

# The Bells of the Mid Fosse Benefice

## St George, Newbold Pacey (4, 7cwt in B)



The frame and fittings are probably of 1880-1, contemporary with the present church, but by a carpenter and builder (probably James Kibler of Wellesbourne, the church building contractor) rather than a bellhanger.

The bells are the only surviving complete ring by William Clarke & Michael Bushell of Evesham and date from 1707. They carry their distinctive IHS mark and are listed.

The treble swings E-W along the South wall and the rest N-S in parallel pits on

the North wall, all on plain bearings. The bells have canons and none have been turned. The clappers are all 18<sup>th</sup> century types with long flights.

The treble is rung from the corner of the ringing room and the other 3 in a straight line down the middle of it – not using all of what is a fairly small ringing room that is reached via a vertical ladder in the church porch.

There is currently a scheme starting which intends to rehang the bells in the existing frame and also add a treble to make them up to a ring of 5.

**Treble:** William Clarke & Michael Bushell, Evesham, 1707. 4cwt (200kg), 26.5". 1344Hz (E+33c).

**2:** William Clarke & Michael Bushell, Evesham, 1707. 4½cwt (230kg), 27.75". 1248.5Hz (D#+6c).

**3:** William Clarke & Michael Bushell, Evesham, 1707. 5¼cwt (270kg), 29.875". 1146.0Hz (C#+57c). "SAMVEL HOBINS IO CVRTIS CH WAR 1707"

**4:** William Clarke & Michael Bushell, Evesham, 1707. 7cwt (350kg), 33". 997.5Hz (B+17c).

## St Giles, Chesterton (3, 8½cwt in Ab)



There has been a place of worship here since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The church contains some fine monuments to the Peyto family who came to the village in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and who paid for the bells to be cast in 1705.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century these bells were an unringable 3, due to the “general tattiness” of all the original Rudhall fittings. The frame is probably contemporary with the bells and is itself considered somewhat “tatty”. There is a pit for a fourth bell, though it has never been occupied. In about 1955 a rolled steel joist (definitely there by 1966) was inserted under the west side of the frame. A piece of oak with ornamental carved tracery has been used as a jack brace in the treble pit.

Starting in September 2009 these bells were converted to a swing chime by Whites of Appleton. The work involved removing the existing fittings, drilling out the crown staples and replacing the wooden headstocks (with wood again) and clappers. The frame was then treated. All the bells retain their canons, those of the 2 and 3 being cable patterned.



**Treble:** Abraham Rudhall, Gloucester, 1705. 5cwt (250kg), 29½". 1083Hz (Db–41c). “GOD SAVE THE QVEEN [arabesque] A R [bell] 1705 [scroll border] [arabesque]”.

**2:** Abraham Rudhall, Gloucester, 1705. 6½cwt (330kg), 33½". 974.5Hz (B–23c). “GOD SAVE THE QVEEN & CHVRCH [arabesque] A R [bell] 1705 [scroll border] [arabesque]”.

**3:** Abraham Rudhall, Gloucester, 1705. 8½cwt (430kg), 36". 849Hz (Ab+38c). “WILLIAM PEYTO ESQ<sup>R</sup> GAVE THE CASTING OF VS ALL 1705 [scroll border]”.

## St Laurence, Lighthorne (6, 5-2-6 in B)



Lighthorne is known to have had three bells since at least 1552. The church was taken down and entirely rebuilt in 1773–4 at the expense of Lord

Willoughby de Broke, the stone tower replacing a previous wooden belfry. In 1875-6 the body of the church was rebuilt and enlarged, the earlier tower being left intact.

In 1890 a major refurbishment was carried out by Llewellyns & James for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The three bells were removed, the original treble bell (now 4), which had been cracked since 1875, was recast, and a new treble bell (now 3) provided. The old frame (probably from 1773-4) was extended and provided with new fittings. The third cracked in April 1898, but was not recast until 1913, the 1890 fittings being reused. The frame was further strengthened by insertion of supporting steelwork in 1935 and 1963.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this ring of 4 was reputedly in a not too good condition, the treble having a "wormy" headstock. All this changed in 2006! The back 4 were retuned and hung in a 6 bell grillage. The two trebles were added later the same year. All now hang in a new galvanised steel fabricated frame. The bells have tuned up quite well, the third being originally somewhat flat of what it should have been. The new treble bell is a Coventry Guild Centenary bell. The fifth is a recast of a Henry Bagley of Chacombe bell, 1679. Canons were removed from the Llewellyns bells, the 1913 Bond bell being cast flat topped and the tenor having its canons removed in 1890. The tenor, a fine mediæval bell, is listed. Bells 3, 4 and 6 have been one-eighth turned and the fifth turned by an unspecified amount.

