



# ANNUAL REPORT AND NEWSLETTER OF THE ANCIENT SOCIETY OF COLLEGE YOUTHS

JUNE 2014



*The Master (centre) accompanied by his Stewards at the 376th Anniversary Dinner*

There is a story – too good to check – that Zhou Enlai, the Chinese leader, when asked for his view on the impact of the French Revolution, said that it was ‘too soon to tell’. He may have had his doubts, but as we look back on the Society’s year of 2013, we can already be assured that it was a very good year, under the leadership of Graham Bradshaw. And equally, as we approach the midway point of 2014, there is no doubt that the momentum is being continued by the (nearly) new Master, Simon Meyer.

The heart of the Society’s activity is the weekly Tuesday practice. This takes place at a rota of twelve-bell towers in the City of London, with occasional excursions across

London Bridge to Southwark Cathedral. We are fortunate in having access to six fine rings of twelve, some more challenging than others. In years gone by, one practice a month was scheduled at an eight bell tower (St Lawrence Jewry or St Andrew’s Holborn), but our eight-bell ringing is now confined to the occasional special practice, and a wide range of peal attempts. Practices continue to be well-attended, and the standard repertoire includes a range of more advanced methods, rung singly and in spliced, along with regular touches of Stedman and Bristol.

The Society’s activities, though, extend far beyond its London base. Almost 500 members – probably half the

Society's active membership – took part in a Society peal in the year to November 2013. Our two country meetings, in New York and Chester, brought together large numbers of members and guests, as did the 376th Anniversary Dinner. The widespread use of e-mail makes it much easier to maintain regular contact with members across the UK and beyond.

Following the successful Country Meeting in New York in May 2013 (reported in last year's Newsletter), the Society visited Chester for its UK Country Meeting in July. The eleven successful peal attempts brought together members from London and the south of England with a strong representation from the north-west. At the business meeting, Rev Brian Harris, a Chester resident and Society member for 51 years, proffered a warm and witty welcome to the city, with references to the major contributions to ringing made by Cheshire bands under the leadership of Kenneth Lewis, also a Society member for 50 years. A splendid dinner was held in the plush surroundings of Chester Racecourse.

The third weekend in September is designated peal weekend. 44 peals were rung between 18 and 23 September this year, including two in the USA.

The London Twelve bell competition was held at St Magnus the Martyr in October. The Society's two bands (mysteriously labelled M and Q) entered the fray with high hopes, bearing in mind that some of our members virtually live at St Magnus. However, in a very close contest, our bands were placed third and fourth, behind the SRCY and St Michael's, Cornhill.

The 376th Anniversary Dinner was held at the Guoman Tower Hotel on 2 November, attended by over 300 members and guests. Our principal guest was the Dean of St Paul's, Dr David Ison, who entertained us with a speech which was both witty and scholarly, as he responded to the Master's toast to 'The Church'. It was probably the first time that Gerard Manley Hopkins had featured in speeches at our dinner. A popular member of the St Paul's Cathedral Guild, Eleanor Linford, proposed the health of 'The Society', drawing upon her family connections with the Society (father, grandfather, husband and godfather) as well as her ringing experiences in London and Birmingham. Few of the glitterati escaped her sharp wit. Between the speeches, an excellent touch of Spliced Maximus in five methods was rung on handbells by Paul Mounsey, David Pipe, John Hughes-D'Aeth, Graham Firman, Tom Hinks and Paul Carless.

At the subsequent business meeting, Simon Meyer took up his role as Master. A native of East Anglia, Simon has also lived and worked in the North-West, and currently leads his local band at Shipley in West Sussex, as well as managing all aspects of ringing at St Mary-le-Bow. Katie Town completed her busy year as Junior Steward and moved to the quieter position of Senior Steward, while Tessa Beadman was elected Junior Steward.

We elected 25 new members in 2013, and a number of these are already taking an active part in Society activities, in London or elsewhere. It was a particular pleasure to elect five new members from the USA, all of whom were present at the Country Meeting in New York, and a further five at our Country Meeting in Chester. The names of those reaching 50 and 60 years membership during 2013 are listed elsewhere. Our current senior members are James and Leonard Bullock, elected in 1941, and Francis Bullock, elected in 1942. We currently have 72 known members with 60 or more years membership.

Sadly, we lost fifteen members through death in 2013, including our senior member at the time, Frederick Smeaton, elected in 1935, and Tudor Edwards, a particularly strong supporter of the Society, elected in 1955. As this Newsletter was being compiled, we heard of the death of past Master Alan Flood. Alan was a fixture on the London scene for over 40 years, a member of the St Paul's Cathedral Guild, and one of the Society's most prolific peal ringers. He passed away after a determined battle against cancer, ringing over 150 peals whilst fighting off the side effects of gruelling treatment. We extend our sympathy to his wife, Swaz Apter, who supported him throughout his struggle.

If we thought that we might be able to slacken the pace a little after Graham Bradshaw's busy year, we were mistaken. Simon Meyer has built on Graham's work, adding Deimos into the spliced repertoire, and dabbling with the Orion Principle and Carter's Cinques. In March, the Society had agreed to host one of the three eliminator contests for the National Twelve Bell Striking Contest, at Cripplegate, with the St Paul's Cathedral Guild hosting another at nearby St Sepulchre. The Society's band was placed first at Cripplegate, closely followed by Cambridge and Bristol, while St Paul's followed Birmingham and the SRCY at St Sepulchre. Ringers and supporters from both contests gathered throughout the day at the Butcher's Hook and Cleaver in Smithfield, where the results for both contests were announced to a large and rather merry throng which had severely depleted the hostelry's stocks of ale.

