

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

As ever, thanks for all the contributions to this edition. I'm writing this while it is around 30 degrees outside, doing my best impression of an English person by wondering when it will cool off again! (a bit of rain will be good for the garden!)

In this edition, we remember Brian (William) Ellender, of Hampton in Arden, who passed away in June, having been tower captain for over 50 years. We also cast our minds back to the Bake-Off in May, and hear from Richard Grimmett about the St Paul's band's recent peal – with a twist! We finish the newsletter with an update from Phil Ramsbottom, Ringing Master.

Finally, just a note that a couple of articles refer to the (then) upcoming easing of restrictions on 19th July, so apologies for any consistency issues. My fault for sitting on the newsletter for too long this time!

The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the Q2 results. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating!

April	1 st	23	Richard Lewis	£54
	2 nd	86	Angie Wakefield	£16.20
	3 rd	39	Arthur Reeves	£5.40
May	1 st	52	Gill Fielden	£54.00
	2 nd	63	Clare McArdle	£16.20
	3 rd	56	Eleanor Linford	£5.40
June	1 st	61	Mike Dodson	£54.00
	2 nd	64	James Ramsbottom	£16.20
	3 rd	102	Keith Whitehead	£5.40

Brumdingers – Simon Linford

The Brumdingers have benefitted from the guidance for children's activities in out-of-school settings and have thus been able to ring more than just six bells at their restarted practices. You wouldn't have thought they had had a year off as all of them seem to have gained skill through absence! Really that is because of increased strength, which is noticeable. Increased height all round, even Caoimhe, means there is much less of a fight for boxes. Orson seems to be over six feet tall! Keeping the group together through online activities had been effective, and we have only partially lost one of the team. Charlie and Sara have notched up a couple of quarters, and on 4th July Kunal made his return to ringing with a quarter of Bob Minor on the treble.

We are looking forward to extending practices back to the old length as soon as restrictions are lifted as there is so much to do. I can see us extending the practice beyond the hour and a quarter we used to ring for, to enable everyone to make the progress they are capable of. Last week we got the Learning the Ropes progress chart out again which provided a lot of excited focus, including Cian standing over the Level 1 planner with a pen saying "what can I tick"?!

Remembering William Brian Randle Ellender (1927-2021) – *Bridget Osmond*

Brian was born in 1927 in east Coventry and learnt to ring in Coventry in 1944. He met Ros in the ringing chamber when she was just 15 and they were married six years later when he was 25. Brian died on the 16th June 2021, just before their 68th wedding anniversary. They set up home in Hemel Hempstead but after two or three years moved to Hampton in Arden.

It was in 1956, after they'd only been in the village a short while, that the then incumbent asked Brian if he would become Ringing Master, a position he retained until 2008. He ran an easy going tower where visitors were always welcome. Brian was not a prolific peal ringer - ringing 26 peals - but could ring and conduct the more complex methods and rang at other local towers when needed. His commitment was to Sunday ringing at Hampton, and he taught many ringers over the years including myself to whom he handed the mantle of leadership when he retired (no I don't plan to emulate Brian's 52 years of captaincy!). I fondly recall his love of smart suits with colourful linings and endless selection of ties for every occasion. Brian continued to ring until 2016 when ill health prevented him from continuing, however he still maintained a healthy interest in the bells and the ringers, ever hopeful he could return up the tower.

Brian also rang handbells, both change ringing and tunes. He had a magnificent set of handbells which came out at our wonderful Ringers' Christmas Parties. Brian polished his bells and after Ros' magnificent food, out came the music and we rang carols into the night.

Brian was very active in village life; School Governor, Chairman of the PTA, acting Father Christmas, member of Probus, Rotary and the PCC as well as a sidesman. He was a trained architect and became Surveyor for the Diocese of Coventry; he knew all the churches there well. He also worked for the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust on their properties. After retirement Brian had one final commission, to design the church extension at Hampton. The church at Hampton is his memorial, not only has he a plaque in the tower celebrating his 50 years as Tower Captain but the extension is a permanent reminder of a true gentleman, kind, calm but with a wry sense of humour.



