

**A RECORD PEAL FOR RECORD SERVICE
TO CELEBRATE FIFTY YEARS OF BELLRINGING
Mr. George Preston Returns Thanks**

C.T. September 25th. 1937



In the belfry of the Christchurch Priory Church on Saturday afternoon, two commemorative peal boards were unveiled by Miss Stewart and the Mayoress (Mrs. Douglas Galton). One commemorated the ringing of a peal of Bob Maximus—5,280 changes—to mark the completion of half a century as a ringer by Mr. George Preston. The other recorded the ringing of a peal of Grandsire Cinques—5,038 changes—by members of the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Ringers last November. In the picture (reading left to right) are the Mayor of Christchurch (Alderman Douglas Galton), Miss Stewart, Canon W. H. Gay, R.D., and Mr. George Preston, who composed and conducted the Bob Maximus peal.

THROUGHOUT SATURDAY AFTERNOON THE PRIORY BELLS PEALED CHEERILY TO PREFACE THE HAPPY CEREMONY OF DEDICATING TWO MEMORIAL TABLETS TO THE RECORD ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CHRISTCHURCH BELL-RINGERS.

The tablets record the ringing of the first Peal of "Bob Maximus," with 5,280 changes, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary in bell-ringing of the leader, Mr. George Preston, and a peal of "Grandsire Cinques" (5,038 changes) by members of Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Church Bell-Ringers.

For the ceremony bell-ringers from throughout the guild's area gathered in the tower, including representatives from Winchester, Southampton, Chichester, the Village of Dunmow, Bournemouth, Ringwood, Milford, Litchett Matravers, Portsmouth, Alresford, Kingsworthy and Uxbridge.

Among those present were the Vicar of Christchurch (Canon Gay, R.D., C.F.), the Mayor and Mayoress of Christchurch (Alderman and Mrs. D. Galton), Mr. George Williams (Master of the Guild), Mr. F. W. Rogers (general secretary of the guild), Mr. W. Andrews (captain of the Winchester band), Mr. George Preston (secretary of the Christchurch and district area of the guild, and captain of the local band), Mr. A. Troke and Mr. Walter Tucker (churchwardens).

Until four o'clock visiting members of the guild were entertained by the local bell-ringers in

the belfry, and when all had climbed the winding stairs to the tower, the dedication was prefaced by a short service, conducted by Canon Gay, including prayers and hymns suitable to the occasion.

The tablet recording the attainment of the local band, covered by a Union Jack, was unveiled by the Mayoress, and the other, draped by the Church of England flag, the Red Cross, was ceremonially disclosed by Miss. B. Stuart of Ferndown, the daughter of Mr. Martin Stuart, the donor of the tablet. After the ceremony the memorials were dedicated to the belfry by Canon Gay.

Following this, the ringers had another "turn" on the bells, and the company adjourned to the King's Arms Hotel for tea.

During the ringing the lower part of the bell rope taken by Mr. Preston broke, and in an endeavour to prevent the loose end from striking any of the guests, he experienced a heavy fall. Fortunately Mr. Preston was only slightly shaken, and was able to continue ringing and entertaining his guests.

At tea that spirit of goodwill which binds bell-ringers from far and near in a common free masonry, was strikingly apparent, and the gathering was of the happiest nature.

Following tea, Mr. Preston addressed the ringers: —

YOUNG RINGERS WANTED.

"Before we separate," he said, "I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Vicar and Church-wardens for their kindness in presenting the board recording the peal of Bob Maximus which was rung by the local ringers to commemorate my 50 years as ringer at the Priory Church. If one had to look forward to something 50 years hence, it would seem a very long time, but I can assure you, it seems but a very short time to look back on. During that time I have seen many changes, but I can honestly say, I do not for one moment regret the time I have spent in the tower; in fact I am proud of being a ringer at the Priory; during my 50 years' service there I have made many friends from all parts of Great Britain.

"I do regret, however, the fact that our young churchmen do not show more eagerness to learn the art of campanology, so as to carry on the good work as the old ones die out; if they would only come forward I should be only too pleased to welcome and teach them all I know concerning ringing. Although these young people are so shy in coming forward, when the time comes that I have to leave the tower, I think it may safely be said I shall leave it much better than I found it."

Mr. Preston extended his thanks to the Mayor and Mayoress for visiting the ringing chamber to unveil the tablet, remarking that he did not remember having a Mayor and Mayoress of Christchurch with them before.

"The board which you so graciously unveiled this afternoon, commemorates not only my 50 years' service to the church, but also a record for the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Ringers, it being the first peal of Maximus ever rung for the guild by a local band of Sunday service ringers. In one at least of the many letters of congratulations I received, it was thought to be a national record inasmuch as the peal was composed, conducted and rung by an entirely local band all ringing their first peal of Maximus. However, I make no claim to that, as I do not know if that is correct. Anyway, I believe in unveiling this board this afternoon you have probably done what no other Mayor or Mayoress has, thereby making another record for the tower, and on behalf of the ringers I wish to thank you both and to say how pleased we all are to have you with us."

