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Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

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Peals in Africa

by Colin A. Lewis

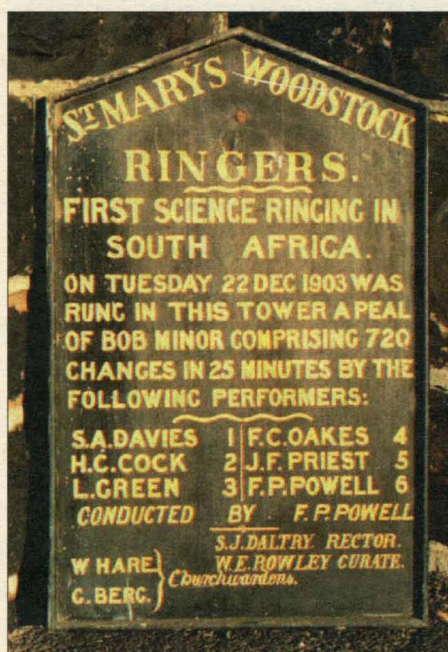
Cape Town and the first peal

The first peal in Africa was rung in Cape Town, at St Mary's Church, Woodstock, on Thursday, December 15th, 1904 in 3 hours and 7 minutes. The method was Grandsire Triples and the composition was Ed Taylor's six-part peal on a three-lead plan. In other words, there were two calls in every three leads, at the first and third lead. This was probably the composition first called on December 15th, 1788 by Taylor when he rang the observation bell at the Church of St Nicholas in Deptford, Kent. The composition was published in Shipway's *Art of Ringing* in 1816 and credited to Taylor. The composition was also claimed by Benjamin Pugh, a renowned member of the St Martin's Youths, Birmingham, and was rung at King's Norton on December 11th, 1811, conducted by Henry Cooper.

Three-lead plan peals are held in limited regard by many ringers because of their rigid nature and the multiplicity of calls. One bell, in this case the sixth, is the observation bell and rings the same three leads throughout the peal and never enters the hunt (the sixth rings double dodge 4-5 up, thirds, double dodge 6-7 down). There are also 46 Singles in Taylor's peal and, at least in the past, it was considered preferable to include as few Singles as possible in a peal of Grandsire Triples. The minimum is two, as in John Holt's famous composition, first called (by himself) at St Margaret's, Westminster, on July 7th, 1751 and known today as 'Holt's Original'.

The conductor at Woodstock was F. P. Powell, who rang the seventh. The band was G. A. Davies 1, J. F. Priest 2, H. G. Cock 3, E. F. Behan 4, L. Green 5, J. Murray 6, F. P. Powell 7, H. Montgomery 8. James Murray had previously rung in the first peal in Australia, at St Philip's, Sydney, in 1890, where he conducted John Holt's more demanding ten-part composition of Grandsire Triples. Perhaps it is significant that Murray rang the observation bell at Woodstock. He would have been well placed to help Powell with the calling, if that became necessary.

The slow time taken for the peal suggests that the ringing may have been a little hesitant, although the 'go' of the bells might have encouraged a slow pace. Behan reported that the peal was rung at the second attempt and was well struck. The peal is



*Prelude to the first full peal in Africa:
an extent of Bob Minor at Woodstock
(Photo courtesy of R. J. Holmes)*

commemorated by a peal board on the wall of the ringing chamber at St Mary's.

Although not stated in the published record of the peal nor on the peal board, Cyril Chambers reported an oral tradition that 'Mr Collins shared the ringing of the tenor. ...in 1941 he had a jewellery business [in Johannesburg]'. Frank Hopgood reported in a letter to *The Ringing World* (29.8.1941) that he had rung in a touch of 600 Grandsire Doubles at Woodstock while his convoy was at Cape Town [presumably in that or an earlier year of the Second World War] and that A. Collins rang the third. Whether that was the same person as mentioned by Cyril Chambers is unknown.

