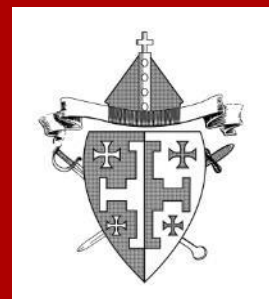




Lichfield Cathedral from Beacon Pool | Used under CC license, courtesy of BSoUoEo on Flickr

# Newsletter



## December 2015

[www.lwascr.org.uk](http://www.lwascr.org.uk)

## The Handbells of St. Bart's Penn

by Vicky Wakelam

The art of hand bell ringing is a form of musical percussion, of which St Bart's has a history. Indeed, Penn church is fortunate to possess an excellent set of bronze hand bells. These are sometimes used by the ringers to entertain or to provide an appropriate 'touch' to a service, for example at Christmas, or a Ringers' Service. They are an asset to St Barts and one which the ringers have tried to make good use of in recent decades for the benefit of the church. However, the hand bells were not always so prized as the following story tells:

*The economy of the tower having fallen on bad times, it was agreed to pawn them one by one for liquor at the Old Stag. Mine host, seeing little likelihood of local redemption, sold*

*them to a pawn broker in Willenhall. By chance, John Roden's uncle, Harry Roden, collecting rents in that area, discovered them and bought them. News trickled to the ears of the then churchwarden, Mr Twentyman, who, after prolonged negotiation, managed to redeem them for the church on the understanding that he had certain key ones engraved with the name 'Penn' to avoid any subsequent loss.*

*Today the hand bells are properly looked after.'*



We would now like to bring you up to date with the story of these bells: Having re-started a regular hand bell practice in order to use the hand bells at Christmas and Easter, we were finding that they were not particularly easy to chime, making practice more challenging than it should be. So it was agreed that a dozen of the thirty hand bells should undergo refurbishment. This was necessary to make them easier to chime as well as to improve the sound quality by tuning them.

We were without the hand bells for three months while they were sent off to receive their new lease of life and a considerable facelift.

When the hand bells returned, we were delighted to discover the investment was well worthwhile. As hoped, they are now gloriously in tune and easier to ring. As an added bonus, the bells look splendidly pristine having been given new leather straps and a high shine polish. We can now read the inscription given to them on their

previous return to St Barts: 'St Bartholomew's, Penn.' The bells deserve to be used and heard by our church and local community and this is now one of our aims.

Therefore we are asking for anyone who is interested in hand bell tune ringing to join us. We already have about eight hand bell ringers but would welcome potential new recruits. There has recently started a regular fortnightly hand bell practice, on Tuesday's at 7.30pm in the bell ringing chamber. Visitors would be made welcome at these practices to try their hand at tune ringing with the group.

We look forward to refurbishing the remaining eighteen hand bells in time and will keep you posted.

Contact Vicky:  
[vickywakelam@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:vickywakelam@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Meet the new Ringing Master

by Derek Giddins

Having recently been elected Ringing Master for the Lichfield and Walsall Archdeaconries Society and also being a new arrival to the area, I thought it would be helpful to give you a brief history of myself.

In 1965 my sister (already a bell ringer) suggested I took the opportunity to learn to ring at St Johns Merrow, a 6 bell tower in the Guildford District. My progress was slow as I had other interests at the time. I finally got the ringing bug in the early seventies!

In 1976, I changed my home tower to Guildford Cathedral (ring of 12) stayed at the Cathedral until the early nineties, although never ringing peals on the 12. I achieved 2

peals on the back 10. My overall peal total being a mind blowing 19! I have never kept quarter peal records but it will be in the hundreds, from doubles to Maximus.

Due to family commitments in the mid-nineties, I chose to balance family life with ringing and found it easier to ring at my local Parish Church in Shalford (ring of 8) just south of Guildford, I was tower captain at Shalford for a few years until 2010, also whilst down south held the post of Guildford District Ringing Master for 12 months. My late wife was also a bell ringer and worked for the ringing world when their offices were in Guildford. I have a son who rings at Southwark in London and one of my two daughters also learned to ring.



I remarried in 2013 to Gilly (who informed me she did try bell ringing in her school years but broke a stay and has never touched a rope since!) We chose to move to the Midlands as my sister lives in Fradley and Gilly was from Nottingham. We were on holiday two years ago and spotted our house in Handsacre. This fitted in nicely with my retirement in March 2014. Whilst our house is two doors

from the Old Peculiar Public House, in no way did this influence our decision in buying the property! (An added bonus was a very nice ground floor ring, St John's Armitage)

My other interests include off road trail riding, and on road cycling, and of course the usual DIY and helping Gilly in the garden.

Over the coming months I look forward to meeting my fellow ringers when visiting you at your home towers and at Society events.

