

NDAR Newsletter Issue 11

(September 2023)



SUPPORTING BELLRINGING
IN NORFOLK

CCCBR AGM Ipswich, 2nd/3rd September

Raymond Harwood and I attended as your elected representatives. Here is a short report on the AGM meeting from Raymond and a report on Ringing 2030 The Future of Ringing from me. If anyone has ideas or wants to get involved at a national/international level with the ringing community, then please get in touch with one of your reps

Mary Jones (Reedham), Jo Belsten (Hickling) Raymond Harwood (Drayton)

Central Council for Church Bell Ringers

Annual General Meeting report

This year's annual general meeting of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) on 2nd September 2023 followed a typical and similar format to previous years. The agenda began with acceptance of a new affiliate, namely, The Central European Association and its 30 members followed by a welcome to new regional guild representatives to the CCCBR.

This was followed by acceptance of last year's minutes and matters arising which mainly covered the consequences of changes to the governance at last year's meeting that showed there was no adverse impact on small societies. (I believe this relates to the change in how the CCCBR charges guilds for their membership dues to the central council based on the numbers in each guild with special dispensation for smaller societies that have very limited membership.)

What then followed was the Trustees report for 2022, accounts for 2022 and executive report for 2022. Then each workgroup (subcommittee) expanded on its work over the last year over and above what has been recorded in the annual meeting papers.

The full copy of the annual meeting papers can be accessed via this link <https://cccbr.org.uk/about/annual-meetings/2023-annual-meeting/papers/> which details the activities of the workgroups over the last year. The slides from the conference are available on the website.

Historical Archive Group

They have their section of the CCCBR website up and running which can be found at:

www.history.cccb.org.uk

Although still in the early stages of this website section they are now looking to expand their database of peal board photographs as well as written or aural biographies of bell ringers. If you can help, please get in touch with them.

Public Relations (PR) Group

With the election of Vicki Chapman to Deputy President of the CCCBR her replacement as head of the PR section is now Allison Devine. At the meeting Vicki still found time to highlight the two promotional videos now available for anyone to use.

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmjrg8h0w_m_qcPL89bKrMPvpDT8YEgs_2

Stewardship & Management Group

Although in the past they had produced a handbook on belfry maintenance their advice now is not to use this handbook as any information contained therein is likely to be out of date. To compensate for this they now have a QR code which leads to up-to-date information on belfry maintenance and this is the preferred source of reference information on the subject as it will be kept up-to-date and current.

They are also looking to promote the Westley Award for Tower Maintenance which is to highlight the importance of monitoring the condition of bells, bell frames, ropes and all other fittings and the value we place on those who undertake regular checks and maintenance especially first time steeple keepers.

 	Belfry Upkeep  https://belfryupkeep.cccb.org.uk
 	Belfry Projects  https://belfryprojects.cccb.org.uk
 	Running a Tower  https://runningatower.cccb.org.uk

Volunteer & Leadership Group

They have been busy of late carrying pilot surveys in the Bristol area to gather data in general and from tower captains specifically. Much of this data analysis is expected to show the areas where recruitment and retention of bell ringers need to be addressed.

Schools and Youth Groups

Here they have highlighted success of the young ringers striking competition held in York.

Motions

Of the three motions debated and voted on the second was the most controversial in that the council's aim was to reduce the number of guild membership representation to the central council. This follows on from the recommendations in the CRAG report which was worked on in 2016 and published in 2017:-

<https://cc-crag.weebly.com/>

Unfortunately a lot of members probably were new since then and not aware of the report so could not make an informed judgement. Furthermore with the approximate drop of 10,000 in number of bell ringers worldwide, mostly due to the pandemic, it would seem prudent to maintain the status quo until such time as membership numbers increase. At the same time by keeping the present numbers, in effect, retains the pool of volunteers to the various workgroups is maintained such that the work of the council can continue. It is this from this group of guild representative at the central council AGM meetings that most volunteers appear.

