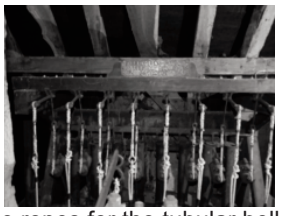
OUR CHURCH BELLS :: NEVER SEEN AND SELDOM HEARD (Unfortunately !)

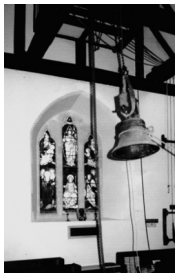

The two sides of the tolling bell

The disused bell wheel



The ropes for the tubular bells

The hammers for the tubular bells



The tolling bell being hoisted back after repair (1999)

The tolling bell as originally hung. (c1995) © John Rosewarne

St Nicholas', Hedsor :: A Report on the Bells by Matthew Smith :: DEC 2011

A western, wooden tower containing 1 bell and a set of 8 tubular bells

Bell	Inscription	Diam.	Weight	Note
1	A K J700	20 ½"	c.1¾cwt	G

The bell is hung for swing-chiming from a wooden headstock with fabricated plate gudgeons, ball bearings and metal lever. The frame consists of two upright wooden beams with the bell in between, fixed to a horizontal beam above and placed in the centre of the tower. The fittings are by Whites of Appleton, who re-hung the bell in 1997.

Before the re-hanging, the bell was hung for ringing from a wooden headstock with strap gudgeon and plain bearings. The stay was fixed to the wheel. Very roughly scratched on the headstock was the date 1736, but the stock would appear to date from later than that, also the figures were certainly not carved by a craftsman. These old fittings were left within the tower.

The bell has 6 canons, but one of the double canons is broken, and has been quarter turned. The founder is not known, but it would seem to have been a regular bell-founder.

In the 1552 inventory is the following entry:-

Itm ij belles whereof the one stolen by one Wyttm Gybbis and Nycholas Prattchedd wyttm whyte John Long, ij hand bells

Also in the tower is a set of 8 tubular bells made by Harringtons of Coventry and installed in 1888. The details are as follows:

Tube No.	Length	Ex. Diam.	Int. Diam.	Note
1	63 ¾"	3 ½"	3"	A
2	65 ¾"	3"	2 ¼"	G#
3	70"	3"	2 ¼"	F#
4	74 ¼"	3"	2 ¼"	E
5	79 ¾"	3"	2 ¼"	D
6	82 ⅜"	3"	2 ¼"	C#
7	87 ½"	3"	2 ¼"	B
8	95 ⅞"	3 ¼"	2 ¼"	A

The installation is typical of Harringtons, with the bells being set-out in one row along the west wall of the tower. Due to the length of the tubes, the floor under them has had to be removed and the bottom boxed in, this extends down into the church. The large plate with: HARRINGTONS PATENT / TUBULAR BELLS / COVENTRY, which is usually found on the chiming rack, is placed on the frame of the bells. The rack is on the ground floor with the ropes passing between two sets of pulleys to avoid the west window. The tubular bells were also renovated in 1997 by Whites of Appleton.
In the church is a plaque:

To the Glory of GOD and in loving memory of
P ·M ·LAMBERT, these Chimes are placed by
Her Husband, P ·D ·Lambert Junr. Christmas 1888

We are indebted to Matthew Smith for this information on our bells. And also to Chris Chacksfield for making the perilous climb into the belfry to take these excellent pictures and to John Rosewarne for the less adventurous picture of the hoisting.
We hope this article will encourage someone to ring our bells from time to time before morning service.

Originally the tolling bell was hung for ringing from a wooden headstock with strap gudgeon and plain bearings. The stock was fixed off-centre to the wheel. The date 1736 is very roughly scratched on the stock, but it would appear to date from later than that, also the figures were certainly not carved by a craftsman.
Following an inspection, during the Millennium restoration, it was considered that rotating the bell through a complete circle, in the traditional manner, was placing too a great stress on the church tower due to the stock being off centre, which is essential to the traditional tolling system.
It was decided to replace the tolling wheel by a lever system swinging the bell through a small arc so that it impacted the vertically hanging clapper (as shown in the top photograph of this page) - the system works well but is not quite so much fun!
This photograph also shows the tiny size of the original access hatch, which made access difficult and extremely perilous. The access was considerably enlarged in 1996/7.