



*The Weekly Journal for
Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

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Editor: Robert Lewis

Oxbridge clerics and early ringing in South Africa by Colin Lewis

There is a hand written list of ringers in the ringing chamber at Grahamstown Cathedral, headed by the name of James Hoyle. James, who came from Zambia, was a student at St Paul's Theological College in Grahamstown when, like many other ordinands in the late 1960s and 1970s, he learnt to ring.

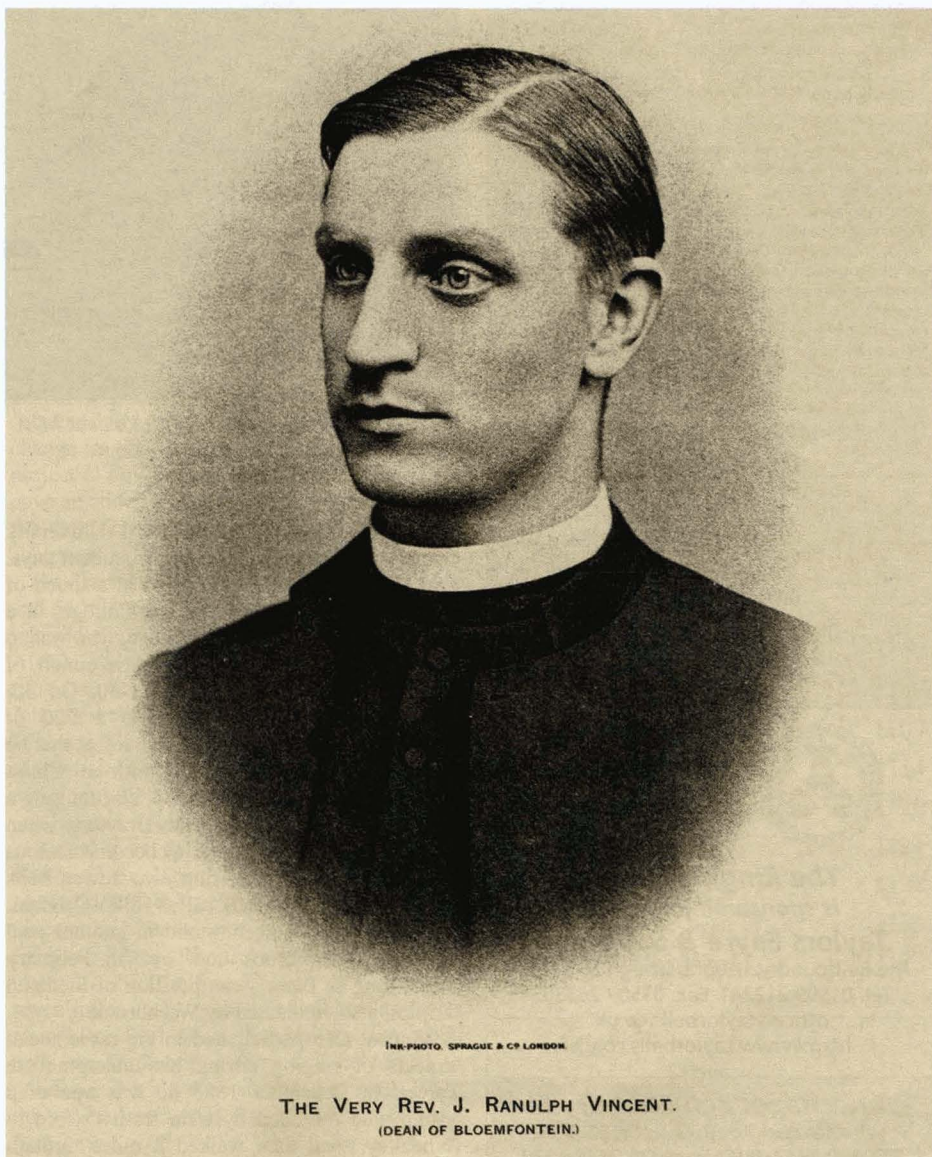
Sadly, none of the present ordinands at what is now named the College of the Transfiguration, formed from the merger of St Paul's College and St Bede's Theological College, Umtata, learn to ring. In fact, it is doubtful whether even one cleric in South Africa rings these days. That was not the case in the early Twentieth Century, when many gifted British clergy came to South Africa.

In February 1914 the Dean of Grahamstown, The Very Revd John Ranulph Vincent, together with the Revd (later Canon) G. H. Ridout of Johannesburg and Percy Holt, rang extents of Grandsire Doubles on handbells in the Deanery at Grahamstown. Their performances were recorded for posterity in *The Ringing World* of 27th March 1914.

