

**MASTER's REPORT**  
**for 2021 to the**  
**Annual General Meeting of the Society**  
**on**  
**7th March 2022**

## Summary

This is the end of my third and final year as Ringing Master and the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic has continued to fundamentally affect the Society's ringing activities, as the following figures show:

<b>GSM tower bell ringing activity</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Peals	16	3	1
Peals for the Society	9	0	1
Quarters	24	1	7
Quarters organised by or for the Society	21	1	3
Service rings (tickable <sup>1</sup> )	81	14	19
Monday practices	50	11	29

The focus for 2021 has continued to be on keeping the band together. As lockdown restrictions have been lifted, more ringing opportunities have been introduced and there has been an emphasis on encouraging as many ringers as possible to come and ring again at GSM.

An important component of this approach has been to give ringers confidence that it is safe to come back and ring. Ventilation experiments in GSM ringing room have been conducted and transmission calculations performed to give us confidence that we operate well-informed Covid-secure measures at GSM. Throughout, ringing activities at GSM have been consistent with the latest CCCBR guidance and agreed with by GSM church and the vicar.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant from November onwards, ultimately leading to the Government moving to Plan B measures in early December, put everything back. It meant that we were not able to progress as quickly as I had hoped with developing the different levels of ringing at GSM. Instead, we had to bide our time, again, and wait until we had greater certainty about the timeline for returning to all the ringing activities we used to do.

I am not going to repeat everything I wrote last year about the longer-term negative impact that this pandemic is likely to have on our Society. However, a cursory look at the average attendance at service ringing for the last three years does show a marked fall in numbers.

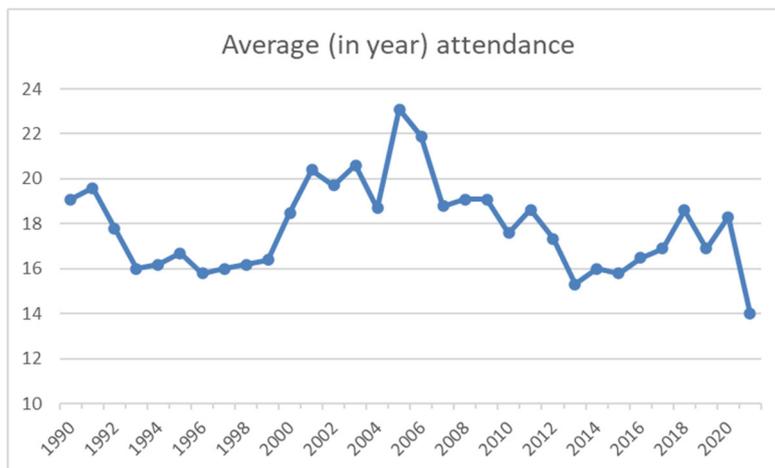
<b>Year</b>	<b>Av attendance</b>	<b>Comment</b>
2019	16.9	Last full year before the pandemic
2020	18.3	Q1 only, no figures for following Q2 to Q4 due to the pandemic
2021	14.0	Q4 only, no figures for earlier Q1 to Q3 due to the pandemic

Plotting attendance figures over the past 30 years (see overleaf) shows even more clearly the fall in average attendance, which is lower now than it has ever been during this period. This may not seem significant, however, with an average of 14 you only have to have two regular ringers not available and one regular ringer leave early (which happens most weeks) and we no longer have enough to ring all 12 bells.

Admittedly, towards the end of 2021 the pandemic had a downward influence on numbers, and for 2021 the sample size is much smaller than normal; hence I realise that these figures may be a little pessimistic and we should not be too hasty to draw conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> Confers members' voting rights



The Society's history tells us that when ringing has stopped abruptly for long periods there has been a measurable drop in Sunday service attendance that has taken years to recover. The longest period the bells were previously out of action was about 14 weeks in 2009. If you take the period from the first lockdown in March 2020 to when regular Sunday service ringing restarted in May 2021, the bells have been out of action on this occasion for about 14 months. Is it any surprise that fewer ringers are making a commitment to come and ring at GSM?

Anecdotally, too, there is evidence of the impact this pandemic has had on ringing at GSM. There appear to be fewer ringers who turn up regularly on Sundays or come along to support others at our Monday practice nights.

The low average attendance figure in 2021 for Sunday service ringing is likely to be a genuine reflection of the healthiness of the Society, which has suffered as a consequence of this pandemic. There is going to be a need for the Society to rebuild, to some degree, the GSM band across all levels in the coming years, from our most advanced ringers to our newest learners.

