

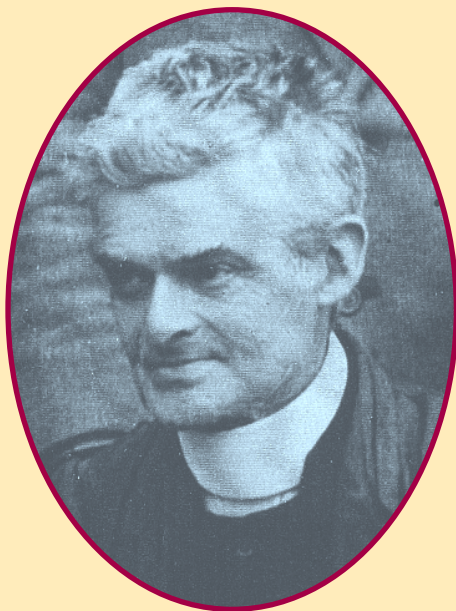
GIANTS OF THE EXERCISE II

More Notable Ringers of the Past

by

DR. JOHN C. EISEL, FSA

(Hon. Librarian C.C.C.B.R. from 1992)



The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

2006

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By the same author:

The Bells of Hereford Cathedral.

The Church Bells of Montgomeryshire.

William Greenleaf. (in *Trans. Wool.Nat.Fld.Cl.*)

Spires. (in *Trans. Wool.Nat.Fld.Cl.*)

The Study of Church Bells in Wales.

Change Ringing: The History of an English Art. (Co-author)

Dore Abbey. A Definitive History. (Contributor)

Treasures on Earth. (Contributor)

Hereford Cathedral. A History. (Contributor)

Tewkesbury Abbey. History, Art and Architecture. (Contributor)

The Church Bells of Breconshire.

The Pubs of Bromyard, Ledbury, and East Herefordshire. (Co-author)

The Pubs of Hereford City. (Co-author)

The Pubs of Hay-on-Wye and the Golden Valley. (Co-author)

The Church Bells of Merioneth.

Herefordshire Clockmakers and Watchmakers. (Co-author)

Giants of the Exercise

ISBN

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Introduction

The kind reception given to the first volume of *Giants of the Exercise*, together with the encouragement of the Publications Committee of the CCCBR, has caused me to produce another volume of biographies. This was begun soon after the publication of that earlier volume, but it too has proved rather longer in coming to fruition than I would have liked, being interrupted by other projects and a long-anticipated house move.

In essence the idea has been similar to the previous volume, in that the ringing biographies of 28 notable ringers have been linked together thematically. In this case the biographies are of the more recent past, and give an outline history of some aspects of the development of change ringing over the last 150 years or so, but with a bias towards the twentieth century. In some ways this has proved rather more difficult than with the first volume. The subjects of the biographies have been my own personal choice, and while it is unlikely that anyone will ever agree on the selection, they have been chosen to give a balance to the contents, and, of course, reflect the material that is available. Although peals are used to mark the progress made by each subject, it must not be thought that is the only criterion, rather that because peals are recorded, the material is available. Because of the way the Exercise has developed, certain events are mentioned in more than one biography, but are dealt with in detail where most appropriate. Each chapter, however, is freestanding.

Most of the material used has appeared previously in the pages of *Bell News* and the *Ringling World*, but I have also used unpublished material in the Central Council Library. Where a biography has depended to a greater extent on a single article or obituary, I have acknowledged this in the text. However, even in such a case I have endeavoured to add extra information that I considered relevant or of interest. I should like to thank Martin Fellows for the loan of Bill Short's pocket book, and Mary Bliss for checking John Austin's peal book for me. Also to Richard James for access to James George's peal book.

The illustrations used have mostly been taken from material in the Central Council Library, but the fine photograph of William Chattell is reproduced by kind permission of the St. Martin's Guild. Photographs taken from *Bell News* and the early issues of the *Ringling World* are not of the standard that appertains today. Thanks also to Ruth James for providing the photograph of A.J. Pitman, her grandfather.

John C. Eisel
June 2006

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CHAPTER ONE

The Lady Ringers

The introduction of ladies into the belfry is one of the most outstanding 20th-century developments in change ringing, at a stroke doubling the number of potential ringers. The seeds were sown in the 19th century, when changes on handbells were rung by a number of pioneering ladies. An early one was Miss Elizabeth Deacon, who rang the 5th and tenor bells to a 720 of Kent Treble Bob Minor at Besselsleigh on 10 October 1859. The two other ringers were members of the Appleton band. However, it is not clear if the bells were retained in hand, or 'lapped'. Rather more certain are the performances of the Trelawney family. Colonel Harry Trelawney was a pioneer of change ringing in Cornwall. Born in 1826 and interested in ringing from his boyhood, it was not until 1863 that his attention was called to change ringing. With only the aid of Hubbard's *Elements of Campanalogia* he and his band of ringers at Calstock managed to ring a 120 of Grandsire Doubles, and then on 24 June 1866 the first 720 of Grandsire Minor in Cornwall was rung there. Clearly an enthusiast, he taught his wife, three daughters and son to ring changes on handbells. When the Rev. H.T. Ellacombe gave a talk on ringing at the Athenaeum in Exeter in 1869 the Trelawney family rang a course of Grandsire Cinques double-handed by way of demonstration. The handbell band was capable of ringing double-handed touches of Grandsire and Stedman Triples, Grandsire Caters and Cinques, although no peals were rung.

The honour of being the first lady to ring a peal on handbells was claimed by Mrs. George Williams. She was born in Meonstoke, Hampshire, on 16 November 1860, and in 1881 married George Williams, then of Brighton. Although she never learned to ring on tower bells, she became competent in ringing a pair of handbells, and had an ambition to ring a peal 'in hand'. In 1892 Thomas Blackbourn and Alfred Goddard were in Brighton, rehanging the bells of St. Nicholas and the opportunity was taken to attempt a peal 'in hand'. This was one of Grandsire Triples, rung at the third attempt on 24 March 1892. The band, in order of ringing, was Mrs. George Williams, Thomas Blackbourn, George Williams and Alfred Goddard. George Williams conducted, and it was his first handbell peal.

As for tower bells, we do not need to take too seriously Jack Goldsmith's jocular after-dinner reference to a band of lady ringers entertaining Samuel Pepys at St. Olave's, Hart Street, in 1670 (*Ringling World* 1937, p.720). However, there are later references that are indisputable. In 1873 Fred Day, the noted bellhanger from Eye, Suffolk, rehung the bells at Laxfield. When this had been done an old woman by the name of Chenery came to the tower and rang a bell, to the amazement of the bellhangers. She was apparently related to the well-known family of ringers of the same name who formerly rang at the nearby tower of Wilby. In 1890 *Bell News*

reported that there was a band of lady ringers at Saffron Walden, Essex:

‘The band of lady ringers at this town, who are under the tuition of Mr. F. Pitstow, rang upon the tower bells rounds and call-changes in honor of her Majesty’s birthday. We imagine it is the first time in history that a peal of Church bells has been rung by a band of the fair sex.’

There seems to be no other reference to this band and in 1896 the columnist Jingle commented that the band did not seem to do anything, and indeed had probably lapsed by that time.

The honour of being the first lady to ring at peal on tower bells belongs to

ROSETTA ALICE WHITE



Alice White at the time that she rang her first peal.

who was born in Basingstoke on 8 October 1880. Her father was Henry White, a well-known ringer and conductor, and from a very young age she was accustomed to visiting the belfry with him, and sit during chiming for Sunday services. In 1887 Henry White became steeple-keeper and as a consequence spent more time in the tower; Alice went along to help him chime. At about the age of 11 she started to learn to handle a bell, and was soon able to ring rounds, and help with Sunday Service ringing, as the bells were then rung for Sunday Service rather than chiming. In 1893 she qualified for membership of the Winchester Diocesan Guild, and on 12 February 1896 rang the treble to a peal of Grandsire Triples at Basingstoke, which was credited to that Guild. She was then only 15 years old. This was commented on very favourably in the editorial of *Bell News*, which concluded its comments by saying:

‘The name of ALICE WHITE will long be remembered and treasured by the Exercise. If other young ladies can be induced to enter into the practice under similar conditions, it will be a good thing for them.’

No hint there of any prejudice against lady ringers.

She continued to make progress in method ringing, and in September 1896 rang her first quarter peal of Stedman Triples, after a failed peal attempt for Grandsire Triples. This was commented on by the columnist Jingle, where he referred to her as ‘The Basingstoke heroine’.

In January 1897, just less than a year after her first peal, Alice White rang, at the first attempt, a peal of Stedman Triples at Basingstoke. It was conducted by the

redoubtable Rev. F.E. Robinson and was a compliment to Henry White on his fortieth birthday. Again, the peal received favourable comment in the editorial.

Further ground was broken in 1901 when Alice White rang a peal of Grandsire Caters at St. Nicholas, Guildford, the first lady to ring a peal on more than eight bells. She was also the first lady to ring a peal of Stedman Caters, on the same bells in January 1908. In *Notes to Peals* attention was called to her 'neatness in handling her bell, and also for her correct ringing of the method'.

With the increase in the number of lady ringers in the early years of the twentieth century, there was the possibility of ringing an all-ladies' peal. An attempt for a peal of Grandsire Triples was made at Christ Church, Cubitt Town, on 1 July 1911 by a band that included Alice White, which was lost by a miss-call. It was not until 20 July 1912 that a successful attempt was made on the same bells but Alice White was not able to ring. Whether this was because of the ill-health that later dogged her life, I do not know, but the last peal that she recorded in her peal book was rung in 1911. The total thus recorded was 32.

With the impetus from such activities, the Ladies' Guild was formed in 1912, the inaugural meeting being held on 26 October 1912 at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London. Because of ill-health Alice White was not able to be present, but in her absence was elected the first president. She continued to be re-elected president, although she did not attend the Annual General Meeting of the Ladies' Guild until that in 1916. Her ill-health can perhaps be traced back to injuries that she suffered in Basingstoke in June 1898, when she was knocked against a wall by a bullock that was being driven to the local slaughter-house.

In 1920 in Basingstoke Alice White married a Mr. J.C. Salvaneschi, and consequently resigned as President of the Ladies' Guild. The following year they emigrated to Canada, where their surname was changed by deed poll to Sullivan for business reasons. They lived in various places in Canada and England, but in 1940 they were bombed out of their house in Sussex, and went back to Canada, where she lived for the rest of her life. However, she did keep in touch with what was happening in the Ladies' Guild, and when the Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in 1972 she wrote a letter of congratulation. She died in Canada on 25 August 1979, in her 99th year.

With the introduction of ladies into the belfry, the next step was to organise a Ladies' Guild, which, because of its nature, could not be a territorial association. The driving force behind this was

EDITH KATE PARKER (later MRS. G.W. FLETCHER)



Mrs. Edith Fletcher in 1938.

who was born on 12 November 1891, at Crawley, Sussex. Her father, James Parker, was the conductor of the famous band there, and after the family moved to Edmonton, he built up another skilful band there. At the age of 14 she took up ringing, but it was not until two years later that she took it seriously, when it was evident that she was of exceptional ability. She rang her first peal in May 1909. Remarkably, this was one of Superlative Surprise Major, and she was the first woman to ring a peal of Surprise. She rang her first peal of London Surprise Major the following December, and in June 1910 she rang her first peal as conductor. This was one of Stedman Triples, and she rang a non-observation bell. Such exceptional progress was marked by an article on her that appeared in only the second issue of the *Ringling World*, on 31 March 1911. At that time she had rung 17 peals, of which she had conducted eight. She also rang a Sunday-service touch of Stedman Cinques at St. Paul's, worth noting because she belonged to the Cumberlands, as did her father, and relations between the Cumberlands and College Youths at that time were less than cordial. The article noted that in recognition of her abilities, a gentleman had anonymously presented her with a set of twelve handbells, and that the Edmonton band had also made a presentation of an inscribed travelling bag.

When Edith Parker came of age in November 1912, the Edmonton band celebrated with a week's peal ringing, during which peals in six different Surprise methods were rung, four of which were conducted by Edith Parker, each from the second bell.

Meanwhile, she had been the driving force in the founding of the Ladies' Guild. Discussion at the time of the all-ladies peal at Cubitt Town in July 1912, suggested that there might be enough support for a Ladies' Guild, and so an advertisement was placed in the *Ringling World* of 2 August 1912 asking for those interested to contact Edith Parker. The response was such that an inaugural meeting, as noted above, was held on 26 October 1912, and up to the date of the meeting Edith Parker had received 40 applications. There were 15 ladies present at the meeting, and the chair was taken temporarily by Jack Goldsmith, editor and owner of the *Ringling World*. Alice White was elected the first president, and in her absence through indisposition, Edith Parker was voted into the chair for the rest of the meeting. A set of rules were agreed, although a proposition to call it the Women's Guild was

dropped in favour of the Ladies' Guild, and then Edith Parker was elected secretary/treasurer. The meeting heard that she had been in correspondence with Sir Arthur Heywood, President of the Central Council. He was in favour of the formation of a Ladies' Guild, but pointed out that to gain representation on the Central Council at least 75 members were needed. Despite this, he offered to see if he could get the rule altered in their favour at the next meeting of the Central Council.

At that meeting in 1913 the matter of the representation of the Ladies' Guild was on the agenda, and a robust discussion took place, with strong views on both sides being expressed, before the matter was allowed to be dropped without a vote being taken. At the meeting in the following year, the matter discussed again, and it was reported thus in the *Ringling World*:

'The last item was the representation of the Ladies' Guild. That, too, did not take much time, and recognition was given not unanimously, but by a majority of somewhere about fifty to one.'

It is not at all surprising that Edith Parker was elected as a Ladies' Guild representative to the Council, and she served in that capacity from 1916 until she was made a life member of the Council in 1953.

This, however, runs ahead of our story. In 1927 she married George Fletcher, one of the Edmonton band, and after he became secretary of the Central Council in 1931 she became what Jack Goldsmith called 'the unofficial but highly efficient assistant secretary'. This was in addition to her work as secretary of the Ladies' Guild, a post which she occupied until 1948 - to be promptly elected president, a post she occupied until 1956.

In 1942 Edith and George Fletcher moved from London to Great Yarmouth, effectively ending her peal-ringing career. She did little after the lifting of the ban, with increasing deafness marring her later years. Her final total was about 350 peals, on all numbers of bells. One of particular note was a peal of London Surprise Major which she conducted at Harlow Common on 18 June 1938, rung by members of the Ladies' Guild. This was the first peal in the method by an all-ladies' band, and was rung at the seventh attempt. Another of note was a peal of London Surprise Major 'in hand', rung at the fifth attempt at Enfield on 14 March 1939. This was her first of Surprise Major 'in hand', and she was the first lady to ring London 'in hand'. The only lady who had previously rung a peal of Surprise Major 'in hand' was Mrs. Frank Hairs, who had rung 1-2 to a peal of Superlative.

Edith Fletcher died in 1965, six weeks before her 74th birthday, and at the funeral were many representatives of the Central Council and of the Ladies' Guild. In such regard was she held, that her obituary and account of her funeral appeared on the front page of the *Ringling World*. As a mark of respect, eight members of the Ladies' Guild rang a peal of Stedman Triples at Harrow Weald on 12 November, which would have been Edith Fletcher's 74th birthday.

AMY THOMAS (née JOHNSON)



The church at Hinton-on-the-Green, where Amy Thomas learned to ring.

Hinton-on-the-Green, Worcestershire, was the place where Amy Johnson was born, and, apart from a total of sixteen years spent in Bromsgrove and London, she lived there for all her long life. Her father was Frederick J. Johnson, tower captain at Hinton, a keen ringer who taught all his nine children to ring. She was born there in 1907, one of the younger children in the family, but she would have been aware of, even if she did not appreciate, the handbell peal rung in 1912 by her brother Joseph (Joe) and sisters Ellen and Ruth, aged 13, 12 and 10 years respectively.

She was taught to ring by her father in 1921 on the old ring of five bells then at Hinton, not easy as the ring had a long rope-draught and no sally guides. In 1923 she went to work at the rectory at Bromsgrove, and, despite the initial opposition of the rector, joined the local band, where she progressed in her ringing. Her first peal was rung one of Bob Minor, rung on 4 June in 1925 at Great Hampton, Evesham, to celebrate the marriage of her brother Joe to Ethel Hemming, daughter of the tower captain at Evesham and sister of Geoff Hemming. When she returned to Bromsgrove, she told one of the old ringers there about the peal, and instead of congratulating her, he remarked 'We never did think much of Minor ringing here!' which rather chastened her.



The Johnson family home at Hinton-on-the-Green

However, this cutting remark did not dampen her spirits too much and she continued to progress, taking advantage of her return home in 1930. On 14 February 1931 rang in a peal of Stedman Cinques at Cheltenham. This was her sixteenth peal and it was conducted by her brother Joe. Also ringing in the peal was her father Frederick and Geoff Hemming, both of whose first peal of Stedman Cinques it was. A family peal of Grandsire Doubles was rung at Offenham on 18 June 1931, called by Frederick, and the band consisted of three of his daughters (including Amy) and two of his sons: all were Sunday service ringers at Hinton. In 1930 Frederick Johnson appealed for funds to rehang the bells at Hinton, and such was the response that they were

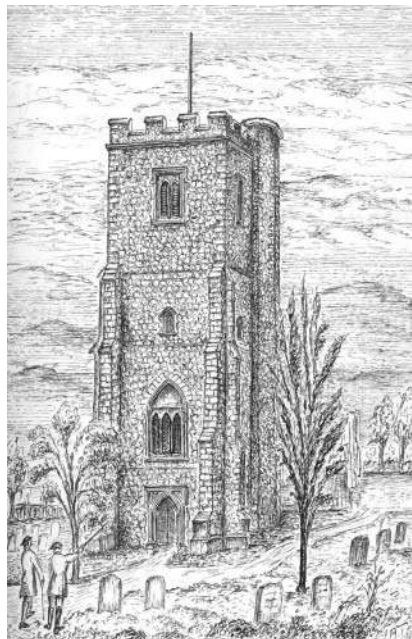
augmented to a ring of eight. The first peal after rehangng was rung on 5 December 1931, all bar one of the band being Sunday service ringers at Hinton. Amy Johnson, her father Frederick and brother Joe all took part.

The following year she rang at the first attempt her first peal of Surprise Royal, one of Cambridge at Bromsgrove in August 1932, while in December 1932 she rang her first of Surprise Major (Cambridge at Hinton), reversing the usual order!

In 1936 she started handbell ringing, apparently after her brother told her that she would never make a handbell ringer! She was determined to prove him wrong, and after some practice she and two of her sisters rang a peal of Grandsire Doubles 'in hand', the first rung by an all-ladies band. It was also her first peal as conductor.

On her marriage to Jack Thomas in 1937 she set up house in Enfield, Middlesex. He was a bell-hanger working for Whitechapel and she travelled the country with him widening her circle of friends in the process, this being commented on in the *Ringng World* of 11 March 1938.

'We have long been in the habit of seeing the familiar name of Mr. John Thomas cropping up in peal reports from any parts of the country, where his work as a bellhanger for the Whitechapel Foundry takes him. Now the name of Mrs. John is appearing.'



Edmonton in the early nineteenth century.
A pen-and-ink drawing by J. Armiger Trollope.

With the war came a ban on ringing, and the change-over to war work at Whitechapel, where Jack Thomas continued to work, she herself, with her step-daughter, drove a delivery van during those hazardous times.

At that time the only ringing was on handbells, and whilst previous to the war she rang only Grandsire 'in hand', the repertoire soon expanded, and 67 peals were rung during the war, up to Stedman Cinques. After the ban on ringing was lifted in 1943 she and Jack taught a young band on the tower bells at Edmonton, and on 27 August 1944 she and her husband, with Charlie Roberts and four of those young ringers, rang 'in hand' a peal of Plain Bob Fourteen-In, the first peal on 14 working bells - not, however, the first peal on 14 bells, as members of the St. Martin's Guild had rung a peal of Stedman Sextuples on 24 June 1922.

Jack Thomas retired from Whitechapel in 1946, and they took over the family

home in Hinton, looking after Amy's mother until her death in 1950. The band at Hinton was much strengthened, and peal ringing continued, with Amy Thomas ringing her 500th peal on 31 January 1953, the first woman to do this. Remarkably, this was a non-conducted peal of Stedman Triples at Salford Priors, which was rung after several failures at Hinton. Of those 500 there were 242 on tower bells and 258 'in hand'.

On 18 June 1955 she took part in Jack Thomas's 1,000th peal, Stedman Caters at St. Stephen's, Bristol, the tower where he rang his first peal on Boxing Day 1899. John Thomas died in the ringing chamber at Painswick on 20 September 1958, and a very moving account of the occurrence, written by Geoff Hemming, was published in the *Ringling World*.

After Jack's death and a return to work, Amy Thomas had less time for ringing but still rang for Sunday service at Hinton and also continued to ring peals. Her 663rd and last peal, one of Yorkshire Surprise Major, was rung at Hinton on her 80th birthday. She was in failing health for some years before her death in 2000.

(Based, with additions, on the article in the *Ringling World* of 8 September 2000)

CHAPTER TWO

The Editors

It is true to say that the more communication there has been within the Exercise, the greater has been the stimulus to progress in the Art. In the seventeenth century, in the formative years of change ringing, we can only guess at how discoveries were passed between centres of ringing, but passed on they certainly were. In the eighteenth century, the spread of local newspapers provided a means of communication to a wider public, and these were used not only to publicise peals rung but to issue challenges and report on other ringing matters. In the nineteenth century, not only ordinary newspapers were used but also the sporting papers such as *Bell's Life in London* and *The Era*, where ringing was treated much as any other sport, indicative of the prevailing attitude.

With the change in attitude to all things ecclesiastical that came about in the middle of the nineteenth century, the need for a general church paper was fulfilled by the weekly paper *Church Bells*, first published on 30 December 1870. From the start it had a column on bells and ringing which was under the supervision of the Rev. H.T. Ellacombe. Such was the success that the column became a page and during the 1870s it published many articles by eminent writers such as Jasper Snowden. The evident success of this page and discussion among interested persons resulted in the publication of the first issue of *The Bell News and Ringers' Record* - generally known as *Bell News* - on 1 February 1881: the editor was Harvey Reeves. Initially *Bell News* was published monthly, but its success was such that it became weekly with the issue of 8 April 1882.

Bell News had two short-lived rivals. The first of these was entitled *Campanology* and this first appeared on 16 September 1896, the proprietor and editor being William Bedwell. Although in its essentials it was the same as *Bell News*, it was laid out more as a magazine. However, it was not different enough from *Bell News*, and the 26th and last issue appeared on 10 March 1897.

Late in 1906 a circular was sent out advertising another competitor to *Bell News*, and the first issue of *The Bellringer* appeared on 5 January 1907, costing 1d. Despite a brighter approach, *The Bellringer* also evidently suffered from lack of support. Five weekly issues appeared, and then it became monthly from 1 March. The ninth and last issue was dated 1 June 1907 and on the front was an apology for its late appearance. It was announced that it would recommence as a weekly paper on 29 June at a cost of 2d, but no more issues appeared and thus it went the way of *Campanology*.

However, it was only a matter of time before a successful rival to *Bell News* was launched. A circular letter was sent by John Sparkes Goldsmith announcing the proposed publication, and stating that '...ringers generally acknowledge that a

readable paper, giving them all the news promptly and dealing freely and without prejudice with the subjects relating to bell-ringing, is now greatly required.' The first issue of the *Ringling World* appeared on 24 March 1911, and in his editorial John Goldsmith stated that '...there is a demand for a journal which shall record faithfully and promptly the doings of those engaged in the pursuit of bell-ringing.' Goldsmith recognised the service that had been done in the past by other journalistic enterprises, but stated that '...there never was a time when ringers generally felt that their requirements were more inadequately met than they are today,...' The success of the newspaper showed that his assessment of the situation was correct. *Bell News* continued to be published for several years, and it has been said that it had been supported financially by Sir A.P. Heywood. What proved to be the final issue appeared on 25 December 1915, but this contained no hint that it was to be the last. No comment on its passing appeared in the pages of the *Ringling World*.

HARVEY REEVES



An engraving of All Saints' Church, Worcester, published in 1796. Harvey Reeves learned to ring there some 60 years later.

