

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Happy new year to all. Here's hoping that 2022 continues the trend towards normality, and we can look forward to plenty of in-person ringing. I'll be stepping down from this role after Newsletter 40, so you're stuck with me for a little while yet, but if you fancy taking on the editor's role, do get in touch.

Thanks to all for the contributions to this edition and even in these slightly strange times, it's great that there is still so much to write about in a newsletter ☺

The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the Q4 results plus the Christmas Draw. Catt was our winner for the Christmas Draw, taking home just over £100, with Carl and Christine also winning just over £50. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating. This continues to provide a useful source of income for the Guild, raising £1,442 which will go towards funding events and projects in 2022.

October	1 st	John Gwynne	£54
	2 nd	Bernadette O'Dwyer	£16.20
	3 rd	David Large	£5.40
November	1 st	Richard Lewis	£54
	2 nd	Alison Edmonds	£16.20
	3 rd	Steve Pugh	£5.40
December	1 st	Will Davies	£54
	2 nd	Alan Cottrell	£16.20
	3 rd	David Flint	£5.40
<div>  </div>	1 st	Catt Smith	£103.96
	2 nd	Carl Jenkins	£51.96
	2 nd	Christine Barnell	£51.96
	3 rd	Mike Rigby	£12.99
	3 rd	James Ramsbottom	£12.99
	3 rd	Gill Fielden	£12.99
	3 rd	Mike Dodson	£12.99

BSoBR is back up and running – Clare McArdle

After the long-awaited return of the School in September, we almost managed a whole term with three towers. Groups at St Paul's and Harborne started off first with a third group at Northfield from early November. A couple of weeks were lost to illness, but overall it was a very successful term.

We had seven new and returning students at St Paul's in the Bell Handling group and I'm pleased to report that three of those students have achieved Level 1 of the Learning the Ropes scheme. We also welcomed Olly Bouckley and Sarah Vernon as new tutors.

In the Foundation Skills group, at Harborne, Eleanor Linford guided Max and Lex Earthquake to their Level 2 certificates in December (see photograph below of Max and Lex receiving their certificates).



The students at Northfield are working towards Level 3 and Level 5, under the tutelage of new tutor Andrew Brown – a combination that has proved to be working well. They have a way to go yet, but I'm looking forward to successes towards the end of March...

The scourge of Omicron has delayed the restart slightly, but we are hoping to be back on 15th January. A Level 4 (starting to ring methods inside) course at Handsworth will begin in February. We already have two students signed up, but there is room for a couple more. If this is something you think you could benefit from please get in touch.

Thank you to all the tutors and helpers who have heeded the call to arms. The pleasing results so far are thanks to everyone who has helped the School to get back on its feet.

The second photograph shows Harvey Butler receiving his Level 1 certificate from Tony Daw.



First Steps in Calling Touches – Keith Whitehead

Shortly before the first lockdown in March 2020, I took my first faltering steps in calling Plain Bob Minor. For some reason I was never interested in calling Doubles, where I suspect many people start. Lockdown intervened to halt my progress and my interest was taken off in many other directions on the multiple weekly Zoom / Ringing Room sessions that I attended or organised.

I was delighted when one of the first Wednesday evening Guild workshops organised by Phil Ramsbottom (once these had resumed) was on precisely the subject of calling touches for beginners. This meant I could pick up the threads again with expert guidance.

As usual the prospect of definitely being put on the spot makes you do your homework and turn up prepared and I managed the standard two wrongs and two homes called from the tenor for a 120. Others called a variety of touches of Grandsire Doubles and Plain Bob Doubles.

Practice back at St Alphege followed, where I became particularly attached to a bob every other lead as everyone gets to do everything and the calling uses every calling position, so is excellent practice for the conductor as well as more interesting for everyone else. I also made sure I didn't get stuck on the six and called it from other bells.

