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# Devon Calls

June / July 2019

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## End of an Era at King's Nympton

Recently I became the bell captain at St James's Church at King's Nympton after ringing there, mostly on the treble, for roughly fifteen years. I learnt to ring at a village called Oakford near to Exmoor, where I grew up next to the church and was taught along with my friend Jackie, the vicar's daughter, by Bun Burrows and Ernie Kingdon. St Peter's at Oakford has eight bells and a wooden screen separating the main body of the church from the tower so all I could see, as a child, were the sallies appearing and disappearing. No-one ever came out and I couldn't wait to get in there to see what was going on. I started to

bell ringer, Stuart Bowden. The sound of bells ringing is beautiful even if it isn't done perfectly and I am delighted that we currently have around six learners here at King's Nympton, including a ten-year-old called Katie (see photo) and that six others have also learnt in the last few years. The bells at Oakford have, sadly, been silent for many years.



Josie giving Brian his bell

This isn't my story though, it's Brian's, the former captain, so please read on.

In the 1850s a young man named Lewis Gill married a girl from King's Nympton and started ringing at St James's Church. His Great

Grandson Brian Gill retired as bell captain on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2019, having rung in the same tower from the age of eleven and so comes the end of a King's Nympton bell ringing dynasty lasting over 150 years. These weren't the only Gills to ring, Brian's wife Gill and his son Andrew both learnt to ring and Gill still turns out for us now if we are short of ringers.

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**COPY for "DEVON CALLS" is always welcome and we rely on you to submit articles**

**Deadline for next edition - 15th September 2019**

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](mailto:devoncalls@devonbells.co.uk)



## ***King's Nympton—Continued from page 1***

Brian's father Albert, his Grandfather William and his Great Grandfather Lewis were all bell captains at St James, the role passing from father to son through the generations.

Along with other family ringers from the Parish, Bowdens, Lakes, Simmons', Heards and Westacotts, they rang in bell ringing competitions held in the South Molton Deanery and as Brian says they "won some and lost some". These competitions were often between 8 - 10 different teams because at that time every village had its own set of ringers.

Brian started to ring at the age of eleven, his father obviously thought it was time to get him started and took him into the tower to literally show him the ropes. He started on the second bell and as he got bigger and stronger moved back round the tower until he was ringing the heaviest bell, the tenor.

Over the years he has taught more than 100 people to ring, the last one was Paul McKenna who appropriately rings the tenor most of the time for us now. Others are still scattered through the Parish, Martin Alexander, Jeremy Turner, Harold Chugg, John Lake and Karen Bowden among them.

When the bells were rehung in 1997 Brian and Stan Broome spent long hours in the tower and thanks to them and the fundraising efforts, we now have bells which are very easy to ring. Before this it was thought, though obviously not by Brian, that a woman couldn't have rung them since it required too much muscle. Once the bells were in though Gill Gill and Amy Bowden soon learned and became part of the team and were the first lady ringers from King's Nympton.

Weddings are a common feature of bell ringing life and, along with waiting for the bride to finally arrive, drink can play a



*Brian ringing up the tenor and Josie on the treble 12 years ago*



*Katie Pailthorpe, our youngest learner who's ten and Brian at 86*

part. One wedding featured so much drink the ringers had to be stopped because of the racket and at another a lady, who broke the stay, disappeared up the tower with the rope. Her long dress made a sort of parachute so she landed pretty well and this image has stuck with Brian over the years. Another is Fred Ayre's Union Jack underpants, which appeared when his trousers slipped downwards as he rang despite him moving his feet further and further apart in an effort to prevent disaster. Luckily, as Brian says, he was at the back of the tower not the front or the whole Church would have benefited.

Brian was presented with a beautiful bell mounted on a stand as a thank you gift on his retirement and remains Honorary Life President of the King's Nympton ringers. As he drove home in his buggy after the Church Service it dinged at him every time he turned the corner or hit a bump and now sits proudly on the dining room table in his cottage near the Church where he has spent the vast majority of his life.

So, thank you to Brian and also to Gill who for many years has organised the ringers, done the paperwork and sorted out the visiting teams. I hope the latest batch of ringers learning the ropes now continue to become more tuneful and you enjoy the sound of their efforts over the next few years.