The origins of the peal band were given in *The Bell News* of 14.1.1905 and in various other publications. Davies began his ringing career at Woodstock, as did Cock; Priest had taught himself to ring at Christ Church in Wanstead and subsequently joined the Cumberland Youths; Behan was from

Melbourne Cathedral in Australia but was working in Johannesburg in 1904: he travelled to Woodstock for the peal; Green was from Leytonstone and was a College Youth; Murray was from Glasgow and St Mary's Cathedral Edinburgh but had also rung (as already noted) in Australia; Powell was from Witney and was a College Youth; Montgomery was from Sydney in Australia.

Green had arrived in South Africa in 1889 and Priest in 1890. Priest had rung the treble to a peal of Treble Bob Royal at St Mary Abbots, Kensington, as his farewell peal before sailing for South Africa. That was his first and only ten bell peal. In 1941 Priest wrote that "...we [Green and himself] were at Woodstock when the bells arrived, so got together a band and struggled along until we succeeded in ringing the... peal". By December 1903 the Woodstock band had progressed as far as ringing a 720 of [Plain] Bob Minor.

Priest worked as a locomotive driver for South African Railways, from which organisation he retired in 1922. Green returned to England in 1907 and rang about 30 peals of Grandsire, Stedman, Plain Bob, Double Norwich, Kent TB and Cambridge Surprise Major before going back to Cape Town in around 1911.

The bells at Woodstock are the only ring of bells in Africa by Barwell of Birmingham. This foundry was established in 1784 in Great Hampton Street, Birmingham, by James Barwell, but bells were not cast by Barwells until c1870. By 1914 Barwells had restricted bell production to bells no larger than 20" in diameter at the mouth. They ceased bell founding in 1960. The tenor of the eight bells at Woodstock weighs 11 cwt and is in the key of G.

Why Barwell, a relatively unknown founder, should have been selected to cast bells for what was, in 1900, the fashionable Cape Town suburb of Woodstock, is unknown. The bells were hung in the squat stone-built tower of St Mary's Church in 1902 and were dedicated by Archbishop Jones on Palm Sunday, being rung to rounds immediately afterwards. They were put to good use in the next few years. Unfortunately, however, the lure of high wages and of the gold fields of Johannesburg soon enticed ringers away from the Cape. Powell himself moved to Johannesburg.

(continued overleaf)



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<http://www.whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk>**PEALS IN AFRICA — continued****Doubles and Major at Woodstock**

The next peal at Woodstock, and the third peal in Africa, was rung on December 27th, 1951, and was Grandsire Doubles. Another peal of Grandsire Doubles was scored on June 13th, 1953. Both peals were conducted by R. H. Stickley, the second in honour of the Coronation of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

Robert H. Stickley was from Herefordshire and had been admitted to membership of the Hereford Diocesan Guild in 1931 as a member of the tower at Fownhope. In 1935 he moved his allegiance to Lugwardine where he remained, apart from war service, until 1947. In 1948 he was registered with the Hereford Diocesan Guild as a member of the band at Hereford Cathedral. The following year he was again shown as a member of the band at Lugwardine. From 1950 until 1954 he was listed as living in Johannesburg, and in 1955-6 as in Zaria in Northern Nigeria. From 1957 until 1963 his address was 12, St John's Road, Cape Town.

Stickley rang a peal of Grandsire Doubles at Wigmore for the Hereford Diocesan Guild on December 23rd, 1952, conducted by Wilfrid Moreton. Other well known ringers in the band that day were Leslie Evans and, ringing her first peal, Rosemary Jarrett. Stickley is not credited with any other peals for the Hereford Diocesan Guild.

The 1951 peal at Woodstock was Stickley's first peal as well as being the first peal for all the other members of the band: Oswald Lamb 1, Clarence Gardiner 2, Alfred Gardiner 3, Robert Stickley (conductor) 4, John Wood 5, John Ernstzen 6. Wood was Tower Captain at Woodstock in 1941, when A. Patrick Cannon visited the tower and rang touches of Grandsire Doubles with the local ringers.

