



# Guildford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

## Some interesting Old Bell Inscriptions

Bells usually have inscriptions cast into them and these can give fascinating insights into the past

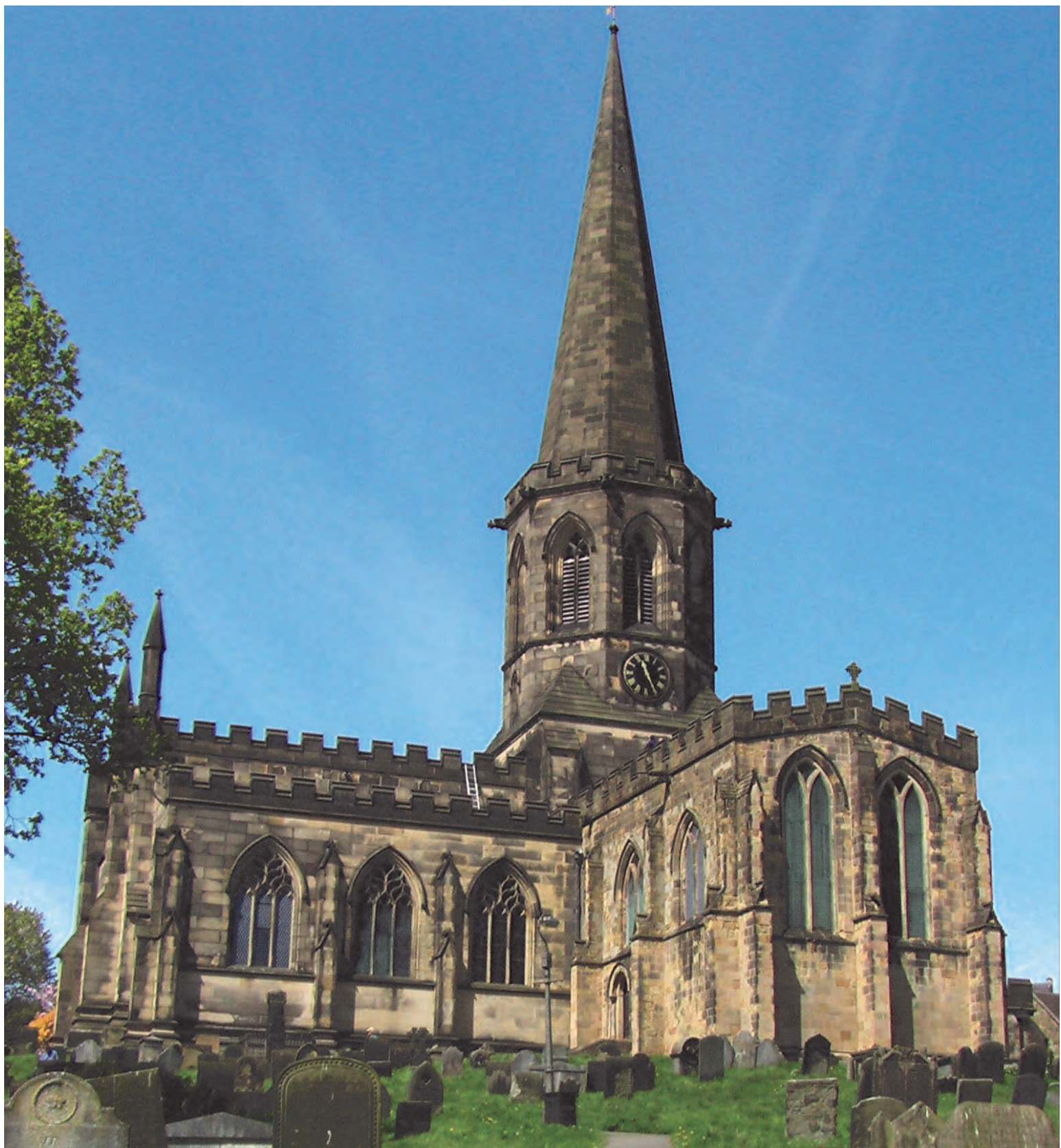
### All Saints', Bakewell, Derbyshire (1796, Thomas Mears)

**Treble**  
When I begin our merry din  
This band I lead from discord free;  
And for the fame of human name  
Every leader copy me.

