

HISTORY

The Church of St Mary the Virgin commands a dominant position in the small village of Dennington, Suffolk, with a population of just under 400. It is almost certain that there was a church here in Norman times, but the present grade I listed building dates to the early 14th Century with its noble tower being added in late C14. It is not only a showpiece of architecture and craftsmanship, but is used for regular worship, and many are the visitors who come to admire the fine stone and wood carvings, the mediaeval stained glass windows, the exquisite parclose screen and the alabaster tomb of Lord and Lady Bardolph, and of course the rare hanging pyx.

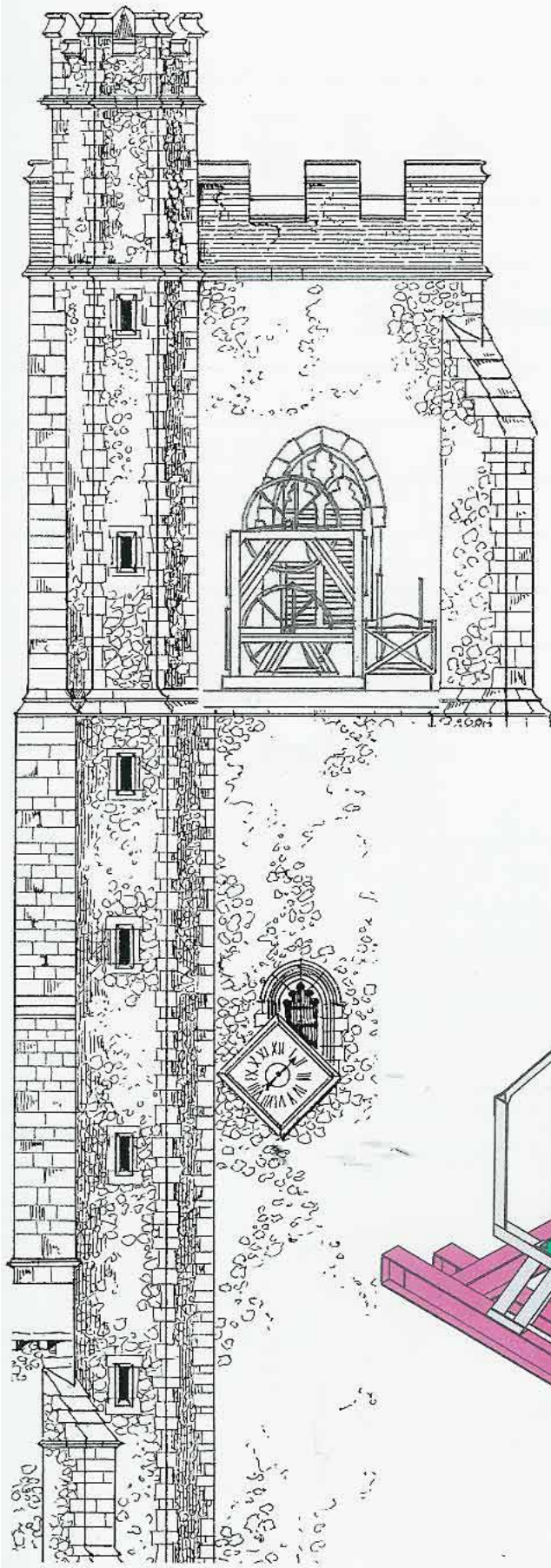
It is known that the tower, rising to an overall height of 82 feet, has had a ring of bells since 1553, and the present peal of 6 is the second heaviest in Suffolk, with the tenor weighing 19cwt. That was cast by Bowell of Ipswich and added in 1915, the year the bells were last re-hung. The bells still swing on plain bearings which became obsolete more than 50 years ago.

A recent survey revealed that cracks have appeared in the masonry walls around the beam-ends as a result of extensive corrosion of the steel bell frame. All the moving parts of the bell installation - the wheels, the clappers and the bearings - are badly worn. As the bells are rung regularly for services, weddings and other occasions, and also used for the training of new ringers, it has become imperative to take action.

As part of a major programme of restoration to the Church we are now launching the *Dennington Bell Appeal* and looking to raise £75,000.



PROPOSED BELL RESTORATION WORK



To replace the existing bell frame and to construct a *new* frame to house the six bells on two levels with the 2nd bell hanging above the remaining five. Thus the No 2 bell will be placed over the treble. This means that bells Nos. 1, 2, 5 and 6 will swing in the East/West direction and Nos. 3 and 4 in the North/South direction. By this method the greater load will be in the East/West direction being the strongest way of the tower. The bells will be retuned and re-hung onto new ball bearings.

