

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Welcome to the latest Guild newsletter! As ever, it's been a busy period with plenty of ringing across the Guild and lots of events.

We'd like to thank Simon for his work in putting the newsletter together over the last six or so years. I've now taken over the reins, and thank you to all who were able to supply material for this edition.

Ringling Master's Report – Arthur Reeves



There are several highlights to comment on from the last few months. Two bands from within the Guild were represented at the Tewkesbury Shield in May, the first time (I think) Birmingham has put forward two teams in this highly competitive 10-bell striking competition. Both teams rang credibly, but special recognition to the St Paul's band who only narrowly missed out on first place. It was particularly pleasing to see so many Guild members ring in their first striking contest for St Paul's. Whilst there was some friendly rivalry on the day, it is a credit to the Guild and ringing in Birmingham that we could pose two highly credible teams in this competition.

The Standing Committee has continued its approach to focused practices. Surprise major practices have seen good numbers, with a solid introduction to Cambridge for some and ringing of Glasgow and Spliced for others. The Guild further hosted a very busy and popular Bristol Maximus and Stedman Cinques practice, run by Simon. Members were given a chance to consolidate their ringing on higher numbers with a prime opportunity to ring these complicated methods over an extended period of time. 6-bell focus practices have been held by Phil, focusing on developing ringing at a level suitable for those just past Level 5 of the Ringing the Ropes scheme (and the final stage of the Birmingham School of Ringing).

As a committee, we are committed to focus practices because we believe that they offer members the best opportunity to have a solid go at the methods they are working at. A practice should offer a "comfortable struggle" for attendees. However, they are designed to be friendly and inclusive, with the Guild offering something for everybody (and if you feel we don't, please tell us!). If you are unsure if a particular practice is for you, please just get in touch.

Future Surprise Major practices
(Edgbaston, 4.30-6pm): 22nd
July and 19th August

The youths have continued to meet. The Standing Committee and others from the Guild have discussed at length the opportunities and challenges of youth recruitment and retention. More on this soon, but in the meantime, we have offered every young ringer a free copy of the "50 Ringing Things" activity book and online log-in - certificates are available for completing a variety of challenges. The Guild will cover the cost of this interactive and fun scheme. Please encourage your young ringers and let us know of any who might be keen.

It was great to join the Brumdingers at their weekly practice recently. It never ceases to amaze me how much progress young ringers can make and so quickly. The future is bright if these young ringers maintain their interest! Enjoy the summer!

10-Bell Quarter Peal Programme – Phil Ramsbottom

Three attempts and three scores to report these last three months so something's improving!

April saw us scoring variable hunt Grandsire Caters at Northfield which was a first in the method for all the band except for Alan Burbidge; the conductor on this occasion. It was also thought to be the first quarter peal in the method though a peal of it has been rung.

May was Little Bob Royal at Aston, arranged for Susannah Moore for whom it was a first of Royal. Well done Susannah! Hopefully it was also my first and last quarter on the treble to Little Bob.

Bringing up the rear in June was 3-spliced Surprise Royal at St. Philips. This turned out to be a first of spliced Surprise Royal for three of the band, one of whom was ringing their first blows of Lincolnshire and for another their first blows of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, so well done Andy Clark, Rose Horton and Matt King.

I'm happy to say we have a couple of newcomers to the group in August so that will provide some material to go at for some future quarters. As always though, if either you, or you know of someone who would like to break into elementary 10-bell ringing, then please do get in touch via email. Ringing the treble to simple caters is where it all starts.



