

Lincoln Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Central Branch Newsletter (number 63) September 2008



St Giles, Lincoln

I'm sorry this piece about the 70th anniversary of the bells of **St Giles, Lincoln** submitted by John Ketteringham is late - I mislaid it while producing the last edition.

'When the church of St Peter at Arches was demolished many of the fixtures and fittings were transferred to the new church of St Giles which was built on a new estate to the east of the city. An estimate was submitted by the Loughborough bellfoundry for transferring the eight bells to St Swithin's church in the centre of the city not far from the site of St Peter's, but this did not materialise. It was later proposed to distribute them as two rings of four. Fortunately, after a campaign initiated by 19 year old Jack Chambers, the bells were transferred to St Giles and they were dedicated by the Bishop of Lincoln on Whit Sunday 5 June 1938. Jack and his brothers Sidney and Noel became ringers and all three of them rang in the first peal on the bells in their new home. The 70th anniversary of the dedication was celebrated by a peal on Friday 5 June and the Parish Communion service on Sunday 8th June also commemorated this event. Three of the hymns sung during the service had bells and bellringers as their theme, and the organist, Louis Paul, played the Bell Symphony by Henry Purcell and Carillon de Westminster by Louis Verne. [If you want to know more about these bells and their history, they were featured in an early Newsletter.]

Proposed Ringing Programme 2008/2009

11 Oct	Lincoln St Mary & St Botolph	2.30 - 4.00	
8 Nov	Hackthorn Quiz night	7.30	
13 Dec	Quarrington Carol Service	3.00	
10 Jan	Washingborough	AGM	3.00
4 Feb	Nettleham Ringing	2.30 - 4.00	
14 Mar	Timberland Ringing	2.30 - 4.00	

Branch Surprise Major Practices at Washingborough will be from 10.30 - 12, on 18 October, 22 November and 20 December 2008. **Put these dates in your diary!** Any queries to Sue Waterfall 07925 149104.

These are subject to change during the year. It is wise to check.

October is our quarter peal month. This has proved a great incentive for people to organise quarters to advance the ringing in their towers. If you want help in making up your band or finding a conductor or anything else, ask Mick or any Branch Committee member.

News from the towers

The bells were rung at **Thorpe-on-the-Hill** on Sunday 31 August in memory of Mr Shepherd who was sub postmaster in the village for many years. A rose was planted by his family outside the tower immediately before the ringing. They were also rung in memory of Ruby Dunbar (previously Hughes) who lived in Thorpe for many years and is best remembered as a wonderful school cook.

Ray Brewer is still making scale model bell frames. They are beginning to appear in many local towers (nearly as prolific as Fred's boxes), and are a valuable aid in explaining how a bell works. He does however need bells, and has sent this SOS. 'Wanted small bells approx 4ins - 6ins diameter for making working models. Heavy ones only. Light ones are no use. Ideal bells are the old 4in door bells. They will be black but clean up'

A new method was named **Hackthorn** Surprise Major when rung to a peal at Milton, Oxfordshire, with the footnote 'in thanksgiving for the life of Bridget Cracroft-Eley, through whose efforts the former Milton bells were transferred to Hackthorn, Lincolnshire.'

Lincolnshire Mid-Week Ringers

The 29th July being the fifth Tuesday in the month meant it was time for another 'away day' for those fortunate enough not to have to work.

Fuel prices meant that car sharing was readily agreed not just to reduce the numbers of cars at towers. It was a beautifully sunny day as 22 of us made our way to the first tower at Caister for a quarter to eleven. Those not driving had ample opportunity to chat with friends and enjoy the sunny Lincolnshire countryside.

These events are firmly based on the prospect of a sensible amount of ringing either side of a good venue for the lunch time refreshments. This one was no exception to that rule with ringing at Caister to be followed by nearly two hours for lunch at Wooton with an hours ringing at Barrow on Humber in the afternoon.

The three quarters of an hours ringing on the eight bells at Caister soon passed, Philip managing to fit in plenty of rounds and call changes between the surprise ringing and finishing with some 5 spliced.

Off to lunch at the Nags Head at Wooton. Having been pre warned it was not long after collecting our drinks that the food began to be served. They had a considerable collection of puddings to follow and all agreed it had been an excellent choice of venue. There was even a village pond opposite for those that wished to stretch their legs and watch the anglers.

