

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – 2023/4

www.wm.hrgb.org.uk or on Facebook at HRGB WM

| | |
|--|---|
| Sun, 3 rd September | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 1 st October | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sat, 7 th October | Regional Rally, 10.30am, Withington, HR1 3PP |
| Sun, 5 th November | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sat, 18 th November | 25 th David Williams Memorial Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 3 rd December | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sat, 6 th January, 2024 | Committee meeting – 10am – Zoom |
| Sun, 7 th January | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 4 th February | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Fri–Sun, 23 rd –25 th February | Bells beyond belief, Worcester Whitehouse Hotel, WR1 1EA |
| Sat, 2 nd March | Spring Rally and AGM, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 3 rd March | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Fri–Sun, 5 th –7 th April | National Rally, Swanwich, Derbyshire |
| Sun, 14 th April | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 5 th May | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 2 nd June | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |
| Sun, 7 th July | Monthly Sunday five-octave Workshop, 10.30am, Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, WR2 6QY |

The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the Editor and the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of HRGB or the West Midland Regional Committee.

Editor's Exhaust

MARGARET MOSS, OUR Regional Secretary, received an email recently, bemoaning the absence of a Regional Newsletter. Rightly so, though just as folk tend to exaggerate when they want to “make a point”, it was in fact March, 2021, not 2020, when the last one appeared. Still too long, I agree.

I'm grateful to Wendy H, Wendy W, Ursula, Jason, Jenny, Keith, Sue, David, Margaret, and Lindsay – plagiarised photo – for their direct and indirect contributions. By the time you read any of this, it will be out of date, but sadly, that's life these days. The immediacy of Facebook and the internet has seen to the demise of such publications as this one, hence, the electronic version only. Please, team correspondents, forward this newsletter to your individual team members, whether by email or print.



Some have asked for more on the doings of HRGB's National Executive Committee. They cover a great deal of ground, on our behalf. I'll flag up two things for you though. 2026 sees the HRGB hosting another International Symposium, in Gateshead this time. The last time was in Liverpool in 2012 and the undertaking was mammoth. The same will be true in 2026, with close on 1000 attendees. You may want to be involved.

Further on, in 2027, is HRGB's Diamond Jubilee. At the moment, the NEC is looking for a Region to host it. Potentially, this could fall to the West Midland Region, if the current rota is maintained! Having witnessed the efforts of the South West Region in hosting the Golden Jubilee celebration in 2017, I know the enormity of the task. If you have thoughts/ideas on this, contact any of the committee – see last page.

In the meantime, ring bells when and where you can. And let's hope it's not two years till the next newsletter appears.

NEW CHAIR

AT OUR REGIONAL AGM in March, in accordance with our Constitution, I as Chair, stood down. I am delighted to welcome David Hampson as our new Chair, for the year 2023-2024.

David brings huge experience to this role, not least because he has been on the committee for many years. He steered our ship through two National Rallies in 2014 and 2018, as Treasurer, and has served as one of our Regional NEC Representatives, which brings him in to contact with HRGB more widely and at a national level.

More important, he, like all our past Chairs, is not one to “blow his own trumpet”, but someone who sees what is important and what needs to be done. His support as Treasurer, to me during my role as Chair through COVID has been invaluable and I know you will wish him well.



It's also fitting to welcome Keith Rowland, the new Chair of HRGB, following Tim Willett's decision to stand down. Keith has a wealth of handbell experience, not least at regional level in the South East Region, but nationally with the setting up of UK Bronze 20 years ago. This programme provides a great opportunity for players to experience high-class

international coaching over a four-day period, and is an ideal complement to the National Residential Ringing Week.

We wish Keith well.

THE JOINT-RALLY EXPERIENCE

BACK IN 2007 (yes, that long ago), we joined forces with the South West Region for a rally at Bromyard. Robert Willis joined us and led Robin Benton's arrangement of *Berceuse*, which had just been published.

Our committee was keen to repeat the experience. The plan was to hold it in 2020 at Churchdown, in Gloucestershire and although for some, the travelling might be significant, there was plenty of enthusiasm for the venture. The hall was booked, massed music and an itinerary ready, almost a year out. Then.....



We were lucky, it was only postponed a year and took place in October, 2021. It was hugely successful and has been reported elsewhere. On the strength of its success, we went for a similar format in 2022 and Kenilworth gave us a great school venue – thanks to Janice Sheasby for all the grunt-work at that end. And, although, a significant distance for some, sixty-five from the West Midland and East Midland Regions joined forces, with, once again, Robin Benton's arrangement of *Berceuse*.

