

NEWS FROM THE GUILD

Inspiration at the Guild Competition Day

July 2026

There was inspiration aplenty at the Guild Competition Day held at Bromyard on 18th July, and the greatest inspiration of all were the entries to the Novice Challenge section. The friendly positivity was infectious, even those who may have been feeling a little nervous had happy smiles on their faces and, we hope, were making new friends. Everyone delighted in the easy-going bells at Bromyard, many said they hoped to return again soon. The results of the day were as follows:

Novice Challenge - this was not a competition, the teams were taking the opportunity to ring together to show their progress, and it was clear to see how far some of the teams have come.



Team A was **Bromyard** – our hosts with 4 novices in the band rang first and were awarded Bronze, it was great to see the camaraderie and support between all the Bromyard ringers throughout the day, most of the novices stayed all day and supported and encouraged all the ringers in all the competitions.



Team B was **Pencombe** - the Pencombe Pealers have been doing great work in forming a completely new ringing community in their village, they also had 4 novices in the band and were awarded Gold.



Team C was **Wellington** – with 2 novices in the band, it was so pleasing to see that there were 3 members in the supporting band who had themselves entered as novices the last time we held a competition day. Great progress and teamwork – a supportive band working together. The team was awarded Silver, the judges commented 'rows 30-40 absolutely sparkled'.

Team D was **Kington/New Radnor** with an amazing 6 novices in the band. As neither of their tower captains/teachers were available to attend, the band decided to back themselves and enter as a complete novice team. Buzz admitted after ringing that the end of the test piece was the first time she had ever called 'Stand' - what a way to start! We were delighted that they were awarded Gold certificates, and the judges declared that theirs had been the best ringing overall (although this was a very close call with Pencombe).



We are so proud of all of you for entering – thank you!

The Judges commented that they really enjoyed listening to the Novice section and wished all novice bands could sound as good. They declared that the bands could be proud of the standard of ringing which would be highly acceptable for any service or wedding ringing.

After the novice teams had finished ringing, we enjoyed some open ringing on the ten bells, then took lunch in the shade of the trees in the churchyard.



Call -Change competition – The Osbaldiston Shield.

Just two teams entered in the call change competition – our hosts Bromyard and Bridgnorth, with Bromyard declared winners, thank you all for taking part. It was great to see past and present entrants in the novice section stepping up to the call-change competition.



Congratulations to Bromyard.

Method Competition – The Thomas Cooper Trophy

This year marked 50 years since Tom Cooper of Bromyard presented the trophy to the Guild. Long-serving member Andrew Watkins rang in a Hereford District team in both 1976 and 2026. Bands representing Bromyard, Church Stretton and Hereford Districts took part with the results as follows :

1st place Church Stretton



2nd place Bromyard



3rd place Hereford



Inspiration here again – every team had support from ringers from their districts who attended even though they were not taking part. Inspiration from the Church Stretton District too – we are all very accustomed to Church Stretton District winning over the years, but this year the band included 4 ringers who had not taken part before. Their ringing was assured, relaxed and of a very high standard – deserved winners, congratulations to them.

Over sixty ringers were in attendance throughout the course of the day – we wish there had been more. If your district did not take part – please try to join us for the next occasion.

HUGE THANKS to: our judges for the day – **Simon Ridley** and **Grace Dooley**, their friendly and supportive judging meant everyone felt happy and relaxed; our **hosts Bromyard** for their welcome and enthusiasm, especially **Rev Phil Miller** who joined us for the presentation of certificates and trophies; **Anne Newman** who held a raffle in aid of the BRF raising £185.00; and to **all the ringers who took part** – it was great to see you all – we hope you enjoyed the day.

News from the Central Council – Heritage Open Days Publicity Toolkit

Heritage Open Days provide a fantastic opportunity for churches across the country to open their doors, welcome their communities, and share the remarkable story of church bellringing. Every year, thousands of visitors discover the history, heritage and people behind our towers, many stepping inside a ringing chamber for the very first time.



To help Associations, Guilds and individual towers make the most of this opportunity, the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers has created the Heritage Open Days Publicity Toolkit.

Designed to be practical, inspiring and easy to use, the toolkit brings together a wide range of ready-made resources to help you promote your event with confidence. From press release templates and newsletter articles to social media graphics, photography guidance, media invitations and activity ideas, the toolkit has been developed to save volunteers time while helping create a consistent and engaging message across the country.

Whether you're opening your tower for the first time or building on a successful Heritage Open Days event, we hope these resources will help you inspire curiosity, welcome new visitors and celebrate everything that makes church bellringing so special.

If you have any questions about the toolkit, or require additional publicity materials, please get in touch with Gemma at gemma.groom@cccbr.org.uk.

Together, let's open our towers, share our stories, and invite people to discover what happens Behind the Bells.

We recommend that everyone takes the time to look at the materials on offer – there is a great deal of free, helpful information that we can all use, whether you want to put a poster in the porch, have a stall at your local fete, or launch a major recruitment campaign – there is something to help you.

140 Firsts

The **140 Firsts** initiative is still going strong – thank you to everyone who has contributed and taken part, we will continue to record the firsts throughout the year, and the most recent achievements can be seen on the Guild website at [HDGB 140th Anniversary - Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers](#)

We've now surpassed 140 records or certificates - the 140th certificate being issued to **Luke Hollingsworth of Burghill** who rang for his first wedding on 27th June, well done Luke! The certificates are issued according to the order in which 'firsts' are recorded on Bellboard. Special mention to **Fiona Daly** and **Lorna Ward** who both also recorded their first ringing for Sunday Service at Bodenham in May and July respectively.

