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President ~ Mr Horace Clements

DEVON CALLS

No. 8

Newsletter of the Devon Association of Ringers

Autumn 2002

"NO CHANGE"....

...WELL, NOT TOO MUCH, ANYHOW...

...LEASTWAYS, NOT JUST YET...

Well, the fall may not be upon us as yet, but as the seasons come round, so does the AGM, with (almost) monotonous regularity...on which point, I hear you ask, will this year's AGM be quite so "interesting"? (It must be said that Brian Rix would probably have been proud to be associated with last year's.) Only time will tell; but do check out the previous minutes (hopefully, enclosed herewith)...for those (like me) who advocate that the Association be allowed to continue its natural process of evolution these may at first sight make for rather disappointing reading. However, all is not all doom and gloom, for closer inspection will reveal that the log-jam is slowly being freed...

There's a most interesting article inside this issue (thanks again, Mike!) focusing on Paignton and its redoubtable Tower Captain, John Kelly B.E.M. Surely a shining example to us all...

As one or two will already be aware, I have decided not to stand for re-election to the post of Publicity Officer. (Wipe away those tears and read on!)...Consequently your newsletter will have a new editor after this edition...I have proposed a certain south Devon ringer for the post: I dare say you'll know who 'tis by the time you read this...

Surprise (and surprised) winners of the inaugural national Devon Call Change competition were Dunsford: Congratulations! (& celebrations!) The competition organised by the St Petrock's Ringing Centre was hosted by Drewsteignton on Saturday 24th August as part of the Devon Bells Weekend in aid of the DCBRF...a full report inside!!

Spotlight on Paignton.

100 years anniversary

On my travels I meet many people, some very interesting, some knowledgeable and some enthusiastic. A person who fits all three categories is John Kelly, BEM, of Paignton Tower. The ringing chamber walls are filled with certificates, photographs and historic notes. These are due to John who has rung there for 50 years and has been the captain since 1959. He ensures that all ringers are aware of events so that their interest is maintained. This year Paignton celebrates the 100 years anniversary as in 1902 the bells were augmented from six to eight by adding two trebles cast my Mears and Stainbank who also recast the old fifth bell.

Two rehangs

The bells have been rehung and retuned twice since 1902. In 1950 the rehang was by Gillett and Johnston who changed the bells from plain bearings. At that time Paignton was the heaviest peal of 8 in the country in the key of F. The next rehang and retuning was by Taylors in 1963 to the key of E. The tenor did lose 5lbs and Paignton lost the title for being the heaviest peal. At that point the clappers were a failure with them having to be replaced over two years. The clappers from the 4th bell upwards were replaced with the tenor breaking within six months and having to be replaced several times. This was later resolved by Taylors who stated that the 'modern' method of making pig iron caused metal fatigue.

Impressive set

In 1993 the clappers were rebushed. This set still persists today. Anyone who has rung at Paignton should have been impressed by how well the eight bells go, especially as the tenor weighs 21.3.5. This is thanks to the regular maintenance from John and his helpers.

Michael Webster.

Paignton Handbells Ringers

This group was originally formed in 1955 and still rings at Christmas and New Year to raise funds for the Dame Hannah Rogers School in Ivybridge. The sum forwarded this year was just over £1,500. The School is certainly grateful for the continual support over the last 47 years and especially to John Kelly, BEM, who has been ringing for 46 of those years.

It is John who tirelessly seeks out new venues, ringing in pubs, clubs and hotels and even shows. With 19 bells and ringing just the melody line it may seem a bit quiet next to Harmony 400 who entertained us so well at the Bellringers' Christmas Carol Service but it does show that four or five people can get together over a week or two a year and collect such a large sum so effortlessly.

Many churches and individuals have handbells, and I am sure the editor would like to hear about what events take place so that the readers can be informed.

Michael Webster.



■ **CONCERT CASH:** Paignton handbell ringers captain, John Kelly, left, hands over the cheque to Bill Evans, principal of the Dame Hannah Rogers School, watched by fellow ringers.