Raymond Harwood

2030 Building a strong future for ringing

There was a presentation at the 2023 CCCBR AGM this month by Simon Linford, the retiring president of the council and Tina Stoecklin, the incoming president. Together they considered the projection of the age profile of the ringing community and it was not encouraging.

Currently, 15% of ringers worldwide are under 40, 25% 40-60, and 60% over 60, with many 70+. For obvious reasons, that means that numbers of ringers will shrink alarmingly over the next 10-15 years as those 60+ cease to be active. We need to replace them and not with more of the same age group, because that will only provide a short term rise in numbers. We need to feed in more in the younger age groups because it is these young people who will take ringing forward into the mid 21st century and beyond. Without a solid base of the younger age groups, the future looks bleak

One startling observation was that the current ringing population of committed ringers grew from a base 5X the size of the current base. The current great and the good of ringing began their ringing careers surrounded by people their own age. 1:5 of those ringers continued to ring once jobs/families/life got in the way. 4:5 lapsed. If the same happens to our current young ringers, then we need a great deal more of them to allow for the inevitable "natural wastage".

Many young ringers drop off once they leave school, perhaps move away from their familiar tower, where often they ring with family and family friends, and either start university or some other post-18 activity. It is holding on to them and encouraging more to join them that will secure the future of ringing.

Naturally, as a post-retirement novice, I bristled a bit at the idea that the future of ringing has nothing to do with people like me. Teaching me and others like me produces a short term boost to numbers, but in reality, we have not that many years to offer. We may facilitate the youngsters and show them the path, but, in the long term, it is up to them to preserve the art that we love so much. Therefore our focus must be on the younger age group and understanding what attracts them and conversely what puts them off (church, cold and grumpy old men are front runners) is crucial to our survival.

With this in mind the CCCBR has consulted with an outside agency, Yellowyoyo, to try and understand how best to reach the hard to reach future ringers, a re-branding exercise that aims to refresh the recruitment strategy and establish 3 pillars on which to build for the future. There are so many competing demands on their time and enthusiasm, why would young people choose ringing in preference to other exciting activities?

Words such as Dynamic, Adventurous, Friendly, Logical and TikTok are mentioned as likely to attract young people, whereas someone like me might choose Tradition, Community, Dementia-Protection and BBC, although Friendly still stands. Naturally this re-branding has to be achieved without alienating the older and more experienced ringers and therefore promotion and advertising needs to vary to reflect the intended target audience. A delicate path to tread indeed.

As for the 3 pillars they are: a drive for new recruits via publicity and marketing/training and developing the new recruits/ retaining the recruits. Current workshop groups will be realigned to reflect these "pillars" on which to build our future.

A trial survey of ringers and tower captains has been undertaken in 3 associations so that a comparison can be made between 2023 and 2030. The results are fascinating.

75% of ringers are in the 51-80 age group

43% learned to ring when they were under 21

80% of those who learned under 21 ring advanced methods

100% of those who rang 26 or more peals last year learned to ring before they were 21

90% towers need more ringers

29% towers never practice

42% towers are not confident about the future of their own tower

If we want to try the survey locally, I believe it can be arranged.

Mary Jones September 2023

Here in Norfolk we are doing our bit to attract young ringers with a weekly designated Young Ringers' Practice, a Norwich School Band and an interesting holiday programme. I believe that holding on to and attracting more post-18 young people are our next challenges.



Ringling Summer School

Over six weeks, a band of ringers aged 18 and under explored various towers dotted around Norfolk and Suffolk, from Ipswich, to Dereham to Great Yarmouth and beyond! There were a variety of day trips and practices that we all attended. The highlight was, of course, the Ipswich trip. We rang at several towers throughout the town and local area, with an assortment of weights and numbers of bells at each church, and all just a short train ride away.

