

The Church Bells of the Benefice - Project Update

Since the article in the magazine and on the website earlier in the year, outlining a project to rehang/refurbish the bells in Hartpury, Corse, and Staunton churches, a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes.

There has been some ups and downs in raising the money, however, despite being unsuccessful in the application for a Lottery Grant, (which may have been a blessing in disguise as they come with many strings attached), applications to other charities have mainly been successful, and along with donations from local people, almost enough money has been raised for each church to have the work completed.

Grants totalling £105,000 have been received from the Listed Places of Worship, Glos Historic Churches Trust, The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust, Gloucester & Bristol bellringers, Forest Branch bellringers, Benefact Trust, Hobson Foundation, ChurchCare and the Sharpe Trust. Fund raising locally has raised £1,352 and personal gifts, including gift aid, £19,000 making £20,352 in total.

A significant amount cost reduction, £25,000, of the project has been negotiated by offering free B&B to the bell hangers and providing "local labour" to help them when they are on site at each church.

The project still needs over £5,000. It is not too late to donate! If you would like to contribute and help raise the rest of money required over the next year, please contact Jim Chapman jjrchapman@btinternet.com who is co-ordinating the fund raising for all the churches. No donation is too small!

While raising the money for the project is a primary objective, before any work can start, many other tasks and approvals had to be completed. Including, agreeing the work specification, obtaining reports and quotations from three bell hanging firms, discussion and analysis of the quotes, liaison with the local bell advisors, arranging structural engineer's reports, applying for, and obtaining faculties for the work from the Diocese.

This has all been carried out quietly by members of the churches PCCs, and while some more fund raising is required, the good news is we have been able to place the contract for the work at the three churches with John Taylor, Bellfounders of Loughborough.

If you would be interested in providing "local labour", no experience of bells is required, just common sense, practical nous, and a willingness to get dirty. If you have some spare time, as much or as little as you can, it would be an opportunity to get involved in a unique project – please contact David Butler if you are interested.

Contact details: - 01452 700160. email dgbutler.mail@gmail.com

Work is expected to start on the bells in the New Year, with completion expected in September 2023 when a rededication service is being planned at each church on the same day.

Once the bells and fittings have been removed from the churches for refurbishment, there will be redundant parts of the bells and fittings, some of which are hundreds of years old, which will be made available for anyone who wishes to buy them for keepsakes with the proceeds going to the project.

Before that, in January a trip(s) to John Taylor's bell foundry is/are being organised to see the new bells for Hartpury being cast. This will be a very interesting trip to the historic foundry – if you are interested places are available with tickets being sold to help raise the additional money. Full details will be in a separate advertisement, the cost, including coach transport will be £35.