Armed with this success I turned up to Sheldon a few weeks later, as our weekly practice at St Alphege had been moved because of a service and was asked to call Plain Bob Doubles (for the first time!). A quick glance at Coleman suggested three homes, which came round successfully.

The second (and final) Guild workshop on the subject in December saw me (and others) trying further variations of touches. Four days later I had the opportunity, back at St Alphege, of calling a longer touch of Plain Bob Minor. Would I like to try a 360, perhaps? Again, I had done my homework and decided that if all went well during the 360, I'd throw in a single at the end and do it all over again for an extent. This went surprisingly well as the attached BellBoard entry shows.

I certainly wouldn't call myself a conductor. I can put the calls in but I probably can't put people right. But it's a decent start and a nice success for me to build on. Next will be Little Bob...

Solihull, West Midlands

St Alphege

Sunday, 12 December 2021

720 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Triona M Jowett
- 2 Malcolm J Paulson
- 3 Linda M Whitehead
- 4 Sand J Cooper
- 5 Mike Dodson
- 6 Keith D Whitehead (C)

For evensong and to welcome Christopher Thomas, the new Director of Music and Organist at St Alphege.

First extent (and first touch longer than 120!) as conductor.

Christmas Tree Festival at Shirley – Gill Postill

St James Shirley held a Christmas tree festival in mid-December, inviting lots of local groups to decorate a tree to reflect their particular interests. We were so pleased that it could go ahead again this year. It was amazing to see how many different groups took part and to see the very wide range of local interests represented. St James' bell ringers were keen to take part, and as well as decorating a tree, we held a mini open day in the tower. Because of Covid restrictions, we were only able to have a small number of visitors in the ringing chamber at any one time, but we were still able to offer an interesting programme.

After stressing essential safety requirements, we talked about the Shirley bells themselves, when they were installed and how we handle them. Using the middle four (suitably distanced from the visitors, of course), we showed the progression from rounds to call changes to plain hunt – and fielded a lot of interesting questions!

Here we are inside the church beside our suitably and elegantly decorated tree. L-R: Gwen Albrow, Adam Knight-Markiegi, Colin Baugh, Richard Andrew, Anthea Tinline, Richard and Gill Postill.



Winter Spice – Clare McArdle

Three years ago a group of guild members put on an “introduction to the world of bell ringing” for an organisation called Spice. Spice UK is an online social and activity club that organises a wide range of activities for its members to try. It proved so popular an event that we quickly had to schedule another one. When they contacted me again towards the end of last year, I had no hesitation in agreeing and fixed up two dates in the run-up to Christmas. As the events had done before, they were sold out within just a few days of being advertised on their site.

We had had such good feedback that I decided to keep the programme exactly as before, just updating the Powerpoint presentation a little. I contacted the old team and was very pleased that they all agreed to come and help again.

The 2-hour programme gave participants a whistlestop tour through the world of bell ringing. An introductory PowerPoint presentation got the evening started. We moved up to the ringing room and gave a demonstration of ringing from rounds through call changes to simple method ringing and then split the group into two smaller groups – one group stayed upstairs for a go at bell handling and the other group went down to the school room for an introduction to how methods work using hand bells. We had a break for mince pies and coffee and then the groups swapped over. An opportunity for questions at the end rounded off the evening before everyone went home.

Ten people had booked and nine of them came along, each paying a £10 donation. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and we fielded some very good questions from them.

We were all set for our second date in December when the rise of Omicron meant that we had to postpone. I've promised to reschedule the second event once case numbers are going down rather than up.

A big thank you from me to the team that helped put the night together: Tony Daw, Angie Wakefield, Simon Linford, Chris Mills, and Arthur Reeves – you did a great job. The photograph shows the group walking Plain Hunt under Arthur's supervision.



ART Conference 2022 – Annie Hall

In May 2022, the Association of Ringing Teachers will be holding its annual conference in the West Midlands and I wanted let you know of our plans.

