

The Bells of St Mary's

St Mary's Church, Old Newton, has five bells in the key of G#. The largest bell (*known as The Tenor*) weighs 8½cwt (approx. 432 kg), and the smallest (*The Treble*) 4½cwt (233 kg). These two bells along with the 3rd are nearly 350 years old, all three having been cast by John Barbie of Ipswich in the year 1663. The 2nd was cast in 1810 and the 4th in 1896.

Shortly before the millennium, the bells were overhauled and made suitable for full-circle ringing, and were rededicated on 8th December 1999 by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Rt Revd Richard Lewis.

All bells are now fitted with modern clappers, and have new conventional sliders and stays. The Treble, which was badly cracked, has been welded. All have had new headstocks, the 2nd and 3rd have new gudgeons, and the Treble, 4th and Tenor have been re-hung on ball bearings. The ringing chamber has been restored to its original pre-1890 position on the second floor, where two windows allow in some natural light, and a new silence floor constructed.

The bells are rung for the 11 o'clock service each Sunday morning and on special occasions, such as weddings and to ring in the New Year at midnight on 31st December/1st January. Practice nights are the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, finishing by 9 o'clock.

Anybody interested in seeing the bells or learning to ring, or any other enquiries, should contact Peter Godden on 01449 781306.

A description of change ringing and how the bells operate can be found at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Change_ringing