

THE RINGING WORLD

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OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

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Holy Cross, Bearsted, Kent

THREE MILES SOUTH of Maidstone at the foot of the North Downs lies the village of Bearsted. On a hill overlooking the picturesque village green stands the ancient church. There still remains part of the original Saxon stonework, from the first Basilican type church, in one of the arches. Over the following three centuries alterations were quite frequent and resulted in the main church as it now stands. The major addition during the fifteenth century was the tower, recognised as being the most noticeable feature of the church. Much of the stonework was carved by a family of masons residing in the parish. On top of the tower sit three splendid beasts, which have been the subject of many arguments over the years, but they are now thought to be a lion, a griffin and a panther.

The oldest bell in the tower was cast by Henry Jordan in 1450, and it seems likely that this was the original bell, cast at the time the tower was built, and it has a Latin inscription which means: "The voice of Augustine shall sound in the ear of God." This bell is now the **second of a ring of six**. The next addition to the ring was cast by Robert Mot in 1590, and resulted in a splendidly-toned bell which is the present fourth. The inscription reads: "Robertus Mot Me Fecit IB TP 1590". "Joseph Hatch Made Me 1606" reads the fifth and is a fine example of the famous Kent founder's work in this area.

There are records of two bells dating from 1599 and 1729, although our present treble and third are both inscribed: "Mears & Stainbank, Founders London 1877." The tenor originally bore the inscription: "Tho^s Lester Of London Made Me William Lot Ch Warden 1742". In 1961 this bell was cracked, sent to Mears & Stainbank, was recast and now bears an additional inscription to this effect. Both this bell and the fifth were then rehung on ball-bearings. The front four still retain their old plain bearings, but it is hoped to be able to rehang them in the near future. The old

(Continued overleaf)

HOLY CROSS, BEARSTED—continued
pegged oak frame, still in good condition, is inscribed: "I. W. WEBB C.W. 1793".

The first peal on the bells was in 1899, in six minor methods. Two more followed by the same band in 1900 and 1901, and there were only two peals rung between then and the end of the second world war. During this war ringing was restricted, and only towards the end of 1943 did a new band start training. December 1945 saw the arrival of George F. Cantrill, arguably the greatest boost to ringing at Bearsted ever! Having taken office as captain, the band was brought up to such a standard that they were then able to ring the first peal ever by a resident band. This was of Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles in 1948. In the ensuing six years ten more were rung, mostly by local bands, and 1957 saw several more added to this total.

The sixties saw a virtual break in peal ringing, as complaints of excessive noise meant a restriction on ringing time. However, three peals were managed, including the first on the new tenor. In 1965 George F. Cantrill resigned, but the local band carried on, call changes being the "staple diet". In 1971 seven members of the band were lost, and a further two in early 1972. However, ringing is again looking up and there is a band of eight who are trying to master the simpler Doubles methods. Three members rang their first quarter last year and all look forward to the time one will be rung unaided. It is hoped that two members of the tower will also ring their first peal this year, and with some measure of sound control this may well be at the home tower.

JOY SHEPPARD,
ANDREW C. P. GUNSTONE.

FUND RAISING

By P. SOTHERAN

Plastic Products

Many people during the last couple of years have tried their hand at setting things in clear plastic resin and making brooches, key-fobs, etc. There is money in this! Professionally produced rings, key-fobs, pendants, etc., sell for about 70p to £1 or more. By simplifying the designs you can make a key-fob for about 8p and sell it easily for 20p or 30p.

First decide on the type of thing you wish to produce or which you think may sell well. You will need a cheap supply of the things to encapsulate in the plastic; for people near the coast, sea-shells are an excellent idea, country areas could use seeds, small flowers, etc. If you have easy access to neither of these, approach a watchmaker and beg a box of broken watch parts.

To experiment, initially, use a mould with a variety of sizes and shapes. You will soon find which is the most suitable shape for your product; think in terms of economy of plastic resin and speed of production. Most craft shops stocking plastic materials supply a range of different shaped moulds some of which are ideal for the mass production of one particular design.

As all the kits contain full instructions, it will suffice to mention here a few brief points. Make sure that the shells or watch parts (or whatever you intend setting in the plastic) are clean and bright. Take a few simple precautions to prevent dust or flies settling in the liquid plastic while it sets. Remember that it is a highly inflammable substance while in its liquid form, so work in a garage or out-house with good ventilation. After removing the solid plastic article from the mould, rough it down on a sanding disc or a sheet of "wet and dry" paper. To remove fine scratches use a damp cloth and rubbing paste (obtainable from garages or car-accessory shops).

To sell these efficiently they must be well displayed. A bright display card can be made from a sheet of fluorescent "Day-glo" card. Be sure that the lettering and

prices are neatly written; if you cannot manage this, use a Dymo lettering tool. In the centre of the card, about four inches from the bottom, make a small hole and insert a brass paper fastener, insert another about two inches above it. Make light pencil marks horizontally across the card level with the two paper fasteners, and at the edges of the card cut small notches. Take two pieces of decorative cord or fine wire long enough to pass round the card horizontally. Draw each cord round the card tightly so that it passes through the notches and over the paper fastener and tie securely behind the card. The purpose of the notches and the paper fasteners is to support the cord. Hook the key-fobs, rings, brooches, etc., over the cord.

Larger articles such as paper weights and table lamp bases can also be made. They require a larger quantity of plastic, and should anything spoil the end product your expenses are higher.

Next: Handbell ringing.

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PUFF AND NONSENSE

Under the heading "Bell Hangings", Church Bells for January 6, 1883, gives the following comment from S. B. Goslin, of The Crescent Bell Foundry, Cripplegate, London.

"The advertisement of a most wonderful character has been brought before me, as full of puff and nonsense as ever Barnum the American showman could have concocted upon the above topic in which the great triumph—extraordinary discovery and improvement—in the form of cast-steel gudgeons, are held forth as an inducement to try the discovery, with the assurance that such productions wear a thousand times longer, and go fifty per cent lighter (than—it is not said what!) for the ringer. Now as cast steel is very liable to have flaws and break off short, as all large bell gudgeons are generally case-hardened by men who understand their business properly, and as ordinary gudgeons will wear well for ten to 20 years without being turned afresh in a lathe, I fail to see how one can assert in truth, either from his own knowledge, or reliable information, that steel gudgeons will last in wear from 10 to 20 thousand years; and, further, I fail to comprehend how that such a one-handed ringing performance in Devon, as a 22 cwt. tenor, being rung on steel gudgeons, can compare with the St. Saviour's pull on ordinary gudgeons, where the tenor was and is 52 cwt., and one man rung it for a stretch of 6½ hours.

"The advertisement appeared, I think, in the Western Times of Dec. 21st last, and if any of you readers are desirous to see a good long puff, they will be satisfied with a perusal; but my humble advice to all parties concerned in rehanging church bells, decidedly must be: Beware of steel gudgeons. I have heard of them breaking off short."

[Can anyone tell us of the controversy and who was S. B. Goslin?]

DEVON RINGERS' TOUR

A small number of members of the Devon Guild held their first tour of the season on March 24, when the South Hams was the venue. The event was again organised by Mr. A. L. Bennett, and the party included Mr. and Mrs. N. Mallett and family, Mr. and Mrs. D. F. Wheeler and Rosemary, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Myers and Mrs. Brown, Messrs. A. G. Pullen, H. F. Myers, C. Yorke, D. R. Bould and A. N. Frost.

Towers visited were Loddiswell, Dodbrooke, West Alvington, East Portlemouth (the best of the day) and Sherford. Thanks were expressed to the organiser at the conclusion of the tour.

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