

Magazine of the Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Issue 15 Winter 2014



Sts Botolph and Andrew, Burgh. See back page.

Awl a'huld

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From the Editors

The year of anniversaries is drawing to a close. As promised, we include in this issue Rowan Wilson's account of the cycling/ringing trip round the county to celebrate the centenary of the diocese. We congratulate the group and admire their fitness!

This year has also seen the celebration of fifty years of ringing at the National Cathedral in Washington. George Pipe has written his memories of the part played by ten English ringers at the dedication of the bells there. And of course there have been many special services of remembrance in this centenary of the outbreak of World War I.

We cover two restoration projects in this issue: the very successful complete overhaul of the bells and frame at Rattlesden and the first, tentative steps towards making the bells at Little Cornard ringable again. I hope there will be more about the latter in future issues.

The untimely and sudden death of Simon Griffiths was a great shock and a great loss to ringing in Suffolk. We extend our condolences to his family.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the magazine this autumn. We were especially pleased to receive so many pictures. Please keep your stories and photographs coming in. Copy for the next issue should reach us by the end of February. Please email your contributions to magazine@suffolkbells.org.uk or write to Sue Freeman at High Meadow, Martens Lane, Polstead, Colchester CO6 5AG.

Editors' Quiz

Left: this head is of course that of the jack o' the clock in Blythburgh church, one of two in Suffolk, the other being at Southwold. There were four entries, three of them correct. The winner was Richard Rapior who has received

his prize.
Right: this time the head to be identified can be found in a church in

South

the

East District. Again, a prize will be awarded for the first correct answer drawn out of the hat at the end of January. If you think you know where this head is to be found, please contact the editors as above.



Now it only remains for us to wish you all a happy Christmas season with lots of festive ringing.

Richard Gates and Sue Freeman

From the Chairman

Well, the summer ringing has come to a close; no more weddings in the diary and no longer do we have the outside door of the tower open to allow in the fresh breeze from the churchyard. This is an advantage of our ground floor ring denied to those who have stairs to climb. The next thing will be climbing those stairs to fit the muffles for the remembrance service. Many people say how cheerful the bells are and make so much difference to a wedding but they are also much appreciated by the congregation at the remembrance service giving the proceedings just a touch more gravitas, if that were needed. And being able to mark the beginning of the silence with eleven blows from the church tower certainly adds to the solemnity. The advantage of not having a church clock is that chiming



the eleven in the tower can be made to fit with the service avoiding the difficult challenge of doing it the other way round. It will be particularly poignant this year with its centenary commemoration.

Also at this time of year we come to the Guild District annual meetings and as with last year I will do my best to get to them. And while on the subject I would like to acknowledge the good ideas and suggestions that start at District meetings and get brought to the General Management Committee (GMC) meetings and lead on to actions.

Preparations for the AGM in the spring are under way and it is hoped that there will be something a little different this time in place of the Fringe meetings of the last few years. Watch out for announcements.

Last but not least: youth ringing. In Suffolk we are very fortunate at this time to have well organised, well supported youth ringing. And, springing from the 'Future of Ringing' forum that followed last Year's AGM the GMC is considering, among other things, the youth funding issues. And we must not get complacent; so many things go in cycles. Towers with strong bands come and go with the years but we must keep focussed on youth ringing, not just the rising stars but all of our young ringers and work on attracting and retaining new ringers, young and not so young. Alan Stanley



A 'Week of Firsts' in the North East District

The aim of the week beginning 4th August was simply for ringers in the District to attempt something for the first time. Everything was valid to ensure that everyone, no matter what stage they had reached in their ringing career, could feel that they had achieved something. The week culminated with a quarter peal day.

There were 38 separate 'firsts' during the week, recorded by 19 ringers at 9 towers. We had a first of 'going solo' for one person at the start of their ringing career. A flurry of firsts with rounds on 10, call changes on 6, 8 and 10, and plain hunt on 5, 6 and 8. Treble ringers also clocked up firsts of Penultimus and Bastow Doubles, Plain Bob Minor and treble bobbing to Kent Treble Bob Minor.

