

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Looking out of the window, it's not quite living up to the weather of Summer 2018 just yet, but the pace of ringing certainly has, so without further ado I'll hand over to Arthur for his usual introduction and recap of all the events. With a week to go until the closing date for newsletter material, I was concerned we wouldn't have a great deal to report. It turns out I was wrong, and actually we have a bumper edition, so here goes...

Ringling Master's Report – Arthur Reeves

As the Summer months begin, it can only mean one thing - striking contests! Last weekend saw the Brumdingers travelling to Liverpool to compete at the National Youth Ringing Contest. Our Brumdingers are enthusiastic, but as a group are new to ringing. So whilst we didn't bring home the trophy, the group enjoyed seeing many parts of Liverpool as we toured around ringing at various towers. However, the omnipresence of The Beatles at Penny Lane was entirely lost on the group, but not on those of us supporting! The last weekend of June saw many Guild members travelling to Exeter for a wonderful day at the 12-bell contest. Whilst Birmingham didn't quite win, being pipped to the post by the home team, the standard of ringing was superb to listen to and I know Birmingham remain ambitious for next year.



Looking back slightly further, we had the Guild 6-bell striking contest along with the increasingly important cake and bake challenge. Harborne won the call change trophy whilst St Philip's won the method award. Clare McArdle and Stella Tew were victorious in the 'bake-off'. Whilst the baking contest saw many entries, there were - it has to be said - a disappointing number of tower entries (and I apologise to Solihull here for the clash of dates, which I know they were trying to avoid). We are pursuing the striking contest for next year (see date overleaf) and I'd encourage bands to consider entering. I am conscious that in recent years some of the judging comments have been less than constructive. If this has put you off, I can, with confidence, reassure members that this will not be the case next year.

When I begin writing these quarterly reports, I always find it useful to look back at the previous report and the most recent monthly digests to remind myself of what we have offered, and indeed what we have promised to offer! The last report focused heavily on initiatives designed to more closely align Guild activities with enhancing what is going on each week in towers around the city. One scheme, the so-called 'X Practice', continues to attract interest and we have held several successful practices including most recently Bristol Maximus at St Philip's. We will take August off for the summer, but October sees us at Coleshill for a Doubles-focused practice. I'm looking for towers to host September, November and December. So far, all practices have been well attended and have provided local ringers a solid opportunity to enhance and extend what normally happens on a practice night. I was extremely pleased to hear that a group from the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing (BSOBR) had set up their own 'Y' (or is that 'Why'?) practice focusing on running ringing themselves. This is exactly the sort of ground-level activity I'd like to see promoted widely across the Guild and ask members to get in touch if there is something you are looking to run, or are currently running, which requires support.

In my last report, I also discussed the concept of 'swap week'. As yet, we have made little headway in getting this off the ground. Guild officers remain committed to the concept (or a version of it), but at the moment the level of organisation required has meant we haven't had the capacity to properly launch and run with it. But thank you to towers which did express an interest and we will be in touch once we have formed a proper proposal and plan.

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

Communication remains central to ensure all members know what is going on and have the required information to access events. I think the monthly digest is proving useful (for those who read them!). I do invite other members to email me if you are running a practice and would like to advertise it more widely. Furthermore, Guild officers are going to be much more focused around planning at every meeting for the next 12 months ahead, rather than our usual practice of planning for the year ahead in January. Hopefully this means we can get dates out to you much earlier and you can pencil them in. On that note, the next 12 months of 'big' events include:

- Saturday 13th July: Guild Walking Tour
- Saturday 12th October: Guild Trip to York
- Saturday 7th December (afternoon): Guild Challenge Day
- Saturday 11th January 2020 (afternoon): Guild AGM
- Saturday 29th February 2020: HJ Dinner Day
- Saturday 2nd May 2020: BSoBR Away Day
- Saturday 16th May 2020: 6-bell Striking Contest



Finally, and certainly not lastly, a huge 'thank you' to those who organise and lead Guild events. I've said it before, but it is crucial so needs repeating – the Guild could not offer such a vast range of opportunities without the continuing support of key individuals in co-ordinating events. You know who you are!

Wishing you all the best for the Summer. Remember to keep an eye out on the website and the August digest – some of the usual Guild practices won't be going ahead through the holiday season.

A Recap on the AGM – *Simon Linford*

The AGM, back in January, left all attendees wondering whether or not we had actually had an AGM. This was because we were two people short of the 20% of members needed to be quorate. With uncertainty on the top table of the consequences of an inquorate AGM, we had the meeting anyway and fortunately all the Officers were willing to continue in office (it needs an AGM to change them so they had no choice), and there was nothing particularly controversial.

Subsequent investigation with company and charity administration experts told us that we had in fact had an AGM. A non-quorate AGM is still an AGM - it just cannot make any decisions that need a quorum. This was clarified at the recent Guild meeting.

Our focus next year is on trying to have a quorate AGM otherwise the current Officers will have to carry on indefinitely! As per Arthur's calendar of events, it will be on Saturday 11th January 2020 in the afternoon and won't be too far from the City Centre. Please put this in your diaries!

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

The April 6-bell event was the second of two workshops covering entry level conducting or more accurately - bob calling. This one was more about taking a basic 'bob-only' touch and strategically introducing singles which can either double or sometimes have zero effect on the length of the touch. Thanks to Keith for the 'that's the first time I've ever called a single' quote of the evening, said whilst tying up his rope after a successful touch. Well done to everyone who took part. Anyone ready to call a quarter yet – it's not difficult!



The 10-bell event in April was a Grandsire Caters workshop for those who wanted to practice either a few plain courses, a few bob courses, perhaps ring the treble or simply ring the tenor behind. A very well attended evening and thoroughly enjoyed by all – at least that's the impression I got from the Facebook posts!

