



View of St Mary's Lichfield from Stowe Pool, taken by Hazel Hall.

Welcome to the October issue. Little has changed since July but there have been some activities: significant achievements, some 'changes', important information on Safeguarding, and some ideas for future arrangements.

Note - the AGM is on November 21st at 3.00 pm on Zoom.

Details will be sent nearer the time.

Diana Wilkes recently celebrated 60 years of ringing - a remarkable achievement with interesting insights into the life of a bell-ringer some years ago.

Newsletter



October 2020

www.lwascr.org.uk

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S PENN – NEWSLETTER

As a stillness settled over our country in 2020 – nay, our world, the doors of countless businesses and places of worship alike closed in an unprecedented suddenness. You might therefore assume that the silence of our bell tower at St Bartholomew's, Penn was solely because of the Covid-19 outbreak, yet there was a far more exciting reason for its quietness...

On June 1st this year, while silence hung over every bell tower of the land, work quietly began on the overhaul of the bell installation of St Bart's, which had seen its last major overhaul and recasting on a new frame in 1929. While the eight bell Gillett and Johnstone ring have served faithfully, ninety years of continuous use, aside from the Second World War, had led to more than a small degree of wear and tear in many of the components of the installation. Last year, therefore, with finance kindly agreed from our own PCC and a grant from the Bell Restoration Fund, the decision was made to arrange for this full overhaul to be carried out by TLB Services of Newark,



Nottinghamshire. With the bells removed from the frame, all moving parts were taken back to the company's premises for inspection and repair/replacement. The final list included clapper refurbishment, new main bearings, new stays and sliders, clapper rebushing and more besides. New gale breakers were also installed on the windows in the bell chamber. The accompanying photographs show



some of Penn bell ringers and the bells in various stages of removal from the frame. There are views of the bell chamber and ringing room, with block and tackle sets used for lifting and lowering the bells and heavy fittings. One shows the remains of a leather washer from a bell, greatly worn after ninety years use. Headstocks and clappers are lined up ready to go for renovation.



Following this work, reinstallation and setting up took a little over a week and the bells were being rung again for the 10 am service on July 5th, albeit subject to Covid-19 restrictions on ringer numbers. Of course, it would have been magnificent to have rung all eight of these wonderful sounding bells for that service but that is a privilege we will have to wait for. We have always received compliments on their sound and their character, now they behave even better. Odd-struckness is now gone and there is also a marked increase in their clarity of tone. It has been a great privilege to witness this work being carried out and to be among the first to ring these bells following this major overhaul, which is a huge investment in the future of bell ringing in Penn, hopefully lasting into the next century.



INTERVIEW WITH DIANA WILKES

An informal interview was held outside Church after ringing on the 60th anniversary of Diana's first visit here, with questions from Soula Windley, Ruth Vyse and Oliver Bouckley. She subsequently fleshed this out with other information, incorporated into the text.

Diana, you've been ringing for 60 years. Can you tell us something about it?

I started as a 16-year old, as a challenge at Rushall for a new band being built from scratch, taught by George Hughes, Tower Captain at St Matthew's. I'd learnt to handle a bell within 8 weeks and ring rounds, and George threw down the challenge that we ought to have more experience.

I volunteered to come up to St Matthew's and did so on 6th September 1960. I rang rounds reasonably well and we also managed call changes. That was my challenge for that day, and then I just sat and listened and watched what was going on in the belfry at the time. It was a good experience, a good challenge because coming from a tower where we were only ringing 6 bells to suddenly double the number of bells, and much heavier bells as well. It was, looking back, a good experience.

The Walsall ringers were booted and suited, absolutely immaculately dressed, and I felt a scruff in jeans and a t-shirt.

The belfry floor was solid oak. Stilettos were all the rage at the time so ladies had to remove their footwear.

Each bell had its own circular mat. If your back stroke was not long enough or straight enough you were told to aim for the mat - the good old days.

As a visitor you had to wait and be asked to ring and silence was maintained during ringing. If you did speak you were told firmly to be quiet.

There used to be a register that was kept for ringers at Sunday services at 11am and for Evensong. At the end of three months attendees received a small remuneration.

In the 1960s/1970s there was a pensioners' band who met during the week for a tower grab and a meal. This band rang for weekday weddings. As I was teaching at the time I was asked to supplement the band if needed. On the first occasion I joined them I was formally introduced by James Eastwood the tower secretary and we shook hands.

