

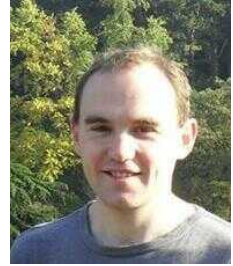
## **Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark**

Welcome! Plenty to keep you interested in this edition, I hope. Also, keep your eyes posted for a new feature from the next newsletter onwards – I'll be after some volunteers to answer some simple questions about themselves! Anyway, I won't spoil the surprise. As ever, thanks to all the contributors for this edition.

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## **Ringling Master's Report – Arthur Reeves**

It is perhaps the simplest ideas which prove to be the most effective. I hope you have found the monthly digests a useful form of communication in outlining the opportunities open to you. If you haven't been receiving them, make sure you get in touch with one of the officers so we can add you to the mailing list.



Maybe I'm just getting older, but the first few months of this year have seemed particularly busy. On top of the usual Guild events, February saw our young ringers join over 40 youths from across the country for a ringing trip around Worcester, including ringing at the Cathedral. The trip report itself became the scoop of the Ringing World! For the adults, Simon Linford organised an opportunity to ring at the city-centre towers, which was incredibly popular.

At the AGM, we spent some time discussing what sort of things members thought the Guild should provide and areas we perhaps had been missing so far. Peal opportunities was one area many of you felt could be improved and I'm pleased to say that the monthly peal programme is well on its way and has, so far, been wholly successful with three peals of Surprise Major scored. Rose Horton and Dan Calvert have rung spliced Major for the first time and Dave Bassett his first peal of Surprise Major. I know some of you have been in touch to ask to be involved and I am conscious that some members have asked for methods building up to Surprise. A couple of us are co-ordinating these so one of us will get in touch soon if you have put your name forward.

Also at the AGM, we agreed to changes to the way in which Guild events would be paid for. Membership costs increased, but focus practices and other events (excluding peals and quarters) would be free. The Guild Treasurer obviously made her costings to ensure we remain solvent, and so far I have overspent every month. Tracy won't thank me for saying this, but I am actually proud of this fact since it outlines the sheer amount available to you and the benefits you gain for your membership. Don't panic; the Guild is very much in credit with an average of 3.5 practices put on each month! Our focus practices on eight and six bells, and 10-bell quarter peals, have flourished over the last four months offering opportunities for a range of members to ring methods they may not otherwise have had the chance to ring. As always, I am grateful to those who spend their time organising for others. You will see from my monthly email the sheer amount that others do for the Guild. And, as I've said before, the more people who can offer, the more the Guild can provide! Big thanks to Phil Ramsbottom, Jonathan Townsend, Alistair Cherry, Mark Eccleston and Simon Linford.

Brumdingers have continued to mature as ringers and I am delighted that they will be entering the Ringing World National Youth Contest in July, supported by a couple of St Martin's Youths who can offer their experience of previous competitions. Talking of competitions, many Guild members are preparing for the Tewkesbury Shield in May. The Guild is fielding a band, as are St Paul's, to compete against other teams for the coveted shield. Let's hope one team from Birmingham can bring it home! Furthermore, Birmingham successfully got through the heats for the highly competitive 12-bell contest so will be preparing for the finals

in July; more on this below. Best of luck to all involved! Keep taking advantage of the opportunities open to you and enjoy the spring weather!

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## **Workshops & 10 / 12-Bell Ringing – Phil Ramsbottom & Jonathan Townsend**



Three workshops have been held so far this year; the general themes being moving on from Bob Doubles and Bob Minor, and also an evening demonstrating that learning new methods doesn't necessarily mean learning yet more new lines! All have been very well attended and enjoyed (or so we've been led to believe), and as always we are grateful to everyone who turns up for these events – both the 'learners' and the helpers alike. Always keen to hear from anyone who is interested in learning more about these events which are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday at St Pauls, the fun starting at 19:30. To find out more specifically about these then please keep an eye out for the 'What's on' circular or maybe drop us a line.

