

Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Plenty to read about this time and great to see so much progress being made across the Guild, from the youngsters in Brumdingers, to the slightly-less young elsewhere! Well done also to the Birmingham Team on successfully qualifying for the 12-Bell Final (was it ever in doubt?!).

I'm handing over the reigns after this newsletter – to Andrew Brown – so I'm leaving you in safe hands. This is my 20th edition of the newsletter as editor (I know bellringers like stats!), and it has been a pleasure throughout. I have only ever had to do some fairly lightweight nagging to get material, and more often than not, plenty of contributions come flooding in! So, thanks to everyone for their efforts.

Behind the scenes, also a big thank you to Clare who has diligently proofread these newsletters for me over the last five years. Clare has been excellent at spotting my editorial clangers (Grandsire Caters on eight bells, various name-based spelling mistakes, you get the idea!).

I'm now going to start up a similar (but probably shorter) newsletter for the Cheltenham Branch of the Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association. I moved down to Cheltenham in 2018, so it feels like a good time to 'jump ship' and do something closer to home.

The 100 Club – Clare McArdle

Please see the table for the Q1 results. Well done to the winners and thanks to all for participating!

January	1 st	Bernadette O'Dwyer	£51.50
	2 nd	Michael Wilby	£15.45
	3 rd	Rowena Shipley	£5.15
February	1 st	Peter Bennett	£51.50
	2 nd	David Hull	£15.45
	3 rd	Malcolm Paulson	£5.15
March	1 st	David Ingram	£50.50
	2 nd	Chris Mills	£15.15
	3 rd	AJ Barnfield	£5.05

Ringling for Commonwealth Games 2022 – Jonathan Townsend

Thursday 28th July between 19:00 and 22:00 sees the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games at the Alexander Stadium, Birmingham. The games run until Monday 8th August when the closing ceremony is held. Unfortunately, games' organisers advise there is no opportunity to formally accommodate bell ringing as part of the event. This should not stop us from ringing to welcome the games to Birmingham! There is still a (perhaps slim) chance that a 'community-based film crew' from the games will find time to visit a tower to televise ringing so you never know.

What we do know is that Birmingham ringers can rise to a challenge. You may like to ring to welcome the games, a Country, or even a particular athlete to Birmingham. How about ringing a 'year touch'? Please get in touch if you'd like a composition.

Whatever you ring, please link it to BellBoard Event, 'Commonwealth Games 2022'.

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

Treble Dodging Minor Workshops – *James Ramsbottom*

The St Martin's Guild Treble Dodging Minor workshops, held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month, started up half a year ago and have now become a regular part of the Guild's monthly calendar. The aim of these workshops was, and still is, teaching how to ring new methods by knowing above and below works, instead of looking at a blue line. Although Cambridge is a good starting point for treble dodging minor, these other less common methods are just as fun and as useful for progression.

Having established a base of methods at the end of last year, we've been adding new above and below works every month, such as King Edward and London. The regular students at these sessions have made amazing progress with all of them picking up the new methods quickly which shows just how effective this way of learning methods can be. The helpers at these sessions have also learnt a thing or two, with many of them ringing some of these methods for the first time. We've all had great fun in the process.

Although the current students in the group are now well into learning 6-bell methods above and below, there is always space for new people coming in at the bottom. The only requirement is that they've attempted a little bit of something like Cambridge or Kent beforehand. Even using just these two methods you can create a new method called Oswald Delight by ringing Kent above work and Cambridge below work.

The next Treble Dodging Minor workshop will be at St Paul's on Wednesday 20th April starting at 19:30. We will be focusing on ringing methods which are Norwich and 2nds place Norwich above, but we'll ring whatever our students want to try. New faces are always welcome, and please don't be put off by how well everyone else may appear to be doing. Soon you'll be as good as they are.

Brumdingers – *Simon Linford*

The young ringers' practices continue on Thursdays with the group split across Moseley and Harborne, with periodic joint practices. Some good progress is being made. Particularly impressive this month was Elizabeth and Orson learning Grandsire Doubles and ringing it for the first time over the space of about five minutes. Grandsire Doubles becoming more of a favourite than Plain Bob now.

Sunday evensong quarters since Christmas have seen a return to the tower of Kunal (now training to be a police officer) and a first of Stedman Doubles for Charlie, which was also a first for Matthew King and Malcolm Paulson.

