

HANDBELL RINGERS  
OF GREAT BRITAIN



# *South East Region*

## *Newsletter*

*November 2020*  
*Issue 118*



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**Larry & Carla Sue**

## EDITORS NOTES



Welcome to the latest edition of the South East Region Newsletter, in which you will find:-

Reports from Hampstead Norreys, Reigate and Redhill, St Mary Teddington and Winkfield teams, Good News about John Belcher, Where, there's a will there's a way, Christmas bells and cats and a Christmas Carol at the Old Vic.

Sadly we also have two obituaries, Maud McAndrew, and Mary Hughes.

Many thanks to all who sent me these items - it was very pleasing to get so many! Keep them coming!

The deadline for the next Newsletter is **31st January 2021**

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas, despite restrictions, and hope for a better 2021.

*Valerie*

*v.j.boon@ntlworld.com*

### **Honoured Members of the South East Region**

*Cliff Blundell*

*Keith Rowland*

*Angela Blundell*

*Wendy Rowland*

*Pauline Dover*

*Michael Wilkinson*

*Bridget Smith*

*Derek Wilkinson*

*Jeanne Turner*

### **CHUCKLE CORNER**

A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine last week is now fully recovered.

He had a photographic memory but it was never fully developed.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

Carrots can be good for your eyes, but wine can double your vision.

A car's weakest point is the nut holding the wheel.

Dear Ringers,

I hope everyone is coping with our second lockdown - it certainly seems very odd not to have a full diary of concerts and Christmas engagements this year.

It is so lovely to be able to read about teams that have found safe ways to rehearse. I was delighted to be able to form a school team and they are looking forward to recording a processional this week for our virtual Carol Service. While there are many guidelines we have to follow in school from numbers in clubs to not mixing "bubbles", I am very fortunate to work in a school which is allowing any musical activities which we can do safely. So I am currently up to my eyes (or ears?!) in Nativities and Carol Service rehearsals - all of which will be recorded and then sent out to parents to watch.

It is also sad to hear about members of the region passing away. In this edition we have obituaries for Maureen (Maude) McAndrew, leader of Bishop's Bells, and Mary Hughes, Hamilton Ringers. We have also heard in the last few days that Alan Collings has died following a heart attack. He was a former Chair of the region and recently made an Honorary Life Member. A full obituary will appear in our next newsletter. Our thoughts and prayers are with all their families and their handbell teams at this time.

While we are still unable to organise any regional events and those teams which had started rehearsals have had to put them on hold, many teams are continuing to meet together virtually - using Zoom, with Whatsapp groups, by email or simply by picking up the phone and talking to each other.

Recently some regions have begun to organise these events, which can involve anything from socialising to looking at music, games to exploring new repertoire. If you would like an event via Zoom in the New Year - please do let me know!

In the meantime, stay safe and I hope you all have a peaceful and happy Christmas.

Yours, *Heleen*

[HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:HELENLSECKER@GMAIL.COM)

## Report from HAMPSTEAD NORREYS HANDBELL RINGERS

Out of the blue, Hampstead Norreys Handbell Ringers received an email from our Leader, Thelma, asking if anyone would be interested in playing 12 bells (group of 6) in her garden.

The answer was an enthusiastic 'Yes please'.

Lots of 'reply to all' emails went back and forth until finally a date was decided, Monday afternoon 14 September.

Five of us duly arrived on a hot and sunny afternoon to be greeted by Thelma and her dog Captain.



The music stands were erected in the shade of the apple trees and when the sun moved round, so did we. We had a bit of competition from a robin singing for all it was worth, but that just added to the enjoyment. We hadn't met since March, but it didn't take long before we got back into playing the bells. It just felt so good to be doing something again that once was taken for granted as part of our normal routine.

*Ann Beard*



## **'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' AT THE OLD VIC THEATRE – WITH HANDBELLS!**

If you would like to have a Christmas treat at the theatre - and see some handbell ringing too – tickets are now on sale for the Old Vic Theatre's production of 'A Christmas Carol', which is going to be streamed online this year.

This very successful production has been performed 'live' to sell out audiences for the last three years and as well as the play, features carols with handbell ringing and singing throughout, performed from memory by the cast.

If you fancy a trip to the theatre from the comfort of your own armchair or sofa, you can of course watch with more people in your household - with no interruptions from people talking/chewing or asking you to stand up!

Here is the link to find out more or buy tickets: <https://www.oldvictheatre.com>

Happy Christmas!

## JOHN BELCHER (ARSCM)



Those of you who have been part of the Guildford Cathedral Service since 2004, will know what a great organist John Belcher is.

