



## Editor's Foreword – *Andy Clark*

Hi everyone and welcome to our first newsletter of 2025. As Mike explains below, ringing for many has been somewhat overshadowed by the loss of Liz Coke, tower captain at Cheltenham Minster. We will be publishing Liz's obituary in the next newsletter, along with a selection of the ringing that has taken place in her memory.

For this newsletter, I've reintroduced a summary table of what's coming next but changed the approach slightly to focus on the bigger events for the remainder of the year, rather than the specifics of the upcoming quarter. In addition to what's in this table, Cara is continuing to organise lots of training events, targeting ringing of all abilities, so please refer to the Branch Website for more details of those. Note there are also some further dates in the notices section (last page of this newsletter) for upcoming events and ringing that aren't specific to the Cheltenham Branch.

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> May	Cheltenham Minster	19:30-21:00	Minster 10 & 12 Bell Practice. Thereafter, scheduled to be every first Thursday of the month
Saturday 17 <sup>th</sup> May	Winchcombe	TBC	Subject to numbers, this will be a 'Pot Luck' striking competition
Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> September	Leckhampton	TBC	Branch Striking Competition for the Banner and Cleeve Trophies
Saturday 29 <sup>th</sup> November	Bishops Cleeve	15:00 onwards	Branch ringing, short service and AGM, followed by a ringers' tea

Finally, a quick reminder of my standard request – while Barbara won't email for contributions for the Q2 newsletter until early July, I'll happily take any contributions well ahead of that, so don't feel you have to wait for the prompt.

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## Branch Chairman's Welcome – *Mike Hartley*

It's been a busy first quarter of 2025. Sadly, much good ringing has been overshadowed by the sudden, tragic death of Liz Coke, the Cheltenham Minster tower captain. Liz will be missed terribly, especially by the Cheltenham Minster and St Mark's bands. In the next edition of the newsletter, you will be able to read about her ringing career and her significant contribution to the exercise.

### Training

So far this year there have been six Cheltenham Branch training sessions, mostly focusing on Plain Hunt and Bob Doubles. From the feedback I've received these have been a great success, both for trainees and helpers.

I attended a training morning at Winchcombe, and it was great to see the enthusiasm and progress made by the learners. As a helper, I found it really enjoyable.

I would encourage those of you haven't managed to attend one of these events, to try to find time to attend at least one during the year. In addition to the Branch events, an Association Training Day has been held.



A big thank-you to all of you across the Cheltenham Branch, who have dedicated time to training at your local towers, Branch or Association events.

### **Colesbourne Snowdrop Festival**

There was a good turnout of Cheltenham Branch ringers at our annual visit to the Colesbourne festival. No floods or gales put a stop to proceedings this year. We had some good ringing on the charming ring of five, followed by an opportunity to visit the gardens. On a personal note, I must thank the Coates family (Leckhampton) for pushing my car out of the mud!

### **Branch Ringing Master**

I feel I should mention again that the Ringing Master post remains vacant. Do please contact me if you would like to find out more about what the post involves. Working as part of the Branch officers' team, it's not as onerous as you might imagine and could be really rewarding.

In the meantime, some of the tasks usually carried out by the Ringing Master are being delegated. In this connection, I'm very grateful to Stuart Tomlinson for taking on the co-ordination of this year's Banner Trophy striking competition, which will be held at Leckhampton on 20<sup>th</sup> September. Following the competition there will be a bring-and-share supper in the Leckhampton cottages.

### **Ringing Achievements**

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, there have been some significant ringing achievements by branch members during the first three months of 2025, including a first quarter peal, a peal to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of first peal on 12 bells and participation in the national 12-bell competition in Liverpool.

In addition, St Mark's and the Cheltenham Branch entered teams to the G&B Croome and Penn striking competitions held at Churchdown and Barnwood, and came third out of eight and fourth out of six respectively.

Well done to all for your personal ringing achievements, not least those not mentioned above.

### **Looking Ahead**

The Cheltenham Branch website lists ringing events during 2025. These include further training sessions, a 'Pot Luck' striking competition (subject to numbers) and the above-mentioned branch striking competition in September.