So far, **114 different ringers** have recorded a first, with **243 firsts** being achieved (some performances on Bellboard contain more than one first). Brilliant! Let's see what we can achieve.

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

Bridgnorth District Monthly Practices

In 2025 we were conscious that some of our District ringers were struggling to progress due to shortages of method ringers in their local bands. We therefore started up District Doubles Practices which were held regularly throughout the year.



We initially intended to keep this format into 2026, but in February our Treasurer Jon Hunt came up with another idea to try to improve participation. Jon suggested that each monthly practice could consist of a short inspection of the bells by the **District Maintenance Team**, followed by a method practice, an inexpensive lunch and a non-method practice.

We held the first of the new-style practices at St Leonard's in Bridgnorth on 21st March. The maintenance crew consisted of Jon and our District Secretary, Darren. We had reasonable attendance for both ringing sessions, though, and a very enjoyable bring-and-share lunch in the church.

Our Spring Meeting was held at Chetton in April, with lunch provided by the Chetton ringers in Charles and Lisa's beautiful garden, which noticeably boosted attendance. We even had four attendees for the maintenance session.

In May, we changed the format slightly to fit in with our hosts. District ringers were given the choice of joining the weekly Coalbrookdale Saturday morning ringing session, or helping with a maintenance session at Broseley. This was followed by a bring-and-share brunch and a general ringing session at Broseley. We only had five attendees in total at the morning sessions (excluding the Coalbrookdale regulars), but we had an excellent practice at Broseley in the afternoon with some very respectable ringing.

Going forward, our **Summer Social on 25th July** will involve ringing and a circular walk followed by a meal, hopefully at the Riverside Inn. After that, we'd welcome invites from towers for our monthly practices on August 29th, September 26th and November 21st. We're hoping to make our way around most of the District towers in the near future so we can encourage participation from all towers, rather than just the "usual suspects".

We're seeing some real benefits from our new meeting format so far. Our District Maintenance Team share ideas and learn from each other. We're also starting to see some strong progression amongst the regular attendees of our ringing sessions. Having lunch together each month gives us time to chat about any ringing-related issues and helps everyone get to know each other better. We're confident that our monthly practices will result in increased attendance and advance the level of ringing across the District.



If you're interested in taking part in our District events, please join our facebook group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HDGBBridgnorthDistrict/>

Ginette Pardoe

Guild AGM – Sat 9th May

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting are available on the website at [http://philtheclick.com/Guild AGM - Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers](http://philtheclick.com/Guild%20AGM%20-%20Hereford%20Diocesan%20Guild%20of%20Bellringers)

Thank you to everyone who made our Guild Festival and AGM day such a success - especial thanks to <http://philtheclick.com/> who took our official photos of the day; [Matthew Higby and Company Limited](#); [Church Bell Engineers](#) for Peals on Wheels; Burghill and Tillington Handbell Ringers; [Stoke St Milborough Bell Ringers](#); Chris Brackston Crafts, Frank Seabright - [Association of Ringing Teachers](#); Dr John Eisel; our wonderful hosts [St Peter's and St James, Hereford](#); Bishop Richard [Hereford Diocese](#); and, of course, all of the fabulous volunteers.

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We were delighted that Bishop Richard was able to join us for the service, he spoke warmly of our service and dedication as bellringers, and afterwards presented certificates to our long-serving members.

If you would like a **copy of the Guild photo** (electronic or printed) please email contact@hdgb.org.

Wendy Roberts of Bodenham wrote a report of the day for the Maund parishes newsletter, and it is reproduced here –

Ringling began early, at 9.30am at Holmer, a detached Bell tower, which like the other detached bell towers in Herefordshire was used as a refuge during attacks by the Welsh. There are six bells in the tower which were fully restored and rehung in 2000 by Arthur Berry/Taylor's and ring well. The tower has a simulator. For such an early start turn out was good with a lovely welcome support from Karen.

The route continued to Hereford St Nicholas starting at 10.45am. St Nicholas' Church is an early Victorian building on the site of an ancient Saxon church thought to be pre-Norman Conquest. The Grade II listed building was designed by the architect Thomas Duckham of Hereford. There are 8 bells. Unfortunately, St Nicholas' Church, which sits on the edge of Barton Road and Victoria Street Hereford was closed for worship on May 1. For ringers wishing to grab this tower, Anne greeted ringers and made everyone feel most welcome. Ringling ranged from rounds and call changes to methods.

The final ring on the route was Hereford All Saints between from 12 noon. All Saints Church in Hereford has a rich history dating back to around AD 1200 with its construction beginning in that year. The church underwent significant rebuilding after being damaged by an earthquake, which took place until around 1330. Over the centuries, it has become a landmark in Hereford, known for its dramatic twisted spire which some of you will remember. With a busy turnout ringling was brisk, but all who wished to ring were given a chance to ring with organisation and support from the organisers and local teachers.

