

## **Master's Report to the AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015**

Well here I am 9 years after I thought I had written my last ever Master's report writing another one as I complete a year of a second stint attempting to lead the Society's ringing activities at Great St Mary's.

What follows is my report on the year's ringing activities interspersed with some personal thoughts on our ringing.

### **Service Ringing**

Sunday morning service ringing we have managed to ring 12 bells for all bar one service. We start as soon as Matins finishes, typically ringing on the middle 8, 10 and then moving to 12 as soon as we have the numbers. Morning ringing has usually consisted of a staple diet of Grandsire, Stedman, Cambridge Maximus and occasionally Bristol Maximus.

During the year I have been pleased with how a number of "improvers" have made progress with their Stedman Cinques and/or Cambridge Maximus to the point where we can ring this with them on a Sunday Morning once we have got sufficient numbers to support the touch.

My preference is to not have short touches so that a touch can be given time to develop and improve. However with the number of improvers we have in the band, I have sometimes used short touches to enable more of them to have a chance to perform whilst maintaining a balance of improver-expert (a maximum 1:3 ratio appears the upper limit) though I admit over the last year I haven't always got that balance right. This approach is somewhat hampered by lack of punctuality; we are normally in changes by 8.35 but often only on 8 or 10 as half the band aren't there yet. I have been taken to task for catering for late arrivals at the expense of others; something I don't consciously do but I frequently have to re-plan touches whilst wishing that he/she had been here earlier as he/she would have ideally rung in the last touch etc.

We ring from 8.35 to 9.30 – can I can urge every member of the band to turn up on time please I think the maxim is that, to be fair to the band, if you turn up late then you have to accept that you won't necessarily get the chance to ring as much or in the types of touches you would like to.

Sunday Evening ringing continues to have lower attendance than morning ringing with the same few regulars turning out and ringing, often only on 6 for most of the session. However, we have not wasted the time and produced some quality ringing whilst attempting a range of 5 and 6 bell methods including Dixons and touches of Antelope (which admittedly was chosen for the name only to find it can be quite challenging/satisfying to ring and one not to be underestimated).

The Church's experiment to bring the evensong service forward and with it our ringing to 4.30-5.30, has not appeared to have the dreaded impact on attendance I thought it would. If anything I feel we have had slightly higher attendances thanks in part to members of the Guild joining us.

Overall attendance at service ringing has increased marginally with average attendance across 80 services up to 16 (from 15.3 for 2013).

### **Practices**

Practice Nights start promptly at 7pm and like Sunday Morning what we can ring is predicated on when people turn up, which for some is understandably limited by when they

can get from work. We are fortunate that we also have a number of regular members and visitors who often travel from outside the locale to join us.

At practice nights I aim, like Service ringing, to focus mostly on 12 and we regularly rung through our standard repertoire; Grandsire, Stedman and Cambridge and more recently Bristol with a number of “improvers” revising and practising these with an aim to be able to perform these for Service ringing.

At times we have enough expert attendance to ring Ariel, Zanussi and Phobos including spliced, which was a great aid to the peals of Cyclic Maximus we rang during the year. But with lower headcount the late or non arrival of more experienced members means we not only can't practice these methods but also it impacts on the quality of general ringing with fewer ringers to support the “improver” touches.

There was one practice where, with a shortage of ringers to attempt Stedman or Cambridge, we successfully tried some wrong hunting and then expanded to the point where we rang Charm, Top, Up and Down. Useful insights into how people learn methods and cope with new concepts and there is definitely a place for methods like these in learning to ring on higher numbers.

It is pleasing that with our sound control, clapper ties and simulator we can support basic training and I am pleased that the Guild have made use of bells for a learners practice. More recently Jonathan Shanklin has been teaching some learners on a Monday night at a tied practice in addition to teaching them at Benet's.

### **Quality of our Ringing**

We have over the year produced some really high quality ringing; not just with the competition band touch but also in our touches of Grandsire and Stedman; but we do not, I feel, do it as consistently or as often as we can and a key reason for this has been our propensity for method mistakes. The impact of a mistake on the quality of our (often very public) performances should not be underestimated; how can we hope to produce quality ringing if there is a mistake every touch or even lead? We all make mistakes but we do not have to accept them as the norm rather it should be the exception.