***Josie Barnes***

# Editorial

This edition marks the twentieth year of production for Devon Calls. It was in May 1999 that the first issue came “off the press,” as it were, thanks to the creative thinking of both Janice Gist and Johnathan Bint. Here we are 48 copies later and still going strong; courtesy also of the long standing commitment made by Mike Webster.

1999 was a year I remember particularly well as the late Cecil Crocker, who was an absolute gentleman as well as being a very good ringer, was President and I was President elect. It was also the year in which a decision was taken by the association to hold its first Novice Competition.

You will see three accounts of ringers who have given outstanding service to bellringing. Their combined service is in excess of 176 years! Brian Gill began ringing at King’s Nympton when he was just 11 years old. Brian has just retired from being an active ringer for 75 years. Julia Endacott recently retired as Tower Captain at Chagford, a position which she held for 41 years and Barry Osbourne, who began ringing in 1959, recently celebrated 60 years as a ringer; 50 as Tower Captain at Lamerton.

Thank you to those who have taken the trouble to provide these accounts. It is a pleasure to be able to record such

outstanding achievements. These ringers deserve to be recognised by the Devon Association of Ringers.

The magazine carries news of yet another restoration project. The project, which is already underway, is at King’skerswell and is expected to cost an estimated £80,000. The project involves augmentation of the existing peal of six bells into a peal of eight.

Like all major projects involving work on bells a request for assistance from the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund (DCBRF) becomes essential. You will see inside this edition a letter from Janet Deem who is writing on behalf of the DCNRF committee. In her letter Janet makes a strong case for ringers to regularly contribute to the fund in order that requests for grants can be maintained at least at the current level. Whilst we do make a generous contribution to the fund each year as a result of the annual draw we are being asked to do a little more. We all enjoy our ringing and it is always a pleasure to hear about restoration projects like the one at King’skerswell. Please give Janet’s letter your careful consideration.

Contributions towards the content of the magazine, no matter how small, are always welcome.

Enjoy the summer season.

*Colin Adams*

## Interview with Julia ENDACOTT, recently retired Tower Captain at Chagford after 41 years



*Evan & Julia at Chagford, c. 2010, then with a combined total of 100 years ringing*

### ***Do you come from a ringing family?***

Yes, I do – my father and his two brothers all learnt to ring at Gidleigh and my brother learnt at Chagford.

### ***What made you decide to take up bellringing in the first place and how old were you at the time?***

I was eighteen when I went to Plymouth to start my Radiography training and my father thought I should learn to ring before I went there

### ***Who taught you to ring and on what bell did you learn?***

My father taught me to ring on number 4 bell at Chagford

### ***Were there other people learning to ring at the same time? If so, who were they?***

I don’t remember anyone else learning at exactly the same time but *John Collins*, who still rings with us, learnt at much the same time but just before me.

### ***Whilst learning to ring were there any particular stages which you felt difficult to master?***

Probably the most difficult was learning to rise in place

### ***When you began ringing within the team which bell did you ring? Was this on six or eight bells?***

When I first started ringing with the team it was usually on number 4 bell, usually on the front six.

### ***Whilst you were learning to ring was your ringing restricted to practice nights only? If so, roughly how long was it before you were considered competent to ring on Sundays?***

Because I went to Plymouth soon after I learnt to ring, I didn’t ring at Chagford’s practice nights until quite a time later but my uncle (*Jim Rice* – then Captain of the Kenn team) asked if I could join the practice nights at Plymstock Church. The Plymstock team was strong and I gained a lot of experience fairly quickly and was soon considered to be good enough to ring in their B team (captained by *Peter Brewer*) for competitions. I was usually at home at weekends so rang in Chagford on Sundays.



**When did you enter your first ringing competition and was this a six or an eight-bell event?**

I think my first competition was at Lustleigh and was with the Plymstock B team, probably about 1964, and was an interdeanery competition. (I cannot find my results record book so cannot be totally accurate.)

Because of Plymstock's interest in competition ringing I brought the enthusiasm for it back home and encouraged Chagford to enter the Moreton Deanery, and one or two other local invitation Competitions.

In 1965 I met Evan who had also learnt to ring at Gidleigh. We were married in 1967 and Evan became a regular member of the Chagford team.

