

The 'Pancake Bell' at Holy Trinity Church, Ashford-in-the-Water

The oldest bell in Holy Trinity Church, Ashford-in-the-Water, is a small pre-Reformation sanctus bell, sometimes known as the 'ting-tang' bell after its characteristic sound, but also called the 'pancake bell' because it was traditionally rung on Shrove Tuesday.

In 1864, the Ashford-born antiquarian and businessman Thomas Brushfield recounted the following custom, which even then had been of at least 60 years' standing:

'Shrove Tuesday – also called Goody's Tuesday – was held as a notable day in the village. At eleven o'clock in the morning of that day, a bell, called the 'pancake bell,' was rung in the church tower, and on the first sounding of that bell the children of the schools in the village were released from their studies, and had the rest of the day for holiday purposes – indeed it was a general holiday. The game of football was generally played during the after part of the day. These customs are still observed – the pancakes, the bell-tolling, and the football-playing – and there is no harm in them ... '



The 'pancake bell' bell was exposed to the weather for many years when it was suspended in an exterior bell-cote above the chancel. At the time of major building renovations between 1868 and 1870, the architect, James Medland Taylor, designed a new sanctus bell turret. However, his suggestions were not adopted, and the bell was taken down and stored in the tower. It was forgotten for 23 years, until it was rediscovered and rehung in the tower, where it remains today.

It is frequently still chimed during the consecration of the Eucharist.

From: Pykett, Ian. The Life and Times of John Reddaway Luxmoore (1829-1917), with Special Reference to his Renovation of Holy Trinity Church, Ashford-in-the-Water. Country Books. 2022.