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Devon Calls

March / April 2020

An Introduction from our New Honorary Secretary

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Hi, for those of you who may be wondering who the Devon Association of Ringers new Honorary Secretary is, well, it's me! I will usually answer to the name of Jo (Tucker) and am a fairly new ringer from the north of our fair county.

So how did I get to this point...?

A chance encounter while out walking the dogs one damp drizzly January day, at which meeting I made the (almost) throw away comment, "oh, I've always wanted to do that" when bell ringing was mentioned; and before you know it, just shy of eight years later, sitting in the front pew at the AGM is how.

Mervyn Way who has been heard to describe ringing as a disease has a point. It really has got under my skin, in a good way that is. For me it's the ultimate team sport, the perfect on-going physiotherapy for a long standing neck



injury, mindful, always allows room for improvement, and as hobbies go in this modern world it's cheap! Not to mention that wherever you go to ring you find yourself among friends. That to me is a really special feature of the world of ringing.

There is a learning curve to be negotiated with this

role but hey, I don't mind a challenge. There's a wealth of expertise to be found among committee members, Rachel Avery our most excellent out-going secretary has left everything in good order and Chairman Ian Avery has lots of experience with committee matters.

So, if you want me I'll be in a tower somewhere - oh, no - I mean please get in touch (hon-secretary@devonbells.co.uk or 07967 929823) if you have any questions, corrections or comments. I will do my best to help.

Joanne Tucker

COPY for "DEVON CALLS" is always welcome and we rely on you to submit articles
Deadline for next edition - 14th June 2020

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

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Editorial

Welcome to the spring edition of Devon Calls. It has taken a little longer to put this edition together, mainly due to the fact that we are all leading busy lives; even those of us who are retired!

On behalf of all who read the magazine I want to convey a very warm welcome to our newly elected team of officers and committee members. We all appreciate the fact that you have put yourselves forward to serve our organisation, freely and voluntarily, and wish to assure you of our full support. At the same time we thank the previous team for the excellent service which they provided.

There are a growing number of young people taking up bellringing across the county, both within The Guild of Devonshire ringers as well as The Devon Association. We continue to focus on their achievements and this time it is on three young people, David, Eva and Lucy who ring at Kingsteignton and also Combeinteignhead. They willingly completed a Ringing Questionnaire which they were sent and I'm sure you will find their comments make very interesting reading, and are equally thought provoking.

We feature the obituaries of: George Tribe, Keith Laslett, David Willis and Margaret Whittle. Each has made an important contribution to ringing and the church over many decades. It is important that such devotion is recorded and we are grateful to the ringers who took the time and effort to provide these accounts. When a lifetime's service to ringing is brought to an abrupt halt, we should never let it go unacknowledged.

Ringling Chambers are remote places and mostly out of sight to the public. Yet, often these places harbour material that is interesting and which provides a valuable link with the past. Certificates, some hand done, decorate the walls, as well as old photos of teams who once rang. Ringling related books and magazines are sometimes found often gathering dust in the corner. At Exeter St. Petrock's good use is being made of the space made available since major refurbishment work took place. Les Boyce who rings at St. Peter's Tiverton has carefully moved a large quantity of Guild related material that he was housing and placed it into St. Petrock's. There is now an opportunity for the Association to do likewise. So if you or your tower has anything that may be suitably filed centrally or placed on display, even if it is a photocopy, please get in touch with Stephanie Brown who is in charge there.

What a wealth of material the two organisations have between them. Surely it should be made more widely available? And what better location in which to do so than in the centre of Exeter, the capital city!

As I am sure you are aware this year is our 95th anniversary. Are there any plans for making this occasion 'special' or are we waiting for our centenary year?

Thank you to all those who have taken the trouble to produce and submit articles for this edition. Thank you also to our faithful team of volunteers for helping to ensure that the magazine is a credible source of information and sent out appropriately, and for keeping me on my toes!

Colin Adams

News from Chardstock Ringers

At Chardstock Street Fayre on Saturday 7th September, having opened up the ringing chamber, we were pleased to recruit a new ringer. For a small fee, to go towards the church, adults and children could have a go at getting the bells to chime, a certificate was given to the participant and many questions were asked about the bells and bellringing, keeping us busy.

Keeping up a long tradition, the bells were rung and tolled on New Year's Eve. Mince pies and drinks were on offer to celebrate the New Year. We had been hoping to have our new ropes, that we purchased after our fund raising event in November 2018, in use for the New Year, but it was decided to wait, due to a leak around the weather vane where it is fitted to the roof. The leak is dripping onto the fourth bell and spraying water around the surrounding area and floor. It has been reported many times and we are waiting for the PCC to sort the problem out before putting the new ropes in.

We are hoping to ring our bells over the weekend of May 8th to 10th to mark the 75th anniversary of V.E. Day.



Chardstock ringers on New Years Eve

L-R Stephen Goff, Susan Bray, Derrick Goff, Angela Drake, Lucy Herrod, Richard Scott, Rickey Johnstone (Tower Captain).

Susan Bray

Three Octegonarians' Birthday Celebrations - 15th February 2020

Well, we have had the Golden Globes, The Bafta's and the Oscars, but recently at Exminster we held a different kind of ceremony, namely-The Octa's!! There was no red carpet, the stars were not dressed to impress and we did not invite the paparazzi. Flash bulbs didn't pop, but instead we had Eric, our own officially appointed photographer quietly clicking away in the background!

Undeterred by the atrocious weather which prevailed on Saturday 15th February, distinguished guests arrived from neighbouring Kenton, Kenn and Alphington towers and a surprise guest too. Mr. Ray Tutton came to join in the celebrations. Ray

used to ring at Exminster and had journeyed down from South Wales. He was able to join us for the celebratory peals which took place on the bells of St. Martin's prior to the Grand Tea Party which followed. This was held in the nearby Methodist Hall.

As we all know having three ringers, all of whom ring at the same tower,

celebrating their 80th birthdays is a rare occasion indeed. David Wills was born on 20th December 1939, Cliff Wilson on 12th January 1940 and Lewis Withecombe on 23rd February 1940. Collectively their lives' span 240 years and between them they have achieved approximately 200 years ringing experience! How many churches have they visited during this time? How many ropes and sallies have they held and how many peals have they rung? We can only guess.

