

Middlesex Bell News

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AGM - A Poem
Barnet's Horton
Janets' Jaunt
First Quarter Peals
And much more

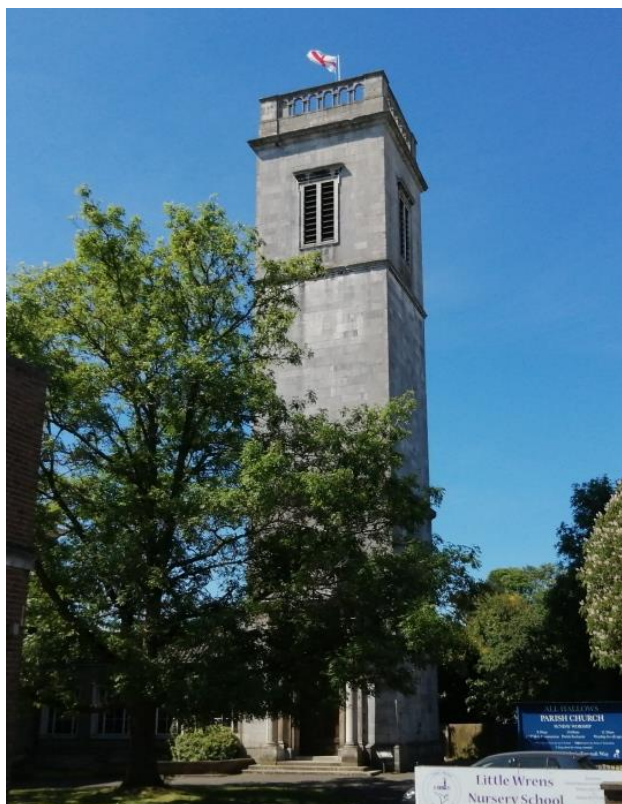


www.bellringing.london

Issue 118 June 2024

Middlesex Bell News

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



All Hallows, Twickenham

Front Cover: St Mary's, Hampton

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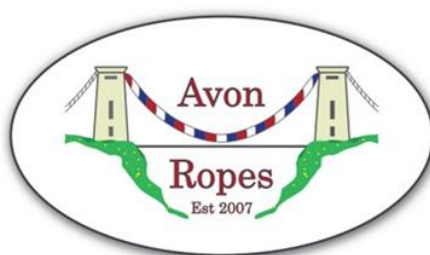
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Next deadline 23rd August 2024



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THE BELL TOWER – Father Kevin Bell

Who will ring the bell for peace, for war
For married love, for death, for kings and poor
For freedom won and freedom lost
For counting out the weight and cost
For warning and for welcome, graduation and celebration
For the sake of local history, or the memory of a nation
Who will hold and who will pull
Who will pause, or swing right through
Who will step the spiral stair
Or climb the tower for April air
Who will cause those bells to chime
A gathering of friends in constant mime
An overture of notes and rhyme
In perfect pitch and perfect time
And what about the Sanctus Bell
The single toll that prays so well
The one the verger and the priest
Use to signal heaven's feast
Its voice is different to the rest
A solitaire that does its best
Will you wake the angels, the sleepy and the lazy
Morris Dancers of the skies, that others think are crazy
But we all know since ancient times
That ships were saved by timely chimes
And those who forged them in a flurry of flames
Etched holy verse or chosen names
Cathedrals, churches, monasteries and minsters
When calling the Banns for bachelors and spinsters
Convents and schools, firemen and fools
Those ringing *for* - or *against* - the rules
Whether young or old, wealthy or poor
The bells come knocking at every door
They awaken so deep within woman and man
That sense that there's something beyond our plan
Like the 'Changing of the Guard' when you thought it all sorted
The bells even sound when the Old Regime is thwarted
It can scare away the burglar, it can say we're not afraid
It can echo to the silence of The Fallen on Parade
There among the questions that wait to take their turn
Campanologists know something that most have yet to learn
The bells can even speak when their silence weighs them down
When the beat of weary feet chimes about the town
There may be bats in the belfry or mice in the choir
But I've heard from passing strangers, that bells their hearts inspire
There are peregrines in our tower, they are clearly quite at home
I've heard them answer back when prayer strikes the tone
They never wander far from our stone or our bells
It seems their way of life likes a holiness that gels
And when our tower sways to the heartbeat of a peal
The sequence seems to say that the joy of heaven is real
Through the seasons of the year and the seasons of the heart
There is silence in each bell that longs to play its part
The heartstrings of the soul, the mind, and the will
Are like hands on a rope that strains to bring a thrill
Who will watch the watchtower, that watches over much
Who will carefully maintain it because it brings a holy touch
Who will captain the home team as their ladder reaches heaven
Or even welcome visitors from as far away as Devon
May Middlesex Association Members of the Campanologists' club
Enjoy their afternoon tea with some carefully chosen grub
May their Annual General Meeting be a time for old friends greeting
Like the bells that know each other despite the poor church heating
May their time of 'Open Tower' reinvigorate and empower
Their fanfare of sound, feel like a welcome shower
Humble does it well and humble does it best
Sticking to our place and working with the rest
Not getting out of step, not getting out of sorts
Just focusing on the moment without distracting thought
Almost like a Zen monk serving up his tea
Campanologists are working at their own remedy