Wendy Walters had also chosen *'Twas in the moon of wintertime*, arranged by Cathy Mokolbust as a second piece. These two provided contrasting styles, with the latter having a part for finger cymbals and tambourine.

The day followed a traditional format, with plenty of massed ringing as well as opportunities for individual teams to perform. We were delighted to welcome Alton Handbell Ringers, Areley Kings, Burghill and Tillington, Harvington, Mayflower, Tintinnabulis, and from the East Midlands, Stanwick Handbell Ringers.

Stanwick's rendition of *Old MacDonal had a farm* with appropriately-chosen animal noises was a highlight. Mayflower were making a

first appearance at a handbell rally, were naturally very nervous, but played with an aplomb that you would expect from more experienced handbell groups.





This year's Regional Rally takes place in deepest Herefordshire on Saturday, 7th October in Withington. Although this is hardly central and will involve travelling for some, it does move it round the region. Information has already been circulated and Jenny Barraclough has agreed to lead the massed ringing.

The deadline is Saturday, 2nd September, as we need to know how many copies of massed ringing to order. Please email me with the required information at chordringer@tiscali.co.uk.

A word about *Berceuse*

Robin Benton's arrangement of Gabriel Fauré's *Berceuse*, from the *Dolly Suite*, was published in 2005 by the Lorenz Corporation, cat. no. AG35245. I've used it a number of times, after Robert led us with it. It is a great "workshop vehicle" because it's so accessible. Some will tell you it's a bit tricky but that isn't true. Granted, the middle section, in A^b needs players to change from "no sharps and flats" to "lots of sharps and flats" but what people miss is that the first section, in C, is the "familiar bit" to those who grew up in the 60s. It's the theme music to *Listen with Mother*, which appeared on the wireless!



There is no need to play the middle section of four flats if it daunts. Stick to the first section and enjoy it. Robin has made a name by arranging predominantly classical pieces, and whilst this isn't a music review, I can't recommend this piece enough.

GWEN SAMPSON

1931 - 2023

Wendy Hartwright

IN FEBRUARY, JUST before our Regional AGM, Wendy Hartwright contacted me to tell me that Gwen had passed away. What follows is a composite from Wendy and I, and reflects Gwen's significant contribution to the life of the West Midland Region for well over 20 years.

Gwen had been ill for some time and died very peacefully, at the age of 92 in a home on the coast of Cumbria. In the 1980s, Gwen put an advert in the local church (St. Mary's),

magazine, in Kington, inviting anyone that would like to try handbells to come to her house on Thursday evening. I went along and this began my love of handbell ringing.

Gwen was an excellent teacher, not letting us get away with sloppy damping, showing us how to correctly hold the bells and also developing an enjoyment of the music we were playing. From this beginning, Kington St. Mary's Handbell Ringers were formed and soon after, they registered and joined HRGB,

Gwen joined the Region's committee, eventually becoming Treasurer and Chair and steering us through the organisation of the National Rally in Aberystwyth in 2006.

Eventually, she had to retire, through ill health, first moving to Earls Barton and finally, moving to Cumbria to a home overlooking the sea, where she could be closer to her family.

Gwen had many interests and was a close and loyal friend. She did so much for the West Midland Region and enjoyed doing it. As a Region, we have a lot to be grateful for, thanks to Gwen. As a friend, I will never forget her.

In 2005, Gordon Lane put up for sale, his five-octave set of bells, which had formed the heart of Kingsbury Handbell Ringers. As a committee, we were keen that such a set (a) remained in Britain and (b) remained as an integral set. Through Gwen's generosity, the Region put in a bid to Gordon, bought the bells, which now bear her name. The Sampson Bells are a fitting legacy to Gwen and a significant resource available to all in the Region.

Harvington Handbell Ringers

Keith Hemming

THE ST. JAMES Handbells came about in April, 2005. We were at a tower bell AGM when the Rector said he would like to thank Harvington Handbells for their donation. This was soon corrected for it was the St. Matthew's Handbells of Salford Priors, where some of us had been playing,

After the AGM, the Rector asked us what we thought about Harvington having a handbell team? Well, of course we jumped at the chance. The Treasurer applied for a grant from Arts for All to cover the cost of the bells. This was granted and the bells were ordered.

The church paid for the first set of team uniforms. At the end of March, the bells duly arrived and the bells we had been using went back to St. Matthew's. We were now in possession of a brand-new set of Whitechapel bells to play.

