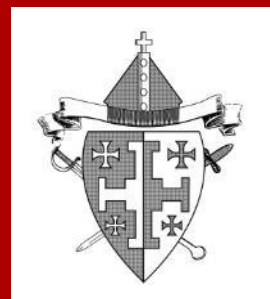




Three Spires – second out of nineteen teams entering the National Youth Competition

# Newsletter



## September 2017

[www.lwascr.org.uk](http://www.lwascr.org.uk)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the National Youth Competition by

Anne Ogden

The Ringing World National Youth Competition 2017 was held in Birmingham on Saturday 1st July and team Three Spires was proud to take part along with 18 other groups from all around the country.

The three eliminator towers were Harborne, Yardley and Shirley and we were drawn to ring first at the latter venue. It's always nerve wracking ringing first but the team were in good spirits and cracked on well with the task in hand. They rang the test piece of 160 rows of called changes with determination and this resulted in a pleasant piece of ringing to listen to.



The programme for the day was such that we couldn't stay and listen to the other teams as we had specific time slots for Solihull and Aston but as we were in a group with some high profile teams we didn't think we would get through to the final so we made our way to ring at Solihull. The team managed well on this lovely 12 ringing plain hunt on 11 and also some called changes. Unfortunately there was an accident on the way to Aston so we didn't get there in time to ring so carried on into the city centre.

We parked and walked over to St. Martin's in the Bullring (base tower for the afternoon) only to be told we were in the final and were to ring second!

After a rushed walk back over to the final venue at St. Paul's (Jewellery Quarter) we were shepherded up into the tower to test our nerves again. Although



the bells are a pleasure to ring, some of them are quite oddstruck but everyone responded well to what adjustments they would need to make. Another pleasant piece was rung and then we got

more opportunity to 'chill out' in the grounds with cold drinks and ice-creams while we listened to the other test pieces.

We walked back over to St. Martin's for our slot to ring on the 16. The team managed really well – setting every stroke and ringing some excellent 'jump' called changes – a comment was even made that it had been some of the best ringing of the day there!

The results were due at 5.30pm so we assembled in the Church to hear the verdict. Grades were given for all of the teams that had rung but they kept back results from the six teams in the final. As they started grading from place six up we slowly began to realise that we had won the called change section! Unfortunately we couldn't quite beat the Yorkshire Tykes to the overall title but came second out of nineteen teams with an A- grade. We were also told that we had rung the best Whittington's of the day and a special mention was made to our treble and second ringers!

Many congratulations to the team of young ringers, including our reserve Holly, who rang superbly on the day with no fuss. Alex P, Kayleigh and George were all ringing for the first time in the competition.

Thanks must also go to parents, chauffeurs and supporters – their help on the day with lifts etc. was greatly appreciated.

We will lose Jordan and Alex D for next year's competition but on a positive note that means there are spaces available for any

young ringers you may have at your tower – please get in touch if you are interested – it really is a positive experience to be involved in and the contest will be held in London next year on Saturday 7th July.

Well done!

[youthringing@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:youthringing@lwascr.org.uk)

Team in ringing order; Alice Ogden, Alex Packham, Alex Davies, Aimee Ogden, Kayleigh Debenham, George Rawlinson, Jordan Lawley (c), Chad Pickering.

## Rev. Arthur Morrell Pratt

Remi Hodister

Alan Regin's Roll of Honour articles in the Ringing World have generated much interest, both within and without the ringing world. Many stories from around the country and beyond have been related and appeared in print about the impact that ringing has had within the communities involved, with many lost connections re-found, questions answered, mysteries solved and, in this particular case, brought to light.

The ringing room at Willenhall has upon its east wall a simple brass plaque commemorating the deaths in action in 1918 of two members of the band and we



The grave in St. Sever cemetery

intend to mark their centenary at the appropriate time.

Alan's 2nd June article included Chaplain 4th. Class Arthur Morrell Pratt, M.A., Willenhall, Stafford Archdeaconry, died 29th June, 1917 aged 42 and, crucially, included the fact that he was the incumbent of St. Giles' church.

I have known for years that someone of clerical status had been killed in the Great War, but it being neither my church nor town, I didn't pursue the matter but it came as a bit of a surprise to discover so recently that the person involved was actually the vicar. What is even more surprising is that there is no record in the church of his passing and even more mysteriously, his likeness is the only one missing from the church records of photographs of incumbents dating back to 1883.

Although included in the Roll, the Rev. Pratt was not a ringer, appearing in the Staffs. Archdeaconry Reports of the period as being an Honorary

Member, quite common at the time where the Incumbent's church had an active band, as Willenhall had. Arthur Pratt was a hugely popular parson who commanded widespread respect and deep affection, so conferring Honorary Membership at the instigation of the local band would have been their way of saying "thank you".