Born in Worcester on 10 November 1841, he was the only son of Charles Reeves. He was taught to ring at All Saints', Worcester by James Burford and from a chance remark made in *Bell News* on 10 August 1901 we know that he made his first attempt at rounds on 25 January 1858, the day that Victoria, the Princess Royal, married Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia. He made such progress that in 1862 he was elected a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths. He rang - and called - his first peal, Grandsire Triples, at St. Helen's, Worcester, on 25 May 1863. After serving his apprenticeship as a printer at Messers Bayliss, Printers (a firm still in existence) he left Worcester

at the age of 23 and went to work in Tunbridge Wells. He was soon offered positions both in London and in Cheltenham, but accepted the journalistic post with Waterlow's in London. As a consequence of the move he came into contact with the prominent London ringers of the day. During the 1870s he was ringing with such celebrated ringers as Henry Haley, John Cox, William Cooter and Matthew Wood, and was a regular attender at Bethnal Green on a Sunday morning. During this period he moved to Walthamstow, where he was a member of the band for a number of years. Ringing at St. Mary's, Walthamstow was at a low ebb, but improving, as

J.R. Haworth had been employed as an instructor to the band that had been refounded in 1874. On 17 June 1875, despite the poor condition of the bells, Reeves conducted a peal of Grandsire Triples there, the first peal by six of the band. The bells were rehung by Warners later that year and opened on 25 September. The report on the opening that appeared in *Church Bells* stated:

‘A word of encouragement is due to the leader of the Walthamstow ringers, Mr. Harvey Reeves, who has been instrumental in bringing the exercise to its present position in the parish, and who is most assiduous in promoting the efficiency of every member of this young company.’

After 15 years service with Waterlow’s, Reeves joined the publishing house of Cassell & Co. and was invited by Canon Erskine Clarke, the proprietor of *Church Bells*, to look after its ringers’ page. This was still under the nominal control of the Rev. H.T. Ellacombe, but his situation well away from centres of change ringing throws doubt on how much he was able to participate.

From Reeves’ connection with *Church Bells* came the idea of a ringing periodical, which was supported by such noted personalities as Jasper Snowdon and William Greenleaf, the prominent College Youth and bell hanger. The first issue of *The Bell News and Ringers’ Record* - usually known as *Bell News* - appeared in February 1881. Clearly the idea had been widely canvassed as this contained details of thirteen peals that had been rung in the Provinces as well as one rung in the Metropolis. Advertised by a flyer, initially it was a monthly paper, but such was the success that that on 8 April 1882 it became weekly. Thereafter, although Reeves continued to ring and compose, his work for the Exercise was to act as its means of communication over a period of more than 30 years.

Reeves was proud of his connections with Worcester. When Bromsgrove ringers arrived early in Worcester to ring a peal on the bells of All Saints on the morning of the Annual General Meeting of the Worcestershire and Districts Association in May 1884, they found that the ropes were in a poor state and the clapper out of the tenor bell. The clapper was put back and some ropes borrowed so that the Bromsgrove ringers could eventually have a ring. The general state of affairs in Worcester was criticised and the parochial authorities of All Saints were taken to task by Reeves in his editorial a few weeks later. However, on 4 October a touch of Grandsire Caters rung on the bells of All Saints on the previous Sunday was stated to be ‘the first touch rang with the new ropes, presented by a native of the parish, who is an ardent admirer of the bells.’ This ‘ardent admirer’ was Harvey Reeves, and the gift was recorded by a tablet in the belfry. Reeves also presented sets of handbells to Worcester Cathedral (31 bells), St. Helen’s (15) and the Worcestershire Association (24). Those he gave to St. Helen’s are in the belfry at All Saints’, and have an inscription marking Reeves’ first peal.

Reeves also used his editorial to promote belfry reform. Thus when a move was made in March 1886 to form a ringing association for the diocese of Hereford, this

was welcomed in an editorial on 3 April in which he wished the promoters of the association God-speed in their undertaking.

The early issues of *Bell News* had such a vitality that they make compulsive reading. By the middle 1890s that vitality had diminished somewhat, and an attempt was made to start another weekly paper for ringers. This was entitled *Campanology* and first appeared on 16 September 1896. The proprietor and editor was William Bedwell and the office was at 221 High Street, Lewisham. Although essentially the same as *Bell News*, it was laid out more as a magazine. In the introductory remarks it was stated that ‘...the necessity of a bright and cheerful journal...has for years past been plainly manifest.’ In the pages of *Bell News* there is no mention of its competitor, but it is evident that this new venture affected its circulation, for a new flyer was issued. This is undated, but from internal evidence it dates from February 1897 or soon after, and presumably was issued before the demise of *Campanology*, the 26th and last issue of which appeared on 10 March 1897. It had paid the penalty of being too similar to *Bell News*.

The threat of a rival changed nothing in the format and content of *Bell News*, and another attempt was made to start an alternative ringers’ paper ten years later. A circular was sent out late in 1906 and the first issue of *The Bellringer* appeared on 5 January 1907, costing 1d. The editor was William C. Hunt, and a major contributor was William Willson of Leicester, who wrote under the pen-name ‘Jingle’ and who had previously contributed a regular column to *Bell News* under the same pen-name. The opening editorial, without actually naming *Bell News*, stated that a paper should be published on time, inferring that *Bell News* was regularly published late, thus appearing after the meetings which were advertised in its pages had been held. It also said that it stood for progress, and lamented the demise of *Campanology* from lack of support, through a mistaken sense of sympathy to the old. However, despite its brighter approach, *The Bellringer* also evidently suffered from lack of support. Five weekly issues appeared, and then it was admitted that the money that had been set aside to start the paper was rapidly vanishing. As a result the paper became monthly from 1 March at a cost of 3½d. The ninth and last issue was dated 1 June 1907 and on the front was an apology for its late appearance. However, there were no more issues.

It was only a matter of time before a successful rival to *Bell News* was launched as the decline in the standard and interest of *Bell News* continued, not helped by Harvey Reeves’ breakdown in health. The first issue of *The Ringing World* appeared on 24 March 1911, producing the breath of fresh air that was needed. Sadly, Harvey Reeves died on 28 March 1911 after having been bedridden for nearly a year, and so would have seen or heard of the first issue of the paper that would eventually cause the closure of *Bell News*. His obituary was written by William Willson. *Bell News* continued to be published for several years, and what proved to be the final issue appeared on 25 December 1915.

JOHN SPARKES GOLDSMITH



A fine photograph of Jack Goldsmith, taken in the 1930s.

A member of a long-established family of Southover, Lewes, he was born there on 13 January 1878. His grandfather and father successively held the office of parish clerk, and when his father died during John Goldsmith's early boyhood, his mother took over the position. She employed her son to toll the bell for deaths and funerals and the earliest record of his doing this was in 1887, when he was given special permission for release from Southover Day School for a quarter of an hour on saints' days to chime a bell for the 11 o'clock service. When he was old enough his mother almost insisted that he become a ringer and when he began to learn change ringing he took to it with enthusiasm. The band at Southover was capable of ringing Grandsire Triples, and this was the method for his first peal, on 8 April 1893. He rang three more peals that year while in the following year he rang in a peal of Stedman Triples, and on 27 November 1894 conducted a peal of Grandsire Triples at Southover, his first as conductor: this latter peal was recorded on a peal board in Southover belfry.

The proximity of the fine band at Brighton meant that the standard of ringing that was available was excellent, and in 1896 he rang three peals of Superlative Surprise Major. On 20 January 1897 he rang his first peal of Major as conductor, Plain Bob at Southover. This was rung at the second attempt, the first being lost after 1,000 changes due to a mechanical failure. After both attempts the band was entertained to a meal by Goldsmith's mother at the King's Head, of which she was the proprietress. Later in the same year he rang his first peal of Stedman Caters, conducted a peal of Stedman Triples and rang his first peals of Cambridge Surprise Major and London Surprise Major. The latter was rung at Eastbourne on 18 December 1897 and was his 50th peal.

With the opportunities offered by the Brighton band, his peal total increased rapidly for that period, and he rang his 100th peal on 4 March 1899, London Surprise Major at Arundel. After this, other activities intervened, and although he remained a keen peal ringer until the end of his career, he never rang peals at such a rate again. However, when opportunity occurred he went on peal tours, and on one such tour in Ireland in 1901 he conducted a peal of Superlative at Bray, the first in a Surprise method rung out of England. The final peal on the tour was one of New Cambridge Surprise Major at Bangor, the first in a Surprise method in Wales.

When Goldsmith left school he was apprenticed to his uncle, who owned the *East Sussex News*. As a consequence he learned all aspects of producing and printing a newspaper, and developed skills as a reporter. In 1902 he married and

shortly after left Lewes to take up an appointment at Woking. In 1903 he took charge of the editorial work of *The Woking News and Mail* and soon became manager. This brought him into contact with Woodbridge Press Ltd. of Guildford, the firm that later printed the *Ringling World*.

At Woking there were only limited opportunities for ringing. The nearest band of any standing was at Guildford, and such peal ringing as he had time for was on a visiting basis. Thus in August 1904, despite having no opportunity for practising on twelve bells, he rang in a peal of Stedman Cinques at St. Martin's, Birmingham, conducted by Albert Walker.

In the next few years he rang few peals, but this was not indicative of a waning interest, rather the lack of opportunity, for he was planning to start the *Ringling World*. As a journalist, it was clear to him that the old *Bell News* was not serving the needs of the ringing fraternity and that there was a need for a new, brighter, paper. Early in 1911 he circularised many towers, giving information about his proposed new paper and asking for information on the number of ringers who would be likely to take the new paper. Evidently the response was encouraging, as the first issue of the *Ringling World* appeared on 24 March 1911. Its aims were set out in the first editorial:

‘...We intend to use our columns for the information, the instruction, and, we hope, the elevation of all who take an interest in the Art of Change Ringing and in the business and social side of the organisations which promote that art. There are two things in the conduct of a ringing journal which ringers rightly demand, and which it is our determination to carry out. One is that the journal shall be punctually in the hands of its readers week by week, and the other that passing events shall be recorded promptly...The furtherance of the art is the first object of this paper, and all that relates to its progress will find in it the warmest support. “The Ringling World” will be open for the fair and impartial discussion of all matters appertaining to the interests of ringers. We intend to spare no pains to keep the pages of “The Ringling World” interesting to beginners, as well as to the ringers of riper experience.’

The paper was an immediate success, with peals being reported promptly and with up-to-date information, and had got itself on a sound basis by the start of the first world war. However, a sharp rise in costs and shortage of materials and labour, caused by the war, brought on a crisis in the affairs of the paper. This was an anxious time, and the paper only survived because Goldsmith took on other work, giving lessons in shorthand and typing, and then holding a position in the Woking Food Office. After the war he worked for a time for the Commissioners for the Inland Revenue.

One difference to *Bell News* was Goldsmith's use of editorials in commenting on matters of interest and in trying to mould public opinion. Until September 1934 these weekly editorials were entirely written by Goldsmith, but in that month he went on the tour of Australia, being away for four months. During that time he sent

back regular reports on the tour, and these were subsequently published in 1935, with additions, in a book entitled *A Great Adventure*, of which the first edition of 1,000 copies sold out very quickly, necessitating a reprinting. With his return to England Goldsmith took up the leader writing again, and there was no break until February 1941, when he was taken ill, which caused another four month break before he resumed. His final leader of the series was published in the issue of 26 December 1941, although he wrote two more in February 1942.

Goldsmith's achievement in founding and running the *Ringling World* tends to obscure the fact that he was one of the leading ringers of the day, despite being away from the main centres of ringing, and rang in a number of notable performances. In 1911 he rang his first peal of Bristol Surprise Major, and of Cambridge Surprise Royal. His first of Cambridge Surprise Maximus was rung at Great St. Mary, Cambridge on Monday 4 August 1913, conducted by Bill Pye, and later on the same day a peal of Stedman Cinques was rung on the bells by mostly the same band.

After the break caused by the first world war it was some time before peal ringing settled down again, but subsequently Goldsmith took part in some notable performances. In 1924 a band of members of the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, including Goldsmith, rang a peal of Stedman Caters at the Imperial Institute, while on 11 June 1927 he took part in the first performance of Law James' composition of four-spliced Surprise Major (London, Bristol, Cambridge and Superlative) at Warnham in Sussex. On 1 April 1929 a peal of spliced Cambridge and Superlative Surprise Maximus was rung at Chelmsford, the first twelve-bell peal in more than one method, in which Goldsmith rang the sixth bell. In the 1930s he took part in the first peals in several Surprise Major methods. His last tower-bell peal was Stedman Cinques at Great St. Mary, Cambridge, on the August Bank Holiday Monday just before the outbreak of the second world war, and his last handbell peal was one of Bob Major in the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields on 20 September 1941, in honour of the 80th birthday of W.H. Fussell. His final total was 463, not large but containing many notable peals.

When the second world war broke out Goldsmith was put in charge of the Woking Food Office, a full time job. As a consequence he had to edit the *Ringling World* by deputy, although still continuing to write the leading articles and make up the paper. He was taken ill in February 1941 and had to have a serious operation, which was successful although his recovery was slow. After making an excellent speech at the College Youths' luncheon in November 1941 he became unwell and had to take to his bed for several days. Although he returned to his work at the Food Office he was not the same and had to resign. Another operation brought about by a relapse in his condition was unsuccessful and he died on 1 June 1942. He was buried in the churchyard at Pyrford, Surrey, beside his wife, who had died in 1938. Despite the wartime conditions many ringers were present, and there were many floral tributes.

JABEZ ARMIGER TROLLOPE



Jimmy Trollope at the time of the first world war.

‘Jimmy’ Trollope was born at East Dereham, Norfolk, on 8 January 1876 and was educated at King Edward VI Middle School, Norwich. While at school he made the acquaintance of George and John Burton, and a hobby of climbing church steeples led to an interest in their contents. He learned to handle a bell at St. Giles’, Norwich. A ring of six handbells was made by himself and his friends from bells bought at an ironmonger’s, and a plain course of Bob Minor was rung double-handed on 30 April 1892, a 720 being finally achieved on 30 September in the same year. On 19 January 1893 a peal of Bob Minor was rung in hand, with one of Bob Major being rung later the same year, on a new ring of handbells that had replaced the home-made

set. Charles E. Borrett joined the band, and in April a peal of Bob Major was rung in hand. Another, in June 1893, was composed and conducted by Trollope.

The rapid progress that he made in change ringing at this period was recognised by the fact that in 1897, at the early age of 21, he became a representative member for the Norwich Association on the Central Council and an honorary member in 1900, a position he held until his death in 1947.

In 1902 he moved to Ealing where he set up home with his sister and although initially he spent time on his other interest of photography, he returned to his main interest of ringing and he was a member of the well-known peal band that rang at St. John’s, Waterloo Road, before 1914. During the first world war he served in France with the Royal Corps of Signals, sending peal compositions home on the back of postcards, much to the bemusement of the censors. Between the wars he was a member of Bill Pye’s band that rang many pioneering peals of Spliced Surprise Major. His final total of peals is not known but it was between five and six hundred.

However, although a fine practical ringer, he is best known for his written work, technical, historical and journalistic, and was one of the most distinguished historians of the Exercise. During the 1920s and ‘30s, while not working, he spent much time in the British Museum where he researched his monumental history of ringing in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In 1934/5 he acted as editor of the *Ringling World* while J.S. Goldsmith went on the ‘Great Adventure’ to Australia, and during the second world war he took over as editor during Goldsmith’s illness, and continued after his death. Little was happening during the war years, and it was only Trollope’s wealth of knowledge that could be printed to fill the pages that kept the paper going during a very difficult time. In 1946 an unfortunate incident about a



The young handbell band that rang a peal of 11,200 changes of Plain Bob Major in Norwich on 26 April 1894. Left to right: C.E. Borrett, J.A. Trollope, G.P. Burton, J.E. Burton.

footnote to a peal report in the *Ringing World* led to his resignation. George Pipe had rung 'inside' to a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major at the age of 10, but when the report was published his age had been deleted from the footnote as submitted. At the Central Council meeting that year there was a huge row about this and Trollope resigned. He died the following year.

Trollope's legacy to the Exercise was his manuscript history of London ringing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was left to the Central Council library. Part of this was used as the basis for his book on the College Youths, published for the Stedman tercentenary celebration in 1937, and other sections were used during the war years (and reproduced at various times since). It consists of about 7,000 pages written in Trollope's large and elegant handwriting and is

illustrated with prints, photographs and pen-and-ink drawings by Trollope. However, until it was published recently in the form of a CD, most of it had never reached a wider public.

CHAPTER THREE

The Characters

While there is, and always has been, a wealth of characters within the Exercise, the three described below are outstanding each in their own way, one as a teacher, one as a (false) prophet and the other as a self-publicist. All were capable of ringing a bad-going bell successfully. Perhaps the one who had most influence was William Chattell: when he arrived in Birmingham ringing there was in a poor state and it can be argued that the improvement in the standard of ringing there was due to the stimulus of his teaching. However, the world would be a duller place without characters such as are described below.

WILLIAM CHATTELL



A contemplative William Chattell in later life, appropriately sat in a 'smoker's bow' chair:

Billy Chattell was born at Irthlingborough, Northants, on 8 August 1806. He learned to ring on the six bells then in the tower where his father and grandfather were ringers before him. Initially he followed his father as an agricultural worker, but not liking this he tried shoemaking and then baking. While a young man he worked in Leicester but did not make much progress, as a journeyman had little time to practise. However, he managed to obtain a copy of the *Clavis Campanalogia* which he studied in order to gain a theoretical background. He left Leicester early in 1833 and completed a walking tour through London, Exeter, and Bristol. From Bristol he made for Worcester and then to Birmingham. On the way he passed through Bromsgrove on Wednesday 29 May (Oak Apple Day) and heard the bells ringing, but did not visit the belfry because his shoes were tied together with string. Arriving in Birmingham on the same day he obtained a post

with a Mr. Perks but as he could not start until the following Monday he walked on to Leicester, returning in time to take up the post he had been offered.

His introduction to the Birmingham ringers was probably through Elijah Roberts, whose tapping activities were the talk of the Exercise at that time (See *Giants of the Exercise* Vol. I, 2nd ed., pages 53-6). Chattell heard every change of the peal of 5,016 changes of Stedman Cinques that Roberts tapped on 30 June 1833. With his residence in Birmingham he made progress in change ringing and on 6 July

1834 he rang his first peal, a longer-than-usual peal of 6,282 changes of Grandsire Caters at Aston, conducted by Roberts. His first peal of Caters as conductor was rung in August 1840 and in the same year he rang the tenor at St. Philip's to a peal of Grandsire Royal. The following year he rang the tenor at Aston to a peal of Treble Bob Royal, which he also conducted.

It was at about this period that he became in charge at St. Philip's. The tower-keeper had died and the senior beadle was appointed to the post. As he knew nothing about bells he arranged for Chattell to take control of the tower, to attend to the chiming for service and provide ringers when they were needed. For this the senior beadle took a percentage of the earnings from any paid ringing. This displeased the ringers and so in November 1841 they resigned. This put Chattell on his mettle and he attracted a band of young ringers from Aston, which could ring Grandsire Doubles, with the promise of tuition in ringing. He was so struck with the beauties of Stedman Triples that he refused to teach them anything else. By the March 1842 the band was ringing simple touches of Stedman Triples, and from May 1842, after which time John Lates visited regularly, rapid progress was made. In February 1843 Chattell conducted a peal of Stedman Triples, and included in the band were five of Chattell's pupils.

At about the time that Chattell took over the ringing at St. Philip's he took his own bakehouse in Pope Street, which he ran for the rest of his life. At this period he was prosperous enough and, after his father's death on 28 July 1845, he sent six muffles to Irthlingborough and also five shillings a year for seven years to pay the Irthlingborough ringers to ring three six-scores of Grandsire Doubles with the bells muffled in memory of his father.

Chattell had the fatal flaw of jealousy and this often embittered his relationships with other ringers. Thus he fell out with some of the ringers that he had taught, and also had a poor relationship with Henry Johnson, whose pleasant manner was in contrast with Chattell's somewhat brusque style. On Easter Monday 1846 an attempt was made at St. Martin's for a peal of Stedman Cinques, conducted by Johnson. This was lost by a miss-call which Chattell decided (unjustifiably) was deliberate, and thereby caused much unpleasantness. Later in the same year, during a ringing occasion at St. Philip's, Chattell picked a quarrel with John Hopkins, a well-respected member of the St. Martin's Youths, and this was so resented that the company demanded that he apologise. Rather than do this he resigned from the scroof (paid ringing), but continued to do the chiming for service. He did not look after the bells (which were then in a poor condition) and then there was only indifferent ringing on the paid days. By Christmas 1848 the ringing was of such a poor standard that Chattell was asked to take over again. He assembled a mixed band which he trained using much late-night practice on handbells at his bakehouse.

After Christmas was usually a quiet time with Chattell and he normally organised an outing then. On 29 December 1847 a visit was made to Coventry, and the St. Philip's peal book records that 'A band selected from the Coventry and Birmingham Societies Rang upon the Beautiful Peal of Bells of St. Michael's

Church, Coventry a First Rate Peal...'. On the same day in 1851 a peal of Kent Treble Bob Royal was rung at Christ Church, Bristol, claimed as the first peal in the method rung in Bristol. John Day states that although the band was in first-rate practice this was not a very creditable performance as one of the band had indulged too freely of 'the stale Bristol beer'!

In 1859 Chattell organised a band to attempt a peal of 10,047 changes of Stedman Caters at Aston parish church. This was rung at the first attempt and was the longest length in the method rung at that time. It was conducted from the treble by John Perks, one of Chattell's pupils and the son of his old employer, and Chattell rang the seventh bell. Chattell gave way to jealousy and to drink and his behaviour caused Perks to leave the band.

In 1860 John Day and John Perks assisted in reviving the St. Martin's Youths, and asked their old instructor to take part in a peal of Stedman Cinques: this was rung at St. Martin's at the first attempt on 30 October 1860. In 1866 a peal was rung at Aston in memory of John Bannister, one of the band that had rung in the 10,047 Stedman Caters.

After this Chattell deteriorated physically, but continued to teach young ringers - and fall out with the older ones! His last peal was at Bishop Ryder's Church on 4 January 1870, when he called from the treble a composition of 5,024 Kent Treble Bob Major by Lates. His offensive presence and manner drove away the customers from his bakehouse, which in later years was his home. Eventually he was admitted to a home but only lived there for about three weeks. He died on 4 April 1875 and was buried in Harborne churchyard. Almost exactly a year later, on 3 April 1876, a muffled peal of Stedman Caters was rung at Aston by members of the St. Martin's Society to the memory of three old members of the St. Martin's company, including Billy Chattell.

The achievements of Chattell are perhaps best summed up in the words of John Day, one of his pupils:

'Than Chattell I should think a better ringer could scarcely be. He was equally at home from treble to tenor, a fine striker all round, and a terror to bad ones. He had a good theoretical as well as practical knowledge of the Standard methods, justly prided himself on his ability as a Stedman ringer, and at the tenor in Treble Bob had few equals. When at his best his great strength and powers of endurance enabled him to ring with comparative ease a bell that another man dare not tackle. He was a safe conductor, in fact I never heard of his losing a peal through missing calls or anything of that kind, but I have known him patch one up.

I imagine that his one great fault was a kind of jealous rivalry, which he had not the moral power to keep within proper and reasonable limits.

In promises of any kind that he made he could always be depended upon, was strictly honourable in all money transactions, while a certain class of ringers who used to come to Birmingham at that time, when hard up always made for his bakehouse, and, I believe, were never sent "hungry away."

(Summarised from John Day's memoirs, *Bell News* 1895, pp.111 *et seq.*, with additional information)

WILLIAM JOHN SEVIER



*Bill Sevier as a young man. A
Bell News portrait of 1890.*

Bill Sevier was born on 2 December 1864, the son of George Sevier, a watchmaker of the city of Gloucester. He learned to ring at an early age at Hasfield, Gloucestershire, started change ringing took place at Staunton and achieved his first six-score at St. Mary-de-Lode, Gloucester. Gaining experience in the Gloucester towers, he visited widely, and soon rang in most of the large towns in England. His first peal seems to have been one of Grandsire Triples at Upton St. Leonard's, Gloucestershire, on 14 December 1885. He was a keen walker, and most of his visiting was done on foot: evidently he was of a roving disposition. In the summer of 1886 he moved to the Manchester area in search of work, and stayed there until January 1887, ringing a total of fifteen peals while he was there. When he returned to Gloucester, he was immediately appointed as a part-time instructor for a year to a group of towers in the Thornbury area, being paid £15 for his instruction. Later in 1887 he was one of the founder members of the St. Michael's Juniors and acted as instructor to the Society, which was based at the church of St. Michael, Gloucester. Among those he taught change ringing were E. Bankes James and H. Law James, the two sons of the vicar of St. Michael's.

