



Worcester Cathedral

Guild of Bellringers

PEAL ANALYSIS

As at **6 MAY 2023** the bells, a **1928** Taylor recast¹ of an earlier twelve, have had **222** peals rung on them. Together with **6** peals rung on the previous bells, a total of **228** have been rung in the tower. They are the eighth heaviest ring² measured by tenor weight but the fifth heaviest in terms of the total weight of 10.5 tons. They are challenging to ring well because of tower movement and some frame movement though their magnificent sound is usually considered more than sufficient compensation for the effort involved.

Along with the ring of twelve there are four semitone bells – combinations of these give **five**³ distinct rings – the **Twelve** (and its subsets the **Back Ten** and the **Back Eight**), the **Harmonic Minor Ten**, the **Clare Ten** (and its subset the **C# Eight**), the **Middle Eight** and the **Front Eight**.

The first peal on the modern twelve was in 1928. The 6^b was first pealed in 1960, the 5[#] and 9[#] in 1961 and the 2[#] in 2018.

The previous twelve, with a 50 cwt tenor, were cast by Taylors in **1869** to Grimthorpe's⁴ specification, and at the time the third heaviest of the 24 rings of twelve then existing. In the nearly 60 years existence they were pealed only six times of which just one was a twelve-bell peal. By 1875 there were also three semitone bells⁵ but they were never rung to peals and may never have been rung at all.

Before 1870 the cathedral tower contained a one-ton octave dating back to 1611 but they were never pealed. Five of these bells are now in the cloisters.

¹ Cost about £1,300 which is equivalent to £ 104,500 today.

² Liverpool, Exeter, St Paul's, York, Wells, Redcliffe and Southwark have heavier tenors

³ There are a further two Natural Minor Tens on which no peals have been rung – see footnote under Harmonic Minor Ten section

⁴ Sir Edmund Beckett Denison (1816-1905) was not actually Lord Grimthorpe until 1886, some years later than the Worcester twelve. He is famous for his escapement mechanism used on the Westminster Clock (1851) and the design of the five chiming bells including Big Ben (1852 & 1858).

⁵ The 5[#] was cast with the twelve in 1869 and intended for use as part of the clock chimes. The 6^b and 9[#] were added in 1875 when the carillon was installed. It operated on 14 of the 15 bells, using 28 hammers.

LEADING RINGERS – TOP 20

Over 600 people have rung a peal here, with members of this group having rung 17 or more –

		1	2 #	2	3	4	5 #	5	6	6 b	7	8	9 #	9	0	E	T
Mark Regan	127	21	1	5	8	4	6	3	3	3	4	14	1	3	11	16	24
Bernard Taylor	100	10	1	9	7	7	4	9	11	6	11	12	1	7	2	2	1
Jim Clatworthy	89	11	--	11	16	9	5	10	10	5	8	4	--	--	--	--	--
Ashley Fortey	89	1	1	8	4	2	2	1	1	2	3	5	1	11	27	11	9
Chris Pickford	71	--	--	--	--	3	--	--	--	--	2	3	2	16	14	23	8
Dan Jones	61	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	4	1	8	11	1	13	8	5	1
David Jenkins	51	2	1	5	8	5	3	2	4	4	4	5	1	2	1	3	1
C P Homewood	47	1	--	4	4	6	1	3	3	1	7	12	1	2	1	1	--
Darran Ricks	46	2	1	4	3	2	2	2	7	1	12	2	1	2	3	1	1
Nick Brown	45	1	--	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	4	4	17	2
Chris Kippin	40	3	--	5	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	4	6	5	3
Alex Byrne	36	2	1	3	1	2	1	4	4	1	1	5	1	4	2	2	2
Swaz Apter	28	4	--	11	4	2	4	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mike Clements	25	1	--	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	1	1
Alison Regan	25	1	--	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	3	3	2	1
Gordon Birks	24	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	--	1	9	8	2
Rick Shallcross	22	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	3	3	--	1	4	6	4
Tom Childs	21	--	--	1	3	1	--	3	2	--	1	2	--	1	4	1	2
Robin Hall	21	1	--	1	1	--	--	2	2	--	1	5	--	5	1	1	1
Alan Flood	17	2	--	3	3	2	--	1	--	--	4	2	--	--	--	--	--

Those in **green** have rung all 16 bells to a peal.

Those in **brown** ‘circled’ the 15 bells prior to the addition of the 2#.

A version of the totals in this table, showing all ringers, is now a feature of Pealbase.co.uk – select ‘Towers with 100 or more peals analysed by Society, Ringer, Conductor and Method’

LEADING RINGERS – TOP SEVEN

It is rare for all the leading ringers to be in the same peal so on 18 Feb 2017 when the top seven happened to be together, a photo was lined up. This picture was put on Facebook in Feb 2018 and dubbed the ‘Magnificent Seven’ by Ashley Fortey.



*L to R with peals rung at Worcester as at 18 Feb 2017 –
Dan Jones (32), Nick Brown (38), Chris Pickford (46), Ashley Fortey (48), Jim
Clatworthy (58), Bernard Taylor (64), Mark Regan (87)*

The equivalent picture today would have Dan Jones moving to the right by one position, and David Jenkins replacing Nick Brown. The top five are in the same order, though their totals are rather higher!

The current top eight have never all been in the same peal.

‘CIRCLING’ THE TOWER

Ringling all the possible bells to a peal, or ‘circling’ the tower, is a relatively new phenomenon at Worcester because of the rarity of peal attempts pre-millennium. So the achievement of **Tom Lewis**, back in 1974, of ringing all the **twelve bells** to a peal was impressive, particularly as he took only 15 peals to do so, which was his final total. Only 6 of these were 12-bell peals and he did not ring any of the three existing semitone bells (5#, 6b and 9#).

