



# HRGB Scottish Newsletter

2021 Issue 2 – July 2021

## Chat from the Chair

It was perhaps not unexpected that covid struck the Spring Rally for the second year running but the Scottish Region AGM business was properly conducted via Zoom. A report on the Spring Rally which followed appears in this issue.

Many team correspondents replied to my email asking them to give me some idea of:

- their team's activities (if any),
- when they expected to resume ringing,
- whether their members would be interested in joining an on-line Autumn Rally, and
- what help, advice and support their team might benefit from?

I was very pleased to learn that some teams have resumed ringing while a good number are meeting on social media. Others are maintaining face-to-face contact while some teams have been unable to return to any activity, and there is a summary of the results in this issue.

The committee has decided to hold the 2021 Autumn Rally online on Saturday 9 October. You can contact [laura.buist@btinternet.com](mailto:laura.buist@btinternet.com) anytime from now to express your interest in attending. This event will be open to individuals, small groups or whole teams to attend online, with or without bells to ring, so please do consider joining in whatever your circumstances.

I am very pleased that Claire Griffiths has agreed to continue as our Safeguarding Officer. I am equally pleased that Marge Paterson has agreed to be our new magazine distribution manager and that Judith Frye has joined the committee. Thank you all.

I'm sure you will know by now that the UK National Rally due to be held in Scotland in April 2021 has been postponed to April 2023. Volunteers to help with this event will be warmly welcomed.

Keep well. Keep safe.

Best wishes.

## Castletown Primary School's Year of Bell Ringing 2020-2021

We are the Primary 5/6 class at Castletown Primary School, which is in the far north of Scotland, only 5 miles from the most northerly point on the UK mainland. Despite all the COVID restrictions this year, our class bell team has managed to keep on ringing. Every time we rehearsed, we washed our hands before and after taking out the belleplates. Each player kept their individual bells in a zip lock bag, which meant that no one else could touch them.



In August 2020, as soon as we returned to school, we began playing. Half of our class had never rung bells before so we started with some easy ringing from "The Handbell Book" by Guy Radcliffe. We also joined in with an [online project](#) organised by caithnessmusic.com and The Scottish Chamber Orchestra. We played a Promenade 1 from "Pictures at an Exhibition" which was especially arranged for us by Miss Watson, our class teacher.

By December, we were able to record four festive songs which we shared with the other children in our school. Regrettably, we couldn't have a live Christmas concert this year so we shared our music via Google Classroom. The tunes we played were Jingle Bells, Good King Wenceslas, Mary's Boy Child and Away in a Manger.

Unfortunately, due to lockdown we had to stay at home from January until March 2021 so we didn't play our bells during that time. However, we were delighted that Malcolm Wilson decided to organise the first ever completely virtual Scottish Schools Ring in June. Our school usually takes part in the Schools Ring online while the other groups play together live, in a venue in the Central Belt of Scotland. This year everyone was online. We played lots of rhythm games, took part in a notation quiz and attempted to find the titles of Disney Songs written using Emojis. It was tricky but fun!

During the rally, we also played "Cheerful Prelude" by Michael Coe live over the Internet to children from Newton Primary (Stirling) and Shieldhill Primary, in Falkirk. We were very proud of our

performance. During the session we also listened to Shieldhill play a song from “Titanic.” It was part of their school project and they played it beautifully. They also had an amazing picture of the Titanic on their classroom wall!

We know that this past year has been very difficult for bell ringing teams all across the UK. We feel extremely fortunate to have been able to keep playing together during this unusual time. We hope the COVID situation improves enough soon so that every bell team in the country can ring together again very soon.

Best Wishes to all

Primary 5/6 Castletown Primary School, Caithness, Highland, Scotland



## “Play Handbells and See the World”



This has certainly been my experience and involvement in handbell ringing. The “world” has included many different regions of Great Britain which I have been able to explore while attending the annual HRGB National Rally each year.