One of the highlights of my career was being in the team that won the Moreton Deanery Competition, in Moretonhampstead in 1972. (I remember my good friend "Pickles" saying "huh! Rough ringers for rough bells". The team then was *Jack Rice, me, John Collins, Cyril Tapper, Evan Endacott, and Percy Rice* (my Dad).

The Parish of Chagford was moved to the Okehampton Deanery in the early seventies and in 2002, at Sampford Courtenay, we won the Okehampton Deanery competition. The team then was *me, Karen Squire, Colin Wills, Mervyn Langdon, Jon Bint and Evan Endacott*.

Other competitions – I rang several times with Buckland in the Moor's 8-bell team winning on one or two occasions. In particular I remember *Pat Johnstone, John Caunter, George Whiddon, Pickles and Graham Pascoe*. I also rang, for a short time, with the Kenn team.

Ever since joining Okehampton Deanery, Chagford has never missed ringing in its Annual Competition. I took over as Treasurer of the Okehampton Deanery Ringers' Association from *Perce Aggett* in 1991 – a position I still hold.

**When did you become appointed Tower Captain at Chagford?**

In 1977, taking over from my father when he had completed 40 years as Captain.

**What would you say you have learnt from being Tower Captain over such a long period?**

As a Tower Captain I have always felt it is better to approach people personally with a view to learning to ring and, when they are learning, not to get down-hearted if sometimes they don't ring too well. We all have our off days. One of the things I found hard as Captain was having to help learners with their ropes, but I got more confident with practice.

**Your retirement as Tower Captain follows extensive work recently carried out on structures supporting the bells. Has the work produced any improvements in the handling of the bells?**

The handling of the bells has improved immensely. This means an even more enjoyable ring and it is encouraging to hear all ringers, experienced or a recent recruit, expert or poor, say how much easier and enjoyable they find the bells to handle. Visiting ringers are also very complementary about the bells. We are also now able to have a Training ("dumb") Bell and an electronic monitoring system fitted for training purposes.

**If you have any advice to offer anyone contemplating learning how to ring what would it be?**

Ringing is wonderful exercise both physically and mentally, gives you a wide circle of friends and takes you to all sorts of places you would otherwise never visit. I would say to a potential learner "come and have a go – if the bug bites you will have a hobby for life, as I have had".



*Return of the bells from Loughborough January 2017*



*Evan and Julia – Bell no. 7: headstock sponsored by family in memoriam Percy Rice – January 2017*

# Barry Osbourne's Ringing Career

I was born at Lamerton in June 1946. At the age of 13 I was asked by the Tower Captain at the time, Mr. H. Barriball, if I would like to learn how to ring the bells. There were three of us in the village who joined at the time. I started learning on the third bell and ended up as the only one who decided to continue; ringing eventually becoming my hobby. At the age of 19 I was invited to ring in the local Tavistock Deanery Competition. I felt honoured to be asked. At Lamerton Bellringers' AGM in 1969 Mr. Barriball announced his retirement as Tower Captain. I was nominated to take his place and the ballot supported my nomination. When I took on the Captaincy I was 23 years old. I have just completed 50 years as Tower Captain at Lamerton and I have rung there for 60 years. I once served as Churchwarden at the church a duty which I carried out for 17½ years.

Lamerton ringers joined the Devon Association of Ringers in 1966 and entered their first Association ringing competition at South Pool in 1967. The tower has a record of entering every Devon Association competition since. The best result achieved was second in the Major Six Bell Final when the event was held at Sandford, near Crediton. The team has won the Minor Six Bell Final on three occasions.

During the years between 1970 and 1984 we were lucky to have had a complete team of girls and boys from the village. I trained a group of boys who gradually progressed to become competent enough to ring in competitions. This team actually entered and won a junior competition which was held at Dunsford. Between 1980 and 1990 I taught a complete team at Clawton near Holsworthy and also at Walkhampton which is in the Tavistock Deanery.

In 1974 Lamerton ringers were invited to compete in the South Devon Ringers' 8-bell competition. It was the first time that a six-bell tower had been invited to compete and came about as a result of a decline in the number of 8-bell towers

entering. In 1985 at Stratton's annual competition Lamerton ringers competed and won in both the 6-bell and 8-bell sections and became the fourth team in the competition's history in which to do so.

