

The Lancashire Ringer

Series 2 Issue 3 – July 2017

PILLING HOST THE ASSOCIATION AGM

The Association AGM at Pilling, in the Lancaster Branch, was well attended. Was it the venue, or the food, or the fact that many ringers from other parts of the Association hadn't been there before? Whatever the reason, it seemed to work well. The Lancashire Association's report, covering its activities during 2016, was available at the meeting. It has a yellow cover. If you were a fully paid up member last year and haven't received your copy, please get in touch with your Branch Secretary. One word of warning though: pages 1 and 2 with a list of officers was left off. A reprinted version is available from the Report Editor if you need it.



RINGING COMMENTARY – a brief look at the ringing scene

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry finally closed its doors in May. This is a very sad loss to the ringing community. However Whites, the bellhangers based at Appleton, Oxfordshire have acquired patterns to enable them to cast bells to both Whitechapel and Gillett & Johnston specifications. They will be doing this through the Westley Group, a major industrial combine with considerable experience of producing castings of all kinds.

The foundry they intend to use is that of J.T. Price at Holditch Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 9JG. Apparently they are quite amenable to the idea of allowing groups of ringers coming to see their bells cast. The premises aren't as old or glamorous as 32-34 Whitechapel Road but as the Holditch site (roughly half way between Newcastle and Chesterton) is only a short distance off the M6 it should be an easy day trip for a party from Lancashire.

York Minster has now appointed a new Tower Captain – sorry, Head of Tower (she is being paid for it so perhaps corporate language is appropriate). It is to be hoped that the band and the Dean and Chapter will now be able to put their recent troubles behind them and get on with what they do best.

And finally... a small bell intended for chiming has come to light at St Oswald's **Knuzden**, on the edge of Blackburn. It used to hang on the west front of the church but some years ago was replaced with a more modern one. It's dated 1691 but there is no other inscription to identify the founder and the canons on the top have been removed at some point when it was rehung. It could have come from the Wigan foundry, then operated by William Scott, or it could have come from York. Anyone with any knowledge of its provenance is invited to contact the editor.

(Photo by Gerry Sumner)



WHALLEY - PROBLEMS OR OPPORTUNITIES?

by John Pilkington

In September last year we were informed that the work on the tower would require that the bells must not be rung until the work was complete and the new mortar had had time to set. This was to take at least until the end of January but later became the end of March. Here was an ideal recipe for the disintegration of a band of ringers – people finding other things to do and continuing with them.

However, realising that, mainly as a result of illness etc. St Mary Magdalene's at Clitheroe had only two active ringers at present, after some discussion I approached the Vicar, Rev. Andy Froud, to ask if we could transfer our Tuesday Night practice to Clitheroe. I am pleased to say that he was very welcoming, and the first such practice took place on 4 October, supported as usual by our regular visitors from Waddington and Bolton-by-Bowland. We realised that to use the bells just for practice was a little selfish, so we questioned whether it would be possible to ring for any services.

It happens that the service time at St Mary's is 9.30 am, so if we got up early enough, we could ring for that and still get back to Whalley for our own service. Taking into account the earlier start, extra travelling time, and occasional other duties at Whalley, we decided to aim at ringing on alternate Sundays. At Christmas we were able to ring for their Carol Service, and that was early enough for us all to be able to attend the service and still get back to Whalley for our own!



Whalley: St Mary and All Angels

Rev. Andy seems very pleased, and usually meets us arriving as he nips home for a quick break after his early service. We have also had some very positive comments from the slightly late comers meeting us as we sneak away back to Whalley (not sure if they know where we are going!). Another particularly pleasing outcome is that two (sometimes three) of the Waddington ringers have chosen to join us for this, as they can also get back to their church in time to ring. Furthermore, at least two former Clitheroe ringers have indicated that they would like to return, so with the Waddington ringers, it is likely that some ringing will take place after we have come home.

While all this has been going on, there has been an opportunity for scraping, rust proofing and painting of the bell frame, along with other repairs and refurbishment in the bell chamber.

Work is now complete, so Whalley bells are back in action. The next opportunity is to train some more recruits - are you interested?

Ringling Events: Calendar for 2017

This list is based primarily on the Association and Merseybells web sites so some branches are better represented than others.

