

Leeds Branch Newsletter



Issue 1 December 2020



Christmas Ringing

We had been given the go-ahead for some 'more normal' ringing at Christmas, ringing up to six bells for 15 minutes during the period when the Covid restrictions are being relaxed, provided we are 1 metre or more apart and we follow all the usual precautions (mask wearing, hand sanitising, ventilation etc). There hasn't yet been any update to the guidance, but presumably now it applies only on Christmas Day. Guidance to assess the risks of your ringing chamber and your own personal risk, can be found here. Whatever you decide to do, please take care and stay safe.



Welcome

A very warm welcome to our First NEWSLETTER. I do hope that you all enjoy this splendid idea that has come from our Committee. There may not be much news to write about at the moment, but we have tried to include something for everyone, and I hope that you will find it as interesting and entertaining as I have.

This isn't a "one-off" production - we want to have a regular update from you all. If you have anything at all about your tower or past and present members to interest us, do let the committee know. We would also love to know how you are keeping in touch with each other during the ringing restrictions. Have you had Zoom coffee mornings like us? Has your tower tried using 'Ringing Room'? Are there things you have tried that other towers could try for themselves? We would welcome your feedback and any other suggestions that you might have. Please send any comments and contributions to leedsbr.editor@gmail.com

I do hope that we get back to ringing prior to Easter, and that we can start ringing together as a Branch and Association very soon.

In the meantime, I hope that you are all very well and "staying safe", and I wish you a very "Merry Christmas" and a "Happy New Year".

Barrie Dove: Chairman

Your Leeds Branch Committee

Chairman – Barrie Dove (Leeds Cathedral)

Secretary - Janine Jones (Leeds Cathedral)

Treasurer - Miles Lawson (Birstall)

Membership Secretary - Peter Oldfield (Chapel Allerton)

Education Committee Rep - Cate Ovington (Unattached)

Ringing Master – Paul Brook (Leeds Minster)
Assist. Ringer Master – Alan Futers (Far Headingley)
Webmaster – Wendy Bloom (Leeds Minster)
Committee Member – Bill Todd (Kirk Deighton)

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If you have any idea for articles, please feel free to send it to leedsbr.editor@gmail.com

What's on the Web?

Each issue we will feature one ringing website to give you a flavour of what ringing-related information is available on the internet. This time we look at the 'Training Resources' page of the St. Martin's Guild website - https://www.stmartinsguild.org/teaching/training-and-resources/.

At the beginning of the first lockdown, the St. Martin's Guild instigated a series of talks for its members and there are now more than forty video presentations covering a wide range of subjects available to watch and listen to. There really is something for everyone – even non-ringers!

To give you a taster, there is: 'The Ringing Isle; an introduction to bells and bellringing in Britain' and 'Ringing Remembers' – an account of the project to mark the centenary of World War I if you are interested in history, presentations on ringing from the basics 'An Introduction to Plain Bob Doubles' to the advanced 'Exploring Cyclic Surprise Maximus', more practical subjects such as 'Safeguarding in ringing' and 'How can we improve Public Relations in ringing and in our towers?', to the more theoretical 'How does our memory work?' and 'How to learn methods', together with many more topics including conducting, composing and handbell ringing.

Most of the talks last between forty minutes and an hour and are available to anyone with a computer and a set of speakers.

News from the Branch

The Branch committee has recently held a (Zoom) meeting. The main points from the meeting are:-

- Enth monthly branch ringing practices remain cancelled for the foreseeable future. The only meeting that is planned at the moment is next year's Branch AGM which will be held by Zoom on 13th February. Three posts are due for re-election at the AGM the Chairman, Membership Secretary and Assistant Ringing Master and the Membership Secretary has said that he is standing down, so we are looking for at least one new committee member.
- While we can't get together in the tower, you could join in on some of the online ringing practices that are going on -the YACR Education Committee are holding regular online practices and training courses, but there are also many other local, and national, 'Ringing Room' practices going on if you are interested. If you would rather try online ringing with people you know in the branch, please let someone on the committee know.
- If you don't really fancy online ringing you could think about recruitment for when we get back to ringing again St. Peter's Birstall have had encouraging responses from potential new recruits through their Facebook page. Whilst people can't get out and about, they are spending more time surfing the internet, so it could be a good time to pick up some new recruits ready for when we can get back ringing again.
- The branch finances are quite healthy at the moment as we haven't had much opportunity to spend any money this year. If there is any work that needs doing in your tower, or you have some good ideas for ringing projects in the branch when things get back to normal, why not apply to the branch for a grant towards it.



