



## Editor's Foreword – *Andy Clark*

Back at November's Branch AGM, I agreed to restart the Cheltenham Branch newsletter, so here goes with my first edition. I am really pleased that we have so many articles to include, requiring little or no chasing on my part. Please keep them coming!

For those who don't know me, I moved to Cheltenham in 2018 and my home tower is St Mark's, but I've also done a fair bit of ringing with Reg and team on the local mini rings, particularly that at Alma Road. Prior to Cheltenham, I lived in Olton, just outside Solihull, and my home tower was Shirley. Before that, three years at the University of Birmingham to read Geography, and preceding all that, I hail originally from nearby Bourton-on-the-Water, where I learnt to ring back in 1994! Scarily for me, this means my 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ringing a bell is rapidly approaching!

Going forward, I am hoping that we can issue a newsletter every quarter, but if we get to September and there isn't a great deal to report on, it might be that we revert to 6-monthly frequencies, with one appearing in early July, and the other early in the new year. I'll take a view on that in due course.

Thanks again to everyone who has contributed. I am very keen that this doesn't become 'elitist', and it is very much intended to be of interest to anyone who rings, regardless of whether they ring rounds and call changes, or surprise maximus, or anything in-between. Thanks also to Becca Meyer for volunteering to proof-read for me. Finally, if you've got an idea for an upcoming article, I'd love to hear it, so please email me direct at [c72ad@aol.com](mailto:c72ad@aol.com), or via Barbara.

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## A Welcome from the Ringing Master – *Stuart Tomlinson*

Firstly, on behalf of the branch membership, I want to thank Andy Clark for offering to prepare this newsletter for us. This innovative move is much appreciated!

It is great that most of our branch tower bands are regularly ringing again, after all the Covid lockdowns of the last two years. I have been particularly encouraged by the number of new learners and returning lapsed ringers I have met at branch events and practice nights.

Learning to ring is not easy and it requires a lot of practice and determination. However, if you stick with it, then it can be such a rewarding hobby. To our learners, I would encourage you to get as much ringing practice as possible. Once you can safely ring a bell on its own and have started ringing rounds, then going along to another tower's practice night is an invaluable way to get more experience. Cara Capewell has organised a few Saturday sessions for those at the rounds / call changes level and plans to organise more from September onwards. You can read more about these in the next article.

Finally, some upcoming branch practice dates for your diaries. Please keep checking the branch website (link in the footer) in case details change, and also for other branch events.

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> August	Woolstone	10:30	6-bell practice
Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> September	Prestbury	19:30	8-bell practice
Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	Childswickham	19:30	6-bell practice



## **Branch Workshops – *Cara Capewell***

I had a couple of enquiries from people who were just about handling independently and were sad that there had been no Spring training day. ‘Someone should do something about that’, I thought, before reflecting that as Deputy Branch Master perhaps that someone might be me...

I thought that probably a lot of people could make Saturday mornings.

The idea was to give people a concentrated learning session, ideally led by someone they'd not been taught by before, to give them fresh perspective and ideas.

I ran the first session myself – partly because I lacked the will to find someone else in time!

I had been on an Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) course at Tewkesbury Abbey a few years before (I think it was a Module 2F) but remembered little of that apart from that tied bells are slightly weird to ring, and how to turn 180 degrees while ringing (top tip, do it while you are up at backstroke!).

So I was a bit apprehensive... Would the students get much out of it, would I be able to give them equal amounts of time and attention? Would the helpers get horribly bored?

Would we break all the stays, would somebody get tangled up and lose a finger? Would I – horror of horrors – forget someone's name?

It was a nice rainy day in Woolstone, just right for knuckling down for two hours of hard work in a tower. Due to Covid and other things, we ended up with just two students, which made it a lot easier for me (and harder for them).

We started with a little bit of raising and lowering, familiarised ourselves with the very light Woolstone bells, made steps to improve handling styles, did some balance work, tried to hear our own bells and ended with a theory session on how to change speed.

At the end of the first hour, Pauline Bower suddenly produced drinks and biscuits and called for a break, which I hadn't thought of at all and was very welcome and certainly should be a thing in all future sessions. The students coped magnificently, made definite progress, the helpers were positively brilliant, and no fingers were lost so all in all I call that a success.

The second session at Prestbury was better attended with five students, was run by Pat Halls, who we were very worried wouldn't get up and down the steps! But much to the relief of backup leader Mike Hartley, she managed it and ran a very successful practice by all accounts, with style improvement, kaleidoscopes and some tenoring behind. Our Leckhampton learners certainly came back from it with improved confidence.



