

Ancient Society of College Youths

Tower Officials' Reports for 2014 (presented at the business meeting on 13 January 2015)

St Michael Cornhill - Tower Secretary's Report for 2014

The bells have been rung after every 11am Sunday service in 2014, mainly by ringers from St Paul's; this ringing is much appreciated by the church. The bells have also been rung for four weddings and eight weekday services:

City New Year Service
Ash Wednesday Service
Ascension Day Service
Drapers' Company Annual Service
Installation of the new Rector (July)
Drapers' Company 650th Anniversary Service
Parish Carol Service
Christmas Morning Service.

The new Rector is the Rt Rev'd Stephen Platten, recently retired Bishop of Wakefield, now joined by a new Assistant Rector, Rev'd Hugh Thomas.

Practices in 2014 were held approximately monthly by the ASCY and the Cornhill Midweek Band. Five visiting practices were held by the Cumberlands, four by the UL, two by Southwark Cathedral and one by the Middlesex Association.

Seven bands of visiting ringers were welcomed, from George Salters' Young Ringers, St Albans Abbey, St Michael's Society, Yorkshire Association, Llandaff Cathedral, St Martin's Guild and St Wilfrid's York. 19 peal attempts took place during 2014, of which 12 were successful: 6 by the ASCY, 1 each by the Cumberlands, the UL, the University of Bristol and the Chester DG, and 2 non-association. Looking ahead to 2015, 12 peal attempts are booked so far, and several more are still available from June onwards.

Total donations for 2014 (before Gift Aid) amounted to £1,851. All of it has been paid in to the ASCY Bell Restoration Fund, which is responsible for all routine non-faculty maintenance of the Cornhill bell installation. Expenditure on Cornhill from the BRF in 2014 was £621, comprising:

- £420 for a servicing visit by John Taylor & Co;
- £201 to Avon Ropes for replacement sallies and tail-ends on the back four (the first replacements since 2006).

My sincere thanks to Ryan Noble, who has been an exemplary new steeple-keeper, and also to everyone who has contributed to all the service ringing at Cornhill in 2014.

Antony R Kench

St Michael Cornhill – Steeplekeeper's Report for 2014

The bells and their fittings remain in excellent condition. Taylor's visited in September to carry out some routine maintenance which included adjusting odd-struckness, work to the tenor clapper to reduce reverberation and the placement of some more plywood nearby the third to stop it from shouting outside.

Taylor's have told us that they think the sound control operation unit is faulty so they will be getting this repaired or replaced at some point soon.

Some of the ropes on the heavy bells were beginning to wear quite badly so we have been sending small batches to Avon ropes to have new tail-ends spliced on. So far, bells 9 to 12 have had new tail-ends and they appear to be of good quality. Gradually, the plan is to get new tail-ends for bells 1 to 8. The Tenor rope seems to have lost part of the white strand on the sally so a replacement may need to be ordered eventually. The main wear on the back-bell ropes is from where the ropes hit the boxes, and to help reduce future rope wear, we plan to cover the boxes for 10, 11 and 12 with carpet.

In addition to all of this, occasional cleaning has taken place and several lightbulbs have been changed on the stairs. We are also looking at getting a rubbish removal contractor in to remove a large amount of unwanted wood, metal and other rubbish in the tower and roof space, which has accumulated over the years from various works on the bells.

Tony and I have alerted the church to a couple of problems with the tower fabric: the tower windows are allowing some water to leak in, and the rooftop door is letting in birds.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank anyone who has helped me to carry out steeple-keeping duties at Cornhill over the past year.

Ryan Noble

St Giles, Cripplegate – Tower Secretary's Report for 2014

In March, St. Giles' Cripplegate was one of the towers chosen to host an eliminator for the National 12-Bell Ringing Contest. Preparations started in January with oddstruckness measurements. A month later, Whites of Appleton spent a day correcting the clapping and tightening up the fittings.

For the next few weeks the competing bands visited to practise and the ASCY home team honed their skills. On the day the Rector welcomed all the bands and invited the youngest ringer present to draw the bands from her sorting hat. The ensuing day was a success for both St. Giles' and the Society. Good ringing was enjoyed by Barbican residents who had been warned to expect excellence. Books were bought and sold for Christian Aid and Help4HurtingChildren. The Childrens Society sold out of tea and cakes. The Society won.

Like the previous year Sunday Service ringing in 2014 started with Plain Bob Minimus. A month later the University of London Society offered to lend a hand and the result was very enjoyable Stedman, Triples on the back eight followed by two courses of Cinques. For the rest of the year, during term time, the second Sunday service ringing has regularly been on twelve. When the UL were away the long standing support from St. Vedast's has ensured ringing at least once each month. On Palm Sunday, Christmas Day, All Souls and during the July Masses ringers from St. Paul's have supported St. Giles'. The Rector was surprised and pleased to hear ringing for the Parish Carol Service, now she hopes we can make this a regular ringing occasion. There were three weddings. Thank-you to all who have helped.

