

# Delving into the Past

Graham Collyer takes a look at days gone by in the South Hams

## Ringling in the old and new



Contributed

Bellringers at Stoke Fleming in 1902. Those identified are (from left) back: W Purcell, B S Martin, John Mitchelmore, W Merrifield, A Tolman, J Wallace, T Marks, A H Pook, C Isaac. Front: H Leonard, C Langworthy, C Marks, C Hambling



WHEN the bells of St Peter's Parish Church in Stoke Fleming ring out again in a few weeks, it will be the resumption of a way of life in the village that can be traced back to 1777.

This week the church has taken delivery of two new bells, to add to the six that have rung out for the last 240 years, plus a refurbished bell-frame from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. When these have been installed and bedded in, ringing will start again.

The original six bells were cast by Pennington Bros of Cornwall in 1777, and one was recast by Gillett & Johnson in 1928.

Peter Bailey, on behalf of the village's ringing team, says: 'The bells of Stoke Fleming church have been rung regularly since they were installed. Their sonorous voices have spoken out to inform the community of church services and special occasions throughout history, and to provide recreation for the teams of ringers that have taken part in hotly contested inter-village competitions.'



Contributed

The Elliott, Dietz and Skinner father-and-son combinations ringing in Ermington church in the mid-1960s

'In Devon, church bell ringing was a popular activity long before the days when radio and television were able to bring mass entertainment and news of other sports

into the home. Devon still has more towers with church bells than any other county in the country.

'Emily Prescott was one of the first lady ringers in Stoke

Fleming in the 1930s. She married Christian Dietz who later became the tower captain. Their son John is carrying on the tradition as the present captain.'

Peter has contributed

the photographs on this page, the earliest picture of which shows the Stoke Fleming band at the station on an outing while the Rev Joseph Samuel Exell was the rector (1890-1910).

Above

A photograph from 1953 taken at St Peter's, Stoke Fleming (from left) back: F J Pook (churchwarden), S Seeking, B Winsor, J Skinner, C Dietz, S J Bowden, M Ferris, D Skinner, L Saunders. Front: W Ward, W Mitchelmore (captain), Rev L A Erett, A D Teague (churchwarden), W Winsor



The coveted Ipplepen Deanery Shield won by Stoke Fleming in 1970. From left, back: J Dietz, D Skinner, C Elliott, R Elliott. Front: Mrs E Dietz, the Rev R S Chalk, C Dietz (captain)

Contributed



Picture courtesy of the Purcell Collection

The Rev Joseph Samuel Exell, rector of St Peter's for 20 years until his death in 1910, is pictured in the centre of the front row in this photograph taken at a railway station, possibly Kingswear. Mr Exell's son, Noel, died in the Second Battle of Ypres in July 1915, when serving with the King's Royal Rifle Corps. He was born in the rectory at Stoke Fleming in 1890, shortly after his father had taken up the living in the parish

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