Sevier rang regularly with the St. Michael's Juniors, apart from a temporary residence in Derby early in 1889, until he moved to Woolwich in August 1891 as a consequence of his obtaining employment at Woolwich Arsenal. He stayed there until the next year, returning to Gloucester about April 1892. Towards the end of the year he moved to Hampshire, taking up a job as a striker in a smith's shop at the London and South-Western Railway Company's carriage and waggon works at Eastleigh which had opened in 1891. He remained in the area until late in 1900. In the late 1890s Sevier did little in the way of peal ringing, probably because another side of his character was coming to the fore. He claimed that he had the gift of prophecy, and that he had been aware of this gift from the age of four years. It appears that he began to publicise his prophecies in the Portsmouth papers and elsewhere. Sevier spent Easter 1900 visiting his home city of Gloucester, and found time to call in at the office of the *Gloucester Citizen* (the Gloucester daily paper) and give an interview to a reporter, in which he again propounded his views and prophecies.

Sevier moved from Hampshire in 1900 and after a short period in Wolverhampton, returned to Gloucester. During his absence from Gloucester, the St. Michael's Juniors had become one of the leading companies in the country under the leadership of John Austin.

After a peal of Double Norwich at Quedgeley on 1 February 1902, he moved to Portsmouth via Eastwood, Notts., and then returned to Eastwood, finally returning

to Gloucester in May 1904. Soon after this his old weakness came to the fore, and on 7 January 1905 he started to advertise in *Bell News* as “The Prophet Sevier, Preservation Specialist”. The Gloucester ringers treated him with some tolerance and amusement, and it was probably at this period that they had some cards printed stating that he was the seventh son of the seventh son of the “Emperor Septimus Sevier”. Despite this, he was active in peal ringing in the years 1905 and 1906.

On 1 September 1906 Sevier placed in *Bell News* a new, enlarged, advertisement headed ‘Symbol of Strength’. This must have caused some comment, and in *Bell News* for 19 January 1907 a letter was published in Plain Speaker’s column. (Plain Speaker contributed a column of comment on current matters). This letter asked for an explanation of the advertisement, and gave Plain Speaker an opportunity to have a bit of fun at Sevier’s expense.

‘The paragraph alluded to is an advertisement, and I have been advised it should be designated as such. What it means is a puzzle. Our friend Sevier is a philosopher, acute, subtle, and profound. He is said to have come over with the Conqueror, i.e. his ancestor, who was one of the ringing company sent through the length and breadth of the land to teach the young ‘uns how to ring the curfew. Very likely that is the reason why W.J.S. is so fond of bells. Perhaps the above correspondent don’t (*sic*) know him; he can soon scrape an acquaintance by a visit. He will be shown the laboratory where the philosopher operates among the occult sciences, he will see the alembics and crucibles, and then he will get the full meaning of the advertisement. W.J.S. is a very good and safe ringer and conductor. It is quite a sight to hear him call a bob.’

The following advertisement appeared in *Bell News* for 19 December 1908:

INTELLIGENCE

(BY THE PROPHET SEVIER)

It is Mr. Sevier’s intention to further advance the circulation of ‘THE BELL NEWS’ in all Wales. Where he finds one ‘BELL NEWS’ only in the belfry he will thoroughly advise each individual ‘ringer’ to take in separately, ‘each individual,’ their valuable paper, ‘THE BELL NEWS’ (specially created for the wealth knowledge and progress of the art in change-ringing by our valuable friend the editor). And in further support of the paper Mr. Sevier will demand from each ringer he may meet with in and throughout north and south Wales his constant, thorough and continual support.

Despite this, he was back in Gloucester in April 1909 where he stayed for some while, with occasional temporary residences elsewhere. Early in 1913 he was resident in Lincoln, and he moved to Sneinton, Nottingham, in 1916 where rang at Old Basford. At this period he was very hard up, and in 1923 he set out to earn money with a set of handbells mounted on a laundry basket on wheels, busking as he went. On his travels he called at Surfleet rectory, the story of his visit being later



Bill Sevier in later life, with faithful companion.

told by Mrs. A. Richardson. She was married to Rupert Richardson at Surfleet (where Rev. H. Law James was vicar) on 3 July 1923, and as is customary, had the usual honeymoon. She told the story thus:

‘A week after we returned from our honeymoon my husband was sent for by Miss Wander, Mr. James’ housekeeper. A man named William Sevier had arrived at the Vicarage, complete with old pram on which handbells were mounted. The Vicar was away on holiday. She did not know what to do as he said he had taught Law James to ring. Rupert told her he was sure that Law James would have put him up for the night, so she did this. William Sevier had walked from Nottingham to Surfleet, pushing his pram.

Next day he came to us for lunch - my first guest. He kept saying ‘This is the best meal I have had for a long time’ and, believe me, it looked as if it was the only one he had had for months. He then started on his walk to Skegness, where he was hoping to tap the handbells on the beach. We heard afterwards that he only did this for two or three days. Owing to the bye-laws he was warned off.’



Tapping handbells at Skegness. Bill Sevier before he was ‘warned off’.

Sevier died on 20 November 1924 after a few days illness: no ringers were present when his funeral took place. A fortnight later John Austin called a half-muffled peal of Grandsire Triples on Barnwood bells as a last token of respect, which was appropriate as Sevier had been a member of the band there nearly forty years before.

(For a fuller account of Bill Sevier see the *Ringing World* 1989, p.1158.)

JAMES GEORGE



A Bell News portrait of Jimmy George, published in 1894.

James George, ‘of England’ as he called himself, or Jimmy George, as he was more familiarly known, was not only a great character but also one of the greatest self-publicists in the Exercise.

He was born at Pinner, Middlesex, on 27 November 1853, the second son of James George, for many years leader of the ringers of that place, and so it was inevitable that he learned to handle a bell there at an early age. When he was sixteen he entered the service of the London and North-Western Railway Company and in 1881 transferred to the Estate Department at Rugby. No doubt enjoying the benefit of cheap travel because of his employment, he travelled widely in pursuit of change ringing. His first peal was not rung until

1889, when he rang the tenor bell to a peal of Grandsire Triples at St. George’s, Camberwell. This was an augury of the future, as he became noted as a heavy-bell ringer.

Once he started peal ringing, James George took to it enthusiastically, and he rang his 100th peal at Leominster, Herefordshire, on 20 November 1894. He calculated that he had travelled 11,000 miles in achieving these peals, irrespective of any failures. To this must be added the mileage that he travelled in order to gain practice, as until 1896 there were only five bells at Rugby, and he travelled regularly to Nuneaton and Northampton, distances of fourteen and eighteen miles respectively, for that purpose. Those 100 peals were rung over a wide geographical area, from Newcastle-on-Tyne in the north to Brighton in the south. During the 1890s he regularly reported his annual holiday in the pages of *Bell News*, listing where he had been to ring, and the peals which he had rung - and lost!

In 1895 a ring of eight bells was cast for Rugby parish church, and this was installed in a new tower in the following year, making Rugby the first church with two rings of bells. James George was selected as master of the society of change ringers that was formed, and as a result of his leadership a peal of Grandsire Triples was rung by the local band on 31 December 1899, which he conducted.

Landmarks in James George’s ringing career were regularly reported in the ringing press, *Bell News* and later the *Ringling World*. Thus in 1899 a list of his first 200 peals appeared in *Bell News* (two of which were apparently false) and in 1908 a list of his first 400 peals appeared.

It has been mentioned that James George was an excellent heavy-bell ringing (despite being slight in build), and on Easter Monday, 1911, he rang the 27 cwt.

tenor at Ashton-under-Lyne to a record peal of 12,240 changes of Kent Treble Bob Maximus, taking 8 hours and 39 minutes. Five months before the bells had been rehung by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon, who used this record length to advertise their work. In the same year as this long length, James George was elected Master of the Warwickshire Guild.

When James George reached the age of 60 in 1913 he celebrated in style. A week of peal ringing was followed by a meat tea and musical evening at the St. Martin's Hotel in the Bull Ring, Birmingham to which he invited over 150 of his friends, and a special souvenir programme was printed. In July the next year he retired from his post at Rugby, and later moved to Birmingham, where he became ringing master at Bishop Ryder's church, and entered fully into the ringing life of Birmingham. Taking an interest in handbell ringing, he rang the tenors to a number of peals of Stedman Caters and Stedman Cinques, and was one of the band that rang the first peal of Stedman Cinques 'in hand' in the city of Birmingham, on 15 June 1916, conducted by James E. Groves. This was the start of the brilliant handbell band that flourished in the city in the 1920s, led by Albert Walker. However, James George was not a member of that band, most of his handbell ringing in Birmingham being done during the first world war.

Despite his advancing years, James George continued to ring many peals. During the 1920s and 1930s he was a member of the peal band led by Maurice Swinfield that rang so many peals of Stedman Triples in the Midland Counties. It is said that Maurice Swinfield very seldom called a composition of Stedman Triples more than once, and that the standard of ringing was of an exceptionally high order.

James George continued to ring heavy bells to peals until late in life. On his 70th birthday in 1923 he rang the 11th bell at St. Martin's, Birmingham to a peal of Stedman Cinques. This was also the method for his 1,000th peal, rung at Wolverhampton on 6 October 1928, in which he rang the tenor, and in 1933 at the age of 80 he rang the same bell to a peal of Kent Treble Bob Maximus. Three years previously he had rung the tenor at Painswick to a peal of 17,687 changes of Grandsire Cinques. Unfortunately the composition used turned out to be false, and the record in his peal book is scored through with a red line. This peal book was printed specially for James George, and in it he carefully entered details of the peals that he had rung including the conductor of the peal, but not the other members of the band. He rang a few false peals, and these were carefully crossed out, and the numbering of the true peals adjusted accordingly. A list of places where he rang peals was also kept, cross-referenced to the peal record, so that he knew how many peals he had rung at each place. Also in the back of his peal book are a number of compositions by him, in various methods. He started composing in 1894 with varying degrees of success, and his compositions were not always true!

Two of the peals that he rang at this period are worth mentioning, both rung at St. Olave's, Hart Street, London. In 1933 a peal of Stedman Triples was rung, with the aggregate age of the band being 612 years, and average age of over 76, while

three years later he rang the treble bell to a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major, the members of the band each having rung over 1,000 peals.

James George's last tower bell peal was one of Plain Bob Major rung at Enderby, Leicestershire, on 24 August 1939, conducted by Ernest Morris. He had his left leg amputated in the following year and this meant the end of his peal-ringing career on tower bells. However, he rang five more peals on handbells, the last being on his 95th birthday, 27 November 1948, when he rang 7-8 to a peal of Grandsire Triples, conducted by Dan Matkin. This took place in Bournemouth, where he was living in a nursing home, having moved from Birmingham. His final total of peals was 1281.

He died on 10 March 1951, in his 98th year, and was buried in Poole Cemetery, Dorset. His peal book was left to the St. Martin's Guild, Birmingham, with the request that it be placed open on the table in St. Martin's ringing chamber: his handbells were left to Mrs. F.J. Marshallsay.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Development of Spliced

Although the ringing of methods spliced together during the twentieth century saw phenomenal growth, there was a long period in which the idea was known, but not developed. A 360 of Crown Bob was given in the 1702 JD & CM *Campanalogia Improved*, and this consisted of successive leads of Oxford Treble Bob Minor, College Pleasure and College Treble Bob, repeated four times giving a false touch of 15 leads or 360 changes. This touch last appears in the third edition of 1733, but was certainly rung a number of times in the eighteenth century, easily verified by checking the index to Morris's *History and Art...* It was also rung in the nineteenth century. In the middle of the nineteenth century James Platt of Saddleworth Fold, Yorkshire, investigated 720s of minor in more than one method, and in 1843 a 720 of combined Treble Bob Minor composed by him - in what is now called the Worcester Variation - was rung at Saddleworth. In 1849 a 720 of spliced Treble Bob Minor in three methods was rung there and although the figures have not survived, there are strong reasons for believing that it was true. Subsequently Platt composed a 720 in seven methods - the figures of which have not survived - and one in nine methods. The figures of the latter were published in the *Ringling World* on 23 March 1923 and it is true. Platt died in 1858 at the age of 72 and with his death developments in this field lapsed for half a century.

After the founding of the Central Council in 1891, it debated the legitimacy of the type of peal of Minor made up of touches of less than 720 changes, a type of peal which was in much favour in Yorkshire. The report of a debate on the question in 1894, included the following:

‘Mr. James called attention to the possibility of ringing fourteen 360s in plain methods by starting in one method, calling a single at the end, and turning into another method without the bells coming round until the completion of the 720, so as to ensure rounds or any other change coming only seven times in a 5040.’

‘Mr. James’ was E. Bankes James, not his brother the Rev. H. Law James.

On 10 November 1909 the Rev. H. Law James conducted a peal of Minor in eight methods at Surfleet. This included a 720 of Plain and Double Bob Minor spliced in the way suggested by his brother, and was the first spliced 720 to be included in a peal. A series of peals of Minor incorporating more methods were rung until, on 15 February 1911, Law James conducted a peal in 14 methods at Edenham, and although this is often considered as the beginning of spliced ringing, this is not so, as demonstrated above.

The ringing of Spliced Surprise Major has an even shorter history, the first peal, in two methods (Cambridge and Superlative), being rung at Whitley Bay on 14 May 1924. The first peal in four methods (London, Bristol, Cambridge and Superlative) was rung in 1927.

THE REV. H. LAW JAMES

The elder son of the Rev. (later Canon) George James, rector of St. Michael's, Gloucester, he was born on 18 November 1868. He was interested in bells from an early age, the story of this being told many years later by his younger brother the Rev. E. Banks James:

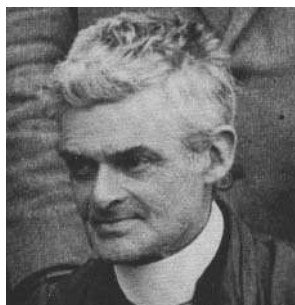
'It was in 1878 that the clock bell, Great Peter, was last rung up - for the funeral of Sir George Seymour, Canon of Gloucester - and I well recollect going up the Cathedral tower with my brother to see her raised.

We were living in the Deanery at that time, and every now and then, when we were having breakfast, he would start up with a cry, "Oh, there's the Cathedral bells." Then came a wild rush up to the ringing chamber. He led the way, and I panted far behind. He was then about 10 years old, and it must have been about this time that he learnt to handle a bell.

We both went to Malvern College in September, 1883, and it was the jubilee year, 1887, that really was the opening of his career as a change ringer.

The old ring of six at the Priory Church, Great Malvern, were to be augmented to eight and rehung. He went to see the six, and wrote an article on them, which he sent to our school paper, "The Malvernian." The article that he wrote escaped the notice of the editors, but was sent to the printers, and came out in the paper, much to the surprise of the former. It was then copied into the Malvern local paper, and his notes on the old mediaeval convent bell, which was condemned to be recast, raised such an outcry amongst the local archaeologists that a subscription was raised to save the bell, and it still hangs in the old Priory Church tower.'

The year 1887 was thus significant in the change-ringing career of Law James. It was also significant in a wider sense in that it was the year in which Law James and his brother founded the St. Michael's Juniors, based on the church of which their father was the rector. This society was founded on 6 September 1887, but the first peal for the society was not rung until 30 June 1888. This was one of Grandsire Triples at Upton St. Leonard's, the bells at St. Michael's being out of order. It was conducted by William Sevier and Law James rang the treble, it being his first peal.



This photograph of the Rev. H. Law James was used to illustrate his obituary in the Ringing World.


Meanwhile, in October 1887, Law James had gone up to Cambridge, where he was a welcome addition to the Cambridge University Society, although he continued to ring with the St. Michael's Juniors when he was in Gloucester. His undoubted abilities helped the progress of the University Society, and on 28 April 1890 when the first peal for the society was rung - peal of Plain Bob Triples 'in hand' - the band including both James brothers. Plain Bob Major 'in hand' followed

on 17 November 1890, and on 23 February 1891 the first ever peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major ‘in hand’ was achieved, Law James conducting from 5-6.

In 1891 Law James was ordained deacon, and moved to Stamford, where he was assistant curate at St. Martin’s, Stamford, and also taught chemistry at Stamford Grammar School. He was made a priest in 1892. His presence in Stamford was soon felt, and he was instrumental in setting up the St. Martin’s Scholars at a meeting on 30 October 1891, and by February 1892 Law James had taught the band to ring 120s of Bob Doubles. The first peal by the society, in two minor methods, was rung at Glington, Northants, on 3 February 1894 and was the first peal by all the band except for Law James, who conducted.

In 1897 Law James was offered the living of Surfleet, Lincolnshire, but turned it down because of the dilapidated state of the church. When the offer was repeated, he accepted and took up his duties on 22 January 1898, the day after he had taken part in the peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal rung by the St. Michael’s Juniors at St. Mary’s, Cheltenham, the first rung in modern times. When he took up his duties he set about restoring the church at Surfleet, both inside and out. Included in this restoration was the ring of five bells in the tower, the middle bell of which was cracked. This was recast at the expense of the churchwarden after Law James unsuccessfully attempted to restore it by chemical means. The ring was augmented to six bells for the coronation of Edward VII: the new treble was at the local station at 9 a.m. but by 9 p.m. had been hung and rung in two 720s. Finally, in 1913 he paid for two bells of the ring to be recast, the ring augmented to one of ten bells, and hung in a new iron frame.

When Law James moved to Surfleet, there were four different ringing associations in Lincolnshire. In 1898 he convened a meeting in the Chapter House of Lincoln Cathedral, as a result of which the Lincoln Diocesan Guild was formed.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "H. Law James".

The signature of H. Law James, taken from the Trollope MS.

Law James was elected Ringing Master, a position that he held until his death many years later. Within the Diocese he was asked for advice on bell restoration matters on a number of occasions and it was due to his advice that the bells of Lincoln Cathedral were recast into a light twelve in 1928, as a memorial to members of the Lincoln Guild who fell in the Great War. He

conducted the first two peals on the new bells, of Cambridge Surprise Maximus and Stedman Cinques.

It was in the field of composition that Law James was best known, and he produced compositions in the standard methods being practised at the time. Not only that, but he was prepared to defend his opinions in the ringing press in a forthright manner! His work on spliced minor is discussed above, and his composition of four-spliced Surprise Major, first rung in 1927, stimulated the

development of this form of ringing. He was the representative of the Lincoln Diocesan Guild on the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, and his technical expertise was recognised by his membership of the Methods Committee.

Law James died on 3 February 1932 and was buried in Surfleet churchyard in the presence of a large congregation. A half-muffled peal of Plain Bob Royal was afterwards rung on Surfleet bells. His contribution to the development of ringing was recognised in the leading article in the *Ringing World* of 12 February 1932:

‘He has been one of the greatest composers that the Exercise has ever had:...his serious work was devoted to some specific end, of obtaining peals with new or hitherto undeveloped properties; or to new features of composition. One of his greatest contributions to this phase of ringing, was perhaps, his exploration of Minor, which made method splicing possible...by his peal in the four best known Surprise Major methods he extended the scope of ‘spliced’ ringing into a field hitherto unapproached.’

In his memory the bells of Surfleet were augmented to a ring of twelve bells, and the new bells were dedicated on 4 February 1933.

ALBERT JOHN PITMAN



Albert Pitman as a young man.

Albert ‘Jack’ Pitman was born at Bridgend, Glamorgan on 22 September 1887. The son of a ringer, he began ringing at Baglan, Port Talbot at the age of twelve, where the band at that time was capable of ringing Grandsire Doubles. Soon after this he left school and joined the railways, for which he worked until he retired. In 1909 he joined the band at Aberavon, which could ring Grandsire Triples, and he was soon appointed conductor: this started him composing musical touches of Grandsire Triples for Sunday Service. His first peal was one of Grandsire Triples which he conducted at Aberavon in 1914. His next peal was rung in 1919, and this was one of Stedman Triples which he composed and conducted. His skill in composing was largely self-taught, having learnt the basic ideas from the Snowdon series of textbooks. Most of his composing was done during the night hours, and he was proud of the fact that he never published a false composition.

His most active ringing period was during the 1920s and ‘30s, ringing most of his peals for the Llandaff and Monmouth Association during that period. The standard of method ringing was limited but some interesting peals were rung, mostly composed by Pitman: in 1925 a peal of Spliced Union and Grandsire Triples, and in the following year the first peal of Spliced Oxford Bob and Grandsire Triples. The first peals in Wales in various methods were also rung by bands under his

organisation, including London Bob Triples (1927), Little Bob Major (1928) and Erin Caters (1933). Later, Pitman's ringing career was curtailed because he had to nurse his invalid wife for many years until her death.

However, his main contribution to the Exercise was in the field of composition, and while his name is mainly associated with compositions of Spliced Surprise Major, he produced compositions in almost every field, from his 240 of Grandsire Doubles to peals of Spliced Stedman and Grandsire Caters. In 1924 the first peal of Spliced Surprise Major (in two methods) was rung, while the first in four methods was rung in 1927. Pitman's talents having been recognised, he was asked to produce a composition in six methods, which he did and then extended it to ten methods. In this form ('No. 1') it was rung at Willesden on 13 August 1929, conducted by William Pye, the first peal to be rung in ten Surprise Major methods. This composition was the foundation of his peals in 12 to 30 methods.

The direction of Pitman's investigation was altered by a letter from John Worth that appeared in the *Ringling World* in May 1935, part of which reads:

'I hope some composer will some time be able to get a spliced peal either with tenors together or otherwise - it should make no difference to a band where the tenors are - in which every bell, at some part of the peal, rings all the seven leads in each method.'

Thus the idea of 'all the work' compositions was born. Five weeks later, Pitman published a composition in four methods with all the work in London, Bristol and Superlative, but not Cambridge. A peal with all-the-work properties and the tenors together was not produced until 1947, composed by Harold Cashmore and conducted by him at Lambeth on 19 April in that year. Eight days previously Pitman had published his now famous composition of four-spliced Surprise Major with all the work and a quarter peal in each method. This was first rung at Frodsham, Cheshire on 18 July 1947, conducted by J.C.E. Simpson. With the recognition of the merit of Pitman's compositions of Spliced Surprise Major, there was competition to ring them as soon as they were published in the *Ringling World*. Thus when his composition of nine-spliced Surprise Major was published in 1956, it was rung by the Willesden band only six days after the figures appeared.

The Cheshire band also rang a series of long peals of Spliced Surprise Major, composed by Pitman. On the last day of 1949 J.C.E. Simpson conducted a peal of 6,496 changes in six methods at Frodsham, while a year less a day later Simpson conducted a peal of 8,032 changes in eight methods in the same tower. A longer of 9,568 changes in ten methods was attempted under the conductorship of Simpson in 1951, but was not rung and was left for some years as a mark of respect after Simpson's death. This was finally rung in 1959. On 28 April 1961 Pitman published a composition of 13,440 changes in six methods, the extent with the tenors together, and this was rung at Norbury on 20 May, conducted by C.K. Lewis.

In recognition of Pitman's achievements, in 1953 he was elected an honorary member of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and remained such until his

death in 1966. In the year that he was elected an honorary member he was also elected Ringing Master of the Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association. From 1954 until his death he was a member of the Peals Collection Committee. He had previously served on the Central Council as a representative member for the Swansea and Brecon Guild for the period 1927-33, the same period that he was Ringing Master of that Guild.

When Pitman retired from the railways he was yard inspector at Port Talbot goods yard. He subsequently remarried, and went to live at Lillington, near Leamington, Warwickshire, but he still maintained his links with his family at Aberavon. He died on 16 August 1966 and was buried at Baglan four days later: after the funeral a half-muffled peal of Grandsire Doubles was rung on the bells there, on which he had learned to ring.

Pitman kept no peal records, but it is known that he rang 159 peals for the Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association, and about 250 altogether, approximately 100 of which he conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Professionals

For most persons nowadays change ringing is a hobby, or sometimes an abiding passion. There were those in the past, however, who were professional in that, for part of their career, they were paid to do what other persons did - and still do - for enjoyment. One such was John Cox, whose career has already been considered (see *Giants of the Exercise* Vol. 1, 2nd ed., pages 61-3). Below are the careers of four more.

JAMES ROBERT HAWORTH



Bob Haworth as portrayed in Bell News in 1897.

‘Bob’ Haworth was such a notable character that when he died in 1910 it was said in *Bell News* that ‘For nearly seventy years Mr. Haworth has been one of the most prominent personages of the Exercise.’ He was born on 21 April 1821 and seems to have started his working life with Richard Loftin, a London printer who was also a ringer, and through him he learned to ring, possibly at St. Margaret’s, Westminster. In 1836, at the age of 15, J.R. Haworth was apprenticed to Mr. White, a London printer, and served his time with him. He was involved with the printing trade for the rest of his working life until he became a full-time ringer.

In the first part of the nineteenth century there was much handbell ringing in public houses in London, and what may have been Howarth’s first attempt for a peal was for a ‘lapped’ peal of 6,070 Stedman Cinques at the Cock and Bottle, Bedfordbury on 31 December 1837. This was lost after nearly four hours, with only a course to go. The same band, which included several well-known ringers, successfully rang a peal of 5,014 Stedman Cinques in 3 hours 9 minutes at the Cock and Bottle on 6 January 1839. His first peal that would be acknowledged today was one of Grandsire Triples, rung at Holy Trinity, Southwark, on 1 October 1839.

