



2025 Newsletter



Officers for Year:

Master	James Mundy
Deputy Master	Iwan Cotgreave
Social Secretary	Grace Dooley Rose Horton
General Secretary	Ainsley Gilbert
Catering Officer	Rhiannon Meredith (co-ordinator)
Mascot Keeper	Matthew Tosh
Romance Officer	Roger Haynes
Webmaster	Stephen Penney (to 12 th April) Kirsty Gifford (12 th April onwards)
Central Council Rep	Fiona Hartley

Events held:

Master's Tour (QPs)	11 th January	Stoke on Trent
Dinner Tour	7 th to 9 th March	Bristol
Easter Tour	10 th to 13 th April	Manchester
Summer Tour	23 rd to 27 th July	Lincolnshire
Camping Tour	28 th July to 1 st August	Cornwall
Autumn Tour	30 th October to 2 nd November	Stourbridge

New Members:

Ordinary	Sarah Knight (formerly Associate member)
Associate	Rupert Buckley Kirsty Gifford Edward Mort

Society Ringing Events

Master's Tour

Six Quarter Peals were organised in the Stoke on Trent area with a 50% success rate for the day. The day concluded with a Curry at Planet Bollywood to round off a social day.

<i>Saturday 11th January</i>	<i>Keele (St John)</i>	<i>1320 London Surprise Minor</i>
<i>Saturday 11th January</i>	<i>Norton in the Moors (St Bartholomew)</i>	<i>1250 Cambridge Surprise Major</i>
<i>Saturday 11th January</i>	<i>Stoke on Trent (Minister Church of St Peter vad Vincula)</i>	<i>1264 Plain Bob Major (handbells)</i>

Dinner Tour *by Caroline Stonham*

It was a pity that the Portwall Tavern ran out of Pizza on the Friday night but the food on offer the next day amply made up for that.

On Saturday the welcoming ringing chamber of St. Mary Redcliffe could easily accommodate a crowd of ringers ranging from 3 months to over 70 years, assembling for a convivial day of socialising, and ringing too, of course. Rounds, Call Changes and Cinques were cheering those out and about on such a cold, raw morning. Some lovely Surprise Major was successful at the slower melodious eight of the Cathedral, 15 mins walk away.

Feeling rather thirsty after that, many took advantage of the vast array of ales on offer at The Famous Royal Volunteer down near the quay. The pre-ordered food was hot and welcoming. After lunch, with more ringers materialising it was quite a squash in the belfry at St Stephens; Rounds and Call Changes, Plain Hunt on eleven, Caters and a bit of Maximus was achieved.

At exactly 15.45pm in St Stephen's the company was called to order by the Master's bell to start the 182nd meeting of the Society. After the usual preliminaries the society elected James Mundy as the new Master with Rose Horton and Grace Dooley sharing the Social Secretary's role. Matthew Tosh was elected Mascot Keeper (even though Puff was having a nap in the hotel) and Catering Officers were to be arranged on a tour-by-tour basis.

While England and France were playing Rugby at Twickenham (England finishing one point ahead!), fifty three of the assembled party put on their glad rags for the Annual Dinner held at the Novotel Hotel. After an exquisite and delicious three course meal, Ainsley Gilbert introduced the guest speaker; Colin Newman and then retiring Master Emily Vallow and our Romance officer Grace Dooley excelled themselves with their speeches. Percy Penney was congratulated on his engagement and the happy company then danced (a disco!) the night away.

Easter Tour

It is quite some time since this author has been asked to put together a WCs tour report and given the fact that this is a somewhat cursory account put together a number of months after the event (best laid plans for doing it a few days later well out of the window then!), and involving a fair amount of memory searching, it may well be some time before the job offer is made again. But thanks, James Mundy – it was nice to be asked!!

Easter Tour 2025 turned out to be a bit of a baptism of fire for the first tour organised by the new Social Secretary pairing of Rose Horton and Grace Dooley, accommodation wise at least. Cosmopolitan Manchester, with all that it has to offer, did not come up trumps with an available Hall and it certainly wasn't without a great deal of effort in trying to get something suitable secured. As a result, it was therefore a bit of a new experience for the Society – a Hall-less Easter tour for the first time. Every person for themselves then in getting something arranged for their base for the weekend.

