



Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Happy New Year and welcome to this festively-themed Q4 newsletter for 2018! I was certainly impressed by the number of 'firsts' we are reporting in this newsletter, including those ringing a quarter peal for the first time, those conducting for the first time, or those ringing methods for the first time. It was also great that in November the Guild was able to make a considerable contribution to the national commemorations for remembrance.

Ringling Master's Report – Arthur Reeves

Christmas and New Year always serve to remind us of the important part that bell ringing plays in the wider community. It is often a time when the church requests ringing for additional services over this season, and bells usually play a central role in "ringing out the old" and "ringing in the new". I hope you have thought of your New Year ringing resolutions for what you'd like to achieve in 2019. I certainly have!



Thinking of the part that ringers play in the wider community takes me back to November. Bells played a very important role in the national commemorations for remembrance, helping to mark the 100 years since the armistice ending World War One. Towers across Birmingham and the Guild contributed in ringing for this important occasion, including ringing for the Act of Remembrance and at 12:30 by request of the Government. I was proud to participate in these ringing events and to be part of the contribution that we as ringers across this region made.

Guild focus practices have gone from strength to strength over the last few months with several people taking charge. We've seen practices focusing on Stedman Doubles, Plain Bob Minor, Grandsire Caters and Stedman Caters. Thanks as always to the hosting towers and those leading each session. I've said it before, but I want to reiterate my belief that focus practices are the most effective way of supporting members to develop as ringers. As a Guild, we've committed to focus practices for several years now (as opposed to open Guild practices, where people turn up and engage in general ringing). We remain committed to this approach and have some thoughts on how we can further embed this more systematically. Simon has begun consultation on whether we may benefit from adopting a "focus practice" week once a month, as they have successfully done in Ledbury. We will be keen to hear your views and we will begin the discussion properly at our AGM on 12th January.

The last few months have also seen the introduction of the X Practice, where local towers host a practice for something they want to focus on with support from the Guild. Phil Ramsbottom has launched the first two of these which focused on ringing up and down. Both were well attended with glowing feedback. Solihull is hosting our next practice, on 19th January, focusing on Stedman Caters. I'm looking for towers to host for February and beyond, so please get in touch with me if you have something you think your tower members would benefit from.

October saw a highly popular and successful outing to Pershore, with ringing at the Abbey and the Parish Centre. Thanks to Simon for organising this. Ringing at the Abbey is certainly an experience, and one even practiced ringers can find daunting! But being pushed beyond our comfort zone is usually good for us and this outing was certainly an enjoyable challenge.

Brumdingers have continued to flourish over the last few months, including featuring in a TV broadcast on BBC's Newsround to share their reasons for ringing. Furthermore, Charlie Linford has rung a quarter inside to

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Plain Bob Doubles whilst Sara Paulson has rung her first on the treble. The Brumdingers also enjoyed a Christmas party before breaking up for their holidays! As always, if you have young ringers it'd be worth contacting Simon, Clare or myself for information on getting involved with this friendly and sociable group.

Finally, I have focused this year on trying to improve communication throughout the Guild – principally through the monthly digest updates. Please email me if you have any ringing opportunities going on which you think will be of interest to other members.

Workshops and Quarter Peals – *Phil Ramsbottom & Jonathan Townsend*

Workshops

October was, by special request, an evening of Stedman Doubles touches for four “pupils” all of whom finished the event with the added skill of managing singles.

November was to be a Plain Minor evening but which sadly turned out to be a non-event. Definitely intending to repeat that in 2019 (the Plain Minor bit, not the non-event).



December was also a request evening, the specialist subject being calling Grandsire Doubles, including how to bring it into rounds. Again a very beneficial evening for the three “pupils” who attended.

As always, our thanks go to everyone who makes these events possible as we couldn't run them without you. The plan is to continue the workshops through 2019 which are always on the 2nd Wednesday at St Paul's and generally aimed at ringers wanting to progress beyond Plain Bob. Please do get in touch if there is something specific you would like to try and we'll organise and run an event specifically for you.

10 / 12-Bell Quarter Peals

There were only two attempts this quarter, both of which sadly came to grief.

On Tuesday 23rd October, we set off for a quarter peal of Stedman Caters at St Paul's. Although we didn't score, the evening turned out as a very useful practice with several ringers seeing for the first time how important it is to ring by rhythm (and not purely by rope sight) to improve striking.

