

‘The Westerner’

Bell News for the Western District Ringer



Thank goodness the winter is behind us. With three named storms Cornwall has experienced the wettest winter on record. Well done to our wonderful ringing community who braved the cold, dark, windy and wet nights to continue our love and joy of ringing. Roll on spring!



112th Edition

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Twitter users can get a feed of all peals, quarters and other performances recorded on BellBoard for TDGR by following @TruroDGBells

Guild website: www.tdgr.org.uk

BellBoard: www.bb.ringingworld.co.uk

Ringers with a Facebook account may like to join the group

‘Bellringing in Cornwall’

The Westerner is now available on-line on the TDGR website at
<https://tdgr.org.uk/the-westerner/>

Message from the Editor

Thank you for sending in your stories and updates. Without your input, this magazine would not be possible.

Next issue will be Monday 29th June 2026

If any of you would like to write something for this edition, please do!

To avoid disappointment, please send to westerner@tdgr.org.uk
by Monday 8th June 2026

Look to.....!

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Chairman's Message

Hi all,

Spring is finally unfurling its petals, even despite one of the gloomiest, wettest winters we can remember.

Brighter days are around the corner which is good news for my replaced joints. The wet damp winter has made my replacement hips, knees and shoulder joints somewhat stiff.

Onwards and upwards then.

I'm delighted to bring you, courtesy of Allyson's hard work, another bumper edition of The Westerner.

I am sure that you will find plenty of interesting articles as we all report on activities and ringing events past and to come in our towers.

Enjoy the read then.

Here's to soaking up some sunshine hopefully.

The daylight and warmer towers I believe make-or-break better bellringing.

Two important events in one week coming up.

1. We have our Western District Open practice at Truro Cathedral coming up on Easter Monday, 6 April, 2026. A beautiful set of bells & a privilege to have an invite to ring them as a district.

2. Also on the following Saturday, 11 April 2026, the Western District have their AGM day with ringing at Madron, as well as our host tower, St Buryan, for the AGM (plus yummy tea).

I hope to see as many Western District members as possible on the 2 above events. In the meantime, enjoy your bellringing.

Bob.
Chairman

Diary Dates:



**Truro Cathedral
Practice**

Western District

We have been invited to hold a Western District practice at Truro Cathedral on Monday 6th April (Easter Monday) from 19:30 to 21:00 hours

Please share the date of this wonderful opportunity with your band members and let me have the names of those wishing to attend by Monday 30th March. To assist Martin and Bob with organisation, we will be asking once more if you could please indicate everyone's ringing ability and preference of ringing style - rounds, called-changes, or method ringing.

All ringers are asked to read the Cathedral Volunteer agreement and have viewed the Cathedral safeguarding guidance found:

<https://www.trurocathedral.org.uk/safeguarding>

Western District AGM

Saturday 11th April -Ringing will take place at Madron Tower between 13:30 and 14:30, followed by ringing at St Buryan from 15:00 ahead of the service and AGM at 16:00, with tea and ringing after - a huge thank you to both Towers for hosting - more information will follow in the coming weeks.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE ATTENDING OUR AGM

Parking - parking at St Buryan will be on the roads around the church. PLEASE do not block the narrow lane at the base of the church steps that goes to Crows-an-Wra, as buses and tractors use this lane to access the A30.

Toilets - there is a toilet at the back of the church, in the vestry.

Steps up to the Ringing Room - please note access to the ringing room is via a spiral staircase and 33 uneven steps, but there is a handrail.

The Buryan band is really looking forward to seeing everyone and giving the opportunity to ring and enjoy their beautiful bells! Please do encourage your Band to come along...

I look forward to receiving your Cathedral and AGM attendance (plus pasty orders!) by the 30th March and 3rd April respectively - thank you, thank you!

Speak soon... Claire x

Western District Striking Competition -

Saturday 13th June 2026 from midday, hosted at Mullion. More details to follow

Western District Annual Dinner -

Saturday 21st November 2026. Queens hotel Penzance. More details to follow.

An interview with Kathryn Arkless

Full Name, Current tower(s) you ring at, any current position(s) held:

My name is Kathryn Arkless I ring at Constantine and Truro Cathedral.

Where and when did you learn to ring, who taught you how to handle?

I learned to ring at Truro Cathedral taught by Anthony Davidson who was our next door neighbour and wonderful friend. I was given the nickname Pearce 3 as all five of us Pearce siblings learnt to ring here, our childhood Sundays revolved around ringing for and attending both Eucharist and evensong services.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's there was a very vibrant scene of many young ringers with peals, quarters, tower grabbing, lots of fun and romances. Both my sister-in-law and brother-in-law also rang at the Cathedral.

