

THE GLOUCESTER & BRISTOL DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS: WOTTON BRANCH

CLANGOUR NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2021

*Deadline for articles for the next edition of Clangour (September 2021):
21st August 2021 to mattandsarah.lorkin@gmail.com*

NEWS FROM...

DURSLEY

Frank Byrne

The 10:00 Service on Easter Sunday at St James' will be live (streamed). We hope to ring for this subject to CCCBR recommendations which, at the time of writing, are under review. If we are allowed to ring, it will be the first since 1 November 2020 not counting the two people chiming 4 bells for the Christmas Day Service, 2020.

Along with almost 300 other towers as published in the Ringing World, we tolled a bell 100 times on Saturday, 27 February in memory of, and on the day of, the funeral of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

A significant birthday fell on our Thursday Zoom meeting at the beginning of March. Tim Soanes, long time tower captain of St. Mary's Berkeley, reached a milestone thought worthy of celebration. As many as were able gathered for this meeting to wish Tim a happy birthday with a rendering of the traditional song. Lizzie Lindsell made him a special cake and some people, reluctantly, broke their Lenten abstinence to drink his health. People were also invited to wear something suitable to mark the occasion. One attendee took this request the

extra mile and attended in his birthday suit (or as far as we could tell).

Ringing at Dursley, St James the Great

Tuesday 23 March 2021

Tolling

6 Elizabeth Byrne

Tolled after 1 minute silence at noon to mark the Day of Reflection for those affected by Coronavirus

Bob Grover

People often enquire about how Bob is, and this is a brief update on his wellbeing based on our visits to him to deliver the Parish Magazine (Messenger). He now has a full-time live-in carer who is quite happy for him to come out and have a chat if it's convenient. He is very happy to talk about general things such as the magnificent view from his garden - those of us that have been to his house during the days when he and Audrey used to entertain the Branch in their garden will remember it well. Bob's memory of recent activities and long past ringing events is very limited. Consequently, we limit discussing this and his significant involvement in Branch affairs in case his lack of memory about these things causes him distress. He seems not always to

remember that his wife, Audrey, has died. The overall impression he gives is that he is very content with his lot, that he gets paid for not going to work and that he is looked after very well. He will be 90 on May 6th this year.

With so little ringing activity taking place during lockdown, a note of what was happening in the Branch 40 years ago might be of interest. The March 1981 editorial of the Branch Newsletter informs us that ringing in the whole Branch seems to be on the 'up' with numbers at tower practices showing a steady increase. The editor thinks this is due to more people prepared to travel to different practices. He also reminds us that no visitor has a right to expect to further his or her own ringing at that band's expense. The editor invites the views of people on this topic. The May edition did bring forth some correspondence, notably from 'Struggling Stanley'.

More specifically, a quarter peal was rung at Dursley in February 1981 to bid farewell to the Browning family. Rev. George Browning from Newcastle, Australia had exchanged parishes with Rev. Eric Hoskin, from St James' for 9 months. We taught the three Browning boys, Pip, Richard and Tim to ring during their stay in Dursley. It was noted that the Friday night (silent) practices will never be the same again. A photograph including the three boys is in the tower.

HAWKESBURY
Colin Dixon

Matthew Higby, the bell engineer, came to St. Mary's Church at the beginning of March to take the final measurements for the bell frame. As he said this is the third time he has measured the bell chamber so hopefully at least two of the measurements will match and be right.

At the same time Ben Humphries was recording for a documentary of the Hawkesbury Bells installation Project. This is a very exciting prospect and he has some very good footage of the bells being tuned at the bell engineers and construction of the new bell ringing chamber already.

Ben has been recording the Badminton Benefice Church Services and streaming them on YouTube during the lockdown. He has also produced the wonderful Church Choir recordings played during the services. If the lockdown videos are anything to go by the documentary will be very professional indeed. Look for Badminton Benefice on YouTube to see the services.

How the documentary will be distributed has yet to be decided but I will keep you all informed.

As we move into April the most exciting prospect at St. Mary's is the delivery of the new bells to the Church towards the end of the month. We will then see them here on the ground. This is a spectacle not to be missed as it will be the only time they will be on the ground in St. Mary's for several centuries.

We are planning two celebrations of the bells although, like everything else, Covid is complicating the planning. The first celebration is the blessing of the Hawkesbury Bells when they are on the ground at St. Mary's, which will take place in Late May and unfortunately be restricted to 30 people. However, we are planning to open the Church for the whole of the following week to allow visitors to see the bells whilst they are on the ground.

