

THE ELY DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

MAINTENANCE OF BELL INSTALLATIONS - GUIDANCE TO GOOD PRACTICE

The Ely Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers offers assistance with all matters concerning church bells and ringing. This document gives guidance to incumbents, churchwardens and tower keepers in the maintenance of church bells and fittings. It is not a code of practice but highlights major points when planning belfry maintenance and gives examples of work to be carried out.

Further information and links to other sources of assistance can also be found on the Association's internet web site at: <http://www.elyda.org.uk> under **bell maintenance**.

Church towers can be dangerous places. All workers, paid or voluntary should ensure that adequate insurance is obtained against accident or death. If you are uncertain about any aspect of bell maintenance ask for help.

Environment

- Never go into the tower without telling someone you are there.
- When working among bells always take an assistant in case of accident.
- If possible, avoid working on a bell, which is in a raised position. If safety is in doubt seek an alternative solution.
- Extreme caution must be taken if there is no floor below the bell frame.
- After any maintenance has been carried out, ensure that all tools and rubbish have been removed and it is safe to start ringing.

Personal Protective Equipment

- When clearing rubbish wear suitable personal protective equipment including a facemask, especially if the rubbish contains bird droppings.
- Ensure that tools are in good condition and that any power tools are electrically safe and protected by use of a circuit breaker.
- Do not use timber treatment unless you are wearing protective clothing and a facemask.
- When accessing trap doors using vertical ladders use of a safety harness is recommended.
- Ensure the tower has a first aid kit

Maintenance Tasks *(not a definitive list)*

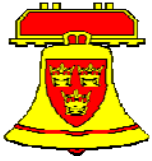
- Lubricate plain bearings
- Check pulleys for wear and lubricate as required.
- Check that clock hammer wires and springs are intact.
- Check for loose clapper staples and tighten if necessary.
- Tighten up loose stays, and replacing any that are cracked.
- Treat rust outbreaks
- Check ropes for wear and splice or adjust accordingly.
- Clean and check running boards / sliders for free movement.
- Check all bolts on frame and bell fittings for tightness.
- Check lighting throughout the tower for safety and adequacy. Keep spare light bulbs.
- Check for ingress of birds and repair bird wire if necessary.
- Check hand rope on spiral staircase (if applicable), and "spider" cord.

Records

- Maintain a logbook to record any work carried out.
- Keep the PCC / Churchwardens advised of condition of the bells and fittings.

General

- Check fire precautions regularly.
- Keep the tower free from rubbish and unnecessary stored items.
- If you do not feel able or qualified to tackle a particular problem, seek advice.



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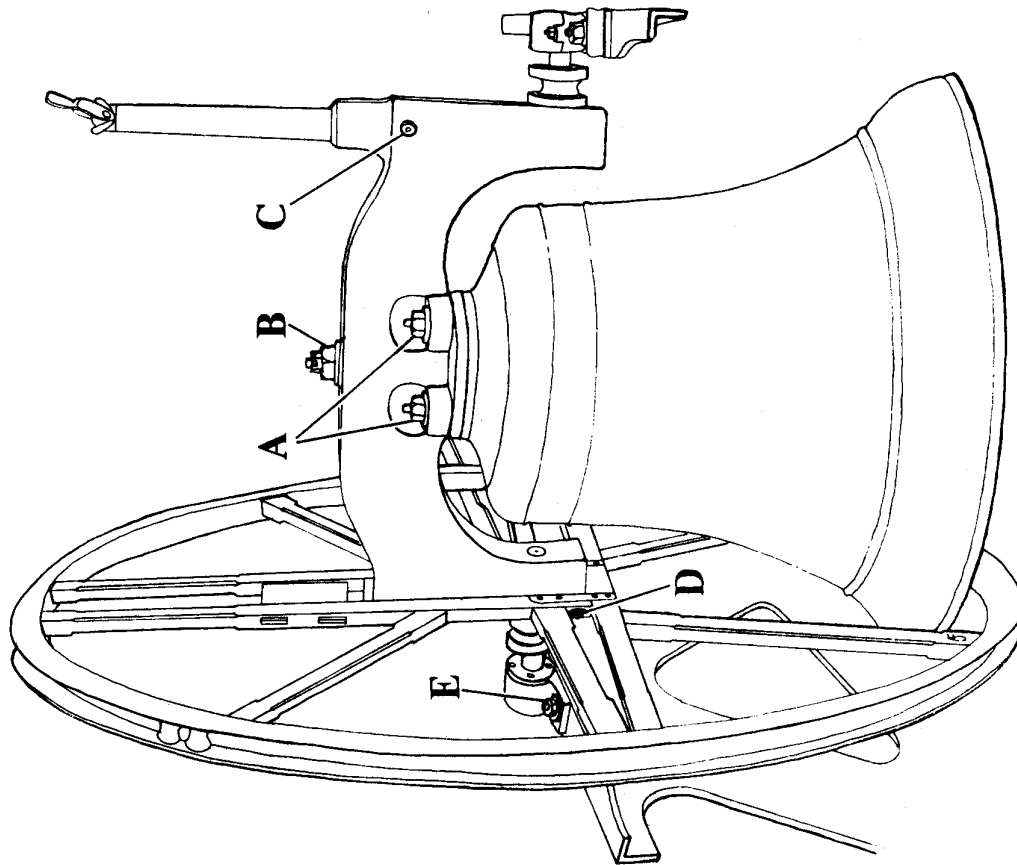