Over the next few months, I ordered at various times, odd bells to fill in the gaps. In the meantime, we were doing what most handbell groups do: rallies, fetes, and old folk's homes.

In October, 2006 we hosted a rally at Harvington School for non-HRGB teams from which the Heart of England Handbell Society was formed. I was appointed Chairman, there by meeting up with different people.

July 2008 was our next big jump wanting to go from two octaves to three octaves of bells. We applied for more grants, were successful and because we wanted the bells as soon as possible, they were delivered to my holiday cottage in Yorkshire. We were well-pleased.

One other note worth mentioning is that we sent a note to Andrew Lloyd Webber, asking permission to convert his music for *Love changes everything* to number notation for our bells. Finally, a reply: "yes" and there was no fee to pay. What a nice man.

We support our Church and the Air Ambulance service in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. Christmas for us is always manic. We aim to raise £4000 for charity. We are always keen to welcome new members as availability to perform at some events can be a problem.

In 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, it wasn't long before worldwide condemnation erupted. But sadly, such condemnation had little effect on those invading. In Britain, singing of the Ukrainian National Anthem was probably the best support available. John Langley, the Musical Director of Harvington, set to making an accessible arrangement for handbells, of the anthem. It is still available through HRGB's website, in various formats. We are all grateful to John for his efforts. The invasion has had a significant impact on other handbell events. Ed.

ALTON HANDBELL RINGERS

Wendy Walters

THE ALTON HANDBELL Ringers had four new ringers join at the beginning of 2022 to make a team of 16 members. We leased a two-octave set of handbells from HRGB last year, which has enabled us to double up on some parts to help with training and provide extra volume if needed.

We enjoyed three full team concerts in November and December 2022. The final one in Alton village hall was our fundraiser for the local hospice when we raised £775. The evening included Peter Walker, one of our team, leading a rousing sing-along of the *Twelve days of Christmas*, on his accordion. We were even asked for an encore of *Frosty the Snowman*, at the end of the concert!

A twelve-bell team rang at Chatsworth House on two occasions over Christmas. We were under a gazebo in the courtyard, donning Christmas hats and being full of Christmas cheer in spite of the cold! We had an appreciative audience and we always ask the children to join us for *Jingle Bells* on some small sets of jingle bells.

We were pleased to be asked back into nursing homes for the first time since COVID. We had so many requests that we visited some after Christmas. We go with a twelve-bell team for these. We recently rang twelve bells at the beautiful Bethesda Chapel in Hanley. It is one of the largest non-conformist chapels outside of London and was built in 1819. There is a long, ongoing campaign to restore it. The acoustics were wonderful and we especially enjoyed playing *Sheep may safely graze*.

We continue to meet weekly and enjoy our monthly tea and cake sessions! We are working towards our autumn and Christmas concerts.

BURGHILL AND TILLINGTON HANDBELL RINGERS

Jason Walker

IN THE LAST twelve months the group has grown in strength and in numbers and we are now at 16 members. We had new recruits join us in January 2022, which brought on the idea of having a "beginners' workshop". This was well received by groups across the Region as well as our new members and so we decided to run another one in February 2023 as we also had new members in 2023. Again, this workshop was well attended and we in fact had members of the public who had always wanted to have a go at handbells attend the workshop as well as ringers who had recently joined a group.

A week later, the team performed at Church in a joint concert with a community choir in Hereford. The



group put themselves forward when a male voice choir were unable to commit to the date due to lack of members. Everyone did really well, and the group were

approached by another local church and we have ourselves a booking for a concert in October.

In April, five members of the team attended the National Rally in Stirling. It was a fantastic weekend and the Scottish Regional Committee did themselves proud. It was Tricia's and Dave's first national rally and it seems like they are now hooked! It was lovely to see Fiona and Sarah from Knighton Handbell Ringers as well as Ursula Howes from Hanley Swan. We all felt refreshed and full of enthusiasm for handbells ringing. We would thoroughly recommend attending a National Rally when you can, you get to meet some wonderful people and to try new and different things.

The other exciting news is we are now the proud owners of a bass octave of bells.



Well, nearly a full octave (two sharps missing). We bought these when we were at the national rally. Up to now, we have been covering these positions with a bass octave of chimes and although they covered the notes, you can't beat the sound and visual aspect of the large bass bells. The group is slowly adjusting to the sound but we are thoroughly enjoying ourselves.

