

William Wooding Starmer's contributions to the modern carillon art

Abstract

William Wooding Starmer (1866-1927) was an English campanologist and carillon advisor of international renown. During his time, he was considered a leading figure in the carillon community for his expertise and influence, as demonstrated by his frequent correspondence and close ties with the likes of Jef Denyn and William Gorham Rice. He was active during a period of great change within the carillon art and its associated community. These include improvements in bell production techniques, instrument ranges and technical innovation, education, and composition. Starmer was active in all of these areas: they represent the vision he had of the potential of the carillon as a modern instrument and the contributions he made to the development of the carillon art as it would come to be recognised by the end of the twentieth century.

Introduction

William Wooding Starmer (1866-1927) was a respected expert on bells and campanology based in England but advising on projects around the world. Although primarily a music educator, organist and choral conductor, he devoted significant time and effort to the promotion and development of the carillon as an instrument. As this article explores, this is demonstrated by contemporary correspondence, news articles, and related activities; why then is so little known and published about Starmer and his activities related to the carillon? It is interesting to note numerous accolades and references to Starmer in contemporary publications,¹ while more recent seminal publications only refer to him in once in passing: mentioned in both the Dutch² and English³ versions of *Singing Bronze*, Rombouts mentions that Jef Denyn took refuge in Tunbridge Wells 'with' Starmer during WWI. Similarly, Jill Johnston, in *England's Child*, one of the authoritative texts on the Gillett & Johnston bellfoundry, mentions Starmer during a single incident involving the recasting of a small

¹W. G. Rice. *Carillon Music and Singing Towers of the Old World and the New*. John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd., 1926; F. P. Price. *The Carillon*. Oxford University Press, 1933.

²L. Rombouts. *Zingend brons: 500 jaar beiaardmuziek in de Lage Landen en de Nieuwe Wereld*. Davidsfonds/Clauwaert V.Z.W., 2010, p. 293.

³L. Rombouts. *Singing Bronze: A History of Carillon Music*. Lipsius Leuven, 2015, p. 195.

set of bells.⁴ Starmer fares slightly better with a few more mentions in the Keldermans' text on the development of the carillon as a concert instrument in North America.⁵

From 1901, until his death in 1927, he had a particularly strong relationship with John Taylor & Co., as a close confidante of several members of the family, and professional collaborator. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are several contemporary and archival references to Starmer, which have been used when appropriate to develop understanding of Starmer's activities. Another key source of information is archived correspondence held by the Taylor Bellfoundry Trust⁶.

It is my argument that Starmer's retreat into relative obscurity, when considered alongside his contemporaries, is due to three main factors:

- Starmer did not play the carillon himself, at least very often and/or well. Much posthumous regard in the carillon community is developed through students and accolades, and the community remains largely driven by performers of the instrument (rather than other actors, such as advocates, historians, and instrument makers).
- He did not publish a *magnum opus*, although he did spend many years preparing a manuscript on 'Bells, chimes, and carillons' (now lost)
- His efforts span an impressive breadth and diversity of activities

It is this final factor that this article primarily seeks to address, on the premise that his contribution to the carillon art is greater than the sum of their parts. In doing so, this article strives to recreate a lost figure of early twentieth-century carillon history, and demonstrate the contributions he made to the modern carillon art.

⁴J. Johnston. *England's Child: The Carillon and the Casting of Big Bells*. Cadmus Editions, 2007, pp. 22 and 28.

⁵K. Keldermans and L. Keldermans. *Carillon: the evolution of a concert instrument in North America*. Springfield Park District, 1996.

⁶The Trust holds several folders of correspondence received by members of the Taylor family from Starmer, dating from 1907 to 1927. These records amount to several hundred items of correspondence from Starmer which are not exhaustive, and also include correspondence sent by and received by Starmer to other individuals, which he forward to members of the Taylor bellfoundry. The Trust also holds the bellfoundry Letterbooks, which are bound volumes of mimeographed outgoing correspondence from the firm covering (but not limited to) Starmer's active years in the carillon field. These Letterbooks contain over 1000 items of correspondence sent to Starmer between 1901 and 1927. A quick review of the Letterbooks demonstrates that Starmer was therefore one of the most frequent correspondents of the firm, and easily the individual person with whom the Taylor's corresponded on business matters (discounting other firms they collaborated with, just as Smith of Derby).

Well-tuned bells

*The Leopard cannot change his spots any more than the Cattistock carillon can put itself 'in tune'!*⁷ –W. W. Starmer

Haweis, in his frequently-reprinted *Music and Morals*, went as far as writing “I question whether there is a musically true chime of bells in the whole of England, and if it exists, I doubt whether any one knows or cares for its musical superiority”.⁸ Lord Grimthorpe, another nineteenth century authority on bells, pays equally little attention to the musical aspects of bells,⁹ focusing instead of casting processes and dimensions.

When Starmer was consulted about tubular bells for a church in Westminster, the correspondent focuses almost exclusively on how they are struck, nothing about the tune or tone.¹⁰ When casting a set of bells of New Zealand in 1908, John W. Taylor tells Starmer that he suspects they will “send the engineer to inspect them, [who] knows nothing about the musical possibilities of bells [and] will pass anything as long as it is a good casting”.¹¹

Starmer was first and foremost a musician. With his significant education as an organist and experience as a composer, there was no debate: bells were fundamentally musical. The ‘musical question’ of bells is predominantly concerned with tuning, although there are other relevant aspects. Starmer’s advocacy for well-tuned bells began around the time that Canon Simpson and John Taylor & Co. were re-establishing what they would call ‘five-point’ or Simpson tuning, in which the first five partials of the bell would be tuned to include three unison octaves encompassing a minor triad. Prior to this, bell tuning in England was a pseudo-science without a precise goal: in his 1897 Pamphlet *A protest against the Modern Development of Universal Tone*, the organ builder Lewis claimed that in a peal of eight, the hum notes should be slightly sharp of the strike note, but in an extended scale they should instead be in unison.¹² Whether this was because the five-point well-tuned bell was not yet an established concept, or it was a technical limitation is unclear. In 1902, Starmer (quite rightly) points out that John Taylor & Co. is likely the only bellfoundry in the country

⁷W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 14 August 1919*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 11/4].

⁸H. R. Haweis. *Music and morals*. Harper & Brothers, 1872, p. 456.

⁹J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 18 April 1903*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 144, pp. 766-767].

¹⁰W. W. Southgate T. Lea; Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 17 November 1914*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12]; D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 19 November 1914*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 212, pp. 721-722].

¹¹J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 15 April 1908*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 171, p. 85].

¹²J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 1 October 1901*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 136, p. 239].

that has the machinery to tune the first five partials of a bell.¹³ Starmer also points that, in his writings, Canon Simpson focused principally on the nominals, and the desirability of making them true octaves with the fundamentals. He did not give much consideration to the hum tone, and does not appear to have made any successful experiments with the tuning of this note.

In Starmer's own words: "There is no possible comparison between the tone of an accurately tuned bell and that of ordinary bell. The former is a musical instrument, [while] the latter generally very indefinite as to pitch and often described as a noise".¹⁴

Principles

By 1901, Starmer had already firmly decided that a bell must be in tune with itself before it can be in tune with others.¹⁵ His further ideas on the principles of bell tuning were later codified:¹⁶

1. A bell must be 'in tune' with itself before it can be in tune with others.
2. Every bell has at least five principal tones in it which can be accurately tuned.
3. These principal tones are the Strike Note, Nominal, Hum Note (these three must be perfect octaves with each other), Tierce (minor 3rd), and Quint (perfect 5th)
4. All these tones must be in perfect tune with each other.
5. The tone of a bell depends:
 - (a) On the consonance of its component parts;
 - (b) On the relative intensities of the various tones, which in their turn are dependent upon the minute accuracy of sharply- defined height-, width-, and thickness-proportions.

It speaks to Starmer's authority on the subject that in his landmark text on carillons, William Gorham Rice quoted Starmer verbatim (as above) as to the specifications of a well-tuned bell.¹⁷ He was similarly cited during the presentation of evidence in favour of

¹³W. W. Starmer. 'Bells and Bell Tones'. *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 28 (1901), pp. 25–44.

¹⁴W. W. Starmer. 'The Bells of St Peter's'. *Kent & Sussex Courier* (1919). 24 February 1919, p. 2.

¹⁵Starmer, 'Bells and Bell Tones', see n. 13.

¹⁶W. W. Starmer. 'A Famous British Bell Foundry'. *The Musical Times* 59.900 (1918), pp. 55–57, p. 56.