Eight people completed the circle of **the fifteen bells**, prior to the latest augmentation, the first being **Bernard Taylor** in 2007 within the space of 19 peals. He was followed by **Mark Regan** in 2008 (28 peals), **Alison Regan** in 2009 (21 peals), **David Jenkins** in 2013 (21 peals), **Ashley Fortey** in 2014 (32 peals), **Mike Clements** in 2015 (22 peals), **Nick Brown** in 2015 (22 peals) and **Chris Kippin** in 2017 (31 peals).

With the addition of the Sharp Second in 2018 **seven** people have completed the new ‘circle’ of **all sixteen bells**. The first to do so was **Bernard Taylor** in 2018 followed by **Mark Regan**, **David Jenkins**, **Ashley Fortey**, **Darran Ricks**, **Alex Byrne** and **Dan Jones**. Waiting to ring this bell are Mike Clements, Nick Brown & Chris Kippin.

Perhaps a ‘purer’ definition of ‘circling the tower’ would be to ring each bell to peals on the relevant number, so 12-bell peals on the Twelve, 10-bell peals on the Minor Ten, 8-bell peals on the Front Eight, &c. For the five distinct rings – **the Twelve**, **Harmonic Minor Ten**, **Clare Ten**, **Middle Eight** and **Front Eight** it would take a minimum of 48 peals to achieve this.

For **12-bell peals on the Twelve** just 7 ringers have completed this ‘circling’, namely **Mark Regan**, **Bernard Taylor**, **Chris Kippin**, **Nick Brown**, **Mike Clements**, **Alex Byrne** and **David Jenkins**. Robin Hall has one bell left (4th) to achieve this, Ashley Fortey (7th & 8th) and Dan Jones (3rd & 6th) two. David Jenkins is the only person to have done this to a single method – Stedman Cinques on 14 Jan 2023.

For **Minor 10-bell peals on the Harmonic Minor Ten**, **Bernard Taylor (2011)**, **Ashley Fortey (2019)** and **Mark Regan (2022)** have rung each bell. Craig Homewood has the 9th to go. It will certainly be sometime before anyone achieves this for any other of the rings.

The TWELVE

Cinques & Maximus

148 peals

Stedman Cinques was the only twelve-bell peal on the old bells – **2 Jun 1914** – and also the first one on the new bells - **26 Dec 1928**. The first Maximus was the following year when Bill Pye rang the tenor. Not until 1962 was the tenor ‘turned-in’ again, its fearsome reputation having been the result of loose headstock bolts. The most recent peal was on **6 May 2023**.

CINQUES		78	MAXIMUS		70
Stedman		70	Cambridge		48
Other		8	Other		22
	<i>Fastest</i>		<i>Average</i>	<i>Slowest</i>	
CINQUES	3h 41m		3h 54m	4h 12m	
MAXIMUS	3h 49m		4h 1m	4h 20m	

The 17 people who have rung 14 or more twelve-bell peals are listed below.

Twelve		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	E	T
Mark Regan	74	20	2	6	1	2	2	2	3	2	4	7	23
Bernard Taylor	57	9	5	5	3	9	9	3	5	6	1	1	1
Jim Clatworthy	54	10	7	9	7	8	9	4	2	-	-	-	-
Ashley Fortey	48	1	6	3	1	1	1	-	-	3	18	6	8
Chris Pickford	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	10	8	14	8
Chris Kippin	31	3	5	3	1	1	2	2	1	3	4	3	3
David Jenkins	30	2	4	6	2	2	3	2	4	2	1	1	1
Nick Brown	29	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	1	12	2
Dan Jones	29	1	1	-	1	1	-	4	5	8	4	3	1
C Homewood	28	1	3	1	3	1	2	5	10	2	-	-	-
Alex Byrne	22	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	2
Darran Ricks	22	2	3	2	1	2	6	2	1	1	1	-	1
Swaz Apter	20	4	10	3	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mike Clements	18	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	3	1	1
Rick Shallcross	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	3	5	4
Robin Hall	16	1	1	1	-	2	2	1	4	1	1	1	1
Alison Regan	14	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	2	2	2	2	1

This table corresponds to the ‘circled tower’ feature of Pealbase.co.uk – select ringer’s list of towers, select number rung there - it only ‘counts’ 12-bell peals for this analysis.

The THREE TENS

	F#	E	D#	C#	B	A#	G#	F#	E	D#	C#	B
Back 10	-	-	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	E	T
Minor 10	-	2	3	4	5#	6b	7	8	9	0	E	-
Clare 10	-	2#	3	4	5#	6	7	8	9#	0	E	-

THE BACK TEN (48-02 in B)

10 peals

Five of these were on the old bells, the first on **14 Dec 1893**. All of them were rung significantly quicker, by about ¼ hour, than those on the current bells, the average being 3h31m with the first two taking only 3 ¼ hours. Two of the five peals had two men on the tenor. The peal of Royal was the first and only time the tenor was 'turned in' on these bells – by Joseph T Dyke.

The other **5** on the new bells, the first of which was **26 Dec 1935**, have averaged 3h42m with the most recent being **20 Feb 1960**. Oddly, three of these peals had two men on the tenor.

The current back ten have always had a reputation for being more difficult to ring than the twelve, whereas for the old bells it was the other way round. It would be **good to score one peal of Royal on the current bells** just to make this table worthwhile.....

CATERS	9	ROYAL	1
Grandsire	8	Plain Bob	1
Stedman	1		

The leading ringers have been -

Back Ten		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	E	T
William Johnson	5	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	2
William Lewis	5	-	-	-	-	3	1	1	-	-	-
George Hinton	4	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
William Powell	4	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

This melodic, haunting ring⁶ makes Worcester unique⁷. One of the challenges of ringing them has previously been the odd rope circle with 5# out of position⁸.

