



# Oyez

North West Region of Handbell Ringers of Great Britain  
Registered Charity Numbers 298945 (England) and SC038918 (Scotland)

Winter 2016

Number 14

## Summer Ring at Gresford June 2016



The *All Saints Gresford Handbell Ringers* hosted a delightful rally, different from any others I have attended.

Once registered and refreshed we split into our three groups.

The first visited the 14<sup>th</sup> century church *All Saints*, complete with misericords and rood screen. The screen which separates the nave from the chancel is fifteenth century, probably from the Ludlow workshop. The wainscoting, and the fan vaulting which is further ornamented by liernes, make it one of the finest screens in Wales. There are many notable memorials along the walls and on the floor of the church. The Trevor Chapel houses a wall painting commemorating the Gresford Colliery disaster of 22 September 1934, when 266 men died. Mentioned in the Domesday book *All Saints* is often called "The best Cheshire Church in Wales".

There are impressive yew trees in the church yard, most of them planted in 1726, but an enormous one older than 1600 years.

The second group joined the tower bell ringers in the belfry and rang a few changes. This is the only church in Britain to have two completely independent sets of bells (a ring of 8, a lighter ring of 6, and also 1 tolling bell). The older 8-set is one of the *Seven Wonders of Wales*. The suspicious red stains on the tower roof floor were – yes- blood! Caused by red kites eating their prey.

The third group were entertained by Dr. Elfed-Owens who told us about Welsh culture, history, customs, and costumes. We heard about the famous *Big Ben* and his formidable wife, who although English by birth were Welsh to the core. Then we earned our lunch by learning about music and dancing, and then we danced.

The afternoon proved both instructive and entertaining as we learned the background to the better and lesser known Welsh music we played. It was all massed ringing, beginning with a spirited rendition of *Men of Harlech*. Next was the sad hymn *Gresford* written to commemorate the mining disaster of 1934. This was followed by *Watching the Bloomin' Wheat*. Despite being a sorry tale it was a delight to ring. There was another hymn *Rhyd-lydan* and we finished with *Sospan Fach*, worth driving 100 miles for, to find out what it meant!

Then the Welsh tea – lovely! After intense debate and comparative trials it was decided Welsh cakes were preferred without butter – but the debate continues.

Audrey Phillips      Kirkby Lonsdale Ringers

### **Chairman's Corner**

It is hard to believe we are quickly approaching the end of the year, and what a busy year it has been! Since the last newsletter we have had 3 rallies in the North West; one hosted by Gresford back in June and our autumn rallies hosted by Kinder and Dean. All three were very successful and the committee would like to thank each of the host teams for their hard work and it has to be said, at all three events the cakes lived up to the impressive reputations! There were a wide variety of activities as well as opportunities to ring. We were pleased to see such a good turnout at both of the autumn rallies in particular.

A few people from the NW along with a number from elsewhere in the country made the trip to London to see the visiting American team; The Raleigh Ringers. Their performance lived up to expectations and they really did persuade people to dress up in '*Flight Of The Bumble Bee*', which is nearly as impressive as the speed at which they played the music!

2016 has also seen the 17<sup>th</sup> International Handbell Symposium hosted by Canada and held in Vancouver. Nearly 90 members of HRGB attended this event and there are recordings available on YouTube and on Facebook of some of the performances. HRGB was represented in the International Concert by East Anglian Regional Team. I highly recommend that if you have a Facebook account, you 'like' HRGB as this will enable you to see what is going on around the country.

Several teams from all over the UK also submitted recordings of themselves playing ' *The Toreador's Song* ' as part of the BBC Get Playing scheme. This involved downloading the appropriate version of the music, performing it to the speed set by the virtual conductor, uploading the recording and then waiting to see if it would be featured! In total there were 6 teams whose pictures were shown although more teams had their music included in the final performance, released on iPlayer on the day of The Last Night of the Proms.

Now we are in the run up to Christmas, so I'm sure many of you are busy planning your ringing schedule. We are also on the countdown to the Golden Jubilee of HRGB. This will be celebrated next year through a variety of events, both regionally and nationally. Things to look out for include: music compositions, Exeter National Rally, a regional teddy bear who will be travelling around to team events and of course, the big celebration on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017 which will be a 1967 themed rally. More details to follow!

For now, please let me wish you an early Happy Christmas and all the very best for the New Year. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the very near future!