Their ringing careers: David, Cliff and Lewis:

David. David was born at Clyst St. George. He has the distinction of being the last person to be baptised at Clyst St. George Church before it was destroyed by an enemy bomb in 1940.

His ringing career began in 1952 when he started to learn on the second bell at Topsham. He progressed from ringing rounds to Grandsire Doubles and Stedman Doubles. At the time Clyst St. George church was being rebuilt and in 1953 work to restore the bells was completed and ringing began once more. He then became a member of the newly formed/reformed team at Clyst St. George where his father Bill, was Tower Captain. He rang his first peal of 5040 Grandsire Doubles on the bells of Clyst St. George on 8th November 1956 at the age of just 16; quite an achievement. He progressed and was elected to become a member of The Guild of

Devonshire Ringers (GDR) at an Aylesbeare Deanery Branch meeting held at Sowton in March 1954.

Whilst working at Heathcoat's factory at Tiverton between 1956/57 he joined the band at St. Peter's where he progressed to ringing Grandsire Triples. In 1960 he acquired his first car (not a Skoda we understand!). This enabled him to travel further afield to ring whereas previously he had been restricted by having to cycle to local towers. In 1960 he was appointed to serve as Branch Secretary to The Aylesbeare Deanery Branch of the GDR.

Seeing little chance of being able to progress at Clyst St.



L-R Lewis, David, Cliff

George, in 1964 he joined the band at Withycombe Raleigh where the late Frank Mack was trying to rebuild a team following a post war decline. Frank Mack later replaced Frank Bastin as Tower Captain. It was whilst under the captaincy of Frank Mack that the band at Withycombe Raleigh, which included David, became acquainted with call-change ringing. Already affiliated to the GDR

the tower also became

affiliated to The Devon Association of Ringers (DAR) and in the 1970s Frank entered the Withycombe Raleigh team into the DAR's annual eight bell competitions. David also accompanied Frank on some of his many trips to score all the ringable towers in Devon.

During the 1960s David was appointed to become a member of The St. Peter's Exeter Cathedral Society of Change Ringers. He remained an active member of the band until retiring in 2007 at which point he was the longest serving member of that particular band.

In 1995 he was invited to become Tower Captain at Sowton a position he held for eight years.

Having served in all the other offices for the Aylesbury Deanery Branch of the GDR he was elected Branch Chairman in October 2015. He held the post for three years finally having to retire because he could no longer hear well enough to chair the meetings.

In 2003, along with fellow Topsham ringer the late David Rowe, he decided to renew his call-change links and came across to Exminster, joining the team on their regular Thursday practice nights which he still does. It wasn't long after coming to Exminster that he found himself being invited to ring at other towers i.e. Alphington, Kenton, Kenn and

Three octogenarians - continued from page 3

Powderham. He supports Alphington's practice nights, makes himself available to ring for weddings, funerals and competitions. Not only this he provides valuable instruction to newly recruited learners.

Recently David was advised to stop driving and his faithful Skoda

stands idle next to his bungalow on the mud flats between Topsham and Clyst St. George. So the question is. How does he manage to get around and ring at so many towers? The answer is by Public Transport and returning home via The Exeter Inn at Topsham courtesy of one of the ringers.

Cliff. Cliff's ringing career began at Tedburn St. Mary in 1973. His niece wanted to learn to ring but for some unknown reason her parents were not very supportive and so she came to Cliff for help. Whilst at the tower he was invited to have a go and this marked the beginning of a distinguished ringing career. At Teburn he was taught to ring by the late Jack Ralph.

When he moved out of farming and came to live at Exminster he joined the Exminster band. Initially he was a little cautious about joining and ringing with an eight-bell team when he had been used to ringing six, but with encouragement he soon settled in. His chosen bell was the tenor. The tenor bell at Exminster is just over 17cwt. which is considerably heavier than the tenor at Tedburn. However, Cliff is from farming stock and he quickly demonstrated that he was up to the mark. Having established himself within the team, and by showing a strong commitment towards Sunday service ringing, as well as practice nights, it wasn't long before he was ringing with the team regularly, even in competitions. He is always willing to help learners which he does not only at Exminster, but also at neighbouring towers i.e. Kenn, Alphington and Cheriton Bishop. To his credit he has bounced back after being quite ill last year. In view of this set back he no longer rings the tenor but has moved forward to ring lighter bells. He is once more enjoying his ringing, as much as we all enjoy ringing with him.

Lewis. Lewis first started to learn to ring at Kenton in 1951. Initially he was taught by the late Fred Gardener who was the Tower Captain at the time. Lewis' father Bill was Vice-Captain and he also helped with teaching and later became Tower Captain. In 1952 two brothers, Colin and Michael Adams, Fred Gardner's Grandsons also started to learn. They were later joined by Nicholas Tucker son of Police Constable Tucker who was also a ringer at Kenton. Learning wasn't just confined to church bells either. As the lads began to improve Fred



L-R David, Lewis, Cliff

Gardener introduced them to hand-bell ringing. In this they became reasonably proficient and as word got round they were invited to perform locally at various small scale social events. On one occasion the team travelled to the village of Hennock in the Teign Valley - which was quite

a journey in those days - to perform in the Village Hall.

At the age of fourteen Lewis took part in a peal at Kenton comprising three fathers and three sons. The three fathers were: Frank Adams, Bob Tucker and Bill Withecombe. The three sons were: Colin Adams, alternating with brother Michael, Nicholas Tucker and Lewis Withecombe.

Lewis still rings regularly at Kenton and he also supports the ringing which takes place on a regular basis at: Powderham, Exminster, Kenn, Alphington and St. Thomas Exeter. He also helps to maintain the bells in these five towers.

He rings regularly in competitions and by so doing has acquired considerable knowledge and experience of Devon's bells. He is a member of The Retired Ringers Group and also The Friday Evening Ringers which he enjoys and sums up by saying "nothing beats a good ring."

Lewis is a very keen gardener. Like ringing it is a life-long hobby which he really enjoys. In his large garden at Kenton he grows fruit, vegetables and flowers. For his efforts he is regularly rewarded with a top prize in the annual Britain in Bloom village competition.

Interestingly, Lewis, Colin and Michael still ring together regularly having first started almost seventy years ago.

