

NW DISTRICT RINGING MASTER'S REPORT 2023

2023 felt like our first really back-to-normal year since the pandemic. It has been possible to make a reasonably confident assessment of the state of ringing in the District.

The good news is that the District has welcomed a steady flow of new members in the year, and we have seen a number of existing and new centres of ringing thrive. Collaboration between towers is continuing to develop, a source of real hope for the future. The fact that the North West District was able to enter three teams for the Guild 8-bell striking competition in October is a matter of celebration, and reflects the growth in 8-bell learning opportunities. District towers also recorded approaching 30 peals, over 20 rung for the Guild's centenary year. At the early ringing end of the scale, new ringer development is an increasing priority, and made more resilient and sustainable by teaching collaboration between bands.

On the other hand, this picture is not uniform. We still have bands for whom method ringing would be massively helped by the addition of a handful of experienced ringers and for whom teaching beyond bell handling and rounds and call changes is difficult. These are not failing bands, they run successful practices and maintain service ringing, often by sharing resources and commitments with neighbouring bands. It is a challenge for the District to find more imaginative ways of supporting them, for example by facilitating contacts with training facilities in adjacent Guilds. Two ART teacher training courses were arranged, an M1 basic handling session in the Spring and an M2 methods teaching one in the autumn, both fully subscribed. There is demand for more.

Attendance at monthly District practices has been strong with a good spread of ringing abilities represented. More centrally placed towers have attracted the largest numbers, not surprisingly, with at the peak 37 people attending. In the farther reaches of the District the numbers were lower but different groups of ringers came, so there was a much larger spread of participating ringers across the practices than any single one represented. We have been really pleased to welcome local ringers who do not usually attend District meetings, and we were able to offer strong support in the ringing they want to do. The District outing to Cambridgeshire towers (and Exning!) in July was blessed with fine weather and attractive towers, and with nearly 30 participants was a great success.

The work of organising District ringing has fallen also on the shoulders of Lesley Steed, Deputy Ringing Master, in what has been very much a joint effort.

This is my last report as Ringing Master, as I shall step down at the ADM. My grateful thanks to the many ringing friends, old and new, whose support I have valued, and my best wishes to my successor.

Maureen Gardiner