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Chatter from the Chair



Hello everyone and welcome to this issue of Oyez for summer 2025.

I'm writing this on the hottest day of the year so far and deciding it really is better to be inside, in a cool(ish) room and getting on with some overdue tasks. Why is it that at some point everything you're involved in requires urgent action at the same time and then it all goes quiet?...

A few evenings ago, we had a Zoom North West Region Committee meeting involving, amongst other topics, a review of our recent Golden Jubilee GatherRing at Preston. It's clear from the feedback we've had that it was a brilliant day and very much enjoyed and appreciated by those who were able

to be there. What a joy and privilege to have the wonderful Malcolm Wilson with us! His expertise, leadership and humour led us to abilities and confidence we didn't know we had in both the Masterclass and Massed Ringing. The second Masterclass was led by our own Kate Worthington and was also an enjoyable, enlightening and encouraging time. Malcolm had to start somewhere all those years ago and he probably felt then as Kate does now! Huge thanks to both of them for such great parts of the day and thanks too for the Massed Ringing pieces led by Irene Merson, Anne Hopley and Beth McCord. The pieces had been carefully chosen to reflect our Region over the last 50 years and proved to be inspired choices. We couldn't have such a day without cake and candles and know that not only do we have talented musicians but also bakers!

It was lovely to have Simon Rennie with us for the day, and to recognize his contributions made so freely and generously over so many years. Looking through team scrapbooks and other items which were brought along (not quite the Antiques Roadshow) made me stop for a while and remember, with great affection, those no longer with us but who played such valuable roles in developing and leading the Region into what it is today.

But nothing stands still and it was absolutely wonderful to be able to render Beth speechless and award her Honorary Life Membership of the North West Region. All you need to know about Beth is further on in this issue and there's nothing more to say at this point other than the honour is so hugely well deserved. Congratulations, Beth!

On a slightly different note, but still to do with celebrations, my set of handbells will be seeing light of day in the near future. Normally a select few appear out of the case for me to ring as a Significant Other but at this point I shall be needing them all. The school at which I spent almost all my teaching career is celebrating 175 years since it opened. It's still on its original site and about a third of it is still the original building. A week of great excitement is looming, including a Victorian Day, a day-trip on the local Heritage Railway with a 'proper' steam loco, a Victorian Fair, Maypole Dancing and yes – handbells. The Staff have asked for the children to see them and have a go at some change ringing, as some with long memories remember doing that before I took early retirement 13 years ago. At least two members of staff have fond memories of being part of the school team I ran for a number of years and hopefully some of the expected past pupils will remember too. I've been asked to do a short session with each class and then maybe a tune or two... Not much to think about then!

Many teams still seem to break for the Summer, so enjoy the break if you do. We are encouraging you lovely people to host and share an event in the Autumn by providing you with a couple of pieces of music to start you off and some hints and tips about what you may consider doing. It's not so much a Neighbourhood Watch as a Neighbourhood Ring and such an occasion has great potential for fun and friendship. Don't dismiss it as something you wouldn't consider – give it a try! I look forward to some contributions in the next issue of Oyez, which may even inspire those not as collectively brave as your team to give it a go in the future!

Happy Ringing.

Linda Parkinson

NORTH WEST REGION GOLDEN JUBILEE

OUR CELEBRATION AT LOSTOCK HALL ACADEMY ON 10th MAY 2025



All set out and ready to go on our special day in Lostock, near Preston!

When the Committee started to plan how we would celebrate this very special occasion, it soon became clear that we wanted “Something a Bit Different”. After several Zoom meetings we decided that it must be a busy ringing day for everyone who attended, with plenty of opportunities to learn as well as to socialise. With that in mind, there would be two Masterclasses and lots of massed ringing. As a special treat for our members, we would invite a nationally known conductor to run one of the Masterclasses.

We would choose massed ringing pieces which had been used at North West events over the 50 years of the Region’s existence. We would also ask those attending to bring along their own archives and photos of regional events, to share on the day. And there just must be a Cake Competition! And a Quiz!



