



Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Welcome back!

I am writing this in pleasant 25-degree heat (great for drying laundry!!), following a day when it was non-stop rain and the umbrella was being battered by wind. The English weather certainly keeps you guessing!

Lots of contributions to this edition, so many thanks to all who were able to write in. As ever, don't feel you need to wait until the deadline to send your contributions over. I'm happy to receive them much earlier and they can be safely 'parked' until nearer the time.

I've kept the usual update of the table below, showing events in Q3. The usual caveat still applies - so please keeping checking the branch website in case of any short-term changes.

Something a bit different on the last two pages, but I won't spoil the surprise!

Happy reading and see you again next quarter!

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Sunday 28 th July	Colesbourne	14:00-15:30	If you had been looking forward to the Snowdrop Festival ringing now is your chance but sadly no snowdrops!
Wednesday 28 th August	Childswickham	19:30-21:00	Joining the local practice night
Saturday 21 st September	Norton	14:30-15:30	<i>(assuming the bells are back)</i> The bells were last rung on Wednesday 20 th March 2024 before being removed for restoration by Whites of Appleton



Remembering Alan Smith – *Hilda Ridley*

Alan was born in 1936 in Great Bookham in Surrey. He was taught to ring by George Marriner at Leatherhead and rang his first peal in 1949.

In 1955 he went to Bristol University to study Civil Engineering and met fellow fresher Pauline Sprackling from Tewkesbury. They were married at Tewkesbury Abbey in August 1959. Alan spent his working life with water infrastructure and supply. He had a one-year posting in 1960 to Dubai, then a small Arab town, and a three-year posting to Fiji in 1970. Alan rang at Leatherhead for over 50 years, 25 years of which he was Tower Captain. He also served as Leatherhead District Officer, Secretary and Central Council Rep.

Following Pauline's Ordination in 1994 they moved to Great Wishford, near Salisbury, in 1996 where he became the "vicar's wife". He also served as Bells Adviser on the Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Council. Alan taught countless people to ring including his daughters Rachel and Caroline and four grandchildren. In Leatherhead he ran adult education classes in bellringing and taught a whole new band at Stapleford, one of Pauline's parishes, when the bells were augmented and restored.

In 2003 he and Pauline moved to Charlton Kings and he rang there until 2020 when Covid and problems with the tower stairs curtailed his ringing career just short of 75 years. His peal total was a modest 136 and he was very proud of a silent and non-conducted peal of Grandsire Cinques for the University of Bristol Society. A quarter peal in Alan's memory was rung on Saturday 4th May (see panel).

May he rest in peace.

Charlton Kings, Gloucestershire

St Mary

Saturday, 4 May 2024 in 45m (17–0–13 in Eb)
1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Andra Knight
- 2 Hilda Ridley
- 3 Mary Lynch
- 4 Ray Talbot (C)
- 5 David Lynch
- 6 Michael Seagrave
- 7 Richard Knight
- 8 Peter Aylott

In memory of Alan J Smith



The Croome and Penn Trophies – *Liz Coke and Mike Hartley*

The Penn and Croome Trophy were again held on the same day as the G&B Association Annual General Meeting – Saturday 13th April. Teams from the Cheltenham branch entered both competitions, with short summaries below courtesy of Liz and Mike.

Croome Trophy - Liz

The Croome trophy is a six-bell striking competition, with the winners of all the branch striking competitions in the Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers taking part. This year's event was held at Minchinhampton. The winner of the Cheltenham branch striking competition last year was St Mark's but unfortunately they were unable to muster a band so the band that came second, Cheltenham Minster, was asked to replace them.

Our band comprised Mark Davies, Hugh Evans, Andra and Richard Knight, Andrew Haynes and Mike Seagrave. They rang second and nerves soon calmed. They came fourth out of ten teams and had some very complimentary comments from the judges. The team photo is below (l-r): Richard, Mark, Mike, Andrew, Hugh and Andra.



Penn Trophy - Mike

The Penn Trophy is an eight-bell striking competition, also run by the Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers. Branches across the association enter teams, which ring their methods of choice (alternating each year between Triples and Major).

Cara Capewell, Mark Davies (conductor), Hannah Guggiari, Quentin Jackson, Richard Knight, Hilda Ridley, Ray Talbot and Stuart Tomlinson made up our Cheltenham Branch team this year, ringing Yorkshire Surprise Major at Bisley.



Our branch has been accustomed to performing strongly at recent Penn Trophy competitions, coming second out of seven teams, third out of nine and first out of three over the past three years. Unfortunately this year we weren't so successful, coming seventh out of eight teams. We had a strong band, and we rang a good practice Quarter Peal a few days before the competition. However, on the day our ringing didn't settle early on, which impacted the remainder of the performance. Sometimes with ringing it happens like that; it just wasn't our day. While the result was disappointing, we were pleased to have taken part. We weren't downhearted as we know we can do better, and we look forward to entering next year's competition. The team photo is below (back row, l-r): Ray, Quentin, Richard, Mark (front row, l-r): Hilda, Stuart, Cara, Hannah, with a photo of Bisley, courtesy of Andrew Haynes, below the team photo.