Meanwhile, somewhere about 1837 or 1838 he had joined the St. James’s Society and he joined the College Youths on 13 August 1839. The College Youths’ name book shows that he was then a member of the band at Westminster and indeed he rang at Westminster Abbey in 1837 to celebrate the coronation of Queen Victoria. He rang there on every anniversary of her birth for more than 60 years. Once elected, Haworth was a staunch member of the College Youths for the rest of his life. At this period the College Youths were at a low ebb, and Richard Mills,

master from 1837 to 1840, offered silver medals to the bands that rang the first peals of Oxford Treble Bob Major and Royal. The peal of Major was rung at Stoke Newington in 1840, and the same band plus Haworth and one other, rang a peal of Oxford Treble Bob Royal, at St. James', Bermondsey on 30 December 1841. The medals were duly presented.

Through the 1840s the fortunes of the College Youths continued to improve, and on 27 January 1846 a band of College Youths rang a peal of Kent Treble Bob Maximus at St. Saviour's, Southwark, the first in London. Haworth rang the seventh bell, and in December 1849 he rang his first peal of Stedman Cinques on the same bell. At this period there was competition in ringing longer-than-average peals of Stedman Cinques. A peal of 7,126 changes had been rung at Norwich in 1844, one of 7,392 changes had been rung in Birmingham in 1848, and on 6 January 1851 a band of College Youths rang the slightly longer length of 7,524 changes at Cripplegate, Haworth ringing the seventh as usual. This was superseded by a peal of 8,448 changes rung at Painswick on 16 February 1858. The College Youths tried to regain the record with an attempt for 8,551 changes at St. Saviour's on 5 April 1858, but the peal was lost when nearly 8,000 changes had been rung, an upset being caused by the person who brought the candles. It was regained on 27 April 1861, when a marginally longer length of 8,580 changes was rung at St. Michael's, Cornhill. This was immortalised by James Dwight in a song which had a verse about each ringer, that about Haworth going thus:

Robert Haworth rang the seventh
And well he played his part
He has rung so many peals you'd think
He knew them all by heart.

However, despite the implication of having rung large numbers of peals, this was actually his 58th.

The improving fame of the College Youths from the 1840s onwards led to the Society being asked to supply bands to open rings of bells that had either been rehung or a new ring provided. These were not only rings close to London (for instance, St. Mary's, Wandsworth in 1843, and St. Gabriel's, Pimlico in 1855) but further afield, facilitated by the extending network of railways. In May 1865 a band of College Youths, including Haworth, went by train to open the new ring of bells at St. Stephen's, Carlisle, where they rang a peal of Grandsire Triples, the first peal in Cumberland. The bells and tower had been paid for by Miss Burdett Coutts, who also defrayed the expenses of the visit. Eighteenth months later, in December 1866, a similar band travelled overnight from King's Cross station to Edinburgh to open the bells of Leith, a trip of over 400 miles. No peal was rung on that occasion.

A more adventurous visit took place in July 1872 when Haworth was one of the band of College Youths who travelled by train and steam ferry to open the bells at Waterford, Ireland. A peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on 27 July 1872, at the

second attempt, and was the first peal rung in Ireland. After the peal, Charles Lee, one of the band, stayed behind and acted as paid instructor to form a local band, to such effect that Lee and seven ringers that he had taught rang the second peal in Ireland on 9 December 1873.

In 1873 Haworth took part in the first peal rung in Scotland when a band of College Youths travelled to Dundee and on 21 May 1873 rang the first peal on the ring that had just been installed in the Old Steeple. He also rang in the first peal on the new bells at Llanstephan, Carmarthenshire, on 1 January 1876. This was the first peal rung in Wales by the College Youths, but was not the first peal in Wales. That had been rung at Wrexham on 26 March 1729, and there had been others as well.

In the early 1870s Bob Haworth had a change in career, eventually giving up his job as a compositor to become a professional ringer. There is a good description of him in his later years:

‘In appearance he was still erect and spare in figure, in height a little above the medium, his face was rather pale and wrinkled - with quick-glancing grey-blue eyes, and his head was crowned with brown hair which, with his side whiskers, gave no sign of white - indeed, his use of an oily pomade suggested a dye, and he was nick-named “Uncle Treacle.” But the writer has often thought that this name derived from his earlier dynamic years, when Haworth’s blend of reticence and suavity, laced with a certain whimsicality, enabled him to gain control of those, often ‘difficult,’ bands of paid ringers frequently met with in those days. He was a good organiser and his cleverness was in pushing around a small number of ringers to man a large number of ropes. Of course this was all before the great reduction in paid ringing, when the vestries and church rates were abolished in 1885.’

As the above paragraph indicates, Haworth had gained control of most of the paid ringing in London, usually referred to as the ‘Scroof.’ He was also paid for giving instruction in change ringing, and late in 1872 he seems to have been appointed as official instructor to the bands at Waltham Abbey and Wanstead, Essex. He was associated with Waltham Abbey, off and on, for at least seven years. In a number of cases the opening of a new ring of bells highlighted the need for the instruction of a new band of ringers. After the opening of the bells in the Old Steeple at Dundee in May 1873 Haworth was employed as an instructor for three months from the middle of July. He was engaged in this type of work in various places throughout the country until at least until the late 1880s. One place at which he was employed was at the church of St. John, Wilton Road, Pimlico. This ring was opened on 2 October 1878 and during his period as instructor he taught two ringers who later became well-known in the exercise - Challis Winney and Francis Edward Dawe.

In the 1880s he also had other employment. On launching *Bell News* in 1881, Harvey Reeves ceased editing the bellringing page of *Church Bells*, and this was taken over by Haworth. He continued to do this until about 1895.

Through all this Haworth remained a prominent member of the College Youths, and in 1881 he took part in the first peal on the bells of St. Paul's. However, this was almost by accident as it was intended that William Greenleaf should ring, but he gave up his rope so that Haworth could ring. On 4 August 1883 a band of College Youths rang a peal at Sonning, Berkshire, to commemorate the silver cup won by a band of 'Junior' College Youths 100 years previously. Haworth was one of five College Youths who went to Twyford on the train, and then walked across country to Sonning. This centenary peal was marked in January 1884 when he presented a new silver cup to the Society, which cost him £6 15s. for the cup and £1 10s. for suitable engraving. When Haworth celebrated his fifty years as a member of the College Youths in 1889, on the anniversary day of 13 August a celebratory touch of Stedman Cinques was rung at St. Saviour's, Southwark, followed by a meeting in the evening when numerous members were present. In his reply, Haworth stated that he had made enquiries, but could not find anyone who had ever been a member of the College Youths for as long as he had.

What seems to have been Haworth's last peal was one of Grandsire Caters rung at St. Clement Dane's on 26 July 1894, a tower with which he had been associated since 1838 when he was elected one of the parochial ringers. His final total was 176, in the usual methods of the day, Plain Bob, Grandsire, Stedman, Oxford and Kent Treble Bob, although he did ring two of Double Norwich Court Bob Major, quite unusual at that period.

Haworth's name was known not just in ringing circles but further afield. He was evidently very frugal in his habits and lived in a single room. The following story is told of his later years.

'An old 'College Youth' was heard to say that, when as a steward, he was collecting the pence paid by members attending the meeting, he would tactfully ignore Haworth and pay the pence out of his own pocket - knowing him to be not too well off. He was, however, quietly reminded one evening by Haworth, that he wished to pay his pence, like the others.'

Appearances were deceptive, however, and the reason Haworth was not well off was that he gave his money to the Printers' Pension Corporation, despite not having worked in the trade for many years. Over the years he gave a considerable sum to the corporation, and in 1906 he endowed an almshouse at the Printers' Almshouses at Wood Green. A plaque commemorating his generosity was unveiled, and in the speeches it was mentioned that Haworth had given in total some £2,000. In 1910 he attended the annual dinner of the corporation, and was presented to the Prince of Wales (soon to be George V). Despite his advanced years, even in 1910 he was able to donate 100 guineas to the institution at Wood Green. He died on Christmas Eve 1910, and such was the respect in which he was held that he was given a civic funeral at St. Sepulchre's, Newgate, when the Lord Mayor of London was present. The funeral took place at Highgate cemetery. Even in death he had not forgotten the

Corporation, and the 1912 annual report records:

‘The Institution has benefited by the Will of the late Mr. J.R. Haworth to the extent of £256 19s. To perpetuate the memory of so remarkable and generous friend of the Institution, the Council have placed over his grave in Highgate Cemetery a stone commemorating his long years of self-denying devotion to the cause of the aged printer.’

JAMES WILLIAM WASHBROOK



J.W. Washbrook as a young man.

James W. Washbrook was born in Oxford on 27 July 1864. His first visit to a belfry was at the age of six, when he was taken up to the belfry of the church of St. Thomas the Martyr, Oxford by the nine-and-half-year old John Jaggard, who had started to learn to ring there. John Jaggard proceeded to show young Washbrook how to ring a bell. This clearly made an impression, and Washbrook subsequently learned to ring at St. Thomas's, being able to ring a bell in rounds before his eighth birthday. However, he did not learn anything of change ringing until after he was sixteen: at about that time the curate of St. Thomas's presented each of the ringers with a copy of Troyte's book, and within a short time the

band was ringing 120s of Grandsire and Stedman, followed by Minor. He rang his first peal, one of Grandsire Triples, at Kirtlington, Oxfordshire, on 26 November 1881. Five of the members of the band were members of the Oxford University Society, the others being members of the Oxford Society, and it was the first peal for six of the band. It was also the first peal credited to the Oxford Diocesan Guild.

Washbrook's developing teaching skills were recognised early in 1882, when he was appointed as a six-bell instructor to the Oxford Guild, one of a number of paid instructors who were appointed at the same time. He gathered a young band about him in Oxford, and under his leadership this was soon ringing Stedman and Treble Bob on eight and ten bells. His first peal as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples, at Christ Church, Oxford, on 13 March 1883. An attempt for a peal of Grandsire Triples at Merton College on Easter Monday 1883 with a band averaging less than twenty years, Washbrook conducting, was unsuccessful due to being stopped by the authorities because of a military drill nearby.

With a peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major rung at Drayton on 19 April 1884, the long peal-ringing association between Washbrook and the Rev. F.E. Robinson began, resulting in a large number of peals being rung in the late 1880s. It was almost certainly through Robinson that Washbrook was appointed instructor

to the newly formed Hereford Diocesan Guild in 1886, holding the post until the following year. During that time he called the first peal for the Guild - Grandsire Triples at Ross-on-Wye on 28 June 1886. In 1886 he was paid for 27 weeks tuition, and for ten weeks in 1887. However, his behaviour at Holm Lacy gave cause for concern and his appointment was not continued.



An unusual photograph of the Rev. F.E. Robinson, taken in later life.

While he was an instructor to the Hereford Guild Washbrook still returned regularly to Oxford to continue his ringing career there, and the termination of his employment just meant that he rang more peals in Oxford. He was also appointed principal instructor to the Oxford Guild, the number of other assistant instructors being reduced to three. His increasing involvement around Oxford was noted by the Rev. F.E. Robinson, who stated that: 'In 1887, owing to the increasing skill of Mr. Washbrook (a veritable ringing genius) as conductor, I rang a larger number of peals than in any previous year,...' At that time Washbrook was devoting most of his time to ringing, and Robinson says: 'The year 1888 was one of the

very busiest in all my ringing career, as Mr. Washbrook at that period gave his whole time to bellringing.' The result was that in 1888 Washbrook composed and conducted four long peals, 10,080 Double Norwich Court Bob Major, 13,247 Grandsire Caters, 12,041 and 15,041 Stedman Caters. The last was rung at Appleton on 31 December 1888 and was Washbrook's 121st peal of the year.

In the autumn of 1890 Washbrook had a serious illness, partial recovery being followed by a relapse and this necessarily affected the amount of ringing during the period. Either from this or from other causes, the arrangements for instructors in the Oxford Guild were altered late in 1891, with six others being added to the list of qualified instructors. From then on the amount of money spent on instruction declined. Clearly Washbrook could not support his expanding family on this and he also had a business as a dairyman in St. Clement's parish, Oxford.

At this period Washbrook accomplished many fine performances. When the bells at Wells cathedral were rehung by Blackbourn and Greenleaf of Salisbury in 1891 a band from Oxford, led by Robinson, was asked to ring the opening peal, the contract stating that the bellhangers would not be paid until a peal was rung on the bells. Accordingly a peal of Stedman Caters was rung on 4 November 1891, composed by Washbrook and conducted by him from the tenor. He rang the 57 cwt. bell single-handed for all but the last 40 minutes or so of the peal. A subsequent meeting of the Bath and Wells Association passed a motion deprecating the behaviour of Robinson in this matter, for what reason is not recorded. After having rung the bell single-handed to a peal of Grandsire Caters in December 1894, on 25 April 1895 Washbrook turned it in to a peal of Kent Treble Bob Royal.



The accomplishment of the long peal of London Surprise Major was marked by a photograph of the band being published by Bell News.

Long lengths were also attempted - one for 13,440 Double Norwich Court Bob Major at Boyne Hill on 31 December 1892 was called round true after 12,096 changes due to the indisposition of one of the band. Beaten by a peal of 13,440 changes at Romford in 1896, Bill Pye's band rang 15,072 changes at Erith in

April 1899. Washbrook had composed a longer length of 17,042 changes and this was rung on 22 May 1899 at Kidlington, Oxon., Washbrook conducting from the tenor. This peal was heard by Bill Pye and resulted in an acrimonious correspondence in *Bell News*, both the truth of the calling and standard of the peal being called into question by Pye, a matter not satisfactorily resolved.

A better reception was given to a peal of 11,328 London Surprise Major, rung at Drayton on 17 September 1896. Washbrook's composition had been sent by him to (Sir) Arthur Heywood a month before, asking for his comments. The accomplishment of the peal brought laudatory editorial comment in *Bell News*.

In 1899, while the acrimonious correspondence about the Kidlington peal was going on, an advertisement appeared in *Bell News* for a sexton to take charge of a new church at Arklow, County Wicklow, Ireland. The successful man had to be able to teach a band of ringers. The salary was 30s. (£1.50) per week and accommodation to be provided was in the form of a gate lodge, part of the duties being to take charge of the gate. On 8 July it was announced that Washbrook had been appointed, and, taking up this appointment, he moved outside the mainstream of change ringing. The bells were dedicated on 12 August 1899, and the first peal was rung on the following day, although Washbrook was not in the band. Within two years Washbrook had trained a band which rang a peal of Grandsire Triples on 2 August 1901, the first peal for all but Washbrook. With the difficulties of teaching a band and shortages of skilled ringers, he developed his facility for ringing two tower bells, and on 19 September 1901 not only rang the third and fourth bells at Arklow to a peal of Grandsire Triples, but also called Holt's Original composition. The editorial in *Bell News*, while acknowledging that this had been done, raised doubts about the standard of the performance, echoed in subsequent correspondence.

Accordingly, W.H. Barber, J.W. Townley and Gabriel Lindoff travelled down to Arklow from Dublin and on 19 October rang in a peal, Washbrook ringing the third and fourth bells to Grandsire Triples as before. Afterwards, the three visitors certified both the truth and quality of the performance.

Washbrook also rang 3-4 to Grandsire Triples at Arklow in the first peal for his eldest son James jun. This was on 17 June 1903, and James jun. was 10½. On 23 January 1904 James jun. rang his first peal of Stedman Triples at Arklow, James sen. conducting one of his own compositions from 3-4. This time there was no adverse comment.

Washbrook's last peal at Arklow was in 1909 and he subsequently moved back to England, his change of address to Tunstall, Staffs., being announced in *Bell News* on 23 December 1911. His two eldest sons had moved to the Potteries for work and Washbrook followed them. He moved to Manchester in 1913. With the opening of hostilities in 1914 all four of his sons joined the army, and three were killed, his eldest son being the only one who survived, although he was injured in the right arm at Gallipoli.

James W. Washbrook carried on a dairy business in Manchester and it was while he was out on his round on Christmas Day 1923 that he collapsed and died. Although it was many years since he had left Oxford, as a memorial the six bells at St. Ebbe's Church, Oxford, were rehung and augmented to a ring of eight, the cost being met by the Oxford Diocesan Guild and other ringers. They were dedicated on 4 December 1925, and among those present was James Washbrook jun.

For the sake of completeness, the later career of J.W. Washbrook jun. should be mentioned. After his father's death he seems to have dropped out of ringing for a while, but in 1934, while living in Levenshulme, he came out of retirement and on 25 October rang 1-2 to a peal of Stedman Caters 'in hand', his first on handbells. Over the next three years he rang at least 16 peals on handbells and six on tower bells. He then dropped out of ringing again, and although attempts were made after the war to make contact with him these were unsuccessful. He died in 1956 and on 22 June he was buried in the same grave as his parents.

W.H. FUSSELL

William H. 'Bill' Fussell was born at Upton-cum-Chalvey, Bucks. (now part of Slough) on 16 September 1861. In 1875 he became a chimera on the six bells of the church of St. Mary, Slough, while in 1878 he and his brother Alfred became regular members of the band. At that time the band mainly rang call changes, but change ringing was beginning to be practised in the area. He joined the Oxford Guild on its formation in 1881 and his first peal was one of Grandsire Triples at Bicester on 10 April 1882, only the fifth peal rung for the Oxford Guild. The day before this he walked 38 miles from Reading to Oxford, and then on the morning of the peal he walked 15 miles to Bicester. His next was also one of Grandsire Triples, rung at



Bill Fussell as portrayed in the Ringing World in the 1930s.

Christ Church, Ealing, on 5 August 1882 and it was the first peal rung by members of the West Middlesex Association, which had been founded in 1874. The peal was conducted by William Baron who was instructor to the Association.

In 1883 Bill Fussell worked for a builder in Bridgnorth for some weeks, before returning to Slough, and during this time he became acquainted with John Overton, head ringer at St. Leonard's, Bridgnorth. It was perhaps because of this contact with the Diocese that Bill Fussell was asked in March 1888 to become instructor to the infant Hereford Guild, which had been founded two years previously. The post had become vacant on the resignation of H.J. Tucker some three months previously. Fussell travelled about the Diocese either by train or on foot, and must have walked hundreds of miles in furtherance of the art. His experiences were recorded in his diary which he kept until 1890, extracts from which were published in the *Ringing World* in 1950 and 1951. In these were recorded the standards of both ringing and conduct and provide a unique insight into the times

In 1889 it was decided to employ Fussell for nine months, leaving out the months when the country ringers were engaged in harvest, while in 1890 financial considerations meant that he was only employed for 25 weeks in the year. For the same reasons he was only employed for three months in the spring and in the autumn of 1891, but he resigned before the end of his second period of duty. He was then employed intermittently, from December 1893 to February 1894, then for about 16 weeks in the first half of 1894, and finally for about 10 weeks early in 1895. However, his enthusiasm had evidently waned and he became unpunctual, and after a complaint from the foreman of Bosbury ringers he was not employed again.

Afterwards he did act as instructor in other places from time to time, and in the summer of 1897 he spent a week giving lessons to the ringers of Llanbadarn Fawr, Cardiganshire. He used handbells as a teaching aid, to such an effect that before the end of the week, 120s of Grandsire Doubles had been rung on both handbells and on the tower bells. There seems to have been some sort of change-ringing band here a few years previously, as Sharpe records a printed broadsheet recording 120 of Bob Doubles rung on the back six on 3 May 1886. However, this band appears to have lapsed before Bill Fussell acted as instructor.

Bill Fussell is perhaps best known for the peals that he rang, many of which were rung on tours which he organised. He rang his 200th peal in 1906 and his 300th in 1910, which was about the average rate at which he rang peals. However, in 1913 he ran over 50 peals. In 1934 Bill Fussell rang his 1000th peal, and had taken 52 years to reach that total. This peal (which, remarkably, was published in the Oxford Diocesan Guild annual report without a footnote), was rung at Slough on 13 September, the day before a party set out on what was the greatest ringing tour that

Bill Fussell organised, the ringing tour to Australia. As discussed above, a full account of this tour was published by Jack Goldsmith under the title *A Great Adventure*, to which Bill Fussell added a chapter on the visit to New Zealand, on which Jack Goldsmith did not go. The peals rung on the tour included the first peals of Royal and Cinques rung outside the British Isles.

Bill Fussell died in 1944 and was buried at Farnham Royal. His last peal was rung at Slough in April 1944 and his final peal total was 1,151. Of these he only conducted 21, but what was remarkable was the wide area over which these had been achieved, with peals in every county of England and Wales. For a long time Anglesey had eluded him and it was not until 1938 that he rang a peal on the bells at Beaumaris, commented on in the *Ringing World* thus.

‘Mr. William H. Fussell, the doyen of ringing travellers, has just consummated one of the great ambitions of his life. He has now succeeded in ringing a peal in every county of England and Wales, an achievement which no one else had yet managed to complete. In every other county in these two countries he had rung a peal except the island of Anglesey, where there is only one ring of eight - at Beaumaris. For years Mr. Fussell had waited for an opportunity; it came rather unexpectedly on July 9th, when a band gathered from Chester and Bangor and the record was made. It is 25 years since the last peal was rung there...’

Of all his peals, apart from his first and 1000th peals, he was also particularly proud of the peals that he had rung at the Curfew Tower, Windsor, the Imperial Institute, Kensington, and Devonport Dockyard Chapel. He was probably the only person to achieve this. In addition, he was one of the band of 1,000-pealers who rang a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major on the bells of St. Olave’s, Hart Street, London on 15 February 1936.

One lasting legacy of Bill Fussell, almost more significant than his peals and certainly known to a far wider audience, is the masthead of the *Ringing World* which he designed, and which has been revived in colour in recent years.

WILLIAM SHORT

‘Bill’ Short was a native of Pershore, Worcestershire, being born there on Easter Day 1868. In 1886 he moved to Clent and first entered the belfry there the following year when he and four others were taught to ring by Thomas Barber. His first 720 - of Grandsire Minor - was rung at the nearby tower of Hagley on 18 March 1888 as indeed was his first peal (Grandsire Triples on 24 November 1888). Both performances were conducted by Henry Martin of Belbroughton. On 1 January 1889 Bill Short rang his first peal of Bob Major, also at Hagley. Because there was no local conductor Bill Short was given a few tips on what to do, and on 24 January 1889 he conducted a peal of Grandsire Triples at Hagley, using Taylor’s bob-and-single composition. Four of the band were local ringers and the other four were members of the band at Clent. On 23 December in the same year Bill Short



A splendid portrait of Bill Short, published in 1913.

conducted a peal in seven minor methods on the bells at Clent, the first peal on the bells and rung at the first attempt. All but one of the band were local, and the poor 'go' of the bells was indicated by the footnote that said 'Great credit is due to J. Barber for ringing the tenor.'

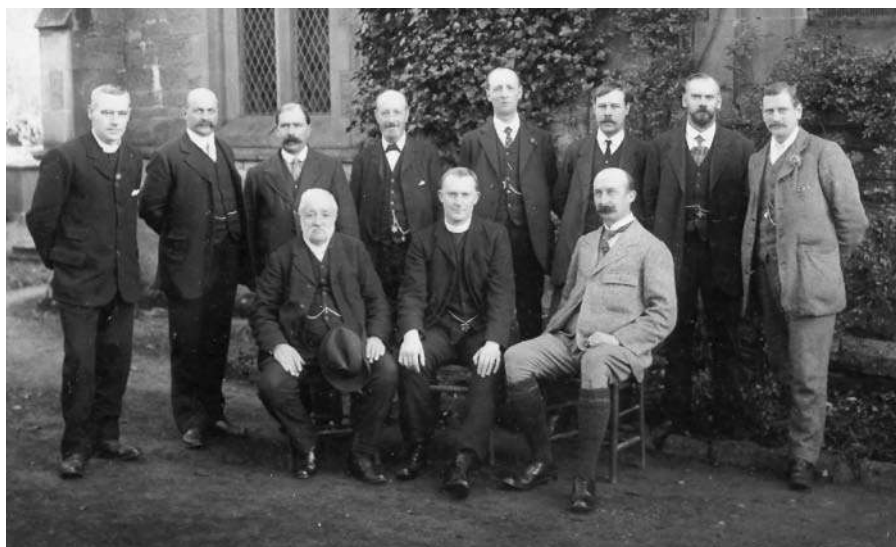
In summer 1890 Bill Short moved to London, where he spent 18 months, during which time he rang 41 peals. Among these were the second peal of Cambridge Surprise Major rung in London (Southgate, 28 November 1891), and the only peal rung at the Curfew Tower at Windsor Castle in the nineteenth century (24 October 1891). He returned to Kidderminster where he rang peals of Superlative, Double Oxford and Duffield Major with the excellent band at that time attached to the tower. Then, in 1895, he moved to Birmingham where he rang on the higher numbers of bells. One peal of Stedman Cinques at St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, on 1 August 1898, was the only peal in the method rung on the old bells in the nineteenth century. For this peal he cycled there and back, a total distance of 90 miles. Such was his progress that in January 1899 he became deputy ringing master of the St. Martin's Guild and during his tenure of office the first peals of Double Norwich, Double Oxford, Superlative and Cambridge were rung in the city. His expertise in conducting was commented on by the columnist Jingle (a pen-name of William Willson) in the issue of *Bell News* of 19 January 1901, where he stated:

'I see by the note to a Birmingham peal that the Master of St. Martin's Guild has called everything within the space of four months from Minor to Maximus!

