

"Months Peals" in reflection

"That seems a good idea - anyone interested" and so began the 1986 version of the month's peal challenge for us in Worcestershire. (Roddy having rung alternate peals for the Association some years before).

The year's activity started late in January (25th) being the first date that everyone could make. The delightful ring at Hanbury brought round in 2h47, although the wrong places in 5/6 proved more interesting than they should have done. Richard's composition brought the best out of the method and even though it had not been published we did not feel this would bring instant disqualification so we carried on.

February at Rock on the 26th brought real pressure, again caused by non-availability and was probably the daftest thing the writer has ever done. There is not a lot between this tower and the Urals and with a howling gale and a temperature of -6°C, raging flu and a scarf around the neck does not exactly help. Is it really worth sacrificing one's life for this; does not bring much sympathy from the wife either. They tell me it was a good peal... I will believe them!

March at Dodderhill on the 15th, was almost certainly unique, as I believe it was the only peal of the method to be rung without 87's at back-stroke. RJC's composition had the third as the hunt bell throughout and succeeded in eliminating the unwanted changes together, unfortunately, with the wanted ones. However we all agreed that it was worth the effort and a good peal was scored.

April at Amblecote on the 9th coupled a super peal full of good music with an interesting line. The band were beginning to get the feel of the task and this was evident in their confidence and hence with the ringing.

In May we travelled to All Saints, Worcester on the 21st and another very good musical peal was duly scored. The static nature of 2nd's place bell contrasted well with the Bristol type backwork.

The distraction of good beer just down the road from June's tower (Netherton on the 4th) thankfully did not prove too much. The band's confidence was now high and peals in other "spiky" single methods brought quality ringing.

Quality however is all a matter of comparison and with July S. Major you could not have a worse comparison. A broken rope at Evesham on the 10th after 50 minutes forced the dubious pleasure of a double helping at this method. We scored at Hanbury on the 16th and to a man vowed to commit this line to the deep. Where on earth did this one come from? Those places in 5/6 went on for an eternity.

Sanity was restored with August at Edgbaston on the 13th and we were back to our previous high.

The writer's employers did their best to interrupt the continuing 100 per cent success rate when they (deliberately?) cancelled a train, but despite this a rapid peal of September was scored at Great Hampton on the 13th. Even Gerald listening outside was heard to comment "I thought that was moving!"

Rod's dire warning was relayed to all and probably the best peal of the lot was rung at Stoke Prior on the 11th as a result. As a subtle reminder of the spikes in October, the presence of a dozy wasp flying erratically in the belfry helped enormously. Someone was heard to say "a method with teeth in it" whatever did he mean?

Following the City's Big Bang and considering the date (5th at Bewdley), November caused no more than a whimper and the hammering on the

The City of the heavy fours

by The Reverend David L. Cawley, AKC, FSA

In 1965, Bristol celebrated the octo-centenary of the foundation of "The Abbey at Bristowe, that of Seint Austin, upon the fairest mount with the sweetest aire". In view of this long history it is perhaps strange that change-ringing bells had only been ringing from the Cathedral tower for seven years previously; and those are the result of war-time activity when all but the leaning tower of the church which formerly housed them, Temple or Holy Cross, was destroyed. A subsequent article will deal with those bells up until the time of the destruction of their original home; it is perhaps worth noting that well over a hundred peals have been rung on them since their installation at the Cathedral comparing with only four in their whole time at Temple Church. The excellence of their tone and the immaculate way in which they are maintained present a pleasing contrast to the four bells in the ancient tower which has held the Abbey bells for so long.

