

MASTER'S REPORT

I was honoured to be elected Master at the AGM in May and thank you all for your support.

Firstly, thank you to Noel Gibbin for his excellent stewardship over the last four years, especially as we have gone through such challenging times for our towers with the pandemic. Noel oversaw the introduction of Member Mojo, kept people interested with the on-line Ringing Room programme, and launched the Ringing Recovery group to help ringers and towers.

Bellringing is a skill gained over many years and it is imperative that our experienced ringers help our learners and pass on those skills now or they will be lost forever. Success stories and good ideas should be shared too. Jackie is doing an excellent job with the Newsletter. We also have an excellent website and Facebook page and Member Mojo system and some towers have their own Instagram pages – please do use all these resources to see what is happening and to share your stories.

We rang with joy for the Platinum Jubilee and we rang with sadness for the death of the Queen in September. The Ring for the King programme is a great way of getting new recruits for your tower and we are already seeing new learners coming through. The Association also hosted SEECON, a competition for young ringers, on 1 April 2023.

At Kingston we have a number of new learners and we are teaching them using our ART techniques. ART is an excellent teaching method as many of you will know, but all experienced and competent teachers are worth their weight in gold when we have a lot of new learners to teach. Intensive one to one sessions 'accelerated learning' certainly speed up the process and keep the learner interested and making progress.

The Training Group have finalised the full training programme for 2023 and the training events are designed to help ringers progress to the next step of ringing, e.g. call changes to Plain Hunt, Plain Hunt to Plain Bob and so on.

Surrey entered a team in the London 12 bell competition held on the challenging bells of St Paul's Cathedral, with its 62cwt tenor and 70 foot rope draft. We had a couple of practices and with our limited squad the team rang as well as could be expected on the day. We are not used to ringing on such heavy bells so we can be proud of our performance.

We are sorry to hear that Michael Chilcott passed away recently with his son Mark by his side. He was 88 years old and had been a ringer at Beddington and St Paul's Cathedral for many years. Mike and Kath had been members of the Association for over 60 years.

Eric Godfrey....

Eric Godfrey died on 18th December. He was a Surrey stalwart having held the positions of ND Master, Secretary, General Master and President. He was tower captain for many years at Addington which had one of the best six bell bands in the country at the time. Eric also held the important positions of Secretary of the Central Council and Treasurer of the Millennium Fund. We pass our condolences on to Margaret his widow and their two daughters Alison and Judith.

Bob Cooles has stood down as President. Bob is also standing down as DAC Bells Advisor and we thank him very much for his work with the Association. I'd also like to thank all the General and District Committee members for their contribution over the last few years and in particular Pam and Paul for managing their districts so well. We warmly welcome all new committee members to their posts. Your contribution is vital to the smooth running of the Association.

Many of you will have had tower AGMs as well and we do appreciate and thank all of you who hold tower posts such as ringing master, secretary, treasurer and steeple keeper. Running a tower is a big commitment and without you, many towers would not be ringing at all. If you have people with talents in your band then make sure to use them!

I look forward to continuing as your Master for the year ahead and hearing of the success stories from Ring for the King as well as the progress for our many new recruits. We will prioritise training for the new recruits to ensure they become valuable members of their local bands.

GENERAL SECRETARY AND TREASURER REPORT

Ringling recovery continued slowly from early 2022, then with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the quarter peal month and our regular practices across the districts many towers and ringers returned. Resulting in a great recovery.

District meetings and events also had a welcomed return to face-to-face gatherings. The annual quiz was again held at Banstead with a fish and chips supper served during the evening and Sarah Isard from Merstham as our quiz master. There were fewer teams, just 8 and 64 attendees but an overall great success. Redhill, team name "We've got no creativity" retained the trophy.

Similarly the AGM resumed to "in person" with a mini tower tour (Caterham - St John, Merstham, Bletchingley) followed by a short service, delicious tea and meeting at St Mary's Bletchingley. 41 members attended. During the meeting Noel was presented with a gift as outgoing General Master and he welcomed and handed over to Paul as the incoming Master. Alongside the usual Officer reports and agenda items an update was given on the Membership Development initiative by Martin Crick, this focused on the Membership system Membermojo which now includes online payment of membership fees and a platform for communication with members.

Association members increased slightly in 2022 with a total 583 member records in Membermojo as at the end of the year. We welcomed 43 new members including 5 young ringers and 5 non-residents. Honorary Life memberships were awarded to Sheila Davison, Noel Gibbin, Susan Gibbin, Ian Griffiths, Francis Ring-Davies, Chris Stanley and Gill Tomlinson. Also of worthy note is that Kathleen Chilcott has a 70 year distinguished membership in 2023.