After the first few months as Master I deliberately paired back what on what we were ringing for Services, particularly Sunday Morning on 10 and 12. Partly this was due to my own dissatisfaction with the quality of ringing but also due to feedback from other members of the band; one key cause of dissatisfaction was the number of mistakes that were occurring and so I instigated a more frequent stand and try again policy. I wish I had done this earlier as I think overall we have seen fewer mistakes on a Sunday and I am pleased to see some improvement in quality but we can still do much better.

One simple thing that would help is that when you have been placed on a bell to ring then you should be focusing solely about the forthcoming touch, your start, the first lead etc. even if it is a method you ring every week. This would also be a good example to set our younger learners and visitors.

A real aid to improving striking is the Strikeometer and do urge everyone to use it. I personally find it a real boon to review my own ringing and I'd like to say a big thank you to our local Strikeometer Team David Pipe and Dave Richards for their continued work on it and to David Pipe for processing the data each week and sending it out. One day I hope

technology will advance to the stage where we can look at touches immediately after we have rung them whilst it's still fresh in our minds.

## **Peals**

There were 10 tower peals by the Society or by a predominantly society band including impressively a repeat of the Quark peal and two peals of Cyclic-6 along with the usual 23 spliced;

08/02/14	5152 Spliced S Major (23 m)	Most spliced: Henry J W Pipe (aged 10), Sue Binns <i>[Rung for EDA as band included John Fielden]</i>
01/03/14	5016 Spliced Max (6m Cyclic)	First of spliced maximus: Richard A Smith
17/07/14	5152 Spliced S Major (23 m)	
18/09/14	5088 Bristol S Max	Engagement compliment to Tessa Beadman and Leigh Simpson
22/11/14	5016 Spliced Max (10m Quarks)	On St Cecilia's day.
06/12/14	5016 Spliced Max (6m Cyclic)	in memoriam Rosalind Brooke
19/12/14	5088 Zanussi S Max	First blows in method: Paul Seaman
10/01/15	5040 Bristol S Max	<i>[Rung Non Assoc as band included A.Forster]</i>
21/01/15	5088 Bristol S Major	<i>[Rung at OLEM]</i>
24/01/15	5042 Cambridge S Max	

During the year we lost 3 peals at GSM; Bristol Royal, Quarks and a SCY/London band attempt of Quarks. One Thursday peal slot was used for a Quark practice and another for Competition band practice.

We had one Saturday peal slot in 2014 cancelled due to a diary clash with a wedding and recently one had to be cancelled due to a short notice Memorial service. Steps are in progress to improve diary coordination.

There were also 5 successful visitor peals at GSM during 2014.

## **Hand bell Peals**

Once again the Society was extremely active on the hand bell front with 17 peals including a number most decidedly outside of the locale. Notable hand bell peals included 23 spliced with bells drawn before the peal, peals of magic blocks and conducting firsts.

16/02/14	5040 Plain Bob Minor	Weybourne; "First as conductor. 11th birthday compliment to the conductor who wanted to ring this yesterday but was banned by his Mum who thought he should be having fun instead. Whatever."
06/04/14	5040 S Minor (7m)	
17/04/14	5024 Bristol S Major	First peal in Mumbai, first of Surprise in India and first in Asia for all.
18/04/14	5040 Plain Bob Minor	Mumbai. All Pipe performance
19/04/14	5040 Spliced TD Minor (120m)	Mumbai ; First Magic Blocks outside the UK. changes
27/04/14	5040 Surprise Minor (24m)	
11/05/14	5040 Spliced S Minor (41m)	400th peal Liz Orme
01/06/14	5040 Spliced TD Minor (120 m)	First Magic Blocks: Jonathan Agg, William Bosworth.
15/06/14	5040 Bristol S Maximus	First Bristol Max in hand: Alban Forster, William Bosworth <i>[Rung Non Assoc]</i>
22/06/14	5152 Spliced S Major (23 m)	Pairs drawn immediately prior to the attempt.
13/07/14	5040 Spliced TD Minor (120 m)	Orwell 1st magic blocks: Liz Orme
28/07/14	5040 TD Minor (7 m)	Willingham ; 7 different over works

09/08/14	5088 Bristol S Major	300th peal: Michael G Purday
14/08/14	5056 Cambridge S Major	Orwell; First Surprise Major in hand and first in a plaster cast (aged 11): HJP
18/11/14	5120 Bristol S Royal	Orwell
28/11/14	5024 Bristol S Major	Orwell; 1st Bristol in hand (aged 11): HJP. Contains no calls at consecutive leads
03/02/15	5088 Kent Treble Bob Major	Mumbai. Earis-Loveless

Attempting peals in GSM tower after evensong ringing has been a popular, if at times cold, location with 7 peals scored. The CUG band rang a hand bell peal (5040 Treble Dodging Minor) in GSM tower.

