



*The Weekly Journal for
Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

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Editor: Robert Lewis

Cornhill's new ring of 12 *by Tony Kench, Tower Secretary*



The new 11th is hoisted into the church



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

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The consecration service at St Michael's Cornhill on Sunday, 3rd April 2011 was one of the happiest services anyone could remember. The Rector, Peter Mullen, had wanted the consecration to take place during the regular Sunday morning service so that the whole parish congregation would be there, and they in turn were delighted to see almost 100 ringers there too. The new bells were laid out on the church floor, under the tower. The Bishop of London performed the ceremony, which culminated in both he and the Rector striking the new tenor a good blow - it had been suspended three feet off the ground for the purpose. And a very fine sound it made too.

Reaching that happy day had taken more than five years' hard work. The PCC had agreed back in 2005 to support a new ring provided a benefactor could be found, and when Dill Faulkes agreed to provide the funding (£135,000 at the time), the project was initiated. The main case for a new ring was the poor tonal quality of the old bells, with a subsidiary case of making the bells easier to ring. A study by the late Harry Windsor, via the Towers & Belfries Committee, calculated that tower movement could be more than halved if the tenor weight was reduced from 42 to 32cwt, and with the encouragement of the church architect this became the plan.

The case was put to the London DAC in March 2006. The DAC was aware there was some opposition to replacing the existing 12, so invited soundings. It became clear that it would help if the matter of the tonal quality could be decided by fact rather than opinion, so we commissioned William A. Hibbert as a respected independent expert to analyse the tuning of the old bells. His report, dated August 2006, showed graphically that many of the harmonics were considerably out of true (up to three semi-tones out in some cases), and being a mixed ring from six different casting periods between 1728 and 1968, they were not even consistent with each other. His report was influential, and in late 2006 the DAC issued their certificate of approval for the new ring. English Heritage had no objection.

Also during 2006 the preservation lists were revised. Previously none of the Cornhill bells was listed, but the new lists required preservation of any bells that were part of the original ring in a tower. This meant preserving the only three bells at Cornhill that were part of the original 1728 ring: the 3rd, 4th and 7th. We agreed to retain them in the tower, above the ringing peal, with the old 7th as a chiming bell.

The next step, in December 2006, was to apply to the Chancellor of the Diocese of London for a faculty. Unopposed faculties can be granted quite quickly, but when there are objections a long process has to be followed whereby the petitioners respond to the objections, further submissions are invited, both sides respond to those too, and so on. The correspondence file is 2 feet wide.

The objectors' main argument was that this was a fine and rare example of an 'old-style' 18th century ring that should be preserved



Cornhill's magnificent Hawksmoor tower

intact. We countered that it was not an '18th century ring' since half the bells were 20th century replacements; that there were other and better 18th century-based rings nearby at St Sepulchre and Southwark; and that given the tuning deficiencies of the existing bells, a new true-harmonic ring would sound very much better. Secondary arguments concerned the difficulty of ringing the old bells: the objectors said they could be rung well enough by a good band, which was not disputed, but we maintained that the slightly lighter ring proposed would reduce tower movement and improve their general ringability.

We were reminded that a contested faculty is a legal process: the Chancellor is a QC, and would decide the matter on the basis of evidence, as would any court. Our professional legal advice, kindly offered *pro bono*, was to keep all arguments factual, without hint of emotion, and to expect that having no expertise in bell tuning and tower movement, the QC would look for facts and look for independent experts.

The Chancellor did indeed find this a troublesome case, and asked for further submissions from both sides in mid-2007. It took him over a year to find an independent expert witness, in the person of the diocesan bells adviser of another diocese, whose report in February 2009 endorsed our case for a new ring. The Chancellor circulated the report, saying that unless there were further objections he would proceed to determine the matter on the basis of the written submissions. The objectors continued to object, but in January 2010 the Chancellor wrote saying he had reached a provisional judgment that the case for a new ring had been made.

In August 2010 the Chancellor published his Judgment, authorising the faculty to be granted and the new ring to proceed. His Judgment set out with great clarity the basis on which the case was decided; as our legal adviser had predicted, the Chancellor was influenced by the factual nature of our proposition, and was dismissive of the 'emotional nature' of many of the objections.



Dill Faulkes, the original benefactor

He also accurately noted that the objectors were not representative of the main body of actual ringers in the City, the ASCY, which had voted support for the project at a business meeting in 2006 by ‘a huge majority’ (about 60 to 1).

