



HRGB Scottish Newsletter

2023 Issue 1 – January 2023

Chat from the Chair

I'm sure you will all wish to join me in congratulating Lysbeth Wilson who, in the New Year Honours list 2023, was awarded the BEM for services to handbell ringing. Well done, Lysbeth.

The Scottish Region's 2022 Autumn Rally was held at the Bankfoot Church Centre, Bankfoot, Perth on Saturday 8th October. In celebration of a return to face-to-face ringing, a generous grant from HRGB meant that entry to the event was free to all HRGB members. Doors opened at 10.00am with the rally commencing at 11.30am. With breaks for lunch, coffee and tea, served by Blair Bells, the rally continued until 3.30pm.

The massed ringing pieces included Malcolm Wilson's arrangement of *Highlander's Lament* conducted by Katrina Gordon, *March of the Chimes* by L. Hollander, conducted by Judith Frye and *Colors of Joy* by Brenda E. Austin, conducted by Ruth Cantlay.

Those present were also entertained by pieces rung by Blair Bells, Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers and Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers.

The committee is continuing its preparations for the 2023 UK National Rally due to be held at the Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling from 14-16 April 2023. I look forward to seeing you there.

My best wishes to you all for a tuneful 2023.

HRGB National Rally 14-16 April 2023



The Scottish Regional Association of the Handbell Ringers of Great Britain warmly invite you to the HRGB National Rally 2023 to be held on 14-16 April 2023 at the Stirling Court Hotel, Airthrey Rd, Stirling, FK9 4LA. The Stirling Court Hotel is located only a short distance from Stirling with great transport links from both Glasgow and Edinburgh and is situated in the beautiful grounds of Stirling University overlooking Stirling Castle.

The Stirling Court Hotel is a world class conference venue set within 330 acres of stunning grounds with 15 miles of walking and cycle tracks. The hotel boasts the striking backdrop of the Ochil Hills and the majestic Wallace Monument. Closer still, at the heart of the campus sits Airthrey Loch, overlooked by its 18th century namesake, Airthrey Castle, creating a natural, calming environment for you to enjoy.

Accommodation includes comfortable double and twin rooms with en-suite facilities, fully accessible public areas, inviting lounge bar and seating area, complimentary use of the Olympic-standard swimming pool, complimentary use of fitness facilities and ample car parking.

The weekend includes 16 hands-on workshops, a Saturday evening concert, Sunday morning massed ringing with four different conductors, the national AGM and plenty of time for socialising: indeed something for everybody, whether you are an experienced ringer or are just beginning.

Should you not be able to attend the whole weekend, many other options are available.

It is likely that additional nights' accommodation both before or after the Rally will be available at the Stirling Court Hotel but these add-on bookings should be made directly with the hotel.

Bookings can be made via the HRGB website members' area. A deposit of £50 per person is required at the time of booking with the balance payable by 31st January 2023. It is also possible to pay the full amount at the time of booking.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Scottish Region Autumn Rally 2022

On Saturday 8th October, five members of the Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers (Ruth, Linda, Lynda, Kirsty and myself) headed to Bankfoot near Perth for the HRGB Scotland Handbell rally. The weather all week had been dreich at best but the sun came out for us on Saturday which made for a good start to a day of ringing.



We were warmly welcomed by the ladies of Blair Bells with tea, coffee and home baking before the day commenced. This was my first rally with JPCHR so I was looking forward to meeting other ringers and taking part on the massed ringing, although I did feel slightly nervous when I arrived and realised that our table was right at the front – there would be no hiding in the back from the conductors!

We kicked off the massed ringing with my favourite piece of the day, Highlander's Lament, arr Malcolm Wilson which was conducted by Katrina Gordon from Caithness Handbell Ringers. It was then I realised that being stern is a necessary trait of a conductor as otherwise they would never be able to control the room! As we went through the piece, we were instructed to be mindful of the musicality of the piece and not just play the notes; the music should tell a story.

It was then the turn of the ladies of Blair Bells to play for us and we were treated to My Grandfather's Clock by Henry C Work and Une Jeune Pucelle, a 16th century French folk song. Both tunes were lovely and played very well. I particularly enjoyed the French folk song which was accompanied by a drum.

The next massed ringing piece was March of the Chimes by L Hollander, conducted by Judith Frye from Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers. Every conductor during the day made sure that we worked on different skills and Judith made sure that we learnt how not to make any noise! Well, really, that we didn't ring when we weren't supposed to. It sounds easier than it is!

We then went straight into our final massed ringing tune, Colours of Joy by Brenda E Austin, conducted by our very own Ruth. This piece had a lot of bell ringing techniques to master including martellato, martellato lifts, swings, thumb damping and echoes. The biggest learning point for everyone, however, was trying to work out how to cope without being counted in at the start of the piece! Ruth has recently been on a conducting course and, since then, no longer gives us a “bar for nothing”, but rather starts each tune with just an upbeat so if you are not watching then you’ll have no idea what speed to play at. We were used to this and were fully expecting it; the other ringers were a bit surprised at first, but everyone quickly got to grips with it and Ruth did an excellent job, as did all the conductors of the day.

