

They tolled the quarters and the hours from Cannocks
Clock for 75 years

Famous Limerick Bells for Nigeria

THE massive bells of Cannocks Clock that tolled the quarters and the hours for Limerick citizens from 1888 to 1963 were yesterday on the first stages of their journey to Northern Nigeria, where, from missionary church belfrys, they will call Africans to prayer.

The famous bells have been purchased by Messrs. Matthew O'Byrne & Co., Bellfounders and Engineers, James' Street, Dublin. In the company's foundry they will be re-cast and will later be shipped to Kano, Northern Nigeria, for missionary work.

Two years ago, when the large-scale reconstruction of Messrs. Cannocks premises was completed, the bells were replaced by electronic chimes and the clock itself was fitted with an electric mechanism.

Previous to that it was wound by one of the company's porters, three times per week, and since 1930 the chimes and the time-check of this well-known Limerick landmark were under the supervision of Mr. Jack Gleazer. On the rare occasions in which the clock was a few minutes fast, Jack was the most popular man in town—but not so popular when it was a few minutes slow!

Jack had an amusing story for me concerning this. On a particular evening many years ago the clock struck six... an hour before it should have had. Immediately all the female employees in nearby Spillane's factory ceased work for the day and left for home. Some 10 minutes later Jack was told by an irate official of the company that his famous clock had lost the firm 80 working hours!

In the old days the correct timing for the clock was taken from a ship's chronometer in Messrs. Wallaces, jewellers, O'Connell St., and in later times the clock was adjusted to radio time signals.

For his time-check, Jack had to climb the 180-ft. high clock tower by three flights of stairs and two ladders. The chimes had also to be silenced each night by hand and, before the face was illuminated 20 years ago, the work had to be done by the light of an electric torch.

Jack is now 61 years in employment with the firm and he can claim the longest service record of any drapery employee in Limerick. Well known as a sportsman in many spheres, he is best known as the greatest oarsman of his day. For many years he was champion sculler of Ireland and, with Mick O'Brien, he was the last man to win the Irish Pairs Championship. The race was last competed for at Dublin Metropolitan Regatta in 1911.

THE CLOCK

According to a commercial directory published in 1892, the clock and bells were made and

erected in 1888 by Messrs. Gillett and Bland, of Croydon.

The bells upon which the quarters and hours were struck were five in number and had a total weight of 33 cwt., 1 qr. and 8 lbs. No. 1, the smallest, rang the note E; No. 2 the note D; No. 3 the note C; No. 4 the note G, and No. 5 the note F.

Each of the four dials of the old timepiece was six feet in diameter and glazed with opal glass, which had the advantage of diffusing the illumination behind them. Each centre part was backed with iron-cast ribs to protect the glass from being blown in by high winds.

The dials were made of iron, cast in one piece, and painted gilt. The hands of each dial were made of stout sheet-copper and stiffened by means of brass run in at the back, which prevented them from being blown about and enabled them to keep their position on the face. The hands were also balanced inside the tower, to preserve their equilibrium.

THE COMPANY

The history of Cannocks dates back to the early part of the last century, when the business was founded by Messrs. Cumine, Mitchell & Co., woollen drapers. The commercial directory of 1892 goes on to tell us that this firm was succeeded in 1850 by Messrs. Cannock & White. Later the title was altered to Arnott, Cannock & Co., at the head of which was the famous Cork businessman, Sir John Arnott, with whom was associated George Cannock.

After some years prosperous trading, Sir John retired from the firm, and George Cannock was joined by Sir Peter Tait, a man whose name had even then become a legend in Limerick.