**Fifth:**  
Thro' Grandsires and Triples  
With pleasure men range,  
Till Death calls the Bob  
And brings on the last change.

**Tenor:**  
Possess'd of deep sonorous tone,  
This belfry king sits on his throne;  
And when the merry bells go round  
Adds to and fellows ev'ry sound;

So in a just and well pois'd state  
Where all degrees possess due weight,  
One greater power, one greater tone  
Is ceded to improve their own.



**St Mary the Virgin, Bruton, Somerset**  
**Treble (1752)**  
Once I'd a note that none could beare,  
But Bilbie made me sweet and clear

**Second (1629 founder unknown)**  
I am the first of those five,  
Cries loud to those that are alive.

**Third (1752, Bilbie)**  
Pray ring the bells and praise the Lord,  
With tuneful notes and sweet accord.

**St Mary, Stafford**  
**Treble (1709, Abraham Rudhall)**  
When you mee ring,  
Ile sweetly sing.

**St Peter's, Brooke,**  
**Fifth (1758, Joseph Mallows)**  
Come rais us well and ring us right  
Then all that hear will take delight.

**Halesowen, Worcestershire**  
**Fifth bell**  
Be it knone to all that doth me see,  
That Joseph Smith in Edgbaston made wee. 1707.

**Tenor bell**  
When sound of bell doth pearce your ear  
Come to the Chvrch, God's Word to heare.  
My movrnful sovdn doth warning give  
That heare men cannot all ways live.

## How does a bell work?

This model shows a bell when it is 'down'. In this position the bell is safe — it can be swung from side to side but will always come safely back to its rest position.

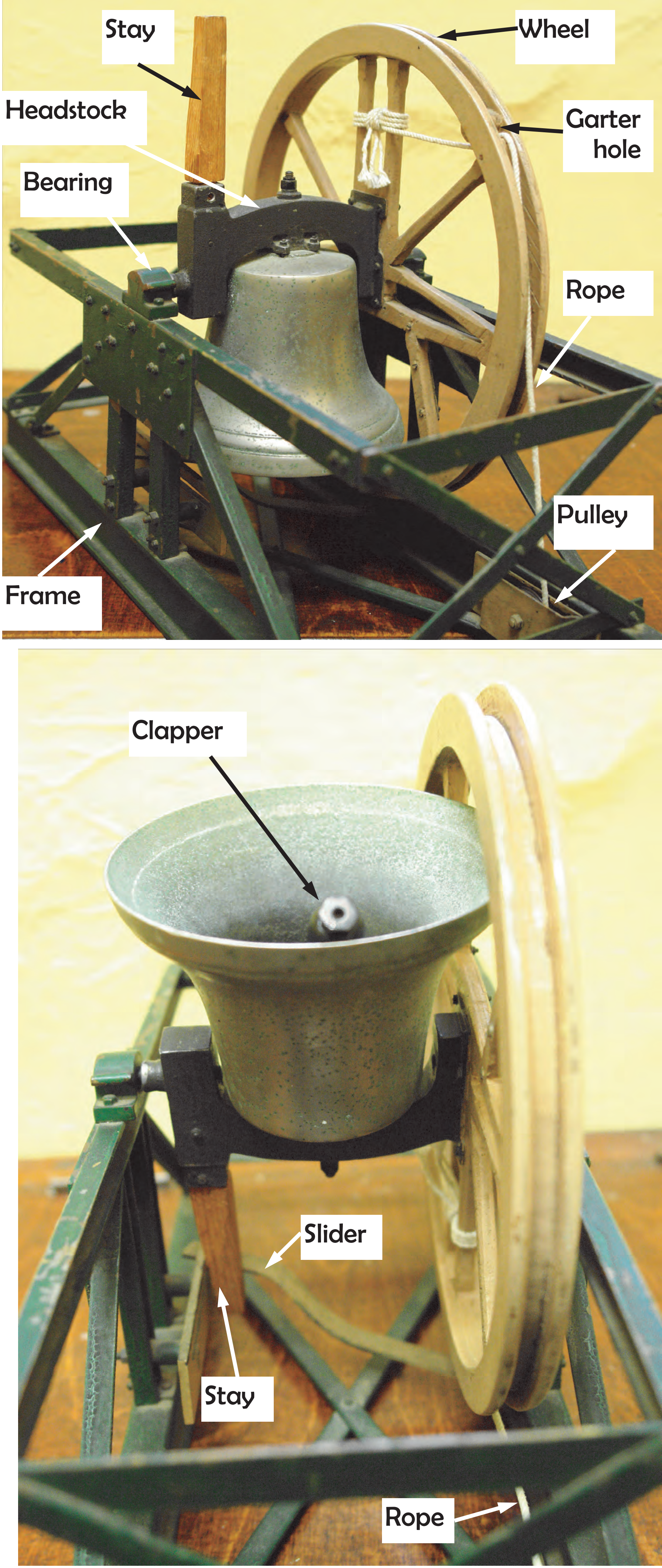
However, before a bell can be rung to changes, it must first of all be swung to its 'up' position.