The afternoon was warming up nicely and the ringing chamber at Barrow on Humber soon became a little sticky but no one seemed to mind too much as they took the opportunity to ring a method or rounds on the 12 bells. The ringing of rounds and call changes eventually graduated to plain hunt on 12 and the afternoon culminated with Stedman Cinques.

Thank you Philip for arranging such a pleasant day and for ordering the sunshine.

John Nicholson

Bells and Bellies

Little Tommy Tucker had to sing for his supper but an interesting variation took place at Ruskington and Sleaford when the ringers of the Central Branch were called upon to ring for their suppers at their meeting on August 9th, and were rewarded with a much more varied and appetising feast than 'brown bread and butter.'

The festivities kicked off at Ruskington where newcomers to the tower were intrigued to find the six bell ropes hanging in two lines instead of the more usual circle. Various ribald comments about 'square ringing' were made but, in spite of the unusual layout, some good touches were achieved, ranging from Plain Bob to Norwich.

Upon descending from the ringing chamber via a ladder for the first leg and a rather sumptuous carpeted staircase for the second, the ringers found their first course laid ready in the church. Pate, toast and salad, beautifully presented, with a choice of delicious pickles, all, so he claimed, made by Richard Short that morning. May your nose never grow longer Richard.

Having done full justice to the starter the replete ringers repaired to Sleaford to sample the eight bells and the culinary expertise there.

Once more a good variety of methods were rung with a little diversion caused by the tenor proving very difficult to set. John had to undergo some merciless teasing when he took several pulls before setting, only to be vindicated when first Phil, then Mick followed his example. 'Ask not for whom the bell tolls' became the byword until Dot took a turn and managed the seemingly impossible with only one extra pull. No further comment needed here!

By now the ringers were ready for their main course and were greeted at the church hall by Richard Spencer, resplendent in his striped 'pinny' and only lacking the Chef's Hat. Everyone did full justice to the delicious chicken, rice and veg. followed by a choice of mouth-watering desserts - to the extent that some went for seconds and even thirds.

It is hardly surprising that it was a much depleted band that finally returned to the church to finish off the evening's ringing.

It was a meeting that was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended and very many hearty thanks to all the willing helpers who worked so hard to make the event such a success.

Jill Bland

She failed to set her bell and said, 'I am listening. It's the bell that isn't!'

Ringling at the Cathedral Sunday 10th August

It was Sunday 10th August 2008 and Central Branch had been invited to ring at 2.30pm for the 3.45 Evensong in the Cathedral. A few of us set off from Wragby on a very windy afternoon. Climbing the 128 steps to the ringing chamber gave us time to wonder why we ever said that we would go.

We rang on ten bells in rounds to begin with and after one or two pulls of what seemed to be an endlessly long rope, confidence returned and there was nothing to be anxious about at all. Later on we rang in rounds on 12 bells which was a slightly different experience as we rang much closer, but slower.

It was all a very enjoyable experience and we were glad we had agreed to go.

Pauline Cooper

Cathedral Ringers' Outing 16th August

On 16th August the 'Cathedral Companie of Ringers' plus friends had their annual outing to Nottingham.

The ringing was at 5 towers all within easy walking distance of Nottingham's tram system with the meeting point being the Wilkinson St. Park & Ride. This proved to be an excellent way of getting to towers, the only drawback being the Senior Citizens weren't permitted to use their bus passes.

Ringling took place at All Saints (10), and after the tram to 'The Lace Market' we had time for a coffee in the Old Shire Hall, formerly County Council offices, Magistrate's Court,

Crown Court and place of execution, before ringing at St Mary's (12). Lunch was then taken at various venues in the City centre. After lunch ringing was at St Peter's (12), where we rather overpowered the efforts of a saxophone player in the square below, followed by two eights at St Mary & All Souls, Bulwell and St Leodegarious, Basford before returning to our start point.

A very well organised outing enjoyed by all who attended.

David Fox

We wonder

At the Guild Striking Contest Final

- - - who was the Central Branch ringer who ran into the back of the judge's car?
- - - and why did a member of the Market Deeping team find it necessary to drive up to Welton church in a pantechnicon? (Actually she was fetching the Guild simulator for Grantham while she was at this end of the county.)

Hackthorn Ringers Outing Saturday 30th August

I have only recently joined Hackthorn ringers and this was my first outing with them. Val and David provided my transport for the day.