Back at Mancroft, where the Junior Ringers are based, we had a few of our regular practices in the city centre, with some very special company! The Cambridge Junior band, who were on a trip around Norwich's churches, came to join us for a practice session. I've never seen the Ringing Centre so busy, and the atmosphere was electric. We all had the chance to share our knowledge and try some new things, like Tittums, a change we had never attempted before! And of course, have the necessary argument of whether we should call the changes up or down. We didn't really reach a consensus.



Nearer the end of the holidays, we ventured to the centre of Norfolk to ring at Dereham and Gressenhall's churches. St Nicholas Church, in Dereham, has a unique tower, as it's an entirely separate building to the church itself. The bells were quite heavy, but incredibly enjoyable to ring. We tried rounds on twelve, although admittedly two of the bells were training bells. These particular rounds were rather disorienting, as the computer that connected to the training bells insisted that it would ring digitally for all the bells, so we could tell how terribly out of time we may have been. Gressenhall was quite a contrast, with very light bells in a smaller tower, although no less delightful to ring. This tower was especially personal to me, as both my mother and grandmother had been christened there. My Nanny was very excited to hear us ring these bells as such.

Finally, we made the annual summer trip to Yarmouth Minster, for another chance to ring on twelve bells. As we prepare to enter our local striking competition it gave us a much-needed opportunity to practice call changes together. It was a fantastic end to a wonderful summer of ringing!

Ellie Maunder (Junior Ringer)

And a footnote from some more junior ringers:

Report on the Junior Ringers' Summer School

We had the opportunity to ring at Dereham and Gressenhall with the Young Ringers. We caught the bus from Kings Lynn and then Philippa gave us a lift to Gressenhall. It was our first ring at both these towers and our first ring on 10. It was good to be able to catch up with everyone who was at the striking competition in York. Ollie and James.

Heritage Open Days

A number of towers took the opportunity to open their doors to the general public during the Heritage Open Day. This is a good opportunity to promote ringing and to allow non-ringers to take a peek into our world and to appreciate that it is people who weave those wonderful sounds than emanate from our towers. Many believe that it is all done electronically and are amazed to witness the skill involved. Here are reports from just a few:

MRDC and St Peter Mancroft were open throughout the HODs week.

There have been tower tours which were immediately full when booking opened. It's always lovely to see the reaction of visitors when they come to visit the tower at Mancroft. The history on display in the teaching centre is always of interest. Visitors are astounded that something like a bellringing school exists and it's a great opportunity to promote our Young Ringers sessions.

The view from the Upper Ringing Chamber never ceases to amaze. One new little junior ringer arrived on Wednesday evening with his granny as a result of her visit to Mancroft for the Heritage Open Days. He was really a bit small but hopefully he'll be back soon!

Nikki Thomas

Hectic Heritage Hosting

Well, what an amazing weekend at The Minster, Great Yarmouth. It was Heritage Weekend and the church was open for visitors. We were requested to open the bell tower too. Friday was beyond my expectations as the number of visitors was amazing, just showing the interest that people have in the history of the tower and all bell-related things in general. As we have 72 steps and a suspended high balcony to reach the ringing room, it was a brave visitor who scaled the heights to visit.

Being able to visit places normally closed off is a great opportunity to connect and inform people regarding our towers. With the help of some Reedham and Martham ringers who came Friday to have a practice with us and some local ringers who came on Saturday to help out, we were able to provide something for the visitors to listen to and watch the ringers in action.



To top it all, an unannounced visit from Norfolk Radio completed the fun, with the ringing, the views of the ringers and visitors broadcast live. The interviewer even tried his hand at ringing with Verity (TC Martham) as teacher. I think that it was quite an experience for him. You may want to listen, as I am sure that it will be available for a little time.

Overall, a fun, enjoyable, interesting weekend, even if it was exhausting. Hopefully, we will gain a few new ringers.

