

The Lancashire Ringer

Newsletter of the Lancashire Association of Change Ringers

Series 2 Issue 11 – October 2023

LACR STRIKING COMPETITIONS 2023: THE RESULTS

BAMBER BRIDGE BAND WIN THE SIX BELL SECTION...

This year's Lancashire Association striking competitions, on both six and eight bells, were held at Holy Trinity Morecambe (right)



The bells are good ones, but the acoustics can be challenging, and the ringing room is a little cramped. Nonetheless all five bands entering the six bell section put in a creditable performance. The competition was judged by Robin Daw from Silverdale, and the results were as follows:

Position	Team	Branch	Score
1	Bamber Bridge	Preston	76.7%
2	Liverpool SFX	Liverpool	71.7%
3	The 3 Ls*	n/a	70.6%
4	Heywood	Rochdale	57.8%
5	Rainford	Wigan	55.6%

...WHILE THE LANCASTER BRANCH TAKES THE TROPHY FOR EIGHT

The eight bell competition followed on from the six bell one. Its results were announced after a session of open ringing on the ten bells at Lancaster Priory. It was judged by Philip Earis, from the Yorkshire Association. The marking system he used counted both whole and part faults. He commented that he had become very used to listening to Plain Bob Triples! All the teams made good use of the opportunity to practise on the bells beforehand. His assessment of each team included an estimate of the time they would have taken to complete a quarter peal, which varied from 42 to 44 minutes. He placed them as follows:

Position	Branch	QP Speed (mins)	Faults
1	Lancaster	43	20
2	The 3 Ls*	43	41
3	Liverpool	42	57
4	Furness	44	60
5	Rochdale	43	71

Congratulations to the winning bands, and to all those who entered both competitions.

- The Lancashire Lads and Lasses, the LACR's young ringers.

BOOK REVIEW

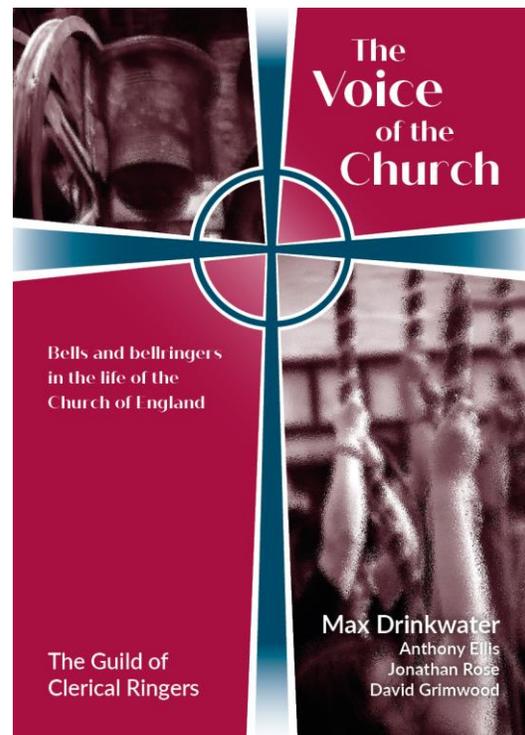
The Voice of the Church – Bells and bellringers in the life of the Church of England. By Max Drinkwater and others; published by the Guild of Clerical Ringers; 76 pages. Available online from The Ringing World - [Shop \(ringingworld.co.uk\)](http://Shop.ringingworld.co.uk) - price £7 including postage.

As someone who has grown up within the C of E (though never at a church with a peal of bells!) I know very little about the world of bellringing. I was therefore intrigued to be asked to read and review this booklet. Written by bellringing clergy, the book explores ringing's history and development, technique, theology and community, and in particular, its relationship with the C of E. It opens a window onto the world of bellringing for those who have heard the distinctive sound of a peal of bells, maybe at weddings or to mark significant national events, and have wondered how, why and by whom, this wonderful sound is produced.

In particular, the authors hope that the book will encourage church leaders, members of the congregation and the local community to learn about bellringing and to get to know the ringers in their churches. It gives some suggestions on how to develop and maintain good working relationships between ringers and church leaders, and offers encouragement for those involved in this distinctive art form.

