

Great Urswick Bells Project

Raising funds to cast 2 new bells & preserve a historic bell for the heritage and social benefit of the community!



The church of St Mary and St Michael in Great Urswick (between Dalton-in-Furness and Ulverston) has a ring of 6 church bells, including one of the oldest in the UK dating back to the 15th Century dedicated to Sir William Harrington, flagbearer at the battle of Agincourt!

The 5th bell is the Harrington bell, and this has an elongated profile typical of early bells which makes it slow to swing and difficult to accurately ring and strike well. This bell be rehung for chiming by the clergy separate from the ring of 6 but still in the tower. This will allow the bell to continue to be heard as part of Urswick Church, and potentially accessible to interested parties by arrangement.

The 4th bell is a bell cast by Abraham I Rudhall in 1711, but has a slightly different tonal quality and is too thin in places to tune further without risking damaging it beyond repair. A new home has been found for this bell through the Keltek Trust.

The late Tom Metcalfe (tower captain at the time) planned to improve the bells to make them easier to ring and sound better together, and the project aims to fulfil his vision and passion for these bells in fond memory of Tom.

Two new bells will be cast to take the place of the 4 and 5 in the ring of 6. One bell has already been cast at John Taylor's Bell Foundry in Loughborough on 18th December 2025. A date for the casting of the new 4th bell and the installation of these new bells has yet to be confirmed.

The project has been supported generously by the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers, John Taylor's Bell Foundry and a number of other benefactors. Further grants are being sought and this crowdfunding page offers individuals the opportunity to contribute to the completion of this project. It is estimated that about £4,500 remains to be raised to cover the remaining cost of the core project, including labour costs from John Taylors Bell Foundry staff involvement in the physical work rehangng the bells.

Any surplus funds after new grants, crowdfunding, or cost reduction through volunteer labour would be used for the essential replacement of the tired bell ropes; future bell maintenance; and further used to help recruit and train new ringers, and possibly publish leaflets to educate and promote bell ringing at Urswick.

This appeal is about more than just preserving history. Bell ringing brings people together - young and old - fostering friendship, teamwork and a deep sense of belonging. For older members of our community, it offers companionship and purpose, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation. For younger ringers, it provides a hands-on link with living heritage and a chance to learn a skill that has endured for centuries.

Once the project has completed there will be community engagement to find out more about their bells and bell ringing, and encourage people of all ages from 12 to pensioners, families together, and friends to try bellringing and learn the skill involved. This is a social and team activity which keeps the mind sharp and offers a gentle or moderate physical workout. It is a very affordable and inclusive pastime where we welcome people of all ethnic backgrounds, gender/identity, any faith (or none), and is a fantastic way to make new friends. This project has so much to offer the community for generations to come, just like the Harrington bell which has been here for centuries.