

North West Region of HRGB

Oyez



June 2026 Issue 37



Kate Worthington, new Chairman of the NW Region on the left and Linda Parkington, outgoing Chairman on the right

Chair's Chat

Hello all

I am currently sitting in my garden with the sun beating down after a disturbed night watching a huge thunderstorm. The UK weather at its best!

I am very happy to introduce myself as the new Chair of the North West Region of HRGB. I follow in the footsteps of many hard-working Chairs including my predecessor, Linda Parkington. I hope I can do the role justice for the future. I am a former piano teacher and I now run an online needlecraft business. I was doing both roles for a while, but the business took over! I will hopefully go back to teaching in later years. I am learning the accordion which is such fun and a great new challenge.

I have been playing handbells for many years and love playing within a group and working together. I am the MD of Sale Handbell Ringers and am a member of the Northern Bell Orchestra. I am the National Safeguarding Officer and a member of the NEC, which is a committee of trustees for HRGB. One of my other great hobbies is the theatre and I am a regular at all the local and regional theatres around Manchester and Cheshire.

Our event and AGM in March at The Ministry Centre, Ormskirk was a wonderful day with the usual massed ringing and teams individual ringing. It would be great to see more teams attending but we welcome individual ringers as well. We can try to put an event on in your area if you let us know. One of my aims is to visit each of the handbell groups in the North West area which may take me some time. If you have any suggestions or ideas, no matter how strange, I would love to hear from you. You can contact me by email or speak to me at one of the HRGB events. I will be at the National Symposium in Aberdeen so just come over and have a chat. I will be contacting you soon to arrange a visit. We have some great plans for the rest of year including a joint event across the North and South of the region. More details to come. On behalf of the North West Committee I wish you a great Summer of ringing.
Kate Worthington



A note from the new editor

Hi! I would like to introduce myself as the new editor for Oyez. My name is Jocie, I am 10 years old and I ring handbells in a team in Newton-le-Willows. I love ringing handbells because it brings people together and it is something I can do with my Mum and my Nanna!

At the last committee meeting, we discussed the future of Oyez and decided that it should be shorter but more frequent. We are going to aim to issue one edition every two months. So please keep sending in any reports, photos or comments.

We would like to offer an opportunity to ask and answer questions, if you have a handbell or music related question which you would like answered send it over to the northwestHRGB@gmail.com.

Look out for the 'Events' section where you will find details of upcoming events and let us know if you would like an event to be advertised.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this month's issue and I look forward to hearing from some of you for the next one!

NEXT ISSUE DATE 1ST AUGUST
PLEASE SEND ANY ARTICLES, NOTICES OR
QUESTIONS BY 25TH JULY TO
northwestHRGB@gmail.com



On the 28th March 2026 Linda Parkington stepped down as the Chairman of the North West Region of HRCB and Irene Merson stepped down as the Secretary. We were under strict instructions not to 'do' anything for them as they did not want to be honoured without Anne Hopley also being recognised for her dedication to our region. So we did what we felt was right and honoured all three of them for their hard work and commitment to the North West Region of HRCB by presenting them with engraved vases and flowers. As Linda and Irene were also stepping down from the committee, I decided we should interview them to delve into their handbell history. Jocie.

- Linda
1. How did you first get roped into being on the committee?
John Partington (chairman of the NW at the time) was driving me home and on the way asked me if I wanted to be chairman surprised but excited, I agreed.
 2. What was your favourite role on the committee and why?
Chair, it allows you to see work by everybody.
 3. Do you have a favourite piece of handbell music?
Home sweet home by William
 4. What is your favourite memory from the North West Region?
The Weekend rally in Chester!
 5. How long have you been on the committee?
41 years
 6. What do you think was your biggest success being part of the committee?
Helping organise National Rally Weekends
 7. Have you enjoyed your time on committee?
Yes, definitely!