The May workshop underwent a conversion and morphed into a quarter peal, which was a first for Beverley McAlister from the BSoBR. Well done Beverley! The May 10-bell quarter, organised by Jonathan, saw a group visit the fine ring of 10 at Moseley, with Trish Everett scoring her first quarter peal of Stedman Caters. Well done Trish!

Finally, it was back into the city centre for the June workshop, this time all about stepping into Little Bob Minor from either Bastow or Plain Bob as well as ringing a few touches for those already a bit more advanced in the method. The evening also included some theory which proved to be beneficial all round and as always, a fun evening was had by all.

<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Paul Wednesday, 8 May 2019 (3-3-23 in C#)</p> <p>1260 Mixed Doubles Stedman, Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Bob, St Nicholas Bob, Winchendon Place Bob, St Remigius Bob, Huntley Place Bob, Plain Bob, St Simon's Bob, St Martin's Bob, St Osmund Bob, Eynesbury Bob</p> <p>1 Rebekah G W Horton 2 Phil Ramsbottom 3 Clare McArdle 4 D Rose W Horton 5 Stephen W Horton (C) 6 Beverley J C McAlister</p> <p>1st as cover: Beverley McAlister</p>	<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Mary, Moseley Wednesday, 22 May 2019 (18-0-9 in F)</p> <p>1395 Stedman Caters Composed by James P Ramsbottom</p> <p>1 Tony Daw 2 Eleanor Linford 3 Trish Everett 4 James P Ramsbottom (C) 5 Phil Ramsbottom 6 Daniel Calvert 7 John Fielden 8 Matthew King 9 Jonathan B Townsend 10 Steve Horton</p> <p>1st of Stedman Caters: 3</p>
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Brumdingers – Simon Linford

Brumdingers continues to go from strength to strength, with the last couple of weeks of the month being practices at Harborne to get match fit for the Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC). We lost three of our most experienced band members from the team for various reasons, but this gives the opportunity for some 'new blood' to get competition experience.

We have had one new joiner in the last quarter, Susan (see photograph), who is making excellent progress, helped by having individual handling sessions before the main practice. Susan is already able to ring in rounds and is handling very nicely. Most importantly she is extremely keen.

By the time you read this, the RWNYC will have been and gone. The Brumdingers all enjoyed themselves very much and it's the taking part that counts at this stage!



The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the April, May and June results. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating!

April	1st	27	Jen Hickman	£46.00
	2nd	68	Steve Pugh	£13.80
	3rd	6	Janet Horton	£4.60
May	1st	92	Olly Bouckley	£46.00
	2nd	85	Rebekah Horton	£13.80
	3rd	91	Eileen Keeble	£4.60
June	1st	59	Janet Horton	£46.00
	2nd	22	Janice Anderson	£13.80
	3rd	77	Margaret Burling	£4.60

Have you tried Kaleidoscope Ringing? *Lesley Belcher*

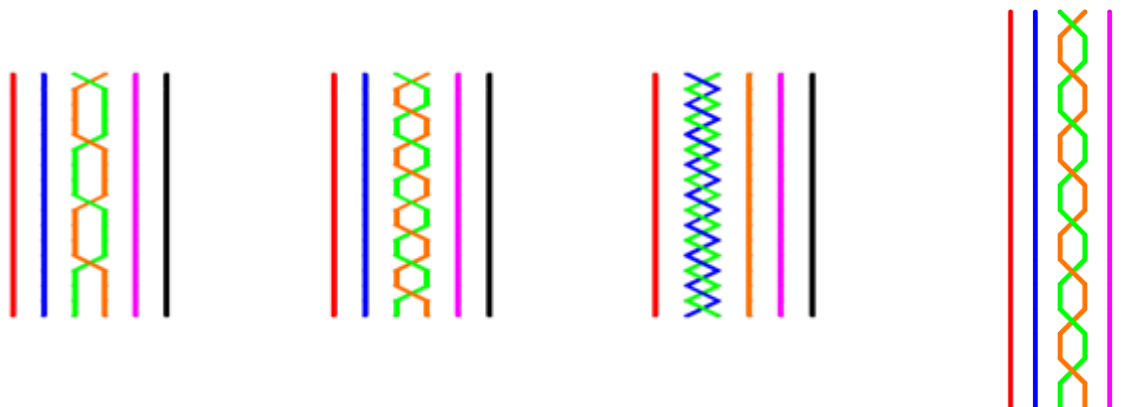
Once a learner can ring rounds successfully, they are often moved onto call changes. Obvious to us, but for the new ringer (who is using at least 90% of their brain concentrating on handling their bell safely and keeping it in sync with everyone else) there's not much processing power left to remember the order of the bells, translate a verbal instruction to the whole band into a specific one for them (do I or don't I move place and if so, do I need to move up or down and who will I follow) and then think about what they need to do with the rope to make the bell make that move... all in less than four seconds. And that's without the occasional conductor who decides to mix calling up and down!



This is where Kaleidoscope ringing can help – a series of changes all made within two places. Perhaps not an immediately helpful definition so in this case I think a picture speaks a thousand words. And the benefits:

- Breaking the learning into small, easy understandable steps. Kaleidoscope ringing allows the learner to practise moving their bell up or down a place without having to remember the order of the bells or knowing which bell is following which as they are always moving from rounds.
- It is easier for a learner to hear their bell and correct their striking. Kaleidoscope sequences move out of and back into rounds all the time. Because the sound of rounds is familiar it is easier for the new ringer to identify their bell, listen for gaps and clips and correct their striking.
- It can sound nicer. Bands with insufficient ringers to ring methods can make up their own sequences (even naming them after people e.g. Sheila's Shuffle) and ring them for service making a more pleasing sound than call changes gone wrong or Plain Hunt struck badly.
- Kaleidoscope ringing can grow with the band. Long places (four blows) lead onto short places which lead onto dodges or dodgy places, all of which can start at handstroke or backstroke. Then why not more complex sequences such as the bells in 2-3 making long places whilst the 4th stays in fourths place and the 5th and 6th make short places?

