

GLASBURY-ON-WYE BELLS AND RINGERS, 1838-1979.

By Colin A. Lewis

The churchwardens' accounts for the parish of Glasbury for 1838-9 record the expenditure of thirty shillings on the provision of 'Dinner and Beer for Bristol Ringers.' Although the accounts do not state the reason for the visit of the Bristol band it is obvious, from other information, that they came to Glasbury to open the new ring of six bells. These were cast by Jeffries and Price, bellfounders of Bristol, who also supplied the church clock. The accounts record 'Jeffries and Price Bristol in part of Payment for Clock and Bells' £100. A further £50 was paid in 1840, with another £60-8-0 in 1841. In 1840 a Mr North was paid £5-11-9 'for the carriage of the new Bells as per bill,' as was Mrs Prosser, 'carrier.'

The bells varied in weight from the treble, of 5 1/2 cwt, to the tenor, of about 13 cwt (although the weight of this bell is traditionally accepted as about 15 cwt). The tenor was inscribed: 'Jeffries & Price fecit Bristol 1838. William Bridgwater & Thomas Morgan Churchwardens.' The bill for raising the bells into place in the tower was recorded in the accounts presented at a Parish Meeting on April 1, 1840: 'Paid a Bill for levelling Churchyard & raising the Bells £10-17-6.' The reference to levelling the churchyard is due to the fact that, in the years immediately before 1840, a new church had been built to replace the small and outmoded seventeenth century edifice, and obviously the builder's rubbish and other debris had to be dealt with before the new church and its surroundings could be regarded as complete and shipshape.

The old church had contained its own bells, as is witnessed by the accounts for 1832, in which it is stated that William Pugh was paid 11/8 for repairing the bell frames. Unfortunately we know nothing of the ringers of those days, or of most of the remainder of the century. Nevertheless the new bells were certainly used, and by 1869 it was necessary to mend the bell-pulleys (at a cost of 4/-), buy new bellropes (£3-8-7) and splice the old ropes (1/6). Five years later, in 1874, six shillings was spent on 'Sundries for Ringers' and in 1876 another eight shillings was spent on the 'church Bells.' In the years that followed there were a number of references to the bells, as in 1880, but the main local church development during the 1880s and 1890s was the installation of a series of beautiful stained-glass windows in the church. On a broader scale, the 1880s saw the establishment of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, which was supported by the Glasbury ringers, and established on March 2, 1886.

THE OBJECTS

The objects of the Hereford Diocesan Guild were fourfold: 'To recognize the true position of Ringers as Church Officers. To encourage and cultivate the art of Change-ringing, in order that the bells of each Parish Church may be rung for the Service with the attractiveness of perfection. To promote due order in the Belfry, and to bring Ringers into closer fellowship with each other. The promotion of interest in the care of all the bells within the Diocese.'

In order to encourage Change-ringing the Guild employed a peripatetic instructor during the winter months, William Short. Short had to tour the belfries in the Guild and teach change-ringing. He was a stone mason by trade, but since masons found it difficult to get work in the winter his part-time post with the Guild suited him admirably. Short's task was

immense, for the Guild embraced not only the Diocese of Hereford, but much of St David's Diocese as well. Nevertheless he was obviously an able man, and in the early 1900s change-ringing spread rapidly throughout much of the Guild.

By 1902 Glasbury had been struck by disaster: the fifth bell had cracked. But a parish that could build a new church in the nineteenth century was not likely to be daunted by such a minor problem, and before the year was out Mears and Stainbank, the London bellfounders, had recast the bell. To pay for it a subscription list, headed by Alderman Walter Vaughan Morgan of London was opened. The Vaughan Morgans had long been associated with the parish and had formerly resided at Pipton and Treble Hill and even though they had moved to the Metropolis they still held their love of the Glasbury area. In addition to the subscriptions a series of concerts was held, as was a rummage sale, a lecture given by the vicar, the Rev. H. H. Gibbon (that raised one guinea), a couple of dances (that raised £7-12-7) and (July 16, 1903) an Eisteddfod that raised £17-16-2/2.

