



Front Row (L to R): Mike Roberts (Penkridge), Brandon Pickering (Cannock), Peter Biggin (Tamworth), Jack Lisseter (Tamworth)

Back Row (L to R): Freya Roberts (Tamworth), Holly Newton (Cannock), Chad Pickering (Cannock), Tamzin Gulliver (Tamworth), George Rawlinson (Whittington), Aimee Ward (Cannock)

The Three Spires Junior Band (by Geoff Pick)

I have been ringing for well over 50 years now find that the evenings I enjoy the most are when assisting Derek Giddins with running the Three Spires junior band.

After being unable to field a team for the national contest in 2018, we were pleasantly surprised to find that, after a change of evening, 17 different youngsters took part in our first few practices. Six of these represented LAWAS in the 2018 inter-association competition, coming away with a win.

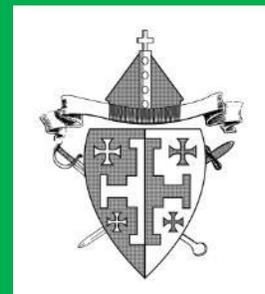
We heard on the grapevine that this year's 'National' was to be held on a 17 cwt ring of eight, a daunting prospect for our young band. A decision was made to move the practices from Aldridge to the heavier bells at Cannock and, ultimately, to the even heavier Penkridge bells. The ringing here was far from perfect but it did give practice at ringing at the right speed for bells of this weight.

Ten of our regulars, plus two youngsters who were ringing in the Darlaston team, rang in the LAWAS annual striking competition with the 'A' team having the fewest faults in the Call Change section.

Derek then had the difficult task of selecting our team plus two reserves. Disaster struck shortly after this when Xanthe Simmonds, from Abbots Bromley, broke her arm in a horse-riding accident and one of our reserves understandably decided that her GCSE work took precedence over a day in Liverpool. Luckily we were able to draft in our youngest ringer, Brandon, and also Mike from Penkridge to make up the 10.

A bleary-eyed group met at Penkridge station on the morning of the competition and set off for Liverpool where we met up at the station with the rest of our group including a large number of groupies from Tamworth. A trip

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on the underground was taken to Bootle where morning ringing was available, although Brandon gave us a few heart-stopping moments when he decided to get off at a random intermediate station. At Bootle we were disappointed to find a full church and a long wait before our scheduled warm-up ring. This left little time to get back to the city centre for our allotted slot at St. Nicholas, Pierhead. The 12 bells here are very heavy and our band acquitted themselves well with Chad being invited to ring the 40 cwt tenor. Several of the band also rang on a mini-ring for the first time in the church grounds. A rushed lunch was followed by a walk to the competition tower of St Francis Xavier, about 1 mile away. Derek and I were concerned whether our band would adapt to these new bells, but we need not have feared as the ringing sounded quite respectable outside. Team Photos were taken downstairs after a team hug. These including an attempt at recreating the 3 Spires although George didn't seem to realise that a straight line was needed. The rest of the afternoon was spent with retail therapy for some of the band and by chasing a frisbee around a park for others. We reassembled at Pierhead for the results where we were placed joint 14th out of 24 teams, not too bad for such a young band. The feedback from the judges was positive with Holly particularly being mentioned for her ringing of the 2nd in Queens. Derek and Mike took the opportunity to join in the open ringing at Liverpool Cathedral whilst the rest of the band caught trains home. Derek and I are particularly grateful to the parents and ringers who have ferried the members to practices and supported them so well. It is difficult to assess the long term benefits of a day out together, but friendships are strengthened and confidence grows. We will be starting evening practices again shortly and all young ringers are welcomed. Please contact Derek Giddins if you would like to be advised of future practices.

Summer Outings



The annual Lichfield Cathedral outing was held on Saturday 1st June, and this year took us to towers in West Staffordshire and Shropshire. Having continued the good attendance with last year's outing to towers in North Staffordshire, this year saw 17 Cathedral ringers attend this year's outing, supported by John Mulvey of Tamworth and some committed

non-ringing family members! Starting at Brewood, the group then moved over to Codsall, followed by Patteringham, Patshull and finishing at Albrighton. The tour featured good ringing, with everything from rounds and call changes up to surprise major methods, allowing our group of varying abilities to try out some new bells and improve on our methods. Beyond the ringing, this tour was marked by an interesting series of events getting to Patshull; not only did the convoy of cars struggle down a narrow lane (with the road access having changed since some Cathedral members had last visited), but this culminated in some tricky manoeuvring of cars after the ringing, as evidenced in the photo from David!

Lichfield Cathedral.



Thank you firstly to Heather Griffiths for organising the towers, coffee break, lunch, and for getting everyone to each tower on time! Thank you also to everyone who came along and made it a very enjoyable day.

