ULVERSTON PARISH CHURCH BELL RESTORATION 2021

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BELL RESTORATION
2021

This note has been produced to preserve much of the content in the photographs and explanatory posters, prepared by Kristen Negaard O'Brien, which were displayed in church during the work. Some historical documents relating to the bells are included in the Appendix. See also the Heritage pages of the Church website for further information about the development, over the centuries, of Ulverston Parish Church.

Front cover photographs:

Top	Before	May 2019
Centre	During	July 2021
Bottom	After	September 2021

Details of the Bells

ULVERSTON - St. Mary

A ring of 6 bells cast by Thomas Mears II at Whitechapel London in 1836

Bell	Diameter	Weight (approx.)	Note (approx.)
1	2ft. 5in.	5½ cwt	F
2	2ft. 7¼in.	6 cwt	E ♭
3	2ft. 9⅜in.	7 cwt	D ♭
4	2ft. 10in.	8 cwt	C
5	3ft. 1½in.	10 cwt	B ♭
6	3ft. 6in.	13 cwt	A ♭

Inscriptions:

1 THOS RICHMOND GALE BRADDYL PATRON & LAY RECTOR D.D. L5O

2 RICHARD GWILLYM M.A. MINISTER

3 JOHN DODSON OBIT 1782 T.R. L5O

4 JOHN BOLTON D.D. L2O

5 COMMITTEE
JOHN SUNDERLAND M.A. WM GALE JOHN FELL
BERNARD GILPIN WILLM POSTLETHWAITE
THOS TOLMING PHILIP B. DEAN RICHD ROPER
HENRY REMINGTON JAMES HODGSON
JAMES CLEMINSON

6 JOHN PENNY
JOHN PARKER } CHURCH WARDENS
JAMES PARKE

Also on the inscription band of each bell:

THOMAS MEARS OF LONDON FOUNDER 1836 ['OF' is missing on the 3rd bell]

DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL HARMONIC TONES OF THE SIX BELLS
(as determined by Alan Hughes of Whitechapel Bell Foundry when inspected on 21st June 2011)

Bell	Hum Note	2nd Partial	3rd	5th	Nominal
1	405.5	590.5	848.5	1160.5	1406.5
2	347	556	764	990	1257.5
3	308	510	684	873	1136.5
4	284.5	508	654	806.5	1076.5
5	261	435.5	564	762.5	932
6	235	380.5	504.5	665.5	837 *

* Strike note = Nominal ÷ 2 837 ÷ 2 = 418½ A ♭ International Pitch = 415¼ Hz

The bells were cast to an exceptionally thick scale. At the time of manufacture, the 5th was 'skirted' (metal chiselled from the lip of the bell) to raise its strike note and the treble was 'chip tuned' (metal chiselled from inside the bell) to lower its note. The 4th was also chip tuned, but over only half its circumference, possibly to correct core shift. The other three bells were un-tuned. The tuning machine acquired from the Rudhall foundry at Gloucester was not installed until the 1840s. The weights are taken from a plaque supplied by Mears & Stainbank in 1899. The bell diameters (to ~¼") and inscriptions were rechecked on 23rd May 2022.

Background to the Work

Over the years, it was felt that the bells were "going" less easily than in the past - in particular, the tenor and 5th bells were less predictable and would drop or tip over the balance. This was investigated in 2010, including videoing the frame movement. A note outlining the maintenance history and work needed was produced in January 2011. The main recommendations relating to frame movement are reproduced below:

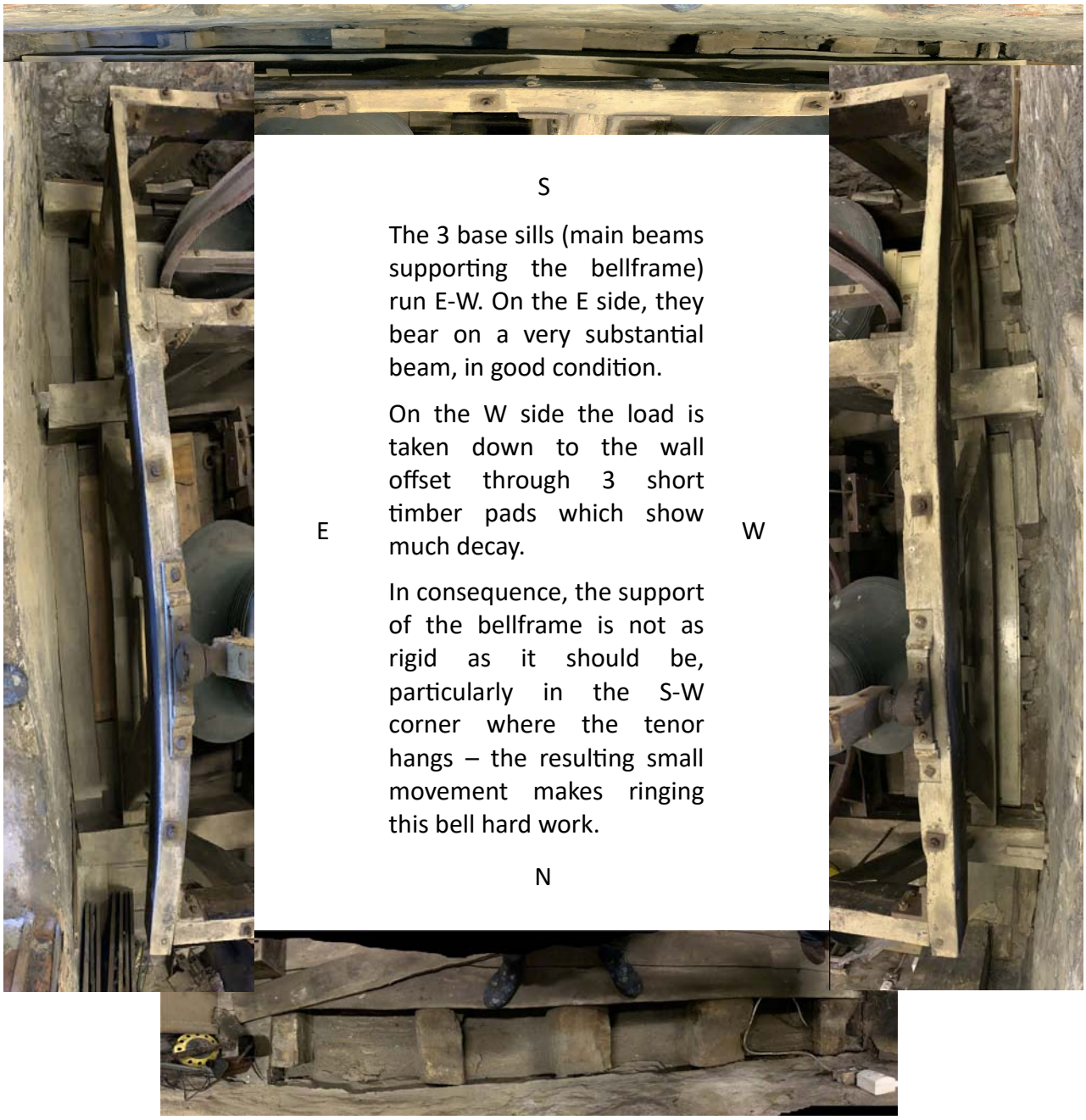
"Whilst there is some work which can be done by DIY effort, rectification of the frame movement will require the involvement of a bellhanger. Builders will also be needed, working closely to the bellhanger's specification. At the least, it is likely to require support/lifting of the frame for removal of the decayed wallplates on the west side. This would be followed by cutting out of pockets and casting of padstones or a concrete beam on the offset of the wall (or insertion of an RSJ) to support and restrain the cills [sills] of the bellframe, care being taken to ensure that the frame remains level."

