



Imber

The Bells Ring out at Imber

Bell ringers from all over the country descended on Imber last week to hear its church's bells ring for only the second time in 60 years.

Imber was evacuated in 1943 to enable American troops to train for the D-Day landings and has remained in military occupation since.

The village church, St Giles, had its bells removed in 1950 but in August last year six replacement bells were finally installed. The new bells were rung for the second time on Thursday, following the church's annual service, which was held on September 18 last year.

Neil Skelton, custodian of St Giles Church, which is only open on selected days of the year, notably in August, at Easter and Christmas, said: "Interest in the village never seems to wane. There were more than 1,500 signatures in the visitors book during the Christmas period. I think we must have had more than 3,000 visitors in total.

"It's a church that most people, including myself, never thought bells would ring in again.

"The bell ringers came from all over the country, from Newcastle to Yorkshire.

"The bells can be heard from quite a distance depending on the weather.

"The old bells were taken out in about 1950 and then in 1968 one of them went to Edington Priory and the other four bells were scrapped.

"The new bells have come from different places and vary in age from the mid 19th Century to 2003.

"One was donated to the church and the others were brought a little above scrap value."

Nick Claypoole, who rings in Codford, Heytesbury, Wylve, Sutton Veny, and Steeple Longford for the Salisbury Diocese group of bell ringers was present at St Giles on Thursday.

The 69-year-old said: "It was a unique opportunity to see St Giles Church because Imber is only open to the public on a few days a year.

"It was also a unique opportunity to ring the church's bells, which have only recently been replaced.

"The bells sounded wonderful. It was a very momentous occasion."

St Giles closed its doors to the public on Monday after a busy Christmas period and is expected to reopen in Easter.

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