

Castle Bromwich Restoration Project gets the go-ahead

It was third time lucky for the Castle Bromwich ringers whose award of £34,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will now enable the bell restoration project to begin.



There have been bells at Castle Bromwich since the Middle Ages with a new ring of 5 cast in 1717 by Joseph Smith of Edgbaston, a new tenor added in 1893 by Charles Carr of Smethwick and the 6 recast in 1952 by Gillett & Johnston. However, there were insufficient funds to replace Carr's old fixtures and fittings and, although a frame for two additional trebles was made, these were never cast.

In 2013 the ringers formed a charitable trust to renew all the old fixtures and to install two new trebles while retaining the Gillett & Johnston 6. There was disappointment when the first two applications to the heritage Lottery Fund were

unsuccessful, but the ringers were undeterred, and continued their fundraising, applying to a large number of different charitable trusts as well as undergoing a variety of fundraising activities. In three years the trust has raised over £60,000 from a wide variety of individuals, trusts and charities, including a generous grant from the St Martin's Guild Bell Restoration Fund.



Bill Dargue and Stuart Stanton at Taylors

At the Guild May meeting, the previously agreed donation of £5,000 was increased to £8,000 as news had been received confidentially that the HLF grant had been awarded and the appeal had virtually reached its target. The project is now moving ahead at full steam, with a date set by Taylors for casting of the two new trebles of 21st September.

Tower Captain Dan Harris expects the project to be completed in the New Year.

National 12 -bell Striking Contest

The Final of the 12-Bell Contest was a great day for the St Martin's Guild and for the Birmingham band. The Guild put on what has been widely acknowledged as one of the best contests ever, and the Birmingham band won convincingly once again.

The Guild's organizational machine was at its very best, working closely with the local ringers and the church. The church organized everything to do with the site, visiting dignitaries, extra-curricular tours (Aston Hall and Villa Park) and all of the food. The Guild ran the ringing and the bar. There was actually only one formal planning meeting between the church and the Guild's team, although there were an awful lot of emails!

35 Guild members helped in some way on the day. The majority did shifts on the bar, while others looked after parking, the tower, the judges, photography, selling beer tokens, and generally meeting visitors' every need.



Bar managers, calm before the storm

The bar is always a significant feature of 12-bell contests, and the element that presents the highest risk to organisers. Simon arranged delivery of 1700 pints of bright real ale from Wye Valley Brewery, plus 80 litres of cider and 24 bottles of wine. In the end 1400 pints were sold,

but arrangements had been made to deliver untapped barrels to the Wellington pub.

And so to the ringing. It was a nine team final, with a high standard of ringing. The Birmingham band, whose performance is always eagerly awaited, left listeners in absolutely no doubt of the result, with a performance that understood how the bells needed to be rung to win, and was executed superbly.

Richard Grimmett accepted the Taylor Trophy from Chief Judge David Hull.



"First class local arrangements!"
Richard Burton on behalf of Guildford team.

"Superb – no negatives at all. Local arrangements perfect."
Jim Clatworthy on behalf of Worcester

"A first class day out. Good beer, lots of food, plenty of activities. Well done!"
Matt Hilling on behalf of Exeter

Although the final account is still to come, the funds raised for Aston tower and the Guild's general fund were considerable.

May ALE Outing “Stourbridge Crawl”

28 members went on the ALE at the beginning of May. The outing was to Stourbridge, with ringing starting on the 12 at St Thomas, in the town centre, before walking up the hill to experience the light eight at Amblecote, then walking over to Wollaston where there is a relatively meaty ring of six.



There was a good mix of ringing, although compared with when these ALEs started a few years ago the number of people just needing rounds has decreased, and the number ringing Plain Hunt on different numbers has increased. The ‘Tower D’ band even performed a silent and non-conducted party piece!

The enjoyable day finished in the Royal Exchange, a busy little Bathams pub on the way back to the station.

The next ALE will be on 19th November and the destination will be Lichfield, including ringing at the Cathedral for evensong. Book the date now!