Born in Bradford, a Master of Arts graduate of Queen's College, Oxford and married to Violet of Branksome Park, Bournemouth he succeeded Dr. W.E. Rosedale as vicar in 1909 and was later to become attached as Chaplain to the South Staffs. Regiment but his death, whilst under the auspices of the Army Chaplains' Department, came whilst he was Chaplain to the North Midland Brigade.

His assiduousness in his duties to his "flock" while in France led to a long period of intense rest in Southern England and it was after his return that his death occurred, according to the censored release in the Express and Star, by "an accident to his horse", although at some prior point he had been an ambulance driver, making him the third priest thus far from the diocese to die in the conflict. He was laid to rest just outside the English Church in Rouen in the St. Sever Cemetery in Grave Officers, B.8.5.

As would be expected for such a widely-esteemed and loved personage, the church was packed at his memorial service on 12th. July, 1917, with the Bishop of Lichfield preaching. A half-

muffled peal attempt of Stedman Triples on 10th. July had come-to-grief after one and a quarter hours, followed exactly again on the 13th. and then again after one hour and forty minutes on the 19th. The majority of the band came from further afield to join with the two or three locals who were competent enough to stand, but the reported cause of failure in all three attempts was the same; "shift course"; probably a polite way of describing the more-usual cause of Stedman loss!

The centenary of his loss coincided with practice night so we decided to mark the occasion with a quarter, to include the two who have been instrumental in assisting the progress of Mark and Richard to this point and a non-standard length was called to keep everyone on their toes!

**Willenhall, Staffs.** Thursday, **29th. June, 2017.** 1260 Minimus with 5 and 6 cover (Plain; Reverse; Double) in 40 mins. Treble; Richard Harper. 2nd. Philip J. Day. 3rd. Remi Hodister (c) 4th. Catherine Pollard. 5th. Eileen Southall. Tenor; Mark Turner.

Second quarter and first on treble.

First of minimus. Treble, probably 2, 4, 5 and 6.

To commemorate this day the centenary of the death of the Rev. Arthur Morrell Pratt. M.A. Vicar of St. Giles', Chaplain 4th. Class, Army Chaplains' Department, buried in France in St. Sever Cemetery, Rouen.

The church celebrates its 150th. anniversary on 22nd. July and it seems likely that the Rev. Pratt's story may be prominently featured, all because of his inclusion in the Ringing World's Roll of Honour. If that causes a permanent memorial to be raised there in honour of this outstanding Man of God it is nothing less than his memory deserves.

**Remi Hodister**

## **Gunner William Harry Brown**

Aldridge, Stafford Archdeaconry. Died 06/08/17 age 21. Royal Garrison Artillery 109<sup>th</sup> Siege Bty. Commemorated at Assevillers New British Cemetery, Grave VIII B 8. Son of Allen Brown and Caroline Brown of 3 Pool Terrace, Aldridge, Staffs.

He joined the Stafford Archdeaconry Society in 1914. He enlisted in the Royal Artillery on 08/11/15 and left Southampton with his unit, the 109<sup>th</sup> Siege Battery on 07/06/16 bound for Le Harve.

The circumstances of his death were unusual, he travelled to Assevillers to attend a course of instruction at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Signalling School. The Army report reads that during a violent thunderstorm, he took shelter in a latrine and was struck by lightning. He died from shock, "an act of God". He worked as a

tile maker and later a stoker before enlisting.

The memorial quarter peal:

**Aldridge, West Midlands. St Mary the Virgin. Monday, 7 August 2017**  
in oh44 (9-0-6 in A). 1250 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1 David CH Simpson
- 2 Clare Coleman
- 3 Sophie Ash
- 4 Matthew D Hardy
- 5 Margaret Simpson
- 6 Raymond H Daw (C)
- 7 John P Burton
- 8 John W Pollard

500th QP together: 6 & 7

It was a glorious day for it, sun

## Abbots Bromley 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations by

Dave Towell

shining, bright blue sky, temperature in the 70s, Union Flag flying, even the church yard was freshly mown. It could have been the summer of 1976, but actually it's 40 years on and the day before Palm Sunday 2017. In Abbots Bromley we were celebrating 40 years since the rescue and installation of our 8 bells by a group of local ringers and villagers.

Some 25 past and present ringers came along at various times during the day, with ages between 11 and 89. The celebration began with a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples, rung by past and present tower captains and those who had participated in the installation in 1977. This was

followed by 40 minutes of open ringing by the current band - a true mix of novices and experts. Touches were rung from call changes to Stedman Triples, which latter was especially enjoyable. At the peak, there were 20 of us in the ringing room, including our vicar Simon Davies, who gave us a short touch of Betjeman, a prayer and a blessing. Then it was down to the Bagot Arms for a well-earned pint of Pedigree (or Wainwright - whichever takes your fancy) and a bite of dinner.