First it was to Norton Disney where we met up with the other ringers and their spouses. Norton Disney is a pretty little church and it felt very welcoming. Parts can be dated to the Normans in the 11th century but, as with most churches, the building has evolved over the centuries. All the churches we were to visit had ringing chambers on the ground floor and six bells. I was called on to ring and I must admit that I struggled but I need not have worried, Margaret was there at my side to give encouragement, advice and instruction!!

Our second church was Bassingham. Five of their bells were cast in 1770 and a treble in 1926. In 1998 a bell, from the decommissioned HMS Bassingham, was installed in a fine mahogany bell hood in the north aisle and is rung to start Sunday worship. I really liked this church, and it felt well used and that a lot was going on. We called the tower 'Lexie's Tower' because it was the first time she had managed to ring without standing on a box. I do believe she has grown an inch taller since leaving Bassingham!!

We then moved to the Royal Oak in Aubourn for lunch. The food and service were excellent, especially as we had all ordered something different. It's well worth a visit on any pretext.

Our third church was at Thorpe on the Hill. The ringing chamber being on the ground floor was much appreciated by me after our meal. The ropes were very light, which I found difficult but never fear there was more help from Margaret.

Last but not least of the churches we visited was All Saints, Eagle. This has a low Early English tower but the rest is 1903. I was by now feeling a little jaded and found it hard to concentrate, which I blame on too much food in the middle of the day.

When ringing at Eagle was completed, Val and David provided afternoon tea. What a treat that was. Val's chocolate sponge was delicious.

By the end of the day I was feeling pleasantly exhausted. It was a good experience, very interesting and well organised by Val and David. I am sure I can add the thanks of everyone who took part. I really enjoyed myself. My feelings that the Hackthorn ringers are a really good crowd was enhanced and I am pleased I took part.

Eileen Barton-Smith

Guild Striking Contest Final 13 September

This year our branch hosted the Annual Guild Striking Contest Final. Members from all over Lincolnshire competed for the John Freeman Cup at Welton and the Ted Colley Plate at Dunholme. Scothern tower was also open for anyone to have a ring when they weren't otherwise involved. It was up to the local ringers to sort out the details of the arrangements and especial thanks are due to Fiona Dawson who made sure the towers were available and someone was at each to open up etc. On top of that she, with the help of the local ringers, organised a first class tea in the village hall so that no-one went hungry while waiting for the results. Everyone went away feeling very full! There were 7 teams in each competition and both judges said how good the ringing had been. The Guild is in a healthy state.

First to speak was Mike Belcher who judged the Plate. We are used to seeing him in casual clothes so he remarked that he had dressed appropriately for the occasion - sporting collar and tie and a smart blazer. He gave each team a positive score, and they ranged from 210 to 228 perfect changes in the required 240 - pretty good to my mind. As always, most of the teams improved as the test piece progressed once nerves had settled and the ringers began to get used to the bells. He did not seem to have been too dismayed as he said, 'There was I supposed to be judging a competition when a car drew up behind me and ran into the back of my car!' - and the culprit was in the room! Congratulations to the Swinderby/Eagle team on winning the Plate, and to Alford with their young band who were the runners up.

Chis Sharp then gave the results of the Cup. He started by apologising, amid laughter, for, unlike his fellow judge, not dressing up in 'his Les Townsend gear.' He too said how all the teams improved as they went on. We had to explain afterwards why we laughed as he said of one team 'They got better as they got used to the bells.' This was in fact the local band! 'Oops,' he said, 'I got that wrong, didn't I!' Yes, judges are human too. On awarding the Cup to Messingham he said that every lead throughout the piece was spot on thus giving the rest of the band 'the chance to follow without any surprises.' He went on to say how important is the leading to good striking. Congratulations Messingham and to runners up, Bourne.

Well done all the ringers. You all rang well, and thanks once more to Fiona and her team. It was a very enjoyable evening.

Our Little Bell

On the 7th September The Bishop of Grantham (The Rt Revd Tim Ellis) joined us for our regular Sunday Service at St John the Evangelist, Washingborough, This was our Benefice Service, but as it happened it also marked another special occasion, namely the consecration of the new Angelus bell in the tower at St John's, completing a process that started in mid 2003.

Chris Taylor (then Tower Captain at Washingborough) was seeking a 'little service bell' for St John's. Chris called upon the services of Dr John Ketteringham in his capacity as The Diocesan Bells Advisor to help locate something suitable. John found such a bell in the redundant church of St Hybald, Manton (north of Gainsborough). If we could arrange for it to be removed, it was ours.

