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Easter daffodils – Lilas Rawling

**Newsletter**



**Spring 2022**

What is YCRA? Written by Xanthe Simmons, a young ringer from Abbots Bromley.



YCRA (not to be confused by older members with the YMCA!) stands for **Young Change Ringers Association**. For under 30's, run by under 30's. It has helped me realise that there are many young ringers across the UK. In many towers I find that I am the youngest by up to 60 years - YCRA is designed to allow young ringers to connect with other people and realises discover that other young ringers do exist. (Before I upset any over 30's – Its only because of the over 30's that I have any ringing skill! I have met and admire many older ringers, and really appreciate the opportunities, feedback and knowledge that has been provided to me – THANK YOU !)

**Who runs YCRA?**

YCRA is an initiative supported by the CCBR. Its committee consists of a mix of committed bell ringers from all around the country who possess a wide ranging skill set. YCRA was launched at the July 2021 RWNYS and held its first meeting in Jan 2022 in Birmingham.

**What Happened at YCRA inaugural meeting?**

- Saturday 15th Jan
- 4 towers – 8, 10, 12 and 16 bells
- All within easy walking distance of New Street station.

8 Bells – St Chads

Over 50 of us met up outside St Chads in the cold to get issued with ID bands and rang various call changes and methods on the 8 bells. (I rang call changes and Plain Bob Triples).

10 Bells – St Pauls

We could see St Pauls from St Chads, so a short walk whilst talking to Matt and Josephine (two of the founding members) took us to the lightweight 10. We all sat around inside out of the cold (did I mention the frost!) before being sent up to the "holding pen" of the Teaching room. We then made our way up to the bells and realised how light they were (but I am used to ringing at Hoar Cross 😊) Call changes were the order of the day here – one band attempted something confusing but were promptly called to rounds after firing out after first dodge!



12 Bells – St Philips (B'Ham Cathedral)

After a visit to Greggs to get a well-earned warming cuppa it was time for the ascent up to the Cathedral ringing room. This time we had a camera man in the middle of the ringing circle! I rang call changes with a wide age range of people (called the "right way") from ~10 years old to an ancient (on the day) 30 year old.

16 Bells – St Martins (Bull Ring)

The famous Bull Ring – all 16 bells rung perfectly at times (from what I could distinguish!). Plain Hunt on 15 was very impressive – I didn't do that 😊 BUT I did ring "Fancy call changes" where we were separated into 4 groups of 4 (by a blue sally) and then calls of "2 to 3" meant 8 changes took place. A great opportunity provided by YCRA – only 3 places in the world could possibly offer this 16-bell experience!

**When's the next YCRA meeting?**

Of course there is a RWNYC in Exeter in July, but there is also a YCRA Sept 2022 meet in Nottingham already planned. See their website [ycra.org.uk](http://ycra.org.uk) for more information.

**Who do I need to talk to about Young Ringers in LWASCR ?**

Our youth ringers are not as scary as the 50 in Birmingham – I promise!

If you are under 18 or know people who are please contact Ray Hosking: [rayjan72@btinternet.com](mailto:rayjan72@btinternet.com)

**Wouldn't it be great if we could represent LWASCR in Exeter on July 2<sup>nd</sup>?**

It is to be based at Exeter Cathedral with a format will be similar to previous years (methods and called changes) including, hopefully, open ringing at the Cathedral on the glorious 72cwt 12, the second heaviest peal of bells in the world!

**Xanthe Simmonds****Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaconries Society****Peal Week 2022**

After a Covid gap last year, the 12<sup>th</sup> LWASCR peal week coincided once again with Half Term and resulted in 7 successes with 35 ringers taking part. Planning started some time ago when it wasn't clear what restrictions might still be in place and so a more modest number of attempts were scheduled. Thanks to organisers Roger, Anne and Gordon, it ended up being a bit bigger than we expected – we even got a Birmingham peal kindly linked to our RW event! Thank you to all of the organisers for their hard work in providing opportunities for ringers in our area.