For many years they were only rung for a short period on Remembrance Day so the first peal on them, **31 Dec 2003** was 75 years after the bells were installed. The most recent was on **31 Dec 2022**. All but one of the peals have been rung half-muffled. There are usually peal attempts for Good Friday, Remembrance Sunday and New Year's Eve each year, which makes them the most rung of the various semitone rings at the Cathedral.

CATERS	32	ROYAL	7
Grandsire	26	Cambridge	3
Stedman	6	Other	4
	<i>Fastest</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Slowest</i>
CATERS	3h 18m	3h 32m	3h 49m
ROYAL	3h 28m	3h 37m	3h 45m

The average speed equates to 3.9 minutes per course for Grandsire Caters, or 4.6 minutes per course for Stedman Caters.

The leading ringers for peals on the Harmonic Minor Ten are –

Minor Ten		2	3	4	5#	6b	7	8	9	0	E
Mark Regan	33	2	1	1	4	3	1	9	1	3	8
Ashley Fortey	25	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	7	6	2
Bernard Taylor	23	4	1	1	2	5	4	3	1	1	1
James Clatworthy	19	3	4	-	5	5	1	1	-	-	-
Dan Jones	18	-	2	-	1	1	3	2	5	2	1
Chris Pickford	16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	6	6
Darran Ricks	15	1	-	-	1	1	8	1	1	2	-
Craig Homewood	13	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	-	1	1
Nick Brown	10	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	4
Tom Childs	9	1	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	2	1
David Jenkins	8	-	2	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	1

⁶ The Minor scale used is HARMONIC because the seventh note, from the bottom, is sharpened (5#). If the 5th bell was used instead this ten would be in a NATURAL minor scale, which is a major octave plus a semitone and full tone beneath. Worcester has a second Natural Minor Ten being the Front Eight plus the 9# and 10th bells, that is 1, 2#, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9#, 10. The third type of Minor scale is the MELODIC but as it has different notes going up and down it is unsuitable for change ringing.

⁷ The 2016 bells at Taunton have a 5#, 6b and 9# like Worcester but only the 6b is a ringing bell. So there is a Harmonic Minor Ten available but only on its new chiming machine.

⁸ The 5# has now been moved to the old pit of the 6b, and the 6b rehung in a new frame under the bourdon, so that as of October 2020 the ropes are all in the correct positions.

The 2018 addition of a Sharp Second Bell means that the cathedral has a new major key version of the Harmonic Minor Ten using 2#, 6, 9# instead of 2, 6b and 9. This is almost unique⁹ to Worcester, as the most common way¹⁰ of obtaining a major ten is to add a 'top treble' and 6b, making the 9th the tenor. As the new bell is dedicated to St Clare¹¹ this middle ten is known as the 'Clare Ten'. For the first peal the rope circle was quite awkward but the changes made to the 5# and 9# mean it is now quite normal.

This ten were first pealed **1 Dec 2018** and most recently **29 May 2022**.

CATERS	2	ROYAL	1
Grandsire	1	London No.3	1
Stedman	1		

The peal times for these were 3h41m, 3h44m & 3h38m. This is not much data but it does suggest that people want to ring this ten slower than the Harmonic Minor Ten even though they are almost the same ring. The three different bells (2#, 6th & 9#) actually make this ring 3 ¾ cwt (190 kg) lighter, but the fact that the Harmonic Minor Ten are always rung half-muffled may be the most important distinction between the two tens.

Currently there are 5 leading ringers, as three is enough to be on this list!

Clare Ten		2#	3	4	5#	6	7	8	9#	0	E
Bernard Taylor	3	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dan Jones	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
Alex Byrne	3	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
Ashley Fortey	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1
Darran Ricks	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1

⁹ Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin has 6#, 9# and 13# semitones in addition to its ring of sixteen, which are equivalent to 2#, 5# & 9# in its back twelve, though they never were a ring of twelve, being augmented from 10 to 16 in 1999 and acquiring the 6# at that point.

¹⁰ Of the rings of twelve 21 have this combination. Winchester's 14 with its 8b and Perth's 16 with its 10b effectively have the same.

¹¹ The only bell at the Cathedral dedicated to a female saint. The Twelve are named after the disciples - Matthias, Thaddeus, Simon (the Zealot), James (the 'Lesser', son of Alphaeus), Matthew, Bartholomew, Thomas, Philip, Andrew, John, James (the 'Greater', son of Zebedee) and Peter. The other semitones are named Paul, Mark and Luke. The Bourdon or Hour Bell, one of only 28 bells in Britain over 4 tons, is not named.

The FOUR Octaves

	F#	E	D#	C#	B	A#	G#	F#	E	D#	C#	B
Back 8	-	-	-	-	5	6	7	8	9	0	E	T
C#8	-	-	-	4	5#	6	7	8	9#	0	E	-
Middle 8	-	2	3	4	5	6b	7	8	9	-	-	-
Front 8	1	2#	3	4	5	6	7	8	-	-	-	-

THE BACK EIGHT (48-0-2 in B)

2 peals

These are heavier (and tonally much better) than Sherborne Abbey¹² and have been pealed just twice, on **15 Aug 2009** and **5 Oct 2019**. Despite their weight they 'fit' together much better as a ring than any of the other octaves and deserve to be rung a bit more often. However the challenge of doing so should not be underestimated and is beyond many bands.

TRIPLES	1	MAJOR	1
Stedman	1	23-Spliced Surprise atw	1

Back 8		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ashley Fortey	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Bernard Taylor	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Mark Regan	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1

Another eight exists with the same tenor but not in a major key. It is the heavy **PENTATONIC EIGHT (3-4-5-7-8-0-E-T)** which has not been rung to a peal, and probably never will be.

