



OYEZ

FEBRUARY 2019 NUMBER 18

Now here's a MUST for your diaries. Our Spring Rally and Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 23rd March 2019 and the venue is Bury Grammar School.

NOTICE TO ALL NORTH WEST HRGB MEMBERS

SPRING RALLY AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, BURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 23RD MARCH 2019

By now, you or your Team Correspondent should have received:

The Calling Notice and Nomination Form for the AGM;
and the Invitation and Booking Form for the Spring Rally.

If you have NOT received these, please contact Irene Merson –

Tel 01663 308621, email irene@mersons.co.uk.

Editor's comments

When we get to the rallies and listen to the other groups it's hard to imagine how these proficient players started off. In this issue Dean tell us about their beginnings and, as you'll see, none of it is a load of bull – well, actually some of it is!

David Kerry

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Happy New Year!

Looking back since the last Oyez, I am sure that you have all been very busy ringing during the Festive Season. I will continue to ask you to send in pictures, anecdotes and articles telling other ringers what you have been up to. It is sometimes reassuring to know that you are not the only team of handbell ringers crazy enough to be playing Christmas carols in a freezing cold market or a stifling hot residential home!

And now we are into January. Of course, you all know what that means....no, I'm not talking about diets, dry January or even New Year Resolutions....but of course it is the time to renew our HRGB memberships. Please remember that HRGB events (including the NW Spring Rally, summer events and autumn rallies) are for HRGB members. The cost of attending any HRGB event is always kept as low as possible – we don't attempt to make a large profit, but rather to cover the costs of running the event. So please, make sure you renew your membership in good time and encourage any members of your team who are not currently members of HRGB to join.

We are looking forward to our Spring Rally and AGM, to be held on 23rd March 2019 at Bury Grammar School. There will be the usual format of massed ringing, solo team performances and of course, the AGM.

Having first said two years ago that I thought it was time for a new person to take over as Chair of the NW Region, it is hard to believe that this is my last Chairman's Corner! Having announced again last year that my intention was to step down as Chairman, my reasons became more obvious as the year progressed and my bump grew bigger! Max arrived to join our family on the 7th December and I can only say that we are all thrilled. I really feel that it is time for someone else to take over, as I am not convinced I can give as much time and energy as I would like! Let's face it....you are probably all ready for a change of face too!

However, I can honestly say, that taking on the role of Chairman back in 2013 was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with everybody on the committee, even through the National Rally in

2016 and the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2017! It has been an honour and a privilege to attend the events held across the NW and I feel that our region is in a really good place. Our events are well attended, there is always a lovely, welcoming and positive atmosphere and we always enter into the spirit of things....whether crazy games or Christmas on one of the hottest days in July. There are things about our region which are unique to the NW and these should be cherished as we all try to move the region forwards. I wish the new Chairman all the best and I know that the committee will all continue to work together to offer the best support and events possible to all members.

I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

Beth McCord

(NW Chairman)



Max

Ahh....he's gorgeous. Congratulations Beth. (Editor)

DEAN HANDBELL RINGERS – A POTTED HISTORY

First Report January 1984

Margaret Benn 7 May 1931 to 14 March 2015 born in Toddington

Joe Benn 24 September 1928 to 15 September 2018 born Whinfell Farm

In the beginning

The idea was conceived during Christmas Supper at the “Duck”, in January 1983. We wanted to do something different, which we could begin together on an equal footing.

We borrowed six handbells from Dean School and Dean Handbell Ringers was born. The founder members were Pearl Wilson, Stella Hey, Enid Davies, Margaret Brown, with Margaret & Joe Benn. Freda Woodyer who had been school music teacher for many years was invited to join us. The first meeting was held at Freda’s house in Cockermouth on Thursday 20 January 1983. Confusion reigned at this meeting, as few of us knew much about music and no-one knew anything about bells! We had great difficulty in even ringing the bells in the correct order. We persevered. The following week our bell power was up to twelve, with a further loan of bells from All Saints Church, Cockermouth, now our chaos was complete.

Over the next few weeks we learned to ring the melody of a few simple tunes. We made our public debut during Cumberland “Neet” at the Kirkstile Hall in Dean on March 10th, 1983. Using one bell each we rang three tunes, and very daringly used all our bells to produce an accompaniment of chords for the fourth song. We were terrified, but the audience liked us!