The Thursday evening meet-up joint had been arranged as The Bank in the city centre, but other watering holes were available as per Martyn Owen's detailed lowdown as to how to experience Manchester to the hilt. Friday's itinerary saw us head northwestwards to the outer periphery of the big smoke and later on in the day to spy some fields, moors and hills. We started on the delightful bells (!!) of St Mary's, Oldham, known as a bit of a handful on account of being a chunky twelve in a slender tower set out in three frames on top of each other and with some alarming tower sway. Ringing here was certainly an experience and an interesting tour opener! We staggered outside in need of a lie down and something strong to drink! Thankfully, the other ringing opportunity of the morning at nearby Oldham Moorside were a decided improvement and we cantered through some favourites and a first attempt at Heywood Cyclic Bob Major, the chosen method of the tour. This tower housed some ancient peal boards with decidedly flowery language of praise, again being spied later on in the day at other towers. Somewhat of a local tradition in the past, maybe?

Time for a lunch stop – already! The Morningstar in Shaw did us proud and coped well as it turned out to be a bit of a pub takeover. Tour numbers had swelled by this point and so the first ringing of the afternoon in the somewhat cramped chamber at Newhey turned out to be a series of band relays. Much more room at Milnrow to follow before our final general tour stop at Heywood, a fine ring of bells with some notable ringing heritage judging by the old photos and peal boards with some notable ringers of the past recorded.

For an intrepid eight not content to finish now it was on to the rather loud ring of Brookfield Unitarian Church in Gorton for a noble Quarter Peal this being Kirsty Gifford's first for the Society.

<i>Friday 11th April</i>	<i>Gorton (Brookfield Unitarian Church)</i>	<i>1250 Yorkshire Surprise Major</i>
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The evening was then whiled away chiefly in Manchester's China Town.

Further report by Paul Lewis

Saturday dawned all too soon with parking at a premium at the first venue of the day, Didsbury – we started our morning activity just as the local park run was coming to the end. Onwards then to West Didsbury with chunkier bells and more room in the ringing chamber, though that was after some of us had struggled to find the church. The rest of the day was to be spent in the city centre, so a good chance then to ditch the cars, shift onto the trams and to swell the already thronged crowds in the great metropolis. Most of Manchester seemed to be either inside or in the beer garden of the planned lunch venue – the famous Sinclair's Oyster Bar – but Rose Horton had bagged us the upstairs room to make it a bit easier. It was a tight squeeze though with the very healthy tour numbers this particular weekend. Great to be joined here by the Manc legend, Malc Murphy, after a bit of a gap on tour.

Before lunch arrived, we fitted in the tour meeting, the 183rd meeting of the Society. Kirsty Gifford was welcomed to the Society as an Associate member, the date was fixed for the AGM and Dinner Tour in February 2026, and Evesham won the vote for the venue of next year's Easter Tour. Dorset and the Tyne Valley will live on for further tries, no doubt. After all of this excitement, lunch, and a pint or two, it was a mere hop and a skip from the Oyster Bar round the corner to the Cathedral for the first of the two afternoon towers. We didn't disgrace ourselves in the ringing repertoire and we duly entertained the Manchester city crowds. Likewise with the final official ringing of the tour a short walk away at Sacred Trinity, Salford. From here, some bade their farewells without a Saturday meal in Hall option, but a goodly number transferred that meal plan to a very welcoming curry house, eastZeast in the Riverside, for an early evening Indian.

Thanks to Rose Horton and Grace Dooley for all the tour arrangements and to the many Society members who met up for a memorable and sociable city Easter tour experience.

