



The Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers



GUILD NEWS

March 2006

All Saints, Basingstoke – a Unique Tower



The generosity of Col. John May to the church is recorded on a brass plaque at the bottom of the tower in the memorial chapel, reading “To the honour and glory of God and as a permanent memorial of the long and close connection of the May family with this town the peal of nine bells in the tower of this church was presented by Lieut. Col: John May, V.D. Anno Domini 1916 Sursam Corda”

Eight or Nine?

The bells are unique in the world being the only diatonic nine hung for full circle ringing anywhere. They were, however never intended to be rung as a nine. The order book from Mears and Stainbank shows the details of the bells, and

Yes, that is the ring of nine! becomes a familiar phrase when you ring at All Saints, Basingstoke. A famous (or infamous) tower among the ringing community.

The Church

All Saints church building was started in 1915, and opened for worship in 1917 as a daughter church to St. Michael's (with the ring of eight). It was paid for by Rev. Alexander Titley Hall, a local clergyman, and was designed by the great Temple Moore. It replaced the “iron church” which had been constructed a few years earlier on the same site. Although built of brick, it is clad in Chilmark stone, giving it a gothic feel. The tower stands on the south east side of the church, and also contains the organ directly beneath the ringing chamber. The nine bells are contemporary with the church, being cast by Mears

and Stainbank as a complete diatonic nine in 1916. The first peal was rung on the back eight on 24th April 1920.

Lieut. Col. May

The church was very fortunate to have the complete ring of bells donated by Lieut. Col. John May a great benefactor to the town. He was Mayor six times during his life, and also donated a clock and tower to the town hall (now the Willis museum). The tower was removed in the 1960's, but the clock is still in place now above the main door of the museum in the market square. The Bounty pub across the road is named, not after the notable ship, but after a piece of land donated by Lieut. Col. May to the town to become a playing field and cricket pitch. The Bounty is a fitting reminder of the May family, being the owners of the local brewery, which stood on the site now occupied by the Anvil theatre.

that “chiming ropes provided for bells Three and Four”, these being the third and fourth of the back 8. The extra treble was provided, and is still used today, for ringing during Advent and Lent, being the treble of a light ring of 8 in the Dorian mode, giving a minor, unfinished sound to the ringing.

The bells were hung, as they are still today in a cast iron, low side frame. The lightest 5 bells were cast with Doncaster cannons, the back four with flat crowns. All are still hung on the original cast iron headstocks.

Peals

The first peal rung on the bells was on the 24th April 1920, Grandsire Triples, and is recorded on a large peal board in the tower. The first Major on the bells was rung 5 year later.

It was not until 1946 and the fifth peal on the bells that all nine bells were

pealed. The first peal on the nine was arranged by Charles Kippin, and was Grandsire Caters on the 16th February 1946. This was followed later in the year on 12th October 1946 by a peal of Kent Treble Bob Major rung with a cover. Until this time the Central Council rules stated that peals of Major were to be rung without a cover bell, and Caters were to be rung covered. These two peals caused much controversy at the subsequent Central Council meeting. The meeting in 1946 following the peal of Grandsire Caters asked the rules be reviewed as a result of the peal. The Kent Treble Bob Major was discussed at the 1947 council meeting, and was rejected outright.

To date about half the peals have been rung on eight (only one on the Dorian eight) and the rest on 9. This includes Grandsire Major and Caters spliced, Stedman Triples and Caters spliced, and a peal that was rejected of Grandsire Triples with eight and nine covering, being rung double handed.

One of the more notable peals of recent times was the "Nine Taylors" peal to mark the 70th anniversary of the publication of the novel of the same name. This was a peal of Kent Treble Bob Major with a cover rung by nine ringers with the surname "Taylor".

Interestingly despite there having been 61 peals on the bells to date, only one has been rung on the light (Dorian) eight, and there has only been one peal of Spliced Surprise Major, which was not rung until 2005!

Modern History

The bells were re-hung in 1980 and again in 2000 by Whitechapel when they were tuned. Up until this point they had been maiden castings, although two had been quarter turned. At the time they were cast there was still much debate about the benefits of modern "Simpson" tuning.

There was once again much debate about tuning the bells in the church at the time of the 2000 re-hang, as this issue was raised very late in the project. With the organ being directly under the ringing chamber, parts of it need to be dismantled to get the bells in and out of the tower. Fortunately the organ was being re-built at this time, so access was easy, and funding soon became available. Those members of the tower involved in the 2000 re-hang will testify to the positive results gained from the tuning.

Ringling Chamber Restoration

With the bells going so well after the re-hang, attention in 2005 turned to the ringing chamber. This was beginning to look shabby with some weather ingress causing paint to peel off the walls, and the large oak peal board splattered with paint from previous re-decorations. With the support of the church, the local band set about a complete re-decoration of the ringing room. Advice was sought from a member of the congregation, the correct type of paint was purchased, and the onerous task of scrapping the old paint, and cleaning the walls began.

After a couple of months work in our spare time during the week and at weekends the ringing chamber looked even worse than it did before we started! Paint missing from large areas, bits of brick missing, and enormous quantities of dust everywhere. At times we wondered what we had taken on, and whether it would all be worth it.

At last the time came to paint. Again, a huge task to make sure we did a good job, from ceiling right down to floor level, round all the alcoves, and trying not to drip the paint everywhere. Bit by bit the ringing chamber improved despite the smell of fresh paint every week. Once the painting was complete the carpet was replaced, swapping our ill fitting 3 layers of carpet for one nice new professionally fitted one.

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Despite the slight problem of the door sticking on the new carpet (resolved very easily with a door saw), the atmosphere in the ringing chamber was lifted. A new notice board and white board, as well as a new blind, matching cushions and a table cloth, made by members of the band gave the finishing touches and at last we had a ringing chamber and bells to be proud of.

As a final step of the restoration, the old peal board was also taken down and shipped off to Bath for a full restoration. Years of dirty and grime, along with splashes of paint from previous redecorations will be cleaned off. Splits in the wood mended, and the faded lettering restored. As a final touch the details of Charles Kippin's first two nine bell peals will be added to it in the two blank spaces at the bottom of the board which have been empty for nearly a century. We are looking forward to welcoming it back in the summer!

Most of this work has relied on donations from members of the church and local band, as well as those with family ties to the church. For all these donations, the band and church are very grateful.

The Current Band

Historically All Saints has been seen as the poor relation in the town, both as a church and as a band. This is partly down to the links and historic relationship with St. Michael's. Despite this, the church has always maintained an active band of ringers, and this is still the case today.

We currently have a band of 13 active ringers with 3 learners just starting out. Ringing on a practice night ranges from rounds and call changes through to Plain and Little Bob

Major and Stedman Triples. On occasions we are also able to take a foray into the realms of Surprise Major. The focus for practice is progression and consolidation of what we can ring well. There are always touches to focus specifically on good striking and listening skills. Sunday mornings we tend to stick to rounds and call changes at present, to ring what we can ring well to the glory of God.

Most members of the band are also members of the congregation/ choir/ server team, so there can be quite a race to get downstairs at the end of Sunday ringing to prepare robes and books before the service starts. Because of this dedication it is rare to ring less than eight on a Sunday morning.

We have also started on a pattern of quarter peals to give everyone something to aim for. These take place before additional services, as well as taking up the first half hour of practice night from time to time (We start the quarters at 7:00pm). In 2005 with these quarter peals as well as visiting bands ringing quarters, a total of 12 were scored on the bells. This is the most in a single year since our tower records of quarter peals began in the early 1960's. They included quarter peals for the World War II and Trafalgar anniversaries as well as for our local confirmation service (when two members of the band were confirmed) and a farewell compliment to our vicar. We aim for the bells to have a place in the life of the local community as well as the church.

To aid progress further we have arranged some joint "learners" practices with the band from St. Michael's currently

focussing on plain Triples and Major and Stedman. These take place twice a month on a Saturday alternating between the two towers in the town.

Ringling as Part of the Church

Partly due to the large number of ringers in the congregation, and partly due to the effort made by the ringers to be a part of the church community, we enjoy a very good relationship with the church. After the re-hanging of the bells, the dedication service included the vicar, in full vestments, climbing into the bells with a Thurible and censuring each one in turn. After the re-dedication of the ringing chamber, again, members of the church were invited to ascend the tower directly after the morning service for prayers of blessing and thanksgiving.

At our annual St. Nicholas fair we open the tower to visitors, and have even hooked up a web cam and television in the tower to show the bells, and a bell ringing. We also try and include something about the tower or the ringers in the monthly church magazine.

Ringling Times

We are always pleased to welcome visitors to our ringing. We practice on a Monday night from 7:30 until 9:00. Please note the door is locked at 7:35 and opened again at 8:00 until 8:05. Sunday ringing takes place from 9:30 until 10:00.

Adam Greenley

Test Valley Bells Ring Out for Nelson & Trafalgar

On Friday October 21st ringers from Lockerley, Broughton and Kings Somborne who often help each other out with bands for weddings and Sunday Services as well as enjoying each other's practice nights, joined forces to ring at all their local churches, to celebrate the life of Admiral Lord Nelson and the victory at the Battle of Trafalgar.

