

The Lancashire Ringer

Series 2 Issue 4 – February 2018

EXTREME FUNDRAISING by Peter Rivet

Need some money for repairs to your tower? How about a sponsored abseil down the side of it? Several churches have tried this in the past, including Lancaster RC Cathedral in the 1990s when was raising a significant amount of money towards getting the bells rehung.



An event organised by the Scouts at St John's Silverdale - Photo by Robin Daw

There are some obvious prerequisites. The first is that the tower itself is in sound enough condition not to be a hazard to those taking part. If there's a risk that a pinnacle will come crashing down at the same time, this is not a good idea. The tower needs to adjoin a churchyard, not a busy town centre shopping street. At the same time you need to be able to draw on advice and supervision from people experienced in this activity, and have access to appropriate equipment.

Mountaineering clubs and organisations like the Scouts (see the photo above) may be able and willing to help. There ought to be a reasonably straightforward access to the top of the tower; as we all know, some towers are much more user friendly than others. And finally, you need to find some volunteers willing and fit enough to do the abseiling!

If there are practical difficulties with letting people do this you could follow the example of St Paul's Scotforth, on the south side of Lancaster. The church only has one bell, so it doesn't normally feature in a newsletter of this sort, but in 2015 it showed what could be done when an abseiling event was arranged for teddy bears (£2 a go for each of them). This proved immensely popular with teddy bear owners of all ages.



Scotforth St Paul (1) setting off at the top and (2) safe arrival at the bottom - Photos by Brenda Rockall.

A further advantage of an event like this is that plenty of people will come to watch. Consequently it provides an excellent opportunity to raise funds in more conventional ways, like selling home made cakes and jam, or a “Spot the tower” competition based on old postcards...

But that is a subject for another article.

CENTRAL COUNCIL REPORT 2017

Beth Ingham, Ernie de Legh Runciman and Giles Blundell

This year the Central Council met in Edinburgh. Three of your five representatives were there (Beth, Ernie, Giles) while Alison and Chris had to send their apologies.

Two large issues were discussed: the reorganisation of ringing’s central body, and the rules which apply to which peals are included in the national records.

For the past year, a ‘Council Review Action Group’ (CRAG) has been looking at what the Central Council does, how it does it, and how it is responsible to ringers throughout the world. CRAG came up with a number of proposals about what should be done about this: these were discussed, and overwhelmingly approved. That’s all indisputable fact: I (Giles) make some personal comments about whether this is a good thing or not below.

The other major issue was quite what sort of peals should be listed in the Central Council’s records. I choose my words carefully here, in that we are all free to ring whatever we want – no-one will be banning us from ringing or fining us if we ring a method that does not comply with the Central Council’s decisions – but a lot of us do like to know that everyone will agree with us if we say that we have rung a peal. The motions here were also passed. For most of us, the important things to note are that peals rung on simulators will now be recorded (as long as it feels like ringing a tower bell by rope and wheel, or ringing handbells in the usual way), that peals on seven or less bells can now include one part extent (so a performance of (say) 5100 Plain Bob Doubles will now be recognised as peals) and that tower bell peals no longer have to be audible outside the tower where they are rung. There are more detailed changes as well – for those and for more detail of what I have mentioned, the changes can be seen at the Central Council’s decisions D and E (<http://www.methods.org.uk/archive/ccdecs17.htm#decD>)

What else happened? The Ringing World held its AGM – for the moment, things are ok, but money remains tight: Ernie and Giles both retired from the Council’s PR Committee, but remain members of the Administrative Committee, and next year the Council will be meeting in our area at Lancaster University. Ernie and Giles have been involved in the Central Council’s organising group for the Lancaster meeting, and we are confident that there will be things from the council that will help us here in the LACR. More details should follow soon!

CRAG AND REFORMING THE CENTRAL COUNCIL **some personal thoughts by Giles Blundell**

As I said above, the bare facts about reforming the Central Council are that some reform plans were made, and that overwhelmingly the plans were passed. This means that next year's Central Council meeting will see a chance for the current council to vote on new rules, so that instead of decisions being made once a year by a council of some 200 people, they will be made on an ongoing basis by an elected Executive of 8. There will still be an annual gathering of one representative from each society (instead of the five representatives that Lancashire currently has) but the annual gathering will be tightly restricted in how it controls the Executive.

I voted against these plans. That's not to say that I think that the way ringing organises its central body at the moment is perfect. But what was proposed by CRAG was badly flawed: it clearly stated that the new Executive would take over in November 2017, before the Central Council as it now stands had a chance to consider the precise terms of the reorganisation rather than the general direction of travel. I also had concerns about what the Charity Commission would have to say about the Central Council working outside its rules to give power to an Executive.

