

## **RINGERS TO HAVE STAND AT COUNTY SHOW MAY 2009**

The Ringers' Council has booked a stand on the "Churches" stand for the 2009 DEVON COUNTY SHOW from May 21<sup>st</sup> through to May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Ringers Council will have further discussions in February to consider proposals such as manning the stand daily 7am to 6pm, ringing for the daily 9am service and ideas of ringing demonstrations on the mini-ring and having the demonstration bell from St Petrock's available. It is hoped that with live performances of bell ringing and with ringers available to talk about the development and heritage of bell ringing that this will be a marvellous opportunity for people to discover the fascinating history and unique music of this ancient British art.

## **HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE 1100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DIOCESE?**

The Diocese of Exeter will be 1100 year old in 2009 and the day of celebration will be Saturday 27 June 2009. Archbishop Rowan Williams will be in attendance from Friday when events start at the Cathedral at 8pm. On Saturday there will be the outdoor 1100<sup>th</sup> Celebration Communion starting at 11.30am followed by events throughout the day at various venues within easy walking distance from the Cathedral. The day finishes with a firework display on the Cathedral Green at 10.30pm.

## **NORTH DEVON STEEPLEKEEPER'S DAY**

Following a notice in a recent Devon Calls, on Saturday 4 October, thirteen (lucky for us!) steeplekeepers joined me for a few hours at Chittlehampton, to discuss how we can better look after our towers and bells. Whilst I am not best qualified to tell you how it was received, those who came seemed to indicate that it was time well spent. We met at 10.00 for coffee in the church and started discussions soon after. The preliminary run through my list of items to which we should pay attention, always seems to provoke plenty of questions and therefore usually takes longer than I allow. However we were soon climbing the tower to view the eight bells and their iron and steel frame. I chose this tower for several reasons, not the least being that it is possible for observers to stand around three sides of the frame, without the need to climb all over it. As is usual (and as Gerald Arscott anticipated) there were a few items that needed attention, and each were discussed. I demonstrated my favoured way of tying a rope to a wheel, for those who wished to see it. The participants then repaired to The Bell for lunch (this was the other main reason for choosing Chittlehampton). After refreshment we motored over to St Giles-in-the-Wood to have a look at a timber frame installation. Again, and unusually, there is room here for observers to stand comfortably around three sides of the frame. Following the discussions I was kindly thanked for arranging the event, and those who wished stayed for a peal. I would like to thank Gerald Arscott and Chittlehampton PCC for permission to use their facilities and to Janice and Andrew Gist and St Giles PCC likewise. Chris Ley organised a quick "whip around" so that we were able to make a small donation to each tower, and assisted your truly with the "domestic" arrangements. I did say that I would arrange a similar event for those "down south", if there was sufficient interest. I have already had two persons do so, and so I now invite others to contact me and add themselves to the list. I think that twelve participants per session is about the right number so I will take the first dozen, and see how we go from there; a few more or less won't be a problem. I am still sorting out a suitable date and venues, and so will make contact with those on the list when these details are confirmed. I am aiming for Spring 2009. I am also happy to run the event in the north again, if there is demand (perhaps in the autumn of 2009).

*James Clarke.*

## **Phil Stevens and the Mini Ring**

Phil Stevens, bell captain at St Mary's parish church in Kingskerswell is very pleased. He has recruited two new members for the church bell ringers after a mini ring with six bells was set up in the parish centre. Thirteen year old Jack England and sixteen year old Joshua Tratt, are keen bell ringers. Philip said it is becoming more and more difficult to get young people interested and that he was very fortunate in having two. Jack still has quite a long way to go because he has only been ringing a year. Philip added that for any ringer there is always room for improvement as you are always striving to ring perfectly.

## **Lead Stolen from Church Roofs**

Police have warned of a crime wave sweeping Britain as thieves strip millions of pounds' worth of metal off buildings to ship to countries where demand is soaring. Recently, we were informed that the churches at Ashburton and Bickington had been targeted for their metal.

