

The Chester Diocesan Guild of Church Bell-Ringers

Chester Branch

Friday 03 August 2018

It really is time for a Chairman's Newsletter. This is absurdly overdue, and I can barely believe it was April when I last sent one. I feel, however, there will not be many more, unless my successor is going to keep producing them.

Happenings Since April

The Branch will keep ticking over, of course, irrespective of what the Chairman does or does not do; and the ringing of bells in our churches will keep happening despite what the Branch or indeed the Guild does.

Striking Competitions

There have been two competitions: our Branch Competition at Dodleston on 12 May; the Guild 8-Bell Competition at Malpas on 14 July.

Our Branch Competition always goes well; and we had eight teams this year. A big Thank You to Greg Morris for being our judge, and judging it so well. Congratulations to Tarporley this year for winning the John Griffiths Shield. They represent the Branch in the Guild 6-Bell Competition on 13 October (at the occasion of the Guild AGM), somewhere in the Wirral Branch. The strength – in my opinion – of our Striking Competition is that we have other awards, and I know these are treasured by you as much as the main prize. Well done to the team from Dodleston which won the Intermediate Cup; and to Christleton, who won the Novice Cup.

We can often manage at least third place in the Guild 8-Bell Competition; and quite often we have been second. Just the one win: at Barthomley in 2014. This year brought us right down to earth, and we came bottom! Not that we disgraced ourselves: not at all, and we had praise from the judge (Len Mitchell of Liverpool Cathedral) for our consistently excellent leading. All the teams coped admirably with the test piece (Original Triples), but some accumulated more faults than others. We accumulated the most; and that must be something of a disappointment to Ben, our Guild Master; especially in his home tower. Life is full of disappointments; and there are always going to be many in ringing, as in life. It's not a knock-out blow and we live to fight another day. If the Chester Branch has won this competition once before and it can definitely win it again; and we shall!

Branch Practices

The Training Meetings have been going well. They attract plenty of participants, and I am pleased to say that Helen continues to do really good work. Unfortunately we have had some cancellations with the Ringing Master's Practices, but it is quite clear to me that they are more or less achieving

what they set out to do. It is the Advanced Practices which worry me. Some have been excellent, but on a couple of occasions we have met fewer than eight. I think the problem is we are not getting any younger, and inevitably some people will be dropping out; and then there are not really too many people in the Branch able to ring methods beyond Plain Bob and Grandsire. It only needs a very small number of key ringers to be away and we then cannot function properly. This has been a hard task for Simon, and he has worked conscientiously to keep these practices going. They have not been suspended and I personally would be very sad to see this kind of practice disappear. They are having a break until September, and we shall have to review the situation after that; and certainly at the AGM we shall have to make a final decision. I do just wonder if a few practices devoted to Minor and Doubles ringing might attract more support. But then I would say that, wouldn't I?

The simple fact about ringers making progress remains: you can never be any better than your own tower captain and fellow ringers if you stay at your own tower. That might, of course, give you all you want. But the best way – the only way, in fact – of making progress is to get out of your own tower (I don't mean completely: they'll still need you on Sundays).

Walk and Ring

This is one event to which I eagerly look forward every year, and 2018 was not to be found wanting. One more a good walk and decent bells, even if the company was fairly small in number. We definitely managed to ring very respectably at all three towers in and around Macclesfield, even if we had a little help at the ten-bell tower. It was hot, but not approaching the levels that came later, and which we are probably due to experience again. Thank you, as ever, to Roger Boulton for putting together such a splendid walk. Keep the Spring Bank Holiday free in 2019: that's now become the traditional date. A pleasant walk in good company and some bells to match. Simple pleasures – what more do you want out of life?

Quarter Peals

And here is another way to progress. There are a lot of quarters being rung at the Cathedral, and many are at a basic level. Then there are also some quarters at Tarporley. That's very good, but I should like to see many more quarters rung which have the clear aim of moving people on. It's surely not too much for tower captains to organize something: either entirely on their own or by coming to the Ringing Masters and asking them for help.

