THE RINGING WORLD

The Weekly Journal for Church Bell Ringers since 1911

No. 4988 December 1, 2006 Price £1.60
Editor: Robert Lewis

A 'Compleat Chyme' Restored

The restoration of the bells at St. Andrew's and St. George's, Edinburgh (Church of Scotland)

By Peter Whyatt

Last Sunday, 26th November, the Church of St. Andrew's and St. George's, Edinburgh celebrated the dedication of its restored eight-bell peal. The bells are of enormous historical significance, being the oldest full peal and the first ever installed for full-circle ringing in Scotland. They have not been rung full-circle since 1903.

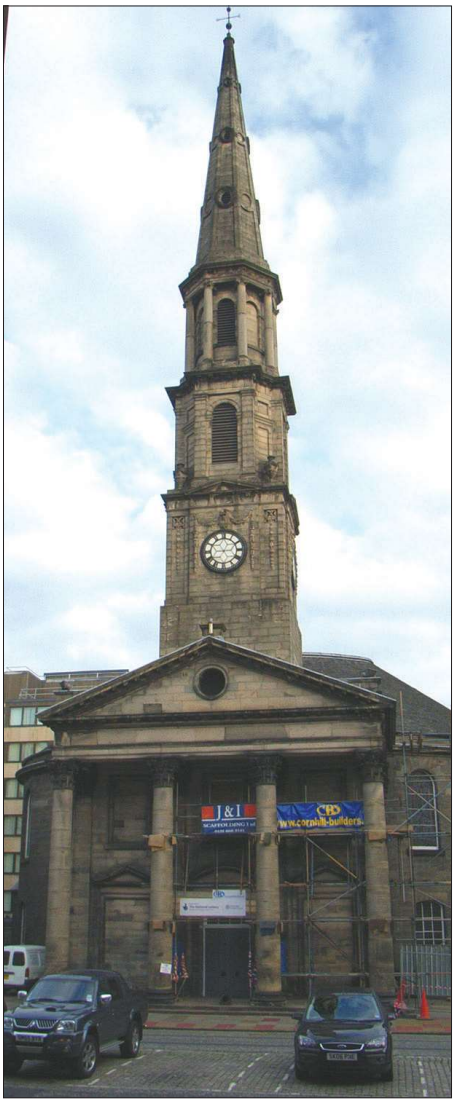
The Minister, the Revd. Roderick Campbell, conducted the service. On behalf of the Kirk Session and Congregation he thanked all those who had taken part in the last three years of dedicated effort. In his sermon he spoke of how bells can signify sadness or joy. Although unseen they send a message that everyone can hear – the Church is a place of love and hope, and the number of changes that can be rung symbolises the number of opportunities we each have to make a contribution.

The Minister then invited the Revd. Dr. Mary Levison to perform the dedication during which the bells were rung in a brief touch.

Ms. Anne Mulligan, DCS, Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh, gave the Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession. The Revd. Dorothy Anderson, Outreach Minister to the Parish, also took part. After the service the bells sounded again and a reception was held in the undercroft.



Unloading the lorry (l-r): David Roskelly, Peter Whyatt, Bill Brotherton, Jonathan Frye



The front of the church

Energetic rejoicing

Sunday's dedication followed some energetic rejoicing the day before. Members of the Scottish Association of Change Ringers (SACR), eager to try out this unknown 'new' tower, exercised themselves and the bells in an afternoon of general ringing. An evening's ceilidh, organised by the congregation, brought church members and ringers together in even more vigorous festivity.

Anxiety is natural at a first ring, especially of restored old bells. After Saturday's fair trial, professionals and ringers alike concluded that the peal has exceeded expectations. A 'thumbs-up' verdict also came from a court of judges in session late on Saturday evening in the pub – where all truths are best expressed!



