

# NEWSLETTER

## Oct – Dec 2014

It was billed as a 'Mystery Outing'. The Adult Learners Experience on 3<sup>rd</sup> January saw 20 attendees, many of whom had attended the School that morning, gather at St Paul's Jewellery Quarter, for the start of a tour which had had no instruction other than that the transport was going to be free, and it would return to Birmingham (or still be in Birmingham) by 6pm.

In fact, it was a bit of a con! The outing was a tour of the city centre towers, with the thinking being that if this was advertised in advance many less experienced ringers would not feel that it was for them. However, supported by 15 or so of the Guild's more experienced ringers and members of the bands of the Cathedral and St Martin's, it was shown that these big rings are easily tamed.

There was nothing too adventurous. Rounds, call changes, plain hunting and up to Grandsire Caters. Plus a demonstration Bob course of Stedman Cinques at St Martin's.

Special mention should be made of Paul Mobey (Shirley) and Sue Rogers (Coleshill), both of whom passed their Level 1 bell handling

assessment in the morning of the outing at St Paul's. By 6pm they had both confidently rung on 8, 10, 12 and 16. Paul and Sue are pictured here in front of the 12 bell contest trophy at St Martin's – the ultimate target?



Ringers from **St Martins** went on what was for some the outing of a lifetime to London. Simon Linford put together a two day itinerary drawing on all his knowledge and contacts within the London ringing scene, managing to include ringing at St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

The outing started on Saturday with ringing on the 12s of St Sepulchre's Holborn, St Giles Cripplegate and St Mary le Bow. St Paul's Cathedral was then the highlight of the afternoon. There was more than a nervous moment when just as the group was due to go into the Cathedral to ring for evensong, the fire alarm went off and the whole Cathedral was evacuated.

Dave Bassford (St Paul's Secretary) joked "the only person in the world who could get St Paul's and the Abbey on an outing and you've had a lock out!" However the all clear was given in time, and the band acquitting themselves very well including ringing Bristol Maximus on this 62cwt ring. The final tower of the day was the new 12 at St Michael's Cornhill, before plenty of beer and curry.

Sunday then saw visits to the new rings at Garlickhythe (8), St Dunstons in the West (10), and St Magnus the Martyr, Lower Thames Street (12), before the absolute highlight and rare privilege of being able to undertake the service ringing at Westminster Abbey. This

was a special service for London Mayors so the ringers of the Abbey Company stood down and let us take over, under the watchful eye of the Abbey's Conductor, David Hilling. A four course touch of Stedman Caters, followed by course of Cambridge Royal, drew quiet admiration from David. The knocking of knees almost drowned the bells!



The ringers at the Abbey



""Can I give you some advice? When you're conducting, there's no need to say please""

**Castle Bromwich** were pleased to welcome the Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Mrs Kate Wild to the bell tower recently as part of a heritage open day. She climbed the 99 steps up to the tower roof stopping at the belfry en route.



The bellringers took the opportunity to explain their plans to restore the Castle Bromwich ring which is in need of some serious TLC. The 1717 Joseph Smith six were recast in 1952 by Gillett & Johnston. While they did a fine job of casting, they reused Charles Carr's unsatisfactory 1893 frame and his old fixtures and fittings. Visiting ringers will be familiar with the very uneven ring.

The bellringers set up Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project (CBBRP) as a charitable trust at the end of 2013 with the ambitious plan to rehang the bells with two additional trebles and new fittings in a purpose-built frame and to complete the project by 2017 for the tercentenary of Sir John Bridgeman's commissioning of the bells.

Castle Bromwich church is a Grade I Listed building and consent had to be sought from

English Heritage. Pending consultation with an independent structural engineer and the church architect, the plans will then be sent to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for their approval.

After receiving estimates from four bellhangers, the CBBRP has accepted a quote by Taylor's of Loughborough. This quote was the highest but was inclusive of all the work involved meaning that the ringers would not have to manage any part of the project.

The projected cost is around £90,000 of which the Trust has now raised over a third, much of the money from private donors. The ringers are now in the process of applying to trusts and charities and would welcome any advice or encouragement from towers who have experience in this area.

See the website is at [cbbells.webs.com](http://cbbells.webs.com).

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Plans are well advanced for the **Association of Ringing Teachers AGM** which is being hosted by the Guild in Birmingham on the weekend of 7/8 March. The conference itself will be in Northfield hall, with ringing on the Friday night, various seminars and courses being run at other towers. Clare McArdle will be giving the keynote talk about the School, while Simon Linford will be delivering a new two-part course on learning to conduct. The event is open to all those interested in ringing training.