The ringing began at Lockerley in the afternoon, then moved on to East Tytherley, where there were refreshments for the ringers, on to Mottisfont, Broughton and finally Kings Somborne.

At Broughton the ringers were met by villagers who were keen to witness the event. Some of the younger members of the audience showed a keenness to learn the art of bellringing and as soon as the bells were lowered Mike Hayward, tower captain, allowed the youngsters to chime some of them. Band members of the future hopefully.

Representatives from each tower joined the event, which lasted three and a half hours, when work or other commitments permitted.

None of the towers are able to provide a peal band and so the three tower captains, Mike Hayward, Sue Spurling and Jen Churchill, decided to ring in total the equivalent time of a peal in methods and call changes as their modest contribution to the Nationwide effort.

The photograph shows the ringers who rang at Mottisfont:- Mike Hayward, Sue Spurling, Brenda Palk, John Palk, Rachel Rand, Jen Churchill, Heather Harris, Sally Josling, Joy Scanlan, Rosemary Oakeshott and Adam Spurling (behind the camera).

Jen Churchill



Guild Email List

If you do not do so already, you might like to consider subscribing to the Guild email list and encouraging other members to do so too. About 120 members currently subscribe. It is a free automatic distribution system. An email sent from a subscriber to the list is automatically forwarded to all members. It is a useful method of disseminating Guild information. You will not be inundated with mail - there are typically about 4 or 5 a week. It is a private list so you will not be subjected to 'spam' - the list has been running for 5 years now with no such problems. Email addresses are not revealed to the other members, the only people who can see them are the two moderators - Ian McCallion and David Forder.

You can subscribe by sending a blank email to win-port-bellringers-subscribe@yahoo.com or send an email to admin@wp-ringers.org.uk, requesting a subscription. You can easily un-subscribe at any time.

An Evening to Remember at Sparsholt

I read in the Parish Paper that trainee bell ringers were needed at St Stephen's so I went along on a cold January night as I thought to watch the bell ringing practice. John, the Tower Captain, and Angie seemed genuinely pleased to see me. The church was very cold except around the two big radiators that were just the right height to perch on. The area around the bell tower was lit but the rest of the church was in darkness. John explained how the bells work and he shone a large torch through a trap door overhead to show me one of the bells together with its housing. He also demonstrated how to hold the rope in the left hand so that it does not slip and how the right and left hand are used to pull the rope down at the sally (the woollen area on the rope). By this time Coral from Crawley had arrived and again was keen to see a new recruit as I gathered St Mary's is also short of ringers. As they prepared to ring, the church door opened and Edmund came in together with his bike; so the three of them waited and, as I watched fascinated, he worked two ropes into one not appearing to look at what he was doing, all the while exchanging friendly banter with his fellow ringers. I realised that Edmund was going to ring two bells together, one with each hand. Angie led off with an intriguing little phrase and they were off! What a wonderful sound and how utterly fascinating. Everyone concentrating, looking straight ahead and lost in the rhythm and flow of what they were doing. Edmund would call out some numbers and I would hear a subtle change in the peal. It was mesmerising. Eventually they reached the end and all the bells fell silent together. Two more young women had slipped into the church, Lucy from Crawley, and Denise from Sparsholt. While everyone had a break there was a lot of discussion about the re-dedication of the Crawley bells that had taken place the day before. John said to me that it was time I had a go, I was quite apprehensive just having seen what a wonderful team they were but he reassured me that I had got to try sometime. He operated the sally and I held the rope with two hands. So John pulled down on the sally, then the rope and both my hands went up until it is as high as I could reach and then I had to pull it down. Luckily John mostly did this for me as it was quite difficult not to pull too hard. We were ringing bell number three which was half way between the lightest and the heaviest. At one point I hesitated when my hands were high over my head and the sally came crashing down around my ears, which was rather disconcerting, but John seemed to think it is par for the course with a beginner.

I finished my short lesson and someone had found our vicar Juliet's tin of Christmas sweets so we all helped ourselves before the six of them took up positions around the six ropes. Edmund was on the lightest bell and John on the heaviest. Edmund started everything off with the interesting phrase and they were away. Again a privilege to watch and they all finished as one and I had another go, this time on number six bell, the heaviest so that I can feel the difference. John said it is easier to judge the heavy bell than the lighter bells and I agreed with him because I could feel the difference, so some progress!

Another break, lots of chit chat and some helpful tips from Lucy and then a final session. This time Coral who was probably the smallest lady present rang the heaviest bell. I was fascinated by the looks of concentration, all of them counting but not appearing to and the wonderful rhythmic way that their hands were moving. Peter, the Church Warden, had slipped in to lock up and was watching and listening with me

and I felt very lucky to have spent such an enjoyable evening amongst so many friendly and talented people.

As I drove out of the village hall car park my lights picked up a barn owl as it flew from the grassy area behind the war memorial, a fitting finale to a memorable evening. My only regret is that it has taken me so long to realise that such a life enhancing opportunity was right here under my nose!

Barbara Elsmore

Bell Ringing on BBC2

It was not what I expected! I'm not sure how many Channel Island ringers had the misfortune to see the Weakest Link one afternoon in November 2005. To those of you who did see it — I write this to apologise! My name is Gill, and I am a ringer at St. Mark's Church, Jersey. One of my problems is that I am also addicted to BBC Radio Jersey and, if they tell me to do something — I do it!

One afternoon Radio Jersey told us that a research team was coming to Guernsey and Jersey to audition for the Weakest Link. They told us how to apply to be auditioned. They told us to do it and so I did it!! I was most surprised to receive a telephone call, a few weeks later, telling me when and where I would be auditioned. The audition was fun and, afterwards, they told us that they could not tell us if we had been successful, but it could be up to two years before we heard from them if we were required. However, the surprises continued and I received a telephone call just a few weeks later, inviting me to Pinewood Studios to be a competitor on The Weakest Link.

It was the beginning of November. I was flown to Gatwick where a car met me and took me to Pinewood. I met the other competitors, we were interviewed, we had our hair and make up done, and then we were set up in the studio, awaiting Anne Robinson — the Queen of Mean.

The first round went well for me, but then Anne started chatting to us as she found out who we had voted for as the Weakest Link. I suspect that she thought that I would soon be voted out, because she very quickly asked me about my hobbies. I offered her lots of my hobbies — reading, computing, praying, helping with Brownies, etc. but she was waiting to hear of just one. On the television my helpfulness was edited out — it appeared that I answered with just one hobby — bell ringing.

Anne told me to stand to one side, so that I could be seen, and to show her how I rang a bell. I tucked my skirt between my knees, grabbed an imaginary tail end and reached up for the sally. Now — my demonstration could have been good but I have one large disadvantage — I am a very large lady!!

I did my best! Unfortunately, my best was just not good enough. With my shape, I could never make bell ringing look elegant. Anne was fairly rude to me but I did get off fairly lightly. Other competitors were not quite so restrained about my efforts! However, I hope that I did redeem myself at the end of the competition.

To the astonishment of all, I reached the final two and, although I did not win, mine was the comment that ended the programme, telling folk that bell-ringing was a great hobby! Unlikely, I know, but I do hope that my comment might just encourage one or two folk to consider bell ringing as a hobby.

Gill Carter

Gladys D. Matcham

On display at stand number 227 at the 2005 Newbury Ringing Road show was a peal board commemorating the re-ordering and restoration of St. Mary's, Eling. Alas, Gladys D. Matcham, ringer of the treble and Tower Captain since 1990 did not live to see it mounted in the belfry of her church. Gladys and Eling church were inseparable; not only was she churchwarden, but she was organiser supreme of everything that took place in that building. Barn dances, accordion concerts, beetle drives (except that you had to gradually draw a church building and then call out "Alleluia"), flower festivals, church fetes, art displays, boat trips, she could organise anything, and then provide memorable refreshments for these events, as well as popular ringers' teas.

Moving to Totton and adopted by Aunt Lily and Uncle Arthur in the first year of World War 2, she attended Colbury School, Totton Junior and then Testwood Secondary after its conversion from a Fire Training Centre during W.W.2. Her Aunt and Uncle called her "our little Jim", a nick-name which remained with her. She became a Sunday School teacher at St. Mary's, and was confirmed in 1951. She then organised the young communicants to volunteer to help the few call-change ringers in the belfry. Taught to handle by Bob Buchanan they progressed to Grandsire Doubles on the six bells as a result of weekly visits by the Southampton District Secretary, Maurice J. Butler. Up to 2005 the communicants have continued to be organised by Gladys to gather for a yearly lunch at The Pilgrim, Marchwood. Grandsire Doubles were rung immaculately, initiating Gladys's insistence that anything rung on her bells must be immaculate, as those who attend Tuesday night practices will know. So well known was their standard that Eling ringers were chosen by the B.B.C. to broadcast 6 bell ringing on Christmas morning 1972. The group were also drilled in tune ringing on the tower hand-bells, with arrangements made by her best friend and organist Gwen Mackrell. Being bicyclists they ventured out to ring at Fawley, then a ground floor ring with a long draught. Here began a life time friendship with the Smiths, Mary, Lionel, Liz and of course the tower captain "Mr. Smith". Here also began the attachment to her favourite method, Stedman. The group ventured further afield to Romsey practice night, protected, as Mavis White informed me, with a police truncheon in the saddle bag. This was a crucial moment in her life, meeting George Northway, son of ringer Monty Northway and "Mrs. Northway".

