

St JOHN the BAPTIST CHURCH  
BRESSINGHAM, NORFOLK

DEDICATION OF THE  
NEW FRAME AND TWO NEW BELLS  
AND THE  
REDEDICATION OF FOUR RESTORED BELLS

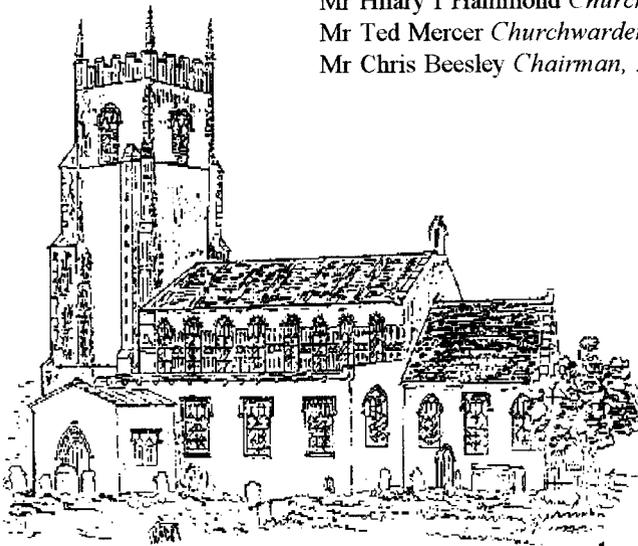
by

THE VENERABLE PETER DAWSON MA  
Former Archdeacon of Norfolk

on

Friday 4th August 1995  
at 7.30 p.m.

The Reverend David M Hunter *Rector of Bressingham*  
Mr Hilary I Hammond *Churchwarden*  
Mr Ted Mercer *Churchwarden*  
Mr Chris Beesley *Chairman, Bell Restoration*



## The 1995 Restoration Project - Why and How?

The restoration of Bressingham church bells has a clear beginning in the vision and determination of John Oates, who wanted to see the bells rehung for full-circle ringing in the traditional English manner. Sadly, John did not see the restoration take shape, but he left a substantial bequest with the challenge that, if we could not restore Bressingham bells, the money was to be used for bell restoration elsewhere.

In 1994 a small committee was formed to undertake a feasibility study. In August we officially launched the project with a public meeting. Our aims were to preserve the village's heritage of bells in a new bell frame and possibly add one or two new bells plus a ringers' gallery. Whatever we did, we wanted to ensure that the restoration would give at least 100 more years of ringing from Bressingham church.

It quickly became clear that we had the support of interested villagers, bellringers, local and national charities (thanks to many determined applications!). We also learnt that people can contribute to a project in different ways - for example, the estimated cost for six bells shrunk from £44,000 to £30,000 as we exploited local volunteer talent to do as much of the work as possible. Our biggest boost came when Tony and Betty Baines offered to construct and donate a brand-new bell frame - and at this point we committed ourselves to achieving every one of our original aims.

Practical work began in February 1995 with the removal of the bells, expertly carried out by members of the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers' bell restoration team. In March we witnessed the casting of our two new bells, one inscribed to the memory of John Oates. Things reached fever pitch in June and July when the old bell frame was cleaned and preserved, the new frame installed and the bells brought back and rehung. Local villagers and bellringers were involved throughout; the work was dirty and arduous but, we hope, rewarding.

So here we are in August 1995 with a fine ring of six bells. For the immediate future the bells must be rung from the ground floor, but fund-raising is already well underway towards the ringers' gallery that will make the bells ideal for trainees of this most traditional English art. The people of Bressingham are grateful to all those who contributed in any way. The committee, both original and co-opted members, thank all those who have supported them with enthusiasm and interest.

*Bressingham Bell Restoration Committee, August 1995*

# ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome: *By The Rector*

*Procession of Clergy and Lay Readers from the South Porch during the singing of:*

Hymn:

Christ is made the sure Foundation,  
Christ the Head and Corner-stone,  
Chosen of the Lord and precious,  
Binding all the Church in one,  
Holy Sion's help for ever,  
And her confidence alone.

