

R.N. Guild of Bellringers Trafalgar Weekend 19-21 October 2018 – returning to its commissioning home

It was forty years ago that the Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers was formed by some bellringing naval personnel, so it was fitting that this year's Trafalgar Weekend outing was in the RNGB's 'Home Port' area of Portsmouth, including a number of quarter peal attempts and culminating with a celebratory formal dinner at the place it was 'commissioned', HMS Collingwood.



Founder members with the President

Being a celebratory weekend, things started earlier than usual and it was a beautifully sunny morning on the Friday when the first quarter peal team arrived at St Mary's Church, Portsea, where Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Charles Dickens were baptised in the previous church on the site. The very impressive tower is a magnificent landmark which can be seen from nearly everywhere in Portsmouth, and holds a ring of 8 (17 cwt). The circular staircase to the ringing chamber has numerous steps, but the climb is worth it with a lovely ringing chamber with sunlight flooding in through the southern window. It was decided to ring Grandsire Doubles on the front six. The bells are a delight, and the team was fully up to the challenge. A very well struck and tuneful quarter peal was achieved in 47 minutes.

Following on from Portsea, a team rang at St Faith's, Havant (8 bells 15cwt), home tower of the secretary of the RN Guild. The ringing chamber is distinguished by the framework of old ships' timbers which support the bell frame immediately above.

A splendid lunch and refreshments were then provided by Bill, the Secretary and his partner Helen at their home, before it was onto the early afternoon ringing. There was another quarter peal attempt at St Peter's, Curdrige, 8 bells 26cwt, but unfortunately this was not successful.

The final quarter was rung at Titchfield, which was successfully completed in 42 minutes and went very smoothly with a pleasant rhythm. This ring had been delayed due to a funeral taking priority of the original intended time, but this allowed members travelling from afar to be included in the band, helping to include as many members as possible in the quarters.

Details of the successful quarters are listed at the end of this report.

Some of the ringers who took part in the Curdrige quarter peal travelled to Shedfield as this was the first tower for general ringing for RNGB members. Arriving early gave time to sit in the Church yard and enjoy the peace and quiet sitting in the hot sunshine, which is a rare event so late in October. Unfortunately only five member ringers attended, others still taking part in the quarter peal at Titchfield, but, with the help of Betty Daysh, a local ringer, Plain Bob Minor, Grandsire Doubles and Cambridge Surprise Minor were rung.

Finishing early at Shedfield, members proceeded to Wickham where time allowed a short coffee break in the Chesapeake Mill, where an Aladdin's cave displayed a huge variety of traditional and vintage lifestyle accessories, a unique range of hard to find products with timeless appeal for the home and garden. The café is an award winning

Vegan Café, so unusual coffee made with either Soya, Almond or Coconut milk was enjoyed whilst watching the river Meon peacefully flow by. The Chesapeake Mill has an historical significance with the Royal Navy in that the buildings internal structure is formed by recycled timbers. These timbers come from the United States frigate Chesapeake, which was captured by the Royal Navy during the War of 1812. The battle between the Chesapeake and the HMS Shannon lasted less than 12 minutes before the Shannon's crew had disabled their adversary and boarded led by Captain Broke. The timbers from the Frigate Chesapeake form one of the largest and most significant groups of 18th century ship timbers surviving in Britain today.



The good weather continued into Saturday, with members being woken to a lovely sunny day and after a hearty breakfast at the hotel, it was on the coach to be transported to the first tower of the day, Purbrook. These are a very easy and nice six (5 cwt) to ring, with an organised 'six ringers down and six up' for each method due to the limited space in the ringing chamber. A number of 'Saint' methods, Plain Bob Minor and call changes were rung and an attempt at Armistice Day Delight Minor was also made

and overall there was some nice ringing. The Church has a number of naval links, including a commemorative plaque for Lieutenant FWF Cuddeford who was serving on the K5 Steam Submarine, which was lost with all hands 120 miles off the Scilly Isles. She was taking part in exercises in the Bay of Biscay and did not re-surface after diving, something the K Class were notorious in having problems with. These submarines were 'Fleet Submarines', which used steam on the surface to keep up with the surface fleet and retracting the funnels when diving and running on electric underwater. In the lychgate there is also a memorial plaque to all those from the parish lost in WWI, including the Captain of HMS Hampshire, Captain HJ Savill. He went down with the ship along with over 600 men including Lord Kitchener, War Minister at the time, after hitting a mine. This was just two days after she had safely returned to Scapa Flow following limited action in the Battle of Jutland.



Purbrook – waiting to be called!



Purbrook K5 Lt Cuddeford loss



Purbrook WW1 Plaque



Next it was Catherington, a quick eight (8 cwt) and it was very interesting seeing how people got up and down the steep ladder up to the ringing chambers and the different styles used! Some nice Grandsire, Plain Bob, Cambridge and call changes were rung and this time an attempt at Armistice Surprise Major. It was very pleasant sat in the sun listening to the ringing, especially as it was warmer outside than in and catching up with members' news. There were more naval links here, with the Coronel, Falklands

(WWI) and River Plate (WWII) being remembered. In relation to the Coronel, Admiral Cradock who lost his life at the battle is also commemorated and it was following that loss that the Royal Navy sent additional ships into the South Atlantic, leading to the victory at the Battle of the Falkland Islands. There is also a Commonwealth war grave to W Goffin, Stoker 1st Class, HMS Victory, which at the time was the main Naval Barracks in Portsmouth (the present HMS Nelson) rather than the famous wooden ship from Trafalgar!