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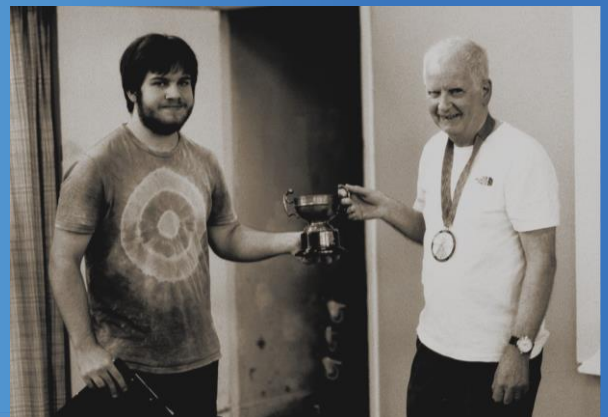
Written at All Hallows Twickenham for *The Middlesex County Association and London Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers.*

AGM

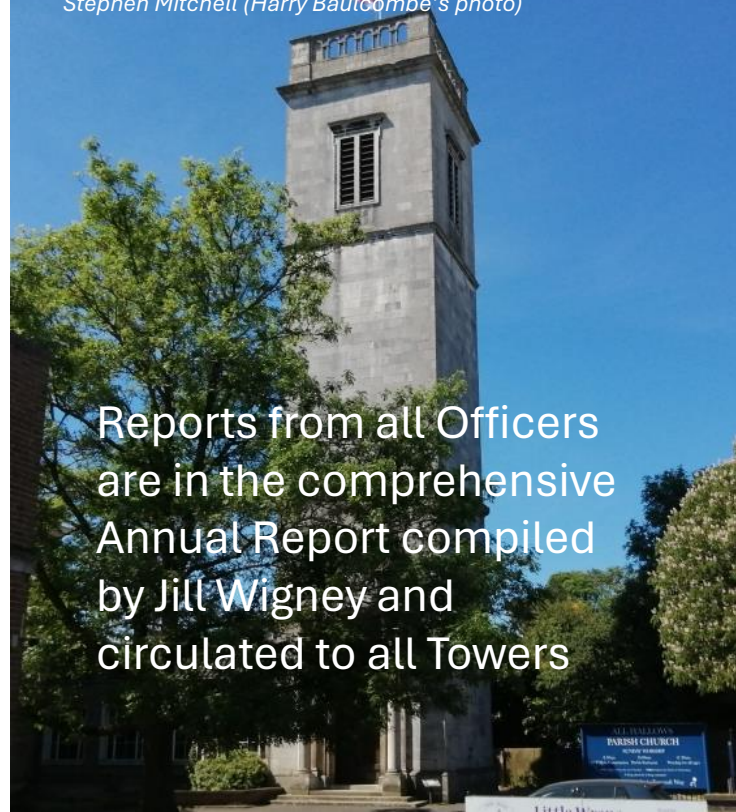


David Bassford presenting Honorary Life Membership to Jill Wigney (Harry Baulcombe's photo)

A huge thank you to everyone for the amazing "send-off" I was given at the AGM - the kind words, the fantastic round of applause, the lovely presents and most of all the huge honour of being made an Honorary Life Member. It was all a bit overwhelming at the time, but I wanted to convey just how grateful and appreciative I am and how honoured I feel. Thank you so much. **Jill Wigney**



Isaac Johnson presenting the Roger Bailey Cup to Stephen Mitchell (Harry Baulcombe's photo)



Reports from all Officers
are in the comprehensive
Annual Report compiled
by Jill Wigney and
circulated to all Towers

HISTORIC GRANT - HAMPTON

*Chris Weavers, Bell Restoration Fund Treasurer
Steve Jakeman, Bell Restoration Officer*

The Association's Bell Restoration Fund (BRF) has made many grants since its first in 1952 of £5-5s-0d (£5.25p) to St Margaret, Uxbridge. Since then, well over £300k has been given in grants and there are few towers that have not benefited.

History was made at the recent AGM when a grant of £40k was made to Hampton. Their project plans to rehang the bells in the existing frame with all new fittings, install a sound control system and make improvements to the ringing chamber. This represents some 40% of the total project costs, something we can be proud of, and which will ensure the project can start.

Saint Mary's bell appeal was originally launched on Saturday 26th of February 2022, with a target of £80,000. The 8 bells play a key role in the local heritage of Hampton and have been ringing for nearly 200 years. Maintenance on the bells was last carried out 70 years go.



GILBERT VIERI - DIED 26.04.24 - RIP

Written by the St. James' Islington ringers

Gilbert's introduction to bell-ringing was at a U3A demonstration session at St Mary's, Islington in January 2017, when he was the first to respond to an invitation to have a go at a backstroke - grinning from ear to ear as he followed instructions, and clearly smitten by the ringing bug. He went on to learn to ring at St. James' Islington and was elected a member of the Middlesex in September of the same year. He was an important member of the St James' band, with his enthusiasm and ready smile and good humour. He was French but with an English accent unless speaking his native tongue and he preferred the French pronunciation of his name. He rang his first quarter on the tenor at St. James' in January 2019. He was learning Bob Doubles at the start of lockdown and supplemented his ringing at St. James' by visits to St. John at Hackney, helping out at St. Mary's, Upper St. and attending some District events and the Janets' Jaunts. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer during the pandemic, and although was able to return to ringing as restrictions lifted, he later suffered a major heart attack while receiving treatment, which badly affected his mobility and short-term memory. He retained his good humour and always greeted visiting friends with his ready smile and welcoming words. He spent his last 2 or 3 months in a nursing home near the canal which on fine days enabled him to get some fresh air as a friend pushed him in a wheelchair along the towpath. He will be very much missed by all his ringing friends.

May he rest in peace.