There is much yet to come – the final of the National 12 bell Contest at Oxford Cathedral, the Country Meeting at Portsmouth, which leads straight into UK14, peal day in September which coincides with the Master's 50th birthday (and a promised party at his country estate!), and the 377th Anniversary Dinner on 1 November 2014. We look forward to members from across the UK and from around the world joining in these events, and enjoying the good ringing and excellent fellowship which the Society offers.

David House  
ASCY Secretary

## MASTER'S MESSAGE 2014 by Simon Meyer



The pace of activity in the Society is quite breath-taking on both the ringing and social fronts.

The Tuesday night repertoire has been put on a very sound footing by previous masters with Phobos, Ariel, Zanussi, Deimos and ORABS considered standard fare. Zanussi now makes common appearances, often more so than Stedman, and is a method we ring well. The practices continue to provide an opportunity for members to develop their repertoire beyond Bristol and is one of the few places that this can be achieved. We have a good young contingent (well, they certainly look young to me!) and it is fantastic to see them working through these methods. We've also tested members' diversity by introducing Carter Cinques. This standard might sound daunting to members thinking of visiting us on a Tuesday night but please do come along – you will always receive a warm welcome. As well as the monthly specials on meeting nights, I have also arranged additional quarter peals once a month to provide additional focus for specific members and these seem to have worked well.

### COUNTRY MEETING

This year's country meeting will be held in Portsmouth on 16 August. In addition to the ringing programme, a particular attraction will be the reception and dinner on HMS Warrior, Britain's first armour-plated iron-hulled warship (1860). Details of the booking arrangements are on the Society's web site, and on the leaflet distributed with this newsletter.

My year of office launched immediately into peals on the Saturday following election night, when we marked the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stedman's death. Since then, I have particularly enjoyed travelling around the country ringing with members in Winchester, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Worcester, Towcester and Wales and meeting members at Lincoln to listen to their peal. I would have preferred ringing but somehow I managed to invite 13 people. Given that I have asked/emailed people 810 times to fill ropes for peals and specials to date, this error represents a very small proportion – and at least it was too many ringers not too few!

Thanks are due to David Moore, David Llewellyn and Stef Warboys for the organisation of the Wales weekend. It was a rare break for me to only have to turn up and ring! Similarly the informal dinner is a rare night off for the Master but one which was much enjoyed.

The Wales tour took me back to my mother's family's homeland and I will shortly be ringing a peal at Wisbech where I learned to ring. Later in May, we will be visiting Washington to help celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of the cathedral bells. This will take me to my father's homeland so will complete the set.

The society put up a good show at the 12 bell eliminators, both winning their heat and helping drain the pub convincingly; although with St Paul's and the University of London there too the latter was inevitable! Well done to those members and the Secretary who were involved in the organisation of the day.

There are still a lot of activities to come: The visit to the war graves to mark the sacrifice of members in the great war; the country meeting in August aboard HMS Warrior in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard; UK14, once again generously organised by Simon Linford; peal day in September; the annual dinner in November. All of these events bring members together for the very best of ringing and the very best of socialising which is what the society is about. What more could one ask for?





## ASCY AND THE GREAT WAR

On 4th August 1914 Great Britain entered the Great War. At the end of the war, on 11th November 1918, it is estimated that 743,000 British servicemen had lost their lives. In addition to those who died, of course, were the countless who 'survived' with physical and/ or mental injuries and those who served, waited, worried and grieved at home (both men and women). The Somme in particular, alongside Mons, Ypres, Jutland and Passchendaele, were to become bywords for the horrors of modern war. The recruitment of a huge volunteer army, the formation of local so-called 'Pals' regiments followed by conscription, meant that this war, unlike any before, touched almost every family and every town, village or hamlet as the war memorials in our churches and churchyards still bear witness.

The effect on ringing was marked also; ringing activities slowed considerably and in some places pretty much stopped altogether.

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers maintains Rolls of Honour for both the Great War and WWII, ASCY members may have seen these book on the way up to the ringing chamber at St Pauls Cathedral. 7 ringers listed in the Great War book are recorded as being ASCY members specifically while a number more, that are listed under their local Societies, were known to have also been ASCY members.



At the end of July, 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 there will be an opportunity to travel to France and Belgium to visit the battlefields, cemeteries and memorials, including visits to those places where ASCY members are buried or commemorated around Ypres, including the Menin Gate and the Tyne Cot cemetery, the largest Commonwealth War Grave cemetery in the world. Visits will also be made to the Lutyens designed Memorial at Thiepval which commemorates over 72,000 servicemen that lost their lives during the Battle of the Somme that have no known grave.

The Master will lay a wreath during the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July.

I will be joining the group and would encourage those with an interest to come along also to gain an appreciation of the sacrifice that happened very nearly 100 years ago.

*Alan Regin – Steward of the Rolls of Honour*

## PEAL RINGING IN 2012/2013

A total of 257 peals were rung from 17 November 2012 to 12 November 2013, the year of Graham Bradshaw's mastership. Graham himself was our leading peal ringer with 88, closely followed by Katie Town (everywhere) with 60. Both the number of peals rung and the number of members taking part (491) were a little up on the previous year.

Notable peals rung during the year included a 5100 Stedman Cinques at Cornhill, rung on the exact centenary of the first such peal, by a band of Past Masters, not all of whom were dedicated Stedman conductors. Also notable was a peal of Plain Bob Major at Loughborough Bell Foundry on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the extent of major. By seven of the original band, still going strong, joined by our Master.