In 1990 I took over the role of Secretary and Treasurer of the South Devon Ringers' Association, a post I still hold today. In 1998 it was an honour and a privilege to be elected to serve as a member of the committee of the Devon Association.

In 1999 I began judging at the Association's annual 8-bell competitions. I was elected the Association's President in 2017 and served for twelve months. This was another great honour and privilege and also a wonderful experience. One of the highlights of my year was the Centenary Anniversary of Buckfast Abbey's bells. This was a joint venture by the Guild of Devonshire Ringers and the Devon Association of Ringers. There was so much on offer during the day and not only for ringers but also for the many non-ringers in attendance. The mini ring which had been supplied by Paul Hext was in regular use and amongst all the activities taking place there was also handbell ringing.

I would like to sincerely thank the Lamerton ringers for their support over the years and all the people that I have come to know and respect from within the wider community of church bell ringers. I feel I have been fortunate to have been involved with ringing for the past 60 years. I hope and trust that I have served the Association in accordance with its traditional values. I wish our newly elected President and my successor Mr. John Barnes all the very best in his year of office. I hope the Association will continue to function and provide pleasure for all its membership for many years to come.

**Barry Osbourne**

*See also the article on the Lamerton ringers dinner on page 10.*





# Buckfast Abbey Bell Ringers Epiphany Lunch, Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January

For the third year, ringing coordinator Peter Bill organised a lunch at Buckfast Abbey on the Feast of the Epiphany to thank all those who have supported the Abbey's ringing through 2018. This had been a particularly important last year, as the monks here celebrated 1000 years since the establishment of the first monastic foundation on the site in 1018. Our ringers support a number of Sundays through the year as well as many of the weekday services, celebrating various Feast Days of the Benedictine Monastic Community who live here. Last year that included the four main church services attended by various liturgical hierarchy including two Cardinals, (one being the Papal Legate) and the global figurehead of all the Benedictine Monastic Communities, the Abbot Primate.

Paul Hext, the ringing coordinator for the Sunday Ringers, mustered a few different bands from 8 to 12 ringers after the morning Mass, under the watchful 'ear' of the many ringers arriving for the lunch at Northgate House Hotel. Paul always manages to raise a band of ringers for our selected Sundays, on top of all his own ringing commitments to various towers in and around Dartmoor and we are very grateful to him for his efforts.

Our hotel has quickly established itself as a popular place to stay in the local area and the menu for lunch was a good example of why. A choice of four tasty courses and three delicious deserts at least kept the ringers quiet for a while!

Ringers availed themselves of the hotel bar before convening in the dining room. A surprise quiz was



*Ringling for the Epiphany Service at Buckfast Abbey*



*Peter Bill thanks the ringers*



*Geoff Pring delivering his poem*

organised by Peter Bill, with a 'spot the ringer' photograph, showing ringers from a Quarter Peal at the Abbey in 1983. This generated quite a bit of interest amongst ringers and had people scratching the heads and asking 'I'm sure I recognise that one!' Peter kept the ringers guessing until after the meal to reveal the answers; I think the most successful team managed to recognise 9 of the 10 ringers so he still has his prize of a bottle for anyone who can identify all 10 ringers (answers to peterbill@gmail.com )

After the quiz, Peter passed on thanks on behalf of Paul and himself for the efforts of all the ringers who come from all over the county to support the Abbey's ringing. This event is turning into a regular feature and is a great way for us all to get together and be thankful of the support given to ringing here.

As part of the thank you, I wanted to pay particular attention to the efforts put into the Millennium Bell Ringing festival, which took place on the Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>

August last year. That event was previously covered in this publication and the success of it is still talked about today. In fact, as with all great events the inevitable question is asked 'when are you doing that again?', well not this year but we'll see what the future holds!

A thank you can sometimes go on a bit and often people are missed so this time I decided to do something a bit different. I summarised my words into a poem which seemed to be well received by ringers (well, they were all there at the end and some even clapped): you can make your own mind up by reading it on the next page!

