

Northern Universities Assoc.

MEET IN BIRMINGHAM

Not being one of the most centrally-placed Northern University Association members, the Birmingham University Society was pleased to welcome 29 visitors to their meeting on February 2 from the universities of Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. The majority were able to arrive on Friday night and witness the presentation of a 21st birthday present to Gill Barter, secretary of B.U.S.C.R. The German beer mug (not 1-litre size!) was filled for the first time by the master; others followed suit . . .

Our day-visitors from Sheffield and Leicester joined us on Saturday morning for the schedule of ringing around the majority of Birmingham city towers. The difficult task of organising ringing at each of the towers was very efficiently carried out by some of the more experienced members, enabling each person to ring to the extent of their capabilities. Selly Oak, Harborne and the Cathedral were visited in the morning, with Aston as the first in the afternoon, where we had to wrestle with 'Villa' supporters for parking spaces. Other afternoon towers were Erdington Abbey, Perry Barr and Sutton Coldfield, but the dozen or so ringers in the Leeds minibus only just made it to the last tower as their vehicle ran out of petrol.

The itinerary for the rest of the day was a meal at a Chinese restaurant, followed by a party in High Hall, nourished with a barrel of beer and five gallons of cider. A crowd of ringers is not always the best combination for a good party, but this one certainly got going with everyone on the dance floor by the end of the evening. Some managed to get up on Sunday for service ringing at Edgbaston, Kings Norton and St. Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral, rounded off by the usual gathering at the 'Gunmakers'.

Thanks, on behalf of the visitors, to Valerie Vere who put up most of them in Mason Hall, and also to Tony Greatrex who organised all the weekend activities. N.U.A. members please note—next year's meetings will be at Sheffield in the autumn term and at Lancaster in the spring.

L. G. P.

WHY GIRLS RING BELLS

By PHILIP NATAL

In *The Girl's Own Paper* of 12 October, 1895, is to be found the true, altruistic reason why girls become bellringers. This is how it was expressed nearly 80 years ago.

Apart from the thought of mere exercise and amusement, which after all are a selfish reason for undertaking a new pursuit, we cannot help thinking, and this is a result of experience, that there is genuine work for the Master to be done by our sisters if they will try bell-ringing.

The ringers in a country parish are often drawn from quite the rough, happy-go-lucky lads of the village, and not infrequently are a source of great trouble, or at least anxiety, to those responsible for the

ST. ALPHEGE, SEASALTER, DEDICATION



The large proportion of the local band, with their first ringing master, now a Norfolk clergyman, following the dedication of the bells. Ten of the band pictured here (all regular ringers) are under 20 and four of them are not yet teenagers. The advantage of a 3½ cwt. eight is that you can catch 'em very young.

On ladder: Stephen Jakeman (vice-captain), Phil Jakeman (steeplekeeper, by courtesy of the Whitechapel Foundry).

Back row (l. to r.): Pat Ackling (secretary), Michèle Short, Jim Phillips, Richard Offen, Paul Baker.

Middle: Katie Stark, John Legg (captain), Alex Phillips, Mervyn Short, David Cawley, John Phillips.

In front: Mark Hughes, Moira Short, Ian Marchant, Gary Saunders.

religious tone of the parish; in many cases they do not think of going to a place of worship, except when they ring the church-bells for Service, and, even then, we have too often seen those who have been engaged in calling the people to worship, themselves troop out of the church just before the service begins.

But further than this, they are very difficult to get hold of; they avoid the clergyman of the parish because they are afraid of him, or uncomfortably shy with him; they have as little to do with religion of any kind as possible, because somehow they think it unmanly. In a word, there is often no influence in a country village that can reach them, since they have given up going to Sunday school; and consequently they loaf about at street corners on Sundays idle, if not worse.

Now there is, we are confident, no influence with such lads equal to a lady's. If once a lady can get hold of them and make them trust her, there is little she cannot do with them. She need never be afraid of them, they will most certainly never insult her, and she may do them lasting good by her gentle firmness with them. At all events, she will make them, quite unconsciously, less rough and more gentleman-like, and that is something, and so prepare their minds to receive again the teachings

of Christianity, which they have almost forgotten. She will awaken in their hearts that feeling of chivalry towards women which is so necessary to a good man's character, and which is not dead in the breast of the ordinary English lad, but only sleeping for want of exercise.

And this she may do in a great measure, we believe, in the belfry, if she will condescend to learn and to take part in the pursuit of which they are in many cases so fond. Her presence in the belfry will tend to humanise and civilise the lads in a way which nothing else can do; it will suppress all coarse words and idle jesting which are not convenient, and by teaching the lads to reverence the lesser, herself to wit, she will gradually lead them to a reverence of the immeasurably greater One, her Maker and theirs.

[Mr. Philip Natal, who supplied this article, lives at 164 Hillbury Road, Warlingham, Surrey, CR3 9TE (phone: Upper Warlingham 3717). He has a volume of 52 issues of the *Girl's Own Paper* and says that if any ringer cares to call and see it, he would welcome him. It has quite a lot of technical jargon and as he himself is not a ringer is not able to judge the quality of the article. Perhaps someone in the area would like to visit Mr. Natal and report on the articles.—Ed.]