He also extended his thanks to Mr. Stewart, of Ferndown, for presenting the board recording the peal of Grandsire Cinques, and to Miss Stewart, who had come to unveil it. He had known Mr. Stewart for many years, and in fact the latter had learned practically all his ringing in the Priory tower. He believed that it was 42 years ago that he conducted Mr. Stuart's first peal. He had also rung his first peal on ten bells there, and he had now rung his peal on twelve in the local tower. The board that he presented recorded that six of the ringers rang their first peal on twelve bells. It had also been the first peal of Grandsire Cinques rung by the master of the guild, Mr. George Williams, who had rung about 1,400 to 1,500 peals in various methods.

Mr. Preston thanked Canon Gay for the trust and confidence which he always showed in the

ringers, for his readiness at all times to grant him the use of the bells, and for dedicating the two peal boards. He also extended his thanks to Mr. D. Llewellyn for assistance rendered with repairs to the bells.

Finally he thanked the Priory ringers for their loyalty to him at all times, for without their co-operation, he said, he could not have done what he had.

"In fact I can assure you that although we are up in the tower out of view of the congregation doing our work, we are a very happy family."

THE ART OF CAMPANOLOGY.

Canon Gay said that his admiration was for the work that made these records possible, and considered that they were records to regularity and a testimony of the ringers art. Much of the enthusiasm for bell-ringing in the diocese was due to Mr. George Preston, who had instructed so many people in the art of campanology.

The Mayor of Christchurch (Alderman D. Galton) said that he regarded it as a very great pleasure to have had the opportunity of being in the tower on this occasion. He could confidently say that among the many public duties that the Mayoress had been called upon to fulfil, the unveiling ceremony which had just been completed had been the happiest.

He was particularly pleased to be with them because it afforded him the opportunity of personally extending to his old friend, Mr. George Preston, his heartiest congratulations on his completion of fifty years ringing in the Priory tower. There was no doubt that his fellow ringers appreciated his leadership to the full, and that officials of the church valued his work, and also he had no doubt that the people of the Borough of Christchurch would like to be associated with these congratulations.

COME IN AND GET DOWN TO IT.

The tablet had been unveiled in commemoration of a record peal, which was rung to celebrate Mr. Preston's fiftieth anniversary in the tower, and he hoped that he would be spared for many more years to carry on the good work he was doing.

Mr. Martin Stewart declared that he thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Priory, because the Christchurch ringers had a way of defusing happiness to all. "Whenever you look in at the belfry, it is immediately suggested that you take off your coat and get down to it."

In presenting one of the tablets, he was only contributing a small quota to a tower, the walls of which were already becoming too small to hold the many memorials of past records. The Priory tower was the centre of bell-ringing in this district, and that was largely due to the great work of Mr. George Preston.

It might be thought that a review of past years and records made them feel old, this was not so. "One enjoys a kind of perpetual youth in bell-ringing," he declared.

FIRST RANG IN 1888.

Mr. George Williams (master of the guild) told his audience that he had rung in the Priory tower before many of them had been born. It was in 1888 that he had come to Christchurch to ring the first peal on the bells. Mr. F. W. Rogers (general secretary of the guild) felt bound to congratulate the ringers of the local tower for the work they were doing in "twelve bell-ringing." He understood that they were now planning to try to ring a record peal of Stedman Cinques, and he hoped that it would not be long before another tablet found its way on to the wall of the tower.

As a member of the Priory bell-ringers, Mr. F. A. Sparshott said that they fully appreciated the fine instruction and training they received from Mr. Preston, and they considered it a privilege to ring with him. "It has been our greatest pleasure to give him the most loyal support we can," he concluded.

THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE TABLETS.

The inscriptions on the two peal boards are as follows: —

"On Wednesday, April 14th, 1937, in three hours forty-three minutes, a peal of Bob Maximus of 5,280 changes was rung on these bells by the following members: George Preston (treble), Miss C. E. Sparshott (2), W. M. Stone (3), E. V. Hinton (4), E. T. Griffin (5), K. Derham (6), Mrs. E. A. Williams (7), S. W. White (8), G. J. W. Scragg (9), F. A. Sparshott (10), L. Stone (11), W. G. Fowler (tenor). Composed and conducted by George Preston. This the first peal of Bob Maximus rung for the guild, also by the band of our Sunday service ringers, and was rung to commemorate the Jubilee of George Preston as a ringer for 50 years at this church."

Ringers in the peal of Grandsire Cinques, consisting of 5,038 changes, in three hours forty-four minutes, were: G. Williams (treble), H. P. Read (2), R. A. Read (3), R. C. H. Conolly (4), W. M. Stone (5), A. F. M. Stewart (6), A. J. Corrigan (7), W. Andrews (8), E. T. Griffin (9), W. E. Cheater (10), G. Preston (11), H. J. Gillard (tenor). This was the first peal on twelve bells rung by Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10.