This is good business. I happen to know the worthy Master, but as he doesn't know me I have not the slightest compunction in strumming my harp in his honour:-

William Short - St. Martin's Guild
 Good old sort - Sturdy build
 Mine is hot - this with me
 You have got - Ability
 With old port - May you be filled
 And so you ought - (and something grilled)
 You call and ring - and never shelve
 Anything - to Treble Twelve
 Good old sort of sturdy build
 Is Master Short of Martin's Guild.'

In May 1901 Bill Short was a member of a touring party that rang several peals in Ireland. These included a peal of Kent Treble Bob Royal at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, the first true peal of Royal in Ireland. On the ferry on the way home he conducted a peal of Stedman Cateters 'in hand', the first handbell peal rung



The band that rang the first peal on the eight bells at Knighton, Radnorshire, one of Grandsire Triples on 6 November 1914, conducted by Bill Short.

(Standing) The Rev. V.A. Cresswell, James H. Shepherd, William Short, James George, Charles L. Sadler, Samuel Grove, James E. Groves, Samuel Roberts. (Seated) The vicar and churchwardens.

upon the water.

Bill Short also conducted the then record peal of 11,111 Stedman Cinquses rung at St. Martin's, Birmingham, on 26 December 1901. The first of London Surprise Major for the St. Martin's Guild was rung at Kidderminster on 28 December 1901, conducted by Bill Pye, and this was also Bill Short's first in the method. His next in the method was the record peal of 14,112 changes rung at King's Norton on 11 May 1903.

Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1902, Bill Short was appointed instructor to the Hereford Guild, taking over from Jimmy Groves, and until the first world war acted in that capacity during the winter months of each year, during which time he taught change ringing to upwards of 80 bands. This probably fitted in well with his work as a scaffolder, which would have had a slack period during the winter. His work as an instructor led to a great increase in the numbers of towers affiliated to the Hereford Guild. Most of these were six-bell towers, where the limit of achievement was Grandsire Doubles, and when this standard was achieved Bill Short would call a peal of it. Thus the first peal at many of the country towers was rung at this period. Such was the number of peals rung for the Hereford Guild by Bill Short that, when he rang his 600th peal in 1913, 102 of those peals had been rung for the Hereford Guild. However, not all of these peals were of Grandsire Doubles. For example, Short helped the improving band at Brecon to practise Stedman Triples and called a peal in the method at Brecon in 1910, with seven local ringers in the band. Two

years later, William Evans, the local conductor, called a peal of Stedman Triples, the band including Short, and finally, in 1913 a completely local band rang a peal of Stedman Triples.

The outbreak of the first world war in August 1914 caused a rethink in the Hereford Guild, and at a special meeting in September 1914 it was decided not to employ an instructor for the time being. Activity in the Hereford Guild started again after the war with a peal tour in December 1919, based on Clun, in which Fussell, Short and Groves all took part. However, at a committee meeting held in Hereford in March 1919 it was decided not to employ an instructor again as it was too expensive, and so Bill Short's connection with the Hereford Guild was finally severed.

From 1912 Bill Short's name appears in the annual reports as an unattached member of the Northern Branch of the Worcestershire and Districts Association, and then as a member of Clent tower from 1917 onwards. He was Northern Branch ringing master for 1921/2, a member of the Association Committee from 1922 - 34, and then Master of the Association for 1934-38.

On 6 January 1939 an appreciation of Bill Short appeared in a regular series of articles on leading conductors. At that time he had rung 919 peals of which he had conducted 329, and it was stated that he was still active. His merits were clearly recognized locally, and in February 1939 the vicar of Clent placed the following advertisement in the parish magazine.

'The unique opportunity - which cannot be extended indefinitely - is for lads who have time on their hands and need a hobby. The chance of being taught to ring now by our old friend William Short, who knows everything about it and much more than many ringers do; the reward - a small bonus when proficient, offered by the Vicar. More ringers are needed - Learn now while Mr. Short is still able to teach you.'

By the start of the second world war Bill Short's peal total had risen to 927 but the interruption of ringing caused by the war prevented him from reaching the magic total of 1,000 peals. By the time that peal ringing had again become possible, he was unable to climb belfry steps because of chronic arthritis and eventually became totally incapacitated. He died on 27 August 1950 and was buried at Clent. A course of Grandsire Triples was rung over the grave on handbells, and then a half-muffled touch of Stedman Triples was rung on the tower bells.

WILLIAM HENRY BARBER



*Bill Barber in old age,
as portrayed in the
Ringing World.*

‘Bill’ Barber was born at Clent, Worcestershire, on 4 November 1876. Both he and his older brother John were taught to ring there by their father Thomas Barber, John being a contemporary of Bill Short. His first 720, of Plain Bob Minor, was rung at the first attempt at Clent on 21 April 1891 and he rang his first peal at Kidderminster on 5 November 1892, shortly before his sixteenth birthday. The method was appropriately Stedman Triples, a method with which his name is strongly associated. His first peal on handbells (Grandsire Triples) was rung on 27 November 1895 and his first as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples ‘in hand’ on 20 July 1896. It is said that he was only asked to call the peal as the bells were being rung round before starting for the peal. Be that as it may, he successfully called Holt’s ten-part composition. His first peal as conductor on tower bells was Plain Bob Major at Kidderminster on 3 October 1896 which he conducted from the tenor: despite being slight in build he was a good ringer of a heavier bell. Only six days later he rang a peal of Stedman Triples ‘in hand’.

Barber’s progress was helped by the fact that he had moved from Clent to live in Selly Oak and he was ringing with the King’s Norton Guild, a developing band led by the Pritchett brothers. However, in May 1898 he moved from Selly Oak to Bangor, Caernarfonshire. How this came about is not certain, but the rector at that time, the Rev. T. Lewis Jones, was a keen ringer and maintained a good band despite the remoteness of Bangor from other centres of change ringing. Barber kept in touch with what was happening back in Worcestershire, and on 10 September 1898 conducted a peal of Canterbury Pleasure Royal at Bromsgrove, the first peal in the method. It was his 100th peal, and it was noted in *Bell News* that he was only twenty-one.

Barber was resident in Bangor until November 1899, when he returned to Birmingham. A move from Birmingham to Dublin followed in September 1901 and while he was there he was one of the witnesses to Washbrook’s feat of ringing two bells to a tower-bell peal. During his time in Ireland he made at least one return visit to Birmingham and on Boxing Day 1901 he took part in the record peal of 11,111 Stedman Cinquses rung at St. Martin’s. He again took up his residence in Birmingham in May 1902, when he became the first person to conduct Carter’s Odd-bob peal of Stedman Triples (at Selly Oak on 5 May 1902) and then, on 20 August 1902, he conducted the composition on handbells, the first time that this had been done. He was married at Clent on 27 September 1902, his best man being Gabriel Lindoff.

In 1902 a proposal to have a professional instructor for the band of St. Mary’s

Cathedral, Edinburgh, was agreed by the Cathedral Board, and in December 1902 Barber was appointed. This was announced in *Bell News* on 31 January 1903, and he seems to have taken his post up in March 1903: his salary was £50 per year. As part of his tuition Barber introduced change ringing on handbells, and on 20 November 1903 he conducted a handbell peal of Plain Bob Major, the first in Scotland. The band made good progress and on 2 July 1904 a peal of Grandsire Caters was rung by the local company, conducted by Barber. He also introduced Stedman to the company, and 2 January 1905 the St. Mary's Society rang a peal of Stedman Triples at the Old Steeple, Dundee, the first peal in the method in Scotland. Later that year Barber's employment was terminated as the Cathedral Board decided they could not afford his salary, and a farewell peal of Grandsire Caters 'in hand' was rung on 16 May 1905, conducted by Barber, prior to his departure for Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Barber lived most of the rest of his life in and around Newcastle and must have followed his trade of bricklayer, specialising in the renewal of furnace linings. It was in this locality that many notable performances were achieved. On 21 February 1908 he conducted Carter's Odd-bob composition at Gateshead from a non-observation bell - blindfolded! This was rung at the third attempt and was remarkable in that during the peal Barber gradually rotated around his rope and at the end of the peal was once more facing the centre of the circle.

Barber also called other remarkable peals. At Gateshead on 5 June 1909 he called the first peal of Erin Triples, followed by the first peal of Erin Caters, at North Shields on 12 July 1909. A peal of spliced Erin and Stedman Caters was rung at Newcastle Cathedral on 27 January 1925, using a composition by A.J. Pitman which had been published in the *Ringing World* on 26 December 1924. This was the first peal of spliced Caters ever rung and, remarkably, Barber conducted it from the tenor.

Another remarkable peal conducted by Barber was one of Grandsire Caters on handbells. This was rung by members of the Newcastle Cathedral Guild and took place on 21 June 1930 441 feet down a coal mine at Cramlington, Northumberland. During the course of the peal the electric lights failed for about 50 minutes, and the band had to ring by the light of pit lamps until the power was restored.

Arrangements had been made for a similar peal to be rung in a dirigible airship, but the airship became unavailable because of a flying accident, prompting Barber to remark that '...it was a good thing the balloon blew up when it did, and not during the ringing, which might have thrown the bells into confusion.'

In 1924 he was elected a representative on the Central Council for the Durham and Newcastle Association, and served until his death in 1950. It was later said that

'...he was not prominent in debate, but held forthright views, which he was capable of expressing with great deliberation. His 'Ringing World' comment during the Bankses James' Cambridge Minor dispute, '...scrap the lot,' will be remembered by many.'

In 1949 he moved from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Sutton Coldfield, and

became a service ringer again at St. Martin's, Birmingham, after a break of almost 50 years. His health had been adversely affected by his work, often repairing the brickwork of furnaces at weekends when they had hardly had time to cool down and such were the conditions under which he worked, that on 9 December 1938 it was reported that he had just spent several weeks in hospital recovering from a burn on his knee, received during the course of his work. He died quite suddenly on 30 May 1950 and was buried at Sutton Coldfield on 3 June, but the news did not reach Birmingham in time for his many friends in the St. Martin's Guild to attend the funeral. Several tributes appeared in the *Ringling World*, the final one summarising his merits.

'Although a great ringer and conductor, he was never presumptuous about it. His loss will be felt by a great many of his old associates as well as by his family. But the memory of his personality will remain with us as a gentleman and a master of his art.'

He rang over 600 peals, many of which he conducted.

CHAPTER SIX

Peal Ringers

In Chapter 12 of *Giants of the Exercise* Vol. I, 2nd ed., pages 96-8 I discussed the peal-ringing careers of the Rev. F.E. Robinson, the first person to ring a thousand peals, and Bill Pye, who was nearly the first person to ring two thousand peals. Such totals could not have been reached without the support of many ringers, and Bill Pye in particular gathered a very capable band around him, some members of which also rang large totals of peals. These included his brothers Ernest (died 1915, rang 1,007 peals) and George, known as Bob (died 1945, rang 1,878 peals). Another brother, Staff Sergeant Alfred Pye, was also a very capable ringer but his career was interrupted by extensive army service and his peal total was relatively small. The name of Isaac Shade is perhaps not as well known as it should be, and at the time of his death in 1926 (knocked down by a motor car on the way home to Greenwich from a ringing practice) he had rung 1,450 peals, at that time more than any other ringer except for Bill Pye. Charles T. Coles was secretary of the Middlesex Association from 1910, Bill Pye being Master, and many of his peals were rung for that Association. At the time of his death in 1946 he had rung 1,014 peals. Another of the all-time greats was Reuben Sanders, who I had the privilege of ringing with in his later years. He died in 1965 at the advanced age of 91, having rung over 650 peals, the last one on the eve of his 90th birthday. It is as a heavy-bell ringer that he is best known, and his superb style enabled him to perform such feats as ringing the eleventh bell at Exeter Cathedral to both Stedman Cinques (15 October 1927) and Cambridge Surprise Maximus (15 October 1932). In both of these peals Bill Pye rang the tenor with the assistance of a strapper.

All of the above, with the exception of Ernest Pye who was killed on a railway line at the age of 39, lived to a good age. But as well as Ernest Pye there was another member of Bill Pye's band whose life was cut tragically short and whose full potential had not then been realised. This was Bertram Prewett, whose career is described below.

BERTRAM PREWETT

While his ringing career was comparatively short, during it he was at the forefront of the Exercise. He was born at Oxhey, Herts. on 12 October 1878 and educated at Watford Grammar School and King's College, London, before entering the civil service. Early in 1915 he volunteered for the London Rifle Brigade and served until he was killed on 31 August 1918. Such was the confusion of the time that news of his death did not reach his wife and parents until the last week in October.

Bertram Prewett - usually called Bert - started to learn to ring in November



A photograph of Bert Prewett that appeared in the Ringing World in 1911 after he had rung his 700th peal.

1897 and under the tuition of George N. Price made such progress that he rang his first peal at Oxhey on 28 March 1898, one of Grandsire Triples. The following year he became connected with the Middlesex County Association, and joined Bill Pye's developing peal band. Because of this not only did he ring many peals but he also rang in many of the outstanding performances of the period. What was claimed as his fiftieth peal was rung on 24 November 1900, but a peal rung earlier in the same week was later found to be false. His 100th peal - Double Norwich at St. George-in-the-East, London - was rung on 10 January 1902. From then on he rang a regular succession of peals, reaching his 500th with a peal of Bristol Surprise

Major at Ashover, Derbyshire, on 16 September 1908. This was on one of Bill Pye's peal tours, during which eleven peals were rung in eight days, Bert Prewett ringing in all but one. In 1909 he took part in the record peal of 18,027 Stedman Caters at Loughborough on 12 April 1909, and in a subsequent write-up in *Bell News* it was pointed out that he had rung more than fifty peals per year for eleven years in succession. His 900th peal was one of Double Norwich Court Bob Major at Heston, Middlesex, on 7 November 1913. He had thus rung 400 peals in a little over five years, the average being helped by the fact that he rang 100 peals in 1912. In 1913 he married Ida Elton and this was celebrated by a peal of Kent Treble Major rung at Bushey by members of the Bushey Society on the same day (12 July), conducted by Robert E. Stavert. After his marriage his rate of ringing peals declined, and this was also affected by the outbreak of the Great War. His last peal was rung at Wrentham, Suffolk, on 14 May 1916, one of only two peals of minor that he had rung. When he was killed he had rung 953 peals. In one of those sad coincidences, Robert E. Stavert had been killed only six days before.

Bert Prewett was an extremely capable conductor. His first peal as conductor was one of Stedman Triples at Aldenham, Herts., on 5 March 1900 and this was rung at the first attempt. Stedman Triples accounted for more than a quarter of his peal total, ringing 247 of which he conducted 88. A letter from R.G. Beck in the *Ringing World* of 28 February 1975 recalled his abilities:

'I have heard the late Joseph T. Dyke say on more than one occasion what a great loss to ringing the late Bertram Prewett was. Apparently he was a first-class ringer with exceptional ability as a conductor. If for instance you wanted to call a touch of Stedman Triples, he would play it on the piano. Also, he and three others would ring eight handbells, two persons in one room and two in an adjoining one.

Mr. Dyke also told me the story of when the late Rev. F.E. Robinson was ringing his

numerous peals of Stedman Triples. It seems all his peals came to a successful conclusion, but some of it in between was questionable, i.e. he would go in slow and think he was quick or vice-versa, and then proceed to move the bells around until the bells had gained the desired effect and his own prestige. One day he went to ring a peal in Bertram's tower and Bert had been informed. His remark was "It won't happen here." Strange to say, there was trouble in this peal attempt, but when His Reverence tried to shift Bertram he was adamant and would not budge, so he had no alternative but to set the bells, but he never spoke to Bert again.'

He also conducted peals in most of the standard methods that were rung at the time, including a number of peals of Bristol Surprise Major. To illustrate a theoretical point the Rev. E. Bankes James published a lead of the method in *Bell News* on 11 December 1897. The method was taken up by the famous Brighton band and the first peal in the method was rung by them on 22 March 1901. Bill Pye's band, including Prewett, rang a peal on the method at Erith, Kent, on 13 May 1906, the first in the method for all the band. The second peal in the method by a band led by Bill Pye was at St. Giles-in-the-Fields on 25 June 1906 and this was stated to be the 'first peal in the method ever rung in the Metropolis'. Bristol became a firm favourite with Bill Pye's band, with an increasing number of peals being rung in the method. How galling then that the first long peal in the method was rung at Knebworth by a band representing the Hertford County Association. This was of 12,160 changes and took place on 8 April 1912, the Rev. H. Law James producing the composition. This provoked Bill Pye to respond, and on 27 May his band rang 15,264 changes of Bristol Surprise Major at Hornchurch, Essex, Prewett ringing the fifth bell. At the time it was the longest length ever rung in any Surprise method, and it remained the longest length in the method until 1950.

Bill Pye's band was one of the leading Surprise bands in the country and helped to develop the ringing of such methods on the higher numbers. On 9 February 1903 the first peal of Surprise Royal in London was rung on the bells at St. Magnus the Martyr, Lower Thames Street. Contrary to what would have been expected, this was of New Cambridge Surprise Royal, and was the first peal in the method, rung at the first attempt after only one practice. Prewett rang the fifth bell and Pye conducted from the tenor.

Surprise Royal naturally lead on to Surprise Maximus, the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus being rung at Ipswich on 15 August 1908. The band essentially was an Ipswich one, but was made up with Bert Prewett, Bill and Bob Pye.

It was with a peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal at St. Clement Danes on 29 February 1912 that Bert Prewett completed a peal on every day of the year.

The range of achievements of Bert Prewett, made during a comparatively short period, indicate that his death in 1918 was a loss to the ringing exercise as a whole. It was even more of a loss to his wife Ida, who survived him for many years until her own death in November 1974.

It was inevitable that Bill Pye's total would be passed sooner or later, and that someone would reach a total of 2,000 peals. However, it was not until more than twenty-five years after his death that this was achieved by

ERNEST MORRIS

The advantage of having a father who was a ringer, particularly one who insisted on correct bell-handling, was not lost on the Morris brothers. The father was Josiah Morris, of Leicester, well known as a teacher of ringing, and who could not put up with slovenly ringers. His favourite saying was: 'There are only two kinds of ringers - graceful and disgraceful - be the former.' He was also an exponent of the art of ringing the tenors to handbell peals of Triples, Caters or Cinques, so much so that he later became nick-named 'The Rhythm King'. The sons were Ernest and George Stedman Morris, the former being the subject of this biography.



Ernest Morris in the 1930s.

Ernest Morris was born at Leicester on 28 July 1889. At the time Josiah was working as a shoemaker and unable to afford to send Ernest Morris to high school, so Ernest had to leave school at the age of fourteen, and was largely self-educated. When he left school he went to work in a leather warehouse. He married in 1914, and saw service during the first world war, although because of defective eye-sight (he was blind in one eye) he spent much time working on the land in Yorkshire. He succeeded his father as verger of St. Margaret's Church, Leicester in 1937, and in 1957 their combined service in this post was 50 years. His wife was a formidable ally in carrying out his duties (see the *Ringing World* 1958, 189). He retired on 1 March 1958 and died in 1962 at the age of 73.

Ernest Morris was taught to ring by his father at St. Mark's, Leicester in 1900 and then started to learn change ringing on the then ring of six bells at St. George's, Leicester. However, he did not ring his first peal until 1906. This was Grandsire Triples while on holiday at Grimsby on 6 August - Bank Holiday Monday - and his father also took part. In the same year he joined the old Midland Counties Association. Within two years he became local secretary of the Association and then, in 1925, the honorary general secretary, a post which he held until the dissolution of the M.C.A. in 1945.

But this runs ahead of our story. His first peal as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples at Melton Mowbray in 1908, and in 1912 he rang his 50th peal. However, it was after his service in the first world war that his ringing career really took off and in 1931, the year in which he published *The History and Art of Change Ringing*, he rang his 600th peal. Over a quarter of these were of Doubles and Minor,

and the total included seven of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, a high number for the date. Included also was the record length of 12,896 Cambridge Surprise Major rung at Stoney Stanton on 28 April 1923. After the hiatus caused by the second world war, he rang in the first post-war long peal, 12,663 Stedman Cinques at Christ Church, Oxford on 26 August 1946. The following year he rang his 1,000th peal, the 15th person to achieve this total, his father ringing in both his first and 1,000th peals. With increased opportunity his tally of peals grew rapidly, and he rang his 2000th peal at Loughborough Bell Foundry Campanile on 27 February 1961, the first person to achieve this total. The final number of peals that he rang was 2,076, 336 of which were at the Bell Foundry Campanile. Just under a quarter of his total was peals of Doubles and Minor, reflecting not only the fact that he enjoyed ringing on any number of bells but also the fact that he was only too willing to help younger ringers to achieve their first peal.

Ernest Morris is perhaps best known for his writing, which began with a small book on St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, published in 1912. During the 1920s he was working on a revision of North's *Church Bells of Leicestershire*, during which he made sure that he rang a peal in all the ringable towers. This work was never published and the manuscript is in the library of Leicestershire Archaeological Society. It is clear that it was designed as more than an archaeological work as, when it was catalogued by Chris Pickford in 1980, it was stated:

'Much space is taken up with details of peals in which Ernest Morris took part'.

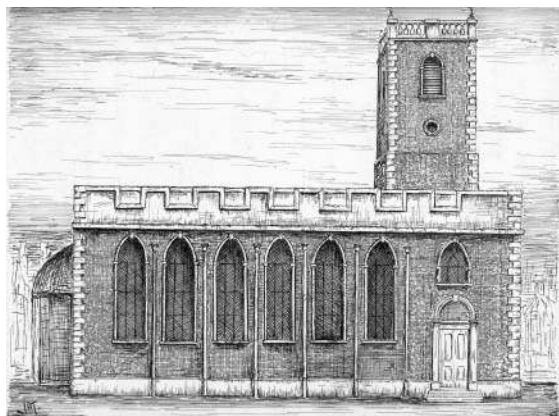
Morris's reputation was made with his *History and Art of Change Ringing*, published in 1931. This was a compendium of information that had appeared in the pages of *Church Bells*, *Bell News*, *The Ringing World*, and other printed works, running to a hefty 673 pages. A great success at the time, it is still a very useful source of reference but certain of his conclusions must be used with caution. As well as writing a number of articles on a variety of topics for publication in the *Ringing World* and elsewhere, he published four other books. *Legends o' the Bells* (1935) was another compendium, this time of legendary material, while *Bells of All Nations* (1951) dealt with the subject on a very general basis. *Towers and Bells of Britain* (1955) was a summary in book form of a series of articles that had appeared in the *Ringing World* during the war years and was to a large extent based on his own experiences. He was a collector of small bells, and his final work was *Tintinnabula* (1959), dealing with the small bells of the world. It is said that these general books were well received in the United States.

Morris died suddenly on 28 April 1962 after apparently progressing well after an emergency operation. His death was marked with extended coverage in the *Ringing World*.

GEORGE ERNEST FEARN

was born in Birmingham on 26 July 1906 but it was not until he was twenty-one that he joined his younger brother Henry ('Our kid') in learning to ring at St. John's, Deritend, a rough-going ring of eight cast by Wells of Aldbourne. Their tutor was John Neal, the tower captain, who was himself a fine heavy-bell ringer. Regular visits to other towers by bus or train, particularly to Bromsgrove and Belbroughton, soon gave them experience, and George was elected a member of the St. Martin's Guild on 19 May 1928. His first peal was one of Grandsire Doubles, rung at Stone, Worcestershire, on Boxing Day 1928, conducted by Ernest Calcutt from Belbroughton: it was the first peal by all the band. Subsequently George bought a motor-cycle, and after that was stolen from outside a church he relied on a push-bike, on which he travelled many thousands of miles. Many stories are told of his exploits on his bike, the following in the words of Muriel Reay:

'According to one tale he was cycling along one windy day. He was wearing a hat "with a wide flange" pulled well down to keep it on, and with his head lowered he was pedalling along into the storm. Suddenly the bike went bump, bump, bump, and he fell off. He had cycled up the first three rungs of a window cleaner's ladder fixed to a handcart.'



