

# Middlesex Bell News



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## SECOND ONLINE-ONLY LOCKDOWN ISSUE

*Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London,  
kindly agreed to a Zoom interview with Bell News:*



The Patron of our Guild, Bishop Sarah, has followed a rather unusual course to her appointment in March 2018 to be Bishop of London, ranking only behind the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. Having qualified as a nurse in 1984, she sought to apply her interest in a holistic approach to patient care both on the ward with specialist training at the Royal Marsden and with further academic qualification. In 1999 at the age of 37 she was appointed Chief Nursing Officer at the Department of Health, the youngest person ever so appointed, and remained in post until 2004.

In 1998, however, Bishop Sarah had started theological training for the priesthood, and from 2001 until 2004 served as an unpaid curate in Battersea. She commented that as Chief Nursing Officer, travelling first class in trains and often with a driver when going by car, it would have been easy to become somewhat removed from the immediacy of dealing with patients suffering pain or facing death. She found that working as a curate in her parish in Battersea provided some balance, and her theological and academic studies provided a theoretical structure for the challenges that arose. Her aim is always to be a “reflective practitioner”.

How did she manage her husband, children, all her academic work, and two jobs, all at the same time? “You must be very efficient,” Bell News commented rather nervously. Without claiming to be efficient, Bishop Sarah did acknowledge that an academic assignment might have been completed on a bench in Rugby station while waiting for a train. We get the picture.

The three churches in her Battersea patch had no bells, and it was not until, after ordination, she moved to Sutton that she encountered handbells and for the first time saw what change ringers were doing, though she didn’t take up the Exercise herself. She gained an MA at Heythrop instead.

Bishop Sarah was appointed a Canon of Salisbury Cathedral in 2012, but, as a cruel fate would have it, Salisbury is one of only three English Cathedrals which has no peal of bells, making do with the oldest clock (1386) in England instead. However, the city has other towers with peals of bells, and Bishop Sarah says that their children grew up surrounded by bells, not least the Cathedral clock which chimes every 15 minutes, day and night. She and her children have always been conscious of bells around their various homes, and her family miss them when they fall silent, as they have done during lockdown.

In 2015 Bishop Sarah was consecrated Bishop and became Suffragan Bishop of Crediton. Holy Cross church in Crediton has a ring of 12 Whitechapel bells, cast in 2004 and 2006, so in Crediton and in many other churches in her area she was very accustomed to the sound of bells. She remembers blessing the bells of St Mary, Hemyock, where No. 5 has the enigmatic motto “True Hearts and Sound Bottoms”, and of course met many ringers who were members of their church or church workers.

When visiting churches Bishop Sarah has always tried to meet the ringers because of their role in making the church and its services known in the neighbourhood. Churches have a central role in the community, for worship and members of the church, but also for those of other faiths or none. Her view is that all are welcome to ring – “It’s a joy that those who are not members of the church come to ring”.

She is aware, of course, that ringers often leave the church after ringing, unseen by the incumbent or members of the church. She would encourage ringers always to build relationships, perhaps best done around activities other than ringing, so that each church’s ringers are known and recognised as part of the wider community centred around the church. Ringers are always welcome to attend services, but could perhaps take part in any of the many outreach activities that most parishes run.

And how does Bishop Sarah take time out? Her daughter learnt pottery in her teens, and Bishop Sarah took it up too in order to have time with her. She finds it a completely absorbing activity, and has been able to give it more time during the Covid-19 lockdown when some of her normal duties have been curtailed. However she would not make great claims for her skill, and says that her level is “Making large pots”.

Bishop Sarah spoke warmly about the sound of bells, and seemed delighted to have the bells of St Paul’s as her very own. She discreetly indicated that she was doing what she could to persuade the government to make a return to normal ringing possible, and all members of the Guild will be grateful to our Patron for her efforts in that direction.

Bishop Sarah concluded the interview by expressing her thanks to ringers for the time they committed. It was clear that she views ringing as an integral and valued part of the church’s position in the community and welcomes all ringers to take part.

