THE BRAYFORD BELLS RESTORATION PROJECT

The Brayford Bells Restoration Project was set up to raise funds to restore the six ancient bells hanging in the church at High Bray. It involves the removal of the bells from the tower, transporting them to the factory works for all fittings to be refurbished, mending the existing oak frame in the tower and once completed, the bells will then be replaced. Lighting will be installed in the stairwell and bell chamber, and a camera and video link fitted so those less abled fcan see the bells on a screen below.

Brayford Parish extends NE. to the Somerset boundary along a high ridge of Exmoor and includes Span Head (1618 ft.) and Setta Barrow (1556 ft.) There are numerous barrows on Whitefield Down, Bray Common and Fullaford Down. Gratton and Whitefield farms were Domesday estates, and Muxworthy is mentioned as early as c.1100. The parish contains deep wooded valleys and fine moorland scenery.

The ford in the village of Brayford was a well-established pack horse route and drover's trail from Porlock to Barnstaple. By the mid 17th century, Brayford was on the most important highway across Exmoor, from Dunster via Exford, Simonsbath and Kensford Cross (Kinsford Gate) to Barnstaple. In the late 1920s a bridge was built, and now thousands of visitors pass over this on their way to enjoy the sights of Exmoor.

All Saints Church with its six ancient bells stands in a commanding position in High Bray on a promontory overlooking the Bray valley. It is said there has been a church on this site since Saxon times, but it appears to have been established by the Normans with the present building dating largely from a reconstruction in the 1520s. The church was subsequently restored in 1878 and consists of a west tower, nave chancel, south aisle and south porch. The tower is broad and battlemented, with carved faces and gargoyles.

The main entrance to the church is through a pair of Ashlar gatepiers (1864) which have pyramidal caps. Set in these is a wrought iron double main gate and a side pedestrian gate to the left with fleur-de-lis heads to the shafts and dog bars, and a twisted wrought iron simple arch overthrow with central lamp bracket.

In the porch are stone seats and an old coat rail. Inside the church the aisle has four bays and the nave has a wagon roof. A capital on one of the pillars between the nave and aisle has a carving of a bellringer with a rope entwined around the column.

Features of particular interest include a 15th century rood screen, now in the tower arch and a circular font with a characteristic Norman zig-zag frieze (the shell ornament on the lower part of the bowl was added later with a chisel). There is a stained glass window dated 1919, which is a memorial to landowner Sir Charles Dyke Acland.

The Village of Brayford has a Methodist Chapel built in 1927 and also a former Baptist Chapel. Regular Methodist preaching began at Brayford in 1777.

The Baptist Chapel was built in 1820 on land donated for a Methodist chapel and graveyard in 1813 by Joseph Gould. It was once the oldest in North Devon but is now a private dwelling.

In the neighbouring village of Charles is the Church of St John the Baptist restored in 1891, and replacing the old chapel dedicated to St Petrock in 1424 which was later converted to become the rectory.

Bells were first introduced into England around 400AD by Bishop Paulinus of Nola in Campana, hence the word 'campanology' meaning the study or use of bells. The process of casting bells is called bell founding or bell making, and in Europe dates to the 4th or 5th century. However the profile of bells made in the western world did not evolve until the 14th century.

The traditional metal for bells is a bronze of about 23% tin and 77% copper, an alloy known as bell metal. Steel was tried during the busy church-building period of mid-nineteenth England, for its economy over bronze, but was found not to be durable and manufacture ceased in the 1870s.

The largest bell ever cast was the Great Bell or 'Monarch of Moscow' cast in 1653. It was 21 feet in height and diameter, and weighed 198 tons. It was fractured during a fire which took place in the building erected over it.

The tradition of bellringing – or "change ringing" as it is called – began in Britain in the 17th century. Until then few churches had more than four bells. These rarely formed a scale but this was of little consequence as each bell was used for a specific purpose, such as the curfew, sanctus, or tolling for the dead.

