

# Ringing Round Leicestershire

## *Newsletter of the Leicester Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers*

April 2026 : Issue 69

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## Welcome to the April 2026 issue of the Guild Newsletter

This year's April newsletter has managed to fall at the same time as Easter, notable for bellringers for the reduced or absent ringing during Holy Week that precedes it. Hopefully you will have enough time to read through the newsletter before heading off to catch up with some ringing after Easter Day!

As usual I am pleased to include in the newsletter reports about a whole range of activities, from the very first steps in ringing being taken by members of the university society, to the peak of achievement in ringing for the National 12 Bell Contest eliminators, with a whole mix of ringing and community in between.



Scan the QR code to see  
the newsletter online

*Rebecca Banner*  
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# President's Message

Welcome to the April 2026 Newsletter.

Over the last week I've been reminded about what a welcoming community bellringers are part of. On a recent visit to London, myself and Annette requested a ring with the local team at St Bartholomew the Great Church in Smithfield. These are the oldest pre-reformation bells in the City of London (1495-1515) and the oldest bells of more than 4 pre-reformation bells by the founder Thomas Bullisdon in England. We could not have been made more welcome by the team and after a great hour of ringing we were asked to join the ringers and other church volunteers for a wine and nibbles event in the Cloisters, laid on by the clergy. It was lovely not only to be with such a welcoming group of ringers but to also appreciate that the ringers are very much seen as part of the group who are keeping the church alive.



According to the Met Office, it has been the wettest winter in Leicestershire since records began in 1836; this has been evident in the state of our local ropes with all natural fibre ones being much shorter than normal and very stiff. We had a rope at Somerby that started to jump the wheel and on investigation the top end had become so rigid we could do an impressive 'Indian rope trick with about 5 feet of it.

## ART Award Winner – Jez Bowman

Congratulations go to our very own Jez Bowman, for winning the ART Learning the Ropes Contribution Award, presented to him at this year's conference which was held in Loughborough.

The ringers' contribution award is not based on ringing ability or attainment but for contribution to the wider ringing community, for example, within a band, local area, Guild, Association or national organisations such as the Central Council.

We have a couple of social events coming up for your diaries; the LDG will be holding the half-yearly meeting in the Loughborough District. I do hope to see many of our members there for both the ringing and the social. Also the LDG@80 celebration plans are moving ahead - everybody should have had an email with details of the Ceilidh that Annette Tudor-Brown is organising for June the 6th in Oadby. Places are limited so please book soon. Details of the half yearly meeting, and the ceilidh can be found later on in this newsletter.

Congratulations to Jez Bowman (Chair of our Education and Recruitment Committee) who was the winner of the "Learning the Ropes Competition" at the ART conference in Loughborough this month, an excellent achievement that reflects all the hard work undertaken to promote ringers and ringing. See a video of the presentation in the report later on in this newsletter.

Nicky and Dave Carling have kindly taken up the challenge of running the 'LDG@80 Ringing Focus month' in October where we will try to get as many 'firsts' in things like methods, quarter peals, conducting etc which will be rolled up into an article for the Ringing World. Anyone who wants to should be able to pick a personal goal for this, get their achievement logged on bell board and entered into the article.

Enjoy your ringing in the better weather and I hope to see many of you at the Half Yearly Meeting on the 25th April.

*Peter Brown  
Guild President*



# Firsts From Bellboard: January – March 2026

## General Ringing

First length of ringing by an all Universities of Leicester Student band in over 20 years, ringing rounds at St Mary de Castro on 4<sup>th</sup> February.

