

SHIP'S BELL IS USED AS FONT

It's An Old Naval Custom

In a recent ceremony in the Chapel of Our Lady St. Mary on Paget Island, Archdeacon John Stow baptised the infant daughter of a member of the staff of Nonsuch Training School, using the school's inverted ship's bell as a font.

This is the first time in Bermuda that the Archdeacon has performed the service observing the ancient Naval custom, although he baptised many babies abroad in his capacity as Naval Chaplain, using ship's bells on various vessels.

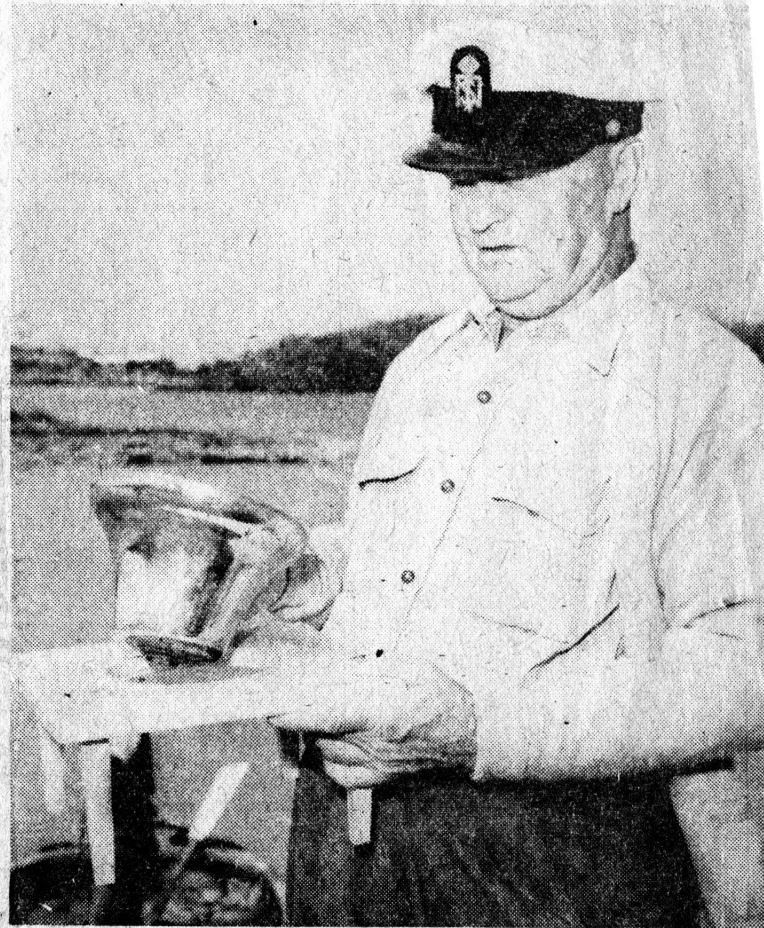
The child on Paget Island was christened at the regular morning service which is held every alternate Thursday. Archdeacon Stow told a Royal Gazette Weekly reporter that each bell has a tongue. When the baby is a girl the tongue is not kept inside the bell, by ancient custom. "They say a girl

has enough tongue anyway!" said the Archdeacon.

On the high seas a baby is christened as soon as possible after birth and in the old days was said to be of the Parish of Stepney (London) and was registered in that parish. The receptacle used was always the ship's bell. Babies born to wives of officers serving aboard a battleship would, of course, not be born on shipboard but could be christened on the ship when it was in port.

BELLS CHRISTENED, TOO

Archdeacon Stow mentioned that bells themselves are christened. Some famous ones are Big Ben (which is not a clock, but a bell), Great Tom, and Harry. The old death knell consisted of nine tailors and in St. George's today the custom is observed. Nine times the bell is tolled for the death of a man, seven for a woman, and five for a child. Together they add to 21, and the bells are rung 21 times for Our Lord on Good Friday for all mankind.



Mr. Arthur Tucker, superintendent at Paget Island's Nonsuch Training School, holds the school's ship's bell in the inverted position in which it was used as a baptismal font.