**Geoff Pring**

## An ode to the Buckfast Abbey Millennium Bell Ringing Festival

A 1000 years of Monastic life calls for a celebration a whole year long,  
Services, festivals, concerts, a play, a garden, a statue, antiques for a song,  
But what can be the highlight, so many people, so much to choose,  
Choose the bells I hear you say, the bells, surely not, I think you'll lose,  
But which event braved the weather, welcomed the curious, was a real Spotlight?  
A bell ringing festival, that will never catch on, lets show the doubters we were right,  
With no Robin Hood, we needed a different band of merry men (and women),  
With Ian, Peter & Martin, Geoff and Ali, with Anna and Paul, Lester and tea,  
We planned and we plotted, how can we make, this strange old hobby a cause to celebrate?  
August arrived, the marquee was ready, but what shall we fill it with, the bells are too heavy?  
With smaller bells brought by car, posters and banners, leaflets and planners, don't forget the bar!  
Special thanks to Taylors who ventured far, beyond the motorway to our bell ringing bazaar,  
Our interesting space, a bit like a steeple, wonderful volunteers ensured we had plenty of people, Down came the rain but that didn't matter, in came the people, with a welcome clatter,  
With burgers and bells, they came to see, a giant Bourden bell for a great Bellfie!  
Our clever Abbey team, created an exhibition, which just had to be seen.

With old folk in black and white clothes, we admired the start of these ringing rainbows.  
While all around the bells did sound, 'but we can't see them down here on the ground',  
We used cameras to film those ringing moles, for we never see these dedicated souls,  
What a great success of the 'ting a ling power', seen all the way, high up the tower,  
The 'Big Ring' sounded nice, brought the BBC here, not once, but twice!  
But real not fake, we wanted to link, Holy Trinity here, for history's sake,  
Red smoke from the tower was the sign to start, for miles around both peals did depart.  
As well as the ringing, a church service brought singing, with choir and handbells, a nod to our liturgical upbringing,  
So after it all, how do we assess, the fruits of our labour, our tools and duress?  
Well we could be unkind and mention health and safety, the importance of help when the reach is too lengthy!?  
All joking aside, we must specially thank, our pivotal ringer from the sometimes kiwi flank.  
Fifteen hundred visitors they say, many on the mini ring, trying the art of this hobby/sport thing,  
Questions, of how? of when? of why? we ring bells – well, you give your reason and I'll give my,  
In the end, we can only hope that time spent with us equals time on the rope.  
So whether you're method or whether your change or maybe you're both, (not ever so strange)  
All stand and raise a glass, with this ringing Daddy, to all you fine ringers of Buckfast Abbey!

*Geoff Pring*

## A Major Undertaking at St. Mary's Kingskerswell

At last the full restoration of our bells is going ahead. Progress has been very prolonged as the bells form just part of a major reordering of the church. The faculty for all the work was granted last year, and all the details have now been finalised. The work being undertaken in **Phase 1** is: -

- a) Rehanging the bells in a new frame, tuning 3 of the bells and augmenting to 8 with 2 new trebles.
- b) Automation of the clock
- c) Constructing a new mezzanine ringing chamber lower in the tower, which will give us so much more space as we will not have the clock and the weights case to contend with, and the balcony will extend through the tower arch and a further metre into the church.
- d) Re-open the bottom of the staircase to connect the inside of the church to the existing exterior entrance to the tower.
- e) Make an entrance from the stairs to the new ringing chamber.
- f) Construct a new kitchen in the base of the tower.

- g) Construct a new toilet in the space between the south side of the tower and the west end of the south isle.

**Phase 2** will include removal of the pews, a new heating system, new lighting, and relocation of the vestry and font.

An order has been placed with Nicholson Engineering for rehanging and augmenting the bells, and work in the tower is scheduled to begin at the beginning of April. The bells will be out of action for about 6 months. A grant from the Devon Bell Restoration Fund has been approved.

Although there are sufficient funds for Phase 1 to go ahead, a substantial amount still needs to be raised for the bell restoration. Fund raising will be undertaken over the next few months, and any donations to our bell fund will be very gratefully received. Donations can be made to 'The Friends of Kingskerswell Church' c/o Philip Stevens, 22 Priory Avenue, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, TQ12 5AQ.

A scheme we have started, is to give away free tubes of

Smarties with the request that they be filled with 20p coins (or £1 coins for that matter!). If anybody would like some free smarties, either for individual use or for collection in the

tower, please get in touch, my email address is philipandmo.stevens@gmail.com.

