

Curdrige Bell-Ringers minute book 1916 – 1974

Rose Lee recently passed on to us an old minute book of the Curdrige bell-ringers, and I thought that some extracts from it might be of interest.

One end of the book starts with a list of peals rung at Curdrige, starting with the first in 1898 and going up to 1922. All were conducted by George Williams. The peal rung on January 7th, 1916, was described as 'rung deeply muffled with the exception of the tenor which was open at backstroke for all those who have fallen in this war'.

At the other end of the book is an attendance register, starting on 28th January 1916. The names listed are: Andrew Mears (captain), Alfred Pook, Caleb Johnson, Alfred Mears, Jesse Ryves, George Jupe, William Ryves and Fred Newlands. Fred only appears six times; more muffled ringing took place on Dec 26th 1916, 'as a last token of respect to Frederick J Newland, formerly a much respected member of the local band'. The attendance record continued on and off until December 1934, when the fines for lateness or non-attendance were discontinued.

Details are also given of touches and quarter peals rung from 1912. These include 1008 Grandsire Triples on Dec 10th 1917, to celebrate the capture of Jerusalem by British troops. After the war, in 1923, a quarter of Grandsire Triples was rung for the unveiling of a stained glass window given by Mr & Mrs Lee in memory of their only son and other war dead; this window may still be seen in the church.

There is then a gap until 1933, when various meetings are described resulting in repairs to the bells in July 1933; unfortunately the repairs are not specified. In 1934 a new band was started, with help from some of the old ringers. Rules included a wedding fee of £2, and ringing on Easter Day at 6.30 am, 9.30 am and 6.30 pm. The book then goes on to record in considerable detail correspondence received from the Winchester & Portsmouth Guild, and minutes of their meetings, throughout the 1930's. It also describes the muffled ringing for the death of King George V in 1936. Later in 1936 the band enjoyed a trip to Windsor, paid for by various parishioners and others, during which the band had lunch on a river boat and visited the Castle, including the ringing chamber in the Curfew Tower.



On 19th June 1937 ringing took place for the wedding of Mr A Davis, of the St Peter's band (sixty years later there was more ringing for his Diamond Wedding!)

In 1940 the Hon Secretary of the band, Mr A A J Spicer, wrote that 'As I have been recalled to the Royal Navy I shall have to give up my Secretaryship'. Sadly the next entry is a note saying that 'Lieutenant A A J Spicer died Dec 1940'.

In 1951 the ringers received a bequest from the will of Mr Liddell, paying interest of £5 a year. Most of the entries up to 1960 describe various outings paid for by this fund, including trips to the Gaumont Theatre Southampton, the Royal Tournament, Cheddar Caves, Wells Cathedral, Kew Gardens and Hampton Court.

More discussions about repairs to the bells took place in 1962, and a newspaper cutting is pasted into the book stating that 'Curdrige bells are to be re-hung at a cost of £409', by the original founders Taylors of Loughborough. Repairs were completed on 15th March 1963.

In 1968 a presentation was made to Mr W Ryves on his retirement after 34 years as tower captain. Next year discussion included the possibility of a false ceiling in the ringing chamber to deaden the sound of the bells (this was finally installed in 1987). In 1974 the clappers were re-bushed in nylon, and the ball-races of the ground pulleys replaced, by Arthur Fidler of Bow in Devon. Later in 1974 the funeral took place of the tower secretary, Mrs Pritchard. She was at one time stewardess of the Curdrige British Legion Club, and was well known for keeping the belfry supplied with sherry!

Ten days later a mix-up occurred, when a Portsmouth District sponsored peal attempt took place in aid of the Guild bell restoration fund, starting at 9.30am. Unfortunately the ringers were not aware that a wedding had been arranged to start at 12 noon, and despite thumping with a long pole on the underside of the trap door the peal continued through the wedding.

The book finishes on Sunday 18th April 1976, when 8 locals and Richard Green were to ring Plain Hunt and Grandsire Triples for the 8:00 Easter Communion. The minutes starting from the front of the book had also collided with the attendance record coming from the back!