Sat 1 July	Wigan Branch meeting and striking competition: Rainford, 3:00-5:00pm Further ringing in the evening 6:30-8:00pm
Fri 1 July	Lancaster Branch advanced practice: Hornby, 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 8 July	Furness Branch meeting - Ambleside, 2:30-4:30pm Refreshments provided. Preston Branch meeting – Scorton 3:00-5:00pm
Sat 22 July	Fylde Branch meeting – Poulton-le-Fylde 3:00-5:00pm
Mon 24 July	Wigan Branch practice: Wigan 7:30-9:00pm
Fri 4 August	Lancaster Branch advanced practice: Hornby, 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 5 August	Wigan Branch meeting: Poolstock, 6:30-8:00pm
Sat 12 August	Furness Branch meeting: Millom, 2:30-4:30pm Preston Branch meeting: Ecclestone, 3:00-5:00pm
Sat 26 August	Kirkham (Willows) 3:00-5:00pm
Mon 28 August	Wigan Branch 10 bell practice: Wigan, 7:30-9:00pm
Fri 1 September	Lancaster Branch advanced practice: Hornby, 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 2 September	Wigan Branch meeting: Newton-le-Willows, 3:30-5:00pm. Followed by tea. Further ringing at Knutsford (Cheshire) 6:30-8:00pm.
Thu 7 September	Rosendale Branch meeting: Ramsbottom, 7:30-9:00pm
Sat 16 September	LACR Committee Meeting – Bolton Branch. Venue and times to follow.
Fri 6 October	Lancaster Branch advanced practice: Hornby 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 7 October	6 and 8 bell striking competitions – Douglas-in-Parbold. Times to follow.
Sat 14 October	Blackburn and Preston Branches: Joint outing Furness Branch meeting: Kendal, 2:30-4:30pm
Sat 21 October	Manchester Branch meeting: Ashton, 10:30-12:30pm
Mon 23 October	Wigan Branch 10 bell practice: Wigan, 7:30-9:00pm
Fri 3 November	Lancaster Branch advanced practice: Hornby 7:00-8:30pm
Sat 25 November	10 bell striking competition – Venue and times to follow.

STRIKING COMPETITIONS

We are approaching the time of year when the General Secretary of the Association sends out details of the six and eight bell striking competitions. If you come from a tower that has never entered a band in these you may feel that they are for really advanced ringers but this needn't be the case.

All you need for the six bell section is a group of six ringers who ring regularly for Sunday services at your tower, and are members of the Association. Note they don't have to be registered under your tower for Association purposes – they key point is that they ring there on Sundays. They also have to be capable of ringing tolerably well together. You can enter a call change band, but unless they are very good this isn't recommended as the format of the call changes is quite strict; the changes mustn't repeat, and every bell except the tenor has to be called in to lead. The general requirement is a touch of 120 changes and for this an extent of Plain Bob Doubles is all that is needed. If you have a really advanced band there is nothing to stop you ringing a touch of Landon Surprise if you like, but remember that the competition is judged for the quality of the striking, not the complexity of the method – and with something advanced there is a much greater chance that you will fire out! So why not give it a go?

MISSING BELLS AND METAL THIEVES

by Peter Rivet

Metal theft from churches has attracted a lot of attention over the last few years. Most cases of it involve lead from church roofs. The experience of the Church of England's Blackburn Diocese, we were told several years ago, has been "average" in this respect, which indicates that in some parts of the country it has been very much worse. When an impermeable roof covering is removed it may not be immediately apparent... until it rains, and water starts pouring into the building, causing all sorts of damage.

Other kinds of metal have not been exempt. Church plate left on display is obviously vulnerable; so are bulkier items like candlesticks and lecterns. It all makes depressing reading.

Church bells have got off relatively lightly, mainly because they are much less easy to get at, but they have been stolen too. Bronze is valuable. A well publicised case a few years ago was the theft of some bells from Nicholson's bell hanging works at Bridport in Dorset. Several of them were of historic interest, but it is almost certain that they were melted down for scrap.

In Lancaster, the little bell from the bellcote on the former church of St Anne (now the Duke's Theatre, see the photo on the right) disappeared in 2011. No details are known of any inscription on it so it was virtually impossible to trace. The thieves appear to have taken advantage of scaffolding put up for repairs to the premises next door in order to gain access. It has not been replaced; it was of no use to the theatre, whose management have other priorities. But its loss is to be regretted as it was part of the character of the building, and a reminder of its former use.



More recently, a single bell was stolen from the church of St Barnabas at Heapey. This church serves a scattered rural community near Chorley and is in an isolated position with few houses close by. The bell (Mears 1853) was a reasonably substantial one, said to have been 20 inches in diameter. It was mounted on two very large cast iron brackets attached to a buttress adjoining of the porch. As it was hung close to ground level, it was probably all too easy for the people responsible to remove it to ground level before anyone noticed what they were doing.



The empty brackets which used to carry a bell on the side of Heapey Church

Heapey's PCC are keen to replace their missing bell, and have found one from a redundant mission church. This is commendable, but it must be questioned whether it makes sense to put it in exactly the same place. Would it not be better to reposition the brackets further up the building, so that the bell would be out of reach of a short step ladder? The design of the buttress appears to be compatible with this.

Bells in towers are not exempt; pigeons may not be the only unwanted intruders in belfries. Recently three tubular bells, plus one small conventional one, were removed from a chime of ten of them at St Peter's, Daylesford which is in Gloucestershire (though in the Oxford Diocese). Presumably they were picked on because they were relatively easy to remove. As change ringers we may not think very highly of tubular bells, but to those churches that have them they are an important asset.