J. R. Vincent was the son of Revd R. Vincent, of Crockham Hall in Kent. In due course John Ranulph Vincent went up to Oxford, where he was a student at St John's College. After taking his M.A. he read theology at Ely Theological College, completing his studies in 1885. On December 20th, 1885, Vincent was ordained Deacon at Oxford Cathedral. A year later, in the same cathedral, he was ordained priest.

Vincent became Curate of Aylesbury in 1886, and in 1889 moved to Ely Theological College as Chaplain and Lecturer, where he stayed until 1892. In that year he was installed as Dean of Bloemfontein, in the Orange Free State. He had the misfortune to be Dean during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, when much of the fighting was centred on the Bloemfontein area.

In June 1899 Vincent married Evelyn Templer of Lynbridge, Devon. Bloemfontein, with its hot summers and cold winters, surrounded by battles and full of troops, was not a very conducive place for a young bride! In 1902 they



INK PHOTO. SPRAGUE & CO LONDON

THE VERY REV. J. RANULPH VINCENT.
(DEAN OF BLOEMFONTEIN.)

John Ranulph Vincent M. A. (Oxon.), Dean of Grahamstown (1912-14) and formerly Dean of Bloemfontein, who invited Ridout to inspect the bells in Grahamstown Cathedral in 1914



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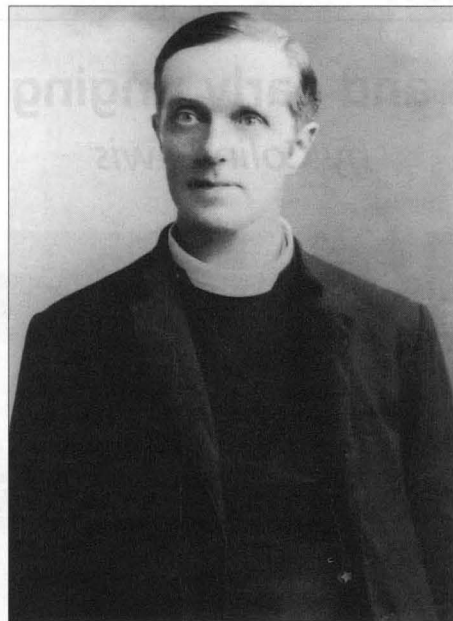
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moved back to England, to the less exciting, but probably more comfortable, parish of Clapham, where Vincent remained as Vicar until 1906.

Africa has a strange magnetism, and the Vincents returned to the highveld in 1906, where John Ranulph became Rector of Bethlehem in the Orange Free State. Bethlehem is, in winter, one of the coldest places in South Africa, and Vincent was probably relieved to be asked to accept the post of Dean of Grahamstown, in 1912. Sadly, he died of typhoid in Grahamstown two years later and was buried at the Old Cemetery in that city. He was known in Grahamstown as a keen Freemason and True Templar.

J. R. Vincent was a competent change-ringer who had distinguished himself among the



A photograph of John Ranulph Vincent M. A. taken later in his career

ringing members of the Oxford University Society of Change Ringers in his student days. On 27th January 1883 he stood in a touch of 1008 Grandsire Triples at New College, in a band that included G. F. Coleridge, who was to become President of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers from 1921-30. On 5th October 1883 Vincent stood in a 720 of Grandsire Minor at New College, a feat that he thrice repeated that same month at Christ Church. On 6th December 1884 Vincent rang a peal of Grandsire Triples at Drayton, when James W. Washbrook (later to become famous as the first person to ring two tower bells simultaneously to a peal), called Holt's Original. Two days later Vincent stood in another peal called by Washbrook and, on 7th February 1885, rang in Lates's composition of Stedman Triples, also conducted by Washbrook.

Vincent also participated in the more social aspects of ringing during his undergraduate career. In December 1883 he was one of a group who travelled by train from Oxford to Wheatley, 'and then walked 2 miles through newly-fallen snow' to ring at the parish church at Cuddeston (Spice, 46).

There is nothing to suggest that Vincent was one of the wilder spirits in the Society, and he may well have supported the phrase in the Society's recruiting notices, that: 'The objects of this Society render it especially worthy of the attention of those intending taking Holy Orders'. There is no evidence that his behaviour resembled that of his contemporary, A. F. M. Custance: '...the son of a poor Parson, he shortened his career at Oxford by driving tandem up the High and a steam launch down the river' (Spice, 47).

