

# Blog 2021

31st December 2021

The new ringers' website was started in July 2021 when BTCK withdrew their support for free websites. We converted to Wordpress which has more options for formatting. The website is managed under my name.

Lockdown due to the Covid pandemic continued until May 2021 and ringing didn't really re-start until June/ July, so there were no blogs for the first part of this year.

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## 2021 End of Year Summary

2021 has been a slightly more "normal" year than 2020, the latter being spent almost entirely in lockdown due to the Covid pandemic. Covid social distancing restrictions were eased on Monday 17th May 2021 but we were only allowed a maximum of six ringers in the tower and we had to sanitise our hands and wear face coverings. We also needed to make sure we had all doors and windows opened to improve ventilation.

We returned to the tower immediately, starting with tied bell practices using the simulator, and making sure that everyone had an opportunity to ring over the following few weeks. This helped us get back into ringing. We recommenced open ringing in early June and by July there was no restriction on numbers which made our ringing much easier to organise.

Since June we have rung for 14 services and practiced on 23 occasions. The average attendance has been 7 ringers (including an occasional visitor) and it is pleasing to have this support.

We have also had 18 simulator practices which continue to be a valuable time for extra practice and theory. The sim has certainly come into its own in the last 2 years, enabling more bells to be rung and supporting our learning. A total of 19 quarter peals have been rung on it this year.

One quarter peal was rung on open bells, the first since March 2020, and we have rung four lots of 120 call changes, celebrating marriages and births.

We had plans for ringing over the Christmas period but decided at the last minute to postpone most of them because of the sudden emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid which is highly infectious and which, we felt, put us at higher risk. However, plans have already been made to carry out this ringing in the New Year.

We have ten resident ringers, but as with all towers not everyone can be there all of the time, so we need to continue to use social media and word of mouth to make our presence known so that we can increase our team and grow in experience.

A team photo taken in August was the only time we were mostly all present. It is included in a design for a jigsaw puzzle which represents our group in 2021, surely a landmark year, but we are looking forward to an even more successful 2022 with many exciting objectives to be achieved.



Ringers 26th August 2021. Photo taken during our practice Jigsaw puzzle representing Gransden Bell Ringers

## [A Busy Ringing Week](#)

It is Sunday 14th November 2021 and we have been ringing half muffled for the service of Remembrance this morning. We were able to ring all six to call changes. We also rang half muffled for practice on Thursday the 11th when nine ringers took part. The quarter peal attempt earlier in the day was unsuccessful but we rang for over half an hour which itself was good practice. Many thanks to Becca Glazier of Thriplow for coming over to ring at the last minute due to illness of one of the band.

[Here is a clip of the ringing during our practice session.](#)

The muffles had to come off on Friday when we rang in celebration of the forthcoming marriage of Michael Prest and Adrienne Brayman. Michael is a former ringer at the tower and he, together with brother Martin and parents Sheila and David made up two thirds of the band with Sheila and Phillip George completing it. We rang 120 call changes which took 24 minutes with very good ringing throughout. Details can be found [here](#).



Ringling for Michael and Adrienne's wedding. L-R Sheila G, Phillip, Michael, Martin, Sheila P, David

On Wednesday we held the usual weekly tied bell/sim practice. We are currently working on bell control and practising dodging to help with this. There is always a lot of theory at these sessions and the white boards come into their own when it comes to explaining up's & down's and in's & out's.

## [Plans for November 2021](#)

Ringling at the moment is a bit like a spluttering engine, one moment it is running and the next it suddenly stalls, and this is all beyond our control. We have had to cancel one tied bell practice and two ringling practices due mainly to our brush with Covid and the need for

different individuals to stay away in the interest of everyone's safety. This, coupled with holidays, has left us with a minimal number of ringers.

However, we are optimistic and are preparing for ringing in November which will hopefully include a half muffled quarter peal on the 11th, following in the evening by further half muffled ringing for practice. On Friday the 12th we are ringing on open bells to celebrate the wedding of one of our former ringers, and on Sunday 14th the muffles will be on again for the Remembrance service.

