

Roving Ringers ride again – a tale of bells bikes and beer

by Kevyn Hopkins



Left to right: Simon Alford, Richard Pendlebury, Caleb Saunders, Penny Bradsell, Mark Hall, Lawrence Davies, Mike Wigney, Mark Chilcott, Lucy Chandhial, Steph Pendlebury, Andrew Lay and Kevyn Hopkins

With the looming threat of rains, storms and gales, the Roving Ringers 73rd Annual Tour got off to a trepidatious start. The will of the Rover, however, coupled with the fact a tour has never been halted or even paused due to some drizzle since its inception in 1947, drove us onwards. Damp, wind-beaten and somewhat dishevelled after two wrong attempts at finding the church in Stamford we were supposed to be ringing at, I arrived ... almost last, and so the tour of 2019 began.

Some background information for those who are wondering what I'm on about, would probably be relevant at this point. The Society of Roving Ringers was not created originally as a Society at all, but as an advert in a post-war edition of *The Ringing World*, asking if

anyone would care to go on a cycling and bell ringing holiday. The response was pretty big, and since then, there has been a tour every year, to all parts of the country, recruiting new members each time, focussed on cycling between 3 and 5 towers, and 30 and 50 miles a day for an entire week. Some call it fun, others ... insanity.

Anyway, where was I ...? The tour, of course. As it turned out, throughout the week, despite predictions to the contrary, the weather held out and all we suffered was some light drizzle, a few headwinds and the odd, short-lived outpouring from on high.

The joy of the tour is, along with the great people, the wide range of bells and cycling that you are able to experience. This year it was all arranged by our tour secretary Mike

Wigney, who had promised us a flatter tour than the previous one in Herefordshire. On this, he delivered in the form of the windy wilds of Lincolnshire, where the concept of a hill is something a mole makes. Being based in Thurlby, we managed to cover a wide area of towers, stretching south to Peterborough, North to Sleaford and even across the feral fenlands towards Spalding. This did, however, spark some insubordinate talk, possibly by myself, about missing the challenge of a good hill.

Along with the usual array of cycles, including, Mike's hand-cranked recumbent, this year even saw the first tandem in almost a decade, which led to some nice drafting opportunities for others, battling with the headwinds. This year also saw the addition of two new members to our merry troupe, in Andrew Lay of Hertfordshire and Caleb Saunders of Middlesex, with Caleb getting the full Rovers experience after inadvertently cycling, some would say crashing, into a damp ditch of nettles, fortunately without injury. 2019 also marked the 40th tour, for true veteran, and most toured, Simon Alford, having covered over five decades of tours.



Ringling at St Mary, Whittlesey (l-r): Kevyn Hopkins, Simon Alford, Mike Wigney, Mark Hall, Anne Donaldson, Penny Bradsell, Lucy Chandhial, Caleb Saunders and Richard Pendlebury

When it came to the actual ringing, I had the privilege of being nominated master for tour this year, which was a pleasure on the fantastic range of bells we were fortunate enough to be allowed to ring. Just a few highlights from the tour included the lovely, light-weight twelve of Surfleet situated in a wonky tower, with an even wonkier floor, Crowland, a nice yet challenging six, in a fantastically architected abbey, purported to be the longest draft in the country, and the gorgeous 25cwt eight situated in St John's, Peterborough.

As master, I'd like to think I availed the other tourers in a range of ringing, more varied than the terrain. Along with the traditional assemblage of Stedman and Grandsire etc, I tried to cover a range of location appropriate methods, including Lincolnshire in Lincolnshire, Cambridge in Cambridgeshire, Surfleet in Surfleet and Bourne in Bourne, unfortunately missing our



Left to right: Ricard Pendlebury, Andrew Lay, Lucy Chandhial, Lawrence Davies, Penny Bradsell, Mark Hall, Kevyn Hopkins, Simon Alford, Mike Wigney

Continued on p.858

SDGR. Calne Branch. Practice at Lyneham. Workshops in handbells and listening skills from 15:00-17:00 (please contact Andrew Woolley calne.training@sdgr.org.uk) followed by bring and share tea. Evening activity: 18:30 Beetle Drive. 3047

Meetings on Saturday Sept 21

ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS. Southern District. Meeting at Downham, CM11 1LG. Ringing 3pm, service 4.30pm, tea and meeting. No's. for tea to Julia Taylor on 07880 735659 or julia.coggins@hotmail.co.uk by Mon. 16th Sept. 3048

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD. Summer Festival and Inter Branch 8-bell Striking Contest on Saturday 21st September 2019. Open ringing at Stanwick 2.30-3.30pm. Contest at Rushden starting at 4pm, with buffet tea, followed by brief guild meeting and results. Open ringing at Wellingborough from 7.30pm. Contest entries to Simon Dixon by 10th September, sjdixon07@btinternet.com. Names for tea to Jenny Ball, jennyball@btinternet.com. All welcome. 3049

THE WORCESTERSHIRE & DISTRICTS CRA. Northern Branch Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday 21 September 2019 at St Laurence (8), Alvechurch. Ringing from 3pm, service at 4.15pm followed by tea and business meeting. Names for tea to Michael Davenport, tel. no. 0121 447 7709 by Wednesday 18 September 2019 please. 3050



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Thought for the week
Summoned by bells?

