

The Lancashire Ringer

Newsletter of the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers

Series 2 Issue 16 - April 2024

ORMSKIRK AND ITS TWO TOWERS by Peter Rivet

Rugby parish church, as many ringers know, has a special claim to fame in that it has two separate towers, each with its own ring of bells: eight in the main tower and five in the smaller one which was inherited from the original building before its Victorian reconstruction. We don't have anything like that within the territory of the Lancashire Association but if we did, it would surely be at Ormskirk, in the Wigan branch. This also has two towers, very different in character (*see the photo below*). The church of St Peter and St Paul has a complicated building history, but much of what we see now is the result of a fairly drastic restoration of 1877-91 by Paley & Austin (as they were then known) of Lancaster. It is listed grade II*.

The big, sturdy tower at the west end of the church contains a fine ring of eight, with a tenor weighing 21½ cwt /1091kg, all cast by Taylors in 1948. Your editor remembers being very favourably impressed when he visited a ringing practice here, many years ago, and not just by the bells; somebody had a birthday and brought along a cake to share!

It is claimed that the main tower was built to house four bells taken from Burscough Priory after the Dissolution. Be that as it may, before 1948 there was an earlier ring of eight.



The tenor was a 1576 casting by Henry Oldfield, just under 50 inches/127 cm in diameter which indicates a weight of around 23 cwt (1170kg). It survives on display in the church. Its inscription indicates that it is a recasting of an earlier bell of 1497. The others were a mixture: 3, 4, 5 and 6 were cast in 1714 by Abraham Rudhall I while 1, 2 and 7 were by one of his successors, Thomas Rudhall, and dated from 1774.

In the little tower with a spire over the main entrance is a 1cwt /50kg “priest’s bell” cast by Ralph Ashton I of Wigan in 1716 and hung for swing chiming. Now, there just might be just enough space to augment the Ashton bell to provide a mini ring...

At present there is no regular ringing practice at Ormskirk. Hopefully it will resume some time soon, in which case it will be well worth a visit. Unfortunately I can’t guarantee the cake.

ELIZABETH COSNETT 1935-2024: AN APPRECIATION

by Bryan McCahey

Elizabeth Joan Cosnett was born on 17 May 1935 at the Rodney House Nursing Home, in the shadow of Liverpool’s growing Liverpool Cathedral. She grew up in Wavertree, although this was interrupted by her being evacuated during the war to Ruthin, in Denbighshire. She was educated at Calder Girls’ Grammar School in Liverpool and won a scholarship to read English at St Hugh’s College, Oxford.



Photo reproduced by kind permission of Stainer & Bell Ltd. and Peter Kaye Photography

On graduating, she returned to her home city to teach first at Childwall Valley High School, then later at her old school, which had become part of Quarry Bank Comprehensive. In 1969 she took up the position of English lecturer at St Katherine’s College, Childwall which is now part of Liverpool Hope University.

Through one of her fellow teachers at Childwall, Gwen Howlett, who became a lifelong friend, she was introduced to ringing at Our Lady and St Nicholas Pier Head. She was taught to handle a bell by the then tower captain, Ted Birkett. She and Gwen became mainstays of the band through the 1960s and 70s, serving tea and coffee after practice nights to delay the lure of the pub. She joined the LACR in 1964 and rang two peals for it. Although she did not ring Surprise she could ring Grandsire, Plain Bob and Stedman and could hold her own in Caters and Royal.

