

Scarcely a clanger dropped!

The Wirral Branch held its annual 6-bell striking competition on Saturday, 14th July, at Holy Trinity, Capenhurst. Seven bands entered, and after some juggling with the draw, ringing commenced with the rest of us enjoying the lovely weather; apart, that is, from the people who live opposite the church. They decided that two weddings and a striking competition in one day was just too much, and so went out for the evening.

The judges on this occasion were Len Mitchell and John Hopwood from Liverpool, who hid in the car park whilst tower captain Sid Roberts and his wife Sal served tea and scones to the competitors and groupies.

After a short delay the results were announced in the church. After the marking system had been explained, comments were made about the ringing - perhaps rather slow due to nerves, the weather and the fact that the village of Capenhurst isn't "plumbed-in". Approximate peal speeds were calculated using Mr. Mitchell's new toy, which beeped at all sorts of odd times! Never mind, Len, if all else fails read the instructions!

Ringing ranged from call-changes through Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles to Plain Bob Minor. In a close contest Port Sunlight were judged winners with 8.25 faults, followed by Wallasey (St. Nicholas) with 13.25 faults and Heswall with 15.75 faults. Special mention must be made of the young "Oxton Learners" band, who kept their nerve to finish a very creditable 6th. Port Sunlight now goes on to represent Wirral in the Chester Guild competition to be held in Eastham in September.

The ringers then adjourned to the Tudor Rose (definitely plumbed-in) where the winning band rewarded the judges for their excellent choice.

B.D.H.

A move to West Dorset

Once again the day of the Salisbury Guild's Striking Competition turned out to be a beautiful, warm, sunny one, just right for sitting around in a country churchyard listening to ringing. For the past eight years the competition has been held in the middle of the large diocese, but this year a break with tradition took participants to West Dorset and the lovely village of Askerswell, nestling under the hills.

Nine teams representing most of the Guild's branches rang a mixture of Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles, with one exception ringing Bob Minor, whilst the rest sunbathed or perused the bookstall, laid out on a convenient table-topped tomb.

The Guild Service, followed by tea, took place at Bradpole, where tea included a new Dorset Delight - a jam scone, covered with clotted cream and topped with an enormous strawberry. The judge was Frank Mack from the Guild of Devonshire Ringers, and he gave a few helpful comments before announcing the results. The winners were Damerham (Salisbury Branch) with 7 faults, second were the Marlborough Branch 10, and tied third were the West and East Dorset Branches with 12. Jack Baverstock, captain of the Damerham team, received the Centenary

A very hot Sandwich

At the risk of causing another Godmersham saga, it was felt that the circumstances leading up to the successful ringing of (probably) the first peal in the tower of the Parish Church of St. Clement, Sandwich, should not go unmentioned. Indeed it was probably only the second-ever peal in the town; the only other peal recorded was in the Church of St. Peter at the turn of the century; it was rung by members of the Quex Park Society.

Once the day of dedication had been and gone, with all its pomp and ceremony, it was back to the grindstone - well, rounds and call-changes *ad infinitum* anyway. Time now for young men's thoughts to turn to . . . well, peals and quarter peals actually!

At a meeting of the Sandwich ringers held in April it had been made quite clear that the "learners" were of the opinion that the ringers who are giving their time and trouble to get a band established in Sandwich should have the honour of ringing the maiden peal in the tower. The Hon. Gen. Sec., probably mindful of the furore that Godmersham caused, tried to decline but was over-ruled. The next problem was trying to find a date that would suit, and once the date had been found to get some sound control (lots of old carpet squares, courtesy of the Halifax) because they were, and still are, very noisy.

The date finally decided upon was Saturday, 23rd June, being eminently appropriate because it is the eve of St. John-the-Baptist Day, he being the patron saint of the church at Kirkheaton from whence the bells came. The peal was to be rung directly after a wedding. The band met, the peal began. The band was made up of five of the

trophy from the Guild Master, Neil Skelton, and a certificate for the best effort was presented to the team from Bryanston School, entering their first competition.

Four teams took part in the 8-bell competition which followed at Bradpole, with Frank again at his table in the warm, sunny churchyard. The first three teams were separated by only 1 3/4 marks, but the shield was retained by the Salisbury Branch with 20 1/4 faults, the West Dorset Branch were second with 21 and East Dorset third with 22. Frank, however, warned three of the teams that they had over-run their 2-minute practice time, so that is something for the committee to work on.

Many thanks, West Dorset, for your hospitality.

J.R.

Friends in the band

Our band, we are a struggling one,
We can't ring much, but it's great fun.
Plain Hunt, Bob Minimus, Grandsire,
These are the heights to which we aspire.

Myself, I've other methods rung,
Before I joined this present throng.
A certain magic with this band,
The friendship you feel here is grand.

I'll ring other methods elsewhere,
Just to keep my progress fair.
But I keep my loyalty true,
True, to my own Ringing crew.

S. K. JEBB.

Sandwich "tutors" (including the Hon. Gen. Sec.) and a member of Romney (Bellhangers) Inc. It was obvious for much of the attempt that the Hon. Gen. Sec.'s mind just wasn't on the job in hand - she was making more mistakes than usual. Apportioning no blame, suffice to say the attempt ground to an undignified halt after nearly two hours of ringing.

Ever mindful of the fact that there are bands lining up to ring at Sandwich, it was decided that another attempt should be made as soon as possible with the same band. The Rector was consulted and it was agreed that another attempt should be made on the following Sunday afternoon, 1st July.

Probably thinking that the failure had been some kind of punishment from Him up there for starting off all the hot air generated over Godmersham, the Hon. Gen. Sec. insisted that for the next attempt she was going to play a substitute (or is that the World Cup!). Nobody believed her!

During the intervening week life continued. On Wednesday evening at practice, one of the "learners" said he thought the 5th "felt funny". The Hon. Gen. Sec. rang it and reassured him it was only a wobbly pulley. On the following day she decided to go and have a look, and found the bolts that hold the wheel together had worked loose and the wheel was coming apart (perhaps it was just as well the first attempt came to grief - it could have been very nasty!).

Also during the week the Hon. Gen. Sec. was working on her substitute, being ever so persuasive!

On Sunday, 1st July, the band, which included the substitute, met and the peal was successfully scored in 2 hours 38 minutes.

When the belfry door was opened, the Hon. Gen. Sec. entered to find one ringer laid out on the carpet demanding the kiss of life, and the others draped around various bits of the tower looking as if they had been sprayed with a hose-pipe. It had been very hot!

Then came the reward for labour. The Hon. Gen. Sec. in a much more suitable role as barmaid than peal ringer, produced glasses and a bottle of alcoholic fizzy stuff - not just any old fizzy stuff, but the real genuine article all the way from Rheims: very cold - just what the doctor ordered!

Just to be a little controversial, although it is agreed that the bells "go" all right, the odd-struckness of some of them make them quite tricky to ring well; but all in all it was a very creditable performance for the maiden peal. Various footnotes to be sent to *The Ringing World* to accompany the peal were suggested and quickly censored by the Hon. Gen. Sec.

It is hoped that the next peal on the bells will be rung by members of the Kirkheaton band in the next couple of months, and eventually the Hon. Gen. Sec. will get to ring one as well.

On a sadder note, also during the week, a very-well-liked former Mayor of Sandwich died.

The Rector, when told of the success and the fact that the peal had been rung in thanksgiving for the life of the former Mayor, was exceedingly pleased, to say the least!

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