This is done by pulling on the rope on each swing so that the amount of swing increases until the bell is mouth up.

Here, the bell has been swung into the 'up' position. The stay of the bell rests against a slider underneath the bell, and the bell can be balanced mouth up.

A light pull on the rope is now enough to tip the bell off its balance. It will then fall under its own weight and swing right round until it is mouth up in the opposite direction.

The rope will be wrapped right round the wheel and the ringer will only just be able to reach the 'tail'.



## How do I learn to be a ringer?

- ♦ Ringing tuition is usually free.
- ♦ You do not need any special clothing or other equipment.
- ♦ You need time and dedication to learn the skill of 'handling' a bell.
- ♦ You will be taught initially one-to-one by an experienced tutor. Tutors are DBS cleared by the Diocesan authorities
- ♦ Ringing is less dangerous than most sport but incorrect handling of the rope could cause an injury. This is rare.
- ♦ Pay close attention to the safety instructions given by your tutor, and be aware of the possible risks.
- ♦ You will get hot when ringing: polo shirts or T-shirts and jeans or casual trousers are popular. Avoid loose clothing or anything round your neck.
- ♦ If your hands get a bit sore when you first start to learn, apply a little hand cream before ringing, and rub it in well - especially between your fingers. Ringers don't wear gloves!
- ♦ It's best not to have long finger nails: some people take off their rings and watches too.
- ♦ Once you can handle the bell safely, it's time to ring with the rest of the band.
- ♦ You will practise ringing in 'Rounds' and you will learn to time the swing of your bell to blend in perfectly with the rest of the band.
- ♦ Once you can ring at a steady speed, you next need to learn how to alter the speed of your bell as and when you want to.
- ♦ You will be 'called' to ring after different bells from the one that you normally follow. Once you can ring these 'Call Changes' with precision, you can call yourself a Ringer.
- ♦ How long will this take? Many factors come into play. Most important—the amount of time you spend 'on the end of the rope'.
- ♦ You will be expected to join your band's regular practice, and you will find that everyone will encourage you.
- ♦ You will know you have 'arrived' when you're asked to ring for Sunday Service!