Vincent's predecessor as Dean of Grahamstown was Francis Carter, who had been at Truro Cathedral while that building was being erected. He would, no doubt, have been aware of the discussions that led to the foundation of the Truro Diocesan Guild of Ringers in 1897. From Truro, Carter moved to Canterbury Cathedral, where he was a colleague of F. J. O. Helmore, who stood in 'The first peal on ten bells by ten priests of the church', so ringing must have been part of Carter's culture, even if he was not a ringer himself. Helmore, incidentally, donated a badly needed set of bell-ropes to Grahamstown in 1909.

Carter came to Grahamstown in 1900, on the recommendation of the Bishop of Grahamstown, Charles Edward Cornish. Cornish had been Vicar of St Mary Redcliffe, in Bristol, where the bells had been augmented to twelve in 1872. In 1899, the year in which, on the recommendation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cornish came to Grahamstown, the first full peal was rung on those bells, after lengthy practice. Cornish must have been well-aware of the potential of ringing bells and presumably wanted to hear Grahamstown's bells sound to their full advantage.

In January 1902 Carter wrote that: 'It would positively electrify the citizens if they could hear - say on Easter morning - a peal sound out from our splendid tower'. By October that year ringers were in training under the instruction of a Mr Stephens. Consequently, by the time Vincent became Dean, much had been done to foster ringing in this outpost of the Empire.

Vincent was keen to develop change ringing, but the condition of the cathedral bells was



St Mary's Johannesburg (now the cathedral) as it was when Ridout arrived in 1906

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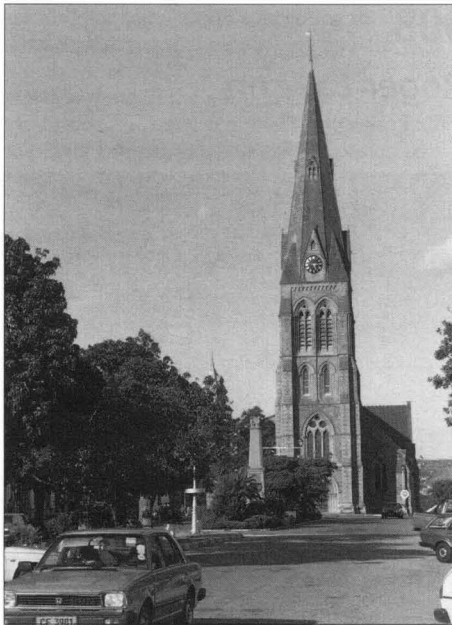
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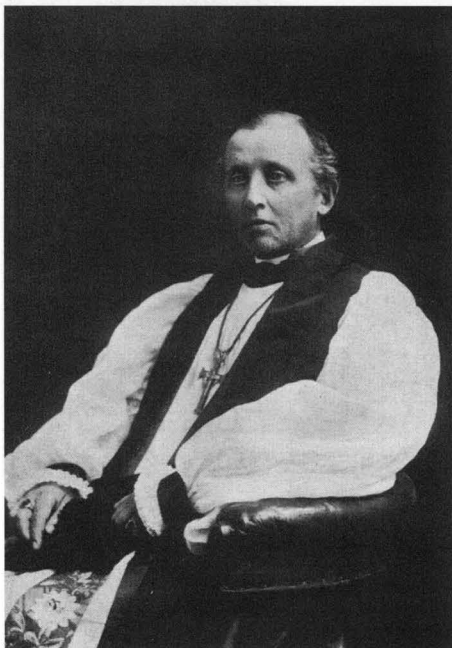
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The tower of Grahamstown Cathedral housed a Warner octave when Vincent was Dean. They have now been augmented to ten with two Whitechapel trebles

against him. In 1913 he invited George Ridout to visit Grahamstown and inspect and report on the bells. Ridout came to South Africa in 1906 as Curate of St Mary's, Johannesburg, which is now the cathedral of that diocese. While an undergraduate at Cambridge, Ridout had learnt to ring. He took his B. A. degree in 1893 and proceeded to Ely Theological College, where he completed his studies in 1894. He was ordained Deacon at St Paul's Cathedral in London in 1894, and priest a year later. From 1894-6 he was Curate of St Jude, in Grays Inn Road, before moving, also as curate, to St John the Divine in Gainsborough for 1897-99. Between 1900 and 1905 Ridout was Vice-Principal of Dorchester Mission College.