On July 2, 1903, a cheque for £70-0-0 was received from Alderman Vaughan Morgan in order that two new bells be acquired to complete the octave. Two weeks later, on July 17, the bell committee met in the church vestry and 'It was unanimously resolved ... that two bells be ordered ... from Messrs Mears and Stainbank, to be erected in accordance with their estimated cost: £115.'

On April 3, 1904, the bell committee reported that: 'The above order was duly executed by Messrs Mears and Stainbank and the ring of eight bells was completed and all charges defrayed, Jan 5, 1904. The amount expended on the bells and the bell-loft was £169-6-10. Messrs Vaughan Morgan, sons of Thomas Morgan, late of Pipton, and churchwardens of this Parish in 1838, gave £70, being the cost of the two new bells, no's 1 & 2.'

THE NEW BELLS

The lighter of the new bells was inscribed: 'Mears and Stainbank. Ad gloriam Dei. the gift, 9th Nov. 1905, of Septimus Vaughan Morgan and Edward Vaughan Morgan, sons of Thomas Morgan of Pipton.' The second bell was inscribed: 'Mears and Stainbank. Ad gloriam Dei, the gift, 9th of Nov. 1905, of Walter Vaughan Morgan, Lord Mayor of London, son of Thomas Morgan of Pipton.'

Before long the bells were being put to good use and records of the ringing and ringers exist from 1905 onwards. In that year H. Thomas was elected foreman, J. T. Beaven secretary, Fred Gwynne deputy foreman. Other ringers were J. Hammond, W. Whitney, C. Whittal, G. Lewis, J. Weaver, E. Minton, E. Gibbon. On November 9th, 1905 'It was arranged that ... the bells should be rung during the day to honour the Lord Mayor of London W. V. Morgan Esq. He kindly gave 2 new bells to this church: will be dedicated at 11 o'clock service.' Four years later, in 1909, Captain Kidson offered to donate a set of handbells and in September of that year the set of twelve handbells arrived in the tower.

On Saturday, November 23, 1907, the first peal was rung on the tower bells, Grandsire Doubles on the back six. This took two hours and forty-seven minutes to complete and was rung for the Hereford Diocesan Guild, as were the other peals described later. It was conducted by Louis Griffiths of Talgarth, and the band stood as follows: William Pritchard 1, Louis S. Griffiths 2, Arthur J. Griffiths 3,

William Evans 4, William D. Griffiths 5, John Hammond 6.

Less than two months later William Short conducted the first peal on the eight, Grandsire Triples, composed by J. E. Groves and completed in three hours and five minutes. This was rung on Thursday, 9 January, 1908 and the band was: Arthur Hadley 1, Louis S. Griffiths 2, William Short 3, George Giblin 4, William Evans 5, William Hargest 6, Charles L. Sadler 7, William D. Griffiths 8. Unfortunately, however, the ringers in general found that the go of the bells left something to be desired, and in October 1909 'Messrs Greenleaf and Tristram were given orders to repair the bell-fittings at a cost of £46.' That this was done is evidenced by the peal rung on Monday January 24, 1910, when William Short conducted another peal of Grandsire Triples, this time composed by Taylor and known as Taylor's Six Part. The band included at least three local ringers: A. G. Arnold, Leonard Lewis and E. R. Jones, all of whom were completing their first peal of Triples. The band was: A. G. Arnold 1, L. S. Griffiths 2, W. B. Clarke 3, W. Evans 4, W. Short 5, L. Lewis 6, W. D. Griffiths 7, E. R. Jones 8, and the peal took three hours and six minutes. It was rung for the restoration of the bells.

NOT SATISFIED

The Glasbury men were not satisfied, however, by joining men from other towers in ringing peals on the Glasbury bells, they wanted to ring a peal with a purely local band. Their pride on that achievement, performed on Wednesday September 27, 1911, is reflected by the footnote published to record the peal: 'This is the first peal ever rung on the bells by a completely local band, and was rung at the first attempt. 'Not surprisingly the method was Grandsire Doubles, and the peal was completed in two hours and fifty-one minutes. It was conducted by Leonard Lewis (whose first peal it was as conductor), and the band was: John Vizor (first peal) 1, A. G. Arnold 2, Leonard Lewis 3, J. P. Hyett 4, Edgar Jones 5, Thomas Turner (first peal) 6.'