November was a local(ish) attempt at Grandsire Cinques at St Philip's for Tom Horton and also Dave Bassett. Sadly with ten minutes to go, the roll-ups weren't quite sounding as they should've so we cut our losses and did some business with The Wellington. Well done though to Tom and Dave, both of whom rang very well for the 40 minutes it lasted.

As with the workshops, the intention is to continue the 10 / 12-bell quarter peals / practices throughout 2019 which are primarily aimed at bringing people into high number ringing – the treble to Grandsire or Plain Bob Caters is all it takes. Please do get in touch if this is something with which you would like some help.



Brumdingers – *Simon Linford*

The Brumdingers have gone from strength to strength over the last few months. It is never quiet on Thursday evenings at St Mary's Moseley – sometimes we stand there wondering what on earth is going on or how the minds of 11 year olds work!

A real highlight was the visit of the BBC Newsround team. This was arranged at quite short notice (about two days) when the leader of the Ringing Remembers initiative got in touch with me to see if we could help with the BBC's filming request. Not one to pass up the opportunity for high profile publicity, I said yes straight away and was fortunate to be able to get a good crowd of the kids to a special practice at St Mary's.

The Newsround team was with the Brumdingers for a couple of hours. They interviewed each of them individually, showing great skill in teasing out the best from each of them. They rang rounds and a few called changes, and overall the BBC compiled a really excellent piece which spread quickly around social media. It was also great that their friends at school picked it up, and it was shown at a couple of school assemblies.

The Brumdingers are making progress with their Learning the Ropes qualifications. It is not a huge focus of the weekly sessions, but milestones are recognised and certificates awarded to proud recipients. With Charlie and Sara able to ring Plain Hunting and methods inside, and Sonny and Orson starting to do Plain Hunt on the treble, the practices may take quite a different shape over coming months.

Thanks as always to the regular helpers - Clare, Malcolm, Tracy, Arthur, Tamsin, and particularly Trish who not only helps ringing but also makes the tea!





ALE Outing to Pershore – Marianne Fisher

In the afternoon of Saturday 6th October the St Martin's Guild went on a mini-outing to Pershore, Worcestershire. Though a small town, Pershore boasts two contrasting rings of bells: the deconsecrated ring at St Andrew's Parish Centre is a handy eight with a 9 cwt tenor; over the road, the Abbey Church of the Holy Cross is a moderately heavy eight – the tenor weighs 25½ cwt – becoming increasingly awkward because of significant movement in the old timber frame. Before you can battle the bells, however, you have to brave The Cage (see photograph below).

Pershore Abbey as it stands today is but a part of the former building. The Benedictine monastery, founded by the Anglo-Saxon King Edgar (r. 959–975), was dissolved c. 1540; however, the townspeople managed to save the east end, crossing, and tower for use as their parish church (the iron gates in the Abbey park mark the west end of the old nave). However, misfortunes were to follow: in 1686 the north transept collapsed, and in the nineteenth century the building was further damaged by a storm. Enter, in the early 1860s, the architect George Gilbert Scott, who would restore and renovate the Abbey – and render it forever notorious among ringers.

Scott determined to open up a lantern tower so as to bring more light into the body of the church, while also revealing the building's fine internal tracery. This meant removing the floor of the ringing room. It was replaced with a wrought-iron cage, supported in the centre of the tower on a pair of cross-beams, from which the bells could be rung. It stands there still, accessed – after the customary sequence of spiral staircase, transept crossing, and narrow passage – by another spiral staircase, this one of wrought iron, and with open treads. From the top, there is a clear view down to the Abbey floor many feet below. (There are videos on YouTube for those who want to experience the climb from the safety of a chair!).





Having learnt to ring at Pershore, and let in many groups of visitors, it came as no surprise to discover that some of our party refused even to climb the stairs. There are always some! Others made it to the cage then discovered they hadn't the nerve to ring. That's quite common too – the cage does rather swing about when all the bells are going. Still, if you have a head for heights it's really not that bad once you get used to it. We rang lots of rounds & called changes, a touch of Stedman Triples, some Grandsire Triples, Plain Bob Triples, and three leads of Bristol, then lowered the bells and returned to ground level.

St Andrew's, of course, presented less of a challenge. There we started with Grandsire Triples, followed by more Plain Bob, Stedman, rounds & called changes, and a course of Turramurra. Finally, those who could stay repaired to the Pickled Plum, the pub of choice, highly recommended for good food and the best beer and cider Pershore has to offer.

Both Pershore's rings are available for bookings and welcome visitors.

