



Oyez

Golden Jubilee

Issue



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

Winter 2017

Number 16



1967 TO 2017

John B, John P, Jeff and Enid were all at the founding event of HRGB in Ashton-Under-Lyne —and here they are, still ringing, at the Golden Jubilee Rally at Lancaster on 7th October 2017.

The NW Region over the years

The history of HRGB has been told in detail already this year – included in the booklet by John Willis you received with the last copy of REVERBERATIONS, so in this article I'm just looking at how events in the region have evolved and changed over the years.

When regionalisation was talked about in 1975 it was Bill Breckell and the St Mary, Reddish, HR, who organised a gathering in the Spring of that year, and the Region itself was formed in January 1976 at Harry Calderbank's house in Higher Walton (we all walked there, under the brand new M61, from Walter Mansley's house as so many people turned up).

Rallies then always followed the format of starting after lunch, rally ringing in the afternoon, tea provided by the host team, and more rally ringing in the evening - which became a concert, and then a ceilidh. At that time Scotland was part of our Region, and Dunblane HR had their own ceilidh band, "The Potted Hough", who played for us around the Region, for a number of years – wonderful times !

For a number of years the Region also held an Annual Dinner in the Autumn with a speaker, and also held a Carol Service on the first Saturday evening in December rehearsing in the afternoon. I seem to remember being rained on *in* Liverpool Metropolitan RC Cathedral !

The dinner changed to one at lunch time, organised by Derek Jackson, and on occasions involved skittles as well !

Sadly the Dinners and Carol Services have faded out, the timing of the rallies has changed to mornings with massed ringing and workshops or classes introduced. Even the Regional AGM that survived as a separate event (usually with potato pie or fish and chips tea) until only a few years ago has been incorporated into the March Rally day. Other than the occasional "summer event", that seems to be the latest schedule and format.

Perhaps somebody will suggest something else, even something that's been done before but in a new format, I'm sure the Committee would be delighted to receive your thoughts and suggestions.

John P Partington (Hon. Life President NW Region)

COMMENTS FROM THE GUEST BOOK AT LANCASTER 2017

As a new bellringer and my first time at a rally I am really enjoying the rally and camaraderie.

HRGB – a fantastic organisation open to all irrespective of age or gender. Rallies can be – and usually are – relaxed, friendly and informative. Lots of fun and camaraderie.

I've been in HRGB for 20 years now and the organisation has provided plenty of opportunities for making friends and music both in the UK and abroad. Thank you to all those who make things happen at all levels of the HRGB.

Janet and Ian from Walthew Ringers - a most enjoyable day ringing alongside sighted players.

Chairman's Corner

The end of the year is in sight and I'm sure that most of you are busy with lots of Christmas ringing! It has been an exciting year, with extra celebrations to mark the 50th Year since the formation of Handbell Ringers of Great Britain. The launch was at the National Rally in Exeter with the actual date of the Golden Jubilee being marked regionally in October with a wide variety of rallies and events being held across the country.

The North West chose to host one large rally on the actual anniversary, at Lancaster University (also the venue for the Silver Jubilee Rally). We aimed to choose a venue as central as possible, with the focus being on everybody participating together alongside the opportunity for teams to perform a 'party piece'. At this point I have to thank each and everyone involved in the planning and throughout the day. A lot of hard work went in to producing what turned out to be a very successful day, which was only so successful because so many of you chose to come along and enter into the spirit of all the activities, games and ringing. It was really awesome (in the truest sense of the word) to see so many teams ringing such a range of different music; from arrangements dating from the very start of the society to modern compositions and pop music. I genuinely had shivers when we sang 'Let There Be Peace on Earth', accompanied by bells, chosen for not only the relevance to life today, but also because it was included at the rally in 1992. I have to say, I felt incredibly privileged and proud to be involved. I think October 7th was a true testament to HRGB, reflecting the supportive, encouraging and fun nature of the society.

There are still things to look out for, as obviously it is our Golden Jubilee Year until October next year...

The bears are still on their travels, so please do not hesitate to request a visit from Ashton or Norbury if they haven't made it to you yet, or if you would like their presence at an upcoming event! Please do continue to take photos and send them to our Webmaster along with a caption.

Also, the national Chairman, Tim Willets has challenged each region to recruit 50 new members. So if you know anybody who rings bells, but maybe doesn't know about HRGB, or is not yet a member, then please do try to encourage them! We would love to find more people to come along to our events who would enjoy meeting other handbell ringers and sharing music and skills.

