

# THE GLOUCESTER & BRISTOL DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS: WOTTON BRANCH CLANGOUR NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2021

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*Deadline for articles for the next edition of Clangour (March 2021) 20th  
February 2022 to [mattandsarah.lorkin@gmail.com](mailto:mattandsarah.lorkin@gmail.com)*

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## DATES FOR THE DIARY

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December – Branch ringing at Berkeley 4pm-6pm

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April – G and B AGM & Penn and Crombe competitions

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June – Horton Lunch

## NEWS FROM...

### HAWKESBURY

Colin Dixon

The Hawkesbury Bells are bedding in well and we have been ringing in earnest since 11th September, when we rang for a wedding the day after the dedication.

Since then, we have rung for two weddings and several services. The latest being the Remembrance Day Services, when the tenor was tolled half muffled for the 11.00am Children's service and the full ring was rung half muffled before the service and unmuffled after the Service.

Our Band is progressing with the help of a number of visiting ringers from neighbouring towers. We are by no means proficient but we are enthusiastic and willing. We have managed to break a stay already.

We had our first  $\frac{1}{4}$  peal organised by the Bell Master James Joynson and I am sure he will report on its success.

We are planning a full peal for the Saturday of either the 15th or the 22nd of January 2022, it is being organised by Matthew Higby. It is around the day of St. Wulfstan (19th January) and we will invite G&B Members to come and listen and we will be providing refreshments and comfy seats.

We have had many compliments on the sound of our bells and we are very pleased with them. The sound is winning over the local residents – only two – who have commented affirmatively.

## UPPER CAM

Alex Reeves

Like other towers, we stopped ringing in March 2020. We returned to ringing as soon as church services resumed, following the CCCBR's guidance and risk assessments. For us this meant that we could ring various combinations of bells, taking account that there is over 2m between the 5th and tenor and because we had two ringing couples.

My highlight this year was my younger daughter's (Hannah's) wedding, so we rang a 1/4 peal to celebrate her forthcoming marriage to Tom, who is the son of Gary Dingle, Tower Captain of Eastington. Rightly, half the ringers were from Upper Cam and the other half were from Eastington. On the actual day, Hannah wanted to be early for the wedding, so we arrived 15 minutes early and Hannah and I sat in the wedding car and enjoyed listening to a joint band ringing before the service, and great striking it was too.

Our practices now vary in attendance numbers: sometimes we have eight or nine ringers and sometimes just three or four. We have slowly been getting back to where we were before the first lockdown. When we have a good turn-out we had been ringing Kent Treble Bob Minor and are on the verge of Cambridge. Please come along and help us make that next step. We have two ringers who are starting to ring touches of Plain Bob Doubles too. We look forward to ringing with you.

## YATE

Barry Fletcher

Ringling at St Mary's is no longer; the bells really want a rehang and there is only one bell ringer left (myself) and I cannot teach anyone to ring as I am waiting to go into hospital due to things being wrong with my right hand and arm. There seems to be no-one interested in learning, mind you those living almost under the tower in new houses are pleased that there is no ringing, but I bet once we start up again they will put in their complaints as in the past.

# Ringling Up – an Engaging Tale

*Lizzie Lindsell*

You may remember that when I started ringing, back in the mists of Feb 2016, I was single. Achingly so. I expect you will remember, as I used to broadcast the fact as widely as possible like an advertisement, boring all and sundry with my plaintive cries for a mate. My tower captain at Upper Cam, Alex Reeves, would console me with the fact that he had met his wife “up a bell tower”. It turns out that a lot of ringers happen upon their future spouses in similar locations. Given the rag-tag bunch from Wotton branch and beyond that I collided with at that point in time, I was sceptical!