Chapter 1 is entitled 'The Ringing Island: What is so distinctive about change ringing?' For a non-ringer this provided a fascinating insight into the history and mechanics of change ringing and how it has evolved in England to become a totally unique discipline, together involving aspects of music, art, sport and religion. Indeed, throughout the book the authors stress the *distinctiveness* of ringing, whether in terms of mechanism, sound, music, purpose, impact, responsibility, calling and Christian witness.

How did this unique art, with its own distinct identity and community, develop into the mix of music, fellowship, sport and performance art we know today? And what can bell ringing offer the life of today's church and its local community? as well as summoning people to, and providing a setting for, worship.



The answers to these questions, and more, are to be found in these pages. The authors suggest that the joyful sound of bells often makes a significant contribution to the identity and 'soundscape' of a community. The final chapters look at bellringers themselves and the way in which ringing is organised as a community activity, not only in this country but across the world. Bellringers share the use of church buildings, 'noisily but often invisibly', so here are found some ideas as to how ringers, and others in the church and the community, might be able to work together to make the most of one of the church's oldest and loudest assets.

Much of this may already be familiar to seasoned bellringers, but as an introduction for the general reader the book makes a convincing case for the value of bells in all their glory.

Rosemary Lyons

CAN'T HELP FALLING IN LOVE... WITH THE NORTH WEST RINGING COURSE

by Helen Lacy

Reflections on being a helper on the North West Ringing Course
Thursday 10 August – Sunday 13 August 2023

As a residential ringing course “rookie” I was a student on the first NWRC course which took place at Myerscough College, north of Preston last year. I had such a good time and learnt so much on the “moving from 6 to 8” topic. I was encouraged to apply as a helper on this year’s course and ended up on the new mysteriously titled “Learn It! Ring It!” topic. This was offered initially as one class but was so popular that NWRC ended up offering four classes.

As a student, I did not appreciate just how much time the helpers spend ringing; at the end of the session my muscles were screaming “what the [deleted by censor] are you doing!!?”. Before the course, I was confident I could ring PB doubles with my eyes shut; by the end of 4 hours a day ringing, my eyes WERE shut, and I couldn’t remember halfway through the 3-4 dodge whether I was going In or out. I now fully appreciate the effort helpers give to the course.

The weather for NWRC2023 was not so hot as the daily 30 degrees C encountered last year, but we were still blessed with (some) glorious sunshine, friendly welcoming local ringers and beautiful churches set in the stunning rural Lancashire landscape and the company of 135 ringers who joined us this year eager to make the most of the fantastic teaching and camaraderie and fun that is becoming a feature on NWRC. The campus echoed with the sound of the handbells, Maplestead and Charmborough rings contributing to the 22 quarters linked to NWRC2023 – see <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/event.php?id=17165> .



North West Ringing Course students and helpers at Brindle (photo courtesy John Lacy)

Forty optional sessions were offered this year including Rope Splicing, belfry Maintenance, Listening Skills and Ringing up and down. We were honoured to have the presence on site of Bryn and Leland Reimer, prime movers behind “Ringing Room”, to give us a fascinating and entertaining demonstration. Evening entertainment was hilarious and at times raucous and included a “Question Time” chaired by Eleanor Linford (move over Fiona Bruce) and a cracking speech by David Hull who provided us with many belly-laughs relating to his student adventures with Simon Linford (who apparently can walk on water).

My personal unique moment, impossible to imagine anywhere else but the NWRC, was an attempt to ring the Charmborough ring “under the stars” at 11pm under the alcohol-fuelled impression that we were favourites to win next day’s striking competition. Sense prevailed when. Two leads of Cambridge in, I was showered with cold water that had been collecting on the awning... did I mention that the weather wasn’t as good as last year...

Best thing about being a helper?

- The firm belief that students develop that you are a “good ringer” (bless them)
- The joy of being party to a student “epiphany” – several this year, some quite emotional
- Watching and learning from a superb tutor (thank you Alison)
- The satisfaction of seeing everyone in the group gain confidence and realise that they have moved forward.

And finally... GEMS! Gold ones to go on your badge for ringing in a NWRC quarter, red ones for having a good idea, blue ones for being helpful; other colours awarded on a more arbitrary basis. I am convinced that Andy Ingham gave himself an award for “being Andy Ingham” as he hadn’t received any...who’d have thought a small piece of plastic could bring so much excitement. I loved being a student and I also loved being a helper this year.