### **10 / 12-Bell Events**

The January event kicked off the year with a Grandsire Caters practice at St Paul's with several people (including a visitor from Codsall) being given the opportunity to benefit from ringing some extended touches as opposed to the usual four leads. We are planning on another 'practice event' on 23<sup>rd</sup> May also at St Paul's but with nothing planned as yet regarding the choice of method. Please do get in touch if you have any special request and we'll see what we can do.

On a cold and slightly snowy Tuesday evening in February, an intrepid group of ringers from the Guild met at Aston to ring a quarter peal of Grandsire Caters. Congratulations to Tom Horton for scoring a first and thanks to all for supporting the event (see panel).

Probably also worth mentioning here is the Bristol Maximus practice at St Martins on 30<sup>th</sup> January. Although not officially part of the 10 / 12-bell programme, there have been a few of these now, always on 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays, and always very well attended, there being no shortage of ringers wanting to hone their method learning skills at this level. We'd like to think there might be another one at the end of May but as always, look out for details on the 'What's on' circular.

#### **Aston, West Midlands**

SS Peter and Paul  
Tuesday, 27 February 2018  
(24–2–18 in D)  
1259 Grandsire Caters

- 1 Tony Daw
- 2 Tim Martin
- 3 Susannah Moore
- 4 Richard Andrew
- 5 Jack Page (C)
- 6 Tom Horton
- 7 Phil Ramsbottom
- 8 Steve Horton
- 9 James P Ramsbottom
- 10 Jonathan B Townsend

1st of Grandsire Caters - 6

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## **Peal Report – Mark Eccleston**

18 successful peals were rung for the St Martin's Guild between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

As discussed at this year's AGM, Guild Officers (and friends) have begun organising a series of monthly Sunday afternoon peals. These are being co-ordinated by Simon Linford and Arthur Reeves. Stephanie Warboys kicked the series off conducting a peal of Bristol Major at Perry Barr in January, followed by Steve Horton

calling a peal of Superlative at Shirley in February. The aim of using a different conductor for each peal is on track...

<p><b>Perry Barr, West Midlands</b> St John the Evangelist Sunday, 28 January 2018 in 2h 54m (13–3–22 in F)</p> <p>5088 Bristol Surprise Major Composed by J W Parker</p> <p>1 Jack E Page 2 Stephanie J Warboys (C) 3 Catherine R Taylor 4 D Rose W Horton 5 Matthew D Hardy 6 Janet A Horton 7 Simon J L Linford 8 Alistair J Cherry</p>	<p><b>Shirley, West Midlands</b> St James the Great Sunday, 25 February 2018 in 2h 43m (6–1–1 in Bb)</p> <p>5024 Superlative Surprise Major Composed by Thomas B Worsley</p> <p>1 Christine Mills 2 Catherine R Taylor 3 Stephanie J Warboys 4 Maurice F Edwards 5 Clare McArdle 6 David C Bassett 7 Eleanor J Linford 8 Stephen W Horton (C)</p> <p>Rung in fond memory of Christine Andrew 1st peal of surprise major: 6</p>
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Two silent and non-conducted peals of Stedman Triples have been rung by the Thursday evening band at St Paul's. Both used Andrew Johnson's new three-part, bobs-only composition of Stedman Triples:

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1209443>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1215929>

Two methods from 'Project Pickled Egg' have been rung in peals at Edgbaston, organised by Jack Page. Both Cooktown Orchid and Lessness are musical, right-place methods and not too difficult to learn if you have a good grounding in the more usually rung Surprise Major methods:

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1207652>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1222558>

Richard Pullin rang his first peal of Orion with the Monday night band at St Philip's, and he followed this up by calling his own composition of Stedman Cinques at the same venue two weeks later:

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1207651>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1215924>

