

Northumberland Gazette

In an article in the Gazette in September 2018 the intention to launch a Tower Project, including the installation of a ring of ten bells, at St. Michael's church, Alnwick was first shared with the public.

In the intervening two years a great deal of work has gone on behind the scenes and the church has now received all the necessary permissions to allow the scheme to go ahead. Her Grace, the Duchess of Northumberland has kindly agreed to be the patron of the project as the church now invites people to be actively involved in making this exciting scheme a reality for Alnwick.

The project includes a new roof for the ancient tower which was last replaced 274 years ago in 1746 and the preservation and display of interesting graffiti – some of which is considered to be quite rare and of national importance.

The main part of the project is the installation of a ring of ten bells; six of them refurbished having previously been in the tower of St. James' church, Newton Hall near Corbridge alongside an additional four which will be specially cast for St. Michael's.

The good news is that seven of the ten bells have already been sponsored: all four of the new bells and three of those to be refurbished. Of the remaining three, two have been set aside with dedications reading 'Ring out for Alnwick' and 'Ring afresh for St. Michael'. One further bell remains to be sponsored.

It is hoped that the Alnwick bell will be funded by organisations and individuals from within the town or associated with Alnwick and already a generous donation has been promised by the Freemen of Alnwick.

All those who feel a connection with St. Michael's church, whether currently or in the past, are being invited to make a contribution towards the St. Michael bell and some generous support has already been given.

A permanent record of all donors and dedications will be displayed in church.

The final refurbished bell could be sponsored by an individual, a group of people or an organisation and the church is appealing for interested parties to be in touch.

The only other ring of ten bells in Northumberland is at Hexham Abbey and so this is a really exciting project which will ensure that our county town has a facility for celebrating historic and civic events as well as ringing out for weddings and other celebrations and, of course, for regular church services.

Work will be starting on the casting of the new bells very soon and it is the ambitious hope that the bells may ring out for the first time on St. Michael's day (29th September) 2021.

If you would like to contribute to this exciting project, which will be a lasting part of Alnwick's history for centuries to come, please be in touch with the Vicar of St. Michael's, the Rev'd. Canon Paul Scott, who can be contacted on 01665 603078 or paulscott1957@btinternet.com.