

# Northern News



The Northern District Newsletter - July 2020

## Return to Ringing - Updated Guidance

The Central Council's guidance on ringing tower bells was updated on 24<sup>th</sup> July, after consultation with Public Health England, in partnership with the Church of England. All the up-to-date guidance documents, FAQs, and risk assessment templates can be found here:

[www.cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus)

The general rules are as follows:

- 2m spacing between ringers (which will generally mean alternate bells)
- 1.5m spacing allowable if ropes fall in a straight line (ringers facing inwards not towards each other)
- Adjacent bells can be rung by ringers from the same household

On 21<sup>st</sup> July the Church of England [published guidance on facemasks](#) which said: "We strongly advise that face coverings should be worn by all those attending a place of worship, including ministers, worshippers, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors, where there may be other people present; remembering that they are mainly intended to protect other people, not the wearer, from coronavirus COVID-19 and that they are not a replacement for physical distancing and regular hand washing." Although there is no explicit instruction that this includes ringers, the Church considers bellringers to fall under 'volunteers' therefore we must assume that facemasks should also be worn for ringing. Wearing facemasks does not reduce the minimum distances referred to above.

Before ringing tower bells, you must complete a COVID-19 risk assessment for ringing, discuss this with your vicar and receive the vicar's permission to ring. If you have any queries about how to complete a risk assessment, the Association's "risk group" can provide guidance - contact [secretary@scacr.org](mailto:secretary@scacr.org) or [sec-north@scacr.org](mailto:sec-north@scacr.org).

## What's On ... Yes, there is something on!

Association Quiz - 8th August, 7.00 pm



Save the date! The not-quite-annual **Association Quiz** will be held at **7 pm on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> August**.

Team entry is encouraged - friends and family are welcome to join (you can also enter as an individual). Quiz Mistress Emma Gadd will present the questions using Zoom.

For full details, see the info on the Association [website calendar](#), and the separate Quiz Guide (also attached to this email), which includes instructions for how to manage a remote, distributed team!

## Northern District Virtual Saturday Gatherings (by Steph Pendlebury)



The first ever online Northern District Saturday Gathering was held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August via Zoom. Apparently the time clashed with at least 2 "important" sporting events, sorry about that (not something that is typically on my radar!). Eight people, many of whom hadn't seen each other in person for at least four months, caught up with what everyone had been getting up to during lockdown, and discussed the gradual return to ringing.

We'll organise more online events going forwards - if you have any requests or suggestions, please contact me ([sec-north@scacr.org](mailto:sec-north@scacr.org)). Registration in advance will be needed for all virtual events, to ensure the security of the meeting (the link will only be shared by email with individuals who register).

### Association Annual Course - it's back, but not as you know it!

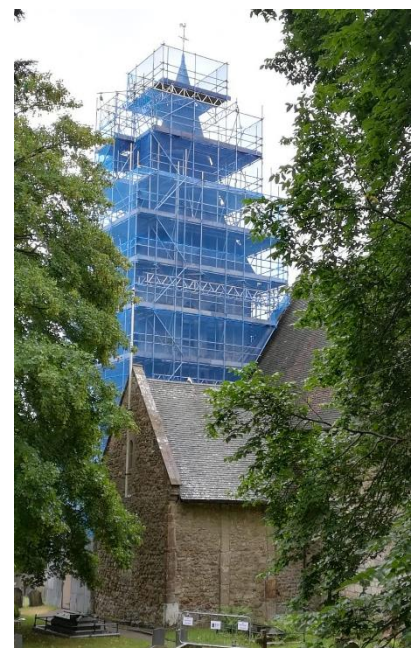
Breaking news: the SCACR two-day course will be reincarnated this year as a series of online training events, starting with a focus on Plain Hunt. More info to follow... If you have requests or suggestions for other topics, please contact Rob Lane, Association Master ([master@scacr.org](mailto:master@scacr.org)).

## Updates from around the District

### Update from Worth

As you can see, we're not likely to be ringing at Worth any time soon. Work has finally started on re-shingling the tower and repointing the stonework. That's not to say that we haven't been "ringing". By the time you read this, we will have had three practice nights on Ringing Room. We've found it's not as easy as ringing real bells, but we can almost manage a plain course of Bob Doubles! Inevitably, the evening ends up being more about catching up than catching hold, but it's a good way to keep in touch.

Thanks to Neil Dobson



## Update from other churches

Susan Wightman tells me that they have not yet started ringing at **Holy Trinity church, Rudgwick** but are in the process of drawing up a risk assessment with a plan of resuming ringing.

While Lynda Anne Johnson emails to say that at **St Swithun, East Grinstead**, the tower continues to be silent - although the quarter chimes of the clock continue to ring over East Grinstead, confusing many who think the ringers are RINGING!