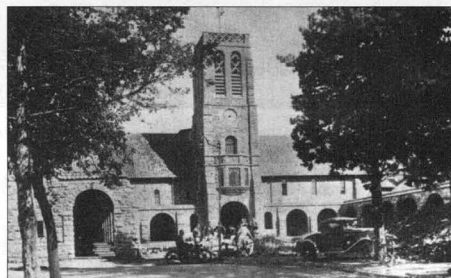


Charles Edward Cornish, Bishop of Grahamstown (1899-1915) and formerly Vicar of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol

Ridout maintained his links with the Cambridge University Guild even after going down, and on March 4th 1905 rang the tenors to a peal of Plain Bob Major, on handbells, for the Guild. Ridout was thus a very competent change ringer by the time he moved to South Africa, and he brought his set of handbells with him.

There was little opportunity for ringing in South Africa when Ridout arrived, and Johannesburg was little more than a rough and ready mining camp, where fortunes were made and lost overnight. Durban was, perhaps, more civilised, but the only cities with ringing bells were Grahamstown and Cape Town, where there was a ring of eight at the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Woodstock, cast by Barwells of Birmingham and installed in 1902.

In 1907 Ridout became Rector of St Alban's, Ferreirastown, Johannesburg, where he continued to serve until his death in 1941. During that period, Sisters of the Community of St Margaret, from East Grinstead in Sussex, were active among the non-white population of Johannesburg, including the St Alban's area. According to a report in *The Ringing World* of April 11, 1930: 'On St Margaret's Day, July



Bell tower of St John's College, Johannesburg, which houses only clock bells

20th, 1926, some of the Sisters of St Margaret's, Johannesburg, expressed a desire to take up change ringing as a form of recreation; and the project of building the new Church of St Alban gave an added incentive. Within twelve months the first 720's and quarter peals had been achieved'.

On Thursday, March 6th 1930, in one hour and 55 minutes, Canon Ridout and his band of intrepid nuns rang the first handbell peal in Africa: 5040 Plain Bob Minor. The peal was rung at St Margaret's Mission House in Johannesburg and the ringers were Sister Angela 1, Sister Madeleine 2, Sister Vivian 3, Sister Mary 4 and Canon Ridout 5-6. In those days it was permissible to ring peals on handbells with one bell per ringer.

Ridout was delighted with this peal, and wrote of St Alban's church that 'On 10th March, 1929, the new church was dedicated though the bells are not yet forthcoming... St John's College, Johannesburg, is building a bell tower, ... St Boniface Church in Germiston, seven miles away, is to start building its tower soon after Easter...we have hopes that when bells are forthcoming they will be turned to good account'. Sadly, it was not until 1980, thirty-nine years after Ridout's death, that the first ring of bells was installed in Johannesburg.

continued on page 1105

RINGING WORLD ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Main Features:** 1800 words max.
- Letters:** 600 words max.
- Comment/Opinion:** 1000 words max.
- Obituaries:** 800 words max.
- Tour Reports:** 500 words max.
- Book/CD Reviews:** 800 words max.
- Association News:** 600 words max.
- Short Stories:** 1800 words max.
- Around & About:** 200 words max.

PLEASE REMEMBER that the above are **GUIDELINES** only – if you wish to depart from them or discuss a planned submission then please contact the Editor, Robert Lewis, on 01264 366620

Photographs: Black and white or Colour prints and transparencies – high definition **ONLY** please.

Digital and scanned (**at least 300 dpi**) photos are welcome by e-mail **as separate .jpg attachments.**

E-mailed text should ideally be sent either in the body of the message or as a MS Word attachment.

Please note that we now *prefer* to receive longer articles (200 words+) as MS Word attachments.

WHAT YOU MUST INCLUDE

Please remember to include the fundamental facts for **EVERY** story – long or short. As Rudyard Kipling put it in his poem *The Elephant's Child*:

"I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are **What** and **Why** and **When**
And **How** and **Where** and **Who** ..."

If you submit a group photo, please include the Names (left to right).

PRESS DEADLINES

The *RW* usually goes to press at **Noon** every Tuesday.

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NAMES FOR RW PHOTO CAPTIONS

Please note that we are most unlikely to print any group photographs that are supplied to us without the names of the subjects (*preferably listed left to right*).

back to the competition's inception in 1978. These make fascinating viewing and are well worth a look, particularly if you are able to provide some of the missing names. Once confirmed, the date, venue and entry forms for the 2009 competition will also be posted on this site.