Special Practices at Sheldon – Margaret Burling

At the suggestion of Phil Ramsbottom, I have begun organising special ringing practices at St Giles, Sheldon. The object of each practice is to improve our ringing for Sunday Services. We ask each ringer to commit to coming just as we do for wedding ringing. In this way we can plan carefully and make sure we have enough ringers with the skills and ability we need to help achieve our aim for each practice. We have been grateful to ringers from other towers who have supported us when requested.

We plan each session carefully thinking about the progression and often leaving ideas for future special practices. We have found we have fun and always plan a short break for refreshments which is useful as we are often concentrating really hard on the task in hand.

So far we have had a practice to introduce one of our band to touches of Plain Bob Doubles, another to improve / begin ringing down in peal and one to ring touches of St Nicholas Doubles.

Probably the best reason for continuing these practices is the improvement they have made to our Sunday Service ringing.



Happy Birthday Alison! *Mark Eccleston*

On 15th December, Guild member Alison Edmonds celebrated her 50th birthday by ringing the 59cwt tenor at York Minster to a quarter peal. A number of current and former Guild members travelled to York to celebrate with Alison; and all enjoyed the opportunity to ring well-struck Stedman Cinques on the glorious bells at the Minster.

Happy Birthday, Alison!



York, North Yorkshire

Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of
St Peter

Saturday, 15 December 2018 in 58m

1250 Stedman Cinques

Composed by LJW

- 1 Rebecca L Sugden
- 2 Mark R Eccleston
- 3 David G Hull
- 4 Arthur J Reeves
- 5 Simon J L Linford
- 6 Simon D Roberts
- 7 Ewan G A Hull
- 8 Eleanor J Linford
- 9 Julia R Cater
- 10 Tina R Stoecklin
- 11 Lucinda J Woodward (C)
- 12 Alison L Edmonds

To celebrate Alison's 50th and Gail Cater's 75th birthdays today. This quarter is also dedicated to Rob Rigby and Sandra Ardern on the occasion of their engagement.

Shirley Outing to Gloucestershire – *Andy Clark*

Having moved down to Cheltenham in March, I was very keen to introduce my former band at Shirley to some of the excellent towers that I've been able to ring at in Gloucestershire, either since March or from my days of ringing in the area as a teenager. Hence on 17th November, I organized a day trip to the area, visiting four towers.

We started the morning at St Mark's in Cheltenham, a very nice ring of eight (and my new home tower), having been augmented from five bells. We then moved onto the more challenging eight at Charlton Kings.

We had an excellent lunch at the Cheese Rollers pub in Shurdington – named after the local tradition (you can see the cheese rolling hill – Coopers Hill – from the pub). Do Google this tradition when you have a moment, but make sure you have good life insurance before taking part yourself!

After lunch we moved onto two rings of six, starting with Badgeworth (see band photograph overleaf). We finished the day at the lovely six at Churchdown – which is well worth a visit just for the view even if you aren't able to ring there. It's the tower you can see from the M5 motorway, perched on top of the hill!

Thanks for the Shirley band and friends for visiting and making it such an enjoyable day. I've already got a shortlist of towers ready for the next tour! Thanks also to local ringer Becca Meyer for boosting our numbers.

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"We remembered" – a message from the President of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Last Sunday (11th November) – Remembrance Sunday – we were called to “look to” and take part in a most momentous commemoration. Being so intimately linked in to our local communities, it was no surprise that bellringers everywhere stepped forward to participate, collectively and individually, in such a solemn centenary.

And it is entirely right and fitting that bells gave voice to the deep and lasting emotions felt so widely at this time. So many today owe so much to our forebears for the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy one hundred years on. As bellringers, we are the “external choir” that calls out across time and space, giving tribute on this day for those who have gone before. This is what we do, this is our calling, this is our service.

On behalf of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, I wish to thank all who participated in this historic event. The Ringing Remembers campaign, promoted by the Central Council, has claimed some inspiring headlines – towers silent for many years have rung out once more; hundreds of bands have been augmented with new learners; tens of thousands of ringers mobilised to ring in thousands of towers – not just in the UK, but across the world; ringing featured strongly in local, national and international media; and the BellBoard website went into meltdown!

Our campaign sought to recruit 1400 new ringers, to symbolically replace those ringers who fell in the First World War. At the most recent count, new ringer registrations for the recruitment campaign totalled 2792 – close to 200% of the original target. The Council’s newly-stated mission is, among other things, “to promote an environment in which ringing can flourish”. Last Sunday we witnessed what “flourish” looks like – more of that please.