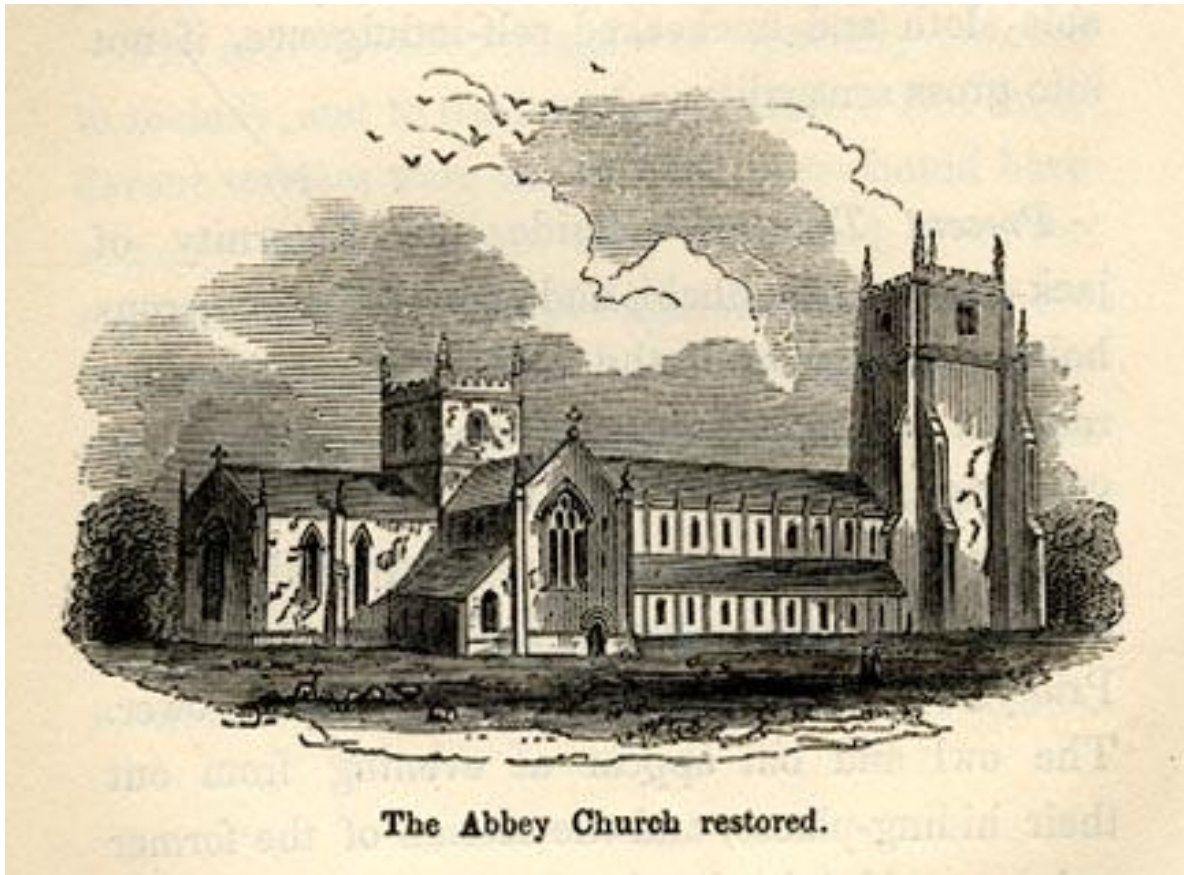
She drifted away from ringing for about ten years during the 1980s but remained heavily involved with the life of the church. Having completed an MA which focused on the hymns of George Wither, Willam Cowper and Robert Bridges she became an authority on hymnody. She enjoyed a fruitful partnership with a music lecturer, Ian Sharpe who set many of her texts to music and in 1985 they were among the winners of a BBC Songs of Praise competition. She travelled extensively during this part of her life. She spent some time working with a Tibetan refugee community in the north of India and taught for several months at Potsdam University, New York.

She returned to ringing in 1990 and continued until spring 2015, just before her 79th birthday. By this time her health had deteriorated and eventually she entered into residential care where she died peacefully on 22 January. As well as her legacy of hymns and her formidable intelligence, she will be remembered with great affection for her kindness and good humour.

This is a shortened version of the obituary published by the LACR’s Liverpool Branch.

FURNESS ABBEY AS IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

The Lancashire Association's greatest lost tower?



In its day, Furness Abbey, just outside Barrow, was one of the largest ecclesiastical buildings in the north of England, comparable with Fountains Abbey on the other side of the Pennines. The western tower was added around 1500, by which time the Cistercians had overcome their earlier reservations about bell towers. It was the work of Alexander Banke who was elected Abbot in 1497, at what seems to us the very early age of 30. At that time Furness was one of the wealthiest monasteries in the region and the second richest Cistercian abbey in England, with an annual income of £805.

