

THE RINGING WORLD

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THE CENTRAL COUNCIL
OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

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SS. PETER AND PAUL, BROMLEY, KENT.

Message from the Rev. Philip Goodrich, Vicar of Bromley, to the ringers who will be attending the Kent County Association's annual meeting at Bromley on Easter Monday.

"It is with great pleasure that we look forward to the visit of the Kent County Association to Bromley on Easter Monday. The great festival of Easter comes as such a climax of the Christian Year that it always seems to cry out for continued celebration, even after the day itself is over. The bellringers will help us to do this. How fitting it will be to hear the bells ringing out over the traffic and the holiday-makers on Easter Monday. How good it will be to have a church full for a service of praise and thanksgiving for the glorious resurrection of Christ. It will also be a thanksgiving for bellringing and bellringing friends. I am myself a bellringer and I know the sheer pleasure and satisfaction which bellringing gives. The lengthening days remind me of how we used to get our bicycles out and go ringing round the villages of Lincolnshire during spring and summer.

"I wish you a good day on Easter Monday and look forward to welcoming you all."

COVER PICTURE—

SS. Peter and Paul, Bromley, Kent

THE FIRST RING of bells at Bromley, of which there is any record, is listed in an inventory made in 1553 during the reign of Edward VI:

"Item iiii greate Belles, seated in the steeple, one Sants bell and iiii little sacrying bells and one hand bell".

Of these the sanctus bell would be rung at the Paternoster and the sacrying bells chimed at the elevation of the Host. The iiii greate Belles which then formed the "peal" had clearly been much beloved as earlier records of gifts include:

- 1481 Randolph Bothe, gent. 5s. "to the use of the said church for the grete bells".
1504 John Scott of Chislehurst 6s. 8d. "to the bells of Bromley".
1507 John Godwyn Xls "for the reparacion of ye Grete bell".

This is followed by a gift from Thomas Erliche in 1512 of 12d "to the bringing home of the bells" which presumably had had to go away for further "reparacion".

Nothing survives about the bells between 1553 and 1773, but they must have been rung on many national as well as local occasions because in 1838 the ringers were ordered by the Vestry to stop ringing on the anniversaries of the Stuart Restoration, 1660, the Coronation of Queen Anne, and the Gunpowder Plot.

In 1773 a complete new set of eight bells was cast by Thomas Janaway, of Chelsea. Each was signed T. Janaway fecit 1773. Further inscriptions were on:

- 1.—Prosperity to the parish of Bromley.
- 2.—Musica est Mentis Medicina.
- 3.—He and he only aims aright
Who joins Industry with Delight.
- 4.—When from the Earth our notes rebound
The hills and valleys ecco round.
- 7.—The Ringers' Art our Grateful Notes
[prolong]
Apollo listens and Approves the Song.
- 8.—A record of the names of the then
[churchwardens].

Probably metal from the old bells was used in the new ring as the churchwardens' accounts include:

1773	For carrying the Bells to Chelsea with two teams	£2 10 0
Jan. 12th	For one team to fetch four of the Bells from Do to Bromley	1 5 0
		£3 15 0
1773	For beer to the men who helped to unload the Bells and get them into the Church	6 0
	For beer to the Bell-hangers	5 0
	For a saucepan for oile	7 7
	For Ringing the King's Birthday	5 0
		£1 3 7

The first peal was rung by some London campanologists, but the real inauguration of the new bells was a peal of "Oxford Treble Bobs" involving 5088 changes in 3 hours and 7 minutes, rung by a team of "Kent Youths" led by James Barham, of Leeds, near Maidstone.

LOCAL MEN

William Cook, one of this team, evidently undertook the training of the local men, for he acted as leader on No. 8 when the "Bromley Youths" rang their first full peal of "Bob Majors" 5040 changes in 3 hours and 11 minutes, on September 14, 1774, 16 months after the foundation of the society on May 27, 1773, immediately after the hanging of the new ring.

The vestry minutes of 1823 record a petition from the bellringers to be paid in cash instead of by refreshments supplied at a public house. This does not mean the ringers were entirely abstemious. Bellringing

must be thirsty work, and Horsburgh says that ten years later George Porter, then landlord of The Bell, supplied the ringers with liquid refreshment on special occasions, notably weddings, and "could be seen as soon as the sound of the bells notified the conclusion of the ceremony, hurrying up the High Street with a 2-gallon can of beer, a couple of pint pots hanging on its spout and a bottle of gin protruding from his coat pocket".

NOTABLE PEALS

Many notable peals were recorded in the church tower.

- 1775 William Cook conducted a ring of 10,080 changes in 6 hours and 13 minutes.
1778 William Chapman, who had rung No. 7 under Cook, conducted a ring of 12,672 changes in 7 hours and 48 minutes.
1817 On January 15 Wm. Chapman, "being a ringer in the Parish of Bromley 43 years", was honoured by a Muffled Peal of Grandsire Triples rung by the Society of Bromley Youths, under J. Allen, and said to have been "the first Dumb Peal of this kind ever rang in this Kingdom".
1904 The Rev. A. G. Hellicar, Vicar of Bromley since 1865, was similarly commemorated.

On the night of April 16, 1941, when the Parish Church was destroyed in the blitz, the tower "formed a kind of chimney, the contents burned furiously" and with a terrifying noise the great bells crashed to the ground. The bell metal was salvaged and the bells were recast by Gillett and Johnston, founders of Croydon. The new ring (tenor 16-2-8) was rededicated by Bishop Guy Warman on September 15, 1951, with a cheerful noise as the Society of Bromley Youths rang a spell of rounds under the pre-war master of the bellringers, Mr. Isaac Emery.

THE RINGING WORLD

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Editor Ringing World: Stop Press: Great happening in Liverpool stop Liverpool becomes first university to hold dinner dance stop Unqualified success stop Over 100 attended what is confirmed as greatest event on Northern University scene stop Plans already proceeding for next year stop More detailed report following stop. [Keep it short or it will not even start stop Editor.]

SUFFOLK'S BELLS

Beccles St. Michael, Stonham St. Lambert, The Marys of Hadleigh, Woodbridge and Eye,

Deb'nam St. Peter, Lowestoft St. Margaret, All join together in sweet melody; St. Peter of Lavenham, Bury St. James, Stradbroke All Saints which extols all their names.

All these, with many another tall tower, Go to the making of Suffolk's rich dower.
C. J. S.

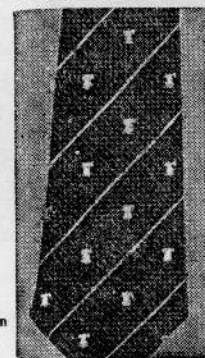
In the handbell peal at Bournemouth on February 26 Roy Hurst rang his 149th peal (Bob Major in hand) in September, 1958, and waited 14 years for his 150th, Dorothy Gardiner rang her last handbell peal (Grandsire Caters) in February, 1957, 15 years ago.—D. T. M.

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