



## St Editha - an Open Day



Open days are a great opportunity to engage the wider community, promote bell ringing and even recruit new band members. This year's Heritage Open Day (HOD) on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September was no exception for band members at St. Editha's in Tamworth who did not let covid 19 stop them.

We were contacted by the Tamworth and District Civic Society who were trying to do as much as possible in our town for HOD. Given the social distance restrictions that were in place at the

time it was not going to be easy but, if the public can't go to the tower then the tower must go to the public and this is exactly what was achieved using mobile technology and social media.

Our answer was to live stream from the top of the tower following CCCBR guidance. So at 11am, a band of 5 rang changes on 2,4 6,8 & Tenor while a further member using a mobile phone streamed to our Facebook page. From opening in the ringing room with live ringing to a virtual tour of the tower we used the full 15 minutes to showcase the tower and promote ringing from a different angle.

The band was chosen to include 3 of our young ringers who we introduced the following day with a further post on our Facebook page. The video received 5941 views and the follow up post 3461 with many positive comments including the following: "I was thinking it's not just old fuddy-duddies who ring bells", "What a brilliant idea", "Well done all – thank you and best wishes from The Isle of Wight", "That was brilliant showing the ringers and the double spiral staircase.

**Images are of Tamworth young ringers: Freya, Jack and Tamzin with, in the ringing chamber photo, band members Andrew and Kay Else**

Following the posts we were contacted by a staff member from a local school asking if they could purchase or make a donation for an old bell rope to be used for a "circle time" activity. We were happy to donate an old rope and a separate sally for them to use in class, the idea being that the next generation are being exposed to bell ringing at an early age.



Continuing on from the great success of the video, we are now looking to the future and what else we can do to promote bell ringing and recruit new members. We have started a project to produce a virtual tour of the tower that will be uploaded to our YouTube channel. By scanning a QR code on a mobile device the viewer will be able to see ringers in action, the bells or views from the battlements. Further links will then be available to other points of interest such as the history, or even "Have a go", details.

In time and given enough funds we would like to have a static touch screen available that can be used by anyone who is unable to climb the stairs, no one needs to be excluded because of age or disability and our door is always open! Showing our young ringers in this way can only serve to help eliminate the image of old fuddy-duddies and recruit more young ringers.

Happy ringing and stay safe.

The video and posts can be viewed via our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/tamworthbellringers>

**Kevin Jackson**

## **NOTICE OF NEXT SOCIETY MEETING**

**NEW MEMBERS MEETING SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2.30 pm. All Society members are invited and welcome. Zoom link will be sent by email.**

### **Update for the Society's Young Ringers**

We all know that the pandemic has had a profound effect on all age groups. The society's young ringers as a group have not met since March. The lockdown and the restrictions have had a very traumatic and lasting effect on all youngsters. Their schooling has been badly affected; lost teaching time, limited contact with their friends, the loss of their sports and social activities, exam distribution and general uncertainty about their future prospects. It was therefore very pleasing to meet up again as a group a couple of Sundays ago via ringing room. It was a great turnout and a very creditable performance from them. What was particularly gratifying was that they are still very interested in ringing, and like the rest of us are missing ringing greatly.

We have organised another ringing room session for Sunday 17th January. Hopefully when ringing returns in the Spring, on a Saturday we will have a ringing and social event. We will start first with a ring, have something to eat and finish with a game of ten pin bowling. If you have any young ringers who have not yet been to any of our practices, please get in touch with me, they will be made very welcome.

If things do settle by the Spring, we hope to take part in the National Youth Competition on Saturday 10th July at Worcester. For ringing to have a long term future, I think everyone would agree, we not only need to recruit more youngsters, but we have to make sure we retain them. The central council have recently published some suggestions as to how this can be achieved. However we must also remember that we have a number of towers in the Society who have been very **successful** at this. Perhaps at some time these towers can share with us their experiences and what advice they could give us.

Ray Hosking 07969888438 rayjan72@btinternet.com

**From newer members to a trip down memory lane with thanks to Stuart Hutchieson.**

The first photo is from a peal of Grandsire Cinques we rang at St Woolo's Cathedral, Newport, Gwent on 23 Sept 1989. In the photograph are (L-R): Gordon Chaddock (Alrewas), David Webb (senior – Lichfield Cathedral), Geoff Pick (Cannock), Clive Smith (Lichfield Cathedral), Liz Sheard (Abbots Bromley), Lucy Smith (Lichfield Cathedral), Malcolm Quimby (Cannock), Anthony Cleaver (unattached), Martyn Reed (Colwich), Eric Speake (Coseley) and the conductor, David Everett (Bilston at that time). Most of the names will be familiar – even if the faces aren't! – however some members may not know two previous Society Bell Advisers: Eric Speake and Tony Cleaver.



