

ANCIENT SOCIETY OF COLLEGE YOUTHS

Tower Officials' reports for 2011

Presented at the Society's business meeting on Tuesday, 10 January 2012

St Michael, Cornhill

Tower Secretary: Antony R Kench
Steeplekeeper: William Dawson

Tower Secretary's Report

2011 was obviously a milestone year in Cornhill history: following the grant of faculty in 2010, the old bells were taken out in February 2011 and the new ring installed in April. Consecration by the Bishop of London took place on the church floor Sunday April 3, first ringing was Friday April 27, and the first peal on the new bells was rung on June 26. Sunday and midweek service ringing resumed in May and has continued since, with rather greater enthusiasm than in earlier years; thanks to everyone for that. The PCC and parish have been absolutely delighted with the excellence of their new bells. The old 3, 4 and 7 are retained hung dead, with the 7th in use as a chiming bell.

The new bells have taken a while to bed in, of course, but the internal strike notes are now clearer; there's a bit more work to do on reducing reverberation from the tenors. There is some other finishing-off work to do by Taylors in the next few weeks too, including more bracing on the upper frame, and frame access platforms and ladders. The objective of a better, more musical ring of bells has certainly been met, and so has the objective of much reduced tower movement.

The Society is now holding monthly practices and the SRCY quarterly; there've been two by the UL and one by Southwark, and we've had the first couple of visiting bands too. A mixed Cornhill band brought together from lapsed 12-bell ringers and friends also practices monthly, and was lucky enough to win the 2011 London 12-Bell Trophy in October. Five peals have been rung so far, three by donor bands and the first two of what should be a regular stream of ASCY peals. We still have a family living 50 feet from the bells, but the external sound control is quite effective now, so I'm going to try raising the frequency of peals from one a month to one every 2-3 weeks in 2012, and see how it goes. In fact 17 peals are already booked in 2012: 4 allocated to ASCY Masters plus 6 other ASCY, and peals for the St Paul's Guild, SRCY, Southwark, Middlesex and Birmingham. Peals in 2012 will also include the first 3-4 individual applications; it's hoped to include 6-8 outside applications pa from 2013 onward, as well as regular peals for the ASCY.

Income to the BRF for 2011 was £707.50, considerably up on 2010. The peal fee has been recalculated at £7.50, with the aim of enough income to cover all future outgoings. We'll need a new set of ropes in due course (the current ones date back to 2006), so I would like to make a formal request to the BRF to fund the ordering of a new set, please.

Antony R Kench

Steeplekeeper's Report

There is no report from the steeplekeeper, since the bells and fittings are still under warranty.

St Giles Cripplegate

Tower Secretary: Mrs G Rogers
Steeplekeeper: Dr J P W Taylor

Tower Secretary's Report

Service ringing has taken place on 29 of the possible 52 Sundays in 2011, which is three up on 2010. It has followed the pattern established that year. On the first Sunday of the month, there is an 8-bell practice at midday, and on the second, ringing for the Parish Eucharist at 9.30 am. In January, visiting ringers from Inverary rang for the Eucharist on the third Sunday. In July, the St Paul's Cathedral band rang every week. Other services for which the bells were rung were Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, the 'Wedding' service, half-muffled for the anniversary of 9/11, All Souls Day, the London Ringers' Advent Carol Service, Christmas Day, and two weddings.

We are grateful for the support of the Foster Lane ringers, without whom monthly Sunday ringing would not be possible. Thanks also to ringers from St Paul's Cathedral, Stepney and the Middlesex County Association.

The Society has held eleven practices at Cripplegate, the Cumberlands two, Southwark Cathedral one, and there have been nine first-Sunday practices. In March, the Ringing World celebrations included ringing at Cripplegate. In August, the UK11 tourists, following in the footsteps of UK08, rang at Cripplegate. The St Vedast's band rang a quarter on the back six.

There were ten attempts during the year, of which nine were scored: three by the Society, one by the St James' Guild and five rung non-association.

Although Whites tightened up the frame in March this year, the 'rogue' bells on the north side of the tower continue to 'blow and suck'. While the 60-year old bearings may exacerbate the handling problems, we are advised that their replacement will not be sufficient to fix the problem. The University of Cambridge Engineering Department assisted in the planning for the successful renovation of the bells at Great St Mary, Cambridge (GSM). The next phase of their research into tower movement will involve a number of towers with and without existing rings of bells. Richard Smith has offered to include Cripplegate, and it is hoped to identify a strategy for re-hanging Cripplegate bells as effectively as GSM.

The major item of expenditure was the Whites maintenance to frame and bells which cost £817.80. The income for the year, including Gift Aid, was £830.38. The outcome was a small deficit of 32p.