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry inspected in 2011 as did Nicholson Engineering in 2014. Both proposed the conventional solution of installing a new steel grillage under the frame. However to fit this would require **taking out the bells** either through removed louvres or through a new roof hatch, or storing the bells in the ringing room after creating a large hatch in the floor of the bellchamber. (The floor of the ringing room is reinforced concrete without a hatch.) All of these options would incur considerable extra expense and would make the job more extensive than the PCC could contemplate.

After examining the space available between the bellframe and walls, with further limits set by the chimney in the N-W corner and a downspout in the N-E corner, it seemed just possible to fit a 10"x3½" channel section steel beam on each side of the bellframe to stiffen it in the E-W direction. By making each beam in 3 sections (at 35 kg/m), it was feasible to lug each piece up the spiral staircase. Using long bolts and copses under the bellframe sills and by packing up the ends of the beam (in the wall pockets) the frame **with bells in place** could be lifted enough by screwing up the bolts to allow removal of the decayed timbers and casting of the replacement concrete padstones. Placed flat, the channel beam would need intermediate support to take the load, however if set on edge, further support would not be needed. This would also give better access and allow the padstone to be cast as a single continuous unit, level along its length. After lowering the frame, the channel would be turned to lay flat before being finally built into the north and south walls. In 2018, Nicholson Engineering agreed to implement this scheme and provide a costed proposal.

The Hutton+Rostron report (Timber Decay Survey, February 2019) highlighted extensive decay in the floorboards of the bellchamber as a result of moisture retention and beetle and fungal attack. It recommended that: "The vinyl floor finishes over the Belfry floor should be removed immediately. The floorboards should be raised and the floor void thoroughly cleaned and vacuumed of all collected debris. Decay in the floorboards is extensive and salvage is, therefore unlikely." As a result of this, the ringers carried out a major clearance in May 2019 ahead of the work on the bells and bellframe.

Bellchamber Floor - May 2019



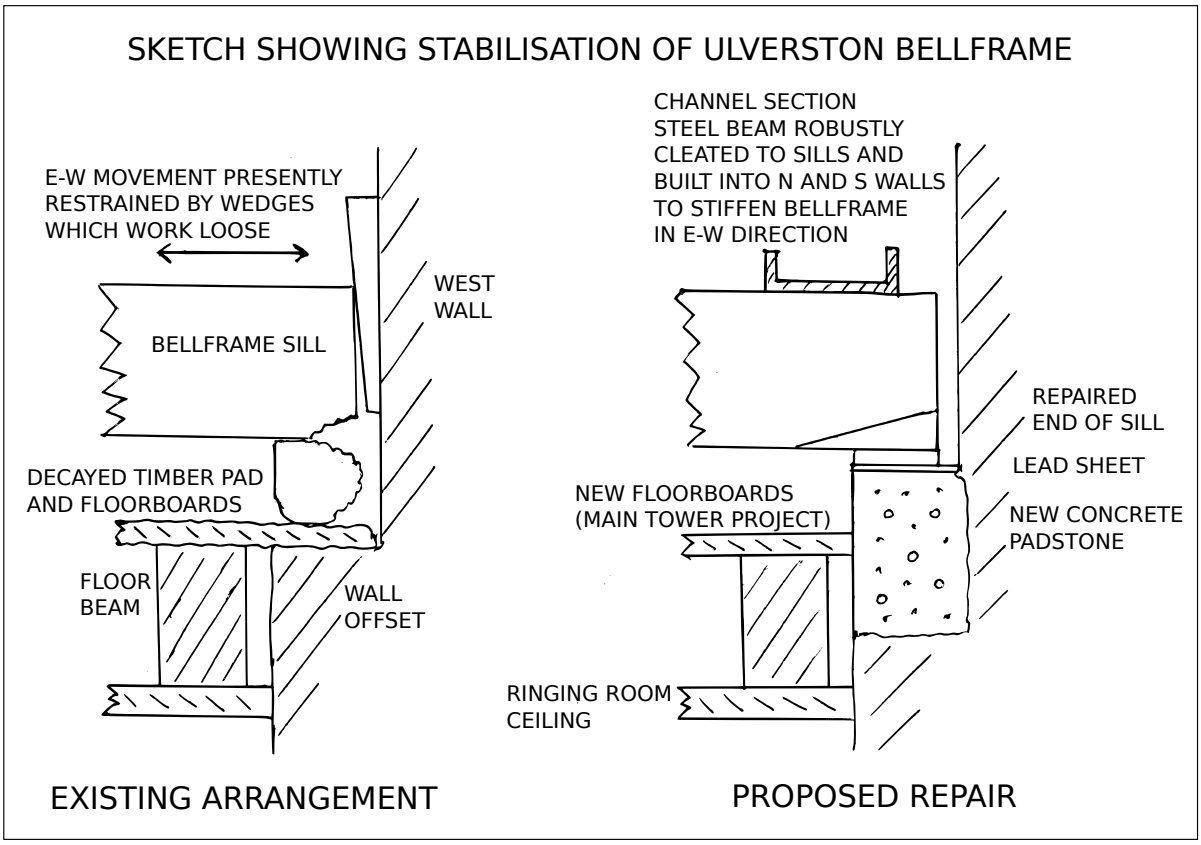
This montage shows the bellchamber after clearing much debris from the ends of the ancient floor beams which run N-S; these beams are supported on the wall offsets. Their ends are visible prior to refitting the floorboards. The bellframe is not as distorted as the panorama shots might suggest!

Several carloads of damp carpets were also removed from under the bells. These had been added over the years to reduce the sound reaching the ringers below; the floorboards were in poor condition and had many gaps. Old doors were then positioned under each bell pending the installation of new floorboarding.

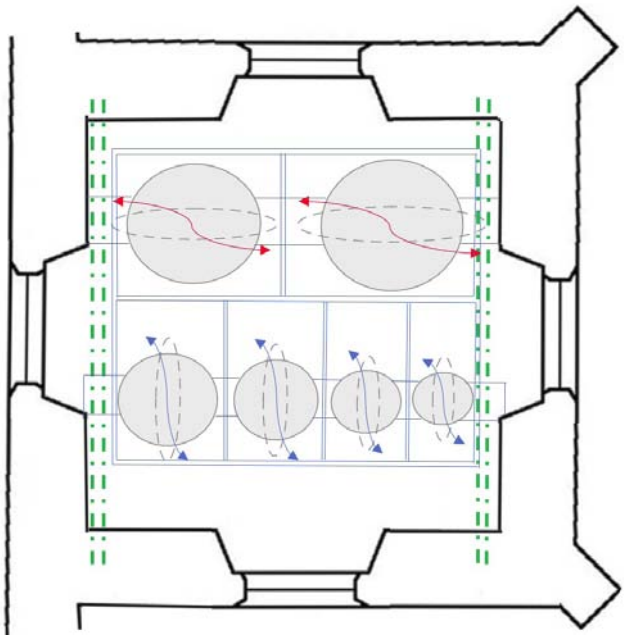
A temporary repair was also done under the N sill when the short timber pad was found so decayed that it simply lifted out. The floor beams would have been taking the load in this area.

