



## **Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark**

Hi everyone and Happy New Year!

Thank you for your continued efforts in providing articles for the newsletter. Touching-wood as I write this, there is still a steady stream of articles that I hope are of interest to most of our readers. The offer remains on the table for you to get in touch to suggest what you'd like to see more of going forward.

Just the one upcoming date to put on your radars for now, which is the G&B Association AGM (along with the Penn & Croome Trophies) on 18<sup>th</sup> April, hosted by the Tewkesbury Branch. As Mike says in his welcome below, the local committee is busy preparing a calendar of events for this year, so for the next edition of this newsletter the familiar 'look-forward' table will reappear.

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## **Branch Chairman's Welcome – Mike Hartley**

Greetings everyone,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a lovely Christmas and are looking forward to 2026.

2025 was a busy year in the Cheltenham Branch, and 2026 promises to be too. The menu for 2026 is likely to be similar to 2025, and will include ringing for the Colesbourne Snowdrop festival (weather permitting), plenty of bespoke training sessions, another 'Pot-Luck' striking competition and, of course, the usual branch and association striking competitions. In addition, your branch committee will coordinate regular visits by pairs of more experienced ringers to local practices to provide support and capture training and other needs. The committee met on 6<sup>th</sup> January and will aim to have the programme of events posted on the branch website by the end of January at the latest.

Making New Year resolutions is a very long-standing tradition. You might be making some personal resolutions, but how about considering setting yourself one or two ringing aims? For example, by the end of 2026 ring a 120 of Plain Bob Doubles on an inside bell; ring or conduct a quarter peal; lead a training session... Share your aims with your tower captain, and a member of the branch committee if you wish. They'll be more than happy to assist you in reaching your goals.

Just before Christmas, Barbara posted a survey from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers concerning their 'Recruit, Regain and Retain' initiative. If you didn't have the time to have a look at it during the pre-Christmas rush, do please think about submitting your views before the 11<sup>th</sup> January deadline. With the average age of branch ringers increasing, these three 'Rs' have to be at very top of our priority list. One thing we can do straightaway without large amounts of effort is to contact and attempt to 'Regain' lapsed ringers that we know of.

Wishing you all the very best for 2026 and looking forward to seeing you at your local practices or at branch event during the year.

Mike



## 2025 Southwest 12-Bell striking competition at Newport – *Cara Capewell*

With the sad loss of Liz Coke among other things, the Cheltenham 12-Bell competition team was getting a little thin, so the team at this year's Southwest 12-Bell consisted of five Cheltenham Branch members, three Tewkesbury Branch, and one each from Stroud, Wotton Under Edge, Cirencester and, umm, Ludlow (Paul Wells who filled in for Liz at the National 12-Bell qualifier in March).

Everyone comes to the advanced 12-Bell practices that happen once a month at the Minster and therefore count as regular ringers there.

We'd practiced the piece, which was a touch of Little Bob Maximus, three times at Painswick and three times through at Cheltenham Minster, with Hawkear running to try and tell us how to improve. Hawkear was giving us 2 stars at Painswick, which are very difficult to hear, and 3 stars at our home, the Minster. Many thanks to our teammates Sandra Alford for organising the practices, and Jeremy Alford for running them and leading us to success.

Some of our team were in a (sadly failed) peal attempt in the morning and so had managed to wangle it with the SW competition organisers that we be one of the last teams to compete, which meant we didn't have to be there in time for the draw at 11:00.

Mike Seagrave, Cath Jack and I took the train together - a nice little ride to Newport.

The bits of Newport we walked through were not very pretty. My Dad (Peter Davies, Winchcombe) was born there and he says it's a good place to emigrate from. But the Cathedral is nice, on top of a hill with estuary views glimpsed between the houses. It was a greyish but not rainy day, and we could hear the bells – the local Llandaff & Monmouth team ringing their competition piece – as we walked up. I was very hungry when we got there as we'd travelled over my lunchtime, so I was very happy to find I could purchase some absolutely delicious homemade Lamb Cawl in the bowels of the cathedral, put on especially for the 100+ ringers who were milling about the place.

The Newport St Woolos bells are not too heavy, almost the same weight as our Minster, and are mostly nice and easy to ring. However, after our 10-minute practice, Simon Ridley on the tenor warned those of us who use ropesight not to get anywhere near him at backstroke as it was so oddstruck. Like in a normal competition, you get some minutes to practice, then it's two whole pulls on the treble and two to tell the judges you're ready, and then away we go.

