

THE TROYTE RINGING CENTRE:

THE STORY SO FAR - FROM 2001 - 2018:

No-one woke up one morning and said “Let’s have a Ringing centre”. The early stages were drawn out over a number of years as the officers of the North East Branch of the Guild of Devonshire Ringers explored how best to develop method ringing.

THE BAMPTON PRACTICE BELL:

In 2001 the officers of the North East Branch decided to bid for funding for a practice bell and simulator through the Awards for All Programme administered by the Arts Council of England. The bid was for £4036.00 for the supply and installation of the practice bell, its bell frame and equipment by Nicholson Engineering within the tower of St. Michael and All Angels Church Brampton.

In January 2002 the NE Branch officers were informed that their bid was successful and would be funded in full, subject to the following conditions. The award was to be committed or spent within twelve months, Bampton PCC would obtain the necessary faculty from the Diocese of Exeter and the Bampton bell ringers would pay all the ancillary costs and provide all the additional labour required to support the services of one bell hanger to be provided by Nicholson Engineering. There was also a requirement to provide an end of award report showing how the equipment was being used as part of the NE Branch training programme.

The installation of the practice bell was completed by the end of October 2002 and since then the equipment has been used every week as part of the various training programmes developed by the NE Branch officers and by the Bampton bell ringers.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH HUNTSHAM:

Early in 2000 All Saints Church Huntsham joined a small group of churches located around St. Michael’s Bampton. This group later became known as the Hukeley Mission Community. Devon bell ringers knew of Huntsham as the home of Charles Troyte, the first President of the Guild of Devonshire Ringers which was established in 1874. In 2000 it was also known that the ring of eight bells in Huntsham church was in dire need of attention with the tenor and treble unringable and the tower roof in a very poor state of repair.

A small group of bell ringing enthusiasts decided that a modernised light ring of eight bells would link together very effectively with the practice bell and simulator being considered for Bampton tower.

A series of option appraisals resulted in the following summary of the work to be undertaken:

- The tower clock mechanism to be relocated in the old ringing room and the clock winding system electrified

- The removal of the sound lantern on the roof of the tower and the replacement of all the tower roof timbers and sheet lead coverings
- The sale of two of the existing eight bells and the provision of a new treble to be known as the Troyte bell and a new fifth bell to be known as the Presidents' bell. Seven of the revised ring of eight bells to be tuned to match the 17th century Pennington bell which was to remain uncut.
- The rehangng of all eight bells, with a tenor of approx 9cwt. In a new two tier metal frame located somewhat lower in the tower
- The installation of a sound management system enabling the sound output from the bells to be reduced outside the tower during practices, training sessions and periods of extended ringing
- The installation of bell access hatches throughout the intermediate floors in the tower
- The installation of an improved electrical power and lighting system throughout the tower
- The replacement of the ringing gallery floor and balustrade.

Following much discussion the Diocese of Exeter issued a faculty for the above work on 21 April 2004. During this period of four years a total of £67,000 was raised without help from Huntsham PCC, who were busy fund raising for other work to the church fabric. However, throughout the period of work the Huntsham community supported our volunteers in many different ways, through cash donations, through encouragement and enormous interest in the work and with cakes during tea breaks. On Monday 10 January 2005 the Bishop of Crediton dedicated the new bells and associated work to Huntsham bell tower.

During the course of the project it was suggested by Alan Hughes of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry that we should apply for the status of a Ringing Centre through the Ringing Centres Committee of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.

DISPLAY BOARDS:

The Troyte Ringing Centre team recognised that the number of active bell ringers within our geographical area of interest was rapidly declining, and thus a continuing programme of raising the public profile of tower bell ringing and recruitment of new ringers was seen as essential. Towers and ringing chambers are not the easiest places in which to discuss ringing matters; they are often cold and unwelcoming, may involve climbing stairs and sometimes present hazards of various kinds. Thus the process of raising public awareness and recruitment of new ringers may mean taking ringing out of the tower, with tower visits as an obvious essential part of the process.

Thus visual aids are appropriate. After much discussion we decided that a series of display boards on demountable stands produced to museum quality would provide a useful background for discussion of basic ringing issues.

Thus we produced, with professional assistance display boards which described the following aspects of ringing:

- How bells are cast and tuned
- The evolution of bell frames
- An annotated diagram of a bell hung for full circle ringing
- An introduction to call changes and method ringing
- An introduction to the Guild of Devonshire Ringers and its North East Branch
- An introduction to the Devon Association of Change Ringers

A DEMONSTRATION BELL:

Sometime after a series of local talks and a very successful stand at the Mid Devon Show in 2010, Peter Walter of Burlescombe informed us that he had a redundant small bell in his garden which he would willingly pass to the NE Branch, if they were interested in using it as a demonstration bell. His offer was accepted and although the bell was rather larger than anticipated it was hung in a purpose made wooden frame and a demountable stand. However, using this bell as a demonstration of full circle ringing has proved unpopular.

THE TROYTE RINGING CENTRE WEB SITE:

In 2005 Ken Smith, a non ringer who had been a major participant in the Huntsham project asked if we had ever thought about having a web site. After a previous abortive attempt to set up a web site Ken took over and has very effectively managed our web site ever since.

THE TROYTE RINGING CENTRE IN ACTION:

To what use have these facilities been put? Since 2004 we have provided a wide range of opportunities for

- Members of the general public to learn more about full circle tower bell ringing
- New recruits to develop good bell handling techniques
- Competent ringers to develop method ringing skills on six and eight bells
- Competent ringers to experience extended ringing through recorded performances of quarter peals and peals
- Church communities to understand how tower bells can become assets to the wider community rather than liabilities
- Developing strategies for the long term funding of future major rehangings works.

In 2007 we were awarded the Founders' Company prize as the best Ringing Centre.

MOVING TOWARDS A CHARITABLE STATUS:

Ringings Centres are only as good as those who use them. To provide a range of ringing related opportunities covering basic bell handling, rounds and call changes, methods on five, six, seven and eight bells in short touches, and extended ringing leading to quarter peals and peals, as well as theory sessions, refreshments and all the

other social ringing related activities, together with talks with local community groups requires an active and dedicated team of helpers. The tasks facing those helpers are made easier if there is active and enthusiastic support from churches, local communities and local ringing societies.

During 2015 we realised that trying to manage the affairs of the Troyte Ringing Centre with responsibilities split between Bampton PCC and Huntsham PCC, raised difficulties regarding banking and financial management, the insurance of those using the Ringing Centre, and the establishment of good communications with church communities, when most of the active participants within the Ringing Centre had no active participation in the life of either church. We started a series of discussions with local bell ringers and explored a range of options for the future management of the Centre. These discussions petered out and no enthusiastic conclusions were reached.

In 2017 we realised that the best model was charitable status in which the Troyte Ringing Centre would become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. We obtained CIO status on 30 July 2018 when the Troyte Ringing Centre was entered onto the Register of Charities with the Registered Charity Number 1179374.

The Troyte Ringing Centre has the following trustees:

Richard Barker	Holcombe Rogus
Leslie Edward Boyce	Tiverton
Mandy Burnett	Bampton
Michael Hatchett	Bampton
Patricia Hatchett	Bampton
Jennifer Jones	Tiverton
Sheila Joy Scofield	Tiverton