



# HRGB Scottish Newsletter

2025 Issue 2 – April 2025

## Chat from the Chair

Hello everyone in the Scottish region!

I have been furiously rereading the "Chat from the Chair" that John has written from when I started receiving the newsletter to make sure I'm not missing out an essential part of the job! There's always a bit of muddle when something changes, especially when it has been run so smoothly previously. I have never really been an active member of a committee before, and I am as forgetful as that animal that always forgets things... And speaking of the elephant in the room - I definitely don't have the same experience bellringing as most of you all. However, I am a passionate person, who has fallen head over heels for bellringing, all while dragging my whole family behind me! They tell me they love it too though. I hope that I can fulfil as much as possible with enthusiasm, thanks to the vast amount of knowledge and support there is in the Scottish region alone.

Thank you all for being so kind and helpful - I may ask the most inane questions or repeat myself a few times, but I promise that I will try my best to make sure things keep going as smoothly and efficiently as before. I certainly feel like I'm the luckiest person in the world being surrounded by all of you, so thank you from the bottom of my heart for being here. It will be lovely to see you again, and meet some more of you, at the next rally/workshop!

The Spring rally was held in Holy Trinity Church, Haddington on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2025. The AGM was held at 11am with John Elcock stepping down from his post as Chair, myself being elected as Chair, and the other positions re-elected from last year's bearers. The massed ringing pieces were "Sweet Nightingale" arranged by Elaine Duffus, "Willow/Willis Waltz" by Ryan Price and "Messing about on the River" by Tony Hatch, arranged by D De Salis.

It was a well-attended rally, with representation from Cumnock and District Handbell Ringers, Poltney Handbell Ringers, Jordanhill Parish Church Ringers, Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers, Blair Bells, Cushnie Ringers, Duddingston Handbell Ringers, Caithness Handbell Ringers and hosting team Holy Trinity Handbells. There were definitely lots of smiling faces by the end of the day, it seemed like it was enjoyed by all!

The upcoming workshop at Jordanhill sounds great, I know I will be aiming to be there on the 14<sup>th</sup> June! The Autumn Rally will be held in Kirkcaldy on the 25<sup>th</sup> October which will be lovely to visit. We look forward to seeing you all there.

All the best, Kirsty! 😊

♪ Getting to know you...

... introducing Kirsty Hill, our new Chair



I interviewed Kirsty on her return from the Scottish Region Spring Rally, to find out more about what makes her tick!

*Editor: First, some quick-fire questions to warm up: If you could take your team on tour anywhere in the world, what would be your dream destination?*

Kirsty Hill: New Zealand

*Ed: If you could persuade one famous person to join your handbell team, who would that be?*

KH: Jack Black!



*Ed: Of all the songs in the world, which song would you most like to hear arranged for handbells?*

KH: The [Kirby Videogame soundtrack](#)

*Ed: You're polishing a bell, and a magic genie pops up to grant you just one wish for HRGB – what would your wish be?*

KH: A set of handbells in every school!

*Ed: And now some more in-depth questions so our readers can get to know you even better – how did you first get into bellringing?*

KH: A lucky accident, really – I was just walking past the church with the kids in 2019 when you were doing a Christmas show and the boys really wanted to go in to listen. We've actually got a picture of Peter that day holding a bell when he was only 4! I didn't try playing a bell that day but the kids did, everyone was so friendly, and I went home to my husband and said "I'm going to go to a Saturday practice and try handbell ringing!" Then of course, covid happened... so I never managed to get along. Eventually I managed to go, I just turned up at a rehearsal once the team was back to practising, and that was it, I've never looked back!

*Ed: We're so glad that fate brought you to us!! Next question: What qualities do you most value in a handbell team member?*

KH: Any kind of kindness. Being kind to other people and being kind to themselves. It's just horrible to hear someone being really mean about themselves, so kindness to self is really important. And obviously being kind to other people is so important too, especially when something's gone wrong in the music.