On 5th May we were invited to perform for the St Lawrence's friendship club in Canon Pyon to help them celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. We took twelve bells, rang some "Royal" music, and were treated to afternoon tea.

On the 13th May, we hosted our annual rally at the Simpson Hall in Burghill. It was lovely to catch up with our friends. Teams in attendance were: B&T Handbell Ringers, Tintinnabulis, Harvington, Areley Kings; Knighton and Oranges and Lemons. It was Oranges and Lemons' first performance at a rally. The four-in-hand group is made up of members of the Knighton Handbell Ringers.



Jason led us all through the massed ringing. He arranged two pieces, an organ piece called *Choral Song*, by S.S. Wesley, and *Trumpet Tune*, from *Te Deum*. Well, it was the day of the Eurovision Final, so we just had to have it!

ST. BARTHOLOMEW, ARELEY HANDBELL RINGERS

Sue Crowther

WE WERE PLEASED to welcome a new adult member in December last year who was able to join a beginner's workshop organised by Jason Walker in February. Then a young ringer from the school bell ringing club, joined us in January and her mum also joined us the following month. We now have an intermediate group, which meets during the first part of our weekly rehearsal, with everyone joining in to support them.

A team of us continue to go into our local primary church school once a week, for a bell ringing club. Doing this has added to the link St Bart's church has with its school.

A small group of us went to the Regional Rally and AGM in March. We were instructed on 'cross and stretch' change ringing, which we shared with the rest of the team the next time we met.

We held our own AGM and shared lunch in March. It was a good time to look back on the last year and discuss and look forward to this. Also in March, we entertained a local social group, with familiar tunes, telling the history of handbells and of our group and giving members the opportunity to have a go.

We joined Burghill & Tillington Handbell Ringers in Hereford, at their rally in May. We had prepared two items, one for each of our groups. It was the first local rally for our



three new people. Everyone enjoyed the relaxed, friendly, helpful, and sometimes challenging, event, led by Jason. The B&T team laid on a lovely afternoon tea too. We were unable to ring in our church on 14th May for Bell Sunday so, with the tower bell ringers, we celebrated on 21st. People heard the tower bells as they arrived and the handbells performing a piece during the communion. At the start of the service, information was given to the congregation about the bells in the tower and about the handbells. Prayers for bellringers everywhere were added to the service and two special bell hymns were sung.

Two of our Young Ringers have been working to achieve Crescendo recognition. Both have achieved *p* and *mp* levels and one, *mf*. The scheme works so well for young people, as the goals are easily achieved while they are regular ringers in a team. We are extremely proud of their achievements and their commitment to the team.

The Crescendo scheme, offered by HRGB, arose from a similar scheme available to tower bell ringers. Back in the 1980s, Pam Copson created Bell Club, along with a series of hugely-popular books – One per learner and The follow-up books – that allowed tower bell

ringers to track their progress from the earliest steps in bell handling, to the complexities of method ringing.

The beauty of Pam's Bell Club was that it was so accessible and user-friendly. Material was handwritten, and explained your progress in a clear and interesting way. We, as tower and handbell ringers owe a great deal to Pam. Ed.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Sandra Winter Workshop (2022)

Ursula Howes

SADLY, OWING TO ill health, Ursula Howes was not able to host the Sandra Winter Workshop in June, 2023. The event was cancelled. But here is what happened in 2022.

On a Sunday, 19th June, the Maclean Handbell Ringers were able to welcome Sandra Winter back to Hanley Swan Village Hall for a follow-up workshop to the one held in 2019. There weren't quite as many as in 2019 owing to the Three Counties Show and Fathers' Day, but this however, didn't detract from the enjoyment of those who did attend.

As well as nine members from our own team, we had three ringers from Areley Kings, four from Bell-tide, nine from Burghill, four from Severn Belles and a couple from Gloucestershire, as well as Sandra and Martin Winter.

As usual, Sandra was able to inspire experienced ringers as well as newcomers, as we made use of a five-octave set and three-octave sets of bells. She chose two contrasting pieces that she had arranged as well as a *Change-ringing Prelude*, arranged by a tower bell ringer. This piece was particularly interesting and challenging as it had numerous time signature changes from $\frac{6}{9}$ to $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and even $\frac{4}{4}$. Luckily it was extremely slow and as no damping was required the effect was quite stunning.

Sandra's *Celebration* was a lively opening piece written especially for the South East Region to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. *Shepherds Hey*, an arrangement of a Morris Dance, played entirely with mallets, provided another contrast. We ended the day by playing all three pieces.

