

Middlesex Bell News



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www.bellringing.london

Returning to ringing this summer

From May 17th up to six people have been able to meet indoors, allowing small-scale practices with up to six ringers as well as service ringing. Consider space, ventilation, and individual ringers' health. See <https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/> for fuller guidance.

Tower ringing



"Which comes first – handstroke or the other one?"
"Can't remember."

The focus for this summer is to re-start tower ringing, to re-build the confidence of all ringers and make music for the community to enjoy! Restrictions on numbers mean that people will need to ask if they want to join a practice so please do think about your local contacts and get in touch again with the towers near you.

Every tower is different and every ringer is individual so there are no hard and fast rules here but if you are interested to start tower ringing again now is the time to start planning. District Officers are there to help !

RinginRoom

Many RinginRoom practices will continue so if your tower is switching to tower practices and you would still like a RinginRoom / Zoom practice please ask your District Officers to match you to a suitable practice. The Association General Practices on RinginRoom will continue on the first Friday evening of each month from 7 - 8:30pm.

N&E district

N&E district organises something on the third Saturday of every month and we will now make this a ringing day again! You are invited to join us for an outdoor meeting in an open park from 3pm with the aim to join a small-scale practice earlier that same day in your local area and then come from that practice to the outdoor get-together. See the Calendar page, and plan a practice in your tower on this day, to fit with then coming to the get-together: If you have any questions or concerns or any specific needs, ask the District Officers to help !

Training commendations

The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) Awards 2020 held in March commended Sonia Field and others, noting that 'the development of eKenton demonstrates best practice in retention through the Covid pandemic'.





Association of Ringing Teachers ...

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The ART Award for Innovation in Recruitment or Retention
Sponsored by AbelSim
Highly Commended: Sonia Field

👍 You, Jennifer Thomas and 4 others



The Association is fortunate to have several other very active e-towers, including Hackney, Kilburn, Stepney and Ealing, all of which have enabled ringers to stay together and to learn during lockdown.

Tolling for the Duke of Edinburgh's death and funeral 10th and 17th April 2021

Illustration removed

Windsor Castle

James White, Ringing Steward, Curfew Tower, Windsor Castle

I was introduced to ringing at the Curfew Tower of St George's Chapel by Frank Blagrove, who was Master of the Middlesex Association when I joined in 1994. I first rang there in 1999 and soon joined the list of reserve members of the band. In January 2006 I became one of the eight Full Members (which also includes Frank), and in January 2019 I became the Ringing Steward. I had known before the pandemic that the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral would be at St George's Chapel, and that tolling, and only tolling, would be required.



The 'peppercot' Curfew Tower

St George's Chapel is a Royal Peculiar, that is, outside the jurisdiction of any diocese, with the Dean answerable to H.M. The Queen. The tower is under the jurisdiction of the College of St George, which "runs" St George's Chapel. The College is independent of the Royal Household (which manages the rest of Windsor Castle) but works very closely with it, and, of course, the chapel, tower, and other College buildings are physically inside the Castle so are subject to the Castle security arrangements. The ringers at the Curfew Tower have good connections with both the Middlesex Association and the Oxford Diocesan Guild, with many of the band members ringing at other towers locally.

Early in 2019 three of the Curfew Tower ringers practised tying the tenor clapper so that the bell could be raised silently, and in such a way that the ties could be removed with the bell up. We also devised a way of retying the clapper so that the bell could be lowered silently. We put this into effect for real to toll the tenor 75 times for the 75th anniversary of VJ Day in August 2020.

On Saturday 10th April we repeated the process to raise the tenor bell silently and once the ties were removed it was tolled 99 times with single blows every 30 seconds from noon. The clapper was tied and the bell lowered silently. Details of this ringing and the people involved are on BellBoard:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1432812>.

