

# OYEZ



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## IN THIS ISSUE:

CHATTER FROM THE CHAIR

VIRTUAL RINGING – DEAN HANDBELLS

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL - DEAN

LET THERE BE LIGHT - SMAART, MIDDLEWICH

GRESFORD HANDBELL RINGERS



## Chatter from the Chair

Hello everyone and welcome to this late summer edition of Oyez.

Thank you to all team correspondents and individual members who replied to the recent questionnaire from our regional secretary Irene Merson regarding 'the state of play' of teams in our region. The questionnaire came about following our first face-to-face

committee meeting in the middle of August, when we discussed the prospects of meeting and ringing as a region sometime in the autumn. We represent 6 or 7 teams which are at different stages of returning to ringing and we could see the need for a much broader picture before we made any decisions. It was very helpful to the Committee in our planning for the coming months and good to hear from almost everyone who was contacted. It's impossible to please everyone and we have some unenviable decisions to make but would we be doing the best we can for our region if we did nothing? I am very grateful to all the committee members for their time and

input as we move forward, and we are grateful for the advice we are receiving from HRGB at a national level.

As I'm writing this, final plans are in place for the Rally at the wonderful hall in Newbiggin, Cumbria on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October and we are hoping to have a date soon for a Saturday in November, in Sale. The venues in the north and south of the region are chosen for shorter travelling distances and appropriate social distancing by fewer people in large rooms. I hope all of you who attend will feel glad you did and know everything was done to keep everyone as safe as possible. If you are waiting until next year we will be delighted to see you then!

It was lovely to have a good number at the on-line event in July, which our former Chair, Beth McCord, organized and delivered with great expertise and patience! I know that Zoom isn't for everyone, not least because not everyone can access it. However, it was a great afternoon and I thoroughly enjoyed it as an event of its time. Thanks to Beth for all her hard work both before and during the afternoon.

At the Committee meeting, I challenged everyone to submit a short note about where their team was up to for this edition. Whether or not they responded can be seen in the following pages! When I think back to the time I was regional secretary and really e-mail was only just becoming 'the thing' I wonder how on earth we successfully planned events – but we did!

Everyone should have received the Autumn/Winter 2021 copy of Reverberations. It's full of interesting articles and photographs and was worth the postage just to read AKR in Numberland by one of our own... I hope you enjoyed reading the whole magazine, it reminded you how much fun handbell ringing is and inspired you to re-engage with all it has to offer both socially and musically.

With best wishes

*Linda Parkington*

### **COMING SOON!**

For teams and independent members in the south of the Region –

Get-Together at the end of November 2021

at Sale, near Manchester (Just off the M60).

Meet up for Massed Ringing, Quizzing, FUN!!

Look out for Details, or ask your Team Correspondent



## MARRON VALLEY /DEAN HANDBELL RINGERS



Like a lot of other teams, I gather, we rang outside as often as we could and a few times indoors, keeping safe as per the rules, but managed two special events. One was to ring in the garden of our 90 year old ringer Julie, on her birthday in the summer. It was a complete surprise to her but we had been secretly negotiating with her daughter and we put on a good spread and rang Happy Birthday to her.

The other was just before Christmas when we were able to ring indoors and we put our Christmas hats and sweaters on and rang a medley of Christmas music for 12 bells. Like Sheila, who rings with Dean, we've been amazed and delighted at just how much music there is out there for 12 bells.



### THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

We are nearly there, we hope. It seems such a long time since we all got together for a rally. Things are a bit different now, wearing face masks, no hugging. I have had my Covid injections and have also had my flu injection, so ready to go.

We have at last started ringing again, yippee, but took it easy to start with as none of us were really "ringing fit". Six people and twelve bells. There is a lot of music for twelve bells, but we wanted to play more from our vast collection of music. We have eight people ringing now, having borrowed ringers from Marron Valley, so we have started ringing something a bit more adventurous. We are very lucky as the village hall we use put the tables out for us and store our foams; we are spoilt.

Some weeks we have had seven ringers, as there is usually somebody away on holiday. So, it's either find something for seven or I try and ring eight bells. I usually give up and use mallets instead! But at least we are having fun and meeting up again.

Now we have the mini North West rally at Newbiggin to look forward to. We have the music and have played it all before so it's not strange to us. Some of the pieces will need us to ring from three to five bells so that is going to make our brains work. It will also be lovely to see friends again we haven't seen for nearly two years.

Soon it will be Christmas, and yes, (at the time of writing) it's just 15 weeks away. We have a couple of concerts already, so as soon as the rally is over, we might start ringing something Festive. I am writing this on a warm 18°C sunny day in autumn. The trees still have their leaves and there are flowers blooming in the garden. Horses are still out in the fields and the dogs don't get wet and have to wear their jackets when they go for a walk. It can only get worse!!

Sheila Harris, Dean Handbell Ringers



## LET THERE BE LIGHT!

We are all well aware of the trials and tribulations of the past 18 months so there is no need to dwell on them here. However, it now looks as though the end of the tunnel may not be too far away.