After a lovely lunch of soup and more home baking, again courtesy of members of the Blair Bells, we were straight back into it. Katrina and Judith took us through Highlander’s Lament and March of the Chimes again, building upon what we had previously worked on before we were treated to a performance from, Judith, Ruth, Katrina and Susan from Caithness Handbell Ringers. This should have been a performance by Dunblane Cathedral ensemble but unfortunately Malcom and Lysbeth were unable to attend due to illness. They played Autumn from Vivaldi’s Four Seasons and Wild Mountain Thyme. Both pieces were chosen to showcase a new 12 bell book called “This & That” by Jason M Walker and it was such a great performance from the four ladies that it was hard to believe they had only rehearsed the two pieces that morning!

There was no rest for Ruth who took her place at the front of the ensemble again to take us through Colours of Joy before she had to join us for our performance piece of Celebration 70 by Sandra Winter. This tune was written as a celebration of the Queen’s platinum jubilee and we thought it would still be fitting to play it in celebration of the Queen’s life. Then Lynda and Ruth played an 8-bell traditional Ukranian piece called While on the Sea arr Larry Sue.

Following another break, we then ran through all three massed ringing pieces to end the day on a high but not before the raffle. One key take-away for me was not to enter into any competition Linda is taking part in; she won not one, not two but FOUR of the raffle prizes (and I am told that this is not unusual for Linda!).

All in all, it was a great day and it was lovely to meet so many bell ringers. The fact that the sun was shining all day was an added bonus.

Michelle McGowan

Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers

Caithness Handbell Ringers – Christmas 2022



Over the last six months, the Caithness Handbell Ringers are delighted to have welcomed three new members (Ann, Anna and Kirsty) to our team. This has given us strength in numbers and we were very pleased to have a team of 10 ringers available to play Christmas Carols for the residents Pentland View Nursing Home in Thurso. The power of music on the memory was very evident as our audience sang along with us, despite the fact that many of them are living with dementia. Every word of Away in a Manger was remembered!

During December, the Caithness Handbell Ringers also performed as guest musicians at the Caithness Orchestra Carol Concert in aid of the local RNLI. Many of the audience commented how lovely it was to hear the bells back ringing again.

We had planned to ring at the Bettyhill Christmas Market, which about one hour's drive west of Thurso. Unfortunately, extremely icy road conditions that day prevented us from attending. Hopefully, we will be able to introduce our bells to the far North West of Scotland in 2023!





Not only have our new ringers been enthusiastic about making music but they have also helped us with fundraising, too. We have made cakes and soup, sold raffle tickets and had lots of fun along the way. Together with support from a local windfarm and the Caithness & North Sutherland fund we have raised enough money to bring the whole CHR team to the HRGB National Rally in Stirling in April. We really look forward to seeing you all there for even more bell ringing fun!!

Susan Watson, Caithness Handbell Ringers

UK BRONZE, 26 – 29 October 2022

It had been quite a number of years since I had attended UK Bronze as it is held the same year as the International Handbell Symposium. This year I had not managed to get to the IHS in Nashville, so this was my opportunity. UK Bronze is normally held in the Holiday Inn in Sutton but with only a few weeks' notice it had to be moved to the Aerodrome Hotel in Croydon.

UK Bronze happens over 4 days, running from Wednesday to Saturday. There were ten pieces of music for the event, and Fred expects that notes are learned prior to attending so that we would be working on the musicality of each piece. Most of the music was challenging, in particular Collierico and Sao Paulo, with the difficulty levels ranging from Level 2 to Level 5!

The ten pieces were: - A Christmas Mix(olydian) arr Barbara Scheffler; His Eye is on the Sparrow arr Larry Sue; Called Home to Heaven arr Fred Gramann; Sao Paulo by Elizabeth Peters; Songs in the Night by Sondra K Tucker; Collierico by Mathew Compton; Walz No two by Shostakovich arr Gina Maire Williams; Chamapaca by Elizabeth Peters; Reverie by Lawrence Paul Bauer Jr; and Ocean City Shuffle by Brian Childers.

I had an early flight down which meant getting up at 03:40! Travel down all went smoothly and I arrived earlier than planned. I met my roommate Chris Opsal who had travelled from USA for the event, and we got on well.

After Keith Rowland welcomed us, and Fred Gramann had been introduced, rehearsals started at 12:30. We rang through all ten pieces finishing rehearsal at 21:00. It was a long day! All rehearsals ran strictly to time.



On Thursday morning rehearsals started at 08:45 and finished at 17:30. Treble bells had time off in the morning while Fred worked with the Bass section and the reverse happened in the afternoon while he worked with the Treble section. There was not anything much to do near the Hotel, but it was nice just to get out for a walk and some fresh air in the unseasonably warm weather.