Two Tarporley quarters need a mention: Alison Levens rang her first quarter on eight in May (see: <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1233980>) and in the same month Roy Walker rang his first quarter (<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1230788>). Then at the Cathedral Alex Sinnott has recently (July) rung his first quarter away from cover (<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1239306>); his mother rang her first quarter of Bob Major (<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1238971>); and in the same quarter Lynda Hine rang her first Major inside. More than that, though, we had three first pealers from the Chester Branch at the Cathedral, ringing for the Royal Wedding:

Chester Diocesan Guild. On Monday, 21 May 2018 in 3h10. Chester, Cheshire, Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary Tenor: 10–0–24 in G. 5040 Plain Bob Triples Composed by Charles Ravenscroft. 1 Ian Orme 2 Sallie Jamieson 3 Andrew J Rawlinson 4 J David Adams 5 Paul B Hunter(C) 6 Simon Christian 7 Ben Kellett 8 Alex Sinnott. First peal: 1, 2 & 8. In celebration of the marriage of HRH Prince Harry to Meghan Markle.

Well done to everybody.

GDPR

I shall not write much about this item, beyond thanking Richard for all his efforts. He is trying very hard to get all the completed forms in, as I can see from the e-mails into which he's copying me. If you still have forms and have not completed them **please do so now**, and return them to Richard. I do, however, have the distinct impression that the Guild Committee is going to have to revisit this matter at its next Committee Meeting.

Armistice 100

I cannot believe there is a single one of you as yet unaware that the bells throughout the land should be rung on Sunday 11 November. First of all I add this from the Central Council website:

The UK Government invites all bell ringers to join the nation in marking the end of the First World War by ringing together on Remembrance Sunday. They would like ringing to take place at 12.30pm on Sunday 11 November to coincide with the nation's tribute as thousands march past the Cenotaph. Everybody is invited to take part, whether you are a new Ringing Remembers recruit or an experienced ringer. All are welcome. If you haven't done so already speak with your tower captain to start making plans for ringing during this national moment.

It is vital that we ring all the bells in the Branch on that day. Don't worry too much if your times are slightly different, but it would be good to have most of them ringing at the same time.

I shall be reminding you several more times, and I shall be seeking assurances from every tower captain that all is in hand in your tower. If you feel you just don't have enough ringers or that you don't feel able to ring all your bells, don't worry; we have enough Branch ringers to cover this very important occasion. As long as I know in good time I can arrange for the necessary help to be provided. Remember that this is an occasion when bells speak more loudly and much more poignantly than the human voice, more even than an orchestra or any other musical group. And above all remember we are not celebrating anything, but commemorating all those millions of people who suffered between 1914 and 1918, some giving their lives in battle, but many enduring years of anguish at home. And that's not just us, but our enemies too. How could it possibly be any otherwise with the sound of bells coming from God's house? It would be good to believe there will never be any more wars, but that is unlikely to happen. I don't know if any of you heard Canadian historian Margaret MacMillan giving the 2018 Reith Lectures on Radio 4. I was very moved by her lectures. They can certainly be heard again as a podcast, or by using the listen again facility. She tries to come to terms with war, its causes, its impact, its effects on all people, and there is much on

which to reflect in her words. What we can do as bell ringers is project a very powerful voice of hope out to a selection of humanity here in a part of West Cheshire. For those of you who are new recruits to bell ringing I remind you that this is a fascinating activity you have embraced, and will give you much pleasure (as well as a little frustration at times!). We do have a duty to perform, however; and more than anything we have on important occasions the duty to release the full power of the bells in our churches.

Before I leave this topic I remind you of Ringing Remembers. See the June update on the Central Council website. (<https://cccbr.org.uk/2018/07/13/ringing-remembers-june-2018-update/>). There must have been several ringers who have learnt to ring in 2018. I regularly see two of them. I suppose such people could register, although you might feel that it is not vital, and that even if we don't officially reach the 1400 number we'll get closer than the final published numbers. What is vital is that we ring our bells on 11 November.

Soldier from the Roll of Honour

We have already honoured one of the three WWI people from our Branch who were killed in the Great War – Private William Thomas of Handbridge (<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1226824>) – by ringing a quarter peal. The next one is coming up later this month: Private James Wright of Tarvin. There will be a quarter peal of Bob Minor on August Bank Holiday Monday, which will be 100 years to the day since James Wright died. I still hope that all Tarvin ringers available on the day might also be able to join in the commemorative ringing for him; in that way the whole band can be included. I cannot, however, possibly know what everybody's plans and commitments for that day are likely to be. I can only leave it to Colin and his band.