This was duly followed by tea and cakes provided by the host team.

www.wm.hrgb.org.uk

Welcome to the 21st century

THE RAIL DELIVERY Group runs our rail system. Yes, I know there are rail companies that operate the trains but the RDG is "in charge" of everything. They recently recommended to HM Government, the Ministry of Transport, in particular, that nearly all station ticket offices be shut. Cost-cutting and money-saving being the reasons.

Naturally, there has been an outcry from passenger user groups and of course the RMT union, who are concerned about the loss of jobs. The RDG has, however, said that the staff should be redeployed. Hang on. What's this to do with handbells?





the one in ten) iPhone and internet-savvy. Sadly, I fear, there is some truth in this, and quite possibly, that is the way it will be from now on.

HRGB and our Region have/need to embrace modern platforms if we are to engage with people who do not play bells. We are lucky to have the efforts of Jenny Barraclough who has produced the Region's website – www.wm.hrgb.org.uk and Jason Walker, with the Facebook page – HRGB WM. Take a look.

This is a terrific resource; there is a vast range of material, including a picture gallery and a number of video clips. This is a swift way of getting information out there. Contact Jenny – jenny.barraclough@brinternet.com – with any material you have. This is a great public vehicle and whilst there is an inevitability to the march of time, such a vehicle can get us more widely noticed.

One of the stats put out by the RDG is that only one in ten passengers use ticket offices and that most people, by their tickets online. This, after all is the 21st century and we are all, (except



NATIONAL RESIDENTIAL RINGING WEEK – 2023

Reflections on a week well spent

Jenny Barraclough

I HAVE JUST returned from the National Residential Ringing Week in Sheffield and can finally take a moment to think about the experiences of the past five days.

We were guided by three inspirational conductors: Emily Li from Hong King (who featured on the West Midland Region website 'pick of the month' with the Hong Kong Academy playing *Pirates of the Caribbean*), Nick Hanson, a handbell teacher and composer from the USA and Kate Sawallisch, who is the musical director of the Northern Bell Orchestra.

When the music pack first arrived, I was not sure whether I liked all the pieces but could appreciate why some had been chosen. However, by the end of the week, we all enjoyed playing them. The compositions ranged from the sea shanty *Bound for South Australia* – during which we had to sing, – to *Nocturnal Fantasy*, composed by Emily Li and seemingly impossible to play at the correct tempo. With Emily's help, we had cracked it – or almost. The conductors explained their choices of music and how they interpreted each piece. This included reading us poems and the words of hymns. We also used our imagination to



conjure a nature scene when playing *If I were a butterfly*, which included butterflies, robins, fish, elephants, caterpillars, and trees. This helped us to play expressively and with the correct energy for each passage.

I have no doubt that everyone's musicality and techniques improved. This was achieved in a supportive and non-judgemental way with plenty of humour.

Although there was plenty of music it was good to meet up with old friends and exchange news. As usual the food was fabulous and kept us going through the rehearsals. On our afternoon off there was a group visit to Chatsworth. Others went for walks or simply had a rest.

A contingent from the Hong Kong Handbell Academy rang with us. They ranged from twelve to 20 years in age. The team entertained us with a showcase of pieces one evening. Their playing was beautiful and we were really impressed when they played a piece by memory.

Ringling for the whole week was great fun. Everyone felt a huge sense of satisfaction as we ended the last piece in the concert and the familiar words 'the bar is now open' were shouted out.

DAVID WILLIAMS MEMORIAL WORKSHOP

ORIGINALLY, WE HAD planned our DWMW in November, 2021, as a "ringing day", then delayed to January, 2022 and finally, cancelled over fears amongst some, about the recurrence of COVID. Not to be disheartened, we rescheduled the DWMW for November, 2022 and were able, after a three-year gap, to go ahead.

20 met at Cutnall Green Memorial Hall near Droitwich, and in keeping with the occasion in 2019, we chose two

Christmas pieces. *It came upon a midnight clear*, arranged by Kevin McChesney and *Songs of the shepherds*, arranged by Lloyd Larson were used. The first was the less familiar American tune, whilst the second had an integral part for hand chimes, and it was, as a consequence, great to make use of the newly-acquired Roger Thomas hand chimes. Video footage of the two pieces is available through the West Midland Region website – www.wm.hrgb.org.uk.

All seemed to enjoy the experience though with barely 20, (partly a cautionary consequence of lingering COVID), attending, it is possible that such occasions are less in demand than five years ago.

