



Waltham Church

You win some, you lose some

It is always sad to announce that a tower of bells is to be taken out of commission for an unforeseeable length of time, but unfortunately this is the case with St. Bartholomew's church Waltham near Canterbury (pronounced *Walt-ham*). The church has a distinctive anti-clockwise ring of four with an 8 cwt (approx.) tenor. One mystery lies in its key, as in the KCACR Annual Report it is recorded as "A", in the church guide book as the "Aeolian Mode", but in practice appears to be "G sharp minor"! The founder was Joseph Hatch of Ulcombe (one of his few complete rings in the country), the third being so early (1603) that it bears his father's foundry stamp.

The problem lies in the belfry floor. When the church architect visited it, he put his foot through it and declared it unsafe, causing the tower to be boarded up. This meant that fundamental repairs such as the mending of a stay which was mysteriously found broken, couldn't be carried out, and even the general safety was questioned. There were also conflicting professional views on whether the floor contains beetle! Waltham doesn't have a regular band but borrows brave ringers from nearby Petham (its square bearings deterring most people). As a result there will be no further ringing there until the floor is sorted out, which hopefully won't be too long. In the long term, new fittings are required, but this has to wait for the rest of the church to be restored. Coincidentally, this PCC ruling appeared in the same week as that of the rededication of another ring in the deanery, that of the five at Godmersham: you win some and you lose some! Enquiries please to the churchwardens.

DICKON LOVE.

Petham

Maltese chime

Whilst on holiday in Malta recently I took the opportunity to visit the Anglican church of St. Paul as I had vague recollections of seeing mention in "Dove". Fortunately the vicar was in the church but alas would not be persuaded to allow me to inspect the bells - he said it was not safe up there!

He did however show me to the ringing chamber where there is a set of wooden levers attached to wires and he invited me to chime the bells. There are six rope holes in the ceiling, two of which are now used by the chiming wires system which are in perfect order.

I am wondering if any other ringer has been fortunate enough to visit the bell chamber and I would be very interested to learn whether in fact the bells are hung for ringing. Incidentally I am puzzled as to why the 5th and 6th editions of "Dove" make no mention of Malta, even if the bells are only hung for chiming.

D.J. HUNT.

Shaftesbury, Dorset.

Central council peal compositions committee

We met recently on a wet and windy Sunday in Birmingham. Many things were discussed of which the following were probably of the greatest general interest.

Ringing World compositions

We agreed some changes to our system for dealing with compositions submitted for publication. These changes will, we hope, lead to greater selectivity and informed review, and speedier publication of those selected. Each member of the Committee will be taking responsibility for a particular type of composition (e.g. Major) and will deal with all aspects after it has been entered on the database, including proving. Formerly this stage also was handled centrally, and this sometimes caused something of a bottleneck! Our computer equipment will continue to be held by Peter Border and all compositions should continue to be sent to him in the first instance.

It was also agreed that when we decide not to publish a composition for any reason the composer should be notified accordingly. We aim to be objective and tactful!

Our database

We discussed how we should index our database, which now contains approaching 1,000 compositions, and how we should seek to extend it besides gathering newly-submitted works. The database is held on word-processing software, mainly because the text can thus be organised easily for publication, both in *The Ringing World* and in collections. However, this approach does not permit an easy method of searching in order to find a particular composition or select according to defined criteria. We are considering using a database package as an index to the word-processing file, and suitable software is being investigated. The structure of the index itself (i.e. what keys we hold) is also an interesting question which we are addressing.

Our current thinking on extending the size of the database is to work backwards through *The Ringing World* from 1979 (we have all compositions published from 1980 onwards). This obviously involves much work, both in terms of initial keying and subsequent proving - we have no positive guarantee of truth before 1980! Any offers of assistance will be gratefully received - for keying the minimum hardware requirements are a BBC model B or an Acorn Electron, and a cassette-recorder.

Another approach, either as a interim stage, or as a long-term alternative, would be simply to index RW references and, possibly, other sources of peal compositions such as association reports. We will be discussing some of these ideas at later meetings.

St. Benedict's, Northampton

The Dedication Service for the new ring of six bells at the Church of St. Benedict, Northampton, will be at 10 a.m. on Sunday, October 11th, 1987.

The Dedication will be by the Archdeacon of Northampton, the Venerable Basil Marsh.

There is limited ringing only on this occasion, but the Northampton Branch of the Peterborough Diocesan Guild are planning an "Open Day" on Saturday, 24th October, 1987 (details to follow). It is hoped that this occasion will be well supported by ringers from near and far.

B. AUSTIN

Collections in the pipeline

We also discussed some collections of compositions which are being prepared and agreed broad guidelines for those responsible for compiling them. These comprise General-Purpose compositions - broadly an up-to-date "Wratten" (Tony Cox), Spliced from a historical standpoint (Peter Sanderson) and Stedman Triples (John McDonald). We are always interested to hear ideas for collections - the Stedman Triples project came about as a result of a discussion between the Chairman and a conductor who couldn't find a copy of Heywood's! We can't guarantee to take them all on board (in any event the Publications Committee will have a view on the saleability of any proposed collection) but we would like to know what people want.

Altogether we had a very profitable meeting and all went away with lots to do. We agreed to meet again in the spring to review progress.

Compositions for publication should be sent to Peter Border, 5 Verdon Place, Barford, Warwick CV35 8BT. Other communications will be welcomed by the Chairman, Robert C. Kippin, 20 Alfred Place, Bristol BS2 8HD.

R.C.K.

First in living memory

A large number of visitors were lured to the September meeting of the Huntingdon District Ringers, which was held at Ramsey on Saturday, 19th September. This was the first district meeting on these bells within living memory, as the bells have been unringable since before the First World War. The Vicar, Rev. Brian Jones, welcomed ringers to the church and during the service presented Chris Higgins with a hoist in recognition for all his hard work in getting the bells ringable again. The four bells at Wistow were also available for ringing earlier in the afternoon, but ringing was limited due to a broken rope and stay. However, Ramsay bells were put to good use before and after the business meeting and tea, held in the church.

Rung in the dark

The quarter at Camerton had its interesting moments. First of all, to take some time to get into the tower. Some local half-wit had jammed a coin in the key hole; that is to say, one of the key-holes - there are two ways in to the staircase, and so all was not lost. This, however, was a minor problem compared to what was to follow. It transpired that there was no light in the ringing-chamber - a tree had fallen across the power-lines to the church, with a detrimental effect upon the electricity supply - and the only source of illumination was one rather small pocket torch. "It's got new batteries in it, though..." the bells were raised and a few experiments were made: it seemed practicable to make the attempt, and in the event a very reasonable quarter was rung.

The whole business had a double irony: firstly, that the quarter had been arranged as an "easy job" for Bryan Parker, Master of the North Somerset Union, and had turned into a major challenge; secondly, that Bryan - who, as is well known, has been a registered blind person for most of his ringing career and is now almost totally blind - was the member of the band least affected by the problem...

R.W.W.

Camerton, Avon. 14 Sep, 1260 P.B. and Grand-sire Doubles: MJ Stubbs 1, Zena Woodley 2, Kate Rouse 3, Maggie Willans 4, R W Willans (C) 5, B T Parker 6.