

# OYEZ



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## IN THIS ISSUE:

CHATTER FROM THE CHAIR

SPRING GATHERING AND AGM – KNOWLE GREEN

FUTURE REGIONAL EVENTS IN 2023

NATIONAL RALLY AT STIRLING, 2023

NEXT YEAR'S NATIONAL RALLY AT SWANWICK, DERBYSHIRE

TEAMS' ACTIVITIES

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE 2023 AGM

COMMITTEE LIST, 2023 - 2024

## Chatter from the Chair



Hello everyone, welcome to this second Oyez of 2023 and thank you to everyone who has contributed to it.

As we have yet to find a volunteer to take on the role of Newsletter Editor, we are once again indebted to Irene Merson who has put this issue together. Surely there is someone out there who would at least give the role a try! I am reluctant to introduce a negative theme so early on, but it would be such a shame if Oyez became a thing of the past, especially as technology makes it easier and less time consuming to produce than years ago. When you think back, someone had to type up the articles, often from hand-written notes, it had to be taken to the printers and

collected and then, when address labels had been written, taken to a post office to be sent out. Mmm – makes you think! We made the decision some years ago to stop paper copies by post to save our funds for other things. Now we rely on our team correspondents to forward each edition to team members or maybe print out a couple of copies to share. If this isn't working for your team, please let us know and we'll do some problem solving.

We have had our Spring GatheRing and AGM and now look forward to other events. You will read further on in this issue (and on our website and Facebook page) of late summer Workshop days and autumn ClusteRings. Note the plural usage, as we hope to have venues in both the north and the south of the region to accommodate issues with travel. I won't give too much away but I am particularly looking forward to a 'Back to Basics' theme for our Workshop days. In its wider sense, we all benefit from looking at our team and what we do a little closer and maybe address what we can do to encourage new ringers to our highly individual set ups. We've all had to start somewhere and must have been welcomed and encouraged – otherwise we wouldn't be reading (or indeed writing!) this. But – dare I say it – wonderful as those skills are, they aren't the whole picture. In a previous life I was a Year 6 teacher (often referred to as the Primary School 'Top Class') and experience very soon taught me that children who are absolutely whizzo at something – particularly maths or technology – make the very worst partners for those who need a little more time or support. Are we the best we can be at starting someone off? Can we overcome the challenges that may face us with specific issues? Almost forty years ago, the teams I joined could answer those questions with a resounding 'Yes!' and probably had no inkling of the difference it would make to my life. The Workshop days will be for all of us as team members so I urge you to support them.

So far this year we have had three North West Committee meetings and to save our time and the Region's money, we have used our regional Zoom licence. It's not the same as meeting face-to-face but it's true to say that a) we've got used to it and b) we've been nudged (sounds better than pushed!) into today's world. The licence has also been used by a slightly smaller group which is preparing for the National Rally Weekend in 2024 at The Hayes Conference Centre at Swanwick in Derbyshire. Our friends in both the North East Region and Scotland who have hosted the last two Rallies have given us invaluable help and support and we are very grateful to them. This 'Working Party' has now met four times and is well underway with all the essential preparation required in these initial months.

I hope to read about those of you who rang for the Coronation, went to Stirling, have managed concerts or just rung in public spaces. On a final note, I see that Maghull Parish Ringers are celebrating their 40<sup>th</sup> birthday with a concert in Maghull on Saturday 1st July. Happy Birthday and congratulations to them, with thanks for the contributions they (both as a team and individuals) have made to the NW Region and HRGB as a whole. Now that's definitely worth an article in the next edition of Oyez...

With best wishes and happy ringing.

*Linda Parkington*

## NORTH WEST REGION SPRING GATHERING AND AGM

**25 MARCH 2023, at KNOWLE GREEN VILLAGE HALL.**

It was a bright, breezy morning when thirteen intrepid handbell ringers boarded the bus to go to the first handbell event that we had attended in three years. We had restarted practices a few weeks earlier, but were still slightly apprehensive: would we have forgotten



everything we ever knew about playing in a rally?

