

Barnes Ringers and Friends in Cornwall

From modest beginnings 20 years ago the annual Barnes Ringers and Friends "Weekend" has become an institution. After a relatively low-key event in Kent and Sussex last year, all the stops were pulled out to make this year's tour possibly the best ever. On Tuesday we drifted down to Penzance by various routes and modes of transport, a few stopping at Truro for the cathedral practice, and congregated in the Yacht for supper.

Wednesday got off to a good start with Stedman Triples on the fine eight at Penzance. We then headed for Land's End, via general ringing at St Buryan (form an orderly queue for the tenor), and lunch at the "First and Last". The three at St Just were, shall we say, interesting. Later in the day there were shenanigans with parking at Mousehole ("Good job it wasn't me or we'd never have heard the last of it!") but soon the tinkling of handbells could be heard from around an upturned boat. Mike was advised that it might be prudent to apply the brakes of his wheelchair while perched on the edge of the harbour wall. Fresh fish from Newlyn featured prominently on the supper menu at the Ship.

The Yacht Inn has much to commend it: comfortable bedrooms with spectacular sea views, well-kept beer and a genial landlord. And the place seemed to be peculiarly conducive to vivid dreams which were discussed at the breakfast table, including the story of Maestro Hartley donning his tail coat and long white gloves to conduct an orchestral concert. The significance of a lorry load of Jersey Royals was not immediately obvious, although in retrospect it may have been a premonition (see below). Liz hinted darkly at tales of treachery and betrayal but declined to elaborate, while our poor organiser had dreamt that she was severely rebuked for booking dinner at a Thai restaurant when "we should be eating Cornish food".

The memory of Thursday's ringing, successful though it was, pales into insignificance. Griggs Quay Tea Rooms provided the best cream tea anyone had eaten for many a year – no wretched little plastic packets here but big bowls of home-made jam and proper clotted cream. Having piled it high on the warm scones, some resorted to spooning it up but were still defeated. Apparently the lady of the house runs it as a hobby and had opened specially for us. She bustled around with the scones and cream while her husband pottered in and out, dispensing pots of tea and chatting amiably about the bird life on the Hayle estuary. Quote of the day: "I've only been here three days and my shorts have shrunk already."

Friday found us travelling the narrow winding lanes to the little villages of the Lizard peninsula. Philip, leading the band into Mannacan church, barely touched the door when an alarm went off. It eventually turned out to be on the school opposite but his timing was impeccable. St Anthony church, in a picturesque waterside setting, is still lit by candlelight. Quarters included a first as conductor, rung to compliment an absent friend on attaining his "three score and ten". At lunch time we were running at a 100% success rate but with Stedman Caters and 23-spliced Minor on the afternoon's agenda we couldn't possibly keep it up, could we? Amazingly both quarters were scored with the bonus of an impromptu one of Bob Major in hand.

There was drama in the village of Constantine on Saturday morning. A tractor towing an enormous trailer full of potatoes (remember that dream?), in the process of negotiating a carelessly parked car, reversed into a wall outside the Methodist Chapel, partly demolishing

it. In the 20 minutes or so it took to clear the road a queue of at least six cars had built up, half of them containing ringers en-route to Mawnan. Thankfully we got there in time. Fears that the very light bells might be difficult to handle proved unfounded, leaving the “experts” on standby free to enjoy the view across a steep wooded cove or inspect the ancient bier house which now serves as a disabled toilet. Auntie Stella had of course rung there when they were a three.

Dinner at the Queen’s Hotel was the occasion for reminiscences on previous tours (“Grandsire Triples eluded us again!”) and a presentation to Chris Northeast, without whose local knowledge and organisational skills this year’s wouldn’t have been possible. Afterwards, most people took the opportunity for a breath of sea air while admiring the beautiful (if premature) harvest moon casting its golden light over the rippling waters and jagged rocks and pondering the mysterious appearance of an oil drilling rig in the bay (“It wasn’t there this morning”).

After Sunday service ringing there was coffee on St Michael’s Mount (the indefatigable Christine had even organised the tides). The first arrivals were able to look back over the causeway with binoculars and witness the unusual spectacle of their leader walking (instantly identifiable by the trademark black bag). Those who ventured up to the castle were met by a bracing wind. Crab sandwiches were pricey but undeniably fresh and accompanied by a barbershop quartet.

At this juncture, some of the party headed for home. Quarters on the last day are often a little fraught and, with the added pressure of only one loss so far, 8-spliced at Tuckingmill soon became “Yorkshire and score”. But DNCB at Penzance just wasn’t going to go, so, with the curry already on order, we opted for an early finish and a quick pint or two before supper.

As the remnant prepared to disperse on Monday morning it was noticed that the oil rig, which had been there all day Sunday, had vanished as suddenly as it had arrived. Realising to our astonishment that we had been in Cornwall six days without a single pasty being consumed or even appearing on the menu, a couple of us went to Portreath for the definitive article. All in all, it was a most satisfying trip, from a gastronomic as much as from a ringing point of view (Oh, I nearly forgot the honey and lavender ice cream). Grateful thanks to Eddie and the Barnes ringers and especially to Christine.

TN

QUARTER PEALS:

Penzance, Cornwall. 16 Jul, 1296 Stedman Triples: Stella Shell 1, Edmund Hartley 2, Trisha Hawkins 3, Sheila Cheesman 4, Gill Tomlinson 5, Philip Pratt 6, Tony Nunn (C) 7, Jeremy Cheesman 8.