Some other major news is that we now have some more ringable bells in our branch, at Whitkirk (near Temple Newsam). The three bells there had been unringable for some years but have now been overhauled and returned to ringable condition by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough. Chiming hammers have also been added. All three are Mears bells and the tenor weighs 9cwt.

Unfortunately, the bells are very close together – bells one and two are 1.2 metres apart and bells two and three are 0.8 metres apart, so at the moment only people in the same household or support bubble could ring them.

Janine

News from the Association

Yorkshire Day 2021

The Yorkshire Association is planning to hold a recruitment and open day on Sunday 1st August next year – Yorkshire Day. The idea is that the Association will promote the day with press releases, radio and television interviews, posters for towers to use etc, and as many towers as possible across the county will open their tower to visitors and potential new recruits on that day or sometime over the weekend. We will be in touch with towers soon to ask what help you might need.

Help wanted

The Association is looking for a new Report Editor - to be elected in May 2021, and to produce their first annual report in 2022.

The Association is also looking for someone to produce a newsletter. Bob Cater (who used to produce the Association newsletter) is happy to collate the articles, however we need someone with a bit of technical knowhow to put them all together.

If you are interested in either of these roles please get in touch with our President Barrie Dove or Association Secretary Simon Plows

Meet the Committee

We asked the committee why they learned to ring:-

Alan - With both parents ringers, I was first taken up a tower aged 11 days old, so it was only natural to start learning. Far Headingley had an influx of youngsters start learning in 1998, so as part of this, I started learning aged 6/7, Yorkshire tailends included. The result? As long as there is a rope - Yorkshire, Plain or otherwise, I'll ring it.

Barrie - My father was a ringer, so I was taken to the belfry from an early age and eventually he started teaching me to ring. It took me so long to learn that he nearly gave up, but luckily I got the knack of it just in time.

Bill - My least favourite duty as a dad was to take my sons to the swimming club: sitting in the viewing area; the noise, the heat, the smell of chlorine, their refusal to get changed quickly afterwards, and the compulsory crisps, all made for an unpleasant evening. One such evening, sitting next to a friend of long standing, I noticed he was reading a book with nothing in it but columns of numbers. "What's that?" I said.

Malcolm was a ringer at Kirk Deighton and his enthusiasm was such that it really left me with no alternative but to go and see what was involved; "just to see Bill, you don't have to stay if it's not for you". I was suckered in as easily as that. I knew that bellringing was 'a thing' but that's it. When they started ringing a method I knew that I would never be able to cope. "You'll get it eventually" said John Burnup. The rest is history!

Cate - My mum learned to ring when she was a child, and, when I was 9, she started taking my elder sister along to Kingsclere with her. However, being two years younger, I wasn't going to be left behind, so although the bells were heavy, I nagged until I was allowed to learn. Although it took me some time to handle the bells (I had a teacher who would not allow any bad habits), there was no stopping me once I did.

Janine - I was attending confirmation classes at our local church, and one evening we arrived to find the bellhangers in the process of lowering the old tenor bell down from the tower. After the old (unringable) bells were replaced the whole confirmation class learned to ring and formed the first band at the tower.

Miles - "I was a teenager in the choir of Canford Magna church, 6 bells 10cwt in G, near Wimborne Minster in Dorset. The vicar at that time was a ringer and he asked me to give ringing a try. So I turned up on a Friday night and I began the learning process. Within a year I had rung my first QP of Plain Bob Minor and in 2 years I was conducting all sorts of Plain Minor methods.

I remember climbing out of my bedroom window when I should have been doing homework to attend practices. The story goes on, but that was the start."

Paul - A friend of my parents tried to persuade them to learn to ring. They weren't interested, so sent me instead. A couple of years later I went to university and got caught up in the ringing society there. The rest is history.

