

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

A quick look at the Bellboard website whilst writing this newsletter reveals that ringing is very much getting back to 'normal' (I won't call it the 'new normal'!), with most performances being on tower bells, and just a few on Ringing Room, which is clearly very different to this time a year ago. It's great to see the return of tower outings, so thanks to Richard Grimmett for providing an excellent article on the St Paul's tower outing to Shropshire. Similarly, in-person striking competitions are back on the cards, so I hope you'll enjoy reading the articles by Angie and Simon.

Thanks as ever for all the contributions. Phil is very keen to see as many Guild members contributing as possible so please don't be shy!

The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the Q3 results. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating!

July	1 st	Angie Wakefield	£54
	2 nd	Ann Smart	£16.20
	3 rd	John Anderson	£5.40
August	1 st	Michael Wilby	£54
	2 nd	Vicky Wilby	£16.20
	3 rd	Bernadette O'Dwyer	£5.40
September	1 st	Leo Fielding	£54
	2 nd	Will Davies	£16.20
	3 rd	Clare McArdle	£5.40

Central Council AGM Report 2021 – Richard Andrew

For the second year running it had been decided that the Central Council's AGM would again be held via an online Zoom video conference meeting, as the state of the ongoing Covid pandemic meant that it was still not going to be practical to hold the Central Council weekend at a particular venue in the traditional way. And so it was that James Ramsbottom and I logged into the Zoom conference meeting on Saturday 4th September along with just over 150 other Council members from around the country.

As with last year's online meeting, the agenda had been drawn up so as to avoid any potentially contentious issues which might require extended discussion not easily handled in an online environment, and so there were only two motions on the agenda, both relating to matters of a housekeeping nature. The first motion covered amending the Council's Rules and Standing Orders to allow for the possibility of only one Independent Examiner being elected rather than two. The second motion proposed that the Council Executive 'be encouraged to publish and maintain a list of its decisions that are currently in force', ideally in one place such as the CC website. Both motions were carried with large majorities.

Much of the rest of the meeting was taken up with the annual reports of the CC Executive and Workgroups. In the Executive Report, the President (Simon Linford) pointed out that quarter peals were now being

included in the annual Performance Analysis for the first time, and that quarter peals can often give a better view of grass roots ringing than peals.

The Workgroups' updates for May to August 2021 followed, and one theme common to several of these was the need for further people to become involved, as there is more than enough work for current workgroup members to do.

After a short break, the President presented the Forward Plan for 2022. He commented that Covid guidance was coming to an end, although there was still interest in monitoring CO2 levels and ventilation in towers. Other highlights included an update on progress in developing a Mobile Belfry 2.0 that can be taken around festivals and schools as it will be easily transportable and quickly erected. There was also reference to the 'Cast of 1000' which was set up to provide support to ringers seeking to progress in ringing Surprise Major – this had worked well in Ringing Room during lockdown and plans were now in hand to roll it out to towers. A national Call Change Competition will also be set up – a suitable date is being sought in 2022 for this. On the issue of reducing the size of the Council, in the latest consultation, respondents felt that on balance the Council should be smaller, but there was no clear idea on how best to do this.

In the last section of the meeting, David Kirkcaldy, the Deputy President, advised that the 2022 CC AGM is planned to be a face-to-face meeting at Trent University, Nottingham. For the 2023 and 2024 meetings, invitations have been received from the Suffolk Guild and the Guild of Devonshire Ringers respectively. So, for next year's CC AGM in September, we are hoping that it will be third time lucky and that we will all be able to go to Nottingham and have a Council meeting in the traditional way, with everyone in the same room. The weekend is being planned to follow the format successfully trialled at Goldsmith's College, London, for the 2019 meeting weekend, so the CC AGM is planned to take place on Saturday 3rd September, with a Roadshow event planned for Sunday 4th September.