Clearly I need two NWRC courses next year. Watch this space: <https://nwringingcourse.uk/> .

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KENDAL’S AMATEUR RINGER (1876 Peal Board)

I suspect the mention of an amateur refers to the practice of an 8 bell tower having 8 stipended ringers, who were expected to be present at all ringing and who received a periodic payment for this, less any fines for absence and lateness.

Amateur ringers were the others, sometimes called probationers, who would turn professional if a vacancy arose. There's several mentions of such in our tower's original minute book, including two people who swapped status by mutual consent. Professionals didn't ring in absolutely everything, a proportion of amateurs behind rotated, usually excepting the service touch.

John Rogan, Lancaster Cathedral

ROLAND ECCLES

I was particularly interested in the item about Roland and Dorothy Eccles. When we lived near Bury, we went quite often to ring with them at Manchester Cathedral. Such a kind pair of friends. They mentioned Morecambe when we announced our move north, and it was great to see their many quarters posted on the walls there (in spite of restricted space!).

Deborah Preston, Kirkby Lonsdale

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

BARNOLDSWICK: The church of St Mary-le-Ghyll is in the process of having its bells augmented from six to eight. The new treble bell was cast at Loughborough on 3 August. The second, a Taylor stock bell, is being retuned to match the rest of the ring.

THE LACR ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 AND 2022 (covering two years because of the disruption associated with the Covid pandemic) is now available. It has a blue cover, and a picture of the church at St Anne's on Sea (Heyhouses) on the back cover. Copies are available from your Branch Secretary. The text is also available on the Association web site.

COCKERHAM, ST MICHAEL: The bells at this church were out of action for a time but thanks to some work by Nigel Goodship and Kevin Mayfield they are once again available for ringing. They were able to be used, along with many others, on the North West Ringing Course.

FLEETWOOD, ST WULSTAN is a Roman Catholic church of 1924-6 with a tall, slender brick tower (see the photo on the right). Its proportions mean that it is unsuitable for change ringing bells, but in the 1960s it was provided with a chime of nine, with a 6cwt tenor. As a result of a lightning strike the chiming mechanism became inoperable. Taylors have been commissioned to replace it with a new one.



KIRKHAM, ST MICHAEL bells are rung much more often now that they have a **good ring of ten**. Unfortunately this has resulted in complaints from a neighbour. A sound control scheme is proposed, and this will be eligible for a grant from the Association Bell Restoration Fund.

KENDAL bells have also been the subject of noise complaints. Fortunately for us these were not related to Holy Trinity church, but to the Town Hall which has a clock chime. Apparently this has been annoying some of its neighbours at the nearby Rainbow Tavern, a pub which offers overnight accommodation. Following an investigation by South Lakeland (now Westmorland & Furness) Council, the clock chimes are now silenced between 11:00pm and 7:00am.

LANCASTER PRIORY has changed its practice night from Tuesday to Thursday. Visiting ringers are as always welcome, though it may be advisable to check that it is taking place as occasionally there are conflicting events going on in the church or at the castle next door.

AN ISLE OF MAN DESK BELL appeared for sale on eBay recently, with a starting price of £10. Now that could be just the thing for somebody chairing meetings of the Sodor & Man branch, to call participants to order... So far as can be ascertained the can of Diet Coke wasn't included in the price. In any case, indications are that most of the ringers there prefer the products of Okell's brewery.



HANDBELL RINGING – The LACR is primarily an organisation for tower bell ringers. However Lancashire also has a long tradition of handbell change ringing. If you would like to get involved, contact Nick Harrop – nickharrop@btopenworld.com

THE DAC BELL ADVISERS' CONFERENCE IN LIVERPOOL, which was originally intended to take place in October, has been postponed until 26/27 March 2024. This will allow its organisers more time to prepare material for it.

KEN PARKINSON - AN APPRECIATION by Andy Pollock

Ken Parkinson sadly passed away on Monday 18 September aged 82. Ken and his wife June were a lovely couple who were very much part of the church of St James in Barrow.