During the next three years peals were rung by local, or largely local, bands. On June 25, 1912 Edward Pugh (better known to his friends as Ted) rang the treble to his first peal, Grandsire Doubles. The following year, on 29 June, 1913, Thomas Vaughan rang the tenor behind for his first peal. Many local folk will remember Tom Vaughan, who lived in Three Cocks, and he served his tower well as captain in the years following the Second World War. Ted Pugh, happily, is still with us, although in Bronllys Hospital.

The footnote to the peal of Grandsire and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Bob Doubles rung on April 1, 1914, marked a turning-point in the history of Glasbury ringing, for it was the farewell peal to Leonard Lewis, who left on April 2 'to take up an appointment in the West Sussex Police Force.' The loss of Lewis and the tribulations caused by the First World War, led to a reduction in the standard of ringing at Glasbury. In 1915 A. Davies and T. Vaughan were 'serving with H. M. forces in India,' and E. R. Jones was serving at Cromer, but before the end of the war a total of eighteen local ringers had served in the forces. Nevertheless James Hyett did much to keep the tower going until his death in 1944, and on June 29, 1919, it was still possible for a Hereford Diocesan Guild band to ring a peal of Grandsire Doubles on the bells as 'the Peace Peal for the parish,' although the band was not entirely local.

(To be concluded)

GLASBURY-ON-WYE BELLS AND RINGERS

(Continued from p. 1068)

The Ringers Minute Book for 1918 contains the following appeal to parishoners:

'St. Peters Church Glasbury-on-Wye
Xmas 1918

It is with a feeling of thankfulness that the Bell Ringers of the above Church approach their annual subscribers for Xmas 1918 Duly thanking each one for their loyalty to them during the "Great War" we appeal for as generous a subscription as possible as it is the intention of the Ringers to use it as the commemoration of the 18 Ringers that left Arts of Peace for those of Warfare and especially those that made the Supreme Sacrifice.

J. P. Hyett Captain.'

The list of subscribers was headed by the Honourable R. C. Devereaux, who gave £1-0-0. After three years sufficient money had been collected to pay L. S. Griffiths for making a wooden peal tablet at a cost of £9-0-0 and on Sunday, January 4, 1920, a peal of 5040 Doubles was rung, half-muffled, 'as a token of respect to Pte A. Hamer (SWB) Pte W. A. James (R.E.) Pte W. R. Jones (SWB) Died for King and Country in the Great War 1914 RIP 1918.' The peal was conducted by L. S. Griffiths and took three hours and twenty-three minutes to complete. Changes were rung on the front five bells, with the back bells covering. According to Ted Pugh it was a wonderful peal and a memorable experience to ring in it. Indeed, it would be hard to think of a more fitting tribute to their former comrades than a half-muffled peal, rung slowly and solemnly, and the music, echoing across the Wye Valley and the village of Glasbury, must have been hauntingly beautiful. The band was: A. A. Rackham 1, L. S. Griffiths 2, J. P. Hyett 3, S. T. Rackham 4, J. H. Rackham 5, C. Jones 6, E. Pugh 7, J. Jones 8. The Glasbury ringers in 1920 were: J. P. Hyett, J. Jones, C. Jones, T. Pugh, E. Pugh, F. Pugh, C. Whitmore, H. Whittall, C. Williams, I. Morgan and G. Haynes, and there were probably a number of probationers as well.

