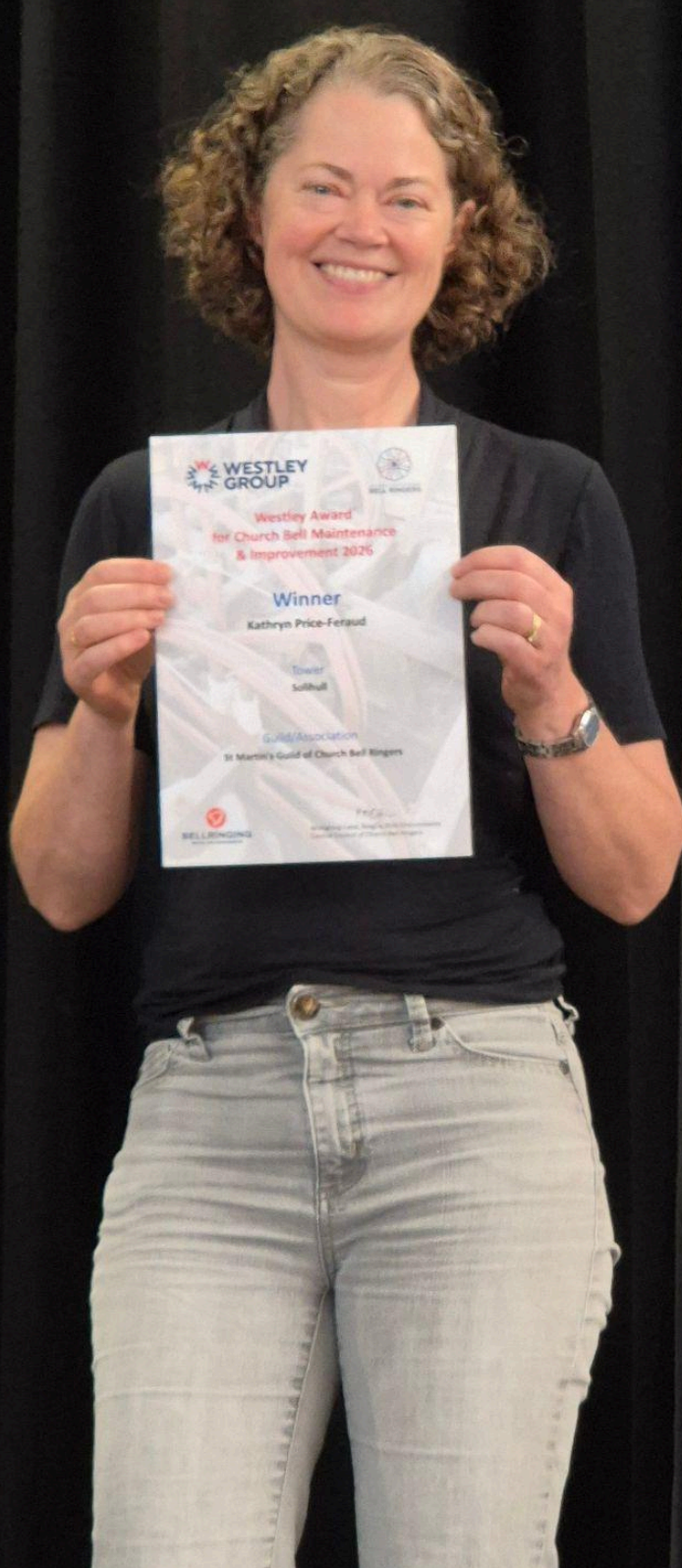


St Martin's Guild Newsletter



Autumn 2026 - Issue 58

Solihull Ringer Wins National Award

The cover of this issue of the Guild Newsletter shows Solihull ringer Kathryn Price-Feraud received the 2026 Westley Award for Belfry Maintenance & Improvement from Mark Odgen. The Westley Awards

Sand Cooper takes up the story...

Kathryn took on the role of Tower Keeper at St Alphege, Solihull with very little knowledge of bell maintenance. However, equipped with a huge amount of enthusiasm and a willingness to learn, she's not only become a great Tower Keeper but also won an award!

Kathryn has been jointly named the winner of the 2026 Westley Award for Belfry Maintenance and Improvement, a national honour presented by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers. The award recognises exceptional dedication to the care, maintenance, and improvement of church bells, and it's wonderful that Kathryn's contribution has been recognised.

