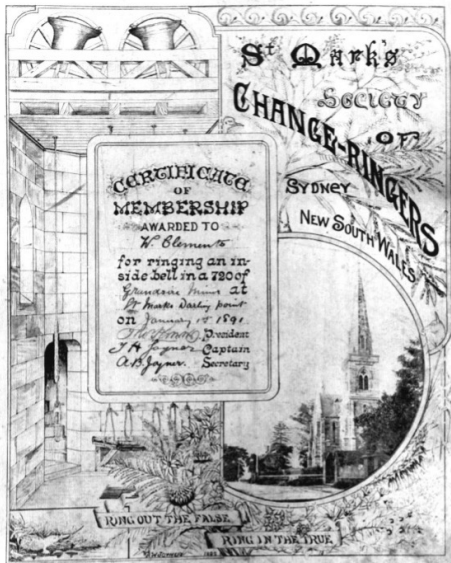


Bells at St Mark's - A brief history

The St Mark's Darling Point bell tower is one of the oldest towers in Sydney, dating back to its opening in 1862. At that time, it was one of only a few suburban bell towers, resulting in St Mark's being popular within the ringing community to ring for regular Sunday services and other various ringing events. Indeed, St Mark's was usually one of the first towers in the southern hemisphere to herald royal occasions (weddings, coronations, funerals, etc.), given its convenient location on the East Coast of Australia.

St Mark's has a full eight bell peal. The heaviest six bells in the tower were originally cast in 1861 and installed in 1862 (before the tower spire was completed). They were donated by Thomas Ware Smart. The bells were rung for the first time for the wedding of Mr Smart's stepdaughter. Later in 1923, two additional bells were added to the tower, being the two lightest bells today, to make a full eight bell peal. All bells were overhauled in 1988 at the bicentenary of the church, removing them from the tower to be shipped over to the UK for retuning. Retuning involves removing small amounts of metal from the bell which changes the tone, all done by hand back in the 20th Century. The bells were then shipped back to Australia and rehung with new ropes and frame structures, which has since improved the quality of ringing and ability to control the bells.



Replica of a Certificate (now unfortunately damaged by time and mice) awarded to William Shapley Clements. He helped to teach method-ringing to the Bellringers at St. Mark's in the late 1860's and, at the age of 24, with this peal was a member of the first Sydney Band to ring a 720. It is recorded that "it was necessary to put Mr Clements at the Tenor, otherwise we should all have been cornstalks". (Bell News and Ringers' Record, 28th February, 1991) Returning to England, in 1895 he was a member of the band to ring the first peal of Stedman Triples at St. Peter's Church, Tiverton, Devon
This plaque is donated by his three Grandchildren, Derek, Nigel & Averil Clements (Derek and his wife Gillian are bellringers at St. Mary's Church, Kintbury, Berkshire)

Mr William May (the Parish Clerk-Sexton) was the first Captain of the Bell Ringers.

St Mark's Bell Ringers - A local band passionate about creating joyous sounds

Since the installation of the bells, the local band of St Mark's Bell Ringers has seen many generations come and go. We are often reminded of previous bands who remain in the tower through the many war time or pre-war photos or plaques commemorating them, in addition to the historical records stored with the Australian and New Zealand Association of Bellringers (ANZAB). The most recent peak in volume of the local band was just before my time in the 2000's and 2010's with a strong community of up to double digits. Much of this group, however, have moved on to other towers or countries for personal and professional reasons. As a result, it was some years before regular ringing restarted in the tower with our now current band.