Beth McCord

## AUTUMN RALLY at DISLEY 8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016

On a bright, autumn Saturday morning we set off early for Disley, allowing just over an hour for travel. Lots of cyclists en route, where one could not safely pass and then ROADWORKS!!! Eventually we arrived at our venue, then had to juggle cars in the car park.

At last, all six groups present were ready for the first massed ring piece "Toreador's Song". It sounded good, even the first time through – much better than in our practices.

Three rounds of team ringing produced a wide variety: from classical to popular music, hymns and jazz to tunes from musicals and film themes. Solo ringing (a real challenge) to lots of bells, belle-plates, whistles etc and several new techniques (to me anyway).

The pieces which will be remembered I'm sure: - "Highland Cathedral" by Maghull, "God's Train" by Kinder and a very moving "Let There Be Peace on Earth" by Maghull. All pieces were most enjoyable: well done all.

The other two massed ringing pieces "Le Lierre" and "Land of Hope and Glory" were good to play. Thank you to all three conductors. It is wonderful to hear lots of bells playing in unison.

Thanks must go to our hosts, The Kinder Ringers, for their amazing organisation and hospitality – the cakes were delicious and next year's dates are in our diaries.

S.M.A.A.R.T

PS The two dates to remember are 18th March 2017 and 7th October 2017! - Ed.

## Dean Rally

On 22nd October, 6 Bell ringing teams arrived at Dean School for our North West Rally. During the months before this date all teams were given the massed ringing pieces to practise: Toreador's Song, The Ivy and Land of Hope and Glory.

The room was decorated to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday - it was spectacular. Behind the scenes (in the kitchen) 3 very kind ladies welcomed us with tea, coffee and biscuits. Debbie had travelled all the way from Colorado to be with us. We were very lucky to have 3 conductors, Anne Hopley, Irene Merson and Jane Holland. We began with Toreador using mallets and bells; it was quite rousing and I'm sure it will become a favourite for us all to play at our concerts.



Then came our solo pieces. Dean, the host team, played first with a nursery rhyme, Horsey Horsey. The second team was Kirkby Lonsdale with Trumpet Voluntary followed by Greystoke with Birthday Rag, which got the feet tapping. Antony Ringers from Egremont rang Blessed Assurance. Three of a Kind (a trio from Kinder) gave us the medley Country Airs. Then Marron Valley rang Matchstalk Men and Matchstalk Cats and Dogs.

Our 2nd Massed ringing piece was Le Lierre (The Ivy) - a lovely piece. I felt it could be made into a dance like a Gavotte.

Just before lunch the teams were given an unseen piece, Oh How Lovely Is The Evening. It was based on a "Round" between 3 sections of teams. It was challenging because we had to sing at the same time.



Then it was a lovely break for lunch and a quiz. Well done to Kirkby Lonsdale's great quizzers and thanks to Sheila who set the questions and unwittingly gave us the answer to question 4! We had to disregard that question which brought much laughter.

There was a lovely display of bonnets in the foyer, where we all thought they were going to stay. However little did we know we had to do a parade. Well done Betty from Marron Valley, whose hat portrayed the Queen to a tee.

There was a good raffle, well supported.

After lunch we started up again. Marron Valley played Bonnets Go West and Charlie Is My Darling. Kinder played Marietta's Catherine Wheel. Antony played Fanfare. Greystoke played Pachelbel's Canon and I Vow to Thee My Country. Kirkby Lonsdale played Party Poppers and Dean played Maori Magic.

We finished off by going through our 3 massed ringing pieces. Then on to the afternoon tea, fit for a Queen, provided by the Dean and Marron Valley ringers.

It was a wonderful day of fun and laughter and a gathering of friends, the weather was kind especially for the time of year.



Our thanks to Sue and Sheila for all their hard work before the rally. It doesn't happen just on the day, a lot of e-mails and planning, measuring, booking of the school etc is needed beforehand. Once again Sue and Sheila a great big thanks from everyone who attended that day.

Norma Parke



A little legal advice:

Just a reminder that if you organise an event e.g. a get-together which includes other teams, you should let the regional Secretary know. This is so that it can be reported to the Committee and become an official regional event. It would then be covered by HRGB third party insurance.