Firsts of methods include 2 ladies who rang their first of Cambridge Minor, Original Minor complete with lots of calls, and our youngest ringer managed his first inside to Plain Bob Doubles. Conducting was also much encouraged and featured 'firsts' of calling changes on 10, a touch of Plain Bob Doubles unaffected and start and stop for Plain Bob Triples and Plain Hunt on 7.

A listening course held at Hollesley helped swell the number of firsts as 6 people had an introduction to ringing with a simulator. As a tower, Reydon also had a first (not counted above,) as we held practice night with the bells half muffled in commemoration of the commencement of World War 1.

To round off the week, three quarter peals also recorded more 'firsts' for the District – of Plain Bob Major, covering behind to Doubles, Superlative Surprise Major and a conducting first on 8.

The challenge now is to use the information gleaned during the week to provide District meetings and practices with more focus. For a small, spread-out District, there is plenty going on. Perfect reason for hope and celebration at the end of a week that started half muffled in commemoration.

NE District Quarter Peal Afternoon - 11th October

Sadly this year there weren't enough takers to make a District Outing viable, but we were able to put together quarter peal bands to make use of the towers that had



Blofield church from the ringing chamber

been booked just over the county border in Norfolk. Whilst not having an outing was a disappointment, it did however give two of our young District ringers some extra opportunities.

The first ring of the afternoon was a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor at Acle (first treble to Bob Minor for Matthew Rolph), which was followed by Plain Bob Triples at Blofield (also first treble to Bob Triples for Matthew). The afternoon was completed with a final quarter peal on the light bells at Surlingham with Richard Stevens ringing inside to St Simon's and St Martin's Doubles.

Thank you to everyone who took part and helped 'rescue' the day, and well done to our young ringers who took everything in their stride.

Michelle Williams

From the South East: St Mary-le-Tower Open Day

n Saturday 11th October, the ringers of St Mary-le-Tower in Ipswich held a

tower open day. Hundreds of shoppers passing by gave guizzical looks in the direction of the churchyard, a place they wouldn't usually notice, as The Vestey Ring drew in the young, old and those in between. Guided tours and talks were held up the tower that were so popular that we had to lock the door up to the ringing chamber to stop any more coming in, as we only had room to safely ring on the middle six as it was! Demonstrations of tower-bell and handbell ringing were carried out to wild applause, as were talks by Amanda Richmond amongst the ropes and Owen Claxton overlooking the 35cwt twelve upstairs, looking impressive even with a clapper and slider missing from the tenth following an incident at the previous practice!



The results have been good. Nearby Sproughton have acquired a mother and daughter who have taken up ringing, a father and son learning at Rushmere have been encouraged to get extra practice here and so hopefully helping the band there, whilst another ringer who has moved into Suffolk's county town has since been up on a Monday night, and many more will have gained a better understanding of what we do, all on the back of coming to this occasion. This can definitely be described as a PR success!



Thank you and well done to who made those arrangements and assured it all went so well, especially David Potts, Stephen Cheek, Diana Pipe. the aforementioned Amanda and Owen and all those who helped put up and take down the Guild's mini-ring, which I would suggest is a musthave for any tower looking to hold an open day.

Richard Munnings

The tenor chimes again at All Saints, Little Cornard

ell ringers know how important the sound of bells is to church life and how it enhances the Christian experience particularly for celebrations and mourning. In this church that had not happened for over 50 years although there were bells in the tower which could sound if a small amount of work was done. The belfry is derelict and the bells have not been rung full circle in living memory but all that was needed this summer was to swing a bell. The parish asked if we could make that happen for the WW1 commemoration service to be held in front of the war memorial in the churchyard. Derek Rose and I agreed to make the tenor, cast in 1399 with a fine tone, chime again.

