

Old Boy has to be prodded awake

On Saturday April 13th the Canterbury District of the KCACR met at St. Mary's Church, Chilham in typical April weather - strong winds, warm sunny spells and showers - well more like torrents. Chilham is a very pretty village and a number of tourists wandered into the church to be puzzled by the sight of various odd-bods waiting for ringing to start.

Once everybody had climbed the not inconsiderable number of steps (puff-pant), ringing duly began. An exciting time was had by all the less-experienced in rounds and call changes and the district chairman fell asleep in Stedman Triples whilst ringing the sixth - he says he likes to stay at the back.

One of the features of the belfry was the loudness of the bells on the stairs with a much quieter sound in the belfry itself. However this was more than amply compensated by the level of talk. Everyone not ringing seemed to want everyone else within ten yards to hear what they were saying.

The service, a shortened form of Evensong with five hymns was taken by the Curate, the Rev. Arthur Soar (worth a mention as he thanked all bellringers for ringing bells as he thinks we are an unseen and unrecognised race). Following this the tea was served in the back of the church despite a low flying bird trapped inside.

There were about 48 people including tea ladies and the travelling gannets from Birchington, who appear at every meeting and have tea-scoffing down to a fine art. However as the next meeting is at their own tower we trust that their guests may get a look-in first.

The business meeting was also held in the Church and went so quickly that when AOB came up, The Old Boy, B. Luck Esq., had to be prodded awake to give his item of news.

The speed of the meeting left everyone bemused and it was some minutes before ringing recommenced. Firm control was exercised by the ringing masters and this fine ring of eight sounded out over the village square into the evening.

I.F.Y.

P.S. The absence of the regular scribe is caused by her gallivanting with the RW Editor (and others) on a long weekend at Hereford. (Supposed to be some sort of ringing school!)

The church in Fleet Street

The following extract is taken from an illustrated history of the *Church of St. Dunstan-in-the-West* which appears to have been written in about 1825. The spelling and punctuation are those used in the publication. The church referred to is, of course, the previous church, which jutted out into Fleet Street and was demolished in 1831, and replaced by the existing octagonal building. The old clock is still there, and is a familiar feature of Fleet Street, having been returned to the church after spending about 100 years in "exile" in Regents Park. The two giants still chime the quarters upon the two small bells which hang in the turret.

There were eight bells in the present tower, and these appear to have been derelict since about 1900. They were taken down and broken up by the Whitechapel Foundry in the early

1960's. The church received in exchange the money for the bell metal, and one stock bell which is hung "dead" for chiming. It is regularly chimed, and is extremely loud, so as to be audible above the din of the Fleet Street traffic. In this it succeeds very well.

I do not know whether the ring of bells which was broken up was the original ring which is described in the old guide - I wonder whether anyone knows this?

In the former ringing chamber are two old peal boards now, sadly, completely indecipherable. There is, however, a rather splendid peal board hanging in the inner vestibule on the ground floor, visible to all visitors to the church. This is resplendent with two upturned bells, and a crown reposing upon a cushion, and records the following peal:

ROYAL CUMBERLAND SOCIETY

On Saturday the 11th of January 1879
Eight Members of the above-Named Society
assembled to Commemorate the 38th
Anniversary of the Revd. Prebendary
Auriol as Rector of this Parish, by
ringing on these bells, Holts Original
One course Peal of Grandsire Triples.
Comprising 5040 Changes in
3 Hours and 4 minutes

— Performers —

W. D. Matthews	Treble	C. T. Hopkins	5
J. Nelms	2	A. Kirk	6
W. Coppage	3	H. Hopkins	7
W. R. Smith	4	T. Essen	Tenor

Composed by Mr. John. Nelms

F. H. Fowler } Churchwardens
H. W. Dalwood }
A. Tisley } Vestry Clerk.

BERNARD R. GILDERSLEVE
Sevenoaks, Kent.

Extracts from

"Views exhibiting The Exterior and Interior and Principal Monuments of the very Ancient and Remarkable Church of ST. DUNSTAN IN THE WEST, in the City of London, to which is added an Historical Account of the Church by The Revd. J. F. Denham, B.A. of St. John's College, Cambridge, Curate of St. Dunstan in the West and Sunday Evening Lecturer of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, etc."

The Church is built partly of stone and partly of brick. It is ninety feet in length, sixty feet in breadth and thirty feet in height, from the ground to the roof, above which rises a disproportioned tower, exactly one hundred feet high.

The tower is furnished with a set of eight very excellent bells: there is also a bell of smaller size suspended in one of the turrets, which is rung every morning at a quarter before seven o'clock. On the walls of the belfry are some records of exploits in ringing, which have been performed here on different occasions, and it may possibly amuse some readers if the memorials of these feats be transcribed.

No. 1

"College Youths - on Monday, March the 12th, 1778, the above society rung in this steeple a true peal of 5184 changes, Double Bob Major, with two bobs in a lead, and performed it in three hours and twenty-four minutes.

"This is the first peal of Double ever completed since the art was invented".

