



Mid 2023

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DEVON CALLS

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Chardstock Bells Ring out in Celebration

On a bright, Sunday morning on the 7th of May, the bells rang out from St Andrew's Chardstock for a Celebration Service for The Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Rounds and call changes were rung, and learner Caroline Wilson joined in ringing rounds. On Monday the 8th of May it was a wet and misty day, but it did not stop Chardstock celebrating The Coronation. The bells were rung prior to village celebrations at The Community Hall. Call changes included Rounds, Kings, Queens, Orb and Sceptre and 1953 Coronation. Before joining the village celebrations, we had our own celebration and raised a glass to King Charles III.

Susan Bray.



Chardstock Bell Ringers on the 8th of May 2023, prior to village Celebrations at The Community Hall, for The Coronation of King Charles III.

Back Row from Left to Right: - Rikki Johnstone, Derrick Goff (Tower Captain), Kevin Newbery, Lucy Herrod, Front Row from Left to Right:- Stephen Goff, Susan Bray.

THE RINGING CAREER OF CHITTLEHAMPTON'S LONG STANDING TOWER CAPTAIN MR. GERALD ARSCOTT.

Having known Gerald for such a long time, and because neither of us are as young as we once were, I felt the time was right to find out about his lifelong commitment to, and love of, bell ringing which spans an amazing 70 years! He is from a farming family and has farmed the land around Chittlehampton all his life. Farming and bell ringing have occupied most of his time.

Background.

According to information contained in "The Legend of St. Hieritha & The Well" (Andrews J. H. B. 1954) Chittlehampton, or the 'farm of dwellers in the hollow', was one of the first centres for Saxon colonisation and the church was a great pilgrimage church. It is dedicated to St. Hieritha and was built between 1470 and 1520, replacing an earlier wooden structure (Andrews J.H.B.1954). The church, with its magnificent Somerset-style tower 34.74 metres (or 114 ft) high, sits in a prominent position in the village. There is a saying about local churches in the area which goes –

*"Bishopsnympton for length
South Molton for strength
Chittlehampton for beauty."*

Disaster struck the church during the gales of 1990 which caused three of the pinnacles to fall from the tower. One landed on the tower roof, one fell through the roof of the nave and the other fell down the side of the tower, badly damaging the clock face. These were replaced but a few years later they fell off again! Eventually they were replaced again, and this time according to Gerald, "A more substantial job was done". Thankfully no one was severely injured or killed on either occasion. The majestic tower houses a fine peal of eight bells hung in a low sided cast-iron frame by Taylors in 1927. (Scott. J.M.S.) Over the years the bells have been lovingly maintained by Gerald. More recently the ringing chamber was thoroughly cleaned, the walls were painted and a new carpet was fitted. Gerald told

me the whole project was carried out single handed by Julie Baldwin, a comparatively new member of the ringing team.

Learning to ring.

Gerald first learned to ring at Chittlehampton in September 1952 when he was 14 years old. Two young mates, Raymond Squires and George Harris, also learnt at the same time. The three of them were taught by George Mayne who was the Tower Captain. According to Gerald "George was a good ringer and a good teacher."

Jack Twose rang at Chittlehampton before becoming Tower Captain at Swimbridge and he assisted George with much of the teaching. Gerald said Jack Twose was "A good treble ringer, and he was very good at putting people right." He went on to say how Chittlehampton had a very good band of regular ringers, all of whom lived locally. In those days it was hard to get into the senior team. Being the youngest and a newish ringer, he often had to sit out to watch and listen to the others ringing, but at 16 years old he was invited to 'Ring out the Old and Ring in the New Year'.

It was a memorable occasion because one of the older ringers had been in the local Bell Inn for most of the evening and was slightly over "lubricated." He managed to climb the 40 steps up to the ringing chamber, and the team started to ring but after 4 or 5 rounds he let go the rope and said "It's no good George, I can't see the b....y rope!".

Becoming competitive.

It wasn't long before Gerald was invited to ring with the team for Sunday morning and evening services. After having proved he was competent and up to the mark, he was also invited to ring with the team in ringing competitions. He said he "especially enjoyed the South Molton Deanery competitions when anything between...



2005 AGM - Past Presidents of the Devon Association of Ringers at the with the newly appointed President Mr. Gerald Arscott. Back row (L-R) Edgar Cole. Ivor Hookway. Gerald Stevens. Brian Drake. Horace Clements. Jack Rhymes. Colin Adams. Front row (L-R) Herbert Pascoe. Harry Bardens. Gerald Arscott. Pat Johnstone. Mervyn Phillips.

12 to 14 teams took part. By comparison today it is a struggle to get even 5 or 6 teams to participate". Chittlehampton had a good period by winning the annual South Molton Deanery competition on 10 consecutive occasions. The team also won several other competitions, the highlight being the Devon Association 8-bell competition when it was held at Combe Martin on 27 April 1985. In the same year a surprise came when the team were invited to travel to London, with nine other teams from Devon, to compete in a competition at St. Olave's Church, Hart Street, London EC3 (near the Tower of London). Chittlehampton were invited because they had the distinction of being the top 8-bell team in the county.

Gerald spoke fondly of the early days of his ringing career when he regularly attended the Devon Association AGM which, in the 1960s, was held in the Chapter House at Exeter Cathedral. He said how much he enjoyed listening to the banter

between some of the old stalwarts, with Herbert 'Pickles' Pascoe of Buckland-in-the-Moor, Tom Wright of Down St. Mary, Mervyn Phillips of West Down and Jack Hine of Plymstock being some of the most vocal and Chairman Brian Drake of North Tawton doing his best to keep order.