¹² Sherborne Abbey has the heaviest ring of eight bells. Naturally there are back eights within the rings at Liverpool, Exeter, St Paul's, York, Wells, Redcliffe and Southwark, so this octave is the eighth heaviest in the world. Some of these back eights, but not all, have been pealed.

THE C SHARP EIGHT (34-3-4 in C#)

12 peals

Worcester is unique¹³ among twelve-bell towers in having a major octave with its 11th as the tenor. They were pealed first on **10 Jun 1961**, and had an even more challenging rope circle than the Minor Ten until the 9# roping was moved in 2018 and the 5# in 2020. Arguably they are harder to ring well than the back eight because they do not quite ‘fit’ together – recent work has made them somewhat easier, with the 9# in particular having a more appropriate swing time. However they do sound magnificent, which may be why more peals have been rung on them than on the lighter Middle Eight.

With the 2018 addition of the 2# and the use of the 3rd these have become a ten – an unusual example of an augmentation within a ring – so it is likely that they will be less rung as an octave in future. Last pealed **29 Feb 2020**.

TRIPLES	4	MAJOR	7
Stedman	2	Cambridge	4
Grandsire	2	London	2
		Spliced Surprise (23m atw)	1
		Plain Bob	1

C# octave		4	5#	6	7	8	9#	0	E
Mark Regan	10	2	2	-	-	1	1	3	1
Bernard Taylor	7	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	-
Ashley Fortey	7	-	-	-	1	2	1	1	2
Chris Pickford	7	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
James Clatworthy	6	1	-	1	3	1	-	-	-
Dan Jones	5	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	-
Nick Brown	4	-	1	-	-	-	1	2	-

Two other eights exist with the same tenor but are not in the major key. They are the **HARMONIC MINOR EIGHT (4-5#-6b-7-8-9-0-E)** and the ‘light’ **PENTATONIC EIGHT (2#-3-4-6-7-9#-0-E)**, neither of which has been rung to a peal, though the latter has had a quarter peal rung on them.

¹³ See earlier footnotes about Taunton which has the same, but the 5# and 9# are chiming bells only, and Christ Church, Dublin with its 9# and 13#.

THE MIDDLE EIGHT (20-0-6 in E)

10 peals

This is the standard light octave within 50+ twelve-bell rings, but curiously at Worcester they were not pealed for over thirty years after installation, the first one being on **7 May 1960**. This was the first time that any of the semitone¹⁴ bells, in either the old ring or the new one, had been rung to a peal.

The octave has not been particularly popular, perhaps because it was not a comfortable ring, however the recent work on the bells has improved that. Having an alternative in the new Front Eight is likely to make them even less used. The most recent peal was **15 Jan 2022**.

TRIPLES	5	MAJOR	5
Stedman	1	Cambridge	2
Grandsire	4	Other	2
		Spliced Surprise (23m atw)	1

Middle 8		2	3	4	5	6b	7	8	9
David Beacham	4	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-
Bernard Taylor	4	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	-
Tom Lewis	3	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
John Nicklin	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Mark Regan	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-
John Stanier	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

¹⁴ It is unlikely that the semitones for the old ring were hung for ringing. Though the present ones are, anecdotal evidence suggests that for many years only the 6b routinely had a rope on it! For some reason the local tradition has been to refer to the three semitones as 'flats' not 'sharps' – 4b, 6b and 8b. This is misleading because the bells should be named after the bell they replace in the twelve (5# replaces the 5th, 4b does not replace the 4th) and also because musically they are actually sharps – the C# octave has an E# and B# in it, just as the front eight in F# has an E# in it. The 6b is genuinely a flat, as the 6th is an A# and the 6b is an A.

THE FRONT EIGHT (14-3-26 in F#)

4 peals

The installation of the new Sharp Second¹⁵ to make the Clare Ten had the bonus effect of providing a front eight. These are a bright, sparkling ring and were pealed for the first time on **20 Jan 2019** and most recently **3 Sep 2022**. It will be interesting to see if they become more popular than the Middle Eight over the next decade. As is normal for such an octave at the front end of a heavy twelve the peal times are rather slower (average 3h11m) than the tenor weight would lead one to expect, though this average has been brought down by the one peal of Triples in 2h57m.

TRIPLES	1	MAJOR	3
Stedman	1	Spliced Surprise (23 atw)	1
		Bristol	2

Front 8		1	2#	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bernard Taylor	4	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	1
David Jenkins	4	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	-
Daniel Jones	4	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-
Jim Clatworthy	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Mark Regan	3	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Alex Byrne	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
Craig Homewood	3	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-

¹⁵ Worcester is one of only five towers having both a 2# and a 6b - the others are Buckfast Abbey, Hull, Dublin (S Patrick's) and Winchester. In the last case the 1992 augmentation to 14 means the bells are now 4# and 8b.

The Rings of Six

No six-bell peals have been rung at the cathedral though one was organized in 2010 but not started. Diatonic rings with **five** different tenors are possible –

2#-3-4-5#-6-7 (front six of the middle ten) – *a quarter peal has been rung*

3-4-5-6-7-8 (back six of front eight and the front six of back ten)

4-5-6b-7-8-9 (back six of middle eight) – *a quarter peal has been rung*

6-7-8-9#-0-E (back six of middle ten)

7-8-9-0-E-T (back six) – *a quarter peal has been rung*

There are also the back sixes of the two pentatonic eights

4-6-7-9#-0-E and 5-7-8-0-E-T

and the two ‘musical’ sixes (1-2-3-6-8-0 of a major ten) -

2#-3-4-7-9#-E and 3-4-5-8-0-T

Rings of Five

There is occasional (pub talk of a peal on the front five, as the obvious lightest choice for a major key (tenor 8-2-19 in B). *A quarter peal has been rung on this five*. There are also all the back fives of the sixes making a total of six different rings. Someone will do it someday.....