The first peal of Major on the bells was rung by a visiting band from England in October 1982. This band had intended to ring peals at Durban and Grahamstown as well as at Cape Town. Sadly, while in Durban a member of the band, A. Patrick Cannon, who had rung at Woodstock when his ship was at Cape Town during the Second World War, was killed in a motor accident. His favourite method was Double Norwich, so his friends rang that method at Woodstock as a tribute to him. There has not yet been a peal of Minor on the bells.

Canon Ridout and his handbell band

The second peal in Africa was rung on handbells in Johannesburg on March 6th, 1930, conducted by Canon G. Ridout. Ridout was a competent ringer on hand and tower bells and had rung a peal on handbells for the Cambridge University Guild in 1905. He came to South Africa in 1906, initially as Curate of St Mary's (now the cathedral) in Johannesburg. He brought his handbells with him. Subsequently Ridout was in charge of St Alban's, Ferreirastown, Johannesburg.

Ridout trained a group of nuns from St Margaret's Mission, Johannesburg, to ring changes on handbells. He also rang with a few other immigrant ringers who had learnt handbell-ringing before emigrating from Britain. For the Johannesburg peal Ridout rang 5-6, while four Sisters: Angela, Madeleine, Vivian and Mary, rang bells 1 to 4 respectively. The peal took 1 hour and 55 minutes and was of seven different extents of Plain Bob Minor.

The Province of Central Africa: Salisbury/Harare

The second tower to be pealed in Africa was the Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints in Salisbury, Rhodesia (today, of course, Harare,



The Woodstock peal board
(Photo courtesy of R. J. Holmes)

Zimbabwe). On October 31st, 1962, Grandsire Doubles was successfully rung there. On March 31st, 1965, the first peal of Major in Africa (Plain Bob) was scored on these bells, which were cast by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry of London in 1959. The tenor of the ten bells at Harare weighs 24cwt 3qr and 3lb and is in the key of Eb.

The first peal on ten bells in Africa was also rung at Salisbury/Harare, when Plain Bob Royal was scored on June 4th, 1977. These bells were also distinguished by having the first peal of Caters in Africa scored on them, on August 12th, 1986 - Grandsire Caters. Sadly, perhaps, few peals were rung at Harare in the 1990s, although the resident band there is arguably the most advanced band, in terms of repertoire, in Africa.

The first peal in Natal

St Mary's, Greyville, Durban, was the third tower in Africa to be pealed. On March 9th, 1968, Geoffrey Armitage conducted Grandsire Doubles on the back six in 2 hours and 49 minutes. Geoffrey, an Englishman, had been a student at St David's College Lampeter, in Wales, but subsequently worked for a short while in the Durban area. The peal was notable in that it was the first peal for four of the band as well as Geoffrey's first as conductor. The band was T. J. Maeder 1, David C. Philogene 2, Cyril Chambers 3, Robert J. Philogene 4, Geoffrey D. Armitage 5, J. A. Callum 6. Only Cyril Chambers and Geoffrey Armitage had previously rung peals. This may have been the first time that South African born ringers scored a peal, at least in South Africa. Robert Philogene is still an active ringer in South Africa: in July 2002 he covered for a quarter of Grandsire Triples at the South African Guild's meeting at Parktown.

(concluded on p.388)

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PEALS IN AFRICA — concluded from p.0386

Greyville bells were cast by John Taylor and Company of Loughborough and were the gift of the sugar magnate, Sir Charles Smith, in memory of his mother, Emma. The tenor weighs 18-0-25 and is in the key of E. The bells are hung in a steel frame that was made locally and their installation was supervised by Canon Ridout. The bells were dedicated in 1921 and the first quarter peal was rung on them on July 1st, 1924.

Caters and Royal at Greyville

The second peal at Greyville was on July 1st, 1989, when Jim Clatworthy called the first peal of Stedman Caters in Africa. The first peal of Royal in South Africa was rung on them on July 13th, 1991, when Steve Barton called Plain Bob Royal off the tenor in 3 hours and 1 minute.

