

The Weekly Journal for Church Bell Ringers since 1911 No. 4693 April 6, 2001 Price £1.35 Editor: Robert Lewis

Bells and Bell Ringers in South Africa 1835-2000

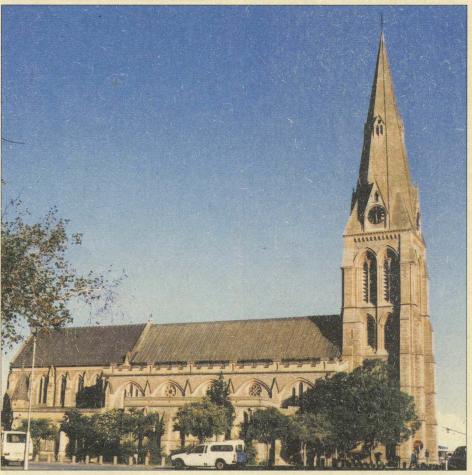
The first ring of bells in Africa was installed in Grahamstown Cathedral in 1879 at the instigation of Frederick Henry Williams. Williams was Dean of Grahamstown from 1865 until his death in 1885. He was born in County Fermanagh, Ireland, not far from Enniskillen, where an octave was installed in the Cathedral when Williams was an impressionable 12-year old. Grahamstown's bells were also an octave, cast by John Warner and Sons of London. They were hung in the newly built tower, designed by the English architect, George Gilbert Scott.

The bells were initially intended to be part of the public clock project. Evidence suggests that they were used for swing chiming from 1879. An Ellacombe-type chiming apparatus was also installed and was used until 1991. Ringing probably started in 1902, encouraged by Bishop Cornish, who had been Vicar of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and Dean Carter, who had served at Truro and Canterbury. Unfortunately the state of the frame rendered the bells very difficult to control. In 1903 the ringers were 'Mr Lancaster (Captain), Dr Drury, Messrs G. Barnes, Charles, Cory and Walker'. Drury was a local doctor and was sufficiently interested to obtain a copy of Troyte's *Change-ringing* and Jasper Snowdon's *Rope-sight: an introduction to the art of change-ringing*.

Following an inspection in 1913 by Dean J. R. Vincent and the Rev. G. Ridout (both competent change ringers who had rung peals in England before moving to South Africa), ringing was suspended 'as the bells need a thorough overhauling'. In 1959 Mr Eardley from Stoke-on-Trent did sufficient work to render at least four bells ringable and began to train recruits, but his initiative was short lived.

In 1968 Bill Jackson, who had learnt to ring at Dalton-in Furness in Lancashire, and Paul Spencer, who learnt to ring at Armitage Bridge in Yorkshire, re-established ringing at the request of Dean Kenneth Oram and taught a band to quarter peal standard. Oram was born in England and came to South Africa in 1946. He became Dean of Grahamstown in 1964 and Bishop of Grahamstown in 1974. In 1987 he became Assistant Bishop of Lichfield. He died in England in 2001. Ringing has continued at Grahamstown since 1968, apart from an interval while the bells were being restored.

The bells were rehung in a steel frame in 1993 and two trebles, cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1996, were added in 1997. The frame was designed by Ray Ayres of Eayre and Smith Ltd, with fabrication drawings done by R. J.



Grahamstown Cathedral, where the first ring of bells in Africa was hung in 1879. Photo: Duncan Greaves.

Holmes, a ringer at Cape Town cathedral. The frame was fabricated and donated by Koch's Cut and Supply Steel Centre, of Pinetown, Durban. Restoration was made possible by the efforts of the South African Guild, led by Jane and Eric Webster, Rhodes University and ringers in Britain. Colin Lewis undertook local organisation in Grahamstown as well as a national fund raising campaign that was given excellent television, radio and newspaper coverage.

The first peal on the bells was Cambridge Surprise Major, conducted by Alan Regin on 17/12/1995 in 3 hours 12 minutes. The first peal on the ten was also Cambridge, on 4/4/1998, conducted by Timothy G. Pett in 3 hours 19 minutes. In the same year Colin Lewis turned the tenor to a peal of Plain Bob Royal in the blistering time of 3h7! By the end of 2000, five peals and 27 quarters had been rung on the bells. Colin Lewis, who had learned to ring at Glasbury-on-Wye in Wales, called 20 of those quarters.

