

OYEZ



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Chatter from the Chair

Hello everyone and welcome to this early Summer edition of Oyez.

It seems a long time since the last issue in February. We had our Regional AGM, when I am pleased to say that everyone serving on the North West Committee agreed to continue for another 12 months. The reports were accepted and the accounts sent to the National Treasurer in good time, with no issues. One of the official parts of belonging to HRGB done and dusted for another year.

You will read further on about the National Rally Weekend at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, hosted by our Region. Thanks were given at the time to all who helped in any way – and many of you reading this should be thinking, “That included me!” This is an opportunity to thank everyone again. It wouldn’t have happened without the imagination, dedication and sheer determination to do the best we could from an increasing band of willing North West members. It began last Autumn with Beth and Irene dealing with all the pre-event information and bookings, then ordering music and sorting workshops, masterclasses, massed and rally ringing and the concert, as well as liaising with the team at The Hayes. We used Kate’s business experience and expertise plus access to printing and postage and then Anne and Mags played their

parts, as well as Jocie, when tasks came thick and fast as the event date loomed. We were fortunate to have brilliant session leaders from across the HRGB regions as well as our own talented NW members. We needed an army of people to help with all the organisational tasks which make or break an event like this – and make it they did! I've had the task of collating the comments on the weekend feedback forms and the praise and thanks for a fantastic weekend is overwhelming. Months and months of very hard work paid off and Friday to Sunday came and went in a flash.

I receive a national, weekly church newspaper and in it I recently read a very interesting article about the state of heritage craft skills. Research carried out by the national not-for-profit organisation Heritage Crafts has shown that its 2023 Red List contains 163 crafts which are at risk, some of which are associated with churches and other religious buildings. Sixty-two of them are classified as “critically endangered” and in this category is the making of bell ropes and bell-founding. The compilers note ‘The shrinkage of the bell-founding and bell-hanging market is mirrored by the decrease in the number of active tower bell-ringers and musical handbell ringers. It can also be a challenge to find people to take on the craft who are enthusiastic, have some basic skills, and are prepared to learn’. There is an increasing awareness and concern for the future of our teams and membership within HRGB and we all have a part to play before it's too late.

Included in this edition is an obituary of David Cleave, who led the Chandale Handbell Ringers for many years. David was a former NW Region Chairman and the team were very regular supporters of our regional events and rallies. I have fond memories of David and his late wife Joan, as we shared a love of Cornwall as well as handbells. Anne has paid tribute to David – definitely one of life's gentlemen – and our thoughts are with his family at this time.

As we approach the holiday season when many teams break for the Summer, I hope you enjoy time away or to relax, and you look forward to resuming ringing with renewed enthusiasm.

Linda Parkington

And just for once – a word from your Pretend Editor ...

Well that's what “Acting” means, isn't it? Thank you, Sue and Jeanette, for the two brilliant articles below about the National Rally – a topic which took over the lives of the NW Committee for a few months! I thought of the Rally last week, when I was watching coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show. Monty Don asked Nigel Slater why he came to Chelsea, and he said “I love it because as soon as you walk in, you realise that everyone there has a common interest and it's your interest too. So you feel that you belong to a whole community.”

And that's how you feel when you're at an HRGB event! If you've been put off going to the National Rally in the past, thinking it's a bit too high-falutin' for the likes of you – it isn't, it's for everyone who enjoys ringing, so give it a go!

Irene Merson

HRGB National Rally and AGM, April 5th-7th 2024

What a wonderful weekend of handbell ringing!

Held at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick (which was an ideal setting for the event) there was an action-packed timetable, superbly co-ordinated by the NW region committee. Special thanks to Linda Parkington for chairing the group and also huge thanks to all the committee(s) for the variety of sessions and provision of bells for all.

On arrival we were greeted with a folder of goodies, allocation of accommodation and a lanyard with convenient printout of individual details for workshops, etc. After our meal some teams stepped up to entertain in the Derbyshire Suite Main Hall in a “**Teams in the Spotlight**” event and Aidan Fozard rang a solo spectacular on belleplates.

On Saturday **Masterclass Workshops** were very ably run by many different handbells experts:

‘**Music Matters**’ was a large group of between 30-50 ringers, working on a piece of music for 90 minutes.

‘**Not Just Dots and Sticks**’ was a smaller group of 15-30 ringers, again focusing on one piece of music, for 75mins.

The session entitled “**The Good, the Bad and the Scary**” was a masterpiece in itself. Bravo to Kate’s team, Sale HR, who were filmed doing the *bad* things intentionally!

