

The Quarterly Newsletter of the St Martin's Guild - issue 43

From our new Master:

Thank you for electing me as Master of the Saint Martin's Guild. Clare is leaving the guild in a strong position and I am looking forward to building on her hard work.

For those of you who don't know me I ring at St Martin's in the Bullring and at Moseley. Despite having lived in Birmingham for 16 years I also maintain my London ringing connections and I am a Sunday service ringer at St Paul's Cathedral which takes me down there a couple of times a month. For those of you who still can't place me I'm also Charlie Linford's mum and her taxi service.

The Saint Martin's Guild is generally in good strength and has bounced back well post pandemic but there are gaps in opportunity that I would like to help the other officers, bands and individual ringers fill. The first of these is in surprise major development and I am planning to organise a series of Saturday evening practices working through a

structured programme of methods from the Project Pickled Egg book (author Simon Linford, published by the Ringing World, available from the guild library). These will be on the first Saturday of the month starting on 4th February at Edgbaston. The special methods are Bristol and Lessness with Cambridge, Yorkshire and Superlative for spliced.

I also feel that there are gaps in steeplekeeping experience across the guild and that some towers may be struggling with basic maintenance. There are pockets of real strength in the guild and I'm looking to encourage towers and individuals to share this expertise around.

Exciting times ahead and lots of opportunities. I look forward to seeing you at a guild event soon.

Eleanor

Ringing Masters Report.

I feel it's safe to say the last three months of the year have seen the usual level of activity within the Guild continue.

By way of including something not usually mentioned in my reports, I had a quick scan of the Guild peals rung during the last quarter and was pleasantly surprised to find that of the 23 peals rung as good as 50% of them were on 12 bells. That really is quite an achievement though I'm sure this probably isn't the first time this ratio has been achieved. It's also worth remembering that it requires quite a considerable high-end talent pool to be able to pull off some of these quite staggering and complex performances and those involved deserve a special mention for achieving this level of peal ringing of which the Guild can be rightly proud.

Meanwhile back here on planet earth, there have been four workshops, all very well attended, covering topics such as improving bell handling, raising and lowering in peal and Cambridge surprise minor. More detailed reports on the latter two workshops are elsewhere in this newsletter. My thanks as always to those who are eager to come along to either improve and/or learn something new and of course to the many helpers without whom the workshops simply wouldn't happen. I'm very grateful to you all.

The regular Thursday morning open ringing at St. Marys in Moseley carries on unabated with a wide range of six bell methods being managed, including spliced, and on eight bells the dizzy heights of Grandsire, Stedman and little bob have been achieved. A special 'thank you' to Trish who unstintingly keeps us

supplied with tea, coffee and cakes during the morning. If you're interested, these sessions are held every third Thursday and open to anyone who would like to come along and join the fun which incidentally begins at 10.15am. Having been promoting the 'Three Events Challenge' throughout the course of last year via emailings and newsletters, at the recent AGM it was a great pleasure to be able to present 'Three Events Challenge' certificates to four Guild members. Although the main purpose of the challenge is simply to introduce ringers to the idea of arranging their own ringing events and no more than that, Margaret Burling, Keith Whitehead, Sand Cooper and Max Earthquake all arranged three ringing events in order to personally benefit from some focussed ringing practice which they all did to great effect. I'd like to think that more Guild members might be inspired to do likewise. The whole thing is only really intended as a bit of fun whilst at the same time demonstrating how easy it is for members to arrange their own ringing. If this is something you'd like to try, there's more information on the Guild website [here](#) and I'm more than happy to help should you require any assistance.

Phil Ramsbottom

Brumdingers & Moseley.

Thursday night practices are always good fun, and have got a bit longer as the ringers have got older. From those early days of Brumdingers when ringing six bells in rounds was a target, we now ring lots of different methods at the same time as trying to develop skills including ringing heavier bells. In the last few weeks we have rung Stedman Doubles, a remarkable first attempt at Stedman Triples, Dixons, Plain Bob Doubles, Minor and Triples, Oxford Treble Bob Minor, and the newly named Pineapple Road Slow Course Doubles. Perhaps the hardest thing we do is Devon call change ringing. We often start the practice with a raise and at least a half peal of Sixty on 3rds. It is a real test of bell control, and the Brumdingers are gradually getting to the point of liking it half as much as I do!

