



# HRGB Scottish Newsletter

2018 Issue 1 – Jan/Feb 2018

## Chat from the Chair

I am sure all our readers will be as devastated as I was to hear of the death of Heather McLean of the Parish of Dunkeld Handbell Ringers. Heather possessed a magnificent gift for handbell ringing and we will miss her terribly. Our thoughts and prayers must be with Heather's family, friends and fellow ringers.

What a fantastic Autumn Rally we had at Bankfoot when Fred Gramman, Director of Music at the American Church in Paris, conducted *Polaris and the Northern Lights* by Brendan Bevan, *Peal con brio* by Karen Thompson and *Hosanna!* by Jason Krug (based on the tunes *Ellacombe* and *St. Theodulph*). Fred soon had 105 ringers at his fingertips in what was an exceptional day. A huge thankyou to Blair Bells for organising such a splendid event.

Elaine depicted the travels of our three golden bears and Teddy McRing on a map of Scotland together with some delightful photos. We also found out the answers to the Gold Quiz set by Susan Allan as part of our anniversary celebrations. Congratulations to the winner!

The Golden 50 Challenge, launched at the HRGB AGM in Exeter, will run until October 2018. Any team which recruits two new members will receive a £10 HRGB Shop Voucher and the numbers of new members will be shown on the HRGB website. So even more reason to join; a bargain at £12.00 a year!

I look forward to seeing you all at the 2018 AGM and Spring Rally which will be hosted by Mannofield Handbell Ringers at Mannofield Parish Church, Aberdeen on Saturday 24 March 2018.

My best wishes to you all.

### A Tribute to Heather McLean

Heather was born in Manchester where her Scottish father was in the police force. She was the youngest of three sisters and when she was 11, Heather's father retired from the police and the family moved to Birmingham where Heather finished her schooling. She greatly appreciated the support and encouragement of her parents who wanted their daughters to do their best and persevere with their education.

Heather's abilities and enthusiasm lay in mathematics and chemistry and she started off as a laboratory technician. When her marriage broke up she moved back with her young son to her parents who supported her through her primary school teacher training. Having taught in a couple of schools, Heather became an adviser in mathematics and science for Lancashire County Council, going round helping other teachers.



She met Alistair through a Scottish Country Dance club. They married 26 years ago on the condition that they would retire to Scotland. With her Dad being Scottish, Heather liked to maintain those links and Matthew remembers as a youngster, his intrepid Mum taking him on holidays all over Scotland ending up in Edinburgh for the Tattoo. So it was no hardship to retire north of the border.

While working as a teacher, Heather helped another member of staff establish a handbell group which kindled her interest in handbell ringing. She had always been musical and enjoyed playing the piano but it is through bell ringing that she is best known. She rang first at Dunblane but then set up a group in the parish of Dunkeld. Her energies and organisational skills meant it grew from nothing to a large group putting Dunkeld on the bellringing map. A widely appreciated solo ringer, she would meet folk from all over the world and raised a lot of money for parish funds.

She rang at HRGB rallies and a proud moment was to ring in Perthshire Amber with Dougie McLean performing an arrangement of Caledonia. She rang most recently on Santa Day at the start of December in the Cathedral. She organised group trips to Iona and Mull, Orkney; she organised concerts – incredible achievements and a lot of work for her. Although raised an Anglican, she was part of the Methodist church in Lancashire, but after moving to Murthly, Heather was a regular and faithful member of the congregation at Dunkeld. For her, ringing served the church in that it made an important contribution to worship.

There was a kind and thoughtful aspect to Heather but she was also a bit of a perfectionist, who liked things done right and she used to get anxious before performances lest anything go wrong. She liked the handbell group to ring correctly but also expected high standards of herself.

It is amazing Heather had any time to herself but she also made lovely cards using a lace technique called tatting. She had a lovely collection of different varieties of African violets she had cultivated. And although science was her big interest she loved the arts – keen on reading and in particular historical novels. She and Alistair always found time for holidays too – away with the caravan or on many cruises over the years.

Heather undoubtedly had drive and determination which enabled her to do so much. Her death has come very suddenly and is therefore all the more shocking to her family and friends. She will be sadly missed by all those who knew her.

## **An Update from Stonehaven**

Kilwhang Ringers celebrated ten years of ringing in September with a tea party. There was a display of what we had achieved over the years, where we had played music and photographs for us all to reminisce. For nostalgia we rung some pieces of music that we had played ten years ago along with some firm favourites.

In October some members travelled to Bankfoot, near Perth where we were privileged to take part in ringing with Fred Gramann at 'Autumn Gold.' An event to celebrate the 50th. anniversary of HRGB. This special occasion was enjoyed by all and indeed it was a day to remember.