¹⁷Rice, *Carillon Music and Singing Towers of the Old World and the New*, see n. 1, p. 225-227.

the import of the carillon currently housed in Riverside Church in New York to the US Senate.¹⁸

For Starmer, there was no argument for a bell's 'character' as a substitute for accurate and precise tuning: "To state that any faults in this respect are covered up when the bells are rung in quick succession is no evidence whatever that the bells are in tune. In the case of the Painswick bells, Starmer's opinion was sharply contrasted by that of members of the change ringing community: it was generally felt that "The bells are as everyone knows an exceptionally beautiful peal and do *not* require tuning".¹⁹ In contrast, Starmer thought "the dissonant characteristics of the Painswick bells are certainly *wild* but not beautiful or fascinating".²⁰ This theme is repeated throughout the early part of the twentieth century, for example through the well-known case of the bells that were recast at Coventry Cathedral in 1926, in part informed by a scathing testimonial from Starmer. In 1906, bells cast for Elstree by Arthur Johnston (the father of Cyril Johnston and at the time proprietor of Gillett & Johnston), were rejected by Starmer who acted as a consultant to the Parish.²¹ Cyril took initiative to recast and attempt to tune these bells, thus demonstrating Starmer's role in fostering investment and experimentation into tuning by Gillett & Johnston.²²

Starmer's frequent disagreements and run-ins with the change ringing community was no doubt influenced by his background first and foremost as a professional musician. Rooted in his belief that bells are fundamentally musical, he identified the importance of engaging with the musical community to promote bells as part of musical instruments.

By far his most significant efforts were in engaging with local chapters of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM). His lectures all around Britain and Ireland focuses on bell tones, carillons, chimes, and bell music. Extracts from his correspondence with E. Denison Taylor demonstrate the impressive frequency of his ISM lectures, for example in the first few months of 1920:²³

- Jan 17th Tun. Wells. [Tunbridge Wells] Tech Inst.
- Jan 29th Loughboro' [Loughborough]
- Feb 16th Cambridge University

¹⁸U. Senate. *Carillons: The carillon to be imported by the Park Avenue Baptist Church*. Notes of the 69th Congress, 1st session. Document No. 118. 1926.

¹⁹G. H. Phillott. 'The Painswick Bells'. *The Bell News and Ringers' Record* XX.999 (1901), p. 53, p. 53.

²⁰W. W. Starmer. 'The Painswick Bells'. *The Bell News and Ringers' Record* XX.1019 (1901), p. 292, p. 292.

²¹J. Glanville and W. M. Wolmuth. *Clockmaking in England and Wales in the Twentieth Century*. Crowood Press, 2015, p. 367.

²²Johnston, see n. 4, pp. 21 and 28.

²³W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 11/4].

- Feb 26th Tunbridge Wells
- Ipswich late in Feb or early in March
- ... with the possibility additionally of Spalding and Hertford

These efforts amounted to 26 public appointments that Starmer endeavoured to arrange in the space of a few months: “4 lectures to give in Tun Wells [Tunbridge Wells]. Then there is Mayfield, Ipswich, Spalding, Cambridge, Loughborough, Seaford, etc. so that I am going to be busy!”.²⁴ He also fostered relationships between bellfounders (Taylor’s) and the ISM, for example by organising visits to the foundry.²⁵

During projects on which Starmer collaborated with John Taylor & Co., they emphasised the importance of having “musical people hear and judge our bells”,²⁶ particular with regard to formal testing and evaluation, for example as part of a sale prior to shipment.²⁷ They had success engaging with those in the church community or other authority roles who were musically adept: in Taylor’s own words, their goal was to have “such men to interest themselves in good bells—musicians of the first rank and men who’s word carries weight”.²⁸ Given the level of musicianship present in Britain and Ireland at the time, Starmer could not understand how musicians could not want to improve the musical quality of the soundscape of their countries: “The more one considers the subject the more one becomes convinced that musical people will not put up with such atrocities as these. Of course so far it is scarcely known that better results can be attained and that is where [Starmer’s] paper and writings will do so much good”.²⁹ For example, in 1905, they engaged the Professor of Music at Maynooth Roman Catholic College in Dublin to evaluate the sound of an old bell. With their guidance, the Professor advised the recasting of the bell for the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Dunkalk.³⁰

Some musicians were not as easily as convinced as to the musical opportunities of which bells are capable. During a visit to Bournville carillon, a certain Mr Gaul³¹, was

²⁴W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 13 January 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

²⁵D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 8 March 1906*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 159, p. 415].

²⁶J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 3 June 1900*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 131, pp. 391-392].

²⁷J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 26 June 1900*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 131, pp. 595].

²⁸W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 7 April 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

²⁹J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 27 December 1901*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 137, pp. 226-227].

³⁰J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 14 July 1905*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 156, pp. 64-66].

³¹Likely Alfred Gaul (1837-1913), the English composer, conductor, teacher and organist who was well established in musical circles in Birmingham

“thoroughly beaten by the minor third” and suggested that it should be eliminated.³² Similarly, after a consultation at Cripplegate in the City of London with the Vicar, a Churchwarden, and the organist, the organist struggled with the minor third and doubted whether a chime of bells could ever be satisfactory from a musician’s point of view.³³

The example of a bell in Exeter

The emphasis placed on accurate tuning of bells and the engagement of musical authorities is exemplified through the case of a bell in Exeter Cathedral. The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral did not “look upon the question as a musical one” and thus “only [change] ringers should be consulted”.³⁴ A Cathedral committee felt it better to retain the original bell, as the general public could not tell it was out of tune. John W. Taylor wondered what the Cathedral organist [Mr David Wood] would make of the original bell, as Starmer had once mentioned writing to him about it.³⁵ Under the influence of Starmer’s correspondence a visit to the Taylor bellfoundry is made by representatives of the the Dean and Chapter, but crucially also including the organist Mr Wood.³⁶ Starmer is asked to attend to ‘help’ convince Mr Wood.³⁷ Following this visit, Starmer sent a written report to the Dean and Chapter which has convinced them that recasting the bell is necessary.³⁸ Despite the ‘success’ of this venture (from Starmer’s perspective), it likely contributed to the turbulent relationship he had with the change ringing community. Following the publication of a letter in a local Exeter newspaper about the controversial recasting, John W. Starmer wrote to Starmer exclaiming “Did you ever read such trash — I like the last sentence "and more especially to the experts who have been called in" — Don’t you begin to feel rather small when a respectable working man who perhaps knows as much about music as the average school boy has given you such a slating – Because he can pull a rope he thinks he is privileged to speak on the musical question [of bell tuning]”.³⁹

³²J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 14 November 1907*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 169, p. 136].

³³J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 25 September 1906*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 163, pp. 311-312].

³⁴J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 16 February 1902*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 138, p. 3].

³⁵J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 13 November 1901*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 136, pp. 693-694].

³⁶J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 22 February 1902*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 138, p. 94].

³⁷J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 23 February 1902*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 138, p. 101].

³⁸J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 5 March 1902*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 138, p. 221].

³⁹J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 7 March 1902*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 138, p. 227].

Measurement versus perception

Although Starmer never took a great interest in the acoustics and physics of how bells produce sound, he did put his faith in technical measurement over perception, particularly with regard to tuning: “The [tuning] forks show the deficiencies so quickly and so accurately that no musical ear can successfully complete with them”.⁴⁰ This is in stark contrast with the perspective of Jef Denyn, for whom the final test is how it sounds to him rather than technical precision.⁴¹ Starmer laments that despite Denyn’s strengths as a performer, as well as his understanding of the disposition and configuration of the instrument, he does not prioritise precise tuning of bells. Starmer claims this is because Denyn “is used to the empirical methods of Van Aerschodt and judges every other founder accordingly”.⁴²

Starmer’s teaching, writings, and correspondence demonstrate that he was instrumental in establishing the necessity of well-tuned bells if collections of bells were to be used and appreciated as musical instruments. The lack of appreciation within the wider musical and carillon community for precise tuning, as well as the opposition from administrators and the public, demonstrate that Starmer was a key voice in establishing this now widely-accepted concept.

It is tempting to agree with the opinion of some of Starmer’s contemporaries: if the public could not tell when a bell was poorly tuned, why should it be retuned or recast? Indeed, there was a certain nostalgia and affection for bells in the ‘old style’:⁴³ In response, it was pointed out that the person making this request “cannot tell when this is the case...so no heed should be taken of what he says”.⁴⁴ I argue, in agreement with Starmer, that if the public is not educated on the musical potential of bells through best practice, they would never develop an understanding of the possibilities and by extension the expectation of well-tuned bells.