From the coach we had a wonderful view of the countryside emerging from winter, and arrived at Knowle Green Village Hall in plenty of time to set up our tables and catch up with other teams whom we hadn't seen for such a long time.

Soon the rally got under way, with the first massed ringing piece, Reflection on Finlandia, commissioned in memory of Derek Jackson, whose influence

on handbell ringing in NW region has been profound. I think he would have appreciated the performance under the gentle but firm direction of Beth McCord.

It was a pleasure to hear the varied contributions from teams from around the NW, and to be inspired to search out music we hadn't heard, and might be able to play ourselves. We soon got back into the swing of things, and although there were the inevitable missed notes, or lost bars, we felt we had acquitted ourselves adequately.

The morning passed very quickly, with plenty of friendly chat and welcome cups of tea or coffee during the break. The AGM was conducted efficiently, and over lunch we enjoyed trying to identify far-off landmarks through the window of the hall. It was still a bit brisk to spend much time out of doors!

The Royalty Waltz that started off the afternoon session sounded impressive: much better as a massed ringing piece than our feeble attempts as a single team, and the final massed ringing of both pieces demonstrated the value of the earlier runs-through.



The return journey somehow never seems to take as long as the way out, and we were pleasantly surprised that it was still light when we got back.

Many thanks to everyone involved in the organisation and implementation of a delightful day of fellowship and ringing fun. We look forward to seeing everyone at the next event!

Trish Owens  
All Saints Gresford Handbell Ringers

#### AND ANOTHER REPORT ....



Linda Parkington, our regional Chair, gave a nice welcome to the Spring GatherRing, followed by Beth McCord who gave a lovely talk on the life of Derek Jackson. Those of us who knew him will always remember him, so it was a privilege to play our first Mass Ringing piece, Reflection on Finlandia, which had been specially commissioned and arranged by Malcom Wilson. Then

we went into the round of team ringing:

- Sale:- Dutch Clog Dance (Tulip time), a very sweet piece of music.
- Norbury: March Pomp and Circumstance, by Edward Elgar - lovely.
- Marple: Early One Morning: This brought back memories of my school days (I didn't join in by singing).
- Gresford: Plink Plank Plonk: No bells rung in this piece. The malleting was played to perfection.
- Dean: La'Morisque by Teilman Susato arranged by Sandra Winter: this short piece started with drum beat and mallets, then went on to bells, finishing with the drum beats and mallets.
- Beth & Jocie: A Mother and Daughter Duet: the first piece was STOP: a very modern piece by our standards, sung by the Spice Girls. Their second Duet was I have a dream by ABBA. Well it certainly was a dream to watch Jocie play, and still be able to smile all the way through. Well done Jocie!
- Kinder: God's Train: A lovely piece, music by Valerie W Stephenson.

Marron Valley: In the Bleak Midwinter: Rather different from the other pieces, but as Margaret our leader said, it's been a cold winter up to now (April 16<sup>th</sup>), and it is still quite chilly.

Maghull: Parade of the Tin Soldiers: one of my all-time favourite pieces of music from childhood, with memories of listening to Uncle Mac on the Saturday Morning Radio. Some of the lyrics: "The toy shop door is locked up tight and everything is quiet for the night when suddenly, the clock strikes twelve !!!"

This was followed by the AGM then Lunch.

Our second Mass Ringing Piece was Royalty Waltz: a long piece, very nice. Thank you to the conductors for leading us through these pieces. We learnt so much from your teaching, how to get the best out of the music. Then the second round of team ringing:

Maghull: Gave us a catchy, foot tapping piece, Birthday Rag by Robin Benton.

Marron Valley: Maria from the Sound of Music. A great musical, as we all know.

Kinder: Policeman's Holiday: Another great piece of music, I guess in the olden days it was a two-step at a dance. Dixon of Dock Green, Jack Warner, would have certainly enjoyed it. Montague Ewing enjoyed playing it on piano.

Dean: Followed Kinder's earlier train piece with The Runaway Train, along the way I think we lost our whistle.

Gresford: You Raise Me Up. A great hit for Westlife.

Marple: Trumpet Symphonia by Purcell. A nice classical piece.

Norbury: Prelude Te Deum, another lovely classical piece by Marc-Antoine Charpentier.