Gerald was Chairman of the South Molton Deanery ringers for 20 years and was a representative on the Devon Association committee until Covid restrictions were imposed in the spring of 2020. For a period spanning 20 years he acted as scrutineer for the Devon Association at the North Devon semi-finals, as well as at the Major and Minor finals. He recalls being on the end of "some stick" when certain teams were disqualified for ringing under time. It was one of the unpleasant tasks which went with being a scrutineer, but he said the judges were always reassuringly supportive with their comments, saying "Time is time."

The 'Three Towers Competition' was an event which Gerald organised each year. Teams would compete in a 6-bell competition held in the afternoon at Warkleigh, West Buckland and Chittlehampton. The event regularly attracted 12 teams. In the evening teams would compete for the Ivan Harris shield on the 8 bells at Chittlehampton. The event was last held in 2000. The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 interrupted ringing generally for quite a while. By the end of the outbreak there just weren't enough helpers to assist with running the event and it was never restarted.

Working in conjunction with Ian and Colin Avery from Kingsteignton, he now assists with organising the annual 8-bell competition for the Tawstock shield which takes place in the autumn of each year. The venue alternates between Tawstock and Kingsteignton. Each year when the competition is held at Tawstock, a corresponding 6-bell competition takes place at nearby Bishops Tawton.

Venturing into Wales.

In the early days Chittlehampton always held an annual outing, usually on the third Saturday in July. In the 1970s the team were even confident enough to venture 'abroad', going to South Wales! On one occasion the visit happened to coincide with the week in which the late Queen Elizabeth II and the late Duke of Edinburgh were visiting as part of the Queen's 1977 Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Many memorable trips were made to Wales, one being when the team were visiting Llandaff Cathedral. Gerald explained how the team were scheduled to ring at 11.00 a.m. but as he had arrived a few minutes before, he was invited to join the local team to ring for a wedding which was about to take place. After he had rung with them, all the Chittlehampton ringers then joined in and rang for about an hour to celebrate the couple's 'special' day. On another occasion the team rang for a wedding taking place at Ebbw Vale. He recalled that once when the team were inside ringing at Abergavenny, he wandered outside to listen to the bells where he met two older locals who asked which part of the country he was from. Gerald said "A little village near South Molton in Devon which you probably

haven't heard of." The response was, "We had a gentleman here from Cornwall last week". Gerald said, "He wasn't by any chance called Harry Stacey, was he?" "That's the one." came the reply. "How did you guess from all the people living in Cornwall?"

Ringling at Stratton.

Reciting this account to me triggered fond memories Gerald still holds of the late Harry Stacey and the tower where he rang, Stratton in Cornwall. In the early 1970's Chittlehampton always competed in the annual Stratton 8-bell competition which took place on the last Saturday in November. One year the team came second and were duly awarded the runners' up cup. He explained how the team went across the road to the Bideford Inn to celebrate. Two or three of the ringers got carried away and drunk a little more than they should have done! Gerald had asked Harry if there was a fish and chip shop nearby because the team had missed out on tea. "No need for that," said Harry. "When you are ready come back to my place and have some supper."

"We can't do that," Gerald explained, "there are eight of us." But Harry insisted and at around 11.00p.m. they went across the road and were walking through the butcher's shop which formed part of his house, when Harry suddenly said "Get the sandwiches out, mother; I've got a team of ringers from Chittlehampton here." Mrs Stacey didn't bat an eyelid and calmly went ahead and prepared supper for them all. As it was getting near Christmas, they all sung a few carols and because of the kind hospitality extended to them they left a donation.

For several years after ringing at Stratton's competition the team were always invited back to Harry's house for supper. He was usually ready to take it easy at the end of the day, having spent most of the afternoon and evening strapping the tenor for various competing teams. It was a task he willingly undertook but amazingly it often involved acting as strapper for anything up to 6 or 8 teams, sometimes even more!

Affectionate memories.

Gerald told me has great respect for all ringers and he doesn't want to offend anyone but felt he must especially mention some in particular, one being the late Cedric Hockin, former captain of Braunton. "Cedric," he said, "was a well-respected ringing judge who for many years judged at competitions in North Devon, including the Devon Association 6 and 8 bell competitions."

Another is the late Bill Avery. Bill was married at Pilton, Barnstaple, but after living in North Devon for a short while, he and his wife 'migrated' to South Devon. There he quickly took up ringing again and joined the Kingsteignton team, eventually becoming tower captain and leading a very successful band. Finally, Gerald said "I mustn't overlook the enormous contribution made by the late Monty Bertram from South Molton." Monty had been a great help to him and they had rung together for 50 years. It was clear by the tone in his voice the high regard in which he still holds all these people he met through his love of bellringing.

He concluded by saying he has thoroughly enjoyed his ringing career. The highlight came when in 2005 he was elected President of the Devon Association of Ringers. There is no doubt that being recognised in this way by the organisation which he had faithfully served for such a long time was something he richly deserved.

Thank you Gerald for providing such an interesting account of your ringing career. Of course behind any good man there is a good lady and your wife Pearl must have played a significant part both in your farming, as well as in your ringing, careers. Well done to her.

References.

1. Andrews J.H.B., M.A. Revd. Prebendary. 1954 The Legend of St. Hieritha & The Well. Chittlehampton. David Ryall, Colleytown, Chittlehampton.
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Colin Adams.

INTERVIEW WITH AN UMPIRE

When Brian Drake indicated his intention to stand down as captain of North Tawton ringers, I promptly decided to approach him with my application to succeed him, but oh my! - what a man to follow.

When Brian was 14 yrs old he would attend the local church service and Sunday school at St. Peter's, North Tawton. During the service he would pump the organ with a large set of bellows. On his way to the organ he would pass the door to the belfry where some of the ringers encouraged him to pop in and have a go.

Eventually he decided to take them up on their offer and have a go, which happened to be when they were first allowed to ring for services after the second world war.

