

## NEWS FROM THE GUILD

January 2025

### Message from the Guild Master, Sue Robinson

Welcome to 2025!

After the build up to the festive season January can seem a bit flat. Not so for us bellringers though, things are back to normal, practice nights are back on schedule, service ringing is back to being on a Sunday. We as a Guild are getting back into the swing of scheduling practices, attending AGM's, planning the Guild AGM, practicing for competitions, working on projects such as potential church closures, guild finance planning, finishing our policy documents, implementing Membermojo, collecting subs, collecting BRF contributions, ringing quarters and peals and teaching new recruits.



It is little wonder we are so passionate about our hobby when it is so absorbing. I hope all of us HDGB members, new & old, are looking forward to a bit of ringing normality with a liberal sprinkling of new challenges on top.

It is with regret that we must announce that Neil Bennett is stepping down from being the Guild Peal Recorder due to ill health. We send thanks and good wishes to Neil who has served the Guild very admirably for so many years.

Following on from the learner's sessions which have been well attended and enjoyed by helpers and learners alike & in direct response to requests from members, we held the first guild practice session for those at the next stage. A very well attended session was enjoyed at Kingsland in December 2024, providing an opportunity to ring Grandsire Triples, Plain Bob Triples and Plain Bob Major. We had a great response from those willing to help and enjoyed a full-on couple of hours for the learners. Thank you to everyone who supported the event and helped to make it a positive experience. The next one is already scheduled, and once these are established, we can look to the next level! As always, we are open to ideas so please let us know what you would like us to put in place and we will do our best to do so.

Thank you to everyone who has given myself and my fellow guild officers their encouragement and support, it is much appreciated.

Sue Robinson 09.01.25

Dates for your diary	
18/01/25 Triples & Major at Stoke St Milborough	01/03/25 Beginners/Learners session at Cradley
18/01/25 Church Stretton AGM at Welshpool	16/03/25 Guild Management Committee Meeting
25/01/25 Hereford District AGM at Woolhope	24-27/04/25 Hereford Ringing Course
01/02/25 Bridgnorth AGM Coalbrookdale & Broseley	03/05/25 Tewkesbury Sheild Striking Competition
08/02/25 Ledbury District AGM at Bosbury	10/05/25 Guild AGM at Ross
22/02/25 Bromyard District AGM	13/09/25 Guild Striking Competition Day
<b>For up to date information on all these and other events, remember to regularly check the guild website at <a href="http://hdgb.org">hdgb.org</a> as well as social media.</b>	

## Neil Bennett. An appreciation by Rick Shallcross

It's not often that the HDG is lucky enough to have a top ringer and administrator move into the County but it happened when Neil Bennett moved to Welshpool in 1976.

Neil started his ringing career in the 1950s at St Peter's, Ashton under Lyne where he eventually took over as tower Captain. He was an excellent ringing teacher and tower leader and a competent bell engineer. He became a prominent member of the talented Manchester peal band in the 1960s and I was lucky enough to have been encouraged by him in my formative ringing years. We used to cycle sizeable distances together to ringing events, particularly Lancashire Association and Chester Guild meetings and, of course, peal attempts. He was the spliced Maximus band conductor and composed and conducted the record 110 spliced surprise maximus peal. To date Neil has rung 2055 peals and has conducted 364. For the HDG he has rung 727 peals and conducted 107 of them.

He was a member of the band that rang the Extent of major at Loughborough Bell Foundry in 1963.

Neil moved to our Guild from Gloucestershire where he had been a member and finally leader of the Tewkesbury Abbey ringers and I know he was sadly missed by them on his departure.

On moving to Forden in 1976 he joined the Welshpool ringers and again quickly aspired to ringing master teaching many new ringers and helping existing members of the band to advance in their ringing.

Neil joined HDG in 1976. Being recognised for his interest in peal ringing he became the Guild Peal Recorder in June 1980 and in 1985 served also as Church Stretton District auditor, a position he held until 1991. Soon afterwards I asked him whether he would join me on the Guild Bell Restoration Fund committee and to take on the position as Treasurer. He agreed, becoming Treasurer on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2001, and his contribution made to the Fund has been nothing less than amazing. Chasing PCCs to pay affiliation fees, reorganising our Bank Accounts, giving advice to members is no mean task but his all-round involvement in the day-to-day running of the Fund has been invaluable.

Neil is the longest serving officer ever in the history of The Guild and was elected a Freeman of the Guild in 2002. At the March 2024 Guild Management meeting he was nominated as a Vice President in recognition of the huge time and effort that he had contributed to the Guild. Typical of his modesty he thanked the committee for the nomination but politely declined the honour but indicated that he might reconsider the offer after he had finally found a suitable candidate to take over his position as Guild Peal recorder.

