



St Laurence Church, Reading. | Used under CC license, courtesy of Andrew Smith on geography.org.uk

# Newsletter



## April 2016

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

## Putting Walsall on the National 12 Bell Striking contest Map

by Anne Ogden

As some of you may already know, a team has been entering the National Twelve Bell Contest for the past three years under the name of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Mike Wilshaw got a 12 bell practice going there some years ago now and it's due to him that some of us got to re-visit 12 bell ringing, or indeed tried it for the first time! Thanks for the stress Mike!

Peals of Bristol, Avon and even spliced Maximus have been scored since and it seemed a natural progression to try our luck in this prestigious competition.

Fast forward three years, see personnel come and go, decide on a

new t-shirt colour, change base tower and here we are – practicing monthly at Walsall and other local towers, including Wolverhampton, Aston and Shrewsbury.

This year, we were drawn for the eliminator at Reading. We had lots of practice sessions, including a quarter peal and a trip down to Reading for a go on the 'real thing' and before we knew it we were travelling down on Saturday 19th March for the contest eliminator.

The draw took place at 11am and we got the dreaded first spot! Nerves started to kick in but we started our practice piece and realised we didn't sound too bad! The signal was given to indicate the start of our test piece and off we went. We all agreed that we had done the best we could have done.

At least when you're drawn first you can get

it out of the way and enjoy the rest of the day! Cakes and bacon butties were available in the Church and the local Wetherspoons was only a two minute walk away.

After listening to 7 other teams and enduring a nerve-wracking wait for the final results at 5pm, we gathered in the church to hear the verdict.

Our comments were quite positive and gave us plenty to work on for the future and we were eventually ranked 5<sup>th</sup>. We couldn't have been happier after coming last the previous year!

Congratulations to Bristol, Melbourne and Worcester from our eliminator who go through to the



final at Aston on 25th June.

Thanks must go to everyone involved, but especially to Matthew and Gail Lawrence for their organisation and to Neil Bennett for all of his encouragement throughout.

Keep your fingers crossed for us next year!

## The LWASCR 6 bell striking "event"

by Vicky Wakelam

I deliberately use the term 'event' here, to replace the often-dreaded term 'competition', which may deter teams from entering what is, one of the most sociable events of the ringing year. Here is an improving team's viewpoint of the morning:

'Our team were the second up, waiting outside the ringing chamber for our turn to ring and listening to the first team's performance. Then, as the first team exits the chamber, friendly, knowing looks are exchanged and a few choice but encouraging words shared from members of the exiting team.

We had practised for weeks and even if we 'fired out' we were determined to enjoy the moment. After the first 5 whole pulls, determining how the bells go, we shared comments and glances which hoodwinked ourselves that we were on an informal ringers' outing to another tower. 'Just enjoy it' chirruped our kindly tower captain, receiving nods of approval from our team.

And so we did enjoy it - ringing 120 changes of Plain Bob doubles, with a mere 52 faults. (Oops, sorry team, was that brutally honest information not to be disclosed?) It was for us a significant improvement on the previous year, as we pondered the thought that a certificate for the most improved band's score could be included in future events?

Having experienced firing out during the same event two years ago, we held our heads high, smiled and returned to try again. As a result, our Penn band achieved a Bronze award for our efforts for the last two years.

With only seven teams entering this year's striking event, to those of you wonderful people who feel they "aren't good enough to enter": If we are good enough, you are good enough! It is always a most enjoyable morning, which happily includes some further hidden highlights and delights:

- Helpful, constructive feedback on your team performance.
- Gives you something to aim for with team striking..
- A relaxed and informal atmosphere and a change of scene for a morning.
- An opportunity to meet with have friendly banter with other ringers
- Raffle raises money for the bell fund and opportunity to win some goodies.
- All teams receive recognition and award – just for completing their test piece.

Furthermore, if that's not enough to persuade you to participate, there is the wonderful array of delicious homemade cakes and hot drinks to enjoy while contemplating your

team's effort and listening to the other entries.

Please do put it in your tower diary for next year. It would be great see more towers supporting this sociable and very helpful event. If Penn can do it, so can you!

Finally, a big thank you to the ringers, novice and experienced alike - who helped to make it a successful and enjoyable event.

Remember, your 6-bell Striking Event 2017 needs YOU!

## "Bell wronging" A poem by Jayne Cowdale

When I began to learn to ring, I couldn't get it right, I'd sometimes pull quite steady, And then I'd tug with all my might.

With patience and encouragement, And vast amounts of praise, I've managed to control the bells, To lower and to raise.

Some ringers use sign language Which I don't understand, Keep up; hang back and dodge now, With unintentional sleight of hand.

Always count your places, And listen to your bell, And then I think, 'which bell is mine?' Whoops, I cannot tell.

The exercise from ringing Is good for the grey matter Ringers strive to strike well So as not to make a clatter

For special days and weddings, The 10 o'clock and evensong I now can ring a bell all right, Instead of being all wrong.