All that dedicated city,  
Dearly loved of God on high,  
In exultant jubilation  
Pours perpetual melody,  
God the One in Three adoring  
In glad hymns eternally.

To this Temple, where we call Thee,  
Come, O Lord, of hosts, to-day;  
With Thy wonted loving-kindness  
Hear Thy servants, as they pray;  
And Thy fullest benediction  
Shed within its walls away.

Here vouchsafe to all Thy servants  
What they ask of Thee to gain,  
What they gain from Thee for ever  
With the Blessed to retain,  
And hereafter in Thy glory  
Evermore with Thee to reign.

Laud and honour to the Father,  
Laud and honour to the Son,  
Laud and honour to the Spirit,  
Ever Three, and ever One,  
Consubstantial, Co-eternal,  
While unending ages run.

Bidding Prayer:

The Lord's Prayer: *(All)*

*OUR Father which art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen.*

First Lesson: Haggai 2 : 4b - 9

*Read by Dr Paul Cattermole  
Norwich Diocesan Adviser on Bells*

Hymn:

ANGEL-VOICES, ever singing,  
Round Thy Throne of light,  
Angel-harps for ever ringing,  
Rest not day nor night;  
Thousands only live to bless Thee  
And confess Thee  
Lord of might!

Thou, Who art beyond the farthest  
Mortal eye can scan,  
Can it be that Thou regardest  
Songs of sinful man?  
Can we know that Thou art near us,  
And wilt hear us?  
Yea, we can!

Yea, we know that Thou rejoicest  
O'er each work of Thine;  
Thou didst ears and hands and voices  
For Thy praise design;  
Craftsman's art and music's measure  
For Thy pleasure  
All combine.

In Thy House, Great God, we offer  
Of Thine own to Thee;  
And for Thine acceptance proffer  
All unworthily  
Heart and minds and hands and voices,  
In our choicest  
Psalmody.

Honour, glory, might, and merit  
Thine shall ever be,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
Blessèd Trinity!  
Of the best that Thou hast given,  
Earth and Heaven  
Render Thee.

Second Lesson: John 10 : 11 - 16, 27 - 29

*Read by Mr Ted Mercer  
Churchwarden*

Hymn:

*During the hymn participants in the Act of Dedication will process to the West end of the Church*

O PRAISE ye the Lord!  
Praise Him in the height;  
Rejoice in His Word,  
Ye Angels of light;  
Ye heavens, adore Him  
By Whom ye were made,  
And worship before Him,  
In brightness array'd.

O praise ye the Lord!  
Praise Him upon earth,  
In tuneful accord,  
Ye sons of new birth;  
Praise Him Who hath brought you  
His grace from above,  
Praise Him Who hath taught you  
To sing of His love.

O praise ye the Lord,  
All things that give sound;  
Each jubilant chord,  
Re-echo around;  
Loud organs, His glory  
Forth tell in deep tone,  
And sweet harp, the story  
Of what He hath done.

O praise ye the Lord!  
Thanksgiving and song  
To Him be outpour'd  
All ages along;  
For love in creation,  
For heaven restored,  
For grace of salvation  
O praise ye the Lord!

# ACT OF DEDICATION

*The congregation turns to face the tower.*

*Rector:*

Venerable Peter, we ask you to dedicate to the glory of God the new frame and two new bells in this tower, and to rededicate the four restored bells.

*Archdeacon:*

Almighty God, be pleased to accept at your hands the offering of the frame and bells and all the work that has been done on this tower:

The new bell frame so generously given by Tony and Betty Baines

1. The new bell dedicated to the late John Oates:      *(the Oates family)*
2. The new bell dedicated to the Rector:              *(Revd David Hunter)*
3. The restored 1480 bell:                              *(Mr Chris Beesley)*
4. A restored 1922 bell:                                 *(Mrs Pat Bateson)*
5. Another restored 1922 bell:                        *(Mr Peter Willan and  
Mr David Craggs)*
6. The Churchwardens' 1671 bell:                    *(The Churchwardens and  
representatives of the  
volunteers)*

In the name of Jesus Christ we do solemnly set apart and dedicate this frame and bells to the glory of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*All: Amen.*

Almighty and everlasting God, we beseech you to bless and sanctify this frame and bells: may their sound stir all who shall hear them and those who shall ring them to the remembrance of Your majesty and to the proclamation of Your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All: Amen.*

*A representative of John Taylor Bellfounders Limited hands one of the ropes to the Archdeacon who, handing it to the Rector, says:*

Receive these bells into your charge as the Incumbent appointed to this parish. Remember that they have been set apart to ring out to the glory of God. Take care, therefore, that they ever and only be used in God's service and for His glory.

