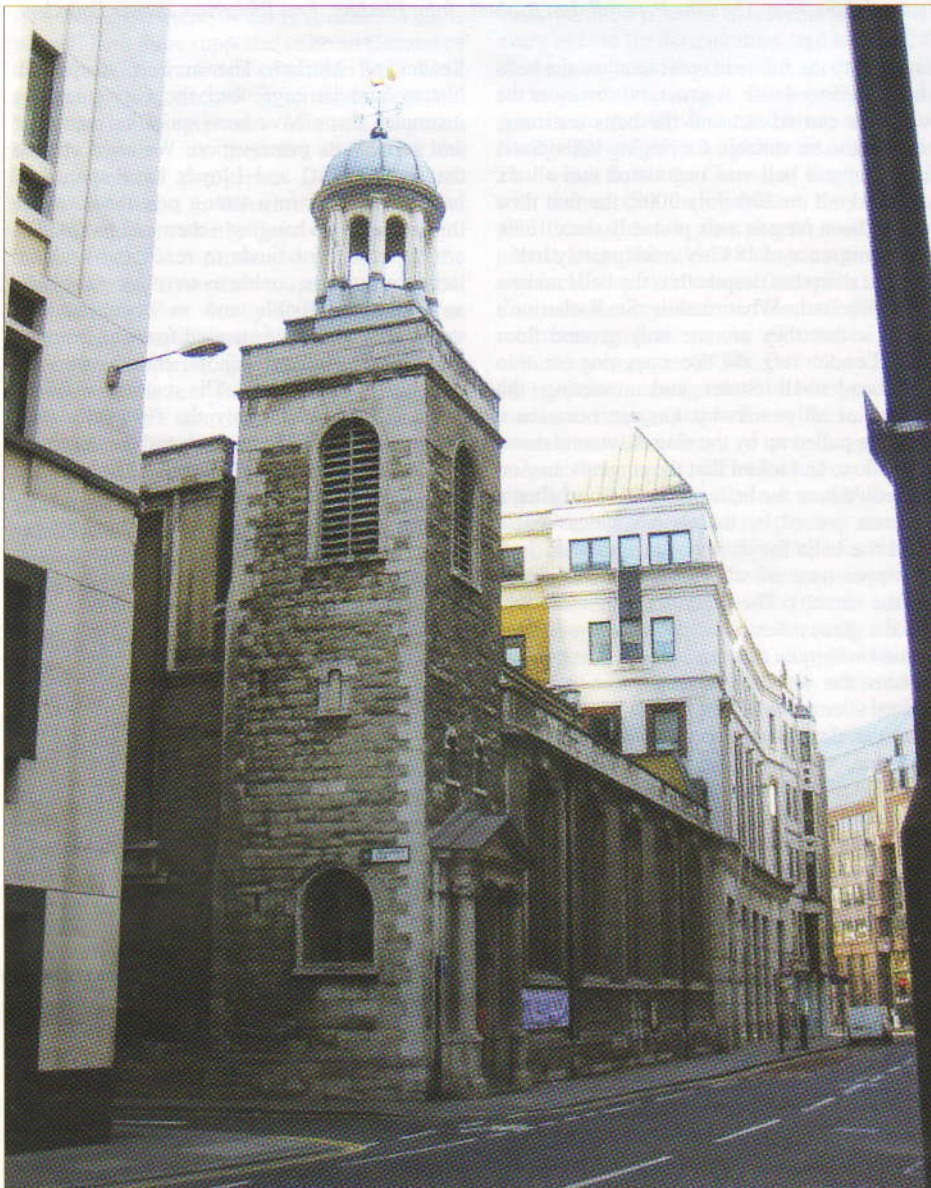


*The Weekly Journal for  
Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

No. 5055 March 14, 2008 Price £1.70  
Editor: Robert Lewis

## **Maids in White Aprons say the Bells of St Katharine's!** Cree bells to be restored *by Michael Royaltan-Kisch*



*St Katharine Cree, a reminder of Old London (Photo by the Editor)*

November 2007 saw the launch of an appeal to restore one of London's long unringed peals, the six bells of St Katharine Cree. The church is one of a few to have survived the Great Fire of 1666, and nestles between the imposing structures of St Mary Axe and the Lloyds Building. In its small tower, which dates to 1504, hangs a ring of six bells which have lain derelict and forgotten for upwards of 100 years.