Carillons as memorials

Up to and including the nineteenth century, carillons performed civic and religious functions in the Low Countries. During the First World War, many bells around the world

⁴⁰W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 6 February 1916*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 8/4].

⁴¹W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 10 February 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

⁴²W. W. Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 1 July 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

⁴³J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 14 January 1916*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 218, p. 76].

⁴⁴Taylor, see n. 43.



Figure 1. William Wooding Starmer, photographed with Jef Denyn, Cyril Johnston and Frederick Rocke (carillonneur of Morristown, US), in 1925 at the 2nd International Carillon Congress held in s'Hertogenbosch. Used with permission of the Archives of the Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn' (Inventory No. 760).

were silenced,⁴⁵ stolen, or destroyed. In places where the carillon was already established, such as the Low Countries, the main effort following the war was to replace instruments which had been lost. More widely in the world, a different type of carillon was emerging: new, modern instruments that would act as memorials.

9 out of 53 carillons in Belgium were destroyed during WWI,⁴⁶ thus sparking a programme of rebuilding and restoration of these civic instruments. Internationally, this has a different effect of raising awareness the carillon, the pride of 'brave little Belgium'.⁴⁷ Perhaps in solidarity with the Belgian people⁴⁸ as well as the recognition of the importance

⁴⁵Price, see n. 1, p. 62.

⁴⁶W. Gorham Rice. 'The Carillons of Belgium after the Great War'. *Art and Archaeology* XII.2 (1921), pp. 51–73.

⁴⁷A. M. Miall. 'Rebuilding ravaged Belgium'. *Quiver* 51.3 (1916), pp. 266–270.

⁴⁸Similarly, a proposal developed to fund raise for a circle of change ringing bells to be hung in Ypres, commemorating English contributions to the war (W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 14 November 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14])

of public music within the development of wider cultures,⁴⁹ the carillon revealed itself as ideally suited to be a memorial.

One of the first examples of a carillon conceived as a memorial for the Great War came from the Mayoress of Cape Town in South Africa, Anna Thorne, just five days after the armistice⁵⁰⁵¹. Suggestions for carillons as fitting war memorials within the UK followed closely behind this initial suggestion. At St Marks, Tunbridge Wells, where Starmer was the organist and music director for several decades, the Vicar began a project to have a War Memorial as a carillon the tower of the church.⁵² Nothing came of this proposed scheme.

By May 1919, Starmer had begun publishing this recommendation in the press, setting the scene with the story of the return of the sound of the famous bells of the Mechelen carillon after Armistice Day:⁵³

BELLS AS MEMORIALS

It is probable that bells will be required in many places as War memorials and it is to be hoped that all the authorities dealing with such matters will secure the best expert advice to ensure obtaining bells which are truly *musical instruments* [italics original] of good tone and accurate tune.

By 1920, the idea was catching on: W. A. Roberts, writing in the *The Musical Times*, put it simply: “surely no more splendid war-memorial could be erected than a carillon of perfectly-tuned English bells”.⁵⁴ Across the UK, for example in St Andrews and Spalding, the idea was spreading.⁵⁵

Spalding, which would inaugurate a 23-bell instrument as a war memorial, was supported by Starmer’s activities. Starmer was invited to give a public lecture on ‘Chimes and Carillons’ to convince the public as to the suitability of carillons as memorials^{56,57}. “[Starmer] pointed out that the nature of the surrounding country was particularly suitable for the effective use of a carillon, as it very much resembled the districts in Flanders where

⁴⁹T. Ng. ‘A New History of the Carillon,’ review of *Singing Bronze*, by Luc Rombouts’. *Keyboard Perspectives* 8 (2015), pp. 185–194.

⁵⁰T. De Wet, P. Van Deventer and J. Teugels. ‘The Cape Town carillon: A forgotten heritage’. *South African Journal of Cultural History* 26.2 (2012), pp. 31–60.

⁵¹This project would later come to fruition after several years of fundraising in 1925

⁵²W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 27 November 1918*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 9/3]; W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 5 December 1918*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 9/3].

⁵³W. W. Starmer. ‘Bells’. *The Musical Times* 60.915 (1919), pp. 225–225.

⁵⁴W. A. Roberts. ‘The Carillons of Belgium: Some Recent Impressions’. *The Musical Times* 61.934 (1920), pp. 817–818.

⁵⁵‘Carillons’. *St Andrews Citizen* (1920). Saturday 20 March 1920, p. 8.

⁵⁶*Kent & Sussex Courier* (1920). Friday 13 February 1920, p. 7.

⁵⁷This same article suggests that Spalding had hoped to install a 37-bell instrument, although only 23 bells were finally purchased”

bell playing was heard to the greatest advantage. Spalding was the first place in England to initiate a scheme which would probably include a public clock with quarter-chimes and chime-tunes, in addition to a carillon of three octaves chromatic with clavier. The bells will be properly placed in a specially constructed tower, which will replace the present bell turret of the Corn Exchange—a position with plenty of open space about it at the head of the Market Square”.⁵⁸

The first War Memorial carillon was inaugurated at Mostyn House School, in Parkgate, Cheshire, in 1922⁵⁹. The inauguration included an address by Starmer.⁶⁰ Interestingly, Starmer was also involved a few years later in raising local awareness of the instrument, in which he gave a lecture accompanied by demonstrations by Tony [Anton] Nauwelaerts, then city carillonneur of Bruges.⁶¹

One of the most widely-known war memorial carillons is in Loughborough. The instrument was inaugurated in 1923 including a recital given by Jef Denyn. The carillon and tower was funded through a public appeal that included local trades, organisations, and individuals. Following initial opposition from the community,⁶² Denison Taylor was concerned that the community would not understand or appreciate the potential of the carillon to a memorial. As in other cases, local residents were concerned that a lot of big bells would be a noisy nuisance: he asked Starmer whether he might be able to help in using his authority to assuage the public that they should expect “concerts of about an hour’s music, of varied items, instead of three to four hours’ change ringing”.⁶³ Starmer published widely on this, but his primary influence was on a well-attended public lecture on 29 January 1920 in the Town Hall.⁶⁴ In his lecture, Starmer emphasised the musical nature of the instrument, as well as claiming that “the carillon with clavier was the most democratic instrument in existence for educating the people in and cultivating their love for folk-songs.” Starmer’s contribution to the Loughborough War Memorial carillon went beyond publicity and education: he was also heavily involved in the technical design and implementation of the instrument. It is fitting that he was honoured as the Honorary Campanologist for the project, as inscribed on the second largest bell of the instrument.

⁵⁸‘Carillons’. *The Musical Times* 61.925 (1920), pp. 194–194.

⁵⁹This instrument has subsequently been renovated following an installation at Charterhouse in Surrey following the closure of the school

⁶⁰‘Random Notes’. *Central Somerset Gazette* (1922). Friday 30 June 1922, pp. 6–7.

⁶¹*Announcement for a lecture at the Mostyn House School (Parkgate, Cheshire, England) on February 8, 1924*. Anton Brees Carillon Library Vertical Files (AACF000113).

⁶²M. I. Bray. *Bells of memory*. B.R.D. Pub, 1981, p. 20.

⁶³D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 23 June 1919*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 228, pp. 165-167].

⁶⁴‘Carillons’, see n. 58.

These examples demonstrate Starmer's significant and varied contributions to establishing carillons as memorials. They represent only a fraction of his efforts. For example, he was instrumental in ensuring the attendance of Dame Nellie Melba at the inauguration of the Loughborough War Memorial carillon,⁶⁵ which later sparked her passion for carillons enabling a leading role in introducing the idea of war memorials carillons to Australia,⁶⁶ leading to one at the University of Sydney. Starmer would later be involved in this project as a technical consultant.⁶⁷ Similar involvement of Starmer is seen in several worldwide war memorial carillons as well, in which Starmer played key roles in providing evidence and technical support. These include: Ottawa,⁶⁸ Albany,⁶⁹ for which Gorham Rice personally requested his assistance, and others.

