

Bishops Sutton and Ropley Bells



Preface

This booklet is the result of various research on the history of the bells and ringers in Ropley, Bishops Sutton and the surrounding area.

It is intended to be used as source material to help local schoolchildren find out about various aspects of bells and bellringing, and to place them in their historical context.

It is also intended to be used as the basis for talks to local groups, and to produce roller banners and other display material for exhibition in the local church, to be seen by members of the local community when visiting the building, and at events such as Heritage Open Days.

We show how the art of bellringing developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, following the reformation, and was and is still being influenced by contemporary changes taking place in society.

We also explore how bells were rung, not just for religious purposes, but also for civic purposes as well as for pleasure of the ringers themselves, and how this changed over the centuries.

Records have been lost and we have limited information about the ringers at Ropley and Bishops Sutton prior to the 20th century. However, there seems little doubt that from 1701 onwards when Ropley bells were increased to a ring of five bells, the ringing at Ropley reflected what was happening in nearby parishes, such as New Alresford and Odiham, in Winchester itself, and across the country as a whole.

Front cover illustrations

1. A Peal of Church Bells, 16th century (woodcut). The Stapleton Collection.
2. Ropley church, now restored after the 2014 fire.

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Timeline

Athelstan enacts a law requiring all thanes to maintain a bell tower on their estates	926	
	1066	William the Conqueror invades England
Curfew introduced – towns and cities to toll a bell in the evening	1068	
Bells were rung for three separate reasons:	1500's	
1. Civic ringing – From the earliest days bells were used for a variety of civic purposes. Different bells were rung to mark different times of the day. Most churches had three or four bells, not necessarily tuned to a musical scale.		
2. Pleasure ringing – The local youths enjoyed ringing the bells as a form of exercise. Even today ringers refer to ringing as 'The Exercise'. The ringers started ringing them in order, then varying the sequence in what is known as 'changes'. This led to bells being tuned to a musical scale and more bells added to practice 'change-ringing'.		
3. Religious purposes – As a signal for worship. Many pre-reformation bells were named after saints.		
Thomas Bullisdon casts a bell for Bishops Sutton in Aldgate, London	1500-15	
	1534	Henry VIII breaks from Rome
	1539	William Tyndale translates Bible into English
Martin Bucer German protestant reformer visited England and complained of recreational use of bells by foolish youths	1549	
	1553	Mary I takes the throne. In 1554 Mary marries Catholic Philip II of Spain at Winchester Cathedral in an attempt to reunite England with Rome. However, in 1558 Mary I dies and Protestant Elizabeth I takes the throne.
John Cole casts a bell for St John's Winchester in a field at Alresford	1574	
	1603	The Stuart monarchy begins. James I (1603–1625) saw the continued rise of the Puritan movement in England. Puritans sought to rid the Church of England of what they considered to be Roman Catholic practices, and become more Protestant.
	1605	Gunpowder plot – An unsuccessful Catholic plot to murder the King at the state opening of Parliament. Ringers were paid to ring in celebration of the failure for many years afterwards.
Ancient Society of College Youths formed in London	1637	
	1642	The English Civil War breaks out. Puritan clergy subsequently come to power. There was to be no music dancing or singing. Organs were taken out of churches.
Bellringers were constrained by a Puritan Act of Parliament to ban all forms of sport on Sundays, including ringing, and only a solitary bell was permitted to call the faithful to worship. This persisted right up to Victorian 'Belfry Reform'.	1643	

	1660	The revolution is over and the Stuarts regain the throne. Charles II becomes King. Dancing singing and music making, including bell ringing, celebrated once more.
Publication of Tintinnalogia – the first book on change-ringing	1668	
Ringling competitions become popular, often sponsored by the local publicans or squire, with prizes for the winning band. There was much rivalry between villages and betting on the outcome.	1700's	
Civic ringing is also common, with payments to the ringers for ringing.		
West Gallery music has its origins in the early 1700s, with the formation of amateur choirs, which were initially male. From the mid 1700s, we see the presence of an accompanying instruments, including handbells.		
Samuel Knight and John Gilberd recast St Peter's Ropley bells from four into five	1701	
The first recorded true peal of 5,040 changes of Grandsire Triples (8 bells) was rung at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich	1715	
The first peal on 12 bells Grandsire Cinques at St Bride's Fleet Street, London.	1725	
William Laughton launches the Rambling Ringers club	1733	
Cheriton church destroyed by fire in 1744 and in 1746 a new ring of five bells was cast for the church by John Stares of Aldbourne, Wilts.	1744-6	
Ringling competition at Basingstoke	1745	
Entries in Churchwardens accounts at New Alresford for payments to ringers for five Civic ringing days	1768 -	
Old timber tower at Old Alresford rebuilt in brick and new ring of six bells cast by Pack and Chapman to replace old ring of five bells	1769	
Ringling competitions at Odiham	1776-9	
Ringling match at Barton Stacey and Baughurst	1789	
Six bells at New Alresford recast and augmented to eight	1811	
The ringers enjoy high Civic status. The New Alresford Corporation give an annual dinner for the ringers at the Horse and Groom	1824	
The Alresford Youths ring the first peal on the bells at New Alresford – Grandsire Triples	1825	
	1831	The 'Oxford Movement' originates with clergy trained at Oxford University who wish to restore liturgical customs from traditions before the Reformation. Oxford movement leads to tensions between the clergy and the ringers, with their secular and recreational use of the bells. Clergy try to take back control of their belfries, and even lock ringers out!.
	1837	Queen Victoria comes to the Throne. The Victorian period is a time of great social reform and technological progress.

Rev H T Ellacombe publishes book 'Practical remarks on Belfries and Ringers	1849	
	1856	The Palace of Westminster is being rebuilt. John Warner & Sons cast the hour bell 'Big Ben' at Stockton on Tees. However, in 1857 it cracked. The contract to replace it was given to George Mears at Whitechapel. The replacement bell was cast in 1858, but that too subsequently cracked, and it remains cracked today, resulting in its distinctive tone.
	1869	The author and social commentator Charles Dickens attends a meeting of the Ancient Society of College Youths at St Saviour's Southwark (now Southwark Cathedral) and publishes an account of his visit.
	1862	Church of England Temperance Society formed
	1864	Salvation Army formed, with emphasis on abstinence from alcohol
	1865	Watercress line opens between Alton and Winchester
	1872	The Victorian era saw much church rebuilding due to the Oxford movement, who removed the galleries. Like the ringers, the West gallery musicians were often difficult for a vicar to control, whilst influence over an organist was much easier. Such an ousting of the church band by an organist is given a fictional treatment in Thomas Hardy's 1872 novel Under the Greenwood Tree.
	1872	Formation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage
	1876	Mothers Union formed at Old Alresford by Mary Sumner, wife of the Rector to bring mothers of all social classes together to provide support for one another and to be trained in motherhood
Winchester Diocesan Guild of Ringers formed	1879	
Marianna Hagan, a wealthy spinster and follower of the temperance movement conducts her first philanthropic act and constructs a temperance hall, known as the coffee rooms, with the objective of keeping the men and boys of the parish out of the three public houses that existed in Ropley at the time.	1883	
The Old and New Alresford ringers hold their annual feast at the Sun Inn, paid for by the Town Council. Local magistrates granted a bar extension till 1am. An article in the Hampshire Chronicle cheekily suggests that teetotal neighbours might be critical of this!	1886	
Cheriton bells recast by John Warner & Sons as a ring of six.	1888	
Central Council of Church Bell ringers formed	1891	
New Alresford church rebuilt and bells rehung in existing frame on new fittings.	1895-7	
Alice White rang her first peal at St Michael's Basingstoke. This peal was the first to be rung by a lady anywhere in the world.	1896	
Dinner for the ringers at the Sawn to mark the re-opening of New Alresford bells. Local ringers encouraged to join the Winchester Diocesan Guild.	1897	

Quarterly meeting of the Winchester Diocesan Guild at New Alresford. Significant discussion about differences of opinion between certain ringers and their vicars.	1898	
Bishops Sutton bells recast from three into five by John Warner & Sons of London	1898	
Cyril Johnson joins the family clock making firm and begins experimenting with modern bell-tuning, following the theories of Cannon Arthur B Simpson.	1905	
More women become ringers and the first all-ladies band of eight ladies ring a peal. The Ladies Guild of Ringers formed.	1912	
	1914-18	First World War. Women take the place of men as ringers. In Longstock there was a population of 212 men and 201 women. Of the men, 75 went to war. After the war men came back to their jobs and the belfries and the Ancient Society of College youths introduce a rule to no longer admit women to the society!
Gillett & Johnston of Croydon and Taylor's of Loughborough, the pioneers of modern bell tuning, now produce 'Simpson' tuned bells. The Whitechapel Foundry still produce 'old style' bells. There was much controversy about recasting the old Coventry Cathedral bells. Permission for Gillett & Johnston to recast them was only given after a court case.	1927	
The same year Gillett & Johnston recast Ropley bells from five into six, the gift of Marianna Hagan.	1927	
	1928	Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928, equalizing the franchise to all persons, male and female, over age 21.
	1939-45	Second World War. In 1940 all ringing ceases. Bells only to be rung as a signal of enemy invasion. The ban was lifted in 1943 after much campaigning in the press by the likes of the author Dorothy L Sayers, and debates in the House of Commons.
Ancient Society of College Youths votes to admit female members	1998	
	2014	St Peter's Ropley destroyed by fire. Only the external walls remain standing. The bells remain in the tower, but two were cracked by cold water used to put out the fire.
	2019	Rebuilding begins, but is interrupted in 2020 by Covid 19. For fifteen months almost all ringing ceases throughout the UK.
	2022	St Peter's reopens, rededicated by the Bishop of Basingstoke on Sunday August 28 th .
Gillett & Johnson's extensive set of tuning forks were measured electronically and found not to be accurate.	2023	
Ropley's cracked 3 rd bell is welded by a specialist process at 'Soundweld' in Newmarket. However, the 5 th bell is too badly cracked to be welded and instead it is recast by Emanuel Allanconi in Italy. The six bells finally return and are hung in the tower.	2024	

1. Introduction and Historical Background

For many centuries bells have had both religious and secular uses. The Saxons regarded the bell as sacred, and a different saint's name was ascribed to each one. There were enough of them by 926 to prompt Athelstan to enact a law requiring all thanes to maintain a bell-tower on their estates to provide a warning signal. Following his conquest of England in 1066, William introduced the Curfew in 1068¹, and towns and cities tolled a bell at some time in the evening depending on the season. The word 'curfew' comes from the French words meaning to put out the fire.

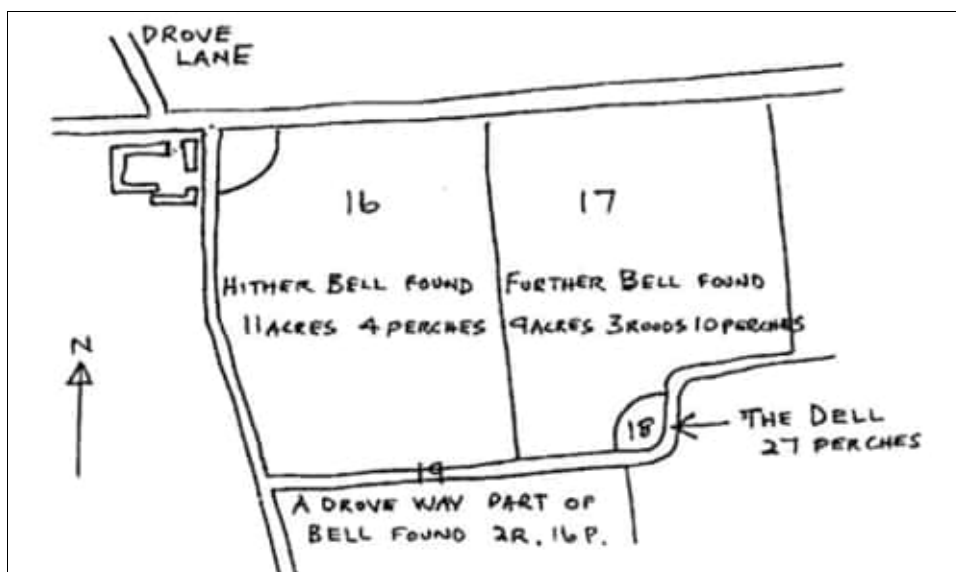
1.1. Pre-reformation towers and bells

The book Church Bells of Hampshire², written by Rev W E Colchester and published in 1920 is an authoritative source of information, and contains details of some of the oldest bells in Hampshire and their founders, although it does contain some inaccuracies.

Prior to the reformation in the 16th century, the road network was very poor and bells were often cast by itinerant bell-founders, who set up temporary foundries in fields near to churches. You can often find references to this in local place names.

From the tithe map of 1842 we know that in Alresford, there were two bell fields Hither Bell Found and Further Bell Found³. An 18th century survey by Robert Boyes also names two fields as West and East Bellfound. We cannot be certain how far these field names go back, but on page 35 of St John's Winchester account book for 1549 – 1596 there are the following entries:

<i>pd. to the belfounder for castying the bell</i>	<i>liis</i>	<i>(52s)</i>
<i>pd. for expenses at Alresford</i>	<i>xxd</i>	<i>(20d)</i>
<i>pd. to John Fawcett for caryage of the bell</i>	<i>iiis viiid</i>	<i>(3s 8d)</i>
<i>For five bellropes</i>	<i>viiid</i>	<i>(8s)</i>
<i>For ringing for the Queen</i>	<i>xviiis</i>	<i>(18d)</i>



¹ [The First Curfews – Now I Know](#)

² Colchester's book can be downloaded here [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Colchester - Hampshire Church Bells](#)

³ [98 Bell Founding in New Alresford.pdf \(alresfordhistandlit.co.uk\)](#)

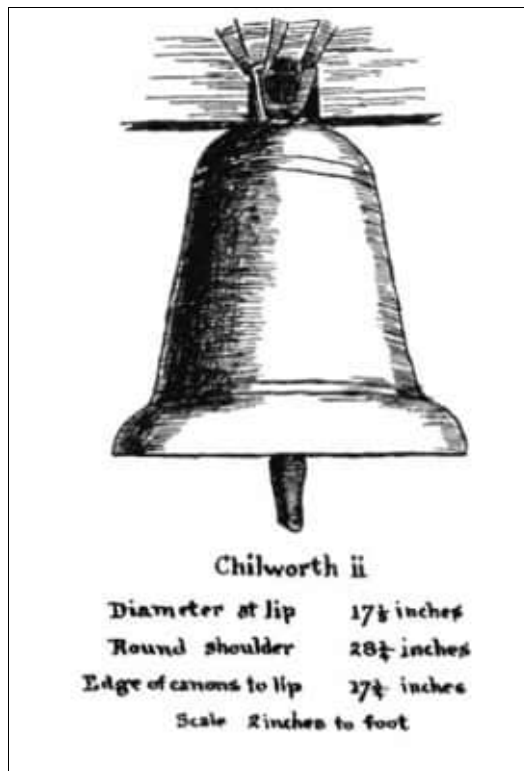
One itinerant founder at this time was John Cole, who is known to have cast bells both at Winchester College and St John's Winchester in 1574

Two centuries later there is a record in the transcript of the Upham parish registers that Thomas Swain cast six bells for the church in 1761

"Cast in a field (or large Dell) near Alresford by Mr Thomas Swain"

Bellfounders were often connected with monasteries and the three principal founders of bells in Hampshire during the reformation came from Salisbury and the monastery at Chertsey. Some also came from London.

