

# A YEAR OF BELLS



Patricia Stoughton celebrates the first anniversary of the dedication of the Royal Jubilee Bells at St. James Garlickhythe.

**I**t hardly seems a year since the Thames was lined with delighted crowds ten or more deep, its bridges overflowing and millions watching the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant on television. And leading the flotilla was a floating belfry with a ring of eight new bells cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. Commissioned by the church of St James Garlickhythe, the bells are now safely installed in the bell tower.

The project was set in motion just over two years ago. Alderman Dr Andrew Parmley, organist at St James for 30 years, describes how on a walk round Hampton Court with his Verger they heard "the Hampton Court clock bell ring out as it has done for over 500 years." This direct link with the past struck his imagination and he began to think about a new ring of bells for St James to replace the three existing bells, which had been cast at different times and were out of tune. Having recently raised a large sum to restore the church organ and confident that he could repeat the process for a new ring, he contacted Dickon Love.

Bell-ringing expert Dickon, explained in an article in *The Ringing World* in December 2011 how 'A project was conceived for a new ring of eight bells with a tenor of just over 9 cwt, to be cast [for St James Garlickhythe] at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.'

There was a structural survey to check the feasibility of the plan, particularly to make sure that the frame and ringing platform could be accommodated in the tower. Once it was judged possible, the order

was made but it had to be made quickly as with the ever increasing price of metals, estimates were only valid for two to three weeks. The new ring of bells was priced at £180,000.

Andrew found raising the money for the bells much easier than it had been for the organ. As soon as word got out, there was competition among potential donors, particularly among the Livery Companies whom he approached. And within a short space of time sufficient funds had been raised or pledged to go ahead with the project. Dickon tells how the Whitechapel Bell Foundry was contacted soon afterwards by the Diamond Jubilee Pageant Trust who, unable to actually fund such a venture themselves, were looking for some bells already due to

be cast for a City church, which they could use and return later. The idea was for a herald boat with a ring of bells to lead the Diamond Jubilee flotilla down the Thames.

Andrew explains that the two City churches of "St Magnus the Martyr and St Dunstan's had just had new bells installed so that St James' bells were being cast at the right time. Also St James' bells would be smaller and so safer to handle."

The bells were cast between February and March 2012 and are named after the senior members of the Royal Family: Elizabeth, Philip, Charles, Anne, Andrew, Edward, William and Henry, whose names are inscribed on the bells together with the Royal Coat of Arms, the names of donors and the Churchwardens of St James.

Churchwarden Lynette Stone was present at the Whitechapel Foundry for one of the castings when she discovered that her name was to be inscribed on the bell 'Charles', sponsored by the Glass Sellers Livery Company. "It was a wonderful surprise, most humbling and a great honour." It was particularly appropriate as Prince Charles had presented her with her CBE. Churchwarden Valerie Cross was moved to see her name on Prince Andrew's bell and reflected: "By some magical coincidence of situation and timing, I have made a tiny mark on the history of the City churches." Both she and Lynette were conscious that their names will live on as the bells of St James welcome congregations to worship for

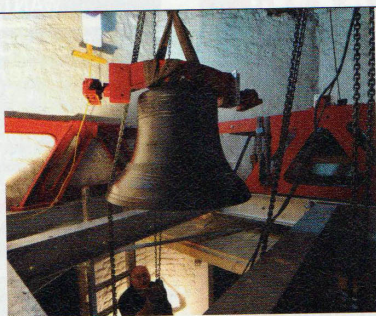
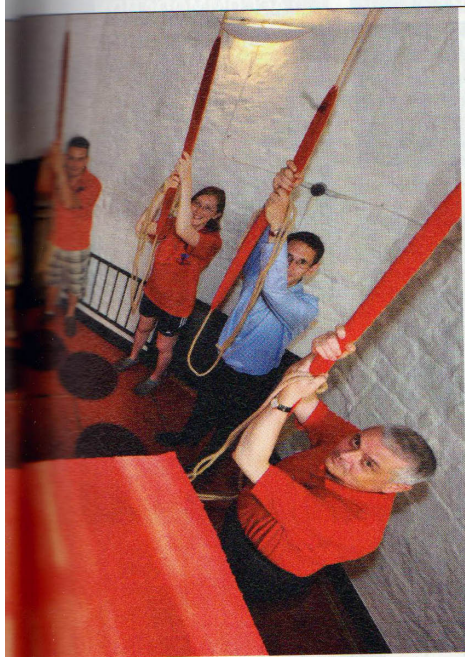


Dickon Love (centre) with a new group of ringers.