In the late afternoon the celebrations came to a close and people left the hall to face once more the atrocious weather. The weather however did not prevent us from marking a unique occasion and one at which history was made and recorded at Exminster tower.

The next time you see www instead of thinking of The World Wide Web think also of -Withecombe, Wilson and Wills and raise a glass to Lewis, Cliff and David. Each one has made an outstanding contribution to ringing, been utterly loyal and faithful and never caused even a ripple. They are true "Devon" ringers.

Colin Adams

Tiverton Ringing

I moved 'back home' to Devon about 18 months ago after an absence of over 30 years, spent in church ministry. Back to proper ringing, and a town with two great rings of bells – Tiverton.

There is good method ringing based around St Peter's (the heavy eight) but the ringers there also have a lot of respect for, and interest in, proper call change ringing. The Guild has a much higher profile in this deanery and area than the Association, indeed it is the local branch of the Guild which organises help for many towers in the area where the ringing is call changes. The Association has little presence, partly because there are no longer any competition teams in the area apart from East Anstey which is a fair distance away in a different deanery. When I last lived in Devon there were several including Plymtree and Kentisbeare; and Cullompton and Uffculme were also both active in the Association.

St Paul's is my home tower, and I was recently elected Tower Captain. A year ago I realised that there were call change ringers in the area presently without any competition team, so, experimentally, I started call change ringing for an hour and a quarter before the evening service twice a month (in addition to our weekly morning ringing). From this regular base of between 8 and 14 ringers we have developed a competition team, as well as including a good number of novice ringers. It will be a long time until we win anything of course, but we've had a very enjoyable year and some lovely days out in 2019. We hope to get stuck in again this year!

One advantage of St Paul's is that they are an easy-going light six (tenor just under 9 cwt), which means that we can raise



St Paul's Tiverton

and lower for each peal – so getting in some much needed practice. Our ringers are mostly from very near Tiverton, but we have been fortunate also to have regulars who live slightly further away, including two from over the border in Somerset who have been converted to Devon ways – thanks largely to the welcome received from my friends in Exminster.

A call change centre?

Our most recent venture at St Paul's has been to install a simulator on all six bells, with speakers in the ceiling of the ringing chamber which use a recording of our own bells! It is very

new as yet, but I hope that we can offer a place where teams of all standards can come to practise without disturbing the neighbours. Even raising and lowering are pretty authentic, so if you have ringers who would benefit from intensive practice do get in touch. If there are only two or three we could provide ringers to make up a team, or help teach handling and listening skills.

The church is very well equipped with kitchen and toilets, and Tiverton is pretty accessible from most parts of Devon. You never know, folk from up country might even want to learn how we do it!

I have benefitted enormously from Devon ringers over the years and would like to be able to give something back to encourage our unique tradition.

My email is tim@bankend.net, and phone 07504 356628. It would be good to hear from you.

Tim Jones

Tavistock Deanery Ringing Festival

The Deanery Call Change competition fizzled out a few years ago due to the lack of entries. However, the Tavistock Deanery Ringing Festival seems to go from strength to strength. The format is quite simple. All the Church Bells in the Deanery are available during the day for any one of the teams that turn out. Some of the Okehampton Deanery Towers are also available and we are very grateful for that. The event is always held on the last Saturday in October and culminates with a service and Grand Ringers Tea at a different host tower each year.

2019 saw the Festival held at Brentor and we believe that this could well be a first!!! The weather was pretty rough so only a few are believed to have ventured up to ring at St Michael's on the Tor, but a full church gathered at Christ Church in the village for the service at 5pm. There is only one bell at Christ Church but not to be outdone four of the Lamerton Team –

Will and Sue Dawe, Peter Crockford and Bill Blowey rung The Queens Peal on Handbells at the end of the Service. We then made our way down to Brentor Village Hall for a superb buffet tea very efficiently organised by Carol Sargent, the Brentor Tower Captain. After the draw, thanks were expressed to those concerned and to David Pike, Deanery Secretary and Captain of the Ringers at Bere Ferrers for the organisation of such a successful day. Teams taking part came from Bridestowe, Lydford, Peter Tavy, Meavy, Sheepstor, Tavistock, Lifton, Bere Ferrers, Lamerton, Whitchurch, Sydenham Damerall and Sampford Spiney. Next year's Festival will be held at Peter Tavy as usual on the last Saturday in October 2020 and with numbers like we had this year it is bound to be a great success. Who knows we might even get enough together to rekindle The Deanery Competition again, but that's another story!!!

Geoff Hill

Young Ringers at Kingsteignton and Combeinteignhead

There is a growing number of young people across Devon who are taking an interest in bell-ringing; some have already featured in Devon Calls. It is heartening to see such enthusiasm towards the craft being demonstrated by these young people. Of course learning how to ring requires people who are committed to teaching and these unsung heroes deserve credit also. They devote their time, energy,

and considerable patience free of charge in order to transmit their considerable knowledge and skills to successive generations. Well done to them.

This time our focus is on David, Eva and Lucy who ring at Kingsteignton and Combeinteignhead.

Colin Adams

DAVID BURGOYNE, 17 years old

What motivated you towards learning how to ring?

I heard the bells from my house when I was 11 and that made me curious, so I went onto YouTube to see what it was all about. I thought it was really interesting, so I went to one of their practice nights and asked if I could have a go.

Do you come from a ringing family?

No, but I managed to get my mum into ringing and she's very good.

Do you have friends who ring?

Yes, I have made friends with Eva and Lucy after they started ringing.

Do you play any kind of musical instrument?

No.

Do you have any other hobbies?

No.

Did you make prior enquiries about learning how to ring, or just present yourself on a practice night?

I just went to a practice night and introduced myself. I was 11 years old.

Who taught you how to handle a bell, and were you taught with the bell down or up?

I was taught by Ian Avery, Kingsteignton's Tower Captain and I was taught with the bell up.

Roughly how long did it take before you could safely handle a bell on your own?

I was ringing on my own within a month of starting.

Roughly how long did it take for you to ring with the team?

That took longer. As soon as I was able to ring on my own, Ian put me in a group to ring rounds. About 4 months after I



L-R David, Eva, Lucy

started I learnt how to do changes and half a year after that I entered my first ever deanery competition (Wolborough, East Ogwell and Kingsteignton). We came out with second place, I enjoyed it so much... I just wanted to do it again!

