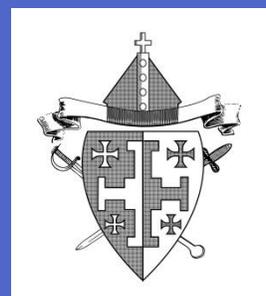




Cannock's team – winners of this year's 6 bell striking competition

# Newsletter



## April 2014

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

## 2014 Peal Week report

by Stuart Hutchieson

In the Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaconries, February is Challenge Month and has been for a good few years. The Half Term week was set aside once again for a peal week aimed at getting as many people involved in progressive attempts as possible. 12 were organised involving nearly 50 ringers, with both figures showing an increase on previous years.

The organisation went smoothly and every attempt met with the right people in the right place. Many congratulations to all those who took part especially those who were pushing their boundaries. Unluckily, 6 attempts were lost for a variety of reasons including Horton's Four at Mavesyn, 41 Minor at Rugeley,

Minor at Pelsall, a handbell attempt, Medway Major at Darlaston and Bristol/Avon at Walsall.

I was rather demoralised by the low success rate, until a kind person pointed out that lots of people had tried new things and everyone had enjoyed the chance for some ringing that they wouldn't have done otherwise – it was 'challenge' month after all! The footnotes to the successful peals hopefully speak for themselves and I hope everyone enjoyed themselves, win or lose. Thank you to those who helped me with the organisation and to the local and visiting experts who enthusiastically supported our efforts.



*Darlaston won the call changes trophy*

### The successful peals

22 Feb 2014 Elford (St Peter) 5040 Minor

20 Feb 2014 Alrewas (All Saints) 5056 Cambridge Surprise Major

19 Feb 2014 Great Barr (St Margaret) 5040 Plain Bob Minor

17 Feb 2014 Abbots Bromley (St Nicholas) 5024 Spliced S Major

17 Feb 2014 Rolleston on Dove (St Mary) 5024 London Surprise Major

16 Feb 2014 Abbots Bromley (The Campanile) 5040 Plain Bob Minor

## Down at the skittle alley

by John Edlin

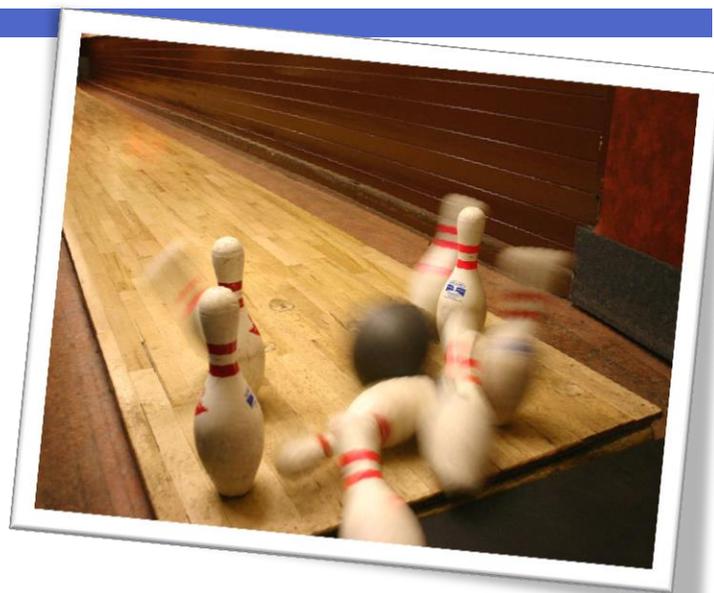
On Saturday 15th February, having got all that Valentines nonsense out of the way, the Society took to the more serious pursuit of Skittling and Drinking, plus a ring on the magnificent 8 at Brewood.