Plans for Stabilising the Bellframe

a. Repairing and Supporting the Bellframe



b. Reducing E-W Frame Movement

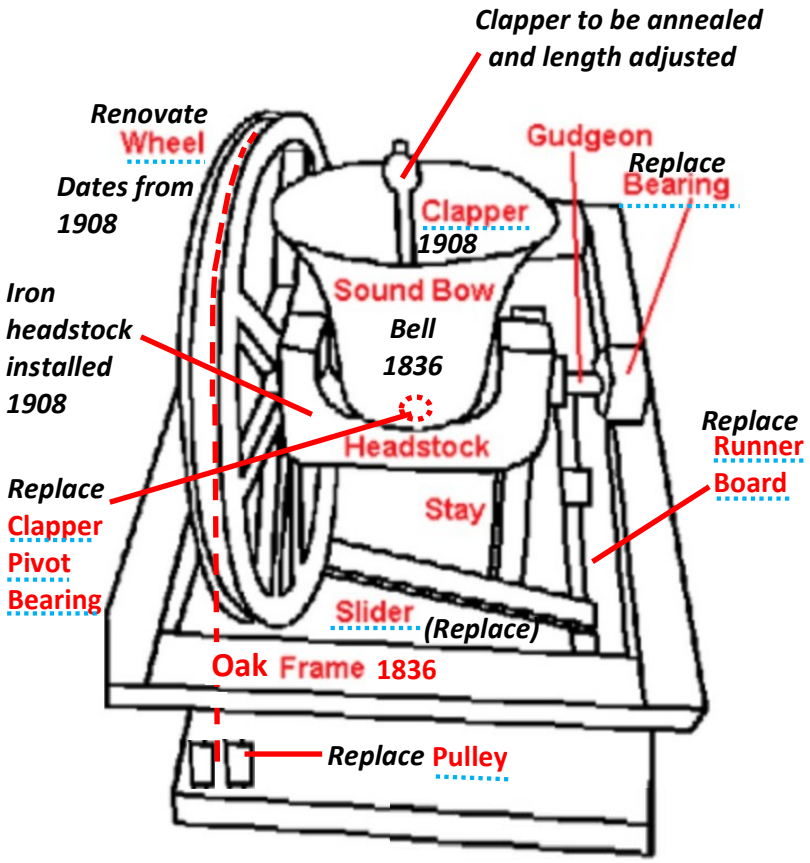


A swinging bell creates a horizontal force (side-to-side) about twice its weight and a maximum vertical force (downwards) about four times its weight.

Two channel section steel beams will be fitted and concreted into the tower walls to resist the E-W forces and frame movement caused by the ringing motion of the two largest bells - thus reducing the E-W frame movement (presently estimated as 2 or 3 mm relative to the tower).

The total (static) weight of all the bells is approx. 2.5 tons. All of the bells and frame together weigh approx. 6.5 tons. When initially fitted on edge (before being finally fitted flat) the W channel is strong enough to lift this side of the frame while the padstone is being cast.

Restoration of Bell Components



In 1836, the bells were hung by their canons (bronze loops cast on the top of the bell). Iron strapwork attached these canons to the original timber headstocks. The clappers were pivoted from iron staples cast into the crown of the bell, the staples being lined with leather baldrics. Recessed into the top members of the bellframe were plain brass bearings in which the steel gudgeons rotated.

In 1908, the canons were removed and cast iron headstocks were fitted in place of the timber ones, each bell now being suspended more securely by 4 bolts through the crown. The drillings were positioned so that the bells ended up 1/8th turned, thus giving new clapper impact points. The cast-in staples were drilled out and new clappers with independent crown staples were fitted. The iron headstocks and removal of the canons allowed the bell hang (distance from bearing to bell lip) to be reduced, so improving the "go". New wheels were fitted to suit the iron headstocks and the altered hangs. The joints of the bellframe were strengthened with steel angle brackets.

In 1934, the headstocks were fitted with new gudgeons and new bearing housings containing self-aligning ball bearings. These were mounted on heavy cast iron bedplates to spread the load into the frame and the recesses for the old bearings were filled in. The clapper pivots were relined with lignum vitae and the pivot pins were replaced. The pulleys and sliders were also replaced and 20 tie rods were fitted to strengthen the frame.

In 2021, the bell components indicated by dotted lines would be renovated for the first time since the 1934 work.

Dismantling of Fittings (1)

Bell headstock bolts removed to free bells.

Wooden bell crown spacer will be replaced with an epoxy spacer allowing adjustment of bell hang (distance from bearing to bell lip) for better grading.

Pulleys and sliders will be replaced with new components. The clappers will be annealed, their lengths adjusted, the balls turned (to give new surfaces) and the pivots rebushed with Tufnol bearing material. The crown staples (below right) ended up being replaced, too.

Dismantling of Fittings (2)

A cracked clapper eye meant that this clapper had to be scrapped. Nicholson Engineering provided a good secondhand wrought iron replacement. Note the foundry mark and three punch marks on the shaft of the clapper that indicate this belongs to bell number 3.

Tenor bell wheel and iron bracing (above) awaiting renovation.

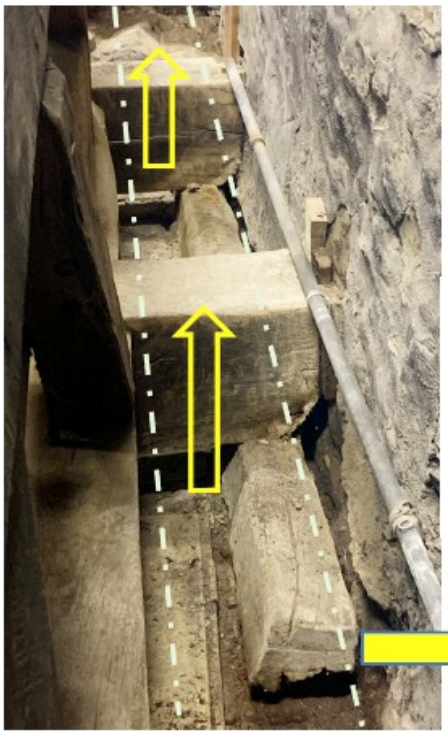
Bell wheels removed for restoration (via tower roof hatch). This was the first time they had been in the light of day since 1908.

Crack Detection

Nicholson's bell hanger checking for cracks in the crown of the bell. No notable cracks were found in all bells cast in 1836!

Number three bell after penetrative die crack detection of the bell crown - now showing new epoxy spacer and pink staining from crack detection fluid.

Installing New West Padstone and Steel Beam



Decayed timbers to be replaced with concrete padstone

8 tie rods (above right) which passed through the floor beams had first to be removed to allow the bellframe to be lifted. After 87 years they had rusted into the beams and so removal was not easy!

Channel beam initially installed on edge (below left) to lift and support the W side of the frame while the concrete forming the padstone sets. With the frame sitting level on the new padstone, the channel beam was turned to lay flat, cleated to the sills and concreted into pockets on the N and S walls to resist the E-W forces from bells 5 and 6.

Lifting W side

In final position

Note: on the E side a similar channel beam was installed to further stiffen the frame.

Repainting of Ironwork

Bells fitted with new crown spacer pads, ready for quarter turning.
Ironwork fittings that had been added to the original wooden frame – corner brackets (1908), long bearing bedplates (1934) and the 12 remaining tie rods (1934) – were wire brushed and primed (red) while the other bell fittings were removed for restoration.

Wire brushed and primed cast iron headstocks (1908) from the front four bells (1, 2, 3 & 4).