Sale: Singing in the Rain. Another foot tapping piece.

We all went through the two mass ringing pieces again, then after a thank you from Linda, it was time to tidy up and go home.

Norma Parke - Dean, Marron Valley and Tantony teams.

### **FUTURE REGIONAL EVENTS IN 2023**

#### **Late Summer Workshops – Back to Basics!**

Come and join us for our 'Back to Basics' workshop ... but those basics may not be the ones you are already familiar with! This is an opportunity to experience and share how other teams ring in a leader-based workshop where there will be plenty of opportunities to get your hands on bells and get involved. Whether you are new to ringing, looking for ideas

about how to integrate and keep new ringers or are just interested in how different teams work, we are aiming to offer something for everyone. In order to ease travelling distances, we would like to run the workshop twice, and for the south end of the region, we have booked a venue at **Llandudno on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September** – so you have a good excuse for a day at the seaside! For the northern end, the date we are aiming for is **Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> September**, but we're still waiting to confirm the venue. As soon as we have news, we'll let you know.

We would love to see you at one of these Workshops! Booking forms will go out to Team Correspondents and independent members shortly, so keep a lookout for further details.

### **Autumn ClusteRings**

As usual, we plan to offer two Autumn Clusterings this year. For the Southern one, we've already booked a venue at Sale Moor Methodist Church, Sale Moor, near Manchester, on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October** (we used this venue for the Spring GatheRing in 2022), and we are looking for a venue at the northern end of the region.

So you know what's coming now, don't you? We need host teams for these events – oh yes we do! If you've never hosted one before, please be assured that it's not a huge undertaking – you will receive plenty of guidance and support from the Committee, as well as our gratitude and admiration and a good feeling as you polish your haloes. If you can help, please contact Irene Merson – details on the last page.

### **THE NATIONAL RALLY**

This year's National Rally took place in April at the Stirling Court Hotel, on the campus of Stirling University. It was a brilliant event, friendly and well organized - ringers from across the UK were pleased to be able to meet again without any Covid-shaped clouds hanging over the proceedings. You'll find below two articles about it, the second from Maghull Parish HR, who represented the North West Region in the National Rally Concert on the Saturday evening and gave a wonderful performance, so well done Maghull!

As you may know, next year it will be the turn of the North West Region to organize the National Rally. This was at short notice, because the usual cycle of National Rally hosts had to be changed and the NW volunteered to bring their turn forward from 2026 to 2024. The venue we found is officially outside our Region – the Rally will be held at The Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, near Alfreton, Derbyshire, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – but it's not too far away and easily accessible, just off Junction 28 of the M1.

If you have never been to a National Rally, it's a wonderful opportunity to meet ringers from outside your own region and to listen to teams from across the UK. If you have attended National Rallies in the last few years, you'll find that the next one is a little different – instead of multiple workshops on the Saturday, we plan to have four sessions, which everyone will take part in on a rotating basis. The organizing committee is determined to make the 2024 Rally welcoming for everyone, including beginners and those with less experience, so some of the sessions will be graded, to ensure that everyone is working at a

level they're comfortable with. Booking arrangements will be set out in the Autumn edition of "Reverberations", and it would be great to have a good representation of North West ringers at the Rally, so put the date in your diary and start saving now!

We will also be looking for help during that weekend from those North West ringers attending it – perhaps helping guests to find their way around the Conference Centre during the breaks, or acting as a Steward in one of the sessions. It won't be something that prevents you taking a full part in the weekend's activities, so if you would be happy to take on one of these tasks, please get in touch with me in the usual way – the more willing volunteers we have, the better!

Irene Merson

### AND NOW FOR THE REPORTS:



Our names from left to right are: Margaret Howarth, Margaret Hogarth, Soo Grey and Gordon Grey [*and there's Anne Hopley, between the two Margarets! – Ed*]. We had a great weekend and loved the venue which was perfect for us in every way and a beautiful site. If I was choosing to go to University now, Stirling would be very high on my list!!

Our workshops were all interesting and beneficial and included 4 in hand, change ringing and accompanying singing in church. The information sent out beforehand was very good apart from the lack of programme. We were able to take our own bells for the massed ringing so we were able to ring together.