## North-West Region Rally Report

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, the second NW region Mini-rally took place in Dean, which is about as far as it is possible to get from London, and still be in England. Of course, Dean does have other good points. Once you have navigated your way to the far west along Route A66 it is not Californian hospitality that awaits you, but the much superior West Cumberland variety, starting with a very welcome mug of tea. We checked that all the team had got there, got set up, and started meeting old friends. Sorry, that is 'Friends of long-standing', although one or two are fairly mature.

Then we unloaded The Hats. Not just 'the hats', but 'THE HATS'. In celebration of Her Maj's recently becoming the longest serving monarch, etc., Dean had invited us to create suitable red, white and blue decorated headgear, to be paraded in front of the admiring assembly.

The rally started, not with the usual massed ringing, but with Greystoke's individual selection. This was not wilful disregard of procedure, but because an important person (the conductor, I believe) had to leave for an Even More Pressing Engagement. Before she left, Greystoke treated us to Trumpet Voluntary and Birthday Rag. This was notable for the disparity in the music. A fairly large gentleman of the bass persuasion seemed to be ringing from a postcard, while a modest sized lady at the top end completely disappeared behind a huge spread of paper.

Then we started the rally 'properly', with a massed ring of the Toreador tune. After a lot of hard practice and much muttering, Kirkby Lonsdale can just about struggle through this. S l o w l y. It went a teeny bit faster than we were comfortable with, but we sort of got through it. Dean, as hosts, kicked off the individual section with Horsey-horsey. Apparently the Queen is fond of them. Kirkby Lonsdale got in the party spirit with Sing Hosanna, and Tantony (nice to see you!) rang Blessed Assurance. This is one of our favourite pieces and we had considered it, so we were very glad we picked something else. Kinder, sorry Three of a Kind (who have absolutely no connection at all with that famous team, oh dear me, no), gave us a four in hand masterclass of popular country tunes. Marron Valley (it is nice to see how these rather isolated teams share ringers) finished the first individual section with Matchstalk Men. The first half finished with the massed ringing of Le Lierre (The Ivy). I don't recall ever playing Gounod before; we were a bit doubtful at first, but it grows on you.

After lunch, during which some members of Kirkby Lonsdale displayed an amazing knowledge of Royal trivia for the Quiz, and the raffle (I noticed the shouts of 'Fix' got a lot quieter when Greystoke people started winning a 'few' prizes!); we restarted gently with the ring from scratch. Not a challenging ring, but a bit different when rung and sung as a round. Massed Ringing again, and Land of Hope and Glory caused a few chests to swell with pride. Or perhaps it was stomachs. Whatever.

Marron Valley began the second half with a Scottish feel, Dundee Bonnets and Charlie is ma Darlin'. Three odd people totally unconnected with Kinder rang Marietta's Catherine Wheel, which we haven't heard for a while, and Can-Can; during which we were treated to a 'Show' by a certain smallish person from Greystoke. She doesn't just ride a scooter, she dances as well! Restoring us to something resembling sanity, Tantony displayed the Fanfare from Pictures at an Exhibition, and Greystoke, with Chris now the right way up, rang Pachelbel's Canon and the Jupiter theme from The Planets. Kirkby Lonsdale continued the party theme with Party Popper, and Dean concluded the Individual section with Maori Magic. Before the final Massed Ring we had a parade of THE HATS! These ranged from tasteful, impeccably assembled triumphs of the Milliners' Art, to, well, mine. But it was all jolly good fun, and no animals were harmed during the process, although some might have been rather startled. The day finished with the Massed Ringing of all three pieces and the tea for which Dean is justly renowned.

As usual, a big Thankyou to Dean for another well-organised and very enjoyable rally; and a reminder (I am sure you will read this elsewhere) that the theme for our autumn meeting next year (the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting) is '1967'. See you there!

Alan Cox

An Important Date for your Diary  
Spring Rally and AGM 18th March 2017  
Venue to be confirmed very soon.

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The recent mini rally at Disley was held on 8th October, exactly 50 years since the first meeting of handbell teams at Norbury, near Stockport. Our President, John Partington, attended both events and described how the gathering at Norbury led a year later to the formation of HRGB.

Plans are now in hand for the Golden Jubilee of HRGB on 7th October 2017. The North West Region will be holding a special event on that day (instead of the usual Autumn Rallies) and the Committee hope that as many members as possible will join in the celebrations.

**DON'T FORGET: 7TH OCTOBER 2017! Venue to be confirmed.**



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REMEMBER TO LOOK AT THE NORTH WEST WEBSITE!

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