The most visited towers were Cornhill (10) and St Magnus (8), followed by Garlickhythe and St Dunstan-in-the-West, and then Trinity Wall Street, New York, where all six peals were rung over one weekend.

Although the range of methods rung was very wide, with plenty of challenging spliced, Stedman Cinques (20) and Bristol Maximus (19) topped the list, showing a healthy respect for tradition.

Richard Allton, our Peal Recorder, keeps meticulous records of all our peal ringing activity, including compositions rung where available, and is always willing to answer individual enquiries. Full details of all Society peals rung are placed on the Society's web site.

## FREDERICK N SMEATON (1909-2013)

On the evening of Tuesday 14 May 2013, the ASCY gathered for a regular monthly meeting at The Counting House, in the City of London. As the Master called the meeting to order, it was already approaching breakfast time next day in Adelaide, South Australia, on the 104th birthday of Fred Smeaton, the Society's senior member. Greetings were sent to him from the meeting, and as ever, a prompt and witty reply arrived, neatly typed on Fred's iPad.

Just a few weeks later, on 7 July, came the news that Fred had passed away, sitting quietly in an armchair. Warm tributes to him were paid at the subsequent meeting, led by Phil Goodyer, our senior Australian, who had led the Society on a memorable trip to Adelaide during his master's year of 2011, during which many of us spent time with Fred.

Fred was born in Yorkshire in 1909 and brought up in Sussex, where he learned to ring as a teenager. With his wife and family, he emigrated to Adelaide in 1950. His peal ringing career was concentrated into the period from 1928 to 1947, almost all of it in and around Brighton, where he took up his first post with the Midland Bank. By the standards of the day, he was clearly a more than capable ringer, taking part in peals of Stedman Triples and Caters, Cambridge and Superlative Major, and a number of peals of Double Norwich. His first peal (Stedman Triples) was conducted by the legendary Frank Bennett, and the band included Bennett's daughter, Elsie Hairs, already a College Youth herself (elected in 1917), and for a long time referred to as 'the last lady member', until the rules were changed (back) in 1998.

In March 1935, Fred was one of eight bankers who gathered to ring a peal of Plain Bob Major at St Olave's Hart Street. Along with Harry W. Badger, Fred was elected to the ASCY before the peal, it being understood that the remaining six ringers were already members. Some months later, a brief letter in the Ringing World from the ASCY Secretary informed readers that the Society could not recognise the peal because it had been discovered that one of the band was not a member (this was Edward R Coles, of Lloyds Bank at High Wycombe).

Though Fred's election was of course entirely valid, and served him for the next 78 years, he did not actually ring a peal for the Society. He appears to have been unaware of this, for in his e-mail response to our birthday greetings, he wrote to me:

*As I think I have told you, my membership of ASCY came about when we met for what I believe was the only Bankers' peal ever rung when it was found that I was the only non-member so they proposed and elected me on the spot ( I guess things were a bit casual in 1935 !!) and, being the worst record keeper in the world, I think it is the only peal I have rung for the society in the mere 40 I have rung !!!*



*Fred Smeaton at the ASCY/SRCY dinner in Adelaide in February 2011*

Fred rounded off his peal ringing career in Australia, with one peal at Walkerville, and three on the magnificent eight at Adelaide Cathedral, including the first peal of major on the bells, conducted by George Pipe. His last peal was in 1975, of Stedman Triples at Adelaide conducted by Bill Perrins.

A spell out of ringing followed, as Fred took moved away from the city of Adelaide upon retirement, but he returned to the city after the death of his wife, and resumed active ringing at the age of 88! He remained engaged with the ringing community in Adelaide for the next fifteen years. He enjoyed meeting Society members during the tours of 2003 and 2011. At the time of the 2011 visit, he was coming up to his 102nd birthday, but was fully engaged with a well-rounded sense of humour. He was slightly bothered that he had been invited to surrender his driving licence at the age of 100 after what he termed 'a minor parking misjudgement', but he remained fit enough to make the ascent to the ringing chamber on his 102nd birthday to watch the Adelaide ringers lose a celebratory quarter peal (after a good birthday lunch), and then again next week to share their success.

## YOUTHFUL IMPERSONATORS by Chris Ridley

Over the years there have been a number of regional societies who have called themselves 'College Youths'. One well documented example is the Liverpool College Youths who appear to have existed for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Liverpool area has a long association with the Society going back to at least 1788 when James Delafondz, William Farnsworth and Nicholas Nicholson joined. It appears from the ASCY Name Book that new members from the area at the time tended to join en bloc at infrequent intervals which may explain why the Society of Liverpool College Youths was established.

The Liverpool College Youths were based at St Peter's Liverpool, the parish church which later became the pro Cathedral Church. The ring of 10 bells was transferred to St Helen, St Helens when St Peter's church was demolished between 1919 and 1923. Fortunately the Radcliffe Collection in the Liverpool Hope University Library holds three manuscripts (MS 61 to 63), the latter being the local society's peal book dated 1811, which helps us examine the connections between the ASCY and the local society. It is interesting that a significant number of new Liverpool based members were elected to the ASCY in both 1800 and 1854, and from comparing the ASCY Name Book with the local society peal book entries it is clear that bands tended to be generally comprised of ASCY members with a few additional ringers. However, a report in both the *Courier and Evening Gazette* (November 24 1800) and *Porcupine* (November 27 1800) suggests that when the local society was established in 1800 it may either have been founded by ASCY members or called on additional support from existing members outside the area to ring peals.