The main CC AGM finished just after 13:45, which is the earliest I can ever remember a CC AGM finishing, and certainly the first time it has finished before the Ringing World AGM in recent years. This latter meeting started at 15:00 and was chaired by Paul Jopp, the new Ringing World chairman who has been in post since last January. Key points from this meeting included the fact that donations to the Ringing World were down by over £29k compared to the previous year, largely due to there being far fewer ringing performances. Company reserves, built up over a number of years, have had to be tapped to address this. However, on the plus side, office costs were down due to staff working from home more. Also, a new print contract had been agreed with Pyramid Press, based in Nottingham, starting from September – this would yield a modest annual saving, but also a significant increase in quality. In his Chairman's Report, Paul Jopp commented that when he joined the RW, he had been very impressed with what the staff had done to keep the paper going through the pandemic. In particular, the work of the editorial team (Will Bosworth and Christopher Teasdale) had been absolutely fantastic and he gave special thanks to them for this.

Fuller reports on the CC AGM and also the Ringing World AGM for 2021 were published in Ringing World issue no. 5759 (10th September).

Brumdingers – *Simon Linford*

The Brumdingers continue to meet at Moseley on Thursday evenings, with some of the less experienced going to a parallel practice at Harborne. In all we have about 12 young ringers regularly going to one or other of these sessions, and as the oldest are only in Year 9 that bodes well for the future. It has made a big difference at Moseley on Sunday morning to have some of the youngsters joining, and wedding earnings are starting to become a focus! Amid the general chaos that is a Thursday night 'practice' we still manage to give out Learning the Ropes certificates, with the latest successes post resumption being Cian's level 1, Caoimhe's level 2 and Orson's level 3. More are in the offing. What we wouldn't give for a nice easy 10cwt eight with room to stand behind people rather than what we actually have to contend with.

We were a little depleted for a trip to Worcester for the youth contest, so we joined up with three members of the Lancashire Lads and Lasses who also wouldn't otherwise have had enough. With the Red Roses of Lancashire joining with our ringers from the home of chocolate, the joint team was called the 'Cadbury Red Roses', and a couple of boxes of said confectionary made its way to Worcester (but not back). Max Earthquake was the youngest participant in the entire competition by some distance and did very well on her debut. The evening finished with about 100 young ringers larking around on College Green in Worcester, wrapping their leaders in toilet roll, playing with a giant parachute, playing football, and generally doing things that adult organisers of young ringer entertainment would not have thought of!



achievement using the same composition. Leading up to this, Richard Jones and I had agreed a joint project with the local ringers and incumbent to preserve some significant peal boards which were lying in a state of dilapidation behind the organ. The project was successful, although the pandemic has delayed the return of some boards to the ringing chamber. We were delighted to be met by our friend and local tower captain, John Burton, who had ensured the church was opened to allow us to view the recently restored boards. John also gave assurance that the project would soon be completed, having commissioned the local fire brigade to raise the larger boards to the ringing chamber. The new board commemorating the original peal of Stedman Triples rung in 1819, and the repeat performance in 2019 was also available for us to admire.

A thoroughly enjoyable hour was spent in the tower, and good ringing was achieved on these moderately tricky bells. Methods ranged from Variable Treble Grandsire Triples to Deva Surprise Major. A short break followed, giving space for liquid refreshment, before we continued our train journey to Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury is truly a wonderful town; a largely unspoilt medieval street plan filled with Tudor buildings and ancient churches. Surprisingly it is not overrun with tourists, and I feel this is a very good thing since its abundant charm would surely be harmed. Some spare time gave opportunity to partake of local ale, pub food and picnics before reassembling at 14:30 to ascend the tower of St Chad's. The twelve bells were cast by Taylor's in 1914 and are a fine example of the founder's art. The tenor weighs 39cwt and the ring sits in the original 1798 frame, installed shortly after completion of the current building. The previous building was destroyed in 1788 when the central tower unexpectedly collapsed – on a day when the ringers were to have attempted a peal, which they had fortunately cancelled the night before. For those of us who only ring regularly in Birmingham, where the go of the bells is extremely smooth, St Chad's provide a few challenges. Some very stretchy ropes, a frame which twists during ringing, and the extra weight did not make it easy for us, but nevertheless we feel we did well. Our repertoire included Grandsire Caters and Stedman Cinques, and the highlight was a well-struck course of Glasgow Surprise Major on the magnificent back eight.

