

Ringling for the 300th anniversary of Stedman's death

Fabian Stedman is often dubbed 'the father of change ringing'. He is best known to most modern ringers as the author of the method that bears his name. It stands out among methods not only because it is the most commonly rung principle but because its structure makes possible enormous diversity of composition and music without excessive length. But Stedman's most significant contribution to the Exercise was undoubtedly in connection with the first two books on change ringing: *Tintinnalogia* in 1668 was a joint effort with Richard Duckworth who supplied much of the content that Stedman published. Stedman later wrote *Campanalogia*, which was published in 1677.

We take books on ringing for granted (and other sources like the *Ringling World Diary* or ringing websites) and it is hard for us to imagine a world where the only way to learn about methods was by personal explanation or private hand written notes. Change ringing was still in an early stage of development in the late 17th century. The dominant form was 'plain changes', where only one pair of bells swap in each change, and it was gradually being supplanted by 'cross peals', where several pairs may cross at each change – which we consider normal today.

Fabian Stedman was baptised at Yarkhill Church on 7 December 1640. He was the second son of the Reverend Francis Stedman, so unlike his older brother who entered the priesthood, Fabian was apprenticed to Daniel Pakeman, a master printer in London, where Stedman became a prominent ringer. In later life he appears to have dropped out of ringing, and also changed jobs to become auditor to Customs and Excise for the Crown.

On 17 October 1713 he wrote his will, and a few weeks later, on 16 November, he was buried at the parish church of St Andrew Undershaft in the City of London, so the 300th anniversary of his burial is on Saturday 16 November 2013.

This is not just an event for ringers to celebrate by ringing, but it is also a major opportunity for us to bring ringing more into the public eye with coverage in national and local press, radio and TV. The Central Council will be generating national publicity, and we hope that local bands and ringing societies will contact their local press and broadcasting stations to promote their own ringing for this anniversary. It is a good opportunity to increase your local community's awareness of what you do (and maybe even gain some recruits).

As many towers as possible should try to ring at some time during the day on 16 November, or if not on the day, then shortly before or after. Having the anniversary on a Saturday should make it easier for those bands who want to ring peals and quarter peals.

Bands that are capable of doing so should try to ring quarters or peals of Stedman, but bands that do not feel able or confident to ring Stedman are encouraged to ring something else. A quarter peal in any method, is a fitting tribute to 'the father of change ringing'.

Bands not wishing to ring peals or quarters are encouraged to ring short touches of Stedman, especially touches of 300. For Doubles ringers, 300 can be achieved by ringing five plain courses or two 120s and a plain course. More ambitious touches of Doubles, and touches of Triples or above, are available on the Central Council website. There will also be touches of 1713 Stedman on the Council website for those who want to ring a back-dated date touch.

As well as ringing, it is important for us all to ensure that the non-ringers in our communities know why we are ringing. This is one of the few opportunities when we can make ringing the main news story, and not just use bells as cheer leaders for a story about something else.

To help you with your local publicity you are welcome to use any of the material about Stedman and change ringing on the Council's website. The Council also provides advice about local ringing publicity, which you should find useful. If there is any other way that the Council can help you, please contact us.

John Harrison (on behalf of Central Council PR Committee)

Information for Stedman publicity and touches of 300 Stedman : cccbr.org.uk/stedman/

Advice on working with the media: cccbr.org.uk/pr/advice/media/

General advice on ringing PR: cccbr.org.uk/pr/advice/

Contact: stedman@cccbr.org.uk