## In Memoriam: Ken Head 1940- 2016

by Dorothy Turley

It is with great sadness that we at Christ Church, Coseley have to report the death of our former captain, Ken Head. Ken took over the captaincy in 1995 following the death of Eric Speake and battled with ill health until finally having to retire from ringing in 2010. Sadly, during the past year his health deteriorated rapidly and he died on 15 January 2016.

During the time that he was captain he taught countless learners with infinite patience and humour. He was also a skilled woodworker and produced many beautiful items for the church and new stays for the bells as well as being very involved in general maintenance of the church building.



Outside the church, his hobby was his garden which always looked beautiful.

He was a truly good, kind man and will be greatly missed by his family and everyone at Christ Church but his legacy will live on through the ringers he taught and the beautiful objects he made for the church.

## Messy Bells

by Dave Towell

Messy Church came to the ringing room in Abbots Bromley on 7th February.



For those not quite in the know about what exactly Messy Church is, it's a different form of ministry, which aims to explore religious themes through hospitality, creativity, and celebration. It's very different to traditional Anglican services, yet is popular both with the existing congregation and newcomers.

It's something of a self-development concept (DIY?) rather than being led by a minister and it's for all ages - not just for children. Messy Church days start with a welcome, a longer creative time in which to explore the day's theme through getting messy (involving story, prayer, song, games and activities), a short celebration time and a shared meal.



Messy Church takes over our Sunday service once a month at Abbots Bromley and our messy organisers explore a different biblical theme each time. When they invited us to join in and demonstrate the bells for them, we were delighted to do so.

We bell ringers are (if we are honest with ourselves) a pretty secretive lot; we hide upstairs in the ringing room (which in many cases can often be accessed without having to go through the church) and if we are ringing peals or quarter peals, we usually lock ourselves in for security!

For obvious safety reasons regarding heavy and moving metal parts, we also tend to discourage unaccompanied visits to our domain.

So, when we were invited to open our hearts (and the door) and share our secret with the congregation and give them a chance to get involved, we leapt at the opportunity to join in.

Our messy activities started with an open door invite to join us in the ringing room for the pre-service ringing – the call to worship.

Through that, we showed that we are a band with a range of abilities, from novice to expert, which anyone would be welcome to join. We carefully arranged to have more ringers than ropes, so that we could welcome and talk to our guests as



well as ring – though one or two of us can actually do both!

During the creative part of the morning there were a range of ringing related activities in the church which included:

- A demonstration of ringing technique on the treble bell
- A mini-striking contest, using the laptop and Abel ringing simulator to see who could strike the tenor most accurately to rounds (the winner was "Abi-the-elder", and second was Catherine)
- Baking & decorating bell shaped biscuits with St Clements (oranges & lemons) icing
- A study of Psalm 150 (Praise him with loud cymbals & timbrels)
- A visit to the belfry to see the mechanics of ringing (the promised bats were missing)
- Making prayer bracelets, featuring mini jingle-bells
- A selection of singing prayer bowls and Tibetan prayer bells – which have a delightful resonance

- Making mini bell ropes (Liz is remarkably creative with red white & blue pipe cleaners, as the Christmas Tree also demonstrated)
- Hand bell ringing to the messy song for today (Alleluia, Praise the Lord)
- Tea, Coffee, plenty of chat & friendship

The service ended with prayers (using our prayer bracelets) and two rousing verses of our song, with hand bell accompaniment of a sort.

Did we enjoy our morning? Yes, we did. Was it worth it? Well, there were winners and smiles all round; it got some of the ringers into church who don't always stay for the service, it got us more engaged with our church congregation and our village and it also introduced lots of people to our art and encouraged some would-be learner ringers.

Most importantly, we all enjoyed it.

If Messy Church meets near you, it's definitely worth engaging with them, as they'd make you very welcome indeed.

## TAPS (Thursday accelerated practice sessions)

by Ian Slater and Gerald Scrivens

You can't learn to ring by going to just one practice a week, so an opportunity like TAPS is great!

A whole morning for a small group of students to focus on just what they need, with the opportunity to get something right and then repeat it, produces far more gain than a few minutes a week of getting something wrong.

It's good to have the reassurance of similar learners/improvers around.

Armitage is a great choice of tower and the teaching team is wonderful. You get carried along by Lance's enthusiasm; Derek's unflappable ringing with quiet helpful feedback gives confidence, whilst Jim mixes solid support with insightful hints. One day I hope to get closer to the standards Jean expects! **Ian Slater**

I have attended training sessions held at Armitage on Thursday Mornings in February and March and would like to thank those involved for their help, guidance and patience.