Surprise Major Day

A Quarter Peal day to ring Surprise Major methods was organised by Heather Griffiths around the South West of Birmingham. The day started brightly with an attempt at Erdington until the Tenor rope broke – Iain Scott had been concerned about the rope at the start and his fears proved right when all the band were thinking the attempt was likely to be successful. The rest of the day was uneventful until the last tower – the Quarter Peal was score but not until Chris Ridley's Tenor bell rope had become completely untucked leading to some concerned glances from other members of the band. The successes were as follow:

<i>Saturday 26th January</i>	<i>Boldmere (St Michael)</i>	<i>1344 Spliced Surprise Major (4m)</i>
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<i>Saturday 26th January</i>	<i>Castle Bromwich (St Mary & St Margaret)</i>	<i>1280 Bristol Surprise Major</i>
<i>Saturday 26th January</i>	<i>Sutton Coldfield (Holy Trinity)</i>	<i>1280 Yorkshire Surprise Major</i>

Summer Tour by Chris Ridley

Forty not out at The Stump(s)

South Lincolnshire was the chosen venue for the 2025 Welsh Colleges' Summer Tour because of the flat terrain with parts of the route being below sea level. There was also the opportunity to enjoy impressive church architecture at a variety of venues. Not all had factored in the wind impact however, although the summer heat proved a more tiring factor on the Friday of the four-day tour. It was also a special occasion for Helen Foster's bicycle which was making its 40th Summer Tour appearance. Attendees fluctuated over the tour hitting a peak of forty ringers on the Saturday, but the Master skilfully managed to arrange ringing for all while providing the opportunity to meet requests from those wishing to attempt new things they had learnt.



Helen with her trustee steed!

Wednesday 23rd July

An advance band met at Heydour in the evening to attempt a peal of Pitstow's three-part composition of Yorkshire Surprise Major. The locals arrived with the key advising the need to get two helpers to get the church door open given the difficult lock. After experimenting we gained access and the peal commenced. The bells were not easy and Chris Mundy on the

tenor later explained his rope was too long. He contemplated whether he should ask the conductor if we could stand to adjust it but then hesitated until after the first course end, after which he decided making the request was now too late. The long drive and need to work on the bells saw the first part of the peal completed after an hour, but a hesitation in putting in the final part bob was not unwelcomed by the band who decided the designated pub offered a more welcome option.

Thursday 24th July

Two good old-fashioned rings of eight bells in the morning at Swineshead and Dorington got the WCs off to a good start with a variety of methods, including the obligatory Lincolnshire Surprise Major, rung. The morning saw light rain, so it was unclear whether ringing the back bells or weather gave rise to the damp conditions exhibited by certain members. The church at Donington had the grave of Captain Matthew Flinders RN who circumnavigated mainland Australia, which he called New Holland, between 1801 and 1802. Today this achievement is recognised by having Flinders University at Adelaide named after him.

Lunch at the Black Bull in Donington saw huge portions of food served. Although cake was available at all the morning towers, the cyclists had burnt off sufficient energy to enjoy the lunch but there was no need for any deserts when offered.

The afternoon towers at Quadring and Gosberton were both six bell towers allowing the tour methods of Surfleet Surprise Minor and Pinchbeck Bob Doubles to be rung alongside other standard methods. Gosberton belfry was a collectors' haven with a variety of antiques displayed there. These included six old bicycles, four hung from the belfry ceiling and two more in the bell chamber – very apt for the summer tour mode of transport.



Getting ready to ring at Gosberton

The evening saw the now expanded party returning to The Ship at Pinchbeck, one of the few pubs serving evening food, although Paul Parker had to sweet talk the chef who was not keen at first to cook for such a large group. The proprietors were not keen for us to return the following evening without an advance booking!

Friday 25th July

The day commenced at Kirton which was a recently refurbished ring of eight bells – a good tower to start the day. Valerie Wild who had the keys for all the churches visited that day met us and kindly agreed to come and open the towers for us. A highlight followed with a visit to St Botolph, Boston, better known locally as ‘The Stump’ - a glorious architectural gem with a ring of ten bells rung from an unusual belfry. This involved a climb of 209 steps to the belfry! The band struggled to ring the bells well given the spacing of the bells and the domed floor in the middle of the belfry. The tendency was to ring too slowly but some more sprightly ringing included a touch of Littleport Little Surprise Royal.