Rest in Peace




BARNET'S JOURNEY TO HORTON'S FOUR

Mark Liebenrood

Horton's Four is ringer's shorthand for a tricky combination of spliced surprise major: London, Bristol, Belfast and Glasgow. It's named after a composition by Roderick Horton that was the first to combine the four methods in an all-the-work peal, each bell ringing every lead of all the methods, and is widely acknowledged as one of the toughest challenges in 8-bell ringing.

The band at Barnet has been working towards the more modest goal of a quarter of Horton's Four for some time. It seemed like a good idea to ring the harder and less familiar methods on their own before trying to combine them, and a quarter of Belfast in March 2023 was followed by another two months later. But Glasgow is often thought to be the hardest method of the four, and so it proved. Unusually for a surprise major method it features 4 -5 dodges at the lead end and wrong 5-6 places near it, and those combined with bobs can cause moderate chaos. After two unsuccessful attempts, we switched to dedicated Glasgow practices



St. John the Baptist Church, Barnet

instead of trying to ring quarters, and taking the pressure off led to some good, solid ringing. We eventually scored quarters of Glasgow in November 2023 and January 2024. Those four quarters of Belfast and Glasgow were the first in the methods at the tower for around five years. The next aim was to ring spliced. We started without London and rang Bristol, Belfast and Glasgow spliced in February. A quarter in March saw us ring all the methods together, but this was 'laminated'; ringing blocks of each method in turn. Some would say that doesn't count as proper spliced, but reducing the changes of method to a minimum enabled us to ring the first successful quarter of all four. Unfortunately, two other attempts came to grief. A quarter in April with more changes of method failed at about the half-way point, but restarting the composition where we'd left off led to some decent ringing and showed we were capable of it.

Finally, success with 'proper' spliced came at the start of May, when we navigated an all-the-work composition of all four methods. The ringers were five Barnet practice night regulars and three guests, and this was indicative of the bands in all these attempts. Although regulars at Barnet practices often ring London and Bristol, these quarters would not have been possible without the help of a considerable cast of supporting ringers who don't normally visit. Nancy's indefatigable organising has brought helpers from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Essex to support our efforts, for which we're very grateful.

What next? We'll probably ring Horton's again when we can get a band together, and adding more methods to the mix is another possibility. Post-quarter chat in the pub didn't agree on what those might be, but there's certainly scope for building on what we've achieved so far.

MEXICAN WAVE AT ALL SAINTS, HARROW WEALD

Sonia Field

At service, on the last Sunday in March, we invented a new version of Mexican Wave. I was getting a bit fed up with the usual 'long place' version which gives newer learners a chance to practise moving one place up and down, and a chance to level out in the correct place before they move back again. Some of the band can do this easily, but I also wanted to provide something with a bit more interest for the others. On the spur of the moment, I decided to try something different.

We discussed the fact that each pair of adjacent ringers has eight blows in a 'long place' Mexican Wave. Our more experienced ringers could therefore fit in a quadruple dodge. Others could make four consecutive sets of two-blow places, others long places as usual. We were ringing on seven bells. Our first composition was:

- 4 dodges (1st pair)
- 4 dodges (2nd pair)
- places (3rd pair)
- places (4th pair)
- places (5th pair)
- long places (6th pair)

Then, to make it a bit more interesting, we switched ringers around so that we were able to ring: dodges, places, dodges, places, places, long places.

LOTTERY AT BUSHEY HEATH e-KENTON

Celia Workman

At eKenton practices we like to play ringing games. It keeps us on our toes and makes us think about striking and places in different ways. This week we played Lottery on 6 bells. The treble leads and the tenor is in 6th place. All the other ringers are asked to pick a playing card numbered from 2 to 5. You have to keep your number secret and not tell anyone! Then the treble pulls off and the other bells follow in the order of the card that they have picked. Anyone not ringing has to play along too as no one is left out at eKenton practices! They have to write down the order that the bells are ringing in. A magnetic board with a set of numbers makes this very easy as it allows shuffling while our observations are fine tuned. This is particularly helpful when some of our more experienced ringers try to confuse us by deliberately looking at a bell they are not following! The observers are allowed to confer. When they think they have the answer one of them calls 'stand'. Everyone compares notes and then we all swap round and do it again so each of us gets a turn at everything! It's great fun and a good team building exercise with the added bonus that it makes us concentrate on striking and place bells. Moving on, the treble and tenor could be in the mix, or we could try playing on 8? The possibilities are endless.



The first week of June is promoted as National Volunteers' Week, and as bellringing is organised and led almost exclusively by volunteers, I thought we could celebrate what our Association achieves thanks to the commitment of ringers who also organise outings, run practices, look after the accounts and more.

The Association has forty-two elected Officer and District roles ranging from Association President to Bell Restoration Representative to Assistant District Secretary, and four appointed positions for specific skills like website management and Bell News Editor (thank you Angela!) as well as undocumented responsibilities like organising for young ringers, social media promotion and organising the recent 8-bell striking competition.

At the ADMs and AGM earlier this year eight roles were left vacant as no one volunteered to be nominated to take them on.

Five people already have more than one elected responsibility so we do need more people to get involved if we are to fill all roles.

