

Bell-notes

The quarterly newsletter for The Chertsey District
Issue 53 February 2026



St Maty's Walton on Thames



GUILDFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

President: THE BISHOP OF GUILDFORD

BELL NOTES ISSUE 53 February 2026

A Message from the Editor, -

Welcome to Bell Notes 53; a huge 'thank you' to all our contributors. I must apologise for not including any of the pictures sent to me – a combination of Word/Microsoft updates and Co-Pilot – rot its sox – have defeated all attempts to transfer .jpg files as sent into photos inserted in Word.

On a brighter note, I have really enjoyed putting this issue together – there has been so much going on and the discovery of Hersham's lonely bell is a nice piece of history. History, too, in the lives of our departed friends – my thanks to John Young for the information that allowed me to add the 'in Memoriam' section.

On that score, we all know that ringing is good physical and mental exercise, highly sociable and welcoming but the fact that it is more than the sum of those parts is less easy to describe. Or so I thought until I happened upon the Tower Captain's story in Ronald Blythe's book – 'Akinfield'. Read it and be entranced; encourage your younger ringers to in store; share it with friends so they can understand your enthusiasm for the 'exercise'! Bearing that in mind, please note the plea from the CCCBRs Secretary and sign the petition!

Included in the mailing of this issue are the Minutes of two meetings, ANM and ADM and the latest Programme on a Page.

Peter Binns

From the District Ringing Master,

it was good to see so many towers represented at the annual district meeting last month, and particularly to see so many new members being elected. Well done to everyone involved with recruiting, welcoming and training them all! However, this was a meeting marked by the absence of those we have lost this year - Denise, Jen and most recently Malcolm Loveday. I'm sure many will be paying tribute to Malcolm in these pages, so my personal tribute is that I found Malcolm to be a man of boundless generosity, enthusiasm and expertise. Whether you needed advice on your bell frame or were short-handed for a peal, Malcolm was your man. He was a reliable supporter of ringing at tower, district and guild level, quite apart from all that he found time for outside of ringing. We remember him with gratitude and hope that a fitting memorial to him can be put in place in the form of practical works to the tower to which he was so devoted.

My personal gratitude is also due to Tricia, who is expanding her remit as training officer with great gusto, and Lewin, who has taken on the new role of publicity officer. Tricia is organising an ambitious repertoire of events to support YOU to progress in your ringing, giving you the time and expertise that may not be readily available within your own practices. So please do support her by coming along, whether as a student or a helper. If you've never been to a district event, whether a training event, general practice or meeting, then make this the year you do - ask your tower captain or another ringer to come with you and you'll find we're not so scary!

Finally an admin plea - please do CHECK that your tower's details are correctly listed on the Guild website, please do encourage all your tower's ringers to SIGN UP for the district google group so that they find out about district activities, and please do PRINT AND CIRCULATE the posters that will be resuming under Lewin's care - your newer ringers can't get to events that they don't know about! On the other hand, if you make full use of all the opportunities on offer it could be your tower winning the Parsons' Cup for 2026!

Best wishes

Rachel Johnson, District Ringing Master

From the Secretary to the CCCBR, Ernie de Legh-Runciman,

Please make members aware of these two matters:-

Bell ringing as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. As part of the application process to have bell ringing registered as an ICH with UNESCO, we need to show we have the support of the practitioners of the art. As such, there is a petition on the Council's web site for ringers to sign up to say they support the application. Please encourage all your members to sign as soon as possible. You can find the petition here: <https://cccbr.org.uk/heritage/>

The Dorothy L Sayers Society have launched the award for Young Bell Ringers. The Award is designed to help young ringers deepen their skills and broaden their experience. Funding may be used for activities such as attending ringing courses, visiting other towers, or purchasing equipment to support ringing in their own church. Group applications from teams of young ringers are also welcome.

More details here:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/2026/01/23/dorothy-l-sayers-society-launches-500-award-for-young-bellringers/>

Short and not-so-short touches from the towers

Chertsey, 20cwt 8, Wednesday, KT16 8AS

It was with immense shock and sadness that we learned of the death of Malcolm Loveday BEM on New Year's Eve. Malcolm had been tower captain at Chertsey since he moved to the town in around 1972, having previously learned to ring at Staines. His first peal was at St Peters' Staines on 21st July 1962. The ringers are still coming to terms with his loss and what it will mean for us all. We are grateful for the kind words we have received and for the various offers of support to complete the projects Malcolm had been involved with - firstly to install an auto-winder for the clock and secondly to re-install the first-floor ringing room which was unfortunately removed in 1907 - we tried this out during the church redecoration some years ago from scaffolding erected in the tower and found the go of the bells much better. We also need urgently to train some new (and ideally young) ringers.

