An Clogh

"The Bell"

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Carol Service at Bodmin

Although in the absence of any invitation it looked at one time as though there would be no Carol Service this year the Eastern District officers were made of sterner stuff and approached the ringers at Bodmin who were only too pleased to extend an invitation to the Guild to hold its annual pre-Christmas gathering in its magnificent parish church. Clare Prout and her team laid on ringing at a number of churches around Bodmin, and the bells there were put to good use during the afternoon with several ringers handling bells out side their home towers for the first time and all traditions of ringing being followed. Despite the bitterly cold weather, the rival attractions of retail therapy on the final Saturday before Christmas and (if one was desperate) Plymouth Argyle playing at home (they lost, again) approaching 50 members from as far west as Gulval and Carbis Bay and as far east as the Tamar Valley gathered to sing some well-loved carols and hymns and to hear once again the familiar bible readings. Fortunately the date coincided with a Crib Festival at Lanivet and a Christmas Tree Festival at Bodmin, and both events enhanced the very special atmosphere of the pre-Christmas period. Lessons were read by a number of Guild and District officers, and the Bodmin Handbell Ringers gave splendid renditions of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Good King Wenceslas". Bodmin Parish Church is so large that even 50 people can look a little lost in it, but our singing more than compensated for those who were unable to attend.

After the service the Bodmin ringers served tea, coffee and mulled wine, all of which were very greatly appreciated, together with the mince pies and Cornish cream. We are very grateful to the Eastern District for its initiative, to the Rector of Bodmin (Canon Graham Minors), his organist and his ringers for the warmth of their welcome, and to the incumbents and ringers of the other churches we visited for allowing us to ring their bells. *Robert Perry*

Pillaton Open Day

2009 marks the 750th anniversary of the foundation of St Odulph's church, Pillaton, Cornwall, the bicentenary of the installation of three bells and the centenary of the augmentation of the ring to six.

In 1259 Walter de Bronescombe, the Bishop of Exeter, made a tour of Cornwall and dedicated 19 parish churches which had recently been built or rebuilt. On 16th October in that year he reached the church of St Odulph in Pillaton where he may well have stayed at the inn adjoining the church to rest after the service of dedication. It wasn't until 1809, 550 years after the church's foundation, that records show that 3 bells were put into the tower, hung in a wooden frame and rung from the ground floor of the tower. Exactly 100 years later the third bell was recast, three larger bells added with all new fittings and a wrought steel framework, and a floor for the ringers constructed above the vestry. This was all done for the princely sum of £400, the 4th bell being donated by William Hawk of Kernock House in memory of his wife and of her parents from Howton (although it bears no inscription to this effect). The fine six, dedicated on 7 October 1909 by the Bishop of St Germans, are still regularly rung by local and visiting ringers. Although these bells have been well maintained over the last century, they have never been completely refurbished. They are still on the original plain bearings, the frictional parts are well worn and the fittings are in a substandard condition. The bells are worn in the soundbow and require tuning.

Since 2009 marks so many significant anniversaries the ringers decided that it would be appropriate not only to refurbish and rehang the existing bells on ball bearings, but also to add two new smaller bells to complete the octave. This is, of course, a major undertaking for a small parish, requiring both considerable financial input and much effort on the part of the ringers. They have been quite successful in raising the £45,000 needed for the project. Whites of Appleton, Oxfordshire, have been commissioned to undertake the work, while the two new bells will

be cast and the existing six re-tuned by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, who actually cast the back four existing bells and can therefore match the shape and tone exactly. It is hoped to have the new eight ringing by the end of the year.

On Saturday 25 August the Pillaton ringers held an Open Day in order to show local people what bells and bell ringing are all about and in particular to publicise their project. This was well advertised in advance, but the bells were rung in the morning to jog people's memory. A "peal" of 120 call changes, a new composition composed by Owen Borlase and named Open Day Doubles, was followed by a quarter peal of 1309 changes of doubles. In the afternoon more than 80 visitors enjoyed a tour of the tower to see how the bells are rung, climbed the tower to watch them ringing and admired (and photographed) the spectacular view of the surrounding countryside from the tower roof. In the evening about 40 people were entertained in Pillaton Village Hall to wine and "nibbles", with an illustrated talk by Maire Warwick on bells and bell ringing, a demonstration of change ringing on handbells by the St Dominick handbell ringers and a video of the Pillaton tower bell ringers in action. The ringers were particularly pleased to welcome Mr George Hocking, a trustee of SITA Cornwall Trust, one of the major benefactors of the project. *Richard Warrick*

This article was received just too late for our last issue and we are pleased to report that the eight bells have now been hung and rung – Ed.

Western District Autumn Festival

Saturday 19th September was a really beautiful sunny autumn day for the Western District Autumn Festival at Phillack. From the buzz of voices, the bursts of laughter, the plates piled high with pasties and fruit cake in the church and, of course, the vigorous ringing in the tower, it can be safely said that it was a jolly good day inside, for one and all, as well.