For those not ringling or for ringers needing a rest after busy rounds, St Peter's Church, Hereford provided a focus for the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers 140th Anniversary activities: Café style refreshments, handbells, book, craft and Guild merchandise stalls. The spire belfry holds a 14th-century bell, part of 5 bells. Unfortunately, the bells are unringable, but the event gave visitors a chance to visit the ancient bells of St Peter's on the tower tour.

A highlight for me was the 'Pells on Wheels' mini ring and recruitment opportunity. Jason Walker and Ian Thornewell did an amazing job of drawing ringers and non-ringers alike to try the mini ring. Great fun and a great introduction to bellringing.

At 1.30pm in St Peter's Church Guild members, joined by the Bishop of Hereford the Rt Revd Richard Jackson met for the 140th Anniversary Group Photo. Rev. Andy Morgan and Rt Revd Richard Jackson led a Café Church service in St Peter's Church for all members, ringers and all who wished to attend. A highlight was the presentation of Long Service Awards by Bishop Richard.

The final event of the day was the Guild Annual General Meeting at 3.00pm in St Peter's Church Hall. A full agenda was provided in advance to Guild members. Key activities included: Election of new members, Officers Reports & adoption of accounts, Election of Executive Officers /Trustees. Non-Executive Officers, Clerical Representatives, Approval of nomination for Independent Examiner, agreement of Peal Fees & Non-Resident, Life Membership subscription and Rule Changes: 7c & 8. The new Master-Elect is Mark Gilham. The Centenary Shield was awarded to Ashley Smith. Finally an officer from Church Stretton District delivered the invitation to the Guild for the 2027 AGM, on 8th May 2027.

Wendy Roberts

Getting to know...

Mark Gilham, Church Stretton District Ringing Master & Master Elect

In the first of a series of 'Getting to know' articles, we asked Mark about his ringing experiences, here's what he had to say:

How long have you been a ringer?

Since 8th November 1985. I was 22 years old at the time – so 40 years ago! However, I had a ringing hiatus of about 25 years, returning to ring at Clun in 2023 after emigrating from Kent in 2020, mid Covid.



Where did you learn to ring?

I didn't learn to ring at a single tower – there were (at least) three of them. During my first week I attended Leeds, Kent (10 bells, 17cwt), Hollingbourne (6 bells, 13cwt) and Headcorn (8 bells, 21cwt) and continued that routine throughout my initial learning period (which I can remember very little of) and beyond. I also attended KCACR Ashford District practices. I'm a firm believer that attending a variety of different practices is extremely beneficial when learning to ring, rather than a single tower.

Who taught you?

Difficult to say (see above) but Nigel Baker (Hollingbourne) is an excellent bell handler and was undoubtedly a significant influence over my learning to handle a bell and initial ventures into change ringing. David Manger, who ran KCACR Ashford District practices at the time, for instilling the importance of standards alongside encouragement and opportunity. Alan Bourne (Frittenden and Headcorn) for introducing me to quarter peals and, inevitably, post-ringing

refreshments! A very significant part of my learning took place through ringing peals with some of the best ringers in the country at the time, and for that John Keeler (Kent). Despite all the above, my ringing style is often described as 'agricultural'. Sorry folks!

What made you decide to learn to ring?

I was invited by a young lady who happened to be the daughter of one of the teachers at my school (also a ringer) when we ended up working together. She still rings in Kent.

Which are your favourite bells?

I much prefer bells with 'character', typically those which most ringers consider unwieldy, lumpy, difficult and sometimes out-of-tune. I have no idea why.

Have you been on a ringing holiday?

Tulloch, a couple of years ago with a bunch of Ludlow/HDGB mates and organised by Paul Wells. Excellent bells, fantastic facilities and a great time spent with friends. All the beer and whisky may have affected our ringing performances, so don't do that if you go!

What do you enjoy most about ringing?

Good, sustained, rhythmical ringing. However, that's often forgone in the pursuit of ringing methods which at least half the band haven't learned properly, or the band isn't placed with capable ringers who work well together occupying the back and front bells. I encourage towers to adopt a 'Service Touch' and practice it regularly, at least once every practice and make it your 'show piece'.

What is your favourite method?

I have a delectation for Bristol which seems to confound ringers who extol the virtues of London or Grandsire. I also like Stedman which seems much more popular elsewhere than it is within the boundaries of the HDGB – this verges upon criminal neglect in my opinion!

How do you learn new methods?

Immediately before going to sleep. A quick run through the blue line and, amazingly, it's there waiting for me in my head when I wake up. In glorious technicolour.

What is your favourite number of bells to ring on?

Twelve. With a passion.

Have you tried ringing handbells?

Yes, several times, all disastrous.

Do you have any advice for learners?

Get out and ring at other towers as soon as you can competently handle a bell. If you're struggling to get to that stage, contact your district secretary to see what supplementary training is available in your area.

Do you like to ring peals?

If you get into the habit of ringing peals with a good band (or bands) you'll quickly appreciate the quality of ringing that can be regularly achieved, and if you enjoy good ringing then peals can be a way of achieving that. So yes, selectively.

Do you like to ring quarter peals?

I've rung and called a lot of quarter peals, but I'm not overly enthusiastic about them (in the way that some ringers are) unless they're for a

purpose such as consolidating complex methods or ringing worthwhile 'firsts'.

What do you find most rewarding about ringing?

Bringing people together so that we can collectively enjoy the passion for ringing which we all share. It's a team sport.

