

## The Quarterly Newsletter of the St Martin's Guild - issue 48



### Bell Sunday is 12 May 2024

At Kingsbury, we are organising an Open Church Weekend on the 11th and 12th May to incorporate Bell Sunday.

On Saturday our history boards will be on display in the church and the bells will be rung intermittently throughout the day. It's hoped that the ringers will be available to meet anyone coming into church who is interested in learning to ring the bells - possibly followed by a short 'have a go' session. Refreshments will be served and, in the morning, the Kingsbury Church Handbell Ringers and the church organist will be playing in between the tower bellringing sessions.

Bell Sunday falls on the 2nd Sunday of the month when Kingsbury would normally have an 11am Holy Communion service. Our vicar has kindly agreed that the service can be focused around the bells. After the service the congregation will be invited into the ringing room to see us ringing. The church will be open during the afternoon for visitors and refreshments will be served.

We have been fortunate to welcome and teach people from other churches in our group. It is hoped that this weekend we will encourage more people from our own village to join us.

Elaine Lane

*From the CCCBR Bell Sunday website:*

St Dunstan is known as the Patron Saint of Bellringers due to his experimentation in early forging of bells in the 900's CE. It is for this reason that we've chosen a Sunday near his feast day (19th May) that does not conflict with any other significant days in the Church calendar to promote Bell Sunday - a day when the contribution of bells and Bellringers to the life of the Church is recognised.

In 2024 St Dunstan's Day falls conveniently on Sunday, 19th May. However, as this is Pentecost, we have agreed, with representation from the Clerical Guild, that 12th May would be more appropriate.

With co-operation between Church and Bellringers it may be possible to be involved in a Service on the day, from reading lessons, giving a talk instead of a Sermon, playing handbells, singing bell related hymns, readings and prayers, all associated with bells and Bellringers. Even bell-shaped biscuits served with after Service refreshments.

It is hoped the day will raise awareness, emphasise the importance of the sound of bells in our Communities and how it can help bring Church and Community together, strengthening relationships between Clergy and Bellringers.

[We have listed below](#) some suggestions on how to make the most of the day, including hymns, readings, prayers and music.

If you would like to explore and understand the relationship between bell ringing and the church further, a new book from the Guild of Clerical Ringers, *The Voice of the Church*, offers some reflections on the place of ringing in the church and suggests some ways that ringers and church communities could work together to help, support and encourage each other. The book is available to purchase from the [Ringing World Shop](#).

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## Residential Ringing Course Bursaries

**2024**

In 2024 we are planning to financially support Guild members who would like to attend a residential ringing course either as a student or as a helper.

Residential courses offer an opportunity for students to have several days intensive tuition on a developmental area of their choice. They include a combination of classroom sessions alongside practical ringing at local towers plus a range of optional extra-curricular (but generally ringing focused) activities on campus. Many students enjoy the course so much they return in future years either as students in different groups or as helpers. For helpers, courses often feature as a regular part of their ringing calendar.

There are three main UK based ringing courses each year - Bradfield, North West and Hereford. In the first year of this bursary scheme we are focusing on the Bradfield and North West courses because they both happen at the same time of year (August) with roughly the same application period (April-May). That said, if we have funds left over there is still scope for possible financial support for the 2025 Hereford course (which takes place at Easter, with an application period towards the end of the calendar year).

Outline details of the Bradfield and North West courses are on their websites:

[www.bradfield-ringing-course.org.uk](http://www.bradfield-ringing-course.org.uk)

[nwringingcourse.uk](http://nwringingcourse.uk)

The exact fee structure for either course is not yet released but we are anticipating residential rates in the region of £350 for students and £200 for helpers for both courses. We are hoping to award 12 bursaries of £100 each (students or helpers) with an exception for Bradfield where there is already a discount for U26 helpers and we would only offer further funding of £50 (bringing the cost down to £100).

We would like to promote Guild members taking part in something new so priority will be given to people doing something they've not done before. That said, if you are a regular at one of these courses please still apply and we will make a decision based on demand.

Please complete [this form](#) if you would like to apply for a bursary. The initial closing date is 30 April 2024.