QUITE INTERESTING

PEAL STATS

Loud Time – Peal ringing at the cathedral has become much more of a routine affair in the last two decades. 1993 was the last year with no peal, and as recently as 2002 the normal annual total was 2 or 3, now it is often double figures. The 50th peal at the cathedral was not achieved until the end of 1998, the 100th just ten years later, the 150th in 2014 and the 200th in 2019.

The most peals rung in a calendar year was 13 in 2015, the same number as the entire 1990's. 12 were achieved in 2009 and 2019, and 11 in each of 2011, 2017 and 2018. The shortest gap between peals (3 days) has occurred several times between Good Friday and Easter Monday, and also in September 2015.

Most heard bells – The 7th and 8th appear in all the combinations so they are the most used bells, and they used to be part of the quarter chimes. The third most popular is surprisingly the 4th, just beating the 10th and 11th.

Quite frequently all 16 bells are heard in a week – if the Twelve and the Clare Ten are used, only the 6^b is not rung, and that is heard as one of the clock quarter chimes (4,5,6^b,9).

Quiet Time – arguably the longest time without peals was the 23 years from the installation of the twelve in 1870 to the first peal on them in 1893. Between the second and third peals (1894-1910) there were 15½ years. In the modern era the longest gap between peals has been the 18½ years (1975-94) when the tower was being restored after a pinnacle fell off in Jan 1976. A similar incident occurred on 26 Nov 2021 but did not result in prolonged silence. Covid-related ringing restrictions caused a peal gap of only 17 months.

Rarest bell – The semitones are obviously rung less often than the main twelve, and because the 2# is a recent addition it has so far been pealed only 6 times. The 9# used to have the lowest peal total (now 15) and only Chris Pickford has rung it twice. However, both the 5# and 6^b have been rung in over 40 peals.

Longest ringing – The longest time for a peal was 4h 20m in Jan 2001. However the peal rung in Nov 1969 had a false start of over 40 minutes - the bells were called round and the peal re-commenced without stopping. Added to the peal time of 3h47m this meant the bells were rung continuously for 4 ½ hours.

Muffled ringing – The Harmonic Minor Ten are routinely rung half-muffled but the other combinations have only occasionally been rung with muffles on. Peals on the back ten (in 1910 and 1936) were rung fully-muffled, with tenor backstroke open, to mark the passing of the monarch – Kings Edward VII and George V. The Twelve have only been rung half-muffled twice – in July 2016 marking the centenary of the Somme and in 2022 to mark the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Front Eight were rung half-muffled in 2022.

Clapper trouble – the 10th is the ‘unluckiest’ bell, having had its clapper break in three peal attempts. It has also broken during service ringing after just 300 changes, the day after a peal (rather better luck!) Although not mentioned as occurring in peal attempts the tenor clapper is recorded as breaking in Jun 1973, Nov 1974, Oct 1975, Feb 1981 and Apr 1983 (five times in 11 years) and again in 2002 and 2004 which led to the installation of the innovative Wheeler wooden-shafted clapper in May 2005.

Speed – The optimum speed for 12-bell peals, judging by the average and the spread of data is 6.2 minutes per course of Stedman Cinques and about 14 minutes for 6 leads of Cambridge Maximus. The fastest peals of both occurred in the same year, 2006 - 3h41 and 3h48m.

6^b x 3 – The Flat Sixth has been in three different parts of the frame. It was hung on the east side in 1928, swapped with the 6th in 2003 putting it in the centre, and moved under the bourdon in Sep 2020 as part of the rope circle improvement. David Jenkins is the only person to peal this bell from all three locations, and the only one who could.

5[#] x 3 – Although the 5[#] has only been in two positions within the frame its roping has meant that it has been rung from three different positions in the ringing room – behind the 8th, behind¹⁶ the 6th and where it is now¹⁷. David Jenkins has also completed this ‘triplet’, though in this case three other people could do so, including Bernard Taylor who has.

All the octaves to Norman Smith’s 23 atw – A band consisting of Jim Clatworthy, Mark Regan, Bernard Taylor, Darran Ricks, Alex Byrne, David Jenkins, Dan Jones and Ashley Fortey have rung this composition on each of the four octaves – the front eight, the back eight, the C# eight and the middle eight.

¹⁶ Four peals rung - 11 Nov 2018, 1 Dec 2018, 31 Dec 2018, 19 Apr 2019

¹⁷ Peals from 4 Sep 2021 onwards

FAMILY STATS

Three generations – two families have three generations who have rung a peal at the Cathedral – the HEMMING, James (1928), Geoff (1935) and Gerald (1965), and the PIPES, Cecil (1962), Roderick (1966) and David (1994).

Brothers – pairs of brothers have appeared together in peals on a number of occasions – Albert & James Hill (1910), Bill & George Pye (1929), Henry & George Fearn (1945), Ron & Jim Diserens (1958), Martin & Michael Fellows (1965), John & James Insley (1966), John & Michael Chilcott (1971), John & Ron Diserens (1973), George & Roderick Pipe (1975), Geoff & Peter Randall (1995), Richard & Michael Clements (2000), Bernard & Malcolm Taylor (2006), Jack & Daniel Page (2023).

Fathers & sons in the same peal – Benjamin with Albert & James Hill (1910), William & Tom Lewis (1930), Geoff & Gerald Hemming (1965), John & Richard Clements (1974), David & Matthew Hilling (1994), John & Michael Clements (1996), Alan & Andy Hartley (1996), Chris & Ian Povey (1999), Michael & Phillip Orme (2000), Andrew & Mike Wilby (2006), Russell & Nick Brown (2012), Mark & William Regan (2015), David & Ewan Hull (2018).

Fathers & daughters in the same peal – John Clements & Liz Orme (1996), Chris Kippin & Eleanor Linford (2009), Michael & Louise Palmer (2009).