Three people rang their first peals – Xanthe and Sam at Armitage and Gary at Cannock. Xanthe has been ringing for about 5 years at Abbots Bromley, participating in the LWASCR youth team throughout that time. Sam has been ringing at Lichfield Cathedral since attending the Cathedral school and is ringing doubles, minor and triples methods inside. Gary got within sight of the finishing line of his first peal in the peal week 2 years ago only for the attempt to falter in the last 10 minutes. He also was delighted to score second time round.

This peal week also aimed to get people back up to speed following the lockdown(s) and so there were perhaps fewer 'firsts' than in previous years. However well done to Mikey on ringing his first peal inside (only his second peal) at Coseley. One other pleasing 'first' was Dave Towell scoring his first of Major on handbells. Dave learnt handbells from scratch as a lockdown project and has now rung three handbell peals!

Rather than waiting until next February, I hope that ringing leaders will follow this up with second attempts. With the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June, there is an ideal time frame to aim for.

Thank you to everyone who took part and to those who assisted with the organisation. Keeping peal ringing alive in small Societies can be hard work but, despite the effects of lockdown, there was a lot of determination to succeed and I hope everyone enjoyed themselves. Well done to all.

**Stuart Hutchieson**

Society of Rambling Ringers and Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaconries Society

Brewood, Staffordshire, St Mary and St Chad

Saturday, 19 February 2022 in 3h 25 (21–2–12 in Eb)

5152 Bristol Surprise Major

Composed by M B Davies (No. 4)

1. George A Dawson
2. Elizabeth Hutchieson
3. Alex S Riley (C)
4. Stephen G Askew
5. John F Mulvey
6. Luke S P Riley
7. Stuart C W Hutchieson
8. Roger S Riley

7: 1250th peal. 5,7: 200th together.

(St Martin's Guild)

Lichfield, Staffordshire, Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Chad

Saturday, 19 February 2022 in 3h 23 (31–2–9 in D)

5002 Stedman Caters

Composed by M R Eccleston (bobs only)

1. Jimmy L Yeoman
2. Jack E Page (C)
3. Rachel L Mahoney
4. Oliver C Bates
5. Paul E Bibilo
6. Andrew V Brown
7. Alan Regin
8. Jonathan B Townsend
9. Colin G Newman
10. Claire F Roulstone

Kemberton, Shropshire, St Andrew

Saturday, 19 February 2022 in 2h 27 (5–2–19 in A#)

5040 Surprise Minor (7m)

1 extent each of York, Bourne, Norwich, Ipswich, Surfleet, Beverley and Cambridge.

1. Dawn Grundy
2. Andrew W Gordon
3. Gail K Lawrence
4. Timothy M Davis
5. Matthew Lawrence (C)
6. Andrew C Ogden

Lichfield, Staffordshire, 8 Beechfield Rise

Sunday, 20 February 2022 in 2h 35 (11 in G)

5040 Plain Bob Major

Composed by Stuart C W Hutchieson

- 1–2. Elizabeth Hutchieson
- 3–4. Lucy Smith
- 5–6. Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)
- 7–8. David L Towell

First peal of Major in hand: 7-8. Welcome back to peal ringing for Lucy, ringing her first since Covid restrictions were imposed.

Coseley, West Midlands, Christ Church

Sunday, 20 February 2022 in 2h 54 (11–2–5 in G)

5056 Plain Bob Major

Composed by John R Pritchard

1. Michael Chester
2. Gillian Eastwood
3. R Jean Nixon
4. Richard J Hurst
5. Stephen G Askew
6. Michael S Roberts
7. Paul E Bibilo
8. Gordon R Birks (C)

First Major inside: 6

Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire, St Nicholas 1376 Rutland, 1344 Yorkshire, 1280 Lincolnshire, 1088 Cambridge, 133 com, atw.

Composed by Bernard H Taylor

1. Elizabeth Hutchieson
2. R Jean Nixon
3. Ruth Jopp
4. David L Towell
5. Dawn Grundy
6. Paul Jopp
7. Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)
8. Andrew C Ogden

Liz is the 12th person to circle the tower.