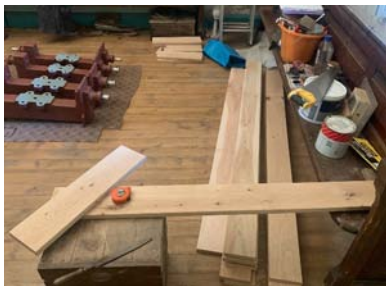
The tenor's headstock can be seen parked in the S louvre windowsill in the picture above.

1908 floor bosses with some additional bosses for the ceiling were wire brushed and repainted in preparation for another 100 years of use!

Renewing Bellchamber Floorboards

Close up image of original floorboards located under the bell frame. Notice protruding below the frame are wooden brackets (part of the pulley boxes) and old wooden doors (far left and right) that were placed on top of the rotten floor for safety prior to restoration. The powdery bits in the centre are the remains of the original (~1700) floorboards. Top centre is the end of one of the 8 new stainless steel tie rods (strengthening the trusses of the frame). These replaced the rods which passed through the floor beams (and had to be removed to allow the frame to be lifted).

Old decayed and worm eaten floor boards removed from under the bellframe. Many of the peg holes did not line up with holes in the supporting beams, suggesting that the boards had been taken up and relaid - possibly when the bells were hauled up inside the tower in 1836.



New air-dried solid oak bell chamber floorboards are prepared for installation, each one cut to size for exact fitting and replacement prior to bell contractor's next phase of work. 64 of the 2 m boards were required to cover the area under the bellframe. Access under the bells, which were resting on bearers during this work, was awkward - but would have been far more difficult had all the bell fittings still been in place!

Reassembly with New Components

A new double pulley (small wooden box with 2 pulley wheels) on the fifth bell draws the rope sideways (6") to further separate bell ringers in the ringing room below. Ideally there needs to be at least 24" between bell ropes for comfortable positioning of ringers. A new stainless steel horizontal tie rod (top left) stabilises the north-south sides of the bell frame from moving apart.

The new double pulley on the tenor (sixth) bell now draws the rope sideways (4"). (Previously it had been drawn too much.) On the far left, behind the wheel, you can see a chiming hammer. This was a feature in the past and has now been reinstated. It allows a single bell to be chimed by a non-ringer for funerals or early services in the absence of ringers.

A new hardwood pulley box is to be seen front left. The new slider (centre), new runner board (right) and bell stay allow the bell to be rested upside-down. Notice the craftmanship in the joinery of the new oak floorboards!

The bells were rotated 90 degrees for the first time since 1908. The old clapper indents can be seen on the bell (left & right) with the new clapper mark just beginning to show (far side).

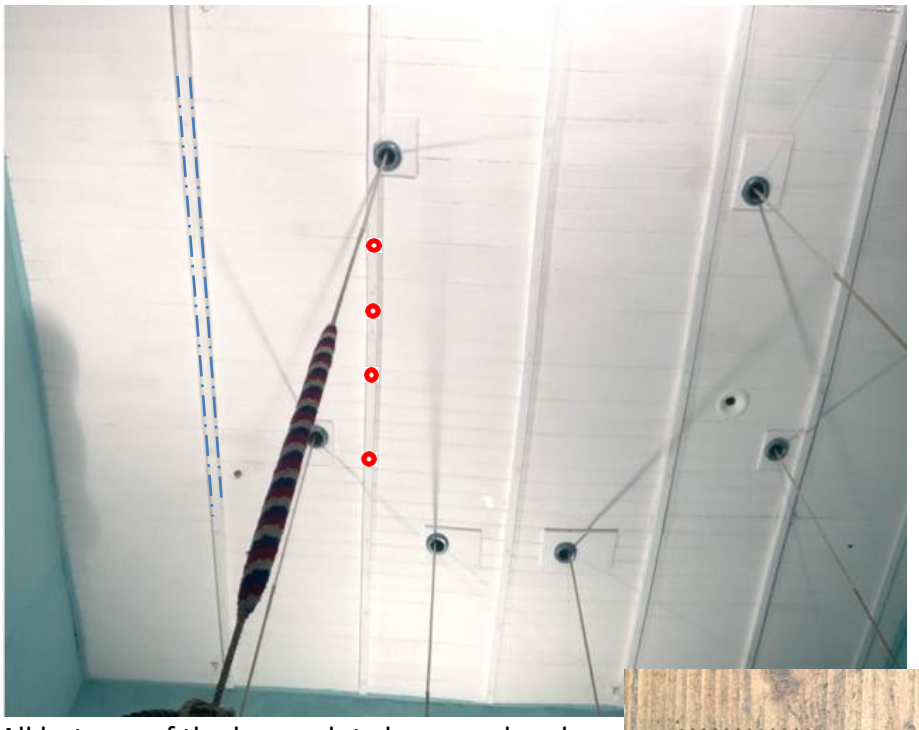
Once the restoration of the bell fittings was complete, frame movement was measured with the clappers silenced (to be good neighbours).

Ringing Room Ceiling Restoration

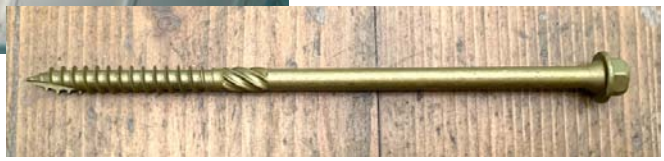
Repositioned rope holes with new cast iron ceiling bosses. The old holes are covered by boards.

Replacing the bellchamber floorboards allowed new rope holes to be positioned exactly in relation to the wheels. Previously the 2nd bell (outlined) had needed a flapboard to stop the rope jumping off the wheel.

The lath and plaster ceiling probably dates from 1836 with the match boarding underneath being added later (?1934). The original wooden rope bosses (turquoise) were attached to the plaster with the match boarding cut around them. There were several areas where the lath and plaster had become detached from the bellchamber floor beams as a result of rusting nails or decay of the soft sapwood into which they had been driven. There was a significant sag at the middle of the north edge, but this seemed to be mainly the result of the central beam having settled.



Ribs (blue dash dot line) were installed to strengthen the lath and plaster ceiling. They were secured to the bellchamber floor beams with long screws (circled) which went through the ribs, the lath and plaster, and the decayed sap wood before finally reaching strong heart wood in each of the beams. A coat of white paint finished the job!



All but one of the heavy-duty hexagon-head 6" screws could be felt biting into solid wood.

Restore, Renew, Revive Ringing Room

Ringing room south wall showing loose / bubbling plaster due to years of damp trapped by impervious paint.

The south and west walls in the process of being stripped of loose plaster. The damp brick chimney in the N-W corner (far right) was later stripped too.

And finally 'as renewed' after repainting with Earthborn breathable clay paint.

The 1836 tree trunks (with rope size holes) that were formerly placed between the ringing room ceiling and bell chamber floor (to act as rope chutes) found a new use as weights - to stretch the ropes which had not been used for 18 months.

Loose and damp plaster was also removed at the bottom of the stairs and from the bricked-up doorway. The doorway and local patches were re-rendered with sand/cement mix. The bottom of the stairs was left unpainted to allow the masonry to dry out, after stabilising the surface, and a new fan was fitted at the top of the stairs to create a constant draught.

Summary of Work Completed in 2021

a. Bells & Bellframe

Total cost: £38,407 (ex-VAT) for Nicholson Engineering (bellhanging) and SSK (associated building work). Funds raised by the ringers: £35,650 (including Gift Aid); the shortfall (on account of dispensing with local assistance) met from PCC funds.