Since stepping into the role in early 2024, Kathryn has combined her scientific precision with huge commitment, quickly becoming a trusted guardian of our 13 bells. Her work has ranged from rope splicing, assisting the foundry in larger scale repairs and preparing the bells for major ringing events. She has embraced every challenge with enthusiasm, learning from the experts at Loughborough Bell Foundry and the

experienced ringers around her both here at Solihull and at other towers. She has documented work in a comprehensive Tower Keeper guide, specific to our tower, ready for future generations.

What sets Kathryn apart is not only her technical skill but her generosity in sharing it. She has involved learners, supported neighbouring towers, and championed safer working practices within the belfry. It was quite the proud moment to hear the introduction given by Mark Ogden before he made the award.

It's an award that is richly deserved, and I'm sure you'll join us in celebrating her achievement.

Robert B Smith Competitiion – Stop Press!

Saturday 26th September saw the 8th Robert B Smith 12-bell competition hosted at Solihull, with the local ringers putting on a wonderful day for all there. 2 of the 8 teams in the competition were from the Guild – regular competitors Birmingham Cathedral and a new band formed from the Guild's Higher Numbers practices. The Higher Number band had several people taking part in their first 12-bell striking contest and were pleased to be placed sixth overall. Meanwhile, the Cathedral band put in an impressive performance and came first – the third time they have one the competition.

A full report of the day will be in the next issue of the newsletter.

Ringling World National Youth Contest in Nottingham

James Ellis



This was the sixteenth year of the RWNYC. It was held in Nottingham with 43 teams entering and 325 young ringers from around the country got to experience the event. It was a wonderful event and it was lovely to meet and share our experiences with new people.

The Brumdingers started their day at Birmingham New Street, where we all met up and caught the train into Nottingham. After a bit over an hour on the train we arrived in Nottingham. Our first tower of the day was St John the Baptist, Beeston. They were quite an easy seventeen hundredweight ten and the whole band really enjoyed ringing on them! There was also a variety of mini-rings throughout the day that the band managed to get a ring on and it was a good experience for all of us.



Our next stop was St Michael and All Angels, Bramcote where we performed our test piece. We entered the six bell method category and, considering the fact that the year before we lost one of our most experienced members, I think we did very well and should be very proud of our performance.



In the end, the Brumdingers finished in eighth place and although we didn't win like last year, everybody had an amazing time and did some wonderful ringing.



Guild Walking Tour

James Ramsbottom

At the start of this year, I didn't just take on the role of newsletter editor. I also took over from Mike Dodson as the organiser of the Guild Walking Tour.

Mike last organised a tour for us in 2024, so after a year off this event returned to the guild calendar. It's usually held on the second Saturday in July, the week after the Ringing World National Youth Contest, but this year it was moved forward two weeks, to 27th June. (Usually this would be the day of the National 12-Bell Final, but this was held a week earlier than usual this year.)

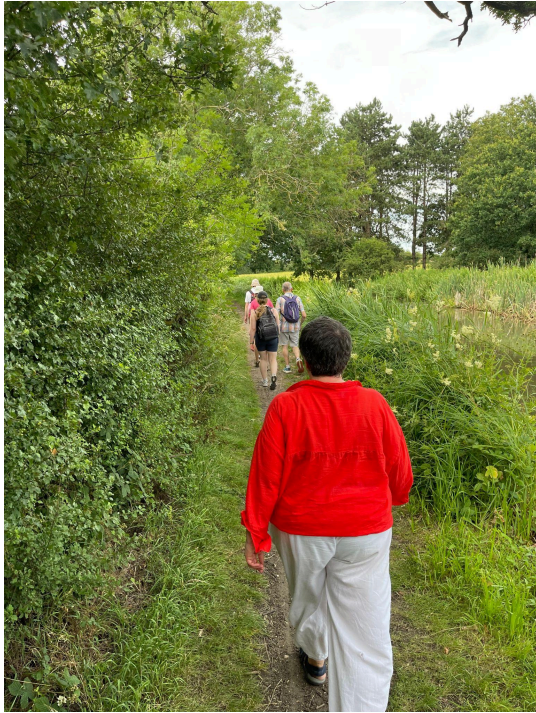
I've organised several tower outings previously, and even some full ringing tours, and so I knew exactly what was needed – 3 towers and a lunchtime pub. But organising a walking tour has a few other issues. The distances between the towers can't be more than a few miles at a time, the routes need to be mostly on good quality footpaths, plenty of time must be allowed for travelling, and the whole route should ideally start and end at a national railway station. In addition to this, having a tower suddenly become unavailable can be disastrous, as replacing it with another tower 5 miles away isn't feasible.