Practice for the 12-Bell Eliminator dominated the first quarter of the year. All competing bands, except Liverpool, took their opportunity to check the go of the bells and the sound from the live feed to the judges in the vestry. The Society increased its practice quota from four to twelve. The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths were drawn in the St. Sepulchre's eliminator. After qualifying they applied for an extra practice at Cripplegate where they judged the bells a good preparation for the final at Oxford. The Southwark Cathedral Guild and the St. Martin in the Fields band both rang three times. The other bands were ULSCR, Essex, High Wycombe, Bristol, Cambridge, Ipswich, Birmingham and the St. Paul's Guild.

There were six peal attempts. Four were scored. Bristol S Maximus was rung by the Society and a Non-Association band. Stedman Cinques was rung by the Kent Count Association. The Cumberlands rang Horton's 4 on the light eight.

The bells are difficult to ring. They "blow and suck" unpredictably, possibly in response to tower and/or frame movement. The frame and fittings are 60 years old. Modern bearings and a stronger frame might help. To investigate tower and frame movement the CCCBR Towers and Belfries Committee conducted a tower movement survey in April 2013. At the beginning of 2015 neither the report, nor the data, has been published. During 2014 this matter has been raised with the Chair of the Committee, the members and ex-members involved in the survey and finally with the Secretary and President of the Central Council.

While waiting for the survey it was suggested that we try some relatively cheap experiments. The first was to rehang one of the difficult bells swinging north-south. We chose the fifth. Whites and Whitechapel quoted for the work without extra visits but Taylors sent Mike Semken to inspect the installation and prepare a quotation. His report is very helpful and while ringing the fifth from the frame he observed the tower oscillate with the swing of the bell. With such close resonant coupling between the bell and the tower he advised a sway survey rather than rehangng the bell. Other suggestions include:

- ⊖ Moving the bells down to the clock chamber.
- ⊖ Strengthening the tower and its foundations.
- ⊖ Employing a large mass damper system to control the tower's movement.

As the Taylors reports says "these are large civil engineering projects and the needs must be fully understood before anything is done".

A reply has now been received from the President of the Central Council, dated 31 December 2014. Attempts are being made to salvage the data from the Towers and Belfries Committee inspection but, even if successful, he anticipated difficulties completing the analysis. Since a sway survey is pre-requisite for planning improvements I would like to recommend that Taylors be invited to conduct a survey asap.

For details of repairs and maintenance during the year see the Steeplekeeper's report. Thank-you to all who have helped especially our Steeplekeeper, Terry Streeter.

The income exceeded £1,000 for the first time since 2009. Expenditure was low with only one maintenance session by Whites and only one broken stay. The surplus for the year was £846.70.

Gwen Rogers

St Giles, Cripplegate – Steeplekeeper's Report for 2014

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 Sepulchre Holborn – Tower Secretary’s Report for 2014

This year, St. Sepulchre experienced an exciting first quarter, as it was one of the eliminator venues for the national 12 bell competition, hosted by the St. Paul's Guild of Ringers. The day was a success with many thanks to the church, Martin Cansdale, and of course the St. Paul's Guild, in particular Dave Bassford and Ann White.

The rest of the year was business as usual. We are continuing to ring through the evensong practice and ring for service prior to usual practices at St. Sepulchre. Unfortunately due to the eliminator being held and eliminator practices being held, there was limited ringing at St. Sepulchre in the first quarter. Despite this, in addition to the six ASCY practices we welcomed the SRCY, St. Martin in the Fields and the Middlesex practices; seven quarter peals were scored from seven attempts, and six of the nine peal attempts were successful. This contributed to £816.66 income and £49.99 expenditure (new vacuum cleaner).

Rachael C Smith

St Sepulchre Holborn – Steeplekeeper’s Report for 2014

The year at Sepulchre’s began with the installation of the new ringing room carpet, which was ordered last January and fitted in mid February. This was followed by final checks to the ropes and fittings before eliminator practices commenced.

Since then it has been a quiet year of routine maintenance. A new Hoover has been purchased, and the resulting improvement on the look of the carpet is clear.

At least one clapper would benefit from re-bushing soon, and this will be taken to the foundry as soon as a gap in ringing bookings allows. Once this has been done all of the clappers will be adjusted to reduce oddstruckness.

Martin J Cansdale

St Magnus the Martyr – Tower Secretary's Report for 2014

2014 has been a good year with ringing on 191 occasions (228 in 2013).

Service ringing has been provided for 52 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 ringing given on Sunday 12 January which was a quarter peal during the Blessing of the Thames with Southwark Cathedral.

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. Regular practices are also held by the Cumberlands and Southwark Cathedral.

27 quarter peals were attempted and all but three were successful. The quarter peal total at the end of the year stood at 157.