Armitage, Staffordshire, St John the Baptist  
 Friday, 25 February 2022 in 2h 39 (4-2-20 in C)  
 5040 Plain Bob Minor  
 1. Xanthe A Simmonds  
 2. Timothy C Hine  
 3. Simon P Ferguson  
 4. Sam Ecclestone-Brown  
 5. Jonathan B Townsend  
 6. Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)  
 First peal for 1 and 4. 50th together 3 and 6.



Cannock, Staffordshire, St Luke  
 Saturday, 26 February 2022 in 3h 4 (14-0-10 in F)  
 5104 Plain Bob Major  
 Composed by Stuart C W Hutchieson  
 1. S Geoffrey Pick  
 2. Selwyn G Jones  
 3. John F Mulvey  
 4. Gary S Crutchley  
 5. Michael J Dew  
 6. Stephen G Askew  
 7. Malcolm Quimby  
 8. Stuart C W Hutchieson (C)  
 First peal : 4. First peal with a mechanical heart valve for Malcolm (Six Million Dollar man) Quimby.



February is challenge month in the Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaconries Society. We were delighted that so many towers rang something special for the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession last weekend. Meanwhile, there have been two quarter peal challenges:

Grandsire Doubles at Pelsall <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1493139> and spliced Cambridge / Yorkshire /Lincolnshire / Rutland at Cannock. <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1493123>

Well done to everyone involved.

### Congratulations to:

A Quarter peal at Hoar Cross recognizing and celebrating Dawn Grundy's 50 years as regular church organist St Nicholas, Abbotts Bromley.

1260 Doubles ( M ): 720 of Grandsire, 540 of Plain Bob

1. Anne E Ogden ( C )
2. Elizabeth Hutchieson
3. Gail K Lawrence
4. Dawn Grundy
5. Helen R Jarvis
6. Rachel J Everett

Also rung for International Women's Day, March 8<sup>th</sup>

### News from towers...

**St Augustine, Rugeley** hosted the 2022 Striking competition and meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup>. It was the first contest for two years due to covid restrictins (last year's was online) and was a well attended event. The team at Rugeley provided a very warm welcome and a lovely selection of drinks and snacks, the sun was shining and the really good ringing all made it a very successful event.

Unfortunately the Coseley team had to withdraw because of covid; five teams took part.





Abbotts Bromley

Armitage

Brewood

Cannock

Lichfield Cathedral

Congratulations to everyone who rang, to Alastair for adjudicating, to the hosts, to all who came to support and listen, and welcome to new member Jonathan Healey. It all made the day an enjoyable and successful meeting.

Few points separated the five teams.

Results

1st Lichfield Cathedral

2nd Cannock

3rd Abbotts Bromley

4th Aldridge

5th Brewood.

Helen Jarvis receiving trophy.



**Mavesyn Ridware** Anyone visiting St. Nicholas Mavesyn Ridware to ring now will see that we have a lovely new addition to the 'wall art'!

To celebrate the longest peal rung in Staffordshire that was achieved back in 2010, we asked Keith Brooks to design us a peal board. Keith was most helpful, firstly sending us numerous photos of previous ones that he had done and once we had agreed on the style and text we came up with a most agreeable layout, to be laid out on oak.

We are so pleased with the final product – the bespoke lettering and motifs give the piece a most unique feel and Keith's attention to detail is second to none.

Sadly, Lee Southall, who rang in the peal, is no longer with us, but we invited his sister Kerry and her daughter to come and view the peal board in situ and they were both very touched. It was definitely something that Lee could have been very proud of.

So, if you are looking to have a peal board commissioned yourself, we would have no hesitation in recommending Keith's work.



New method preparation: some ringers arrive ready to ring it, some not!

Other joys of the tower - spring cleaning!



### Lichfield Cathedral .

Several adult learners have recently joined the cathedral band; Monday's practice begins at 7.00 pm to accommodate a wide range of skills and experience. Meet Amanda, Hilary, Becky and James.

On Easter Sunday they rang for the first time for Sunday worship.



Ray Hosking has been increasing the number of young ringers at Lichfield by introducing two grandsons to ringing. The photo of the three of them after ringing rounds and call changes on six. Aled (middle) has been ringing since 2019 and who, in spite of the covid 'break', is ringing inside in Stedman triples, grandsire caters, cambridge minor and conducting doubles on practice night. His brother Rhydian started ringing 8 months ago and already ringing rounds and call changes.

