



Shropshire Association of Church Bell Ringers

Newsletter – May 2025

Hello,

Last week we heard the very sad news that Ann Williams had died. Ann passed away peacefully on Tuesday, 22nd April. She will be much missed, both as a friend and as a tireless organiser for the Association. Her drive and determination in the face of a terminal diagnosis have been inspirational, enabling her to achieve such personal goals as her 500th peal, and to organise major events for our 2026 Centenary.

Michael Carding has written an appreciation which is included in this Newsletter.

We expect Ann's funeral to be at 1 pm on Thursday 15th May, at Meole Brace. However, **this is not confirmed: please do check.**

Gill Glover, Editor



Dates for your Diary

Ringing for Peace, Thursday 8th May

This year sees the 80th anniversary of VE Day, on 8th May. It would be great if lots of our towers can join in this national event. If possible, bands are asked to ring at 6.30 pm, but any time during the day would be good. The following evening, at 6 pm, bells will ring across the Continent for the European Day of Peace: we can join in this occasion too.

If you do ring on either day, do consider putting your ringing on RW Bellboard (instructions in June '24 Newsletter), and send me a note for the next Newsletter.

Training morning, Saturday 17th May

Our next training morning, at Meole Brace, is **fully booked**. There will be another opportunity for some intensive ringing practice on 19th July, at Moreton Corbet.

Bell Sunday, 18th May



Angela Elliott, Public Relations Officer for the Central Council, writes: 'Bell Sunday is a national opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique contribution that bell ringers make to the life of the church and to the soundscape of our communities. In 2025, Bell Sunday will be marked on Sunday 18th May, and bellringers across the country are invited to ring for the occasion.'

This initiative has been running for several years, and it is gathering momentum. It is an occasion when ringers can raise the profile of their art, whether by involvement with their own church, or perhaps by organising a band to ring at a tower that is normally silent on Sundays. For further details, including links to resources, go to bellsunday.org

In April

Young Ringers Get Together, Saturday 5th April

Eight of our young members took part in a Saturday afternoon practice at Stanton on Hine Heath and Moreton Corbet. These included some very new learners, who bravely tackled ringing on strange bells with a lot of strange adults! They did so well, and it was great to see all the young ringers gaining in confidence. The more experienced rang Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Doubles, and we finished with a wobbly rendition of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' – to laughter all round.

Grateful thanks go to the adult helpers, and especially to Chris Fraser and Sue Dancey for organising the towers and laying on tea and biscuits.

We plan to meet again, on **Saturday, 14th June, 2 – 4 pm**. If any more of our young members would like to join us, we will be delighted to see you.

Gill Glover and Paul Lewis

Quarterly meeting, Saturday 12th April at Oswestry

A select company of nineteen members met at Oswestry. We enjoyed ringing on the good eight at St Oswald's, led by our Master, Tony Freemont. Ringing included rounds and call changes, Plain Bob, Grandsire and Stedman Triples, and a half course of Cambridge Surprise.

Tea or coffee and biscuits were on offer in the hall, before a short Quarterly Meeting. We elected four new members, and hope to meet them soon at a practice or social event. After brief summaries of our events in the last quarter, Madeline Harris gave out the Annual Reports. Nik Galton ran the raffle, thanking those present for their generosity, which raised over £50 for the Bell Restoration Fund. Wine, Easter chocolates and an Australian tea towel were on offer: the lucky winners were Biff Patterson, Madeline Harris, Gill Glover, Tony Freemont, Philip Murphy and Simon Rice. (The Committee did rather well there!)

Gill Glover

Further Ahead

Lilleshall Bell Ringers Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge



Training for the 3 Peaks Challenge

The bells of St Michael and All Angels Church in Lilleshall have been a cherished part of our community for over 200 years. However, they are becoming increasingly difficult to ring and maintain. We are now raising funds to restore the bells, to ensure they continue to ring out for generations to come.

We're aiming to raise around £60,000 and have already made an excellent start.

As part of our fundraising efforts, a team of bell ringers will be taking on the Yorkshire 3 Peaks Challenge in June 2025. This 24-mile circular route involves 1,585m of ascent and includes the peaks of Pen-y-Ghent, Whernside, and Ingleborough. We're aiming to complete the challenge in under 12 hours!

We've been training hard—fitting in early Sunday morning circuits of Lilleshall Hill and the Wrekin, as well as full-day hikes in the Shropshire Hills.