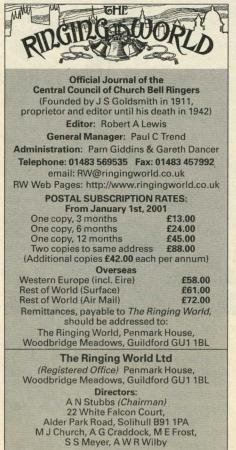
The second ring of bells in Africa was installed in 1902 at St Mary's Church, Woodstock, a suburb of Cape Town which was fashionable at that time. They were cast by the Birmingham Foundry of Barwells. The first recorded change ringing in Africa, 720 Plain Bob Minor, was rung (continued overleaf)

SOUTH AFRICA – *continued* on these bells on 22/12/1903. The first peal in Africa was rung on them on 15/12/1904. F. P. Powell called Taylor's six part composition of Grandsire Triples in 3 hours 7 minutes. The band was G. A. Davies 1, J. F. Priest 2, H. G. Cock 3, E. F. Behan 4, L. Green 5, J. L. Murray 6, F. P. Powell 7, H. Montgomery 8. James L. Murray also stood in the first peal in Australia, which he conducted at St Philip's, Sydney, in 1890.

The initial band broke up when increased prosperity following the end of the Boer War (1902) encouraged movement into the interior. Powell, at least, moved to Johannesburg. Apart from a quarter peal in 1925, there appears to have been little change ringing of note until after the Second World War. In 1930 a competent visitor, who 'had rung "Paul's" tenor often and in comfort', found that Woodstock tenor 'soon beat me' and that 'the treble wanted as much coaxing as a half broken-in colt'. The bearings were locally overhauled that year, resulting in much improved go.

In 1941 A. Patrick Cannon visited Woodstock only to find one bell without a rope and two ropes in very poor condition. After emergency repairs Cannon and another serviceman, Cecil F. Guy, joined local ringers and scored 'several 120s' and a 240 of Grandsire Doubles, the latter being rung by J. L. Riley 1, V. Meyer 2, A. Collins 3, J. S. Wood (Tower Captain) 4, Signalman A. P. Cannon (conductor) 5, Mechanist C. G. Guy 6. Another local ringer in 1941 was H. Meyer.

Among immigrants to South Africa from Britain after the Second World War were a few



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Frederick Henry Williams, the Irish Dean of Grahamstown 1865-1885.

ringers, including W. Smith, Len Hewitt, John Botham and Victor Sheppard. In the 1950s they renewed some of the bell wheels and quarter turned the treble and second. In 1951 and 1953 peals of Grandsire Doubles were rung, with about 20 quarters in the 1950s. R. H. Stickley, who used to ring at Hereford Cathedral, was in charge in the 1950s and called the Coronation Peal of 1953. He was succeeded by W. (Bill) Smith, formerly of Guildford, who later led ringing at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town.

By 1955 at least some of the Woodstock ringers had formed The Society for the Cape of Good Hope. Members even sported a blazer badge! They also sought other towers suitable for housing rings of bells. In 1960, apparently as a result of their influence, a project was established to install a ring of bells at St Alban's Church, Green Point, Cape Town. The project has long been abandoned. The callchange band extant at Woodstock in 2001 is led by Nathan Hendricks.

Rings of bells in Natal were hung in 1921 at St Mary's Church, Greyville, a suburb of Durban, and at St Paul's Church in the centre of the city. The bells were cast by Taylors of Loughborough and their installation was supervised by the Rev G. Ridout, who was then based in Johannesburg.

Ridout had rung as a student at Cambridge University (he was at Selwyn) and had scored a peal of Plain Bob Major in hand for the Cambridge University Guild in 1905. In the following year he emigrated to South Africa, initially as curate of St Mary's Church (now the Cathedral) in Johannesburg. He brought hand bells to South Africa with him and proceeded to encourage change ringing in the country. In 2000 these hand bells were in the care of Dai Herbert of the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg

The bells at Greyville form part of the War Memorial to the 324 men of the parish who died in the 1914-18 War. The church was designed by Herbert Baker, the renowned 'South African' architect, and completed in 1912. The tower was designed by F. L. H. Fleming, who formerly worked with Baker, and was added to the church as part of the War Memorial. 'Although the structure seems light and fragile, it is really of enormous strength, owing to the amount of steel used.' The bells were donated by Sir Charles Smith, a local sugar magnate, in memory of his mother, Emma Smith.

The bells at St Paul's were donated by Thomas Hamlyn in memory of members of his family, and by other members of the parish. They had originally been intended as a chime of 11, on which hymn tunes could be played! Rising costs, however, limited the bells to an octave. The frame was made in Durban and the architect was Fleming. The tower had to be strengthened to take the ringing peal. The bells were dedicated on 8/5/1921. The existing bell at St Paul's was given to Canon Ridout, at his request, for one of his churches.

