

## The Bellringers

The band meets regularly on Thursday evenings from 7.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. for practice. This time is spent teaching learners and furthering the capabilities of the band as a whole.

On Sundays we ring from 8.45 to 9.45 a.m. for the Parish Eucharist. When ringing for this service we ring a number of different pieces, each lasting for 5 to 10 minutes. Each piece will be selected to suit the ringers taking part, thus enabling newer members of the band to participate fully. We also ring for many weddings throughout the year and for other special occasions (e.g. St. Lawrence Fair) and on some of these we attempt a quarter peal.

If you are interested in learning more about ringing, you are very welcome to visit the belfry on a Thursday evening. We are always on the lookout for suitable recruits to join the band and if you would like to learn to ring please contact one of the people listed below. Equally, if you have been a ringer at some time in the past and would like to take up the art again then also please make yourself known; we would be delighted to welcome you back with a refresher course, if necessary.

We are fortunate at Hurstpierpoint in also having a Chiming Apparatus which can be operated by one person for playing tunes, mainly hymns and carols, on the bells. We have a separate team who play tunes for 10 minutes before the 8 a.m. Holy Eucharist and any other "ad hoc" services. There is usually a separate chiming practice from 6.45 to 7.30 p.m. on Thursdays. If you would like more information about chiming or feel that you would like to join this team then please contact the Chiming Master.

## Contacts

**Tower Captain** John Norris  
**Vice Captain** Susan Elrick  
**Chiming Master** Rosemary Brown  
**Secretary** Sián Maidment

The Birches, Hurstpierpoint (843718)  
Windy Down, Albourne Road, Hurst (832019)  
9 Highfield Drive, Hurstpierpoint (833177)  
4 Hurst Gardens, Hurstpierpoint (832710)

If you are thinking about becoming a ringer you must consider these points. Firstly, the principal aim of ringing is to remind people of the presence of the church. Secondly, in common with other team activities, ringers need to be committed to supporting the band on a regular basis. Thirdly, you are not going to be able to learn to ring overnight. It takes several lessons to learn to handle a bell and many months to become a proficient ringer.

Supporting the band is essential to ensure that one progresses in ringing. Even after years of ringing there will still be something new to learn and new bells to ring. The fellowship amongst ringers is second to none, and once you have learned to ring a bell you can ring in almost any other tower in the world, and feel that you are immediately at home as soon as you walk through the belfry door. We frequently have visitors join us both on Thursday practice nights and on Sundays.

Ringings to the glory of God has much to offer, including intellectual satisfaction, enjoyment, good fellowship and the satisfaction of a good job well done.

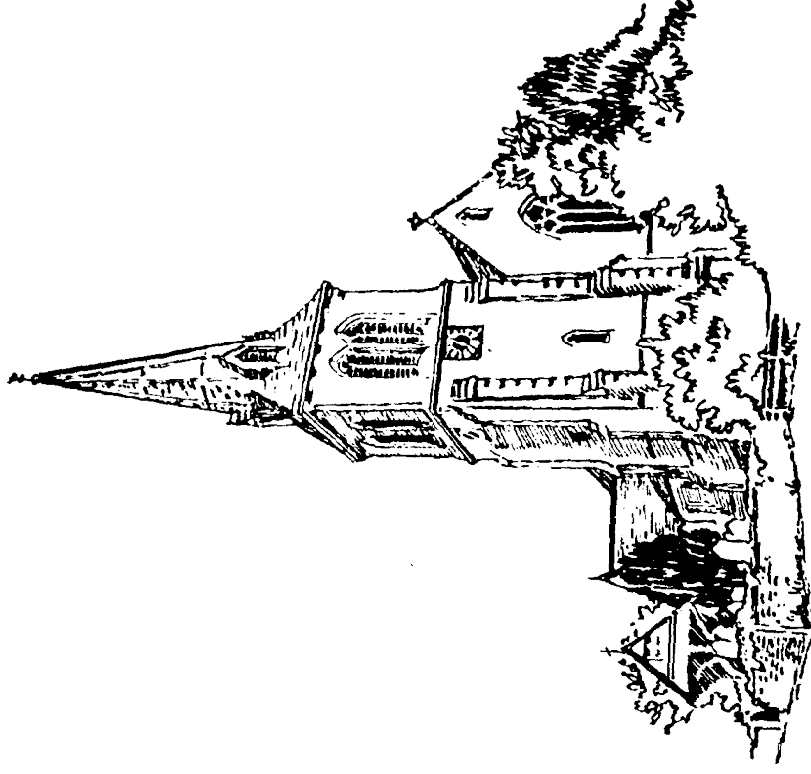
## The Bells

	Note	Weight cwt qtr lbs	Date Cast
Treble	G	4 4 6	1868
2	F#	4 2 1	1775
3	E	4 3 17	1775
4	D	4 3 2	1846
5	C	5 2 12	1901
6	B	6 2 0	1846
7	A	8 2 22	1953
Tenor	G	12 3 6	1846