In September 2017, I volunteered to assist Dursley St James' ringers as they reattached their newly-bushed clappers. (This is not a euphemism. Why does everything sound like a euphemism to me?) It was a hard-going and messy job, but a novice such as I was was thrilled to get up close to the bells, and even get wedged inside one of them with Ian Unsworth, while Andy Binstead did the fixing. Leaving the blokes to finish up, I found myself chatting to Andy's wife Helen and lamenting for the umpteenth time about my solo status. She had been encouraging me to join their Thursday night practices. I laughed and asked if there were any eligible single men. She thought for a bit.

“Yes, there is one.”

“Is he tall?” (Being 5’9” in flat shoes, this was always my first consideration.)

“Oh yes, very tall.”

“What does he do for a living?”

“He’s a piano teacher.”

I was stunned into silence. In listing the traits of my “ideal man” over the last few years, I had gone further and created a character. I had woven him into a work of fiction that I would add to in my lonelier moments, finding solace in his story. He too was a piano teacher.

The following Thursday saw me nervously take the ropes at St James’, scouring the room for this tall, single man... who bloody wasn’t there! It turned out that he’d had some music rehearsal that night. However, there was no such distraction the following week, and there, between the sixth and seventh ropes, I encountered Jonathan Adkins. Tall, as advertised. Musical, being organist at Tetbury St Marys’\* as well as his educational endeavours. And, on closer inspection at The Old Spot after the practice, kind, gentle, sweet, well-read, and so amazingly funny. I liked him straight away.

With several more practices (and subsequent pub visits) I realised that I was attracted to him a bit more deeply than might have been comfortable. I couldn’t stop thinking about him. I took every opportunity to flirt, and came away afterwards analysing my every word. (“Why did I say that? I must look like an idiot! He’ll never like me,” etc etc) I thought he was too highbrow to be interested. He had had Chopin on his teenage Walkman; New Kids on the Block hung tough on mine

It took Abigail’s Party by Mike Leigh, a coincidence at Tewkesbury Abbey, and a sticky Shakespeare performance, for Jonathan to consider that maybe this mad woman who keeps saying daft stuff and laughing at his jokes could actually be something more to him. (NB I summarise all events here as I’ve probably already banded on about them to you several times over, whether you wanted to hear or not.) Further chatting and laughing and a couple of dinners out, and he finally got the message. It was him, not me, who made the first move! After practice and pub one Thursday - also bin collection night - he took it upon himself, as we stood by his car and the overflowing boxes of recycling, to kiss me.

To begin with we took it steadily. We were timid about giving away too much, and would pretend that we had “arrived separately” to the towers where we rang. I got to see him at work at the organ, (seriously, *not* a euphemism) and was introduced to his churchmates as his “friend from Dursley”. I don’t think anyone was fooled. The beams on our faces must have given us away instantly.

Ten weeks into our burgeoning relationship, things suddenly took a turn for the worse. Jonathan was admitted to hospital: Not just one, but both lungs full of pneumonia, and, discovered during an ultrasound investigation, a “shadow on his pancreas”. Writing about this brings back the sheer panic I felt at that time. It had taken me most of my life to find this gorgeous man. Would this pairing be over before it had really begun?

With support from all corners, we dragged ourselves through. Jonny (as he is to me now) was diagnosed with bronchiectasis – a chronic illness where his lung-tubes are wider than everyone else’s. It can’t be cured; it can get worse; it will be managed. As for the terrifying shadow, that turned out to be nothing. Although his subsequent diagnosis of Type I Diabetes, in January 2020, might indicate otherwise.

Two life-threatening conditions was enough to put Jonny in the vulnerable category when the Covid pandemic hit the world the following March. The government recommended he shield, so I saw to it that he did. Which meant we were apart for fifteen weeks. To be separated from the man I loved was incredibly difficult. We would talk daily using Zoom, and I would visit him occasionally to drop off shopping and see his lovely face in person. When we were permitted to bubble up, we did so like a shot.

