

TOWER REPORT 2023

We are pleased to report that the last of the work for refurbishment, rehangng and augmentation of the bells was successfully completed in April 2023 with the installation of the new ships ladders. The completion of the project, which was formally launched in April 2018, was marked by a 'Thanksgiving Service' in the church followed by an 'End of Bells Celebration' in the WCC on Sunday 4th May. The new ships ladders make access to the bells and roof much easier permitting tower open days, of which there were five in 2023, with many members of the congregation and local residents being given guided tours; more are planned for 2024. In addition, there have been two school visits and five visits from brownies, cubs, and scouts.

There some 19 regular members of the band attending on Thursdays and Sundays. On Monday evenings a bell handling practice is held with the clappers tied and the sound of the bells provided by the simulator. There are occasional method ringing practices held on the dummy bell and simulator on weekday mornings.

On the first Thursday evenings of even months, we have been holding 8/10 bell practices. These alternate with 10/12 bell practices for more advanced ringers held on odd months.

As the bells were still out of the tower in September 2022, they were unable to be rung in memoriam HM Queen Elizabeth or for the proclamation of HM King Charles. If it was any consolation our bell muffles were lent to Much Hadham, Little Hadham and Albury church towers where the members of all four towers joined together to ring in fully muffled sadness.

Fortunately, the St Michael's bells were able to be rung on Saturday 6th May 2023 in celebration of the coronation of King Charles III.

Out of five peal attempts in 2023 on the rehung bells it is unfortunate that only two were successful. The first on the front 8 bells being 5056 changes Cambridge Surprise Major on 15th April and the first on 12 bells being 5040 Bristol Surprise Maximus on 25th November.

There were 9 quarter peals attempts of which 8 were successful:

Plain Bob Doubles on 8th and 14th May to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles III. Grandsire Cinques on 15th July to mark Dick and Pat Prime Diamond Wedding Anniversary that day, Little Bob Royal on 19th August, Stedman Cinques on 16th September, Plain Bob Cinques on 22nd October, Plain Bob Minor on 29th October and St. Clements and Plain Bob Minor on 24th December. The unsuccessful attempt being Little Bob Maximus on 28th January.

There have been visits to the tower by several ringing groups including Young@Herts (the Hertfordshire young ringers' group), a canal boat trip by a group of ringers including Mike Wigley who rang from his wheelchair, the Hertford County ringers for a quarterly practice, the Waltham Abbey and Epping ringers on their annual outing,

As part of the fundraising a separate Faculty permits donors to sponsor one of the thirteen new cast iron bell headstocks. In recognition a brass plaque is fixed the headstock of a chosen bell. Eleven headstocks have been sponsored to date, two are still available for sponsorship.

Nick Hughes March 2024