QUALIFIED FOR MEMBERSHIP

In 1925 Jimmy Hyett started to teach a youth named Eric Smith to ring. Eric found change-ringing difficult, but qualified for membership of the Hereford Diocesan Guild by ringing 120 changes at a meeting in Eardisley in 1926. Other members of the local band around 1925 that Eric remembers were Eric Gibbon (a son of the Vicar, who also played the organ), Charlie Jones (a carpenter who worked for Fred Smith, Eric's father), Jim Slater (also a Smith's man), Jack Jones (gardener at Gwernyfed), John Jones (the sexton, who always rang the tenor), Sid Price from Velindre (a carpenter), Tom Davies (electrician for the Talgarth Electric District), John Jones Junior (a gardener), Fred Jones (a gardener, probably at Tregoyd, the seat of Lord Hereford), and Charles Whittall (railwayman). Thomas Abberley and Edward Stephens were also listed in the attendance books.

Ringling at Glasbury in the inter-war years was based on rounds, call-changes, and occasional forays into the intricacies of Grand-sire Doubles, but the standard was much lower than it had been in the 1910-1914 period. Nevertheless the bells were kept going, and when the Swansea and Brecon Guild of Bell-Ringers was founded, on October 27, 1923, the tower affiliated to that Guild, although it also retained its ties with the Hereford Diocesan

Guild. Bearing in mind the much higher standard of ringing that existed in the Hereford Guild it was wise that this was done, and the Hereford Guild is still far more active than it's Welsh neighbour. Many older ringers will remember Glasbury bells in the inter-war period for the annual ringing competition for a challenge shield, that now rests in the tower at Bridgnorth. A few still remember the wonderful, but sad, occasion when, at the funeral of the Rev. H. H. Gibbon in 1933, all bells but the tenor were rung muffled, the open tenor booming above the rest.

Following the death of J. P. Hyett (who had been a railway signaller at Hay), the captaincy of the Glasbury tower passed to Thomas Vaughan. He had learned to ring at Llandefalle, where there are four bells that, sadly, have not been rung for many a long year. Tom Vaughan did his best to maintain a band, but found it impossible to reach a standard higher than call-changes, partly because so few of the youngsters he taught were able to find employment in the area, and so had to leave for other, urban, areas. Amongst those he taught were Joe Amphlett and his two sons, Denzil and Bob, Walter Holtam, Joe Davies, Bob Bowling, Tom Pugh, Eric Price, Geoffrey Price (who works at Pipton), Colin Lewis (now in Dublin), Gwyn Griffiths (Cardiff), Howard Thomas, David and Richard Morris, John and Brian Jones, Robert Ralphs and Cecil Wedgwood (who made the ringers boxes for the tower).

GLASBURY YOUNGSTERS

When Tom Vaughan's captaincy ended he was succeeded by Eric Smith who, with his brother Reg, runs a building firm in the village. During the past twenty years Eric has taught a multitude of Glasbury youngsters how to ring, including the Royds boys, Julie and Dianna Williams, Isabell Davies, Lyndon Cooper and many others. He has also heard a number of peals rung on the bells, although he has always declined to participate in them himself, preferring the shorter length of a quarter-peal. On Sunday, July 31, 1960, for example, the first peal of Minor was rung on the bells, Plain Bob, in two hours and fifty-nine minutes. The band was: Colin A. Lewis (Glasbury, first peal) 1, Robert A. Hatcher (Eardisley, first of Minor) 2, Magnus Pettersen (Brecon) 3, Philip M. Saunders (Llanelli, Breconshire, first of Minor inside) 4, A. Bryan Ellsmore (Old Radnor, Conductor) 5, John W. Hope (Almeley, first of Minor) 6.

Two years later, on Saturday, November 10, 1962, the first peal of Major was rung on the bells, 5056 Plain Bob Major, completed in two hours and fifty minutes. The band was: Robert A. Hatcher 1, Colin A. Lewis 2, Mrs E. C. Chandler 3, John W. Hope 4, Miss Audrey Gladwell 5, Austin T. Wingate 6, Reginald G. Powell 7, George Couzins (conductor) 8.

During Eric Smith's captaincy Glasbury bells have been rung regularly almost every Sunday, and in the winter practices are held weekly. The local band in 1979 comprises: Neville Powell, Stephen and Alec Edwards, Ann Wilson, Brian Collins, Gillian, Neil and Anne James, Roger Beetham, Eileen Smith and a host of former regulars, who ring whenever they come home.

