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# Ringers' Roundtable

*The Newsletter of  
the Manitoba Guild of English  
Handbell Ringers  
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Your editor is not sure to call this a spring or mid-winter edition of the newsletter, seeing as how we are experiencing a mid-April snowstorm. A week ago, we were out in shirtsleeves cleaning up leaves and other debris from our yards. Now we are back into winter clothing and shovels in hand to clear heavy, wet snow. But by the time this issue goes out, goodness knows what weather we will be having!

Since mid-March 2020, most handbell groups totally ceased although valiant attempts to ring on occasion have happened. Having contacted our local choir members and individuals, here are their words.

Trinity Lutheran Church Handbells, Starbuck      Report by Patsy Andrews-Vert  
*Trinity Lutheran began in the fall, 6 feet apart. We had about 5 rehearsals before we were shut down again. In that time, we did manage to record 2 pieces that were used at our ZOOM church services. I was then left to my own devices, so I did about 3 or 4 more recordings on bell tree with piano accompaniment and Ron and I did a duet all for the Advent Christmas season. Since then, I have recorded one flute and one Bell Tree piece for the Holy Week services. (I lost a couple of months with a broken arm of course). I should do a few more recordings yet to be played at Spring services as we are still doing virtual church services and I'm sure with the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave here that won't change a whole lot. Oh well, next year.....!*

Broadway-First Baptist Church Handbells, Winnipeg      Report by Susan Stevenson  
*B-FBC tally: two 12 bell ensembles and 4 bell tree solos (3 for Advent and Christmas, 1 for Easter), not sure if we will try for another 12 bell piece in May or not. So glad we opted to play the 2 full choir pieces we had ready last March on the Sunday before everything shut down rather than holding one of them for April 2020. It's definitely not going to take me long to write the handbell choir report for the church AGM docket this year. Sadly, there will be no camp at the International Music Camp this summer. They are running a number of online courses, but I don't think any of them are directly related to handbells - at least based on the info I have received from them yet.*

*Five members of Broadway-First Baptist Handbells decided to celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday of one of their bell ringers, Dr. Bob Barber, by having a flash mob scene in front of his house on April 20<sup>th</sup>. See photographic display at the end of this issue.*

A'Cabella (First Presbyterian Church), Brandon      Report by Karen Wall  
*Angela has them at her home to do solo practicing, but other than that we are not using our bells.*

Minnedosa United Church Handbells, Minnedosa      Report by Val Thompson  
*We haven't been doing any ringing at all. Hopefully, we can start up in the fall.*

Karen Kuhl Report from Winkler, Manitoba

*No, sadly I haven't done a thing. I intended to purchase a bell tree or at least do some solos with my bells set up in the basement. With family members staying here in the basement while renovations were going on at their home, it was not conducive to having bells out. Maybe next winter?*

Karen Peters Report from Steinbach Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Manitoba

*No, sadly I have not managed to do any playing with our group. Church buildings had to be closed for such a long time. As you know, we couldn't even celebrate Christmas in person. The Steinbach Mennonite Handbells were determined to play together again as soon as regulations allowed and all of us felt comfortable but so far that has not happened.*

*Early in 2021 I was contacted by my daughter Kristel Peters. Her role with the Choral Department at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School had her wondering what she could do with students to keep them interested in the programme when they were not allowed to sing. Kristel asked if she could borrow my handbells and Melody Chimes for the second semester which began in February. It makes your heart happy when the equipment can be used somewhere! If you have a lot of space to work in, bell ringers can practice social distancing as per health orders. It looks like the students are thoroughly enjoying this new experience. I'm told they staged a little performance for others at the SRSS. Will Steinbach Mennonite Handbells be able to resume rehearsals by September? The ladies and I are certainly keeping our gloved fingers crossed!*

Erin Hammond Report from Montrose School, Winnipeg School Division

*We were permitted to use them in September and October up until October 22 when we went into code red.*

Honorary Life Member Report from Morna-June Morrow

*Since March 10, 2020, the four handbell groups that I play in: namely Ring Out Quartet, Rochester Ringers, Broadway-First Baptist Handbells and St. Andrews' River Heights United Handbells totally ceased their rehearsals. Although I am delighted to say that Director Susan Stevenson managed to have a small ensemble of us perform at the Thanksgiving Sunday, a December service and Easter Palm Sunday 2021 service at Broadway-First Baptist Church.*

*On February 27<sup>th</sup>, I played solo bells at Chapel Lawn Cemetery for the funeral of one of my former Chapel Bell Ringers at Westworth United Church. After the funeral, I was asked if I would play at the Easter morning service at Westworth which I did virtually.*

*I am pleased to report that since St. Andrews' River Heights were not using their three octave set of handbells, permission was given by the Church Board to loan them to Linden Christian School for the balance of the 2020-2021 term where they have been used at the high school level. Wonderful to know that some handbell ringing is continuing, although very limited.*

## **THE FUTURE OF HANDBELL RINGING**

It is obvious that the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers will not be holding its Annual Spring Ring this year, just as we had to cancel last year's Spring Ring due to the unforeseen global pandemic that engulfed the entire world.