Whether the local society came into being to allow prospective members to join in activities is not known, but the evidence suggests the Society of Liverpool College Youths was not strictly a branch of the main Society, especially in the latter years of its existence.

There are though many similarities which show the influence of the ASCY members. For instance, the peal book includes an illustration copied from the ASCY membership certificate above a line drawing of St Peter, Liverpool. Up to 1863 the peal records are also richly illuminated in a similar fashion to our own peal books. The peal book contains details of 115 peals rung between 9 November 1800 and 25 March 1882, in addition to a set of rules headed '*for the purpose of establishing and forming themselves into a respectable society, began in the year 1800 at St Peter's and re-established at the opening of the bells at St Nicholas 1814*'. These are signed by William Lloyd (President), William Jaeger (Vice President), Henry Rothwell, (Treasurer) and James Briarley (Secretary). Again, only William Jaeger and Henry Rothwell appear to have been ASCY members.

The rules contain the usual references to fines for late or non-attendance on Sundays and practice nights, and for being intoxicated. Perhaps more unusually the rules required each member to '*be particularly attentive in appearing on Sundays clean and decent in their apparel as circumstances may afford*'. The local society obviously realised the importance of a good social side as members were particularly requested to '*meet together after the ringing is over for the satisfaction of enjoying each others company and transacting the necessary business at the house appointed by the society for that purpose*'. Each member was required to pay a subscription of 1/- (5p) each month towards the annual dinner which took place on the 15 May. The rules also promoted hand bell ringing and gave a preference for scientific (change) ringing.

The Society of Liverpool College Youths was active as a society for around 82 years, although possibly not continuously given it was re-established when the new ring of 12 bells was installed at St Nicholas, Pier Head, Liverpool. The installation of the new Dobson ring of bells was widely reported in the press at the time, with invited bands representing the St Martin's Youths, Birmingham and a band of 'College Youths' from Ashton-under-Lyne opening the bells on 4 June 1814. The *Liverpool Mercury* (June 10 1814) reported the St Martin's Youths won a handsome silver cup of twenty guineas value presented by the Churchwardens of the town for their ringing, the report giving full details of both bands as well as the new and former rings of bells. Other reports in the *Liverpool Mercury* (June 10, 1814), *Lancashire Gazette* (June 11 1814) and *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* (June 13 1814) show the opening of the bells was accompanied by significant celebrations - '*At twelve o'clock, a salute of 21 guns was fired from the fort, and the military being drawn up on each side of Castle-street, fired a feu de joie, after which, they gave three British cheers. At one, a salute of 21 guns was by his Majesty's ships in the river*'.

While the evidence suggests the Liverpool College Youths was not strictly a true branch of the main Society, the area continues to retain strong links as witnessed by recent elections to membership and the successful Country Meeting held there in 2008. It would be interesting to know if the records that survive from other local 'College Youths' societies exhibit similar features to the Liverpool College Youths.



## ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL BELLS APPEAL

The ring of 12 bells at St Paul's was installed in 1878. It is the oldest complete 12 in the world and the second heaviest in terms of total weight.

The connection between the College Youths and St Paul's dates back to the installation when the Dean and Chapter asked the Society to provide a band of ringers that later became the St Paul's Cathedral Guild. Until 1999 all members of the Guild had to be College Youths. The Guild Rules still stress the close connection with the Society and at present 27 of the 30 Guild members are College Youths. 75 of the 99 peals, including all but one of those recorded on the ringing room wall, were rung by the Society.

After over 130 years of service, including 3 half hour sessions every Sunday in recent years, the bells are in need of some attention. The original wooden headstocks on the front 8 bells need to be replaced. When the bells were installed, and for many years after, the atmosphere in London was thick with smoke and soot and during the blitz smoke, chemicals and other materials were thrown into the air. The unique arrangement whereby the bells hang behind 4 large roundels means that they are completely open to the elements. As a result, they are caked in dirt and need to be cleaned to restore the original sound quality. It is proposed that they are removed by crane, taken to the foundry, given a thorough clean and the headstocks replaced with modern cast iron ones. Failing accidents such as cracking, the bells should then be good for at least another hundred years apart from routine maintenance.

In addition to the bells, the ringing room requires some work. The peal records on the walls are starting to decay and, if they are to be preserved, they need treatment by professional restorers. The lighting has always been poor and it is proposed to replace it with modern uplighters. Painting the walls will also make the room lighter. The Society will derive much of the benefit from the improved lighting as most of the ringing done during the hours of darkness takes place at its Tuesday practices.

The total cost of all this work is currently being finalised but it will be in the order of £200,000\*. The Cathedral does not have money within its maintenance budget for the work and, in consequence, all of it will have to be raised. It is hoped that the livery companies and the City of London, which donated the bells in 1878, will help us but it seems likely that a very considerable sum will have to be raised by the ringers. Society members can help by giving donations large or small. UK tax payers can increase the value of their donations by 25% by making them subject to Gift Aid. Higher rate tax payers should be able to reclaim an additional 25% (31.25% for those paying tax at 45%).

Members who are able to, may wish to consider one of the following options for larger donations:-

- Anyone donating £5,000 or more (or £4,000+ with Gift Aid) will have their name recorded on a donors' board in the ringing room similar to the one recording the 1878 donors;
- Anyone donating £15,000 or more (or £12,000+ with Gift Aid) will qualify as a bell sponsor. In addition to having their name recorded of the donors' board they will be able to have their name cast into the headstock of one of bells 1 to 8 or mounted on a plaque on the headstock of one of bells 9 to 12, which already have cast iron headstocks. Dedications, such as to the memory of a deceased person, can be included.