What would you say are the most challenging aspects of learning how to ring?

I think that control is the hardest aspect, making the bell do what you want it to do, and not letting the bell control you.

What would you say are the most rewarding aspects of ringing?

For me the thrill you get when you ring a really good peal is really rewarding. I also love how the other ringers in your tower become your family, you just want to make them proud.

Do you openly tell your friends you are a ringer?

I do, but I know other young ringers are worried that they'll be laughed at, because people think ringing is an old man's hobby. My friends have never made a fuss about the fact that I ring, they just see it as any other hobby.

Is there anything which you feel needs to be done to attract young people into bell ringing?

I feel it's a "hidden" hobby, I mean, you only really know about it if you come from a family of ringers, if you go to church or if you go to an open tower event. I think if it was taken to schools by young ringers and children had the chance to have a go, they will love it and realise that it's just another activity you can do in your free time.

Young ringers, continued from page 6

Are there any other comments concerning ringing which you would like to make?

I would love there to be an annual young ringers' competition for two main age categories, perhaps alternating 6 and 8 bells. That would be so much fun! You could have a few teams, one for each area of Devon, formed by ringers from all different towers within those areas. We could come together now and

again to practice for the "big event", visiting a different tower each time. We could compete for a unique shield that the winners could keep for a year. I really think this would bring all the young ringers in Devon together and build a sense of community but also competition. And it would probably make bellringing a more accessible pastime to new potential ringers.

David Burgoyne

Eva Lee, 14 Years Old

What motivated you towards learning how to ring?

My primary school was a minute or so walk from St Michael's Church, one day my class spent an afternoon being shown the ringing chamber and how to ring. I really enjoyed it and soon after that, my sister, Anna, tried bell ringing and loved it as much as I did, so she started going on Wednesday practise nights and a few months later I joined her.

Do you come from a ringing family?

My mum, sister and I all ring - my grandad used to, and my dad can ring too!

Do you have friends who ring?

Yes - I encouraged my friend Lucy to start ringing, who to my pleasure was as passionate about ringing as I was! I also met one of my best friends David, who rings at Kingsteignton with me.

Do you play any kind of musical instrument?

I play the drums, I have lessons every week and have done 3 exams so far, making me Grade 4. Music is my passion and I want to go into the music industry when I'm older!

Do you have any other hobbies?

I do a sport called Freerunning, which is very similar to Gymnastics. I also go running twice a week- once with my mum and sister and the other with the club I belong to.

Did you make prior enquiries about learning how to ring, or just present yourself on a practice night?

I presented my self on the practise night!

Who taught you how to handle a bell, and were you taught with the bell down or up?

Everyone in the tower pitched in a little bit, by giving me tips on how to make my ringing more rhythmical. However, (the one and only) Ian Avery taught me how to safely handle a bell and explained the mechanics of it!

Roughly how long did it take before you could safely handle a bell on your own?

I think the instant enthusiasm I obtained for ringing played a big part in my learning- I'd say it took me about three weeks before I could ring a bell by myself.

Roughly how long did it take for you to ring with the team?

I did my first novice rounds competition after about six weeks of ringing. I'd say I could ring changes without getting hopelessly lost after about 3 months. However, rising and lowering in peal took much, much longer- I've now been ringing for two years and can rise and lower to what I feel is a good standard!

What would you say are the most challenging aspects of learning how to ring?

For me, the most challenging aspects were the mental barriers. From the fear of breaking a stay when setting a bell, to making your sixth coil in a lower with long ropes, it took me a while to take a deep breath and say 'it will all be ok, I can do this'. Nevertheless, I think a little bit of fear makes everything a bit more fun!

What would you say are the most rewarding aspects of ringing?

The sense of accomplishment. The times when you can say to yourself 'I did it!', or (quite often in my case) 'that was better than I expected!'.

Do you openly tell your friends you are a ringer?

I started ringing when I was only a couple of months into my new secondary school- none of my friends went to that school so I had to make new ones. Because of this I was quite shy and didn't tell people straight away. Now, all of my friends know (some of them have even come to watch) and I frequently share clips of me ringing online!

Is there anything which you feel needs to be done to attract young people into bell ringing?

I think a lot of young people think ringing is easy and won't take it up because they don't think it will be a challenge, and we need to emphasise the fact that it's more rewarding than many other sports out there, and that you will make new friends and take part in new experiences.

Are there any other comments concerning ringing which you would like to make?

We should encourage people to give it a go- people's perceptions of ringing never match what it is! Ringing has changed my life for the better and has provided me with memories that will last forever. I think everyone deserves an opportunity to encounter something as incredible as ringing.

Eva Lee

Lucy Campbell, 13 Years Old

What motivated you towards learning how to ring?

I went along once to see what it was like and to see if I enjoyed it and I had an amazing time

Do you come from a ringing family?

Not at all, none of my family really understood what ringing was until I started

Do you have friends who ring?

I have made friends through ringing, and had friends who encouraged me to ring

Do you play any kind of musical instrument?

I can play piano but don't have lessons or exams in it

Do you have any other hobbies?

I play netball once a week

Did you make prior enquiries about learning how to ring, or just present yourself on a practice night?

I just went along with a friend one evening, no enquiries were made

Who taught you how to handle a bell, and were you taught with the bell down or up?

Ian Avery was the main teacher but everyone helped a little bit! I'm still learning how to ring properly now. I was taught with the bell up

Roughly how long did it take before you could safely handle a bell on your own?

After about 2-3 months I could ring alone

Roughly how long did it take for you to ring with the team?

I was ringing rounds after 3-4 months with the team, but started doing changes after around 6 months

What would you say are the most challenging aspects of learning how to ring?

Definitely the rise and lower. Once you've got the hang of basic rounds ringing and changes, the rise and lower are the most challenging aspects, in my opinion.

What would you say are the most rewarding aspects of ringing?

I would say definitely having people congratulate you after a particularly good peal. Also, watching someone else do well is so rewarding, especially in a rise or lower!

Do you openly tell your friends you are a ringer?

Yes, I don't hide it. I don't go out of my way to tell people though, it is a casual conversation.

Lucy Campbell

2019 Ringers' Carol Service

The first Friday in November sees choir rehearsals commence in preparation for the Carol Service organised by the Devon Ringers' Council to take place this year in Exeter Cathedral on Saturday 7th December.