It is being held on Saturday 7th May at the Erdington Academy in Birmingham. Transport links are excellent as the Academy can be found within one mile of M6 J6. The conference is later in the year than usual in order to minimise the risk the event has to be cancelled due to a winter Covid surge. In a break with tradition, the conference will be separate from the AGM, which will be held online on Saturday 5th March.

The second day of the conference weekend, Sunday 8th May, will be hosted by the Stewardship and Management Workgroup of the CCCBR. Through the leadership of Alison Hodge, this workgroup offers advice and guidance on matters including insurance, tower management, risk assessment, church law, health and safety, etc.

I thought it was important to emphasis the conference is open to anyone irrespective of ART Membership or even if they are an ART supporter or sceptic. We aren't talking about ART, we're talking about ringing – sharing what other people are doing and talking about topical events. People are welcome to attend both or just one of the days.

We are currently finalising the content and will send further details closer to the date. If you need any further information, please let me know.

Tower Handrail – Dave Reeves

With an increasing number of older ringers and health & safety considerations, we have fitted a handrail to the spiral staircase at Boldmere. Finding a suitable commercial supplier who could bend a steel pipe into the required spiral shape with the appropriate supports made the exercise difficult. In the end, a simple solution using 28mm HEP20 plastic water pipe attached by Munsen ring pipe fittings was adopted (see photo). Although this does not comply fully with Section K1 Part 1.36 of the Building Regulations, it is a reasonable approximation and certainly better than nothing. The components cost less than £100 and were readily available from Screwfix and Toolstation. There are some components left over from this exercise and these are available (free of charge) to anyone interested in doing the same at their tower.



My Three Events Challenge – *Sand Cooper*

I left work in 2020 just as the restrictions were gaining momentum and so my plans of doing more ringing and maybe even getting to a surprise practice or two were somewhat scuppered! But, as things have started to open up and in conversation with Phil Ramsbottom, who launched his Three Events Challenge last year, I have been gently nudged into doing something about it. I, once upon a time, rang 8-spliced. I will admit that Bristol and London weren't my strong point and every time we rang spliced the conductor would whisper to me before we began, so I'd know which place bell I would be and could brace myself! I had such a strong and willing band around me where I was ringing at Chichester Cathedral. I was in my late teens / early 20s and back then I recall learning a surprise method whilst being given a lift to East Grinstead, of all places. Looking now at what we then affectionately called the standard eight, I find I have barely any recollection of any of it and learning surprise methods, it turns out, is no longer really my strong point.

By now I'd accepted the challenge and set about booking the bells at Solihull and searching round for a band. Phil, once again, was really supportive in guiding me through the process and who I might invite. Richard Andrew also let me know who had, before the pandemic, been attending the Surprise practices at Shirley. Finding the right evening is going to be an ongoing issue but on a cold Wednesday night in December, with windows open and a gale blowing we braved the elements and met nine of us ready to ring Cambridge and Yorkshire. Now I've been ringing Cambridge Minor locally so extending to Major was fine really. But, not wanting to let myself down amongst some pretty strong ringers, I did my Yorkshire homework thoroughly and I was set to go.

I was so pleased with the outcome. Eleanor Linford and Charlie had come as a 'package' and what a welcome addition Charlie made. Sadly, two of the band had dropped out so Charlie willingly and ably rang the treble several times but she too made some great steps forward with Cambridge. The band were truly over-worked, no one sat out as there was 'standing behind' to be done. Andrew Brown ran the session for me. He has the right mix of kindness, high standards and encouragement so whilst I'd been a little concerned that I might be intimidated by the expertise and experience of those around me, I was fine and everyone was so helpful. By the end of the evening, the three weakest members of the band had made real progress and I'd achieved my goals of ringing a touch of Cambridge, plain course of Yorkshire and splicing the two. Well chuffed! And feedback suggests that others enjoyed the session and found it worthwhile too.

Feeling like a learner again has actually been quite liberating! And learning and moving forward is really positive. Not to mention the renewed insight it gives me when helping our learners move on.

