

Check your Nuts—before they Bolt

I was ringing the treble at Seal Chart on Sunday 12th August, for Sunday Service, when something fell on my shoulder, bounced on the floor, and then hit Annette MacKellar's foot - she was on the second. No, it wasn't a chip, but a five inch bolt, with two washers on the shank. There didn't appear to be anything wrong with the treble, so we rang the bells down, with a view to investigating the mystery later in the week.

Phil Jones and I did this the following Saturday, and Phil quickly found that one of the two bolts connecting the two halves of the wheel was missing (the halving or wheel bolts connect the two long rails of each half wheel), and the nut was in the pit. The photo shows the errant bits, placed either side of the hole where they should have been. Since the bells had been thoroughly checked only eight weeks before, on 12th June, we reckoned the prolonged hot spell had caused the wood to shrink, allowing the nut to work loose. Why there were two washers on the shank when it fell, and no washers, as far as we could see, in the pit, has not been satisfactorily answered. The odds of the washer at the nut end of the bolt both falling down two floors and ending up on the shank is highly improbable. But, then, if two washers had been put together at the other end when the bells were rehung ...?!



As a result of this incident, and a very minor one at Sevenoaks a week later, where a nut was found to be slightly loose on the third's wheel, Stella Wooldridge and I decided to check Chiddingstone's bells. They had been inspected very carefully on 28th April 2018, and we have found that a six-monthly rigorous check is normally sufficient to catch problems before they become large ones.

Stella and I looked on 7th September, and the situation was not as good as we would have expected. Quite a few of the wheel nuts were slightly loose (we would normally expect no more than one or two to be so), and most of the stays had one nut a little bit loose. More worryingly, on the sixth, where the headstock is attached to the wheel, one of the nuts was missing (see photo).



So, on a regular basis, and particularly after extreme hot or wet spells

USE YOUR NUT - CHECK YOUR BOLTS

❖ *Fraser Clift, Kemsing*

Post Script A few weeks later it was found that one of the two clapper nuts on the fourth at Leigh was missing, and worse still, the top bolt on the third had disappeared, and the second was in imminent danger of coming off. These bells were checked by Alan Hughes of Whitechapel in October 2017, and have had visual checks since then. Unlike the other examples recorded above, these can only be explained by the metal expanding in the extreme heat, leaving the nuts loose when the temperature dropped. Stella tells me that they have never experienced anything like this before.