

MONKTON REPAIRS AND AUGMENTATION

The ancient tower of St Mary Magdalene was built in the 12th century, and received its present top stage in the 14th. It is very likely that new bells were provided at this time, though how many, or by whom they were cast we don't know. The present ring of four was cast at different dates; it is possible that Monkton, like so many local villages, had three bells by the time that the English Reformation took place.

The 17th century was the "golden era" for Monkton's bells. The third was cast in 1615 by the great Kent bellfounder, Joseph Hatch, whose foundry was at Ulcombe, near Maidstone. The treble bell was cast — possibly added to the peal — by the same founder in 1633. Following the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1661, two bells, the second and the tenor, were recast by the Canterbury founder, Thomas Palmar I, whose foundry was in St Dunstan's parish, near the present West Station.

The bells were well looked after at the time, and the earliest record of a payment is dated 11 October 1728: "Paid Ye ringers at the King's [George II] Coronation 2s 6d" [12½p]. With the passage of time, however, the bells fell into disrepair and around 1870 the tenor bell, being cracked, was sold. This left three bells in a minor key.

In 1910, the then Vicar, Revd Watkin S Williams, wrote to John Taylor & Co, Bell Founders of Loughborough, for a specification for restoring the bells. Taylors' report did not make pleasant reading: "we beg to report that the whole of fittings and framework are in a most dilapidated condition". The resulting restoration involved the tuning of the three bells at Loughborough, providing them with all new fittings and installing them in a new cast-iron frame with space for a tenor bell. It all cost £89.4.0d! Their offer to provide a new tenor bell (£64) could not be accepted owing to the cost. And there matters rested, with the bells being kept in good repair, until 2012.

In that year, the Derbyshire church of St Giles, Sandiacre, was having its peal remodelled, and the discarded 3rd bell was found to be almost exactly the right note for Monkton, who had been enquiring at Loughborough for a replacement tenor. A friend of Monkton church put down a deposit to secure the bell which Taylors were holding, and a local benefactor stepped in to pay the balance of its metal value — rather more than in 1911. Various grants and practical assistance enabled the bell to be tuned and re-fitted and it arrived in Monkton Church of 18 January 2014, its newly engraved inscription telling the story.

<i>bell</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>inscription</i>	<i>weight</i>
Treble 27¾"	D	iofeph hatch made me M P C W (H) 1633	3-1-22
Second 2½"	C#	H P I P T P 1661	3-2-13
Third 32"	B	iofeph hatch made me 1615	5-0-3
New Tenor 34¼"	A	J: TAYLOR & Co. FOUNDERS LOUGHBOROUGH 1880 ONCE MORE WE'RE FOUR MONKTON 2013	7-0-9

The Association's Heavy Brigade, under Redleader Brian Butcher, were awaiting the arrival of the bell which had to be trundled up the long slope to the church gate, thence across a very soggy churchyard to the west door. Tackle having been rigged, the bell was "persuaded" to leave the delights of the churchyard and to take up temporary residence on the tower floor. There, in the presence of a packed congregation, it was dedicated by the Bishop of Dover on Sunday, 9 February. The intercessions were led by David Cawley, who had a great deal to do with acquiring the bell. In the meantime, a

century of rust had been removed from the frame, and it was painted to professional standards by Tony Goodman and the Minster-in-Thamet gang (Tony has done wonders with Minster's notorious five, and is successfully training a new band). The tower was rewired throughout, electric lighting and a power point being installed in the upper chambers for the first time. The missing half of the bell chamber floor was installed, a new floor having been laid in the ringing chamber a few years ago: this now had to be modified with a hatchway for the bell and various improvements made to render the rather long step-ladder less formidable.

The Heavy Brigade returned to hang the replacement tenor on 1 March, and with certain improvements to the roping of the front three, Kent's latest ring of four should be ringing by the middle of the month.

David Cawley

Contacts for Monkton are as for Minster-in-Thamet. Please respect the fact that there has been no tradition of regular ringing for many years, and there are houses quite close to the church, and we would like to continue good neighbours!



Click on the thumbnails to display a larger picture. If you hover your cursor on the left or right of a picture you'll see a "<" or ">" symbol. Click on these to navigate. Users with touchscreens may not see the "<" or ">" symbol, but touching the right or left of the picture will still work. When you've had enough click on "close".

BEARSTED REPAIRS

A broken gudgion on the second left Bearsted with only five ringable bells for several months while the headstock and wheel were replaced. The ringer at the time was rather shocked! Some of the BRF gang rescued the bell and the broken bits went to Whitechapel for repair. The job was finished by June and all is well again.