To CRAG's credit, between them issuing their report in April 2017 and the vote being taken at the end of May, they made a lot of effort to address these problems. As of the meeting, when Central Council representatives had to vote on the principle of the plans, I felt that the concessions weren't enough – so I reluctantly voted against the plans. Having thought about it further, I think I was wrong: it is now fully understood that the new Executive and so on will spend the time between now and next May getting up to speed so that if the current council chooses in Lancaster to hand over to the new way of operating, the Executive will be ready to go.

It is certainly important that ringing's central body should know where it is going: as grassroots ringers, I don't think many of us are particularly interested in national politicking. What I think we *are* interested in is that the support we need from a national (even global) body is provided effectively and (for choice) efficiently. The Central Council – or whatever it will be called in future – needs to sort itself out quickly so that the help we expect from it is readily available.

METHOD OF THE MONTH - ASHFORD LITTLE BOB DOUBLES

12345	14253	15432	13524	This is a very short, simple method to add to your band's repertoire, especially if you have a little time to fill up before the Sunday morning service. Bobs work exactly as in Plain Bob so there isn't a great deal to learn. It offers a change from the usual list of doubles methods, and has been rung a few times at the two towers in Lancaster though it seems to have fallen out of favour recently. Why not give it a go, as an alternative to another plain course of Grandsire Doubles?
21435	41523	51342	31254	
24153	45132	53124	32145	
42135	54123	35142	23154	
41253	51432	31524	21345	
14523	15342	13254	12435	
14253	15432	13524	12245	

CORRECT WEIGHTS OF WARNER BELLS

When bells are rehung it is often found that they weigh significantly less than they are believed to. The Whitechapel Bell Foundry used to provide an "official" notice to be hung in the ringing room, but the precise weights of those provided by other firms is often less certain, particularly in the case of Warners. There was some interesting correspondence about this a few years ago on the Bell Historians' internet site. Chris Pickford, one of the leading authorities on English bells and bell frames, commented as follows:

"Warners did weigh their bells, but as the foundry records haven't survived we often don't have "exact" weights. Generally, full weights for Warner bells are only available from contemporary reports (e.g. *Bell News*, *Ringling World* or local papers), where the invoices happen to survive or if someone happened to record them at the time (e.g. lots of Warner weights in Deedes & Walters "Essex"). It is sometimes said that Warners weighed their bells with clappers and fittings. I very much doubt if this is the case, although occasionally (as at Lancaster RC Cathedral) what seem to have been weights provided for carriage purposes (i.e. including fittings if that's how bells were dispatched) have been wrongly interpreted as bell weights. Weight by net bell metal has been industry standard for quite a while".



Lancaster Roman Catholic Cathedral from the west

As he points out the same applies to many other Victorian founders. It makes sense – when Lancaster Cathedral bells were brought from London by rail, the railway company and anyone else involved in transporting them would have needed to know the weight of what they were being asked to carry, not the weight of the bells alone.

EUROPEAN BELL FOUNDRIES no. 4 – Grassmayr, Innsbruck, Austria

The Grassmayr bell foundry state in their publicity that they have been going since 1599. That's not quite as long as the late lamented Whitechapel Foundry in London, but it runs it quite close. They don't just do bells; they combine the business with making tower clocks, and they do some art castings as well.

As can be seen from the picture on the right, they still make bells with canons. The external finish of their bells is of a very high standard.

Although they use cope cases they appear to be markedly different from the kind developed in Britain by Warners. They have an imaginative line in carillon design.

The foundry is open to the public and there is museum with a souvenir shop which sells a variety of handbells and other souvenirs. If you



Photograph courtesy of Andrew Holden

are planning a holiday in the Tyrol this is somewhere to include in your itinerary.

RINGING COMMENTARY

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN

Not surprisingly a great deal of attention has been given lately to the events of 100 years ago. The First World War resulted in the loss of a huge number of able and talented people, including many ringers. This Association, like others, has been recording their names and where possible the towers to which they were attached.

At a national level, the most interesting project is the new ring of eight cast by Taylors for St George's Ypres (Ieper). This is the first set of change ringing bells to be installed in Belgium. Any chance of a Lancashire Association trip to go and try them out?

THE JULIE MCDONNELL TRAIN

The "Strike Back Express" fundraiser organised on behalf of the Julie McDonnell charity has attracted a lot of favourable attention, both for the cancer charity she set up and for ringing as an activity. Last autumn a vintage "Hastings" diesel electric multiple unit train took a large party of ringers and friends from Kent to Bath and Keynsham. Local towers were open for ringing in Bath and as an alternative attraction, there was a steam fair at Keynsham. It was a great success, raising just over £5,000 and a good time was had by all.



