

# Middlesex Bell News

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# Middlesex Bell News

All the news, articles, achievements, outings and seasonal celebrations from members throughout the Middlesex County Association and the London Diocese.



St James Garlickhythe

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Front Cover: St Magnus the Martyr

## In This Issue:

- ❖ Achievements galore, with 500 peals from Master, Stephen Mitchell, and Dickon Love's MBE in the New Year's Honours list.
- ❖ 14 years of 12-bell competition entering. Master, Stephen Mitchell tells us of the thrills and spills.
- ❖ Reports on a plethora of Christmas celebrations.
- ❖ Workshops a-plenty and a report from new ringer Constance Redgrave.
- ❖ News round-up from towers around the Association.
- ❖ First two peals by young ringer Thomas Ashwin-Siejkowski.
- ❖ Update on Learning to Ring enquiries.
- ❖ New crossword, and last issue's solution.

Plus, the piece de resistance – the almighty Middlesex Association Calendar.

Enjoy!



*St. Magnus the Martyr*

Until fifteen years ago the rings of 12 in central London were neither very suitable nor generally available to book for evening ringing practices. The installation of a brand new 12 (26 cwt) at St Magnus the Martyr in 2009, to which cost the Middlesex Bell Restoration Fund made a significant contribution, changed all that. The Association entered the first London 12-Bell Competition at St Magnus in October 2009. Building on that experience from January 2010 our then Master instigated a monthly Association 12-Bell (method) practice. These practices, on the second Friday evening of most months, have continued ever since, led by Steve Jakeman and his successors as Master. On this basis, I am pleased to say that we have been able to field a band on all fourteen of the London 12-Bell Competitions held. With the St Martin-in-the-Fields band no longer holding 12-Bell practices, either at St Martin's or elsewhere, the Association's practices really provide the only opportunities in central London for members to learn to ring on 12. The Southwark Cathedral Society's practices are open to all, but they are very busy and entail ringing heavy and challenging bells. The bells at St Magnus are neither light nor easy to ring, particularly due to tower movement, but certainly provide a good development and training ground for aspirant 12-Bell ringers. The tower has hosted the London 12-Bell Competition several times, including in 2023.

Most ringers find it a significant step up to 12, even from a good base of 10 bell ringing. Feeling and fitting in with the rhythm, and listening to and placing your bell accurately, is vital to success on 12. Although watching and following ropes can help (for example by following bells in the coursing order in a bob course of Grandsire Cinques), ringing principally by ropesight really doesn't work. Also, the methods are longer (e.g. a course of Cambridge Maximus has 11 leads or 'place bells' to learn) and to some extent more complicated. Method ringing on 12 is not for everybody, and can be very frustrating, particularly when people go wrong around you. Things can soon end up in an impossible mess! But for those who can ring to a rhythm, hear their own bell striking amongst a larger number, tackle the methods, and invest time

# Ringling

## 12-BELL PRACTICES 14 YEARS ON

*Stephen Mitchell (Master, MCALDG)*

The first Association 12-Bell practice of 2024 was on Friday 12 January, attended by over twenty people, with several University of London Society ringers taking part, including the current Master Stephen Mitchell.



and effort in learning and improving, it is certainly a worthwhile endeavour.

We rang touches of Grandsire Cinques, Stedman Cinques, Little Bob Maximus, and Little Bob, spliced with Cambridge Surprise Maximus. We also had four attempts at ringing Bristol Surprise Maximus (4 leads), two of which came round successfully. This will continue to be our standard repertoire at the 12-Bell practices in 2024, but we will also give people who want them opportunities to ring Plain Hunt on 11, and to ring the tenor covering to Cinques.

Our President (Dave Bassford) and immediate-past President (Geraldine Forster) are both very experienced 12-Bell ringers, and ring regularly in the finals of the National 12-Bell Contest, for St Paul's Cathedral and the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths respectively. They always try to attend the Association's 12-Bell practices and help me as Master to run them. If you want to know more about what goes on, and are considering coming along, please have a word with Dave, Geraldine or me. Last November, I organised and conducted a Middlesex Association peal of Grandsire Cinques at High Wycombe, with several regular 12-Bell practice attendees in the band, including a first on 12 and a first of Cinques. I will be pleased to do more of this sort of thing in the remainder of my term.



## N&E Christmas Ringing

*Araminta Huitson, St. Vedast, Foster Lane*

Surely there's no better time to be ringing bells than at Christmas - all those carols about steeple bells being "swungen" inspire even the most tentative ringer to attempt a merry ding-dong. Thus, on a chilly Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December, I hopped on the bus to St. Matthew's, Bethnal Green. Once in the ringing chamber, there now came call changes and a soothing touch of Stedman, after which I squeezed on to the bench to admire Middlesex ringing Middlesex Bob Triples! At the second tower, St. Leonard Shoreditch, I paused on the stairs to peak at the inside of the clock face, before making my way to a spacious ringing chamber. I joined the youngsters from Enfield as they were guided through rounds, call changes and plain hunt by Steve Jakeman. Thanks to the 'rocks' in the group we managed to make a nice sound, and after being treated to a performance of Grandsire Caters, found it was soon the end of our allotted time, despite Alan Regin's generous offer to let us ring all night if we wished! Many thanks too to him for fixing the broken stay just in time after the first two choice of tower (and nearly three) fell through.

