

The Lancashire Ringer

Series 2 Issue 1 – August 2016

Welcome to this edition of the Lancashire Ringer which is intended to keep you up to date with what is happening in the territory of the Lancashire Association, and occasionally beyond.

Your editor is based in Lancaster so he doesn't always get to know about what's happening in places like Barrow or Manchester. Please send in details of what you are up to, and submit articles for publication if you feel inclined to do so.

KIRKHAM ST MICHAEL: A RING OF TEN FOR THE FYLDE

Those who have rung on the eight bells at St Michael's Kirkham will know that they are not in particularly good condition. The tenor is at present unringable. There is a chunk missing from the soundbow of the second, which doesn't do much for its tone. The bells are not a good fit for the tower; bits of frame and even a bit of the inside of the tower wall have been cut away to make room for some of them.

Initially the Kirkham ringers thought in terms of rehanging the tenor, as that was the absolute minimum needed to put them into working order. Then the church received a large legacy, and it became apparent that some of it could be used towards funding something more ambitious. The result is a proposal for the present 20cwt eight to be replaced by a 16cwt ring of ten, hung in a new frame lower down the tower. The back four bells are intended to come from a chime of eight taken from a redundant church at Porth in south Wales. The remaining six will be cast specifically for Kirkham.

Some of the money required has still to be raised. If you would like to contribute towards the cost of the project, please contact Terry Williams - tebsw@talktalk.net or 01772 682484. The proposal is also dependent in part on a grant from the Association's Bell Restoration Fund. However, when the work is complete, this very worthwhile project will give the Fylde branch – and the Association as a whole - a really fine ring of ten.



*Photo of the bellhangers at Porth in action:
courtesy Keltek Trust web site*

Taking the chime of eight (cast by Taylors in 1930) out of the tower at Porth was evidently quite a complicated operation. The tenor in particular only just fitted through the opening made for the bells.

Fortunately the Keltek Trust, the charity which acts as a clearing house for redundant bells, had the foresight to make a recording of the work while it was in progress.

You can get some idea of what was involved here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgGlbeYtSDw>.

Events Calendar

Some of the meetings listed below are subject to confirmation. If in doubt, check. Not all branches have supplied information for this list. If you would like to include your events in the next issue, please let me know! - Ed

Thu 4 Aug	Liverpool Cathedral (12) Twilight Tour (Simulator Practice)
Fri 5 Aug	Hornby (8): Lancaster Branch Surprise Practice 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 6 Aug	Long Preston (3) 2:45-3:15, Gisburn (6) 3:30-5:00, Bolton-by-Bowland (6) 6:30-8:00pm: Blackburn Branch three tower summer meeting. Poolstock: Wigan Branch Practice 6:30-8:00pm <i>To be confirmed – contact Barry Hale 01695 625829.</i>
Tue 9 Aug	Childwall: Liverpool Branch Practice 7:30pm
Fri 13 Aug	Heywood (8) 7:00-9:00pm: Rochdale Branch practice.
Sat 14 Aug	Tarleton (8): LACR Training Day – Plain Hunt. 2:00-4:00pm
Sat 20 Aug	Leck (5) and Burton-in-Lonsdale (6) Lancaster Branch meeting. <i>Details to be confirmed:</i> <i>contact Robin Daw r4daw@aol.co.uk or 01524 701710.</i>
Sat 27 Aug	Lytham St John (6) Fylde Branch Practice 3:00-3:00-5:00pm
Fri 2 Sep	Hornby (8): Lancaster Branch Surprise Practice 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 3 Sep	Southport Crossens (8) 3:30-5:00pm; Southport Emmanuel (8) 6:30-8:00pm. Wigan Branch Practice. Names for tea to Celia Hughes D'Aeth 01704 532745
Sat 10 Sep	Bootle (8): Liverpool Branch meeting 10:00am-12:00noon. Includes business meeting at 11:00am
Wed 21 Sep	East Crompton (8) 3:00-5:00pm: Rochdale Branch practice
Thu 22 Sep	Low Bentham (6) 7:00-8:30pm Lancaster branch meeting.
Sat 24 Sep	Liverpool Cathedral (12): 6:00-7:30pm: Liverpool Branch Practice
Sat 1 Oct	St Anne's on Sea (8): 2:00-4:00pm: Fylde Branch Practice Six and Eight Bell Striking Competition – Preston Branch Ormskirk (8) 6:30-8:00pm Wigan Branch meeting
7-9 Oct	Rochdale Branch Quarter Peal weekend
Fri 7 Oct	Hornby (8): Lancaster Branch Surprise Practice 7:00-8:30pm
8-11 Sep	Heritage Open Days – Why not open your tower to the general public?
Thu 13 Oct	Hale (8): 7:30-9:00pm Liverpool Branch Practice
Sat 22 Oct	Lytham St Peter (6) 3:00-5:00pm: Fylde Branch Practice
Fri 4 Nov	Hornby (8): Lancaster Branch Surprise Practice 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 5 Nov	Hindley (8) 3:30-5:00pm; Westhoughton (8) 6:30-8:00pm. Wigan/Bolton Branch Practice. Names for tea to Martin Pendlebury 07743 046609.
Sat 12 Nov	Milnrow (8) 7:00-9:00pm: Rochdale Branch practice.