Fig. 4. Bell in Typical Iron Headstock & Gear, showing nuts which need regular attention:

- A. Bell bolts.
- B. Crown-staple nut (with lock-nut or split-pin).
- C. Stay securing bolt.
- D. Wheel securing screw.
- E. Bearing holding-down bolt.

The crown-staple nut B must *always* be tightened after the bell bolts. The drawing shows a "Hastings" type stay: the pivot bolt of the toggle also needs checking if such a stay is fitted.

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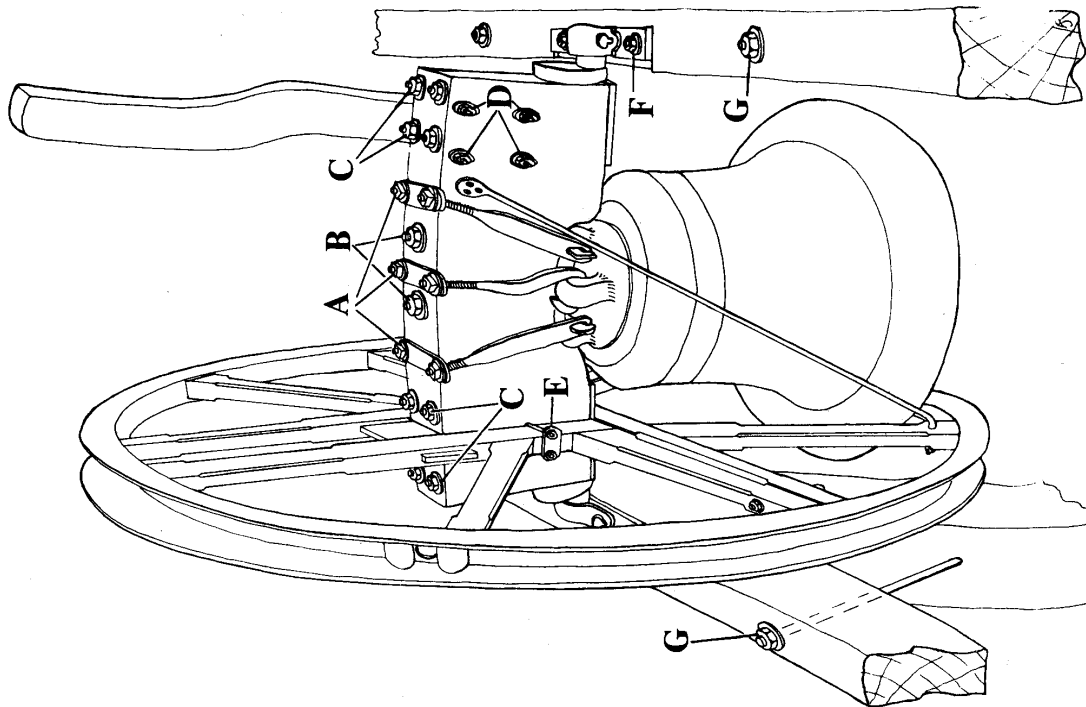


Fig. 3. Bell in Typical Timber Headstock & Gear, showing nuts which need regular attention:

- A. Bell straps.
- B. Argent U-bolt.
- C. Gudgeon U-bolts.
- D. Stay straps.
- E. Wheel securing bolts.
- F. Bearing holding-down bolts.
- G. Frame tiebolts.

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