



All in a row: the new ring of bells at St Magnus the Martyr await a blessing

New bells consecrated in City of London

by Prudence Fay

IN A SERVICE harking back to the Middle Ages, a ring of 12 new bells was consecrated at St Magnus the Martyr in the City of London on Tuesday evening. Bell-ringers and civic dignitaries, including the Lord Mayor of London, attended. Such a ceremony had not been held in the City “time out of mind”, said the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, who presided.

The service was based on the pontifical blessings of the old Roman service books. Its five rites may be carried out only by a bishop or a specially empowered priest, the service leaflet said.

Accompanied by trumpet calls, and prayers said and sung in Latin, Bishop Chartres washed, anointed, baptised, and censed the bells, as they stood in a row down the nave, garlanded with flowers and ribbons.

Then the Gospel was chanted (the fifth rite); and the Bishop prayed for “heavenly benediction” on the bells, so that at their sound “the fiery darts of the enemy, lightning strokes, hailstorms, and the damage of tempests may be driven far away.”

St Magnus has been without bells since the start of the Second World War, when its early-18th-century ring of ten was taken down for safe storage. In 1976 they were broken up for scrap. “There was at that time less interest in restoration, and a loss of nerve,” the Bishop, who is patron of the fund that raised £300,000 for the new bells, told the congregation.

After the service, the Lord Mayor, Alderman Ian Luder, hosted a reception at Mansion House. The bells will now be lifted into the refurbished belfry, and it is hoped that they will ring out for the first time on Easter Day.