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REHANG AT BREDHURST

Back in October 2012 two of the BRF gang were called in to Bredhurst (Rochester District) to remove the two small bells hung in a turret there. This was very simple job, since there was already scaffolding in place and it's doubtful if the two bells together weighed more than a hundredweight. This being the case, the job was completed and the two bells loaded into the back of a churchwarden's car within a couple of hours. What we didn't know at the time was that Whitechapel were going to pass the rehangng over to the gang too. So on 1 December 2012, a bitterly cold morning, three more of us were atop the scaffolding manoeuvring the bells back into position. This involved drilling holes and filling them with epoxy resin to secure studding to fix the bearing plates. This stuff is reputed to cure in about an hour, but we spent quite some time trying to get more resin out of the pump gun before it went off. Anyway, all went well and the two Mears & Stainbank 1866 bells are back in business for some time yet. Click on the pictures below for larger images.



A NEW SIX FOR KENT

Well, not quite yet. However the existing Gillett & Johnston bell (9-2-19) at St Giles, Farnborough, in the Lewisham District was removed by the Heavy Gang on the morning of 2 January 2012. This bell is to be joined (independently) by a new miniature ring of six (tenor 2¾ cwt). Five of these new bells are part of the front six of the ring of ten that was originally cast for Old St Martin's, Worcester. It's hoped that the new ring will be up and running in time for Easter. [*Written 4 January 2012.*]



Thanks to Brian Butcher for the photos above.

Postscript. They didn't actually make it for Easter, but the hanging took place at the end of May and the bells were first rung to a quarter of Cambridge Minor on Friday 1 June, the band consisting almost entirely of the people who'd helped with the installation.



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A NEW THREE IN KENT?

The three at Ditton ("hung for swing chiming" according to the Handbook since 1986) have been chimed for years. However when a rope broke recently one of the locals Googled for rope suppliers in Kent. Although this wasn't a great success they did find the KCACR website and made contact with Brian "Redleader" Butcher. Brian went along and fixed some new top ends to the existing ropes and was surprised to discover that the three larger bells are actually hung for full circle ringing. The back two required a little more work to make them ringable again, but he was able to ring the treble up.

So it came about that the BRF "Heavy Gang" arrived at Ditton on 6 February 2010 armed with grease, oil, ground pulleys and the odd slider. After the installation of the pulleys, the cutting and fitting a new slider, the relocating of two garter holes and a lot of cleaning up, the "new" three were rung to rounds and slow and quick sixes. It's not often that one can note that the best bell in the tower is an 1897 Warner job, but it has to be said that the back two are not musical. They are not the easiest of bells to ring (apart from anything else one has to stand facing the wall!), so ringing will be restricted to experienced ringers, and will not be permitted for long periods.

It's not clear why Ditton were consigned to the "chiming only" slot. Stahlschmidt noted quaintly in 1887 that the two larger bells (ie the second and third) were "quite lately rehung and in thorough order". The treble was added ten years later and the current three-bell frame looks to be a complete job. So were the back two hung in a frame for three, or were all three rehung again in 1897?

Unfortunately the Heavy Gang didn't have time to investigate inscriptions in any detail, but the following is an amalgam of Stahlschmidt, Dove and digital photography.

- treble (2cwt ish), inscription: Cast by John Warner and Sons Ltd London (crown), Victoria RI 1897 (waist);
- second (2½cwt ish), inscription: TM CW WH 1656 (crown);
- tenor (3cwt ish), inscription: Edward Middleton CW 1717 (crown).

The second was probably cast by William Hatch, the last Hatch to operate at Ulcombe. It seems possible that the "TM" might have been an ancestor to the Edward Middleton of 1717.

The tenor is probably by John Waylett, who produced at least another 25 bells for Kent, seven (now eight) of which were cast in 1717.

According to Stahlschmidt the tingtang was cast in 1825, and he appends the solitary name of "Borodino" to it. Borodino was the site in 1812 of what was apparently the bloodiest battle of all time, when Napoleon and the Russians he took on lost around 75,000 men in a day. There were a number of battleships called Borodino, but they were all Russian, so the Ditton bell is unlikely to be a ship's bell. Bell historians it's down to you now!



