

Volume 20 Issue 3 – December 2015

Wheathampstead Outing November 2015

Laura Hill and Ben Quinn

Just a few weeks after Laura Hill started to learn to ring she had the idea that she would love to ring at St John the Baptist, Kingsthorpe, Northampton where her father rang, to celebrate what would have been his 100th birthday. Harry Freeman Shepherd or Free as he was known died in 1984, and rang for 20 years at St. John the Baptist and Laura remembers the whole family tagging along with him on bell ringers' outings. Unfortunately the bells are not rung regularly at St. John the Baptist on a Sunday anymore. This didn't deter Ben her teacher who volunteered to arrange a bell ringer's day out, and promised Laura she would be ready to ring rounds and simple call changes by then, a daunting task, considering Laura was learning in St. Helens Wheathampstead, probably the most difficult bells in Hertfordshire to ring.

On Saturday 14th November a band of 12 ringers from, Wheathampstead, Sandridge and Hatfield set off to ring in 3 towers in Northamptonshire.

Three Churches with 6 bells of similar weights to those at Wheathampstead were chosen, The first church was St. George at Wootton,



where the band was greeted by one of the resident bell ringers offering a welcome cup of coffee and a cake. As there were no loos there, the low branches of the churchyard Yews came in very handy!

Next was All Saints, Harpole, where again the band were made most welcome.

Finally, the band rang at St John The Baptist, Kingsthorpe to an audience of Laura's Brother, Sister, Husband and various other relatives who expressed their appreciation to all the bell ringers for coming and bringing back such fond memories of their father.

Afterwards everyone retired to The Queen Adelaide, where a social lunch was enjoyed by all. Oh, and Laura did manage to ring rounds and call changes at all three churches, thanks to the help and encouragement from all the band

A Visit to South Oxfordshire

Alison Evans, St Michael's, St Albans

The St Michael's outing took place on a lovely autumn day at the beginning of October – it was dry, not too cold and, after a slightly dull start, there was even some welcome sunshine. We had decided to visit South Oxfordshire to give us a chance to catch up the Hughes-D'Aeth family who many readers will remember as loyal supporters of ringing in the St Albans District until they moved away in 2009.

Last year, we left organising the outing rather late and we ended up with only nine ringers so, although it was enjoyable, it was quite hard work. This year, we started to make the arrangements and canvass support in plenty of time. This paid off so, when we met at the first tower, there were eighteen ringers all together, including various family members and friends. Cathy and Edward H-D rang with us all day; John conducted a peal for the College Youths in London in the morning but joined us at the penultimate tower.

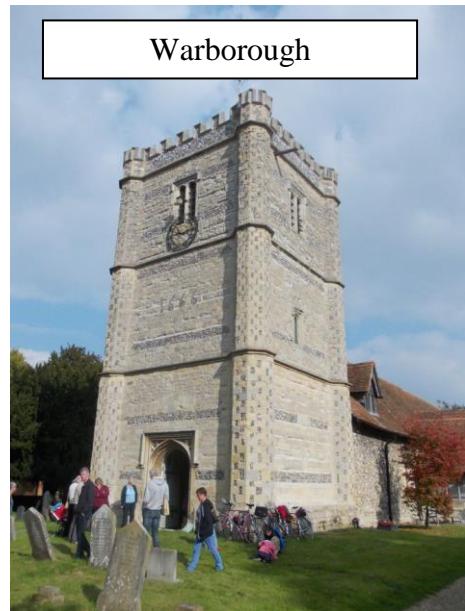
We began the day at Watlington (24cwt, 8). The ringer who let us in told me, rather sadly, that the South Oxfordshire branch of the ODG never hold ringing meetings there, as the bells are heavy and have a long draught. When my turn came to ring them, I didn't think they were all that bad, although I gather that those who rang round the back wouldn't necessarily share that opinion.

Next, it was on to the easy-going ring at Brightwell Baldwin (8cwt, 6).

The last tower before lunch was the lightest ring of the day at Berrick Salome (7cwt, 6). It was slightly off the beaten track and some people had a bit of trouble finding it but soon everyone was there. The bells had been out for several months of 2015 for a major refurbishment so they went beautifully and we enjoyed the ringing. I had originally hoped to visit this tower in the afternoon but it turned out there was a three o'clock wedding so I had to rearrange the schedule slightly to find a more convenient time. Although there is no access to the church from the ringing room, the church was open, so we were able to enjoy the ancient building which has a gallery dating back to 1676 overlooking the nave and had been beautifully decorated for the wedding. Some members of the party went to the pub in Berrick Salome for lunch but the majority moved on to Warborough for a picnic on the spacious village green, before adjourning to the Six Bells for refreshment. I found out later in the afternoon from the local ringer who let us in that the village is a frequently-used filming location for the Midsomer Murders television series.

