

Ringling Around and About in the Huntingdon District



Issue No 32: August 2025

Editor – Phillip George



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Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Ringing 2030 - PG

I subscribe to email updates from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and on the 9th August I received an email from them informing me of their business plan "Ringing 2030".

You might have heard of the initiative Ringing 2030 but there doesn't seem to be much information coming down from CCCBR to the associations and on to the districts, so I have included some of the information in this newsletter. We are already half-way through the decade and there is a lot to do in the next five years!

I can't include the whole of the plan but I strongly recommend that you read it. You can find it on the following link. <https://cccb.org.uk/ringing-2030-business-plan/>

During my seminar last December I mentioned the challenges that we all face in recruitment, training and marketing. We all know that the fortunes of individual towers ebb and flow and we often don't have control over this. But if we plan for the future we are better placed to have continuous ringing in our towers, and this is one of the main objectives of Ringing 2030.

Although the Ringing 2030 initiative is a high level 'business plan' aimed mainly at associations it is very relevant to individual towers and there are some good points made in the report.

On pages 6 & 7 of this newsletter I have highlighted some of the issues which I think are relevant to us as individual ringers, tower captains and trainers. We can all be part of this project.

Summer Social at Fenstanton – 19th July – Catherina Griffiths

Last night was the Quiz, Catherina has written about it here and I have taken the photos. Thank you very much to those of you who came along and joined in.

The Huntingdon District usually holds a social instead of a ringing meeting in August and this year, it was Quiz and Chips in the Village Hall at Hilton. There were 5 teams (2 from St Neots and 2 from Ramsey and a mixed team) competing. Our secretary Caroline Stevens set the questions, explaining that the themes for each round were based on transport links to her family - ships, cars, trains, planes and food. There were some interesting and challenging table rounds too- traffic signs, shipping forecast names, chocolate bars and country shapes. The last round was a Beetle Drive in the form of a plate of fish and chips. The winners were St Neots Royals, with Bits and Bobs as a close second. The winners were rewarded with the infamous chocolate medals.

Many thanks to Ed Groome for organising the venue, to Caroline for organising the quiz and food and to Andrew for the technical bits and keeping the scores.

Another fun evening!



Comments received afterwards:

Fun evening. Thanks for including us from over the border. VC

It was fabulous and such a great laugh. EH

It was a great night. Laughter ruled, brains failed and we were proud to maintain our position! And thank you Caroline and Andrew for all the work you put in, so ensuring that the evening went smoothly. CM

Open Tower Day at St Neots – 2nd August - *Catherina Griffiths*

An open tower day at St Neots is a big logistical exercise with so many steps to the roof. I've never counted them but I'm told there are over 100.

Prior to the day the stairs and roof have to be cleaned of debris, volunteers recruited, risk assessments done, and plenty of local publicity, as well as prayers for a fine day. The minimum number of volunteers needed for such a day is: 2 to control queues at the bottom of the tower; 2 in the ringing chamber; and 2 on the roof.

Those church members who couldn't manage the stairs, looked after bookstalls, bric a brac, and a refreshment station with lots of lovely cakes. Lloyd our organist entertained with music for a while and then Paul our Rector took over.

The views from the top of the tower are always fantastic and so as soon as we opened at 10.00am there was a constant stream of visitors. Mike one of our ringers took control of the middle tower walkie talkie, and controlled the flow going up or down the stairs so that nobody had to pass on the steps.

As the ringing chamber is halfway up the tower we invited visitors in for a rest and took the opportunity to tell them about the bells. I gave a brief history lesson about the bells and clock, and then John, another of our band demonstrated how easy it is to ring the tenor bell (I'll take his word for that!) and then he rang the treble up and down to show what we do. Having stressed the dangers of touching ropes in a ringing chamber unsupervised we let the children have a go at chiming the treble.

Once those on the roof had gone down the group in the ringing chamber were allowed to go up to see the views from the top, while we waited for the next group to come up. In the afternoon James joined us and we were able to demonstrate call changes and Plain Hunt on 3 bells. It was a very busy and exhausting day, and we were told that we had had over 240 visitors so a lot of good PR for bellringing. Several people were surprised that the bells were not automatically rung! James later overheard someone saying that the "ringing demonstration was cool"!