The second celebration of the Bells will be in September and we are asking Bishop Rachel to bless the bells in the Tower when they are commissioned, before the bells are rung in earnest. This second celebration will

be after the Covid restrictions are ended so we are hoping that we can have a full congregation.

Meanwhile, we have restarted the Dumbbell training (the dumbbell is in my barn and outside, so we are restricted to 6 people) and we have acquired a set of hand bells so that we can practice change ringing as well. We also have a couple of new ringers who are already showing promise. Due to our excellent bell ringing trainer – James Joynson the Bell Master from Wotton – we may well be up to complement by September.

WICKWAR

Peter Juniper

Needless to say, general ringing for services and practice has not taken place at Wickwar since mid-March 2020 but the tower and bells have not entirely been neglected. The bells themselves have received a basic check to ensure that they remain in a ringable condition and I am pleased to record that all is well in the belfry. Meanwhile, occasional cleaning of the floor and surfaces in the ringing chamber has taken place, but the birds and/or bats that occasionally take up residence have had little reason to move out during the past year, consequently leaving some evidence of their occupation. Nothing that a dose of carpet cleaner and a bit of elbow grease can't put right!

The tenor bell has been called into action a few times and was rung on VJ Day in August, Remembrance Sunday in November, for the funeral of former ringer Jenny Pollard in January, to mark the funeral of Captain Sir Tom Moore in February, and also to mark the National Day of Reflection in March.

The Rector, David Russell, announced the ringing for Jenny's funeral on the village Facebook page and, as a result, he received 79 likes and 9 comments including the following: "It was really lovely to hear the bell. I was out walking and so heard clearly. So I was remembering Jenny as I walked. Nice to hear it at the close too. Such a lovely gesture for a sweet lady who I knew all the years I have been here". As David said, "We may not be ringing regularly, but when we do, people notice!"

I am beginning to formulate plans and protocols for re-starting general ringing later in the year - under the current "roadmap" that is unlikely to be before mid-May. There will be restrictions involving the numbers of ringers, the wearing of face masks, ventilation in the ringing chamber and the frequency and length of sessions, but it will be good to get those bells swinging and ringing again. We have a wedding to ring for in early July, so will need to get back into proper ringing!

REPORT ON BRANCH AGM NOV 2020

Barbara Metcalfe

The AGM was held on 14th November 2020 via Zoom because of Covid restrictions. 16 people attended including Committee members.

Following Rachel Parker's resignation (for health reasons) Chris Cooper took on the role of Management Committee Rep. The role of Assistant Ringing Master (following Dave Clarks resignation) was not filled because of limited ringing taking place at present. Rachel and Dave were thanked for their work in the past. There were no nominations received for other Committee Members and the current Committee agreed to continue.

Gill Carey (Treasurer) presented accounts for 2020 and these were accepted.

The project at Hawkesbury Upton to install eight bells was discussed. A report had been received from Colin Dixon of Hawkesbury, outlining the project, which is hoped will be completed by May 2021.

The Wotton Branch has been asked to host the Association AGM in 2022, and those present agreed.

THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ELLACOMBE'S INVENTION

Fen Marshall

One or two events have fallen a bit flat over the past 12 months. I thought it would be a shame if New Year's Eve went the same way so, after a Zoom supper with the other ringers, I strolled across the fields to Tortworth Church. Beautiful night: "Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone". Full moon so I didn't need a torch. I know the route fairly well- I've been doing it for over 40 years. When I got there I "donged" the tenor and then rang the carillon. It's not strictly a carillon, it's an Ellacombe Apparatus. A hammer strikes each bell controlled by ropes pulled by one person in the ringing chamber. The bell hangs "dead" rather than rotating, so the sound does not travel so far as when they are rung the normal way, full circle. However, this year, it was so cold and still, on New Year's Eve, that apparently the bells could be heard over the whole of Tortworth. Several people commented on how atmospheric it sounded. During Lockdown smaller towers have been unable to maintain a social distance so bells have remained silent. Luckily the few services we have held have meant that we have at least managed to ring the carillon. It is hard work and 10 minutes is quite enough. We call it "milking the cow!"



Revd. Ellacombe from Bitton, near Bristol, devised the mechanism so that all the bells could be rung by one trusted person without involving a band of unruly and perhaps drunken ringers! It is rumoured that he was a curmudgeonly old chap who had fallen out with his team of ringers

and had barred them from the tower. There remains a number of these systems around the Wotton area although they are not all still ringable.