There was an interesting story about ringing in the 1960s

When Julia Sturrock and I were ringing together, ladies were not supposed to ring heavy bells - it was very much frowned on. We were expected to ring the front end - fine. One day somebody had passed a comment in the belfry about ladies

ringing heavy bells, so Julia and I just looked at each other and said "we can ring the tenor", and between the two of us we actually rang the tenor up. Julia was on the box; I was on the tail end as a strapper, with George Hughes passing comments all the way along. We got the tenor up and both of us rang the tenor for two or three minutes, on our own, at the end of the session, to prove that ladies could ring heavy bells, and after that it became a regular feature at practice nights. This is bearing in mind that it very often took two gentlemen in that era to be able to ring the tenor up as well. But Julia was always on a box, immaculately dressed in a miniskirt and her hair up and there was me on the floor adding weight to it in a t-shirt and anything I turned up to the practice in. And look at it now, when ladies are turning Liverpool Cathedral tenor in to methods - it's a complete contrast.

You started off at Rushall and St Matthew's. Can you remember some of the other places you've rung at?

I rang regularly at Aldridge. I also went as far as Bilston, Wolverhampton, Coseley, Brierley Hill, Bloxwich and Pelsall. We literally had a group of ringers who went wherever they fancied. Monday it was Aldridge. Tuesday I know we rang at another tower and I can't remember. Wednesday was here. Thursday was Rushall and Friday was Bilston and it was a constant round of ringing during the week.

Bilston I went to with one of St Matthew's young ringers. She rather took a shine to one of the ringers at Bilston (who eventually became a vicar). He ignored her; I think he realised it was just a teenage crush, but we travelled there on the bus on each Friday night.

How did you meet your husband David?

That was again through bell-ringing. He was Tower Captain at Bloxwich at the time. He came with some of the Bloxwich ringers to help us out at Rushall because it was a band that started from scratch and the bells had been silent for donkey's years and we needed that support. He came along with the Bloxwich ringers and I can remember taking one look at him and thinking "ooh I don't fancy him one little bit", but look what happened - I married him, so that relationship worked out well.

My sister, brother and I all met our spouses in the belfry. Rosemary met Martin Clive (Dennis's nephew) at Great Barr and married April 5th 1972, I followed next on 27th May 1972 at Rushall and Nick married Dee from Aldridge on Grouse Shooting Day 1972.

When David and I were married, I was going to go up into the belfry to ring and I was told I couldn't get up there because there was someone wedged up the tower. A ringer, who shall remain nameless, was a very, very rotund gentleman, who loved his drink and his food and somehow he'd gone up those narrow stairs to ring, and he became wedged. How they got him out, I didn't stop to find out, but it amuses people, that tale.

What notable performances have you been involved in?

I have rung in two peals:

5039 Grandsire Caters on 14th March 1970 in 3hr 16mins; a birthday compliment to Roy Coleman.

- 1 Diana M White (1st peal)
- 2 Rosemary E White (1st of Caters)
- 3 E Marion Key
- 4 Barnabus G Key (Conductor)
- 5 David Wilkes
- 6 James S Eastwood
- 7 F John Keddie
- 8 Keith S Williams
- 9 Howard Howell
- 10 Roy Coleman

Barny and Marion Key and Howard Howell were the well-dressed people.

Howard Howell's brother Gordon was a ringer at St Matthews - a glider pilot in WW2; he never came back.

Jimmy Eastwood died of a massive heart attack in the early hours of 16th March (two days after this peal) and is buried in St Matthew's Garden of Remembrance.

Rosemary and John Keddie had just ended a romantic friendship.

And I rang treble as I was a reliable treble ringer.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CLOCK

The clock at Lichfield Cathedral situated in the ringing room at the Cathedral has been there since 1891 and was installed by J B Joyce of Whitchurch. It has been hand wound daily by the Cathedral vergers over the years and involves ascending to the ringing room then going up a steep wooden stairs to the clock mechanism and then winding all three weights which is quite a workout!

The dedication of the clock, after it was installed, took place on Friday 31st July 1891 during evensong. A hymn 'Good Lord, when from this ancient tower' was sung in procession to the south west tower where the Precentor representing the Dean dedicated the clock and started it running. The procession then returned to the Cathedral singing the hymn 'O God our help in ages past'.

