

NEWS FOR ALL CLERGY RINGERS



from the Guild of Clerical Ringers to all ringing clergy

The Clerical Guild was established in 1937, and apart from the war years has organized an annual tour ever since, until Covid forced the cancellation, not only of the tours, but also of other gatherings such as peal attempts.

This year, the tours have returned, but after such a break, members may not be aware of the value, refreshment and enjoyment they offer.

Greetings to you all!

We hope you will enjoy this reminder of the Guild and what we have been up to. You may not have joined a Guild tour before, so included here are some insights and information to show what you are missing!

Guild members have been busy behind the scenes developing new ideas, important as the future of the church continues to adapt to current challenges.

One significant aspect of Guild activities is the friendship that develops between us as we meet, not only to ring, but socially and to enjoy our shared yet varied vocations.

Our most recent tour last September took us to South Wales

Unashamed tower grab meets with delight!

Over the last few years, some Guild members have set out to ring in all of the towers in Wales. Having almost entirely 'cleared' Ireland (north and south), Scotland, Isle of Wight and Cumbria, attention was turned to Wales. September this year saw the fifth Welsh tour, arranged to complete the collection. Inevitably, some towers are unobtainable, or become available after our tours. But this project was unashamedly a tower grab (but still including the usual Guild features of good company and generous hospitality!).

Many towers had been closed for two years or so. However, we rang at all twenty-five of the towers on our 'to do' list. Much



Since 1936, the Guild has rung at 2018 towers across the UK and Ireland, some several times. The full list can be found on the Guild website:
guildofclericalringers.org.uk

to our surprise and pleasure was the enthusiastic welcome we received at many of the churches. Local people and visitors were clearly delighted to hear the bells rung, and at several we were treated generously to refreshments. One group of villagers provided sandwiches and home-made cakes, turning out in force to welcome us. (We wondered briefly and unfairly whether this was related to the clergy vacancy they were hoping to fill!).

One tower proved elusive, reached along a track, a walk through a field before finding it hiding behind trees. Despite a delay in gaining entry, we were able to attempt what were surely the most difficult bells of the tour. However, we found most bells tuneful and easy to ring, even those dating from seventeenth century local founders. That allowed us to ring a range of well-struck surprise minor and major methods with confidence, even Shipway Place at the five-bell towers!

The abiding memory is of the delight with which we were greeted, and the enthusiastic commitment of those we met to their churches and local community involvement. Also most agreeable was the very 'green and pleasant' scenery of the Monmouthshire hills and valleys – a real discovery for those who have not visited the area before. And, of course, the evenings characterized by excellent food and relaxed company!

Why would I want to go on a clerical guild tour?

Our President, Tony Ellis, reflects:

My first tour was in 1979 giving me the chance to ring methods that were not possible at my local tower.

I have missed only one tour in over forty years, and enjoyed every one of them. Over the years I have made some very good and valuable friendships. I have been challenged to learn to new methods and seen other ringers grow in confidence. I have discovered parts of Britain and Ireland, including post-industrial areas (normally ignored) as well as hidden rural backwaters, from the comfort of the coach provided for us.

In full time ministry, I did not have time to ring much, so it was always rewarding to be able to ring in a friendly and supportive atmosphere with others. Having this annual tour in my diary encouraged me to take time

off after Easter, enabling proper relaxation, and a break that some have even found to be as refreshing as an actual retreat!

Notable memories include an opportunity to ring in London city towers, catching the ferry to explore Brownsea Island, lunching on board a Pullman train, ringing in all shapes of towers with from three to nineteen bells and ringing at such notable towers as Inverary. The Guild's principle is to ring at every tower with bells that we pass, reducing travel time and providing occasional surprising "challenges".

It is important that everyone on the tour has the opportunity to ring at their own comfort level. The ringing can be very good, local ringers complementing us on the quality of ringing. One local said that it was the best ringing that had been heard on the bells!



What really stands out is the joy of the companionship, convivial pub lunches and laughter usually at my expense!