Normal practices and tied bell sessions will continue for the rest of the month and on the 28th we will be ringing for the Advent carol service.

All in all it should be a good month for ringing as long as we can keep clear of the virus, and this is proving to be more difficult just now! See our [calendar](#) for ringing times.

## **Progress or Just Catch Up!**

We had a good practice last night (Thursday 15th Oct) and welcomed Catherina who had come over to ring with us. Hon T/C delegated the running of the practice to David and he organised us to ring call changes, plain courses of Grandsire and 120's of Plain Bob and St.Martins. A ladies band was selected to ring call changes.

Tricia rang the tenor a couple of times to call changes and Plain Hunt on 5, which was good experience and learning for her. St.Martins was rung for the first time since lockdown and dusted off a few cobwebs.

As usual sweets at half time accompanied the notices, and this week a reminder of the emergency evacuation procedure in the event of a fire or other catastrophe.

We are gradually catching up from where we left off in March 2020 but it will be a while before we are completely up to speed again, but it is progress. Our striking needs attention!! Midweek tied bell/SIM practices are helping with bell control & the theory of change ringing. We are now looking at "wrong" working and are doing a lot of dodging practice. Ringing up and down in peal also features. The SIM is a real benefit to the tower. Everyone is welcome.

Thanks to David for running the practice at the drop of a hat, testament to our teamwork and support from all the ringers.

## **Tower Captain's Workshop**

What does this mean? Well, its not like my garden shed with lots of tools and equipment where we manufacture tower captains, although it would be useful sometimes to have them ready made. The role of the tower captain is multi faceted. The TC (or Ringing Master) needs to be able to organise the ringing and although this may sound straight forward enough it involves a lot more than that, especially when managing ringers who you may not know.

Sheila and I attended this TC workshop on Saturday 2nd October. It was one of six workshops organised as part of the Association's training day and this particular one was held at Swaffham Bulbeck. The session was attended by eight ringers, some of whom had many years experience in this role, and others who had only recently been appointed.

We were there as helpers and were able, with the other experienced TCs, to guide others through decision making processes when deciding what to ring, placing ringers on particular bells, appointing a conductor and giving positive feedback to ringers as required.

As well as a lot of interactive discussion we had some practical ringing sessions where some of the skills were put into practice which helped consolidate the learning.

Swaffham Bulbeck is off the A14 just pasty Anglesey Abbey. The church is flooded with light and houses a ring of 8 bells with a tenor of 10 1/4 cwt (520 kg). The bells are rung from an open gallery which has fine views of the church interior, and there are kitchen and toilet facilities. Many thanks to the SB ringers for allowing us to use the bells.

It was a great afternoon, good to meet some ringers for the first time and good to ring on eight bells!



Ringers attending the workshop



Swaffham Bulbeck Church. Interior of the church looking east

## [\*\*A Broken Clock, and the Mystery of History\*\*](#)

Time moves on, that inextricable link between one moment and another, creating memories and our history.

The church clock signals the time for us minute by minute, the dial on the north face of the tower assuring us (if we care to glance up) that we are on time, or late, or that life goes on as

normal; and on the hour the clock mechanism springs into action to strike the tenor bell, signalling the time of day.

But, we now have a problem! The winding mechanism for the hour strike failed last week, entangling cables and with chains slipping off winding gear. We are unsure as to the cause of the problem and have assessed that it is best to ask the clockmaker to attend to rectify this.

For the time being the clock will continue to show the time but there will be no hourly or three hourly chimes. We hope that we can fix the problem very soon!

Still writing on the theme of time, we were delighted this week to welcome to the church Mr & Mrs Robert Livett. Robert is the direct descendant of Nicholas Livett who was churchwarden here in 1686. Robert has carried out extensive searches into his family history and wanted to visit the church where his ancestor had worshipped and who lived in the village 335 years ago.