The smaller monasteries were dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536. This was far from universally popular and led to a revolt, the Pilgrimage of Grace, which was supported by some of the Furness monks. The rebellion failed and its leaders were executed. To avoid befalling a similar fate, Abbot Pyle "voluntarily" surrendered Furness Abbey to the crown in 1537. The picture above is the work of Charles Jopling and was published in 1843. A lot of it is speculative, but it gives a good idea of what the Abbey would have looked like if it hadn't been taken out of use.

We do not know for certain how many bells the west tower contained, though one source claims there were as many as six. Clearly they would not have been hung for ringing as we know it, and it can be expected that they would have had individual functions within the life of the Abbey, rather than be tuned to a scale. However it is reasonable to assume that they were quite large ones. When the Abbey was dismantled in 1537 following the Dissolution, its bells were sold to Kendal for £80, which was a very substantial sum in those days.



The upper section of the tower was dismantled “with ropes and other engynes” but the lower part still stands, to a height of 18m (just under 60ft). Even at half its height, it’s an impressive structure.

Furness Abbey is in the care of English Heritage and its setting is an exceptionally attractive one. It’s well worth a day trip. If you would like to have a look at it, details of the opening times and admission charges are available here:

[Prices and Opening Times for Furness Abbey | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](#) .

RINGING MUG OF THE MONTH – FURNESS ABBEY

A mug with another view of Furness Abbey as it is today (*see right*) is available here: [furness abbey mug - Google Search](#) . The price quoted is £10.



There’s also a more expensive one (£14.99) with a different view of the Abbey as it might have looked before the Dissolution: [Photo Mug of Furness Abbey J900267 - Media Storehouse](#) .



WESTLEY GROUP

2024 WESTLEY AWARD FOR BELFRY MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT

Towers and bells in good condition will make the environment for ringing more pleasant, easier for ringers to develop their skills and, in particular, help new recruits.

Are you relatively new to finding your way round bell installations? Perhaps you are gaining experience in what to check upstairs in a tower, what may be unusual and interesting, or in poor condition and likely to cause ringers difficulties while ringing? Hopefully, you are starting to make some improvements and share your experiences with others.

The Stewardship and Management Workgroup of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers is launching the 2024 award for people who have recently become involved in belfry maintenance and improvement, developing their skills and helping others to do so. \The award will be made at the \CCCBR AGM in Exeter in September 2024. The winner will receive £100, kindly donated by the Westley Group, and a certificate. Full details and an application form will be available on the CCCBR website here:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/about/workgroups/stewardship-and-management/westley-award-2024/>

The closing date for submissions will be **12 noon on Friday 31 May 2024**.