<p>St. Martin's Guild for the Diocese of Birmingham Northfield, West Midlands St Laurence Wednesday, 26 April 2017 in 50 mins (14–1–13 in F#) 1298 Variable Hunt Grandsire Caters 1 Angie Wakefield 2 Janet A Horton 3 Alan Burbidge (Con'd) 4 Helen R Jarvis 5 Luke Daniel 6 Clare McArdle 7 Jonathan B Townsend 8 Phil Ramsbottom 9 Tony Daw 10 Clare S Townsend 1st VHGC for all except 3</p>	<p>St. Martin's Guild for the Diocese of Birmingham Birmingham, West Midlands SS Peter and Paul, Aston Tuesday, 23 May 2017 in 51 mins (24–2–18 in D) 1296 Little Bob Royal Composed by James P Ramsbottom 1 Phil Ramsbottom 2 Arthur J Reeves 3 Helen R Jarvis 4 Susannah Moore 5 James P Ramsbottom (Con'd) 6 Janet Horton 7 Richard Andrew 8 Andrew Clark 9 Tony Daw 10 Jonathan B Townsend First of Royal – 4 Previously arranged but respectfully dedicated to those affected by events in Manchester last night</p>	<p>St. Martin's Guild for the Diocese of Birmingham Birmingham, West Midlands Cathedral Church of St Philip Wednesday, 28 June 2017 in 53 mins (31–0–21 in D) 1282 Spliced Surprise Royal Cambridge, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire 1 Mike Dodson 2 Simon Linford (C) 3 D Rose W Horton 4 Janet A Horton 5 Andrew Clark 6 Matthew King 7 Jonathan B Townsend 8 Phil Ramsbottom 9 Alistair J Cherry 10 Tony Daw First of 3 spliced Surprise Royal - 3, 5 & 6 First blows of Lincolnshire - 3 & 6 First blows of Yorkshire - 6 First of spliced for the programme</p>
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BUSCR – Jack Page

Since the heady days of early 2017, which included the 62nd annual BUSCR dinner, famed for its world-class handbell performance of sick beats such as 'Thine be the glory' and 'Joy to the World', BUSCR has not suffered from a 'failure to thrive' and has been more active than ever under the esteemed mistresship of Susannah Moore!

Come the first weekend in June, exams had finished and the sun was not quite over the yardarm and it was time for our annual BUSCR summer outing, which this year took us to Reading where we descended upon the Page family like a hoard of bell-hungry locusts.

The day included a ring of 4, with ropes falling 6 inches away from each other, a ring of 6 with two broken ropes, and a 17cwt ring of 8 that go worse than the 26cwt ring of 8 in the town centre! Essentially, after a year of appreciating the best that Taylors have to offer in Birmingham, we thought it was high time to appreciate the fact that not all bells are necessarily easy-going, well maintained, or even in tune with each other. Despite these tricky bells, we rounded off the day by ringing on the pleasant 8cwt ring of 8 at Englefield, famed for being the venue for the recent 'royal' wedding between Pippa Middleton and... Mr. Pippa Middleton. Unfortunately, Pippa gave us the wrong date and we turned up a couple of weeks too late! We then retired to chateau Page for a slightly soggy barbeque due to the inclement weather. But fear not! Our previous experiences meant we coped well with the heavy rainfall!

A couple of weeks later, BUSCR was invited on the NUSCR summer tour, for a bit of inter-NUA multiculturalism. We were made very welcome, though of course we all came away thinking how much cooler BUSCR is than NUSCR. Though, we believe, with a bit of effort, we can teach our friends in the more disadvantaged societies the banterous ways of the Birmingham Universities' Society of Change Ringers!

6-bell Striking Contest and Business Meeting – Clare McArdle

At the behest of Jenny and Tim Sunter, the Guild was invited to hold the 6-bell striking contest and business meeting at Brierley Hill on Saturday 20th May. Jenny and Tim have done what many people might consider impossible. Coming to ringing with no experience at all, they were surprised to discover that there were bells at Brierley Hill but dismayed when they found out that there was no band to ring them. They decided to do something about it and enrolled with the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing to learn to ring. In the space of just over three years they have both flourished as ringers, but not only that, they have negotiated taking charge at Brierley Hill and set about building a new band. Fridays are their regular practice nights and they have recruited and are teaching three new ringers. Their invitation to the Guild to hold the contest and meeting at Brierley Hill was in recognition of the help and friendship they have received from many Guild members.



The striking contest got underway at 3pm. Once all of the teams had rung it was time for tea and we were treated to a sumptuous spread which included more pork scratchings than anyone had ever seen at any previous Guild tea! See the photographs for evidence!

Seven teams had entered the contest including a band from Brierley Hill and a scratch team with the youngest participant – Charlie Linford, aged 9. Judges Michael O'Hagan and Molly Waterson made constructive and encouraging comments as they delivered their verdict and the Master presented James Ramsbottom, conductor of the victorious Cathedral team, with the trophy (see previous photograph).

With the more pleasurable parts of the event over and done with, we got down to the nitty-gritty of the business meeting. The highlights were the election of five new members – four from BUSCR: Susannah Moore, Jenny Robertson, Amelie Hunnebeck-Wells and Jonas Muñoz Novelo, and one with a University connection: Dave Bassett who has recently moved here to work at Birmingham University; and a review of successful ringing programmes and practices. More serious were the discussions about youth ringing, an area we have been struggling to develop for some time; the upcoming Central Council meeting where the CRAG report would be considered; and debate about future reorganisation of the workings of the Guild. No doubt there will be more debate about all of these issues in the future.

