



Hartley at home

Meet Hartley who, for the Newsletter, is the 'poster' Easter bunny. He is looked after by a ringer – has not yet made it to the ringing chamber – but inspires an assortment of comments when his name crops up, from cuddly, or handsome to, dare I say, pies – that being from one ringer who ended up being locked out!! (Photo at the end of the newsletter).

Much has happened since the last newsletter in December 2019 - and apologies for the delay in this edition: computer break down.

Before looking back over some of the joys and successes since December 2019 – below are some thoughts and ideas from the committee and other ringers.

Newsletter



Easter 2020

www.lwascr.org.uk

Strange Times

Helen Jarvis, Society Ringing Master, and the committee members have sent their thoughts and best wishes to us all via emails amid 'voicing' their concern about the serious effects isolation may have on each and all of us, and expressing their hope for us all to keep safe and well. Following their meeting on 5th April I include a small extract here of their ideas; two more documents at the end of the newsletter provide fuller accounts.

'We can't solve those problems of isolation, but maybe we can help a little by sharing a few experiences. Several towers have managed to set up digital communication groups through their computers, tablets and mobile phones. There are a range of tools available, including:

- *For text messages and sharing videos / photos there's Facebook, Messenger, Email, Whatsapp and Instagram. Whatsapp seems particularly good for group chats whereas some of the others are more 1-to-1.*
- *With video technology we now have Skype, Teams and Zoom. Skype is probably best for 1-to-1 again, but Teams is better for groups and Zoom has worked very well. All have free-to-download versions for your tablet or laptop and are fairly easy to use. We know that Lichfield, Brewood and Abbots Bromley have very successfully used Whatsapp and Zoom for catchup virtual meetings instead of ringing.*
- *There's also a website called ringingroom.org where ringers can ring a virtual set of bells together – try it – it's not easy, but fun to stagger through and see if you can master it.*

Maybe technology is not your "thing", but no doubt there's someone in your tower who can set up a group and steer you through the process.

We hope you all stay safe and healthy and do keep in touch

John Allen, who became a member of the Society in 1954, remarked that this was the longest period in his memory when tower bells couldn't be rung - this was after only two weeks!

Richard Coles (a celebrity vicar) expressed the thought recently that this is the first time churches have been closed since the Black Death.

Ray Hosking; 'Like many others I am missing ringing a lot – does my daily routine sound familiar? – Get up, have breakfast, do some jobs, then lunch, go for a walk, do some gardening, have tea, ring family, watch TV and go to bed? Repeat. Apart from the plus points of catching up on the backlog, I have recently been discovering the wonders of the Internet which has brought respite – being at that age which meant I wasn't a confident user. I am now familiar with WhatsApp, Houseparty and Zoom. These are great mechanisms for 'seeing' and keeping up with other ringers. The lockdown doesn't mean we can forget about ringing, we can make use Internet 'assets' such as Abel and try to keep up.'

Back to December 2019....

December 21st we were made very welcome at Mavesyn for the regular meeting where we indulged in delicious food, mulled wine and coffee and while socialising, also took part in tower and handbell ringing. Noticeable are the two redundant 'parking' attendants relaxing away from it all near the door (3rd photo from the left) who inspired such comments as: 'Call Crisis at Christmas' and 'Where's the Salvation Army when you need them?'



Sincere thanks to all who attended, rang, worked and helped share the joys and laughter of ringing. It was another successful meeting.

Then the February Challenge with congratulations to:

- Michael Roberts (Penkridge) who rang his first doubles inside with Penkridge band at Shareshill and then first Bob major on the treble at Cannock. (Jean Nixon)
- The ladies who scored their first quarter of Bob Caters – first on 10 for Pam Garbett, Gill Wheatley and Helen Turner-Murphy, and first inside for Petula Hughes. (Jean Nixon)
- For John Binns who rang a quarter on the tenor to Grandsire doubles at the cathedral after an absence of 10 years, and to Daniel Munday who conducted superbly.
- To the whole band at Brewood from Steve Askew. 'The newest learners rang call changes with their bell in the correct place at the correct time without any interventions from the conductor – excellent. After several attempts, the local band rang a perfect course of Norwich minor. Then, not as a challenge but more maybe as inspiration, the band welcomed a team of Birmingham superstars who rang a fabulous silent and unconduted touch of John Noonan's peal composition of Stedman triples. Now – the band is doing much homework to prepare for the return'.