Married couples – first made an appearance with John & Amy Thomas (1946), followed by Bill & Claudia Critchley (1970), Stuart & Barbara Piper (1994), John & Stef Warboys (1996), Phillip & Liz Orme (1996), Bob & Ruth Smith (1997), James & Jennie Taylor (1998), Mark & Alison Regan (2002), John Loveless & Linda Garton (2002), Martin & Maggie Whiteley (2002), Bob & Pat Newton (2003), Ian & Wendy Campbell (2003), Paul & Ruth Curtis (2004), Phil & Gwen Rogers (2005), John & Ann White (2007), Ian & Claire Roulstone (2009), Andrew & Liz Harvey (2011), Sam & Sian Austin (2012), Simon & Eleanor Linford (2018).

PEOPLE STATS

Youngest – the youngest person to ring a peal at the cathedral for many years was David Jenkins who in Apr 1974 was 15y8m. Laura Davies, at 16y4m in Jan 2012 was the youngest to ring a 12-bell peal but both of these achievements were eclipsed by **Alistair Smith** who was **15y1m** in Sep 2013. More recently, in Apr 2018, Ewan Hull rang one at the age of 15y9m.

Youngest tenor ringer – **Ewan Hull**, at **20y10m** on 10 Apr 2023 has now eclipsed Cyril Tansell who was 21y1m when he rang this bell to Stedman Cinques in Dec 1930. (An article in the *RW* 2022 *p.86* stated that Cyril was only 19 but his birth is recorded as Nov 1909).

Oldest¹⁸ – **Chris Kippin**, at **78y6m**, in Jun 2022, is the oldest person to ring a peal at the cathedral, eclipsing the previous contender, Neil Bennett (77y9m in Sep 2016). Other known septuagenarians are – James George (75y5m in May 1929), Alan Ainsworth (74y2m in Dec 2009), Jim Clatworthy (72y9m in May 2023), Rick Shallcross (71y4m in Jan 2017), Chris Pickford (70y11m in May 2023) and Mike Mears (70y2m Feb 2023). There are possibly a few more.

Oldest tenor ringer – this was **James George** in May 1929, when aged 75. Chris Kippin rang it in 2014 when he was 71.

Two-and-a-half tons for Half A Ton – Bernard Taylor (2006), David Jenkins (2008) and Andrew Hartley (2014) all rang the tenor to celebrate entry into their sixth decade. In each case it was their heaviest bell rung to a peal.

1000th peals – this personal landmark has occurred four times at the cathedral – Alan Flood (1994), Swaz Apter (2004), Steve Barton (2005) and 1000th as conductor, Bernard Taylor (2006).

Half centuries – seven people have now completed 50 peals on the bells, a feat unimaginable even twenty years ago – Mark Regan (2011), Bernard Taylor (2013), Jim Clatworthy (2015), Ashley Fortey (2017), Chris Pickford (2017), Dan Jones (2020) and David Jenkins (2023). Mark has achieved a century (Jun 2018) and so has Bernard Taylor (May 2023).

Groupings – in Oct 2016 Mark Regan and Bernard Taylor became the first pair to ring 50 peals together at the Cathedral. In Oct 2021 the trio of Mark, Bernard and Jim Clatworthy reached 50 peals.

Just William – this seems to have been a very popular name in the early part of the 20th century as no fewer than 12 different ringers with the name rang in the six peals on the old bells – Powell, Pudge, Johnson, Bradford, Stone, Cotton, Page, Jones, Short, Fisher, Lewis and Edgington.

¹⁸ Known birthdays of septuagenarians – James George 27 Nov 1853, Alan Ainsworth 2 Oct 1935, Neil Bennett Nov 1938, Chris Kippin 2 Dec 1943, Rick Shallcross 4 Sep 1945, Jim Clatworthy 2 Aug 1950, Chris Pickford 2 Jun 1952, Mike Mears 27 Nov 1952.

Old & New – 11 ringers rang in peals on both the 1869 bells and the 1928 bells

Ladies on the box – only two ladies have rung the tenor – Alison Regan (2006) and Claire Roulstone (2008).

Ladies Peal – the first, and so far only, peal rung on the bells by an all-female band was on 16 Feb 2008. The first lady to ring a peal at the cathedral was Amy Thomas in 1946, and the first peal rung with more than one lady participating was not until 1994.

Tired ? – In 1996 David Pipe ‘turned in’ the tenor the day after doing the same thing at Southwark Cathedral – two 48cwt bells to Maximus in a weekend!

Tired ? – In 1998 Andrew Mills rang the tenor ‘behind’, in between ringing two peals elsewhere on the same day, both of which were over 10,000 changes.

Not so tired – the tenor has been ‘strapped’ (rung by two people) on seven occasions – ‘behind’ in 1893, 1894, 1936, 1937, 1945 and 1953 – and ‘turned in’ in 1963 by Wilf Williams & Bill Theobald.

Four eights on the same bells – Bernard Taylor has rung both the 7th and the 8th to peals on all four different octaves in which they appear – the front eight, middle eight, the C# eight and the back eight.

Semitone Man – The top four semitone ringers are Bernard Taylor (12), Mark Regan (11), Jim Clatworthy (10) and David Jenkins (9).

Most on a bell – Ashley Fortey has rung the 10th 27 times, Mark Regan the tenor 24 times and Chris Pickford the 11th 23 times.

Conductors – Mark Regan (34), Bernard Taylor (30), Darran Ricks (16), Alex Byrne (12) and Jim Clatworthy (11) head the list and between them have called over 100 of the peals rung.

Composers – Jim Clatworthy (35), Bernard Taylor (21), Rod Pipe (11), David House (10), and Darran Ricks (9) head the list

Local yokels – 12 of the Top Twenty Leading Ringers on the bells are, or were, in the local band - Alex Byrne, Nick Brown, Tom Childs, Jim Clatworthy, Mike Clements, Ashley Fortey, Craig Homewood, David Jenkins, Dan Jones, Mark Regan, Darran Ricks and Bernard Taylor.