Whilst it is impossible to thank all key individuals by name, I would like to pay a special tribute to Vicki Chapman – Ringing Remembers Project Coordinator, Colin Chapman – Coordinator’s “roadie”, Alan Regin – Steward of the CCCBR Rolls of Honour, Andrew Hall – developer and administrator of the Ringing Remembers web platform, and Bruce & Eileen Butler – who linked thousands of enquirers to guilds, districts and towers. And there are so many others...

My thanks go also to all those who have come to ringing through this route – may you continue to develop in skill, and gain many happy years of fulfilment in your ringing. And to that widespread army of ringing teachers who have risen to the challenge of training so many enthusiastic learners – well done!

Last Sunday was a day of reflection, a day of commemoration, a day of participation. Bellringers everywhere were able to say – “I was there – I remembered”.

Christopher O'Mahony

As published in The Ringing World Friday 16th November, p1099.



Remembering Soldiers from Harborne – Clare McArdle

Four years ago in August the bell ringers at St Peter's church in Harborne embarked on an ambitious project – to commemorate all of the soldiers recorded in the Book of Remembrance, who were killed in or died as a result of the First World War. Our plan was to remember them by ringing Quarter Peals on the nearest Sunday to the 100th anniversary of their death.

The Book of Remembrance lists the names of the soldiers alphabetically by surname and gives their initials. And that's it. In honouring their sacrifice we felt we needed to know more. A number of us set to and researched the names on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website and we were able to find names, ages, regiments, rank and service numbers, the all-important date of death, where each soldier is commemorated and in many cases a little biographical information such as the names of their parents or wives and what their connection to Harborne was.

Once we had done our research, the list of 204 names from the Book of Remembrance had increased to 252. We discovered that one of the soldiers, Private William Henry Keys, had been a bell ringer at Harborne, so of course we were very keen to do something special for him. The final total will be 258 because as bell ringers we felt it would be fitting that we remembered all of the bell ringers from the surrounding areas, of which there were a further six. The nearest were ringers at Selly Oak, Northfield and Smethwick, so there's a good chance that they may well have known and rung with each other.

Fifty different people have taken part in the quarter peals, eighteen of whom learned to ring after the project had started. Every ringer involved has received a commemorative badge for taking part as a memento of our project.

To date we have rung 98 quarter peals and two peals in remembrance of the men of the parish who sacrificed their lives for our futures. On Armistice Day we rang our 100th performance, a peal of Grandsire Triples. We were not alone in doing this – bells rang out across the nation commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armistice. We mounted two displays, presenting a history of our WW1 project, one at the back of the church and the other in Harborne Library.

We did think that the peal on 11th November might be the end of it, but as the list of casualties continues beyond 1918 we have decided to end our project in June next year on the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles, which brought the war to an end, thus bringing to a close a project that, for us, has been moving, inspiring and a valuable experience for us all.

Private William Henry Keys, Harborne, Worcestershire. Died 13/04/1918 age 38

Royal Warwickshire Regiment 2nd/6th Bn, Service No.242965

Commemorated at Lapugnoy Military Cemetery, France, Grave IX B 15

Born 2nd quarter 1880. One of eleven children; seven surviving at the 1911 census. Son of Charles Keys and Matilda Keys. Husband of Ada Keys (née Wheatstone), whom he married in 1912. Father of Ethel M. Keys (born 1912). At the time of the 1911 census, he was working as a domestic gardener