He is mentioned in the latest issue of the *Ringing World*: he was born in 1890 and baptised in Tarvin on 30 November 1890. He was one of fourteen children (twelve of whom were still alive in 1911), and came from a family of bricklayers. When the 1911 census was taken he was living with his parents, Samuel and Martha (née Crawford) and two of his brothers at Sheaf House, Stapleford. I am still looking for Sheaf House; perhaps some of the locals can help me?

Coming Up Soon

I shall mention just three events.

Training Meeting: 11 August at Dodleston (a.m.) and Hawarden (p.m.).

You should all have had the notice and if everything runs true to what's been happening so far it should turn out to be another good and very useful day. A break in the middle for lunch (this time at the Red Lion, Dodleston – a venue well known to us) makes for a very pleasant day. I reckon Helen has just about got the perfect format.

Quarterly Meeting: Saturday 18 August, Farndon at 3 p.m.

We don't go too often to Farndon, but the bells are definitely worth ringing: a ground floor Taylor eight, all of 1841. They both go and sound well. In May, after the Striking Competition, I was quite

shocked when we had a mass exodus after the results were given out. There should have been a short business meeting, and I suppose we had a meeting of sorts. We certainly elected some members. At Farndon I envisage ringing up to about 4 p.m., then a short business meeting, followed by no longer than another half hour of ringing.

Ringling at Old St Mary's: Saturday 01 September at 2.30 p.m.

This is the second occasion in the year when the bells are opened to the Chester Branch. We usually have a quarter peal once a month, and this year two peals are planned (one has already been rung – another one for Harry and Meghan), but it is important that all Chester Branch members should be given a chance to ring there at least twice a year. Last time the bells were available for general ringing (in April), attendance was excellent, although not all ringers were from the Branch. I'll send out a special notice nearer the time, and this time I'll make it quite clear just what the arrangements will be for getting in if you arrive late. We now have our own set of keys, but we'll definitely lose that privilege if the door is left open and some undesirables get in and cause any damage to the inside of the building. The door will have to be locked after about 2.35 p.m. Inevitably some people will arrive after that time, and I'll work out a way of letting you in if you are one of them.

Raymond Hill

We seem to have had our fair share of deaths this year, either former Chester Branch ringers or ones still on the books. I mentioned Vicki Parke of Handley in the April Newsletter; but fairly soon after that we heard that Ray Hill, a ringer at Waverton, died suddenly. He had been a member since 2005 and a faithful Sunday service ringer. Our very belated sympathy to his family.

Congratulations

Diamond Weddings are always a bit special. This one also got something sent by the Queen. I'm sure you'll join with me in sending our warmest wishes and heartiest congratulations to Robin and Carol Ferris, ringers at Waverton, on reaching their 60th Wedding Anniversary in July. I am fairly sure that Robin is our oldest branch ringer, but somebody will correct me if I'm wrong; of that I have no doubt. There is another 'big one' which I ought to mention. My wife certainly needs to be congratulated for putting up with me for fifty years. I was pleased to be invited into a quarter last Friday, and there were some people in the band with whom I rarely ring. See

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1240686>

And finally

I obviously got carried away in Newsletters earlier this year with quiz questions and instead of asking one or two simple questions, put in a whole lot of them. In the highly unlikely event that anybody is still trying to puzzle out exactly what the definitions of Delight and Surprise methods are, or just what is meant by Asymmetric Methods, I refer you to the excellent Tower Handbook, which is now online. See the Glossary – but it might not help much!

<http://jaharrison.me.uk/Ringing/Glossary/index.html#top>

Going back to Asymmetric Methods, however, I should like to refer you to a peal board at Pulford. One such method appears there, and I wonder if anybody knows what it is.

The question proper is about somebody in our branch from the past.

We had a tapper in the Chester Branch. Can you name this person and above all explain just what a tapper does?

JDA

Saturday, 04 August 2018