Abbots Bromley

Organising a Ringing Outing

From Dave Towell, Abbots Bromley

Over the years there have been quite a few Abbots Bromley outings. Some, like the camping weekends and Jack's Winnebago are before my time and warrant a telling from those "who were there". Then there were the destinations of legend, like Pershore, Merton College & Liverpool. In contrast, my first ringing outing was a (slightly) less ambitious trip over the county border to Sudbury – and hastily back to Staffordshire and Marchington. Quite exciting though, to a novice ringer. In recent years we've taken to doing something around Easter time. This started with the idea of a visit to Dordrecht – Paul de Kok being a good friend of our tower captain. Deciding that we first needed to find out whether we could get on together for a whole weekend, we tested ourselves with a weekend in Derek Giddins' old stamping ground at Guildford – which was a tremendous success, culminating with Sunday ringing at Guildford Cathedral. Buoyed up by that, the Dordrecht weekend followed in 2018 and was another outstanding outing. It was however quite difficult to organise all the travel and getting everyone in the right place. Maybe getting bumped off an overbooked flight didn't help? So this year we decided to something less ambitious – "why not just a day trip this year? And how about London?"

London?! Less Ambitious??

Deciding that it was time to give our tower captain a break from organising the outings as well as practice night, peal week and regular peals as well, I bravely volunteered to help organise.



Where to ring? We'd enjoyed Geoff Pick's recent society trips to London, which crossed a few off this list. Also with a member of the College Youths in our midst, we had a few contacts, which helps. We didn't want to over-reach ourselves with the ringing, so settled on 6 and 8 bell towers. We also wanted towers within a short walking distance. Four seemed a good number, with time for plenty of ringing, coffee stops, leisurely dinner ("lunch" in the south) and sightseeing. So that seemed to settle it on the city.

What to ring? We can ring surprise methods, so knew we should be able to acquit ourselves well, but we also have several novices so wanted to also ring lots of call changes as well. Whatever we rang, it should be rung well. We settled on a range of standard calls and methods - nothing over ambitious, with the bones of plan of what to ring and in what order at each tower, so that everyone got plenty of rope time.

Having a different organiser for each tower helped spread the load on the day and gave lots of people the chance to try being captain for an hour.

Above is a beautiful view from St Vedast.

But the tough bit was actually arranging four towers, in the right order. We had a list of about 10 possibles and a short list of four desirables. Armed with the Middlesex Association website, Dove's Guide and some personal contacts it boils down to lots of emails, phone calls and the power of persuasion. We started early – 4 months early - expecting City towers to be popular. A couple of early "yes" responses from St Vedast and St Olave's filled us with confidence, and one tower captain shared some very helpful notes about the ringability and likely availability of other towers. However, the others proved somewhat harder to arrange, with a range of reasons including "the neighbours" (St Barts & not unexpected), "an event at the Guildhall" (Jewry - unfortunate, but maybe not unexpected in London), never ending building work and excessive security (St Andrews), and a broken gudgeon pin (bit of a surprise at Garlickhythe). Nevertheless we found that all the tower correspondents – who included some big names in ringing – invariably friendly, helpful and encouraging. Have plenty of alternative plans is the advice – we didn't finally find out that two wouldn't be available after all until about 3 weeks before. We had a couple of strokes of luck however, in that we were offered St Magnus instead of Garlickhythe (an unexpected 12) and Alan Regin came up trumps letting us ring at Spitalfields at quite short notice.



At St Vedast we were elevated by the presence of royalty; at Magnus the Martyr, we had to bend low to enter the ringing chamber.

Then there was the timing – getting everyone in the right tower, in time to ring up, without losing anyone and in one case getting them in the right pub ("This is the back door in" – but to the wrong pub!). A generously timed programme helped. Some might say we over planned, but arguably it's more successful if you have a good plan and relax from it, than having to wing it when things go awry.

So, it was a bit stressful to arrange, but ultimately successful. All four towers were a joy to ring. St Magnus were marvellous and we coped well with 12. Quote of the day at St Vedast – "We keep the Queen in the cupboard you know" (well a cardboard cut-out). Most spectacular architecture was Spitalfields which just edged out St Vedast. And the best ringing? A touch of Yorkshire at Spitalfields in memory of our Yorkshire friend Michael Platt.

And there you have it – the experience of a novice tour organiser. It can be done, its not as hard as you might think, tower captains are invariably welcoming and helpful and (on the way home) you can bask in a job well done. Why not give your tower captain a break and give it a go yourself?

Good luck.



Holy Week at Tamworth

As with most towers, Tamworth doesn't practice during Holy Week, the week preceding Easter. Usually we take the opportunity to go out for a meal together along with our partners. This year, as we now have four young ringers, we decided to do something different and more active. This would not only include the youngsters but also involve their parents. Kay Else organised a skittles evening for us at a town centre social club. Over 30 ringers, parents and children took part. The evening included a buffet supper which, as there were so many teenagers, was soon consumed. I think all agreed that it was an event that may become a fixture on our calendar.