This was the point where things started to go a little awry! Three of us were slow descending the tower, and on reaching the deserted street below assumed the rest had made their way to the Coach & Horses. We found the pub and ordered a round, wondering where the rest of the party had got to. Thanks to modern day communications we learned they were already on the train, and it was about to depart - we had our timings wrong. Knowing we could not reach the station in less than fifteen minutes we had little alternative but to settle in and have another couple of drinks before heading for the next train. When we finally did arrive at Codsall, we sampled the Holden's ales in the Station Pub on Platform 1 whilst waiting for the rest to return from the church, some fifteen minutes walk away.

Codsall has a pretty 9cwt ring of Taylor bells, cast in 1936. The former ground floor ring is now rung from a newly completed ringing platform, beautifully constructed to a high standard. Codsall bells go well and the band enjoyed ringing its usual fayre of Triples and Surprise Major.

After our group was reunited in the Station Pub, we enjoyed further refreshment and bonhomie before catching a return train to Birmingham. Some then went on to the Manzil for curry – a favourite restaurant amongst ringers for several generations. This brought us to the end of another most enjoyable and convivial day out, and we all agreed we do not wish to wait a further year for the next one.

Robert B Smith Striking Competition – Angie Wakefield

Saturday 25th September saw a team of band members and friends from St Philip's Cathedral head off to St Mary the Virgin, Nottingham (35-2-23 in C) to compete in the Robert B Smith twelve bell striking competition.

Ringling Master James assembled a squad of both seasoned and not-so-seasoned competition ringers plus a sub. A couple of promising practice sessions were held (thank you St Philip's and St Martin's) but when the personal circumstances of one of our number prevented them from taking part, a last minute change in band placement brought the (now terrified) sub off the bench just a few days before the event, leaving the competition band as follows:

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|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Mike Dodson | 7. Richard Andrew |
| 2. Arthur Reeves | 8. James Ramsbottom (C) |
| 3. Matt King | 9. Phil Ramsbottom |
| 4. Rachel Mitchell | 10. Alex Frye |
| 5. Graham Kelly | 11. Tony Daw |
| 6. Angie Wakefield (the terrified one) | 12. Jon Townsend |

The 11.00 draw scheduled us to ring last but not one. Friendly rivalries were established with Guild friends ringing with other teams. Then, with time to fill, several of us wandered around the castle and grounds, home to an impressive art gallery, before a good barbecue lunch provided by our hosts.

Then it was our turn to ring the test piece, some 236 changes of Erin Cinques. James conducted impeccably well and the band delivered a sound performance with which all felt content. Relieved to have the ringing behind us, it was time to try out the beers on offer and await the results.

The judges' comments were complimentary with special mention going to our tenor, Jonathan for setting a firm and consistent rhythm, a vital contribution to the shape and pace of the piece. We were placed third, a pleasing and encouraging outcome. Please see our band photographs taken by the event photographer.





Birmingham School of Bell Ringing – the return! *Clare McArdle*

After an 18-month gap, School sessions resumed on Saturday 18th September. In some ways, starting again was very much like our original launch in 2013 – two towers, covering two skills, with a small number of students. Except this time we have the benefit of eight years of experience behind us, which has given us the confidence not to worry that the School is not operating on the scale that it did before ringing was suspended. We know that we have very good foundations on which to build.

The cessation of ringing has given us a chance to look at certain areas of the School and we have implemented some changes to the way that it operates. We are confident that we will be able to run three towers a week from November. The bell handling tower will, as it did before, run every week, teaching people the basic bell handling skills (Level 1) and making sure they have a home tower. The second tower, teaching Level 2 students will run from September to January. In November a group at a higher level will begin. The sessions will run as ‘courses’ with a 16-session duration:

18/09/21	Level 1	St Paul's
18/09/21 – 15/01/22	Level 2	Harborne
06/11/21 – 05/03/22	Levels 3&5	Northfield
22/01/22 – 14/05/22	Level 4	Tower tbc

We are introducing some new roles – each cohort of students, as well as a tutor, will have a pastoral manager as an additional point of contact with whom to discuss progress or any issues. We hope also to be appointing an outing organiser to facilitate regular social outings locally to keep people connected whether they are currently taking a course or not. In addition, we have ambitions to appoint a quarter peal organiser, to facilitate the arrangement of developmental quarter peals for students as and when they reach the appropriate stage and competence at the higher levels.