Harry Earle and Kwe-Kwe

St Luke's Church, Kwe-Kwe, Zimbabwe, has a light ring of six bells cast by Whitechapel. Bells 1,2,4 and 6 were cast in 1961 and were hung by Harry Earle, a Canadian who was working in the area as an engineer, in a locally fabricated steel frame. Harry then, with little help, taught himself to ring! The South African Guild elected Harry as an Honorary Member at its meeting in 2002, in recognition of his services to ringing in Africa. Harry now lives in Ladysmith, in KwaZulu-Natal.

The tenor at Kwe-Kwe weighs 5-2-1 and is in the key of C#. Bells 3 and 5 were cast in 1975 and reached the town after a circuitous journey caused by the sanctions that had by then been imposed on Rhodesia. The first peal on the bells, rung on October 17th, 1981, was particularly noteworthy, being the first of Surprise in Africa: Cambridge Surprise Minor. The second peal, of Plain Bob Minor, was rung in October 1987.

A trio of towers

1982 was a memorable year for peal ringing in South Africa, with the first peals on three rings of bells: St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, St George's Church in Parktown (Johannesburg), and St Paul's Church in Durban.

St George's Cathedral, Cape Town

The first of these peals was at Cape Town where, on July 3, Paul Spencer conducted the local band through Plain Bob Minor. Paul learnt to ring at Armitage Bridge in Yorkshire. He subsequently emigrated to Grahamstown where he and Bill Jackson, who had rung at Dalton-in-Furness in Lancashire, trained a band on what were then very difficult bells.

In October 1977 Paul conducted the local band through a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles at Grahamstown. All, except the conductor, were ringing their first quarter and it was Paul's first as conductor. The Cape Town peal was also Paul's first as conductor.

The ten bells of St George's Cathedral were cast at Whitechapel in 1963 but were not hung until 1979, when a purpose-built tower was erected for them adjacent to the south west corner of the nave. The tenor weighs 25cwt and is in the key of Eb. Another peal of Minor, three peals of Royal and one of Doubles have since been rung on the bells, the last peal in the millennium being on July 14th, 2001.

Parktown, Johannesburg

Eight bells with a tenor of 4-2-12 in the key of D, were cast by Whitechapel and installed in St George's Church, Parktown, in 1980. They were first pealed, to Plain Bob Major, conducted by S. W. Barton, on August 8th, 1982. The second peal, in October that year, was the first peal of Surprise Major in Africa:

Yorkshire. The first peal of Stedman Triples in Africa was rung on them in February 1985. Other notable peals at Parktown in the 1980s were Double Norwich Court Bob Major, Cambridge Surprise Major, Kent Treble Bob Major, Johannesburg Surprise Major, Bristol Surprise Major, Lincolnshire Surprise Major and Rutland Surprise Major. During the 1980s, thirty-two peals were rung at Parktown.

Durban, St Paul's Church

On October 10th, 1982, a British visiting band rang the first peal at St Paul's, Durban on a day that at least one of the band, Philip Saunders, remembers as hot and humid. Perhaps, by English standards, it was! The peal was of Cambridge Surprise Major and was conducted by Geoffrey K. Dodd. Subsequently peals of Minor and Triples have been rung on the bells, which were cast as an octave by Taylors. The tenor weighs 14cwt and is in F#. The frame was made locally and installation of the bells was supervised by Canon Ridout. The bells were dedicated in 1921.



The first peal of Doubles at Cape Town Cathedral was rung by R. J. (Dick) Holmes, Colin Lewis (conductor), Margaret Rueger, Ed Elderkin, Christina Geddes-Elderkin and Mark Ogilvie

(Photo courtesy of R. J. Holmes)

East Africa

The light-weight ring of six bells at St Thomas' Church in Kilifi, Kenya, was cast by Taylors in 1962. The person who instigated the order for the first, and as yet only ring of bells in East Africa, was W. F. P. Kelly, the local District Commissioner. The tenor weighs 2-3-10 and is in the key of E. The first peal on these bells, by a visiting band with English and South African connections, was of Plain Bob Minor, conducted by D. Paul Smith in 2 hours and 19 minutes on August 14th, 1992. Smith conducted many noteworthy peals and quarter-peals in Africa, including the first quarter at Grahamstown (on July 30th, 1977) and the first peal of Spliced Surprise Major (Yorkshire, Cambridge, Lincolnshire, Rutland) in Africa (at St Paul's, Durban) on September 11th, 1993.