*St. John's Chapel, Deritend, where George Fearn learned to ring.
A pen-and-ink drawing by J. Armiger Trollope*

After ringing finished at Deritend, George and Henry rang first at Harborne and then, from 1929, at King's Norton, where there was a band capable of ringing London Surprise Major for Sunday services. Because ringing at King's Norton took place on alternate Sunday mornings, they were able to go to St. Martin's in the Bull Ring on the Sundays when King's Norton bells were not being rung. This was an association that lasted to the end of George's life. His first of his 256 peals of Stedman Cinques on tower bells was rung at St. Martin's in 1930 and on 23 October 1934 he conducted at peal of Stedman Cinques on the same bells, the footnote stating that it was 'The conductor's first attempt to call a peal in any method.' The resident conductor at St. Martin's at that time was the legendary Albert Walker, and when Gillett and Johnston recast the old ten bells at Birmingham Cathedral in 1937 it was on his recommendation that George was appointed ringing master there, holding the post until the end of his life. It was through George's persuasion the two

trebles were presented to Birmingham Cathedral in 1949 by Frank B. Yates, and both names appear on the bells. Other posts that he held were those of ringing master of the St. Martin's Guild from 1944-48, and its Honorary Secretary and Treasurer from 1949 until 1969.

His peal ringing career really got under way after the second world war. By 1944 he had got together a small band of enthusiasts and this was foundation of his success. Initially peals were of the simpler methods on eight, Cambridge and Yorkshire, indeed so many of the latter were rung that it was nick-named 'Birmingham Surprise'. George conducted most of these, and while he could reliably put in the bobs, he was not able to correct more than minor slips in the ringing, so this had to be good or not at all. Major led on to Royal and Maximus, the latter particularly after the augmentation of the bells at St. Philip's Cathedral to a ring of twelve in 1949. His name as ringing master appears on the second of those bells. The institution in the early 1950s of the regular peal attempts on a Thursday night, continued until well after his death, was a major factor in ringing his large total of peals, and of his 762 peals on the bells, a high proportion were rung on a Thursday night. These peal attempts were designated the 'Long practice', a polite fiction maintained between George and the Provost. The band for these peals attempts had a nucleus of permanent ringers, and others who joined for shorter periods, perhaps at university or working for a time in Birmingham, and those of us who passed through this finishing school have reason to be grateful for the opportunity given and the high standards set.

Another tower which contributed to his total in the 1950s was that of Bishop Ryder's church, and attempts continued on a Monday night even after services were no longer held. The conditions were bad, with rain entering the tower, causing Rodney Meadows to make his often-quoted remark about 'ringing in the deep end'. George rang 140 peals at this church, which demolished in 1959/60 when the bells transferred to Harborne.

George spent all his working life in the electricity supply industry, having started work for the old City of Birmingham Electricity Supply Department in 1920, and then for its successor the Central Electricity Generating Board, until his retirement in 1966. After short break he worked for an insurance company for two years or so. I remember him telling me of one problem that he had had. He had quoted for insurance on a house, but had omitted to ask one vital question that affected the risk - was the house thatched? As it happened, it was, and burned down not very long after, to the dismay of the insurance company!

George Fearn was the leading peal ringer of his generation. When he rang his 1000th peal on 2 September 1953 he was the youngest person to do so. It was reported in the *Ringling World* at the time that the last 875 had been rung in nine years and nine months. His 2000th peal was one of Superlative Surprise Maximus rung at Birmingham Cathedral on 25 February 1965 by an essentially Thursday night band.

ST. MARTINS' GUILD FOR THE DIOCESE OF BIRMINGHAM

At the Cathedral Church of St. Philip

On Thurs., Feb. 25, 1965, in 3 Hours and 45 Minutes,

A PEAL OF 5280 SUPERLATIVE SURPRISE MAXIMUS

Tenor 31 cwt. 21 lb in D.

Henry H. Fearn	Treble	Martin D. Fellows	7
Susan Funnell	2	Clifford A. Barron	8
Norman J. Goodman	3	David J. Purnell	9
Roderick W. Pipe	4	Peter Border	10
John C. Eisel	5	J. Alan Ainsworth	11
Michael J. Fellows	6	*George E. Fearn	Tenor

Conducted by George E. Fearn

* 2,000th peal.

His 2,500th peal in 1972 was marked by an amusing write-up by Muriel Reay in the *Ringing World*. At the time of his death on 20 May 1974 he had rung 2,667 peals, more than any other person. A summary of his peals is given below (figures in brackets indicate numbers conducted).

SUMMARY OF PEALS

	Tower		Hand	
Maximus	426	(12)	-	
Cinques	262	(10)	18	
Royal	409	(47)	4	
Caters	71	(4)	18	(2)
Major	1,321	(231)	8	
Triples	69	(7)	2	
Minor	47	(12)	8	
Doubles	<u>3</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>1</u>	
	<u>2,608</u>	<u>(324)</u>	<u>59</u>	(2)

Final Total 2,667 (326)

George rang 817 peals with Norman Goodman, more than any other person.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Surprise Maximus

One of the characteristics of the ringing Exercise is the increasing complexity of change ringing, not only in the methods rung but also the number of bells used. Although the ringing of Surprise Maximus is now relatively common, it was only in the early twentieth century that the first peal of it was rung, although the foundations were laid in the previous century. In 1898 what was claimed as the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal was rung at St. Michael's Church, Gloucester by the St. Michael's Juniors. Although this claim was not correct (the first had been rung at Wakefield in 1822) its accomplishment caused the attention of the St. Michael's Juniors to turn to Cambridge Surprise Maximus, and this band was the first to ring this, although no peal was rung. The conductor of the St. Michael's Juniors was

JOHN AUSTIN



John Austin in 1898, at the period when Cambridge Surprise Royal was achieved by the St. Michael's Juniors.

He was a native of Burton-on-Trent, where he was born on 19 November 1863. He learned to ring on the ring of six bells at Winshill, part of the Burton-on-Trent conurbation, and rang his first 720 there on 30 May 1885. This was one of Grandsire Minor, and it was conducted by John Jaggard, who became a firm friend for the rest of his life. Jaggard had moved from Oxford at a young age in 1873, and became attached to St. Paul's, Burton-on-Trent, the pioneering band whose exploits I have chronicled previously (see *Giants of the Exercise* Vol. 1, 2nd ed., pages 80-2). Thereafter, Austin's progress was rapid, and Jaggard conducted his first peal, Grandsire Triples, rung at St. Paul's, Burton-on-Trent, on 5 December 1885. Clearly John Austin made a good impression and he joined the band, making such rapid progress that he took part in peals of New Cumberland, Superlative, Cambridge and London Surprise Major rung by that band. He was thus, within a short time, at the forefront of the Exercise.

John Austin's first peal as conductor was rung at St. Paul's, Burton-on-Trent, on 11 August 1888. This was a substantial achievement as he conducted Holt's Original composition of Grandsire Triples. Within two years he had moved to Gloucester, and marked his arrival by conducted Holt's Original at Upton St. Leonard's on 8 November 1890. One member of the band was James E. (Jimmy) Groves, whose first peal it was. Austin joined the St. Michael's Juniors and on Christmas Day 1890

was in the band that rang a peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major at St. Michael's on Christmas Day 1890. Despite the fact that the peal was rung before breakfast, there was no difficulty with the vicar over ringing a peal on such a day, as both his sons (the James brothers) were in the peal! In *Bell News* the footnote to the peal claimed proudly 'First Peal in this Method in the City and County.'

Early in 1891 his job took John Austin to Lincoln, where he was resident for about six months and where he rang with the St. Peter-at-Arches company, but he then returned to Gloucester and his association with the St. Michael's Juniors. In April 1893 the Juniors rang a peal of Superlative Surprise Major at Quedgeley, the first peal of Surprise in the county. John Austin conducted and it was his 100th peal. In May the following year a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major was rung at the same place, the first in the method by all of the band except John Austin, and in the September following a peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Caters was rung at St. Stephen's, Bristol, the first peal in the method. Both the latter peals were conducted by John Austin. The story of the Double Norwich Court Bob Caters is told in a letter he wrote to Edgar Shepherd early in 1944:

'At that time the brothers James were crazy for ringing. They were after me every night to go somewhere. On one occasion H.L. suggested going for Double Norwich Caters, so E.B. arranged the bobs in thirds place and composed a peal, gave it to me to fix up a practice. Only having eight at the Cross we had to go to Stroud or Painswick to get the practice.

On one occasion J.W. Taylor, who was visiting the district, said he would like to ring a peal of Double Norwich Caters, so I fixed up Stroud. We rang up to the last course, and 89, which should have made a single and turned into the handstroke 798, made a bob and came out 789 as a bob. I called "Stand" at once. It was very disappointing. One member of the band said he would never ring another peal, but that is only one of the setbacks we get in ringing.'

The first of London Surprise Major by the band, at St. Michael's on 8 November 1894, was conducted by the Rev. H. Law James and new ground was broken in June 1897 when John Austin conducted at home the first peal of Gloucester Surprise Major.

Meanwhile the band had also been gaining experience with peals on higher numbers, although this had to be away from home. Cirencester was not too far away, and Grandsire Cinques was rung there in December 1893, Bob Maximus in June 1897 and Treble Bob Maximus in September 1897, all conducted by John Austin. Clearly the band was in first-rate practice, and on 6 January 1898 a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major was rung at home. An attempt for a peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal was made at Stroud on 20 January 1898 but this failed after 2¼ hours. However, it was successfully brought round at Cheltenham on the following day, John Austin conducting. The footnote in *Bell News* claimed it as the first in the method. However, in the next issue it was pointed out that a peal in the method had been rung at Wakefield in 1822, prompting an enquiry from John Austin as to

whether any other peals of Surprise Royal or Maximus had been rung. No reply was published.

Later in 1898 the bells of St. Michael's were augmented to a ring of ten, and in September of that year the Juniors rang a peal of Stedman Caters at home, while in February 1899 another peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal was rung there, this time conducted by the Rev. H. Law James.

The successful performance of Cambridge Surprise Royal led to consideration being given to extending the method to Maximus. However, there were practical difficulties as it was necessary to travel to access a ring of twelve bells, thus limiting practice. Moreover, the Rev. H. Law James, an important member of the band, had taken up his duties at Surfleet after the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal in January 1898. Despite the difficulties three attempts were made at Cirencester, one of which lasted well into the second course, and so John Austin, who was conducting, was the first person to call a bob in Surprise Maximus. However, it seems that the bob was the cause of the problem, and in 1970 it was reported:

'A conversation with John Austin and more recent information from Mr. F.J. Lewis, of Cirencester, reveals that they did manage a plain course but a bob rather upset things and a fierce argument between the brothers Law James and Banks James shattered the affair.'

This was, perhaps, the high water mark for the St. Michael's Juniors, but the band continued to be active until the start of the first world war. That is not to say that the band did not have its further achievements, and on 16 April 1906 John Austin conducted a peal of Stedman Cinques at Painswick, the first of Stedman Cinques by all but one of the band. By September 1912 John Austin had rung 354 peals, of which he had conducted 197. His final total was about 550, of which he had conducted over 300. Included in that total was the remarkable peal of Stedman Caters that he conducted at Exeter Cathedral on 15 September 1903, when Bill Pye rang the tenor single-handed.

The impression given above is of solely a peal-ringing career, but this is only one aspect of John Austin's ringing career. He was secretary of the St. Michael's Juniors, and then in 1916 he was elected Master of the Gloucester and Bristol Association, a post in which he served until 1918. He served for a number of years as the secretary of the Gloucester branch of the G&B, and was a representative on the Central Council from 1908 until 1920, and then from 1932 until his death in 1944. His merits were recognised over a wide area, and in August 1925 he was presented with a gold watch and albert, suitably inscribed, 'subscribed for by ringers and friends as a token of the respect in which he was held', as the report in the *Ringling World* put it.

It is not surprising that the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus was rung at St. Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich as there was a strong local twelve-bell band there led by

JAMES MOTTS



An elegant James Motts in 1891.

James Motts - known locally as Jemmy - was born in Fressingfield on 18 September 1859. Coming from a long line of ringers, stretching back to his great-great-grandfather, he became a ringer at the early age of about 12, although he did not ring a 720 until 1874. Early in 1875 he went to Ipswich, and although he did little in the way of ringing there, the most being a 720 at St. Margaret's. On his return to Fressingfield after a stay of about two years in Ipswich, he rang his first peal at Fressingfield, Bob Major on 12 May 1878. At that time there was a band of eight young ringers at Fressingfield, including William Motts, James's brother, who also all worked together at the same place. This band practised change ringing on

handbells, and also walked to other towers in the vicinity for practice. Before his return to Ipswich early in 1882 he had rung about 16 peals in the neighbourhood.

When he returned to Ipswich to follow his trade as a painter and decorator, he was soon recruited by the leaders of St. Mary-le-Tower, including William L. Catchpole and Daniel Prentice, both composers and conductors of note. Thus began an association that lasted for the rest of his life. His talents were soon put to good use, and on 18 December 1882 he conducted a peal of Oxford Treble Bob Royal, the first in that method for the Norwich Diocesan Association, and his first of any sort for that society. Other firsts for the Association that he conducted at St. Mary-le-Tower include Oxford Treble Bob Maximus (25 November 1884) and Stedman Cinques (8 September 1885).

Meanwhile, he was involved in a remarkable series of attempts that were made at Debenham to ring Thomas Day's composition of 16,608 Oxford Treble Bob Major. The first attempt was in 1881 and over the years ten unsuccessful attempts were made, the longest in 1891 lasting 7 hrs. 54 mins. Success finally came on 6 June 1892, when the bells were brought round in 10 hrs. 32 mins. The peal was conducted by James Motts, and the tenor was rung by Frederick Tillett. It is worth recording that on the morning of the peal James Motts cycled the fourteen miles from Ipswich on his 52-inch ordinary bicycle, and no doubt cycled back again afterwards.

From the 1890s the Ipswich band was widening the range of what was being rung. In 1817 a peal of Norwich Court Bob Maximus was rung at St. Peter

Mancroft, Norwich, and this is thought to have been of the 'Double' version. It was not until 28 November 1896 that another was rung, this time at St. Mary-le-Tower, composed and conducted by James Motts.

However, a great step forward came in 1908 with the ringing of a peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus. At Whitsun 1908 the Pye brothers and one or two others had a peal-ringing weekend around Ipswich. The story of what happened next was told by Charles J. Sedgley in 1958.

'After the peal at Ipswich the band adjourned to one of those places beloved of ringers for refreshment and talk. And the subject of Cambridge S. Maximus was broached by - so I have been told - Wm. Pye. Anyway, it was taken up by the progressive-minded ones, diagrams were produced and it was decided to try a course at St. Mary-le-Tower for service the next morning. Now it must not be thought that this would entail 'slap-banging' about: it was a band of experienced 12-bell ringers who did not tolerate that sort of thing. The attempt was made and about eight leads rung, quite a good start this was considered, and a peal attempt was fixed for a month later, which resulted in 4½ courses being rung, under the conductorship of James Motts. It was too good to abandon now, and another attempt was fixed for August 15th which turned out successful, for a very good peal was rung in 3 hours 47 minutes, James Motts again conducting the composition taken from Middleton's,...

The majority of the peal band belonged to St. Mary-le-Tower, and in due course consideration was given to ringing a local band peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, the brothers William and George Pye and Bertram Prewett having been in the 1908 peal. A local band (bar one!) peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal was rung on 26 November 1908 and with additions to the band, courses of Cambridge Surprise Maximus were rung, and a half peal accomplished on 20 August 1910. An attempt to ring a peal was made on 17 September 1910, and this was successful, an excellent peal being rung, again conducted by James Motts.

In the four years leading up to the first world war, a total of eight peals were rung in the method - two at Ipswich, three by the College Youths (two at Southwark and one at Cornhill, three different conductors), one each at Cripplegate and Great St. Mary's, Cambridge (both conducted by Bill Pye) and one at St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol (conducted by W.A. Cave). After the war, the first peal scored in the method was rung at St. Mary-le-Tower on 5 March 1921. This was the last in the method rung by Jemmy Motts, and he died in his residence in Orchard Street, Ipswich on 21 January 1923. He was buried on 26 January when about 20 ringers were present, and handbells were rung over the grave. A half-muffled peal of Stedman Cinques was rung to his memory at St. Mary-le-Tower on the day of the funeral.

No peal book seems to have survived, but his old friend Charles Borrett analysed the peals rung by Jemmy Motts for the Norwich Diocesan Association, the correct total of these being 559 - 530 on tower bells and 29 'in hand' - and of these 93 were rung on 12 bells. In addition, there were others rung for the Essex

Association and further afield, as he rang in the record length of 14,112 London Surprise Major at King's Norton in 1903, for which he cycled there and back!

A fine tablet to the joint memory of William Catchpole and James Motts is mounted on the east wall of the St. Mary-le-Tower belfry which states that they were

*'COMPOSERS AND CONDUCTORS OF NUMEROUS PEALS. WELL VERSED AND CAPABLE. ALWAYS READY TO GIVE A HELPING HAND TO THEIR LESS LEARNED COMRADES IN FURTHERING THE ART OF CHANGE RINGING.
OF GENIAL AND NOBLE DISPOSITION WERE THESE TWO MEN.'*

The death of James Motts did not, however, bring to an end the Surprise Maximus band at St. Mary-le-Tower, which continued to flourish under the leadership of

GEORGE E. SYMONDS

(with notes on CHARLES J. SEDGLEY)



George Symonds in middle age, in 1938.

George Symonds was born at Oakley, a village in north Suffolk near Diss, on 11 July 1875. In 1886 his family moved to Church Farm in the adjoining parish of Brome, and in December of that year he taught himself to handle a bell on the ring of five bells there. Then he went on to ring call changes on the ring of eight bells at Eye. An apprenticeship in a flour mill at Eye followed, and while his ringing progressed he found it difficult to be accepted into a 12-bell band such as that at St. Mary-le-Tower.

He moved to London in 1895, still following his trade of a miller, and, living near St. John's, Waterloo Road, he came into contact with W. Barron, the leader of the band (nicknamed 'Tubby'). As a consequence he rang his first peal with the Waterloo Society, one of Kent Treble Bob Royal at St. Giles', Camberwell, on 13 February 1897. This was also the first of Royal for the Waterloo Society. His first peal as conductor was Holt's Original at St. Margaret's, Barking, on 5 February 1898, and later that year he took part in a 'silent' peal of the same at St. John's, Waterloo Road.

Whilst in London such was his progress that he occasionally rang the ninth bell at St. Paul's Cathedral on a Sunday morning, deputising for Ezra Carter who was occasionally unable to attend because of his work as a tug-boat pilot on the Thames.

On other occasions he travelled to Ipswich on a Sunday morning on a train called 'The Sunday League' at a cost of 2s. 6d., for which he covered a round trip of 140 miles and made the acquaintance of such as James Motts.

His last peal while he was resident in London was one of Stedman Caters at Beddington in January 1900 and later that year he returned to East Anglia, becoming a member of the band at Beccles. His 50th peal was one of Stedman Triples at Redenhall, Norfolk, which he conducted on 20 August 1904. In 1907 George Symonds married a ringer's daughter from Wangford, Suffolk and the couple set up house in Beccles, moving to Framlingham in 1909, where the rector, the Rev. J. Holme Pilkington, was himself a ringer and composer. George Symonds' 100th peal was rung in Framlingham, although it was one of Bob Major 'in hand' and not on the tower bells. This was rung during a week's visit to Suffolk by Alf Pulling in August 1913 during which eight peals were rung, five 'in hand' and three on tower bells. George Symonds rang in all but one of the peals. The published analysis showed that, of his first 100 peals, he had conducted 59.

In 1919 George Symonds moved to Ipswich, and joined the band at St. Mary-le-Tower. He took part in the first post-war peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, at St. Mary-le-Tower in 1921, his first in the method. In this peal the tenor was rung by Fred. J. Tillett, a fine heavy-bell ringer, who had rung the tenor to the long peal at Debenham in 1892, and it was also his first peal in the method.

James Motts died in 1923 and George Symonds subsequently became the leader of the band, the conducting being shared with this great friend Charles J. Sedgley. The latter was the son of John W. Sedgley, the tower captain at King's Lynn, and had come to Ipswich in March 1909. At that time he had only rung a couple of peals of Bob Major, but after only a year in Ipswich he had made such progress that he took part in the 1910 peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus. After service in the first world war, he returned to Ipswich and resumed his place at S. Mary-le-Tower. A peal of Stedman Cinques rung at St. Mary-le-Tower on 25 October 1919 and contained, for the first time, the names both of George Symonds and Charlie Sedgley. From then on both were linked in the progress made by the band, and their friendship, and Charlie Sedgley's gifts in the theoretical aspects of ringing, kept the Ipswich band at the forefront of developments. His skills were recognised nationally, and when in 1932 William Cave of Bristol published a booklet on Cambridge Surprise from Minor to Maximus, Charlie Sedgley sent a number of compositions which were included.

Between the wars it was the achievements of the Ipswich band that set the benchmark for Surprise Maximus, with the first performance of no less than six Surprise Maximus methods being rung by the band in that period. These started with the first peal of Superlative in April 1927, then those of New Cambridge (December 1928), Yorkshire (November 1929), Pudsey (September 1930), Rochester (February 1934), and York (February 1939). Usually George Symonds conducted, although Charlie Sedgley conducted the first peals of Yorkshire and York. Most of these were

rung to peals several times, and the fact that a total of 59 peals of Surprise Maximus were rung at St. Mary-le-Tower between 1908 and 1939 out of a national total of 177 in the same period shows the pre-eminence of the band. (It is also worth noting that George Pye rang in over 80 of those 177 peals of Surprise Maximus). In addition, there were peals rung at St. Mary-le-Tower in unusual methods such as Forward Maximus (March 1926), Duffield Maximus (April 1926) and Little Albion Treble Bob Maximus as well as the usual Treble Bob Maximus. Such was the standard of ringing at St. Mary-le-Tower that the great Albert Walker of Birmingham was heard to say 'If you want to hear good Maximus then go and listen to the Ipswich Men.'

1938 was the last full year before the second world war, and a report on the activities was made at the annual belfry meeting on 3 January 1939, worth quoting in full because of the detail.

'The secretary, (Mr. G.E. Symonds), in his report, stated that during the year no less than 161,222 changes, not including failures in peals and touches, had been rung on St. Mary-le-Tower bells for services, practices and twelve peals, viz., 3 Cambridge Maximus, 2 Superlative Maximus, 1 New Cambridge Maximus, 1 Rochester Surprise Maximus, 1 Yorkshire Surprise Maximus, 1 Pudsey Surprise Maximus, 1 Double Norwich Court Bob Maximus, 1 Cambridge Surprise Royal, 1 Yorkshire surprise Royal, accounting for 62,520 changes. The touches included 50 courses of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, 22 courses of Superlative Surprise Maximus, 9 courses of Yorkshire Surprise Maximus, 5 courses of Pudsey Surprise Maximus, 8,160 changes of Rochester Surprise Maximus. Other methods of Maximus included Double Norwich 5,112, Stedman and Grandsire Cinques 8,569, Royal (seven methods) 21,660, Caters 1,965, Major 6,256, Triples 1,572.

Both the grand total of 161,222 changes and the 12 peals are records for the society. This is an average of 3,100 per week. In addition, the society rang 10 peals outside Ipswich. The total for 1937 was 144,696 changes.'

The success of the Ipswich society was discussed in a front-page article in the *Ringling World* of 20 January 1939.

The next Surprise Maximus method was to have been Bedford but the outbreak of the war immediately followed the two peals of York (February and August). To give some measure of the vision of Symonds and Sedgley, in 1939 George was in correspondence with George Baker of Brighton, who sent him a blue line of Bristol Surprise Maximus. That would have been a quantum leap!

The inevitable break came with the outbreak of the second world war. A story of this time was told by George Pipe:

'When war broke out George Symonds was at retiring age - but of course he didn't, and helped in the food line issuing ration cards from the local police headquarters. He recalled this story just before he died: he and a colleague were issuing their cards when G.E.S. was 'taken short'. He nipped into a neighbouring cell where there was a W.C.

and accidentally slammed the door. Knowing the warden was a call change ringer from St. Clements (6) he didn't worry too much, but the former opened the hatch and yelled out, "what would you like for tea mate?" George 'tried it on' and replied "A pair of kippers please." "Kippers be damned," said the warden, "you'll get bread and marg for your cheek." George spent most of the day there - reciting Holt's original!

After the war George Symonds continued to ring peals, even ringing the eleventh bell at St. Mary-le-Tower to a peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus in 1949 at the age of 75, his 103rd peal on the bell. In the band was the young George Pipe, ringing his first of Cambridge Surprise Maximus at the age of 13, who subsequently recorded that George Symonds 'rang the 11th beautifully'.