*3rd, Derbyshire (rang 1st) –
back row: 6 Christian Peckham,
7 Simon Humphrey, 8 Tim Peverett,
9 Richard Taylor, 10 John Heaton (C);
front row: 5 Paul Jopp, 4 David Marshall,
3 Frances Haynes, 2 Duncan Walker,
1 Simon Melen*



*4th, Liverpool (rang 2nd) –
back row: 6 Oliver M. Austin,
7 Bryan J. McCahey, 8 Paul J. Tiebout,
9 Lenard J. Mitchell, 10 Simon J. Poole;
front row: 5 Daniel J. Vernon,
4 Michael O'Hagan, 3 Siân E. Kipling,
2 Paul B. Hunter, 1 Samuel M. Austin (C)*



*5th, Coventry (rang 5th) –
back row: 6 Benedict Kimpton (C),
7 Andrew Alldrick, 8 Geoff Pratt,
9 Dominic Travis, 10 William R. Haynes;
front row: 5 Ian Thompson, 4 Sarah Tompkins,
3 Claire Kimpton, 2 Richard Angrave,
1 Ruth Border*

continued from page 1103

Although he failed to obtain ringing bells for Johannesburg, Ridout supervised the installation of the bell frames and rings of bells at St Mary's Church, Greyville, and at St Paul's Church, Durban. He is thought to have taught a band to ring at St Mary's, where the bells were first rung, unmuffled, in March 1921. The Parish Council Minute Book for St Paul's Durban records, on 19th April 1921, that 'The Vicar advised that Canon Ridout had been most kind in spending a lot of his time in supervising the hanging of the Bells'.

In September 1924 Ridout visited Queenstown to inspect the tower and the two bells already hung there: 'I was quite delighted with the Tower and its contents', he wrote to the incumbent on 8th September 1924. Sadly, the project to install a ring of eight in that tower has still not come to fruition!

Ridout's visit to Grahamstown in 1913 was of a very different nature. He declared the bells to be unsafe until work had been done on them and the *Church Magazine* of January 1914 contained a report stating that 'The young band who have been practising so assiduously has been obliged to suspend their practices as the bells need a thorough overhauling'. They were not to get it until they were rehung, in a new steel frame, in 1993!

Ridout attended the Jubilee Gathering of the Cambridge University Guild in 1929 and the group photograph shows him as an elderly and rather bald man with a moustache, of medium build. He rang two peals for the Guild during that visit: Stedman Triples at Bourn on 5th September and Stedman Caters at Soham the next day.

During November 1913 Ridout had rung 720s of Plain Bob Minor in hand, at St Alban's Vicarage in Johannesburg, with Canon C. E. Earle Bulwer and Colin W. Kearns. Ridout and Bulwer had been contemporaries at Selwyn College Cambridge.

Cyril Edwin Earle Bulwer was born on 16.6.1871 at Kidlington near Oxford, the son of the Rev. Henry Earle Bulwer. Kidlington was a major centre of change ringing, of which H. E. Bulwer was a great supporter, being the second



St Mary's, Greyville, Durban, home of a fine ring of ten Taylor bells installed under Ridout's supervision

Honorary Secretary of the Central Council of Church Bellringers, from 1892 until 1901.

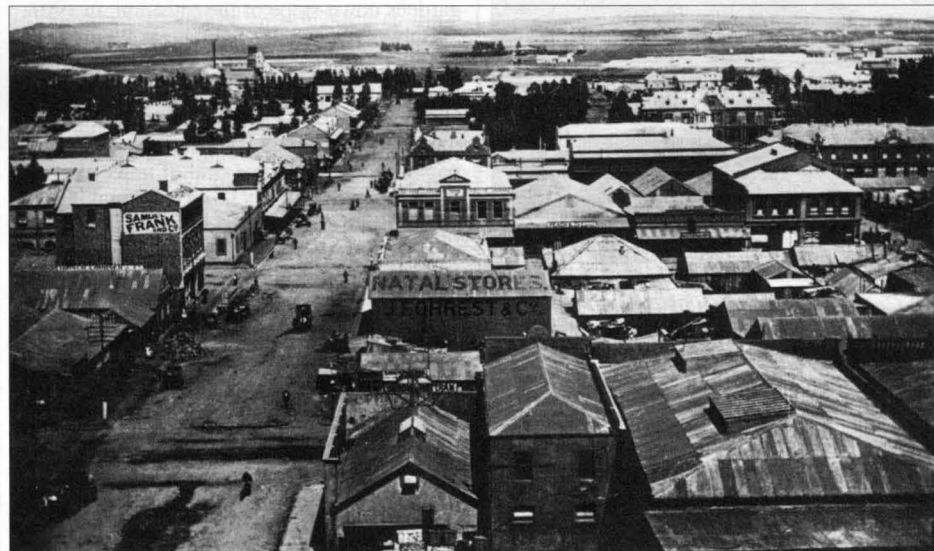
Cyril Edwin Earle Bulwer took his Cambridge B.A. in 1893. On 17th April 1894 he stood in the first peal on tower bells for the Cambridge University Guild: Grandsire Triples at Sawston. In 1895 he was ordained Deacon at Lichfield Cathedral and, a year later, in the same cathedral, Priest. From 1895-7 Bulwer was Curate of St Mary's, Handsworth, in Warwickshire, where