The bellhanger arrived on 10th May (as planned, but late, after a poor motorway journey) and started work the following day. The work by Nicholson Engineering was completed on 18th August (a week later than originally scheduled because of Covid isolation).

Work done:

- 8 tie rods through the floor replaced by stainless steel rods only through the trusses to allow lifting of the frame for the work
- Bellframe stabilised with concrete padstone on W side to replace decayed timber pads
- Channel section steel beams built into N&S walls to restrain E-W movement
- 2 tie rods fitted alongside the horizontal timbers between 5-6 pits to strengthen this area
- Frame movement measured after the work
- Headstocks and ironwork descaled and repainted (3 coats)
- Bells quarter turned to present new impact points
- Hangs adjusted with new resin spacer pads
- New ball bearings fitted in main bearing housings
- New hardwood sliders and runner boards
- New pulley boxes
- Clappers rebushed (3rd replaced), balls turned to present new surfaces, lengths and throws adjusted (N.B. tenor clapper should not be subjected to further fire working)
- Replacement crown staples
- Stainless steel screws fitted to secure the shrouding on the wheels (as existing nails rust)
- Draw of tenor rope reduced (and that of 5th increased to compensate), rope boss positions adjusted for better rope drops and cast iron bosses fitted to ringing room ceiling

b. Bellchamber, Belfry Floor, Ringing Room & Stairs

The following work was all done by DIY efforts:

- Rotten floorboards under bellframe taken up and replaced with 145x25 mm air-dried oak boards
- Remaining floor area on N side temporarily reinforced with MDF board and old doors
- Roof leaks from around chimney treated with IsoFlex rubber
- Sagging ringing room ceiling reinforced with ribs secured with 6" screws to heart wood of belfry floor beams
- Trap extended a few inches at ceiling level for easier access
- Blown plaster in ringing room removed on S and W walls and from chimney, walls repainted with Earthborn breathable clay paint, ceiling repainted
- Loose and damp plaster removed at bottom of stairs and from bricked-up doorway, this doorway and local patches re-rendered with sand/cement mix, bottom of stairs left unpainted to allow masonry to dry out after stabilising surface
- New fan fitted at top of stairs to create constant draught
- Chiming hammer reinstated (defunct since 2007 when crèche created and rope drop blocked by new plasterwork)
- Efflorescence and spalling on sandstone around W window brushed away

Acknowledgements

The funding for the work was raised by the bellringers. We are grateful for: very generous private donations amounting to £17,000 which, with Gift Aid (£4,250), covered over half the cost of the project; a grant from The Lancashire Association of Change Ringers Bell Restoration Fund of £6,100; further fundraising from the Furness & South Lakeland Branch of LACR of £300; and £8,000 raised by ringers' coffee mornings, concerts, wedding ringing fees and general donations.

The bellhanging work was carried out by Nicholson Engineering involving: Andrew Nicholson, with Tim Whitehead and Ian Hasman on site, and others at Bridport. Associated building work (cutting pockets, casting the padstone and building in the beams) was by Sam Shaw Kilburn and his team.

Local assistance covered: clearance of the bellchamber; clearance of the ringing room; work with the bellhangers; painting of components; floorboarding under bellframe; restoration of ringing room ceiling, walls and stairs; provision of lunches and refreshments; as well as fundraising and publicity about the work. Those involved were: Alan Dewar, Chris Harvey, Phil Huck, Cathrine Livesey, Kristen Negaard O'Brien, Hugh Pettifer, Andrew Smith, Martin Smith, Sue Smith, Jennifer Snell, Mike Tattersall, Ian Taylor and Margaret Taylor.

Ulverston Parish Church at 8.22 in the morning, 23rd June 2022.
Following complete destruction, when the steeple was blown down in 1540-1, the church was entirely re-built. The present bell tower is the sole remaining part of the 16th century replacement building which may have re-used stone from (the dismantled) Conishead Priory and Furness Abbey.

APPENDIX

Extracts from Historical Notes Relating to the Bells

Inventory of 1552

The date 1552 refers to the inventory of church goods made by the commissioners of King Edward VI in the sixth year of his reign and preserved at the Record Office.

As regards the Inventories of 1552 in North Lonsdale only five returns have come to light - Aldingham, Dalton, Kirkby Ireleth, Ulverston and Urswick. They are all dated September 19, 1552. They are printed in *Chetham Society*, New Series, vol. 47 (1902).

The Inventory (as printed) gives plate and vestments but there is no mention of bells.

[*Cheetham p.136*]

As the steeple had fallen in 1540-1 and 'utterly destroyed' the church, 'leaving no part thereof standing', it is perhaps unsurprising that there were no bells.

References to Bells in the 18th Century

c. 1740 Browne Willis gives five bells at Ulverston.

The history of the Ulverston bells prior to 1836 is somewhat obscure. Browne Willis, as quoted above, mentions five bells, but as early as 1710 two bells are mentioned as being burst and a third cracked. The bishop at this time censured the churchwardens for "very great neglect." From the payments made for ringing on special occasions in the middle of the eighteenth century it would seem that not more than three bells were then generally in use—but this is, of course, only a conjecture.

[*Cheetham* p.136]

Browne Willis (1682-1760) was an 18th century antiquary. Cheetham refers to a manuscript in the Bodleian Library: "For the references to the MS. list of bells in Lancashire churches made by the famous antiquary Browne Willis about 1740 I am indebted to Mr. H. B. Walters. Browne Willis' MS. is in the Bodleian Library, but there is a copy in the British Museum (Add. 30,316). F.H.C.".

The Ringing and Repair of the Bells

The Churchwardens' accounts start in 1724. In *Chronicles,* Canon Bardsley reproduces several pages of accounts up to 1773. Extracts relating to the repair and ringing of bells in this period follow on the next page of this Appendix. They show that the bells were much used, and not only before church services:

If a war was declared, or a battle won, the fiddler was summoned, they set the bells a-ringing, lit a bonfire, and drank a barrel to England's glory ...

1762. March 26. "Rejoycing day for taking Martinacow; paid for ringing bells 3s.; for aile 4s. 1d.; for ye fire 3d." (Constable's Accounts).

[*Chronicles* p.13]

[Martinique would shortly be returned to France in the 1763 Treaty of Paris!]

Churchwardens' Accounts

Extracts (reformatted) relating to bells and ringers from Canon Bardsley's *Chronicles* (1885) pp. 99-111, with his footnotes, keeping original spellings and inconsistencies

		£	s.	d.
1724. Nov. 3.	For mending y^{e} Belropes	0	0	8
1726.	for mending bell roapes	0	0	6
1727.	To Thomas Addison for mending of bells and making a key	0	3	0
1728.	leather and oyle for bell tongue	0	0	10
	paid for hemp	0	4	8
	to Briggs for makeing (rope?)	0	5	0
1729.	Great bellrope	M.S. torn.		
	2 little ropes	do.		
1741. May 23.	Ale to the ringers	0	3	4
1742. May 6.	new ropes for the bells	0	10	6
Nov. 5.	p^{d} ringers [*a*]	0	3	2
1743. June 26.	to the ringers in ale 2s., in cash, 1s. 6d.	0	3	6
Nov. 4.	To Tho^{s} Richardson for mending the bell	0	2	7
Nov. 5.	Paid the ringers	0	3	0
1744. Nov. 5.	to ringers	0	3	0
1745. April 26.	to John Fell for mending bell tongue	0	0	8
1752. June 6.	to Sexton for dressing belfrey, ale	0	0	4
1753. March	for wishers and kas [*b*] for chorch beals	0	0	6
1759. Dec. 25.	to ale and bread and candles for ringers	0	1	7
1761. [?] 22.	By ringing at the King's Coronation [George III - 22nd Sept.]	0	5	0
Nov. 5.	By ringing 4s., oyle 2d., candles 2d.	0	4	4
Dec. 25.	paid John Greives for ringing and candles	0	1	7
1762. Mch.20.	paid Jane Marr for mending a spade and makeing a key for steeple door	0	1	2
Aprill 14.	paid Titus Harrison for a bell roap	0	2	4½
15.	paid Will^{m} Noble for one more	0	2	6
1763.	To Thomas Calvert for mending bell frames	0	2	0
1765.	to ringers for ale when the Bishop was here [*c*]	0	2	0
	for ringing [*c*]	0	7	6