These bells were usually made from a mould on a length of timber, turned horizontally on a spit. Therefore these 'long waisted' bells are much taller than modern bells.



Colchester's sketch of a long waisted bell at Chilworth

Until the arrival of the railways in the 1800's brick and stone for masonry were in short supply, but there was a plentiful supply of trees, so many of the early church towers in Hampshire, such as Ropley and Bishops Sutton are built of timber, or had timber upper stages.

Prior to the reformation these towers usually housed three or possibly four bells of different notes, and each one was used a signal for different events. These bells were not usually tuned to a musical scale.

Only a few pre-reformation bells survive in Hampshire. Many were recast because of change-ringing. However, there are two pre-reformation bells at West Tytherley, one dated 1350 and the other 1399. There is also one dated 1460 at St John's Winchester.

There is more information about early Hampshire bells the Hampshire HistBites podcast with Phil Watts a bell-historian and bells adviser to the Winchester Diocese⁴.

⁴ [Celebrating and remembering with Hampshire's oldest bells — Winchester Heritage Open Days](#)

1.2. The Reformation and the establishment of the Church of England.

In the 15th and 16th centuries there was a protestant reformation in parts of Europe. In England, in 1534 Henry VIII broke from the authority of the Pope and the church in Rome. The dissolution of the monasteries commenced in 1536. In 1539 William Tyndale translated the Bible into English and Latin was no longer used in services

Between 1553 and 1558 Mary I, a devout Catholic became Queen and reversed some of these reforms. However, upon Mary's death Elizabeth I, a Protestant, took the throne and reversed the changes again.

Under the Elizabethan settlement, Catholic mass was forbidden and by law everyone needed to attend church. She was also concerned that traditional superstitions went hand in glove with Popeish observances. She prohibited the use of the ancient customs such as the ringing the passing bell to mark someone's death⁵, channelling bellringing into celebratory secular occasions. From the 1570s, the day of her accession, St. Hugh's day, 17 November 1558, was celebrated throughout the country with bonfires and bellringing.

Elizabeth I visited Winchester on several occasions, the first in 1560, and although there is no record that the cathedral bells were rung, it is reasonable to assume that cathedral ringers were no less obsequious than their counterparts in London, particularly since their failure to ring would have attracted a fine from the Royal Almoner.⁶

In Stuart England, as elsewhere in the country, bellringing continued to lead loyal civic celebrations. Winchester Cathedral's Treasurer's Book 1634 records on 5 July, payment of six shillings for 'bread and gruel for ringers' in addition to 11s.6d. for the ringing itself. The purpose is not revealed, but later entries after the Restoration include regular payments for 'the coming of the judges', evidence of yet another link between bells and State, dating back to Henry VIII. The Cathedral's Treasurer's book and belfry records show that the Cathedral bells were rung at the commencement of the thrice-yearly assizes right up to 1940, when the bells were silenced by wartime interdict.

In an increasingly puritan England, bellringers were constrained after 1643 by Act of Parliament from ringing on Sundays, and only a solitary bell was permitted to call the faithful to worship⁷.

From the Restoration of the Monarchy, there is ample evidence of the secular use of the bells in celebrating the Protestant succession. Winchester Cathedral records show that In 1695, £1.4s.0d. was paid 'pro pulsatione campanarii 29 May in die inauguram'. The following year, 'pro campanis 4 + 5 November - £2.8s.0d'. The bells were also rung to celebrate key anniversaries, such as, Royal Oak Day (Charles II's restoration), the Gowrie conspiracy, William III's marriage to Queen Anne, 'the Gunpowder Plot', and St Hugh's Day (Elizabeth I's accession). Such observances continued annually throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth-century.

1.3. The development of change-ringing

Following the reformation in England and especially in large cities like London, groups of young men would swing the bells as a form of exercise. They swung them higher and higher, with simple levers giving way to quarter, half, three quarter and eventually full wheels so that they could balance them upside down. This enabled them to control the bells and ring the bells down the musical scale. This is known as ringing 'rounds'. In 1549 Martin Bucer German protestant reformer visited England and complained of

⁵ [Death knell - Wikipedia](#)

⁶ Colin Cook - Bellringing in Winchester - A study of the ringing of bells at Winchester Cathedral

⁷ [The History of Ringing – CCCBR](#)

- Recreational use of bells by foolish youths
- Clanging of bell day and night on various superstitious festivals, rather than for religious uses

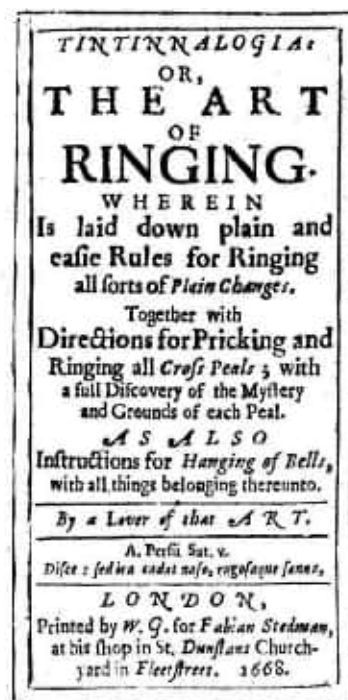
Cast at different times, by different people the early bells were not tuned to a musical scale. However, following the advent of this early recreational ringing, itinerant bell-tuners would tour the country chipping metal off the insides of the bells to bring them into tune with each other. However, from about the 1680's bells in England started to be tuned upside down on a turntable, acting as a lathe.

In parallel with this, there was competition between various groups of ringers to practice changing the sequence that the bells rang in, rather than simply ringing them down the musical scale. From the early 1600's traditional patterns of changes emerged, in a similar way to folk dancing. These patterns or 'methods' became increasingly complex and often had local names, depending on where they were rung.

There were many changes in society at this time. People were becoming more literate because the bible had been translated into English. Also, in Germany, around 1440 Johannes Gutenberg had invented the movable-type printing press, Willam Caxton, introduced the printing press into England in 1476.

During the Stuart period from the early 1600's onwards the aristocracy also took an interest in bell ringing. They even went as far as to invent exercise machines which imitated the action of a bell – hence the term 'dumb bell' so that they could practice in the comfort of their own home. There are records of one such dumb-bell at Knowle House in Kent. This ringing as a form of exercise evolved into gyms and modern dumb bells that athletes use today, as the Historian Adam Hart Davies explains in his TV programme, What the Stuarts did for us⁸.

Many of the 'methods' that were rung at the time are recorded in the first ever book on change-ringing *Titinnalogia*, written by Richard Duckworth and published by Fabian Stedman in 1668. Both were members of the Society of College Youths, one of several early groups of change-ringers, in London.



Titinnalogia, the first book on change ringing - 1668⁹

⁸ [What the Stuarts Did for Us - Wikipedia](#)

⁹ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Tintinnalogia - Duckworth - Stedman](#)

On page 2 of his book, Duckworth explains that “...in these fifty to sixty years left past, Changes were not known, or thought possible to be Rang: Then were invented the sixes, being the very ground of a six score: Then the Twenty and the Twenty-Four, with several other changes. But ‘Cambridge forty eight, for many years was the greatest peal that was Rang or invented; but now neither Forty-eight nor a Hundred, nor Seven hundred and twenty can confine us; for we can ring changes ad-infinitum...”¹⁰ These early sets of changes took place on alternate strokes, similar today to what we know as ‘call changes’ with just one pair of bells swapping places at a time.

The six

1 2 3
 2 1 3
 2 3 1
 3 2 1
 3 1 2
 1 3 2
1 2 3

The Twenty Four

1 2 3 4
 2 1 3 4
 2 3 1 4
 2 3 4 1
 3 2 4 1
 3 2 1 4
 3 1 2 4
 1 3 2 4
1 3 4 2
 3 1 4 2
 3 4 1 2
 3 4 2 1
 4 3 2 1
 4 3 1 2
 4 1 3 2
 1 4 3 2
1 4 2 3
 4 1 2 3
 4 2 1 3
 4 2 3 1
 2 4 3 1
 2 4 1 3
 2 1 4 3
 1 2 4 3
1 2 3 4

The Twenty

1 2 3 4 5
 2 1 3 4 5
 2 3 1 4 5
 2 3 4 1 5
2 3 4 5 1
 3 2 4 5 1
 3 4 2 5 1
 3 4 5 2 1
3 4 5 1 2
 4 3 5 1 2
 4 5 3 1 2
 4 5 1 3 2
4 5 1 2 3
 5 4 1 2 3
 5 1 4 2 3
 5 1 2 4 3
 5 1 5 2 3
 5 1 2 4 3
5 1 2 3 4
 1 5 2 3 4
 1 2 5 3 4
 1 2 3 5 4
1 2 3 4 5

Tintinnalugia contains a number of other single change methods, and then progresses on to double change methods where two pairs of bells swap places simultaneously, what we know today as ‘Doubles’ methods. Most of the early methods in the book are on five and six bells, although at there is mention at the end of the book of changes on eight bells, which was the extent of what was rung at the time. The book contains the figures for Grandsire and Plain Bob, which are what new ringers still learn first today.

Stedman went on to publish his own book Campanalogia¹¹ in 1677. It is interesting to note that changes were not made as frequently as today, when changes are typically made each stroke at the rate of 24 rows per minute. However, based on the comment in Stedman’s Campanologia page 4, in the early years each row was repeated twice, at a tempo of “720 changes every hour”, i.e. 12 rows per minute, This

¹⁰ [The Cambridge 48 – an early 17th century composition – Simon Chadwick](#)

¹¹ [Campanalogia: or the art of ringing ... 1677 : Stedman, Fabian. : Free Download: Internet Archive](#)

probably reflects how early ringing transitioned from something akin to call-changes into scientific change-ringing.

Tintinalogia and subsequent books led to a great expansion of scientific change ringing during the 17th and 18th centuries, with increasing numbers of rings of six and eight bells, and a few rings of ten and even twelve bells hung to enable change-ringing to take place on higher numbers of bells.

There was much rivalry and competition to ring all the possible changes on seven bells – 5,040 different permutations. The first band known to achieve this feat were the band at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich on May 2nd 1715. Other bands may have achieved this feat earlier, but there are no surviving records. A fine tablet in the ringing room at St Peter Mancroft records this performance.



The board at St Peter Mancroft in Norwich recording the 1715 peal.

Within a decade, the society of College Youths in London had rung the first peal on 12 bells, 5,060 Changes of Grandsire Cinques, with five pairs of bells changing simultaneously, at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London.

In subsequent decades and centuries, many other bands up and down the country were ringing peals of 5,040 or more changes, and in increasingly complex methods. Today peals have even been rung on the fourteen bells at Winchester Cathedral, and peals have also been rung on the several rings of sixteen bells in the UK and overseas.

Early ringing societies

Various groups of ringers had sprung up to practice scientific change ringing. One, the Ancient Society of College Youths was formed in 1637¹² and still exists today, practising regularly at various churches and St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London.

The Antient Society of St Stephens Ringers¹³ was established in Bristol before 1620. Their historian, John Latimer, has written that the society had probably been a pre-Reformation guild for religious, benevolent and social purposes. However, the society no longer rings bells and today they are more of a Livery Company for businessmen.

Between 1733 and 1735 the Rambling Ringers Club¹⁴ operated in London, with the objective of ringing at fifty of the lesser rings of bells in the City of London and the area covered by the "Bills of Mortality". They would meet to ring, at a different tower each time if possible - the first was St Benet Fink. Then they would eat and drink together. They sometimes went out into the surrounding countryside, which nowadays are suburbs such as Camberwell, Merton and Walthamstow. Sometimes things went well, sometimes they didn't and there were scrapes, in and out of the tower - everything is recorded in the founder William Laughton's diaries, up to the fiftieth meeting on Saturday 8th March 1735, when the Club was dissolved. These diaries are now held in the City of London archives.

From these diaries we also know what change ringing methods the Rambling Ringers rang:

- On five bells, Grandsire, Old Doubles, New Doubles, "Simonds" (St Simon's) and Cambridge Delight.
- On six bells, College Single, Plain Bob, "Court Bob" (Double Court), Oxford Treble Bob, and Morning Exercise.
- On seven bells Grandsire Triples,
- On eight bells Bob Major, and "Union Bob", the name given to Oxford Treble Bob when first pealed by the Union Scholars.

They rang whole "peals", or extents, on five and six bells (120's of Doubles and 720's of Minor), whilst for longer touches on eight the lengths chosen were 1,008 and 1,680, changes.

The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths¹⁵ is another still active bell-ringing society, based in London. Little is known for certain of its history prior to 1747, when it is said to have changed its name in honour of the Duke of Cumberland, and his bloody suppression of the Jacobite rising of 1745. This was at the battle of Culloden, which was part of an attempt to restore a Catholic King to the throne.

¹² [Ancient Society of College Youths \(ascy.org.uk\)](http://ascy.org.uk)

¹³ [The Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers \(ststephensringers.co.uk\)](http://ststephensringers.co.uk)

¹⁴ [Essay for the Friends No 22 \(cccbr.org.uk\)](http://cccbr.org.uk)

¹⁵ [Society of Royal Cumberland Youths - Welcome \(srcy.org.uk\)](http://srcy.org.uk)



The Rambling Ringers Club, Nov 29th 1733.

1.4. Prize ringing

In the eighteenth century, bell ringing had spread quite widely and there was considerable rivalry between town and village bands. Many bell ringing competitions were held, with prizes such as hats and scarves donated by the local publicans or squires. Advertisements for these competitions were usually published in local newspapers. Although change-ringing had been practiced since the early 1600's, this was not universal, and in some parts of the country, such as Hampshire, these competitions were for ringing rounds, rather than methods. The following newspaper extracts¹⁶ are part of a collection assembled by the Central Council of Church Bellringers.

This is to give NOTICE to all Gentlemen-Ringers,

THAT on Thursday the 3d of October next, will be Rung for at Basingstoke six very good Hats, by any six Men from one Parish, and every Sett of Men to have an Umpire, but no Townsman to stand as Umpire, and the Treble Man and Umpire are to draw Tickets every Peal, that no Fraud may be in the Case. Every Sett are [*sic*] to be at Mr. Henry Grace's (the Proprietor of the Hats) at the Rose near the Town-Brook in Basingstoke, in order to be ready to begin to Ring at One o'Clock. Every Set [*sic*] or Setts of Ringers are desir'd not to go to any other Publick-House, because they will not be permitted to ring for the Hats if they do. Any Setts that come within ten Faults of each other, shall Ring again any other Day, except Sundays.

