

## NUSCR v Pigeons



*Inside the ringing chamber in September 2018, at the first practice of the year with all the new freshers*

The Nottingham University Society of Change Ringers (NUSCR) has taken on a huge fundraising project, though it's nowhere near your usual rehang project!

All Saints' Church in Nottingham is the home of NUSCR and the bells are at risk of becoming unringable. This is especially frustrating as over the last 25 years NUSCR have raised many thousands of pounds to enable first the rehousing of the original eight bells in a new frame, and subsequently augmentation to the current much loved ten. The bells are rung weekly for both practice and Sunday service during term time, with student attendance averaging 15–20.

A ceiling was built directly above the bells in the '70s, its main purpose to provide some level of sound control. Over the years, this ceiling has become rotten and is starting to fall apart – not surprising really, as some of the material was – ahem – acquired from behind the organ at St Mary's Church, and even at the time the ringers didn't know how old the material was (finders-keepers, right?)

The ceiling separates the louvres in the spire from the bells, meaning that the louvres can't be reached easily. The bird netting in the louvres has come loose, allowing pigeons to enter the spire. The pigeons are then falling through the rotten holes of the ceiling and, as they're not the most intelligent of species, they can't quite work out how to fly back out. Therefore, the belfry is littered with pigeon carcasses – not a pretty sight!

In addition to this, the ceiling is beginning to bow under the weight of detritus from pigeons attempting to nest on the ceiling and a collapse is expected if not dealt with imminently.

Firstly, scaffolding is required for safe access to the ceiling and louvres. Secondly, a professional clean-up is required as the state of

the belfry isn't even fit for a student to live in. But the scaffolders won't go up the tower until the cleaners have been and the cleaners can't clean until there is scaffolding in place.

The bells themselves aren't in terrible condition, considering all. Maintenance has been kept to a minimum in an attempt to reduce the number of times people enter the belfry, so some general housekeeping will be required at the end of the tower restoration. Great news, right?

However, NUSCR has found that they are not eligible for most bell fund grants, as the project has nothing to do with bells or bell fittings. The ceiling's replacement is planned to have trapdoors for sound control, so they can get some money for the installation of the floor – but not the dismantling. The irony is, if the ceiling collapses, NUSCR will certainly find themselves eligible for grants, though the additional cost to repair any damage to the bells is something they'd rather not think about.

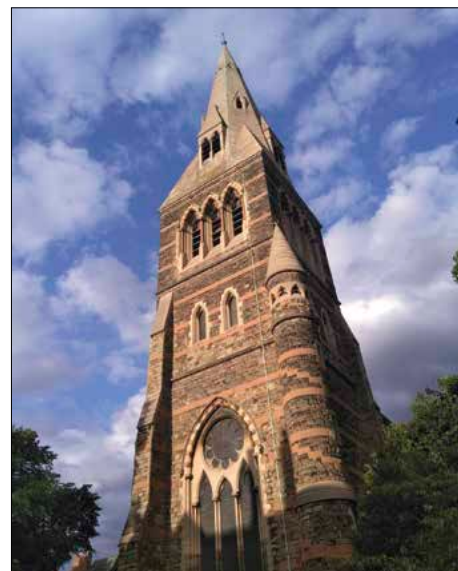
I know what you're thinking: if this has nothing to do with the bells, why aren't the church fixing this? The church and NUSCR worked together for several years applying for Heritage Lottery Funding. In late 2018, they found out that their application was declined. They found themselves with no more money, low morale and a tower in a worse state than when they began. The church itself is not wealthy and has an ageing congregation in the mid-teens on a Sunday morning. They are able to fund a small part of the scheme; however, a substantial amount still needs to be raised.

Fear not! It isn't all doom and gloom. NUSCR have a plan.

When NUSCR found out that the church was not successful in applying for Heritage Lottery Funding, they elected a Fundraising Secretary at the following AGM in February. This person created a fundraising team, whose job involved finding out what they need to do to fix the tower and how much money they need to raise, then making sure NUSCR does it.

The work has been split into two phases. The critical repairs are going to be carried out during Phase 1, which includes the professional cleaning, scaffolding, deconstruction of the old ceiling and installation of the new floor with steel lifting beams for future maintenance. The cost of this phase is approximately £15,000, though NUSCR are hoping that they can save a substantial amount through volunteered labour.

Phase 2 involves turning the ringing chamber into a modern, hospitable room which will help to attract new members and improve learning.



*All Saints' Church, Nottingham*

To aid the fundraising process, the church set up a restricted fund in their accounts; Gift Aid claims can be made on eligible donations and cash will be recovered via the Listed Places of Worship Grant scheme where possible.

NUSCR has been busy raising funds too; in March they held their first fundraising event, a Silent Auction, which raised over £1,000! Additionally, a sponsored handbell quarter peal day is being organised for 26th May. The students are also going to be set a £5 challenge over the summer holidays, where they are loaned £5 from NUSCR and given the entirety of the holidays to turn it into as much money as possible! NUSCR are also hosting a ceilidh on the 5th October, which will be a great social for returning students from the holidays and any Freshers the society acquires.

NUSCR are receiving an overwhelming amount of support from their alumni members and the Southwell and Nottingham Guild. NUSCR wants to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported NUSCR past, present and future. If anyone would like to find out more about this project or offer to help in any way, please contact the fundraising team on [fundraising@nuscr.org](mailto:fundraising@nuscr.org).

EMILY HALL  
Fundraising Secretary

*Note. As we went to press, we learned that the situation has escalated: ringing at All Saints is suspended after baby pigeons found their way into the ringing chamber and died.*



*NUSCR's 60th Anniversary Dinner, 2018*



*NUSCR Summer Tour, 2018*