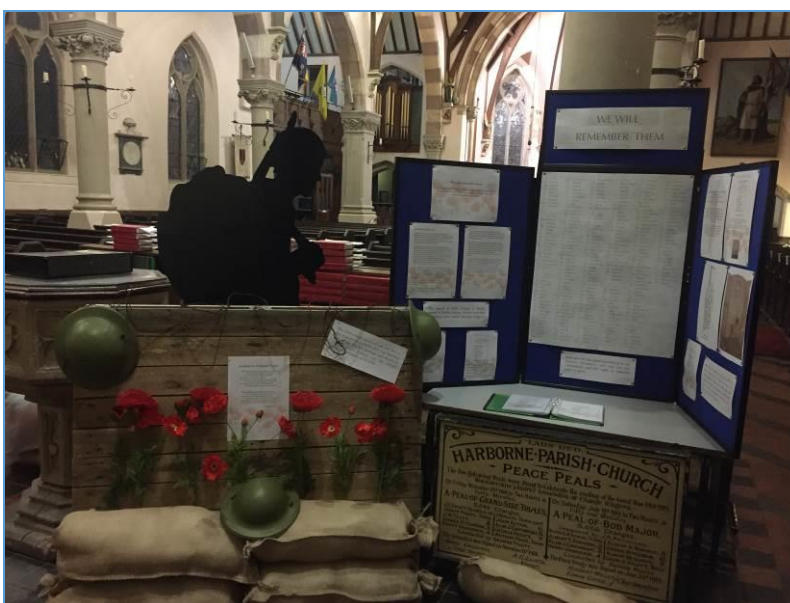
He rang a number of peals at Harborne, including the first by a local band: Grandsire Triples, on 05/02/1906. Born: Cassington, Oxon. Enlisted: Edgbaston, Birmingham. Resided (1911 Census): Boarding with the Hutchcocks family at 15 Nursery Road, Harborne



In April, during a visit to Ypres, Clare McArdle and Tracy Stevens took the opportunity to visit the grave of William Henry Keys, who was killed in France on 13th April 1918.

<p>Harborne, West Midlands St Peter Friday, 13 April 2018 in 2h 43</p> <p>5120 Lessness Surprise Major Composed by B D Constant</p> <p>1 Arthur J Reeves 2 Clare McArdle 3 Jack E Page (C) 4 D Rose W Horton 5 Stephen W Horton 6 Alistair J Cherry 7 Eleanor J Linford 8 Mark R Eccleston</p> <p>Rung on 100th anniversary of the death of Private William Henry Keys of, Harborne, Worcestershire.</p>	<p>Harborne, West Midlands St Peter Sunday, 11 November 2018 in 2h 51</p> <p>5040 Grandsire Triples Composed by W Matthews (arranged A J Reeves)</p> <p>1 Christine Barnell 2 Mark R Eccleston 3 Stephen W Horton 4 D Rose W Horton 5 Clare McArdle 6 Arthur J Reeves (C) 7 Eleanor J Linford 8 Tracy Stevens</p> <p>Rung to mark the centenary of the signing of the Armistice, remembering those from Harborne who were killed during the First World War.</p>
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The photographs show the grave of William Henry Keys in Lapugnoy, France, and our WW1 display in the Church on Armistice Day.





Remembrance Sunday at Shirley – *Richard Postill*

We were involved in the ringing for Remembrance on Sunday 11th November. Members of the band rang rounds and called changes on eight at 12:30 and then a 1260 of Grandsire Doubles was rung in the afternoon. The newly-refurbished War Memorial in the churchyard was re-dedicated at 11:00.

Shirley, West Midlands

St James the Great

Sunday, 11 November 2018 in 40m

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Gwen Albrow
- 2 Helen Crosby
- 3 Adam Knight-Markiegi
- 4 Gill Postill
- 5 Richard Andrew (C)
- 6 Colin Baugh

1st in method: 3.

For Remembrance Sunday Centenary and the re-dedication of the restored Shirley War Memorial



Solihull Date Touch – *Keith Whitehead*

We traditionally ring a date touch each year and, just as traditionally, we leave it until late in the year to add to the pressure! Our first attempt on 2nd December failed, leaving us insufficient time to try again but enough time to ring a cut-down version comprising 1458 of mostly Plain Bob Major. This prompted the thought that there must be some achievable lengths of quarter peal that have never been rung before. Perhaps this is one of them? We reconvened a week later and were successful (see panel).

The last issue of the Ringing World in 2018 contains many 2019 date touch possibilities but one in particular of Plain Bob Major that we have our eyes on.

Solihull, West Midlands

St Alphege

Sunday, 9 December 2018 in 75m

2018 Plain Bob Major

Composed by Donald F Morrison

- 1 Margaret Burling
- 2 Kathryn J Price-Feraud
- 3 Sand J Cooper
- 4 Mike Dodson
- 5 Linda M Whitehead
- 6 Keith D Whitehead
- 7 Jonathan Evans (C)
- 8 Malcolm J Paulson

For Evensong and to celebrate the recent birth of Benjamin William Freeman, first grandchild for the treble. First date touch: 1, 2



Notable Quarter Peals – Andy Clark

A selection of 'firsts' is outlined below. Well done to all involved and I hope you now have some targets in place for what you'd like to achieve in 2019!

