



NEWS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the St Martin's Guild - issue 42

Editor's forward:

Welcome to issue 42 of the Newsletter and thanks for all the submissions. They range from muffle mayhem to a rarely rung bell at Tong through green shoots at Kingsbury and a 1000th quarter peal at Knowle. In Guild news, both Clare and Arthur have chosen to stand down from their posts as Master and Secretary. Clare says, 'It is up to the members to elect the Master [and Secretary], it should not necessarily fall to the Standing Committee to find a candidate. I hope you will see this as an opportunity to inject some "new blood" with fresh ideas to keep the Guild at the forefront of the ringing community'.

Please feel free to make any submissions, at any time, for the next edition.

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Ringing Master's Report:

With the exception of activities to mark the passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth II, the last three months have been a bit quieter, but then it has been the holiday season.

The last workshop in July morphed into a quarter peal at Perry Barr (at the vicar's request) to mark the opening of the Commonwealth Games. Due to all the heavy security surrounding Alexander Stadium, the site for the games, the biggest challenge was managing to get to the tower and I'm grateful to the band for stepping up to the mark and achieving this. It was coupled with a further quarter peal at Perry Barr to mark the closing of the event. It was good to see other Guild towers ringing to mark this global event which included a peal of Stedman Cinques at St. Martin's. The regular weekly workshops took a break in August and then due to the national period of mourning only one workshop took place in September at St. Annes Moseley focussing on calling plain minor which I understand was a great success.

Future workshops include Grandsire triples on 26th October and raising and lowering in peal on 9th November, both will be at St. Pauls. Please get in touch if you'd like to attend either (or both) of them.

In the coming months I plan to visit a few practice nights at various towers to get a feel for what's happening more generally across the Guild and hopefully meet a few new faces. One of the main purposes of the Guild is to 'help maintain strong local bands of ringers who can maintain ringing for church services' and I'm keen to hear from bands about what they feel the Guild could do to help them continue to achieve this. I have visits arranged for October but if you'd like to be next on the

list then please get in touch. We can arrange a convenient date and discuss a few ideas. Going slightly 'off grid' there was a very well attended special event in August at Tong, Shropshire reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

The St. Philip's band who entered the Robert B Smith 12 bell contest at St. Margarets in Leicester in September are to be congratulated on attaining 3rd place again - that's now four times in a row.

The Thursday morning ringing at St. Marys in Moseley continues as it has been. Ringing is dependent on who turns up and there are usually a few learning opportunities included, which makes for good conversation over the

tea, coffee and cakes. Thanks, as always, to those of you who come along to these sessions and especially to Trish for the fabulous catering. If anyone wants to come and join in the fun, these sessions are held every 3rd Thursday of the month at 10.15am - just turn up and you'll be guaranteed a welcome.

Elsewhere in the Guild there is a whole raft of other activities happening, be it regular Sunday ringing and practices to peals of the very highest standards and everything in between. It all contributes to making The St. Martins Guild what it is today, a very strong, active, supportive and vibrant community for which you all deserve a big 'thank you'.

Phil Ramsbottom

Ruth Shepherd rings her 1,000th QP at Knowle.

The footnote to the Quarter Peal at Knowle on 16 October marked the celebration of Ruth Shepherd's 1,000th QP on the bells. Whilst this is a notable landmark, what is not recorded is that Ruth has been arranging the (almost) weekly QP attempts at Knowle for the evening service since the late 1980's when her sons started ringing. During that time, there have been nearly 1,400 QPs scored at Knowle, the vast majority of which were with ringers 'booked' by Ruth; so, with the inevitable losses along the way, her tally of QP bands arranged probably exceeds 1,500!

For those who like statistics, here are a few relating to Ruth's 1,000 QPs 'career' at Knowle:

First QP at Knowle rung on	31 October 1976
	Number
Date touches included in total	5
Rung on the 'old' bells (pre 1979)	24
Rung on the 'new' bells	976
Favoured bells:	
4th	350
6th	358
Conductors included:	
Shepherd family	131
- of which conducted by Ruth	2
Stephen Shipley	599
A J Barnfield	41
John Anderson	34
- and a dozen others!	

Well done Ruth!

St Martin's Guild
On Sunday, 16 October 2022 in 43m
Knowle, West Midlands
St John the Baptist, St Lawrence, and St Anne
Tenor: 9-3-7

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Jill Erskine
- 2 Bridget Osmond
- 3 Richard Andrew
- 4 Ruth E Shepherd
- 5 A J Barnfield
- 6 Rowena Shipley
- 7 Stephen Shipley (C)
- 8 Ann Smart

For the evening service.

Celebrating Ruth's 1,000th QP at Knowle.





