

The Ringing World

October 18, 1985

The weekly journal for church bell ringers

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Flanked by Wendy Lines and Alan Barsby, three of the Eversley ringers take their first tentative pulls on their shortly-to-be-augmented ring of four.

In anticipation of things to come

From two to four to six

Eversley, Hants is not a tower well known to ringers – not yet that is. The original two bells in this most picturesque church have been overhauled and rehung together with two new bells cast at Whitechapel. The four bells were “tried out” by local ringers and visitors a week or so ago. The verdict – a very pleasant sounding and easy going ring. But there is more to come. In November hopefully, two more bells are being cast and Eversley should be a ring of six by Christmas. The Rector, the Rev. Michael Perry and many of the parishioners were present for the “test run” of the four bells and great delight was expressed at the sound produced outside.

More details of this project when the six bells are in action.

* * *

At least £900 raised for Pott Shrigley's augmentation

On 21st September, a motley collection of over 30 East Cheshire ringers and friends – two, three and four-legged – gathered at the start of a 15 mile sponsored walk and ring to raise money towards the augmentation of Pott Shrigley's three bells. The first few miles through Lyme Park to Disley were uneventful and ringing took place on the six bells here. Marple was the next port of call, the shortest and most level route being along the canal towpath. Liquid refreshment was purchased at the “Ring O'Bells” and we reluctantly made our way to Norbury.

It was during this leg that our luck with the weather changed and the heavens opened. What had seemed a casual Saturday afternoon stroll suddenly appeared to be an uphill marathon but thankfully, warming cups of tea and coffee were available in the new Narthex at Norbury, our outing coinciding with the Church's “Gift Day”.

Poynton was the last scheduled tower, after which we made a beeline for the finish at Brian Scholfield's farm in Pott Shrigley, where a feast of tea and scones welcomed us (thanks, Muriel!). Prizes were awarded to the three walkers who amassed the most sponsorship money: Simon Poole and Mike Strutt – modesty prevents me from naming the third. A special mention must be made of the close relationship shared by Annette and Ruth from Bowdon – they decided to handicap themselves by completing the 15 miles three-legged. One thing does still puzzle me: why did Denis Mottershead, who only joined the party at Norbury, carry his bike saddlebag around the course?

To end a very successful, if somewhat damp, day some of us even mustered enough energy to ring “Three Blind Mice” at Pott Shrigley. Our thanks go to David Friend for all his brainache and administration. An amazing sum of at least £900 was the estimated amount raised.

S.B.

* * *

Holy Trinity, Guildford bells

We hear that work is to start very soon in the overhaul and rehanging of the excellent ring of eight at Holy Trinity, Guildford. At last ringers of the 7th and 3rd will be able to perform without fear of a sudden drop in their performance.

* * *

Work at St. Mary-le-Bow

The bells of St. Mary-le-Bow will be out of action whilst major work takes place in the tower and spire. This work has also given us the opportunity to make a start on improving the ringing conditions at Bow as well as improving the internal and external acoustics of the bells. These are “problems” we have been aware of for

some time and have nothing to do with a recent article in *The Ringing World*.

The tower and spire are to be cleaned externally and the erection of scaffolding will soon be underway. A great deal of the work on the tower, however, will take place inside the belfry and first stage of the spire. As many ringers will remember the belfry and spire were taken down after the last war and rebuilt on a concrete sub-frame. To avoid the disastrous acoustic effect of the bells ringing in a concrete “box”, the belfry and first stage of the spire were coated with a “spray-on” form of brown asbestos to mimic the acoustic properties of the original Portland stone. The effectiveness of this exercise has always been debatable and it must be stressed that this was done a long time before asbestos was found to be a serious health hazard. The asbestos in the tower is relatively static and is solely confined to the belfry and spire area and ringers at Bow have always been aware of its presence. Once it was discovered what the coating on the tower walls was, plans were implemented for its removal and this is to be done by a specialist firm of industrial cleaners.

Obviously the asbestos needs to be replaced to eliminate the effect of the concrete walls of the tower and spire. In many ways the asbestos was too effective in “deadening” the sound of the bells and considerable thought has gone into choosing substitute materials and where they are to be placed in the tower and spire. The “tone” of the bells has often been blamed on the tower and this is the first serious attempt to remedy this. It should be pointed out that the cost of the replacement material and associated works is likely to exceed the cost of the removal of the asbestos. Those who heard the bells broadcast on “Church bells on Sunday” may

(Continued overleaf)

CONTENTS: 887 Methods Committee · 888 Letters – Rotherham augmentation
889 In the beginning . . . · 890 Twenty-five years at Pinner · 892 Madness in our methods

WORK AT BOW - continued

have been surprised at what an excellent 12 Bow really are and it is hoped that this work will improve the sound of the bells both inside and outside the tower.

Work will also be done to the sound control in the louvres, but the sound of the bells has always been affected by the buildings which surround the church. The bells "echo" from these buildings and the result is the "thin" sound upon which many ringers comment. The only solution would be to knock down most of the buildings in the immediate area!

Once these works have been completed other ancillary works will take place during the ensuing weeks. Firstly, the lighting in the tower is to be improved and the fittings are to be overhauled. For example, many of the pulleys need to be replaced. We will also experiment with the internal acoustics of the bells in order to achieve a more balanced and enjoyable level of sound in the ringing room. The tall and bare ringing room walls have an adverse effect on the tone of the bells and "acoustic boarding" will be used strategically to eliminate this. The "roping" of the bells will also be improved and rope noise eliminated as much as possible.

