

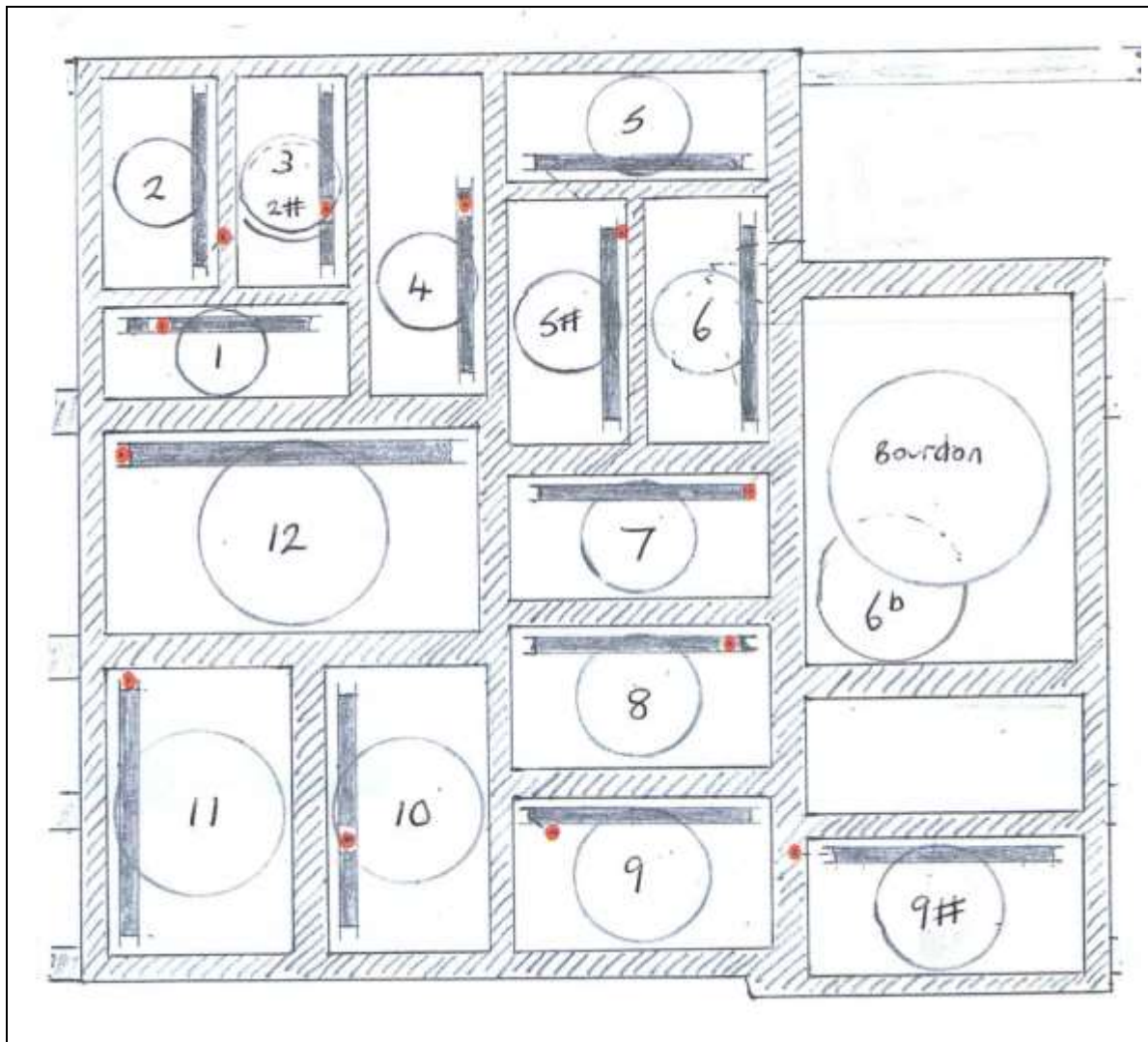


Worcester Cathedral

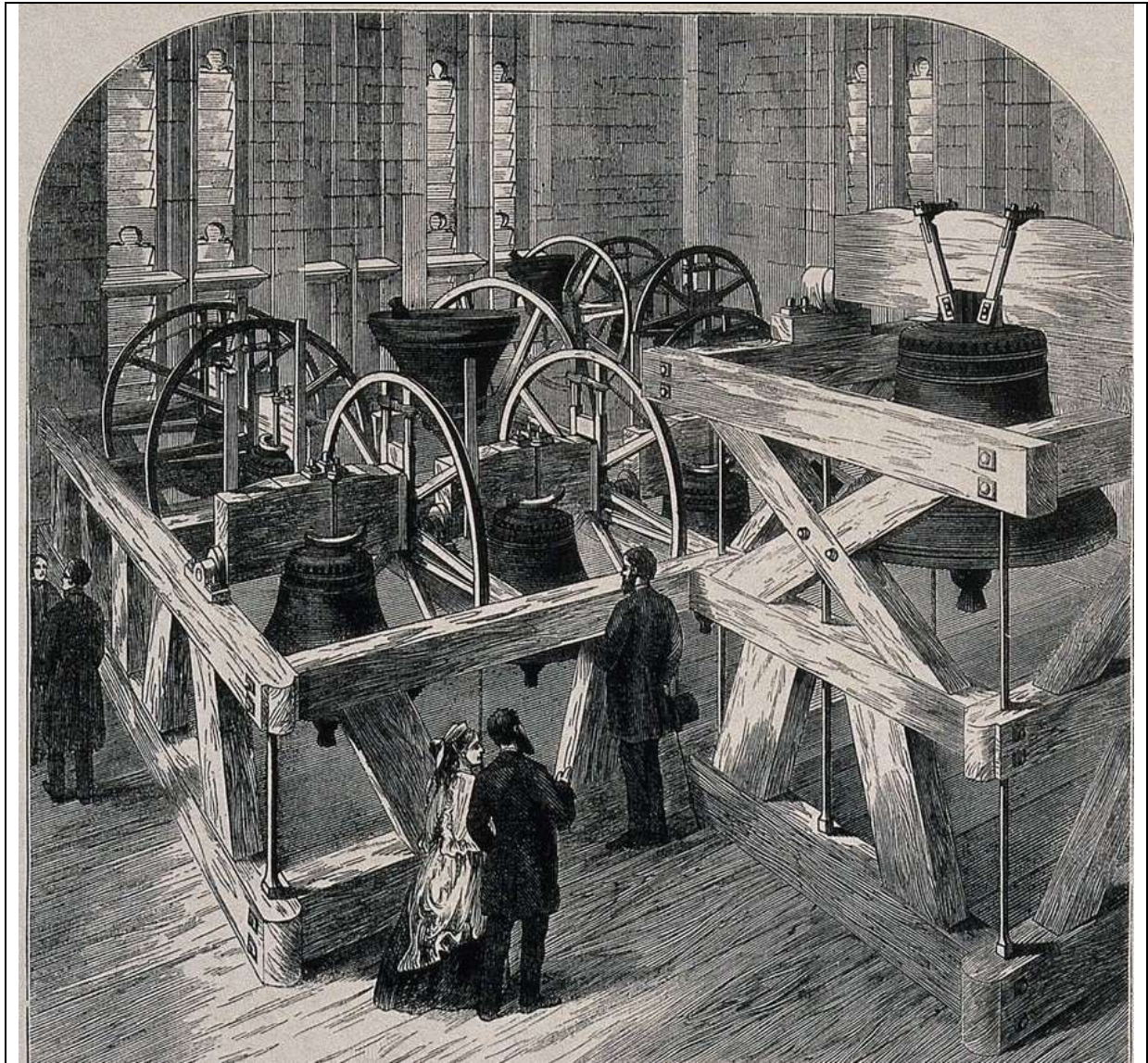
Guild of Bellringers

Bellframe History in Sketches 1869-2020

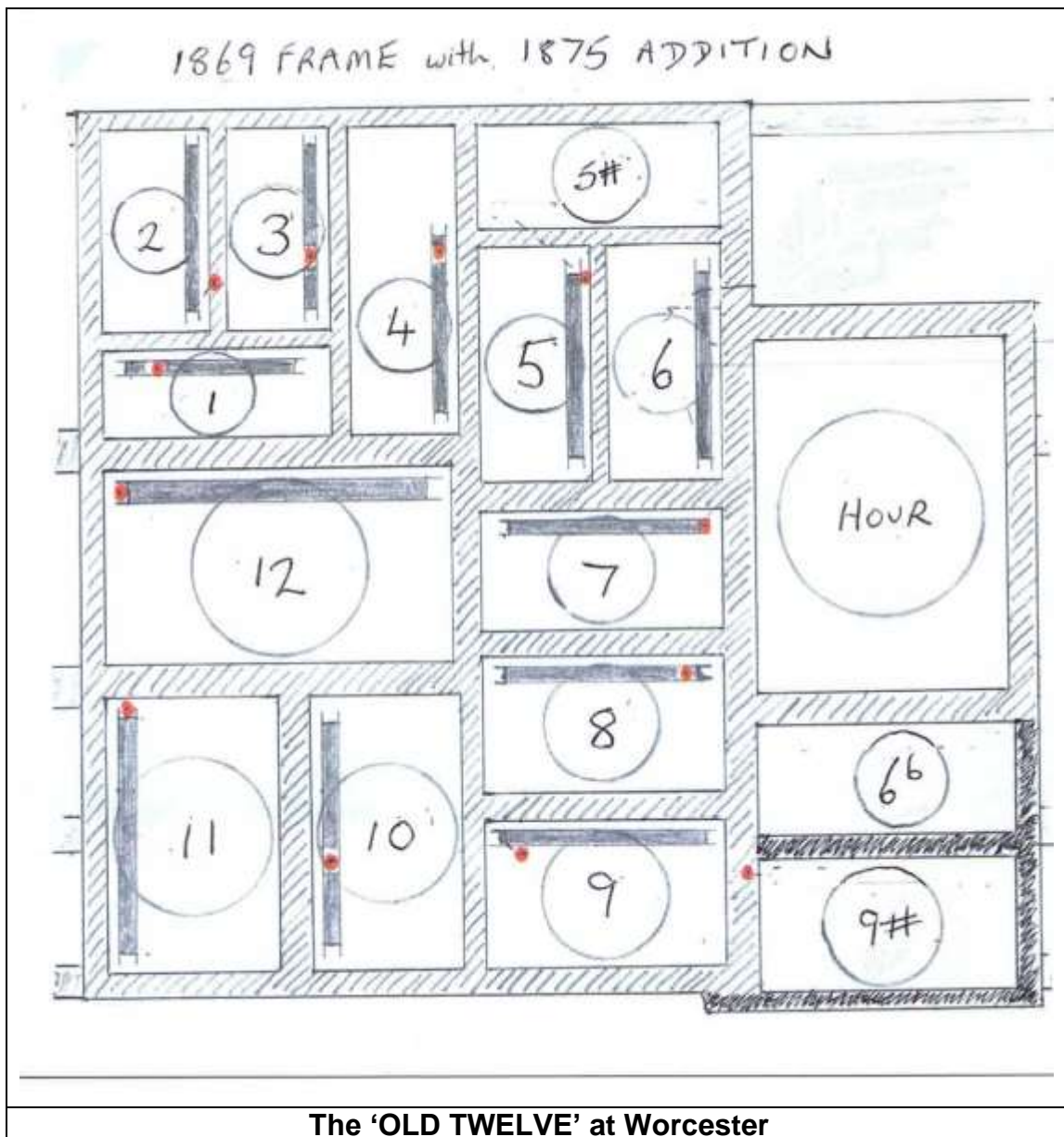
The layout of bells within the frame has undergone a number of changes in its 150-year history. The **current arrangement** of the 16 ringing bells and the bourdon bell is shown below.



The frame was built in **1869** to house the ring of 12 bells cast in 1869, and a 'Great Clock Bell' of 4 ½ tons cast in 1868. The great bell went in first, during 1869, and the ringing bells followed in 1870. The quarter chimes of the Joyce clock were intended to strike on the extra semitone 5#, plus 6th, 7th and 10th but were changed to 7th, 8th, 9th and tenor. This engraving, which appeared in the Builder magazine in 1874, artistically interprets what was in the tower, viewed from the SE corner.

