

CATALOGUE OF BELL RINGING BADGES AND MEDALS



INTRODUCTION

This catalogue is based firmly on the work of Chris Ridley. In 2002 he published a catalogue in paper form and updated it the following year. This revised edition was subsequently placed on the Library Committee web site of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers as an online catalogue in May 2005.

In 2008 Chris published a second edition of the printed catalogue, considerably enlarged by the addition of numerous additional badges. The current online version has added still more examples. It represents an attempt to list all known bell ringing badges that have been produced. Illustrations, where available, are shown, with accompanying notes to describe the composition, size and other details of the badge. Chris sought information from ringing organisations and a number of individuals who have built up their own collections. A survey undertaken by the Library Committee on behalf of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers was disappointing, in that many organisations appeared to have only limited knowledge of badges they had previously produced. In the circumstances the information provided is unlikely to be comprehensive. The Library Steward would therefore welcome any corrections or additional facts that can be added at librarysteward@cccbr.org.uk

Most items in the catalogue, and in the Library Committee's own collection, are cast metallic lapel badges. There are, however, some other items where it was thought that they were relevant and interesting. The possibility of a national ringers' badge under the auspices of the Central Council arose in 1914, when a resolution was put by Revd G F Coleridge, on behalf of the Oxford D G, 'That the Central Council approve and issue a national badge for ringers'. After discussion, the matter was adjourned for a year, 'in order that the feelings of the Associations might be taken'. At the 1914 meeting, the adjourned resolution found no proposer and was dropped.

'The wearing of a badge is of course a matter of individual taste, and is never likely to come into general vogue among ringers. That is one strong reason against an attempt to issue anything like an official badge, but there are others equally as strong against the Council entering upon an undertaking of this kind. In the first place many associations have their own distinctive decoration and those who owe allegiance to a county or diocesan organisation and like to wear these little medallions would, we think, prefer to have that which would identify them with their own society rather than wear a badge which would have no special distinction. Moreover, tastes vary and what would please one would not appeal to another. Under present circumstances, they have a fairly varied selection provided by enterprising firms to choose from, and would much prefer, we believe, to make their own choice. The question stands deferred for a year by the Council, but we doubt if, when it comes up next time, it will receive very extended support, although we are ready to admit that from a sentimental point of view a national badge has a good deal to be said for it.' *'The Ringing World' editorial 19th June 1914*

There was a later suggestion that lapel badges could be used as an indication of ringing ability or qualification. This was quickly dropped after this letter appeared in *'The Ringing World'* on 27th October 1922

'Sir, - In reference to ringers' badges, etc., I would suggest a medal in bronze, silver and gold for Plain, Treble Bob and Surprise peals, the medal to vary in size according to the weight of bell rung for the first peal; also a bar might be added to denote lengths above 5,000; a chevron to be worn for every peal rung. Think of the man with a thousand or so! Then for the convenience of conductors making up teams, perhaps the Editor would compile a small handbook entitled 'Form at a glance.' As to anyone who rang 25 per cent. of peals in any one method, he should be suitably 'crimed'. Thus should we know and be known. Yours, T H Vallance

The 'Specials' part of the catalogue gives an indication of the wide range of bell and ringing related badges and medals available, other than those simply indicating membership of a particular Guild or Association. It also illustrates some of the other badges created for special occasions or for organisations other than ringing associations. It is incomplete and the Library Steward would therefore welcome any corrections or additional facts that can be added.

In 2015 the collection received a welcome boost following a serendipitous discovery in an old 'Ringing World' and a subsequent meeting with a noted character in Cornish ringing. The story is told in this unpublished article:

'Over the last couple of years the Central Council Librarian has been working on updating the catalogue of the collection of ringing badges, which was first published by Chris Ridley in 2002. Much time was spent trawling through 'The Ringing World' to find details of designers, manufacturers and dates. One interesting item is reproduced below from the edition of 12th December 1977.'



Badges

Sir, — The photo is of my collection of ringer's badges from various ringing Associations.

This project started in October/November 1974 and I thank all secretaries who have been so obliging in enabling me to make such a collection — probably the only one in the country.

Listed below are the names of Associations of which I have *not* been able to obtain a badge. I appeal to any Association that has, in the past, had a member's badge (and perhaps no longer has one) to help me complete this collection by advising me of a source of supply. Any costs and postage would be sent by return on receipt of the badge. — Yours, etc.,

D. STEPHENS

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Australian & New Zealand, Barnsley & District, Doncaster & District, East Derby & West Notts., Arch. Halifax, Halifax & District, London County, Midland Counties, North Staffordshire, Oxford Society, Saffron Walden, Scottish, Selby & District, South Derby & North Leicester, Stafford Arch. Society, The Rhodesian Guild, and any University & College Societies & Guilds.