Any Sett or Setts of Ringers that intend to have any thing dress'd for Dinner, are desir'd to give a Day's Notice to the said Mr. Grace, and it shall be done agreeable to their Order.
(*Reading Mercury: or, Weekly Post*, Mon. 9 September 1745 - advert)

¹⁶ [History & Archive \(ccbr.org.uk\)](http://History & Archive (ccbr.org.uk))

R I N G I N G.

THIS is to give Notice to all Gentlemen Ringers, that there will be rung for at Odiham in Hampshire, on Tuesday in the Whitsun Week, Six exceeding good Hats for any Company that rings the best Round Peal to continue twenty minutes. Also Six very good Pair of Gloves for the second best and Six very handsome Ribbands for the third best Peal. Each Company to bring an Umpire, and the umpire of each winning Company to be entitled to the same Prize as the Ringers. To be decided by the Majority of Umpires. Each Company that rings to subscribe six Shillings towards the Prizes before ringing.—A good Dinner will be provided at the Bell Inn where the Prizes will be given. Each Person that rings to pay a Shilling for his Dinner and the Umpire's. To dine at One o'Clock and begin ringing at Three. Fifteen Minutes allowed between each Peal. No Odiham Man will be permitted to ring or be an Umpire.

The Bells are free for Trials any Day before the Time.

(Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette, Mon 22 April 1776 – Advert)

R I N G I N G.

IN pursuance of an advertisement lately inserted in this paper, concerning Ringing at Odiham on Tuesday in the Whitsun week, mentioning that the several companies that ring were to subscribe towards the prizes, I beg leave to inform all ringers that please to favour me with their company on the above day, that the prizes will be given GRATIS, and equally as good as at first proposed.

By their most obedient servant,

J. WALTERS, BELL INN, ODIHAM.

, and Oxford Gazette, Mon. 6 May 1776 - advert)

(Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette, Mon 6th May 1776 – Advert)

R I N G I N G.

On Monday the 19th of July instant, will be given by William Cordery, at the Bell in Odiham, Hants, Seven very good HATS, to be rung for on a peal of six bells; six hats for the men who ring the best peal, and one for the umpire; the peal to continue for 15 minutes, and each set to provide an umpire.—No less than four sets will be allowed to ring; and no person to ring unless he dines at the ordinary, which will be on the table precisely at one o'clock, and to begin ringing at two. All ringers will be allowed trials on week days, and on Sundays after divine service; but no say peals on the day of ringing.—No Odiham man will be permitted to ring, or be an umpire.

(Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette, Mon 5th July 1779 - Advert)

A RINGING MATCH,
BETWEEN Barton-Stacey and Baughurst in the county of Hants, for Five Guineas a side. To ring a round peal on five bells, ten minutes long, at each place. The Barton-Stacey men to ring at Baughurst on Monday the 16th of November instant, and the Baughurst men to ring at Barton Stacey on Saturday the 28th of November instant.
 A dinner at the New Inn at Baughurst at one o'clock, and the men to ring before dinner; also a dinner at Mr. Spratt's, at Barton-Stacey, on the 28th at one o'clock.

(Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette, Mon 9 Nov 1789 – Advert

In addition to the prizes for the ringers, there is also evidence that a considerable amount of betting took place. Not only would teams place wagers between themselves, but large crowds would come to listen and to place wagers. Although we have been unable to find any evidence of this happening in Hampshire, the following two examples are from Norwich and Shrewsbury. The Central Council's history website contains other examples.

On Wednesday last there was a Wager of 10£. Rung for at Bunwell, between the Ringers of Bunwell and the Ringers of Carleton, which was won by the former with great Odds; and notwithstanding the great Concourse of People that appeared on each Side, and a great many Wagers laid, there was not the least Disorder.

(Advert in Norwich Gazette, Sat. 17 Nov. 1733)¹⁷

On Thursday morning, being the last day of the old year, was rung at St. Chad's Church a complete peal of grandsire Tripples, consisting of five thousand and forty changes, which was performed in three hours and three minuets [sic], and never rung at the said Church before; many wagers were depending on the occasion, on account of the great weight of the mettal, but was done with the greatest of ease, by the Society of the said Church.

(Shrewsbury Chronicle, Sat. 2 Jan. 1773)¹⁸

In researching other examples, you need to note at this point in time the term 'peal' refers to the maximum number different changes possible on the number of bells involved in changing e.g.

Five bells (doubles) 120 changes (sometimes rung on six bells, with the sixth bell not changing).

Six Bells (minor) 720 changes

Seven Bells (Triples) 5,040 changes (usually rung on eight bells, with the eighth bell not changing).

When accounts talk of the 'truth' of a peal, they mean that every row should be different. At this time the ringers did not have the aid of computers, so some form of mathematical proof was required. This often led to arguments.

¹⁷ [From the St \(cccbr.org.uk\)](http://cccbr.org.uk)

¹⁸ [1770 – 1779 \(cccbr.org.uk\)](http://cccbr.org.uk)

The Victorian reforms led to a standardisation of terminology, and the term peal was subsequently used to describe performances of more than 5,000 changes (5,040 of triples). The tradition of prize ringing was also frowned on by the Victorian belfry reformers, although rounds and call-change competition ringing has survived in Devon¹⁹²⁰ and Cornwall²¹ to the present day, although without the same prizes, any gambling, or the requirement to dine at the local pub!

1.5. Paid civic ringing

Throughout the 18th century and the much of the 19th century bellringers played an important part in civic life. Gareth Davies has conducted extensive PhD research into the roles that bellringers played in Cambridge during this period and there is an interesting podcast interview with him about his research²²,

In addition to recreational ringing, there is much evidence of the civic roles that the ringers played, and the support that they received from the local community happening all over the country. This part of Hampshire was no exception. As Gareth explains in his podcast, although small by today's values, at the time they were significant sums of money.

Payments to New Alresford bellringers

At New Alresford from about 1768 there are comprehensive records in the churchwarden's accounts showing there must have been an active band of ringers. There are entries for five ringing days, one for £1/17s/6d occurring annually and for entries such as mending belfry door key 6d.

In 1783-4 there are entries of cash paid to:

Stephen Fowler	One ringing day	7/6d
Richard Freeman	One ringing day	7/6d
Tho Taylor	One ringing day	7/6d
Tho Weston	One ringing day	7/6d
Widow Curtis	One ringing day	7/6d

In 1784-5 there are entries of cash paid to:

Peter Loft	One ringing day	7/6d
F Houghton	One ringing day	7/6d
Tho Taylor	One ringing day	7/6d
Jno Beazley	One ringing day	7/6d
Richard Boxall	One ringing day	7/6d

An entry for 23rd March 1789 states the bells rang for the whole day to celebrate King George III's late happy recovery.

Furthermore in 1803 7/6d was paid for one ringing day when the King passed through the town. However, by 1808-9 the Churchwardens accounts show payment for the five ringing days for the last time. Perhaps the six bells were becoming unringable. At a vestry meeting on the 20th of November

¹⁹ [Ringing differently in Devon | Fun with Bells - a podcast about bell ringing](#)

²⁰ [Devon Association of Ringers – The Art of Call Change Ringing \(devonbells.co.uk\)](#)

²¹ [Cornish call change compositions | Fun with Bells - a podcast about bell ringing](#)

²² [Remarkable PHD study of Cambridge bellringers' pay and habits | Fun with Bells - a podcast about bell ringing](#)

1810 it was decided to take down the six old bells and recast them to make a ring of eight and to install a clock. This was financed by public subscription.

When the new bells were put in, payments for ringing increased considerably to £5 per annum. In 1818 it was resolved that ringers would be paid 10/6d per ringing day.

Whilst the ringers were being paid, the cost of the new ring had not been met fully. The vestry meeting of 30th of April 1820 had to consider the best method of repaying the debt of £150 with five years interest thereon from the parish to James Redmond and William Keen churchwardens. 'It was resolved that the said debt shall be liquidated and paid by the present church wardens and their successors out of the rates to be made and collected on the parish by instalments of £50 every successive year until the whole sum was discharged.

In 1821 J Pewsey was paid £5/11/0d for ringing days

W Pewsey and J Harvey were both ringers and churchwardens. In 1836 the Corporation [later to be the Bailiff and Burgesses and then the Town Trustees] gave the ringers a dinner at the Horse and Groom and a voluntary contribution. This dinner and contribution continued to be an annual event.

In 1886 the bells were reported to go 'in an unsatisfactory manner'. However, the bells obviously continued to be rung and there are records of payments of 10/6 to the bellringers and the Town Trustees continued to host an annual dinner and give a contribution for ringing for public occasions.

According to a report in the Hants and Berks Gazette, on 1st January 1886 the Old Alresford ringers joined in the feast at the Sun Inn and the local bench granted an extension of time until 1:00am. This was remarked upon by the teetotal neighbours - This report needs to be read in the light of what was happening in society at that time, especially with the activities of the Temperance movement.

<p>Alresford: Our Ringers: Under the chairmanship of Mr F. C. Batchelor the ringers of our musical peal in the tower of St John the Baptist and St Mary held their annual feast at The Sun Inn, on the 1st instant. In response to an application from Host Spary, our local bench granted an extension of time until one am - an incident that doubtless our teetotal neighbours will not be slow to utilise as illustrative of their allegation re the ideal association of "Church and Beer". Well, let it be so; and may the difference of opinion never alter friendship. The time was ample, the supper did the landlord and landlady credit; the room was full, the best of orders was preserved, and the occasion altogether a most jolly one.</p>	<p>Song, sentiment, and sobriety, were the prevailing trinity. A few toasts were drunk, viz. "The Old Alresford and the New Alresford ringers; may the bells never be silent for the want of men to pull the ropes;" "The health of the landlord and his wife," who were praised for their endeavors to gratify their guests. The chairman's complimentary motion was acknowledged and replied to by the landlord. "The health of the chairman" was received in the way so characteristic of such "jolly dogs" and the sentiment was reciprocated by the chairman. As is customary here and at Old Alresford, a muffled peal was rung as the old year departed, and its successor was welcomed by "the sweet music of the bells".</p>
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From the Hants and Berks Gazette – Saturday January 9th 1886

The Town Trustees held a meeting in October 1893 which noted that the bell ringers had formerly been supported by an annual contribution from the funds of the late corporation, and they had since 1824 held an annual dinner at the Horse and Groom. It was felt that lack of support might result in a reduction in the number of ringers. It was decided to make payment for ringing on public occasions, and for the maintenance and hoisting of the town flag on the church tower.

One of the paid ringing days would have been for ringing in the new year. From 1837 to 1906 James Sait and William Hall rang a midnight peal each January the first. This is commemorated on a board in the church porch. There are records that James Sait was still ringing in 1913, also that in 1889 J Sait was paid a year's salary of £6/0/0d.

Winchester cathedral

Right up to the present day the Winchester Cathedral ringers are paid to ring the Cathedral bells on certain specific days, although today the amount is very small. Colin Cook's Thesis gives an example of the paid ringing days in 1912:

1912	Activity
6 February	for the arrival of the judges
21 April	on news of the Titanic sinking (voluntary)
6 May	the anniversary of George V's Accession,
14 May	for the annual Festival of Natives and Aliens (the Winchester society whose monument at Westgate records the help given to its widows and orphans after the plague hit the city in 1666),
20 May	special ring of 1259 changes Grandsire Caters (a quarter peal) to mark the 70 th birthday of Dennis Froome (vice-captain and knell ringer for some 30 years – (cover)
26 May	Queen Mary's birthday
3 June	George V's birthday
13 June	Opening of the Assizes
22 June	Coronation Day [anniversary]
23 June	Prince of Wales' birthday [the future Edward VIII]
14 July	Special ring in thanksgiving for the preservation of the Cathedral [on completion of the underpinning work in which the diver, William Walker, played a prominent role]
15 July	St Swithun's Day – for the special thanksgiving service in the presence of King George V and Queen Mary (Fig.21) – ringing at 7am, 1.30pm, and 5pm
14 October	Knell for Dean of Durham (Dean Kitchin, formerly Dean of Winchester) ⁷²
8 November	Opening of the Assizes
1 December	Queen Alexandra's birthday [widow of Edward VII]
25 December	Christmas Day
31 December	New Year's Eve

Figure 22: Extract of special ringing for which additional payments were made
Source: WCL, Belfry Book 1911-1922.

1.6. Folk culture

Bell ringing naturally found its way into the culture of the time. For example the expression ‘ringing the changes’. There is also the nursery rhyme²³

***Oranges and Lemons
Say the bells of St. Clement's
You owe me five farthings
Say the bells of St. Martin's
When will you pay me?
Say the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Say the bells of Shoreditch
And when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney
Oh, I do not know
Say the great bells of Bow
Here comes a candle
To light you to bed
And here comes a chopper
To chop off your head***

Oranges and lemons were more than just a popular choice for the locals of 18th-century London — they were a testament to the booming global trade networks and a rapidly evolving economy.

During this period, Britain's trade routes had extended farther than ever before, bringing in a bounty of citrus fruits through routes grounded in lands as distant as sunny Spain and the coastal stretches of Portugal.

Oranges and lemons were not just symbols of economic prosperity but were coveted for their health benefits, adding a burst of vibrancy and nourishment to the daily lives of the Londoners.

West Gallery music

The term "west gallery music" derives from the wooden galleries which in the 18th century were constructed at the west end of churches, and from which gallery the choir would perform.

West Gallery music²⁴ has its origins in the early 1700s, with the formation of amateur choirs, which were initially male. The Puritans had removed many of the trappings of Catholicism including the removal of organs from churches. From the mid-1700s, we see the presence of an accompanying bass instrument and later a small band commonly consisting of instruments such as flutes, clarinets, bassoons, cellos, violins and even handbells.

Victorian reformers disapproved of the Georgian galleries, and most, like that at Ropley, were removed during restorations in the 19th century. Use of west gallery music in the Church dwindled due to the Victorian Oxford movement, who removed the galleries in their church restorations.

Like the ringers, the old church bands were often difficult for a vicar to control, whilst influence over an organist was a much easier task. Such an ousting of the church band by an organist is given a fictional treatment in Thomas Hardy's early novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which reflected actual events at Hardy's church at Stinsford.

²³ [The Brutal Truth of Oranges and Lemons Say the Bells of St Clement's \(hangerlondon.com\)](http://hangerlondon.com)

²⁴ West Gallery Music Association - Home Page

1.7. The Oxford movement and belfry reform

The Oxford Movement was a movement of high church members of the Church of England which began in the 1830s and eventually developed into Anglo-Catholicism. The movement, whose original devotees were mostly associated with the University of Oxford, argued for the reinstatement of some of the older catholic traditions of faith, and their inclusion into Anglican liturgy and theology.