The Settler City (Grahamstown)

The most recent tower to be newly pealed in Africa is Grahamstown, the settlement founded in 1812 by Colonel John Graham as the garrison town for the eastern frontier of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. Eight years later, in 1820, Graham's Town became the focus of British settlement in Africa as some 4000 immigrants from Britain and Ireland arrived in this frontier region to form a living buffer zone between the 'White' colony to the west and the Xhosa speaking tribes to the east of the Fish River.

The bells of Grahamstown were cast as an octave in 1878 by John Warner and Sons,

London, and have a tenor of 25-2-15 in E#. They were first hung, by local workmen, in 1879, but proved exceedingly difficult to ring. They were the first ring of bells to be hung in Africa, since an earlier set of eight bells at the 'old' cathedral in Cape Town, cast at Whitechapel, had been hung dead after arriving in Cape Town in 1835. In 1993 the bells of Grahamstown were rehung in a steel frame that was made in Pinetown, Durban, and designed by Ray Ayres of Eayre and Smith Ltd, the English bell hangers.

The first peal at Grahamstown, of Cambridge Surprise Major, was conducted by Alan Regin in 3 hours and 12 minutes on December 17th, 1995. In 1997 two trebles, cast the previous year by Whitechapel, were added to augment the ring to ten. The first peal on the ten, also of Cambridge, was rung by an English touring band and conducted by Timothy Pett on April 4th, 1998. A quarter of Grandsire Caters was rung the following day. Six peals: three of Major, two of Royal and one of Doubles, had been rung on the bells by the start of the new millennium.

Hillandale

Of all ten rings of bells in Africa only Hillandale, near Grahamstown, has yet to be pealed. Hillandale is presently a ring of five bells. The tenor weighs 3-2-0 and is in F#. The heaviest bells were cast at the Xmeco Foundry in Port Elizabeth. They were installed in a locally made six-bell steel frame in 1999 and the first quarter-peal was rung on them and another bell that was out of tune with the rest, the following year.

Two treble bells, a gift from John Taylor and Company of Loughborough, were added to the ring on 18th May 2002 and the out of tune bell discarded. Taylors hope that their gift will benefit ringing in southern Africa. South African ringers, particularly, are thrilled by Taylor's generosity! Fittings have been partly paid for by grants from the Central Council Bell Restoration Fund and from the Fred E. Dukes International Bell Fund.

Conclusion

Although change ringing still has weak roots in Africa it is obvious that the ten rings of bells in the continent have been put to good use. The 1980s, in particular, saw great expansion in peal ringing. The 1990s have witnessed the rehanging and augmentation of the historic bells at Grahamstown, repair of both bell towers in Durban and the erection of a tower and installation of bells at Hillandale.

The new millennium heard the first quarter at Hillandale and the first peals of Doubles at St George's Cathedral in Cape Town and at Grahamstown. The Cape Town peal was the first for four of the band, all of whom were resident in South Africa. Ringers in Africa therefore look forward to the years ahead with confidence. They intend to continue to peal their bells but also hope that touring bands will visit them, ring, and contribute to the development of change ringing in the African continent.

Acknowledgements

Dr John Eisel is thanked especially for information relating to the first peal at Woodstock and the handbell peal at Johannesburg, Dr Ed Elderkin for information on Taylor's peal, Neil Bennett for information on R.H. Stickley and R. J. (Dick) Holmes for photographs of the Woodstock peal board(s) and the Cape Town Doubles peal band. Duncan Greaves took the photo of the Grahamstown peal band.