## Quarters

### First Quarter peal

**Alex Hopwood** ringing treble to Plain Bob Doubles at Barrow upon Soar on 10<sup>th</sup> January

**Laura Ward** ringing treble to Grandsire Doubles at Earl Shilton on 18<sup>th</sup> January

**Glenn Jones** ringing tenor behind to Plain Bob Doubles at Aylestone on 28<sup>th</sup> January

**Barry Hackett** ringing Tenor behind to Plain Bob Doubles at Medbourne on 31<sup>st</sup> January

**Phil Mattingly** ringing treble to Plain Bob Doubles at Knighton on 15<sup>th</sup> February

**Mat Whitaker** ringing tenor behind to Plain Bob Doubles at Thurnby on 8<sup>th</sup> March

**Sophie Haynes** ringing tenor behind to Plain Bob Doubles at St Mary de Castro on 18<sup>th</sup> March

**Caroline Cockayne** ringing tenor behind to doubles at Wanlip on 22<sup>nd</sup> March

### First Inside

**George Davis** ringing Plain Bob Doubles at Thurstaston on 4<sup>th</sup> March

### First of Minor

**Kath Eastwood-Paramore** ringing treble to Plain Bob Minor at Barrow upon Soar on 1<sup>st</sup> January

### First on 8

**Karen Allen** ringing treble to Yorkshire Major at Sapcote on 3<sup>rd</sup> March

### First of Surprise

**Jake Harkett** ringing Cambridge S Minor at Wanlip on 17<sup>th</sup> March

### First of Surprise Major

**Jeremy Bowman** ringing Cambridge S Major at Oaks in Charnwood on 11<sup>th</sup> January

**Edward Angrave** ringing Yorkshire S Major at Sapcote on 31<sup>st</sup> January

### First as Conductor

**Tessa Preston** ringing Yorkshire S Major at Sapcote on 31<sup>st</sup> January

**Jake Harkett** ringing Plain Bob Doubles at Knighton on 15<sup>th</sup> February

### First Surprise as Conductor

**Dexter Deakes** ringing Cambridge S Royal at St Mary de Castro on 2<sup>nd</sup> January

**Catherine Baker** ringing Cambridge S Minor at Packington on 12<sup>th</sup> January

### First in Method

**Liz Watson** and **Rebecca Banner** ringing Single Oxford Bob Triples at Barrow upon Soar on 9<sup>th</sup> January

**Aoife Harrison** ringing Pudsey S Major at Whetstone on 16<sup>th</sup> January

**Helen Straw** ringing Plain Bob Minor at Wanlip on 18<sup>th</sup> January

**Tessa Preston, Brenda Parr, Nicholas Parr, and Joseph Blake** ringing Bristol Royal at St Mary de Castro on 18<sup>th</sup> January

