

## **St Michael's Cornhill**

### *Tower Secretary's Report*

In their first full year the new bells have had a good reaction, especially since the internal acoustics were sorted out by Taylors around Easter-time. They've been rung well for services almost every Sunday and several midweek services too; I'm very grateful to everyone who's helped with that. The external sound control has proved quite effective, and we've had monthly practices by the ASCY and others by the Cornhill band, SRCY, MCA and Southwark, and visiting ringers from Norwich, Oxford, Bristol and Guildford. There were 16 peal attempts in 2012, 11 successful, including 7 ASCY. For 2013 over 20 peal attempts are booked, spaced 2-3 weeks apart so as not to endanger our welcome with the adjacent residents. The long-term arrangement is that all peal fees and donations for ringing at Cornhill go into the ASCY Bell Fund, minus any maintenance costs, which were just £46 this year for a new tenor rope tail-end; the net income to the Bell Fund from Cornhill in 2012 was a healthy £1,464.

Anthony R Kench

### *Steeplekeeper's Report*

After the installation of the new bells just under two years ago things have been relatively quiet.

Some of the ropes are showing signs of wear, which has been addressed. The tenor rope has had a new, slightly lighter, tail end fitted and will be put back on the bell shortly and I will then move the "spare" back bell rope to the 11th and will send the rope from that bell to Avon Ropes to have a new bottom end spliced on. To tide us over with ropes, we have been offered/lent/given spare ropes by Cripplegate/St Sepulchre and St Pauls and I would like to thank Gwen Rogers, Martin Cansdale and John White for their help with this.

The tower was rewired shortly before Christmas and new and enhanced lighting has been provided in the ringing chamber which is a great improvement. There is still a need for suitable blinds in the large, high window on the south side of the ringing chamber but this is complicated by the need to open the windows for ventilation and the proximity of a light fitting. Tony is currently working on this problem.

I recently discussed the bells with Andrew Mills from Taylors and he advised that they are looking for a suitable date to come down to do one or two final jobs on the installation:

- Odd-struckness - some people have commented that the bells may be starting to get a little odd-struck now that the clappers are bedding in.
- Completion of final part of walkway above the lower frame.
- Replacement of the temporary canopy over the bells in the top frame with a permanent structure
- Removal of unused rock-wool from on top of the bell frame and within the church
- General check over to make sure all nuts are tight and everything is as it should be.

Finally, following a generous bequest from John Gaze, a member of the church, we are now in a position to be able to purchase a full set of muffles. Tony and I are currently investigating the best option for this and anticipate ordering a set once we have taken advice from others on the best sort to go for.

David I Bassford

## **St Giles Cripplegate**

### *Tower Secretary's Report*

In 2012 scaffolding was erected for tower works including replacement of crumbling Kentish Ragstone, clock face conservation and long overdue repairs to the Ringing Chamber windows. This work was originally planned to start in June and eventually commenced in September. As a result there was no ringing between the middle of August and Christmas Day.

In the first half of the year there was ringing before the Parish Eucharist on the second Sunday of each month. In July there was ringing every Sunday then none until Christmas Day. Ringing was requested for three weddings but, to the disappointment of the bride and groom, one was without bells because of the scaffolding. We are grateful for the support of the Foster Lane ringers, without whom monthly Sunday ringing would not be possible, and to members of the St. Paul's Guild for the ringing in July and on Christmas Day.

First Sunday practices were held from January until June. The Society practised at Cripplegate 3 times. The Cumberlands, the UL and Southwark Cathedral held one practice each. There were only 2 peal attempts in 2012. Cambridge S Maximus was rung non-association and the other attempt was unsuccessful.

A tower movement survey by the CCCBR Towers and Belfries Committee was postponed because of the tower scaffolding. It is hoped to complete this survey in the first quarter of 2013.