This narrative appears to have taken a gloomy turn, but don't be misled! In amongst all this struggling have been some really wonderful times, many of them involving bells. To have a shared hobby has strengthened our relationship. We know what we mean when we say that the third was a little oddstruck, or that they've got a heavy-going eight at St John's, or that I need to practise my Stedman whole turns. Though Jonny is a much more experienced ringer than I am, I try hard to learn so we can ring together, and he has been instrumental in helping me to memorise new methods. Before the enforced break, I was preparing to ring 5-spliced Surprise Major. Like everyone else, I have lapsed, but the ability and the knowledge are slowly coming back.

In fact, Jonny supports me in everything I do, including my work as a humanist celebrant. I officiated at my first ceremonies this year: two funerals and two weddings. As we approached our three-year anniversary, I found myself fantasising yet again – what would *our* wedding be like? To be married had never been a part of my life plan, yet somehow I could see it with Jonny. A brief conversation one Saturday morning led to us making the decision which had been staring us in the face for a while: let's get married.

Together we chose and paid for a ring, and I left the proposal up to him. With my birthday soon, I expected to have to wait until then. So he took me by surprise when it happened at the end of our piano lesson the very next day. We were playing one of our favourite duets – *Romance Sans Paroles* (Op 17, no.3) by Gabriel Fauré, which involved a page turn. As I fumbled at the fold, I saw my ring taped overleaf, accompanied by a handwritten question. With due diligence, I finished playing the piece before I could answer "of course I will!" through my tears of happiness.



I never thought I would be anyone's fiancée, let alone a wife. I know Jonny feels similar disbelief. We keep looking at each other and laughing with wonder and joy. To be married for the first time at 47 years old! We will be having a humanist ceremony on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 at Norman Hill Field in Dursley, followed by a big party at The Chantry Centre, where my band will provide the music (now including a certain Jonathan A on backing vocals!). The paperwork side of things will be covered at Stroud Registration office during the week, but this won't be the date we will celebrate as our wedding.

It goes without saying that there will be ringing. So much ringing. It would be lovely to achieve a quarter peal in the tower where we first met, while wearing our wedding clothes! Though it will be a busy day, we think it fitting – important, even - to celebrate the hobby and the people that brought us together, erased our loneliness, and led us to our vows.

\*Yes, this apostrophe is correct. Originally, it was dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, but they added Mary Magdalen later. So there are two patronal St Marys, thus St Marys' Church. #smugface #punctuationpolice

## 45 Years and Counting

*Roger Booth*

It is 45 years since I was Ringing Master of the Wotton-under-Edge Branch, in my early twenties. Although from year to year it may seem that little changes, I have seen substantial change over this period of time.

Chipping Sodbury and Coaley were difficult rings of six, hung in timber frames; Horton were an unringable five not rung in living memory, Stinchcombe and North Nibley were rung from the ground floor and you always needed to avoid hitting your elbow on the sink in the corner by the 2nd. Other towers have also been transformed, the latest being the new ring of eight at Hawkesbury.

Around 20% of the members at that time were young ringers like me. I also remember that with so many enthusiastic young people around, elections for Branch and Association posts could be hotly contested!

Some argue that there's no point teaching young ringers as they will move away. However, I think this is very short sighted. Quite a few of us are still ringing. I recently met up with Erica Crabtree (nee Pierce) at Shrivenham and prior to Covid I regularly rang handbells with Janet Morris (nee Fox) another of the ex-Dursley young ringers, who now lives in Bishopstoke.

If other branches avoided teaching young ringers, the exercise as a whole would suffer. The branch would also not benefit from ready-made ringers moving into the area. I remember the transition from shaky Grandsire, Plain Bob and Stedman to ringing Surprise methods at Branch practices that occurred after the young Frank Byrne and his wife Liz moved into the Branch from Hertfordshire.