“**Read and Ring**” was a fine introduction to the many ways in which handbells can be rung – by sight-reading numbers or marked-up notation, or various points in between!

On Saturday afternoon the **AGM** was a well-attended meeting and reminded us all what HRGB does for us, in the way of leading musicians to good practices of handbell ringing.

I feel grateful thanks are appropriate to the Willis family members who keep us all in touch with so many things online, as well as being office-holders of HRGB and dealing with Sales. It was good to put faces to the names, as Robert and Fiona were running HRGB Sales throughout the weekend!

We are now able to tap into the many resources provided with the splendid HRGB website <https://handbells.org.uk/>

The **concert** on Saturday evening was an interesting variety of excellent pieces and sizes of groups, giving us their best; it was inspirational! Maghull Parish HR gave a wonderful performance to represent the NW Region.

On Sunday morning the **Massed Ringing** was truly that - with the vast array of bells, and I lost count how many people were playing 7 octaves arrangements for:-

- 1) 'Reflection on Finlandia', Sibelius, an arrangement written and conducted by Malcolm Wilson (commissioned in memory of Derek Jackson).
- 2) 'Psalm' (a version of Crimond), arranged and conducted with good humour by Sandra Winter.
- 3) 'Blues for Bells', custom-written by Robin Benton and brilliantly led by Linda McCord.

(You can catch mp4 versions of these 3 on the HRGB website, and you might be able to spot the committee in their hi-vis jackets?)

There wasn't time to keep a diary, so I hope I haven't missed out any vital parts! Thank you very much to all involved in organising an excellent handbells weekend (& Beth for keeping cool in all the difficult moments!).

(Sue Ardern, member of Kinder Ringers)

Here are some photos taken at the National Rally:



Left: Beth and Jocie show everyone how it's done at the Friday evening informal rally ringing session.

Adult ringers please note: Jocie can smile while she's ringing!

Right: Some of Maghull in the Sunday massed ringing session.

Lisa and Dave didn't have time to put their polo shirts on – they worked through the whole weekend, moving tables, foam, bells Huge thanks to them!





Above: The full massed ringing session on Sunday morning – 182 ringers, and we didn't have time to count how many bells!

National Rally 2024 - Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

On a lovely spring day the National Rally, organised by the HRGB North West Region Committee and others, began at Swanwick near Alfreton, Derbyshire.

The venue was chosen for its central location with good road and rail links. Ringers came from all the regions including other nations, Scotland and Wales, to share a weekend of making music and exchanging experiences.



The first evening's activity was "Teams in the Spotlight", a regular feature of Rallies but moved to Friday night to allow more time for massed ringing on Sunday. *[Photo shows some of Norbury HR in the audience]*

The running order was:

Kinder Ringers - "Come Lassies & Lads"; Aidan Fozard – "Compassion"; Broxbourne HR - "Je vous salut Marie"; Beth & Jocie - "Firework"; Dronfield HR - "Little Fugue" by J S Bach.

Cliff Blundell then amazed the crowd by ringing **6** in hand "Tuba Tune" (Sofronino) and "Knick Knack Padiwack give a dog a bone".

Saturday was a day of workshops for all abilities with a combination of participation and presentations. Thanks go to Sale Handbell Ringers for their dramatic portrayal of a "what not to do" performance. The Read and Ring session proved challenging, with ringers having to get to grips with other music notations they were not familiar with.

The Saturday evening Concert was excellent with a good variety of teams representing all the regions.



Maghull Parish HR giving their excellent performance in the Concert

After a short act of worship for those who were missing church, the Sunday Massed ringing included "Finlandia" conducted by the arranger, Malcolm Wilson, Robin Benton's "Blues for Bells", an unusual piece chosen by Linda McCord and "Psalm", an arrangement of the 23rd Psalm arranged and conducted by Sandra Winter. Sandra noted that she was now mindful of the performance mistakes pointed out in the "Good, Bad and Scary" workshop yesterday!

Jeanette Jenkins *[Pictured right, concentrating hard in a Saturday workshop session!]*



And here's another chance to join in with other ringers

NORTHERN BELL ORCHESTRA OPEN DAY – 20th JULY 2024

The Northern Bell Orchestra would like to invite you to ring with us as we start rehearsing music for next season. We'll be beginners together. There will be a couple of Level 2 (easy-ish), mostly Level 3 and possibly 1 rhythmically challenging piece. You can come for as long or as little as you want; an hour or two, a half day or a whole day. It's free but we'd appreciate it if you could let us know whether you are planning to come and when so we can arrange for you to have music. We have a limited supply of music stands so do let us know if you need one. You will need to bring your own 3 ring folder. We ring from staff notation only. You can also come just to listen.

