

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

is, this year, meeting in London (May 26-30), and each week we shall publish an article on the different churches and places where ringing and events will be taking place during that week - end. We acknowledge the assistance of Dr. D. E. Sibson and Mr. W. T. Cook, who are supplying the necessary pictures and information.



ST. BOTOLPH'S, ALDGATE

Botolph was an Englishman who lived in Saxon times. He became a monk and built a Benedictine Abbey at Iken, near Aldeburgh in Suffolk. He died in about 680 and became venerated as a patron saint of travellers. Some seventy churches dedicated to St. Botolph were built at the gates of various English cities, so that people setting out could pray for a safe journey, or give thanks on their safe arrival. In the City of London, churches dedicated to St. Botolph are to be found at Aldgate, Aldersgate and Bishopsgate, and until 1666 there was one at Billingsgate.

The first church at Aldgate was probably built about 950, and was enlarged in 1418. Shortly before the Reformation the church was rebuilt by one of the priors of the great Augustinian Priory of Aldgate, who were also Rectors of St. Botolph's. This second church consisted of three naves of almost equal height and breadth, with a fine lofty tower at the south-west corner, probably containing five bells.

These bells were presumably rung when Queen Mary came to St. Botolph's to return thanks for safe journey from exile to the throne, and when she married King Philip of Spain. Queen Elizabeth I presented new silken bellropes to the church because when (as Princess) she was a prisoner in the Tower she had heard those "merry bells" ring. The bells were also rung on February 9, 1586, "for joye that the queene of skotts was beheaded," for which ringing the vestry paid the sum of xijd, and a further xijd. "for breade and beare for ye ringers."

During the 17th century the bells were increased to six. The church was outside the area destroyed by the Great Fire, so it was on these same bells that Laughton and the members of the Rambling Ringers' Club rang on December 20, 1733 (Grandsire Doubles on the back five, and a 720 of Plain Bob on the six).

By 1740 the church had become very dilapidated, and the architect George Dance the elder (who also designed the Mansion

House) was called in. He recommended that it would be better and cheaper to rebuild rather than to repair, so the old church was pulled down and the present one built on the same site. It was consecrated in 1744. The building, which cost £5,536, is of red brick, and is rather plain in appearance—"not very inspiring," as Gerald Cobb puts it.

In the year of the church's opening, 1744, a ring of eight bells was cast and hung in the tower by Thomas Lester, with a tenor of 28 cwt. In 1764 the back four bells were recast by Lester and Pack.

Benjamin Annable conducted the first peal on the bells, a 5040 of Bob Major. These bells were never popular for peal ringing, perhaps because, being hung high in a brick tower, they were difficult to ring owing to tower sway. The only other peals recorded here were 5120 Oxford T.B. Major by the "Junior" College Youths in 1758, Grandsire Triples by the Junior Cumberlands in 1785, and another of Grandsire Triples by a Friendly Society in 1832. A report in Bell News for 1881 shows the existence of a local Ringers' Society at this tower at that time.

I do not know if the bells were ever rehung after their installation, that is, until recent times. In the ten years or so following the 1939-45 war the bells were occasionally rung, the tower being popularly known as "the slaughterhouse"; it was very hard work to ring them.

By 1958 the bells were in such a bad way that ringing stopped altogether; but in 1964 an appeal was launched to set the bells going again. A few months later, in August, 1965, an unexplained fire broke out in the church (which had only been slightly damaged during the war). Fortunately, the money was available for a complete restoration of the church, including the tower and bells. The bells were taken to the Whitechapel Foundry, where they were cleaned by shot-blasting and tuned; they were then rehung in the tower at a lower level, making them easier to ring. The church and bells were reconsecrated on November 8, 1966.

W. T. C.

A TO Z

The quarter peal of Zeal Monachorum Surprise Minor at Zennor recently completed a project started early in 1970 by a band from North Somerset whose aim was to ring the Surprise Minor alphabet in order in six-bell towers which had the same initial as the method rung. The only concession allowed was the phonetic equivalent for X! Apart from rare towers like Veryan and Jacobstow the rest were almost all within easy reach of home; the harder part was having to learn the methods, some of which seldom, if ever, see the light of day. Two years is a long time, but four of the original "inside" band—Eric Lee, Michael Horseman, Peter England and John Brain—completed the series and rang in the last quarter on March 11.

Of the methods chosen, Cunecastre for some reason required three attempts, and a false extent of London required a second go, but apart from these two the rest were successful the first time. Altogether four new methods were named and rung, and we were indebted to Cyril Wratten for his advice and help, both in compiling the programme and for ensuring that we avoided choosing new methods which Tony Peake's band might have used in their multi-method peals of Minor which they were ringing at that time.

Progress was somewhat slow in 1970, when only G was reached, but 1971 saw a dramatic change, and at the end of the year

only Z was left to be rung. Having named Zeal Monachorum in anticipation of visiting the tower, it was a big disappointment to hear that the tower was under repair, so for the third time a rail trip to the Duchy was necessary.

Many incidents remain in the memory as progress was made; the car stuck in a ditch in ice and snow after Hemington; the problems of the postal strike; monster Cornish pasties at the Vicarage at Jacobstow; praying for success at Queen Camel on a very warm Sunday evening in July with the thought of having to go to Quinton in Warwickshire if we failed; driving across Exmoor to Exton in a blinding storm, and finally ending up driving to Zennor from Penzance Station with Alan Carveth at the wheel, again with snow sweeping across the moors.

Apart from the various treble and inside ringers who rang with us, our special thanks are due to all the Cornish ringers who made our visits so enjoyable, with a special mention for Alan, who kindly ferried us around on two of our visits, and for ringing the treble at Zennor.

The whole idea of the "alphabet" must be laid at the door of our hon. organiser, Michael Horseman from Farmborough, Somerset, and my advice to the reader in conclusion is just this—beware what you agree to during a convivial evening after ringing; you never know what you might be letting yourself in for!

J. B.

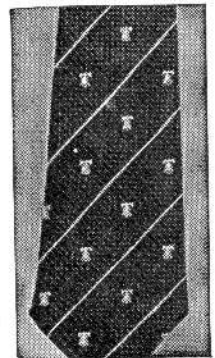
QUARTERS RUNG

(All rung in Somerset unless otherwise stated)

Place	Method
Abbot's Leigh	Alnwick
Butcombe	Berwick
Compton Martin	Cunecastre
Dunkerton	Durham
Easton-in-Gordano	Eastwood
Farmborough	Fyfield
Glastonbury	Gainsborough
Hemington	Hexham
Iron Acton (Glos)	Ipswich
Jacobstow (Cornwall)	Jacobstow
Kilmersdon	Kelso
Loxton	London
Marksbury	Munden
Nailsea	Northumberland
Oaksey (Wilts)	Offley
Paulton	Purleigh
Queen Camel	Quendon
Radstock	Rossendale
Ston Easton	Surfleet
Tickenham	Thorne
Uphill	Upshire
Veryan (Cornwall)	Veryan
Wembdon	Wells
Exton	Xanten
Yate (Glos)	York
Zennor (Cornwall)	Zeal Monachorum

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