



Mr. E. H. Jones (right) with the late Mr. F. Hector Bennett of Shrewsbury at a meeting at Marbury, Cheshire in 1974.

### Friday the 13th at Goostrey

Friday 13th February 1987 was an auspicious day for Mr. Ernest H. Jones of Goostrey, Cheshire – his 80th birthday – and this was duly marked by the band of St. Luke's Church, of which he has been a regular and most valuable member since his arrival in 1967 – on Saturday 14th, seven extents of Kent T.B. Minor were rung and for Evensong on 15th, a quarter peal of Kent T.B. Minor was also rung in which Mr. Jones himself took part.

"Ernie" Jones started ringing in 1923 at Christ Church, Mitcham, Surrey and joined the band at St. Mary, Lewisham, Kent in 1936, where he was a fellow member with Mr. James Bennett and Mr. Philip A. Corby, President of the Central Council. He retired from the (then) LCC in 1967 and "emigrated" to Goostrey, Cheshire, where his valuable services to ringing as a member of the St. Luke's band and the Chester Guild are matched by his active membership of the St. Luke's congregation.

We "country folk" have often been fascinated by his stories of ringing outings long past which were organised by Mr. Johnston of the Croydon bell foundry.

We wish "Ernie" many more years of health, happiness and active ringing with us.

BILL GIBBONS

**Goostrey, Cheshire.** 15 Feb. 1320 Kent T.B. Minor. D N Young 1, K Elaine Young 2, E H Jones 3, M C E Hodge 4, J S Fisher 5, W F Gibbons (C) 6. For Evensong, an 80th birthday compliment to Mr. E. H. Jones. £2

### A birthday celebration in Kent

On Thursday 5th February 1987 at 7.30 p.m., six ladies, all members of St. Dunstan's Band (either past or present) assembled for what we think is the first quarter by an all ladies band in the tower. The quarter of Grandsire Doubles was rung by the following, in honour of our favourite member, Bert Luck, who was to celebrate his 80th birthday the following day.

**Canterbury, Kent.** (St. Dunstons) 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Catherine F E Davis 1, Carolyn I North 2, Brenda Chatfield (1st as C for 34 yrs) 3, Patricia A Dabson 4, Frances Templeman (1st as C) 5, Enid D Dixon 6. £2

Unbeknowing to Bert (all he knew was "Be ready at 6.30 p.m. on Friday and wear your best suit") a meal had been arranged for him at The Victoria Hotel, Canterbury. By 7 p.m. all 15 of us had arrived and after having a drink with the "birthday boy", studying some old photographs

## Bristol Bells: the higher numbers

by Christopher J. Pickford

Inspired by David Cawley's interesting articles on Bristol bells, I thought that readers of *The Ringing World* might like some further historical details of the bells of that City. The notes which follow are a by-product of my researches on the Rudhalls of Gloucester whose work of various periods is or was nowhere better exemplified in one place than in Bristol. Moreover, the parish records of many city churches are remarkably complete<sup>1</sup>, enabling the full story of each ring of bells to be related in some detail. Although my own work has yielded some interesting information hitherto unpublished, particularly on the bells of Christ Church and St. James', I have but scratched the surface in my search for specific information and a more methodical study of the surviving records would undoubtedly produce rich rewards.

Bristol once possessed more rings of bells than any other English provincial city. Writing in November 1844, Joseph Leech, the proprietor and editor of *The Bristol Times*, described a Sunday morning journey to Henbury when on reaching the Down he and his horse "... found the echo of all Bristol's bells there before us; and the swell of sweet sounds, bourne (sic) on the breeze from twenty towers, swept by us in a full

flood tide of magnificent music"<sup>2</sup>. A fine sound it must have been.

The bells Leech heard were predominantly of 18th century date, for during that period Bristol had been the scene of fierce competition between rival bellfounders for the prestigious work of recasting and augmenting the bells of city churches. In several cases, this work involved lowering the key-note and increasing the weight of the ring. The main competitors were the Rudhalls of Gloucester, Evans of Chepstow and the Bilbies, all of whose work is represented in the surviving rings in the City.