Sadly, Neil's best ringing days are now behind him and his health is such that he has great difficulty in gaining access to Welshpool tower.

Personally, he is my longest serving and best friend. He's quite a guy!

Rick Shallcross, Burghill St Mary

### **NEW Contact Details for all queries relating to peals:**

Please send peal reports and emails to [pealrecorder@hdgb.org](mailto:pealrecorder@hdgb.org)

**Did you know that details of all peals rung for the Guild are now available on Bellboard?**

Visit [https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/search.php?association\\_id=7&length=peal](https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/search.php?association_id=7&length=peal)

## Come Chime With Me

*We were intrigued and delighted to see the novel way in which Stoke St Milborough ringers invited their community to celebrate Christmas with them, what a fantastic idea...*

A fine festive time was had by all when we hosted our *Come Chime With Me* event for the villagers of Stoke St Milborough on Thursday 19 December 2024. Ashley tied the clappers to make them easy to chime and Martin worked out in advance which Christmas carols would work with the major scale of our eight bells. Sixteen brave souls ventured out into the cold to come and have a go, with Martin conducting. They took to it like ducks to water... or rather, like reindeer to snow... and the mulled cider and festive snacks helped to keep the spirits high and the energy up.

Donations of £41 were received for the benefit of the Church and we will look forward to hosting the event again next year.



**St Milburga's Church  
Stoke St Milborough  
Thursday 19 December from 7:30pm**

**COME  
CHIME  
WITH  
ME...**

A light-hearted evening of chiming the tunes to your favourite Christmas carols on the bells of St Milburga's

No prior experience necessary... (Chiming is much easier than full circle change ringing - just give it a yank!)

Please bring some shareable festive nibbles or a bottle and plenty of festive cheer! Mulled cider and mince pies will also be served. It's an opportunity to mingle with the community even if you don't want to chime. All welcome!

No charge, but donations to the church would be greatly appreciated.  
Please contact Ashley or Martin if you plan on coming

Ashley Smith

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## AGM Season

We are well into District AGM season and there are a lot of good reasons to attend. Not only is it great to get out, meet and ring with your fellow ringers and friends but there are important matters for us to discuss so that we can continue to make the Guild relevant, helpful and enjoyable for all our members.

If you aren't able to attend your district's meeting here some of the things that might be discussed, maybe you could ask someone to represent your views...

- Continued roll out of Membermojo administrative system (n.b. this does not involve subscriptions)
- Election of Guild Officers - you can make nominations for all roles other than Guild Master, we especially need nominations for Central Council Representatives
- Election of District Officers - you can make nominations for all roles
- Rule Change – proposed change to Rule 20b, ask your secretary for details
- Tell us what Guild events or training you want to see

Guild officers are trying to attend as many AGMs as possible, we would love to meet & talk with you there.

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## Safeguarding training

The new year is an excellent time to think about all those good intentions, and to complete those tasks you may have been putting off.

**All ringers are required to undertake the Basic Awareness Training (C0) every three years.**

If you have never completed the training, or it was more than three years ago visit <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/parish-support/safeguarding/safeguarding-training/>

**Tower Captains (and we recommend District & Guild officers) should complete the Foundation module (C1) every three years.**

## Guild Sessions

We are continuing to progress with Guild-wide training sessions. As these are so popular numbers are limited so next time you see one advertised make sure to contact us early so that we can reserve you a place.

Ledbury District will be hosting the next Learners/Beginners session – these are proving to offer more benefits than just an opportunity to ring. Learners can sometimes feel isolated, and maybe sometimes even a little bit inadequate, if they are the only learner in a tower where everyone else seems to know exactly what they are doing. By meeting other learners at the same stage they gain support and friendship from someone who knows exactly how it feels to learn this complex new skill. The more experienced ringers make sure that there is a positive environment so that each learner is able to relax and enjoy the practice.

The first Triples & Major practice had a similar relaxed feel, and we were delighted to see that **Sue Lewis** used the opportunity to get in plenty of practice before she achieved her **first quarter peal inside to Grandsire Triples** the following week. Well done Sue.

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## Tower Questionnaire

The recently formed Church Closure Working Group has sent out a Tower Questionnaire to all tower correspondents through the district secretaries. We will be using the information provided to build a picture of the health of churches with bells within our Diocese. This will help us develop ways in which the Guild can manage the prospect of church closures in relation to the future of the bells and the bell ringing community affected.