The photograph shows the attendees of Session 2 (Prestbury). Clockwise from top: Sarah Collacot, Jacquie Matthews, Isobel Hitchings, Hilda Ridley, Penny Slatter, Reg Hitchings, Keith Reading, Maureen Mcbane, Malcolm Ware, Paula Ware, Pat Halls and Gail Jones.

The final of this batch of three sessions was at Tewkesbury Abbey, with eight tied bells and the simulator. This one was run by Harry Stephenson and was thoroughly over-subscribed, with eight students initially booked – but because of Covid and other injuries this soon shrunk this to six. The group was split roughly by ability, with handling and balance work, some raising / lowering, rounds and work on changing speed.

Feedback from all sessions was very good, and there seems to be appetite for more, so I am planning to book more sessions in September, hopefully to include Tewkesbury Abbey again, the Minster and Badgeworth. Do get in touch if you would like to be a student, helper, or leader. So far we have had interest from students from Prestbury, Warden Hill, Leckhampton, Childswickham and beyond.

These next three would still be for bell control / listening skills / beginnings of ropesight, but sessions like these could easily be used for other things such as Plain Bob Doubles or treble bobbing, or even for consolidating things learnt on the Autumn Training Day. Do let me know if you would like me to arrange one for you.

Can I say a massive thank you to all helpers and leaders, without whom it would not be possible. It makes it very easy to arrange this sort of thing when people are so willing to give up their time for it. ♡



## A notable milestone at Leckhampton – *Stuart Tomlinson*

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January, we rang the 2,000<sup>th</sup> quarter peal at Leckhampton since the major rehousing in 1972. Possibly the most quarter peals rung at a single tower – unless you know otherwise!

### **Leckhampton, Gloucestershire**

St Peter

Sunday, 30 January 2022 (9–1–14 in Ab)

1260 Stedman Triples

- 1 Pat Hickey
- 2 Barbara Pettit
- 3 Sue Drinkwater
- 4 Malcolm Taylor
- 5 Hilda Ridley
- 6 Stuart Tomlinson
- 7 Bernard Taylor (C)
- 8 Chris Hickey

2,000<sup>th</sup> quarter peal at Leckhampton since the major rehousing in 1972  
(new frame, fittings and 5 new/recast bells)

The first quarter was rung on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1972 - Stedman Triples, with Bernard, Hilda and Malcolm in the band and ringing the same bells. The rest of the band are current Leckhampton ringers

So, how have we achieved this?

The Taylor family (Eric, his wife Helen and their four children, Hilda, Clare, Bernard and Malcolm) moved to Leckhampton in the late- 1960s. The bells were in a fairly poor state and Eric and his family undertook to restore them. As well as fundraising, the Taylor family helped hugely with the manual work, in order to keep the costs down. I am amazed that the total cost was only £3,300, even allowing for inflation and one bell being donated. Taylors of Loughborough carried out the work, which comprised of five new / recast bells, a new frame and new fittings. The other three bells (treble, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) date from 1904 and were also cast by Taylors. I learnt to ring in 1974 and fundraising was still ongoing. I remember the shed in the church rectory grounds being full of old newspapers ready to be sold for reuse.

As a result of the 1972 rehang, we have a light and musical ring of eight (9cwt). The bells are relatively easy to ring, although not so easy to strike well. We ring in the chancel, in a beautiful setting which is usually nice and warm!

The key reason that we have rung so many quarters is due to Eric initiating a Sunday quarter attempt for the evensong service. This has often been used as an advanced practice (i.e. giving a learner more time to practice something with a strong band around them). This approach has been continued by subsequent Tower Captains: Terry Jones and myself. Another tradition Eric initiated was attempting a quarter prior to the 8am service on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday.



We are fortunate to have had a fairly strong band at Leckhampton throughout this 50-year period. So whilst we often rely on help from other local ringers we usually have a good number from the local band in each attempt.

The number of quarters rung has been fairly consistent over the years – usually scoring between 35 and 50 quarters each year. The most in one year was 55. Around 80-90% of the quarters rung are for Sunday service, with the remainder being rung for other special days (such as Ascension Day), by visiting bands, or when we have had just the right number on a practice night.

When I retired three years ago, one of my plans was to computerise both mine and the towers peal (414 peals) and quarter peal records. Many of these were already on BellBoard so it seemed sensible to continue with this. BellBoard has good searching options and has the advantage of the entered records being available for anyone to access. I completed this through the summer of 2020 using our excellent paper tower records as the main source. I enjoyed remembering ringers I had rung with back in the 1970s and 1980s and this made the task more pleasant.