A service loosely based on the traditional Nine Lessons and Carols has for some years now been a regular and well attended event. There ringers, family and friends from both the Guild and Association gather for a celebration of words and music for Advent and Christmas.

The day arrives and from around 2.30pm, with the lofty and regal sound of the Cathedral bells echoing around the Cathedral Close and beyond and as people make their way to the grandeur of the West Front entrance, one feels a draw towards something special about to unfold.

This feeling of expectation (fitting so aptly with Advent) continues when inside the Cathedral, with the congregation arriving from all over the County and beyond, the choir having rehearsed in the morning slowly returning from lunch, readers familiarising themselves with the lectern microphone set-up, handbell ringers seeking out their reserved seats and organ voluntaries beginning. The time is fast approaching for the celebration to kick-off at 3pm. The choir arrive from the Chapter House, their base for the day, to take up their position in the South Transcept where at the stroke of 3 o'clock, Bach's Chorale 'Glory now to God we Render' is sung as an introit. They then process to the choir stalls with everyone singing 'Once in Royal David's City'.

The music for this service tends to be a mix of traditional carols for congregation, readings from representatives from both the Guild and Association, two handbell touches showing the intricacies of both method and call change ringing and carols for the choir.

The idea of a choir for this service was formed in the early 90's and an idea of the late Revd Bob Southwood. Initially, the choir was made up mainly of ringers and whilst many ringers still form a large part of the choir, over the years it has grown to include family and friends. The main reason for this is to maintain a balance in the four parts.

This year, two of the choir items included in the service gave the opportunity for soloists. Will Carew sang the solo part in Peter Cornelius' 'The Three Kings'. This piece calls for the gentlemen of the choir to sing in four parts underneath the solo part. This is then repeated but with the sopranos and altos taking the top two parts. This gives a sumptuous contrast in the singing of what is a gloriously written carol. Ginnie Cox sang the solo part in the equally glorious 'O Holy Night' written by Adolph Adam. Not unlike the previous carol in that the choir sing four parts underneath the solo part – one of the differences being it has sections just for the choir. This remains a firm favourite of not only the choir but of congregations and audiences up and down the country.

Holding the service in the Quire brings about an intimacy for the choir and congregation not evident when held in the nave. This facilitates some enthralling carol singing with descants

Carol Service - continued from page 8

bringing a spine-tingling and uplifting climax to the carols – something we never get tired of singing or hearing year in, year out.

The DRC and I'm sure all ringers are extremely grateful to the Dean and Chapter for allowing us to hold our service in what is such superb surroundings. Thanks also must go to the Cathedral's organists for allowing us to take over for the day in what is an extremely busy time for them, to the floor managers for their much appreciated support on the day, to the Cathedral Bellringers for ringing both before and after the service and to administrative personnel in dealing with bookings and requests over the past 12 months and that includes our very own Clare Griffiths who is so efficient at being our link between the Cathedral authorities and

bellringers. Special mention and sincere thanks must go to Wyn Turner our organist. Wyn has so generously given his time for the past 26 years and his musical mastery, interpretation and accompanying skills are second to none and for which I am personally extremely grateful. We just could not achieve this most joyous and uplifting pleasure our service brings without all this dedicated support being in place. A huge thank you to one and all. The collection taken at the service for Children's Hospice South West amounted to £707.36.

'THANKS BE TO GOD'

The 2020 Bellringers Carol Service will be held in Barnstaple Parish Church on Saturday 12th December at 3.00pm.

Ian Avery

Autumn Ups and Downs

Nervously, I opened the church door a few minutes before 10.00 on a Saturday morning in October. I was greeted by smiling faces looking down from the ringing chamber and quickly encouraged to: "Come on up!" Guild Education Officer Tim Bayton introduced us to our fellow learners and the band of five experienced ringers whose mission was to teach us how to raise and lower in peal.

"In on the third: one, two...", the treble ringer calls and the rich, melodious tone of the bells fills the air as they are expertly rung up in peal. Then, after a few rounds, a perfect lower commences, everyone in place, controlled and brilliantly executed. What an act to follow! After this expert demonstration, the course began: one learner at a time with an expert band and an individual helper each time. Ropes were tied around pillars in the church for us to practise crawling up the rope and taking coils, so that we were each ready for our individual turn.

Never did I feel so exposed. Would I be able to follow the bell in front of me smoothly and efficiently, letting out the correct amount of rope and pulling with just the right amount of effort, not too much and not too little? Concentrating hard and listening carefully to the advice from my mentor, I did my best to follow the bell in front of me all the way up, in a few rounds and then as we rang down. Making coils? Scary! Would

I tangle the rope or, worse still, miss the sally? My mentor calmly talked me through the whole process. Very soon the bells were all down and the next learner was getting ready.

After two goes for each learner in the morning and then a pleasant pub lunch, there were two more turns for each of us in the afternoon. At the end of the day, we were privileged to watch the tutors raise the bells, ring a few call changes and lower again: a target for us to aim at and a pleasure to listen to at the end of a very satisfying day. As a learner, I really appreciated the time and effort of all the helpers, who had given up their whole day for us (and forgone watching England beat New Zealand in the semi-final of the Rugby World Cup). Now comes the hard part: putting it all into practice in our home towers.

Sharn Kent and Lesley Houghton

The Guild of Devonshire Ringers is in the exceptionally privileged position of sharing its territory with the Devon Association of Ringers. I am very grateful to members of the Association for sharing their expertise and helping with this training organised by the Guild. We have much in common and pooling our strengths, especially when it comes to recruitment and training new ringers, is beneficial both to the exercise as a whole and to the individual towers where we ring.

Tim Bayton, Guild Education Officer

The Changing of the Guard...



*Presidents old and new
Sue Ashton and John Barnes*



Our new team of principal officers

*L-R Ian Avery (Chairman), Chris Ley (Treasurer),
Sue Ashton (President), Joanne Tucker (Secretary)*

Chagford Ringers and Friends' Long Weekend; Derbyshire: Friday 16 – Sunday 18 August 2019

Hot sunny days August; then rain came to the Midlands and North West including Derbyshire. Our base was not too far from the reservoir at Whaley Bridge from where residents had to be moved lest the dam did not hold. On Friday, travelling from Devon to Derby, there was another warning of heavy rain! On the motorway the signs were of the expected bad weather.