Heydon Hall, seat of the Bulwer family

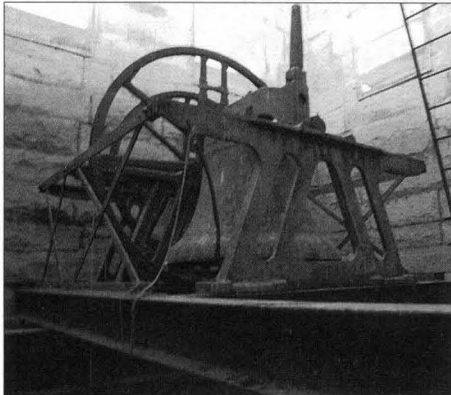
there was a ring of eight bells. Handsworth is a suburb of Birmingham, a town that, since the middle of the Nineteenth Century, has been one of the centres of excellence of change ringing in England.

In 1895 Bulwer came to the Transkei, as Priest-in-Charge of Mount Frere in the Diocese
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Johannesburg as Ridout would have seen it on his arrival

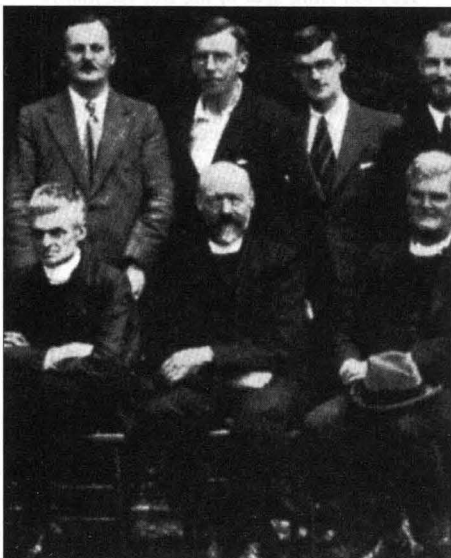
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The existing bells at Queenstown. Plans are afoot, courtesy of Mr Laith Reynolds, to add five bells, using the existing smaller bell as tenor, to form a ring of six with a 5cwt tenor. The existing tenor will be retained as a bourdon bell

of St John's. Three years later he moved to Umtata, as Warden of St John's College, where the sons of chiefs were educated, near to St Bede's Theological College. Bulwer became a Canon of St John's Cathedral, Umtata, and in 1913 applied for a church site at Ncombedlana.

At the start of the Twentieth Century Umtata was a pleasant little colonial city, laid out on a grid-iron plan, with the stone-built cathedral at the top of the hill leading to the administrative and commercial centre of the urban area, not far from the Bunga (seat of the United Transkeian Territorial Council). A tower suitable for ringing bells was designed as part



Canon G. H. Ridout of Johannesburg attended the Jubilee Gathering of the Cambridge University Guild in 1929, where he is pictured sitting between Revd H. Law James (left) and Revd E. Banks James. Standing behind them (l to r) were: Captain J. H. R. Freeborn of Rickmansworth, E. M. Atkins of London, J. R. Duffield of Westminster Hospital, London and Revd H. G. Benson of Likowa, Nyasaland. (Source: Morris, E. 1931. The history and art of change ringing)

St Albans Vicarage
Ferreiras, Johannesburg
8 Sept. 1924.

Dear Gordon,

It was a great pleasure to spend last Monday at Queenstown: and I was quite delighted with the Tower and its contents.

On further consideration I find that I made an error, when you asked me about the order in which the remaining bells should be installed.

As the frame must be arranged to bring the ropes into an approximate circle, and in their numerical order, they will be arranged as in these diagrams, – probably as A.

	1	
7	8	2
6	4	3
	5	

	1	
7	8	2
6	5	3
	4	

Dots represent position of ropes.

accordingly the bells to be carried by the girders now in place are 1. 8. 4. 5.

