

Dover Restoration nearing completion

The restoration at St Mary's Dover is nearing completion at long last. The Kent County Association's "heavy squad" took out the bells on 9th March; they went first to Whites of Appleton to have the iron clapper staples drilled out, and resin pads cast into the crowns. Then there was a return trip along the M40 to Whitechapel for the tuning process, after which the tenor weighed in at 15-2-9 in E-flat. In the meantime Whites had been assembling the frame, complete with headstocks, wheels and stays.

On Friday, 7th June, a coach party from Dover went to Appleton to see "our bells". We rang first at the parish church in Appleton, followed by lunch in the "Thatched Tavern". At his works Brian White gave us the red carpet treatment. Photo calls and demonstrations of our bells were interspersed with ringing on the little bells at the works. It was enormous fun, and quite an achievement for us to manage some rounds on the 1³/₄cwt twelve. Only too soon was it time to leave, and some very welcome refreshments provided by Diana White saw us on our way.

There is a nice ground floor octave at Cumnor, some three miles from Appleton, augmented from six by Whites in 1989. We would have loved to spend more time ringing there, but there was long journey home ahead of us. It had been a fascinating and enjoyable experience, particularly for the less agile members of the parish who otherwise would never have had the chance to see the bells in their frame.

The bells returned to Dover on Saturday 13 July and received a blessing during the Parish Eucharist the following morning. They remained on display in the baptistery while the new grillage and frame were installed and they were then hoisted up into the tower. A successful trial ring has taken place and long time Dover ringer (and for many years Tower Captain) Godfrey Gray was delighted to take part in



The back six standing in Cannon Street awaiting collection.

the first rounds on the new bells. St Mary's is a town centre church and the bells attract a great deal of interest among the many groups of visitors who come through our doors.

There is still much to be done before ringing can start again. Apart from general electrical work, Tim Phillips and Pete Neil of Sound Solutions need to commission the sound

control system, and Gillett & Johnston must reinstate the clock after its overhaul. The re-dedication service will be on Saturday afternoon, 7th September, at 3.30 and further details will be announced shortly.

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St Mary's parish outing at Whites' works.

'... I heard of some ringing, some Dancing and Singing'

So run the words of a song The Bell Ringing, well known in the South-west of England, which describes an epic contest in two rounds between the ringers of Northlew and Broadwoodwidge. Northlew won the first round, 'one day in October', 'for a belt and a hat laced with gold', which was rung off at Ashwater. The Broadwoodringers challenged them to a second round 'for a note of five pound' at St Stephen's-by-Launceston, but it was actually rung at Callington, and Northlew were winners again.

One day in October 2001, the Dartington Morris Men made the song the theme of their annual rally and feast. They invited Morris sides from Yateley and Bristol, and the King John Morris Men from Southampton, to join them at Okehampton for the weekend, and on the Saturday, with some invited ringers (some of the dancers being ringers as well) they visited all five of the towers mentioned in the song, dancing in each venue and ringing at Northlew, St Stephen's and Callington: unfortunately the tower at Ashwater had just been pronounced unsafe, and the