If you think your church may not have received/completed the questionnaire please contact [hfdguild@gmail.com](mailto:hfdguild@gmail.com)

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## News from the Clifford & Kington District

Unfortunately the Clifford & Kington District AGM in December had to be postponed because of Storm Darragh. We were, however, able to meet a week later at St Mary's Church, Almeley, when the vicar, bells and tea-makers were all available! We were joined by 3 of the Guild officers and particular thanks go to Fran Watkins who helped some people with their Membermojo registrations.

After being in post as Ringing Master or Assistant Ringing Master since the December 2017 AGM, Barney Bell expressed a wish to retire. Tim Hollinghurst was therefore elected as Ringing Master and Anne Stacey, tower captain at Dorstone, was elected as his Assistant, with other officers being re-elected. The post of Education Officer was left vacant, the other officers agreeing to share the duties.

A schedule of proposed monthly combined practices was circulated and the first of these was held at Presteigne on the afternoon of Saturday, 4th January - luckily before the snow arrived! Members of other Districts are very welcome to join us at these practices, on the first Saturday of each month, and which will be spread across our towers

*Pat Key*



On the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 bells rang out across Britain as the nation took to the streets in celebration of Victory in Europe Day. Eighty years later we celebrate this momentous occasion by inviting you to recreate that moment at 6:30pm local time and pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might live in a free world.

Upload your VE Day ringing to: <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/event.php?id=19733>

For further information about the VE Day 80 Celebrations please visit: [www.VEday80.org.uk](http://www.VEday80.org.uk)

## Cradley Bells

The original ring of six bells, were installed in 1724 by Abraham Ruddell of Gloucester. The 4<sup>th</sup> and tenor have been recast over the years by Taylors of Loughborough and they added two new trebles at the turn of the millennium to make today's peal of eight. To commemorate the 300 years the original bells have been rung at St. James, an extended quarter peal was rung on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December at 10:15am on the original 6 bells by a band of local ringers. A quarter peal normally consists of 1260 rows or changes. This was extended to 1724 changes to commemorate the 300 years. The composition was based on Plain Hunt and Bob Minor to obtain the right number of changes.

What was particularly pleasing is that Neil Toussaint who has been growing in confidence and skill in conducting over the last year agreed to take on calling this quarter at the last minute and successfully steered it into rounds in 59 minutes



The band Treble to Tenor Right to Left at the rear of Cradley Church

Hereford Diocesan Guild  
 On Saturday, 21 December 2024 in 59m  
 Cradley, Herefordshire  
 St James  
 Tenor: 13-2-20 in F#

**1724 Plain Hunt, Plain Bob Minor**  
 8 changes of Plain Hunt followed by 1716 Plain Bob  
 Minor rung by members of Ledbury District

- 1 Anne Toussaint
- 2 Chris Roberts
- 3 Sarah Macdonell
- 4 Keith Anderson
- 5 Frank Seabright
- 6 Neil Toussaint (C)

1724 changes to mark the 300th Anniversary of the original 6 bells at the Tower

## News from Bellboard & Facebook

We regularly check Bellboard and Facebook to see what has been happening around and about. Here is a round-up of some of the news and events over the past three months :

**Rhi Pugh** of Leominster was rightly proud of being awarded the [Bluebell badge](#) – congratulations to you!

The **first service ringing** by new recruits was recorded for the following :

**Carter Taylor** at Whitney on Wye on 19<sup>th</sup> December, **Wendy Roberts** and **Louise Edwards** at Bodenham on 25<sup>th</sup> December, and **Paul M** at Michaelchurch Escley on 25<sup>th</sup> December. Well done to you all, we hope it made your Christmas feel more special than ever.

Quarter Peals and other ringing have taken place for some memorable occasions too:

Very many Happy Birthday wishes to **Graham Fletcher** (85), and **Noel Anderson** (90), and both **Agnes Bowen** and **David Manton** who celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays in December

Congratulations to **Amanda Price** (Wistanstow 30/10/24) and **Julian Harrison** (Dilwyn 29/11/24) who both rang their first quarter peals, and to **Anne Hone** (Rushbury 13/12/24) for recording her 300<sup>th</sup> quarter peal.

**Judith Faux** achieved her ART LTR Advanced call Changes Level 3 at Mathon on 21/11/24, well done.

Solemn ringing took place for Remembrance Day and Armistice Day, marking these special events for our communities.

## Spotted in the Ringing World

The Christmas edition of the Ringing World contained an interesting article about ringing to commemorate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of John Kyrle 'The Man of Ross'. The ringers joined a whole host of events in the town to mark the anniversary, this is another excellent example of how we can engage with our church and wider communities. You can read the full article on page 1265, issue 5930 (available to buy from <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/>)

### Ross-on-Wye, Herefs. (S Mary) 7 Nov,

1260 Grandsire Doubles: Sally Townsend 1, Pauline Leggate 2, Sarah Goodbody 3, Richard Clements 4, Elizabeth Walker (C) 5, Jeffery Wallace 6.