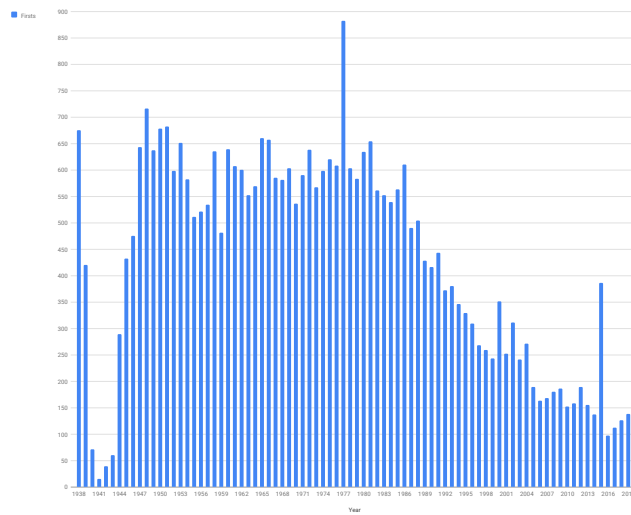
Many of us who learnt as teenagers in the 1960's and 1970's sang in the church choir. At Stone, in addition to Thursday practices we also rang on Sunday mornings and evenings, and cycled to towers such as Stinchcombe and Thornbury for practices to progress.

However, things are substantially different these days. The frequency of services has been reduced as parishes have been amalgamated into larger benefices, and with safeguarding what parents would be comfortable with young people cycling out in the evenings to attend practices. The source of young recruits coming via church choirs has all but dried up. GS2222 will only accelerate the pace of change.

### **What legacy are we leaving for future generations?**

The lions share of our resources over the last 50 years has been spent on bell restoration. With initiatives such as the £3 million of Lottery funding around the millennium, our bells are in better condition than ever, but in 40, 20 or even 10 years' time will we have the ringers to ring them?

Of course, there will still be rounds and call-change bands in some towers, but will the current level of method ringing be as widespread? Once a band loses the ability to ring methods it can be very hard work to get back to that standard. The steady decline in the number of new people ringing peals since the 1980's is quite worrying.



Number of people ringing their first peal 1935 – 2019 Source: Pealbase

The Central Council of Church Bellringers (CCCBR) recognise these challenges and their first strategic priority is to **“Find alternative long-term sources of recruits who have the potential to be good ringers”**

Ringling is a cheap hobby, some would say too cheap compared with what you would pay for a round of drinks in a pub, or a sausage roll and cup of coffee in Greggs!

Short campaigns like ‘Ringling in the Millennium’ and ‘Ringling Remembers’ may have resulted in new ringers, but do they address longer term needs? Are there less silent towers as a result? Are we focussing on recruiting the right people?

I have been helping the CCCBR Executive and the Association of Ringling Teachers (ART) Management Committee discuss these issues. After Covid, we reckon that each year nationally we need to train 3,000 ringers, up to the stage where they are competent change ringers. That perhaps means recruiting 6,000 people and giving them a first handling lesson. Rather than a one-off campaign we need to do this every year for the next ten years.

If we recruited say 1,500 young people to learn through a national campaign, where would we direct them to so that they were taught well and retained? With so many bands composed almost entirely of older ringers would they feel welcome?

### **How are we going to deliver the changes needed?**

CCCBR and ART cannot command or deliver anything at local level, it can only help provide the tools so that branches can run recruitment and training programmes at a local level.

One of these tools is the use of portable mini-rings and mobile belfries at parish fetes, local and county shows and other public events.