Fewer peals were attempted than last year – only 53 (!) of which 37 were successful (41 out of 56 were successful last year). The peal total at the end of the year stood at 207. Three out of five of these peals were of spliced. Most peals were Non Association peals (17) and 13 were rung by the Society. In February, a peal was rung by the first 11 people to circle the tower, with Katie Town being the 12th ringer, who circled the tower in this peal (in place of Alan Flood who was unable to ring). Alan Regin rang his 5,000th tower bell peal in October, and David Brown and David Dearnley rang their 1000th peal together in December.

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, although no quarters or peals were scored 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, James Foster, Elizabeth Hibbert (Treasurer), Dickon Love (Secretary) and Fr Philip Warner.

The accounts for 2014 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

St Magnus the Martyr – Steeplekeeper's Report for 2014

In general, the bells and fittings are in an excellent condition, as one would expect. Whitechapel performed an inspection in the third quarter of 2014 to confirm this.

The odd-struckness of the back 4 wandered briefly in the middle part of the year, and I therefore used the odd-struckness meter to correct the go of the back 4 bells. As the bells have now bedded in after their installation, I will regularly look at the odd-struckness of the bells.

A new set of ropes was put on during the 2013 year and as such we have not had to replace many ropes, except for a splice on the 9th. We 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. That being said, we will shortly order a new set of ropes for the back four, as these are the ropes that tend to fail first.

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

There was a significant exercise to put up six peal boards in the ringing room at the start of the year. My thanks are extended to Jim Hardy for all his help and guidance in this process.

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 fixed in place. That, along with a project to replace the belfry door should improve sound control.

James H Foster

St Lawrence Jewry – Tower Secretary's Report for 2014

This has been a quiet year at Jewry with five peal attempts, two visiting bands, eleven weddings and three pieces of ringing for the usual Corporation events.

I would encourage members to make the most of these wonderful bells; the agreement with the church is that there may be one peal attempt a month.

I would like to thank all those who have rung for weddings or Corporation events, especially those who have turned out to help me get the bells up. Your support is much appreciated.

As announced at the October meeting, I have decided against standing for re-election. I have enjoyed my time as Tower Secretary. Jewry is an interesting church and it is always nice to hear the positive comments from those coming to ring the bells.

I have yet to have any expressions of interest in the post and would encourage members who might be interested to come and talk to me about what is involved. It is not an onerous role, and the current incumbent is very easy to work with.

To remind members; the agreement with the church is:

- one peal per month on a Saturday
- and two or three mid-week or weekend visiting bands or quarters per month (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 or my successor.

Rebecca L Sugden

St Lawrence Jewry – Steeplekeeper's Report for 2014

Once again, it has been a very quiet year from a steeple-keeper perspective. There are only a couple of points to highlight heading into 2015.

Firstly, the clapper from the 6th broke during a peal attempt in September, and with the Lord's major's election in Guildhall approaching, this needed to be repaired swiftly. The clapper was taken to Whitechapel and was repaired and installed a few days prior to the election.

Secondly, a power cut damaged the motherboard of the electronic chiming mechanism also in September. Smiths of Derby are still in the process of fixing this issue.

Daniel J Smith

St Mary-le-Bow – Steeplekeeper's Report for 2014

(Note: The Steeplekeeper at St Mary-le-Bow is appointed by the church and not elected by the Society. The current incumbent, Simon Meyer, has once again offered this report on a voluntary basis).

2014 has been another busy year at Bow. All the major festivals have, once again, been rung for and with noticeably stronger bands in the latter part of the year – hopefully this will continue. There were only two weddings to ring

for this year but ironically they were on consecutive days on the August Bank Holiday weekend; not the easiest time to get bands!

Peal ringing has flourished this year with fifteen successful attempts compared to eleven the previous year. Nine quarters were also rung.

The ASCY continues to be the most frequent society to practice at Bow (12 times) although the Cumberlands, Southwark and the University of London Society are also regular attendees.

It was a privilege to host the London 12 Bell Striking Competition in October. As well as the bells being good, differentiating competition bells, the churchyard with the pub opposite makes an attractive listening area. There was a very considerable increase in the amount of ringing immediately prior to the competition as various bands came to practice.

Maintenance has been fairly standard during the year other than the replacement of the 6ths gudgeons. The church was very grateful for contributions towards this from the ringing fraternity but especially the ASCY bell fund which made a handsome grant.

We will be investing in new ropes soon – the current ones are now in a poor condition. Also on the agenda is to look at improving the sound control. The current shutters are starting to show signs of age with one pair now not able to be opened safely. The intention is to try to retain the open and closed volumes as much as possible but with a system that is easier to operate.

We are also in the final throes of getting Hawkear up and running with the remaining items purely software related. I am sure Bow will be a popular practice venue for many societies for this year's 12 bell competition so this will be a timely addition.

All in all I am pleased to report on a really healthy year in the tower at Bow.

Simon S Meyer