<p>Smethwick, West Midlands Old Church Thursday, 4 October 2018</p> <p>1260 Plain Bob Doubles</p> <p>1 Anne C F Snaith 2 Matthew Turley 3 Jenny Sunter 4 D Rose W Horton 5 Stephen W Horton (C) 6 Janet A Horton</p> <p>First QP (at first attempt): 1</p>	<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Paul Tuesday, 4 December 2018 in 44m</p> <p>1260 Grandsire Triples</p> <p>1 Rosalind Martin 2 Chris Mills 3 Oliver Bouckley 4 Angie Wakefield 5 Graham Kelly 6 Richard Grimmett (C) 7 Tim Martin 8 Jonathan Thorne</p> <p>First QP of Grandsire Triples inside: 3</p>
<p>Northfield, West Midlands St Laurence Sunday, 11 November 2018 in 39m</p> <p>1260 Plain Bob Doubles</p> <p>1 Carl Jenkins 2 Catherine R Taylor 3 Graeme Lanfear 4 Julie Winterbourne 5 Rose Horton (C) 6 Bob Maine</p> <p>To commemorate 100 years anniversary of the ww1 armistice (half muffled)</p> <p>First QP: 6</p>	<p>Moseley, West Midlands St Mary Sunday, 16 December 2018 in 43m</p> <p>1260 Plain Bob Doubles</p> <p>1 Sara C Paulson 2 Charlotte D Linford 3 Simon J L Linford 4 David C Bassett 5 Trish Everett (C) 6 Malcolm J Paulson</p> <p>First QP inside: 2</p> <p>First QP as conductor</p>



Adding a bit of Spice... Clare McArdle

In October I received an enquiry from an organisation called Spice UK – “to have an introductory evening having a go at Bell Ringing” for a group of their members. Spice UK is an online social and activity club that organises a wide range of activities for its members to try.

I was a bit wary – how many times have we tried a recruitment drive and getting even a flicker of interest has been like getting blood out of a stone. Still, this was not a recruitment drive. I stifled my misgivings and asked them what sort of event they wanted. I found out they had already got a similar event booked to take place at Kingsbury and that it had sold out! That got me a bit interested and so I suggested holding the event at St Paul's, came up with an itinerary and casually added that we would expect a £10 donation from each participant and would need to limit numbers to 12. Imagine my surprise when, having agreed all the details, the event was posted on their website and all places had been taken within 24 hours and they were asking me to arrange another date.

With everything confirmed I rounded up a team of helpers and put together a 2-hour programme giving participants a whistlestop tour through the world of bell ringing. An introductory PowerPoint presentation, recycled from an induction event at University of Birmingham School, courtesy of Arthur Reeves, got the evening started. We moved up to the ringing room and gave a demonstration of ringing from rounds through call changes to simple method ringing and then split the group into two smaller groups – one group stayed upstairs for a go at bell handling and the other group went down to the School room for an introduction to how methods work using hand bells. We had a break for mince pies and coffee and then the groups swapped over. An opportunity for questions at the end rounded off the evening and all of the participants went home.





We got some fantastic feedback from some of those who came that evening:

"The exercises with the hand bells did demonstrate the complexity of the sequences and how they work. This meant it was a fun practical learning experience. The time spent in both sections was adequate to give everyone a good go and experience".

"This was possibly the best Spice thing I've ever done - it was brilliant. The instruction was superb and the whole evening thoroughly enjoyable. I'd recommend it to anyone. Good value for money as we just made a donation and they gave us refreshments as well as personal instruction".

"The team of bell ringers were very helpful and encouraging. Something I've always wanted to do is to ring the bells..."

"I really enjoyed the bell ringing. It was very good value for money and the people hosting were exceptional. Both with their teaching and friendliness. It made me realise how hard bell ringing is... I would not fancy taking it up or doing it again just for the complexity of it... but hats off to you for having it on the Spice timetable and them for hosting a truly fantastic event. I would definitely suggest other spice members doing it even if it weren't Xmas!!"

"I thoroughly enjoyed the bell ringing – learnt a bit about bell ringing in the UK. I would book this type of event again. I am not sure how it could be improved. I would want another go at it and may have taken the evening's learning further. However I am moving out of the area and will need to move to a different Spice region. Otherwise I would seriously consider doing something else with this initial learning".

Thanks must go to the team that helped put the night together: Tony Daw, Angie Wakefield, Simon Linford, Chris Mills, Arthur Reeves and Tracy Stevens – you did a great job. I've just looked at the Spice website and the date they booked with us for January has sold out...