Friday 1st April was an epic evening at St Mary's when a pack of 15 Scouts came on an 'experience bell ringing' outing. What made it more significant though was that the Central Council's Schools and Youth Groups Workgroup took the opportunity to film it as part of a project to provide film for the Scouts and Guides nationally to use. There was a professional camera man, Rachel Mahoney (ringing master of BUSCR) was the 'host' with a carefully prepared script, and additional help with bell handling from Oliver Bates and Ewan Hull. Lex and Max came in their Brownie and Guide uniforms, while fellow Brumdingers Caoimhe, Orson and Cian were there with two hats on – Scouts and bellringers! Tamsin arranged for two Guide Rangers to come along, one of whom turned out to be Esther who learned to ring some years ago.

All 15 of the visiting Scouts got a chance to do some learning about bellringing, call some call changes, do some backstrokes, go up the tower, do some handbell ringing with Clare, and swing around on the tenor (down!). Thanks to Orson's dad Mark for supplying all the Scouts, and Tamsin for arranging the Brownies, Guides and Rangers. The photo overleaf shows some of the group on their visit to see the bells.



Teaching Bell Handling – *Clare McArdle*

Have you ever considered what a useful skill learning how to teach someone to ring is? The Association of Ringing Teachers runs courses teaching people to teach. Courses are available to book on the ART events website (<https://events.bellringing.org>). If you look at the events list, you will see that the courses are run all over the country. As an ART tutor, I deliver some of these courses myself and often have to travel quite a distance to do so.

We could do with some more teachers in Birmingham. It would be nice to think that every tower in the Guild was able to take on a learner and teach them to ring, but sadly that is not the case.

If learning to teach is something you feel you would like to add to your skills, I would be happy to run a course in Birmingham. You don't have to be an expert ringer. You might have learned to ring quite recently – it can be an advantage as you can still remember how it feels and what does and doesn't work well. The criteria for enrolling on the course is to be able to ring a bell up and down and ring safely with a good handling style.

Please send expressions of interest to me at: bhamsor@gmail.com

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

BSoBR Update – Clare McArdle

Students continue to make progress at all levels at the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing (BSoBR).

In January, Thomas and Matthew Healy were awarded their Level 1 Bell Handling certificates at St Paul's (see upper photo) and a couple of weeks later Helen Surr received her Level 2 certificate at Harborne (see lower photo).



At Northfield, Elizabeth Wilby made strides by completing Level 3 in record time (see upper photo), enough time in fact to be able to join the new Level 4 group at Handsworth which started in February. Jane Morris achieved her first and second quarter peals within two weeks of each other, rounding off Level 3 by the end of March. Emma Clewlow became the latest student to graduate from BSoBR by completing the Level 5 in fine style with a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor on the penultimate session at Northfield (see lower photo).

Well done to all of the students who have made such good progress – not just the ones who have achieved awards.

The next sessions to start are Level 2 sessions (Foundation Skills) at Harborne at the end of April. Look out for the plain hunting course (Level 3) which is estimated to start in July. If you are interested in joining either of these courses as a student, please contact me at the School: bhamsor@gmail.com

We are always on the lookout for helpers, so if you've not yet taken the plunge to see what Saturday mornings are about, or you have helped before and would like to go back on our mailing list, then I would love to hear from you.



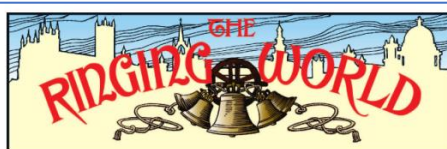
'Why Practice' is back! Mike Keeble

'Why Practice' is a ringing group consisting essentially of former students of BSoBR. We get together to ring and have a chat. Prior to lockdown, we got together to ring on alternate Tuesdays, rotating between towers we scrounged, mainly in Birmingham but also Brierley Hill and Drayton Bassett in the far east.

When we first started, we struggled but we slowly improved and could ring plain courses and even touches of simple methods. In October 2019 we rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles. Our confidence climbed.

Then lockdown struck. The 'Why Practice' format changed but didn't stop.

We turned to Zoom, had chats and organized presentations, with topics including stained glass windows of Brierley Hill, bassoon playing with demonstrations and how to tie fly fishing flies. Then thanks to very clever and generous ringers from across the pond, we had a new member, namely Ringing Room. Yes there were a few problems with the new band member. On occasions, they would stand their bell and refuse to ring any more, but we persuaded them to persevere!