Jack Page has been busy calling more fiendishly difficult compositions, including two further performances of 'Particles' (very complicated spliced Maximus, including 215 changes of method and 120 calls) as well as a tricky composition of Spliced Cinques and Maximus:

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1215925>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1218132>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1221889>

G. W. Slack's challenging two-part peal of Stedman Triples (with lots of bobs and only two singles) was successfully rung at Edgbaston, conducted by Jack Page:

For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsGuild.org/>

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1215926>

Jonathan Townsend rang his first peal of Maximus – Cambridge with the Monday night band at St Philip's:  
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1223008>

Although not rung for the St Martin's Guild, a peal was successfully completed at Cranford St John, Northamptonshire, to mark the 40th anniversary of Stephanie Warboys' first peal:  
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1214042>

Finally, not a peal report, but a request from Richard Jones to Richard Grimmett, asking if the latter would organise a touch of Stedman Triples where all the ringers were blindfolded. This was recorded and then played at this year's Henry Johnson Dinner. It has subsequently generated quite a bit of interest on social media. Thoughts have now turned to what the band might do next...

<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1218084>

### Brumdingers – *Simon Linford*

Brumdingers have had a good three months. Caoimhe and James have both got their Learning the Ropes Level 1 certificates, and Robbie is not far off. That will take them to eight Level 1 passes and all now working on Level 2. Weekly practices have changed from all being about bell handling to now being about ringing rounds and call changes. The general level of hilarity has not changed however!

A highlight was the day trip to Worcester where they joined the Worcester young ringers along with others from York and Rugby. They rang at Old St Martin's, St Swithuns, All Saints, and the Cathedral, with all of the Brumdingers ringing on the Cathedral bells and giving a good account of themselves.

The Brumdingers now join the local ringers once a month to ring for morning service ("Church Parade") and are starting to make a useful contribution. They certainly enjoy that aspect of ringing and rise to the occasion, with some of them now able to ring passable rounds on 10.

The next challenge is the Ringing World National Youth Contest which the Brumdingers have entered. This is a somewhat ambitious target, but we have at least three months to be able to ring call changes on eight!





## Project Pickled Egg – Simon Linford



Project Pickled Egg is the most determined attempt ever to change the way ringers progress through early surprise major ringing by providing an alternative and more structured pathway than the Standard 8, which is what most ringers currently learn and ring. I introduced it at the Guild AGM, and launched it online and in the Ringing World shortly afterwards. I am currently running weekly articles in the Ringing World introducing the methods one by one.

The start of it isn't terribly radical but it has proposed the ditching of Lincolnshire, Pudsey and Rutland and the early introduction of Cornwall and Lessness, making the first group of methods Cambridge, Yorkshire, Superlative, Cornwall, Lessness, Bristol and London. These have already become the staple diet of the St Martin's Guild practice repertoire, and the monthly surprise major peals. More exciting methods such as Cooktown Orchid and Deva are going to be introduced shortly in the 'second batch'.

Over 150 ringers have now joined the Project Pickled Egg discussion group on Facebook and are participating in the process, adding to a core group of 'experts' who have been working on the project for some time. It is supported by the President of the Central Council and by ART, and the Ringing World has asked for the rights to produce the teaching materials for it. The proof of the

pudding will be in seeing ringers gradually adopting and learning different methods from the ones which got adopted in the 1950s.

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## Ringing at St George's Ypres / Ieper – Janet Horton

Many of you will know that I teach Foundation Skills at Handsworth on a Saturday morning. Fewer of you will be aware of my interest in foreign languages. Sadly, it was not possible to take A' level French alongside Double Maths and Physics at my secondary school. However, I have tried to make up for this since by taking evening classes in French, Russian and Italian over the years.

