



LLANDAFF & MONMOUTH DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION of CHURCH BELL RINGERS

Founded 13th October 1893

ASSOCIATION NEWS 2025

WELCOME!

The Llandaff & Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers is the organisation for church bell and hand bell ringers in the dioceses of Llandaff and Monmouth. This is an abridged version of our Annual Report, which tells you who we are, what we've been up to, and how we can help you and the ringers in your church.

Bell-ringing is a tradition which goes back more than 400 years. It has brought pleasure and solace to generations of people who are ringers or hear the sound of the bells from our churches.

Learning to ring is the start of a life-long learning adventure, ringers are part of a community that stretches all over the world. Ringers from the Llandaff and Monmouth Association have been made welcome at towers from Hawaii to New Zealand, and members of our Association range in age from 8 to well over 80.

Ringling combines physical and mental skill, working as part of a team. You don't have to be particularly strong as the bell does most of the work, and you only have to be fit enough to climb the steps to the ringing room.

ASSOCIATION TOWER OVERVIEW

Our Association is divided into two branches which correspond to the diocesan boundaries, from the River Severn in the East to Neath in the West, Llantilio Crossenny in the North and towers on the Gwent levels in the South.

There are 88 towers with bells within the Association boundaries. Of these, 30 towers are not available for ringing and one tower has only one bell. The Association's 411 members are spread across 57 active towers.

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Honorary Life Membership is conferred on members who have given outstanding service to furthering the aims and objects of the Association. At the AGM in April, we recognised two people who have made a valuable contribution to the life of the Association over many years

JULIAN C PARKER

Julian has been a member for 43 years, he is Tower Captain of Sully, and has worked hard to keep the bells ringing, as the commitment from the local band has ebbed and flowed, he has always managed to keep ringing in the hearts of the parishioners.

Julian has held many of the key officer positions in both the Llandaff branch and the Association, serving as Llandaff Branch Master for eight years between 1996 and 2003, Association Master in 2001 and Central Council Rep for 14 years between 1996 and 2009.



He was Public Relations officer for ten years between 1992 and 2001 and was instrumental in bringing the Lichfield Diocesan mobile belfry to the Royal Welsh Show for a sustained week of ringing, even sleeping alongside it for the duration.

His work of proofreading the Association Annual reports, whilst mainly unnoticed, has been key in improving their accuracy and readability.

In addition, Julian has organised and run the monthly Association Surprise Major Practices since 1993 keeping his approach fresh and relevant over all that time.

Julian has nurtured a keen interest in developing new methods, composing and putting bands together to ring at least 17 new methods for the Association.

This leaves a lasting legacy for our towers, our ringers and their offspring (who have had methods named after them) that will remain in the annals of ringing for perpetuity.

YVONNE R JOHN

Yvonne has been a member of the Cadoxton band for many years. She has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to supporting others in their ringing and has been instrumental in developing and maintaining the ringing in the Western and Northern fringes of the Llandaff branch in towers such as Aberavon, Baglan, Cadoxton, Dyffryn, Aberdare and Merthyr.

Additionally, Yvonne is seemingly always at every Branch ringing event and the Branch would be very much the poorer without the family's involvement and commitment. Not to mention her hugely popular cream and jam puffs that appear at all our bring and share teas.

Yvonne served as Llandaff Branch Master between 2014 and 2019 and did an 11-year stint as Llandaff Branch Treasurer between 1991 and 2001.

Yvonne has run the monthly Branch 8 bell practice over a number of years, this has provided valuable ringing experience to many, expanding their ringing opportunities beyond what is achievable in their own tower.

With a keen interest in training, Yvonne has turned many recruits into ringers and then supported them on their ringing journey, nurturing and nudging people to achieve more than they thought possible. Capitalising on this skill and ability, Yvonne was elected as Llandaff Branch Training Officer when she stepped down from being Master in 2020 and has now fulfilled this important role for the last 5 years.

With the geographically spread-out nature of the Llandaff Branch, she has played a key role with her exceptional efforts and time commitment keeping the Branch coming together at our monthly practices.



