

# Welcome to the Swan Bells Belltower

Opened on December 10, 2000, the ‘Swan Bells’ was Western Australia’s **Millennium Project**.

Designed in Perth, the Swan Bells is the only belltower in the world you can see change ringing bells ring at their level as well as see the ringers perform their art.

Swan Bells is often described as a building where the old meets the new. Inside you will find 18 change ringing bells made up of the 12 ancient bells from the Church of St Martins-in-the-Field in London and 6 additional modern bells.

The building also contains a growing collection of clocks and bells including the 1896 turret clock from Royal Ascot racecourse in England and a rare set of working church tubular bells.

As you read the information in this introduction, you will see words in **bold type**. Use these important words for a dictionary or encyclopaedia search to add to the information you receive when you visit. Even construct a **glossary**.



Your parents or grandparents may have learned of the bells of St Martins when they were little. Children throughout the English-speaking world have often sung of the bells in the popular nursery rhyme, ‘**Oranges and Lemons**’ which includes the line, “*You owe me five farthings say the bells of St-Martins*” thought to refer to the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

The nursery rhyme probably existed for several hundred years before 1666 when many of the churches referred to were destroyed in the **Great Fire of London**.

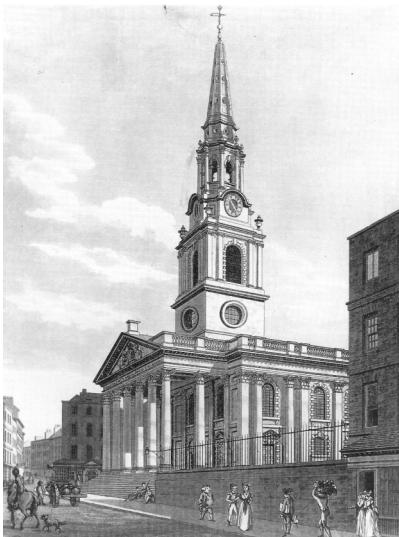
Several variations exist but a more complete modern version of the rhyme goes:

“Oranges and lemons”, say the bells of St. Clement’s,  
“Pancakes and fritters”, say the bells of St Peter’s,  
“Two sticks and an apple”, say the bells of Whitechapel,  
“Old Father Baldpate”, say the slow bells of Aldgate,  
“Pokers and tongs”, say the bells of St John’s,  
“Brickbats and tile”, say the bells of St Giles,  
“You owe me five farthings”, say the bells of St. Martin’s,  
“When will you pay me?”, ask the bells of Old Bailey,  
“When I grow rich?”, say the bells of Shoreditch,  
“When will that be?”, ask the bells of Stepney,  
“I’m sure I don’t know”, say the great bells of Bow.  
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,  
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head!



Yes, they sure did like scary nursery rhymes in old England.

# St Martin's Bells History

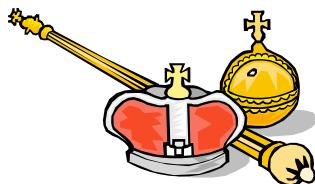


The Swan Bells include the twelve old bells from the Church of St-Martin-in-the-Fields in London, England.

This church was established in the late 1100's with bells known to have rung out there before the 1300's. The church we see today however (in the picture at left) was built in 1720-26 containing a new set of 10 bells paid for by the Prince of Wales, later King George II, in 1724. Another 2 bells were added in 1726, and these 12 bells we see today at Swan Bells.

The largest bell known as Zachariah, is named after the vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1725, the Reverend Zachariah Pearce. At 1480 kg, it is the third largest swinging bell in Australia.

The St-Martin-in-the-Fields bells have rung out to celebrate many historic English events and victories – the defeat of the Spanish **Armada** in 1588, the home coming of **Captain James Cook** after his voyage of discovery in 1771, Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805, and the World War II victory at El Alamein in 1942 are just a few of the significant occasions marked by the bells.



The bells you see today have also rung in the New Year at Trafalgar Square for more than 275 years and have celebrated the **coronation** of every British **monarch** since King George II in 1727.