Guild Bake-Off – Andy Clark

The 2020 Guild Bake-Off set the bar very high, but I'm pleased to report that the 2021 version has done just as well, with a great crop of entries, both from the junior, and not-so-junior, bakers.

This year's winners were Matthew Healy for the junior bakers (his Dragon Cake is below – and I wonder what order you'd eat that in!), while Vicky Wilby triumphed for the adult bakers, with her Luscious Lemon Bars.

A total of £200 was raised for the Trussell Trust (foodbank charity), so a big thank you both to the bakers and to those who judged and made donations.

Some of the other entries were too good not to feature in this newsletter, so see the back page for more!



Recovery – *AJB*

Greetings from an RC (Recovery Champion, I prefer Contact). Just in case you have missed it, RCs form an international communications network for shunting about ideas on recovery; just about ringing though. During the winter there was more shunting than you would find in a 1950s Good's Yard but it has gone a bit quiet of late.

As far as the St Martin's Guild goes, the plan is to get in touch with towers, by visiting if possible, once we get going again. The trouble with writing anything about recovery at the moment is that by the time the second paragraph has been written a load of stuff has changed and you have to start again. So this is very much "at the time of writing". Things might look very different by the time I press the send button, let alone when you read it.

It looks likely that the Government will lift most of the legal restrictions relating to Covid. It had seemed that would mean that we would be more or less back to normal on the 19th July but the tension between political optimism and scientific caution seems to be moving in the direction of caution. The formal government announcement is yet to be made and, as far as I am aware, no updated formal guidance (if that is the appropriate language) has been issued by the C of E. Of course, the view of the C of E and other church authorities will have considerable sway over the immediate future of ringing. Then there are the views of RMs / TCs and ringers to take into account.

While the St Martin's Guild has plenty of ideas of things that might help recovery, I am thinking in terms of process: In the light of law and national and local church protocols, engage with ringers and find out what towers are available, what ringers we have, what ringing is taking place and engage with ringers to discuss what might usefully be done in changeable and uncertain times. We will need to match ideas and initiatives with reality. First off, we will need to establish the nature of reality and I don't think that can be predicted in advance.

Ringling at St Paul's Birmingham during this Pandemic – *Richard Grimmett*

When lockdown first hit at the end of March 2020, the Government urged the population to maintain distance from each other. It appeared ringling was going to suffer badly. Practice nights at St Paul's stopped and we started to ring four seemingly quite random, but distanced, bells for service – which made a noise but did little for the ringers or the art. Lockdown was extended and so we modified our ringling arrangements to ring six bells from the ringling room, and four from the schoolroom below. Ringling the front three bells together was dependent on having a family of three present, but with this arrangement, we were able to ring the front and back sixes, the back eight and the full ring of ten, whilst keeping within the relevant guidelines and law.

I will 'come clean' here and admit I had been keen on trying this arrangement for some years. Since calling a peal whilst wearing a blindfold, I had started to look for other challenges, and one which caught my imagination was to ring a peal with a band divided between two rooms within the same tower.

The St Paul's band continued to ring on most Sunday mornings through the pandemic, except for a short stint where Church guidelines prevented this. The main service had moved from the evening to the morning a couple of years before, and the start of the pandemic was the first occasion where sufficient ringers were free to ring for it. The Church expressed their gratitude, as did many of the local residents who would approach us in the churchyard after ringling. They really enjoyed our ringling, saying the sound of bells meant something very special during these horrible times, and it gave them hope and comfort. We also commenced handbell method ringling in the churchyard during the service, and on some

occasions had in excess of 15 ringers participating using two sets of handbells (always standing within legally allowable groups!). The local coffee shop did rather well. Ringing tower bells now required two floors, but there was no such obstacle with handbells. Many had their first taste and have since progressed from attempting simple plain hunt to ringing surprise minor, major and royal.