When Ruth and I moved to Totton in 1963 and joined Eling band, the newly weds were principal officers, George as tower captain and Gladys as secretary since 1959. We were not the only addition to the band. John Hartless, a British Railway official, had appeared as a result of the Beeching closures. In January 1965 John undertook the sad task of cycling to the homes of the ringers to explain that our tower captain, George, had failed to recover from the operation on the hole in his heart. This tragedy for Gladys in her third year of marriage was not to be the last she would have to bear.

While John Hartless became our new tower captain Gladys threw herself fully into a career involving vehicles. First as director and secretary of Vehicle Repairs at Netley Marsh, then she set up Galloway Autos. After driving tractors and all sorts of commercial vehicles she became the third ringer in the Southampton area to own a car, after Maurice Butler and Charlie Kippin. No longer were ringing outings just on

bicycles. As more ringers acquired cars she organised outings to neighbouring counties, to the far north, and even to Scotland. She rang at a vast number of towers, along with John Hartless and Trevor Matcham. Trevor also became Church Warden, responsible for all structural work for the building, while Gladys, a member of the P.C.C. since 1957, and church social committee, had organised events as listed above. It was therefore inevitable, after ringing numerous quarter peals together, that they were married on 23rd September 1978. The Rev. Bob Southwood, Curate of Fording-bridge and Chairman of the Christchurch and Southampton District officiated.

For several years John Hartless had dreamt of augmenting the six bells at Eling into an octave as at Ringwood, his previous tower and then the centre of Surprise Major ringing in the Guild. Trevor and Gladys enthusiastically organised fund raising and the breakthrough resulted with aid from the newly formed Guild Bell Restoration Fund committee. Because of building works in Bournemouth the tower of Holy Trinity was to be demolished. The clock bells were offered to the committee on condition that they were responsible for lowering and moving them. Organised by Martin Waldron the four bells were moved to St. Michael's, Southampton, where they stood on the floor at the rear of the church for over a year. Eling fund raising was so impressive that the committee answered Gladys's secretarial pleas by offering the largest of the four bells for casting into two treble bells. (One other was converted into two trebles for Brockenhurst, another into two trebles for Upham, and the last for a treble at Selborne.). No 1 bell, 3-1-4l in F# and No.2, 4-2-3 in F, were cast at Taylors Bellfoundry in 1977, to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee. Eling ringers could now practise Grandsire Triples and occasionally Gladys's favourite, Stedman Triples. The insistence on perfect striking paid off when the band entered the Guild 8-Bell striking competitions, and frequently defeated those from Bishopstoke, Portsmouth and even Winchester Cathedral. Trevor constructed a shelf in Eling belfry to take the trophy, and the north wall was covered with framed certificates. In 1977 Gladys became a founder member of the new Southern District of the Ladies Guild. In this organisation she was elected Ringing Master in 1989 and Vice Chairman in 1998. She chaired the most recent meeting in July last year.

After many quarter peals of Grandsire the band was given the impetus to attempt the first peal on the octave when the Church of England Children's Society requested that sponsored peals be attempted nationally to raise funds for their centenary. An added incentive was that each member of the band raising most in sponsorship would be presented with an engraved glass bell. This was the kind of challenge that Gladys enjoyed, and she dragooned the other seven ringers into acquiring more and more sponsors. Ringing the treble on the 9th June 1981, with Trevor on No.4, the peal was conducted by John Hartless in 2 hours and 56 minutes. The sum they raised for the Children's Society easily overtook all the other bands in the country, and then they learned that the presentation would take place in The House of Commons by the Speaker, George Thomas. The engraved glass bell was her pride and joy.

The death of John in 1982 resulted in the automatic choice of Trevor as the new tower captain and steeple keeper, posts in which he had shadowed John for many years. Ringing

flourished with methods up to Cambridge Major attempted. The annual tower outing was so popular that a large coach was easily filled. Trevor re-wired the church and together they planned many changes. The great storm of 1990 was not a time to be out on the roads but Trevor's firm required him to supervise vital work in Scotland, transporting equipment there from Southampton. He was alone in his van on the A34 just south of Newbury when a tree fell directly onto him. Somehow Gladys survived this second tragedy, supported by her life-long friends Gwen and Bryan Mackrell, and particularly by the Vicar, David Grimwood.

In more recent months, suffering terribly from cancer, her participation in ringing became less and less, though sitting out she was quick to correct those standing in a wrong position, or admonish those with unpolished shoes. She was determined to attend the 2005 Guild Ringing Festival so that she could ring at Alderney on the only bells in the Channel Islands that had escaped her.

At the A.G.M. in Guernsey on July 2nd she learned that the Guild wished to award her Life Membership, at which she was overjoyed. Her last ringing at Eling practice night was a touch of Stedman Triples, with me standing behind her "in case Colin goes and calls a Single". Taken to Lymington hospital in July she was visited daily by hordes of friends. In Oakhaven Hospice she was barely able to converse with those who visited but she was delighted when Alan Elsmore presented her with a picture of the peal board marking the re-ordering peal. On 23rd August Andrew Craddock, the Guild Master, visited to present her Life Membership certificate and then Rex Corke and Maurice Bailey joined the Master to ring handbells in her room. She passed away next morning.



The Eling band at the House of Commons - Gladys second from left

The funeral service at Eling on September 1st was attended by a very large number of family and friends. There was standing room only at the rear of the church, and the bells were rung half-muffled by the local band and friends. As the cortege approached the lych-gate, at her request the tenor tolled 68 times for the years of her life. As the coffin left the church a picked band rang a touch of her favourite method, Stedman Triples.

A handbell peal was rung in the ringing chamber at Eling and numerous quarters rung in her memory.

Derek Jackson

Opportunity

Those who have been in ringing a long time like me will know that it is due to others that they have made the progress that they have. I have been fortunate in this direction and cannot too strongly express my gratitude to those who have helped me along the way. My first peal only came about because Frank Harris and his Salisbury band were one short for a peal of Double Norwich at Amesbury, Wiltshire, and Reg Rex was asked to find someone at short notice. The postcard (no telephone in those days) came to me on the Wednesday, I rode my bike the 6 miles to Donington to tell him "Yes", and caught the bus on the Saturday to Andover at 10 o'clock. Then another to Salisbury via Amesbury, and arrived in time for a 3 o'clock start going back the same way arriving home at 10 o'clock.

The opportunity for my first peal of Surprise came the same way, on a Roving Ringers reunion in Birmingham. George Fearn was one short on the Sunday morning for a peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major at Hanbury (of Archers fame). In the afternoon, we went there by bus, rang the peal and went straight back to Birmingham. And so my first Surprise peal was with the Birmingham band.

Cambridge Royal came my way in the same way. Attending my first Guild Executive Committee meeting, when ringing took place at St Michael's Southampton afterwards, I took the opportunity to ring my first course of London No 3 Surprise Royal, Charles Kippin and Reg Reed followed me down the tower and asked me to ring in a peal of Cambridge Royal at North Stoneham two weeks later. It was to be a Guild Officers peal, and was rung for the dedication of the George Williams Bookcase at St Mary's Southampton. I was in the right place at the right time for the third time.

After this, I made my own opportunities; a letter to George Fearn and he organised my first peal of Yorkshire Surprise Royal at Birmingham Cathedral. The same weekend I rang at St Martin's Bullring, and Bishops Rider (no longer there) with its sloping floor. James George, who had a wooden leg, had been unable to retain his balance, so they tried nailing his leg to the floor; however, even doing this they still lost the peal.

We also rang at Lichfield Cathedral the same Sunday, so I came away with one peal and three new towers, having rung at the Cathedral before, when I rang my first three leads of Kent Treble Bob Royal.

When not using public transport my push bike was my main means of getting from A to B. And on a January day in 1955 I set off on snowy roads to cycle to Overton. I was alright on the back roads, but on the main roads partly melted and slushy conditions were impossible; so I abandoned the bike at Old Burghclere Station and took the train and then the bus to Whitchurch. Getting back was not so easy after Whitchurch, only one way - walk. The 10 miles took around four hours, one step forward, two back and I met only two cars going in the opposite direction. The worst walk of my life. That peal of Bristol will live with me every time I ring the method. That road is only a back road now, but it brings back memories every time I use it.

From then it has all been opportunities. I owe so many people for those opportunities; the latest, a 16 bell peal, something I thought I would never do. To all those many people, a sincere "Thank you". Without you I could not have done it.

Geoff Dodd

Basingstoke's Bishop Blesses Bells

Even though as ringers, we see quite a number of bell restoration schemes across our Guild each year, it's easy to forget that for each parish, their own scheme is often a once in a lifetime event or even rarer. In some places it can be a once in a century occurrence, particularly in smaller churches where, perhaps the bells have enjoyed rather less regular use and attention. So it has been at St. Mary's Crawley. Crawley lies in a gentle fold of the western arm of the Hampshire downs, about five miles west of Winchester, between the A272 to Andover and the B3049 to Stockbridge. This leaves it slightly off the beaten track and as a result Crawley is a peaceful and picturesque village, with pretty thatched cottages, a duck-pond and manor house. Crawley is also a major location for telecommunications giant Arqiva (formerly NTL), based at Crawley Court. NTL were major benefactors to the project.