**Ian McKelvey** ringing Grandsire Doubles at Oadby on 7<sup>th</sup> February

**Liz Reading** ringing Warkworth S Minor at Hallaton on 8<sup>th</sup> February

**Jane Boyd and Elizabeth Wright** ringing St Clements Minor at Aylestone on 25<sup>th</sup> February

**Oliver Harvey** ringing Yorkshire Major at St Mary de Castro on 13<sup>th</sup> March

**Dexter Deakes** ringing Bristol Major at St Mary de Castro on 16<sup>th</sup> March

**Rebecca Banner and Mark Banner** ringing Deva S Major at Whitwick on 27<sup>th</sup> March

### First of Spliced Surprise

**Jethro Woolley** ringing Yorkshire and Cambridge Major at Hathern on 20<sup>th</sup> February

**Rebecca Bullingham** ringing Cambridge and Yorkshire at Leicester Cathedral on 8<sup>th</sup> March

### First of 8 Spliced

**Stephen Hamby** at Earl Shilton on 31<sup>st</sup> January

### First of Variable Hunt

**Karen Allen** ringing Plain Bob Doubles with Variable Hunt at Packington on 23<sup>rd</sup> February

### First in Method as Conductor

**Richard Thomas** ringing Plain Bob Minor at Wanlip on 18<sup>th</sup> January

**Alex Johnson** ringing Grandsire Caters at All Saints Loughborough on 8<sup>th</sup> March

## Peals

### First Peal

**Samuel Rose** ringing Tenor behind to Stedman Doubles at Branston on 7<sup>th</sup> March

### First in Method

**Tessa Preston and Charlie Worger** ringing Lincolnshire Major at Enderby on 1<sup>st</sup> January

### First as Conductor

**Dexter Deakes** ringing Yorkshire Major at St Mary de Castro on 9<sup>th</sup> March

## Handbells

### First spliced grandsire

Whole band ringing Grandsire Triples and Major on 18<sup>th</sup> January

### First in Method

Whole band ringing St Martins Triples on 19<sup>th</sup> January

Whole band ringing St Simons Major on 18<sup>th</sup> February



# GUILD'S 1/2 YEARLY MEETING

HOSTED BY LOUGHBOROUGH DISTRICT

25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2026

14.00 RINGING AT COPT OAK

15.30 – RINGING AT OAKS IN CHARNWOOD

17.00 1/2 YEARLY MEETING IN OAKS IN  
CHARNWOOD CHURCH HALL

TEA AND COFFEE WILL BE AVAILABLE

18.00 – BUFFET MEAL FOLLOWED BY QUIZ AND RAFFLE

**£6 PER TICKET**

PLEASE EMAIL  
[LOUGHBOROUGH@LEICESTERDG.ORG.UK](mailto:LOUGHBOROUGH@LEICESTERDG.ORG.UK)  
TO BOOK YOUR PLACE



## **Leicester Diocesan Guild**

### **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Ceilidh**

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**St Peter's Centre, Wigston Road, Oadby**

Ceilidh dancing offers an enjoyable and engaging evening suitable for all ages and skill levels, with no prior experience required. Our callers, Gordon and Jen from "Ceilidh Noches," will guide us through each dance, providing demonstrations and detailed instructions as we dance the evening away.

The hall will open at 7:00 pm and dancing will commence at 7:30 pm. A light supper will be provided during the half-time break and we will finish at 10:00 pm.

Please bring your own drinks with you.

We use tables of 6 so please tell us if you're part of a group. There is parking nearby.

**Cost is £15 per head payable on the night.**

Please book by emailing Annette with name(s) and numbers at [events@leicesterdg.org.uk](mailto:events@leicesterdg.org.uk)

**\*\*Please note there is a limit of 80 people in the hall so please book early\*\***

# From the Districts

## Hinckley District

Our January meeting was held at Sheepy Magna followed by a fabulous Brunch with further ringing at Orton-on-the-Hill in the afternoon.

Leire held their first District Meeting on valentines day in February with lots of beautiful homemade cakes provided by the Leire Band and a great turn out. Further ringing was continued at Cosby.

The March meeting began at Narborough, again well attended, and then there was a really lovely ringers Tea at Sapcote with more ringing afterwards.

All in all a great start to the year. Hinckley District Meetings are always held on the second Saturday of the month with everyone welcome! The more the merrier....

*Marie McSeveney  
Hinckley District Secretary*

## Leicester District

The district has started the year strongly, with four well-attended meetings so far. At our meetings, a variety of methods to suit all abilities are rung, typically six and eight bell methods although we will ring on the higher numbers as well when we visit appropriate towers. Our aim is to visit all the towers in the district over a two year period. We have elected four new members to the Guild so far this year which is very encouraging. The next few district practices are:

- Leicester Cathedral, Tuesday 5th May, 7-9pm;
- Anstey, Monday 1st June 7-9pm;
- Arnesby and Willoughby Waterleys, Saturday 4th July, a daytime meeting with lunch break for picnic or pub

lunch.

Everyone is welcome to join us.

Sadly, I have to report that Stan Gardner, a district member, has passed away. Stan was a founder member of the Guild, and was a ringer and the tower captain at Kirby Muxloe for several decades. He was known for his calm manner and maintaining high standards of ringing.

*Anthony Haywood  
Leicester District Chairman*

## Melton District

Spring has sprung in the Melton District and we've learnt that our Ringing Master Jackie Adcock can not only deliver an excellent practice but can also deliver lambs!

The Melton District meetings have been at Harby, Melton Mowbray and Asfordby over the last quarter, all have been well attended especially the Melton Mowbray February meeting where we rang everything from Call changes on 10 to Cambridge Major .

Thanks to all the members and visitors who attended and made the meetings a success.

The next meetings is at Hickling on Saturday the 18th of April at 7pm - this might be an interesting tower grab for some people as it's just slightly over the border from Leicestershire - all visitors would be welcome to come and join us there.

*Pete Brown  
Melton District Secretary*

# News Bites

## Aylestone

It has been an eventful couple of months at St Andrews, Aylestone, Jane Boyd has passed her ART's level one teaching. She has successfully taught our new recruit, Wendy, who has now progressed to ringing rounds. Congratulations to Jane and Wendy.