## Ringling for the Grenfell dead

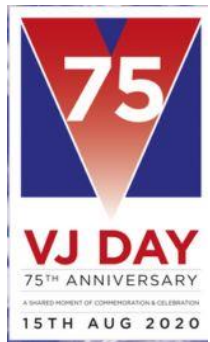
*Illustration removed*

At the request of Bishop Graham Tomlin, bishop of Kensington, on 14th June towers across the Association commemorated those who died and those who suffered in the Grenfell Tower fire three years ago. Across the country at least 166 towers tolled 72 times for the dead and then 3 times more, one for each year since the disaster. In our Association 9 towers recorded tolling for Grenfell, and many others did so without recording the event.

## VJ Day and ‘Crying out for peace’

*Bruno Peek, Pageantmaster, tells Bell News:*

Plans for a worldwide commemoration of VE Day, May 8th, were disrupted by the Covid lockdown, but attention was then focused on the 75th anniversary of VJ day, August 15th. Across the world more than 100 pipers played “Battle’s over”, while a similar number of town criers worldwide called out the ‘Cry for Peace’. Although the CCCBR did not endorse the appeal for towers in the UK to toll 75 times at 11:10, more than 10 towers in our Association arranged to do so in compliance with the health precautions in force.



## Annual General Meeting

*Lucy Chandhial, N&E District Secretary, updates Association members:*

It is our intention to hold the Annual General Meeting for the Association on Saturday 10th October in a virtual format. We expect to make it possible for all members to join via phone or via computer / smart phone. Please keep this date in your diary (unlike so many other planned ringing events this year) and more information will be provided by email nearer the time.

## Annual Report of the Association

All tower contacts, and anyone who requested one, should now have received a paper copy of the 2019-20 Annual Report by post – or have received an email from me asking for confirmation of the contact details held. Anyone who has not received their copy should please contact me – preferably by email at [jill.wigney@googlemail.com](mailto:jill.wigney@googlemail.com) - and I will send one out. *Jill Wigney, Membership Secretary*

## Whitechapel bell foundry

*Bell News architecture correspondent writes:*



The Whitechapel foundry having been on the present site since 1570, closed in 2017 and the site was sold for £7.8 million.

The developer proposes to build a hotel, café, and “small production facility” on the site, complete with a gesture to its history on the roof.



*Artist's impression*

In January 2020 the Secretary of State called in the proposal for a public enquiry, originally set for May, but then postponed to October 6th. Whether and how this enquiry will take place is not clear. Updates may be found at <https://spitalfieldslife.com/> as more information becomes available, or check <https://hackney.gov.uk/planning-applications>.

## Bell Restoration report

*Steve Jakeman, Bell Restoration Officer, reports:*

St John at Hackney needed more than just dusting off the bells, tightening a few nuts and putting the ropes back - far from it! They were last rung in November 2018. The church has had a £5m+ restoration project, with sundry delays plus 8 weeks more with lock down.

Services restart on September 13th. By then we should have replaced the mesh on the louvres, up-graded the sound control system, redecorated the ringing room, put back all the peal boards and installed the simulator. We now have a dedicated kitchen area with a sink and running water in one of the alcoves and additional storage space.

## Virtual Bells – Ropesight Restored

*Angela Slocumbe offers a guide:*

Since COVID-19 stopped church services, weekly bell ringing sessions are on hold. With towers silent, what can newbies getting to grips with call changes, plain hunt and method ringing do to practice ?

My memory's not what it was when I first learnt the basics and enjoyed ringing back in the seventies. Whilst one can't replicate the supportive ensemble of a tower practice session. Steve Scanlon's Change Ringing Toolkit is an amazing resource that can help those like myself trying to retain, learn or improve their skills during this unprecedented time.

I relied on the Ropesight Tutor when I returned to bell ringing. It is a simple effective tool. Fantastic for visual learners trying to memorise new methods or positions. The bell ringing community is modest, kind and supportive, so when I could not find 'Ropesight Tutor' on the updated toolkit Steve Scanlon responded to my email and resolved the issue immediately.