We are really pleased to welcome new tutors Eleanor Linford and Andrew Brown to the teaching team. Having taken ART teaching modules, they are benefitting from using the School as a platform to hone their teaching skills, mentored by our tutors, to secure their accreditation as ART teachers. We have always been keen to mentor new teachers – if you have ever thought about learning how to teach, why not consider the support that we could offer by mentoring you and even funding your teaching course?

We are really grateful to all the faithful helpers who have signed up again to help on Saturday mornings, and by November they should all be back in the swing. However, that's not to say that we don't need any more helpers. We are keen to welcome new people onto the team. Helping does not have to be an onerous commitment, we are grateful to anyone who can offer help, however infrequent. Some helpers sign up to help nearly every week, but others may just commit to helping once a month or once every six weeks, or just being on stand-by in case we are short.



If you feel you can help on Saturday mornings you would be most welcome. This link takes you to a google form to give your availability:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFcW6L6ojWWcky3GKQ5IYRcmg-w6ijA3Ruqfp-P6VbKQbCAw/viewform?usp=sf_link

If you would like to know more about the outing organiser or quarter peal organiser roles, please get in touch – either of those roles could be an easy way of getting your 'Three Events Challenge' certificate, awarded by the Guild Ringing Master...

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

St John's Cathedral, Brisbane – *David Smith*

I guess it's people not towers that are members of SMG, but St John's would have to be one of the most distant towers at which members ring. We resumed ringing a year ago, though initially with quite strict restrictions so that we rang the 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12 for a few months. This actually proved to be a beneficial exercise with several local ringers saying that the challenge improved their striking. It was certainly challenging ringing the tenor to surprise minor.

But more recently, as restrictions have eased in England, the Delta strain has hit hard in Australia and New Zealand, with most of Victoria and New South Wales currently in lockdown, so no tower ringing there. We are lucky in Queensland to be fairly unrestricted at the moment as we are largely free of infection (though this can't last for ever, and we are not making adequate use of the time to get high vaccination rates – we are only at about 30% double vaccination here). We are all very strict about logging in to the tower (there's a QR code to scan as you enter), and I've just worked out how to get my vaccination certificate up on my phone!

So ringing is going ahead at St John's – we typically ring Plain Bob Major, and Grandsire, Stedman and St Clement's Triples for service ringing, plus a wide range of surprise minor, and call changes on 10 or 12 if we have enough ringers. On a good day we attempt surprise major at practice, but really need some visitors to make this work.

Long term effects of Covid? We haven't lost any ringers, but recruitment, never strong, has been zero. We also find that people do much less travelling (whether the result of travel restrictions or just natural caution), so we have had fewer visitors than usual, and other nearby towers (notably the new tower at Bundaberg, which is 260 miles away but that counts as 'nearby' for us) have not had the regular support and training from Brisbane that is needed.

International travel is still some way away, but I hope it will be possible to catch up in person at some stage in 2022.

Ringling Progress since Lockdown – *Margaret Burling*

After lockdown we started by ringing on smaller numbers than before, but recently we have got back to ringing all the bells in the tower when we have had enough ringers to ring them. To begin, we only rang for a limited time, but have now progressed to usual ringing times.

During lockdown we kept in touch with emails and at Solihull we had frequent 'Ringling Room' sessions, although I found these very hard and was unable to see where I was passing the treble, as I would have in the tower. The number of ringers is fewer than before, having lost some to illness (although most are temporary) and others deciding not to come back or having other commitments.

I was relieved to find that my knowledge of previous methods was still apparent and I surprised myself very early on by being able to call a half-hunt 120 of Grandsire Doubles even before I'd re-introduced myself to a plain course!