Firstly, they taught him bell control by tolling the tenor for services, and then moved on to ringing in rounds under the tuition of Mr Alfie Lias the church verger. The captain of the ringers in those days was Walter Mortimer who had stood in while Jim Bennett was serving in the army.

Many years went by under the captaincy of Jim Bennett and Brian was a key member of a team of experienced ringers who would enjoy the occasional competition.

Upon the Passing of Jim Bennett Brian was elected to take over as captain of the ringers in 1967.



L to R: Kathie Drake, Graham Pridham, Brian Drake

For his day-to-day life outside of ringing Brian also had a farm to manage, crops to sow and harvest and he was always Showing his Prize-winning Devon and Cornwall long wool sheep and pedigree red ruby cattle.

Under Brian's Captaincy North Tawton rose through the ranks winning the coveted Ross Shield many times, year in year out. They also rang and won in several six bell competitions. In more recent years Brian turned his ear to judging and has judged in the Devon Association final competition 44 times and the qualifying rounds several times! During a long and fruitful career Brian has dedicated his lifetime to ringing overall. He and an associate, Percy Agget, set up the Okehampton Deanery Competition.

Brian has been ringing, sounding out the bells at his home tower of North Tawton for 81 years (1942 – 2023). I am now happy to say that Brian once collared me to ring in a peal with him for the Okehampton Deanery Ringers' Association ringing festival which was held at Chagford in 1997.

I was there reluctantly being 17 and ringing with Sampford Courtenay. Brian approached me and said "come on you're ringing with us". Again reluctantly, I obliged. It was only top ringing and, thanks to me, we

didn't do very well, but I have still got the 6th certificate.

For my first duty, as the new captain, the other ringers and I decided we should thank him for his decades of dedication. Over the next few weeks we arranged a fitting gift and a surprise presentation with many faces from the past and present giving their support.

I am happy to say Brian joined us in ringing for a second time for a Coronation when he rang on Saturday 6th May 2023. He had previously rung for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953.

Graham Pridham,
Tower Captain. North Tawton.

NEW OFFICERS

New Honorary Secretary Deborah Jones - Hello all, I would like to introduce myself as the new Honorary Secretary of the DAR, taking over from Rachel Avery, who demonstrated to me her impressive typing skills that I am never going to be able to equal! However, I shall be giving the job my best shot.



I have been involved with ringing from an early age as both my father and grandfather were ringers and tower captains in the Birmingham area. I was pictured at about three holding a rope, and often accompanied my father to various churches to watch him ring for weddings, so it seemed only natural to learn to handle a bell when I was about ten.

I learned in a small group of young ringers at Stratton Church in Cornwall. We were taught by some fairly well-known ringing characters including Charlie Sangwin, Henry Trewin, Harry Stacey and of course, my Dad (John Venn-Conduct). After only a couple of years, I gave up, much to Dad's disgust, and it took me over forty years to pluck up the courage to go in to a try-out session being held in Alphington church. By this time, I had been living in Exeter several years, and living within the sound of the bells, I had often considered ringing again but not found the nerve to go along.

I was made very welcome by all the ringers and once my ageing brain had finally mastered what was going on in the changes, I began to attend different towers locally. Nowadays I ring with Alphington, Kenn and St. Thomas on a regular basis, plus SERS and the Ringklies whenever I can manage it. I am learning to call changes and enjoy trying out different bells when we go on ringing trips.

I look forward to serving on the DAR committee and getting to know ringers from over the whole county.

New Technical Editor Devon Calls - Robin Canniford - Following a 12-year holiday in Australia, Robin has taken over from James Grant as technical editor of *Devon Calls*. Encouraged into ringing at an early age by his father, Robin really got 'hooked' when he moved to North Devon where he joined Frithelstock, Monkleigh and Torrington ringers, honing his skills with the likes of John Down as well as Derek Prouse in Cornwall.

'I particularly enjoy the friendship aspect of ringing', says Robin, 'Joining a band of ringers after a long time away always makes me feel like I am welcomed home, and I feel lucky to have met so many characters over the years'. Robin now lives in Arcachon, France, but travels back when he can to enjoy ringing for Sunday services, outings and trips.



Robin (left) and friend.



New Honorary Treasurer - Nigel Bateman

I moved to Exeter in 1981 with my Building Society employer (Cheltenham and Gloucester, subsequently acquired by Lloyds, but then later sold off after taking over Bank of Scotland Group in 2008 after the financial crisis and renamed TSB).

I started off my own mail order business in 1995 and finally retired in 2021 so with a financial background and a little more time available I am happy to take over the role of Hon Treasurer to the Devon Association of Ringers.

I moved to Whitestone in 1986 and a chance conversation with a bell ringer in 2007 led me to learn to ring there and later at Holcombe Burnell and Tedburn St Mary on a fairly regular basis. A house move to Shillingford Abbot in 2013 meant three other towers were much nearer and I now regularly ring at Ide, Alphington and Exminster on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays plus a couple of times most Sundays.

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OBITUARIES

JOHN LOCK 1941 – 2022. John Lock was born at Cleave Farm, Dolton, and this is where he lived and worked his whole life. As the name of the farm suggests, much of the land is steep, so not conducive to arable farming. Perhaps this is the reason why it was developed as a dairy farm and John grew up milking the cows morning and evening every day for most of his life. The farm sits on the edge of a steep valley just below St Edmund's Church and the bells can be heard clearly from there; John had grown up with and loved the sound of those bells. He just wanted a chance to get involved.

In the mid-1970s Devon County Council ran various training programmes and bellringing was one of these. John learned bellringing under the instruction of Fred Jennings, one of the ringers from Merton.

There must have been about 10 of us who took up ringing at that time, with varying degrees of success. The training was not comprehensive – once you were considered capable of keeping control of the bell, that was it. You were ready to ring at the Sunday services.

