



Issue 41

NEWSLETTER

September 2009

Welcome to a new session of handbell ringing and welcome also to the Scottish Region's first electronic newsletter. This issue is very much an experiment. However, spiralling costs together with a lack of news items from teams, makes electronic delivery a very cost effective means of keeping in touch. Thank you to all teams who supplied email addresses of members. Please let us know what you think of this issue and this method of keeping in touch.

The Region's website has also been redeveloped thanks to the work of Malcolm Wilson of Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers. The website address remains the same at www.hrgbscotland.org.uk - please visit it and let us know what information you would like to see there. The aim of the website is to promote handbell ringing across Scotland. If your team has its own web presence, please let us know about it so that we may link to it – and perhaps you might consider linking back to the Scottish site. It is the intention to make the magazine available on the website. Please therefore can you ensure that if you are submitting any photos of people that you have their permission.

I have had a busy summer of ringing. Back in June I took part, along with 10 other Scottish ringers, in the International Festival of Handbells concert in St Giles'. We were joining a touring group of Americans under the artistic directorship of Debbie Rice. We had a sizeable and very appreciative audience. During a trip to the States I was able to meet up with Debbie again when she told me how appreciative the American ringers were that so many Scottish ringers had joined them for the St Giles concert. Celtic Carillon, ably directed by Claire Griffiths, performed three pieces at the concert. You can read more about this event later in the magazine.

At the end of July, I took part in the National Residential Ringing Week in Kingston on Thames. This year the two guest conductors from America were Kevin McChesney and Tim Waugh. It was a great and fun learning experience to work with these well know directors. Tim made us think about rhythm and expression while Kevin concentrated more on the visual impression we convey as ringers. In between all the ringing, there was time to dress up from the time of Henry VIII to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his reign. You should have received by this time details of our Autumn events. Your committee has planned three events which will all follow the same format - hopefully somewhere close to you thereby reducing travelling time. Feel free to come and join us at any or all of the days if you wish. You can come on your own – just bring bells and everything else you require to ring with you. Happy ringing and hope to see you at one of our events.

Christine D Reid



Rehearsing in St Giles' Cathedral



Claire Griffiths, Adam Wilson and Debbie Rice.

St Giles' Cathedral June 2009

Enthusiasm coupled with a slight degree of nervousness was the general feeling of the Scottish ringers who had agreed to join with a large group of visiting American ringers for a performance in St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh. A challenging experience it would turn out to be, with six new pieces to perfect in only three rehearsals, guided by detailed written instructions from the renowned American conductor Debbie Rice. Worst of all, there would be no chance to practise with the Americans until the afternoon of the concert. Still, we were assured that we would be well-hidden in the back row on concert day, so surely the audience would be oblivious to the odd wrong note here and there?

The programme, a varied selection including the moving *Metanoia* by Phil Roberts and the uplifting *Big Ben Birthday Waltz* by Sandra Winter, seemed rather daunting at first, with quick tempos, bells, chimes, bells again, and the odd mallet sock thrown in just to keep us on our toes. However, we soon got to grips with them, along with the three pieces that we were to play on our own as Celtic Carillon under the expert guidance of Claire Griffiths from Jordanhill and Lysbeth Wilson from Dunblane. Our pieces were selected with a Scottish theme in mind – *Bluebells of Scotland*, *Cradle Song* by Malcolm Wilson, and *Auld Lang Syne* composed by Lysbeth.

The day of the concert arrived and, on entering St. Giles', we were greeted by the sound of handbells – the Americans, barely off the plane, were already in full swing and producing a delightful sound. Particularly impressive was the sheer number of ringers and their range of bells – our largest bass bells suddenly looked pitifully small in comparison. Our plan to sneak quietly into the back row didn't quite materialise – we were ushered straight to the front, but at least we were guaranteed an unrivalled view of Debbie, who proved to be an excellent conductor, full of enthusiasm and vigour.

The rehearsal seemed to be over in a flash and it was soon time for us to don our gloves again and perform. The attentive audience seemed eager to hear our repertoire, and, along with a few friends and family members, we had attracted a fair number of tourists and even a touring American youth orchestra, whose music-reading abilities proved very handy during Debbie's impromptu audience participation section! Our sound in the vast cathedral was quite different to what we were used to during rehearsals, and each piece suddenly seemed to come alive with the help of a strong bass section and a far greater number of ringers. The addition of Adam Wilson on trumpet also greatly enhanced *When in our Music God is Glorified* by Arnold Sherman.

When Celtic Carillon's turn came to play, we suddenly felt rather exposed without the support of our American friends, however Claire's perfect conducting skills and calm demeanour ensured that we did our Scottish medley justice.

The evening drew to a close with rapturous applause, and there was just enough time to say our goodbyes as Debbie and her team headed off for a well-earned rest before embarking on the next leg of their tour. As we disbanded to Glasgow, Dunblane and beyond, we reflected on our challenging but thoroughly enjoyable experience and all that we had learned in the process. Perhaps a Celtic Carillon tour of America should be our next venture?

