

February Ringing Publicity

Exeter Colleges Guild of Bellringers will celebrate their 50th Anniversary with a dinner tomorrow, Saturday, February 4. To start the day they are ringing at the Holy Cross Church in Crediton for an hour or so, starting at 10.15am. (*Crediton Courier*)

Polly Marchant-Thomas had always been interested in bell ringing, but it was only once she had returned to her childhood village of **St Agnes** with her husband and three children that she decided to give it a try. Since last September Polly has been meeting once a week with Annie Holland, captain of the bell ringing team at St Agnes Church and president of the Truro Diocesan Guild of Ringers, to practise ringing the bells. She currently has one-to-one practice sessions with Annie and will continue these for the next year or so until she has the skills and confidence to ring in a round with the other volunteers. She is off to a great start, though, as she has already been working on putting her front and back stroke together, a move that can often take a year or two to master. Although she doesn't have a church background, Polly has been welcomed into the group of bell ringing volunteers. She said: "I have really loved getting to know a new community group within the village I grew up in. It is great that all the ringers are volunteers and give up so much of their time." Polly's daughter Lila is also keen to start ringing with her mum but has to wait until she is eight years old, so has a long two years ahead of her. (*This is the West Country*)

Philadelphia — In the tower of St. Mark's Episcopal Church here, a circle of men and women were taking turns pulling ropes that moved up and down through holes in the ceiling some 20 feet above them. The ropes were attached to eight bells hanging in a belfry, and the adults were working hard to create the glorious and constantly changing cascade of notes that rang out over Center City Philadelphia. The participants are "change ringers," practitioners of an ancient art that first summoned the faithful to church in 12th-century England. Today, the art is kept alive by small bands of devotees, many of them older adults, at various locations around the world, particularly in England. The combination of mental discipline, physical stamina and rigorous teamwork helps to explain the appeal of change ringing to retirees, who typically have the time and experience to become successful ringers, and who are the majority in many ringing groups. For those accustomed to the automated church bells ringing on the hour or at regular intervals, change ringing is a more complex undertaking. The ringers at St. Mark's and about 6,000 other churches of various denominations around the world create their joyful symphony with a small number of bells — typically six or eight. The notes remain the same, but the bells are played in a perpetually changing sequence and emphasis, requiring close teamwork, a keen memory and years of practice. "The mental agility and the social side is definitely a big part of it," said Bruce Butler, president of the North American Guild of Change Ringers, which was started in 1972. [Start of long article] (*New York Times*)

Ding, dong merrily on high, in heaven the bells are ringing! These are the words of the first line of a Christmas carol we have been singing not that long ago. They paint an image of what heaven is like – bells ringing along with angels singing. In this country we ring bells by rotating them in a full circle and then ringing the set of bells in a sequence so that we hear the sounds that we are familiar with from our church towers. This involves one ringer per bell, ringing the bell accurately so that they follow on one after another. To achieve a good standard of ringing we need to practice, learn to control the bell, and improve our accuracy of ringing. We do all of this so that we can call people to worship God and as the words of the carol suggest so that we can experience a little of what we imagine it to be like in heaven. This way of ringing bells has been going on for many centuries – indeed two of the bells at Sancton church were cast in the 1500s. For this way of calling people to worship

God we need a band of ringers. We have eight bells at All Saints, **Market Weighton** and need at least eight ringers if all the bells are to be rung for a service. If you would like to learn to ring the bells do come along to a Wednesday practice night at the Church (7.30pm onwards) and have a go. You will be very welcome. (*Pocklington Post*)

Bells fall silent at **Warwick** church St Mary's Church tower. All will be quiet at a Church in Warwick so work can take place. The bells and clock at St Mary's Church will be silent for the next two weeks. The usual chimes and ringing of the bells and clock have been stopped so painting work can be done to the bell frame. The volunteers and members of the church have also started a new fundraising project to help restore the iconic church tower which can be seen for miles. The volunteers are trying to raise £650,000 this year so the vital work can take place next year. (*Warwick Courier*)