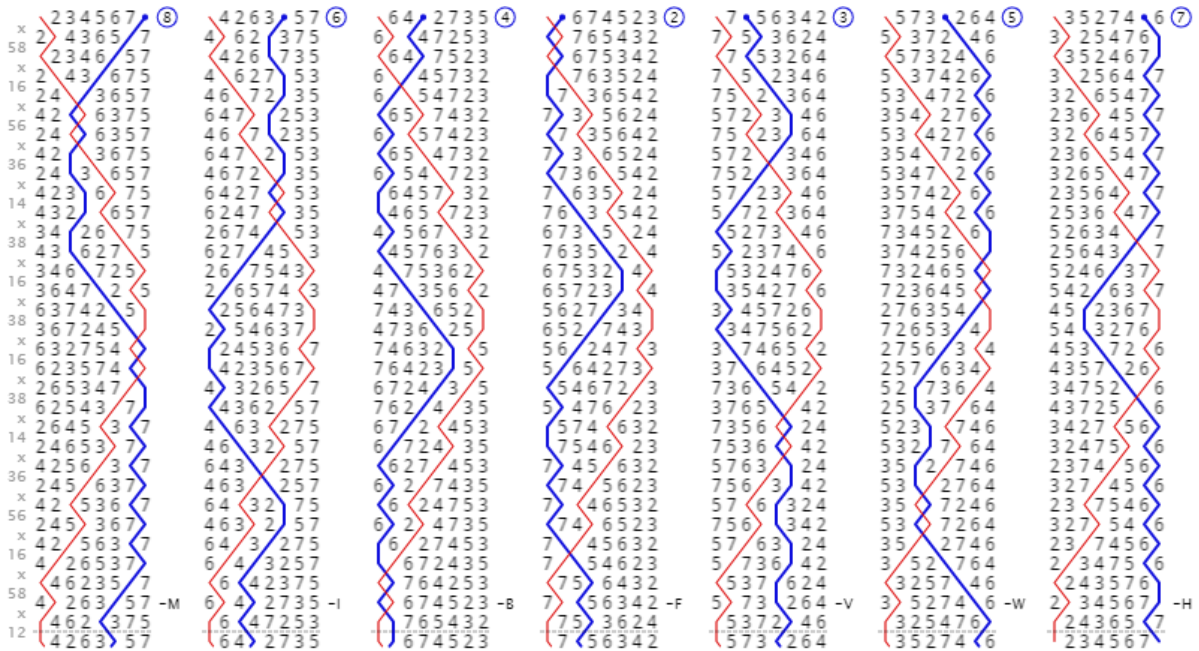
BELL SUNDAY – Sunday 12 May 2024

The Central Council of Church Bellringers is promoting Sunday 12 May this year as Bell Sunday. Ideally this would be a week later, on 19 May which is St Dunstan's Day (he's the patron saint of bellringers, because of his experiments in making bells) but that date is already taken in the church calendar, as it's Pentecost. It is hoped to use this day as an opportunity to involve ringers in services that day, perhaps with readings, handbells, or even bell shaped biscuits served with coffee and tea after the service.

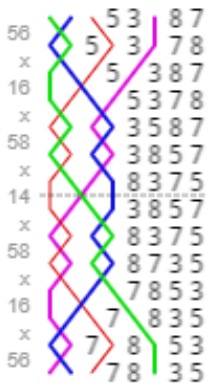
The Central Council has provided a list of suggestions of how to do this on its web site: see [Bell Sunday 2024 – 12th May – CCCBR](#) for details.

METHOD OF THE MONTH – Kendal Surprise Major

There doesn't appear to be, as yet, a ringing method named after Furness Abbey (though there is a Furness Surprise), but if Kendal is where its bells went, so can we.

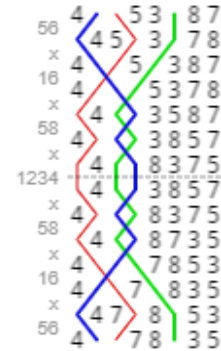


Bob:



Now, what do I do at a single?

Single:



CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS NEWS

Provided by the Secretary, Ernie de Legh Runciman

The Central Council executive held a Zoom meeting on 24 February 2024. Items discussed included:

- Approval of two grants from the Central Council's Bell Restoration Fund
- The structure of the Council's workgroups, and their terms of reference. The following workgroups have been identified as required to enable the Ringing 2030 project to proceed: (a) Technical and taxonomy (b) Historical and Archive (c) Stewardship, Guidance and Management (d) Ringing 2030 Environments & Marketing (f) Ringing 2030 Recruitment and Development (g) Technology for Ringing 2030 (h) Young Ringers for Ringing 2030.
- By The Council's finances.

A chart has been prepared indicating the relationship of the proposed workgroups to the Executive along with another paper setting out their terms of reference.

The next meeting of the Executive will be on Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 8:00pm.

Martyn Bristow of the LACR's Rossendale Branch has been designated as the lead person to work with Ernie de Legh Runciman on the workgroup entitled Ringing 2030 Digital Platforms. Its purpose is defined as being "To enable and facilitate the Ringing 2030 initiative through new digital platforms".

