



OYEZ

NOVEMBER 2018

NUMBER 17

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S COMMENTS

A big hello from your new editor, David.



Having a newsletter, for any organisation, always seems a good idea, but it does very much rely on members sending in articles. We did put out an appeal a little while ago and, after a short pause, the articles have started to roll in. For editorial deadlines see the last page - "FINAL CHIME".

When I agreed to take on this task I did make it clear that I don't know all the groups, or the individuals connected with them and I have only had the opportunity to meet a few members of the committee - so far. That means I don't have enough knowledge to just make up articles, I need you to help to fill these pages.

I wrote in a previous edition of Oyez about being new to bell ringing. It's not my only hobby. I'm also into horse riding (that's me on Blitzzen who we have now retired) and compete in showing and dressage competitions. I'm currently bringing on a new horse Zasca (stable name Trixie). I also help out as a steward at Cumbrian Horse Trails.

I give talks (usually to WI groups) on vexillology (I am a member of The Flag Institute) and also on



the subject of greyhound rescue (my wife and I have two “rescue” greyhounds, Carys and Joey).

I only started ringing last year with the Greystoke Handbell Ringers and great fun it’s been. Responding to an offer which my wife Helen had spotted in the local newspaper, to “come along and have a go”, I did exactly that. The little beginners’ group have stuck together and continue to meet and I still go along to help Chris Ellison who leads them. I was transferred to the main group – the “big boys and girls” - last Easter, but, by helping out with the beginners, I get to ring bells twice a week. We have, in truth, stopped calling them “beginners” and those of you



Carys and Joey

that attended the “Christmas in July” rally at Newbiggin will have had the opportunity of hearing them play three numbers very early in the proceedings. I am certain they were delighted with the applause and the very nice comments afterwards.



Here’s a rather unusual shot of our group ringing at a dinner held at Greystoke Castle last winter.

David Kerry

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

It has certainly been a little while since our last newsletter, this has been due to a variety of factors, the main one being that our Newsletter Editor did not have any articles to put in. At every regional event we ask for people to send comments, articles or even just photos, however the response is often rather minimal. It is very easy to assume that 'someone else' will do it!

As a committee we have therefore decided that we will issue set copy dates for each magazine. This means the newsletter will be issued at a certain time, 3 times a year, regardless of the number of articles or the length of issue. Hopefully this will help some people to remember to send in details and information about handbell events they have been involved in. We don't want just reports about regional events, it is also rather nice to have details about local activities!

Copy dates will be as follows:

- 20th January
- 20th May
- 20th October

Moan over! Honest!

It is my pleasure to be writing following several successful events held throughout the region this year. Most recently of course were the rallies hosted by Sale and Tantony on 13th October. Both days were highly successful and we have to thank the teams for all the hard work in preparing and organising such enjoyable days.

Back in July we had our Regional Christmas celebration. It is safe to say that this was a typical NW event – in as much as it was really good fun and very relaxed. Everybody who attended had a great day and although it seemed a little strange to walk in to Christmas music with the (hot!) sun beating down, everybody entered into the spirit. There were decorations, cakes, mince pies and of course Christmas songs and carols. Thanks to all those involved in the organisation and everybody who attended.

Even further back was the Spring Rally and AGM. This was held at Bury and was another successful day. It was great to see so many ringers in attendance and participating in the rally ringing sessions. At the AGM I announced my intention to step down as Chairman this coming year. This is largely due to the fact that I am pregnant with our second child and feel that I may struggle with the level of commitment required, however this is not the only reason. I have been Chairman for several years now, and I really feel it is time for someone else to take over the role. If you have considered joining the committee or would like to know a little bit more about what is involved please do not hesitate to contact me or anybody else on the committee and we will gladly talk to you!

The last thing I would like to mention is membership of HRGB. We are a privileged society; there are not many organisations where the cost for annual membership is as little as £12 a year. You may not realise what you are getting for your money....

It is not just the copies of Reverberations and Oyez, but also HRGB members are entitled to attend HRGB events – including our NW Rallies, as well as National and International events. Although there is a small charge to cover the costs of running rallies, events are supported financially by the NW Region (and therefore ultimately by HRGB). The region gets a rebate for every member, this is what allows us to run events, provide music for massed ringing and make sure that the region is as active as possible. If there are members of your team who are not members of HRGB please, please encourage them to join this year and please make sure that you renew on time too.

I'm sorry if it seems early, but I am going to take this opportunity to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on March 23rd at Bury for the Spring Rally and AGM.

Beth McCord
(NW Chairman)

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Well, the Australians do it, so why not the NW Handbell Ringers? I mean, of course, Christmas in the summer.

