

The Ringing World

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Burley, home tower for Leeds University Society

The parish church of St. Matthias, Burley is situated about two miles from the centre of Leeds in an area that typifies large parts of the industrial cities of the north. Burley, in the 1840s was "a picturesque village on a hill overlooking the River Aire" – sadly, today, the picturesque qualities have long since gone, although the River Aire (and the Leeds-Liverpool Canal) remain. Burley's pastoral charms were ultimately destroyed by 19th century industrialisation, but it was the huge influx of population which accompanied this process that provided the need for the first church.

A parish with no church

By 1849, the parish of Leeds had grown to such an extent that subdivision was required. A new parish of Burley-cum-Headingley was created, which had the unusual distinction of having a vicar but no church, a situation that was to continue for two years with services being held in the local school. The long delay in building a church seems to have been due to opposition from the vicar of Leeds, and the reluctance of Lord Cardigan, the landowner, to sell a site. Eventually, however, both obstacles were overcome and thanks to two main benefactors, John Smith, a local banker, and William Beckett M.P., the new church was built and consecrated on 10th November 1854.

The village continued to grow in size over the next decade, but in 1871 the trustees of the Earl of Cardigan put all their Burley property onto the open market and the land was quickly purchased by local builders. Within a few years, 4,000 houses had been built, such that by 1887, the church was completely surrounded by a dense mass of back-to-back housing which remained until the 1970s.

The bells

The tower originally contained three bells cast in 1854 by Taylors of Oxford, and presented to the church by Mary and Elizabeth Beckett of Meanwood. Three trebles were added in 1855 to complete a ring of six with a tenor of 7½ cwt. in B flat. These were recast and augmented to eight in 1930 by Gillett and Johnston, and dedicated by the Bishop of Ripon on 13th November 1930.

Bell	Year Cast	Note	Weight
1	1930	B flat	3-1- 1
2	1930	A	3-1-12
3	1855	G	3-2- 9
4	1855	F	3-3-24
5	1855	E flat	4-0-19
6	1854	D	4-3- 7
7	1854	C	5-3- 9
8	1854	B flat	7-3-16

Ringing at Burley

Recorded ringing achievements seem to have been few and far between until 1900. The first peal, Seven Minor methods, was rung on 15th October 1859, although a local band was not formed until 1868. Only four other peals were rung on the original six of which the last, in May 1913, was worthy of note. Miss Alice Hick rang the treble to a peal of Mixed Minor – the first tower-bell peal rung for the Yorkshire Association in which a lady took part. Following their augmentation, the bells were a popular venue for peals during the 1930s, but unfortunately a variety of factors led to a decline in ringing during the post-war period and the tower fell silent for some years.

Ancient Kent bell under restoration

The region around Dover is rich in very historic bells indeed. All are within a semi-circular radius of about five miles from the town, and although it is tempting to think that they were cast by monks of Dover Priory, the design features differ.

Undoubtedly the oldest is at St. Peter, Whitfield; this bell of 18½" diameter is of early 12th century date and of primitive form. Written off by Stahlshmidt as "blank", with no further reference, its antiquity was discovered some 15 years ago, and in 1970 the bell was properly rehung in its turret by the Whitechapel

Continued on next page



The church of St. Matthias, Burley, Leeds

Home for Leeds University Society

In 1958, the recently formed Leeds University Society was invited to ring at Burley on a regular basis, thus beginning an association which has continued to the present day. The last 25 years have not been without incident, however, the very close proximity of houses causing many problems. After years of silence, the local inhabitants were less than enthusiastic about hearing the bells rung at all, and the University ringers were forced to leave Burley for St. Mary's, Hunslet. In 1971 the Society returned, but it soon became clear that soundproofing was a major priority, if only to stem the tide of non-ringing "visitors" on practice nights. Rather ironically, the first soundproofing project was completed just as the Leeds urban renewal programme began reducing much of the area closest to the church to derelict wasteland! Fortunately further sound control work in recent years has significantly reduced noise levels, and Burley has featured regularly in the peal columns once again. Of the 92 peals rung on the bells, 38 have been for the Leeds University Society, and the remainder for the Yorkshire Association, one of which, in November 1982, was the first peal of Surprise Major by an all-ladies band to be rung for the Association.