In preparation for the funeral procession we rehearsed on Thursday 15th April, meeting the army signal team and the television sound crew, tolling four times though without the cannon fire. On Saturday 17th the cannon fired nine times during the procession, so the tenor was fired nine times at minute intervals. Details of the ringing are on BellBoard:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1436544>

The bell tolled on each occasion above was the tenor bell, cast in 1614 (reputedly), weighing 26cwt and measuring (according to the chart on the tower wall) 54 inches in diameter. The ring of eight bells hang in a wooden frame, with the tenor in the middle. The bell is quite light-set at backstroke. With the clapper tied the ringer on each occasion was able to ring a few strokes (silently) on the bell to get the measure of it, to get boxes in place as necessary, and to work out their position on the rope.

And yes, given the importance of striking just single blows, and the pressure of the occasion, assistance was given with setting the bell each stroke by a ringer on the frame handling the wheel.

Many towers across the Association tolled for the death and the funeral of HRH Prince Philip. Some have recorded their performance on Bellboard. The following personal accounts have been received by Bell News:

St Nicholas, Chiswick

Monica Trow

There are houses very close to St Nicholas Church, Chiswick and on Church Street there is no vegetation to soften the sound at all. The sound bounces off the houses, so the tenor tolling would have been very intrusive for neighbours watching the funeral. Consequently we rang half-muffled call changes on 4 bells before the Requiem Mass on Friday evening 16th April rather than tolling.

All Hallows, Twickenham

Otto Benz

On Saturday 10th April I rang the Sanctus bell at All Hallows, Twickenham 99 times at 12:00, to commemorate the life of Prince Philip. The ringing was undertaken with the permission of the incumbent, Father Kevin Bell. Kevin is a former military chaplain, and was very appreciative of the ringing.

Towers in East London

Steve Jakeman

I organised half-muffled tolling at Hackney, Dalston, Stamford Hill, Bethnal Green St John (and Leyton as this is now under the Hackney Rector's jurisdiction!).

Like everyone else it's a real challenge having to locate suitable ringers (some of these bells are somewhat challenging), find the muffles and organise access to put them on, sort out access on the day (which nearly failed at two of the towers), and then repeat the process to remove the muffles. But it was all extremely worthwhile to be able to contribute and participate in this sad event. Thanks to all who rang or counted.

All Saints, Harrow Weald

Sonia Field

There was much to-ing and fro-ing of emails prior to the funeral order to enable us to ring at All Saints, Harrow Weald. Martin Clode kindly scrambled amongst the bells to put incredibly geriatric muffles on three of them.

With Covid-guidance in place, it was possible to toll, half-muffled, for 30 minutes prior to the funeral, and also for 30 minutes prior to the memorial service held on Sunday 18th.

On the Saturday, even 5 minute shifts on our respective bells seemed hard work.

All Saints, Isleworth

Louise Dixon

As Tower Captain and sole member of the band at All Saints, Isleworth I tolled its No. 8 bell 99 times (eleven times Nine Taylors) before the one minute's silence at 3pm on Saturday 17th April.

St Mark, Dalston

Lucy Chandhial

After a lovely Janets' Jaunt (*see separate report*) I made my way to Dalston. Steve Jakeman had done the hard work, muffling the bell and ringing it up earlier in the day. I set an alarm on my phone



so I would know when to stand, in time for the minute's silence, and then I went to ring. It's a deep-set bell so it took me a couple of pulls to lean in and

tip it to and then over the balance but once ringing it rang easily. I tried to ring slowly but couldn't always wait as long as I might choose at backstroke.

I tried counting the strokes, I tried calculating how many strokes fit into ten minutes, I counted another 50 strokes, I waited for the alarm on my phone to ring.

When it rang I was happy to stand the bell securely and then I found the radio on my phone and listened to the service with Clare Balding telling me that the Royal family had paused on the steps and now we would hold the minute's silence. Content with my role within this much bigger event, I relaxed.

St Anne, Highgate

On 10th April your Editor arrived in good time to muffle no. 7. No muffles in the ringing chamber. Messages flew about, and the vicar at our sister church, St Martin's, Gospel Oak, agreed to a brief window in her busy schedule to allow collection of the muffles held there.