The 'Compleat Chyme' on the pavement outside the church

THE RINGING WORLD

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

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RW Web Pages: http://www.ringingworld.co.uk

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

One copy, 3 months	**£15.25**
One copy, 6 months	**£28.25**
One copy, 12 months	**£52.00**
Overseas	
Western Europe (incl. Eire)	**£66.00**
Rest of World (Surface)	**£69.50**
Rest of World (Air Mail)	**£81.25**

Remittances, payable to *The Ringing World*, should be addressed to Eagleside House.
The Ringing World Bankers: NatWest
Sort code 60-01-17. Account No. 45502323

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(See Central Council Officers box opposite)
Registered in England Co. Number 1722963
Registered as a Charity in London under No.287182

The Ringing World
is sponsored jointly by
Taylors, Eayre & Smith Ltd
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A complex project

Due credit must be given to Whitechapel Bell Foundry which performed the bell restoration with architects Gray, Marshall and Associates managing the project. The restricted space and the need to preserve internal architectural features made the installation one of the most complex Whitechapel has tackled in recent years.

The bells now hang from steel cannon-retaining headstocks in a two-tier cast-iron and steel frame. To reduce stress on the tower they are installed two stories lower than before. The front four bells were retuned and spheroidal graphite clappers replace the wrought iron originals. Electric hammers have been fitted with a control system to strike the clock chimes and play tunes or methods – either manually using a keyboard or automatically via a pre-programmed memory chip: Ellacombe apparatus brought up to date! The bells, in their new location, displaced the original clock mechanism, which has been replaced with individual electrical mechanisms, one for each of the three clock faces.

This magnificently restored and historic peal should serve the Church and its congregation for many years to come.

'Good and musical bells'

William and Thomas Mears of Whitechapel cast the bells in 1788. All bear the same founder's inscription:

'W & T Mears Late Lester Pack & Chapman of London Fecit 1788'

This is the only known complete peal carrying that inscription, marking a distinct period in the history of the foundry. (See Alan Hughes' article in *The Ringing World 2003,* p.895).

The only other inscription is on the tenor. It appears to be engraved rather than cast in relief:

'The Right Hon^ble Thomas Elder Lord Provost, & James Gordon Esq^r Dean of Guild'

Edinburgh Town Council ordered the bells in 1788 at the instigation of Thomas Elder, a former Lord Provost. They requested the current Lord Provost (then in London) to purchase a bell or bells for the spire. He sent back an estimate from Mears for a 'peal of six good and musical bells, in tone and tune to each other, including a new frame, hanging etc. amounting to £387.10.0 sterling'.

The Council authorised the commissioning of the peal of six and in February 1789 ordered a further two treble bells for an additional cost of 'about 70 guineas', to make a 'compleat chyme'.

The bells were installed in the steeple in June 1789 – 'to be rung in the English manner'.

A remnant of popery

These bells were remarkable as being Scotland's first ever change-ringing peal. Change ringing developed in England after the Civil War. Oliver Cromwell had attempted to suppress religious ceremony but, after restoration of Charles II in 1660, ringing became a loyal and gentlemanly activity. A large number of English change-ringing peals date from this time.



Left to right: No.3, No.5, and No.7 bells in their pits

In Scotland, things were different. Episcopalianism was outlawed until 1792. The austere Calvinist Presbyterian Church scorned all forms of outward show and forbade instrumental music in church worship. As late as 1829, an organ introduced by a minister into a church in Glasgow was deemed 'contrary to the law of the land and to the law and constitution of our Established Church'.

A visitor to Edinburgh in 1801 wrote:

> 'I was much surprised this morning at hearing a peal of bells ringing at St. Andrew's Church in George Street … On enquiry I was told that there is no other peal of Bells in Scotland … It is a proof how prejudices are by degrees weakened. I have always understood that Bells, except what were necessary to give notice of the time of Service by simply tolling, were esteemed a remnant of popery'. *(Farington Diary of 1801)*

However, this was the 'Age of Scottish Enlightenment'. Scottish notables such as Smith, Hume, Adam, Ramsay, Raeburn, Black, Watt and Telford were influencing philosophy, arts and sciences at home and abroad. Edinburgh was renowned as one of the most intellectually influential, exciting capitals of the world. Perhaps it was this free-thinking that accounted for the

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'weakening of prejudices' and the revolutionary peal of bells.