November saw us ringing handbells to residents at local care homes and approaching Christmas we rung at a Candlelit service along with a Christingle service at surrounding churches.

We look forward to the year ahead with new pieces of music to challenge us and also the fun, friendship and joy that handbell ringing brings. Below is a poem which was written to celebrate the 10th anniversary of The Kilwhang Ringers by Elizabeth McGhie, our conductor.

Margaret Godsman,  
Kilwhang Ringers.

### **Bells**

**By Elizabeth McGhie**

How brightly ring the bells,  
Their sound lift spirits high.  
Listen, - Listen, to their beautiful tone,  
As they ring through your mind,  
And capture your soul!

Come, Come and hear how they ring,  
The sound is amazing, - such pleasure they bring.  
Sending their message to all who would hear,  
Listen - be joyful - the bells ring out clear.

A decade of ringing has past it is true,  
We all have our favourites, some old, - some new.  
But whatever we ring, I know you will say,  
The Kilwhang Ringers are here to stay!!

## **News from Inverness and the Far North**

Last year, the Inverness Handbell Ringers' gain was our loss as much loved Caithness Handbell Ringer John Heathcote moved south to join our "neighbouring" team. However, John has proved to be a superb link and has been dogged in his determination to bring the teams of the Far North together for a day of music making. I'm delighted to report that we now have an event planned for April 7<sup>th</sup> 2018 which will take place in Inverness, where the two Caithness teams will

meet up with John and his new friends from the Inverness Handbell Ringers. If any other teams would like to get together to play with us, please contact [katrinathurso@aol.com](mailto:katrinathurso@aol.com) or give me a ring on 01847893517 – depending on the venue size, we'd love to say "the more, the merrier!"

In the meantime, with John's permission and in the interests of fostering a sense of common humanity and humility among bellringers across Scotland, I reprint his article of 2004 about the Art of Being Lost as a brand new ringer. Smile as you remember that feeling...

## ***Lost without trace***

I couldn't help but laugh at the article in Autumn 2004 Reverberations – all about the joys of counting 2/4 time, when the piece starts on an up-beat, and has a similarly placed repeat. It's almost two years since I started ringing, not having read a piece of music since round about 1965, and two years ago I wouldn't even have understood the article, let alone been able to empathise and laugh.

I still get lost, but I'm relieved to see that it can happen to almost anyone in the team. It's not so bad if you are a bar early, but being a bar behind results in an embarrassing ting (or in my case playing the lower bells, a bong) after that strangely hollow C major chord finishing the piece.

With a bit of luck, earlier you have realised that some of those funny chords which you have noticed, even if the audience hasn't, are a result of *your* bells being played at the wrong time. So you stop ringing, trying not to look too blank or too concerned. You then have to try to pick up where the rest of the team are. This can be challenging if, like me, you can't look at a piece of music and hear it in your head. Sometimes there's a distinctive bit both audibly and visually on the printed page, so you know where to start getting back in synch, after recovering from the fact that it's not one bar that you were adrift, but three! Sometimes you can pick up the bit the person next to you plays – I usually play C and D, so I rely on the person playing E and F to get it right. This isn't 100% reliable, since of course they may be relying on me!

Because we usually have only two notes each, no-one has the tune and accurate counting is the only way I can hope to get the notes at the right time. I get complained at if the counting is audible, and my fellow ringers seem to have very keen ears for this. Counting crotchets in 4/4 is fine – **1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4**. Quavers come in as '*ands*' **1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 1...** Fine, but it's not so easy playing an isolated note at '*2 and*', especially when you've had nothing to play for the first 15 bars (the settings we have of Christmas carols are like this). Then there are semi-quavers – 16 notes in the bar **1 and with a 2 and with a 3 and with a 4 and with a 1...** By the time you have thought this through, those who don't have to are miles ahead! Or there's the opposite, the Huron carol is dead slow in quavers, 4/4, eight notes to the bar. **1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4** goes through my head – I'm getting through bars twice as fast as the team, and I fall silent, trying not to look too spare, hoping to pick up the final chord. 'We saw three ships...' is 6/8. Counting **1 2 3 4 5 6 1...** takes too long, but **1 and a 2 and a** doesn't help with note 3. Perhaps the final straw – we have a setting of 'Scotland the brave' which has another tune interspersed in the middle. 'Scotland the brave' is 4/4 dotted crotchets (**1 and with**) and semi-quavers on *a*, and the bit in the middle is 6/8. That's why you haven't heard us play it yet!

What intrigues me and annoys me is that I have absolutely no problem *singing* these irregular rhythms, despite not being able to count and sing. I can even cope with the verses of most hymns

not starting at a bar line, or liturgical chants with a different number of beats in every bar. Just don't expect me to ring them!

