

**MATTHEW HIGBY & COMPANY LTD**  
**BELL FOUNDERS - BELL HANGERS – SERVICE ENGINEERS**

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Company no 04540126. VAT Registration number 779 4220 01

**Post Conservation Report**  
**From the Parish Church of**  
**St Mary Magdalene,**  
**Turnastone.**  
**Diocese of Hereford.**



**Conserved items:-** Cracked early 16th Century Bell.

**Background.**

Until the bells were removed in 2023, this church possessed two bells, the larger of which was cracked and disused. The PCC sought to dispose of the smaller modern bell, to part fund the repair and reinstatement of the larger bell, and it was proposed to rehang this for stationary chiming with an new hardwood deadstock, new supporting ironwork, electromagnetic tolling hammer and a computerised controller unit.

**Details of Bells**

**The larger bell.** Diameter 21¾ inches. Weight approx. 2cwt.

There is no inscription.

This bell appears to have been cast in the early 16th Century by an unknown founder.

When first inspected in February 2021, this bell was found to be cracked from its lip to the lower waist, and has completely lost its tone as a result. The crack appears to have been caused by the clapper being struck too hard, and held against the bell after being struck, possibly by an over enthusiastic ringer.

**The smaller bell.** Diameter 18¾ inches. Weight approx. 1½cwt. It was cast by Thomas Rudhall of Gloucester in 1774, and appeared to be in sound condition. Its tone is distinctly old-style in nature.

Both bells retain their canons and also their original, wrought iron, cast in crown staples. The cast in staples were heavily corroded.

**Description of work undertaken:**

Both bells were lowered to the floor and transported back to Matthew Higby & Company Limited.

The smaller bell was put into storage pending a decision on its future.

The larger bell had its cast- in crown staple carefully extracted and was repaired by Soundweld of Newmarket. The bell was equipped with all new fittings for automated stationary chiming, including:

- Hardwood deadstock.
- New supporting ironwork (straps and dogs).
- Electromagnetic chiming hammer with internal mounting bracket.
- Computerised controller unit with GPS time control.
- All required wiring.
- A new fused electrical spur was installed by a certificated electrician.

**Conservator.**

Matthew Higby Ltd.

Unit 16, Charmborough Farm,

Holcombe,

Radstock,

Somerset,

BA3 5FX

**Work Completion Date.**

25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**Conservation.**

The crack in the larger bell has been repaired by the bell repair specialists at Soundweld in Newmarket. The remaining cast-in crown staple has been carefully extracted to reduce the risk of the bell becoming cracked in the future.

**Observations.**

No further observations were noted, other than as previously described above.

**Church Architect.**

Arnold Bartosch Ltd, Chartered Surveyors and Historic Building Consultants

1 Bath Mews, Bath Parade, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 7HL

**Church building environment.**

• **Value** The church was established some 900 years ago and has high Historical Value. The restoration of the 500-year old bell adds to this and demonstrates the continuity of community and worship through the centuries.

• The church's charming and modest rectilinear form with appended porch and turret form an attractive composition at the centre of its mature rural churchyard and demonstrates High Aesthetic Value.

**The bell turret** is understood to date from the early 17thC and until the start of the restoration project housed two bells (c.1520 and 1774) neither of which was operational.

- The historic 500-year old tenor bell is marked on the National Bell Register for preservation. It has not been rung in living memory. It was not hung and was cracked from its lip to the lower waist, having completely lost its tone as a result. It has been repaired under Faculty (Hereford diocese Ref.2021-062325).
- The smaller, treble bell from Thomas Rudhall, 1774, has been removed to the bell engineers' works, under authority of the same Faculty, with a view to sale.
- The evolution of the church through incremental change and the monuments inside and outside of the structure chart the evolution of parish life and prosperity and demonstrate High Evidential Value. By bringing a bell back to life we aim to signal to the community that there is an active centre of worship here at the heart of the village of Turnastone.

Matthew R T Higby

Managing Director of Matthew Higby & Co Ltd.

**Photographs:**



The smaller bell (Left) and the larger bell (right).



The larger bell (during rehanging).