Why not introduce Kaleidoscope ringing into your practices? More information about Kaleidoscope ringing is available at www.ringingteachers.org/resource-centre/teaching-tips



St Paul's Society Success at Tewkesbury Abbey – Richard Grimmett

Visiting ringers to St Paul's notice emphasis is placed on striking rather than ringing complex methods. All bands are placed rather than using a 'catch hold if you want to' approach. Using these techniques, it is possible to tailor each touch for a specific recipient, granting the beneficiary a quality opportunity to develop. Visitors often mention the experience is not something they are used to, but are pleased to see.

To help our striking we created exercises, such as 'Rounds & Squares', used for warm-up at the beginning of practices. Musicians play scales to loosen up, and this is one of our equivalents. In 'Rounds & Squares', the band moves from one change to another without the usual series of call changes - often from rounds on ten to backward rounds on ten, where the tenor continues to ring at the same pace during the change-over whilst all others wait on the balance. We return to forward rounds using the same process except it is the treble which maintains its rhythm rather than the tenor. More advanced forms include ringing rounds every handstroke or backstroke and backward rounds at the alternate stroke, and sometimes the inclusion of other changes such as queens and tittums. If method ringing is ever going to be good then it is important ringers have full bell control, and it is surprising how many do not!

After the bells were installed in 2005, the newly-formed St Paul's Society rang mostly on six and eight bells. As the band strengthened all 10 bells started to be rung quite competently to methods at almost all practices and on Sundays. The band felt it would be productive to enter contests, using the events and necessary practices as opportunities to strive for excellence.

Our first contest was the 2017 Tewkesbury Shield, where we faced eight national teams ringing Grandsire Caters. Some of our band had never competed before, and our primary goal was simply not to come last. We were surprised and delighted to achieve second place, and also pleased we had come ahead of a strong Guild entry, as a little bit of local rivalry creates healthy competition!

Later in 2017, we entered the Worthington Cup, held at Ticknall, where the touch was Cambridge Surprise Royal, which stretched our band. Apart from practicing Cambridge at every opportunity, we also arranged a pre-contest practice in the morning at a neighbouring tower of a similar weight to Ticknall, and buoyed by this won the Cup!

In 2018, Cambridge Royal was also chosen for the Tewkesbury competition, and we were again delighted to be awarded second place. The band started to feel the successes were no accident, and once more we came ahead of a strong Guild entry!

St Paul's Society felt 2019 might be the year! This year's method was a lengthy touch of Stedman Caters, and on 4th May we met at Kidderminster for a pre-contest practice before proceeding to Tewkesbury Abbey. Despite the usual nerves the band made no method or major striking errors and felt we had rung the touch pretty well, and were in with a shout. After descending the tower and refreshing ourselves in a nearby hostelry, we returned to hear the judge's pronouncements. The judge had only complimentary comments to make on our ringing, and announced the St Paul's Society to be the winners!

Where to next? Well we intend to return to Tewkesbury next year if we are lucky in the ballot for places, and in the interim we will continue with our development using 'Rounds & Squares' as well as method ringing. The thing about striking is that however good you believe a band has become there is always room for

improvement, and we know we have a long way still to go. We'd like to recommend the 'Rounds & Squares' approach to other Guild towers too. The full results from Tewkesbury are set out below.

<i>The Results</i>		
1st	St Paul's, Birmingham	90%
2nd	St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol	87%
3rd	Oxford Diocesan Guild	76%
4th	Nottingham University Society	71%
5th	Salisbury Diocesan Association	62%
6th	Derby Diocesan Association	58%
7th	St Mary's, Bathwick	55%

The winning band, clockwise from front right: Jonathan Thorne, Vicky Wilby, Jack Page, Richard Jones, Frances Dodds, Graham Kelly, James Ramsbottom, Alistair Cherry, Tony Daw, Richard Grimmett.



The Robert B Smith Competition – *James Ramsbottom*

Despite Jon Townsend and my best efforts, we have been unable to get a St Philip's Cathedral band together to enter the Robert B Smith competition this year. The contest, devised as a Midlands region 12-bell competition, was inaugurated in September last year at Melbourne, Derbyshire, with a team from St Philip's coming third out of eight. There was a plan to enter a team for this competition at Towcester, Northamptonshire, but many members of the Cathedral band - including me - couldn't commit to ring for one reason or another.

I, for one, hope that this is an exception, and that the Cathedral band will be able to enter a team in the 2020 competition.

A Visit to Winfield House – *Simon and Eleanor Linford*

There weren't actually any Ferrero Rocher there. It's a myth perpetuated by the advertising industry. In fact, the US Ambassador served us with canapes and, having been tipped off about ringers' preferences, Fullers London Pride.

Why were Eleanor and I at Winfield House, the US Ambassador's palatial residence in Regent's Park, with about 100 other bellringers from around the country? Sometime last year, the Ambassador Robert Wood 'Woody' Johnson found himself killing time at St Paul's Cathedral and went up to see the bellringers. Captivated by the whole concept of change ringing, he decided that he should invite bellringers to one of his ambassadorial soirees to say thank you for all we do.

So it was that I received an invitation as Guild Master, and Eleanor received an invitation as a member of the St Paul's Cathedral Guild, and we went to Winfield House. The guest list was representative of all Guilds and Associations, the Central Council, bell foundries, the St Paul's Guild, and Old Uncle Tom Cobley (who is a lapsed ringer). There was good general mingling, chasing the canape trays for those who hadn't eaten, and trying to predict which door the next beer waiters were going to come out of. Woody gave a super-welcoming speech, the President of the Central Council was suitably presidential, and we drank all the beer. We did outstay our welcome somewhat, but when they dimmed the lights and played the national anthems it was a subtle hint that we needed to say goodbye after a very enjoyable evening.