In addition, Cath Jack is looking to reinvigorate the monthly 'beyond 8 bells' monthly practice at the Minster to encourage branch members to have a go at ringing on 10 and 12 bells. Do not be daunted; all levels of ringing ability and ambition will be catered for.

Branch committee officers have undertaken to visit all towers with practices at least twice during the year to capture needs. So far we've visited Dumbleton / Alderton and Badgeworth. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. As a result of our visit to Dumbleton / Alderton an additional training session has been arranged, along with two quarter peals to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day on 8<sup>th</sup> May. I hope it will be possible for other branch towers to ring out on or near this date. I'm sure help will be available if it's needed.

Best wishes, Mike



## Celebrating a Milestone Peal – *Simon Ridley*

On 19<sup>th</sup> January 1725, 12 ringers met at St Brides, Fleet Street, London, to attempt the first ever peal on 12 bells. They were successful and the event is recorded in the Ancient Society of College Youths' peal book. Note this was prior to the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar (1752).

The bells at St Brides had been cast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester in 1710 as a 28cwt ring of 10. In 1717, the first ever peal on 10 bells was recorded in the tower. In 1719 they were augmented by the same founder to create the first ever ring of 12 bells hung for change ringing. Two of the bells were recast, but otherwise the ring remained original until they were destroyed in the Second World War. The tower remains empty to this day, apart from a single bell cast by Taylors in 1956.

2025 saw the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this first peal on 12 and so it seemed appropriate that a peal be arranged on the bells at Cheltenham Minster, alongside many other attempts over the same weekend around the country. Reg Hitchings arranged the peal, which was completed by a mostly local band. Rather than ringing the original composition, which was built for ease of calling and ringing (not music), a modern composition of 5300 changes was selected by Jeremy Alford, which made the best of a historic method. The peal was completed in 3h 30 minutes. The original performance is shown in the left panel, with the recent performance in Cheltenham in the right panel.