St. Andrew's Church

St. Andrew's Church (the union with St. George's took place in 1964) owes its existence to the development of Edinburgh's New Town. The New Town (it is still called that to this day) was developed in the 1760s to relieve the insanitary conditions and congestion of the old city. The citizens needed more room, more light and more air. At first people were reluctant to move and expansion was slow, but by 1780, with monetary incentives from the Town Council, development was well advanced.

In that year the Town Council perceiving the need for a place of worship offered 10 guineas for the best plan. Major Andrew Fraser of the Engineers (retired) won the competition but magnanimously declined the prize, desiring that it go to an Edinburgh drawing master, whose plan had been



Unloading (l-r): Whitechapel bellhanger, Peter Scott, Andy Kelso, Bill Brotherton

considered 'highly meritorious'. Thus, it is believed, St. Andrew's is the only church in Edinburgh, perhaps in Scotland, to be designed by a soldier.



Peter Scott on the external scaffolding

Fraser's design reflected the fashion of the time for classical Roman architecture. The nave has an elliptical plan (reputedly the first in Britain) with domed roof, and is flanked by an impressive portico displaying four massive Corinthian columns onto George Street.

Two stoves

Building began in 1781 (the foundation stone was laid on 21st March) and completed in 1784 at a cost of £7,000. The Church first opened its doors for worship in December 1784. The Edinburgh Evening Courant of 8th November 1784 advertised seats for rent, stating when the church would be open for 'inspection of such persons as intend to apply'. A quaint snippet of 18th Century sales patter appeared as a footnote:

'N.B. – Two stoves will be placed in St. Andrew's Church during the ensuing winter'.

The steeple

But at this time the building was still without its steeple. The original design included a short tower but the Town Council desired something grander. They obviously considered different designs because they rejected one as being 'too great in proportion to the space left for its base'.

continued on p.1145

Statistics

bell	*diameter ft-in*	*(mm)*	*weight (after tuning) cwt-qr-lb*	*(kg)*	*nominal (Hz)*	*note*
1	2′4⁷⁄₁₆″	(722)	5-0-19	(263)	1343.1	E
2	2′5¼″	(743)	5-1-17	(275)	1257.3	D#
3	2′7¼″	(794)	6-0-13	(311)	1122.2	C#
4	2′9³⁄₁₆″	(843)	6-2-11	(336)	1001.9	B
5	2′1¹³⁄₁₆″	(894)	8-0-14	(413)	893.9	A
6	3′1¹¹⁄₁₆″	(957)	9-1-26	(482)	842.8	G#
7	3′4⅛″	(1019)	11-0-18	(568)	748.7	F#
8	3′8⁹⁄₁₆″	(1132)	14-2-23	(748)	669.2	E
	Total weight:		**66-3-01**	**(3,395)**		

Editorial

We hear that the restored ring at St. Andrew & St. George's Church, Edinburgh 'go' and sound very well indeed. The revival of this historic Whitechapel ring, in the heart of Scotland's capital city, has aroused public interest and was featured on the BBC News website. It will do much to boost the art of change-ringing north of the Border – where English style change-ringing peals have always been few and far between. Indeed, one might expect to find them exclusively in churches belonging to the Scottish Episcopal (Anglican) Church. Yet a surprising number of Scottish peals reside in buildings belonging to the established Church – the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland. It would be interesting to have an article exploring the history of how and why those particular kirks acquired their rings of bells.

Although we have not had a chance yet to see George Perrin's film *The Craft of Bellringing* (p.1144) it is evident that George has put a great deal of time, effort and research into its production. It will be interesting to see a documentary that has been produced very much from the perspective of an active ringer and we look forward to publishing an independent review of this film at the earliest possible opportunity.