All the wheels have loose spokes, no rim and bearings filled with dirt. A 50's

farm rope, used in those days to lash corn to the wagon at harvest time was tied to the vertical spokes and fell away almost vertically to a ground pulley and then through holes into the intermediate chamber and into the base of the tower. The rope ended about eight feet from the ground and was solid when we pulled it. It was wedged in a slot cut by wear an inch deep in the ceiling boss and also wedged between the ground pulley and its housing. The pulley had a flat caused by



A new ground pulley

wood eaten away by woodworm. Because of

the way the rope was fixed to the wheel, there was almost no leverage. The ground pulley and its housing were rotten and broke away easily when given a tug. Using pulleys and bearings from Winston Girling's salvaged stock and

wood from the workshop we made up two ground pulley

assemblies. We sandwiched stays diagonally across the ends of the vertical and horizontal spokes of the wheel which tightened them up and strengthened them adequately and fixed a bell rope. Then of course we cleaned and greased the bearings.

After a trial run Richard Gates was able to chime the bell for the service in front of a congregation of 70 people, once for every soldier from the village who perished in that dreadful war. Now it is being chimed

regularly by churchwarden Robert Mackman before Sunday services. John Taylor



The Vestey Ring at the Rendlesham Street Fair

t was interesting that the Vestey Ring was included at the Rendlesham Street Fair where there are no ringable bells. This is a traditional country style event held on August Bank Holiday Monday in the picturesque surroundings of 12th century St Gregory's parish church. The church has an unringable 3 in a five bell frame, painted pews and this unusual east window which is, according to Mortlock, of 1780 vintage. It is a copy of a window in a Florentine church. The tracery is made of wood as is the perpendicular tracery of the nearest window on the south side which was made at the same time.

There was everything here for all the family: barbecue, beer tent, teas, craft





stalls, children's activities, Morris dancing, St Gregory's choir and pony and trap rides but it was ruined by ever increasing amounts of rain. There was a reasonable attendance and events were transferred to the church.

A full band turned up and manned the ring in response to Tom Scase's call for help; it was not entirely unsupported and Sally Munnings was interviewed live on Radio Suffolk.

The little chap in the picture at first refused to ring but suddenly took the rope and refused to let go. He rang for around fifteen minutes shoeless, his wellies in mum's hands. He was soaked and oblivious to the rain which was probably running down his neck while he was watched by Granny, Mum and all. Perhaps there is a future for ringing!

John Taylor

The restoration of Rattlesden bells and frame

1 ay back in 2003, the bells at Rattlesden Church, which had never been an VV easy ring, started to show a marked decline in their 'go'. Accordingly three bellhangers were invited to carry out a survey and make recommendations concerning the work to be done. All three firms came up with the same conclusion. i.e. that the installation carried out by Day of Eye in 1895 had reached the end of its useful life. They all recommended that both bells and frame should be removed from the tower; that a modicum of tuning should be carried out on the bells, four of which were Thomas Gardiner bells, dating from 1754, one a Thomas Osborne bell dating from 1789 and a 1905 Warner bell; that the bells' Victorian fittings should be replaced with modern fittings: that the plain bearings should be replaced with self aligning ball bearings and that the metal frame, which was largely fabricated from wrought iron with some steel angles, should be sand blasted and painted or galvanised as appropriate. In addition, the frame rather than sitting on four oak beams which were bolted to four foundation beams should be fixed to four galvanised steel joists which were to be grouted into the tower walls and the four wrought iron struts which braced the top of the frame to the base of the spire should be replaced by two galvanised steel joists, also grouted into the tower walls.

It took ten years to raise the money required for the project but this was finally achieved in late 2013 with the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund which provided 47% of the funds needed. The bells and frame were removed from the tower in December 2013 and transported to Loughborough for the work to be carried out by John Taylor & Co. The bells and frame returned in June 2014 and were rung publicly for the first time for morning service on Sunday 6th August.