Inevitably, age and the second world war affected the band at Ipswich, with some of the younger members not returning and the band in the 1950s was not the force that it had been. However, George Symonds continued to ring, and called a tower bell peal at the age of 97. His final peal was rung at the age of 98, and he died in August 1974 in his 100th year. His final peal total was 476, of which he conducted 228.

For the sake of completeness, the career of Charlie Sedgley should be alluded to. He died in January 1973, at the age of 85. Not only a distinguished theoretician and ringer, he was also the first master of the Suffolk Guild, a post he held from 1923 until 1956, and he also served 29 years as a representative on the Central Council. His peal total increased rapidly after he settled in Ipswich, and his 100th peal was rung at Leiston, Suffolk, in February 1925. Coincidentally, it was the 100th peal of Surprise on the bells. His love of twelve-bell ringing was reflected in the fact that of his final total of 330 peals, 130 were of Cinques and Maximus.

(Based on articles by George Pipe in the *Ringling World*, 23 March 1973 and 10 January 1975, with supplementary material kindly supplied by George.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Inventors

The development of electronic computers in modern times has made the production of changes by automatic means relatively easy, and a number of programmes that can do this are available. But previous to this the matter was very difficult. Changes could of course, be chimed using a chime barrel, a larger version of a musical box, but this was limited and effectively the changes produced were being treated as a type of tune.

To produce changes systematically and with the important facility of being able to produce touches was, before the electronic computer, an entirely different matter and the logic that could produce changes was difficult to implement mechanically. There were two mechanical machines produced, the first being that of John Carter, one aspect of his mechanical genius that was also applied to firearms. That of G.F. Woodhouse, which went through several versions, was produced in his workshop after his retirement from his career as a schoolmaster. The first of the modern machines was the electrical one constructed by B.D. Price which reflected his professional work as a teacher of mathematics, and employed much more in the way of electronics than those of his predecessors.

In this chapter the careers of the first two of these inventors are given in detail.

JOHN CARTER



A portrait of John Carter, published in 1892.

A native of Darlaston, he was born there on 30 April 1854. His father was a gun-lock maker and John Carter worked for him from a very early age. When he was about twelve years old his father went to work at the small arms factory at Enfield Lock, near Waltham Abbey, and John Carter went to work with him. Factory legislation on minimum age being introduced, he went back to school, but returned to the factory as soon as he could. It seems to be at this period that he took up competitive shooting, and his first experience was at Enfield with the old smooth-bore musket. After a few years there was a general reduction at Enfield and father and son returned to Darlaston.

In the summer of 1873 John Carter was working in Darlaston but residing with an uncle. His cousins had taken up ringing at the parish church and John Carter was persuaded to have a go, his first lesson being on 6 July 1873. Within two months he could ring Stedman Triples better than

his cousins, with the result that they gave up ringing altogether! In January 1874 he went to Enfield to join his father who had already returned to work there, but only stayed about three months to complete a contract. While he was there he rang at Waltham Abbey and also visited Bethnal Green. Through this he met some of the influential London ringers, including Henry Haley.

On his return to the Midlands he went to work for Paul Cashmore (the well-known composer of Treble Bob) at West Bromwich. He rang his first peal - of Grandsire Triples - at Willenhall on 7 July 1874, a year and a day after his first experience of ringing. His first peal of Stedman Triples was rung with the Birmingham ringers at Bishop Ryder's Church, Birmingham on 20 December 1875, and his first as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples at West Bromwich on 22 February 1876 in which Paul Cashmore rang. In this John Carter demonstrated his remarkable ability by calling Holt's Original composition. At this period Paul Cashmore employed a number of ringers in his firearms factory, and when he felt like it he would call the band together during working hours and adjourn to the belfry of the Old Church, West Bromwich, for a ring. There was no objection from the vicar, provided there was no service, as there were then few houses in the vicinity of the church. One of those was a pub, the story of which was told in the *Ringing World* in 1939.

'One of the nearest houses was the house of refreshment known then, as now, as the Ring o' Bells, where it is still humorously claimed they sell beer by the pound. This is, of course, quite true as one of the old-fashioned 'pounds' (an enclosure for straying horses or cattle) still stands in front of the house.'

The pound is long gone, of course.

In June 1880 John Carter took up a position with the firm of P. Webley and Sons, later called Webley and Scott, and stayed with that firm for the rest of his working life. On his removal to Birmingham he found the position with regard to the St. Martin's Society unsatisfactory. In the words of his old friend Tom Russam

'...there was no opportunity of young and enthusiastic ringers getting a chance at St. Martin's. The majority there were old and stubborn, and thought they were going to live for ever and did not want any young blood. But time proved otherwise.'

Late in 1881 John Carter formed the Birmingham Amalgamated Society out of the bands of Bishop Ryder's and St. Chad's churches, and this society rang a number of peals over the next few years. In 1883 the Birmingham and District Association was formed, with the idea of being a large district association, but the St. Martin's band would have nothing to do with it. However, when it was launched it attracted about 150 members. These two societies joined in 1889 to form the Birmingham and District Amalgamated Society, in response to the formation of the St. Martin's Guild by the union of the St. Martin's Society and the Holt Society of Aston. There were thus two associations in Birmingham, one with its headquarters



John Carter at work on his ringing machine.

at St. Martin's and the other based on St. Philip's, the latter being dubbed 'The Forty Thieves' by the St. Martin's ringers. The condition of the bells at St. Philip's did not help, being deemed unringable in 1889, and these were rehung in 1892. Despite this the Birmingham and District Amalgamated Society gradually faded away, being last reported in *Bell News* in

1897. The formation of the St. Martin's Guild caused a partial break up of John Carter's handbell band, with which he was trying to ring the first peal of Stedman Cinques 'in hand' in Birmingham.

In all his activities John Carter was in the forefront. Thus his eminence as a conductor was recognised when he took part in a silent peal of Stedman Triples at St. Paul's, Burton-on-Trent on 20 November 1886. His ability in ringing the more difficult methods was recognised by his being the first Birmingham ringer to take part in a peal of Surprise Major (Superlative at Burton-on-Trent on 19 April 1888). In composition he always aimed for originality, and he produced many fine compositions of Stedman on all numbers as well as Grandsire on even numbers. In 1906 he produced a broadsheet of compositions of Stedman Caters, which contained some 7,000 in all. And, of course, he produced his famous one-part peal of Stedman Triples - 'Carter's Odd-bob' - which he composed in June 1898 and which was first conducted by W.H. Barber at Selly Oak on 5 May 1902. He was also skilled in method construction, those he produced including Darlaston Bob Triples, Scientific Triples, Carter's Principle and Forward.

John Carter's mechanical skill was demonstrated both in his work and in his ringing career. After he joined P. Webley and Sons in 1880 his developments in the mechanics of firearms caused him to be involved in 12 patents in the period 1884 to 1907, either on his own or in conjunction with other persons. These were not only for revolvers - the Webley revolver was well known - but for the mechanisms of shotguns and for automatic pistols with sliding breechblocks.

He also applied his inventive genius to developing a ringing machine. The first version is said to have been made while he was working for Paul Cashmore, who encouraged the project, and John Carter was helped by Edwin Cashmore, Paul's eldest son, and another ringer/employee called Sidney Smith. This machine was subsequently scrapped, but it seems to have been the source of the report that appeared in *Bell News* in 1886 which stated that John Carter was engaged in making a machine to record peals as rung, denoting any mistake and pointing out the bell

that made it. Within a few years John Carter had conceived the idea of a better machine to ring changes, his so-called Campana Mutaphone, which he did bring to completion. The principles came to him at work one morning in 1890, and occupied his thoughts to such an extent that later that day he was unable to conduct a peal that he had arranged at Perry Barr. The first known mention of the machine is in an article on John Carter that appeared in *Bell News* on 9 April 1892, and which says:

‘He is at work during spare hours upon what he calls a bellringing machine, which is to ring any peal in any method the onlooker demands. It will be some time before this invention is perfected, though several courses and leads in various methods have already been rung upon it.’



John Carter in characteristic pose, with Henry Dains.

Then followed thirty years of development work that resulted in his machine that was capable of ringing from one up to twelve bells. In May 1911 the Rev. C.D.P. Davies accompanied Sir Arthur Heywood to John Carter's house in Sparkbrook where the machine was demonstrated to them. In an article in *Bell News* Davies attempted to describe the action of the machine but was unable to give more than a general idea of how it worked: however, he was clearly most impressed.

John Carter retired to London early in 1921 and at the Johnson Commemoration Dinner he was presented with an illuminated address as a mark of respect. His later years were dogged with ill-health. From 1899 to 1905 he did no peal ringing due to the effects of rheumatism. He also suffered with increasing deafness, perhaps due to the amount of shooting he did with the local volunteers and at which he was very proficient, and a photograph of John Carter and Henry Dains that appeared in *Bell News* on 1 August 1903 shows John Carter with his hand cupped round his ear. He had a paralytic stroke in November 1923 and when he died on 29 January 1927 he had been confined to his bed for nearly a year.

John Carter rang a total of 315 peals, 207 of which he conducted. His ringing machine was deposited in the Science Museum in South Kensington, was subsequently moved to the museum in Birmingham, and is currently at the Bell Foundry Museum in Loughborough. Trustees for the machine are appointed by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.

GEORGE FRASER WOODHOUSE

was the second son of Canon Woodhouse, rector of St. Andrew's, Manchester. One of the curates was the then Rev. H.J. Elsee, a keen ringer who is better known as Canon Elsee, for many years president of the Lancashire Association. Canon Woodhouse's three sons were all taught to ring by Elsee, and George and his brother H. E. Woodhouse were elected members of the Lancashire Association in 1890. In 1893 George Woodhouse went up to Cambridge, and on 17 April 1894 rang the treble to a peal of Grandsire Triples at Sawston, his first peal and the first tower bell peal for the Cambridge University Guild. A curiosity in which he rang was a 'peal' of Bob Major on the Seage's apparatus at Great St. Mary's on 27 January 1897, the band being half town, half gown. His first peal of Royal was one of Bob Royal, rung in hand in his rooms at Caius College on 2 March 1897, in which he rang 5-6.

In 1897, the year in which he went down from Cambridge, his brother Edmund joined the Lancashire Association, and on 22 July 1897 the three brothers, together with Alfred Cross, rang a peal of Bob Major 'in hand' at their father's rectory. A day later he rang in a peal of Superlative Surprise Major at Pendleton, his first peal of Surprise.

Woodhouse's name continued to be included in the Lancashire Association report until that for 1901-02, and then he is recorded as a Life Ringing Member. The names of his brothers also disappear at this time and it seems that they dropped out of ringing. The reason for the alteration in status of G.F. Woodhouse was that after graduating in 1897 he was appointed as a science master at Sedbergh School, and



A photograph of G.F. Woodhouse and his No. 2 machine that appeared in the Ringing World in August 1934.

he taught there until his retirement in 1930, and then continued to live in Sedbergh until his death in 1957. When he arrived in Sedbergh he found that the old ring of three bells were in the process of being recast and augmented to a ring of eight bells by Taylors of Loughborough, and the bells were rung for the first time after augmentation on 1 November 1897. A new band of ringers was formed, instructed by George Woodhouse and F.S.J. Pile of Sedbergh, and such progress was made that this band rang a peal of Bob Major on 25 March 1899. It was the first peal for all the band except Woodhouse, who conducted.

Progress continued to be made, despite the remoteness from other centres of ringing, and in 1904 it was reported in the pages of *Bell News* that the methods of Grandsire, Stedman, Plain and Treble Bob, and Double Norwich were being practised. In the following years progress continued to be made, and in the years immediately before the first world war the local band was

capable of ringing Superlative and London Surprise Major. Indeed, in March 1905 the local band rang a peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major and on 25 January 1908 a peal of Superlative Surprise Major was achieved, first by all the band except for Woodhouse who called it.

The Yorkshire Association reports include names of members of the Sedbergh band until the report for 1916-20 and then no names at all are given. It is assumed that the band broke up as a consequence of the war. Woodhouse's name does not appear again as a member of the Yorkshire Association until 1937 although it is known that there was a regular Sunday Service band at that period which regularly attempted quarter peals.

But while Woodhouse was a fine teacher and ringer, it is as an inventor that he is best known. He was a skilled mechanic and after his retirement in 1930 he had more time to spend in his workshop making a ringing machine. He had previously attempted to make an arrangement that rang Bob Minor, but this did not really work. However, he heard that John Carter had made a ringing machine, and started again. His No. 1 machine was working by 1933 and it was demonstrated to Frank Bennett's touring party in August of that year. A report of the tour written by W.H. Fussell in the *Ringling World* described it thus:

'We had the pleasure of meeting Mr. G.F. Woodhouse, a Cambridge chum of Mr. Bankes James, who very kindly took us to his house and exhibited his very intricate ringing machine. The inventor has never seen Carter's masterpiece, and has worked out the difficult problem in quite another manner, and we had a course of Treble Eight performed on a set of small handbells with great accuracy.'

Woodhouse's work was brought to the wider attention of the Exercise by Canon H.J. Elsee at the Central Council meeting held in Warwick in 1934. At that meeting a report was made by the Trustees of the Carter Ringing Machine, and after this Canon Elsee described the Woodhouse machine, which he said was simpler in construction than the Carter machine. Actually, by this time Woodhouse had constructed his No. 2 machine and this was described in the *Ringling World* on 10 August 1934. However, he had already made an improved machine, No. 3, and in July 1934 this was as perfect as he could make it: he had already rung plain courses in 324 methods. It was on this machine that he 'rang' a peal of 5024 Double Norwich Court Bob Major on 19 August 1934, the first 'peal' rung on a machine. A peal of London Surprise Major was lost after about 4,000 changes when he fell asleep owing to the mesmerising effect of the machine and so missed a bob, but subsequently 'peals' of Cambridge Surprise Major and Stedman Triples were accomplished. Machine No. 4 was a remade No. 3 and completed in autumn 1934, and the principles on which it worked were described in a booklet, written by Mr. Woodhouse. However, he still continued working on the machine, and produced several more versions. On 3 August 1935 he wrote excitedly to George Baker of Brighton, sending him a copy of the booklet he had written, and telling of his latest

version, stating:

‘Have rung - or drawn - & typed plain courses of 457 methods - all I can lay my hands on. Very amusing machine & I can even do splicing on it.’

The ability to splice methods together seems to have been developed at the suggestion of A.G. Driver (a non-ringer who wrote on theoretical aspects of change ringing under the pseudonym of ‘The Mad Hatter’). On 31 October 1936 Woodhouse sent a postcard of his current version to George Baker, saying ‘This is my latest. I can ring spliced Minor on it!’

Meanwhile, as a consequence of the publicity given by Canon Elsee in 1934 Mr. Woodhouse agreed to bring a machine to the Central Council meeting in 1935. Unfortunately the demonstration did not take place, as he had an accident in his car while leaving for the Central Council meeting and it was not until the Central Council meeting in Leeds in 1938 that a demonstration was made to the Council. It was described in these terms:

‘During two days Mr. G.F. Woodhouse had his wonderful ringing machine on view, and each evening demonstrated it to wondering and admiring groups of ringers. Its ingenuity staggered them, especially when, while one method was being rung, the machine was set to ring another and touches in ‘spliced’ methods were performed.’

His No. 8 machine, the one demonstrated at Leeds, was finished by March 1938, and a good description was given in the *Ringing World* of 18 March 1938.

‘Mr. G.F. Woodhouse’s ringing machine grows more wonderful than ever. His latest development is the provision of a double panel, by which the mechanism for one method can be set, while another is being rung.

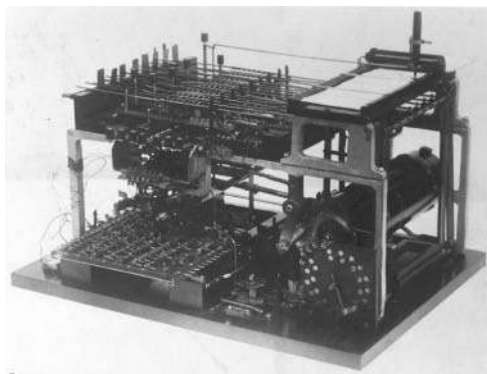
As a result the machine can produce spliced method ringing, and we have received from Mr. Woodhouse the diagram of a touch of nine leads, made up of Bristol, Ealing, Cambridge, Bristol, Ealing, London, Bristol, Superlative and London Surprise.

The diagram, of course, is made by the machine, as the changes are rung, and it is perfectly distinct and definite. It is 2½ inches wide, and the nine leads (covering 288 changes) take up a strip 29½ inches long.’

This version was also demonstrated at a meeting of the Western Division of the Yorkshire Association at Giggleswick on 18 June 1938.

The final machine, No. 9, was made in 1949 and was essentially an extension of No. 8, but capable of ringing up to 12 bells, all his earlier models having rung eight bells.

Woodhouse died in 1957 and left his books and his No. 8 ringing machine to the Lancashire Association. At that time this was not in a satisfactory condition, but it was put in the care of Mr. Gordon Thwaites of Kendal who over the next five years stripped it all down, and rebuilt it. It was next demonstrated to the committee of the



The postcard sent by Woodhouse to George Baker, in Brighton, in October 1936.

Lancashire Association on 1 September 1963. A trial quarter of 1,280 Spliced Surprise Major in two methods (Cambridge and Superlative) was rung on the machine on 5 May 1963, and a peal of Spliced Surprise Major in four methods was rung on 19 April 1964. During the latter the paths of the treble and seventh bells were drawn out, and the resulting diagram was about 12 feet long!

(An excellent article on the principles on which the Carter and Woodhouse machines operate, written by Brian Price, is given in the *Ringling World* for 1950, the first part appearing on page 170.)

CHAPTER NINE

The Handbell Men

Whilst quite a number of ringers have the ability to ring two handbells through a simple method, the gift of ringing two bells through a difficult method is given to but few. The first subject, Challis Winney, was a leading ringer in London for much of his life, and was a gifted handbell ringer and conductor, mainly confined to odd-bell methods. Harry Withers, on the other hand, was not good at ringing a pair of handbells, but is included here because he had the ability to tap changes on twelve bells on his dulcimer, a gift given to even fewer. In this he followed that outstanding character Elijah Roberts, although unlike Roberts he tapped no peals. Long peals on handbells require a much greater degree of concentration than those on tower bells, and the long peals of Stedman Caters rung in hand by the Guildford band under the leadership of Alf Pulling can only be marvelled at. The development of the ringing of Surprise methods on handbells mirrored the development on tower bells, but with a slight time lag. Thus the development of the ringing of spliced surprise on tower bells from 1924 onwards was followed ten years later by the achievements of the Hertfordshire handbell band under Harold Cashmore.

CHALLIS WINNEY

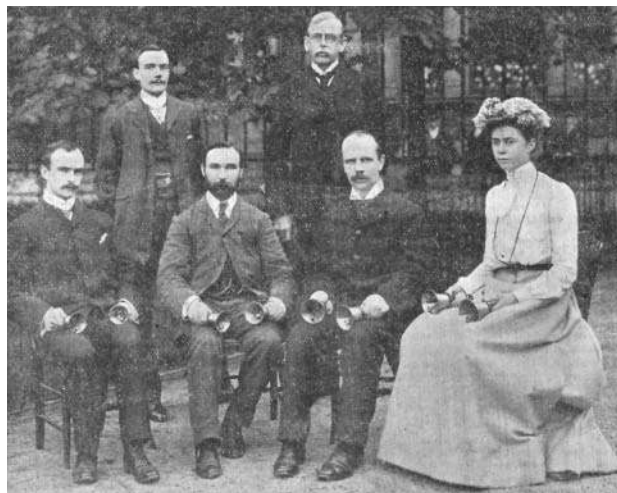
was born at Nayland, Suffolk, on 17 March 1858, of a local family, the previous three generations being ringers at Nayland. His grandfather William Winny (the spelling varied) was married at Nayland in 1827, and one of the ringers who celebrated that event was William Corder, later hanged for the murder of Maria Marten at the Red Barn at Polstead. George, William's son and the father of Challis Winney, died in 1869 at the age of 40, and about three years later the family moved to London.

On 2 October 1878 a new ring of bells was opened at St. John's, Wilton Road, Pimlico, S.W.1. A band of ringers was formed, and J.R. 'Treacle' Haworth was appointed instructor. One of those who were taught to ring was Challis Winney, and he was one of the band of young ringers that rang what was described in *Church Bells* as a 'funeral peal' for the late Princess Alice on 19 December 1878, under the guidance of Haworth. Challis Winney obviously made good progress as he was elected a member of the College Youths in the following year, and rang his first peal at St. Gabriel's, Pimlico, on 2 October 1880. This was a peal of Grandsire Triples, conducted by J.M. Hayes. Only a fortnight later he rang a peal of Stedman Cinques at Southwark Cathedral conducted by James Pettit. Winney's outstanding ability was soon recognised and he became a regular member of the College Youths' peal band. A long length of 11,111 Stedman Caters was rung at Fulham by the College Youths on 8 December 1883, and Challis Winney was included in the band. Pettit

conducted the peal and it was the longest length rung in the method at that time. He also rang peals regularly for the St. James' Society.

In 1881 Challis Winney was elected Junior Steward of the College Youths, and Senior Steward in the following year. He would customarily have then become Master for the year 1883/4 but withdrew at the last moment, and William Greenleaf was elected in his place. Winney remained a member of the College Youths for the rest of his long life, but never became Master, although he was Trustee for the Society from 1897 until his death in 1940.

Challis Winney was skilled in handbell ringing as well as tower bell ringing as indeed were the previous generations of his family (his father, grandfather and great-grandfather often used to ring 720s 'in hand'). No doubt his skills were helped by his keen auditory perception, developed in his trade as a piano tuner. He rang his first handbell peal, 3-4 to Grandsire Triples, on 5 October 1881. John Cox acted as umpire and the report in *Church Bells* stated: 'All were pleased with the performance.' His first peal as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples on handbells,



The band that rang two handbell peals in one day on 11 August 1902. George N. Price, Herbert P. Harman, Challis Winney, Miss Margaret Nichols (later Mrs. Shurtleff). Standing: Mr. Thomas Taffender and Dr. Arthur H. Nichols.

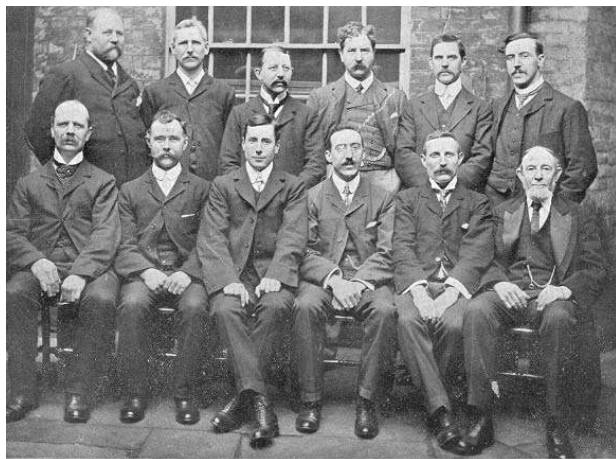
rung on 21 March 1884, when he conducted Holt's Original from 5-6, the other three members of the band ringing their first peal 'in hand'. At about this period a Cathedral Society was formed at St. Albans, Herts., and change ringing revived there. Change ringing on handbells was taken up seriously, and Challis Winney became a regular visitor. Under his tuition a peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on 28 April 1886,

Winney conducting Holt's Original from 3-4. Again it was the first handbell peal for the other three ringers. We can be sure that these peals were well rung, for Challis Winney had the highest standards in ringing, and it was said that he would stop the ringing because he was dissatisfied with the striking when most other conductors would have allowed the ringing to continue.

From Challis Winney came the suggestion that it should be possible to ring Holt's Original non-conducted on handbells. After much practice this was finally achieved on 11 March 1887, at The Goose and Gridiron, the old headquarters of the

College Youths in St. Paul's churchyard. Many ringers heard the peal from the next room and testified to the perfection of the performance. The peal book of the College Youths states that 'the striking of the peal was faultless throughout'.

During his ringing career Winney took part in many noteworthy performances. On 31 December 1892 he stood in an attempt to ring 13,440 changes of Double Norwich at Boyne Hill, Maidenhead. This was called round after 12,096 changes by the conductor, J.W. Washbrook, because of the indisposition of one of the band. Another feat of endurance in which he took part was the first peal of Maximus that was rung on the bells of St. Paul's Cathedral (Kent T.B. on 24 November 1894). At that time these were the heaviest ring of bells, the total weight being greater than the ring at Exeter Cathedral.



The band that rang the first peal of maximus at St. Mary-le-Bow on 19th January 1907. Front row, left to right: C.F. Winney, S.E. Joyce, H. Langdon, H.R. Pasmore, W.F. Garrard, E. Horrex. Back row left to right: W.H. Pasmore, A.B. Peck, E.P. O'Mearn, H.R. Newton, R.T. Hibbert, W.T. Cockerill.