RINGING FOR WEDDINGS

April, as we all know, is a popular time of year for weddings. The Carlisle Diocese has published a useful set of advice notes for couples getting married in church. It doesn't contain anything specific about bells, but it does have one section which is very welcome and relevant to us:

“TIMING - It is most important that the service starts promptly. The custom of the bride keeping the groom waiting is a cruel and silly one. You must make sure that groom and best man are at Church 25 minutes before the service is due to start; the bride should be here at least 10 minutes before. If your cars need to make more than one trip, you may need to get the bridesmaids here quite early”.



It's always difficult to plan your day when you're ringing for a wedding.

THE CUMBRIAN CODGERS

If you have some time on your hands midweek, perhaps because you have recently retired, have you considered joining the Cumbrian Codgers? They are based on the northern edge of our area and organise regular ringing trips on the third Thursday of the month (with a good pub lunch thrown in) within and around the Lake District; they also venture into Northumberland, Durham, North Yorkshire and beyond. They also have a long weekend trip further afield in the summer.

If you are interested in finding out more, they have a useful web site here:

[The Cumbrian Codgers – Carlisle Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(bellringingincumbria.com\)](http://bellringingincumbria.com) or phone 07847 433117.

RINGING COMMENTARY - A look at what has been happening in the area covered by the Lancashire Association.

This March was expected to be a relatively slack month for quarter peals, as the last part of it coincided with Holy Week which is seen in some places as the “close season” for ringing. There are exceptions where secular towers are available. We have Manchester Town Hall, while the Durham & Newcastle Association have Berwick Town Hall and Morpeth Watch Tower. The Leicester Guild have the private tower at Loughborough Bell Foundry. In the Church of Scotland, however, they do things a bit differently. At St Machar’s Cathedral in Aberdeen, in the late 1980s, the then Minister Dr Stewart Todd indicated that he wanted his recently installed bells rung as often as possible in the run up to Easter as a way of emphasising the Church’s presence!

BAMBER BRIDGE (Brownedge) St Mary – Saturday 23 March 2024: 1260 Grandsire Triples: Pauline Campling 1, Charlotte Ferguson 2, Raymond Hutchings 3, Rob Chapman 4, Joe Shaw 5, George Campling 6, Bob Moody (c) 7, Connor Blakey 8.

Rung in memory and to celebrate the life of David Coxhead, friend for over 40 years of 2 and over 30 years of 7, who died on 21 February 2024. Rung on what would have been his 39th wedding anniversary. First on 8: 8 (hope the blisters heal quickly).



BARROW-IN-FURNESS, St James held an open day on Saturday 9 March to mark ten years to the day since the rehanging and restoration of their bells by Nicholson Engineering of Bridport, with an exhibition in the church showing what was involved. At the start of it they rang a quarter peal – 1260 Grandsire Triples: Jayden Milby (c) 1, Geoff Pullin 2, Dennis Ellisdon 3, Carole Pullin 4, Andrew Nicholson 5, High Pettifer 6, Andrew Pollock 7, Ron East 8. Rung by seven people heavily involved in the restoration, and conducted by someone who learnt to ring on the restored bells. Also to remember Hairy Biker Dave Myers, a fellow Barrovian.

BARROW-IN-FURNESS, St Mary of Furness (the Roman Catholic church in Duke Street) has only one bell, but it’s an interesting one. When Father Stephen Cross, who was a ringer, was appointed Priest there in 1997 he found a church with a tower, but no bell so he obtained a second hand one through the Keltek Trust. It was cast by Edward Bilbie in 1713 and was formerly the sixth bell at South Petherton in Somerset.

GARSTANG (Churchtown) St Helen Sunday 10 March - 1296 Cambridge S Minor: Andy Cope 1, Charlotte Ferguson 2, Laura Robinson 3, Raymond Hutchings 4, Bob Moody (c) 5, Rob Chapman 6. Rung on Mothering Sunday. Specially arranged in celebration of Maureen Towers’ 80th birthday.

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LANCASTER PRIORY, Sunday 24 March – 1272 Norwich Surprise Minor: Merlyn Gilddaley 1, Cate Gardner 2, Alex Gardner 3, Sam Norman 4, Robin Daw 5, Nigel Goodship (c) 6. Rung for evening service. First of treble bob – 1. First Minor inside – 3.