We left in good time and picked up friends along the way.

Unfortunately, Paul and Catherine from the IOW who instigated these trips 28 years ago, supporting them ever since, were unable to join us.

Our first tower was at Ashby de la Zouch (actually in Leicestershire) where we met Neil, organiser of this tour, and his wife Nikki. Here there was plenty of space as this is a ground floor ring of 10 bells, tenor 21cwt. All agreed that this was a reasonable peal with which to start our weekend. The beer in the Plough on The Green was excellent the Green now being tarmac, concrete and paving! Then to Ticknall (now in Derbyshire), also 10 bells, tenor 9cwt – tricky being a lot lighter but again the peals went well. Here we were joined by Stuart, an old Brum Uni friend of Jon Bint's, and Liz Hutchinson who ring at our next stop, Melbourne, 12 bells, tenor 15cwt., in this memorable church with splendid Norman arches. The ringing circle, set in the chancel, had a challenging long draught. Again, the ringers excelled themselves in coping with ringing 12. Ringing 10 or 12 requires a different style the bells being rung more on balance (higher up) and slower (to the usual 6 or 8) to accommodate the extra bells in each round. The last tower of the day was at Alvaston, a village now a suburb of Derby. This has a ring of 6 bells, tenor 17cwt., a weight more to our liking our ringers being so familiar with 6 bells! All 21 of us crammed into the small ringing chamber up a short flight of stairs.



*L - R: Back Row - Tony Jeffrey, Amy Squire, Ben Squire, Andrew Gist, Michael Webster, Colin Barnes, Tim Waller
Third Row - Kevin Tingey Janice Gist Karen Squire
Second Row - Emma Jeanes, Chris Smallwood, Clare Griffiths, Margaret Peirce, Julia Endacott, Evan Endacott, Elinor D'Albiac
Front Row - Gabriel Bint, Jon Bint, Neil Thomas, Nikki Thomas*

Our hotel in Derby city centre, alongside the River Derwent, has flood protection work in progress right outside the door. After supper we visited a hostelry appropriately named the *Exeter Arms*.

Saturday 17 August: a short walk led to the Cathedral church of All Saints Derby. The ringing chamber was opened late for us allowing extra time to visit this wonderful building. Our

ringers made a very good job of raising and lowering all 10 bells, tenor 19cwt., in peal. We were shocked to learn that the gentleman who unlocked for us died the following Thursday. Then to St Peter, Belper, 8 bells, tenor 14 cwt, where we were confused with cleaning volunteers but were invited to share their hot drinks! The sound control was so effective that the bells were hardly audible outside – one might say too effective. We then journeyed through wonderful countryside to a buffet lunch at the Red Lion Hotel, Wirksworth. On entering this delightful village, we passed the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway. The ringers spent some time in church trying to find the door to the ringing chamber, it was on the outside and not that obvious. From there we went to St James, Brassington, 6 bells, tenor 8 cwt., where the ladies rang first. Several male ringers were outside listening intently with glasses in their hands. This church overlooks wonderful valleys the day being beautifully sunny and warm. Saturday's ringing finished at St Oswald, Ashbourne, 8 bells, tenor 13 cwt. This was another ringing circle in the chancel of this stunningly beautiful church. The draught of the ropes was very long indeed making ringing very difficult especially for the less expert ringers but all performed admirably! We returned to the hotel, our evening walk being to an Italian restaurant, Zizzi, in the shopping centre.

Chagford Outing—continued from page 10

Sunday 18 August - we walked to St Peter's Derby; 8 bells, tenor 12 cwt. . These are excellent bells and there was wonderful ringing from all the ringers. Sunday lunch had been pre-arranged at the Stanhope Arms, Stanton-by-Dale, home to the steel pipe works. Here was another mini-Brum reunion – Ben Farnsworth drove down the M1 from Sheffield just to meet us / Jon. We were scheduled to ring at the parish church, but the tower contact forgot so we were locked out. We used the time available to take group photos. Our last tower was at St Mary, Ilkeston. 8 bells, tenor 17 cwt. very similar in weight to our own – a proper set!!

We said our goodbyes to Neil and Nikki Thomas. Neil had arranged the towers, hotel and meals and was presented with

a 'thank you' gift from us all. Thanks go to all who made this trip possible, to all who joined in, to Julia for the business arrangements and to the Captain, Jon Bint, for encouraging the ringers and for writing and designing the programme. Also special thanks to our very thoughtful, considerate and excellent driver, Bob Edwards of Taw and Torridge Coaches. It was a wonderful and well organised weekend, with beautiful churches and delightful bells. A tour like no other!

***Michael Webster (aided and abetted
by Jon Bint and Colin Barnes)***

Update on the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund

As we come to the end of 2019, there is some good news from the DCBRF having received, or is due to receive, more income this year than expected expenditure. There is a bit of a caveat to this, however, as it has been a relatively quiet year for Grant requests with just six received totalling a little under £12,000. This is in sharp contrast to the £33,450 offered during 2018.

Following my articles in both Ringing Round Devon and Devon Calls I had hoped to see a steady stream of donations being received but alas this was not the case. However, there were one or two donations which probably wouldn't have happened without it including a regular payment from one ringer and a large donation from Withycombe Raleigh of £1,500 (I could hardly ask everyone else to give without asking my own tower to do the same!). We also received £1,000 from the Exeter Cathedral ringers being some of the profits made at the excellent National 12 Bell final held there in June. In all we have received just over £19,500 so far with a further £6,000 due by year end. What I must point out is that more than 50% of the Fund's income comes from the Smale Bequest so as the ringers in Devon we have only raised approximately £12,000 this year. As you can see this only just pays for the grants offered this year during a **quiet** year. We should remember that the Fund gave £15,000 to Ugborough alone, an unthinkable amount based on current income levels.

Whilst we have only paid out just under £6,000 in grants so far this year, we expect to pay out a further £17,000 in the immediate future as some larger projects come to fruition. Therefore total giving for the year will be around the £23,000 mark. Remember there is always a time lag between money being allocated to it being paid out. However, we cannot commit funds to new Grant requests that we do not have, hence the need to try to raise our liquid fund levels.

Details of the Accounts for the DCBRF are made available to Association members at the AGM.