Last year was not entirely dead musically for us, since we were able to have a few practice sessions for six ringers, socially distanced of course, in a local village hall. This was under the guise of exercise for sport, justifiably so given the puffing and blowing after months of inactivity, or perhaps that was simply due to age! For these sessions we used hand chimes. We had bought a small set some years ago. They ranged from C15 to G4 (or 15C to 4G or even C5 to G6 in foreign terminology - a bit of a minefield!). We had not found a great use for them at the time, the higher notes having quite short shafts and being difficult to play. However, the hand bells we use were not available to us and we have plenty of music for twelve bells so using the chimes seemed a good solution. In fact we cracked most of the problems we had encountered previously, with few missed or misplaced notes, and a recognisable result. Another benefit was that the instruments are light and anyone could play anywhere.

The core set of hand bells we use (G18 to G4) belong to the church and need to be retrieved for practices or performances. Over the years we have bought other bells and have the rather odd range of D21 to D07. I leave you to work out what that means in other numbering schemes! A natural consequence is that much of the music we have available to us is arranged in house. The rather dismal period we have endured has resulted in over 20 new pieces, plus a few re-workings of old pieces. So earlier this year, we sent MP3 versions of the music by e-mail to our team members, partly to maintain interest and partly for approval. We also decided to invest in a new set of folders and to concentrate on the new repertoire.

With the relaxation of restrictions in July we were able to resume practices in our normal venue, the main hall in an extra care facility. This often provides us with a small, but knowledgeable audience, who are quite willing to give us a forthright opinion! We soon found, of course, that hearing something produced electronically and being presented with and trying to play the music are quite different. So the "Liberty Bell March" and "Funiculi, Funicula" are much quicker than we thought, but "Little Buttercup" (from HMS Pinafore) and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" are much

more manageable. There are many pieces we have not yet tried. No doubt some will stand the test of time and others will quietly disappear into the archives, but we will enjoy the challenge on the way. Perhaps “Old Folk at Home” sums up the last 18 months!

David Hawkes

SMAART (St. Michael and All Angels Ringing Team, Middlewich)



**The very smart SMAART (St Michael and All Angels Ringing Team)**

### **GRESFORD HANDBELL RINGERS**

“Way, way back, many centuries ago (or so it seems) not long after the pandemic began...” Gresford All Saints Handbell Ringers were privileged to play at a very special occasion: the 95th birthday of the parish church of St Martin of Tours in neighbouring Llay. This was especially fitting, because until the establishment of the parish of Llay, the area had been part of the parish of Gresford, home of our very own handbell team.

I’m sure you remember the playground joke “Antidisestablishmentarianism is a very long word. Can you spell it?” But I’m also sure you never thought you’d have the opportunity to use it. Well, now’s your chance!



Before 1920, Anglican churches in Wales were part of the established church, as the Church of England is today. After the Church of Ireland broke away in the mid nineteenth century, prolonged debate and a campaign spearheaded by Prime Minister of the time (and local landowner) William Ewart Gladstone, resulted in Royal Assent to the separation of the Anglican Church in Wales in September 1914. Opponents of this move were, of course, antidisestablishmentarians. (But “it” is spelled I T!)

The First World War delayed the ratification of the Royal Assent until 1920, and St Martin of Tours in Llay was the first church to be built in disestablished Wales. The foundation stone was laid in 1923 and the building was consecrated in February 1925 by Dr Alfred George Edwards, the first Archbishop of Wales.

Before the war, Llay was an area of farming and forestry, but underlying seams of coal had been discovered, and in the years after the Armistice, the shaft was completed for the new Llay Main colliery, Wales’ largest deep coal mine, which was finally opened in 1921. To house the workers, and then the colliers and their families, the new “garden village” of Llay was rapidly built in 1920. February 2020 therefore saw a constellation of celebrations: 100 years of the village of Llay and 95 years of its church, coinciding with the centenary of the Church in Wales.

With an assembled congregation in St Martin of Tours church, including the diocesan Bishop and local dignitaries, Gresford Handbell Ringers accompanied the hymns and played a couple of suitably commemorative pieces with a distinctly Welsh flavour.



The celebrations continued with contributions from Llay Silver Band, and refreshments in the Miners' Welfare Institute. Llay has always been a close-knit community, and it was wonderful to see the cooperation and collaboration that went into marking a special milestone in local history.

#### SUBMITTING ARTICLES AND EDITORIAL DEADLINES

To submit articles and photographs you can contact me, David R. Kerry at  
[blitzen@btinternet.com](mailto:blitzen@btinternet.com)

#### EDITORIAL DEADLINES

**Our editorial deadlines have been suspended. When it is appropriate (and when we have enough material) the next issue of Oyez will appear. In the meantime keep sending me articles and photos.**

**NORTH WEST REGIONAL COMMITTEE, 2021 - 2022**

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