Pete - I learned to ring when I was 17 or 18. I was friends at school with a ringer who some of you may remember - Gary Mann - and after I'd helped with a sponsored walk to raise money for the tower, I was invited up. I shall never forget my 1st lesson - Gary had the backstroke and I had the handstroke - neither of us felt the stay go, but at one point the sally rapidly accelerated towards the ceiling - with me holding on!!! My head bumped onto the ceiling and grazed my hands on the garter hole - at which point I finally let go and crashed to the floor. I have never shaken so much in all my life - and it's a miracle I kept going (albeit having a quick ring and thinking up an excuse to leave very early). I am glad I continued, it really helped at University to have a ready-made community. Thanks to Peter Kirby as another long suffering tutor.

Wendy - I'm also a child of ringers so have been in towers as long as I can remember, starting with Lichfield Cathedral where I rang until leaving home. Our daughter Emily is the 6th generation to ring in my maternal family and whilst living in Cambridge in the 1980s I rang with someone taught to ring by my greatgreat grandfather 60 years earlier. Graham and I joined the Pudsey band when we relocated here in 1991, moving to Leeds Parish Church over 20 years ago when Pudsey stopped ringing. I suspect I was brain-washed into ringing.

From the Archives

A look back at notable events from the past in the local area. Thanks to Neil Bennett for finding the following articles in the Ringing World of 1949.

Leeds Tenor Crashes

It usually takes five minutes or more to lower the 42 cwt. tenor at Leeds Parish Church, so that the record of the tenor man who got the bell down in one half-pull and cleared the belfry in about two strides on a recent practice night will probably stand for all time.

An accident, which might have had more scrious results, proved the truth of the old

proverb that... 'for want of a nail the battle was lost... but in this case it was apparently the want of a nut on the clapper pin which resulted in the tenor at Leeds being thrown into the frame.

By a remote chance the clapper, as it was thrown from the bell, apparently became jammed endways against the frame, so that the full shock was taken by the bell and its headstock. Fortunately the bell appears to be undamaged, but its massive cast-iron headstock was snapped in half. The clapper was only slightly bent, and while the exact cause and the extent of the damage can only be found when the bell has been lifted, it seems that a lost nut from the clapper pin was the cause of this alarming accident.

For the time being ringing will be confined to the light eight or the middle ten. The accident was all the more disappointing as only that night the struggling local band had with the aid of two visitors got through a course of Grandsire Cinques.

In fairness to the bell hangers, Messrs. Taylor and Co., it should be stated that the accident implies no neglect on their part. On the contrary, it is a striking proof of the quality of their workmanship that a bell of 42 cwt. can be hurled against the frame with apparently no ill effect upon either the frame or, it is believed, the bell.

"Evidence of this accident can still be seen today: the cross frames under the tenor are visibly bent (see next page) and there's a nick in the lip of the bell which is likely to have been caused then. There may also have been some damage done to the adjacent H frame (by the 11th) as that has failed in the last 20 years, the only part of the frame to have had any issues since the original installation."

Wendy

BELL FOUNDERS NOT TO BLAME

Dear Sir,—The clapper pin had a castle nut and split pin. The accident arose through disregard of the bellhangers' instructions, so that the fixing of responsibility for the mishap is purely the domestic affair of Leeds Parish Church.

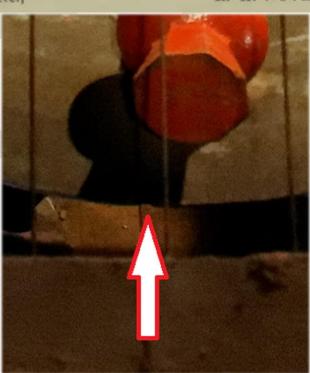
The bellhangers are accordingly exonerated from all liability and Mr. Overy's implications are, therefore, entirely without foundation.

A falling or breaking clapper is not a rare occurrence. It can and does happen to all bellhangers, but in this particular instance there is an element of real bad luck attached to the incident. The size of Leeds bells necessitated a tight job so far as space is concerned and the bells are cluttered up with every kind of encumbrance—clock hammers, carillon hammers and Ellacombe hammers, 45 hammers in all. It has now been established beyond all reasonable doubt that the heavy counterbalanced clapper became wedged against the Ellacombe hammer directly in the path of the bell, which struck the clapper with full force on the downward swing from backstroke, and was stopped dead.