Do you enjoy ringing days out?

Not particularly, no. I'm not a tower grabber and rushing from place to place isn't really my cup-of-tea. Lunch and a curry afterwards are the highlights for me.

Have you undertaken any tower maintenance?

I recently installed a rope chute in the intermediate chamber at Knighton (with help from Ian Ferguson and Nessa) which fixed the tenor sally which had a habit of going walkabout on unsuspecting ringers. Does that count?

Have you ever taken part in a Bell Restoration project or rehang?

Yes, as a trustee of the KCACR Bell Restoration Fund, whilst I was also KCACR Treasurer. When not paying the bills I might occasionally have been found in the belfry getting in the way of all the people who actually knew what they were doing!

Tell us about a bell-related achievement or something you are proud of

Whilst I was ringing master at Canterbury Cathedral (back in the 1990s) we developed a band which rang Cambridge Surprise Maximus regularly for Sunday Service, which was a great achievement all things considered. We went on to compete in the National 12 Bell Competition eliminators which was a great day out and a valuable experience for everyone. I earned the nickname 'Clochenfuhrer', courtesy of the Vice Dean at Canterbury at the time, which stuck.

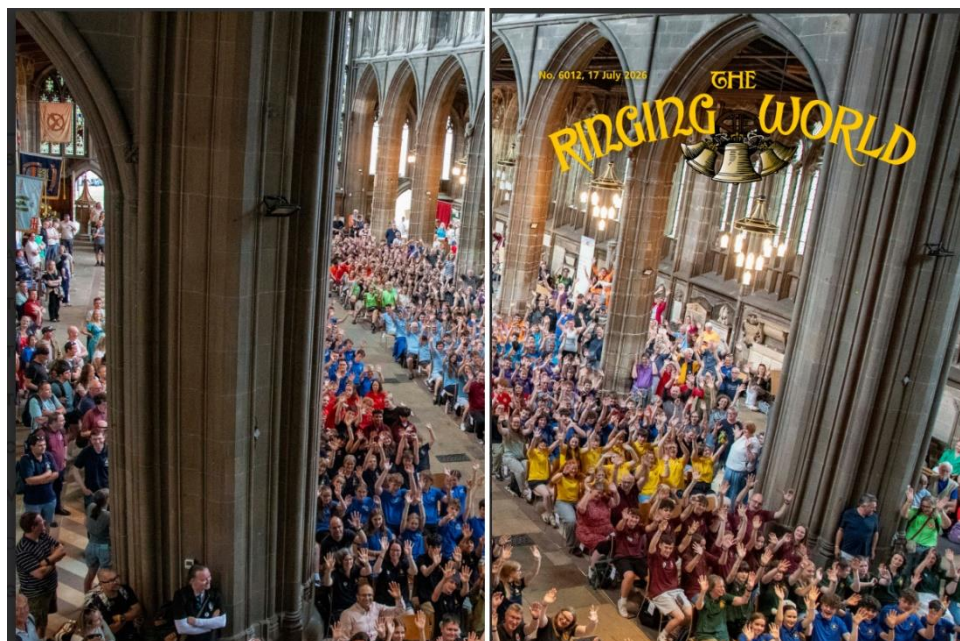
Young Ringers

The Central Council has launched a new website – the Young Ringers Hub [Young Ringers Hub – Young Ringers Hub](#) for all young ringers from school age to 30. The website is attractive and informative – take a look for some inspiration.

Ginette Pardoe, Ringing Master Bridgnorth District, is planning to contact schools in the area to try to attract learners who may be taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and she has produced a leaflet explaining the benefits of ringing to schools.

Coincidentally we were approached by Team Goal17.Global who had met with Herefordshire Mayors and asked us about volunteering opportunities for young people involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Ginette very kindly agreed that we could adapt her leaflet, and this has now been uploaded to the goal17.global website so that young people can find out about the opportunity to learn to ring as part of DoE.

If your tower is close to a high school or college, why not approach them to offer ringing taster sessions to pupils, if you would like support to do this from the Guild please get in touch.



Pictured – front and back covers of **The Ringing World Issue 6021**

You may have seen The Ringing World Issue 6021 which features a report of the Ringing World National Youth Contest 2026 in which 325 young ringers attended in 43 young teams, and competed across five classes in the striking competition.

Are the young people in our Diocese missing out?

Sponsored Walk in aid of the Bell Restoration Fund

The sponsored walk we advertised in April's issue has been postponed in view of the recent spate of heatwaves. Sue needs to be able to get into training in a comfortable heat, so the event will now take place in hopefully favourable conditions on Thursday 24th September – please contact sue@peasgreen.co.uk if you would like to support or sponsor the event.

RingFest 2026

Don't miss it! Print out the poster on page 12 and encourage all your fellow ringers to join you for a great day out.

Ringling tour

Ewyas Harold group of ringers plus friends enjoyed a great ringing tour of Somerset and Devon in May half term week. 14 of us set off down the M5 to meet for coffee and cake before the first ring of 6 at All Saints, Trull, just outside Taunton. Lots of doubles and even Surfleet!



Lunch, then onwards to another 6 at Holy Trinity, Taunton. We met up later to check in at our hotel in Paignton. A pleasant evening at a couple of different locations (Where are you Alan?). Some of us eating earlier than others!