A special thank you to Elizabeth for giving us such a meaningful and enjoyable service and a thank you, also, to David Philp, a Phillack ringer and fine organist, for playing at the service.

At the end of the day it was estimated that there must have been between 45 and 50 people present of who about 20 were in some way attached to Phillack. I was quite pleased with the numbers until I took a close look at one of the old photographs hanging in Phillack tower. It was taken at Gulval rectory in 1933 and shows approximately 110 ringers posing for the photograph.

"How would they have got to Gulval?" I asked Mike Smaldon. "Most likely by bicycle or 'bus," he replied. "Travelling was more difficult in those days."

And yet 110 made it there!

"In 1946," Mike added, "the Phillack tower band of ringers had the chance to ring at the cathedral. Do you know how we got there?", "No," I replied. "We all gathered at Hayle station and went by train to Truro. We walked down the hill to the cathedral and rang our peal and then we walked back up, and caught the train back to Hayle."

What enthusiasm, back then, for campanology!

Then I wondered whether there are a hundred ringers in our Western District now, and how many there might be in 20 years' time? And are similar groups – choirs, bands and such like, suffering with declining numbers as well? And what can be done about it?

Whatever the answers, we had a happy day and, Lord willing, there will be several more to be enjoyed. *Christopher Berry (from The Westerner)*

John Rawles – 90 years young

In his earlier days John did not particularly like bells and on occasions could be rather rude about them until he came down to Cornwall and stayed with his younger brother, the late Peter Rawles. Peter was the Tower Captain of St. Andrew's Church at Calstock. While here, John went on an all-day ringing trip in the East Cornwall Diocese and apparently "caught the bug". Later, after returning home, he began ringing at St. George's Church, Beckenham.

Subsequently moving to Calstock, he continued his ringing under the guidance of his brother Peter, together with the Rector of the Parish at that time, The Rev. Canon G. W. Ruming. John made good progress and moved into the realms of method ringing including the ringing of a few quarter peals of Bob Doubles and Grandsire. For many years John has been a very faithful member of the Calstock team of ringers but sadly, for health reasons, has had to give up. He still maintains an interest and every Sunday morning he comes into Church with his stick and has a look to see who is ringing. A goodly number of his family accompanied him to Church on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th October to see and hear the ringing on the occasion of his 90th birthday anniversary. *Doug Petipher*

Young Ringers' Day

The first ever Guild young ringers' day took place at the end of August. Due partially to it being the holiday season and perhaps also a lack of notice only a small number were able to attend. However perhaps this was for the best as it gave an opportunity to develop ideas and systems for the future.

Participants did attend from Otterham and Emmanuel, Plymouth (yes, OK, Devon Guild area but we won't hold that against them!) and so the venue for the morning session was midway between the two at Callington. A number of helpers attended to assist Education Officer Norman Mattingley who organised the day and the bells & simulator were soon put to good use ringing rounds & call changes. A ploughman's lunch was shared in the church before we moved across to Linkinghorne for the afternoon session.

Here the Guild handbells were produced and the youngsters tried their hand at rounds, queens & tittums on twelve followed by plain hunt on six with one and two handbells each. The tower bells were then put to good use, giving some of the youngsters an opportunity to call changes and also to hunt the treble to doubles. The day ended with a guided tour of the tower but unfortunately the inclement weather prevented the planned walk to the top of Kit Hill!

Any young ringers, or their tower captains or parents, reading this who would like to be involved in and notified about the next such event are encouraged to contact Norman Mattingley 01872-242569. *Phil Tremain*

Day trip to the Isles of Scilly

Seventeen ringers, including the Guild President (Ian Self) and the Guild Secretary and his wife (Robert and Helen Perry), met at 8.30am on Saturday, 5th September on Penzance quay for the sea crossing on the *Scillonian* to Hugh Town on the Isles of Scilly. This was a voyage of discovery – to meet the new band of ringers on the island of St Mary's and to ring on the new peal of eight bells at the parish church of St Mary the Virgin in Hugh Town.

The party landed at midday and with just about four and half hours ashore time was precious. Lunch was the first priority. At one o'clock the ringers from the mainland met the local ringers and everyone was soon ringing on the glorious bells of the parish church. The bells were put to good use for an hour and three-quarters with call changes, Grandsire Doubles with 7-6-8 covering, Grandsire Triples, Bob Major and a plain course of Cambridge Surprise Major. At 2.45pm a short but lovely service was held in the church conducted by the Revd. Guy Scott – himself a ringer for over 25 years. In his very apt and focused address, Father Guy reminded those present to never underestimate the power that ringers have when ringing bells, as in this increasingly secular world bells are a reminder that there is a God and that the Christian Church is still here. During the service, the Guild President presented Madge Christopher, from Madron, with a certificate to commemorate 50 years of ringing. After the service, a splendid tea was provided in the neighbouring church hall, during which the island ringers and the mainland ringers got to know each other.