Our Association runs ten structured practices each month and organises an outing, quarter peal week or similar each month as well as providing the website and email list to support local ringers and visiting ringers in finding tower contacts. With a Bell Restoration Fund to financially support our towers and active maintenance support offered by the Bell Restoration Committee towers are able to ring regularly and safely. New ringers are pointed to a local teaching tower and training sessions are provided to develop new skills at each stage of learning. Of course, many ringers take responsibility within their tower, as the liaison with the church and visiting ringer requests, teaching bell handling, running practices and steeple-keeping. Without these volunteers, bellringing would gradually grind to a halt (perhaps with some worrying incidents along the way) so take some time to thank the volunteers who enable your favourite bellringing opportunities and think about how and when you could take on a little responsibility yourself to contribute to the future of ringing in London.

JANETS' JAUNT – 6TH APRIL

Jill Marcum

Still blinking the sleep from my eyes, I stood on the platform awaiting the 9:40 from Tottenham, bringing with it the start of my first Janets' Jaunt. As the train pulled into the station, I found myself positioned directly in line with a carriage full of sixteen garrulous ringers, three observers, and two rambunctious children. I boarded and promptly ensconced myself in a corner, ready to fall back asleep, only to be quickly engaged in pub lunch orders, tower and Bell Restoration Fund donations (raising a princely £117), and excitement about the day ahead.

Alighting at Audley End, it was mere steps to our first stop at Wendens Ambo, a charming village of thatched cottages, pargeted plaster, friendly dogs, and spring blooms. Stepping inside 13th-century St. Mary-the-Virgin 6 (8-0-0) GF, we found it still beautifully decorated for Easter, with charming bouquets on every sill and hanging from the pews. We baptized their new ropes with Grandsire Doubles, Stedman Doubles, and Cambridge Surprise Minor. The ropes and their gorgeous blue, purple, and white sallies were funded by a Stansted Airport Community Grant.

The sunny walk to Arkesden took us through farmland, enjoying the cowslips and skylarks amidst wide open fields. Lunch at the Axe & Compasses passed all too quickly (although some managed to squeeze in a post-prandial handbell session!), and we were over to the nearby St. Mary-the-Virgin 6 (5-2-19), also beautifully decorated with tulips and hand-painted Easter eggs. It was a cozy tower, already fully inhabited by ladybirds. We joined them to ring methods including Norwich Surprise Minor and your correspondent's first called changes.

We trudged and puddle-jumped back across the windswept fields to Newport's St. Mary-the-Virgin 6 (14-2-17). Long ropes led up high to monstrous "agricultural" bells in this tower, with feathers and bits of latent dust drifting down as we rang. Eventually, your correspondent had to surrender her bell after her wrist gave out and the rope started to get away. Absconding to the base of the tower, she joined her companions on a bench, listening to the bells ring out over the village. An elderly gentleman approached, asking if we were ringers. We nodded, and he told us how grateful he was to hear the bells ringing again.

Smiles on our faces, some headed off to the White Horse pub, while others, exhausted from the full day, headed on home, grateful to the Janets for another joyful Jaunt.



St Mary the Virgin Wendens Ambo - Photo Gordon Ridgewell

<https://www.saffronwaldenreporter.co.uk/news/24245978.wendens-ambo-church-welcomes-guild-bell-ringers/>

Marion Macdonald from St. Mary-the-Virgin, Wendens Ambo writes: On Saturday 6th April, 2024 St Mary's welcomed a band from the Middlesex Guild of Bell Ringers to be the first to ring with the new ropes as part of their ringing tour. The sound of Grandsire Doubles, Steadman (sic) Doubles and Cambridge Surprise Minor rang out across the village, much to the delight of villagers. The PCC at St Mary's, Wendens Ambo, would like to thank Stansted Airport Community Trust for the grant, Mike Slowe and Ian Jolley for checking the bells and fitting the ropes and Gordon Ridgewell for the photographs.

We look forward to hosting many more bands at St Mary's, Wendens Ambo as part of their ringing tours of North-West Essex. Full article on the above link.

THE HILLINGDON OUTING - MAY

Bridget Campbell

The Hillingdon annual outing was earlier this year, being held in May. The weather was very kind and many current and past Hillingdon ringers with family and friends took part again. Five towers in Guildford and its surrounds had been booked and all went very smoothly on the day. The five towers were St John's in Stoke-next-Guildford, SS Peter & Paul in West Clandon, St Mary's in Guildford, St Nicholas in Guildford, and St Mary V in Shalford.

Each tower had its own leader who managed the ringing and ensured all had a good opportunity for practice, at their level, and ringing on the day ranged from Rounds and Call Changes up to Cambridge Surprise Royal. Lunch was in Guildford, and we ended the day in the gardens of a local pub, The Queen Victoria. Many thanks go to Louise Palmer for organising such an enjoyable day of ringing and a lovely reunion of ringers.



At the last church



At the pub

FUTURE OUTINGS

Lucy Chandhial

Saturday 20th July Learners Outing Epping area
This all-day outing (10:15 - 6:30) will start in Epping and finish at another Central Line station so that people can cycle or get lifts between towers. It is an outing to include less experienced ringers so open to all with lots of rounds and called changes and plain hunt. If a learner can ring backstrokes in rounds with a teacher or ring independently in rounds then they are very welcome to come along and try some different bells, with support. Of course, we also welcome experienced ringers to provide secure rounds and plain hunt (and maybe more).

Saturday 17th August Summer Afternoon Roehampton and close by.
This afternoon will be 12:00 - 6:00 to visit three towers, including the new set of bells at Roehampton. It is designed to make use of the 170 bus or can be cycled and should include time for tea and cake near the river or on the green. This is open to anyone who can ring rounds independently on new bells and will include a full range of ringing to suit those who come along.

