

Ancient Society of College Youths

Tower Officials' Reports 2013 (presented at the business meeting on 14 January 2014)

St Giles Cripplegate

Tower Secretary's Report

In 2012 ringing was suspended from August until Christmas. Sunday service ringing restarted in January 2013 with Bob Minimus and, as the year progressed so did the ringing, finishing with Stedman Cinques on Christmas Day. Ringing for the Parish Eucharist on second Sundays has been made possible by support from the St. Vedast's ringers. It has featured good striking on the middle six and the light eight. During the "July Masses" ringers from St. Paul's rang weekly, usually on the back eight. Other services for which the bells were rung were Palm Sunday, Easter, All Souls, the Ringers Advent Carol Service, Christmas and 3 weddings. Thank-you to all who have helped.

The Society has practised at St. Giles' four times during the year. The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths has held two practices. Southwark Cathedral and University of London have held one each. Guildford Cathedral ringers rang a quarter peal and visiting ringers have been welcomed from Norwich, Liverpool, the Isle of Man, Stockton and the Police Guild.

There were 5 peal attempts in 2013. Scored were Stedman Cinques by the Society, Horton's 4 by SRCY and Yorkshire S Maximus rung non-association.

A tower movement survey by the CCCBR Towers and Belfries Committee took place in April but, disappointingly, no report has yet been received. The chairman, James Clarke, recently emailed to express his hope that the data can be recovered and a report written. Routine maintenance, including clapper adjustments, has taken place. Whites completed the annual inspection and servicing in March. They reported that the 5th. and 9th. clappers needed rebushing, which took place in August.

Thank-you to all who have wielded spanners this year especially our Steeplekeeper, Terry Streeter.

In 2013 expenditure exceeded income, including gift aid, by approx. £85. This is offset by the £200 surplus in 2012.

Gwen Rogers

Steeplekeeper's Report

As Gwen has said, a CCCBR tower movement survey took place in April. I was unable to be present, the date having been fixed before I was elected. Gwen has been liaising with the Tower & Belfries Committee trying to get a finished report from them.

Whites of Appleton did the annual inspection for us in March and noted that two of the clappers needed re-bushing and that a stay was cracked. A replacement stay was obtained from Whitechapel and fitted later that month. The clappers were removed at the end of July and refitted one warm August evening by Gwen and me.

Everything in the belfry is in reasonable condition but, frustratingly, without the tower movement survey it is difficult to make any progress on deciding how best to improve the go of the bells.

Many thanks to Gwen for her assistance with my steeplekeeping duties.

Terry J C Streeter

St Lawrence Jewry

Tower Secretary's Report

2013 was again a fairly standard year at Jewry. There were ten peal attempts and a number of visiting bands and quarter peals. The bells at Jewry were also rung for the usual Corporation events, and a number of weddings and I would like to thank all those who helped out with the ringing for these events.

To remind members; the agreement with the church is:

- 1 peal/ month on a Saturday
- and 2/3 mid-week/weekend visiting bands or quarters (no ringing on Sunday or Bank Holidays).

The vicar has taken to going away for the month of August, meaning that the bells are available for mid-week peals. I am awaiting confirmation of whether this will happen again this year, but suggest if members are interested to contact me.

Rebecca Cansdale

Steeplekeeper's Report

It has been a quiet year for steeple-keeping duties at St Lawrence Jewry with only minor maintenance carried out. This included ensuring nuts and bolts were secure, hoovering and general cleaning in the ringing chamber, and checking the ropes for signs of wear and tear. In addition, one of my first tasks was to replace all the bulbs in the stairwell which burnt out after a visiting band left the lights on. Also the new 7th rope was given a special bath after a peal band left their mark after ringing rather enthusiastically. There were reports that a clock hammer was potentially resting on a bell whilst chiming however after investigating I can confirm this is not the case. The bells are in good condition heading into 2014, however the belfry could benefit from increased security and as mentioned by David last year, the ringing chamber still requires an improvement in lighting. I would finally like to thank everyone for their support in my first year in steeple-keeping at St Lawrence Jewry.

Dan Smith

St Michael's Cornhill:

Tower Secretary's Report

The new bells continue to provide much pleasure, to ringers and indeed to the parish. They have been rung after almost all Sunday services as well as Christmas Day, several midweek services and two weddings, and I'm most grateful to everyone who has helped out with that. We've also had practices most months by the Society and by the Cornhill band, quarterly practices by the SRCY and one by Southwark; and we've entertained two rings by the UL and two rings by the Middlesex, plus visiting bands from Leeds, Macclesfield, Bedford, Chichester, Exeter and Stockton.

There were 18 peal attempts during 2013, all on Saturdays, of which 4 were lost and 14 were rung: 7 by the ASCY, one each by the SRCY, Guildford DG, Oxford DG and Durham University, and 3 were Non-Association. For 2014, 19 peal attempts are currently booked, 10 of which are ASCY, including one in July for the 650th anniversary of the Drapers' Company, the patrons, who'll also be holding a big service of celebration at St Michael's the same month.