We all tucked into a hearty breakfast on Wednesday morning before making our way to the station to catch the first steam train of the day to Kingswear, ringing at the 6 bell tower of St Thomas of Canterbury in Kingswear, before the ferry across the river to Dartmouth. Looks like Lesley was ringing in the doorway!

After lunch we had a pleasant walk to St Petrox church overlooking the Dart, located within the grounds of Dartmouth Castle. We had an audience of visitors in this church who gave a round of applause for our ringing!

Some of us walked back to Dartmouth while the rest decided to wait for the ferry which ran back to the quayside near Dartmouth Harbour. Our last tower for the day was St Saviours 8 bell tower in Dartmouth. Our return journey was the ferry to Kingswear and then train to Paignton. A very enjoyable meal followed at Gurkha's Diner. Thursday morning we set off for Cornwood where we met Olivia Richardson, ex Ewyas Harold ringer, who now lives in Devon.

The next stop was St Andrew, Sutcombe, North Devon 6 bell tower followed by a further journey and another 6 at St John The Baptist, Holcombe Burnell near Exeter.

We then set off on our journey home after a very enjoyable ringing tour. Thanks to Nick for arranging it.



Vicky Rees

Guild Report

The 2025 Guild Report & 2026 handbook is available in pdf format on the website <https://hdgb.org/hdgb-annual-report/> Printed copies are also available for those who indicated they wanted a physical copy of the report.

News from Clifford & Kington District

Tim Hollinghurst reports good progress at the learners practice at Kington in which many of the learners are plain-hunting the treble and beginning to tenor behind, hopefully with a view to ringing first quarter peals over the summer.

Practices were restarted again at New Radnor following a temporary fix to the tower roof, sadly only to be stopped again by a recurrence of the problem.

Several ringers attended Mike Reynolds' funeral at Dolau and a quarter peal was rung in his memory at Presteigne (enabling Jenny to ring Bristol successfully) and also at Bulth, including ringers from Presteigne.

Please get in touch with Tim if you would like to join the upcoming outing to 5 towers in the Chirk and Llangollen area on August 6th (timhollinghurst@hotmail.com).

Upcoming practices in the district are – 1st August Whitney on Wye, 7.30pm and 5th September Eardisland 7.30pm. There will be no practice in October as the date coincides with the Guild Tower Open Day.

Ringling for Licensing Service

On Monday 22nd June, St Johns church, Pencombe, hosted the licensing of Rev Katie Smith, the new Priest in charge of The Bredenbury Benefice.

The Bromyard district bell ringers rallied to support the Pencombe Pealers get the six Bells of Pencombe ringing out for an occasion which Pencombe had not seen for some years. Led by Adam Crocker, Julia, Nick, Terry, Anthony, Rachel and Simon rang rounds and call changes. A very appreciative audience even paused the pre service organ playing in order to listen to the bells.

The church was decked out with an religious art exhibition by Pencombe school. The Pencombe Flower Ladies had excelled themselves, the congregation of 175 from the Bredenbury benefice, part of the Bromyard deanery, were joined by pupils from Pencombe school, Pencombe Community Choir, plus church wardens, with the Bishop of Hereford and an entourage of some 25 Clergy from across the diocese.



A very uplifting service installed Rev Katie and the congregation, with a large clergy contingent lifted the roof with their singing.

A wonderful social evening in the village hall followed with much positive comments about the bell ringing.

A good start for a new chapter in the Bredenbury benefice.

Simon Wells

Badges

Only 34 of the **Limited Edition 140th Anniversary Badges** remain.

You can order a badge through the membermojo store, or some of the District Secretaries have a handful of stock.

They cost £3.00 each, or £6.00 inc P&P – go to [Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers at membermojo](https://www.membermojo.org/) to buy online.

If you'd like a badge please order it soon, if any stock remains we intend to offer it to all ringers to buy through The Ringing World.





RingFest

— 2026 —

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A day for ringers, friends and families!

For further info contact Neil Pirie at ch_str_sec@hdgb.org



Obituary: John William Hope MBE (1936–2026)

John William Hope MBE, aged 90, peacefully passed away on Sunday, 12th April 2026, leaving behind a monumental legacy of over 75 years of devoted service to his community, local sport, and the ancient art of church bell ringing.

Born and bred in Almeley, John was the son of William and Annie Hope (née Bright). He grew up alongside his younger brother, David, on the family's small-holding in the village. John attended Almeley Primary School and later Lady Hawkins' School in Kington. Leaving school at the age of 15, he dedicated his entire working life to the land as a local farmer and agricultural contractor.

In July 1963, John married his beloved wife, Margaret, in Eardisley. Together they shared 55 wonderful years of marriage, building a family and a shared passion for the community until her passing.

John poured his heart and energy into local governance and community development. He served his area with immense dedication at every level of local government—as an Almeley parish councillor, as well as a district and county councillor. He further gave his time as a school governor to several local schools and served as a churchwarden at St Mary's Church for more than 52 years. His exceptional, lifelong commitment to civic duty and the rural community earned him an MBE in 2005—an honour he characteristically dedicated to the village teamwork he so strongly believed in.

John's passions extended widely into village life from an early age. He fostered a lifelong devotion to the church community and local camaraderie, lending his voice to the church choir where, by 1951, he proudly served as the crucifer in the robed choir at Almeley village church. In his younger days, he was also a keen cricketer for Almeley Cricket Club.

