



ST MICHAEL'S TILEHURST

THE BELLS AND THEIR HISTORY



There has been a Christian church dedicated to St Michael on this site in Tilehurst since 1189, about 70 years after Reading Abbey was founded. The church was served by the monks of Reading Abbey until the Dissolution. In 1542 the parish was transferred from the Diocese of Salisbury to the Diocese of Oxford. The first church building here was probably made of wood and no trace remains of it. Several other buildings may have followed. The oldest part of the present church is the south aisle, now called the Lady Chapel, which was built round about 1300. The tower was built in the 1730s. The spire was added at the time of re-building in 1855 to G. E. Street's design.

Originally there were six bells in the tower, rung from the ground floor. These were cast at Reading in the year 1723 by Henry Bagley III, believed to be on the site of a mediaeval foundry now extinct but previously owned by Joseph Carter, the last of the famous Wokingham founders dating from the 14th century.

In 1885 the bells were rehung in a new oak frame, two trebles by Mears & Stainbank of London were added to complete the octave, being dedicated to the memory of Du Pre Alexandra. Ringing continued from the ground floor until 1906 when the present floor and screen were erected.

In 1937 the eight bells were fitted with ball bearings, rehung in the existing frame which was quarter turned and reassembled on girders replacing decayed timbers.

In 1970, the treble and 5th were recast, and the other bells were tuned, by Whitechapel. The bells were rehung in the oak frame of 1885 with mainly new fittings (cast iron headstocks, fixed steel gudgeons, self-aligning ball bearings, and traditional English wheels, stays and sliders). In 1978, the 7th was found to be unsafe and was recast by Whitechapel.

Before Sunday ringing commences, the Captain selects a ringer at random to read the ringing office prayer. This is a tradition across the whole ringing world and whilst the prayer may change from time to time the ritual remains the same.

The standard prayer reads:

*In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen
Praise Him on the well tuned Cymbals. Praise Him upon the loud Cymbals.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen
Guide us O Lord in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help, that in all our works begun continued and ended in Thee we may glorify thy name, and finally by Thy mercy obtain everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



The Details of each bell are as follows:

No.	Weight cwt qr lb	Note	Date Cast	Founder	Inscription
1	5-0-2	E	1970	Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd	MEARS & STAINBANK FOUNDERS LONDON : IN CALEDONIS AFEXANONI MEMORIAM CONNUBIALIS QUE PEA XL ANNOS FELICITATIS ME ET SOROREM MEAM DD VIDUA EJUS CAROLINA
2	5-3-13	D#	1885	Mears & Stainbank	MEARS & STAINBANK FOUNDERS LONDON : CALEDON DU PRE ALEXANDER OBIIT XVIII ^{mo} DIE QUINT AD1884 AETAT LXVI
3	7-0-10	C#	1723	Henry Bagley III	HENRY BAGLEY MADE MEE ANNO DOMINI 1723 : CANTATE DOMINO CANTICUM NOVVM
4	8-0-23	B	1723	Henry Bagley III	THOMAS STEVENS : WILLIAM BOULT : CHURCH WARDENS : HENREY BAGLEY MADE MEE 1723
5	8-0-12	A	1970	Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd	HENREY BAGLEY MADE MEE IN YER OF OUR LORD 1723 : BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD
6	10-2-1	G#	1723	Henry Bagley III	THOMAS STEVENS : WILLIAM BOULT : CHURCH WARDENS : H B
7	12-0-13	F#	1978	Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd	WILLIAM COWDEROY : WILLIAM KNIGHT : BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT DO ME SEE THAT H B OF READING MADE ME IN YE YER OF OUR LORD 1723
8	17-1-15	E	1723	Henry Bagley III	THOMAS WALKER RECTOR : WILLIAM BOULT : THOMAS STEVENS : CHURCH WARDENS : BE IT KNOWN TO ALL THAT HEARE MEE SINGE THAT H BAGLEY OF READING MADE THIS RING 1723 : WHEN I RING OR TOLL, MY VOICE IS SPENT THAT MEN MAY COME AND HEARE GOD'S WORD, AND SO REPENT

If you would like to know more about bell ringing at St Michael's or want to learn how to ring Church bells please contact the Tower Captain. You can find full details on the Church web site.