At the beginning of February, we visited Crosthwaite Handbell Ringers and they gave us the address of Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London. We enquired about renovating the borrowed bells, which were in poor condition, but the cost proved to be too great considering they would never belong to us. I did visit the Whitechapel Foundry and found it a fascinating place, almost like stepping back into a Dickens novel.

The foundry spokesman, who was very helpful, suggested that we should contact our nearest representative of a body called the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain; and John Bowley exploded into our lives. Since then John and

Barbara have visited us regularly and have been an invaluable source of help and information. They completely revised our approach to Handbells and suggested that we adopt the “off the table” which we now prefer.

After much discussion, John was persuaded to hire to us a set of twenty-five bells in good condition. It is uncertain where these bells were cast, but they are believed to be of mixed origin. Some, at least, were cast at Taylor’s of Loughborough, one of the few foundries still in existence.

In June the team as affiliated the H.R.G.B. and became 661/NW. We also returned the borrowed bells, with many thanks. Now began the business of fund raising and practicing with two bells!

We received a lovely gift, from a close friend, of a set of wooden music stands which she had ordered from a member of the Kirkby Lonsdale team. A coffee morning was held in the village, a “clothes” party was held in the village hall, Heather, Margaret’s daughter sold Christmas cards and gifts and Joe grazed and looked after a bullock bought by the team. By the end of November we invested £500 in a Building Society.



To sum up – we have learned a great deal about bells and, a little, we hope, about music. This is due mainly to all the generous bell ringers we have met who have shared their knowledge and experience. It is also due to the fact that we have worked together despite our varied personalities and the fact

that our age range spans over forty years. We now have almost three quarters of the money need for a set of bells.

Thank you all for the contributions you have made to the group in whatever capacity, but thank you especially for the enthusiasm which has swept us along and which has made 1983 – The Year of the Bells.

Margaret Benn 1983

This is a copy of a report of Dean Handbell Ringers when they started in 1983

p.s. the bullock was sold for £295



News from Gresford Handbell Ringers



The latter half of 2018 was even busier than usual for Gresford Handbell Ringers. In July we provided musical entertainment at the annual Gresford Library Garden Party, which raises funds to enable our village library to remain open, as it's been organised and run by volunteers since it was closed by the council three years ago.

After our summer break we went straight into rehearsing for both the Autumn Mini Rally and an evening of Remembrance for the Armistice of 1918. This was a particularly moving event, featuring Brymbo Male Voice Choir, diaries and letters from World War 1 read out by family members, as well as our contribution, which included a performance of 'In Flanders Fields' a new handbell composition by Sandra Winter based around the poem by John McCrae, which was particularly well received.

We then had just one rehearsal to dust down the Christmas music files before playing at an early Christmas Fair at Erlas Victorian Walled Garden near Wrexham which has been lovingly restored by volunteers and provides specialised training and support for adults with learning difficulties.

December brought the usual round of Christmas activities – playing for village Carols around the Christmas Tree (luckily it rained, so it took place in the pub!!) entertaining the WI and Village Retirement Group at their Christmas parties, as well as the annual visits to local residential care homes, hospice, and Blessing of the Crib service in our own church.

In addition to all this, there was much excitement in early December when I received an e-mail from the producer of a music and chat show on BBC Radio Wales in Cardiff. She'd been looking for different types of Christmas music on

the internet, saw our website and was asking us to appear on the Roy Noble Show on 23rd December! A sound engineer came to record us playing four Christmas pieces at our rehearsal the week before, and then on the day I did a live interview with Roy about handbells in general, the history of our team and all our various activities. I was pretty nervous, but everyone seemed to think it went ok and we were all pleased at how well the bells came over on the radio. The producer sent me a CD of the show, so that's something different to store in our archive! She also said she'd like to feature us again as there's never been any handbell playing on Radio Wales so watch this space....!!

We've all enjoyed a well-deserved break over Christmas but are now looking forward to our belated 'Christmas meal' in late January before starting to rehearse some new pieces for the Spring Rally. Looking forward to seeing you all then!

Jill Roberts, Musical Director, Gresford Handbell Ringers





Greystoke Handbell Ringers

I imagine, like most groups, you were quite busy with requests to play at various Christmas functions. Greystoke Handbell Ringers had three engagements in their own village. The W.I. invited us to their Christmas meeting – nice, cosy and warm, in the village hall. We had two engagements in the church – freezing, up at the chancel end.



Text: David Kerry

Photos: Tony Royle

A Kinder Christmas, 2018

Having had "Christmas in July" this year it seemed we were all ready for a busy festive season.

