The bells are back at St Rumbald

04/02/2014

The end of the refurbishment project was celebrated last Sunday, when the Dean of Peterborough Cathedral, the Very Reverend Charles Taylor led a service of celebration and rededication. The work could not have gone ahead without the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Church Buildings Council, Peterborough Diocese Guild of Bell Ringers, Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust and The Benham Charitable Settlement, who along with very generous donations from the local people of Stoke Doyle, have helped meet the cost of the project.

It has been an important project to Stoke Doyle a small village south of Oundle, as it allows the bells to be rung again, something that has not been possible for nearly 10 years. The bells provide not only a lovely sound across the Nene Valley, but also give the opportunity for the local people to become involved in bell ringing especially the younger residents of the village. If there are any would be bell ringers living locally who would like to learn the skill, the practice nights are Thursdays 7.30 to 9.00pm, and should any bell ringing groups wish to come and ring these wonderful Thomas Eayre bells, we would be delighted to see you.

The restoration works has been carried out by Whites of Appleton, although to save some of the cost, a small army of volunteer helpers has been involved in lowering the bells from the top of the tower and assisting with some strengthening of the original oak bell frame. Then hauling the bells back up again when they returned from Oxfordshire, installing them in their pits and installing all new ringing fittings.

The bells, are all listed in the Church Building Council Schedule of Bells for Preservation. They were recast in 1727 from the bells of the earlier gothic church, believed to be c.1265, by Thomas Eayre of Kettering and are regarded as a maiden ring, as they have not been tuned together, although one of them shows signs of some “chip tuning”. The ring is set into a contemporary and unusual diagonally set oak bell-frame believed to be by Henry Ladds. The diagonal setting allows the corners of the frame to sit into the sound openings of the tower, rather like letting the frame rest on the four window sills. This gives more space in the chamber, and averages out the stresses and loadings around the tower structure.

Notes to Editors

Stoke Doyle PCC have organised the restoration of the bells.

Further information

Images and interviews please contact Keith Doherty (PCC treasurer) on 01832 273525, email: keithldoherty@sky.com.