

# Shropshire Association of Church Bellringers



**News – December 2024**



## **Training Morning**

**Saturday, 2 November at Edgmond**

Our last training morning of the year was well supported by 19 ringers. This was a pot-pourri of requests, ranging from plain hunting, through courses of Plain Bob Doubles, to Grandsire and Stedman Triples. Every student improved noticeably during the morning, to the great pleasure of their instructors. The plain hunters had a go at covering to a doubles method, with good results, while the Bob Doubles people were encouraged to try ringing the method on different bells. It was great to have the support of plenty of more advanced ringers, many of whom proved adept at 'standing behind', talking through the theory, and advising with handling issues.

Training mornings are valuable for the chance to have several goes at something, with a steady band. You can also widen your experience of ringing different bells, and widen your ringing social circle. Many thanks to all those who came to support and participate, and to Mark for making the bells available (and ensuring that the heating was on!). Special thanks, also, to Madeline, Sue and Biff, who provided home-made cookies with coffee or tea, and kept the kitchen clean and tidy.

The next SACBR training morning will be at Edgmond on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to meeting some more of our members then, and we will soon be putting together the programme for next year, so do let us have your ideas and requests, at [training@sacbr.org.uk](mailto:training@sacbr.org.uk)

## Central Council AGM Weekend Part 2

In last month's Newsletter, Ann Williams, my fellow Central Council Rep., gave a full report on the Council's AGM that we both attended in Exeter at the end of September, mentioning some updates linked to the Ringing 2030 initiative. My contribution this month is to provide an update on some of the other discussion 'hot points' of the weekend essentially linked to the outputs of a ringing research project and activities linked to young ringers.

### **Risk to bells and ringing of possible church closures**

Back in the Spring of this year, Simon Linford, recent ex-Central Council President, and Alison Hodge, who at the time was the Council's Stewardship and Management Workgroup Lead, undertook some work investigating the risk to bells and ringing with changing circumstances of churches, through possible closure or access limitations even if a building is not closed for worship. Simon and Alison reported their findings to a packed audience at a CC AGM Weekend 'fringe' meeting. Here's a shortish summary!

The general issue of reduced congregation sizes, increased difficulty in being able to fill church volunteer posts and pressures on financial resources has some high public awareness now through press and other media outputs. Certain dioceses are reviewing ministry and mission effectiveness, (including here in Lichfield with 'Shaping for Mission' which has been running for a while and which has now reached the phase of a new strategic framework being launched to move forwards to 2030).

As one example, the Lincoln Diocese has some major constraints with a very high density of church buildings in its area, a low average population per parish, the lowest level of financial giving in any of the Church of England dioceses and with only four benefices that actually cover the cost of their stipendiary clergy. In the Lincoln Diocese each church has been asked to try to grade itself into one of five categories - key mission church, local mission church, community church, festival church (to have a minimum of six services per year) or move towards closure. 34% of the churches (209 of them) put themselves into the last two categories which would represent 17 rings with five or more bells.

Overall, across many dioceses, churches at risk of major change (sometimes quite quickly) are often linked to being small rural parishes by population or in urban areas of deprivation and with a lower grading of architectural heritage. Also, generally those with a low attendance, or with unaffordable repair costs, or possibly with a lack of PCC members, churchwardens or other volunteers.

Ringers are encouraged to take active roles in their churches, and be more connected with them, so that any possible changes that may develop can be worked with. All churches with rings of bells should have at least one ringing PCC member for example. Ringers should also work closely with Diocesan DACs and their Bell Advisors. Over the next ten years, 10-15% of churches with bells could either close or find new uses.

There is much more detail associated with this research presentation on the website of the Central Council (search for its 2024 Annual Meeting) and our Association Committee has discussed the subject at an initial level at its September committee meeting. As an added note, some closure of churches with rings of bells reasonably local to the Shropshire Association are in process at the moment – Shareshill and Wood Green (linked to the Lichfield and Walsall Archdeaconries Society) and Berrington and Hereford, St Nicholas (linked to the Hereford Diocesan Guild).

## **Action for Young Ringers**

One aspect of the Central Council's Ringing 2030 Strategy is a focus on Young Ringers, knowing that the current ringing population grew from a base of youngsters five times larger than what we have now. A new CC Young Ringers Workgroup has recently been established to lead progression with both school age and university ringing development. Initial work within this area has now led to the formation of a Young Ringers Hub (see <https://yrhub.cccbr.org.uk/>) with the aim of it being a "one stop shop" for all young ringers up to the age of 30, providing appropriate support and guidance in different threads – for those under 18 (including youth groups), the 18-30s, university ringers and resources for other ringing leaders. Other key components of the Workgroup are a Ringing in Schools project and initiatives looking at how youth ringing is led and organised. One very successful ringing development of recent times has been the Ringing World National Youth Contest held each July and which next year will be in Birmingham. Here in the Shropshire Association we will need to work on developing our young ringer base from the foundations that we already have in some of our towers across our area – help and suggestions will be gladly taken up by the Association's Committee so please don't hold back.

*Paul Lewis*

## **Dates for your Diary**

### **Surprise Major Practice – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December**

This will be at Wem, 7:30 to 9:00 pm. Things to be attempted include 5-spliced, 3 leads of Bristol, half or plain courses of the favourite 5 (Cambridge, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Superlative and Rutland) plus Lessness and Pudsey. And for those wishing to expand their horizons into Surprise methods but not feeling ready for Major, there will also be Norwich and/or Cambridge Minor. Please let Tony know if you plan to attend.

### **Committee Meeting – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

The Committee will be planning next year's Calendar of Events. If you would like to invite the Association to your tower, do get in touch. Our Calendar runs from April to the following March. If you wish to comment on the proposed changes to Association Rules, or to nominate someone for a Committee post next year, please contact Julie Bowen, [secretary@sacbr.org.uk](mailto:secretary@sacbr.org.uk)

### **AGM – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at Ellesmere**

Last year's day-time meeting proved very popular, so we are repeating the format.

Ringing will start at 11 am, followed by a Thanksgiving Service at 12 noon and lunch at 12.30 pm. The January Quarterly meeting and then the AGM will start at approximately 1.30 pm.

The proposed changes to the Association Rules, brought to the attention of members at the October Quarterly meeting, will be voted on at the AGM. If these pass, the new posts on the Association's committee will be voted for. We would love to welcome some new people to the management team, so do consider if you would like to play a part.

*Gill Glover, Ed.*

## Market Drayton Creative, Culture & Leisure Fair



On behalf of St Mary's Market Drayton, I attended the Market Drayton Creative, Culture and Leisure Fair in the Grove School Assembly Hall on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

Unfortunately, the Fair was poorly attended and consequently the opportunity to promote bell ringing very limited, whilst the few people I spoke with were interested to know how bell ringing was performed (is that the right word?) no-one wanted to take up the offer of trying their hand on a bell rope.

The most interest I had was from the members of the Whitchurch Camera Club (the stall next to mine) who were fascinated by the mechanics of a ringing church bell and how a bell is rung and controlled, also how a bell rope was spliced, as the bell rope I had taken with me had a spliced mend. They were as lonely as me! Sadly I could not persuade any photographers to try bell ringing. The photograph of the stall was taken courtesy of the Camera Club

I would like to thank Lilleshall for the loan of the model bell and if anyone needs the SACBR Banners they are currently kept in my garage

*David Beckwith – Tower Captain St Mary's Market Drayton*

Congratulations to David for trying. As you can see, the Association Banners make a colourful backdrop to a display. They are available to all members planning a promotion (hopefully better advertised and attended!).  
*Ed.*