

Bell-notes

The quarterly newsletter for The Chertsey District
Issue 39: Aug 2021



GUILDFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

President: THE BISHOP OF GUILDFORD

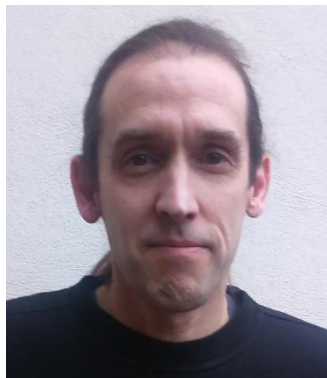
A Message from the Master, -

Right now I wish I could welcome you all back to normality ... but as we know it's not quite like that. Boris has helpfully left it up to us to decide what precautions to take, with the inevitable consequence that in most teams of people, everybody will have a slightly different idea of optimum behaviour. By the time you read this, many of you will have worried over whether to hold/go to practices, what to do about masks etc.

Many of you may also have worried whether you can physically ring a bell for more than a few minutes, or remember any methods. On that front, I can offer some reassurance: Any method you'd been ringing for years beforehand will still be lodged in your brain and come back to you with little effort. And no special muscle development is required for ringing anything but the largest of bells.

On the Covid front, I can't claim to be an authority - each of you will have to do as you think sensible. I know some people have already piled back in, others are adopting a "wait and see" approach until they feel the environment is safer. At Guild and District level, we're still trying to gauge the sentiment from the towers before planning physical events for the rest of the year. Nonetheless, the outlook is promising right now, and I hope that by the time of the next Bell-notes, I'll have rung with many of you in person, and be actively helping you on your road to ringing recovery.

Best wishes, Richard



Short touches from the towers

Esher

We spent time thinking about Boris and his pronouncement for "Freedom Day", and then wondering about how it would affect us and what the Archbishop of Canterbury and Simon Linford would say - when it comes down to the bare bones we need to discuss everything with each other so we feel safe and then ring!!

It will be lovely to be able to ring with more than four people but this rule does not appear to be understood by our insect friends!! To our horror we found carpet beetles in our beautiful handmade bell mats (by Phyllis Maybrey in the late fifties) and they (the carpet beetles) had a good meal and despite all our spraying efforts kept eating for nearly a month - I think we have "exterminated" them now!! At least the mats have had a good Hoover and look much better really clean!!

We have also rung with the windows open - catching the sallies as they wander around in the wind - but the local bee population has found a short cut - through one window across the ringing chamber and out through the other side - guaranteed to distract you whilst struggling to pull a bell in for Bob Minimus.



All this excitement will soon be in the past and once we have worked things out we look forward to welcoming visitors BUT no more than 8 ringers at any one time!!

Jennifer Meade

It is August, the silly season in the newspapers so this time we are not having a quiz, just a set of silly info on food to be found [or not found] in the 1950s, courtesy of Mr Google

1. Curry was a surname

Chertsey

Maintaining social distancing and wearing masks we were pleased that ringing recommenced at Chertsey on the front six bells a few weeks ago. Although we normally have managed to ring six bells on Wednesday practice nights, however we often only have 3-5 ringers on a Sunday mornings at 8.30am ringing for the 9.00am service. Unfortunately, we cannot ring for the 10.30am service since the music group need to play for 20 minutes prior to the service and we cannot hear the bells.

We undertook a 'spanner morning' in May to tighten bolts and clappers etc.

We look forward to allowing our beginners to return who require one-to-one tuition with masks after the Government have relaxed social distancing requirements on 19th July 2021.

We were approached in April by a TV film company who wanted to know if we would be willing to allow actors ringing a bell. After numerous e-mails explaining that it takes several hours to train a person to safely ring a bell, especially at Chertsey (!), and to ascertain the nature of the film script in case it was a remake of *The Omen*, it was agreed that it might be possible to show actors how to swing chime a bell during the two hours scheduled for the filming. After meeting the Associate Producer and showing him up the tower to see the bells it was agreed to proceed including shots of our band ringing full circle and of ringing down to allow them to be swung chimed.

We believe that the show is an 8-part comedy documentary based on a granddaughter (Amanda) and grandmother (Myrtle) completing a 'bucket list'. Since the film crew were based at Thorpe Park presumably it will include a scary ride as well as ringing a bell. We assume that they contacted Chertsey Church because we are close to Thorpe Park and it is a ground-floor ring so filming is easy, particularly whilst operating under the Covid-19 restrictions. Cameras follow Amanda as she moves back in with her elderly relative, Nan Myrtle, and will also focus on her relationships with other members of her family. It was largely non-scripted and improvised on the hoof. We understand that series will be screened on Channel 4 sometime in August – October. We hope that all the footage does not merely end up on the cutting room floor and that our efforts portray bellringing in a good light. Unfortunately, we have no control over the editing process. It was an interesting experience but we anticipate the screening with trepidation.