After dinner, we repaired to Church House for tea, biscuits, reminiscing and for Brian Harris to recount the story of the 1976/77 installation with an accompanying slide show. The day was rounded off by a marvellous cake, baked (not cast) by Jenny Simmonds in the shape of a bell.

In 1976, the "old five", some of



which dated back to 1516, were becoming increasingly difficult to ring, despite liberal applications of Castrol GTX to the plain bearings. The last work done had been the renewal of bearings in 1893. The village ringers had started to raise money for

maintenance work, which seemed to involve the traditional 1970s fundraising techniques of collecting newspapers and tin foil - remember doing that? - laborious and rather slow to bring in much needed cash, but steady progress was being made.

At the same time, the Stafford Archdeaconry Society ringers were regularly ringing peals and quarters on the relatively new ring of 8 Taylor bells at St Martin's, Bradley, in the Black Country. Cast in 1957, they were then less than 20 years old, so barely rung in really. However, dry rot had invaded the roof and with no local will to save the church, it was condemned. Spotting the twin need of a church needing better bells and 8 bells needing a new home, the Abbots Bromley ringers took the plunge. A bid was made for the bells and after a bit of haggling, a price of £2000 was agreed on.

The race was on however as the old home - now closed up - was rapidly going downhill, courtesy of the local miscreants. Spanners at the ready, the team set to work straightaway to dismantle the bells and frame. Clearly though, even in 1976, they were worried about metal theft, as the bells weren't lowered to the ground straightaway but instead stored out of sight in the belfry until they could be collected. There was also apparently another obstacle too: the organ. However, since no-one wanted that, it was put to use and - it is said - some of the pipes were used to make a ramp to get the bells out of the church

and onto one of the villager's flat-bed BMC lorry! Incredible as it now seems, apparently the only other items salvaged from St Martin's were some of the old wooden pews.

Meanwhile four of the old bells were removed from Abbots Bromley tower and lowered (fairly) carefully to the ground. No buyers could be found for these and they were eventually sold to the Foundry. The old timber frame had to be sawn out, though again, no buyers could be found for the timber. A little of the frame was saved and used to hang the 1516 Henry Oldfield bell which became the hour bell for the clock.

Several runs were made to transport the bells over the 40 mile journey across Staffordshire to Abbots Bromley, where a new problem was encountered – getting them off the lorry and transporting them the 200 yards into the tower. The ingenious solution was to back the lorry under the lych gate and use the cross beam to hoist the bells one by one off the lorry and onto some scaffold poles that could be used as rollers to trundle them slowly down the path to the west door. By now, as Brian described it, they had a large and heavy Meccano set on their hands and here the vicarage lawn came in handy. Throughout the summer of 1976, the vicar (the recently and sadly deceased Tony Sadler) was treated to a trail of people wandering into his garden armed with wire brushes to clean large quantities of grime and guano

from the fittings, as well as stripping down and applying liberal quantities of creosote to the wheels and stays. We wonder if there's still a patch in the garden where nothing grows? The frames were also painted in a fetching shade of battleship grey, courtesy of Brian's brother Cyril and the store room of the Cheshire Machine Company.

Meanwhile the hard work began of installing the frame in the tower. One of the few items of the installation done by professionals was a survey and advice from John Taylor's to establish that the tower was strong enough to support the bells and about the layout of the supporting grillage of beams. At 2'6" of solid gritstone, the tower had no problems at all when it came to taking the stresses. However, when it came to cutting out recesses to take the ends of the supporting beams – by hand, with hammer and chisel – it fought back. Big time. Many tiresome hours were spent laboriously chipping away.

It was done eventually, and by early spring 1977, the time had come to put down the chisel and creosote brush and pick up the spanners to start reassembling the Meccano. The bells were hoisted up by chain pulley, though somewhat alarmingly, rope slings and tag lines seem to have been used, with a couple of narrow escapes. Then there was the new ringing room ceiling to go in, adjusting the pullies and boring holes in the floor for the ropes to go through – by hand, with a T-

bar auger. Again, John Taylor and Co were called in for a 2nd bit of advice on arranging the rope circle.

Finally, it was time for the blessing of the bells, laying a carpet in the ringing room and the first peal.

Quite a remarkable achievement for a group of locals from a small village, with the work done almost entirely in their spare time. And quite an investment for only £2000 (and a lot of help, support and labour freely given). 40 years on, the bells are still ringing out across the village. They still go well, sound glorious and are considered one of the finest rings in the area.

And the other feature of 1976? – not a single fluorescent jacket, safety glasses or safety helmet. Brian's old jumper featured strongly in all the photos though. We half thought he'd wear it again for the 40th anniversary!