PEAL SPEEDS for the TWELVE

To inform any discussion about ringing speed, and there are many, some data may be helpful. This covers ALL of the Twelve Bell Peals rung on the **1928 Cathedral bells**. The averages shown are normalised to 5040 rows. CPM = changes per minute.

ALL PEALS 1928-2023			
Number	Stage	Av Time	CPM
77	CINQUES	3h 54m	21.540
70	MAXIMUS	4h 1m	20.887
147	all	3h 57m	21.229

The clapping of the tenor has been argued as a key determinant of the speed of ringing. From 1928 to 2005 the bell had traditional all-metal ones, which were repaired or replaced quite frequently. Initially the use of a wooden clapper was associated with a 4-minute reduction in peal speeds, but the increase in ball weight on Versions 2 & 3 has seen current peal times much the same as originally. It would appear that the dynamic of the wooden-shafted clapper makes the bell easier to ring but not make it significantly faster.

PEALS 1914-2005 (metal clapper)			
30	CINQUES	4h 0m	20.991
22	MAXIMUS	4h 2m	20.851
52	all	4h 1m	20.932
PEALS 2005-11 (wooden clapper v.1)			
Wheeler Original first pealed 13 Aug 2005			
15	CINQUES	3h 55m	21.465
15	MAXIMUS	3h 58m	21.147
30	all	3h 57m	21.306
PEALS 2011-19 (wooden clapper v.2)			
Ball broke Feb 2011, replaced with larger one, first pealed 13 Aug 2011			
25	CINQUES	3h 54m	21.500
29	MAXIMUS	4h 2m	20.802
54	all	3h 59m	21.125
PEALS 2020-23 (wooden clapper v.3)			
Ball broke Dec 2019, whole new clapper, first pealed 7 Mar 2020			
8	CINQUES	3h 58m	21.174
3	MAXIMUS	4h 4m	20.685
11	all	4h 0m	21.040

PEAL BOARDS



There are 12 peal boards in the ringing room and 3 in the Teaching Centre which show the details of the following 17 peals (two of the boards contain more than one peal) –

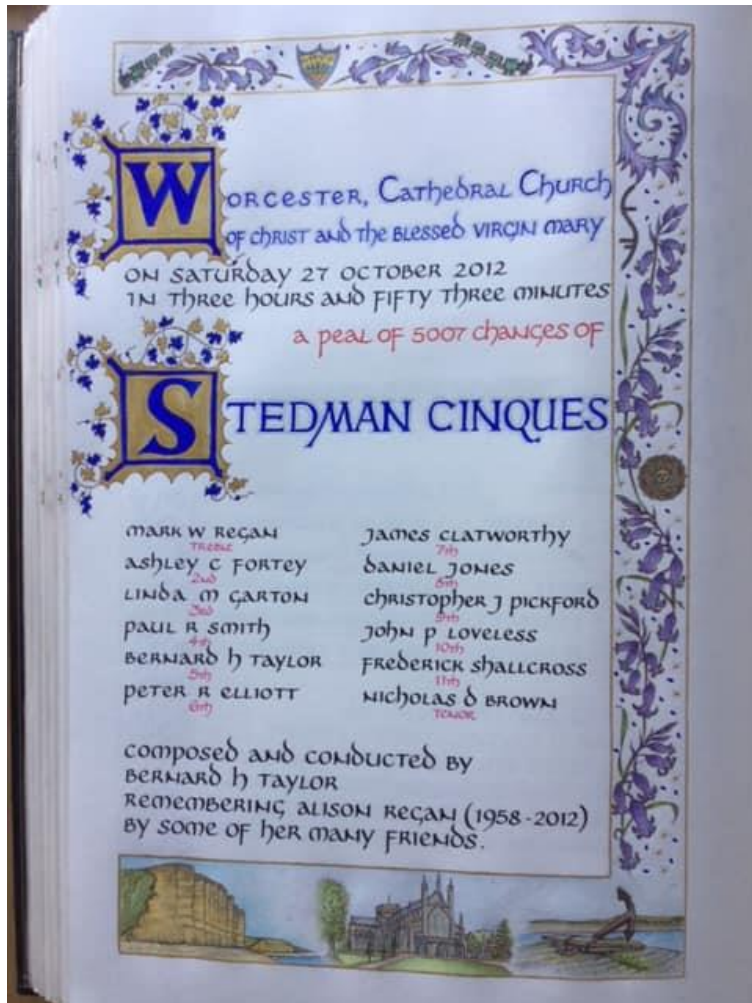
14 Dec 1893	5093	Grandsire Caters	First peal at the cathedral
10 Dec 1894	5057	Grandsire Caters	
20 May 1910	5040	Grandsire Caters	In memoriam Edward VII
2 Jun 1914	5019	Stedman Cinques	First peal on the twelve
23 Aug 1919	5000	Plain Bob Royal	
11 Dec 1920	5003	Grandsire Caters	
26 Dec 1928	5007	Stedman Cinques	First peal on the recast twelve
29 Nov 1934	5037	Grandsire Cinques	
28 Jan 1936	5003	Grandsire Caters	In memoriam George V
9 May 1945	5057	Grandsire Caters	Victory in Europe
3 Jun 1953	5021	Grandsire Caters	Coronation of Elizabeth II
4 Apr 1994	5015	Grandsire Cinques	Tower Restoration
4 Aug 2000	5100	Stedman Cinques	100 th birthday of Queen Mother
29 Apr 2011	5040	Cambridge Maximus	Royal Wedding
11 Jul 2012	5019	Stedman Cinques	Visit of HM Queen Elizabeth II
27 Oct 2012	5007	Stedman Cinques	In memory of Alison Regan
11 Nov 2018	5039	Grandsire Caters	Armistice Centenary

New boards are planned for the peal in memory of HM Queen Elizabeth II (19 Sep 2022), and the one for the Coronation of HM King Charles III (6 May 2023).