Boston Stump Tower and inside the belfry

A further good lunch pub (Goodbarns Yard) was pre-booked conveniently near to St Botolph. This again served an excellent lunch with portions only slightly smaller than the previous day.

The afternoon saw ringing at three towers (Frampton, Sutterton and Wigtoft) but the good lunch and hot weather saw ringers fading as the afternoon progressed. Not least at Sutterton where the initial party up the tower experienced trouble deciding which bell was the treble when attempting to ring up in peal. A selected band departed early from the last tower to ring a Quarter Peal at Swineshead. This was rung to congratulate Iwan Cotgreave on his graduation from Swansea University. Also to celebrate 40 years of Helen's bike coming on Summer Tours.

<i>Friday 25th July</i>	<i>Swineshead (St Mary)</i>	<i>1250 Cambridge Surprise Major</i>
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Given the pub from the previous two evenings were unwilling to serve food to such a large group, Cathy Hampson arranged for a pizza delivery to the hall. Certain ringers stopped at the Crown in Surfleet for a quick pre-meal drink enroute. This was an interesting venue as it was more like a private home than a traditional public house.

Saturday 26th July

The day started and finished at the two eight bell towers in Spalding with the ring of twelve bells at Surfleet between. The bells at Spalding (Fulney) were on plain bearings but the local ringers had kindly oiled them in advance. Poppy Wheeler demonstrated how to start your child's ringing career at an early age by having Rupert in her backpack while ringing a touch of Grandsire Triples. Rupert followed Poppy's blue line closely as he watched over her shoulder which bodes well for the future.

Surfleet tower leans at an incredible angle which at first suggests it would not be capable of holding a ring of bells. The vicar there was previously H Law James – an important historical ringer and composer of peals. Little Bob Maximus, Stedman Cinques and a touch of Grandsire Cinques were successful with certain members ringing a method on twelve bells for the first time.



The leaning tower of St Laurence Surfleet

A previous agreement to have lunch at The Crown opposite the church was inadvertent double booked. They subsequently arranged for a renown local caterer to put on a buffet lunch for us in the Church Room. A magnificent two course spread followed for seventeen ringers who had taken this option, but there was too much food even for the hungry ringers to consume. The caterers received applause for their efforts.



The feast at Surfleet underway

The day concluded with ringing at Saint Mary and St Nicholas Spalding – a good Taylor ring of eight bells. The number of ringers had diminished with early departures but methods up to five Spliced Surprise Major were rung by the band. The band were welcome by an Oasis Tribute band performing next to the church. There was a suggestion they became more in-tune possibly because of the ringing which took place during the performance.

A traditional BBQ took place at the hall in the evening, despite the quantities of buffet food consumed earlier, kindly organised by Rhiannon Meredith. She also took first prize for her white chocolate and raspberry blondies in the cake competition.

Sunday 27th July

Sunday service ringing took place around Spalding before the remaining members made their way home after a splendid Summer Tour. Thanks to Rose Horton and Grace Dooley for the arrangements, to James Mundy for running the ringing so expertly, and to Emily Vallow for stepping in to manage the breakfast catering.

Camping Tour

The Camping Tour which traditionally follows the Summer Tour was organised by Bridget Lazenby. Good weather and scenery greeted both the hardy campers and the less hardy members staying in alternative accommodation. A full programme involving 18 different towers in addition to other tourist opportunities were enjoyed.

Autumn Tour

Ten towers were visited in the Stourbridge area. Unfortunately no official report was produced for this tour.