The movement's philosophy was known as Tractarianism after a series of publications, the Tracts for the Times, published from 1833 to 1841. Many well-known Tractarians were fellows of Oriel College, Oxford, including John Henry Newman (later Cardinal Newman) and John Keble, (Keeble College, Oxford is named after him)

The influence of Rev Henry T Ellacombe

Henry Thomas Ellicombe (then with an "i") was born in Alphington, Devon, on 15th May 1790, second son of Rev. William Ellicombe, the Rector, and his wife, Hannah. Henry grew up in Alphington Rectory, and graduated from Oriel College, Oxford, in 1812. For a few years, he studied engineering under Sir Marc Isambard Brunel (father of the more famous Isambard K. Brunel), but, called to the Anglican ministry, he returned to Oxford to prepare for ordination. After a brief assignment as curate of Cricklade, he became curate at Bitton, Gloucestershire, in 1817, and, progressing to vicar, was to stay in the parish until 1850. Around this time, he changed the spelling of his name to "Ellacombe", which he felt more accurately represented the original family name.

We don't know where or when he learned change ringing - maybe as a young man at Oxford - but he was definitely a ringer of sorts. In a letter he wrote in 1864 quoted in the fourth edition of Practical Remarks ... (p.58), he says "... I speak from experience for I generally ring once a week".

Although not an accomplished change ringer, he was elected to the Ancient Society of College Youths in 1861. Whatever his ability as a practical ringer, he had a keen antiquarian interest in bells, and combined this with the grounding in engineering acquired in his youth from Marc Brunel.

Henry was an enthusiastic supporter of the Oxford movement, whose aims included the expulsion of all secular activity from the church building. It's clear that when he arrived at Bitton, he found the ringers to be an uncouth body of men, and he seems to have had some success winning them over to 'the path of righteousness'. Such was the disconnect between ringing and worship, that one of his achievements was to get the ringers to agree not to ring at all on Sundays, on the understanding they could have two practice nights in the week!

His early experiences of the ringers at Bitton seem to have coloured his view of ringing generally, and in publishing Practical Remarks on Belfries and Ringers in 1849 he became the leading promoter of "Belfry reform" - the process by which change ringing was absorbed into Anglican worship. The book was reprinted several times.

Perhaps more than any other individual, Ellacombe was a driving force in the transformation of change ringing from a secular sport to a part of Anglican worship which took place in the second half of the 19th century. A significant influence on Ellacombe's thinking seems to have been the 1804 work, the non-conformist Samuel Beaufoy's 'The Ringer's True Guide'²⁵, which Ellacombe had reprinted in 1857. Similar thinking is in evidence in Walter Blunt's 'The Use and Abuse of Church Bells', of 1846²⁶.

²⁵ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Beaufoy - The Ringer's True Guide](#)

²⁶ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Blunt - The Use and Abuse of Church Bells](#)

“Raised in a country Parsonage, and close to a ring of eight bells, as musical and as well rung [unscientifically] as any in the kingdom, it has been my lot from childhood to have seen much of the practises in a country belfry. They had better, I grieve to say, be passed over in silence: for such things as I remember to have seen and heard would hardly be tolerated in a village alehouse: and yet the Ringers were considered respectable, honest men in their way, and the honour - many of them - of being the ringers of the cathedral band in the adjoining city, where 15 men were required: and it was a well-known fact that, as a body, a more drunken set of fellows could not be found. It is painful to me even to allude to such ungodly practises: I mentioned the fact, in the hope that it may perhaps call the attention of those in authority to this crying evil, which exists more or less in every parish and belfry in England; for I fear it may be too truly said, “Ex uno disce omnes” and how dreadful it is to think of such conduct in a church, if per chance [as formerly no doubt was universally the case] the ropes hang time, and what improvement has been introduced among them.

When first I went to the parish of Bitton - July 1817 - scarcely one of the six ringers attended the services of the church: I used to see them on a Sunday, waiting in the churchyard till the service was over; and then, almost before every person had left the holy place, they would strike out a merry peal. This was the state of things which could not be suffered to continue, and therefore at once I did what I could in the way of talking and reasoning with them; and at last I was obliged to make a rule that unless they came to pray they should not be allowed to ring. For a time this gave great defence; but I remained firm, and at last the man who was most outrageous confessed to me that my view of the matter was right.

In the course of time the old ringers dropped off, and others, self-appointed succeeded; And very soon, by their own consent and proposal, I obtained the custody of the keys of the tower. Before that, the Ringers had uncontrolled admission to the belfry when they pleased, and for what purpose they pleased; but ever since, the keys have been kept at the Vicarage.

It is long been the practice - and a very common one it is in country villages - to ring a peal or two on Sunday mornings, sometimes before and sometimes after breakfast; but I observed that the ringers seldom came to church afterwards; and therefore, except on festival days, I at once prohibited all ringing before morning service....”

Extract from Practical remarks on belfries and Ringers fourth edition by Rev H T Ellacombe

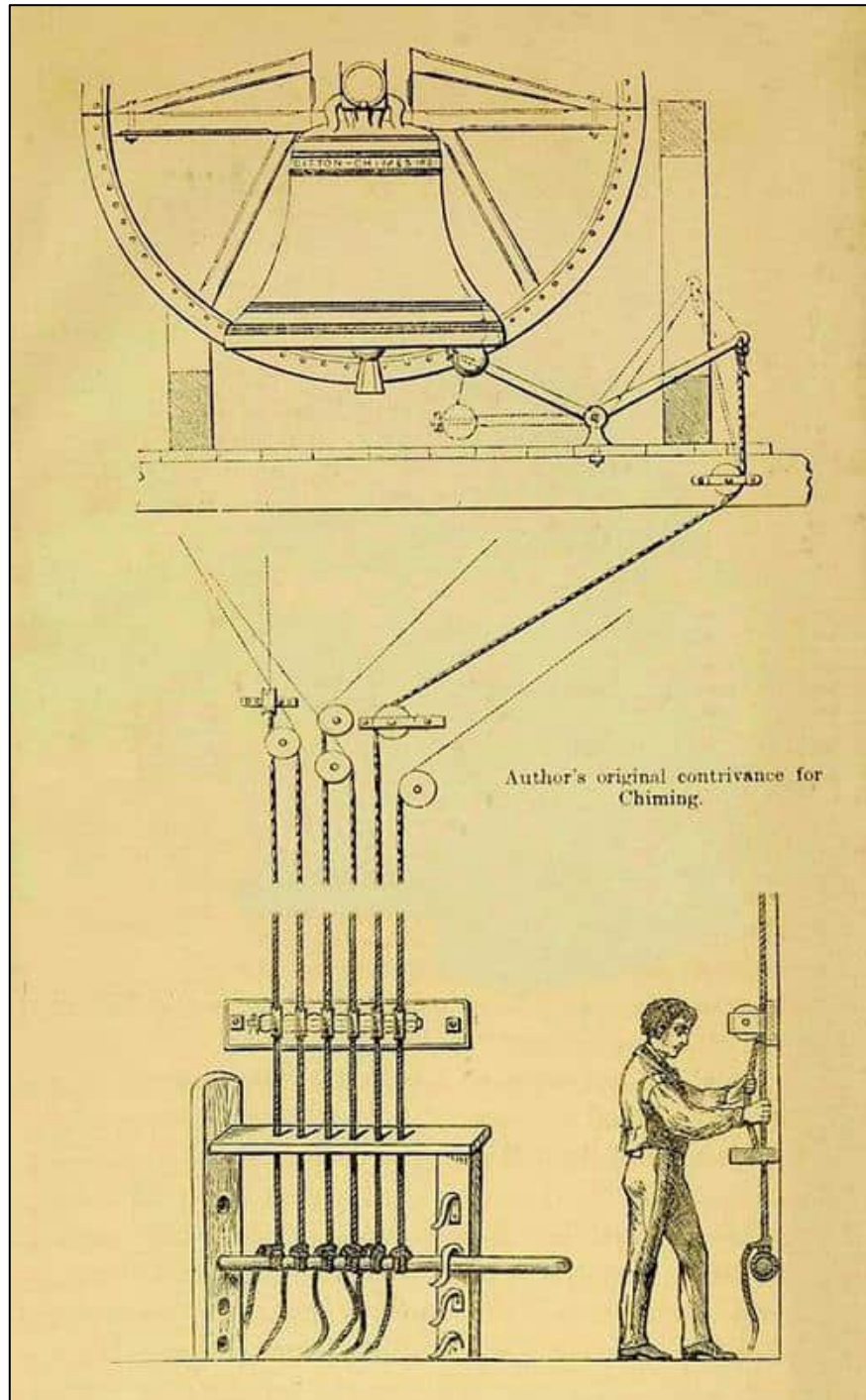
From 1871 *Church Bells*, a general church newspaper, contained a regular column devoted to bells and bell ringing, edited by the Revd H T Ellacombe. This column included reports of restorations and augmentations, peals and other ringing performances, instructional material, and historical articles. Being a strong advocate of belfry reform, Ellacombe made good use of his column for this.

It is interesting to note that in this book, Ellacombe makes reference to ‘unscientific’ ringing. Today in Devon and Cornwall, competitions still take place but without the prizes that were once common. These competitions include raising and lowering the bells in peal and to ring ‘call-changes’ a simpler form of change ringing where the conductor calls out each change. Change-ringing of the type that was developed elsewhere from the 1600’s onwards is referred to in Devon and Cornwall as ‘scientific’ change-ringing.

The Ellacombe chiming apparatus.

One of Ellacombe's achievements was to invent the Ellacombe Chiming Apparatus by which "...a number of bells could all be chimed by one man, saving the need for six or eight ringers!..." Ellacombe did not want un-holy men ringing the bells in his church on Sunday, so given his engineering experience, he devised an apparatus where the bells remained stationary and were hit with external hammers and 'chimed'. There are drawings of the apparatus in his book.

Many examples survive in towers to the present day, although rarely in use. There is scarcely a copy of Church Bells or Bell News through the 1880s which does not carry at least three adverts by sundry bell hangers touting to install "Mr Ellacombe's chiming apparatus



Ringers rules

In his book Practical Remarks for Belfries and Ringers²⁷ Ellacombe published a set of 29 rules that he devised for his ringers at Bitton. Rules referred to appointing a treasurer who will hold all monies generated by the ringing of the bells, and a system of forfeits and fines if any of the ringers failed to attend on time or contravene any of the other ringers' rules. At the end of the year the monies were shared out amongst the band.

The first rule, and chief of all, was that the ringers resolved to be a respectable body of men and they should not desire to take into their company any who are of low life and character, idle, drunken fellows or Sabbath breakers. The ringers were required to acknowledge that the belfry was part of the church and that the ringers being officers of that church, should be of a good character, and that is what they should endeavour to promote.

There was to be no ringing on Sundays. The ringing days were to be the Queen's Birthday, the 5th of November, and if these days fall on a Sunday, then the ringing was to be done on the Monday following. Also on Christmas Day, Easter day, Ascension day or Holy Thursday and Whitsunday, New Year's Eve and New Year's morning.

As a body the ringers were required to agree not to spend their money in drinking, but every ringer having received their share shall be at liberty to do with it what they please.

On Christmas day morning, Easter day and Whit Sunday the ringers shall, if possible, attend the services of the church, in proper time, and if anyone is late or absent, they shall forfeit their share of the money.

If any ringer should disgrace himself by being drunk on a ringing day, or in the belfry, they shall also suffer a forfeit, and also be in danger of being turned out of the band. If any member of the band is guilty of fighting, quarrelling, swearing, drinking or smoking in the belfry they shall also suffer a forfeit. The ringers were also prohibited from ringing the bells for any political matters such as elections, lawsuits or trials and such like, nor for any clandestine or runaway marriages, marriages elsewhere than at the church, nor for prizes, nor for any unusual or special purposes without first obtaining the consent of the minister and one churchwarden.

Lastly the ringers were agreed required to agree to endeavour as much as possible to be good Christians at all times, and regularly attend the services of the church.

There are many examples still in existence of similar rules being adopted by local bands. Such as the rules adopted by the band at Tichborne.

²⁷ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Ellacombe - Practical Remarks](#)

RULES OF The S. Andrew's Tichborne Ringers Association.

1. Any person desiring to become a member must be proposed, and seconded, and elected by a majority of two-thirds of the Association. He must also pay 6^s to the funds.
2. On Monday and Thursday nights there shall be practise. Younger members are to ring on Thursdays.
3. Every Member is to pay 1^s a week, and will be fined 2^s if he does not appear on Mondays before 7 p.m. from Nov: 1st to March 31st; 3 before 8 p.m. for the rest of the year.
4. The call-bell is to be rung $\frac{1}{2}$ of an hour before Practise. Ringing to cease during Winter Months at 8:30 p.m. during Summer Months at 9 p.m.
5. Any person misconducting himself by using bad language, swearing &c; shall be fined 1^s; if by being drunk he shall be fined 6^s and removed from the Belfry.
6. There shall be no smoking, or drinking in the Belfry.
7. All fines and monies shall be paid to the Treasurer, who shall provide lights, and other things which Members think needful, he shall also keep a book in which the accounts are to be kept.
8. Any member not paying his fines in two Months, to be crossed off the list.
9. The Treasurer's accounts shall be audited yearly.
10. Easter-Day, Christmas Day, or any Sunday appointed for ringing Members not attending will be fined 2^s. This rule also applies in special cases.
11. There shall be no practise, if any Parishioner is lying dead in the village, or in Holy Weeks.

EASTER 1861.

PRESIDENT.

HON: SECRETARY.

N.B. MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT THE BELFRY IS A PART OF THE BUILDING
CONSECRATED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Ringers rules – St Andrew's Tichborne

The temperance movement

The temperance movement in the United Kingdom was a social movement that campaigned against the recreational use and sale of alcohol, and promoted total abstinence (teetotalism). In the 19th century high levels of alcohol consumption and drunkenness were seen by social reformers as a danger to society's wellbeing, leading to social issues such as poverty, child neglect, immorality and economic decline.

Temperance societies began to be formed in the 1830s to campaign against alcohol. Most of these temperance groups were aimed at the working class. Temperance was also supported by some religious groups, especially nonconformists.

In 1864 the Salvation Army was founded in London with a heavy emphasis on abstinence from alcohol and ministering to the working class. The Church of England Temperance Society, which had roots in the Anglo-Catholic tradition was founded in 1862 by Henry Ellison. Its volunteers within the court system would lead to the first probation service.

The temperance movement failed to impose national prohibition, and disappeared as a significant force following the Second World War.

The formation of Diocesan Guilds and Associations of ringers

The belfry reformers promoted change ringing, which they felt would improve the moral tone of ringers, and formed Diocesan ringing societies so that ringers in different towers could meet other. Many of our current Guilds and Associations of ringers date from the latter half of the 19th century.

The Guild of Devonshire Ringers was founded by Rev Ellacombe in 1874 and was the first territorial Guild or Association to do so. The Winchester Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers was formed soon afterwards in 1879. Of the seven towers whose fifty-two members inaugurated the Guild, Winchester Cathedral's band accounted for seventeen of these, led by its captain, William Masters who was a teetotaler. There were many more churches in the Winchester Diocese that had ringable peals of bells, but the limited number of founding towers demonstrates that support for these reforms was not widespread that time.