“Hippo Night” at Perry Barr

Simon Linford’s passion for collecting hippos was marked by a presentation by Andy Hardy of a particularly fine example from South Africa. If any other towers fancy having a “Hippo Night” Simon will be pleased to attend!



We are very excited that the **Ringling World National Youth Contest 2017** will be held in Birmingham. The Contest was last held in Birmingham five years ago, which was the second time the event had been run. It is a much bigger event now, and we will have to provide towers for three Qualifier heats in the morning, with the final taking place at St Paul’s in the afternoon. A variety of other ringing activities will be planned, the highlight of which should be the opportunity to ring at St Martin’s at the end of the day. This was certainly a highlight last time, with a queue out of the door waiting to ring!

Ringling Master's Report

Arthur Reeves

In my last report, I noted that my ringing commitments had taken a slightly backseat as I was preparing to run the London Marathon.



Whilst I am aware this is not a newsletter for general news, many guild members were very interested in my efforts – and many generously donated to Muscular Dystrophy for this challenge – so I will briefly say that I was delighted to complete the Marathon in the time I was aiming for, and I'm very grateful for all of the support given.

With all of the training completed, my attention has turned back to my duties as Ringing Master. Indeed, it has been a very busy few months. As part of my "ringing circuit", I have managed to visit ringers at Shirley, Erdington Abbey, Smethwick and the University Ringers. It has been a pleasure ringing with so many members from around the Guild, and I look forward to where my travels take me next.

Our higher numbers practice went to Solihull recently, where it was nice to welcome some new faces as well as extending our ringing forays into Grandsire and Stedman Cinques. You will read elsewhere in this newsletter of lots of different activities having taken place recently. I am, as always, very grateful to all who contribute to making our guild as successful as it is.

On behalf of the Standing Committee, thank you to: Phil Ramsbottom for the quarter peal programme; Jack Gunning for organising the

weekly peals; Gillian Eastwood and all those involved in the youth ringing; Mike Dodson for organising the walking tour; and all who have helped out at the BSoBR, the 12 bell contest, or have supported any of the practices the guild has held this year.

Wherever you may spend it, enjoy the summer!

Youth Ringing

The great event of the last month was the Ringing World National Youth Contest, for which the young ringers spent the months covered by this newsletter practicing. A report of that day will be saved for the next issue.

Lichfield, Staffordshire

St Michael

Saturday, 23 April 2016 in 2h37 (11-3-9)

5040 Stedman Doubles

1 Gillian Eastwood (C)

2 Alan S Burbidge

3 Mark W Regan

4 Stephen W Horton

5 Paul E Bibilo

6 William M Regan

First as conductor - 1.

First on six - 6.

Solihull triumphed in the 6 Bell Striking Competition which was held at Lapworth.

Solihull won the method ringing category and overall, with **Perry Barr** successfully defending their crown in the call change competition.

Chief judge was Will Bosworth, assisted by Emily Tamhne. Six participants were ringing in their first ever striking contest. Trophies were received by Mike Dodson for Solihull, and then young ringers Rio Peynado and Kunal Pal picked up the trophy for Perry Barr.

BBC Music Day

By PR Officer, Tim Sunter

Eight Guild towers took part in the BBC Music Day “Bells Ring Out” event on Friday 3rd June.

Publicity for bell ringing activities in the City was achieved on the BBC’s website - where all participating towers were listed together with photographs of ringing at Birmingham Cathedral, and tweets from the Guild’s new twitter account @SMGuild1755 appeared in over 50,000 (FIFTY THOUSAND!) timelines, gently raising awareness of bellringing across the City as well amongst the ringing community.

The brainchild of BBC producer Miranda Williamson, ‘Bells Ring Out’ aimed to get as many towers across the country involved as possible - and an urgent call for towers to take part was issued.

Rising to the BBC challenge, the towers of Erdington Abbey, Birmingham Cathedral, Castle Bromwich, Coleshill, Kingsbury, Northfield, Polesworth and Smethwick meant that the Guild made one of the biggest ringing contributions to the day in whole country.