**Service ringing at GSM**

2021 began with the country in full lockdown and, consequently, no ringing was possible at GSM. This situation persisted for many months, and it was not until May that Sunday service ringing restarted.

On 23rd May six ringers rang for 45 minutes for the Sunday morning service. To comply with Covid measures bells 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and the tenor were rung. Shortly afterwards, the 1m+ restriction was removed and six bells on a diatonic scale could be rung for services.

From Sunday, 25th July the Youths could ring all 12 bells once more for Sunday services, and in September the duration of morning service ringing was extended to an hour.

Sunday service ringing has been largely back to normal since the beginning of October, having dispensed with the 'invitation only' approach in the previous month. From Sunday, 10th October the keeping of a register of attendance at service ringing was recommenced, attendance being linked to voting rights at General Meetings.

**Ringing for special occasions**

On 23rd March we tolled GSM tenor bell to remember the victims of Covid.

Date	Blows	Toller	Footnote
23-03-2021	-	Phillip Orme	Tolled following the minute's silence for the National Day of Reflection to remember the victims of Covid. The vigil began with the Cambridge Chimes and the sounding of midday on the 1770 Tenor and ended at 12:01 with solemn tolling on the 2009 Tenor.

There was tolling of GSM bells to mark the death of the Duke of Edinburgh on 9th April.

Date	Blows	Toller	Footnotes
09-04-2021	99	Jonathan Shanklin	99 blows on the tenor to mark the death today of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, aged 99. He was Chancellor of Cambridge University between 1977 and 2011.
10-04-2021	99	Luke Smith	Eleventh tolled half-muffled for 99 strokes to mark the death yesterday of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh
16-04-2021	99	Jonathan Shanklin	Tenor tolled 99 times at 10 second intervals from 17:42:10 prior to a Choral Service in Commemoration of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and former Chancellor of this University.
17-04-2021		Luke Smith	Tolling immediately prior to the national one minute silence and the funeral of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, held this afternoon in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

Four further special occasions were marked by ringing on GSM bells by members of the Society.

Date	Changes	Method	Footnotes
17-05-2021	240	Plain Bob Minor	First blows in changes on these bells since Xmas Day.
05-07-2021	720	Carlisle Surprise Minor	Rung on the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the NHS in thanksgiving and to celebrate NHS, Social Care & Frontline Workers Day thanking them all for everything they have done during the pandemic. Also marking Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II awarding the George Cross to the NHS today in recognition of this past year.
30-10-2021	-	Plain Hunt, Grandsire, Rounds and Call Changes, Plain Bob	Rung on the eve of the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, COP26. This was instigated by the 'Ring Out For Climate Change' campaign
23-11-2021	360	Cambridge Surprise Royal	Rung to welcome HRH The Prince of Wales on his visit to the Cambridge Market where some of the ringers were later introduced to him by the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire.

### Practice nights

At the start of the year we continued to hold online Ringing Room sessions comprising monthly eight-bell and monthly advanced maximus practices. At the eight bells practices we rang a range of different surprise major methods, including Lessness, Kenninghall, Lancashire, Turramura, Deva, Bristol and Cornwall. At the advanced practices we rang Stedman Cinques and touches of Phobos, Bristol, Zanussi and Ariel Maximus, as single methods and in spliced.

With step 3 of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown coming into effect on Monday 17th May, that same evening six ringers rang for 45 minutes various combinations of six on the 8 in G, where the 9th is the tenor. The first touch of [Plain Bob Minor](#) was posted on Bellboard to mark the occasion.

The last monthly Monday online Ringing Room practice was held on 10th May, and this was marked by a quarter peal of 11 Pickled Egg methods. The last monthly online Ringing Room advanced maximus practice was held on Tuesday, 22nd June when 8 of us rang Phobos, spliced Phobos and Bristol, and spliced Phobos, Zanussi and Bristol.

On Monday 19th July the Youths rang all 12 bells at GSM to touches of Stedman Cinques, Cambridge and Bristol Maximus. The last time the Youths rang all 12 bells was Sunday 15th March 2020, which is a 16-month gap. This heralded the return of regular Monday 12 bell practices.

Throughout August there were Monday practices on all 12 bells, and from September the opportunity for more advanced method ringing, usually on the 2nd Monday of the month, was reintroduced. During September the duration of practices was increased from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Shortly after this, practices were back to starting at 7pm and finishing at 9pm, and from the 11th October Jonathan Shanklin resumed the 6.30pm to 7pm learners practice.