Gwen Rogers

Steeplekeeper's Report

In general, everything is in reasonable condition. However, there are four issues to report:

- After a few years without issue, we again saw bell bolts loosening last summer. I suspect this may have been caused by the long hot dry spell causing the wooden pads to shrink.
- I noted in my last report that the 5th pulley can rub against the pulley block. It is not noticeably worse after a year but will need attention soon.
- The 10th and 11th are currently rather quick at handstroke. In general the bells seem to be getting odd-struck quicker than they used to.
- The 2nd seems very deep-set at hand and both the treble and 2nd are quite light-set at back. It has been suggested that the bells may be easier to ring if they were made deeper set at back-stroke.

Whites came for routine maintenance on 16 March 2011. White's annual visit included checking and tightening all frame bolts. It also included adding twiddle pins to the 11th. Note that the hole at the base of the headstock has not been enlarged. Much like the 5th and tenor, the pins are intended to hold the clapper in place once it is trued-up to help the fight against odd-struckness.

Many thanks to Gwen, especially for collecting data using her odd-struckness meter. There have been many adjustments over the year, some with tapered washers, some with coins. Unfortunately, especially for the 10th and 11th, nothing has kept odd-struckness at bay for any length of time.

John P W Taylor

St Sepulchre-without-Newgate

Tower Secretary: Mr H D Coggill
Steeplekeeper: Mr M J Cansdale

Tower Secretary's Report

This year has been quiet at St Sepulchre, with all the excitement surrounding Cornhill. The good news is that progress has been made on the tower and ringing room. Sadly however, Father Mullen is retiring - we rang for his last service as priest-in-charge tonight. The Society will certainly miss his and Lynne's support and enthusiasm for our ringing activities. There now follows an interregnum for at least six months. Fortunately the church bookings manager is continuing his role during this time.

Three peals and one quarter-peal were scored, with an outing, a wedding and twelve practices. One broken stay and a Whitechapel maintenance inspection leave the bell fund at £15,872 from £15,642 in 2010.

Henry D Coggill

Steeplekeeper's Report

Work at Sepulchre's this year has included general checking and tightening of bolts, some cleaning and tidying, and the replacement of a broken stay. The material for the new floor arrived in November, and is currently in the ringing room. The floor will be fitted this month. Once the floor is in place I will obtain quotations for a new carpet.

Alan Hughes of Whitechapel Foundry visited the tower on November 3rd to inspect the bells and fittings. While he reported wear consistent with the age of the installation, there are no particular mechanical problems. The PCC have received a quotation to:

- renew all pulleys
- fit washers under the heads of all stay bolts
- check, adjust, and lubricate all clappers
- open up all of the bearing housings, push the grease back into the ball tracks, and clean the housings
- ensure that all sliders move freely
- brush down the bells, fittings, and frame

This should improve the go of the bells. The work would be financed by the PCC, and I intend to recommend, in advance of their meeting later this week, that it is carried out.

My thanks go to Dave Bassford for fitting the replacement stay, to Henry Coggill, Leigh Simpson and Paul Tiebout for their assistance in moving flooring material, and to Tony Kench for his support and for arranging the Whitechapel Inspection.

Martin J Cansdale

St Magnus-the-Martyr

Tower Secretary: Dickon R Love
Steeplekeeper: James H Foster

Tower Secretary's Report

2011 has been a very busy year at St Magnus, although not quite as busy as last year, with ringing on 187 occasions (223 in 2010). Service ringing has been provided for 54 services, there have been 57 practices, 11 bands of visiting ringers, 22 quarter peal attempts (20 successful) and 41 peal attempts (31 successful). Regular practices are held by the St Martin-in-the-Fields band on alternate Mondays, the Middlesex Association every first Friday, and the Southwark Cathedral Society on an occasional basis.

The ringing room has also been used as a handbell venue with 8 peal attempts, of which 5 were successful, and 3 successful quarter peal attempts. The ringing room is available to be used as a handbell venue and the chairs appear to be quite comfortable for such things.

The parish is thrilled with all the ringing that takes place, particularly on Sundays. My particular thanks go to Peter Valuks and David Maynard who have been running the ringing on a Sunday during the year. All of the peals were rung with the sound control open and there continue to be no complaints.

A peal was rung on 28th June for the visit of HM The Queen to the parish, following which we received special thanks from Buckingham Palace. This year also saw the first half-muffled peal (on the back eight).

The Trustees during the year were Paul Mounsey (Chairman), John Hughes-D'Aeth, James Foster, David Hilling, Dickon Love and Fr Philip Warner. David Hilling resigned as a Trustee and Treasurer during the year, and Elizabeth Hibbert was elected Trustee Treasurer. Special thanks go to David Hilling who has served as a most capable treasurer throughout the entire fundraising campaign.

Dickon R Love

Steeplekeeper's Report

In general, the bells and fittings are in an excellent condition, as one would expect. Whitechapel will be able to confirm this in their bi-annual inspection which is next due this spring.

A new set of ropes was put on the bells in the 4th quarter of 2011. They will be monitored closely, as the initial set hadn't lasted as long as we'd hoped for and lots of splicing had been needed this year.

We are in the process of installing additional sound control in the upper open doorways above the bells. We hope to have this in place as soon as we can in the 1st or 2nd quarter 2012, as sound currently escapes at high levels, even with the existing sound control on.