If you'd like to support us, please visit our JustGiving page:
https://www.justgiving.com/page/lilleshall-bells?utm_medium=FR&utm_source=CL&utm_campaign=015

Thank you for your support!

Matt Lawrence

The ART Award for Excellence in Recruitment and Retention

The Association of Ringing Teachers Award winners for 2025 were announced on Sunday 27 April. These Awards recognise people and groups who are leading best practice and innovation in the teaching and development of ringing. This year, the judges received 57 nominations from all corners of the globe and to reflect this diversity, the ceremony was held online so that it could be accessible to everyone across the world.

One of the Awards is for Recruitment and Retention. The judges are looking for how successful a group or individual has been in recruiting and retaining recruits and any differences in approach which have been particularly effective. This year, the winner was Matthew Lawrence. Very many congratulations to Matt.



SUMMER RINGING OUTING

SATURDAY, JUNE 21, 2025
FOR FURTHER DETAILS, CONTACT
SOCSEC@SACBR.ORG.UK

10:00 ST LAURENCE, MEASHAM
11:00 THE HOLY ROOD, PACKINGTON
12:00 ST MARY, COLEORTON
13:00 LUNCH, QUEEN'S HEAD, BELTON
14:35 ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, BELTON
16:00 ST EDITH, ORTON ON THE HILL
17:00 POLESWORTH ABBEY

SACBR Summer Outing, Saturday 21st June

Arrangements for the summer ringing outing are now complete. The trip will begin at Measham in Leicestershire and end at Polesworth Abbey in Tamworth, with lunch booked at The Queen's Head in Belton. I hope you can join us for what should be an excellent day of ringing.

Please let me know if you are coming, so I can pass on further tower details. I will need to collect preorders for lunch in good time.

Vicki Sivess

MEMORIES OF ANN WILLIAMS (EAW : died 22nd April 2025)

I cannot remember the first time Ann appeared in the ringing chamber at Holy Trinity Meole Brace. I do know that it was accompanied by gentle warnings from some of the established and competent ringers at SACBR. She had fallen out at other towers and could be very forthright. We were just starting from scratch so I was wary. It developed into an unlikely love affair between Ann and the new Meole band.

We held an Open Tower in October 2013 and recruited about a dozen keen learners. I invited a band of SACBR ringers to demonstrate on that occasion but I do not think Ann was one of them. We rang for Sunday worship in late January 2014 never to miss again for over 11 years except when prevented from doing so by COVID. She probably started to attend practice and ring on Sunday sometime during that Spring. The first record of her in our Tower Log is a photo at the top of Lord Hill's column in September 2014. We had rung for a wedding, had lunch at the White Lion, climbed the column and returned to the pub for pudding. Typical of what lay ahead for us all!



Ann never taught bell handling. We were desperately short of competent ringers and Lewis Roberts, John Crum and Ann were vital in providing a steady band to ring round others as they improved. But none of them taught handling; I was the mainstay of this helped by Alan Glover (my ART mentor) and others from SACBR. Over the years she did do “theory sessions” either all together in the ringing chamber or for new learners in the tower vestry below while the more advanced tried methods. Knowledgeable and experienced, of course, but kind, friendly, encouraging as well. Ann was a teacher.

She had become a valuable and reliable member of the band by the autumn when I disappeared for seven months to Malaysia and left them to it. The fact that the project survived this disruption is as remarkable as the consequent growth and development of the band. Ann was a crucial part of both and must take much of the credit for the first occasion when the SACBR Canons trophy came to Meole Brace.

Whatever rows she may have had with other towers she could easily have gone for challenging ringing four or five times a week in Shropshire. Instead she chose lowly but friendly Meole. She would go all over the country, the world even, ringing clever stuff with the cream of ringers in different towers and sleeping in a Youth Hostel or the back of her van. Like a good teacher she would tell us in advance, do it, then relate her experiences to eager new recruits. She was an unattached member of SACBR telling me that she had been brought up to accept that if you belonged to a church tower band then you rang on Sundays. She intended to miss too many by her own standards because of far-flung ringing opportunities and visits to her bolt-hole in Machynlleth. In fact she has been one of our most regular worship ringers over the past decade.