# The Church of the Holy Trinity, Hurstpierpoint

# Belfry Open Day

## 24th September, 2005



Welcome to the Belfry. This leaflet gives some information about the bells, the ringers and the art of change ringing. Please take it home as a memento of your visit.

## Like Father Like Son ...

Or in bell ringing circles perhaps it should be like Son like Father!

Some two and a half years ago, my 11 year old son and 8 year old daughter had been told about a 'tower open day' at the Church. Apparently there was a need to promote the art of bell ringing, or 'campanology' to use the teamed term, and on a May Saturday morning my wife and I duly accompanied our children to the church.

We were shown the basic principles of how a bell works on a marvellous portable 'mini-ring' designed and built by Warnham ringer George Francis. We then ventured up into the bell tower for the first time and were treated not only to a brief demonstration by the local band, but an informative tour of the upper tower by Tower Captain John Norris, including a 'close quarters' inspection of the 8 bells slightly scary for the faint hearted if you are not used to balancing on rafters!!

At the end of our visit we were invited to add our names to a list of those interested in 'having a go'. My son George was desperate for us to leave our names, and after some "well I don't know" and "let's think about it" I agreed to sign on the dotted line, thinking that it would be ages until we heard anything and that George would probably have forgotten all about it.

Not a bit of it! John called the very next day and we were booked in for our first 'try out' the following week. We were joined by another Father/Son duo from the village, and spent some time with experienced ringers learning to handle a bell. These early lessons were done using 'clapper ties' to allow the bells to swing as normal yet silently, preventing the local community from over suffering! After a few weeks we had learnt how to ring 'rounds', and before long we were let loose on a Sunday morning.

Gradually, over the ensuing weeks, I found that this new pastime was not only challenging but also extremely enjoyable. George seemed to make better early progress than I, which apparently is not unusual, as younger brains absorb the information quicker! (Oh dear ... over the hill in my 40's?)

As a child I was heavily involved in my local church in Westerham, Kent as a chorister and whilst I had always loved the sound of the bells, I had never realised the countless scores of different 'tunes' that they could play. Now, at last, I was on a true voyage of discovery, with the added pleasure of my son accompanying me. New vocabulary was quickly being learnt, 'plain hunting', 'bob doubles', 'grandsire triples' and so the list goes on.

After a year's ringing our big target was to ring our first 'quarter peal' on the treble bell which we both did within weeks of each other, and were duly awarded a certificate in recognition.

George and I have had tremendous fun learning 'the ropes' to date, and there is so much more to learn, but we can all do it at our own pace and the experienced ringers are always there to help and lend a hand or an ear. The rest of the band have become friends and there is always an event to attend if you can spare the time, including a summer outing in June and a smaller outing in the autumn where we tour a number of different bell towers and sample the delights (for the most part) of unfamiliar bells.

I find that I look forward to practice nights on Thursday and no matter what pressures the working day has produced, they are usually washed away by the time we are ringing the bells down at the end of the session. Ringing on Sunday also produces enormous satisfaction and the knowledge that one is doing something for the village!

*Simon Anckorn  
(Hurstpierpoint ringer since May 2003)*

## The Bells of Hurstpierpoint

When bells were first hung in the old church of St Lawrence is no longer known. The first definite reference we have is an item in the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1685: "For a set of Bell Ropes 19s 6d". Thereafter, frequent entries for ropes, minor repairs and "oyle for the bells" occur, together with entries for payment for ringing on special occasions such as "Gave ye Ringers on Gunpowder Treson 5s".

By 1717 more than minor repairs were needed for Thomas Marchant of Little Park wrote in his diary, for March 5th, "I met Mr. Whippain at the Church to consult about mending a bell". They seem to have been unsuccessful in their task, for Bishop Bowyer's Visitation of 1724 records "six bells, one a little cracked".

Nothing seems to have been done about the cracked bell until 1775 when Messrs. Paek & Chapman of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry cast a new ring of six. They were in the key of A-major and the new tenor weighed about 9cwt. The bells were hung by Robert Turner from the foundry in the existing bell frame and the total cost was £100. Before the Parish was satisfied two of the bells had to be recast, the 5th and the tenor.