Second hand bells quite often appear for sale on ebay. They may be legitimate demolition contractor's perks, but it's a good idea to ask the vendor where they came from. Just because those men on the church roof are wearing hard hats and high visibility jackets, it doesn't mean that they have any business to be there. It's always worth checking.

METHOD OF THE MONTH THE QUIRISTER (1677)

12345 This is an early doubles
21354 method, from Fabian
23145 Stedman's Campanalogia.
23415 It involves four blows in
24351 the same place a bit too
42531 frequently for present
45213 day tastes. But Stedman
45123 himself clearly approved
41532 of it: "This peal is as
14523 musical, easie and prac-
14532 tical as any of this kind
41523 that ever was prickt".
45132
45312 The structure at the lead
43521 end is incompatible with
34251 the kind of bob used in
32415 most doubles methods.
32145 The version given by
31254 Stedman is as follows:
13245
13254 BOB
31245
32154 23154
32514 21345
35241 12354
53421 12534
54312 21543
54132 25134
51423
15432 The double dodges
15423 at the back are a bit
51432 like those in Stedman.
54123 Doubles. Perhaps that's
54213 what he meant about the
52431 music. The only way to
25341 find out, of course, is to
23514 ring it. With a bit of
23154 practice, it might be a
21345 suitable subject for a
12354 quarter peal attempt.
12345

If you would like to suggest a slightly out of the ordinary method for this column, please feel free to send in details.

Things that can be rung at six bell towers are preferred as they will be useful to a wider audience.

EUROPEAN BELL FOUNDRIES No.3 - CORNILLE-HAVARD VILLE DIEU-LES-POELES, FRANCE

This foundry is relatively close at hand for British visitors, as it is just the other side of the English Channel in Normandy. Villedieu-les-Poeles has a long tradition of producing metalwork of all kinds, particularly pots and pans. The foundry building (10 Rue du Pont Chignon) dates from 1865. As with any bell foundry, a substantial amount of Cornille-Havard's work is concerned with maintaining existing installations. The firm produces not only bells and chiming equipment for them, but bronze sculptures as well.



Tours of the foundry are available from mid-February to November, with commentaries in French, English and German. There is also a tourist shop selling a range of bell related souvenirs.



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL: Why do we seem to be hearing so much more from it than we used to?

by Giles Blundell

When we go ringing at our usual towers, it's tempting to think of ringing as something that is done in isolation by us and members of our regular bands. But of course there is more to ringing than that: from time to time ringers will visit us from elsewhere (and we may visit them at their towers), and we band together in branches of the Lancashire Association, and then as the Lancashire Association. We do this because there are things that we do better together than we do apart – for example it's easier to talk to the church across a diocese if we speak with one voice, and there are few if any towers who can provide all the opportunities and training that their ringers can ever want without working with other ringers elsewhere.

While we band together across the North West in the Lancashire Association, since 1890 ringers have realised that we need a nationwide (and now worldwide) voice. That voice is the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (the CCCBR or Central Council for short). Given the nature of ringing, where the only people any given ringer really needs to listen to are their tower captain and their vicar, the Central Council doesn't give orders to ringers or to Associations – instead it must work by persuasion and consensus. At the moment, the Central Council is made up of 65 societies like the Lancashire Association. As one of the largest societies, we send five representatives, who are expected to carry out a number of jobs. I'd summarise these as

- Helping to make decisions that will affect ringing throughout the world
- Keeping in touch with other ringing societies
- Carrying out the work of the council
- Making sure that the rest of the Central Council are doing their job properly
- Keeping the Central Council in touch with the views of members of the LACR – and keeping the members of the LACR in touch with the views of the Central Council

Of our five CCCBR reps, four are currently serving or have recently served on Central Council committees. In particular, our own Ernie de Legh Runciman chairs the Tower Stewardship Committee, and both Ernie and I (Giles) are members of the Central Council's Public Relations Committee, and of the Administrative Committee – the nearest thing that the council has to an executive committee.

So why are we hearing more from the council than we're used to? Well, for a start, it's because your representatives are committed to acting as a channel of communication between the Central Council and ringers in general – and that means we need to let you know what is going on. But it's also because that many of the things that ringers do better together – working out how to deal with protecting children and other vulnerable people, or finding ways to promote ringing to the general public for example – affect what we do in our ringing in our home towers. And it's also because (perhaps rather late in the day) the Central Council has recognised that we no longer ring in the world of 1890 when the Central Council was founded.

We're not in the world of post war Britain or even 2000 either. With very few people not using the internet, email or social media, it's much quicker and easier to communicate than it used to be. So when there is information which can be useful to any or all of us, as your CCCBR reps we try to pass it on to you as effectively as we can – which these days means that as well as getting information passed down through the Association and the branch, you may also hear about it through email or Facebook.

No one would claim that the CCCBR as it stands is perfect (and that is something that would need another, much longer article to discuss) but we do need to work together to do things that will be much the same wherever we ring. For the moment, the Central Council is the way that we do that.