Malcolm Loveday



2. A takeaway was a mathematical problem

Ottershaw

Peter Binns

3 A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower

Ockham

Throughout the pandemic All Saints Ockham have been having their ringing practice on line in the 'Ringing Room'. This has worked extremely well and been an opportunity for some of us to be more adventurous trying out new methods. For the likes of me, someone who is not confident with the mechanics of rope pulling, the Ringing Room on a Thursday night was a safe place to ring things I could not have done in the bell tower. I am just hoping some of what I learnt will stay with me when we return to real life. However, I shall miss Wheatly.

It was also good to keep in touch at the Zoom meeting, the social platform we used for the Ringing Room. But even better was a damp but lovely, socially distanced evening get together in the garden here for Tony Bishop's birthday.

Clare Bevan

4. Crisps were plain: the only choice we had was whether to put salt on or not

Thames Ditton

Pamela Rider

5. A Big Mac was what was worn when it was raining



Chobham

We are not meeting on Zoom anymore. We resumed face to face ringing at the beginning of June, wearing masks and socially distancing.

We have not been able to ring all the bells because of the rule of six, and some of the bells are too close together.

We have rung for two mid-week weddings and have a few more booked from September onwards. In church as from Sunday 25th Jul) we were able to sing again after a very long time, although we still had to wear masks.

Chris Hill

6. Eating raw fish was called poverty, not sushi



Oatlands

The past three months have seen us expanding our ringing as the country progressed through the Covid Roadmap Steps 2, 3 and 4. A solitary bell on Sunday mornings in May became two, then four: all the while observing 2 metre spacing in the ringing room. Four bells was all we could offer at the weddings that came during this time. Finally, at the end of July, the spacing restriction went and it was a pleasure to ring adjacent bells again. To date we have limited ourselves to call changes and plain hunt. Our range will expand as the confidence returns.

We contemplate resuming monthly practices, probably in September.

John Burnett

7. Brown bread was something only poor people ate

Old Woking

We've been very relieved at Old Woking to begin to get back to something approaching normality (albeit with additional facemasks).

Prior to the changes on 19 July, we'd already been able to ring on six bells for a wedding and on a number of Sunday mornings (although it was a rather odd sounding six – 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8), so it was great to be able to have a practice night on eight bells again. Admittedly, the first of these was on one of the hottest days of the year, so we had to take a break for some fresh air part way through, but it was lovely to hear all eight ringing again after such a long gap. We were a bit rusty it would be fair to say (Cambridge went well, Yorkshire not so much), but we can hopefully start improving. We're limiting numbers at present though, so do check before visiting.

Away from the Tower, Rachel has had some exciting news – from September, she is going to start training to become an Ordained Local Minister. The band wishes her all the best!

Doug Stoneham

8. Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking



Walton-on-Thames

Our church is not opening for services until September so we have not yet commenced ringing due to several factors. However, the tower is clean and the bells are now checked out after such long inaction.

Let us hope we get back soon.

Hilary Brooks

9. Tea was made in a tea pot using tea leaves and never green

Horsell

On 18th April, normal (Covid) single bell Sunday ringing, resumed for all services.

17th May, relaxing of Covid regulations has no effect on distancing, mask wearing and ventilation requirements.

27th June, was the Induction and Installation of our new Vicar by the Archdeacon, during which I assisted him with the ringing of the “Calling Bell” (No.4).

18th July, was the last day of solo Service Ringing and I took the opportunity to ring all 6 bells, up and down. The tower needed a good clean and my final duty, before the end of the current “lockdown”, was to test the emergency lighting and the emergency fire escape, namely the vertical ladder, which I descended, safely, in the presence of another member of the PCC.

21st July, was our very first practice night for 2 years, the last 16 months of which were as a direct consequence of Covid-19 Regulations. Masks were worn by the 4 of us and Rounds and Called Changes were rung with surprising accuracy, after such a long time apart, and the only problem was the infestation of flies which was eradicated by the use of “Raid”, the following morning. The evening was concluded with a convivial visit to The Crown, just down the hill.

22nd July, was the Children’s Fun Day, organised by Roz Haynes for Year 6 pupils at Horsell, C of E School. Two parties of five visited the top of the Tower, the Bell Chamber and the Ringing Chamber, including a safety briefing, a short talk on how the bells work and a demonstration.

Sunday, 25th July, marked the beginning of a return to some form of normality, with 4 of us talking part in Service ringing.