Designed and developed by Steve the change ringing software is a free resource provided to help new and experienced campanologists. It can be located at <http://www.ringbell.co.uk/software/>. Those wanting to ensure progress made is not lost can use the Ropesight Tutor to help simulate the actions required for towers with up to eight bells. With rounds, call changes and plain hunts to practice you can select a bell and the configuration of your home tower.

Whilst we cannot be sure when the nations bells will be back in action. I would like to thank all those like Steve Scanlon doing their best to ensure some virtual practice is available.

## eKenton....?



*Sonia Field explains:*

An accidental consequence of Lockdown is the emergence of eKenton (*Ringing Room*). Previously we had established a 'hub' in the north of the S&W District offering a regular programme of training and practice based on ART's Learning the Ropes scheme.

Primarily for local ringers, but also open to those from further afield, events were proving increasingly popular, so we decided to continue our learning virtually using Zoom and *Ringing Room*.

With the support of Dave Bassford, our Master, and other helpers we have held a series of successful theory and practical sessions covering Call Changes, Plain Hunt, Plain Bob, simple method structure and place bells. eKenton has enabled early stage ringers to continue progressing, and helps to maintain involvement and motivation.

## Questions to ponder

*Rachel Seghers writes:*

The instruction said that "Questions to ponder" was essential preparation for the training session on Sunday 12th July. Led by Sonia Field and David Smith, as a follow on from the two sessions 'What is a Change' and 'Plain Bob to Place Bells', there were 10 keen students in the e-Kenton ringing room at 11am.

For learners like me - with a couple of years or less under their belts - exploring the theory without managing the bell itself can be rather liberating. It offers a great opportunity to meet other ringers through the powers of technology and extend our theoretical knowledge so that we are 'ready to go' when we get back to normal.

The session consisted of 21 questions. We worked through these in smaller discussion groups using Zoom breakout rooms (masterfully managed by Sonia) to explore theory, vocabulary and blue line diagrams. Regrouping we shared answers, asked more questions and received additional morsels of knowledge that we had no way of knowing that we needed - but discovered we did!

Thanks as always to the experienced ringers that so willingly give up their time to give guidance and advice.

## eKenton – a real ramble

*Marilyn Langridge reports:*

Seven ringers met for "a three mile round trip" along the Ebury Way from Watford – Rickmans-worth. Some of us had previously met only online in RingingRoom and had to introduce ourselves in real life. After a socially-distanced ceremony for distribution of ART certificates Level 1 (Wendy), Level 2 (Katy) and Full Membership for Sonia, certificates, we set out.

Our walk began through the delightful Oxhey Park, on to and along the Grand Union canal, past many barges and long boats in various stages of splendour or dilapidation, where our accompanying dogs

enthusiastically swam in the black mud. All three returned to their owners happy and delighted, legs and tummies covered in black silt.

Lunch outside The Café @ lock 81, Rickmansworth to eat our snacks, and then we amused ourselves by doing some Plain Hunt Minor moves in dance form in order to teach Becca what it's all about.

Back along the towpath, finishing in heavy rain. We must

have covered some nine, *nine*, miles... not quite what we thought we had signed up to! However good friendships were made and a fine time had by all, not least the dogs. Thanks for organizing this ramble and we look forward to the next occasion.





## **Debbie Malins**

*A tribute from Janet Drake*

Debbie was remembered with great affection and appreciation during June's virtual zoom N&E District Meeting . There were 9 participants including two from south & west. Shared memories included her calm, quiet, unassuming manner whilst ringing, particularly when helping learners, 'standing behind' and enabling equal participation for the more hesitant ringer without treading on toes. Her presence at practices was always reassuring and supportive to those running the practice as well as the participants. Her nod and reassuring look as one dodged with her confirming one was in the right place has helped so many of us.

We have vivid memories of her being laden with tea making equipment, quietly doing what was needed, preparation, washing up and providing those mouthwatering flap-jacks & cakes. Perhaps less well known to all, but important to many, was her involvement in the handbell ringing particularly at Christmas time and the visits to the Care Homes in Highgate & elsewhere.