PLAIN BOB COURSES

Round up of Reviews - Cathryn Hunt

There have been two Plain Bob Doubles courses at Enfield St. Mary Magdalene this year so far. One in March, and one in April. Some participants attended both, others just one. The feedback from attendees was good and will help shape future training courses.

- It was an excellently taught course, in a very nice tower and with yummy snacks! I give it 5 stars.
- Being able to spend three hours really concentrating on one method was very useful, as were the different approaches taken by the trainers.
- As an older learner, it takes a little more time to make progress, but these sessions boosted my confidence.
- Many thanks to Lucy Chandhial, Guy Wells and Edmund Wratten for their excellent teaching and to all the experienced ringers who came to help.
- Edmund was the right mix of patient and encouraging. He helped demystify the structure of the method and was very good at spotting weak points with constructive and tailor-made teaching.

FIRST QUARTER PEALS

Steve Jakeman
Vice-President

Ringling one's first quarter peal is a significant step, not only for the individual but also for the band that they ring with, having provided the necessary support to reach this milestone. So far this year seven members have done so, and some have shared their recollections of the experience. My hearty congratulations to them all and may they ring many more.

Andi Szabolcsi – St John at Hackney

The journey to ring my first quarter peal was a challenging yet immensely rewarding experience, filled with invaluable help and support, moments of frustration and tears, aching fingers, and the patience of the Captain, the band, and fellow ringers. Ringling my first quarter peal happened on a Monday evening. I don't remember much: taking the longest bus route to the tower to clear my mind; climbing the stairs thinking it wasn't the end of the world if I messed up; pulling off; almost losing the rhythm and wondering what time it was. I was surprised and relieved when I heard the conductor's call, "*This is all.*" It took 44 minutes and 1,260 changes, which I bragged about to anyone who would listen. In the end it went by in a flash. It was a great confidence booster and an excellent way to consolidate the last 11 months' learning.

Lucy Cartwright – St John at Hackney

When Steve Jakeman proposed my first quarter, I'd been ringling for around eight months. My first inclination was to decline; however, trusting in my Tower Captain, and buoyed up by the knowledge that a fellow learner would ring alongside me, I accepted. I would be covering Plain Bob Doubles and ringling at my home tower. That said, I had very limited rope-sight and some bad habits persisted, meaning that as the day approached, I was less viewing it with enthusiasm, and more with a grim determination. Surely I could manage simply to ring for forty-five minutes?

The day arrived and I was heartened to see Jess Pumphrey ringling her first as conductor. Steve encouraged us to 'enjoy it'. For the first twenty minutes

I thought it would never ever end. My initial thrill turned into anxiety. Would my concentration ebb and would I lose my place? Luckily, the bell was a dream, the sally coming to hand without my having to remember to catch it. The nauseating worry persisted though, and I could feel my breathing become choppy - and then my fear materialised: I *did* lose concentration, and drifted into an altered state, coming round a moment later with a start. To my surprise nothing terrible had happened. I was back in the circle. I could see which bells to follow, and I realised then that I was genuinely enjoying it.

Perhaps St Dunstan was looking over me because when the call came to stand, I stood the bell at the first attempt, ensuring a clean finish. A huge feeling of accomplishment arose, together with gratitude to my fellow ringers for giving up their Sunday evenings to support both my and Jess's 'firsts', and to Steve for all his time and support teaching me to ring. First quarter: done. Next challenge: actually learning a method!

Lenka Nadejova - Highgate

Standing on the church steps, forty minutes too early, cowering under a little broken umbrella and thinking what on earth possessed me twenty years ago, and in a far distant land to think I could become a bell ringer, and yet here I am about to ring my first quarter. I started in the depths of winter 2019/20 and could not have asked for better teachers. Every week Steve Jakeman and Debbie Malin gave of their free time and patiently walked me through the first hurdles. That feeling of having the weight under your control (sometimes) and producing harmonic coordinated sounds (very occasionally) is priceless.

It has been a rocky journey for me. Periods of lockdowns, work commitments, family responsibilities, loss of confidence, frequent months of absence, and despair when faced with my inadequacies. I got to thinking 'oh come on, this isn't worth it. I should find something that is easier, or just go clubbing.'

The years passed by and I wasn't getting any better, barely 'hovering' between bad covering, and

even worse trebling on plain hunt, following memorised numbers. Then, towards the end of last year, my tower captain, Janet Betham, suggested I join a group of learners led by the fantastic Louise Booth, and that changed everything. She worked relentlessly on my bell handling, theory, and ropesight. She has been so supportive, patient beyond belief and just a superb teacher.

In the end, I didn't mess it up and although my covering was a bit choppy, it really didn't matter. The sense of achievement made it all worth it.

Should this be read by a budding ringer, may I offer a little food for thought? Even though you may experience the feeling of a step forward and two steps back, do not give up. It's normal and we all go through it. Give it time and some hard graft. It WILL get better.

Robert Bacon – Barnet

I first started my ringling journey in late February 2023 and almost a year to the day was put forward to try ringling my first quarter peal. I knew something was afoot when Tower Captain Nancy Surman kept ushering me to the tenor. It was an uneasy moment when I climbed the tower that Sunday evening to attempt the longest ring I had done so far. In the run up there had been several sessions ringling the tenor as cover, but all significantly shorter in duration. Would I manage it?

We pulled off promptly and I managed to settle into a decent rhythm. I drifted off the pace occasionally but recovered once it was gently pointed out by our conductor, the most experienced Richard Pullin. From my position I could clearly see the clock, but I was most relieved to find out that I was not desperate to reach the end and I managed to ring reasonably efficiently and get to the end relatively unscathed! I wondered if I would feel stiff the following days but fortunately not. I must be in better shape than I thought. I walked home feeling happy to have managed the next milestone in my ringling career. Since then, I have managed a second quarter, and this time found it a little easier and my timekeeping has improved a tad. So, what comes next?

