

The Church of St Goran dates from the 12th century and the tower dates from the late 14th century with restoration works taking place in 1876. The church is Grade II* listed.

Of the church's original six bells cast in 1772, two were damaged and replaced in the 20th century, and the four remaining are considered by English Heritage to be of significant Georgian heritage value. The Georgian oak bell frame also survives.

The local community has worked hard over the past four years to raise funds to preserve the existing bells and frame. However before repairs could be carried out a fine ring of eight bells was offered free of charge to St Goran, from the redundant church of St Mary in Chatham, Kent. This church, near the former dockyard, was where Charles Dickens worshipped and supposedly gained inspiration for the names of some of his characters among the headstones in the churchyard.

It has been closed for worship for almost 40 years. Its bells were cast to celebrate the diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897 and were named The Victoria Peal with Her Majesty's personal consent. With the Tenor weighing in at 25 cwt (1270kg) this unique ring of bells will become one of the finest in Cornwall and is expected to bring visitors from across the country.

In addition to the physical work to the bells, the project will enable the story of the bells to be explained, bringing the past 250 years of history to life. Local community groups and students of all ages from local schools will be invited to

witness aspects of the work in the tower that will preserve the old Georgian bells and see the newly refurbished Victorian bells installed later this year.

Bob Thornton, who leads the project for the PCC, said: “We are absolutely delighted to receive this generous award from HLF which, together with support from SITA (Cornwall) Trust Ltd, Garfield Weston Trust, our parish council and of course local people and our visitors, will enable us to take traditional Cornish bell ringing forward at the same time as bringing 250 years of history to life. There will be lots of opportunity to learn about things that are usually hidden from view and the whole community can be proud of their achievement.”

Commenting on the grant award Nerys Watts, HLF’s Head of South West, said: “The sound of church bells ringing is a deeply rooted part of the UK’s heritage, marking both joy and tragedy, peace and war. That is why we were so delighted to be able to support the efforts of the community of Gorran Churchtown to save not one but two significant sets of bells, allowing them to continue to be heard and appreciated into the future by both local people and visitors alike.”

Notes to editors

About St Goran Church
Situated in Gorran Churchtown, just one mile inland of the popular and busy village of Gorran Haven, the church tower dominates this unspoilt hamlet. The church is of Norman origin and is well worth a visit for many good reasons. With a fair wind, the sound of the old Georgian bells carries to the neighbouring parish of Caerhays and they have, with the aid of modern technology in the form of Radio Cornwall, been heard across the county early on a Sunday morning.

Further information

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