<p><b>St Bridgets</b> <i>Alias St Brides in London.</i></p> <p><i>The Company rung on Tuesday January 19. 1724. a complete peal of 5060 Grandfire Cinques. being the first that was done</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr><td><i>Mr William Woodrove</i></td><td><i>Treble</i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Benjamin Annable</i></td><td><i>2<sup>d</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Edmund Chadwell</i></td><td><i>3<sup>d</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr John Ward</i></td><td><i>4<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr John Pearson</i></td><td><i>5<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Robert Catlin</i></td><td><i>6<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Richard Castelman</i></td><td><i>7<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr William Thompson</i></td><td><i>8<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr William Jackson</i></td><td><i>9<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Peter Merrygarts</i></td><td><i>10<sup>th</sup></i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Matthew Egge</i></td><td><i>11<sup>th</sup> Call'd Bobs</i></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td><i>Mr Thomas Roman</i></td><td><i>Tenor</i></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p><i>These are the Bob Changes of the peal and were Composed by Mr William Jackson</i></p> <p><i>The ten biggest Bolls were made in the year 1710 and the two trebles in the year 1719 by Mr Abraham Rudhall Sen: of the City of Gloucester</i></p> <p><i>The two trebles were given to the Bolls by the two Societys of ringers College Youths &amp; London Scholars</i></p>	<i>Mr William Woodrove</i>	<i>Treble</i>		<i>Mr Benjamin Annable</i>	<i>2<sup>d</sup></i>		<i>Mr Edmund Chadwell</i>	<i>3<sup>d</sup></i>		<i>Mr John Ward</i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr John Pearson</i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr Robert Catlin</i>	<i>6<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr Richard Castelman</i>	<i>7<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr William Thompson</i>	<i>8<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr William Jackson</i>	<i>9<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr Peter Merrygarts</i>	<i>10<sup>th</sup></i>		<i>Mr Matthew Egge</i>	<i>11<sup>th</sup> Call'd Bobs</i>		<i>Mr Thomas Roman</i>	<i>Tenor</i>		<p><b>Cheltenham, Gloucestershire</b> Minster Church of St Mary Saturday, 18 January 2025 in 3h 30 (21–2–1 in Eb) 5300 Grandsire Cinques Composed by J D Alford</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Elizabeth A Coke</li> <li>2 Henry J Stephenson</li> <li>3 Paul J Wells</li> <li>4 Gregory J M Jones</li> <li>5 Hilda C Ridley</li> <li>6 Reg C Hitchings</li> <li>7 Stuart E Tomlinson</li> <li>8 Michael P Hartley</li> <li>9 Jeremy D Alford (C)</li> <li>10 Michael J Seagrave</li> <li>11 Simon J Ridley</li> <li>12 Malcolm P Taylor</li> </ol> <p>1st on 12: 4</p> <p>Rung to mark the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first peal on 12 which was Grandsire Cinques at St Brides, London.</p>
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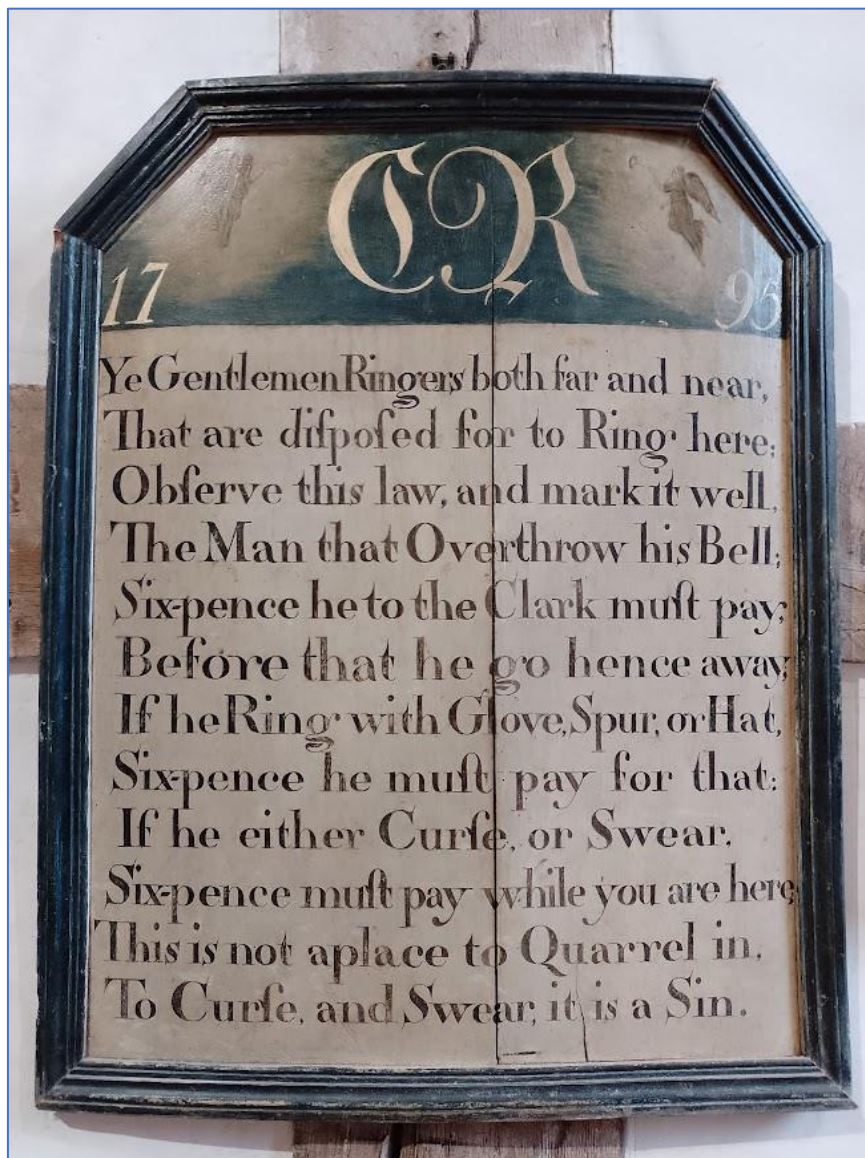


### A Fine at Cradley? *Stuart Tomlinson*

On a recent quarter peal day, we rang at Cradley (a pleasant ring of eight on the north-west side of the Malverns). On the wall in the ringing area was the following set of rules from 1795. You quite often see similar boards but I thought this one was a particularly good example.