St Alphege Annual Outing – *Sand Cooper*

So the terrible twosome had the ringers up early again for our annual ringing outing – taking place on Saturday 18th May. We assembled at 07:15 in the OBH car park ready for the off! This year it was Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. We had the lovely Mark from Johnson's coaches with us for a second year running so he was already well-used to our antics and seemed unphased that even we were worried about the routes which took us through some very narrow lanes. His response to our fear that the coach might not fit was that together we'd make the gaps bigger! So all good, we set off to Malmesbury – a lovely market town. We had time here for a quick coffee, a look around the Christian Aid plant and cake sale before ringing in the campanile.

Then off to Tetbury, another beautiful market town and close, of course, to Highgrove. Here we found an easygoing ring of eight. Already starting to get hungry for lunch, we made the band wait and instead took them all off to the village of Minchinhampton. The trusting Mark followed our suggested route and wound the coach around the village streets to get us close to the church. Here we enjoyed reading the 1887 Belfry Rules which included sanctions for being guilty of disobedience to the Rector including drunkenness, swearing and habitual negligence of public duty. The least said the better here I think, in case our Rector decides to impose rules upon us! So, off to the pub at Brimscombe for lunch. The weather, having been a little drizzly earlier in the day, was now much brighter and warmer so we almost lost a few of the band as they were determined to walk to the next tower. However, having gathered them up and persuaded them that they'd miss the next ring if they insisted on making their own way, we managed to get them to Chalford on time.

Now Chalford was an interesting ring of six steel bells – a rather tuneless lot! So fortunately when the local band member met us with some rather gruff warnings about ringing the bells well, we saw the funny side. After all, these six bells were no match for our magnificent ring of 12 at home! All 25 of us squeezed into the small ringing room and the hatch to the ladder down was closed and we were imprisoned for a short while to see what we could manage. With multiple messages around the walls about the quality of ringing that we should strive for, the somewhat intimidated band felt we'd done ourselves proud and we can't have rung too badly as weren't ejected early! In fact, we rang a pretty decent touch of Cambridge Minor – well done us!



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

So off to what we thought at the time might be the best ring of the day – the eight at Bisley. The band was somewhat confused as we seemingly drove past the village as this was the most tricky narrow route for which the only way to get close to the church was to drive on and approach the village from the north. There was still a short walk to the church through the village school as we abandoned the coach in a pub car park. By the time we'd returned a local resident had blocked our path so after a hunt around for the driver, who willingly accommodated us by moving, we managed to get to Painswick on time.

Painswick was delightful. A lovely ring of 12 with additional bells to create a 'true' light ring of 10. We probably didn't do them justice but all the same, we loved ringing there. The churchyard is full of Yew trees and made the perfect backdrop for our team photo (see previous page) and also provided some fun over dinner at The Falcon. Local legend has it that there were 99 Yew trees growing in Painswick churchyard and that the devil would destroy the hundredth if it were ever planted. In the Millennium, St Mary's was faced with a dilemma, as every parish in the Diocese of Gloucester was given a Yew tree to plant. Parish officials bravely planted the 100th Yew tree on the north side of the church and contrary to legend, it is doing well. Armed with a poem written by Gillian's husband (our P.A.), we read the poem as the band members opened envelopes to see who would have the winning message 'it's Yew!' and a small Yew was duly awarded for planting at home.

So back in Solihull safe and sound, we await news on the progress of our Yew tree!

And yes, the intrepid Mark is already booked for his third mad ringing trip for 2020 – wonder where we'll decide to go? Wherever it is, Gillian and I won't be telling anyone until much closer to the date...

Boldmere & Erdington Parish Annual Outing – Dave Reeves

On Saturday 1st June, a total of 13 ringers, from St Michael's, Boldmere, and St Barnabas, Erdington, plus one non-ringing 'groupie', travelled to the eastern extremities of Warwickshire in a hired minibus, ably driven by Colin Wright from Erdington.

Our first tower was St Mary's, Atherstone, set on the high street and just over the road from the market place. This church was founded in the early 12th Century and the chancel dates from 1385 when it was used as an Augustinian Friary until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538. When King Henry VIII's officials came to value the friary they reported only two items of note: a chalice and a bell. The bell would have been of value because, being made of bronze, it could have been melted down and re-cast as a canon. It weighed a respectable 16 cwt, was cast by Johannes de Stafford of Leicester circa 1360. It remained the sole bell, chiming away for nearly six centuries, until 1960 when it was taken down and put on display in the nave. This was to make room for the installation of a newly commissioned ring of eight bells designed for the new-fangled art of change ringing!

Access to the ringing chamber was up a steep, irregular, narrow spiral staircase. With a tenor of 8 cwt, the bells are just over half the weight of those at Boldmere and Erdington and the lighter ones needed careful handling.

From here we went on to St Nicholas, Nuneaton, which also has origins from the 12th Century. Here the eight bells were a mixture of three different founders dating from 1703, 1819 and 1873 but, with a tenor of 14 cwt,

they presented a slightly easier ring for us. In the churchyard is a ringer's grave with an epitaph containing ringing references:

Here lieth a Ringer beneath this cold clay,
Who rung many Peals both serious and gay;
Through Grandsire & Trebles so well he could range,
'Till Death call'd the Bob, and brought round the last change.

A short drive took us to lunch at The Attleborough Arms in Nuneaton. Our pre-ordered meals were served promptly, giving us time to relax after the morning's exertions and enjoy good food, a pint and a chat. Lunch is always a high point of the outing!