It's nerve wracking, but I'd been doing affirmations all week, instructing myself to be calm, relaxed, focused, and above all to ring the damn method (there's nothing like going wrong to accrue faults, and that's all too easy when jittery and focusing solely on striking), and this seemed to have worked in that my knees were not actually knocking.

On 12, the bells have to follow each other so closely, and with the disparate sizes of bell, ringing the fifth I have to pull off almost on top of the treble, but stand right off the tenor with ropesight becoming more of a curse than a blessing. So I ring away, trying hard to stick to a rhythm, correcting myself against other ringers, trying to hear it all but somehow not being able to really tell how well we're ringing. It always seems to go on too long...



We weren't aspiring to come first, not against teams from Exeter and Bristol, but always hope to not come last... The judges said that the top five teams had been very close in marks (at which point I was expecting we had come 6<sup>th</sup> or less). So we were extremely pleased to be placed 4<sup>th</sup>, just fractionally pipping Bristol Redcliffe!

The judge's words were:

"Another confident piece of ringing to finish the day. This team had good structure and teamwork which meant their first course was very good indeed. During the first few leads of the second course the ringing was temporarily less accurate, possibly a result of some nerves, but the quality recovered in the third course. The main area in which faults were accrued was leading where hesitations crept in on handstroke, but a very strong piece on which to end the competition."

You can see our picture and listen to our piece at:

<https://southwest12bell.org.uk/pages/2025-results.html>

We were also really pleased to find out that Hawkear had given us 4 stars!





## Milestones Quarter Peal Attempt – *Barbara Pettit*

I realised that at least six of the Branch had milestone birthdays in 2025 and had the idea that we could try for a quarter peal. There were two 60<sup>th</sup> birthdays, two 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays and two 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays, with one female and one male at each stage. I think the last birthday was in October but I didn't get around to organising anything until December – not very efficient for your Branch Secretary! The attempt was booked for 31<sup>st</sup> December at the Minster. We could have rung something simple but Reg found three variations of Doubles for 60<sup>th</sup>, 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The base methods were Warwickshire and Worcestershire – no problem there. But for the variations Warwickshire had to be rung with a Thurlby Single for 60<sup>th</sup>, Worcestershire with a Shipway Place plain lead for 70<sup>th</sup>, then with a Thurlby Single for 80<sup>th</sup>. We had it all worked out in theory – Gilly would call 60 of Stedman from the treble, Alison 3 x 120s of 60<sup>th</sup> from the second, Reg 3 x 120s of 70<sup>th</sup> from the fourth, Barbara 2 x 120s of 80<sup>th</sup> from the third, Tony 2 x 120s of 80<sup>th</sup> from the fifth and Graham to call stand from the tenor.

Three of us rang the base methods to a quarter peal on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup>, no problem. The four inside ringers were involved in a quarter attempt at the Bicycle Ring on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> so we had a practice but it was a bit challenging and we hoped it would go better on tower bells with more thinking time in the afternoon. But it didn't! Not wanting to finish the year with a failure, five of us turned up at the Warden Hill practice in the evening and with Isabel standing in for Gilly on the treble and Reg doing all the calling we managed to ring 120 of each method.

The Thurlby Single is challenging (try it!) and trying not to confuse it with the Shipway plain lead was even more challenging (we are getting old!). We have until 1<sup>st</sup> May whilst we are all at our milestone to give it another go – anyone up for the challenge?

### Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

St Christopher, Warden Hill

Wednesday, 31 December 2025 in 9m (0–2–7 in C)

360 Doubles (3v)

120 ea Sixtieth, Seventieth and Eightieth Doubles

1 Isabel Hitchings

2 Alison Lee

3 Barbara Pettit

4 Reg Hitchings (C)

5 Anthony P Foster

6 Graham Lee

Rung on Practice night after a failed Quarter peal attempt earlier in the day. The quarter peal band had Gilly Whittingham on the treble and all of that band had significant '0' birthdays during the year 2025, 2 60s, 2 70s and 2 80s.



## Other Milestones – A Selection

There were a number of other performances that caught my eye. Please note this isn't intended to be exhaustive – these were the ones I spotted or was made aware of.