In this article, I shall attempt to sketch out chronologically the circumstances surrounding the installation of each of Bristol's rings of 10 and I must begin by correcting a small slip in David Cawley's first article. The first ring of 10 in the City, of course, was not at St. Nicholas' but at Christ Church. Of this, more below, but before looking at the "higher numbers" it might be appropriate to list in date order the rings of eight (pre-1850) in the City. The details which follow are based mainly on the Reverend H. T. Ellacombe's account of Bristol bells<sup>3</sup> and on Chapter V of *Bells & Bellfounding* by X. Y. Z.<sup>4</sup>, with some additional information obtained from contemporary sources.

St. Mary Redcliffe	1698	(Two trebles added to old six)
Christ Church	1716	(Complete ring by Abraham Rudhall I – replacing an earlier octave)
Temple	1726	(Trebles by Thomas Bilbie dated 1726 – but 7/8 of 1721 is inscribed "a seventh bell I hope shall be", probably in anticipation of augmentation)
All Saints	1727	(Complete ring by Abraham Rudhall II – previously a ring of six)
St. Peter	1729	(Complete ring by Abraham Rudhall II – destroyed)
St. Philip & St. Jacob	1739	(Complete ring by Thomas Bilbie)
St. Mary le Port	1749/50	(All by William Evans, back six 1749, trebles 1750 – destroyed: David Cawley states that there were four bells and a sanctus before 1749)
St. James	1755	(Complete ring by Abel Rudhall – previously a ring of six)
St. Thomas	1756	(Two trebles by Thomas Bilbie dated 1756 – possibly replacing older bells, see under St. James below)
St. Stephen	1759	(Complete ring by Abel Rudhall – previously a ring of six)
St. Nicholas	1764	(Complete ring by Thomas Rudhall – previously a ring of six)
St. Matthew.		
Kingsdown	1836	(New bells for new church)

that had been dug out by some people, we all sat down to an excellent meal which was enjoyed by all.

Birthday cake was the next order of the day and an announcement over the tannoy congratulating a young man on his 80th birthday was followed by a round of applause from all present and a brandy on the "house" for Bert.

We then retired to the bar for a few drinks and a photographic session in order that we may remember this day for a long time to come, before heading homewards.

The following afternoon, another six ringers (not quite an all male band) gathered at St. Dunstan's in order to attempt a peal. Unfortunately however, the bells had other ideas (or was it too much to eat the night before) and it was not scored.

This band, not wishing to be outdone by the ladies then went for a quarter peal of Kent which was successfully scored in celebration of Bert's 80th birthday.

**Canterbury, Kent.** (St. Dunstons) 1320 T.B. Minor. T J E Brett (1st T.B. Minor) 1, M N Wetherill 2, D N Watts 3, Cathryn M Andrews 4, D C Chatfield 5, C A Huckstep (C) 6. Also 18th birthday compliment to Tom Brett. Congratulations Bert and may you enjoy many more!

### "Go" at Great Paxton much improved

The February meeting of the Huntingdon District ringers was held on Saturday 21st February at Great Paxton, where despite the cold weather, ringers soon got warm ringing the five bells to a variety of Doubles methods including several touches of Reverse Canterbury. All who rang there were grateful to the local band for the "go" of the bells which are much easier to ring than in previous years.

The service at Brampton was held up for 15 minutes while the convoy of cars carrying the ringers was delayed at the level crossing at Olford – there is no truth in the rumour that they were trying to find Brampton as advertised in *The Ringing World* p.185. Nevertheless they received a warm welcome later in the church hall and after a hearty tea, a short business meeting was held with the rector, Canon Wilf Debney in the Chair. Jim Skillings ably stepped in as Secretary in his wife's absence for the meeting.

The day finished with ringing on the six bells at Brampton where a variety of methods from call changes to Cambridge Minor was rung.

Further documentary research on the bells of Christ Church, St. Philip & St. Jacob, Temple and St. Thomas, might well enable a wholly reliable chronology to be given. Suffice it to say that by 1800 Bristol possessed one ring of 10 (Christ Church) and 10 rings of eight as noted above. These figures, with one adjustment, tally with the details given in about 1817 by John Alfred Parnell, *The Gothic Traveller*, whose notes<sup>5</sup> mention two rings of 10 in Bristol City, namely "St. Nicholas Church Tenor 36 Cwt & Christ Church 22 Cwt", nine rings of eight and four rings of six.

