

Rededication of Wittersham (Kent) Bells

IT was cold and blustery on April 2nd, when the bells of St. John the Baptist, Wittersham, Kent, were rededicated by the Rector (the Rev. E. C. Lucey) during Matins.

The church was beautiful with the Easter decorations, lilies in the Sanctuary, daffodils, primroses and other flowers elsewhere. At the entry to the belfry steps there was a large bowl of multi-coloured polyanthus and smaller jars of the same flowers in little niches on the stairway. In the belfry one was greeted by the sight of red, white and blue sallows suspended above the red floor covering (kindly given by Mrs. Chester Beatty), and two arrangements of daffodils and forsythia.

General ringing for about an hour preceded the service. After singing the bellringers' hymn the Rector and choir, together with the family and friends of the man to whom the bells were to be rededicated, and the many ringers present, proceeded to the base of the tower, where the Rector rededicated the bells "to the glory of God and to the memory of Herman Anton Andreae."

Present at the service was his daughter, Lady Mallett (a member of the local band of ringers), at whose instigation the work was carried out and who was also responsible for having the ringing chamber floor repaired.

The sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr. Graham-Harrison, a retired clergyman from Northamptonshire, who has recently come to live in Wittersham, and who took as his two-fold text "They work—to the glory of God." He spoke along the lines that whilst bellringers were members of their own band or team, they were also members of the band within the whole Church.

After the service the ringers, numbering about 40, returned to the belfry for further ringing. The bells have been retuned, turned and rehung in a cast iron frame, with provision for two trebles to be added at a later date, and they now run in a clockwise direction. We were very sorry indeed to learn that the bellhanger from Taylor's foundry, Mr. Fred Thorold, had been ill and absent from work since he left us last December, and the Rector referred to this during his prayers for the sick.

Apart from the local band, those present included the Ashford District secretary (Mr. Alan P. S. Berry), former Ashford District Ringing Master (Mr. John Cooper) and ringers from Appledore (Kent), Battle, Sussex, Bethersden, Folkestone, Hothfield, King's College (Cambridge), New Romney, Rolvenden, Sevenoaks, Stone (Kent), Sturry, Tenterden and Winchester School. We were very pleased to receive as non-ringing visitors in the belfry Sir Victor Mallett, Lord Dunboyne and Mrs. Chester Beatty.

THE BELLS

The second, third and fourth are now the only bells existing in Kent by Josephus Carter, and are referred to in "Church Bells of Kent" as three of the finest bells in the county. The whole ring was restored and rehung, and a new treble added, in 1937, the gift of Mr. A. Max Wilkinson, churchwarden, and was rededicated on Easter Sunday, 1938. The fifth became cracked in August, 1938, and was recast in 1951 by Gillett and Johnston, and was rededicated on May 6th, 1951.

Tenor.—"John Wilnar made me. I. B. G. F. C. W. 1629. Weight 16 cwt, 2 qr. 20 lb.

Fifth.—Shoulder: Thomas Mears and Son, London Fecit 1808. Waist: Recast 1951 by Gillett and Johnston, Croydon. "O be Joyful in the Lord all ye lands: Serve the Lord with Gladness, and come before His Presence with a Song." Weight 13 cwt, 2 qr. 15 lb.

Fourth.—"Thomas Odiarne, Jeremy Odiarne, Isaake Odiarne gave this bell." 1609. Weight 11 cwt, 2 qr. 2 lb.

Third.—"Josephus Carter me fecit." 1609. Weight 9 cwt, 1 qr. 3 lb.

Second.—"Josephus Carter me fecit. 1609. Weight 7 cwt, 1 qr. 26 lb.

Treble.—Shoulder: Mears and Stainbank, 1937. Waist: "In Joyous Sound—Remember Kenneth Maximilian Wilkinson, Commander R.N., 9 Nov. 1936. Aged 43." James Fischer Wilkinson, M.C. Major R.F.A., France and Flanders, 1914—29 Oct. 1918. Aged 23.

A peal of Plain Bob Minor was rung on the bells on April 2nd, conducted by Crawford T. Hillis.

P. F. D.

WARWICKSHIRE'S OLDEST CHURCH

News from Wootton Wawen, the oldest church in Warwickshire, is that there is an active young band with 12 of 16 or under. Three have rung quarter peals, nine more are eager to, and one has rung a peal.

FROM DERBYSHIRE

The Chesterfield striking contest to be held at Clowne on May 13th was discussed at the well-attended monthly meeting at Creswell, North Wingfield, Wingerworth and Creswell are hoping to enter a team for the first time for several years. The contest should prove more interesting than last year, when only four teams competed. Mr. D. Davis, the new District Ringing Master, supervised the ringing.

WINCHESTER & PORTSMOUTH GUILD

The Andover District enjoyed the delightful little six at Longparish on April 1st. The Rev. K. S. P. McDowall conducted the service, and the ladies of Longparish belfry provided tea. The highlights of the evening at Longparish and Barton Stacey were touches of Cambridge Minor and three courses of London Surprise.

CHELTENHAM BRANCH NEWS

The Cheltenham Branch continued its evening practice meetings at Swindon Village, Lerkhampton and Charlton Kings this year.

There has been a change ringing band at the difficult five at Swindon for many years, and the Church Council is now considering providing a treble. There is a pit for this and no difficulties are apparent apart from minimum costs.

The neighbouring eight-bell towers are quite a contrast, one light and fast, the other slow and sonorous. There was a satisfactory attendance at both, methods being varied up to Bristol.

Meetings will be further afield a little later as the area is very long and narrow, the most distant necessitating Saturday meetings.

W. A. F.

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BELFRY GOSSIP

St. Uny Doubles rung at Lelant on April 3rd consists of plain course Stedman, Single, Grand sire Single in quick six. Composition: two singles, 60 changes apart.

"The Child's Guardian," the official magazine of the N.S.P.C.C., has in its March issue a fine picture of a group of students from St. John's College, York, giving a handbell recital in York for the N.S.P.C.C.

The Huntington Guild had a most successful Easter with five tower bell and two handbell peals, all conducted by A. Colin Banton. Also operating in the area was A. Martin Thorley, who conducted another three during the same period.

The Bath and Wells Association at its annual general meeting on Easter Monday abolished the compulsory contribution of 6d. per rope for a peal to "The Ringing World." In its place the Association will make a contribution out of general funds to the journal.

Three of the local band took part in the peal of Stedman Triples at Liss to honour the wedding of Bernard S. Gambrill, the vice-captain, and Miss Sheila Knox. This was the first of Stedman on the bells and our correspondent asks if it was a coincidence that the previous evening's last touch for Evensong, conducted by the bridegroom, contained all "singles."

Mr. Alan R. Pink and Mr. Christopher C. Clarke rang their 100th peal together at Daventry on February 25th.

One of those very rare events took place at Haresfield, Glos, on March 19th, when the whole band rang their first quarter peal—Grand sire Doubles. Congratulations to all concerned.

Regarding Mr. John R. Mayne's letter about conductors making sure their notations are accurate, his observations did not apply to Penden Surprise Major, as the correction was published a week before his letter. Regrets that the reference was not deleted.

Which leading composer composed a quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples that was two courses short of the usual quarter peal length? Which leading peal ringer called it on Easter Sunday without realising the error until it was pointed out to him afterwards?

Ringwood Sunday service band made history on April 3rd by ringing a quarter of Spiced Surprise Major (London, Bristol, Cambridge, Superlative and Yorkshire). It was the first quarter of Spiced Surprise Major ever rung by resident members of the Christchurch District of the Winchester and Portsmouth Guild.