

St Laurence Winslow Information for Bellringers

In 792 AD Offa, King of Mercia, gave the newly founded Abbey of St Alban's a gift of land including Winslow and surrounding villages. The Saxons may have worshipped at a wooden church here but it was the Normans in the 12th century who built the church of stone which still forms the heart of St Laurence's today. Even in these very early times, St Laurence's was more than just a simple parish church. Instead it was the mother church for Granborough, Aston Abbots and Little Horwood.

Our church is, unusually, named after St Laurence who was an official of Rome martyred in 258 AD by the Prefect for refusing to reveal the treasures of his church. Instead he simply pointed to the poor and needy, but was roasted to death, which is why his symbol is a griddle.

We do not know who the early clergy were. St Albans Abbey may originally have sent out monks to serve the town but the first named vicar of Winslow was John, recorded in 1275. Boards either side of the south door record the names of subsequent vicars up to the present day.



As Winslow grew in size the church building grew with it. The tower was added to the west end in the first half of the 13th century to house bells which the parishioners believed would ward off the devil. The belfry and porch were added in the 15th to 16th Centuries.

During the Reformation, King Henry VIII founded his own church independent of Rome and, as with all churches in England, St Laurence had to change from Catholicism to the new Church of England.

From the early 1600s the church began to re-equip itself in accordance with the Church of England practices including a recast Sanctus bell, a new altar cloth and a pulpit.

During the 17th and 18th Centuries St Laurence continued to re-equip itself including recasting the bells and adding a Singers' Gallery. The weathervane (a gilded cockerel) was added to the tower together with a chiming clock which marks the quarter-hours and plays the tenor part of *St David's*, an old Welsh tune accompanying the metrical version of Psalm 95.

The interdenominational Winslow Christian Fellowship was founded in 1989. Preachers from all these churches regularly meet and some special services are shared, such as those on Remembrance Day and at Christmas. This ecumenical approach is typical of Winslow in the 21st Century where differing beliefs are respected and a friendly welcome is given to all. St Laurence's Church has provided the spiritual heart of Winslow for well over 800 years and, God willing, will continue to do so for many more yet.

The Bells

The oldest bell is the Sanctus bell, originally cast in Buckingham by Robert Anton in 1611, and is listed in the Council for Care of Churches "Schedule of Bells for Preservation" in the Oxford Diocese. This bell underwent repairs in 1956 and was rehung on the north wall of the tower at that time.

The 8 bells hung for full circle ringing date from 1668 and hang in an oak frame with oak foundations.

Before the recent restoration, Bells 4 to 8 inclusive retained their canons (supporting loops) and were fitted with elm headstocks. Only Bells 1,2 and 3 had cast iron headstocks. Work on the bells was carried out in 1929 when the then 6 bells were removed from the tower and further work in 1955/6 when two trebles were added to make a ring of 8. It seems little major work had been done since that time and by 2000 much work needed to be undertaken to ensure safe ringing. The ringers had disbanded and the bells were silent most of the time except for clock chimes. They were no longer a tuneful ring.

The Restoration 2007/8

The £60,000 (original estimate £35k) necessary to do the work was raised over 3 years by a new and largely novice ringing team team, supported by the church and community. In brief the work comprised:

- ❖ Better lighting and electrical wiring were installed in the tower.
- ❖ The complicated clock wiring that operated the chimes & the clock hammers were removed for restoration & the clock mechanism protected.
- ❖ Supports were made to hold the steel beam from which the bells were lowered. They dropped through the trapdoor in the ringing chamber.
- ❖ All 8 bells were lowered on 1/2 Nov 2007 for removal to Whites' of Appleton Bell Foundry in Abingdon on 5 Nov 2007.
- ❖ Extensive work was carried out on the bells including tuning several.
- ❖ A new access and entry point were created for the bell chamber
- ❖ The frame was strengthened, the bellchamber cleaned and netted.
- ❖ The bells & clock were out of action for about 6 months while the work was carried out. In the meantime the bell ringing team rang the 6 at St James Church Great Horwood.
- ❖ The bells came home on 2 May 2008 and were re-commissioned on 21st. New ropes are still awaited.
- ❖ It took longer to re establish all elements of the historic clock but is now working fully.

