



The Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers



# GUILD NEWS

November 2007

## All Saints' Parish Church Alton Bell Restoration Project



It is approximately 10 years since we at All Saints Alton received the OK from Winchester to go ahead with the All Saints' Bell Restoration project.

It has at times been a long and tedious task but every now and then a bright idea turns out to be immensely fruitful and that gave us the encouragement we sometimes needed to carry on.

We wrote to many of the large and

not so large companies in All Saints Parish and received one offer of help. The Newbury Building Society came forward with that help and offered to sponsor us for a concert donating in total £4000.00. In fact the Newbury Building Society continued to support our cause for 8 years with more sponsorship and assistance with the involvement of its Alton branch, its staff and its senior executives.

The Royal Marines School of Music has given 7 concerts in all, with evenings that will never be forgotten.

We wrote a multitude of letters, gave presentations for our cause and filled in copious forms searching for grants, The Alton Conservative Club very kindly made us their charity for the year 2000 and the money raised bought the new bell ropes, which we promised would be blue. We held many other concerts, several quizzes, sold second-hand books and received donations from members of the general public. The list of activities is endless.

We felt that we exhausted the grant application method of fund raising as we never seemed to fit into the criteria they specified, especially as All Saints was not then a listed building and applications for such were declined. We did however secure approximately £10,000.00 in grants. We discovered that if you were to spend all your efforts searching for grants the overall task would be very demoralising.

It is a fact that as our fund raising developed we met some really nice people who are genuinely helpful, supportive and encouraging, and also assistance came from areas we had never before thought of.

In fact the last £10,000 we needed came from a chance remark to a business client of ours, it just goes to show that you must keep spreading the word.

After 9 years of hard work the official order was placed with Matthew Higby & Co. The original 3 old bells were removed from the tower in January 2006. This took approximately a week to complete.

The old oak frame was also removed and the majority sold to a local joiner. Some went to local people who passed

by and requested timber for projects in their homes, this obviously raised more funds. All of the timber was sold as it was removed without need for advertising, obviously the word travelled very quickly!

The casting of the bells was watched by seven of us at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in April 2006 and that was the moment we all realised our hard work was now coming to fruition.

The blessing of the new bells by Bishop Trevor of Basingstoke took place on 8th October 2006 with the installation planned for the following week with the first joyful ring taking place lunchtime 11th October. The new ring was dedicated on 9th December with open ringing afterwards.



*Matthew Higby removing one of the old bells*



A quarter peal was rung half muffled on 14th December to remember one of our leading fund raisers Debbie Whitham who sadly died 2 days before the dedication service, Debbie had been with us right from the start.

The first full peal was rung on the new bells on Saturday 27th January 2007.

This was also the first ever peal to be rung at All Saints Alton.

Our thanks go to everybody who supported us. It is and has always been very much appreciated.

Special mention must be made to Roger Barber for his extremely hard work and Terry Collins for his constant support and encouragement for the project.

*Derek Shutler*

*Three of the new bells safely installed and ready to go!*

# Birds and Bells for Church Repairs

On the Saturday and Sunday of the late Spring Bank Holiday weekend Rob and Jen Churchill, respectfully Steeple Keeper and Tower Captain at Lockerley, assisted by the members of the Lockerley band provided cream teas in their 5½ acre garden. The proceeds were in aid of repairs to the west wall of St John's Church, Lockerley, which were found to be necessary during the recent quinquennial review. This, being the wall from which springs the bell tower, was felt to be a worthy cause for support by the bellringers of the tower

Being keen ornithologists, Rob and Jen have laid out the gardens with nature in mind, including a wood, a lake, a number of streams and the remnants of the canal to Salisbury. Nature walks and for the younger visitors a nature treasure hunt were organised and much enjoyed. The opportunity to dissect owl pellets was provided and Emperor Moth caterpillars also provided interest.

In keeping with the ringing theme, the mystic sound of hand bells, provided by the Hill family from Romsey, drifted across the garden on the Saturday. During the afternoon they rang medley of methods which included, 560 changes of Plain Bob Major, 224 changes of Kent Treble Bob Major, 96 changes of Bristol Surprise Major, 112 changes of Double Bob Major and 140 changes of Grandsire Triples



*The Hills entertain*

Unfortunately the inclement weather on the Sunday, when nearly an inch of rain fell, reduced visitor numbers. However, it was braved by some twenty hardy souls, some of who ventured around part of the nature trail.

A total of £248 was raised for the church funds.

*John Palk - Winchester District PRO*

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## A Toast - "To The W&P"

Our guild is lucky to be situated in an area steeped in rich history and it doesn't get more interesting than here at Portchester and Southwick. The Romans built the road through here from Chichester to Winchester and started building great Portchester Castle in the third century as part of the Brancaster ring of forts which stretched all the way from Norfolk around the south east coast. King Henry V launched his attack on the French at Agincourt from here in 1415, and, as he would have had to commandeer all the local shipping to take his troops across the channel, many say this was the start of the Royal Navy. Alas, though we cannot be so enthusiastic about some of our recent history when, for example, English Heritage blocked the installation of the 8 redundant bells from Gosport in the castle church in the 1980s. It's an ill wind though, as their metal now rings out from Bishopstoke but this left the castle church with arguably the very worst 3 buckets in the whole land.