Not all of Starmer's efforts were successful. Despite great effort in lobby important civic figures,⁷⁰ an initiative to have a memorial carillon,⁷¹ it was deemed not to be "the right time for such an artistic memorial".⁷²

A similar situation arose in Nottingham, UK,⁷³ although this scheme seems to have progressed further than that for Cardiff. Starmer lectured to the local community at the invitation of the Deputy Mayor⁷⁴ and similarly wrote to local papers in an effort to help fundraising efforts which were not going well.⁷⁵ Starmer was essential in educating those leading the effort as to the importance of manual play in the memorial: "Then there is the very important topic: of manipulation which is causing me some uneasiness, for I am a complete ignoramus on the subject and I have not contemplated anything but an automatic mechanism arrangement for ringing a tune or tunes and peal at stated times of the day".⁷⁶ A few years later, the Mayor visited the foundry in Loughborough with Starmer.⁷⁷ Despite

⁶⁵D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 11 June 1923*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 247, pp. 425-426].

⁶⁶'The £100,000 Memorial Scheme'. *The Adelaide Register* (1924). Friday 16 November 1924, p. 8.

⁶⁷D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 22 January 1925*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 261, pp. 800-801]; D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 262, p. 842].

⁶⁸W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 25 August 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁶⁹W. G. Rice to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 2 July 1926*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 57.1].

⁷⁰D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 16 March 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 231, p. 479].

⁷¹A. T. Davies to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 5 March 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁷²A. T. Davies to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 26 February 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁷³A. T. Davies to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 3 March 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁷⁴*The Nottingham Evening Post* (1920). Saturday 29 May 1920, p. 3.

⁷⁵C. L. Rothera to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 17 April 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14]; C. L. Rothera to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 27 April 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁷⁶C. L. Rothera to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 26 May 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

⁷⁷*Nottingham Journal* (1923). Monday 26 February 1923, p. 3.

these efforts, nothing came of the proposed scheme.

Starmer had direct involvement in establishing the idea and contributing to the realisation of several war memorial carillons in England around the world. Several of these instruments are some of the earliest examples of such memorial carillon towers, which would later be reproduced in projects with which he did not have direct involvement.

Technical innovation

From correspondence between Starmer and the Taylor bellfounders, it is clear that although Starmer placed paramount importance on high-quality, well-tuned bells, he did not concern himself with technical developments regarding the casting and tuning of bells. It is likely that he appreciated the rapid advances that had been made in the UK at the turn of the twentieth century. He thus turned his attention to other mechanical aspects of carillons, with an emphasis on lightness of touch, expression, and standardisation. According to Price 1933, although Starmer was "an organist rather than a carillonneur... he took up the work where Simpson laid it down and materially aided English bell-founders and their patrons by advising those specifications which would make their instruments not merely the equal of those of olden times, but a distinct improvement upon them. Studying past examples, he sought to improve their defects by lightening the touch, standardizing the dimensions of the keyboard, disposing the bells so that all could be heard equally well outside, and arranging the playing cabin so that the carillonneur could hear his effects properly" (p. 56). Speaking at the First International Carillon Congress in Mechelen in 1922, Starmer expressed his belief that carillons should be no less than 3 octaves in range and no more than 4 octaves.⁷⁸ It is ironic that, following his death, several two-octave instruments would be installed in the UK.

Transmissions and mechanisms

Starmer was well-placed to evaluate carillon mechanisms as he was a noted consultant on prominent organ building projects, for example that at the famous public school in Harrow.⁷⁹ The quality of his improvements is most evident in the response to his design work as the consultant for the carillon in Cobh⁸⁰: "Mr Starmer's practical knowledge of organ building has also been usefully applied to the improvement of the mechanical action

⁷⁸W. W. Starmer. 'The influence of Mechlin carillon art on English bell founders and bell music.' *Beiaardkunst: handelingen van het Eerste Congres Mechelen 1922*. 1922, pp. 66–70, p. 68.

⁷⁹W. W. Starmer. 'Church and Organ Music. Harrow School Memorial Organ'. *The Musical Times* 62.940 (1921), pp. 430–433, p. 430.

⁸⁰Queenstown, at the time

between the clavier and the clappers of the bells, and M. [Anton] Nauwelaerts, the Bruges carillonneur, was lost in admiration at the responsive action at Queenstown which enabled him to obtain all grades of expression, and the greatest rapidity of execution with the minimum of exertion”.⁸¹ Nauwelaerts himself wrote that he was “no more satisfied with [his] own action now that I have seen such a fine one at Queenstown [Cobh]”.⁸² Starmer himself reported similar outcomes at Armagh, in Ireland, for which Starmer also acted as a carillon consultant, where he described the mechanism as “child’s play, [that is] much better than the continental mechanism”.⁸³ He clearly spent quite some time considering the details of the mechanism: “I also think that in order to get the best key control the force conveyed by the key must be exact as to direction – this must always be decided by the clapper – it’s position and its exact direction of movement. I have thought this out a good deal lately because as a matter of fact it is nothing more or less than the tracker action connections of organ building. We ought to have a good discussion as to this because the Belgian mechanism is so rough and ready that I am confident that very great results can be obtained by perfecting the details of the present principles of the motion work”.⁸⁴

In the case of Cobh, it is interesting to note that Starmer acted as the go-between for communication between Denyn (who the Cathedral wanted to be involved) and Taylor’s. At Cobh, Starmer designed a simple method of taking the chain off the flight to enable the bass bells of the carillon to be swung.⁸⁵ Further discussion included the compass of the pedals,⁸⁶ the bell chamber,⁸⁷ the connection between the pedals and the manual,⁸⁸ as well as a request from Denyn for the bass bells to be positioned below the clavier⁸⁹, although Starmer and Taylor thought this would be difficult.⁹⁰ One thing they all agreed on was that the clavier must be as close as possible to the bells,⁹¹ the need to emphasise this driven

⁸¹W. A. Roberts. ‘Queenstown Cathedral: A Postscript’. *The Musical Times* 60.921 (1919), pp. 622–624, p. 622.

⁸²A. Nauwelaerts to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 10 September 1919*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 11/4].

⁸³W. W. Starmer. ‘St. Patrick’s (R. C.) Cathedral, Armagh’. *The Musical Times* 62.946 (1921), pp. 827–830, p. 830.

⁸⁴W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 19 December 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

⁸⁵W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 14 June 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

⁸⁶W. W. Starmer to ? Taylor. *Correspondence dated 28 June 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

⁸⁷Starmer, see n. 42.

⁸⁸Starmer, see n. 42.

⁸⁹At the time, Mechelen was one of the few, if not only, place where this was done

⁹⁰W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 12 July 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12]; J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 16 July 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 215, pp. 513-515].

⁹¹W. W. Starmer to ? Taylor. *Correspondence dated 19 July 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

by a request from the Bishop for a clavier positioned lower in the tower to make it more convenient.

As an extension of his work consulting on new projects, Starmer was also an advocate for regular maintenance of bell installations: he lamented the attitude common in the UK at the beginning of the twentieth century that “once installed [instruments composed of bells] will function perfectly for a century without any attention paid”.⁹²

Claviers

Starmer was consulted during the installation of the Rotterdam carillon, which was paid for by a wealthy businessman P.J. van Ommeren. Starmer encouraged his cousin Bernard, who worked at the London branch of the family firm, to advise that a keyboard of Taylor construction be taken instead of one from Addicks (an Amsterdam-based firm) to whom the original order for the carillon was made. The Taylor keyboard would have included features that would be expected in more modern installations, such as pedals that hinged at the back of the clavier in the same manner as the manual. However, Rotterdam ended up with pedals that hinged under the bench (Dutch style). This, among with other characteristics of the pedals including the spacing, meant that even a player as esteemed as Jef Denyn could barely make use of the pedals as it was too different from other keyboards of the day both in the Low Countries and the UK.⁹³

This bungle would be rectified shortly thereafter, for which installations on which Starmer would consult would have keyboards constructed in England, usually by Taylor’s himself including the 1923 extension of Bournville⁹⁴ and the new Loughborough War Memorial carillon.

The idea of radiating pedalboards for carillons was discussed between Starmer and John W. Taylor at the latest in 1912, in regards to the foundry carillon.⁹⁵ Starmer advocated for a radiating pedalboard, but it was decided at the time that the carillon community would not be ready for such a change and thus the pedals were made in the Belgian style.⁹⁶ It is likely this decision was influenced by the plan to invite prominent Belgian carillonners to

⁹²W. W. Starmer. ‘Carillons and Chimes’. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 64.3291 (1915), pp. 94–98, pp. 97-98.

⁹³L. J. Meilink-Hoedemaker. *A Taylor chimes for the City Hall of Rotterdam*. Available at: www.laurameilink.nl. 2005.

⁹⁴‘Bournville Carillon’. *The Times* (43240 1923). Tuesday 16 January 1923, p. 13.