Christine Searle

(with a footnote from the editor)

I went along to help on Saturday morning and it really was as fun and hectic as described. In 2 hours, at least 50 people passed through the ringing chamber and I chimed with most of them. There were 4, eventually 5, ringers on hand to talk and answer questions and every 15 minutes we gave a short demonstration so that people could see ringing in action up close and personal. Most visitors were impressed and surprised at the skill involved and we were just knocking out some rounds. Many of our guests were local, the majority were young (by which I mean under 40) and all appeared genuinely fascinated in what we do. It seems that there is a huge appetite for ringing at the moment and we need to find ways to harness that interest and encourage more people to give ringing a try. The Minster band have some exceptional bells, yet not enough ringers to ring them on a regular basis. Events like HOD could change that.

And the prize for Saturday morning goes to Mark Walland who was the only person present able to make the tenor chime. Many of the rest of us tried, but sadly without success. Big, fit young blokes were intrigued as to how heavy it was and how their best efforts were in vain. It really has a great deal to do with technique. One Minster ringer, who has never met Mark, was particularly impressed as she thought he was a random but skilful member of the general public!

Mary Jones (Reedham)

News from The Wild West

Recruitment

King's Lynn Minster Fete happens during the King's Lynn Festival in July – this year I had the ringing chamber open for 'drop in' visitors. We greeted over 40, some expressions of interest and one new recruit, so to use ART parlance we now have one novice and three improvers.

Heritage Open Day is always a huge event in Lynn, a blistering hot day on September 10th and more than 50 venues and activities going on – including three tower tours. These include chiming bells, ringing demonstrations and visits to the bell chamber and roof. All positively received but no new enthusiastic takers (yet).

Some of you may be familiar with our local free glossy - KL Magazine – they are planning an article on bell ringing and promoting the need for new recruits. I have already been interviewed, the article should be in the November issue – also available online.

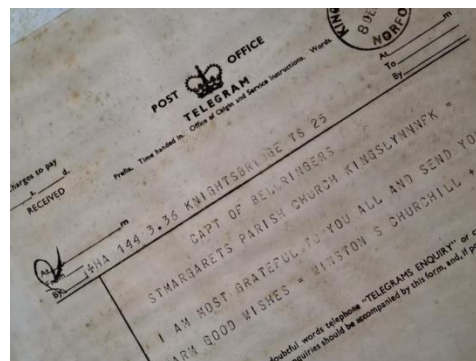
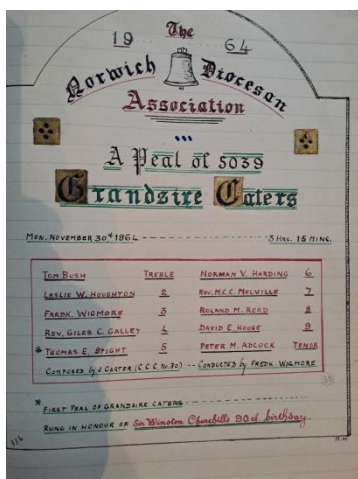
So we keep plugging away.

St Faiths at Gaywood also have 2 new ringers who are making good progress, practices there have been well attended which have allowed for additional method learning.

Attendance over the summer has been patchy – we have not had the same number of holidaying ringers and only one visiting band coming at the end of September

As I was leafing through some old tower records I came across Norman Harding's splendid peal record for Winston Churchill's 90th Birthday which nicely complements the Telegram that Churchill sent in thanks. I'm sure that many of our towers have similar interesting memorabilia

Peter Jackson, King's Lynn



MINOR METHODS – THERE'S SOMETHING FOR (ALMOST) EVERYONE

You may be aware that we host a 'Minor Methods' practise once a month at Gressenhall, but you may not be sure if this could be for you. The good news is that the Minor Methods practise is purposely aimed at a wide range of abilities and you should almost certainly be able to get something out of it, for example:

- Do you, or members of your band, just need a bit of help and support moving from Doubles to (literally!) the next Stage, whether it's learning to hunt to one more (6th) place and Lead without a covering Tenor, or 'extending' Plain Bob to include dodges in 5/6?