Ringing was picking up well during October, and we welcomed many university Guild ringers to our practices as they swelled our numbers. However, the arrival of the Omicron variant in November changed all this and had a dampening effect on ringing that lasted through to the end of the year and into 2022.

### Society Peals

There were four peals rung for the Society in 2021: one tower, two handbell and one online handbell. Just five ringers rang in the handbell peals, including three members of the Pipe family.

#### Tower

29-10-2021	University Church of St Mary the Great	5014	Stedman Cinques
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#### Handbell

19-06-2021	53 Covent Garden, Willingham	5040	Treble Dodging Minor (7m)
08-07-2021	3 Ditton Lane, Cambridge	5040	Spliced Treble Bob Minor (29m)

#### Online handbell

11-02-2021	Ringing Room	5040	Spliced Treble Dodging Minor (120m)
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### Quarter Peals

#### Tower

There were three quarter peals involving mostly SCY members rung at GSM in 2021.

21-11-2021	1346	Cambridge Surprise Maximus
28-11-2021	1346	Cambridge Surprise Maximus
19-12-2021	1311	Stedman Cinques

#### Handbell

There was one handbell quarter peal rung for the Society in 2021.

12-08-2021	Evie, Middle Midhouse Cottage, Orkney	1260	Stedman Triples
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#### Online tower bell

There were two online tower bell quarter peals involving mostly SCY members rung using Ringing Room in 2021.

12-04-2021	Ringing Room	1280	Spliced Treble Dodging Major (11m)
10-05-2021	Ringing Room	1280	Spliced Treble Dodging Major (11m)

## **Competition ringing**

The 2021 National 12-bell contest eliminators and final were cancelled.

All 2021 Cambridge District and Ely DA striking competitions were cancelled.

Three of GSM's regular Sunday Service ringers were in the Ely band that rang in the Ridgman Trophy competition which took place at Braintree on Saturday, 30th October. The band came a creditable third place having rung a touch of Grandsire caters.

## **Non-ringing news and events**

### Ringling World article

An 'On the cover' article about GSM appeared in the Easter issue of the Ringing World at the beginning of April. The article covered the church, the bells, ringers (past and present) and the clock.

### Changes to Sunday service times at GSM

From June the service times at GSM changed. Instead of ringing for the 9.30am service the Youths now ring for the 10am service. Evensong service times also changed, which affects the Youths outside university term time. We now ring for Sunday evensong at 5pm in the summer months (when BST) and 4pm in the winter months (when GMT).

The ringers were consulted, and we made our views known to the church. These changes mean that ringing times clash with those for Benet's church, which affects some of our ringers. It means that the Youths now ring before each University Sermon, there are five in the 2021-22 academic year, where previously we traditionally rang afterwards. This is disruptive and has reduced ringing time. The earlier evensong cuts into the day, in the winter months evensong ringing starts at 3.15pm, which could put ringers off attending. One benefit is that any ringing after morning service can start an hour earlier at around 11am.

### The annual SCY vs. CUG rounders match

The annual SCY vs. CUG rounders match took place on Sunday 20th June. Although cool and overcast it did not rain and we had a lot of fun. The Youths achieved an honourable defeat by the Guild, the final score line being 12.5 SCY to 24.5 CUG. We particularly enjoyed the friendly but determined wrangling at one point about who had a correct interpretation of the rules.

### Cambridge Market Square Project Consultation

A public consultation from 19 May to 31 July 2021 was launched by Cambridge City Council on a proposed multi-million pound project to transform the design, appearance and use of the Market Square. The Youths made a submission to this consultation, and our thanks go to Gareth Davies for preparing this on our behalf.

### St Clement's project

Significant progress has been made during the course of 2021, with the bells cast, preliminary work in the tower completed, and construction work mostly finished. The next stage is the installation work in the bell chamber.

The bell that the Society is donating has the following inscription.

Band inscription: I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH

Bell waist inscription: THE GIFT OF THE SOCIETY OF CAMBRIDGE YOUTHS  
ESTABLISHED 1724

The choice of band inscription has a connection to the famous Cambridge Quarters, which were composed in 1793 and thought to have been influenced by Handel's Messiah Part 3 that was composed in 1741.

Our thanks go to Barry Johnson for leading this project. A separate report by Barry giving more details on this project will be presented at the AGM.