On Tuesday, 30 June 2020

Ringing Room

120 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Christine Barnell
- 2 Eileen Keeble
- 3 Michael Keeble (C)
- 4 Tim Sunter
- 5 Andy Hardy
- 6 Jenny Sunter

First touch by Why practice band on Ringing Room

Some of us really enjoyed Ringing Room, but others found it very alien and didn't continue, so numbers dwindled, but we continued with some of us ringing two bells at once.

Another ringer joined us in 2021 who could ring brilliantly including ringing several bells simultaneously. I am sure many other Guild members have rung with them – their name is Wheatley! The only problem was that they had a tendency to ring a different method to the rest of us if we forgot to press the reset button!

As lockdown eased, we drifted back to the real world, and once general ringing had become more established we organised our first 'Why Practice' in Autumn 2021.

This year we started the 'Why Practice' sessions with a Zoom meeting on conducting call changes and simple touches of different methods. Thanks to Phil for coming along and helping us out. The first tower bell ringing was at Harborne 2nd April and it was really good. We are going to carry on organising meetings, but we need to take it slowly as not all towers are back to normal yet. Our twice monthly meetings may be a little way off. As for the future, another quarter is on the cards and maybe we could organise a summer outing.

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

Notable Performances!

Well done to Casey McLellan for ringing her first quarter peal 'inside' on 10 bells. This was a quarter peal of Grandsire Caters at St Paul's, called by husband James. Similarly, well done to Catherine Morley, with this same performance being her first on 10 bells.

Well done to Steve Maddox for his first quarter peal as conductor. Steve has made calling 120s of Grandsire his 'party piece' but had probably not imagined calling a quarter peal. However, if you can call one 120 of Grandsire Doubles you can call 10, and provided you remember to stick the 60 on the end rather than say 'That's all' triumphantly after 1200 changes, anything is possible!

<p>Birmingham, West Midlands St Paul Tuesday, 25 January 2022 in 46m (12–2–13 in F#) 1259 Grandsire Caters Composed by JPR</p> <p>1 Chris Mills 2 Richard Grimmett 3 Angie Wakefield 4 Casey McLellan 5 Catherine Morley 6 Graham Kelly 7 James Ramsbottom (C) 8 Rachel Mitchell 9 Tony Daw 10 Jonathan Thorne</p> <p>First inside on 10: 4 First on 10: 5</p>	<p>Moseley, West Midlands St Mary Sunday, 6 February 2022 in 43m (7–0–5 in Bb) 1260 Grandsire Doubles</p> <p>1 Sharon Wall 2 David Ingram 3 Tom Miles 4 Simon Linford 5 Steve Maddox (C) 6 Orson Gee</p> <p>Rung to mark the 70th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen's Accession First inside and as conductor: 5</p>
---	---

Learning the Ropes Masterclass (Birmingham, 2nd April 2022) – Janet Bond

For those of us who passed our LtR5 in 2019 and were subsequently invited to the October 2020 Masterclass, Covid was a cruel blow.

(I know, I know, worse consequences of Covid did occur. Even so....)

The invitation to attend on 2nd April was therefore a delightful email to receive!

The day started with a lovely welcome from Stef Warboys in the meeting room at St Martin's, where we had some videos of ringing to watch and more importantly, to listen to. This was a good ice-breaker for students and their allocated tutors for the day ahead, and effectively demonstrated the importance of actually listening in order to improve striking.

My group was to be based at St Laurence, Northfield, a lovely 14cwt ring of 10. Very efficiently we were given our train tickets and shepherded to New Street Station from where it was a ~15-minute train journey and a short walk to the church.

Our group leader was Arthur Reeves, who explained the format which was that each student would have several ringing sessions in turn, concentrating on their own chosen objectives for the day. The tutors would go through theory with us individually whilst the others were ringing. In this way, there was no wasting of time or hanging around and certainly I personally found it to be a jolly useful and productive day. My tutor was Phil Ramsbottom and he did get me successfully ringing Single Oxford Minor, eventually a touch thereof, with which I was absolutely delighted! My fellow students seemed to be doing just as well and enjoying themselves every bit as much as I was. Clare McArdle had made sure we all had plenty of tea and coffee to keep us going, as well as tutoring and organising behind the scenes.

We had such an enthusiastic bunch of tutors and helpers and everyone was so helpful, friendly and fun. I daren't try to name everyone in case I inadvertently miss anyone out and they were all truly wonderful, without exception.