Eleanor Linford  
Guild Master

## The 136th Henry Johnson Dinner

The 136th Henry Johnson Dinner took place this year on the 24th February at the Burlington Hotel. As my first HJ, I am particularly pleased to say that I really enjoyed myself. In fact, even the start of the evening was great - after finally managing to find the entrance to the hotel, I was greeted with the brilliant sight of someone who took full advantage of the black tie optional dress code. I guess jeans and a t-shirt is probably more comfy than anything the rest of us were wearing! In his defence, his suit did arrive shortly afterwards. After grabbing a quick drink at the bar, and briefly considering selling one of my kidneys after seeing the cost, I headed into the main room to sit down.

The food was swiftly served, a smart idea considering that numerous pre-ordered bottles of wine were already waiting for us on the tables (I, of course, took part in enjoying a cheeky bottle of white).

During the evening we were treated to three great speeches. Though my memory of the night gets a bit hazy here, parts of each speech



still stand out to me. For example, Eleanor took the time to make toasts to a whole range of people and groups, both present and not. It was great to recognise the contributions everyone makes to the Guild and to ringing in general. One toast that stood out to me was the one made to the women who rang the first ever ladies peal of maximus in 1975. I found this to be particularly relevant considering that

just before the dinner began, a band of 12 female St Martin's Guild members rang the first ladies peal of maximus for the guild at Solihull. Congratulations to Rose on her first peal of maximus! Stef then taught us more about Eleanor than I ever thought I'd know (and even taught us the name of a new element) and Cecilia then gave a lovely speech which really showed just how important the St Martin's Guild is.



After this, with everyone suitably fed and happy, a brilliant hum began in the room as people moved around from table to table, catching up and generally having a good time. Just outside of the room an arm wrestling contest sprung up and, despite everyone's best attempts, Dan Earthquake remained the unbeaten champion. Personally, after suffering defeat by every non-professional I attempted to wrestle, I thought I'd save

myself from any further humiliation and just attempt to goad others into embarrassing themselves by challenging him instead.

With the wine, beer (real ale!) and spirits all drunk, the night finished and everyone definitely immediately headed home for an early night...

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed myself and look forward to the next one - which a little birdie has told me is planned for the 22nd February 2025 at the Burlington Hotel - hope to see you there!

Kirsty Gifford





## News from St Philip's Cathedral

**Chris Mills** is very well known to Guild members as a talented, loyal and conscientious ringer. She has made a huge contribution to ringing in Birmingham, especially to the Cathedral band where she has been a member for 40 years. Sadly, for us, she has now moved to live in the North East and we wish her well in her new home. As shown in the photo, taken at our recent AGM, the Cathedral band presented Chris with a copy of 'The Pride of the Place', a book covering 300 years of St Philip's Church, signed by the author, and a card signed by all the band. We shall miss Chris and all the contributions she has made to Cathedral ringing and hope that she will come and ring with us again whenever she can.



**James Ramsbottom** has stepped down from the office of Ringing Master which he has held for the last nine years. During this time the band has increased in number, standard and repertoire. Several important events have marked his years in office, including COVID lockdown, the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of King Charles, as well as two successful victories in the Guild 6-bell striking competition and, as crowning glory, a win at the RBS 12-bell Competition in 2023, which we also hosted. As shown in the photo, James was presented with a certificate marking an event in each of his years in office and was thanked for guiding us faithfully for the last nine years. Tony Daw was elected as our new Ringing Master.



Gill Postill

### stop press:

The Birmingham 12 bell competition band won their heat of the National 12-bell Striking Contest.

Reading

Saturday March 23 2024

Test Piece: 288 Cambridge Surprise Maximus

Judges: Thomas W Griffiths (Chief), John N Hughes-D'Aeth

Team	Rang	Speed	Mark
1 Birmingham	7th	3h28	89%
2 Ancient Society of College Youths	3rd	3h35	82%
3 Guildford	2nd	3h31	76%
4 Norwich	6th	3h26	70%
5 Towcester	5th	3h14	68%
6 Chester	8th	3h26	65%
7 Reading	4th	3h23	58%
8 Sheffield	1st	3h24	54%

Sunday 11th February 2024 saw the 50th anniversary of the first peal of the Chandler's 23 spliced - a composition of 23 tricky surprise major methods which has since become a classic. Several peals of this composition were rung around the country on this date and the Guild contributed with a [successful effort](#) at St. Paul's, Jewellery Quarter.

