

BELLS AND BELL-RINGING.

The Surprise Peals.

(Continued.)

SUPERLATIVE SURPRISE.—This variation, of which several performances have been recorded, is, in point of time, the next on the list for consideration. This system is first given in *Clavis Campanologica*, followed by these remarks:—‘The above is an original composition of our own on purpose for this work, and has never yet been rung.’ The principle upon which it is founded will, we doubt not, give it credit with the amateurs of the art, for on inspection it will plainly appear the most even *treble bob peal* that has hitherto been discovered, and, if practised, will produce most excellent music.’ Now, as the date of publication of the first edition of the *Clavis* is 1788, the time this variation has been before the public is at once arrived at. We would remark that practice has proved the truth of the eulogy of the originators on their system. Not only is the work particularly even, and therefore easily acquired, but those who, like ourselves, have heard this most musical of *treble bob* variations actually performed in the steeple, will also most readily assent to its producing ‘most excellent music.’

Although, as we have shown, this method was brought out in 1788, no notice of any performance can be found until 1821, when 5152 is mentioned in Thackrah’s work as having been rung at Huddersfield in that year. A tablet was not erected to commemorate this performance, and although we have made several inquiries we have been unable to gain any more information beyond that given in this work, which we shall presently place before the reader.

The next record of Superlative Surprise is to be found on a tablet erected in the belfry of St. Giles’s, Norwich, which gives particulars of the performance of 5376 changes in this variation by the ‘crack’ Norwich Company, which was then in its prime. The same board also enumerates the peal of London Surprise rung by the Norwich Scholars, and alludes to them both as ‘the first peals ever rung in the above variations.’ As in the case of Cambridge Surprise, the claim is made subsequent to the ringing of the first peal, and as our inquiries anent the Huddersfield peal did not lead us in any way to doubt the completion of the performance recorded by Thackrah, we must award the honour of priority to the Yorkshiresmen.

Following this performance comes that of 5376 at St. Mary’s, Woolwich, in the year 1849, by the clever company of ringers then gathered together under the leadership of Mr. Wm. Banister, and three years later 5600 by the Society of St. James’s Youths, rung at St. Matthew’s, Bethnal Green, this latter peal taking its rank as the greatest number then recorded as rung in this variation. A few years after, however, this length was superseded by one rung at Benington, Herts, as the able band of Mr. Proctor first rang 5376, on May 20, 1855, and then, only ten days later, achieved 6048; which performance is not only the longest length yet rung of Superlative Surprise, but also the last recorded peal in this variation. Appended we give particulars of each of these peals in chronological order:—

1. *Thackrah’s Art of Ringing.*—‘Treble bob triples: this peal was composed by the author in the year 1821, and was first rung by him and seven of the St. Peter’s Company of Change-ringers at the parish church, Huddersfield, on the 5th of November the same year. Likewise 5152 changes of Superlative Surprise, at the first attempt, making a total of 10,192 changes in 5 hours and 56 minutes. Ringers: 1, W. Haigh; 2, J. Clay; 3, J. Thorpe; 4, J. Womersley; 5, J. Womersley; 6, J. Hanson; 7, B. Thackrah; 8, S. Gooder.’ Weight of tenor, 18 cwt.

2. *Tablet in Belfry of St. Giles’s, Norwich.*—‘On February 6th, 1835, was rung in this steeple 5376 of that intricate method, Superlative Surprise. This great achievement was perfectly completed (at the first attempt) in 3 hours and 16 minutes, and was rung by the following persons:—Joshua Hurry treble, Elijah Mason 2, Fredk. Watering 3, Henry Hubbard 4, Robert Burrell 5, James Truman 6, Chas. Payne 7, Saml. Thurston tenor.’ Weight of tenor, 14 cwt. in F.