SANDHURST



For many years now there has been a cracked fifteenth-century bell sitting on the floor of the ringing chamber at Sandhurst. Stahlschmidt provisionally attributes this bell to a John Kebyll, with a date between 1460 and 1485. There are records at St Stephen's, Walbrook, of payments being made to John Kebyll for bellhanging. This John was actually a wheelwright, so it's by no means certain that he cast bells. The inscription on the bell is *In multis annis resonet campana Johannis* (may John's bell ring out for many years), and it is known as the John bell. It isn't clear whether the John in question is Kebyll, but founders in those days were often lavish in their own praise, so it may well be.



With the advent of welding techniques to repair bells, it has been decided that the old bell should be reinstated in its rightful place as the fifth of the six, and so the Kent BRF gang were called in to help remove it to safer storage prior to going off for welding and retuning.

The photographs show members of the BRF gang preparing to fit lifting tackle, John ignominiously leaving the churchyard on the back of a tractor, and the coins found under the bell. For those too young to remember, the coins are 4 x 2/-, 1/-, 6d, 3d, 4 x 1d (a total of 10/1 or about 50p), and the "new money" consists of a 50p, a 10p, 2 x 2p and 5 x 1p (69p in total). It's appreciated that this sum will not go a long way to paying for the welding of John, but it's an interesting find nonetheless.

Many thanks to Richard Cutchey for the photos.





The photos on the left (courtesy Soundweld) show the two sides of John after grinding out the cracks and prior to the welding process. Let's hope they have some industrial grade sticking plaster for this job!

The story finally closed on 21 August 2009*, when the Heavy Gang returned to Sandhurst to remove the Taylor fifth from its frame and replace it with John. This is probably the first time in the history of the BRF that we've actually had, in the same tower, one fifth being lowered on one set of tackle and another being raised at the same time — they passed each other about half way up the tower. Suffice it to say that the welded fifteenth century John matches in beautifully with the other five, a very fitting end to the project.

* . . . well, not quite

After a lot of discussion and false trails John has now arrived at his new home as the tenor to the augmented six at Pitcombe in Somerset. He's lost a bit of weight since leaving Kent and now clocks in at 9-0-3 instead of 9-3-25. The new ring was dedicated on 4 May 2014 and the first quarter on the six was on the 14th. The following is part of a letter sent from Brian Shingler of Pitcombe:

I am writing to let you know how pleased we are in Pitcombe with the bell we had from St Nicolas's [Sandhurst]. Whitechapel have done an excellent job of tuning it to the other bells, and rehung the whole ring augmented from three to six. I am attaching a photo of the bell as it is now rehung, with its additional engraved inscription. You may also be interested to listen to a YouTube video of the first touch on the new ring, which is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thITUF5x3wM> taken by Dave Kelly of the Keltek Trust.



NEWNHAM

We're pleased to be able to tell you that work has now finished at Newnham. The six were rung for the first time on Friday 29 May 2009, and the Rev Richard Birch was able to call the first touch (Grandsire Doubles) on his new bells. The blend of ancient (15th century) and modern (2009) works well, and they are a very pleasant ring. For details of weights etc visit [Dove online](#).

A rather novel striking competition was held on Sunday 7 June: [clicking here](#) will unfold the story.



The bells at the Foundry in Loughborough
[thanks to Taylor's for permission to use
this photo]



The new treble



Looking up through the three tiers
(tenor, 4th, 2nd)



Treble (left) and second at the top

Brian Butcher sent us this report of BRF activity at Newnham in February: These bells were taken out on 10 January on a rather cold morning. We were able to move the bells across the churchyard quite easily as it was frozen so hard. We will have to have another plan when they come back!

The bells are to be augmented to six. One bell has been donated by the Keltek Trust and one new bell is to be cast by Taylors. For further details of the bells at Newnham check out Dickon Love's [Church Bells of Kent](#) site.



The photos (thanks for these Brian) show (L) Newnham bells in the distinctly icy looking churchyard, treble at front of shot to tenor at the back, and (R) the derelict six at Eastling

Brian added: This project has sparked interest at Eastling, a derelict six. I am waiting the reply of the DAC archeologist to see how much of this we have got to keep. The priest in charge here restored the bells in her previous parish and is keen to do something here.

CHEVENING NOW AN EIGHT

Chevening is now an eight, with the two new trebles being installed on 10/13 December 2007. The two newbies weighed in at 3-1-21 and 3-2-13 respectively.



The pictures show (from top left) drilling for the frameside fitting of the new treble; lowering the new second into place; the two new bells safely hung (treble rear left, second on the right).