Peter Whisker

Chobham - St Lawrence, 9cwt 8, Monday, GU24 8AA

Ringling at Chobham continues to make good progress with 8 bells being rung at most of our Monday evening practices. The band at Chobham had a couple of new recruits last year helping to contribute to our largest Christmas dinner for many years in December. We rang for midnight Mass and Christmas Day services and saw in the New Year with ringing and cake.

Many of the band made great progress during last year and at the district Annual General Meeting in Ockham in January we were delighted to receive The Parsons Cup for the most improved tower in 2025.

Helen Scrivener

East Molesey - St Mary the Virgin, 10cwt 8, Tuesday, KT8 0ST

We had an unusual request for a wedding on bonfire night. A young couple, not very well off, who very much wanted bells but couldn't afford them. The church has already waived it's usual fees and asked if we could ring for a reduced fee – even if it was only 1 bell. We decided this would sound a bit funereal.

My generous band happily volunteered to ring for nothing and in the event we rang all 8 bells – normally we only provide 6 for weddings. The bride was very

grateful and overcome with people's kindness – so much so that she bought in a plateful of delicious cakes for us in January.

We rang the bells half-muffled for Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day – whole pull & stand and whole pull plain hunt sounding good and suitably sombre for the occasion. We almost managed Orpheus too – just a lead away before it fell apart – excellent practice in concentration

We rang a quarter peal of plain bob doubles on 30th November in memory of Jennifer Meade Band was:-1 Joanna Hoad 2 Jacquelin Patel 3 Jane Marsters 4 Giles Andre 5 John Young (C) 6 Jonny Chippindale.

This was a first for Jonny – well done! Jim Steele was to have covered for us but he sadly couldn't get to us in time We were lucky that Jonny – who lives round the corner from the church – was at home and willing to have a go and did brilliantly! We also had some general ringing for Jennifer at our next practice on 2nd December - call changes and 360 of Grandsire Doubles called by Tony. Ringers were:- Joanna Hoad, Tony Bishop, Jane Marsters, Andrew Fisher, Giles Andre, Tiana Humphries.

We rang for the carol service on 20th December and Midnight in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve but sadly couldn't manage a band for the Christmas Day morning service However we did ring in the New Year – call changes and plain hunt beforehand – then diminishing rounds trying to get the timing right so the tenor strikes 12 blows with Big Ben then all coming back in again to welcome in the New Year Fizz and nibbles afterwards with family and friends – very enjoyable

On 19th and 20th January we were visited by the 1st Molesey Beavers as part of their church tour Looking very smart in their uniforms they were divided up into 4 groups of 6 and we had about 10 minutes to tell them all about the bells and let them have a go at chiming. They were a delight and asked pertinent questions “How can it be dangerous ?”, “Why are the bells so high up ?” and my favourite when asked what difference there might be between the sound of light bell and a heavy one - “I think the word you want is pitch” How wonderful it would be to harness this curiosity and enthusiasm immediately and teach them to ring – but we'll have to wait for them to grow a bit and hope that they'll remember their visit.

Jane Marsters

Egham - St John the Baptist, 17cwt 10, Thursday, TW20 9HL

David Cox

Esher - Christ Church, 7cwt 8, Wednesday, KT10 8Q5

Regrettably I was unable to pay due respects to our much-missed Jennifer Meade in the last edition of Bell Notes and would like to amend this now. Her sad passing has been noted at several bell events both locally within in the Chertsey District and within Surrey. She was always so very positive about bell ringing and the great fun that could be had by being a bell ringer. Jen had many stories to tell of being roped in to ring at various locations around the UK, all at a moment's notice! She was also a fervent cake maker and somehow managed to bring the two passions together with her much loved and much eaten Lemon Drizzle Cake.

She was firm in her teaching; the bells must be respected and we should be very aware of the safety implications but she was also a bundle of laughs and could have tears streaming down your face quite easily.

God Bless you Jen.