Revitalised, we headed to All Saints, Bedworth where the church sits prominently in the market place. A church had been built here in 1606 but by the late 1880s was considered unfit for purpose and was rebuilt between 1888 and 1890, although the original tower was retained. Another 14 cwt ring of eight awaited us here. Seven of the bells date from 1891 but the sixth bell is a remnant of the three original bells and dates from 1629. Until recently, the bells were rung from the ground floor but a major re-ordering of the church provided a new ringing room on a recently constructed first floor. Access was via a choice of two modern, open spiral staircases or even a small lift!

On to St James, Bulkington, the church that inspired us to plan an outing in this area. One of our current ringers, Nigel Crowther, learnt to ring here in his youth and we thought it was time to pay it a visit. Unfortunately it wasn't a totally happy trip down memory lane as, in the churchyard, Nigel discovered a recent gravestone erected to one of his childhood classmates.

The grey sandstone tower is 15th Century and houses the eight bells. The tenor bell is the oldest, weighs 12 cwt and is probably late 16th Century. Another early bell is dated 1605, four more were added in 1924 and the remaining two trebles in 1948. The tower rocks gently during ringing, which was a little unnerving at first. The bells handled in a similar way to our home towers despite having a long 'draught'.

Our final tower was St Giles, Exhall - yet another 13th Century church. It is clearly visible from Junction 3 of the M6 but not easy to get to from there. Fortunately the route had been checked in advance by Ed Laughton and we found it without any problems.



Here there was a 20th Century ring of six bells comprising three bells cast by James Barwell in 1900 and three more by Mears & Stainbank in 1920 with a tenor of just 6½ cwt. The ringing here was from the ground floor in a partitioned-off area which was also used as a crèche during services. Let's hope the children are well supervised and the bell ropes kept out of reach! The combination of a lightweight six and a long draught due to the ground floor ring brought expectations of handling difficulties but the bells responded well and we managed to finish the day with a plain course of Stedman Doubles.

Then it was time for much needed afternoon tea in the adjacent cemetery field. There were flasks of hot water, tea bags, coffee and three varieties of home-made cake. Tired but replete and happy, we headed home via the M6. The weather had been warm but not too hot - perfect for a day of enjoyable ringing and good company.

An Unusual Dedication! *Keith Whitehead*

The Solihull band recently rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples with a somewhat unusual dedication. This was both for Evensong and to celebrate the centenary of the table in the ringing chamber, which was 'fashioned out of oak from the church below and given to the belfry as a thank-offering for peace after the first world war' (from 'The Tower and Bells of Solihull Church' by Edgar C Shepherd, 1950).

Solihull, West Midlands

St Alphege

Sunday, 7 April 2019 in 47m

1260 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Sara C Paulson
- 2 Kathryn J Price-Feraud
- 3 Mike Dodson
- 4 Linda M Whitehead
- 5 Keith D Whitehead
- 6 William G R Davies
- 7 Malcolm J Paulson (C)
- 8 Jen D Hickman

First of Triples: 1. 50th together: 5, 7.



A UK Tour for the New York Band – *Tim Barnes*

In late June, a bell-starved group of 14 ringers hailing mostly from New York descended on Birmingham and other UK cities for a ringing tour. New York's only change-ringing tower – Trinity Church, Wall Street – is temporarily unringable because the church is in the midst of a 20-month rejuvenation project.

The tour was originally conceived by Simon Linford as a way to provide ringing opportunities in the Birmingham area during our own tower closure. Later the tour expanded to also include a Worcester leg organised by Mark Regan, a day trip to London organised by Dave Bassford, and a visit to Exeter to spectate at the National 12-Bell Contest final.

We had a fabulous time, and are very grateful to the UK organisers for their hard work on all the arrangements, and to the helpers who turned out to ring with us and provide expert coaching. We enjoyed visiting many distinguished towers, and were able to dust off the ringing cobwebs that we had gathered.

Birmingham was the linchpin of the tour, with the Premier Inn facing the Cathedral becoming our headquarters for five days. What was most impressive – and frankly most enviable, from the New York perspective – was to see the St Martin's Guild's extremely high standards, across many towers, and how determinedly the Guild works to meet them. We visitors caught a glimpse of why Birmingham is a world-leading centre of ringing.



When we get back into the Trinity tower, we will have some rebuilding to do. But we return home energised by our tour, and ready to restart our efforts to further develop ringing in New York. We would be delighted to welcome St Martin's Guild members to New York at any time, and to reciprocate the kind hospitality you showed us (the photograph shows the group during its visit to Kidderminster).

Samuel Lawrence and his Birmingham friends – a Commemoration and an Appeal – *Richard Jones & Richard Grimmett*

Shifnal, where St Andrew's parish church has a 19 cwt ring of eight, is about half way on the old road between Shrewsbury and Birmingham, and on Saturday 5th June 1819, Samuel Lawrence, a native of the town, met his Birmingham friends there for a peal – their first of Stedman Triples. It was successfully completed, becoming the second true peal of this kind ever rung, its composer Henry Cooper 'sitting in the steeple' calling from manuscript.

Lawrence (1763–1825) was one of the most eminent ringers of his day, and as a peal ringer one of the most widely travelled, as we can tell from his exceptionally engaging personal peal-book now in the care of the Shrewsbury Record Office. He rang the 10th in the first ever peal of Stedman Cinques at St Martin in the Fields in 1788, and the 9th in the first peal of Stedman Caters outside London, which was at St Philip's Birmingham two years later and 'completed at the first attempt'. He conducted many of his early peals, and altogether he took part in more than seventy performances – a very high total for that period. In the pre-railway age, he was in peals not only in Shropshire and the London and Birmingham areas, but also as far afield as Wrexham, Liverpool, Chesterfield, St Albans and Gloucester.