By the time you read this I should have held my second event (editor's note – now postponed). I'd wondered about learning Superlative again (though at first glance to me this looked equally as incomprehensible, and I have no memory of it at all!). Agreement gained from those in the know (also endorsed by Simon's new book - *The Core Seven and Beyond*), I have every expectation that the tower's availability will have been confirmed, the band gathered and that having regularly refreshed Yorkshire and cracked Superlative, I'll have had another successful evening... hopefully!

There will be a third event and a fourth surprise method. And then to the question of maintaining these skills and maybe even progressing further. But I daren't even ask the obvious out loud. I can hear Phil's response already, if you want to ring it – arrange a practice! (and he's right, of course 😊)

Brumdingers (and Moseley generally) – Simon Linford

We are little bit depleted now post- pandemic but the young ringers continue on Thursday evenings usually split between Moseley and Harborne. One week before Christmas we took the Moseleyites to Harborne and had a great practice including call changes on eight by all the young ringers. Another highlight this 'term' was the first course of Plain Hunt Doubles with Brumdingers with no adult help at all. All are developing the skills, and it is often difficult to decide who needs to get the chocolate medal for greatest achievement of the week.

The next phase of Brumdinger recruitment is now being planned for February half term. I am going to adopt a slightly different approach this time by having a blitz learning week with 2-hour sessions every morning to try and accelerate a group of youngsters through to being able to handle competently in five days. We achieved this when we ran the 'Summer Camp' some years back, and the general school of thought is that with young ringers you need to get them to 'competent' as quickly as possible so they stick with it. I am principally aiming at those who will come regularly on Thursdays, but if you have a young recruit who you would like to have taught in a week then please let me know (starts Monday 21st February).



St Mary's bells are so difficult to teach on (what we wouldn't give for a light eight instead!) that teaching will probably be elsewhere. Because of the inherent difficulties with Moseley, we have agreed with the church to install a Higby Training Bell in the vestry next to the ringing chamber at St Mary's which will improve teaching facilities. Also approved in principle is a proposal to replace some of the pews in the south aisle with a mini ring so we can bring bellringing to younger groups in the church.

In wider Moseley news, St Mary's and St Anne's have now been combined as a single parish (previously it had been a joint benefice). To reflect this changed arrangement the band is going to combine into a single band, so ringing for services can be coordinated across the two churches, recognising that some of the band will lean in one direction more than the other.

Yet another Moseley bell project (we are making the most of a very good relationship with the vicar!) is an improvement to the ringing facilities at St Anne's. Bellhangers have visited, the

problems are clear, and seem easy to fix, so we are looking forward to their proposals in due course. The photograph shows Susan helping Simon Adams from Taylors to inspect the bells at St Anne's.

134th Henry Johnson Commemorative Dinner – Jenny Sunter (*Dinner Secretary*)

Don't pack your glad rags away just yet, Christmas and New Year may be over but the 134th Henry Johnson Dinner is beckoning!

It always surprises me how quickly the plans for the dinner come around following Christmas.

After last year's commemorative event went online, the Guild approved an in-person event for 2022. We managed to retain the booking for the Horton Suite at the Macdonald Burlington Hotel, Burlington Arcade, 126 New Street, Birmingham, B2 4JQ.

The Horton Suite will be pleased to host the joint dinner chairs of Janet and Steve Horton. And yes we did plan it that way!

While still relatively new to ringing, in comparison to most members of the Guild, this will be my sixth or maybe even seventh year. Regular attendees will know exactly how many dinners they have under their belts, or cummerbunds, or sashes even! Be interesting to find out who the current record holder is!

The food, drink and opportunity to dress up are all very nice, and the speeches can be quite illuminating and very funny, but the real draw is the banter with friends old and new.

The Horton Suite is a very nice function room with access to a bar area immediately outside the room. The menu will be a set three course dinner with options on the booking form to indicate dietary requirements. The menu is not chosen yet!