I was able to give him some relevant history of the church and took them both into the ringing room to see the church from there, and where I was able to chime old No3 bell, which Nicholas would have heard when he was alive.

What a wonderful continuity of history?

## [Just keeping in touch...](#)

It's been a couple of weeks since I posted any news and this very rainy and wet day has prompted me to post an update.

We have done a lot of ringing since the church fete, which was much appreciated by Rev Rachel in her email to me afterwards thanking the ringers for their "...wonderful heralding of the fete!" We are very grateful for her support and encouragement.

Since then we have rung the 120 call change composition a further two times. On the 6th September it was to acknowledge the achievements of the olympics teams, and came the day after the paralympics closed. We mentioned especially Will Hipwell, born and bred in Lt Gransden, for his part in the Boccia squad in the paralympics. On the 10th September we rang in celebration of Martin Prest's marriage to Katie, on the following day in GG church. Michael Prest also rang and David and Sheila P made up the family four with Sheila and me completing the band. Both Martin and Michael are former ringers at the tower.

We have rung the 120 on three occasions now, and eight of our ten regular ringers have now completed this. And this secular ringing brings me to the point.... Church bells are not only to be rung for church services, although that will remain a key objective for ringers. Bells are loud instruments and can be used to advertise and celebrate all sorts of other events too. Bell ringing is an art, a science and a sport and we should be encouraging and training people to continue this centuries old activity.

The first bell ringers didn't use to ring only for church services. They rang for local, national and civic events for which they were paid. Ringing developed in our major towns and cities where men rang for exercise. It was a sport to them and they often rang in competitions. By the late 19th century the church was concerned about the arrangement that ringers had (and singers in the west gallery by the way, who were also paid), and belfry reform was introduced which tied ringing in with worship in a closer way than ever before.

This was fine at the time, and into the 20th century. Even up until the mid century the link seemed to be inextricable. Then, something began to change. Church congregations slowly dwindled and young ringers became more difficult to find. Ringing in many churches declined, and is still declining as we try to find a solution to the recruitment problem.

But, ringing is not in decline overall and there are many young ringers now taking on the challenge of learning change ringing. New teaching techniques developed by the Association of Ringing Teachers is raising the profile, and technology in and out of the tower is making ringing much more relevant and interesting.

Above all, modern communication helps us all to keep up with ringing achievements and developments in the UK and throughout the world. And "communication" is a key word. We should be letting our communities know when we ring and why we are ringing. We should maintain a tower social media page and a website to reinforce our message that ringing is successful and enjoyable. We should build and maintain close links with our churches (PCCs and incumbent) to support their mission and help them to understand our goal in building change ringing as a nationally recognised activity which benefits the church and whole community.

We have been doing this in the Gransdens for some time and will continue to build on our strengths and presence in our village. Thank you to everyone for your support.

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Further reading, which prompted my writing this update, and which details at length the history of change in church bell ringing, can be read in Michael Foulds paper written in 2015, called [Change Ringing in the Future](#)

## **[Ringing for the Church Fete](#)**

We are always on the lookout to ring for village occasions. On Saturday 28th August we rang for twenty minutes before Great and Little Gransdens' church fete, which was held next door in the Old Vicarage garden. Call changes greeted villagers as they gathered to enjoy a traditional fete with preserves, cakes, books, plants and bric-a-brac for sale, and a chance to win on the bottle stall and in the grand draw etc. etc.

Live jazz entertained the throng as the sun eventually broke through, and guests enjoyed teas in a shady part of the garden; and some commented on how much they enjoyed the bells.

Well done ringers – good job done. We were pleased to be part of the fete, which raised over £2800.

A full album of photographs can be found by clicking on the image.



On arriving at the fete after ringing

## [Annual Tower Clean Up](#)

The annual tower clean up took place this week. This involves thoroughly cleaning each room starting at the top in the old belfry and working down. It is arduous work at times necessitating squeezing into tight spots, especially in the old belfry where access to the bell frame is limited.