This second is a picture from a Society walk around Dovedale in June 2005. The walkers were (L-R): Malcolm Quimby, Liz Hutchieson, John Mulvey, Penny Allen, Geoff Pick, Brenda Harper, Christine Burton, John Burton, Alan Jarvis, Helen Jarvis, Rachel Everett, Stuart Holtam and David Everett.



## From Willenhall

The band at Willenhall would like to place on record their thanks to the Society for its grant towards the now-completed restoration at St. Giles. Readers will be aware from *The Ringing World* of the nature of what has been accomplished so I will not elaborate further, other than to say that the resultant outcome has vastly improved every aspect of the experience of ringing here. Our own hopes for what WE did in respect of internal sound transmission have exceeded our expectations admirably. We look forward to the day when we can welcome again members of the Society to enjoy the ring's new lease of life knowing that it is superior in every respect to the one known by so many previously.

**Remi Hodister**

**Raindrops kept falling on our heads.**

For a couple of years there has been a small leak in the roof of the central octagon on the top of Tamworth tower. This central octagonal section, which protrudes about 15 feet above the battlements, was the beginning of what was going to be a tall spire. Unfortunately, when they began to build this spire, sometime between 1400 and 1420, the tower began to subside so they stopped.

The lead on this octagon was known to be at least a century old and was due to be replaced. About six months ago the lead was inspected and that was when the trouble started. Following the inspection the amount leaking on to the bells increased until about 3 months ago when we went up to ring five bells for service between lockdowns a large area of one side of the ringing room floor was very damp. Entering the bell chamber and looking up we were faced with a ten foot long split with a wonderful view of the sky. Photographs were taken and passed to the churchwarden. Things moved quickly for church bureaucracy and an emergency faculty was issued for the work which would be we were told "about £37,000."

Within a couple of weeks a scaffolding tower was built up the south front of the tower together with a scaffolding "halo" around the octagon to stop the workers falling off. For Covid ringing we had left the five bells up that we used to save having to ringing them up and down within the fifteen minutes we were allowed. Before the work started we wisely ran the bells down as although nothing major has fallen inside the tower, the amount of dirty dislodged was considerable. We are now in the fourth week of the two men working laying the new lead roof. Stripping off the old lead revealed a date of 1841. 80 years is a good innings for a lead roof. When I come out of the front door of my new house I get a fantastic view of the church tower about a quarter of a mile away with the silhouettes of two small figures on the octagon. We are now at 10<sup>th</sup> December and only a few more days of work tidying up the men say. We are now looking forward to having a dry ringing room when proper ringing commences sometime in the New Year. **John Mulvey**

## Lockdown ringing.

Before lockdown Rachel and I used to ring at the Cathedral every Sunday morning and then go to Cafe Nero for tea/coffee/cakes. We would attend the Cathedral practice on Monday evenings and trot along to the pub for an after-practice drink. Thursday evenings saw us ringing at Mavesyn Ridware coupled with ringing there at most Sunday evening services. Occasional quarter-peals took place with more after-ringing visits to the pub.

Then came lockdown!

When it started we had no clear idea of what to expect or what we were facing. We regarded ourselves as members of both the Cathedral and the Mavesyn Ridware bands enjoying a comfortable existence with two group's of ringing friends whose company we very much enjoyed.

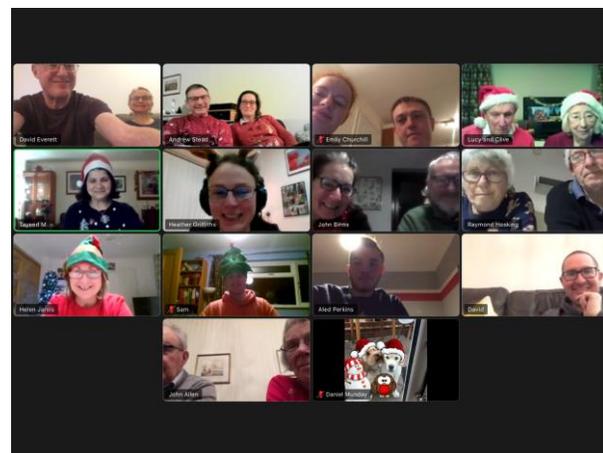
Of course tower-bell ringing stopped and with it the main part of our social life as well.

So what have we done to get around these obstacles?

I am pleased to say that WhatsApp groups were started with both bands engaging in multi-contact and the circulation of many funny and interesting messages/videos/articles.

Beyond this, through the excellent organisation of Ray Hosking, we established a regular Monday evening Zoom meeting to hold a quiz with Cathedral band members taking part - sometimes there have been more attendees than my iPad screen could show and it has not being unusual to have up to 12 small screens showing up to 15 band members. Initially the quiz was conducted solely by Ray asking all the questions but this developed into each household participating in the preparation by posing 5 questions.