*The Rector then hands the rope to Mr Chris Beesley.*

*Rector:* Let the bells be raised now.

*The bells will then be raised in rounds (order 1,2,3,4,5,6) by representatives of the Norwich Diocesan Association of Bellringers who have contributed to the restoration. Meanwhile, the procession returns.*

Prayers:

*Intercessions led by the Rector.*

*Each section ends with:*

Lord in Thy Mercy  
Hear our prayer.

Sermon: *The Venerable Peter Dawson*

Hymn:

*Offertory to the Norwich Diocesan Association Bell Restoration Fund in gratitude for their help.*

CROWN Him with many crowns,  
The Lamb upon His Throne;  
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns  
All music but its own:  
Awake, my soul, and sing  
Of Him Who died for thee,  
And hail Him as thy matchless King  
Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Virgin's Son,  
The God Incarnate born,  
Whose Arm those crimson trophies won  
Which now His Brow adorn:  
Fruit of the mystic Rose,  
As of that Rose the Stem;  
The Root whence mercy ever flows.  
The Babe of Bethlehem.

Crown Him the Lord of love;  
Behold His Hands and Side,  
Those Wounds yet visible above  
In beauty glorified:  
No Angel in the sky  
Can fully bear that sight,  
But downward bends his burning eye  
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of peace,  
Whose power a sceptre sways  
From pole to pole, that wars may cease,  
And all be prayer and praise:  
His reign shall know no end,  
And round His piercèd Feet  
Fair flowers of Paradise extend  
Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown Him the Lord of years,  
The Potentate of time,  
Creator of the rolling spheres,  
Ineffably Sublime:  
All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For Thou hast died for me;  
Thy praise shall never, never fail  
Throughout eternity.

The Blessing:

*Rector:* Let the dedicated bells of Bressingham now be rung in full circle for the first time for more than a hundred years.

*The bells will now be rung by representatives of local bellringers.*

Please join us for refreshments.

## The History

The design of Bressingham tower could be described as 'copy-book' Perpendicular, to the extent that there are almost identical towers at Pulham Market and Occold (Suffolk), clearly the work of a single, distinguished master mason. Work was in progress in 1431, when John Copping of Bressingham left the sum of six shillings and eightpence towards its construction; and one of the shields above the west doorway has the arms of Pilkington quartering Verdon, suggesting that the chief benefactor was an early fifteenth-century lord of Bressingham Manor. The tower was intended to have four bells, and the timber frame that was made for them remains almost complete. In 1480 Alexander Hobart of Bressingham left forty shillings in his will to buy a new bell, with the residue to go towards rebuilding the north aisle. This bequest gives us a date for the addition of a fifth bell, which survives as the third of the new (1995) ring of six. Bressingham was among the very few churches that had as many as five bells in 1552, when an inventory of church goods was made.

There is little doubt that change-ringing flourished in the Waveney valley in the early years of the 17th century, and the churchwardens' accounts show that the Bressingham bells were kept in good repair. The old sanctus bell disappeared from the arch above the chancel gable in 1618, when John Draper of Thetford needed additional metal for recasting the fourth bell of the ring of five (which weighed 9 cwt 3 qr 1 lb). Almost certainly the bell was cast near the church, perhaps in a temporary shelter in the churchyard, since there are no payments for transport. The cost of recasting the bell was agreed at forty shillings and a load of wood (presumably to heat the furnace), with a rebate of eightpence per pound for any excess metal.