The idea was that, as the North-West groups never had the chance to meet over the festive period – too busy fulfilling engagements - they had not had the opportunity to play Christmas numbers together. Well, we put that right. The event was held in Cumbria at Newbiggin Village Hall. It was pleasing to see so many ringers truly entering into the spirit of the thing by dressing up in Christmas gear and decorating their tables, making Christmas cakes etc etc. It was a very hot day with temperatures reaching 25C and many ringers took the opportunity of having lunch outside.

Ashton Bear made yet another appearance and we were treated to the following poem, outlining some of his recent escapades.

*Ashton Bear, Ashton Bear, where have you been?
To Kirkby Lonsdale – and the things I have seen!
I've supervised ringing in various church towers,
And encouraged the ladies tying Mothers Day flowers,
I've made friends with Oochiti, 85 years old,
Don't ask why the name – a tale too long to be told,
And Wilfred's a "Stieff", grey, small and friendly,
Who sports a red scarf. He thinks very trendy!
One night I was invited to make a call,
To the bell ringers practice at the Masonic Hall,
They are short of a player to make the number complete,
I was willing, but have paws, not hands and feet,
I also had lunch with Bowley's Barbara and John,
Who taught K.L. Bellringers in days long gone,
And yesterday Alan took me on a train,*

*We had a great time in spite of the rain,
Alan says,
“The passers-by might have thought we were batty,
When Ashton and I went on a ride on “L’all Ratty”
The weather was frightful, with snow, sleet and rain
But we had so much fun, with a bear on a train,
Oh dear, this tintinabulation is going to my head!
Would campanology be easier instead?”
Audreys says, “No, it would tie me in knots”,
But Alan says, “Stop! It is fun lots and lots”
Time passes quickly and ‘tis the end of May
And I’m glad to be here on this exciting day –
I sat by the window with Iceberg the white cat,
And together we found plenty to have a good laugh at,
A giraffe!!! I tell you – a head on a pole,
And horses and hounds and that was not all,
The square is quite changed with kegs and with carts,
And stalls full of food, fruit, bread and tarts,
An enactment of Dr Doolittle you see,
And Kirkby Lonsdale just happens to be,
A delightful old town, not too much altered,
Where a story like this is easily adopted,
Iceberg from “James Bond” should be a cool cat,
But he does need a friend, which is what I’m good at,*

*When the theme tune starts I'll hold his paw,
And together we'll win an applause at the show,
(NB. James Bond music was a concert held in Kirkby Lonsdale Church)*

The new publication, on the front has me,

With a big beary smile, on that all agree!

So goodbye dear Kirkby, I've enjoyed being here,

And you've all been so kind to a wee yellow bear"

From Audrey, Alan and Iceberg – we miss you!

In addition to the ringing, we had fun, games and quizzes. Special thanks to Chris Ellison for organising the outdoor activities and Sheila Harris for the quiz.

Editor



Kirkby Lonsdale Team having a much earned break at the Christmas in July Rally



Kirkby Lonsdale's Christmas Tree

My thanks to Dean/Marron Valley and Tantony Ringers for the following fuller report on the CHRISTMAS IN JULY RALLY which was held at Newbiggin Village Hall near Penrith on 14th July.

Teams came from Kinder, Kirkby Lonsdale, Maghull, Greystoke and The Lakes as well as Dean/Marron Valley and Tantony. This was such a combination of our local teams with quite a few of the ringers belonging to 2 if not 3 teams!

One member of the Dean team had to withdraw at the last minute as her Mum died suddenly.

Sue Hunter, Sheila Harris and Norma Parke, all being NW Region committee members, had to be there early on the day to help set up. Sue and Sheila were on the welcoming table and Norma was responsible for the bell raffle.

It proved to be an excellent venue with good facilities for ringing and games, including outdoor ones which Chris from Greystoke organised. The weather proved kind too so we were able to go out in the afternoon and play a fun physical game of "Beetle"! Lots of running up and down! We never know what Chris has got up her sleeve.

Beth McCord led the day assisted by the much travelled bear. We heard solos from Kinder-their unique arrangement of "Little Donkey", starting with a small number of ringers, building up, and then reducing the ringers before the end of the piece. This was followed by Maghull ringing an arrangement of "We Three Kings". Greystoke rang next with a medley including "The Rocking Carol", "Lullay thou Little Tiny Child" and "In the Bleak Midwinter". Tantony followed with "Shades of Forest Green". Then we heard the "Skaters' Waltz" (Greystoke), followed by Dean /Marron Valley ringing "Troika". Lastly Kirkby Lonsdale rang "Dance of the Icicles" which I think Marron Valley will be having a go at this winter.

Snowman Beetle followed a Touchy Feely bag game which went round the tables over lunch. There were various quizzes and most importantly - lunch!

“O come all Ye Faithful” had been practised by all teams beforehand so we knew our parts and were able to ring “processionally” into the hall after lunch. It was something different!

