

Litcham Bellringers

Report for Litcham Annual Parish Meeting on 15 May 2023

The bellringers have rung for a number of national events over the past year, namely the Queen's Jubilee in June 2022, the accession of King Charles to the throne in September 2022 and more recently in celebration of the King's Coronation. A single bell was also tolled following the announcement of the Queen's death in September last year.

We aim to ring for at least one church service a month and in addition have established a pattern of practicing at Litcham twice a month, generally on the second and fourth Mondays between 7pm and 8.15pm.

Four residents of Litcham are members of our band with other ringers coming from surrounding villages. We are fortunate that Françoise Walker from West Raynham has been prepared to give a lot of time to training the newer ringers, and this is continuing. We have established contacts at Litcham School and are hoping to develop these so that more youngsters have the opportunity to give bellringing a try, possibly as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

Litcham's bells and fittings have for some time been in a poor state of repair and the bells are notorious as being difficult to ring. We have taken advice and as a result have launched an appeal for a full bell restoration project. This is a major undertaking and will involve a specialist firm of bellhangers removing the bells from the tower so that they can be taken away and properly tuned. The worn ropes and fittings will be replaced, the frame refurbished and then the bells will be put back again. The end result will be bells that are much easier to ring and teach people on, and sound better too.

The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £60,000, of which we have so far raised roughly £5,500. This seems a daunting target but we are in the process of applying for grants from various sources and will also be fundraising. The bells have been part of Litcham village life for more than 350 years, ringing out for church services, national events and personal occasions. The last full refurbishment was in 1894 and in this context if the current work lasts another 129 years that will be very good value!

Litcham's bells and tower are part of the heritage of the village and we plan to give guided tours of the tower as part of the village's Coronation celebrations on Sunday 18th June. The timing seems appropriate given that the tower was built as a thanksgiving for the restoration of a previous King Charles to the throne of England.

We are always pleased to hear from people who would like to learn to ring – this is a sociable activity that exercises both the body and mind and can be enjoyed by young and old alike.

Anyone who would like to contribute to the bell appeal or is interested in learning to ring is welcome to contact me.

Tim Angell