This year a Christmas Tree Festival was held at **Boldmere** church and all the organisations were invited to provide a decorated tree. The ringers used a 7 foot artificial one with a couple of old ropes (kindly lent by Sutton) spiralled around it and threaded a dozen handbells onto the rope through the handles to ensure they were secure. Various decorative bells were added together with some coloured LED lights all from the Pound Shop. It was topped out with a cockerel weathervane made from gilded cardboard. A laptop was used to play a recorded loop of Ding Dong Merrily on High (both choral and handbell versions), a reading of John Betjeman's poem "Christmas" and a touch of Stedman Triples.



**Keith and Olive Haslam** celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary on 6th Nov. A peal was rung to celebrate with the band made up of Haslams and Pipes

**Selly Oak**, West Midlands  
 St Mary  
 Saturday, 8 November 2014 in 2h55  
**5056 Cambridge Surprise Major**  
 Composed by C Middleton  
 1 Phil M Haslam  
 2 Susan C Haslam  
 3 Henry J W Pipe  
 4 Cecilia E C Pipe  
 5 Gary M Haslam  
 6 Benjamin M Haslam  
 7 David J Pipe (C)  
 8 Timothy G Haslam  
 1st peal: 6  
 To celebrate the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of Keith and Olive Haslam, married in this church, 6 Nov 1954



Keith and Olive with the peal band (in order l to r)

By the time of the next Newsletter, the Birmingham **12 Bell contest** band will know whether it has qualified for the Final of the 2015 Contest. Birmingham has been drawn in the Eliminator at Shrewsbury on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

The period got off to a good start with the **October meeting**. In a break from the traditional format of a striking competition with not very many teams in, we had concurrent 'workshop' practices at different towers, giving the opportunity to choose between an introductory handbells session run by Clare McArdle, an 8 bell introduction run by Tony Daw, and a 10 bell practice at St Paul's run by Simon Linford.

The subsequent tea and meeting were held at Shirley, where there hasn't been a meeting for 12 years. The new peal book was unveiled, and those attending were treated to a presentation on the first year of the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing by Clare.

News of **Muriel Reay** from Maurice and Margaret Edwards, who met Muriel just before Christmas. "Unfortunately she slept through the whole visit although she would not know me any way. She was up for the Christmas Party at the home the day before. The carers came in three times in the half hour we were there. She fell the day before after the party and had a slight bruise on her shoulder so it may be the shock of the fall or just tired from the day before.

The carers are very good and really look after her, I have not heard anything from Audrey and George since I visited, she is very weak and apparently does talk to you sometimes and enjoyed the singing of old songs and carols at the party the day before. A few months ago they thought she would have to go into hospital, they managed to get her better at the home."

**Birmingham Cathedral** is celebrating its Tercentenary in 2015 – the building was finished in January 1715. To kick-off a year of celebrations, the Cathedral asked the ringers to ring the new year in as part of a special event, with the floodlights springing into action at midnight as the bells pealed out. For the 15 minutes running up to midnight, the tenor was tolled at 15 second intervals – half pulls on a 31cwt tenor is a new form of torture!



The Cathedral ringers were very busy over the Christmas period, having rung for a total of seven special services, in addition to normal Sunday service ringing. A total of 37 different ringers, comprising 20 Band members and 17 visitors, were involved in this ringing.

During the **Radio WM Carol Service** broadcast from the Cathedral, the Canon Liturgist praised the excellence of ringing in Birmingham and gave a good commercial for the School of Ringing. "Thank you, Canon Janet."

**Mike Rigby** was responsible for saving the lives of the entire Harborne band, by having the foresight to install a Carbon Monoxide Meter in the tower. The boiler flue, which runs up through the ringing chamber became blocked and toxic levels of CO began leaking through porous brickwork causing the alarm to activate. CO levels reached 83. We were informed by the gas engineers that 10 minutes in a room with a CO level of above 30 would have been enough to kill us!

The safe arrival of **Stacey Howard's twins** was welcomed this peal:

**Birmingham**, West Midlands  
St Paul  
Monday, 13 October 2014 in 2h56 (13)  
**5038 Cambridge Surprise Royal**  
[Composed by J H Fielden](#)  
1 Christine Mills  
2 Joanne C Wilby  
3 Simon J L Linford  
4 Paul Needham  
5 John Owen  
6 Philip A Ramsbottom  
7 John H Fielden (C)  
8 Stephen M Jones  
9 Andrew W R Wilby  
10 Michael P A Wilby  
Rung to welcome twins Isabel Laura and Thomas David born to Stacey and Graham Howard on 7th August.