The ringers after their first peal in July 2012.





Westminster Abbey, whose bells joined in the celebrations. Top Left: the bell 'Charles'. Below left: Cake with a model of the floating belfry for the reception.

generations to come.

As well as names, some inscriptions give a distinct personality to the bells such as: 'We rang on the river Thames for the Diamond Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II' and 'Dickon Love put us here'. On Sunday 17 June 2012 the congregation arrived for the Dedication service to find the bells lined up along the nave beginning with 'Henry' and ending with 'Elizabeth'. They were decorated with two small arrangements of garlic and scallop shells – a nod to the old quays where garlic was once unloaded, and of course to St James. Many parishioners had only been able to see the floating belfry on television, so before settling in their pews they approached the bells to touch them and to take pictures before they were lifted out of view into their tower a few days later.

John Sutton, photographer and member of the choir, has recently taken up bell ringing at St James. He had unprecedented access to the casting, trials and installation of the bells. "I was very interested in the concept of ringing church bells full circle on a moving barge, a unique project with several technical challenges." Invited to the casting of two bells at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, he became the bells' unofficial photographer and followed their progress from there. We are grateful to him for the use of some of his pictures.

The service for the Dedication of the Royal Jubilee Bells was taken by Bishop John Waine, assisted by the Priest-in-Charge, the Reverend Guy Treweek.

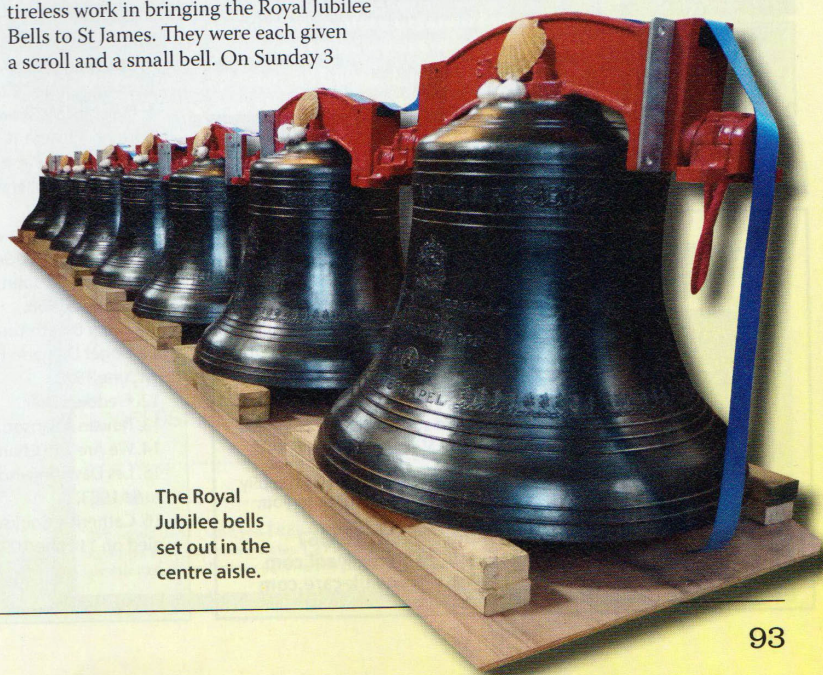
There was some fine music from the choir and organist, Andrew Parmley. Among the hymns were the appropriate and joyful Ring Forth Holy Bells to the tune of Laudate Dominum; The sacred Bells of England to the tune of Thornbury; and Raised Aloft Within the Steeple to the tune of Abbot's Leigh. As the churchwardens and clergy processed down the aisle, they paused for the Bishop to bless the 'Christening' cake, designed, baked, iced and decorated by Nina Hodgson. The service ended with Andrew's spirited rendering of Louis Vierne's Carillon de Westminster.

Shortly afterwards, during the reception, both Andrew and Dickon were called by Guy Treweek to receive thanks for their tireless work in bringing the Royal Jubilee Bells to St James. They were each given a scroll and a small bell. On Sunday 3

June 2012, the floating bells, in pride of place at the head of the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant flotilla, were greeted by joyful church bells along the river from Putney to Greenwich and beyond. Now, a year after their historic river journey, they have settled well in St James' tower, where a new group of bell-ringers is getting to know the ropes, and from where they will ring out for hundreds of years to come.

#### For more information see:

St James Garlickhythe.  
stjamesgarlickhythe.org  
The Jubilee Bells by Dickon Love,  
royaljubeebells.lovesguide.com  
Whitechapel Bell Foundry,  
www.whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk



The Royal Jubilee bells set out in the centre aisle.