Where have you previously rung & have you held any positions of responsibility (e.g. Tower Captain/Steeple Keeper/Secretary)?

As many other Cornish kids I had to leave my beloved Cornwall to find work as a Land Surveyor I became a member of Frensham, Surrey band where I met Jo Wenborne and we were guided by John Mayle to learn Surprise Minor and Major.

I first met Toby in Frensham tower across a crowded room at a district event!! After we were married, we lived in Liphook and I became Bramshott Tower Captain and then Alton and Petersfield District Ringing Master. After many years in Hampshire I retired and Toby and I returned to God's own country.

Please name some ringer(s) that have been an inspiration to you or have taught you something. Who were they & what was so inspirational?

There have been many inspirational ringers over the years but the most important has been Toby, who has given me and many others opportunities to further our ringing.

A few of the others are Robert Pearce, Alan Carveth, John Pladdys, Richard Pearce, Roger Bailey, Mark Esbester, Ben and Ian Carey.

What do you consider to be your biggest achievement in ringing?

There has been a few notable peals, I was the youngest member of the youngest Peal band for TDGR, a peal of 147 'from the book' Treble Dodging Minor methods, we were only the second band in the country to achieve this, my first peal of Stedman Cinques at Cirencester for the ASCYs and a peal of Stedman Cinques at Truro Cathedral rung by the majority of Cumberland Youths who went on to win the National 12 bell Competition. This included Ruth Corney and Sam Cave who learned to ring at Marhamchurch.

What do you find difficult about ringing?

I am both Dyslexic and Dyspraxic which adds to the fun.

Have you ever taught anyone to ring? If so, how many people and what did you learn whilst doing so?

I haven't taught anyone to handle a bell but I continue to encourage the life-long learning that ringing gives us. It has been a privilege to be in George Stephen's, Bob Wood's and Sarah Kew's first peals in the last couple of years.

What is your favourite ring of bells of all time & why?

My favourite tower is Alton St Lawrence, often referred to as Hampshire's music box.

Something people might not know about me.

I worked on the Thames Barrier project checking the primary control and the precision setting-out for the Piers and manufactured gates, I think I am the only woman who worked on the construction of this remarkable project.



The band which rang a peal of Stedman Cinques at Truro Cathedral for the Kings Coronation – I am back row on the left



The 5 Pearce Siblings at Bradoc in 2012,

- 1 – Pearce 1 (Anne)
- 2 - Pearce 2 (Robert)
- 3 – Pearce 3 (Kathryne)
- 4 – Pearce 4 (Christopher)
- 5 – Pearce 5 (Jonathan)

Kathryne Arkless

Tower news from the District

Helston

February and March have been a busy few weeks in the St Michael's, Helston tower.....with Birthdays and a wedding anniversary.

First up mid February, was Tower Keeper Tony Dixon's birthday.....as is customary on celebration evenings, the birthday victim supplies a bottle of port and a Cake. Happy birthday to a committed member of our team.

Next up with a birthday the week after was Catherine Arkinson. Catherine has only been ringing for a total of 18 months and is now well cemented into ringing all occasions possible at Helston. Amazing progress made so thanks Catherine ...oh, the bottle of port and cake were yummy.

Captain Bob and his long suffering wife Christine then had their 53rd wedding anniversary on 24 February. The Tuesday following this it was another bottle of port and a Christine cake to celebrate. It was nice that in the tower with Bob and Chris were their son, Phil and grandson, Jake who are also ringers, making it a family occasion as well as a bellringers social one.

Finally into March when stalwart member, Stan Prior celebrated his birthday. That meant more port and cakes which went down well with the team...who by now have got acclimatised to drinking port & eating cakes rather than ringing bells.

There were practice peals on the evenings of the celebrations, but a little shorter in duration for our townfolk to listen to. Happy days at St Michael's. Thanks to all.

Here's to a further 12 months of a good social life as well as good bellringing in the tower.

We have 16 members in our team....that's a lot of port and cakes I can say to look forward this year to.



At St Michael's Church Bellringers tower in Helston, the ladies are flexing their muscles. The men in the team can now take 20 minutes out on ringing occasions.

A ladies team of ringers has come to the fore.
Excellent I think.

Here are 2 photos taken on the 24th February as the girls ring together in a call change ring (which I spoilt by calling the changes).

Well done...spot on placings and ringing changes.

There are a couple of the ladies in the 6 who can call the changes...so I'll be butting out when they form & ring next time.

Good for the recent International Ladies / Woman's Day.

Team: Christine Woods, Margaret Prior, Julie Petch, Mandy Basher, Catherine Arkinson and Claire Thompson.

Oh and me as Calling Changes (sorry girls).



