



*The Weekly Journal for  
Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

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**Editor: Robert Lewis**

## Women's peal at St Paul's Cathedral

*by Phil Rogers*



*The peal band in order of ringing, clockwise from bottom right: Susan Apter (C), Ann White, Liz Orme, Shirley McGill, Mary Holden, Cath Merlane, Gwen Rogers, Eleanor Linford, Beccy Cox, Gaby Cowcill, Claire Roulstone, Pauline Champion and Margaret Whiteley*

The first ever peal to be rung by a band of ladies took place almost exactly 100 years ago on 20th July 1912. *The Ringing World* at the time enthused about the performance and reported proudly that "Lady ringers can now, we believe, be numbered in scores". At the time there must have been tens of thousands of male ringers.

How times change. In the intervening period the number of women ringers has increased enormously and they may well now outnumber their male counterparts. In terms of accomplishment, they have achieved pretty well everything which ringing has to offer. However, there remain a few unconquered peaks.

One of these was a peal at St Paul's Cathedral by an all female band. The first women to ring a peal at St Paul's were Jill Staniforth and Joan Summerhayes on 27th May 1972. During the following 40 years many peals contained women ringers, but always as part of mixed bands.

The St Paul's Cathedral Guild had been looking for an opportunity to arrange an all female peal for some time. The idea was put to the former Dean, Graeme Knowles, two years ago. He gave agreement in principle but indicated that it would be nice to find an appropriate special occasion for the attempt to take place. When it was subsequently agreed

### NON ASSOCIATION

**CITY OF LONDON,**  
St Paul's Cathedral  
Sun Aug 5 2012 3h57 (61)

#### **5007 Stedman Cinques**

Comp. S Coaker

1 Susan L Apter (C)

2 Ann White

3 Elizabeth A Orme

4 Shirley E McGill

5 Mary E Holden

6 Catherine N Merlane

7 Gwen Rogers

8 Eleanor J Linford

9 Rebecca J Cox

10 Gabrielle L Cowcill

11 Claire F Roulstone

12 } Pauline C Champion

12 } Margaret Whiteley

Rung during the women's  
Olympic marathon.

In loving memory of Alison  
Regan who was due to ring in  
this peal.



*The north west tower and dome of St Paul's  
(Photo by the Editor)*



(Founded by John S Goldsmith)  
**Official Journal of the  
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*The north west tower which houses  
 the 62cwt Taylor twelve (Photo by the Editor)*

that peals at the Cathedral would be attempted on the days of the Olympic marathons, which were to pass the Cathedral west front, we had our occasion. The day of the women's marathon was booked and a band assembled.

It was agreed that the band would be comprised of St Paul's Guild members plus suitably experienced ringers from elsewhere. A strong squad was assembled but everyone felt that a practice quarter peal for Evensong one Sunday would be helpful to get the measure of these challenging bells. A date was arranged but misfortune struck when Alison Regan, who was to ring the 11th, was taken ill and continued when the 3rd clapper parted company with its headstock during morning ringing. With no replacement clapper available, the quarter had to be changed from Cinques to Caters, omitting bells 3 and 6. This went well and everyone felt they were ready for the big day.

Misfortune turned to tragedy when a few days later Alison died. This hit everyone very hard but stiffened resolution to ring the peal in her memory. Elizabeth Orme stepped into the breach to complete the band and Claire Roulstone took on the 44cwt 11th, never before pealed by a woman.

On the day everything went smoothly. Feared transport difficulties failed to materialise, everyone was there in good time, the peal started 8 minutes early and came round 3 hours and 57 minutes later to a burst of cheering from the Churchyard, led by the 'WAG's' who were around to lend their support. The peal was expertly conducted by Swaz Apter, who admitted afterwards to feeling very emotional in the last few courses thinking about Alison. Claire rang the 11th without apparent difficulty and the team of Pauline Champion and Margaret Whiteley kept a good steady beat on the tenor. There were no mistakes worth mentioning and everyone remembered the golden rule at St Paul's – keep pulling!

So, another peak climbed. What next? Liverpool Cathedral perhaps or even a certain

place in SW1. Only time will tell. For the time being, this band went off to the pub feeling justifiably pleased with themselves. One even persuaded the old man to lay off the beer and drive home, so there's another first!

P.R.

**The other peals rung in the City  
 during the Olympic Women's Marathon**

**ANCIENT SOCIETY OF  
 COLLEGE YOUTHS**

**CITY OF LONDON, EC3,**  
 St Magnus the Martyr  
 Sun Aug 5 2012 3h13 (27)  
**5040 Bristol S Maximus**  
 Comp. J N Hughes-D'Aeth  
 1 Joanna M Ainsworth  
 2 Nigel C Smith  
 3 James A Smith  
 4 Dickon R Love  
 5 Andrew J Graham (C)  
 6 Katherine L Town  
 7 Adam A Brady  
 8 Tessa K Beadman  
 9 William J Dawson  
 10 Philip Rogers  
 11 Jonathan H Potter  
 12 Simon S Meyer  
 Rung during the Ladies' Marathon of the London Olympic Games.  
 Circled tower: 11.

**SOCIETY OF ROYAL  
 CUMBERLAND YOUTHS**

**CITY OF LONDON, EC2,**  
 St Vedast, Foster Lane  
 Sun Aug 5 2012 3h13 (16)  
**5040 Surprise Minor**  
 (1 ext each Annable's London, Norfolk, London, Westminster, Bourne, Norwich, Cambridge)  
 1 Simon Read  
 2 Janet E Menhinick  
 3 John J Ford  
 4 Patrick J S Albon  
 5 Richard M Hobbs  
 6 John P Loveless (C)  
 Rung during the London 2012 Women's Olympic Marathon.

**UNIV. OF LONDON SOCIETY**

**CITY OF LONDON,**  
 St Lawrence Jewry  
 Sun Aug 5 2012 3h10 (25)  
**5120 Bristol S Major**  
 Comp. J H Fielden  
 1 Ryan S Noble  
 2 Heather M Forster  
 3 Peter M Jasper  
 4 Charles W G Herriott (C)  
 5 Benjamin J Meyer  
 6 Andrew P F Bradford  
 7 Andrew M Hills  
 8 Oliver D Cross  
 Rung during the Women's Olympic Marathon, which passed by the church.

**SUSSEX C.A.**

**CITY OF LONDON,**  
 St Katharine Cree  
 Sun Aug 5 2012 2h41 (10)  
**5040 Cambridge S Minor**  
 Comp. Revd E Bankes James  
 1 Jennifer A Dearie  
 2 Jacqueline M Barlow  
 3 Marisa A Hayes  
 4 Thomas M Barlow  
 5 Alan R Baldock (C)  
 6 Stephen J Beckingham  
 Rung during the Olympic Ladies' Marathon.  
 100th peal together: 5 & 6.

**YORKSHIRE ASSOCIATION**

**CITY OF LONDON, EC2,**  
 St Mary-le-Bow  
 Sun Aug 5 2012 3h37 (42)  
**5076 Grandsire Caters**  
 Comp. R W Lee  
 1 Tina A Walker  
 2 Alice A Longden  
 3 Martin J Whiteley  
 4 James A Sanderson  
 5 Matthew J Jones (tno)  
 6 Robert W Lee (C)  
 7 David G Maynard  
 8 Peter J Sanderson  
 9 Timothy P Bradley  
 10 David A Leese  
 Rung during the women's Olympic marathon.

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