Rung on the 300th anniversary of the death of local benefactor, John Kyrle, the Man of Ross

## Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme

Sue Hack (one of the Trustees of the BRF) has brought our attention to the uncertainty surrounding the **Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme**. The scheme makes it possible for Listed Places of Worship, the vast majority of which are churches, to claim back the VAT on repair projects. It applies to churches of any denomination, and throughout the UK.

But the scheme is currently **due to expire in March 2025** and this could have very expensive consequences for our churches. Please visit <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/autumn-budget-important-update-uk-churches> to find out more, and how to lend your voice to those who are calling for an extension of the scheme.

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## OBITUARY - Gregory Toby Harris 1991-2024

Greg joined the Bosbury Band in January 2023 in response to the "Ring for the King" initiative. It was clear from the outset that he would grasp ringing, with all its rich history, traditions and eccentricities, with enthusiasm, energy and ability. His interest extended well beyond the ringing of the bells to their history, maintenance and significance in the life of rural communities in particular.

He was elected a member of the Guild at the Guild AGM in 2023, and progressed quickly through the early handling stages to call-changes, dodging practice and covering to doubles. He was ready to embark on plain hunt when his life came to a sudden and tragic end on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.



Bosbury bells were rung half-muffled on the morning of his funeral, and open in the afternoon for the Service of Thanksgiving for his life on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024. This was attended by over 450 people, many of whom stood in the autumn sunshine listening to the bells Greg had grown to value and love so much. Our love and prayers continue for his parents and family and for all who knew and loved him. He is greatly missed.

Nicky Seabright

## Membership Renewal 2025

Don't forget that **all members** renewing their membership for 2025 will be required to complete an online renewal so that we will have one central, secure record of Guild membership which is GDPR compliant. This is a change in the administration of the Guild membership records only, it does not affect the way in which we pay subscriptions.

Almost 60% of members have already completed the form, if you are familiar with the internet it is very simple, quick and easy to do, but we understand that not everyone has access to the internet, or feels confident about using it. Please check whether your ringing friends need help, or if you would like support or advice contact Fran on 07702 799082.

**Please note subscriptions for 2025 should be paid to your District Treasurer in the usual manner.**

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## News from Bridgnorth District

The Bridgnorth District AGM will be on Saturday 1st Feb at Broseley.

The itinerary is:

- Ringing 1pm to 2.20pm at Coalbrookdale
- Ringing 2.30pm to 3.25pm at Broseley
- 3.30pm Service
- Followed by ringers' tea and meeting in the church hall.

There are vacancies for the Management Committee Representative and Bell Restoration Fund Representative, so please speak to one of your district officers if you are interested in taking up a role

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## Ringling Carpets!

Some of you may be aware of the Facebook group 'Ringling Carpets' which celebrates the wonderful (and sometimes weird) floor coverings that can be found in church ringling chambers throughout the country.

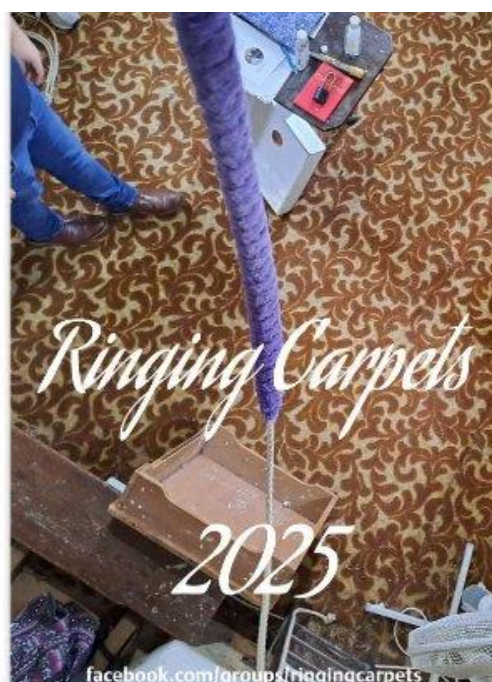
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ringlingcarpets>

To commemorate our textiles, the enterprising ringers of Stoke St Milborough decided to create a calendar containing pictures of such beauties as can be found at **Kington, Weston under Penyard** and **Chirbury**.

The calendar is still available to buy, visit

<https://www.stmilburga.co.uk/news/ringling-carpets-calendar-2025-and-£3> from every sale is donated to Stoke St Milborough tower fund.