⁹⁵J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 2 April 1912*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 194, p. 184].

⁹⁶J. W. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 12 April 1912*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 194, p. 340].

the Taylor bellfoundry as part of the promotion of the instrument; an unfamiliar pedalboard would have introduced a limitation of the efficacy of these activities.

While in the Low Countries there was a general understanding that a carillon should connect its largest bell to the lowest C on the clavier (unless a Bb and/or a G sub-bourdon was included), there was little precedent in the UK. During the extension of the foundry carillon, Taylor's asked Starmer how they should design the keyboard. One proposal was to extend the keyboard down to F (which would put the instrument in concert pitch), and connect the bells that existed within the range.⁹⁷ Starmer advised that the bourdon (the largest bell) should be connected to C, in order to standardise the configuration of the clavier.⁹⁸

Structures

Starmer advocated for towers that were well-situated for enjoyment and structures that facilitated the acoustics of the instrument. This is seen at the Loughborough War Memorial, where early designs placed the carillon over a ceremonial entrance gate to the Queen's Park. The carillon tower eventually ended up at a campanile in the centre of the park, reducing the impact of local road noise to the listening experience.

The carillon in Bournville was built in a copper lantern on top of the school building. When Bournville was enlarged from 22 to 36 bells, Starmer campaigned privately⁹⁹ and publicly¹⁰⁰ that the bells must be installed in a suitable, partially enclosed belfry to allow for the sounds of bells to be mixed. Starmer also emphasised the importance of configurations of bells within a tower that were compact: "the more compact you can get them the better, as the action work and musical effect always of course giving the smallest bells the best chance".¹⁰¹ Starmer also had to campaign for the correct placement of bell frames in relation to openings in the belfry: illustrated in an almost comical drawing was the proposed placement of the War Memorial carillon for Washington, DC, in which the entire frame sits beneath the openings in the belfry.¹⁰² The belfry also had unsuitably

⁹⁷D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 26 March 1912*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 194, pp. 92-93].

⁹⁸D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 1 April 1912*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 194, p. 98].

⁹⁹D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 11 August 1924*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 258, p. 94].

¹⁰⁰'English Carillon Playing'. *The Times* (43892 1925). Saturday 21 February 1923, p. 10.

¹⁰¹W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 2 October 1919*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 11/4].

¹⁰²D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 26 November 1921*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 239, pp. 652-653].



Figure 2. John W. Taylor and several members of his family in July 1911 outside the house that used to exist on the foundry site, photographed with the Reverend Robert Stickland, Jef Denyn, and August Borms. William Wooding Starmer is standing in the doorway, adjacent to the right side of the door frame. Used with permission of the Archives of the Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn'.

large corner pieces at the bellchamber level,¹⁰³ which Starmer addressed in subsequent correspondence with a leading proponent of the scheme.

One of Starmer's most challenging consulting projects regarding the placement of a

¹⁰³D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 23 July 1924*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 257, pp. 752-753].

carillon was that for the University of Sydney. Several options were considered for the size and scale of the carillon. More pressingly, the University could not decide where to install the carillon: as at Loughborough, Starmer campaigned for a standalone campanile in a prominent location on the campus. In an effort to reduce costs, representatives of the university wondered whether the carillon might be installed in an existing structure situated on the main university quadrangle. When an earlier instrument proposal was discussed that would be smaller than that which was eventually installed, Starmer and Taylor had reluctantly agreed that “artistic success assured in the existing tower”.¹⁰⁴ However, once the details of the carillon were confirmed, Taylor agreed with Starmer that a standalone campanile would only be fitting of “so splendid an instrument”¹⁰⁵ of a greater total weight. Starmer iterated this in his report to the university committee.¹⁰⁶ Starmer’s recommendations for the ideal campanile design for the carillon were reprinted in a New Zealand paper, in which he also emphasised the need for an ideal campanile “to hear carillon music under the best possible conditions”:¹⁰⁷

1. Height of the tower to be not less than 120 ft [approximately 36 m]. Mr Starmer recommended not less than 150 ft for Sydney.
2. Large window openings for lateral dispersion of sound. No louvres in windows.
3. Larger bells below window sill; smaller bells opposite window openings.
4. Roof capable of being opened during the playing of the bells.
5. Hathchways through all floors from ground level to bell-chamber.
6. Tower to stand clear of all buildings.

Holistic design

Starmer’s interest in the design of specific aspects of transmission systems, claviers, and structures has been individually demonstrated. However, it is the perhaps the sum of these parts that demonstrates an another contribution to the modern carillon art: the idea that a carillon is a holistically designed instrument and typically built by a single firm. Taylor’s had gained a reputation by the 1910s for their well-tuned bells; sets of bells were produced

¹⁰⁴Taylor, see n. 67.

¹⁰⁵Taylor, see n. 67.

¹⁰⁶W. W. Starmer. *Report on the University of Sydney N.S.W. War Memorial Carillon*. Archives of the University of Sydney [Minute book for the War Memorial Committee (G3/1)]. 3 February 1925.

¹⁰⁷‘Sydney’s Aims. University campanile. Tower of Memory.’ *The Christchurch Press* (18928 1927). Thursday 17 February 1927, p. 4.

for small instruments in the Netherlands, such as that at Flushing and Rotterdam. However, as these instruments were typically ordered from the local firm Addicks, Taylor's was merely subcontracted to provide the bells and nothing further. Starmer and Taylor were concerned about not having the opportunity to consult as to the mechanism or configuration of the instrument, and the implications of this for their reputation on the continent.¹⁰⁸ These experiences, as well as others, prompted Taylor to begin making their own carillon claviers to "get the clavier and pedal biz in some sort of order, from chaos, and [Starmer's] help here will be invaluable".¹⁰⁹

The principle of holistic carillon design of a modern instrument is embodied by the Loughborough War Memorial Carillon, in which Taylor's delivered a four-octave carillon tuned in equal temperament which included well-tuned bells arranged in a strategic disposition. The details of the transmission, the clavier (with features similar to that of the 2006 WCF Standard), and the structure, had all been advised by a carillon consultant: William Wooding Starmer.

Attempted innovations

Not all of Starmer's technical developments or advice were successes. Perhaps most intriguing is the experimental use of doubled trebles. This involved providing two bells per clavier key for the highest octave of the instrument, to try and compensate for their low volume relative to their larger counterparts. While it is not possible to credit this directly to Starmer, he must have advised their in several of the projects he consulted on, including the Loughborough War Memorial, Albany City Hall, the University of Sydney, and Lake Wales [Bok Tower Gardens]. This approach was installed at 10 Taylor carillons between 1921 and 1932. However, the practical challenge of precisely tuning the bells to be identical, as well as being struck simultaneously, could not be overcome.¹¹⁰ The mechanisms of these carillons have all reverted to using only single trebles, whether they be the original ones or later replacements.

¹⁰⁸D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 30 December 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 216, pp. 954-955]; D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 3 June 1921*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 237, p. 400].

¹⁰⁹? Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 19 September 1921*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 238, pp. 725-727].

¹¹⁰W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 30 May 1926*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 57.1].



Figure 3. A postcard showing the Loughborough War Memorial carillon tower shortly after it was built. Provided by the Carillon War Memorial Museum.

Formal education in campanology and carillon

Alongside his other activities, Starmer was a music teacher and local examiner for the Royal Academic of Music. It was perhaps inevitable that he would understand the value and importance of carillon and campanological education for producing technical expertise and competent performers. This section focuses on specialised education, rather than general education through public lectures and writings.

For most of Starmer's life, there was no formal education in carillon or campanology. Those interested to learn to play the instrument would perhaps take up an apprenticeship with a respected player. In the UK context, there were few domestic opportunities to

develop the skills required to be a proficient carillonist.

In 1920, George Cadbury (who had paid for the installation of the Bournville carillon) wrote to Starmer, suggesting a carillon performance competition. This was in part motivated by the perception that best use of bells was not being made, as the Trustees did not feel their current performer, a Mr Withers, was satisfactory.¹¹¹ He proposed to follow up this first competition with a second one about 12 months later, this time for an official carillonneur post. Cadbury went on to ask Starmer further questions around what a suitable salary for a professional carillonist would be, and how sizable a prize should be to attract competitors from all over the country. Upon hearing of this, Denison Taylor wondered where Cadbury expected to find this ‘competition’, for despite the shortcomings of Withers it would be difficult to find someone who could do better. This demonstrates the state of the carillon art in the UK at the time.

