



Christ Church, West Bromwich c. 1905

Newsletter



April 2017

www.lwascr.org.uk

The Christ Church rescue by

John Burton

The first ring of 12 bells in the Society area was at Christchurch, West Bromwich. The church was built in 1820 and had two bells in 1829. They were augmented in stages up to 12 by 1847, all the bells cast by C & G Mears in a triple tier frame. It took three attempts to get the bells right and by all accounts, they were a poor ring of bells.

By 1899 they were unringable and two years later, James Barwell of Birmingham rehung the bells in the same frame. On 23rd September 1911 the first ever peal of Erin Cinques was rung at Christchurch.

By 1953, the bells and frame were considered unsafe and an order

was given to Mears & Stainbank to reduce the ring to 8 and no's 1, 2, 7 and 8 were recast – the last two due to a mishap on British Railways en route to Whitechapel. They were an indifferent ring of eight and were little rung between 1953 and



The partially demolished tower in 1980, after removal of the bells

1974. I rang one quarter peal in June 1971.

The church was declared redundant in 1974 and the tower closed. In 1979 a major fire gutted

the church and some of the bells crashed to the floor.

In February 1980, John Mulvey phoned John Burton and said "can you hire an 18 ton truck with a tail lift and drive it to West Bromwich this afternoon?" This happened and two cracked bells and a huge amount of bell metal was loaded onto the truck and driven to 23 Portland Road, Aldridge (my Mother's house), for safe keeping. They stayed in her yard for two and a half years and my Mother was quite proud of the two 1953 Mears & Stainbank bells. The metal went to augment Shenstone to eight, Newcastle under Lyme to twelve, Seighford to six and provided a sharp second at Walsall.

The only current Society member who rang on the old bells was Clive Smith in 1950 (in short trousers!).

Challenge Month report

Congratulations to everyone who attempted a special challenge during Challenge Month. Particular thanks to those who also reported their efforts to the Newsletter Editor – see reports below.

Cannock

At Cannock, we were able to help some of the enthusiastic ringers in our area to achieve significant quarter peals. Congratulations to Steve Askew (Brewood) who rang his first of Surprise Major, Pet Hughes (Penkrudge) who trebled for her first 10 bell quarter, Mike Emery (Pelsall) who achieved a quarter of Grandsire Triples inside and Ian Salter (Stafford) who rang inside to Bob Major.

If anyone else would like to attempt a progressive quarter on a Sunday evening at Cannock, please contact: geoffpick@totalise.co.uk

Penkrudge

We rang three quarter peals in February, the first two celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Queen's accession and the third after a wedding.

Bob Triples enabled us to score the first all local 8 bell quarter for many years; 3m/v Doubles gave Jim a chance to refresh his conducting skills after a long rest and Bob Doubles was Paul Geoghegan's first as conductor.

Our three girls, who are working towards their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award, tried out some very different bells at Armitage (thanks to Lance) and are nearly

ringing on their own. Petula achieved a long held ambition to ring a quarter on 10 bells, by ringing Plain Bob Caters at Cannock.

Other challenge month quarters:

- Alrewas: First on 6: Joyce Gent
- Pattingham: Betty Jackson's first inside
- Lapley: Four firsts of Middlesex Triples



- Armitage: several quarters of increasingly complicated doubles methods, including Julie McDonnell Bob Doubles

Peal Week (report by Abbots Bromley webmaster)

Thanks go to Stuart Hutchieson for once again organising Peal Week this year. 28 ringers took part in 7 peal attempts and 6 of the 7 attempts were successful. Congratulations to all who took part and special thanks to Stuart – who also rang in them all. The successful peal attempts were:

- Drayton Bassett | Cambridge Surprise Minor
- Cannock | Plain Bob Triples
- Abbots Bromley | Bristol Surprise Major
- Abbots Bromley | Plain Bob Major (hand bells)

- Kingsbury | Cambridge Surprise Major
- Alrewas | Pudsey Surprise Major

Each was a challenge or a special event to at least one of the ringers in each. We didn't quite succeed with the attempt of 6-spliced at Coseley, however, in the beginning of March, a combined LWSCR/Shropshire band had a much more successful visit, to Much Wenlock, for a peal of 23-spliced Surprise Major.

More congratulations

Well done **John Burton**, who reached the milestone of 1500 quarter peals in January 2017. The quarter of Yorkshire was at Norton Canes with the "Monday band" who have clocked up many of John's 1500 together.

Finally, congratulations to **Alex Davis** of Darlaston and **Kit Bardsley** of Lichfield Cathedral, who have been taken on as trainee bell hangers by Taylors'.

6 bell striking competition

by Jean Nixon

This year, there were eleven entries from seven towers and an unofficial Young Ringers' team from the Cathedral and Coseley, which kept Phil Gay from Keele,



The winning Abbots Bromley band

three hours.

