

The Scottish Association of Change Ringers

Project to Re-house the Bells from St. George's North Church, Greenock and Mount Zion Church, Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir.

1. Summary

The Scottish Association of Change Ringers (SACR) wishes to re-house two historic sets of bells that have been acquired from churches in the West of Scotland. The churches are St. George's North Church, Greenock and Mount Zion Church, Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir. In total, 22 bells are involved and they have been removed from the churches and placed into safe storage with help from the Keltek Trust. SACR is now seeking churches in Scotland that could accommodate some or all of these bells.

2. The organisations involved

SACR (www.sacr.org) is an organisation representing church bell-ringers within Scotland. It is affiliated to a world-wide representative body, the Central Council of Church Bellringers (www.cccbr.org.uk).

The Keltek Trust (www.keltek.org) is a charity that helps to preserve heritage by recycling redundant and surplus church bells.

3. The bells available

There were 10 bells at St George's, Greenock the heaviest weighing just over 18cwt (930kg). Eight bells form an octave in the key of F and there are 2 additional "sharp" bells. The bells date from 1889 and were most recently re-cast in 1950 by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon. Bells from this foundry have a very high reputation for the quality of sound that they produce. The bells would make an ideal basis for an octave of eight bells when hung for change ringing.

There were 12 bells at Mount Zion Church, Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir, the heaviest weighing just under 11cwt (554kg). Eight bells form an octave in the key of G# plus two trebles of the octave above and two "sharp" bells. The lighter bells date from 1886 but were recast and augmented in 1946 by Gillett and Johnston. It will be possible to create at least two rings with these bells, one of medium weight (11cwt) and one light weight (4cwt).

4. Churches that could accommodate these bells.

SACR would like to discuss options to re-house these bells with any church in any part of Scotland. Bearing in mind the historical context, we would particularly like to encourage

interest from the West of Scotland. There are 4 main requirements for churches interested to re-house these bells:

- (i) Firstly there must be a desire and commitment to acquire and maintain a set of bells. Similar to organs, bells are a long-term investment for a church and it is quite usual for bell installations to last for well over a century. While most churches possess at least one bell for calling people to services, the sound of a full ring of bells announces the church's presence in the community in a much more effective and audible way.
- (ii) Some sort of existing tower is required to house the bells. For the heavier ring of bells this will need to be of substantial construction. For the lighter options, smaller less massive towers may be acceptable. A new purpose built tower is also possible, but this would add extra cost to any project.
- (iii) Sufficient funds will need to be raised in order to cover the costs of acquisition and installation. While bells are not in general as expensive as pipe organs, costs range from a few tens of thousands of pounds upwards. Bell projects attract funding from a variety of sources such as lottery funds and donations from trusts. SACR itself maintains a bell restoration fund and would normally award a substantial grant towards the installation costs for a new ring of bells.
- (iv) Finally, a new ring of bells will require ringers to be trained. Again, SACR has experience of this and would normally provide assistance. Automatic chiming systems are also available should ringers not be available.

5. How to make contact

Any church, congregation or individual interested in having a preliminary discussion about re-housing these bells should make contact with the master of SACR as per the contact details below. Due to ongoing costs for storage, insurance and the cost of capital used to purchase the bells, we need to identify viable projects by August 2008. That said, we would also welcome any general enquiries about the installation of rings of bells so that we could note potential interest for future reference should further options arise in future years.

6. Contact details

For more information, please contact:

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