The clock chimes the quarters on the bells 1,2,3 and 6 and the hour on the tenor bell. There are two clock faces. One face in ringing room connects with face below in an ornamental wooden case in south nave aisle of Cathedral.



For some years now the Cathedral has wanted to have the clock converted to automatic winding, and as part of the 'Big Give' campaign for Christmas 2019 when donations are given for a specific project it was asked for donations to automate the clock, and money was raised quite quickly. We were grateful to the Friends of Lichfield Cathedral for making up the difference.

Smiths of Derby turned up to carry out the automating of the clock in September 2020 including installing a regulator to keep time spot on and we hope it will continue striking for many years to come

The clock that was previously in the Cathedral prior to 1891 was donated by the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral to St Mary's Church in Lichfield and installed in 1929. It still works to this day



Simon Ferguson

TIME TO BE INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING

In a number of the bell ringing groups on Facebook people have speculated about what will ringing be like after the Covid crisis is over. Some think that the long break without practices and teaching will lead to some not returning to ringing as they have in the meantime found other hobbies. As most of our ringing takes place in churches, others ponder on what effect this pandemic will have on the state of the church. Many parishes were before this crisis dealing with falling income not covering costs. This crisis has only exacerbated that state of affairs. Some church buildings especially in rural areas where a group ministry exists have not yet reopened. Some say they may never re-open.

How can the opinion of ringers be heard in what may be important and painful discussions about the possible closure of churches which contain bells? Of course the Central Council of Church Bellringers can be active at national level. But decision-making regarding the future need for church buildings will be mainly decided at parish, team, deanery or diocesan level. Therefore if ringers wish to be involved in these discussions they need to be on the church, group councils or deanery and diocesan Synods. Many elections for such bodies had been postponed due to the pandemic therefore giving ringers a chance to seek election to church bodies. Firstly, make sure that your name is on the electoral roll of the parish, and it may still be possible to be put on the roll now. Then seek election onto the church council. There is not usually a queue of people volunteering!

Remember if you aren't in on the decision making there is little point objecting when the decision is made to cut back services or actually close the building.

John Mulvey

SAFEGUARDING

This article does not address anything about DBS, who needs it and what documents you require.

The question of Safeguarding has arisen again. This is not an optional extra to consider, but is a requirement of the Church of England. A new Parish Safeguarding Handbook was published in 2019 partly as a result of the inquiry group set up to look at situations which arose when safeguarding was not properly dealt with.

Here is the link. <https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ffdd147bb3/content/pages/documents/1595249440.pdf>

The training requirements also changed from January 2020. Let's start at the beginning. This is a link to a statement from the CCCBR <https://d3hgrrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f3ffdd147bb3/content/pages/documents/bec51e03558db36b11f7eb93f254b16dd3b2bd2d.pdf>

Points to note:

1. The tower and ringers come under the auspices of the PCC which should have adopted a Safeguarding policy. This should be on the front page of the parish's web site. If the tower has a separate entrance then the parish policy, a poster about safeguarding which you fill in with the Parish's Safeguarding Officer's (PSO) name (or the diocesan officer if the parish couldn't find someone willing to do the job) and a diagram of actions to take if an issue arises, should be in a place where it can be seen. These are all available from this link.

https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/safeguarding/safeguarding_resources/

2. Every tower should keep a register of attenders at practice and at service ringing. The simplest way is that everyone signs themselves in, which also deals with visitors (it can be embarrassing if you can't remember their name or tower!). Someone checks during the event that signatures and the numbers present correspond. At the moment, obviously Covid-19 track and trace requirements need to be met, so for visitors you will need a contact number, postcode and house number. I know it all seems a pain, but once in the rhythm of it, it will become second nature.

3. All ringers should preferably complete what is called Co and C1 training to raise their awareness. That is available from this link. <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/> Having done it myself, even though I have been a teacher in further education, the C1 module is very thought provoking. When you have completed it, you can download your certificate and flourish it at the PSO to have it recorded in their records.

4. The requirement for Tower Captains, particularly mentioned in the document, is that they must undertake what is now called Leadership training. This is a combination of what used to be C2 and C3; clergy, licensed workers and others, lay or ordained, paid or unpaid, in any leadership role including Churchwardens need to do this. It is accessed from the diocesan website page on Safeguarding as above.