We had an exciting new arrival at Moseley just before Christmas when Matthew Higby's

portable(ish) training bell arrived at St Mary's and was erected next to the Christmas tree in the side aisle. This is a precursor to us having our own installed so it can be rung from the room next to the ringing chamber, and enables the PCC to see exactly what it is. It has already become a talking point, as well as being useful on practice night to give our learners more of a go.

We have three learners who have been at the School. James and Lucien are just about ringing rounds now and Vicki is close to handling unaided. It will be good to have a few more people because we do often struggle to have enough to ring St Anne's as well as St Mary's.

Quarter peals this quarter included Caoimhe's first, a first of Bourne Surprise Minor for most, Charlie's first Minor as conductor, Orson's first of Bob Minor and (drum roll please.....) Stella's Stedman Doubles!

Moseley ringing features in the new Central Council [eBook](#) on Devon call change ringing. There are pieces of ringing filmed at St Mary's in all the chapters.

Simon Linford



The training bell in the church at Moseley.

St Martin's Guild outing to Leicester 2022.

It was an early start. Thank goodness our original plans to parkrun had been abandoned! As some of the more geographically distant members of the St Martin's Guild, we had an 8.15am departure from Selby. However, with our son Ewan driving we did arrive in Leicester for the Guild outing faster than anticipated!

The towers were familiar for us, given that Leicester had been Ewan's University location and a place for a previous York outing. First up was St Margaret's, a splendid 35 cwt 12. New Guild Master Eleanor Linford was very much in charge and confidently directed the ringing including encouraging lots of people to ring in unfamiliar parts of the circle. This has been an initiative which Guild member Julia Cater and myself have been encouraging over the last few years so it was splendid to see (amongst others) Charlie Linford, Susan Webb and Tracy Stevens all ringing heavier bells.

After St Margaret's, there was a brisk walk across town, via a sneaky coffee for some, and on to the Cathedral's 25 cwt 12. Once up the stairs and across the roof I remembered the rather fine iron spiral staircase in the ringing room, and a number of small children hiding behind it on cushions the last time we were there. Arthur Reeves was in charge here and again there was some lovely ringing, especially from Matthew Healy, as well as some more back bell focus for our younger ringers. Here, we rang Stedman Cinques and Cambridge Maximus to stretch us all. We also took the

obligatory photo – if some of us look a little nervous perched on the edge of the Cathedral roof, it is because we were!

Then there was a longish lunch break which included time for those who wanted to explore the rather fantastic Richard III museum to do so. This includes an opportunity to see the famous parking space where his skeleton was discovered in 2012. Others opted instead for the alternative cultural experience; the pub!

After lunch, another short walk to the 15 cwt 10 at St Mary de Castro, ably run by Clare McArdle in much the same inclusive and stretching style that we had seen at both towers earlier in the day. Amongst other ringing, there was a focus on 10 bell ringing including the opportunity to ring inside to Plain Hunt for those who don't often get the chance to.

There then remained the small task of walking back around the inner ring road to St Margaret's to retrieve the cars and journey home. Some of us were zooming back to Yorkshire, but most headed west to Birmingham.

As a more geographically distant member, I'm always very grateful for our continued involvement with the St Martin's Guild and am keen to participate as much as I can. We always enjoy ourselves at Guild events and are always made to feel very welcome. We'll keep coming back. My only question is: where will it be next year?

Alison Edmonds



Ring up – and down – in peal.

One Wednesday evening in November a group of about 10 of us climbed the stairs at St Paul's for a workshop, that I'd suggested, on raising and lowering in peal. We don't practise this at Shirley, unlike some other towers, so some of us can be rusty when we do try.

Even in towers where you do ring up each time you ring, then lower the bells at the end, this is just one go per ringing session. It's unusual to get more practice. So a dedicated workshop was ideal, a great way to try raising and lowering in peal over and over.

OK, we weren't raising all 10 bells in peal by the end of the night - but we did improve. In fact, taking it back to basics and aiming to raise just a few bells in peal was better practice. We started on just two bells, keeping a steady beat between the two. This is harder than we imagined, but an important foundation for keeping a good pace - essential for ringing or lowering in peal. Moving up to three bells gave us a chance to keep that pace but with an extra bell. Again, it sounds simple - and it will be for many of you - but it's a

useful exercise to take back to local towers. Why struggle with a ragged raise or lower on six when you can break it into two sets of three and practise getting the beat right.