The late Gerald Hemming (obituary – p.1158) really had become a legend in his own life-time. There cannot be many ringers who have not heard his name mentioned in connection with one extraordinary exploit or other; very early on in my own ringing career I was told of the alleged incident at Pershore Abbey, where Gerald is said to have swung up and out of 'the cage' on a bell rope (and back again) crying "Hergé's Adventures of Tin-Tin". When I met him at a St. Martin's dinner I was too shy to ask if it was true. In an age when characters seem increasingly thin on the ground there is no doubt that Gerald will be sorely missed.

First Peal Congratulations

Hazel Sweetman, Stephen M. Soames

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THE ART OF Ringing.
of the Beginning of Changes.
'Tis an ancient Proverb with us in England (That Rome was not built in a day) by which it is declared

A page from the first edition of Tintinnalogia

considerably in letting me film. We even interviewed a ringer on the roof of the Cathedral.

The final challenge was to film the heaviest set of bells in the world hung for change ringing: Liverpool. I contacted the ringing master, Len Mitchell who gave me a lot of support including setting up floodlighting for that huge bellchamber. Liverpool Cathedral is truly magnificent, and to this episode of the film I dedicated a lot of running time. Every bellringer should go there at least once during his/her lifetime, because this shouldn't be missed. The lift, the 'ring', the tenor with two ropes, the radial bellframe …

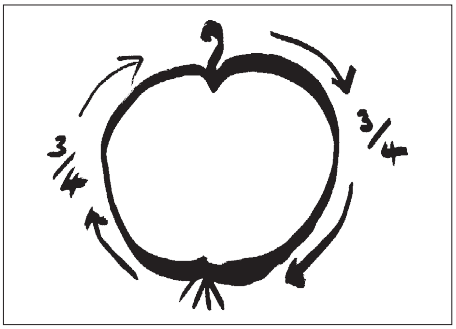
Finally Derek Sibson talks about the Central Council and its work.

In all, the filming took five months. A friend of mine studying at the Academy of Music in Vienna wrote the music score. We also rang a quarter peal of Annable's London on 29th October at Addington to celebrate the completion of the film in style.

I aimed to create something that encompasses the whole of the exercise. To paint an accurate picture of the craft of bellringing as seen from the inside, as a ringer. There is so much to ringing, that you can't pack all these things into an hour of film. But I hoped to project the essence of bellringing, and to show a glimpse of its wide and varied aspects.

***Ed. – We have not had a chance to see George's film in full yet – but as soon as a copy is made available to us we will run an independent review in* The Ringing World.**

The Plain Bob Apple!



This is a really easy way of remembering the work in Plain Bob, which was devised by Nicol Raymond who rings at South Petherton. You can add the 5-6, 7-8, and 9-10 dodges for Triples, Caters and Cinques.

HELEN BEAUFOY

St. Andrew and St. George, Edinburgh

continued from p.1143

The architect, William Sibbald, designed the present slender and elegant spire. Completed in November 1787, it rises 168ft above the pavement and some judge it to be the most beautiful in the city. Unfortunately, the slenderness so pleasing to the eye was to have its drawbacks 116 years later when tower instability took the blame for cessation of ringing.

Screws and bolts

The scaffold used during the spire's construction aroused considerable admiration in its own right. The curious citizens of Edinburgh (Rabbie Burns among their number) flocked to see it. Contemporary reports remark that it was 'very beautiful and not put together by common nails but by screws and bolts which prevents one part being drawn from the other however great the weight'. It won the credit for there being no deaths or serious injuries during the spire's construction.

Shameless and most improper conduct

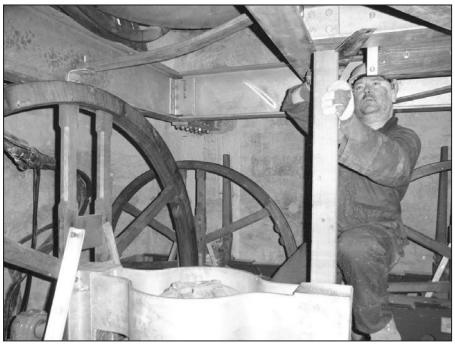
Little can be traced about the history of ringing at the tower after the installation. The Town Council employed a gentleman from England to train the earliest ringing band in Scotland but this band does not appear to have practised method ringing.