Former president Mary McAleese is to launch a 'Joy of Bells' initiative at Waterford's Church of Ireland Christ Church Cathedral on March 19th in protest at anti-immigrant sentiment sweeping the western world. Responding to an idea by Dean of Waterford Maria Jansson, Ms McAleese will speak at the 10am Eucharist service there and launch a ringing of the Cathedral bells at 11am in opposition to what Dean Jansson has described as "the incredible fear out there" being generated towards immigrants and refugees. Ms McAleese said: "The Dean of Waterford cathedral has taken a timely, simple but profound initiative which I hope will be copied by many churches throughout Europe and other parts of the world." She continued: "The event at Waterford's Christ Church Cathedral will take place over St Patrick's weekend. That is not a coincidence. The name of St Patrick is known throughout the world and is synonymous with Ireland but what is not always so well known about him is that he was an immigrant to Ireland and by any standards, despite considerable personal suffering, one of the most successful in history. The bells will be ringing a message of love, hope and inclusion that we hope will bring comfort to the men, women and children whose lives are blighted by the hatred and bigotry of those who would deny them their dignity and rights as human beings. The bells will ring out as a challenge to all Christians to honour the great commandment to love one another." (*The Irish Times* also *the Church Times*)

All Saints Church in Newland, known as the Cathedral of the Forest, has a new rope handrail, thanks to a collaboration between its friends' group, Gloucester Rope and Tackle Ltd (GRTL) and the Sea Cadets. Spokesperson Laura Stevens said: "After many years of good service the rope handrail in the church tower finally snapped. The friends, who raise funds and help to support the parochial church council to maintain and care for All Saints, were very fortunate that Dave Clare of GRTL supplied new rope for the handrail and Mike Pritchard and Dave Williams of the Sea Cadets volunteered to install it. The Sea Cadets used traditional rope working skills and finishing it off with a fine decorative knot known as a 'Monkey's Fist.' The result is beautiful as well as functional. "There are about 50 narrow steps in the spiral staircase which we use to reach the clock mechanism and the bell-ringing chamber, it can be a scary climb and the new handrail looks great and will make everyone feel far more secure. The collaboration with the Sea Cadets has been really enjoyable and we hope to have a traditional rope-work and knot skills workshop at All Saints at some time in the summer so that adults and children can learn about these fascinating techniques that were such an important part of our maritime heritage.' (*Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Review*)

Bells rang out from Priory Church of St Mary in **Chepstow** on Saturday (February 4) to mark the 65th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. Composer and conductor, Nick Jones, said: "Ten experienced bell ringers from across south-east Wales and Gloucestershire came together to ring a successful peal known as Grandsire Caters. The peal consisted of just over 5,000 unique sequences of the order the ten bells were rung and took more than three hours to complete. For centuries, church bells have been rung to celebrate events of both local and national significance. As our current queen is the first

British monarch to celebrate a Sapphire Jubilee, I felt that ringing a peal on the bells in Chepstow would be a fitting commemoration.” (*Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Review*)

Hopes are high that two enthusiastic young bell ringers will be the key to introducing more youngsters to the tradition. Two pupils from St Patrick's Junior School in **Cleator Moor** are on their way to being fully fledged ringers. Harry Finlinson and Tom Leech only started lessons a couple of months ago, and already they are excelling themselves. Chris de Cordova, of St John's Church bellringers in Cleator Moor, says the 11-year-olds are learning the ropes quickly and she now wants other youngsters to follow in their footsteps. Because the church bells are so heavy at the Cleator Moor church, the St Patrick's school pupils have to learn at St James' in **Whitehaven**. Chris said: “We haven't had any as young as Harry and Tom for a few years and we would love to teach more. There are about 10 11-to 16-year-olds ringing in the various churches in Copeland at the moment and they have opportunities to get together for fun and ringing.” (*Whitehaven News*)