St. Mary's Church is a small, homely building, its atmosphere redolent of the worship of countless generations. Its relatively small western tower houses a ring of five bells, all of which came originally from the Aldbourne (Wiltshire) foundry. These include two fairly rare examples of the work of John Stares, who held the foundry for a period of about 3 years from circa 1744 following the death or retirement of the last of the famous Cor dynasty – John Cor. Stares' tenure seems to have lasted only until about 1746, during which year he cast the fourth and tenor for Crawley. By 1751 bells from Aldbourne were being cast by Edward Read, and by 1760 the famous Wells family had taken over to launch the second great era of bell founding in northeast Wiltshire. Bells by Robert Wells (3rd in 1789) and James (Treble and 2nd in 1802) completed Crawley's ring down until 1900 when they last received major professional attention. In that year John Warner and Sons recast the second and rehung the bells in a six-bell low-side cast iron frame with oak cills, and on elm stocks with plate gudgeons running in plain bearings. Such however was the squeeze to fit in the five that the sixth pit has never been filled, and with an even smaller space at ground floor level where the bells are rung, this is probably fortuitous for those ringing them.

All the indications are that Crawley settled again into tranquillity. Short-lived bands were formed and dissolved; the bells rung for occasional festivals and weddings chiefly by visitors. And so it might have continued but for it becoming, in the 1990s the centre of bell handling demonstrations by Gail Cater as part of the residential ringing courses run annually at nearby Sparsholt College. Many readers, as relative newcomers to ringing, will recall Gail's immaculate handling and then, simulator turned up, will have struggled to match her expertise both in handling and in even-ness of striking.

These annual sessions, and periodic visits by the Winchester District led to stirrings locally. Ringers from neighbouring Sparsholt, another tower in the united benefice, having had their own bells refurbished and augmented just a couple of years previously, provided ringers for 'Ring-in 2000'. And in 2001, the Belfry Stewardship Committee of the W&P DG contributed the labour to fit all new pulleys and enhance the roping of the bells. Gail then undertook to train a new local band from among the growing number of interested villagers. Their increasing confidence was matched by a growing appreciation that the gear of their ring was nearing the end of its working life. A further hiatus occurred in 2003, when

a hairline crack in the crown of the 3rd began to run towards the shoulder and inscription band, necessitating rapid removal and welding in Newmarket to avoid further damage. However, rather than dampen local enthusiasm, the Crawley band resumed ringing on their five bells with renewed zeal and with a commitment to fully restore the installation. This was achieved during 2005 when the bells were taken down and removed to Whitechapel for tuning, and to be rehung with largely new gear in the overhauled frame.

This 'once in a century' event came to its climax on Sunday 7th January, when a packed church of over 100 members of the local congregation and visiting ringers witnessed the rededication conducted by Rt. Rev. Trevor Willmott, Bishop of Basingstoke. The service, led by Rev. Juliet Montague, Rector of Crawley, Littleton and Sparsholt with Lainston, was typical of these occasions, particularly in rural communities, with a wide range of contributions - choir, readers, singing etc. adding to the sense of occasion and festival. Special guests Bob and Gail Cater were thanked for making the long journey from North Yorkshire, as they joined the Guild Master (Drew Craddock), BRF Trustee (Jack Walters) and other members representing the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild, which also contributed to the work.



After Bishop Trevor had rededicated the bells and handed them over to the local band to use in the service of God, a local member read 'Ring Out, Wild Bells' by Alfred Lord Tennyson after which Crawley Ringers rang creditable rounds and call changes – always a nerve-racking moment, especially for more inexperienced bands. His sermon was thought provoking and challenging - reminding us that the ringing of our bells in changes out into the community is an echo of the role we must play in our Christian lives; changing, adapting, always looking to new ways to serve, always responding to the new promptings of the Spirit, always reaching out to others with the news of Grace and Salvation. He also took time out to extend thanks to all who had contributed to the project in time, energy or finance, reminding all that churches across the country continue to benefit from the generosity and unstinting efforts of local communities.

Excellent refreshments provided by the PCC and further open ringing drew proceedings to a close. Another ring of bells restored, and another 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for a community to put its bells literally at the centre of things.

Phil Watts

Richard Hamilton Green

21/8/46 - 6/11/05

Richard learnt to ring at his school, Marlborough. He came home to Curdridge eager to show off his new skill, but apparently he wasn't a great hit with Bill Ryves who was tower captain at the time. So he joined the Shedfield band where he helped several learners to progress, and frightened a few others away. He was a big man with a big voice, and rather scary when you first encountered him.

After leaving school Richard went to Law College in Guildford and was articled to the firm of Ronald H Cross & Fiddes where he practised as a solicitor until the mid seventies. The writer was not the only ringer to receive unpaid professional help and advice from Richard. He had a very sharp mind (and occasionally tongue) and found advanced methods fairly easy. That and a good ear, which meant he could put his bell in exactly the right place, meant that he was in demand for the W&P peal band, which was active in the Southampton area in the early 1970s.

Richard rang his first peal (which was for the W&P) at Titchfield in April 1964. This was the first peal on the bells since their rehangng and Richard's peal book records it as the first peal of Plain Bob minor on the bells. The peal was conducted by the late Charlie Bassett; also in the band was Betty Daysh. Richard's first peal of surprise (Yorkshire) was scored in 1966 at Edenham for the Society of Sherwood Youths, conducted by Simon Humphrey. Richard soon moved on to spliced surprise major and on 19 July 1972 achieved 23 methods, all the work with 160 changes of method at Codsall, Staffordshire the band being John Colliss, Kate Maundrell, Tony Smith, Bill Perrins, John Longridge, Roy Le Marechal and Tim Collins. This was Richard's 166th peal. Richard repeated 23 spliced surprise major in March 1974 at East Tytherley with David Dewar, Tony Smith, John Colliss, Graham Nabb, Barry Fry, Bill Perrins, and Roy Le Marechal This was the first 23 spliced for the Guild by a resident band and something they had been trying to achieve since an Oxford Guild band had rung 32 spliced at Overton for the W&P on 21st June 1969. It appears that Richard's last peal was at Swanmore on Christmas Eve 1989, his 251st peal.

Richard was also quite a keen tower grabber and organiser of outings, peals and peal tours and he had an almost photographic memory when it came to recalling details of bells. He could usually remember the founder, weight, and quality of any ring of bells he had visited.

Richard was the Guild's first elected report editor and produced the reports for 1972 and 1973 which re-introduced annual rather than triennial reports for the first time since 1956. His other Guild posts were Portsmouth District ringing master (with Ted Colley) in 1972 and 1973, and Honorary General Secretary of the Guild in 1974 (for just long enough to get a ticket to John Taylor's enthronement as Bishop of Winchester at Westminster Abbey to grab the tower). Richard was also a Guild Life Member. He attended the Millennium Dinner at Winchester Cathedral refectory in 2000, organised for Life Members and Senior Members and was one of 5 Guild Secretaries present.

Late 1974 was quite a turning point when Richard, David Dewar and Martin Waldron decided to go to Birmingham for the University Ringers' Dinner. David Dewar moved to Birmingham soon afterwards, and later met his wife Hilary. At a party after the event, Richard decided he needed a break from 'soliciting'. He handed in his notice and took himself off on what became extensive travels, initially to Europe and then around the world. He kept up ringing when he could and rang peals in Australia and New Zealand. He returned home to Curdridge in the late seventies and spent a while

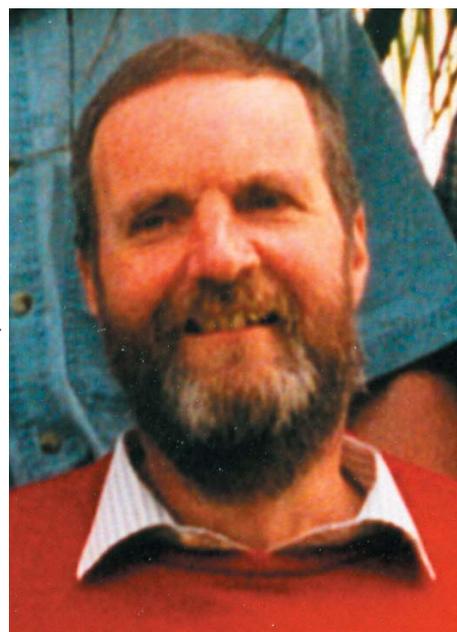
helping Martin Waldron with his coal business, but then went to Huddersfield Polytechnic as a mature student to study Geography and continued to ring, largely with members of the Archdeaconry of Halifax Guild. After gaining his degree he moved back home and to part time work at Cross & Fiddes.

