

Introduction to the source materials and their context.

Background – the 5 historic bells

3rd: 1739 SS Ebor (E Sellers York)

'The gift of the Right Honourable Conyers D'Arcy, Knight of the Bath, Member of Parliament for Richmond, Lieutenant of the North Riding of Yorkshire, Comptroller of His Majesty's Household and one of his Privy Council' With D'Arch arms.

3 lines of inscription.

4th 1697 Samuel 1 Smith York

Venite exultemus Domino (Come let us praise the Lord)

5th 1697 Samuel 1 Smith

Novum Cantate Domino Canticum (Sing unto the Lord a new song)

6th No date circa 1500 Seliok Nottingham (John 1470-1507; Richard 1 Seliok 1507-1523)

'Easby' bell.

Unus Deus sca Trinitas (One God Holy Trinity)

7th 1697 Samuel Smith York

Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Glory to God in the highest)

National Ringing context:

Fabian Stedman 1640-1713 Father of bellringing. Born Yarkhill Herefordshire (father vicar). Apprenticed London to a printer. Published and wrote the first books on change ringing.

1662 ringing at Cheapside;

1664 joined the Ancient Society of College Youths. Established 1637 and described in 2016 as *the premier change ringing society in the City of London, with a national and international membership that promotes excellence in ringing around the world.*

One of 2! Between them ring most of the London Churches – the other is Society of Royal Cumberland Youths founded 1747)

1668 Tintinnalogia (with Richard Duckworth who did most of the writing) *Wherein is laid down plain and easie rules for ringing all sorts of plain changes.* Change one pair (developed to cross-changes where we move several pairs at once).

1677 Campanalogia –(written by Stedman) included compositions from outside London and developed cross-changes – changing more than one pair at the same time. Led to much longer pieces of ringing and eventually to 'peals' - 5040 changes as the extent of the permutations possible without repeats on 7 bells.

Richmond:

1697 – 20 years after the publication of Campanologia, With Samuel Smith's 4 new bells (one cracked and was replaced in 1862) we have at least 5 bells. We can now ring specific changes for which Stedman became famous – a principle named after him as Stedman.

Old documents that were found in the belfry in 1980 indicate that in 1811, 6 ringers were paid 10/6d each for the quarter's ringing and extra for May Day and Good Friday. In 1822 the ringers were paid for ringing (10/6d per man - £3.3.0d, for the quarter year. They were paid also to ring on November 4th for half a day and Nov 5th for a whole day! They rang on Christmas Day and on the King's Accession on January 29th 1822 (George IV); Good Friday (6/0d) and the King's Birthday April 25 (15/0d). They are accompanied by a separate receipt for the payments to the sexton George Brass in 1822. They are our earliest written documentary evidence about bellringing at Richmond; and they tell us the bells were one way in which festivals and national events were noted by the town.

Were they ringing Stedman? Were they ringing plain or cross changes? Were they ringing the simplest of all bell 'music' – rounds – 123456??

We don't know but we do know that by the **late 19th century** Richmond was a very busy tower seemingly with a goodly number of keen and able ringers. This brings us to our earliest 'running' records and our earliest lists of names of the ringers at Richmond:

In May **1898 they ring their first 720**. This is the maximum changes you can ring on 6 without repeating any rows – about 20 minutes of ringing. It's an important first step towards a peal (5040 changes about 2 hours 45). It's significant also because it was a requirement for joining the Yorkshire Association as a member. Founded on 3rd July 1875 the YACR was to be a county-wide society whose purpose was to 'carry out the science of ringing to the utmost limits'. Richmond selected a YACR representative and they seemingly set about qualifying as many Richmond ringers as possible. Richmond was clearly a go-ahead, thrusting band.

In October **1898** the band propose to **attempt a peal** and in **March 1902** they ring the **first 5040** in the tower. It is on **6 bells** and it takes **3 hours 6 minutes**. That's slow, but the bells would be hung on plain bearings that needed greasing and the frame was a frame that has recently been described as a poor example of a bell frame!! It's a rather amateurish wooden construction made by Thomas Mallaby of Masham.