There are many traditions (dear of course to the Man of Kent as he writes) concerning St. Augustine of Canterbury; tradition has asserted that here stood the oak beneath which he sat (and stayed sitting) to receive the Welsh Bishops. Other sites have valid claims; but it is interesting to note that there was hereabouts in Saxon times a chapel dedicated to St. Jordan (one of his followers). Recent excavations on the site of the church of St. Augustine-the-Less nearby revealed the remains of a very early, possibly Saxon chapel. St. Augustine-the-Less was closed in 1938, shaken about by bombs in 1940 and after years of intentional neglect was disgracefully bulldozed in 1962. The site was excavated in 1984, but bids fair to be re-developed; far better that the monstrous Royal Hotel next door, derelict for years, had been bulldozed and re-opened the view of the Cathedral from the Centre. In the obtuse way of things, the little mediaeval church has gone and the derelict hotel is now under reconstruction! It was near to this already established church that Robert Fitzhardinge (later Lord Berkeley) founded this Abbey of Augustinian canons, which finally became independent around 1175. By that time Robert had been dead for five years; he is buried near the west arch of the tower, a canon of the house he had founded.

"No doubt there were bells" is a phrase which frequently occurs in the pages of this journal. Alas, at Bristol one cannot build up a detailed picture of the successive installations and augmentations as the greater part of the Chapter Records, both of the Abbey and of the Cathedral, were destroyed when the mob which

perpetrated the 1831 riots attempted to burn down the building. The records were then kept in the chapter house, which, as its stones reveal, were more durable than the records they contained. External sources and surviving evidence, some of which has appeared before in *The Ringing World* can be our only guides to the present state of things.

To return first of all and briefly, to the Abbey: that it was completed in Norman times is shown by surviving portions in different places rather than a concentration in one. The famous chapter house (beyond the south transept); the Great Gate (beyond the west end) and the initial stair to the central tower (in the north choir aisle) are indicative of this. Further, the piers supporting the great tower are constructively Norman with their mouldings re-shaped out of typical compound piers of the period (c.f. Norwich). The 14th century was one of great development, St. Augustine's becoming a mitred Abbey in 1398. Of particular interest to us are Abbots Newbury, Hunt and Newland during whose terms of office the central tower was rebuilt. Strangely enough the last Abbot of Bristol was a Welshman, Morgan ap Guiliam who surrendered the Abbey on 9th December 1539. For three years there was silence over College Green; then in 1542 the new Dioceses of Gloucester and of Bristol were constituted, in each case the Abbey Church being re-dedicated in honour of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity. The Diocese of Bristol covered at that time the City, then a few neighbouring parishes and the county of Dorset: even St. Mary Redcliffe was in

(Continued opposite!)

door by the local youth was certainly no reason to stop. Another confident score resulted.

The band had decided reluctantly not to pursue the spliced as availability of dates proved extremely difficult and therefore knew that with one more success at Selly Oak on the 13th, the job would be done and excepting July's mechanical failure a complete first time pass rate would be attained. The combination of this knowledge and December's tame line brought an anti-climatic ending to the year, however everyone agreed to continue the good work achieved over the last year.

In reflection on a "year's peals" some will stay in the compilation, some will be rung again but they proved a source of good ringing and furthered this association's repertoire. This band wish to thank Rod Pipe for having the idea and for putting in the work of checking compositions and submitting text for publication, we have enjoyed it. Now, what are we going to ring next year? Any thoughts Rod?

C.G.A.



Hate of the week

Ringers who send in "news" items so late that they are more suitable for a history book.



BRISTOL CATHEDRAL - The tower of St. Augustine from the west, before the building of the Cathedral nave in 1868

the Diocese of Bath & Wells! Following the 1831 riots and the death of Bishop Allen, the Dorset portion was returned to Salisbury whilst Bristol itself was amalgamated with Gloucester. The Bishop of Gloucester, James Henry Monk, became the first of the four Bishops of Gloucester & Bristol; the Cathedral retained its Dean, Prebendaries and status. It is related that the general dissatisfaction which this engendered was aggravated by the fact that Abbot Newland's partly-completed nave had been removed after the Dissolution and the good folks of Bristol found themselves "with half a Cathedral and half a Bishop!". The vast work of building the nave commenced in 1863 and was completed to the designs of George Edmund Street in 1877; at this time the Gloucester and Bristol Association of Ringers was founded and its original membership certificate shows Bristol Cathedral complete only to the height of the windows of the ringing chamber. The north-west (Bishop Butler) and south-west (Edward Colston) towers were completed externally in 1888. In 1893-4 the central tower was at last restored, having been shorn of its battlements and pinnacles for several years. The new Diocese of Bristol was constituted on 7th July 1897.