Separately some of us tried ringing handbells via Zoom/Facetime/Houseparty - if any of you have attempted this you will know that it is virtually impossible to do because there is a time delay between attendee's screens which makes smooth ringing very disjointed.



Quiz group on 21<sup>st</sup> December celebrating the season.



As this wasn't working a number of the band members established a Tuesday evening Zoom meeting to use 'ringing room' to try and ring something ... anything!

Our purpose was to see if we could get this working properly and then extend it to other members of the Cathedral band. I'm not saying that we were very successful to begin with but we did manage to get to a point where we were able to introduce it into the Monday quiz nights either as an alternative to the quiz or for half an hour or so before the quiz started. Our first practice with all the band taking part on a Monday evening was not the success we hoped for - internet gremlins and frankly the different approach required by 'ringing room' proved challenging and our ringing was not as good as we would have liked. However we persevered with this ringing both on a Monday and a Tuesday and the Monday ringing now regularly has two six bell bands ringing for three quarters of an hour or so (with a relatively wide variety of methods succeeding) before all attendees meeting to try ringing on 8 and 10. The Tuesday band has managed to ring standard methods such as Yorkshire and Cambridge Major and Stedman, Erin and Grandsire Triples along with Plain Bob and Little Bob Major.

We have not found it easy - it has taken rather more concentration than we would have used when ringing in the tower but sometimes the ringing has in fact been pretty good and it has allowed us to continue meeting and chatting almost as if lockdown never happened ... almost, but not quite.



One particularly good evening saw us having a striking competition between two six bell bands judged by Clive and Lucy - we were of course grateful to them for doing this for us - they were extremely amusing and particularly when Lucy wondered if some of the bells were odd-struck!



Photos of competition bands 1 and 2.

Six of us attempted a quarter-peal of Plain Bob Minor and would have succeeded if only the technology hadn't failed - just four courses from the end! We tried again recently with the same band and ... it must be something about four courses ... this time the technical gremlins struck four courses from the end of the first 720. A third attempt unbelievably saw the first 720 crash through technical gremlins again about 4 courses from the end - we will persevere.

The handbell ringing wasn't entirely abandoned with three of us (and occasionally a few more) meeting regularly during the summer post first lockdown to ring a variety of minor methods including even a couple of quarter-peals one being 3 spliced plain minor. When the second lockdown started we reverted to handbell ringing room and continued where we left off in terms of achievements - seven or eight different methods have at least ended with a plain course being rung and many of them with a touch.

Oh ... and there was also some ringing on the tower bells in between the two lockdowns ... but social distancing restricted this to 13579, 12468, 13468, 124680 or 134680. To be honest whilst it was good to ring real bells again the sound wasn't as satisfying as we would have liked.

Roll on the roll out of a vaccine!

**David Everett**

On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December, last meeting before Christmas we zoomed in for a final pre-Christmas get-together with a challenging quiz organized by Heather.

**Herewith two quiz conundrums.**

Sweet treat anagrams: 1. RSMITAES 2. KBERDUCEDOEL 3. ALYGXA

Carol without vowels: 1. THNG LGBR L 2. NDL CJB 3. NCNR YLDV DSC TY

**Answers at the end.**

## November 100 Club winners:

1. **£50.50 Tim Ward – Cannock**
2. **£25.25 Brenda White – Great Barr**
3. **£12.63 Elaine Coterill – Pelsall**
4. **£12.63 Pat Goacher – Norton Canes**

## Update from Walsall

Here's an update from the Walsall tower as to what's been going on recently.

### **Sunday ringing**

We started ringing on 4 bells from 30th August, but this was short lived; we only did it until 18th September, after which stricter restrictions came in. By good fortune, this included Diana's 60th anniversary of ringing at this tower on 6th September (reported on in the last Newsletter).

In common with several other towers, we have started chiming one bell from 6th December on a rota basis, and intend to do this until ringing resumes properly. We have also planned to ring for Christmas services as suggested by the Central Council.

### **Practice nights**

We have kept in touch by various means on a Wednesday, settling on a group phone call, using conference call software, more-or-less since the pandemic stopped ringing. We usually have a chat for 30 - 45 minutes, depending on how the conversation goes, and then those who want to remain have a Ringing Room session. It's a different experience from ringing and takes some getting used to, but we're improving as we go - nothing fancy yet but we enjoy it all the same.

### **Simulator**

We have received a set of 12 simulators from David Bagley, so the next task is to fit them and connect them to the tower's computer. Fitting of clapper ties is currently under way; we anticipate all this being complete by the time ringing resumes properly.

### **Handrail**

There is a proposal to fit a handrail to the staircase. This is at the stage of planning and diocesan approval.