Match reports are pretty boring for those who didn't take part, and for those that did, they already know what happened, suffice to say that, in a gently competitive spirit, skittles were dispatched to the pit with gusto. Of note, though, were some novel methods of toppling such as (1) the nudge from a protruding piece of wood at the edge of the pit, allowing the ball which otherwise would have missed, to perform a 90 degree turn then take down two impossibly separated skittles (Ruth, Walsall) (2) the meteor (Andy,

Bloxwich) which missed the whole pack of 9 then bounced off the back wall of the pit with such force as to take most from behind.

Famished from the exercise and the tension, we took to the hearty buffet - "hearty" since the juxtaposition of Black Pudding and Cheese on buttered bread probably held enough saturated fat to "skittle" the insufficiently constituted. More truthfully, The Swan served us well, with Jean encouraging folk to finish the few remaining delicacies at the end.

The second round produced the night's winning team of Diane Edlin (Walsall), Chris Stockford (Penn), Kay Else (Tamworth) and David Hall



(Alrewas).

There followed a round of Killer - a sort of Striking Competition for skittles rather than bells and eventually (almost on Sunday) the winner was Jane Easley (Darlaston). Jean proposed a vote of thanks to Mike, which was applauded all round and gave a good excuse for another generous toast with ale.

## New! Society Rope Bank

The Society now runs a rope bank and you're invited to send your old ropes to Andrew Ogden - it doesn't matter what condition they're in!

Andrew will splice in new tail ends and new sallies, or provide complete, newly recycled ropes to any Society tower that needs them.

All we ask is that a donation is made to the Bell Restoration Fund.

If your tower would like to make a deposit or withdrawal from the Rope Bank, please contact Andrew by phoning 07970 389590

Many thanks to Andrew for his commitment of time to the rope bank.



Picture credit: David Ian Roberts on Flickr

# Challenge Month

by Matt Gallon



Progressing with ringing is a constant challenge and there's always something new to learn. To encourage progress, the Society makes each February a special Challenge Month for our towers and the month is an opportunity to set and achieve individual targets, or targets for your band.

Challenge Month 2014 has been a great success and we're celebrating many successes and congratulate all those who've achieved something, plus thanking their supporters and teachers. Here are some of the successful challenges, we've heard about – although I'm sure

there are many others which sadly go unreported!

**Aldridge** David rang his first quarter on a working bell (Bob Doubles)

Sophie rang her first quarter of Surprise for 37 years

Nick rang his first quarter of major (Cambridge) as conductor

**Lichfield Cathedral** Clive rang his first quarter (at Armitage), since his accident.

**Lichfield, St Michael on Greenhill** Zia and Emil completed Learning the Ropes I

Sonia, Mary, Jan, Sam, Georgia and Gill completed Learning the Ropes II

Charlie completed Learning the Ropes III

Jennifer completed Learning the Ropes IV

Jennifer range her first quarter of Plain Bob Minor

Jennifer and Charlie rang first quarters of triples

Rachel has mastered Plain Hunt on 5

The local band rang a course of Grandsire Doubles for the first time in many years

Gillian rang her first peal of Royal

**Pelsall** Mike rang his most number of methods/variations in a quarter of doubles

**Penkridge** Andrew called a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles for the first time

Pet called a 120 of Bob Doubles

Gordon and Sheila improved their Bob Doubles

Nick and 5 other Penkridge ringers rang a 240 of Cambridge Minor

Jim achieved his first peal as conductor - London Major

Richard rang call changes, unaided, very successfully

Janet, David and Andrew rang their first quarter including Stedman

Jean began her challenge, which is ongoing – the national 12-bell striking competition

**Walsall** Soula and Harriet rang rounds and call changes on 10 for the first time

## Belated first quarter congratulations!

by Anne Ogden

On Saturday 28th December 2013, Alice and Aimee Ogden rang their first quarter peal of Bob Doubles at Armitage.

The girls started learning to ring about a year ago, under the watchful eye of Lance Hill, to whom we're very grateful. Alice and Aimee are regular Sunday service ringers at Mavesyn and King's Bromley, as well as visiting other towers and earning pocket money for weddings. Hopefully this quarter will be the first of many and who knows – we may have a couple more peal ringers in the family!