3. *Tablet in Belfry of St. Mary’s, Woolwich.*—‘On Monday, Feb. 10, 1849, the following members of the Ancient Society of College Youths rang on these bells a true and complete peal of Superlative Surprise Major, containing 5376 changes, in 3 hours and 15 minutes, as follows:—Henry Banister, sen. treble, Wm. Banister 2, Francis H. Banister 3, Samuel Teasel 4, John Banister 5, George Cleveland 6, George Banister 7, Edward West tenor. Composed and conducted by Mr. Wm. Banister.’ Weight of tenor, 14 cwt.

4. *Approximate Copy of Tablet erected in the Belfry of St. Matthew’s, Bethnal Green.*—This tablet was destroyed by the fire which consumed the whole of the interior of the church, and also the tablets and bells then in the steeple, in December, 1860. ‘On Saturday, Feb. 8, 1850, the St. James’s Society rang in 3 hours and 23 minutes, a peal of Superlative Surprise, containing 5600 changes:—George Woolf treble, Henry W. Haley 2, Charles Evnnett 3, George E. Ferris 4, William Cooter 5, Robert Jameson 6, James Dwight 7, Matthew A. Wood tenor. Composed and conducted by H. W. Haley.’

5, 6. *Tablet in Benington Church, Herts.*—‘On the 20th day of May, 1855, was rung a peal of Superlative Surprise Major, containing 5376 changes, in 3 hours and 15 minutes. James Flott treble, Luke Carter 2, Leonard Proctor 3, Thomas Page 4, John Aylott 5, Charles Hollingsworth 6, Joseph Kitchener 7, George Warner tenor.—On the 9th day of June, 1855, was rung a peal of Superlative Surprise Major, containing 6048 changes, in 3 hours and 44 min. James Flott treble, Thomas Page 2, Jeremiah Miller 3, James Collins 4, John Aylott 5, Charles Hollingsworth 6, Joseph Kitchener 7, George Warner tenor. The above peals were most ably conducted by Mr. Joseph Kitchener.’ Weight of tenor, 14 cwt. Key, F sharp.

(To be continued.)

The Bells of Colerne, Wilts.

A CORRESPONDENT says:—‘A few weeks since I was hospitably entertained in the neighbourhood of Colerne, on the borders of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. I had often seen in the far distance the ‘stately, high, well-built tower of the very faire church’ at Colerne, as old Aubrey calls it, but had never been within hearing of the bells till on Sunday morning they sounded forth a most musical peal. A little later, ‘Rousseau’s Dream,’ in good time, summoned us to church. On my return home I was surprised not to find these bells alluded to either in Mr. Lukis’ account of Wiltshire bells, or in Mr. Godwin’s excellent description of the church; but on turning out ‘Colerne’ in Canon Jackson’s edition of Aubrey’s *Collections*, I found the following note, which may perhaps interest readers of *Church Bells*:—‘The late Mr. Bowles, in his *History of Bremhill* (p. 259), says, “A late friend of mine, Lawson Huddleston of Shaftesbury, with many and extraordinary accomplishments, had a kind of passion for bells. To oblige any clerical friend who had six bells in his church, he would pass days and weeks in the belfry, chipping, and modulating the sound of every bell, till they answered exactly the intervals of the monochord. I had often heard of the music of Colerne bells. No one could tell why their sounds were so pleasing. It is because they are perfectly tuned. Huddleston was sent to school at Colerne, and Colerne bells were the first he tuned.”’

Guild of Devonshire Ringers.