The plans progressed, and we found a good venue towards the centre of the Region and close to the motorway system. We were delighted that Malcolm Wilson, pictured left with Linda, was able to join us as our guest Masterclass leader – he has conducted not only at National Rallies, but several times at the International Symposium. It was also especially fitting that Malcolm is a member of the Scottish Region, because when the North West Region was formed in 1975 it included the whole of Scotland. Many of us still have good memories of the wonderful hospitality we enjoyed at Rallies in Scotland – and some of us actually remembered Malcolm as a schoolboy from those days! And here’s our programme of ringing:

Morning Session:

- Massed Ringing – *American Patrol* arranged by the late John Parkinson, Honorary Life President of the Region for many years. Conducted by Anne Hopley.
- Masterclass 1 – *Variations on a Highland Cradle Song*, composed and conducted by our special guest Malcolm Wilson.

- Massed Ringing – *Birthday Rag*, composed by Robin Benton for HRGB's Ruby Anniversary in 2007. Conducted by Beth McCord.
- Massed Ringing – *La Golondrina*, arranged by the late Derek Jackson, ex Chairman and Honorary Life Member of the Region. Conducted by Irene Merson.
- Massed Ringing – *The Skye Boat Song*, arranged and conducted by Malcolm Wilson.

Afternoon Session:

- Masterclass 2 – *Jubilee Polka*, composed and specially adapted for us by Sandra Winter. Conducted by Kate Worthington.
- Massed Ringing – *Polaris and the Northern Lights*, composed by Brendan Bevan for the Golden Jubilee of HRGB in 2017. Conducted by Beth McCord.
- The Cake Break - the Cake Competition was won by Carolyn Walmsley of Sale HR, and we devoured all the entries in a remarkably short time.
- We ended with a final performance of the two Masterclass pieces, led by Malcolm and Kate.



Malcolm in full flow during his Masterclass (or was he getting ready to be in full flight?), and on the right, the winning cake in our Cake Competition. We thought it was beautiful – but we ate it anyway!

Many thanks to Malcolm, Kate and all the Conductors, and to everyone who attended for making this such a special day.

Irene Merson

And here are two reports of the Celebration, first from Norbury then from Marple URC HR.

A GOLDEN DAY INSIDE AND OUT!

Saturday 10th May dawned warm and sunny and that was the greeting when we arrived at Lostock Academy for the NW Region's golden anniversary.

Everyone had gone to a lot of trouble to wear something golden yellow, even the competition cakes were a yellow sight to behold.

After setting up, the hard work began, learning the set pieces of music for the day. Concentration, mixed with anecdotes and laughter, was the order of the day.

Much 'competition' cake was consumed in the afternoon and copious cups of tea and coffee were made.

I hope all enjoyed the day as much as Norbury ringers and we'll all meet up again very soon.

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

A Golden Jubilee is a very special occasion, so members of Marple URC Handbells were happy to join in with the North West Region of HRGB to celebrate their 50 years of ringing! There were many parts to the Celebration – Massed Ringing x 5, Masterclasses x2, Tea breaks x3, Lunch, a Quiz, a Photo board, a Notelet memos opportunity, and a Cake Competition! (All the cakes were deliciously impressive.)

The time at Lostock was intensely packed with super bell-ringing, from ranges of up to 5 Octaves of bells (or was it 6?). Thanks to the memories of the Committee (!), tunes were chosen from each of the past 5 decades, and Masterclasses were led by experts: Malcolm Wilson from Dunblane with 'Variations on a Highland Cradle Song' (a composer and arranger of bells music for many years (*think Skye Boat Song perhaps?*) and Kate Worthington, a more local NW area leader, led a very special *Jubilee Polka*, specially adapted for the event by Sandra Winter.

We were most grateful to Linda for co-ordinating the timings and special 'awarding of Honorary Life Membership' to Beth; also to Anne, Beth, and Irene for the massed ringing leads.

It was a suitably central location and Lostock Academy were most helpful in our set-up/close-down arrangements, so this made logistics on the day smooth-running – Joe deserves a mention...

From a personal viewpoint – it was a fun, exhausting, and memorable day.



The Marple URC attenders (*photo left*) were pleased to be able to join in the celebrating, although the length of time concentrating was demanding, and the older members of the group were more than fatigued by the end of the afternoon!

Well done to all who put the essential elements together for a fine day of ringing, we feel it was a most worthwhile day.

Sue A. (with special thanks to Kinder Ringers, for enabling me to be part of their table for the ringing!)