**Christ Church**

To Christ Church belongs the distinction of having had Bristol's first ring of 10 bells. The present ring consists of eight bells by Abraham Rudhall I, dated 1716 and two trebles cast by William Bilbie in 1789. Abel Rudhall's 1751 catalogue, however, lists "City of Bristol, Christ Church, 10", implying that there were 10 bells, all cast by members of the Rudhall family, at Christ Church before 1751. Investigation in the parish records showed not only that the bells were first augmented to 10 in 1727/8, but also that there were eight bells in the tower before 1716. I did not search the vestry minutes for information on the earlier augmentation to eight, but I have no doubt that the date could be discovered. It would certainly be interesting to know if Christ Church had eight bells before 1698 when the bells at St. Mary Redcliffe were augmented.

The records show that on 23rd January 1716/17 the vestry empowered the churchwardens to "treat and agree with Mr. Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester Bellfounder for the new casting the Eight Bells now in the Tower of Christ Church". The bells are dated 1716 and the accounts for 1716-17 show that "Mr. Abra Riddall" was paid £87.1s., doe "new casting the Bells &c.", the hanging being undertaken by a Mr. Trevett, carpenter. The exact weights of the bells are not recorded, but the Rudhall catalogue of c.1830 gives the weight of the tenor as 20 cwt.

It was on 6th November 1727 that the vestry authorised the churchwarden "to agree with Mr. Rudhall of Gloucester to cast and set up in the Tower of Christ Church two Treble Bells". The bells cost £89.3s., and Rudhall's bill preserved in the parish records is dated 22nd January 1727/8. The weights of the bells are given as 5-1-25 and 5-2-4 and the cost of "making of two new frames and hanging the two New Bells by Henry Jennings [of Gloucester] and W<sup>m</sup> Tanner" amounted to £7.10s. There can be little doubt that these bells were added to the ring, although it should be noted that later in 1728 the church clock was restored and new clock jacks striking the quarters on bells independent of the ring were added<sup>6</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the augmentation at Christ Church took place in the same year as Abraham Rudhall II, supplied a new ring of eight for the neighbouring parish of All Saints. The churchwardens' accounts for All Saints include an entry dated 4th November 1727 which reads "Paid with the Wardens of X Church when [we] enquired ye cost of yr [i.e. their] Bells". The contract for recasting the six old bells at All Saints (the total weight of which was 55-1-12) was signed on 6th November 1727 and the new ring of eight (tenor 16-0-22, total weight 71-1-2) was first rung on 28th March 1728.

But to return to Christ Church. The original church became very dilapidated and a new church was built between 1786 and 1790. At about the same time, in 1788, the parish was united with that of St. Ewen whose church (with

two Rudhall bells cast in 1698/9) was subsequently demolished. The rebuilding of Christ Church afforded an opportunity for improvements to the bells. The old clock and chimes were taken down and transferred to All Saints church in June 1786 and no doubt the 10 bells were dismantled at much the same time. The two trebles were recast by William Bilbie in 1789 and it is said that Bilbie also retuned the Rudhall octave in order to ensure a satisfactory splice<sup>7</sup>. In all probability further details of Bilbie's work in 1789/90 could be gleaned from the parish records.

**St. Paul's - frame for 10, 1795-6**

As David Cawley has shown in his article, which deals mainly with the proposed restoration in the 1920's, the four bells supplied by John Rudhall in the 1790's were intended to form part of a ring of 10 for which an oak bell-frame was provided. Contemporary records do little to solve the mystery surrounding this curious installation, although a few additional scraps of information may be of interest.

John Rudhall originally estimated the cost of "3 Bells & frames at £368 19s. 9d." and he evidently supplied two small bells for the church in 1792. It was not until 8th December 1794, however, that the Church Building Committee (as distinct from the vestry) requested Dr. Small to write to Mr. Rudhall and "order the Frame for Eight Bells - and the two bells to be sent immediately". Rudhall's signed receipts for monies (£228.19s.) paid to him on account by the Commissioners between 8th April 1795 and 30th January 1796 are pasted in the account book, but unfortunately his bill for the work does not seem to have survived.