### *The Tantony Bell*

If you were visiting Lichfield Cathedral on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January, you could have seen a small bell – small to us, as it weighs 63 kg (1 cwt oqtrs. 27lbs) – prominently displayed in front of the nave altar and causing much interest. This is the tantony bell, a name sometimes given to a small bell, or the smallest of a set; the title comes from the name of St Ant(h)ony the Great of Egypt, who lived from 251 to 356 and whose emblems included a bell, as it was said he travelled around with small bells on his staff and sometimes was accompanied by a pig with a bell on its collar.

Our tantony bell is hung and swings in the louvres on the south side of the central tower, positioned so that its sound can be clearly heard, not only in the Close, but also quite a way off in the centre of the city, proclaiming that a service is about to begin. Everyday chiming and exposure to the elements over many years led to the necessity for its complete restoration at Taylor's bell foundry in Loughborough.



This image of the Tantony bell was taken by Christopher J. Pickford. Now returned suitably resplendent in a new coat and with new fittings, the bell was blessed in the morning Choral Eucharist service, followed immediately by a short touch of major on handbells rung by members of the cathedral band – Helen Jarvis, Sue Binns, and Clive and Lucy Smith. Experts consider that the bell was probably cast in about 1500, amazingly over 500 years ago; this was in the reign of

Henry

VII.

Mostly due to the destruction or removal of the cathedral's treasures during the Reformation and the Civil War, this bell is now one of the oldest artefacts in the building. However there is much that we do not know about the bell. If only it could talk! I would love to ask it many questions. Firstly, where were you cast and by which bellfounder? Who gave the order and paid for you? Did you come to the cathedral straightaway? What does your inscription say? Your black letters (some upside down, as was often found in early times) are now badly worn or obliterated and even copies taken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are indecipherable. A cross is still visible but has so far not been accurately identified. Surely you were intended to be hung in a religious building of some kind, but where? Were you a sanctus bell somewhere else before you came to Lichfield? You were cast just before all the turmoil that came at the time of the Reformation; How did you manage to survive? We know that there were bells included in the sale of the contents of the Friary when it was forced to close in 1538 -



did the cathedral authorities buy you then? Were you one of the collection of twelve bells in the cathedral allowed to remain according to the report the Crown Commissioners made in 1553? Or were you given to the cathedral by a benefactor?

Were you here during the Civil War when all the bells were supposed to have been broken up and recycled for ammunition? Or were you the little bell reputedly smuggled out of the Close with other treasures from the cathedral as the Parliamentarians made their way to Coventry? That one was reputedly returned as a 'stolen' bell in 1661 and could be the 'little bell' hung five years later after the rebuilding of the three towers was completed.

From your battered condition you have obviously led a chequered existence, but what a view you have high up in the central tower; from here you have followed the life of the Close; you have seen numerous clergy come and go, watched endless church processions, visits of various kings and queens, many Bower parades, markets and celebrations of all kinds, and listened to your big siblings in the south-west tower as they ring out on both joyful and sad occasions.

We may never know the answers to these questions, but may your strong voice be heard resounding around the close and city for many centuries to come! **Lucy Smith**

## Armitage

### Thursday Accelerated Progress Sessions (TAPS)

I was able to attend two of the four Thursday Accelerated Progress Sessions, (TAPS), held in February and March 2022. The sessions are held during Challenge Month. Their purpose is to enable people to try something new which challenges them with an experienced band to support them.

The sessions were held at Armitage parish church. The bells are a light ring of six which are straight forward to handle. On both occasions when I attended some people were doing basic work, such as call changes and ringing the tenor as last bell down, and others were trying methods which were new to them, or at which they wanted to improve, such as Cambridge.



As there were fewer people at the second session which I attended I had more chance to ring. However I was able to ring at both sessions with a supportive band. I was able to do plain hunting and ring plain bob on the third. As our current band at St. Matthew's, Walsall is small and of varied ability I would rarely be able to practice plain bob there. This was a useful exercise for me therefore.