You may not know what Beth Sinclair looks like — it's more likely you know what she sounds like. Sinclair is the Ringing Master for the **Washington** Ringing Society, the volunteer group behind the English change ringing heard from the National Cathedral and **the Old Post Office** — now Trump International Hotel. Sinclair went to the National Cathedral School here in D.C., and learned to ring when she was in the ninth grade. She has been ringing for more than 35 years and says it never gets old. “In the hands of someone who's experienced, it looks really easy [to others],” she says. But bell ringing of this type is more laborious than meets the eye. She and nine others gather in the tower, each pulling one rope connected to one bell. They're not playing a song — they follow what's called a method, or what Sinclair calls “weird permutations of numbers” that determine how far apart to ring each bell. The method name alone can tell you whether the song is in major or minor, and how many bells are involved. It takes strength to ring English change ringing bells, especially at the National Cathedral, where some bells weigh 3,500 pounds. The National Cathedral and Old Post Office each have 10 English change ringing bells. “The way they work — the bells don't ring quickly,” Sinclair says. “We can't ring music.” They ring the bells on Tuesdays at the National Cathedral and Thursdays at the Post Office for practice. When the whole group gets going, “You can feel the tower sway,” Sinclair says. In the U.S., there are about 50 towers with English change ringing bells. The D.C. area has four of them: the National Cathedral; Old Post Office; Calvary United Methodist Church in Frederick, Md.; and Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. “People don't realize when they hear the bells that it's actually humans ringing them,” she says. “People always think it's angry robots.” (*Washington Post*)

A visiting bell ringer is recovering at home after a “freak accident” at **Worcester Cathedral**. Ian Bowman, aged 51, was 100ft up the historic bell tower when a rope caught around his foot, suddenly hoisting him into the air on Saturday. The visitor, who was part of a touring group from Widecombe-in-the-Moor, Devon, suffered a nasty cut to his head and may have fractured his back when he fell to the ground. Firefighters from Malvern used specialist rope rescue skills to carefully lower Mr Bowman from the bell tower, in a dramatic rescue during Saturday's evensong service. Mark Regan, ringing master at Worcester Cathedral, said: “It was a freak accident. Ian Bowman, an experienced ringer from Devon, got his foot caught in a rope and he fell and hurt his head. He got his foot caught when a rope was moving and he went up in the air a couple of feet and landed awkwardly. He is fine, emergency services were brilliant. They had been here to practise, so they knew what to do. It was quite dramatic.” (*Fox News & others*)

The bells of **York Minster** could ring out on Easter Sunday after it began the search for a replacement bellringing team following the controversial mass sacking. The 15th-century cathedral, whose bells fell silent on Christmas Day for the first time in 600 years, has advertised for its first paid ‘head of bell tower’ to lead a new team of volunteer bellringers.

York Minster disbanded its 30-strong ringing group in October in the culmination of a bitter and long-running dispute over safeguarding. The mass dismissal caused an outcry among campanologists around the country, with some refusing to ring York's bells on Christmas Day in solidarity with their sacked colleagues. A petition for their reinstatement was signed by more than 18,000 people. The famous bells may not be silent for long, however, as York Minster advertised online for a 'head of bell tower' to recruit and establish a new team of campanologists. The role, which was previously unpaid, will command an annual salary of £7,000 for 10 hours of work a week. (*The Guardian* also *the Times* & *The Press York*)

Last December, Julie McDonnell received a knock at the door of her Hastings home. It was a man; friendly in a brusque, bureaucratic sort of way and with a checklist to complete. "He said he wanted to take a look at my living arrangements before I went into a hospice," the 49-year-old says. "We didn't know anything about it at all. Apparently it was some NHS computer somewhere saying that I was about to die." The computer, needless to say, had it wrong. A few months on and the bell still hasn't tolled for Julie McDonnell. Well, not that one at least. McDonnell, a high-ranking Middle East expert in British military intelligence, was diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukaemia in 2015. She was advised by her consultant to accelerate plans to marry her now husband, Andy, and warned she was due to begin a highly aggressive treatment programme. By December 2015, she was told, her illness was terminal. ... From the moment she received her leukaemia diagnosis she has dedicated herself to raising money for charity. She has chosen an unlikely medium – ringing church bells – but so far secured a staggering £7m and rising..... [She & her husband] started attending St George's in **Brede** when they moved to Sussex a few years ago. Julie says she had briefly taken up bell ringing as a child and "loathed" it but got roped in to giving it another go on the peal of six bells in the church tower. It was here where she came up with the idea to start ringing church bells to campaign against better treatments for cancer. [Start of long feature.] (*Daily Telegraph* also *Premier Christian Radio*)