N&E STRIKING COMPETITION RESULTS

Celia Workman

Many thanks to all those who came to ring in the striking competition at Wood Green on 18th May.

Here are the results:

1. Bishopsgate
2. Kilburn
3. Hackney
4. Foster Lane
5. Islington/Holloway
6. The Young Ringers

Congratulations to Bishopsgate who were awarded the Jersey Cup and to The Young Ringers who were awarded the Novice Cup.

The teams from Bishopsgate, Kilburn and Hackney will go forward to represent the district in the Association Striking Competition in the autumn.

Many thanks to everyone who helped to organise the event yesterday and special thanks to the judge - Dylan Thomas.



Young Ringers from Enfield, St. Andrew's

YOUNG RINGERS OUT AND ABOUT

Eleanor Hunt

On 13th April 2024, 6 other members of the Middlesex & London Young Ringers and I went to Bushey, Hertfordshire for the SECON (South-East England Youth Contest). There were 8 teams competing overall, and was very exciting for our team, as for many it was their first time ringing in a competition. Everyone was very friendly, and it was good to see so many other young ringers together having fun.

I really enjoyed getting to know other people over the buffet lunch and playing Uno together! There was also a mini-ring set up in the courtyard, which the majority of our team had a go at when we weren't competing. It was a very relaxed welcoming environment, and the day was very well organised. Overall, it was a fantastic experience and I wish the team well for the National Youth Contest on the 6th July.

S&W STRIKING COMPETITION RESULTS

Bridget Campbell

The results of the S&W District Striking Competition 2024 are:

Rounds & Call Changes

1. All Hallows Twickenham 70%
2. St Mary's Twickenham 67%

Methods

1. St John's Hillingdon 89%
2. All Hallows Twickenham 80%
3. Christ the Saviour Ealing 76%
4. All Saints Harrow Weald 57%
5. St Mary Harrow on the Hill 25% (did not complete 240)

The top 3 bands will ring in the 6-bell striking competition with N&E teams before the Autumn General Meeting in October. Hillingdon retain the Sugar Bowl trophy for another year. Many thanks to judges Paul Flavell and Fraser Storie, who gave considered and helpful reports on each band.

Many thanks to stewards Steve Mitchell, Mike Palmer, and Louise Palmer. Many thanks also to Linda Georgiades for liaising with the church, to Revd Anne Bookless for her welcome and opening prayer, and to the parishioners of St Mary Norwood Green for the lovely refreshments throughout the afternoon. And, of course, many thanks to those taking part. The competition provided a good opportunity for visiting a new tower, catching up with friends and meeting other ringers, and taking part as a team.



NEWBIE AT ONE YEAR

Constance Redgrave

On 15th of May I celebrated my first bell birthday with a visit to Hackney for a lesson with Steve Jakeman. I had asked for *ringing up and down in peal* and what I got was bell control, again. In April I went on the Essex course to learn how to Plain Hunt, and what did I do for three whole days? Bell control. On reflection this morning, I realise that fifty years of playing bass guitar has given me a skillset that I take for granted. I was playing at the Chetnole Jazz Club the other night, heart racing, full house, kicking arse and the plectrum was starting to slip out of my sweaty fingers. My brain calculated how far through the song we were - was there a gap coming up to adjust my grip? Or could I manage to hold on to the slippery plastic just a bit tighter so I could get through to the end without dropping it and risk ruining the continuity of my sound by moving to finger picking? In the end, digging in was the safest option and I made it.

So, why am I telling you this story? Well, because the second six months of learning to ring these beautiful church bells is driving me a bit insane! When I take it apart, I realise there are layers to this crazy. I suspect I may be on one of those plateaux where people want to give up. So, I am sharing this for any of you newbies who feel like you will never get it and want to walk away from bell ringing. Please don't!!! This is what hard feels like, and I know the payoff will be moments of pure bliss when I get to wherever this road leads, be it rounds, call changes, plain hunt or even God forbid, my first quarter peal. I can only get there with hard work and, as a working musician of almost fifty years, I can tell you the longer you do anything, the more there is to learn. Those moments of joy do get closer together. For me, right now, I am so sick of hearing *two steps forward and one back... :-)*

Coming to the end of my first year in this surreal new world, this is what I think I understand about where I am and what needs to happen next:

1. Survival skills: I suspect bells require a lot of them and I don't have the band width or the experience yet to access that bit of my brain when it all goes horribly wrong. I know I must have some common ground on this because survival skills are why I am still alive.
2. Translation: I speak muso, but bells are definitely a different language, and I am still working out where they overlap. It's a bit like speaking enough Spanish to understand a bit of French, and you can hear the Latin underneath both, but you sound like a two-year-old. Arrgh...
3. And the big one: knowledge. I don't know what I don't know yet. I suspect this is where the crazy lives. All these disparate strands: places versus numbers, ropesight, listening, bell control, counting, patience with myself and my tower-mates. Being polite when I haven't a clue what someone is talking about much less how to apply it. I know they are trying, and so am I but I'm still glazing over in panic. You can't know what you don't know. It's impossible but true.

So, my new strategy going forward: find one step to take now, ask for help on how to take it and then do it anywhere and everywhere possible. For now, I am learning to count places in plain hunt and working on my bell control. I managed it on seven last week, five times in a row! That was a buzz! It's like flying - one of those moments of bliss I was talking about earlier.