By 4.15pm the visiting ringers were back on board the *Scillonian* ready for the 4.30pm departure and return to Penzance. All said that they would return, not only to ring again on the lovely bells in Hugh Town, but also to explore and enjoy the beautiful islands that form the Isles of Scilly.

Grateful thanks are extended to David and Fiona Maybrey for their organisation and warm welcome. Thanks go to Father Guy for a most appropriate service and very apt comments about the ringing of bells. Thanks, too, to all the local ringers who not only joined in with the ringing but who produced such an acceptable and welcome tea. The friendship extended by the ringers at Hugh Town will certainly encourage ringers to return again and again. *Ted Venn*

Kernow Old Codgers

Mid-week ringing groups are springing up all over the country as more people are finding themselves active & healthy in retirement. One such group, the Tamar, Taw & Torridge ringers, operates along the Devon & Cornwall border.

Now a new group, the Kernow Old Codgers, is being formed which will meet in mid-Cornwall. The format will be a morning tower (or two), pub lunch and another tower in the afternoon. The first meeting has been fixed for Tuesday 9th February to be followed by another on Tuesday 9th March and subsequently the first or second Tuesday of each month. Both method and call-change ringing will be catered for, ringing within our abilities with an emphasis on achieving good striking; anyone wishing to come along is very welcomed, please contact Phil Tremain.

Western District Dinner

Another very successful Western District Annual Dinner was held at the Queen's Hotel, Penzance on 21st November. There were 60 members and friends present, including two Presidents (Ian Self of the TDGR and Tony Smith of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers) and the Dinner was ably chaired by Michael Wycherley, our Ringing Master. Neil Hitchens, beautifully attired in Cornish kilt, announced from time to time that "the Chairman would like to take wine with . . . ".

We were all very sorry to learn that Margaret Byrne, who has been to almost every Dinner since they began, was unwell and unable to attend this evening. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the evening, and especially to Michael Wycherley, the Dinner Chairman, and to Mary Jones for her usual meticulous organisation. *Christine Northeast*

Andrew Brown – 60th birthday

Congratulations to Andrew Brown, Eastern District Chairman, who celebrated his 60th birthday recently with a peal of 5040 minor at his home tower of St Martins-by-Looe; this also marked his 50 years of ringing.

Andrew has rung at St Martins for the last three years, previously 3 years at Milford on Sea, Hampshire and 44 years at St Johns Croydon, Surrey – the 37 cwt 14 – where he learnt to ring, was Ringing Master for several years and Steeple Keeper for 33 years.

Bodmin Deanery Shield

On Saturday 21st November the Bodmin Deanery Shield Striking Competition was held at St Tudy Church. Around sixty ringers from nine towers made up nineteen teams in this closely fought competition. Lanhydrock, in the form of John Toms (Captain) were the organisers, having won in 2007 and 2008. This year Lanlivery triumphed and took away the shield. Lostwithiel were a close second, and another team from Lanlivery was third.

A big 'thank you' is due to the ringers of St Tudy, who made us very welcome with refreshments aplenty. It was a splendid evening. *John Sale*

Tail Endings

Firsts on the simulator at Callington since the last *An Clogh* was published have been:
Bristol & Spliced (4m) Surprise Major, Kate Jennings; more than one method (doubles), Joyce Pengelly and Robin Clowes; inside to PB Minor & PB Triples, Joyce Pengelly.

The first quarter peal has been rung on the new bells at St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. The band consisted of six island ringers, project co-ordinator John Maybrey and builder Chris Venn.

Tower officers are reminded of the importance of ensuring that they are not overlooked by their PCC in respect of the arrangements for Child Protection and also that of vulnerable adults.

Ray Spencer, tower captain at Wendron, was recently presented with his 25 year certificate by the vicar, Canon David Miller.

Father & son Kevan & Owen Borlase rang their 150th quarter together at Landulph in September.

A tremendously successful open weekend at Stithians in September gained considerable radio, press & television coverage. A number of recruits have come forward both for Stithians and other neighbouring towers and an unexpected outcome has been the *Cornish Bells on Sunday* to be heard on Radio Cornwall every Sunday morning just before the 8am news bulletin.

A quarter of Stedman Doubles was rung at Mullion to commemorate the life of tower captain George Champion.

Congratulations to Paul Major who rang his first quarter inside, Plain Bob Doubles, at St Mawgan.

A number of towers rang to welcome, or bid farewell to, the pilgrims from Sheviock who were following in the footsteps of Bishop Bronescombe 750 years previously.

The St Columb Major band were delighted to win the 8-bell shield at Kilkhampton, and to come third at Stratton, against strong opposition from across the Tamar.

Ash Stays

Supplied free of charge in return for a minimum £5 donation to the Guild BRF

John Toms - Timber Merchant

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