OUR ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR

RINGING WORLD NATIONAL YOUTH COMPETITION – (RWNYC) BIRMINGHAM

In July, Team Cymru returned to compete in the RWNYC in Birmingham. Team Cymru is a group of young ringers aged under 18, mainly from the Llandaff and Monmouth Association. This year, we were competing in the 8-bell Call Change section for the first time, so it was a step up from last year for the team.

Meeting early at Cardiff Central to get a train to Birmingham for the day, our first tower was St Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter, a 10-bell tower in the Centre of Birmingham. Going on to St Martin's in the Bullring, which is the famous 16-bell tower, three of our team rang call changes on the 16, and one of our team was very happy to be able to ring the tenor! All of us had the unique and enjoyable experience of ringing on the 16, as these opportunities don't come around very often.

We then went to Erdington for our competition ringing slot, the 8-bell tower of St Barnabas Church. The competition piece, comprised of ringing to Queens, Kings (names for the order of the bells) and have at least three different bells lead.

We were all quite nervous as we hadn't managed a practice when all eight of us were available. We were quite happy with our ringing when we got out of the church. Our last tower of the day was Erdington Abbey, an 8-bell tower located not far from our competition tower.

Finally, after a long day, we had the results at the Bullring. Even though we came fifth, we were all so proud of the progress we had made from being a six-bell team to being an eight-bell team when most of us didn't have much experience ringing on eight.

Unfortunately, this year we say "goodbye" to our conductor of Team Cymru, Adam Turner, as he is now too old to compete. We will miss him in next year's competition!

Overall, the trip to Birmingham has made us closer together. Not just as teammates but as friends.
Team Cymru

Team Cymru will return to Nottingham for next year's event.



SOCIETY OF ROYAL CUMBERLAND YOUTHS - COUNTRY WEEKEND

Llandaff & Monmouth DACBR hosted The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths during the weekend of 10th to 12th July for their Annual Country weekend. This turned out to be the hottest weekend of the year so far.

The "Cumberlands" is a non-territorial ringing society, made up of ringers from the UK and overseas. It was founded in 1747 and based at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. To be invited to become a member is seen as a great honour and recognition of a high standard of ringing.

Abergavenny was the nominated central point, with peals being attempted at 19 towers within an hour's drive away.

Unfortunately, the weather had a detrimental effect on the number of successful attempts but 12 peals were scored including a handbell peal rung on Sunday afternoon.

Saturday was a mini tour for those not peal ringing, with Mynyddislwyn and Bedwellty the venues in the morning and open ringing at Abergavenny in the afternoon. The weekend concluded with an evening meal and social at Abergavenny Community Centre.



Abergavenny Community Centre - picture courtesy of centre staff

As it was such a lovely evening the meal and quiz were held outside in the courtyard.

Everyone appeared to have a good time and where peals were lost it is likely the Cumberlands will return to try again. There were lots of favourable comments on the bells and locations.

SOUTH WEST 12 BELL STRIKING COMPETITION - HOSTS

In October Newport Cathedral hosted the South West 12 Bell striking competition. 150 ringers came for what turned out to be a very enjoyable day. Planning started for this event in February and was a massive challenge, as a menu of breakfast rolls and homemade Cawl were decided on. The Cathedral and helpers have received a lot of excellent feedback.

Beer from Glamorgan Breweries in Llantrisant was also available as was homemade Cider provided by one of our Shirenewton ringers. The Cathedral ladies provided tea, coffee and cake.

Ten teams took part, coming from as far afield as Truro, Wimborne, Exeter and Trowbridge as well others slightly closer to home from Chilcompton, Bristol, Midsomer Norton and Cheltenham. The Association also entered a team made up of both Newport and Llandaff ringers, who came a creditable 6th. This was very pleasing as the teams who were ahead of us ring on 12 bells at least once or twice every week, and we do not get that opportunity very often.

SPECIAL RINGING

As 2025 saw the 80th anniversary of VE day in June and VJ day in August and a large number of towers rang to commemorate the occasion.