Richard had never been very steady on his feet, but that didn't seem out of place and most people probably put it down to his size and awkwardness (which could sometimes be quite extreme in various ways!). However, in the early 1980's, after watching a television documentary about the cellist Jacqueline du Pré, Richard realised that he probably had multiple sclerosis and his doctor confirmed that diagnosis. Later his mother became quite frail and moved into a care home in Burrigde. Richard had been gradually reducing the hours he spent at work and, as his MS symptoms made him less mobile, he decided to retire completely. Although he experimented with ringing from his wheelchair, this wasn't very successful and so he gave up ringing although he still took great interest in it including visits to churches where Martin Waldron was doing rehangng work. The last time Richard is thought to have rung from his wheelchair was when Brimpsfield bells were tried after they were rehung by Whitechapel.

Richard was a great supporter of the Guild Bell Restoration Fund, especially in its early years, and gave financial support and encouragement to the plans for new bells at Swanmore, Bishopstoke and Botley. In recent years Richard had been on several sailing trips with the Jubilee Trust and other trips abroad indulging his love of travelling, art, architecture and music, but much of his spare time after he gave up ringing was devoted to the support of asylum seekers. He visited detainees at Haslar, was a supporter of Amnesty International and put in many hours of voluntary work at the Portsmouth offices of Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) where he was always pleased when he managed to get bail for one of his 'clients'.

Richard's death came quite quickly in the end. He had been complaining about pains in his shoulder which meant he hadn't been able to get into his car for several days. He was admitted to hospital with pneumonia on Wednesday 2 November and died peacefully the following Sunday morning with members of his family with him.

Richard wanted to live his life to the full (as his disability allowed), particularly on behalf of others, and his courage and determination enabled him to achieve this. He was generous to others with both his time and money and he will be much missed by those who knew him.



Andrew Case

George Williams' Notebook

Part 2

This is the second part of extracts from George Williams' ringing notebook edited by Derek Jackson. *{Derek's comment are displayed thus}*

Page 10 - Soberton to sleep, well do I remember friend Harry tumbling into the nettles when attempting to dismount at the last hill fairly done up – oh no nothing nothing else – this is [over 23 *{Crossed out}*] nearly 38 years ago mind & we had ridden over 60 miles in addition to the peal. *{On the display card about Droxford, above, it mentions that George did much travelling on his penny farthing, peddling each week the 16 miles to Holy Rhoad in Southampton where he could ring plain courses of Grandsire Triples}* The next day the 28th *{Actually 27/08/1889}* was also eventful for several of our Guildford friends had arranged to meet us at Soberton for a peal this meant a 14 mls drive each way from Petersfield – no Meon Valley line at that time of day mind you *{The Meon Valley line, between Alton and Fareham, opened on 1st June 1903. It was famous for the viaduct with 4 x 56 feet steel spans above West Meon village, the longest tunnel in Hampshire, 1058 yards in length, and for the A272 even today tunnelling under the very high embankment near Privett. The history of this line fails to mention the use of Soberton station by George and his ringers for many peal attempts! Alas the line closed to passenger traffic on 7th February 1955}* Well we met & rang the peal *{He fails to mention that the inevitable Holt's Ten-Part was called by Henry White on the second, his first of many as conductor}* and our Guildford friends had ample time to catch their return train, but I was told one of the company more

Page 11 - anxious than the rest to make sure of getting back, and getting uneasy by [talking of *{Crossed out}*] sundry stoppages on the road insisted on the driver obeying his orders at Westmeon, the consequence being that instead of taking the direct route of 8 miles through Eastmeon, they took a circuit of about 12 via Westmeon Hut & Privett arriving at Petersfield to find the last train for Guildford had left. There may be someone here able to describe the consternation which followed but I believe as I have been told that all spent a fairly good night at Petersfield & arrived safely at Guildford by 1st train in the morn. *{The line from Portsmouth to Waterloo, via. Petersfield and Guildford was, and is, frequently used by ringers attempting peals or attending practices. Electrified since July 1937 it was in 1889 steam powered by the London and South Western Railway since its opening on 1st January 1859. George frequently recalled how John J. Jones, one of his peal band and printer of all early Guild Reports, would describe the "Battle of Havant", fought on 28th December 1858. Apparently the line from Havant to Portsmouth was built on top of the old Portsmouth to Arundel Canal by the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. When L.S.W.R. extended their line from Godalming to Havant in 1858 they assumed running rights over L.B.S.C.R.'s tracks into Portsmouth. On 28th December they sent a train of trucks packed with L.S.W.R.'s 'heavies', including two of John Jones tenor ringers, to join the tracks together. The L.B.S.C.R.'s 'heavies' meanwhile disconnected the track behind this train, then the track in front, after which battle commenced. Peace was restored on 2nd January 1860 with this section of track owned and maintained jointly.}*

Page 12 - Myself & friend Harry spent another good night at Brockbridge cycling as fresh as larks in the morning for Farnham 25 miles where an excellent struck peal of Grandsire

was tapped off in the evening. *{28/08/1889, Holt's Ten-Part in 2h 54m. The footnote reads "Mr Barnett started to call this peal, but gave way to G.W." This is peal number 61 in the Guild Peal Book, four of which are recorded out of sequence. It is number 54 in George Williams' own peal book. Of the 61 in the Peal Book 10 do not appear anywhere in Guild Reports}*

{Again George fails to mention that he and Martha moved to Brighton in 1889 and lived there until they returned to Hampshire at Easter time 1905. As principal conductor of the St. Peter's Company his peal total had increased from 54 to 650}

This brings me to over the 1st 50 peals by the Guild during a space of about 10 years I will conclude now by only just mentioning that you will find the 1st peals rang in the more advanced methods by the Guild are as follows

DN Crawley Sept 12/91 *{George conducted his own composition of 5088 in 3h 1m}*

Sup S Crawley May 5/94 *{George conducted Henry Dains' 5088 in 2h 56m}*

{The last entry in the third Guild Peal Book is for 14/11/1896, followed by many blank pages}

Camb S Soberton Oct 3/98 *{George conducted Middleton's 5056 in 3h 6m}*

London S Portsea July 8/99 *{George conducted Washbrook's 5088 in 3h 20m on the old octave, augmented from the six in the old church of St. Mary's, Kingston in 1889. Alas this peal, and one other, were omitted from the relevant Guild Report. They were printed in the 1901 Report and numbered 340A and 343A. Due to this, and previous omits, peals from 1902 onwards in Guild Reports should have 10 added to their printed number}*

The 1st peal of DN rang in Hants was

Page 13 - Dec 26/1892 on the fine ring of 8 at Christchurch Priory & now aug md to ten. *{Conducted by George in 3h 27m on the tenor, he records it in his Peal Book as Dains's 5024. The Guild Peal Book records it as 5040}*

I hope some of these remarks may have been interesting to some of our young ringers and by which they will understand the difficulties we had to encounter 30 years ago. Fancy some of you not having an opportunity to stand in a peal till over 26 years of age, am afraid you would lose heart but thank goodness I did not or should not be here today and I may say when away from home my most enjoyable time is amongst ringers Remember these few remarks are mainly on the fascinating side of peal-ringing but I say

Page 14 - speaking as a church Bell ringer I always make a point of turning up to ring for each service on a Sunday, just in the same way as I go to my daily occupation, and I think its no [more *{Crossed out}*] less than any incumbent can expect of his ringers that they endeavour to attend one of the services. And I think if a ringer is a conscientious thinker he will feel it his duty on principle.

G Williams

Elected a performing member 25th Feb 1880

Attended 2nd annual meeting 28th July 81

Major Events in Over 60 Years of Ringing.

The first Major event must surely have been to handle a bell on my own; my teacher was frightened of the bell, so this was not a good beginning. A change of teacher made all the difference, and after six frustrating months. I was able to ring for my first Sunday service.

After two years of call changes, I finally mastered the treble to Grandsire Doubles after going to Woolton Hill to learn it. So my second major event was my first 720 on this bell, 720's seemed to be the done thing in those days, rather than quarter peals. It was some three years before the first quarter peal came, Bob Major, and this was after a failed peal attempt on the 24th of April 1948.

There were four more failures before that first peal came along, and that was with a Salisbury Guild band at Amesbury, Wiltshire, on December 18th 1948. It took all day to get there by bus and to get home again. 50 years later, I went down there again and rang the same bell to the same method, but with a different conductor, the same conductor had rung in my 25th anniversary peal at Highclere as Amesbury bells were out of action. I had called it then with the same composition, the method Double Norwich Court Bob Major, except for the 30th all those since have been at Amesbury on the 35th, 40th, 45th and 50th. A change of method from the Double Norwich when we rang Amesbury Surprise for the 55th. In three years time, I hope to go back for the 60th and back to the Double Norwich for the last time. All since have been for guilds other than the Salisbury, including one for our own Guild.

The major events came thick and fast after that. On February 10th 1951 my first peal as conductor, Grandsire Doubles at Highclere with five first-pealers including my instructor ringing the tenor behind. Six days earlier I had rung my first peal of Surprise at Henbury, Worcestershire, with a band from the Birmingham area. George Fearn had asked me in the Lyons cafe where all the peals were fixed up in those days; I was there attending a Roving Ringers Reunion being the only one staying over. This was my big chance and I did not mess it up.