You may have noticed the Southwick priory ruins as you came here this evening. It was formed in 1148, but sadly without bells, and the Augustine canons ruled the roost here for 400 years. They had moved out of the castle priory, because apparently they were offended by the foul language of the soldiers and sailors in what was then a large garrison and seaport. The local church here is indeed called St James without the priory gate.

Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in 1558 finished it off though, and the whole of the priory's 8,000 acres were given to one John White by the King. His descendents still own what's left of it.

In the 1850s Napoleon was being a nuisance and some 900 acres of the estate were sold to the Government to strengthen our defences in response. Rings of forts were built on this

land at the bottom and top of Portsdown hill surrounding Portsmouth with guns facing inland. No one could understand why the guns were facing in the opposite direction to France, and the forts were known as Palmerston's follies. In reality, Napoleon was expected to land further down the coast and attack Portsmouth from behind, where the defences were weaker. The Southwick estate was thus deeply involved in playing its part in the defence of the realm.

The church here in the estate village is interesting in that it is known as "peculiar". It is in the gift of the estate owner and not the local bishop – a situation dating back to various ancient grants made to the priory some 900 years ago. In effect, the church and bells are owned by the squire and the vicar is employed by him, not the bishop. So, if you want to ring here, not only have you to get past the formidable Eileen Jayne-Wood who has been the squire's designated tower captain since time began, but also the vicar, the estate manager and the squire. Regrettably, none of these last three seem to understand much about bells or ringing and this has led to upset in the past.

You may have noticed that the church flies an unadulterated English cross of St George on the tower with no diocesan arms in the first quarter – this is an outward sign of its peculiar status. Sometimes though, the squire does fly his personal flag.

Originally there were 4 bells, cast by John Higden, John Sturdy and John Wallis but in 1981 they were removed and the oak frame given to the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. The 3 smallest bells were tuned and the cracked tenor cast into two more, making a ring of 5. A 6th was added in 1989 on the death of the estate owner Lady Borthwick-Norton.

Southwick here is renowned for being the place where the D Day landings were planned. I hope you took the opportunity to look at the map room and perhaps you might have looked at the isobar charts showing the quickly changing weather pattern in early June 1944. You can't help but have immense respect for the hapless weather forecaster, Group Captain Stagg. Thankfully, he got the forecast just right and the invasion went ahead.

During the war, the dockyard was getting heavily bombed and the naval commander bent the squire's ear during a pheasant shoot on the estate about his staff's lack of sleep. So it was, that the sympathetic squire invited the naval staff to come up to his quiet Southwick mansion to sleep, away from the bombing. Little did he know that it was like inviting a cuckoo into his nest. Soon the place was full of military people and it led in the end to the compulsory purchase of the mansion and 295 acres by the Government for a paltry £40k, much to the anger of the squire. It seemed very unfair.

After the war, the RN moved in and named the estate HMS Dryad. It was the navy's operations school with big simulators tied to mock ships operations rooms where new crews could learn to fight their ships before they went to sea. It also incorporated navigation and communications training schools.

During the Falklands war we had the embarrassing task of devising tactics here to defeat the very warships, planes and weapons that we and our allies had sold to the Argentinians. Funnily enough though, it wasn't the Falklands war

that caused me so much aggravation as Commander here at that time, it was the Victorian domestic services, especially the old, brick drains. They were always getting blocked up. The problem was that the navy only issued very hard, insoluble loo paper, (hairy sailors for the use of) and, as it did not disintegrate when wet, it kept getting caught up on the rough, old brickwork. After spending countless thousands of pounds on contractors to unblock the drains, my salvation came in the form of a young WRNS officer. She made an official complaint that her little darling WRNS needed soft, absorbent loo paper, but that the Ministry of Defence would not supply it.

So I had the dubious privilege of writing a paper to their lordships of the Admiralty on Victorian brick drains and the ways in which their heavy maintenance cost could be reduced. I'm glad to say that their lordships got the message, and that in the end the WRNS got their soft loo paper. Success at last.

Now, with the navy decimated, HMS Dryad has been sunk, all the stone frigates with their operations rooms have been sent for scrap and this part of the estate has been turned into a police college. It's all part of the rich heritage within our area, as is the peculiar church here with its bells by unusual founders. We are lucky to be a part of it.

So Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you a toast to "The W&P".