Ulverston, May 30, 1768. – Aggreed by a number of the Principle inhabitants of this town that Nathan Harrison as Clark and Sexton should have such fees as his predisissor John Greaves had had, viz.: 1 shilling for every grave making for any person under the age of 15, and for all above, 11d., and 6d. for tolling ye Passing Bell, and at ye Funeral; and for any further tolling as parties can agree (commonly alowed 6d. per day) for the Bier carrying – per mile, for Psalm singing 6d., and when there is none 2d. for Amens. (Churchwardens' Accounts.)

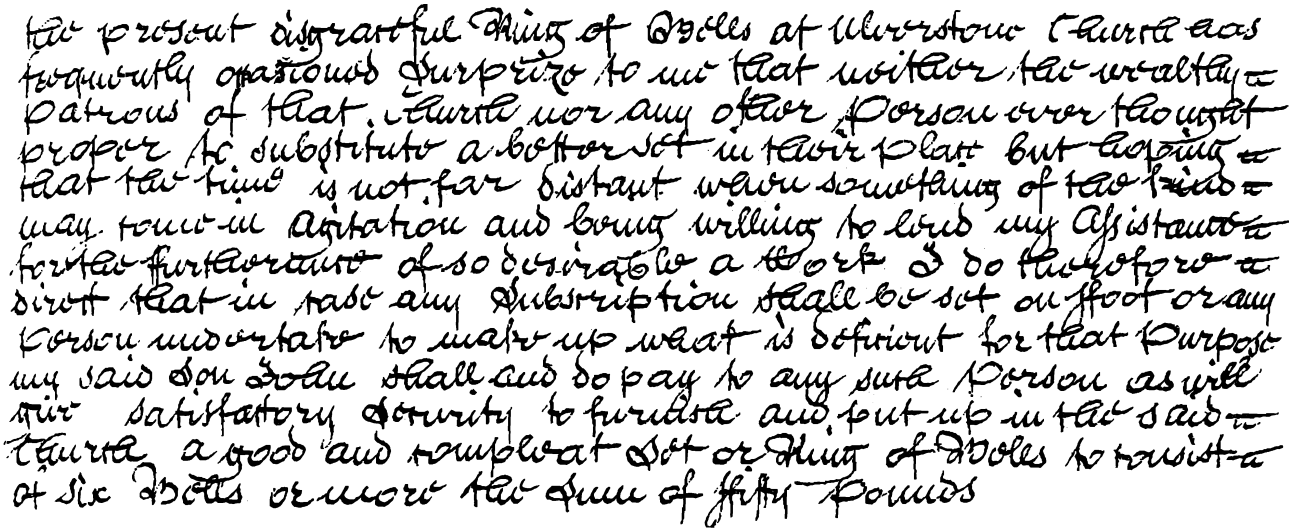
[*a*] Gunpowder Plot day was carefully kept up.

[*b*] Washers and keys. This entry is in another and less clerkly hand.

[*c*] Nearly, if not quite, all the nine items [...] recorded [omitted here] relate to the Bishop's visit, a rare event in those days. The "seven white rods" for the churchwardens, the "desk," and the "bar" for his Lordship, and the ale for the ringers, all bespeak the importance of the occasion ...

Agitation for New Bells - in 1781

John Dodson commented on the disgraceful state of the then bells and gave directions in his will (made in 1781) that, in the event of a subscription being raised for new bells, £50 should be contributed from his estate:



Transcription:

> ...the present disgraceful Ring of Bells at Ulverstone Church has frequently occasioned Surprize to me that neither the wealthy Patrons of that Church nor any other Person ever thought proper to substitute a better set in their place but hoping that the time is not far distant when something of the kind may come in Agitation and being willing to lend my Assistance for the Furtherance of so desirable a Work I do therefore direct that in case any Subscription shall be set on Foot or any Person undertake to make up what is deficient for that Purpose my said Son John shall and do pay to any such Person as will give satisfactory Security to furnish and put up in the said Church a good and compleat Set or Ring of Bells to consist of six Bells or more the Sum of Fifty Pounds...

John Dodson's grave is in the churchyard. He died in 1782 but his testamentary wishes were not carried out until 1836. They are recorded in the inscription on the 3rd bell:

JOHN DODSON OBIT 1782 T.R. L5O

Source Details:

The National Archives, Kew

Reference: PROB 11/1097/117 - Will of John Dodson, Gentleman of Ulverstone, Lancashire

The above extract from the will is from the copy made in the probate register after the will had been proved in London before the Right Worshipful Peter Calvert of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 9th November 1782.

Purchase of New Bells by The Reverend Richard Gwillym in 1836

THE REV. RICHARD GWILLYM,
Vicar from 1834 to 1867.

Almost his first act after becoming Vicar was the purchase of six bells for the tower. Although several bells are spoken of in the Churchwardens' Accounts already printed, only one remained. The gift was practically Mr. Gwillym's, for the money collected was originally intended for a new vicarage — the old Priest's House [on Hart Street] having become dilapidated — but at his urgent request it was thus diverted. The cost was £800.

[*Chronicles* p.134]

Old Priest's House - John Howe, Photo. Ulverston ~ 1885

The amount already in hand for the vicarage does not, however, seem to have covered the whole cost of the bells, for a letter from Sir John Barrow, quoted [below] by Bardsley, shows that an appeal had been issued for subscriptions for the new bells.

[*Cheetham* p.136]

The letter would probably be written in 1835 or 1836:

Admiralty, 31st Aug.

My dear Sir,

I have an application from the Minister of Ulverstone, to subscribe for a peal of Bells to the Old Church; and seeing your name, and some others which I recognise, I will beg of you to insert mine for same sum, namely, £5 5s. 0d., which I see is the sum generally subscribed. Though I can never hope to be either excited or soothed by their harmonious sounds, I am willing to give my mite towards a church in which my family and myself in early life have derived so much consolation.

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

John Fell, Esqre. JOHN BARROW.

[*Chronicles* p. 112]

Arrival of the New Bells

Mackereth's Furness Year Book for 1899, in a 'Looking Back' section, includes the following snippet about the arrival of the new bells in 1836 - via the Canal as the railway had yet to reach Ulverston:

ULVERSTON PARISH CHURCH BELLS

The Cumberland Pacquet, of May 10th, 1836, says:—"We mentioned some time ago that a subscription had been entered into at Ulverston, with the view of purchasing a ring of bells, and expressed our conviction, from the well-known public spirit of the inhabitants, and the zeal with which the project was begun, that the laudable undertaking would be speedily brought to a successful issue. In this, we were not deceived. The required funds were soon obtained, and a peal of six bells purchased, which were brought to this port by the last London trader, and have since arrived at their destination. They are now in progress of being hung in the steeple of the Parish Church, and in the course of a few days will be ready to send forth their cheerful notes.—We wish the good people of Whitehaven would take the hint, and do likewise."