We rehearse from 10am-4pm, with 2 tea breaks (we have an amazing baker/ringer who provides great biscuits and/or cake) and a 30 minute lunch break (bring your own).

Date: Saturday, 20th July 2024

Venue: Ashover Parish Hall, Ashover, Derbyshire

Arrival time: 9.45am for a 10am prompt start, unless you tell us in advance when you plan to arrive.

To let us know of your interest or if you have any questions, please contact Rona Gager on ronagager@gmail.com or 07963 091121 or Kate Sawallisch on katesawallisch@icloud.com or 07578 388620

DAVID CLEAVE, HONORARY LIFE MEMBER OF THE NW REGION

It was with great sadness that the Region heard of the death of David Cleave on the 11th May, just short of his 92nd birthday.

David was leader, with his wife Joan, of the Chandale Ringers (671 NW), from West Kirby on the Wirral. After Joan had heard bells being played for the first time she wanted to have a go so they bought a set of 15 bells and persuaded family and neighbours to make up a team.



Chandale Ringers in the early days – 1988!

After 12 months of rehearsal they gave their first public performance in the local church. The team continued to expand and improve, eventually buying 3 octaves of bells, some belleplates and increasing the membership to 11 regular ringers. Their first outing to a regional rally was at Poynton in 1986 and they tried to attend every regional event after that, even if the whole team were not able to be there. David was often called upon to conduct massed ringing pieces at rallies and his team played many of his own arrangements. Having been to all the AGMs from the early 1980s it was inevitable that David was persuaded to join the regional committee in 1990, and Chandale hosted a rally at West Kirby that Spring. His input and suggestions were invaluable, especially regarding choices of music for different events.

David was also an essential part of the sub-committee arranging the Silver Jubilee National Rally at Lancaster in 1992, taking all the minutes for the meetings. In 1993 he accepted the Chairmanship of the Region and hosted several committee meetings at his home, with Joan providing refreshments.

The future of HRGB was the subject of a Conference in 1994 for all the regional Chairs. David attended for the NW and following this he presided over the AGM meeting which saw the formation of the Scottish Region in Dunblane in 1995. That same year Chandale recorded a piece for the Radio 4 programme "Bells on Sunday", broadcast on Christmas Eve.

The regional AGM in 1996 was to be held in West Kirby but had to be postponed due to heavy snow. It was then combined with the Spring Rally at Gresford when David handed the chain of office to Simon Rennie. However, a regular feature of the regional calendar at this time was the Festival of Carols and David coordinated the arrangements and found suitable music for the one held in St James' Church, Oldham that year.



Chandale Ringers at their last concert, 2010. David is on the left.

Sadly, at the end of 2010, as a result of health problems amongst team members and other difficulties, the Chandale team decided to disband. They had performed in a total of 352 concerts over the years, notable venues being the roofless refectory at Birkenhead Priory, outdoors at Ness Botanical Gardens for a wedding, and in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. They had also made a CD with a school and church choir, "Carols from Chester", which had the dedication "In memory of Joan Cleave 2004".

In appreciation of his many years' service to the NW Region David was made an Honorary Life Member in 2011. Although no longer able to attend events he enjoyed keeping in touch through Oyez and Reverberations. Those of us who knew David are left with many memories of a lovely, kind man who was always willing to help, and so enthusiastic about the pleasures that handbell ringing can bring.

Anne Hopley

FORTHCOMING REGIONAL EVENT

There will be a Summer ClusteRing at Llandudno on **Saturday, 13th July 2024**. Details and Booking Forms have gone out – if you haven't received any information about this, ask your Team Correspondent or contact Irene Merson – irene@mersons.co.uk.

The Committee is also planning to organise an event later in the year, and is looking for a suitable venue further north in the Region. If you can suggest anywhere, please contact us!

HANDBELL RINGERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST REGION

Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Knowle Green Village Hall on 16th March 2024, commencing at 12 noon.

Present: Independent Members Linda Parkington and Irene Merson. Representatives of the following teams: Kinder Ringers, Maghull Parish HR, 1900 Bells, Mini Minims, Sale HR. In attendance: Eleanor Merson, North East Region member.