So when Graham Nabb emailed around looking for volunteers to help teach the new band at Ypres, I jumped at the chance. In the first instance, I had a go at putting together a glossary of bell ringing terms in French. Just one problem. The residents at Ypres are predominantly Flemish and are Dutch speakers. Hence Ieper. So I had to do a Dutch version of the glossary as well, which was checked for me by Paul de Kok from Dordrecht. Although we took both versions up the tower when we went, we quietly took the French version away when we left.

For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsGuild.org/>

I was to be one of a group of five tutors going out on 8<sup>th</sup> March for a very long weekend. I got up at crack of dawn on the 8<sup>th</sup> to catch the 06:30 train to Euston, then walked to St Pancras to catch a train for Dover Priory. There I was collected by Gillian Hughes (Belper) who was also giving a lift to Anne Sladen (Beeston). We then met the other helpers, Bill Evans and Claire Bellis from Canterbury, in the queue for the ferry.

A car journey on the other side of about an hour found us at Ypres where we tracked down our accommodation. The trustees of the Ypres bells had rented a house for the five of us in the very middle of Ypres, very convenient for St George's and all facilities.

We settled ourselves in and did a quick trip to the supermarket before going around to the church for a social event to meet the locals. At the supermarket we met our first challenge. Which was the ordinary milk? In the end we just took the plunge. It turned out to be a sort of buttermilk which was not unpleasant on cereal, but not really the right thing for tea or coffee!

There are 17 learners at St George's, not all of whom we met this weekend. They ranged in age from 20s to 70s, and had varying abilities in speaking English from being ex-pat Brits to virtually none. The Chaplain, Gillian, and the Tower Captain, Liz, had both achieved Level 1 during the previous block of training. Liz learnt to ring many years ago, but has had a 15-year break. Our target for the weekend was to see how many more could get Level 1.

Each day except for Sunday we did three two-hour blocks of teaching with about five students in each session. In a small ringing chamber a bit smaller than St Chad's, it was very noisy and busy. On Saturday we were joined by Gregory, who is a British ringer working as an interpreter for the EU. This was a great assistance as sometimes we thought things were getting lost in translation when translated by other students.

On Sunday we rang for service in the morning, and tried for a quarter in the early evening, which sadly was not to be. Also on Sunday, I visited the 'In Flanders Fields' museum and we all went to the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate.



L-R: Gillian, Kristof, Anne, Frederik, Natrouschka, Janet

Here we caught up with some visiting ringers from Shropshire who were scheduled to ring between our morning and afternoon sessions the next day. As Bill and Claire were returning home on Monday, we were grateful that two of the visiting ringers were down to help with teaching in the morning. This still left us with five sessions for which we had only three tutors.

So how did we get on? Four students succeeded in getting their Level 1 certificates, including one who had only had his first lesson on the Saturday. Kristof was already a ringer of bells in the Belgian style, and clearly there are some transferable skills. Setting 10 times in a row became quite competitive amongst the students, but Kristof was the only person I have come across who has done it straight off at the first attempt.

There are several others who should be able to achieve their Level 1s when the next batch of training takes place; though it is a concern that the gaps between the training means people will go backwards. Some of the students will be a bit of a challenge. We were relieved that the churchwarden Peter only wanted just to have a go and not to actually learn. He is in his 80s with severe arthritis in his hands.

A couple of the students would speak French with me when there was something they didn't understand. However, I restricted this to "How do you say such-and-such in Dutch?" There are two more blocks of training scheduled, and hopefully most will have achieved Level 1 by the end. Gregory is scheduled to do ART Module 1 training in the next couple of months and, as he is retiring later in the year, he is hoping to get over to Ypres regularly to do further teaching.

I am looking forward to going back in due course to see how everyone has progressed, but in the meantime: Who is going to come and do Dutch lessons with me at Brasshouse next year? *Tot ziens!*

### Solihull Date Touch – Keith Whitehead

The Solihull band has continued its tradition of an annual date touch (see panel).

A date touch has been rung each year from 2000 onwards, except for 2007, when the tower was out of action for much of the year due to work on the spire.