This was not the most straightforward of installation jobs, since most augmentations don't involve drilling holes through 8 inch concrete floors for the ropes — especially when there is only just over 3 feet clearance for the drill.

The first practice night on the octave took place on 18 December 2007, and they are a delight to ring.

GUIDELINES FOR BRF GRANT APPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Note that paragraph 4 below was amended following discussion at the general committee meeting on 23 August 2008.

1. The KCACR Bell Restoration Officer should be contacted at an early stage, and certainly before quotations for the work being considered are requested.

2. KCACR can help with bell restoration in two ways:
 - a. By practical help in doing some of the work, or in some cases all of the work, in the tower.
 - b. By financial assistance in the form of a grant.
3. Note: if a grant is awarded, this will not be reduced if practical assistance is given but a grant may be reduced if no approach is made to KCACR for possible practical help.
4. All applications for grants are considered by the general committee of the KCACR, and all grants are based on the amount of funds available at the time of application. **Grant monies offered will be available for up to five years from the date of offer, after which time the offer will lapse and a new application will be required.**
5. More than one quotation should be obtained and help can be given in considering and comparing the work described.
6. Proposals to change main bearings should be dependent on inspection and a proven requirement since opinions vary as to whether this is always necessary. Grants may be reduced if it is considered that bearings are going to be replaced unnecessarily.
7. Building and other work to towers may be considered.
8. Augmentation to higher numbers will be considered less favourably.
9. Single bells and chimes will be considered.
10. Grants will be paid on the satisfactory completion of the work to the specification provided.
11. An invitation for a representative of KCACR to attend any dedication service is not a strict requirement but gives an opportunity to present any grant cheque.

To download a PDF format copy of these guidelines to assist you in discussions with PCC etc, please click [here](#).

*Brian Butcher
KCACR BRF Officer
Dec 2005/Aug 2008*

KCACR INSURANCE UPDATE

Further to the note which appeared on this page recently, a brief résumé of the Association's insurance cover is now available [here](#).

EASTRY

After a day of fitting up lifting tackle the previous Saturday the BRF gang were busy at work on 26 April 2007 lowering the bells before loading onto transport destined for Whitechapel. After being tuned and having their three new companions cast, they will head off to Somerset where Matthew Higby will construct the necessary fittings before they come back to Kent.



The picture shows the tenor being tilted somewhat to get it through the door — it's possible that this bell may be a bit heavier than the 18cwt currently quoted. It was cast in 1740 by Robert Catlin, who probably built the frame.

The three new bells were cast at Whitechapel on 11 May. There was a bit of a delay before the job was completed and it wasn't until the end of January 2008 that the bells were back in situ. There was a tryout on 25 January and Redleader Butcher tells us that they have have tuned up really well and on completion of various adjustments should be a good 8.

MEREWORTH

On Saturday 12 January 2008 the KCACR's BRF Heavy Gang descended on Mereworth to remove the six bells there. There is a massive plan here to virtually rebuild the tower and refurbish the whole church, at a total cost of not far short of a million quid. The removal of the bells was a fairly standard operation, but the bells themselves and their collection from the tower merit a few words.

The founder of these bells, Joseph Eayre, seems to have cast only these bells in Kent (though if anyone knows different please get in touch). He, according to H B Walters' book, built a foundry "of brick in the form of a bell" at St Neots in about 1735. One of his successors in business was one Robert Taylor, who eventually became the first of a long

line of founders of that name at Loughborough. It's an interesting thought that Taylors have once again incorporated an Eayre into their management.

As mentioned above, the dismantling job was fairly routine, being completed in around 5 hours. However, the state-of-the-art tackle used to remove the bells from the porch onto the lorry was quite something. Redleader was positively emotional as he gazed at the radio-controlled operation of the crane. One has to admit that the gear was pretty impressive, with a hook the size of a decent dinner plate and a lifting capability of around 7½ tons (tonnes even).

Update September 2009: The bells were returned to Mereworth in late June 2009 and were hung by Whites on 1/2 July. The first practice on the bells was on 14 July and on the 18th they were rung for their first wedding in 18 months. There is a splendid front-page writeup in *The Ringing World* of 14 August, followed by some supplementary info from David Cawley on page 897 of the 4 September issue.



The tenor, cast by Joseph Eayre in 1746



The lifting gear — note the man with the control pad below the bell



Lifting gear with the tower
as a backdrop

The radio control which Redleader would love to have as part of the KCACR Heavy Gang's kit (we don't actually know what he'd **do** with it, but we have to humour him)

Thanks to Brian Butcher for the photos.