June was in the choir and Ken would help out with the church where he could – one of his favourites being Father Christmas at the Church Christmas Fair.

When the bells were restored in 2014, June encouraged Ken to give bellringing a go and he came along to learn in July 2014 when he was about 73 years young! He made progress and became a regular ringer at Barrow, and also went to Dalton and Ulverston. He was tall and often needed a figure of eight knot in his rope due to his reach. He was mild mannered and softly spoken but often had a boyish twinkle in his eye and a good sense of humour. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and his cheerful company was enjoyed by everyone. Ken embraced the whole bellringing social scene with ringing trips, branch meetings, tower/branch meals, and meandering rambles through Lakeland scenery between towers and café/pubs (see picture at Holy Trinity Brathay and The Outgate Inn as an example). Just thinking back to the times we enjoyed together brings a smile and fond memories.

Sadly in 2017, his wife and soulmate June passed away and this was especially hard on him although he continued stoically and tried not to show it. A couple of years later Ken's health gradually made it difficult to come to practices, so his daughter Julie helped drive him to enjoy his bellringing while he could.

We have missed Ken since he stopped ringing in 2019 but have frequently been reminded of him and his sunny disposition... triggered by a small solar driven animated flower ornament that he won as a prize at a church fair but left in the tower where it used to wave at us merrily from the windowsill when the sun shone. He is now reunited with June, and we hope they can hear the bells they both so enjoyed in life.

Barrow in Furness, St James, Cumbria: Wednesday 4 October 2023. Plain Bob Triples Owen B Osmotherley 1, Cameron Pollock 2, Jayden Milby 3, Rachel Hallows 4, Keith Hackney 5, Andrew Painter 6, J Andrew Pollock (c) 7, Alan Dewar 8. Rung to celebrate the life of Ken Parkinson (9th May 1941 to 18th September 2023), bellringer at this church from 2014 to 2019.

A quarter peal attempt unfortunately did not come round, but in life Ken and his wife June loved the bells and would have very much enjoyed the otherwise excellent standard of ringing by everyone involved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - Part 1

A look at some Lancashire Association might-have-beens

By Peter Rivet

All over the country you will find churches which were intended to have towers – and very possibly rings of bells – which were never finished. This article looks at some examples by a distinguished firm of late nineteenth and early twentieth century church architects, Austin & Paley of Lancaster. They traded under several different names, starting with their founder Edmund Sharpe (1809-1877) but this is their best known one.

Many ringers will be familiar with their work, which include the churches at Barbon, Blackburn St Silas, Bolton All Souls, Dalton-in-Furness, Flookburgh, Lancaster Roman Catholic Cathedral and Pilling. Most, but not all of their jobs were in north west England. Many of these (particularly those by J. L. Austin) were designed in what has been described as a “Free Perpendicular” style which resulted in impressive interiors as well as some very fine towers.

Austin & Paley did not of course just design churches. They were responsible for some notable secular buildings such as the Royal Infirmary and the Storey Institute in Lancaster, and several of the stations on the Furness Railway including Grange-over-Sands and Ulverston.

Let us start in Morecambe. St John the Divine, Sandylands (technically part of Heysham) is an ambitious church of 1898-1901. It has a crossing tower, but if you look carefully you will see that it finishes abruptly. There is a spacious ringing room, but no bell stage above it. It was clearly designed in a way which would have allowed the installation of a ring of bells, but the money ran out. The one bell which it was supplied with (Taylor 1901, 1½ cwt) is hung in a lead roofed shelter on top of the spiral staircase.



We know that the church of St Barnabas in Regent Road (1898-1900), serving the then fashionable West End of Morecambe, was intended to have a tower. A drawing of it was published in the Building News in June 1896 (see below).



It is shown as a large, confident looking structure with a spirelet on top. It is unclear if work ever started on the base of the tower, but it is unlikely as the whole of the liturgical west end was left unfinished. It was eventually completed in 1961 with a concrete and glass parish hall which no doubt seemed a good idea at the time, but pays scant regard to the character of the original building. There is a bell, but it is hung for chiming on the outside of the church.

The story of St Laurence's church in the same town, built in 1876-1878, is also a sad one. It has been redundant since July 1981. It was acquired by a businessman who obtained planning permission for its conversion into a restaurant serving medieval style banquets.