A suggestion was made to ring a quarter peal every month. So on the third Wednesday of January we had a successful ring of Plain Bob Doubles in which Glenn Jones completed his first quarter peal on the tenor, congratulations to Glenn. February we rang St Clements minor first in method for Jane Boyd and Liz Wright. An attempt to ring Cambridge Minor will be made in March, fingers crossed for a successful outcome this time on the third try.

*Liz Wright*

# University Society Update

Since we started 6 months, LUSCR has seen a huge jump in progress almost every single week by our learners, and a good range of outings and events. We still hold practice weekly at St Mary de Castro on Wednesdays from 7pm until 8:30pm, and we must give a huge thank you to Lewis Benfield for his continued support every single week letting us into the church and letting us use the bells. We also wish to thank those who come and help us out by boosting our numbers, and of course if anyone can help in future that would be hugely appreciated!



*Leicester University team at the NUA*

November saw us attend the Northern Universities Association (NUA) and have a Leicester presence there for the first time in many years, and despite coming last in the striking competition, we had a great day out and met many people, enjoyed touring the towers as well as getting lots of higher numbers ringing we wouldn't normally get. A big congratulations must go to Ellen, who despite only having been ringing for about a month, rung very respectable rounds on 12, and showed

incredible collectedness for what must have been a rather daunting bit of ringing for her!

By December, all of our learners were confidently ringing rounds and call changes unaided for brief stints, and having been ringing for such a short time it was very impressive indeed, so well done to Clothilde, Ellen and Kirsten.

Alongside tower bells, a student and staff band had been ringing handbells in lunch breaks at university, and this month saw the first QP for Will Norton of treble dodging minor in hand, of Oxford Treble Bob Minor.

In February, we achieved the first all student length of ringing by an all student band for over 20 years, which was some very respectable rounds including 2 ringers who had been ringing for under 6 months at this point, so congratulations are to them, and to Danté who did a marvellous job leading for us, having done very little of this in the past.

March was a very productive month for us too, as we attended an outing to Birmingham as we were invited by BUSCR. This was a superb day out with tower grabs, rounds on 16 (very bizarre) and pizza. We also had a first QP this month, with Sophie who did a smashing job of tenoring to a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles. Sophie is moving along very quickly and will be ringing surprise for the Guild's firsts month in October if she keeps this pace up!

Once again, congratulations to all of our ringers who have been very dedicated and progressing incredibly well as a result. Thanks go to all the support from everyone and we hope to see you at future LUSCR practices!

*Joseph Blake*



# 12 Bell Qualifiers at St Margarets

This year, one of the qualifier rounds for the National 12 Bell Contest was held at St Margaret's Leicester. The top two teams from each of the four qualifiers, plus the host team at the final, now go through to the 12 Bell final at York in June. Here's how we got on.

## Leicester's turn to host

So the day had finally arrived. Bacon butties table manned, bar set up, cakes and tea stall sorted. Raffle and LDG stall set up. We are ready!

The bands were assembling and nerves were starting to show on a few faces but we all knew we would be in for a treat of a solid 5 hours of 'top notch' ringing on the marvellous 'if not difficult' ring of 12 at 'The Gate'.

All bands present and correct the welcome and draw was underway with the local band ringing 2nd of the day (always one of the favourite slots) although the main opposition of the day (Birmingham) had not been drawn to ring until late afternoon so at least the beer will not run out and be available until the results.

Teams started ascending the 50+ steps with no hiccups or interruptions and thankfully no 'fire ups'.

Everyone seemed to be having a great afternoon and it was wonderful to have quite a few less experienced ringers around listening and socialising, some of which were attending their first striking competition ever let alone on 12 bells.

The results were in, judges ready on the stage to give results and silence in the pews, teams waiting with baited breath. 3rd out of 7 for the Leicester band not so shabby just not quite there! As only the top 2 bands go through to the final taking place in York in June.

After lots of clearing up most people left to catch trains back to far flung places, Exeter, Beverley, etc etc and some locals finished the night with 'alittle more beer' but a few of the younger supporters (with a few additions) decided on a meal to round the night off and tried out a Turkish Delight'.

A Great Day had by all!

*Gail Harrison*

## Thankyou To all who helped

A thank you from Carol to everyone who donated cakes, worked hard and made Saturday a success:

'Thank you all for your help at the 12 bell qualifier. I hope everyone enjoyed the experience of meeting different ringers and enjoying the high standards of ringing. The cakes were wonderful and well received. Thank you bakers! The feedback from our guests was excellent.'