The evening concert was really good with its usual variety and high standard, particularly the 14 year old solo ringer and the 94 year old solo ringer who rang 3 bells in each hand, which I've never seen before. They were amazing.

The whole weekend certainly lived up to our expectations.

Margaret Howarth, Marron Valley HR

## Maghull On Tour, with Special Guests!

The trouble with having members of the team who are also members of the NW Committee is you often get 'volunteered' for things! So it was one Monday rehearsal, I asked how many people were going to Stirling for the National Rally. I was thrilled that there were 9 of us, that was enough for a team to ring something! Then I went to a committee meeting to find that we still hadn't had a response from any teams in the region who would like to be put forward to represent the North West in the National Rally concert. I'm sure you can guess what happened next! With a little encouragement and a couple of volunteers to stand in for the ringers who weren't going, we agreed that we would be honoured to accept!



This was January. It's amazing how quickly April appears to come after January when you have a concert to prepare for! We chose our three pieces and worked hard on them, even managing a rehearsal or two with Kate Worthington (from Sale) and my mum (from the other side of the country) who had agreed to help us out. For some of us the weekend

was looming as a couple of welcome nights away from small children, for others it was extended into a mini holiday. We headed off from our final rehearsal on Easter Monday (yes, we even practised on a bank holiday!) with cars full and high expectations of a good weekend ahead. And the Scottish region certainly delivered!

With plenty of wonderful ringing opportunities, from a variety of masterclasses, to read and ring sessions and informative workshops on change ringing and bell maintenance, we all thoroughly enjoyed throwing ourselves into the activities of the weekend. As always, food was plentiful and good, and it was a treat to be able to catch up with friends and meet new ones from all over the country.

As part of the AGM our Chair, Tim Willetts, said his farewells and was awarded Honorary Life Membership of HRGB in recognition of his service to the Society at a regional, national and international level. Keith Rowland is our new Chair and spoke enthusiastically about what teams at all levels can do to help with recruitment.

As the evening concert approached, nerves were jangling slightly but quite well concealed! Many of our ringers were in the advanced masterclass and were consequently opening the concert with a performance of Aladdin, led by Aidan Fozard. It may have been better in rehearsal, but we were pleased to get through it as well as we did! Maghull were closing the first half of the concert. We played 'Yesterday' as a nod to our Liverpool roots, 'Birthday Rag' as we are in our 40<sup>th</sup> year and 'Solitude' which is an original composition by Robert

Pettener from our team. Our performance went as well as we could have hoped and once again we must express our thanks to our 'special guests', without whom we would have had to limit our music selection. We were thrilled with the reaction from the audience and relieved to be able to sit and enjoy the second half with a cold drink!

A few more drinks were enjoyed post-concert and then all too quickly we were into Sunday morning. Some members were performing their Masterclass piece in the worship service and then it was a morning of massed ringing. Four pieces had been selected and were led by Kate Swallisch, Tim Willetts, Malcolm Wilson and myself. The music was varied and it was a fun session to conclude the wonderful weekend. A roast dinner set us up for the journey back, which was remarkably smooth. We all left full of enthusiasm and looking forward to next year (which, rumours are, the NW are hosting!). If you have never been to a National Rally then next year might be the time to try it out!

Beth McCord, Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers

### **SOME OF OUR NW TEAMS' ACTIVITIES**

#### **NORBURY OASIS CONCERT**



In March, Norbury were asked to entertain the Oasis Over Sixties group at the Bethany church in Gatley.

Jon Legh gave some information whilst we moved the bells around between pieces. Many of the audience remembered the events at Belle Vue which he spoke about and were very interested in the history of the bells. One gentleman regaled us with a tale of how Norbury handbells had once nearly been sold at a Jumble Sale but saved by a quick-thinking churchwarden.

We played Radetzky March which went down well. The group were in fine voice and hummed along with Over the Rainbow and The Skye Boat Song. One lady who was blind had a go ringing a bell herself after the performance. The Oasis group treated us to tea and cakes after the gig and we were informed that the building had once been part of the YMCA sports club.