The total of peal, outing and practice donations for 2013 (before Gift Aid) was £1,724.60, which goes into the ASCY Bell Restoration Fund.

Tony Kench

Steeplekeeper's Report

After the installation of the new bells just under three years ago things remain relatively quiet.

Again, some of the ropes are showing signs of wear, which has been addressed using ropes which were repaired last year and we have two others about to be sent away to have the bottom end replaced.

Taylor's visited in August to do finishing off some odd jobs left over from installation of the bells. When initial work was being done on the acoustics, Taylor's built a rather Heath Robinson canopy over 3, 4 and 5 on the top tier of the frame to make these bells more audible in the ringing chamber. During their visit in August, Taylor's replaced this with a permanent canopy which also has hinged access panels to enable work to be done on the bells more easily. Taylor's also removed some of the detritus which was left over from installation and finished the installation of the access walkways above the bottom frame as mentioned in my report last year. Taylor's also did some work on the odd-struckness of the bells as part of this visit.

There remain a few jobs to be done by Taylor's, including further work to improve the sound balance outside the tower and replacing the red bulb in the indicator box which shows the state of the sound control, both of these are in hand and will be done next time Taylor's visit.

Later in August the stay on the 3rd was severely cracked during ringing by a visiting band. As I was unavailable at the time, Tony kindly made the arrangements for purchasing a new stay and fitted it, for which I am grateful.

A new set of 12 muffles has been acquired for the tower, and were first used on Remembrance Sunday. The new muffles were paid for by a gift from the estate of John Howard Gaze, long-term Parish Clerk at St Michael's Cornhill, who was a good friend of the ringers and always loved the sound of half-muffled ringing. I am grateful to Tony for his organising the purchase of the muffles from Whitechapel and to the people who helped me with fitting and removing the muffles in November.

David I Bassford

St Sepulchre Holborn

Tower Secretary's Report

This year was a period of change for St. Sepulchre with both a new tower secretary who was keen on replying to emails and after over a year of interregnum, the church confirmed an evangelical priest-in-charge, David Ingall. David has been positive about the bells has been keen to meet the ringers, and be generally sociable: he was a welcome new attendee at the annual dinner and has agreed to make the draw for the eliminator to be held at St. Sepulchre in March. Ringing has continued even though the new time for evensong directly clashes with the ASCY practice. Generally, it has been agreed that ringing and the service can proceed at the same time as the bells can barely be heard in church. On these occasions, service ringing is arranged for before the service, and the practice continues while the service goes ahead. Many thanks to those who've been able to help ring for the service - it's greatly appreciated. Atypical to the on-going norm, we were specially asked by David if we could provide ringing today before the evensong service as the Bishop of London was in attendance, hence an early special was arranged (and in this instance we did not ring through the service!).

There were many requests for ringing and unfortunately due to the existing restrictions, not all requests could be granted. Despite this, in addition to the 10 ASCY practices, we welcomed SRCY, Southwark, UL and Middlesex practices as well as 6/8 quarters, 6/7 peals, and 3 outing visits, contributing to £690 income and £0 expenditure.

This year we look forward to the St. Paul's Guild hosting one of the 12 bell eliminators at St. Sepulchre. Unfortunately this does mean that there's reduced ringing in the first quarter of 2014 with only usual ASCY and eliminator practices taking place until after the eliminator. Looking forward to any requests for after this date!

Rachael C Smith

Steeplekeeper's Report

Work at Seps this year has consisted of routine maintenance and preparations for the 12 bell eliminator to be held there in March. The former has consisted of general checking and tightening of bolts, and splicing of the tenor rope after a strand broke. For the eliminator, microphone positions have been tested in order to have HawkEar available for the practices and on the day.

The church has had the windows in the ringing room repaired, and some of the peal boards put back on the walls, which has improved the general condition of the ringing room.

I have obtained a quote from a local firm for the supply and fitting of a carpet. Delivery times willing, this will be fitted before the first band arrives for an eliminator practice. Otherwise it will be fitted following the eliminator.

Martin Cansdale

St Magnus the Martyr

Tower Secretary's Report

2013 has been a record year with ringing on 228 occasions (215 in 2012, with 2010 holding the record of 227).

Service ringing has been provided for 55 services and the parish remains extremely grateful for all service ringing that takes place. We should offer our thanks again to the energetic Ben Meyer who organises and runs Sunday ringing. Particular thanks were given by the parish for the half-muffled ringing given on All Souls Day on the morning of the Society Anniversary Dinner.

The regular ringing slots still take place with the St Martin-in-the-Fields band practising on alternate weeks, and the Middlesex County Association every second Friday. This latter 12 bell practice has grown and now lasts twice as long in order to maximise the amount of 12 bell training the association can provide. Regular practices are also held by the Cumberlands and Southwark Cathedral, and increasingly, the University of London.