Peal Week 2020

Peal Congratulations

The 11th annual peal week coincided with Half Term as usual and resulted in 6 successes from 11 attempts, with 49 ringers taking part. Last minute drop-outs are any organisers biggest fear and this year it was my turn. An incautious gym session left me with a fractured clavicle (see image right if brave!) and the prospect of a week of one-handed peal ringing. Other shoulder problems for Liz and Heather caused some rearrangements and sadly the two handbell attempts had to be postponed. Apart from that all the attempts started as planned, beginning with a good effort at Lichfield Cathedral (a first for Daniel from the local band) followed by firsts for Alex and Steve at Coseley.



- Storm Dennis led to big floods along both of the lanes to Mavesyn Ridware. After delayed arrivals and a false start, a quick check outside revealed that cars that were on dry land before the attempt were now surrounded by flood water. Needless to say there was no question of a second attempt. After 3 hours in a coffee shop, rather than a pub, the afternoon attempt at Abbots Bromley went very well with progress for Jean (she rang 13m in 1978!)
- Shenstone's peal was largely trip-free but we didn't really do justice to these lovely bells. The attempt at Cannock was better and enabled Dave and Steve to ring their first 10-bell peals. The largely local band at Brewood were delighted with their success on Friday – thanks to Andrew for stepping in. Unfortunately, at the same time a band at Sandon was losing multi-Minor close to halfway, and on the final Saturday, Bob Major was lost at Alrewas after over 2 hours. This would have been Gary Crutchley's first peal and, along with the other losses, will be reorganised asap.
- Thank you to everyone who took part and to those who assisted with the organisation. Keeping peal ringing alive in small Societies can be hard work but, despite the losses, there was a lot of determination to succeed and I hope everyone enjoyed themselves. Well done to all. **Stuart Hutchieson**

News from St Nicholas, Mavesyn Ridware

We have been enjoying a 'new era' here at St. Nicholas, welcoming new ringers to our Thursday night practices and many also joining us for Evensong on a Sunday. You know who you are and Oggy and I would like to say a big THANK YOU for your help and support over the past 12-18 months.

We now have ringing sessions that are vibrant, full of laughs and giggles and can sometimes only be described as borderline 'Carry On' in style!

Our Christmas meeting was well attended and stocked full of homemade cakes and savouries.

To celebrate we decided to have a post Christmas meal at the Old Peculiar on Leap Day 2020 – an excellent evening was had, food was yummy, alcohol a plenty (I think our Newsletter Editor provided most of the entertainment – we all now know about her frisky dog??!)

An overheard snippet of conversation at the meal between David Everett (left) and Derek Giddins. David to Derek 'The thing is, Derek, you just have to keep your hair on,' to which Derek replied ...' yes, David, but I have a problem with that'.



Going forward we're also hoping to arrange an outing at some point this year, along with quarter peal attempts for Gilly and Jan to plain hunt the treble to Doubles.

We have attempted quarters of Glasgow and whilst they haven't been successful as yet we are gaining confidence and hope to score soon. An enjoyable quarter of Erin Triples was conducted by Mr. Everett and was an absolute joy to ring in. Plans are in motion to start quarters of spliced Surprise Major which will help all involved to improve in many ways.

On another positive note during these difficult times of self isolation, we are finding our Whatsapp group very useful for keeping in touch with each other, checking if we're all ok and sharing funny stories, photographs and anecdotes etc. Suggested game...best places to hide the loo paper where your partner won't be looking!

Wishing everyone well through these coming months.

Anne Ogden.

More ringing to celebrate.

Very shortly after I joined the Cathedral band, Lucy Smith was unable to get to the ringing chamber; not long afterwards



Clive fell and was unable to ring at all for quite some time, though remained a staunch supporter at the pub after practice and for refreshments after Sunday ringing. The only experience I can enjoy of their ringing days is on You Tube, and they are missed. However, they are still ringing and on 6th January 2020 they rang a handbell quarter peal: 1320, Kent TB and Plain bob minor. Lucy Smith – 1-2, David Everett (C) – 3-4, Clive Smith – 5-6 with the following note. 'Rung more in hope than expectation after effecting an extremely temporary repair to the tenor, and after two earlier attempts failed due to the tiredness of the conductor.'

