

OF THIS PARISH



Score for *Of This Parish*

Contents

OF THIS PARISH
MAY 2014
LIMINAL
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The fonts in this publication are Times New Roman and Minion Pro.
The publication was designed by Frances Crow

The project was made possible with support from the Arts Council England and
Falmouth University’s Sonva research group

Cover design by Frances Crow depicting a measured drawing of St Adrian’s
Church, Sul.

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1. Of This Parish



THE idea of a ‘Parish’ – a common device used to delineate territory while also defining a sacred community – was an articulation of acoustic space: the Parish was the zone in which a church bell could be heard. This notion of ‘Parish’ as phonosphere is the point of departure for *Of This Parish*; a piece which explores the relationship between various acoustic spaces: the personal and the shared, the secular and the sacred, the near and the distant, the historical and the contemporary.

BELLS have been associated with their intense power to evoke, to impart a feeling of time passing, to foster reminiscence, recover things forgotten, and to consolidate an individual’s identification with an auditory site. In *Of This Parish* the tolling bell is used as a device to both unify acoustic space, while also invoking the multifarious cultural uses of bells: as calls to prayer and worship, as keepers of time, as tocsin; an alarm or warning and as a voice of authority.

2. The Soundwalk



IN *Of This Parish*, four walks are made simultaneously by eight synchronised sound recordists, all starting from the central location of the church with a tolling bell. The recordists stand back to back, each facing in the direction of the four compass points. They then walk slowly along the existing paths and roads that lead most directly to the North, South, East and West.

THE recordings from these walks are then played back in the church simultaneously, each recording the acoustic scene from a different perspective to the others. At the beginning of the piece, the recordings sound very similar but as the recordists move along their respective paths, only sounds loud enough to permeate each local environment – such as the church bell – permeate all four recordings. In this way the presentation of these four recordings in a single space creates an impossible listening experience, collapsing the entire acoustic territory of the Parish into its epicentre: the church that defines it.

3. Score for Of This Parish



OF This Parish was conceived as a Performance Score for sound-recordists and bells and mapped the territory of a Parish as defined by the earshot of a bell. It was first realised in Portugal, in April 2013 and subsequently developed into two further performances in the UK, one of which was accompanied by a two-day field-recording workshop. What follows is a short description of how the piece might be recreated in another Parish.

UNLIKE gathering field-recordings for future use in an edited work, it is essential that these recordings are made in a single take as *Of This Parish* is dependent upon a real time rendering of acoustic space. For this reason, a significant portion of the preparation should be devoted to devising and preparing these simultaneous walks. We also suggest that four pairs of sound-recordists make the walk to avoid any errors in the recording process.

THE piece can either last as long as the bell is usually rung for, or the bell can be rung for as long as it takes for every walker to go out of earshot.

THE piece should then be installed within the church from where the bells were rung.



4. The Sound Recordist

THE four pairs of sound-recordist prepare for the recording by listening to the church bell/s before they finally record the walks, while doing this they map out routes to the North, East, South and West that keep away from busy roads and stay as close to the direction of travel as possible.

The four pairs of sound-recordist walk either to the North, South, East or West; LISTENING to the sounds of their environment and mapping out routes.

RETURNING from these walks the sound recordists mark the routes on a map.

5. The Bell

IT is possible to make this piece with one tolling bell or a peal of bells. However to prepare for the walk the bell ringer/s need to agree when the bell can be rung and for how long. It also interesting to consider why the bells are rung.

The bell is rung.

6. The recordists begin recording



THE recordings begin with the sound-recordists standing at the base of the church tower, five minutes before the ringing starts.

First standing separately and then moving together, the sound-recordists each say quietly their NAME; and their direction of travel, NORTH, SOUTH, EAST or WEST; then moving together into a square they stand back to back, facing outwards in the direction of travel.

7. The bells begin to ring

THE ringers begin ringing at the appointed time.

The BELLS RING.

Coming to stand next to the sound-recordists, a conductor CLAPS THREE TIMES; and then moves away.

THE bells ring for the allotted time, tolling, ringing the changes; calling people to their church.

The four pairs of sound-recordists remain still for thirty seconds and then slowly walk away at an even pace, holding the recorder steady.

8. The recordists stop



THE sound recordist walk to the limits of the Parish as defined by the earshot of the bell.

THE conductor remains at the base of the tower listening to the ringing bells, unhindered by the acoustic shadows caused by the topography of the land or the barriers of buildings.

The BELLS STOP, the conductor sends an SMS saying NO PEAL and the recordists stop walking outwards and return to the church.

9. Return to the Church

THE sound-recordists return to the church and download their soundfiles. The conductor takes the soundfiles and lines them up with the claps. These unedited recordings form the content of the installation.

Later, after editing the sound into four stereo channels representing the walk to the North, South, East and West, the conductor installs four stereo pairs of speakers in the church and they play synchronously the soundwalks to the North, East, South and West.

10. Of This Parish: Soundwalks



IT is possible to repeat the process at a number of churches and with a number of bells.

WE have carried out soundwalks in the Parish of Sul, Portugal; Christchurch, Oxford and Bath Abbey, UK. In all of these walks we worked closely with the ringers and a small group of recordists to realise the project.