High Sheriff of Rutland Dr Sarah Furness tried her hand at bell ringing during a recent visit to All Saints' Church in **Oakham**. Dr Furness had such a good time she is considering taking up the hobby when her year in office comes to an end in April. Dr Furness said: "For me the sound of bell ringing is quintessentially English and usually so joyful. It would be such a loss if people don't continue to learn how to do it. Bellringers are desperately needed across the country and Rutland is no exception. I could see what brilliant physical and mental exercise it is – and also what friendships are formed in the bell tower. People of all ages and both sexes were intent on producing 'bobs' and some really complex changes such as the Cambridge Major. It was impressive." (*Rutland & Stamford Mercury*)

Ding, dong! We're ringing the changes say Black Country bellringers. It's a centuries-old tradition. The sound of church bells is one we've all grown up with – whether they are ringing out to celebrate a wedding, signalling the time for worshippers to attend services or welcoming the beginning of a new year. The musical chimes have also become known as the sound of peace – bells up and down the land remained silent during the Second World War, only ringing again once the conflict was over. But there have been concerns that bell-ringing is a dying art; in some parts of the country it's failed to appeal to the younger generations. Even members of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers have expressed fears that its future could be threatened due to a shortage of ringers. But in a corner of the Black Country this much-loved British tradition is alive and kicking. While some churches are finding it hard to attract new blood, Christ Church in **Coseley** has a healthy contingent of more than a dozen regular ringers from across the community. They range in age from 10 to 77; there's no lower or upper age limit in this tower, which has eight bells dating back to 1936. Two of the youngest in the group are 10-year-old Rufus Temple-Purcell and his 11-year-old brother Asa, who have been ringing for 18 months and two years respectively. They're joined at weekly rehearsals by their dad Adrian, who started learning the ropes five years ago. "None of us attend the church but we enjoy ringing. I think it's a real skill

because it involves lots of concentration and it's also therapeutic. The children get a lot out of it. It's something that's a bit unusual that not many people do," explains Adrian. [Start of long feature] (*ExpressandStar.com*)

A lady whose village church has been the cornerstone of her life is set to receive the Cross of St Piran award. Jennifer Bartlett, of **Egloskerry**, is among 20 dedicated church members who will receive the awards. Jennifer has played the organ for Egloskerry Church for 54 years. When asked why, she said: "Because I just love it." She was born in Egloskerry, went to the church as a child, to the Sunday School, sang in the choir and first began playing the organ there. It has always been part of the fabric of her life, and has become a place she loves and cherishes, growing up and older within it — she even celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary there. Later in life she learnt to ring the bells, wishing she'd started earlier. She loves the measured approach to bell-ringing: "It's important to be a good listener, to wait your turn, be mindful of others and be ready to ring out when the time is right." Jennifer's guide to bell-ringing is the perfect metaphor for good communication. (*Camelford & Delabole Post*)

Restorations

Urgent repairs are needed to stop the bells of **St Paul's Cathedral** falling silent — or even plummeting from the supports that keep them in place. Church leaders have launched an appeal to raise £360,000 to restore the 12 bells. They weigh up to three tons each and were the heaviest in the world when installed in 1878. They are rung three times every Sunday and on national occasions, such as the Queen's 90th birthday. The bells have only been silenced in wartime. But surveyors say the condition of the bells has deteriorated and urgent action is required to keep them ringing. In a worst-case scenario they could drop from their supports. According to a report by the City of London Corporation, one of the bodies approached as part of the fundraising efforts: "After nearly 140 years of constant use, there is a risk that ongoing deterioration will result in the bells falling silent and, more drastically, that one of the bells could fall from its bearings, causing serious damage to itself and the installation." The cost of the work has been estimated at £30,000 per bell. The smallest will be re-hung on modern metal headstocks and the bells will be returned to the cathedral tower for a re-dedication ceremony next year. (*Evening Standard*)