*Ed: What have you learned since you became a handbell ringer, and is there a particular aspect of ringing that you'd still like to get better at or learn more about?*

KH: I feel like there's lots to learn! (Laughs) I could learn for 30 years and still not know everything! Learning to read music again was a big one – that's something that I've learned since I came to handbells. I certainly thought I could read music better than I actually could when I started and I'm still working on that. Learning to be part of a team as well – the teamwork aspect of bellringing is a big learning curve. But the specific technicalities of bellringing – you know, martellato lifts and all that stuff – that's certainly something I'd like to learn more about. Hopefully I'll make it to the Jordanhill workshops in June and learn a bit more there!

*Ed: What's your long-term vision for the future of handbell ringing in Scotland? Please dream big... 😊*

KH: I would love for handbell ringing to be part of the school curriculum, so that people know about handbell ringing from an early age, just like football. You know, football is in the schools all the way from primary through secondary school – you do football in gym, there are after school clubs, it's a standard. So for that to be part of the school curriculum, that could do a lot of good for handbell ringing. More people would know more about it – it would be easier to find people to join the team and keep going...

*Ed: Kirsty for First Minister! (Laughter) Thanks so much for sharing that vision. Now just a few more personal quick-fire questions to finish... Who do you share your household with?*

KH: My husband Hilly, my two sons Ruaridh and Peter, Jack the greyhound-cross-saluki, and Rey the beagle who thinks she's human!

*Ed: What's your favourite hobby other than bellringing?*

KH: Spinning and knitting

*Ed: If you could dye your handbells to match your hair, what colour would you choose?*

KH: half blue / half green!

*Ed: Thanks so much Kirsty, for your time today, and thank you for stepping up to become Chair of the Scottish Region of HRGB – we're all so pleased you did!*

## Scottish Regional Association AGM and Spring Rally

The Handbell Ringers of Great Britain (HRGB) Scottish Regional Association AGM and Spring Rally took place in Holy Trinity Church on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> March. Nine teams from across Scotland came to Haddington including from the North (Blairgowrie, Caithness, Poltney and Cushnie); from the West (Jordanhill Parish Church and Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers), and from the South-West (Cumnock and District Handbell Ringers). The newly formed Duddingston Handbell Ringers also attended the Rally for the first time.

The programme started with some special presentations before the AGM in which Peter Hill of Caithness Handbell Ringers was presented with his certificate for achieving the *mf* level of the HRGB WHMF Crescendo Scheme.

John Elcock, having been the Chair of the Scottish Regional Association since 2017 has decided to stand-down and was presented with an engraved glass carafe in recognition of the much appreciated work that he had done for the Association over the last eight years.



For the ringing sessions, Holy Trinity Handbells had selected three pieces of music to reflect an environmental theme for massed ringing and these were:

- Sweet Nightingale arr. by Elaine Duffus
- Willow / Willis Waltz by A. Ryan Price
- Messing About on the River by Tony Hatch arr. by D. De Salis.

The three pieces were conducted by Stuart Clelland, Malcolm Wilson and Ruth Cantlay, respectively. We practised the three pieces en masse in two separate sessions in order to be able to present them in the afternoon's finale. There were

approximately 240 handbells covering 3 octaves which produced a vibrant sound which was enhanced by the acoustics of Holy Trinity.

We were also treated to individual group ringing sessions between the massed ringing practise pieces. In the first of the afternoon ringing sessions Jordanhill, Cushnie and Caithness presented a variety of musical pieces, including the Pastorale Symphony, Gerontius, and Ode to Joy. Holy Trinity Handbells also performed two pieces: The Skaters' Waltz and Colors of Joy.

In our second ringing session we were entertained through individual group ringing sessions by Poltney HR, Blair Bells and Dunblane Cathedral HR. The pieces chosen included 'O Waly Waly', the Iona Boat Song, Scotland the Brave and Blowin' in the Wind.

One of the highlights from the individual group sessions was a new sound described as a 'singing bell'. This was produced by rubbing a wooden stick around the circumference of a large bass bell, a technique I am eager to try!

A raffle was also held that raised over £200, which will be shared between the Bishop's Lent Appeal and HRGB Scottish Regional Association funds.

And finally, a special 'Thank you' to all those who helped prepare the Church and Trinity Centre to welcome 60 handbell ringers and offer refreshments including soup and tray-bakes during the day. It would not have been such a successful Rally without your support and effort in making this such an enjoyable social occasion.