We have lots to look forward to already next year. Our Spring Rally and AGM will be held in Bury again in March and we are planning a summer event for July. Please make sure you put the dates in your diaries as it would be lovely to see as many of you there as possible!

I will take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year. See you in 2018!

Beth McCord

DATES FOR YOUR NEW 2018 DIARY

Saturday, 24th March Spring Rally and AGM

Once again at Bury Grammar School Infants' Hall—Details in the New Year

Saturday, 14th July "Christmas in July!"

Newbiggin Village Hall, near Penrith, Cumbria

Autumn Mini-Rallies will be held in October—Dates and venues to be confirmed

LANCASTER GOLDEN JUBILEE RALLY SATURDAY 7TH OCTOBER 2017

17 handbell teams attended the Golden Jubilee Rally to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the HRGB, along with independent members, visitors and invited guests.

The University of Lancaster LICA building (Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts) was a spacious and airy hall with plenty of room for extracurricular activities. Bishops School pupils kindly guided us into the parking bays and the day set off with a Master Class in "Eleanor Rigby" conducted by Kate Sawallisch. Although it was a difficult piece to play with lots of tied notes and off-beat rhythms, it set the tone for the 60s theme.

The North West Committee had organised quizzes and games to join in with, including Heads and Tails, which really got us in a spin, and a variation on Beetle using Bear parts. There was a mingling game and a 60s quiz plus a raffle and £50 in pound coins to be won. In the refreshment hall there was a display of photos of ringers with the North West Jubilee Bears, Norbury and Ashton, and some historic photo albums.

The Rally session took place in the afternoon with lots of loose connections to the theme of Gold, Birthdays or the Sixties. Norbury, being the first registered team, played the Euterpe Mazurka from the original arrangement by William Gordon of Stockport. There was also lots of 60s themed dress and much Gold in evidence.

Walthew House blind bellringers from Stockport amazed everyone with their Nursery Chimes and joining in the familiar Old-time Medley, Three for the Road.

Original HRGB member and Honorary Life President of the Region, John Partington, cut the celebration cake and made a short speech.

The pieces written specially for the Anniversary, "Polaris and the Northern Lights", "Dance Suite for Bells" and "Three for the Road", were played as massed ringing. These were reprised at the end. The event concluded with the ringing and singing of "Let there be Peace on Earth" and a toast to another 50 years of handbell ringing.

These are the pieces everyone rang:

<u>Team</u>	<u>Music</u>
Norbury	Euterpe Mazurka
Marple URC	Celebration
Greystoke	Moon River
Kinder Ringers	Outbursts of Joy
Walthew House	Nursery Chimes
Mini Minims	Yesterday
Tantony	Over the Rainbow
Kirby Lonsdale	The Muppets theme
Gresford	Alleluia
Beetham	Ode to Joy
Dean	Puppet on a string
Sale	Moon River
Bishops School	Dambusters March
Higher Walton	Silent Night
Marron Valley	I'd like to teach the world to sing
Maghull	Birthday Rag

NEW TO HANDBELLS

I always used to joke that the only musical thing I could play was the tape recorder (we're going back a bit now). When I was just a child, my father tried teaching me to play the piano (never get family to teach you anything), however I gave it up probably to save my mother from going demented listening to me practising scales. A little later my school were encouraging us to learn to play an instrument and I brought home a violin. That didn't work out either and it went back after two weeks of coating strings with rosin and doing impressions of strangled cats.

Ten years ago my wife, Helen, found a flyer from The Eden Singers who were looking for new choir members. I passed the audition, found my voice and confidence and to this day thoroughly enjoy this excursion into music.

Helen did it again, recently, when she spotted an advertisement in the local paper inviting people to try handbell ringing, so I gave it a go. A rather apprehensive group met in January this year and enjoyed it so much that we carried on until March when I was invited to join the main Greystoke Handbell Ringers group. There are ten of us and we meet once a week for two hours.

As with any organisation there will always be absences but, for me, that has been of benefit when I've been asked to play another member's bells. It's given me more practice on a range of bells. I was really delighted when I found out that my allotted bells were base C and D. Fairly big bells and I'm sure that as we play from the shoulder that I'm getting a mini workout every time I use them.

I started in April with the main group and on May Day I was doing my first public performance in Penrith town centre. At the beginning of August I was playing at a harpists' convention.

When our leader Chris told me that we were all going down to Lancaster University for the HRBG North West Rally I wasn't quite sure what to expect. What I did get was friendship and willingness, from complete strangers, to teach or share information.