I would like to thank all who have wielded spanners this year especially our Steeplekeeper, John Taylor. Sadly he is retiring after 10 years during which time, in addition to the regular checks and repairs, significant achievements include

- Improvements to the internal acoustics
- Installation of the sharp-second
- Decoration of the ringing chamber

A year of very little ringing, so a low income (£239.56), and a very small expenditure on tools (£31).

Gwen Rogers

### *Steeplekeeper's Report*

In 2012 there was a long period with scaffolding around the tower to allow for works including window and clock face repairs and stonework replacement. This work was originally planned to start in June and eventually commenced in September. As a result there was no ringing between the middle of August and Christmas Day.

Routine maintenance, including clapper adjustments, was undertaken regularly in first half of the year while ringing was allowed. With so little ringing taking place and a three month closedown scheduled it was decided not to invite Whites of Appleton for the usual annual maintenance. There was no other work to the bells or fittings this year.

There is no real change from last year. In general everything is in reasonable condition. The bells, especially 4 to 7, "blow and suck" unpredictably, probably due to a combination of tower movement and 60 year old bearings. Modern bearings will not fit on the current frame so a new frame must be part of any restoration project. The proposed CCCBR tower movement survey will inform decisions about frame design and location.

John P W Taylor

## **St Lawrence Jewry**

### *Tower Secretary's Report*

This has been a fairly standard year at Jewry, with the obvious exception of the involvement of Jewry in the peals for the olympic/paralympic marathons.

There have been twelve peal attempts, three of these during the marathons. The marathon peals were not only enjoyed by those who came to cheer on the competitors, but also by those who were invited to attend the 'olympic/paralympic parties at the Guildhall'. It isn't everyday that peal ringers come out of a church to applause, and a free BBQ with alcohol. The Guildhall did have the sense to start to serve the food before the ringing stopped, thus allowing those at the party a chance to have some food before the hungry and thirsty bell ringers arrived!

The bells at Jewry were also rung for the usual Corporation events, and a number of weddings. I would like to thank all those who helped out with the ringing for these events, especially the summer weddings when my organisation was a bit last minute. I do hope this was a blip and that I am not picking up bad habits from Martin!

The church is currently closed for some major works, including asbestos removal but fortunately none has been found in the tower. The church has recently been taken under the responsibility of the Guildhall, which should lead to some improvements but I will leave David Maynard to provide more detail on this in his steeplekeeper's report.

Rebecca L Cansdale

### *Steeplekeeper's Report*

In terms of steeplekeeping, we had a broken stay back in the summer, unfortunately while I was away in Northern Ireland with work. My thanks to those members who oversaw the replacement. Otherwise things have been pretty much unchanged in the tower. Works to improve the lighting in both the ringing room and bell chamber are to be included in the programme of works being undertaken to rewire the church, although this is all still at a preliminary stage. I hope that this long-desired and much needed work will finally come to fruition during the coming year. As many of you will be aware, I am not looking to stand again for the position of Steeplekeeper at Jewry, as I have struggled to attend to necessary work such as the broken stay during June and assisting with letting in visiting bands due to the pressure of work and other commitments. It has been a pleasure working with Becky and with the Vicar, the Revered David Parrott over the past few years and I am sure my successor will enjoy working with them both too.

David G Maynard

## **St Magnus the Martyr**

### *Tower Secretary's Report*

2012 has been an even busier year than 2011 with ringing on 215 occasions (187 in 2011), although not as busy as 2010.

Service ringing has been provided for 56 services. The parish is delighted with the service ringing that takes place, and thanks go to Ben Meyer who is in charge of Sunday Service ringing and has been very proactive in ensuring that ringing takes place.

There have been 14 bands of visiting ringers and 64 practices. 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.

There were 23 quarter peal attempts (19 successful), which included the 100<sup>th</sup> quarter peal on the bells. The quarter peal total stands at 102.

