

AUSTRALIA'S HEAVIEST

Most ringers know that the heaviest ringing bell in Australia is the tenor at St.Peter's Cathedral in Adelaide – Great Frederick weighing 41¼ cwt or 2096kg. The precise ranking of the other tenors over a ton is less straightforward, however, and I was quite surprised how much work it took to validate the available information, obtain missing details and come up with (unless anyone has any corrections) a 'definitive' list.

The result of this work is the following league table, in which I have included 'lost rings' (in *italics*) and also details of former weights for bells which have been retuned or re-weighed.

The heaviest ringing tenors are:

1. Adelaide Cathedral tenor - 41-1-0 or 2096kg (Taylor, 1946)
2. Sydney, St.Mary's Cathedral (RC) - 34-1-3 or 1741kg (Whitechapel, 1985)
- *Sydney, St.Mary's Cathedral (RC) original tenor - 31-3-12 or 1618kg (Thomas Mears, 1843 - destroyed)*
3. Melbourne St.Paul's Cathedral tenor - 29-1-12 or 1491kg (Mears & Stainbank, 1889 - originally 31-1-0)
4. Perth, Swan Bells, tenor - 29-0-14 or 1480kg (Abraham Rudhall II, 1726 - was 30-1-20 after 1922 retuning)
5. Sydney, St.Andrew's Cathedral - 29-0-4 or 1475kg (Taylor, 1964 - given in error as 29-1-4 for some years)
6. Adelaide, St.Francis Xavier Cathedral (RC) - 28-2-1 or 1448kg (Whitechapel, 1992)
- *Sydney, St.Mary's Cathedral (RC) original tenor of second ring - 25-2-16 or 1303kg (Mears & Stainbank 1881 - replaced 1899)*
- *Sydney, St.Mary's Cathedral (RC) replacement tenor of second ring - 24-3-11 or 1262kg (Mears & Stainbank 1899 - now used as service bell in west tower)*
7. Ballarat Town Hall - 22-0-10 or 1122kg (Mears & Stainbank, 1869 - originally 22-3-21)
8. Goulburn Cathedral - 21-3-3 or 1106kg (John Taylor & Co, 1872 - originally 22-3-24 when at St.Mark's, Leicester)
9. Hobart Cathedral - 21-2-8 or 1096kg (John Taylor & Co, 1911 - originally 22-2-5 when at St.John's, Eastbourne)
10. Maryborough - 21-0-4 or 1069kg (Mears & Stainbank, 1887)
- *Bendigo, tenor of the original ring - 20-3-9 or 1058kg (Mears & Stainbank, 1872 - replaced 1964)*
11. Sydney, St.Philip, Church Hill - 18-2-21 or 949kg (Mears & Stainbank, 1858 - originally 20-1-12 when first installed)

There are also, of course, some other ringing bells in these peals where the weights exceed one ton – the seventh at Adelaide, the 11ths in the heavier twelves and the 15th at Perth for instance.

When compiling the list, I also obtained details of all the other bells in Australia and I was surprised to find that there are 18 bells weighing over two tons (of which the Adelaide tenor is one), 33 over 1½ and 76 over a ton. The full list is too long to print here, but you will find it on the ANZAB website at http://www.anzab.org.au/info/Heavy_bells_Australia.html. The bells over 30 cwt – with ringing bells in **bold** and lost bells in *italic* - are:

No	Bell	Founder	C.q.l.	Kg
1	Canberra Carillon - bass bell	Taylor, 1969	120-1-00	6109
2	Sydney Post Office - hour bell	Taylor, 1890	98-0-00	4979
3	Sydney University carillon - bass bell	Taylor, 1928	84-1-10	4285
4	Brisbane Town Hall - hour bell	Taylor, 1928	82-0-15	4173
5	Canberra Carillon - no.2 bell	Taylor, 1969	79-3-15	4058
6	Canberra Carillon - no.3. bell	Taylor, 1969	67-0-19	3412
7	Sydney University carillon - no.2	Taylor, 1928	66-2-20	3387

8	Canberra Carillon - no.4 bell	Taylor, 1969	61-1-00	3112
9	Sydney University carillon - no.3	Taylor, 1928	60-0-22	3058
10	Sydney University carillon - no.4	Taylor, 1928	48-2-19	2473
11	Adelaide Post Office - hour bell	Taylor, 1874	48-2-00	2464
12	Canberra Carillon - no.5 bell	Taylor, 1969	45-2-26	2323
13	Maitland, St.Mary - hour bell	Taylor, 1880	44-2-11	2266
14	Lismore, St.Carthage's Cathedral (R.C.) - Bass bell	O'Byrne, 1908	42-1-12	2152
15	Rockhampton, St.Joseph's Cathedral (R.C.) - bell	O'Byrne, 1904	42-0-00	2134
16	Adelaide, St.Peter's Cathedral - tenor	Taylor, 1946	41-1-00	2096
17	Sydney University carillon - no.5	Taylor, 1928	41-0-12	2088
18	Launceston Post Office - hour bell	Gillett & Johnston, 1909	40-0-06	2035
19	Adelaide, St.Francis Xavier Cathedral (R.C.) - bourdon	Murphy, 1867	38-3-07	1972
20	Canberra Carillon - no.6 bell	Taylor, 1969	38-0-27	1943
21	Brisbane, St.Stephen's Cathedral (R.C.) - bell	Mears & Stainbank, 1887	35-1-27	1803
22	Sydney University carillon - no.6	Taylor, 1928	34-3-17	1773
23	Sydney, St.Mary's Cathedral (R.C.) - tenor	Whitechapel, 1985	34-1-03	1741
24	Canberra Carillon - no.7 bell	Taylor, 1969	32-2-17	1659
25	Melbourne, Post Office - hour bell	John C. Wilson & Co, 1870	32-1-03	1640
26	Braidwood, St.Bede (RC) - bell	Unknown, 1862	32-0-00	1626
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27	Sydney University carillon - no.7	Taylor, 1928	30-3-13	1568
28	Bathurst Soldiers' Memorial carillon - bass bell	Taylor, 1929	30-3-08	1566
29	Sydney Post Office - 4th quarter	Taylor, 1890	30-0-14	1530
30	Sydney Town Hall - hour bell	Gillett & Co, 1884	30-0-14	1530
31	Toowoomba, St.Patrick (R.C.) - bell	O'Byrne, 1933	30-0-00	1524
32	East Camberwell - bell	O'Byrne, 1957	30-0-00	1524
33	South Melbourne Town Hall	James Thompson, 1880	30-0-00	1524

Lastly, the claim to have been the heaviest bell in Australia at the time - and similar lists could easily be compiled for each state and territory too - was handed down in the following order of succession:

- 1843-1867 Sydney, St.Mary's (RC), original tenor (1618kg)
- 1867-1874 Adelaide, St.Francis Xavier (RC), bourdon (1972kg)
- 1874-1890 Adelaide, Post Office hour bell (2464kg)
- 1890-1969 Sydney, Post Office hour bell (4979kg)
- 1969-date Canberra, carillon bass bell (6109kg)

Many of these bells are well worth hearing, of course, and perhaps the publication of this list may just tempt readers with a liking for fine bells to loiter to hear the hour being struck on some of the clock bells or to make the effort to go and listen to a recital on one of the carillons. Although not hung for ringing, they are part of our belfry heritage and fine-toned examples of the bellfounder's art.

Chris Pickford
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