Prior to coming over Chris had realized that we had a free evening on Thursday and wondered if I would like to join her going to the Albert Hall to see Live Letters. Of course, I said yes! Another of her friends, Lori, joined us. We got there with only a little time to spare so no time to eat! What an amazingly interesting show it was with various actors reading out letters, some from the recent past and some from several hundred years ago. We got back to the hotel around midnight.

Friday rehearsals started a bit later at 09:00 and continued again to 17:30. By now the music was starting to sound more musical and we were ringing as an ensemble. We again had the evening off so it was good to take time to relax and catch up with friends. During our rehearsal of "His Eye is on the Sparrow" we could hear the birds singing outside which was really lovely. Almost as though they were joining in with us!

And suddenly it was Saturday, the final day, and the day of the concert!

We had rehearsals in the morning doing some fine tuning mostly to do with the musicality of pieces. The culmination of all our challenging work was the concert at 3pm. It was well received by the audience and then it was time to dash off and get to Heathrow for the last flight home.



Huge thanks must go to Keith Rowland for organizing the event and making sure that everything ran smoothly. Huge thanks also to Fred Gramann for the enormous amount of preparation of the music, sending out pre-event notes to mark up the music, for his patience and for his incredible gift of getting people to ring together as an ensemble after only four days. Thank you, Fred!

Ruth Cantlay

Jordanhill Parish Church HR

Lysbeth Wilson, 2023 Medallist of the Order of the British Empire

We'd like to conclude this newsletter with heartfelt congratulations to Lysbeth Wilson, on being recognised in The New Year's Honours, with a richly deserved Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for services to handbell ringing.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/the-new-years-honours-2023/>

Lysbeth Wilson has been a member of Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ringers since its formation in 1977. She directed the group from 1978-87 and was Depute Musical Director from 1987-2005. Since 2005 she has continued to be an active member both in performing in the ensembles as well as holding organising committee positions including secretary, fundraising role, and currently vice-chairperson.

She enjoys solo ringing and has performed on many occasions. She is author of a booklet on arranging music for handbells, a subject on which she has also presented at HRGB events. For several years she was Scottish Representative to the National Executive Committee, and currently serves on the NEC schools committee.



Lysbeth was conferred Honorary Life Membership of HRGB in 2005, in recognition of the contribution she has made to handbell ringing in Scotland.

She was guest presenter at the Phoenix Handbell Exploration in the USA in 1996, presented at the International Handbell Symposium in Albuquerque, USA, as well as on each occasion the event has been held in the UK, and has been massed ringing conductor for several events in the UK, including the HRGB National Residential Ringing Weeks, of which she was also co-founder and co-organiser from 1997-2003.

Lysbeth was on the organising committee for the international handbell symposium when it was held in Birmingham in 2000 and in Liverpool in 2012. She had a role in coordinating the massed ringing music for these events and had a role in coordinating the selection process for music to represent the

UK when the international handbell symposium was held in other countries.

Many hundreds of international handbell musicians have performed in Dunblane Cathedral in the past 4 decades and Lysbeth Wilson has provided much appreciated hospitality in her home over these many years to these groups. This has enabled Scottish groups and audiences to enjoy many, many international groups.

For over ten years from 1997 she led the use of handbells, handchimes and belleplates as a volunteer at Dunblane Primary School and Newton Primary School, Dunblane following the gifting (which she helped to facilitate) of sets of handbells, handchimes, belleplates and music from the international handbell community following the terrible tragedy at Dunblane Primary School in 1996. This has given the opportunity to make music with handbells to many hundreds of children at these schools.

She has co-organised the annual Scottish Schools Ring event for school ringing groups from around Scotland for over 20 years involving thousands of children over the years in coming together to make music. For those events she has created music arrangements as well as been one of the conductors each year for the combined massed ringing of all groups performing together. In recent years this has also been streamed live to be available to any school in Scotland in the national schools intranet, Glow, for them to be able to participate remotely.

Lysbeth was co-organiser and presenter at the National Ring in Praise Handbell Seminars which were held annually for 25 years from 1989 at Dunblane Cathedral and which were attended over the years by many hundreds of handbell musicians from around the UK.

She is an experienced piano tutor and accompanist (having accompanied Dunblane Male Voice Choir and more recently Gargunnoch Songsters), holding ALCM and AMusLCM qualifications, was organist for Falkirk crematorium for 20 years, and was organist at Kilmadock Parish Church, Doune.

Lysbeth is very active in SWRI circles and has used her creative talents in many artistic endeavours. She achieved a City & Guilds qualification.

Responding to the honour, Lysbeth said "It's wonderful. It's really lovely. But it's really an honour which recognises the work of other people – and recognition of Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ensembles. It was quite emotional getting the honour – but it really wouldn't have happened without the enthusiasm and help of others. Handbell ringing is something young and old can take part in together - working together is part of the beauty of handbell ringing."

Important Dates for your Diary:

April 14th – 16th 2023

The Scottish Region is looking forward to hosting the UK National Rally 2023 at the Stirling Court Hotel. See you there, alongside ringers from all over Great Britain!

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 or post to 26 Grove Lane, Thurso, KW14 8AE with all your news and pictures. Thanks!