Thus began a love of the craft which lasted for the rest of John's life. He would ensure that the Sunday morning milking was done in time to get up to the church for ringing, but it has to be said that the enthusiasm was lacking in some of the older ringers. I can remember many Sundays waiting at the church gate until just a few minutes before the start of the service when they would turn up, leaving barely enough time to ring up and down before 11 o'clock.

Being as strong as a horse in those days, John was usually put on the heavier bells, and I recall one Sunday morning when, during ringing, with Jimmy Hutchings on tenor and Bill Madge on fifth, John was put on the relatively light fourth. Well, things weren't going too well for John and the rope was going up when it should have been coming down. No problem, he just gave it one almighty heave and suddenly the rope was coming down – all sixty feet of it falling around his head. I can still recall the look of horror on his face, suggesting that he expected to find 5 cwt of Caleb Squire's finest 1846



bronze casting still attached to the top end of it. It's okay folks, it wasn't!

The old wooden frame of the bells at that time was creaking and wobbling, and long past time for repair or replacement. The bellringing team, which had once been of prize-winning standard, was in a similar state. Soon after this the bells were declared unsafe, so ringing stopped, and no-one was particularly bothered. John had the farm to keep him busy and the bells fell silent.

By 1996 the village was fed up with the recorded bells being played over loudspeakers in the tower and wanted the real bells back. Dowland bells had recently been re-hung, and Dolton wanted their bells working too. A committee was formed with John as the bellringing representative. They set about raising the required £33,000 to get the bells and tower repaired, and in 1998 Peter Bazley and his Tavistock team fitted a new steel frame on the freshly-cast...



...concrete “ring-beam” in the tower. The bells were working once again, and John was the tower captain. With a few new eager trainee ringers, the plan to be able to ring in the new millennium using only Dolton ringers, was realised.

In 1999 John sold off his dairy herd. I suppose you might say he retired, but that’s not quite true as he still worked every day on the farm, but it did mean he was able to spend more time ringing. His

enthusiasm for the craft was infectious, and the improving ringers of Dolton went on to win many certificates under his captaincy. It is true that these were mostly in the novice and B-sections; we were never a threat to the likes of Eggbuckland or Down St Mary, but Dolton were proud to be “social” ringers; in it for the enjoyment of the ringing and perhaps a pint afterwards.

John travelled to wherever he could find a bell to ring, whether to Chittlehampton or Winkleigh on a weekday evening or further afield when organised trips were available. He knew all the ringers and they knew him. He was an enthusiastic member of the Ringkly Ringers, regularly travelling to wherever they were going each month.

It was while the Ringkly Ringers were on their trip last December to Inwardleigh that the news came through that John had passed away suddenly while travelling to America to see his son and grandchildren.

His funeral took place in January at St Edmund’s church which was overflowing with family and friends. Bellringing was a central theme. Many ringers gathered to pay their respects and many of those rang both before and after the service. The ringing continued until dusk, a fitting tribute to the man. The motto in the centre of the Devon Association logo says, “We Serve.” John served, and served well.

Roger Dunn

JENNIFER ROWLANDSON. The following is an extract taken from Jennifer’s interesting autobiographical notes made in 2020 during the period of lockdown.

When I first arrived in Stoodleigh and went to church I asked if the bells were ever rung. Gerald Palfrey, the Tower Captain, said yes and did I ring. I replied no. Did I want to learn? Yes - particularly as people were being encourage to learn so that they could ring in the new decade. So I became a millennium ringer.

Gerald had a very broad accent and was difficult to understand: he would say something, see my look of non comprehension, and say it again even broader. I soon cottoned on, particularly as his eyes would twinkle with amusement before coming out with things slightly clearer. With him were Edward Hill, who looked after the bells and wound the clock, and John Henson who lived on Dry Hill. These three lovely old chaps did well by me and it is sad to reflect they are no more but I hope I live up to Gerald’s standards in the capacity of Tower Captain.

The others who learnt with me did not continue, either moving away or finding it all too difficult. I persevered and met up with Jim Vellacott (and his wife, Mabel, who was the mainstay of the church in Morebath). I used to go over there to ring and through Jim met Keith Bavin who ran the church in East Anstey and so I also rang there. Chris May, living down near New Bridge (the iron bridge at the foot of Stoodleigh drive) across the River Exe was also a millennium ringer and we would both go to Morebath and East Anstey.

I was then asked by Keith to join their team for competitions, as was Chris May. I rang the second bell and occasionally the treble. We never did particularly well partly because we rarely met as a team to practice which was a shame. The competitions involved a huge amount of travelling round Devon quite often just for one competition. With a peal lasting fifteen minutes it was time-consuming and on occasions frustrating.

It was fun meeting other teams and the teas were always pretty good but in the end I dropped out of the team for various reasons in about 2017. We entered the "Devon" Competition every year and this involved driving to the host church to be there for the draw at 2.00 and depending on where one was drawn could be hanging around until ringing in the late afternoon or early evening.

As mentioned above, I very soon got involved in St Margaret's Church by playing the organ and learning to bell ring. After my retirement I was asked to join the PCC and am now Secretary, Tower Captain, church cleaner, in charge of locking and unlocking, as well as keeping an eye on the general upkeep of the church and graveyard.

When I arrived the east end of the graveyard was a mass of brambles and very overgrown. I cleared this and found a number of head stones buried beneath it all. Then the roof needed retiling and so I raised money on one of the South West Coast Path walks.

In 2010 it was discovered that the bells were unsafe - Andrew Nicholson, of the bell hangers in Bridport, had come to inspect them and was horrified to find the fifth totally unsafe and liable to drop at any time. He was even more horrified when he found we had rung for a wedding the previous Saturday !!

