

## **Proposal to reinstate the ring of bells at St Teilo's church, Llanarth and create a ringing centre as part of the renewal scheme for the building**

### **Background**

The former church of St Teilo, Llanarth was home to a ring of 8 bells, the heaviest weighing just over 12 cwt in the key of F#. The oldest bells, the five heaviest bells, date from 1820, whilst the three smallest bells date from 1981 when the bells were comprehensively overhauled and restored by the Whitechapel Bellfoundry. The bellframe and all the associated fittings date from 1981 and were in good condition. In comparison with other towers, the bells at Llanarth were relatively unused as there was never a local resident band, although there were ringers who did ring there regularly.

The last service was held at St Teilo's, Llanarth in July 2013 and a faculty was granted for the removal of the bells, bellframe and fittings. This took place in November 2014, the bells, frame and fittings being removed by volunteer members of the Llandaff & Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers working under the professional guidance of Nicholson Engineering of Bridport. Everything was removed from the tower apart from the base girders of the bellframe which were concreted into the tower walls in 1981 and were too difficult to remove. The costs associated with this work were paid for by the Association.

The bells were removed to secure storage and remain the property of the Church in Wales although in the care of the Llandaff & Monmouth Association. A number of attempts have been made over the intervening years to re-home the bells at another church in Wales but none have come to fruition.

### **Proposal**

As part of the potential development of the Llanarth church building by the Village Alive Trust, it is proposed that the bells be reinstated in the tower and a Ringing Centre be created as part of the building's offering.

### **What is a Ringing Centre?**

A ringing centre can be defined as "a tower or organisation which is a recognised centre of good practice in the promotion and teaching of bell ringing, the teaching of ringing tutors, and of leadership in bell ringing, and to spreading good practice to other towers."

### **Why would a Ringing Centre be desirable at Llanarth?**

A Ringing Centre would provide a dedicated facility where ringing activities and, in particular, the teaching of bellringing can take place. In the area covered by the Diocese of Monmouth (the traditional county of Monmouthshire) we have a number of towers which have no band or where bands are struggling, particularly in the more rural parts of the Diocese. Given the location of Llanarth, it could also serve as a facility for ringers in mid-Wales and in Herefordshire.

It is hoped that a Ringing Centre would boost the recruitment of new ringers and the upskilling of existing ringers within the Diocese. It would provide a centralised resource and facilities around which to base our publicity and training. It is feared that, as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on bellringing, there will be a reduction in the number of bellringers across the country. Therefore, a dedicated teaching facility in Monmouthshire would provide a strategic resource for training new ringers in that area.

As noted above, Llanarth are a relatively modern ring of bells and, if the right environment could be created, would be an excellent facility for ringing and the teaching of new ringers. The bells, bellframe and ringing fittings have remained in secure storage since removal and could be reinstated.

#### **What would a Ringing Centre do?**

The main activities that a Ringing Centre would undertake are as follows:

- To act as a central venue for the training of new recruits for other towers in the area (and any local people who may wish to learn to ring).
- To run training sessions to teach existing ringers how to teach. It is very important to the long-term health of ringing that we have a pool of people who can teach new recruits competently and safely.
- To provide training sessions for existing ringers to improve their skills. This could take the form of day or half-day courses focusing on particular topics or dedicated ringing sessions involving the ringing of quarter peals (around 45 mins of ringing) or peals (around 3 hours of ringing).
- To allow the church bells at Llanarth to remain as part of the village's living heritage. The bells would originally have been bought or gifted at a not inconsiderable cost and were subsequently restored also at great expense. To allow the bells to remain in the building for which they were cast and restored would allow a continuation of the link back to the Llanarth of 1820 when the heaviest bells were cast.

#### **What facilities would a Ringing Centre need?**

Ideally, a Ringing Centre would be situated in a tower which:

- Has an easy-going ring of bells which are suitable for teaching;
- Has a large, comfortable ringing chamber to provide a pleasant environment for those using the Ringing Centre;
- Has space in the ringing chamber for a PC so that a simulator might be set up;
- Has reasonable non-ringing facilities (e.g. on-site toilet, tea-making facilities etc);
- Has space for more classroom-style teaching activities;
- Has reasonable access to the bells in order to facilitate regular silencing of clappers for teaching sessions and regular maintenance;
- Has sound control to control the volume of the bells in the immediate vicinity;
- Has good access to the building to allow ringing to take place on a reasonably regular basis;
- Has good access and transport links (both private and public).

#### **What might the costs involved be?**

An estimate of the costs of reinstating the bells will need to be sought from a professional bellhanger - preferably Nicholson's in the first instance as they are familiar with the church building and the environment in and around the tower.

As well as reinstating the bells, there will be costs for creating a new ringing chamber on the first floor of the tower as the bells had previously been rung from the ground floor. There may need to be improvements to staircases, lighting, heating and ventilation in the new ringing chamber plus costs of decoration.

There may be some other ancillary costs for equipment associated with the teaching aspects including a simulator, computer equipment and other teaching resources.

It must be stressed that the bells, bellframe and fittings remain the property of the Church in Wales.

<insert costs from Nicholson's here>  
<estimate of other costs?>

Matthew Turner  
October 2020