Thank you everyone who took part, in 1977, 2017 and every year in between.

### **Abbots Bromley**

**Saturday 8th April 2017**

1260 Grandsire Triples

1 David J Crump

2 Dawn Grundy

3 Nigel J Argust

4 Elizabeth Hutchieson

5 Brian Harris (Cheshire)

6 John F Mulvey

7 Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)

8 Jenny Beech

Celebrating 40 years since the installation of the bells in 1977

### The CRAG report

The review report into the future of the Central Council was published some months ago and the latest (August 25<sup>th</sup>) update on progress can be found at the link below.

John Mulvey shares his views below on the future of our Society in the context of the wider review of the national organization of bell ringing.

<http://bit.ly/2eRYqi2>

## Point of View by

John Mulvey

The CRAG review came about after many years of criticism of the Central Council being not fit for purpose. Many people have said that it was a body created in the Victorian period which has not adapted to meet the present day needs of bell ringing. Our Society, like many other territorial ringing guilds, was created in the later part of the 19th Century. These territorial ringing groups were based on church diocesan boundaries, as the main advocates of their creation were ringing clergymen. These clergymen hoped that by creating such organisations it would curb the excesses in ringers' behaviour prevalent in the 18th and early 19th Centuries.

The Society has adapted over its 134 years of existence. In the early days there was a clerical secretary. Until the early 1970s no committee existed, only a few officers, to carry out the work of the Society. Instead, at each business meeting each tower sent a representative to discuss any

current matters. But as the Central Council is reviewing how it can be fit for purpose in the 21st Century perhaps it is time this Society did the same? Using the same approach as CRAG, we need to ask ourselves what is our Vision as a Society? This is defined as the best place scenario.

This could be "That all rings in our area are in good condition and have enough ringers to ring all the bells in those rings for service and other important occasions."

How you define the Vision will then have a major influence on the Mission of this Society. The Mission is what role the Society take to achieve the Vision. What services does it need to provide? How does it need to organise itself to provide these services efficiently? If the vision was as outlined above there would be financial implications in funding bell restoration and regular maintenance. We do have a bell restoration fund at present but is its income sufficient to fulfil the vision? How do we increase income?

There are also training implications if we wish to achieve the second part of the above vision. The society does carry out some training at the moment. Is this of sufficient quality and is it sustained? Would it be better to ensure that all people with responsibility for training within each tower are equipped with the knowledge and skills to make them feel confident to undertake the job?

The CRAG report on the reform of the Central Council highlighted the major obstacle that needs to be overcome. That was finance. New initiatives have financial implications and many ringers have ingrained in their minds that ringing is a free or minimum cost hobby. Most other voluntary organisations have a weekly or yearly subscription. Does

your tower? I doubt it. For many years at Tamworth every practice night we put 50p each in a box. This covers the Society subscriptions, outing expenses, maintenance, a yearly donation to the Society Bell Fund and a regular donation to the church, this year being £1,000. Unless ringers change their attitude to how ringing is financed, towers, associations and the Central Council will be prevented from achieving their vision and ringing will continue to decline.

**John Mulvey**

If you have your own thoughts on the role and mission of the society, or wish to make suggestions for future training and other events, please contact the Secretary: [sec@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:sec@lwascr.org.uk)

## Donations at Society events

A reminder that from the **20<sup>th</sup> May 2017** event, ringing attendees at Society events will be asked to make a donation of £1, which will contribute to the tower donation.

## Diary dates

Please make a note of the following events, coming up (full details on the website):

- ✓ **16<sup>th</sup> September**, AGM, Cannock
- ✓ **19<sup>th</sup> September**, Tuesday Daytime Band, Mavesyn Ridware and Armitage
- ✓ **23<sup>rd</sup> September**, Diocesan Striking Competition, Albrighton
- ✓ **30<sup>th</sup> September**, Surprise Practice, Abbots Bromley
- ✓ **21<sup>st</sup> October**, Striking training, Great Barr



## Tower Web Pages

We are able to provide each tower with a separate page on the society website to include extra information such as:

- Contact details
- Directions
- History and details of the bells
- Recording of the bells
- Local refreshments
- Access arrangements etc.

To get a page, all you need to do is complete a brief online form (link below) with the information or give Matt Gallon a call.

We currently have 12 towers providing this information - we would like there to be more!

<http://bit.ly/2if6OYi>

## 100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the last 100 Club draw were:

- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Fred Hodges
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Cherry Bellini
- ❖ 3<sup>rd</sup> Des Fellowes
- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> Renée Morris-Young



If you'd like to try your luck and help raise money for the Bell Restoration Fund, please contact Linda Pick: [lindapick@totalise.co.uk](mailto:lindapick@totalise.co.uk) or download an application form from the Society website.