*As proposed by Bill Harris at the 2007 Guild Dinner*

## Colchester Corrected

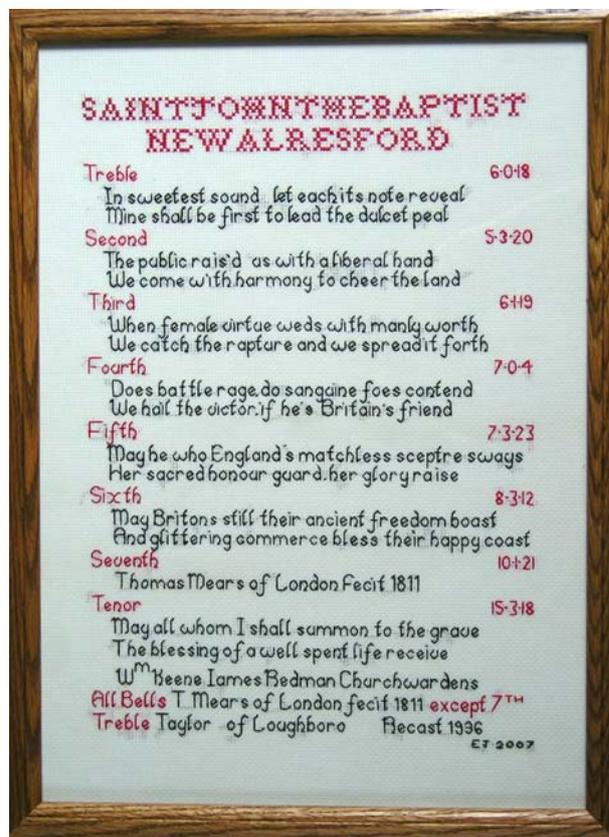
During routine maintenance of the bells of St. John the Baptist, New Alresford, Hampshire, it was decided to make a detailed record of the inscriptions on the bells. Much to our surprise, when checking with Colchester's 'Hampshire Church Bells', we found that he had attributed some of the inscriptions to the wrong bells. Reverend W.E. Colchester was Rector of New Alresford from 1922 – 1925, publishing his book prior to that time in 1920. Presumably, during his incumbency he didn't go to check his own bells as no errata appear in reprints of the book.

The inscription on the treble, second and tenor are correct. There is no inscription on the seventh apart from the founder's name. However, Colchester incorrectly attributed the inscription that is on the third to the sixth, that on the fourth to the fifth, the fifth to the third and the sixth to the fourth.

It is quite a difficult task, checking inscriptions as words are obscured by bell fittings, especially when bells have long inscriptions running round on more than one line. Perhaps other Hampshire towers should check their inscriptions against Colchester's records. The typed record of the inscriptions which hangs in the ringing chamber, presumably produced when the bells were rehung in 1936, also has some errors.

Having successfully produced some bell-themed counted stitch embroideries from kits designed by Chris Berry and commercially available from the Loughborough Foundry Shop, I was inspired to design my own for our bells' inscriptions, hoping to reproduce an accurate record of the words cast into the bells.

*Elizabeth Johnson - New Alresford*



# Marriage of Ceri Dodd and David Salter



Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild  
 Lockerley, Hampshire  
 St John the Evangelist  
 Thursday, 16 August 2007 in 2h 56m (12)  
 5040 Cambridge Surprise Minor  
 Being a 2160 and two 1440s.

- |                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Kelly A Salter | 4 Chris J Woodruffe     |
| 2 Andrew J Dodd  | 5 Brian J Woodruffe (C) |
| 3 Ceri J Dodd    | 6 David M Salter        |

To celebrate the marriage of Ceri and David which took place at Mottisfont Abbey on August 17.

Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild  
 Hursley, Hampshire  
 All Saints  
 Friday, 17 August 2007 in 3hr 1 (14)  
 5042 Yorkshire Surprise Maximus  
 Composed by: R W Pipe

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Rosemary E Hill      | 7 Jenifer A E Smith   |
| 2 Pamela J Thompson    | 8 Janice E Higgins    |
| 3 Anthony P Smith      | 9 Katharine A Hill    |
| 4 Maureen J Hanney     | 10 Andrew G Craddock  |
| 5 Christine A Saunders | 11 Richard M Thompson |
| 6 Ian M McCallion      | 12 Peter W Hill (C)   |

Arranged and rung by a Sunday service band as a wedding compliment to Ceri Dodd and David Salter, members of the Hursley band, who were married today at Mottisfont Abbey.

The wedding of two popular Hursley ringers, Ceri Dodd and David Salter, took place at Mottisfont Abbey, Hampshire on Friday 17th August. The simple moving civil ceremony was attended by family with ringing and other friends and included readings of "The art of Marriage" and an American Indian blessing of the couple. Following the ceremony drinks & canapés were served in the beautiful grounds of the Abbey and there was the opportunity to play croquet, ring on a mini-ring or handbells or just wander around the grounds. The reception was also held at the Abbey. The bride's father, well known long length ringer Brian Woodruffe, welcomed David into the family but told him he now had to start ringing long lengths too! For their honeymoon the couple spent two nights in Rhinefield House, then, accompanied by Ceri's children by her first marriage, enjoyed two weeks in Switzerland. Two local peals were rung to mark the occasion.