On two occasions in 1901 Winney rang Thurstan's one-part composition of Stedman Triples non-conducted. The first time was on 31 October on the bells of St. George's, Southwark, while on 12 December he took part in its performance on handbells. Both peals were credited to the Society of College Youths, which had a strong peal band at that period. Nine years later, on 28 January 1911 the

College Youths rang a peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, only the third such peal ever rung. The same band rang the first ever non-conducted peal of Stedman Cinques, at St. Michael's, Cornhill, on 22 February 1913: Challis Winney rang the second bell in both of these peals. In the period between these two peals he rang the treble to a peal of 12,160 changes of Bristol Surprise Major at Knebworth, Herts., on Easter Monday, 8 April 1912. This was superseded as the longest peal in the method when William Pye conducted a peal of 15,264 changes at Hornchurch, Essex, just seven weeks later.

This sort of activity was more or less brought to a halt by the first world war, but handbell peals continued to be rung, and on 10 July 1917 Challis Winney took part in the ringing of Carter's Odd-bob composition of Stedman Triples non-conducted. After the war Winney was rather old for ringing long lengths but despite

this he took part in the peal of 21,363 Stedman Caters at Appleton, Berks., on 22 April 1922. This record, which took twelve hours and twenty-five minutes to ring, stood for almost sixty years.

While he rang at many London towers, Winney was associated with three in particular. The first of these was St. Clement Danes, headquarters of the St. James's Society, where he rang regularly from about 1880 until his death. Next was the Imperial Institute, South Kensington, where a heavy ring of ten bells had been installed in 1893. Winney rang in the first touch on the bells on 10 May 1893, and called the first peal on the bells, Stedman Caters on 9 August 1902, rung to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. He was a member of the band that rang on the fixed ringing days, as the bells were only rung on certain occasions. Finally, he was a member of the band at St. Paul's Cathedral which he joined in about 1895, although the date is uncertain as there are no records of elections to the band between 1878 and 1907. He rang about eight peals at St. Paul's, the first being the peal of Kent T.B. Maximus in November 1894 and the last the famous peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus in 1925.

Although he was of a retiring nature, Winney was elected as a representative of the College Youths to the Central Council and served for the period 1894-6. In view of his handbell experience it not surprising that he became a member of the Committee considering the matter of umpires for handbell peals, for the period 1894-7. He was Master of the London County Association (formerly the St. James' Society) from 1897 until 1903, and represented that Association on the Central Council from 1900 until 1908. His final term as representative was on behalf of the College Youths for the period 1930-35. His attendance at meetings could not be described as good, only six out of a possible eighteen meetings. This is not too surprising as at that period the Central Council was regarded by the College Youths with a sort of amused tolerance.

During his long career Winney rang a total of 819 peals, of which he conducted 301 and nine were non-conducted. He died on 18 January 1940 and was buried at Brompton Cemetery a week later, a course of Stedman Triples being rung on handbells over the grave.

JOSEPH HENRY WITHERS

Harry Withers was born in the Ladywood district of Birmingham on 14 August 1875, at that time a very rough area and one where weaklings were unlikely to survive. Although not tall, Harry Withers was strong looking and never wore an overcoat, summer or winter. For the early part of his working life he was a member of the staff of the King's Norton and Northfield Urban District Council, where he was employed as a dustman, but because of his abilities subsequently had a change of employer.

He learned to ring in 1896 and rang his first peal on 13 December 1897 (tenor



Harry Withers and his dulcimer.

not tapped by remembering the changes but by following the path of each bell through the changes, and members of the audience were invited to call the touches. Strangely, he used to say that he didn't know how he did it. Naturally he was a firm favourite at these gatherings and it was at one of these that he gave an example of his wit, best told in the words of Edgar Shepherd:

'It was the custom at the Henry Johnson Commemoration Dinner, after the toast to the memory of Henry Johnson, to ask any who had known the great man personally to stand up. As the years went by, the number thus honoured naturally grew fewer and fewer and at last there came a dinner at which there was no survivor. To make sure of this the chairman asked Mr. Withers if he had known Henry Johnson. "No," said Harry, "and I'm glad I didn't; they're all dead."'

For all Harry Withers' ability to tap changes, he was not very good at double-handed ringing. On one occasion when he did not make much of a job of ringing a pair of handbells to Stedman, it was remarked: 'I suppose that you would get on better with the lot.'

Harry Withers also had the extraordinary facility to follow the changes from outside the tower and this was demonstrated on many occasions. On 11 May 1903 the then record length of 14,112 changes of London Surprise Major was rung at King's Norton, taking 8 hours 40 minutes. Harry Withers was outside the tower for the whole time, taking down each lead-end as it was rung. At the finish each lead-end was correct, quite remarkable in view of the fact that he had not seen the composition before the peal was rung. When this peal was beaten by one of 14,144 changes (one lead longer) at Heydour, Lincs., on 4 October 1947 he repeated the feat, despite being over 70 years old at the time.

Another remarkable performance of this type took place at Selly Oak on 13 May 1909, when Harry Withers conducted a peal of Superlative Surprise Major

behind to Stedman Triples at Selly Oak). His first peal as conductor was one of Grandsire Triples at Selly Oak in February 1902 and his first of Stedman Triples as conductor was at the same place on 5 October 1903. Although he rang peals in the standard methods of the day, up to London Surprise Major and Stedman Cinques, he was better known for his activities outside the belfry than in it. He had a remarkable facility for tapping changes, either on a piano or on his dulcimer, and from 1904 onwards he and his dulcimer made regular appearances at the annual Henry Johnson dinner where touches in the standard methods were tapped. These were

from outside the tower. The report in *Bell News* stated:

‘This peal was called by Mr. H. Withers with the aid of a small bell fixed in the ringing-chamber, Mr. Withers standing some thirty yards from the tower, and is believed to be the first peal ever called under these conditions.’

An attempt for a peal of Stedman Triples under similar conditions was lost after three-quarters of an hour when the relay bell failed to act.

Harry Withers’ musical gifts caused a change in career. George Cadbury of Bournville heard the carillon at Bruges while on a visit to Belgium and was so impressed that he ordered 22 bells from John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough, and these were installed in 1906. Harry Withers, despite any lack of musical training, was appointed carillonneur, his performances being given entirely from ear. He was actually employed as a striker in the blacksmith’s department, but when any distinguished visitors came to the works he was summoned to entertain them with a recital. His playing was of a high standard and was commented on favourably by Jef Denyn, the world-famous carillonneur, who was exiled to England from his native Belgium during the first world war. In 1915 three 78 r.p.m. records were made of Harry Withers playing the Bournville carillon, and these were mainly of traditional airs, although on one side of one of these records there was a course of Grandsire Caters.

Harry Withers’ fame was such that in 1922 he gave the first recital on a new carillon at Stavanger, Norway, and in the same year inaugurated the new carillon at the Metropolitan Church in Toronto, Canada. However, in October 1924, a year after an augmentation of the carillon at Bournville, a new carillonneur was appointed. This was Clifford Ball, a professional musician, and he held the post until 1965.

The emphasis has been on Harry Withers’ extraordinary talents outside the tower. However, for many years he was ringing master at Edgbaston Parish Church. He stressed the importance of Sunday Service ringing and insisted on the highest possible standard of striking.

The dulcimer was an awkward thing to carry about, and towards the end of his life he got tired of responding to invitations to take it to various places. One night he cut out most of the wires so that he couldn’t take it out again. He died on Christmas Day 1949 and was buried in Lodge Hill Cemetery, a course of Grandsire Triples being rung on handbells over the open grave.

In the early part of the twentieth two remarkable long lengths were rung on handbells in the Guildford area. The leader of the band was

ALFRED H. PULLING

who was born at Petworth, Sussex, on 18 September 1880. He must have had some idea of ringing from an early age as his grandfather was a ringer there for 60 years. The family subsequently moved to Guildford, and he began ringing at Holy Trinity at the age of 13. Until 1899 only call changes were rung, the 'go' of the bells being very bad, so much so that in August 1898 three men could not raise the tenor. The bells were rehung early in 1899 and change ringing was then introduced under the leadership of Charles Willshire, Alf Pulling receiving a grounding in the rudiments of the art. He evidently was a quick learner, as he rang his first peal at Hawley, Hants., in October of the same year (Grandsire Triples, conducted by the curiously named Barzillai Hawkins), and in December took part in the first peal by a local society in Guildford. *Bell News* reported:

'The members of the Trinity band, Guildford, have every reason to be proud, not only of their peal on Tuesday, but of their instructor, who had a great many difficulties in the shape of illness near the church to check the band in their practice. It is only twelve months ago since he took the band (who knew nothing of method ringing) in hand, and out of that time they were stopped for four months through illness. In spite of this the band started for the peal full of confidence, and succeeded not only in ringing a good peal, but also in ringing the fastest peal on the bells.'



Alf Pulling at about the time that he rang his 1000th peal.

Charles Willshire called Alf Pulling's first peal of Stedman Triples in June 1900, and his first peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major was rung at St. Giles', Camberwell, in July 1901, conducted by Bill Pye. Alf Pulling's ability as a conductor is demonstrated by the fact that for his first peal as conductor, he called Holt's Original peal of Grandsire Triples (1 October 1902), and for his first peal of Stedman as conductor (26 December 1904) he used Thurstan's one-part composition. It is therefore not surprising that he was elected conductor of the Holy Trinity Society in 1906. On 21 February in that year the local band rang a peal of Superlative Surprise Major, the first in the Diocese of Winchester by a local band, conducted, of course, by Alf Pulling. In 1910 local band peals of London, Bristol and Cambridge were rung, with Norfolk

in February 1911, all conducted by Pulling.

In the field of Stedman on both tower bells and handbells, his prowess was evident. His first peal as conductor of Stedman Caters on tower bells was called from a non-observation bell, and the first peals of Stedman Triples, Caters and Cinques on handbells rung for the Winchester Guild were conducted from a bob-making pair. Indeed, the handbell band at this period was outstanding, not only in the numbers of peals rung but also in the lengths achieved. Many of the peals were rung in the belfry of Holy Trinity church, others at Alf Pulling's residence. From 1908 until 1949 he was caretaker of the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, and lived on site (and where the boys irreverently called him 'Widdix'!). One remarkable feat took place in the last full week in October 1911, when six handbell peals of Stedman Caters were rung on six successive days, on six different sets of handbells and in six different places, each peal being conducted by Alf Pulling.

The first non-standard length to be rung on handbells by this band was 7,023 Stedman Caters, rung on 27 May 1911, and then on 29 June 1911, a little over a month later, the length was extended to 7,777 changes. It was Alf Pulling's 100th peal. At what stage the idea of beating the record for Stedman Caters 'in hand' was conceived is not known, but it seems to have been the motivation for these gradually increasing lengths. At the time the longest length in the method 'in hand' was a peal of 8,888 changes rung by members of the St. Martin's Guild, Birmingham, at Aston in 1898, when the band included W.H. Barber and Bill Short. On 29 May 1912 Alf Pulling called a peal of Stedman Caters 'in hand', his 100th handbell peal, and three days later he conducted a remarkable peal of 14,031 Stedman Caters, his 100th handbell peal as conductor, beating the previous record by a considerable margin. A report in the *Ringling World* stated:

'A hitch in the going off course caused a second start to be made, but the peal was rung with extremely few faults. The slightest hesitation on the part of either (*sic*) of the ringers and the brilliant conductor, Mr. A.H. Pulling, had the whole position well in hand in a moment; indeed, the trips seemed to be corrected almost before they were made... It really was a magnificent performance on which the band deserves the greatest congratulation.'

The band differed slightly from that which had rung the previous long lengths.

Not content with that, on August Bank Holiday Monday in the same year (at that time the first Monday in August) an attempt was made to ring 22,222 changes in the method. However, on that occasion only 26 courses were rung before a shift occurred, and a subsequent attempt for a peal of ordinary length failed after a miscall at the end of the first quarter. Another attempt was made on 31 August 1912, and after a late start, and two attempts at the starting course, the bells finally went into changes for the third time at 1.55 p.m. Late in the evening one of the band began to get restless and had no desire to ring the full 22,222 and so the bells were allowed to run round after 19,738 changes, taking 9 hrs. 32 mins., a truly remarkable

performance. It was Alf Pulling's 300th peal, 127 of which had been on handbells, including 58 of Stedman Caters, all of which he had conducted. A very readable account of this peal appeared in the *Ringing World* of 31 August 1956, written by William Shepherd, one of the band.

Alf Pulling was very much in charge of ringing at Holy Trinity, and this is illustrated by a story of an incident that took place in the 1920s, told by Raymond Overy.

'A very strict disciplinarian, Alf would not tolerate any noise or distraction whilst the bells were ringing. An occasional visitor, Admiral Walker (retired), a genial and somewhat talkative gentleman, appeared one evening while a course of Surprise was being rung, and he was true to form. After glares from the tenor box failed to have any effect, Alf stopped the ringing, and we all listened in horror as he advanced to the ex naval officer. "Admiral," he said, "do you allow any talking on your quarter deck?" "No, Mr. Pulling, most certainly not". "Well, this tower is my quarter deck if you please."

Alf Pulling was a good instructor in the art, and insisted on good handling and striking, and if the striking became careless, he would stamp his foot and shout 'Bust it boy, cock your ears up and listen!'

Alf Pulling was above average stature, and could truly be called one of the giants of the Exercise. In 1925 he conducted a peal of Stedman Triples at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, London, each member of the band being six feet or more in height. One of the shortest of the band, at 6ft, was Cyril Johnston, Pulling was 6ft. 1½ins., and the tallest was Canon G.F. Coleridge, who was 6ft 4½ins! In Belfry Gossip it was referred to as a 'long' peal!

Although it could be assumed that Pulling's main skills in conducting were related to Stedman, this was not so, and it should be pointed out that he was the first person to conduct a peal of spliced Surprise Major in the four standard methods of London, Superlative, Bristol and Cambridge. This was rung at Warnham, Sussex, on 11 June 1927 and the composition, by the Rev. H. Law James, was one of 5,408 changes. Although claimed at the time as the first of Spliced Surprise Major, one of spliced in two methods (Cambridge and Superlative) had been rung in 1924.

In 1927 Alf Pulling had a serious motor-bike accident, and was unconscious for several weeks. Bedridden for a long time, he was out of ringing for over a year and peal ringing for nearly another a year. It was said that the fractured skull sustained in the accident made it difficult to understand what he said, owing to paralysis of his facial muscles. However, he resumed his ringing career and rang his 1000th peal on 26 August 1931, Stedman Triples at the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Guildford. He was only the ninth person to achieve this total, and had conducted a higher proportion of his peals than anyone previously (907). Of his 435 peals on handbells, he had called 422.

The emphasis on peal ringing, particularly on handbells, has perhaps obscured

his very real service to ringing at Holy Trinity, which he carried on until his death. At a local level, he was the ringing master of the Guildford District of the Winchester Diocesan Guild, and then, after the formation of the Guildford Diocesan Guild, the local area ringing master and a vice president of that Guild. In a wider field, he was a representative on the Central Council for the old Winchester Guild from 1913 until 1927, and then, after the formation of the diocese of Guildford, in 1928 he was elected a representative for the Guildford Diocesan Guild, serving until 1956. He was then elected an honorary member of the Central Council, an honour he held until his death on 6 July 1959.

At the time of his death he had rung in 1,492 peals, of which he had conducted 1,289. His handbell peals accounted for 502 of his overall total, of which he had conducted 455.

One feature of handbell ringing during the twentieth century was the development of Surprise ringing 'in hand'. The first of Surprise Major in hand was one of Superlative, rung in London at the twenty-fifth attempt on 26 June 1901, conducted by Harry Pasmore. Apart from the footnote to the peal report that appeared in *Bell News*, no other contemporary comment was made. Something over a year later, on 7 October 1901, Bill Pye's band also rang a peal of Superlative Surprise Major in hand, this time at the first attempt although after considerable practice. With developing skills, the same band - Bill Pye, his brothers Bob and Ernest, and William Keeble - rang the first peal of London Surprise Major in hand on 26 January 1904. This was eulogised by William Willson in a poem that appeared in *Bell News* on 5 March 1904:

Is there nobody going to offer a word
Of praise to the men who have struggled and won?
Is the heart of the Exercise ne'er to be stirred
And is silence the meed for the deed they have done?

You deem it triumph, you men of the tower,
To handle one bell through a difficult peal;
What then of a couple? when hour by hour
The mind is beclouded and senses reel.

Do you know what it means when you pilot a pair?
Of the strain which a two-fold task demands,
Have you rang thro' a coming-home course with fear
And a frightful suspicion you've changed your hands!

No? Nor if you had would you think it strange
To speak of the hopes that rose and fell;

How the nightmare flees as you homeward range,
And the glorious thrill at the final change,
Those who have been through the mill can tell.

* * *

Only to think of it! then let us drink to it,
Here's to the handbell peal "London Surprise!"
Will you drink that to them? take off your hats to them,
Honour the famous four - KEEBLE AND PYES.

The band continued to develop and a peal of Bristol Surprise Major was rung on 1 October 1907 at the first attempt, although after twenty-five practice meetings. The next month William Keeble moved away from the area and the band lapsed. Keeble, however, established an active handbell band in Bolsover, Derbyshire, and this band rang four peals of Surprise Major in 1909-10. At the same time the developing band at Oxhey, Hertfordshire, started by George N. Price at the beginning of the century, while concentrating on Stedman on varying numbers, rang three peals of Superlative Surprise Major in 1909-10.

After the first world war the Gofton brothers of Whitley Bay rang half a dozen peals of London Surprise Major in hand, the first of these being rung on 12 November 1920. This was the band that rang the first peal of Spliced Surprise Major on tower bells.

In 1927 a peal of Superlative Surprise Major was rung 'in hand' at Oxhey, the first there since 1910. In the band were Henry Hodgetts and Fred Brinklow, who had rung in the previous peal, and it was the first peal in hand for Harold G. Cashmore, who was to make such a mark in the ringing of Spliced Surprise Major in hand.

HAROLD CASHMORE

was born at Apsley End, Herts., on 23 March 1904. He was a fitter and turner and although he lost a thumb in following his trade this did not have any effect on his remarkable career as a handbell ringer. He learnt to ring at Oxhey in 1919 and rang his first peal at Bushey Heath on 26 November 1921. The method was Superlative Surprise Major, a foretaste of what was to come, as his first peal as conductor was in the same method (at Oxhey on 18 March 1924) and so was his first peal on handbells (17 March 1927). Cashmore called the latter peal from 3-4, and the other ringers were Ronald Picton, Henry Hodgetts and Fred Brinklow (who conducted). It was the first peal of any sort for Picton and his only handbell peal: he had answered an advertisement in the *Ringing World*! For Hodgetts and Brinklow it was their first handbell peal in the method since 1910.

From this time on Cashmore's skills developed to such an extent that during the 1930s, 40s and early 50s he was at the forefront of the development of Surprise Major on both tower bells and handbells, both theoretically and practically. Then, in



Harold Cashmore in 1938.

1953, his name drops out of the peal records. His last handbell peal at this period seems to have been one of Cambridge Surprise Major at Bushey Heath, rung silent and non-conducted on 11 May 1953, while his last tower bell peal (London Surprise Major) was also at Bushey Heath on 16 May 1953. Although his name continued to appear in the annual reports of the Hertford County Association until 1963, he had already given up ringing and was concentrating on his interest in church organs. He maintained that interest until his death in December 1997 at the advanced age of 93.

The art of change ringing has developed to such an extent that nowadays the ringing of a new method is not considered to be of great merit unless it is exceptionally difficult, but at the time that Cashmore

began his peal-ringing career there was only a limited number of Surprise methods rung and the ringing of a peal in a new method was a notable achievement. In the 1920s only one peal in a new Surprise Major method was rung by members of the Hertford County Association, New Gloucester at Edmonton on 19 June 1926. The position changed in the 1930s, starting with a peal of Aldenham Surprise Major rung at Aldenham on 21 November 1933, composed and conducted by Cashmore. By the start of the second world war Cashmore had conducted the first peals in another 33 Surprise Major methods, a number of which have become standard methods, and the reports of many of which had the foot-note 'rung without previous practice'. One of these was a peal of Watford Surprise Major, a method said by J.A. Trollope to be unpealable with the tenors together but Cashmore produced an innovative composition which was duly rung. Another was the first peal of Eryri Major, which was rung at Bushey on 19 November 1935, and which was his 100th peal. Harold Cashmore avoided publicity whenever possible and it was unusual for him to make any claim of this sort.

In parallel with the peals in new methods, Cashmore's band also rang an increasing number of peals of spliced Surprise Major. The first, in two methods, was rung at Aldenham in May 1932, and the number of methods built up to a peal in 6 methods (at Bushey in March 1938).

The arrival of Chris Woolley at Bushey in 1932 completed a band for Surprise Major 'in hand', with Cashmore as conductor, Henry Hodgetts and Fred Brinklow. In March 1933 the band rang the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Major 'in hand' (as distinct from New Cambridge), and then, in November 1934, a peal of London Surprise Major. The ground-breaking peal of two-spliced Surprise Major (London and Cambridge) was rung at Oxhey on 8 November 1935. It is worth noting that Chris Woolley had only rung his first peal of Spliced Surprise Major on tower bells less than a fortnight before. Superlative was added and three-spliced rung to a peal

in February 1936, while in May 1936 four-spliced, including Bristol, was achieved. Five-spliced was then practised and a 78 r.p.m. record was made in 1936 of the band ringing a touch of 280 changes of five-spliced. A peal of five-spliced was rung in February 1937 and one of six-spliced in November the same year. Perhaps the last notable handbell peal rung before the second world war was one of Bristol Surprise Major on 2 December 1938.

One beneficial consequence of the upheavals caused by the war was that a number of other younger ringers had the opportunity to gain experience in handbell ringing. After the war an outstanding peal was one of 13,664 Double Norwich Court Bob Major, rung on 29 February 1948, the band being E.A. Barnett, C.W. Woolley, H.G. Cashmore and E.C.S. Turner. Attention was also given to increasing the number of methods rung in spliced. A peal of five-spliced rung in January 1944 had a slightly different choice of methods (and change of personnel), as did one of six-spliced rung on 8 February 1950. In the latter peal 'Robin' Woolley rang 1-2, and it was her first peal of six-spliced 'in hand'. Two months later a peal in eight methods was achieved by the same band. Peals in twelve methods in April 1951 and sixteen methods on 24 October 1952 followed, the band for these being C.W. Woolley, E.C.S. Turner, H.G. Cashmore and F. Brinklow. Cashmore, as usual, composed and conducted the peals. This latter peal was the peak of the achievement of this handbell band, and after May 1953 his peal-ringing career was over.

It is easy to overlook other aspects of Cashmore's work for the Exercise, but in 1942 he was elected President of the Hertford County Association and held the position for four years at a very difficult period. At the same time he was secretary of the Watford District of the Association and this district continued to hold monthly meetings during the war-time ban on ringing, with ringers from a wide area converging on Bushey to ring handbells. He was also a member of the Central Council from 1933 to 1954 and served on the Methods Committee from 1939 to 1954. He played a major role in drafting the *Report on Extension of Methods*, published in 1952. His work on composition has been mentioned and he produced the first 'all the work' composition with the tenors together in the 'standard four' Surprise methods, published in the *Ringling World* on 6 December 1946, which he conducted at Lambeth on 19 April 1947. There was friendly co-operation and correspondence between him and Albert Pitman in matters of composition, rather than rivalry. Pitman produced his own composition with these properties and this was published in the *Ringling World* on 11 April 1947, just over a week before the first performance of Cashmore's composition.

In his later years Cashmore did ring occasionally, ringing a quarter peal of Stedman Triples at Aldenham in April 1975. When a party was held to celebrate his 90th birthday he took a pair of handbells for three leads of Bristol Surprise Major.

Harold Cashmore died in 1997 but no full obituary was published in the *Ringling World*, only appreciations from Edwin A. Barnett and C. Kenneth Lewis.

(For a summary of his work, see the *Ringling World*, 1994, p.429)

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John Eisel was taught to ring at Hereford Cathedral by Arthur W. Davis in 1955, and rang his first peal in 1960, conducted by Paul Cattermole. While at London University he rang in the Extent of Major in 1963, one of a number of long lengths in which he has rung. After university he returned to the Midlands and was a member of the Birmingham band for a number of years. He has lived in Herefordshire since 1972 and took over responsibility for the Central Council Library in 1992 after the death of Bill Cook. During his time at university he began to collect books on the history of bells and ringing. From this grew his research interests and he has published widely on all aspects of bells and change ringing. His move from the country into Hereford in 2004 has enabled him to spend more time on researching the history of the city and county, on which he has published a number of articles and books. He is an expert on the history of local pubs! Currently semi-retired, he works as an archaeologist.

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