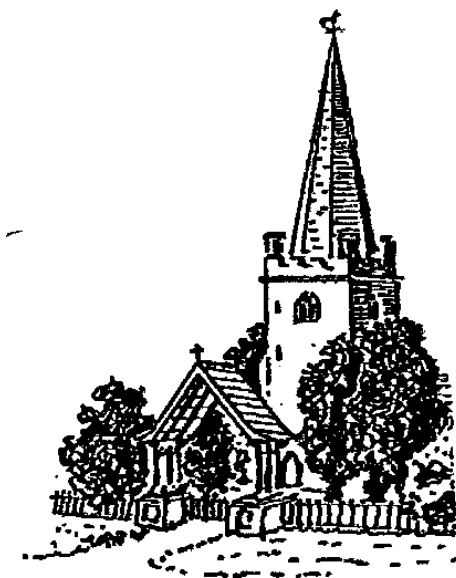


The Parish of St. Edmund

HOLME PIERREPONT



The Bells Project 2008/9

St Edmund's Bells Project – 2008/9

Background

This project arose from a 1997 survey of the bells and bellframe, which recommended the bells be retuned and re-hung with new headstocks in a new metal frame. During the eventual installation of the new frame, it was suggested that, for a number of reasons, a Ringing Gallery, just above the base of the tower would be a vast improvement on the existing Ringing Chamber. So, as one project was well underway, another was started!

The history

St Edmund's had an original peal of three bells, one cast by Henry Oldfield in 1608 and one by George Oldfield in 1667. The third was possibly recast in 1746. These were destroyed in a fire on 24 November 1874. Five new bells were installed in 1875 in a new timber frame, as a gift from Earl Manvers. The sixth bell, the treble, was given in 1956, by Lady Sybil Argles. In order to accommodate this, the second bell was raised and hung on a steel rider-frame, which in turn was mounted on the lower wooden frame. All were cast by Taylor's of Loughborough.



The old bell frame

The 1997 Survey

In July 1997, a survey by Hayward Mills Associates had indicated that much work would soon be needed to ensure the bells' safe operation.

Revival of Ringing

During the 1960's the bells were rung extensively, St Edmunds being the local centre for "Six bell" ringing. Following this, ringing was somewhat spasmodic until 1999 when, in common with many churches, it was decided



The old Ringing Chamber



Removing the bells

that St Edmund's should try to revive the tradition of church bell ringing. A new band of ringers was recruited, which included some experienced ringers, as instructors. Great support was given at this time by the then Southwell Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers. That support, for which we are so grateful, has continued right through the project. The immediate

target, of ringing in the Millennium was achieved, and so started a tradition of an Annual Bell Ringers' Service on New Year's Day, with the bells being rung to welcome the New Year. Since then, the band of ringers has increased in both size and skill.

The 2001 Survey

In June 2001, a further survey of the bells and bell frame was undertaken by Hayward Mills Associates. From our records, it appeared that since the hanging of the final bell, in 1956, little or no work had been done to the bells or the frame.

The Plan for the bells and bell frame

Following the survey, it was apparent that substantial work was needed on the bell frame, in particular, as this was beginning to move during ringing, and so was becoming unsafe. Several options were given, but the Parochial Church Council [PCC] decided that if



Clearing the debris

ringing were to continue, it would be more satisfactory to completely replace the old, worn, and loose bell frame, rather than allow it to cause damage in the future. A short term and cheaper option was considered to be a false economy.

The PCC consulted English Heritage's, bell tower engineer (Graham

Pledger), who was content with our proposals, insofar as they affected the bells and bell frame. Further advice has been given by structural engineers and our architect.

Fundraising

With the 2001 Survey as a spur to action, the band of ringers at St Edmund's and other very supportive local ringers, set out to raise the money required for the work. It was estimated in 2007 to be around £33,000. Consequent on a presentation by the local branch of the Heritage Lottery Fund, an application was made to the HLF for funding for this and other, unrelated, work. That application was rejected, on the grounds that we



Lowering the bells

planned to replace the timber bell frame with a steel one, and not with another wooden one.

Undaunted by this setback, other fundraising activities were arranged, local and national charities were canvassed for their help, and eventually funds were adequate.



The cost

The target for fund raising for the work to the bells and tower was set at £33,000. Grants and legacies totalling £14150 were obtained,

- Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN), via the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust £5000
- The Southwell and Nottingham Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers' Bell Repair Fund £3000

- The Chetwode Foundation £5000
- The Sharpe Trust £250
- R B Mills Memorial Fund (legacy) £900
- Generous donations from various individuals and organisations in the locality

The balance was raised by dint of much hard work by supporters of St Edmund's, in many ways. They included money raised by celebratory meals in church, parish holiday profits, coach outings, concerts, recitals, car boot sales and even by the hiring out of a tennis court! This stage of the project was thus fully funded and all expenditure covered.



Safely down!

A Faculty was granted in the Diocesan Consistory Court on 14 October 2008.



A well-earned break!

The Bell Project – The first phase

Work started on 28th October 2008, with the removal of the ringing room ceiling together with vast quantities of insulation and many years' accumulation of debris, which was carried down the narrow spiral

stone staircase to ground level.

A hatch was then formed in the ringing room floor, temporary lifting beams installed and the bells, fittings and bell frame dismantled



Three down!

and lowered to the ground. This was completed successfully in only four days. The bells were taken from the tower to Hayward Mills's premises in Radford on transport, which was provided free by David Palmer.

The Bell Project – The second phase

On Monday 16th February 2009, the new steel frame was delivered, and the necessary holes cut in bell chamber walls to receive the ends of the new frame. The frame sections were hoisted into position, assembled and fixed in place. The bells, which had been re-tuned, turned to provide a new unworn surface to the clappers, were returned on 3rd March, and re-hung over the next few days.