So with a great deal of work behind the scenes and a generous donation from Trevor and Judith Roberts who worship at St Johns, the bell was finally installed in the tower by Eyre and Smith early in 2008. This very old bell uses a very modern striking mechanism, in the form of a magnetic hammer mounted inside the bell from the crown bolts. It is driven from an electric controller located in the vestry.

The inscription on the shoulder of the bell reads

AVE MARIA GRATIA

translated as 'Hail Mary full of grace' and is the alternating salutation from the traditional Christian devotion in memory of the Incarnation, namely the Angelus. This inspired the present incumbent of St Johns (Steven Jones-Crabtree) to re-instate the bell as an

Angelus bell and with the assistance of some electronic wizardry from Eyre and Smith, the bell now strikes the Angelus (3 lots of 3 strokes with a pause in between followed by 9 strokes) at midday and 6.00 pm.

The bishop being the sort of person to do things properly, climbed up to the top of the tower just before the sharing of the peace, to consecrate the bell. A hastily installed video link allowed the congregation down below to share in the proceedings. With the incumbent and members of the Roberts family present, the Bishop dedicated the bell and gave it the name 'Stephen' in memory of Stephen Glen Smith, son of Judith Roberts. The Bishop then shared the peace from the belfry with the congregation below and those present in the tower. It was a very fitting conclusion to years of effort, giving a new lease of life to a very old bell.

Jonathan Clark

Obituary

Bridget K. Cracroft-Eley, CVO **1933 - 2008**

Bridget died at her home in Hackthorn early on 29th August. Many will associate her with her official roles and as Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire. The people of Hackthorn will remember her for her great concern for the wellbeing of the village, a true lady and a highly respected 'lady of the manor'.

Her deep involvement with the community life of the village led to her becoming very active in their Millennium project. This resulted in enough money being raised to acquire a peal of bells and have them hung in the tower of St Michael and All Angels Church, no mean feat in such a small community. Not only was she a driving force behind the project, but she also learnt to ring alongside a number of local residents ready for the installation, and she rang with them at the dedication in 2006. She became an enthusiastic member of the local band, and, like all learners, she found that things were sometimes frustratingly difficult. After such sessions she would be heard to say, 'That's it. I'm giving up.' Even so she would be there and ready to go next time. She learnt to ring Plain Hunt and was mastering Plain Bob on an inside bell, Along with the rest of the band she was intrigued by hearing the conductor calling for this mysterious man called Bob. She would say, 'I'll carry on till I've met Bob, and then I'll go no further.' Sadly, sudden ill-health intervened and she regretted having 'never met Bob.'

In her official life she was regarded with great respect which left her at the mercy of 'name droppers' but she carried it with great dignity. We felt that she enjoyed in her ringing the fact that she was able to just be Bridget, one with the rest of us. She will be a hard act to follow and we shall all miss her.

R.I.P.

Following a private funeral in Hackthorn church for family, friends, villagers and staff, there will be a memorial service in Lincoln Cathedral on Thursday 20th November at 2.30pm (the congregation are asked to be in their seats by 2.15).

Training Morning

The branch training morning was held on Saturday 13th September at All Saints, Swinderby. Many thanks to Des Underwood for the hospitality (coffee and sandwiches at half time provided a very welcome interlude!) The focus of the morning was 'the raising and lowering of the bells', but there was plenty of time to practise some call changes and method ringing as well.

Everyone was very friendly and welcoming. Experienced ringers were keen to help the less experienced and to share their knowledge and observations. Plenty of tips were exchanged. Hopefully we will be able to put some of what we learned into practice when we return to our own towers.

For those of us who had been nurturing our onions, the training morning was also the day of judgement. An independent judge was roped in from gardening in the churchyard to adjudicate. Our congratulations go to Mick Stracey with the best pair of onions.

The next branch ringing will be at the towers down High Street, Lincoln on October 11th.

Sue Watts

Don't forget

The Guild Barn Dance at Upton on 18 October. Get your tickets now from Chris Jackson, our Guild BRF Rep, or ask any of the Branch committee.

Look to; Treble's going; she's gone!
'Goodbye!'

She missed her sally and the bell set. She looked rather startled and said, 'My bell's stopped!'

The ropes were usually rather long. After the damp spell someone remarked, 'These ropes have gone up,' to receive the retort, 'So has petrol, gas and food!'