

Essay for the Friends No. 2

INDEXES

An absolute mine of information is contained in the pages of the main ringing periodicals that have been published in the last 120 years or so. The general church paper Church Bells, published weekly from 31 December 1870, had a page on bells and ringing, but after Bell News started publication - as a monthly paper from February 1881 and then weekly from 8 April 1882 - the importance of the earlier paper declined. Similarly, the start of publication of the Ringing World on 24 March 1911 hastened the decline of Bell News and led to its closure in 1915, while the Ringing World has continued to flourish.

The information in these pages is easily available only with the aid of a good index, and the Central Council Library is fortunate in having indexes to all these periodicals, compiled by Cyril Wratten. All the ringing pages that appeared in Church Bells between 1870 and 1884 have been indexed in detail, including names, places and subjects. An earlier version of the index covering places and subjects is available for loan either in photocopy form or on microfiche. For Bell News the index is of places and subjects, and can be borrowed in both photocopy form or on microfiche. This index is lengthy, almost 500 pages, and took an immense amount of work. Remarkably, it was compiled before computers were generally available.

Cyril has also compiled an index to the Ringing World for 1911 - 1992. This is not as detailed as the other indexes - for obvious reasons - but gives main topics and articles, and is 127 pages long. It is available for loan in photocopy form only.

To complete the set of Cyril's indexes, it should be mentioned that he has compiled very detailed indexes of the two short-lived ringing periodicals, Campanology (1896/7) and The Bellringer (1907). It is hoped to make these indexes available for loan in photocopy form in the near future.

For a certain limited number of years detailed annual indexes to the Ringing World were compiled and issued. These cover the years 1957 - 69 and 1984 to the present. The Library has a full set available for loan.

An index of obituaries that appeared in Bell News and The Ringing World during the period 1881 - 1999 has been prepared by Chris Ridley and John Eisel, both members of the Library Committee. This has proved a most useful tool and the investment of time has been well worthwhile.