



# Worcester Cathedral

## Guild of Bellringers

This large piece of wood is called a 'headstock' and is part of the 1870 bell installation. The biggest bell of this ring weighed 50 hundredweight (2,444 kg) and used to hang from this headstock in the massive oak bellframe which is still in use. Made of elm, it was replaced in 1894 by a cast iron headstock.

This headstock is upside-down. The bell was strapped and bolted to the top surface in front of you so it could hang in the bell frame. The big metal pegs are called gudgeons. The large hoop connects the gudgeons to the headstock and adds additional stiffness.



The gudgeons would rotate in gun metal bearings on the top of the bellframe. The bell would swing on these bearings, rotating 360 degrees clockwise and anti-clockwise so the bell could be rung in the traditional English style.

By the twentieth century wooden headstocks were replaced by iron headstocks and gun metal plain bearing were replaced by ball bearings.

Modern materials and new engineering techniques are a feature of the evolution of bell hanging. The basic principles of belhanging; bellframes, headstocks, wheels, bearings and ropes have changed very little since the sixteenth century.



This picture shows the cathedral's bourdon bell which hangs with the sixteen ringing bells 160 feet (49 metres) up in the tower. This headstock supports the bourdon which weighs over 80 hundredweight (4072 kg). However, our bourdon bell does not swing. The bell is struck by a large hammer to sound the hour every day between 07:00 and 22:00. It can be chimed on mournful occasions.

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