The bells were indeed soon ready to ring. *The Lancaster Gazette,* of 14th May 1836, reports: 'On Holy Thursday, [Ascension Day, 12th May 1836] the inhabitants of Ulverston were roused at 5 a.m., by a peal on the new bells...'

The Inscriptions on the Bells

The inscriptions have been reproduced as nearly as possible, at the beginning of this note, in large and small capitals and superscript letters. Stops have been omitted except in abbreviations. It is quite rare to find actual donation amounts on bell inscriptions, though they often name the donors or say 'by subscription'. Thomas Mears does not seem to have had a '£' sign and so used a capital 'L' when recording the principal donations. In this case, 'D.D.' is an abbreviation of 'dono dedit' - 'he gave as a gift' - 'not Doctor of Divinity'. Similarly, 'T.R.' is probably an abbreviation of 'testamento requisivit' - 'he required by will'.

Inscriptions often contain mistakes and Cheetham generously concedes that his own transcriptions are similarly prone: the treble is inscribed 'Braddyl' - only one 'l'; the 3rd has 'obit' not 'obiit' (he died) and it (correctly) says 'John Dodson' not 'Dobson' as mis-recorded by Cheetham. On the 5th, there is one 'Wm' but the other is 'Willm'. On all the bells, the date '1836' seems to employ a larger '6' than the other numerals. The '6' from the smaller set may have been lost.

Regarding the names on the bells: as Patron and Lay Rector, Col. T.R.G. Braddyll had the right of nomination to the living. He succeeded his father at Conishead Priory in 1818 and rebuilt the mansion to Philip Wyatt's plans, starting in 1821. The lay rectorship had been purchased by John Braddyll in 1715, thus restoring the link between Conishead Priory and Ulverston Church after a break of nearly two centuries. Colonel Braddyll engaged in unwise speculation and suffered heavy financial losses in the Durham coal mines. In 1848 he was declared bankrupt and was forced to sell Conishead Priory. The impropriation then fell into the hands of Messrs. Petty and Postlethwaite (bankers and shipbuilders) and was purchased by the Rev. Alfred Peache. His trustees remained the patrons until 2019. By the transfer of tithes, the living changed from 'vicarage' to 'rectory' in 1896.

The names on the 5th bell include John Sunderland, the previous vicar. He was an Ulverston-born man. His father Thomas Sunderland, 'a man of mark', had dug the first sod of the Canal in 1793.

[based on extracts from *Chronicles* and *Conishead Priory History*]

Miscellaneous Building Notes from the 1930s

Repair of the Tower

1932: (J.W. Grundy & Son Architects) [*from Malcolm Craig's notes*]
Tower outer surfaces deep raked and repointed with cement mortar, including large 'rent' in West side. Parapet taken down to string course and rebuilt, including new stone and lead dpcs through full wall thickness.
Tower roof reconstructed with 3 ''reinforced concrete girders'' and concrete wall bed, supporting timber wall plates, joists, boarded deck and lead covering.
Trough gutters at North and South discharging into internal gutter in Ringing Room and RW Head on North side.
New flag pole and lightning conductor.
'Furnace' chimney rebuilt above roof level.
Reconstruction of Ringing Room floor in reinforced concrete with boarding.
Walls replastered.

Bellchamber Floor

The following paragraph, from the Taylor report dated 6 Dec 1932, helps explain the decayed state of the floorboards. Traces of soil remained in 1969 and a few dry tufts of grass could still be picked out from under the sills when the belfry was thoroughly cleaned in 2019.

On the floor of the bellchamber, between the frame cills [sills], is a thick layer of turf placed there most likely for the purpose of deadening the sound of the bells in the ringing chamber. Such material gives off a most unpleasant odour and has an injurious effect upon the floor; we strongly advise that the turf be removed from the tower ...

Repair of the Spiral Stairs

Under the heading 'AN EXAMPLE FROM YORKSHIRE [sic] - VISITING DAY AT THE BELFRY', *The Ringing World* of 23rd November 1934 reports:

A fine spirit exists among the ringers of Ulverston, Yorks. When the bells were rehung they determined to attend to the steps which had been worn so badly through the ages as to be almost too difficult to climb. They chipped every one of them and concreted them to their original shape. They provided new linoleum for the belfry, creosoted the belfry frames and painted the belfry fittings. So much improved is the belfry that it can claim to be one of the best in the district.

When their task was completed they held a congregation's visiting night .... only about 20 people could be accommodated in the ringing chamber at once .... The captain welcomed the visitors and then one of the ringers who had made a full model of a bell demonstrated this and also explained the church's history and ringing. The bells were raised in peal, a plain course rung, and then lowered, and so interesting was this that without exception everyone climbed the rickety wooden ladder to the bell chamber where the inscriptions on the bells were explained. This programme was carried out three times during the evening, and the collection towards the great effort realised £1 7s. 6d. ....

This explains the date 1934 in one of the windows on the stairs. It's a pity our correspondent gave Ulverston a free transfer from Lancashire to Yorkshire - 40 years later the transfer was to Cumbria!

References

Documents consulted in producing this Appendix

Canon Bardsley's extensive study of old documents (which he found in the church chest) resulted in his publication of *Chronicles* in 1885. Most of the later sources quote from this work.

C. W. Bardsley, *Chronicles of the Town and Church of Ulverston* (1885)

F. H. Cheetham, *The Church Bells of Lancashire* Part V The Hundred of Lonsdale (~1924)

Will of John Dodson, Gentleman of Ulverstone, Lancashire The National Archives, Kew - Reference: PROB 11/1097/117

Mackereth's Furness Year Book for 1899

The Lancaster Gazette (14th May 1836) - extract via The British Newspaper Archive

Ulverston Parish Church Its place in history and the town (Booklet produced by UPC in 2011)

Conishead Priory History: https://www.conisheadpriory.org/conishead-priory-history.html

M. Craig, *Historical Notes from a variety of sources* (undated - Malcolm Craig was the inspecting architect in 2011)

John Taylor Bell Founders & Bell Hangers *Report & Estimate Ulverston Church - Bells* (6th Dec. 1932)

The Ringing World 1934 p.742 (23rd November 1934)

'The parish of Ulverston', in *A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 8*, ed. William Farrer and J Brownbill (London, 1914), pp. 342-348 Originally published by Victoria County History. Available at British History Online: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vol8/pp342-348

The above documents mention further sources (not consulted, but details are noted in the text).

Exact quotations have been set in a serif font with comments and additions in square brackets [ ] and omissions marked ... The churchwardens' accounts would of course have been handwritten: the font used to reproduce the extracts here is similar to that in Bardsley's *Chronicles.*

Archives and other sources of information

Lancashire Archives, Preston: https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/

The National Archives, Kew: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal

Cumbria Archive & Local Studies Centre, Barrow

The British Newspaper Archive: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

The Heritage pages of the UPC website

Publications by The Chetham Society [The *Chetham Society* continues to publish major works of scholarship on the history of the palatine counties of Lancashire and Chester - not to be confused with F.H. Cheetham.]

Publications by The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire [This Society also continues to publish the texts of historic documents relating to the two counties. The Society has digitised the bulk of its old volumes (up to Volume 146) to make them more widely available on-line.]