This year's David Williams Memorial Workshop will be the 25th such and takes place on Saturday, 18th November at Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, near Hallow. Information about it will be distributed to Team Correspondents in September.



GDPR AGAIN!

YAWN, YAWN, YAWN. “Please, not this again” I hear not a few of you say. But, GDPR, adopted by Britain in 2018, is something we cannot avoid, and, as an internationally recognised charity, HRGB has to comply.

What this means, in simple terms is that we CAN keep databases of members; things like your name, a bunch of contact information, and one or two other bits of information pertaining to handbell playing. What it also means is that you have consented to such information being stored, for appropriate use by your Regional Committee and HRGB nationally.

It also means that, should we, as members, want to gain access to such a database, we do so through those who have dedicated access to this.

So, should I wish to promote our David Williams Memorial Workshop, amongst our membership, or even those in other Regions, I can contact Diane Holt, Membership Secretary for HRGB, and ask her for address labels for said members. Alternatively, I send the relevant information to Margaret Moss as Secretary of our Region, asking her to email the various contacts, She, is one of the designated people for such.

Yes, I know this sounds all very bureaucratic but, we like every other organisation have signed up to this. It doesn't stop you telling your mates about a handbell event, but because we organise such events under the auspices of HRGB, we also have to follow the correct protocol.

Simple.

SAFEGUARDING

THERE IS NO misunderstanding: HRGB as a national organisation, with charitable status, has a responsibility and duty of care when it comes to working with young and vulnerable people, who are involved with handbell playing. However, let us also be clear that this responsibility is not as daunting as it may seem.

In essence, much of what we do in looking out for those at risk, is common sense. We all, as individuals though, have a responsibility to report instances of behaviour that may come under the Safeguarding umbrella, as inappropriate.

What is construed as “inappropriate”?

Anything that makes an individual feel that somehow, they are out of place, in a particular handbell environment. Such an environment might be a regular rehearsal or a one-off workshop or rally. Our organisation is no different to any other. The key is inclusivity and if members don't feel safe and included then this becomes an issue.

The practicalities

The West Midland Region has two Safeguarding Officers, Richard Hartnell and Jean Lloyd. One or other of these will aim to be present at any handbell event, being organised under the HRGB banner – all workshops and rallies. If neither is able to attend, someone from the organising team can be asked to take responsibility for that day.

There is a procedure to follow. HRGB has an Incident Report Form – see Safeguarding on the HRGB website – which can be completed and passed on to the Regional Safeguarding Officer. The Regional Safeguarding Officer is then bound to investigate the incident.

SUNDAY FIVE-OCTAVE WORKSHOP

BACK IN 2003 a West Midland Region members got the chance to meet on a monthly basis to play music for five octaves of bells. It was a kind of monthly DWMW.

This has continued ever since. The Region has acquired a five-octave set of bells, the Sampson Bells, and a number of sets of hand chimes, including the recently-acquired Roger Thomas Hand Chimes.



The aim is simple: play music for five octaves of bells and take it in to the community, whenever the chance arises.

In July of 2022 the group joined forces with Worcester Ukulele for a “Music for a Summer’s Eve”, which included a combined performance, with audience participation, of Rob Worrell’s arrangement of *Three for the road*, a medley of *Tavern in the town*, *A long way to Tipperary* and *Pack up your troubles*. Lots of smiling.

Then, in June of this year, the group returned to Great Malvern Priory for another “Music for a Summer’s Eve”, this time, with Friends of the Priory. They were joined by soprano, Jenny Cromwell, in John Rutter’s *A Gaelic Blessing*, arranged for handbells by Mar Kay Parrish.



Monthly rehearsals take place almost always at Lower Broadheath Memorial Hall, starting at 10.30am, on the first Sunday of the month, and finishing by 4pm. The £10 per month, covers the cost of music and the hire of the hall. There is no audition process; this is simply an opportunity to play good music with like-minded people.

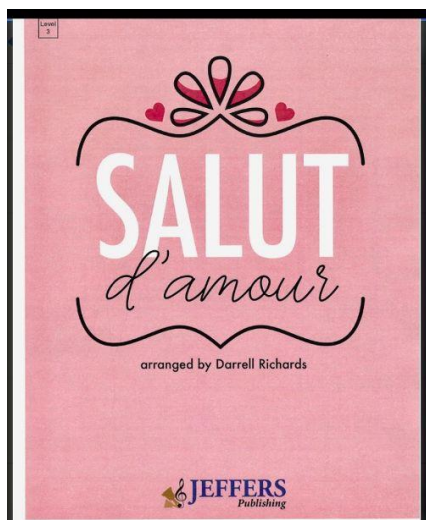
The first rehearsal of the new academic year is on Sunday, 3rd September.