The year was a record one for peals. Of the 65 peal attempts, 52 were successful. This is the most in any year at the tower and indeed would appear, along with Thorverton (also on 52), the most in any tower in the world in 2012. The tally includes some ground breaking performances of spliced and immaculately struck Stedman, and the tricky Double Norwich Court Bob Cinques. Two ringers rang their first on twelve during the year (Stef Rueff and Robert Sworder), three circled the tower (Alan Flood, Charles Herriott and Jonathan Potter) and Andrew Graham rang his 1,000<sup>th</sup> peal there in February. Peals were rung as part of the Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant and for all three Olympic marathons, and four were rung for the Tower Secretary's "wedding". The 100<sup>th</sup> peal was rung on the bells during the year, and the total on the bells is 128.

Virtually all weekend ringing takes place with the sound control open. There have been no complaints, and indeed a reporter for the Friends of City Churches newsletter has commented on how often the bells seem to ring and how much she appreciates it.

Financial management of the tower is administered by the Bells Trust. The Trustees during the year were Paul Mounsey (Chairman), John Hughes-D'Aeth, James Foster, Elizabeth Hibbert (Treasurer), David Hilling, Dickon Love (Secretary) and Fr Philip Warner. In November, the Parish approved the appointment of Paul Tiebout as an Assistant Steeplekeeper to Jim Foster. The accounts for 2012 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.

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 confirmed that the bells are bedding in well, and there are no issues of note.

A new set of ropes was put on the bells at the start of 2012. They have been monitored closely throughout the year (especially due to the high volume of

peals rung), as the initial set hadn't lasted as long as we'd hoped for and lots of splicing had been needed in 2011. The ropes have worn in well, except for the tenor rope, that started unravelling at the top of the sally, and is currently being replaced by Ellis. On investigation, the rope does not seem to be catching anywhere so the assumption is a fault with the rope - but the new tenor rope will be closely watched for signs of wear and tear. At the start of the year the sallies on 10,11,12 were raised, to encourage ringers to ring them from boxes. This has successfully helped to reduce the wear and tear of tail ends on the floor of the ringing room in the peals throughout the year.

The stay on the 6<sup>th</sup> was broken this year and Whitechapel swiftly made a replacement within a couple of days, so there was no break in the ringing schedule.

There are currently five peal boards in the belfry awaiting installation, and another in the church. A seventh peal Board is being worked on by Peter Rumney, and when this is produced (estimated February/March), they will all be installed in the belfry (kindly by Jim Hardy).

The sound control for the chamber above the bells is awaiting installation, as currently sound escapes at this high level. A working party is being planned for the spring to cut the wood, transport up the tower stairs and fix the sound control in place. (If anyone would like to help with this, please let me know).

Other key jobs for 2013 include investigating any possible oddstruckness that may have developed with the oddstuckness meter, installing a new belfry door, a new handbell case and various other jobs.

James H Foster

## **St Sepulchre**

### *Tower Secretary's Report*

Following the retirement this time last year of Father Mullen, the church has been in an interregnum, with day-to-day affairs handled by the friendly vergers and bookings manager. It now seems likely that a new rector will not be appointed and the church will become a charitable foundation with its primary focus the support of music making. Ringing continues, and we see no reason why it should not continue. The sound control means ringing can take place provided a concert is not in progress, and subject to the existing restrictions from the flat inhabitants.

In 2012 there were 2/5 quarters, 5/9 peals, 11 practices and 2 outing visits. £681.45 income and £2416.80 expenditure.

Henry D Coggill

### *Steeplekeeper's Report*

Two items of work mentioned in last year's report have been carried out. The first of these is the fitting of a new floor. This is made of sheets of high density chipboard backed with acoustic felt. The felt absorbs much of the unevenness in underlying oak floor, while tongue and groove joints mean that the new floor is substantially more stable than the old. Comments on the experience of ringing on the new floor have been positive. The removal of the old carpet, with its disintegrating underlay, rendered viable the thorough sweeping of the ringing room floor and the portion of the walls within reach, leaving the ringing room cleaner than at any time in recent years. My thanks go to Henry for his assistance in the finishing of the floor and spring cleaning of the tower.