London Quarter Peal Day

A further Quarter Peal day based in London was organised by Rhiannon Meredith in the autumn. It was unfortunate that not all attempts were successful – including a planned attempt for Grandsire Cinques at St Sepulchre, Newgate where a lock out was experienced – but successes included:

<i>Saturday 15th November</i>	<i>Bethnal Green (St Matthew)</i>	<i>1260 Grandshire Triples</i>
<i>Saturday 15th November</i>	<i>City of London (Garlickhythe Ringing Room)</i>	<i>1260 St Clemen's College Bob Minor (handbells)</i>
<i>Saturday 15th November</i>	<i>City of London (St Dunstan in the West)</i>	<i>1280 Bristol Surprise Major</i>
<i>Saturday 15th November</i>	<i>Limehouse (St Anne)</i>	<i>1282 Yorkshire Surprise Royal</i>

A traditional end of day curry in Brick Lane concluded the day for those who did not need to catch an early train home.

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Other Society Achievements

Bob Smith 12 Bell Competition

A Society band rang in the competition held at St Mary, Stafford on Saturday 27th September 2025. The test piece was Little Bob Maximus judged by Tom Griffiths and Bill Haynes who used the experience of a tricky journey to describe the performance of each band. The WCs were judged to have come 5th although rumour had it from a good source that our placing would have been higher if the results had been judged on the Hawkear results alone. The top four places were claimed by well established bands who ring regularly together on twelve bells (i.e. Melbourne 1st; Birmingham 2nd; Leicester 3rd; Cambridge 4th) so a good performance from the Society.



2025 Band left to right (front row: Cathy Hampson, Becky Drysdale, Chris Mundy, Debbie Turner, Rona Joiner, Susan Healey; back row: Chris Ridley, Tim Payne, Halisi Drysdale, James Mort, Matthew Turner and Richard Wolfgang)

Other Ringing Performances

The following peal was rung for the Society during the year:

*Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary & St Chad, Lichfield
Saturday 1 February 2025
in 3 hours 26 minutes (31-2-9 in D)
5004 Stedman Caters
Composed by John Hyden*

*Treble Susan J Healey
2nd Catherine E Hampson
3rd Christopher M Mundy
4th Sue Wolfgang
5th Heather E Griffiths
6th Christopher Ridley
7th Timothy M Payne (C)
8th Richard A Wolfgang
9th Martin S Davies
Tenor Halisi Drysdale*

Some further Society handbell Quarter Peals were organised by the Mundy family during the year.

Thursday 5 th June	Eglwysbach (Lletty, Ffordd Llyn Syberi)	1260 Plain Bob Minor
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<i>Friday 6th June</i>	<i>Eglwysbach (Lletty, Ffordd Llyn Syberi)</i>	<i>1260 Plain Bob Minor</i>
<i>Monday 7th July</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1260 Spliced Plain Minor (2m)</i>
<i>Monday 7th July</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1260 Plain Bob Minor</i>
<i>Sunday 6th July</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1260 Plain Bob Minor</i>
<i>Thursday 14th August</i>	<i>Bradfield College (Blood 2)</i>	<i>1280 Plain Bob Major</i>
<i>Saturday 13th September</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1264 Plain Bob Major</i>
<i>Saturday 13th September</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1316 Spliced Triples & Major (2m)</i>
<i>Saturday 13th September</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1272 Kent Treble Bob Minor</i>
<i>Friday 26th December</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1260 St Clement's College Bob Minor</i>
<i>Sunday 28th December</i>	<i>Long Crendon (13 Chearsley Road)</i>	<i>1320 Kent Treble Bob Minor</i>

Other Society activities

Society Constitution

Following the Society becoming a Registered Small Society with the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) it was required to state in its Constitution the need to elect its CCCBR Representative annually. An addition to Rule 4 was agreed to facilitate this.

Membership Data System

A new system based on the Online Club Manager was agreed.

The Magic Dragon

The National 12 Bell Final held at St Mary the Virgin, Redcliffe, Bristol on 28 June 2025 saw Matthew Tosh in the commentary seat again for the day. He was lucky this time to have the help of our Mascot to ensure he kept on track throughout the day. It was no surprise therefore that Birmingham got burnt with the Bristol team triumphing to win the Taylor Trophy.



The Mascot Keeper and Mascot

Member Obituaries

Thankfully, the Society is not aware of any member who died during the year.