*Carol Franklin*

*Continued on next page*



## A View from inside the team

When the Qualifier towers are announced in about December time it's then the challenge to find 12 bell towers that are similar in weight to have the best chance in adapting on the day. However, since the Leicester band was hosting one of the 12 Bell Qualifiers (at St Margarets) we had a home advantage. This advantage was also helped by the fact that the visiting bands couldn't practice till the day of the Qualifier.

As the chosen touch for this year is 269 of Stedman Cinqes it would take around 12-15 minutes to complete. This meant that, in our standard 1h30min practice on an evening we were able to have a go at the touch anywhere from 3-5 times. The aim at the beginning of these practices is to get a rough grasp of the touch and identify its difficulties at certain points. This is because these touches are chosen to challenge every band by having slight annoyances for example the treble and the eleventh dodging together or have no music to try and give the bands nothing to hold onto at the tricky points. We were able to do this with relative quick succession and since that point it's then just down to the finer details.

Like with anything the best way to improve is practice, so nearer the time, the band was able to meet more than our once-a-month practice to dedicate that time completely on the touch. In this modern world we have access to a computer program called HawkEar, this is one of if not the harshest judge ever because it is able to detect discrepancies far beyond what the human ear can detect. It also doesn't help that the microphone that HawkEar listens to is in the belfry rather than what the ringers hear in the ringing room. Which can make it very difficult because of the decision to strike the bell on how we hear it in the ringing room or how the judges hear it through the feed.

The draw is probably one of the most anticipated

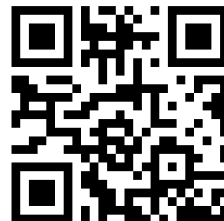
things of the day. Most people will have different preferences of when to be drawn, however the common thought is to be drawn 2nd, 3rd or even 4th. This is because the 1st yes will get it out of the way very early on but will probably be marked the harshest because of the judges getting acclimatised to hearing the bells through the feed. On the other side of the draw, it's not so good to be drawn later in the day because then you'll be tired and the adrenaline you had at the beginning will start to wear off.

Leicester were drawn second (12:10 start time), which is also thought to be one of the better draws in terms of when you ring as, at the start of the day the judges haven't acclimatised to the ringing yet so will most likely mark the first one harshly, but then as the day goes on the judges will understandably get tired after a little over 4 hours of ringing.

Each team's slot is a total of 40 minutes (this is the same for visiting or the local band), this is roughly 20 minutes to practice, a 5 minutes interim to start the piece and then final 15 minutes to complete the piece for the judges. So, for these 40 minutes it's more than enough time to complete the touch once for the practice and then to then do the piece again for the judges to listen to (which is signalled to the judges by doing 2 whole pulls on the treble and second).

Overall, our test piece is one of the best pieces of ringing we've produced (which is what you want on the day) and as a result came a very respectable 3rd out of the 7 teams. This means that we don't go to the final at York but we as a band were very pleased with where we came in the results.

*Alex Johnson*



*Scan the QR code for a video of Leicester team's test piece (from outside the tower).*



*The ringing room at St Margarets, waiting for the first team to enter*

# Methods of the Months

This year the Ringing World have brought back their Method of the Month Series. If you are looking to ring something a bit different from your usual repertoire, why not give them a try!

If you are lucky enough to have a strong band to ring with, you can try a new method each month. Or if you would like to take two months to work on a method, every other month, shown shaded on the list, are less tricky methods.

We've been working our way through the Surprise Major methods at Loughborough, though Mark and I only just achieved our quarter peal of Deva, January's method, in March!

## Surprise Major

January	Deva
February	Superlative
March	Kenninghall
April	Ashtead
May	Glasgow
June	Norwich
July	Bolonium
August	Turramurra
September	Adelaide
October	Cornwall
November	Cassiobury
December	Belgrave

The Surprise Major methods for the next three months are:

Ashtead: A double method, reflected below the treble and above the treble. Similar to Uxbridge with 4 pull dodges at the back (and front)

Glasgow: One of Horton's Four Surprise Major (which I always thought as the two difficult ones from the Standard 8, plus two even more difficult ones!)

Norwich: Although a common Minor method, not usually rung at other stages.