I'll spare you all the details of how the planning went, but it was unusually hard, with many towers being very slow to reply, as well as the first choice of pub, and several towers being unavailable and re-routing



required. In addition to this, I became worried that the nationwide heatwave would affect trains to and from the walking route. But by the day of the outing, I had 3 towers booked, a tested walking route and a pub with a lunch order for 26 people.

There was a healthy crowd on the platform of Moor Street station at half past 9 in the morning, and the train out was running on time – a good start! We all disembarked at Wooton Wawen, where the pub and the second tower were tantalisingly close. But before any of that, we had a walk to Aston Cantlow and back, with ringing in between. The heatwave had started to pass and the walking throughout the day was pleasant, although we still took advantage of shade when we could. The 6 bells Aston Cantlow were the heaviest ring of the day (14cwt) and required a little work, but we still enjoyed ourselves and produced some nice ringing, including a course on London S Minor.



We then retraced our steps and visited The Bull in Wooton Wawen, where we had been given our own room and a table for 26 people in a slightly awkward “L” shape. The kitchen to the pub served mostly Thai food, marking a change from the usual ringing outing lunch fayre, although quite a few still people still went for the Fish ‘n’ Chips.

Immediately after lunch we had by far the easiest walk of the day – a few hundred metres along the road to Wooton Wawen church. The church building is a great mix of architectural styles, with different sections added on over the years. The tower is located centrally on the church and has a rather convoluted access route to the ringing room, starting externally on the north side. The bells themselves were pleasant and the ringing here included Call Changes, Grandsire Doubles and Cambridge Minor.

There was then the final section of walking, partially along the canal, to our final tower at Henley-in-Arden, but not the one which was originally planned. Henley had cancelled

only that morning, but (to cut a long story short) I had managed to secure the other tower in Henley – Beaudesert – as a replacement. As mentioned earlier, towers becoming unavailable for a walking tour can be problematic, but when a replacement can be found only 200 metres away things aren’t so bad.

We started the ringing here with a Devon-style raise in peal (coming in all-together, no one at a time), running straight into closed-handstroke Call Changes at the top. This was followed by more Call Changes and Grandsire Doubles, and doubtless other things which now escape my memory.

Henley has a rather good selection of pubs. I can confirm this from my test run. But we were all tired and keen to get home by now, so we headed for the train station and returned to Birmingham, with the return train also running on time. It had been a tiring but thoroughly good day. I’m sure that I shall plan another walking tour for near year. I just hope that it’s easier the second time around.



Report on the Central Council AGM

Richard Andrew and Simon Linford



This year's Central Council AGM weekend was held in Rugby from Friday 4th to Sunday 6th September and was hosted by the Coventry Diocesan Guild. On Friday evening a general ringing session was arranged at Rugby, St Andrew's, which is unique in having two separate rings (a 5 and an 8) in separate towers. The main meetings of the weekend (Ringing World and Council AGMs) were held on the Saturday at the Benn Hall, to the north of St Andrew's and Rugby town centre.

The Ringing World AGM

This was chaired by Paul Jopp, the Chairman of The Ringing World Ltd. He reported that the RW team continued to deliver a high-quality weekly magazine. Royal Mail delivery performance had been inconsistent, but despite this there was no intention to move to 1st Class delivery, but instead to remain with 2nd Class delivery. The numbers of peals and quarter peals rung in 2025 were slightly up on 2024, with 3,755 peals and 17,910 quarters being rung. They are still heavily reliant on donations, with nearly

£70,000 being received during the year. Paper subscriptions continue to fall, but this is slightly offset by the increase in online subscriptions. Their strategy over the coming year will be to migrate commercial functionality to the main RW website, and indeed a new website is under development with a planned go-live date at the end of September 2026.