I also enjoyed the detective work of adding more detail to some of the early peals (such as entering a forename, where there had previously just been an initial, and in some instances only a surname). BellBoard records a further 72 quarters rung at Leckhampton prior to 1972.

The following have all rung in at least 500 of these quarters:

Stuart Tomlinson (1,149), Helen Taylor (1,116), Barbara Pettit (850), Sue Drinkwater (794), Eric Taylor (780), Ann Herbert (775) and Terry Jones (729).

The most popular methods / types of method rung were:

Surprise Major (501), Surprise Minor (432), Plain Bob (480), Grandsire (278) and Stedman (119).



## Remembering Ellis Boardman (1926 – 2022) – *Ann Jessop*

Ellis was the only child of Elias and Ellen, born 30<sup>th</sup> December 1926 – the same year as the Queen. His Grandfathers worked in the mines of Lancashire. His father was a butcher.

Ellis' interest in science started at an early age. When he was a small boy, his night light was a neon bulb in the light socket. This gave an orange glow to see by. However, when it was turned off it still faintly glowed, so he asked the local electrician why it glowed, but he did not know. When studying at Manchester University Ellis worked out why – the switch was on a braided cord from the ceiling to by the bed and about six feet long. The braiding of the cord generated capacitance which allowed just enough electricity to flow between the wires to cause the faint glow.

Ellis studied Electrical Engineering at Manchester University and gained a Bachelor of Science in 1947 and a Master of Science in 1948. With these qualifications he joined the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1954.

He was at Manchester when the first electronic computer was built and tested, called BABE as it weighed 6 tons and had a 16-word memory. The first task was to calculate if 41 was a prime number, which took many hours.

He did his national service with the ministry of supply working at the Royal Military College of Science, and he met his wife Bernis at Shrivenham during this time. They were married in 1952 in Swansea.

Ellis worked for Unilever but did not fancy taking up a position in London, instead opting to work for the Government in Cheltenham at GCHQ, working for them from 1957 until he retired in 1987. He became a Grade 7 but turned down further promotion as it would have meant leaving research and becoming purely an administrator.

Ellis used to come home with a complete program on 11-inch fan fold paper up to 2 inches thick and would go through it line by line to find the problem.

Even in his later years he kept up his skills. On starting Sudoku, he decided to write a program to provide the solution for the harder ones.

His three sons were born in 1958, 1961 and 1964. Ellis drove a 12-seater Bedford CA van to take them, with other lads, to scouting events.

In his study was a pewter mug which he won on a treasure hunt with the AC owners club back in the 1950s, with the chairman's 10-year-old daughter as his navigator. On nearing the end of the hunt, they were running behind time. Ellis realised that if they completed the last three stages, they would receive more penalty points than if they simply skipped the stages. They won, much to the annoyance of the team who came second, who completed the course, but picked up the extra of penalty points. The rules were changed for the next hunt!

One day, the next-door neighbour came round with a very large electric bill. Ellis looked at it and said, 'obviously an error' and wrote on her behalf, saying the bill was in error, please would they correct it. The reply boiled down to 'no, there isn't an error, pay up'. Ellis then wrote a second letter, pointing out that the electricity charged for could not have been provided by the cables as they would have caught fire, along with the formulae and working out to prove the point. He then said the problem was their





computer program, which simply took the largest number and subtracted the smallest number. This did not take into account that the older meters would 'roll over' making one very large number and one very small number. A few simple lines of code would allow for this. This time he signed it putting all the letters after his name that he was entitled to, which ran for a line and a half. The next reply was very different, summed up as, 'You are right in everything that you say, a corrected bill has been sent'.

Ellis would look at the world from a slightly different perspective. The children were given puzzle boxes one Christmas, shapes that could be packed into the box five different ways, so the instructions said. He worked out a sixth way.

Ellis was a member of many clubs and societies, being one of the longest members of the Cheltenham Camera Club. He was an accomplished piano player and organist and played the organ at Oxenton Church for some years. He was a keen bell ringer, and rang with the Bishop's Cleeve band from 1975, when he moved into Woodmancote, until Covid required us to shut down in 2020. For 25 years he looked after the Church clock at Bishop's Cleeve. At the age of 90 he decided to join a gym, to keep fit.

Bernis died in 2014, after 62 years of marriage.

Ellis was a quiet and modest man but had a dry sense of humour. He announced, 'I have placed a bet with the undertaker. I have paid for my funeral, fixed price. He's betting I'm dying soon; I'm betting I'm not'.