Contact Derek:  
[ringingmaster@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:ringingmaster@lwascr.org.uk)

## Drayton Bassett: order placed!

by John Mulvey

At the November meeting, the PCC agreed to place the order for the three new bells. The hope is that news of work about to start will bring in the few thousand that we need to complete the whole project, including sound control and a new ringing room floor to shorten the draught.

A few days later, there came some sad news, as the churchwarden, Don Hellmuth, who had been a strong supporter of the project and who was to send the letter from the PCC ordering the bells, died suddenly.

I quickly checked with the foundry and in his usual efficient fashion, he had sent off the order the previous day. It was a great pleasure to be able to ring the bells for his memorial service, which was standing room only. It is hoped that he can be commemorated with an inscription on one of the bells, or headstocks.

A few days later I heard that, because of the full order book at Taylors, the casting date would be Wednesday, 13th April 2016.

The parish are already organising a trip to the foundry to view the casting. Among the group will be Year 5/6 from the local school who are going to record the casting and installation of the bells as a project.

There is not yet a date for the installation of the bells, but it is hoped that this will be sometime in June or July 2016. In the meantime, it is hoped that the electrics can be installed, the traps made and the new ringing room floor installed.

Andrew Ogden has also very kindly offered to dismantle the fittings of the present treble bell which are to be reused and move the third bell which is over the proposed trap door.

As far as funding is concerned, I have received an offer of a grant of £150 to preserve the present 1713 treble bell for chiming and £500 from the local parish council towards the cost of the new ringing room floor and furnishing the room. Still a little bit of money to raise, but another quiz night is planned for the New Year - details later.

## Tower web pages by Matt Gallon

### LWASCR website: extra tower information

The Society website includes a page for each tower, offering visitors extra information, not available on Dove's Guide. Please complete this form, so that a page can be completed for your tower. If you have a photo of the church, please email this to [web@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:web@lwascr.org.uk) so it can be included. This form can also be used to update the entry for your tower - fill in only the details that have changed, stating the place name and church dedication. Please email [web@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:web@lwascr.org.uk) if you need a paper copy of this form.

\*Required

What tower are you giving information about? \*

Please state placename and church dedication

About the bells

Simulator installed

Ground floor ring

Other:

### Complete the online form

We have the facility to provide each tower with a separate page on the society website to include extra information such as:

- Contact details
- Directions
- History and details of the bells
- Recording of the bells
- Local refreshments
- Access arrangements etc.

To get a page set up, all you need to do is complete a brief online form with the information, I will do the rest!

Please also take a moment to check the information recorded on the website for your tower and let [web@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:web@lwascr.org.uk) know if there are any updates required.

## New ringing times at Barton

The practice night at St James' church Barton under Needwood has changed.

It is now 7.30-9.00pm on Wednesdays. There are four learners, three of whom are children aged 13, 12 and 8, and three experienced ringers.

If anyone felt like coming along to help we would be delighted to see you. Jill Rogers

## Congratulations all round..

Congratulations to John Daubner and Marjorie Clive – both presented with their Life Member certificates at the recent AGM.

Well done also to Richard Bower of Penkridge, who rang his first peal at Sandon on November 24<sup>th</sup> (see overleaf).



Marjorie Clive & John Daubner

Contact the appeal:

[mfjohn1@ntlworld.com](mailto:mfjohn1@ntlworld.com)

07760 367570

Complete the online form here for a tower web page:

<http://bit.ly/1JrgpHh>



Richard Bower, after his first peal

# 11 quarter peals in a day

By John Burton

You are welcome to share your ringing stories in these pages, including those from many years ago. John Burton passed on this story of eleven quarters in a day – a record back in 1974.

One Tuesday in January, we were sitting in the pub after our regular Tuesday quarter, when the subject of the North Notts ringers' ten quarters in a day cropped up. We were all praising this achievement, when John half-jokingly suggested that we should try to beat it. At first we were very dubious, but the effect of the beer found us agreeing to March 2nd as a suitable date. It was decided to aim for 12, to avoid being pipped by another band, so John, *who is renowned for his smooth talking*, was entrusted with the task of organising 12 Staffordshire sixes, and Geoff with the job of working out who should ring and conduct what.

The first attempt had to begin at 7:45a.m and so remote Blithfield was chosen. John was concerned about people oversleeping and not reaching the first tower in time. He need not have worried about oversleeping though, as it was for another reason (car trouble) that the second half of the band slithered to Blithfield nearly three quarters of an hour late!

Undeterred, we abandoned this attempt and transferred the method and ourselves to the next tower,

Stowe-by-Chartley. Perhaps we would still beat the ten by one quarter, if luck was with us. One or two early morning mistakes, but a well struck quarter and ten more to go. Exhortations of "keep your minds on it" followed us into the cars and we knew that any false starts could ruin the day. We slid along icy lanes to Colwich and scored a good quarter of Single Oxford on the Rudhall six.

