

## That's what we'll be like - in 20 years' time

The Six-bell Striking Competition of the Cambridge District of Ely Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers was held at Stapleford Church on Saturday, 10th June. Ten Sunday service bands from Cambridge City and University, and from nearby villages, competed in this annual event, the aim of which is to provide an incentive for regular Sunday service ringers to improve the quality and precision of their ringing. On the pleasantly-warm afternoon, bellringers awaiting their turn to ring could relax in the churchyard, meet ringers from other towers, or participate in general ringing at the nearby churches at Great and Little Shelford. Each band rang 120 changes of a method of its own choice, or rounds and call-changes with 15 calls in 120 rows. The chosen methods varied from London Surprise Minor to Plain Hunt Doubles - this last very well struck by the Duxford band which came well up on the list. The winners were again the Great St. Mary's band, who therefore retain the shield they won last year. Second was the Cambridge University Guild "A" band, whose members had bicycled out to Stapleford from the city. In bracketed third place were the bands of Cherry Hinton and Chesterton.

The President's Award for the "most improved" band was made this year for the first time. The District President, Johnny Gipson, in handing over the beautifully-designed certificate to the Balsham band, congratulated the ringers on "having the nerve" to put in a band for the competition after only eight months' ringing. Balsham Church bells were restored and rehung last October, whereupon Richard Pargeter, the only experienced ringer in the village, undertook the training of a band of beginners right from scratch. During the afternoon the Balsham folk, while listening to the winning band ringing London Surprise with near-mechanical precision, had remarked: "That's what we'll be like, in 20 years' time". They are aiming high.

A hearty tea was provided by Peter Hinton and afterwards came the comments of the judge, Philip Mehew of Hitchin, and the presentation of shield and certificates. The judge remarked that one of the bands had rung so fast that he was surprised to see them at tea: he had supposed that they were all rushing off to catch a train!

A vote of thanks to vicars, to the judge, and to the tea provider was carried with acclaim, and the evening ended with general ringing at Trumpington Church. P.S.

## Lines crossed - please try in August

We had met to attempt a peal by the Guild of Post & Telecom Ringers to mark the 80th birthday of George Goodman who was our founder President. The Guild rang one for his 70th at the same tower, where George had rung for many years. This year's peal unfortunately came to grief, but a consolation quarter was scored without incident, George looking fresher than the rest of the band throughout!

We plan to have a fresh attempt for the peal in August - but that could well be the excuse for another story (or quarter).

D. JOYCE

Brent Pelham, Herts. 17 June, 1440 P.B. Minor: C L Walter 1, G C Goodman 2, A W Cansdale 3, Mary Coe 4, R G R Collins 5, D M Joyce (1st Minor as C) 6. 80th birthday compliment (14th June) to George Goodman. 50p

## Disaster at Quex - the full story

As previously reported, on Saturday, 3rd June, at Quex Park an unfortunate incident occurred which resulted in serious damage to the 9th bell.

### The Incident

The back eight bells were rung up in preparation for a quarter peal before practice night with no apparent problem. After plain hunt to check the ropes, the bells were stood up. The ringer of the 9th decided to shorten his rope and while doing so stood the bell at back-stroke to check the length. When the bell went over the balance he said "Oh dear" and the rope disappeared through the ceiling - fortunately the ringer did not go with it. Verbal chastisement followed until a few seconds later it dawned on the band that there was no sound of the bell ringing down.

Several people dashed upstairs and immediately shouted out totally unprintable comments. The other bells were lowered one by one before anyone ventured on to the frame to inspect the damage. Closer inspection revealed a large crack right round the top of the bell and a large piece missing.