At the same time there was conservation interest in the roof bosses and green man wall plates and Hugh Harrison, consultant and contractor in the conservation of joinery and polychromed timber, came and did an appraisal of Henry Woodyer's restoration and of the bosses and foliate head wall plates. This is all recorded by him, as are details from Nicholson Engineering and Southwest

Archaeology - all in a separate file with details of a diary for restoration.

So in 2010, I fronted a massive fund raising effort approaching various charities and the Heritage Lottery Fund. In the end we raised over £71,000 which covered the bells, conservation and a bit of work on the roof. I got very involved with the bell work and this is all recorded for the church in diary notes. It was fascinating but hard work.

Nicholsons gave a discount if we could provide two workers a day to help the bell hanger. He was in luck, because with me there were three of us volunteers.

A trap door had to be made in the clock chamber and the clock removed so that the bells could be lowered. The clock had a lot of work done to it by Andrew Nicholson, including regilding the clock face. The work on the bells - replacing the frame, clappers, headstocks, wheels, sliders, and stays plus retuning, was completed in early 2011. The nave was covered in scaffolding so that work could be done on the bosses and foliate wall plates, the latter by Madeleine Katkov. The bells were rededicated by the then Bishop of Crediton in June 2011.

Jennifer now rests in peace in St. Margaret's Churchyard; near her favourite places, her garden and St Margaret's Church, Stoodleigh, Exmoor.

COLIN DUDLEY 1933 - 2022. On Tuesday 7th February 2023 ringers from across North Devon gathered at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Marwood to celebrate the life and work of Colin Dudley.

Colin was born in Derby and into a ringing family. At an early age he moved with his family to Cornwall. Shortly after he moved to Combe Martin.

After moving to North Devon he returned to ringing and joined the team at Marwood under the captaincy of the late Jack Watts. When Jack Watts retired Colin was appointed captain.

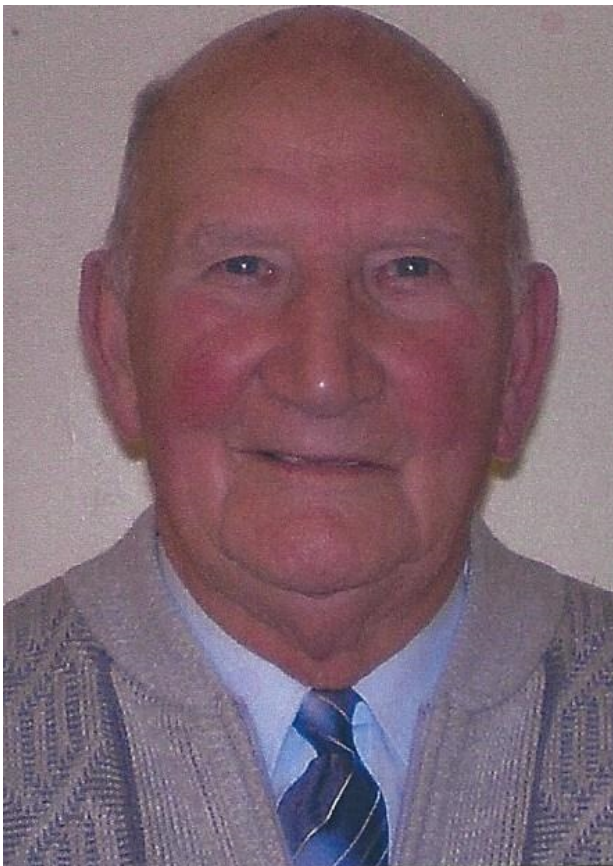
He was a popular and well-liked man who was always willing to help out at any tower whether it were six or eight bell peals and he was always willing to assist in the teaching of learners.

Eventually he moved into Barnstaple and being a baker by trade worked for one of the local supermarkets. It was whilst living at Barnstaple that he joined the Pilton team

I first met Colin at Bishops Tawton and rang with him and the other members of the team such as, Michael Beer, Reg Yeo and Alpie Stephens.

IVOR WARREN 1927-2022. On Friday 20th May 2022 a funeral service was held at the North Devon Crematorium to celebrate the life and work of Ivor Warren, aged 95, who rang at South Molton.

Ivor was born in 1927 at Bishops Nympton and it was there that he initially went to school, later moving to attend the Senior School at South Molton. His ringing career began on the six bells at Bishops Nympton where he learnt to ring under the late Jack Syrils, ably assisted by Bill Yates and Wally Snell.



Ill health unfortunately took its toll and Colin had to retire from his beloved ringing. The six bells of St. Michael & All Angels, Church, Marwood rang out before and after the funeral service to wish Colin on his way. It was a fitting tribute to such a loyal and faithful ringer.

Colin Tovey, South Molton.

On leaving school he took up employment working on one of the local farms, later moving to a farm at Chittlehampton. It was there that he met his future wife Margaret. The couple were later married at St. Heritha's Church in 1949. In 1951 the couple moved to live at South Molton. It was around this time that Ivor started a new career as a driver for the Western National Omnibus Company working out of Barnstaple. His last working years were spent with a local coach company based in South Molton.

Ivor had a life-long love of bellringing. He joined the South Molton team in 1951 and regularly rang the seventh in the peal of eight bells with a tenor weighing 24cwt. (1219.26 Kg). He was still climbing the steps of South Molton's tower when he was well into his eighties! Eventually it became too much for him and he had to call it a day.

On his 85th birthday he was presented with a Silver Salver by the South Molton ringers in recognition of his outstanding service to bellringing.

On the afternoon of his funeral the eight bells of Saint Mary Magdalene's Church, South Molton, which were half muffled, sounded out over the town and roof tops across to the home of Ivor and his family in his honour.

He was a friend to all who knew him and a real "Gentle" man.

Colin Tovey, South Molton.

