



Llandaff



Monmouth

## LLANDAFF & MONMOUTH DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION of CHURCH BELL RINGERS

Founded 13<sup>th</sup> October 1893

### ASSOCIATION NEWS 2024

#### 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.

Our Association is divided into two branches which correspond to the diocesan boundaries.

There are 25 active towers in the Llandaff Branch, with a total of 205 members including 8 Honorary Life Members, 3 who are unattached to any particular tower and 4 who have died during the year. The Monmouth branch has 31 active towers again with 205 members, including 6 Honorary Life Members and 9 ringers who are not attached to any particular tower.

Each branch has a general practice once per month on a Friday or Saturday and there is a monthly Association-wide daytime practice held on a Friday morning. Each month there are additional practices tailored towards developing particular skills, such as ringing more complex methods or on a higher number of bells.

## OUR ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR

### NATIONAL SUCCESS FOR OUR YOUNG RINGERS

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There are approximately 30 ringers under the age of 30 in the Association and they're pretty well spread out among our 56 active towers. It's important for the future of the Association that they feel welcome and can form a cohesive social group that will keep them engaged with ringing in the future. The Association holds one event per term exclusively for young ringers, and all ringers under the age of 30 are invited to attend.

The Ringing World is a weekly magazine covering all things bell ringing related from all over the world. This year, for the first time in 13 years, the Association entered a team in the Ringing World National Youth Competition. (RWNYC). This is an annual bell ringing competition for those who are aged 18 and under. It is the largest event for young ringers in the UK and was hosted this year by the Ancient Society of College Youths in London.

There were 36 teams involving over 300 young ringers from all across the UK, with over 130 additional volunteers. Furthermore, there were Team Leaders, Families and Supporters of each team.

Our team "Cymru" was entered in the 6 Bell Call Changes section and as it turned out we had a 50-50 split of representation from both branches!

We were drawn to ring in the afternoon at St James, Garlickhythe, which are a really easy-going ring of bells, cast for the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

The presentation was held at St Pauls Cathedral, it was awe-inspiring sitting there, with all the youngsters in their team tops, waiting eagerly for the results.

We knew we had rung well and had done the best we could, but having never entered before, we had no idea what to expect. We were absolutely delighted and overjoyed to find that we had come 2nd in our section! We all had such a fantastic experience and are eagerly looking forward to the next one!



*"Team Cymru" at St Paul's*

## TRAINING COURSES

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The Monmouth Branch holds a whole day training course in February each year. Students make weeks' worth of progress in a single day by having the opportunity for tuition and focused practice with an experienced band around them, and the course is always over-subscribed. This year, the course catered for 30 students, supported by 42 helpers and tutors, using 8 towers in the Newport area.

The course is supplemented by half-day courses approximately every three months, including a get-together for new ringers in November to give them their first experience of ringing away from their home tower, and to get to know other people in the same situation.

The Llandaff Branch organise specific training events on demand.

## PEALS

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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.

There have been 14 tower bell peals rung in for the Association in 2024 at 8 different towers, and 4 handbell peals.

## COMPETITIONS

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Branch striking competitions are held in May, with the winners competing for the "Pitman Trophy". This year's final was held at Llanedeyrn on Wednesday 10th July. The bands were from Cowbridge, Penarth, Rumney and St Woolos, with St Woolos as winners.



*The Pitman Trophy*

## ASSOCIATION MASTER'S INITIATIVE

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In 2024 the Association Master started an initiative designed to help ringers at all levels to improve their ringing by ringing a quarter peal supported by a strong band.

In total, 15 quarter peals, each lasting about three quarters of an hour, were rung at six different churches across the Llandaff and Monmouth Association.

This included nineteen 'firsts', accompanied by 28 different ringers each ringing from one to ten quarter peals. These were the members or conductors in the support teams. A really impressive achievement by all involved!

## ASSOCIATION CHAIR'S CHALLENGE!

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The Chair's Challenge is about developing the leaders of the future. It encourages people to get involved in organising ringing and social events, to take the initiative when it comes to their own development, and provide opportunities for ringers to get together socially, which is important for keeping them engaged.