Greyville bells were first rung open on 20/3/1921. The ringers included F. J. Cole (assistant conductor), W. H. Royston, H. Howard, J. Cason, F. Simpson (junior), F. Finlayson, N. Vine, J. Hume, C. Clarkson, A. E. Warman, F. Simpson (conductor). The bells 'bear the names of great men and great deeds, as follows: (1) The Old Contemptibles, 1914; (2) Botha, S. W. A., 1915; (3) Edith Cavell, 1915; (4) Smuts, E. A., 1916; (5) Jellicoe, Jutland, 1916; (6) Kitchener, 1916; (7) Delville Wood, 1916; (8) Allenby, Jerusalem, 1917; (9) Haig, Armistice, 1918; (10) Foch, Peace, 1919.

The first quarter in Natal, Grandsire Doubles, with 6-8 covering, was rung at Greyville on 1/7/1924. The conductor was John Prickett, who had been a member of the band at St Mary's, Chepstow, before emigrating. On 3/4/1923 a peal of Grandsire Triples was rung at Chepstow with Prickett on the fifth. The footnote to the peal read: Specially arranged and rung as a farewell to the ringer of the 5th, leader and tower-keeper of this Church on his leaving for S. Africa.

The first quarter of Triples in Natal was rung at Greyville on 22/9/1924, also Grandsire, conducted by Prickett. The band included Rev. Canon Ridout, 'who was spending a holiday in Durban'. The band included five who were ringing their first quarter of Triples. Fred G. May, born in Avening in Gloucestershire in 1875, emigrated to South Africa in around 1924. He is reputed to have rung over 660 peals and was a talented composer. May rang the third in the Triples quarter.

(continued opposite)



John Ranulph Vincent, Dean 1912-14.

Editorial

The Ringing Roadshow last Saturday was a great success – even though the beer dried-up in The Ringers' Arms (the RW beer tent) a little earlier than we would have wished. Thirsty work, these shows! We hope to have a full report with photographs in next week's issue.

On a much sadder note, we were deeply shocked to hear news this morning of the sudden death of Revd Clare Pipe-Wolferstan of Bristol on Friday 30th March. Clare was a very well known and respected ringer and cleric. Her loss at such a young age will be widely felt. Our thoughts and prayers are with husband Charles, her family and friends.

We reported last week the death of Ronald H. Dove of *Dove's Guide* fame on 19th March at the age of 95.

There is no doubt that the Exercise owes Ron Dove a great debt of gratitude for his work on the Guide and his contribution to ringing in general. In due course we hope to publish a very full obituary. In the meantime, I thought it would be appropriate to share a few words that his grand-daughter, Jaqueline Dove wrote to us:

"Please thank people for their kind cards and condolences over the last couple of weeks. My grandfather's passion for bell ringing is something that I have grown up with throughout my whole life (I am 23). It was a passion he took very seriously but gained so much from.

I remember sitting with him on many occasions when he was doing work for his next book and having fun searching on maps for churches and looking for any new bells or ones that could no longer be used. His funeral was yesterday and as he had wished, there was a great welcome and departure from the church with the bells ringing out loud. He always said he didn't want them muffled as he wanted to be heard!"

First peal congratulations

Russel A. Lisk, Iain D. Scott, Mark S. Eason, Christine Webb, Alan G. Reading.

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SOUTH AFRICA – continued

Greyville bells were first pealed in 1968, when Geoffrey Armitage, who had been a student at Lampeter (Wales) called Grandsire Doubles for the local band, four of whom were ringing their first peal. The band was: T. John Maeder 1, David C. Philogene 2, Cyril Chambers 3, Robert J. Philogene 4, Geoffrey D. Armitage (first as Conductor) 5, Roderick J. A. Callum 6. 1, 2, 4, 6 were ringing their first peal.

The first peal at St Paul's was on 10/10/1982 when a touring band conducted by Geoffrey K. Dodd rang Cambridge Surprise Major. A South African resident band scored the second peal at St Paul's, Plain Bob Minor conducted by Stephen W. Barton on 11/4/1989, while the first ten-bell peal in South Africa (Stedman Caters) was rung at St Mary's, Greyville, the following day.