The opportunity is taken to carry out an inspection of the bell and clock installation to make sure that everything is in safe working order. Annual cleaning is important because although we have effective bird proofing during the course of a 12 month quite a lot of dust and small debris is blown into the tower. Regular cleaning also maintains the fabric of the church.



Negotiating a squeeze point in the old bell frame  
Cleaned pit in the old bell frame  
Old belfry after cleaning



Belfry after cleaning



Floor of the belfry, also tricky to negotiate due to clock wires

## [First Quarter Peal for 18 Months](#)

Ringers met today to ring a quarter peal on Great Gransden bells. This is the first quarter peal on the bells for eighteen months (9th March 2020), such a long gap whereas we are usually ringing about eight quarters every year, but the Covid pandemic prevented us from ringing very much until now.

It was lovely to meet up with ringing family and friends and we rang a very enjoyable and creditable quarter, being 720 of Single Oxford Bob Minor and a 564 changes of Plain Bob Minor. The ringing took 45 minutes and two minutes of the ringing be heard by clicking this [link](#). It is the end of the Single Oxford and the change over to Plain Bob.

The ringing was very good throughout and we were pleased to be able to slot back into ringing so easily after such a long wait!



The quarter peal band L-R: Sheila G, Catherina Griffiths, Phillip, Naomi Laredo, Mark Banner, Rebecca Banner

## [120 Call Changes rung for the first time!](#)

Monday 2nd August, the ringers meet with a little apprehension. We are to ring 120 call changes (the extent on 5 bells), which will take about 25 minutes. Most of us haven't rung for

any longer than 10 minutes since Covid restrictions have been eased, and so are a little out of practice.

The bells are already up from Sunday's ringing, so that saves us a job, but it takes us a few minutes to settle into some reasonable rounds, and we had to start again after a few minutes of ringing because someone forgot to switch on the digital recorder!!

Off we go again, and all went well with changes being called approximately every 3 whole pulls, and the extent took 24 minutes to complete.

We were pleased to be able to mark our ringing as a celebration of the birth of David and Sheila Prest's grandson, Dylan William Brayman Prest on 28th July 2021.

[Follow this link](#) to hear the last two minutes of our ringing.



The call change band L-R: Sheila P, Tricia, Phillip, David, Alasdair, Sheila G.

## [Ringers attend Societies' Fair](#)

Saturday 24th July 2021



Happy ringers with the mobile bell  
All ringers received a sticker



A super Saturday afternoon at the Gransdens' Societies Fair featuring about 20 village organisations. From bowls club to tennis; from singers, guides and golf, to childrens' club and horticulture; something for everyone.

The bell ringers were there too, inviting people to ring the Ely Association's mobile bell. Fifteen people from age 7 to ??? had a go and all were able to ring within a few minutes, the younger ones needing a little extra help, but some coming back later for more practice! Every participant was issued with a compulsory "I rang the mobile bell" sticker; greatly appreciated

by children and graciously accepted by adults! We were encouraged to receive many comments about how much people enjoyed the sound of the bells and although we didn't gain any new recruits our presence at the fair was educational and enjoyable.

Thanks to the [Ely DA](#) for loaning the bell, the organisers of the fair for giving us the opportunity to get out into our community, and to all our ringers who helped fly the flag. It was a great day!

## **Sunday 18th July – Preparing for Easing of Lockdown**

We rang the front five bells this morning because it was rather warm, and although it was still relatively cool at 9.15am it was warming up quickly in the mini heatwave! We rang call changes with the 5 in.

Lockdown will be eased on Monday 19th July and the latest CCCBR communication confirms that all social distancing is off, mask wearing is not compulsory, and length of time ringing is up to us. The House of Bishops has issued guidelines and comments and it will be up to individual parish priests and churchwardens as to what, if any advisory measures are put in place.

A copy of the CCCBR statement has been circulated to our ringers and we will discuss this on Thursday 22nd at our practice. Meanwhile, a new risk assessment is being drafted.