The photographs show some of the excellent food laid on, including pork scratchings and black pudding!



After the formal proceedings of the business meeting had ended, people drifted home or to the pub, or into the tower for some more ringing and then headed to the Bull and Bladder for some excellent beer and more pork scratchings!

Remembering Jim Dunn (2nd July 1924 – 23rd May 2017)

Clare McArdle (photograph supplied by Catherine Taylor)

A good number of past and present ringers from Kings Norton and a few more Guild members gathered, together with Jim's family and friends, for Jim's funeral on Thursday 15th June at Yardley Crematorium.

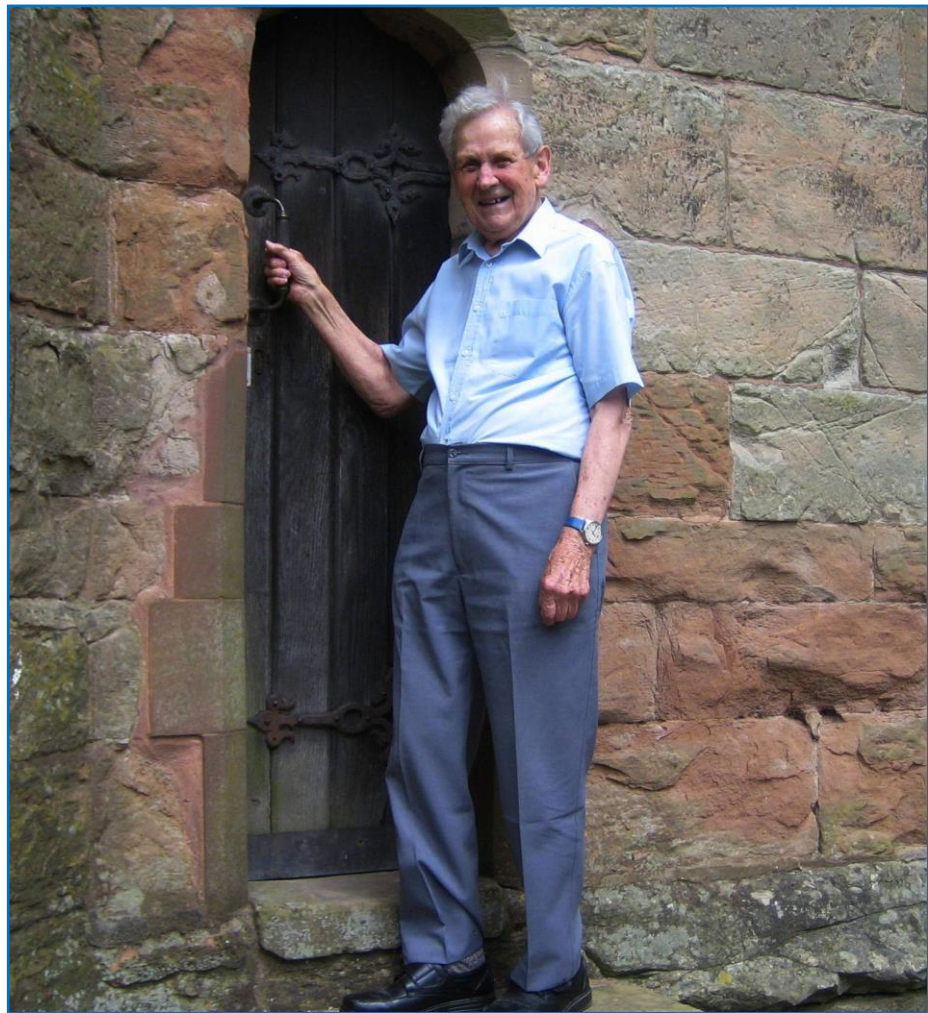
The service was a moving tribute to Jim's long and happy life led by a representative of the Humanist Society. We listened as Jim's early life was recounted; he was a bright boy and was put into a class of older boys, but still regularly came top of the class. He left school at 14 for the world of work and at 18 was enlisted in the RAF as a wireless operator.

Jim met his future wife Chris at a dance, whilst stationed at RAF Coningsby and they were married on New Year's Day 1948. They had five children. Jim's work took him to many different places and meant many moves until they settled in King's Heath in 1964.