In other news we lost a total of four ringers last year but did gain one very enthusiastic new ringer who has now progressed to ringing with us on a Sunday.

As with other Towers, numbers are often low meaning practices must be cancelled; the same also for some Sunday services although we have managed to keep all the main ones covered.

We have placed a local advert in the hope of attracting new ringers – fingers crossed!

During 2025 we rang for six funerals and three weddings. Weddings have been booked for 2026 but the decision as to whether bells are required or not has yet to be made.

Ann Battensby Tower Captain

Hersham - St Peter, 8cwt 8, Tuesday, KT12 4AA

The Hersham band continues to ring on Tuesday practice night 7.45 to 9pm. Our three learners are doing well all ringing good rounds. John recently rang treble to a 120 of bob doubles so should be getting on to methods. Josh is getting the hang of plain hunting. We are lucky to have help from neighbouring towers which speeds progress and enables decent practices.

Some time ago I noticed that the Hersham entry in Dove's Guide did not mention the small 2.75 cwt bell hanging above the eight on a main beam of the wooden steeple. This bell was originally in Holy Trinity the first church on

the site. It has an inscription saying that it was cast at Whitechapel in 1839 the date Holy Trinity was dedicated. The bell and clock were moved to St Peter's when it was built in 1887 and was used until the eight was installed in 1901. It has remained unused ever since. It is equipped for lever swing chiming or striking with a hammer. I informed the Dove team and it turned out that it was not in their list of bells cast at Whitechapel. I also sent photos of the bell frame and it was confirmed that it was typical of the cast iron

units used by the founder Blackbourn in his many re-hangs and augmentations. The Dove entry has been updated.

David Mealor

Horsell - St Mary the Virgin, 11cwt 6, Tuesday (check first), GU21 4QQ

This issue of Bell Notes is written with mixed emotions, following the death of Denise Balmer on the 1st September, 2025. Denise was admitted to the Guildford Guild on the 9th May, 1998, and her funeral was marked by the ringing of half-muffled bells by 8 of us, on the 6th October, 2025. Tributes were paid to her by family and friends from many parts of the world.

As forecast, we rang on the 15 th August to commemorate the 80 th Anniversary of V.J.Day, marking the end of World War II. We rang also for the Deanery Confirmation Service, at 18:30, on the 21st September, when we were joined by one of the sponsoring clergy, who is also a ringer at Send. Our church and Tower were open for visitors on National Heritage Day, on the 13th September, attracting some 80+ who climbed the Tower, were shown the bells and given demonstrations of ringing. There was lots of interest but no takers! We also had 2 visitor groups from other parts of the South East.

We continued with an average of just under 6 for Service ringing and but had to cancel ringing on 4 Sundays. We mustered a full team to Ring for Midnight Mass but there were insufficient to ring on Christmas morning. On the other hand, we had one more wedding and 2 District Practise nights.

Alan Nichols - Tower Captain

Oatlands - St Mary, 12cwt 8, 2nd Wednesday, KT13 9TS

With our two young ringers, Rohan and Christian, now beyond the learner stage, we frequently ring all eight bells on a Sunday morning. They also demonstrated how to ring when the tower was open at the Winter Fair in November.

During the past three months, we had the usual "extras" of ringing half-muffled on Remembrance Sunday, staying up late to ring on Christmas

Eve and coming back ten hours later to ring on Christmas Day. There was also a wedding on the following Monday.

We were pleased to have Louisa, a student on vacation from Birmingham University, join us for some of the Christmas ringing. As reported in the Ringing World, they have a very active Ringing Society so we wait to see how much she has progressed if she reappears at Easter.

Our practice on the second Wednesday of the month continues to benefit from the presence of regular visitors.

With our two young ringers, Rohan and Christian, now beyond the learner stage, we frequently ring all eight bells on a Sunday morning. They also demonstrated how to ring when the tower was open at the Winter Fair in November.

John Burnett

Ockham (+Send)- All Saints, Tcwst 6, Thursday, GU23 6NL

We only rang for the one wedding during 2025 in July. Visitors came from Ealing, Lane End, UCL and a Peal band during the year and we also hosted the RAF Guild AGM along with four other more local bands.

The Belfry Bells and Tower are generally all clean and in good working order and the faulty donated Dyson has been repaired and put to good use. The frayed 5 th rope failed again and was sent away for professional repair.