BELLS BEYOND BELIEF

IN FEBRUARY, 2022, a group met at the Pear Tree Country Inn and Hotel for what was a “return to ringing” after the event in 2021 was cancelled. The Pear Tree is a great venue with a spacious rehearsal room, light and airy, and offering a relaxed atmosphere in which to work on six pieces. Concerns over COVID meant that the concert at the conclusion of the weekend could not take place in All Saints Church, in the heart of Worcester. Instead, we held it in the hotel – “oh so UK-Bronze-like”.

Following this event, we booked for 2023 at the Pear Tree – same format, and concert in the hotel. Might as well save the hassle of shifting sets of bells and chimes to a new venue. This would be BBB no.11.

Then, Ukraine came along.



Britain, like many countries was slow to respond but eventually, began to take in refugees from the war. These folk had to be housed and a number of hotels, were forced (the Home Office gave them no choice), to turn over their facilities to these refugees. The Pear Tree was no different. Our BBB '23 would have to be moved. Fortunately, the Worcester Whitehouse Hotel in the centre of the city, was able to accommodate us. So, towards the middle of February, people gathered for a weekend working on six pieces and performing them at the end.

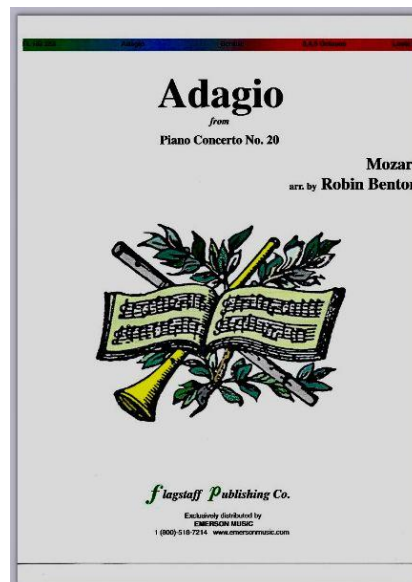
It is an intensive weekend; not for all. It is an

expensive weekend; again, not for all, but the results are particularly worthwhile. Players get to encounter music that has not been seen before. Hardly surprisingly, some of these pieces make it in to the repertoire of other teams.

I'll mention two in particular. Robin Benton's arrangement of Mozart's *Adagio* from piano concerto no.20, and Darrell Richards' arrangement of Elgar's *Salut d'amour*, are all too few examples of secular music arranged for handbells. The market is for arrangements of music for sacred settings, primarily because the bulk of the customer base is church-based. Robin, in particular has made a point of filling that gap.

In 2024, we are again at the Worcester Whitehouse Hotel, from Friday, 23rd to Sunday, 25th February, and the price will be the same as that for 2023.

Information will be sent out towards the middle of September.



WM REGION FACEBOOK

BETTER THE DEVIL you know! You either love or loathe Facebook. For some, it's a necessary evil, which has to be embraced, along with emails and the internet and Twitter [sic] and tiktok. For others, is a curse and should be avoided at all costs. Facebook polarises opinion.

The reality in 2023 is that such a platform is hugely significant in allowing information to be circulated very quickly to millions. If you can accept that anything, which appears on FB is unedited and *may* be inaccurate, then you have a means of engaging with a wider audience than would be possible via any other means.

Jason Walker currently acts as Facebook administrator for the West Midland Region. You have an event you want to promote, email Jason at jason10walker@hotmail.com and he should be able to oblige. Alternatively, search Facebook HRGB WM.



BACK TO SCHOOL

THE OLD ADAGE “those that can, do, those that can’t, teach, whilst those that can’t teach, become teacher trainers”. A tongue-in-cheek equivalent, for handbell players might read: “those that can, play a real instrument, those that can’t, play handbells, whilst those that can’t play handbells direct handbell teams”. Ha ha!

My point is that sometimes, we are rather too inclined to give the impression that playing handbells is somehow hard, when in fact, it is remarkably easy, especially, if you have age on your side.

In 2019, following a bunch of emails, we managed to take five octaves of bells and chimes in to Birmingham Conservatoire, where we worked with students in their percussion department. In an hour, they were playing *Toccata on King’s Weston*, by Vaughan-Williams, arranged by Matthew Compton. Impressive stuff.