With plenty of cheek in those days, two years later, I wrote to George, asking him if he could fix up a peal of Yorkshire Surprise Royal for me and a fellow ringer Dick Curry, who rang at Winchester Cathedral. This he did and we both rang our first of Yorkshire Royal at Birmingham Cathedral in company



The successful band at Bishopstoke - Matt on the right

with another up-and-coming youngster Peter Border.

It was the start of other major events too numerous to mention them all, my first on 12, Grandsire Cinques at Winchester Cathedral for the coronation. 50 years later, I was back there again ringing Grandsire on the 14 for the Queen's 50 years on the throne.

London Major came in 1954 at St Michael's Basingstoke, the London Royal soon followed at North Stoneham. After several failures with other conductors with Stedman Caters and Cinques I decided I would call my own first in both. The Cinques came first at St Lawrence's Reading followed by the Caters at St Nicholas Guildford. I had already rung the Doubles at Bentworth, but called my first at Longparish.

But it was not only the peals that were the major events in my life, ringing at towers for the first time like Hurstbourne Priors, Sydmonton, Chute Forest and Gosport was always a thrill, especially as with two of them it was 60 years or more since they had been rung, and in the case of Chute Forest, which were later transferred to Upper Chute, they had probably never been rung.

From a tiny acorn grows a mighty oak, at East Kennard, a 23 cwt. Five, we rang the bells for a service, then stayed for it. As a result, the bells were re-hung and are rung on a fairly regular basis, a similar story at St Burian Cornwall. I was not involved there but the four existing bells had two more bells added, one being a 37 cwt. tenor making them the heaviest six, although Queen Camel overall, has the extra weight.

But I suppose the biggest event in my life out-classing the strapping of the tenors at Exeter and Liverpool is keeping the ringing at Highclere alive for the 52 years that I have been captain there. Those five first-pealers for the Grandsire doubles at Highclere in 1951 have escalated over the years, and the first-pealers I have helped over this milestone far outweighs my own personal achievements. What we in the country call spadework, long may it continue.

Geoff Dodd

Is This A Record?

On Saturday 18th February, at 18:15, Matt Swain started his first ringing lesson. It was at Bishopstoke, Hants, under the tutorship of Roy LeMarechal. At 13:40 on Saturday 25th February, 6 days, 19 hours and 25 minutes later, Matt completed his first quarter peal. If anybody knows of any ringers who have progressed faster than this, Roy would be pleased to hear of them. Until then he would like to claim this as the fastest anybody has gone from first lesson to first quarter peal.

Bishopstoke, Hants. 25 Feb 2006. 1260 Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles. Stephanie F LeMarechal 1, Rhiannon J Matthews 2, Christopher J Stubbington 3, Graham J Wright 4, Roy LeMarechal (C) 5, Matthew P Swain 6. First quarter - 6.

To prove it was no fluke, the following day Matt rang his second quarter peal, still less than 8 days after his first ringing lesson.

Hursley, Hants. 26 Feb 2006. 1260 Stedman Doubles. Rhiannon J Matthews 1, Graham J Wright 2, Janice E Higgins 3, Andrew G Craddock 4, Roy LeMarechal (C) 5, Matthew P Swain 6. For evensong.

John Hunt (1927 - 2005)

The many peal boards in the W&P Guild bearing John's name bear witness to his ability and enthusiasm for ringing, and the tributes paid to him at his funeral were an indication of the respect in which he was held.

He learnt to ring in 1943 at Titchfield, leaving the choir to take up the exercise while many ringers were away in the services. He learnt quickly, ringing his first peal, of Plain Bob Major, a year later at Alverstoke. He became a very competent method ringer and conductor, on both tower bells and hand bells and rang his first peal of surprise and first as conductor the following year. Altogether he rang a total of 350 peals and 1448 quarters.

On his 21st birthday he met the lady who was to become the love of his life, Blanche Ball. The bench in Wickham churchyard, where they did much of their courting, now overlooks his grave.

John and Blanche were keen cyclists as well as ringers and at one time they visited and rang at a different tower every day of the week.

Although his ringing was frequently interrupted by periods when he was working abroad, he found time to become District secretary and later Ringing Master - first for the A&P district, and then for the Portsmouth district. During this time he visited every tower in the District, set up regular Surprise practices and organised peals and quarters for everyone who wanted to ring, or needed a conductor. He was an excellent conductor with an uncanny knack of being able to tell when someone was about to make a mistake and to preempt them. He also had a reputation, achieved by few others, for being able to make himself heard anywhere - even above the sound of the bells at Curdrige before the sound proofing was improved!

John's ringing came to an abrupt end in 2003, when he suffered a massive heart attack. Sadly, he never regained his health, although he retained his interest in ringing, and was delighted when his grandson, Max, expressed a desire to learn. Max is learning at Catherington and John was able to come and listen to him during a practice night. Despite being unable to climb up to the ringing chamber, he was still able



John Hunt, circa 1952

to tell us the methods and the compositions of all the touches that we rang that evening!

John did not live to know that his son Ian is now joint District Ringing Master of the Portsmouth district, though he would, no doubt, have been immensely pleased and proud.

Our sympathy goes to Blanche and all the rest of John's family. RIP.

A Bit of Isle of Wight History!

Thursday 9th February 2006

Brook Hill House, Brook, Isle of Wight

1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1-2 David Weir
- 3-4 Susan Mansfield
- 5-6 Stephen Noyes (cond)

First in hand:3-4; First in hand (but not double-handed):1-2; First minor in hand as conductor, and first in hand for 25 years:5-6; First in hand by Isle of Wight District; First in hand in the County; First on the bells.

Sue writes "We had two practices together before attempting the quarter. We had one false start but on our second attempt got into a good rhythm and before we knew it we had completed the 1260 changes in 35 minutes!"



l-r David, Sue and Stephen

New Clappers as Part Payment for Re-furbished Ones!

The Lightest ring of 6 Quarter Pealed

As steeple keeper at Alverstoke it was becoming apparent that our clappers showing signs of wear were in need of some attention. After reporting this at the Tower AGM this year, I was asked by the PCC how much it would cost. So I set about getting a few quotes. I sent off emails to the 3 nearest bell hangers, who were Whites of Appleton, Nicholson Engineering in Bridport, and Matthew Higby Bellhangers Ltd in Chilcompton.

I had no response from Whites at all; I guess they didn't get my email. I received a good quote from Nicholson's, which was quite detailed and I had almost decided to go with them when I had a quote from Matthew Higby. His quote was considerably less than Nicholson's, and Matthew made the quote even cheaper by asking me to do a favour for him.

Matthew Higby, as many of you know, has successfully marketed the so called "Mini-Ring"; since 1991 he has made over 50 rings for customers of up to 12 bells of varying weights. One of his inventions is the "Micro-Ring" which is a transportable ring of 6 with the tenor of around 7oz. Despite his best efforts the clappers never worked properly, although well engineered, and based on his successful Mini-Ring clappers, somehow the laws of physics change when applied to much smaller bells. Matthew had been so impressed by how well my Jack & Jill type clappers worked that he wanted me to make him a new set as part payment for re-bushing the clappers from Alverstoke.

I accepted his offer because not only would I be saving the church a great deal of money, but also I couldn't resist the challenge. There was another consideration for me, this was the time taken to do the job; I wasn't really prepared to have our bells out of action for several weeks, so I stipulated that the job should be completed within 4 days if I delivered and collected the clappers myself. Matthew told me that it shouldn't be a problem.

I decided to wait until the wedding season was over before going ahead just in case things didn't go according to plan. In the meantime Matthew delivered the Micro-Ring to me on Saturday 1st October when he was with a visiting band to Jack & Jill. After they had gone I set the Micro-Ring up under my carport to assess the situation. The bells were very quiet indeed (especially the front 2), the sound was also "dead" in that they had virtually no hum, and to cap it all they were extremely odd struck. No wonder Matthew wanted something to be done.

I contacted Ben Carey and asked if he would be up for a couple of Quarter Peals "before and after" for the Quarter Peal month. He was very keen and came round to have a look at them after ringing on Sunday 2nd October with Ian Hopkins. Together with daughter Lizzie we rang a plain course of Grandsire Doubles and it became apparent that a Quarter Peal would be a complete waste of time, because you could only hear the back 2 bells over the rope noise. So I dismantled the clappers and set about making the new set. We would just have to have the "after" Quarter Peal.

In the event the job was a little trickier because the bells are smaller than mine. I had always considered that the front 2 at Jack & Jill were on the outside edge of working properly. I was a little concerned that the front 4 were too small to be

completely successful.

However within a week the job was complete and on the evening of Monday 10th October, my wife Moira, Lizzie and I double handed all 6 to a few rounds, We were all amazed with the difference compared with how they sounded just a week before. I took the Micro-Ring to the Narnia practice on 16 October and set them up in the Midways garage and they had another try out.



The microring 1/4 peal band

The following Tuesday 3 Houghs and 3 Careys rang the first Quarter Peal on the bells since they were hung over 4 years ago. We decided to play it safe and ring Plain Bob Minor, and in the event it turned out to be a very good Quarter Peal, although the bells were a bit tricky being so light and rung with tiny ropes. We found them easy to strike and a pleasure to ring. I took the Micro-ring home and re assembled it under the carport where it stayed until Remembrance Sunday when we pick up the conclusion of this story.