Constance Redgrave on the Essex Plain Hunt Course.



TEWKESBURY SHIELD, 4 MAY

Linda Georgiades and James White

Possibly for the first time, a band of MCA&LDG members took part in the Tewkesbury Shield Ten Bell Striking Competition on Saturday 4th May having secured a place in the competition at the ballot that takes place in November the previous year (and the organiser having secured "permission" from the Master to enter an Association band).

The competition touch was 360 Grandsire Caters by the judge, Richard Pullin, so taking part was the next step after having rung the same method at Walthamstow in the Essex Trophy in September 2023.

Members of the competition band were invited to take part in two practice quarter peals, on Saturday 13th April (AGM day) at Pimlico (St Barnabas) and on Monday 29th April at St Magnus the Martyr. All but one of the band members took part in these with some additional support from others replacing those not available. At St Magnus we also rang the competition touch (just to make sure the conductor knew it).

The quarter peals were successful, and the details can be seen on BellBoard. There was some tough competition, as we all heard the draw take place.

11:30 Bell Meadow, Sussex
12:00 St Paul's, Birmingham
12:30 University of London
13:00 Oxford D.G.
13:30 Cheltenham
14:00 Cambridge
14:30 St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol
15:00 MCA & LDG

Even if alcohol consumption (by those who indulge) was delayed by being drawn last, it gave us the chance to listen to all the other participants and to conclude that the standard was very high! We could also look around Tewkesbury in glorious sunshine. Fortunately, when our time came, we were all around and after being escorted to the ringing room we were able to complete the test piece and so did not disgrace ourselves.

Richard Pullin gave his results at about 16:40: St Mary, Redcliffe came first with 102 faults. We came 7th with 167 faults (with the UL band in 8th). Having arrived after a week of ringing in Wales, Linda ticked off two new achievements, the Tewkesbury Shield competition in the afternoon (without being in either practice quarter peal, tut tut) and the Tewkesbury Parkrun in the morning coming first in her age group! Should we all take up running?!

The band was:

1 Adrian Udall
2 Ted Westlake
3 Alec Gray
4 Linda Georgiades
5 Andrew Hodgson
6 James White (C)
7 Louise Booth
8 Stephen Smith
9 Thomas Lawrance
10 William Stungo



It was an enjoyable day out, with good weather and (mostly) good ringing. Tom Lawrance and Alec Gray now pick up the baton and will be arranging a band to enter the Essex Trophy in September 2024.

N&E QUARTER PEAL WEEK

Tom Britten

From 9th - 17th March (yes - it was extended by 1 day by popular demand!), the N&E District held its annual Quarter Peal Week(ish). QPs were rung throughout the week at various towers culminating in the Quarter Peal "day" on Saturday 16th March, where 8 (ambitious!) QPs were attempted followed by much needed refreshments in the pub. Overall, it was a hugely successful week, exemplified by many "firsts".

I would like to thank everyone that participated, from organising towers and bands, those conducting each QP and for those who tried and achieved something new.

21 QPs achieved

16 different methods rung
26812 changes rung
18 towers involved
90 ringers involved (a fantastic number!)
And individual successes:
16 x first in method/principle
5 x first inside
3 x first maximus
2 x first conductor in method/principle
2 x first away from cover
1 x first QP
1 x first major
1 x first triples
1 x first treble bob
1 x first covering
1 x most methods

NEW RINGERS IN EAST LONDON

Chris Weavers

On 20 April, 2024, 10 interested residents of Bethnal Green and beyond gathered for a ringing taster session. Meeting first at St. Matthew, Bethnal Green, through the kindness of the church, everyone was treated to a range of bagels from Brick Lane. After a brief introduction, the group made its way to St. George in the East (lighter bells, larger ringing room and a viewing gallery to see the bells up).

Under the supervision of Steve Jakeman, the combination of demonstrations from volunteer ringers and the opportunity to try some backstrokes clearly had the desired effect and a number have expressed a desire to learn to ring - raising the long-term prospect of regular ringing at Bethnal Green's two towers. Plans are now being developed to get a learning programme in place.

Angela Elliott

As one of the volunteers on the St. George in the East's taster session, I can attest to the considerable interest shown by those attending. It remains to be seen how many of them actually take it up. It seems like the ideal opportunity to bring regular ringing back to Bethnal Green. Certainly, St. George's is easy to get to as it's situated very close to Shadwell Overground station.

The ringing chamber itself is light and airy and the bells very easy to handle, albeit the stairs up are without light, making your ascent somewhat precarious.

We volunteers rang rounds and call changes, Plain Hunt and Bob Doubles and all would-be ringers had the opportunity to test their mettle.

WHAT'S THE RIGHT NUMBER FOR A PRACTICE?

Parnell Clatworthy (Anthony Davey in disguise)

For the first time since Fabian Stedman published *Tintinnalogia* in 1667 scientific study has been directed to the question that tower captains have wrestled with for centuries, namely what is the best number for a weekly tower practice? While this work has yet to be peer-reviewed, and is not yet endorsed by the Central Council, *Bell News* is able to share its initial findings with our readers.

The research group of ringers and mathematicians envisaged that the work would result in a simple algorithm or formula which tower captains across the Exercise could use to improve their practices and thereby lift the standard of ringing around the world. However, once the team started work it became obvious that ringers did not by any means agree on what constituted a "successful practice". Good ringers just wanted to ring, preferably a new or notably difficult method. Ringers at earlier stages of learning turned out to have all sorts of other motives, including getting some exercise without having to go to the gym, eating chocolates not allowed at home, having a chat, and in a few cases finding a romantic partner.