Will Bosworth, the Ringing World editor, reported that this year's Ringing World National Youth Contest, the 15th overall, was held in Nottingham with 45 teams ranging from Cumbria to Cornwall taking part, and the day went exceptionally well. Next year's contest is scheduled to be held in Guildford on Saturday 3rd July 2027. Will also acknowledged his predecessor as editor, Robert Lewis, for his vision in getting the contest going back in 2011.

Dorothy L Sayers Society and Westley Awards

The next part of the day was taken up with announcing the highly commended and winning entries for these two awards.

The Dorothy L Sayers Society Award recognises exceptional young leadership in its broadest sense, and is open to any young person under 18. The winner receives £500, which can be used to further their development.

In the case of the Westley Award for Belfry Maintenance and Improvement, which recognises exceptional dedication to the care, maintenance and improvement of church bells, one of the joint winners was a

ringer from our Guild, Kathryn Price-Feraud of Solihull, St Alphege, who took on the role of Tower Keeper in 2024 and has since carried it out with huge commitment and enthusiasm. (Ed. – See pages 1 & 2)

Central Council Meeting

Saturday afternoon was mostly taken up by the annual meeting of the Council, chaired by the President, Tina Stoecklin. During the meeting, a summary was given of the key points from the workgroup reports. Among the most interesting points was that the Young Ringers for Ringing 2030 workgroup reported that Young Ringers Hub website is now live and consists of four sub-sites – University Ringing, Under 18s, a Library of resources, and Development Pathways (which is coming soon). This website can be accessed by the following link:
<https://yrhub.cccbr.org.uk/>

Next, Ringing 2030 and the Forward Plan for 2027 were discussed. The goals of Ringing 2030 have been identified as follows:

- 10,000 new active ringers by 2030 (new and returning)
- Half of them under the age of 30
- 30,000 people under the age of 20 have heard about or had a go at ringing
- Retention rate of at least 50% of new recruits
- Double the numbers of teachers and trainers of ringing

Whilst there is a possibility that the goal of reaching 30,000 young people by 2030 may be achieved, for most of the other goals, information to be obtained via the proposed

Ringing Census will be important in establishing the current position and how best to take things forward.

The census is scheduled to take place during the week of 16th-22nd November and is being carried out in connection with Ringing 2030 in order to establish as accurate a picture as possible of the current state of ringing across Britain and other countries with ringing towers around the world. The plan is to include individual ringers, towers and also targeted areas in the Census, with the aim of providing baseline figures which can be used as a starting point for Ringing 2030 objectives. Details about this census have already appeared in a number of locations, such as the Ringing World. If you or your tower are selected to take part in the Census, please do your best to respond and support the Census, as this will help to ensure the data obtained is as wide-ranging and accurate as possible.

In the election of Trustees later in the meeting, both Tina Stoecklin and Vicki Chapman were re-appointed as President and Deputy President respectively for a further term of three years, while Jason Carter was elected to become Treasurer.

Thanks are due to the Coventry Diocesan Guild members and their excellent organisation of the weekend. Next year's meeting will be jointly hosted by the Lichfield and Walsall Archdeaconries Society and the North Staffordshire Association, and the current plan is to hold it at Uttoxeter Racecourse over the weekend of 3rd-5th September. There are also plans to hold a Ringing Roadshow alongside the AGM.

Aston Band Outing to Warwickshire

Cliff Griffin



The ringers of Aston went on their first band ringing trip for over ten years during August. We visited the anti-clockwise ring of 5 at Meriden and the ring of 8 at Hampton in Arden, and were welcomed warmly at both towers. We then spent a little time exploring the woods at Hampton. One of the highlights of the trip was trying to ring the tenor bell at Meriden which was cast in 1400. We had mixed success with this!