On Monday 9 March,2026, your Chairman Bob and his wife Christine had the privilege of an invite to the Curfew Tower, Windsor Castle, where Christine had arranged through the tower Captain, James White. We joined the team there for ringing to celebrate Commonwealth Day.

At the western end of Windsor Castle stands the Curfew Tower, the belfry of the College of St George.

With walls 13 feet thick at the base and standing 100 feet high, it was built between 1227 and 1230 as part of the new defences of the Castle following the siege of Windsor during the reign of King John.

Eight bells hang from the lower part of the timber frame, which was recently preserved and repaired as part of the ongoing College restoration program. The bells originally brought from the old belfry consisted of a ring of five and three hour bells, and were known by the names Aston, George, John, Mary, Jesu, Edward and Wyrun, with the eighth unnamed. Over the years, these bells were recast, sold off to cover College debts or replaced, and the eight that hang there now range in date from 1612 to 1898.

The tenor weighs approx. 23 cwt. An opportunity to be treasured.

During the evening Bob rang 2 peals of 58 call changes on bells 5 and 7 with the tenor turned inside and lowered his bell 7 in peal at the end of the session.

The peal of 8 are tricky bells to ring as they have long flighty rope draughts from ground floor ringing chamber to the bells up top.

A wonderful experience ringing in such a historic belfry. Speaking to the other ringers they had many stories to tell of ringing for Royal occasions.

The Windsor Castle tour can be a great supplement to the actual ringing if anyone is thinking of giving this a go.

Thanks to Christine and also James White at Windsor for making the day and occasion special for me.

Bob

Curfew Tower, Windsor Castle



West Cornwall now has a Training Bell.

Fitted in St Michael's Church, Helston, in January 2026, was a John Taylor, Loughborough, Training Bell.

Manufactured by Taylors of Loughborough, the project to make & install the bell took 12 months in all.

It has been installed in the clockroom above the tower belfry and simulates ringing a bell at Helston about 4-5 cwt in weight.

To ring it, it is incredibly easy and certainly not hard to do.

An asset I'm sure not only to the Helston tower, but the wider community as recruitment is utmost in my mind going forward this year.

So far a number of the Helston and Wendron teams have used it for improving rising and lowering where taking & letting out rope coils has been a problem.

Several local organisations in the town have been to view the bell and have a go.

Word is out so hopefully once I can get the technology on board to use it with a laptop programme a lot more than just ringing it can be achieved.

If anyone is interested in having a session for any bell related problems they may wish to iron out, then please contact me to arrange.

The bell has been kindly donated by the Bolland family. Nigel & Kate Bolland were former ringers at Helston. Unfortunately, Kate passed away in December 2024.

The family have been extremely kind and generous in their donation for the Training Bell, which will be in memory of Kate.

It will be known as The Bolland Bell.

The dedication service for the Bolland Bell will take place in the St Michael's Church Ringing Chamber on Sunday 26 April 2025, following the Holy Communion Service at Helston.

Bob.

The Bolland Bell.



Phillack

Members of the band (8) recently rang for a wedding. The daughter of the groom asked to ring with us just as we were about to begin. During the wedding ceremony she sang a solo - Pie Jesu - which was incredible.

Also during the ceremony the poem 'Phillacks Welcome' was read out to the congregation.....

Phillack's Welcome

*What is it lad, what can you hear?
The sound of Phillack's bells, so clear,
Time was, my father and his as well,
Heard and loved the Phillack bell*

*They rang to tell of England's news,
They called the faithful, to their pews,
Of wreck and rescue, peace and wars,
They warned as danger neared our shores*

*The crowning of a King and Queen,
A greeting to each changing scene,
Peeled for a wedding, a marriage blest
Tolled when a loved one, is laid to rest*

*They told us that a war was won
Our world was free, the peace begun,
The chimes ring out, for each new year,
The old year's gone, the new one's here*

*Some may not know or even care,
How long those bells have sounded there,
Yet how much poorer life would be,
If they weren't there, for you and me*

*That's what you hear lad, amidst life's pages,
A voice passed on, down through the ages,
The sound of sorrow, peace and joy,
Now welcomes you, my little boy.*

James Davey

**Kevin
Phillack**

Open tower practice – St Budock

Our first Western District Open Tower practice took place this evening, Wednesday 18th March, and what a grand night it was!

Thank you St Budock for your warm welcome and hospitality - thank you Western District and friends for supporting (40 attendees plus our hosts!) - and thank you Mr President for your unexpected attendance, always a pleasure!

A wonderful opportunity also, to present long service awards to members of St Budock Band - congratulations ladies 🎉🔔

Doreen Robbins - 45 years

Lucy Thompson - 35 years

Lorna Crewes - 25 years



Such a lovely evening ... 🔔🔔

Thank you all... ❤️

Claire