It is the frame which is the most remarkable element of this restoration as it is of unusual design and there is only one other like it in the country. That one is at Quidenham in Norfolk and is listed as being of special interest. Both were installed by George Day in the late 19th century. The Rattlesden one is special in that the tower is quite small being only approx. 10 feet by 10 feet or 3.0m by 3.0m in new money, and Day was tasked with creating a frame to hold six bells, although he only hung five bells in it in 1895, coming back 10 years later to install the sixth bell in 1905. It was a significant engineering feat in the 1890's to fit everything in. particularly as the tenor weighs 11cwt 0qt 12lb or 56.5kg. The overall dimensions of the frame are 9'10" by 9'10" by 8'0" high (2.99m by 2.99m by 2.44m) so there is very little room to play with. Because of the size of the tower it is impossible to take a photograph showing the whole frame in the tower so the photographs shown here were taken at the bell foundry. The first one shows the frame itself and the second one shows the frame with the bells and some fittings installed. It is hoped that these photographs give some idea of what the restored bells and frame look like, but the only way to see them properly is to visit us and see for yourself how cleverly George Day fitted everything in some 120 years ago. Unfortunately access to the belfry is not easy and even though we have done a lot to improve access,



only fit intrepid people are willing to make the effort. We are however planning to install CCTV in the belfry so more people will be able to see the installation more clearly.

Now that the restoration is complete and the bells are ringing again we have re-

instituted practice nights. We now practise on Thursdays from 7.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. and we are always happy to receive visitors. However, at the moment we are concentrating our efforts on teaching new recruits so it is worthwhile checking with me to make sure that your visit is worthwhile. My contact details are in the Guild Handbook. As a band we are very pleased with our 'new bells' and I close this

article with a quote from the Guild Technical Advisor, Winston Girling:-'My congratulations to all involved in this project which has transformed this previously difficult peal of bells into an easy going and very pleasant ring.'

David Ward



Ring (and cycle) round the Guild

aving cycled only 150 miles ringing at 9 towers over 5 days on the St Edmund's Pilgrimage (London St Paul's to Bury St Edmunds) last year, we set ourselves a harder challenge this year to celebrate the centenary of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

The idea was to cycle around the diocesan border (236 miles) and ring at 35 towers to form a 'Ring around the Guild'. We could obviously not do this unsupported so we asked local ringers either to help out at their own tower or join us for the day.

Day 1 Felixstowe to Leiston (35 miles)

We started the tour by ringing at Felixstowe where Mike Burns joined us and then piloted us on our first stage. The foot ferry to Bawdsey provided a useful shortcut to Hollesley where the locals welcomed us with refreshments. The bells were half muffled to commemorate WW1 and we managed to ring a decent ½ course of Superlative S Major. We were also joined by Ruth Hatchett (Hollesley's ringing and cycling vicar) who cycled with us to the next tower, Orford. With the Leiston bells being out of action, we finished the day at Aldeburgh instead. We were too early to be joined by the Aldeburgh ringers unfortunately and only managed to ring the back four so felt we had earned a few beers in the pub afterwards!

Day 2 Leiston to Beccles (30 miles)

At our first tower of the day, Theberton, we were met by a local lady bearing refreshments but jelly babies were the reward for our efforts at our next tower, Southwold, where we also received a great welcome from Helen and several NE District ringers. Ringing at Reydon and then Worlingham allowed us to help with the NE District's 'week of firsts' including Ambrin ringing the treble to treble bob and Michelle calling a touch of Stedman Doubles. After a day's cycling it was a hard climb (up the steps) to ring at Beccles but we were rewarded with a touch of Grandsire Caters. A rare but very welcoming Wetherspoons hotel provided B,B &B (beer, bed and breakfast) for the night.

Day 3 Beccles to Diss (30 miles)

The weather forecast was for heavy rain and sheltering in the porch at Bungay we suffered our first lock out as people started arriving for a service scheduled for when we should have been ringing. We had a very wet ride to Elmham St Margaret suffering our first puncture of the day on the way.