JOHN DOWN 1933 - 2023. It was with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of John Down in March 2023 at the grand age of 90. John was a member of the famous Down Family Dynasty that hailed from Yarnscombe in North Devon.

I first saw John in the late 1960s when The Devon Association 8 Bell Competition was held at Braunton. He was ringing for High Bickington under the captaincy of the great Herbert Pidler. Tavistock also entered but John's team took us to the cleaners!!!

John learnt to ring at Atherington and also rang at St Giles in the Wood together with Great Torrington. Atherington were rehung in 2010 and John was very proud of the photograph that showed 6 members of the Down Family in the Service leaflet.

John was a farmer and it was with this connection that we seemed to have so much in common. The native breeds of cattle in the County are both North and South Devons. Virtually the same name but two distinctive types of animals. It transpired that each of the two breeds were kept by farmers who could sport a team of Bellringers. The outcome was that we all got together at Bow and Down St Mary. John was a member of that North Devon ringing team under the leadership of Brian Drake.

John retired from farming and moved to a bungalow in Great Torrington and rang both there and Monkleigh. We would occasionally meet up at a knock-out competition and it wouldn't be long before we would be talking about farming.

The last time we rang together was at Torrington on one of Lamerton's Annual Outings. John rang the second and I recall the perfection that we experienced in the Queen's Peal. The last time we

met was at South Molton in the Devon 8 Bell competition and he was there with his daughter Barbara - just to listen. Clamp down seemed to play havoc with everything but we kept in touch via the phone and it is something I will greatly miss.

To quote the words of the legendary Tommy Darch of Great Torrington - 'Bellringing is a wonderful brotherhood' John certainly embraced that!!

My deepest sympathy goes to his wife Valerie and daughter Barbara.

Geoff Hill

Photo: John ringing for the rededication of Atherington Bells - John Down's Archive.



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN DOWN

At the time of our conversation in Great Torrington, January 2015, John had been ringing since his late teens. He had first encountered ringing as a small boy but didn't count this as his start: "my father was a ringer, this was before the war, and I remember going to practice with him. I was 7 when war started, so just when I was seven they let me on a

box [to ring]. And then the war came and the bells weren't rung. But as I say, I don't count that".

"It was after I left school at 17 I started learning at Atherington. We used to go to Atherington School because our farm was on the outskirts of Yarnscombe, so it was easier to get to. I only went there until I was 11. Then I went to Belmont, boarding.

Then when I left school I started ringing and I used to cycle to practice. We used to live at Chapel Farm then, and then when I was 20, we moved to a farm about a mile away from Atherington, which was easier to get to ringing practice [laughs]. I started in 1949, and I quickly picked it up.”

Although John showed early promise as a ringer, getting a place in a tower was not always easy. Whether for service ringing, or outings, ropes were coveted: “Atherington went on an outing, the first place was Bishops Nympton. In 1956 I went on the outing, but I didn't ring ... Really you only got to ring on six if people didn't turn up, because they had their team. So if they were waiting ten minutes they'd look round the tower and say, 'well he's not turning up, so you better have a ring'. But then you'd only get a ring on six. But then Bill [Pidler] would say 'you ring in my place', and that's how I got in.”

“Well time went on and they [the ringers] were all getting older, there were not so many ringers then and they were getting short, so I rang with High Bickington from then on until coming to Torrington. But my ringing life has been quite hard you know. Because the ones on the lighter bells wouldn't give them up, so I started further back than I should have, being quite small. I mean, I used to be able to work and lift with the best of them, but I remember when I came to Torrington I was on the six and I'd been working all day and I was tiring and I eased up just a little and before I'd gone in just a little too much, and the captain shouted at me 'keep him up John,'. And I could, but I was further back than I should have been.”

Ringing outings were well-attended during the 1950s. John showed me a photograph of an outing to Somerset in 1958 (see above). Of the 26 attending, only twelve rang, with two others who were ringers but didn't ring. Many went along to make up numbers on the coach:

Alfie Short (non ringer); Tom Darch (Torrington ringer); Edgar Cole (ringer); Artie Snell (non ringer); Clifford Gooding (Non ringer); Jim Patt (non-ringer); Dick Pidler



(didn't ring); Arthur Down (ringer); Charle Shapland (ringer); Reg Slee (non ringer); Bernie Hookway (non-ringer); Sam Down (ringer); Cyril Bright (non ringer); Louie Brownscombe (ringer); Bill Pidler (ringer); Herbert Pidler (ringer); Alf Pincombe (non ringer); Sam Slade (visitor from St Giles/ rang Kingsteignton); Joe Tucker (ringer); Jack Harris (ringer and judge); Tom Blackmore (ringer); Tom White (Atherington); George Keen (non ringer); Keith Snell (non ringer); John Down (ringer); Colin Miller (learned later).

John mentioned that his father only rang for services and that service ringing was taken extremely seriously during his youth. “Longer ago, ringers were very good at making sure that the bells were rung for service.” Towers borrowed ringers if they didn't have enough of their own.” The churches had support from other organisations, also. “Ashreigney Young Farmers were asked if they would like to learn ringing. Do you know Joe Stoneman? Another one Philip Middle, Nigel Short: they were good...”

I asked John when had they approached the Young Farmers: “We didn't. They approached us - well Mister Pidler the Captain, nothing to do with me... What I remember about it, the county [young farmers] gave High Bickington some money towards the ropes, because in those days they didn't last very long. Ringers today are blessed! When towers were damp, the ropes would go up and down like yo-yos and we were forever adjusting the ropes.”

John laughed at that memory, but he had a serious and sophisticated approach to ringing. He was always concerned to help others improve their teams' striking by finding the right pitch for sets of bells, "Torrington should be rung at 29 rounds per minute. That's the pitch of them; they've got to flow. The pitch is the secret of it all really, because the bells change so much easier. I've got a recording of Torrington from 1962 I think, I'll see if Barbara can dig it out tomorrow and we can listen to it before we go to Weare Giffard."