Other tower bell peals were rung at Bishopstoke and Hurstbourne Priors, handbell peals at Romsey and Micheldever.

*Ian McCallion - photo Andrew Craddock*

## Mid-Monthly Ringing on the Isle of Wight

In June the IOW District was host to some 20 ringers over from the mainland. They either came under their own steam and spent a few days here, or by ferry for the day and joined June Mitchell and me who were waiting for them with a minibus at Yarmouth.

First stop was Brighstone where we were met by Beccy Noyes. It was great for our visitors to see so many Island ringers, which included a large contingent from Arreton Tower.

The ringing in all towers ranged from call changes to treble bob.

At midday we descended on the Brighstone Tea Rooms for a very enjoyable lunch.

Fortified, we made for Shorwell where we were welcomed by Cal Challoner. Again more good ringing and here the 'Cambridge' fared better than it had at the previous tower. A photocall ended our hour on these bells.

Ian Cole greeted us at Chale. Sadly, after the sunshine, the weather began to close in and the fine view across to the Needles was invisible. However that did not detract from another lovely mixture of good ringing. As ferries don't wait



it was necessary to finish on time in order to return to Yarmouth. Fortunately, the rain did wait - until our friends were all safely on board! Thus ended an extremely enjoyable day.

A big big Thank You to the three Tower Captains for the use of their bells.

*Maureen Kelly*

# 1879 When Did It Start?

## Winchester Diocesan Guild of Bellringers

The above, initial title of our Guild appears on the pamphlet, issued in 1879 by the "Temporary Committee of Management", Mr. G. H. Barnett, Rev. C. H. Lacon, Rev. F. T. Madge, Rev. H. A. Spyers, Rev. H. J. Sumner and the Secretary Rev. Arthur du Boulay Hill. The latter was Assistant Master at Winchester College from 1874 to 1882, as well as Chaplain from 1881. The pamphlet contains names of 52 members attached to the seven "Bands in Union" (Farnham, Godalming, Hursley, Southampton St. Michael, Weybridge, Winchester and Yateley) and the names of 51 members unattached to bands. Finally it contains the programme for the "First Annual Meeting", planned for Thursday 15th July 1880.

We claim, in our current Reports that the Guild was founded at Basingstoke on Thursday 26th June 1879 but there is no mention of this date in the early Guild Reports. There is no Minute Book to check such dates since the first one we hold starts in 1900. However, issue 3556 of "The Ringing World", our Guild's Centenary issue on 22nd June 1979, does contain a reference on page 510. The Guild Master at that time, Kenneth S. B. Croft, wrote about Rev. Arthur du Boulay Hill's diary, as follows :-

*"Dec. 5, 1878. With Madge's help we began some real handbell practice with Cathedral ringers. The Dean has given us a room in No. 4, the Close, for practice. Made fair progress."*

*"June 26, 1879: Meeting at Basingstoke to establish W. D. Guild of Ringers."*

This date does not appear until page 2 of our Fourth Annual Report, dated June 1884. In addition, this date is clearly stated in the 1929 Guild Report on page 2 at the beginning of a potted 50 years history of the Guild. This was written by George Williams, then current Guild Master and a Member since 25th February 1880.

In February, Ruth and I paid our monthly visit to Hampshire Record Office in Winchester. The lunchtime lecture, entitled "The Parish Pump", concerned the information one can obtain from issues of Parish Magazines, many of which are stored in their archives. Quite by chance the lecturer mentioned, as an example, those of Basingstoke dating back to 1860. In the search room that afternoon I filled in a request slip for these, only to be told there were 81 different items, and you can only book three at a time! Alas, none of them had dates on the bound covers so I had to order randomly. On the fourth attempt, at 1600 hrs., one of the three was for 1879 (46M74/PZ27), with a mention of bells:

PZ27 for 1879 - June 1879

### St Michael's Tower

During the past three or four months, our Church Bells have given the people of Basingstoke sufficient opportunity of testing their merits.

The Ringers of S. Michael's Tower, with a view to improving themselves in the art of change ringing have recently reorganised their society, and invite others to join them, either as Honorary or Ringing Members. The entrance fee is 2s 6d. There are now about 12 Ringing members in the society, among whom the eight recognised ringers are:

Mr. R. Redgrove-Leader, Mr. G. White, Mr. H. White, Mr. G. Capron, Mr. T. Wheeler, Mr. W. Hatton, Mr. T. Powers, Rev. C. H. Lacon

While speaking of S. Michael's Bells and their ringers, it may be mentioned that a scheme is being set on foot for the formation of a Diocesan Bell Ringing Society, the first meeting of which will take place at Basingstoke, on June 20th, when it is expected that ringers from various parts of the country will meet to discuss a set of rules etc., and will also ring some 5000 or 6000 changes on our Bells during the afternoon. Further details will be given hereafter.