Commemoration Ringing – *Charlie Linford*

Annually our school, Saint Martin's Solihull, has a Commemoration where we remember the two founders of our school, Miss Bull and Miss Tucker. We have a special lunch, walk over to St Alphege's church to have a special service and have a day off on the Friday!

This year we rang a quarter peal to accompany the school walking over to the church. We rang Plain Bob Doubles with Sara on the treble (the little one) and Charlie on the tenor. We had Mrs Linford (Head of Maths) ringing the fifth and our other ringing parents, Malcolm Paulson (4th) and Simon Linford (2nd), and Clare McArdle on the 3rd. As Year Seven gets last dibs on commem lunch, Sara and I were given early lunch to allow us to go ringing (Chinese and Indian for your next question) and we all got a pat on the back afterwards.

This quarter peal was almost certainly the most special quarter we had rung because ringing was heard by the whole school as they walked to church as well as the Head Girls' team when they put the commemorative wreath on Miss Bull and Miss Tucker's grave outside the church. We feel that the school's founders would have been very proud of our efforts.



Solihull, West Midlands

St Alphege

Thursday, 22 November 2018 in 43m

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Sara C Paulson
- 2 Simon J L Linford (C)
- 3 Clare McArdle
- 4 Malcolm J Paulson
- 5 Eleanor J Linford
- 6 Charlotte D Linford

Rung before Saint Martin's School's annual Commemoration Service, by two pupils (Sara and Charlie), their parents and teachers (academic and ringing).

First on the treble

My first year as a Steeplekeeper – *Mike Keeble*

In March 2018 I was asked to take on the steeplekeeping at Harborne and I've learnt a few things since then.

The bell ringers in Birmingham are some of the best in the world, but they wouldn't sound very good if the towers weren't well maintained. I've been in belfries before, but only to look round a massive musical instrument, which relies on simple mechanics and no electronics. It is quite magical. The bells and ropes at Harborne were well maintained before I started, but my first job was to splice a new tail end and rehang it on the no.5 bell.



Help is available everywhere, so armed with a splicing book lent to me by Richard Jones, I had a go at a short splice on an old bit of rope. After murmurs of approval from the band I removed the rope from the no.5 and nervously cut off the old tail end. No going back now! It worked!

While sitting out on a practice night I noticed that a clicking on the no.5 was probably due to the tucks going through the ceiling boss, but with slight alterations the problem was solved.

Looking around the belfry as steeplekeeper was very daunting. For example, how tight should the bolts be? Holding the report from Taylors inspection 18 months earlier, there was mention of a slight split in the sole of the no.7 wheel which I found, and I also wobbled the clappers that were due to have new bushes so I would know what worn bushes felt like.

Eventually on one my inspections I found a crack in the no. 4 stay, which was only small but would need changing soon. This was my first new discovery.

Tower Maintenance Course

In November, a one day tower maintenance course was organized by Jenny Higson in Northampton. We did a car share with Colin Wright and David Horspool from St Barnabas Erdington.

It started with registration and coffee. The itinerary for the day was then explained.

Initially we discussed risk assessments and keeping records (note this was the week when an accident at St Helens in Abingdon was reported in the papers – a ringer is suing the church for not maintaining the bells properly, as a broken stay resulted in him being lifted into the air causing significant injuries). We then went into the belfry at All Saints Northampton and climbed amongst the recently installed (2006) immaculate ring of ten. It was a real hands-on experience. We looked at the bells, wobbled the clappers, and discussed routine maintenance, and detecting potential problems. It was so much easier to see the points made while being in a working belfry.

After lunch in Northampton we walked the short distance to St Peter's church just a few hundred yards from All Saints church. St Peter's church is a stunningly beautiful church but is now little used.

The bells and the frame are from 1734 and although some work has been done by Taylors this century, there is an obvious crack in the headstock on the treble and some of the stays were definitely not straight grain ash – more like a small pine tree whittled down and rammed into the headstock.

The bell maintenance course was beautifully practical, run by exceedingly knowledgeable steeplekeepers (ex-Taylors employees). This course is a must for all budding steeplekeepers and anybody interested in really seeing how the bells they ring work.

Sound Control System at Harborne

St Peter's Church Harborne has been planning to install a sound control system for many months. The initial problems were planning, in which luckily I took a very back seat role.

