

**FROM THE E-LISTS**

*A round-up from the internet compiled (this week) by Bill Hibbert*

The **Friends of Dorothy** were chatting at length about their highly successful trip to Shropshire. There were events to suit all tastes, from a peal of Yorkshire Royal at Coalbrookdale, the first of Royal for the society, to a snowball fight at Bishop's Castle. The trip raised some money for the Hereford Diocesan BFR, perhaps to replace the gnome-height ropes at some of the towers.

Speaking of gnomes, **Ringling Chat** came to the conclusion that Zurich, not Lovely Lincolnshire, was the loveliest place in the world. Attempts to introduce a ringing theme by observing that Zurich is a trivial variation of Lincolnshire failed. R-C subscribers have answers to almost everything, noted one correspondent. Inevitably, subjects ranged widely, including railway platforms, worms, Tony Blair and the daughter of an Australian ringer both sleeping rough, interplanetary travel, whisky, and a Liverpool ringer breaking into a car and ringing for a non-existent service in the same week. A crazy-haired, cheese-touting woman was invited to various places by old men who should know better. Other foods discussed included deep-fried Mars bars and coconut fried pie. A Berkshire ringer asked if his conducting was competent; merely gruff, responded the list's e-Aunt, who went on to educate the list on regional accents. A serious discussion on religious faiths was sparked by the list moderator, temporarily de-camped abroad, in search of a future for the Judaeo-Christian tradition and of good American beer. The tail end of a discussion on tower access prompted a story of entering St Olave's, Hart Street through a cupboard in the rector's bedroom. Most unusual image of the week was Gerald Hemming swinging out over the nave at Pershore on the tenor rope shouting "Herge's Adventures of Tintin".

A discussion of three-tier frames caused unusual animation on **Bell Historians**. A debate on whether the tenors should go at the top or bottom of a multi-tier frame led to the suggestions, possibly controversial, that a) the frame at the Bullring had been installed upside down, and b) bell-hangers were blacksmiths, not musicians. A description of the multi-tier installation at Oldham led to an account of the dangers of ringing without underwear. Speaking of exposed equipment, a description of Seage's apparatus (little bells on the ringing room walls connected by wires to the bigger bells above) raised the question of how quiet bells had to be outside the tower for a peal not to be valid. R-C had previously asked how long a handbell could remain dropped before a peal was invalid. Back on B-H, mention of William Wooding Starmer, quondam Professor of Campanology at Birmingham University, and of a little-known Glasgow bellfounder advertising in the first edition of Dove, failed to lift the tone back to its normal level of dry erudition.

Many messages on **Change Ringers** were concerned with the use of MIDI files for recordings of bellringing. A complaint by one correspondent that the subject was beyond the comprehension of many led to the setting up of a new list for the developers of **Ringling Software**: [groups.yahoo.com/group/ringingsoftware](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ringingsoftware).

**Nabbers** is a must-read for anyone interested in ticks-in-Dove, ringing outings, fellowship, travel or minor rehanging work. The dedication and organisational energy displayed on this list is amazing, though the suggested outing

**St Paul's Under Wraps**

*by Paul Carless*

*"As the 300th anniversary of the completion of St Paul's approaches, the Cathedral has embarked on an historic £40 million restoration campaign to mark the anniversary and to prepare the Cathedral for its next three hundred years. This programme will see St Paul's repaired and cleaned inside and out, with greatly improved provision for those with disabilities and an enhanced visitor experience through the provision of new exhibition and interpretation galleries.*

*A fundraising campaign to finance these projects is being conducted by St Paul's Cathedral Foundation, an independent charity (No. 1082711) with Trustees drawn primarily from the City of London. The generosity of individuals, companies and trusts has enabled the restoration work to begin and much has already been achieved. However, the work can only be completed if others join with existing benefactors to demonstrate our abiding love of this building and respect for Sir Christopher Wren's achievement."*



*The view from Ludgate Hill – St. Paul's undergoing a £40m restoration  
Photo PLC*

Anyone who has visited the City of London over the last few months may well have noticed that the West front of St Paul's Cathedral has gradually been covered with scaffolding and sheeting. It has taken some 5 months to erect and there is a phenomenal quantity of scaffolding involved. I do mean phenomenal. The two west towers are completely enshrouded, the whole west front and the steps leading up from Ludgate Hill to the west doors. There is also a full size 'Trompe-l'œil' across the west front.

The reason for this is a £40 million restoration and cleaning project of the interior and exterior of the Cathedral to be hopefully complete by the 300th anniversary of the completion of St.Paul's.

The impact upon the St Paul's Guild of Ringers should have been minimal if not non-existent, but we did have a couple of unpleasant surprises. The first occurred during the erection of the scaffolding over the northwest tower where the bells are housed. One Sunday morning we were about to pull off for the first of the day's service touches

and found that the two trebles were down. We leave our bells up for obvious reasons, apart from the middle six, which are lowered for chiming during the week. We were all puzzled as to why the trebles were down until a couple of weeks later when talking to two of the scaffolders. They had access to the middle chamber between the bells and the ringing room to get to the aisle roof. This chamber has signs saying 'Do Not Touch Ropes', 'Danger' etc. They had also been explicitly told by the Clerk of Works to not touch the ropes under any circumstances, but they ignored this and decided to pull the treble ropes as one of them had seen ringing before. Fortunately, nothing was damaged, but had they been hurt, the resulting fallout could potentially have had far reaching consequences for the ringers and the Cathedral authorities. But what do you do? You put up signs saying 'Danger' and 'Do Not Touch Ropes' for two clowns, who clearly aren't the shiniest spanners in the toolbox, to put themselves and their colleagues at risk 'for a laugh'. As a result, the scaffolding contractors no longer employ them.

As part of the restoration work, some of the stonework in the cupola at the top of the northwest tower above the bells needs to be replaced and in order to do this, a platform was to be erected above the bells. The ringers were told that this structure would in no way interfere with the bell installation. Yeah, right.

Again, this is the result of unsupervised scaffolders. Ringing was cancelled until the Clerk of Works inspected the structure with the bells ringing and decided that the scaffolding was sound. Some of the clearances are painfully small; the picture below shows the second (left) and treble. Note the base-plate of the scaffolding down section jutting out over the edge of the frame side. The second headstock clears this by about the width of a Rizla fag paper. It does not make pleasant viewing.



*Too close for comfort?  
A precariously placed scaffolding pole  
Photo PLC*

covering both Cheshire and Tyneside in one day must be ambitious for even the most dedicated tower grabber.

**If you want to know more about ringers' e-mail lists and how to join them, send a blank e-mail to [ringinglists@bellringers.org](mailto:ringinglists@bellringers.org).**