July 1879

A very successful and largely attended meeting was held in the Chapter Room, Basingstoke, on Friday June 20th, for the purpose of forming a diocesan Society of Bell Ringers. The chair was taken by Melville Portal, Esq., and there were representatives from some twenty parishes present, together with our own Ringers headed by Mr. Redgrove. The objects of the Society, as explained by the Rev. A. D. Hill are:

1st.-The due recognition of Ringers as Church officials.

2nd.-The care of Bells and Belfries.

3rd.-The cultivation of Change ringing.

And in order to carry out this scheme which was fully approved of by the meeting, the following were appointed as a Committee:

Revs. A. D. Hill, C. H. Lacon, F. T. Madge, W. B. Money, H. A. Spiers, H. G. Sumner, and Mr. G. H. Barnett.

Our Bells and Belfry elicited warm expressions of approval at the meeting, and during the day several peals and touches were rung both by our own ringers and also by those who had come from various parts of the country. We heartily wish the Society success.

The following month I booked PZ29, recording details of Parish activities for 1880.

PZ29 for 1880 - August 1880

The Winchester Diocesan Guild Of Ringers

This Guild, which has been formed, under the patronage of the Bishop, Dean and Archdeacons, for the promotion of good Church-bell-ringing, held its first Festival at Basingstoke on Thursday, July 15th, and though the traditional rain-fall of St. Swithun's Day did not fail to make its usual mark, the gathering was on the whole very successful. Church-bells and Handbells proclaimed the occasion throughout the day, and the members of the Guild dined pleasantly together at the Red Lion. Mr. Lacon, to whom we owe the improvement of our own Bells, was present, as was another former Curate, Mr. Howard.

[Rev. Lacon had just vacated the Curacy after 4 years, and was then Vicar of Wangford, Suffolk]

Unfortunately all the Guild's stationery, documents and records currently bear the date 26th June 1879. Using reference books, 20th June is a Friday and 26th June is a Thursday. All other dates and specified days in the Parish Magazines check out. D.B.H.'s diary appears to have disappeared. The Minute Book, covering the early days was listed as "lost" during the time Rev. Sir J. C. W. Herschel, Vicar of West Clandon, was Guild Secretary, between 21st June 1919 and 4th July 1921. On the latter date he cited "pressure of other duties" and also "onerous duties with treasurership as well". A letter sent to me by George Pullinger, a past Guild Master, on 27th June 1966, states "Many of the early records of the Guild were lost. Sir John Hershall (sic.), vicar of Hersham, Surrey, was elected Gen Sec. He was a non-ringer & had very little interest in the job (It was usual to elect clergy at that time) Sir John died & things were in a mess. George Williams tried to sort things out but eventually had to more or less start again from scratch" The Minute Book current at the time was passed on but the historic, original one was lost forever. Hence the above record of the inaugural meeting is the only one in existence, and shows that our date is incorrect.

I can offer an explanation of how the error arose from D.B.H.'s diary. I mark G.C.S.E Science papers. After ticking "creditworthy answers" (We are not allowed to refer to them as correct answers!) we write the mark a student is awarded in the right hand margin. When we mark "non-creditworthy answers", we write a zero in the margin. Perhaps because I am left-handed I write my zeros anti-clockwise, and in past years my supervisor requests that I use clockwise zeros because the students employed at Guildford as mark checkers interpret my anti-clockwise zeros as 6! D. B. H. was clearly anti-clockwise like me. Are you clockwise or anti-clockwise?

Derek Jackson - July 2007

# Ringwood Fire Brigade Exercise

Approximately 18 months ago we talked about having the local emergency services carry out a full emergency exercise in the church tower and in May this year an exercise with the local Fire Brigade took place. Members from the Church, Fire Brigade and Bellringers met in the Church tower to discuss the requirements for the exercise. As Ringwood Fire Station is a retained station with limited resources, the Hampshire Fire Brigade rope team based near Southampton also attended to add their expertise.

As we climbed the steps to the ringing chamber (all 52 of them) all that could be heard was muttering about bringing a stretcher down the spiral staircase. From the ringing chamber we then went up through the clock chamber to the bells and outside onto the roof. The Fire Brigade then discussed how they would recover the casualty from the roof as they preferred to go 'up' rather than 'down'. After this they were then told about the trapdoors between each of the floors - the route for the bells' installation and removal from the tower. The smile on their faces was a sight to be seen - this meant that the casualty stretcher did not have to go over the side of the tower nor taken down the spiral staircase.

A week before the exercise three members of the Fire Brigade came up the tower for another look round. As this happened to be a practice night the opportunity was taken to try and recruit new ringers and each of them had a go.