The church previously contained a ring of five bells, although little is known of their origin. It seems that they were badly neglected in the years preceding the 1754 re-casting of Lester and Pack, for in 1733 The Rambling Ringers (of the College Youths) rang some Grandsire Doubles on the five bells and reported that "the bells were in such bad repair that they had much ado to make em answer".

Centuries later, and a visiting party (consisting of two Middlesex ringers and a well-known College Youth) would find a similar situation prevailing; six bells shoe-horned into a gallows end frame, hung right into the louvres and devoid of all ringing fittings, these having been removed in 1911. The Middlesex Association's bell restoration team are lucky insofar as they have very few towers in the 'unringable' bracket, and a great deal of resources available to them. St Katharine's represent an important milestone in the eventual ringability of the capital, so the chance to recover them was eagerly pursued. A proposal was put to the church and its enthusiastic vicar, to bring the bells into temporary use and demonstrate their value as an integral part of the church's life. The Guild Church Council agreed, and funds were quickly put forward for the purchase of second hand ringing fittings. Fittings were offered from far and wide, some even came from nearby City churches, including an old wheel from St Sepulchre and ropes from nearby Bishopsgate!

About 250 man hours later, and the initial try-out was arranged on the front five. It quickly became apparent that some strengthening would



(Founded by John S Goldsmith)  
 Official Journal of the  
 Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

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**POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**

One copy, 3 months £16.15  
 One copy, 6 months £29.90  
 One copy, 12 months £55.00

**Overseas**

Western Europe (incl. Eire) £70.00  
 Rest of World (Air Mail) £73.50  
 Rest of World (Airmail) £86.00

Remittances, payable to *The Ringing World*, should be addressed to Eagleside House, *The Ringing World Bankers*: NatWest  
 Sort code 60-01-17 Account No. 45502323

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 Registered in England Co. Number 1722963  
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included meat and poultry at the nearby women of the 1600s who sold the wares which Maids in White Aprons were the costumed Say the Bells of St Katharine's!'  
 were rung once again: 'Maids in White Aprons of 'Oranges and Lemons' and St Katharine's bells Hamilton Ringers performed a dazzling rendition of 'Oranges and Lemons' and St Katharine's bells course of Grandfire was duly performed! The ring had been erected inside the church and a astonishment of all present, the Chamberborough restored 17th century organ. Much to the organ music from the majestic and recently Lloyds Choir, Bejerman poetry readings, and press attended an eventful evening of music from aporns', about 150 ringers, City dignitaries and a characterful welcome by the maids in white launch on Friday, 4th November. Following a restoration, which was the subject of an appeal authorities decided to proceed with a full-scale ringers with some experience of difficult that these bells are extremely tricky to ring; on Easter Monday. Please be aware, however, installation will be the Middlesex Open Day An opportunity to ring on this characterful Street, London EC3A 3DH

**Donations for the appeal will be gratefully received, made payable to 'St Katharine Appeal, St Katharine Cree, 86 Leadenhall Street, London EC3A 3DH**

to be pronounced safe. A structural survey of the tower was carried out and the bells test-rung, and found to be suitable for ringing bells. Soon after, the tenor bell was negotiated and all six were tried out on 20th July 2007, the first time they had been rung as a six probably since 1880. The re-cast tenor of 1842 is unfortunately half a semitone sharp but despite this, the bells make a pleasant sound. What makes St Katharine's unique is that they are the only ground floor central London ring, the doors opening out onto busy Leadenhall Street and attracting the attention of all passers-by. On one occasion a police car pulled up by the church, wound down the window, and asked that the ringers carry on so he could hear the bells up close! Soon after, a film crew passed by the church and asked to record the bells for their documentary on Jack the Ripper (one of whose victims was found near the church). The ground floor feature will have the great potential to publicise the ringing tradition within its modern urban context.

*The band of helpers and supporters which rang all six bells for the first time since c.1880 (l-r): John Adams, Paul Chandler, Revd David Cawley, Steve Jakeman, Michael Royallon-Kisch, Richard Casserley, Matthew Peperell, Ian Bushell, Ian Bushell, John Pladdys, Rod Bickerton, James Saunders*



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