John began his journey into campanology in 1949, taught by Arthur Williams at his beloved home tower, St Mary's, Almeley. He was a dedicated member of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers (HDGB) for a remarkable 75 years. Over the course of more than three-quarters of a century, John's rhythm, leadership, and unwavering dedication anchored the local band. He served with distinction as the Tower Captain at Almeley and was a former Master of the Guild, as well as the Clifford and Kington District. In recognition of his vast contributions, John was made a Freeman of the Guild in 1997.

Over his brilliant ringing career, John rang 512 peals and conducted 32, proving himself to be both an exceptional ringer and a skilled conductor. Early milestones in his ringing career included his first peal of Minor at Glasbury in 1960, where he rang what was then the very physically demanding tenor to the first even-bell peal on those bells. In 1962, he rang his first peal of Major on the fourth at Glasbury; a notable event where four of the band (Hatcher, Hope, Gladwell, and Powell) were ringing their first peal of Major, and it marked George Cousins' first peal of Major as conductor.

John and Margaret shared this profound passion, achieving the wonderful milestone of ringing 49 peals together. A pinnacle achievement of his individual ringing career was taking part in the legendary, record-breaking peal of 15,000 Doubles in ten methods at St Mary Magdalene, Eardisley, on 11th August 1974. Ringing for 7 hours and 22 minutes to raise funds for the church roof, his role in this exceptional feat remains an iconic moment in ringing history. As a patient teacher and an ardent supporter of the craft, he introduced generations to ringing, ensuring the bells of Herefordshire would ring out for years to come.

John was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Margaret, and his younger brother, David. He is survived



by his son, Vivian, and his daughter, Valerie, his wider family, and a deeply grateful ringing, sporting, and village community. [1]

The funeral service took place at St Mary's Church, Almeley, on Saturday, 25th April 2026. In true tradition and celebration of a master ringer's life, the bells were rung open, and a commemorative quarter peal was dedicated in his memory by his fellow ringers.

Andrew Watkins

We received the following message of thanks from Val, one of John's daughters, after writing to let the family know about the ringing that took place in memory of John:

Dear Fran,

Thank you so much for letting us know.

Do pass on our gratitude to all the ringers involved in the peal and the other ringing events.

Best wishes

Val Hope

Guild Rope Splicing Course Success

On 4th July Wellington Church hosted the first Guild rope splicing course, led by instructor Keith Brimley from Wellington. The session was a resounding success, with all participating students delivering impressive results. Notably, several students successfully mastered the complex long splice technique.

Our sincere thanks go to Keith for running the course so expertly, and to Wellington Church for providing the venue and the use of its excellent new kitchen facilities.



Andrew Watkins

Bells on Sunday

Towers within the Diocese have featured on Bells on Sunday again recently, with Clunbury on 3rd May and Morville on 31st May, both recordings are taken from recent quarter peals rung at the churches. You can listen at [BBC Sounds - Bells on Sunday - Available Episodes](#)

Could you be our next Webmaster?

We're looking for someone to take over the role of Guild Webmaster. After 6 years at the helm, our webmaster Nick Chapman is looking to move on. Do you have the IT skills to take the reins?

"The Guild website is ready for a refresh and it would be good to get some new ideas into how we present all the Guild information and business" said Nick. "Increasing workloads on other projects I work on mean that I can't spend as much time on the Guild website development so the time is right for someone new to get involved".

The Webmaster's main task is of course looking after the website, which was built by Nick in 2020 using Wordpress and now hosted at Hostinger. Nick also looks after the administration of the HDGB.org email addresses in our not-for-profit Microsoft 365 as well as being instrumental in setting up the membership system, Membermojo. Thankfully, Fran Watkins does a great job of the Membermojo day-to-day running so this is only an occasional advisory role, but some experience of Microsoft administration would be very useful.

If you would like to know more about the role, please contact Nick at webmaster@hdgb.org for a no-pressure/non-obligation chat. Nick Chapman

Bell Sunday 17th May 2026

A quarter peal was rung at Ludlow on Bell Sunday to welcome The Rev'd Sam Hustwayte as Archdeacon of Ludlow. Ringers at Ewyas Harold also commemorated the day with a special touch of Little Dewchurch Doubles.

John Hodges' long service as tower captain at Stoke Lacy and Much Cowarne was celebrated on Bell Sunday with a special service, his dedication and recent retirement from the roles was also recorded in The Hereford Times on 27th March.

Archbishop of Canterbury to visit Hereford Diocese in 10th & 11th October 2026

Date for your Diary – Although we don't have details of the Archbishop's itinerary yet, maybe you could make some tentative plans for ringing, so that wherever she travels, the Archbishop could be welcomed by the sound of our bells.

Safeguarding

Just a reminder that if you have any questions at all about safeguarding or training please do contact safeguarding@hdgb.org or if you have immediate safeguarding concerns in your parish environment you should contact your Parish Safeguarding Officer, Incumbent or the Diocesan Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@hereford.anglican.org

140th Anniversary Dinner

We enjoyed a very happy and relaxed 140th Anniversary Dinner at The Green Dragon Hereford on Friday 12th June. With lively chat in the Cocktail Bar before the evening started, and excellent food, it was a memorable evening. Many thanks to our Guest Speakers Bishop Richard, Will Bosworth and Val Roberts for entertaining us, and to all who attended for their friendship and company. We were delighted to welcome back John Goldrick (Guild Secretary 1986-89) and his wife Felicity, who sat with friends from the Ledbury District.