The bells are rung regularly on Sundays and Monday practice nights by an enthusiastic resident band, made up of both students and past members now living in Leeds. Many of the band are keen supporters of local Branch and Association activities, and provide regular help at other towers. We in turn are grateful to the other Leeds ringers who frequently join our practice nights, and we extend an equally warm welcome to all visitors to the area.

With grateful thanks to Robin Brown (Yorkshire Association Peal Secretary) and Canon K. W. H. Felstead for help in compiling a full list of peals, and to Leeds City Archives.

S.J.G.

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Ancient bell—continued.

Foundry, who equipped it for swing-chiming. Almost of the same date is the ancient bell of Coldred, St. Pancras; again, Stahlschmidt did not see it, but it was reported to him as "an ancient". The bell is $18\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter, and its moulding wires, two at the shoulder and two at the waist, are similar to those of Whitfield. Unfortunately, the bell fell out of its gable on 6th April 1939, and broke in two; now rivetted together, it is preserved, and its place taken by a 22" Mears bell dedicated in July of the same year.

Largest (although according to Stahlschmidt it would be the smallest, as he merely calls it "9" - blank) of these bells is that at Lydden, $27\frac{1}{4}$ " diameter. When discovered in 1968, this bell of perhaps c.1280 was in a parlous state. It was subsequently rehung "dead" by the Whitechapel Foundry.

The other two are possible foreigners; Dover being close to the continent. One, at St. Nicholas, Barfreystone, is the smallest of all, being only $14\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, and having a notably flared lip, a feature of continental bells even today. The bell has well-moulded wires, three above and two below the shoulder and one at the waist. It hangs most curiously in a cote in the church yew tree, and is sadly in need of restoration. The latter treatment has been brought to bear on the similar bell at SS. Peter and Paul, Sutton-by-Dover, a beautiful bell $19\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, exhibiting the same "flared" soundbow as at Barfreystone. Until 1982, the bell hung in a very ugly pyramid-capped stone "box" on the stump of the old bell turret. This 19th century edifice, being unsafe, was removed but for some reason, the gable was built up scarcely high enough to take the bell it had supported for 700 years, and moreover (despite structural evidence) was not pierced to hold it. The gable had been tiled and the vane replaced before anything could be done. Interest was shown in preserving the bell in use, and Messrs. John Taylor & Co., Ltd., now have the bell at their foundry in Loughborough, where it is to be drilled, fitted with a steel canon-retaining headstock and all new fittings, and hung in an "arch" frame mounted upon the west wall. The photograph illustrates the bell with its fine well-defined moulding wires, and the six excellent canons and argent which the founders are to preserve, again with their head mould clearly defined. It is a matter for great thankfulness that this historic bell is properly to be rehung and used.

D.L.C.

First quarter to be attempted

We understand that there is to be a first quarter attempt on the bells of Christ Church, Walcot, Bath on Sunday, December 4th.

* * *

The *Hereford Evening News* reported the return of the bells at Weobley. "They will be able to have their bells and eat them" the report continued. This referred to a cake iced by the vicar, the Reverend Colin Sneyd, who used to be a master baker. The cake was decorated with a magnificent icing replica of the six bells hanging from the new belfry.

* * *

Extensive coverage was afforded in *The South Norfolk News* and *The East Anglian Daily Times* to the removal of the eight bells at Diss. Volunteers helped workers from John Taylor & Co. to dismantle the bells and M.R.C.T. transport took the bells to Loughborough Bell Foundry.