University of Birmingham

As discussed previously, Starmer was always keen to engage musicians with the carillon. Through his relationship with George Cadbury, Starmer secured a benefaction from the well-known local philanthropist for a course at the University of Birmingham¹¹² culminating in an examination. The course included a series of lectures and was offered annually from 1924 to 1926 under the auspices of the music faculty,¹¹³ but members of the public could attend the lectures as well. The lectures covered:

- Ancient bells
- The Bell—a musical instrument
- The Carillon
- Carillon Music
- English Chimes and Chime Tunes
- Continental Chimes

¹¹¹G. J. Cadbury to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 21 April 1920*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 14/14].

¹¹²*Birmingham Daily Gazette* (1923). Friday 12 October 1923, p. 4.

¹¹³P. Hinton and E. W. Vincent. *The University of Birmingham, Its History and Significance*. Cornish Bros., 1947.

Students who were enrolled in the course had access to the practice clavier at Bournville,¹¹⁴ although it was primarily a course of academic nature and not intended to produce carillon players. On this topic, Starmer wrote in a letter to William Gorham Rice: “By bringing my subject to the highest courts, I have put it in a higher position than ever the Carillon School of Malines could aspire to, because my audience is of the highest MUSICAL qualifications. We must have a school of practical work and we are likely to get this here very shortly”.¹¹⁵

Further insight into the topic and level of the course is provided by the examination from 1924:¹¹⁶

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Degree of B.Mus.

CAMPANOLOGY

Wednesday, June 11, 1924, 10 a.m. to 12 noon

1. What is a bell ? Draw a diagram showing the common rule of height, width, and thickness proportions of bells, and indicate the particular parts to which technical terms are applied.
2. Discuss the composition and properties of ‘bell metal’.
3. Explain the differences between—
 - (a) a ‘peal’ or ‘ring’ of bells,
 - (b) a chime of bells,
 - (c) a carillon.
4. Compare the harmonic tones of an accurately tuned bell with those of a string or open metal tube.
5. Write a short description of the carillon clavier.
6. Write out in musical notation the notes of any well-known quarter chimes. Give some account of their history.
7. Write a short prelude for the carillon with clavier in two parts and not less than 16 bars in length.

¹¹⁴W. A. Roberts. ‘The Late W. W. Starmer and English Carillons’. *The Musical Times* 69.1021 (1928), pp. 224–227, p. 227.

¹¹⁵W. W. Starmer to W. Gorham Rice. *Correspondence dated 26 May 1924*. Library and Archives Canada [MUS 133 1981-31, Vol. 60, p. 87, G.B. TUNBRIDGE 33].

¹¹⁶1924 *University of Birmingham Music Exam Paper, BM. 179*. Cadbury Research Library [UC].

Despite the academic nature of the course, without intention of producing proficient carillonists, evidence suggests it had real and significant impact on the carillon art in the UK. “It was almost accidentally that Mr. Clifford Ball became a carillonneur. While studying for a degree in music at Birmingham University in the 1925, [Ball, then a] young student was persuaded by friends to go to a lecture by [William] Wooding Starmer”.¹¹⁷ Clifford Ball would study at the Mechelen Carillon School in 1926, during which time he kept in correspondence with Starmer.¹¹⁸ Ball went on to become a leading figure in the UK while he was the carillonneur at Bournville until 1965, having developed an international reputation as a performer.

The Mechelen School

Starmer had close ties with Jef Denyn and Mechelen long before the existence of a carillon school. In 1910, he was a member of the jury for an international carillon performance competition; on this occasion, he was provided a gold memento “as a small recognition of appreciation of his invaluable services in making known in England and America the carillons and carillon playing of Belgium, and of Mechelen in particular”.¹¹⁹ Denyn and Starmer corresponded about the emerging idea for a carillon school in Mechelen as early as 1913.¹²⁰ A few short months before the carillon school in Mechelen was officially opened, Starmer was asked to compose a set of studies for students of the school to develop technique;¹²¹ see Section for further details. It is likely through Starmer’s initial introductions that allowed Denyn to campaign to George Cadbury for financial support for the school.¹²²

From 1923 until Starmer’s death in 1927 he participated in several final examination juries, including that of Clifford Ball.

Compositions for carillons and bells

Prior to the 20th century, original compositions for the carillon were rare. 15 known collections of music pre-dating the 20th century exist, mostly comprised of psalms, secular

¹¹⁷*Birmingham Daily Post* (1962). Friday 13 July 1962, p. 19.

¹¹⁸C. E. Ball to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 14 July 1926*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 57.1].

¹¹⁹‘International Carillon Contest at Malines’. *Musical Standard* (1910). Saturday 29 October 1910, pp. 274–275, p. 275.

¹²⁰W. W. Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 20 February 1914*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

¹²¹‘English Bells: Influence of Malines Carillon Art’. *Musical News and Herald* (1922). Saturday 30 September 1922, p. 295.

¹²²? Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 3 September 1925*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 265, p. 650].

songs, and dances, and include little to no original music for carillon.¹²³ Many of these were arranged for automatic play on the large drums to mark the passage of time in conjunction with clockwork, such as the music arranged for automatic play by the carillonneurs of Antwerp, known today as the ‘De Gruyters’ carillon books.¹²⁴ Some exceptions exist, such as the canonical *Preludes* composed by the carillonneur of Leuven Matthias Van Den Gheyn (1721-1785), for which he became known as the “Bach of the carillon”.¹²⁵ Thus, most repertoire performed on the carillon were adaptations of existing music or improvisations incorporating recognisable themes, often combined with improvisation and variation.

Starmer often included repertoire in his lectures, typically played on a piano. The pieces he selected to include gives a snapshot of the state of compositions for carillon at the time:

- Two of the eleven preludes composed by Matthias Van den Gheyn
- *Rondino*, J. A. H. Wagenaar II¹²⁶
- *Minuet*, J. A. H. Wagenaar II
- One of the preludes composed by Jef Denyn
- *Introduction and four variations on the ancient Flemish St Cecilia’s Song*, composed by W. W. Starmer

In contrast, lectures accompanied by performances on carillons or practice instruments are typically more dominated by arrangements. One of Starmer’s lectures on ‘The Carillon and its Music’, given at the Taylor bellfoundry in 1913, was accompanied by two recitals given by Jan van Beers and Jef Denyn:

- **Program of M. J. van BEERS**

1. The Thorn (Shield)
2. ‘Brise de Nuit’ Romance (D’Hach)
3. ‘Van twee conincks kindern’ (vielles chansons flamandes) (F. van Duyse)
4. ‘De vlamsche leeuw’, Marche (Miry)

- **Program of M. JOSEF DENYN**

¹²³Rombouts, *Singing Bronze: A History of Carillon Music*, see n. 3, p. 130.

¹²⁴Rombouts, *Zingend brons: 500 jaar beiaardmuziek in de Lage Landen en de Nieuwe Wereld*, see n. 2, p. 196.

¹²⁵Rombouts, *Singing Bronze: A History of Carillon Music*, see n. 3, pp. 109-120.

¹²⁶Carillonneur at the Domtoren in Utrecht at the time

1.
 - (a) March of the men of Harlech
 - (b) Allan Water
 - (c) Old King Cole
2. Rondo, from Sonata IV (Nicolai)
3. (Schubert)
 - (a) Lob der Thränen
 - (b) Frühlingsglaube
4. Grazioso from Sonata I (Richter)
5. (Peter Beniot)
 - (a) Zuivere liefde
 - (b) Erste Fantasia

Starmer's programmatic choices demonstrate the emphasis he placed on original compositions for carillon. While this idea is established in contemporary carillon culture, it was nascent in Starmer's time. Starmer emphasised the importance of idiomatic music composed for carillon: "However joyous the tune, many of the London listeners have noted there is a strange, sweet melancholy added when it is played on bells. The late Wooding Starmer...insisted that this was a factor which must always be considered by the composers of music for carillon".¹²⁷

His own original works and arrangements

Starmer was primarily a composer and arranger of organ and choir music. He wrote only a few original works for carillon, but they are notable as being early examples of compositions for carillon that were not written by players of the instrument. Most, if not all, of his works were composed before the Mechelen carillon school began publishing compositions for carillon in 1925.¹²⁸ He also experimented with works for carillon and other instruments. The known works composed by William Wooding Starmer for carillon are:

- *Introduction, Air, and Variations* (1910), for four-octave solo carillon

¹²⁷'The Singing Tower'. *The Evening Post, Wellington, New Zealand* CX (111 1930). Friday 7 November 1930, p. 8.