Bells are usually **recast** from the old ones and this is what was planned to happen in 1987. At St Martin's the large set of bells housed in the small belltower had always caused problems. The bells were hard to ring and their movement caused the belltower to sway, damaging it.

The bells were to be melted down and recast but bellringers from Australia had another idea to help celebrate the **bicentenary** of Australia in 1988. Perth would take the old bells to go in a new tower and in return, Australia would supply the tin and copper for new bells at St Martins.

Sponsors were found to pay for transport of the metal and the bells, as well as casting the new bells including 6 new ones for Perth. So that is how these bells come to have a new life in Australia.

# The Art of Change Ringing

The Swan Bells is a group of ‘change ringing’ bells, called a ‘ring’ or ‘peal’.

Here, up to 16 ringers ring together at one time.

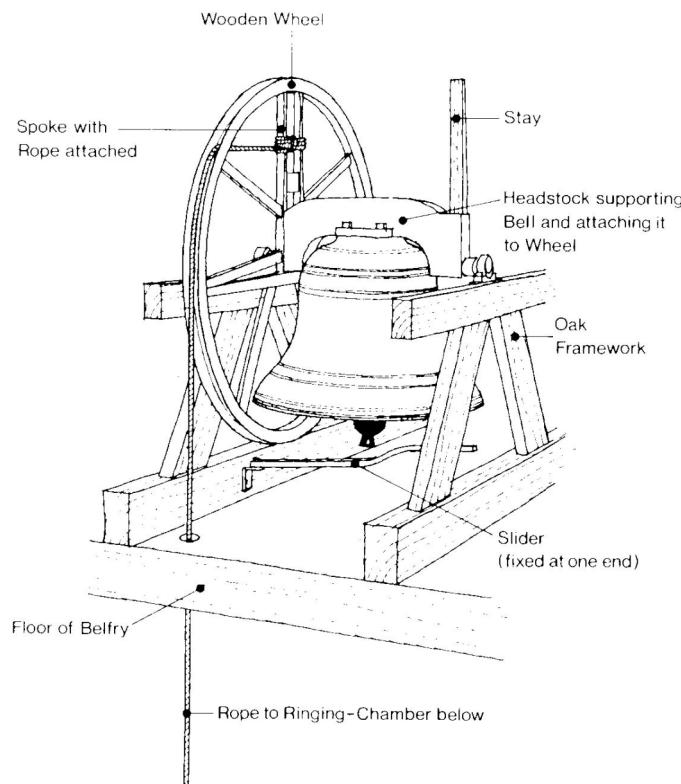
It is  
China  
warn,  
time.



Change ringing bells were developed in 1400, many churches had three or more chimed on special occasions, using a from side to side. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century wheel which allowed the bells to be rung patterns.

believed that bells were first perfected as musical instruments in thousands of years ago. Since then, bells have been used to awaken, celebrate, commemorate and help people know the

England where by the year swinging bells which were rope and lever to swing them ringers had developed the full ‘full-circle’ in particular



The Swan Bells are also rung ‘full circle’. Each bell hangs on an axle called the **headstock** which is attached to a vertical wooden wheel with a rope running round it, long enough to reach the ringing room below. Each bell needs one ringer to ring it.

Having the attached wheel allows the bell to be swung through a complete circle of 360 degrees up to the upright **point of balance**, where the ringer can stop the bell and control when the bell will swing down and sound again. Change-ringing bells take up to two seconds to spin around and so cannot be used to play tunes, where the same note may need to be repeated quickly.

The bells are arranged from the smallest called the **treble** to the largest called the **tenor**. It is usual to begin by ringing ‘**rounds**’, a sequence going down the scale from the lightest to the heaviest. The order in which the bells sound is then altered to give different sequences, called ‘**changes**’.

The aim of change ringing is to ring the bells in a continuous series of different changes, with the sounds evenly spaced, ringing a new change each time the bells sound, and not repeating the same change. This is done to a pre-set pattern or ‘**method**’, producing a beautiful flow of musical sound.

