

# The Bells of St. Christopher's

Prior to restoration in 2011/12 there were four bells plus a service bell which formerly hung in Shellow Bowells church and was installed for stationary chiming in 1974. The bells had not been rung on wheels since before WWII, the fittings had much deteriorated, the frame was of poor design and construction; and the bells much indented.

In mid 2008 Ian Kerwin and Peter Tottman saw the state of the bells and frame. Ian, a bell ringer and qualified as a carpenter, and Peter, having an interest in woodworking, conceived of the project to restore the bells.

The restoration project had two key principles – as far as practicable, the work would adopt traditional materials and techniques and, secondly, work would be carried out by the community. The bells were augmented to a ring of six by the addition of a new treble and the adoption a bell formerly hung in St. Mary's, Prittlewell as the second. The original four and the one from St. Mary's were fully overhauled by Whitechapel Bell Foundry and fitted to new timber headstocks, all retain their canons. The new bellframe was designed by Whitechapel and constructed in European Oak. Both frame and the wheels were made by volunteers here in Willingale. Almost all work in the tower, including the lowering and raising of the bells, was carried by volunteers.



The project exemplifies the strong self-help attitude and community spirit of this parish and the participants enjoyed working together.

## THE BELLS' FIRST RING

The May sun shone, the bells rang out.  
No fears here of casting clout.  
In majesty, the Tower stood proudly  
Excited whispers, inside, spoken loudly.

No ordinary day to salute the Team,  
Honouring its achievements in high esteem.  
We stood, we sang, we suppressed a tear.  
We sat, we blessed, anxious to hear.

Pride shone through on the faces of they  
Whose efforts now on open display.  
From now on, we will see them ringing.  
On high, they will hear us singing.

Weekly worship and quiet prayer,  
Large congregations and smaller fare,  
Weddings, funerals, baptisms and all  
St. Christopher's bells to summon, enthrall

The time had come – the new peal was rung.  
Heads turned upwards – praises sung.  
Emotions ran deeper than we thought  
At no price whatever could this be bought.

Spontaneous applause heralded the crew.  
Its skills and devotion so clearly in view.  
The bells, they beckoned, "Come and try us"  
Their future secured to enrich and inspire us.

The service over, we went our own way  
The visitors and villagers leaving the fray.  
Smiling, moved and touched to the core –  
Willingale's bells ringing, for evermore.

John E. Jewiss – May, 2012



## The Volunteers

Simon Baker	Damon Kelly	Martin Pasloe
Bernard Bantick	Val Kelly	Neil Pasloe
Terry Barton	David Kerwin	David Piggott
Derek Beavis	Denise Kerwin	Brian Rew
Jane Cass	Ian Kerwin	Rev. Vernon Ross
Gemma Crouchman	Katheryn Kerwin	Nigel Stag
John Ellis	Kieran Kerwin	David Stokes
Ray Farnall	Scott Kerwin	Alan Sweeting
Andy Flesher	Stuart Kerwin	Martin Sweeting
Arthur Gatcum	Ian Lawrence	Michael Tottman
Tom Gooday	Bill Lee	Peter Tottman
Nigel Holgate	Murry Lowe	Brian Watson
Chris Jackson	Chris Murrells	
Jane Jackson	George Neal	

## The Funders

The project cost £70,000. The PCC and the bell ringers express their thanks to all who have supported financially or in kind.

## The Heritage Lottery Fund

The Essex Association of Change Ringers  
The Keltek Trust  
Alan Evans Memorial Trust  
Sharpe Trust  
All Churches Trust  
Personal donations  
Local fund raising events

## The Supporters, Suppliers, Contractors

Central Council Church Bell Ringers  
David Sloman  
The Daniel Connal Partnership  
F Sweeting and Sons  
G E Day Electrical  
Gillian Jaggard  
Jean Beavis  
John Jewiss  
Michael Royalton-Kitsch  
Stag Joinery  
Ward Cole Structural Engineers  
Whitechapel Bell Foundry  
Willingale Sports and Social Club



The bells were dedicated on the 27 May 2012 and rung to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee on 2 June 2012.

Bell	Diameter	Weight*	Date	Founder
Tenor	2' 11 1/2"	7-3-9 (398)	1610	William Carter, London
5th	2' 9 3/4"	6-3-15 (350)	1631	Thomas Barlett, London
4 <sup>th</sup>	2' "5 3/4"	4-3-18 (249)	1867	Mears & Stainbank
3 <sup>rd</sup>	2' 3 1/4"	3-3-2 (191)	1794	Thomas Mears I, London
2 <sup>nd</sup>	2' 2 3/4"	4-0-17 (206)	1902	John Warner & Sons,
Treble	2' 1"	3-2-23 (193)	2011	Whitechapel
Service	2' 5 3/4"	4-3-14 (248)	1634	John Clifton, London

\* Hundredweights, quarters, pounds (kgs)

In 2015 the 1634 John Clifton fourth, that was irremediably oddstruck, was replaced by a bell from Christ Church, Bath that was tuned and set up by Matthew Higby. The 1634 bell is now the service bell.