So, there we are, Ellis Boardman, who had a long life and was one of the last who was there at the start of the electronic computer age and the formation of GCHQ.

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### **Remembering Graham Leslie Maggs – Jenni Scruton**

Graham Maggs was born in Prestbury in 1948. He lived with his parents in Bouncers Lane and attended Prestbury St Mary's schools and then at age 11 progressed to Bishop's Cleeve. He sang in the choir at Prestbury and then learned to ring. He was taught by Bob Dowdeswell.

Graham always enjoyed his ringing on Church bells and also joined with other ringers from Prestbury tower at Christmas time when the tower's hand bells were taken round the local pubs. Carol tunes were rung on the hand bells and money collected for chosen charities. It sounds as if a good time was had by all on those occasions!

Graham returned to regular ringing after retiring from his job as a civilian in the police force, returning to join the Prestbury band despite living in Leckhampton with wife Maureen, a non-ringer, whom he had married in 1973.

Graham was not a prolific peal ringer, but he rang his first at Prestbury on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June 1977, in celebration of the Silver Jubilee of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The band also included Graham's older brother Malcolm – it was also his first peal. They rang Plain Bob Major.

Graham was a reliable and steady member of the band at St Mary's. Owing to ill health, he did not return to ringing after the easing of restrictions following the Covid pandemic. However he remained a tower member and was interested in how the ringing was progressing. He was pleased to receive regular updates about ringing and other tower members. He was very much a 'people person' and died on 21<sup>st</sup> April, aged 73. His very well attended funeral was held in Prestbury Church on 26<sup>th</sup> May followed by burial in Charlton Kings Cemetery. We shall all miss Graham greatly. May he rest in peace.



## Tewkesbury Shield 2022 – Hilda Ridley

The Tewkesbury Shield was held on 7<sup>th</sup> May this year in lovely Spring sunshine.

Eight teams had entered, one of which was the Cheltenham team who are part of a group of local ringers looking to improve their 10 and 12 bell ringing. They meet once a month at Cheltenham Minster and plan to enter the National 12-bell competition in October this year.

Finally, having been drawn as one of the last teams to ring, we entered the tower to ring. The judges were Simon and Andrew Meyer who gave comments about each piece of ringing and the peal speed followed by the results.

1 <sup>st</sup>	St Mary Redcliffe	92%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Leicester Diocesan Guild	88%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	St Paul's Birmingham	85%
4 <sup>th</sup>	St Oulton Campanile Youths	82%
5 <sup>th</sup>	Cheltenham	78%
6 <sup>th</sup>	Oxford Diocesan Guild	74%
7 <sup>th</sup>	Welsh Colleges	68%
8 <sup>th</sup>	Nottingham University	60%

The judges' comments about Cheltenham included 'the fastest ringing with a peal speed of 3hrs 15'.

The Ringing World of 13<sup>th</sup> May has the full article about the competition. Many thanks to Simon for organising the practice ringing and the suggestion that we enter the competition. In addition, thanks to Becca for providing the photograph below of Tewkesbury Abbey.







## The Bicycle Ring on Tour and other Versions – *Reg Hitchings*

Although not officially a branch group, a lot of the ringers in our group are members of the Cheltenham Branch and we are usually included in the branch reports.

We came to national attention immediately after the main outbreak of Covid and the relaxation of regulations for groups meeting outdoors and indoors, but the ringing of mini rings locally began in 2011 when using a technique called 'external clapping' (basically the bell hits a fixed clapper to produce a sound) where it is possible to use very small bells. This dramatically reduced the cost of the installation and we used 26" Bicycle Wheels and a set of handbells (we found a way of keeping the handbell complete with handle so that they could be taken out and used as handbells). The set of 8 (now known as 'The Bicycle Ring' for obvious reasons) was hung in our garage and first quarter-pealed in 2012. They were very loud and we used improvised ropes. In 2013 we built a new Summer House in our back garden and the bells moved there (actually it was built to take the bells!). The first quarter in the new location was in May 2013 and since then 300+ quarters have been rung and we have attempted one peal.

When we developed the external clapper technique a couple of other ringers decided to join in the fun and produced their own rings of bells, using 'Servants Bells' or 'School tune ringing bells' (you know the coloured ones). The latter ones are very small 2.6oz but with counterbalancing and heavy wheels a very acceptable ringing arrangement can be achieved.

These other 'towers' joined our group and we rang regularly at them all until Covid.