On 26th June this year, there will be a worldwide celebration of the 200 year anniversary of Ellacombe's invention of the apparatus. Bells throughout the world will be ringing, starting in New Zealand. It is planned for them to be heard in each of the major time zones, played (this is a carillon; not proper ringing) at noon local time in each location. They will make their way to the UK, and then across the Americas, finishing in Vancouver, Canada, 17 hours after they first started.

I don't know how many local towers will take part but it would be nice to have a bit of a celebration; I've had enough of a flat year.

I'm very grateful to Bitton Parish History Group for bringing this anniversary to my attention on their website.

CAPTAIN SIR TOM MOORE

Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association

Thornbury, Gloucestershire

St Mary the Virgin

Sunday 28th February 2021 in 2m (18-2-19 in D#

100 Tolling

8 Chris White-Horne

Rung to celebrate the life of Captain Sir Tom Moore. We shall follow your lead.



LADIES IN THE BELFRY

Frank Byrne

Ladies taking part in ringing have not always been as welcomed. Objections have not only been from some male ringers but also from the clergy. Early in the 20th century, some correspondence in the Ringing World voiced these different views in a very direct and unambiguous manner. In 1911 a clergyman, upon finding a lady ringer among the band, instructed the tower captain that she was forbidden to enter the belfry under any circumstances whatever. He claimed that the belfry is not a fit and proper place for any female as it might lead to questionable actions. The lady in question was the daughter of the tower captain.

A subsequent editorial made the point that the Rev. Gentleman makes is a reflection of ringers which is of a most unkind nature. The same editorial does not refute the claim that ringing is not a suitable hobby for ladies to follow but only to note that there may be, perhaps, some divergence of opinion. There was much correspondence on this issue including some from lady ringers who, understandably, refuted the clergyman's view and spoke only of the courtesy and respect they had experienced from their male contemporaries in the belfry.

One male correspondent, in support of the clergyman's view, voiced his objections as these:

- 1 They will do men out of their hobby
- 2 They will be given all the privileges, while the gentlemen ringers will have to 'take a back seat' and look on
- 3 They will do as that vicar of Quorn once said; 'Cause all the trouble'

This correspondent also noted that if the ringing world wants a better class of men to learn to ring, viz. the middle-classes, then things would be better.

The ensuing correspondence was very much in favour of lady ringers and the impression mustn't be given that lady ringers were universally unwelcome in the belfry. During her six weeks visit to London from Boston, USA, the 22-year-old Miss Margaret Homer Nicols records the amount of help she was given by the London ringers. This help enabled her to progress from being hardly able to ring a plain course of Grandsire Triples to ringing five peals. But a significant element against lady ringers existed. A change of rules by The Ancient Society of College Youths, (ASCY founded in 1637) resulted in lady ringers being unable to be elected after 1919. Prior to this date they had been allowed as members and had rung peals for the Society. As reported in the 2018 October edition of Clangour, Miss Margaret Homer Nicols is recorded as having rung 4 peals for the Society in 1902, including 2 in hand. However, on 30 December 1919, the Society voted to change the wording of their rules that would prevent lady ringers from being elected to membership. Current lady members could continue. This wasn't questioning their presence in the belfry, just excluding their possible future membership to the ASCY, upsetting 282 years of tradition.

The minute of the meeting on 30 December 1919 records this:

Master Charles H Horton in the chair.

Mr A. A. Hughes brought forward his motion suggesting that there may be a large number of ladies seeking membership to this Society, which, he thought would be breaking away from old traditions, and he proposed that to rule 1 after the word members 'male' be added in brackets, and from rule IV the words 'or she' should be deleted, and that ladies no longer elected as ringing members.

Mr Newton seconded this proposition.

Some discussion followed and voting was 27 for the proposition and 6 against.

The date of the meeting, the day before New Year's Eve, and the smallness of the members present might raise suspicion that it was a put-up job. However, it wasn't until the 1999 October meeting that this decision was reversed and that ladies were once again allowed to become ringing members of ASCY; the voting being 418 in favour; 295 against; 1 abstention and 3 spoiled. The first lady to be admitted after 80 years was Anne Parkin of Hexham, elected in January.