The spider moved in and the Solihull ringers moved out!

I guess like everyone, we've been thinking Health and Safety at Solihull, and whilst Ecclesiastical allow for us to leave our bells up because of the weight of the tenor, we knew that to have a locked spider would be best.

So, having copied the arrangement at St Mary Moseley, our spider is now in place! It's beautifully turned wood and the rope is locked into a key cabinet so only we can release it. It was made for us by one of our church wardens in memory of his wife and we have made a donation to APS Support, a charity for whom he has so far raised £315K.

So, why have we moved out? Well, the next stage to the repair of one of the windows is so delicate that we can't afford to create any vibration. It's important to keep the band together and we are anxious that none of us should get out of the habit of practicing on Tuesday evenings and ringing for Sunday services. So, in the coming weeks we are taking our practice, lock stock and barrel, to other local churches and will be ringing at Knowle, Moseley, Packwood, Shirley, Yardley

and the Jewelry Quarter to name but a few. Sundays have proved more challenging. We're very lucky in our Parish to have regular Sunday evensong, something that's increasingly rare, and we haven't found anywhere that, as a band, we can take our Sunday evening ringing. Though, no doubt as individuals, we will help out where we can. However, Sunday mornings we are off to Bickenhill where it has been some years since they have had a band of ringers and their bells now generally stand silent. When we agreed that we would start ringing there for Sunday morning services they were over the moon. Our first Sunday just happened to be the day that Bishop Anne was visiting them and it was also the Proclamation of the New King - so we rang with no muffles in celebration. A few of the band also rang a quarter peal the day before. We used our muffles to ring fully muffled for the Sunday before the Queen's funeral and the day of the funeral. As I said, the local congregation are over the moon that we're ringing there. We will of course be back at Solihull just as soon as it's possible but if we can inspire others to learn and ring at Bickenhill, then all well and good.

Sand Cooper



Central Council Weekend - Roadshow Report.

After the main meetings of the Central Council Weekend held on the Saturday, 4th September, 2022, at Nottingham Trent University, the Sunday was devoted to the Roadshow. This followed a similar format to that laid down at the CC Weekend held at Goldsmiths College in London in 2019 (the last time a meeting of this type was possible).

There was a good selection of exhibitors covering many aspects of ringing and including the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART), Avon Ropes, Big Wilf's Bell Muffles, the Carillon Society of Britain & Ireland, Handbell Ringers of Great Britain, John Taylor & Co (bellfounders), The Ringing World, the Young Change Ringers association (YCRA), and also several Central Council Workgroups including CCCBR Publications, who had their new book 'Beginners Stedman' on sale – well worth a read if you are starting to find your way through the intricacies of Stedman.

There were also a number of talks during the day on a variety of ringing-related topics, including 'Engaging young ringers', 'Retaining your ringers', 'Insurance and Risk Management in relation to bell ringing', 'How can we be the

best teacher for our learners?' (given by our own Arthur Reeves), 'Ringing Simulators – Friend or foe?', and 'What is out of tune?', a fascinating talk given by Nigel Taylor (formerly head tuner at Whitechapel Bell Foundry) about the perception of what constitutes in tune or out of tune, and what the human ear can accept as in tune. Nigel also illustrated his talk with short recordings of several rings from around the country and how their bell frequencies measured up against accepted methods of tuning.





And of course, there were up to half a dozen mini rings - another essential part of any ringing roadshow. Some were set up inside, such as the Maypole Bells where the bells are at ground level (see accompanying photo), while larger mini rings were outside, such as the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry and the new Mobile Belfry 2.0, a joint initiative between the Central Council and Taylors bellfoundry, making its first public appearance (again see accompanying photo).

All in all, another successful Roadshow, with something of interest for every ringer whatever their level of ability.

Richard Andrew
St Martin's Guild CC Rep

Brumdingers.

Brumdingers continues to be the place to be on a Thursday evening for the Guild's young ringers. Groups run at Moseley and Harborne with a joint practice about once a month.

The most we have had at Moseley is nine, with the locals now regularly joined by James and George Ellis, and Thomas and Matthew Healy. We were able to ring James' first quarter on a working bell in July but given his rate of progress it is now difficult to keep up!

The news of the death of the Queen came in the middle of one of our practices, leading to the Brumdingers taking it in turns to toll the tenor (somewhere between 90 and 100 times), before then ringing the bells down and getting the handbells out.

A quarter with all youngsters is planned before Christmas, and there will be competition for places in the Youth Contest next year!

Simon Linford



Such an Honour and a Privilege to ring for the Queen and King Charles.