COMING UP NEXT!

The next **moving on practice** will be on **September 6th at Bluntisham**. This practice is aimed at those who haven't rung on 8 bells much, come and have a go at plain hunt triples or major, plain bob triples or major. Experienced ringers are needed too to support this please.

The third Saturday in **September** (20th) will be a practice at **Hamerton** from 3pm. Our Ringing Masters welcome all to ring on the 6 bells at Hamerton, from rounds upwards, all are very welcome. Newish to ringing? Come and say hello, we are a very friendly bunch!

Our fourth **training day** this year will be on **Saturday 4th October at Kimbolton**, between 10:00 and 12noon. It will follow the same pattern as the ones held previously this year. Learning Plain Hunt or Plain Bob Doubles.

Come and join us for some extra practice and hints and tips. Helpers needed too please.

Caroline will send a link for you to sign up nearer the time.

Performance Ringing during August

First out of the blocks this month was a band who rang a quarter peal of Cambridge S Minor at **Buckden** on the 1st. The previous recorded quarter there was on the 12th May 2023. Some of the same ringers were at **Hilton** on the 8th when a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles was rung for the wedding of Susan Meacock and John Montemayor. The bride is the sister of Caroline Burstall, ringer of the 6th and the aunt of Eleanor Burstall, who rang the 2nd. This was Eleanor's first quarter of doubles inside.

The 80th anniversary of VJ Day was marked in several towers including **Stanground** on the 14th and on the 15th at **Woodston, St Ives, Moleseworth, Little Paxton, Catworth, Alconbury and Great Gransden**.

Cathy Moulton reports that on Friday 15th August, VJ day, nine ringers rang before and after the morning act of remembrance at **Ramsey** town war memorial. Later that day, seven pitched up to welcome residents to an evening of community singing and the lighting of the beacon. They said with a chuckle that they usually summon the faithful to worship, but this was good bringing the community together and with our church choir and Rector leading.



St Neots bells were rung at 6.30pm on Friday 15th August 2025 as part of the national ringing commemorating the 80th anniversary of VJ Day. One of our former ringers - William Arthur Reginald (Joe) Chamberlain was interned in a Japanese POW camp. He never spoke about his experiences but his mantra for the rest of his life was "Believe me, life is sweet". After ringing, the usual Friday practice was cancelled and several of us spent the rest of the evening cleaning the tower, one team in the bell chamber and

the other in the ringing room. The photo of those taking part in the ringing was taken before cleaning so any cobwebs in view are no longer there.

The next quarter peal was on the 18th at **Little Paxton** where doubles in 3 method was rung for Josh Crutch to practice his ropesight from the tenor. This was Phillip Georges 850th as conductor.

Photo: Lt. Paxton 18th. L-R: Elinor Cole, Sheila George, Charlotte Gamble, James Gamble, Phillip George, Josh Crutch



A ringing occasion worthy of note was at **Alconbury** on Sunday 10th August. Mark George, Tower Captain, reports that "This was the first time the bells have been rung for church service since the 1960's. The bells have been refurbished and re-hung in a new frame installed at the end of 2023. A new band of novice bell ringers started learning in 2024, so it's a great achievement to resume service ringing in 2025."

The monthly **Godmanchester** quarter peal was rung on Sunday 24th being 1344 changes of Superlative S Major.

On Monday the 25th a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles was rung at **Great Gransden**. This was Hazel Pettit's first quarter inside and in achieving this Hazel achieved her Level 4 certificate in the Learning the Ropes scheme. Well done, Hazel!

Photo: Gt Gransden 25th. L-R: Elinor Cole, Becca Glazier, Hazel Pettit, Phillip George, Tom Ridgman, Sheila George



Performance Ringing during August - *continued*

On Friday the 29th a date touch of 1965 changes was rung at **Holywell** as a belated 60th birthday compliment to Jez Bottley. The ringing included an extent of spliced Surprise minor in four methods,



Cambridge, Beverley, Surfleet; an extent of Norwich (to give 1440 changes), plus 420 Plain Bob Minor, and a 105 of Plain Bob Doubles – Compton variation.