The church of St Lawrence was demolished in 1843 to make way for the larger church of the Holy Trinity, which was consecrated in 1845. With a new church came a new ring of bells, in the key of G. From the original ring of six, three were retained to become part of the eight. The treble became the new second, the second became the third, and the fourth the

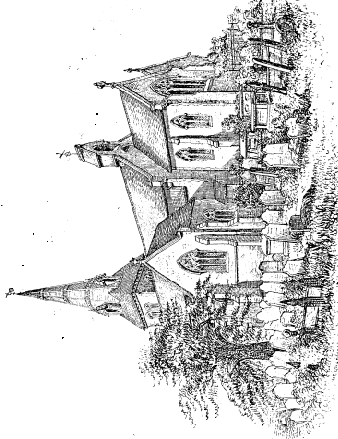
fifth. The notes of these bells were F sharp, E and C sharp respectively. It was necessary to alter the note of the new fifth from C sharp to C so that it would fit into the new octave. This was done by removing metal from inside the bell, using a chisel-headed hammer. This "chip-tuning" was the normal method of the time and five of the bells still show the marks of its use.

The five bells needed to complete the new eight were cast by C. & G. Mears at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1846. The total cost including bearings, gudgeons and clappers was £150. The foundry did not hang the bells nor did they make the frame.

Possibly the frame was made by Michael Hammes, one of the local ringers, as it is inscribed with his name. It is not a good frame.

Four of the new bells bore Latin inscriptions. The parish evidently contributed at least to the tenor, since the

inscription on it runs, when translated: "The generous people of Hurstpierpoint caused me to be made". The treble bore the inscription "Deo Cari Nihilo Carent", the personal motto of the Rector, the Rev. Carey Hampton Borrer. Possibly he or his family contributed to the bell, because when it was replaced in 1868 the new one was again associated with him, bearing the initials C.H.B and the motto of his father Nathaniel - "Robore et Labore". The new treble was cast by Robert Stainbank at the Whitechapel Foundry. Nathaniel Borrer noted in his diary that the old bell went to St George's church, where it remained until after the turret was demolished. It was returned to the foundry in 1952, £40 being allowed towards the cost of rehanging the bells at Holy Trinity.



In 1901, the fifth cracked, possibly as a result of the removal of metal in 1846 when its note was lowered from C sharp to C. It was recast by Thomas Blackburn of Salisbury and all the bells rehung.

Apart from routine maintenance little further attention was needed until 1950 when the seventh cracked. It was recast and rehung by Gillett and Johnston in time for the bells to ring out for the Coronation in 1953. The cost of this work was £641, the money being raised in the village by public subscription in barely two months.

In 1977 the clappers were overhauled and in 1985 the wooden headstocks were replaced by new cast iron headstocks. The frame that has supported the bells for over one hundred and fifty years will eventually have to be replaced but hopefully, this may yet be twenty years or more away.

The bells are a mixed lot being the work of four different founders. However, although only mediocre in tone, they fit well together and continue, Sunday by Sunday, to call people to worship, as bells on the site have done for over three hundred years.

## Who Can Ring?

The short answer is “almost anyone”. Ringing is a hobby which attracts people of all ages. Young and old, they can all get great satisfaction from their ringing. Some towers start children as young as 8 or 9, although at Hurst we prefer to wait until they are about 12. At the other end of the scale, some do not start until they are past retirement age.

Physically, ringing is not very demanding. The ability to climb the belfry stairs, stand unaided and to be able to raise both arms above one’s head is sufficient. Although the bells are heavy, the momentum of the bell as it swings through the full circle means that all that is required

is a controlling hand. Skill is far more important than strength.

The other attribute required is the ability to hear when the bell has struck in the correct place. Apart from this, good co-ordination and a sense of rhythm or some musical ability will make learning easier. However, as with all rules there are exceptions, and there are good ringers who seem not to have all of these attributes.

## Learning to Ring

Learning to ring is much like learning to drive a car. There is much to assimilate and to the new learner progress may seem slow. However, after several lessons it comes together and in time becomes second nature.