Walking into the main hall was something of a "wow" moment. I have never seen so many handbells in one room. The sound of mass ringing was unbelievable. When individual groups played their chosen piece it was interesting to see the many different styles of ringing and it was a privilege to watch so many talented people.

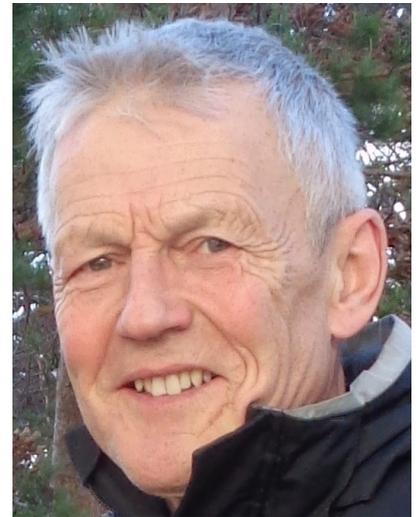
The schoolboys "Dambusters" rendition was great and I wasn't the only one to comment on the speed of some of their players and marvel at the fact that one lad had only been playing for two weeks. And who could forget the nursery rhymes played by three people, two of whom were blind? The Kendal group certainly put a smile on our faces too with their version of The Muppets theme.

I'm 66 now and it's taken me all this time to find a musical instrument that I can play. It's helped me learn to read music faster and keep rhythm, which in turn is paying dividends with the singing too.

To all my handbell ringing friends, I thank you for your patience and encouragement.

Oh, and to my wife, a really big thank you – you've done it again.

David Kerry, Greystoke Handbell Ringers



COMMENTS FROM KATE SAWALLISCH,

LEADER OF THE "ELEANOR RIGBY" MASTERCLASS AT LANCASTER

Arrived in the UK in November 1999 and thanks to Derek and Jennifer Jackson was ringing within 2 weeks of arrival. They took me along to a regional event at Bolton and Cestrian Ringers allowed me to join them. Thus was born the beginning of 18 years of ringing, making good friends and travelling the UK and world through handbell ringing. It's been a tremendous journey for me, personally and professionally. Thanks HRGB! Long may you continue to bring people together through music.

Quite an event!

The last time I visited Lancaster University was with my eldest daughter when she was considering it as one of her choices for university. It has certainly grown since then and to quote the university's website their campus is "home to two banks, a post office, supermarkets and general stores, a bakers, hairdresser, travel agency (surely students don't have holidays!!) charity shop – and an ice cream parlour". It was certainly an eye-opener for me as it now appears to be a vast site!

When we started out at eight that morning, the weather seemed to promise a bright Autumn day, but it wasn't to last! We had duly kitted ourselves out in something "golden" and found some very fetching earrings typical of the 60's and these items had given the **majority** of the group a chance to think back to their younger days. Unfortunately, not all our members could be with us and I'm sure those who couldn't come were very disappointed at not being able to have a legitimate reason for dressing up for the day! Unfortunately, none of the team fancied sharing their teenage photos—just our modern interpretation!

Gresford managed to arrive just before the 10 am. opening, so we had a little time to catch our breath after unloading what seems to be an "ever increasing" amount of equipment! We were all set for the master class, which proved to be a little more "challenging" than some of us had thought it would be! It was an excellent chance to get to grips with "Eleanor Rigby" and our thanks to conductor Kate for sharing her expertise and helping teams achieve the most out of their morning sessions - this was an excellent workshop!

After the lunchtime break, everyone was keen to get on with their team's individual ringing session and also to get a chance to hear the music chosen by the other teams. We were hoping our choice of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah would go down well. We really love the piece and as Jill our conductor is an avid Beatles and Cohen fan she had a difficult choice as to which piece we should play to reflect the chosen theme. We think she chose well! The afternoon sessions were a mix of differing music choices and it was both inspirational and humbling to hear the music played by the Walthew House Ringers and their guide. Every team explained why they had chosen their particular piece of music to play, together with the links that they had made to the theme of the rally...personally I felt that the theme worked very well and dressing up was an added dimension.



I wonder if we are likely to see that aspect of the event at future rallies?

Of course typically, as we loaded up to travel back to Gresford, the heavens opened!

Travelling back down the M6 proved to be a little bit "hairy" in the transit van and if I was to be asked for any feedback on the event at all, possibly it would be to suggest that a 4 or 4.30pm finish would have been preferable at an Autumn do?

Congratulations to all the organisers of the event as everything appeared to run smoothly and efficiently and everyone enjoyed themselves making music - which is what it's all about!

Janet Fletcher pp Gresford Handbell Ringers

The Mini Minims on the Golden Jubilee Rally...