Why and how are the tours suited to clergy and their families? They come in spring when the weather is improving and we are all ready for a break after the Holy Week and Easter activities. We try hard to keep the costs down while seeking decent accommodation.

In times past we often submitted to the rigidity of retreat houses, but have since found excellent and flexible hospitality in guest houses and hotels. These have proved very suitable for families, enabling family



members to enjoy a virtually free holiday, taking advantage of the non-ringing activities we enjoy - an open-top bus trip to the Needles, riding on narrow gauge railways and a trip on a pink tram, to name a few!

Evenings are mostly free of ringing, but we have not indulged in playing charades or similar games - yet!

We hold a short act of worship to reflect on each day, with a Eucharist at some point during the week. It is rewarding to relax with those immersed in a shared vocation and experience, unselfconscious and mutually respected (no clergy dress or dog collars!).

Peals attempts once formed part of every week, but recently this has faded away, although we plan to revive the habit, just before the main tour. We have attempted quarters in the evenings occasionally.

You may be concerned at the cost of the week, but we ensure it works out at rather less than an equivalent residential or touring holiday, bearing in mind that for families, children go free!

What about the next tour?

The 2023 tour will follow the tradition of taking place in "Low Week", from Monday lunchtime on 17th April to Friday lunchtime on 21st April 2023.

The tour will be based on Mildenhall, in Suffolk, and visiting the West Suffolk area from Ely and Soham across to Lavenham and Sudbury, taking in the recently-augmented twelve at Bury St Edmunds - some very well-renowned and significant towers!

The programme will be published beforehand, so you can plan to visit the many places of interest to non-ringing partners and families close by, including Bury St Edmunds itself, as well as Cambridge and Newmarket.

Full details and booking form will be circulated in January. Not to be missed!

You can follow the Guild on Facebook - search for "Guild of Clerical Ringers". The page is updated frequently, the main input being "Thought for the Week" printed in the Ringing World.

Other information is added from time to time about Guild tours or video clips from previous tours as well as information from the Guild Committee.

A NOTE FROM THE NORTH

from *George Cringles*

I live on the north west coast of the Scottish Highlands. I joined the Guild as a minister of the Church of Scotland. I was minister of St. Blane's Church in Dunblane and rang at Dunblane Cathedral (where I first met members of the Guild on their Scottish tour). During my 14 years in Dunblane I made steady progress and succeeded in numerous quarter peals in various methods and three full peals of Plain Bob (ringing inside).

In 2002 I moved west to become minister in Connel, linked with the Island of Coll, where the nearest ring of bells is Inveraray. Sadly, there is no local band or regular practice night so I decided to join a Guild autumn tour to the Lake District. I was made very welcome and found many new friends who made the experience most memorable and enjoyable. This encouraged me to be part of a number of other Low Week and autumn tours. It was really worthwhile to have a relaxing holiday and enjoy the fellowship of the Guild while on these tours, as well as having the opportunity to ring on so many different bells and visit lovely places and very interesting churches that I would probably never otherwise have seen.

Another aspect of the tours that I enjoyed was the daily worship with evening prayer at the final church of the day. I was also asked to lead worship one evening and include something of a traditional Scottish flavour, so we sang a metrical psalm unaccompanied and I gave the blessing at the end in Gaelic. It was also a privilege to accompany the worship on the organ occasionally in some of the churches we visited.

An additional outcome was that some Guild members stayed on Coll and led Sunday worship in the island church. Since retirement, my main contribution to ringing is a regular 'Thought for the Week' in the Ringing World. When I decide to retire again, perhaps I will be able to join in with the Guild tours once more.



CHRIS MARSHALL, our longest serving member who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, remembers...

My first Low Week Tour was in 1958 – Bridport area, Dorset. At the time I was a curate in Leatherhead, Surrey, and my fellow curate was Eric Wood. Eric was a member of the Guild, and it was through him that I joined. Luckily, our Vicar, Canon Frank Page, was happy for us both to be away for the Guild week, and so it was to Bridport that we travelled. Due to the cost, being poor curates, we both stayed down the road at a cheaper B&B rather than at the hotel where the rest were residing.