On the lych gate at Warborough (10 cwt, 8), there was a notice to welcome us. I have never seen one of these before and I'm afraid I have certainly never thought of putting one up when we've had visitors: it was a very nice touch. The

Warborough



more cynical members of the party wondered whether it was to let the villagers know that, whatever they might hear from the tower that afternoon, the local band were not responsible... But the bells went very nicely and we rang well.

Two 'Elevens' on Clock Face



The fifth tower was Benson (14 cwt, 8). An unusual feature of this church is that its clock has two elevens on its face - the ODG website says this is because the nine was painted upside down. The bells were a bit weightier than some of the others during the day and ringers were beginning to tire but nevertheless we achieved some enjoyable ringing. Quite a few people left after this tower, leaving only ten of us to move on to the final ring of the day at Little Milton (11cwt, 6), the Hughes-D'Aeths' home tower. To reach the ringing chamber, you have to climb a very steep ladder which, unfortunately, wasn't to everyone's taste. Although the rest of us rang a number of touches, we were happy not to linger upstairs too long and soon adjourned for a delicious evening meal at the local pub.

Over the course of the day, we rang a variety of different things, ranging from rounds for Steve's nephew - whose blows at Brightwell Baldwin were his first away from his home tower - through called changes, Plain Bob, Grandsire Stedman and spliced Plain and Little, to Cambridge, Norwich and London. Although we are an eight-bell tower, there are only six ringing members of the St Michael's band so we have rung a lot of Doubles in recent months, although, to try to make it less run-of-the-mill, we have attempted a number of variations, including April Day (Plain Bob with Grandsire Singles) which had an airing at Brightwell Baldwin. Another favourite is Hertfordshire Bob Doubles which I read about in a Ringing World article about Non-Method Blocks. It was recognised by the Central Council as a method until the 1950's at which point it was outlawed for having eight consecutive blows in one position (very long fifths) in the plain course. However, it is an enjoyable method, and perhaps not as easy as you might think. (Edward H-D called a very unusual touch!) On account of our lack of practice on eight bells, I was a bit worried we might quickly exhaust our repertoire so we decided to have a go at Middlesex Bob Triples. This turned out to be very musical and after a couple of plain courses at the early towers, we rang a touch of it at Benson which, I think, was a first for everyone involved.

Making the arrangements turned out to be a bit more complicated than I would have liked but, in the event, the company was good, the weather was pleasant, none of the bells were too horrid and we achieved some nice ringing, so I would like to thank everyone who took part.

A Double Celebration Peal at Harpenden

Charles Pocock

It was Amy Coburn who reminded me that the double anniversaries mentioned fell in 2015 and suggested that it would be a suitable opportunity to get a peal organised to mark the occasion. At that time I was unsure of being able myself to ring for three hours and I decided to seek the help of a former Harpenden Ringing Master, Bernard Taylor, to see whether he could put a band together to include as many as possible of the Harpenden ringers. In the event only Christine and I were available from our local band.

The details of the peal rung are:

Saturday, 8th August 2015 in 2 hours 55 minutes

A PEAL OF 5025 YORKSHIRE SURPRISE MAJOR

Composed by B H Taylor

- 1 Stephen W Penney
- 2 Hilda C Ridley
- 3 Graham R D Lay
- 4 Charles F Pocock
- 5 Christine C Darby
- 6 Bernard H Taylor (Conductor)
- 7 Andrew W R Wilby
- 8 Simon J Ridley

Rung to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the daughter Church at All Saints and the 25th anniversary of the installation of new bells at St Nicholas.

It was a great pleasure that Andrew Wilby agreed to take part in the peal. He was a Harpenden taught local ringer in a 1965 peal details of which are recorded in the ringing room on a board above the cupboard and which included Amy Coburn herself.

Bernard's composition was both complex and musical. And, very cleverly, its length – 5025 changes – neatly reminded us of the anniversaries being celebrated.

Remembering a Bellringer.