After that will come 6 + 7 (with further girders)

Finally 3 + 2 (with the remaining girder work).

So the order runs 1 + 8 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 3 / 2.

The above order will also give the best results from a musical point of view, when only a portion of the bells are available.

With kind regards
Yrs sincerely
G. H. Ridout

Copy of Canon Ridout's letter to the Rector of Queenstown

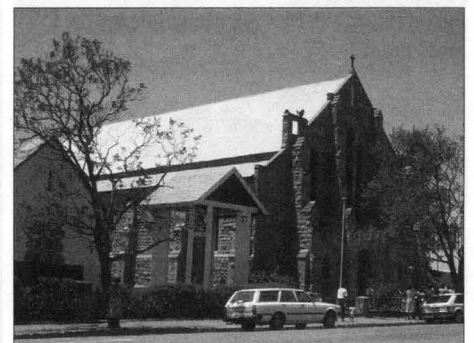
of the cathedral, perhaps due to Bulwer's influence, but still has not, and now may never, been built. A clock chime, with a tenor of 12-0-14, cast by Gillett and Johnston of Croydon, was hung in the Town Hall, set amid beautiful gardens down-slope of the cathedral, in 1907.

Bulwer remained in Umtata, as Warden of St John's College, until 1916, when he moved to St Mark's Mission, on the way from Umtata to Queenstown, as Priest-in-Charge. There he remained until 1945, ministering to the local populace, doing a great deal of translation into Xhosa and, from 1931-44 undertaking the duties of Archdeacon of St Mark's. After he retired, in 1946, he moved to Port Elizabeth, where he died on 22nd June 1962.

Bulwer must have been delighted, like Ridout, that a ring of eight bells with a 26cwt tenor, was to be installed in the 1920s in the central tower of the fine church of St Michael and All Angels, Queenstown. The railway from Qmata Poort, on the edge of St Mark's Mission, would have enabled Bulwer to reach Queenstown, ring, and return home that same day. Sadly, the fall in wool prices in the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression in the 1930s, then the Second World War, and then the rise of

the apartheid government from 1948 until it finally fell in 1994, meant that the Queenstown project remains a project, and the treble and tenor of the projected ring languish, seldom rung, in the tower of what will probably soon be the cathedral of a new diocese.

We can only speculate at the joy that Vincent, Ridout and Bulwer must have felt as they rang



St John's Cathedral, Umtata, photographed in 1985. The swing-chimed bells hang in the open campanile on the north-west end of the nave, where the architect intended a stone tower to be built

changes on handbells in 1913 and 1914. South Africa had survived the Boer Wars, the economy was reasonably healthy, new churches were being built and many others were planned. The Union of South Africa was only a few years old and the political stability of this great part of the British Empire seemed assured.

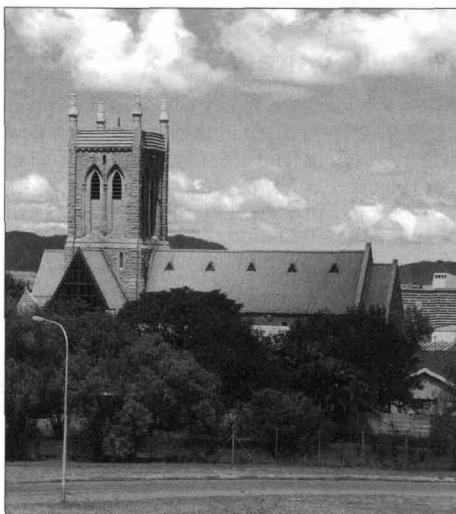
The clerical trio must have felt optimistic that many rings of bells would soon be installed in their adopted country. Sadly, their optimism was misplaced and in 2008 only eight rings exist in South Africa. Had it not been for the efforts of the Oxbridge trio, however, and particularly of Canon Ridout and other British immigrants, these rings would not exist.

COLIN LEWIS

Sources

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St Michael & All Angels, Queenstown, where the treble and tenor of what was intended to be a 26 cwt ring of eight, by Taylors, were hung in 1923 in the central tower as a memorial to the men of the Queenstown District who lost their lives in the 1914-18 War

FROM THE E-LISTS

A round-up from the internet compiled by John Camp

There was no comprehensive list of doubles variations on the web, grumbled a correspondent on **change-ringers**. **FODS** were also in complaining mood. 'A decent ring of sixteen' was an oxymoron: it was musically inept. And 'I hate towers where you can't hear anything. Internal acoustics should be much more of a priority'. Meanwhile, Dickon Love and other would-be participants in the FODS Dublin tour were stranded at Gatwick. Earlier, in response to a request on **bell historians** for a service for the rededication of a bell, he had cited the Catholic ceremony in which the bishop blesses baptismal water, praying that the sound of the bell will see off 'the phantoms, the storms and the lightning which threaten the peace of devout Christians ...'

