

The Bells of New College, from Five to Eight to Ten

The original bells of New College date from the foundation: Wykeham provided five bells at a cost of £132 16s 4*d*

though they went on apace, when once begun
yet was it somewhat strange to see them run;
Some sayd the bells were drunke I cannot tell
If so, I'me sure casting hath made them well
Surely some fault there was for downe they come⁵
ready to be dissolv'd in martyrdom
So having left the Aery region
they tooke their station in the torrid Zone
And to augment the lustre of their glory
'Tis well that they have ben in purgatory
They should be bulls Phalaris made such before
Pull them but by their tailes, they're mad they rore
And yet (I marvaile at their stunted power)
though they speake big they'r pris'ners in the tower
nay And for all they now exalted bee
There's none but knows there

Nor would this be the end of bell-rivalry in the college: in 1712 Rudhall increased the Magdalen ring to eight, whereupon New College commissioned a willing Rudhall to push their ring up to ten.⁸ This is the ring the college still possesses.

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⁸ Sharpe, *Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, p. 348.