The Victorian period was also a time that many churches were reordered to accommodate changing patterns of worship. West galleries to accommodate their choirs were often removed, and organs installed. By 1895 the whole church at New Alresford was in need of major repair and so Sir Arthur Blomfield was employed as the architect for a total rebuild. The tower remained standing, untouched by the works although the bells were re hung with new fittings, the frame strengthened and the bells quarter turned at a cost of £142/10s

The opening peal on the re-hung bells was of Kent Treble Bob Major on 22nd December 1897. There is a fascinating account of this peal which can be found in the Bell News and Ringers Record of 1st January 1898. The peal was rung in a free standing tower. The church had been demolished with its walls just six feet high.

At the dinner in the Swan that evening, hosted by the Rector, the local ringers were encouraged to join the Winchester Diocesan Guild.

ALRESFORD, HANTS.

"Can you make one for Treble Bob at Alresford, on December 22nd, to re-open the bells? Rector will entertain at dinner and pay expenses." Thus ran a post-card from friend Whiting of Fareham, and as it seemed a request distinctly out of the usual run of applications at this season of the year, a reply in the affirmative was soon despatched.

The date having duly arrived Alresford Station was reached, and the way to the Church enquired for: "Down there and you will see the tower." This sounded strange, but was soon literally explained, for there was only the tower standing—the church having been pulled down and only advanced 6 or 8 feet in the rebuilding. Shortly after, the rest of the band having arrived, a move was made to the isolated tower, and, after a trial course, the peal was duly started, and settling down to the tower-man's time successfully brought to a completion. The Rector (Rev. A. A. Headley) was one of the first to congratulate the band, and suggested a wash and brush-up at The Swan, in readiness for dinner. To the surprise and gratification of the visitors they found themselves the guests at a public dinner at which over fifty gentlemen were present. The dinner was a most substantial one, and served in the style for which The Swan is so justly famed.

After the customary loyal toasts had been honoured in the usual hearty manner, the rector spoke on the events of the day, and said that having been curate at Fareham some twelve or fourteen years ago when they had increased their bells, he became acquainted with Mr. Whiting and the other Fareham ringers, and naturally turned to them when it was decided to have a public re-opening of the Alresford bells. Pointing to two large old-fashioned peal-tablets which had been carefully brought from the tower before the work of restoration began, the rev. gentleman remarked that one peal was dated 1824 and the other 1837, and it was felt that it would be very appropriate to finish up their Jubilee rejoicings with another peal, which he was very pleased indeed had been accomplished.

In responding for the visitors, Mr. H. White laid great stress on the work of the Winchester Diocesan Guild, and urged the Alresford men to become members when qualified, and as his remarks were received with much applause, it is hoped that a strong branch of the Guild will be found in Alresford ere long.

As the trains left very early at Alresford station, the rector had provided a pair-horse covered brake for the nine-mile drive to Winchester, which was reached in good time, and the visitors had the additional pleasure of meeting Mr. W. H. George and others of the Cathedral band. The band take this opportunity of recording their thanks to the rector and bell committee for their hearty Hampshire welcome, and one and all of the band expressed their confident opinion that it was the record opening with which they had ever had anything to do. The band comprised representatives from Fareham, Basingstoke, Guildford, Wickham, and Mr. Lawrence, of Messrs. Mears and Stainbank, that firm having made a most satisfactory job, each bell being quarter-turned, and all new fittings supplied. J. J. J.

Published in the Bell News and Ringers Record – January 1st 1898

There is also record in the Bell News and Ringers Record of a quarterly meeting of the Winchester Diocesan Guild at New Alresford on Easter Monday 1898. At this time many Guilds and Associations were led by the clergy. The Master was the Rev R C M Harvey, who presided over the business meeting. Several other Clergy were also present. The account of the meeting includes a lengthy discussion about differences of opinion between members of certain bands of ringers and their Clergy.

THE WINCHESTER DIOCESAN GUILD.

QUARTERLY MEETING AT ALRESFORD, HANTS.

On Easter Monday the above Society met under favourable circumstances, and were cordially welcomed by the Rev. A. A. Headley, Rector of New Alresford. The bells (8) were set going early in the day, and various touches of Treble Bob Major, Stedman and Grandsire Triples were brought round. At 3.30 the Master, the Rev. R. C. M. Harvey, presided over the business meeting, which was held in the board school, some twenty-five members being present, including the veteran Mr. J. Hewett, Rev. F. Whyley (Vicar of Alton), Rev. H. Wheat (Titchfield), the Rector of New Alresford, and the Hon. Secretary, the Rev. C. E. Matthews. The minutes of the last quarterly meeting were read and passed on the proposition of Mr. W. H. George, seconded by Mr. J. W. Whiting. The election of new members then followed; C. E. Radclyffe, Esq., of Little Park, Wickham, life member, and twenty performing members being added to the list. These latter belong to the following bands: Portsea, Capel, Oakley, York Town, Farnham, Hawley and Christchurch.

The Hon. Secretary then mentioned a difference which had occurred between the ringers of a certain band affiliated to the Guild and their Vicar. He desired to test the feeling of the meeting on the point, as two or three other similar cases had occurred in recent years, and he did not wish to feel that he was solely responsible for their settlement. It was a difficult matter always, and he had written to advise the ringers to settle their differences as loyally as they could. With one exception they had all returned to their duties. So far as he was aware, the only manner in which conduct of this sort could be dealt with was by placing the names of such ringers upon the unattached list, thereby detaching them from their own tower. He had framed a motion which he would read: but he would leave it entirely in the hands of the meeting to say whether it would be advisable to add it as a new rule or not. The motion was "That the committee have full power to summarily deal with members or band in cases reported from incumbents."

Mr. J. J. Jones (Guildford) said that the rules already provided for such cases, when the emergency arose.

Mr. W. H. George (Winchester) thought it would be unadvisable to have any hard and fast rule on such points.

Mr. E. J. Heathorn (Woolston) said that often these mistakes occurred from misunderstandings on both sides.

Messrs. White (Basingstoke), LeClercq (Farnham), and Whiting (Fareham) also spoke on the subject.

The Master thought it would not do to have a fixed rule on such a subject, but if the Vicar and ringers could not settle their differences, then the committee might be called in to arbitrate if desired to do so.

The Rev. F. Whyley (Alton) said he knew from a long experience that difficulties would arise from time to time. He thought that the Guild should not use any arbitrary power, but rather hear both sides. He knew that parsons made mistakes, and ringers also made mistakes, but he did not think the Guild would do any good by interfering. If a band was to be upset by one or two members, it was far better in the interests of all that such should retire. He always had the greatest respect for ringers as a body.

The Hon. Secretary then replied, and thanked the meeting for their expression of opinion, and the matter then dropped.

A letter was read from the Rev. C. P. Berryman, Vicar of York Town, suggesting Monday, July 4th, as a convenient date for the annual meeting. On the motion of Mr. M. Steer (Hawley), seconded by Mr. G. E. Chappell (Wickam), the above date was fixed *nem. con.* A small committee, consisting of the Master, Messrs. White, Whiting, Harper, Steer, with Mr. T. Fairry (churchwarden of York Town), and the Hon. Sec. was appointed to draw up the programme of arrangements for the annual festival.

Mr. H. White was appointed to audit the accounts of the Guild, on the motion of Mr. Whiting, seconded by Mr. J. Harper. A vote of thanks to the Rev. A. A. Headley for his kindness in welcoming the Guild to Alresford, to which he cordially replied, terminated the business of the meeting. Subsequently twenty-eight members sat down to an excellent tea, catered for by Mrs. Crook.

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Following the establishment of the Diocesan or County Guilds and Associations it was recognised that there was a need for a national body. In 1883 the eminent ringer, the Revd F.E. Robinson, advocated a National Association, but this did not gather much support,

However, the bell ringing aristocrat Sir Arthur P. Heywood contrived in 1890 to organise a dinner in Birmingham for the 80th birthday of the noted ringer Henry Johnson, to which representatives of ringing associations from around the country were invited to attend as a "national gathering". At the dinner he proposed a meeting of representatives from each association to discuss "matters of consequence". The first formal meeting of the new Council took place the following year on Easter Tuesday, 28 March 1891, at the Inns of Court Hotel, London.

Sir Arthur's wife was his cousin, Margaret Effie Sumner, daughter of the Reverend George Sumner, Rector of Old Alresford. Her mother, Mary Sumner, was the founder of the Mother's Union.

1.8. Women in the belfry

Historically, women played a subservient role to men in society. They were even excluded from voting in Great Britain under the Reform Act 1832 and the Municipal Corporations Act 1835. Belfries were no exception and ringers were almost exclusively male right up to later in the Victorian era.

In 1872 the fight for women's suffrage became a national movement with the formation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage.

Slowly at first women started to take up ringing. Alice White was born on October 8th 1880 and raised in Basingstoke, the daughter of Henry White, a 'well known ringer and instructor' of bell ringing. Alice would often accompany him to service ringing. When Alice (right) was 11 years old she learnt to ring bells full circle and progressed to ringing methods both on tower bells and also on hand bells. In 1895, Alice successfully rang a quarter peal of Grandsire triples and then on February 12th 1896, rang her first full peal of 5040 Grandsire Triples at St Michael's. This historic peal was the first to be rung by a lady anywhere in the world.



Things progressed from there onwards and on July 20th 1912 the first ever peal rung by a band of entirely of ladies was rung at Cubitt Town (Isle of Dogs) in London. Shortly afterwards the Ladies Guild of Bell Ringers was formed. A large plaque on the ringing room wall (left) at the Isle of Dogs records this achievement.

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, women took up ringing to keep the bells sounding when the male ringers went to the front. Longstock had a population of 413 in 1911; 212 men and 201 women. 75 of the men went to war.

A historic photo held by the Imperial War Museum shows four women training to be bell ringers during World War One in Longstock, Hampshire. Their teacher was The Rev'd Robert Houth (centre), vicar of Longstock.



Girls of Longstock village in Hampshire replacing the male bell ringers who joined the armed forces. They are assisting the local vicar in ringing the bells. Copyright: © IWM²⁸.

Prior to World War I, a handful of women had been elected to the Ancient Society of College Youths until, reflecting a post-war mood to reinstate men in their traditional roles, Mr A A Hughes proposed in 1919 that the word 'male' be inserted into its rules, thus precluding new women becoming members. The handful of women that had been elected prior to this continued to be welcomed at Society functions, the last surviving female member from this time, Elsie Hairs, attended Society dinners until the 1960s.

On 13th October 1998, members of the Ancient Society of College Youths finally voted by referendum to remove the word 'male' from its rules, thus breaking a 79-year tradition by allowing the election of women again. This development echoed changes in the socio-political landscape of the 1980s and 1990s, such as the ordination of women priests in 1994, the admittance of women to a growing number of the City of London Livery Companies, upon which the Ancient Society's governance and administration are modelled, and the introduction of women to the Marylebone Cricket Club in September 1998.

Even today, whilst there are as many female as there are male ringers, fewer women ring the heavier bells than their male counterparts, and an even smaller proportion of women actually conduct methods. However there are initiatives to turn this round. The issue of the Ringing World magazine dated 13th November focussed on issues surrounding women in ringing. You can also find out more by listening to the women in ringing today in the podcast [Let's fix Ringing's 'leaky pipeline' | Fun with Bells - a podcast about bell ringing](#)

1.9. The impacts of WW2 and Covid 19

In 1940, ringing the bells was banned pending sounding the alarm for a German invasion (which many people remember) However, historians frequently get the rest of this story wrong. This may be due to a focus on the oral histories of VE Day, when people recall the initial reason for the ban and then the bells ringing, in force on VE Day. For example, in the Channel 5 documentary, VE Day – the lost films, in which

²⁸ [Longstock's pioneering women ringers in World War One | Big Ideas \(big-ideas.org\)](#)

the narrator says that the bells had been silent for 6 years. However, contemporary records reveal an interesting story of how this ban was actually lifted prior to the end of the war in 1943. There was:

- Direct intervention by Churchill
- Debates in the House of Lords and Houses of parliament
- Leaders in the national press of the day
- Letters by the public and the author Dorothy L Sayers

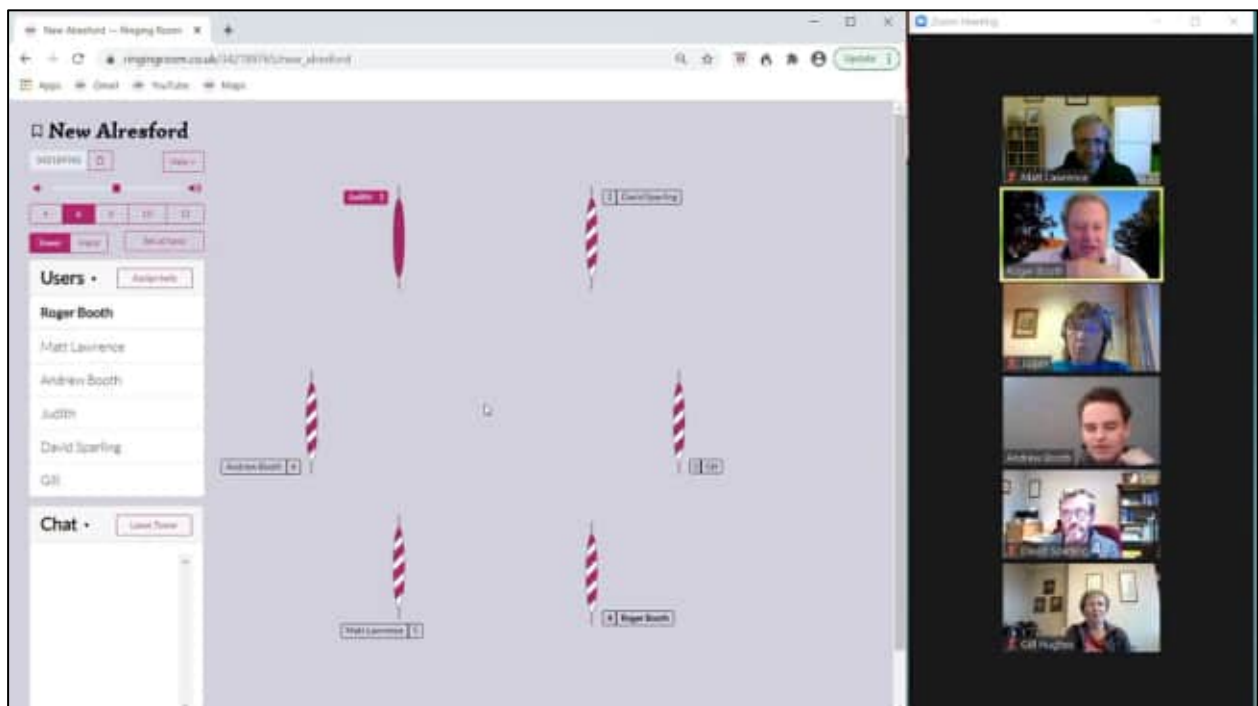
In the podcast episode [Lifting the WWII ban on ringing | Fun with Bells - a podcast about bell ringing](#) twenty seven current day bell ringers, from around the country, read the eloquent words from Hansard and 'The Ringing World' magazine to provide the real story about what actually happened.