The night of the exercise duly arrived. One of the firemen who acted as 'the casualty' was positioned under the seventh bell (all bells were down except the sixth). The sixth, which is over the trapdoor, was tied so it would not move and ropes set up ready to lower the stretcher. The distance between the bell chamber and the floor of the church is approximately



*No opportunity for recruiting should be missed*

90ft through three trapdoors. The distance from the ringing chamber to the church floor is about 60ft. On each of the floors firemen were positioned to check the progress of the stretcher and to guide it through the trapdoors. All of these personnel had to use safety harnesses just in case anyone followed the stretcher!

After safely reaching the floor of the church, the clear-up operation took place. All the ropes and equipment had to be removed and checked, the sixth untied ready for ringing on Sunday morning, floorboards and carpets put back into place. The Fire Brigade went back to their station to discuss the evening's exercise and the possibility of another exercise later in the year - but this time taking a casualty off the roof.

*John Davey*



## Guild Email List

If you do not do so already, you might like to consider subscribing to the Guild email list and encourage other members to do so too. About 160 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](mailto:win-port-bellringers-subscribe@yahoo.com) or send an email to [admin@wp-ring.org.uk](mailto:admin@wp-ring.org.uk), requesting a subscription. You can easily un-subscribe at any time.

# Ringling Escapades

We had successfully rung five peals in five different towers in one day starting the first one at 4.00 a.m. at Longparish. This, at the time was a record as five had been rung by a band led by Wilf Moreton in Herefordshire but in the same tower with Wilfred doing all the conducting.

I couldn't rest on my laurels for long; with the bit between my teeth and urged on by the others I undertook to organise seven peals in a day with the idea that if we lost one we could still go ahead and ring six. As with Longparish it meant fully muffling the first two, the Highclere muffles were pretty effective with padding, and the Ampport ringers would do the muffling with their own muffles and, on my instructions, plenty of padding.

To get two towers at midnight and 3 o'clock in the morning, Abbotts Ann being second tower, and another to finish after 10, this being Goodworth Clatford, needed some powers of persuasion. It would not happen now. The date was set for November 8th 1958, and as we pulled the chancel ring of six at Ampport we realised that they were louder than we would have wished. No time to do anything about it even if we had the means to do so. So a few minutes after midnight it was "Go Cambridge", and less than a lead later a frantic banging on the door nearest the ringers. We had no alternative but to stop and a frantic vicar in his pyjamas was telling us "You can't ring them like this; they should be muffled, unless you can quieten them I can't allow you to carry on."

End of attempt but not the end of Ampport, two police met us at the gate, "We have had several phone calls about the bells ringing and thought somebody had broken into the church and was ringing the bells. We have informed the military in case it is service personnel, and they are sending their police down here."

Sure enough two Redcaps appeared on the scene, police consulted with police, Redcaps departed! Police took names and addresses and Geoff Dodd now has a police record.

On to Abbotts Anne for a 1.30 start for Winchendon Place Doubles, bells much quieter, Fred Scott wandering round the village did not hear much until one of the muffles slipped. One bell does not make so much noise as five. A second vicar, disturbed from his slumbers, was ordered by his wife to go and stop them. Who did he fear most, his wife or Geoff Dodd trying to set up a new world record? I won, and his wife stopped his morning coffee for a month.

Breakfast at 6 o'clock, peal at Broughton starts at 7 o'clock, almost 2 hours to kill, a bit of a snooze at the side of the road. And now wide-awake, "Go Cambridge" at Broughton prompt at seven o'clock, "That's all." and on to Lockerley, three in the bag and joined by Chris Kippin and Bill Deason. We started for Cambridge Major, but two hours later, miss-call, and the world record had gone out of the window.

What to do now? We could only equal our own record. The bells were booked, so we decided to go ahead with the other two attempts. After the disaster at Sheffield English, Stockbridge was our next challenge, but the seven methods were not to be, a broken rope around the halfway finished that one off. We should have known better than to attempt the last one, but we would be finished before nine o'clock now. Tiredness and despondency had set in and after a couple of extents a muddle finished it off. We never attempted it again much to my relief. I don't think I would have got permission a second time.

After so much work by many this was a sad ending. Cooked breakfasts at six o'clock in the morning and three out of seven, was not a good result. 32 years later, we did ring Six Surprise Minor in a day in six different towers and had the police as visitors on the ground floor tower at Padworth. Fortunately I had the foresight to warn them at headquarters at Kidlington. "How are you doing?" he asked, then "Good luck." Again, we were ringing them open; the first peal at Dorney had been fully muffled with the Highclere muffles. The last peal, which I conducted, at East Woodhay with bells open, finished at 11.15, but it was New Years Eve, and it was a sponsored one in aid of the Royal Marsden. We raised £1200, mainly due to the generosity of ringers, and those villages where we had rung, the headmaster of Eton, making a generous donation.