PHOTO: Steve Pope

MEMBERS of Paignton Parish Church handbell ringers were in tune for some fundraising when they donated £1,472 to the Dame Hannah Rogers School.

The handbell team staged a series of Christmas concerts around South Devon to raise the cash for the Ivybridge school for children with special needs.

Team captain met school headmaster Bill Evans for the official presentation ceremony at Torquay's Carlton

Ringers
£1,472
donation

Hotel, in Falkland Road.

The handbell ringers also made their Christmas concerts count by donating £100 to the Miracle Trust which works with cancer research.

A further £50 was also given to the Paignton Hospital League of Friends.

from Herald Express

13.03.02

Editorial

Last Sunday evening many of you will have watched on television the episode of *Midsomer Murders* entitled "Ring Out Your Dead". The making of this programme was the subject of a front page article last year (RW 14 Sept 2001, p 917). You may recall that the production company sought a great deal of technical assistance by ringers, one or two of whom appeared briefly on camera.

There is no doubt that the programme worked very well at some levels. Inevitably a high degree of dramatic licence was used - notably striking competition teams sporting colourful sashes [oh I don't know; I can visualise Egguckland in an Argyle-green set, or even picture North Tawton in a rainbow-design; and how about Chagford in an army camouflage number designed to keep the National Park planners happy?], and some improbable [tho' not impossible] double-handed ringing... In fairness things could have been much worse and technical advice from ringers evidently paid off from a public relations point of view.

However, it is difficult to gauge the overall PR effect of this kind of venture. On balance it was a positive one. The *Midsomer Murders* series is well known to be "tongue in cheek", with wacky plot-lines that would not be out of place in a children's cartoon. It is also a popular series that will have brought ringing to the attention of a huge prime-time TV audience; even if the image of ringers portrayed was not always a flattering one.

Perhaps we should just be thankful that several of the fictional "Midsomer Wellow" band [that's team, to you & me] were under the age of 40 and slightly less eccentric than their Tower Captain.

Incidentally, the same page in the RW also featured a picture of three topless young men posing with bell ropes in their hands. Apparently, said picture appears in a 2003 calendar produced by Portsmouth Cathedral for which nine (18-33 year-old) choristers/former choristers have bared their chests. Some of the money raised will go to the Macmillan Cancer Relief Fund. The December picture is entitled "Ding Dong Merrily On High". (Make of that what you will...) Now how about some of the Association's most prominent characters following suit (as in "birthday suit") in aid of say the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund? ...perhaps let's not go down that road...

ADVANCE NOTICE

**The Ringing Roadshow
Saturday July 26th 2003**

Lincolnshire Showground, Lincoln

Organised by ringers for ringers

Guild of Devonshire ringers:

Saturday 19 October 2002

Morning: Holcombe Burnell hosts the 6-Bell Competition for affiliated towers (240 changes of any method)

Afternoon: Pinhoe hosts the Inter-Branch 8-Bell Competition (test piece: 216 Stedman Triples)

From "Ringing Round Devon" (Newsletter of the Guild of Devonshire Ringers), June 2002:

Brixton: new memorial shield: **Novice Competition honours local ringer**

A novice competition is to be held at Brixton in memory of Wilf Edworthy who rang in Plymouth for some 60 years. The competition, on **Saturday 26 October**, will consist of two sections:

Section 1 will be **round ringing** only (off the stays) for eight minutes, the first minute to be a practice. All competing teams will receive a certificate. The draw for this section is to take place at 13:00, and the result should be announced at approximately 14:00.

Section 2 will start at approximately 14:00. Teams will be expected to ring (off the stays) **half of the Devon Peal known as 60 on thirds**; either the front half or the back half will be acceptable. The teams will be allowed one minute of practice before judging starts, and the teams will be expected to have completed the test piece within ten minutes. The winning team will be awarded the **Wilf Edworthy Memorial Shield**, and all teams will receive a certificate.

The judges' decision is final. Any team seen in the opinion of the organisers to be breaking the novice criteria will be asked not to compete.

