

MINSTER BELLS
By John Meredith January 1990

The tower is divided into three sections vertically:

1. Bellringers' chamber.
 2. Clock Chamber
 3. Bell chamber.
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1. Before 1961, instead of a ringing' floor there was a balcony, with a wire grille as protection. In that year, the bells were re-cast by Taylors of Loughborough and a floor replaced the balcony. A lift was planned, but the idea had to be given up. By 1971, the floor was sinking. In 1973, steel girders were put in and a new floor laid on top of the old one.
 2. A tune-ringing machine was installed in 1693 and a tune is rung at noon and 4.00 p.m. A plaque on the wall of the North Quire transept commemorates this gift. It was rebuilt after the fire of 1711. The tunes played are:
 - (a) Jerusalem, My Happy Home - tune 'Southwell' by Irons, former Rector Chori.
 - b) Tune 'Bedford'.
 - c) The National Anthem.
 3. Land was given so that £1 rent paid for the upkeep of the bells, hence the name "Chimes Meadow".

History of the Bells

Archbishop Cynesige (1051-1060) gave two bells to the Minster in 1055. It is not known if they were transferred to the Norman tower. The next reference is in the 15th century, when the Canons were in trouble for not ringing them for services. A funeral request for a peal on 5 bells proves there were that number. In 1578 No.8 was repaired, which proves a ring of 8 existed - very unusual then. In 1712 a new set was cast after the fire (when the bells melted) by CLAY of Leicester. These were not satisfactory, and in 1721 were replaced by Ruddalls of Gloucester, by public subscription and put in a new wooden frame so the bells hung counter-clockwise, which is very unusual.

Mears and Stainbanks of London recast two when they were cracked.

In 1897 (the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria) two more bells were added so that the National Anthem, which requires 10 bells, could be rung.

In 1961 8 bells were recast by Taylors and two trebles retuned. Now a ring of 12 in the key of D major is the only ring of 12 hung counter--clockwise in the world.

THE SILVER

The Minster's best silver is in the treasury of Newark Parish' Church. John showed us that which is in everyday use, as we were most likely to be asked about this. This includes some from the early 1660's, made in York and modern silver by Ian Doxford.

THE VESTMENTS

We were shown modern sets, in all 4 liturgical colours, most by Leonard Childs, also a Jacobean fiddleback chasuble, stole and maniple lavishly embroidered in silk, and an 18th century embroidered cope too small for a man, perhaps made for a boy Bishop?

The copes worn by Bishop Ridding and Bishop Hoskyns on their monuments are in the cope chest - the former was worn by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Coronation of Edward VII.