The group meet monthly and they said they would be very interested in having us back at Christmas to ring a few carols and Christmas songs.

Jeanette Jenkins, Norbury HR

*Here are photos of some Maghull Parish HR, helping a Newton-Le-Willows team to Ring for the King in May.*



*Beth (on the left) is Kneeling for the King, too!*

## THE COMMITTEE

On the last page, you'll find the list of Committee Members for the year 2023 – 24. You may notice that this is shorter than it has been in the past; that's because since the beginning of 2020, we've lost five committee members. All for good reasons, but unless we can recruit some replacements, it's inevitable that this will begin to make a difference to the events and activities we can offer our North West Region members. Please, please consider joining the Committee – we have nearly all our meetings on Zoom now, so travel is not an issue. And you really would be made very welcome!

## HANDBELL RINGERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

### NORTH WEST REGION

**Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Knowle Green Village Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023, commencing at 12.15 pm.**

**Present:** 61 members of HRGB attended, as follows: Independent Members Linda Parkington and Irene Merson. Representatives of the following teams: Dean HR, Gresford HR, Kinder Ringers, Maghull Parish HR, Marple URC HR, Marron Valley HR, Mini Minims, Norbury HR, Sale HR, Tantony HR.

The Meeting was chaired by Linda Parkington (Chair), who began by welcoming everyone.

**Apologies for Absence** were received from Alan Cox, Chris Ellison, Janet Fletcher, David Healy, Jane Holland, Margaret Hubbard and Dawn Jones.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting** held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022 had been circulated to members. It was proposed by Jeanette Jenkins, seconded by Sheila Harris and agreed without opposition that they be accepted as a correct record and signed by Linda Parkington.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes** – Item 8 Regional, National and International Events – it had been reported that the North West Region was due to host the National Rally in 2026 but the NEC had yet to decide whether to hold a National Rally that year, as the UK would be hosting the International Symposium. Events had now moved on, and the North West Region Committee had volunteered to host the 2024 National Rally as the East Midlands Region were not in a position to do so. The event would be held at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

**Correspondence** – No correspondence had been received.

**Chair's Report** – This had been circulated to members before the Meeting.

At the beginning of 2022, things had still been far from normal due to the Covid pandemic. The AGM was not included in the Spring Gatherings, but was held separately on 7<sup>th</sup> May at Halton, near Lancaster. Margaret Hubbard remained on the Committee but stepped down as Representative to the National Executive Committee and was replaced by Kate Worthington. Linda thanked Margaret for representing the Region so well for a number of years. She also paid tribute to Chris Ellison who had indicated that she would be leaving the Committee at the 2023 AGM, thanking her for her contribution over several years, especially

at the northern end of the Region, and including her work as Regional Secretary and Treasurer.

Linda also thanked the teams who had hosted the Autumn ClusteRings, Irene Merson for acting as Magazine Editor and Jeanette Jenkins for her continued work in managing the Region's website and Facebook page.

The Chair's report went on to mention the North West region's commitment to host the National Rally in 2024 and the piece "Reflection on Finlandia" commissioned by the NW Committee in memory of Derek Jackson. Finally, Linda thanked Irene for her work as Secretary and ended with an appeal for members to come forward and take up roles within the Region.

The Chair's Report was accepted by the meeting.

**Secretary's Report** – this had been circulated to members before the Meeting.

Irene Merson reported that the Committee had met four times during the year; three of the meetings had been face to face and the last one on Zoom, the Committee having taken the decision to hold winter meetings on Zoom in future. The purchase of a Zoom licence for the Region will certainly prove a worthwhile expense over the coming year, with plans for the National Rally in 2024.

Events had moved towards the normal pre-Covid pattern, with a Spring GatheRing at Sale Moor which included team ringing for the first time since 2019; a separate AGM at Halton; and two Autumn ClusteRings, at Newbiggin for ringers in the north end of the Region, and Disley for the south. The new feedback forms sent out after the Autumn events had proved useful to the Committee in their planning, especially in revealing a demand for a workshop-based event.

The report ended with thanks to all the Committee members. It was accepted by the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts** – the Report and examined Accounts had been circulated to members before the Meeting.