Please make certain that everyone takes these requirements seriously; it's not an optional add-on. When no issues have arisen locally, it's all fine, but better to have followed the guidance so that, heaven forbid, should a problem arise, you can show that at least you have done what is required of you.

Lilas Rawling

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CHALLENGED BY HANDBELLS

From Dave Towell, Abbots Bromley

Despite the Covid-19 lockdown, the sound of change ringing hasn't been entirely absent from Abbots Bromley.

Over the last couple of years, we've been developing our novice ringers and they're becoming confident at plain hunt & plain bob, meaning we could ring changes on Sunday mornings. Then at the end of March, Covid-19 struck and we were locked down and unable to enter the tower. Feeling bereft in a world without bells, our tower captain needed an alternative challenge – so decided to teach me to ring handbells. And I was daft / brave enough to accept the other half of that challenge.

To be honest, I like a challenge and with its myriad of opportunities, that is what makes ringing so fulfilling. There have been so many to work up to, including simply learning method ringing, my first quarter of Bob Doubles, first Peal of Triples or first of Surprise, 12-bell ringing, and on, and on.

My handbell ringing up to now however was pretty unpromising. I'd attempted it with Clive & Lucy Smith at a new members' meeting and found I couldn't dissociate the two sides of my brain to make two bells work independently. I'd done a bit of tune ringing with some Christmas Carols and I'd had a memorable physical demonstration of plain hunt by Linda Pick, with six ringers each holding a bell and taking steps to the left or to the right. A start then, but really a complete beginner.

Fortunately, Stuart & Liz Hutchieson live only just across the street from me, on a tee junction (and it's a fairly quiet street) so on a Wednesday at the beginning of April, handbells 5&6 were proffered and we took up station outdoors in the largest and safest imaginable circle with one of us each of the three footways around the junction and we attempted plain hunt on 6. V-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y. Also, first error was that I didn't know which was hand and which was backstroke – and I had guessed wrongly. To be honest I can't recall how it went, but it must have been OK as on the Sunday morning at 9:30 we reconvened for half a dozen plain courses before our vicar Simon's improvised lock down service – 2 verses of Morning has Broken played on the flugel horn from the church porch door. And thus began our Sunday morning routine for several weeks – handbells at 9:30, hymn on flugel horn at 9:45 and non-ringing zoom meeting over coffee with fellow band members from 10am.

The following week involved putting in the dodges and attempting a plain course. Bob Minor was the method. As Liz explained; for most of the plain course, bells 5 & 6 course together, so whatever one does, the other does the same two blows later. There's just the difficult bit where one bell makes 2nds place and the other dodges and runs out. IF of course you can remember which one is supposed to ring first and you don't cross over. Then on our 2nd Sunday performance it nearly all came to grief. An unexpected hazard of ringing in the street even in lockdown is that we nearly got run over by a white van. But we did still have the presence of mind to complete our two plain courses.

After another Sunday on the footway we then spent a few weeks ringing around the tree in the front garden – still at a safe distance. By now we were putting in the bobs and aiming for a "120". This was getting tough now. Moving out of the plain course meant that instead of my 5&6 bells crossing over that the lead or back of the course, sometimes they would cross over in 2-3, 4-5 or in 3-4. We had a few random names for the two bell positions – there was the fairly obvious "coursing", but also "parallel dodge", "opposites" and the frankly bizarre "kiss & cross". It's very easy to go wrong or lose track so a quick call of "opposites" (or whatever) from the conductor is a handy way to recover and get back in to place. It also helped to learn and understand the calls so that you can prepare for the impact of a bob. We've been ringing WHWH (wrong and home), which means calls come when the 6th (tenor) is in its home position of 6ths (dodging 5/6 down) or its wrong position of 5ths (dodging 5/6 up). Hopefully you can tell that means the 6th is never affected, which was one thing less to worry about.