In mid-May restrictions eased and we were able to return to the ringing chamber, but only with six ringers. Prior to moving ropes back upstairs we decided to satisfy my long-held aspiration, and ring a peal on the back eight with four ringers in each room – 1, 3, 5 and 7 in the ringing chamber and 2, 4, 6 and 8 in the schoolroom. I asked Michael Wilby and Jack Page to both conduct – one in each room. When split between rooms rope-sight has no value. Having only some ropes moving around is a distraction which has proven more destructive than having none at all; it's best to stare at the floor or face the wall. Hearing is paramount, as it always should be, but the usual steadying agent of rope-sight which we have all become used to (too much sometimes) is now gone.

We became quite good at pulling off in rounds on Sundays. This requires the treble ringer to be heard by all, and loudly shout the usual words "going .. gone" at exactly the right time. The ringer of the second hopes the treble ringer is telling the truth and follows! The first row is the only one where the limited rope-sight on offer has any value, as the remainder of the ringers simply pull off after the ringer they can see in front of them, but leaving a double-sized space. Ears must then take over, and fine tuning of the rounds take place. Moving into changes presents challenges: how much must I hold up to move to the place above where I am, or accelerate to move to the one below? Each individual fine tunes this by interpreting the sound and making any necessary adjustments to their physical rhythm. Some find this easier than others, and it is those who can translate the pace and structure of the ringing into exact physical rhythmic movements who will be successful.

On the morning of the peal the band adjusted in the opening rounds, and once into the method needed only a few rows to find the pace of change required. The chosen method was Superlative, which has five pull dodges on the front and back. Repeated dodging over five whole pulls provides excellent opportunity for further refinement of physical rhythm and is steadying to the whole band. The five pull dodges on the front always end when the treble leaves the back, and those on the back end when the treble leaves the front. The ringers listened attentively to the treble during the peal, and are grateful to the ringer of that bell for making no errors at all. Her steadiness ensured the rest of the band never dodged too many or too few times!

There were two moments of panic during the peal, but our conductors did their jobs and normal service was quickly resumed within a few blows.

I am a stickler for peals starting and ending in rounds, and not accidentally containing rounds in the middle (through a method mistake for example). I feel certain all the members of this band share my values. The peal contained every near miss (rounds with a pair switched over, eg 21345678, 13245678, 12345687 etc.), and the band sensed from the ringing when these were about to occur. These moments put stress on the ringers to avoid any striking mishaps which could bring rounds up – and stress often forces errors. Very pleasingly, no errors were forced during this peal! We weathered the storm well, and a true and proper peal was accomplished which anyone outside would have thought was rung in the perfectly normal manner of having all the ringers in the same room.

For many, the pandemic has been a trying and sad time, and in some cases completely life changing. The ringers at St Paul's wanted to carry on throughout this, in a safe and legal manner. It has provided a haven for ringers on Sunday mornings – a place to go and meet, talk and laugh with friends. We have tried to maintain some normality within the restrictions we have all faced, and we have had lots of fun doing this, as well as developing quite a lot of skills on handbells which would have never come about in

normal times. It is understandable that some readers may be wondering how we have managed this with all the restrictions in place, and I state here that we have abided by all relevant guidelines and laws, and have done all this with detailed risk assessments and procedures approved by our church, and the application of good old common-sense! With further easing about to happen, may we all be able to move quickly to a more normal life.

Oh and I nearly forgot, after the peal we all adjourned to the Rock and Roll Brewhouse Bar for a socially distanced celebration – definitely legal but with considerably less distancing than we had enjoyed in the tower. A place we all highly recommend!

The date is now Sunday 18th July, and I am putting the finishing touches to this article. The laws will relax tomorrow and our ringing will return to normal. I have returned from St Paul's, where the ringers once again found themselves the centre of attention. We were greeted by a 3 year old boy and his father on our descent from the tower. The father explained that his son, Kimmo, requested they listen to the ringing every week, and that it has become a significant and highly enjoyable activity for them. Kimmo tried the handbells and was promised a trip up the tower in the near future. Then we were approached by a young couple who had been listening to us and wanted to understand method ringing. They also tried the handbells and decided to come to practice on Thursday. We realised this may be the last week for handbells in the churchyard, since many participants will now be needed at other churches. It also sank in how much we had become a regular part of the community within this fine Georgian Square – the residents, the churchgoers, and the businesses. We are no longer seen as "unusual", but have become a valued part of the rich tapestry of life. Many of the band have rung here since the bells were installed in 2005, but the feeling of closeness with the community has never been more powerful than now. We are unsure how best this can be preserved.