After all that hard work we found sustenance in the form of delicious apple crumble (thanks to Clare at Humble Crumble in Spitalfields market) before adjourning to the cheerfully crowded pub for a meal. Many thanks to Janet Betham for organising the afternoon and persevering when her first two choices of towers fell through. It was a pleasure to stretch my wings in two new towers and contribute in a small way to the festivities in the streets below.

## Two St. Botolph's Churches

*Erika Cule, St. Mary's Islington*

Our first tower of the day was St Botolph's without Aldgate. The bells, like the current church, date from the 18th century. The ring here is the heaviest in London with a regular practice night. The tenor, at 25-0-7, is about one and a half times the weight of the tenor at my native Upper Street. Many ringers were relatively new to ringing so we rang rounds and called changes, acclimatising ourselves to handling these heavy bells. More experienced ringers rang plain courses and touches of Grandsire Triples.

At St Botolph's without Bishopsgate the bells are mercifully a bit closer to the weights I am used to ringing (tenor: 17-1-6). The notable feature here is how loud the ringing room is. Bring earplugs! Here, we rang more rounds and called changes, more plain courses and touches of Grandsire Triples, plus Stedman Triples for our more advanced ringers.

The ringers of Bishopsgate are committed to their task. Not only are the bells very loud, they have a hardy history: after the windows of the church were blown out by an IRA bomb in the nineties, they rang for some time with sheeting over the windows, even in winter! Fortunately for us we had a pleasant ring before heading down to the church hall for our planning meeting and social. Many thanks to John Adams, Tower Captain, for additional facts about St Botolph's without Bishopsgate, and Tom Britten and Claire Baker for helping with the writing of this report.



*St Botolph's Without Aldgate*

## Handbells at Bishopsgate

*Eleanor Hunt, Enfield St. Andrew*

I really liked learning about the handbells at Bishopsgate. They were more difficult than expected but very musical and I had lots of fun. I had a go at ringing plain hunt on 6 which taught me a lot about keeping track of multiple bells, and not necessarily knowing where both are but knowing what they do in relation to each other. I also had a go at the tunes which I found a lot easier following the sheets and enjoyed hearing familiar melodies from the bells.

Very many thanks to Steve Jakeman and Martin Clode for carrying the handbells and large books of music, and for leading the ringing in the two groups. Also to everyone for providing such a varied and delicious selection of dishes for the shared supper.



## Ringling in the New Year

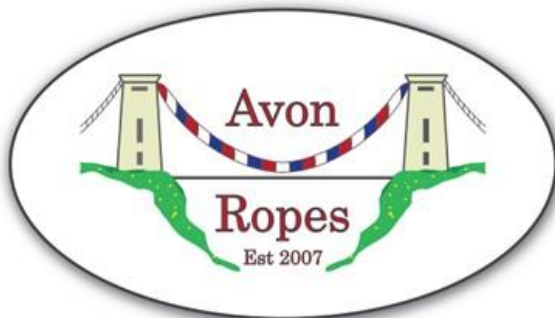
Stephen Jakeman, Hackney St. John's

Some 21 ringers and friends from other towers and including some non-ringers, met for the traditional ringing out of the old year and ringing in of the New Year.



Making use of the simulator we enjoyed an hour's ringing, first on the middle six, with the sound of the back eight (isn't technology wonderful – worth all the hard work putting it in). The clapper ties were then removed, and with the sound control open we enjoyed some half-muffled ringing on the back eight as we approached midnight. The muffles (put on after service ringing in the morning) were then removed, the tenor tolled for twelve blows at midnight, and the New Year toasted appropriately. All ten bells were then rung open to welcome in the New Year to rounds, call changes and a bob

course of Grandsire Caters. At that point the sound control was closed, and the bells rung down. A thoroughly enjoyable evening and both a great finish to the old year and start to the new one.



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## The London Bell Ringers' Advent Carol Service

*Bridget Campbell, and on behalf of Greg Rose and Julian Cass*

The London Bell Ringers' Advent Carol Service 2023 took place on the evening of Monday 27 November at St Vedast-alias-Foster Church, Foster Lane. Its recently decorated interior and improved lighting system provided a lovely Christmas setting for those attending, and the service was warmly led by The Reverend Paul Kennedy, Rector of St Vedast, who made everyone most welcome. The service music was ably performed and led by the London Ringers' Choir, conducted by Gregory (Greg) Rose, and accompanied by organist, Joseph Ramadan. The six readings were read by representatives of a range of bell ringing associations.

There was a much appreciated return of the St Vedast Handbell Ringers, performing a Ukranian folk carol, and Italian tune from 'Laude Spirituali', 1674. The general ringing before the service was led by Tom Lawrance and the service ringing before and after the service was organised by Harry Turner.

Many thanks to all who took an active part in the service and the ringing, to those who joined the congregation, and to all who socialised later at Ye Olde London.

We are extremely grateful for a grant given to us by the Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers which enabled the service to be performed.