## Some interesting ringing chambers

### What do ringers like about ringing?

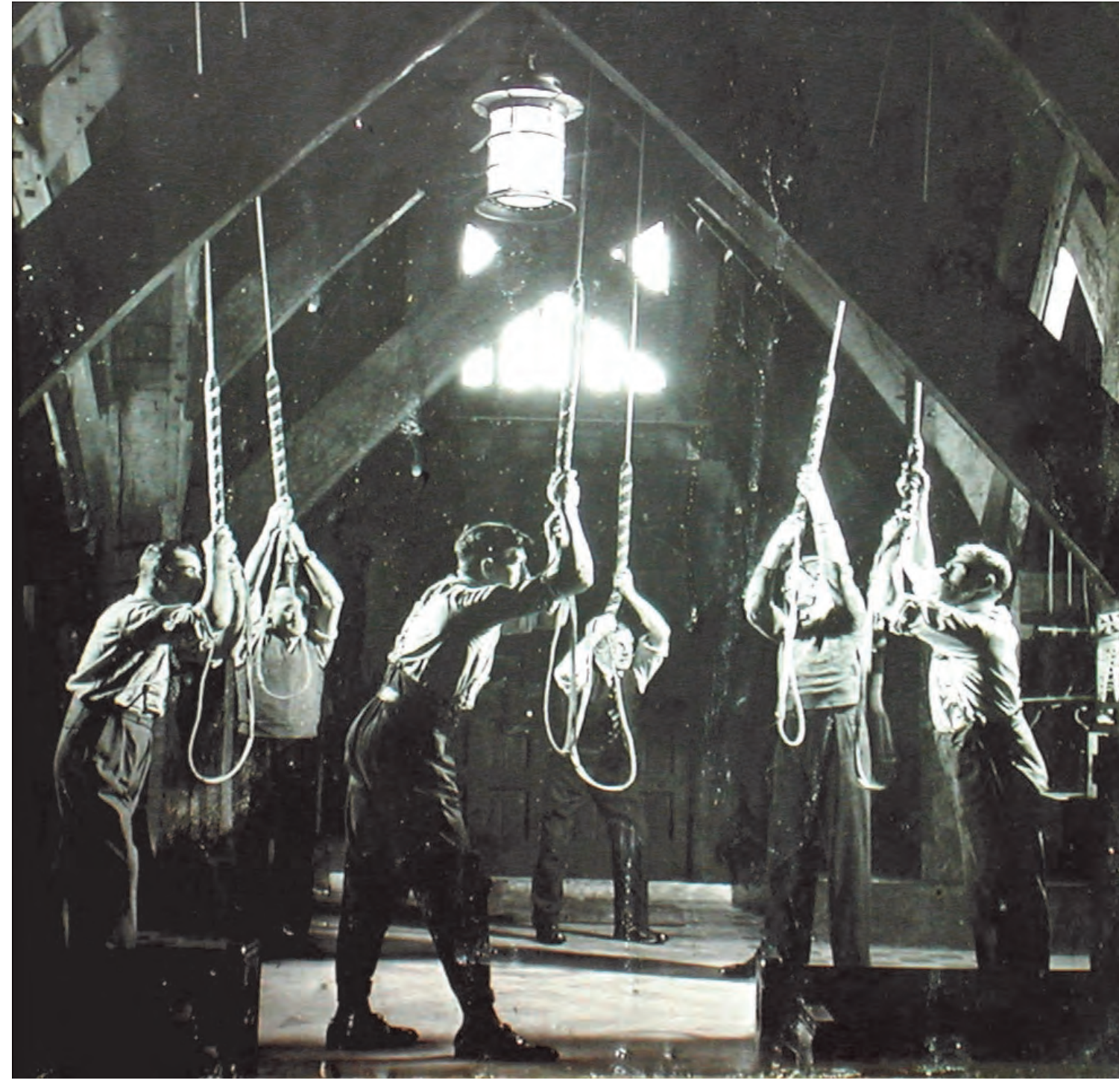
- ♦ Acquiring a physical skill that they can use for decades
- ♦ The mastery of the loudest musical instrument ever devised
- ♦ The pleasure of working with others to produce a beautiful sound
- ♦ A legitimate way of working up a thirst to be quenched sociably
- ♦ The challenge of unravelling the mysteries of complex 'methods'
- ♦ The inventiveness of devising newer and better 'methods'
- ♦ The achievement of calling a difficult composition
- ♦ The thrill of visiting mysterious places
- ♦ The fellowship of an exclusive club
- ♦ Maintaining a heritage over 1,000 years old

It is a great privilege to be able to ring in a great medieval tower like this one at Chichester Cathedral. Its ring of 8 bells weigh a total of nearly 4 tons—and five of the bells are over 350 years old! Note the huge clock-case on the right of the picture.

Here the ringers are mentally preparing themselves to ring the bells 'up'.



(Below) This rather menacing pendulum reminds us that ringing chambers are working spaces.



(Above, left) A group of ringers at Newdigate in Surrey try to emulate the ringing style of former years. (Right)

(Below) The rope-marks worn into this Norman stone archway at Cobham, Surrey, show that ringing must have been hard work in medieval times. Two of the bells in this tower are 250 years old.

