

The Ringing World

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The weekly journal for church bell ringers

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Sir Henry Tulse – Lord Mayor of London 1683-84, Master of The Society of College Youths 1684-85

On Saturday 2nd November, the College Youths will be honouring the name of Sir Henry Tulse, the Master of 300 years ago, at its Anniversary Dinner, and during the morning at 11.15 a.m. there will be a short wreath-laying ceremony in the churchyard of St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street, where Sir Henry's tombstone now lies. Four members of the College Youths are known to have become Lord Mayor of London, but it is likely that the other three – Sir Watkins Lewis, Slingsby Bethel and Samuel Birch – had ceased to take an active interest in the affairs of the Society long before they became Lord Mayor.

Sir Henry Tulse was born in Hampshire in about 1620. His grandfather was "William Tulse of Avon (New Forest), gent.," and his father, also William, was a burgess of Southampton. A Henry Tulse was returned to parliament in 1640 as a member for Christchurch, but this may have been the uncle of the bellringer. The latter was probably the M.P. "described as of Hinton Admiral" (E. A. Young, *The Ringing World* 1941 p.139), and who left a large sum of money for the poor of the parish of Sopley. During the time of the Commonwealth, the Tulse family held the manors of Bodley, Upprove and Scarlettes in the area now known as Tulse Hill in South London (named after the family).

Nothing, of course, is known of Henry Tulse's ringing career, beyond the facts that he joined the College Youths in 1659, was elected Steward in 1674, and Master in 1684. Nowhere else does his name figure in ringing records. However, of his career as a leading citizen of London a good deal is known, at least from the time when he was about 50. He was admitted to the Grocers' Company on 29th July, 1673, and became Master of the Company for 1681-2.

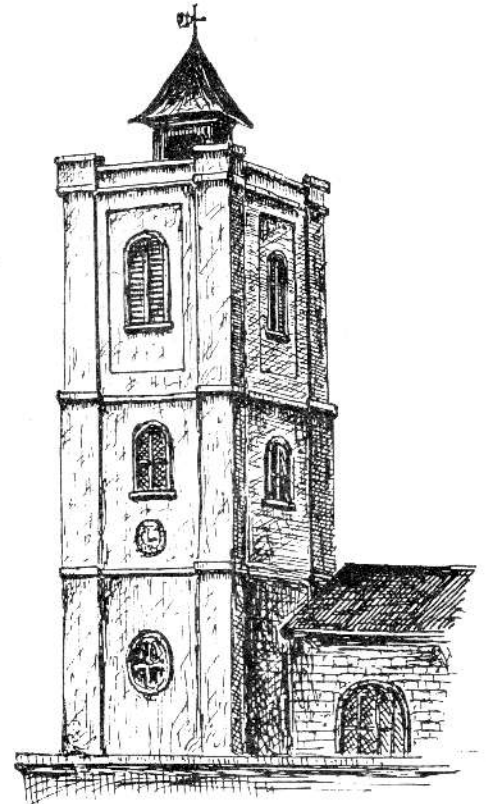
In the same year that he joined the Grocers, Sir Henry rapidly came to the forefront of City and national politics. In 1673 he was elected Alderman for Bread Street Ward, and Sheriff for 1673-4. Just after his election, Tulse was publicly knighted by Charles II at the Lord Mayor's Banquet. No doubt he owed his rapid rise and his knighthood to the fact that, at a time when there was a very strong Whig, or Republican, faction in the City of London, Tulse remained a staunch supporter of the monarchy, and a useful member of the Tory minority which the King was eager to favour at the expense of the Whigs. Sir John Robinson, a member of the Court Party, wrote at this time to Joseph Williamson, the Secretary of State: "The Sheriff's names are Tulse and Jefferies, both good men." A little later, he wrote, "We have settled a Lord Mayor, Sir William Hooker, who I hope will prove a good one, with his two Sheriffs, Alderman Tulse

and Deputy Jefferies, honest men." He meant, of course, that these men could be relied upon to do as the government wanted.

In 1679, Charles II dissolved the "Cavalier Parliament", which had lasted for 18 years, and this led to the Whigs promoting petitions to the King praying for the calling of a new Parliament. One of these petitions was drawn up by the strong Whig majority in the City of London, and Tulse was one of the leading citizens selected to present the petition to Charles, but he declined to serve, and stayed away when the other petitioners went to Windsor.

The Whig party was in decline after the discovery of the "Popish Plot" of 1678, but still held a majority in the City, as in many other towns. Tulse was one of the two candidates put forward by the Tories for election as Lord Mayor in 1682, but the Tories decided not to split their vote (whereas the Whigs did, and voted almost equally for their two candidates), and as a result Sir William Pritchard received 2,233 votes, while Tulse had only 236. It appears that both Whig candidates had a higher poll than Pritchard; nevertheless Pritchard was declared duly elected.