#### Solihull, West Midlands

St Alphege

Sunday, 3 December 2017 in 1h 13m

2017 Plain Bob Major

Composed by Donald F Morrison

- 1 Keith D Whitehead
- 2 Sand J Cooper
- 3 Linda M Whitehead
- 4 William G R Davies
- 5 Simon J L Linford
- 6 Michael G Dodson
- 7 Malcolm J Paulson
- 8 Guy E Darvill (C)

For Evensong. 70<sup>th</sup> birthday congratulations to Fr Roy Murray, Triona Jowett and Geoff Hickman. The treble rang with a fractured pelvis sustained 18 days earlier but not diagnosed until the day after ringing. The clapper of the 7th broke in two after a few minutes' further ringing.



## **ALE Tour – Gwen Albrow**

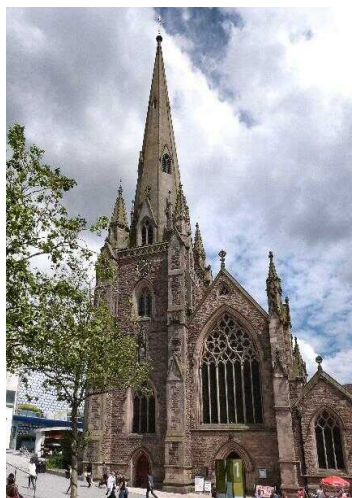
Ringers turned up in hordes to experience and enjoy the open ringing at the three prestigious city-centre churches on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February. St Martin's and St Philip's were open for ringing during the day with St Paul's late afternoon.

Just before 12:30, Simon Linford was hovering on the steps of St Martin's, one or two people were waiting around wondering, no signs were out saying that anything special was happening but no sooner had the tower been opened than ringers began to stream in. Once in the ringing room people were asked to put their name and tower on a badge but this very quickly became almost impossible as numbers built up and there was barely a space to stand. The start of ringing was on 12 bells for those new to the tower. Groups were quickly organised by Simon, in his quiet calm manner, giving everyone who wanted the option of ringing rounds or call changes and repeating these groups until everyone had had their chance to ring on 16 bells. A form of call changes numbering the bells in groups of four was used, as well as some tricky jump changes. Despite the inexperience and nervousness of many (helpers were available wherever needed), ringing on the 16 was a great success.

Ringling finished at St Martin's and it was a short walk across the city centre to St Philip's Cathedral where again the ringing room filled up with unbelievable speed. There was an invitation to sign the visitors' book and light refreshments in the form of jelly babies were provided on the table. So popular was the event that again the ringing room was full to bursting within a few minutes. Simon warned that we were in a city-centre position and many shoppers out there would be listening! A similar format of repeated rounds and call changes, as well as some very creditable plain hunt on 11, meant everyone had a chance to ring the beautiful bells at St Philip's.

After a tea stop, quite a number of people moved on to St Paul's for ringing between 16:00 and 17:00. Numbers were perhaps a little more manageable there as the teaching room could act as a kind of 'holding pen'. Comments were made about 'the rather striking colour of the sallies' and 'lovely bells to ring'.

I'm sure all those who had the chance to ring on Saturday would like to thank Simon and all the other Guild members who gave their time to organise and run the event – it was very much appreciated. Thank you also to Richard Postill, Shirley's resident photographer, for providing the photographs below of St Philip's, St Martin's and St Paul's respectively.





## St Alphege Solihull Ringing Outing – Sand Cooper

Back in October the Solihull ringers set off to High Wycombe. The preparations had started months before. The wonderful Gillian Stead usually decides where she will take our band of merry men but on this occasion we had invited the band to make suggestions through an anonymous poll. Well the day came when High Wycombe was duly pulled out of the hat and travel was to be by coach. Gillian then planned the tour to include some of the beautiful countryside through the Chilterns. Now, simple enough you might think, but there were several trips by car ahead of the big day and negotiations with the coach company as to the size of coach as we had three low bridges to squeeze under and avenues of low hanging trees to avoid!