LEYLAND, St Andrew Sunday 10 March – 1260 Plain Bob Royal: Alice Rogan 1, Giles Blundell 2, John Wane 3, Jim Currin 4, Andrew Kayll 5, Sam Norman (c) 6, B Robert Hough 7, Matthew Warburton 8, Chris Barr 9, Robin Daw 10. First quarter on 10 – 1. First conducting on 10 – 6. Rung for evensong service and Mothering Sunday.

LYTHAM, St Cuthbert rang a quarter on Saturday 24 February – 1260 PB Doubles: Finley Meakin 1, Richard Jones 2, Neil McGarry 3, Adrian Page 4, Hal Meakin (c) 5, Mick Phillips 6. To celebrate Finley’s birthday the previous day.

ROCHDALE, ST Chad have had their old bells taken out of the tower. They were a Rudhall eight of various dates, to be replaced by those from Glodwick which are to be augmented to ten. The work is being carried out by Blyth & Co of Collingham, Newark in Nottinghamshire. The two new trebles are to be cast by Allaconi in Italy. However the parish wanted to retain the inscription from the old tenor, which was cast by John Rudhall in 1812. It is, unusually, arranged in a shield. The relevant portion of this bell was therefore cut out before the rest of it was scrapped. The result can be seen in the photo on the right. It is perhaps fortunate that the inscriptions on the old bells make no mention of the Dearden family, who in the mid nineteenth century “discovered” a series of monumental brasses establishing their long association with the church and the town. They later turned out to be fakes, made c.1847.



ST ANNES ON SEA, St Anne Sunday 17 March – 1389 Doubles (April Day, St Simons, St Martins, Grandsire, PB): John Preston 1, Val Andrews 2, Monica Hollows 3, Ellis Hollows 4, Stuart Newton (c) 5, Shaun Elsander 6. Rung in thanksgiving for the lives of Patricia Ward and Colin Miller, who were both long-standing and faithful members of this church.

STRETFORD, St Matthew Saturday 9 March – 1272 Oxford Treble Bob Minor: Wendy Lee 1, Beth Ingham 2, Dennis Latham 3, Elspeth Stein 4, Jason Bowden-King 5. George Lee (c) 6. First in the method - 2. Birthday compliment to Martin Mellor of Burbage, Leics.

WHALLEY St Mary Thursday 21 March – 1264 PB Major: Pauline Campling 1, Ian Benson 2, Stuart Moore 3, Garry Peel 4, Adrian West 5, George Campling (c) 6, Alan Schofield 7, Matthew Warburton 8. Rung to mark the centenary of the installation of these bells – 21 March 1924.



“But I don’t like ringing Kent! Tell them I’m not available”.

LEAP YEAR PEAL

There aren't many opportunities to ring peals on 29 February, so this one is worthy of mention even though it was rung at a tower just outside our territory.

LANCASHIRE ASSOCIATION – BAMPTON (Cumbria), St Patrick (5-0-9/258kg)
Thursday 29 February 2024: 5040 Minor (Norwich Surprise, Cambridge Surprise, Kent Treble Bob, Oxford Treble Bob, Plain Bob) – 2h 18m

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Jayden R Milby | 4. Sam N Norman |
| 2. Ceri Bicknell | 5. Julia R Cater |
| 3. Robin A Daw | 6. Simon A Percy (c) |

In memory of Trevor Hollowell (uncle of 3), Stephen Devine, and Dave Myers. 250th peal – 6.

A PEAL OF LESSNESS IN MORECAMBE

LANCASHIRE ASSOCIATION – MORECAMBE (Poulton), Holy Trinity (10-0-25/519kg).
Sunday 3 March 2024: 5024 Lessness Surprise Major – 2h 49m

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. George H Campling | 5. D Annabel Preston |
| 2. Pauline Campling | 6. Stuart J Heath |
| 3. Cate Gardner | 7. James E Andrews |
| 4. Alex A J Gardner | 8. Simon D Woof (c) |

First peal in the method – 3, 4. Rung immediately following a service of Holy Eucharist with Baptism and Confirmation, officiated by the Rt Rev Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn.