Having directed the choir for the London Bell Ringers' Advent Carol Service from 2015 to 2023, Gregory (Greg) Rose is now stepping down from this role. During COVID restrictions Greg produced a most creative electronic version of the Service (2020/2021). Many thanks for his dedication to organising and directing wonderful Advent music and singing for all to enjoy as a lovely kickstart to the Christmas season. Every best wish to Greg in the future. Hopefully, a potential replacement Conductor will contact us for further details if the Advent Service is to be run in 2024.

Photo: St Vedast Handbell Ringers, taken by Elizabeth LeMoine.



## Quarter Peal and Pudding Party

*Sonia Field*

At All Saints, Harrow Weald we ended 2023 with a Quarter Peal of Plain Bob minor during the afternoon. In the evening we held the now traditional Pudding Party (photo) hosted by Charmian and Steve. It's a good job that calories don't exist on New Year's Eve. This was followed by the also now traditional Ringing Out and In. There were seven of us ringing with a few non-ringing guests and some drop-in visitors (photo of the latter with the ringers). We rang a selection of call changes, faded out for midnight, fell in again in rounds after Roxanne's 12 'dongs' on the tenor and then had fun with firing and more call changes.



# Learning the Ropes



## Training Teachers

*Andrew Reed*

On a very cold and suitably atmospheric morning in January, I travelled from north London to the city of Cambridge to attend an Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) training session. They deliver three courses designed to give students the skills to teach a new ringer from scratch, starting with Bell Handling and progressing to Plain Hunt and Methods. The ART method for Bell Handling is a specific way of teaching to enable a new ringer to competently ring both strokes fairly quickly, with the theory that the more a new ringer can do in a short space of time, the more motivated and engaged they become.

We were a group of 12 would-be teachers, from all over the south-east and with all ranges of experience covered, from those under 20 to those over 60! It was interesting to hear each person's experience of teaching, not just their own journey but how everyone's tower varied in terms of approach and especially the time taken for a new ringer to ring in rounds. This is the point that struck me most, I had assumed my own experience was fairly standard but not so and perhaps this is one of the aims of the ART courses to offer standardisation.

As a returning ringer with a 40 year gap, one thing that struck me most was how little has changed and while to me this is reassuring, as our tutor explained, to many new and younger people it can seem a bit out of sync with other current ways of learning. From ART there is a defined teaching structure, a focus on keeping new ringers engaged through planned and documented lessons, active and noted feedback and note books and certificates.

ART request that new teachers have a mentor for their initial new ringer, and I am indebted to mine for accepting the role! I have a new ringer lined up later in March and am really looking forward to putting the theory into practice.

Apart from all this, it was incredible to be on the course at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, where the Society of Cambridge Youths was formed in 1724, which is the second oldest ringing society in the world with a continuous history of ringing. It was really amazing to see a peal board dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 1725, commemorating the first peal rung in the tower, and only 120 years after Guy Fawkes!

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## Plain Hunt Workshop

*Bronagh Coakley*

On January 20th the first instalment of the 2024 MCALDG training season took place at St. James, Garlickhythe, and the subject was Plain Hunt. The session, with five learners, was led by Martin Clode assisted by seven experienced and patient ringers. I attended the workshop hoping to take my first steps towards ringing Plain Hunt. I quickly realized that I had already taken quite a few of those steps in my home tower of St. Augustine's in Kilburn through ringing rounds, call changes and observing others as they rang.

Following brief introductions, each learner had the opportunity to lead. After some rounds, we launched into Plain Hunt. I found it tricky at first and it took a few tries to figure out the speed of changes. Martin was calm and encouraging and, with the experienced ringers keeping everything steady, I began to get the feel of it. We were given a generous quantity of time at the end of the rope, and no one seemed to feel rushed. I was so delighted to manage my first Plain Hunt up and down that I fumbled a catch. With Martin's

encouragement I started again and was happy to have persevered. As I watched each learner ring I noticed that my ropesight began to improve. We were all at a slightly different place in our skill development, and the guidance and direction we received met us where we were in the moment and then gently stretched us outside of our comfort zone into new territory.

Coffee and cake came at just the right time and during the break we had a chance to reflect on the first hour and a half of ringing.

One of the elements I have enjoyed most about my bell ringing journey is that every stage is built so solidly on the stage that came before. I continue to need to practice and refresh all the techniques all the time. This workshop was the perfect stepping stone to the next level. I know my Plain Hunting won't be close to perfect every time (and don't mention moving me to different bells just yet) but having the extended ringing time and the support of Martin, the amazing volunteers and my fellow learners, I now know it is possible.

The training provided a wonderfully supportive environment for growth, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate.



# A Newbie Story

Constance Redgrave

I have been listening to the bells at St Anne's Highgate for over thirty years, as it's around the corner from my flat. In summer the sound wafts through the open windows and it's always been part of the tapestry of living on the Holly Lodge Estate, along with foxes mating, ambulance sirens and living under the North London helicopter corridor. There is nothing like the sound of a Chinook over your head. As a professional musician I am both fascinated and puzzled by what I hear. There were definite patterns in those ringing bells, but God knows what they were or how they were doing it.