We Rang Quarter Peals for the wedding of Lorna's Norfolk friends in April, Greta's 90th Birthday in June, Lorna's achievement of the Queens Guide award in July, and for the passing of Jennifer Meade and Nicky Mellstrom in November. Other shorter lengths were achieved for the Churches Arocha Gold (720), and for 80th VE day celebrations (800), both in May

We ended the year with 'ringing out the old' bells muffled, before midnight, and 'in the new' bells, open, afterwards, together with our drinks of fizz and nibbles.

Luke has now become a Non-Resident ringer of the diocese having moved to Whitegrove in Warfield Berks, but I am sure we will see him and his partner from time to time when visiting his parents.

We currently have 6 local ringers at our practices together with teaching six learners for St Mary the Virgin Send and three neighbouring regular ringing visitors. The evenings are generally very successful. Unfortunately, another

two regulars with us for over many years, are waiting for the lighter evenings and finished M25 works, as they find winter night driving difficult now.

John Young - Tower Captain

Old Woking- St Peters,

It's been a busy few months at Old Woking since the last newsletter. The band rang a quarter-peal of Yorkshire for Remembrance Sunday and quarters of the Nottingham Eight in December and January, the latter of these in memory of Malcolm Loveday - the band were very sad to hear that he had passed away and are thinking of his family.

The quarters were part of preparing for an attempt at a peal of the Nottingham Eight - this was rung at Shalford at the end of January, but was unfortunately lost around a course from the end. Thanks to Jackie Roberts and David Cox for joining the band and to Richard for getting us as close as we did!

In addition to the above, the newer members of the band are doing really well - Jackie is learning plain hunt, Jenny is picking up Grandsire and Little Bob and Christine is getting to grips with Plain Bob. They're also making a vital contribution to Sunday morning ringing.

The band did plenty of ringing over the Christmas period, including for the Guide Dogs carol service, the midnight service on Christmas Eve and on Christmas morning. We've also got our Tower AGM next month, so more news on that next time.

Doug Stoneham - Tower Secretary

Ottershaw-Christ Church, 16cwt 6, Wednesday, 8pm-9pm KT16 OPB

Since the last report the story at Christ Church has been mainly one of maintenance of the bells. Our number four bell had a major problem and started making a number of unusual noises. We stopped using it while we tried to understand the problem. Essentially quite a few of the bolts holding the mechanism together were coming loose which required several visits to check and tighten them all including checking the bolts on the other 5 bells. All is now good, but we have also decided to have the tower checked professionally.

On a brighter note, Peter Binns has recovered sufficiently from last

year's illness and returned to ringing with us on Remembrance Sunday, which is appreciated by everyone. Our two new ringers Brian and Pavel are still making good progress. However I think my estimate of methods by the end of last year was a little optimistic. Still, we will get there.

Gordon Cox Tower Captain

Send - St Mary the Virgin, 11cwt 6, Wednesday, GU23 7JL

Rachel Wilkinson, Tower Captain

Thames Ditton - St Nicholas, 8cwt 6, Monday, KT70QQ

Pamela Rider, Tower Secretary

Walton-on-Thames - St Mary, 21cwt 8, Friday, KT12 2QS

The campaign to recruit and teach more ringers over the past two years is beginning to show results. For the first time in recent years there was ringing for the Christingle service at the beginning of December and for the Nativity service on Christmas Eve. Of equal importance, two returning ringers and two of the learners have stepped forward to take on the positions of Tower Captain, Tower Secretary, Tower Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. On a less positive note, the attempt to ring on the first and third Sunday mornings of each month has had to be scaled back to the first Sunday only.

As will be reported elsewhere in this issue of Bell-Notes, Jennifer Meade sadly died in October. She was a regular and welcome visitor to the Walton tower. We wanted to mark this by ringing in her memory but accepted it was not realistic to attempt a peal or even a quarter. We decided instead to bring together those who knew and had rung with her at Walton on Saturday 29 October for general ringing. Fourteen of us were there to ring, then went into the church for a cheerful gathering with tea, coffee and lemon drizzle cake (a Jennifer speciality).

Practices continue on Friday evenings, starting at 7.30. Sometimes it has looked as though there might not be enough to make it worthwhile but I am always reluctant to cancel and my optimism has been rewarded more than once by the arrival of unexpected visitors. Don't give up!