In 1836, the ringers fell into disgrace. The Kirk Session minutes of 19th November 1836 report a complaint that the bellringers 'were in the regular practice of repairing to a public house on Sundays, so soon as the ringing of the Bells was finished, and of spending great part of the Sabbath in drinking'. A Police Officer was sent to investigate and reported that he: 'traced the Bell ringers on their leaving the church to the House of a Spirit Dealer in Clyde Street.' and 'found six persons, and a woman sitting with spirits before them. Can identify five of these individuals as having come out of St. Andrew's Church together after the Bells stopped ringing.'

The Session expressed its 'highest disapprobation' of this 'shameless and most improper conduct'. They sent the Town Council a copy of the police report 'having perfect confidence, that the Town Council, who have the appointment of the Bell ringers, will do what is proper in this matter'. What happened to them subsequently is not recorded.

The Town Council employed the bellringers until about 1860. Thereafter, the expense of ringing the bells for public worship was borne by the Session and the Congregation.

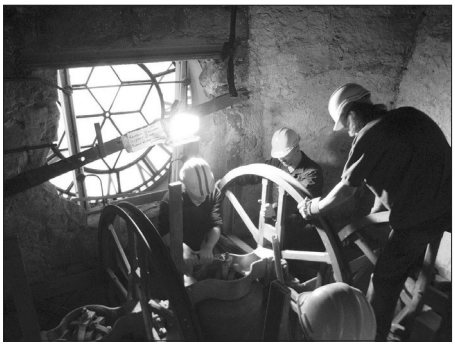
No other records of bellringing activity have been tracked down. A History in celebration of the Church's centenary, published in 1884, records in great detail the names of ministers, elders, and seatholders. Organ and psalmody, choir, work society, and soup kitchen committee members are all named, as are Sabbath school teachers, literary society members and more. Bellringers do not get a mention!



Mike Clay trimming the tenor stay

Ringing ceased

Full circle ringing ceased in 1903, 'the swinging of the church bells proving dangerous'. An Ellacombe apparatus was then fitted and sounded the bells on Sunday mornings. When it failed in September 2001 the SACR Bells and Towers Advisor, Mike Clay, inspected the installation and found deterioration sufficient to raise concerns over safety. Professional bellhangers were consulted. They all proposed rehanging in a new metal frame lower in the tower. A structural engineer's inspection found no damage attributable to the bells being swung, and judged the tower to be strong enough to support the bells for change ringing. Nevertheless, installation lower in the tower would naturally reduce stresses.



Tightening No 5's crown staple (lr): Andrew Durdin, Mike Clay and David Roskelly

Removal and reinstallation

Restoration plans got the 'go-ahead' from the Kirk Session in May 2003. The following September, Whitechapel bellhangers and volunteers removed the five smallest bells, taking advantage of access provided to install mobile phone antennae *(see The Ringing World, Sep. 5th, 2003)* The three largest bells, too large to pass through the louvres, remained in the tower until March 2006 *(Ringing World 2006, p.444.).*

At 7 o' clock on 12th September – a wet, miserable, 'dreich' (local term) morning – the fully-laden lorry arrived. Peter Scott, Whitechapel's bellhanger, and an army of volunteers raced to unload, before parking restrictions began at 08:30. The deadline was not met but the fearsome Edinburgh traffic

wardens were obviously feeling benevolent – no tickets! By 09:30 all eight bells and frame members were sitting on the pavement; woodwork and electrical equipment were inside out of the rain.

Then we began the hard work of hoisting the bells and frame into the tower. When work finished that day only the tenor and some frame sides were still at ground level. The rest were either in the belfry or at various positions on the scaffolding.

Midweek, Whitechapel's Neil Thomas arrived. He supervised the work on Friday while Peter attended to business elsewhere. By the end of the first week the team had made excellent progress. Frame members were bolted together, bells hung in their respective pits, wheels and stays assembled, runner boards and sliders in place, clock hammers bolted to the frame. It looked complete and the inexperienced could be deluded into thinking that the job was nearly finished. If only! It took another seven working days to tighten the frame, adjust clock hammers, check swinging clearances, stay lengths and clapper flighting; mark and cut rope holes, fit pulleys, etc. … Even then the work was not quite complete!