An appeal by the Cathedral will be launched in due course. In addition, although a formal request has not yet been made, it is hoped that the Society BRF will sponsor the project and give Members the opportunity to donate by that route if they can.

If anyone would be interested in donating, please contact me at [treasurer@ascy.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@ascy.org.uk) or at my postal address (193 Lennard Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1QN).

**Phil Rogers, Project Manager for St Paul's Cathedral Guild.**

*\*As we went to press we received reports that additional work to the frame may be required which will increase the cost by an amount yet to be quantified.*

## THE SOCIETY'S FINANCES

In the last year the Society's General Fund recorded a surplus of £581, despite exceptional expenditure on property of £636. This result was significantly better than we anticipated for a number of reasons of which the most significant was an increase in Newsletter donations combined with a containment of costs.

The Society's finances remain in good heart but much of its income is potentially volatile and we have probably squeezed costs as much as we reasonably can. Paper Newsletter costs in particular are likely to keep rising as postal rates increase, especially as a stockpile of stamps purchased by the Secretary at 2012 prices is now exhausted. Members can continue to assist us with the Newsletter by making donations and, wherever possible, switching to Email copies.

The Bell Restoration Fund also had a good year, with net income of £8,800. At the year end the Fund's unallocated reserves stood at over £33,000. The policy of the Fund's Trustees is to use its resources to support its objectives, which are to provide grants to churches at which the Society has a major interest. We are aware of a number of pending requests for grants which are likely to consume most of the reserves which we currently hold.

PDF copies of the General Fund and BRF accounts are available by Email on request ([treasurer@ascy.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@ascy.org.uk)).

## MEMBERSHIP PROPOSALS

The Society is committed to the pursuit of excellence, and welcomes proposals for new members who share that commitment, either in person at a business meeting or by letter or e-mail to the Secretary. In each case, a proposer and seconder are required. Proposals should be accompanied by the full postal address (including post code) of the candidate, and should set out clearly the rationale for the proposal, which will normally include an account of the candidate's ringing career to date and an assessment of their future potential. The future of the Society depends upon the recruitment of good new members, and we strongly encourage existing members to seek out suitable potential recruits.

Membership proposals are considered carefully and critically at our business meetings, where all members attending have a vote on each proposal. The fact that proposals are made at one meeting, while the actual election takes place at the next or a subsequent meeting, allowing members time for reflection, demonstrates the importance the Society attaches to the election process.

The Society chooses not to set out detailed criteria for membership in its rules. (The requirement to have rung at least a quarter peal is a longstanding requirement to make it clear that the Society does not elect non-ringing honorary members, and is not an indicator of the level of experience or expertise we seek). There is nevertheless a

common understanding that we are seeking to attract the best ringers of each generation. Membership of the Society is rightly seen as a privilege accorded only to ringers who have reached an excellent standard or who otherwise command respect in their local area. This obviously means excellent striking, and the determination to avoid mistakes. Most of those elected will be familiar with the standard surprise repertoire, and many will be comfortable with ringing on higher numbers of bells where their local opportunities permit this. The primary requirement, though, is not the ability to ring methods of great complexity, but to reach and maintain high standards of striking and method ringing. We also want those elected as members to enjoy and contribute to the fellowship which the Society offers.

Members planning to propose candidates are welcome to contact the Secretary for an informal discussion. It is in any event useful to have advance notice of membership proposals. Ideally at least one of the sponsors should be a long-standing and active member of the Society. Statements of support for the candidate from other members in the local area may also be helpful. Candidates and their sponsors are encouraged to be present at their election meeting if possible, but we recognise that distance will rule this out in some cases.

The (once-only) membership fee is £40, payable upon election.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### PEAL WEEKEND

We designate the third weekend of September as peal weekend, which this year falls on 19, 20 and 21 September. Last year, we managed to ring 44 peals, including two in the USA. The Senior Steward, Katie Town, will shortly be contacting those who have organised attempts in recent years, trying to make sure that we have a good range of attempts arranged throughout the UK and abroad. If you are planning to organize an attempt, please let Katie know. She will be pleased to try to broker arrangements between organisers and those who would like to be placed in an attempt ([senior.steward@ascy.org](mailto:senior.steward@ascy.org)). Even if you are not a regular and enthusiastic peal ringer, this is the weekend to make an exception. This year, peal weekend coincides with the Master's 50th birthday, so a number of peal attempts will take place in Sussex, followed by a social gathering at Shipley.

### 377th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The Society's 377th Anniversary Dinner will take place on Saturday 1st November. It will again be held at the Guoman Tower Hotel, close to Tower Bridge. Tickets may be purchased using the enclosed order form. The seating plan will consist of round tables of 10. Members are invited to make up tables and to encourage "occasional" and prospective new members to join them.

Accommodation at the Tower and other hotels in the area is available at competitive rates through Reservations 2000. For details please contact them on 020 8547 0601, quoting the Society, or obtain an online booking form by e-mail ([res2000@res2000.co.uk](mailto:res2000@res2000.co.uk)) or from the ASCY web site.



## SILENT PEAL RINGING IN THE ASCY

### *A personal take on silent ringing, by Neil Buswell*

Silent and non-conducted peal ringing is the ultimate challenge in ringing, requiring 100% concentration from all ringers from start to finish. When I ring a “normal” conducted peal, I sometimes feel about 20 minutes from the end “this one is in the bag”. I know that in the unlikely event of anyone going wrong, there will be up to 11 ringers to quickly put them back onto the line. With silent peals, it is only in the bag when you hear rounds at the end.