John Burnett (for Hilary Brooks on her way to Australia)

Weybridge - St James, 11cwt 8, Thursday, K173 8D

Remembrance Sunday in November found us ringing half muffled bells for two services; the usual morning Eucharist and the afternoon Civic service attended by the mayor and uniformed services.

Moving into December, the band were unable to practice one Thursday evening as the local senior school was holding its carol service in the church. We took the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with a meal out. Fourteen of us enjoyed wood-fired pizzas and various pastas at 'Cantina 41', a restaurant very close to St James

We rang for several Christmas services including nine lessons and carols and midnight mass. On Christmas morning nine ringers arrived so we were able to ring all the bells.

With the start of the New Year came a new tower captain. Neill Rubidge has been at the helm for 15 years but has been unable to ring since 2022. He has decided to step down, whilst remaining a band member, and I now have the title. We thank him for all his leadership over the years.

St James will be hosting a training session in February, so if you are wondering what to do on Valentine's Day, why not join us from 10-12:30pm. Look out for posters with more information.

Linda Strange, Tower Secretary

Chertsey District In Memoriam 2025

It has been a sad year within the Chertsey District as we have lost 4 of our members in the last four months.

Denise Joan Balmer (82), Horsell, elected to the Guild at the Striking competition at Send on 9th May 1998.

Jennifer Claire Meade (85) elected to the Guild at the ANM on 13 th November 1982, became Tower Captain in 1988 for 35 years and was our District Secretary for 11 years from 2008.

John Frederick Mallett Maybrey (91) elected to the Guild on 12 th October 1957 and a member for 32 years.

Malcolm Stuart Loveday BEM (79) Tower Captain at Chertsey for 52 years , elected to the Guild at

the ADM on 6 th January 1973. He was our Exec Committee member 1975-76, our District Master 1977-79, and a Vice President of Guild from 2017. Awarded BEM in 2019 for services to the community in Chertsey.

He has been the Diocese advisor on Bells to the Diocesan Advisory Council (DAC) for many years and was recently looking for a volunteer to train and carry on this role on behalf of all parishes with bells in the diocese.

Malcolm's funeral will take place at 12 noon at St Peter's, Chertsey on Friday February 6th followed by burial at Thorpe Cemetery. Then those who wish can join Sue and family at The Kingfisher at Chertsey Bridge.

There will be open ringing beforehand - from about 11am onwards and a course/touch of Bristol Surprise Major following the service.

Chertsey District Officers/contacts 2025

Master: Rachel Johnson (Old Woking)

24 Howards Rd, Woking, GU22 9AP. (07722 650090.
rachel.e.johnson@sky.com)

Secretary: (Joint) Simon & Liz Burton (Ockham)

Simon : 3 Roughlands, Woking GU22 8PT (07789 876514.
svburton26@gmail.com)

Liz : 07788 190816. eburton71@btinternet.com)

Chairman & Assistant RM: John Young (Ockham)

5 Parsons Cottages, Harpers Road, Ash, GU12 6BX. (07814 554627, jgy-young@tiscali.co.uk)

Treasurer Alison Sanderson (Chobham)

20 Fernhill Close, Woking, GU22 0DJ. (07784 091369.
ali.hullah@gmail.com)

Executive Committee Member: Patricia Hoverd-Hughes (Ockham)

22 Poyle Road, Tongham, GU10 1DU. (07426 197761.
patriciahughes@live.com)

Independent Examiner: Post Vacant

Assistant Ringing Master: Eliot Johnson (Old Woking)

24 Howards Rd, Woking, GU22 9AP. (07769 674609.
eliotpjohnson@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Peter Binns (Ottershaw)

5 St Crispins Way, Ottershaw, KT16 0RE. (01932 872844 or 07968 259002.
pjbinns43@gmail.com)

Belfry Inspection Co-Ordinator: Andrew Fisher (Oatlands)

18 Woodland Grove, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 9EQ. (01932 829130.
andrew@atf.me.uk)

Training Officer: Patricia Hoverd-Hughes See Above (Exec Officer)
Paul Thurtle (Esher)

3 Waverley Drive, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 9PE. (07732 746504.
thurtle@hotmail.com)

Publicity Manager : Lewin Cox
lewincox@gmail.com

Dates for the diary -

Dates and details of special events will be circulated by email in advance.
For Training events, names to the Ringing Master or a Training Officer
please.

More details in the Programme on a Page