UNRINGABLES

The Central Council Bell Restoration Committee have come up with a new category of "unringable". Their definition of an unringable ring is one where "a local band would have difficulty ringing the bells continuously for 15 minutes without a break". OK, if they want to create a new category, it may be better as I have suggested to John Barnes, to use a numbered scale which gives an idea of the condition of the bells, such as used by the Suffolk Guild and what I like to call "the rickety scale". I fear that if bells are listed as "unringable" then many ringers will consider them in some way dangerous and make no attempt to ring them. Also John was saying how much progress has been made in reducing the number of unringables. I think this new definition will only serve to "top up" the unringable figures considerably. On this basis, I have not forwarded information on towers in Kent that might be considered for this new category for the 2007 CC unringables survey. The definition as used would, I calculate, make around 20 rings in Kent "unringable".

Brian Butcher

LYNSTED



The new treble has been delivered to Lynsted, and local ringers are fabricating their own frameside (there is already supporting metalwork). The BRF will be installing shortly to augment this ring to a six.

The "pre-used" bell was part of a clock chime at Perry Hill, Catford. It was cast by Warners in 1889 and weighs in at around 4cwt.

DETLING

A call to the BRF to fix a new rope seemed a fairly routine sort of job, but Detling was a little unusual. Firstly access had to be via a longish ladder, since there were no steps or spiral staircase to the bellchamber. Secondly, the bell turned out to be one of Joseph Hatch (of Ulcombe)'s earliest bells. He started business in 1602 and worked until around 1639, and the bell at Detling is dated 1603. (The fifth at Waltham and the third and tenor at Egerton were cast in 1602.)



The photo on the left shows a general view of the bell. Note the massive skirting of the soundbow (an attempt at tuning), and the fact that the bell has been quarter turned at some point — not too long ago, judging by the newish paint on the clapper and the relatively modern headstock. The date (1603) is clearly visible in the photo on the right.

David Cawley updates the above on 15 February 2010: The bell was in fact rehung for swing chiming in 1974 by Whitechapel, Harry Parkes doing the work, which included getting all his gear into the tower, packing up the bell from underneath and drilling out the staple in situ; and then a second visit including bringing the new fittings up the ladder and rehanging the bell. When I visited Kent that year I saw Harry and he gave me a "picturesque" account of the procedure.

The inscription reads "Joseph Hatch made me 1603". The bell is 27" diameter and probably weighs around 2½ to 3 cwt. The leaflet in the church says that there were originally four bells in the tower, the others being sold in 1861 to pay for new pews (no souls, those Victorians). However there is only a frame for three, and there are only three old holes in the floor below, so it seems that a bit of artistic licence is involved here. Stahlschmidt, writing in 1887, also reckons that there were originally three. It has to be said that Detling's bell is not one of the more musical Hatch offerings, but at 404 years old it's not doing too badly.

REDLEADER GOES TO BORSTAL



Well, we'd suspected it for some time, but the photos above say it all. Brian (Redleader) Butcher seems to have changed his colour scheme for these shots, kindly supplied by Peter Romney. Unfortunately Peter didn't tell us what Brian was actually *doing* at Borstal, but there seems to be a bell involved, so it must be alright.

. . . later that week . . . Brian brings us up to date on Borstal, the story so far. It seems that Peter was approached to investigate the single bell, since there was a rumour that it was cracked. The problem was found to be the clapper assembly which had been fabricated from a piece of metal strap and a short length of cord supporting half a sash weight to strike the bell! The bell is a John Warner job, 1878, 22" diameter (just over a hundredweight probably) and sounds a note of --- well let's just say it sounds! A replacement clapper will be provided in due course

HAWKINGE

Below are some pics of the single bell installed at St Luke's Hawkinge. This is the bell from St Michael's Hawkinge which must be one of the most travelled bells in Kent. It was taken out when the church was sold as a residence over 10 years ago. It was stored at Brian Butcher (KCACR Bell Restoration Officer)'s house until it was offered to Waltham as one of their new trebles. It was then taken to Waltham and transported to Hayward Mills in Nottingham and then to Taylors. It was found to be too light and was transported back to Brian's place. It visited Chartham for their flower festival and finally on 27 January 2007 was installed in the "new" church at Hawkinge on condition that it is returned to KCACR if no longer required. The bell has no inscription, is thought to be 14th century, is 25¼ inches in diameter and sounds approximately F sharp.



