

Time and Tide Bell Project

A permanent installation around the U.K. of bells rung by the sea at high tide.

Marcus Vergette has designed a bell with a new harmonic relationship, which can sound different notes from the same strike, and is played by the movement of the waves creating a varying musical pattern. This bell has been installed at the high tide mark at a number of diverse sites around the country, from urban centres to open stretches of coastline. To create, celebrate, and reinforce connections, between different parts of the country, between the land and the sea; between ourselves, our history, and our environment. Additionally as sea levels rise as an effect of climate change, the periods of bell strikes will become more and more frequent, and as the bells become submerged in the rising waters the pitch will vary. The first bell was installed in July 2009 at Appledore, Devon: the second on Bosta beach Gt. Bernera, Outer Hebrides in June 2010: the third at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London in September 2010. The fourth installed in Aberdyfi, Wales August 2011, and the fifth Anglesey, Spring 2013.

Sites : The integrity of the Time and Tide Bell project nationally is in the choice of the sites and how they connect. Each site brings something particular and unique to the whole group.

Appledore, Devon (installed May, 2009), in North Devon, on the Taw and Torridge estuary, an ancient shipbuilding town with connections east and west, through export of domestic ceramics to the West Indies as part of the slave trade, to ball clay still being shipped to Russia. Here are some of the highest tides in Europe, the base of the bell marks the moment the water is over the bar and ships may leave or enter the estuary.

Isle of Bernera, (installed June 19, 2010) on the northwest fringe Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides; is some of the oldest rock/land on earth, and has been resisting the ravages of sea for 3 - 400,000,000 years, from before the fossil record. This island has a complex history of courage, and independence in the face of resource depletion and oppression, with barely a tree now left on the island. Bosta beach has been the point of arrival and departure for many different groups and cultures from the Vikings to the clearances.

Trinity Buoy Wharf, (installed Sept 19, 2010) London, on the embankment wall of the Thames, 28 seconds east of the Meridian Line. One of this bell's potential meanings is as a time-piece or time-marker, both in the way the bell is rung by the movement of the sea at high tide daily, and as a long time marker of sea levels and present shoreline. Here Michael Faraday built a lighthouse to experiment with electric lighting for lighthouses, lighthouse keepers were trained, and navigation buoys were made. This site is the confluence of the Lee and the Thames rivers which twist and turns between walls and embankments, through factories and houses as it winds its way from the central heart of England to the sea.

Aberdyfi, Wales (installed August 2011) clinging to the rocky edge of Snowdonia, on the estuary of the historic river Dovey, flowing down the mountain Arran Mawddy to Cardigan Bay, the dividing line between north and south Wales. Aberdyfi is referred to in ancient Gaelic legend and song as the former kingdom of Cantre'r Gwaelod now submerged beneath Cardigan Bay, and its bells which, it is said, can be heard ringing beneath the water. Here the tree stumps from the ice age forests are revealed at low tide. The ancient Gaelic legend perhaps referring to ice melt at the end of the last ice age and the formation of the bay.

Cemaes, Anglesey (to be installed Spring 2013) Cemaes Bay is on the north coast of Anglesey and is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with a unique history and some of the most geologically important shoreline in Britain, whose significance has been recognized internationally. Local legend

insists that St Patrick was shipwrecked on Ynys Badrig, where he founded a church in 440 AD. However this project is not only to connect with the past but also to engage with the present and future. Around Cemaes there is a long history of varied land use, with farming, industry, and mining, and more recently wind farms, and a nuclear power station.

The Time and Tide Bell has become a way for residents and visitors to connect with their own history and environment, as an instrument of measurement, as a musical instrument, as a sculpture, and a focus for music, events, exchanges, etc, both locally and between the different bell sites. Every bell has its own inscription on the wave catcher, written by the community around the bell, in this way the bell says what those who experience it regularly want it to say. Bells speak in celebration and in loss, they are a mouth piece for our culture.

London Inscription

What is the song in the wave, if not
that all living is meeting?
nothing given up, or held for good:
bats in the lantern light,
cormorants scouring the tide.

Aberdyfi Inscription

Above the awesome tide I will rejoice	Uwch llanw erch llawenhaf
--	------------------------------

Bernerá Inscription

Gun mhuthadh gun truas	Without change, without pity
A' sluaisreadh gainneim h na tràgh'd	Breaking on the sand of the beach
An àtaireachd bhuan	The ceaseless surge
Cluinn fuaim na h-àtaireachd àrd.	Listen to the high surge of the sea
Mo leabaidh dean suas	Make my resting place be
Ri fuaim na h-àtaireachd àrd.	By the sound of the surge of the sea

Appledore Inscription

In thrall to the moon
rocked by her ebb and flow
I sing of swells beneath the stars

black waves at the storms height
new ships' rhythmic passage west
seabirds in the dancing wake
all who set sail in sorrow or joy
and all who sleep below

"This is an inspired project. The link between ourselves and the elements are in danger of being lost in our 21st century life. The importance of that link, given climate change, is more important than it ever has been and such a beautiful reminder of the importance of tides and sea levels is truly inspirational."
Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer,
House of Lords Climate Change Committee

Bell Design:

This new bell form was designed in collaboration by Marcus Vergette and Dr Neil Mclachlan. This form has never existed before and has only been possible as a result of very recent developments in computer modeling. The bell is cast marine bronze and will not degrade. If you would like to hear the bell, go to:

<http://audioboo.fm/boos/186220-time-and-tide-bell-trinity-buoy-wharf-sept-20-2010>

<http://audioboo.fm/search?q=bosta+bell>

<http://audioboo.fm/search?q=appledore+bell>

<http://www.marcusvergette.co.uk/bell.htm>

The Time and Tide Bell Project was a finalist for the Climate Change Awards 2011, Best Artistic Response to Climate Change.