Last year, despite the best efforts of COVID and the RMT union’s strike action, we took three octaves of bells to Hagley Roman Catholic School, where, with Jane, Jean, and Wendy, we worked with year 7 and 8 students.



We taught them how to “dong” the bells; how to identify which notes in the music were theirs; how to decide whether the particular bell note lasted for one beat, two beats, three beats or four. And we took them through *My heart will go on* from *Titanic*, arranged by Kevin McChesney for three octaves of bells.

The results were amazing, a testament to what IS possible, in a short time with young people. No inhibitions or preconceptions; no prerequisite knowledge. In fact, it’s almost better if the children haven’t encountered handbells!

If you and members of your team are in a position to get into schools, even if just for taster sessions, see what you can accomplish. There are administrative challenges but preparation and persistence will pay off.

The next projects are to return to Birmingham Conservatoire and to take bells to Chantry School in Worcestershire. Paradoxically, Chantry wants an activity that involves more students – at least 40 – rather than the more manageable dozen! Some logistical challenge.

ROGER THOMAS HAND CHIMES

IT’S BEEN RATHER longer than I would have liked, but finally, in February of this year, the project – to remember Roger H. Thomas, our long-time Chair, who passed away suddenly in 2019 – was completed.

Back in 2019 at the Regional Rally in Knighton, we asked how our Region should remember him. In the end, the response was disappointing. One or two suggested that they

didn't know who or what he was. Considering Roger's presence, this is a little strange. I've already written about his contribution to our Region and HRGB.

The tangible way was to buy a set of hand chimes – the bass octave of a five-octave set. This was done and they were duly on display at our AGM in March. These will be a valuable addition to the Region's resources, giving us even more flexibility when running ringing activities.

Thee, along with the Belleplates®, two three-octave sets of chimes, a five-octave set of bells, and mallets, plus plenty of table foams, are available for anyone to use.

We are hugely grateful to those who made donations towards the cost of these; in particular, Sue Crowther and her team from Areley Kings, Ursula Howes with two significant donations from her quizzes, and the Sunday five-octave workshop.

Farewell to Corrie

THE REGION'S COMMITTEE says farewell to Corrie Paxton, as she moves from the West Midlands to Sussex. Corrie has been a key member of our Regional Committee as well as the face of Halesowen Handbell Ringers, for many years. She has represented our Region on HRGB's NEC for at least the past fifteen years and had a huge part to play in organising our National Rallies in 2014 and 2018.

She'll be a big loss to our committee, but we wish her well.

A Journey Home

Karen Lakey Buckwalter

For 3-5 octaves Handbell Choir with optional 4-5 octaves of Hand chimes

© 2012 Beckenhorst Inc. HB431-1

Commissioned by the West Midland Region of HRGB

English Suite

Michael Helman

For 3-5 octaves Handbell Choir with optional 4-5 octaves of Hand chimes

© 2018 HB630

Commissioned by the West Midland Region for HRGB's 2018 National Rally

W.M. REGION COMMITTEE – 2023/4

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|--|
| <i>Chair</i> | David Hampson | david48hampson@btinternet.com |
| <i>Deputy-chair</i> | Richard Hartnell | chordringer@tiscali.co.uk |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Margaret Moss or | wm_secretary@handbell.org.uk margaretcross@btinternet.com |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | David Hampson | david48hampson@btinternet.com |
| <i>Sales</i> | Rowena Shipley | s.r.shipley@btinternet.com |
| <i>Newsletter</i> | Richard Hartnell | chordringer@tiscali.co.uk |
| <i>Safeguarding</i> | Richard Hartnell | (contact details above) |
| | Jean Lloyd | jlloyd.4509@yahoo.com |
| <i>Website</i> | Jenny Barraclough | jenny.barraclough@btinternet.com |
| <i>Facebook</i> | Jason Walker | jason10walker@hotmail.com |
| <i>Committee</i> | Jenny Barraclough | (contact details above) |
| | Sue Crowther | susancrowther44@aol.com |
| | Wendy Hartwright | whartwright@gmail.com |
| | Jean Lloyd | (contact details above) |
| | Janice Sheasby | janicesheasby@tiscali.co.uk |
| | Liz Smith | lizsmith04@yahoo.co.uk |
| | Jason Walker | (contact details above) |
| <i>NEC reps</i> | David Hampson | (contact details above) |