Nevertheless, learning the 120 was tough and involved quite a lot of time on Abel and ringing along to that. Publication of Mabel for my android phone also came along at the right time (as did my new phone). Mentally rehearsing the course while out on my bike also helped, though it's quite hard to concentrate for long periods when on 2 wheels and either the mental ringing or the bike would usually crash after a couple of courses. But still, the dodge into the opposites (3-4) position and the bob out of it seemed to flummox me more often than not. No-one ever said that handbells are easy. By mid-June we'd migrated from the front garden to the garage – with the door open, which gave both social distance, shelter and at long last the opportunity to sit down (up to now, rather like Bob Smith's early attempts, we'd been ringing standing up). Being west facing, it was surprisingly welcoming in the evening sun and a couple of bottles of beer made it a

surprisingly convivial lock-down alternative pub. We'd also by now worked up to 360, then the extent of 720 and now ready to attempt the first quarter peal. Of course our neighbours were by now getting used to our Wednesday & Sunday eccentric activities and we could sense that they had stopped to listen to our performance. Which of course was most off putting and we crashed out – or at least I did. Nevertheless, the following Sunday evening saw our first successful – if slightly staggering – quarter peal.

Come July and relaxations meant that we could return to the tower for Sunday morning ringing, albeit only four at a time and no more than 15 minutes, so our handbells in the street came to an end. But midweek evening practice in the garage continued.

Then came the bombshell – our conductor Stuart's aim was to get me to ringing a peal before the end of lockdown. And Covid restrictions were gradually being relaxed, so a deadline was looming! A couple more reinforcing quarters followed and then at the end of August came P-Day. We went for the peal. Surprisingly, apart from a couple of stumbles, I actually enjoyed it and could listen to the music. But not relax too much as that would lead to going wrong and disaster. It wasn't the fasted handbell peal but we made it, even though we (I if I'm honest) only just got through the troublesome 5th extent.

There's no doubt that it's been a challenge, but a very satisfying one. I think its improved my ringing too as I'm better able to do all those things we are encouraged to do on tower bells, such as listening for the treble leading (time to dodge or bob), trying to keep an eye on the treble, understanding the bob calls, the interaction between two bells and - above all else - listening.

As it turns out though, we need not have panicked as it looks like lockdown is going to carry on.

What next? Who knows? But there is a huge repertoire out there to aim for. I can recommend having a go to anyone. I thought it would be impossible at the beginning, but with great teachers it's been an enjoyable success for all of us. It's kept us working on method ringing and is so much more satisfying that the call changes on four that we're allowed in the tower.

Patience, encouragement & support from my teachers Stuart & Liz Hutchieson, plus words of encouragement from fellow band members and society members including Steve Askew, Clive Smith, Geoff & Linda Pick and Paul & Ruth Jopp have all been very much appreciated.

Oh, and during all that, the following clue appeared in the Guardian's cryptic crossword: Can you get it?

One's rung Robert, not yet eighteen (3,5)

Dave Towell, Treasurer.



11:47 Sun 20 Sep 89%

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK: UK Summary Ringling World BellBoard

BellBoard

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Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaonries Society
Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire
 1 Preedys Close
 Thursday, 27 August 2020 in 2h 23 (11 in G)

5040 Plain Bob Minor

1-2	Elizabeth Hutchieson
3-4	Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)
5-6	David L Towell

First handbell peal at first attempt: 5-6 after learning to ring handbells in lockdown. A local band peal.

👍 21 people like this — Like this

SECOND-HAND BELLS WANTED

We have a large number of enquiries for single bells for augmentations, for complete rings of bells and small bells for chiming

Please contact:
**The Secretary, Keltex Trust, The Kloof,
 Lower Kingsdown Road, Kingsdown, Corsham,
 Wiltshire SN13 8BG**
 email: bells@keltextrust.org.uk
 web site: http://www.keltextrust.org.uk
 Registered Charity No. 1154107



Dave in action!



Nice shiny handbells following servicing this week at Taylor's.

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COMMITTEE VACANCY

There is a vacancy on the Committee and we would love to hear from you if you are interested in joining us. The committee aims to support and promote ringing in this Archdeaconry and this involves attending meetings (administrative as well as ringing), enjoy communicating and working with IT. If you are willing and would like to share in this undertaking, please contact Jean Nixon (lwascro1@ntlworld.com).

Many thanks to all those who have sent articles and photos for this newsletter. They are really superb especially in these difficult and unusual times.

For future newsletters please send in any items (articles, ideas, photos) of anything to do with ringing or you that you would like to share – photos of churches, quiz questions, new hobbies or undertakings etc to me (suebinns100@yahoo.co.uk) or Jean or another committee member if easier.

100 Club Update

Lucky winners on the September draw were:

Jean Nixon	£ 101.00
Renee Morris Young	£ 50.00
Derek Giddins	£ 50.50
Great Barr Tower	£ 12.63
John Whittall	£ 12.63



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.