On 24th October, he was made an Associate of the RSCM. The honour was virtually conferred during the Celebration Day 2020 service held on-line

In his career, John has been organist at Chester Cathedral, St. Peter's Bournemouth, St Asaph Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey, and Godalming Parish Church. He has trained numerous choristers and organists.

It is great to have some really good news for you all at this time, and we send John our most hearty **Congratulations!!**

### TWELVE COMMANDMENTS FOR SENIORS

1. Talk to yourself. There are times you need expert advice.
2. "In Style" are the clothes that still fit.
3. You don't need anger management.  
You just need people to stop making you mad.
4. Your people skills are just fine.  
It's your tolerance for an idiot that needs work.
5. The biggest lie you tell yourself is,  
"I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."
6. "On time" is when you get there.
7. When you say "the other day",  
you could be referring to any day between yesterday and 15 years ago.
8. It would be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes,  
then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller.
9. You've noticed people your age are so much older than you.
10. Younger people of the opposite sex no longer notice you.
11. Ageing has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.
12. Growing old should have taken longer.



## WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY"

Covid 19 and bells do not go together!. We were suddenly plunged into silence in March and the bells stayed in their boxes. As a solo handbell ringer alongside playing with two other teams, I was very aware that entertainment in care homes was brought to a sudden halt, thus depriving the residents of the pleasure of seeing and ringing the bells. I am sure that I speak for all handbell ringers when I say that we have missed the ringing and the friendship massively.

As the situation eased, one of our teams who talk weekly on Zoom decided to get together again, so seven volunteers met in the large garden of one of our ringers on a sunny afternoon in August, but due to the threat of rain, we moved into her very large conservatory where we set up our music, following all the Covid rules and wearing masks .We played six pieces including Pie Jesu, Cwm Rhondda, Hyfrydol and Morning Has Broken, with a few people ringing different bells from their normal allocation. The emotion was tangible, increasing with each piece, so that at the end we were all overcome.

What is this thing that grips us all and gives us so much pleasure? It gives us a reason to go out once or twice a week or even more in some cases and create a sound that we have all grown to love. We have missed that, together with the friendships and fun and some of us will be wondering whether we can ever return.

We seized that opportunity in August and have met once since then in a group of six in a large hall, obeying the rules. It was great fun, especially when I requested Ragtime Ramble which some had never played! There was great hilarity as we pushed the tempo to the limit!. Twelve bell music **can** be fun.!

Now we are in a situation wondering if we will ever ring again. Some will have lost their confidence but our shared love of bell ringing will drive us through this situation and we will survive.

*Carol Wheeler*

*Children don't always hear Christmas carols quite right, for example....*

Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly

We three kings of porridge and tar

On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me

Later on we'll perspire, as we dream by the fire.

Frosty the Snowman is a ferret elf, I say

Sleep in heavenly peas.

He's makin a list, chicken and rice.

With the jelly toast proclaim

## GREETINGS FROM WINKFIELD!!

Like everyone else we have been suffering from withdrawal symptoms from not ringing our bells – it has been so disappointing.

During the first lockdown we met up each Sunday outside church with coffee flasks for a socially distanced chat and catchup which was lovely – not so welcome in this cooler 2<sup>nd</sup> lockdown...

We also initiated zoom meetings each Monday in order to keep in touch – perfect as I do not have a licence so we are restricted to 40 minutes. It certainly focuses attention if we have anything important to discuss!!

However we are really lucky here in that we practice in our church so, as soon as we were allowed back in after the first lockdown, we started ringing again.

Adjustments did need to be made though.

I purchased extra stands so that each ringer had their own, rather than sharing, and because we have the luxury of space we were able to ring safely.

A downside was having to wear masks which everyone hates, but on the plus side (for some ringers) I couldn't complain about mouths moving to count as I couldn't see them!!!

The annual Harvest Supper had to be cancelled but we did ring our bells as part of the Evensong service – we are so lucky that our church supports and encourages us to participate at almost every event.

Our interim vicar, Patrick, from Kenya had never heard tune ringing on hand bells and was both amazed and astonished that he could recognise hymns – we rang Sandra's "Harvest Praise".

He is now keen for us to ring at as many services as possible!

We had practiced "The Day Thou Gavest" for the Remembrance Service and managed to record it before lockdown so that it could be used during the zoom service.

We are hoping that after December the second the church will open again and we can participate in the Advent services – fingers crossed.

Wishing you all a healthy Christmas in whatever form it takes this year and hopefully we will be permitted to meet up next year – fingers crossed.