Peter Dalling

William J Southam 21st January 1928 – 6th November 2015

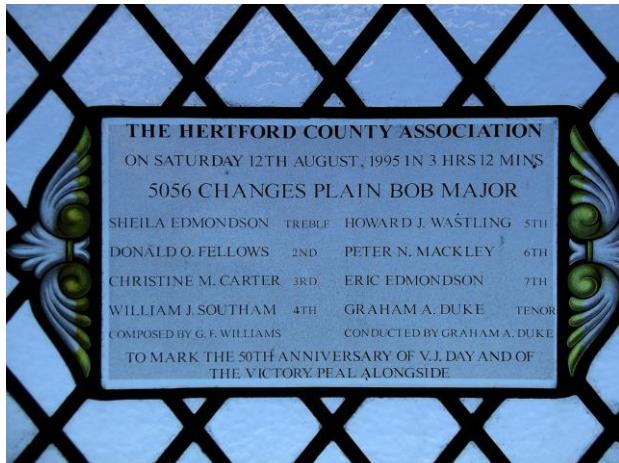
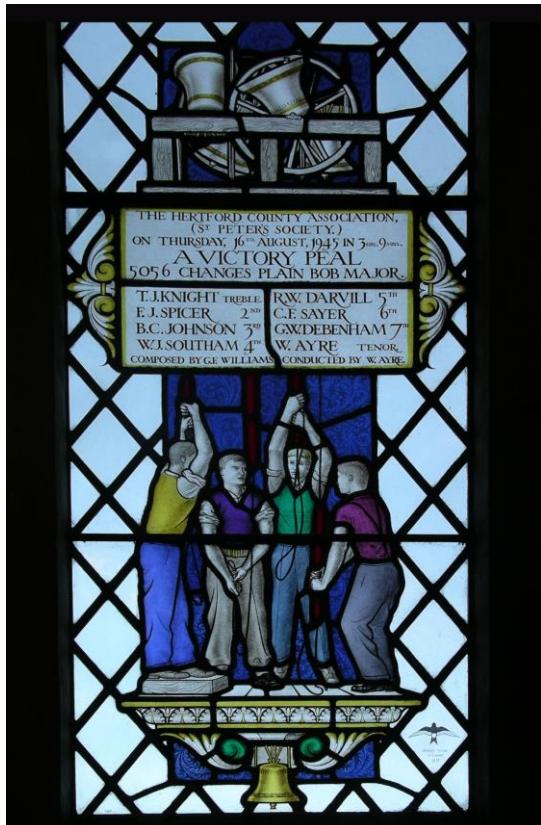


Jack will be remembered by the bellringers for his dedication to ringing and leadership of the North Mymms band for many years.

Jack will also be remembered for his reminiscences of his early life living with his parents in Hastings and then, his school years in St. Albans where he was evacuated, in 1940, with his school, to what was hoped was a quieter environment during the war years. Then his post war

experiences in the Royal Corps of Signals in the north of England and occasionally his career and travels all over the country on behalf of Marconi Instruments.

For many years he rang at St. Peter's, St. Albans. He is named, along with his brother Tom, on a peal board, unusually formed in the stained glass of the north window of their ringing chamber. It commemorates the victory peal in 1945. He also rang the same bell 50 years later and this peal is also in stained glass.



From the death of Tom Lock in 1992 until fairly recently, he was also the main source of teaching new ringers. He was always the first to arrive and open the ringing chamber on Wednesday practice nights and Sunday mornings. For many years he was tower captain, secretary and steeple keeper; liaising with the Vicar on wedding ringing, corresponding with other bands wishing to ring our bells and maintaining the bells when ropes frayed or needed adjusting or if stays cracked, making new stays at first or ordering new, ready-made ones from the bell founders in later years. With the death of Tom a set of the tower keys went missing and Jack, who had the lathe and the skill to use it, made three more sets of keys so that on the rare occasion when he was not present to open up other ringers were able to carry on without him. He also made a fully working scaled down bellframe complete with string rope, sally, all the pulleys, slider and stay to house a small brass bell as a teaching aid.

His knowledge of ringing "methods" and calling made him the main caller for the many methods rung over the years. As the years passed and age took its toll he passed on the duties of tower secretary to Adrian Sherlock and passed on the bell maintenance and some of calling skills to others in the band. He took more of a back seat with others taking over the calling of methods more frequently, with him suggesting alternative callings, as we progressed, to make the ringing more interesting.