HRGB is divided into 8 regions covering the length and breadth of the UK. The Rally is organised and hosted by each region in turn (Scotland’s turn to host will be in 2023) and it brings together ringers from all over the country for a weekend of music making and general bonhomie. If you haven’t attended such an event before it may seem rather a daunting prospect. I know that is how I felt as a novice ringer: *Do I have the skills required? Can I cope with the difficulty of the music? Will I keep up with everyone else?*

All my fears were unfounded. There is always a warm welcome among the ringers who are keen to encourage and support fellow enthusiasts. The rally offers hands on workshops at all levels to progress your knowledge and skills, massed ringing, allowing the opportunity to be part of a large bell orchestra, a concert, processions, talks, and many occasions to chat with friends old and new. As we all know, it is often while chatting in a relaxed setting we learn most about our chosen hobby or leisure activity.

2022 sees the twice postponed National Rally in Sheffield hosted by the North-East Region. Booking details will be contained in the Autumn issue of Reverberations which is delivered to HRGB members.

In April 2023 the rally comes much closer to home. The Scottish region will be hosting the weekend event in the Stirling Court Hotel in the beautiful grounds of the University of Stirling, close to Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument. This is your chance to attend a large handbell gathering on your doorstep. A variety of accommodation and attendance packages will be available to suit your needs. Come with your team-mates or on your own.

This is a wonderful experience, and chance to welcome the other regions with our renowned warm Scottish hospitality.

You will make new friends, learn many ringing skills, and have lots of fun in the process.

All the information will be available next year. Check for details in Reverberations, the Scottish newsletter and on [www.hrgbscotland.org.uk](http://www.hrgbscotland.org.uk) and on [HRGBScotland Facebook page](#).

Put 14-16 April 2023 in your diary planner now.

**Lynda Barclay (Jordanhill Handbell Ringers)**

## Ringling virtually

When the pandemic struck in 2020 and we became confined to our homes, one question sprang to the minds of the Jordanhill handbell ringers. How would we cope without our weekly fix of bell ringing and chat on a Sunday evening? The answer, of course, soon became clear. Jordanhill went virtual, and Zoom rehearsals were born.

We began by chatting on Zoom (we're good at that), admiring holiday photos used as Zoom backgrounds, hearing news from others and making sure that we were all coping in what were rather unsettling times. We injected more fun to some sessions with cocktails, admiring each other's concoctions. We were able to chat to one of our former members who had moved away from Glasgow a number of years ago, highlighting one of the benefits of virtual meetings.

After attending the Scottish region's virtual autumn rally in October 2020, our Zoom sessions progressed to new heights. It was time for us to become Jordanhill's finest air ringers.

Some of us took the prospect of air ringing very seriously, coming prepared with labelled wooden spoons representing musical notes. Others decided that imaginary bells were best (or perhaps some wooden spoon collections were a little limited). We became masters of air ringing, always assuring our conductor that we had achieved note perfection (and she believed us...we think). We even gained another member of the air ringing club – a ringer from another group who was keen to join the fun.

We've continued with our air ringing sessions, adding new pieces to our repertoire and revisiting old favourites. Although virtual rehearsals are no substitute for the real thing, we've all been extremely grateful for the opportunity to keep in touch and make music together, albeit in a rather different setting.

We do all wonder how we'll manage when we're able to meet in person and play bells as we used to. All mistakes will be heard, and there will be no way of just missing out the odd accidental here and there (not that we do anything of the sort on Zoom of course). Will we remember how to play real bells? Will good old muscle memory just kick in? Time will tell.

Susan Macfarlane (Jordanhill handbell ringers)

## HRGB Scotland Virtual Spring Rally held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2021



Following on from the success of the Scottish Region's first virtual rally in October 2020, Scottish ringers gathered on Zoom to take part in the AGM and Spring rally on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This offered another opportunity to experience a range of different activities such as 'air ringing', a quiz and breakout rooms.

There was a very positive turnout of more than twenty ringers for the Spring Rally, which offered another opportunity to experience a range of different activities such as "air ringing", quiz, break-out room chats and virtual massed ringing.

Laura & Malcolm both provided instructions on the technicalities which allowed for screen sharing the music pieces on the participants desktop, tablet and mobile devices running Zoom. The music pieces chosen and arranged by Malcolm Wilson for air-ringing (using Muscore, a popular notation software) were Love me Tender, My Love is like a Red, Red Rose and Plaisir d'Amour. There were a few challenges to encounter for those participants unable to see the music, but these were soon corrected, and we were all able to enjoy making use of air-ringing to each of the handbell music pieces.