Just after the change of rules in 1919, a spoof conversation appeared in the Ringing World in 1920:

The Ancient Society

By An Entire Outsider

So, the College Youths have decided to exclude lady members; and that in a year when all sex disqualifications have been legally re-moved, and when one woman has taken her seat in Parliament and others on the Bench of Magistrates. What are we to think of it? Is it a case of the old lady trying to keep back the Atlantic with a broom; or of the Seven Thousand in Israel who refuse to bow the knee to Baal? You may be sure that the society will be hotly condemned in all quarters. And yet it seems there is another side to the matter.

Mr John Hawthorn leaned back in his chair and smoked for a minute or two in silence. Then he continued, 'the partisans of lady ringers consist entirely of fond fathers, lovers, sentimentalists and leader of bands put to it to find enough men for Sunday ringing. Take them away and you will find the Exercise has no particular liking for lady ringers'

'But surely', I said, 'it is it is only stupid and unreasonable prejudice that is dying out.'

'Prejudice, I grant you,' he answered 'and un reasonable, and perhaps dying out; but stupid – no. I should call it a rather subtle form of the struggle for existence. Your male ringer has a prevision of the coming time when he will be squeezed out of the belfry altogether. Not that I personally, object to lady ringers as ringers. But I do like good striking.'

'The inference being –' I began

'You can draw your own inferences' he interrupted, 'and then the responsibility will not be mine.'

'But surely,' I objected, 'some ladies can strike. What about Miss Fulmer? She rings and strikes Surprise methods as well as we could expect of any man.'

'One swallow does not make a summer,' he replied, 'and of course there are exceptions. Do you expect us to be logical in our prejudices? All the same, I do not think the College Youths have handled this matter in the deftest of manner. If I'd had the ordering of the matter, I should have said nothing about sex. I should simply have made a rule that nobody could become a member of any society unless he or she could ring rounds properly.'

'That's very drastic' I said.

'Very drastic and very effective.' He replied. 'Not only would it get rid of the present trouble, but I calculate that it would reduce the Exercise to three-sixteenths of its present size. Of course, there would be a lot of anger and bad language among the rejected, they would probably go and ring peals of Stedman Triples and London Surprise Major to pretend they are really ringers. But it would be worth it. We that were left would get some decent ringing.'

'Should we be left?' I queried.

He did not reply directly, but helped himself to some more beer.

'No, I am afraid that the College Youths have not handled the matter in the best way. They mean well, but they will fail. The old women will no doubt keep the young women out for a time; but in the long run they'll find the young ones too strong for them. I don't expect to see a female Archbishop of Canterbury in my time, the obstacles are rather many. A she Prime Minister is more likely, and I shall be surprised if we shan't have before long, a 'mistress' presiding at the Coffee Pot, and calling Stedman Cinqs from the eleventh at Saint Pauls.'

WOTTON BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman	Chris Cooper
Ringling Master	James Joynson
Assistant Ringling Master	Vacant
Secretary	Barbara Metcalfe
Treasurer	Gill Carey
Clangour Editor	Sarah Lorkin
Publicity Officer	Terry Chivers
Management Committee Rep	Chris Cooper

REGULAR PRACTICES

Monday

Chipping Sodbury	19:30-21:15	Antony Gay
Cromhall	19:30-21:00	Sue Wray
Stone	19:30-21:00	Jeremy Sargent
Yate (1 st and 3 rd only)	19:30-21:00	Barrie Fletcher

Tuesday

Wotton-under-Edge	19:30-21:00	Adrian Davis
Upper Cam	19:30-21:00	Alex Reeves

Wednesday

Berkeley	19:30-21:00	Tim Soanes
Coaley	19:30-21:00	Terry Chivers
Horton	19:30-21:00	Rex Isaac

Thursday

Dursley	19:30-21:00	Elizabeth Byrne
Tortworth	20:00-21:00	Michael Goom
Stinchcombe	19:30-21:00	James Joynson
Wickwar	19:15-21:00	Peter Juniper

Friday

North Nibley	19:30-21:00	Wynne Holcombe
Slimbridge	By arrangement	Huvin Thompson

SPECIAL PRACTICES

Berkeley – 3 rd Wednesday of the month	19:30-21:00	10 bell practice	Tim Soanes
---	-------------	------------------	------------

Cromhall – 2 nd Thursday of the month	14:00-15:30	Surprise Minor	Peggy Collett
--	-------------	----------------	---------------

Chipping Sodbury – 3 rd Friday of the month	19:30-21:00	8 Bell practice	Dave Clark
--	-------------	-----------------	------------