12. Of This Parish: Christ Church, Oxford

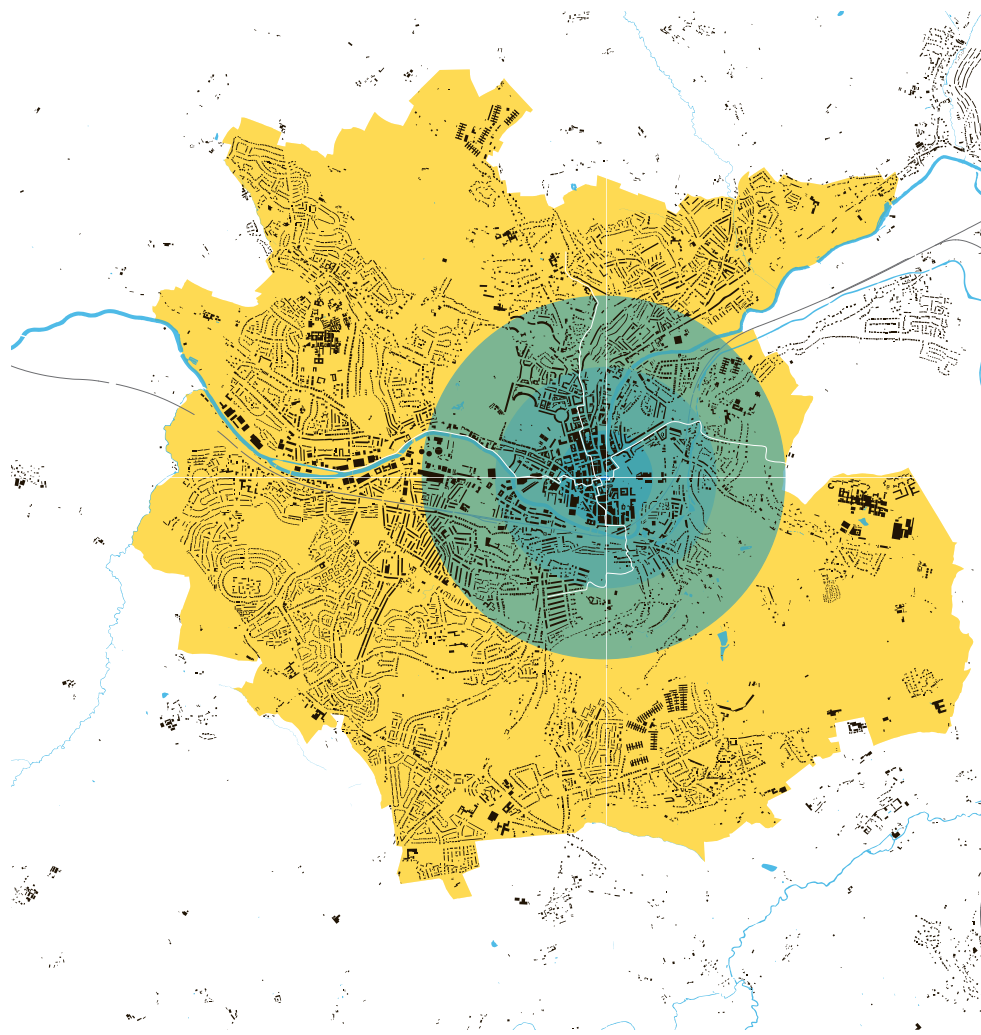


THIS version of *Of This Parish* explores the territory of Christ Church's bells in Oxford and was conceived by David Prior and Frances Crow and realised in Oxford with Felicity Ford and Oxford Brookes University alumni and SARU practitioners for the Sound Diaries Concert, held on 13 March 2014 at the Holywell Concert hall as part of the Audiograft Festival 2014.

IN preparation for the piece Felicity Ford, aka Felix spent time working with Simon Bond and the Oxford Society of Change Ringers to identify a church and a ring of bells to record. She also worked closely with the sound recordists, Sam Kidel, Victoria Boshier, Bruno Guastalla and Dimitris Batsis to map out the walks.

CHRIST Church's bells ring every Sunday to call people to the service. they have a ring of twelve bells, the earshot of which is restricted by the acoustic baffling of the tower in which they are hung. This lead to the walkers moving very slowly to achieve a piece with a duration of 10 minutes; the length of time it takes to ring a 'touch'.

13. Of This Parish: Bath Abbey



THIS version of *Of This Parish* explores the territory of Bath Abbey's bells, and was conceived by David Prior and Frances Crow and realised in Bath with ICIA through a participatory field recording workshop held on weekend of 22 – 23 March 2014.

THE final recordings were made in the evening of Sunday 23 March 2014, to a quarter peal of 1,288 Grandsire Triples, composed and conducted by William Willans and rung by the Bath and Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers at The Abbey Church of SS Peter and Paul, for the evening service.

THE sound recordists were Finnian Evans, Fiona Fraser-Smith, Rory Gracias, Fiona Haines, Sara Mark, Margherita Consanza Salvini, Jerry aka Yue Zhuo and Lizzie Hawthorn.

THE bell ringers were Hazel Spence, Fiona Hartley, William Willans, Robert D. Bell, Maggie Willans, Martin Pearson, Roger Haynes and Thomas G.A Wareing. The Tower Master, Richard Sweet and Matthew Butler welcomed us into the ringing chamber. Maggie Willans designed a Peal Board for *Of This Parish: Bath Abbey*. The installation was held at The Stables at the American Museum in Bath from 5 - 12 April 2014.

BATH'S bowl like topography had a significant effect on the earshot of the Abbey bells. Close to the Abbey, the sound of the buskers and bells can be heard, as the sound-recordists move away, the buildings shape the sound of the bells causing them to disappear quite quickly, leaving the sounds of the city to dominate. But we hear the bells again to the South at Shap Castle – it is possible here to hear the bells at the edge of the Parish as defined on the map.

Score for *Of This Parish*

Frances Crow & David Prior
2014