After the Northfield session we returned to St Martin's where we were first treated to an expert band on 12, ringing something marvellous and I'm afraid I've forgotten what, but it may well have been Stedman Cinques. I'm always overwhelmed – and rendered a tad emotional – by this level of ringing. But I pulled myself together when we were all gently led through some rounds and call changes, first on 12 and then on all 16. Amazing experience. Heartfelt thanks to everyone involved.

Off to The Bull next, for a beer and some pub grub which was very gratefully received! We were certainly well fed all day as there were sandwiches and biccies provided earlier too.

The weekend continued with the opportunity to ring for service on Sunday morning. I grabbed the chance and rang at St Philip's, St Paul's and St Chad's.

I have come away from the Masterclass armed with lots of advice, plenty of new contacts and most of all, amazing memories of a smashing weekend!

The photo overleaf shows our group at St Martin's, ably led by Stef.

Thank you all, so much. 😊



News from Sheldon – *Margaret Burling*

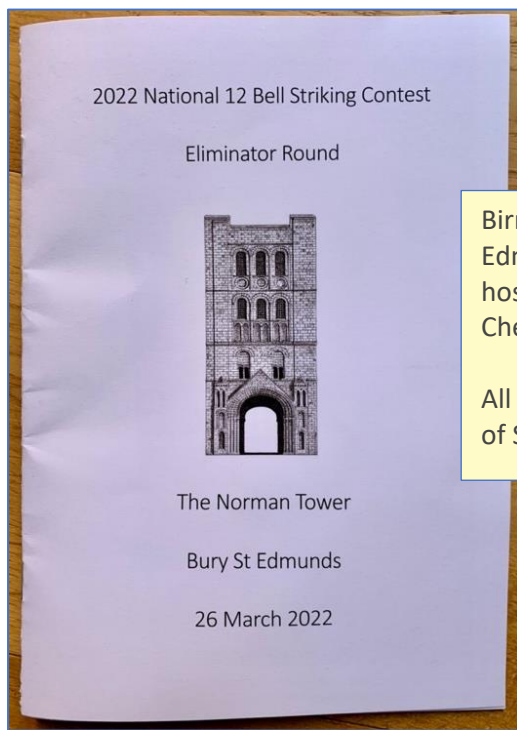
After a long break for Covid, our Special Practices resumed at St Giles, Sheldon, in February. Four of us were beginning to call Plain Bob Minor so I arranged an evening dedicated to doing just that. I called in help from at least six different towers in order to make this possible. By the end of the evening four of us who were comparatively new to calling had called at least two different touches of Bob Minor; not only that but we had all chosen different touches of Bob Minor. To cap off the evening, Alan and I provided refreshments which included home-made scones and cake, tea and coffee so most of us were able to stop and socialise which was something many of us had not been able to do for a very long time.

My March practice did not go to plan. I had organised this one to give two ringers who were competent at ringing plain courses of Plain Bob Doubles the chance to learn what happens at a bob. For different reasons neither ringer was able to make it on the day, but as we still had eight ringers we decided to make the most of it and so we practised calling Plain Bob Minor again. Despite the last-minute change of plan we all agreed it had been very worthwhile and of course we enjoyed the cake and hot drinks afterwards, but especially the chat with friends.

I am so grateful to all the ringers who regularly turn up when requested to these practices. Without their help it would not be possible. Even with the break forced on us by Covid restrictions, I have seen a noticeable improvement in our ringing ability.

So – if you are thinking that you need practice at some aspect of your ringing I hope you will, like me, organise some ringing sessions and complete your 'Three Events Challenge'.

2022 National 12 Bell Striking Contest, Eliminator Round. A Story in Pictures – Jonathan Townsend



Birmingham was drawn to compete at Bury St Edmunds. Two other venues simultaneously hosted eliminator events; London St Magnus and Chester Cathedral.

All teams rang the same test piece, 252 changes of Stedman Cinques.

Test Piece												
252 Stedman Cinques												
Composed by David E House												
2314567890E	1	2	3	5	8	16	17	18	19	21	22	
2314567E098	s				s					-	-	
(2314567890E)	-	s	s		-	-	-	-				



Beer

A selection of real ales and ciders will be on sale inside the Cathedral from 11:30, provided by the organisers of the Bury St Edmunds beer festival.

