

The Hertford College Youths

Alastair Stacey - Ringing Master

The Society was formed at a meeting held on 5th September 1767 where 14 members subscribed to the Articles of the Society. Since then, as with many organisations, fortunes have waxed and waned and there were clearly some periods when ringing in Hertford declined significantly.

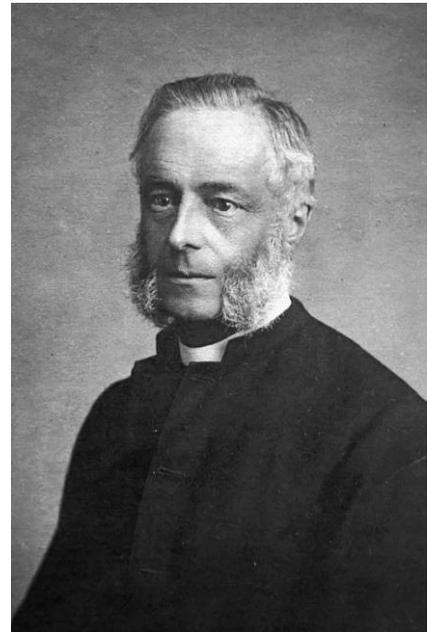
At that time of the formation of the new Society, both All Saints and St Andrews had rings of 8 bells, however in 1770 funds were raised to enable two new bells to be provided for All Saints. Now with a ring of 10 bells, Hertford became something of a magnet for visiting ringers. This is not the ring of 10 bells in the tower today – the original bells were lost when the church burned down and the melted remains were sold to Mears and Stainbank Bell Foundry in London for the princely sum of £236/4/1d (£236.20), which was donated to the rebuilding fund.

Although it is known that the Society provided ringers at both All Saints and St Andrews (as we do today), it is interesting that the original Articles only refer to All Saints. It would seem that the ringers would meet there before going on to St Andrews, but this cannot be confirmed.

The next notable event in the Society's history occurred in 1857 when a letter to the *Hertfordshire Mercury* lamented "...that in a town boasting two excellent sets of bells, they should be so seldom heard...". Although this letter was written anonymously, it did lead to a town meeting, chaired by the Mayor and which passed a resolution "*That it is desirable to form a new Ringers' Society in the town of Hertford, to consist of practical and honorary members.*" . Further resolutions regarding the appointment of a Secretary, Treasurer and committee members were also passed.

Shortly after this, ringing in Hertford received a further boost when Rev (later Canon) Woolmer Wigram was appointed as Rector of St Andrews. Canon Wigram was a ringer and author of a heavily advertised book on

change ringing. Under his leadership the rules of the Society were revised and rewritten.



The next record we have is in 1920, when ringers were returning to Hertford after WWI. At a meeting in February 1920, Colonel Herbert Baker was re-elected Master, and continued in this post until his death at the age of 58 in 1925. Although spending only a short period as Master, Col. Baker was a most enthusiastic ringer, well known in ringing circles outside Hertford. Col. Baker was clearly a keen photographer and the first of his peal books contains photographs of the many churches he visited and rang at.

The meeting in 1920 was chaired by the Mayor of Hertford and attended by clergy from All Saints, St Andrews and Holy Trinity, Bengo; in fact, at that time, and for the first time, Bengo was considered as one of the Society's towers, although the link was broken some three years later. Since then, Bengo have had their own ringing society.

During the 1920s and 1930s, regular annual meetings were held, usually in one of the town pubs, and followed by the annual dinner (or "feast"), which included speeches by the Mayor and others, and

All Saints Alive

included in 1933 a further revision of the Society's Rules. In 1937, the Society rang at the re-opening of the bells at St Mary's, Hertingfordbury, although there appears to have been no attempt to add this church to the regular ringing roster.

It is also worth noting that the Society was one of the first to welcome lady members, a peal having been rung at St Andrews by Miss C Ditton in 1936; in 1938 it was also noted that lady ringers would be attending the Annual "Feast".

During the years 1939 to 1943 ringing was completely banned but the Society reformed (with no change in the rules) and Annual Meetings resumed in 1946, still under the chairmanship of the Mayor of Hertford. At this time it seems that funds had dwindled somewhat (or the cost of living had risen) so that the Society could not afford to pay for both an Annual Outing and a "Feast" in the same year.

No Annual Meetings seem to have been held since the early 1950s, and there is no plan to resume (although I suspect the Mayor would be surprised to be informed of her responsibility to chair such meetings).

And so we come to the present day, with the Mastership of John Kemp and latterly the writer. Much has changed, much still remains the same.

The main change reflects the changes in Society in that we have become less formal and regular minuted meetings are no longer held – matters are discussed and decided over a pint in the *Salisbury* after practice. We also no longer "fine" ringers for non-attendance although since the practice of paying ringers elapsed (except for weddings or other specially requested ringing) the ringers give their time voluntarily and are not paid.

We still, as did our predecessors need more ringers and we still hold an annual "feast", but this is very informal and is paid for by individuals and not the Society – the only payment from the Society is a contribution to the cost of pre-dinner drinks!

Holy Baptism



2 nd July	Torin James Hendrix Drummond
9 th July	Oscar Richard Gareth Page
16 th July	Charles John Alexander McLeod
	Clementine Rose McLeod
23 rd July	Harper-Rose Elsdon
	Jack Layton Boyd Coughtry

In Peace



17 th August	Derek Westwood
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Holy Matrimony



12 th August	Dean Chappell and Laura Rodia
18 th August	James Martin and Tiffany Steele
19 th August	Joseph Sewell and Charlotte Middlemiss