A MEETING of the Committee of the above Guild was held at St. Paul’s school-room, Exeter, on Saturday, the 20th inst., for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements for the annual meeting, and to dispose of any other business that might arise. In the absence of the president, the chair was occupied by the Rev. F. Sterry. The report of the local committee relative to the expenses incurred in connexion with the Guild was received and passed. The Hon. Secretary (Rev. J. L. Langdon Fulford) reported that four hon. and three performing members had been added to the Guild, amongst the former being the Right Rev. the Bishop of Exeter. The Secretary also gave notice that at the next annual meeting he should bring forward a motion for making the Bishop of the Diocese, when a member, *ex officio* Patron of the Guild. On the motion of the Secretary it was resolved, ‘That the previous restrictions respecting the record of performances by bands be rescinded, and in lieu thereof the following regulations be agreed to:—1. That a peal-book be provided in which shall be inserted all peals of 5000 and upwards (whether in one peal or several continuous touches), together with all date touches. 2. That a diary shall be kept in which shall be recorded, 1st, the ringing, either in the steeple or on handbells, of the bands who take part in the general meeting of the Guild; 2nd, the first performance of a band or individual, in any method, not being a peal.’ It was further resolved that the annual meeting of the Guild should be held in Exeter, on or about the 19th of April, and that the local officers of the Exeter branch, together with such members of the Committee as reside in the neighbourhood, be nominated to serve as a Local Committee. It was also decided to present an engraved shield to each band that shall accomplish a peal or date touch, or (in case of six bells only) a peal of minor. After a short discussion upon other matters connected with the Guild the proceedings terminated.—*Local Paper.*

Change-ringing at St. Mary’s, Ormskirk, Lancashire.

ON Shrove-Tuesday afternoon the ringers of the parish church, assisted by Mr. John Heron, jun., of St. Nicholas, Liverpool, rang a true peal of Grandire Triples, consisting of 5040 changes, in 3 hrs. 12 mins. viz.:—J. Heron, jun., treble; J. Leatherbarrow, 2nd; J. Eastham, 3rd; N. Spencer, 4th; J. Higham, 5th; R. Rothwell, 6th; J. Winrow, 7th; J. Prescott, tenor. The peal was composed and conducted by Mr. John Heron, jun.—*Reported.*

Muffled Peal at Waltham Abbey, Essex.

ON Monday, Feb. 15th, a muffled peal was rung at Waltham Holy Cross, in memory of the late Mr. W. Carr, who died on Monday, Feb. 8th, in his eightieth year. Performers.—J. R. Haworth (London), treble; T. Britten, 2nd; J. Barker, 3rd; W. Alps, 4th; R. Richardson (London), 5th; P. Cleverly, 6th; D. Tarling, 7th; T. Powell, tenor. Conducted by Mr. J. R. Haworth. Mr. Carr had been fifty-eight years parish-clerk and sexton of the above church, and sixty-eight years a change-ringer. About 1806 he rang, with Mr. Shipway and Mr. Huits from London, 1008 Grandire Triples. They considered him a wonder for his age, and wished him to ring another touch; but he made answer that he could not do so, as he had to go to school, wearing his pinafore at the time. The Carrs have upheld the art of change-ringing at Waltham Abbey for half a century.—*Reported.*

Muffled Peal at St. Bride’s, Fleet Street, London.

ON Tuesday evening, Feb. 16th, a few members of the Cumberland Society met at the above church, and, as a mark of respect, rang a muffled peal to the memory of the late Mr. Peter Coote, who died, after a protracted illness, on Feb. 2nd, aged fifty years.—*Reported.*

Cambridge Chimes.

SIR,—I understand that the Parliament-houses’ clock strikes the ‘Cambridge Chimes.’ May I ask what notes these chimes are, and the order in which they come for the several quarters of the hour? I think this information would be valued by a good many of your subscribers. I have frequently been asked, and do not know to whom I can refer my inquirers.

St. Saviour’s Parsonage, Eastbourne, Sussex. HENRY R. WHELTON.

[We hope that most of our subscribers are more careful readers of *Church Bells*, or have better memories, than our present correspondent. They will then be able at once to refer to No. 207, p. 19, where the information is given.—ED.]

RECEIVED from Messrs. Curtis and Beamish a very artistically-got-up card broadside about the tower and ringings at St. Michael’s, Coventry. We commend it to all who collect such bell memoranda. We believe the price is 2s. 6d.