Her skills, personality, quiet sense of humour and smile will be very much missed by all, and, of course, by her family and the Hackney ringers. Her absence when we do eventually return to ringing will be very apparent and particularly hard-hitting for the Hackney ringers. A number of us will be wanting to ring quarters in her memory and tune-handbells as soon as we are able. She was unstinting in the help she gave to our ringing community.

## The Central Council – What’s it for ?



*Simon Linford explains:*

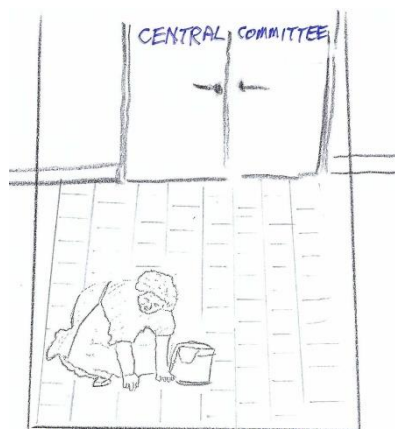
There certainly was a time when if there was an item in a ringing newsletter titled “Central Council Report” you would be flicking on and trying to do the crossword. But try my blogs (<https://cccbr.org.uk/> and see President’s blog). My challenge is to get you to read all of them !

For most ringers the sort of ringing I do, 12-bell competitions, calling spliced peals, and so on is not real life. So it’s the other end of the scale that’s important for most. Before lockdown put everything on hold, every Saturday morning after parkrun I would expect to be at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing teaching ringing. Every Thursday evening I was at Moseley teaching kids. I did ten years of being Master of the St Martin’s Guild, based in Birmingham, and we made great leaps in inclusivity of all levels of ringing. There is nothing better than the look on someone’s face when they do something they didn’t think they could do, whether it is a quarter of Bob Doubles or a peal of Orion.

Kicking the Central Council has long been a bit of a

sport. Many ringers see it as irrelevant or ineffective.

So in 2017 it embarked on a ‘strategic review’ and came up with a reforming agenda that the rank and file did not believe would get voted through. The so-called ‘CRAG review’



proposed widespread change, which was then implemented.

I came in on the back of that, with a new structure and a sense of mission, but maybe not a complete sense of what was possible. After 100 days of watching and listening I wrote the ‘Strategic Priorities 2020 and Beyond’ paper, and now we are implementing the ideas within it.

I have an enthusiasm for getting things moving (*Simon runs CZero, a sustainable construction company. Ed.*) and believe that if I can engage the enthusiasm of others we can achieve a lot. The Council is not sitting in some ivory tower. We are just ringers like anyone else who are trying to do things for the good of ringing that cannot be done as effectively at the local level. I think I am gradually winning people over. There are fewer critics, and more helpers.

When I learned to ring I was very lucky as I never hit a barrier to my own progress. It upsets me that some people do not fulfil their potential because the opportunities are not presented to them. These are things the Strategic Priorities are hoping to do something about. For instance we have committed to organising two new **residential courses** starting next year to build on the success of courses run in Hereford and Bradfield.

I am also hoping to recruit the ‘**Cast of 1000**’ – experienced ringers prepared to turn out and help at focused practices aimed at helping people to achieve things that cannot be done with local resources.

I have got two new Workgroups established which are looking at how we get ringing into **schools and in youth organisations**, and how we stop young ringers giving up when they go to university.

And the latest initiative is looking at how we remove **gender imbalance** in ringing that prevents women ringers from getting the same opportunities as men.

We won’t have our ringing restricted forever, although I fear it will be longer than we ever expected. There will be much rebuilding to be done when we get going again. A year with no teaching, ringers who just give up, bands which lose critical mass – this is a perfect storm. Maybe though it gives us the opportunity to take a step back and do some of those things which we always knew we needed to do to secure ringing’s future.

Please give the Central Council a chance to prove its value. If nothing else, read my blogs and see what we are doing.

Simon Linford

President, Central Council of Church Bell Ringers