EUROPEAN BELL FOUNDRIES - 1

We tend not to realise how many bell foundries there are outside the UK, particularly in Europe. One of the more interesting ones is that of the Kruszewsky family at Wegrow (pronounced Vengrov) in Poland. They have a web site in English which tells you a bit about its history. Below is a picture of a set of six swing chiming bells cast the firm for a church in Gdynia, near Gdansk. As can be seen the external finish of their bells is very good and they take a lot of trouble over ornamentation.



We regret to report that **DIANA HANDLEY**, a well known and popular member of the Furness & South Lakeland Branch of the Lancashire Association, died on 5 July this year. In addition to her considerable ringing achievements she was the author of a very useful booklet on the bells of the Furness Branch.

THE BELLS OF BALLAUGH by Peter Rivet

The Association AGM on the Isle of Man at the end of April provided an opportunity to ring at both the Sodor & Man branch's active towers. Douglas St George has a ring of twelve, while Peel Cathedral has eight. Both towers have very good, well tuned modern bells. The down side of ringing trips to the Sodor & Man branch is that there are only two of them.

For those of us who enjoy something a little bit different, there was a real treat in store on the Monday following the "official" meeting: a chance to look at the unringable three at Ballaugh New Church, in the north west part of the island. As can be seen from the picture the church has a distinctive character. The lower part of the tower is quite conventional but the upper section is octagonal, and a little bit reminiscent of All Saints Pavement in York.

Ballaugh doesn't appear in Dove, in either the printed or the online version. The bells have wheels, but they have not turned for many years, and as there are no stays or sliders it could be argued that they were intended for swing chiming rather than ringing.

These days they are chimed with ropes attached to the clappers, using a makeshift Ellacombe apparatus. "You don't want to go to Ballaugh, they're rubbish!" was the comment of one of the regular Isle of Man ringers who expects rings of bells to be perfectly in tune

With this warning in mind, visitors' expectations were low. But in fact their tone was quite acceptable. The main problem was the state of the tower. As the photo below shows the upper stages of it were liberally provided with twigs from birds' nests.



The church, which like its predecessor Ballaugh Old Church is dedicated to St Mary, was consecrated in 1832 and the bells appear to be of the same date. The tenor bears the following inscription on the soundbow:

COWGILL & COMER . LIVERPOOL

The treble and second are said to have the same makers' names incised on them, but this was not readily visible. The tenor is estimated to weigh around 3cwt but this is a very approximate figure. Ranald Clouston, when he wrote up the bells of the Isle of Man in 1986, reckoned that the treble was probably the heaviest of the three.

This requires some explanation. Cowgill and Comer usually only cast single bells and so far as is known this was their only attempt at producing a set. They appear to have only a vague idea about tuning as all three are roughly the same diameter (23¾"). To obtain a different note the founders simply increased their height.

Could these bells be put into ringing order? It is possible, though substantial modifications would be needed to the fittings. Could they, in the longer term, be augmented to five or six? That would be a serious challenge and is unlikely to happen, which is a pity as it would make the Isle of Man a much more interesting destination for visiting bands. The church serves a very small congregation which doesn't help.

