

# The Ringing World

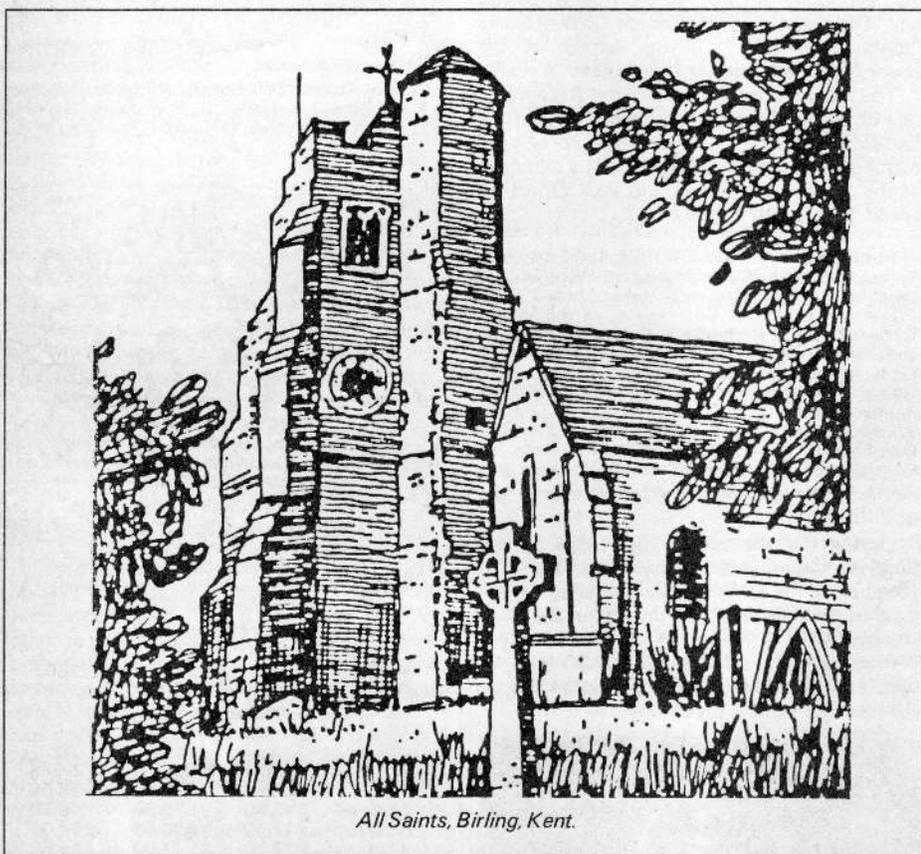
April 3, 1987

The weekly journal for church bell ringers

no. 3962 55p weekly

## From Eight to Six to Five to Eight – Now the Best in Kent

*This could be another tedious article telling how a small village with a population of less than 300 raised £174,000 in 10 years to restore their church and rehang their bells but ... on Sunday 10th March, Birling, Kent, a small rural community nestling at the foot of the North Downs, had its bells pealing out over the snow covered hillsides for the first time in over 30 years.*



All Saints, Birling, Kent.

The entire village had been invited to the celebrations together with those who helped with the restoration work. Parishioners had been busy since Christmas, planning, cleaning and decorating the church in readiness for what was to be one of the largest village celebrations this century.

Ten years ago the church architect had reported that the North and South valley gutters required attention; this was but the tip of the iceberg. The tower was becoming dangerous and extensive work to prevent it crumbling away altogether was required so in 1983 work was begun on the exterior of the tower and in 1986 the interior. The old eight were hung anti-clockwise in a two tier timber frame and were

removed by members of the Kent Association in June 1982 and the bells stored at Whitechapel Bell Foundry pending sufficient funds to rehang them.

Since 1978 the cost of the repairs has been raised locally and because the parish had managed to raise so much towards the cost Charitable Trusts have helped and as Birling church is listed Grade B, English Heritage also made money available for work to the fabric. Not only was a great deal of effort put into fundraising but thought was given to whether there would be ringers for the bells if they were rehung and to this end an advertisement was placed in the parish magazine requesting would-be ringers a year before the bells were returned. A number

THE BELLS (Old Eight)		
Treble	G	3-3-0
	Mears & Stainbank 1891	
2nd	F-sharp	3-2-19
	Lester & Pack 1759	
3rd	E	3-3-19
	Thos. Lester 1746	
4th	D	4-3-15
	Thos. Lester 1746	
5th	C	4-3-19
	Mears & Stainbank 1891	
6th	B	5-1-1
	Joseph Hatch 1631	
7th	A	7-0-9
	Joseph Hatch 1631	
Tenor	G	7-1-3
	Mears & Stainbank 1891	
(New Eight)		
Treble	A	2-2-0
	Whitechapel 1986	
2nd	G-sharp	2-3-27
	Whitechapel 1986	
3rd	F-sharp	3-1-7
	Lester & Pack 1759	
4th	E	3-1-22
	Thos. Lester 1746	
5th	D	4-0-10
	Thos. Lester 1746	
6th	C-sharp	4-1-12
	Whitechapel 1986	
7th	B	5-0-0
	Joseph Hatch 1631	
Tenor	A	6-3-16
	Joseph Hatch 1631	

of people came forward and were kindly taught by the bands at Snodland and West Malling.

An order for rehangng the bells was placed with Whitechapel in May 1986.

Between going into store and being rehung the bells were deaugmented to six by the sale of the old treble to Brimpsfield, Gloucestershire and by scrapping the old tenor. The old 5th was recast for the second time in 100 years. Before the bells had made it back to Birling they were reaugmented by the gift of two new trebles and came back as a lighter eight than they went.