A catalogue is then added, containing the names of the person who rung the different bells.

On bobs, bongs and related matters

I thought, I really thought I was doing quite well. I had mastered plain hunting. It didn't even matter **too** much if they weren't in the same order every time, I could do it, and the world was mine. The Plain Bob Doubles was a bit more of a nuisance, but by feats of memory and frantic recitations I coped on the second, the third and fourth were a little more difficult, as I sat down to memorise both patterns on the same evening, with the result that I am not terribly sure which is which. Then someone shouted "Bob" (actually what was shouted was "Wup", but I am assured that this is a dialect form of "Bob") and my world fell apart. Who was the sadistic creature who thought that one up? How does one cope? Some say count your place, others say think of the time, a third more esoteric group seem to get a feeling in their water. You can tell this group by their sky blue auras, and a crackling mysticism in the air, which all leads to fog between my ears.

The only asset of the nasty things is their wonderful potential for vituperative alliteration. They are haunting my dreams, my innocent slumbers are suddenly broken with the cry "The Bob, the Beastly Bob" and there it squats, leering in the undergrowth. Closely akin to the Jabberwock; in khaki-green with warts on its snout, and big mauve feet. Aaargh. There are some slight indications before it appears. (I put down my book on ringing, and picked up one on body-language, which is more to the point.) If it is Pip who is bellowing the commands, he suddenly assumes an expression of unbelievable innocence, like someone about to pass a dud cheque. Roger (a less urbane character) looks like a stoat after a rabbit. This poor rabbit quivers in mortal dread. Not that they're not very sweet about it, and cope with the effects of panic quite nicely, ranging as they do from hysteria to hideous despair, and, I am ashamed to confess it, outbreaks of naughty temper.

My fevered and muddled brains are in turmoil. The order is given two bongs before it takes place, and how does one think at the same time about where one will be in two bongs time, what metamorphosis must take place, and what will the situation be afterwards. I have tried prayer and alcohol, but believe I shall have to resort to Valium. Perhaps I should just take up basket weaving instead.

If any kindly disposed soul has any idiot proof hints on learning how to tackle a Bob, perhaps they could contact: Worried Brown-eyes of Hascombe. (from *Guildford District Newsletter*)

No. 2

"The Junior Society of College Youths rang in this steeple, January 7th, 1823, a true and complete peal of Grandsire Trebles, consisting of 5040 changes, in two hours and fifty seven minutes, being the first on these bells for forty years".

After the names of the ringers, as before, the churchwardens are added, during whose administration the achievement was performed.

No. 3

"February 10, 1823, was rang in this steeple, by the Society of College Youths, a true and complete peal of Oxford Treble Bob, consisting of 5080 changes, in three hours and eight minutes".

No. 4

"On Tuesday, March 11, was rang in this steeple, by the ringers of St. Saviour's, Southwark, a true and complete peal of Grandsire Trebles, containing 5040 changes, in three hours and three minutes". After the names are given, it is remarked that the above peal was composed of 182 bobs and 58 singles.

No. 5

"Junior Society of College Youths - Rang in this steeple, on Monday 6th of April 1813, a true peal of 5280 changes of Oxford Treble Bob. The above was performed in three hours and fifteen minutes".

No. 6

"Junior Cumberland Society - On Monday, February 23, 1824 was rung the whole complete peal of Grandsire Trebles, containing 5040 changes, in three hours and five minutes".

* * *

In the view which we are now taking of St. Dunstan's Church, in which we do not mean overlook its remarkable clock. It is well known as an object of curiosity, and seldom fails to attract a fresh group of gazers every time, throughout the day, when the quarters are about to be struck by its curious mechanism. It is stated in the parish records that "on the 18th of May, 1671, Mr. Thomas Harrys, then living at the end of Water-lane, London, made an offer to build a new clock with chimes, and to erect two figures of men with pole-axes, whose office should be to strike the quarters. That this clock should be so constructed as to afford one dial plate at the south end of the church, and another at the east end of it".

The whole of this, he proposed to perform, and to keep it in order, for the remuneration of £80 and the old clock; at the same time observing, that his work would be worth £100. He is also recorded to have added these words "I will do one thing more, which London will not know the like, - I will make two hands show the hours and minutes outside the church upon a double dial, which will be worth your observation and to my credit".