The long-established members of the Guild, the likes of C C Cox, E V Cox, John Andrews and Gilbert Thurlow wore clerical collars and suits, although my recollection is that a few, like Ken Felstead, wore collar and tie. Nicky Coleridge, of blessed memory, always wore clerical garb. We youngsters dressed in a more casual fashion (although with no open neck shirts like today!).

As far as the ringing went the repertoire was somewhat limited – it was an achievement if we had enough for Double Norwich and certainly spliced of any sort was light years away. But, as it has always been, and is, the Low Week Tour was a few days off to enjoy bells, beer and the company of a convivial crowd second to none.

And as a PS: Malcolm Melville once remarked: 'All you need is your Office Book and a set of darts'. That I suggest, sums it up pretty well.

More than just tours:

New initiative for 2023

Over recent years, the Guild has played an increasing role raising awareness about the church among ringers and raising awareness among clergy about ringers, and taking part in the activities of the Central Council for church Bell Ringers.

This led to a discussion at our 2022 AGM (held on Zoom) and a change in our formal aim to:

“The purpose of the Guild is to encourage fellowship between clergy who are ringers. It will promote and foster good relationships between ringers and the Church. As ministers of the Gospel, its members will serve the needs of the wider ringing community.”

Articles have already been published in the Ringing World, but we are going a major step further by publishing a booklet for clergy explaining the nature of ringing and ringers. We know that clergy who serve churches with bells hung for ringing may not be aware of how significant bells can be in worship and in the community, nor how ringers and their networks work.

We had hoped that the booklet would have appeared by now, but delays with the publisher mean it will now become available in 2023.

Peal ringing has always featured in Guild life, reaching a high point in the 1990s, but tailing off recently. There may be several reasons for this, such as travel distance, lack of confidence, shortage of conductors and making the time. However, the Guild committee is keen to revive peal ringing, as not only is it a satisfying and rewarding achievement, it develops confidence in our ringing abilities. One strategy is to invite members within a locality to gather together for a day around either a peal attempt or a couple of quarters, along with a lunch and time for conversation. As a start, I would like to try a south west or Devon/Somerset day - please let me know if this appeals to you, or if you would like something similar in another area of the country. Nothing ventured, nothing gained! Contact me, Jon Rose, at revjonrose@gmail.com
All of the 115 peals rung by the Guild can be found on Bellboard at bb.ringingworld.co.uk, plus all-clergy peals rung between 1884 to 1935.

Thought for the Week

For some years – It may be ten or more – members of the Guild have contributed articles for the ‘Thought for the Week’ column each week. We were originally invited by the then Editor, Robert Lewis, to offer something that would help remind ringers of their connection with the church and its life.

The initial ‘Thoughts’ tended to be about what ringing and church life (more particularly the Bible) had in common. However, with increased experience, contributors have reflected more widely, although always with a faith and theological basis.

Contributors form a rota, which currently calls on them for an article of around three hundred words about three times a year. Whether or not you read The Ringing World, these ‘Thoughts’ reach a large number of ringers and friends, making this a great opportunity to share your thoughts about our faith and about the relationship between ringing and church life.

As the one who prepares the rota, I would be very pleased to hear from you and explain more about it – **new writers are always very welcome!**

David Grimwood,
dwgrimwood@gmail.com or via
guildofclericalringers.org.uk.

The Guild of Clerical Ringers, built on a long tradition

In 2000 the late Peter Robbins, Guild member and former Guild President, wrote a history of the Guild, including the clerical groups that existed before the Guild itself was formed. An interesting example of an early group includes the first all clerical peal, Stedman Triples, on October 4th, 1884, on the bells of St Peter Drayton, Oxfordshire. The Conductor of this peal was Francis Edward Robinson, the Vicar of Drayton 1878 to 1908.