## Plain Minor

January	Double Bob
February	St Clement's
March	Pinehurst
April	Buxton
May	Stepney
June	College
July	Thelwall
August	Single Oxford
September	Double Court
October	Cumberland
November	Frodsham
December	Double Oxford

As you can see, it is not just for Surprise Major ringers either. The Plain Minor methods are an excellent way of bridging the gap between plain bob and Cambridge, and many of these methods are well known enough, or similar to well known methods, that there is a good chance that if you asked for them at a district meeting, there would be enough experienced ringers to ring them with you.

Or why not ask your tower captain if your band could give it a try? If you have enough ringers for Plain Bob Minor, looking at some of the simpler plain minor methods (shaded in the table above) could be something you could all learn together.

The Minor methods for the next three months are:

Buxton: This method is the same as St Clements, but with a slight variation on the front work.

Stepney: This one is a bit more tricky, and more suitable for bands that are competent in ringing other plain minor methods. Although the structure of it is very similar to St Clements again, the blue line is quite different, and there are some interesting 3rds on the way in, and point leads.

College Bob: Another one similar to St Clements, but without the 3-4 and 5-6 dodges at the lead ends.

*Rebecca Banner*

# Ringling in the Swinging Sixties

*Ron Chapman, currently of Perth, Western Australia, has sent us an article about his time ringing in Blaby in the 60s, an excerpt of which I reproduce here:*

One of my classmates at Guthlaxton Grammar School in the early 1960s was a lad named Alan Ward. He was among a group of friends that I would hang around with during recess and lunch breaks. Alan lived near Blaby, a village about twenty minutes' drive west of Wigston Magna, so he travelled to Guthlaxton by bus every day. He lived in an area called Glen Hills and his father was the Headmaster of Blaby Junior School, which was located next to All Saints Church.

One day Alan told me he had just started learning to ring the bells at the church and wondered if I would be interested in joining him. I thought it sounded interesting so I said I would go along. The ringing practices were held on Wednesday evenings, so each week I would catch the L15 bus from outside my home or cycle to Blaby. My mother was surprised when I told her I wanted to learn how to ring church bells, but was glad I had found another interest.

who would not only become one of my greatest friends and eventually the best man at my wedding. Brian lived with his parents at their home in James Street, Blaby. Like most beginners I felt totally uncoordinated with having to learn how to do "back strokes" and "hand strokes" and control the bell so that I didn't commit the ultimate sin of "breaking a stay". I soon learned that bellringing has a language of its own and realised that a non-ringing bystander listening to a group of experienced ringers chatting amongst themselves would find the conversation totally incomprehensible.

Despite the initial confusion and with much perseverance I soon got the hang of it and was pleased when I first managed to reach my first milestone of ringing my bell in rounds. From there I progressed to exploring the mysteries of change-ringing, which meant ringing your bell on a fixed path through the other bells. I do not propose to write at length about the intricacies of change-ringing, but sufficient to say that, like many people, I had several misconceptions about bellringing and soon discovered that the art and science of change-ringing was far more complex than I could have ever imagined.

At the time I started ringing at Blaby in the early 1960s there would have been about eight to ten other bellringers. One of these ringers was a lad called Richard Cobley, who lived with his parents in Hospital Lane, Blaby. Richard also became a close friend of mine, and in the ensuing years Brian, Richard and myself would have some enjoyable times together sharing our mutual interests.

In Moat Street, Wigston Magna, where I lived, there are two centres of religion. Topping the hill at the western end of the street with its fine spire is the imposing fourteenth-century All Saints Church. At the street's eastern extremity was the c1896 Victorian-style Primitive Methodist Chapel (now simply 'Wigston Magna Methodist Church'), built in distinctive yellow brick. My mother had a long association with the Methodist Chapel and since my early childhood I had attended the Sunday School and later the Youth Club. After I started bellringing at Blaby I can recall one of mother's Methodist friends saying to me: "Oh, Ronnie, I hear you've left us and gone over to the other side." In actual fact I suppose you could really say that in terms of religion I had simply moved from the chapel in the valley to the church on the hill.

