

Who's Who?

Anthony Chandler, the Bell Maker

D'you hear those bells?

They've been ringing in this Church for over 350 years now.

How do I know?

I made them myself. Put my name on them, if you don't believe me. I made five of the bells, back in 1664 – just two years before the Great Fire of London. Dreadful thing, that fire.

Excuse me, I forgot my manners. Let me introduce myself. I'm Anthony Chandler.

Been a bell maker, or bell founder, all my life. Had to take over my dad's business up in Milton Keynes when I was just 16, so I could make money and put food on the table for my mum and sisters.



There are six bells here in St Leonards. As I've said, I've made five of them. The last was added about 60 years later by a man called John Waylett, from London. Let me tell you, church bells are big, the biggest here weighs 679 kilograms, in the way you would measure it today. So you can see that bells are very tricky to make and put in place.

So, how do you do it?

Well, first you need to make a wooden mould, the exact shape and size you want your bell to be. And make sure you've done your sums right, because no-one wants a bell with a dull thud instead of a brilliant, musical ring. That would never do.

Next, mix your copper and tin to make bronze. That's best for making bells.

Heat it up to over 1000 degrees Celsius – very hot, five times hotter than your oven at home, and 10 times the boiling point for water. That way you get a hot molten mixture that you can pour into your moulds like thick syrup. The mixture is so hot it needs about a week to cool down and harden in the mould.

Finally, you have to fit the clapper – the bit inside that hits the bell to make the sound. Job done, one sweet-sounding bell.



It's lovely to hear the bells' song after all these years. The bells are rung at special times: to help people worship or to mark an important occasion like a wedding. Love a wedding, I do. All those happy faces always make me smile.



Before I go, I'll leave you with one more fact. Campanologists – that's the fancy word they use to describe all those people who've been ringing these bells

all these years. Enjoy the rest of your visit, and don't forget to listen out for my brilliant bells.