David Hinley

All the performances from the Haddington Spring Rally can now be viewed on YouTube via the following playlist link:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJodi1RBQoj6Uf1ZPY0jo0djUIV1XNsmY&si=z9aq2VzcmxWi1WZt>

## **Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers**

Six of the Jordanhill ringers travelled to Haddington for the Spring Rally and AGM in March. It is always great to take part in these events. It is good to take part in massed ringing and to listen to others performing their pieces. It is great to catch up with friends and gives an opportunity to make new friends. And the hospitality was amazing!! Thank you, Holy Trinity.

We are currently preparing for our annual charity concert with the Jordanhill Community choir which is being held in the church on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May.

We are also looking forward to hosting the summer workshop which is being held on 15<sup>th</sup> June.

Kirsty, Linda, Lynda and Ruth are looking forward to going to the National Residential Ringing Week in Sheffield at the beginning of August. We have nine pieces of music to prepare before we go, so no rest over the summer!

Ruth Cantlay

## HRGB National Rally in Milton Keynes

HRGB Scottish Regional Association teams represented at the HRGB National Rally, held in Milton Keynes over the weekend 11-13 April, were Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers and Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers. The event offered many classes covering a wide range of topics, there was massed ringing with all participants working under different conductors, and there was a showcase of performances from groups around the country. And the event was topped off with tasty food and regular refreshment breaks, and opportunities for chatting with others.

Malcolm Wilson, Dunblane Cathedral HR





## Check out the Members Map!

HRGB website has a beautiful map which shows all the HRGB teams in Scotland – go to <https://handbells.org.uk/members-map> to have a look and find out who your neighbours are. Now is always a good time to befriend some more bellringers! 😊

## Important Dates for your Diary:

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June 7.30pm** Music for a Summer Evening – Concert by Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers in Dunblane Cathedral.

All are welcome to a concert presented by the multiple groups of Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers, including children's group, teens and adults, soloist and 4-in-hand ensemble. Music from Disney's Moana, from the musical Wicked, Bob Dylan, and Taylor Swift, as well as music which commemorates significant anniversaries this year, including Mary Poppins, railways, Satie, Elvis, Ravel, Bette Midler, Strauss, and the Pink Panther.

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2025** A one-day regional workshop, open to all HRGB members, to be held in [Jordanhill Parish Church](#). Woodend Drive, Glasgow G13 1QT. Every participant will have the opportunity to attend all three sessions:

1. Understanding various handbell techniques, finishing with a piece of music which uses the techniques, led by Ruth Cantlay
2. Weaving and ways to handle multiple bells, including how to incorporate accidentals into your weaving technique, led by Malcolm Wilson
3. See the World as a Handbell Ringer: What it's like to attend a National Event and/or an International Symposium, led by Lynda Barclay.

The application form for this event will be sent out to all Scottish HRGB members at the start of May

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025** The Autumn Rally will be held in Kirkcaldy this year. Bennoch Bells will be hosting, at Bennoch Parish Church, Elgin Street, Kirkcaldy (now part of Langtoun Central Church)

**4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> August 2026** International Handbell Symposium will be held 4<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> August 2026 (**Next year!**) at The P&J Live in Aberdeen, Scotland! Don't miss it!!

You still have time to plan, dream, save up and fundraise to make sure your whole team makes the effort to attend this AMAZING event!!! The next time the International Symposium might come to the UK could be 2042, so please don't miss this unique opportunity – get the date in your diary now, get talking with your team-mates, and do your best to attend Lynda's session on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2025 giving information about this and providing lots of inspiration to encourage us all to attend the Symposium. Booking will open later this year and lots more information is available here: <https://ihs26.handbells.org.uk/node/2> and here: <https://ihs26.handbells.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/Info%20sheet%20April%202025.pdf>

Whatever you've been up to, please do send me your article about it for inclusion in the next newsletter. 😊

Please email [katrinathurso@aol.com](mailto:katrinathurso@aol.com) or post to 26 Grove Lane, Thurso, KW14 8AE with all your news and pictures. Thanks!