In addition, there are **three open towers available on the day**: Holbeton, Plympton St Mary and Yealmpton. Anyone wishing to visit these towers please see the organisers on the day. St Mary's Brixton is open for practice up to one month before the competition.

There is a small parking area in front of the church and also a large car park within easy walking distance. Refreshments will be provided at a small cost. The entry fee is £2 per team pre section.

Please contact B. Meek on 01752 406317 to book a place.

Results from annual festival of the **Okehampton Deanery Ringing Association** (founded 1969)
held at **Sampford Courtenay**, Saturday 1st June 2002:

Judges: Ivor Hookway & Percy Pester

Novice Section [5 minutes' round ringing]

1st & Shield, **Chagford** 19½ faults; 2nd Spreyton 20½; 3rd Gidleigh 36½.

Intermediate Section [1½ peal, no rise or lower]

1st & Shield, **Okehampton** 28 faults; 2nd & Cup, Spreyton 41½; 3rd Sampford Courtenay 47; 4th Chagford 57½; 5th Gidleigh 61.

Main Section

1st & Shield, **Chagford A** 56½; 2nd & Cup, Chagford B 57; 3rd South Tawton 62; 4th North Tawton A 65; 5th Sampford Courtenay A 65½; 6th North Tawton B 93; 7th Sampford Courtenay B 150.

Numbers were slightly down on account of the clash with HM Queen's Golden Jubilee events, which accounted for Bridestowe's teams. Regrettably, Okehampton had to withdraw from the main section due to a prior commitment. Despite all that, the sun shone! And many thanks to the hosts for an excellent tea!

JMGBint, Hon Secretary (for the time being...)

What has been happening in other Deaneries (& Valleys beginning with "T") this year? We should dearly like to know...is there anybody out there?...or have you all been abducted by aliens?...

The 1st St Petrock's Devon National Challenge

The sun shone on the righteous at Drewsteignton as this ground-breaking idea finally became reality thanks to the will-power and hard work of the organisers - the scrummy cakes went down especially well! And to help wash this down, the local pub ("Aunt Mable's" as was, aka Drewe Arms), very obligingly reopened early to help quench the considerable thirst of the ringers and their entourages.

Encouragingly, several visiting ringers from beyond the county took time out to come and witness "how the other half rings" - I remember speaking to one couple from Kent and another gent from Hampshire. Some of the competing Brummie Uni contingent had battled long and hard with the rest of the August Bank Holiday traffic heading south westerly in order to assemble in the heart of Devon - one coming from Sheffield, another car coming from Worcester in addition to one from Brum itself, all on the day. The biggest challenge on the day for most of the competing ringers seemed to be stopping the bells from chattering, both before and after - I must have screwed up the grease caps a time or two too many...

The organisers had cleverly managed to assemble an experienced panel of judges from across Devon, one from the north of the county, one from the south, and one from the east (when I was asked "What about the west?", I replied "Well, that's Cornwall, isn't it?"). Their accommodation in the old, old Rectory (never do things by half in Drewsteignton) has a wonderful growth of Virginia Creeper around the side where the judges sit. It was especially vigorous around the window of their room, and their hosts had kindly left a pair of shears on the windowsill before going away on holiday. The creeper and the occasional angle grinder caused less of a problem than the continually barking dog, apparently.

Two beautifully worked wooden trophies were presented, made locally by farmer Ian Rowe of Mill Farm, Whiddon Down. One, given by the St Petrock's Ringing Centre, for the first-placed team, was in the form of a mahogany bell, mounted on a lacewood plinth, and this went to Dunsford. The other, presented by the host tower captain, was a fine shield made from an unusual tropical wood (the name of which I can't recall!) and was presented to the highest-placed team from out of the county and so went to Shepton. (The reddish colour of the wood of this shield apparently turns very dark if/when left in the light!)

Congratulations to winners, Dunsford, and indeed, all who took part, and very many thanks to Dave, Steph & Graham for making it all happen, especially after the difficulties of the previous year's false start. Now that the seed has been sown, and begun to sprout, here's hoping for some steady growth over the coming years.