The Birmingham connection

He had a ready-made connection with Birmingham ringers from his earliest days, for Andrew Peake, a leader of that town's ringing in the mid-18th Century, had moved to Shifnal in about 1770 and established a peal-ringing band there (the Albion Society). Lawrence's first peal was Grandsire Triples at Shifnal in 1783, conducted by Peake, who will surely have been impressed with the young man's aptitude. Lawrence rang his second peal 17 months later at Aston near Birmingham (an eight similar to Shifnal), demonstrating both ability and confidence by calling Oxford Treble Bob Major from the tenor.

He was a great ringer in more than one sense, being thought the second heaviest man in England, at 32 stone; and in his later years he travelled around in a chaise cart built specially for him. He must also have been a great character. John Day tells us in his Recollections that Lawrence was always spoken of by the old ringers 'with the greatest possible respect', and one of them commented in reminiscence 'Ah, John! It is a pity that such men as Lawrence should ever die'.

Stedman Triples

The decade 1811–20 had been a period of strong development in the Birmingham tradition and the idea of achieving a peal of Stedman Triples may have been long in mind. Once Cooper had got a composition out, Lawrence will surely have been keen to join his friends in ringing it. He does not actually state that the peal at Shifnal was the first attempt, and the footnote in the peal-book is a little ambiguous: 'Such is the difficulty of the undertaking that no company has yet attempted it except the Junior Society of Cumberland Youths, London, who completed a peal at St Giles [in the Fields] about 20 years ago' (This was Noonan's peal, 22nd May 1799). In a later note, he acknowledges the peal at Kensington on 4th December 1803 by the College Youths, and adds that Noonan's peal 'is little thought of as to truth or correctness'. In fact, it was the 1803 peal that was subsequently found to be false.

What is clear is that they recognised the unique challenges of Stedman Triples – participants in such peals today will know them well – and it seems quite possible that there had been one or more attempts in the Birmingham area, with Aston a very likely venue. As usual, there is no evidence of any lost peals. Anyway, we may picture Lawrence proposing a summer day's outing to his home tower to go for the peal, and the band being happy to agree. The Birmingham contingent were all leading peal-ringers: James Jarvis; Thomas Chapman; Thomas Worrall; Thomas Thurstans; William Hassall; Alexander Sanders; and Henry Cooper was among the most experienced of conductors. So they must have rated their chances quite highly.

A Controversy

The successful peal, rung in three hours and two minutes, did not however escape 'attempts to throw discredit on the very able performance'. Lawrence wrote a strongly-argued defence, a copy of which, together with the figures for the composition, is among the papers kept with his book. He mentions the attestations of several well-qualified witnesses, and gives details of changes per minute and overall timings of various peals, which he felt necessary as 'evidence as to its truth and stability that shall silence the malevolent and set scepticism at rest'. He does however admit that they had a problem shortly after the half-way single:

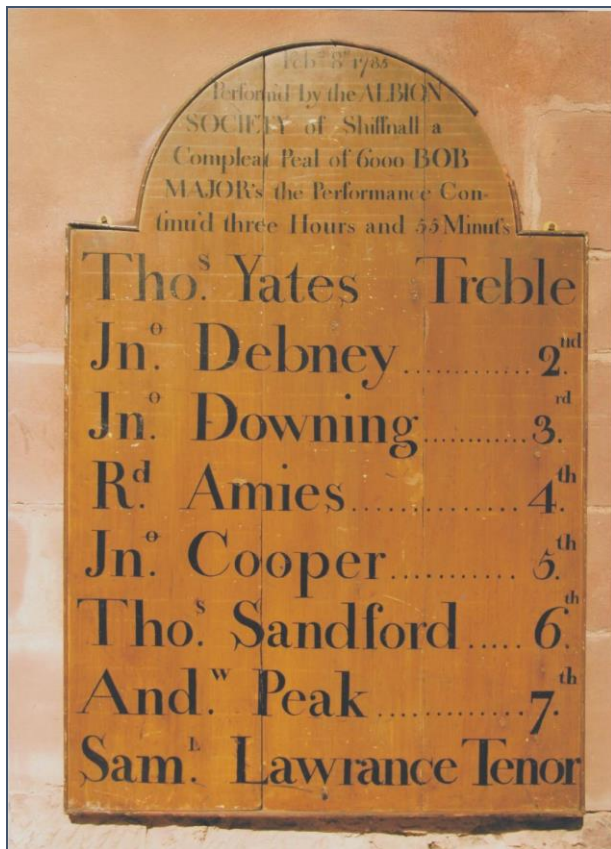
[At that time] and two courses after, there was scarcely a bad blow. Our Tenor Man was now knock'd up, came among us and threw us into confusion for about 3 Minutes, which was completely recovered, & Mr Cooper will make oath that all the calls were made during the blunder and after. The ringing may not be quite so good for some little time after, but each man was in confidence & there was no blundering nor firing after that time & the bells came home as fair & as true as the first single was made.

The unfortunate tenor man – Joseph Patchett – from Stourbridge, must have been regarded as normally reliable: he had, for example, rung the tenor at Bromsgrove for the opening peals of Caters on two successive days in 1816 (the first of which had not come round cleanly), and he was on the eighth at Dudley for a peal of Royal in December 1820. So one imagines at Shifnal all was forgiven in the pub afterwards.

The Commemoration

On 5th June this year, 200 years later to the day, this historic performance was commemorated by a Birmingham band in a repetition of the original peal – and the bells had not been out of the tower in the meantime (see band photograph overleaf). It was not an exact replication: our conductor Mark Eccleston called every call of the Cooper composition from memory with miraculous assurance; our tenor man Richard Grimmett avoided the least lapse throughout (not without effort, he said); Michael Wilby took Lawrence's bell, the seventh, but did not say, as Lawrence is reported to have said, 'What sort of a peal do you call that? For I have rung sixty plain courses!' (he knew in advance). But we did spend a large part of the day in celebratory mode, and it was good to feel so warmly welcomed by the Vicar Revd Chris Thorpe, by the tower captain John Burton, and by other local ringers. In assembling in the churchyard near the entrance to the central tower, we stood within a yard or two of Lawrence's grave. This is no longer marked, but we were told that pieces of his tombstone now form the lowest steps of the belfry stair.