The generally accepted theory is that the force of a swinging bell is ten times its dead weight, and if this is correct the bell was subjected to a shock of over 20 tons, which no headstock could be expected to withstand.

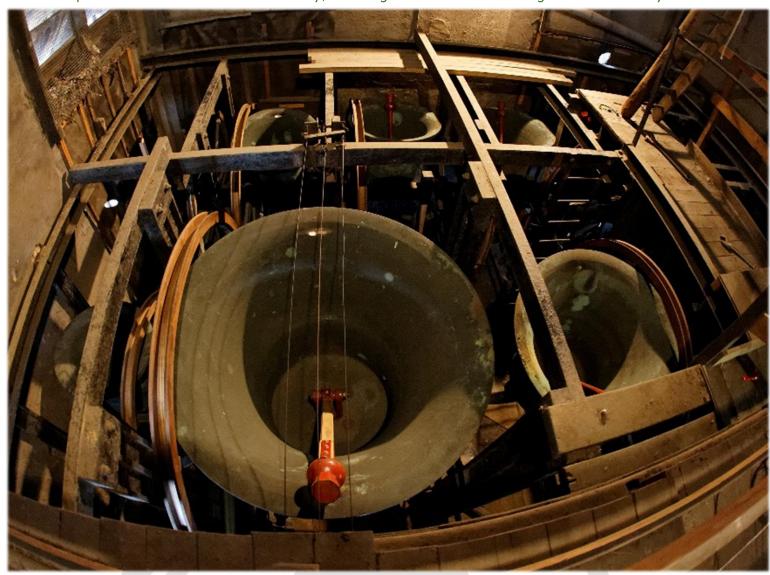
The many admirers of this grand bell will be glad to learn that she has since been raised and has been found to be unscathed.—Yours, etc.,

R. H. DOVE.



From the Archives cont...

This is a photo from the Leeds Minster belfry, showing their scale and how tight the one tier layout is.



Above - The bells of Leeds Minster, with the tenor (40cwt) in the foreground, with the chip just visible near the clapper, just in the shadow on the clapper. The 9th (17cwt to the right) is roughly the average tenor weight for Leeds Branch, and the treble to the left under (5cwt) giving scale to the failure on this practice night. Also in evidence is the mechanism that is used to flip the tenor clapper over from the ringing chamber when the bell goes up wrong. The 3 wires over the top of the bell are attached to a strap that when pulled across the bell, catches the clapper to transfer it to it's current position in the photo. This saves considerable time and effort rather than ringing it down and up again to get it up right. (Photograph courtesy of Ollievision).

Right – The bent cross-bracings from under the bell



Focus on: Aberford

The name Aberford originates from 'Ædburgs ford', later becoming Ebberford, and then Aberford. It was part of the ancient kingdom of Elmet.

Aberford lies on the route of an ancient Roman Road where it meets the Cock River (at the site of a ford). This later became part of the Great North Road, and Aberford was a staging post on this route between London and Edinburgh where it was roughly the midpoint. The A1 later followed much of the same route and still ran up the main street of Aberford as recently as 1963 when a bypass was built. It is a typical ribbon development with properties stretching along the road in both directions. In times past, Aberford had a mill and even its own railway station, and in the 17th Century it was well known for the manufacture of pins.



The current church was built in 1861 on the site of an earlier C12 one. The church is dedicated to St. Ricarius – the only church in England with this dedication. However, there is some dispute over the identity of this St. Ricarius. There is a St. Ricarius in the Catholic Church - a French monk (Richarius or Riquier) who founded two monasteries in France and is alleged to have visited Aberford in 630. However, a window in the church depicts 'Ricarius Rex 720' (King Richard), an Anglo-Saxon chieftain or under-King, who was also known as St. Richard the pilgrim. Accounts of the lives of each claim that the church is dedicated to them.

The church contains many stained glass windows, the anvil of a blacksmith who is buried in the

churchyard and has retained several features of the earlier Norman church.