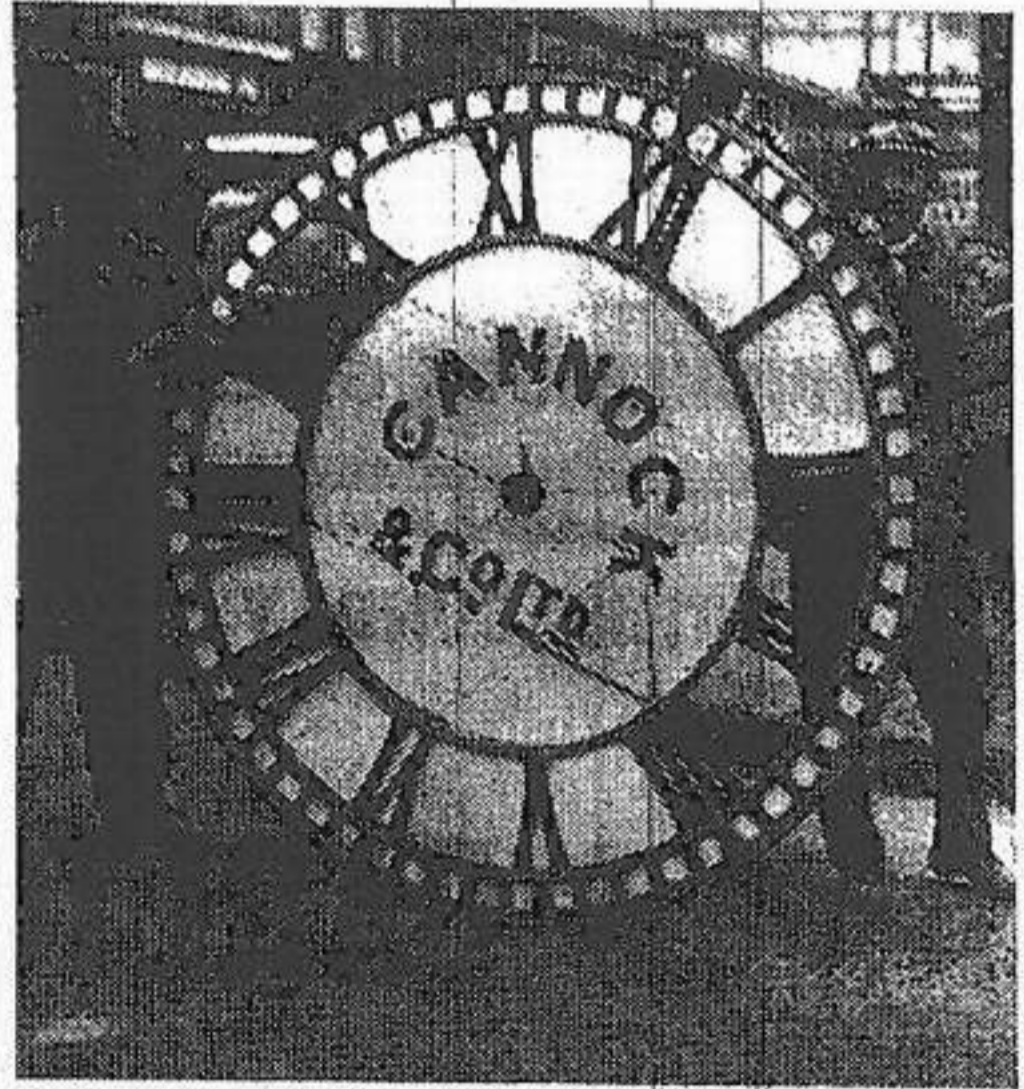
In 1869 the business was acquired by J. Clery, chairman of the great house of Clery & Company, Dublin, and James Moriarty Tidmarsh, and was continued by these two with ever-increasing success to 1877. In that year it was converted into a limited liability company, trading under the title of Cannock & Company Ltd.

In 1960 it was decided to change the facade of the building which had graced the skyline of Limerick for well over a century, and major reconstruction work was begun.

