



# Bellfounders' Gift Page



## Westminster Abbey - the facts

The article, Changes at Westminster Abbey (RW 9th March, p.207), began with facts, but later deteriorated sharply both in tone and accuracy.

First, ringing does not "normally take place after the mid-day service". There is in general no mid-day service at the Abbey, though Communion is on most weekdays celebrated in a side-chapel at 1230. The order for ringing the bells on the fixed days is "generally between the hours of 1200 and 1300", unless a different time is specified. Special services are often arranged by the Abbey. If change ringing is required, it follows the service. Some of these are memorial services, which usually but not always start at 1200.

Second, a typically supercilious bell ringer's remark, "the band usually manages to ring up to Stedman Caters and Cambridge Royal". Well yes, Stedman Caters always and Cambridge

Royal sometimes are rung on the 10 bell fixed days. In my time as a Sunday ringer at St. Martin's, Birmingham, or St. Paul's, London, I do not seem to recall *The Ringing World* blithely announcing that the bands there usually managed to ring up to Stedman Cinques and Cambridge Maximus. They rang Stedman Cinques and sometimes Cambridge Maximus, by choice. What then are the "up to" methods? Plain Bob? Kent? Grandsire? On eight bell occasions at the Abbey, it is true, in recent months the following other methods have been rung: Yorkshire, London, Bristol, 4 Spliced Surprise Major. Perhaps these fulfil the "up to" category.

Third, none of the Abbey Band has any memory of Major ever being rung with a cover on these famous bells, as you put it. Since the broadcast is described as a TV documentary on the Palace of Westminster, one cannot altogether evade the thought that across the road from the Palace is the 10 bell tower of St. Margaret's, Westminster, though it may be that they too will disclaim this sour anecdote.

These errors may be laughable and better ignored, but not the remark about Supernumerary members "who attend when a Principal is unavailable but are not otherwise permitted to participate in the affairs of the tower". The Supernumeraries do not attend the Annual General Meeting, but are invited to everything

else I can think of, e.g. in the past year they have been mailed with invitations to the following functions:

Annual Dinner.

New Year Communion followed by breakfast in hall.

Reception by Dean and Chapter in Jerusalem Chamber.

One People Service followed by Conversazione in Abbey Garden.

Farewell Party, in Jerusalem Chamber, to Bill and Claudia Critchley.

Peals at the Abbey are few, but the most recent, Yorkshire Royal in June 1982, included seven Supernumeraries in the band.

Do not otherwise participate? In all my ringing experience I have never known a church that did more to look after its band of ringers than does the Abbey. We depend on good ringers agreeing to join the band as Supernumeraries. You offered a disagreeably misleading impression of their role and status.

Mr. Milner, of the Royal Naval Guild, queries the Earl Mountbatten of Burma funeral service (RW 6th April, p.292). I was away in Newcastle for a week when the shocking news broke. Among first thoughts were a speedy return to London, the near certainty that 10 bell ringing would be required for a royal occasion, and the problems of locating ringers amid the summer holiday season. To our surprise, as ringers, Stedman Triples half-muffled was the specific requirement. Either this was the choice of the Abbey authorities, who are remarkably well-informed on ringing matters, including bells, or more probably of the Mountbatten family. We did not seek to probe further. Stedman Triples was rung, half-muffled. I hope this answers Mr. Milner's criticism. Having since listened many times to the BBC tape of the ringing I cannot rate the choice as less than inspired.

What constitutes a "special occasion" (per Mr. Milner) is decided by the Abbey authorities. The regular 8 and 10 bell ringing days are printed in the Westminster Abbey Handbook. The text, which occupies nearly a page and also describes what other single bells are to be rung on other occasions, is too long for inclusion in this letter. If you request me to do so (although paid advertising would seem more normally appropriate), I could supply the full text for publication in *The Ringing World*.

R. B. MEADOWS.

Harrow, Middlesex.

*We would indeed be interested to receive the information on the ringing on single bells at the Abbey and are sure that ringers would find this of interest. - Ed.)*

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## A backward look

The eye tends to see what it expects to see and it is interesting to note that many of those ringers who have visited St. Mary's, Richmond admired Peter Devenish's colour transparency which featured on the front cover of the Easter edition of *The Ringing World*. The more knowledgeable and the more observant however will have noted that the photo was printed the wrong way round - not easy to spot if you don't know this particular church (the clue is the clock face). Our apologies of course to Mr. Devenish.

## Great things expected

Marina Warner conducted her first peal at Barton, Cambs, on March 25th. The peal of Bob Doubles was only the second on the bells - the first being 25 years ago, also Bob Doubles on August 15th. That peal also had a "first as conductor", a gentleman called George E. Thoday; so, following in illustrious footsteps, great things are expected of Marina.

## Vicar's sudden death

The band that rang a peal at Middleham on 7 April wish to thank the Vicar, Rev. Guest, for allowing the bells to be used at short notice. The peal was to be rung at Tadcaster, but sadly the Vicar, Rev. Burnett, died suddenly on Thursday evening. He had been at Tadcaster for 24 years and had recently announced his retirement. The band wish to extend their sympathy to Mrs. Burnett and her two sons, and also to the Parish of Tadcaster.

## A difficult ring of bells

This free standing tower, of Hingham, Massachusetts, USA, built as a memorial to the early settlers in 1912 to mark the 275th anniversary of the founding of the town, has a reputation for having a difficult ring of bells, tenor 2,263 lbs., each bell having its own personality. However, on 1st April 1984 the first peal on the bells took 3hr6min, on a glorious spring day. The ringers were Geoffrey Davies, Stephen Jarvis, Becky Joyce, Colleen and Bill Kollar, Quilla Roth, Roger Savory, Don Trumpler, Linda Woodford with Eddie Fletcher conducting Stedman Caters. The ringers emerged from the tower and did not look tired at all; after years of trepidation about pealing this particular tower, it seems that the fears were unfounded after all. Someone was heard to remark about Eddie: "He looks so damn casual about it!"

Refreshments were provided by Hingham's Ringing Master, Dan Cushing and the general public showed great interest.

ELIZABETH DAVIES

## First peal congratulations

Jonathan B. Gamble and Susan Murdoch.