It is quite a journey up to this tower. The spiral stairway commences in the Norman portions of walling in the north choir aisle, bringing one to the triforium and affording a spectacular view of the mediaeval part of the Cathedral; one then walks along this narrow passage to a second stairway, passing en route the dark chamber below the north transept and then, over the transept roof, up again and into the vast and dusty ringing room. One is now well above the vaulting, which was closed in the time of Abbot Newland who succeeded in 1481; the walls are apparently older and are generally considered to have been carried up at least this far on the (remodelled) Norman piers by Abbot Newbury who died in 1473.

During the years of Abbot Hunt's tenure of office the work was no doubt consolidated, leaving it for the great and energetic John Newland (1481-1515) to complete. Despite much damage (such as that in 1638 when by thunder and lightning a main pinnacle of the tower was beaten down and the tower itself dangerously shattered) and subsequent restoration, the huge tower (it is over 30ft sq.) exhibits ever more elaborate decoration and panelling as one gets higher; internally it is very much as Abbot Newland left it.

The room contains a fine modern clock, replacing a much older movement; there is also a motor, operating a tolling hammer on the tenor bell. Relics of pre-1958 days are four very worn out bell ropes, one with a huge blue sally. Two of these are tied to the bell clappers for "clocking" and two are fixed to 19th-century type "Ellacombe" hammers. Below the ceiling run the six massive foundation beams of the bellframe above: the four centre ones are braced at 45° well down into the ringing room. All this foundation work has the appearance of having been in the tower for a very long period, probably ever since it was built.

The stairway continues to the bell chamber where one is again greeted by the sight of a vast bellframe for more than the four bells which are in it. The long years of torpor which seem to have afflicted Bristol more than most cities have allowed the survival of what is probably the largest surviving pre-Reformation bellframe in the country. The most impressive portion, of double-braced king-post design occupies the eastern two thirds of the tower and is designed to hold five bells swinging side-by-side. Placed at right angles to it are two very long pits; the inner one seems to be of the same period, but the outer one (on the western side) consists merely of four upright posts (the inner ones braced) carrying a head, the whole altogether inferior to the more substantial frame beside it. The two long pits would accommodate two bells each, three of which are still there, whilst the eastern portion has an individual pit for each bell. As we know that the Dean and Chapter sold a bell weighing 11 cwt. 17lbs. in 1802, we can make up the following table for the nine bells:

Treble	28½" dia.	37" pit	5-00-00
	third semitone flat of F (present treble)		
2nd	31½" dia.	37" pit	6-00-00
	shade flat of F-flat (present 2nd)		
3rd	c. 33" dia.	38½" pit	7-00-00
	? flat of D (post)		
4th	35½" dia.	40½" pit	8-10-00
	shade flat of B (present 3rd)		
5th	c. 38" dia.	44" pit	9-00-00
	? B-flat (lost)		
6th	c. 40" dia.	47½" pit	11-17-00
	? A-flat (sold 1802)		
7th	c. 42½" dia.	46½" pit	12-10-00
	? G (lost)		
8th	c. 45" dia.	53" pit	15-00-00
	? F (lost)		
9th	49½" dia.	57" pit	20-10-00
	Half semitone flat of E (present tenor)		

The writer is grateful to Mr. R. W. M. Clouston, BScEng, FSA, for the basis of this tabulation which he has only slightly altered. The tenor was recast in 1676 and the centre hatch (below pit 7) with the sill timbers above it have been widened to 53". Bearing in mind the width of the tenor pit, it is possible that the previous tenor was larger than the present one, say around 22/23 cwt., note E-flat, an octave lower than the mediaeval 2nd. Even so, the present 3rd is much too flat for even the semblance of a perfect octave on these back eight bells, but when one considers that not only were their uses very different and that this bell is markedly older than the others, the frame, or indeed the tower itself, there is no ground for thinking otherwise than that a distinct and authentic mediaeval usage was being followed.