John Draper's fourth bell had become cracked by 1671, when the churchwardens' accounts record details of payments for recasting the bell at Thrandeston by a Mr Yaxley, who was acting as foreman for Miles Graye II, a well-known itinerant bell-founder. Yaxley's own name appears on a bell at Fritton in the same year, suggesting that he continued working the small foundry at Thrandeston in his own right.

In 1751 an attempt at 'Fyleing the Split out of the Great bell' was unsuccessful, and the bell was sent to London to be recast at cost of twenty pounds. Major repairs to the bell-frame were undertaken at the same time by Matthew Coleby, bellhanger of Banham, who made two new wheels costing two pounds, together with various pulleys and boxes. The bells were rehung by the Bressingham churchwarden,

Mr Thomas Laws and his son, whose 'Sally nuts for the ropes and pieces of board' represent the rope guides which allowed the bells to be rung from the ground floor of the tower. The curious clapper ball (shaped like half an Edam cheese) in the tenor is one of the 'four new lumps for the clappers' which, although made from cast iron, were apparently bought from the bell-foundry in 1751. The design is very similar to contemporary clappers at Beetley, Fundenhall and Whinburgh.

The Bressingham bells were kept in ringing order until the end of the nineteenth century, and at least one local ringer earned fame as the composer of a peal of Bob Major rung at Diss in 1889. The name of Benjamin Francis of Bressingham last appears in the Annual Report of the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers in 1892; and there is little doubt that by the closing years of the nineteenth century ringing was no longer possible, because of the rough 'go' of the bells. In 1902 George Day, the well-known Eye bellhanger, reported that nothing short of a new bell-frame, and completely new fittings, would be needed if the bells were to be rung again; but it was not until 1922 that action was taken. In view of the expense of a complete re-hanging, the two cracked bells were recast, and all five were fixed for stationary chiming; and they remained in that condition until 1995.

The scheme to restore Bressingham bells for change-ringing has involved remodelling the five bells into a lighter ring, and re-hanging them in a new frame, lower in the tower. Four of the original bells, augmented by two new ones, make up a ring of six in the key of G; while the old tenor bell remains as the clock bell. The stress on the tower is greatly reduced by this re-arrangement, and the ancient timber bell-frame has been preserved in its entirety, above the new installation. While archaeologists should be satisfied by the preservation of one of the best examples of a fifteenth-century bell-frame, and the conservation of old bells in use, bellringers should be satisfied to have a manageable and responsive ring of six bells available for practising and teaching the art of change-ringing that has been a traditional part of local culture since the beginning of the seventeenth century.

*Extract from an article written by Dr Paul Cattermole  
Norwich Diocesan Adviser on Bells  
18th July 1995*

### Details of Bressingham's new ring of bells, 1995

Bell	Note	Date	Weight * cwt-qr-lbs	Inscription	Foundry
1	E	1995	3-3-6	To the memory of John Oates, 1927 - 1991 O praise ye the Lord, all things that give sound	John Taylor Loughborough
2	D	1995	4-2-2	David Hunter, Rector For ever in joy!	John Taylor Loughborough
3	C	1480 approx.	5-3-20	Sancie Johannes Ora Pro Nobis (St. John pray for us)	Reginald Church? Bury St. Edmunds
4	B	1922	6-1-10	Recast 1922	Mears & Stainbank London
5	A	1922	7-3-24	Recast 1922	Mears & Stainbank London
6	G	1671	8-2-20	Miles Graye made me, 1671 Henry Malloves + William Rowt Churchwardens	Henry Yaxley (for Graye) Thrandeston
Clock bell	F nominal	1751	14cwt approx.	Thomas Lester of London made me, 1751	Thomas Lester London

**Additional notes:**

- Bell no. 3      Because of its great age, this bell has been left untouched and the other bells re-tuned around it
- Bells 4 & 5      Recast in 1922 from ancient bells, which had become cracked
- Bell no. 6      Found to be cracked in March 1995, but fortunately saved and preserved by modern welding techniques
- Clock bell      Too heavy for full-circle ringing at Bressingham but preserved as clock bell in old frame, may be re-hung for swing chiming
- \*      All weights are given in hundredweight, quarters and pounds