So violent was now the nation-wide reaction against Catholicism (especially in view of the likelihood of Charles II's successor being James, Duke of York, an ardent Catholic), that for a short time the power of Charles II remained unchallenged, and he was able to counter-attack the Whigs, whose strongholds were in the Boroughs and Cities. The Whig Corporations, including that of London were called upon by writs of Quo Warranto to prove their title to their charters, and in many instances these titles



The tower of St. Dionis Backchurch – pen and ink sketch from J. A. Trollope's MS History of London ringers and ringing.

were found to be defective. The Corporation then had to beg for a new charter "in accordance with the royal pleasure." On 13th October, 1682, the King issued a new commission to the Corporation of London, as a result of which the Common Council ceased to exist, and only Sir William Pritchard (the Lord Mayor) and 17 Aldermen, including Tulse, were reappointed.

Tulse was not elected as Lord Mayor in 1683; he was appointed by the issue of His Majesty's commission. The swearing-in ceremony on 28th October was accompanied with the usual civic procession and banquet, held at the Grocers' Hall. His year of office as Lord Mayor probably came to an end on 6th October, 1684. Assuming therefore that in those days the Master of the College Youths started his year of office on 5th November, it is not strictly true to say, as has often been claimed, that Sir Henry Tulse was Master of the Society during his Mayoralty.

Sir Henry was later the subject of an action brought by the crushed Whig opposition alleging that he and Sir Robert Geoffrey, as Sheriffs some years previously, had illegally sold the office of under-sheriff. This action was unsuccessful. In the reign of James II, Tulse was a fervent supporter of the Church of England,

(Continued overleaf)

Forthcoming attraction at the College Youths' Dinner

The guest speakers this year are to be the Very Rev. Alan Webster, Dean of St. Paul's and the Rev. Edward Rogers, Rector of Cripplegate. The distinguished orator, past Master and stand-up clerical comic, the Rev. Brooke Lunn has kindly undertaken to propose the toast of "The Society" – an occasion not to be missed! Amongst the other guests Mr. Edward P. Duffield will be present on the 50th occasion of his taking the chair at the dinner as Master and David Thorne, Editor of *The Ringing World* is to be let loose with his expensive camera again.

In the morning at 11.15 a.m. the Master will lay a wreath on the gravestone of Sir Henry Tulse Bt. in the churchyard of St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street. Sir Henry was Master of the Society and Lord Mayor of London 300 years ago.

SIR HENRY TULSE - continued

and was removed, with others, from the Aldermanic Court for obstruction of the King's manoeuvres to wrest power from the hands of members of the Church of England. In 1688 Tulse and all other ejected Aldermen were restored to their former position by William III.

Tulse was a benefactor of the City Church of St. Dionis Backchurch, which formerly stood on the corner of Fenchurch Street and Lime Street, until its demolition in 1878. This church was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren after the Fire between 1674 and 1677, and as its bells were soon replaced, Tulse may have rung there. (Sir Robert Jeffrey or Geoffrey mentioned above was also a parishioner of St. Dionis, and gave some of the money towards the ring of six cast by James Bartlett in 1686.) Sir Henry Tulse gave the marble font and the pavement and steps leading up to it. On the demolition of the church, the font was transferred to St. Dionis, Parsons Green, built out of the proceeds of the sale of the site.

Sir Henry Tulse became President of "Bethlem and Bridewell" in 1689, but died in the same year on 31st August. He was buried in a vault in the north chancel of St. Dionis' Church on 12th September. The stone which covered his tomb was removed in 1878 into the courtyard which marked the site of the old churchyard, where it became practically illegible. In 1937, on the occasion of their Tercentenary, the College Youths had this stone restored. The inscription was recut, and a bronze plate recording this restoration was attached to it. The original slab is inscribed:

In a Vault under-neath
this stone Lyes Buryed the Body
of Sir Henry Tulse who Departed
this Life the 31st day of
August 1689

The bronze plate reads:

Sir Henry Tulse was a Benefactor of the Church of St. Dionis Backchurch (formerly adjoining). He was also Grocer, Alderman and Lord Mayor of this City. In his memory this tombstone was restored November, 1937, by the Ancient Society of College Youths (during the 300th year of the Society's foundation). He was Master of the Society during his Mayoralty in 1684.

About 20 years ago the site of the churchyard of St. Dionis Backchurch was deconsecrated and sold to allow redevelopment of the whole site. Fortunately, London ringers were alerted just in time to arrange for the tombstone to be moved to its present resting-place in the churchyard of St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street.