It got me thinking about the six-pence fine and wondering how much that would be worth today. After a bit of internet searching, it appears that 6 old pence (i.e. half a shilling) equates to roughly £3.82 today.

A typical weekly wage then was around 84 old pence (i.e. 7 shillings). So 6 pence was about half a day's wages – really quite a lot and I imagine it was a very effective deterrent!





## First Quarter Peal – Emma Skidmore

I've been learning for a little less than two years, over which time we have toured around many local towers to gain valuable extra practice time and experience. I was invited months in advance to a ringing practice at Churchdown. My parents still live at the bottom of Churchdown hill, and I've always been fond of the bells there having grown up listening to them.

A few days before, I noticed that the email invite was titled 'extended practice' which I thought was a little strange. Little did I know that it would be my first attempt at ringing a quarter peal! We arrived at the church and it was a cold and dark February evening. None of the lights or heating would turn on – we were in the midst of a power cut! This didn't perturb the experienced team of ringers, who happily gathered candles and matches and rang the bells up in the glow of flickering candlelight. Just before we were due to begin, the lights came back on! I was very relieved.

The conductor explained to everyone that three methods would be rung, however this didn't mean much to me as a novice. I thought it sounded like a lot, but off we went! Everyone had a little smirk on their face as the treble pulled off. My nerves settled down and I got used to the feel of the bell, tenoring behind. I was grateful that this bell was lighter than my home tower's tenor and I enjoyed the rhythm of 6 bells compared to the 8 bells, which I'm more familiar with. My job was made much easier thanks to the accurate ringing by the other experienced ringers. Time went by, and it was after about 30 minutes that I realised that we must be trying for a quarter peal.

Eventually, after 45 minutes – we did it! My ringing personal best! I've always trusted my bell ringing teachers and the team of very experienced bellringing peers that have supported me from the beginning. On reflection, I'm grateful for the opportunity and not having had the chance to worry about it beforehand. Without this nudge, it's unlikely I'd have volunteered to try for a quarter peal. It's been a good confidence boost and has helped my bell handling. I'll be even more grateful when my hand blisters callus!

### Churchdown, Gloucestershire

St Bartholomew

Wednesday, 26 February 2025 in 45m (9–2–1)

1260 Mixed Doubles (3m)

480 Stedman, 420 Grandsire, 360 Plain Bob

- 1 Aidan T Derby
- 2 Hilda C Ridley
- 3 Andrew L Haynes
- 4 Stuart Tomlinson
- 5 Simon J Ridley (C)
- 6 Emma R Skidmore

First Quarter Peal - 6





## Cheltenham at the National 12-Bell Contest Eliminator in Liverpool – *Ian Bucknell*

We finally made it! Despite all the tribulations, and the tragic loss of Liz Coke, the Cheltenham band arrived on time on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March for the National 12-Bell Eliminator at Our Lady & St Nicholas, Pier Head, which is the Liverpool Parish Church.

The weather was fine and there was plenty of time to enjoy the breakfast refreshments laid on by the extremely friendly Liverpool locals; in fact, refreshments were available at the church throughout the event.

The day began with the welcoming ceremony and the draw for the order of ringing. At this point it was announced that the day's ringing would be dedicated to the memory of Liz, which was an extremely thoughtful gesture. Cheltenham were then drawn to ring first! Although never ideal in any striking contest, we were not unduly perturbed – less time for the nerves to build. As it turned out, the other benefit was that we could enjoy a nice, fresh ringing room because, after our 40-minute slot, the room was fairly muggy and the tail ends already moist and slippery!

Our practice ringing was not good, but we made the most of the time allotted to us and some well-chosen messages from Jeremy Alford and Simon Ridley meant that the test piece ringing was much-improved. We were happy with our performance and the adrenaline was still pumping when we had our team photographs downstairs. Simon submitted our test piece to BellBoard (see panel below) very soon after we finished and this was given with the footnote dedicating our ringing to Liz – she would have been proud of our achievement and she was in our thoughts all day.