Lunch at the Alfred Munnings pub (with Alfie Munnings and his mum and dad) after ringing at Mendham gave us a chance to re-fuel and dry out before a short ride to Weybread. The roads were now drying out but were strewn with flints so it wasn't surprising that we suffered three more punctures on the way to Oakley. This was almost our second lock out but our ingenious team managed to free the ropes so we could ring. We had to cross the border to reach our digs in Diss but our puncture misery was not over unfortunately with two more punctures.

Day 4 Diss to Mildenhall (45 miles)

This was the first of two long days with more towers to fit in so we were very pleased to be joined by ringers from the NW District and further afield. We had welcome refreshments at Redgrave then rang at Hopton and Euston. We started

the afternoon at Elveden where we rang 5 spliced then it was on to Brandon and Lakenheath for a cup of tea before braving the rat runs and A11 roundabout to our digs. We were a bit thin on the ground for our evening tower, Mildenhall so we could only ring 5 of the front 6. This was rather disappointing but at least we were still fulfilling our dream of ringing around the Guild!

Day 5 Mildenhall to Sudbury (56 miles)

With another long day ahead of us and a long ride of 10 miles to the first tower, Exning, the ringers from the SW and NW Districts who joined us were made most welcome (especially when they went ahead and rang the bells up). St Edmund may have been watching over us as we rang at Newmarket, Great Thurlow, Haverhill, Stoke by Clare and Cavendish on our way to Sudbury as it was exactly one year to the day since we reached Sudbury for our final night on the 2013 Pilgrimage. There was a little rain but it didn't dampen our spirits as the end was in sight. We had a magnificent turn out at Sudbury St Peter's where, in spite of a last minute change of venue, twelve SW District ringers turned up to ring with us. Day 6 Sudbury to Ipswich (40 miles)

The SW District ringers were out in force again at our first tower, Bures. Colin Salter rode out to Nayland (a lockout unfortunately) to pilot us back into Ipswich. Eleven ringers squeezed into the small ringing chamber at Higham then it was on to East Bergholt where the local band rang for us. A welcome lunch, fuelled us for the final leg of our journey back to Ipswich (St Matthew's) via Stutton and Harkstead where another cyclist (Simon Griffiths) helped with the pilot duties including the all important last pub (St Jude's Tavern in Ipswich) where he negotiated cycle storage with the landlord.

We were overwhelmed by the level of support we received and the names



Abby Antrobus, Colin Salter, Rowan Wilson, Mike Burns, Simon Griffiths, Jed Flatters

collected at each tower show that ringers from each District supported us to celebrate the centenary of Diocese in a rather different way. A total of ringers and supporters joined us on our quest and we raised a very healthy £361, £42 of which went directly to some of the towers leaving £319 for the Bell Restoration Fund.

On a very sad note,

little did we know that this was to be the last time that we rang, cycled and enjoyed a pint or three with Simon Griffiths who died unexpectedly on 20/10/14.

Rowan Wilson

Washington, May 1964

Having read with interest the story of Washington Cathedral's golden jubilee we asked George Pipe, one of the band chosen to dedicate the new bells and now, with John Chilcott the only ones left, for his memories of that wonderful event back in 1964. Amongst many other things it resulted in the formation of the North American Guild. Ringing there really flourishes today.

n the summer of 1963 the rumour went round that a new cathedral in Washington D.C. was in the process of being built. None of the sophisticated communication there is today – only the coaxial telephone cable across the ocean and the trusty old orange telegrams. No picture in the Ringing World, hardly anyone in the Exercise knew about it.

Then we heard following Taylors' order for a 57 bell carillon, Whitechapel had been awarded the 32 cwt in D ring of ten in a specially designed radial frame.

Underpinning local fundraising in that great city was a separate 'gift' to bring over from England ten ringers to dedicate these bells and teach as many recruits as possible during eight days' residence in Washington. Someone had said at a Cathedral Chapter meeting, 'We shall have this magnificent instrument but who is going to ring them?'