All loaded & ready to go!



New wheels and fittings

cast iron clappers, clapper bushes, cast iron staples etc, etc, bell ropes and cast iron floor bosses. The fittings of bell 2 had been overhauled/replaced and adapted to suit the new bell frame, which was mounted on hot dip galvanised heavy section steel beams. Then the bells had to be balanced on new headstocks.



Re-tuned bell & bell frame

A new ceiling with a trap door was then constructed below the new bell frame, and in order to prevent future accumulations of debris and to weatherproof the bell chamber, the apertures in the tower walls were suitably screened.

Ringling Chamber access

At the start of the project to replace the bell frame and re-tune the bells, the question of improved access to the Ringling Chamber was considered.



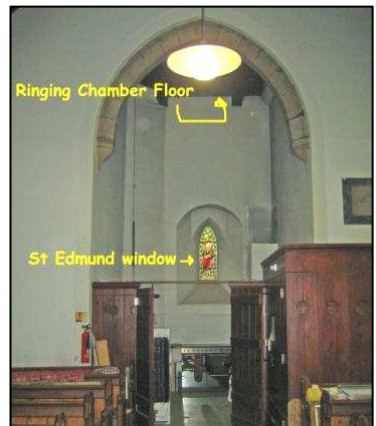
The existing Ringling Chamber was reached via a narrow stone spiral staircase, which did not coincide with the ringling room doorway so that it was necessary to step across a wide gap to enter, with only an iron rail for support. This deterred some potential ringers and was a safety issue.

The Ringling Gallery Project

the underside of the then Ringling Chamber. It was suggested, initially, that the Ringling Chamber floor was lowered by around one metre. Although this would have made the access safer, it was felt that a better option for ringling the bells would be a much lower floor.

The revised plan was to install a new Ringling Gallery in the base of the tower, immediately above the existing servery.

Above the ground-level servery area was a void of around 15 metres high, reaching up to



Additionally, it would give us some extra seating for large congregations at services and concerts

It would also make for easier ringing with a better rope length between the ringer and the bell, and a larger ringing area. In addition, the ringers would be visible from within the body of the church, a factor that may well improve recruitment of new ringers. Furthermore, the ringers would see themselves more as part of the church.

The initial plan was to site a new spiral staircase within the nave, but this did not meet with the approval of English Heritage. The alternative of a new door, opening from the existing stone spiral staircase, and giving level access to the new Ringing Gallery, including the repair and making good of the stairway stone steps, was acceptable to them.

Bruce Bradley, our Church Architect was commissioned to design a suitable balustrade, a curved glass screen being the preferred option.



Installing the temporary ringing floor

This would have a minimal effect on the ancient stonework. The steelwork was designed to be concealed within the floor.

It was also agreed that the moving of the St. Edmund window in the west wall of the tower, should be left for future consideration and that to protect it from the Ringing Gallery a glass screen should be provided.

Rawbolts anchored into the stonework with epoxy resin would bear steel girders, which would in turn, carry the floor. This

Cost

The cost of undertaking the work described above was estimated to be almost £11,800.

PCC Resolution

At a Parochial Church Council Meeting on 24 November 2008, the PCC resolved unanimously that the Churchwardens should proceed with the application for a Faculty to install a new Ringing Gallery.



Ringling Gallery – Faculty



Breaking through the tower wall!

Contemporaneously with the bell work, a Faculty application was put together for a new Ringing Gallery. It was subsequently granted on 2nd June 2009. This involved lowering the ringing floor to 3 metres above ground level and forming a new access from the existing tower stairs at the level of the new Ringing Gallery floor.

Following the completion of Stage One of the project, a temporary ringing floor was installed above the servery, accessed by ladder across the roof of the toilet cubicle! This enabled the bells to be rung for the various weddings during the summer. The retuned bells, which could be heard much better from within the church, were first rung on 17th April 2009.



Temporary access to the ringing floor

The work on the permanent Ringing Gallery started on 21st July, and was due for completion in November.

Fundraising

Clearly, without the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the bells and frame, much more money had to be raised to fund that work. Offers of interest-free loans ensured that the work was not delayed for financial reasons.



However, the efforts of the St Edmund's ringers and other members of the church have continued, and at the date of going to press, we are well on the way to achieving the required target for funding the Ringing Gallery, as well as the bells and their frame.

The happy band of ringers!

Conclusion

While it has taken some twelve years from the date of the first warning survey to completion, the result is proving to be well worth the wait.

Credits

Main contractors and bell hangers:	Hayward Mills Associates, Nottingham
Bell tuners/re-furbishers:	Hayward Mills Associates, Nottingham
Stonemason:	Gardham Stonemasonry, Sleaford
Electrician:	Crew Electrical, West Bridgford
Structural Engineers:	Ward Cole, Nottingham
Architect:	Bruce Bradley, Peart Bradley Architects, Nottingham

Thanks

St Edmund's PCC would like to record its grateful thanks to Brenda Stevenson and Colin Wightman for taking on the Project Leadership, the fund-raising and steering it to a successful conclusion. The number of people involved is considerable, too many to list here, but mention must be made of Margaret and David Left, Maureen and Gary Mitchell. The others



know who they are, and we know who they are. Our thanks are due to all of them who have contributed in any way to the completion of this project. This includes those who have contributed financially, those who have given of their time in the form of voluntary labour, and our friends from other bell towers who have helped in many ways, and continue to do so. .

Starting to install the glazed screen

Without their support and effort, often very physical, this project would not have been possible. To our contractors, and all our volunteers and benefactors, we offer our sincere thanks. We are so grateful.

Text: Ian Godson & Colin Wightman Photographs: David Left & Ian Godson

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