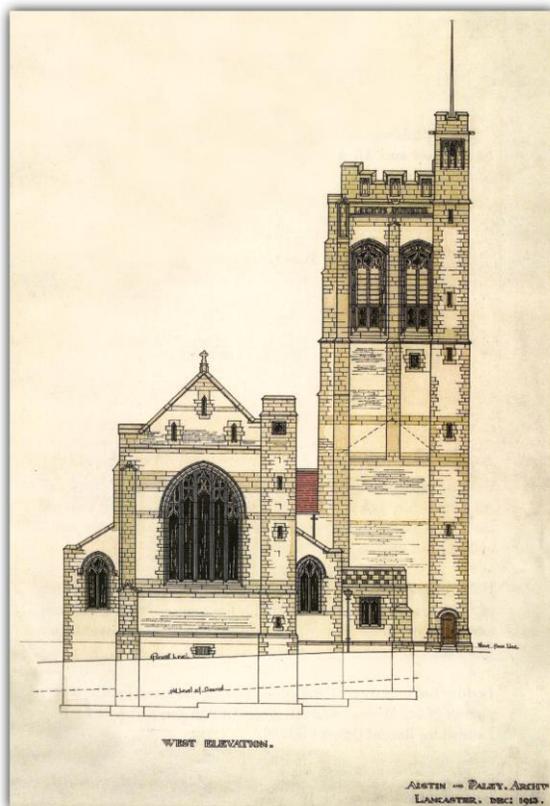
When he found how much the building would cost to restore, he attempted to cut his losses by using it as a market for second hand goods. This did not last long and it is currently empty, in need of a new use.

As at Sandylands the funds available did not allow the completion of the design. Only the ground floor of the north west tower, with a spiral staircase going nowhere, was completed. This was finished off rather unconvincingly with a pyramid roof (see the photo on the right). There was a small bell in a cote at the other end of the building. This has found a new home nearby at St Mary's Roman Catholic church.

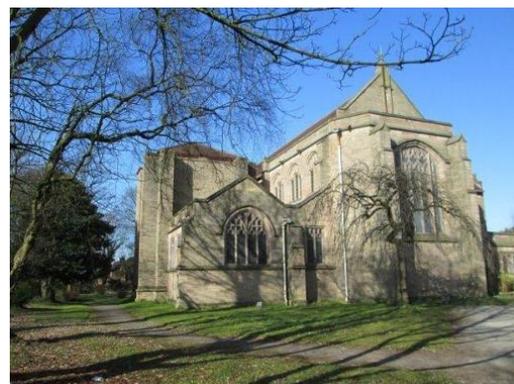


To the north of Morecambe, in Hest Bank, St Luke's church has a very short crossing tower. It is topped with another pyramid roof with what is best described as a dormer extension, housing a single bell from the Whitechapel foundry. Presumably the idea was that this would be a temporary solution, though the firm did design something similar at St Peter's Finsthwaite, near Newby Bridge which was never intended to be any higher.

The intended final design of this and many other towers would have been known from the firm's drawings but when Austin & Paley's practice in Lancaster finally closed down in 1942, their records, instead of being sent to the County Council's archives, were thrown away.



Happily this is not the case with St Michael's Ashton-on-Ribble (1906-15), in Preston. It has a chunky tower base which finishes with a shallow pyramid roof at the same level as the nave. We know how it was intended to look (see the drawing on the left). Below is a view from the other end of the church of what was actually built: There is just one 3cwt bell, cast by Gillett & Johnston in 1928. It is a great pity that it did not have the opportunity to become the treble of a ring of eight, or even ten.



To be continued in the next issue

THE FUTURE OF RINGING

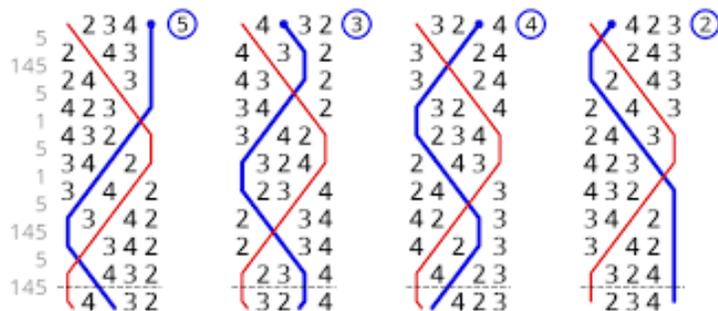
Those who attended the September committee meeting of the LACR at St Francis Xavier in Liverpool were treated to an excellent presentation by Simon Percy, the Association Ringing Master on “Ringing 2030”. This follows the work done by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers on the future of ringing.