Thousands of properties - including hundreds of churches and other historic buildings with lead roofs - have been targeted by organised gangs who sell the metal on to unscrupulous dealers. It is then shipped overseas, either as scrap or after being melted down, to countries such as India, China and Dubai, which are struggling to find enough materials to keep their booming manufacturing and building industries supplied. According to Ecclesiastical Insurance, which provides cover for most Church of England properties, lead thefts have trebled while copper thefts have multiplied by 10 since 2005. In the past 16 months they have received 750 claims, totalling £1.2 million. If you find this worrying, read on.....

Three masked men suspected of stripping lead from a village church roof were allowed to go free because they could have been enjoying the view. Police responded quickly after churchgoers reported seeing the trio on Treeton Parish Church, in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. The suspects were caught wearing balaclavas and gloves with rolls of lead nearby, but officers were unable to prove an offence had been committed. Thieves have targeted the church, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book, ten times in as many months at a time of rising lead prices. Eighty five per cent of the roof has been stripped and church officials need to raise £100,000 for repairs and as much again to repair the tower. Builders put up scaffolding to replace the roof with stainless steel sheets, but thieves have used it to get easier access and steal lead they could not previously reach.

Four police officers, including a dog handler, were sent to the church to investigate reports of people on the roof after a Sunday service. Chf Ins Jason Harwin, of South Yorkshire Police, said: "When the officers arrived they spoke with three youths who were on the scaffolding. Officers searched all three youths and thoroughly examined the surrounding area but found no evidence that any offences had been committed, nor that the youths possessed any articles with which to commit any offences. As a result of this officers had no power to arrest these youths and they were warned to stay away from the property."

Carole Robinson, whose husband Ron is a churchwarden, said: "It was beyond belief. The police said they could claim they had only gone up to look at the view. It left people furious. We have been plagued with lead thefts. It's so frustrating that after so much damage and trouble, we finally catch men on the roof only for the police to let them off. The police arrived and the men came down. Lead had been removed and rolled up ready to be carried off. But the police said lead was not the kind of material you could get fingerprints from and they did not have enough evidence to take them to court because they could not link the men to the lead. It seems we are totally helpless and the law seems to be on the side of the criminals."

*Roger King*

## **Ottery St Mary Bellringers and the Pixie Day Legend**

The story behind Pixie Day started over 600 years ago. The town was ruled by pixies; mischievous little things who caused various strange events to happen. Bread did not always rise, beer would not always brew and wine sometimes went sour.... All of these things were blamed on the Pixies. When the large church was built up on the hill, much anxiety was caused among the Pixies for they believed their power would be weakened. The Pixies became even more concerned when they heard that bells were to be in the tower, the sound of which Pixies simply cannot abide. The Pixies set about to prevent the bells being hung; they asked all their wicked little friends in the underworld, such as elves and goblins, to interfere with the metal in the bell foundry and delay the casting of the bells. Their efforts worked for a while but eventually the bells were ready and the Monks travelled to Exeter to fetch them. The Pixies made one last attempt; they cast a spell on the Monks who walked straight past Ottery until they came to the edge of the cliffs by the sea, hauling the bells with them. Just at the tip of the cliffs, however, one Monk stepped on a thistle -"God bless my soul and Saint

Mary" he cried ... and this broke the spell. There were other troubles but eventually the bells were hung and blessed, the Pixies being banished to Pixies Parlour, deep in the banks of the river about a mile from the town. Once a year, on Pixie Day, the Pixies emerge from their cave and try to capture the bell ringers. This year, on June 27th The Sidmouth Herald recorded the attempts of the Pixies to regain control of the town, with photographs showing Ottery Brownies, Beavers, Cubs and Rainbows capturing some very un-reluctant bellringers.