The BBC website listed all of the towers taking part and photographs of the ringing taking place at the Cathedral.



Radio 4 and the TV coverage of BBC Music Day helped to promote bell ringing nationwide.

Locally twitter came into its own. Some energetic tweeting from the Guild account, building on good work already taking place at Castle Bromwich, @CastleBromBells meant news of the event spread across the City and further afield.

Retweets by the Central Council, @ccringing, Chigwell Bells and other ringers meant that over 1000 ringing enthusiasts saw the Guild’s activity - whilst targeted tweets using @ messages to local groups @BrumHour, @ColmoreBID, @EnjoySolihull, @SandwellCouncil and others meant that news of the ringing appeared on over 50,000 timelines.

As well as providing the opportunity for enjoyable ringing, “Bells Ring Out” has highlighted the potential of social media to engage with local communities and raise awareness of bellringing generally.

There has been some talk in the Guild of organising a social media training event for members to learn more about twitter Facebook. It is hoped to arrange this in the near future.

Meanwhile thanks to all of those involved for making the day a success.

Foundation Skills Workshop

Many of the helpers we have at the School, whilst more than comfortable with traditional methods, are new to some of the "stepping stones" exercises. We use these to give students a thorough grounding in the Foundation Skills which lead to confidence and understanding when getting to grips with method ringing. Building those Foundation Skills begins at Level 2 LtR, quite a while before the student's first attempts at ringing what most people consider to be the first steps towards method ringing.

Janet Horton put on a special "Foundation Skills" workshop, specifically to give some of our helpers the opportunity to try out and practice some of those exercises, without the added pressure of ringing them for the first time with a student ringing them for the first time.



The two hour session flew by and people got to try things like Kaleidoscope ringing, with more and more complex patterns; methods such as Bastow Minimus; Bistow Doubles; Bastow Twin Hunt (Cloister) and Janet offered helpful explanations as to why they were useful for the students.

Many of us came away with a both a sense of achievement and a new understanding of some really useful stuff. Thanks Janet!

The **Queen's 90th birthday** was marked by ringing at lots of Guild towers. Ringing was organised at all four of the City centre towers on the Sunday, followed by a picnic in Eastside Park, which ended up being a picnic in the Woodman!



Band at the Cathedral

Ten children from **University of Birmingham School** at Selly Oak attended an end of year outing to Tamworth, organised by Arthur Reeves. This was badged as an official school trip, so they arrived by minibus with teachers, packed lunches, and surplus amounts of energy. There were two long ringing sessions, a scholarly investigation of the double spiral staircase, great trip to see the bells with Andrew Else, and then some running around outside.

There hadn't been ringing in the summer term at the School, and it is expected that more of the children will learn to ring when school restarts in September.

The arrival of a **baby daughter** for Charli and Gordon Birks was marked with a peal at the Cathedral, giving James Ramsbottom the opportunity to call his first of Stedman Cinques.

Birmingham, West Midlands
Cathedral Church of St Philip
Monday, 25 April 2016 in 3hrs 26mins (31–0–21 in D)
5007 Stedman Cinques
Composed by J P Ramsbottom
1 Dickon R Love
2 Mark R Eccleston
3 Paul Needham
4 Paul McNutt
5 Jack E Page
6 Jonathan Thorne
7 Alistair J Cherry
8 John P Loveless
9 James P Ramsbottom (C)
10 Louis P H Suggett
11 Paul E Bibilo
12 Laura M Davies
To welcome Amelia Grace Birks.
First on 12 as conductor.

The fiendishly difficult Scientific Triples was rung in memory of Gordon Lane:

Kingsbury, Warwickshire
SS Peter and Paul
Tuesday, 24 May 2016 in 2h 56m (17)
5040 Scientific Triples
Composed by A J Pitman
1 Paul E Bibilo
2 Alan S Burbidge
3 Frances Dodds
4 James P Ramsbottom
5 Richard L Jones
6 Mark R Eccleston
7 Richard B Grimmett (C)
8 Andrew E Else
In memory of Gordon H Lane who rang in the first peal of Scientific for the Guild in 1979 and in the 25th anniversary peal in 2004.