I really liked the opportunity to hear different pieces of music. I was amazed by the blind ringers; it just shows that handbell ringing is open to everyone.

It was funny when Imo dropped a bell!

I loved the relaxed atmosphere!

Who was the funny lady with no shoes on who did the games?

I really enjoyed having a go at 'Eleanor Rigby', even though it was challenging!

I thought it was a fantastic venue!



More Comments from the Guest Book

It was good to meet friends from 50 years ago. Delighted that handbell ringing continues to thrive.

Thanks to all the organisers for a great day and for all the beautiful bell ringing. So glad I was introduced to handbells when I retired.

Hearing the concert at the International Symposium in Liverpool. I knew I would never play like that but it inspired me.

FROM A NEW MEMBER OF THE REGION

Although I've been handbell ringing for six years, since moving to North Wales, I'd never heard of HRGB. I came across it accidentally while looking for something else online.

We ring for fun and don't take things too seriously. Occasionally, around Christmas time, we ring in public, but usually, we just attend practise nights with the intention of making music and enjoying ourselves. Some of us don't read music, so all our music books have the notes coloured in to help us.

There's usually six or seven of us, so we only ever ring with twelve bells and don't have a conductor.

When I came across HRGB in June this year, I decided to join the North West Region as an individual member.

With much trepidation, and after several emails to and from Beth McCord and Irene Merson, (thank you both for all your help and reassurance) I attended the 50th birthday celebrations at Lancaster University.

What a day that was! After my initial nervousness, I was invited to ring with a lovely group from Chester. (Thank you Betty). I've never rung 'off the table', or 'four in hand', or with a conductor, or in a big group, so I was concerned that I'd be out of my depth. I needn't have worried. Everyone was so lovely and accommodating; one of the ladies rang different bells to those she usually rings, to allow me to ring the bells I'd prepared for with my music full of coloured notes.

I joined in with all the games that were organised, saw the smallest and largest handbells I've ever seen, and met many lovely people.

I had a wonderful day, and can't wait for the next event organised by the HRGB.

A huge thank you to all who made the day possible.

Maureen Williams.



HAVE NORBURY OR ASHTON VISITED YOU YET?

If you haven't had a visit from one of our little furry friends, please get in touch with Beth or Irene—details on the last page. We aim for them to do a complete tour of the Region during this Jubilee year.

If they have dropped in on you already, please remember to send a photo to Jeanette Jenkins for our website.



FROM THE EDITOR

Many thanks to all our contributors to this edition. Once your busy ringing season is over, please think about putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) for a special post-Christmas round-up of your activities.

Deadline date 31st January.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

REPORT FOR DEAN, MARRON VALLEY and TANTONY'S ATTENDANCE AT THE

HRGB GOLDEN JUBILEE RALLY.

As this turned out to be even more of a combined effort than we could ever have imagined, I am writing one report on behalf of all 3 teams.

Initially, our arrangements were: Margaret T., Sheila, Irene, Margaret H., Norma, Sue, Maggie and Vicky in Dean; Norma, Margaret H., Julie, Betty, Sue, Ed, Eleanor, Audrey and Hilary in Marron Valley and Carol, Deb., Soo, Gordon and Jane in Tantony... with Norma, Sheila, Sue, Ed and Eleanor coming for their solo. A few weeks earlier, it was decided Sue would move across from Dean to Tantony, so the top octave (which Dean don't have) of Tantony's bells could be rung. We are all so involved in more than 1 team!

Transport for tables, foams and bells was to be provided by Sue, Ed and Audrey. Sadly, however, 2 days before the rally, Ed had a massive stroke which meant that Marron Valley and Tantony were not only 2 ringers down, but Marron Valley were without their driver for their tables and foams.

It was suggested that if Sheila and Norma went across to Tantony's team, and help fill their spaces, there would be some spaces on the Dean team for the Marron Valley ringers who were now incomplete, and without equipment. So the 3 teams combined into 2. It all worked out well in the end and all 3 solos went well despite the sadness of the day for everyone.

When the invitations had been sent out some months before, we were encouraged to think of a solo from the 60s, or something with a golden or teddy bear theme. Even the raffle prizes from our teams had a golden theme, thanks to Norma. Our ringers made quite an effort to consider those themes when we chose what to wear on the day. Dean rang "Puppet on a String", and Marron Valley "I'd like to teach the world to sing". Tantony rang "Over the Rainbow". Norma appropriately dressed the 2 musical teddies she had previously dressed for St Patrick's day when we had a NW Region rally some years ago. Sheila organised a very good musical quiz for breaks during the morning. Games were organised between ringing and all added to the fun of the day. The committee worked very hard to make this huge event happen, which included free admission and a pre-booked buffet. The venue had a huge hall for the ringing and a second half at the side where games were played and refreshments served. Parking was available close by.