It's a pity it was such a long way from Lancashire. Perhaps somebody would like to organise something similar in the north of England? We would need a destination with a lot of towers, and some alternative destinations. York is an obvious possibility (with or without the Minster). Alternatively we could head south to somewhere not accessible from most of Lancashire by direct trains, like Oxford, which probably has more ringable towers within easy walking distance of the railway station than anywhere else.

As for the train - it doesn't have to be a Hastings DMU, though there's nothing wrong with them as an option. They are nothing to do with Hastings stays! They were special narrow bodied trains built in 1957-58 to cope with the needs of the line from London to Hastings, where a Victorian contractor had skimped on the width of a tunnel. We have a lot of alternatives to choose from as West Coast Railways have their headquarters at Carnforth, with an extensive range of locomotives (and coaches) available.

A RINGER HONOURED

Congratulations to Tom Metcalfe of Kirkby-in-Furness (Furness & South Lakeland Branch), on the award of an MBE in the New Year Honours list.

NORTH WEST TWELVE BELL RESULTS 2018

Here are the results of the North West 12 Bell Striking Competition held on Saturday 27th January at **St Peter's, Bolton**:

1st Macclesfield (Blues) 73% Rang 5th
2nd Chester (Devas) 72% Rang 4th
3rd Liverpool 64% Rang 6th

4th Manchester 60% Rang 3rd
5th Chester (Festerers) 52% Rang 2nd
6th Macclesfield (Silks) 50% Rang 1st

RINGING CALENDAR – a programme of forthcoming events

Sat 10 Feb – LACR Committee Meeting, 2:00pm at Quernmore Methodist Church Sunday School, Lancaster Branch. No bells there, but ringing afterwards at **Lancaster Cathedral** (10) 5:30-6:30pm. also **Flookburgh**, Furness Branch (8) 2:30-4:30pm, followed by refreshments.

and **Rochdale St Chad**, Rochdale Branch (8) 3:00-5:00pm

Sat 17 Feb – Flixton, Manchester Branch (8) 10:30-12:00pm

Tue 20 Feb – Whittington, Lancaster Branch (6) 7:30-8:45pm

Sat 24 Feb – Kirkham St Michael, Fylde Branch (10) 3:00-5:00pm. A chance to ring on the new bells.

Fri 2 Mar – Hornby, Lancaster Branch (8) 7:00-8:30pm: Advanced ringing practice (Surprise/Stedman).

Sat 10 Mar - Blackburn Cath, Blackburn Branch (10) 10.45-12:15am.

also **Broughton**, Furness Branch (12) 2:30-4:30pm followed by refreshments

and **Leesfield**. Rochdale Branch (8) 7:00-9:00pm

Mon 26 Feb – Wigan All Saints, Wigan Branch (10) 7:30-9:00pm.

Sat 17 Mar – Hoghton, Preston Branch (6). Association Basic Training Day.

Details from Barbara Murray, battybarbara1@gmail.com or 01772 725241.

Wed 21 Mar – Low Bentham, Lancaster Branch (6) 7:00-8:30pm

Sat 24 Mar – Bispham, Fylde Branch (8) 3:00-5:00pm

Mon 26 Mar – Wigan All Saints, Wigan Branch (10) 7:30-9:00pm

Sat 7 April – Standish, Wigan Branch (8) 3:30-5:00pm. Own arrangements for tea.

Sat 14 April – Dent, Furness Branch (6) 2:30-4:30 followed by refreshments.

Sat 21 April – Lytham St John, Fylde Branch (6) 3:00-5:00pm

Sat 28 April – Lancashire Association AGM, Liverpool Branch. Venue and times to be announced.

Mon 21 May – Lancaster Priory, Lancaster Branch (10) 7:30-9:00pm

Sat 26-Mon 28 May – Central Council of Church Bell Ringers meeting at Lancaster University.

A RING OF BELLS IN FRANCE?

Vernet-les-Bains is a small French town in the southern Pyrenees. The nearest big city is Perpignan.



In the late nineteenth /early twentieth century Vernet became popular with British visitors, which is why it has an Anglican church, St George's. As the photograph shows it comes complete with a tower. Jeff Ladd, from Leeds, who will be known to many LACR peal ringers, has started a project to install a ring of ten bells in it, with a tenor of 5 ¾ cwt. This will be the first set of change ringing bells in France.

If you would like to help make this happen, further details are available on the internet at <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/vernetbells> and on the relevant facebook site

The Lancashire Ringer is the newsletter of the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers. Articles for future issues will be very welcome. The views expressed are those of contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Association as a whole.

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