The photos show the new church at Hawkinge, the old bell (tastefully painted gold) and the new bell safely in its new home

ST MARGARET, ROCHESTER

After having been unringable for the best part of 30 years the bells at St Margaret's were lowered from the tower by the Kent BRF gang (with a lot of help from the locals) on 3 September 2005. The frame came down a couple of weeks later, leaving the residents with a huge pile of timber at the foot of the tower and a thin layer of dust over almost the entire church. Thanks to Ray Shuter for these pictures of the frame and the gang.



Three sections of the frame on their way to terra firma (the frameside on the right is about 15 feet long!)



The pile of timber at the foot of the tower al fresco lunch provided by the locals for the gang

After a long wait and a lot of hard work by many the octave at St Margaret's were at last back in action on the morning of Sunday 26 March 2006 after having been silent for a period of over 30 years. This was the time when a capacity congregation saw the Archdeacon of Rochester, the Venerable Peter Lock, dedicate the newly rehung bells, which are now rung from the ground floor and are now hung clockwise. The processional hymn prior to the dedication was "Ding dong! Merrily on high". Despite this hymn's association with other events in the church calendar, there is in fact no reference in it to anything remotely related to Christmas — it's all about bells and their ringers, and seems entirely appropriate to the occasion. Maybe it was the tune which somehow called up memories of wassailing. However this gave Archdeacon Peter a wonderful lead-in for his introductory remarks, something along the lines of "May I take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful Christmas"!

After the blessing and the handing over of the bells, a band of mainly local ringers rang for a few minutes and were duly applauded by the congregation.

After the end of the service a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung by a group of people who'd been involved in some way with the restoration work or training the new band: Frank Lewis 1, Malcolm Smith 2, Anita Perryman 3, Arthur Vidgeon 4, Alan Driver 5, Brian Butcher 6, Neil Jones 7, Phil Stott 8.

The church is now in the process of training a new band with the help of ringers from neighbouring towers and re-establishing a schedule of ringing after 30 years of silence. Whilst they will try to accommodate visiting bands, please do bear in mind that the church is in the middle of a residential area of Rochester and currently the tower has no sound control. Consequently, in order to establish good relations with the local residents, ringing will need to be limited. There is already a peal attempt scheduled for April and it is unlikely that any more will be allowed until the sound control is sorted out.



General view of the church, showing the splendid panoramic view over the Medway



The view from the back door



Local ringers just after the dedication



Some of the bells

NETTLESTEAD

The bells were removed by the KCACR BRF gang on 6 August 2005, and although this is only a light ring, it was a very tricky job as there was no height to lift in the tower, and a temporary gantry had to be constructed to get the bells out of the frame. However, that was not the end of the problems because the organ is under the tower and there is no trap cut in the ringing chamber floor. So call out the stonemason to remove part of the mullions from the window into the church, and the local builder to erect a scaffold (though to say this was rickety would be an understatement), and we are then ready to lower.

"Quite the trickiest job I've done in all the years I've been doing it", said Redleader Butcher, KCACR Bell Restoration Officer



This shot of the scaffolding gives some idea of the difficulties faced at Nettlestead.



The BRF gang at the end of the job — it looks as though a cake of soap wouldn't go amiss!

The dedication of the new treble took place at evensong on Sunday 9 October. The church was fairly well packed, and a number of ringers were in evidence from various parts of the county. The service was conducted by the Vicar, with not one, but two bishops in attendance. Bishop John Hine, Auxilliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Southwark (RC) led the intercessions, while Bishop Michael Gear, Honorary Assistant Bishop of Rochester, delivered the address and performed the blessing ceremony. The bells were arranged on the floor, tastefully decorated with Harvest Festival garlands, and rehangng was to commence on the following Monday.



The new treble suspended from scaffolding poles at the base of the tower.

AYLESFORD

The front five at Aylesford were removed on Saturday 10 December 2005. They will be transported to Whites for new headstocks and fittings. A first was scored* when we were asked to lower an old font that had been collecting dust in the tower. [**Though we were once asked to move a safe from one end of a church to the other — Ed**]

* "Oh no it wasn't" was the response from David Cawley to this remark. He goes on to say

"Aylesford is certainly not the first time that the Association has moved a font. When the former parish church at Burham was demolished in about 1980 we were asked to remove the bells. There are some pictures of this operation in progress on Lovesguide (see under the lost rings section). Quite apart from getting the largest — destined to be the service bell at St Michael, Maidstone — into Fr Gibbons' Transit, we made use of his services to transfer the middle bell to the Old Church, down by the river (whence it was subsequently stolen). There was a very large and heavy Norman font down by the west door of the Victorian church, and the team pressed the Transit into service to transfer that down to the Old Church as well; you can still see it there, a tribute to the varied skills and talents of the KACR."