In 2015, initially as a result of a competition to get a portable mini-ring in the back of a car, I designed and built the first version of 'Bicycle Ring on Tour'. Six bells in a box measuring approximately 800 x 600 x 600. No one else managed to produce a ring! They made their first public appearance at the South Cheltenham Team Family Fun Day at St Christopher's on 11th July 2015. I wasn't very happy with the sound (we have used a set of Servants bells selected from Ebay purchases and not tuned) so investigated the possibility of having a set of Hemispherical bells cast and tuned. Taylor's of Loughborough produced these and the first ring of 'Bicycle Ring on tour V2' was in 2016.

We all remember 2020 when Covid meant we all had to stay at home and interaction with non-household groups was forbidden. As soon as there was mention of limited social interaction, albeit a maximum of six and outdoors (and two metres apart), we looked at how we could adapt the mobile ring to satisfy those regulations and rang them for the first time on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 in what became known as the 'Socially Distanced Version' (SDV). Over the next 14 months, much of which was under restricted conditions, we rang over 100 quarters and for Church Services at St Christopher's and St Peter's Leckhampton and in people's gardens in Charlton Kings, Minchinhampton and St Margaret's Hall. Over the winter of 2020 / 1 we were very grateful to the Elders of Warden Hill United Reformed Church who allowed us to set up and ring in their Church space.

With the end of restrictions, we looked to slightly amend the arrangement of the mini ring to make it easier to erect and fit into the car! In April 2022, we were invited to take the Bicycle Ring on Tour to the 'Grand Yorkshire day out' in Harrogate when nearly one hundred people enjoyed them and now we have been invited to take them to the CCCBR AGM and Ringing Day in Nottingham at the beginning of September.



## The Croome Trophy – *Becca Meyer*

The Croome Trophy 6-bell striking competition was held this year at Cromhall. The St Mark's team was drawn last in our slot and so we listened to the other bands ring before we went up – some good ringing really turned up the pressure we felt! The bells were nice, if a little odd-struck. The test piece (Grandsire Doubles, conducted by Simon Ridley) went without incident, which is all we really hope for!

Results were given that evening at the G&B AGM. The judge's comments on our piece mentioned good use of practice time and initial rounds, with the band getting to grips with the bells quickly. They thought we rang at a nice pace with good, open, handstroke leads and commented that the last third of the test piece was 'excellent' – what a compliment! The weather was kind and the tea and biscuits provided were top notch! The band dispatched fairly promptly after ringing as most of us were due to ring again at Chipping Sodbury for the 8-bell competition (for the Penn Trophy) immediately afterwards. The top four teams in The Croome competition were: Tewkesbury (4<sup>th</sup>), Redcliffe (3<sup>rd</sup>), St Mark's Swindon (2<sup>nd</sup>) and St Mark's Cheltenham (1<sup>st</sup>). Good job, team!

The photograph shows the winning team in the belfry at St Mark's. From left to right: Becca, Liz, Mike, Mike, Simon and Hilda.





## Branch Striking Competition Day – *Stuart Tomlinson and Sarah Galvin*

The Branch held its striking competition and evening social event on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June. The results are set out in the table.

1 <sup>st</sup>	St Mark's	9.5 faults
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Leckhampton	16.5 faults
3 <sup>rd</sup>	The Minster	24 faults
4 <sup>th</sup>	Charlton Kings	57 faults

The Minster band chose to have the door open for extra ventilation. Unfortunately, a gust of wind caused the curtain to wrap itself around Liz Coke, which led to a short period of unsettled ringing, which the team did well to recover. Without this, the judges commented that the band may have finished 2<sup>nd</sup> or joint 2<sup>nd</sup>.

It is also worth noting that three members of the original Charlton Kings band were unable to ring, due to catching Covid. This meant finding replacements at short notice.

The Cleeve Trophy was not presented this year as there were no suitably inexperienced bands taking part. Hopefully we will have more towers (and 2<sup>nd</sup> bands) entering next year.

Remember, it isn't just about winning!

With thanks to Badgeworth for hosting the competition, to Pat Halls for being timekeeper in the ringing room, and to the judges (Philip and Anne Pope from Dursley).

After a week of glorious sunshine and high temperatures, we had hoped for fine weather for the branch BBQ that evening. Alas, it was not to be, but this did not deter 13 of us – and Kinsey the dog – who braved the heavy rain and cool weather to enjoy an evening of delicious food and good company. Thanks to everyone who kindly contributed food and drink for us all to share. The photos show Becca holding the winner's trophy, on behalf of St Mark's, and the right photos shows the group, including Kinsey, enjoying the evening social event, organized by Sarah.