First quarter or peal to report?

Let everyone know about it, in a future issue of the newsletter - contact: [newsletter@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lwascr.org.uk)

## Striking competition round up

by Matt Gallon

This year's striking competition was hosted by Longdon and we were pleased to have 9 teams entering – a few down on last year, but still a good turn out. The bells proved a challenge for some teams and the unusual rope circle – located around a stairwell was not for the faint-hearted! There was some good ringing though and all left having achieved something, with greater confidence to enter next year.

Judge, Pat Halls from Derby Cathedral, gave some useful feedback to every team and first prize went to Cannock (11 faults), while the call change shield was retained by Darlaston. Gold certificates were awarded to Abbots Bromley (17 faults), Cathedral A (17 faults), Cathedral B (19 faults); Silver went to Aldridge. Lichfield St. Michael's and the Society Youth team also received bronze certificates. Well done to all!



Photo cc Anthony Brunning

Getting ready for next year's competition?

Try this help sheet on common striking errors and how to correct them:  
<http://qurl.com/nyhdm>

# Behind the Louvres.. St. Matthew's Walsall

by Matt Gallon



*The old Rudhall ten displayed at the foot of the tower*

The spire of St. Matthew's Church, Walsall is a well-known local landmark and rises over 170 feet and many Society members will have rung on the first rate, 1928 Taylor 12 (tenor 25cwt). However, these bells are just the latest chapter in the story of bells and bell ringing at St. Matthew's, reaching back over 500 years.

The earliest record of bells at St. Matthew's is in the 1460s, where the Book of Accounts of the "Guardians of the Church" has many references to expenditure connected with bells. Spending included new ropes, replacement clappers and in 1469, major work to install a new clock with chiming apparatus. Sadly, the fate of one or more of the bells was to be sold, "by the consent of the parish..to the amendment of divers brydges and hyghways about ther town". In the 21st century we are yet to resort to this method of funding road repairs!

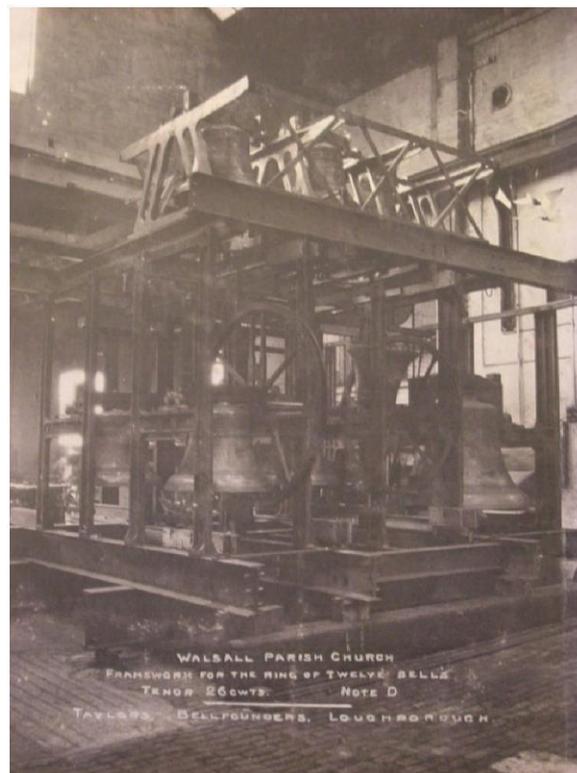
The next mention of bells comes many years later, in 1674, when a new bell was cast and hung in the tower at a cost of £33.8s.10d. This bell formed part of the ring of six, the "Great Bell" of which was recast in 1721 by Joseph Smith of Edgbaston. By 1775, the six bells, totalling 54cwt and 11 pounds were said to be "very ruinous and much decayed" and were taken down and replaced with a new ring of eight.