Midlands Young Ringers Summer Tour

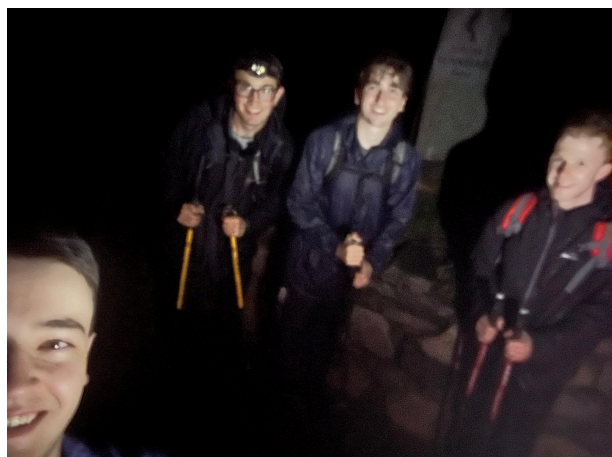
Susan Healy

On the 12th September 25 young ringers from the Midlands area, including Oxford, Coventry, Derby, Worcester and of course Birmingham, enjoyed an outing to Staffordshire. Ringing took place at 6 towers in the Abbots Bromley area, ranging from the 10lb 6oz campanile at the Hutchieson residence and finishing at the mighty 28cwt 6 at Hoar Cross. Limited adult input was required during the day as youngsters from different groups lead the ringing, with methods from rounds and call changes to Bristol Surprise Major being rung.

The next outing is being hosted by the Brumdingers and will be on home turf at the beginning of December – another day to look forward to, adults needed only to provide the transport!

Peaks for Peals: Success!

Tommy Groves



Readers of The Ringing World may remember our article 'Peaks for Peals' (RW6015, p.741), in which we announced that four Birmingham student ringers would be swapping ropes for walking boots to undertake the National Three Peaks Challenge in aid of the Edgbaston Bells Restoration Appeal.

On Saturday 29th August, Ben Wigley, Ben Williams, Tommy Groves and Lucas Williams set out to climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon – the highest mountains in Scotland, England and Wales – within 24 hours.

We are delighted to report that, after months of preparation, many hours of walking, several hundred miles of driving, some questionable dietary choices and considerably more Scottish midges than we would have liked, we completed the challenge in just 20 hours and 45 minutes, comfortably inside our target. More importantly, the challenge has raised over £3,500, including Gift Aid, towards the restoration of the bells at St Bartholomew's, Edgbaston.



Edgbaston church houses a fine ring of eight, cast by Taylors in 1927. Approaching their centenary, the bells are increasingly in need of attention, with the restoration project seeking to ensure that they can continue to be enjoyed by future generations of ringers. The priority is to address worn main bearings, further work is also required to tackle deterioration of the bell frame and various fittings. The restoration appeal is working towards an overall fundraising target of £45,000. University ringing is an important opportunity to introduce new people to our art, and ensuring that students have access to bells on which they can learn and develop is essential to its future.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported us, whether by making a donation, sharing our fundraiser, sending a message of encouragement or simply taking an interest in our progress. The generosity of the ringing

community has been extraordinary, and it is heartening to see so many people supporting a project that will benefit the next generation of ringers.



For the time being, we are rather content to return to the considerably more familiar activity of climbing church towers. We hope that by the time the bells celebrate their centenary in 2027, we will have rather more to celebrate than exhausted ringers making it down a mountain in the middle of the night. If our efforts have encouraged anyone to support the restoration, or perhaps inspired another group of ringers to undertake a similar challenge for their own tower, then we will consider the weekend an even greater success.



Our Three Peaks fundraising page, including more photographs from the challenge, remains open at:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-GB/donation-for-m/three-peaks-challenge-for-the-edgbaston-bell-project>

Guild outing to Oxford

John Gwynne

10:16 at Oxford station on a Saturday 19th September saw a number of familiar faces among the crowd jostling for position to get through the ticket barriers. Out into the weak sunshine I didn't follow them – I wanted to have a look at the state of the Botley Road underpass. This had been closed since April 2023 but was now supposed to reopen the next day. It was a noisy hive of activity, installing traffic sensors and road markings.



I headed east in the general direction of New College. I looked for a familiar landmark and found one – the figure of Jonathan Healy striding head and shoulders above everyone else, better than a tour guide with an umbrella. I caught up and we arrived at New College in good time for the 11:00 start. Which was just as well as we were required to sign in and heed the dire warnings about steep steps and the capacity of the ringing room – “You won't get 36 of you in there, Sir” said one of the porters. We proved them wrong on both points – the steps were fine and the ringing chamber is enormous. At one point a cry went up – “Watch out, a couple of tourists are in the queue with the ringers!” The supposed tourists turned out to be Jen and Ben from Knowle, everyone knows who they are now! New College provides good photo opportunities here for Harry Potter and/or Inspector Morse fans,

according to age and taste.