The available evidence is all too inconclusive, but the frame evidently dates from 1795-6 and the bells show that the authorities had laid the foundations of a ring of 10 to be completed at a later date. Joseph Leech tells us<sup>8</sup> that Portland Square, once "eminently aristocratic, before the tide of high life flowed westward", was by 1844 in decline "though still respectably inhabited". Here, perhaps, is the real reason why the scheme never reached fruition.

**St. Nicholas**

Unfortunately, the parish records of St. Nicholas' were destroyed with the bells in World War II, but a certain amount of information on the bells is available from other sources. The weights of the heavy ring of eight bells cast by Thomas Rudhall in 1764 are recorded, along with those of several other Bristol rings, in a note in the Ellacombe collection at the British Library<sup>9</sup>. Details are as follows:

Treble	33½"	7-3-19
2nd	34½"	8-0-15
3rd	36½"	9-2-24
4th	39½"	11-2-3
5th	42½"	13-2-25
6th	45½"	17-0-13
7th	49½"	20-3-17
Tenor	56½"	28-1-20

The weight of the tenor is given as 33 cwt. in the catalogue produced by John Rudhall in about 1830, however, and it is interesting to note that the sizes (i.e. diameters and weights) of the three largest bells were all increased in subsequent recasting.

Cyril Wratten kindly drew my attention to two early press reports concerning the Rudhall octave. The first is an "Extract from a Letter from a Gentleman of Bristol to his Friend in Gloucester" published in *The Gloucester Journal* on 9th June 1766. In it, the writer comments that "The peal of eight bells, which Mr. Rudhall, of your city, lately cast for our new

church of St. Nicholas, has received the highest approbation from all who have heard them and prove that in the art of bellfounding he is not in the least inferior to his father and grandfather". The second item is a report in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* on 13th December 1783 of a "solemn peal" rung at St. Nicholas "on the death of Mr. Tho. Rudhall, bell founder, late of Gloucester, it being the only peal of his casting in the City".

I have no firm evidence of the date of augmentation to 10, though I feel sure that David Cawley is correct in supposing that two bells were added to give St. Nicholas' Bristol's second ring of 10 in 1809. This is the date on the original second bell, but the treble (probably recast) was dated 1817. We know that a date touch of Grandshire Triples was rung on the eight bells on New Years Day 1805 and there must have been 10 bells in the tower by 6th December 1814 when a peal of Grandshire Caters - "the first peal ever rung on these bells" - was rung by the Society of Bristol Ringers.<sup>10</sup>

The later history of this ring has already been given in ample detail by Mr. Cawley so no more need be said here. I do just wonder, though, whether the Bristol newspapers of the early 19th century might provide some additional information on the augmentation to 10 and on the recastings which took place in 1804 and 1817.

I can add, however, that an undated entry in the old "peals book" at the Whitechapel foundry shows that the treble and eighth (not the ninth) bells were recast by Thomas Mears. This entry evidently refers to the work carried out in 1817, details of the new bells being as follows:

New Treble	31½"	7-1-26
New 8th	46"	18-0-21

**St. Mary Redcliffe**

The heavy ring of eight at St. Mary Redcliffe was augmented to 10 in 1823, giving the City of Bristol its third ring of that number. The two new trebles were cast by Thomas Mears of Whitechapel, but it is interesting to note that they also bore the name of Jasper Westcott (later a bellfounder) as churchwarden. Redcliffe bells were later augmented to 12 in 1872 and in 1903 all except the eighth, tenth and eleventh bells were recast by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough.

By the addition of two extra bells, a flat 6th cast by John Taylor & Co. in 1951 and an "extra treble" from the same foundry added in 1970, St. Mary Redcliffe became the second tower (after St. Patrick's, Dublin, where a similar augmentation took place in 1925) to possess a light ring of 10 for use instead of the "back ten" of the 12. The light 10 has the ninth bell of the ring (weight 19-3-1 in E) as tenor.