The Compton variation is Plain Bob Doubles using a Plain Bob, bob, and a Grandsire single (info from Variations Library).

Happy birthday Jez!

And the last one for August was on Sunday 31st at **Hemingford Grey** when Mel Farnham achieved her first in 5 doubles methods in a quarter rung for Evensong. Well done, Mel!

Training Morning at Alconbury – PG

What was on the schedule for today? A very enjoyable training session focusing on Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Doubles! Venue - the nice little 11cwt six at Alconbury where over twenty ringers attended, both learners and helpers.

Most of the ringing was in these methods and there was plenty of help from more experienced ringers to stand behind and discuss theory (and write out plain courses on squared paper). The Alconbury ringers are a fairly new and very enthusiastic band. Some were able to ring tenor behind to doubles whilst others were offered call changes. They also provided tea/coffee and biscuits throughout the morning.

Many thanks to Alconbury for your warm welcome this morning, and to Ed Groome (District Training Officer) for organising the event and brilliantly co-ordinating the ringing.

The next training event will be in October at Kimbolton.





Continued from page 1.

Here is the CCCBR ‘wish-list’, which requires an enormous effort by all of us if it is to be achieved.

We want to work in collaboration with ringing organisations to put in place a growth pipeline, creating a steady and sustainable recruitment stream:

- 10000 more active ringers by 2030 (new or returned)
- Half of them under the age of 30
- 30000 people under the age of 20 have heard about or had a go a bellringing.
- A retention rate of 50% of new recruits
- Double the number of teachers and trainers of ringing.

Key challenge:

Our key challenge is demographic. In the ringing survey of 1988, the number of ringers was estimated at 41000 ringers. We now think that there are 25% fewer ringers and the biggest loss is in the recruitment of younger ringers.

Age	Percentage in 1988	Est percentage now	Est numbers now	Numbers in 25 years
Under 40	49%	15%	4500	4500*
40 - 60	38%	25%	7500	4500
Over 60	13%	60%	18000	7500

*Assumes same rate of recruitment

Notes: The under-40s turn into the 40-60 in 25 years’ time. The over 60s are the 40-60 of 25 years ago.

Other Challenges

Church Buildings: The financial pressure of maintaining church buildings and falling congregations pose a threat to the easy access ringers are accustomed to having. *Many churches cannot afford to maintain their bells or commission new installations or augmentations.*

Funding Issues: Large amounts of money are locked in Bell Restoration Funds while other aspects of ringing operate on minimal budgets. *Our own association bell fund is not being called upon for many restoration projects. Could some funding be released for other purposes?*

Skill Shortages: To be able to teach all the ringers we need, we need about 10 times more teachers than we have. *There are very few teachers. We must develop this locally, not necessarily through A.R.T.*

Skill shortages also include steeple-keeping and tower management, ringing masters and conductors

Recruitment Challenges: Traditional recruitment via church congregations and choirs is no longer viable as the only route. We need to explore new ways to promote bellringing. *A lot of work is done by some towers to promote ringing but we should find a way of encouraging everyone, at least every tower, to engage actively with their local communities and develop good marketing strategies.*

The business plan can be read by following this link. <https://cccb.org.uk/ringing-2030-business-plan/>

Ringling 2030 Business Plan *continued*

The Central Council has set their objectives but without action at local level these will never be achieved. Most ringers don't have any engagement with the Central Council and might ask why they should be interested. But, without some thought for the future, ringing will continue to decline.

What can we do in our towers? Improve our marketing, PR, development of the band and teamwork, teaching and training, delegating responsibilities? At individual levels, developing good bell control and striking, ringing quarter peals, learning how to conduct?

Questions which are relevant to everyone

How important is ringing to me?

Do I consider it to be under threat?

What will my legacy be to ringing?