During lockdown I attended most of the St Martin's Guild talks on Zoom. I found these very interesting and, in many cases, very illuminating; so a big thankyou to all those who gave these talks. I can appreciate a lot of work went into them.

I still wear my mask for ringing and was pleased to find it protected us at a recent session when one of our ringers tested positive for Covid the following day and yet none of us caught it. Ventilation is easier in some towers than others. At Solihull we remove the windows and keep the door open, although I have to admit it might get a little chilly as winter progresses.

In early September, for Evensong, I ran my first quarter peal since lockdown. This really made me feel more confident about my ringing. Since then I have attended a couple of practices at Moseley on Thursday mornings, St Paul's on Wednesday evenings and I've become a regular at Shirley practices. At St Paul's I rang Kent Treble Bob Minor for the first time thanks to James Ramsbottom and many other helpers. This really gave me more confidence to return to Cambridge Minor (where I always struggle with the middle work). At St Alphege, Solihull, we have begun to ring plain courses of Solihull Bob Doubles – a method devised by Edgar Shepherd (a past ringing master at Solihull apparently) which is not always correctly described in some sources. I look forward to being able to ring touches of it at some point.

On Wednesday 22nd September I organised our first Special Practice since lockdown at St Giles, Sheldon, to ring various doubles methods with places (inspired by Phil Ramsbottom). It did not go to plan as only six of us made it out of the nine I had planned for, but we still managed plain courses of Reverse Canterbury Place, Antelope and Devon Place. We also attempted Winchendon Place, but didn't quite master it. I had rung Devon Place in Ringing Room so it was good to actually ring it in the tower!

Hopefully (along with Alan Cottrell) I can resume helping with the ringing school later in the year as I think we shall need all the extra ringers we can get! My photographs below are of Sheldon and Solihull respectively.



Ringling Master's Report – *Phil Ramsbottom*

Having just written a report for the October business meeting I'll simply use this opportunity to remind Guild members of the forthcoming Wednesday night workshops which are:

13 th October	St Pauls	6 bell workshop
20 th October	St Pauls	Treble Dodging Minor
27 th October	St Pauls	Grandsire / Stedman Caters
3 rd November	Erdington parish	Rounds and Call Changes
10 th November	St Pauls	6 bell workshop
17 th November	St Pauls	Treble Dodging Minor
24 th November	Solihull	Grandsire / Stedman Cinques

Further details will be announced a week prior to each event all of which start at 19:30. Also worth mentioning is the open ringing at Moseley St Mary every 3rd Thursday and the fun starts at 10:15.

Put these dates in your diaries if you think you might be interested in attending any of these and please get in touch if you'd like to know a bit more about them.

My contact details are: 07971 009689

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Sunset at Coleshill – *Mike Walpole*

Thanks to Mike Walpole for providing this image of a sunset over Coleshill. This picture faces west, towards Birmingham, and is taken from the battlements of St Peter and St Paul, Coleshill. Those readers of Ringing World will recognise this image from a recent edition!



News from Smethwick – Janet Horton

We were lucky to be able to do a lot of ringing at Smethwick over the last 18 months by virtue of five of us being members of the same household. Now ringing is open to the rest of the band, and we are back ringing on Sundays and Thursdays. However, the timings have changed slightly.

Sunday service ringing is currently 10:00 - 10:30 and Thursday night practice is 20:00 - 21:00. These will be reviewed over the next few weeks and may change. So please message us in advance if you are thinking of coming over.

We have excellent ventilation at Smethwick which involves opening both windows. We get quite a gale blowing through - so please wrap up warmly!

Another change is that there is now a set of traffic signals at the junction of Church Road and The Uplands. This reduces the amount of parking in The Uplands slightly. We recommend parking in Church Road. We know some people don't like parking where there is a cycle lane. However, this is advisory only and I have never, ever seen a cyclist use it (it has an adverse camber on the outside of a bend - so why would you?).

And to Finish

Thanks to Margaret Burling for providing some photographs of Guild towers taken recently. I'm sure you'll recognise this anyway, but for the record, here we see St Mary's Moseley.