**St. James, Horsefair**

The fourth of Bristol's rings of 10 is that at St. James, Horsefair. The story of the bells of St. James' would make a lengthy and interesting article in itself, but for the purposes of this note I will confine myself as far as possible to the essential facts. The old bells at St. James' were a ring of six with a tenor of about 18 cwt. On 23rd September 1754, Abel Rudhall of Gloucester contracted to provide "Eight new Bells of the Best Metal the same Key of Saint Thomas within the City of Bristol aforesaid the Tenor to weigh Twenty five hundred and the other seven bells to weigh in proportion". Rudhall's contract thus shows that the new ring of eight was modelled on the bells of St. Thomas's and this is of interest since it provides an indication that there were already eight bells at St.

*(continued overleaf)*

Thomas's before the present trebles were cast (or recast) by Thomas Bilbie in 1756.

Under the contract, the old tenor at St. James', a Rudhall bell cast in 1700, was to be left in the tower "till the new bells are completed". The bellhanger, George Nott of Hanham, took delivery of the five smallest bells of the old ring on 15th October 1754, the weight of each one being given in his signed receipt. The old fifth bell weighed 13-2-23. The new bells were to be cast and hung by 1st June 1755 and the contract price for the work was £300. Rudhall thought this "as cheap as they possibly Can be Done for Considering the Extraordinary Addition of Metal", and the three letters which he wrote in September 1754 show his anxiety over possible competition from his "Brother trader Mr. Evans". Rudhall's ring was opened on 6th August 1755 and the churchwardens' accounts record expenditure of £2.4s.6d. on "Expences at the Opening of the Bells, being a Dinner and Liquor for the Ringers". In a report of a peal of Grandsire Triples rung at St. James in February 1756, it is stated that the bells were "thought to be the most complete ring of their Weight in this part of England"<sup>11</sup>.

Two of the original bells of 1755 have been recast. The seventh (now the ninth) was recast by Thomas Rudhall in 1778 and the founder's bill dated 7th February 1779 survives among the parish records. The recasting cost £19.19s.6d. In October 1833, John Rudhall noted Richard Cole's estimate for the bellhanging work associated with replacing the cracked tenor at St. James', and he may have been asked to quote for recasting, but it was not until six years later that the parish took the work in hand<sup>12</sup>. By 1839, John Rudhall was dead and his executors had sold the bellfounding business to Thomas Mears of Whitechapel who supplied the present tenor (weight 28-0-25) from his London foundry in August 1839. The old tenor, delivered at Whitechapel in October 1839, weighed 25-1-14.

But what of the augmentation to 10? The parish records include a letter which shows that augmentation to 10 was under consideration long before it actually took place in 1866. On 17th September 1781 "the Ringers of Saint James's" petitioned the churchwardens, urging the addition of two bells to the ring. They claimed that the bells "would make a melodious Peal of Ten equal if not superior to the Ten at Painswick in Gloucestershire which are reckoned the finest Peal in the County". The letter continues: "In all likelihood it would have been done at Saint James's before now only one Gentleman in the Parish was rather against the matter, fearing lest adding two bells might hurt the present peal, but it is impossible it can effect or hurt them in the least, because they would remain just as they now are without the least alteration either in the Bells or the Frames, and the two additional Bells would be hung over them in the same manner as at Bath Abbey where they have lately [in 1774] added two Bells to their Peal of Eight." The ringers concluded by offering to subscribe 10 guineas towards the expence if the churchwardens approved "having a Peal of Ten at Saint James's". The vestry minutes may shed some further light on the fate of this abortive scheme.

According to X. Y. Z. (John Llewelin Jun. of Messrs. Llewelin & James, bellfounders) who gave details of all the rings of bells in Bristol in his book *Bells & Bellfounding* (1879), the ring at St. James' was increased to 10 in 1866. He commented, however, that "neither of the additional bells are well in tune or peal with the others and they mar rather than improve the effect of the whole". The Reverend H. T. Ellacombe gives the inscriptions of all the bells

in his book *The Church Bells of Gloucestershire* (1881), details of the two trebles of the 10 being as follows:

1/10 HENRY HUGHES ESQ. CHARLES FISHER  
CHURCHWARDENS 1866 (Diameter 28½ inches)  
2/10 M<sup>R</sup>. M. WHITTINGHAM  
CHURCHWARDEN (Arabesque border) T (bell) R  
1771 (Diameter 29 inches).

