

St Christopher's Willingale Bell Ringers

Tower Captain Ian Kerwin

Affiliated to The Essex Association of Change Ringers

St. Christopher's Willingale Ringers - Annual Report 2012 - 13

We are providing this report to those who helped to fund the restoration, have supported us or might take an interest in the progress of ringing at St. Christopher's. It is one year since the dedication of the restored bells on that glorious sunny day in May 2012. Our first year has been very rewarding and active.

We must start with a big "thank you" to many people, mainly members and officials of the Essex Association of Change Ringers, who have supported us in our ringing progress.

During the course of the year it has been a pleasure to welcome a number of visiting groups and individual ringers to St. Christopher's, this is our way of saying "thank you" for the support we have had from ringers and the Essex Association. In addition to ringing for all services, bells were rung for two weddings in St. Christopher's; we look forward to ringing for more in summer 2013. In collaborating with the other local ringers, we strive to ring the bells of all four churches in the benefice before every service, and we are supporting ringing at North Weald where the bells have been silent for many years but now ring for special occasions such as weddings.

We have welcomed quite a few people who had not rung before to our practice evenings. It has been rewarding to see some continue and progress to varying stages in their ringing career. Others had a try and found it "not-for-me", but we are content that they had a try and now have some understanding of the skill of bell ringing. The learning that has been achieved ranges from some people who have been ringing for a number of years making further progress through to people who have never rung before but can now ring for services. One way or another the project has made bell ringing or an enhanced knowledge of bells available to a hundred or more people.

The ringing progress during the year is commendable given that the majority of us are learners and we lack very experienced people within our group to guide us. After practicing on "our bells" over the summer months we were delighted to host the Essex Association's NW District striking contest in October and enter two bands who achieved creditable 2nd and 3rd places. Also, in the autumn St. Christopher's hosted the NW District's ringing school. To further our ringing skills four people from the St. Christopher's ringers attended the three-day Essex Ringing Course in April. The course improved the ringing skills of the individuals and their ability to transfer skills to others. A clear indication of progress is that four of the St. Christopher's ringers achieved their first quarter peals in April and one achieved a repeat sixteen years after his first. Our best band entered the NW District methods competition at the end of April. They achieved sixth place but importantly were made very welcome as a new band and given credit for enthusiastically entering into the spirit of things, and for doing so well, (in spite of extreme nerves in some cases!). We have attended several of the Association's meetings and practice sessions notable at Stansted and Waltham Abbey. All our ringers are members of the Essex Association and overall St. Christopher's is making a good contribution to the work and activities of the Essex Association.

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We repeated our annual celebration and ringing for St. George's Day by ringing each of the four towers in the benefice. This is a sociable evening with a number of family members and friends joining the mini tour which, importantly, ends in a local pub. With the lighter evenings we are now staying after ringing to socialise on Wednesday evenings, we invite villagers to walk to the church, sit in the beautiful churchyard, listen and join us. The annual ringers' dinner will be held on 2 June.

The combined scheme of bells restoration and toilet & tea making facility has been awarded a DAC Design Award. In the letter advising us of the award the DAC awards the scheme a Merit. The judges found the creation of a traditional bell frame admirable, a good community project, commendable and an amazing achievement for a small parish and that a great deal of funds was saved by using volunteer labour. The certificate will be displayed in the church. The restored ring is performing well although there is a technical detail with the fourth bell that we are working to address. The bell ringers now operate their own fund that will pay for running costs and routine maintenance so as to not require any funding from the church. It is worth mentioning that the restoration project was completed at a cost of approximately £69,000 or 101% of the budget and was fully self-funded, e.g. making a call of only £30 on church funds.

During the period of major church redecoration in spring 2013 when services have been held in the Village Hall we have not rung on Sundays but we keenly await the return of services to the church at the end of June when we'll be ringing with renewed enthusiasm in the bright and fresh redecorated church.

Although the first year has been one of good progress more people must join us and learn to ring so that there are enough competent ringers readily available to ensure a band can be provided for all services including those at Moreton and Bobbingworth where there are no "home" bands. We invite anybody to come and have a try, we are a friendly bunch. Although we are normally at St. Christopher's on Wednesday and Friday evenings do remember we might be ringing at Moreton or Bobbingworth so listen out or call Ian on 01245 248382.

You can follow us on Facebook – Willingale Bellringers or look up our web site Willingalebells.org.

Of course none of the above would have been possible without the financial support of the restoration from a number of organisations and many individuals.