Frank the driver had never come across bell ringers before and I'm sure he thought we were all quite mad but he gamely took us through the narrowest of lanes trusting in our confidence that he'd get the coach through. Route agreed, we set off early arriving to ring the fabulous 12 bells of High Wycombe. A fair bit heavier than our own so we were grateful for the help of a few additions to the band but we were pleased by what we achieved. We grabbed coffee and cake in the church coffee shop (always good to support a local cause).

Then off to Hughenden. What a gorgeous location, right on the edge of a National Trust property (no time to explore on the day, though Gillian and I had managed to fit in a quick look on one of the infamous reckies!) A more familiar feel to this eight, so we perhaps felt more at home. After a good lunch at The Chequers Tree in Prestwood, we set off to Little Missenden. A super ring of six though, disappointing to see what has been done to create an organ loft which spans across the ground floor ringing room so that a few of the ropes go through an extremely low ceiling. Gaps have been made in the floor so that you can reach up at backstroke which really didn't seem safe for anyone tall. Thankfully no hands were caught up but a very odd arrangement? A special church with its medieval floor tiles and 800 year-old wall paintings. Really quite fascinating.

Next it was off to Great Missenden and the renowned location of Roald Dahl's grave. Unfortunately these bells had been given a rather bad press before we arrived and there was some anxiety about how difficult and heavy they would be to ring. Tiredness had also set in at this stage so we were a little less than enthusiastic. However, they weren't half as bad as had been suggested and we rang really well. It was here that we celebrated Richard Cann's 60 years of service to our



local guild. We'd arranged a lovely cake decorated for the occasion with icing that matched exactly the colour of our sallies at home. So after all, I think we will look back on Great Missenden with great warmth.

Finally to Bledlow having negotiated the low bridges. By now in the dark, we entered this very welcoming little church where sadly they no longer have a Sunday Service band. Well maintained bells all the same, so with renewed enthusiasm we finished the day with some excellent ringing.

Back on the coach and with a pit-stop at the motorway services, we made it back to Solihull wondering where next year's trip would lead us. Well of course Gillian had plans by then but that's top secret until she's ready to spill the beans!

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### Youths descend on Worcester – Arthur Reeves

*'Everywhere I look, I see the repulsive sight of hundreds, thousands of revolting little children!'*

So said the Grand High Witch to her assembly in Roald Dahl's *The Witches*, as she planned to eradicate all children from the world. Well, 'repulsive' and 'revolting' are certainly not adjectives I would use to describe the young people who came to Worcester on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, but as you can see from our photos of the day, children were indeed everywhere you looked.

*Ellie and I had a fantastic day we really enjoyed ringing on lots of different bells, especially the dumb bells at the Cathedral. It was great meeting lots of other young ringers, it was epic!*

*Rachel Bagley*



Clare McArdle with Max Earthquake,  
Worcester Teaching Centre

The Ringing World National Youth Contest has helped to motivate and bring together youngsters from various regions throughout the country. We have begun to bring some of those regional youth groups together to develop links, friendships and ringing opportunities beyond what is available in each area. Most recently, young ringers from Yorkshire, Birmingham, Coventry and Worcester were treated to a day in Worcester. Maths was never my strongest subject, but I estimate that around 40 young people joined with an average age of 12 years. The youngest being Max, from the Brumdingers, at five years old. With supporting adults, numbers easily exceeded 60. I won't be so rude as to mention our oldest ringer, or how far the adults brought up the average age!