PEAL BOOK

A Grand Peal Book was given to the Guild in 2015 by Steve & Joyce Barton, within which Clare Griffiths (of Honiton) is providing hand-crafted illustrated details of each peal. So far **155** peals (up to 3 Apr 2015) have been written in it. Still to do are the **55** remaining peals up to 7 Mar 2020 for which we are relying on donations.

The cost of writing up the **18** peals rung from 4 Sep 2021 onwards (# 211 to 228) is being covered by money set aside from peal fees.



It is displayed in the Teaching Centre in a purpose-built cabinet.

REFERENCES

The only database with the **full details of all the peals** is my copy of Philip Saddleton's **Pealbook** program, the detail of the peals being extracted from *The Ringing World*. The data from Pealbook is periodically transferred on to the **Guild's website** www.worcesterbells.org.uk/peals-database by 'exporting' from the program a .csv file with the Format choices TABLES = Full and INCLUDE = Tabs. It needs to be sent to richard@enrichdesign.co.uk. Currently the peals up to 7 Mar 2020 (#210) are on this website.

The Ringing World is making its site, **Bellboard**, www.bb.ringingworld.co.uk the main record for all ringing, including peals. **The details of all the Cathedral peals have now been put on this site**, though not entirely in a consistent fashion (middle initials &c) because they have been done by several different people.

The peals are recorded in ornamental style by Clare Griffiths in the **Grand Peal Book** which is on display in the Teaching Centre. It is a project with some way to go, with the peals up Apr 2015 (#155) having been completed. For this Jim Clatworthy cross-referenced the details with their publication in *Bell News* and *The Ringing World*, and tidied up the footnotes, up to Peal #160 on 13 Feb 2016. At some point Clare Griffiths will need 'official' details of the peals after this.

A complete list of peals appears on the **Felstead** database site at www.cccbr.org.uk/felstead/tbid.php?tid=5668. Another list, starting from 1985 (with full details from 2005) exists on *The Ringing World* site www.peals.co.uk but this is no longer being updated, as Bellboard has become the main site. It does, however, cover the 171 cathedral peals rung 4 Apr 1994 to 7 Mar 2020.

Bernard Taylor

THE REEVES HANDBELLS

In **1893** Harvey Reeves (1841-1911), a native of Worcester and Editor of 'The Bell News' (from 1881 to his death) presented the ringers with a set of 31 Shaw handbells which are stored in a wooden box in the ringing room. This marked the creation of the 'Worcester Cathedral Guild of Voluntary Bell Ringers' which later became the 'Worcester Cathedral Guild of Change Ringers' and today is the 'Worcester Cathedral Guild of Bellringers'.

The set's largest bell is 19F with 2 ½ octaves above it, running up to 1D. The various semitone bells between the diatonic notes make them almost fully chromatic so that octaves, and some double octaves, are available in many keys.

The most useful change-ringing bells were re-handled and refurbished by Whitechapel Bellfoundry in 1998-99, giving a **twelve in C** (size 15) and, using the Bb for B a **light ten in F** (size 12). These are shown in red. (Adding the top Bb and C makes this into a light twelve but these two need renovation). The bottom four bells are also in good condition but the others have poor handles and need some attention to be of any use.

They are arranged in the box as below, starting with the 19F at the back left and running up in note alternately right then left -

→			F	G	A	Bb	B		
		F	E	Eb	D	C#	C		←
→		F#	G	G#	A	Bb	B	C	
	G#	G	F#	F	E	Eb	D	C#	←
→		A	Bb	B	C	D			

Some research is needed to find out what peals have been rung on them. Four were definitely rung at Spring Lane in 2013 but there may be more. It is believed they have not been pealed at the cathedral. A few quarter peals were rung in 2014-15 and in 2020.

THE THOMAS BELL



On the table in the middle of the ringing room is a well-tuned bell mounted on a plinth. The inscription reads -

THIS BELL WAS PRESENTED TO
E.P.THOMAS ESQ,
JOHN TAYLOR & CO,
BELLFOUNDERS
LOUGHBOROUGH,
AS A MEMENTO OF,
THE RESTORATION OF THE
BELLS OF, WORCESTER
CATHEDRAL, 1928.

Ernest Percy Thomas¹⁹ (1873-1957) was responsible for raising the money for the recasting and, together with his widowed mother, donated the 9th. He ran a business manufacturing water pumps and windmills which were sold internationally - this earned him the nickname 'Pumpy'. The premises of the 'Climax Works' were in Droitwich Road, Worcester until 1970. Known as a warm and generous man he employed several bellringers, including Reg Woodyatt and William Lewis of the Cathedral band, and gave money towards the clock and bells at Claines in 1927 & 1940²⁰.

It would be natural to assume the bell has been at the cathedral since then, but in fact it has only been so for 21 years. On Percy's death in 1957 it was passed to his daughter Mary Noond (1905-96) who gave it to bellringer Arthur Alfred Jopp (1920-2001) in the 1990's. Arthur's estate was put up for auction the year following his death - the Cathedral ringers were notified and several donated to enable a bid to be made on 16 March 2002 – they were successful and that is when the bell became the property of the Guild.

Sources – Chris Phillips, John Slater, Paul Jopp, Bernard Taylor - Jan 2023

¹⁹ His father was also E P Thomas (1849-1915) , a pump manufacturer, who married ELIZA MARIA ATKINS and lived at Claines. He was their only child.

²⁰ He gave the 3rd, 4th & 5th 1927 in memory of his father, and the 2nd & treble 1940 in memory of his mother.