*Jill Glennister*



## **CHRISTMAS BELLS & CATS**

With the end of the Gardening Season our thoughts returned to handbell ringing and, in particular, how we might be able to do some small group ringing to mark the Christmas Season. We faced the dual challenges of abiding by the latest social distancing recommendations and finding enough members of the team who were likely to be comfortable with ringing indoors. So we dusted off our selection of 8-bell Christmas music - some arranged by Michael Coe & some by Larry Sue - and found we had a total of 16 pieces we could play with 4 people. We were hoping to get several festive practices in before Christmas, but then came news of Lockdown 2! Luckily we managed to get one practice in before this came into force. So, on 3rd November, Jenny and Kim - from Owslebury Handbell Team - joined us for Christmas bells, tea, cake and natter. An afternoon of great hilarity ensued, but we did stay composed enough to record one of our pieces - See Amid The Winter Snow - which you can view via this link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2100702526726310>

We so enjoyed ringing after such a long break, that we decided we should try some new duets to keep the momentum going 'til Christmas. We purchased and started to learn Michael Coe's arrangement of Noel Nouvelet.

Tilly, our tortie cat, decided that she wanted to join in a make it a trio



and took to wandering among the bells while we were getting to grips with the music; she brought a whole new dimension to weaving the bells with Geoff narrowly avoiding decapitating her at one point! Tilly managed to give a perfect percussive ending to the piece by jumping off the table with a loud THUD, in time with the last beat! Several hours later, while Tilly was taking a cat-nap, we managed to film our performance without her ..... & this is what we came up with:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztdv6WbNJyU>

At this point of writing, we don't know if we'll be out of lockdown in December, but we've acquired a few more duets to keep us busy. We are hoping to re-start 8-bell practices with other Owslebury team members once restrictions are relaxed. Maybe this is the way forward to gradually re-starting the whole group again; we live in hope!

*Mandy & Geoff - Owslebury Handbell Team*

## MEMORIES OF MAUDE 11.3.1948 – 5.9.2020



Maureen McAndrew, known to us all as Maude, was a founder member of Bishop's Bells when it was formed in January 1984 by Fred Haigh. She joined along with Florence, her mother and 8 year old daughter Lizzi. Having had music throughout her whole life she became a key member of the team, taking over from Fred as leader when he retired.

She did everything from sorting out and arranging music, compiling concert programmes and organising our weekly practices.

Her numerous talks to WIs and fellowship groups on the history and practice of handbell ringing contained many jewels of information. We all remember the fines for drunken bellringers who rang in pubs!

Known throughout HRGB, she was the regional representative for South East Region for some years. She attended many national and international rallies in Albuquerque, Toronto, Birmingham and Liverpool. One of our memories is from the National Rally in Aberystwyth when we were in student accommodation and it was so cold we all ended up in the kitchen drinking tea in our nighties, socks and scarves. In Toronto Maude sat in bed every night studying the music for the bell orchestra. As always with Maude there was a lot of laughter and giggles along the way.

Maude had many other talents including singing in church choirs and needlework. We still use the table drapes and music stand covers decorated with gold tassels and our BB logo.

She was a gentle lady with a great sense of humour. She always worked hard to make everyone, irrespective of musical ability, feel included. Maude passed away

peacefully following cancer treatment. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, Bishop's Bells were unable to fulfil her wish for us to play Pachelbel's Canon at her funeral. However, we hope to be able to carry out this wish at a celebration of her life at a later date.

Maude was a beautiful soul who we shall dearly miss.

Tuesday evening rehearsals will never be the same again.



# TO CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF MARY HUGHES

December 1931-October 2020

Mary was a great friend and ringer who was at the heart of Hamilton Ringers and supported all of us massively. On first meeting she could best be described as 'Old school' properly polite and rather formal. But everyone soon discovered that behind this was an incredibly kind, generous, giving person with a wickedly dry sense of humour.

Mary spent her working life in nursing and specialising in midwifery. She was a Sister at Kingston Hospital, then a Departmental Sister, then a Tutor and finally Director of Midwifery Services. A title she retained until she retired in 1988. On two occasions Mary got her whole set through their midwifery exams. The consultant had said that if this ever happened, he would take the whole set, tutors and some of the senior Sisters out to dinner. He had to do this twice!

Mary had been a tower bell ringer from an early age and later joined Hamilton Ringers in Tolworth. As a ringer she was always determined to 'get it right' and expected everyone else to do the same including the conductor. In rehearsals she would regularly say 'can we just do that again so I can get it right' or get to the end of a piece and break out into laughter saying 'I made a right mess of that' and at times mixing in the odd profanity or two.

As part of the team at Hamilton she took her twin roles of Chair and Catering Manager very seriously and conducted meetings and AGM's in a very formal manner reflecting her view that things should be done properly. She would brook no nonsense from those of us who took things less seriously and with hindsight we now realise how right she was.