Ringing is believed to have resumed at **St Georges, West Grinstead** and **St Mary Magdalene, Rusper** amongst others. And service ringing resumed at **St Mary's, Horsham** on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

## Why, When, Where and How? Interviews with ...

*This series of interviews turns the spotlight on individual ringers. This time our intrepid reporter, Steph Pendlebury, shines the light on Chris Westwood and Stella Bianco.*

### Stella Bianco



Stella has been a ringer in Sussex for over 40 years. She describes herself as "a useful ringer rather than an ambitious one", and particularly enjoys helping on training courses. Her ringing career has included joining the Cumberland Youths, a stint as Director of the Ringing World, and significant contributions to the Central Council's work, such as running a national ringing survey, chairing the library committee, and co-leading the £6M Ringing in the Millennium initiative to augment and restore bells in 150 towers - for which she was awarded an MBE. She is currently tower captain at Cowfold and librarian/custodian of the Sussex Association library.

*How did you get into ringing?*

When I was a Girl Guide my curiosity was aroused from watching the ground floor ringing, so I asked Frances Gilbert how to go about learning. Alas, I wasn't proficient enough to gain my Ringing Badge and I don't think she did either, but we did become Queen's Guides together.

*Where and when did you start ringing?*

July 1961 at Aldrington. I was taught by Diana Gough, who has sadly passed away in the last few days. I was fortunate to have an interest taken in me by Harry & Stan Brown, by then at Hurstpierpoint, and they arranged my first quarter peal and peal. I was introduced to visiting towers with the Sussex Association and discovered there were interesting students ringing from the newly created University of Sussex at St Peter's, Brighton. We used to pile into Albert Bond's empty book van (no seats!) and be taken to divisional meetings. Angela Newing (nee Grainger) and John Norris organised holidays ringing at 40-45 towers in a week - that's how to learn ringing up and down in peal! My husband was dismayed when I insisted on going ringing at Stratford on Avon on the morning after our wedding!

*Where do you ring now?*

Cowfold and Billingshurst.

*What do you like most about ringing?*

Friendship and the opportunities it has given me locally and nationally, especially visiting places I would not have seen, including tours to Australia, NZ, USA and Canada.

*What do you find most challenging?*

Teaching and Homework!

*Who do you get inspiration from?*

People who make ringing, especially handbells, look so easy!

### **Chris Westwood**



Chris is a chemical engineer and mathematician who is now retired. He joined the Northern District Committee in February 2020 - so we haven't been able to carry out many of the activities he'd helped to plan!

*When and where did you start ringing?*

I started ringing at Coleman's Hatch about 2-3 years ago.

*Where do you ring now?*

I normally ring at Hartfield and Danehill now, but I still ring at Coleman's Hatch if they're short of ringers.

*How did you get into ringing?*

I never intended to ring, but I really enjoyed listening to the bells. I went to the church café at Coleman's Hatch, and complained that I couldn't hear the bells - someone passed this on to the tower captain, who approached me and asked me if I'd like to learn to ring.

*What do you like most about ringing?*

I enjoy the sound of the bells, and I enjoy knowing that I'm contributing to making that sound. It's also good to wake up Hartfield village at 9 o'clock on a Sunday morning!

*What do you find most challenging?*

Ropesight! It depends which tower I'm at; Hartfield isn't too bad, but Danehill is very difficult.

*Who do you get inspiration from?*

Richard Feynman (Nobel prizewinning physicist) and Lennard Suskin (another physicist - all his lectures are on YouTube).

### **First Peal in Hand - tales from a Country Churchyard, by Chris Shaw**

Thursday the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 was a very hot day. I was working from home (as one now does), and Michael was similarly 'at school' from home, as he had been since the middle of March. I made my excuses, left work at half past four and drove Michael to Ripe where we met Stephen and Jonathan to attempt the peal they felt ready to score - but more of that later...

The Sunday before was the first time the three had met to ring any of this composition together in person. There had been a few practices on Ringing Room, but that was it - this was the first real ringing out of lockdown. Ripe Churchyard was the agreed venue for the practice, and the party started with a quick game of musical chairs as they hunted for flat bits of ground

to make a sensible ringing triangle. Once that game was over and they were comfortably seated at a socially appropriate distance (-which is frankly rather more distant than you would really want for the purposes of ringing handbells) they started ringing the first block of the peal composition to see how far they might get - without much in the way of expectation. They were ringing at about a two hour peal speed - which you would describe as 'measured' rather than slow.

I was stationed a little further away, with a good view down two sides of the church to the main entrance and the far entrance. My job was to guard - to intercept any members of the public who got too close, tell them what was going on in hushed tones, give some good PR, and make sure they didn't distract the honed athletes from their 'zone' under the trees. I only had one runner to deal with - who disappeared around the right hand side of the church, and then rather unexpectedly came straight round the church, past the ringers, and back through the gate.

Anyway, after a while the ringing fired out, and once the forensics were done, other parts of the composition were practised, and it was considered a successful first in-person meeting.