Next stop was Mavesyn Ridware, where a cup of coffee and Linda's cookies awaited us in the sunshine. With the bells already up, we went straight into Buxton Bob and did justice to a very pleasant Taylor six. We departed and headed to King's Bromley and another excellent ring. Norwich was the method and it was Geoff's turn to ring the tenor-*a rare and momentous occasion*-and, a good steady quarter (44m) gave us four out of four.

Pangs of hunger now and a chip shop in Lichfield fortified us for St Michael's. Probably the best quarter of the day here – Oxford T.B.-and even a missed heart beat or two when Steve changed composition half way through, did not put us off our stroke. At Shenstone we found more good Taylor bells and quarter number six successful-Double Oxford this time-with no mishaps.

Only five to go and a coffee break after the next one, or so we thought. Upon arriving at Little Aston we found some unscheduled repairs to the louvres, and ladders all over the frame. Ah well, coffee break before ringing. Perhaps this put us off our stride a little, for when the ladders had been put away, we had our only miscall of the day and so now we were late. A hasty change in method, and a fast quarter of Plain Bob (34m) in an effort to catch up a bit.

Leaving sweat on the floor, we rapidly negotiated the lanes to Great Barr, where Reverse Canterbury was scored, with one or two three quarter dodges, just to keep the conductor on his toes.

Still behind schedule, but perhaps a quick tea and we would be on time again? John Burton's mother must be given credit for fixing up a rapid, but superb tea for twelve, and feeling refreshed we changed cars and sped to Pelsall only a few minutes late. Another quick quarter – Kent T.B. this time and only two more to go.

Fatigue was overtaking us all, for disaster struck on the Barwell 6 at Rushall, where with only three courses to ring a swap was discovered. What else but stop? What could we do? 8.25pm and another one after this? The Rector of Aldridge would never let us ring a quarter at half past nine, or would he? So we went cap in hand to Aldridge.

Perhaps we had not given him credit: after a quick explanation he shouted his permission through the bathroom door. At the time when most thirsty ringers would have been in the local, for quite a time. Philip called "That's all" for St Clements. We had done it! A quarter past ten and six tired ringers joined the ladies in the comfort of the cricket club.

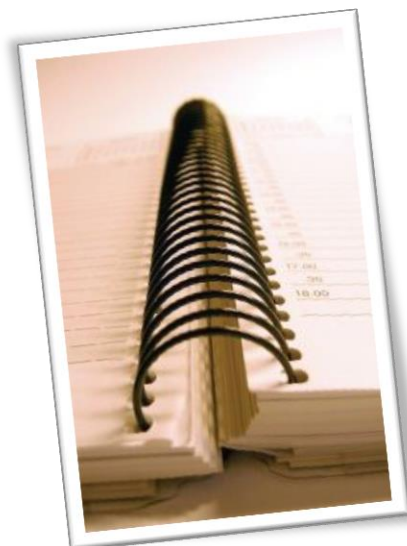
The day's statistics were 13,980 changes in the course of the quarters, but a grand total of 15,200 by the band during the day.

**Of the six ringers, Geoff Pick and John Burton still ring locally. Richard Dorrington rings in Cornwall, Ken Russell at Dumfries. Steve Yates (father of Ann Ogden) still produces compositions for Stuart Hutchieson. Phil Johnson died some years ago.**

## Diary dates

Please make a note of the following events, coming up (full details on the website):

- ✓ **16<sup>th</sup> January**, New members' meeting, Darlaston
- ✓ **19<sup>th</sup> January**, Tuesday Daytime Band
- ✓ **30<sup>th</sup> January**, Surprise Major Practice, West Bromwich
- ✓ **February**, Challenge Month
- ✓ **13<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> February**, Peal Week
- ✓ **20<sup>th</sup> February**, Skittles evening, Walsall
- ✓ **19<sup>th</sup> March**, 6 bell striking competition, venue TBC



### Training and recruitment help from the Society

In 2016, there are two new initiatives to help bring learners on and recruit and teach new ones. In February, there is a series of four Thursday morning (10:00am-) training events on the simulator at Armitage, for anyone wanting to supplement what they are learning at their own towers.

At the time of the national Heritage Open Days in September, we'll be encouraging towers to open their doors to support recruitment. On Saturdays, following the open days, we'll be running an intensive course aiming to get the new recruits handling a bell successfully. More information to come...

### 100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the 100 Club draw at Walsall were:

- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Brenda White
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Penn Tower
- ❖ 3<sup>rd</sup> Stuart Hutchieson
- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> Peter Olding



If you'd like to try your luck and help raise money for the Bell Restoration Fund, please contact Linda Pick:  
[lindapick@totalise.co.uk](mailto:lindapick@totalise.co.uk) or  
 download an application form from the Society website.

## Happy Christmas!



The Society wishes all its members and friends a very happy Christmas and a successful ringing New Year!