James Ramsbottom



### Bells for Solihull Borough's 50th, 60th and 70th Anniversaries

Churches across Solihull Borough have made plans to ring for the Borough Anniversaries on Monday 11th March 2024 at 7:30pm and Monday 1st April 2024 at 3:00pm. There are ten towers with bells in the Solihull Borough and each of us were approached to mark these important events. The towers involved are Barston, Berkswell, Bickenhill, Castle Bromwich, Hampton in Arden, Knowle, Meriden, Salter Street, Shirley and Solihull. Bickenhill and Salter Street don't have their own bands so a big thank you to Luke Daniel and Lucas Williams for arranging quarter peals for them, and to Simon Linford for helping out by arranging a peal band for Solihull on the 1st April.

Most of these towers have been able to arrange some special ringing on one of the dates or were practicing anyway. At the time



of writing we're between the two anniversary dates. The 11th March is the 70th anniversary of Solihull becoming a Municipal Borough in 1954 and the 1st April marks both the 60th anniversary of Solihull becoming a County Borough in 1964 and the 50th anniversary of Solihull becoming a Metropolitan District in 1974.

Solihull's Library Specialist for Heritage & Local Studies has recently herself become a bell ringer! She isn't learning locally, though, but when the Borough turned its attention to how to mark the celebrations, she immediately thought of including us. A [BellBoard event](#) has been created and if you haven't yet recorded your ringing please do add it now. I'm loving the BUSCR photo from the car rather than the Salter Street ringing room because they forget to take it any sooner!

The Mayor visited St Alphege Solihull on the 11th March, with her consort, where she was 'shown the ropes' by Malcolm our Tower Captain. She's due to visit Barston for the April date.

Best of luck for any ringing still to take place and Happy Birthday Solihull..!

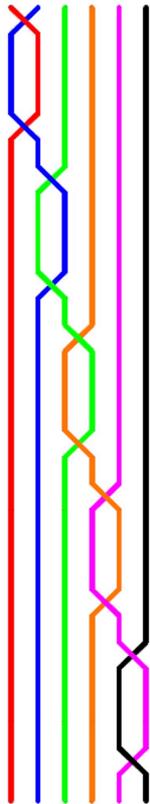
Sand Cooper



And from our roving reporter at

## All Saints, Harrow Weald:

Today during service ringing we invented a new version of [Mexican Wave](#). I was getting a bit fed up with the usual 'long place' version which gives newer learners a chance to practice moving one place up and down (or vice versa) but also gives them a chance to level out in the correct place before they move back again. Some of the band are able to do this easily and, whilst wanting to enable practice for those who would benefit from making long places, I also wanted to provide something with a bit more interest for the others. Looking around the wave line-up, on the spur of the moment I decided to try something different.



We discussed the fact that each pair of adjacent ringers has eight blows to work with in a 'long place' Mexican Wave. Our more experienced ringers could therefore fit in a quadruple dodge. Others could make

four consecutive sets of two-blow places, others long places as usual. We were ringing on seven bells. Our first composition was:

- 4 dodges (1st pair)
- 4 dodges (2nd pair)
- places (3rd pair)
- places (4th pair)
- places (5th pair)
- long places (6th pair)

Then, to make it a bit more interesting, we switched ringers around so that we were able to ring: dodges, places, dodges, places, places, long places.

An entertaining morning!

Sonia Field

*cont'd from page 1*

The Bell Sunday website is a fantastic resource for ways to celebrate the particularly English change ringing that we know and love. There is, however, a vast array of ways in which bells are rung in both religious and secular settings throughout the world. Our very own Casey McLellan started her change ringing career here in Birmingham in 2015 when she was researching different styles of bellringing around the globe - as reported in these pages.

From the beautiful singing bowl - a bell that can be held in the palm of the hand - to the [great temple bells](#), bells are everywhere.

Here is some alternative bell poetry, a bell chant, written by Thich Nhat Hanh (and performed [here](#)):

May the sound of this bell penetrate deep  
into the cosmos  
Even in the darkest spots living beings are  
able to hear it clearly  
So that all suffering in them ceases  
Understanding comes to their heart  
And they transcend the path of sorrow and  
death.

The universal dharma door is already open  
The sound of the rising tide is heard clearly  
The miracle happens: a beautiful child  
appears in the heart of a lotus flower  
One single drop of this compassionate  
water is enough  
To bring back the refreshing spring to our  
mountains and rivers.

Listening to the bell I feel the afflictions in  
me begin to dissolve  
My mind calm, my body relaxed  
A smile is born on my lips  
Following the sound of the bell  
My breath brings me back to the safe island  
of mindfulness  
In the garden of my heart, the flowers of  
peace bloom beautifully.