Finally the day was set as 19th November. I arranged with the parish office and church playgroups to close the car park so building materials could be delivered, rope off a working area at the base of the tower, ensure toilets, kitchen facilities, etc, were accessible. Everyone was really helpful, and it was interesting to hear so many people express how important and enjoyable the regular bell ringing at the church was to them.



It was not always easy to find extra help for the next day, as I did not know the work plan from the builders until the evening before, but we managed. The builder was an ex- Taylors employee and his assistant a tower captain. As we worked in the belfry I absorbed as much knowledge as I could from them. After 10 days the job was complete.

Unfortunately we couldn't arrange for the no.4 and 5 clapper to be re-bushed while the building work was in progress, but an extra week with no ringing allowed the mortar to properly harden.

Thanks to Simon Adams for taking the clappers to Loughborough and having them re-bushed and supplying three new sliders and new tenor stay and returning them six days later. Thank you for all your advice and tricks of the trade for reinstalling the clappers and solving other problems.

Finally the bells of Harborne rang again on Saturday 15th December.

Steeple Keeping at Harborne in 2019

I have taken advice from the tower maintenance course and schedules for monthly, quarterly, six-monthly and annual maintenance have been organized. I will buy a few spare bulbs for the stairs and belfry, splice on a new tail end on a spare rope, and am looking forward to the long summer evenings to sort out simple shading on the window to stop people being blinded by the sun.

As a steeple keeper you are responsible for looking after tons of swinging metal, wood and ropes housed in the most beautiful and historic buildings. They produce the unique sound of English change ringing. Looking after the bells is really great fun and very rewarding.

Please don't limit yourself to the ringing room – go up to the belfry.



Christmas Tree Festival & Craft Fair – *Richard Postill*

The ringers decorated a Christmas Tree as part of the Festival organised by St James, Shirley. Band member Julie Milner, business manager of Northfield C of E Junior School, got a group of children in an out of school club to fabricate some miniature ropes and sallies using 'french' knitting and pipe-cleaners. These, along with specially made wheels and some bells bought from a local garden centre, made a very realistic representation of church bells. The tree was decorated by Gwen Albrow and Colin Baugh, aided and abetted by other members of the band.

On the Saturday, members of the band rang handbells, conducted by Richard Andrew, in the hall during the Craft Fair. The belfry was opened to anyone interested in seeing the tower bells rung, with Colin Baugh on hand to explain the intricacies of the exercise! Quite a number of people showed interest in both the tower and hand bells.

The left photograph shows Richard and the ringers, joined on the left by Fr. Peter Law-Jones, Vicar of St James. The right photograph shows some of the newly installed Christmas tree decorations.



Christmas Ringing at Birmingham Cathedral – *Gill Postill*

December is always a busy month at the Cathedral with so many extra services to ring for. There were eight specials, and overall a total of 28 different ringers came along, including one who rang for all of them. One outstanding event was ringing for the sell-out Jethro Tull concert. Although strictly speaking this was a secular concert, it was given to raise money for the Cathedral's "Divine Beauty" project, for the conservation of the famous Burne-Jones windows. James Ramsbottom provides further details of this event overleaf. A short video about the concert was made by the Cathedral, featuring the ringers, and can be seen on You Tube:

https://youtu.be/8E_8BBsEgGY

My thanks to all who supported us so willingly at this busy time.

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



The Jethro Tull Concert – *James Ramsbottom*

Leading on from Gill's article, as well as the usual collection of special services in December, the ringers at St Philip's Cathedral received a rather unusual request. The Progressive Folk Rock group Jethro Tull were playing a concert in the Cathedral on the 18th December and the ringers were asked to provide bells before the concert.

Meeting just before 18:00 on a cold night, we assembled outside the Cathedral before asking for one of the vergers to let us in so we could ring - security arrangements were much higher than what we were used to! Once we were all up the tower we then had an unexpected visitor. The son of one of the vergers was creating a video of the concert and asked if he could film the ringers for a short while beforehand, to include us in the finished film. We all agreed, and the first piece of ringing - rounds and called changes on 12 - was duly recorded. The cameraman then ventured on to the roof of the Cathedral for a few shots of the Christmas market in the churchyard, whilst we carried on with the ringing, managing Grandsire Caters, Stedman Caters and more rounds and called changes on 12.

We had been asked to finish ringing at 18:45, even though the concert didn't start for another 45 minutes! As the audience started to enter the Cathedral, most of us made our way out, although two of our number stayed for the concert and found it very enjoyable. The ringers even got a special thanks during the concert.