The message from the Trustees is that we are not out of the woods yet. A quiet year has allowed us to get "back into the black", however, the dreaded "B" word still hangs over all of us including our investments. We have a slightly better idea of what will happen in that we are set to leave the EU on 31 January 2020 but we don't know how our Stock Market, and those around the World, will react when something does. We have no desire to dip into the Fund's investments at this time as they do provide a very good level of income and now is simply not the right time. Therefore, we must rely on the good nature, and very kind giving, of all our ringers to ensure the Trustees can continue to give Grants of a meaningful level to help all projects to be a success.

Janet Deem

From the Archive



This photo of the 1939 Down St Mary band appeared in the Express and Echo on 31st December 2002.

The ringers are L-R Francis Andrews, Joe Gunn, Harry Dockings, Joe Towt, Tom Wright, Ralph Wright and Tom Mortimer

Colin Adams

Obituary For George Tribe 1928-2019

The ringing community, family and friends, gathered in large numbers a week before Christmas to bid farewell to a man who, with his varied skills and interests, managed to touch the lives of so many in Devon and beyond.

George Leonard James Tribe was born in Bristol Royal Infirmary on 25th August 1928. At an early age George settled in Bratton Fleming, near Barnstaple, to live with his Gran although the rest of the family moved to south Devon,

In his younger years, George is reported to have been a little rascal. He had a fascination with fire which led him to believe that putting an old bicycle tyre on his Gran's stove would be a good idea. This resulted in great plumes of black smoke billowing from the chimney. On its own this would not have been so bad, except, that that afternoon the Bratton Fleming team were playing on the cricket pitch just over the hedge. When the smoke got so bad, the match had to be temporarily abandoned due to bad light!

George went to Bratton Fleming School and then embarked on a painting and decorating apprenticeship. This was to remain George's day job for the rest of his working life, a remarkable feat in

itself as George never learned to drive a car. George earned an enviable reputation as a good worker in his local area so didn't need to advertise or travel far from Bratton to keep working.

George also met Fay in the village and they were married on November 4th 1972. Thereafter they lived with Fay's brother Eric in Haxton Lane in the centre of the village very close to the Parish Church.

Anyone who knew George would agree that his interests were of an earlier age. Perhaps his early fascination with fire fuelled his passion for steam. In 1958, George acquired a 1907 Aveling & Porter Traction engine from near Exeter. Bert Conibear recalls taking George to collect the engine which was in need of serious restoration. Using a bar, they managed to tow it and having come through Lapford, progress came to a stop when suddenly the retaining pin popped out, the bar detached, and George brought the weighty engine to a halt by partly demolishing a stone wall.

It took 36 years of dedication to restore 'Grandsire' to a fully

working engine. George and his engine were featured in Old Glory Magazine and also gained TV coverage when he eventually threw away his L plates having passed his Traction Engine driving test! Grandsire was traditionally coach painted by George himself and his attention to such detail was to become his hallmark in many different forms.

George would often be found at the steam rallies. He would be the one in the overalls with his face covered in oil from the flywheel!



Handbells were George's other great passion. Over many years, he gathered suitable bells to make ringable sets, in some cases tuning them himself. He enjoyed maintaining and ringing them in Bratton and Goodleigh and augmented his Gillett & Johnston set of twelve whenever a suitable bell came his way. Though not a reader of music, he would cleverly play by ear, playing all the right notes in the right order!

In recent years, George was keen to see his beloved handbell set go to a good home. He asked my wife Rachel and me if we would take ownership as we used to ring them with George as part of the St Gregory Hand Bell Ringers. George felt his bells fundamentally

brought the two of us together all those years ago. When we thought about it, he was quite right and he was clearly comforted to know his bells were in safe hands and we cherish them dearly.

George's knowledge of the Church bells of Devon was arguably unrivalled and would have been worthy of being his chosen specialist subject on Mastermind – had he ever taken part. He had an encyclopaedic memory for any information connected with the bells themselves. This became a regular form of amusement to fellow ringers on the Goodleigh ringing outings of years ago. During the coach journey someone would point out a tower in the distance. George would soon be able to recall the parish, the name of the bell founder, the date they were cast, number of bells and the weight of the tenor. In another part of the coach someone would look up Doves Guide and nod to confirm George was indeed correct. Where necessary, George would also throw in a word of caution, that if you ever ring there, "the third's a tricky toad... a Sally bell".

George Tribe—Continued from page 12

Happiest on the tenor, George was proud to have rung the 72cwt "Grandison" at Exeter. At Upton, Torquay, in 1962, he rang the tenor to win the Devon 8 Bell Final behind (in order) Bill Howard, John Conibear, Percy Lavercombe, Ivan Harris, Bert Conibear, Charlie Liverton and Bill Latham. In the same year, they also won the Pilton and Tawstock Shields.



The 1962 team, photo courtesy of Bert Conibear

Back Row L-R George Tribe, Bill Latham, Charlie Liverton, Bert Conibear, Ivan Harris

Front Row L-R Bill Howard, John Conibear, Percy Lavercombe

For many of his ringing years, George would cycle long distances from home to various towers for regular ringing. Primarily a call-change ringer, George would occasionally ring tenor in method peals too.

For a good many years, I had the pleasure of ferrying George from Bratton to Goodleigh for practice and Service. Though short, these journeys were always packed full of interesting stories about bells, his beloved steam engine or the general goings-on of village life.

It seems to many of us that George could turn his hand to make almost anything. Bratton Fleming, Goodleigh and Pilton (Bartnaple) towers all have single frame-mounted working model bells, which are regularly used to demonstrate the workings of a bell to beginners and visitors. All these were handmade and donated by George. He even made a superb six bell working model set of bells on a metal frame which was then gifted to the Guild of Devonshire Ringers permanently displayed at St Petrock's Church, Exeter.

He could be called upon to carve memorial plaques, display retired clapper sets, detail Church clocks in gold leaf or repair weather vanes. These will remain a testament to the talented man he was. Whenever any praise was heaped upon him for his efforts, George would usually reply with "All I can do is keep trying".

Towards the end of his working life, George

was the caretaker and cleaner at the village Primary School where he took great pride in his work. He was polite and respectful with a smile for every child. His recycling efforts were recognised about eight years ago when he was presented with an award at County Hall, Exeter. Somewhat overwhelmed by the numbers witnessing his award, George still managed to steal the show with a beautiful acceptance speech and was apparently quite the star after the event.