These problems led the research team to widen the range of factors to be measured and included in the target algorithm. It was obviously going to be necessary to rate each member of the band for chattiness and appetite for chocolate (later extended to include cups of tea), as well as for willingness to pay attention to the conductor – the latter rating extending to a minus rating of those inclined to argue. Conversely, the tower captain would need to rate the conductor on a multi-dimensional scale of decisiveness, planning a practice, and loudness of voice ranging from stentorian to mouselike.

Once all the other obvious factors, such as number of ropes and the area of the tower, had been included, detailed mathematical analysis was taken in hand, and results shared with a group of towers. Results were disappointing, partly because tower captains complained at having to install a powerful computer to process the multi-factorial algorithm, but mainly because at most towers numbers attending a practice vary unpredictably with the weather, choir practice, a flat tyre, and other ills. Since tower captains are generally grateful for at least a reasonable attendance at a practice, the test group, while impressed by the fancy maths, suggested that the researchers find something more useful to look into. Or words to that effect.

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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 to be put on the list if not on it already.

Date	Day	Distri ct	Event	Place	Time
02/06/2024	Sunday	S&W	6 Bell striking Competition	Norwood Green	14:30 - 16:00
05/06/2024	Wednesday	N&E	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Southgate	19:00 - 21:00
06/06/2024	Thursday	S&W	Triples Practice	Hanwell	20:00 - 21:30
08/06/2024	Saturday	S&W	Second Saturday practice	St Mary Harefield	10:30 - noon
09/06/2024	Sunday	N&E	Caters and Royal Methods practice	Hackney	14:00 - 16:00
11/06/2024	Tuesday	S&W	6 bell practice	Norwood Green	19:45 - 21:00
11/06/2024	Tuesday	N&E	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Enfield St Mary Mags	19:00 - 21:00
14/06/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques and Maximus Methods practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 - 20:30
15/06/2024	Saturday	N&E	District Outing – See Janet B's email	Brighton	All Day
20/06/2024	Thursday	N&E	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Islington Upper St	19:00 - 21:00
21/06/2024	Friday	S&W	Surprise Major practice	Harlington/Heston	19:30 - 21:15
22/06/2024	Saturday	S&W	General Practice	Cranford tbc	10:30 - noon
28/06/2024	Friday	N&E	Surprise Major methods practice	Hart Street	18:30 - 20:30
28/06/2024	Friday	S&W	10 bell practice	Hillingdon	19:45 - 21:15
03/07/2024	Wednesday	N&E	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Southgate	19:00 - 21:00
04/07/2024	Thursday	S&W	Triples practice	Hanwell	20:00 - 21:30
09/07/2024	Tuesday	N&E	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Tottenham	19:00 - 21:00
09/07/2024	Tuesday	S&W	6 bell practice	Norwood Green	19:45 - 21:00
12/07/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques and Maximus Methods practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 – 20:30
13/07/2024	Saturday	S&W	Second Saturday practice	Chiswick	10:30 - noon
14/07/2024	Sunday	N&E	Caters and Royal Methods practice	Hackney	14:00 – 16:00
18/07/2024	Thursday	N&E	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Stepney	19:00 - 21:00
19/07/2024	Friday	S&W	Surprise Major practice	Harlington/Heston	19:30 - 21:15
20/07/2024	Saturday	N&E	Learners Outing	Epping	All day
26/07/2024	Friday	N&E	Surprise Major methods practice	Pimlico St Saviours	19:00 - 20:30
26/07/2024	Friday	S&W	10 bell practice	Isleworth tbc	19:45 - 21:15
27/07/2024	Saturday		Training Course	TBA	10:00 - 1:00
27/07/2024	Saturday	S&W	General practice	Cranford tbc	10:30 - noon
01/08/2024	Thursday	S&W	Triples practice	Hanwell	20:00 - 21:30
06/08/2024	Tuesday	S&W	6 bell practice	Norwood Green	19:45 - noon
07/08/2024	Wednesday	N&E	Surprise Minor Methods practice	Holloway Road	19:00 - 21:00
09/08/2024	Friday	MCA	Cinques and Maximus Methods practice	St Magnus the Martyr	18:30 - 20:30
10/08/2024	Saturday	S&W	Second Saturday practice	Sunbury on Thames	10:30 - noon
11/08/2024	Sunday	N&E	Caters and Royal Methods practice	Hackney	14:00 - 16:00
13/08/2024	Tuesday	N&E	Plain Triples and Major Methods practice	Isle of Dogs	19:00 - 21:00
15/08/2024	Thursday	N&E	Plain Doubles and Minor Methods practice	Islington Upper St	19:00 - 21:00
16/08/2024	Friday	S&W	Surprise Major	Harlington/Heston	19:30 - 21:15
17/08/2024	Saturday	N&E	Summer Outing	Roehampton	12:00 – 18:00
23/08/2024	Friday	N&E	Surprise Major methods practice	Bow in the Road	18:30 - 20:30
23/08/2024	Friday	S&W	10 bell practice	Harrow on the Hill	19:45 - 21:15
24/08/2024	Saturday		Training Course	TBA	10:00 - 13:00
24/08/2024	Saturday	S&W	General practice	Cranford tbc	10:30 - noon

Items for inclusion in **Middlesex Bell News** to Angela Elliott at BellNewsEditor@bellringing.london

Next deadline Friday 23rd August 2024

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