The sessions are a good idea. In particular they give ringers from towers with fewer experienced ringers the chance to try something new with a supportive, experienced band and gain confidence. It is a chance to try something which would not be on offer at a weekly practice. It would be helpful if more sessions could be provided later in the year. It may be worth thinking about having separate sessions for beginners and for advanced ringers if numbers require this and could enable it to happen.

A big thank you to all who attended and taught and supported those learning new skills. A big thank you also to Lance for welcoming us to the church at Armitage and providing the delicious refreshments.

Ruth Vyse  
18 March 2022

## Images from events past.



From Keith Brooks.

I was a member of the ringers at Cannock from 1973 until 1976 and have come across this church magazine whilst searching through books and papers at home. This may be of interest to the ringers of the Society. For your reference the names are (from L-R) Kathryn Fish, Patrick Goodwin, Mark Johnson, Martin Hardeman, Geoff Pick, Linda Pick, Keith Brooks and Alf Barker.

An image sent in by Stuart Hutchieson: John Mulvey and Phil Gay sitting in the sun while enjoying some excellent ringing at the National Youth Striking competition, in London, 2016.



Daniel Munday preparing to ring the tenor at Hoar Cross for a wedding in a cooler wetter month. Hopefully the bride wasn't so affected by the weather.



#### March 100 Club winners:

1. £51.00 Lilas Rawling
2. £25.50 Penn Tower
3. £12.75 Rachel Wheeler
4. £12.75 Brenda Harper

#### It's Spring! Time for a maintenance check?

Hopefully by the time you read this we will be returning to whatever we define as normality. During the last two years ringing has been curtailed and probably we have neglected the usual maintenance checks in our towers. Below are a few points to consider and check for in your tower.

##### On the staircase

1. Lighting Are all the bulbs lit? Is lighting adequate to prevent a fall? Have you converted to LED yet?
2. Handrail Have you a rail? Is it secure?
3. Steps Are your treads, whether stone or wood, in good order?

If any of the above need attention discuss with your churchwardens/ clergy. Trips and falls are a major danger.

##### In the Ringing Room

1. Electrical Gadget All electrical equipment that you plug into a socket needs to be PAT tested annually and a date sticker attached. This includes extension leads. The tower often gets forgotten when the tests are carried out in the rest of the church. This is your church's responsibility so talk to them if your equipment has not been tested. You should not bring in items from home for use in the tower unless they are tested.
2. Fire Extinguishers Again these are often neglected when those in church are inspected. Check the last inspection date on the equipment label, if over a year ago inform the church authorities.
3. Trip Hazards This could be carpet joints, trailing electrical leads, ringing box storage or just poor lighting which needs to be improved.
4. Emergency Lighting An electrician would automatically place an emergency light over an exit door but in a ringing room what is the greatest danger when the main lights go while you are ringing? The danger comes from not being able to catch the rope. Therefore an emergency light needs to be situated to enable ringers to see to catch their rope.

### In the Bells

1. Tower Roof Look up can you see daylight or is there evidence of water dripping from the roof onto the frame and flooring? Report if there is as over time minor leaks can cause major damage.
2. Louvres Are they securely attached to the stonework? Strong winds can easier dislodge insecure louvres which could fall onto the bells and frame.  
Check the wire netting for gaps. Birds can get through the smallest gaps.
3. Framework Bad weather causes stonework to fall. Now is the time to sweep down and clean up the frame and floor under the bells. Clean surfaces lower the risk of accidents.
4. Bell Fittings
  - a) Stays Are the bolts tight? Nuts often work loose and drop off. If you have hasting stays check the dingler on top of the stay. Is this secure?
  - b) Bearings Nearly every tower in our area has enclosed bearings. Do not be tempted to force grease into these. Leave well alone. Thousands of pounds of damage is caused by breaking the bearing seals. You will know when you are ringing a bell if there's something wrong with a bearing. Then call in an expert.
  - c) Clappers Get down under the bells and push upwards on the clapper. If there is a lot of upward movement it probably needs tightening. This is a two-person job. One to tighten the nut, another to hold the clapper against the side of the bell and to check that it crosses the bell in a straight line. Check that there is either a locking nut securing the clapper where the staple comes through the headstock or a split pin through the castle nut. If when pulled again the side of the bells there is a large amount of sideways movement the clapper may need rebushing.
  - d) Wheels Are all the nuts present and tight on the wheels? Again these do work loose over time. Perhaps they could do with a coat of preservative?
  - e) Ropes These should of course be checked for wear every few months and moved up and down occasionally to even out wear.
  - f) Sliders Hastings stays will have a shaped metal bar attached to the frameside with which the stay engages. Do not use ordinary grease as a lubricant as it will attract dirt which will make the matter worse. If the stay is fitted correctly this bar should not need lubrication. Old fashion stays and pivot sliders- check for excessive wear.
  - g) Clock Hammers These should not rest on the bells even when in use. They should be fractionally away from the bell, so that when they strike, they lift away to allowed the bell to vibrate. If they do rest on the bell inform the church to get the firm who service the clock to visit.
  - h) Ladders to the tower roof. If you have access to the tower roof via a ladder in the bell chamber is this secured safely? Has it got the necessary safety features such as a rail and hoops to comply with H&S legislation? If not report this to the churchwardens, it would be the PCC that would be liable if there was an accident.