### Antennas in GSM tower

NET has been granted planning permission to put antennas on the roof of a building in Round Church Street. Given the Faculty to install antennas in GSM lapsed some years ago and the obstacles NET would face in pursuing this course of action, the chances of this option ever being picked up again by NET are thought to be very small.

### Preparations for the 300th anniversary of the Society in 2024

Although still some way into the future, a small group of ringers is working on some initial preparations. Led by Gareth Davies, George Unsworth, Phil Orme and Gareth are compiling records for past ringers down the ages and finding out fascinating histories and facts along the way. Thoughts on events to mark the anniversary (e.g. dinner, peals, articles) are in the early stages of being considered and I expect more details will follow in due course.

### **Covid-secure measures for ringing at GSM**

This section tracks the response by the ringers to Covid throughout 2021. For the Society's historical record, the ventilation work that underpinned many of the Covid measures operating in GSM ringing room can be found in the Appendix at the end of this report.

### Timeline of Covid restrictions throughout 2021

It is worth reminding ourselves of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and the key milestones that had a bearing on ringing at GSM throughout 2021.

At the beginning of December 2020 Cambridge had moved into a revamped Tier 2, which meant no ringing at GSM. This is how 2021 began and things did not improve for many months, as the timeline below shows.

<b>Date</b>	<b>National Covid restrictions</b>	<b>Implications for ringing at GSM</b>
Wed, 6th Jan 2021	Third lockdown begins	No ringing
Mon, 8th Mar 2021	Step 1 of roadmap begins	No ringing
Mon, 12th April 2021	Step 2 of roadmap begins	No ringing
Mon, 17th May 2021	Step 3 of roadmap begins	Ringling on 6 bells restarts
Mon, 19th July 2021	Step 4 of roadmap begins	Ringling on 12 bells restarts. Many Covid restrictions relaxed over the following months
Wed, 8th December, 2021	Plan 'B' measures in place	Many Covid restrictions re-imposed

### The impact of Covid restrictions on ringing at GSM

When ringing restarted in May it was necessary to manage numbers and to know who rang. As a consequence, a ringing schedule and volunteer spreadsheet was laid out and anyone wanting to ring had to enter their name. In effect, ringing was by invitation only and a first come first served approach was taken to deciding who rang. In practice, we settled quickly into a pattern where a few ringers signed up for everything, some ringers signed up when there were gaps to fill, and the rest (most ringers) did not participate.

Volunteers signing up was adapted over the coming weeks and operated from May to September, at which time it was allowed to lapse. Overall, it was beneficial given the prevailing circumstances, as it ensured that we had just enough ringers at every ringing session and it gave us confidence that we were operating Covid-secure measures in line with government restrictions and CCCBR guidance. However, it had some downsides too, acting as a barrier to those who were not regular attendees and being at odds with the welcoming ringing culture at GSM.

From Monday 17th May, it was possible to ring on six bells for up to 45 minutes, and from Monday 19th July the Youths were able to ring all 12 bells once more at GSM, though still for only 45 minutes. The number of ringers in the ringing room had to be managed and when numbers reached 15 or more ringers sitting out of touches were asked to stand on the tower steps.

From September many Covid restrictions were further relaxed and longer ringing durations were possible. However, everything changed following the rapid spread of the Omicron variant from November onwards. Ringers at GSM became more cautious, and in the lead up to Christmas some activities were cancelled and some ringers chose to not come ringing.

From 10th December the wearing of face masks in public became compulsory, and without further clarification this was taken to mean in the ringing room too. A week later CCCBR guidance clarified that the wearing of face coverings while ringing was not mandatory, however, most GSM ringers continued to wear them.

### **In conclusion**

Looking back over my three years as Ringing Master, many of the challenges I thought we would face are far removed from the challenges we actually encountered. When taking on the role I knew there was a chance that the Faculty to put antennas in GSM tower could come to a head and be a major issue, and during the second half of my first year as Ringing Master this is exactly what happened. It dominated everything for a time but ultimately with a well-reasoned case, perseverance, and teamwork, we reached a good outcome for the Society and the church.

The second and third years of my tenure have been totally overshadowed by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic. It is hard to find words to describe the scale of the impact this has had on ringing at GSM and across the whole country. The amount of time and effort that has often gone in to securing the tiniest morsel of ringing (who can forget ringing 4 bells for no more than 15 minutes) is incalculable.

I am proud to have been Ringing Master of the Society during this period, with so many members helping to keep things going and showing a strong sense of belonging through the many long months of disruption. The amount of support and advice that I have received has been magnificent, and this team spirit has made the job worthwhile.