Jim had several real passions throughout his lifetime – his family being the principle one. He enjoyed dancing, gardening and DIY as well as bell ringing (of course). He even took up ice skating when his children were young and would continue skating until he was almost 70.

The latter years of his life Jim spent looking after Chris when she developed Alzheimer's and did so until her death in 2009. During this time, he perfected his baking skills, baking his own bread and cakes. He continued to take Chris dancing, even when she was in a wheelchair.

Jim was a lovely man, with a great sense of humour and a twinkle in his eye. He touched many people during his long life and was a true gentleman in every sense of the word. He will be sadly missed but fondly remembered at King's Norton.



Don's 50 Years at Aston – Nigel Cripps

During a service at Aston on Sunday 25th June, one of our well-known ringers, Don Finnemore, was presented with a plaque to celebrate a major milestone! Don has now been tower captain at Aston for no less than 50 years, which is a great achievement in anyone's book. In addition to being master at Aston, Don has been very active in the St Martin's Guild and is currently a Trustee of the Bell Restoration Fund.



It goes without saying that 50 years in this busy, nationally recognised tower is a remarkable achievement.

In his reply, Don mentioned that when he took on the job he did not realise it would be for so long! Following his appointment, he worked hard to improve his skills and he mentioned being in the Birmingham team that competed at Bristol in the first National 12-Bell Striking Competition Final. He went on to be in five Birmingham teams, of which three won the competition. Don thanked the

numerous ringers that there have been at Aston in the last 50 years. He concluded by speculating that he could be the longest serving Parish officer in the 1,000 year plus history of Aston Parish Church!

Well done to Don on this major milestone.

Peals Report (April to June) – Mark Eccleston

There have been a number of noteworthy peal performances over the past three months. Most noteworthy is the fact that three members of the Guild rang their first peals, all in fine style: Sophie Keeble, Christine Barnell and Matthew King. See the table over the page for these impressive firsts.

Accompanying Matthew King for his first peal was Bill Haynes, ringing a peal 'left-over-right' for the first time following a nasty accident with a circular saw late last year.

<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Peter, Harborne Sunday, 30 April 2017 in 2h54 (12–3–24 in F#) 5040 Grandsire Triples Composed by L P H Suggett 1 Christine Mills 2 Sophie M Keeble 3 Mark R Eccleston 4 Christine Barnell 5 Arthur J Reeves (C) 6 Clare McArdle 7 Jack E Page 8 Stephen W Horton</p> <p>First peal: 2 and 4.</p>	<p>Birmingham, West Midlands Cathedral Church of St Philip Monday, 15 May 2017 in 3hrs 19mins (31–0–21 in D) 5016 Stedman Cinques Composed by M R Eccleston 1 Jack E Page 2 Mark R Eccleston (C) 3 Dickon R Love 4 Jack P Gunning 5 David M W Threlfall 6 Matthew J R King 7 Andrew V Brown 8 James P Ramsbottom 9 Jonathan P Healy 10 Gordon R Birks 11 Julia R Cater 12 William R Haynes First peal: 6 First peal left handed, due to loss of thumb to circular saw: 12</p>
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Henry Pipe (aged 14) became the youngest person to ring the 'Pipe Classic' composition of cyclic 6-spliced Maximus. And, in same peal, Jack Page (slightly older than 14!) became the youngest person to call it: <http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1171773>

Michael Wilby rang Exeter Cathedral's 72cwt tenor single-handed, turning it in to a peal of Bristol Maximus: <http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1167591>
A clip of the ringing can be found on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHLraQCHtrl&t=76s>

Three successful attempts at the fiendishly tricky 'Particles' peal have been rung at St Philip's by the Monday night band, all demonstrating impressive conducting skills by Jack Page:
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1168645>
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1173130>
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1177012>

In April, John Warboys' 'Blue Peal', comprising six previously unringed (and non-trivial) Maximus methods, was rung for the first time, at the first attempt, at St Philip's: <http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1170116>

Alistair Cherry and James Ramsbottom rang their first peals of the standard 41 Surprise Minor:
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1174595>
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1176651>

A peal at St Paul's, in June, saw Rose Horton ring her first peal of Stedman. Followed, a day later, by Angie Wakefield and Graham Kelly ringing their first peal of Royal:
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1176006>
<http://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1176130>

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

Fifty Years On – Dave Reeves

On Wednesday 10th May, the ringers from Boldmere and representatives from half a dozen north Birmingham towers plus Master of the Guild, Simon Linford, met at Moor Hall Hotel to mark Dave Reeves' 50 years as Ringing Master.