Results from the Judges, Bill Avery, Brian Drake & Percy Pester:

- 1st Dunsford 14 Faults
- 2nd Mortchoe $18\frac{2}{3}$
- 3rd Egg Buckland $22\frac{1}{3}$
- 4th Chagford $28\frac{2}{3}$
- 5th Buckland in the Moor 29
- 6th Exeter St Petrock's $35\frac{1}{3}$
- 7th Exeter Cathedral $36\frac{1}{3}$
- 8th Shepton Beauchamp (Somerset) $52\frac{1}{3}$
- 9th Birmingham Universities Society of Change Ringers $59\frac{1}{3}$

(I had hoped to include here a picture of the winning team, but am hindered by my lack of cutting-edge technology, the skill to use it, and indeed, a picture to print! Still, you could always have a go at drawing your own, if you're minded to.)

Comment: *So where do we go from here?..*

More than a millennium has passed since King Canute sat on his throne on the seashore in the face of flowing waves to prove to his minions that tide and time wait for no man. Now, no one within our Association has more respect for the past than I do - I am one of only two or three ever to have taken time to research and write about our tradition; indeed I am constantly seeking to learn more about it. However, I am not hidebound by it. The past is exactly that: it is passed. One cannot live there. And without facing up to the reality of the present one cannot hope to mould the future to the benefit of those that are most likely ones to have to live there some day.

Here is an analogy to dwell upon: the water in a small pond, unless it is replenished by fresh water flowing into it, will eventually become stagnant; ultimately it will evaporate and that pond will cease to exist.

During my four-year stint as the Association's first Publicity Officer I have made a point of listening to and discussing with other ringers at all levels of the Devon Call Change tradition. Some of the unsolicited comments I have received provide food for thought:

"There is a lack of leaders within the Association" - said one of our most respected senior ringers;

"It's all got stale" - opined another respected senior ringer and former Committee member;

one of Kenn deanery's experienced younger ringers voiced the thought that has been in my own mind for some time: "it's almost as if they want to take it [the Association] with them when they go";

another member, from the same deanery, active in keeping the bells turning in several towers, felt that one wasn't encouraged to speak at the AGM. Others, sadly, felt that it wasn't even worthwhile attending.

It is no secret that this last past year has been (to say the least) a rather unsettled one for the Devon Association of Ringers. That this is so should have come as no surprise to anyone in touch with the grass-roots of Devon Call Change Ringing: it must be said that the writing has been on the wall for some time. It occurred to me that the most influential individual in the formative years of the Association was a clergyman; so there was a certain symmetry when, at last year's AGM, it was another clergyman who had the courage to bite the bullet and (perhaps unwittingly) set in motion events which may ultimately have equally far-reaching consequences.

Another of the key items on the agenda of the same AGM was the set of points for consideration and consequent proposals which I made concerning the present and (more importantly) the future good health of the Devon Call Change Ringing tradition and the Association which purports to represent its well-being. In the minutes you will see that the Committee (or, at least, a majority of those able to be present) has resolved the following, set out below. However, the minutes don't actually record the original proposals; so here they are, for the benefit of those without a copy before them (the majority I would guess):

Proposals:

1. *We as Devon Call Change Ringers should acknowledge our own tradition and use its unique status as a 'selling point' for itself and the Association which represents it, especially with regard to the future recruitment of ringers to our art. Resolved: No change. So presumably the Association does not wish to recruit any ringers in future?*
2. *We should acknowledge that the social make-up of our towns and villages has changed and that, consequently, a more (pro-)active approach is needed in order to encourage the necessary new recruitment to our art. Resolved. No change. So presumably the Association wishes to remain in a time-warped?*