## **Website feedback, practice night and mobile bell**

Thanks for the feedback on the website so far. I have made some amendments and tried to pick up on typos. Please continue to let me know if you spot any errors (and encourage others to sign up for the updates!).

We had an enjoyable practice on Thursday, with eight in attendance (excellent!). This meant that, due to Covid regs, two had to wait downstairs while the others rang, but there were plenty of volunteers so that everyone had several rings. We continue to ring call changes only and usually for about ten minutes at a stretch, but the quality of the striking is pretty good and I hope were all enjoying it.

As we expect to have all Covid restrictions lifted on 19th July I have set aside Wednesday 21st and Tuesday 27th as possible dates to ring 120 call changes as part of our stamina building initiative. Ringing will last about 30 minutes. I think we will only have enough ringers for one team at the moment, so we'll decide on the date soon.

I am collecting names for attendance at the Societies' Fare on the 24th July and although several of us are involved with other village organisations I hope there will be plenty of opportunity for everyone to ring the mobile bell.



Association Mobile Bell

We are ringing the SIM next Tuesday 13th at 10.00am, and there is a normal practice on Thursday at 7.30pm. Dont' forget that we have a calendar on the website which I hope will always be up to date with ringing events.

## [Ringers and Singers, and Website Design](#)

On Friday 2nd July we held our annual Ringers and Singers safari supper when members of the church choir and the ringers visited three different venues around the village. We had a very relaxing and pleasant time in the balmy evening sunshine, taking the opportunity to explore our hosts' beautiful gardens. We all met together for the sweet course where some enjoyed a game of croquet until poor light stopped play, but our social chatter continued until well after dusk. Thank you to our hosts for opening their gardens, to Sheila (photo credit) for organising us, and to everyone for their great company.



Photo credit to Sheila George

I have done more work on the website design, creating and adding a site logo which heads each page. The idea is to present a modern look for bell ringing which will be attractive for visitors and new ringers.

I have introduced a QR code to new advertsing posters for church and other notice boards. The code can easily be scanned with a smart phone camera and takes the reader to a 15 second clip of the bells ringing. The website is gradually taking shape and we hope to launch it in the next couple of weeks.

## [Experimenting with Page Design](#)

I am currently working on another website as I try to bring together all the information I have on local bell towers and history, so work on this site has slowed for the time being. But, I am experimenting with different website themes and have just changed this one. This may not be the finished product as I am still learning my way around WordPress, but hopefully I will have decided on a theme by the time all the pages are fully populated.

## [New Page Added and, Shall I Upgrade the Website?](#)

I have today added a new page to the website called – "[The Restoration Project](#)"

This page includes a summary of the origins of the very extensive tower and bell project of the late 1990s and some of the elements involved. I am currently scanning key documents and have added some already.

I had originally placed this information on the Archive page, but felt that as it is quite an extensive subject it deserves a dedicated page. Still to come – further documents and lots of photographs, but this will happen in due course because I will have to scan them before I can upload them for viewing.

**Upgrade?** I am currently using the free version of WordPress, which, whilst very useful does have its limitations. Now that I have more of an idea as to how it works and what it can do I will probably upgrade to add further functionality. I will be considering this over the next days.

**Feedback** – If you have any questions or comments about the website or content please do not hesitate to contact me.

## [Website Update](#)

Content on the website is coming along. Pages have been set up with menu headings on each page. Some pages have been populated.

A description of our tower management can be found on the [Meet the Ringers](#) page, and a virtual tour of the tower is found on the [What's in the Tower](#) page. Our ringing outings and social activities can be found on the [Archive](#) page.

This is the first Blog post and is in its own way a trial posting.

## [Ringing Around / Latest News](#)

25th May 2021

As lockdown was eased slightly from 17th May we have been meeting in the tower to ring four or five bells according to the guidelines on social distancing. We had two daytime

sessions last week which included most of our ringers. More sessions this week will encompass everyone.

We are ringing on silent bells and using the simulator for the sound. So far, we have rung call changes, just to get back into ringing a bell, but we will soon venture into Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles.