As it was a dedicated workshop, not a normal practice night or service ringing, we could play around with these exercises. We could start to raise a bell, level off at whatever point we wanted, not just at the balance, then come down at will. Together, hopefully! It's a bit like learning to drive but trying to park. With most lessons, you don't get much practice at parking but if you have a whole session on it, you improve. You have plenty of goes and then start to consolidate those new skills.

Phil led the group as the dedicated Ringing Master that he is, while a few of us helped out, with Phil providing guiding words and only the odd joke or anecdote (really?!). It was great to see Guild members who I hadn't seen at other workshops and it shows that there is a need for this type of dedicated practice.

Adam Knight-Markiegi

A trip to tulloch.

We decided, many years ago, having seen information on TV, to give bellringing a go. We were welcomed by the band and encouraged and supported in our learning by the Tower Captain and his wife and we continue to ring at St Leonard's, Beoley, Redditch.

As part of our learning journey and after Covid had interrupted our progression, we looked at training facilities and spent several weeks as beginners at St Paul's, Birmingham. This experience gave us the confidence to continue even further and we decided to take part in a week's training at [Tulloch](#) Bellringing Centre (Scotland) last week - November 2022. We were put in a group to suit our needs and there were some very, very experienced people who were taking part in ringing methods far beyond those we had ever heard of. It was a fantastic week of [training](#).

The facilities are astonishing. There are two towers - a 12 and an 8 - and a simulator with a dumb bell. There are sitting areas, a kitchen and a dining room. There was a trainer for

nearly every trainee and the week was very well structured and organised. We were able to, and encouraged to, break down techniques and examine them step by step. The use of the simulator and hand bells gave further understanding and we were encouraged to take part in reverse rounds and diminished rounds too - it was great fun. We were welcomed and supported and were able to see the experts at work. We stayed on site as there is accommodation available.

The eight are being replaced this year with a heavier eight and there will be another dumb bell installed too - expanding the learning environment. If I blindfolded a ringer and took them into the ring of 12, they would think they were in a tower.

The next [course](#) will run from November 13th to the 17th 2023.

The week can be summed up in a phrase - 'Experience Tulloch, enjoy Tulloch and you surely will progress at Tulloch'.

Pam Moore

My Surprise 3 Event Challenge!

The biggest surprise was perhaps that I got there! What a relief after all the method cramming! I was so grateful to Phil Ramsbottom for the moral support and for suggesting helpers. And sooo hugely grateful to Andrew Brown for running each event. The first was at Solihull way back in December 2021. My second, arranged for January, fell apart when COVID numbers crept up, which kept people away, and then latterly, family issues got in the way.

With renewed impetus, I arranged two events at Packwood in October and November last year. What a lovely little ring of 8, just right for Surprise ringing. And yes, more thanks. I was so grateful to the helpers for their patience when I made mistakes, for their encouragement throughout and ultimately for



sharing in my success. Andrew was a star running each session, working so hard on my behalf both preparing touches, planning the evenings and being so flexible with all those who turned out to help. I really feel I gained so much.

You may recall from an article I wrote many months back that I rang surprise some 30 plus years ago. With the help of those around me I have achieved my first plain course of Bristol, (I'd only learnt specific place bells for spliced in the past), my first touch of Bristol, and my first silent and unconducted touch. I almost lost track of all the methods we ended up splicing - there was Cambridge, Yorkshire, Superlative, Bristol, Little Bob and Plain Bob.



The real challenge, interestingly, was just how tricky it seemed to be to get from Little Bob into Bristol! My brain hurt by the end of each session - goodness knows, I slept well!

I will most certainly try and keep up my surprise ringing and have this year rung a few quarter peals and hope to ring one of Bristol. But there is something else I learnt... not to ask Lucy Gwynne to be my photographer! When I had time to check back, she made me smile, she'd been quite giddy with my phone! I found pictures of the inside of the church, the danger notices, the chocolates, selfies and more and oh yes... the ringing! A selection are attached for your enjoyment!

Sand Cooper

the practice touches:

leads of C or Y alternating with P
 bob courses of CY and S
 PPYbSPCbSYPb for CY and CSY
 BbBbBb called and silent
 LSsBBCbBY(Y) for B without bobs
 BLbLBbBBBBbP for B with bobs
 CYbLBbLBbSB for all four methods and B bobs

L is little bob and P is plain bob
 b is a bob and s is a single

Cambridge Minor Workshop at St Paul's - 14 December 2022.