The first peal of Royal on tower bells in South Africa was rung by the South African Guild at Greyville on 13/7/1991 in memory of the men of the parish who died in the First World War. Two veterans of that War, the Mayor of Durban, the Incumbent of St Paul's, Eric Webster and a bugler met the band prior to the peal at a short but moving ceremony. The peal was rung by eight members of the Guild who were then resident in South Africa, plus two ringers, Michael and Valerie Stone, who were en route from New Zealand to England. The band was: Gillian E. Lewis 1, Susan M. Ottley 2, Colin A. Lewis 3, Valerie J. Stone 4, Richard H. Roberts 5, David G. Herbert 6, Stuart J. Barton 7, Andrew C. Bolton 8, Michael J. Stone 9, Stephen W. Barton (conductor) 10. The method was Plain Bob Royal and the composition was an arrangement of S. W. Barton's.

The first peal of Spliced Surprise Major in Africa was rung at St Paul's on 11/9/1993, conducted by D. Paul Smith (who had called



Paul Spencer and family in the 1970s.

the first quarter at Grahamstown 16 years earlier) and contained a number of ringers then resident in Johannesburg. The band was Clifford Davies 1, Deborah L. Blagden 2, Mary T. Pipe 3, Ann Davies 4, Roderick W. Pipe 5, John Hill 6, Stephen W. Barton 7, D. Paul Smith 8. The methods were Yorkshire, Cambridge, Lincolnshire, Rutland.

Clarkson was the Captain at St Mary's in 1930, while there was a young band of callchange ringers at St Paul's that included Edmund Merryweather and his brother, John. After the Second World War John Maeder, who had learnt to ring at St Mary's, became Captain of the band there until his death in 1985. Eric Webster was then Tower Captain until he emigrated to England in 1994. Cyril Chambers, formerly of Kidderminster, was Tower Captain at St Paul's in the post Second World War years until succeeded by Eric Webster. Cyril moved to the Durban area in the 1930s, where he was in practice as a Chartered Accountant.

Eric officiated as Steeplekeeper rather than as Tower Captain, in spite of his title

(continued on p.367)



Capetown ringers with Woodstock links: Hilary Moekli, Mark Ogilvie (whose father had been Incumbent of Woodstock), Christina Horell (now Geddes-Elderkin), William (Bill) Smith, pictured in 1994.

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Zimbabwe Guild AGM

It is said that life begins at 40. The Zimbabwe Guild of Bell-ringers celebrated its 40th anniversary on 14th December 2000, and if the attendance and activities at the AGM weekend of 23rd-25th February 2001 in Harare were anything to go by, it is in good heart for the next 40 years. It was particularly pleasing to see Peter Rayner, a founder member and first Master of the Guild.

Despite the absence of a few resident members and the presence of only one overseas visitor, rounds, call-changes and Bob Royal were rung on 10, up to Cambridge and Rutland Surprise on eight, and up to London Surprise on six. As well as maintaining a good standard of ringing despite its isolation, the Guild is also to be commended for having kept the Harare and Kwe Kwe bells and their fittings in full working order in a country where spare parts are not readily available.

At the AGM the Master, James Milford, emphasised in his report that the Guild was one of 'Bell-ringers' not 'Change-ringers' and the fact that the bells of both towers were rung every Sunday to an acceptable standard was very gratifying. Ruth Hutchinson (Harare Tower Captain) reported a good year in 2000, beginning with ringing in the Millennium which was broadcast on the BBC World Service. A ringers' service with an open day in the tower had been held, yielding some new recruits. Tendai Dzuda (Kwe Kwe Tower Captain) also reported optimistically. There had been some losses of personnel (including one who now rang in Harare) but new recruits had filled the gaps. The band was young and keen and had taught themselves largely unaided to ring plain hunt and call-changes, but now needed assistance to progress further. He and the Guild Master hoped

The Guild's funds were in good order and no increase in subscriptions was proposed. Three new members were elected (one from Kwe Kwe and two from Harare) and Frankie Milford (Harare) received the Attendance Trophy.

All the existing officers except the Secretary were re-elected for another year. The Secretary, Barbara Rundell, would be leaving Zimbabwe soon and her post was taken by Felicitas Pswarayi, who had been ringing only since last September and who is the first African to hold office in the Guild.

There was an animated discussion about the Fred Dukes International Bequest and clarification would be sought of its terms to determine whether the Guild could benefit. To mark the Guild's 50th anniversary, the possibility of the issue of a commemorative stamp would be investigated. The business over, the company enjoyed the annual ritual of eating the writer's birthday cake.

And so to dinner at the Bronte Hotel. Members and guests were welcomed by the Master, the Loyal Toast was proposed by the Harare Tower Captain and the Bell-ringers Toast by the Kwe Kwe Tower Captain who, with the rest of his band, arrived just in time having been delayed by their car having been broken into.

