

## SCACR Northern District

### Central Council Rep's Report (2021) – Steph Pendlebury

Although a significant part of 2021 was affected by COVID-19 restrictions, the Central Council and the “grassroots ringers” who are members of the various Workgroups (more on those below!) were working hard throughout the year. Of course, a major part of this work was to produce up-to-date guidance on how to mitigate coronavirus risks in ringing rooms.

The Strategic Priorities have also been updated:

1. [Find alternative long-term sources of recruits who have the potential to be good ringers](#)

We can no longer rely on the church to supply us with recruits, particularly youngsters, and we have to work harder to attract and retain them.

2. [That no ringer should hit a barrier to their own progression](#)

If a ringer wants to progress, they should always be able to find a pathway that helps them, although it will probably not just be at their own tower.

3. [The pursuit of excellence in everything we do](#)

The pursuit of high quality performance should be what binds together all the different strata and styles of ringing. To achieve this we need the best possible ringing environments, organisation and leadership.

4. [The sound of church bells remains part of our cultural soundscape and is appreciated and understood](#)

The sound of church bells is quintessentially British, although it exists more widely. When people hear bells it should not only remind them of the presence of the church, but they should recognise and appreciate the skill involved.

5. [The pursuit of method ringing is not the only measure of success for a ringer](#)

No one should feel a failure if they do not do method ringing. All ringers are valued.

6. [The Church continues to value our contribution](#)

We must retain the Church's goodwill in order to continue to have access to their bells.

The biggest news story for the Northern District was District young member Ollie Watson's win of the Westley Award for church bell maintenance and improvement. The judges were impressed by Ollie's enthusiasm and accomplishments.

The Recruitment & Retention team (of which I am a member) gave Zoom talks “across the country” for several guilds and associations.

There is a new, worldwide “Young Change Ringers Association” (YCRA), that young ringers themselves have set up and are running, with a loan from and the support of the Council. This is an Association for anyone old enough to handle a bell, up to the age of 30, with the aim to be an Association for young ringers, by young ringers. Several events per year are planned.

Work is underway on a new mobile belfry. This will be easy to transport, quick to set up (30 mins), provides a realistic ringing experience, and looks the part. It will be part of a major push to get bells in front of more people – in schools, at music festivals, shopping centres, etc.

The Council ran a photo competition with several themes (e.g. “Ringers in Action”, “Bells in Art”). The images submitted form a media library that can be used when you need a picture e.g. for a news article for a local paper, on a website, in a recruitment leaflet... They are available from the CC website ([cccbr.org.uk](http://cccbr.org.uk)).

You may be aware that the Church of England is currently reviewing its “Mission and Pastoral Measure” with a view to potentially closing some churches. The Council submitted a response to this review, on behalf of ringers. This emphasised that bells are the voice of the Church, and the importance of early consideration of the bells in the process of closing any churches.

“Ringing Forums” ([ringingforums.org](http://ringingforums.org)) is a new set of online networks for like-minded ringers to ask specific topic questions, get support and share information quickly and easily. No social media account is needed, and the Forums are fully-searchable (unlike Facebook!).

A formal Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Churches Conservation Trust to develop a National Ringing Centre for all ringers to use, at the Old Black Lion (an historic real ale pub) in Northampton. The plan is for six training bells, meeting and conference facilities, and letting bedrooms in the pub. There is a light eight in St Peter’s church, next door. All just five minutes’ walk from a mainline railway station.

The new North West Ringing Course has been launched; the first course will take place in August 2022, based at Myerscough College, near Preston. The course is open to anyone, not just those in the NW. A range of topics will be covered. More info on the CC website.

There is currently a push to encourage lapsed ringers to return to ringing. Do you know anyone who used to ring – perhaps they learned as a teenager, then gave it up when they moved away or went to university? Why not bring them along to the next District event?! Even if they don’t want to ring, there’s usually plenty of cake to eat and lovely people to talk to...

Finally, if you are interested in contributing to the wider ringing community, there are opportunities for everyone, no matter what your interest or skills, in the CC’s Workgroups. All ringers have skills and knowledge (not just about ringing!) that are useful to others. Any ringer can volunteer in a Workgroup, and Workgroups cover a range of subjects – from supporting young ringers and university ringing, to caring for churches and bells. More information on the “situations vacant” page on the CC website ([cccbr.org.uk/about/volunteering-with-the-council/](http://cccbr.org.uk/about/volunteering-with-the-council/)). My experience of being on a Workgroup has been one of fun, friendship and fulfilment – I definitely recommend it.