The 'Gloria in Excelsis' tower, photographed by national cathedral. George in May 1964

John E. Chilcott, at the time conductor at St Paul's was invited by the Dean of Washington, Francis Savre, to select nine other ringers for the job, an unenviable task from the estimated forty thousand in Britain. I was one of the lucky ones and so it was that John (St Paul's), Pitstow (Westminster Harold Abbey), Peter Staniforth (Leicester), John Freeman (Lincoln), George (Birmingham), Fearn Norman Chaddock (Sheffield), Harry Parkes Wilfrid (Canterbury), Moreton (Wakefield), Frank Price (Oxford) and I (St Edmundsbury) - ten cathedrals/abbevs represented 'got the call' so to speak.

Imagine the thrill of an invitation like that dropping on your mat. We had no prior warning and in my case only having been home from Australia for a few months where as I recall it no mention had been made of a new national cathedral

somethina John Happily. made Chilcott's task a bit easier: all ten of us were able to get leave (four of the band had never flown before!) The band met at Westminster Abbey and St Giles, Cripplegate the week before for lunch and a short ring together. We flew from London Airport as it was called then on May 2nd 1964, ahead of us, we knew, an exciting but demanding schedule, but how nice for each of us to stay with American families. Sixty young ringers to be taught, many still ringing today public demonstrations, special services, ringing handbells for the New York Opera Company, the Kennedy children, (it was shortly after JFK's assassination) several dignitaries' houses and TV appearances. The Great Day was Ascension Day, May 7th.

Interest was terrific, glorious weather all week in the high eighties and very humid. Everything went well, pupils duly taught, the Whitechapel Guild formed, so many memories and friendships forged. Because of their commitment and eagerness to learn the new



The first page of a four page supplement to the Ringing World, June 12 1964, written by George Pipe

cathedral band were change ringing on ten in a matter of months.

On the final Saturday we naturally hoped we would be allowed to ring a peal on the fine new ten. Full circle ringing had never been heard there and as the Cathedral Close is surrounded by schools and embassies we were told permission might not be forthcoming. But with the Dean's strong support we had the chance. A lovely peal of Stedman Caters was rung, the first outside Britain and the first ten bell peal in North America. What a relief to score! It was estimated that between fourteen and seventeen thousand people listened on Mount St Alban and when we got down from the belfry some 200 feet above ground level the applause was deafening. And would you believe, a crate of Bass specially flown out from Burton on Trent awaited us on the presentation table.

We were all so conscious of the privilege of making the first ever Dedication and Teaching week overseas. What **is** important, ringing flourishes in North America, new rings are put in, ringers are well taught (I've yet to see a poor handler or striker). The key word in what they do and ring is COMMITMENT.

There is a little sequel to all this: our flight home was intentionally diverted to Boston. But that's another story!

GWP

The art lives on.

Diamond wedding celebrations

ick and Daphne Pegg both learned to ring at Bramford, Suffolk in 1943,

following the lifting of the war time ban on ringing, and were married at Bramford Church on 21 August 1954. The Diamond Wedding Anniversary celebrations extended over three days and included receiving a card from HM Queen Elizabeth II, a photo in the local paper, and a barbecue for many of their friends.

Dick no longer rings, but Daphne still rings regularly at Sproughton and Grundisburgh, and as several other family members are also keen ringers the celebrations included a peal at Grundisburgh of Spliced Diamond



Daphne with two granddaughters and Sally Munnings at Bramford

and Bramford Alliance Royal, and a quarter peal at Bramford in which Daphne rang, with her daughter Christine, her son-in-law and two granddaughters. A lunch for close family and friends, including Dick and Daphne's best man, was held on the actual anniversary at the beautiful Hintlesham Hall Hotel, followed by champagne and a cake (made by Daphne) at their home. As a finishing touch, daughter and son-in-law Liz and Stephen Pettman arranged a surprise transfer for the happy couple from the hotel to their house in a 1933 Lagonda, owned and driven by local ringer Mike Pilgrim.