The next time I arrived at John's house, his daughter Barbara had kindly set up a tape recorder

with a recording of Great Torrington's bells made in 1962, the year after the Great Torrington team had won the eight bell competition.

We sat and listened to a peal broadcast on the overseas Service to South Africa. The rise was enviable; the top ringing was lyrical. As we listened, John called out the changes before they were made. He called them like a story, a story he had been taught by others, a story he has passed on to countless new ringers, and a story that will be retold each time we ring 8 bells together.

Robin Canniford

POETRY CORNER

BECOMING A RINGER

From Frithelstock

When you first join a tower and start learning to ring
You're very surprised when you only go 'ding'.
In two or three weeks you're allowed to go 'dong'.
Then you put them together before very long.

"Ah, now I can do it", you think with a grin
Until others join you and all the bells ring.
They all keep in time, but your bell goes awry.
You 'ding' when they're 'donging', however you try.

Then one day you've cracked it, you're ringing in place.
It sound very good. You've a smile on your face.
But then the conductor calls "Treble to two".
The two bells change places, but what do you do?

And when you've learnt 'changes', you 'hunt' up and down
If you make a mistake you're heard all over town.
And then there are 'methods', the easy ones first.
(The ones they call easy are always the worst!)

So now you're a ringer, with entry to towers
All over the country. You spend happy hours
Controlling a bell rope and make glad sounds
Whether ringing a 'method' or just ringing 'rounds'.

And so it goes on, you must learn more and more.
But by this time you're hooked, can't walk out of the door.
There isn't a cure, but it isn't a crime
So we hope you will join us if you've got the time.

BELL RINGING BLUES

With thanks to Kate Wilkinson, Martinstown, Dorset

I thought I might try bell ringing about nine months ago,
But didn't have the first idea of what I'd need to know.
It couldn't be that difficult if eight year olds could cope,
Surely all you really had to do was pull on some old rope?

I went to my first lesson in our village church's tower
And quickly realised that it would take more than an hour.
I listened to dire warnings of the things that could go wrong.
And wondered if I maybe should have taken up ping-pong.

It was extremely tricky and it took me quite a while,
And certainly my teacher must have found it quite a trial.
Like when to grab the sally and then quickly let it go.
And all the time be trying not to let the panic show.

On numerous occasions, how the rope would flap about!
And nearly knock my glasses off which made me want to shout.
But gradually I got the hand of how to ring a bell,
And raising it and lowering the clanging thing as well.

And now I'm in the band of ringers here in Stoodleigh town,
Learning how to ring it fast and then to slow it down.
And trying not to be the one who spoils the lovely sound
Or getting very muddled by the changes in the round.

I'll keep on persevering to improve on my technique.
You'll find me in the bell tower on a Thursday every week.
And if you think it might be fun to give the bells a ring
Don't listen to my blues and come and see if it's your thing.

CORONATION RINGING

Three generations of the Bass family ring together for the Coronation.



L to R: Chris Bass, John Bass, Graham Sweetland, Grace Bass (Front), Janice Burroughs, Kath Matthews, Anne Burn, Keith Smith.

Grace is 12½ years old, and was introduced to Bell Ringing in September last year. Congratulations to Grace who must be one of the youngest ringers in the county to ring for the Coronation. Congratulations also to the Bass family and the ringers of Branscombe for supporting Grace and enabling her to take part on such a unique occasion.” - Ed.

Ringling for the Coronation at Kenton



On the day of the Coronation, Saturday 6 May, Kenton's bells were rung in the morning from 9.00 – 10.00 a.m. At neighbouring Exminster, the bells were rung in the afternoon from 2.15 – 3.15 p.m. Left to Right: Lewis Withecombe, Colin Adams, Jane Green, David Kindred, Julie Field, Paul Field, Adele Jeffs, Pauline Ward, Michael Adams (Tower Captain), Scott Adams.

A highly successful recruitment day at North Tawton

For the Coronation - like lots of towers - we did a *Ring for the King recruitment drive*. The following idea and details I borrowed from Hatherleigh - with their permission - which was for anybody from the local community to come to the tower and have a go at dinging a bell (lowered).

We put invitations on Facebook, and in local shop windows, and we had *Ring for the King* badges, certificates, and stickers to give out to everyone who took part.

Three of us (Ewan, Teresa, and I) met at the tower at 08:15 to put up bunting and decorate around the tower, and before we knew it, we had our first dingers - a family of three, shortly followed by the Vicar and his family.

Then people just kept coming. At times we must have had as many as 25 people in the tower and as our ringers arrived, they helped by showing people how to toll a bell. Before we knew it, it was 10 O'clock and peal time.

We started with Brian's *On the Spot* request to toll a bell: great idea. Then we rang Kings on 8 conducted by Ewan, followed by a bit of three-bell ringing to signify the third. Then I conducted the Coronation peal on 6 bells.

I am happy to say our learner, who started in February, rang in all the peals. At that point a lot of people had gone through the tower, so we all nipped off to watch the Coronation.

No sooner had I eaten something and the Crown was on the King's head when I had a phone-call saying "we're outside the tower.... I'll be right down".

12:30 until 13:30 was quiet with maybe ten people through the tower. Then bang back on it again. We had babies, children, ex-ringers, parents, and grandparents.

It transpired we also had a 95yr old in the tower; he looked good for his age.

Luckily, Stuart Bennie came down again with Joe Stoneman in tow and with a queue outside and a rough contraflow system in place there was barely five minutes without 15 to 20 people being in the tower. Finally, working on a supply and demand system, we closed 30mins after the planned time of 17:00.

We had 160 badges, 100 certificates, and 100 stickers and they were all gone by 15:00. As a rough estimation we think we cleared well over 200 people...!