The Bank balances remain healthy with a total of over £38,000. Expenditure in 2022 totalled just over £4,000 with the major spend being the platinum jubilee commemorative badges. There was further spend on the tower inspection grants with benefit to 2 towers. £239 was spent on recruitment banner grants, another scheme from the ringling recovery group. In addition £186 was paid as a tower grant towards the simulator setup for Ockley tower. With income from membership fees and donations the year ended with a decrease of just under £3,000 in total funds.

There were eight Association peals rung in 2022, a very pleasing increase of six over the previous year. The peals included first peals for 4 ringers. In December a peal was rung at Addington in memory of Eric Godfrey. Eric was a former tower captain at Addington and the Association president from 1996 to 2014 as well as General Master 1978 to 1980, he also took a term as General Secretary from 1987 to 1993. The peal was also significant as the band members included three former and current Association ringling masters and an Addington band first pealer. More details and a photographs of the peals are included later in the report. Congratulations to all the peal bands.

Over the year an impressive number of 193 quarter peals were rung across 57 towers. Many of these were rung during the quarter peal month and included a great number of firsts. We should aim to beat this in 2023 and include those towers where a quarter peal was not achieved.

During the year we learned with sadness of the death of the following members:- Michael Chilcott a non-resident Life member, Jenny Clarke a Life member from Newdigate, Eric Godfrey a non-resident Life member, John Munton, Life member from Epsom Common, Tim Pryke from Ockley.

With the Ring for the King initiative which launched towards the end of the year, we have already recruited new members and gained returning ringers; we hope to continue this throughout 2023.

Ann Beirne

NORTHERN DISTRICT REPORT

District ringing got off to a slow start in 2022 when the January Saturday practice had to be cancelled because of concerns about the omicron Covid variant. Our first Saturday practice was held in February at Putney, and after that we held an event on the 3rd Saturday of every month except September, when the planned practice at Beddington was cancelled following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Saturday practices have all been well attended and the nine practices for which records were kept were attended by ringers from a total of 27 different towers. We joined the Middlesex County Association for a very enjoyable outing in the Docklands area in March and held a successful 12 bell practice at Kingston in August.

The monthly all-comers 12 bell practices at Croydon and the monthly surprise major practices have taken place regularly during the year and I would like to thank Shirley McGill and Paul Flavell for arranging and running these.

A new initiative this year was the monthly 8's Great! practice at Merton. This is a practice for competent six-bell ringers who want to progress to ringing triples. During the year ringers from 8 different towers have come to practise plain hunt on 7 or Grandsire triples. People who came to these practices had a range of previous experience, from no experience at all on 8, through already being able to ring plain hunt on 7, to people who could already ring the treble to triples or a plain course of Grandsire triples inside. I am pleased to report that everyone who has been able to come regularly has made appreciable progress, and two participants mastered touches of Grandsire triples during the year and been promoted to "helper" status. This means that we now have space for one or two new participants so if anyone is interested in coming please do get in contact with me. I would particularly like to thank all the helpers for making these practices possible.

The established regular District practices will be continuing in 2023 and I am planning to hold some additional one-off practices focussing on particular methods. All practices are advertised on the Association events calendar, so please do check the website for details. Ann Beirne, our Association Secretary, compiles a list of the practices and events arranged by both Districts, the Association and the Training Group in the form of an A4 poster, which she sends to all tower contacts, so if you have difficulty accessing the website please do look out for this poster in your tower and speak to your tower contact and find out what's going on.

I've always enjoyed visiting other towers, and being the District Master has given me an excellent excuse for gate-crashing other people's practices! During 2022 I have visited practices at 14 towers in the Northern District and had a wonderful welcome and a very good time at all to them. On these visits I've seen for myself how depleted many of our bands are following the anti-covid restrictions. I've also seen that many bands are currently teaching learners or have novice ringers making progress with call changes and plain hunt, so I'm confident that we will work through this difficult period and build up our numbers again. I've also seen that many towers are blessed with regular visitors who are a great support to the practices. Please, please do visit your neighbouring towers. You don't need to be an advanced method ringer to be a big help – there are towers out there who are unable to ring call changes on 6 without outside support and currently more than half the 33 towers in the Northern District cannot ring bob doubles without visitors. Even if you only visit occasionally your contribution will be appreciated.