To begin, congratulations to our chairman Mike on conducting his 100<sup>th</sup> quarter peal. While this wasn't rung in the Cheltenham Branch, it does contain at least half a band of Cheltenham Branch ringers!

### **Painswick, Gloucestershire**

St Mary the Virgin

Friday, 17 October 2025 in 53m (25–2–19 in D)

1346 Yorkshire Surprise Maximus

1 Sandra Alford

2 Becca Meyer

3 Hilda C Ridley

4 Cara Capewell

5 Paul J Wells

6 Rupert Howes

7 Michael Hartley (C)

8 Mike Seagrave

9 Quentin S A Jackson

10 Greg Jones

11 Mark B Davies

12 Jeremy D Alford

100th Quarter as (C)

Secondly, congratulations to Harry Stephenson on his recent engagement to Yva, with two quarter peals rung to mark the occasion. Also congratulations to Harry on ringing the Liverpool Cathedral Tenor (82cwt) in changes!

### **Lancashire Association**

#### **Liverpool, Merseyside**

Cathedral Church of Christ

Sunday, 21 December 2025 in 74m (82–0–11 in Ab)

1320 Plain Bob Maximus

Composed by Donald F. Morrison

1 George T Basford

2 Martin J Gentile

3 Lenard J Mitchell

4 Sam N O Norman

5 Michael J Allen

6 James C Turner

7 Randle T J Tinkler

8 Taylor Wright

9 Raymond D Helliwell

10 Jayden R Milby (C)

11 Luke D Marshall

12 Henry J Stephenson

For the engagement of Henry Stephenson and Yva

Petit on Tuesday 16th December.

First on 12: 6.

### **Cheltenham, Gloucestershire**

The Bicycle Ring

Monday, 22 December 2025 in 27m (1lb 7oz in C)

1260 Tuckers Grave Bob Minor

1 Anthony P Foster

2 Isabel Hitchings

3 Barbara Pettit

4 Mike Hartley

5 Cara Capewell

6 Reg Hitchings (C)

Engagement compliments to Henry Stephenson and Yva Petit.

1st in method 3, and 4.

150th together 2 & 5.

For Christmas.



Last but not least, a milestone for Hilda Ridley, who rang a peal on Christmas Day, at Cold Aston in the North Cotswold Branch. Coming out of the pandemic, Hilda had rung peals on all days of the year (including 29<sup>th</sup> February!) apart from three dates. Having cleared off two of those three dates in the intervening period, she was left with just Christmas Day, so was pleased to be able to tick this milestone off. Her late husband John sadly never got to complete a Christmas Day peal but had completed all other days of the year. As per the footnote, it was also a milestone for Hilda's brother Bernard who has now conducted a peal on every day of the year.

#### **Cold Aston, Gloucestershire**

St Andrew

Thursday, 25 December 2025 in 2h 37 (5–3–16 in B)

5100 Doubles (7m)

720 each Reverse Canterbury, St Nicholas, Winchendon Place, Plain, St Simons, St Martins, 780 Grandsire

1 Simon J Ridley

2 Hilda C Ridley

3 Grace Dooley

4 Bernard H Taylor (C)

5 Craig P Homewood

Has now rung a peal on all 366 calendar dates - 2, and as conductor - 4

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#### **Branch Notices – All**

##### **Branch AGM Minutes**

The Branch held its AGM on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November at Bishop's Cleeve. Barbara has emailed the minutes from that meeting, but if you wanted a copy and haven't yet seen them, please contact Barbara directly.

##### **Marketing Ringing in your Area – Open Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Finally, Barbara also emailed details of this open meeting (via Zoom) in mid-January, with details below.

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) has run several successful international awareness and recruiting campaigns, such as Ringing Remembers and Ring for the King. It has guidelines and a good list of 'what works' to help you with more localised campaigns, which will be shared during this session. It will also discuss the difference between an awareness campaign and a recruiting campaign and when you should do each.

In addition, the CCCBR has built up branding assets, guidelines and tools to support your local marketing efforts. The CCCBR will give you a tour of these and answer your questions. For further details, please contact Ernie de Legh-Runciman – [secretary@cccb.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cccb.org.uk)

Register to attend by following this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/5OlcE-OHRLCyJaL5qrzMQ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.