Covid 19 Lockdowns and Social Distancing

Eighty years later, with Covid lockdowns taking place from 23 March 2020, there was another complete cessation of ringing. Not only during the lockdowns, but afterwards there was 'social distancing' which required people to be 2m apart, so in most towers, with ropes closer together than this, it was only possible to ring about half the bells. Missing out adjacent notes also meant for un-musical combinations of bells. It was not until July 2021 that ringing started to return to normal.

During the intervening period there was much ingenuity and many ringers met together socially on Zoom. A virtual 'Ringing Room' was also developed to enable on-line ringing where ringers could press one or two keys on their keyboard to ring with others elsewhere. Depending on the speed of the broadband connection ringers in different countries could even practice ringing methods together.

Motion sensitive handbells were also developed, which could be plugged into USB ports on computers so that people in different locations could practice ringing methods on handbells, either with the computer ringing the other bells, or with real people virtually over the internet.



Screenshot of virtual ringing on Ringing Room

2. Bishops Sutton bells

The Norman church at Bishop's Sutton was built in the 12th Century, on the previous site of a Saxon church. The Bishop of Winchester Henry de Blois built the church to service the community around the Bishop's Manor and hunting parklands that he created at the time.

The Church was added to and parts rebuilt over time during the 13th and 14th Centuries. The protestant Reformation of the 17th Century wiped away the colourful detail and important historical aspects of the church - such as the Rood Screen and the adjacent chapel. The whitewashed walls, bare altar and conservative feel stems from that period.

2.1. The early ring of three bells

Up to 1898, Bishop Sutton had a ring of three bells, dating back to at least 1515. Therefore, it is unlikely that before 1898 change-ringing was practiced in Bishops Sutton.

Details of the three bells are recorded in Colchester's Book, Hampshire Church Bells²⁹

BISHOP'S SUTTON.—
i. Sancte Thoma ora Pro Nobis. (See p. 28.)
ii. Thomas Seaward Henry Budd C [68] W . H [69] K
1672.
iii. I.W Hope well 1605 [82].
Recast into five by Warner 1898.
S no inscription.

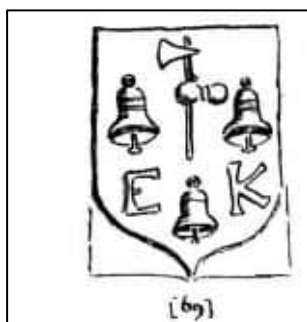
Bell 1 – Thomas Bullisdon circa 1500 - 1515

Thomas Bullisdon, was an active bell founder in Aldgate between 1500 and 1515. He is counted as a predecessor of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry which until 2017 operated at premises in Whitechapel High Street.

Bishop's Sutton i * is only a memory of Thomas Bullisdon. It bore the cross and shield with initials TB and the inscription, "Sancte Thome ora pro nobis." A rubbing may be seen amongst Dr. Tyssen's rubbings at the Society of Antiquaries.

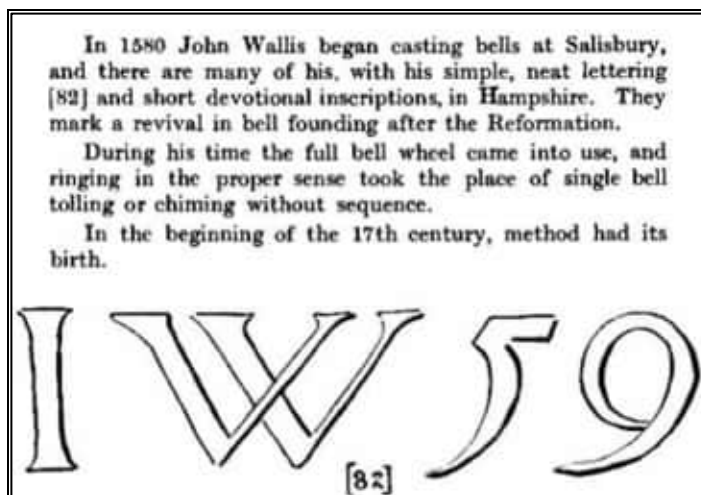
Bell 2 – Francis and Ellis Knight 1672

Francis and Ellis Knight were part of the a family of bell founders, based in Reading. Ellis retired in 1684, handing over the management of the foundry to Samuel Knight, who also cast five bells for Ropley in 1701



²⁹ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Colchester - Hampshire Church Bells](#)

Bell 3 – John Wallis, Salisbury 1605



2.2. John Warner & Sons recast the bells

Treble 3cwt-3qtr-15lbs Note D#
JOHN WARNER & SONS LONDON 1893

2nd 4cwt-1qtr-9lbs Note C#
JOHN WARNER & SONS LONDON 1893
G HOLSON VICAR

3rd 5cwt-0qtr-4lbs Note B#
JOHN WARNER & SONS LONDON 1893
MR LOE
R POTTER CHURCHWARDENS

4th 5cwt-3qtr-26lbs Note A#
JOHN WARNER & SONS LONDON 1893
ARTHUR S YATES

Tenor 7cwt-3qtr-0lbs Note G#
JOHN WARNER & SONS LONDON 1893
RECAST JUNE 16TH 1893 IN LOVING MEMORY
OF MAUD FRANCIS BELOVED WIFE OF C G DUFF

The firm of John Warner & Sons was established in 1739. Under continuous ownership by the same family for more than two centuries, they manufactured a wide variety of products before finally closing in 1949. It's uncertain whether the firm operated under other names for some periods of their history.

Warner began making bells in 1788³⁰, and continued to do so (with a hiatus between 1816 and 1850) until 1924. Their total production of bells is unknown, but there are approximately 2,550 surviving Warner bells that are hung primarily for change ringing, carrying dates from 1788 to 1921. They also produced many bells not hung for change ringing, plus some hemispherical bells and tubular bells.

³⁰ [Index - Warner \(towerbells.org\)](http://Index - Warner (towerbells.org))

The Warner foundry (or foundries) operated at various locations in London from before 1782. These locations included Cheapside, Cripplegate (2 Jewin Crescent, commonly known as the Crescent Foundry), Spitalfields (Spelman Street) and Fleet Street. Warner kept the Jewin Crescent address as their registered office after the Spitalfields location was developed in the 1870s. Other Warner foundries or works were located at Tendring, Essex and at Stockton-on-Tees, where the original Big Ben was cast.

Both the Cripplegate site and the Spitalfields site were badly damaged in WW II, and the land was cleared thereafter. All of Warners' bellfoundry records were also destroyed in that war, so details of their work must be recompiled from secondary sources.

Warners' telegraphic address was "Big Ben, London", and that was in their catalogue for 1900 in spite of the fact that their casting of the original Big Ben had been long gone.



2.3. The Big Ben controversy

Big Ben is the name given to the bell that strikes the hours in the Elizabeth Tower of the Palace of Westminster, home of the Houses of Parliament. The design of the bell was specified by Sir Edmund Beckett Denison QC (later 1st Baron Grimthorpe), leader of the Parliamentary Bar and President of the British Horological Institute.

There were three principal bellfounders at the time. George Mears of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry considered himself to be at the top of his craft and declined to tender in competition with anyone else. Warners were very keen to point out that they had recently commissioned two new large furnaces for their foundry at Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees, while Taylors of the Loughborough Bell Foundry insisted on receiving payment in advance. This was unacceptable to the Government and so the contract was let

to Warners. The original Big Ben³¹ was a 16 ton (16.3-tonne) bell, cast on 6 August 1856 in Stockton-on-Tees by John Warner & Sons.

The casting of the four smaller quarter bells presented no problem to their Cripplegate foundry, but as Warners were unable to guarantee the note which would be sounded by the hour bell, the casting of the four quarter bells was delayed until this was known. It is thought that the bell was originally to be called "Victoria" in honour of Queen Victoria, but that an MP suggested the bell's current nickname of "Big Ben" during a Parliamentary debate, although the comment is not recorded in Hansard. Sir Benjamin Hall M.P. was Chief Commissioner of Works.

As the tower, which had been started in 1843, was incomplete, the bell was loaded on to a specially constructed carriage and vast crowds lined the route as it was drawn by sixteen white horses across Westminster Bridge and into New Palace Yard. It was decided to suspend the bell from gallows which had been erected especially for the purpose near to the foot of the tower, where extensive testing could be carried out. Originally it had been intended to strike the bell with a 4cwt hammer, but when it was discovered the bell exceeded its designated weight by 2 tons, Denison specified a 6cwt hammer be used as he felt that a heavier hammer would be necessary to produce the maximum tone.

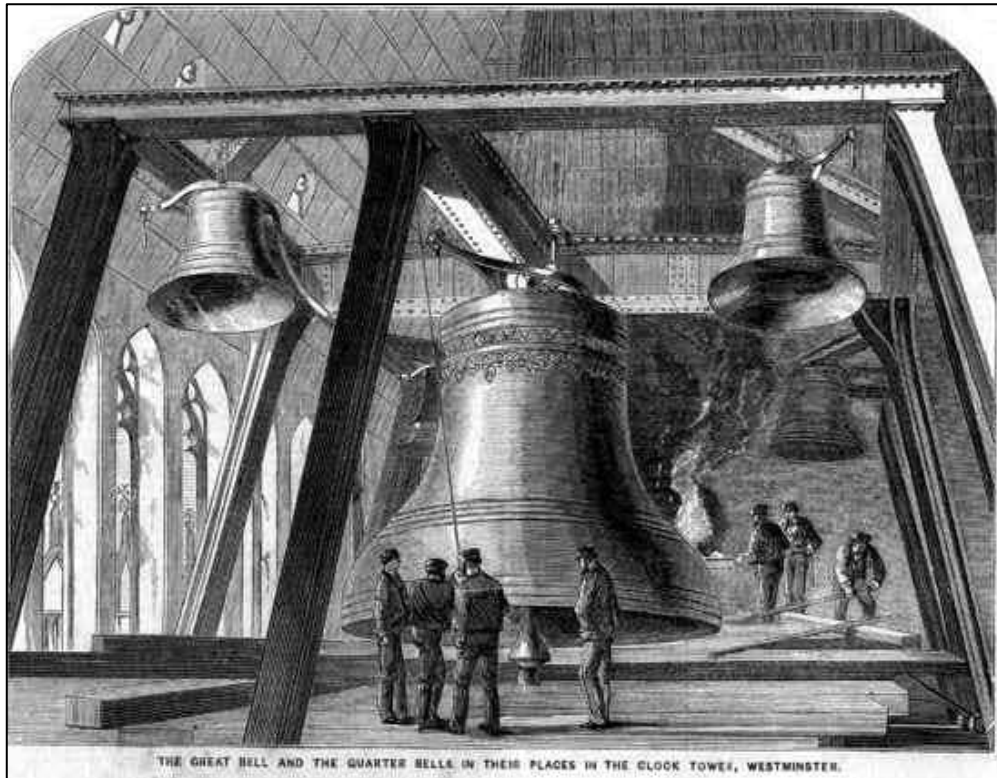
The bell was struck regularly throughout most of 1857 and was found to have an agreeable tone. But on 17 October 1857, nearly a year after its arrival in London, the bell cracked while being struck. A thorough examination revealed a crack about 4ft in length stretching up from the sound bow. Predictably, there was much controversy regarding the cause of the crack, Warners claiming that the fault lay with Denison for using the heavier hammer, while Denison claimed that the fault lay with Warners for manufacturing a poor casting.

The Office of Works asked Warners to put in a tender for recasting the bell, but this time to a higher specification than that which Denison had drawn up originally. Meanwhile, at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, Mears had been very sorry to have missed his opportunity to make the most famous bell in the world; he reconsidered his position and asked to be allowed to tender. When the bids came in, Warner's estimate was reckoned to be excessive. Mears, however, quoted a very reasonable price and so a contract was let. By now, the public were becoming very impatient and must have wondered, after the ungainly departure of the first Big Ben, if they would ever see the clock which they had been promised so many years earlier. Their feelings were summed up very aptly in this little rhyme which became very popular in London about that time:

*Poor Mr Warner is put in a corner
For making a bad Big Ben
Good Mr Mears, or so it appears
Will make us a new one, but when?*

George Mears wasted no time in setting to work. On 10 April 1858 the great bell was cast. The new Big Ben was cast. It was found to weigh just over 13½ tons, being some 2 tons lighter than its predecessor. It underwent extensive tests before being loaded on to a carriage and once more crowds lined the route and cheered as it was drawn, this time from Whitechapel through the streets of London and into New Palace Yard.

³¹ [The History Press | The recasting of Big Ben](#)



The second Big Ben and the four Quarter Bells
from *The Illustrated News of the World*, 4 December 1858

3. Ropley bells

3.1. The original rings of four and five

There were originally four bells, details of which are unknown. These were recast into a ring of five by Samuel Knight in 1701. Samuel Knight was casting in Reading from 1681 to 1707. However, it seems that the Ropley bells were actually recast in Ropley in 1701. During the 1896 restoration workmen found the remains of a furnace and pieces of old bell metal in the south transept. John Giberd was Samuel Knight's foreman in charge of the work.

By the mid-1920s these bells were in a sorry state and had not been rung for some time. The third was found to be cracked. Gillett and Johnson recast them and augmented the peal to a ring of six, hung in a new metal frame and fittings. They were dedicated on Tuesday May 31st 1927 by the Bishop of Winchester, and the Master of the Winchester Diocesan Guild organised a band to ring them for the dedication service. Gillett and Johnson's invoice dated third of May 1927 was for a total of £580.0s.0d.

As a complete Gillett ring, when this foundry was perhaps producing its best work, the bells are regarded by many as one of the best rings of six in Hampshire. Details of the bells are

Treble 4cwt-2qtr-6lbs Note D#
GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF JACOB AND MARY HAGEN ALSO
P.G.W., J.S.O'H AND A.H.S. THE GIFT OF M.S.HAGEN, 1927

2nd 5cwt-1qtr-3lbs Note C#
RECAST BY GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
I AS TREBLE DOO BEE GIN S K 1701

3rd 7cwt-0qtr-2lbs Note B
RECAST BY GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
FEAR GOD, HON NARE THE KING S K 1701

4th 7cwt-2qtr-9lbs Note A#
RECAST BY GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
SAMUEL KNIGHT MADE THIS RING
J G THOMAS OLIVER C W 1701

5th 10cwt-3qtr-19lbs Note G#
RECAST BY GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
ROBERT CATLIN OF LONDON FECIT 1749

Tenor 15cwt-0qtr-23lbs Note F#
RECAST BY GILLETT & JOHNSTON CROYDON 1927
UNTO THIS CHURCH I DO CALL
DEATH TO THE GRAVE SHALL SUMMONCE YOU ALL
S K 1701 JOHN GILBERD DID CONTRIVE TO CAST FROM FOUR THIS PEL OF FIFE

3.2. Marianna Hagan – Philanthropy and Temperance

Marianna Hagen³² was one of Ropley's most prominent residents in the late nineteenth century. She left a notable and enduring legacy. Her philanthropic contributions include the Coffee Rooms and Four Marks School, and she paid for the restoration of the bells in 1927.