Ran at top, though not very fast, speed, caught a bus, and arrived just in time before the vicar had to leave. Out of time, disaster loomed, averted by an unprecedented taxi.

99 blows were tolled half-muffled aided by two counters, one who had never been inside a ringing chamber before and wasn't entirely sure whether the target was 99 hand-and-back or 99 single blows.

How often does chaos underlie dignified and historic occasions.

The MCA Virtual Striking Competition

Lucy Chandhial

Let me start by saying that this striking competition was always designed to be just for fun. This is important when you agree to help with the organisation of the event and find yourself in the fifth place team!

Following the AGM day the Middlesex Association usually holds a serious District striking competition. Tower ringing being impossible both in 2020 and 2021, the Association Master, Dave Bassford, suggested that we do something online, using <https://ringingroom.com/> 'just for fun'.

Teams were invited to request a place, to decide on their own six minutes of ringing (anything other than rounds) and be prepared to be judged. Dave asked Gwen and Phil Rogers, experienced St Paul's ringers, to judge the competition. Linda Georgiades as tower steward calmly resolved technical and timing problems.

Each team came to an MCALDG tower in RingingRoom at an agreed time, Linda confirmed that the judges were tuned in, and then the ringing could begin. Each band used their own Zoom meeting, including Linda. So Linda could hear the final deliberations of the band and the conducting during the ringing, while the judges could hear only the sound of the bells. The results were:

1. eHackney 76%
2. eKenton 70%
3. eStepney 63%
4. eEaling 59%
5. eKilburn 36%

Feedback from the judges was constructive and their time was rewarded with an e-voucher (for a virtual event). Phil reported back that this voucher went towards a bottle of Cotswold Gin for Martini Fridays - this is not virtual!

eHackney, the winners

Steve Jakeman

eHackney started virtual practices when RingingRoom was still a very new platform, and the band has grown to include ringers from Hampstead, Highgate and Islington. This band includes Marg Laing, a ringer who has learnt only through RingingRoom and so has won a striking competition without ever touching a rope !

For most of the band ringing in a striking competition was a new experience and whilst there were some nerves the practice earlier in the day

definitely helped to settle the group ready for the top performance of the afternoon.

eKenton

Wendy Crampton & Sonia Field

Having grasped Plain Hunt less than 12 months ago, the eKenton band decided to challenge itself to ring Grandsire Triples for the Middlesex online striking competition. We had not tackled this method previously. So in preparation we held a theory session for the whole band via Zoom prior to embarking on practical work in RingingRoom. We rotated around the virtual rope circle thus encouraging everyone to ring confidently from each bell. Karin & Steve Beard offered to stand as reserves and kindly turned up to every practice. In the end this proved to be our saving grace: the day itself was plagued in every way!

Rachel was prevented from attending our final practice the night before due to the rescheduling of a washing machine delivery. On the day itself, Chris dashed back to the pre-competition practice from collecting the keys to his new home; but had a migraine and needed to bail out part way through our run-through. In jumped Karin, to take the treble. Then Wendy's internet kept flagging the words we all loathe to see: "internet unstable". Frantic hot-spotting of her phone took place to secure a connection.

We reassembled in the competition tower. But at the final moment just before the judges arrived, as we were all muting ourselves, the words: "I've lost sound in Ringing Room" were uttered in despair! Nothing was working to bring back Caspar's sound. So we decided to bring in the next reserve: Steve. However, he was not logged in. A hurried phone call was made. We shunted Jo from the tenor to the 2, and once Steve had joined us in RingingRoom popped him on the tenor. But now Steve couldn't get into the Zoom call. Sonia was seriously thinking about calling in the shadow reserve, Simon.

A message came through from the organising team saying Will Bosworth should ring two bells. With Celia the only band member unscathed, we bumped Steve off the tenor and assigned Will...at which point Steve appeared on Zoom! By now we needed to ring immediately or move back our time slot. So without yet another shuffle to re-accommodate Steve, we rang.