In the January 2021 issue of Ringers' Roundtable, your Editor began reporting on a Campanology History as published in Jane Yolen's *"Ring Out! A Book of Bells"*. Following are other notes of historical information from the same source

## CAMPANOLOGY HISTORY

Bells have been part of Man's history for over 4000 years. First of all, a piece of wood was used to strike a gourd or nutshell. Then clay was used to make bells. Finally, around the bronze Age in 3000 BC, man learned to mix an alloy of copper and tin, and metal bells were made.

The small crotal was one of the first types of metal bells. They were first created over 36 centuries ago. Since that time, the crotal has always retained the same shape. It is a little sphere with small, connected holes in the side and a tiny ball inside. The ball was originally made of clay, and later on of metal. These tiny, jingly bells were tied around the necks of cows and sheep, so that the herdsmen could find them when the animals went missing.

Christmas bells and sleigh bells are examples of crotals. Of all the ancient bells discovered in tombs, buried cities and archaeological digs, more crotals have been found than any other bell.



400 year old crotal given to Morna-June Morrow after the 2000 International Handbell Symposium held in Birmingham, England.

(Note: You may recall in *Ringers' Roundtable*, Volume 23, Issue 2, January 2019, the report on the New Year's Levee at the Manitoba Legislative Building where members of the Ring Out Quartet were greeted by Their Honours, Lieutenant Governor Janice Filmon and The Honourable Gary Filmon. A photo showed Her Honour holding the above crotal.)

The importance of bells in Europe grew parallel to the growth of Christianity. The first Christians had to hide their faith on pain of death. Some even met at night in caves. There was little bell ringing in Europe during this time.

When their faith became legal and Christians began to build churches, worshippers were summoned by messengers banging together large wooden clappers called *sacred boards*.

In 400 AD in Campania, Italy, the Bishop of Nola, thought that striking a large brass kettle would make *a joyful noise unto the Lord*. While it was certainly an improvement over the sacred boards, it might not have been a real joyful noise. But the kettle-bell remained and is thought to be the forerunner of the large church bells hanging in towers throughout Europe. Legend has it that large bells continue to be called *campana* after the town, and smaller bells are called *nola* after the Bishop.

Source: Yolen, Jane, *Ring Out! A Book of Bells*. 1974

## MORE CAMPANOLOGY HISTORY

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Bishop of Campania, Italy, desired the Christian Church to have its own method of calling worshippers together and decreed that bells should be employed to announce the designated hours of worship. Because this important act took place in the province of Campania, the science of bell ringing is known as *campanology* and towers built to house bells are known as *campaniles*.

Excerpt from *The Story of Handbells* by Scott Parry.

In future issues of *Ringers' Roundtable*, look for more Campanology History.

Tintinnabulum – Latin word for bell

Tintinnabulator – Another name for a handbell ringer

Rin Tin Tinnabulator – What else? A handbell ringer's pet dog's name!

**APRIL 20, 2021 – Street flash mob preparing to celebrate Dr. Bob Barber's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday surprise!  
1:30-2:30 pm**



Peggi Talbot and Ann Pound-Holl with the mode of transporting food and bells down the street to STOP sign, then turning right down to Bob and Carole's house for his birthday surprise!



Five bell ringers on a mission



Marianne Dagenais with Tim's coffee

Sandra Mann

Susan Stevenson



Carole Barber

Sandra Mann

Bob opening his card



The portable bell tree and mallets resting on the foam padding



Susan Stevenson holding the bell tree while Morna-June Morrow malleted *Happy Birthday!*  
Sandra Mann and Ann Pound-Holl adding other instruments.



Ring and singing *Happy Birthday Bob!*



Neighbour across the street delivering balloons for Bob's birthday added to the festivity



Peggi

Carole

Happy Birthday Bob with refreshments



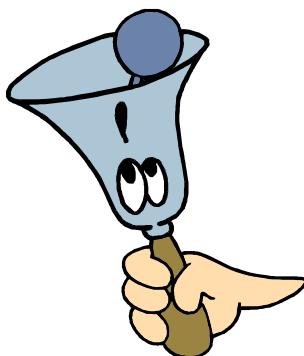
Amy's delicious cupcakes!



Happy 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Bob!



"Oh, is this ever good! Thanks Amy."





It was great to be outside and socially distanced (?)

Our birthday party lasted about an hour and the sun actually came out while we were enjoying cupcakes and coffee. Just as we were leaving, it started snowing again!!!

Photos by M-J Morrow, Ann Pound-Holl, Susan Stevenson and Anne Barber.

**MANY THANKS TO SUSAN STEVENSON FOR ALL THE  
COORDINATING OF THIS SPECIAL TIME TO  
CELEBRATE BOB'S 85<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY!**