I hope that the Northern District can help local bands by providing opportunities for ringers from different towers to come together and ring things which at present they can't ring in their own towers. The "Ring for the King" recruitment drive has now been launched and if this is successful our towers will gain new ringers – and for the next year or so we will all be ringing lots of rounds and call changes! One of my aims as your District Master is to provide more advanced ringing at District level for existing ringers, so that they can sustain their interest in ringing even if their own local practice currently can't offer them many development opportunities.

We've had a good year in 2022, coming more or less from a standing start. I'd like to thank the District committee members and Paul Flavell, our Association Master, for their support, and I'd particularly like to thank all members of the Northern District, the Southern District and neighbouring associations who have come to our events this year. I hope you've all enjoyed yourselves as much as I have.

Pam Donovan

SOUTHERN DISTRICT REPORT

2022 will be remembered as the 'Recovery from Covid' year. I know that quite a few towers were effected not only by Covid but, like Dorking, their bands shrank in size and years of not being able to ring meant that their ability to ring methods also deteriorated.

The committee wanted to be able to help bands recruit and teach more ringers. We negotiated that a tower could claim money from us to buy a banner which could be used to attract new people to the tower, some of which might want to ring. We are also putting on a Learners practices at Bletchingley on a regular basis, every month, trained, experienced teachers give up their morning to help accelerate the beginners by working on their handling techniques.

We have continued to hold practices on the fourth Saturday of the month although the number of attendees is lower than the pre-Covid numbers. I always feel that these Practices allow us to chat to other ringers and provide a social time as well. I would like to thank Matt for organising the Christmas outing– I felt that it provided a confirmation that things were turning back to normal.

I would like to thank Noel for running a Surprise Practice on the 2nd Saturday of the month. Again, the number of attendees is lower than Pre- Covid.

We have tried to encourage ringers to visit and help other towers and will continue this, this year. Paul Flavell has encouraged me to start an open 10 bell practice; there is now a regular 10 bell open practice in the second week of the month – its aim is to get ringers more used to ringing 10 bells and allow those who can to help others.

Unfortunately, the year will be remembered as the year the Queen passed away and I know that most bands were able to commemorate this by ringing in her memory and I know that we are trying hard to train new ringers to ring for our King in May.

I would like to finish this report by saying that I have been pleased by the recovery and the help that the Southern District have been able to give and look forward to some more this year.

Paul Beeken

BELFRY REPAIR FUND

At the end of the first full year since the lock-down, the fund stands fractionally above its level at the close of 2020, at £21.5k. Receipts have been slightly higher than in the previous two years, but are not back to the preceding levels. Meanwhile, although one possible grant application has been discussed extensively and two others have been mooted, there have been no disbursements.

Clothing purchases were ordered on behalf of ten ringers this year, up from five in 2021 thanks to Kate Wills. Cash collections at meetings rebounded after inevitably low levels in the previous two years. Numbers Club membership grew slightly further and contributed 46% of all BRF receipts; apologies to the handful of good-hearted players who were accidentally bounced into doubling their subscriptions! A doughty team of ringers manned a car-park for Brockham Bonfire, as in pre-lockdown days, earning a very useful contribution to the fund, despite complications arising from the preceding deluges of rain. The Association Quiz again made a very welcome contribution.

The committee, comprising Malcolm McAlister, Gail Terry, Russell King, Kate Wills, Noel Gibbin, Sid Bensberg and Paul Flavell, have been active in discussions of projects and awards as well as in the running of the Numbers Club and the compilation of clothing orders.

Donations were received during the year from the towers of St John's, Caterham and All Saints, Kingston; and the PCCs of Beddington, Oxted and St John's, Egham. Mention should also be made of our donors with regular standing orders, who have long been the bed-rock of the fund.

Malcolm McAlister

TRAINING GROUP REPORT

As with the two previous years, 2022 started with Covid lockdown with very little ringing being done. The Training Programme continued the theme of the previous year of “Helping Others to Ring” and “Return to Ringing” and events were run with Covid limitations in place such as using well-ventilated towers and limiting the number of attendees. Two ART teaching courses were run, a Module 1 (Bell Handling) at Barnes and Module 2 F to C (Foundation to Change Ringing) Upgrade at Oxted, the first time ART had run this particular course.

Several events were oversubscribed and a subsequent follow up was arranged to accommodate those unable to attend the earlier session. As the year progressed a sense of normality returned and more events were organised. As it turned out a virtually full programme of monthly training courses were provided.

