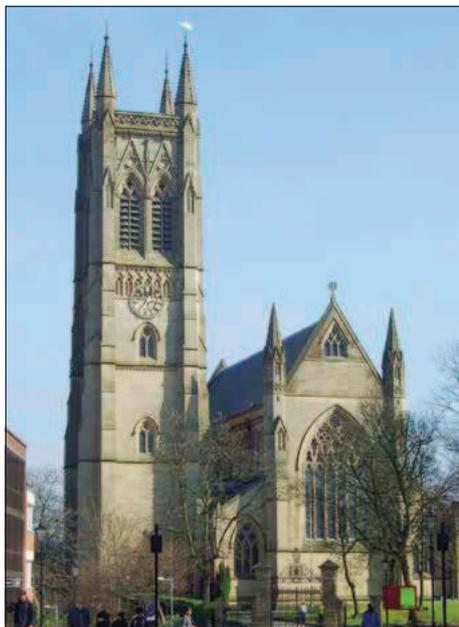


The Second Northwest 12-bell – St Peter’s, Bolton

by Mel Curwen (photos by Andrew Rawlinson)



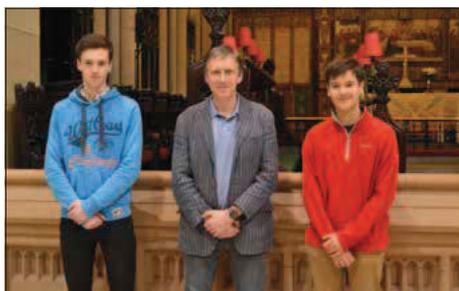
St Peter’s, Bolton

On Saturday, 27th January, St Peter’s, Bolton hosted the second North West 12-bell striking competition. The format was slightly different to the inaugural event held at Chester Cathedral last year, but it still kicked off with a gathering in Church for the rules and draw, and the ethos of the competition is still absolutely about helping 12-bell bands to develop.

The bells (19-2-10 in E) were all cast by John Taylor & Co., the back eight in 1885 and the front four in 1974. They were easy enough to ring, although a few ringers may have found the treble a little ‘flighty’. The challenge was to hear them – apparently the trapdoor above had been opened to assist with clarity, and several bands experimented with the ringing room door open and closed.

A warm welcome was extended by locals John Walsh and Alan Forrester (Churchwarden and Tower Captain), who offered us an endless supply of tea and coffee, a wonderful local lunch of pie or pasty with mushy peas and red cabbage, and a rather good Bolton brew called Flat Cap, from the Bank Top brewery.

Six teams entered this year’s event, but unlike last year we were to be judged by expert human ears rather than Hawkear, the equipment



The judges (l-r): Alex Riley, Simon Linford and Ewan Hull



The winning band, the Macclesfield Blues (l-r) – front row (rang 1-6): Anne Orme, Helen Foster, Carol Marchbank, Katherine Hinchliffe, David Friend, Philippa Stokoe; back row (rang 7-12): James Hibbert, Mark Jacot, Michael Orme, Mel Curwen, Trevor Marchbank and Jeff Brannan

for which isn’t installed at Bolton. As a slight twist on usual draw proceedings, the first team out of the hat were able to choose their position in the running order: Chester Festerers were first out and elected to ring second. Everyone else then rang in the order drawn.

Each band was allotted a 30-minute slot to use as they wished. Since the test piece, a plain course of Plain Bob Maximus, takes about 12 minutes to ring, most spent the first 15 minutes practising and trying to decide if it was better to ring with the door open or the door closed!

The ‘gather, ascend the tower, band swap over, descend the tower’ system worked like clockwork, ably marshalled by the local ringers, so the programme kept to time.

Those who ventured away from the warmth and refreshments to step outside in the damp were rewarded by some good ringing. The locals had publicised the event and there was a good story in the local paper that morning all about the competition taking place in their town. The paper had also sent a reporter/photographer along to see what we were doing. The first band to ring, Macclesfield Silks, were photographed during their practice piece and featured on the *Bolton News* website later that evening.

Judging 12-bell ringing is no mean feat. We were fortunate to have a very good team of three judges, led by Simon Linford from Birmingham. He was ably assisted by two members of the recent record breaking young peal band: Alex Riley and Ewan Hull. After hearing how they had judged us, some general comments and observations on the ringing, they declared that all three of them had agreed on the final order. The results were given as an overall percentage, shown in the table below.

Simon presented the Duke of Westminster Shield to Macclesfield’s Mel Curwen.

Huge thanks to Paul Hunter of Chester for organising the event and putting so much effort into putting 12-bell ringing in the northwest

Band (in ringing order)	Peal Speed	Position / % score
Macclesfield Silks	3h29	6th / 50
Chester Festerers	3h30	5th / 52
Manchester	3h34	4th / 60
Chester Devas	3h26	2nd / 72
Macclesfield Blues	3h27	1st / 73
Liverpool	3h37	3rd / 64

firmly on the map. Thanks also to the staff and ringers of Bolton for being such wonderful hosts on the day. Of course, we also offer special thanks to the judges, who did such a demanding job without the aid of Hawkear.

It was a great day with not only good ringing, including the inevitable breakout of handbells at the back of the church, but also a great social event. This year, entry was opened up to permit up to two bands from further afield, provided they met the competition ‘ethos’ of being developing bands – it’s a shame no one took us up on this offer. This competition is a great opportunity for developing 12-bell ringing without the pressures of the National 12-bell contest, so why not contact your nearest 12-bell tower and get involved?



Simon Linford presents the Duke of Westminster Shield to Macclesfield’s Mel Curwen