Beer List

Nethergate Brewery real ale:

- Venture (Gold 3.7%)
- Stour Valley Gold (Gold 4.2%)
- Suffolk County (Bitter 4.0%)
- Augustinian (Pale Ale 4.5%)
- Melford Mild (Mild 3.7%)

- Woodfordes Wherry (Bitter 3.8%)
- and a 'mystery' dark

Weston's cider

- Rosie's Pig (4.8%)

Price List

- Real Ale Pint £3
- Real ale half-pint £1.50
- Cider Pint £3
- Cider half-pint £1.50
- Red or White Wine large £3
- Red or White Wine small £2
- Soft drinks half-pint £1

Ringers gathered in the sunshine outside the Norman tower, delighted at the well-organised bar.

10

DRAW	PRACTICE TIME	INTO CHANGES BY	TEAM NAME
A	11.30	11.45	SRCY
B	12.10	12.25	Birmingham
C	12.50	13.05	Sheffield
D	13.30	13.45	Towcester
E	14.10	14.25	Bury
F	14.50	15.05	Ipswich
G	15.30	15.45	

Drawn second, to ring after The Cumberlands, was felt to be a good slot. In London, Melbourne and in Chester, Exeter would be ringing at the same time as Birmingham.



Some of the Birmingham squad enjoyed a Cathedral tower tour while other teams were ringing. Some great views from the top of the Cathedral lantern tower!

RANK	TEAM A-G	PEAL SPEED	JUDGE'S SCORE	TEAM NAME
1	B	3h30	83	Birmingham
2	A	3h24	78	SRCY
3	F	3h29	75	Ipswich
4	D	3h33	65	Towcester
5	C	3h26	55	Sheffield
6	E	3h33	40	Bury
7	(Leeds we're here in SPIRIT!! 😊)			

Some nerves at results time of course, but a happy Birmingham team proceed to the final to be held at Guildford on 25th June. We were sorry not to see friends from Leeds whose team was clobbered by Covid.

The top three teams from each venue will compete at Guildford. Birmingham, Cumberland Youths, Ipswich, College Youths, Melbourne, Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and Exeter.

The 134th Annual Henry Johnson Commemoration Dinner – Andrew Brown

I'd booked a room in the Macdonald Burlington hotel weeks before the event and as I was preparing to leave home in Worcester I received a WhatsApp message saying, 'Will get to the hotel for 6, lots of drinkies xxx'. It was from Rachel Mahoney and I was looking forward to seeing her in her cocktail dress and Ewan in a suit. As I got dressed-up, up in the room, it was amusing to think that last year I'd sat at my computer at home in a t-shirt and jogging bottoms for the 'alternative, on-line thing' – this time it was a proper event at which to see and be seen. The next message I received from Rachel was, 'We're by the bar xx' – at three minutes past six – no surprise there!

The Macdonald Burlington is an odd mixture of tired Edwardian opulence and 1990s kitsch. The Horton Suite was the latter. Entirely windowless, brightly lit and with a carpet that would take on a life of its own after one too many – more of a conference venue than a dinner venue. But the dresses, suits and bow ties more than made up for the environment. It was lovely to realise that there was almost no-one I didn't recognise out of the 100 plus in attendance. There was a fair amount of chuntering, however, about the complete lack of 'real' ale at the bar..! A pre-dinner gin and tonic would have to do – and there was a delicious Peaky Blinder Spiced Dry Gin – apt, in the heart of Birmingham.



At about 7pm we were ushered from the bar area into the main hall and found our tables. I was seated beside one of the few people I didn't recognise and introduced myself and asked his name. The response was unexpected, 'You may not know me but I know you. My grandmother was the midwife at the birth of

your father and his identical twin brother'. Ah... ok, but I don't recognise you - where are you from..? Again, the response was... odd – 'I'm from Oxford and you'll find out why I'm here, later'.

After a while everyone stood and applauded as the 'top table', led by Steve and Janet Horton, came in from the bar area. With a welcome from Janet, dinner began. The food was excellent – and surprisingly hot. A tomato soup with basil oil was followed by a chicken supreme dish and sticky toffee pudding. And the service was perfect – almost imperceptible. As the after-dinner coffee and tea were being served the speeches began. The Horton double act proposed The Queen and the memory of the late Henry Johnson before there was an interval to allow for mingling for a while.