Sundial dated 1806, from the earlier church.

There are four bells, rung from the ground floor, with the tenor weighing 5cwt. The oldest bell – the third - dates from 1618 and was cast by William Oldfield of Doncaster. The treble and fourth were cast in 1879 by Mears and Stainbank, and the second was cast in 1957 by John Taylor & Co. There have been two peals on the bells, one in 1984, of 11 Minimus methods, another in 2008, of Plain Bob Minimus.

The bells are not the easiest to ring owing to their long draft, and whilst they are occasionally rung full-circle for weddings, there are no longer enough local ringers to ring them on a Sunday. However, the locals would be delighted if any nearby ringers or visitors would like to ring there for 11am Service on the first Sunday of each month.



Next month, we'll be looking at Christ Church, Upper Armley.

Aberford Stat Pack

Number of bells - 4 (5 cwt in B)

Founder(s) - William I Oldfield (3)

Mears and Stainbeck (1 & 4)

John Taylor & Co, Loughborough (2)

Total Weight of bells - Unknown

Height of Tower - Unknown
Total Peals - 2
Steps to ringing chamber - Ground Floor
Sunday Service Ringing time - For 11am Service
Practice Night - None

Bellringing - Listening Skills

During this global pandemic, we as ringers have had to change how we have rung. Some of us have been able to ring on a smaller, more spaced out selection of bells for 15 minutes service ringing, keeping to the same bell for that session. Some might have been lucky to have a family unit, enabling a selection of adjacent bells to be rung by that family. Or some might not have been able to ring at all. So we are all likely to be getting a bit rusty with our listening skills. This little feature aims to highlight some videos of ringing, either for you to just sit and enjoy hearing bells rung 'as we used to', or to try and start to shake some rustiness off and listen to the striking of the bells, and judging what you hear.

The Central Council of Church Bellringers started running monthly YouTube competitions setting a theme for the month, and asking for qualifying videos to be sent in, and some small prizes given to the best video. The theme for their May feature was 'Best Striking on 6 bells or fewer'. The video selected for this article can be found here on this link, or go to YouTube and search for "Eaton Socon Bellringers at Haynes".

Those of you who came to the Striking Competition at Bramley (June 2019) will remember Andrew Aspland gave a helpful and interesting talk about listening to ringing, and how to judge it. In summary, you listen to each row, mark down each row for faults, then total up your score at the end. So firstly, listen to the ringing and pick up every time the tenor strikes, and just get your ear to take note and anticipate when the tenor strikes. Next, get some lined paper (or use Excel), listen to the piece again, and when the tenor strikes, on the paper, mark what you thought to the striking of all the bells on that row that the tenor strikes. So each line will be a rung row. You might need more than one column, which is fine. There are many individual ways to judge what you hear on a row, but for now, if you're unsure, keep it as simple as possible - for each row, mark them as the following:

- 0 No faults/clean row
- 1 Unevenness within the row
- 2 Major clash/fault within the row
- 3 No clear row

So, using rounds as an example (1 2 3 4 5 6), judge the rows similar to the following:

How a row should	1	2	3	4	5	6	
sound							
0 Fault Row	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1 Fault Row	1	2	3	4	5	6	
2 Fault Row	1	23		4	5	6	
3 Fault Row	No clear order of ringing						

Please feel free to submit any scores/comments you wish to make on the ringing, and we'll see what on average Leeds Branch makes of the ringing.

The excerpt you will hear is 120 changes of Plain Bob Doubles, so the 6th will be covering throughout, giving you a strong reference point of when to mark your score for a row. And when you're finished, you should end up with 142 numbers, representing the 142 rows of ringing (this includes the rounds at the start and end of the 120 Plain Bob). Then add up all the numbers to get a total number of fault scores.

A quick look on Dove's guide shows that Haynes is quite a mixed tower with regards to the bells, with 5 different founders, and cast between 1349 and 1973, which gives each bell a distinctive sound beyond their strike notes, which with the clarity of the recording, should help you to listen for any faults within the ringing. I'd imagine not many of us will have rung at Haynes (in Bedfordshire), so we don't know what they are like to ring, or know of any might peculiarities be there e.g. oddstruckness, ringing chamber obstacles which might hamper the ringers, so you should be able to judge based purely on what you hear on the recording rather than using any experience at the tower. They could be really easy going, or they could be really difficult and the band are working very hard to get and keep them right.