OUR BETH - A PROFILE OF BETH McCORD, THE REGION'S NEW HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

May 10th at Lostock was not only a Golden Jubilee Celebration – we also used the occasion to surprise Beth McCord by awarding her Honorary Life Membership of the Region. This honour recognises a major contribution over many years to the Region's activities. The following profile has been put together partly from Beth's answers to questions about her life in ringing, and partly from the Region's records. Words in italics are Beth's own.



Beth being awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Region, and presented with her certificate. We had Jocie in attendance ready to hold her up if she was overcome by the surprise!

Jocie also helped to lead the audience's cheers of approval.

When did you start ringing, and was it as a member of your mum's team? (Beth's mum, Linda McCord, was for several years Chair of the East Anglia Region and is a member of Bellfolk HR).

My mum started ringing to get a night out away from me and my brother so she joined the team in the next village and then got 'bitten by the bug'. I started ringing at primary school when my Mum set a team up there. At Christmas we used to ride around on the back of an open topped truck playing carols to people in the local villages and the posh farm houses. I remember we used to get invited in sometimes and we would warm up with a drink and a mince pie before carrying on. Health and Safety wasn't quite so tight in those days! I joined Bellfolk when I was about 15 as they had been invited to play in the National Concert at the National Rally in Liverpool in 1999 and one of their regular ringers was away in Canada so I got roped in. It wasn't like I was studying for my GCSEs or anything!!! I still go back and tag along to their rehearsals when I'm visiting Mum and Dad.

I came to Liverpool University because I loved the 1999 National Rally there and the whole experience of staying in their halls of residence, even just for a weekend! Although I must admit the quality of the food was significantly better for conference delegates than it was for students!! Obviously they were also offering the course I wanted to do (Modern European Languages) but the National Rally certainly helped to persuade me to put it as my first choice.

Did you join Maghull Parish HR immediately?

I have to admit, in my first couple of years handbell ringing was not really a priority! I also didn't have a car so getting to Maghull would have been tricky. However, I was abroad for my third year and on my return I went back to halls. This led to Mum suggesting I get in touch with Simon Rennie as maybe I would enjoy an evening activity doing something which wasn't going to damage my liver! I also had my trusty little Peugeot 205 with me so I could get to rehearsals on a Monday night without any problem. I cannot quite believe that it was 21 years ago!!

I thoroughly enjoyed the National Rallies which I was then allowed to attend. Indeed, it gave me more insight to university life than any open days could have done! I went to the Birmingham International Symposium with Mum in 2000 which was incredible and my first taste of handbells on an international scale. When she suggested we might like to go to the

Australian Symposium in 2006 in Brisbane I jumped at the chance! Since then we have been to Symposia in Japan in 2010 and South Korea in 2014. Mum has kept up the international travel but the arrival of Jocie put mine on hold for a bit!

You were elected to the NW Committee at the 2009 AGM. By 2011 you were leading massed ringing at the Spring Rally and by 2012, also helping to organise a Ring from Scratch session. We're pretty sure that you've attended almost every regional event since you came onto the Committee, and have run activities at most of them.

Yes, Simon has a lot to answer for! I helped a little bit with the Liverpool Symposium in 2012 too, arranging the social evening at the Albert Dock and taking a few people out to sample the delights of the Liverpool nightlife! I couldn't justify spending the money on a hotel as I only lived a short way out of town but that walk up and down to the docks seemed to get longer every day!!

Beth was elected Chairman of the Region in May 2013, succeeding Jennifer Jackson, and she became an NEC Representative at the same AGM. In 2016 she led the Committee in organising and hosting a wonderful National Rally at Newton Rigg Agricultural College, in Cumbria. In 2017 Beth expressed her intention to stand down as Chairman the following year, but she was "persuaded" to stay on for one more year, so it was in 2019 that she was succeeded by Linda Parkington.

In 2018 I attended the first team leader's seminar held at The Edge in Sheffield. I really enjoyed it although being 6 months pregnant meant I was pretty exhausted by the end of it! I also then did the advanced team leader's seminar last August which was a fantastic experience.

In 2024, Beth took a leading role in organising the National Rally at Swanwick, making a huge success of introducing a departure from the format of National Rallies over the previous 25 years and proving that innovation is not impossible! Through her role as an NEC Representative, she has created good contacts all over the UK.