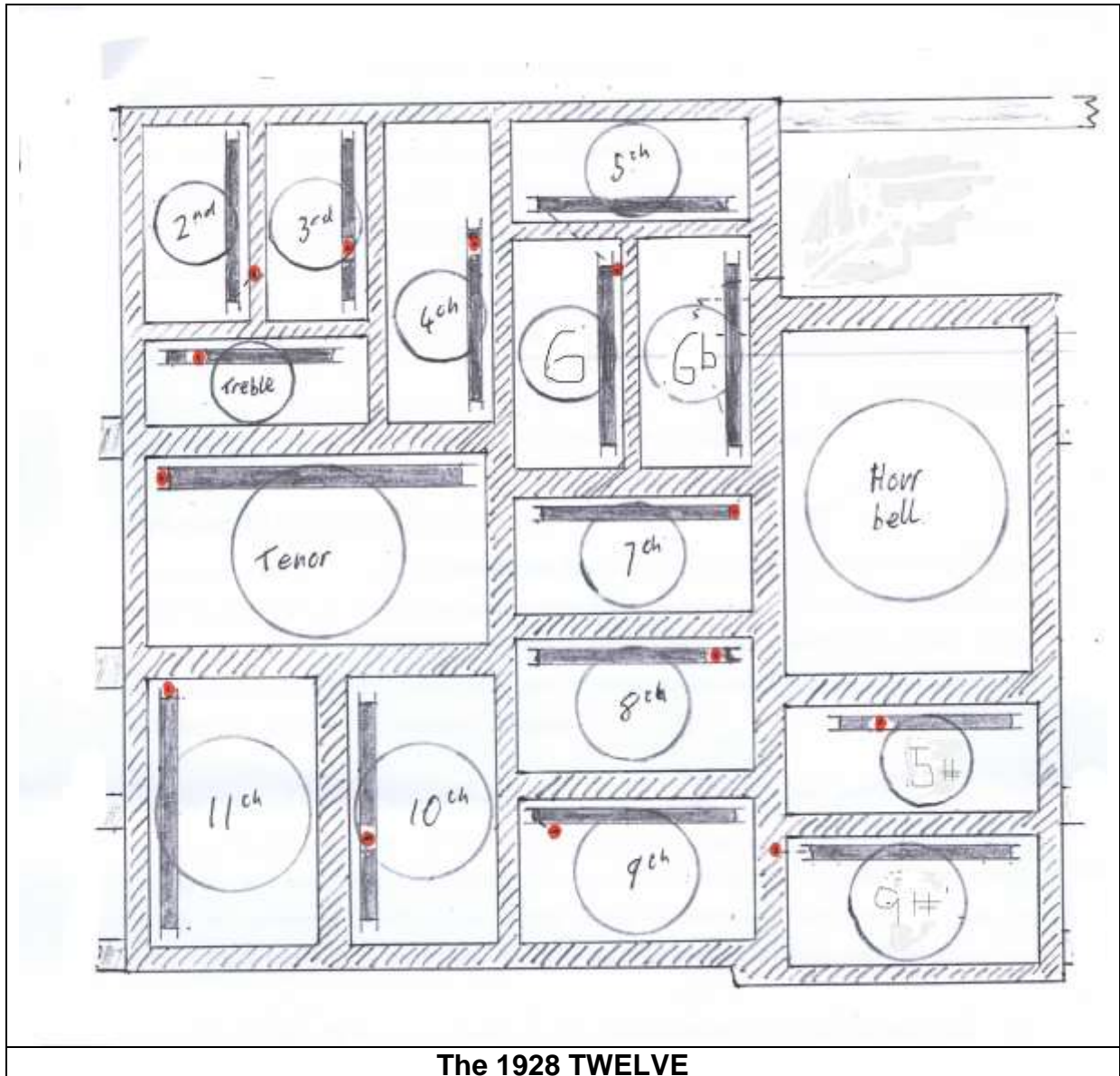


In **1875** an extension to house two further bells (Flat Sixth and Sharp Ninth) was built in the SE corner. None of the three semitone bells were hung for ringing – they were used by the carillon chiming machine installed in 1872.



In **1928** the 15 bells were all recast and the Bourdon retuned. **The arrangement of the middle bells (5, 5#, 6, 6b) was changed.** It would have been quite a job to remove the old bells and install the new ones with all the carillon and clock hammers and wires in place – so it is likely that they too were largely dismantled and re-assembled.

The semitone bells were hung with full ringing fittings but not much used until the 1960's. The new twelve were first rung on 11 November 1928.



Three major changes have taken place in this century. In **2003** the **Sixth and Flat Sixth bells were swapped over**, with a very tight fit for the latter. In **2018** a sixteenth bell, the **new Sharp Second** (cast 2017) was installed below the Third. In **2020** the **Sharp Fifth was moved** into the middle of the frame, becoming the fourth different bell in that pit. **The Flat Sixth was rehung** below the Bourdon on new steelwork. For the first time in nearly a century the ropes fall in the correct order.



The Bells of Worcester Cathedral
Looking south from above in Oct 2020
Top left – 9#, Left – 4-ton Bourdon
Middle top to bottom – 9th, 8th, 7th, 6th, 5#, 5th
Right – 10th, 11th, Tenor, Treble, 4th, 3rd, 2nd
Not visible – 6b under bourdon and 2# under 3rd.

Bernard Taylor
Nov 2020