As I progressed with my ringing I soon discovered that apart from the serious business of learning to ring the bells proficiently for Sunday services there was also a very strong social tradition attached to bellringing. While many of the Blaby ringers did not go to church after morning ringing, it was customary for most of us to attend the evening service. I did not usually ring for the morning service because I had to travel from Wigston, but I soon started a regular habit of travelling to Blaby on Sunday afternoons to ring for evensong. I usually caught the L15 Midland Red bus from outside my house, which took me directly to Blaby via South Wigston.

BLABY GUILD OF BELLRINGERS 1965



BACK ROW: G. JEFFRY, M. WHEELWRIGHT, R. CHAPMAN, H. WALE, K. GREWCOCK, S. THOMPSON.  
FRONT ROW: R. COBLEY, M. PROPHET, REVD. J. PROPHET, REVD. C. TWYGCROSS, S. CANEY, B. LAW.

I think I had my first bellringing lesson in late-1961, although I cannot fix the date with absolute certainty. When I started ringing at All Saints, Blaby, the tower had a ring of five bells, with a 10 cwt tenor. At that time the ringing room was on a first floor level, which was reached by means of a fixed ladder in the corner of the room at the base of the tower and then up through a trapdoor. In more recent times the bells have been augmented to a ring of six.

I will never forget my first lessons in bell handling because everything seemed so chaotic! When the ringing chamber was on the upper floor the room was so much smaller, so everyone had to squeeze themselves against the walls while five ringers were standing around in a circle trying to ring the bells.

My instructor was the tower's ringing master, Brian Law,

By mid-1962 I had become proficient in my bell handling and was able to ring some basic change-ringing "methods" as they were called. By reaching this standard I had become eligible to join the Leicester Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers, and in August 1962 I was duly elected a member at one of the district meetings.

After I managed to become proficient at bell handling and ringing some simple changes I started travelling to other local towers. This had the attraction of not only providing me with the opportunity to get used to ringing on different rings of bells but also the added benefit of meeting other ringers in a social setting. This "social setting" was traditionally a visit to the local public house after the evening practice session.

I also began attending monthly meetings of the Leicester Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers, which were held on Saturdays at various towers. The meeting venues and times held in each of the six Leicestershire districts were advertised every week in the bellringing national publication, *The Ringing World*, which also contained the latest news about ringers and ringing, plus records of change-ringing achievements. A typical programme for a meeting day would be a bellringing session in the afternoon followed by a church service, an afternoon tea and a formal business meeting. There would probably be more ringing after the meeting and then the highlight of the day – a social get-together at a local hostelry. I distinctly remember attending a Guild meeting held in Kibworth sitting in the pub sipping a most enjoyable, but for me at that time, illegal, pint of Watney's Draught Red Barrel. So you can perhaps appreciate that weekend ringing meetings could be exhausting yet most refreshing occasions!

The most important social event of the year was the Guild Annual Dinner, which I seem to recall was held in November. The venue changed from year to year and the event was usually held in a well-known pub that had a large function room. I cannot remember too much about these grand occasions, due to both the passage of time and the effects of too much refreshment, although I do have a vague recollection of myself and some of my ringing friends sampling the delights of some Benedictine liquor with unfortunate results. As with many of these functions I often wonder how we ever got home in one piece!

My ringing skills were progressing well and I soon found myself starting to ring quarter peals and peals. For the uninitiated these are specific lengths of changes which are usually rung for special occasions, but in our case we sometimes rang just for the challenge. Depending on the weight of the bells, a quarter peal usually takes about fifty minutes, and a full peal can take well over three hours continuous ringing. In the early to mid-1960s I spent much of my spare time travelling around the countryside with a group of bellringing friends ringing quarter peals and peals at various church towers.

Sometime in 1964 I read in our local Wigston newspaper an item about the ringers at All Saints Church in Wigston Magna, which is the Church of England church at the top of Moat Street and the one I visited as part of my education at All Saints Junior School in Long Street. The article in the newspaper mentioned that the ringers at All Saints were short of members and called for support from other bellringers or those willing to learn. I felt a little guilty when I read this, because here was I, a fairly competent ringer, who lived just down the hill from the church and I had not even rung the bells in my local tower! I decided to immediately remedy this situation and went along to their next Friday night practice session and introduced myself.