Alan Nichols and Avril Blagbrough

10. Sugar enjoyed a good press in those days and was regarded as being white gold. Cubed sugar was regarded as posh



Weybridge

We made a return to Sunday Service ringing on May 23rd, keeping to four ringers and wearing masks. There have been a few positive comments from the parish who clearly enjoy hearing the bells again.

We had one wedding during this period and did our best to make a joyful noise.

Since the lifting of restrictions on July 21st, we have managed to ring six bells for both Sunday Service and a second wedding.

Due to a staff shortage, (it is the holiday season), we have not resumed practice night.

It looks as if our 5 junior ringers are all keen to return and two of them, who were not on holiday, have had a refresher session.

Andrew Mills from Taylor's Foundry has been to inspect our ailing treble (cracked timber bell pad) and deemed it safe to ring at the moment but there will be some maintenance required in the not too distant future.

We have plenty more events booked into our bell ringers diary so hopefully we shall remain healthy and not have to go into any further lockdown this year.

Linda Strange

11. Healthy food consisted of anything edible

Send

Rachel Wilkinson

12. Cooking outside was called camping



East Molesey

We started ringing 5 bells for Sunday service as soon as we were told we could meet up to 6 indoors from 17th May. Still sounded odd as 1M distancing meant every other bell but infinitely better than the previous mournful 2 or 3 bells. We restarted practices on 25th May. Great to meet in reality again and relearn handling skills and other basic exercises.

Since 19th July we have had no restrictions on numbers and distancing. What a joy to ring for a wedding recently and hear again the sound of 6 adjacent bells and plain hunt that rang the right tune! A relief also to find I hadn't entirely forgotten how to call changes. Our up and down in peal leaves a bit to be desired but then it always did and our catch is getting better. It's also been lovely that many passers-by have stopped to say how nice to hear the bells again. They mayn't say much in normal times but it seems they've missed the sound of bells during lockdown. Also good to have a drink in The Bell after practice – first visit to a pub for nearly 18 months.

We've abandoned Ringing Room for the time being but will probably arrange the odd theory session once we've got over the excitement of ringing properly again. Wondering whether the "bad" RR habits such as "2 and in" and "stop at rounds" will continue in the real world or whether the conductor will once again prevail. And how will we manage without Wheatley? Also recognise that there are some ringers who are understandably nervous about returning just yet and others, shock/horror, who have made other arrangements on practice night. It'll be a while before things settle down.



We've taken advantage of SA's offer of a £35 grant to create and buy a recruitment banner 6.5 x 2.5 ft with eyelets for attachment. They have been successful in the past at several SA towers. We only intend to use it now and then on practice nights or special sessions – not as a permanent display. As it's non-specific about

location, date and time its use is versatile. Anyone wanting to borrow it - let me know.

Jane Marsters

*13. Seaweed was not a generally
though Laverbread is a Welsh*



*recognised food
delicacy*

Egham

A bit of news from Egham.

We have started ringing for services again. The service times have changed and the new ringing times are:

08.30 - 09.00 and 10.00 - 10.30

Practices are still on Thursdays 19.45-21.15

The first Thursday in the month is set aside for the Chertsey District 10 bell practice. Please come along and improve your 'higher numbers' ringing.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

David Cox +44 7887 626 544

Willy Burgess eghamten@gmail.com

14. Kebab was not even a word, never mind food

Hersham -

15. Water came out of the tap. If someone had suggested bottling it and charging more than petrol for it, they would have become a laughing stock

A Message from the CCCBR ~

Ringíng guidance for England for the period from 19 July onwards has been agreed with the House of Bishops Recovery Group today and can be found

here: <https://cccbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Guidance-at-a-glance-2.0-3.pdf>.

The lifting of any restrictions on how long we ring for and with how many other ringers is welcomed, although we need to be mindful that at a time of greatly increasing infection rates, and big regional variations, many ringers will still be cautious in terms of how much ringíng they do. Some towers are actually discussing reducing the amount of ringíng they do because of the rise in infection levels, not increasing it.

The Church of England's own guidance has not been published yet, but should be later today. It includes a paragraph referring to the Central Council's guidance. Although the wearing of facemasks is no longer mandated in places of worship, and will not appear in the Church of England guidance, we have included a number of situations where due to the particular nature of ringíng we would expect masks to be worn, including close face to face teaching, and ringíng with unvaccinated children. Some clergy may retain a policy of facemasks in their church or cathedral, and if they do then their wishes take precedence.

The Government now wants us to take responsibility for our own actions. If you don't think you should ring for as long as you are allowed to – don't. If you want to wear a facemask when ringíng – wear one. If a member of your band wants you all to wear facemasks to protect them – discuss it as a band and come to an agreement. Bellringíng is a group activity and we are responsible for each other not just ourselves. The virus has not gone away by any means – we are learning to live with it.

