

Details of the bells

Bell	Weight		Diameter inches	Note	Inscription
	cwt	qr lb			
Treble	4	2	25 ½	A	A.M.D.G.d.d.d. Mary Wyatt Gibson, 1914. Make a joyful noise unto God. Recast 1928, Mears and Stainbank, London.
2 nd	5	15	26 ¾	G	George V. R. et I. 1911. God save the King. Recast 1928, Mears and Stainbank, London.
3 rd	5	1	27 ¾	F [#]	J.J. Antrobus, Vicar, J.P. Atkinson & John Gilling, Churchwardens, 1914. L. Hughes, Vicar. H. Potter & P.L. Allen Churchwardens 1928. Lift up your hearts. Recast 1928, Mears and Stainbank, London.
4 th	5	1	29	E	Waldensis Posuit me Campania Gilda. A° DNI. MCMXIII. Frederick Pittstow, Master. O let my mouth be filled with thy praise. Recast 1928, Mears and Stainbank, London.
5 th	6	1	31 ¼	D	John Briant, Hertford, Fecit 1798, Justice Prudence.
6 th	6	2	32	C [#]	John Briant, Hertford, Fecit 1798, Prudence Justice.
7 th	6	2	33 ¼	B	John Briant, Hertford, Fecit 1797.
8 th	8	16	35 ½	A	John Briant, Hertford, Fecit 1798, Temperance.
9 th	9	3	38 ½	G	John Briant, Hertford, Fecit 1798, Faith.
10 th	10	3	41	F [#]	C.&G. Mears, Founders, London 1849. Ralph Clutton, B.D. Vicar. Thomas Frye, Henry Smith, Churchwardens 1849.
11 th	14	1	45 ½	E	John Leverett, Thomas Cornwell, Churchwardens 1813. T. Mears of London Fecit.
Tenor	22	2	51	D	This Peal was cast and hung by John Briant of Hertford from a voluntary subscription of Lord Braybrooke and the Inhabitants. Gloria Deo in excelsis Law temporal The Gospel eternal. Wm. Gretton Vicar R Leverett & J Bowtell Churchwardens. AN.DOM. 1798.

Memo: - The first four Bells were added in 1914.



St Mary's Church
Saffron Walden
Sharing God's Love

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin Saffron Walden

Guide to The Bells

The Bells of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin Saffron Walden

Brief History

The tower contains a fine peal of 12 bells, one of the largest rings in Essex. The earliest bell dates from 1797 and was cast by John Briant of Hertford. The bell was one of a new ring of eight cast by Briant in 1797/98 where the heaviest (the tenor) weighed 24 cwt (1219kg). Two of these bells required re-casting (probably due to cracking), one in 1813 and the other in 1849. These were re-cast by the Whitechapel bell foundry, one of only two foundries operating in the UK today. In 1914 the bells were augmented to a ring of twelve by the addition of four treble bells by Alfred Bowell of Ipswich. He was the only bell founder at the time who said the entire ring could be installed on the same level in our slender tower. Unfortunately the tonal quality of the new bells was poor, so they were re-cast at Whitechapel in 1928.

The last restoration was in 1962 when the entire ring was retuned and hung in a new iron frame by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough, the tenor now weighs just over a ton (22cwt 2 qtr 24 lb (1154 kg.)).

Although the present Peal, therefore, can only be dated back to the time of the 1790s restoration, there is evidence that there were bells in the church well before then. The churchwardens' accounts for 1450 show payments 'to men for ringing the great bell in a violent wind' and, in 1661, 'bread and beer' was provided for ringing on Coronation Day.

Thomas Turner and Great Ringing Day

In 1623 Thomas Turner, a local man, lost his way in the woods and was able to find his way home by following the sound of the Walden bells. In gratitude for his deliverance, he left an endowment in his will for the bells to be rung and for a sermon to be preached on the anniversary of his death - a custom which is still honoured with Great Ringing Day, now held on the last Saturday in June (where possible) each year.

Why Bells are Rung

In mediaeval times the bells were an important part of daily life. Apart from their normal use before services to summon the faithful to prayer, the Sanctus bell was rung at the elevation of the Host in the pre-Reformation Mass, the Passing bell (today sounded three times for the death of a child, six times for a woman and nine for a man) and the Knell (with one stroke for every year of the deceased's age) called the faithful then as now to add their prayers for the deliverance of the soul.

There were also Curfew bells and Fire bells (sounded to summon assistance when there was a fire). The bells are rung today for weddings, funerals and other special occasions such as Remembrance Day.

Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers

The Society almost certainly goes back as far as Thomas Turner's adventure, the earliest set of ringing rules still exist and dates from 1800 when the members agreed to meet at the church every Tuesday evening by 'a quarter after six o'clock ... and there to stop and Ring a Peal or part of a Peal...'. The ringers still practice on a Tuesday evening but now at 7.45 pm.. The Society continues in a healthy state to-day.

Ringling the Bells at Saffron Walden

Today the bells continue to be rung by members of the Saffron Walden Society of Change Ringers, but ringers of all abilities are welcome to join us for ringing for church services and Tuesday evening practice.

Bell Ringing at Saffron Walden Today

10:00am Sunday Service ringing from 9:15 to 10:00am.

Practice Night, Tuesday ringing from 7:45 to 9:15pm.

We at Saffron Walden are always looking for new ringers - adults or young people (young people must attend with a parent on their first visit and should be at least 12 years old - we have a Child Protection Policy). Ringing helps keep to keep you fit and provides good mental exercise - ringers often continue ringing into their '80s and beyond. Bell ringing is a social activity and is all about being part of a team.

Further Information about the bells and the Society visit:
www.saffronwaldenbells.org.uk

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