



# NEWS REVIEW

by Giles Blundell

Bells can inspire, and our art is recognised even where change ringing may not routinely be heard. The *Moore American* of Norman, Oklahoma (nearest tower St James, Dallas, 168 miles away) wondered why every church didn't have a bell tower or belfry? 'It seems as though it should be a requirement for every church, not only for the beautiful music but for the history and sound it brings as it resonates throughout the city.' Wanda Billbe had clearly done her research (although not entirely accurately), and wasn't afraid to express an opinion: 'It is estimated that between the United States and Canada, there are only 45 bell towers. The United States has only one that houses a set of 12 bells, Trinity Church in New York. For the bells on ropes, a bell ringer's task is not easy. One must develop a technique of holding the rope, feeling its tension in order to create beautiful sound from thousands of pounds of brass. It is an art and many travel from around the world to Trinity Church in New York to attend classes for rope bell ringing at this 280-foot bell tower that includes a 24-hour marathon that rings out over Wall Street. Imagine the delight the visitors to this famed city are blessed with when the bells begin to ring. They probably think they are in heaven.'

The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that Norwich composer David Berwick, an associate organist at St Mary's Happisburgh for 12 years, had been inspired by his long appreciation of the dedicated service and skills of the bell-ringers to write a new work based on bell-like rhythms. The 13-minute work entitled *Carillon-Sortie* would be the central focus in 'a special celebrity organ recital to raise money for St Mary's Church Fabric Fund'. The article naturally concentrated on the new piece, but also gave a short history of Happisburgh's bells and started by emphasising that 'Bell-ringing is an ancient and noble art, requiring a nimble brain to work out the complex method patterns of the peals involved. It calls for a great dedication to team-work and some physical endeavour. Campanology can become a compulsive hobby.'

Of course, ringing can also be an inspiration for puns: *BBC Sport's* webfeed noted on the third day of the third test match at Southampton that '(Ian) Bell is taking Jadeja apart here, smacking him for four through the covers, lofting another six over the bowler's head and guiding another four backward of point. The Bell is ringing loud and clear – a campanologist's dream.'

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I've said before that it's important that when trying to recruit, we give a positive impression (how many people want to join a dying art?). So full credit is due to the Marsworth, Bucks ringers for a piece in the *Hemel Gazette*: under

the headline 'Bell-ringing is the real heavy metal', we were asked if we fancied 'learning to play 'real' heavy metal?'

The item (which is worth quoting almost in full) told us that 'All Saints' Church in Marsworth is a tower that specialises in teaching new bell ringers, with trained teachers accredited by the Association of Ringing teachers – and on Friday, August 1, people were being invited to try their hand at the unique craft.

'The 'heavy metal' in this case are the bells themselves, with the heaviest of the six weighing around 86 stone. Unsurprisingly, they are some of the largest and loudest unamplified musical instruments in the world.

'According to tower captain Richard Booth, the emphasis is on balance and timing rather than brute strength, so big muscles aren't required – just the ability to climb up a fixed wooden ladder to the first floor ringing gallery.

'The open evening started at 7.30pm and was free to anyone over the age of nine interested in learning more about ringing or trying their hand at handling a Church bell.'

I'm finding it hard to fault this as a piece of publicity: the tone is positive and welcoming, good use is made of ART accreditation, myths are dismissed and weights are given in a way that most people can relate to, instead of our beloved but these days rather obscure use of hundredweights, quarters and pounds. And the piece – published on 27th July – was timely: not so far ahead of the event as to allow people to forget it, but not so close that the intended audience would be busy doing something else. It would be good to hear how successful or otherwise this recruitment event was.

GILES BLUNDELL



# ASSOCIATION & GUILD NEWS

## S&BDG Annual General Meeting and Striking Competition



The Brecon band (l-r): Wendy Medd, Jean Hudman, Malcolm Johns, Pauline Stables, Kath Johnson and Paul Johnson

On Saturday, 19th July the Swansea and Brecon Diocesan Guild of Bellringers held its annual general meeting and striking competition at the detached tower of St Mary's Church, Bronllys, Powys. Storm clouds gathered in the distance but the rain held off and members were able to stroll between the church and the tower, chatting and listening to the bells.

Lay reader and Bronllys tower captain, Lloyd Evans, led the service which was characterised by some rousing hymn singing, accompanied on the organ by guild member Tim Hollinghurst.

After a generous tea in the village hall the guild held its annual meeting at which the following officers were elected: Master, Paul Johnson; Secretary, Douglas Davison; Treasurer, David Childs; Training Officer, Kathleen Johnson. The meeting decided to divide the work of Public Relations Officer between Hilary Rose, for the southern part of the diocese, and Kathleen Johnson, for the northern part.

The meeting voted unanimously to elect Mike and Hilary Rose Honorary Vice-Presidents in grateful recognition of their great and varied service to the guild. Mike and Hilary have been generous with their time and talents from their arrival in Swansea in 1977 to the present day.

The Leslie Evans Trophy for progress in ringing was awarded to Chris Vickery of Sketty.

The judges of the striking competition, Marice Sherlock and Barry Morgan of the Llandaff and Monmouth Association, commented favourably on the quality of the ringing in general and announced the result:

- |     |              |
|-----|--------------|
| 1st | Brecon       |
| 2nd | Sketty       |
| 3rd | Builth Wells |
| 4th | Cefn Coed    |

KATH JOHNSON

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### 50 Years Ago

*The Ringing World*, 14 August, 1964  
Selected by the Editor

#### Letters to the Editor

##### Ernest Morris Memorial Window

Dear Sir, — The reason for the long delay in placing the Ernest Morris Memorial Window in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, is the difficulty in getting a suitable design.

The first design received was rejected by the Council for the Care of Churches, another design was obtained from the same artist, and the P.C.C. decided to get a second artist also to submit a design in the hope that one or the other would be accepted.

A meeting was held a month ago with this artist, who has promised to get to work on it immediately but, as he says, these things do take time, and agrees with us that the window should be worthy of the man.

The fund now stands at over £400 from all sources, which we hope and believe will be sufficient for the work.

I will keep 'Ringing World' readers informed on progress and hope they will be as patient as we are trying to be.—

Yours sincerely,  
GORDON A. OLLIFFE  
Braunstone, Leicester