Finally in May 2023, on the Coronation of HM King Charles III, I noticed the sound was a bit different, so I decided to walk round the corner and have a listen up close. A lovely woman called Lenka invited me up into the tower and I sat in the corner with strict orders about not crossing my legs. I stayed till the end, took the group photo for the day and was utterly fascinated by the whole experience. It was like climbing into an alternate universe.

The following Thursday evening I went back and met Steve Jakeman who supervised my first ever go on a rope. As St Anne's was short of trainers, he offered me some classes at St Johns Hackney. Between these lessons and brilliant summer school, Thursdays and Sundays in St Anne's Highgate, St Martins Gospel Oak, Tuesdays at All Hallows Tottenham and the odd Saturday outing to weird and wonderful places around London, it's all become a bit of an obsession.



I have made great progress in the past six months thanks to so many people's advice and patience. I can now contribute on Sundays, raise and lower bells, am learning call changes and my bell control is moving erratically but never the less in the right direction. Like learning any instrument, I know there are learning curves and stumbling blocks. This is no different.

It's early days yet and the serendipity of my new passion continues to amaze and frustrate me. I am a right-brained, hyper-mobile muso so I know what hard work feels like. It will eventually get better and even if it doesn't I am gonna do it anyway.

A special shout out to Steve Jakeman who is a gifted teacher as well as a man on a mission to save English bell ringing from fading into history. I know I was lucky to get my start there. I wasn't looking for this, never saw it coming, but I love bell ringing and the people who do it. Thank you all for keeping such a beautiful and unique tradition alive. I am determined to play a small part in its future.

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## Last Call For Annual Report

The 2023-24 Annual Report will be sent for printing shortly and this is a last call for Coronation ringing performances to be linked to the diary event "Coronation of King Charles III" on BellBoard AND credited to the Middlesex Association, and for members to have renewed their annual subscription on MemberMojo.

Only those performances linked and accredited, and only Life Members and members who have renewed their 2024 subscription, will be included in the Annual Report. Please email me if you have any queries about this. **Jill Wigney**

[reporteditor@bellringing.london](mailto:reporteditor@bellringing.london)

## Report Editor Needed

Jill Wigney is stepping down as Report Editor at the AGM in April and we are looking for someone to take on this role. If you think you would be interested and would like to "shadow" the final stages of production of this year's Report, please email her for more information:

[jill.wigney@gmail.com](mailto:jill.wigney@gmail.com)

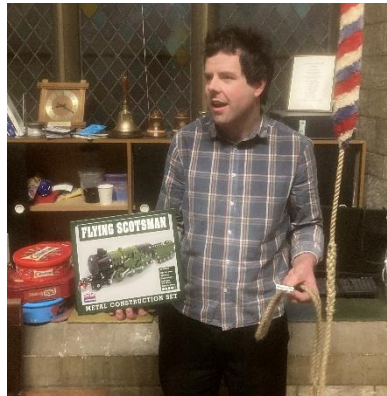
## In Memoriam, Ronald Russ

We rang a Middlesex Association peal in memory of Ronald Russ at Hillingdon this morning, marking the first anniversary of his death (next week). We didn't manage to organise one last year. The details of the peal are below in a link to Bellboard. As well as being a dedicated member of the local band at Hillingdon, Ron was a stalwart supporter of the activities and work of the MCALDG over many years, including working on various bell restoration projects. His obituary is on page 30 of the Report for 2022-23. I am very pleased that Stephen Russ was able to travel up from Hampshire to ring with us. He has now rung Hillingdon tenor 19 times to peals!

**Stephen Mitchell – Master**

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1691903>

## Second Peal for Edward Gormley



On 18<sup>th</sup> February Edward Gormley rang his second peal at St John's Church Caterham Valley, Surrey, ringing a peal of 5040 Plain Bob Triples in 2 hours and 59 minutes.

C Ravenscroft

1. Edward P Gormley
2. Thomas S White
3. Anne L Rueff
4. Simon Beirne
5. Alexander E Gray
6. Fraser A Storie
7. Noel J R Gibbin (Conductor)
8. Alan M Cooke

*First peal: 8; first on 8: 1 and 2; first on eight inside: 4.*

*Rung for the Surrey Association Peal Weekend, celebrating the first peal for the Association on 18th February 1881.*

*Belated 60th birthday wishes to Susan Gibbin, and also to welcome Rowan Forster, grandson of Noel and Susan, born on 22nd November 2023.*

*This peal included a first peal ringer on bell 8.*

## Next Janets' Jaunt

The Spring Janets' Jaunt will take place on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> April with train to Audley End, Essex, walking to Arkesden to ring and pub lunch, walking to Newport to ring and train back to Liverpool Street. Distance about 6 miles, full details to follow by email nearer the time. **Janet Betham**

Please send news items to:  
BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london

## N&E ADM

The North & East ADM was held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February. 34 people from 11 towers enjoyed ringing at St Mary's Hendon and the service, the generous and the tasty tea. 36 New Members were elected across 14 towers, many of whom joined us on the day. We welcomed Claire Baker and Cathryn Hunt to the Training team, working with Guy Wells.

After a bold debate we settled on a calendar that spreads practices throughout the month.