This celebration took the form of a three course meal and was a surprise to Dave as he had been anticipating a normal practice night at Boldmere!

As a token of their appreciation, the Boldmere band presented Dave with a framed calligraphy scroll signed by all the ringers to mark the occasion. The photograph shows Dave holding the scroll presented by the Boldmere band.

Well done to Dave on this major milestone!



The National 12-Bell Final – Michael Wilby

We won. Again.

Sounds simple: boringly predictable, even. In truth though, it's never a given – even if our track record suggests otherwise – but this year it was even less so...

The Birmingham team is made up of ringers from the city centre, most of whom are Sunday Service band members from St Martin's. It is a fairly static and stable squad of ringers (though if you look back over the years the faces have changed a bit, albeit gradually) – and this is probably a key ingredient of success – but this year there was a change at the top, with Mark Eccleston taking charge from Richard Grimmett. With clear home advantage we came through the eliminator at St Philip's in fine style in March, but the challenge of the final would prove to be something else entirely.

Southwark Cathedral, set next to London Bridge, is home to a fine-sounding 48cwt ring of twelve. The bells have been rehung very recently – indeed the try-out of the bells was only in March this year – and as a result, work to strengthen the ancient bellframe had to be put-off until after the competition. This presented some unique problems: while the front 9 go quite well, the back three – especially the 10th and 11th are prone to drop, or go-over quite dramatically; weighing 22 and 28cwt respectively they are a real physical challenge. All teams are allowed a 90-minute practice on the bells in the weeks preceding the competition final – which is just as well given the unpredictability of the back bells - and we had a slot just a fortnight beforehand. Then the terrible terrorist attack in Borough Market occurred, affecting the Cathedral which is set in its heart. The huge local trauma endured, and the massive police forensic operation that followed meant that our practice had to be cancelled while the area was sealed for over a week. It's hard to reconcile our need for a practice with the needs of the Cathedral and local community to recover from the ordeal, but we were incredibly

grateful that the local band and the Cathedral authorities permitted the affected teams to hastily rearrange slots in the week before the contest.

And how necessary it was... It's fair to say in our practice we struggled to make anything sound good. We had to try different band placements and different speeds in an effort to find something that worked, and when we received the Strikeometer feedback from our practice it was very disheartening. What a way to approach the final...

No matter where the contest is, or the weather (or indeed the bells!) it's always a grand day out. With 10 teams and an increasing number of spectators swelling the numbers beyond 600, as you will have read in the Ringing World, it is a very inclusive event and a real highlight of the ringing year.

The difficulty of the bells meant all bets were off and the result anything but a foregone conclusion. We were drawn first – usually an unpopular position, but this year somehow it didn't seem to matter – we could only do our best in the difficult circumstances and at least the tower would be cool and airy, which was not how band number two found it after we had toiled away for 30 long minutes!

Without romanticising the event, we turned out our best performance on those bells and, descending the tower feeling we had acquitted ourselves honourably, went off to the bar to enjoy the day; the rest of the afternoon melting away in a mixture of sunshine, good beer and great company. At 6pm all gathered in the Cathedral to hear the results, and to our great surprise, we won. Again. Celebrations continued late into the night and the team members made their ways home with varying degrees of success...

Next year the contest is at Great St Mary, Cambridge – if you're free on the 4th Saturday in June do come along: it will be a fine day whatever the result!

Ringing World National Youth Contest – Andy Clark

The St Martin's Guild was this year's host for the Ringing World National Youth Contest on Saturday 1st July.

Led very ably by Clare McArdle and Simon Linford, the Guild required a huge turnout of volunteers to provide stewards, ringers and other support staff to cope with the arrival of around 200 young ringers! It truly was a logistical challenge and the Guild coped admirably, with excellent feedback received on the day.

The day began with teams registering at their allotted competition towers – one of Yardley, Shirley or Harborne. The teams then rang their test pieces, with most teams ringing call changes, while some of the more experienced bands opted for Plain Hunt 7, Plain Bob Triples or Grandsire Triples. Away from their qualifiers, the teams were also able to ring at other open towers, namely Sheldon, Knowle, Kings Norton and Solihull. It was certainly difficult to miss the stewards on the day, as they were wearing bright green t-shirts, as proudly modelled by the volunteers at Shirley in the photograph and snapped by resident cameraman Richard Andrew!