As one would expect, the Society has been at the forefront of silent ringing for a very long time, although less so in recent years. When I joined the College Youths in 1981, Ian Dear was Master, and he was very keen on silent ringing. As well as hearing about the exploits of many silent peals in his year as Master, I remember him organising silent touches of Stedman Triples at St Lawrence Jewry on practice nights. Also in his year as Master was the legendary 10080 silent Stedman Triples at Meldreth using Slack’s 2-part and Noonan’s one part compositions, one of the greatest feats in the history of the Society.

This inspired me shortly afterwards to organise ULSCR silent peals of Slack’s and Noonan’s, although my main objective in doing this was to keep Linda Garton quiet for three hours.

Richard Allton has sent me a list of silent peals rung by the Society. This shows 88 peals from 1884 to 2013. Richard believes this may not be a complete list, as there may be earlier peals. The list makes very interesting reading, with about half the peals being Stedman and around 40% being spliced surprise. Some that are worthy of mention – apart from the Meldreth 10080 already highlighted above – are as follows:

- The first ever silent peal of Stedman Cinques, at Cornhill in 1913, repeated at the 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries
- Carter’s Odd Bob, (Handbells) 1917
- Stedman Triples, various compositions at Deptford in the 1970s
- Pitman’s in the 1980s
- RABS, at Leighton Buzzard, 1991
- Chandler’s in hand, 1992
- Stedman Triples, bobs only, at Bermondsey in 1995
- and Stedman Triples, Colin Wyld bobs only at Bishopsgate in 1996

In 2012, I decided to organise a Society silent peal of Slack’s 2-part. If you look at this composition, it is daunting, and very difficult. However, the task is made somewhat easier by assigning ringers a bell in advance (I won’t cover here the very clever skill where ringers’ positions are drawn out of a hat). Each ringer then has the task of learning just their own line for the whole peal. In

Slack’s 2-part, 5 of the 7 ringers have to learn just half of the peal. The trick in learning something like this is to look for patterns: the longer you look for patterns, the easier the learning. Also, it helps if you think of ways of memorising things. For example, when doing zero bobs up at the back followed by 2 bobs down at the back, I memorised this as a famous football match which finished 0-2. Richard Burton also had a 0-2 to remember: he had learnt this as the O2 Arena. That’s much better, why didn’t I think of that?

There are often 6 bobs in a row at the back. It is tricky to count to 6 without losing count, so again it is worth looking for patterns. For example, not long after the start, the 4<sup>th</sup> does 6 bobs at the back in 6/7 down. Bell number 6 has just left the back, goes down to slow work, and then after finishing 4-5 up replaces the 4<sup>th</sup> at the back. There is no need on the 4<sup>th</sup> to count 6 bobs – just watch the 6<sup>th</sup> disappear and wait for it to reappear.

The Slack’s peal, rung at St Lawrence Jewry, went very well, almost without fault. There was one crash on the front, about 20 minutes from the end. It only lasted one whole pull, but was further proof that these peals are never in the bag. An interesting feature about silent ringing is that it can be difficult to control the speed, because of the lack of any communication. At 3hr1, this peal was slightly fast, and Chris Poole on the 7<sup>th</sup> looked quite hot by the end. With the peal being silent, he had little opportunity to slow things down!

Following that highly successful project, the band was keen for me to organise something else. My next project was very different: the Pipe Classic cyclic peal, rung silent. This is a very different type of challenge to Stedman. The composition is relatively easy to learn, and the methods are mainly in the standard repertoire. The real difficulty here is that everyone has to stay right the whole time, and if you do go wrong, you need to know how to get back on to the line without help. Again, like the Slack’s, a bit of time looking for patterns can be of great help. Although ultimately unsuccessful, we had some long patches of terrific ringing at times: however, sooner or later one unfortunate ringer would fall off the line and be unable to get back. It did convince me though that this will ultimately be rung: I do hope the Society lead the way with this.

Currently, I am organising Noonan’s – the famous one-part peal of Stedman Triples. This is a bit more of a challenge than Slack’s, being twice as much learning for most of the ringers.

As mentioned earlier, Cornhill was the setting for the first silent peal of Stedman Cinques in 1913. In 1963, a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary silent peal, also at Cornhill, was rung to commemorate this. A relatively straightforward composition was chosen. Dennis Randall was asked to

ring. Although he was a top Stedman Cinques ringer from the St Paul's Cathedral Guild, he was not known for his composing or conducting skills. He was given the 9<sup>th</sup>, and all he had to remember was to make a bob at 1 and then ring plain courses for the rest of the peal. Dennis thought about this for a while, and then asked "How will I know when to finish?" The answer came back "when everyone is looking the same way!"