I've never been one for focussing slavishly on ringing milestones. However, I was pleased in 2019 when Fran Dodds invited me to start learning Cambridge Minor, place bell by place bell. Needless to say the pandemic got in the way and interrupted my learning once I'd just got through all the leads and needed consolidation.

Since us all resuming I've been trying to take this forward, but have found this hard to do by just ringing the method every few weeks at practice nights. So I grabbed the chance to go to Phil Ramsbottom's workshop on 14 December at St Paul's.

First of all Phil sent out a very useful sheet of background theory in advance, with some context by way of preparation which outlined the concept of half leads as anchors. Further down the line I imagine this will be very helpful to assist me in staying right. It also referenced other methods which can help as building blocks towards Cambridge Minor. Whilst these other methods were a useful reference, I was delighted to get this opportunity for a number of us to get repeated chances to ring the method with supporting ringers as well as also others like me, who wanted to improve their method. I found it heartening that several had been ringing it for

longer than me but wanted to develop their grasp of it further.

I got a chance to try a few leads on three different bells, the least familiar of which didn't go too badly.

Since ringing the method through, I have struggled with both the timing and sequencing of the Cambridge places up and down. I've also found the front work a challenge, so shifting to start on the second to split this up has helped at practices at Moseley.

On the evening itself I gained useful feedback on my timing of the Cambridge places which I now wish to focus on to move forward.

Overall the evening was relaxed, calm and good fun - as is always promised by Phil! Thanks obviously goes to Phil but also to Steve Horton for useful feedback and steers. They were a good double act. Thanks also to the rest of the group for creating the right atmosphere for a supportive and warm learning environment on a chilly pre-Christmas night at St Pauls - helped along by chocolates and mince pies.

Credit also needs to be given to the Moseley band for their patience in helping me progress with this over the last few years.

Thanks to all and a Happy New Year.

Stella Tew

Solihull date touch tradition.

For a while it looked as if we would be unable to carry on this tradition in 2022, as the bells were out of action from August onwards. A stained-glass window was found to be supporting the stonework tracery at St Alphege instead of the more conventional arrangement the other way round. Fears that vibrations from the bells might lead to the glass falling out led to us ringing elsewhere. Although we rang regularly for services at Bickenhill, who were delighted to host us as they have six bells but no ringers, a QP of Doubles in September to mark the accession of King Charles III led us to conclude that an attempt at Minor over a longer period was unlikely to be successful there. Some of the bells are, to say the least, a bit idiosyncratic.

Then, at almost the last minute, an alternative emerged. Stephen Shipley has called some of our date touches for us and was due to do so again. He offered Knowle and we duly achieved the date touch there in November.

The composition was similar to others we've rung, with most of it in a familiar method (Plain Bob Minor this time) and a handful of blows in another (usually unfamiliar) method, to make up the number we needed (this time the oddly-named Un-Saiph Little Bob, previously known as Ashford LB). This method has the treble hunting to thirds place so one lead provided the six blows we needed. Placing this at the start means we got it out of the way rather than having it hanging over us until the end. Then it was on to familiar territory.

We are most grateful to Stephen Shipley and the band at Knowle for hosting us and giving

up one of their QP slots to enable us to achieve this. We have rung date touches every year since 2000 apart from 2007 (when the bells were out of action for most of the year due to repairs to the spire) and 2020 (we all know what happened to ringing in that year!)

I already have some 2023 date touches in mind. We are back ringing at St Alphege again so I will try not to leave arrangements until too late in the year.

Keith Whitehead

St Alphege Guild

Knowle, West Midlands

St John the Baptist, St Lawrence, and St Anne

Sunday, 20 November 2022 in 70m (9-3-7 in G)

2022 Spliced Minor (2m)

6 Un-Saiph Little Bob Minor, 2016 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Margaret Burling
- 2 Michael G Dodson
- 3 Keith D Whitehead
- 4 Sand J Cooper
- 5 Malcolm J Paulson
- 6 Stephen R Shipley (C)

With grateful thanks to Knowle for lending us their bells for our annual date touch while those in Solihull are out of action and for providing the conductor.