A couple of other things to listen out for during separate sittings.

- 1) If you were learning to ring touches of Bob Doubles, pick a bell to listen for (could be the one you would usually ring) and see if you can follow it through the touch.
- If you were getting into calling a touch, see if you can listen and work out which bell is the observation bell.

So, enjoy either judging what you think of the ringing, or just sit back and listen to bellringing as we are more used to.

Puzzle Page

Here are the initials of the first lines of some well-known, and some not so well-known, Christmas songs. They all mention bells. Can you guess what they are?

- 1) IWCEB
- 2) ISTSCSI
- 3) DDMOH
- 4) SBR AYL
- 5) IDJ LUOHS
- 6) PTAC AACFM
- 7) SBSBICTITC
- 8) DTTS,IAOHOS
- 9) IHTBOCD
- 10) IDOAWC
- 11) TCWBATSAGD
- 12) HHTB SSB ASTS

Where's that tower.....?

Clue: Tower located within the Leeds Branch.

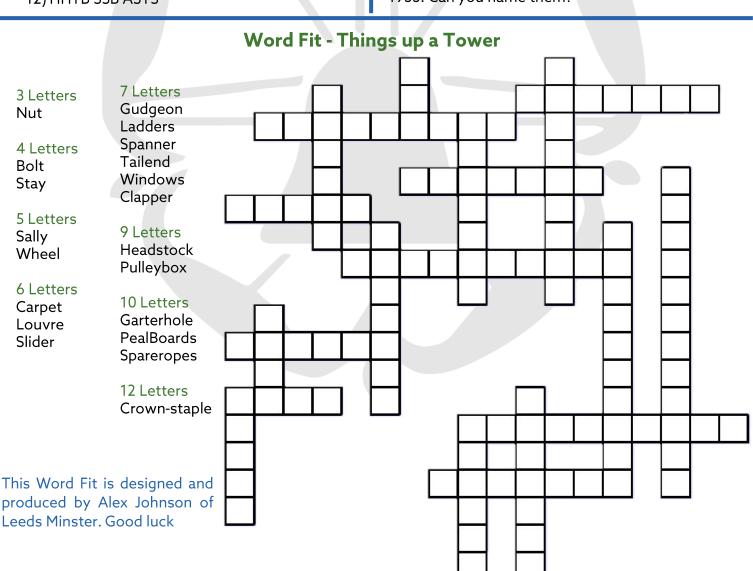


What am I?

You could be saved by the bell, if the bell did this. Give me one for a chat, or for marital bliss.

Name Them:

Alfie Johnson rang 5 peals at 2 different towers, both within the Leeds branch area. Both were rings of 8, cast by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough in 1933. Can you name them?



Ringers of the Leeds Branch: Ringers from the Past

In this feature, we look at a past or present ringer from the Leeds Branch. This issue, we focus on Alfie Johnson, ringer at Far Headingley, who was a member of the Yorkshire Association from 1947 until 2006.

Alfred Ian Johnson, Alfie to most people, was born in 1922 and lived and worked all his life in Headingley/Meanwood area. He attended St. Chad's day school from the age of 4-14, then he became an apprentice to a local joiner and undertaker. His apprenticeship was interrupted by the war where he served with Royal Army Pioneer corps landing at Sicily, Italy and Normandy on D1.

He returned to the business after the war. Alfie continued as joiner & undertaker all his working life. He was involved in many funerals since his early days and his great care and sensitivity in dealing with bereaved families was widely respected.

He was in the choir at St. Chad's with his brothers, Ernest and Edward, when his voice broke, he was asked if he'd like to learn to bell-ring and both he and Ernest re-joined the tower after the war and became a Yorkshire Association member in 1947. Alfie always enjoyed attending the Snowdon Dinner, sometimes travelling by train to attend. In fact, I can remember going to York by train to attend the dinner at Betty's and coming home on the last train.