*Philip Stevens*

## **Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund - Continued Fund Raising**

I know some of us, me included, have wondered why the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund still needs us to continue to raise funds each year when they received a sizeable legacy (The Smale Bequest) just a few years ago. 'Surely this will keep them going for several years to come and we are off the hook for a bit and can concentrate on other matters?' I suppose it is entirely possible to think this way and for the Trustees to have taken this approach. Had they done so, based on the expenditure from the Fund in 2018 of approximately £39,000 and with the Fund standing at £380,000 all the money bequeathed to the DCBRF would be spent in a little under 10 years. And then where would we be?

Thankfully for all of the ringers in Devon, and beyond, in 2014 the Trustees took a much longer view of the matter. Whilst a not insignificant amount was left on deposit, and available to be spent directly on grants, the majority was invested to help provide an income for the Fund therefore securing this, probable one off, legacy for the future. With the new found wealth of the DCBRF the Trustees upped the level of grant given from 10% to 15% of the value of each project they were asked to support. This has continued for the last 4 years and can clearly be seen in the annual accounts with grants in 2014 (agreed pre Smale) of £11,000 rising to approximately £22,000 in 2015. For the last two years expenditure has outstripped income by approximately £10,500 and £16,000 respectively. One interesting statistic is that between 2000 and 2014 inclusive (pre Smale Bequest) the Fund gave out grants totalling £130,770, whereas from 2015 to 2018 the Fund has given grants of £116,070 (post Smale Bequest). 2018 saw the Fund giving its largest ever single grant of £15,000 towards the new installation at Ugborough. If you compare this to the grant given towards Crediton of £3,000 when the old 8 there were replaced by a new ring of 10 in 2004 (not a 12 until 2006) you can clearly see that not only is the Fund giving more but projects are costing so much more as well.

So here we are in 2019, and with the money left on deposit pretty much spent/committed, the Trustees now find themselves, without further fundraising, with the income from the Smale Bequest of approximately £12,000 (subject to the stock market and "the dreaded B word" (Brexit)) to give for any Grant requests received during the year. As you can see this isn't going to come anywhere near the amount that the Fund has been asked to provide in Grants over the last few years. Whilst there is an expectation of donations from both the Association and the Guild we have still had to make the difficult decision to reduce our Grant level back to 10% for 2019 and at the last Trustees' meeting there was a discussion about the possibility of having to set a cap on the amount given to any one project. Whilst there is an agreement that a small amount of capital can be drawn from the Smale

Bequest, at a time when the value has decreased due to market volatility by over £36,000 it does not seem to be the most prudent of timings.

So I hope, if you are still reading this, you are thinking 'What can I do to help?' Well in the short term a personal donation to the Fund, however big or small, would seem to be an easy answer. You may think of setting up a standing order as one ringer has already done this year. Bank details are available on request from the treasurer Mary Mears (general@1appleearth.co.uk, 01626 351895).

The Association has been generous to the DCBRF over the years, perhaps there is scope to give a little bit more this year. What are your own tower funds like? Is there more money in the pot than you can see will be required in the near future. It doesn't have to be a lot. Perhaps the money charged for one of the weddings rung for during the year could be donated instead.

In the longer term perhaps consider a legacy in your Will to the DCBRF, remember all charitable giving from an estate is free from Inheritance Tax.

Just a final statistic for you, the DCBRF since inception in 1972 has given £293,755 in Grants to 210 Devon churches. It is quite likely that one of those towers is one you ring at on a regular basis. Something to remember is that the subscription you pay and any fees for other ringing are still exceptionally low, however the equipment you use is worth 10s of thousands of pounds.

The Trustees meet twice a year and it would be great to be able to go along to the next meeting with the promise of at least some unexpected donations. The normal plea at the end of a TV advert for charitable donations is please give generously.

Details of Grants paid in 2018 and those already agreed for 2019 can be found on the DCBRF page on the Guild of Devonshire Ringers website.

*Janet Deem*



# CHAGFORD BELL RINGERS' WEEKEND IN KENT

**Friday 17th August** at 5.45am the Chagford ringers left by coach on their annual weekend ringing in another part of the country. This year – north Kent in the Medway valley. The group was 15 from Chagford and district joined on the way by our usual friends from the Isle of Wight and east London, added to this year by friends from Taylors Bell Foundry and Bristol – a total of 23. We

were also pleased to have a couple of friends visit and ring with us as guests.