From Ann-Marie Hopkins, St Bartholomew's Church, Penn, Wolverhampton.

1260 Plain Bob Doubles, January 26th 2020.

1. Michael Hopkins
2. Keith Porter
3. Ann-Marie Hopkins
4. Dave Whitfield
5. Alastair J. Hopkins
6. Bob Dunphy *

*First quarter peal.

Rung in memory of Shirley Russell Hopkins 1923 – 2019: father of Alastair J. Hopkins, Father-in-law of Ann-Marie Hopkins, and grandfather of Michael Hopkins.

From Ray Hosking

Aled Perkins, aged 17, is one of the latest recruits taught at the cathedral by Helen Jarvis. He rang his first quarter peal on 8 at Aldridge. The band: David Everett (C), Helen Jarvis, Rachel Everett, Ray Hosking (cathedral ringers), Sophie Ash (Aldridge), John Mulvey (Tamworth but rings at the cathedral on Mondays and evensong), and Jonathan Healey (formerly Birmingham cathedral but now rings at Aldridge with his son). The local band benefits from having someone of Jonathan's immense standard and ability. Aled rang really well and made excellent progress; he rings at the cathedral on Mondays and for evensong, and at Walsall on Wednesdays. The quarter peal of Stedman triples planned for 4th April 2020 is currently on hold.

Graffiti at Lichfield Cathedral.

Graffiti now has become very much an art form – quite a change from the time when it used to be seen as desecration to public buildings – though that attribute has been part and parcel of life for thousands of years.

Below are some images of graffiti at the cathedral – some only visible in the roof spaces – ‘discovered’ following a recent survey.

Firstly, Masons markings – why did masons sculpture markings into the stone? There apparently is no formal record of ‘why’ these markings appear in random places. There were some specialist masons (Bankers, Quarry, Assembly) where there might have been a system for payment, size, location (information from Warwick University website) but for quite specific roles and systematic markings. The markings here are a collection of straight lines, differing from each other, high up, and in random places. Are the random examples signature marks (masons were unlikely to be very literate), or just leaving a part of them for posterity?



These remaining examples of graffiti cover a century of cathedral visitors: some may be seen as desecration, others to inform and remind. At a recent tour of the roof spaces, the guide mentioned that until recently, choir boys were allowed up into the roof space during break times from practices – until it became/was deemed unsafe. If that was the case, graffiti here might well reflect choir boy activity. You may recognise one or two of them.



However in all cases, they are in the cathedral for posterity – be it for fame or notoriety.



Gilly Hanson-Giddins, a Mavesyn ringer, was admitted to hospital on 3rd April, diagnosed with coronavirus. She is now, thankfully, slowly getting better and we send our love, thoughts and very best wishes to her and Derek for a speedy and full recovery.

Of interest....

“I struggle to see the value of the Associations - I am not inspired by what is going on there.”

The above statement appeared in last week's RW [5679] and made me think. In fact there are quite a lot of comments about the Associations in the RW, usually from some of the more outspoken members of the upper echelons of ringers.

It seems though that there are three principal types of ringer;

1. Those who are content to ring for Sunday services and weddings but really don't want more,
2. Middling ringers who want to improve to the next level,
3. Experts who get invited to take part in peals.

I had a discussion down the pub recently with a member of our tower who told me how they felt a sense of achievement several years ago when they started to get invited to ring in peals of more difficult surprise methods. Maybe those ringers have no need of their local Association. But for those of us in groups one and two, we are the ones who the Regional / Diocesan Associations are really for. So, “What exactly do the Regional Associations do for us”? Without thinking too hard, the following quickly came to mind:

- For those of us not yet being invited, they organise challenges, quarters and peals
- Regular opportunities to ring with members of other towers and to ring at other towers
- Regular opportunities to practice higher / more difficult methods
- Training & development sessions
- Arranging local contests (after all its contesting that raises aspirations and standards)
- A point of contact with the diocese (who are after all our landlords and one of our principal purposes)
- Local expertise / support when it comes to repairs, improvements, fundraising for them and obtaining faculties
- Support to struggling bands / towers where numbers or skills are few
- Sociable ringing with friends when one's own band might be just too small
- Organizing RWNYS teams (very important that one)
- And above all, a local and friendly face to turn to when help is needed

The degree of success obviously varies. There's no obligation to join and no bar if one doesn't. In our local association we are talking to our towers to find out what they actually want from us, which might be very different to what we think they want and from what we currently do, but at least they are trying! Ask for support and it might be surprising how willing the Associations are to help. Like many organizations, sometimes they get a bit mundane and samey, but on that occasion when you need them, you're glad they are there. Of course, we can't please all the local ringers all of the time. We can't even please some of them some of the time. But, if we disbanded the Associations, could the Central Council really be that active everywhere? Would ringing gradually fade away except for those few clusters of experts? Nobody really knows.