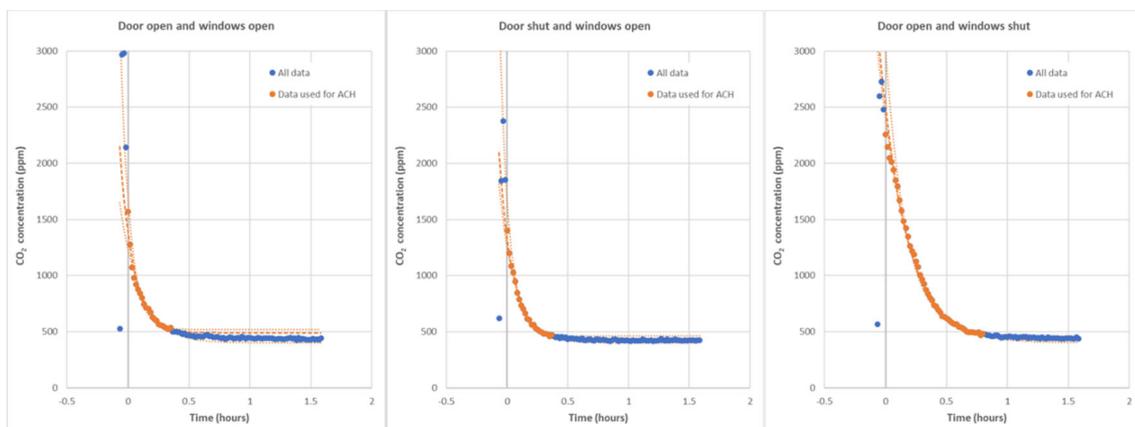
This Society faces many challenges in the aftermath of this pandemic, and it will need to invest time and effort in some rebuilding activities if it is to encourage talented ringers to become an integral part of the GSM band. However, I have every confidence that the Society will thrive in future, and there is plenty to be positive about and look forward to, including the St Clement's project that is due to deliver a new Training Centre later this year and the 300th anniversary celebrations in 2024. I look forward to continuing to be a member of the band at GSM and actively supporting my successor.

## APPENDIX: VENTILATION MEASUREMENT AND TRANSMISSION ESTIMATION

SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus is spread through the air, especially in indoor spaces, and the transmission of aerosols, tiny contagious particles exhaled by an infected person that remain suspended in the air of an indoor environment, plays a significant role in the spread of the virus.

A highly effective way to disperse aerosols is to have good ventilation, however, understanding what good ventilation means in practice was important when it came to opening up GSM for more ringing. We wanted to be confident that we were operating a safe environment for ringers, and although CCCBR guidance was good we felt that it left many questions unanswered, and it was difficult to decide whether or not what you wanted to do would be OK.

Between June and August Phil and I carried out ventilation experiments in GSM ringing room to better understand how well ventilated this space is under different conditions. We used CO<sub>2</sub> release from a fire extinguisher to measure the air change rate. We created a test protocol tailored to suit a ringing room environment, and this gave us a measure of air-changes per hour (ACH) for various combinations of the west windows and tower door being open or shut, as shown in the plots below.



### Data table

9.3 ACH	West facing windows open and door open	25th June 2021
9.1 ACH	West facing windows open and door shut	2nd July 2021
4.6 ACH	West facing windows shut and door open	20th August 2021

The east facing window was always open.

For the days of these measurements, the air pressure was high, temperatures between 18 and 22 deg C, and the winds were between 2 and 15 kts.

Although the results were useful, I felt that ACH values on their own did not have a strong enough correlation with probability of infection through aerosol transmission. This led us to take a further step and use ACH as one input parameter to a Wells-Riley model of a disease transmission estimator calibrated for Covid-19.

Putting our ventilation results into the transmission estimator, along with parameters for the ringing room environment, ringing durations, number of ringers, community prevalence, and population risk factors (e.g. vaccination status), this enabled us to gain some handle on the probability of infection, hospitalisation or worse.

With so many variables, we were not going to be able to convince ourselves that a given situation is perfectly safe. The most we could reasonably hope for was to identify those situations that on average significantly reduced the risk of exposure to the virus, and to rank different scenarios based on their probability of infection, hospitalisation or worse.

We are fortunate that GSM ringing room affords good ventilation, and what this ventilation work showed is that by having the west windows open just enough to allow a decent flow of air then this makes a notable contribution to keeping the risk of infection small for our commonest ringing situations, i.e. a typical Sunday, Monday practice night or quarter peal.