

THE BELL-CAGE & THE BELLS

The Parish Church of St Mary's,
East Bergholt
In the county of Suffolk



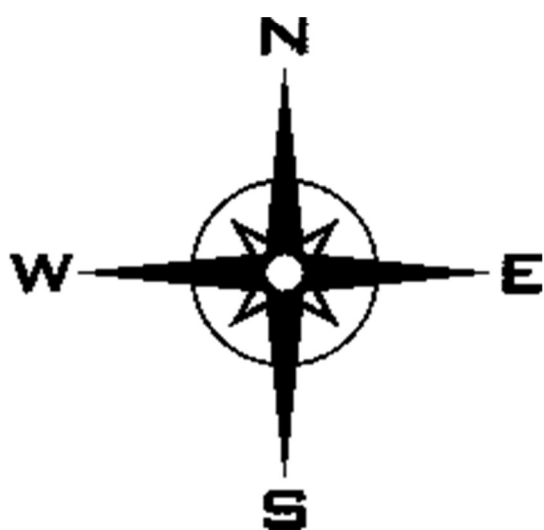
THE BELL-CAGE

The building of a bell tower was started in 1525 with assistance promised by Cardinal Wolsey, but his downfall cut short any help and work ceased in 1530. The cage was erected as a temporary measure in 1531 and is said to have originally stood in the east part of the churchyard until the 17th century, when it was moved to its present location on the wish and at the expense of Mr. Joseph Chaplin, because the noise of the bells was disliked by the family at Old Hall.

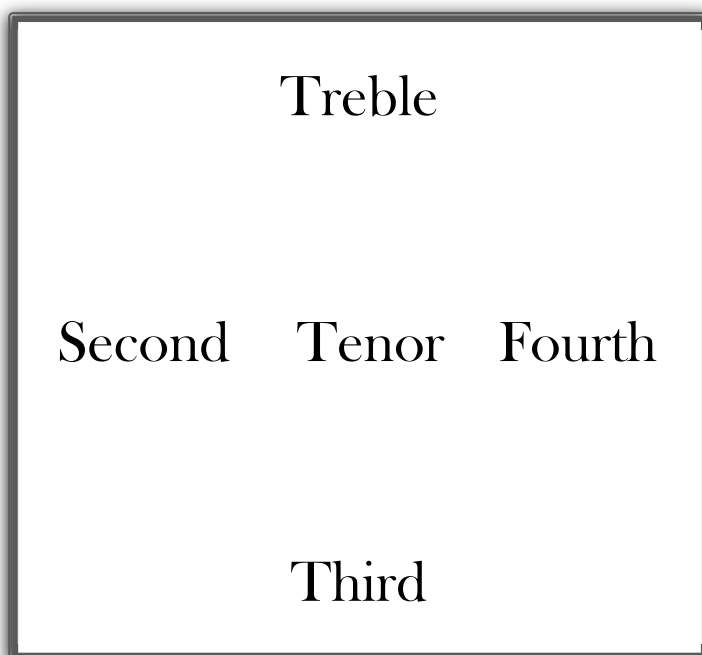
Other cages are not unknown, but East Bergholt is the only place where the bells are rung by pure force of hand applied directly to the bell and not by a rope and wheel. The bells are left upright due to the effort required to get them in that position as they are not counter balanced. The blue head stock is merely a block of wood attached to the bell to enable the ringer to operate it.

They are the heaviest five bells that are currently being rung in England (approximately 4¼ tons 4,400 kilos).

THE BELLS



Entrance



The Treble A (A) The Treble, or First, is a modern piece of work; it was recast in 1887 by Warner and Sons. The original bell weight 8cwt. and had the inscription “*Richardus Bowler 1601*”. The present bell bears the inscription “*Warner and Sons me reficit in anno Jub. Vic Reg. 1887*”. There are impressions of eight coins of 1887, Queen Victoria’s Jubilee year.

Weight: 12cwt. 0qr. 9lb. Diameter: 3ft 4ins. (101.5cm)

The Second (G) The Second is probably the most interesting because it has come down to us in its original form. Its date is approximately 1450. The inscription reads “*Hecce Gabreelis Sonat hec campana fidelis*” - “*Here sounds this bell of faithful Gabriel*”.

Weight: 12cwt. 3qr. 23lb. Diameter: 3ft 5ins. (104cm)

The Third (F#) The Third has inscriptions “*Ricardus Bowler me fecit 1601*” and “*Sum, Rosa Pulsata Mondi Maria Vocata*” - “*My name is Mary; for my tone I am known as the Rose of the World*”.

Weight: 15cwt. 1qr. 5lb. Diameter: 3ft 8ins. (111cm)

The Fourth (E) The Fourth shows coins of Charles II, and was cast in 1688 by Christopher Hodson, a London founder.

Weight: 19cwt. 1qr. 5lb. Diameter: 4ft 1ins. (124cm)

The Tenor (D) The Tenor, or Fifth, was made by John Stephens, a Norwich founder, in 1727, and repairs were done in 1749 by Messrs Hayne of Ipswich for £1 4s 6d.

Weight: 1 ton. 6cwt. 0qr. 8lb. Diameter: 4ft 6ins. (137cm)

The bells were removed from the cage in 1972 to enable restoration work to be carried out on the cage. They were rehung, this time on ball bearings, in 1973.

During 2000/2001 the bells were silent whilst a considerable amount of work was carried out to bring the cage and bells up to modern Health & Safety requirements.

The bells are normally rung between 9.30am and 10.00am on Sunday mornings throughout the year, as required for Weddings and on Wednesday evenings (practice) during the Summer.

The drawing of the bell cage on the front cover is reproduced by courtesy of the East Bergholt Society and the artist, John Finch.