### Quarter Peals

There were 16 Quarter Peals on Tower rung by (or assisted by) the Society;

05/01/14	2014 Stedman Triples	Birthday compliment to Dave Richards. Date touch
02/02/14	1346 Cambridge Surprise Max	
09/02/14	1260 Stedman Triples	Rung for the University Sermon
16/02/14	1263 Stedman Caters	First Quarter Peal of Stedman Caters Dorothy Brooke
09/03/14	1296 Surprise Minor (2m)	Rung for the University Sermon
30/03/14	1311 Stedman Cinques	For Mothering Sunday
04/05/14	1260 Stedman Triples	
25/05/14	1296 Stedman Caters	Rung for the University Sermon
06/07/14	1282 Cambridge Surprise Royal	Rung after Mattins, in memory of the Rev Dr John Hughes, Dean of Jesus College.
03/09/14	1280 Shelford Surprise Major	<i>[Rung at OLEM]</i>
19/10/14	1282 Cambridge Surprise Royal	Rung after the University Sermon.
09/11/14	1260 Stedman Triples	Half muffled on Remembrance Sunday
16/11/14	1282 Cambridge Surprise Royal	First Royal: Christopher J Endicott <i>[Histon and SCY band]</i>
21/12/14	1280 Bristol Surprise Major	For the solstice
04/01/15	1287 Stedman Caters	
01/02/15	1346 Cambridge Surprise Max	1st quarter of Cambridge Maximus; Dorothy Brooke

The Society rang two hand bell quarters

21/08/14	1376 Kent Treble Bob Major	Willingham; First TD Dodging Major (aged 9) AGWP
19/11/14	1260 Plain Bob Minor	Magdalene College

The Society rang hand bells for at least three other occasions

31/07/14	72 Grandsire Caters	Wester Alligin	An after dinner touch
24/08/14	120 Stedman Cinques	GSM	During morning service on the occasion of the baptism of Dorothy Elisabeth Johnson
20/12/14	120 Stedman Cinques	GSM	Rung during Carols by Candlelight

## **Competition Ringing**

The Society competed in two competitions last year. In the National 12 Bell competition the Society qualified well at Cripplegate (2<sup>nd</sup> only to the local ASCY band) and then came 7<sup>th</sup> (out of 10) in the final at Oxford. Being drawn first at Oxford was not ideal as we were still 3 short due to travel delays. The Society is entered again this year and has been drawn to ring at the eliminator in Shewsbury. Thanks must go to our competition manager David Pipe for his work in preparing and leading the competition team.

In the District 6-bell competition, in addition to contributing to a Young Ringers band, the Society entered three bands, coming first and second in the method competition and first in the rounds-and-call category. CECF won her first striking competition, hopefully not her last.

## **Other Ringing**

During the year in addition to the normal service and practice ringing we also rang for the Tour-De-France which passed right by GSM and for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. Organising any ringing during the day mid-week is hard but a call to the wider district and also Frank's sterling efforts provided enough ringers in the end for both occasions.

There was also an informal bicycle outing organised by Dave Richards to towers south of the City. Finding a double-helical start point near Addenbrookes was a challenge for some but apart from that a really good day out was had by all rounded off by a BBQ at George's.

## **Conclusion**

It occurs to me the three big differences this time around for me as Master have been;

- Firstly, how fortunate we all are to have such excellent bells to work with and which personally continue to amaze me with their easiness, tone and audibility.
- Secondly, I cannot help feel how frustratingly variable our performances have become; on occasions we can ascend the sublime heights of quality 12 bell ringing including spliced Maximus yet on others we fall at the basics with consequential impact on the quality of our very performances. Our public may not know the difference between Quark and Grandsire but they do note when ringing is uneven and littered with mistakes.
- Thirdly, FHK's statistics show we are a weaker band in terms of headcount than we were 9 years ago, though I feel in terms of ability we are no weaker as evidenced by our ability to qualify 4 years in a row for the 12 bell final, ring Quarks etc. If we can focus on the basics, reduce silly mistakes, turn up on time, do our homework etc. then I think we could consistently produce ringing that is not only of higher quality but more enjoyable and attractive to other ringers.

To wrap up this report I would like to say that despite some of the moans above I have really enjoyed my return as Master and I thank the other officers and members of the band for their support and encouragement

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