On first sight these details seem rather puzzling. Were the bells really augmented in 1866? If so, how come the second bell is dated 1771? Who cast the new treble? These were the main questions which sprang to mind and fortunately a little research quickly revealed some interesting answers.

The churchwardens accounts for 1771-2 show that Thomas Rudhall was paid £38.13s.9d. "for a Bell for the Clock to Strike upon". The accounts also record payments for bringing the bell from Gloucester on a trow, for unloading it at the quay, for carriage and for getting it in the tower. Rudhall's bill to "Mr. Wm. Whittingham", the churchwarden whose name occurs on the bell<sup>13</sup>, survives and it shows that the new clock bell supplied in December 1771 weighed 5-2-3. So, the present second bell was originally cast for St. James' as a clock bell in 1771.

The Loughborough foundry records mention a bell with the inscription "Henry Hughes Esq., Charles Fisher Esq. Churchwardens 1866" which was cast by John Taylor & Co. and supplied to Messrs. Llewellins & James of Bristol as "Treble to a peal of ten" in April 1866. The weight of this bell is 5-2-17. This entry both explains why no founder's name appears on the bell and also gives evidence that John Llewelin had good reason to know that the ring was augmented in 1866 since the work was undertaken by his firm. His retrospective criticism of the work does him credit, although from the facts given above it is clear that the augmentation was done "on the cheap" and it is hardly surprising that the results were unsatisfactory.

### St. Stephen

The last of Bristol's historic tens was that at St. Stephen's where the old eight was augmented to 10 in 1891. As in many of the other cases described above there were only six bells at St. Stephen's prior to the installation of a new Rudhall octave in 1759. The parish had had previous dealings with the Rudhalls, since Abraham Rudhall I had recast their tenor bell in 1714 and on 15th June 1759 the churchwarden was ordered to "contract with Mr. Rudhall of Glouc<sup>r</sup> for a new Peal of Eight Bells The Tenor to weigh not less than 20 Hundred and the others in Proportion". The total cost over and above the value of the six old bells was to be £145 and the accounts show that Abel Rudhall's bill actually amounted to £143.16s.6d. Like those at St. James', the new bells were hung by George Nott of Hanham and the new tenor weighed 20-2-6.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers took an active role in raising money to pay for the gradual restoration of the church. The Society had long since ceased to have any practical connection with the art of ringing and Joseph Leach wryly observed in 1844 that he "should not think of trusting a member amongst them with a rope-end in a triple-bob major, or even a 'call-change' which is considered a much easier undertaking"<sup>14</sup>. He had a great respect for their "talents as trenchermen", however and he evidently had good reason to know of their prowess at the dining table for apparently he attended the Society banquets on a number of occasions<sup>15</sup>.

The bells of St. Stephens were, nonetheless, dear to the hearts of members of the Antient Society and it was in March 1891 that they decided to pay for the rehangings of the bells and to increase the peal from eight to 10. The contract was carried out by Messrs. Llewellins & James of Bristol, who supplied two new bells in 1891/2. Their work was never entirely satisfactory and it was severely criticised in 1905 in a report by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough who were called in to report on the bells after ringing had been stopped following a survey of the state of the tower. Taylors advised rehangings the bells in a new cast iron and steel frame and their estimate of £407.10s. included a sum for recasting the two trebles which they considered to be "out of tune with the rest of the peal". Apparently, however, Taylors' recommendations were discredited by a Mr. C. E. D. Boutflower, "an expert campanologist", who "wholeheartedly condemned the use of steel in the frames" and in April 1906 Messrs. Llewellins & James were asked to submit an estimate for carrying out the necessary work along more traditional lines. Their estimate of £370 was accepted and by October 1906 they had recast the two trebles and all the bells had been rehung in a new wooden frame<sup>16</sup>.