After this, Janet proposed 'The Church' and then we were serenaded by three leads of Littleport Little Surprise Maximus on the newly restored Blews handbells – and I finally discovered why the gentleman with whom I'd shared dinner was here. He was Bernard Stone and he had recently refurbished the bells. He was the guest of the St Martin's band. Interestingly, he had decided that the tenor bell was a poor casting and it had been recast. We heard both the old bell and the new one during the touch – Alistair Cherry was ringing the tenors and nonchalantly turned and swapped the old one for the new one between one change and the next. To be honest, I couldn't hear any difference during the ringing but was able to ring both of the bells later, and there was a noticeable weakness in the old bell. Is this a common phenomenon in tower bells – bells that sound poor on their own can often be perfectly acceptable when rung with others..?



The handbell ringing was followed by the Guild tribute to Andrew Stubbs. This was proposed by Steve Horton, with a response by Michael Church and also by a family member, Heather Richards. Although Andrew had sadly died after a short illness on 2nd April 2020, it had been decided that his life should be celebrated at the first post-pandemic Henry Johnson Dinner to be held 'in-person'. Pre-pandemic, Andrew used to join the Cathedral Sunday service ringers in the coffee shop after ringing – so, although I only knew him from short chats in the coffee shop in his latter years, it was good to hear more of his life. Amongst many other achievements in ringing, he had been Life Vice President of the St Martin's Guild and had held the position of Master for 11 years. He was described as a man of great influence and wisdom who is sorely missed.



The sombre mood was lightened by the final speech of the evening – the Guild Master, Clare McArdle's, 'Health of the Chairs'. When I read this title in the programme I was a little confused as to what chairs were being referred to... but of course, it was the Hortons, the joint Chairs, the MCs - and great friends of Clare's. Whilst I apologise for remembering little of the speech, I did make a single note on my programme, 'I'm just checking the weather forecast'. It must have been something that stood out at the time but it meant as little to me when I re-read it as it probably means to you now – until I asked Clare about it. It seems that Janet's job means that she has to decide (or at least she is aware of a decision being made) whether or not to grit the roads in Birmingham, each day. She's often 'just checking the weather forecast' when she should be ringing, at Harborne. The connection between this and the excellent job that she and Steve did as joint chairs, has been completely lost to the effects of Peaky Blinder Gin and white wine on my memory – and to time, though. To the health of the chairs..!

‘Birmingham University of Bell Ringing’: please consider replying to the Council consultation by 2 May 2022 – Stef Warboys

Guild members will be aware, from periodic updates at Guild meetings, that The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing has for some time been exploring the possible use of buildings at Manor Park Farm as a secular training facility. This possibility has been pursued via collaboration with the Cadbury Barn Trust (a registered charity), who wish to improve the amenities and level of use of Manor Farm Park on the Bristol Road in Northfield. In order for matters to proceed any further, Birmingham City Council is consulting on the proposals for the future use of the land and buildings at Manor Farm Park.

The St Martin's Guild and the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing are intending to provide responses to the consultation **as organisations** but it would be very valuable if as many Guild members as possible were also to reply **as individuals by 2nd May**. The relevant links are given below:

Details of the Cadbury Barn Trust's outline plans can be found at Cadbury Barn Trust/public-consultation. More about the plans for the 'Birmingham University of Bell Ringing' can be found at <https://stmartinsguild.org/teaching/birmingham-university-of-bell-ringing/>. You can click through to submit your response to the Council's consultation from either website, and hopefully express your support for the proposed developments, or go direct to www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/manor-farm-park-consultation/. Enter your name to read the details, link to the charities and answer their six questions.

If any Guild Member has any questions regarding this initiative, please address them to Simon Linford or Clare McArdle.

Further background

Two charities, the Cadbury Barn Trust and the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, have plans to develop amenities to facilitate a wide range of recreational, educational, and cultural activities to promote good health and wellbeing. Building on the work of the Friends of Manor Farm Park and other stakeholders, including Bournville Village Trust, the proposals are consistent with George Cadbury's gift to the people of Birmingham but relevant to current day needs and expectations of park users and local residents. The charities would like park users, potential park users (including us as bell ringers) and South Birmingham residents to have their say on the proposals, and hopefully express their support, before the consultation closes on 2nd May 2022. If enough people do not show their support for the proposed amenities then the Council is likely to withdraw its support and effectively bring to an end the ten years of work by the Friends of Manor Farm Park, many other local organisations and the Cadbury Barn Trust.