The rehung eight were tried out on 20th February and from then until the dedication the new Birling band spent many an evening shivering in the tower practising rounds on bells muffled with pieces of Michelin XZX wrapped round the clappers. Needless to say the final practice, less than 12 hours before the dedication yielded a broken stay but, thanks to the combined talents of an art student, a police sergeant and a man who works in the sewers, a temporary repair was soon effected and the practice resumed.

The day of the dedication dawned and the whole village was alive with a sense of anticipation, excitement and joy. Over 300 people packed the tiny church to give praise and

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## Obituary

### F. Dunkerley - an appreciation

I was sorry to see in a recent issue of *The Ringing World* that Fred had passed away after a long illness.

He would not be instantly recognisable to present day ringers, as most of his peal ringing was done in the late 1940s to the '60s. A shy man, he was one you would not associate with a shrewd mind and very successful business enterprises.

The pinnacle of his ringing career must be the Bristol long length at Over and the Cambridge Royal at Worsley. He did in his native Lancashire, call several difficult compositions of Double Norwich and Stedman Triples in the early 1950s.

He was General Secretary of the Lancashire Association during a difficult period of their history. His business expertise and own personal finance helped in no small way to pull them through.

What he got out of ringing he more than repaid. He was responsible for those not as well-off as himself, employing them, helping them to go on peal tours or long distance travelling to well-known rings of bells.

Another one of his interests was flying. Even on a peal tour he arranged to hire an aircraft for the afternoon to take the young members of the band on a trip around the local countryside. He was good at this as he won the King's Air Race.

He very often generously entertained the band after peals. The first thing he always asked for was a pot of tea and I am sure that when he passed to the other side a cup of tea was awaiting him.

B.F.L.G.

### BIRLING - continued from front page

thanksgiving for the restoration of the church, tower and clock and for the dedication of the bells. The service was filled with song and culminated in audible evidence of 10 years hard work as the bells sang out to the glory of God as the congregation gathered for luncheon, provided by the ladies of the village, in the marquees adjacent to the church.



The peal band at Birling. Left to right: Thomas M. Barlow, Anne L. Martin, John B. Keeler, Richard C. Offen, Richard P. J. Carter, Malcolm Barden, Thomas Cullingworth, F. Paul Lewis.

### Richard Douglas Divall

It was with great regret that we heard of the passing of "Doug" as he was known to most ringers in Northern Sussex, on 26th February at the age of 85 years.

Doug had been a ringer since about 1923 and rang at Coleman's Hatch, Sussex up to the start of the war 1939-45 and on joining the forces he saw service overseas. On returning to civvy street he took up farm work and lived with his brother at Eridge near Tunbridge Wells. During this time he shared his ringing between Tunbridge Wells and Withyham towers going around on his small motorcycle. After the death of his brother, he moved to Rotherfield, Sussex where he joined the local band of ringers and for some time was Captain of the tower, until he had to give up active ringing.

Although he did not keep records it is known he had rung at least 40 peals most of them in Sussex. Doug had been a member of the Sussex County Association for over 60 years and he was also a Founder member of the East Grinstead and District Guild of Church Bell Ringers "founded in 1927", having served on the committee and as auditor for a number of years.

The funeral service took place at Rotherfield church on 6th March when the bells were rung half-muffled before and after the service by members of the local band, assisted by members of the Sussex Association and East Grinstead Guild. May he rest in peace.

ERNEST J. LADD

**Tunbridge Wells, Kent.** 14 Mar, 1260 Stedman Triples: A King 1, E J Ladd 2, June Woolgar 3, D Woolgar 4, A C Manktelow 5, Helen J Izzard 6, K R Wakefield (C) 7, I G Cochrane 8. In memory of Richard D. Divall. **Rotherfield, Sussex.** 8 Mar, 1260 Grandsire Triples: Rebecca Player 1, B Reeves 2, Linda Moores 3, Caroline Harris 4, K Player 5, R Harris 6, D Featherstone (C) 7, A Lovell 8. Half-muffled in memory of Doug Divall, former ringer at Withyham, past Captain of Rotherfield and Founder Member of East Grinstead & District Guild. By ringers of both Withyham & Rotherfield towers.

During the afternoon a peal of 8 Spliced Surprise Major was successfully rung by members of the Kent Association being the first peal on the new eight and the first in the tower since 1949.

Practice night is Wednesday 7.30-9.00, to which all visitors are most welcome to ring on the best light eight in the county!

### A. W. Cox

A. W. "Gussy" Cox will probably be best remembered as a master craftsman in the watch and clock trade than as a bellringer and his expertise was much sought after locally.

He learned to ring early in World War I and after war service in the Royal Air Force finished his apprenticeship locally in the watch trade, following which he went to work in London where he remained until the London blitz forced his return. He worked in local engineering until the end of hostilities, when he set up his own business in the town.

Gussy was a regular member of the local band when the ban was lifted and for many years following while a new band was being formed and was for many years in charge of the church clock.

A Fellow of the British Horological Institute, he passed peacefully away in the local hospital on 10th February, aged 86, and on Thursday 19th February, the local band rang a half-muffled quarter peal of Grandsire Triples to his memory.

B. J. COGGINS

**Witney, Oxon.** 1260 Grandsire Triples: M Rosser 1, J O'Beirne 2, T Hester 3, M Probert (1st in M inside) 4, A R Cornish 5, W Clarke 6, B J Coggins (C) 7, S Putt (1st Q) 8.



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Could you also supply an additional copy of the issue for 6th March 1987. I have rounded my cheque up to £25, and this will give you an ecstasy of the week!