- Are you familiar with learning Methods by a basic 'Cycle of Work' and want to develop your 'toolkit' to include things like: Place Bells; Treble Rules; Symmetries; Standard Bobs/Singles ... etc.?
- Are you at the Minor Stage of a learning plan (e.g. whilst working through the Learning the Ropes scheme or The Little Purple Ringing Book)?
- Are you comfortable with some 'Plain' Methods and want to extend your repertoire, try Treble Bob hunting, or move towards Treble Dodging (e.g. Surprise) Methods inside?
- Are you nostalgic for some of the 'old favourites' – those Methods that used to be rung regularly but can now be hard to come by – e.g. Double Oxford Bob Minor? Kent Treble Bob Minor? Norwich Surprise Minor?
- Are you familiar with the 'old favourites' and would enjoy giving them a little twist to spice things up a bit – e.g. Spliced Plain Minor? Grandsire Minor? Ebor Surprise Minor ('4th's Place' Cambridge Surprise Minor)?
- Would you like to try some basic Conducting, or develop your Conducting skills?
- Is there something else on 6 bells that you'd like to try (all requests/suggestions are welcome)?
- Are you not bothered about any of the above, but just fancy an enjoyable couple of hours ringing (we try not to take it too seriously!)?

Why not give the Minor Methods practise a try? It's held at Gressenhall, normally on the second Saturday each month, from 10am – Noon (Note: there are occasional exceptions – check the NDAR website, subscribe to the NDARingers emails, or email gressenhallringers@gmail.com for the latest information).

Hope to see you there soon!

Mark Hibbard

Bellringing Training Opportunities from the newly appointed Ringing Master, Nikki Thomas

I have arranged a series of Ringing Up and Down in Peal Workshops. One in each of our four branches.

Northern Branch @ Upper Sheringham 4th October

Southern Branch @ Carleton Rode 14th October

Eastern Branch @ Norton Subcourse 21st October

Western Branch @ Gressenhall 18th November

All are at 2-3.30pm, at the time of writing there are only places left in the Eastern and Southern Branch. I've had a few people not able to get onto the workshop they'd like, I can arrange another workshop if there is demand.

Novice 10 & 12 Bell Ringing

For a while now, the last Thursday of the month we have held a Novice 12 Bell Practice at Great Yarmouth. It is open to anyone who can ring on their own confidently. Being able to experience lighter and heavier bells plus the control needed to ring on higher numbers is great for confident bell control.

We will be holding a Novice 10 Bell at Kings Lynn on 28th October 2-3.30pm. This will run along the same lines as the Great Yarmouth Practice.

News from Dereham

We welcome Philippa and Frank Rivett who have moved to Dereham. Two of the country's leading ringers, they come with a wealth of experience, both as peal ringers and from running the Biggleswade Ringing Centre.

They are trialling a monthly practice at Dereham aimed at moving from Plain Hunt to extending people's method repertoire. This is a monthly practice on the 2nd Thursday of each month 7.30-9pm

12th October, 9th November & 14th December.

Young Ringers.

After a summer of outings, ringing activities and the RWNYC the Young Ringers are back meeting at 5.30pm on Wednesdays. We teach bellhandling, Foundation skills and method ringing. It's a lively group please spread the word, the young ringers are our future.

What's on at MRDC?

Beginners meet at 9am on a Saturday Morning

Foundation Skills is held Tuesday 12-1pm

A series of Plain Bob Workshops is being held Tuesday afternoons, these are fully booked but keep an eye on the website for more workshops being added <https://www.mrdc.org.uk/>

Method Ringing Group is 12-1pm Thursday

Solo Practice on the Simulator is held Friday 12-2pm

Surprise Major Practice is the last Saturday of the month 10.30am-midday

If you'd like more information contact mrdc@stpetermancroft.org.uk

Striking Competition

Reepham 7th October 1pm onwards including a ringers tea!