Various other escapades have taken place in my life. I nailed the trap door down with a 6 inch nail at Chute Forest to keep the local farmer out who was anti-bells. He wanted the church to store his hay as it was at the end of his farm track. He let my tyres down; fortunately one of the ringers had a foot pump to enable me to get home. The fact that two of them were down rather pointed to his doing it. We also had police come in to the Belfry at Aldermaston on the first of our attempts to ring five Surprise Major in a day. They had to push past Pat Cannon in the doorway to get into the Belfry. Fortunately, his explanation as to what we were doing, sent them away satisfied. That was one of the ones at Aldermaston that we did get with the trap door under the bells open. They must have been audible to warrant a visit from the police.

Others would probably tell of similar visits from the police, or can they? Two other cases, one was being hauled into the police station at Wareham after ringing at Worth Matravers when there were only three bells. During the morning there had been a robbery in the church, and we being there later made us chief suspects. We were finally released without charge. At Fisherton Delamere, where the bells had not been rung for many years, the police made a 7 mile dash from Warminster in seven minutes to catch us leaving the church with the vicar. We allowed him to go first for questioning followed by me as organiser. My question, "Will you keep my name on record at Warminster?" met with a serious reply "Yes, it will stay there for about 10 years." This led me to approach Derek Jackson is Guild Secretary, to see if he could supply me with some means of identity for future use. This he did, but it was never used, I kept out of trouble from then on. But it is reassuring to know that there are people who will pick up the phone when there are suspicious characters lurking around. In the case of the two bells which were stolen from Quarley, a phone call might have prevented this.

All these events happened in my younger days. Now I leave others to climb the ladder inspecting the bells, but we have had a lot of pleasure in bell restoration work, of travelling to Chute Forest on Easter Sunday and ringing the bells open for the very first time after the try out on Good Friday. Again fully muffled, and no police. And at Sydmonton for their Harvest Festival. In fact we rang at the latter for a number of services even holding a meeting there. Mike Goss rang his first quarter peal of Kent Minor there. It is at times like this that ringers are really appreciated by the local parishioners when bells have been silent for many years. I still remember the incense at Gosport after ringing for a service there. Nobody will ring for one there now.

*Geoff Dodd*

# Froxfield Bells

On Saturday morning, 4th August, local Froxfield people stopped in their tracks! At first they thought they were imagining things. The bells were being rung – surely! “It’s all right, folks”, I said. “Everything’s under control – I hope!”

This was what was happening. As you all know, unfortunately, at St. Peter’s, our Tenor Bell has become virtually unringable, considered dangerous, whilst the fittings and the frame itself for all our bells have deteriorated considerably! Perhaps this is not surprising after 130 years of good service of ringing on Sundays, at weddings, at funerals and, of course, ringing in the New Millennium.

Now, having been silent for many months, the bells, in their present state, were being rung just once more. Six intrepid and experienced bell ringers had been coerced into ringing them for this final time! They come down quite soon, (the bells, I mean!) after a tremendous fund raising effort. But before they go, we wanted to record their very individual sound. So, armed with Roger’s intricate state-of-the-art recording equipment, I sat in the corner of the churchyard ready to stop people coming over and making inane comments into the recording! All went well and Cambridge and Grandsire Doubles came over loud and clear. The belfry did NOT collapse upon the ringers (Health & Safety Chaps please note!). The photograph shows the gallant team – l-r Hugh Routh(5), Mo Routh(3), Roger Barber (Tenor), Val Williams(2), Teresa Brown(4) and Terry Collins (Treble).



We all look forward now to repeating this performance with the restored belfry. Work is ready to begin, now that we have both the funds and the faculty. First, the dismantling will take place, followed by the new steel frame being fitted by Matthew Higby & Co Ltd, whilst the bells themselves will be properly tuned at Whitechapel Bell Foundry. So, listen everyone, in a month or two, for you will be hearing a new ring in Froxfield!

*Jeremy Boyd-Wallis, Tower Secretary*

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## The Hartley 12 at St Mary’s, South Stoneham

In the Vicarage, one never knows what the next phone call will bring! One morning in early October 06 Paul from the University of Southampton Estates and Buildings Department rang to ask whether we would like a ring of 12 bells, which had to be moved very quickly from New College in the Avenue, which has been sold.

After visiting the bells, and checking height and weight, we eventually decided that the Choir Vestry at St Mary’s was the ideal (and only!) place for them.

Technically, they are a mini-ring, and are run by the ‘Southampton University Guild of Change Ringers’, who will use the bells for practice. The heaviest bell is about 15lb (which is very light), and they are in a self-contained frame. They were made in around 2000 by Matthew Higby (about whom more below), and were initially on loan to us for 6 months, so that there was time for us to decide that we were happy with them, and could make the appropriate legal arrangements for their more permanent stay.

As far as I know, we will be the only Church in the world with a mini-ring in it, and we hope that it will prove useful for the students who practice regularly, and for visitors who may come to ring from time to time.

However, there is a second reason for welcoming the bells.

You may know that for some time we have hoped that we might be able to apply for a grant to augment our three tower bells at St Mary’s to make a ‘proper’ ring of six.