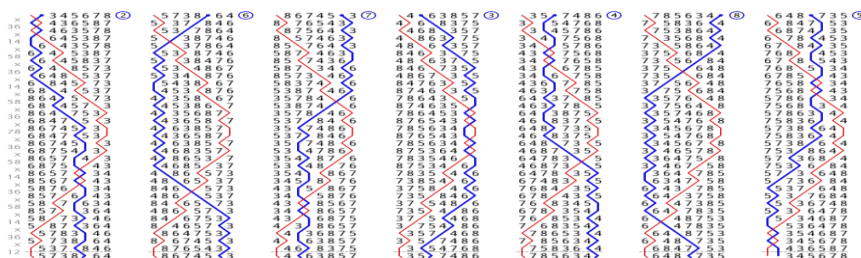
The following questions might apply to you depending on your interests in ringing. Broadly speaking, some of us are only Sunday service ringers, others attend district events, and others arrange or ring in quarter peals. Some are Leaders, others are content to simply be part of the team. The following isn't a definitive list and some of the questions might raise further questions. It's just a start point to set us all thinking about the future.

In the last 12 months

- Has your tower changed very much? E.g. number of local ringers, number of regular visitors.
- Have you been able to develop your own personal ringing skills? How have you achieved this?
- Have you taught anyone to ring?
- Have you been given the opportunity to conduct? e.g. including call changes, or simply 'go and that's all' to plain courses?
- Has your tower regularly engaged with the local community or school?
- Have you been encouraged to share the responsibility of running your tower?
- Have you rung a quarter peal?
- Have your local ringers talked about sustaining the band for the future?
- Have you recruited a new ringer this year?
- Do you support other towers?
- Do you attend district events?
- Do you know if your parish church is at risk of change of status?
- How sustainable is the tower(s) where you currently ring?
 - *The age and experience of ringers? The relationship with the church?*
- Have you wondered what will ringing be like in 5 years time?

The future wellbeing of ringing is your responsibility, my responsibility, our responsibility – not someone else's! Have you thought about developing a plan for your tower? Whatever the Central Council does, even if they roll out their initiative to associations, it will still be grass-roots ringers who keep ringing alive and hopefully thriving! We must own the problem!

Superlative Surprise Major
Rung on the 24th August at
Godmanchester



THE BACK PAGE

Central Council Weekend

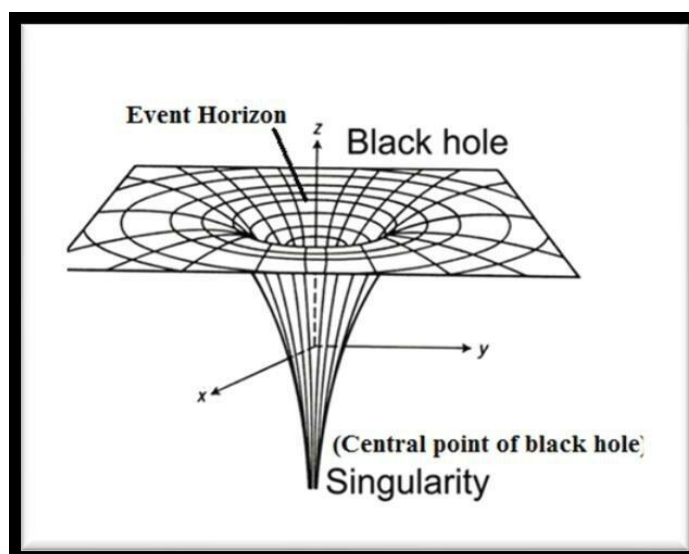
The Central Council Weekend is from Friday 5th to Sunday the 7th September. Details can be found here:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/CCCBR-AGM-Sheffield-Programme-v1sml.pdf>

The Back Page is more or less empty due to lack of material.

Thank you to those who have submitted details to the Facebook page, which I have copied for the newsletter, or those who have emailed articles to me.

This is a diagram of a black hole. I think this is where the sound of our ringing goes, once rung never to be heard again!



We take for granted the sound of our bells. Perhaps we should record them for posterity. This is easy to do nowadays with digital recorders and mobile devices. It's also quite easy to make short videos which could include practice nights, quarter peals, striking competitions or outings. Then upload them to YouTube and share them with everyone, including the general public which is now our main source of new ringers!

Example: Holywell bells. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVbb3SRxgyc>

Photographs will be published only where the Editor is satisfied that consent has been obtained from someone who has legal responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult.

Contact information for the District Committee

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