In most towers, there is at least one experienced ringer skilled in teaching learners. Like all physical activities bellringing can be somewhat hazardous unless it is properly taught. Before the new learner handles a bell rope for the first time, an explanation, augmented by the use of a model bell, is given of how the bell is hung. Particular attention is given to how the movement of the rope relates to the movement of the bell. The learner will then be taught to handle the bell (with the clapper tied so the village does not hear!), at a different time from the normal practice. To ensure safety, we progress slowly, step by step, with the instructor always alongside to rectify immediately any problem which might occur, until the learner can consistently control the bell without assistance. Everyone moves at his or her own pace, there being no time limit.

Holy Trinity, Hurstpierpoint is fortunate in having recently been given a dumbbell as a training aid to ease the learning process. We also have a computer simulator capable of generating the sound for all eight of our bells by electronic means.

Once a learner can handle a bell, the next stage is to learn how to control the speed at which the bell rings. This is achieved by the use of the simulator for listening and also by ropesight i.e. ringing a tied tell, with the sound being generated by the simulator, whilst at the same time, closely following an experienced ringer who is also ringing a tied bell linked to the simulator.

When this has been mastered the learner practices ringing “Rounds” on an “open bell”, (where the bells sound out down the diatonic scale), with the rest of the band on practice night. This is the point where the learner is taught how to listen critically to the bell, so that the sound which the team produces is as melodic as possible. Our audience is captive, and deserves the best we can achieve.

The learner is now in a position to start to study change ringing – an activity which will continue for the rest of one’s life, no matter how young one might be when starting to learn. Initially, the learner is to be taught how to move the position where the bell sounds amongst the other bells on the command of the conductor (“call changes”). Once this is mastered the learner will begin to ring regularly for Sunday services. The new ringer will then be taught how to move the bell at each pull through a set series of changes, starting after a single command from the conductor. Initially this will be using only a few bells, and then, as the learner gains ropesight, progressing to more, following a planned course of instruction.

The learner is now a change ringer and will eventually be elected to the Sussex County Association of Change Ringers. Here one will meet many other ringers from other towers, some of whom will also be novices, and others who are more experienced. Everyone will be willing to help each other in a friendly atmosphere. How far you progress is entirely up to you (there are some ringers who never progress

beyond call changes) but you will always be a member of a team, all trying to achieve the same goal. The result is, to say the least, extremely satisfying.

## Ringling Societies

The development of change ringing can be traced back at least as far as the beginning of the 17th century, in the early years of which a number of Societies of change ringers were formed such as the “Schollers of Cheapside” about 1603, and St Stephens, Bristol, in 1620, as well as bands at Oxford and Cambridge. The oldest surviving example is the Ancient Society of College Youths, founded in London in 1637. The College Youths, together with the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, founded in 1724, represent the elite of the ringing world.

Today, each county or diocesan area has its own Guild or Association and most Sussex ringers belong to the Sussex County Association of Change Ringers, which was founded in 1885. The aims of the Sussex Association are to foster ringing for Divine Service; to encourage the recruitment and training of learners and the advancement of the art of change ringing; to ensure the proper care and use of church bells and belfries; to preserve bells from redundant churches and to restore, maintain or improve existing bells and belfries housing them. The Association also abides by the decisions of the Central Council of Church Belfringers, the ‘Parliament’ of Ringers to which ringing societies throughout the world are affiliated. The Sussex Association is divided into four divisions, each organising meetings on a different Saturday in the month. Hurstpierpoint is in the Southern Division, which meets on the third Saturday.

## The Background to Bellringing

Although bells are very ancient – there were certainly small bells in the 1st century AD – bellringing as we know it today is relatively modern. The use of bells in connection with church worship is believed to have started in Italy in the 4th century AD. There were certainly bells in England by the 7th century. The oldest surviving bell in England is at Hardham in Sussex and is dated around 1050.

Hanging bells in towers and increasing their size made the sound carry further and the Venerable Bede makes reference to the fact that the Whitby Bell was heard over 13 miles away on the death of Abbess Hilda in 680 AD. Bells were also used for secular purposes, including signals to indicate the end of the day's work, the closing of town gates each day, as a fire warning and many others. The Curfew ('cover-fire') Bell, originally a fire prevention measure imposed by William the Conqueror, is still rung in a few places.

At first, bells in church towers were swung through only a small arc, using a rope attached to a lever connected to the block of wood from which the bell was suspended. Quarter wheels, then half wheels were introduced to increase the leverage and the swing of the bell. Eventually, the swing was maximised by the introduction of the three-quarter wheel, followed by the full wheel to provide greater mechanical strength. By this time the bell was being swung through almost 360 degrees.