Categories -

Novice Rounds

Call Changes

Method Ringing

Ringling Festival/Striking Competition

It is that time of year again, and the NDAR annual striking competition/ringing festival draws near. Some people prefer to see it as a celebration of local ringing and others are more competitive and wish to see how their band shapes up against neighbouring towers. Whatever your motive for entering a band, it is always a good excuse to meet up with old friends, make new ones and enjoy a proper Ringers' Tea. This year it is at Reepham and I have included the rules.

NDA 6-bell Festival of Ringling 2023

Rules

Aims

To encourage good striking, individual awareness of one's striking and, above all, to encourage socialising and fun between towers and ringers.

General

Any Association tower may enter one or more bands in the competition. Some areas of the Association now operate as clusters rather than individual towers due to limited numbers. Such clusters may also enter bands. As the emphasis is on fun and participation, composite bands may be entered where it is not possible to raise a full band from one single tower or cluster.

A band must be comprised of ringers who normally ring at that tower or in that cluster.

There will be three categories: Rounds; Call Changes; and Method. A tower can enter as many bands in each of these categories as it wishes, provided the below rules are followed.

Composition of bands

Because the emphasis is on fun and participation, a ringer may ring in up to one band from each category. The Rounds category is open to bands that could not enter the competition if they were to have to ring call changes or methods. It is equally permissible to enter a Rounds band where 5 of the six ringers are method ringers as it is to enter a band of entirely rounds ringers, if the result of doing so is to allow the individual rounds ringer to have the opportunity to take part. Please take the spirit of the competition seriously: if your band is capable of entering the Method category, please do not enter it into the Call Change category; if you have 4, 5, or 6 rounds ringers, enter them in one team rather than split them and find extra supporting ringers.

Categories

Rounds

- A practice slot of 2 minutes is permitted before the test piece. After this practice, all bells should be stood.
- Bands should signal that they are ready to begin the test piece by ringing the treble for two whole pulls.
- The test piece must consist of 3 minutes of rounds. The first 30 seconds of this will not be judged.

Call Changes

- A practice slot of 2 minutes is permitted before the test piece. After this practice, all bells should be stood.
- Bands should signal that they are ready to begin the test piece by ringing the treble for two whole pulls.
- The test piece must consist of 120 rows of call changes. At least two bells (other than the treble) must be brought to lead. At least 10 changes must be called.
- The test piece should begin and end in rounds.
- The rounds at the beginning and end of the test piece will not be judged. There must not be more than 1 minute of rounds at the beginning of the test piece.

Method

- A practice slot of 2 minutes is permitted before the test piece. After this practice, all bells should be stood.
- Bands should signal that they are ready to begin the test piece by ringing the treble for two whole pulls.
- The test piece should consist of 120 changes of any method. Plain courses of a method are acceptable.
- The test piece should begin and end in rounds.
- The rounds at the beginning and end of the test piece will not be judged. There must not be more than 1 minute of rounds at the beginning of the test piece.

Judges

The judges' decision is final.

Delights to Come

Teaching Bell Handling Refresher at Holt. 10-11.30am Fri 20th October

For anyone who has completed the ART M1 and would like to gain more confidence in teaching. We will have an ART assessor present so if the logbook has been completed properly and you show the necessary capability you can complete your ART M1.

If this proves popular, a second session will take place in the afternoon

October 7th NDA Ringing Festival Reepham 1pm draw (see above)

Association 12 bell practice, Great Yarmouth (last Thursday of month, 7-9pm)

Association Leading up to Surprise Major/Surprise Major practice, E. Dereham, 12th October, 7.30pm

Association Novice 10 bell practice, King's Lynn 28th October, 2pm

Minor methods practice, Gressenhall (second Saturday of month, 10-12noon)

Mancroft Ringing Discovery Centre in Norwich has a programme of regular targeted practices from weekly ART level 1 bell handling and absolute beginners to monthly Surprise Major practices.

<https://www.mrdc.org.uk/calendar/>

Events are normally posted on the ndar website, so it is always worth checking for details and new opportunities to ring.

<https://ndar.org.uk/events/>

That is all!