The present third bell is by an unknown hand; it bears the well-known *recercele* initial cross (often from its shape known as the "hook-armed" cross; see Frederick Sharpe, *The Church*

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Bells of Herefordshire, pp.444-56 (including a paragraph of the Bristol bell; and George Elphick, *Sussex Bells and Belfries*, where there is a good photograph of an inscription cast at West Thorney). The earliest such bell is at the Bargello Museum, Florence (1184), the latest is dated 1534 at Pulsaritz, Austria and a feature is the variety of forms of lettering and their application to the original mould. At Bristol the evidence of the casting indicates that the impression was first cast in wax (rather than being made of wax rolls) and then applied in the normal manner of the time to the wax model. Assuming that the bell was cast for, and always at Bristol Abbey, a favourable date would be c.1300-25 when Abbot Knowle was rebuilding the choir. The inscription reads:

+CLARA VOXOR ET CLARIOR ERO
(I am called Clare and I will be clearer)

an unusual dedication, the future tense possibly indicating the recasting of an earlier bell.

The two trebles are almost contemporaries in point of age and both examples of Bristol Foundry workmanship. The gothic inscriptions read:

(Treble)

sancte : elemene : ora : pro + nobis :

(below this, on the waist the monogram IN, and the Nulande rebus, a bleeding heart, twice repeated).

(Second)

+ Sta () margareta () ora () pro () nobis

(the stop not dissimilar to an inverted "S").

Whilst remarkably similar in appearance, the bells have marked differences in their inscriptions: certainly the treble either commemorates Abbot John Newland or was cast to his order; his nickname was "Nailheart", hence his rebus. The initial cross is that exclusively used by Thomas Gefferies of Bristol whose initials (g invariably appear on his bells; also, he started founding in 1518. Either this is a work of an immediate predecessor in the Bristol foundry or else Gefferies omitted his initials in deference to those of the great Abbot. By contrast, the second is rather "routine" excepting that it bears one capital and a rare cross. Again a Bristol bell, it would appear to be from a different founder. The "additional" frameside discussed above provides a common pit 37" wide for these two bells of 28½" and 31½" but adds no evidence as to precise age; the headstock of the treble, however, was made for a smaller pit and an extra piece of oak, merely "spiked" on to the frame, supports its inner bearing; the second hangs on incredible headstock: "I have never seen a bell hung out like the second; it hangs about four feet," wrote Mr. John W. Taylor when inspecting the bells in 1894. Perhaps it came from a predecessor and was designed to give an extremely slow period of swing.

The tenor, whose possible earlier history has been discussed, was recast in Bristol by Roger Purdue II in 1670. It is inscribed:

++ ECCLESIA + CATHEDRALIS + BRISTOLL
+ DOMINI + DOMINI ++ 1670 ++ R(bell)P+(bell)
CETVM + SOLENNEM + IN + DOMVM + DOMINI
++ 1670 RP +++ CONGREGATE +

("The Cathedral Church of Bristol, the House of the Lord, 1670, R. P. Call a solemn assembly into the House of the Lord, 1670, R. P.") (The + represents Purdue's borders of conjoined sprigged fleurs-de-lis).

Opinions of this bell have differed widely; John Llewellyn in 1879 said it was not a good bell but had a "deep spongy lip" the removal of which would help to improve its tone. It must be a tough old bell; having at some point lost its canons, heavy iron bolts were inserted with no room for clearance as with modern bell-bolts; the cast-in staple is still there, so the bursting

AN OPTIMISTIC PROGRESSIVE ATTITUDE

Geoffrey Fothergill became the first ringer to complete 1000 peals for the Lancashire Association on Sunday 28th September 1986, as earlier reported in *The Ringing World* (p.933). It was fitting that Lancashire Surprise Major should have been rung at his home tower of Westhoughton where Albert Greenhalgh had taught him to ring in 1950 and where he had progressed from choir boy to bellringer. Geoffrey's first peal was P.B. Major at Horwich conducted by Peter Crook in 1956.