Thanks David — glad to see you visit the site!



The 4th (as is the 5th) is a Michael Darbie bell, a fairly rare itinerant founder. There are two bells by him at Meopham, and he had a go at recasting Great Dunstan at Canterbury Cathedral in 1663 (though it only seems to have lasted until 1684, so we don't know how good it was). H B Walters, writing in 1912 describes his bells as "wretched productions"!



Two rather large lumps of font safely at ground level.

NEAR MISS AT ST DUNSTAN'S CANTERBURY

[Brian Butcher writes:] I attended site after reports of the tenor dropping badly, and the headstock was removed for inspection. The County Treasurer was seen to have pulled the gudgeon from the headstock!! The gudgeon had broken just inside the gudgeon plate of the wooden headstock and was holding on by about a 10mm (say 3/8") of overlap. The picture shows the gudgeon which appears to have been neatly cut. Sabotage at St Dustbins!!!! surely not.



An interesting installation this, with the bells hanging on two levels. 1 3 5 on top swing one way with 2 4 6 on the lower level swinging the other way. The 5th is the oldest ringing bell in Kent (1325). The tower is quite small to accommodate a 14cwt six.

PATRIXBOURNE



An inspection in late 2004 at Patrixbourne (3, 4½ cwt) revealed some interesting fittings on the treble. These probably date from 1644. Note that there are no nuts visible, and the bolts are tightened by means of butterfly wedges

(just visible top centre). The others have rusted away over the years, and the bell is just a tad insecure!

BICKNOR AND MOLASH

News in from Brian Butcher brings us up to date with the BRF's adventures on 27 April 2002



The two pictures above show the 3rd and 4th at Bicknor. This is a 2½ cwt steel ring of 4 which some "ringers" attempted to ring recently, and the BRF gang were called in to see what they could do to repair the damage caused.

This is the single bell at Molash which has gone to Taylor's for refurbishing. English Heritage feel that the headstock should be preserved. We're not sure whether preservation in the form of turned eggcups would satisfy EH — does anyone else have any ideas? (This bell has now been rehung for lever chiming.)

DOVER

These are a few shots of the heavy gang at work on Dover in March 2002.



The seventh sitting on the pavement by the KCACR publicity blurb



Arthur King (left) and Redleader Butcher preparing to lift the sixth



Brian and Peter being interviewed by the press



It's a long way to terra firma!



Not another crash about!



Seven of the eight waiting for collection

HARTLEY

A light job for the heavy gang on 2 February 2002 when we took out the pair of bells at Hartley near Meopham. Neither was especially large, but the lighter one is one of the oldest bells in Kent. The exact date of casting is not known, but its founder, Robert Rider of London, was in business between 1351 and 1386, so it seems likely its guarantee has expired. The picture below (from Brian Butcher) shows the Rider bell.



Part of the small inscription "Robertus Rider Me Fecit" can be seen around the crown. One of the cannons (on the right of the picture) has been broken and a bodged repair

has been made so that the strap in the centre is now attached to the argent of the bell. The bell was quarter-turned and the other four good cannons were used as attachment points. The main work that was needed was a pair of new clappers and fittings, and the bells were rehung by the BRF gang on 23 March 2002.



Picture above (reproduced with thanks to Brian Tremain) shows Red Leader pausing for breath as he prepares to lift the tenor up the steps



Picture above (also from Brian Tremain) must be the one everyone's been waiting for. It's a very rare shot of the BRF heavy gang with their latest trophies

MISCELLANEOUS BRF JOBS CULLED FROM EARLIER REPORT SUMMARIES

December 2008

- **Sutton by Dover** — Single bell checked out for a strange noise in the church. The bell is 1991 Taylors. The bell it replaced stands in the church and was probably cast in the early 13th century. Apparently its tone is not good and Taylors were asked to retune and rehang it in 1983. When Taylors received the bell at Loughborough they decided that tuning was not really a possibility, and in any case the DAC said "no" on account of its age.



The new and old bells at Sutton-by-Dover. Stahlschmidt doesn't identify the old one in any way other than to describe it as "long-waisted". However George Elphick in 1944 thought it might be of foreign manufacture, and was certainly of the early 13th century, a view shared by Nick Davies and David Cawley when they visited in 1970. It weighs 1-1-24.