*The day was great fun. It was so nice to ring with a whole range of new people and find out about their ringing. It was a great success!*

*James, from Worcester*



Mark Regan ably, and calmly, co-ordinated the day, which included ringing at Old St Martin's, St Swithun's, and All Saints'. This gave us the chance to get to know one another and ring on 10 and 12 bells. But all of this was a warm-up to the afternoon which was spent at Worcester Cathedral Teaching Centre and on the Cathedral bells themselves. The Teaching Centre gave individuals a chance to hone their striking skills using the Abel simulators. Some focused on listening intently whilst they rang the tenor behind, others tried to ring inside to more complicated methods – including Bristol and Avon. Along with tower tours, there was plenty to keep everybody busy.

We then ascended the steps to the real thing – the Cathedral ringing room, an intimidating place housing a challenging and heavy ring of 12. Yet all of those attending – including our youngest – rang with strength and confidence. All were pushed outside of their comfort zone, yet ringing remained at a good standard, because everybody worked hard to achieve their very best. Several competently rang the heavier back bells, whilst many young ringers took part in a touch of Stedman Cinques.



Ringers from Yorkshire, Birmingham, Coventry and Worcester in the cathedral ringing chamber

The day concluded with pizza, drinks and games in the Chapter House, another opportunity for the young ringers to form those all-important friendships which stand at the heart of what keeps many of us so keen on ringing.

It may not have been to The Grand High Witch's liking, but there was plenty throughout the day to keep everybody enthused, excited and motivated by bell ringing. Our more shy members felt fully welcomed, the less experienced had the chance to ring at new places, whilst those more practiced young ringers certainly had challenges thrown their way.

*For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsGuild.org/>*



One final thought from me. There has been much said over the years on the future demise of ringing. But there is much to be cheerful about. Articles such as this and from Gloucester's "Let's Ring" reported last week (16.2.18, pages 148-9) should give us inspiration and hope. A huge thank you to Mark for hosting and organising, and to all of the ringers who came along and made the day such a success. Here's to the next one soon!

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### **BUSCR Report – *Susannah Moore***

Since my last update, the BUSCR AGM took place on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February and the handover process is now complete. Alex Frye has taken over the role of BUSCR Master. Hopefully, as a group we will continue to grow in numbers as we have done over the past year. Since becoming Master, Alex has started running handbell practices before the usual BUSCR practices on a Wednesday evening.

I am also delighted to announce that the application I put in on behalf of BUSCR for the ART Award for a University Society that has made a Significant Contribution to Promoting Ringing to Younger People, sponsored by CCCBR, was successful. We are joint winners with Nottingham University Society which is very exciting as we have been working closely with them for the past year. Unfortunately, due to the snow I was unable to make it to the ART awards evening, but Stephanie Warboys was incredibly kind and attended a BUSCR practice in order to tell us what the judges thought of our application and hand over our certificate and prize. BUSCR now has £250 to spend on us as a society, so watch this space to see what we will use this money for.

This is the last BSUCR update I will write as I am no longer Master, but I am incredibly proud of how far we have come over the past year and hope the success continues for the new committee.

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### **An Introduction to the National 12-bell Striking Contest – *Arthur Reeves***

You have probably heard of the '12-bell', but I thought it'd be useful for new members in particular to hear a little more about it.

The contest for the Taylor Trophy began in 1975. Teams compete at three eliminators, with the top three from each heat gaining a place in the final. Competition is fierce and the standard is very high – it is the Olympics of bell ringing! The competition moves around each year, with Birmingham having hosted the final three times (most recently at Aston in 2016, and twice before at St Philip's Cathedral). This year, we're off to Cambridge on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Birmingham has a very proud history within the competition. Birmingham fields an accomplished team and is usually seen as the 'one to beat', having secured victory an impressive 23 times out of 43 contests. In the last ten years, Birmingham has bought the trophy back eight times.

The Birmingham band largely consists of ringers from St Martin's (where the trophy is currently on show), and most are Guild members. In fact, the band includes several familiar faces from the Guild and Birmingham School of Ringing including Simon Linford and Tony Daw. For more information, visit [www.12bell.org.uk](http://www.12bell.org.uk) and think of coming along on the day – as well as the ringing, socialising is always high on the cards and it always proves to be a highly enjoyable day!

