

## An overview of bell ringing at St Mark's

Each week a faithful group of bell ringers joyously ring out the bells of St Marks, for the encouragement of the community. The St Mark's bellringers meet every Monday between 4:30pm and 6:30pm for practice in the church bell tower and every alternate Sunday between morning services to encourage the community to join the congregation. Additional events that we ring for include community weddings, funerals, and to herald significant calendar and royal occasions.

We are an eclectic group of people, from a wide range of professions and age groups, brought together by the fascination, passion, and determination to perfect a rather esoteric

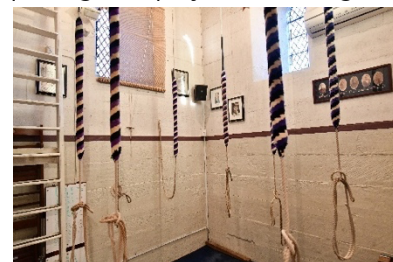


hobby. Although small in number, we enjoy striking a loud note, adding atmosphere to the worship at the church and the wider community. We are also often joined by visitors from the Sydney community (and wider Australia or global community) of bell ringers at our practice sessions and service ringing. Ringing is not only a great hobby and mental challenge, but also a lovely social opportunity to meet people. All too often we need to remind ourselves to get back to ringing after a good yarn in the tower.

St Mark's has a full 8 bell peal. The six heaviest bells were cast in 1861 and installed in 1862 (before the tower spire was completed). They were donated to the church by Thomas Ware

Smart, being rung for the first time at the wedding of Mr Smart's stepdaughter. The additional two lightest bells were cast and then added to the set in 1923. The bells and supporting structure were overhauled in 1988, for the Australian bicentenary, and re-hung which vastly improved the quality of ringing and ability to control the bells.

Despite the daunting size of the bells, ringing does not require great physical strength nor the ability to read music. Learning to ring bells begins with a one-on-one lesson with a teacher who guides you through the various movements and methods to control a single bell. Once the learner is comfortable, other members accompany them by ringing "rounds"; simply ringing the bells from lightest to heaviest down the chromatic scale. From there, we begin to slowly change the order of the bells, first by switching adjacent bells, one at a time known as "call changes", and then in a memorised pattern known as "method ringing". The simplest method called "plain hunt" is where every adjacent bell switches continuously on each stroke until the chromatic scale again is reached. After this, there are literally hundreds of different methods to learn; even for the most experienced ringer there is always a new method.



If you are keen to learn more, to get involved or maybe just to see the bells in action, we'd love to welcome you into the tower. Please do get in touch with us at [bellringers@stmarksdp.org](mailto:bellringers@stmarksdp.org)

If you'd like to know more about the history of bell ringing at St Mark's, a fascinating history is included in "Honourable Engagement - St Mark's Church Darling Point: The First 150

Years" by Susan Mary Woolcock Withycombe. This book is available for purchase at <https://checkout.square.site/buy/Q47Z6EV5FKMNA63KPWQZ67KG>)