RINGING FOR THE NEW CITY OF DOUGLAS

The bells of St George's Douglas were rung on Wednesday 20 March to mark a visit by Queen Camilla to award Letters Patent to the newly created City of Douglas.

Douglas has one of eight new city charters awarded to mark the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. The other seven were Bangor (Co Down), Colchester, Doncaster, Dunfermline, Milton Keynes, Wrexham, and Stanley in the Falkland Islands.



Photo courtesy of Ernie de Legh Runciman

RING OUT FOR PEACE ON 6 JUNE

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers is asking towers to ring on Thursday 6 June for the 80th anniversary of D-Day, at 6:30pm or as close as possible to it. Beacons are to be lit at 9:15pm around the UK and on the Normandy beaches.

You can register your participation on the following web site: www.d-day80beacins.co.uk/. This contains information about the history of the landings and various aspects of the anniversary celebrations.

Ringling Events: Dates for your Diary

Some of the events listed below are subject to confirmation. If in doubt, check. Not all branches have supplied information for this list. All the events listed are open to visiting ringers unless otherwise stated.

If you would like to include something in a future issue, please let the editor know.

Fri 5 Apr	Lan	Hornby	Advanced practice	7:00-8:30
Sat 6 Apr	Bla	Gisburn	Branch practice	3:30-5:00
			To be followed by tea, business meeting and evening ringing.	
	Man	Prestwich	Branch practice	10:30-12:00
Sat 13 Apr	LACR Goosnargh, Bilsborrow, Broughton			9:00-4:00
			Training day on ropesight	
			Contact nickharrop@btinternet.com for details	
	Fur	Dalton-in-Furness	Branch practice	2:30-4:30
			To be followed by afternoon refreshments -and a business meeting.	
	Liv	Rainhill St Bart	Branch practice and	9:30 onwards
			quarterly meeting	
	Pre	Higher Walton	Branch practice	3:30-5:00
Sat 20 Apr	Lan	Ringing trip in the Liverpool area, joint with the Western Branch of the YACR: Much Woolton 10:00, Mossley Hill St Barnabas (Penny Lane) 11:30, Liverpool St Francis Xavier 2:30, Liverpool St Nicholas Pier Head 4:00, Liverpool Cathedral 6:00.		
			Please notify Cate Gardner on 07966 689256 or cjguk1@gmail.com if you are planning to go. There will be a £5 fee to cover tower donations.	
Sat 27 Apr	LACR Annual General Meeting, Manchester branch: Pendleton			
			Other towers will be open during the day. Details to follow.	
Fri 3 May	Lan	Hornby	Advanced practice	7:00-8:30
Sat 4 May	Bla	Branch practice, venue still to be confirmed		3:30 onwards
Sat 11 May	Liv	Tuebrook	Branch six bell	9:45-2:00
			striking competition	
Sun 12 May	LACR Bell Sunday – see short article on the previous page.			
Sat 18 May	Lan	Cockerham	Branch practice/	6:15-7:15
		Pilling	meeting	7:30-8:30
	Man	Manchester Cath	Branch meeting	10:30-12:00
Fri 7 June	Lan	Hornby	Advanced practice	7:00-8:30
Sat 8 June	Liv	Garston	Branch practice	7:30-9:00
			Contact Lillian on 07552 473975 for further details	
Sat 15 Jun	Man	Mossley	Branch practice	10:30-12:00
Sat 5 Oct	LACR Final of the Association six bell striking competition			
Sat 25 Sep	LACR Association Committee Meeting – Fylde branch			

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Views expressed are those of contributors and are not necessarily those of the Lancashire Association.

CORRECTIONS

It's been pointed out that there were some mistakes in the last issue, so here are a few amendments:

p.4 BARROW-IN-FURNESS, St James: The quarter peal on 9 February was Cameron Pollock's first of surprise **major**, not minor.

p.4 GARSTANG (Churchtown) St Helen is in the **Fylde** Branch, not the Preston Branch.