Alverstoke Clappers re-bushed in record time!

The same founder (Taylors of Loughborough) cast the bells at Alverstoke on 2 different dates. The treble 4th and tenor were cast in 1905, and the other 5 bells in 1919. There has always been some mystery about how it all came about; we know that in 1905 there was 5 bells hung in the new tower, which were the 3 new bells and 2 old bells from the old church. These 5 bells would have made up the Westminster Chime for the new clock.

I was always under the impression that the 1905 bells were originally hung dead, and that the 1919 bells were provided with a new frame and the 1905 bells re-hung for ringing into what we have today. But I found out that the 1905 bells were in fact hung for ringing in the existing frame when first installed. This I found out when I removed the clappers on Remembrance Sunday morning (13 November); the 1905 bells had the earlier type of clapper, which I was completely unaware of.

I had left the chimes on so that I could observe the 2 minutes silence at 11.00am. By 11.30 all the clappers were removed and lay on the bell chamber floor ready to be lowered down to the ringing chamber and carried to the car. I went home to fetch Moira for some assistance, we brought a load of rags and old sheets to protect the carpet against the grease that had amassed all over the clappers over the last 86 -100 years.

Moira and I lowered the clappers into the clock chamber first and then into the ringing chamber. Then we carried them down the spiral staircase one by one and loaded them into the car. After which time we popped in at home and loaded up the Micro-Ring and we were off.

One thing was for sure; the clappers had never been re-bushed in their lifetime. The only time that they could have been serviced was when the bells were re-hung on ball bearings in 1971. Being a former employee of Taylor's I would think that the clappers never left the tower, because everything that passed through Taylor's doors left with 2 thick coats of red paint. Our clappers were a very faded grey and the headstocks were red before they were last painted, so the bushes had done very well considering.

I had tried to contact Matthew throughout that week, I was aware that Matthew and his wife Charlotte were expecting their first child any day. Eventually I got hold of him the day before we were due to remove the clappers, the baby still hadn't arrived. We were still ok to go ahead. He gave me details on how to find his works and we agreed to meet there that afternoon.

We arrived at Matthew's works at about 3pm. Matthew was there to greet us and made us both a cup of tea. We set up the Micro-Ring and tried them out. Matthew was delighted with the improved clappers; I had fulfilled my side of the bargain now it was his turn.

We unloaded the clappers and then dropped in at his mother's house where he worked from before moving into his new works earlier this year. This is the home of the Chilcompton Campanile 10bells 11lb, I was keen to ring there as they were the very first ring to be cast and hung by Matthew. We had a quick go on his bells before making our way back home.

I was due to pick the clappers up on Thursday 17 November (only 4 days later), the day before I tried ringing him but he was never there, his mobile was on answer phone and I had no reply. On the Thursday morning I tried again, at last I managed to get through! The baby had still not arrived, and the clappers were not quite finished. He seemed confident that they would be finished by the end of the day.

Moira was busy so I had to travel down to Chilcompton on my own this time, and pick the clappers up (don't laugh) in the Smart Car! It was a bit of a gamble but I was confident that the little 600cc turbo charged engine could cope with the extra load. I arrived there by 4.45pm. Matthew and his 2 employees were putting the finishing touches to the job. They had only time to give the clappers one coat of undercoat, which wasn't quite dry.

I loaded up the car, putting the back 3 clappers over the front passenger seat, and the front 5 in the boot space. I left at 5.20pm, and arrived back in Gosport at 7.20pm. The little Smart car didn't struggle at all; in fact I think she even enjoyed it! I went straight to work unloading the car and carrying the clappers up the tower.

The most exhausting thing was carrying the clappers up the stairs; it drained the energy from my legs faster than anything. In comparison pulling the clappers through the trapdoors by rope was a doddle! By 9pm I had the front 5 clappers back in the bells, the back 3 still lay on the floor of the ringing chamber. I was totally exhausted!

The following evening my assistant Lizzie helped me with those last 3 heavy clappers, we then tightened them all making sure they were "centred" and all swung true (my time working at Taylor's was well spent). By 8.50pm we had

finished. We rang them all up and then down to try them all out quickly. They sounded very different, more "mellow" than before.

Exactly a week after they were last rung, all 8 bells rang out for Sunday Service. The clappers had been re-bushed with Tufnell bushes, the flat faces of the balls had been built up with stainless steel and 2 crown staple bolts had been replaced, all within 4 days. And at a very reasonable price indeed. That's what I call service!

During the next couple of weeks I gave the clappers 2 coats of gloss paint, and fitted DIY adjusters to the wheels to eliminate the oddstruckness to those bells that had always been a problem. Now the best ring of 8 in the Portsmouth District has just got better!

Steve Hough - Alverstoke Tower Captain & Steeple Keeper

From the Editor

Sadly this edition contains obituaries of 3 long serving members of the Guild. Each had in their own way made significant contributions to ringing either locally, in the service of the Guild or both. They will be much missed.

Once again I am grateful to those who have contributed to this newsletter. We have some new bylines which gives much pleasure to the editor.

It seemed that not long before publication deadline there would either be insufficient to fill the paper or I would have to write most of it myself! Now I find that I have had to hold over one or two items until September. There will be more about Steep I promise.

Finally belated thanks to John Cleverley and to Alison Noel for the photos that so beautifully adorned last March's article about Sparsholt. My apologies for not including the acknowledgement at the time.

Ringers' Rules

Cheriton, Hampshire, St. Michael.

6 bells- 6-1-26 in Bb

This is a Belfry that is free
For all those who civil be
And if you chance to chime or ring
It is a very pleasant thing.

There is no music played or sung
Like unto bells when there'll rung
Then ring you bells well if you can
Silence is best for every man.

But if you ring in spur or hat
Sixpence you pay, be sure of that,
And if a bell you overthrow
Pray pay a groat before you go,

Guild Officers

Guild Master - Andrew Craddock
Hon. General Secretary - Steve Castle Hon. Treasurer - Michael Bubb
Hon. Peal Recorder - Jonathon Hetherington Hon. Librarian and Archivist - Anthony P Smith
Hon. Report Editor - David Strong Minutes Secretary - Francis Mitchell
BRF Trustees - Mark Esbester (Portsmouth Diocese), Jack Walters (Winchester Diocese)
Central Council Representatives - Michael Church, Hugh Routh, Anthony P Smith,
Phil Watts and Mike Winterbourne
Independent Examiner - Peter Clarke

Monthly Practice Meetings

Alton and Petersfield

There are special practices on the first Saturday of each month, please contact the District Secretary for location.

Basingstoke

There will normally be a district practice in the months when there is no other district event - contact the District Secretary, Margaret Paterson (01256 850263)

Christchurch and Southampton

1st Wednesday - Ringwood - 7.45-9.15: Surprise Major
2nd Monday - Christchurch - 8.00-9.00: 10 & 12 Bell Practice
2nd Wednesday - Lymington - 7:30-9:00: Call Changes & Doubles
2nd Friday - Southampton St. Michael's - 7:30-9:00: Surprise Royal
3rd Tuesday - Eling - 7:30-9:00: Major & Triples

St John the Baptist, New Alresford

There has been a church on the present site since Saxon times. It started life as a chapelry built on a knoll to the south of the mother church of St. Mary (Old) Alresford.

In the thirteenth century, Godfrey de Lucy, Bishop of Winchester, enlarged the fishpond supplying his palace at Bishop's Sutton by constructing the Great Weir. He then planned the town to the pattern existing today, hence the name New Alresford. It became a thriving market town on the trade route from Southampton to London via Winchester, the main road no longer passing over Abbotstone Down and through Old Alresford.

Bishop de Lucy would have modernized and rebuilt the church of St. John the Baptist at that time. Over the centuries, New Alresford has suffered many disastrous fires. Some of these have caused the church to be rebuilt, altered and repaired and also have destroyed some church records. Somehow the tower seems to have remained relatively unaltered except that in the upper story stone was replaced with brick, probably after the fire in 1736. After this fire many of the buildings in Alresford had their thatched or wooden roofs replaced as a precautionary measure. Above the west door there is a small Saxon crucifix and on the north side there is a Norman door. This was blocked up when the bigger west door was made to accommodate the fire engine which was housed in the tower from 1765 - 1857.

Prior to the installation of the present ring of eight in 1811, little is known about the bells except that there were six. Perhaps there were some bells in the sixteenth century as the Survey of Titles and Properties of 1547 - 1730 shows fields called East Bell Field and West Bell Field to the south of the present main Winchester road and east of New Farm Road.

These correspond to an area on the 1842 tithe map with fields then named Hither Bell Found Field and Further Bell Found Field. Perhaps John Cole cast bells for New Alresford when he cast bells for St. John's, Winchester. The churchwardens' accounts for that church show that work was done by John Cole in Alresford. The Reverend W. E. Colchester, who was rector of New Alresford from 1922-5, gives a very picturesque account of the (re)casting of Alresford bells in his book Hampshire Church Bells. He is insistent that the four A's cast into the crown of the treble of St. John's, Winchester with the date 1574 meant that the bells were cast for Alresford. This bell still hangs, cracked and derelict, in the tower with four other bells.