From left to right; Anne Hopley, Irene Merson, Linda Parkington, Kate Worthington, Beth McCord

- Irene
1. How did you first get roped into being on the committee?
When Anne stepped down from secretary, I was told I should take her place so I did.
 2. What was your favourite role on the committee and why?
Secretary, I got to meet many amazing people
 3. Do you have a favourite piece of handbell music?
Outbursts of joy!
 4. What is your favourite memory from the North West Region?
The end of the rally in Swanick
 5. How long have you been on the committee?
40 years
 6. What do you think was your biggest success being part of the committee?
Organising the Swanick rally
 7. Have you enjoyed your time on committee?
Yes!



Report for Christmas 2025. Gresford Handbell Ringers.

'Janglen of the Bells.' Gresford Handbells. December 2025.

'We're walking in the air....' I'll be ringing that song all the way home now.

Yes, good isn't it. Lucky that we could play that with a smaller group of ringers.

People seem to enjoy it.

When is a table not a table?

Ym, don't know. When is a table not a table?

When it's round!

Ah. Yes of course. People don't realise, do they. Our Musical Director must spend ages finding out whether tables at venues are actually going to be suitable for our group.

Hm, space is another problem isn't it. A room can look quite big enough until you stick a ten-foot Christmas tree in the middle.

Yes, but it wouldn't be such fun without the Christmas decorations. Mind you, we do need a lot of space ourselves. Ringers had to sit in the corridor at the retirement concert with the big bells balancing on a stack of cushions.

Hilarious as the corridor lights were movement sensitive so the ringers had to lean back and wave their arms around if their bells were resting.

Mind you, I suppose they could have used their portable lights.

What do you know about spreadsheets?

You mean the piece of paper that goes round every year for the ringers to put a tick or cross in a box? That helps the Musical Director work out whether we have enough players to perform a piece at all.

It must be quite a headache by the time everyone has let her know about grandparenting, school concerts, holidays, choirs, Church responsibilities and of course a few of our ringers still work, they're not all retired you know!

Quite. Seems a shame doesn't it that all our concerts this December have been daytime ones. Those working ringers must really miss performing.

Yes. So of course, the other ringers need to move around to cover different parts! Talk about being out of their comfort zone.

Yes, and we've had such a lot of illness this time. MD couldn't join us for some performances because she wasn't well either. That must have been really disappointing for her after all the preparation.

Indeed. We managed though, just. There was a bit of a hitch when someone played a different carol from everyone else. Not concentrating! Luckily someone noticed and they started again on the correct copy. I expect that's already on a T=towel somewhere.

How old are you now? Are you one of the oldies?

Yes, 2025 was a special year for some of us. Fifty. Doesn't feel like it though.

It's great that we still have a chance to ring.

I'm looking forward for a bit of a rest now till next year. Then we'll get going on some of the new pieces, when hopefully there'll be enough ringers to play all the bells.

That'll be Entertaining.

Venues

Ashleigh Court/Ashgrove Care Home Gresford.

Gresford Retirement Group

Erddig Nordic Walkers Wrexham

Stansty House Care Home Wrexham

Nightingale House Hospice Wrexham

Gresford All Saints' Church Blessing of the Crib Service

Programme

Ding Dong Merrily

Walking in the Air

Joy to the World

Dreaming of a White Christmas

Winter Wonderland

Carol of the Bells

Selection of Carols:

O little town of Bethlehem

Once in Royal David's City

Hark the Herald Angel

Away in a Manger

While Shepherds watched

O Come all ye Faithful

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

Jingle Bells



BELLS AND RINGS AND THINGS!

Handbells are not the only bells we hear in daily life.
There are lots of other ringing things that give our poor ears strife
Like door bells and alarm bells, car alarms and mobile phones;
An unceasing barrage that won't leave us alone.

And drowns out all the ringing that it might be nice to hear
For not all bells are intrusive or harmful to the ears.
There are rings that give us comfort and make us all feel great
Like sleigh and church and blue bells, the ice-cream van at the gate.

There are wedding and engagement rings and the ring of crystal
glass
And lovely, tinkly earrings that catch the wind as it blows past.
And lots and lots of ring-pulls scattered on the ground
But they don't ring; they just make a nasty scraping sound.