The proposed development would see part of the site leased to the Cadbury Barn Trust to create indoor and outdoor meeting spaces, a community café and toilets and, in a joint venture with the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing, an educational resource to teach and promote bell ringing utilising digital simulators and total sound control in a modern, secular environment.

Birmingham City Council needs to apply to the Charity Commission for a variation to the terms of George Cadbury's will before the Council can lease out part of the site and allow trading activities to take place (needed for the development to be financially viable). Before applying, the Council is undertaking a further public consultation to demonstrate to the Charity Commission that there is demand and support from park users and local residents.

Ringling Masters Report March 2022 – *Phil Ramsbottom*

After the restrictions of the last two years, it seems fairly safe to say that ringing in the Birmingham area is in a very healthy situation, with Sunday service ringing and practice nights almost back to pre-lockdown levels. The downside of the current situation is that positive Covid tests sometimes mean people have to drop out and it seems likely that this will be the norm for a while longer yet. I hope that anyone who hasn't yet returned to their tower knows all too well that they will be welcomed as and when they feel they are ready to come back.

The weekly workshops are still popular and we are able to cover a broad range of the elements of ringing, including foundation skills, rounds and call changes, basic doubles and minor methods, basic bob calling, treble dodging minor and Grandsire Caters, all with a liberal dose of theory thrown in for good measure. I'm always interested to hear from individuals or towers with special requests for a workshop. It might be something new you'd like to try or perhaps improve on something you may have been struggling with for a while (happens to us all) so please get in touch.

Zoom presentations are still part of the mix though not at the previous level of frequency or audience size. They are a very effective medium for teaching theory and have been used in run-ups to particular workshops. I was pleased to be invited recently to participate in a Zoom theory session arranged by a group of Guild members for just this purpose.

Ringling at Moseley St Mary on the third Thursday is well attended and great fun. As well as the standard fare (rounds and call changes upwards) new things are tried, and the tea and cakes (for which thanks must go to Trish) are always superb.

I'm pleased to see other regular ringing fixtures in the monthly special practices held at Sheldon and also the 'Why Practice' group, as per the earlier reports in this newsletter. I hear that the twice monthly special practices at Solihull will also be returning soon so collectively there's plenty of regular extra ringing opportunities beyond your home tower to develop your ringing skills.

At the other end of the scale, congratulations to the Birmingham 12-bell team who won their heat at Bury St Edmunds by a comfortable margin last month. They go forward to the final at Guildford on 25th June where they will be up against the Cumberland Youths, the College Youths, Cambridge and current holders Exeter among others. The 12-Bell Contest final is always a massive social affair with impressive catering and I'd encourage anyone who has not previously been before to go along and support our 12-bell team.

Two recent notable peals deserve a mention. Firstly, a peal of Orion Surprise Maximus was rung at St Philip's Cathedral on 28th February to mark the 40th anniversary of the first such peal, at the same tower, to the same composition and including one of the original band members. More remarkable, and pointed out to me by a younger family member, was that being the closest possible date to the anniversary, the band absolutely had to score the peal. So, no pressure then! The other peal was Bristol Surprise Maximus rung on handbells on 29th March in St Philip's ringing room on the exact 50th anniversary of the first such peal. Two incredible achievements and both bands are commended for their remarkable performances.

Details for both these performances can be seen here:

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1497603>

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1507955>

The fact that this newsletter mentions workshops for those who may have only recently started out on their ringing careers, and peals rung by Guild members that are the absolute epitome of what can be achieved in ringing, demonstrates the range and diversity of what's available within the Guild, something of which we should all be rightly proud.

For members (and bands) who maybe prefer to 'do their own thing', rather like Monty Don suggests at the end of Gardener's World every week, here are a couple of things you might like to think about trying sometime:

- Book a different tower for practice night a few times a year, maybe one with more bells (10-bell towers have two rings of 6 and four rings of 5 so that can add to the fun).
- Challenge another tower to a striking contest. This could be at a joint practice night or any other time and at a different tower. No need to broadcast the event. Make up your own rules, if any at all. Judges could be one ringer from each tower or those 'sitting out'. There doesn't need to be a winner, maybe just some constructive comments from the judges. Regardless of the outcome, challenge another tower, maybe one from another Guild / Society. This isn't about winning, it's about having fun.

As always, a big 'thank you' to everyone who has come along to support Guild events over these last three months and to tower secretaries for making necessary arrangements.