But, is there any value to the Associations? I think there certainly is!

Dave Towell – published in Ringing World.



Below – more complete ‘articles’ from the Committee – these will also be published on Facebook

‘How are you all coping with the current lock-down?’

Fed up? Cooped up? Finding it difficult to work from home? Maybe actually enjoying the peace and quiet?

Most ringers are a fairly gregarious bunch and seem to enjoy being cooped up in a small room with several people for hours on end, followed by a convivial trip to a café or to a bar for a cup or glass of something refreshing, so not being allowed out on practice night is quite tough. Maybe you just like to ring on Sunday mornings before the service, but no doubt whatever your aim, you are missing the company. It’s just not in our nature to have to stay in on our own. Probably some of us are dealing with it better than others.

It’s widely said that Church bells are one of the traditional sounds of Britain and in these currently silent times, they are something else that’s gradually fading from our way of life (a bit like air pollution from cars).

We can’t solve those problems of isolation, but maybe we can help a little by sharing a few experiences. Several towers have managed to set up digital communication groups through their computers, tablets and mobile phones. There are a range of tools available, including:

- *For text messages and sharing videos / photos there’s Facebook, Messenger, Email, Whatsapp and Instagram. Whatsapp seems particularly good for group chats whereas some of the others are more 1-to-1.*
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Maybe technology is not your “thing”, but no doubt there’s someone in your tower who can set up a group and steer you through the process. If all else fails, there’s still the old fashioned ‘phone, or tobacco tins connected by string, or even pigeon post! But do give it a go and chat to your ringing friends – no doubt they’ll be pleased to hear from you. Everyone who’s tried it has said how much they enjoyed the sense of apparent normality from that get-together.

As well as staying in contact, there are many useful ringing related things that we can still do and little projects to engage in while not ringing. We aren’t going to list them all here, but why not keep an eye on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/lwascr/>, where hopefully we’ll be posting a few ideas, just to keep the brain ticking over.

We hope you all stay safe and healthy and do keep in touch

LWASCR

Things to do while we can’t ring or go out – in no particular order

- 1) Show defiance and get a flag flying from the tower. Should be the diocesan flag (Lichfield) but the Union Flag would be great. Failing that, St George’s, Staffordshire, or frankly any flag except a white one. Anyone got a Jolly Roger?
- 2) Make a bucket list of towers you’d like to ring at when its all over
- 3) Get a copy of Abel / Mobel / Beltower and practice that method(s) that have been just beyond you at the last few tower practices – then surprise your colleagues when we have the all clear
- 4) Re-read Simon Linford’s Project Picked Egg articles. You might not agree with him, but they are well written and quite entertaining. https://wiki.changeringing.co.uk/Project_Pickled_Egg

- 5) Write something for the newsletter
- 6) Order one of Steve Coleman's ringing books. There's one to suit all ringing abilities and he has an entertaining easy-going style, in bite-size chapters. <http://www.ringingbooks.co.uk/>
- 7) Get a discussion group going for friends, for the tower and maybe for the society. Encourage everyone to contribute. Whatsapp or Instagram may be suitable tools
- 8) Work up a tower web site / page and send a link to the LWASCR webmaster, Matt Gallon
- 9) Think about the maintenance that you've been putting off and make plans to deal with the backlog
- 10) Produce a routine tower maintenance schedule
- 11) Set yourself a target of methods you'd like to ring – and practice them on Abel
- 12) Write something for the Ringing World, either about you, your tower or your alternative (but related) other hobbies / interests
- 13) Skype or Zoom call your friends and fellow ringers
- 14) Avoid catching coronavirus!