After leaving Hindley Grammar School, Geoffrey went up to read history at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. He rang three peals with C.U.G. After this he then served his two years National Service in Germany as a Sergeant Instructor in the Royal Army Educational Corps, preferring to spend these years near the top of the N.C.O. ranks rather than as a junior commissioned officer. The summer months brought a break from his educational work and then his duties included organising evening refreshments for the troops on their return from tank exercises. Following his demobilisation, Geoffrey studied for his Post-Graduate Certificate in Education at Manchester University and joined the M.U.G.'s Geoffrey taught in Bury, Lancashire and in Staffordshire before returning to his roots in Westhoughton in 1966 and starting peal ringing in earnest! He now teaches history at Bolton North Sixth Form College.

By the early 1970's, Geoffrey had got into the swing of ringing about 50 peals per year for the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers and has to date kept up this steady momentum. He has rung two notable long length peals: 13,440 Lincolnshire S. Major at Accrington, 13th October 1973; 13,440 Pudsey S. Major at Accrington, 22nd February 1976.

There are two types of peal ringer, those who aim to arrive at the tower some time in advance to relax and eat after hectic rush hour driving and those who arrive exactly on time. Geoffrey falls into the latter category and energetically jumps out of his car with a business-like "Let's get to it".

Many ringers are indebted to Geoffrey for his infectious enthusiasm and encouragement especially in the sphere of peal ringing. He has organised and conducted about 400 peals and provided countless lifts. The Lancashire Peal Week started by him about 20 years ago continues to thrive. The monthly Sunday after-

stresses in the crown must be considerable; and if that was not enough it is struck every hour as well as having an auto-toller whose hammer rests on the bell; perhaps the 20th century's answer to a "deep spongy lip". Certainly, sounded by its own clapper with the other impedimenta lifted clear, it is potentially a good bell.

What became of the others, or indeed whether the present bells were intended for the Abbey (the treble must have been as its marks testify) we do not know. All nine pits have been occupied and the bells, as assessed at the Dissolution by Thomas Dutton, Commissioner for Gloucestershire, were signed for as "ten . . . weighing 10,006 lbs". They were allowed to keep "one greate belle for the clock", the tenor recast in 1670; and the status of Cathedral presumably allowed them to keep at least part of the remainder, as shown by the survival of four to this day and as many as five until 1802. John W. Taylor, in 1894, felt that the new north tower would be a better place for a full ring if ever the old four were to be supplemented.



Geoffrey Fothergill

noon Surprise Royal band, organised by him also continues to make progress.

Geoffrey is a regular attendee at church and his ringing activities represent part of his wider involvement in the church's life, so it is not too surprising to learn that the rector and congregation of St. Bartholomew's presented him with a trophy to mark his 1000th peal.

A debt of gratitude is also due to Geoffrey's wife, Norma who has always provided a friendly welcome and hospitality to ringers especially during peal week when their home is often the afternoon venue between the morning and evening peal attempts. She made a delightful bell-shaped cake and prepared a delicious high tea to celebrate the 1000th peal for L.A.C.R.

Surprisingly, Geoffrey manages to find time for other activities, mostly associated with water. He has helped dig and restore canals and enjoys sailing and river cruising in England and France. He can even fit in marking hundreds of G.C.E. scripts during the summer.

Geoffrey has an optimistic progressive attitude to ringing which is, however, down to earth and without hubbug. The Exercise is fortunate to include a person with his ability and personality. We wish him every success in his future activities.

P.B.K.

Whether they were ever rung properly is not clear: the tenor is hung with early 19th-century full-circle ringing fittings, now sensibly immobilized; the treble has the top half of a wheel; the 3rd has no clapper and the 2nd has a headstock already described which would make ringing virtually impossible. On the floor of the bell chamber is a huge and interesting, probably medieval 5/8 wheel, 9'4" in diameter. Even the clock chimes are odd - the hammers are arranged on 1 and 3 for the quarters giving a peculiar musical sequence. Presumably the depth of the second's headstock precludes properly fitting of a hammer so that 2/3 may strike a proper musical interval. The daily service tolling of the tenor is almost inaudible.

In a city so well endowed with fine churches and rings of bells these three heavy fours are a stern warning that it behoves ringers, however proficient in their achievement of good ringing, to maintain an interest in those towers and those churches which by misfortune or by carelessness are unable to play so prominent a part in a city's heritage.