Sennen, Cornwall. 16 Jul, 1272 Cambridge S Minor: Edmund Hartley 1, Stella Shell 2, Tony Nunn 3, Gill Tomlinson 4, Christine Northeast (C) 5, Philip Pratt 6.

Madron, Cornwall. 16 Jul, 1260 Grandsire Triples: Sarah Percival (75th Q)1, Stella Shell 2, Helen Udal 3, Gill Tomlinson 4, Mike Wigney 5, Adrian Udal (500th Q)(C) 6, Christine Northeast 7, Tony Nunn 8.

Paul, Cornwall. 16 Jul, 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Sheila Cheesman 1, Helen Udal 2, Jill Wigney 3, Sarah Percival 4, Jeremy Cheesman (C) 5, Adrian Udal 6. Birthday compliment to Robert Archer, brother of 2.

Crowan, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1280 Superlative S Major: Trisha Hawkins 1, Edmund Hartley 2, Jill Wigney 3, Jane Hitchens 4, Mike Wigney 5, Christine Northeast 6, Gill Tomlinson 7, Tony Nunn (C) 8.

Gwinear, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1260 Plain Bob Minor: Sarah Percival 1, Stella Shell 2, Sheila Cheesman 3, Eddie Heath 4, Jeremy Cheesman 5, Philip Pratt (C) 6.

St Erth, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Stella Shell 1, Christine Northeast 2, Trisha Hawkins 3, Sarah Percival 4, Edmund Hartley (C) 5, Eddie Heath 6.

Lelant, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1272 Spliced Surprise Minor (3m: London, Wells, Cunecastre): Jane Smith 1, Sheila Cheesman 2, Mike Wigney (C) 3, Jill Wigney 4, Jeremy Cheesman 5, Philip Pratt 6.

Ludgvan, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1320 Norwich S Minor: Philip Pratt 1, Stella Shell 2, Mike Wigney 3, Jill Wigney 4, Tony Nunn 5, Gill Tomlinson (1st in m as C) 6.

Gulval, Cornwall. 17 Jul, 1280 Plain Bob Major: Sarah Percival 1, Trisha Hawkins 2, Edmund Hartley 3, Sheila Cheesman 4, Eddie Heath 5, Christine Northeast 6, Francis Ring-Davies 7, Jeremy Cheesman (C) 8.

Mawgan-in-Meneage, Cornwall. 18 Jul, 1260 Plain Bob Minor: Trisha Hawkins 1, Mike Wigney 2, Sheila Cheesman 3, Eddie Heath 4, Francis Ring-Davies 5, Jeremy Cheesman (C) 6.

Manaccan, Cornwall. 18 Jul, 1320 Plain Bob Doubles: Christine Northeast 1, Gill Tomlinson 2, Helen Udal (C) 3, Philip Pratt 4, Adrian Udal 5, Tony Nunn 6. A 70th birthday compliment to James Ingham.

St Keverne, Cornwall. 18 Jul, 1289 Stedman Caters: Jill Wigney (C) 1, Stella Shell 2, Mike Wigney 3, Trisha Hawkins 4, Edmund Hartley 5, Gill Tomlinson 6, Sheila Cheesman 7, Jeremy Cheesman 8, Tony Nunn 9, Philip Pratt 10. A 70th birthday compliment to James Ingham.

Landewednack, Cornwall. 18 Jul, 1264 Plain Bob Major: Jill Wigney 1-2, Jeremy Cheesman 3-4, Mike Wigney (C) 5-6, Sheila Cheesman 7-8.

Landewednack, Cornwall. 18 Jul, 1440 Spliced S Minor (23m: Carlisle 11, Cambridge 12): Christine Northeast 1, Mike Wigney (C) 2, Gill Tomlinson 3, Jill Wigney 4, Philip Pratt (most methods) 5, Tony Nunn 6.

Wendron, Cornwall. 19 Jul, 1276 Cambridge S Minor: Eddie Heath 1, Stella Shell 2, Francis Ring-Davies 3, Christine Northeast 4, Mike Wigney (C) 5, Sheila Cheesman 6.

Mawnan, Cornwall. 19 Jul, 1260 Mixed Doubles (3m: 60 Stedman, 720 Grandsire, 480 Plain Bob): Trisha Hawkins 1, Philip Pratt 2, Helen Udal 3, Adrian Udal 4, Edmund Hartley (C) 5, Sarah Percival 6.

Perranarworthal, Cornwall. 19 Jul, 1284 Plain Bob Minor: Edmund Hartley 1, Francis Ring-Davies 2, Trisha Hawkins 3, Eddie Heath 4, Gill Tomlinson 5, Tony Nunn (C) 6.

Gwennap, Cornwall. 19 Jul, 1260 Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Bob Doubles: Jill Wigney 1, Stella Shell 2, Helen Udal 3, Mike Wigney (C) 4, Adrian Udal 5, Sarah Percival 6. Birthday compliment to Bronson Percival, brother of 6, on his 60th birthday.

Redruth, Cornwall. 19 Jul, 1280 Yorkshire S Major: Sheila Cheesman 1, Helen Udal 2, Christine Northeast 3, Tony Nunn 4, Gill Tomlinson 5, Adrian Udal 6, Francis Ring-Davies 7, Philip Pratt (C) 8.

Tuckingmill, Cornwall. 20 Jul, 1280 Yorkshire S Major: Trisha Hawkins 1, Stella Shell 2, Edmund Hartley 3, Sheila Cheesman 4, Philip Pratt 5, Gill Tomlinson 6, Tony Nunn 7, Jeremy Cheesman (C) 8.