November 2007

Throwley: The 3rd headstock has been removed and a replacement is being made.



The headstock at Throwley

August 2007

Denton: This was an inspection for DAC — pictures below.



There are two early 15th century bells at Denton (Stahlschmidt says they were probably cast by Richard Cresswell, who was in business in 1440). The photos are both of the tenor, and the one on the right shows that the clapper is striking the lip far too far down.

December 2006

Milton next Gravesend: The bells have been inspected and some repairs are required to the third wheel. In addition, with a bit of routine maintenance, they should soon be ringing again. **New information as at mid January:** A secondhand wheel from the 3rd of the old installation at High Halstow has now been fitted to the damaged 3rd, and the bells are ringable again. However further work will be done in due course to the clappers and ground pullies. A trap needs replacing under the 4th to stop it shouting. A more detailed description, with some more photos, appears on the [Rochester District website](#) (thanks for the link Gareth).

Mundella School, Folkestone: The clapper fell out of the bell and Red Leader's daughter works here so he got volunteered to repair the bell. Access being the main problem, a scaffold was erected and the bell removed. A local engineering firm refurbished the fittings and a new clapper was fitted.

Murston: At the request of the DAC we inspected the strange installation for safety. There are five bells hung on the roof as a chime. The bells were transferred from the *News of the World* offices in London in 1963. We have made the bells secure and a decision on their future is being made by the locals. They are cast to ringing spec and so if they decide to get rid of them, they should provide some useful bells for someone. The bells were, as the letter to me stated, "supported by no recognisable engineering method" (see picture).

Seal Chart: Inspected with a view to repairs / restoration. Probably the most difficult bellchamber access in Kent!



" . . . some repairs are required" seems to be a bit of an understatement at Milton next Gravesend



Mundella School



Two of the bells at Murston



Thank you card from the kids at Mundella School



So you think you have access problems huh? This is the view from the bellchamber door at Seal Chart — and there are two more bells above

October 2006

Seal: Whitechapel have replaced most of the fittings on these bells with some assistance by us.



This slider and runnerboard from Seal can't really date from 1885, when the bells were rehung — or can they? Has anyone out there seen kit like this before?

Following the plea above Dickon Love tells us that in 1848 C & G Mears (predecessors to Whitechapel) provided a new frame for five bells, so it looks as though that's when they were installed. Thanks, Dickon.

July 2006

Lamberhurst: Inspection and cleaning up of bearings took place on 10 June. One of the bearings was badly damaged and needed replacing, but all the others were OK after liberal use of paraffin. All the clappers were rebushed by Whitechapel and the bells were back in action on 1 July, after the the heavy gang installed the clappers and new bearing bolts.



The photo on the right gives an idea of the need to clean the bearings!

Greatstone St Peter: Installation of a single bell and frame, supplied by Alistair Coney in memory of his mother Rosemary. The bell is by John Warner, 1871, 17" diameter and weighs around 80lb. The existing 9" bell may stay or be removed.



Greatstone church and the bell in its new frame. The village is just south of New Romney and Littlestone

Late 2004

Smarden: : This work is now in hand with Hayward Mills. We have dismantled the bells which have been left standing in their pits. [See photos below.]



Alan Andrews lowering some kit to ground (Smarden)



The 1921 Alfred Bowell treble in its pit (Smarden)

Restoration news as at mid/early 2003

The 4th at **Bexley** was removed for recasting on 4 January. The new bell will be fitted with a metal headstock and there is a possibility that the other bells will also be fitted with metal headstocks at a later date.



Two shots of Bexley's new 4th at the foundry. The bell was back in the tower on 22 February. The photo at the top is of the bell leaving the church.



St Andrew's

Deal: Brian was asked to inspect this installation and found a 3 to 4 cwt bell by Mears dated 1850. The bell was originally hung for swing chiming between two beams but the wheel has almost gone and the bell is now clocked. The bell will probably be removed prior to major works on the spire and then refitted. There is some interest in installing a light ring of 6. **[The picture definitely shows a lonely looking bell, so five more mates would seem to be a good idea — Ed]**



As a change from pictures of bells, how about this shot of the BRF trailer. To the uninitiated it may look like a twin Portaloo, but to those on the BRF

SubCommittee
it's HOME!
We're told
that its
predecessor is
being allowed
to RIP (Rust
In Peace)