Beth McCord, Chairman of the NW Region welcomed us all and started the proceedings. A highlight of the afternoon session was hearing Walthew Ringers - 3 ringers, two of whom had vision impairment. They were amazing. It was good to hear Norbury Handbell Ringers - they were the first team I heard over 35 years ago and made me want to have a go but never thought I'd get the chance or be good enough if I did.

Margaret Howarth.

PS Two days later we heard the very sad news that Ed had died. His funeral took place on Monday 23rd October at St Paul's Church, Irton, where he was a regular tower bell ringer and worshipper. Ed will be much missed by a great number of people involved in the world of bell ringing in the Egremont area and beyond.

Thank you to Gresford for this article—it relates to the Summer, but this is the first opportunity to include it in an edition of Oyez.

Anne Hopley, Editor

News from Gresford Handbells!

On June 17th we had the privilege of joining the Sirenian Singers and the Rhos Male Voice Choir in Gresford All Saints' Church, for a musical evening. Both award winning choirs are very highly respected and it was with some trepidation that we agreed to join them for this event. Jill, our musical director, chose four pieces for us to play, and we had been in serious practice mode since the Spring Rally! In common with a lot of teams, not all our members were available for the evening and occasional absences from practice sessions happened, but the last two weeks before the event it all came together.

Two of our members were doing a ladies' charity walk after our performance slot so we had to perform fairly early, and as you can imagine we were all a little nervous before we started but in one way "getting it over and done with" meant that we could relax and enjoy the rest of the concert.

We had been asked to play with the Sirenian choir because last year we had accompanied them in a minor role at a church event and Mrs Jean Stanley-Jones, their conductor, had kindly expressed a "favourable view" of our playing. So we had something to live up to! Jill put together a repertoire that would show the differing sounds that could be produced by the bells.....believe it or not, not everyone in the audience knew what handbells were going to sound like!

The church is not always a good venue for handbells as there doesn't seem to be a "best" position to put us; we take up a lot of room! We used some amplification, but some of the audience could hear us but not see us! I'm sure that most of you have played in similar venues where church pillars are most inconvenient!



The photo is taken from an amateur video of part of the event and we are playing quite a tricky little number using mallets. We were introduced to it at a rally and its title is Plink, Plank, Plonk composed by Leroy Anderson. The 3 other pieces that we played were Grand March - Kevin McChesney, Toreador March - Bizet and Hallelujah - Leonard Cohen.

Our musical director Jill, had this to say about our performance.

"I was delighted with the high standard of our performance and it was lovely to receive so much positive feedback from the audience on the night, and our own church congregation at morning service the following day".

The evening was also a financial success, raising £700 for church funds.

Look who came to join us for the evening!!



Well not everyone was there but.....

We did have a special visitor at our last practice session of the year (we still keep to the school calendars even though most of the team who were teachers have since retired)! It was a warm evening but he was quite happy to be decked out in support of Hen Wlad fy Nhadau (Land of My Fathers) as it were!

Although he might just have been a bit miffed that he never got to show himself off at our local garden party to which he had been invited, but circumstances were beyond our control on that day - so he had to forgo mixing with the rest of the Gresfordians who were meeting to raise a bit of money for the local library!

Of course we all know that everyone is **bound** to be aware that the red and yellow flag is the flag of Owain Glyndŵr who was proclaimed Prince of Wales (16 Sept 1400). Now it is also the name of our local University. Have a look here if you want to find out a little more about this famous Welshman
<http://www.owain-glyndwr.wales/index-m.html>

Unfortunately, our bear and his Welsh hat was a little bit tricky to keep in place...no pins allowed!

Janet Fletcher, Gresford Handbell Ringers

And Finally ...

A comment from Lancaster by our Chairman, Beth McCord

I'm very proud to be part of the organising committee of today's 50th Golden Jubilee celebrations. Having been a member of HRGB for almost as long as I can remember, I can honestly say that HRGB has played a significant role in my whole life. Having played bells in countries around the world, today is a testimony to all that is good about handbell ringing. Music is truly a universal language and HRGB strives to welcome, encourage and improve ringing for all its members. Huge thanks to all those involved in organising: past, present and future.

HRGB—NORTH WEST REGION COMMITTEE 2017/18

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