

Whitechapel Bell Foundry

On a winter's evening a remotely suspicious group were seen in Jack the Ripper territory, disappearing into a small doorway to the sound of a shop bell ringing. Who where they and why were they there? Well, the answer was that they were members of the Worshipful Company of Musicians visiting the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the world's most famous bell foundry and Britain's oldest manufacturing company, established in 1570. Craftsmen of the famous Big Ben cast it there in April 1858. Our Livery Club President Eugenie Maxwell had organised a tour of the foundry followed by a buffet and recital.

We were greeted by Alan and Kathryn Hughes, the current incumbents looking after the family business. Alan enthusiastically took us round the foundry explaining the methods used to make the moulds and cast the bells. Then on to how the bells were tuned and a very intellectual discussion ensued about the temperament that the bells were tuned to and the use of the Kirnberger III well-temperament, a conversation I am sad to say was lost on me.

From the area where the large tower bells were cast we moved onto the

casting of smaller hand bells, and having seen how they were cast moved upstairs to the workshop where the hand bells are tuned and polished and fitted with clappers and beautiful leather handles. The foundry at the time of our visit was restoring the bells from Quebec National Cathedral and there they were for us to see, all eight bells, laid out in the foundry workshop, the heaviest weighing 840kg. It was incredible to think that having been made at Whitechapel in the 1830's they had travelled all the way back after so many years hanging in the Cathedral Bell Tower

to be restored

We then moved into the house next to the foundry where we were very well looked after by Kathryn Hughes and her helpers with an excellent buffet accompanied with wine. Our Livery President had very generously arranged some musical entertainment for the evening, and we were privileged to hear Marciana Buta playing the violin and Jennifer Hughes playing the piano. Although it was a tight squeeze we enjoyed excellent renditions of Scarlatti's *Sonata in D Major for Piano*, Paganini's *Caprice No. 13 for violin* and finally Schubert's *Sonata in A Minor for Violin and Piano*. An excellent and most informative evening all round. Our thanks go to Alan and Kathryn Hughes for their kind hospitality and Eugenie Maxwell for her generosity.

Liveryman Alistair Telfer



Musicians' Company Carol Service 2006

The Carol Service on 13th December held at St Michael's Church, Cornhill, attended by The Worshipful Company of Turners, was certainly an evening to remember. This was due not only to an unexpectedly original programme of music, excellent choir, conductor and organist, but also to a congregation who raised their voices with considerable enthusiasm. Their hymns included all the Yuletide favourites: *While Shepherds Watched their Flocks by Night*; *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*; *O Little Town of Bethlehem* and others. The readings were by the Master of the Musicians' Company, Dr Andreas Prindl, the Master of the Turners' Company, Mrs Penrose

Halston, Mrs Eugenie Maxwell, President of the Musicians' Livery Club, and Senior Warden Mr Leslie East, amongst others. The service was dedicated to the memory of Mrs Patricia Wakeham, whose generous legacy funded the evening's music.

The procession before the start of the service, in which the Master and Wardens of the Turners' Company and the Master, Wardens and Liverymen of the Musicians' Company proceeded to their places, was accompanied by *Laetentur Coeli* by William Byrd and Benjamin Britten's *A Hymn to the Virgin*, after which the Prayers and the Bidding were read by the Company Chaplain, the Reverend Alan Boddy.

After a hearty rendering of *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's cry* by the congregation, the choir sang Nicholas Webber's *I saw three ships come sailing by* in memory of the composer who died last February. They went on to acquit themselves splendidly in the magnificent *Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy)* from the eight-part *Missa Ad Imitationem Vinum Bonum* by Orlande de Lassus, followed by Liveryman Christopher Brown's *Gabriel and Mary*. This is a very interesting composition with many different tonal colours, strong rhythms and some very impressive chords, which the organist tackled with enthusiasm. William Byrd's