### Liverpool

Our Lady and St Nicholas  
Saturday, 22 March 2025 in 15m (41–3–15)  
255 Stedman Cinques

1 Catherine J B Jack	7 Ian Bucknell
2 Paul Wells	8 Michael Hartley
3 Sandra Alford	9 Gregory Jones
4 Cara Capewell	10 Jeremy Alford (C)
5 Rachel Bagley	11 Simon J Ridley
6 Hilda Ridley	12 David P Bagley

The Cheltenham team 12 Bell Qualifiers test piece, dedicated to Liz Coke who was to have rung today.

The rest of the day was ours to enjoy although some of us could do nothing more without first having a good cup of tea. The shops, museums and attractions of Liverpool kept us entertained, with many enjoying a boat trip on the Mersey, before we all inevitably gathered in the churchyard to chat, drink some excellent beer and listen to some wonderful 12-bell ringing before it was time for the results. It came as no surprise that the heat was won by the SRCY (the Cumberlands) and Guildford pipped our friends from Worcester to 2<sup>nd</sup> place. The judges – Frederick Shallcross, Julian Howes and Kathryn Carter – placed Cheltenham sixth out of the seven bands which was about what we expected.

In conclusion, a 12-bell contest is really not that much different to a branch striking competition except that the standard of ringing is consistently higher and there is a strikeometer analysing your every blow



which certainly focuses the mind – there is no hiding. The atmosphere was so very friendly and it was great to have the opportunity to meet with old friends who were ringing or supporting the other teams. Is it worth the effort? Undoubtedly yes because, as with any striking competition, the practicing and the contest itself, forces you to think about your technique and accuracy, which improves your ringing back in the real world of weekly practicing and Sunday service ringing.



The Cheltenham Band – anticlockwise from bottom right

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### **An Update on Branch Finances – *Tony Foster (Cheltenham Branch Treasurer)***

First a thank you to my predecessor, Harry Stephenson, for his years as our Treasurer and his helpful handover notes.

Second a thank you to all towers and ringers for so promptly and accurately supplying this year's tower returns and your subscriptions to the G & B association. You may know that this year's sub for adults was increased from £15 to £20 but the amount sent to the association only changed from £13.50 to £16. That meant that the Branch was able to retain £4 this year compared to £1.50 last year. Our Branch Account now stands at a healthy £511. We have 112 adults and five juniors in the branch.



## Branch Notices – All

### Central Council Blog

Another reminder that there is a weekly blog, accessible via the Central Council website. It is free to subscribe and keeps everyone in touch with what the Central Council is working on behalf of all ringers.

### 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary VE Day Ringing (8<sup>th</sup> May)

We are asked to ring our church bells for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary VE Day, at 6.30pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May. The CCCBR website provides further details:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/2024/11/15/ring-out-in-celebration-ve-day-6-30pm-8th-may-2025/>

### Bell Sunday Ringing (18<sup>th</sup> May)

Bell Sunday is a national opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique contribution that bell ringers make to the life of the church and to the soundscape of our communities. In 2025, Bell Sunday will be marked on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, and bellringers across the country are invited to ring for the occasion. Again, please see the CCCBR website which provides further details:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/2025/04/09/bell-sunday-2025-ringing-out-the-message/>

### Module 1 ART Course (28<sup>th</sup> June)

Registration is now open for the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) Module 1 Teacher Training Course on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June, 9.30-5.00pm. This will be held in Moreton-in-Marsh.

If you are confident and competent at basic ringing, can ring up and down (but not necessarily in peal), then you could join this event. This is what the ART website says about the course:

*"Suitable for those who already teach bell handling and want to update their skills AND for those who have never taught anyone to handle a bell, Module 1 provides you with the skills and techniques necessary to take a ringer from their first lesson to having competent bell control."*

Please contact Barbara in the first instance to get more details.

### Save the Date for the Central Council AGM Weekend (5-7<sup>th</sup> September)

The 2025 Central Council AGM weekend takes place in Yorkshire from Friday 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025 and this year includes a roadshow on the Sunday, supported by trades and exhibitors, speakers and ringing opportunities.



The weekend programme is open to all ringers and the full programme will be published in due course. Keep an eye on the CCCBR website and social media for updates. The AGM and roadshow will take place at the Niagara Conference Centre, Niagara Road, Sheffield, with other events being staged in Sheffield city centre.