

John Waylett (or Bells of Ash)

Seventeen-seventeen to this parish there came
A travelling craftsman, John Waylett by name.
Three bells he cast at the Churchwarden's call,
To ring in the tower of Peter and Paul.

All down the years over Ash they have pealed -
The Vineyard, Old Hopground, and Archery Field.
Calling the faithful on Sunday to pray,
Weddings and holidays, each Christmas Day.

Striking no more in times of great war,
Lest there be occasion to tell of invasion.
Till dangers decrease and fighting should cease -
Then finally joyfully ring in the peace.

Down to new ears their old cadences tracing
Through traffic noise, aeroplanes, motorbike racing.
Ring the changes for three centuries -
Nine coronations and ten jubilees.

Removed to Whitechapel, the year Twenty Ten,
Re-tuned and re-hung to make music again.
And so all those moments that history tells
Unfold to the music of John Waylett's bells.

Allan Richardson 2017