We have introduced a monthly plain doubles and minor practice on the 3rd Thursday each month and enabled a full 2-hour practice for plain triples and major on the 2nd Thursday of each month. Hopefully, this will complement the 1st Wednesday, which is surprise minor, the 4th Friday as surprise major and the 2nd Sunday as caters and royal.

The raffle and donations for teas raised just over £250 for the Bell Restoration Fund. With thanks to Fiona and Martin Clode and everyone at Hendon, ringers, Reverend, organist and congregation for an excellent afternoon. Hoping to see many of you at our various practices and 3rd Saturday events across the year. **Lucy Chandhial**

## Peter Blight – 1000 Peals

The Nonsuch Association  
City of London  
St Dunstan-in-the-West  
Saturday, 17 February 2024 in 3h 12 (10–3–23 in G)  
5040 Spliced Surprise Royal (4m)  
1320 Bristol; 1280 London No.3;  
1240 Yorkshire; 1200 Cambridge;  
100 com, atw  
Composed by John S Warboys  
1 Stephanie J Pattenden  
2 Lesley J Belcher  
3 Elizabeth A Hibbert  
4 Ruth Blackwell  
5 Beryl R Norris  
6 Stephen P Noyes  
7 Peter W Emery  
8 Peter J Blight  
9 Richard A Pearce (C)  
10 David R Cox  
1000th peal and 700th tower bell peal: 8.

## 500 Peals for the Middlesex Association

*Stephen Mitchell - Master*

Five of my predecessors as Masters of the MCALDG rang over 500 peals for the Middlesex Association: William Pye, John Mayne, Tom Lock, Frank Blagrove and Roger Bailey. I was privileged to ring Middlesex peals with the latter four truly great ringers. Very much standing on the shoulders of giants, I was pleased to reach the landmark of 500 peals for the Association (201 of them on handbells) on 11 March 2024. I have rung peals at over 90 towers in Middlesex, and at a number of handbell venues, including the famous Huxley Building at Imperial College. I never set out to do all this, and it took me over 45 years from a tower bell peal at Uxbridge in December 1978 to a handbell peal at Twickenham in March 2024 to reach 500. I have greatly benefitted from the efforts of keen Middlesex peal organisers including Frank Blagrove, Roger Bailey and Bernard Taylor mostly last century, and more recently James White. The peal ringing landscape has changed over recent decades, with fewer now being organised and rung, and this is noticeable in Middlesex.

In all, twelve people before me rang 500 Middlesex peals, so this number is not frequently attained. Richard Pearce got there most recently nine years ago in March 2015. Before that, it was Roger Bailey 27 years ago on October 1997 – by chance I rang in that peal, which I don't believe Roger knew was his 500th (Roger was not an enthusiast for personal records!) This begs the question of who will be next? None of those members currently active in peal ringing, and with over 200 Middlesex peals on the scoreboard, seem likely to ring the 150+ peals necessary to get to 500. There are no younger members currently ringing high volumes of Middlesex peals. I set out at Uxbridge aged 25. Maybe there is a 25-year-old ringing Middlesex peals now who will similarly reach 500 in 2079. It would be good if there was. Through my remaining term as Master, I will be pleased to help members and local bands achieve any peal ringing goals they have.



*Stephen Mitchell (Master, MCALDG)*

## Dickon Love MBE

*Stephen Jakeman  
Vice President*

The New Years Honours' list contained a wonderful surprise with Dickon Love being appointed MBE for services to bell ringing in London and Kent. Dickon is of course well known, being an active member of the ASCY, and Tower Captain at St James Garlickhythe which, through his efforts, has a local band.

Dickon was the driving force behind three new rings of bells in the City, St Magnus the Martyr, St Dunstan's in the West and the Royal Jubilee bells at St James Garlickhythe, a real tour de force! May we add our hearty congratulations and thank you for everything that you have achieved for ringing in London.





## First Two Peals for Thomas G Ashwin-Siejkowski

James White

In December 2022 I was invited by Thomas Ashwin-Siejkowski to ring some quarter peals in the Twickenham area to celebrate his 17th birthday. We scored one of Plain Bob Triples (Thomas covering) and one of Plain Bob Major (Thomas on the treble). During the day I asked Thomas if he was going to ring his first peal on Coronation weekend in May 2023, when so many others would be doing so. He said no, he was going to organise his first peal, Grandsire Triples, on his 18th birthday in December 2023.

Through 2023 Thomas chalked up various quarter peal firsts, calling Plain Bob Minor, ringing St Clement's College Bob Minor, calling Plain Bob Triples and ringing Middlesex Bob Triples amongst them, and the year ended with not just Thomas's first peal, but also his second. Making good his plans from December 2022, Thomas rang the fourth to a peal of Grandsire Triples, which I had the pleasure to call, at his home tower of Twickenham (St Mary) on Saturday 2nd December 2023 to celebrate his 18th birthday.



Tapping into Thomas's enthusiasm, Stephen Mitchell, the ringing master at Twickenham (All Hallows), and Association Master, then set about organising a peal of Plain Bob Major for Thomas, and this was rung at Windsor (St John) on 29th December with Stephen conducting.

Firsts have continued into 2024 with a first quarter peal as conductor of Grandsire Triples at Ruislip on 13th January, and plans are already in place for more in the months to come, with Thomas keen to call his first peal soon too. I have not yet asked what is planned for his 19th birthday in December 2024.

Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild <u>Twickenham, Middlesex St Mary the Virgin</u> Sat, 2 December 2023 in 3h 2 (18-2-19 in Eb) 5040 Grandsire Triples Composed by J. J. Parker 1 Mary E Gow 2 Fraser A Storie 3 Vikki E M Bulbeck 4 Thomas G Ashwin-Siejkowski 5 Martin D Clode 6 Stephen J F Mitchell 7 James White (C) 8 William J Stungo First peal: 4.	Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild <u>Windsor, Berkshire St John the Baptist</u> Fri, 29 December 2023 in 2h 56 (17-2-11 in Eb) 5056 Plain Bob Major CK Lewis 1 Vikki E M Bulbeck 2 Alexander E Gray 3 Martin D Clode 4 Thomas G Ashwin-Siejkowski 5 Stephen J F Mitchell (C) 6 Edward C Westlake 7 Stephen R Smith II 8 Andrew B Mills First of Major:4
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### St Andrew's Firsts

Chris Trawin

More congratulations are in order. This time to St Andrew's ringer George HD Hunt, who rang his first quarter peal inside bell at Nottingham All Saints. A quarter of 1,260 Plain Bob Doubles rung by an all-student band from the Nottingham University Society. This brings our current run of St Andrew's ringers' "firsts" to a pretty impressive 33 since May 2022, including 8 "first quarters" and 3 "firsts inside" - the 3 "firsts inside" being especially worthy of note because they are all from the same family: first Cathryn, then Eleanor, and now George! Incidentally, this is not the first quarter peal rung for the NUSCR by a member of the St Andrew's band. Four months before she joined us, in August 2017, Emma rang her first quarter on the same bells, having learned to ring as a student at Nottingham. Nearly all of those 33 "firsts" have been conducted / organised / facilitated by Steve Jakeman. Many thanks, Steve, for all your hard work and support!

Bell News relies on contributions from Middlesex members. Feel free to send your articles for publication to the Bell News editor.

Angela Elliott: [BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london](mailto: BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london)

## Learning to Ring Enquiries in 2023

*Lucy Chandhial*

At the start of 2023 I took over receiving 'learning to ring' requests through the [www.bellringing.london](http://www.bellringing.london) website, and I have tracked the requests which have come through this route with an aim of having some idea how many enquiries it takes to result in one committed and capable Sunday service ringer. It is clear that not all enquiries come in this way, some people contact the church closest to them, others go through the ART Learning the Ropes website and are passed on to an ART trained bellringer, and some stumble up the stairs having heard the bells and enquire directly. This then is only a partial understanding of ringing enquiries in Middlesex, but it does offer us a clear starting point: a form filled in that leads to a tower recommendation and teacher.

In 2023 we had 66 Learning to Ring enquiries. These ranged from a BBC journalist to a tourist on holiday from Turkey and a potential ringer in Lowestoft. Thus, not all were potential Middlesex new ringers. 56 of these enquiries showed real interest and 36 of them attended at least one session at a local tower. 35 of the enquiries came during peak Ring for the King publicity, from the end of February to mid-April, and 13 of these were still ringing regularly in the autumn. So, roughly one third of those who attended an introduction session became a regular ringer.

I aim to continue tracking the Learning to Ring enquiries with a follow-up a few months later so that we can get a better idea of how enquiries convert to regular ringers, and perhaps learn how to make the most of new enquiries.

### Membership Numbers

The general message in bellringing is 'we need more ringers' and the message in Ring for the King was that we need more ringers if we want to ring all our bells at the same time. This is definitely true for Middlesex!

We have about 820 bells in total and about 500 members. Some of the towers are rung by College Youths, Cumberlands or societies such as Westminster Abbey and St Paul's. On the other hand some of our members have either stopped ringing or do not ring in Middlesex anymore. Some towers have more members than bells and some bands cover more than one tower so there is no easy formula for our recruitment requirements.

Like most Associations a high proportion of our members are over 60. Older ringers will gradually stop ringing or ring less often as they reach their 80's. To keep ringing levels stable we will need to continue recruiting and teaching new and younger ringers every year.

That said, our membership stats show that membership is the highest it has been for the last forty years. Average recruitment since 2010 is 13 new members per year (618 total new members), yet the total membership in the same period dropped by 9 members. The top year for new members was 2019 with 102 new members, following on from the focus on Ringing Remembers in 2018. We should expect therefore a high number of new members in 2024, due to Ring for the King recruitment in 2023.

Unfortunately lack of ringing during the Covid period meant that overall membership didn't benefit from the influx of new ringers in 2018/2019. However, fingers crossed, we have the chance to keep and develop the Ring for the King new members AND continue recruiting at a steady pace. Given that only a third of those making enquiries actually learn to ring, we would have to introduce 750 new people to achieve only 250 learners. Looking at it another way, this represents 6 new ringers in each active Middlesex tower. We have around 40 towers with a weekly practice session, but new ringers need to reach Sunday service readiness AND we still need to recruit to replace those who move away, retire, or step back to ring less often.