Letters to the Editor should be sent to him at The Ringing World Limited, Eagleside House, 7-9 Chantry Street, Andover, Hampshire SP10 1DE, or e-mailed to letters@ringingworld.co.uk. The sender's full name, address and telephone number (daytime and evening) should be supplied, but if these details are not to be published this should be clearly stated at the head of the letter. Where a letter to the Editor is not for publication, kindly put 'Not for Publication' at the head of the letter. It is not usually possible to acknowledge receipt of letters privately. We reserve the right to edit letters and do not guarantee to print the whole of any letter received. Publication of a letter does not imply agreement with its contents by the Editor and/or Directors of The Ringing World Ltd. The Ringing World Ltd shall not be liable for accuracy of information or opinions expressed in published letters or for any loss or damage suffered as a result of their contents.

BRF Surveys

Had we still been organising it, questionnaires for the Bell Restoration Committee's 2000-2002 Survey of Bell Restoration Funds would by now be on their way to Society General Secretaries throughout the UK.

Although nearly three quarters of the respondents to the 1997-99 survey said either 'yes' (58%) or 'yes if useful' (16%) when asked "In your view, should the CC BRFC continue to carry out this survey?" the BR Committee had already decided that the Triennial Survey had served its purpose and should be gracefully retired. This was undoubtedly the right decision. There had been a 100% response to the surveys carried out for the years 1991-93 and 1994-96 but only 38 of the 47 questionnaires distributed (i.e. approx 80%) were returned for the 1997-99 survey. In all probability up to two fifths of the Societies previously surveyed would have dropped out if we had continued.

However, we did say that we would be prepared to gather specific BRF-linked information if ringing societies felt it could be of use – either to them or to the bell ringing community in general.

What sort of information? Well that would be up to those requesting it – possibly they might still wish to know total assets held in Societies' BRFs (in 1999 the figure was £1,107,625 - and remember that was only 38 societies) or total value of grants paid (in 1999 the figure was £217,992 – 81% of income but only 19.7% of total funds held) or the total raised for Bell Restoration from Covenants and Gift Aid (in 1999 the figure was £17,421 or 6.5% of the overall amount raised – hopefully this figure has increased dramatically thanks to the new Gift Aid rules).

Suggestions and/or requests for specific, useful BRF information that might be painlessly collected from Societies with BRFs can be sent to me at the address below.

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Peals in Africa

Bill Perrins of Sydney, Australia, has been kind enough to draw my attention to a mistake in my article 'Peals in Africa' (*RW* 25/4/2003). In it and in a previous article (*RW* 6/4/2001) I wrote that the band that rang the first peal in Africa included James Murray, the Melbourne ringer who conducted the first peal in Australia. I was wrong.

In 1904 two James Murrays rang peals in the Southern Hemisphere. The Australian Murray, who had indeed conducted the first peal in Australia: Grandsire Triples at St Philip's church in Sydney on 9th April 1890, rang another peal of Grandsire Triples on 2nd July 1904 at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. That peal was conducted by Arthur E. Bames and the composition was Holt's Original.

James Murray had come to Australia when he was four, when his father, John Murray, moved to Melbourne. John had previously worked in John Murphy's bell-foundry in Dublin. Murphy supplied eight bells to Melbourne in 1853 and they were hung in 1868 in St Patrick's cathedral (*RW* 7/6/2002). According to the diocesan newspaper, *The Advocate*, in 1869 the cathedral ringers were "...under the instruction of a Mr Murray who was employed in the foundry's establishment in Dublin for some time..." Whether John Murray came to Melbourne to hang the Murphy-cast bell is, as yet, unknown.

The James Murray who rang in the first peal in Africa, at St Mary's church, Woodstock on 15th December 1904, was a different Murray. Victor Sheppard, in his article entitled "Let loose in Africa" (*RW* 6/3/1959), wrote of this Murray that: "James Murray was born in Edinburgh, and began ringing at St. Mary's Cathedral there, and later at St. Mary's, Great Western Road, Glasgow, and Doncaster. He took part in the 1904 peal and became tower captain [at Woodstock] in 1906. After 1930 he ceased ringing, and died about five years later."

