

Progress at St. Benedict's

Sunday, 24 July, was the first anniversary of the hallowing of the new light ring of bells at St. Benedict's, Hunsbury Hill, Northampton, by the Bishop of Peterborough, and the day was marked by a series of special events, starting with a quarter peal attempt. This was the first attempt by any of the members of the new local band formed from scratch last October. It successfully came round after 35 minutes.

The ringing was of a high standard and Rachael is to be congratulated on a fine performance. General ringing then followed until the 10 a.m. service.

During his address the vicar, the Revd. Terry Ensor, referred to the Service of Hallowing 12 months ago and the names given to each of the bells. He then invited the ringers to stand before the altar while he dedicated two boards. The first gives details of the bells, their inscriptions and weights, and it is hoped that it will be mounted inside the church near to the door to the tower, rather than hidden away in the ringing room out of sight. The second board gives details of the first peal which was rung on the bells earlier this year, and will be hung in the ringing room. The vicar then congratulated the members of his congregation who had taken up the challenge of becoming ringers and also thanked the members of the Northampton Branch of the Peterborough D.G. who had undertaken the tuition.

After the service the bells were available for general ringing, which was followed by an excellent celebratory lunch given by the vicar for the ringers.

Sunday service ringing at St. Benedict's is at 9.25 a.m. every week and the practice is on Thursdays from 7.30 p.m. Visitors are most welcome, as are any visiting teams who should contact the Tower Captain, Geoffrey Brown, on Northampton (0604) 769742 initially.

It is hoped to ring further quarter peals for the other new members of the band during the next few months.

G.M.E.

Northampton, St. Benedict. 24 Jul, 1260 Grand-sire Doubles: Rachael Williams (1st Q) 1, Anne England 2, B Austin (church architect) 3, Lindy Ellis 4, G Ellis (C) 5, N Parsons 6. £1.50

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CHRISTOPHER GROOME
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"Though Thomas did doubt"

"Le Quatorze Juillet" - Bastille Day to those who remember their history lessons - saw a dozen or more confident-looking people making their way against the homegoing tide of business folk towards the redundant church of St. Thomas the Martyr not far from Bristol Bridge. They came, not to tear down the walls and tower but to prove that when the long-silent heavy eight bells were actually rung the tower and church would stay just as it had stood for years! Within the church the Revd. David Cawley and Nicholas Bowden, who had laboured long and hard in preparation for this day, waited with Neil Skelton and Christopher Dalton of the Redundant Churches Fund and Mr. and Mrs. John Keeling Maggs, the architects, for the historic moment when the sound of the bells of St. Thomas' would roll out again over the Floating Harbour and City Centre of Bristol. The moment came soon after 5.30 p.m. when Father Cawley called to the first ringers standing by their bells the words of the inscription on the tenor before re-casting in 1894 "Though Thomas did doubt this bell will speak out/When me you hear come and appear" followed by "Treble's going - GONE!", and eager hands outside moved towards the recording keys of cassette recorders.

Rounds - increasing in confidence - Grand-sire Triples - Bristol (of course!) - more rounds then Stedman Triples and down - by 6.30 p.m. all was silent, but history had been made and the tower still stood! All looked towards the architects who quietly confirmed that in their opinion movement was acceptable and that it would be safe to ring again on very special occasions, subject to the agreement of the Redundant Churches Fund and with prop-

Truly a ringers' service!

The summer quarterly meeting of the Southern Branch of the Norwich DA was held in the Tas Valley. Ringing in the afternoon commenced at Fornett St. Peter, followed by the Five bells of Tasburgh.

The service held in Tasburgh church was truly a ringers' service, in the absence of the rector, Nicola Westover a member of the Diss company conducted the worship and also gave the address, Bernard Pollard of Walsham-le-Willows played the organ, and Paul Cattermole leader of the Tas Valley ringers read the lesson.

Tea, which had been prepared by Barbara Cattermole, was served in the adjoining Church Hall.

At the business meeting arrangements for the Branch Annual Meeting and Social Evening were discussed, and Association Ringing Master, David Riley gave details of the forthcoming Association Striking Competition. Members were very disappointed to learn that Branch Secretary, Betty Baines would not be seeking re-election for 1989 as she was leaving the district for business reasons. Votes of thanks were duly accorded to all who had contributed to a successful meeting.

Evening ringing took place on the new ring of six at Tacolneston, where rounds and call-changes and a variety of methods were rung under the direction of Branch Ringing Master, Mark Walland.

F.C.A

A brain is an organ that starts working the moment you get up in the morning and does not stop until you start trying to ring Stedman



er consideration for the neighbours. So at long last Bristol no longer has any unringable bells - holders of Dove's Guide please amend, for Ron Dove himself was present to both take a rope and to get the record right for the next edition!

There is of course a temptation to give a blow by blow account of the events leading up to this wonderful occasion but the file is nearly an inch thick and some of the contents "unmentionable". Suffice it to say that after David Cawley, with the writer in attendance as reporting acolyte, was allowed to make a very cursory inspection things never looked back - indeed one look at those beautiful bells in their massive frame gave the very firm conviction that it was only a matter of time and labour which stood between sound and silence. And so it proved to be, and for week after week David Cawley and Nicholas Bowden worked in the tower on the weekly "day off" and removed mess and filth of every description from the bell chamber and ringing room. Every possible discouragement was encountered and finally overcome with nothing worse than the blowing of a goodly number of fuses (personal variety!).

Tribute to whom tribute is due - honour to whom honour. Throughout the whole operation the good will of the Archdeacon of Bristol, the Ven. Anthony Balmforth, has been invaluable, for without his help and encouragement the bells would not yet have been heard. The church is safe in the hands of the Redundant Churches Fund and all who love and care for church bells owe a debt of gratitude to John Bowles the Secretary and Neil Skelton and Christopher Dalton the Field Officers and to Mr. and Mrs. John Keeling Maggs their architects, for without them nothing could have been done. Mention must be made also of Mr. Stuart Rayner and Mr. R. Smith, Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance who were much involved in early negotiations - Mr. Smith came down to witness the trial ring doubtless much relieved that the responsibility was no longer his, although he will be involved with St. Thomas' at Christmas through the work of caring for the homeless wanderer by the Julian Trust.

Among those present on this memorable evening were the Kippins, Sidney Riches, Jim Taylor, Charles Pipe-Wolferstan, Derek Carr, Alan Freke, Ron Dove, Neil Skelton, Christopher Dalton, Nicholas Bowden and of course David Cawley, who in private life happens to be Vicar of St. Anne with St. Mark and St. Thomas (but not this St. Thomas), although he did for a time most conveniently live in St. Thomas's Vicarage - but that is another story!

W.G.H.