Well, we gave it our best. As Will commented "This is a very organised band to have reserves in place. Who would have thought we would need them all! I've never known so much drama in a striking competition!"

eStepney

Joe Tilley conducted, and now writes:

Nothing will ever replace a live competition with the accompanying test of physical skill and trip to the pub afterwards, but I thought that it was a really exciting twist on the traditional format. After a year of RR with the Stepney band, it felt like a joyful way to put it all into practice.

I was so nervous calling it and this was partly my fault. I knew that I was going to be at a picnic in Cambridge on the day, so I downloaded the RR app on my phone. I tested it last Thursday at the Stepney practice but of course hadn't factored in the 4G signal in central London compared with a field next to the Cam. After a bit of a false start, I was able to run to Peterhouse College where the Eduroam WiFi signal was strong enough for me to connect fully!

eEaling

The eEaling band had a last-minute requirement for an extra ringer and the Association Master, Dave Bassford, stepped in to take the remaining rope.

eKilburn

Lucy Chandhial writes:

We have been ringing in RingingRoom every week for a year now and we practised our Little Bob to be ready for this. Unfortunately, what we did *not* practise was starting again when it all goes wrong! Our tendency in RingingRoom has always been to simply stand, discuss and start again rather than getting back to rounds and then going again from there. This is a habit we will probably need to change when we get back to tower practices!

The judges reported that once it settled our performance included some of the best ringing in the competition. However, the choppy rows when we lost the path and the repeated attempts to get going again lost us many many points. None of us were short of practice; but we suffered with laggy internet - that painful moment when you press your key and nothing happens. But, it was just for fun, remember!

As with all these events, the true winner is the team spirit, the camaraderie, and the friendships that grow from the practice days and the trial and tribulation of the win, lose or draw.

Hi tech at All Hallows by the Tower

Stephanie Pattenden



Shortly after the beginning of lockdown we had mastered the technology of RingingRoom and Zoom, and our practices became regular and popular. It took many attempts before we rang our first RingingRoom quarter peal, though. Zoom became a familiar friend and our skills in coping with sudden '*pop ups*' or 'sticky keys' developed - not to mention muting and un-muting or using headphones.

Early on Martin Carr commented that his church was using Zoom for its weekly service and "Wouldn't it be nice if we could feed our Ringing Room into the church Zoom?" James's IT skills came to the fore and before long we were back doing Sunday service ringing - albeit on a computer! Our routine of Friday evening practices with some Monday extra practices and Sunday morning service ringing was then fully back in place.

The Sunday service ringing developed the same feel as when in the tower. "Oh it's Sunday, let's play safe, I'll try a plain course please" or "shall I cover as this is the service touch?" And even though the vicar and online congregation were delighted with our input, Bryn Marie, the American Lady, calling "Bob" or "That's all" loudly just before the service started, did cause comment! One forgets too easily that whilst our ringing is clearly audible the commentary in the tower is not. So we then started to use Zoom and someone with headphones to call the touch.

It has been wonderful to use RingingRoom with other friends outside London and this has really enhanced our practices, so we are now wondering if we can retain some RingingRoom sessions as we begin to emerge from lockdown and embark on REAL ringing again. And certainly we can feel proud of the fact that one London church has had bells before the service through lockdowns - even if it has been in a somewhat unconventional way!

St Mary Magdalene, Holloway

Sara Berry-Hewish

In April 2019 the folk band 'Man the Lifeboats' recorded our bells as a backing track with our bells moonlighting as 'The Highgate Bells'. St Mary Magdalene's Ringers have now received a special copy of the CD Album