PEALS

Peals are the bell ringers' equivalent of a marathon, requiring concentration and stamina, and typically last up to three hours. They are often rung in celebration of significant events, and present an opportunity for extended periods of good quality ringing

Handbell peals are quicker and typically rung indoors, often in someone's home. While they require less physical effort, they demand greater mental focus, as each ringer is responsible for ringing two bells.

This year there have been 11 Tower bell peals and 8 handbell peals rung by the Llandaff & Monmouth Association, and we have hosted 8 other societies who have rung 23 peals at 15 of our towers and 1 handbell peal.

While peals have not been numerous this year, Quarter peals have been very popular, 163 having been rung at 41 different towers – a significant total, given there are only 57 ringing towers in the Association

I would like to mention the quarter peal rung for Bishops Cherry's enthronement service on the 8th November. Although not as much stamina is needed to ring a quarter peal which lasts approximately 45 mins on 12 bells it takes an awful lot of concentration.

COMPETITIONS



Branch striking competitions are held in May, with the winners competing for the "Pitman Trophy".

Striking competitions are an opportunity for ringers to focus on the quality of the ringing rather than complexity, and we're sure that the general public notice the difference.

This year's final was held at Llancarfan on Wednesday 9th July, with bands from Cowbridge, Llandaff, Newport and Rumney. It was a wonderful sunny evening with judges Phil Hopkins and Peter Giles sitting in the pub garden.

Phil Hopkins, Andrew Phillips (Newport), Harriet Moncrieff (Association Master)

Newport were the winners, retaining the trophy for another year and the competitors retired to the pub garden, joining the judges for a well-deserved pint.

ASSOCIATION CHAIR'S CHALLENGE!



The Chair's Challenge is a competition designed to encourage people to take the initiative and organise ringing events for their own development.

The overall winner's prize was presented at the AGM in April. This went to Pauline Morris who organised in excess of 5 events during the year, ranging from a quarter peal attempt with an all-ladies band, to a quarter peal at Imber, on Salisbury Plain, which is under military occupation and only open the public for a few days each year.

SOCIAL EVENTS

The 2025 Association quiz, hosted by Llantarnam Ringers, was held on Saturday 25th October in Llantarnam Church Hall. There were 48 people in attendance making a total of 8 teams and representing 14 towers.



Phillipa was a superb Quiz master and kept the evening running at a smart pace. In between quiz rounds Jonathan had devised a tower bingo game which was used to replace the raffle.

The winners of the Quiz were the Llantarnam Legends, with a score of 72 points out of the 99 available with St Sannans Cannons a close 2nd.

The theme of the evening was a bring your own picnic and people really entered into the spirit of this.

There was a prize for the most innovative table which was won by a team made up from new ringers and their helpers who have only been learning to ring since January, St Sannans Cannons (Bedwellty). Other team names were, Mad Hatters, Happy Anniversary, Confuseddotcom, White Rabbits, Mixology and Madwellty.

It was a very enjoyable evening and £119.00 was raised for the training fund.



BELL MAINTENANCE GROUP

The Association's Bell Maintenance Group (BMG) normally give up one Friday each month to carry out inspections, maintenance, and repairs on church bell installations. This is vital work, as a growing number of towers either have no active band, or no longer have a "steeple keeper" experienced in bell maintenance. All work by the BMG is voluntary, but the Association has a legacy gift fund which is used to pay travel expenses.

Churches or local bands can request a BMG visit through the Association, either to fix a suspected problem with the bells, or simply to ensure the bells remain in good order and safe to ring. Every visit must be authorised by the incumbent responsible for the church to ensure the visit is covered by insurance. After every inspection a written report is sent to the incumbent, plus any active ringers at the tower. This not only details any problems found and repairs done, but also highlights any further work needed to keep the bells in a safe condition, so they may continue to be rung and enjoyed in years to come.

To arrange for a visit from the Belfry Maintenance Group: BMG Co-ordinator, Joy Kipling, bmg@llanmon.org.uk

BELL RESTORATION FUND

For more serious restoration work, the Association has a Bell Restoration Fund (BRF), which is a registered charity. (No 507208)

The BRF provides financial assistance by way of grant aid and/or loans to churches in the two dioceses for the purpose of maintaining and improving their bell installations. The BRF has seen a healthy amount of activity in 2025 with a number of projects completed.