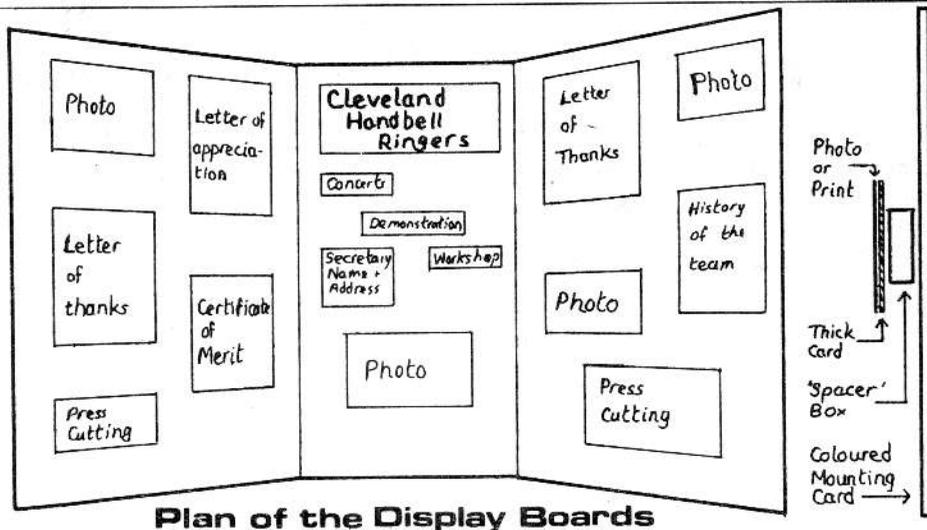
It appears that the vestry finally agreed to give the sum of £35 and the old clock, for as much of his plan as they thought proper to adopt; and on the 28th day of October, in the same year, 1671, his task being completed, the sum of £4 per annum was voted to him to keep it in repair.

Any description here would be superfluous, either of the clock itself, or of the guardian figures, or of their mode of sounding the bells. Whatever St. Dunstan's Clock might have been in the first instance, it is certainly not the only device of this kind extant at the present time in England.

* * *

Among the events which have occurred relative to St. Dunstan's Church, it may be noticed, that in the year 1421, an inhabitant of the parish, whose name was T. Duke, a wealthy skinner, left a sufficient sum of money to build a chapel to be attached to the church. It stands to this day, and occupies the space between the inside of the church, and the outer wall on the side towards Fleet Street. He also left a sum of money for service to be performed therein every morning at seven o'clock, which is the origin of the bell being rung at that hour. It is called St. Katherine's Chapel, at his request; and he was also interred there, agreeably to the directions in his will.

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Plan of the Display Boards

How's your image?

We felt recently that the old saying, about a prophet going unheard in his own land, applied equally to handbell ringers. It occurred to us that the public at large was totally unaware of our existence! There were plenty of invitations to perform away from home, but of late, we had worked very little on our home territory. Ignoring the obvious comment that the locals knew us too well, we planned a publicity campaign.

The major part of the scheme was to prepare a set of display boards (see picture). In our case they featured our work as handbell ringers but they could just as easily be designed around tower bell ringing. The boards were placed in the front window of a local Building Society. The manager was pleased to have something of local interest to draw attention to his windows.

We spent several hours raiding our news-cutting book and sorting through photographs. (As much time was spent in reminiscing as in selecting material!) The basis of the display was a set of photographs, copies of letters of thanks from charities, a brief history of the team with details of our meetings, and the secretary's name and address.

Our local printer made photographic copies of the letters and the history for us and provided

the "Létraset" captions. The bromide prints are more durable and look much sharper than photocopies. The photographs were chosen very carefully. Everyone had to look happy; the prints had to be clear and sharp; they had to show the team in a variety of settings. Once selected, we had ten inches by eight inches prints made and mounted them on stiff card to prevent them from curling whilst on display.

The three boards are about 20 inches by 36 high and link together so as to be self-supporting. On assembling the montage, we did not stick the prints and pictures directly on to the mounting board. Instead, we found some small boxes about the size of cigar boxes. By fixing the prints to the boxes and then glueing the boxes to the mount, all the display material was held out, about three-quarters of an inch from the background. The effect was well worth the effort.

Having checked that once installed, the display could not be tampered with, we set out some souvenirs we had collected over the years. At the front was the silver plated dog given to us for sponsoring a Guide Dog for the Blind. Nearer the back was a special shield presented by the RNLI. At the sides were souvenirs from our recent trip to America. To finish it off we placed a few bells from our "second" set around the edge.

The results were most encouraging. The diary has filled up quite nicely and two or three people have enquired about joining the team. With occasional revisions to keep it fresh and up to date, the display has been re-used in other locations including the local library.

PETER SOTHERAN
Cleveland Handbell Ringers

A record number of teams

Saturday 13th April saw the gathering of ringers from throughout the Devizes Branch of the Salisbury Diocesan for the six-bell striking competition. General ringing took place in the afternoon at Erlestoke and Great Cheverell, both being six-bell towers. Methods ranged from Bob Doubles to Cambridge Minor with some rounds and call changes.

The quarterly business meeting was preceded by a service and tasty tea provided by the ladies at Great Cheverell. Future events were announced and proficiency certificates were awarded to C. Shuttleworth, S. Shuttleworth, D. Whiting and G. Whiting, all of Rowde.

Our judge for the evening, J. Brain, was given a hearty welcome and the draw for order of ringing took place. The number of towers entering had increased during the afternoon and reached 14 by the time ringing commenced. It is believed this is a record number of teams for what is now an annual event.

The result followed ringing with some good constructive criticisms. The results were as follows: First Warminster, second Melksham (A), third Holt. Well done to all those towers who took part.

T.M.D.