The commemoration continued with a Stedman festival in Birmingham over the next seven days, co-ordinated by Richard Grimmett. There was a very successful training morning, run by Simon Linford, to encourage those coming fresh to the special discipline of this method; there were quarter peals of Doubles and Triples, and a peal of Caters at St Martin's (where Lawrence's name appears on the peal board for the famous peals of 1820); and there were peals of Triples called by Jack Page and Alex Frye, members of a new generation of conductors who happily show ample ability and commitment to carry this rewarding tradition far, we hope, into the future.



The Shifnal peal-boards

The Albion Society of Shifnal was, for a small town, remarkably active in the late 18th Century change-ringing scene, but knowledge of it has depended on the survival of Lawrence's peal-book, and also on the historic peal-boards which record many performances from 1774 onwards. Three or four decades ago these six boards were removed from the ringing chamber. There was reason for this: old photographs show a room overburdened with the large dark boards leaning into the room. So three were moved to a wall behind the organ in the church, and others were left standing on the floor in a storage area; all are now in need of conservation work, the loose ones damaged and in some danger of eventual loss.

The names of Peake and Lawrence appear on the earliest boards, and as part of our bicentenary plans we felt an effort should be made to preserve these tangible memorials to the Birmingham-Shifnal link. Fortunately we found our idea readily received by Revd Chris Thorpe and the Shifnal ringers, and on the strength of our successful bid for Heritage Lottery funding for the renovation of old peal-boards at the Bull Ring in 2013, we

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assisted with applying for an HLF grant covering work on all six boards. A thorough report by conservationist Annabelle Monaghan and letters of support from the well-known belfry historians John Eisel and Chris Pickford were submitted and a faculty obtained. But to our surprise and disappointment we heard in March this year that the Lottery application had failed.

An Appeal

So a new approach is now necessary. One obstacle to be taken into account is a requirement not to launch a public campaign locally, since appeals in respect of other church projects are in train. It had been agreed that the two smallest boards, which are both the most attractive and the most in need of restoration, would be returned to the walls of the ringing chamber, bringing the names of Peake and Lawrence back to the attention of new generations of ringers. Permission has been kindly given for us as representatives of the St Martin's Guild to take responsibility for this part of the plan, coupling it with a new board (comparatively modest in size) commemorating the 1819 Stedman Triples and the marking of its bicentenary (there is no existing memorial). Together these boards would express something of the proud history of the Albion Society, and the special connection and friendship that existed between it and St Martin's Youths, which was in that period among the most accomplished bands of ringers in the country. It is a connection that has been renewed over the last 18 months with a friendly exchange of practice-night visits by ringers at St Paul's Birmingham and St Andrew's Shifnal.

We hope that members and others keen to see the preservation of this history would be willing to subscribe to meeting the cost of the necessary work of conservation on the two early boards, which is estimated at a total of £2,400. Contributions to the St Martin's Guild Shifnal Commemoration project will be very gratefully acknowledged. Please contact Richard Jones or Richard Grimmett if you wish to contribute.

Personal Reflections of Learning & Teaching Ringing

With thanks to Annie, Stella and Sarah for sharing their own experiences of either learning new methods or in teaching others to ring.

Workshops St Paul's – Annie Smith

As a child I'd already learned to ring a bell but had given up before I learned any method ringing (sighs with regret).

Since returning to the ringing room a few years ago, my ringing hasn't stood still. I learnt to Plain Hunt by learning the numbers (and I was very pleased with myself) then my home tower captain, Dave Reeves, told me I needed to learn to count my places. Impossible I thought, but I did and that's a much better way of doing it! I learnt to ring the treble so captain Dave suggested ringing inside. I learnt a plain course inside and then he said 'let's add a bob'. My rope sight began to improve so at a practice night I'd arranged, Tony Daw suggested that I ring with my back to rest of the ringing room. What? Is he mad?! I gave it a try and it was a horror show but we did it again and again and eventually it started to come together for me.

The Wednesday evening 6-bell workshops have built my confidence so much. I have been to quite a few now and at first, if I'm honest, I found them tough. I felt self-conscious ringing in front of people who are so much better than I am. My hands shook and I couldn't quite work out if Shouty Phil (!) was actually going to hit me with a stay if I went wrong as he'd threatened, but after the first couple of sessions I decided Shouty Phil was

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actually very nice indeed and he has played a big part in bringing my ringing on. I get encouraged, as do all the learners I have met, to try new things all the time. When Phil and Tony use big words to explain the structure of a method and tell me to learn it by not learning it, I stare back at them clearly not understanding what they have just said to me, but they both persevere and go over it again and again until the penny drops. At this point I should mention Matt King from Perry Barr who also has the patience of a saint and helps me a lot with the methods I am learning.

These people are super supportive and I don't feel self-conscious anymore – they are all 'a safe pair of hands' and I know if I trust what they are saying, I will be able to do it. Maybe not as quickly as they or I would like, but hey, learning to ring is fun and I love it so why get pressured about it? I just keep going back and my ringing is getting better. I have met some fabulous learners and experienced ringers at the workshops and it's always a good evening. I was sad to hear that a workshop had to be cancelled recently due to lack of interest.

So if you want to improve or have a go at something new, put your name down. If you don't, you're missing out on some excellent teaching and the opportunity to learn and have a laugh in good company. Also, there is free parking in St Paul's Square after 18:00..!

Thank you to Phil, Tony, Steve and the other Guild members who give up their time to help people like me learn to ring. You're amazing!