Grand Prize Draw

The Raffle took place during the evening, many thanks to all the companies that donated prizes, and everyone who bought tickets. We received generous donations from **Wye Valley Brewery, Avon Ropes Ltd, Taylor's Bellfoundry Loughborough, Three Choirs Vineyards, Ludlow Distillery, The Courtyard Hereford**. After expenses we raised £568.21 for our charity. A list of prize winners is available on request.

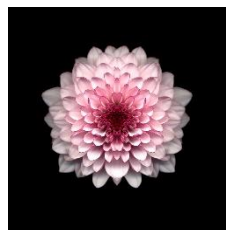
- Have you got news or ideas for the next newsletter – get in touch contact@hdgb.org
- Would you like to edit the Newsletter – volunteers welcome!
- Please share the newsletter with your fellow ringers – we can help each other

Resources

Do you need help or resources for a church or community event, or help designing materials? Please contact the Guild to find out what we can offer, whether it be with printed materials or a loan of the Wombel or handbells to help with your event.

Notices

Since our last newsletter we have sadly lost several members through death.



We remember the following who have rung with us in the past:

- Emily English (Almeley)
- David Lovelace (Norton Canon)
- Michael Reynolds (Presteigne)
- David Manton (Welshpool)

May they Rest In Peace.

Peal News

Congratulations to **Ashley Fortey** who recently rang his 2000th peal. 891 of the peals have been rung for the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers. As far as we are aware, Ashley is the first person who was born and taught to ring in Herefordshire to reach this achievement. In the band was **Rick Shallcross** who coincidentally recorded the same peal as his 2000th peal on tower bells.

A notable peal of 10080 changes of Stedman Triples was rung at Yarkhill on 27th June. **Chris Phillips**, who will be known to many Guild ringers, has Parkinson's disease and rang the peal to raise funds for Parkinson's UK. You can see the details of the peal at <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1984691> and, more importantly, you can donate to Chris's appeal at <https://www.justgiving.com/page/chris-phillips/> To date he has raised £3511.00, please give generously if you can.

Andrew Watkins

A Fresh Look at Tower Comfort

During the recent heatwaves a number of practices have (sensibly) been cancelled. Many of us may have invested in a portable fan, some towers alternate between a supply of heaters and fans as the weather changes.

Why not take a moment to look at the tower (and ringing chamber) with fresh eyes? We sometimes tolerate conditions that we never would elsewhere, and overlook the dirt, infestations, detritus and accumulated items in a tower simply through familiarity, and because we simply want to get on with ringing. Can you work with your church and PCC to make your ringing chamber more comfortable and sanitary? This might make it easier to attract visitors and new recruits as well as making your own life more comfortable.

News from Ledbury District

Through their Facebook page **Ringling West of The Malverns**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61574302978468> ringers from the Ledbury District have been showcasing ringing to the general public across the area and have been following up the promotion with Tower Open Days and Taster Sessions across towers in the District. We hope that they will share the experiences and results from their efforts with us soon.

We'd recommend you visit their Facebook page, there is a lot of really valuable information there that could be shared with non-ringers in your area.

Coming up — we'd love you to join in!

Tower Open Day — volunteers needed

By the time you read the next issue of Guild News the Tower Open Day will have already happened — **so we need your help NOW.**

Towers open for 1 hour

TOWER	Bells	Tenoi	
1. Whitbourne	6	11	9.00
2. Bromyard	10	14	9.25
3. Pencombe	6	9	10.15
4. Bodenham	6	12	10.40
5. Stoke Lacy	6	8	11.05
6. Much Cowarne	6	11	11.30
7. Yarkhill	8	4	11.50
8. Weston Beggard	5	9	12.15
9. Lugwardine	8	12	12.40
10. Mordiford	5	9	13.10
11. Woolhope	6	13	13.35
12. Fownhope	6	12	14.00
13. Much Marcle	6	12	14.25
14. Eastnor	6	7	14.50
15. Colwall	10	10	15.10
16. Coddington	6	10	15.50
17. Bosbury	6	15	16.15
18. Cradley	8	14	16.40
19. Mathon	6	8	17.00
20. Ledbury	10	20	17.30

Here is the draft route for the day — keep your eyes open for updates as we get nearer the date.

We are looking forward to welcoming visitors from all over the country, as well as welcoming our own ringers to towers throughout the Guild, but to make sure the day runs smoothly we do need volunteers to help steward the day.

Those who come on tower open days tend to be happy and friendly, and appreciate the welcome they get in towers — so stewarding is not hard work. We ideally need about 30 volunteers to help throughout the day, as well as the support of tower captains and local ringers. **If you can help (even for just one or two towers, or a small part of the day) please email contact@hdgb.org ASAP**

Guild Survey — have your say

We've published the results of the survey so far to all members, to date only 99 members have responded. Just a reminder that we will leave the survey open, it can be found on the website at <https://hdgb.org/guild-survey-2026/> we will review the results again ahead of the October Management Committee Meeting.