To complete the Challenge, someone must organise three events during the year, and write a piece for the Branch Newsletters to encourage others to do the same.

This year, 14 ringers took part in the Challenge, and 3 people completed it, with "Highly Commended" awards going to new ringers at St Mellons and Ebbw Vale for organising events as a team

At the Monmouth Branch AGM, 3 certificates were awarded for completion of the challenge to Peter Bray, Pauline Morris, and St Mellons Tower.

An overall winner of the Challenge will be announced at the Association AGM in April.



*Helen Philips, Association Chair, Leigh and Madison from St Mellons, Pauline Morris and Peter Bray with their Chair's Challenge certificates.*

## SOCIAL EVENTS

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The Association Quiz is held annually in October and hosted by the previous year's winner. This year the quiz was held at St John's Hall, Newport, hosted by the St Woolos ringers. This is a fun evening with pizzas organised for refreshments.

The quiz winners were Llantarnam who will host the quiz in 2025.

A raffle held during the evening raised £140 for the Guide Dog Centre in Cardiff.



*Gerry the guide dog with his goodies.*

## PR / OPEN DAYS

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*Banner in use at St Woolos Cathedral*

The Association has a CCTV system, advertising banners and publicity materials which can be loaned to towers for open days and tower tours on request.

To borrow any of this equipment or find out more information please contact:  
[secretary@llanmon.org.uk](mailto:secretary@llanmon.org.uk)

The CCTV system and banners were used at Blaenavon, Caerphilly, Ebbw Vale, Mynyddislwyn, Radyr, Penarth, and Newport to support open days, during a taster session held at Bedwellty, and the Caldicot Summer Fayre.



## KEEPING OUR TOWERS RINGING

### BELL MAINTENANCE GROUP IN LLANDAFF & MONMOUTH WINS UK NATIONAL AWARD

In September Rob Bruce was the winner of the “Westley Award”, presented by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers for newcomers to bell maintenance.

This national award is made each year to ringers who have taken up bell maintenance for the first time and made a significant contribution to the maintenance and improvement of bell installations.

In Rob’s case, he had joined the recently formed Llandaff and Monmouth Bell Maintenance Group (BMG), where he quickly learned new maintenance skills and put them into practice at towers all across South Wales

In addition he prepared and wrote a new detailed safety risk assessment for his home tower of St Woolos Cathedral, and wrote articles for the branch newsletters, highlighting safe ringing practices and promoting the work of the BMG.



*Rob being presented with the award by Helen Phillips*

### BELL MAINTENANCE GROUP

The Association’s Bell Maintenance Group (BMG) 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](mailto:bmg@llanmon.org.uk)

## BELL RESTORATION FUND

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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 2024. A grant was paid to St Woolos of £1,323 towards the extra treble project, and £1,349 to Llandaff Cathedral assisting with a gudgeon repair to one of the bells.

In addition to these successfully completed projects, funding offers have been made to Pen Y Fai, Llantwit Major and Llantrisant.

Pen Y Fai: - an offer of £13,150 has been made towards the cost of rehangings the tenor, fifth, third, second and treble, and an overhaul of bearings on the fourth, plus other ancillary works.

Llantwit Major: - an offer of £892 has been made towards the refurbishment of five clappers and a new clapper for the tenor.

Llantrisant: - an offer of £30,000 has been made towards the restoration, complete rehang and retuning of the bells.

Currently the BRF account has £75,139 of which £44,042 has already been allocated to projects, this leaves £31,097 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, 07833778461  
[secretary@llanmon.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:chairman@llanmon.org.uk)

## 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](mailto:secretary@llanmon.org.uk)

For advice on recruiting new ringers: Association Chair, Helen Phillips, 07827 4799773, [chairman@llanmon.org.uk](mailto: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: Dr Peter Giles, [llandaffmaster@llanmon.org.uk](mailto:llandaffmaster@llanmon.org.uk)

Monmouth Diocese: Anne Hayman, 07884 392955, [monmouthmaster@llanmon.org.uk](mailto:monmouthmaster@llanmon.org.uk)

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