St Martin's Guild
Birmingham, West Midlands
St Paul

Saturday, 22 May 2021 in 2h 57 (12–2–13 in F#)
5376 Superlative Surprise Major
Composed by Richard Grimmett

- 1 Frances Dodds
- 2 Victoria J M Wilby
- 3 Jack E Page (C)
- 4 Oliver C Bates
- 5 Paul E Bibilo
- 6 Richard B Grimmett
- 7 Alistair J Cherry
- 8 Michael P A Wilby (C)

1, 3, 5 & 7 were rung from the ringing chamber.
2, 4, 6 & 8 were rung from the schoolroom.
Believed to be the first towerbell peal on more than 6
bells rung in the UK since March 2020.

Ringling Master's Report – *Phil Ramsbottom*

It's good to be able to open this report knowing that some Guild towers are now opening up and beginning to return to ringing as we remember it, albeit with limited numbers and in some cases odd bell combinations. It may not be ideal but it is a positive step forward in the gradual process of fully opening up again.

It will be no surprise that the regular Ringing Room groups, or at least the ones I know about, are starting to wind down a little. Virtually all the ringing in the groups has been progressive and whilst learning a new line has sometimes been involved more usually it's been about making simple alterations to already known lines in a variety of ways to create new methods. Examples include Morland, Oswald, York, Barking Little Bob, (great method), and Gonville Little Treble Bob Minor. Double Norwich deserves a special mention having made a guest appearance more than once.

Since starting last year, the Ringing Room groups very quickly grew in number and I'm very grateful to Andrew Brown and Keith Whitehead for stepping in and running two of the weekly sessions and by all accounts doing a great job. My thanks to them both.

Whilst I'm sure some will be happy to never visit Ringing Room again, I wonder whether some may find that this online platform continues to be useful, if not for group ringing, then perhaps for solo practice, for example practicing a new method or testing out bob calling skills - just a thought.

Skimming through Bellboard I noticed a couple of unusual attachments to recent Guild performances. There were CO2 readings taken during quarter peals at Solihull and Moseley St Mary (someone's got a shiny new meter), and also a photo of a socially distanced band outside St Pauls, the story of which is earlier in this newsletter. This is probably the first time such a peal has been rung and I venture to suggest maybe also the last.

Several Guild towers rang either half-muffled rounds or in most cases tolled a single bell following the death and subsequent funeral of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Saturday morning presentations have once again featured in recent weeks and all very well received. My thanks to Andrew Brown (again) and David Smith for presenting two of them and these have now been posted to the Guild website where they can be viewed in glorious Technicolour.

<https://stmartinsguild.org/teaching/training-and-resources/>

Like Ringing Room I'm sure there are many of us whose lives will be the richer for never having to sit through another Zoom anything. That being said though, should the need arise for some small group theory sessions, I'd like to think that Zoom could be considered as a medium for these as an alternative to travelling to a meeting point.

Moving forward and depending on CCCBR guidance at the time, I plan to re-start the regular workshops at the end of summer, the first four all being at St Paul's and will focus on:

- 1st September - Rounds and Call Changes
- 8th September - Doubles without dodges
- 15th September - Treble Bob Minor
- 22nd September - Grandsire / Stedman Caters

Please be aware these are all subject to other factors and subsequent confirmation. I intend to engage the services of others to lead some of these and future workshops. Using other Guild towers is also part of the plan.

Finally, I achieved a personal milestone a few months ago which has been quite a while in the making and which I felt worthy of a Bellboard entry. If there's anyone still reading this newsletter and would like to take a look: <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1438855>

And a few more entries from the Bake-Off!

Finally, some of the more colourful entries which didn't win, but nonetheless demonstrate great culinary imagination!