We were not bothered by seasonally difficult weather, which is a blessing, as this part of the country is usually first to be snowbound. We played carols at a lovely retirement home where the residents enjoyed joining in with the well-known tunes and were very interested in our arrangements of Christmas music. We enjoyed our first mince pies of the season and agreed to be back again during the following year.

Although not a Christmas event, our quartet were asked to do some change ringing to introduce a play at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. This was to be part of a series of five plays about towns in England, all being performed on one day. During an interval we also played a selection from our normal repertoire, in the foyer. At the end we were amazed to find that many of the large audience had come to listen and showed their enthusiastic appreciation.

The quartet then began their Christmas ringing, entertaining at a local lunch club. The small group of villagers sang along heartily and enjoyed the introduction to their Christmas activities. Next came a Christmas Fair at a Care Home where, this time, the trio provided background entertainment as the many shoppers browsed the varied assortment of stalls.

For the first time, the full team rang a piece written especially for bells and choir, "Christmastime", which was exciting and challenging. It meant rehearsing with the choir in question, "Voices in Achord", an acapella group in Stockport. As well as ringing on our own we also played for another joint piece, "Carol of the Bells". This had to be transposed into the same key as the choir were singing. It involved borrowing a couple of bigger bells to obtain the full sound and thanks go to Norbury Handbell Ringers for their loan. The conductor thanked us for fulfilling a particular ambition he had held for at least two years that had finally come together in a long-awaited triumph.

Following this the trio played at another care home where we were assured the bed-ridden patients had also enjoyed hearing the bells, even though they

could not be in the lounge to watch. On the same day we then travelled to Handforth Dean to play at our first-ever “busk”. We had a two-hour slot and planned to play a few tunes, have a break, play some more etc. However, there were so many shoppers interested in seeing and hearing the bells that we just continued ringing. It was tiring, but we agreed that we had succeeded in bringing handbell ringing to a very varied audience.

Our final engagement was at a Christmas Concert at a church where we had been involved in a production of “Noyes Fludde” earlier in the year. The international, wide age-ranging, cast was drawn mainly from the local congregation. There were actors, singers and dancers – it was a revelation to watch a dance routine performed to “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”. However, the main event was the Nativity Play which was not like any other we had seen before. It was titled “Joseph’s Dilemma” and incorporated a blog of Joseph’s thoughts between scenes looking at the Nativity story from his perspective.

We all felt deeply for him as he coped with the visitations of a very stropky Gabriel and the forceful demands of a ‘fiancée’ unimpressed by the condition she had found herself placed in. A similarly domineering and avaricious Inn Keeper’s Wife had us weeping with sympathy for her meek husband being prompted by her to pile on additional charges for every requirement of the young couple who had arrived at their door in great need, requesting accommodation and for whom he wanted to show compassion. These and many more roles were expertly delivered, including that of the Fish and Chip Van salesperson. Yes, it was a nativity with a difference. However, the most entertaining performance of the whole time we were there was that of the smallest angel. She looked angelic, but don’t they all. She was definitely not typecast though. How on earth she managed not to rip off her wings crawling under the audience’s chairs, we do not know. It was however no surprise to us that her halo was slipped or missing most of the time. She, of course, never got into bother like others following her lead did, but then she did deliver it all with the cutest smile.

Our input? Oh! The audience thoroughly enjoyed hearing our specially requested pieces – Carol of the Bells, Joy to the World and Silent Night. The venue was a little outside our usual area, but we were warmly welcomed and the collaboration with the Lighthouse, Manchester, worked very well. It had

been a really enjoyable occasion for us too and the organisers indicated they would be inviting us back again in the future.

We are already looking forward to ringing at Lyme Park as part of the National Trust's Christmas Open Days 2019 and have several other December dates in the diary. It looks as if it is going to be another varied Christmas.

Kinder Ringers



And who was it that forgot their fleece?

FINAL CHIME

Now we have the Spring Rally to look forward to and seeing that the venue was Bury, I thought you might like to see this rather unfortunate caption on one of their shops. Perhaps not the best advert for the RSPCA!!



Last Time I reminded you all to be careful when sending photos to make sure copyright doesn't exist or if it does that we have permission to use the image. I received some pretty good photos for the last edition and this, but, if there are not too many people in the image, it would be great to have some names to go with the faces (preferably in order eg. left to right).

To submit articles and photographs you can contact me, David R. Kerry at blitzen@btinternet.com

EDITORIAL DEADLINES

Oyez will be issued 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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