RECRUITMENT & TEACHING

1. Association of Ringing Teachers

The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) is delighted and proud to congratulate Pip Penney on being awarded an MBE in The King's Birthday Honours List. *(Many members will remember Pip from the Hereford Ringing Course)* Pip was ART's first Chairman and the driving force behind the formation of the Association. Congratulations, Pip. We are immensely proud of your achievement and grateful for everything you have done for bell ringing and for ART.

ART continues to build on Pip's work. We continue to run training courses across the country, delivered by our dedicated team of volunteer tutors. We also keep in touch regularly with those who have attended a course or have been enrolled by a trainee teacher through our Tower Talk communications. [Read Tower Talk magazine](#)

We would like to thank all the Guilds that support their members in attending courses and developing the teachers of the future. We are also working closely with the Central Council to help recruit and train new ringers in support of its Ringing 2030 programme.

If you would like to know more about ART and its work, please do get in touch. www.bellringing.org

Neil Jones - ART Chair

2. Learning to ring – Ludlow

The learners at Ludlow are generally taught by Richard, the tower captain, and Tim Hughes, his deputy. They tie the bells and connect up to the simulator before the main practice. It's a long session from 6pm to the main practice at 7.30pm but, with the simulator, it means you can ring rounds, call changes, plain hunt even if there are not enough human helpers around. Both Richard and Tim are looking to get ART certified, and are supported by Rosie Marshall.

At present we have Paul learning the basics, Angie on to level 2 ART and we are visited by Patch from a different tower as well as 1 or 2 of our improvers/return to ringing people which makes it quite sociable and fun. This is important as people have to want to climb the 136 steps each week to get to the ringing room, it certainly helps with fitness!

We follow the basic ART course of bell handling, ringing up and down, learning control and how to ring with others. If the learners want to, they can stay to the main practice and ring with the rest of the band, with an open invitation to visit the pub later.

Teaching new ringers always feels enjoyable and rewarding.

Rosie Marshall

Having relocated from West Wales to Ludlow two years ago; whilst exploring the town, I popped into St Laurence's Church. On entering the foyer I saw a notice pertaining to bell ringing which really appealed to me as being new to the area, I was very keen to take up a new challenge/hobby.

The induction & teaching from Richard Bracher the Tower Captain & his team has been excellent & at all points of my ringing journey, I have been whole heartedly supported by everyone within the tower.

My biggest personal challenge was learning to ring as a total beginner as an older adult which now, at 60 years of age, I have accepted. I feel very privileged to be able to take part in the Monday night ringing sessions & more recently at the Sunday morning sessions. It really is such a fabulous, very enjoyable skill to learn amongst such a skilled team of very supportive, friendly ringers.



Angie Jones

3. New Burghill Teaching Hub

An exciting new Teaching Hub has been set up in Herefordshire - The Burghill Teaching Hub is an ART (Association of Ringing Teachers) certified bellringing teaching Hub. The Hub consists of 5 towers: Burghill, Bodenham, Fownhope, Marden and Wellington. The towers are actively teaching and developing ringing. All the towers are located within half an hour of Hereford. The towers have been following the ART programme and working together since August 2024. There are lots of things happening behind the scenes now, to get the Hub running smoothly.

The Hub has a new Facebook page and website and has been posting useful information for those interested in bellringing as well as recording the progress of their current ART cohort.

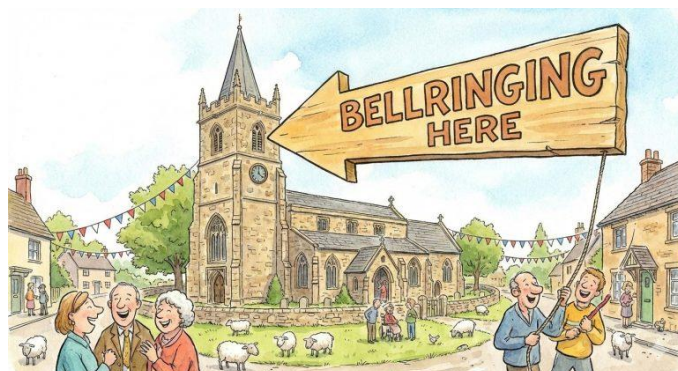
We've seen the huge amount of work and progress at Burghill and neighbouring towers over the past few years, they are currently holding LTR levels 1 and 2 sessions. We wish them every success in the new venture, and look forward to reporting on their continuing achievements.



4. Recruit Regain Retain & the Ringing Recruitment Network

If you'd like information and inspiration about recruitment and teaching then we'd recommend visiting <https://cccbr.org.uk/about/workgroups/recruitment-and-development/>

You can view slides and meetings of previous talks, make sure you don't miss any future info by signing up to the Ringing Recruitment Network mailing list <https://cccbr.info/recruitmentnetwork>



And don't forget – you can access all the Central Council's information about the Ringing 2030 strategy at <https://cccbr.org.uk/ringing-2030/>

5. Looking for an opportunity?

If you are looking for an opportunity to ring things you never seem to have the band for, or would like some practice on a simulator to iron out some kinks in your ringing then why not contact the band at Stoke St Milborough?

They hold practices Tuesday evening (open practice – all levels), Wednesday morning (Advanced 8-bell ringing) and Friday mornings (Beginners/Improvers), as well as tied -bell simulator practices.

Please be sure to make contact before setting off to ensure the practice will be running, and to find out the latest road closure/diversion news – but you will be assured of a warm welcome.