*For up to date information and latest calendar use the website <http://www.stmartinsGuild.org/>*

### **Andy departs from Shirley – Andy Clark**

Having rung with the Shirley Band for just over nine years, Andy has now moved to a new home in Cheltenham. The photograph shows the Shirley band following Andy's last practice on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Although Andy has moved away, he will still be working in Birmingham so doesn't plan to completely disappear from the Birmingham ringing scene!



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### **130<sup>th</sup> Henry Johnson Dinner – Angie Wakefield**

The evening of Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> February saw the occasion of the annual Henry Johnson Dinner kept at 'The Studio' in Cannon Street, Birmingham – a stone's throw from St Philip's Cathedral and a change of venue from the Council House which has been home to the event in recent years.

This was just the first of several departures from the format of previous dinners. Gone were the speeches, the formal service of dinner at the table and the dress code which saw us tying up our white ties and brushing out our tails.

In their place were a three-course, buffet-style dinner which guests served themselves from main course onwards and a programme of varied and engaging diversions conceived and planned by Dinner Chairman, Richard Jones and Dinner Secretary, Stephanie Warboys.

Everyone dined well although the venue's kitchen was pressed to keep pace with the general approach to portion control, an element of under-catering being at play, perhaps.

No matter! Top of the bill of entertainments was James Ramsbottom accompanying himself in the song, 'Early One Evening' which he delivered with comedic genius and to great applause, with the popular ribbing of his father, Phil, in his introduction almost outshining the performance.

A nod to tradition followed via two items of handbell ringing. First, Mark Eccleston, Michael Wilby, Jack Page and David Hull rang the notoriously complex Scientific Triples – a principle invented by John Carter whose mechanical change ringing machine was on display just off the dining room.

The second item, intriguingly entitled 'Heavy Metal Machinations', saw a generously proportioned set of eight Taylor handbells brought into action. The spectacle of eight highly accomplished ringers wielding handbells so hefty that they were more 'Slimming World' than 'Ringing World', all the time line-dancing their way through a course of Stedman Triples, was a delight.

Finally, 'A Swan on the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal', a piece for solo 'cello and handbells was performed. Richard Jones was both soloist and arranger, adapting the music of Saint-Saëns to create his own portrait of a

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swan on the water, transported to the canal near to St Paul's on practice night and joined by a chatty duck with whom he might exchange snippets of a surprising knowledge of call-change ringing. Jonathan Thorne provided the anchoring piano accompaniment and BUSCR provided the handbell ringers, replicating faithfully the ringing up and handling exercises which open practice night.

Available throughout the evening was an exhibition of photographs curated by Richard Jones under the title, 'Exploring England's Belfries' and the evening closed with a slide show of photographs of Guild friends and events over the years.

Much deserved thanks were given to Richard and Stephanie for putting together a hugely enjoyable evening. Retiring from the role, Stephanie was presented with a bouquet of flowers in recognition of the time and energy she had invested not only in this year's dinner but in those of previous years.

The 131st 'HJ' now demands of us 12-months of patient waiting following the innovative approach taken this year. The buzz of anticipation began, however, even before the coffee was poured.

*Richard Jones writes:*

The exhibition 'Exploring England's Belfries' on display at the dinner was partly intended as a taster for a book of this title which will be available later this year. The book will contain a longer sequence of Christopher Dalton's fine black-and-white photographs of historic bells and belfries arranged as a kind of pictorial essay with notes. At the dinner people were invited to put their contact details on a list if they wished to receive further information about publication, but unfortunately this paper was lost in the late-evening retreat from the building. If you were one of those who wrote their names, or would like to hear more in due course anyway, please email me at [rljscp@freeuk.com](mailto:rljscp@freeuk.com)