Other peal ringing achievements were:

Andrew Clark and Richard Andrew first peal of  
8 Spliced Surprise Major  
Steve Jones 1<sup>st</sup> as conductor in hand (Stedman  
Triples)  
Rebekah Horton 1<sup>st</sup> peal of Surprise  
Jonathan Thorne 1<sup>st</sup> of Stedman Triples

**Peals of Stedman Triples**, particularly in hand, dominated the peals list for the last few months. Mark Eccleston, Alan Burbidge, Charles Webb and Paul Bibilo rang two exceptionally difficult compositions of Stedman Triples (Noonan's and Colin Wyld's) silent and non-conduct in hand.

**Birmingham**, West Midlands  
RC Cathedral of St Chad  
Tuesday, 23 December 2014 in 2h 56m  
**5040 Stedman Triples**  
[Composed by Thomas Thurstans](#)  
1 Paul E Bibilo  
2 Alan S Burbidge  
3 Michael P A Wilby  
4 James P Ramsbottom  
5 Jonathan P Healy  
6 Stephen M Jones  
7 Stephen R Shipley  
8 Stephen W Horton  
Rung silent and non conducted  
First silent peal of Stedman Triples for 4,  
5, 6 and 7

The following ringers have achieved awards under ITTS and **Learning the Ropes**:

#### *Level 1*

Hannah Bristow (BUSCR)  
Eileen Keeble (Harborne)  
Mike Keeble (Harborne)  
Paul Mobey (Shirley)  
Sam Molyneux (BUSCR)  
Sue Rogers (Coleshill)  
Stella Tew (Moseley)  
Brian Wevill (King's Norton)  
Anastasia Willetts (Erdington)

All of the above 'graduated' from the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing.

LTR Level 5 (minor)  
Thomas Horton

Phil Ramsbottom is now organizing **10 bell quarter peals** for those interested in gaining more experience on 10 bells. The first fully-fledged attempt was Stedman Caters at Aston in December, providing Malcolm Paulson with the opportunity to ring his first in the method.

**Solihull** rang a '**date touch**' in November. For those not familiar with this concept, date touches are as many changes as the year, so at the moment they are 60% longer than quarter peals. Hitting exact lengths often needs clever composition, funny calls, starts, and bits of spliced. Look forward to Mike's composition of 2015 Grandsire Caters next year ...

#### **Solihull**, West Midlands

St Alphege

Sunday, 23 November 2014 in 1h 14m

#### **2014 Spliced Major (2m)**

Aileen's Little Bob 14, Plain Bob 2000

[Composed by Michael G Dodson](#)

- 1 Sand J Cooper
- 2 Richard J Cann
- 3 Linda M Whitehead
- 4 Keith D Whitehead
- 5 William G R Davies
- 6 Malcolm J Paulson
- 7 Jonathan Evans (C)
- 8 Michael G Dodson

For Evensong. First Spliced Major: 6. First Spliced Major inside: 4

#### **BUSCR News**

Tickets are available for the BUSCR Dinner on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> January. This is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the Society is hoping that as many people as possible will come along and support it. Tickets are priced at £28 and are available from Chris Mills.

BUSCR rang a first quarter for Hannah Bristow:

#### **Birmingham**, St Paul

Wednesday, 10 December 2014 in 42m

#### **1260 Doubles (3m/p)**

60 Stedman, 5 extents each Grandsire and Plain Bob.

- 1 Chris Mills
- 2 Alistair Cherry (C)
- 3 Craig Homewood
- 4 Daniel Calvert
- 5 Michael Woolley
- 6 Hannah Bristow

First quarter peal: 6

Wishing a speedy recovery to Tony Daw, who helped to teach Hannah to ring.



The reference to Tony Daw's recovery is because the Guild's resident Action Man broke his collar bone in the course of his latest ski-ing holiday. He has now had some metal added to his skeleton and is hoping to be back ringing in time for the 12 bell contest eliminators.

And talking of **Tony Daw**, it should be recorded (and will be at the AGM) that he has performed sterling service as Guild Ringing Master for seven years, during which in addition to running numerous practices he has been instrumental in increasing the amount of

youth ringing, and running youth practices. Fortunately his huge contribution to ringing in the Guild is certain to continue if he can stay out of casualty!

### **Forthcoming events:**

*Birmingham School of Bell Ringing*  
Every Saturday morning

Lots of things to be organized by the new Ringing Master!

31<sup>st</sup> January – BUSCR Dinner  
28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015 – Henry Johnson Dinner  
Banqueting Suite, Council House

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays – St Martin's Youths at St Paul's

2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays – Surprise Major practice at Shirley

At **St Mary's Moseley**, Fran Dodds would like to invite any experienced ringers who are able to come and 'enhance' the normal practice on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month. The band would benefit from having an extra few people once a month to enable more advanced things to be rung on eight and ten.



Laura Davies taking Charlie Linford and Elizabeth Wilby to St Martins