The church is on a busy road, but walking down Main Street I could hear the bells where I was due to preach. That Sunday morning they summoned about 90 to the service and reminded others outside that the church was in business. Not everyone appreciates that sort of reminder on Sunday morning, but church bells have a long history. They have had important secular uses as well as sacred ones. In the past they have been used as warning signals for possible disasters – in an episode of Dad’s Army they were ‘accidentally’ chimed by Home Guard members and locals immediately thought the Nazi invasion was imminent. In a book *Nature Displayed* of 1748, the bells were often sounded during storms: the book says, ‘bells are causes very fit, according to some, to dissipate storms or even fitter according to others to pierce the clouds and determine the fall of the fire suspended in the skies. However the comparison of the churches where it is customary to ring at the approach of storms with these where this practice is overlooked, is entirely in favour of those who keep their bells silent’.

There are so many different noises and sounds impacting on our present day society. The modern poet Malcolm Guite, in his collection *Sounding the Seasons*, wrote these lines in a sonnet:

*Not the bleak speak of mobile messages,
The soft chime of synthesized reminders,
Not texts, not pagers, data packages
Not satnav or locators ever find us
As surely, soundly, deeply as those bells
That sound and find and call us all at once.*

We ringers can rightly enjoy our efforts, but for me it adds to the feeling of doing a worthwhile job when we recognise how evocative the sound of church bells might be for our hearers and for us.

(I must stop – was that my mobile ringing?)

Canon BRUCE GRAINGER
Bradford Cathedral Chaplain
and member of the Clerical Guild

Roving Ringers tour

concluded from p.857

chances of ringing Rutland in Rutland and Stamford in Stamford. Additionally, we rang a range of other methods on all numbers from Call Changes on twelve to Bristol Surprise Major as well as Cornwall Surprise Major and Cambridge Surprise Royal.

The other tradition on Rovers, and let’s be honest, a regular pastime of many a ringer in general, is to sample the local beers. A hardship indeed, but one, many of us are willing to endure for the greater good. Amongst them, there was the odd tea shop also, such as Something Special in Pinchbeck (Huge slices of Cake), but the beer, for some reason, is what really drew us in. Odd huh ...? If you are in the area, I can certainly recommend the White Horse in Baston where we sampled a local speciality from Market Deeping’s, Hopshackle Brewery and the Wishing Well in Dyke, just north of Bourne that had a good rotating crop of beers on pump as well as, for those so inclined, a fantastic and unusual array of gins.

In all this year seemed to be enjoyed by all and housed a total of seventeen tourers throughout the week, though more would have indeed been welcomed. If it is something that appeals to you are willing to share with us your knobbly knees, we are a friendly bunch and next year’s tour is looking to be in either Leicestershire or North Bedfordshire towards the beginning of July. Traditionally you’ll be able to ring Stedman or treble bob to surprise major. So, if this sounds like you, get in touch with our tour secretary at **mike.wigney@dhl.com** and join us. More information can be found at <http://rovingringers.org/>.

50 Years Ago

The Ringing World, 5 September, 1969
Selected by the Editor

HANDBELLS IN THE ARCTIC

This summer four ringers from St. George’s, Jesmond — Andrew Craddock, Rodney Yeates, John Pardoe and Geoffrey White — spent two weeks in Sweden and Finland. They took with them six handbells borrowed from Newcastle Cathedral, to educate the natives!

On the boat out they rang a quarter peal and found it a most effective method of clearing the deck. After an unfortunate accident they rang a handbell peal outside the police station at Ivalo in Lapland. (“If they put us away, think of the number of peals we’ll get!” someone commented.) Fortunately the police did not blame them and they travelled south.

Later events included a night in the open outside Rovaniemi Station. Lapland. The party were approached by four Finnish “yobbos” who spoke no English. Imagining they were Anglophiles, the four rang handbells for them, hoping they would think it was the latest thing from the land of the Beatles. They weren’t very impressed!

The peal was the first rung in the Arctic Circle. It was appropriate that it should be rung for the Durham and Newcastle Association. Other notable stunts for the D. and N. have been the first peals on the continent of South America and the first down a coalmine.

PLEASE try to use the correct email address when sending items to *The Ringing World*. This will help to avoid confusion and speed up publication. See inside front cover for the full list of addresses.

Stop press

Revd Bruce Grainger

We were very sorry to hear from Angela Newing that her brother, Canon Bruce Grainger, died unexpectedly in his sleep on 2nd September. Bruce was a member of the Clerical Guild and made regular contributions to our *Thought for the Week* Column; the last of which appears above. We shall miss him and send our condolences to his family.

Angela says that, in the light of this bereavement, she must regrettably tender her apologies to the Central Council Meeting on Saturday. This would have been Angela’s last meeting as a representative of the Gloucester & Bristol Diocesan Association.