As usual, some teams exceeded their expectations and others were a little disappointed. The former included Abbots Bromley, who were delighted to win the Henry Follis cup, after many months of practising and Coseley B, who were entering to gain experience and won the Harry Butler shield for call-change bands.



Coseley B – call change competition winners

It was good to see teams from Walsall and Coseley entering for the first time, along with old hands from Aldridge, Cannock, Penn and the Cathedral. The Little Aston band made us very welcome and had been busy baking mouthwatering cakes (and made over 100 cups of tea and coffee), all served with a smile.



Prize winners for the largest dessert!

TAPS (Tuesday Accelerated Progress Sessions)

by Ian Slater & Olly Bouckley

Imagine all the fun of an Armitage practice night with some experienced extra visitors who can ring anything you want, Jean running the show that goes on for two hours and you get an idea what each Thursday morning in February was like on the TAPS course.

You go with your own objectives - from hunting on five up to your choice of minor method and you get lots of goes, support and rope time. When you're not ringing you chat over tea with other learners. It's hard to beat this environment to learn in.

Ian Slater

What sets TAPS apart from a normal practice is a combination of keeping the bells moving all the time; plenty of people able to provide strong bands for improvers to improve; opportunities, for the most part, to have more than one touch to consolidate progress; and a full 2 hours as opposed to the 1h 30m you get at a typical practice.

Olly Bouckley

Society Subs

At its last meeting, the committee discussed the level of society subs, in light of increasing demands on the Bell Restoration Fund and several imminent major projects. It is proposed to increase the subscription charge (there has been no increase since 1997) and a proposal will be put to members at the AGM. If you have any views on what a fair charge would be, please pass them to the Secretary:

sec@lwascr.org.uk

Scouts enjoy an evening of fun and learning at Armitage

by Jordan Lawley

On the 10th and 17th of February 2017, the Armitage bell ringers held an evening welcoming the local Scouts, aged between 7-10, who were given an in-depth lesson on the age-old art of bellringing, covering the skills required and answering various questions along the way.



Each Scout was given a chance to handle the ropes and ring the bells, with help from the local Armitage bellringing team, including experienced tower captain, Lance Hill.

Each one was given a one-to-one lesson on striking the bells and a chance to actually ring them as a team. They were clearly exhilarated by the experience and really enjoyed themselves, which was great to see.

The Scouts were given a rewarding short lesson on everything to do with the bells,

including change ringing, the health and safety aspects of bell ringing and the tradition of this famous English pastime.

With a little help from myself, by the end of the night all of the Scouts could chime the bells, ringing in sequence, and some even grasped the challenge of correcting their striking!

A few older Scouts also joined us as well as their Leader. Being older, they were given even more chance to progress and were given the special opportunity to ring a bell whilst it was 'Up', enabling them to get the full experience of ringing, with excellent results. One particular



ringer (Ozzy) showed great potential and has already booked more lessons! Who knows, we could have a new team member soon?

We at Armitage are very grateful for the opportunity to teach and familiarise others with the hobby of bellringing, and hope that whatever the age, the chance to ring has left a positive impact on the Scouts.

Being joined by the Scouts was a fun and interesting experience, and gave me an interesting learning curve, with the chance to teach people the skills of bellringing for the first time, which proved to be quite a rewarding challenge.

New Bell Advisor

John Mulvey has taken over from Chris Roberts as the Society Bell Advisor. If you would like to discuss your bells, or arrange a visit, please contact belladvisor@lwascr.org.uk

We would like to thank Chris for his past work in the role

Donations at Society events

Please note that from the **20th May 2017** event, ringing attendees at Society events will be asked to make a donation of **£1**, which will contribute to the tower donation

Diary dates

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

- ✓ **29th April**, Evening practice, Colton
- ✓ **16th May**, Tuesday Daytime Band, Whittington and Drayton Bassett
- ✓ **20th May**, Young ringers' outing; evening practice, Mavesyn (tbc)
- ✓ **17th June**, Full meeting, Wednesbury



Tower Web Pages

We are able to provide each tower with a separate page on the society website to include extra information such as:

- Contact details
- Directions
- History and details of the bells
- Recording of the bells
- Local refreshments
- Access arrangements etc.

To get a page, all you need to do is complete a brief online form (link below) with the information or give Matt Gallon a call.

We currently have 10 towers providing this information - we would like there to be more!

<http://bit.ly/2if6OYi>

100 Club Update

Lucky winners of the last 100 Club draw were:

- ❖ 1st Jonathan Smith
- ❖ 2nd John Bark
- ❖ 3rd Denise Hill
- ❖ 4th Davies family



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.