Special thanks are due to Ernie de Legh Runciman for organising the trip to see these bells, which was much appreciated by the group pictured below.

It has been suggested that a working party could be put together to clear the birds' nests from the tower, and perhaps investigate the potential for putting the bells into working order. If you would like to be involved in this, please contact 07624 426654 or ernie@manxcat.org.uk



METHOD OF THE MONTH

This is a regular feature of Lancaster Branch newsletters, which may appeal to a wider audience. There are a lot of slightly obscure methods that aren't all that difficult in themselves, but don't often get rung.

Here then is something slightly different to try at your next practice. If you manage to ring a peal, or even a quarter, in this method, please send details to the editor (preferably with a photo of the band and/or the tower where you rang it) and it can then be covered in the next issue of the Lancashire Ringer.

ST JAMES'S YOUTHS' EXERCISE MINOR

123456	164523	135264	142635	156342
213546	614253	315624	412365	516432
231564	641235	351642	421356	561423
325146	462153	536124	243165	654132
352416	426513	563214	234615	645312
534261	245631	652341	326451	463521
354621	425361	562431	236541	643251
536412	243516	654213	325614	462315
563142	234156	645123	352164	426135
651324	321465	461532	531246	241653
615342	312456	416523	513264	214635
165432	132546	146253	153624	124365
164523	135264	142635	156342	123456

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS 2016

A report from your representatives

By Beth Ingham, Ernie de Legh-Runciman and Giles Blundell

This year's Central Council annual meeting took place in Portsmouth. Of your 5 representatives, 3 (Beth, Ernie, Giles) attended while two (Alison, Chris) had to send their apologies. To summarise the formal business of the meeting and the associated Ringing World AGM:

- All motions proposed at the meeting were passed, except for the one proposed on behalf of the LACR which we withdrew;
- Alison retired from the Peal Records Committee. Giles was elected to the Administrative Committee. Chris, Ernie and Giles continue as members of various committees, having been elected in previous years;
- The Ringing World is out of immediate danger due to a greatly increased level of donations in the past year;
- The Vice-president of the CCCBR announced that the Council hope to hold their 2018 meeting at Lancaster University

It is probably most helpful to look at the themes that dominated this year's meeting, but before doing that, there are a couple of issues that directly relate to us as an Association:

What's this about the Central Council coming to Lancaster in 2018? I don't remember inviting them

For a good long time (probably forever) the practice has been for the Central Council meeting to move round the country, as invited by various associations. But a number of things have come together: Associations are increasingly reluctant to invite the Central Council for a visit that is difficult to arrange since it needs a venue that is both large enough and cheap enough for ringers, while there is increasing concern that the Council meeting has become an elaborate junket – it doesn't seem to do anything positive for ringing in the area that it visits. It's been suggested that it might make sense to move to holding the meeting in a conference centre of some type.

In 2015, the Administration Committee (the nearest thing the CC has to an executive committee or board of directors) suggested changing the annual meeting to a different date with everything happening within two days – but that motion failed for a number of reasons. The Admin Committee had expected the motion to pass and so had not looked very hard for an Association to invite them for 2018.

What has now happened is that the Admin Committee have said that they will organise the 2018 meeting themselves, but preferably with the help of the local Association. They have identified the conference facilities at Lancaster University as an appropriate location, and so would like our help with the event. We were only contacted about this in early May, when LACR didn't have a meeting planned before the CC meeting. Your trustees (President, General Secretary, Peal Secretary and Treasurer) and CC Reps (who currently include the General Secretary and Peal Secretary) agreed – but made it very clear that this help is conditional on ringers in the north west benefitting from the Council's visit.

The Admin Committee have agreed to this condition. The next stage now is to work out what we – as the members of the Lancashire Association – need to do to make sure that we can let our visitors have a good time visiting us while giving us real help by sharing their knowledge and skills with us over the two or three days that they are with us.

Why did our reps withdraw their motion allowing proxy voting?