In November Whitechapel staff returned to fit some additional frame stiffening, finish rope holes and commission the chiming system – during which we treated ourselves to a few sample touches of Plain Bob, perfectly struck by the hammers at the press of a button! All that was required now for the bells to be made ringable was a good clean up, a meticulous inspection and fitting the ropes. These had to wait until the contractors completed their work and removed scaffolding. Alan Hughes, Whitechapel's Managing Director, came for his final inspection and a 'try-out' on 23rd November and he declared himself satisfied.

A rope guide designed by Jocelyn Cunliffe, the architect, has still to be fitted. Until then ringing is being restricted to experienced ringers only, because of the long draught. Unfortunately we cannot accommodate visiting bands just yet.

Funding

The Appeal was launched officially in March 2004 with the SACR's President, Terry Williams, as one of six Patrons.

The congregation, led by Alison Campbell and the Bells Committee, conscious of how precious their piece of Scotland's heritage is, has been completely committed and enthusiastic about the project from the start. A busy fund-raising programme was organisied. Imaginative activities included a chamber orchestra concert, a jewellery auction and a church organ 'marathon'.

The Scottish Association of Change Ringers (SACR) made full use of a mini-ring generously loaned by Matthew Higby. It was used for a sponsored peal *(see The Ringing World 2004, p783)*, ringing demonstrations and open ringing during Inveraray Festival weekends. Christmas carols on hand bells, various general ringing sessions, quarter-peal and peal fees, plus the sale of Christmas cards and calendars all added to the funds.

Mike Clay, who started the whole thing off, maintained the momentum. He handled communications between SACR, the Bells Committee, the architects and Bell Founders, recruited new ringers and arranged training. He also organised the SACR volunteer labour force – and still found time to do a bit of labouring himself!

Major grants came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council for the Care of Churches in Britain and Ireland, the SACR Bell Restoration Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Manifold Trust and the Baird Trust.

Generous donations came in from individuals, church members past and present and bellringers far and wide. Local businesses donated; others gave in kind. There are too many contributors to thank in full. Our gratitude goes to them all.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Mike Clay, Jocelyn Cunliffe, Mary Davidson and Margaret Street for their help, encouragement and historical data; and to staff of the Undercroft Café for sustenance (well worth a visit).

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All photos were taken by Pat Whyatt

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South Walsham Surprise Minor

SIR, – How often has this happened?

Last Saturday our local band rang a peal in a new method which we decided to name as South Walsham Surprise Minor. We didn't have a method named after us – we have only recently been augmented to 6 and Norfolk doesn't have a record for naming doubles methods. Most of the surrounding villages have methods named after them, thanks mainly to Tim Pett and the late Nolan Golden. So we picked an unrung method, checked it hadn't been rung, learnt it, practised it and practised it and …. well you get the idea. The Tuesday before the peal attempt was set we practised it and still we couldn't ring it fluently and confidently. So it was agreed that a quarter should be rung so that we had to learn it really well. Ranworth was contacted, we met on the Friday night and a quarter was duly rung – at the end of the first extent I said that we could now call it South Walsham, up to that point I had always just said "Go".

Saturday arrived, we met at South Walsham at 4pm and at 6.50pm I was able to say "That's All". We retired to the pub and christened South Walsham Surprise Minor. We all felt justly pleased with the afternoon's achievement.

However on Tuesday evening emails began to pass between Tony Smith and us. Against all probabilities a band in Yorkshire had also rang this method for the first time to an extent on the same day as we had rung our peal. Who had rung it first? Well, at the time of writing I am assuming that we did as we rang a practice quarter the day before. We hope so. But it just goes to show that the strangest of coincidences can still happen even in these days.

RICHARD CARTER

South Walsham, Norfolk

See peal report on p.1149.