Doncaster 'Minster' had the air of being 'on the sidelines of life', said David Bryant. Mark Humphreys was indignant. Doncaster had an impressive girls' choir. Brian Meldon sought information about female bellringers in the 1830s. Records showed a payment to Elizabeth Daukins at Canewdon. She was the parish clerk or sexton, surmised Chris Pickford. Bruce Wakefield noted on **ringing-chat** that there had been twice as many women ringers as men at two local towers on the previous Sunday. Practice nights showed the opposite. Male ringers must be heathens. Sadly, no-one had ever urged Sue Marsden: 'give us a kiss'. (The topic had turned to colloquial English and acceptable usage.) A.J. Barnfield wanted ringers to invent some new words. He proposed 'dongplodder' for 'a learner making lamentably slow progress'. Sue lacked a word to describe the situation where no-one has been told to call a touch and eventually three people say 'go' at once. Mark Davies had discovered a new sport, known as 'changerunning'. You are dropped off at a tower to ring. Afterwards, you run home. (This appeared to be because no-one picked him up. Not quite the same as the recent 'run and ring' marathon.)

Global Handwashing Day, widely reported in the press, should be of relevance to those who spit on their hands before catching the sally, though Mo Turner found tail-ends even more disgusting. Her car had blown a gasket. DIY advice, presumably intended to be practical, led on to motoring in general. Why did diesel cost so much more than petrol? Theories abounded, largely unsupported by evidence. The annual groan about putting the clocks back was accompanied by geographically and chronologically improbable memories of British Standard Time, in force from 1968 to 1971. Some recalled 'the Great Storm' of October 1987 and Michael Fish's unsuspecting weather forecast. Ted Steele had seen a house already festooned with Christmas lights. Basil Potts's reference to Perth, Western Australia, as the 'original' Perth induced near-apoplexy in Ewan Bhamrah Harley, whose home town of that name is in Scotland.

Nabbers were excited to find, belatedly, that a quarter-peal had been rung last year at an

'unringable' tower, but, as John Allen explained, mischief had been at work. The quarter had been rung one-in-hand on handbells. The list learned, from **DevonRinging**, of a new six at Sampford Spiney. Prince Charles, the landowner, had been invited to view the bells, which will be dedicated by the Dean of Windsor. Alice Heilker told **nag-talk** that knitters had discovered change-ringing as a source for patterns. If only they would put down the needles and learn to ring! There are, Dave Sullivan told **ringing-chat**, only 17 irregular verbs in Portuguese.

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Double 4000th peal

We believe that Alan Regin and David Dearnley are numbers 6 and 7 (or 7 and 6!) to reach the 4000 peal mark. We asked them for a bit of background information on the organisation of their landmark peal at Spitalfields, as reported last week. Alan writes:

I started planning the peal when I got to about 3,980, I had already asked Graham John to produce a composition and had given him a selection of favourite methods or important (to me) place names, originally 6 methods, the 7th was added to make it a more balanced composition. I had worked out that I could also make it my 250th peal on the bells at my "local" tower of Christ Church Spitalfields.

My 3,999th was a peal of Bristol Surprise Major at Bushey which, quite by chance, was rung by a band who had all rung over 3,000 peals, this may well have been the first time that has happened on tower bells as well - a quick bit of mental arithmetic gave us a total of about 32,000 peals for an 8 bell band. On the way back from this peal David Dearnley mentioned that he had been doing some sums and he thought that he had just rung his 3,999th peal as well! So, quite by chance we rang our 4,000th together! At the request of the Rector of Christ Church, Rev Andy Rider, the sound control was opened (thanks to Philip Vracas) for the last half hour of the peal.

Champagne was drunk in the tower immediately following the peal, photographs were taken and Ian Roulstone was congratulated on his faultless conducting of a challenging composition (thanks again for that Graham). The band, and some friends gathered to celebrate in the Pride of Spitalfields - It was a late night!

Bernard Fairhead

Many of your readers will know Bernard Fairhead from Colchester and might be interested to hear that he is currently in Langham Ward at Colchester Hospital. He is making a slow recovery but likely to be in for some time yet.

GILL SPARLING

NE District Secretary, Essex Association