

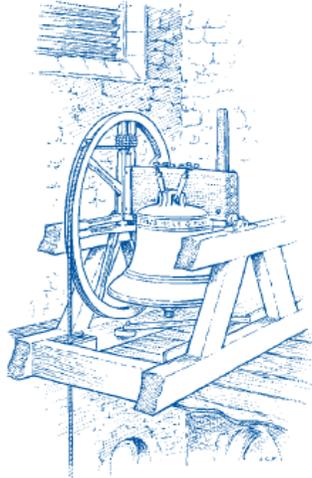
Ringling the bells

Ringling up and ringling down

In order to ring, the bells have to be swung higher and higher, until they can 'stand' mouth upwards on a wooden rest (the stay), so that they can be started instantly with one pull on the rope. It is dangerous to leave the bells mouth up unattended so, at the end of ringling, you may hear the bells chiming faster and faster as they gradually lose momentum, until they are hanging mouth down and can be safely left.

The band of ringers

It takes a little while to become a competent ringer, so please bear with us when we make mistakes, but please don't forget to let us know when we do well!



It is over 20 years since the church bells have rung regularly in the village. We hope that this leaflet helps you to enjoy and appreciate your church bells, and the efforts of those who ring them.

Ian Baker August 2014.

All Saints Church, Covington, Cambs

Ring out those bells!



Bell ringing is a fascinating and challenging hobby. If you would like to know more about the bells, or think you would be interested in learning to ring, please contact Ian Baker or Peter Sewell, or come and talk to any of the ringers after a church service, or visit a practice on Thursday evenings at 7pm.

The bell tower

In our bell tower the ringing chamber is on the ground floor and the bell chamber immediately above. We have lowered the bells by one floor to preserve the previous bell frame dating from 1670 which cannot be moved, and to make the bells easier to ring. Ropes attached to the bell frames pass through holes in the ceiling of the ringing chamber.

The bells

There are four bells in our tower, ranging from the treble, which is the lightest and highest in pitch, to a deeper, heavier tenor, which is our new bell and previously hung in St Lawrence's Church in Seal Chart, Kent. The bells were cast at various times and the first three re-hung in 1928 with a minor restoration in the early 1980s.

1 (treble)	E flat	444lbs	Founder Henry Penn	1710
2	D	622lbs	Edward Newcombe	1589?
3	C	650lbs	Thomas Mears	1841
4 (tenor)	B flat	832lbs	Mears & Stainbank	1888

Church Tower bells

Following the Reformation, bell ringing in England took a different path from the rest of Europe when a unique design for hanging bells evolved. Instead of attaching the rope directly to the bell, it was taken around a wheel attached to the strong frame on which the bell hung. The wheel allows the bell to swung higher and higher until it stands on end, mouth upwards, with a rest or stay to stop it falling backwards. This means that the bell can be stopped and started again without losing momentum and, with a little practice, the ringer can control the bell, ringing more quickly or slowly with each stroke, so that the order in which the bells strike can be changed. That gave early ringers a new challenge – how many different sequences could they ring, without repeating themselves? The more bells, the greater number of changes can be rung-

Number of bells:	3	4	5	6	7	8
Possible changes:	6	24	120	720	5,040	40,320

Listening to church bells

Rounds

Most ringing begins and ends with the bells striking in descending scale from the highest (treble) to the lowest (tenor), and is called 'rounds'. When we are ringing well the bells strike evenly, with the same gap between each bell and no two bells ringing together (clashing). You should be able to count how many bells are being rung, and listen for a slight pause after each bell has rung twice (the 'handstroke gap'), like this:

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 - 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 - 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4.

Call changes.

When you hear bells change the order in which they ring, and then continue in the same pattern for a few sequences before changing again, then we are ringing 'call changes'. The leader changes the order of the bells by calling two bells at a time into a new position, perhaps calling the treble and second to change places, then the third and tenor to change. There are many patterns in call changes, often with curious names, like Kings & Queens.

Methods

When you hear the bells constantly changing their order, so that each sequence is different from the one before, then a 'method' is being rung. Methods, such as Stedmans or Grandsire or Plain Bob, are mathematical patterns, which allow the bells to reach as many different sequences as possible, starting and finishing in 'rounds', without any repetitions. We will generally ring methods in 'Minimus', in which four bells are engaged. For 5 bells methods are called 'Doubles' and for 6 bells 'Minor', eg as at Kimbolton. To this day method ringing is peculiar to England, and some towers in USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Ringling a peal

A 'peal' is the term used for all the possible changes on a large number of bells, but it also means any course of more than 5,000 changes and takes about three hours to ring. Peals and quarter peals (1,250 changes) are sometimes rung to celebrate or commemorate special events, for example to mark the Millennium or the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It is the ultimate goal for a bellringer to ring a peal.