As it happens, Matthew Higby, one of the bell hangers who have been to visit the tower, has got three more bells which exactly match ours, and would make a ring of six.

The Keltek Trust, which keeps a list of spare bells and churches which need bells, so that it can match the two, has offered to donate one of the bells, and the cost of the other two is about £1000.

The hope is that it will be possible to install a modern steel frame in the tower, probably after raising the current bell frame, which has some mediaeval work in it, to a higher place in the tower to preserve it, and to create a new ringing chamber.

A ring of six tower bells at St Mary's would, amongst other things, call people to worship (their main purpose), let people know that there is a Church at South Stoneham (where it is so hidden away), and also attract ringers from the University (which has a strong tradition of ringing) to St Mary's.

Our hope is that the mini-ring will act as a lever in securing funds for a 'Bellringing Educational Project' - people would be able to learn to ring on tower bells and mini-ring, and it should make St Mary's an excellent centre for ringing.

That's our hope - we'll see whether we can pull it off. We would need grants and fundraising probably in the region of £30,000 to make that come true.

For the moment, we have three lovely bells in the tower, which get rung every Sunday (usually by chiming, rather than full-circle ringing), and a mini-ring of 12 in the Church, which we hope you will get the opportunity to hear soon.

As the bell at St Alban's has written on it, so we pray for the bells at St Mary's: 'May God bless all who hear me call'.

*Gary Philbrick, Vicar of Swaythling*

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## Jill's Party

The lady – Jill Taylor, highly-respected ringer and Tower Captain of All Saints', Ryde, Isle of Wight for many years. The occasion – her "Special Birthday". The challenge – to give her a surprise party.

After a year of out-and-out deception by many of her ringing friends, especially those "Oldies" of the mid-to-late 1960's Ryde band, around 60 ringers gathered at 2.30 p.m. on 6th October at the Parish Hall in Carisbrooke. The official reason for the get-together was an Isle of Wight Ringing History afternoon. Everyone was to bring their old photos of ringing trips, information and reports of bell restoration projects and other ringing memorabilia. The start time was 3 p.m. as far as Jill was aware.

In time-honoured fashion, Jill had been at home earlier in the day preparing sandwiches and baking a cake for the ringing tea that was to take place in the afternoon. She had spoken to her daughter, Bridget, on the 'phone early in the morning, telling her of the "History Day" that was to take place at Carisbrooke later in the day. Bridget was working, as usual, on the Docklands Light Railway. She'd started her shift at 4.30 a.m. Little did Jill realise that Bridget and her husband, Jeff, were primed to "Hot foot" it to "The Island" leaving London at 11 a.m.

Soon after 3 p.m. Jill with her husband, Peter, who'd been in on the secret since October 2006, came into the hall. Many surprise visitors had been secreted away at one end of the hall. Jill was greeted with loud cheers, the noise of party poppers and shouts of "Happy Birthday"! She was stunned for some seconds and then gathered herself in royal fashion to do the rounds of greeting her many friends.

The highlight of the day, we all agreed, was when Bridget and Jeff made their appearance complete with appropriately decorated bicycle – a birthday gift to Jill from Peter, Bridget and Jeff. Not unexpectedly, Jill "Lost it" momentarily. It was just the sort of surprise we wanted to honour Jill.

The superb "Ringers' Tea" was enjoyed by all but even that did not stop the excited nattering throughout the rest of the afternoon. There was an appropriate toast to Jill when she did the ceremonial cutting of her birthday cake. The crowds eventually dispersed to the Carisbrooke ringing room across the road to enjoy the Isle of Wight District practice that Jill herself, as the Island's Ringing Master, had arranged many months before.

Altogether a marvellous occasion! The Ryde Reunion that took place over the week-end, as a result, was celebrated by a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples at Ryde on Sunday evening, followed inevitably by a "Down Memory Lane" drink or two at our old haunt – "The Castle". Not surprisingly, there were discussions of when the next reunion would take place; the venue is to be the Midlands, the event, a ringing outing! "Happy Birthday, Jill!" from all of your ringing friends.

*Viv Nobbs*

### Ryde, Isle of Wight, 7 Oct 2007 1260 Grandsire Triples

1 Viv Nobbs	5 Chris Frye
2 Jill Taylor	6 Tom Jamieson
3 Paul Miller	7 Graham Nobbs ( c )
4 Judith Frye	8 Peter Taylor

60th birthday compliment to Jill Taylor.



*l to r - Jill Taylor - "The Birthday Girl", her daughter, Bridget and Jill's husband, Peter*

# The Guild's New Master



*David Strong being congratulated by the outgoing Master, Andrew Craddock, following his election at the Guild AGM.*

## Guild Officers

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



*l-r Babs Simmonds, Jane Walker, Rosemary Shutler, Derek Shutler, Linda Jones & Debbie Whitbam  
At Whitechapel Bell Foundry on All Saints Alton casting day*

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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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