Ringling at Catherington



Making the most of the sun!



Coronel, Falklands and River Plate



Having worked up an appetite from the morning ringling it was now time for lunch, which was at Ye Olde George Inn East Meon, a lovely 15th Century Coaching Inn. Not only was the food excellent, but the organisation and service was carried out superbly in a very military fashion, albeit with a little help over reminding members what they had chosen! With the AGM in March having to be cancelled due to the snowy weather, the first time in forty years including when the AGM was in January, a short meeting was held before the meal, including a minute's silence for those who had passed away during the year. This meeting was kept even shorter once the food came out, such that the President lost the battle and was forced to bring it to a speedy conclusion. If anyone attends meetings that go on and on, just call for the George staff and it will be finished there and then!



Lunch at Ye Olde George Inn



Having now been fully refreshed, it was time to tackle the ten at East Meon (18cwt). With the large ringling room it was easier getting everyone up there, although the final set of steps can be a little tricky and it was nice to see the coloured peal board listing an all naval ringling peal for the Queen's Silver Jubilee review of the fleet in 1977 looking very fresh. Three of the members attending this meeting took part in that peal, which was made up of a number of senior officers, but conducted by the Junior Rate, a Leading Cook! Must have been an experience for him and it has always been a belief that the Navy runs on food and it is the cooks who are really in charge! Often on outings, the first tower after lunch can produce the worst rings of the day, but on this occasion some nice Little Bob Royale, Grandsire and Stedman Catons, along with call changes were rung. Armistice Surprise Major was attempted, although again unsuccessful, but did get further than previously. For those not ringling, it was more topping up their tans in the sun and enjoying the lovely weather while listening to the bells! There was also another naval link with HMS Mercury's bell hanging in the church itself. HMS Mercury was the Royal Navy's Communications and Navigation school and was based at Leydene House and Estate at East Meon for 52 years before decommissioning in 1993.



East Meon Peal Board



Ringling at East Meon



HMS Mercury Bell



The final tower of the day was at Fareham (12 cwt), where the first peal rung by a group of Royal Navy ringers took place in 1948 and was the very origin of the guild, although it took another thirty years to be officially formed! Unfortunately, we saved our worst for last and the ringing for the Guild's follow up visit here was not so good and kept to rounds and call changes.

Then it was back to the hotel to get ready for the final event of the day and it is amazing how well members can scrub up such that a very different looking group from the ones that got off the coach got back on to be taken to the venue.



The Trafalgar and 40TH Anniversary Dinner was held courtesy of the President of the Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers Mess at HMS Collingwood, just outside Fareham and where it all started for the Guild. The meal and event was excellent and music was provided throughout by the outstanding HMS Collingwood Sax Quartet. Interesting Graces were said and toasts to The Queen (in the traditional Royal Navy manner of sitting), the Guild

and Founder Members (six were in attendance) and of course, to the Immortal Memory, as well as thanks to Bill and Graham for organising such a great weekend. A speech and a 'dit' were said before everyone retiring to the bar and some handbell ringing and then it was back on the coach to the hotel and the end of a very pleasant day.



Enjoying the Formal Dinner at HMS Collingwood WO & SR Mess



A very smart looking group!

There was a final gathering for Breakfast on the Sunday and then it was time to part, some for local Sunday ringing, some heading home and some lengthening their stay further and making the most of the area.

The Guild organises several quarter peals each year, to commemorate such events as the Queen's Birthday, the sinking of HMS Coventry, Armistice and other dates of significance to the Guild, as well as having a day outing in March for the AGM and a weekend 'Trafalgar' outing in October. Skill levels range from very competent down to beginner, so there is a place for everybody. Membership is open to anyone who has served in the RN or RM and Reserves, RFA, Cadets or who is a partner, parent or child of someone who would qualify if they were a bellringer.

Chris Gooch / Martyn Thornburn / Graham Brown

Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers

Portsmouth, Hampshire

St Mary, Portsea

Friday, 19 October 2018 (17-0-7 in F)

1260 Grandsire Doubles

1 H John Verity	4 Paul Wotton
2 Debbie Stott	5 Mark Robins (C)
3 Anna Gawley	6 John Stott

Rung to mark the 213th anniversary of The Battle of Trafalgar and in memory of Elizabeth Champion. Also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the founding of The Guild.



Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers

Havant, Hampshire

St Faith Friday, 19 October 2018 (15-0-25 in E)

Quarter Peal attempt of Plain Bob Minor on the front six

Bill Harris, Morag Todd, Mike Todd, Rose Lennon, Bob Wilson, Graham Brown

Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers

Curdridge, Hampshire

St Peter, 19 October 2018 (25-3-19 in D)

Quarter Peal attempt of Grandsire Triples

Tim Wraight, Diane Wraight, Anna Gawley, John Pidgeon, Paul Wotton, John Verity, Mark Robins, Graham Brown

Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers

Titchfield, Hampshire

St Peter

Friday, 19 October 2018 (11-3-10 in F#)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Debbie Stott	4 Chris Gooch
2 James Ingham	5 Paul Wotton (C)
3 John Stott	6 Michael Brown

Rung by members of the Royal Naval Guild of Bellringers at the start of Trafalgar Weekend.

Also to mark the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Guild



Additional photos taken during the weekend:



Portsea Quarter Peal ringing (Martyn)



Catherington War Grave



East Meon



East Meon stairs... who's at the bottom? (Anna)



HMS Collingwood pre-Dinner drinks



HMS Collingwood Handbell ringing (Joan)



HMS Collingwood group photo (Joan)