We were all, of course, saddened by the loss of the Queen. Thoughts turned to ringing to mark the occasion and yet, we'd stopped ringing at St Alphege the week before because of the stonework and window repairs. At a time of national mourning we're perhaps all inclined to feel bereft, but having a purpose can most certainly help. To think that we might not have the chance to ring to mark the passing of our Queen was doubly saddening. So, the negotiations began. Conversations and emails between the Diocesan Advisor, the Parish Wardens, the Priest in Charge and the Project Manager, resulted in a pragmatic decision which allowed us to ring on the day following the announcement and, again, on Sunday afternoon prior to the Parish Service for her late Majesty. We were so grateful and felt so privileged to be able to ring.

The agreement came at 9.00am on the Friday morning which was the call to action. Some years ago we bought a replacement set of muffles but retained the old ones for just this occasion. A few of us worked under the bells to fit both sets and managed to be ready on the Friday with just 40 minutes to spare. Never mind the muffle kerfuffle we've been reading about, we've had our own muffle messing about what with muffles coming on and off at Solihull and then, because we've been ringing at Bickenhill, we took our muffles there. But, as if that wasn't enough messing about, we helped to

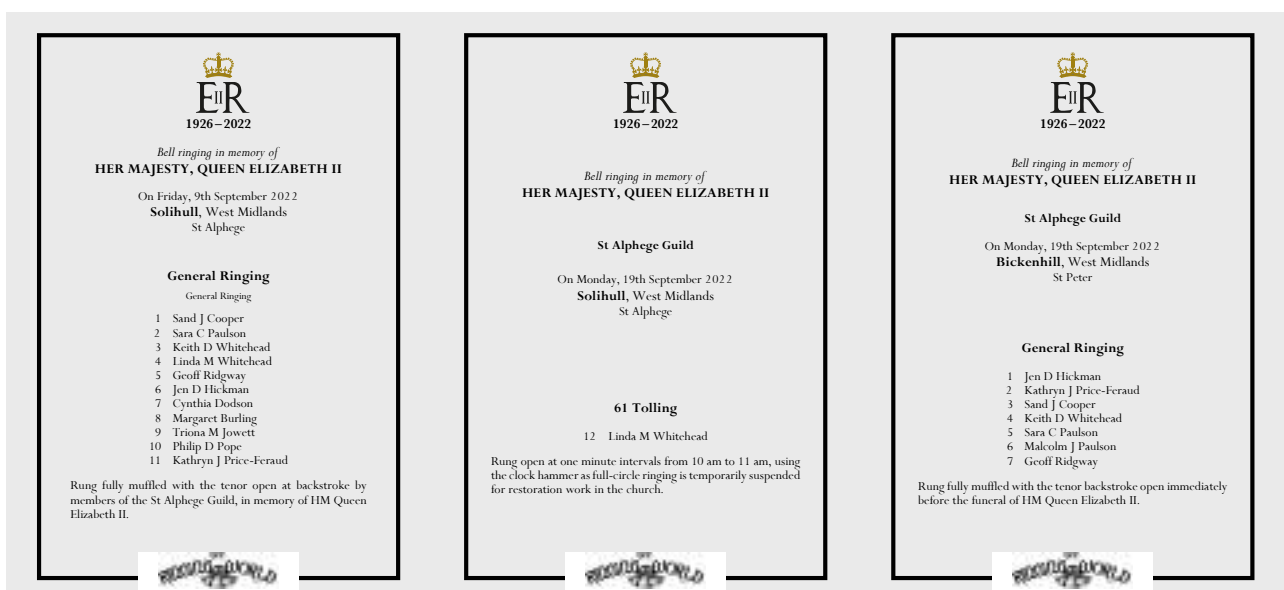


remove the muffles at Packwood before our practice which we had moved there for the day after the funeral. It's all been very educational and all I will say is that we don't know we're born at Solihull - not only do we have beautiful bells but we have a lovely belfry too!

Back to the ringing. The Saturday of the proclamation of the King some of the band set off to Bickenhill where they rang a Quarter Peal in celebration. We'd pushed our luck far enough at Solihull and ringing really had to stop. However, for the Queen's funeral, a volunteer chimed the tenor every minute for the hour before the funeral while the rest of us were back at Bickenhill.

We're really honoured to have marked the events of this historic time with our ringing both at St Alphege and at St Peters, Bickenhill. What an honour to ring fully muffled for the Queen at both towers and we were really proud of what we achieved.

Sand Cooper



My Three Events Challenge.

I've written previously in these Newsletters about various workshops I've organised over the years (issues 26 and 31 if you want to look back!) so here are my latest musings on what we've been doing at St Alphege, Solihull.