¹²⁸P. Price. *Bells and Man*. Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 230.

INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF MUSICIANS.

NORTH MIDLAND SECTION.



M. Josef Denyn (Mechlin.) Chevalier of the Order of Leopold.

CASTING OF A PEAL OF BELLS,
(2.30 p.m.)

**LECTURE AND
PROGRAMME**

BY
Celebrated Belgian Artistes,
ON THE
CARILLON OF 40 BELLS,
AT
Messrs. TAYLOR'S Bell Foundry
LOUGHBOROUGH,
JULY 12th, 1913.
TO COMMENCE AT 3 p.m.

LECTURE in the Tuning Room by W. W. STARMER, Esq., F.R.A.M.
"The Carillon and its Music."

Program of M. J. van BEERS, (Scharbeck.)

1.	"The Thorn"	Shield.
2.	"Brise de nuit" Romance	D'Hach.
3.	a—"Naar oostland zullen wy ryden", b—"Van twee conincs kindern" (vieilles chansons flamandes)	F. van Duyse.
4.	"De vliamsche leeuw, Marche"	Miry.

Program of M. JOSEF DENYN, (Mechlin.) Chevalier of the Order of Leopold.

1.	a—"March of the men of Harlech"
	b—"Allan Water"
	c—"Old King Cole"
2.	"Rondo" from Sonata IV.	Nicolai.
3.	a—"Lob der Thränen" }	Schubert.
	b—"Frühlingsglaube" }	
4.	"Grazioso" from Sonata I.	Richter.
5.	a—"Zuivere liefde" }	Peter Benoit.
	b—"Erste Fantasia" }	

Messrs. Taylor extend their welcome to Members of any Section of the Society, and will be happy to provide Tea for them.

Figure 4. A flyer for a meeting of the Incorporated Society of Musicians (North Midland Section) on 12 July 1913, which included a casting, a lecture given by William Wooding Starmer and two recitals: one by Jan van Beers and the other by Jef Denyn. Used with permission of the Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust (Item reference: JT 6-1-4-180 p.402).

- *Introduction and four variations on the ancient Flemish St Cecilia's Song* (1915), for carillon with wind ensemble. No known MS survives.
- *Prelude* (1919), written for four-octave solo carillon
- *Song of Joy* (1919), for four-octave solo carillon

- *Two simple exercises (Studies) for carillon* (1922), for four-octave solo carillon on the occasion of the establishment of the Mechelen Carillon School
- *Toccata for St Andrews* (1926), for 15 bells and written for the inauguration of the carillon at St Andrews¹²⁹. No known MS survives.

Except for the *Toaccata*, all of Starmer's compositions¹³⁰ were written for Jef Denyn to premiere. This demonstrates the virtuosity that Starmer expected of the instrument and of its performers.

Percival Price describe Starmer's compositions for carillon as "purely English carillon music".¹³¹ Starmer's works for carillon embody characteristics of the English Pastoral School, drawing on folk melodies for inspiration. His works share characteristics with works of composers he admired and corresponded with, including Sir Edward Elgar, Sir Alexander Mackenzie) and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, including strong melodies and creative uses of harmonic colour.

Starmer's first known work for carillon is *Introduction, Air, and Variations*, a five-minute work written for and dedicated to Jef Denyn in 1910. Jef Denyn premiered this work during the closing recital of the international competitive festival held in Mechelen in August that year. According to a report in *The Musical Times*—albeit one that should be taken with a grain of salt, as it was likely written by Starmer himself—"the Air is simple and original, and the variations—contrapuntal and otherwise—bring into use the best effects the carillon is capable of, as well as affording excellent opportunities for the executive capabilities of the player".¹³²

Starmer asked Denyn to write out a very fine old melody known as Cecilia's Song. He intended to write some variations upon it for carillon accompanied by a small wind ensemble including flutes, oboes, and bassoons.¹³³ the wind ensemble would take turns playing the melody while the bells would play the variants. Denyn had heard something of the sorts before in Mechelen and described the effect as 'magnifique and mysterieuse ! !'. Starmer completed his *Introduction and four variations on the ancient Flemish St Cecilia's Song* in April 1915¹³⁴ and John W. Taylor proposed they could rehearse it at the foundry

¹²⁹Although this instrument would later be expanded to more than 2 octaves, the instrument as installed in 1926 is considered a historic carillon according to the World Carillon Federation Statutes

¹³⁰Except for the exercises, which were written at Denyn's request

¹³¹W. W. Starmer *Introduction, Air, and Variations*. Library and Archives Canada [MUS 133 1981-31, File 27-24-IV C 4.

¹³²'Carillon Meeting at Malines'. *The Musical Times* (1 October 1910), p. 657.

¹³³W. W. Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 15 April 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

¹³⁴W. W. Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 18 April 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 4/12].

on the occasion of Starmer's next visit.¹³⁵

In 1922, Starmer was asked to compose a series of exercises for students of the Mechelen Carillon School that would be established a year later.¹³⁶ While it is unknown how many exercises Starmer was asked to produce, or indeed how many he intended to compose, two remain. Study No. 1 is for "combining hands with pedal" while Study No. 2 is "for the alternation of hands, with simple pedal".¹³⁷ Both exercises are in C Major. Study No. 1, the shorter of the the studies, includes rapid passages of descending 8th notes reminiscent of change ringing bells being rung in rounds. Study No. 2 makes use of secondary dominants and also includes a chromatic descending baseline. Although they were composed to develop technique, both studies are generally musical interesting and avoid formulaic repetition.

In 1919, Starmer composed two works for Jef Denyn. The *Prelude* was premiered on 30 June 1919 as part of celebrations of Peace in Belgium.¹³⁸ In a letter to Taylor, Starmer described the works as "real carillon music and nothing else". Denyn came to visit Starmer in Tunbridge Wells prior to his return to Belgium, for which Starmer marked the occasion by presenting Denyn with both manuscripts.¹³⁹ After Nauwelaerts inaugurated the Queenstown (Cobh) carillon, he wrote to Starmer to tell him that he could not wait until Starmer wrote something for him to play.¹⁴⁰ Slightly cheekily, although the *Song of Joy* was presented to Denyn alongside the *Prelude*, Starmer rearranged the *Song of Joy* and sent this to Nauwelaerts, rather than a new composition.

In 1926 Starmer composed a little *Toccata* for the dedication ceremony of the 15-bell chime (historic carillon) in St Andrews.¹⁴¹ Little is known about this work or whether any MS survives.

Starmer's composition style: an analysis of his *Introduction, Air, and Variations*

Starmer's performance note indicates "For the effective rendering of the music, the chords in the Introduction, Air, and Variation II should be played arpeggiando or tremolando at the discretion of the player, taking into consideration the bells at his disposal, etc.".

¹³⁵D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 19 April 1915*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 214, pp. 447-449].

¹³⁶'English Bells: Influence of Malines Carillon Art', see n. 121.

¹³⁷26-20 IV W. W. Starmer - *Simple Exercises for Carillon C 3,5/3,5 26.20-IV*. Library and Archives Canada [MUS 133 1981-31].

¹³⁸Starmer, 'Bells', see n. 53.

¹³⁹W. W. Starmer to J. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 5 December 1918*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 9/3].

¹⁴⁰Nauwelaerts, see n. 82.

¹⁴¹W. W. Starmer to D. Taylor. *Correspondence dated 16 November 1926*. John Taylor & Co. [Folder 57.1].

Tremolando techniques are generally employed by performers to elongate the sounds of the bells and make possible melodic shaping and phrasing. This is especially important for instruments comprised of pre-20th century bells, which generally have shorter sound durations than their contemporary counterparts produced using modern casting techniques sound for longer time periods, negating the necessity of these musical effects. In these cases, arpeggiated chords would be more appropriate to thin out the texture slightly. Thus, Starmer's performance note is intriguing, for there were, at the time of its composition, no instruments comprised of entirely contemporary bells for which the alternative to tremolando would have been suitable. However, around this time Starmer had already been trying to find a suitable situation and funding to build such a carillon. So, he may have included the note for future instruments, rather than writing his composition only to suit pre-20th century instruments.

The introduction incorporates elements of the main theme of the Air that follows in alternating forte fanfares and simple melodic passages with harmonic accompaniment that should be played piano.

Interestingly, the E Major chord is not used as a transition to another key, but rather as a predecessor to a secondary dominant of ii (D minor). It is noteworthy that this unexpected chord progression (C Major to E Major, or any sudden tonal change from I to III) is prevalent elsewhere in later 20th-century carillon literature, such as Ronald Barne's arrangement of *Land Beyond the Clouds*.