All of this work is being funded by the Diocese and the City Parochial Fund and some further ancillary work may be phased over an 18 month period - we also need to have work done to the clock and the carillon. Nothing short of a rehanging will improve the "go" of some of the bells especially the 7th, 8th, 9th and 11th but the removal of the asbestos, the application of a replacement acoustic material and other work in the tower will have a dramatic effect on ringing conditions at Bow and prove to many ringers (including those north of Watford and from York) what an excellent peal of bells Bow really are.

MARK REGAN

Obituary**James J. Spraggett**

It is with deep regret that I report the passing of James J. Spraggett at the age of 72.

Jim was, until retirement a dairy farmer and was a native of Fenny Compton, Warminster where he died.

He was a regular ringer at nearby Burton Dassett (6), the church in the hills. Unfortunately, failing health curtailed his ringing over the last year or so, but not his keen interest in the art and until a few weeks ago he attended ringing meetings and functions whenever possible. He and his wife also enjoyed entertaining ringers at their home.

After attending a practice night at Byfield back in 1957 he continued to do so for more than 20 years. He became a member of the band and of the Peterborough D.G. Daventry Branch, the branch he served well until his death. He also retained his interest in the Coventry D.G. in whose territory he resided.

Jim passed away rather suddenly at his home on Monday 30th September and was laid to rest on Thursday 3rd October at Fenny Compton under the shadow of his beloved Dassett hills.

It was Jim's great wish that the three bells of Fenny Compton be augmented using the five of nearby Avon Dassett Church which has become redundant. He had done a great deal of preliminary work towards this end.

He leaves a widow Kath, son Conway and daughter Molly, both married. Our sympathy goes out to them.

A quarter peal is to be rung open in thanksgiving for his life, at Burton Dassett on Sunday 13th October. May he rest in peace. F.W.H.

Back to his roots

By the kind and considerate invitation of George Pipe, Harold Rogers was invited to take a peal company to St. Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich on the 28th September for his 800th peal. A peal of Stedman Cinques was rung and it included George and other East Anglians as well as ringers from the London area: with Bob Dennis conducting.

This was the tower where Harold rang his first changes on 12 bells - Treble to Grandsire Cinques and where Olive Rogers rang her first course of Cambridge Surprise Maximus. Harold's first experience of the talented Ipswich company was to sit in the tower and watch them practising courses of the series of Surprise Maximus peals which finally made history in 1936, and which are happily recorded on a composite peal board in the tower.

Confusion on the stairs

The Rochester District's striking competition this year was held at Newington. The 11 teams congregated inside the church eagerly awaiting the draw. The draw duly took place, the first band, Sittingbourne, entered the tower and the rest of the bands filed outside to pass their verdict on the ringing.

Meanwhile, back in the ringing chamber confusion reigned supreme as teams tried to pass on the narrow stairs and eventually deciding that one should reverse either back up or down.

After the service, conducted by the Rev. Chandler, and the tea the results were given, with Rainham judged to be first, Tunstall "A" second and then came Rochester, Cuxton "A", Cuxton "B", Sittingbourne, Cliffe "A", High Halstow, Tunstall "B", Frindsbury and Cliffe "B".

Karl Wraight went up and collected the Alice Fether Silver Cup on behalf of the Rainham band.

K.D.

Mr. Stanley Fred Barber

The Parish Church of SS Peter and Paul, Fressingfield was filled on 9th August, 1985, for the funeral of Stanley Fred Barber, who died the previous Sunday. Stanley had been in failing health since early this year. He was the third generation of his family known to be ringers in Fressingfield, and had taught his nephew and great nephew to ring. Apart from service in the Army in 1939-45 War he lived all his 77 years in Fressingfield. Being very active in the family haulage and coal business. For 25 years he managed the petrol station with the help of Vera his wife. In his early days, Stanley drove a model T Ford in the family hire car service.

Stanley is greatly missed by the ringers of Fressingfield, Starston, Redenhall, Weybred and Wingfield, where he served regularly for Sunday Services and for practice ringing. He was the "never absent never late type" of ringer. Together with veteran ringer, Ted Etheridge, Stanley had taught many young people to ring, always impressing on them that the bells were there for Sunday Service ringing. Many local ringers attended the funeral and much sympathy is felt for the family, Vera, his wife, daughter, son-in-law and grandsons.

A peal of Bob Triples was rung at Fressingfield on 21st September 1985 to Stanley's memory.

B.S.

Meeting at Lezant

In spite of seven towers sending apologies 55 ringers and friends attended the Autumn Festival of The Truro D.G., Eastern District at Lezant Parish Church on Saturday 28th September. Ringers attended from Callington, St. Dominic, Linkinhorne, St. Mellion and South Petherwin. Also attending was the Guild's President Mr. W. Boucher and ringers from Fowey and Stokeclimsland. The Guild office was conducted by the Rector the Rev. R. P. Munn and the organist was Mrs. R. Knight. Then followed an excellent tea supplied by the lady members of the Church, for which due thanks was given in the usual way. A short meeting was chaired by our chairman Canon G. W. Ruming. Our spring meeting will be held at Antony Parish Church on Saturday 24th May 1986. A retiring collection for the Bell Restoration Fund amounted to £15.15. Ringing continued during the evening in the local towers.

J.R.M.

The Water Ladies?

The Western District of The Ladies Guild visited Worcestershire and Gloucestershire on 21st September. We were joined by members from the Northampton District, Leicester and our President, Miss Freda Cannon, from London. Towers visited were Kempsey, Stoulton, Birlingham, Strensham, Bredons Norton and Overbury. The ford at Kempsey provided some entertainment as did the tower at Strensham ("Have you seen the cracks?"). Even Kerry (a canine lady), thanks to some assistance on the ladder at Birlingham, succeeded in grabbing all the towers!

R.H.



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