### The Causes

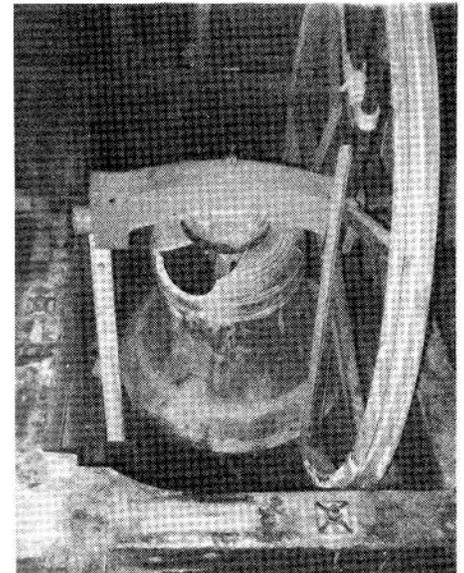
After lengthy discussion we think we now know the chain of events. At some stage, possibly during a recent peal, a nut had come off one of the stay bolts. When the bell was stood at hand-stroke this caused no problem, but as soon as the bell was stood at back-stroke the stay was forced away from the headstock. Eventually the stay was ripped off the headstock and started to fall to the floor just as the falling bell reached the down position. By an unfortunate quirk of fate the bell trapped the stay against the frame, stopping the bell dead. The bell was pushed sideways some 3-4" with such force that it cracked around the crown and a piece the size of a dinner plate was thrown completely out of it.

### A little bit of History

As many ringers will know, Quex is a secular tower, situated in the middle of a private estate on the Isle of Thanet in Kent. It was built to house a ring of bells by John Powell Powell, the owner of Quex Park. The 12 bells, cast by Thomas Mears, were hung in 1819 and at the time were the only ring of 12 in Kent. John Powell Powell's interest in change-ringing may have been stimulated when he lived at Fulham prior to inheriting Quex. Stedman was his particular interest - he published a booklet of compositions in 1828 and was held in high esteem by the ringers of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich for them to present him with a medal, which is now on display in the museum at Quex House.

The tower and bells have been maintained in good order by subsequent owners of Quex and in particular the present owner, Christopher Powell-Cotton. In 1951 the front four bells were recast at his expense, and in 1981 he again spent a considerable amount of money in rehanging the front four in a new frame at a lower level in the tower. He is not a ringer but his interest in an appreciation of the bells is keen, and he is President of the Quex Society. He is always very receptive to requests to ring at the tower - the record-breaking four peals of Maximus in a day were rung at Quex last year. Many outings have enjoyed a visit to Quex and other bands regularly visit for peals and quarter peals.

It is not what we do but how we do it that matters.



The 9th bell badly damaged.

### The Future

Although there is no question of delaying the recasting of the bell, the band of ringers at Quex Park decided almost immediately that as well as organising all the site work to take the broken bell out and get the new one in, a great effort should be made to raise the money for the recasting of the bell. No money is available from the usual bell restoration fund sources because Quex is a secular tower. Donations have already been received from a few local bands and our Annual Barbecue, which is always our main fund-raising event, is being widely publicised. We would, however, like to appeal to the wider ringing community to help us.

Many of you will have visited Quex over the years, some for outings, some to ring peals (or lose them!). Many of you may like to visit Quex in the future - East Kent is ideal outing country. We have a good variety of bells, including the unique attraction of Quex Park, super pubs, the sea, Quex Museum, the Spitfire and Hurricane at Manston. . . . If you have ever visited Quex, or would like to in the future, please send us a donation - yourself, from your tower, as a result of sponsored ringing. If we get a little help from a lot of people we may be able to raise all the money needed and Christopher Powell-Cotton will know how much his care for and interest in his bells is appreciated by ringers.

### Postscript

This incident raises the question of the adequacy of regular maintenance. The bells at Quex are checked regularly and were looked over a couple of weeks before the peal. We don't think we **should** have done any more than we did, although obviously we **could** have done more. The Foundry have told us that they are surprised at the extent of the damage to the bell and that they think we have been desperately unlucky with the combination of circumstances.

Watch this space . . . there will be more

There is no apparent route by which to get the new bell into the tower. It seems likely that the bells were put into the tower via the roof, but that now has a large cast-iron spire on it. . . . Anyone who knows Quex will immediately think of the "sound ducts", but the most obvious one has a brick ceiling part way down and the gap at the bottom is too narrow, not to mention the ringing room door. . . . H.B.