The air is a simple presentation of a melody with accompaniment in 3 parts: one in the pedals, and two in the manuals (the melody in the highest voice accompanied with harmony beneath).

Variation I presents the theme in the middle voice, with a baseline that broadly follows it in rhythm. The upper voice is a contrapuntal accompaniment to the main theme, mostly comprised of running 8th notes, arpeggiated chords and passing chromatic tones:



Variation II is similar in its configuration of the parts, but presents it *Larghetto* in the key of C Minor (the enharmonic equivalent of the tonic of the Air). The third and final variation is the perhaps the least effective for performance on carillon. A modified version of the theme (resembling parts of the Introduction) is presented again in C Major embedded in a very rapid sixteenth-note passage to be played on the manuals accompanied by a baseline in the pedals. Given the speed, and that the interspersing notes are generally lower in register (and therefore played on larger and naturally louder bells), it is unlikely the melody would be clearly heard. However, as it is the 3rd variation, Starmer perhaps knew this was not a priority, and decided rather to focus on virtuosity and a brilliant overall effect, rather than melodic clarity. However, as the passage is primarily formulated of arpeggios, the speed at which the player can perform this configuration of embellished theme is limited by the necessity to move hands over the other to alternate (especially for a sustained passage as long as the variation, 16 bars total).

Other English composers

One of the most well-known contributions to the carillon art made by Starmer is that he facilitated the composition of Sir Edward Elgar's *Memorial Chimes*. It was written for

the inauguration of the War Memorial carillon in Loughborough and performed by Jef Denyn on July 22nd 1923. Starmer leveraged his strong existing relationship with Elgar to convince him to write the work, and then was significantly involved in adapting the work to be suitable for carillon, including modification of musical intentions and melodic lines. The origins of *Memorial Chimes*, as well as the important contributions Starmer made to its development, are detailed elsewhere.¹⁴²

Sir Granville Bantock (1868–1946) was an English composer who held the Peyton Professorship of Music at the University of Birmingham from 1908 to 1934.¹⁴³ Bantock succeeded Sir Edward Elgar after his rather unsuccessful three-year time in the role. Bantock wrote only one known work for carillon: a special setting of *Ring Out, Wild Bells* for a chorus of mixed voices and carillon. This was premiered in 1924 during the Bournville Musical Festival with Anton Brees at the clavier. The performance was achieved with the chorus placed on the flat roof of the tower.¹⁴⁴

It has been claimed that Bantock became interested in carillon and inspired to compose for the instrument by Elgar.¹⁴⁵ While this is plausible, it is much more likely that Starmer's influence dominated. In 1923, Starmer told Denison Taylor he had been successful in getting Bantock interested in the Bournville carillon.¹⁴⁶ Further, Starmer was engaged in giving his series of lectures in the Music Faculty of the University of Birmingham in 1924, which coincides with Bantock's tenure there. Finally, the work was originally inscribed to Starmer,¹⁴⁷ although this was not included in the 1929 edition published by Boosey & Co.

Terminology

The terminology used in the global carillon community has slowly been formalised and aligned. Starmer's activities during a period of significant globalisation of the carillon art contributed to the definition and uptake of these terminologies.

One who plays the carillon can be known by many terms: carillonneur, carillonist, the carillon player, or even 'one who rings the bells'. Starmer was an advocate for a single, unifying term that would be used globally as well as elevate the role to an appreciated and

¹⁴²S. A. Orr. 'The origins, development, and legacy of Elgar's *Memorial Chimes* (1923)'. *Beiaard- en Klokkencultuur in de Lage Landen* 1.1 (2022). In press., pp. 81–101.

¹⁴³'Snapshots of Days Gone By': A Reason for Resignation'. *The University of Birmingham Newsletter* 2 (21 2003).

¹⁴⁴'Ring Out, Wild Bells'. *Kent & Sussex Courier* (1924). 27 June 1924, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵J. B. Lawson. 'Edward Elgar and the Carillon'. *Bulletin of the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America* XIX (1 1968).

¹⁴⁶D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 3 January 1923*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 245, pp. 15-16].

¹⁴⁷'Ring Out, Wild Bells', see n. 144.

specialised activity: carillonneur. A very interesting article was published in *The Musical Times*, written by G. Kirby:

BELL-MASTER OR CARILLONNEUR.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES'

SIR,—In your Review of 'Carillons' (by Colonel Gorham Rice) in your January issue, occurs this timely remark : 'The term 'bell-master' conveys no idea to the reader of the proper function of the word "Carillonneur."' At the 'Reunion' held after the International Contest of Carillonneurs in 1910, M. [Prosper] Verheyden, of Antwerp, introduced the subject of 'Bell-master' v. Carillonneur,' and strongly condemned the use of the latter term.¹⁴⁸ He said 'The England were wanting in patriotism to use such a word when "bell-master" was more appropriate'. Mr W. W. Starmer explained that the term had been in use since the time of Burney¹⁴⁹, and that we should continue to use [carillonneur] while we had carillons to play. A correspondent at the time asked 'Why use such an "undesirable alien" when we can use bell-ringer and chime-ringer?' This shows how imperfectly the art was understood even in 1910.

Perhaps merely an artefact of poor translation, the use of 'carillonneur' (with a single 'n') is common in English publications, see for example *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of Music*.¹⁵⁰ John W. Taylor, in a letter to Starmer in 1907, discusses carillonneurs, while being "not sure as to the two n's".¹⁵¹ Starmer's writings consistently use the double 'n' that is in common use internationally today, and likely helped to solidify this spelling in publications in English.

In the early part of his carillon activities, Starmer uses carillon and chime interchangeably when discussing instruments of a relatively small size, as long as there is a manual clavier properly-tuned bells which are to be used musically.¹⁵² However, by 1920 the proper use of the term 'carillon' is clear to Starmer. In correspondence with E. Denison Taylor, they lament "the misleading interpretation given as to what a carillon is" in "the

¹⁴⁸G. Kirby. 'International Carillon Contest at Malines'. *The Musical Standard* 34.878 (1910), pp. 274–275.

¹⁴⁹Charles Burney FRS (7 April 1726 – 12 April 1814) was an English music historian, composer and musician

¹⁵⁰R. Dunstan. *A Cyclopadic Dictionary of Music*. 3rd ed. J. Curwen & Sons Ltd., 1906, pp. 37 and 191.

¹⁵¹D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 25 June 1907*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 167, pp. 492-493].

¹⁵²D. Taylor to W. W. Starmer. *Correspondence dated 17 August 1914*. John Taylor & Co. [Letterbooks, Volume 211, p. 539].

only bell paper published” (*The Ringing World*, a weekly publication primarily focused on change ringing). The article to which they refer includes the paragraph:

FIRST CARILLON IN DEVON.

The three bells in the Church tower at Kennerleigh, Devon, which have been cracked for more than half a century, have been cast into a carillon of eight, which can be played by one person from a clavier. The work has been successfully carried out by Messrs. Gillett & Johnston of Croydon. This is said to be the first instance of such an installation in the diocese of Exeter.

On the subject of pronunciation, Major Nornabell reports on a deliberation held between himself, William Gorham Rice, Starmer, a Professor E.R. Holme of Sydney University¹⁵³, as well as representatives of South Africa and Canada, at which it was agreed that the majority of English speaking people pronounce it “car’ illon’.¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

William Wooding Starmer made significant contributions to the carillon art during a period of great experimentation and globalisation. Many of the areas he championed, including accurate and precisely-tuned bells and the need for high-quality carillon and campanological education, have become universally-accepted. Through his engagement with the wider musical community, as well as recognising the potential for carillons to be powerful memorials and voices within their community, he did much to develop public interest and the realisation of several carillon projects globally. His correspondence, and evidence of his activities, demonstrate that he was internationally-respected and influential figure commensurate to the likes of Jef Denyn and William Gorham Rice. Despite this, his contributions to the modern carillon art are less frequently appreciated. While it is difficult to say what has caused this, it is possible that his penchant to act as a ‘renaissance man’ as expert consultant, educator, campaigner, composer, and liaison that makes it difficult to appreciate the scale and vision of his contributions until they are brought together, being worth more than the sum of their parts.

¹⁵³Holme was involved in the War Memorial Executive Committee that commissioned the carillon

¹⁵⁴H. M. Nornabell. *Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Singing Tower*. The Highlander Publishing Co. Inc., 1929, p. 5.