3. There should be a shift in attitude, particularly amongst influential members of the Association and its Committee: the Association should become more proactive with regard to its original object, viz., 'to cultivate and encourage the art of [Devon] Call Change Ringing **Resolved. No change.** Presumably confirmation (were it needed) that the Association has lost site of its "raison d'être"?
4. All Officers and Committee Members of the Association should be individually elected/re-elected annually. **No change.** After all, we mustn't acknowledge that there is no such thing as a job for life any more, must we?
5. More radical thought should be given to such ideas which promote the Association's aims and objectives. It was agreed to leave this as it is. Perhaps because the words "radical, thought, promote, aims & objectives" don't figure in the current vocabulary of the Association?
6. The Association should create a post of Training Officer, whose brief shall be to address the needs of Devon Call Change Ringers with regard to learning and improving the art, and this to be accomplished through working with the Publicity Officer and other Representatives on the Committee, via Deaneries, in creating the necessary support. **This has already been done.** ..but only partially: until there is a restructuring (or rather, the creation of one) within the Association, it will never be fully accomplished.
7. Respected members of the Association should have their experience and work acknowledged by being elected as Honorary Life Vice Presidents of the Association. **This should be adopted. Carried.** Little surprise that, this proposal seemed so attractive ...
8. The Association should aim to achieve a more even spread of its representatives by allocating each of its elected Committee members to be responsible for the Association's work within a particular Deanery or group of Deaneries. The current rigid north/south sub-committees can be replaced by more flexible sub-committees grouped by Deaneries. ...proposed that in future years we aspire to elect one representative from each deanery. **This was Accepted.** And so, for example, when one inspects the minutes of 15.8.02, yet another member from Okehampton deanery is proposed...where is the overture to the east of the county? Without a formal constitution (more of which anon) this is unlikely to happen on its own.
9. The Association should adopt some terms of reference for Committee members[these were then set out in full]. ?????????????????? This does not appear to have been addressed. What is it that the Committee is frightened of with regard to this proposal?

"The prevailing priority was not to cock-up, and the easiest way not to cock-up is to not make a decision."

*Adam Crozier, commenting on the state of the FA at the time of his appointment as Chief Executive.
(From the Independent, Monday 12 August 2002).*

10. The Promoter of the Association's Annual Draw should be given full status as a Committee Member in order to aid the work undertaken in relation to the Draw. **The draw promoter to be elected on to the Committee. Carried.** Not that she'll thank me...great oaks from little acorns grow...it is to be hoped that this will enable the increasingly more comprehensive distribution system to work entirely by deanery through a sole representative,, and therefore make life a whole lot simpler for those who do all the hard work which goes with the annual draw.

11. The on-going situation with regard to the to the selection of judges should be resolved by delegating full responsibility for it to the Committee. The best means of achieving this could be investigated by a sub-committee. **Already done.** And yet we still see duplication within the proposed judges list, Either there aren't enough to go round, or there are some not being used: both scenarios are rather disconcerting. That said, it is good to see some fresh names on the list...and the cards still got an outing at the AGM...if only to add some colour to the occasion.

12. The issue of individual membership. There are several valid reasons for **not** pursuing this idea....[these were also listed in full] **Already done.** Phew!

From the Express & Echo, Wednesday September 11th

"Quote me on that

COMMITTEE:

- a group of men who individually can do nothing but as a group decide that nothing can be done

Fred Allen, 1894 - 1956"

I mentioned the "c" word above: **constitution**. It is something that the DAR has done without all these years. That it should have found itself in difficulties recently is entirely traceable to this glaring omission. It is for this reason that I have requested that it be included on the Agenda for this year's AGM - last year's proposals (as above) were merely a precursor. Since the Association is growing old; isn't it therefore time that it concurrently grew up?

Post Script: for those who have enquired of me and those who were wondering, I decided earlier this year that I would not be standing against the current incumbent for the Office of Chairman this year (the reasons being a mixture of the personal, domestic and professional). I informed the current Chairman of this decision at the August Committee Meeting. However, living and well, I fully intend to do so next year.

I should also like to take this opportunity to say **"thank you"** for all the positive remarks that I have received for my contribution towards *Devon Calls* (and indeed, Devon Call Change Ringing in general). I can assure you all that it is fully appreciated. I look forward to supporting my successor as best I can.

Jonathan Bint.

Contributions for the next edition of *Devon Calls* can still be sent to me (address below) and I will forward them to the new Editor, or you can give them to him at the AGM, when I'm sure that his future contact details will be made available.

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