One more question - You have also proved your commitment to young people within HRGB, having founded the youth team, Mini Minims, and you run at least one school team – or is it two? – in addition to being a member of HRGB's national Education Committee.

The Mini Minims were born out of an over excited conversation between me and Lisa on a ferry on the way to ring handbells in Belgium one Christmas. I should imagine it must have been in 2006/2007. The team is currently inactive due to us both having kids of our own to keep up with, but we hope to get it up and running again once we aren't quite so busy.

I used to run 3 school teams when I was a full time teacher in Halewood in Liverpool. I continued to run a school team during my year of maternity leave and baby Jocie would lie on a piece of foam in the corner of the classroom while we practised! It was one of the few times she didn't scream continuously! I have also run two Year 6 experience days at my old primary school. However, due to work commitments I currently run just one school team at Sankey Valley St. James in Warrington.

So there we are! The certificate given to Beth stated that she is also "A Wonderful and Warm-hearted Person, and not at all Stuck-Up".

And so say all of us!!

REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL RALLY AT MILTON KEYNES

Having been part of the organising team for last year's National Rally, I was looking forward to enjoying full participation in the event at Milton Keynes without any responsibilities. Emma and I had a very easy journey down in the glorious sunshine. On arrival we were greeted and shown where to park before going on to the efficient check-ins for accommodation and then Rally registration to collect our Welcome Packs. Although this was in the next building the walk between was all under cover should the weather have been bad.

After the buffet dinner with plenty of food catering for all tastes there was time to catch up with fellow ringers before heading for a DIY bells session. This was organised with timed tickets which avoided too many or too few in each of the 20-minute slots. We don't usually ring from staff notation but were able to choose suitable bells to enable us to cope with the sightreading of several well-known tunes. Our group were complimented on the success of the renditions, which was an encouraging start to the weekend. Less successful was having to solve the puzzle of the hidden light switches in the bedroom (behind the propped-up pillows on the headboard if you ever come across a similar system). It proved to be quite a talking point next day, so I was relieved to discover I was not alone in having this problem.

The hearty breakfast on Saturday morning set us up for the busy day ahead. There was an extensive selection of workshop choices covering a wide range of topics and all aspects of ringing. The mini-ring set up in the grounds sparked a lot of interest during the breaks as well as for those opting to take the opportunity to try tower ringing. The AGM was also held during the afternoon. The most memorable item was the announcement that the regional rebate was to be increased to 50% which was very good news for us all. After the Workshop sessions were completed, we both felt that we had learnt a lot and had successfully tried out things we had not done before.

The Saturday evening session was described as a Showcase of Ringing, rather than a concert, and indeed it was. There was a great variety in the styles of playing, sizes of teams, levels of experience and music chosen. The "Ring Those Chimes" group, who had come together for 2 sessions during the day with conductor John Thompson, were first to perform ringing Via Dolorosa. Our own Beth and Jocie, the youngest ringer there, followed this as one of several duos taking part. They chose the popular show tunes Six by Six and Dancing Through Life. One of the larger teams, Wandle Ringers, played Reverberations, a fitting tribute to John and Jane Willis who had announced their retirement from the Magazine and Sales positions in HRGB. Six more groups differing in size and styles played before the evening was brought to a close by the "Advanced Masterclass" team. Under conductor Aidan Fozard, they showed what can be achieved in 4 sessions of dedicated rehearsal on a huge number of bells and other extras. Crocodile Rock was an exciting piece for a finale to a very varied and contrasting set of performances.

The following morning began with a Sunday Service before we embarked on the massed ringing sessions. We were placed on the front row, right under the conductors' batons, but

we were next to the Stour Valley ringers, who also ring 4-in-hand, so we were in good company, and they gave us some of their ringing tips. The 3 massed ringing pieces were led in 2 separate sessions, conducted by Beth McCord, Aidan Fozard and Jason Walker. They each achieved a high standard of ringing from everyone which ended a very successful and enjoyable weekend. After lunch we left for home having had perfect weather, excellent organisation, great company and a really good time!

Thanks to Anne Hopley for the above – and for the following account of the NBO Concert:

SUMMER HANDBELLS

The NBO's latest public concert took place in The Avenue Methodist Church in Sale. This beautiful venue has hosted many handbell events over the years but never one quite like this. The acoustics of the building suited the sound of over 130 bells and chimes, as well as the voices of the MYC choir who shared the stage on this occasion.