I quickly found out that at All Saints, Wigston I was among a team of very experienced adult ringers with a long and strong family bellringing tradition. The Carter family were most prominent, with Joe, his son Richard and wife Maureen, closely followed by Ted Harrold and his son, John. I also soon became aware that ringing at Wigston Magna was taken much more seriously by these older ringers than was the case with our younger, more relaxed and carefree approach at Blaby! After I had been to the Wigston practice I told my friends Brian and Richard about my experience and they decided they would also go along with me to see what it was like.

We discovered change ringing at All Saints, Wigston to be on a much more complex level than we were used to, but at the same time appreciated that this presented a great opportunity for us to advance our knowledge. When the All Saints ringers saw that the three of us were keen to attend their practices on a regular basis they very kindly offered to teach us how to ring advanced "Surprise Major" methods on their beautifully-sounding ring of eight bells.

In retrospect I view the time I spent ringing with the All Saints, Wigston Magna team of ringers as a period that enabled me to really advance my bellringing skills and to become confident in learning and ringing more complex forms of change ringing. I shall be eternally grateful to the 1960s Wigston Magna All Saints Church bellringers for sharing with me their knowledge and companionship.

Looking back over the years I can now appreciate how bellringing has played such a big part in my early life and opened up so many opportunities for me. It is a stimulating and challenging activity that has provided me with a network of good friends in whose company I have shared many happy hours of social enjoyment. In fact I have always said that the social side of bellringing is equally as important as ringing itself. Ironically my school friend Alan Ward, who introduced me to ringing, decided not to continue with it soon after we started learning to ring at All Saints Church, Blaby.

*Ron Chapman*

# Stanley R Gardner – In Memoriam

28.04.1929 – 16.03.2026

With the passing of Stan, Kirby Muxloe has not only lost a great friend but also someone who served the church community and ringing across 7 decades.



Stan learnt to ring at Groby in 1943 along with his brother Terry and twin brothers Derek and Dennis Dodson. This was during the second World War when ringing was restricted. All the bells were tied and rung silent, black out curtains were also used. All the learners made quick progress and he used to tell of the delight when later in 1943 when the ringing ban was lifted and they could actually hear the bells for the first time! All four new recruits joined the Midland Counties Association of Change Ringers in 1944. They were then all Founder Members of the Leicester Diocesan Guild in 1946.

Stan progressed quickly into method ringing and then into peal ringing with which he rang a total of 31 peals. His first peal was 4th November 1944 Kent Treble Bob Major at Anstey (alongside Terry, Derek and Dennis), a remarkable achievement. From this peal he went on to ring several peals with Redvers Elkington, tower captain at Anstey. Many of these were with notable Leicester ringers of that time such as Ernest Morris, Harold Poole, Ernest Rawson and Dorothy Udale.

His neat handling style, bell striking ability and method ringing competency was picked up early in his ringing career and was still good well into his 90's. He was a very reliable ringer hardly ever going wrong. He enjoyed good striking and would make light comment after a not too great piece of ringing to let you know he was listening! His peal ringing included several peals of Multi Method Minor with the mathematical genius Roland Beniston. These were at Copt Oak. Each week 5 additional methods were added cumulating in his final peal of 105 Minor methods, the first time this had been done on tower bells. Stan used to say he rang the treble, had no idea what the others were ringing, just kept his head down and dared not go wrong!! Stan was a committed family man and peal ringing was put on hold after this to bring up 3 children.

Stan moved to Kirby Muxloe in 1958 where he joined the local team at the church ringing on, what was then, 5 bells. Realising that Stan was a great asset to the tower he was quickly asked to take on the Tower Captain's job which he did without hesitation in 1960. The local ringers raised the money to install and augment the 5 bells to 6 and this was completed in 1972. Stan's last peal, as it turned out, was on the 5 bells just before the installation of the new treble took place. He remained as Tower Captain until 2021. A handbell quarter peal was rung in his back garden in 2020 to celebrate 60 years as tower captain at Kirby Muxloe. Throughout the 60 years he made everyone in the tower welcome and was very encouraging to all abilities. He enjoyed the 'Court' methods from his early peals and his favourite was Stedman which was always rung on a Sunday. He was always fun to be around and offered so much to the church community as a whole over the 60+ years. He will be very sadly missed.

RIP

*Mark Pendery  
Tower Captain, Kirby Muxloe*