Gradually more than one bell was used in a church. The oldest surviving ring, again in Sussex at Clapham, dates from the

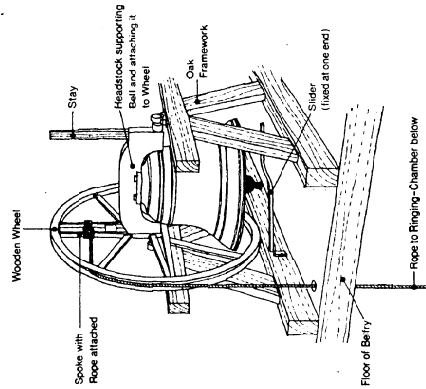
middle of the 14th century. Variations could now be obtained by changing the order in which the bells were rung. It wasn't very satisfying however since the ringers only had minimal control of the bells and only limited variations were possible.

Change ringing, involving the production of predetermined orders of bells, developed from the early 17th century. With the introduction of the three-quarter wheel a time delay could be introduced in the bells swing – an essential feature of accurate change ringing. By the beginning of the 19th century, bellringing had become a popular sport, and rival teams grew up. Primitive bearings made ringing thirsty work and ringing teams were sometimes attached to local hostleries, the innkeeper often appearing to have more influence over the ringers than the local parson!

Competitions were introduced and at that time bell-ringers were held in very low esteem, certainly within the Church. (Even so, many of the titles of the older ringing societies mentioned elsewhere, owe their names to these times and activities).

In the 1830s the change in religious outlook led by the Oxford Movement resulted in ringing reform and the setting up of many of the present church-affiliated ringing societies.

There are about 5,500 peals of five or more bells in the world which are hung for full circle ringing. Of these over 5,000 are in England, over 200 in the rest of the British Isles and the majority of the rest in former British Colonies.



Bell hung for change-ringing

## Change Ringing

The principle of change ringing is that each time the bells sound they do so in a different order. There are many different ways in which the order can be changed but the "methods" used by ringers all follow logical patterns, starting with the bells ringing in a descending scale ("rounds") and eventually returning, by logical progression, to rounds again.

The example shown here is Grandsire Doubles, the Grandsire method of producing changes using five bells. Each row (commonly called a "change") is different until the final row when it returns to rounds. Grandsire is one of the oldest and most popular methods and Grandsire Doubles was first rung over three hundred years ago.

All methods have distinctive two-part names, the first part indicating the method being used for producing the changes and the second part the number of bells. Thus, methods for changes on four bells are Minimus; on six, Minor; on seven, Triples; on eight Major; on nine, Caters; on ten, Royal; on eleven, Cinques; and on 12 bells, Maximus. Some methods are rung with all the bells changing; others have the "tenor" or deepest bell always ringing last.

When learning methods it is the path of the bell through the other bells (as shown by the lines in the diagram) that is memorised by ringers, rather than the figures themselves, in a similar way to using a map. Traditionally, the path through the figures was drawn in blue and ringers still talk of ringing "by the blue line".

In most methods the "treble" (1 in the example) has a simpler path than the other changing bells.

Its straight path in Grandsire Doubles and other similar methods is known as "Plain Hunting". In Grandsire bell 2 also Plain Hunts. The other three bells all follow the same path, each starting in a different place. Therefore once a ringer has learnt a method correctly on one bell he can ring it on any other bell.

For a given number of bells there is a simple mathematical formula to calculate the total number of unique changes possible [the "factorial" of the number of changing bells, e.g. 5x4x3x2x1 = 120 changes on 5 bells, known as "Doubles"]. A look at the Grandsire Doubles example will show that rounds occur after only 30 changes. Further changes are produced by one of the ringers (the "conductor") calling "Singles" and/or "Bobs" during the actual ringing. These calls interchange the positions of two and three bells respectively.

The process of working out at which of the possible positions Bobs and Singles should be inserted to produce the number of changes required is known as "composing". With many methods, compositions can be produced giving all the changes possible for the number bells. The quest to produce such compositions for seven bells occupied many minds in the 18th century and the 5040 changes possible – the extent of Triples – became the yardstick for "Peal" ringing.

A peal, often associated with a special local or national event takes almost three hours to ring and the ringing of one's first peal is a challenge to all keen ringers. A more convenient length for many purposes is a "quarter peal" of 1260 changes, taking about three quarters of an hour, and often rung to mark minor occasions and as a tangible mark of proficiency in a new method.

### Grandsire Doubles

12345  
21354  
~~23145~~  
32415  
34251  
43521  
45312  
54132  
51423  
15243  
12534  
21543  
25134  
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