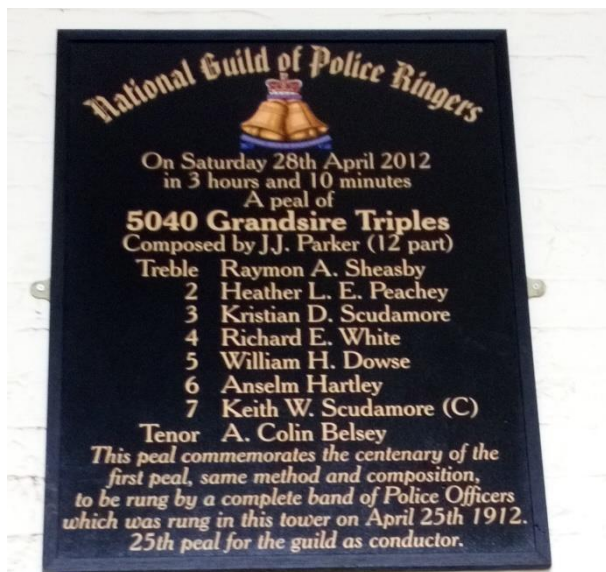
<https://manthelifeboats.bandcamp.com/track/the-highgate-bells>

though our bells are hard to make out !

Sara Berry-Hewish and Anselm Hartley

In 1912 a band of Metropolitan Police Officers rang a peal of 5,040 Grandsire Triples at St Mary Magdalene, believed to be the first ever rung by a band of policemen.

100 years and three days later the centenary was commemorated by a band of the National Guild of Police Ringers ringing the same method. It has taken some time to organise a peal board to commemorate this event, but on 23rd May we assisted Richard White, a policeman with Thames Valley police, to hang the new peal board above the 1912 original.



Janets' Jaunt

Chris Weavers

Saturday 17th April saw the return of Janets' Jaunts with a wander through the Walthamstow marshes on a dry and bright Spring morning.

19 of us set off from Tottenham Hale station soon after 10:00 and as Walthamstow Wetlands don't open until 10:30 we stopped at a small park near the station for a while. There we enjoyed our first handbell ringing of the day, with two separate



groups plain hunting - socially distanced and with rigorous use of gloves and hand sanitiser. Methods included Plain Bob Minor and Cambridge Minor.

After entering the Wetlands, our route took us through the Walthamstow Reservoirs along the route of the Coppermill Stream, passing the Lee Valley Riding Centre before turning West to walk through the Middlesex Filter Beds, built in the mid-19th Century to clean London's water and combat the repeated cholera pandemics. Eventually closed in 1969 the site has now been well and truly reclaimed by nature.



Nature was much in evidence throughout the walk, mainly in the form of varied birdlife, not least Egyptian geese, swans, herons and cormorants, including one silhouetted against the sky sitting on a crane over our path and the river.

We followed the River Lee north ending in Markfield Park, another site once occupied by filter beds and still graced by the Markfield Beam

Engine and Museum (not yet re-opened to the public).

A thoroughly enjoyable morning was concluded with a picnic and further handbell ringing in the remains of what was once a filter bed – you can only imagine what the Victorian members of the Tottenham Local Health Board would have made of that. Methods rung included Cambridge Minor, Plain Bob Minor and Bob Major.

As ever, our thanks to the Janets for a lovely walk in great company and for over £100 raised for the Bell Restoration Fund.

Recruitment & retention

Many towers across the Association have been successful in both retaining their bands and in some cases recruiting new ringers to train in RingingRoom.

Attention is now turning to resumption of training and practices in the tower. When this is permitted, tower captains are encouraged to seek help where necessary from the District Officers; efforts will be made to provide help from experienced ringers to join a practice and assist training and recovery.

Sonia Field, together with a handful of other MCALDG members, attended the Recovery Convention week, covering a wide range of topics,

<http://ringingteachers.org/news/recovery-convention-presentations>

The presentations contain plenty of ideas that you may find useful as we move towards more normal ringing again.

Get fit for ringing...

Janet Betham

As part of the Ringing Recovery plan, there will be an exercise session on Zoom on Tuesday 8th June from 7-8pm, to be repeated on following Tuesdays if members find it useful.

We shall do some simple exercises, outlined in the ART and CCCBR Survival and Recovery Toolbox <http://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>. (The Toolbox also contains much other useful material).