Hayley Young (nee Barton) another young ex-Dursley ringer is now Secretary of the Truro Diocesan Guild and drew my attention to the work that Robert Pearce has been doing with a portable mini-ring at Bradoc in Cornwall. There is a very interesting webinar which explains how the use of a mini ring and handbells with young people rejuvenated a small parish church. ([The Bradoc Experience - Robert Pearce - Truro Diocesan Guild of Ringers \(tdgr.org.uk\)](https://www.tdgr.org.uk/))





*Young ringers on the portable mini ring at Bradoc, Cornwall*

Mini rings and portable dumb-bells are very good for smaller events, but do not have the impact needed at large public events. In 1990 at Wells, Philip Gay proposed that the CCCBR acquire a mobile belfry for use at larger events. The CCCBR rejected this proposal, but Phil went ahead with a consortium of local societies and the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry (LDMB) was born. This first design takes over two hours to erect and needs a large vehicle to transport it between events.

In 2007 the Charmborough Trust acquired Matthew Higby's improved Charmborough Ring but which still takes five people just over an hour to erect. It also requires a large vehicle to tow it to events. It was used at the Berkeley Show in 2013 and used at 173 other events since 2007.



*The Charmborough Ring*

The Charmborough Ring is in heavy demand and we need to turn down a number of bookings each year. Transport and the availability of drivers are issues. Over two years ago we started exploring a Mk2 design. The brief was for a lighter aluminium structure and a self-erecting design which a typical family car could tow and be erected and ready to use in less than 30 minutes.

The bells have now been cast and, subject to securing the remaining funding, the ring should be available next year. Phil Gay and I have been involved, helping the CCCBR. Our longer-term plans include the three rings being able to cover for each other, and possibly the LDMB and Charmborough Ring being modified later to meet the Mk2 brief. We are also collaborating to see if we can save money by insuring the three rings together under one policy, rather than each one being insured separately.

### **Investing in people**

If we are to safeguard the art of change-ringing for the future, we need to change the culture of investing in physical infrastructure to one of investing in people. We have therefore also been looking at other ways in which we can support branches to run sustained and sustainable local recruitment and training campaigns. This includes submitting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £500k to support running school activities days and summer holiday camps, developing an up-to-date recruitment package with not just well-designed posters, but digital media to appeal to young people, as well as supporting the development of the new Young Change-Ringers Association.

Attracting new audiences to engage with heritage ticks a lot of boxes with HLF. Dating from the seventeenth century HLF also consider the art of change-ringing just as important as the bells on which it is performed.

The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) who look after many redundant churches with bells have offered their expertise and come on board as a partner, as have the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain (HRGB) who have experience of supporting professional school-teachers to use handbells to teach music. With support also from the Loughborough Foundry Museum, we are developing an exciting bid.

If successful we will be looking for branches to come on board, contribute their own ideas and help safeguard the future of the art of change-ringing for the future generations.



## WOTTON BRANCH OFFICERS

<b>Chairman</b>	Chris Cooper
<b>Ringling Master</b>	James Joynson
<b>Assistant Ringling Master</b>	Vacant
<b>Secretary</b>	Sarah Lorkin
<b>Treasurer</b>	Gill Carey
<b>Clangour Editor</b>	Sarah Lorkin
<b>Publicity Officer</b>	Terry Chivers
<b>Management Committee Rep</b>	TBC

## REGULAR PRACTICES

### Monday

Chipping Sodbury	19:30-21:15	Antony Gay
Cromhall	19:30-21:00	Sue Wray
Stone	19:30-21:00	Jeremy Sargent
Yate (1 <sup>st</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> only)	19:30-21:00	Barrie Fletcher

### Tuesday

Wotton-under-Edge	19:30-21:00	Adrian Davis
Upper Cam	19:30-21:00	Alex Reeves

### Wednesday

Berkeley	19:30-21:00	Tim Soanes
Coaley	19:30-21:00	Terry Chivers
Horton	19:30-21:00	Rex Isaac

### Thursday

Dursley	19:30-21:00	Elizabeth Byrne
Tortworth	By arrangement	Fen Marshall
Stinchcombe	19:30-21:00	James Joynson
Wickwar	19:15-21:00	Peter Juniper

### Friday

North Nibley	19:30-21:00	Wynne Holcombe
Slimbridge	By arrangement	Huvin Thompson