Inevitably the first stop had to be for breakfast at Amesbury having made good time along a surprisingly quiet A303. Then many miles on the A303, M3, M25 and M20 to our first stop at the Parish Church of SS Peter & Paul, **Aylesford** (Gd I listed) – a good ring of 8 bells in a large square tower, the base of which is Norman, in the old poart of the village. After this encouraging start we moved on to a 6-bell tower at All Saints, **Wouldham** (Gd I) and a challenging, very poor ring on old bearings. The experts graded them as only 3/10 the lowest score of the weekend. This was made up for by a delightful set at St. Margaret's, **Rochester** (Gd II). The church is at the top of an escarpment overlooking the River Medway. Those who had old copies of "Dove's Guide for Church Bell Ringers" had read that this was an anti-clockwise (the usual being clockwise as at Chagford) peal of 8, and 'unringable'(!). The bells were declared unsafe in 1974 and all ringing stopped. However, the Whitechapel Bell Foundry had rehung these, clockwise, in a new frame in 2005-6. The ringing chamber is described as 'ground floor' but is lower ground floor, down four wide, carpeted steps into a large smart carpeted area. This is a beautiful peal which scored 9/10 – the equal highest score for the weekend.

Then on to St. Margaret, **Gillingham** (Gd II) to a pleasant 8 with a remarkably small ringing chamber half way up the tower with a ceiling covered in cobwebs.

After a long and busy day we arrived at The King Charles Hotel, Gillingham which was comfortable, well appointed and spotlessly clean with good service. It had been the old NAFFI building, when this part of the Medway was almost entirely a military area, until 1962. It is a long sprawling building on three floors run by the same family since 1980. They produced an excellent evening meal for us and so to bed – it was hot and humid, no air conditioning although each room had a very effective fan.

**Saturday 18th August** – early breakfast and away by 8.45am to the first tower of the day – a ground floor ring of 6



**Back row l to r:** Chris Smallwood, Evan Endacott, Paul Miller, Julia Endacott, Alec Gray, Mike Webster, Clare Griffiths, Tim Weller, Kevin Tingey, Janice Gist, Ben Squire, Neil Thomas, Tony Jeffery

**Middle row l to r:** Catherine Miller, Jan Lamacraft, Elinor D'Albiac, Margaret Peirce, Colin Barnes, Karen Squire, Nikki Thomas

**Front row l to r:** Jon Bint, Amy Squire, Andrew Gist, Richard Hurdle

at St. Mary the Virgin, **Upchurch** (Gd 1). Dove's Guide records; **c1550** Bell cast by John Harding (now the present 4th) (the oldest bell we came across); **1925** bells retuned (without much success) and rehung in a new frame by Alfred Bowell; **1960** ringing stopped as the tower was deemed to be unsafe; **1966** bells made ringable again. Despite the weight (just over 12cwt) these

seemed very heavy to ring. Then over to the Isle of Sheppey to the Minster Abbey Church of SS Mary and Sexburga, **Minster on Sea** (Gd I). In the 7th century Egbert, King of Kent, granted his widowed mother, Queen Sexburgha's (spelling varies) request for land on which to build a nunnery for 77 Benedictine nuns. The large ringing gallery was reached by very uneven stairs and refurbishment of this extraordinarily untidy church has started.

Then to St. Margaret, **Rainham** (Gd I) 8 bells similar in weight to ours at Chagford; an excellent ring.

Not all attempted the climb to the ringing chamber at the Cathedral **Rochester** (Gd I) – 95 uneven steps, an open parapet and under a low beam. Our team rang the excellent 10 bells for Evensong, marked 9/10 – the equal highest for the weekend, which sounded very well from outside just across the road from the castle.

All Saints, **Frindsbury** (Gd II) (8 bells) is on the precipice of an old chalk quarry with an excellent view over the Medway to Rochester Cathedral and Castle (note the submarine).



Then to St. Margaret, **High Halstow** (Holy Place); 6 bells and ground floor ringing after a long tiring day.