A sold-out Burns Night Ceilidh has taken an **Otley** appeal past its halfway point. The dance and supper was held at All Saints Parish Church on Saturday, January 28 and raised £3,000 for the Otley Parish Church Bell Restoration Appeal. The money will go towards the £28,565 that is needed by Otley All Saints Bellringers to get essential work carried out on the church's bells. (*Wharfedale Observer*)

Work can now begin on restoring the church tower and replacing the bells in **Little Cornard** but first there is another £50,000 to be raised. Having obtained all the necessary approvals, All Saints Church in Little Cornard has been granted a Faculty from the Diocese, so that the work of restoring the tower and replacing the bells can now go ahead. With money already raised or promised, the appeal will have reached the halfway stage towards the £100,000 needed. All Saints Church is situated behind a farmyard on a ridge overlooking the village of Little Cornard. The belfry is currently derelict and the bells have not been rung full circle for decades. The bells first called people to worship as long ago as 1399. With £50,000 still to raise, the organising committee is optimistic that they will achieve their plan of restoring the bells so that they can be first rung at 11am on Armistice Day 2018. (*Suffolk Free Press*)

Some of the bells at **Bolton** Parish Church will be silent for the next six to eight weeks. They will cease to ring out across Bolton from this weekend as the clappers are removed for refurbishment. The clappers will be taken to the bell foundry in Loughborough, where they will be worked on. The striking clock is the only bell that won't be affected and will continue to chime. John Walsh, warden of Bolton Parish Church, said: "We have found a period in our diary where we have no weddings so there won't be any married couples missing their

bells. The bells will be staying where they are and the clock tower will still strike, but the other bells won't be ringing out across Bolton for some time. We hope to have them ringing again by Easter." Bolton Parish Church has 12 bells, all of which were installed in 1974. The original ring of eight bells was replaced with the eight bells of Saviours Church and Deane Road along with five new trebles. The trebles were recast from seven of the original eight bells. The sole tenor bell was retained and hung dead. It is now only rung electrically for services when the bell ringers are unavailable. (*Bolton News*)

A village is celebrating after being awarded a £84,600 grant to replace its church bells. St Bartholomew's Church, **Butterton**, has been awarded the cash from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The church has been working to raise money to replace the bells for the last five years, ever since its original three were removed after they were found to be unsafe during work at the bottom of the bell tower. Over time the wooden bell frame had also began to rot and the bells had fallen into disuse with nobody in the village remembering the bells having been rung for 20 years due to safety concerns. Now, thanks to the grant, work can go ahead. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) had launched an ambitious project to install a new bell frame for six bells, reinstall the original three bells and augment to a ring of six bells with three additional ones. The new installation will be used to mark the centenary in 2018 of Butterton becoming a 'Thankful Village' with all of its men who went off to fight in the First World War returning safely. Butterton is the only village in Staffordshire with this honour. Melanie Hodgkinson, who has been leading the project on behalf of the PCC, said: "We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and we believe this to be a fitting way to mark the centenary of Butterton becoming a Thankful Village. It also represents a timely opportunity to save and enhance an important aspect of our village heritage." Interest has already been expressed by former Butterton bell ringers in the re-formation of a Bell Ringing Group. This will also provide the opportunity for both younger and older villagers and the wider community to learn a new skill. A training facility will be established with the bells being of an ideal weight for teaching people of all ages. A bell simulation facility will be installed so the bells can be rung silently with the sound of the bells being reproduced by computer for the benefit of just the bell ringers. (*Leek Post & Times*)

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