In the afternoon we heard Kirkby Lonsdale ring a new tune to “While Shepherds Watched” and “Ring Out Those Christmas Bells”. Dean/Marron Valley rang “Deck The Halls”. The Lakes Handbell Ringers, a team of four, rang “Good King Wenceslas”, “Hark The Herald Angels” and “The First Noel”. Tantony rang “In The Bleak Midwinter” then Greystoke rang a fun piece called “Sleigh Ride” which was followed by Kirkby Lonsdale ringing “Silent Night”. Lastly Kinder rang “Ding Dong Merrily On High”.

Margaret Howarth

EVOLUTION

R. Simon Rennie writes

At the last Regional Rally I was looking after the Sales stand and was also taking part in ringing as a member of Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers. After the team had played their solo piece I was asked why I did not play. I replied that as I had not attended the practice night I had not been included in the team line up!

Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers was formed in 1984 from our family team the Rennie Ringers. Two of our daughters had left home to go to University. We have been a very active team playing at most regional and national events. Members of the team have played in Canada, USA, Australia and the UK. We take an active part in the community and have raised over £24,000 for many different charities.

We are a community team, not attached to any church although we have played in many churches including Liverpool Cathedral.

Over the past three years I have been trying to find someone to take over leadership of the team. Beth McCord has been a member of our team, and leader of the Junior team for several years, and she recently expressed a wish

to have a go at running the team. This was good news for me and, after several meetings, the team agreed to Beth becoming leader, and I was appointed Honorary President. I am now able to attend rehearsals and ring bells with no other things to worry about.

Beth has introduced quite a few changes, not least sharing conducting between three people.

It is pleasant not to have to think about all the things that go into keeping a team going and just concentrate on enjoying ringing bells. I will still be around , but Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers is now in the capable leadership of Beth.

R. Simon Rennie

Honorary Life Member, Handbell Ringers of Great Britain

From Norma Parke who is Secretary of the Marron Valley Ringers and handbell ringer of Dean, Marron Valley and Tantony. I received the following poem, reminding us all of the commemoration of the end of World War One.

THE MEN WHO MANNED THE GUNS

Where are the lads of the village today, the heroes of the war;

Why, many in rags , drawing no pay, wondering what they fought for,

While risking their lives in Khaki, fighting their country's foes,

What were their thoughts of the future?

Not starvation and misery; God knows,

They were promised a better England, comfort after strife,

What a rude awakening – to come back to this miserable life,

When standing knee-deep in water, facing the treacherous “Huns”,

They moulded their country's future, as they calmly manned their guns,

Now, in justice give them something - a bit of what they fought for;

If it's only a tumble-down cottage, with a good old oaken door.

Anne Hopley has sent two articles, the first is by Jeanette Jenkins, who was in the audience for the concert and is a member of the Norbury Handbell Ringers

Reddish Handbell Ringers 50th Birthday Concert



On Saturday 7th July 2018 ringers and friends gathered to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of Reddish Handbell ringers.

On display were scrapbooks of photos and articles stretching back to 1968 when the team were formed.

The 80 handbells had been left to St Mary's Church, Reddish by a congregation member and the HRGB (Handbell Ringers of Great Britain) had just been formed by nearby teams such as Norbury, so Reddish became team number 58. The team of mainly ladies were fortunate to be able to get some instruction and music for their handbells from other HRGB members.

Team leader and Musical Director, Edna Shires, explained a little of the team's history in between pieces, and tea and cakes were served in the interval.

Music played included the Bell Polka, Roses from the South, Ode to Joy, Singing in the Rain, Madge Wildfire, Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines, Jesu Joy of Mans Desiring, If I were a Rich Man, Deep is the Night and Andantino.

The music was interspersed by poetry including "Albert and the Lion" by Stanley Holloway. Edna recited a poem which had been written for the 40th anniversary about the team and Linda entertained the audience with a new poem she had written about Edna.

Edna explained they had not played “The Bells of St Marys” although they were often asked to do so, as they could not find a satisfactory arrangement which worked for them.

Edna was presented with a gift of a beautiful crystal bell from the team. The Vicar proposed a vote of thanks and a chorus of ‘Happy Birthday’ with hopes of many more birthdays to come.

This second article was written by Edna Shires, leader of St Mary’s Reddish Handbell Ringers.

ST. MARY’S (REDDISH) HANDBELL RINGERS

HOW WE BEGAN

On 7th May **1968** a Concert was given in our newly opened Parish Hall by the Norbury Handbell Ringers. During the interval a lady in the audience spoke to their leader and told him she had “a box of bells just like yours under my bed”. They had been there for years and she had never heard them played (they belonged to her late husband). Mr. Hartley from Norbury and our Rector went to the lady’s home to see them and the outcome was that Mrs. Diggle presented the full set comprising 80 Bells dated 1874 to St. Mary’s Church provided a team was formed to play them.