St Peter's Bellringers recognised on Bell Sunday – *Paula Ware*

Editor: Thank you to Paula for providing a copy of this article that appeared in the local church magazine, which I wanted to replicate here in our newsletter.

Bell Sunday is an annual opportunity to celebrate the contribution of bell ringers to the life of the church, and to acknowledge the part that bells play in worship and community life all the year round.

At St Peter's, Leckhampton, we celebrated during the morning service on Sunday 12th May, with Rev Gary Grady thanking Stuart Tomlinson, the Bell Captain, for leading the bellringers as well as maintaining the bells in the tower. Stuart recognised that learning to ring bells is rewarding but not easy!

About ten years ago, ART (Association of Ringing Teachers) set up a five-level framework to help learners progress through to ringing Quarter Peals. Six St Peter's learners were presented with certificates and applauded by the congregation for the progress they are making in developing their skills. Brad Coates and Jacob Coates, Level 1 – Bell Handling, Malcolm Ware, Level 2 – Foundation Skills, Keith Reading, Level 3 – Introduction to Change Ringing, Gilly Whittingham and Marika Hortop, Level 4 – Novice Change Ringer.

Bell Sunday is always kept on a Sunday close to St Dunstan's feast day. He is known as the patron saint of bell ringers due to his experimentation in the early forging of bells in the 900s and his encouragement of the use of bells in parish churches. Today, the day is designed to raise awareness of bell ringing, to emphasise the importance of the sound of bells in our communities and how it can help bring church and community together, and to strengthen relationships between church leaders and bell ringers.

Bells are usually rung from inside the church but can be heard for miles around. At Leckhampton we are fortunate that bellringers can also be seen in action in the church, rather than being hidden up the bell tower.

As well as ringing before church services, the bellringers can be heard at weddings and important national and international events, for example for the coronation of King Charles III.

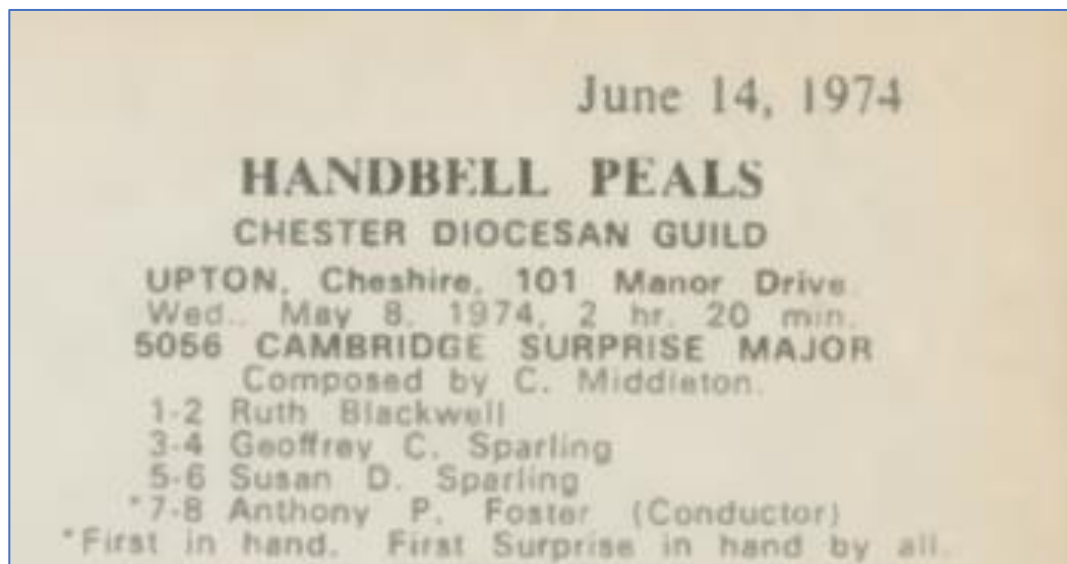
The left photograph shows the learners with certificates (l-r: Marika Hortop, Keith Reading, Brad Coates, Jacob Coates, Gilly Whittingham and Malcolm Ware with Stuart Tomlinson, Tower Captain) with the right photograph showing the learners and Stuart Tomlinson being thanked by Rev Gary Grady.





A Handbell Milestone – *Tony Foster*

50 years ago I rang my only handbell performance (a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major). So I decided to try some way of celebrating that - hence this article!