Chris Rogers has provided a few words about the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary peal:

*"On 22nd February 2013 a band of Past Masters rang a silent and non-conducted peal of Stedman Cinques at St Michael's, Cornhill, on the 100th anniversary of the first ever silent and non-conducted peal of Stedman Cinques on tower bells, rung in the same tower (although on different bells) by a Society band and recorded on a grand peal board. The composition, by the Master of 1988-9, was not exactly straightforward and almost certainly contained many more turning courses than either the original peal or the one rung in 1963 to mark the 50th anniversary. It was well rung, although without a conductor to comment on the speed of the ringing, it was a little slower than might be expected on these bells."*

Paul Mounsey is by far the Society's leading ringer for silent peals with over 50. He has sent me the following about silent ringing:

*"Although I had rung one or two silent peals before coming to London, my enthusiasm for silent ringing was largely engendered by Ian Dear and Jim Clatworthy in the late seventies. There were peals of Stedman Triples, both regular twin-bob compositions and difficult one-parts, and of spliced surprise maximus. We also had one or two attempts at the Stedman "family" - Triples, Caters and Cinques all on the same day. I have rung both Pitman's spliced surprise major series (4 to 9 methods) and Kippin's spliced surprise royal series (4 - 8 methods), and various one-offs including several of Stedman Cinques.*

*In my experience silent peals are often of a very high standard, and that is one of its attractions. There are perhaps three key reasons for this. First you have to learn to focus hard on staying right, and more importantly, to be able to get right very quickly if you do make an error. That helps you to ring reliably in any peal, but silent peals really are a team effort and you are always conscious that even a minor mistake might lead to disaster. Secondly silent ringing often settles quickly without the need for a conductor to give advice on speed or striking. This means listening and watching, and learning how to adjust to fit in with the rest of the band. Thirdly, and perhaps most obviously, good preparation is vital, including understanding the optimum amount of information to learn and retain. So for example when we rang Slack's 2-part Stedman Triples, everyone was assigned their bell in*

*advance so you only needed to know your work, not the whole composition as if you were calling it. I suspect we all had a different way of doing it, but it certainly helped us to learn how to learn.*

*I have taken various approaches to silent ringing, depending on the composition and the methods. So again with the example of Slack's, the amount of individual learning is relatively small but has to be very thorough and the reward is that a band can ring a challenging composition without needing a super-conductor. Mostly though, I would learn the whole composition as if I were going to call it, but am then spared the stress of having to do the actual conducting. It can also be a good learning experience for anyone who can learn a composition but is not yet confident about conducting it.*

*Some of the most rewarding silent peals I have rung were when bells were drawn immediately beforehand - an extra challenge but well worth doing if the band is up to it."*

There have been just four Society silent peals this century. As these represent the ultimate challenge in ringing, I would urge more people to organise Society peals. If you do, the following tips may help.

A practice quarter peal in advance of the peal can be very helpful. This can give confidence and vital experience to those who are unsure about silent ringing, and is also a great way to check everyone has understood the composition properly.

I like to provide detailed notes and tips to participants in advance of the peal. A typical band would range from experienced experts to those who are new to silent ringing, and therefore some notes - which assume zero knowledge - usually go down well. Also, I like to encourage band members to share tips on patterns and tips for learning. This proved useful in the silent cyclic project, as some ringers pointed out various features of method structure. For the peal itself, I appoint a "conductor", whose job is to shout "stand" if the ringing has reached the point of no return. This is an important point - without a conductor, there is a reluctance to be the first to set your bell, and poor ringing could potentially go on for far too long. I like to say a few words before the peal, reminding people that the peal will be rung for the ASCY, and although it will be silent with no-one speaking to you, the very highest standards in striking must be maintained throughout if it is to be counted as a Society peal. Finally, I point out that "silent" also means no form of gesturing that can be construed as helping. I remember a Society meeting a long time ago when a silent and non-conducted attempt was recorded as non-conducted but not silent, as one member had gestured with his hand to help another ringer get back onto their line.

## NEW MEMBERS

The following were elected and welcomed as new Members in the year to November 2013:

Darran Ricks of South Marston  
Ryan S Noble of North Marston  
Alexander T Taft of Washington, DC  
Frederick DuPuy of Washington, DC  
John Hitchings of New York  
Tina Hitchings of New York  
Jennifer S Mackley of New York  
Richard H Johnston of Cullompton  
William P Carew of Liskeard  
Jemma L Mills of Shelford  
Sharon L Mills of Shelford  
Liam Craddock of Liverpool  
Mark A Collins of Liverpool

Andrew J Rawlinson of Weaverham  
Daniel Graham of Southampton  
Kristian D Scudamore of Mangotsfield  
Benjamin J Meyer of London  
Matthew C Webb of Woking  
Ian J Culham of Manningtree  
Peter R Elliott of Worcester  
Alistair A F Smith of Worcester  
Jack P Gunning of Sevenoaks  
Andrew M Hills of Faversham  
Michael O'Hagan of Oxford  
Nicholas D Hughes of Much Hadham

## OBITUARY

We paid tribute to the following Members at Society Business Meetings in the year to November 2013:

Frederick N Smeaton of Adelaide, elected in 1935  
Jack S Dear of Baldock, elected in 1949  
Tudor P Edwards of Pentre, elected in 1950  
Jack R Worrall of Jersey, elected in 1952  
Christopher T Brown of Wareham, elected in 1957  
George E Hancock of Wakefield, elected in 1959  
Dennis A Leslie of Hinton Waldrist, elected in 1960  
Colin Ashworth of Hebden Bridge, elected in 1964

Arthur C Berry of Malvern, elected in 1970  
Michael A Frost of Drayton, elected in 1971  
J Barry Pickup of Beccles, elected in 1974  
Leonard England of East Pennard, elected in 1975  
Roger E Peckham of Ashill, elected in 1976  
James Attwood Jr of Bredons Norton, elected in 1977  
Roger G Green of Ilkley, elected in 2001

## MILESTONES

We congratulate the following members who celebrated 50 years' membership in 2013:

Derek S Beaufoy of South Petherton  
David A H Bennett of Lymington  
Roy Bettley-Cooke of Cobham  
Hugh E Bishop of Abingdon  
David A Burt of Cinderford  
Christopher K Cooper of Selby  
Geoffrey Davies of Lexington, USA  
Geoffrey K Dodd of Newbury  
Colin D Emery of Oldham  
John H Fielden of Birmingham  
Robert N Harris of Norwich