In former days cash registers made proof of purchase rings
And the hammer of a blacksmith would make an anvil sing.
And church towers, every Sunday, would ring across the town,
And police cars had their own bells as they dashed up and down.

We have bells and we send music ringing into space
And, we hope, it comes together to put a smile upon your face.
And it isn't easy, hence the frowns of concentration
Occasionally giving way to sighs of great frustration.

To make upwards of thirty bells ring out in harmony
Is not easy. If you don't believe us, try it and you'll see
That, though we smile and concentrate on musicality and tone
It often seems the bells have got agendas of their own.

Lesley Walker
16/5/26



Hello everyone! As a newbie to the region, I should introduce myself and my team – I'm Isaac, a postgraduate student at the Royal Northern College of Music in Central Manchester, and I'm originally from Hong Kong! In January this year, I'm very honoured to receive support from the HRCGB to establish my school's very first handbell team – the RNCM Handbell Ringers. We are a student-led society under the student's union, and fun fact 1 – we might be the only society whose name doesn't end with a 'society'.

Everything started when I organized two taster sessions to let my schoolmates have a 'taste' on handbells. The responses were promising! Many young musicians are keen to learn a new instrument, especially composers who are really happy to try with more sounds and timbre. Unfortunately, many of them couldn't join the official team due to schedule clashes, but we do have 12 ringers now, which is a good number for a 3-Octave choir! Fun fact 2 – we have 9 composers!

You may wonder, where do our bells come from! We are sincerely supported by the William Hartley Memorial Fund (WHMF), organized by Alan Hartley, where we were able to borrow 3-Octaves of Whitechapel bells. Kate Sawallisch was also really generous to lend us a set of 2-Octaves handchimes and mallets for 3-Octaves. I still remember how the faces of the ringers lit up when they saw the chimes and mallet. Last but not least, we were funded by the HRCGB, with support from the NEC, for other equipment like binders, music, foams, and gloves. All in all, I am beyond grateful to have everyone's support in sharing handbell artistry to young musicians.

Back to the present. The musicality of the ringers is undeniable, but as they are all new to bells, I have to train them in their techniques. Despite having 5 pieces to work on at the moment, I spend around half an hour at the start of each rehearsal to teach and practice basic techniques like Ring and Damp, LV, playing scales, etc. Recently, I have started to teach four-in-hand and weaving, which they are really interested in!

As for future plans, we are negotiating with the school for a year-end showcase to show what we have achieved. It will be around late June, but further details are still to be confirmed. I also hope to bring them to more external events next year, like rallies and mass ringing. Sad that I can't bring them to the Symposium this year, but I believe there must be another opportunity!

All in all, I'm so honoured to be able to bring handbells to young musicians and establish a new team in my own school. I'm excited to join the NW handbell community, and I can't wait to ring with you all in events!

Isaac Wan
Director, RNCM Handbell Ringers

A note from the editor: Since writing this report Isaac has successfully secured a date for an end of year showcase at the university. Good luck!



North West Spring GatherRing



2026

On March 28th 2026 The North West Region hosted the Spring GatherRing and AGM in Aughton. Below are some comments and articles from ringers who attended the event.

From Llandudno Handbell Ringers

Three members of our team attended the GatherRing at Aughton on 28th March. When we were arriving there were people on the roads near the venue with HRGB signposts directing us where to turn off, which was a great idea and most helpful.

We had a wonderful day, the three pieces of music were lovely and it was great being able to practise some techniques that we can't usually do. It was the first time for one of our members and she was most impressed. We were delighted to meet other teams, particularly the Gresford team, who are not too far away from us, and we're hoping to meet up with them again.

We learned a lot from the day and we very much look forward to the next event.



Norbury and Ashton were pleased to be reunited and enjoyed a great day of ringing!