George's faith was evident not just in his worship but in giving numerous hours of his time to Church maintenance and activities. He was also known for his sense of humour with frequent new jokes shared discretely to avoid offence to others – his wife Fay in particular. Even so, he could always be relied upon to entertain his ringing chums, especially when a glass of his favourite whisky was in his hand.

On Wednesday 18th December 2019, the bellringers of Bratton Fleming and Goodleigh joined forces to ring the Bratton Fleming bells prior to the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of George – a husband, brother, uncle and friend. To a full Church, The Revd Rosie Austin began prayers and read the Eulogy and Pastor Peter Ayrton gave a thought-provoking Address referencing Psalm 23, The Lord Is My Shepherd. With full voice, we sang some of George's favourite hymns, How Great Thou Art and Make Me A Channel of Your Peace. Sue Besnard lead us all in prayer prior to the final hymn, To God Be The Glory. The bells rang out as George was carried to his final resting place before falling silent for the committal in a corner of the Church yard closest to his home.

There was an opportunity to take a closer look at examples of George's labours which had been displayed. His model bells, including the miniature ring, the two hand bells he rang in peals and a carved plaque were displayed. In the background the Church bells were made available to anyone who wished to ring. Donations in George's memory were in aid of Devon Air Ambulance Trust. The ringing community came to together that day to give George the respectful send-off he well and truly deserved.

Bratton Fleming Village Hall played host to wonderful refreshments and a chance for Fay, who despite her own health was thankfully able to attend. Eric, George's brother Laurie, his nephews and the many friends were able to share their most cherished memories of an incredible man.

The theme of training and encouragement rang out strongly during the Service. Thanks to George's tuition, I know how to maintain a tower and bells in good working order and for that I will always be grateful.

Not only will the memory of George Tribe forever remain as a well-respected member of the ringing community but also a character whose practical skills, teachings and attitude to others, all hailing from an earlier time, contributed to make him stand out even more in this all too modern world.



The model bell that George made for Goodleigh

Steve Parker

Obituary For Keith Laslett 1955-2019

It is with regret that I record the sad death of Keith.

Many of you will have met Keith at competitions. He was a keen and enthusiastic member of the Kanton and Exminster teams. He was always ready to help and was versatile in that he could ring on any of the bells.

Keith was born in Penzance where his parents ran a grocery and dairy business. When they sold up, they decided to move to Exmouth where Keith attended Exmouth School. He was a good sportsman, played rugby in the school XV and was also an excellent swimmer. His love for both activities never left him.

In 1974 he moved to attend Plymouth University to study Civil Engineering. This move resulted in him meeting Sandra whom he married when he graduated in 1977. Unable to find work locally he took up a position in Cambridge and during this time his daughter Catherine was born. Two years later the family moved to North Wales and welcomed their second child Chris. They stayed in North Wales for 10 years.

1990 brought another move this time to Hayle in Cornwall, a return to his home County. Keith pursued his interest in golf and became a member of the West Cornwall Golf Club where his father and grandfather had been members. When his daughter decided that she would like to learn to ring for her Girl Guides badge, Keith was used as the taxi service and while

there rather than sit around waiting he was invited to "have a try". That was the start of his love for bellringing which continued until early 2019. He rang at Phillack for 17 years and was the Tower Captain from 2007 until 2012.



2011 brought another move this time to Exeter where Keith had been offered a post. Initially he spent the week in Exeter and travelled home to Cornwall at the weekends. He and Sandra quickly made the decision to move to Devon and they settled in Kanton. They both became well integrated in the community and Keith joined the Kanton and Exminster teams.

Sadly, in early 2019 Keith was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour and lost the use of his right arm. During his illness he was always bright and outward looking never giving any indication that he was sorry for himself. He maintained his sense of humour and we remember him with great sadness.

I am grateful to Sandra for helping put this obituary together.

Mike Adams

A Tribute To David Willis



From the moment David arrived in North Devon he made an instant impression and impact on the ringing fraternity.

He was the most likeable, modest and conscientious person who quickly became a dominant force in bringing about a remarkable improvement and advancement in all aspects of ringing.

Just as important in David's eyes, he cemented relationships with both members of the Guild and the Association saying regularly that we are all one family of ringers.

Apart from his busy work life as a piano tuner, he spent many hours collating statistics concerning ringers' achievements which he would regularly provide at a moment's notice to the amazement of all.

His efforts to assist with Sunday service ringing were more than commendable – regularly visiting up to three local towers to make up a team.

David lived a very full and happy life both in work and ringing and we shall all miss him in the future more than we can say.

Very sadly, David, we have to finally say, 'That's all'.

Footnote. David's family would like to convey their thanks to all the ringers who attended and rang at the funeral service. Ringing took place before and after the service. A quarter peal was also rung in his memory.

Don Lawson

Obituary for Margaret Whittle 1943-2019

Margaret Whittle, a popular member of the Marlton band, died on 25th October. She was born at Stoke Gabriel but spent most of her life in Marlton. A Devon girl through and through, during the latter part of her life she is said to have owned a passport, but never used it, saying "why would I want to go abroad when I'm surrounded by such lovely scenery in the West Country". She began her ringing career at Marlton in 1989 and was a regular attender at the tower, but before services she usually left five minutes early because she also sang in the church choir. It was the custom at Marlton at that time to present a silver goblet to ringers who were thought to have made a particularly valuable contribution, and Margaret was very proud to have received a goblet - presented to her by tower captain Fred Westaway - at the Ringers' Christmas Gathering in 1993. Sadly, ill health forced Margaret to give up ringing, with

great reluctance, at the end of 2017. Her usual bell was the 2nd, and this was tolled briefly by Colin Axford before her funeral at a packed church on 13th November. Afterwards the band rang some call changes in her honour as her coffin was taken from the church to the nearby churchyard.

Marlton is a happy tower - there's a lot of badinage and jollity. If I was sitting next to Margaret during a break in the ringing, and there had been a particularly telling quip, she would dig me in the ribs and favour me with her characteristic winsome, slightly toothy grin. This will be my abiding memory of a lovely lady who will be sadly missed.

Roger Avery with thanks to Alan Jones, also a longstanding Marlton ringer, for reminiscences of Margaret during the "early days"



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