Marianna Sophia Hagen was born to Jacob and Mary Hagen in 1852 in Echunga, South Australia. Jacob Hagen, a businessman and politician born in Bermondsey, had moved from England to Australia in 1839. After fourteen years in business there he returned with enough wealth to afford New House, one of the most impressive and prestigious houses in the parish, which he renamed Ropley House.

A devout Christian with a Victorian upbringing, Miss Hagen became a follower of the temperance movement. She founded the Ropley branch of the Church of England Temperance Society and worked as its branch secretary. She donated money to Ropley church and funded the creation of a tin chapel in Ropley Soke. This was later moved to Four Marks where it remains in an abandoned state.



Marianna Hagan

The Coffee Room

Miss Hagen's first major act of generosity to the parish was the construction of a temperance hall known as the Coffee Room, attached to her house Meadowside, at her own expense and in memory of her parents. Intended to combat the frequent insobriety of some local inhabitants, it became the base for many of Ropley's community activities. There is some confusion over the opening date. According to Annals of Old Ropley, the Coffee Room was opened on Monday, October 6th, 1883. An inscription over the entrance bears the date 1883. However, October 6th fell on a Saturday in 1883, and the opening was reported in the local press in October 1884 when October 6th was indeed a Monday.

In accordance with Miss Hagen's staunch temperance principles, the hall served as the meeting place of the Men and Boys Club, a social group which provided an alternative to the public houses in the village. Alcohol, gambling and swearing were forbidden on the premises. Musical evenings, Sunday School teas and other entertainments were regularly held in the Coffee Room, often with songs and readings given by Miss Hagen and her friends.

³² [Miss Marianna Hagen | Prominent People and Societies | Ropley History](#)

Miss Hagen died on 26 February 1932. In her will she made substantial bequests in Ropley and Four Marks. She bequeathed the Coffee Room and her house Meadowside, to the Diocese of Winchester. The deed of trust stipulated that the rooms were to be used as a club for working men and boys, and to teach Sunday School bible classes.

A sum of money was given to support the Men and Boys Club, vested in the Winchester Diocese, and the building called 'The Coffee Room' in her will was given to the village. The Jacob and Mary Hagen Memorial was registered in 1936 as charity number 205039, with the aim of providing 'a meeting room for the residents of the Parish of Ropley'.

The church



St Peter's Ropley before the Victorian restoration

In the year 1891 the question of the restoration of the Church was considered. In 1894 a Restoration Committee consisting of Miss Hagen, the Rev. Canon Wynter-Gibbon, Mr. Norris, Mr. W. Barnard, and the Vicar, the Rev. W. H. Leak, was formed and an appeal made for the necessary funds.

So generous a response was made that in a very short time no less than £2,300 had been subscribed and in 1896 the work of restoration was commenced. The chief work undertaken was an entirely new roof, new East and West windows, the extension of the North Aisle to the same length as the Nave, the underpinning of the four huge oak beams supporting the tower by bases of concrete, and the removal of the old gallery at the West end which provided ample accommodation for the Choir in those days. The old floor was excavated and replaced by concrete and laid with pitch pine blocks, and the high-back pews of former days gave place to chairs.

It was during floor excavations in the South Transept, immediately under where the new organ now stands, that an interesting discovery was made in connection with a former casting of the church bells, probably at the time when "John Gilbert did contrive to cast from four this peal of five." Previous to this it was believed that the bells had been re-cast in an adjoining field but while the work of restoration was going on the workmen found in the South Transept the remains of a furnace and pieces of old bell metal which conclusively proved that it was there that the bells were re-cast.

The Chancel was entirely re-arranged, the large family pews were removed and Choir Stalls erected in their place. A Service of Dedication and Thanksgiving was held on Tuesday, April 27th, 1897, when the sermon was preached by the Bishop of Guildford. It was at this service that the Village Choir first appeared in Cassocks and Surplices.

Miss Hagen also donated two extensions of the churchyard, to the north and north-east of the church, besides the recasting of the bells in 1927. Her temperance advocacy led her to start a local branch of the Band of Hope, a temperance organisation aimed at supporting working-class children. The land that she had inherited and acquired made her one of the largest landowners in the area. Remaining unmarried, Miss Hagen is buried in the graveyard of St Peter's Church.

3.3. Samuel Knight – Founder of the previous five bells

For over 200 years generations of the Knight family³³ cast bells for churches in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and, Oxfordshire as well as further afield. There are still many bells in use today which were cast by various members of the Knight family, some of which are inscribed with the founder's name, date and, usually, a short legend.

It isn't known exactly when bell founding started in Berkshire, but it was certainly a flourishing business in Reading during the 14th and 15th centuries. It is highly likely that William Knight learnt his trade at a foundry owned and run by Joseph Carter. William was succeeded by his son Henry Knight.

The succession of the foundry was then left to a Francis and Ellis Knight. However, after the siege and surrender of the town of Reading to Cromwell's soldiers under the Earl of Essex in 1643, there appears to have been a serious stagnation of trade and for the four following years this former flourishing foundry does not appear to have turned out a single bell.

According to records from that time, Henry Knight (II) was in apprenticeship during this time and many bells can be attributed to him. Francis Knight died in 1671 and it seems likely that it was then that Ellis made Henry (II) a full partner in the business. Henry (II) died in January 1672. After his death, succession passed to Henry's son Henry Knight (III) and Ellis Knight (II). However, Ellis retired from the business around 1675, and Henry's business shrank to a small output. He died in 1682, and Ellis came out of retirement and once more took over the business. He eventually retired permanently in 1684, handing over the management of the foundry to Samuel Knight.

Ellis died in Reading in 1694. By about 1702, shortly after the five bells were cast for Ropley, the business had seriously diminished and in 1710 Samuel made the decision to move the foundry to London. The actual site of his foundry is not known, but it is believed to have been in Shoe Lane, in Holborn, and in the parish of St. Andrew's with which Samuel had connections. For the first twelve to eighteen months, after the move there seems to have been hardly any business, however, in 1712, the tide eventually turned.

In 1726 eight bells were cast (probably on site) for Canterbury Cathedral. He also cast a ring of twelve bells for Southwark Cathedral in 1734-5 and in 1739 a ring of 8 were cast for St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, the Parish church of the House of Commons. However, sadly, just before the job was completed Samuel died and it was completed by his foreman and successor Robert Catlin. In 1739 a number of bells were also cast for St. Sepulchre (Old Bailey) Church - these are the bells which feature in the nursery rhyme 'When will you pay me said the bells of Old Bailey'.

Samuel Knight died in 1739 and he made Robert Catlin, his lifelong friend and business colleague his executor, leaving the business to him in his will.

³³ [HN Bells - Knights Family \(hampsteadnorreys.org.uk\)](http://hampsteadnorreys.org.uk)

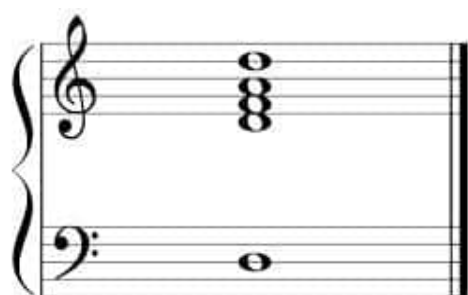
3.4. Gillett & Johnston – founders of the current bells

Gillett & Johnston, through the work of Cyril Johnston, were one of the pioneers of modern bell tuning³⁴. Prior to the 20th Century each founder's bells had a slightly different profile and although each bell sounds a chord when struck, it was not possible to tune all the notes in the chord, so many 'old style' bells are out of tune with themselves

The firm of Gillett and Bland, later Gillett and Johnston, was founded by clockmaker William Gillett in 1844. Cyril Johnston's father Arthur bought a partnership in the firm in 1877, about the time they cast their first bell. Cyril Johnston joined the company in 1902. In 1905 Cyril purchased a tuning machine (apparently out of his own pocket) and began to work on bell designs that could be tuned true-harmonic, basing his work on the two papers on Bell Tones³⁵ written by Rev Cannon Arthur B Simpson³⁶

Cyril Johnston began to experiment with bell designs and in 1907 cast bells for Elstree, which were claimed as the foundry's first true-harmonic bells. From 1910 onwards bells were produced in increasing numbers. In 1921 a carillon was cast for the Toronto Metropolitan Methodist Church. The company went on to cast at least 53 carillons, including the heaviest in the world, the Rockefeller Memorial Carillon at Riverside Baptist Church, New York. This carillon contained 72 bells ranging for 10 lbs to 20 tons.

Cyril Johnston resigned from Gillett and Johnston in 1948 and died two years later, having been awarded an OBE for his work in bells. The foundry continued casting bells until 1957, when it closed – though the firm of Gillett and Johnston continues the clock business.



D	Nominal
A	Quint
F	Tierce
D	Prime
D	Hum

The sound of an individual bell is made up of a number of frequencies or partials. The lowest five partials are the hum, prime, tierce, quint and nominal. In a true-harmonic bell (as most modern bells are) the hum, prime and nominal are in exact octaves. In an old-style bell, the hum is commonly sharp and the prime is flat. These five partials are the ones commonly measured for bells but above the nominal there are more frequencies – the upper partials – which have a significant influence on the sound of the bell.

The strike note, which is the note that we hear when a bell rings, is generated in the ear from the nominal and upper partials. This is important; the note we hear doesn't necessarily correspond with any of the partial frequencies that can be physically measured. The strike note is approximately an octave below the nominal, but the exact note is significantly influenced by the upper partials, and also to some extent by the prime.

3.5. Errors in Gillett & Johnston's tuning forks

In the period that Gillett & Johnston were active, bells were tuned using tuning forks to check their partial frequencies. Prior to the introduction of electronic tuning aids, the frequency of each partial in a

³⁴ [Basic principles of bell tuning – The Sound of Bells \(hibberts.co.uk\)](http://hibberts.co.uk)

³⁵ [Simpson's first paper – The Sound of Bells \(hibberts.co.uk\)](http://hibberts.co.uk)

³⁶ [The Whiting Society of Ringers - Simpson - Why Bells Sound out of Tune](http://hibberts.co.uk)

bell was measured by sounding a tuning fork close in frequency to the partial and counting the beats between fork and partial to determine the exact frequency. Sets of forks used for bell tuning cover from very low to very high frequencies in steps of 2 or 4 cycles per second.

By 1919 the company had a large set of tuning forks to tune their bells. Analysis of the partial frequencies of Gillett & Johnston carillons shows significant discrepancies in frequencies which must be due to errors in the forks. The forks used in the Croydon foundry are preserved at Taylor's bellfoundry in Loughborough and between November 2022 and January 2023 they were measured and the nature of their discrepancies made clear. The errors in the fork frequencies follow a surprising pattern: over three or more octaves, the errors cycle across the octave, with the A's being the flattest and the E♭'s the sharpest. The variation across each octave is 20 to 25 cents, i.e. a fifth or a quarter of a semitone. The very lowest and very highest frequency forks are flat by up to 75 cents or three-quarters of a semitone.

There is every indication that these errors were present when the forks were originally made. The treble bells in G&J carillons have often been replaced or retuned because they are flat. Corrosion from atmospheric pollution has often been blamed for this, but it is also now clear that the forks used to tune them were flat.



This is a tray of Gillett's forks, covering frequencies 2132Hz to 2272Hz.

3.6. Controversy over modern bell tuning

At the same time as Ropley bells were to be recast, there was a controversy as Coventry Cathedral were also considering recasting their ring of ten bells. A court case was held in 1926 to settle the issue³⁷. Both the new ring of bells for Coventry Cathedral and those for Ropley were subsequently cast in 1927, by Gillett & Johnston.

Prior to the casting and installation of these bells, Coventry had an old peal of ten which were by reputation one of the finest rings of their age. These bells were cast by Pack and Chapman in 1774. At the time of the case, the bells had not been rung since 1885 because of structural problems with the Cathedral tower.

There were several issues at stake in the Coventry case. Though much of the evidence and discussion in the Consistory Court was about the relative merits of true-harmonic (aka 'Simpson') and old-style tuning, there was also a strong wish to keep ringing bells rather than a carillon at Coventry in the hope

³⁷ [Coventry bells, and how they were lost – The Sound of Bells \(hibberts.co.uk\)](http://hibberts.co.uk)

that they could eventually be hung for full circle ringing. At the time, Taylors and Gillett and Johnston had both been casting true-harmonic bells for several years, putting the Whitechapel Bellfoundry, who were still casting old-style bells, under commercial pressure. A. A. (Bert) Hughes, proprietor of Whitechapel, called as an expert witness in the case, was clearly torn between his wish to preserve a historic peal of bells, and the commercial realities of the competition from Taylors and Gillett and Johnston.

The Chancellor of the Diocese (Mr. E. W. Hansell) held his Consistory Court in the ancient buildings of the Palace Yard, Coventry, and the case occupied over four hours. Sir Henry Maddocks, K.C. (instructed by Mr. W. P. Legender), appeared for the Vicar and churchwardens, and Alderman J. S. Pritchett, Recorder of Lincoln (instructed by Messrs. Rotherham and Co.), was for Mr. R. Caldicott, who opposed the petition. The Apparitor-General (Mr. G. J. Dalton) having opened the court, Mr. Walter Brewitt, the Diocesan Registrar, declared the terms of the application.

Many people in the bell trade and prominent ringers gave evidence in the hearing. The Chancellor having reviewed the evidence, said that it would appear that the 'Simpson' principle would make the peal in tune in every respect. If scientifically they could tune to an octave, why not do it? He had come to the conclusion that to recast the bells was the proper method; they would be having the same metal, and the same inscriptions and the same weight and keynote, the same bells but improved. The faculty would be granted.

The new Coventry Cathedral bells were initially hung for stationary chiming and not hung for full circle ringing because of the previous concerns about structural problems with the tower. Coventry Cathedral was completely destroyed in an air raid on the night of 14/15 November 1940, apart from the tower, but the bells hung high in the tower were unharmed.

It was not until 1986, after experiments on the sway of the tower, conducted with electronic measuring instruments by the engineer the late Harry Windsor, which established that the Gillett & Johnson bells could safely be re-hung for full circle change ringing in the bomb-damaged tower. They have been rung regularly full circle ever since.

3.7. The 2014 fire

It was eleven minutes past ten on the morning of Thursday, 19 June 2014 when history at St Peter's stopped. This was the time shown on the dial of the tower clock when the roof of the bell tower, bells and clock were destroyed, together with the rest of the church during a disastrous fire at this grade II listed church.

The cause of the fire is not known, nor will it ever be, due to the intensity of the flames. The fire was discovered at approximately 7:50 am, soon after people living nearby experienced power surges. Villagers watched in horror as the church went up in flames. Ten fire engines and more than fifty crew tackled the blaze which destroyed the church, which had been at the heart of the village for over 800 years.

The catastrophic fire left only the main walls standing. Therefore, it was necessary to undertake full clearance of the fire debris from the building, making safe the remaining fabric and providing some weather-protection for the elements that remained.

The bells were left hanging forlornly in the wooden tower, but it was not safe to go anywhere near them. Before the bells could be removed and put in storage for safe keeping, it was necessary to erect special scaffolding to safely access the bells. This scaffold was designed to take the loads of lifting the bells and lowering them safely to the ground. This work in itself quite expensive.