**Sunday 19th August** – again an early start to **Hoo St. Werburgh** (Gd I). St. Werburgh was the daughter of Wulfere, King of Mercia and grand-daughter of Ercombert, King of Kent whose wife Sexburga was Abbess of Minster in Sheppey (see above). The building of the present church was

## Chagford Outing—continued from page 9

commenced in the 12th century. We were made very welcome ringing for their service on an anti-clockwise 8 in a belfry with an anticlockwise clock! The bells had been augmented from 6 and well rehung in 1995.

It was time to start for home. We stopped to ring at St. Mary Magdalene, **Cobham** (Gd I) a “cracking” ring of 6 bells where there is a large display of floor brasses and is linked to a magnificent Alms Chapter House in a village mentioned in Dicken’s Pickwick Papers. Then to St. John the Baptist, **Meopham** (Gd I) - a good ring of 8, and lunch in one of the

two hostleries alongside a quintessential village green cricket pitch and a real old windmill!!!

Our last stop was at St. George, **Wrotham** (Gd I). An arched passage under the tower leads to the churchyard and an entrance up a few steps to a large ringing gallery overlooking the west end of the church. This was a very good ring of 8, equal to any of the others which to finish the tour.

Of the 14 towers visited all were in the County of Kent, 11 were Grade I and three Grade II listed. So a long journey home with one rest stop and back in Chagford by 8.45pm after a most enjoyable weekend.

Colin Barnes

## Lamerton Ringers Dinner

Lamerton Church Bell ringers held their Annual Dinner at The Fox & Grapes, Lifton on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2019. This annual event is always an important feature of the ringing calendar, but this year it marked a significant milestone in the history of Church bellringing at St Peter’s Lamerton.

In 1959 the present Tower captain, Barry Osbourne, learnt to ring and 2019 marks 60 years as a ringer (*see, also, the article on page 5*). He also took on as Captain of the tower in 1969, so this year also marks 50 years service in this venerable role. We would not let that important event pass without some sort of recognition so after some waxed lyricals from Geoff Hill about Barry’s time as a bell ringer. He introduced the Revd Andy Adkins who presented Barry with an inscribed bell and specially printed certificate in honour of his great achievement. The Revd Adkins also gave some hilarious comments about ringing but moreover thanked Barry on behalf of the Church. We had also arranged for a celebration cake and Barry, after blowing out the candles, performed the official cutting ceremony. He thanked everyone involved with this special event and said that it came as a complete surprise – it’s hard to imagine that Barry did not know that we had something going on!! The evening was rounded off with some usual Handbell Ringing and the cake – well it tasted lovely.



*The Revd Andy Adkins presents Barry with his gifts*



*Barry cutting his cake*



*Geoff Hill and Barry*

Geoff Hill



## Now here's a Tenor Man!

Scott Adams found this picture (right) on the St Columb Major, Cornwall Facebook page— Samuel Quintrell looks like quite a character!

### MILTON ABBOT CHURCH BELLS

#### HANDBELL CONCERT

BY

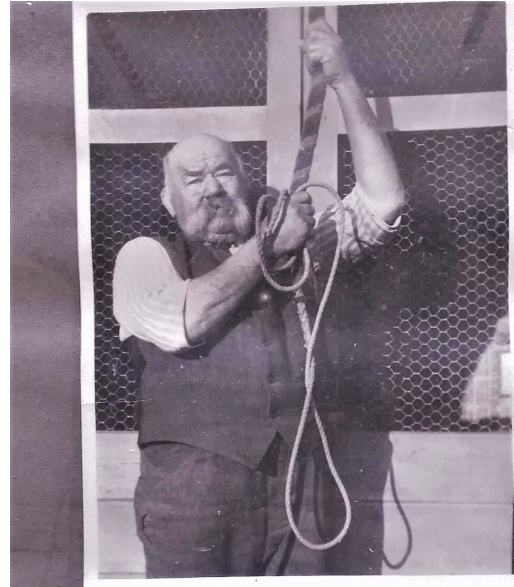
LAMERTON ASSOCIATION OF HANDBELL RINGERS

FRIDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2019

7PM

MILTON ABBOT PARISH CHURCH

PROCEEDS TO CHURCH BELL RESTORATION FUND



### SAMUEL QUINTRELL

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