Further restoration of the tower and bells became necessary in 1969 and the bells were again rehung in a new frame (lower in the tower) and augmented to 12. The Llewellins & James trebles were recast, as was the treble of the Rudhall octave and the resulting ring consists of five Taylor trebles and seven Rudhall bells of 1759. The work was undertaken by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough and the bells were rededicated on 17th May 1971<sup>17</sup>.

### Conclusion

Thus in order of augmentation, Bristol's rings of 10 were as follows: Christ Church (1727), St. Nicholas (1809), St. Mary Redcliffe (1823), St. James (1866), and St. Stephen (1891). To this list should now be added St. Ambrose, Bristol East, where a light ring of 10 (tenor 11-1-21 in G) was formed by adding two trebles to the original ring of eight in 1979/80. Of these rings, those at St. Mary Redcliffe and St. Stephens have been subsequently augmented to 12, in 1872 and 1969 respectively. In addition St. Mary Redcliffe now has a light ring of 10 formed by the installation of an extra treble in 1970.

I am all too aware that my information on these rings is far from complete and further research may well reveal some errors and omissions in my account of Bristol's bells. I hope, however, that I have illustrated the differing circumstances behind the creation of the more important rings of bells in the City and that I have given the reader an idea of the fascinating interrelationships between the ringers and parochial officials of the churches concerned.

(Continued opposite)

<b>A. ELLIS</b>	
<b>ROPE &amp; TENT MAKER</b>	
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## Exeter Colleges Annual Dinner

The Exeter Colleges Guild Dinner was the highspot of the first weekend in February. Ringing began at Ide and Whitestone near Exeter. At Ide 56lb. weights were used in an effort to reach the sallies and Whitestone was eventually spotted rising from the gloom, after much travelling along country lanes. Here the beautiful bells were much enjoyed and a course of London Minor successfully rung.

On the Saturday three rings were sampled, at Kilmington, Lyme Regis and Seaton. These were followed by a short ring at Exeter Cathedral.

A total of 85 members and guests attended the Dinner and after an excellent meal the speeches began. The Secretary, Adam Hopkins, took a humorous look at the activities of E.C.G.'s past members in the preceding year (many marriages and births). He toasted the Visitors (of which several) after a random distribution of gifts.

The Prebendary, John Scott (President), replied on behalf of the Visitors with an interesting, lucid and at times funny account of his activities as adviser on bells and bellfries.

The MC then plugged a new society "The EXE Society" he had helped form, before introducing the Master, Simon Sheldon (as Master) had to suffer again a witty song about himself composed and sung by Peter Comford and Jan Criggs. When he eventually spoke, Simon somehow managed to make the activities of E.C.G. over the last year sound quite interesting.

The speeches were followed by the daffodil toast which Victoria Hess carried out with great dignity and composure. Members and Visitors then talked, or listened and danced to a jazz band, until nearly 1 a.m.

A. H.

## BRISTOL BELLS - continued

### Notes

- The surviving records are listed in the *Guide to the Parish Records of the City of Bristol & the County of Gloucester* ed. I. Gray and E. Ralph, Bristol, 1963. The records are mostly held on deposit in the Bristol Record Office, whose staff were most helpful when I visited Bristol to research the material noted above.
- J. Leech *The Rural Rides of the Bristol Churchgoer*, ed. Alan Sutton, Gloucester (1982) p.174.
- H. T. Ellacombe, *The Church Bells of Gloucestershire*, Exeter (1881).
- X.Y.Z. *Bells & Bellfounding - a practical Treatise upon Church Bells*. Bristol (1879), Chapter V, pp.50-57.
- Original at Sheffield Cathedral, copy of manuscript in Central Council Library (no.115a).
- J. K. Bellechambers *Somerset Clockmakers* (1968) pp.16-23 gives a detailed account of the history of the clock, with illustration (plate 1) of clock jack and bell.
- The tuning is mentioned in X.Y.Z. *op. cit.* p.53. See also *The Ringing World* 6th February 1970.
- J. Leech *op. cit.* p.112.
- British Library, London, *Add.Ms.* 33206 f.3, on the dorse of a printed broadsheet of Richard & Moses Cole, the Pucklechurch bellhangers, c.1820.
- Date touch reported in *Hereford Journal* 9th January 1805; peal tablet given in Ernest Morris, *History & Art of Change Ringing* (1931) p.176.