Training events run in 2022 were:-

- 5 February: Plain Hunt/Plain Bob Doubles. Thames Ditton.
- 5 March: Up and Down in peal. Caterham St John's.
- 2 April: ART M1 course. Barnes.
- 7 May: Plain Hunt on 7. Benhilton.
- 2 July: Up and Down in peal. Caterham St John's.
- 6 August: ART M2C to M2F. Oxted.
- 10 September: Calling call changes. Cheam.
- 1 October: Calling Bob Doubles. Merstham.
- 5 November: Calling Call changes. Reigate.
- 3 December: Cambridge Surprise Minor. Thames Ditton.

All events were well attended and appreciated by those attending. Reports of many events were published in the Association Newsletters.

The Training Group had several meetings on Zoom throughout the year. The programme for 2023 has been prepared and published on the Association website ([Surrey Association Training \(surreybellringers.org.uk\)](https://surreybellringers.org.uk)) where Members can book to attend a course. This programme includes several more advanced events in an attempt to move the level of training forward and includes events not previously run. The programme includes links to several external Residential Courses which may be of interest to Members.

Both the Northern and Southern Districts run regular practice sessions, some of which **are linked to the Training Courses program to ensure there are follow up practices**. It is noted that Members, after attending a training course need to practice the skills learnt and attending a practice session is recommended. Members are also reminded that several Association Towers now have ringing simulators and additional practice can be obtained using these.

Jan Griffiths

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER REPORT

I was elected as Communications Officer at the AGM in May 2022 but continue to work with Chris Baldwin who maintains the Association website and Alan Cooke who looks after our social media accounts. The website is an extremely valuable and well used resource not only for local ringers but also visitors looking for opportunities to ring in Surrey.

The home page has three side by side spaces in the main body which we rotate and keep fresh with the most important links. In 2022, the ringing recovery section was withdrawn and since October, the central space on the home page has displayed the Ring for The King logo with focus on recruitment.

Following the death of the Queen, we paid tribute to her majesty during the period of mourning with a plain background, black and white logo and black highlight as well as a photo on our home page.

As part of his handover as Communications officer, Chris produced some new versions of the Surrey Association logos. We now have some slightly higher resolution images and vector graphic versions in both black and white and colour: <https://www.surreybellringers.org.uk/about-us/rules-and-policies/logo/> These should only be used according to the Terms of Use on that page.

Alan Cooke a.k.a. the Facebook guy took over the Twitter account from Chris and is doing a great job looking after our social media accounts and promoting their use. 50 followers were added to the Facebook page in 2022 making a total of 426 and 351 have liked the page. The Reach (the number of people who saw any content from or about the association page) in 2022 was 9,324.

I was granted admin rights on Facebook and Caroline Prescott editor rights so that she can post news about the Surrey Young Ringers.

Thanks to Ann Beirne who introduced a new events poster for display in Towers to further publicise practice and training opportunities.

4 editions of the newsletter were published and posted on the website: [Newsletter - The Surrey Association of church bell ringers \(surreybellringers.org.uk\)](#) where back copies can also be found.

Alan and I are always looking for more news so if you have any stories, photos, or information to share please do send them to us. And if you have an idea for the website or want to comment on any of our communications, please do email me: communications@surreybellringers.org.uk

Jackie Harrison

YOUNG RINGERS REPORT

Surrey Strikers (AKA Surrey Young Ringers)

The Surrey Young Ringers group has been running for a few years now. It is a group where the focus is gathering together the young ringers of the Surrey Association into a ringing social group, as opposed to a group that teaches young people to handle bells.

We try to meet once a month. The date is not set and varies between a Saturday and a Sunday to enable those young people working or taking part in sport on a Saturday to come along. Announcements via Member Mojo and the Association website show when events are taking place. We also open the events to young ringers in neighbouring counties, and often attract ringers from Middlesex and Guildford.

The beginning of 2022 saw us going to practices at Barnes and Addington organised by members of the group. These are well attended and enable all the ringers to consolidate things being learnt in their home tower, as well as often trying something new.

Outings are always popular! The Berks and Bucks Young Ringers are our outing companions. We meet on the first Saturday of the February and Autumn half term. February 2022 saw us visit Kensington, Chelsea and Rochester Row. St Barnabas Pimlico was a top 10 favourite for many. In November we headed to North London visiting Holloway, Islington, Dalston and South Hackney.

Striking competitions also give a focus to the group. We were unable to enter the SEECON competition in April due to exam commitments by many of the regular group. A team were able to attend the National Youth contest in Exeter in July. I however had to be left behind due to Covid, thanks to Jason Hughes who picked up the mantle for the day!

We are always looking to boost our numbers with young ringers from across the Association so do contact me to find out what we are planning so that you can get involved.

Caroline Prescott