This is definitely not a one year mission or an easy target as training one new ringer takes roughly 20 hours of dedicated one-to-one time, and then ongoing time learning called changes, how to cover and plain hunt, etc.

The good news is that support is available. The Association of Ringing Teachers run training sessions on how to teach bell handling and provide lots of excellent books, videos and guides to support the teaching of bell handling and development from there into Sunday service ringing, method ringing and quarter peals.

Our District practices and training events provide support for developing ringers wishing to extend their method ringing (and other ringing skills) and members can contact the District Ringing Masters, District Secretaries and District Training Reps with their questions and wishes for development.

We see strong and effective collaboration between towers and between District Officers and towers needing specific support. This both enables bands and ensures that the most enthusiastic ringers, who want to progress, can find practices to join to keep extending their repertoire.

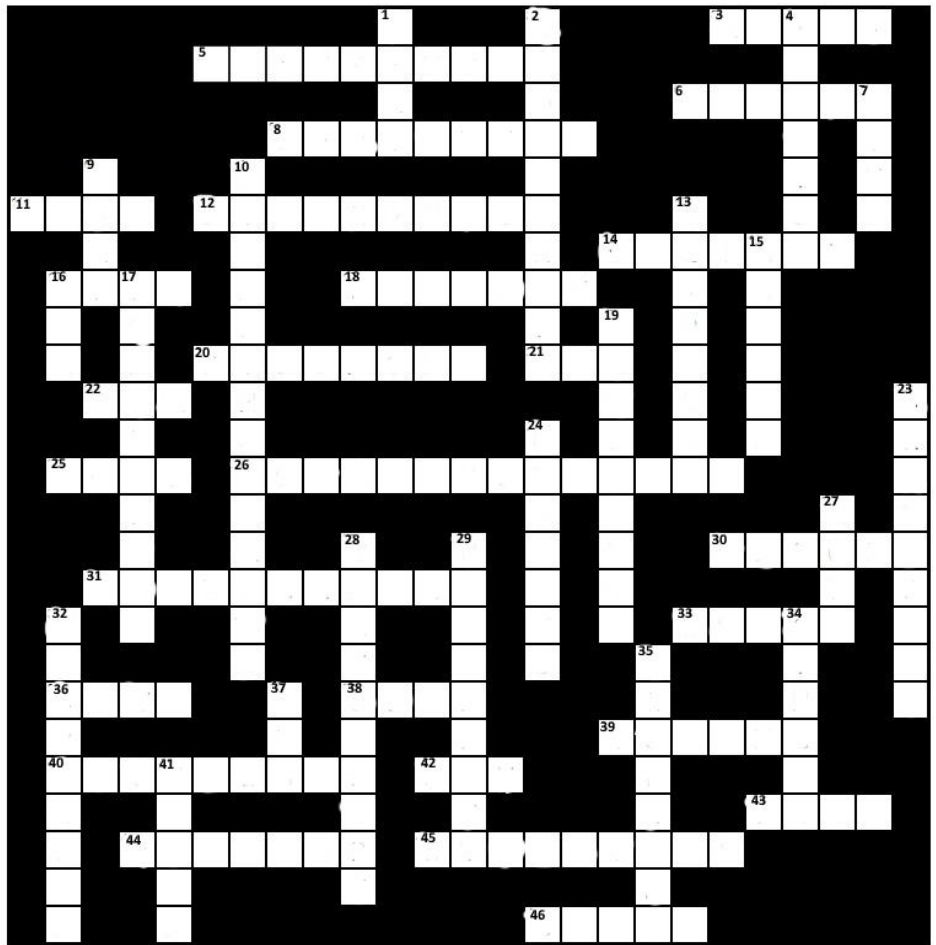
If you are happy to either support teaching bell handling or organise training events and practices with a focus on new learners at your tower, or District, please talk to your Tower Contact, Tower Captain, District Ringing Masters, District Secretaries or District Training Reps. Support can range from organising events to actively teaching at an event.



# Crossword Issue 117

**Across**

- 3. Small child perhaps
- 5. Near Aylesbury
- 6. Tower stairs?
- 8. Closing the gap
- 11. Reverse of go
- 12. Oranges and Lemons
- 14. What fun
- 16. What we ring
- 18. Fabian's moniker
- 20. Says it in a Saintly way
- 21. Half time beverage
- 22. Happens annually
- 25. Loop it
- 26. City will make you jump
- 30. Boat Race Contestant
- 31. Premier foundry
- 33. People complain about it
- 36. Bell's resting place
- 38. Or Ireland
- 39. Trip around towers
- 40. Diminutive Robert
- 42. Run in or...
- 43. Takes 3 hours
- 44. 1260
- 45. Island in the Caribbean
- 46. The last bong



**Down**

- 1. Saxon landing place
- 2. Below stairs space
- 4. Julian would have something to say
- 7. Sometimes blue
- 9. You can't have it and eat it
- 10. Greater and Lesser
- 13. Run as fast as you can
- 15. Another name for Queens
- 16. Stand on it
- 17. Four in five
- 19. Surprised boat race contestant
- 23. Old father perhaps
- 27. Thicker than string
- 28. Julian's home city
- 29. No frills but not gathering
- 32. Where we are
- 34. Called in Grandsire
- 35. The path
- 37. Go there after ringing perhaps
- 41. Poked with a bob

**Solution: Issue 116**



# Calendar

Calendar – March - May 2024

## Email updates

Changes and more details are sent via email to the Middlesex Association email list nearer the date of each event. Send an email to [mcaldg+subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:mcaldg+subscribe@googlegroups.com) to be put on the list if not on it already.