Pen Y Fai: - have completed the restoration of their bells and bell chamber and celebrated with a service of dedication on Sunday 2nd November. At the close of the service, a celebration cake was ceremonially cut by Councillor Bennett of Pen-Y-Fai, marking the culmination of a memorable and uplifting event. The church was filled to capacity, creating a warm and lively atmosphere, and refreshments were generously provided afterwards, allowing the congregation and visitors to continue their conversations and enjoy the sense of community.

The Bell Restoration Fund made a contribution of £13,150 to the project.



Llantwit Major: - have also completed their project to refurbish five of their clappers and have a new clapper for the tenor. The BRF provided funds £892 to help with this project.

Usk: has had two new clappers for the tenor and 7th and Porthkerry have had funds to refurbish their clappers.

Llantrisant: - an offer of £30,000 has been made towards the restoration, complete rehang and retuning of the bells. This work is still ongoing but is expected to be completed by the middle of March 2026.

Currently the BRF account has £78,766 of which £44,042 has already been allocated to projects, this leaves £34,724 available for future grants. Is there a possible improvement that you could make to your bells, fittings or tower that would make your bells easier to ring or more readily available?

You can find out more information about bell restoration, including details of the BRF Rules and guidance for applicants on our website: <https://www.llanmon.org.uk/association/brf>

For details of how to apply for funding contact: Pauline Morris, 07833 778461
secretary@llanmon.org.uk

CHALLENGES FACING RINGERS

Nationally, and in our own Association, two thirds of ringers are aged 60 and over. We are facing a significant decline in numbers in the next 10 years, and it can make it more difficult to recruit the young people we need – not every teenager wants to socialise with people their grandparents' age!

We are looking at new ways of teaching to reduce the time it takes from complete beginner to being ready to ring for Sunday Service, and encouraging young people from different towers to get together and form the social bonds that have kept most of us engaged in ringing for the whole of our adult lives.

We've recognised that parents may not know very much about ringing or be connected with the church, and we've produced an online guide to share with them the benefits to their child of learning to ring, and to answer any concerns they might have.

The guide is available on our website here: <https://www.llanmon.org.uk>

For young people in church schools and coming out of Sunday school and church youth groups, ringing is a great way to keep them connected to the church, and we are keen to work with parishes to make that happen.

For more information, contact the Association Chair, Helen Phillips, chairman@llanmon.org.uk

SAFEGUARDING

The Association is committed to providing an environment where people feel safe, welcome and included.

The Association has been working with the Church in Wales Safeguarding team on a policy which aligns with CinW safeguarding policies and procedures.

We are about to appoint a Safeguarding Coordinator to promote safeguarding best practice to members and signpost members to appropriate resources should they need further information or to report a concern.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

For general enquiries, and more details about the Bell Restoration scheme:
Association General Secretary, Pauline Morris, 07833 778461, secretary@llanmon.org.uk

For advice on recruiting new ringers: Association Chair, Helen Phillips, 07827 4799773,
chairman@llanmon.org.uk

If you have bells, but you don't have ringers, and you'd like to arrange ringing for a special service, please contact one of the Branch Masters:

Llandaff Diocese: Christopher Kipling, llandaffmaster@llanmon.org.uk
Monmouth Diocese: Anne Hayman, 07884 392955, monmouthmaster@llanmon.org.uk

For safeguarding queries or concerns: Association Chair, Helen Phillips, 07827 4799773,
chairman@llanmon.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, in conjunction with the Clerical Guild of Ringers, has produced a guide which explains how ringing is organised and the safeguarding arrangements which apply in the Church of England

<https://cccbr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/From-Practice-to-Perfect-a-short-guide-for-clergy-PCCs-and-Safeguarding-Advisors.pdf>

Information regarding the Central Council's (CCCBR) 2030 initiative and ringing in schools is available here:

<https://cccbr.org.uk/2024/11/24/young-ringers-for-ringing-2030-ringing-in-schools/>

Editor: Pauline Morris (Association General Secretary)
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