After several months only four people were really keen – then the Rector had a brainwave. He called into a meeting of the Young Wives (now all grandmothers!) and five of them said they would “have a go”. With help from Norbury Ringers the team was thrilled to play two carols in the December carol service. Regular weekly practices began.

It was decided we should join the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain and registered as Team No. **58NW**. By **1975** the association was divided into Regions. St. Mary’s hosted the first North West regional rally that March.

In **1969** a representative from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry came from London to see the bells which were in a bad state. He gave an estimate of £360 16s. Od for renovating all 80 bells and £214 0s. 10d for 37 of the bells. Fund raising

began. The team attended national Handbell Rallies in Worcester and Leicester which fired our enthusiasm.

Finally in **1971** our Bells arrived back safely from London completely renovated including some of the larger bells being recast at a final cost of £258.54. In **1972** our treasurer made the six wooden carrying cases for the protection of and easier transportation of the bells, still in use today.

Marple United Reformed Hand Bell Ringers

Taking up the challenge.

by Lesley Walker

Deep in the dusty cupboards of Marple United Reformed Church there was a set of hand bells, unused since a previous team of ringers had disbanded. They were good bells, in excellent condition, just waiting for a new driving force to reform the team and bring them back into the light.

One evening I received a telephone call. "How do you feel about ringing hand bells?" asked a friend. I confessed that the idea had never occurred to me. By the end of the conversation, I had agreed to go along the next Tuesday evening. "It will be a laugh!" I was assured.

By the end of that first practice I realised that it might be a laugh but this was a serious business, demanding practice and dedication. I had some musical ability having sung with choirs for years but this was different and challenged me at every level.

Even though the group were welcoming and a great bunch of people, hand bell ringing is difficult and it takes time and commitment to do it well. Did I want to make that commitment? I thought about that a lot over the next week but I went back the following Tuesday.

MURC ringers are a disparate group of people who, in the normal way of things, might never have met or interacted but have been brought together in this team of ringers. Some of us read music and some of us do not. Some have rung with

other teams but, for some, this is their first. Each of us has had to find our own way within the team and work out how best we can contribute.

Nearly all of us have struggled with the technical skills and co-ordination. Sounding a bell with your dominant hand is reasonably straight forward but persuading your non-dominant hand to perform at the same level and at the same time is not. We know that some teams have members who can hold and ring two bells in each hand. We are still struggling with one.

We have ventured out to do some concerts and people have been very kind. Performing in public is an added pressure. Making the bell sound in the right place, keeping the rhythm, listening to the others, creating the dynamics! No wonder some of our audience have commented on the fierceness of our concentration and realised why when we invite them to stand in the line and join in. "This is really difficult." is the usual response. Yes, we know.

Nerves still get the better of us especially in performing for others. We look good. We have a lovely uniform and setting for the bells but we still struggle to produce in public the standard we can achieve in practice.

And that is our challenge as a team and what keeps us going: not just to do it but to do it well.



In the two years since the team assembled, we have steadily improved but we know we have a long way to go. We have listened to other groups on line and at gatherings and have become very aware of how much there is to learn. The

pieces we attempt have become harder and more technical and our determination to play them and play them well has grown in response.

The bells are still stored in the same cupboard and it is still a bit dusty but the bells have new cases and covers. When we open the boxes and remove the covers they are polished now and shine in the lights. MURC hand bell ringers are trying to do the same.

SMAART have gone international!

Glenys Richardson writes

I am a member of SMAART from Middlewich and we rang on Saturday, 13th October, at the Autumn Rally hosted by Sale Handbell Ringers. Ten teams were present - the hall was full.

All the pieces played were different and very varied; classical, jazz, waltzes and pop - even a piece of music from Singapore. The massed ringing pieces were Trumpet Chorale, Come to the Fair and Hallelujah Chorus; all conducted well by three different people - well done to all of them.

The Hallelujah Chorus was recorded and sent by phone to India - LIVE - sounded really good and we all finished together!

A brilliant day, wonderful ringing and a big thank you to Sale who did an excellent job as hosts.



Members of SMAART waiting for their turn to play.

LATE NEWS

Tantony Mini Rally

Outside it was a miserable October day, in Egremont, West Cumbria, with constant rain. However, inside it was a much brighter picture. Here is a

photo showing the Greystoke Handbell Ringers in action. We hope to have a full report of the event in the next edition.



FINAL CHIME



A really big THANK YOU for all the contributions to this edition of OYEZ.

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Don't forget also that, if you are sending photos to me, it is important that those included in the images have given permission for them to be published.

You can contact me, David R. Kerry at blitzen@btinternet.com

EDITORIAL DEADLINES

I am planning to issue Oyez three times a year at the beginning of February, June and November.

The absolute last dates to get items to me will be the 20th January, 20th May and 20th October. Please don't leave it to the last minute.

"DAMP"

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