Repeats are always a challenge. Quite a lot of music has repeats, giving more playing time from less print (particularly important in pre-computer days when it was all hand set), and reducing page-turns which are difficult with both hands full of bells. A missed repeat immediately leaves one several bars in front of everyone else. Some pieces have rather complicated repeats – there's one piece we play that basically goes ABABCABABCstop. It's slightly more complicated than this, because the A bit is a bar different on the second and fourth times through. You can get so lost that, not only are you not sure where you are, but you are not sure how many times the whole thing has gone round – are you lost for the third time, or the fourth time!

There are more esoteric reasons for getting lost very quickly. Playing a different piece of music from everyone else, because of a last minute change of mind while your mind was elsewhere, is a classic way to get very lost very quickly, with no hope of recovery. Because not all of us can read the music and hear it, it's easier than you might think not to realise that this has happened. Just before Christmas, we practised a piece, on two pages, where page 2 sounded very odd. It stayed odd on a repeat. Two members of the team had their page 2 upside down! This isn't quite as obvious with music as it is with words because notes can be and are printed either way up, but it's unusual to have the clef at the right-hand end of the bar.

In the article referred to above, someone gets 1/3 of a bar out, because they played the time signature, in number notation. We play staff notation, so that one hasn't happened to us – yet!

*John Heathcote*

## **Nominations for Honorary Membership**

Nominations are invited for Honorary Membership of the Scottish Regional Association of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain.

The Award of Honorary Membership is made in recognition of significant contributions to the life of the Scottish Regional Association. Candidates are expected to fulfil at least eight of the following criteria:

- e Leads or has led a handbell team
- e Is or has been a committee member
- e Is or has been a Regional office bearer
- e Has promoted regional events
- e Has promoted youth interest regionally or nationally
- e Has promoted interest either within schools or elsewhere
- e Has encouraged groups to start up
- e Has worked or is working with the larger church outreach
- e Has contributed to the bell music repertoire
- e Has demonstrated long service to the Association
- e Is or has been a National office bearer

Nominations, together with a proposer and seconder, should be sent by email to:

John Elcock  
Chair  
HRGB Scottish Regional Association

[john.s.elcock@gmail.com](mailto:john.s.elcock@gmail.com)

## Get Creative Festival takes place all over the UK between 17 - 25 March 2018.

The festival is an annual celebration of creative participation of all kinds and is a great way for people to find out how to get creative on their doorstep and try something different with hundreds of hands-on events on offer.

### Why you should get involved:

- **Grow your audience / group** – If you're looking to develop your audience or attract new members, Get Creative Festival is the perfect opportunity to profile yourselves and get more people involved in your regular activities.
- **Raise your profile and connect to local BBC** – The extra exposure brought about by Get Creative Festival can help raise your group's profile in the local media, potentially boosting participant and audience numbers.
- **Celebrate your achievements** – We know you work hard all year round, both behind the scenes and in front, taking part in Get Creative Festival is a chance to come together and celebrate all that you've achieved.
- **Feel part of something bigger** – Knowing that you're part of a nationwide event celebrating creative activity reminds us all that we're part of something bigger. A warm feeling inside is distinctly possible.

### Here's how you can get involved:

- 1) Approach your local library and ask if they're supporting Get Creative Festival - offer them a handbell ringing hands-on session for the festival dates and see if they'll provide you with space for the activities.
- 2) Open up your usual rehearsal session or any other planned activities that are scheduled for the festival dates and badge it as a 'Get Creative' event.

For more information on how to get involved please email [info@getcreativeuk.com](mailto:info@getcreativeuk.com)



## Important Dates for your Diary:

- Saturday 24 March 2018** 2018 AGM and Spring Rally hosted by Mannofield Handbell Ringers at Mannofield Parish Church, Aberdeen
- 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018** Easter Sunday – this is an even more memorable deadline for submissions to the next newsletter! ☺ Please email [katrinathurso@aol.com](mailto:katrinathurso@aol.com) or post to 26 Grove Lane, Thurso, KW14 8AE
- 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> April 2018** HRGB National Rally – This is being held at Harper Adams University, north of Telford, Shropshire
- Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2018** Highland Gathering of Ringers in Inverness – contact Katrina for more details if you might like to join us
- Wed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018** Scottish Schools Ring is being held at Newton Primary School, Dunblane
- Autumn Rally 2018** Remember to get in touch with the committee if your team might like to host this autumn ringing event in October 2018!

## STOP PRESS!



### Have you any unwanted polo shirts?

Any size, any colour, any design.

I will collect them at the National Rally or by arrangement beforehand .  
Through the charity Loving Hands they will be sent to a village in Gambia called Batti, where they will be used for school sport, especially football teams. If more are collected than can be used in Batti, they will be sent to refugee centres in Greece though Hope and Aid Direct.

Many thanks

Helen Wetherfield

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