After showing so many people how to strike a bell I was hurting in places where it hasn't hurt in a while! Fortunately on the Sunday, the Vicar conducted a service in the park, so the ringers all had the day off.

I have to say how proud I am of what was achieved and couldn't have done so without the help of all the other ringers.

Graham Pridham

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Devon Ringkly Ringers Coronation Tour



During the week from Monday April 24th to Friday 28th a group of 13 ringers from the group known across Devon as the Ringkly Ringers rang 54 Call Changes peals at 22 towers in the south of Cornwall.

At 21 of the towers, the teams rang the King's Peal on both 6 and 8 bells. Two towers had 10 bells where the King's 8 Bell peal was rung on the front 7 with 8,9 and 10 covering. At Saint Buryan, the heaviest peal of 6 bells in the world, (37cwt 2qtr 9lbs) it was decided to only ring rounds and a few simple changes.

The towers were at Redruth [8], Camborne [8], Phillack [8], Zennor [6], Towednack [8], Madron [6], St

Buryan [8], St Erth [6], Crowan [8], Helston [8], Mullion [6], Landewednack [6], ST Keverne [10], St. Anthony [8], Manaccon [6], Mawgan in Meneage [6], Constantine [6], Carbis Bay [10], Lelant [6], Ludgvan [6], Gulval [8].

It was unfortunate to find that for some of the towers, there were not enough ringers to maintain ringing either for practicing or church services. However at others where there were more local inhabitants, there were learners with intentions to ring for the King's Coronation.

John Staddon (Organiser)

COMPETITION RESULTS



John Scott 10-bell competition at Buckfast Abbey on Saturday 22nd April.

1. Wednesday Evening Ringers 'B' 16
2. Wednesday Evening Ringers 'A' 25
3. Kingsteignton 28
4. Tavistock 32
5. Buckfast Abbey 60 ½

Photo Shows Wednesday Evening Ringers A and B - Missing from the photo is team organiser Scott Adams. The John Scott Trophy was made by Geoff Hill of Lamerton.

Results from the Novice Competition 11th March 2023 at St Paul's Tiverton

Rounds section

- 1 Kingsteignton 10 faults - T.H. Priddle shield.
- 2 Tiverton St Paul 1 15½
- 3 Kenton 16½
- 4 Uplyme 21
- 5 Exminster 26
- 6 South Molton 26½
- 7 Tiverton St Paul 2 33¼

Half peal off the stay

- 1 Kingsteignton 20¼ - P. Rice shield
- 2 = Tiverton St Paul 24¼
- 2 = Stoke Canon 24½
- 4 Kentisbeare 28
- 5 South Molton 49½
- 6 Kenton 49¾
- 7 Cadeleigh 51
- 8 Exminster 72¾

Full peal with rise and lower

- 1 Kingsteignton 56½ Top ringing 23¾
Awarded the Hooper Cup
- 2 Tiverton St Paul 2 76 Top ringing 42¾
- 3 Tiverton St Paul 1 82 Top ringing 39
- 4 Exminster 95 Top ringing 41
- 5 Kentisbeare 124½ Top ringing 47½
- 6 Kenton 173½ Top ringing 62½
- 7 South Molton 175 Top ringing 82½

Results of the South Devon qualifier held at Buckland in the Moor

1. 37 3/4 Shaugh Prior
2. 38 Combeinteignhead A
3. 39 1/4 South Brent
4. 64 3/4 Combeinteignhead B
5. 72 3/4 Stoke Gabriel
6. 76 1/2 Kenton
7. 81 Broadhempston
8. 88 Lamerton
9. 124 Drewsteignton

Judges: Owen Borlase, Jereme Darke, Paul Pascoe. Scrutineer: Mike Pascoe

Results of the North Devon qualifier held at Colebrooke

- 1 19¼ Down St Mary
- 2 26 ¼ Bow
- 3 40¼ East Anstey
- 4 42 Swimbridge
- 5 43 Sampford Courtenay A
- 6 55¾ Sampford Courtenay B
- 7 58¾ Tiverton St Paul

Judges: Reed Partridge, Ken Down, Paul Wright
Scrutineer: Margaret Down

Results of the Minor Final held at Stoke Canon on Saturday 23rd May

1. Tiverton St Paul's 57 ¾ faults - Thomas
Oatway Shield
2. Sampford Courtney 69
3. Lamerton 71
4. Kenton 75 ¾
5. Broadhempston 77
6. Drewsteignton 116

Judges: Ryan Brodie, Jereme Darke, Ken Down & John Enderson. Scrutineer - Margaret Down.

Results of the Major Final held at Denbury on Saturday 10th of June.

- Shaugh Prior 18 3/4
Down St. Mary 20 3/4
Combeinteignhead A 30 3/4
Stoke Gabriel 40 1/4
South Brent 43 1/2
Tiverton 54 1/4
East Anstey 56 1/2
Sampford Courtenay A 59 1/2
Bow 61 1/4
Sampford Courtenay B 66 1/2
Combeinteignhead B 72
Swimbridge 87 1/4

Judges: Paul Pascoe, Paul Wright, Reed Partridge, Owen Borlase. Scrutineer: Jereme Darke

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

TEDBURN ST MARY will be holding a Bell Ringing Competition again this year, after a break of three years. Make a note in your diaries the date will be Saturday 21st October 2023. We will be sending out invitations during August. Please would winners of the 2019 competition return their Shields to Tedburn St Mary – The *Shilston Shield* and The *Courtier Shield*. Contact Jenny Codling on 07872 922202. We look forward to another successful competition in October and catching up with you all.

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We would be very interested in including "Letters to the Editor".

**Articles and letters should be sent to the Editor: Colin ADAMS -
devoncalls@devonbells.co.uk**