Getting to grips with touches of Grandsire Triples – Stella Tew

Earlier this year, I found myself struggling to crack touches of Grandsire Triples. Having mastered Grandsire Doubles and ringing the treble and plain courses of Grandsire Triples for some time, I was keen to increase my rope time trying touches. At my local tower, I was in a vicious circle of trying and then panicking, which did not help.

After a quick shout out on the Guild Facebook page to look for towers where I could go and practice this, many supportive ringers responded to offer their time and help. As a result, on 29th May, Robyn Tighe and I, and a group of willing volunteers gathered at St Paul's for an evening of Grandsire Triples. Ros Martin kindly offered to run the evening. Her calm approach was just right for building confidence and combatting my usual panic.

After a quick warm-up, we moved from plain courses of the method on to touches. The repetition and familiarity of a number of the same touches, along with frequent rope changes between ringers, really helped to build confidence. By the end of the evening, we were ringing for longer stretches, whilst managing to keep awareness of position in the work pattern.

I now need to step up my learning further by visiting other towers to further develop my skills gained at this really key evening, which got me off to a great start.

Thanks to all involved for the time and advice so generously offered – by fellow band members from Moseley, from the BSoBR and the wider St Martin's Guild.

And finally – Art Teaching Bell Handling – Sarah Vernon

Although I have been ringing for more than 40 years, I have never taught anyone to ring. Finally, due to taking on the responsibility of being acting tower captain at my local tower, I decided I should learn how to teach bell handling. I was fortunate that I could attend a one-day training course designed to cover all aspects of teaching bell handling and to give potential ringing teachers the confidence to put their skills into action. This is the ART teaching bell handling course, M1. I joined the next available course in my area on Saturday 27th April at St Paul's, Birmingham. The course was led by Clare McArdle and there were 11 students from towers across Birmingham and beyond. We all had varying degrees of experience: some students had been teaching learners for some time whereas others had never taught. We all recognised the importance of developing the skills and confidence to teach bell handling.

The course was structured with alternating theory and practical sessions. The emphasis of the theory was on teaching complex skills by breaking them down into smaller skills. The learner focuses on the smaller skills and then puts them together. The complex skill can be broken down again if the learner needs it. The importance of giving good, instant feedback to learners was made clear as was spotting and correcting incorrect handling before it becomes permanent! The practical sessions followed were extremely important for developing the confidence to allow learners to handle a bell from the start while remaining in control of the learning process. Clare made the point that, even if we did not have a learner to teach straight away, we could practice our teaching skills on experienced ringers and keep those skills fresh. We worked together during the practical sessions with some of us being teachers, some being learners and then swapping over.

One of the most useful things we did during the practical sessions was to start teaching ringing a bell up and down straight away. The learner feels the weight of the bell and holds and pulls the rope right from the start but the teacher can minimise risks through controlling the 'up' part of the process. Before the course I had never realised that this could be the main way to teach bell handling.

At the end of the course we were given lots of useful resources, links to the Smart ringer website and the name of our mentor who will guide us to become accredited ART teachers. I was on the course with two ringing colleagues from my tower. Since the course, we have been teaching our learners in dedicated bell handling sessions as a team of three teachers. We have been able to use all the skills we learnt in the course and we have supported each other throughout. Our confidence as teachers has improved massively.



Upcoming M2F Foundation Skills – Clare McArdle

Leading on from Sarah's experience of the M1 course, I am planning to run the Association of Ringing Teachers M2F 'Foundation Skills' course - a course for teachers taking students from the bell handling stage towards the very early stages change ringing. You do not have to have taken any other ART module to attend this course. There is more information about the course here:

<http://ringingteachers.org/get-involved/courses>

It is a full-day course, however, I am proposing to run it over two evenings, probably in mid-August. Please get in touch if you are interested.

The small print: All the modules are open to teachers aged 14 or over. Module 2F requires that you can ring at least Plain Hunt.

Remembering Forces Personnel – Stephen Shipley

At the end of June, the Knowle band rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples. This brought to a conclusion the project embarked on in August 2014 whereby those from the local area who died whilst serving in the forces during WW1 have been remembered week by week. This quarter peal was rung on the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.



Knowle, West Midlands

SS John the Baptist, Lawrence and Anne
Friday, 28 June 2019 in 44m (9–3–7)

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Judith Taylor
- 2 Bridget Osmond
- 3 Michael Dodson
- 4 Andrew R Pike
- 5 Ann Smart
- 6 Rowena Shipley
- 7 Stephen Shipley (C)
- 8 John Cranmer

On the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. This was the most important of the peace treaties that brought World War 1 to an end.

Eileen & Mike's First Peal

Congratulations to Mike and Eileen Keeble, graduates of BSoBR and ringers at Harborne, on ringing their first peal. The peal was rung as part of the Harborne ringers' "remembering soldiers from Harborne" project and commemorates the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.



Harborne, West Midlands

St Peter

Sunday, 30 June 2019 in 2h 58 (12–3–24 in F#)

5040 Grandsire Triples

Composed by Thomas Day

- 1 Eileen Keeble
- 2 Christine Mills
- 3 Mark R Eccleston
- 4 Arthur J Reeves
- 5 D Rose W Horton
- 6 Clare McArdle (C)
- 7 Stephen W Horton
- 8 Michael Keeble

First peal: 1, 8

Rung to mark the centenary of the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles on 29 June 1919
Circled the tower: 4

A Milestone for Roy Followell!

Finally, congratulations are due to Roy on two counts - both a milestone birthday and a first of Minor at Coleshill.

Perhaps a quarter peal of triples or even major is the target for the next milestone birthday!

Coleshill, Warwickshire

St Peter and St Paul

Sunday, 7 April 2019 in 45m (14–0–24 in F#)

1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 David Ingram
- 2 Quentin Howells
- 3 Richard Andrew
- 4 Simon Linford (C)
- 5 Roy Followell
- 6 Philip Ramsbottom

60th birthday compliment to Roy Followell
First of Minor: 5