27 quarter peals were attempted and all but 4 were successful. The quarter peal total at the end of the year stood at 130.

Fewer peals were attempted than last year – 56, of which 41 were successful. The peal total at the end of the year stood at 170. Having been the tower with the highest number of peals in 2012, St Magnus appeared 4th in 2013. A third of these peals were of spliced. Peals of note include the half-muffled peal rung for the funeral of Baroness Thatcher in April. Most were Non Association peals and 6 were rung by the Society. The number of people to circle the tower has grown to 13, while both Messrs Mounsey and Love have circled twice.

All weekend ringing continues to take place with the sound control open, so these bells clearly advertise the church to the many visitors to the area.

The ringing room is also used as a venue for handbell practices and performances, with both a quarter and a peal being rung during the year.

Financial management of the tower is administered by the Bells Trust. The Trustees during the year were Paul Mounsey (Chairman), John Hughes-D'Aeth, Jim Foster, Elizabeth Hibbert (Treasurer), Dickon Love (Secretary) and Fr Philip Warner.

The accounts for 2013 have not yet been prepared, but when they are, the headline figures will appear on the Charity Commission website, at which point a copy of the Trustees' Report and Financial Statement will also be available.

In addition to Ben, my thanks go to Jim Foster (Steeplekeeper) and Paul Tiebout (Assistant Steeplekeeper).

Dickon R Love

Steeplekeeper's Report

In general, the bells and fittings are in an excellent condition, as one would expect. Whitechapel performed their bi-annual inspection in the first quarter of 2012, and as such the bells were not due for an inspection this year.

A new set of ropes was put on the bells at the start of 2012 – while these ropes have bedded in well,

we started to see some wear and tear, especially on the sallies of the back bells. As such a new set was purchased and the full set was put on during the 2013 year. We now have a serviceable set of spare ropes for most bells, enabling continuity of ringing as the level of ringing at St Magnus continues to be high.

There have been no problems with stay or fitting breakages throughout the year.

There are currently 6 peal boards in the belfry awaiting installation, and another in production. An initial party has put lower peal board supports in, and another party early in 2014 will put the upper peal board supports in, and the boards should be installed this year (thanks should be given to Jim Hardy for his help).

The sound control for the chamber above the bells is still awaiting installation, as currently sound escapes at this high level. The wood is now cut for this project, and needs to be transported up the tower stairs and fix the sound control in place. That, along with a project to replace the belfry door should improve sound control.

James H Foster

St Mary le Bow Annual Report 2013

(The Steeplekeeper at St Mary-le-Bow is appointed by the parish and not elected by the Society)

There has been a high level of activity in the tower in 2013. As well as ringing for all the major services and six weddings (an unusually high number for Bow) the bells were used for regular practices by The Society as well as the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths.

There have been 11 successful peals & 8 quarters rung in 2013, with a couple of bands organising monthly attempts. The Ancient Society of College Youths was the most prolific society, ringing 5 peals in the year.

We are progressing through the faculty process so that we can order the peal boards for the Jubilee & Olympic peals. Once these boards are installed the tower walls will have little space left for additional boards so we are investigating the potential to install an electronic peal board that can scroll through the entire 510+ peals rung. In fact this makes me realise that we must have missed the 500th peal being rung on the bells last year, which would have been one of Azura Surprise Maximus conducted by Jonathon Potter on 31 December 2012. Sadly the attempt to mark the 50th anniversary of the first peal on the current bells was unsuccessful. This was particularly sad as two of the original band were ringing.

Of particular note was that we rang for the Pearlie's harvest festival this year for the first time, a practice we wish to continue given their support for the bells. In fact many people don't realise that they were central to the efforts to raise the funds for the current bells after the war, so it is only appropriate that we ring for their one major service at Bow during the year.

The installation continues to remain in excellent condition. New clock hammers are being built & are due to be installed imminently. This has taken longer than hoped but I would prefer to get it right rather than rush it.

We are also trying to get a carpenter to look at modifying the sound control. These massive doors are starting to age & one of the eight pairs is already starting to fall off its hinges. The proposal is to create smaller openings in the doors following the theory that the vast majority of sound emerges from the first crack & you don't need to open half the face of the tower to get the sound out. Smaller doors will be much easier to handle & will put less strain on their fittings. So we are looking to engage a carpenter to experiment on one side of the tower & once we are satisfied we will do the same on the other sides. We are also looking at installing Hawkear.

So a very successful year in 2013 and I would once again like to thank the office staff for all the help they give me. With the increasing amount of ringing, they get a steady stream of diary requests which are very diligently handled, for which I am grateful. There is additional work involved in bookings for the bells as, because of their fame, all ringing is published on the church website & people often come to listen to them.

Simon Meyer
Steeplekeeper