*From the Sidmouth Herald*

## Lessons from a Freak Accident

In May a bellringer made the news for all the wrong reasons. Tony Merry, 58, was ringing at St Mary's Church, Charlbury but suffered a broken collar bone when he became tangled in the bell rope. He was lifted up by the rope which caught on his trousers before he fell about 3ft. Because he was in a cramped tower high in the building firefighters had to use a pulley system to lower him on a stretcher through a trap door. Dr Merry, a ringer of three years, told the BBC News website: "I don't remember much, but the rope got caught on my trousers and up I went. I had to let go or it could have been worse. I was knocked unconscious but the people who saw it happen said I fell about 3ft onto my shoulder. The incident did not put Dr Merry off bell ringing in the future. "As soon as my collar bone heals I'll be straight back doing it again," he added. "It was a bizarre accident and I've never heard of anything like it but I'm hoping it won't be repeated." *From the e-lists* section of RW it explained that "the trousers in question were multi-pocketed and the pockets full". Another journal reported that he was dragged from the floor after a big bunch of keys in his pocket got caught in the rope. In July, a follow-up article appeared on the BBC News website, announcing that Tony Merry was back in the bell-tower – this time for the sake of his health! His physiotherapist said the activity would help to improve muscle strength around the broken bone. Tony said 'it's great to be back. What happened in May was a freak accident and I will definitely be keeping my feet on the ground this time round.' Following the accident, there has been a review of safety procedures in all the local churches, to make sure that rescue crews have got proper access to the bell-towers. In the past, people have had heart attacks and the emergency services have been unable to use the trap-doors because there are boxes piled on top."

There are a number of important lessons to be learned from this saga. Without wishing to extend further the nanny-state mentality it seems common sense to wear appropriate clothing when ringing if bizarre accidents are to be avoided, particularly so for inexperienced ringers and those teaching them; to reassess tower first-aid kits and to review safety procedures for unexpected evacuation. And as a precaution, the wording of the relevant insurance policy should also be upgraded if necessary. Perversely, those unlucky enough to suffer ringing-related injuries may be reassured that ringing can also assist the healing process.

*Roger King*

## Health and Safety in Bell Towers: A Guide to Good Practice

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers has published several pamphlets on work in bell towers. One is '*Tower Changes*', being guidelines on procedures for work to bells and bell equipment, and another is *Fact Sheet 5*, dealing with Health and Safety matters during such work. The guidelines deal with day to day good practice in health and safety in bell towers, but do not cover precautions necessary during repairs and alterations. They are not a Code of Practice that could be applied to all towers, but they highlight points that should be taken into account when formulating that part of a church's Health and Safety Policy which applies to bell towers. For more information visit the revamped web site <http://www.cccb.org.uk>.

## Ringkly Ringers' Five Day Holiday

A group of Devon Change Ringers have an annual bell ringing holiday by coach and in 2009 they will be altering their June holiday to go to the Windsor area on the 20 July and returning on 24 July. Ringing will take place every day, including on the journey up and back and during the stay in Crowthorne.

If you are interested, deposits are now being taken by John Staddon, 96 Rivermead Road, Exeter EX2 4RL.

## Young ringers

On 4th October, a group of young ringers from various Devon towers had an autumn outing around Okehampton. They started with an hour's ringing at Inwardleigh, followed by three and a half hours at the Denmisch Simulated Campanile, with a short break for lunch. They investigated the dumbbells in the roof space, rang the six together, or rang alone with the 'Abel' programme to challenge listening skills. Enthusiasm was

sustained throughout and there were requests for a repeat visit. Photos are available on the Guild website <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/gdr/youngringersOct08.html>

## **Sampford Spiney**

After raising £60,000 there are now six bells at Sampford Spiney and they are rung for services on the first Sunday in each month from 2.30 to 3.00 pm, and for practice on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays from 7.30 to 8.30 pm. Anybody wishing to have a ring is more than welcome to join this newly formed band for any of these sessions.

The bells are to be dedicated by the Dean of Windsor, patron to the living, on Sunday 24th May 2009.

## **Devon Ringers' Carol Service**

The carol service this year will be held at Tiverton, St Peter's 20th December at 3pm along with the Ockment Valley and Exeter Cathedral Handbell Ringers. The collection will be in aid of a charity. Open ringing will be available both before and after the service.