Maybe the V&A museum will be interested...



## Central Council Peal Board Recording Project

The Central Council's Historical & Archive Workgroup is undertaking a project to record as many photos as possible of peal boards and are looking for good quality photographs of peal boards to be submitted. The website can be found at [history.cccbr.org.uk/peal\\_board\\_search.php](http://history.cccbr.org.uk/peal_board_search.php)

A quick search shows that they don't appear to have any peal boards from within our diocese uploaded yet, we have some fantastic peal boards, so get uploading.

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## Bell Restoration Fund 600 Club

The Guild's Bell Restoration Fund would welcome your support in 2025. Please consider either renewing your membership of the "600 Club" or joining for the first time. Each unit costs £5 and you may buy as many units as you wish. There is a quarterly draw starting at the end of March. Half of the money to purchase units is given as prizes and the rest is available as grants to churches in the Guild area to help fund work on their bells. The Club is a registered charity administered by trustees.

Anyone over 16 may join (or renew their membership) by completing a form and making a payment as detailed on the form. Completed forms should be returned to the 600 club Organiser (details on the form) or your District Representative {whose details are on the relevant District tab on the Guild website}. This year the form has been redesigned to make it quicker and easier to complete.

The Guild website gives further details of the 600 Club and the work of the Fund and includes a link to the form. Just click on the "Bell Restoration Fund" tab on the website ([hdgb.org](http://hdgb.org)), then choose "BRF 600 Club" which has a link to the "600 Club Membership Form"

Richard Clements

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## Pencombe Pealers

Enthusiastic new recruits in the Bromyard district, known as the 'Pencombe Pealers' have been making a fantastic difference to their community. They appeared in the eNews from the Hereford Diocese on 12/12/24 with a story detailing how they had initiated a Christmas Tree Festival in the village which has been bringing the church building back into the centre of village life.

We know that ringing has not been possible at Pencombe for sometime due to maintenance access, but the determined Pencombe Pealers have been working on finding a solution, and they hope to be ringing again soon.

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## News from Hereford District towers

Work has begun at **Mordiford**, the complete ring of 5 by William Huntbach has been removed to Taylors and it is hoped that they will be ringing by the summer. A fantastic clean up operation has taken place at **Peterchurch**, with a planned re-introduction of ringing to the village and a hope to attract some new recruits.

The final service at Hereford St Nicholas has taken place on 1<sup>st</sup> December, unfortunately a quarter peal to mark the occasion was not successful.



## Notices

We have been very sad to record the deaths of both **Mike Jefferis** of Holmer and **Ena Plant** of Broseley in the early days of January this year. Both were very popular and dedicated members of their towers and communities, even when they could not ring due to ill health. The warm words of those who knew and loved them show us how they were quietly inspirational with their positive attitude to life.

May they rest in peace.

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## Hereford Ringing Course

Don't forget – applications for the Hereford Ringing Course close on **31/01/2025**



## News from Ledbury District

Ledbury District continues to be proactive regarding recruiting and retaining members although sadly our membership numbers are slightly down over the last year.

We have had several new ringers this year, all of whom are making excellent progress. One “returning” ringer has joined us after not ringing for 30y and has taken to it as if she had never stopped!

I suppose bell ringing is all about learning and even experienced ringers are still learning! For want of a better expression, our “learners” from the last 2-3y (maybe we can think of a better description for them?!) are making wonderful progress on method ringing, ringing the treble to methods and covering on the tenor.

We have monthly Saturday morning “training” sessions pitched at a variety of levels. As a result of these we now have more ringers able to conduct simple touches, raise and lower the bells (including leading up and down) and to call complicated call changes (far too complicated for me! Isn't it fascinating how some people can grasp call changes easily and nincompoops like me still struggle after 7y! We were only discussing this over coffee this morning after Sunday ringing).

For more advanced ringers we still have monthly 7/8 bell practices and the “less experienced” members seem to be making good progress and most importantly the sessions are fun and well supported by numerous experienced ringers to whom us “less experienced” ringers are eternally grateful.

Numerous QP's are planned this month. They do not appeal to all ringers but those that participate find them stimulating and give one a sense of achievement!

*Chris Jones (Hon Sec)*

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## **Please consider printing out a copy of this newsletter to put in your tower, or to share with ringers who don't receive emails**

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter, it is amazing just how much positive and inspiring work is happening within our Guild. If you have news for the next issue please send it to [news@hdgb.org](mailto:news@hdgb.org) we really would love to hear from you. I'm looking forward to sharing more good news, as well telling of the solemn moments in our lives, with you all in the Spring 2025 issue.

Fran Watkins