At New College the bells were raised, 8 and 10, 7 and 9, then the front six. They were fun bells to warm everyone up with as they are odd-struck, the ropes were very long after the dry weather and the 8th is a classic visitor's bell: you have to pull it a bit. Eleanor Linford was in charge of the ringing here. The ringing set the scene for the day – lots of rounds and call-changes for the less experienced. We had good attendance from the BSoBR and Brumdingers, and other youngsters too, ringing with supervision. There is a lot to be said for well-struck call changes and we all got a chance to get the measure of the bells. Methods were rung too – Grandsire Caters, Stedman Caters, and Spliced Cambridge and London Surprise Royal. A good start to the day, and it was lunchtime already!



The group split up somewhat for the two hours break until Magdalen College at 2.00. Various pubs were attended – both The King's Arms and The White Rabbit to my knowledge – while some of us sat in the sun outside Theo's Café in Broad Street. The day was warming up nicely, those who had opted for shorts were being proved right, the rest of us were stuffing waterproofs and

fleeces into backpacks. It was a perfect September day.

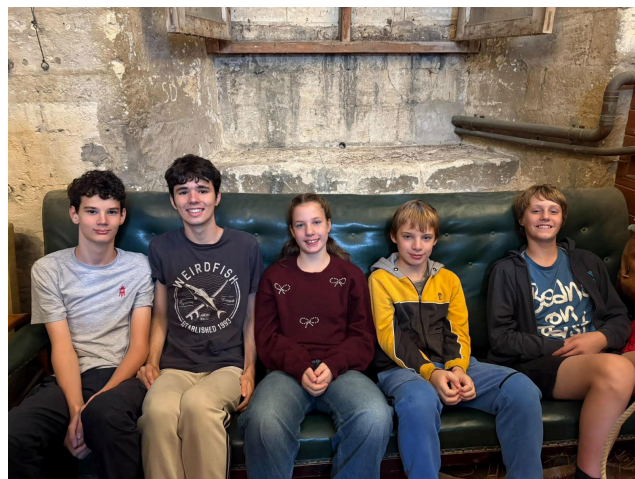
Magdalen College was much more informal – we just had to say ‘bell ringer’ to the lady in the very smart Porters’ Lodge and we were in. I wonder if any ‘civilians’ ever tried it. There was lots going on – an Alumni reunion arriving, a couple having some wedding photos taken, and hymn tunes were being practised very competently on the chapel organ. We gathered in dribs and drabs at the foot of the tower. Heather Kippin was appointed sentry to guide late arrivals – this is the effect of lunch on a walking tour. We lost two Wilbys and gained two Daniels. Susan Healy was in charge and the bells were rung up a bit more easily than at the last tower. There was a similar mix of ringing to New College, but this time the *plat du jour* was Yorkshire Royal. It was a nice, comfy ringing room, with a sofa and easy chairs in the corner. Most welcome after a busy lunch session.

Next, we went to Christ Church College, the only twelve of the day. Our Guild Secretary Sand Cooper spent a while living on site here in her youth because her father was a Verger at the Cathedral. She pointed out her front door and more interestingly where she used to sunbathe – on the roof!



Christ Church College has an interesting ringing room with lots of history, including the bells, but no daylight or fresh air. It has peal boards, photographs, and display cases full of toy pigs. The bells are heavy-ish (tenor 31–0–23) with a short draft, a non-intuitive

ringing circle and some of the heavier bells interact with each other to make life interesting round the back. Simon Linford was in charge here. Lots more rounds and call changes, including rounds on six, then eight, then ten and finally the trebles joining in in rounds. I like doing that, for some reason. Stedman Cinques were rung here, and two practice courses of Erin Cinques for the upcoming Robert B Smith Competition at Solihull.



The last tower of the day was St Mary the Virgin, a ring of six with bells cast between 1611 and 1894, the tenor weighing 26–2–9. They take some ringing but are worth it! Simon in charge again. Here we rang lots more rounds and call-changes, Grandsire Doubles, Plain Bob Doubles, Cambridge Minor, Plain Bob Minor and finally Stedman Doubles. While we were in there it started to rain, but when we got outside it had stopped. At the end of the day the group dispersed for trains and the park-and-ride, while a significant proportion headed to the Royal Blenheim for well-earned beer and important discussions. Everyone agreed that it had been an excellent day – This is well-documented on WhatsApp!

We eventually caught the very full 19:39 train. They were still hard at work on the Botley underpass, but it did reopen on time!