

R.N. Guild of Bellringers Trafalgar Weekend 21-23 October 2016

Trafalgar weekend 2016 was celebrated by the RNGB on 21st -23rd October in Derbyshire, based on the historic town of Belper. Coincidentally, Belper was the centre of events celebrating the UNESCO Heritage Week.

Participants, travelled to meet in Denby, except for the peal ringers who met at Alfreton. Set in the Amber Valley of Derbyshire, Alfreton is said to have been founded by King Alfred (he of the cakes!). In earlier years the town had important coal and iron mining industries as well as being famous for the quality of ropes made locally. St Martin's church lies to the west of the town, parts dating back to 1200. The eight bells were restored in Whitechapel in 2014, after a nine year fund raising campaign. Sadly the anticipated peal of Grandsire Triples could not be attempted due to last minute cancellations, an attempted peal of Cambridge Minor came to grief after 11/2 hours. After some most welcome refreshments in the vestry a Quarter Peal of Cambridge Minor was finally scored, which was also dedicated to a very recently departed long serving and missed member, Dennis Martin.



Meanwhile, other Guild members had assembled in Denby, a village made famous by the location of the Denby Pottery Company. The church of St Mary dates from 1135 and has a ring of six bells, the oldest cast in 1380. A variety of doubles and minor methods were rung before moving on to Belper.

Following a history of a cottage industry of nail making, at the start of the Industrial Revolution, Belper became one of the first mill towns, with several important cotton mills and now forms part of the Derwent Valley Mills UNESCO World Heritage Site.

At St Peter's Belper the quarter peal ringers joined up with the main party. St Peters Church, built in 1884, a prominent landmark in the town, has eight bells, the tenor weighing just over 14 cwt.

On Saturday morning a fully loaded 35 seater coach took the Guild from Belper through beautiful Derbyshire countryside to St Peter's Edensor. This church lies within the famous Chatsworth Estate. Its architecture is Victorian Gothic Revival designed by Sir Gilbert Scott in 1870. The six Taylor bells were re-hung in 1981 and were a pleasure to ring. In the churchyard there is a plaque to commemorate the visit of President John F Kennedy to his sister's grave.



Edensor Church



Ringling at Edensor

On arrival at the next church, All Saints Bakewell, we noticed that the tower was clad in scaffolding; however, fortunately ringing was not affected. The bells were installed in 1616 and a special peal for the visit of Queen Victoria was rung in 1843, just after the bells had been re-hung. The present eight were cast in 1895 in Whitechapel and modified by Taylors in 1938 and again in 1960. The bells went well and a course of Cambridge Major was achieved.





Ringling at Bakewell



Our last visit of the morning was to St Giles Great Longstone. This has a ground floor ring of six bells, five cast in Loughborough in 1870, a new bell was added in 1924 when the six bells were re-hung in an iron frame. On these easy going bells the Guild rang a variety of minor and doubles methods without difficulty.



Inside Great Longstone Church



First time attendee Poppy enjoyed herself

An excellent lunch was enjoyed at the Crispin Inn (see last page for photos), where the collection of seaside postcards, displayed in the gents was greatly appreciated. The first tower of the afternoon was St Peter's Hope. Hope is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Today it has a quarry and a large very visible cement works. The 11 cwt eight were a pleasure to ring. Steadman and Grandsire Triples were successfully rung although Yorkshire was not so successful.



Hope Church



Viweing and ringling at Hope

The last visit of the day was to St Edmund's Castleton, where the eight bells date from 1803 to 1812, and were re-hung in a steel frame in 1923. They are the last complete ring remaining by James Harrison of Barton on Humber. He was the brother of John Harrison, inventor of the ship's chronometer which enabled mariners to calculate their longitudinal position and thus revolutionised navigation at sea. The Harrison bells, known as toll buckets, are rather short and squat and have a deeper pitch than their weight would suggest. The ringing chamber is approached through a very low archway and then up an extremely narrow spiral staircase. Cambridge major, Steadman and Grandsire triples were all rung successfully.



Ringling at Castleton



Castleton Bells

We all returned to Belper via Matlock Bath, where the theme park illuminations were due to be switched on, resulting in very slow progress on the A6. The weekend concluded with a very enjoyable meal in The Lion at Belper and, of course, a toast to the Immortal Memory.



Bill lying down on the job!

JOHN PIDGEON

Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers, Alferton, St Martin, Derbyshire,
Friday, 21 October 2016 (10–2–27)

1272 Cambridge Surprise Minor

- 1 John Pidgeon
- 2 Diana Wraight
- 3 John Stott

- 4 Paul Wotton
- 5 Tim Wraight
- 6 Pauline McKenzie (C)

For Trafalgar Day and in memory of Dennis Martin, RNGB member since 1979, who sadly passed away on 11th September 2016

Post note: Potential RNGB Headquarters?

Despite us toasting the Immortal Memory, it was too late for this pub in Belper, just round the corner from where we were staying! I am sure, with a lick of paint and a few nails it could be turned into a fine base for the RNGB! However, it does appear that one side of the sign gets more 'weathered' than the other!

It was one up for the Army, as 'The Rifleman' two doors down was still operating!



Lunchtime at The Crispin, Great Longstone.