## Running the AGM on Zoom

There's no doubt that Covid-19 restrictions have wreaked havoc on our society activities. After the initial lockdown in March we rather hoped that we might be back to some sense of normality by late summer. Come mid-summer when things were improving we thought that while the AGM might not be practical in its



traditional September slot, we ought to be pretty confident for November. How wrong we were and rates started going up rather than down. By the time we were locked down again we knew that we were going to have to have an on-line AGM.

Quite a lot of us have had plenty of opportunity to practice on video calls over the last few months, whether on Teams, Zoom or Skype, so we were getting the hang of it, albeit in fairly small groups. Scaling that up to an unknown but possibly large number of people was a bit of scary task. Zoom seems the most common one in popular use (its mostly Teams at work), but the downside of Zoom is that the free version only lasts for 40 minutes. Luckily however one of us had a professional edition we could use.

Dave Steve & Stuart had the opportunity of a trial run at the Central Council AGM which was very polished. We made lots of notes about how they did it and made sure we learned from their experience. We realised that we needed to get to grips with potentially running on-line votes, managing large numbers of attendees and dealing with the issue that on internet calls only one person can speak at once. One thing the CC did that we couldn't was to be able to highlight the speaker. To do that required a webinar account and we weren't going to pay for that! What we did realise though that first and foremost, as well as a good chair, we needed someone to administer the technology and manage the meeting. We were fortunate in that Jean had arranged an excellent chair in Julian French the Archdeacon of Walsall. In the zoom admin we don't know how successful we were but we decided to play safe and have two in Dave Towell and Andy Simmonds both from Abbots Bromley. You probably watched from your laptop or tablet (or maybe even phone) but so that we could keep an eye on 30+ people and manage their reactions we both had two screens – and wished for three. We decided that the best way (as do most video conference meetings) to manage lots of people is to keep everyone on mute unless presenting. Then if anyone wishes to speak ask them to send a digital "hand up" so we could invite them to speak.

Luckily, we didn't need to arrange any votes and the motions were accepted by measuring digital reactions – all were accepted with no adverse expressions. We could have run a vote, but it was a technology leap that nearly let down the CC AGM so we were glad we didn't need to.

Ultimately, we think there were 34 members on the Zoom meeting and on the whole we think it went as well as we could have expected. It was a challenge and a bit stressful, but hopefully was worth it. It's certainly given us confidence to try other digital meetings and hopefully the December meeting will go reasonably well, even though we are expecting to have to venture into the world of ringing room and breakout rooms. By the time you read this, you'll probably know how it went.

## **A Good Time to 'catch-up' with Spring Cleaning in the Tower**

I'm sure, just like at home, you have looked at jobs that need doing in your tower and thought "That needs doing soon" but you've never got round to it. Well in lockdown, with the promise of a return to normal sometime next Spring, now is the ideal time to do that task that has been waiting for years. When there is the opportunity to meet in groups, socially distanced of course, it could be a tower team building exercise. Not only that but, if ringing at your tower has been spasmodic or non-existent, it would always be wise to carry out checks in the belfry. Certainly you should check the condition of netting at louvres or that there hasn't been a fall of something that might damage the wheels or bells when ringing recommences. At my tower, Tamworth, work has just been completed on the tower roof and a large amount of dirty has fallen among the bells in addition to the usual stonework dust. A clean up task to complete in the next few weeks.

By the time that we can recommence teaching bell handling again a year will have gone by and we will have to consider recruitment. Take a long hard look at your ringing room or the approach to it, perhaps take along a non ringer to be a critical pair of eyes. Is it welcoming?

Would your ringing room be an ideal set for a Dickensian novel? An untidy pile of Ringing Worlds in one corner. Tatty pieces of bell ropes hanging from broken coat pegs? A two bar electric fire that a deceased ringer passed on to the tower in the 1960s? Odd pieces of carpet, that used to be in your parents' lounge, covering the floor? What impression would a prospective learner have of your tower? You may laugh but if you have to compete with a comfortable heated room where someone can play with their X box you have to make an effort.

Now, with little ringing, is the time to check and renew and even do a major revamp. Have you got a modern fire extinguisher that receives yearly checks? Have all the plug in electrical gadgets in your tower been PAT tested this year and dated, as all church equipment should be?

There's lots to do.

**Don't just sit there get it done!**

John Mulvey

Hon. Bell Advisor

**Many thanks to all contributors to the newsletter – so much of interest.**

**Please send in any updates you have for your towers by mid-June to: [newsletter@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lwascr.org.uk)**

Answers

Sweet treats: 1. Smarties 2. Double Decker. 3. Galaxy.

Carols without vowels: 1. The Angel Gabriel 2. In Dulce Jubilo 3. Once in Royal David's City