**If there is anything you are worried about please get in touch with me on 07760 367570 or [mfjohn1@ntlworld.com](mailto:mfjohn1@ntlworld.com) John Mulvey Hon. B**

### Dates for your diary.

#### May 21<sup>st</sup>

Training morning at All Saints, Alrewas 10.00 am to 12.00 noon. These mornings are excellent opportunities to have a go at a new method/skill or build up confidence after the lockdown(s) or put 'bobs' and 'singles' into a familiar method – or more. Experienced ringers are on site to provide support, help and advice. Please let Jean Nixon know what you'd like to do in advance:

[lwascro1@ntlworld.com](mailto:lwascro1@ntlworld.com)

**June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>** the mobile belfry will be at the Stafford show – a great event. The committee is organizing a team to be on site to welcome and respond to queries. Hope to see you there.



## Obituaries

### Audrey Freda Birch

**09.09.1927 – 02.12.2021**

Audrey was born in Jubilee Cottages, Main Street, Shenstone. She was the only child of Frederick and Ethel Birch. Audrey was a very independent quiet person but not afraid to speak her mind, she remained single all her life.

Audrey was a member of St. John the Baptist Church, Shenstone and was involved in many aspects of it. She was a member of the Church Choir from her teenage years until it was disbanded, a magazine distributor and the Treasurer running consecutively during the period of four vicars starting with Hugh Barber.

In 1961 she answered the call when an appeal went out for a team of ringers to be formed prior to the augmentation of the bells to 5. Clive Smith trained the team. In the same year she became a member of the then Society of Change Ringers for the Archdeaconry of Stafford. She rang 2 full peals on the bells and many quarter peals.

In 2011 she was made an Honorary Member of the Society for her 50 years continuous membership.

Audrey was a fundraiser for the tenor bell that was cast in 1968. At this time she was a Church Warden, so along with the other Church Warden and Vicar her name was cast on the bell. She also played a major part in the raising of funds for the two smallest bells cast in 1982.

After her retirement in 1987 she helped with the flower arranging in the church and when the Village Festival started she played a leading role in the Bell ringers window display.

Audrey retired from active bell ringing in 2012 as it was getting increasingly difficult to climb the spiral steps to the ringing room but she remained as Tower Secretary until 2 months before she died.

Audrey always got on with what she did in her own quiet way. Many will miss her and although we will not see her anymore, in a way we will still hear her when the tenor bell, with her name on is rung.

### Vic Holland.

### Revd. Dr John Baldwin

It is with great sadness to announce the death of Rev Dr John Baldwin of 23rd March 2022.

John succeeded Ron Dove in taking on the collection and maintenance of information on rings of bells, and was the first to digitise it just after the 1982 edition was published.

This led to the first website appearing in 1998 and the extension of the scope to include details on individual bells and frames. John continued to lead the team as Dove Master until his retirement in 2017, although he continued to take a valuable active role until the database was transferred to its present form in 2020.

Our thoughts are with his widow, Beryl, and children, Judith and Sid at this distressing time.