Above all we’ve had such fun! Ann has been a great help to us all, individually and as a band, and in turn we allowed her to relax and enjoy ringing for sheer enjoyment rather than always striving. The outing to Bewdley using The Severn Valley Railway is legendary. Wonderful summer weather, genuine fellowship, and a sense that, despite Vicki’s meticulous planning, the day would just roll out in a heavenly manner. The Darling Buds of May. Her initial reservations about Andy’s Change-o-Matic morphed into pride as she accompanied her new ringing friends into the hallowed halls of a striking competition. She encouraged Vicki to attend ringing courses and invited John & Ann to join a crazy outing to Italy, peopled with her friends from the upper echelons of the exercise.

There were about half a dozen occasions when she pushed the limits with me as Tower Captain. Others say that I stood firm, Ann accepted my authority and later would apologise with the words “I can be bossy”. You always knew where you were with Ann; honest, kind, determined and generous. She was a prime mover in developing the ringing chamber into a swap shop, particularly with plants. She could be a stickler for protocol and H&S. In our spacious ringing chamber she would simply not allow crossed legs. She also scolded us for talking when others were ringing but we will always fondly remember her as the one who chin-wagged constantly. Thursday evenings were a social high-spot, for all of us.

Her beloved, if frustrating, Frazer dropped dead on New Street Station on 28th December 2018, my seventieth birthday. She had been diagnosed with cancer two days before. She managed the shock, the funeral and the future with characteristic stoicism and determination. Various treatments left her weak and she lost weight. The prognosis was not good but she had several declared ambitions, across her wide range of “country” interests and of course ringing.

One was to complete 500 peals which she did. One of the first in 2019, still weak from Chemo, was at Meole where we had permission to ring for three hours to celebrate 150 years of the church and 50 years since the bells were installed. With Andy on the tenor and five stalwarts from SACBR we stood ready to give it a go. I said that it was important but Ann’s welfare was more important. She replied “I’m not feeling very well Michael and I had hardly any sleep but I have very strong will-power”. Never a truer word . . . They were an inspiration to me six months later when tackling Gokyo Ri on my way to Everest Base Camp.

Ann was the instigator and rang the treble for the first all-female peal for SACBR at Stanton on Hine Heath in July 2016. One of her lasting legacies was the vision and implementation of a small “think

tank” looking ahead to the SACBR centenary in 2026. This was totally Ann’s initiative, getting us started in good time before it had appeared on anyone else’s radar. By mid-2024 we had an outline programme of monthly events, a posh dinner, key people and venues agreed and all presented to a grateful SACBR committee. It came as SACBR was picking itself up from a chaotic start to the year and made a significant contribution to a strong recovery and growth. She was a SACBR representative on CCCBR for many years and well-known and connected in the Ringing World (pun intended). She bought her weekly copy of the rag and shared it in the tower.

Her last ring was on the third at Meole on Sunday 15th December 2024. “not too long, Michael”. We did just two minutes and she was unable to ring for the two carol services later that day. I visited her on 27th December after she had cancelled all her Christmas plans and was very weak. She rallied a bit and I was privileged to be with her on two more memorable occasions. She came to the SACBR AGM at Ellesmere in January where she briefed us all on the Centenary plans and was awarded the Canons for her leadership of a project which she would not live to see. In March I took her to the Twelve Bell Eliminator at St Chad’s. Once again it was an idyllic day, she described the bells as “like a waterfall” and met old friends from SACBR and beyond, correctly predicting that Birmingham would triumph.

In the pub, after ringing, two days after she died, we shared stories and drank a toast to a special friend. We thought of her chatting whilst others rang, bringing lavender into the ringing chamber, great posture and style, confident of her own quirkiness. I wondered if she was the secret inspiration for Alan Bennet’s “Lady in the Van”? She was in the van for us at Meole (pun intended) and certainly a lady.

EAW. RIP.

Michael Carding

April 2025

Set of 23 Taylors hand bells in 2 cases for sale. Good condition. For more information please contact Simon Rice (Dawley Telford) at sierice@hotmail.co.uk or 07952 305947

Summer and Autumn Ringing Courses

Applications are now open for the **North West Ringing Course 2025** for both Students and Helpers. The Course will be based at Borwick Hall near Carnforth in Lancashire from Thursday 7th August to Sunday 10th August. All details can be found on our website at <https://nwringingcourse.uk> or contact us on enquiries@nwringingcourse.uk

[Welcome \[www.southwest-ringing-course.org.uk\]](http://www.southwest-ringing-course.org.uk)

The Southwest Bell Ringing Course 2025 Friday 24th October - Monday 27th October 2025 Millfield School, Street, Somerset, BA16 0YD Application for Students and Helpers places will open on 1st May.

southwest-ringing-course.org.uk