The restored bells were blessed by the Bishop of Buckingham on Sunday October 12th when St Laurence Church celebrated its Patronal Festival and welcomed the new benefice curate.

Please see our website for more details and illustrations of the restoration.

A Fundraising T Towel detailing the Bells' pre restoration details is on sale @ £5.

Commemorative peal May 2010 – first since restoration

The band covered three generations and included a few ringers from the last peal rung on the bells. Roy Woodruff (Aston Clinton) remembered the moment he had asked his foreman for a day off while he was working in Wingrave, this was an unlikely chance as he explained but was granted it! This day off work was for a trip to Loughborough to see the casting of the bells which would become the two new trebles at Winslow. He later rang in the first Peal on the new eight.

The Peal was Lincolnshire conducted by James Haseldine (Long Crendon) for whom the restoration was the first he had fully managed and undertaken as the project leader on behalf of Whites of Appleton, bell-hangers.

The details of the Peal were as follows:

Oxford Diocesan Guild, Winslow, Buckinghamshire, St Laurence
Saturday, 29 May 2010 in 3:05 (17-1-9)

5088 Lincolnshire Surprise Major Composed by: W Barton

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Raymond A Vickers | 5 L Roy Woodruff |
| 2 Julie A Haseldine | 6 Christopher C Stokes |
| 3 Ryan S Noble | 7 James A Haseldine (C) |
| 4 Haisi Drysdale | 8 Andrew Haseldine |

Revised Weights Chart

Bell	Rev 2008 Weight			Note	Diameter Inches	Date	Founder/Inscription
	Cwts	Qrs	Lbs				
Treble	4	2	9	E	27.1/2"	1955	John Taylor & Co Loughborough. 1955 In memory of Dorothy Lambton
2	5	1	6	D	29.1/4"	1955	John Taylor & Co Loughborough. 1955 The people of Winslow gave me.
3	5	3	19	C	31.0"	1730	Edward Hall made me 1730.
4	6	0	24	B	34.0"	1846	/1929 Gillett andJohnston C & G Mears Rev W.W.McGreight Vicar 1846
5	8	1	3	A	36.1/4"	1670	Richard Keane
6	10	1	23	G	39.0"	1668	Richard Keane
7	12	2	17	F	42.0"	1668	Richard Keane
Tenor*	17	1	9	E	48.0"	1777	Pack and Chapman of London. Fecit 1777

The tenor was previously listed at over 19cwt. Tenor bragging or a simple error?

ST LAURENCE CHURCH WINSLOW BUCKS

Notes for Visiting Bellringers (January 2012)

1. The church is best approached from the Market Square on the right angled bend on the A413 by the Bell pub. A footpath leads up from the back right-hand corner next to the St Laurence Rooms & 'Brimley Bears' shop. The church is usually open during the day. You will be met inside the church, the tower door is in the north west corner. There is a spiral stone staircase without handrail to negotiate. Visitors parking in the square should note that a ticket must be displayed even if the time is less than an hour. The square is closed for a market on Wednesdays. Another car park, with public toilets, is situated in Greyhound Lane, signed from the High St.
2. **Visitors fee** – is presently a minimum of £20 (set at 2010 Tower meeting) Prospective Peal ringers (fee £80) need to make direct contact. Fees will go into the Tower Bell fund. We are saving towards installing a rope handrail down the stairs.
3. **Clock Hammers** – these may only be handled by a limited number of Winslow ringers. Please do **not** try and operate. The clock will make a lot of noise at the quarters even when the hammers are disengaged.
4. **Bell characteristics to note** –
 - the **treble** is 'flighty' (mainly because of the use of a pipe) and is not a beginner's bell
 - the **tenor** is fairly light set at handstroke
 - **the ropes of 7 & 8** fall very close together for such big bells
5. The **Winslows** call change – you are invited to try this: **3 1 5 2 7 4 6 8**
6. Try **Winslow Surprise major** – Blue line available

Contact Details

Contact: Tower Secretary Jan Lewis on 01296 715106 or Diana Slevin Tower Captain 713903/ 715829.

Email: bellswinslow@winslowbenefice.org.uk

Website: <http://www.stlaurencewinslow.org.uk/bellringers.htm>

Winslow information: <http://www.winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk/index.htm>

Map Winslow Centre

Church at PW below 'Church Walk'