Obituary**Edmund James Morris**

The members of the Swansea and Brecon Diocesan Guild were saddened by the news of the death, on 24th September, of Edmund Morris, aged 77 years. Whilst he had lived at Skewen and rung for many years at St. Thomas' Church, Neath - in the diocese of Llandaff - he was keenly interested and active in the affairs of the Swansea and Brecon Guild since its formation in 1923. It was particularly fitting that Edmund should have been one of the five doyens of the Guild that were elected as Vice-Presidents to mark the 60th anniversary celebrations, earlier this year. In addition to his diocesan interests (he was Guild Treasurer from 1966 to 1977) Edmund was, in 1954, a founder member of the Railwaymen's Guild and took an interest in that Guild until declining health caused him to retire from active ringing.

During the mid-60's, there was a flurry of handbell activity in and around Swansea, resulting in a large number of peals being rung and Edmund was one of those ringers that was involved. It began with a peal of Plain Bob Minor (Edmund's first "in hand") during January 1964, when the other ringers were B. J. Woodruffe and Arthur Hoare. During the next few years, Edmund's personal total of handbell peals for the Swansea and Brecon rose to 51 and these included the first for the Guild of Royal (December 1964), Maximus (August 1967) and a whirlwind four peals in a day (November 1965).

Above all other things, Edmund will be remembered for his lively debating at Guild meetings and his cheerful countenance. One could always be sure that wherever Edmund went, he would attract to him a gathering of young ringers - he was always their "favourite". He is greatly missed.

M.R.T.

Bristol Cathedral - the "Silver Jubilee" of the bells

Until the late 1950's, Bristol was the only cathedral church recorded as having less than five bells, there being four ancient "unringable" bells in the central tower and which served as clock quarters. This unhappy state of affairs was rectified in 1958 when on 2nd December of that year the Bishop of Malmesbury, the Right Reverend E. J. K. Roberts, rededicated the eight bells from the bombed Temple church, which had been rehung in the north-west tower of the Cathedral by Taylors of Loughborough at the instigation of Dame Violet Wills, DBE, in memory of Matilda Strickland.

The year 1983 therefore sees the Silver Jubilee of the installation of the bells and in order to mark the anniversary the Dean and Chapter have invited the Bristol City Branch of the Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association to attend Evensong at 4 p.m. on Saturday 26th November and afterwards to hold their Annual Meeting in the Chapter House. Ringing will take place from 3 p.m. and it is hoped that the bells at the Lord Mayor's Chapel will also be available for the occasion. In addition the BBC have very kindly agreed to include a recording of the Cathedral bells in the "Bells on Sunday" programme at 7.45 a.m. on Sunday 27th November, Radio 4 LW. The recording has been made and we hope that the bells will be enjoyed by many. And the method? Why, "Bristol" of course!

W.G.H.

Quarter peal marks meaningless tragedy

On Saturday 1st October, Richard Aldridge, a third year Keele University student and Old Boy of Marling School, Stroud, went to the Chelsea v. Huddersfield football match in Huddersfield.

As he was walking away from the ground he was set upon by a group of hooligans and beaten-up. He died in hospital that night.

On the evening of Thursday 13th October his immediate family were in church at Eastington to receive the coffin at a short service before the funeral the next day. At the family's request, the Marling School Guild of Ringers supplied a band to ring a half-muffled quarter peal before the service. It was rung, of course, as a tribute to a modest, cheerful and industrious young man, who died before his time had come; but it was also rung in great sorrow at the meaningless tragedy that brought it about.

A.P.H.

Eastington,
Gloucestershire

Eastington, Glos. 13 Oct, 1260 P.B. Doubles: T Baker (member of Staff) 1, A Gibbons (Pupil) 2, P Hendy (Member of Staff) 3, I Bucknell (Pupil) 4, A Hodges (Old Boy - C) 5, R Bucknell (Old Boy) 6. In memory of Richard Aldridge and in sympathy for his family and friends, by the Marling School Guild of Ringers.



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