W. T. COOK

It's Birchington yet again

During the week leading up to the Inter-district Striking Competition of the KCACR the Birchington band, who were representing Canterbury District, tried hard to rearrange the conditions that had prevailed when they were the winners of the district competition. They tried to get a party arranged for their competitors on the previous night and they held a couple of practices, but they seemed doomed to failure. Then they prayed for near Arctic weather conditions, but Saturday, 28th September turned out to be what used to be known as "hop picking weather", that is very heavy mist in the morning and then wonderful autumn sunshine. Just right for propping up a tombstone and listening to what are arguably the best five local bands in Kent.

Dutifully the bands assembled and the draw was made, after which the order was once again

changed because one member of the Birchington band was supposed to be at work and was on a late lunch. Therefore it was Birchington representing the Canterbury District who entered the tower first. They rang P.B. Doubles and rang it very slowly. The next band to participate was Wateringbury, representing the Maidstone District. They rang Grandsire Doubles as did Frittenden, who represented the Ashford District. Next for the Rochester District was the band from Rochester Cathedral and lastly the Bexley band representing the Lewisham District. Bexley were more ambitious than the rest of the bands and rang Stedman Doubles, which was very good but as with all Stedman the leading tended to let them down. The Tonbridge District was not represented as they do not hold a District Striking Competition.

The organisation worked very well and at four o'clock the County Chairman, resplendent in his suit (yet again), was rounding up a band to ring the service touch. At 4.15 p.m. the service began with Peter Russell at the organ, for once playing at home, and as Birchington is without a resident incumbent at the moment a retired clergyman from Wakefield conducted the service, he related his own tale of learning how to ring bells during the sermon.

After tea prepared by the local ringers the County Chairman, Derek Carr introduced the judges from the Essex Guild, they were Adrian Knight, Simon Rudd and David Sparling. David gave a review of the afternoon's performances and reported that the judges had spent a very pleasant afternoon in the sunshine. He also made the comment that when the judges had been sat down to tea it was as far away from the door as they could get, was it so that they couldn't escape if the results were not what everybody thought they should be. All the judges said that all the bands gave very creditable performances and the marks were as follows: First - Birchington with 49 faults for Canterbury, second - Bexley with 66 faults for Lewisham, third - Frittenden with 77 faults for Ashford, fourth - Wateringbury with 85 faults for Maidstone and fifth - Rochester Cathedral with 94 faults for Rochester. Therefore the Birchington band were declared the winners and their name will go on the trophy for 1985.

This is becoming very boring to everybody but the Birchington band, they now hold three trophies for striking, the District Striking Cup, the District Call Change Striking Cup and now the County Shield.

During the evening ringing took place at All Saints's, Birchington and on the bells at Quex Park. Derek Carr having caught the "two in hand" bug had another go at mastering the art and nearly scared one poor lady out of her skin. With the fog closing in fast many participants left earlier than normal or was it something to do with a certain Irish boxer, who happened to be fighting that night. All concerned seemed to enjoy the event very much and are now eagerly awaiting next year to see if anyone else can repeat Birchington's feat and pull off the Triple Crown.

P.R.J.

Scouts can't find the pub

The Worcestershire/Shropshire area was the venue for the second 1985 half-yearly meeting of the B.P. (Scouting) Association. Fortunately for some, who underestimated the distance from home, the first tower was cancelled and late arrival at Clifton-on-Teme meant that ringing there was short and we could not really do the bells justice. Next were the well-kept four at Eastham, where "The Family" had their first ring together in a four-bell tower, followed by

Leysters and Middleton-on-the-Hill. Here, in the churchyard, is a unique monument giving thanks for the safe return of all the men in the parish who served in both World Wars (1914-18 and 1939-45).

Lunch was scheduled for Richard's Castle, but none of us could find the recommended pub, so made other arrangements. Afterwards we were directed from the "new" church of All Saints (one bell) up the hill to Saint Bartholomew's and Postman John chatted with the Churchwarden about the village where he delivered her mail before she moved to Shropshire. Rightly we decided to inspect the bells before ringing. They are in a state of decay and, sadly, unlikely to be restored as the church is redundant.

Because we spent longer than planned at Richard's Castle, we were again behind time but continued on to Stanton Lacy, Diddlebury (where Andrew caused much hilarity when he was chased by a dog), Rushbury, where we rang in the dark, and Cardington, by special request of the ex-Cardington (Beds) ringers amongst us.

It was an enjoyable day, during which we rang a variety of methods including rounds, Plain Bob, Grandsire, Reverse Canterbury, and Stedman. Then Olive provided a delicious farmhouse tea to round off the proceedings. Thanks Olive.

The spring meeting is planned for the Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire area and details will be available in due course from Beryl Worsley, 9 Delamare Close, Sandy, Beds. on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. B.R.

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The work of an unknown good man is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground greener.

- Thomas Carlyle



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