This seems like an ideal time to thank the rest of the Covid guidance team – Phil Barnes, Mark Regan and David Pouncey – who have helped navigate this difficult process over the last 16 months, and the large number of ringers who have given their quiet support behind the scenes. As a team we would like to thank Mark Betson and Brendan McCarthy, the members of the House of Bishops Recovery Group, who have had an extraordinary burden put on them.

Simon Linford

President CCCBR From: Simon Linford

The bell on the front cover -

Is the ancient surviving bell in St Mary's Parish Church, Morpeth, Northumberland.

Bede, a seventh century English monk in Northumbria, told that when the Abbess Hilda died at Whitby in 680, the death-knell could be heard thirteen miles away, so there were clearly bells hung in Saxon churches, none of which survive. Many bells have been melted in church fires over the years and there now seems to be a bit of competition as to which is the oldest bell in England.

The Morpeth Herald of Friday 24/03/2017

<https://www.morpethherald.co.uk/news/englands-oldest-bell-really-our-county-417250>

states that - *Mackenzie, in his Historical View of Northumberland, 1825, says: "The ancient and honourable Northumbrian family of Mitford were possessed of the vills and lordship, from which they derive their name, as early as the time of Edward the Confessor. At the conquest, Sibil, the only daughter and heir of Sir John Mitford, was given in marriage by King William I to Sir Richard Bertram, one of his Norman adventurers."*

If so, it is likely that there was a settlement at Mitford before 1066, and an Anglo-Saxon church with it.

The ancient bell at St Mary's hangs on the wall to your left as you go in, and the current church leaflet says: "The 12th century bell. We believe that it is the oldest in the kingdom, but are willing to hear from contenders."

It's an impressive thought that the oldest bell in England may be right here on our doorstep; but to compare the Mitford bell with the 500 BCE Chinese one in the British museum is perhaps not quite fair.

The true comparators with the Mitford bell are not hand-bells nor bells from overseas, but native bells of a size to hang in a belfry and be heard over a wide area.

There seems, unfortunately, to be no modern appraisal of the Mitford bell. The church leaflet refers only to an article in the Pall Mall Magazine for October 1895. It notes that the height and width at the bell mouth are equal, making it steeple-shaped, whereas later bells are dumper in shape. Another unique feature is that the rim is turned outwards instead of inwards, though this is not easy to see.

But until somebody makes a thorough study of old church bells, we can't possibly know whether Mitford's bell is the oldest or not.

Until then, however, we can at least give Mitford the benefit of the doubt.

Of other contenders for the oldest bells to survive, the oldest may be in St Chad's, Cloughton in Lancashire. The original church was built in 1070, though it has since been rebuilt. There are two bells, one of which is inscribed with the date of 1296.

But in St Lawrence, Caversfield, Oxfordshire there is a treble bell that may be much older. Bells are often dated by engraved dedications. The inscription (in Roman or Saxon letters) on the Caversfield bell says, "In honour of God and St. Laurence, Hugh Gargate and Sibilla his wife had these bells erected." Hugh Gargate died in 1219.

Another St Lawrence, this time in Ipswich claims to have the oldest ring of church bells in the world. The five bells, hung in a modern steel frame for change ringing, are known as "Wolsey's bells", after Cardinal Wolsey who was raised in the area. It is believed that Wolsey's uncle Edmund Daundy may have commissioned one of the bells. Four of them were cast circa 1450 and a fifth added circa 1480. The bells remain undamaged and unmodified, and still include their original clappers.

Ed: I think that someone out there has the answer to this discussion. Is it you? I will put it in the next newsletter if you send it to me.

This.....

.....page

.....is only

.....blank

.....because

.....no one sent

.....anything else in.

Chertsey District contacts -as elected in January 2021

Ringling Master and Chairman: Richard Pearce	richard@holbreck.co.uk
Secretary: Willy Burgess 01784 439583	egamten@gmail.com
Treasurer: John Young 01252 319739	jgy-young@tiscali.co.uk
Assistant Ringing Master: Peter Binns	pjbinns43@gmail.com
Assistant Ringing Master: Peter Whisker	peter@whisker.org.uk
Executive Committee Member: Jennifer Meade	jennifercmeade@btinternet.com
Independent Examiner: Roger Pashley	maryandroger@ntlworld.com
Belfry Inspector: Andrew Fisher 01932 829130	andrew@atf.me.uk
Training: Jane Marsters 020 8942 0886	maljan@ic24.net
Newsletter: Hilary Brooks 01932 227088	hilaryjbrooks@gmail.com
Bookstall: under review	

Dates for the diary - No diary dates have been given to me yet, so I cannot pass anything on, Ed