F E Robinson is of interest for many reasons! Other roles he had included the Diocesan Inspector of Schools 1872 to 1902 and JP of Berkshire 1864 to 1892. Frances rang 1,250 peals of which over half he conducted. He was the first person to ring 1000 peals and the first clergyman to conduct a peal on his own bells. His exploits included 10,080 Double Norwich, 12,041 Stedman Caters, 13,265 Stedman Caters and 15,041 Stedman Caters.

Clearly a man who loved his ringing! During peals he apparently chewed raisins, expertly separating out the pips and spitting them out against the opposite wall. I'm not sure many would do that these days!

It is clear that a Clerical presence was healthy during this time and there is evidence of many other Clerical groups between the F E Robinson era and the formation of the Guild of Clerical Ringers in 1937.

The above information is taken from the Guild History by Peter Robbins, summarised by Ivan Howitt. The full illustrated history is available on the Guild website: guildofclericalringers.org.uk

We hope members have enjoyed catching up with the Guild and its activities. We hope you will join our Tour in March 2023, whether for the whole week or just part of it. Details and booking form will be circulated in January.

If you are not currently a member, we hope that you will consider:

- Joining the Guild's current 100+ members - to enhance what we do or just to keep in touch or whether a member or not...
- Coming along on the tour(s), even for a day or so
- Ringing in a peal attempt, or even calling one
- Ringing in a quarter peal in your area, or calling one.

Please do contact us via the Secretary, David Everett, at david.j.everett24@gmail.com or on 07887 964821.

As members, we sometimes like to contact one another directly. A Members Directory is circulated every couple of years or so to enable us to keep in touch with one another. To make sure that we comply with data protection and privacy laws, the Guild has prepared the following policy. Please note, you do not need to do anything if you are content with your contact details appearing in the Members Directory.

The Guild of Clerical Ringers Privacy Policy

The Guild (we) is required by the regulations currently in force to provide a Privacy Policy Statement in respect of the data the Guild holds in respect of members. Such a statement has been prepared based on the template set out on the relevant Government website. The statement merely sets out what data we hold, how we got it and how we use it.

There is no need for you to take any action in respect of the Privacy Policy Statement unless you have any concerns. It is merely being issued to meet the Guild's legal obligation to you.

Our contact details

The Secretary of the Guild of Clerical Ringers by the email address on the GCR website.

The type of personal information the we collect

We currently collect and process the following information:

- Your name
- Your home address
- Your telephone number(s)
- Your email address.

How we get your personal information and why we have it

All of the personal information we process is provided to us directly by you for the following reason:

- To enable timely communication between the Guild of Clerical Ringers and you.

How we use your personal information

- We use the information you have given us in order to communicate with you on Guild matters, including notice of Guild meetings, events and tours, the dissemination of the Guild's annual mailing and such other matters as may arise from time to time.
- We may also share this information with other Guild members to enable them to communicate directly with you.

Under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the lawful bases we rely on for processing this information are:

- Your consent. You are able to remove your consent at any time. You can do this by contacting the Secretary.
- We have a legitimate interest.

How we store your personal information

Your information is securely stored and is not released to any person or organization outside of the Guild without your express permission.

We will keep your personal data for one year after the year in which you cease to be a member of the Guild of Clerical Ringers.

We will then delete your information from our records.

Your data protection rights

Under data protection law, you have the following rights including:

- Your right of access: you have the right to ask us for copies of your personal information.
- Your right to rectification: you have the right to ask us to rectify personal information you think is inaccurate. You also have the right to ask us to complete information you think is incomplete.
- Your right to erasure: you have the right to ask us to erase your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to restriction of processing: you have the right to ask us to restrict the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to object to processing: you have the right to object to the processing of your personal information in certain circumstances.
- Your right to data portability: you have the right to ask that we transfer the personal information you gave us to another organisation, or to you, in certain circumstances.

You are not required to pay any charge for exercising your rights. If you make a request, we have one month to respond to you.

Please contact the Secretary if you wish to make a request.

How to complain

If you have any concerns about our use of your personal information, you can make a complaint to the Secretary.

You can also complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you are unhappy with how we have used your data.

The ICO's address is:

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 1113. ICO website: <https://www.ico.org.uk>