In 1761 there is hard evidence that bells were cast in Alresford as the parish records of Upham Church state that Thos Swain 'cast bells in a field (or large dell) near Alresford'. Perhaps the Cole bells were being recast or augmented at that time by Thomas Swain.

From about 1768 there are comprehensive churchwardens' accounts and records showing there must have been an active band of ringers with entries for '5 ringing days £1.17.6' occurring annually and entries such as 'mending belfry door key 6d'. An entry for March 23, 1789 states 'The bells rang the whole day to celebrate the King's (George III) late happy recovery.' Furthermore, in 1803 7/6 was paid for one ringing day 'when the King passed through'.

However, by 1808-9 the churchwardens' accounts show payment for the five ringing days for the last time. Perhaps the six bells were becoming unringable. At a vestry meeting on 20 November 1810 it was decided to take down the old six bells and recast them and make a ring of eight and to install

a clock. The work was to be financed by public subscription. Although the Whitechapel Foundry peals book shows work done by T. Mears there is no mention of the old bells or how much extra metal had to be used. It seems very unlikely that the original six bells would have provided enough

Inscriptions on the Bells of St. John's New Alresford

Treble 5-3-10
In sweetest sound let each its note reveal
Mine shall be the first to lead the dulcet peal.

Second 6-1-20
The public raised us with a liberal hand
We come with harmony to cheer the land.

Third 6-3-15.
When female virtue weds with manly worth
We catch the rapture and we spread it forth.

Fourth 7-2-9
Does battle rage, do sanguine foes contend
We hail the victor if he's Britain's friend.

Fifth 8-2-3
May he who England's matchless sceptre sways
Her sacred honour guard her glory raise.

Sixth 9-2-22
May Britons still their ancient freedom boast
And glittering commerce bless their happy coast.

Seventh 9-2-22
No inscription, but decorative pattern.

Tenor 16-2-11
May all whom I shall summon to the grave
The blessing of a well spent life receive
Wm Keen, James Redman Churchwardens.

On all T. Mears of London, fecit 1811.
All inscriptions are round the crown between
moulding wired decoration

metal to recast a 16cwt. ring of eight. The new bells were ordered on 23 November 1810, shipped on 26 February 1811 and opened on 25 March 1811. T. Mears was paid £255 for the cost of the bells and Dyer £61.0.11 for hanging them.

The Hampshire Chronicle advertised on 25 March:

NEW ALRESFORD HANTS - RINGING
Notice is hereby given. a NEW PEAL of EIGHT BELLS, cast by Mr. Thomas Mears of London will be opened with a PEAL OF BOB MAJORS, on Monday the 25th March, 1811, by a select set of ringers chosen for that purpose, precisely at ten o'clock in the forenoon.

William Keene
James Redman, Churchwardens

The Hampshire Chronicle of 1 April 1811 reported,

'On Monday, a fine new peal of eight bells belonging to the church of New Alresford, in this county, cast by Mr. T. Mears of London, was opened with a peal of tripples by the following select set of change ringers:

- 1 Mr. Simmonds, Leatherhead*
 - 2 Mr. Bartell, College Youth*
 - 3 Mr. Joseph Rayner, Newport, Isle of Wight*
 - 4 Mr. Wm. Webb, Newport, Isle of Wight*
 - 5 Mr. Holdsworth, College Youth*
 - 6 Mr. Toddy, Winchester*
 - 7 Mr. Stephens, Newport, Isle of Wight*
 - 8 Mr. Dyer, Alton*
- Weight of Tenor 17cwt.*

Further research in the peal book of the Union Society of Newport, Isle of Wight revealed 'March 25th 1811, the new

peal of bells at Alresford cast by T. Mears Whitechapel was opened by a Society of Ringers from Alton with about 200 Rounds after which 1260 Holts Tripples in 45 Minutes.'

Was the tenor ringer the same Mr. Dyer who was paid for hanging the bells? Why was there a change of method from Bob Major to Grandsire Triples? Was there a dispute with the local ringers about ringing the first full peal on the bells? Certainly the first peal wasn't rung until 1824: '5040 Grandsire Triples by the Society of New Alresford Youths'. At least some of the names can be identified as being Alresford.

When the new bells were put in, payments for ringing increased considerably to £5 per annum. In 1818, it was resolved that ringers would be paid 10/6 per ringing day. Records in 1883 showed payment of 2/6 for 'Tolling bell for the late Bishop' and in 1884 4/6 for 'Tolling bell for the Prince' (Leopold). In 1821, J. Pewsey was paid £5.11.0 for Ringing Days and in 1889, J. Sait was paid a year's salary of £6.0.0. The ringers were being paid but the cost of the new ring had not been met fully. The vestry meeting of 13th April 1820 had to consider the best method of liquidating the debt of £150 with five year's interest thereon from the parish to James Redman and William Keene, churchwardens. 'It was resolved that the said debt shall be liquidated and paid by the present churchwardens and their successors out of rates to be made and collected on the parish by instalments of fifty pounds every successive year until the whole sum is discharged.'



Clockwise from top left: 7, tenor, 2, treble, 5. Clock face is behind the 7 and tenor

In 1824 the first peal was rung and is commemorated on a large black wooden board with gold lettering:

Mr. S. Holt 1st	T. Phillips 5th
J. Harvey 2nd conductor	W. Wise 6th
W. Pewsey 3rd	T. Loader 7th
W. Smith 4th	W. Rutter 8th
Mr. Peter Houghton	
Mr. John Loader, churchwardens	

W. Pewsey and J. Harvey were the churchwardens in 1836. After that first peal the Corporation (later to be the Bailiff and Burgesses and then the Town Trustees) gave the ringers

a dinner at the Horse and Groom and a voluntary contribution. This dinner and contribution continued to be an annual event. In 1886, the Winchester Guild's Annual Festival was held in Farnham with ringing at several towers including New Alresford where the bells were found to go in an 'unsatisfactory manner.' However the bells obviously continued to be rung and there are records of payments of 10/6 to bellringers and the town trustees continued to host an annual dinner and give a contribution for ringing for public occasions. Some of these dinners must have been pretty riotous judging from a report in the Hants and Berks Gazette: 'On Jan. 9th, 1886 Old Alresford ringers joined in at the feast at the Sun and the local bench granted an extension of time until one a.m. This was remarked upon by tee-total neighbours.'

In 1837 the second peal was rung, again Grandsire Triples, with at least some local men including the conductor James Harvey who was a churchwarden. He had also conducted the first peal. Mr. Pewsey, who rang in the first peal, had died in December 1886. His funeral was reported in the Hants and Berks Gazette with fellow bellringers being his bearers: W. Hall, W. Spiers, E. Knight, W. Childs, N. Adams and G. Taylor. A muffled peal was rung after the funeral with J. Merritt, G. White, J. Sait and J. Spary making up the requisite number. Of these ten men (the bearers and extra ringers) Messrs. Sait, Spiers and Hall had rung with the deceased.

From 1837 to 1906 James Sait and William Hall rang a midnight peal each January 1st. One of these is commemorated on a board in the church porch. James Sait was still ringing in 1913 as reported in an account of a Winchester District quarterly meeting in that year.

The Town Trustees, at a meeting in October 1893 noted that 'the bellringers had formerly been supported by an annual contribution from the funds of the late Corporation'. They had since 1824 held an annual dinner at the Horse and Groom and it was felt that lack of support might result in a reduction in the number of ringers. It was decided to make payment for ringing on public occasions and for maintenance

and hoisting the town flag on the church tower.

By 1895 the whole church was in need of major repair and Sir Arthur Bloomfield was employed as the architect for a total rebuild. The tower remained untouched but the bells were rehung with new fittings, the frame strengthened and the bells quarter turned. All this was at a cost of £142.10. The money was raised by public subscription and the work was done by Whitechapel Foundry. The opening peal was Kent Treble Bob Major on December 22, 1897. A fascinating account of this peal can be found in the Bell News and Ringers Record, January 1st, 1898. The peal was rung in a tower with no church – it had been demolished to walls just six feet high! On successful completion of the peal, the band was entertained to a public dinner at the Swan. The church was re-consecrated on 17 August. The work on the bells



St Johns From the North East

is commemorated by a brass plaque in the church porch celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The peal is commemorated by a illuminated certificate in the ringing room. After the re-hang, the Winchester District of the Winchester Diocesan Guild regularly held quarterly meetings at New Alresford; teas were put on at restaurants or pubs.

From 1909 ringers are listed as Guild members in the Guild reports. One, William Curtis, was killed in WWI and his name is on the Roll of Honour at Winchester Cathedral. After 1914, New Alresford is listed only as 'affiliated', no named band, with E. Knight as secretary.

Elizabeth Johnson

Guild News is published twice a year. Its aim is to improve communication between ringers in all parts of our widespread Guild and to communicate the fun of ringing generally. It is distributed free via District Secretaries to all towers in the Guild. Additional copies are available from the editor for £1.

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Please send material for publication to the editor. Most articles will cover ringing and social activities in the Guild which might be of general appeal to all ringers, accompanying photographs are most welcome and will be returned. The editor reserves the right to edit as necessary.

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Guild Web Site www.wp-ringers.org.uk