The hotel is very central and has good access. The hotel does not have its own car park, but has an arrangement with two car parks for reduced parking fees. Please see the hotel website for more details.

As advertised in Ringing World the booking system has now opened. Tickets are now on sale through eventbrite @ £40 (£30 if aged 18 / under and in F / T education, and also for BUSCR students).

To attend this event please book through the link: hj134.eventbrite.co.uk

For any members really struggling to book through this system please get in touch.

Covid is obviously going to be prevalent in everyone's minds. Please note that if the dinner is cancelled then a full ticket refund, minus the booking fee, will be offered.

If a ticket holder is contacted by test and trace and advised to isolate or limit contact and cannot attend the dinner, then the same refund offer will apply.

I look forward with hope and anticipation that a splendid evening can be had by all.

	<p>134th Henry Johnson Commemorative Dinner</p> <p><i>26th February 2022</i></p> <p><i>18:00 for 18:45 Start</i></p> <p><i>Burlington Hotel, Birmingham</i></p>	
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Coleshill ringers were ringing in the rain – Mike Walpole

Coleshill (the Warwickshire one) bellringers' start to Christmas ringing was nearly washed out after a blast of very wet weather started a flood in the ringing chamber.

Anything which could hold water was found to collect the deluge met on arrival to ring for Sunday service.

A quick inspection when the rain eased found that pigeon poo had blocked the spire drains and forced the wet stuff to find another route through part of the belfry, right through the clock room beneath and into the ringing chamber.

Ringer John Parkinson suggested a chorus of Ringing in the Rain. And yes, raindrops did keep falling on some heads until the flood stopped.

With everything dry, the ringers rang a couple of traditional Coleshill handling exercises - otherwise known as Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star and Little Donkey. They test the ringers' ability to stand at hand and back first time (avoids clashes) and rope sight (gets the rhythm right).

We don't know whether the town appreciates the seasonal offering from the tower, but po-faced looks from seasoned method ringers always turn to smiles when they try them.

Some call changes on the ten bells produce a couple of bars of vaguely familiar pop songs.

Roy Orbison's 24 hours from Tulsa, Pearl Carr and Teddy Johnson's Sing Little Birdy, (which took second place at the 1959 Eurovision Song Contest), and Billy Cotton's Bandshow wake-up call Somebody Stole My Gal are easily recognised by ringers of a certain age.

There might have been some income from the more than 20 bags of the white stuff collected by contractors, but a pigeon's gift to your car is not saleable as a fertiliser. Seabird poo (aka guano) with its high nitrogen content is, however. Seaside towers please note. Not a lot of ringers know that...



Ringling Master's Report – *Phil Ramsbottom*

As per last time, having just written a report for the AGM, I'll simply use this opportunity to let you all know what we have coming up in the next few weeks, details of which will follow in due course.

Date	Workshop / Practice	Venue
19 th January	Treble Dodging Minor workshop	St Paul's
26 th January	Grandsire / Stedman Caters practice	St Mary (Moseley)
2 nd February	Foundation Skills and / or Rounds and Call Changes	St Paul's
16 th February	Treble Dodging Minor workshop	St Paul's
23 rd February	Grandsire / Stedman Cinqes practice	Solihull

As always, the fun starts at 19:30. Please do get in touch if you'd like to know a bit more about any of these events or simply want to add your name to the list.

In addition, on Thursday 20th January there is the monthly open ringing event at Moseley St Mary between 10:15 and 11:45 and no appointment is necessary.

I'm delighted to see that we have our first recipient of a Three Events Challenge certificate and in addition two other Guild members have now had the first of their Three Events so well done to Jon Townsend, Sand Cooper and Helen Surr. If you feel this is something which might benefit you (and there's no reason why it wouldn't) and might appreciate a little help in setting something up, then please get in touch or click on this link to see all the information you require on the Guild website:

<https://stmartinsguild.org/calendar-news-and-events/the-three-events-challenge/>

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