In **1904, 2 new bells** were added and the band rang a **peal on the 8 bells for the first time in March 1905**.

From this point onwards through to the 1950s there is a strong and consistent band of ringers listed at Richmond.

Who were the leaders and members of this C19th/early 20th group?

R Borrows led the first 720 in 1898 and made the peal proposal in 1898 He was Tower Captain (leader of the pack!) and probably father of R Borrows who rang his first 720 in 1910. Can we find out for sure?

When we arrived in Richmond in 1979, we rang with Mary Borrows and taught her two sons to ring. By then she was Mary Wrench, but the R Borrows in the records were her antecedents and were part of Hudson Hart and Borrows solicitors on Queens Road. I know this from Mary, but the records include a receipt from – Leeds BS pass book, held by Mary as Treasurer of the bellringers' funds, - a branch office that was located at Queens Chambers.

Who were the other ringers?

R Todd, J Frechum, T Rushton, Richmond Briscoe, A Shelton, W Phillips, T Thirkell, JG Woddy, JJ Peake, F Brand and then, in 1901, Albert Morton.

Albert Morton first appears in the minutes in April 1901. Did they or he realise that he was to become a very significant and long term presence in Richmond ringing? By **1903** he was **leading the ringing 'performances' – conducting 720s** in many different methods; and he **rang in that first peal in 1901**. He was an 'incomer' arriving from Bawtry where he had learned to ring. What a catch! He became a main stay of the group. He **rang in the first peal in the tower in March 1902 and conducted the first peal on the new 8 in March 1905**.

His name appears very frequently in the minutes, proposing, seconding motions, and becoming the band's **'Conductor' in 1904** – a new position presumably to recognise his capabilities in leading the technical side of the ringing. In August 1918 he rang in what was intended to have been an 'All Khaki' peal but Albert had to step in and ring for Gunner Bannister who was ill.

The minutes and attendance records note the coming and going of named individuals as they left or arrive in the town or as they moved out of ringing. But Albert Morton continues in the records to into his old age. Richmond's Postmaster, he was an Alderman on the Town council, served as Deputy Mayor and Mayor and 1922/23. In recognition of his 60 years of ringing a Yorkshire Association meeting was held in Richmond in 1946 and he entertained the assembled group of ringers to tea at The Fleece Hotel. His son also rang A H Morton – were there other ringing family members? He rang in a quarter peal in March 1946

And of those he rang with?

John Goodburn Woddy died in 1946 – he had been made a full member of the team in April 1900 having been 'given a trial previous to becoming a probationer' in October 1899. He was another good catch, being rather rapidly preferred to the role of Secretary the following year!

John George Kinchin

Died in his home in Waterloo on January 1st 1946 – having rung at Richmond since at least 1903 when he was given the chiming for the year with F Brand. His father

and grandfather had also rung at Richmond leading to the proposition that 'there is good reason to believe that this is the first time in a century that has been no Kinchin in our team'

So where does all this take us?

We have quite an extraordinary tower of people from the late 1800s to 1950s whose achievements are worth charting and recording as part of the overall history of bellringing.

What we are keen to do, however, is **track these people within Richmond town and society.**

They may not be of major significance as individuals but their ringing exploits provide a **small bellweather of the mood of the people for celebration and mourning.**

Tracking people **coming and going and bellringing activities during the war** provide a small insight to the nature of everyday life at those times.

You've seen the condition of some of the papers and books: We want to **conserve and catalogue the records** before they become illegible or get lost

Index them – especially noting names and make these available to others – possibly family history researchers who want to add some more personal information to their genealogical research

Identify the more interesting **notes and events to add detail to what we already know about Richmond**

Place them **within the broader sweep of material about Richmond – piece of a much larger jigsaw.**

Identify **information and materials to illustrate the permanent exhibition** of the historic bells and to place on or website

Identify **stimulus materials for the school workshops**

Make known the **heritage of bellringing** and encourage some **people to learn to ring.**

Learn or practise some **skills of historical research** through a small micro-environment – skills are **transferrable** to other historical investigations

Enjoy working **together** and **sharing** skills and knowledge.