We shall work our way through each section trying out specific exercises – nothing too demanding! You can then practise them in your own time at home, making sure you don't overdo it.

Please email me (jrbetham@hotmail.com) if you are interested so that I can send out the invitation and exercises before that first session.

Devon call changes

Lucy Chandhial

The CCCBR organised a virtual national call change competition on 3rd April, in which the test piece was the first section of the established Devon call change peal 60 on 3rds, called back into rounds at the half way point, see the CCCBR website, <https://cccbr.org.uk/virtual-call-change-ringing-festival/call-change-competition-test-piece/>.

For the Association eKenton entered two bands, Alpha and Aleph. After relentless practice, in competition with 14 bands from across the country, Alpha was placed 4th, a rewarding result.

Open House at St Botolph's, Aldgate

Lucy Chandhial

We are hoping to be able to participate in Open House on Saturday 4th September with talks about bellringing and fundraising through tea and cakes. This is a great opportunity to spread the understanding of bellringing and to raise some money for the Bell Restoration Fund.

The exact format is not yet confirmed but if you would be willing to consider helping with either ringing demonstrations, baking or serving refreshments, please add this date to your diary and be ready for more information nearer the time.

And finally

Lockdown has been a testing time for all ringers, but perhaps for tower captains more than most. The strain of tolling at St Mary Magdalene on 17th April was evidently too much for Sara Berry-Hewish as her vain attempt to uproot single-handed a 300 year old plane tree in the churchyard shows all too clearly.



Bell News wishes her a swift recovery.

CALENDAR

Date	Distr	Event	Location	Time
<p>Practices and events</p> <p>Dave Bassford will continue to lead a practice on the fourth Friday evening of the month. The Sunday practice has been discontinued. The Association General practice uses Zoom and www.ringingroom.com is open to all with no previous RingingRoom experience needed, for all levels of ringing experience. To join, email Lucy on Lucy.chandhial@yahoo.co.uk - for the Zoom link. The link will work for all of these practices so you only need to email once and then you can join anytime.</p> <p>A number of social events is being planned. The expected dates are shown below, and further information will be sent out on the Association email distribution list. If you are not already on the list and would like to be, send an email with your preferred email address to mcaldg+subscribe@googlegroups.com .</p> <p>Social gatherings</p> <p>Under current rules tower ringing is re-starting, with restrictions. N&E is organising outdoor get-togethers (all members welcome) on the third Saturday of each month, with the suggestion that members might join after a practice at their tower.</p>				
Sat 19th Jun	N&E	Social meeting	Highbury Fields	15:00-17:00
Fri 25th June	MCA	General practice	RingingRoom & Zoom	19:00-20:30
Sat 17th Jul	N&E	Social meeting	Trent Park	15:00-17:00
Fri 23rd Jul	MCA	General practice	RingingRoom & Zoom	19:00-20:30
Sat 21st Aug	N&E	Social meeting	Victoria Park	15:00-17:00
Fri 27th Aug	MCA	General practice	RingingRoom & Zoom	19:00-20:30
<p>Training</p> <p>Training will be provided by experienced tutors during lockdown.. To see what's on offer and book your place, go to https://bookwhen.com/mcaldg. This user-friendly booking site shows you what training courses are available, who the tutor is, and details about the course, with a large blue SELECT button on the right to book your place. All places are free. If in doubt, email the course tutor.</p>				
Sat 19th Jun	MCA	Splicing Minor methods	RingingRoom & Zoom	10:00-11:30
Sun 27th Jun	MCA	Grandsire Doubles	RingingRoom & Zoom	15:00-16:30
Fri 9th Jul	MCA	Maintenance Checklist and Q&A	Zoom	19:00-20:30
Fri 6th Aug	MCA	Transferring from Virtual to Real	RingingRoom & Zoom	19:00-20:30

Items for inclusion in *Middlesex Bell News* to Anthony Davey at BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london .

Next deadline Friday 20th August

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