

Proposal for the installation of a dumb bell

All Saints, Basingstoke

Current situation

The band at All Saints is currently very strong. We have a strong “top end” of ringers ringing complex methods to a high standard and have won the local ringing Guild 8-bell striking competition for the last two years in a row. Monday night practices are bolstered by a number of regular visitors drawn to the tower for the standard of the ringing as well as the incisive and welcoming nature of the band. Along side this, for a number of years we have been training and increasing number of new ringers of all ages.

Over this period, our normal Monday evening practice has been extended to two hours of ringing from 7:00pm with the first 45 minutes being dedicated to teaching and making good use of our light six bells created at the point the new bell was installed in 2016. Our learners include a number of children who currently only stay for the early practice as the main practice is too late for them.

The issue

As the new learners have progressed, the early practice us being used more and more for ringing on 6 and not the initial physical teaching of ringing. To try and accommodate this, we are using the 7th bell as a training bell whilst ringing our light 6. This is less than ideal as it prevents those ringing from properly listening to what isn happening as there is a random bell sounding at the same time. Being aware of our neighbours, this is also not a pleasant sound to be coming from the tower. We could tie the clapper of the 7th bell, but its position in the tower would mean ringing all the bells down to access it both to tie the clapper and to untie it afterwards, again, eating into our already full practice time.

The proposal

To facilitate the teaching of bell handling alongside our current beginners practice on a Monday, we propose to install a dumb bell in the tower as a training aid. This is a weighted bell wheel with rope and pulleys that can be rung, and feels like ringing a small tower bell. The installation would be in the bell chamber along with the bells with the rope falling in the ringing chamber, but away from the lightest 6 bells so it can be used along side this ring.

Practicalities

Access to install the bell would be needed through the trapdoors in the tower. This shouldn't be an issue as they were opened when the 9th headstock was repaired in 2023. The Bellhangers will be asked to ensure the rope drops away from the circle of the light 6 bells, and will be asked for a costed proposal and drawings of where it would go. This work would require a faculty but this shouldn't be an issue.

Costs

It is estimated that the dumb bell and associated works are likely to come in at around £5000 +VAT. This can be part met through the use of tower funds, but I would propose asking for donations from those who have and are currently learning to ring at All Saints, along with likely grants from both the Basingstoke District and the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild. I also propose approaching the Parrett Trust for a grant, as this would fall into the remit of furthering the mission of the church in the same way as installing the new bell did nine years ago.