A survey indicates that 90% of ringers want to be able to ring more or more challenging methods, and want to improve their ringing. However it isn't always possible for them to travel far from their own tower in order to achieve this. Communication is important, to publicise ringing meetings and events. He also outlined the strategy adopted by the Lancaster Branch, which involves a series of advanced practices and a programme of quarter peals designed to introduce ringers to more advanced methods.

METHOD OF THE MONTH – Devon Place Doubles

We tend to associate Devon with call change ringing, but they do ring methods there as well, especially in Exeter and the area to the east of it. Here is something with a regional flavour to try out on practice night, or indeed on Sunday morning if you don't have many ringers.



And now for something completely different...

USEFUL AIDS TO RINGING THAT HAVEN'T YET BEEN INVENTED

An occasional series by Steve Palmer: **No.2 The unbreakable stay**

We all know that bellringing has been going on for a very long time and many features of present-day bells are the same as they were hundreds of years ago. One such feature is the stay. It's made of wood so that it can break and protect the rest of the bell. Wood was the only material of suitable strength that was available in those days.

The unbreakable stay is made of plastic and is bendy. It fits in the same mount as the old stay. Under the weight of the bell standing it bends about 25cm so there is no need for a slider, instead there is a fixed bar.

In the event that the bell swings over with force that would have broken the wooden stay the plastic stay simply boings past the bar. Of course the rope still disappears up through the ceiling and someone has to go up and unwind or untangle it but once that is done the bell is ready to continue ringing straight away.

THE NORTHERN UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION

The brief piece on university ringing societies at the end of the last edition of the Lancashire Ringer didn't mention that there is also an umbrella Northern Universities Association of them, together with a southern counterpart, which provides an opportunity for members to meet up every year. They have even produced rather a nice mug with their logo on it (right).



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

2023

Sat 21 Oct	Lan	Joint meeting with the Western branch of the Yorkshire Association: Giggleswick 4:45-5:45, Settle 6:00-7:00
Sat 21 Oct	Man	Fallowfield Branch practice 10:00-11:00
Thu 2 Nov	Pre	Chorley RC Branch practice 7:45-9:00
Fri 3 Nov	Lan	Morecambe* Advanced practice 7:00-8:00
Sat 4 Nov	Bla	Practice/meeting Padiham 3:30-5:00 Clitheroe 6:30-7:30
Sat 11 Nov	Pre	Walton-le-Dale Branch practice 3:30-5:00
Sat 11 Nov	Roc	Todmorden Unitarian Practice/meeting 3:30-5:00
Sat 18 Nov	Lan	Lancaster Branch AGM. Ringing at Whittington 5:00; tea and meeting at Hornby, followed by ringing to 7:00
Fri 1 Dec	Lan	Morecambe* Advanced practice 7:00-8:30
Sat 2 Dec	Bla	Whalley Meeting and AGM 3:30-8:00
Thu 7 Dec	Pre	Chorley RC Branch practice 7:45-9:00
Sat 9 Dec	Pre	Samlesbury Branch practice 3:30-5:00
Sat 9 Dec	Roc	Middleton Branch meeting 3:00-5:00
Sat 16 Dec	Lan	Lancaster Cathedral Practice/meeting 5:30-6:30

2024

Thu 4 Jan	Pre	Chorley RC Branch practice 7:45-9:00
Sun 7 Jan		LACR Quiz Night in aid of the Bell Restoration Fund For details contact Graham Turner G.Turner@preston.gov.uk
Sat 17/Sun 18 Feb		Dedication of Over Kellet bells. Details to follow later.

* Work has started on repairs to the roof of Hornby church. Because of this, the Lancaster Branch's advanced practices have been transferred to Morecambe.