After the lifting of lockdown restrictions it took a while for me to put a schedule together with enough people to practice something useful, and a few planned workshops were cancelled through lack of numbers. During 2022 we've had a Method of the Month up the tower, which is a great idea, but it's very easy to move on to the next method and forget the previous one before it's become part of the normal tower repertoire.

So, my first TEC event reprised one of these - St Simon's Doubles. With several learners, the focus was mainly on ringing PCs confidently from a variety of bells, which we achieved. The second revisited Cambridge Minor, which is still a work in progress for me despite several workshops. Once again, the focus was on starting on different bells and trying to get through PCs successfully, though I did try calling a touch at the end. The third again reprised a recent Method of the Month - Single Oxford. This saw excellent progress, with several different touches, some called by me. At the end, we started splicing it with Little Bob.

In all of these, the purpose was to push the band forward but with an element of personal challenge for me. I'm in the early stages of saying Go and Stop and calling touches so some provided an opportunity for me to have a go – or several!

Readers of the last magazine will know that we are currently unable to ring at St Alphege, as repair work is taking place on a fragile tower window, so further workshops will have to wait until 2023, but at least I managed to squeeze my three events in.

Keith Whitehead

New shoots sprouting at Kingsbury.

What an eventful twelve months since October 2021. Kingsbury tower was really in the doldrums, with only three local ringers for Sunday service.

We were grateful for Phil Ramsbottom's thoughts on our situation. We were also extremely grateful that David Jackson, with the tremendous support of his wife, Anne, agreed to be our Tower Captain. We started running two practices a month (2nd & 4th Fridays). This falls in with the current services on the 2nd & 4th Sunday. We wanted the village to get used to hearing the bells again. We have received marvellous support from local towers and "things" are looking much better.

David thought it would be wise to ask Taylor's Foundry for a report on our 53 year old bells. Simon Adam's was incredibly helpful in this respect and, although a considerable amount of work is needed, this has been sanctioned by the church council and DAC. The work starts on 17th October 2022 and we look forward to continuing our ringing progression sometime in November.

Elaine Lane



An evening at Tong, Shropshire.

In July one of Phil Ramsbottom's emails said "please keep an eye out for a notice of something a bit different happening on Wednesday 24th August – and it's not a workshop!"

He was right. It was not a workshop but an evening of open ringing for Guild members (and friends) at St. Bartholomew's Church in Tong, Shropshire. I had heard a lot about ringing at Tong so I agreed to go on a 'watch only' basis. I also knew nothing about the history of the church. A quick check with google. I was intrigued and ready to visit, especially having read on the National Churches Trust site that "St Bartholomew's church is a 600 year old treasure house of alabaster tombs, medieval carving, history and scandal, often described as The Westminster Abbey of the Midlands". There were also references to William Shakespeare and to Charles Dickens, whose relative had worked in the village.



A wedding party stayed to watch and listen to the ringing - and the floor slopes up all the way from the back of the church to the alter.



Elliot and Tony ring the great bell with Elliot's Dad, Luke, watching.



The dimly lit side chapel ceiling.

There are rules for when the Great Bell of Tong can be rung or tolled. The four days each year that the Great Bell can be rung are Christmas Day, Easter Day, Whitsunday and St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24th).

The church did not disappoint. There was so much to see that I almost forgot that these bells had such a long draft. Even when the ringing was over, ringers were still trying to see extra points of interest of the church including trying to see the detail of a ceiling where there was no light; they could be seen grouped together with the torches from their mobile phones shining on the ceiling.

Little did I know that this was going to turn out to be one of the most enjoyable evenings ringing I have had in a long time. I arrived late, not unusual for me. The ringing had already started. I entered the church not knowing what to expect but there was a relaxed atmosphere. Everyone was encouraged to have a ring.

I was surprised to hear myself saying yes when Phil asked, 'Are you going to have a ring Stella?' He asked which bell I would like to ring. I had heard comments that the floor



Andrew ringing the great bell.



The complete set of (1892) rules for when the great bell shall be rung.

sloped in places and added an extra challenge so I selected one where I could concentrate on my ringing. I asked Tony Daw to stand by me 'just in case'. After the initial pull off, where my arms did not want to bend (through nerves) I settled down and thoroughly enjoyed the ringing. Rounds and call changes, and rounds on 7 with the Great Bell ringing behind, were rung. The last ring of the evening was London Surprise Minor.

There was an opportunity for everyone to toll the 'Great Bell' of Tong. The end of the rope had two tail ends spliced into it and Phil organised the tolling in pairs. Despite the two tail ends a few people rang it on their own.

I spoke to the tower captain about the church and his ringing practice nights. I was surprised at the end of the conversation to hear myself saying 'I will be back!!'

My thanks to Phil for organising a great evening out.

Stella Smith