Susan MacFarlane Jordanhill Handbell Ringers



Ringers from Blair Bells, Dunblane Cathedral, Dunkeld Cathedral and Jordanhill Parish Church perform as Celtic Carillon with Debbie, Claire and Adam.

A Journey to the North

by The Parish of Dunkeld Handbell Ringers

After our three day visit to Iona in 2007 to ring in the Abbey, we realised that finding a location for 2009 which could possibly compare with the Island of Iona was not going to be easy – but find one we did and we are now back home, with happy memories, after a five day “Journey To The North”.

DAY 1 Five cars left Dunkeld on a beautiful summer’s morning to travel northwards as far as The Royal Burgh of Dornoch. Needless to say, the cars were heavily laden with all the usual handbell paraphernalia, 12 ringers, 4 husbands (great roadies!) plus personal luggage!

The Cathedral in Dornoch, the venue for our first concert, is the 13th Century Parish Church – not a huge building, but very beautiful. Andrew Carnegie, who was born in Dunfermline, spent many summers at his Skibo estate near Dornoch and there are stained glass windows in the Cathedral which were donated in his memory. More recently in 2000, Susan Brown, the Minister, presided over the wedding of Madonna in Skibo Castle and later baptised her son in the Cathedral. The publicity inevitably brought more weddings to Dornoch and, when we first entered the Cathedral, we were amazed at the floral displays from one wedding. There were flowers everywhere, even the windows had arrangements, at least two feet deep across their full width. My husband said, rather naively, “This lot must have cost over £1000”, only to be informed that they had cost over £10,000! Well, it certainly made a magnificent setting for our concert, before a most appreciative audience, members of which gave generously to the retiring collection towards the upkeep of the Cathedral.

DAY 2 Continued our journey to Scrabster harbour, on the northern coast of mainland Scotland, to board our ferry MV Hamnavoe for the 90 minute sail across the Pentland Firth to Stromness in Orkney. The Pentland Firth is renowned for rough seas and high winds, but we were fortunate to have a sunny day with a slight breeze, a beautifully calm sea and dolphins swimming alongside the ship. Nearing Orkney, we sailed past the “Old Man of Hoy”, the 449 foot red sandstone sea stack,

famous as a rock climb. In Viking times Stromness was called Hamnavoe, the name of our ferry, which means “a peaceful and safe harbour”.

Our second concert was in Stromness Parish Church, reached by carrying most of our equipment along an extremely narrow street. There was a great audience, but it seemed that handbell ringing was new to the Orcadians, who had turned up not knowing what to expect but who obviously enjoyed our music. The retiring collection, chosen by the church at this concert, was in aid of The Thyolo (Malawi) Project.

DAY 3 Free time during the day to explore some of the fascinating places which abound in these islands. We travelled alongside Scapa Flow and crossed some of the Churchill Barriers to visit The Italian Chapel on the tiny island of Lamb Holm. Scapa Flow is the large bay in Orkney selected in both WW I and WW II as a suitable anchorage for the British Naval Fleet, from which they could patrol the North sea. Sadly, in 1939 HMS Royal Oak was torpedoed by a German submarine which managed to manoeuvre between some of the islands into Scapa Flow. The Royal Oak sank with the loss of 833 lives. Winston Churchill immediately ordered the building of barriers across the sounds between a few islands to block access. These barriers now connect the islands forming a five mile highway across the sounds. They were built by Italian Prisoners of War, who were given permission to build their own chapel from two Nissen huts. Their chapel truly is a magnificent work of art and the Orcadians promised to continue caring for it after the Prisoners of War left Orkney in 1945.

Another “must visit” was St. Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, the islands’ capital. Construction of the Cathedral began in 1137 with the aim of building “the finest church the North has ever seen”. By late afternoon it was time to set up for our last concert to take place in the East Church Hall, Kirkwall. The large hall was absolutely packed for this concert. The retiring collection was for The City of Kirkwall Pipe Band and several members played outside the hall before the concert and also performed during the concert itself. Once again we were surprised to find that handbell ringing was a new experience for everyone in the audience, apart from a couple of my personal friends. One of these, a teacher, started a handchime group at her school in Kirkwall a few years ago, after seeing my bells and being persuaded to attend a ring in Praise Seminar and it was lovely to see the children from the group in the audience.

DAY 4 FREE! We visited The Ring of Brodgar, one of the best preserved stone circles in the UK which is thought to date from around 2500 – 2000 BC. The weather was still sunny, but a very cold wind felt as if it came straight from the Arctic! Then we travelled to The Bay of Skail on the shores of which is Skara Brae, the best preserved Neolithic village in Northern Europe. Skara Brae is approximately 5000 years old. The village was inhabited before the Egyptian Pyramids were built and was flourishing before the construction of Stonehenge. The day ended with an evening meal, all the more enjoyable because we could relax and enjoy each other’s company without having to rush off to perform another concert.

At Dunkeld, whilst we continually strive to improve our ringing, we place great emphasis on enjoyment and team spirit, also on promoting the art of handbell ringing as much as we can, which is why we undertake such trips as this.