Michael S Holbrook of St Austel  
Paul G Holmes of Overton  
V David Jenner of Steeple Claydon  
David Kingman of Rothewell  
Anthony Laughton of Alfreton  
John F Murfin of Holmes Chapel  
David T H Robertson of Teignmouth  
Robin H Rogers of Stamford  
A Victor Sheppard of Rustington  
Ian M Smith of Bendafe, Portugal  
Rodney A Yeates of Newcastle

And we congratulate the following members who reached 60 years membership in 2013:

Keith Abbott of Hook Norton  
William G Bibby of Frodsham  
Michael Bishop of East Hagbourne  
Cyril C Deem of Exmouth  
Graham R Eyles of Box  
Michael J Horseman of Clutton  
S Anthony Jesson of Leicester  
Christopher M P Johnson of Cambridge  
Basil Jones of Hertford  
John R Ketteringham, MBE, of Lincoln

Robert G Lay of Hardgate  
Rev Brooke K Lunn of London  
Anthony R Peake of Swindon  
Norman Smith of Burnley  
Eric Sutton of Swindon  
Ian W Taylor of Ulverston  
Joseph Thornley of Bolton  
Ivor H Trueman of Thame  
E John Wells of Reading



## PRACTICE SCHEDULE 2014

The practice schedule as currently arranged is set out below. Changes to this are posted on the Society's website and notified to members via the e-mail group. Business meetings take place after the practice on the second Tuesday of each month. The normal venue for Business Meetings is The Counting House, 50 Cornhill, London EC3.

May 2	Bow
May 13	St Magnus (Special practice: St Paul's)
May 20	Cornhill
May 27	Cripplegate
June 3	St Sepulchre
June 10	Cornhill (Special practice: Magnus)
June 17	East Grinstead (7pm)
June 24	Bow
July 1	Cornhill
July 8	Bow (Special practice: Cripplegate)
July 15	St Magnus
July 22	Cornhill
July 29	Cripplegate
Aug 5	Bow
Aug 12	St Magnus (Special Practice: St Paul's)
Aug 19	St Sepulchre
Aug 26	Southwark
Sept 2	St Magnus
Sept 9	Cornhill (Special practice: Bow)
Sept 16	St Paul's
Sep 23	Bow
Sep 30	Cripplegate
Oct 7	St Magnus
Oct 14	Bow (Special practice: Cornhill)
Oct 21	St Sepulchre
Oct 28	Southwark
Nov 4	Bow
Nov 11	St Magnus (Special practice: St Sepulchre)
Nov 18	Cripplegate
Nov 25	Cornhill
Dec 2	St Paul's Cathedral
Dec 9	Bow (Special practice at St Sepulchre)
Dec 16	St Magnus
Dec 23	Cornhill
Dec 30	Southwark

## SOCIETY OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS 2013/14

Master	Simon S Meyer
Secretary	David E House
Treasurer	Philip Rogers
Senior Steward	Katherine L Town
Junior Steward	Tessa K Beadman
Librarian	Dickon R Love
Trustees	Paul N Mounsey Christopher H Rogers
Peal Recorder	Richard I Allton
Webmaster	Martin J Cansdale

## TOWER SECRETARIES

**St Giles Cripplegate:** Gwen Rogers, 193 Lennard Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1QN. Tel 020 8778 6308

E-mail: gbm.rogers@ntlworld.com

**St Lawrence Jewry:** Rebecca Cansdale

Tel 07739 477110

E-mail: jewry@ascy.org.uk

**St Magnus the Martyr:** Dickon Love, 10 Wharton Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 3LF. Tel 020 8466 1953

E-mail: dickon@ascy.org.uk

**St Sepulchre:** Rachael Smith

Tel 07966 962654

E-mail: Rachael\_c\_smith@yahoo.com

**St Michael's Cornhill:** Tony Kench, 75 Little Britain Apt 51, London EC1A 7BT. Tel 020 7796 2656

E-mail: tony.kench@btinternet.com

## ASCY ON THE WEB

The Society's Web Site is at [www.ascy.org.uk](http://www.ascy.org.uk). The Web Site contains regular updates on Society activities, pictures of Society events, contact details for Members, Society peals and much more information.

## PEAL FEES

Peal fees (£1.50 per rope) and details should be forwarded to the Treasurer within 2 months. Advance notice of peal attempts is given at Society Meetings if advised in time.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Please send to the Secretary, David E House, at 28 Waldegrave Road, Brighton, BN1 6GE (tel: 01273-507077; e-mail: [secretary@ascy.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ascy.org.uk)). Items for the web site should be e-mailed to Martin Cansdale ([webmaster@ascy.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@ascy.org.uk)).

## SOCIETY E-MAIL NEWS SERVICE

The Society maintains an e-mail news service, which is free to members. Subscription is via the web site or by sending an e-mail request to the Secretary or Webmaster. Members are encouraged to subscribe to the e-group and to provide their e-mail address for inclusion on the (hopefully spam-proof) web site list.

## NEWSLETTER FINANCE

This Newsletter is financed entirely by donations from Members. We are most grateful to those Members who have contributed during 2013. Some 600 Members have now elected to do receive the newsletter by e-mail, rather than by a paper copy, which has led to a saving in production and postage costs. However, postal charges continue to rise, so we still need more of you to sign up. Of course, we accept that it will not suit all members and hard copies will continue to be available for those who want them.