ADDENDUM

Searches in Archives

In searching for old references relating to Ulverston church, it is as well to remember that Ulverston was in Lancashire (until 1974) and many matters would be dealt with in the (Royal) Duchy courts, the Hundred of Lonsdale being the relevant area. Lancaster was far more significant in the affairs of Ulverston when the town's main connection to the rest of the county was by stage coach across the sands to Lancaster.

From 1541-1856 Ulverston came within the Diocese of Chester which was created during the Reformation. Ulverston was in the Deanery of Furness in the Archdeaconry of Richmond. The parish extended up to Coniston until the chapelries became separate parishes.

Various catalogues of the national and local archives are searchable on-line. Some documents have been digitised but, for many, a visit to the archive will be needed to view originals, nevertheless the titles and index terms alone can be very informative - and a temptation to further research!

Presentments - these are formal statements. 'Presentments were written out by the church-wardens on single sheets of paper or were in the form of answers to a set of articles of visitation and enquiry sent by the archdeacon, bishop or archbishop before visitation.'

The Lancashire Archives at Preston contain some Presentments relating to Ulverston. The catalogue reference is: ARR/1/3/52/1 (to 13)

ARR - Archdeaconry of Richmond - 1530-1861

1 - Archdiaconal Court - 1665-1841

3 - Churchwardens' Responses to Articles of Enquiry - 17th Cent - 19th Cent

52 - Ulverston - 1690-1799 (Presentments)

The various items indexed in these documents include: Church in indifferent repair, bells untuned, school in church (1690); Church in serious decay (1692); Altar rails fixed, bells and church repaired (1715); etc.

Reluctance of the Chapelries to Pay for Repair of the Parish Church

ARR/1/2 'Compert Books are a record of the Archdeacon's court held before the Archdeaconry's Commissary. They include an enormous variety of information, giving the names of people presented to the court for the following offences: being recusant including papists, Quakers and separatists, fornication, children not being baptised, not paying church assessments, Easter dues and tithes, not attending church, not giving public thanks after childbirth, clandestine marriages, bastardy, unlicensed teachers, doctors, midwives, Quakers teaching, neglecting holy duties, neglecting church repairs ...'

ARR/1/2/51/folio 8v-10 Compert Book: Furness Deanery 1685 Ulverstone (9 Sept 1685): presentments for not attending church ... the bells are in decay ... some churchwardens presented for not collecting their proportion towards the repair of Ulverston church; petition of the inhabitants of Lowick, Blawith, Torver and Coniston that they had all been assessed for the repair of the roof of Ulverston church and only Blawith and Torver paid in full ...

Further 18th Century References to Ulverston's Bells

A search of The National Archives has revealed some documents with intriguing titles, noted below. They refer to the bad condition and repair, or not, of Ulverston's bells. The original papers, stored in the local archives at Kendal or Barrow, may give further illumination.

Bond in £100, 19 November 1712
Bond to pay all expenses that he [Richard Newby of Subberthwaite in Blawith, chapelwarden] shall be put to to defend suit brought by Churchwardens of Ulverston for non-payment of church tax for chapelry of Blawith towards repair of bells of parish church of Ulverston.
'wee are free of the Belles at Olvrstone for the were cassen in 1711 and wee did not pay aney thing to 'rt the charge as to the rofe and wall'

Reference: BPR 18/W/2 Cumbria Archive & Local Studies Centre, Barrow

Summons to meet in general vestry at Ulverston to consider bad condition of church bells, 30 August 1775. [PR2848/6/4] [in Torver churchwardens' documents]

Reference: WPR 52/2/7 Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal

Notice addressed to Revd Mr Strickland, Curate of Cunistone that sidesmen and principal inhabitants should attend general vestry meeting in Ulverston parish church to consider poor condition of bells and want of a vestry room, 30 August 1775.

Reference: WPR 51/1/2/19 Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal

Counsel's opinion of John Wilson of Howe [Troutbeck] concerning liability of Torver and Coniston towards repair of Ulverston church bells, etc, 27 September 1775. [PR2848/6/6]

Reference: WPR 52/2/8 Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal

The vestry meeting at Ulverston in 1775 may have sown the seed in John Dodson's mind to lend support (in his will of 1781) for a new ring of bells.

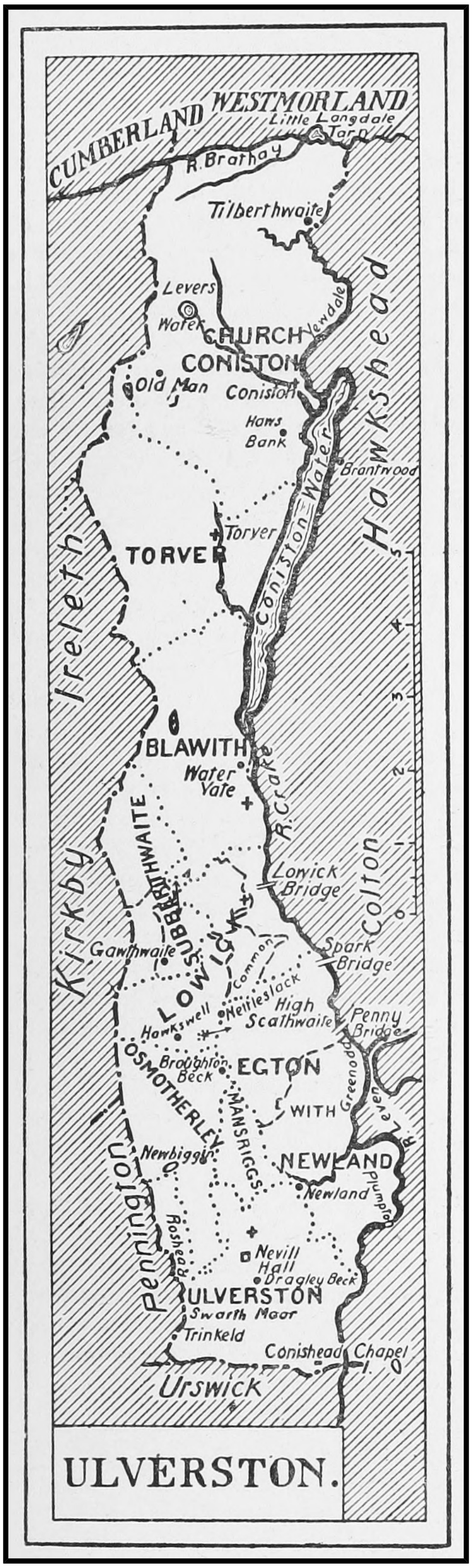
There clearly remains much scope for further research into the old bells!

HFP
July 2022

Back cover:

The parish of Ulverston before the distant chapelries became separate parishes

[*from Victoria County History (see References)*]


CUMBERLAND
WESTMORLAND
Little Langdale Tarn
R. Brathay
Tilberthwaite
Levers Water
CHURCH CONISTON
Yewdale
Old Man
Coniston
Haws Bank
Brantwood
Coniston Water
Hawkshead
Torver
TORVER
Ireleth
Kirkby
BLAWITH
Water Yate
R. Crake
Lowick Bridge
Colton
SUBBERTHWAITE
Gawthwaite
LOWICK
Common
Spark Bridge
Nettleslack
High Scathwaite
Penny Bridge
Hawkswell
Broughton Beck
EGTON
WITH
NEWLAND
Greenodd
R. Leven
OSMOTHERLEY
MANSRIGGS
Newbiggin
Pennington
Newland
Roshead
Nevill Hall
Dragley Beck
ULVERSTON
Swarth Moor
Trinkeld
Conishead
Chapel I.
Urswick

ULVERSTON.