I apologise for confusing the two James Murrays and thank Bill Perrins for drawing attention to my error and providing me with information on John Murray and on when he and his son, James, moved to Australia. I wonder where John Murray learned to ring, was it in Dublin?

COLIN LEWIS

Grahamstown, South Africa

Protest South Africa

Recently *The Ringing World* has had several articles on ringing in South Africa.

I think it was 1970 when I was in a naval ship that was on its way to form the BEIRA patrol. We spent several days in Simonstown. Before leaving I had written to the local ringers and asked if I could ring with them. The Cathedral bells had just been returned from the UK and were sitting on pallets in the grounds outside. I was invited to Woodstock. The ropes were in a state so I volunteered to take them back onboard and splice in new bits. After replacing they laid on a special lunch in the street outside. At that time the Dean (I think of Jo'burg: Gonville Ffrench Beytagh) had been imprisoned for his stand against apartheid. Back in the UK all towers had been asked to ring in protest. How could this be done in Capetown? Arrested. I was asked by the local ringers to meet them in the Cathedral grounds and given a stick. We tapped rounds for about 3 minutes and then all nipped off into the park as fast as we could go. The sound was not good but it was unique.

Lieut. Cdr. GERALD PIDGEON

Llantwit Major

Re: 'Help for a No Hoper'

I wonder if the writer of the letter 'Help for a 'no hoper' (in the last issue of *The Ringing World*) might be encouraged by my experience.

Four years ago when I was 76, I asked my friends Edwin George and Patrick Harris, then the Tower Master and Deputy at Westbury Parish Church, if I was too old to learn bell-ringing. They smiled benignly and told me that Friday night was Tied Practice night. Innocently I climbed the steps to the tower. "All hope abandon ye who enter here!". Not quite, but this was the beginning of a devastatingly difficult new hobby for me.

Like Valerie, I have always been slow to learn and I knew that to achieve any degree of success, I would have to persevere with embarrassing determination. I did not like being the weakest link, I did not like humiliation and seeing others succeed when I appeared to be failing. Depressed on many occasions, I pondered on whether 'giving up' would be the final misery.

Fortunately, thanks to the unfailing patience, encouragement and friendship of Patrick and the bell-ringers, young and old, I did make progress, improving over the years and now I really enjoy ringing – when I do not make mistakes!

Do not give up, Valerie, "practice is what it takes". How about moving to Bristol?

The fact that I am deaf is a big problem for me. When I cannot hear a call, my concentration evaporates; I wonder if anyone can tell me if a Personal Loop System would solve my problem. Would a loop system in the tower be of equal benefit, much cheaper, and of benefit to the wearers of hearing aids?

KAY HUGGINS (Mrs)

Henleaze, Bristol

Never give up!

In response to Valerie Bosley's letter (*Ringing World* 25/04/03 page 403). I too was hopeless at the beginning. Handstroke was fine, backstroke was fine, but oh boy put the two together and the bell rapidly came down!! After several months I was eventually taught to ring 'up' and could then handle a bell. However rounds and call changes were difficult. Having eventually mastered these, plain hunt on six came into the equation – whoops – now we really have problems. We all rang our own bell, learnt by numbers and memorised the sequence!!! Fortunately the late Harold Archer had patience, integrity and foresight. Harold took all his learners to other towers, at one of which I broke my first (and only) stay, how I remember the embarrassment. Perhaps their stays were not as strong as ours, which had endured my continuous 'bashing' for a good long time!! After Harold's untimely death I transferred to another tower (my own band having disintegrated). Owing to my new tower's patience and forbearance I eventually mastered the 'art' of change ringing. I have much to owe to many towers which I have visited and have since rung seven peals and numerous quarter peals, two of which I have conducted. I will never be a ringer who can manage spliced surprise maximus, however my message to you Ms Bosley is never give up. It has taken me 27 years – you can do it too!!

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