DAY 5 Back to the ferry for the long journey home after a fantastically enjoyable tour. Orkney is wonderful to visit. There are many, many interesting places to see, the people are friendly, the food

is delicious, our accommodation was superb, the art and craft work is of an exceptionally high standard and, to our great satisfaction, our audiences loved the handbells.

So – the big question – where to in 2011?

Well, we already have some ideas and planning will begin in the not too distant future.

Heather I. McLean, The Parish of Dunkeld Handbell Ringers



The Parish of Dunkeld Ringers in Orkney

News from the Region



The Parish of Dunkeld HR

The group's BIG event this summer was our "Journey to the North" – five fantastic days of ringing, site-seeing and enjoying each other's company (see separate report).

The rest of our summer programme included ringing at a Nursing Home in Perth, for Summer Fairs at Holy Trinity Church, Pitlochry and Scone Old Kirk, in the Harvest Festival at St. Mary's Church, Birnam, in the grounds of Scone Palace and at a concert which the group organised in The Birnam Institute to raise funds for Dunkeld Cathedral's Chanonry Project. Solo, duet or small ensemble ringing on Wednesday afternoons in The Cathedral continued throughout the summer finishing at the end of September – a total of 23 performances.

Heather and Margaret returned to both St. Giles' Cathedral and The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh to perform solos and duets and rang with AGEHR at the concert in St. Giles. Heather also attended the National Residential Ringing Week in Kingston.

The highlight in our Autumn programme will be ringing at Pitlochry Theatre as part of Dougie MacLean's Amber Festival. For the last two years Heather has performed solos at the Festival, but the whole group has been invited to ring this year. It is a great opportunity to publicise the art of handbell ringing to visitors and other musicians from all over the world.

The group's second CD will soon be ready and a DVD of performances on our "Journey to the North" will follow shortly afterwards.

Heather I. McLean



Parish of Dunkeld playing in Dornoch Cathedral

Jordanhill Parish Church HR

In June some of the Jordanhill ringers performed with ringers from 3 other Scottish teams as Celtic Carillon, Scotland's National handbell ensemble, in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh. This was at the invitation of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, some of whom who were touring Scotland and England under the directorship of Debbie Rice, a well known American conductor. Anne, Susan, Christine, Lynda and I also took part in the American performance pieces. Please read more on this in the article about the event in St Giles'.

Also in June Jordanhill hosted the Ivey Handbell Ringers from the First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, North Carolina. This is a group of 10 high school students who ring on 5+ octaves of Malmark handbells and 5 octaves of Malmark handchimes. They spend part of each summer touring and ringing concerts throughout the US and Europe. What talented young people they were.

Christine Reid took part in the National Residential Ringing Week and I know enjoyed working under Kevin McChesney and Tim Waugh.

We have a busy autumn ahead of us and are working hard for our first concert in October. We are looking forward to the various Ring a Long days and hope to be represented at all of them. As usual the Christmas period will be particularly busy with a performance in Glasgow Cathedral and our annual carol ringing at the local hospitals.

Next Spring our team will celebrate its 20th Anniversary and plans are already under way to hold a celebratory concert.

Ruth Cantlay



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- October 3 Regional Ring a Long Moniaive
10 Regional Ring a Long Scone
24 Regional Ring a Long Fraserburgh
Details of all the above are with your team contacts
Further information from Office bearers
- March 27 Regional AGM and Spring Rally
Jordanhill Parish Church Glasgow
Details in January
- April 16-18 National Rally Leicester
Details in Reverberations
- June 5 Ring in Praise Dunblane
Details from Malcolm Wilson at www.ringinpraise.org.uk
- August 3-7 14th International Symposium Osaka Japan

“SPARKLING SOUND” – Thank You and Update

Thank you to all teams from around Scotland who have purchased copies of “Sparkling Sound”. I hope your orders reached you safely and that you have found the music enjoyable. I gave a delighted Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust a cheque for £60 during my visit to the island in July and will soon be sending on another one for at least £40. The islanders are thrilled that a piece of music was inspired by “their home” and that ringers from around the country have chosen to add it to their repertoire.

I know that some teams are just getting back in action after the Summer (?) break so you can still purchase the music with all profits going to a very good cause. Details below, as before.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Elaine Duffus

Musical Director, Silver City Chimes, Aberdeen

“SPARKLING SOUND”

For 2 ½ Octaves Handbells/Handchimes (G4 – A6)

£12 – for a pack of one copy and a licence to make 7 further copies (with stickers)

Additional copies (*with or after purchase of initial pack only*) £1.50 each

Postage/packing please add 50p for initial pack only or £1 for pack & extra copies if this is required

Remember – ALL profits to The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust

Cheque payment to Miss E Duffus

Contact details for mail orders – under my name on Committee List details (please note change of school address)

Photographs

Taking photos at an HRGB event.

Submitting photos of team members for the magazine or website.

Ensure you have their permission before you forward on the photos.

Deadline for next issue of magazine – 22nd January 2010