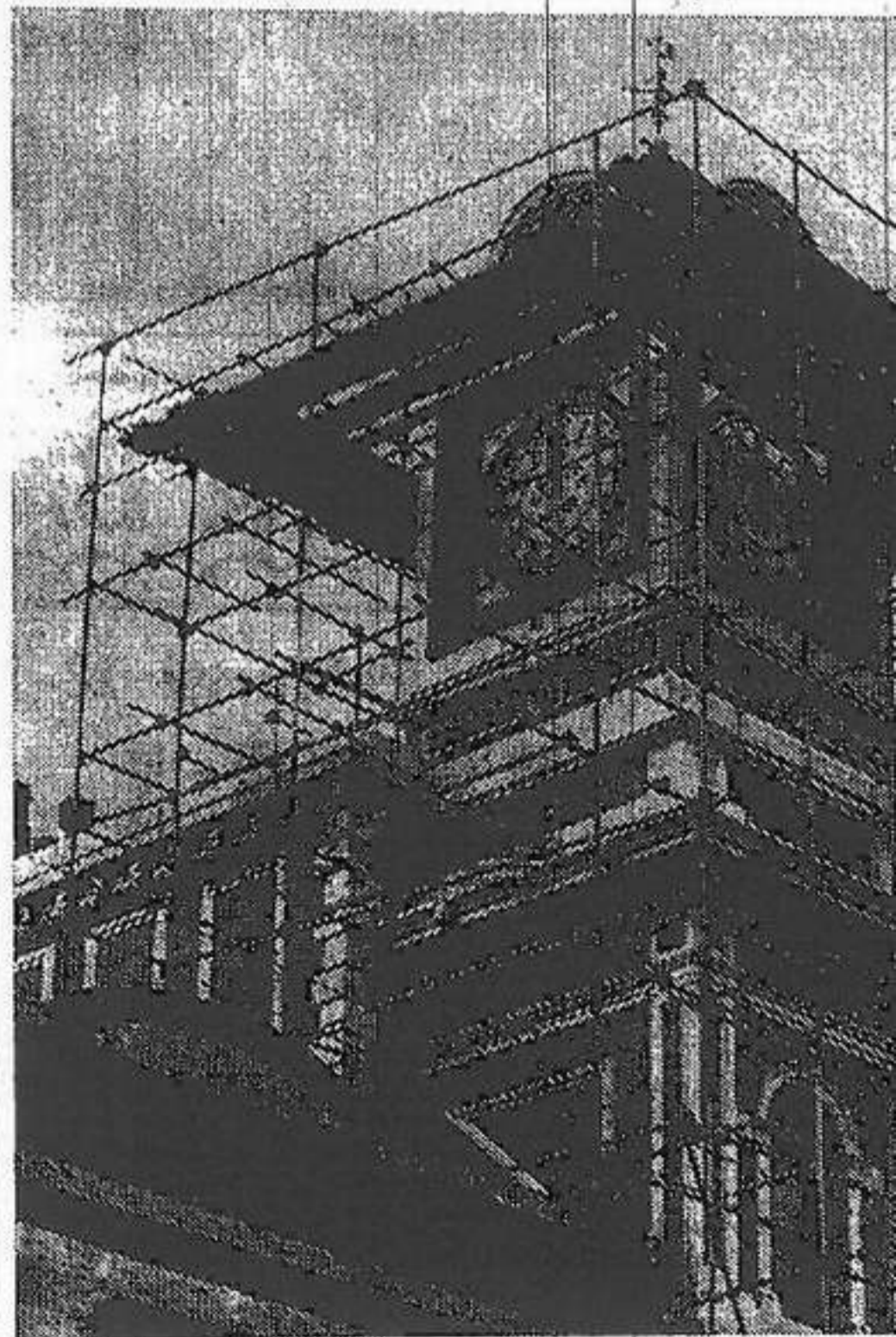
The work was completed three years later. In the meantime the clock and clock tower were overhauled, but their original design was retained. The clock, as stated at the outset, was fitted with an electric mechanism and is now housed in a new concrete tower, which has been moved to a more prominent and forward position on the roof.

The new clock now towers over one of the finest apartment stores in these islands and the old bells, which chimed away so many years of Limerick's history, will have a new life in Northern Africa.

TIME ROLLS BY . . . the face of the old Cannock's clock is rolled on to a C.I.E. trailer. Also on the trailer, on the first stage of their shipment to Kano, Nigeria, are the clock's five bells, which have a total weight of over 33 cwt.



Workmen roll away the face of the old clock during reconstruction work which commenced in March, 1960



The old Cannock's clock was the official timekeeper in Limerick. Picture, scaffolding is erected prior to the stripping of the old work was completed early in 1963 and the famous clock, and electronic chimes, was recreated in a new c