There then followed a long period when experts undertook surveys, producing detailed reports and submitting these to heritage bodies to consult about the repair methods.



The tower in flames, with the rest of the church gutted



Aerial view of the church, left gutted following the fire

The PCC’s vision was that the rebuilt St Peter’s should be fit for the 21st century and another 800 years. To become, once again, the centre of the community, a space for everyone to enjoy and use - not just those who would worship there. St. Peter’s will provide a wonderful venue for christenings, weddings and funerals as well as a place for the Village to gather on festivals such as Christmas, Remembrance Day and Easter. The space being created has been designed to complement other village facilities and to be widely used by the village school, social clubs, concerts and meetings seven days a week.

The original intention was to retain the existing wooden tower. However, it was found that the timbers in the upper parts of the tower were badly damaged, particularly around the beam to post and brace to post junctions, where the strength of the fire penetrated the joint faces. The structural engineer’s opinion was fire damage into the joints would make re-use impractical.

This left the parish with a dilemma. The bells could have been hung dead, no longer available for full circle ringing, or they could have been replaced with a much lighter ring. However, even the masonry walls at low level could not be relied upon to take any loads from swinging bells. There was even talk of selling the bells. However, the PCC were determined to keep their bells and took the brave decision to find a way of retaining them.

The solution was designed with the input of Adrian Dempster, Structural Engineer and expert on bell-frames from the former Central Council Towers & Belfries Committee was to retain the old timber framework at the lower levels for historical reasons, and to insert a new free standing steel framework. This to be designed to be capable of supporting the bells, whilst also minimising sway, so that the handling of the bells would not be adversely affected. The bells would be hung lower in the tower and now rung from ground floor level. The design means that they will be one of the heaviest rings of bells in a free-standing tower in the world!

This work, necessary to enable full circle ringing, came at significant additional cost, using up much of the project contingency, as well as causing a significant delay.



A workman wearing a safety harness carefully releases one of the bells



One of the bells is carefully lowered through the scaffolding



The cracked 5th

Whilst the PCC were insured against fire, this was to replace the existing building on a like for like basis. You don't get a modern building with the latest facilities and the PCC wanted to make St Peter's fit for the next 800 years. Because there was a shortfall to provide the modern facilities, such as kitchens and toilets, it was necessary to raise significant additional funds, and with inflation adding to the costs all the time and eroding the value of the money that we had, it was necessary to conduct a 'value engineering' exercise.

The installation of the bells needed to be put back till a second phase. However, even though it added to the shortfall, the special steel structure to strengthen to tower and support the bells was an integral part of the work and could not be installed later. Therefore, it needed to go ahead in the first phase contract.

Other work put off till the second phase included the replacement of some of the stained glass, the fitting out of the new kitchen and even the provision of chairs and soft furnishings!

Phase one originally got underway in the spring of 2019, but with archaeological investigations revealing that there were bodies that needed to be re-interred first, adding to the cost. Then in March 2020 Covid-19 intervened. Not only was work paused for several months whilst expensive scaffolding remained in place, but subsequently there were various pauses whilst workpeople needed to self-isolate, and delays caused by shortages of materials and key components.

The church was eventually re-opened for worship on Sunday August 28 2022, with the opening service led by the Bishop of Basingstoke, David Williams.



Bishop David Williams re-opens St Peter's

Attention then turned to raising money for the second phase, item by item. The chairs had been purchased and the kitchen fitted out, and although some money had been raised and promised for the bells, there was still a significant shortfall. Also, as the existing team of ringers were now ten years older there was a need to train new ringers. A case was made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the return of the bells, and the training of new ringers over the subsequent two years. Not only would the church have its voice back, but they would reach out into local community, helping to raise awareness of the rich history of bellringing, and to ensure that the bells are rung regularly thereafter.

The work entrusted to Matthew Higby and his company based in Somerset, a specialist firm of bell-hangers. The cracked third bell was welded through a specialist process developed by 'Soundweld' a firm based at Newmarket in Cambridgeshire. Unlike steel which is commonly welded, bell metal is far more difficult to weld and requires a special process. Soundweld have also annealed four of the other bells which had been rapidly cooled by the water used to put out the fire. By heating these bells up and allowing them to cool slowly under blankets, stresses which had built up in the bells, and which could lead to them cracking, were relieved.

The 5th bell which was too badly cracked to be welded has been recast by Emanuel Allanconi³⁸ in Italy as an exact copy, using traditional techniques, with the same profile and with the same decoration and lettering as the original Gillett & Johnston bell. It was then tuned to match the original bell, using figures from Gillett & Johnston's original tuning book, which had been archived.

³⁸ [Fonderia Allanconi - Artistic fusion of customized bells of all weights and sizes](#)

4. Handbell tune ringing

There is evidence of handbells being used in China and the Middle East from very early times. We know that they were used in Europe in religious ceremonies well before the Norman Conquest in 1066. The earliest evidence of handbells being used in England comes from the Bayeux Tapestry, shortly after the Norman Conquest where two acolytes are seen carrying handbells to warn off evil spirits before Edward the Confessor's body is laid to rest in Westminster Abbey.

It is likely that with the growth of change-ringing from about the mid 1500's onwards, handbells were used by tower bell ringers to practice change-ringing, and sets of up to twelve bells were being produced by founders such as the Cor family of Aldbourne, Wiltshire who were active between 1694 and 1750. At this time the clapper hung loose on a loop cast into the underside of the bell. However, in 1750 the business passed to Robert Wells, who improved the design of the handbells and their tuning. He introduced a new clapper mechanism with a hinge that passed through the crown on the bell, so that the clapper only moved back and forth in a single plane, and not from side to side as well.

These and other subsequent improvements led to a much more musical sound and the growth of tune-ringing as well as change-ringing on handbells. We have explained elsewhere that publicans often sponsored ringing contests in the 18th and early 19th centuries and we know that republicans often used to keep a set of handbells behind the bar for the ringers to practice on. There is still a set behind the bar at Lavenham in Suffolk, and there used to be a set at the Chequers inn at Ropley. The Landlord there, Hector Wild was landlord and had a set of 15 handbells which originally belonged to his grandfather.

Hector subsequently became the landlord of The H.H. Inn in Cheriton. Hector brought the set of hand bells with him to The H.H., where they would hang behind the bar and were regularly played in that pub and generally within the village.

In a letter from Hector Wild dated 24th February 1949 he stated that it was his father's wish that the bells should remain within the village. In a subsequent letter dated 29th January 1952 he stated that, whilst his father had "wished the bells to go to the old team of ringers ... if they have passed them on to your young team, well they are now yours..."



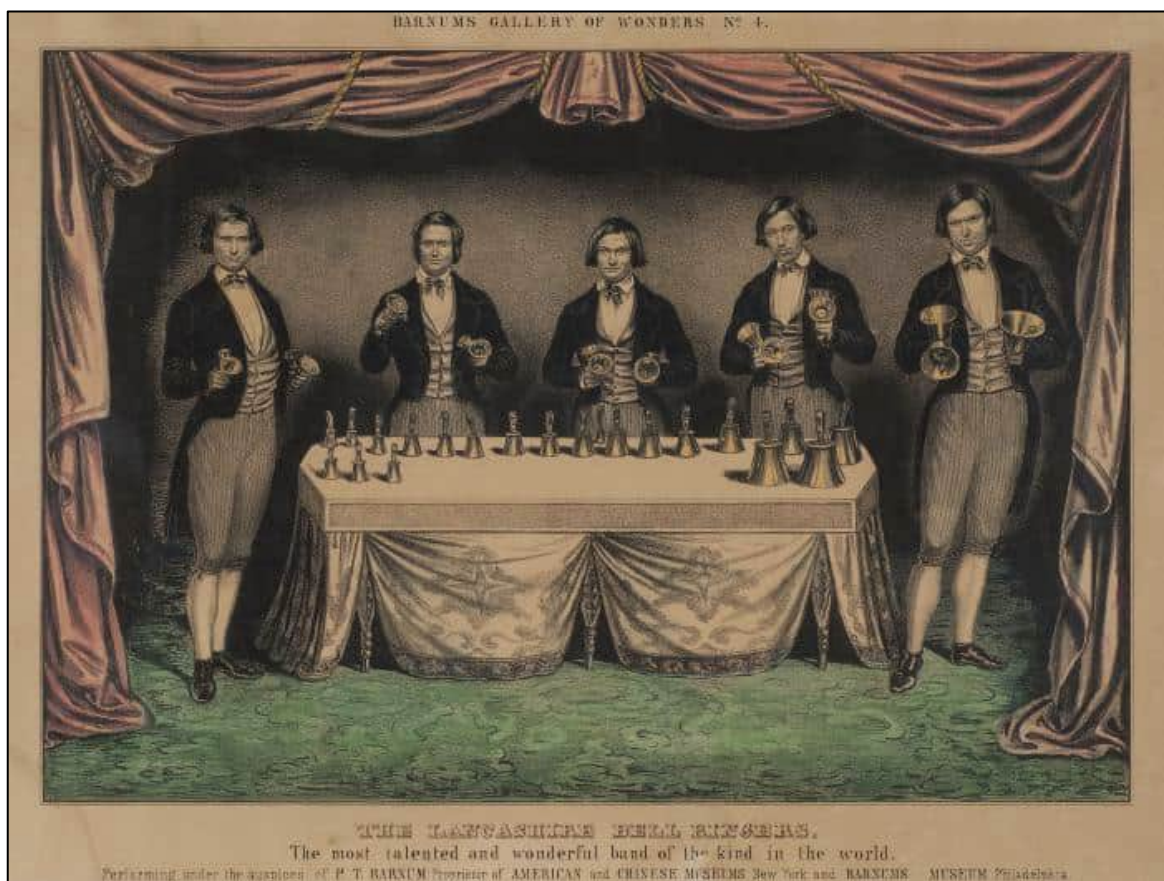
Cheriton Handbell Ringers at the HH Inn, circa 1950

With the Industrial Revolution taking place between about 1730 and 1830, there was a drift from rural villages to the large towns and cities of the North of England. Prior to the invention of the valve in 1815 brass bands did not exist, but the use of handbells in pubs and in West Gallery music was common place. As a result, tune ringing flourished, particularly in these northern towns and cities, with sets of up to 70 handbells and occasionally as many as 120 handbells.

In 1844 the Great Showman P T Barnum was visiting the UK and engaged a team known as the Lancashire Ringers from Oldham to undertake a 12 month tour to perform in the USA. Subsequently teams toured Australian, New Zealand and India.

In 1855 the first British Open Handbell Ringing Contest was held at Belle Vue in Manchester. This contest continued annually up till 1926 with contestants travelling to Manchester by specially chartered trains. It can be argued that handbell tune-ringing was the forerunner of the Brass Band contests which are held regionally and national right up to the present day, with the finals now at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

With the Oxford movement and the growth of change-ringing Guilds and Associations, there was a gradual separation from the tune ringing world, although many tower bell teams kept their handbells.



Spurred on by Barnum's tours, tune ringing spread across America. The Americans also further developed the clapper mechanism and after World War II exported tune ringing to Japan and South Korea, where it is very popular today. They also invented chime bars as an inexpensive alternative to handbells, particularly for use with young people to teach music.

In the years after World War 2 tune ringing also enjoyed a revival in England and the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain organised was formed in 1967 to promote tune-ringing. Teams such as the team at Cheriton expanded their sets.

There is a fascinating book which explains more about the history of tune ringing 'Ringing for Gold' by Peter Fawcett.³⁹ The Handbell Ringers of Great Britain's archives⁴⁰ are housed at Heritage Quay, part of the University of Huddersfield and contains even more information about the role of tune-ringing, particularly as a form of working-class music.

The Ropley handbells were destroyed in the 2014 fire, but a new set has been purchased to replace them. Tune ringing at Cheriton continued in to the early 2000's, after which it faded out. Other active tune-ringing groups at Old Alresford and Bishops Sutton also faded out as recently as about 2020.

Our project to restore tower bell ringing to Ropley also includes working to re-introduce handbell tune ringing to Ropley and the surrounding villages, where there were once active tune-ringing teams. In September 2023 a workshop was held in the freshly restored building at St Peter's attended by over 30 prospective tune-ringers. As a result the tune ringing team at Cheriton has been re-established and an entirely new team at Stoneham Park, between Eastleigh and Southampton. Further events are planned to reach out into the local communities and introduce people to tune-ringing and its rich history



September 2023 – Handbell workshop in St Peter's

³⁹ [Hand-Bell Ringing The living tradition "Ringing For Gold" Written By Peter Fawcett \(ringingforgold.co.uk\)](https://www.ringingforgold.co.uk/)

⁴⁰ [Handbell archive finds ideal home in Huddersfield's Heritage Quay - University of Huddersfield](https://www.huddersfield.ac.uk/news/2019/09/handbell-archive-finds-ideal-home-in-huddersfield-s-heritage-quay)



Ropley's new set of 32 handbells

5. Possible areas of interest for local schools

Primary school (Key Stages 1 & 2)

[National Curriculum - History key stages 1 to 2 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[National Curriculum - Music key stages 1 to 2 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Changes within living memory. Where appropriate, to reveal aspects of change in national life.

Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally.

The lives of significant individuals in the past who have contributed to national and international achievements. Some used to compare aspects of life in different periods [for example, Elizabeth I⁴¹ and Queen Victoria,

Significant historical events, people and places in their own locality

A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality – e.g:

- The occasions when bells were rung to mark historic events, particularly since 1066, various monarchs and the gunpowder plot⁴² etc.
- Aspects of national history are reflected in the ringing of bells locally – from the introduction of curfews in 1068, to the lockdowns of Covid 19. The use of bells as a signal of enemy invasion in WW2, the Victorians and religious reform, temperance, and suffragettes etc,
- Bell founding across the ages, and bells cast in the UK now ringing across the world e.g. the Liberty Bell in the USA
- Origins of Oranges and lemons nursery rhyme its historic significance. Parallels between the development bell ringing methods and folk dancing, morris dancing, maypoles and other historic customs.
- Marianna Hagan and her philanthropy

Secondary School (Key Stages 3 & 4)

[National Curriculum - History key stages 3 and 4 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

A study over time, testing how far sites in their locality reflect aspects of national history:

The development of Church, state and society in Medieval Britain 1066-1509

The development of Church, state and society in Britain 1509-1745

Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901

Challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world 1901 to the present day

⁴¹ [How the Tudor dynasty shaped modern Britain - BBC Teach](https://www.bbc.com/teach/history-ks1/1066-1509)

⁴² [Guy Fawkes and The Gunpowder Plot | History KS1 | BBC Teach - YouTube](https://www.bbc.com/teach/history-ks1/1066-1509)

6. Acknowledgements

Elizabeth Johnson Research on the history of the bells and ringers at New Alresford
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Gareth Davies PHD study on the history of the Cambridge Ringers
Phil Watts The history of bells in Hampshire
Cathy Booth Various podcast episodes and proof reading
Contributions from other published material are referred to in the footnotes.