His last ring in a method was on the 19th August 2015.

Band on Hand for Wedding Ring

Susan L'Estrange

The bells rang out at St Helen's Church, Wheathampstead, to celebrate the wedding of Louise Barnacle to Tom Jenks on Saturday 22 August and the newly-weds, more than anyone, appreciated the fact that they were listening to all eight bells, since both of them have recently joined the flourishing band of new – and old – ringers.

Since the bells in St Helen's are notoriously hard to ring because of the long ropes, it's often been a struggle to find more than six ringers for weddings (even with drafting in ringers from other towers). The last time all eight were rung for a wedding at St Helen's was for Stuart Bowman and Louise Clark on 30 September 2006 – and that was because Louise is the daughter of long-time Wheathampstead ringer Gill Clark. But no-one can remember when all eight were rung for a wedding by a home band.

Tom and Louise will discover that it's a great advantage to have a partner who understands and is prepared to listen to the many triumphs and disasters of learning to ring – most people just glaze over after the first 15 minutes (or

seconds, would you believe?!) and many spouses are (or become) a bit fed up with the ringing obsession. So the band were especially proud to ring for our new colleagues, and we wish them

every success and much harmony, peals of laughter, and not too many clangers, as they sally forth in their married lives together.

Asbestos stops the bells

It turned out that they were lucky to get their wedding in the church at all because a couple of weeks later a builder investigated a hatch above the pulpit and discovered the flue of the Victorian heating system, which, wouldn't you know it, was lined with asbestos. The church was declared a no-go-zone while it was investigated, and sure enough it's the worst kind of asbestos, and there was much tutting and sucking of teeth and wondering whether we'd be celebrating Christmas in a stable somewhere.

However we were eventually allowed back in for Remembrance Sunday when Tower Captain Roger Gedye tolled the tenor. So huge thanks to the local towers (Sandridge, Hatfield and Lemsford) who accommodated many of us (including our band of beginners) during the three month 'asbestos period' – and you're all invited to pop in on Monday evenings from 8pm if you'd like to join us on practice night.



Tom & Louise Jenks with the home band (Chris Male, Brian Day, Roger Gedye, Ben Quinn, Carol Tizard, Anne Howie, Susan L'Estrange – and Dianne Crowder, who is our teacher and honorary home band member in that she's attended more practices than almost anyone in the band)

Young@Herts

Jennifer Johnson organised a number of quarter peals for Young@Herts members over the weekend of Friday 27th to Sunday 29th November.
Congratulations to all who scored a 'first'.

Datchworth, Hertfordshire

All Saints
Saturday, 28 November 2015
1260 Plain Bob Doubles
1 Nicholas C Field
2 Elliot James
3 Judith E Titmus
4 W Robert E T Goss
5 Graham R D Lay (C)
6 Euan J Gilfillan
1st quarter - 6

Great Amwell, Hertfordshire

St John the Baptist
Saturday, 28 November
1300 Plain Bob Doubles
1 Euan R M Thomas
2 James A Coleman
3 Oliver J Bond
4 Andrew F Case
5 Robert Gurney (C)
6 Ashley F E Monck
In memory of Grandmother of 6 who sadly
passed away earlier this year.
First as Conductor

Harpenden, Hertfordshire

St Nicholas
Saturday, 28 November 2015 in 46 mins
1280 Cambridge Surprise Major
1 Claire Below
2 Elliot James
3 James A Coleman
4 Nicholas C Field
5 Ann Evans
6 Michael C Below
7 Charles F Pocock
8 Richard Sales (C)
First Treble Bob-1.
First Cambridge Major-2.

South Mymms, Hertfordshire

St Giles
Saturday, 28 November 2015 in 42 mins
1260 Plain Bob Doubles
1 Edward Bourton
2 Robert Gurney
3 Nicholas C Field
4 Oliver J Bond (C)
5 Richard Sales (C)
6 Oliver Bourton
First Quarter peal-1.
Joint conducted.

Hertford County Association

Tring, Hertfordshire
SS Peter and Paul
Friday, 27 November 2015 in 42m
1260 Plain Bob Minor
1 Daniel Smith
2 Howard Collings
3 Ann Evans
4 Robert Gurney
5 Christopher W Hoare
6 James A Coleman (C)

First Minor 1 & 4
First Minor as Conductor
1000th Quarter Peal 2