The Guild does not specialise in difficult Spliced Major but the peal below was a particularly good effort rung, at the first attempt. The additional complexity of this composition, over and above the methods being difficult, is that it is variable treble, i.e. a different bell acts as the treble in each of the 8 parts. This composition is now getting regarded as perhaps the most musical composition of Spliced Major to date.

Birmingham, St Paul
Friday, 6 May 2016 in 2hrs 53mins
5088 Spliced Major (12 Methods)
512 each Apple D, Clarence D, Colston Arms S, Dunster S, Highbury Vaults D, Knights Templar D, Ostrich S, Three Tuns S; 256 each Bridge LTB, Llandoger Trow D, Old Fish Market D; 224 Seven Stars DLH; 160 com, atw for all 8 bells.
Composed by A G Reading (No. 2)
1 Mark R Eccleston
2 Jack E Page
3 Christian M Peckham
4 Simon J L Linford (C)
5 James P Ramsbottom
6 Jack P Gunning
7 Paul McNutt
8 Michael P A Wilby

The same band rang it again two weeks later and enjoyed it the second time!

Guild band that rang a peal of Stedman Triples at **Cleator Moor**

Richard Jones, Steve Jones, Jack Page, Paul Bibilo, Julia Cater, Richard Grimmett, Jonathan Thorne, and Chris Pickford



10 Bell Quarter Peal Programme



Best news of all regarding the last three months of the 10/12 bell quarter peals, - we haven't lost any! OK, so one did get cancelled due to insufficient numbers, but still a very good effort all round for the five quarters scored.

Of particular note are three 12 bell quarters rung, two being Grandsire Cinques and one of Little Bob Maximus. This last one really was quite a splendid performance. It's worth mentioning that these quarters contain ringers who have only taken their first steps in higher number ringing since the programme started.

Notable landmarks have been:

1st on 12 for Angie Wakefield, Graham Kelly and Rose Horton

1st of Maximus for Graham Kelly, Gillian Eastwood and Matthew King

1st of Yorkshire Royal for Luke Daniel

1st of Surprise Royal inside for Rose Horton

Moving forward, plans are now in the pipeline to arrange a few quarters of Stedman Cinques which really would be a very significant landmark. Please can I ask you all to keep an eye out for the emails requesting ringers, - I could use some serious help with these.

Finally, as always, I'm keen to hear from anyone wanting to take their first steps in 10 bell ringing. If you can treble to Grandsire Triples or Bob Major, you can probably manage the treble to Caters, - so please do get in touch. I can't stress enough, it's not about scoring quarter peals, it's about providing the opportunity to ring on high numbers.

Quarter peal achievements:

Knowle, West Midlands
Sunday, 17 April 2016 in 39 mins
1250 Turramurra Surprise Major

1 Michael Dodson
2 John Anderson
3 Roy Williams
4 Ruth E Shepherd
5 Rowena Shipley
6 A J Barnfield
7 Stephen Shipley (C)
8 Alison R Williams

For evening service; first in method: 4 & 5.
Also, remembering 2nd Lt Aubrey Webster, son of the Curate in Charge of Dorridge, who was killed in action on 25 April 1916, aged 27, and Pte John Marshall, aged 21, killed in action on 28 April 1916.

A School double ...

Birmingham, West Midlands
St Bartholomew, Edgbaston
Saturday, 4 June 2016
1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Eileen Keeble
2 Mike Keeble
3 Simon J L Linford
4 Eleanor J Linford
5 Stephen W Horton (C)
6 Rebekah G W Horton
First inside: 2

and

Birmingham, West Midlands
St Bartholomew, Edgbaston
Saturday, 4 June 2016 in 45m
1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Rebekah G W Horton
2 Eleanor J Linford
3 Simon J L Linford (C)
4 Tim Sunter
5 Stephen W Horton
6 Jenny Sunter
First inside: 4