Anne Hopley was pleased to report a very small surplus at the end of 2022, after the previous year's deficit. She mentioned the high cost of Committee meetings during the year – this would reduce in future, with meetings held on Zoom.

It was proposed by Jeanette Jenkins, seconded by Sandra Ball and agreed without opposition that the Accounts be accepted.

Anne Hopley also explained to the Meeting the Committee's proposed payment arrangements for "Reflection on Finlandia". The Committee did not intend that this should come out of Regional Funds, and proposed that the proceeds from future raffles at events should be used to cover the cost. This was agreed by the Meeting.

**Election of Officers and Committee Members:** The following postal nominations had been received:

POST	NOMINATED	PROPOSED	SECONDED
Chair	Linda Parkington	Jill Roberts	Elaine Radford
Secretary	Irene Merson	Brenda Wise	Jeanette Jenkins
Treasurer	Anne Hopley	Sandra Ball	Rachel Armstrong
NEC Representative	Kate Worthington	Julie Jenkinson	Pat Boyle

& Committee Member			
NEC Representative & Committee Member	Beth McCord	Lisa Doran	David Healy
Committee Member	Sheila Harris	Norma Parke	Jane Holland
Committee Member	Margaret Hubbard	Molly Rennie	Gillian Watt
Committee Member	Norma Parke	Jane Holland	Sheila Harris

It was proposed by Sandra Ball, seconded by Brenda Wise and agreed without opposition that the above Officers, NEC Representatives and Committee Members be elected.

Additional nomination for Committee Member: it was explained that Alan Cox was unable to be present at the Meeting but had indicated that he would be willing to continue to serve on the Committee if re-elected. This was proposed by Anne Hopley, seconded by Norma Parke and agreed without opposition.

As there had been no nominations for Junior Committee Member it was agreed that Beth McCord would continue as Junior Liaison on the Committee. The Examiner of Accounts had indicated that he would be prepared to continue, and this was agreed.

**Regional, National and International Events –**

Regional – The Committee would be planning a workshop-based summer event, subject to finding a suitable venue. Host teams would be needed for the Autumn Clusterings, and members present were urged to consider this.

National – the 2023 National Rally would be held at Stirling, and Maghull Parish HR would represent the North West Region in the Concert. Plans for the 2024 National Rally, hosted by the North West Region, are under way and members would be hearing a good deal about this, later in the year.

National Residential Ringing Week would be held later in 2023, and UK Bronze in 2024.

International – The International Symposium in 2026 would be hosted by the UK at Gateshead. This would be a rare opportunity for UK members to attend.

**Any Other Business -**

Webinars - The National Chair of HRGB wanted feedback from regions about future Webinars. Numbers registering for Webinars had dropped and the NEC would be considering the best way forward. It was agreed that they were a valuable source of information, particularly for members who found it difficult to attend events in person. Linda asked members to let her have any specific comments or suggestions for future Webinar topics.

Questionnaires – Irene thanked those who had filled in the recent questionnaire about teams’ circumstances following Covid, and indicated that their comments would be reported to the next Committee meeting.

**Date and Place of the next Annual General Meeting –** Because of the National Rally in 2024, it was unlikely that the Spring Gatherings and AGM would be held at its usual time; it was more likely to take place in May 2024. It was agreed that the date and venue would be set by the Committee as soon as possible and published to members in the usual way.

The Meeting closed at 12.38 pm.

*Registered Charity Numbers 298945 (England & Wales) & SCO38918 (Scotland)*

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST ....**



Bells she can handle – but this is more of a challenge! Looks like her lightbulb moment hasn't done Lisa much good!

**NEXT EDITION OF OYEZ**

We are still looking for an Editor for Oyez. If you feel that this is something you may like to take on, please don't be shy – get in touch with Linda or Irene!

For the time being, please submit articles / photos to Irene Merson – [irene@mersons.co.uk](mailto:irene@mersons.co.uk).  
Articles in Word, please, and photos as jpegs.

**NEXT PRESS DATE:**

**20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

For the November Edition of Oyez

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL COMMITTEE, 2023 - 2024**

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