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

The afternoon saw the teams visiting Aston, St Martin's and St Chad's, giving the young ringers a great chance to ring on higher numbers, including the full 16 at St Martin's. While most ringing consisted of rounds and call changes, one of the more experienced bands rang a very nice touch of Grandsire Cinques at Aston. I suspect this band will have some future contenders for the National 12-Bell Ringing Competition! There was some excellent ringing at St Martins, with Eleanor Linford and Clare McArdle doing a great job of introducing a one-way system in the tower to successfully get one team *into* the belfry at the same time as one team *out* of the tower! I'm not sure the tower floor at St Martin's has ever had to support so many ringers before! Simon and others did an excellent job of calling changes, sometimes using jump changes and sets of four to get the bells into changes in a timely fashion!

In addition to plenty of tower bell ringing, there were also two mini rings available for the youngsters, with the Ambergate Mini-ring outside St Paul's and the Charmborough Mini-ring outside St Martin's. I didn't make it to St Paul's myself but I can certainly say that the mini-ring at St Martin's attracted a lot of interest from passers by, so I hope some of these interested people will translate into new starters at the School of Ringing!

The six teams who made it through their qualifiers then competed in the final, held at St Paul's, with teams ringing between 2pm and 4pm.

Following the finals and the open ringing at St Martin's, was the important bit of the day – the results! Chief Judge Julia Cater, assisted by Tom Mack, Rosemary Hill, Julian Howes, Becca Meyer and Lizzie Pawley, were able to provide their feedback to the teams, with excellent constructive feedback being provided to ensure that the teams can refine their performances further in years to come. Having not attended one of these contests before, I was certainly impressed by the high standard of ringing and it's great to know that there is such ability out there.

Well done to the Yorkshire Tykes, gold medallists in the Method Category and winners of the Whitechapel Trophy. The last four years have been won by the Bedfordshire Young Ringers, so the Yorkshire Tykes have certainly done well to challenge the status quo! A very well done also to the Three Spires Team (Lichfield and Walsall) who were Gold Medallists in the Call Change category.

Feedback on the day was excellent, as we would have hoped, with Linda Garton, event organiser, saying she'd had nothing but positive feedback, including:

*....A superbly
organised youth
competition*

*....The Brummies did a
great hosting job –
having capable locals is
a key ingredient, of
course*

After the results, the volunteers for the St Martin's Guild retired to the Woodman Pub for some much needed refreshments, to cap off an excellent day.

A big thank you again to Clare, supported by Simon, for their hard work and organisation and of course to all the volunteers who were able to make the day happen. I am sure we have continued to raise the bar for future host guilds!

But that was not all that happened on this already busy ringing weekend, writes James Ramsbottom:

As well as the Youth Competition, there was a service for the ordination of priests at St Philip's Cathedral on in the morning, followed the next day by a service for the ordination of deacons. These two services are held annually and ringing is always arranged for them. However, there was a difference this year, as ringers from other towers around the guild came to help out the local band. Visitors came from Erdington, Boldmere and Perry Barr, allowing all 12 bells to be rung for both services, a fine achievement considering all the other activity that weekend! Thanks to all those who helped out, both visitors and band members.

Brumdingers – Simon Linford

The end of June saw the ranks of the Brumdingers rise to six! The original fearsome foursome of Charlie, Esther, Orson and Sonny, were joined a few weeks ago by Caoimhe (friend of Orson's) and now by Sara (school friend of Charlie). The first four are just about ringing rounds together with Caoimhe catching up fast.

So what is it? Brumdingers is a ringing group for kids at St Mary's Moseley. The practices are structured to suit the lifestyle and attention span of the 10-12 year old! 6.30 to 7.45 (the cub / brownie slot), break for juice and biscuits, plenty of lee-way if the fidget spinners are more of an attraction, and a general atmosphere of controlled fun. They ring handbells as much as they ring towerbells, and all of them are following Learn the Ropes.

Simon and Clare (aka Mufasa and Nala) run the show, with parents getting more adept and providing input and encouragement from the sidelines. Parents even rang rounds on 12 handbells last week!

We are looking to take the group up to eight now, after Caoimhe and Sara were recruited by the Brumdingers themselves. Anyone who has or knows a child in this sort of age range who would like to join in on a Thursday evening would be welcome.