The quiz questions were devised by members of the committee. The answers to each question was the name of a Scottish regional team, such as Callander, Dunfermline, Inverness, Dunkeld and others. There were no prizes given but all participants had a chance to rack their brains for the answers!

Claire Griffiths was asked to help with the breakout rooms and to provide some topics for starting conversations. However, due to the chatty nature of most bell ringers, Claire was not sure if this would be needed. If the breakout room I was assigned to was anything like the others, there was absolutely no need for any prompts and aids to getting the conversation going! If anything, the time spent there was too short.

Finally, thanks were extended to Laura Buist, Malcolm Wilson and the rest of the committee, who had devised all the (some easy, others more difficult) quiz questions and in the organising of the event, which gave yet another opportunity to engage in the fun activities whilst enjoying being a participant in the virtual massed ringing handbell Spring Rally.

Catherine Vost (Jordanhill Handbell Ringers)

### **...and the results are now in...**

Thanks so much to all of the individuals and teams who replied to John Elcock's survey of the HRGB Scottish Regional Association Team activities which has been taking place over the past few weeks.

It was really heartening to see that a handful of teams have managed to get back to ringing in person now that the restrictions have eased slightly. Some teams are choosing to avoid the need for masks and onerous cleaning by practising outdoors in the sunshine as this lovely picture from the Blair Bells illustrates. Even as far north as Wick, the Polteney Ringers have been practising outdoors, thanks to our beautiful Scottish summer weather!



*The Blair Bells rehearsing in the garden. Five Blair Bells, plus one from Dunkeld, enjoyed ringing in the sunshine, after braving the weather for several previous weeks!*

The Borealis Bells of Orkney have been lucky enough to find themselves already in Level 0, and were the only team who reported getting back to regular rehearsals indoors with distancing in place.

Jordanhill Handbell Ringers and Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers have both proceeded successfully with online meetings and rehearsals, Dunblane using bells while Jordanhill have been “air ringing” so far...

The overwhelming message which arises from the survey is that everyone is keen to get back to ringing safely when that becomes possible. A number of obstacles were mentioned: availability of venues, difficulties with internet access and ill health of some members.

For any team which is looking for detailed guidance about how to safely resume rehearsals, the organisation “Making Music” has some excellent guidelines: follow the [link](#), click “Scotland” and “organise a rehearsal” to get up to date guidance. <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/can-group-get-back-in-person>

Obviously, each team will take things at their own pace and all activities must be carried out within the current restrictions, which are an ever-changing sea!

For this reason, the Autumn Rally will definitely be taking place online on **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October**, 2-4pm. This is a real opportunity – we are hoping that by then it may be possible for whole teams or at least small groups of ringers to meet locally, and attend the rally as a group on Zoom. I attended the HRGB national rally on-screen recently in this way with my sister, together in my home, and we were lucky enough to have a set of belleplates to play on – we really did have SO much fun that we genuinely cried with laughter! (There is something very beautiful about participating “on mute” as a group – it puts a whole new and refreshing perspective on any wrong notes...)

Please contact Laura ([laura.buist@btinternet.com](mailto:laura.buist@btinternet.com)), anytime from now, to express your interest in attending the Autumn Rally and you will be contacted later in September to confirm your registration and be sent the Zoom details. Registration will be open till 8<sup>th</sup> October and we genuinely can't wait to see you all there.

Katrina Gordon (editor)

*p.s. Who knows when the next newsletter will appear, but please do send me your stories and pictures any time at [katrinathurso@aol.com](mailto:katrinathurso@aol.com) Thanks! 😊*

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Scottish Schools Ring went completely virtual for 2021**

An often heard phrase in the strange times of this past year, perhaps, but an event being “quite, quite different from previous events” might aptly describe the 21<sup>st</sup> Schools Schools Ring. And of course for the 21<sup>st</sup> year this event has been run, in the year 2021, it seems 21<sup>st</sup> century digital tools are eminently sensible to employ to make it all happen entirely online!