Everyone agreed to meet on Tuesday for a proper attempt - same time, same place. Chairs arranged, sentry in place (with crossword to complete this time) - and off they go. Deliberate pace again ... they decided to start with the London block this time, and were ringing at 2h2m pace with pretty much no errors - **dinng dongg dinng dongg** - I didn't mention the church clock did I? - it rings every quarter... and it is not quiet, and it *sort of* rings the Westminster chimes - just not with the correct notes...

Next came Carlisle block one - tick. Very loud pigeon in tree above the ringers - a few people walking through the churchyard and glancing over. Now the second Carlisle part. In theory they are ringing the composition from most difficult to least difficult parts (which I get as an approach, but I can't ring any of this stuff and probably never will be able to). They seem to slow down a bit. The first block came round as it should after 17 methods and 2160 changes. Now the Cambridge and Norwich block - 2880 changes and a further 24 methods to get through. Someone is now mowing their lawn with a petrol mower - a horse whinnies ... the clock chimes, the ringing continues. It's good - they have settled at the same speed so I'm forecasting about 2h10 as a peal time. There really isn't any drama - the odd slip - self-corrected - one quite crunchy bit, but they sorted themselves out, and then bam - two hours in and about ten minutes before the end - less than 500 changes - it vaporised. I don't think anyone was getting complacent, but it just shows that you can have good quality contained ringing and then in the space of a few rows it becomes irretrievable.

There is a shocked silence, some analysis, and then the disappointment hits. I'm just an observer of all of this really (although of course I do feel somewhat involved). Just from a ringing point of view what they are trying to do is ridiculously hard. It would be hard enough to ring this in someone's lounge, but sitting too far back in a windy graveyard with a load of extraneous noise and bits of tree falling on you is surely asking a bit much.

It was pretty clear that they were quite capable of ringing the work and would get the peal eventually, but there are only so many attempts you can have without a longer period of reflection. A final attempt (for a while) was proposed for Thursday - which turned out to be the hottest day of the year.

So then. Chairs set, ringing starts, clock chimes, different crossword, Blackcap yells in a tree. Tractor goes up the road - that's quite loud. Clock chimes again. London block - tick. 2h17 pace

- yes, really. Next is Carlisle block one - tick - still pedestrian. Someone's hedge trimming (great - just do it quickly and stop...) Final part of the block - smash, crash, silence. 50 minutes ringing down the drain.

Oh well - that's it then - home-time. But rather unbelievably they are all up for one last go. Hmm - that's going to make us a bit late for Fairwarp Ringing Room practice if they go for a long time - but what are the chances of that?!

They start again - this time at indoor ringing speed which seems almost reckless compared to the speed they were ringing earlier. They absolutely cane it through the London block at 1h41 pace, ignoring the clock chimes, the birds singing, the tractors going up and down the road, and the helicopter (mercifully not too close). They streak through the first Carlisle block - not even a hint of a crunch - it is spectacular stuff and very fluent. The second Carlisle block is completed despite a fly past by a couple of Spitfires (you couldn't make this stuff up). Three extents down, four to go.

More clock chimes, various people walking through the churchyard, more tractors, a hedge trimmer, a pointlessly loud motorbike, and the pace noticeably slowed (but only a bit) for the Norwich/Cambridge blocks (which is where it broke down last time...) It goes a bit wobbly around the Hexham/Surfleet leads but they hold it together. In the Warkworth a bit later I wonder whether I am going to have any nails left as it goes through a rocky patch. All of the blocks in this composition are three part-ers, so the band has to navigate this seemingly problematic combination of methods near the end of each part another two times. Only a few leads from the end, a family enters the churchyard and are showing quite a lot of interest. I go over and entreat them to please just stay there and listen as it was about to finish, and then it did - in rounds, and the peal was scored - they had done it.

So there it was - first peal in hand for Michael - lots of methods, lots of distractions, and congratulations to all of the band for a peal well-scored - well called, well rung, and good teamwork. I enjoyed being the audience even if it was a bit nerve-wracking when the clock was striking four quarters and then the hours as well...

Few of us are likely to be ringing complex compositions like this, but just like any sport or pastime we engage in it is good to know that there are always new challenges. Whether you are new to ringing and learning to count your places, getting to grips with Bob Doubles, having a go at rounds on 12 on Ringing Room (because it seemed like a good idea at the time), or you are ringing something more exotic - just have a go.

'How do you actually ring this stuff?' I asked Michael afterwards. 'I have absolutely no idea', he says. 'It's 35 Fourths Place Delight next'.

**Chris Shaw, Fairwarp**

*Keep well, keep safe and let's hope we are all ringing and socialising again soon! Don't forget to send updates, photos, anecdotes and jokes to [news-north@scacr.org](mailto:news-north@scacr.org) for the next issue of Northern News...*