## Tales of Westbridge St. George

*Ringers teas are problematical at the best of times, this time David and the Westbridge ringers are faced with providing a tea at impossibly short notice. But problems always come in three...*

There are times when I wish that the telephone had never been invented! Eight-thirty on Sunday morning when I had been up half the night with Peter was one of them.

"It's for you" called Mary from downstairs.

"Tell them I'll ring back later."

"Sorry, darling, it's Isabel."

"Oh, bl... " I started to say.

"Not now, not in front of the children!" quipped 11-year-old Justin, who had appeared in the bedroom doorway.

"I'll have none of your cheek either, my lad". I got up reluctantly. My head swam as I went down the stairs. I must have got up too quickly. I picked up the phone "Hello Isabel. Problems?"

The worried voice of our District Secretary came down the line. "David, I'm so sorry to bother you at this time, but I've just been hit by a real bombshell. Amchester say they can't do the tea for the District AGM - some mix-up over the booking of the hall - so I'm desperate for someone else to take it on. Do you think you could help us out?"

"But the AGM's on Saturday!"

"I know it's asking a lot, but you are the only people who can get me out of this mess. There's no other tower that I could even think of asking and you always do *such* a good job."

Try that sort of line on my rebellious lot and flattery will get you nowhere, I thought.

"Look, all we need is a cup of tea and a sandwich and somewhere to hold a meeting." Isabel was saying. "Oh, and if we could ring there afterwards it would be a big help."

Perhaps if I had been wide awake I would have put my foot down. Still half-asleep I said, "Alright, I'll look into it, but no promises. Until I know whether our hall is available and the church isn't being used for anything else I can't even begin to think about whether we can cope

- Gloucester Journal* 17th February 1756, *ex. inf.* Cyril Wratten.
- John Rudhall's foundry notebook 1828-1835, Bristol Record Office ref: 20535(335).
- Note the discrepancy regarding Whittingham's initials.
- J. Leech, *op. cit.* p.68.
- H. E. Roslyn *History of the Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers Bristol*, Bristol (1928) p.76.
- Details of the bells taken from Roslyn *op. cit.* pp.110-111, 120-125, 158-161.
- The Ringing World* 7th May 1971, p.396.

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with it at this late stage. I'll call you back after morning service."

\* \* \*

Arriving at St. Georges a few minutes early for service ringing I was fortunate in catching just the right person. Mrs. Walters always knew, without ever seeming to have to keep any records, just who was using which of the church facilities at any given moment. She was sure that the hall and the church would be clear for us to use. "You're lucky" she said, "Saturdays are very popular usually."

"I'm not so sure that I would call it lucky, but you'd better book things in my name at least provisionally. I'll know definitely by tonight whether we'll need them."

I climbed up to the ringing room. The stairs seemed steeper and longer than ever and my head had started to ache. I wondered what was the best way to approach this. Although most people would excuse us if things were not up to their usual standard, given the short notice, I wanted Westbridge to put on a really good show. This was the first time since I had taken over from Joe that we had hosted a District meeting and I had my pride as did the rest of the band. District affairs tended to be very well attended and fairly lavish in catering terms. A few sandwiches and a cup of tea just would not do, but it was a lot to ask of people who, for the most part, had full time jobs and families and would have limited spare time between now and next Saturday.

The direct approach is always best, I said to myself, somewhat unconvinced. Get it over with.

"We've been asked to host the District AGM" I said at the end of a touch.

"Next year?"

"No, next week."

Silence.

"You're joking," said Sue after a moment.

"Fraid not" I replied and explained about Amchester. "Our church hall is free and there's nobody using the church, so the bells can be rung after the meeting."

"Have you booked the hall, then?"

"Yes."

"Without consulting any of us first," Paul was working up into an uncooperative mood.

"Only provisionally. Obviously I can't do anything without substantial cooperation from all of you. What do you think?"

"It's a bit thick to drop us in it like this."

"How on earth are we going to get ready in a week?"

"We'll be catering for hundreds, it's just not on."

(continued overleaf)