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

Apologies for Absence were received from Sue Ardern, Joan Ball, Sheila Harris, Catriona Morris and Gresford Handbell Ringers.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25th March 2023 had been circulated to members. It was proposed by Beth McCord, seconded by Kate Worthington and agreed without opposition that they be accepted as a correct record and signed by Linda Parkington.

Matters Arising from the Minutes - None

Correspondence – No correspondence had been received.

Chair's Report – This had been circulated to members before the Meeting. Linda Parkington reviewed the year 2023, still with ongoing effects from the Covid pandemic but with continued enthusiasm on the part of our members, who value opportunities to gather with like-minded ringers. The recent expectation that the Committee, rather than individual teams, would organise regional events, plus the added work involved in hosting the National Rally in April 2024, had led to a busy year for the Committee. Linda thanked all of them for the part they had played in ensuring that the Region continues to thrive. The Chair's Report was accepted by the meeting.

Secretary's Report – this had been circulated to members before the Meeting. The Committee had planned to return to the pre-Covid pattern of a Spring GatheRing which included the 2023 AGM, plus two Autumn ClusteRings, one in the north, the other in the south of the Region. The Spring GatheRing and the southern Autumn ClusteRing were both well attended, but the northern ClusteRing in October had to be cancelled, due to lack of numbers – an unwelcome “first” for our region.

However, the Committee did try a new venture – a “Back to Basics” Workshop, run twice with one at each end of the Region. This was very well received and the Committee hopes that Workshops will be a regular addition to the Region's programme in the future. 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 much larger surplus at the end of 2023, due in large part to holding all the Committee Meetings on Zoom. The Zoom licence had also proved invaluable for meetings of the planning group for the National Rally in April 2024, to be hosted by the North West Region. In addition, the Committee had taken advantage of a generous grant from the NEC, offered to all regions to enable them to put on free events to members as part of the recovery from Covid. This had been used for the Workshops.

It was proposed by Margaret Hubbard, seconded by Beth McCord and agreed without opposition that the Accounts and Treasurer's Report be accepted. Anne thanked the

Accounts Examiner for his help in ensuring that the Region's returns to the National Treasurer were sent promptly.

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

POST	NOMINATED	PROPOSED	SECONDED
Chair	Linda Parkington	Lisa Doran	Molly Rennie
Secretary	Irene Merson	Sue Ardern	Jeanette Jenkins
Treasurer	Anne Hopley	Brenda Wise	Rachel Armstrong
NEC Representative & Committee Member	Kate Worthington	Carolyn Walmsley	Julie Jenkinson
NEC Representative & Committee Member	Beth McCord	David Healy	Gill Watt
Committee Member	Sheila Harris	Hilary Windsor	Gordon Gray
Committee Member	Margaret Hubbard	Jo Healy	Ruth Swanson

It was agreed without opposition that the above Officers, NEC Representatives and Committee Members be elected.

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 – due to the organisation of the National Rally in April, the usual Spring Gatherings will not take place. However, there will be an opportunity for teams to get together for a Summer Ring at Llandudno on Saturday 13th July. The Committee will make plans for more events later in the year. The Northern Bell Orchestra will hold its Concert on 1st June 2024 in Chester.

National – the 2024 National Rally will be held at Swanwick in Derbyshire, hosted by the North West Region, from 5th to 7th April. Maghull Parish HR will represent the Region in the Concert.

UK Bronze will be held from 23rd to 26th October 2024. Two Seminar Weekends for conductors and team leaders, one at Foundation and another at Higher level, are planned, along with Webinars for members.

The National Rally 2025 will be hosted by the East Anglia Region at Milton Keynes from 11th to 13th April.

International – The 21st International Symposium will be held in Hamamatsu, Japan in August 2024. The 22nd International Symposium in 2026 will be hosted by the UK at Gateshead from 4th to 8th August - a rare opportunity for UK members to attend.

Any Other Business - None

Date and Place of the next Annual General Meeting – It was agreed that the date and venue would be set by the Committee and published to members in the usual way.

The Meeting closed at 12.35 pm.

Registered Charity Numbers 298945 (England & Wales) & SC038918 (Scotland)

A POINT TO NOTE: INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

As you will see from the above Draft Minutes, at the time of the NW Region AGM it was expected that the International Symposium, 2026, would be held in Gateshead. However it was announced at the National AGM in April that due to circumstances beyond the Organising Committee's control, the venue had been changed to Aberdeen in Scotland.

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 get in touch with Linda or Irene.

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

NEXT PRESS DATE: 20th OCTOBER 2024 For the November Edition of Oyez

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