Many of us remember her as the 'Soup Dragon' from the early years at SERBO. Every rehearsal Mary would arrive with a large stockpot full of delicious homemade soup for everyone at lunch time. Someone once asked her 'What goes in the soup Mary' her reply 'oh, any old rubbish I found in the fridge'. So typically self-deprecating of her to be dismissive of what was an incredibly kind and generous action that must have required a not inconsiderable investment of both time and money for her.

Over the years at Hamilton we were joined by a number of young ringers and ringers visiting London from other parts of the world. Mary always supported them, both in their ringing and in other ways and quickly became a good friend to them. For some of them this friendship lasted beyond their time with Hamilton. Indeed there were a number of former ringers who joined the 'zoom' attendees at her funeral including one from Japan.

It was not a surprise that Mary organised her own funeral service, from the entrance and departure music, to the hymns, readings, eulogy and address and prayers. Mary was a one-off with a wonderful sense of humour and a dedication to everything she undertook throughout her life. She will be much missed.



## ST MARY TEDDINGTON BELLS – RINGING DURING RESTRICTIONS



Hello Everyone!!

When lockdown began on 16 March 2020, we as a team and I am sure many other teams went home to stay safe and save lives.

Although we were all doing the right thing, this drastically changed our lives and we had to get used to all sorts of changes.

From working from home, starting to shop online, shield if needed and learning to use online video services so that we could see our friends and family. This was a major change which unfortunately put a stop to not only our handbell teams and other music groups, but the music industry as a whole. After a few weeks we as a team missed playing handbells and seeing each other! So we decided to, during lockdown, do something about this. We started to use Zoom (the video conferencing service) and as many of others have, the Ringing Room website. This was fantastic, not only could we see each other but also ring together. It took some getting used to and we needed to make some alterations to some music to make it easier, but we could at least play some simplified versions of Fields of Gold, The Blue Danube, The Can Can, My Grandfather's Clock as well other traditional pieces.

As the lockdown began to change into the tier system and allowed us to do more, we decided as a group that we would like to start playing again! Before we started, we got advice from the church hall staff and we were told that their facilities were made COVID Secure and we had to make sure that we followed all the guidelines. We also looked at the HRGB SE website for COVID 19 Advice & Risk Assessments as well.



After we made sure everything was above board, we met up (remembering hands, face, space using music stands – wearing facemasks and ensuring ventilation through the room) and started to play.



It was a relief to see all our team mates and starting to play REAL HANDBELLS again! We managed to play for over 9 weeks, starting off small and progressing to more difficult music and even got to the point where we thought, let's see if we can start to introduce a table each (and maybe start doing some carols!), whilst still adhering to all the guidance, the following week!

But as we got to that stage – lockdown again!

We are now back on the Ringing Room and seeing each other through Zoom. We have been very lucky with our venue and have had so much fun trying to make real ringing work! Let's hope that this lockdown and the general COVID19 situation starts to calm and we can see a vaccine soon.

*Grant O'Sullivan – St Mary Teddington Bells*

## REIGATE & REDHILL U3A HANDBELL GROUP

with 15 members have been meeting weekly via Zoom throughout lockdown. We've shared handbell videos and live music making and enjoyed keeping our group together for mutual support and friendship during this difficult time. Those willing and able, restarted live ringing sessions at the end of September.



We moved to the larger hall at the Colman Redland Centre and with a maximum number of 6 players allowed, our conductor David took the largest bells to lead the group with 'socially distanced' tables and new layout.

We really appreciate the work and planning that has gone into this by him and the Colman Centre, to enable our group to play. Hand sanitiser is provided at the doorway plus spray and paper towels to wipe clean the tables and equipment afterwards. Members of the group wear face masks whilst moving around and gloves at all times. It's about as safe as it can be so that we enjoy a little fun, relaxation and friendship during this difficult period.

Learn, laugh, live continues at R Ru3a!

Some old, some new.....

**"Lexophile"** describes those that have a love for words, such as "You can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish," and "To write with a broken pencil is pointless.

An annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who's the best original lexophile. Here are submissions:

I changed my i Pod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

I know a guy who's addicted to drinking brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

I got some batteries that were given out free of charge.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

Police were summoned to a daycare centre where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

## **HRGB SOUTH EAST REGION DIARY 2021**

**At the moment there are no regional events scheduled until we know what is happening with Covid-19 restrictions. Hopefully the vaccine(s) will offer us a way forward!**

***Would YOU like to host an event in the future,  
when restrictions are lifted?  
A regional rally, a mini or micro ring, a County get-together?  
Please contact the Secretary, a committee member  
or a County Rep to talk about it..... please let us know!***

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