Though this year had all participating schools taking part online via Scotland's national schools intranet, called Glow, using the video-meeting facility as part of Microsoft Teams, video-meeting tools via Glow have in fact been used for this event for a number of years already so that the schools which were simply too geographically far-removed from those schools in the in-person face-to-face event held in a school could still take part. The difference this year, of course, was that all participating schools were connecting at a distance from each other.

Aside from the technology being used by all for the first time, there was a recognition early on in planning this event that the way schools have had to operate this past year (sometimes in-school,



What happened on the day? Well, the format for the event had the following included:

In the 1-hour session there was a series of music activities presented which involved unison air-ringing to bar-length rhythmic patterns (shown as slides) moving to 2-part air-ringing, then 4-part. And as parts were learned, repeated by all, then groups created through varying criteria for a bit of fun to play in parts with increasing complexity.

To break up the practical activity there was first a quiz which deliberately also reinforced the note names and values as well as rhythm names being used in the ringing activities, and then later an emoji-based quiz of Disney film song titles.

And also two of the participating groups shared their performances of their own music with the others: Shieldhill Primary School performed "My Heart Will Go On" from the movie Titanic, and Castletown Primary School performed "Cheerful Prelude" by Michael Coe.

In all there were 66 young music-makers taking part from as far afield as Castletown Primary School near Thurso in Caithness in the Highland Council area, Newton Primary School in Stirling Council area, and Shieldhill Primary School in Falkirk Council area.

And there were many enthusiastic comments shared by children taking part. Olivia from Castletown Primary School P5/6 said "I really enjoyed the notation quiz and the rhythm patterns. They were fun as well." Isla from Castletown said "We had good fun. I liked the part where we all played live together. I enjoyed Shieldhill's Titanic so much."

Harry from Castletown Primary School P5/6 said "the rhythm patterns were hard but I got them right and it was exciting." Rufus from the same class said "I didn't think playing live for an audience would work virtually but it did! I really enjoyed it." And Grant from his class also echoed that sentiment, saying "the playing live part was really fun as we haven't played in front of people in so long. It was a good experience and was really fun." Wilson from Shieldhill Primary School P5 class said "The virtual schools ring was amazing."

Kyle from Shieldhill Primary School P5 class said "I really enjoyed how organised it was." And Tane in the same class also said "I was inspired by your confidence and patience when dealing with all of the classes and any technical difficulties."

Orla from Castletown Primary School P5/6, too, shared that "when we played live I was nervous at first and then when I started to play I enjoyed it. I would do the Scottish Schools Ring again if I could." Adele from Shieldhill Primary School's P5 class reiterated that in saying "I really enjoyed it because it was really fun and I would like to do it again." Jamey from the same class said "It was fun and exciting." And Castletown's Brooke said what many of the children from different classes said in comments "Thank you for organising this – it was fun!"

So, many, many thanks to all of the staff and pupils of the schools taking part – and here's to a future event!

Malcolm Wilson

## Obituary – Maggie O’Hagan

18-01-47 - 28-03-21



Maggie was a loyal and valued member of the Kilwhang Ringers for more than ten years. She passed away on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March after a battle with cancer.

We remember her affectionately taking up her stance with those ‘big bells’ in St. Bridget’s Hall where we rehearse. She was the maker of wonderful cakes which fed both us regularly and all our visitors at our annual coffee mornings.

Born in Darlington, Maggie trained as a Geography Teacher, but worked mostly in Learning Support. She moved to Stonehaven where she lived for thirty- seven years. She became fully involved in the Community with many and various interests which included membership of the Horizon Group who ‘keep Stonehaven beautiful’ with plants and shrubs around our town, sailing, Audio-describing for HM Theatre and once at the Edinburgh Tattoo. She was a Goldsmith and had her own ‘Silver Works’ where she fashioned jewellery and was part of NEOS. She also enjoyed sewing, cross-stitch and making stained glass.

Always one to suggest new music for our group to play, Maggie’s enthusiasm knew no bounds. We remember her with great fondness.

She is survived by her husband, Mike and daughter, Claire, who were both actively involved in the Kilwhang Family.

Ros Marshall, Kilwhang Ringers Stonehaven