The original version of this had a few things that involved going up the tower (on your own), but since then the Bishops have issued advice (reiterated by the Central Council in the Ringing World 3rd April) that churches (and therefore towers) should remain closed during the coronavirus lockdown, you may not be able to do them at the moment, but there's no harm in planning.

*Note that some churches have rules about working in towers and who must be present.

Some things to do when you are finally allowed to start ringing again:

- i) celebrate !
- ii) take the hoover and duster up to the ringing room
- iii) check the nuts, ropes, stays and sliders on the bells before you try ringing them again.
- iv) Arrange some special ringing



Some Committee members from left:

Ray Hosking, Helen Jarvis, Stuart Hutchieson,
John Mulvey, Mike Deakin, Steve Askew, Tayeed MacPherson,
Dave Towell and Jean Nixon.

100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the last draw
were:

Alastair Hopkins	£48.50
John Wybrew	£24.25
Walsall Tower	£12.13
Brenda Hopkins	£12.13



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.



Locked out!!

From John Mulvey.



A Trip to America - Ringing Among the Ashes

I've just returned from a two weeks holiday in Charleston, South Carolina. This year marks 25 years since I first went there. Bob Smith of Eayre and Smith, Bellhangers had persuaded me in 1994 to go out and spend 10 days in Abilene in Texas teaching basic bell handling to a new band. I was one of many such people who would spend time there supporting the local band.

In 1995, following the installation of a 4cwt ring of 8 at Stella Maris church on Sullivan's Island in Charleston Harbour, I was again persuaded by Bob to follow others to spend time with the new ringers being recruited for the church. My first visit to Charleston.

There was at that time one other ring of bells in Charleston, at St Michaels, which had been rehung after Hurricane Hugo had done major damage to the tower in 1989. They had not been rung full circle since they were cast by Mears, following the civil war, as their hanging had been entrusted to locals who were unaware of the needs of change ringing. Luckily the architect employed on the tower restoration, although not a ringer, was keen to have the bells rehung as they were intended, as change ringing bells. So there were a few people that had been trained a few years before to assist.

This time in 1995 started my love affair with the City of Charleston and its people. Few British people go there for holidays. Those that do appear may be there for a day on a cruise stop off or pass through the airport on the way to famous golf courses such as Kiawah, a Ryder Cup venue. The city is stunning in its architecture; consisting of mainly 18th and 19th century houses and its position; on a large peninsula fronting a large natural harbour. It had suffered a major decline after the civil war and no one could afford to modernise or replace housing. In the 1920s with tremendous forethought the city council enacted the first conservation legislation in the USA. Today harbour front houses cost many millions of dollars.

In 1998 the same architect, Dan Beaman, who oversaw the rehang of St Michael's bells and the installation of the bells at Stella Maris persuaded the church he attended, Grace Church, that they should have a ring of bells. He wasn't put off by the fact that their tower was structurally weak. He designed a detached campanile to be sited at the rear of a courtyard between the church and its hall.

How was this tower to be financed? Well some restorations persuade you to buy a brick but in this case Dan persuaded people to buy a box in the tower walls. These boxes were to contain their ashes when they died! The tower was to be a columbarium. The front of the tower facing the courtyard consists of a wall of glass etched with angels as at Coventry Cathedral. Through this at ground floor level you can view the ringers and above the bells which are floodlit at night. Inside the ground floor ringing room the floor is marble and the walls are slate panels. Some are inscribed with the names of the occupants whose ashes are deposited there. It's a bit spooky at first

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Newsletter, and to all who read and give feedback, much valued. Please remember to send in articles for next newsletter – June 2020.

Images below for bunnies at an Easter hunt.



With very best wishes for Easter to everyone.

especially when you ring 2,3 or 4 and lean back and the panels clink! But the church members love their unique bell tower, one even gives \$10,000 a year for maintenance.

The 2 Sundays I rung there we were able to ring rounds and call changes on the 10 of which any tower in Britain would be proud. Unlike in England this church is thriving. It has 4 services on a Sunday. I attended the 11am service for which we rang. The church was packed with over 300 people and there was a choir of at least 30. My friends said that the other services had similar numbers and they had at least 3000 enrolled members of their congregation and employed over 40 members of staff.

Need somewhere to go for a holiday, with some ringing on the side, choose Charleston. It now has 4 rings of bells, the most in any US city.