As a mark of respect to Eric and (belatedly) to honour his seventieth birthday, a group of his friends met at Glasbury on August 21, 1979 and, with Eric himself participating, rang a quarter-peal of 1260 Plain Bob Minor with the tenor covering. The band stood as follows: E. J. Smith (Glasbury) 1, Mrs. R. Ford (Whitney and

Bristol) 2, R. A. Hatcher (Eardisley) 3, T. P. Bounds (Weobley) 4, J. W. Hope (Almeley) 5, C. A. Lewis (Glasbury and Bray, Ireland, cond.) 6, B. Williams (Brecon) cover. They wish him many happy years to come, and hope that the record of ringing at Glasbury, maintained throughout this century, may continue in the years ahead.

References.

This article is based upon the churchwardens' accounts, the manuscript book number 19 of the parish, the ringers attendance books, the peal boards and published peal cards in the church, The Ringing World record of peals and on the personal memories of past and present members of the tower, particularly Ted Pugh, Tom Vaughan and Eric Smith.

Wedding

Mr. G. A. CANE—Miss D. S. FOARD
On 10 November the wedding took place at Blackmoor, Hants, between Graham Cane and Dawn Foard. Both Graham and Dawn are local ringers, Graham having been captain since 1973. For the service Dawn was attended by five bridesmaids and a page-boy and the best man was David Cooper. The Rev. R. Inkpen conducted the service. The bride and groom left for their honeymoon in Sussex in a suitably-decorated car. They will return to the parish to set up their new home. D. C.

AROUND GUILDFORD

On November 3rd ringers mustered at Holy Trinity, Guildford from places as far away as Bath and Cardiff. However Stedman Triples was lost due to a trip up by the conductor, but spirits revived after a meal. The remaining three quarters were scored and, despite the bad weather, a good time was had by all. Our thanks to Audrey White and Harriet Oldham for providing transport and for their driving. N.M.W.

Godalming. 1344 April Day Triples: S Mandy Cutley 1, Audrey White 2, Harriet G Oldham 3, Maggie Fanfani 4, M J Stubbs 5, N M White 6, T D Smith (C) 7, S E Wood 8. Believed to be the first in the method. **Shaftord.** 1296 P.B. Major: Audrey White 1, S Mandy Cutley (1st Major) 2, Maggie Fanfani 3, Harriet G Oldham 4, N M White 5, T D Smith 6, M J Stubbs 7, S E Wood (C) 8. **Cranleigh.** 1260 St. Simon's Triples: S Mandy Cutley 1, Audrey White (1st in m) 2, Harriet G Oldham 3, Maggie Fanfani 4, N M White 5, T D Smith 6, M J Stubbs (C) 7, S E Wood 8.

BOOKS (Etc.) FOR

BELLRINGERS

● THE 'DELIGHT' LOOSE LEAF RECORD BOOKS FOR BELLRINGERS

for Tower or Personal use as
Peal and Quarter Peal Record Book
Record Book for Towers Visited
Tower Peal Record and Visitors Book
Send 8p stamp for sample sheets and prices.

● D.I.Y. BINDERS FOR "THE RINGING WORLD"

for binding up a year's "Ringing Worlds"
at home: £2.00 and £3.00 plus 40p postage and packing. When ordering please state if binders are for 1980 onwards, as R.W. size is being altered January, 1980.

● A BELLRINGER'S GUIDE TO THE CHURCH BELLS OF BRITAIN

Compiled by R. H. Dove. 5th Edition, 2nd Binding. Price £2.75. Plus p. and p.: One or two copies 30p per copy; three or more 25p per copy. Also copies interleaved throughout with plain paper for making notes, etc., £3.50 each plus p. and p. 35p. Important notice.—This book is not being distributed through booksellers.

Obtainable only from—

E. M. VIGGERS
28 AYLING LANE, ALDERSHOT