In February two bellhangers from Whitechapel replaced all pullies, checked and lubricated all bearings and clappers, and cleaned the frame and bellchamber. I think this work has noticeably improved the go of the bells, and will certainly be of benefit for years to come. Many thanks to Tony Kench, in his PCC role, for making the arrangements with the Foundry.

The debris from construction of the new floor, together with the remains of the old floor and a number of bell wheels in an advanced state of deterioration, was cut into pieces compatible with the staircase, removed from the tower, and collected by a rubbish clearance company.

The last stage of the replacement of the floor will be the fitting of a new carpet. I intend to have this done in the next few weeks by the carpet fitters responsible for carpeting the Librarian's various new towers.

Martin Cansdale

## **St Mary-le-Bow**

*(Note: The Steeplekeeper at St Mary-le-Bow is appointed by the parish and not by the Society, but the current holder of the office is a Society member and officer, and provides this report for information)*

Inevitably, given the significant events happening this year, there was a lot of ringing at Bow.

There were 2 successful peals for the Jubilee, one by the society and one by the service band. The three Olympic marathon peals were also successful. The organisation of the jubilee peals was particularly tortuous given the number of competing attempts at significant rings, many ringers taking the opportunity that the extended weekend offered to go on holiday plus people deliberately avoiding London because of the predicted crowds. We are looking to have peal boards made to commemorate these two occasions.

There have been 13 peals (7 ASCY), 9 quarters and one date touch (commemorating the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic) rung in 2012. The society held 11 practices at Bow during the year and the SRCY, the UL & Southwark Cathedral all used Bow from time to time.

Bow bells continue to attract all manner of attention from the media, students and members of the public with filming, interviews and tours being a regular part of my role. The church website gets significantly more hits in relation to the bells than for all other reasons put together. The church is clearly conscious of the asset that the bells are and is keen to exploit that. This is why they encourage use of the bells and publish all ringing on the website so that people can come and listen to these famous bells.

This is a key reason why it is important that we maintain a high standard of ringing and I would urge you all, and particularly conductors, to remember this when you are at Bow. I also receive emails from the rector if the ringing is poor so, just because I'm not present, I will probably hear if your ringing is not up to scratch.

I would also ask that people who arrange peals or other ringing at Bow try to ensure there is a good chance that it will actually go ahead before booking the bells. Constantly making changes puts a workload on the office staff, particularly because of putting the ringing on the web, but also people might have seen the published ringing and made plans to come and hear the bells - on one occasion we had people travel from Germany to listen to them (and they were delighted with what they heard).

The installation continues to remain in excellent condition and the church does not hesitate to cover the costs of any necessary works. We are currently looking to replace the clock hammers and have managed to secure a grant to cover the cost of the work. The work is required because the old hammers were reaching the end of their life but the new hammers will be of a much more modern and lighter design. This will dent the bells less (the tenor was becoming particularly pitted) and also allow more of the tunes to be playable because of the reduced return time of these hammers (reduced from c2 seconds to 1/6<sup>th</sup> of a second).

Towards the end of the year we were asked at short notice to ring for a service

for the Lord Mayor at the start of his year of office. The Lord Mayor was an alderman in the Ward of Cordwainer which is where Bow sits so this was highly appropriate. I suspect there will be more ringing for him over the next year.

The other ringing I intend to introduce will be for the pearlies' harvest festival. This is their one major service in the church and in 2012 they were spilling out into the churchyard there were so many of them! In their address they spoke very warmly of the bells and their association with them. People may not be aware but much of the money to replace the bells after the war was raised by the pearlies so we have a lot to thank them for. It seems only fitting, therefore, that we ring for their one service in the year.

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

Simon Meyer