After that peal I did not touch a hand bell for the next 50 years, though my fellow ringers have achieved 584 peals on handbells between them. I did wonder if I had retained any skills at all. Pat Halls and Cara Capewell bravely agreed to join me to find out and Mark Davies very kindly lent us his excellent set of bells. The answer was quickly revealed - I had remembered nothing! My rhythm was terrible and it was very difficult to concentrate for more than a few minutes. But we persevered with practice and finally managed this modest touch of 360 changes of Plain Bob Minor.

Bishops Cleeve, Gloucestershire

17 Tawny Close

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

360 Plain Bob Minor

1 - 2 Pat Halls

3 - 4 Cara Capewell

5 - 6 Anthony P Foster (C)

Rung to mark the 50th anniversary of Tony Foster's only previous performance on hand bells - a peal of Cambridge Surprise Major on 8th May 1974. Thanks to my fellow ringers for their patience and to Mark Davies for loan of his excellent hand bells.



Branch Striking Competition – *Simon Dann*

The Cheltenham Branch Striking Competition 2024 was held at Elkstone on Saturday 18th May in glorious weather. Four official teams took part, all demonstrating very good striking on these easy-going bells. Judge Andrew Brown had the difficult task of placing them in an order which was 1. St Mark's, 2. The Minster, 3. Charlton Kings, 4. Leckhampton.

St Mark's was therefore awarded the Banner Trophy and will go on to represent the Branch at next year's 6-Bell Association Croome Competition. A wildcard band also rang some Devon style call changes to illustrate the differences. There were no bands eligible for the Cleeve Trophy so it was not awarded, but we hope that several towers will have enough new ringers able to compete for it next year. Thank you to all the bands taking part and to Andrew Brown for his diligent judging and insightful comments.

The photo (thanks to Becca Ridley for providing) shows Simon Ridley, Tower Captain at St Mark's, receiving the Banner Trophy from Andrew Brown, who judged the competition.





A Handbell Project – *Cara Capewell*

For a couple of years now I've been ringing handbells with Pat Halls and a friend of hers called Roger Lawson (whose name you may spot against many photos in the Ringing World). We were meeting up about once a fortnight on a work day morning, Roger driving all the way down from Derby to Bishop's Cleeve with his set of handbells. After what felt like several years of practice and umpteen attempts, powered by many cakes, fruit tarts and much shortbread courtesy of Pat, we finally managed to score a quarter of Norwich Surprise Minor.

Unfortunately Roger has now started working during the week which has meant we can't meet up so often. To keep going more regularly, by using handbells borrowed from my brother Mark Davies we managed to persuade Ray Talbot out of handbell retirement so we can still practice surprise minor, and Cathy Cleevely has been making a start at learning how to plain hunt with two in hand and is doing really well. Phil Hope from Stroud has also expressed an interest.

If anyone else is interested in having a go, let me know. We mostly seem to be meeting up on a Thursday morning, but that can be varied. Learning how to ring two at once does wonders for your knowledge of method structure!



Bishops Cleeve, Gloucestershire

17 Tawny Close

Monday, 27 May 2024 in 40m

1272 Norwich Surprise Minor

1 - 2 Patricia A M Halls

3 - 4 Cara Capewell

5 - 6 Roger J Lawson (C)

"We do these things, not because they are easy but because we thought they'd be easy at the time." First in hand as (c). First Surprise Minor in hand 1-2. First Norwich Surprise in hand 3-4.



Ringling my first Treble Bob Quarter – *Shaun Bailey*

Whilst at work, I received a text from Becca Ridley, one of my ringing teachers, suggesting some additional ringing practice. Nothing unusual about this type of communication - generally it's very gratefully received - however she suggested that I ring the treble to a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor.

Her exact words read, *"8, 9, 16, 23rd June - any of these any good for a quarter? Want you on the treble to Cambridge. Elkstone?"*

Rarely do my legs almost give way: this was such an occasion. My initial reaction was to delay any commitment, so I replied: *"OMG let me process that and get back to you!"*

In my heart, I knew it would be exciting - something my training had been building up to. After careful consideration, I selected either of the last two dates, hoping for more time to practice.

Sunday 16th June at Twynning was soon confirmed.

With five weeks to practice and prepare, I took every opportunity at the regular St Mark's practice nights to ring and observe "Treble Bob" in action, and quiz the treble ringers about technique, rope-sight and listening. Their advice was to relax and ring by rhythm.

The first few practices seemed to go very well, drawing a "Well done Shaun" from Simon and Becca.

Then, as with all my other ringing experiences, the next practice felt as though I had taken one step forward and two steps back.

There was no time to despair however - I soon had to get back on the horse and try again. Thanks to a very supportive band at St Mark's, things improved and the final practice seemed to go well.

The only question now was whether an attack of nerves would return on the big day.

With a few days to go, I checked the church location and treble weight in 'Dove's Guide', and was pleased to find the Church was not too far, and the treble compared well to bells with which I was familiar.