There is a large difference between bells that are rung in England and bells that are rung anywhere else (with a few exceptions). Bells naturally hang with gravity, i.e. with the mouth at the bottom, and this is the position bells are in when left after a ringing session.

To ring the bells the English way, the bell needs to be in the "mouth up" position. This gives the ringer control about the exact time the clapper will hit the bell to make it sound. To keep it in the 'up' position requires a piece of wood called a stay.

Bells for change ringing are hung in sturdy frames that allow the bell to swing through 360 degrees. The harmonic richness of a swinging bell cannot be matched by the same bell hanging stationary and hit by swinging the clapper instead of the whole bell. A ring of bells consists of four to twelve bells.

The mechanism of a hanging bell is so precise that the balance of the bell allows young or old, large or small, even the unfit to ring. However it takes a great deal of practice to ring the bells correctly.
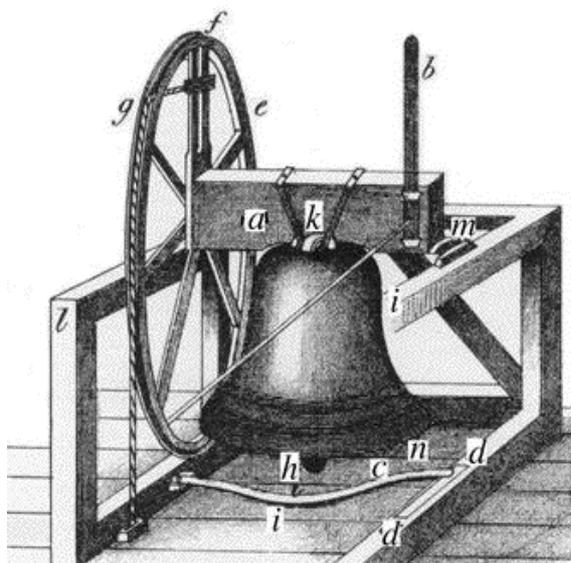
Each bell is attached to a wooden wheel with a handmade rope running around it. Into each rope is woven a tuft of brightly coloured wool called a "Sally", which marks where the ringer must catch the rope while ringing.
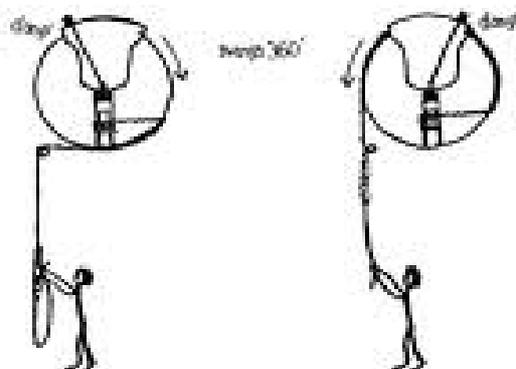
Ringing bells in a precise relationship to one another is the essence of change ringing. Rung in the order from the lightest, highest pitched bell to the heaviest and lowest pitched, the bells strike in a sequence known as rounds, which ringers denote by a row of numbers.

With a pull of the rope, the bell swings through a full circle to the "up" position. With the next pull it swings back in the other direction.

A Bell in Her Usual Position

a. Stock	f. Groove of	k. Cannons
b. Stay	Wheel	l. Timber of Cage
c. Slider	g. Fillet	m. Gudgeons
d. Blocks	h. Ball of Clapper	n. Lip of Bell
e. Wheel	i. Flight of Clapper	

Details and size of bells in the tower

5	**1450**	**IT**
3	**1499**	**Exeter Foundry**
Tenor	**1807**	**Thomas Bilbie**
2	**1892**	**John Warner & Sons**
4	**1892**	**John Warner & Sons**
Treble	**1895**	**John Warner & Sons**

To learn more about our history and heritage, try completing the attached questionnaire (answers can be found in this leaflet).