Date	Day	Distr	Topic	Location	Time
05/03/2024	Tuesday	SW	6-bell Practice	Norwood Green	19:45 – 21:00
06/03/2024	Wednesday	NE	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Southgate	19:00 - 21:00
08/03/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques & Maximus Method practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 - 20:30
09/03/2024	Saturday	SW	Second Saturday practice	Ruislip	19:30 – 21:15
10/03/2024	Sunday	NE	Caters and Royal Methods practice	Hackney	14:00 - 16:00
11/03/2024	Monday	NE	Qtr Peal Week Begins		
12/03/2024	Tuesday	NE	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Enfield St Mary Mags	19:00 -21:00
14/03/2024	Thursday	NE	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Islington Upper St	19:00 - 21:00
15/03/2024	Friday	SW	Surprise Major practice	Harlington/Heston	19:30 – 21:15
16/03/2024	Saturday	NE	Qtr Peal Day. Social after from 17:30	Princess of Prussia E1	All Day
22/03/2024	Friday	NE	Surprise Major methods practice	Pimlico (St Saviours)	19:00 - 20:30
22/03/2024	Friday	SW	10 bell practice	Hillingdon	19:45 – 21:15
23/03/2024	Saturday	NE	Training Course	TBA	10:00 - 13:00
23/03/2024	Saturday	SW	General practice	Cranford TBC	10:30 – 12:00
<b>29/03/2024</b>	<b>Friday</b>		<b>Good Friday</b>		
<b>31/03/2024</b>	<b>Sunday</b>		<b>EASTER SUNDAY</b>		
<b>01/04/2024</b>	<b>Monday</b>		<b>Easter Monday</b>		
03/04/2024	Wednesday	NE	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Southgate	19:00 - 21:00
04/04/2024	Thursday	SW	Triples practice	Hanwell	20:00 – 21:30
06/04/2024	Saturday	MCA	Jaunt. Emails to come	Saffron Walden area	All Day
09/04/2024	Tuesday	NE	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Tottenham	19:00 - 21:00
09/04/2024	Tuesday	SW	6 bell practice	Norwood Green	19:45 – 21:00
12/04/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques & Maximus Methods practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 - 20:30
<b>13/04/2024</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>MCA</b>	<b>Association Annual General Meeting</b>	<b>Twickenham All Hallows</b>	<b>13:00- 19:00</b>
13/04/2024	Saturday	MCA	SEECOM – Competition Young Ringers	Bushey	All Day
14/04/2024	Sunday	NE	Caters and Royal Methods Practice	Hackney	14:00 - 16:00
18/04/2024	Thursday	NE	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Stepney	19:00 - 21:00
19/04/2024	Friday	SW	Surprise Major practice	Harlington/Heston	19:30 – 21:15
26/04/2024	Friday	NE	Surprise Major methods practice	Bow in the Road	18:30 - 20:30
26/04/2024	Friday	SW	10 bell practice	TBA	19:45 – 21:15
27/04/2024	Saturday	NE	Training Course	TBA	10:00 - 13:00
27/04/2024	Saturday	SW	General practice	Cranford TBC	10:30 – 12:00
01/05/2024	Wednesday	NE	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Holloway	19:00 - 21:00
02/05/2024	Thursday	SW	Triples practice	Hanwell	20:00 – 21:30
07/05/2024	Tuesday	SW	6 bell practice	Norwood Green	19:45 – 21:00
10/05/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques & Maximus Methods practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 - 20:30
11/05/2024	Saturday	SW	Second Saturday practice	St Mary's Staines	14:30 – 16:00
12/05/2024	Sunday	MCA	Bell Sunday (National CofE focus)	All Towers	All Day
12/05/2024	Sunday	NE	10 bell methods practice	Hackney	14:00 - 16:00
14/05/2024	Tuesday	NE	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Isle of Dogs	19:00 - 21:00
16/05/2024	Thursday	NE	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Islington Upper St	19:00 -21:00
17/05/2024	Friday	SW	Surprise Major practice	Harlington/Heston	19:30 – 21:15
18/05/2024	Saturday	NE	District 6 bell striking competition	Wood Green	14:00 - 17:00
24/05/2024	Friday	NE	Surprise Major methods practice	Hampstead	19:00 – 20:30
24/05/2024	Friday	SW	10 bell practice	Twickenham All Hallows	19:45 – 21:15
25/05/2024	Saturday	NE	Training Course	TBA	10:00 - 13:00
25/05/2024	Saturday	SW	General practice	Cranford TBC	10:30 – 12:00
25/05/2024	Saturday	MCA	8-Bell striking Competition	Uxbridge	15:30 – 18:30

Items for inclusion in **Middlesex Bell News** to Angela Elliott at [BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london](mailto:BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london)

**Next deadline Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

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