Jill Kenna Marple URC Handbells

Christ Church Ministry Centre at Aughton, near Ormskirk was an ideal venue for our NW AGM Gathering on Saturday 28 March. Our team enjoyed the massed ringing pieces and listening to the other teams play and there was a good atmosphere throughout. It was important to celebrate the 40 years service given by Linda, Irene and Ann at the AGM and really great that others have come forward to serve on the committee. Many of our folk at Marple felt that the day was a bit long with the travelling as well, and would like to suggest that we just have 2 Massed Ringing pieces when it is the AGM and maybe only do them twice. Overall though it was an enjoyable day and our thanks to all those involved in organising it.



Marple, ready to ring!

Spring Rally Gathering 2026 - at Aughton, North of Liverpool, hosted by North West Region and Maghull Handbell Team



We couldn't believe that it was three years since our team from Gresford in North Wales had been able to attend a rally! It was great to be back making music with seven other teams in a light filled hall.

We had conceded to "age" (for some of us) for only the second time in years, by hiring a coach to transport us and all our paraphernalia to the venue!

We wonder now if that was the reason we encountered a hiccup of what seemed huge proportions when setting up? Where was bell box number three? The answer was - back at base!

A somewhat inauspicious and panic inducing scenario.

We are very, very grateful to Beth from Maghull's team who came to our aid with "No problem! I have two boxes of extra bells which you are welcome to use"!

I'm sure that teams everywhere can appreciate our relief and grateful thanks.

The rally itself started with a round of massed ringing for eight teams. But after Altogether we played 3 pieces The Jubelle Celebration Polka, Reflections on Kingsfold and Vincent. Thank you to all three conductors who made us concentrate and work for our enjoyment! We as a team, learnt a lot about dynamics and differing ringing techniques , the proof of the pudding will be when we get back to practicing!

It would be crass to mention any particular team's performances as every team played well with the varying pieces played. Our team played Mamma Mia and then Bring Him Home from Les Miserables, and we played quite well and were pleased that more than one team were enquiring as to where we got the music from - we certainly enjoy playing them. With some of our team having links to

Scotland, it's fair to say that Maghull's Skye Boat song went down very well, particularly for their sensitive rendition of the piece. It was also inspiring to hear and watch both Irene and her daughter Eleanor's playing. Their team of two made brilliant use of at least three bells in both of their hands (so at least 12 bells between them) and rang When the Saints and Stil,Still,Still a German Christmas song. In fact I'm not sure that I didn't spot them actually put bells down and pick some others up in the middle of their pieces!

It was also great to listen to Beth and her daughter Jocie and to see Jocie's obvious enthusiasm for playing handbells. She had a constant smile throughout both of their performances. They played "When I grow up" and "Zipedydoodah" and I don't think I was the only one who wished for half their confidence when playing.

Both mother and daughter teams were a great advert for the up and coming young ringers.

Altogether, our team returned home to Gresford with renewed enthusiasm and a definite aim of learning the beautiful Reflections on Kingfold in time for our next church concert. Thank you to all of the organisers and also to our fellow ringing teams for providing what could be classed as "A Grand Day Out".

Janet Fletcher on behalf of Gresford Handbell Ringers.



EVENTS

Dates for your diary:

2026

June 13th at 3pm

Concert by Northern Bell Orchestra featuring a performance from a flute ensemble in celebration of the life of Louise Cowton, former musical director of Northern Bell Orchestra.

Hessle High School, Hessle, Hull, HU13 0JQ

June 20th at 10am

Meeting of Northern Executive Committee (NW Representatives will be in attendance)

June 27th at 3pm

Concert by Northern Bell Orchestra featuring Bronze Carillon to celebrate 20 years of the team. All Saints Church, Hoole Road, Chester CH2 3HZ

July 18th at 3pm

Concert by Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers. St Andrew's Church Hall, L31 6DD
Donations on the door gratefully received.

August 3rd-8th

International Handbell Symposium in Aberdeen.

If you're not attending then follow the progress on the HRGB Facebook page!

October 10th

Regional event - put the date in your diary and keep your eyes open for more information in the near future.