'Although the letter was published in 1977, the Librarian thought it was worth trying to get in touch with the writer, Denis Stephens. Denis was delighted to receive his first reply after nearly forty years and several letters were exchanged giving more details about the collection, which was to be left to Denis' granddaughter. A few more letters were exchanged, and eventually it was agreed that the Central Council could acquire the collection, with Denis's granddaughter, a non-ringer, more than happy to receive money instead of the badges.'

So, last October, the Librarian made the long trip to the Lizard peninsula, where Denis still lived at the same address. He was made very welcome by Denis and his wife, Eileen, and no time was lost in examining the fine array of badges in their display cabinet. There was a surprise for Denis who had said he had always regretted not being able to obtain an ANZAB badge. The Librarian was able to tell him why he had failed back in 1975, and presented him with a spare from the CC collection.'

Mr. Stevens of Cornwall, England, wrote, as a collector, asking to purchase an ANZAB badge. This was discussed and eventually decided not to accede to the request as it was not clear if he was in fact a ringer. John Martin of Bendigo considered that this was a requirement which had been decided on in the original discussions at the time badges were introduced.

Report of ANZAB annual general meeting in 1975

'The business was soon concluded with Denis naming his price (prompted by Eileen) and a cheque being handed over. The plan was for fifteen badges to be added to the CC collection with the duplicates to be sold to fund further purchases.'

There was one badge which Denis declined to part with as it had come from his local tower, Manaccan. It was an example of the Truro Diocesan Guild Silver Medal, a watch chain medals which had been introduced by 1906. To be eligible members had to demonstrate the ability 'to ring by method each of the working bells in 120 half-pull changes.' This particular example is believed it is one of a set presented by Lt Col C F Jerram to the band when he conducted the local ringers in the first peal on the bells of Manaccan on 22nd May 1935. This was rung for the Silver Jubilee of George V and was Jerram's first peal as conductor and the first peal for the other members of the band.'

A few days after returning home, the Librarian received a package containing the Silver Medal. Denis had had a change of heart and decided that the Central Council collection would be a suitable home for this most cherished item.'

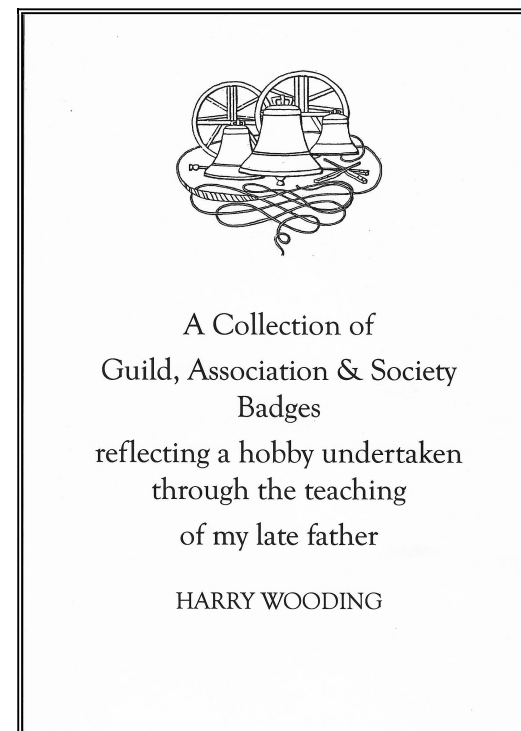


'There was time for a quick photograph of Denis and his badges before setting off on the long trek north. The timing of the meeting was very fortuitous, as sadly Denis died early the following year.'

In 2020 we were delighted to receive the Tim Wooding Collection of almost 200 Guild, Association and Society badges. Tim's father, Harry, had started him on this hobby and Tim had pursued it throughout his life. When Chris Ridley was initiating the Central Council badge collection he collaborated with Tim Wooding to share knowledge gained from their respective researches over the years. After Tim's untimely death, Doug Hird (at that time leading the Historical and Archive workgroup) negotiated with Tim's family for the collection to come on indefinite loan to the Library, where it will be kept separate but the information it contains used to develop the Library badge catalogue. We are grateful to Tim's family and to Doug for bringing this about.



Harry Wooding (1907 – 1981)



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