With the full support of the Association Committee, Ernie (seconded by Giles) was going to move a motion allowing proxy voting – so that CCCBR members would be able to have someone vote on their behalf even if they weren't physically at the meeting. As it's now technically possible to use streaming over the internet to see just what is going on at a meeting even if you're not physically there, we reckoned that this would help widen participation in the Central Council.

But when the agenda for the meeting came out, including our motion, two things became clear: the agenda was very long, and there was a further motion which proposed potentially much more radical change to the Council.

To succeed, our motion would have needed a two thirds majority (because it would have changed the rules of the Central Council – ordinary motions only need a simple majority to pass). Talking to other council members before the meeting, it became clear to us that we would be unlikely to get the majority we needed. Given the length of the agenda, we decided it was best not to be self-indulgent arguing a point that would – in practice – be lost, when Central Council members had better things to do with their time.

Main themes of the meeting

Most of the main themes of the weekend emerged through the motions discussed, which fell into three groups.

Coping with the closure of the Ringing Foundation

In August 2015, the Ringing Foundation was wound up – Giles attended what turned out to be their last AGM on behalf of the Association, and raised the issue of whether the Foundation should continue. The consensus was that it shouldn't, so it was closed. But the Ringing Foundation was mentioned quite a lot in the Central Council's rules. Some uncontroversial motions were proposed and passed to tidy this up.

Widening the choice of what can be rung as ‘methods’ and used in peals that the Central Council analyses

This fairly technical but important issue has been rumbling on for some time, and we are grateful to Richard Andrew, the Liverpool Universities Society rep on the CC, for allowing us to use part of his report to his society:

‘The two motions raised by the Methods committee covering proposed changes to the Council Decisions concerning Peal Ringing, Methods and Calls were passed, including a minor change to the first to amend an incorrect paragraph reference. The Methods committee also issued an explanatory document covering the proposed changes [which is available on the CCCBR website], so hopefully it will clarify the changes to the Decisions which have now been passed. I think it would have been helpful if they could have issued this document at the same time as the proposed motions rather than just a few days before the Council meeting, but at least we have it now. In summary, the changes are as follows:-

1. Allow a wider range of Peal Lengths
2. Allow methods that have more than four consecutive blows in a place
3. Allow a new method to be named by ringing a quarter peal length
4. Allow calls to extend the length of a lead
5. Allow hand bell peals of Minimus.

‘These are explained in full in the document, which also makes the point that they do not impose any new restrictions, so anything that was permitted under the Decisions as they stood before the changes is still permitted now. Incidentally, the first handbell peal of Minimus has already been rung and was completed just minutes after the Motion was passed at the Council meeting - see Bellboard for details!’

What is the Central Council for?

If one issue dominated the weekend, it was this. It’s probably fair to say that over the past year more questions than ever before have been raised about what the Central Council is for, whether it’s value for money, whether it’s organised in the right way and so on.

This wasn’t just addressed in the formal meeting: Sunday afternoon saw a ‘question time’ meeting, streamed over the internet to anyone who wanted to listen, where little else was talked about. This has been reported in the Ringing World. But two formal motions did address the point. One formally added a ‘Decision’ (a specific, recorded motion of the Council) that ‘the Council’s primary rôle is to provide support and services to bellringers’. Of perhaps even greater importance is a motion that ‘the Council appoint a Working Group to undertake a detailed review of its rules and activities, and to make recommendations for modernisation (and) that the Group report, with appropriate recommended changes, to the 2017 Council meeting.(...) The full text of these are, once again, also shown on the Central Council’s website.

There was not universal support for these – it is tempting to say that ‘the establishment’ objected to the motions. But both were passed by overwhelming majorities – including all three of your representatives. A report from your reps is not the place for personal opinion, but if the work that the Central Council has agreed to goes ahead then there will surely be significant change to the Council – even to its existence- in the near future. Whether that will impact on the 2018 meeting that we will have a part in organising is something that is yet to be seen.

ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2015 - Problems with printing and distribution meant that the latest Annual Report (light grey cover) was not available in time for the AGM in Douglas at the end of April. It is however available now, so if you were a paid up member last year and have yet to receive your copy, please contact your Branch Secretary