More from Brewood....



BROKEN CLAPPER AT BREWOOD !

Report from the Brewood Ringers

We had a strange, frightening, and possibly even hazardous incident recently at Brewood.

We were ringing for a wedding earlier in August when without warning there was a very loud and frightening "Thud" from the bell chamber two floors above us, following which our 6th bell was silent.

On inspection, the clapper had snapped in two (see photo)

Clearly, the flying clapper could have damaged anything in the bell chamber, including the bells, and could more worryingly have smashed

through the floor !

Luckily, we have a very solid and thick bell chamber floor, and although the clapper dented and chipped the floor, it stood up to the impact.

We are fortunate to have a spare clapper because of a similar incident about 15 years ago, so we were able to get all eight bells working again for a quarter peal planned for the following morning.

After getting over the shock, we are now working with the bell advisor to seek a permanent repair.

The Bell Restoration Fund

The bell restoration fund supports the efforts of local towers to maintain and restore their bells by giving grants for projects. This is only possible if there are sufficient funds available. At present there is less than £5000 in the bell restoration fund that has not been allocated for projects. When a tower applies for a grant towards a project it would be helpful to be assured that there was a known regular income into the fund which could be relied upon.

There is therefore a need to generate additional regular income. The committee has taken steps to increase regular income by increasing subscriptions. This increase being allocated to the restoration fund. This will generate an income of around £900 per year. Additionally approximately £600 is raised by the 100 Club per year. These are the only sizable regular income sources.

At the Abbots Bromley meeting in January I talked about how members could help the bell fund by giving a regular monthly amount by standing order and also gift aiding this if they were tax payers. So far 4 members have taken out a standing order subscribing £65 a month to the fund. It is my target that by the end of 2020 this number of subscribers should reach 20.

Would you help by just giving £5 a month to the bell fund? Contact the treasurer for the Society's bank account details.

Another way that ringers could assist the fund is by towers making a yearly donation. Over the nearly 50 years of the bell funds existence many of the Society towers have received grants towards work on their bells. Wouldn't giving a yearly subscription being a right way of saying thank you for that grant and ensuring that others could benefit?

At the moment there is only one tower, Tamworth, who give a regular donation. I know that many towers have substantial sums locked away in bank accounts. Giving just a small donation from these accounts will make all the difference to us being able to give meaningful grants to future applicants.

John Mulvey

Blithfield ring – An innovative project.

August Bank Holiday Saturday three years ago at St Leonard's, Blithfield, due to weddings at three local parish's all at the same time, ringers from the local parish's were unable to help out at a wedding at Blithfield. This proved to be a turning point for Neville Cooper (tower captain). He decided that it should be possible to provide an alternative arrangement. His career as a mechanical engineer brought some advantage of knowledge and experience and what began as a hobby became a project. The outcome, operational for the last 12 months, is a Carillon. Not the conventional type (operated with levers and ropes) It is an intriguing piece of equipment, using an electro pneumatic system. showing all the ingenuity and innovation of a Heath Robinson using parts from the automotive industry (7 pin car/trailer plug being the most obvious as you enter the ringing chamber) it ensures the bells can now be heard. The images below show some of the working parts: a compressor operating pistons attached to levers pulling ropes attached to clappers. The system is operated from the ringing chamber either using a rudimentary keyboard or connected to a computer enabling methods to be rung automatically using software also written by Neville. The ringing interface on the computer holds a library of methods allowing the 'operator' to set their own ringing sequence, ringing speed can be set from 15 to 20 rounds per minute



My thanks to all who have contributed their outings, projects and events to this newsletter.

Diary dates

Please make a note of the following events coming up. More details at www.lwascr.org.uk or from sec@lwascr.org.uk

21st September, AGM, Walsall (12) 3.00pm

16th November Full mtg (8) Blakenhall 3.00pm

30th November Evening meeting tbc 7.30 pm

Special reminder:

20th September ringing for climate action.

100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the last draw were:

1st Rachel Wheeler £ 53.50

2nd Norman Bramall £ 26.75

3rd Abbott's Bromley £ 13.38

4th Liz Hutchieson £ 13.38



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 or download an application form. from the Society website.

Very sad news from Tamworth.

Mary Bolt, our former tower secretary died on Thursday 12th September in Good Hope Hospital, Sutton Coldfield where she had been treated for skin cancer. This is from where she retired as a midwife nearly 18 years ago.

She learned to ring later in life in her 50s at Tamworth as her father and other relatives had rung at East Budleigh, near to her childhood home but she was unable to learn when she was younger. She wished to be able to ring on those bells.

She had had to retire from ringing at Tamworth a few years ago as she became unable to climb our stairs. She continued to act as our tower secretary and join us for coffee and social events until very recently.

Her funeral is yet to be arranged.

May she rest in peace.

John Mulvey