## **New Chairman for Association after 30 years**

At the Association AGM in November a new Chairman, Ryan Trout ran the meeting. Brian Drake, the outgoing Chairman had been previously presented with a set of Whisky Crystal glasses. Brian has kept ringing active in all parts of Devon and has been extremely active and supportive. If not ringing he has been acting as a judge. Brian has taken ringing to the standard it is today where the Devon style of ringing is much admired throughout the rest of the country so much so that when ringers from Devon go on tour it is not unusual to have people outside the church listening to the ringing.

Ryan Trout the new Chairman was born on the 14th January 1979 at Freedom Fields Hospital in Plymouth, and started to ring in October 1989. Ryan has a love for organising trips to different areas of the UK and loves ringing with other likeminded individuals, people who know him will know that he loves Real Ale and food or is it food then ale! Ryan said, "Having been elected as Chairman of the Association I honour that people think me fit enough to carry out these duties." Ryan is under no illusion that his three year term will be a hectic and hard working time.

### **NATIONAL CHALLENGE**

The Chairman has stated that the National Challenge Event will change in 2009. He hopes to hold a double competition which will involve a 6 bell and 8 bell competition in two different towers in close proximity to each other. The provision date will be 19th September 2009 and entries will be restricted to 14 teams being 7 from Devon and 7 from outside the county.

### **PRESIDENT**

At the AGM in November the current President, Ray Mugridge handed the sash over to the new President, John Conibear. The President Elect is John Kelly, BEM who will serve as President from November 2009.

### **ASSOCIATION COMPETITIONS FOR 2009**

Novice	Lydford	14 March
8 Bell	Ipplepen	25 April
6 Bell Qual South	Whimble	9 May
6 Bell Qual North	Yarnscombe	9 May
Minor Final	West Down	23 May
Major Final	Lustleigh	13 June

## **Similarities**

During the latter part of WW2, when J. A. Trollope was the editor of The Ringing World, he produced a lengthy serialised article on the Revd. Henry Thomas Ellacombe which ran to 19 pages from the 4th August to the 19th November 1944. In it he referred to 'The Church Bells of Devon (1867 & 1872) as Ellacombe's magnum opus which it is if only his ringing books are considered. However if one looks at the sum total of all the books written by Ellacombe there is no doubt in my mind that his true magnum opus is 'The History of the Parish of Bitton in the County of Gloucestershire' which was completed in the last few years of Ellacombe's life.

Looking at the basic facts there are a few remarkable similarities which can be compared with John Scott's magnum opus 'Towers & Bells of Devon'.

TOWERS & BELLS OF DEVON was researched over a period of 54 years, John had two ringing colleagues as collaborators and it was published in two volumes by The Mint Press Exeter (2007).

THE HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF BITTON was researched over a period of 55 years. Ellacombe had two clerical collaborators, his son Canon H. N. Ellacombe who wrote the chapter on the flora of Bitton, and the Revd. H. H. Winwood who provided a chapter on the geology of the area. The book, which cost 2 guineas, was privately printed for the author in 2 parts in 1881 and 1883 by the Exeter printer William Pollard. Only a limited number were produced so it is rarely that one can find a copy for sale in the present day. One did appear at an auction of antiquarian books in 2006 and it went to a dealer for £500.

To sum up:-

1. The research for both books took a period of just over 50 years.
2. Each author had two collaborators
3. Both books were printed in two parts.
4. Both books were printed in Exeter
5. Both authors died shortly after publication.

*Richard Bowden*

#### **BELL HISTORIANS' WEBSITE**

The Bell Historians' Mailing List is an email discussion list founded on 7th February 2002, which has around two hundred members. It was set up to provide a forum for the discussion of matters relating to the history and archaeology of bells, their framework and fittings, and for the sharing of information on these and related topics. For more information please use this link:

<http://www.bellhistorians.org.uk/>

*Interchange is published as part of both Guild and Association newsletters. Any opinions expressed in Interchange do not necessarily represent those of the Guild, the Association or the Devon Ringer's Council.*

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