Sunday 16th June came round and ringing for morning service at St Mark's went well. Putting my trust in Sat Nav, I left on time. On arrival at "Twynning Chapel", however, I went cold with horror as I realised I must be in the wrong place. With no signal on my phone, I began to panic.

I took a breath and thought of Becca's parting words, "Head for Church End". Recalling such a sign further back in the village, I headed that way. Luckily, I spotted a friendly-looking chap about to cut his lawn, and asked if he knew St Mary Magdalene Church. He burst into laughter and said, "It's hiding behind you, next left, you can't miss it!"

Feeling slightly foolish, I spotted the church and panic turned into relief. Once inside, I focused on breathing deeply to help mentally prepare.

Then it was time to ring.



"Go Cambridge!" Jeremy signalled, beside me.

We began to ring, and I could feel the band willing me to succeed.

I counted places in my head and reminded myself of Becca and Simon's previous coaching:

"Relax."

"Don't rush your leading."

"Leave room over the tenors."

"Over at back."

"Quick backstroke here."

"Steady down to the front."

Then, before I had time to marvel at how smoothly it was going, I heard, "That's all!"

We were back to rounds. Where had the time gone? I heeded the warnings and firmly avoided looking at the clock. I was amazed it was over and relieved it had gone so well.

The thrill and buzz of the experience is with me still and I want to thank the band for their support and encouragement.

Finally, to answer Sandra's question, now that the adrenaline and heart rate are back under control, I can honestly say, "Yes, thank you, I did enjoy it". And I hope I get the opportunity again.

Twynning, Gloucestershire

St Mary Magdalene

Sunday, 16 June 2024 in 42m (9–3–16 in F#)

1272 Cambridge Surprise Minor

1 Shaun A Bailey

2 Jeremy D Alford (C)

3 Sandra Y Alford

4 Rebecca L Ridley

5 Anthony P Foster

6 Simon J Ridley

First treble bob: 1.



Branch Notices – All

Deaths

We were sorry to hear of the passing of Rev. Josie Goodwin at the age of 42. Josie used to ring at Alderton and Dumbleton.

Births

Welcome to Alexander John Clark, second child of Andy and Jess Clark. Andy hopes to ring in a quarter peal before too long to celebrate Alexander's birth, but nappy changing and bedtime routines have got in the way somewhat in the last few months. Thanks to Reg and his mini-ringing band for the footnote on their quarter peal of minimus back in February.

A welcome also to Polly Alison Cooper, a fourth grandchild for Mike Hartley. A quarter peal was rung for Polly at Charlton Kings in early April.

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire The Bicycle Ring Monday, 19 February 2024 in 23m (1lb 7oz) 1272 3m Bob Minimus 480 Double Bob, 480 Reverse Bob, 312 Plain Bob 1 Barbara Pettit 2 Isabel Hitchings 3 Reg Hitchings (C) 4 Stuart Tomlinson 1400th quarter as conductor 3. To welcome Alexander Clark, born 15th February. Son of Jess and Andy and brother to Emily.	Charlton Kings, Gloucestershire St Mary Wednesday, 10 April 2024 in 43m (17-0-13 in Eb) 1280 Yorkshire Surprise Major Composed by MBD 1 Mike Hartley 2 Cara A L Capewell 3 Stuart Tomlinson 4 Hilda C Ridley 5 Ray Talbot 6 Quentin Jackson 7 Richard Knight 8 Mark B Davies (C) Congratulations to the ringer of the treble on the birth of his fourth grandchild, Polly Alison Cupper, on 9 April.
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(Other) Striking Competitions

Having already had three striking competitions in this edition, I thought having two more might be pushing it somewhat, so just a brief(ish) summary here:

- The Cheltenham Branch entered a team in the Annual Tewkesbury Shield Striking Competition on Saturday 4th May, at Tewkesbury Abbey. The team finished seventh out of eight teams, with the test piece being 360 changes of Grandsire Caters. The winner of the competition was St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol.
- The St Mark's band entered a team in the National Call Change Competition on Saturday 1st June, at the Lord Mayor's Chapel, Bristol. The team finished a very respectable sixth out of 13 teams, with the winners being Kingsteignton. The test piece was '60 on thirds', which has become something of a staple diet for the Sunday service band at St Mark's and was the subject of an article by Simon Ridley in a previous edition of this newsletter.



An April Tour to the Cotswolds – *Frittenden Bellringers*

As promised, something a little different to finish with. A group of bellringers from Frittenden, Kent, joined the 'Wealden Wanderers', 2024, ringing tour to Cheltenham and the Cotswolds, and were able to take some amazing drone photographs. On this page we have Winchcombe and Stanton, with Toddington overleaf. For those on the Cheltenham Branch Facebook Page, there are some further photographs. It certainly provides a new perspective on the architecture!