Alfie Johnson in action of the St. Chad's tenor (with Chris Milestone on the 7th)

He was also a regular at general meetings attending by public transport or getting a lift from someone. He used to organise towers outings, mainly by coach, and inviting parishioners to join in the outings. Over the years, Alfie taught many people, along with his brother Ernest, to ring bells including myself. He was chairman of Leeds & District Society of Change Ringers and steeple keeper at St. Chad's for many years. He was a regular ringer attending ringing twice on Sundays and Thursday practice night. He carried on ringing until ill health prevented him from climbing the 60 steps up the tower.

Alfie enjoyed holidaying abroad on many occasions and in later life, enjoyed the Lake District and Scotland. He was also a keen gardener and had an allotment for many years.

Alfie died in August 2003 and the church was full for his funeral. In 2006, a window was dedicated to his memory in the side chapel at St. Chad's; the window (See Page 11) includes many hidden symbols associated with Alfie, including a bell rope, funeral flowers, garden vegetable, a bicycle wheel and another things for which I'm sure many older members of the YACR will remember Alfie.

Elizabeth Johnson (Alfie's niece) Far Headingley

Yorkshire Association of Change Ringers St. Chad's, Far Headingley, Leeds, West Yorkshire Sunday, 4 March 2007 in 45m (18–2–13, Eb) 1260 Plain Bob Triples

1) Emily R Futers

5) Maurice Calvert (C)

2) Alan G Futers

6) Charles Morrish

3) E Anne Futers 4) Carole Hallam 7) T Simon Futers 8) Christopher R J

Milestone

Rung following the dedication of the Memorial Window to Alfred Ian (Alfie) Johnson at the Patronal Festival Communion Service. The members of the band had all rung with Alfie at some stage in their ringing careers.

First on 8 - 1, 2



Alfie (furthest on the right) with the Far Headingley band in 2000

Alfie Johnson's Memorial Window

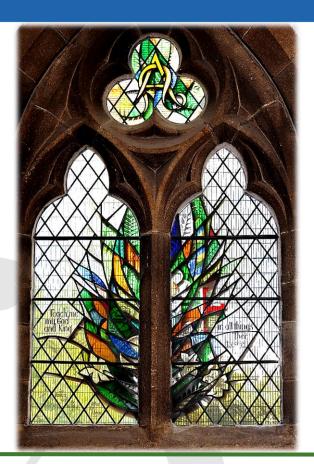
This is Alfie's memorial window at St. Chad's, Far Headingley, which is designed in the form of a tree, with various items from Alfie's life within. What can you identify within the stained glass of the design?

Items include:

- A Bellrope
- A ladder
- △ The St. Chad's Cross
- A Churchwarden's staff cross
- A variety of vegetables
- Different funeral flowers
- A Bicycle Wheel

If viewing this online, zooming into the picture might be useful.

Next time you're in the church, feel free to pop into the side chapel and have a closer look at the window



The Tail End

Have you checked recently?

During these current restrictions, we will be going into our towers a lot less currently, if it all. When government restrictions allow, and with permission of your incumbent (access to the building generally might be restricted as part of extra Covid-19 management measures by the incumbent), it is a good idea to pop into your tower as far as you can safely go to just visually check that everything looks normal with the tower and fabric. For example, one ringer nationally went up to check out their tower, and found that the plaster work in one corner of the ringing chamber had fallen down during absence.

Alan

Dates for your diary

6th February - Association General Meeting, by Zoom

13th February - Leeds Branch AGM, by Zoom

Your Questions

If you have any questions related to ringing, could be anything (methods, maintenance, organising an outing etc) please feel free to get in touch through our newsletter email.

Education Committee Survey

We had hoped to bring you the results of the Education Committee survey but we haven't had anything back from them yet. Hopefully we will be able to report back in the next newsletter.

And Finally...

Hope you all have a safe and relaxed Christmas, and look forward to 2021.

If you wish to submit something for the newsletter, or any comments you would like to see for improving, please let us know using the email given below.

Provided with compliments of the Leeds Branch Committee.

If there is something you wish to contribute, please email any articles/information to the committee for publication. We'd be pleased to hear from you. Please email the Leeds Branch Newsletter at leedsbr.editor@gmail.com