A peal board for the peal celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Plumbers' Company was

donated and made by Peter Rumley and Plumbers' Master Antony Paterson-Fox. It has been dedicated, but now gone back to Peter to correct the spelling mistakes. Once it is returned, Jim Hardy has kindly said he will put all the peal boards waiting, on the walls.

We recently have added a sturdy chest for the old set of ropes, and hope to buy a storage safe box for the hand-bells, such that they can have a permanent safe home in the tower.

James H Foster

St Lawrence Jewry

Tower Secretary: Ms R L Sugden
Steeplekeeper: Mr D G Maynard

Tower Secretary's Report

Not much to report this year from Jewry: there have been fewer peal attempts, five in total, but with 100% success rate. There has however been the steady stream of service ringing, quarter peals and visiting bands.

Just to remind people, the ringing agreement with the Church is that the bells will be made available for one peal per month, along with 2/3 other ringing slots for quarter peals and visiting bands and I would encourage members to make the most of the bells.

Members may also wish to be aware that the Vicar is likely to be away for most of August. During this time, the bells will be available for week night peals without restriction, provided that there is nothing happening at the Guildhall.

I have details of the months that Jewry are currently not booked for peals if any member would be interested in organising an attempt.

Rebecca L Sugden

Steeplekeeper's Report

We had an impromptu autumn clean of the ringing room following ringing for the Lord Mayors Show - my thanks to Mr Simpson for his assistance with sweeping and polishing! A thorough cleaning of the tower, especially the bell and clock chambers will be arranged once the electrical work has been completed.

I have been in discussion with the Vicar about the lighting in the ringing room and bell chamber and this is going to be addressed along with a wider rewiring of much of the church. I am meeting with the Vicar in a couple of weeks to go through what needs to be done and draw up some specifications for the electrician. This should make ringing after dark a less gloomy experience.

In other news, the treble stay came loose on the headstock again. This was remedied by some gentle spannering - in marked contrast to the serious spannering which caused the problem in the first place! It may need to be replaced at some point in the future, but regular tightening should keep it under control, providing visiting bands do likewise.

David G Maynard

St Mary-le-Bow

Steeplekeeper: Mr S S Meyer

(appointed by and accountable to the Parish rather than the Society)

The amount of ringing at Bow seems to increase year on year. This can only be a good thing and is made possible by the excellent relationships which we continue to have with the church. Underpinning this good relationship is that we have rung on every occasion that we have been asked to ring for. It was good to see the rector at the anniversary dinner once again which shows his support for the society.

There have been 13 peals (10 ASCY) & 8 quarters rung in 2011. One of the peals during the year was specifically offered to the people who support the regular service ringing but do not generally get asked into peals at Bow. On paper, not the sort of band you might choose for a peal at Bow but they turned out a remarkable performance which remained strong right to the end with hardly a method mistake throughout.

Unfortunately a similar attempt for the Royal wedding was unsuccessful.

I would particularly highlight the peal that was rung on the back 6 as a remarkable effort.

The society has also held nine practices at Bow during the year. In addition the SRCY & Southwark Cathedral both use Bow on a regular basis.

During the year we have supported a number of other activities such as a sound expert trying to establish the boundaries of where the bells could be heard (to establish the rightful claims of people being a true cockney) and the filming of one of the episodes of Great Railway Journeys with Michael Portillo, which is due to be broadcast in the early part of 2012.

The installation continues to remain in excellent condition and the church does not hesitate to cover the costs of any necessary works; although, given the amount of ringing which occurs, I suspect the income and outgoings roughly balance out.

There have been two significant items of work carried out in the year. The wooden clappers on the 11th & 12th were not performing adequately. The 11th has been re-engineered more strongly & the tenor's was rebuilt, both by Matthew Higby. They seem to perform better now but there is some fiddling with the odd-struckness required to get them completely right.

The other major expenditure was a number of new peal boards. Given the events coming up in 2012 I imagine there will be even more required soon.

The year ended with a peak of activity. I was asked to read a lesson in the parish carol service; they have not had a ringer read at any of their services for a very long time. I thought it was nice for the ringers to be thought of.

This was followed the next day by the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the bells. A quarter of Stedman by current & past officers and officials of the society preceded a short service under the tower, recreating what was done 50 years ago. The Duke of Edinburgh could not be present on this occasion but sent Prebendary William Scott, sub-dean of the Chapels Royal, as his representative. The Master and Secretary were invited back to the vestry for drinks afterwards along with Michael Moreton. Michael rang at the original dedication and was in the quarter this time. There were a number of others present who were also at the original celebration 50 years ago.

As you know, the rector has been at the heart of the ringing for the Olympic marathons & continues to support the efforts here. In fact there was a rather amusing meeting recently with the authorities who were trying to coordinate the broadcasting of this event, where they said that they would need to agree when the bells were rung. George was at his very best in explaining to them precisely who had authority to say when bells in churches were rung!

So a very successful year in 2011 and I thank members for their continuing support. I expect a very busy year in 2012.

Simon S Meyer