The new eight were cast by Thomas Rudhall of Gloucester, with a total weight of 90cwt - the tenor, tuned to E flat, weighing in at 23cwt and the whole peal costing £196. The installation of the new bells attracted ringers from all around, including from the Society of Chapel Youths of Stourbridge, who rang the first peal "to the general satisfaction of the inhabitants" - the performance was 5040 "Bob Majors", on October 12th 1775.

By the 1860s, the bells were again in a poor state and a public fund opened for their restoration, led by local surgeon, Dr David Moore. The funds raised allowed the church to augment the ring by adding two trebles and the work was completed by Taylor's of Loughborough. Around this time, the ringers called themselves "St Matthew's Campanalogian Society" and many peals of Grandsire Caters, Grandsire Royal (now out of favour) and Kent were recorded, including a record breaking peal of 10079 changes of Grandsire Caters in 6 hours, 17 minutes.

Shortly before the outbreak of war in 1914, the condition of the bells precluded peal ringing completely and an appeal for the restoration of the bells was started and then revived in 1918, finally reaching its target in 1928. The project was to recast and augment the bells to 12. The old ring of 10 were displayed in the churchyard for a week and then driven around the town by horse-drawn carriage, before making their journey to Loughborough for re-casting. Following work to strengthen the tower, the new bells were hung on two tiers and are a tight fit, requiring a trough cut into the stonework of the tower to allow the flight of the tenor clapper. The bells reproduced the inscriptions on the old ring of 10 - for example: "when you us ring, we'll sweetly sing" and the sixth includes a memorial to those who died in the Great War.

The final chapter in the story is the addition of a sharp second in 1981. This allows a lighter ring of 8 to be rung and weighs 5.25cwt. The bell was also supplied by Taylors and donated by the family of Nellie Homer, former Headteacher of Chuckery School. The metal for this bell was sourced from the old ring of ten of Christchurch, West Bromwich – more on this lost ring in a future Newsletter!

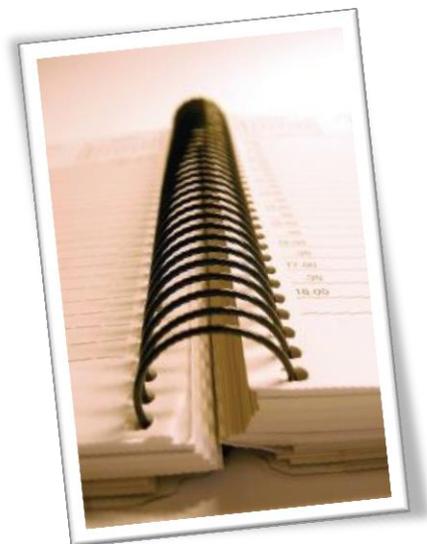


*The new bells at Taylor's workshop - 1928*

## Diary dates

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

- ✓ 26<sup>th</sup> April, Outing to Manchester.
- ✓ 17<sup>th</sup> May, Young people's event
- ✓ 31<sup>st</sup> May, Surprise Practice
- ✓ 21<sup>st</sup> June, Full meeting



## Treasurer's appeal..



Subs were due in July and it would make the Treasurer very happy if they were paid without a reminder! Any queries: [treasurer@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@lwascr.org.uk)

## Newsletter tit-bits

Please pass on your news items, gossip, congratulations etc. to Matt Gallon. Also, if you'd like to share the story of your bells in a "Behind the Louvres" feature, please also get in touch:

[newsletter@lwascr.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lwascr.org.uk)

## Phil Gay

Please note that Phil Gay's email address, in case anyone wants stays, has changed to: [ro.gay@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:ro.gay@btinternet.co.uk)

Lucky winners of the 100 Club draw at the striking competition were:

- ❖ Penn Tower £54.00
- ❖ Diane Quimby £27.00
- ❖ Renée Morris Young £13.50
- ❖ Pat Goucher £13.50



If you'd like to try your luck and help raise money for the Bell Restoration Fund, please contact Linda Pick: [lindapick@totalise.co.uk](mailto:lindapick@totalise.co.uk) or download an application form from the Society website.