The programme notes promised music for everyone and both groups certainly delivered. They each gave us a varied and well-balanced performance of classical music, original compositions, film music, "pop" music and some of their favourites. The exciting "Plink, Plank, Plunk" demonstrated the use of mallets to perfection and all other special bell techniques featured in different pieces, to the amazement of members of the audience who hadn't seen this kind of bell ringing before. The award-winning ladies choir, too, showed off their exceptional vocal skills in their choices of pieces, all guaranteed to enhance the superb afternoon's entertainment.

If you were unlucky enough to have missed this concert, there is a further opportunity to experience the brilliance of the NBO on 12th July in Rotherham, this time supported by Bronze Carillon and soloist Emily Wong. It will be well worth the trip over the border!

(Further details on nw.hrgb.org.uk)

We're also indebted to Anne for the Quiz which she set for our Golden Jubilee Celebration – if you're still scratching your head, here are the answers!

GOLDEN JUBILEE FUN QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Carol of the Bells | 26. Over the Rainbow |
| 2. Jingle Bell Rock | 27. Cabaret |
| 3. Goldfinger | 28. The Phantom of the Opera |
| 4. Tubular Bells | 29. Memory |
| 5. Bluebells of Scotland | 30. Any Dream Will Do |
| 6. Silence is Golden | 31. All That Jazz |
| 7. The Ash Grove | 32. Mamma Mia |
| 8. Men of Harlech | 33. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang |
| 9. My Grandfather's Clock | 34. We Will Rock You |
| 10. The Entertainer | 35. Singing in the Rain |
| 11. Congratulations | 36. Big Spender |

12. Happy Birthday
13. Minuet and Trio
14. Roses from the South
15. The Green Hills of Tyrol
16. The Walls of Limerick
17. American Patrol
18. Parade of the Tin Soldiers
19. Waltz La Sarabande
20. Music Hall Medley
21. Skye Boat Song
22. Royal Fireworks Music
23. Blue Danube Waltz
24. Blaze Away
25. Trumpet Chorale

37. Some Enchanted Evening
38. Defying Gravity
39. Climb Every Mountain
40. Old Man River
41. I Got Rhythm
42. Lullaby of Broadway
43. Hello Dolly
44. Oh, What a Beautiful Morning
45. Circle of Life
46. Getting to Know You
47. If I Were a Rich Man
48. Food, Glorious Food
49. Starlight Express
50. You'll Never Walk Alone

FREE BELLS



A set of 17 bells is being offered free to any team starting up or who can make use of them. They are old, Whitechapel bells tuned to the old concert pitch with a range of 11G to 06E and including 2 F#s and 2 C#s. See photo left.

Further details from Janie Grabham at janie.grabham@gmail.com

The following bells and equipment are still for sale in the Region:

3 octaves/37 Malmark Handbells. G4 to G7, plus 4 original cases. Also: Tables (collapsible), foam, water-blue bespoke cover and Mallets.

Excellent condition. One careful owner. This set was bought in 1997, and used solely for solo ringing.

£6,500 but open to offers. Can be seen in Kirkby Lonsdale/Cumbria. Happy to provide more information and pictures. Contact Sabine Janowitz: ring4him@yahoo.co.uk

LAST BUT NOT LEAST – OUR PLANS FOR THE REST OF THIS SPECIAL YEAR

IT'S OVER TO YOU!

If you've ever thought that you would like to get to know teams near to you, or that you would enjoy something different in our regional events – well, here's your chance! We have just sent out some suggestions for a get-together which you could organise and host, designed entirely by you. You choose when and where it happens, who to invite and what activities to include. So as Linda has said in her Chatter from the Chair – just give it a try! If you haven't received the information, please contact Irene Merson – details below.

NEXT EDITION OF OYEZ

NEXT PRESS DATE: 31ST OCTOBER 2025 - For the November Edition of Oyez. Let's have lots of reviews of your ringing! Please submit articles / photos to Irene Merson – irene@mersons.co.uk. Articles in Word, and photos as jpegs, please.

NORTH WEST REGIONAL COMMITTEE, 2025 - 2026

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