The guest speaker was Stan Dube who was the first African to learn at Kwe Kwe in 1967 and until recently was Tower Captain there. He spoke briefly about his career and his family but devoted most of his speech to giving thanks to all those who had influenced his 34 years of ringing, from Harry Earle, who had taught him, to the present bands at Harare and Kwe Kwe. The formal proceedings ended with hand-bell ringing and thereafter the company enjoyed the usual tradition at ringers' dinners of drinking and good conversation.

The Zimbabwe Guild is a microcosm of all aspects of ringing at large - the mix of ages, sexes, backgrounds, abilities, giving a warm welcome and generous hospitality to visitors. During the troubles in Northern Ireland, ringers there actively encouraged those from elsewhere to visit to assist in maintaining 'normality'. The current situation in Zimbabwe is not ideal for various reasons but, speaking as someone who has visited the country at least once in each of the last ten years, may I actively encourage ringers from elsewhere to go there to help maintain 'normality'. I for one am looking forward to next years' Guild weekend (8th-10th February, 2002). GEORGE THE WARTHOG

Nancy Haines

We regret to announce the death on 12th February 2001 of Nancy Haines, nee Humber-stone, who was a ringer at All Saints, Wigston Magna, Leicester for 55 years. Nancy was a member of the Midland Counties Association, a founder member of the Leicester Diocesan Guild and also a member of the Ladies Guild. Nancy rang 49 peals, some of the earlier ones being in Norfolk. She will be sadly missed.

Trends Survey

Many thanks to everyone who completed a questionnaire for the Trends Working Group at the Roadshow. The Prize Draw was won by Christine Baldock of Hailsham (£20 M & S voucher), with the second prize (£5 Smith's voucher) going to Freda Willgress of Rushden. PATRICIA NEWTON

THE 2001 SPARSHOLT RINGING COURSE NEAR WINCHESTER

The annual Sparsholt Ringing Course offers four days' tuition in bellringing under expert guidance over the August Bank Holiday, at a College set in the heart of the Hampshire Downs.

FRIDAY to MONDAY, 24 to 27 AUGUST

This year the Course offers theoretical and practical tuition in a choice of: Rounds & Call Changes, Starting Plain Hunt, Consolidating Plain Hunt, Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire Doubles, Plain Bob Minor, Cambridge S Minor and Grandsire Triples.

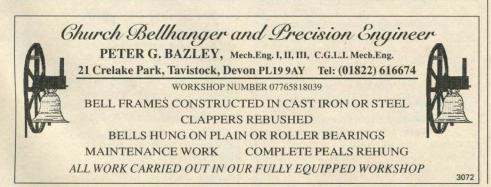
With a full supporting programme of tutorials, optional change ringing on handbells and ringing entertainment, students are very busy from dawn 'til dusk. Sparsholt Agricultural College offers single bedrooms, mostly 'en-suite'. Students may bring their own tent or caravan. This year the Course starts on the Friday morning.

For a Brochure and Application Form please send an A5 sized SAE to the Course Secretary: Peter Wenham, 10 Sanders Close, Braunston, Daventry NN11 7JW, or see the Course Website at: http://www.caroline.hayes.ukgateway.net/sparshol.htm – and download the Application Form. The closing date for applications is 12 May: students are not enrolled on a

'first-come-first-served' basis.

Other appropriately experienced ringers will be most welcome at the Course as 'Helpers', to ring with the Students at their practical sessions. Please ask the Secretary for 'the Helpers' Information'. GAIL & BOB CATER Organisers of the Course

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SOUTH AFRICA - continued

Jane Gant (later Webster), who learnt to ring at Batheaston in Somerset, arrived in Durban in 1978 and was instrumental in founding The Durban Guild in 1983 and The South African Guild, of which she was the first Chairperson, in 1988. She rang four peals in the Durban towers and did much to improve the standard of change ringing there before returning to England in 1994. Jane was Ringing Master of The Durban Guild from 1983 until 1994. David Herbert, who learnt to ring at Carmarthen, gave Jane considerable support. On 24/11/1990 he stood in a peal of Plain Bob Triples conducted by Alan Regin at St Paul's in which Jane's husband, Eric, rang the tenor, and one of her proteges, Brandon Semple, rang the treble. After the Websters left Durban Robert Philogene became Tower Captain at St Mary's and John Fielden at St Paul's. Brandon Semple became Ringing Master of the combined towers. In 2000 Karen van der Willigen became Ringing Master of the Durban towers.

Many quarters have been rung in Durban, including three in one day at St Paul's during the annual meeting of The South African Guild in 2000. The fabric of both towers was repaired in the 1990s and at the start of the new millennium the bells of Durban were in excellent condition. (to be continued)