Two peals were rung on the old four here, on 10 August 1974, (6000 Minimus in 6 Methods in 2 Hours & 55 Minutes) and 11 January 1975 (7248 Minimus in 3 Methods in 3 Hours & 40 Minutes). They were part of a competition between two bands in the country to get the longest peal of minimus. The latter is still the Coventry Guild record number of changes to a peal on tower bells! The new six were first pealed (half muffled) on 19 January 2008 in memory of Sir Adam Butler, the inspiration behind the restoration and augmentation project.



**Treble:** Whitechapel, London, 2006. 2-2-15 (134kg), 23". 1641Hz (G#–21c). “COVENTRY DIOCESAN GUILD – OF – CHURCH BELLRINGERS – CENTENARY BELL – 2007”.

**2:** Whitechapel, London, 2006. 2-3-1 (140kg), 24". 1473Hz (F#–8c). “2006 – NOW 6 BELLS – TO RING OUT – IN PRAISE OF GOD – REJOICE”.

**3:** Llewellyns & James, Bristol, 1890. 2-3-10 (144kg), 26.125". 1317.5Hz (E–1c). “LAUS DEO – W R VERNEY RECTOR – W WILKINS} W LATTIMER} CHURCHWARDENS – 1890”.

**4:** Llewellyns & James, Bristol, 1890. 3-1-9 (169kg), 27.375". 1234Hz (D#–15c). “M BAGLEY MADE MEE – I WAS RECAST IN MEMORIE – OF THE QUEENS JUBILEE 1890”.

**5:** Bond & Son, Burford, 1913. 4-1-1 (216kg), 29.125". 1102Hz (C#–11c). “H B 1679 THOMAS GREEN AND WILLIAM TOWNSIND CHVRCHWARDENS – RECAST 1913 TO THE MEMORY OF – WALTER ROBERT VERNEY – RECTOR 1873-1907”.

6: Worcester Foundry, c1410. 5-2-6 (282kg), 31.94". 985Hz (B-5c).  
“[cross] I O H A N N I S [king] P R E C E [queen] D V L C E [king]  
S O N E T [queen] E T [king] A M E N E”.

## Holy Cross, Moreton Morrell (3, 7cwt in Bb)



It is possible that there may have been a church here in Anglo-Saxon times. In the Domesday Book of 1086 a priest at Moretone is mentioned while the manor was known to be well established in Edward the Confessor's reign. The entry in the Domesday Book mentions that a Count de Meulan was Lord of the Manor, and that a priest, 18 bondmen, 20 villeins and one border lived in the manor that comprised 700 acres.

The main fabric of the church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but the nave is probably of 12<sup>th</sup> century origin. Further alterations to the church can be dated between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

There have been many restorations of the church over the centuries. The tower, the brick top of which was originally built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which is about 7 feet square internally, once contained a ring of 3 bells.

It is thought that the two treble bells are probably late work of Edward Newcombe, who seems to have given up bellfounding in about 1615/16 when Hugh Watts I assumed control of the foundry. At the time of the casting of the tenor, Edward apparently worked in partnership with three sons.

These bells were hung dead as a chime by Whitechapel in 1967 when the upper stages of the tower were rebuilt. They are secured by traditional ironwork to wooden deadstocks and rest on two RSJs spanning the tower. All retain their canons and have been quarter turned. The bells are sounded via ropes attached to the clappers and chimed from a manual below.

**Treble:** Newcombe, Leicester, 1616. 4cwt (200kg). “[cross] PRAISE THE LORDE 1616”

**2:** Newcombe, Leicester, 1616. 4½cwt (230kg). “[cross] PRAISE THE LORDE 1616”

**3:** Newcombe, Leicester, 1609. 7cwt (350kg), 33", in Bb. “[cross] NEWCOMBE OF LEICESTER MADE MEE 1609”

*The MidFosse Bellringers practice every Thursday evening at Lighthorne from 7:15-8:45. If you live locally and would like to know more about learning to ring, or if you are an experienced bellringer who would like to visit, please contact Sally Dick on 01926-650078.*

*This document was written by Mike Rigby in October 2013 using information and photographs taken from warksbells.co.uk. Mike Chester and Chris Pickford are gratefully acknowledged for permission to use this, and additional, material.*