Dick and Daphne with their family at Hintlesham Hall

Bramford, Suffolk St Mary Saturday, 23 August 2014 (10cwt) 1260 Minor (Cambridge S and PB)

- 1 Sally K Munnings
- 2 Daphne E Pegg
- 3 Rosemary E Hill
- 4 Katharine A Hill
- 5 Christine R Hill (C)
- 6 Peter W Hill

Specially arranged and rung to mark the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of Dick and Daphne Pegg. They were married at this church on 21 August 1954.

Christine Hill

Seventies at Southwold

our of our regular Sunday Service band at Southwold are 70 this year. To celebrate, District Ringing Master Michelle Williams conducted a quarter peal on 29th October in which three of them took part. For Aileen and Stephen it was a first quarter at the first attempt. Mike Sage is a veteran 'pealer'. Christine Love the other 'birthday girl' is our latest recruit.

Left to right: Stephen Wells, Mike Sage and Aileen O'Hara



The Hadleigh gotches in the news again

After the appearance of the story of the Hadleigh gotches in Issue 13 of this publication we were approached by the editors of Last Orders, the magazine of the Suffolk and Norfolk branches of the Campaign for Real Ale and asked if they could include the gotch story in their next issue. Richard Finch of Hadleigh who wrote the article gladly gave his consent and the story duly appeared in Vol.37 Issue 3.

Conversation piece



onathan Stevens and Jed Flatters deep in conversation at the Guild Striking Competition at Helmingham. Rumour has it that the Ringing Master actually had tea in his mug.

Many thanks to Stephen Cheek for sending in this photograph, a reminder of the summer in the dark days of December.

Ed Hynard is 90

Many Suffolk ringers will remember Ed, life honorary member of the Guild and tower captain at Polstead for over forty years. Ed now lives with his family on the lovely island of Guernsey and rings at Vale church on Sundays. In August he celebrated his ninetieth birthday and the local band rang a quarter peal of 1290 doubles in five methods and four variations as a birthday compliment to him. He was touched to find that the first 120 was of Polstead doubles.

Sts Botolph and Andrew, Burgh

This lovely little church stands prettily on a Roman mound overlooking the River Finn, a tributary of the Deben. It is a sheer delight; 12th and 13th century – the complete 'three cell' church: south tower, nave and chancel. The pretty but simple tower acts as a south porch, a feature almost entirely found in the Deben valley close by: Grundisburgh, Culpho, Clopton, Witnesham, Akenham, Playford, Newbourne, Gosbeck, Stonham Aspal to name some of them.

The steep hill up to it is worth the climb whatever the weather. Walk through the six bellropes and grasp the thirteenth century 10 inch diameter door ring into the devotional interior. Note the carvings on the ring - two lizards, the emblems of good fortune!

The handsome 15th century font shows the evangelistic symbols:



a man representing St Matthew, a lion St Mark, an ox for St Luke and the eagle for St John. There are also two angels and the two figures of the Annunciation.

There is an angled arch braced roof, a Jacobean pulpit, and some fine late Victorian glass all adding to an intimate and beautiful interior. The east window, designed in 1903 by Kempe depicts St Botolph (Iken, Culpho, Whitton), the seventh century Irish missionary. He is typically shown cradling a church. St Andrew is also depicted; his symbol is a saltire cross on which it is believed he was crucified.

Even in such a small church there was a chapel on the south side; the piscina is still there, proving an altar.

Other treasures to note are a fine fourteenth century parish chest and evidence of a rood screen.

For over a hundred years this has been a popular peal ringing and teaching tower; the ring of six has done good service.

Stand in the north of the churchyard and you will see St Mary's, Clopton's massive tower two fields away. Both well worth a visit and a ring.

GWP