The sessions enabled me to address particular ringing problems with expert guidance. Those giving the guidance and the other ringers filling the other ropes offered the opportunity to practice until problems were resolved - something that is often not available at normal practice sessions. **Gerald Scrivens**

# Two important Staffordshire anniversaries

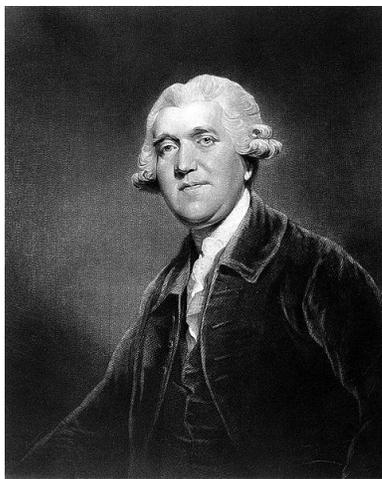
by Phil Gay

This year sees two related anniversaries relating to our area. In 1766 the Act of Parliament authorising the construction of the Trent and Mersey Canal was passed, and construction began soon after.

One of the main promoters of the canal was Josiah Wedgwood, looking for an improved form of transport for imported clay and outgoing pottery.

He cut the first sod at Middleport on July 26th 1766. The engineer of the canal was James Brindley, who had been born in 1716, the exact date not being known.

So we can celebrate these two related and important anniversaries together. In the eighteenth century it was common for events such as the beginning of canal construction and the opening of canals to be celebrated in a variety of ways, including the ringing of bells, and it is known that there were great celebrations in



Josiah Wedgwood 1730-1795. Courtesy of Wellcome Images

Burslem, including the roasting of a sheep, on July 26th 1766.

What is planned this year, is a linear quarter peal day along the length of the canal. This will require the co-operation of our three neighbouring associations, although our area has more of the towers than the others.

There are twelve North Staffordshire towers with ringable bells adjacent to the canal:

- Kidsgrove (8)
- Tunstall (8)
- Stoke (10)
- Fenton (8)
- Barlaston (6)
- Stone (10)
- Sandon (6)
- Ingestre (6)
- Barton under Needwood (8)
- Horninglow (6)
- Burton St Chad (8)
- Stretton (6)

The nearest tower to Middleport is Burslem, where the bells are currently out of action, but we have permission to erect the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry at Middleport Pottery as a substitute, even closer to the canal.

There are seven towers in the area covered by the Lichfield and Walsall Archdeaconries Society:

- Colwich (6)
- Colton (6)
- Rugeley (6)
- Armitage (6)
- Mavesyn Ridware (8)
- Kings Bromley (6)
- Alrewas (8)

The eastern end of the canal is in Derbyshire where there are five towers:



St Michael's church, Colwich and the Trent and Mersey Canal. Used under CC license, courtesy of Roger Kidd on [geograph.org.uk](http://geograph.org.uk)

- Shardlow (6)
- Aston on Trent (6)
- Weston on Trent (3)
- Barrow upon Trent (3)
- Repton (8)

Somewhat surprisingly, given that the canal goes right across the county, there are only five Cheshire towers:

- Church Lawton (8)
- Sandbach (8)
- Middlewich (8)
- Northwich
- Witton (8)
- Weaverham (6)

July 26th is a Tuesday, so we are proposing that the event will take place on the previous Saturday, July 23rd. We are also proposing to round the day off with a social event in a suitable canal-side location.

At this stage it would be useful to have expressions of interest from ringers who would like to take part. Participation will not be restricted to members of the four associations involved – there are known to be ringers in other areas who are interested in canals, and some of them may even arrive by boat.

So please let me know ([phil.gay@btinternet.com](mailto:phil.gay@btinternet.com)) if you are interested. Firm commitments not required until the June newsletter.

## Diary dates

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

- ✓ **23rd April**, Ringing for St. George's Day
- ✓ **30<sup>th</sup> April**, 12 bell practice, Wolverhampton
- ✓ **17<sup>th</sup> May**, Tuesday daytime band at Norton Canes and Shareshill
- ✓ **21<sup>st</sup> May**, Evening practice, Yoxall
- ✓ **12<sup>th</sup> June**, Ringing for the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of HM the Queen
- ✓ **18<sup>th</sup> June**, Full meeting, Coseley
- ✓ **21<sup>st</sup> June**, Tuesday daytime band at Eccleshall



### Congratulations!

- **Nick Hughes**. First peal (Plain Bob Minor at Armitage) on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2015
- **Petula (Pet) Hughes**. First peal inside (in the above).
- **Quarter Peal Week at Penkridge**: Pet Hughes called a quarter of Bob Doubles for the first time and on Feb. 22nd the band rang one of Grandsire Triples, to celebrate the Diamond wedding anniversary (60 years!) of Derek and Pam Knowles that day. Derek has been a regular and very helpful visitor to Penkridge for many years.
- **Striking competition (er.. "event"!)**. The Cathedral took the cup from Cannock A; Cannock B won the call-change shield (let's have some competition next year!). Penkridge and Penn were pleased to have improved on their previous efforts.
- **Clare Coleman**. 500 quarter peals. (Braunstone Surprise Major at Eccleshall) on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2016



*Nick Hughes and the Armitage peal band*

### 100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the 100 Club draw at Rugeley were:

- ❖ 1<sup>st</sup> Des Fellows
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> Stuart Hutchieson
- ❖ 3<sup>rd</sup> Cherry Bellini
- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> Geoff Pick



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.