So we were now ready to proceed – but the cost, five years onward, had risen to £195,000, and our original benefactor, Dill Faulkes, was no longer prepared to provide more than £80-85K, leaving over £100K more to be raised. This was done very quickly: £64K was raised from nine other individual bell donors, all ASCY members or other regular ringers at Cornhill. Other bells were donated by ASCY Officers and Past Masters (the 8th) and the ASCY Bell Fund (the 11th), and many smaller donations were gratefully received from other ringers and from Cornhill parishioners. With the inclusion of £20K in claimable Gift Aid, the £195,000 target was reached within weeks.

After a final round of decisive endorsement from the PCC, the order was placed with Taylors in November 2010. Casting began immediately and was completed in mid-February; a party of Cornhill parishioners visited Loughborough for one of the casting days, to much delight. Tuning was completed by mid-March, and checked for us at the foundry by Bill Hibbert. The nine old bells being traded in were removed to the foundry on February 26th, and the new bells were delivered on April 2nd. After all that had



The new tenor just fits through the doors

passed, one reason for the great spirit of happiness at the consecration service next day was that all the tribulations were now left behind, and all present, ringers and parishioners, were looking forward to the new bells with great joy.

The new tenor is 32-1-6 in D flat, and the new ring is hung in a new-built frame that re-uses a number of components of the 1960 frame, on the same foundation beams but with some added torsional bracing. The first ringing took place at a tryout evening on May 27th, and the first peal was rung on June 26th (p.749). This is the first Taylor 12 in the City of London since St Paul’s in 1878, and it is causing immense delight. The parishioners could immediately tell the difference, and are thrilled by the obvious musical quality of the new bells.



Peter Hayward of John Taylor & Co.

We have all been impressed by the craftsmanship and commitment of the Taylor team: the bells themselves are superb, and the bellhanging (not easy rebuilding a heavy iron frame in situ) has been of the highest quality. The result is a new 12 that has more than met the case for it: not only in its exhilarating true-harmonic tone but also in the fact that tower movement is indeed much reduced. We are grateful to all the benefactors whose generosity made the new bells possible, and we are satisfied that a good investment has been made in providing a first class ring of bells for the long term future of this prominent City church.

CC Publications

The address given in last week’s ‘Learning Together’ article (p.807) is out of date. Barbara Wheeler’s address is
**2 Orchard Close,
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Please do not assume that we know where you live. If you are submitting editorial copy to *The Ringing World* please be sure to include your full postal address **EVERY TIME!**

Editorial

We have a wealth of interesting material for you this week, from Tony Kench’s account of the Cornhill project and Dave Jones’s advice on gudgeon lubrication to an entertaining account of the 51st Italian national ringing meeting.

Following last week’s report of a bell theft we now hear of another: this one was at Bix, near Henley, where scaffolding for roof repairs gave the thieves easy access. They failed to steal a second, heavier, bell.

Jim Heading’s letter, replying to Rich Westman’s of a few weeks ago, makes thought-provoking reading, in particular when he advocates a teacher accreditation scheme. We look forward to receiving further correspondence on this theme.

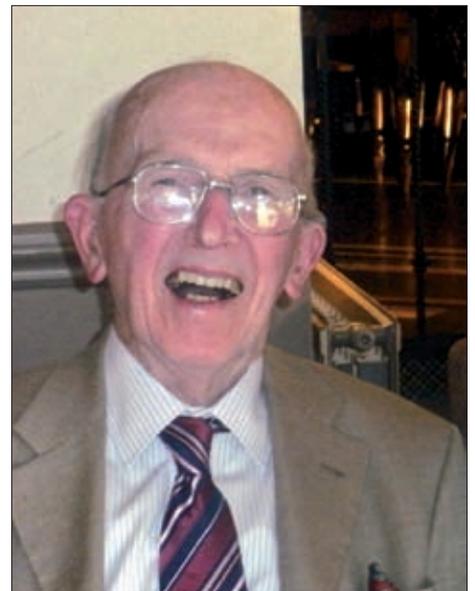
FRED BONE

First Peal Congratulations

Mick Goldsmith

Peter Baker 8.2.25 - 15.7.11

We sincerely apologise to Angela Hill for the omission of a photograph of the late Peter Baker from the obituary in last week’s issue. We reproduce this delightful portrait below.



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