22nd INTERNATIONAL HANDBELL SYMPOSIUM 2026 ABERDEEN



Memories from the Symposium


Bridging the World Through Music
第 22 回国際ハンドベル・シンポジウム
22nd International Handbell Symposium
2026 Aberdeen
Fire exit

Forewords

Dear Ringers and Non-Ringers,

Welcome to this special Symposium supplement of HRGB's Reverberations magazine. At the beginning of August, we all gathered at P&J Live, Aberdeen for the 22nd International Handbell Symposium. This supplement aims to share some of the sights and memories - but sadly not the sounds - of those of us lucky enough to have been there. Please share these memories with those who were not able to be present.

Every symposium is different and creates its own unique set of memories. I would like to thank those people who have shared theirs with us and hope that they will trigger happy memories for those of you reading them.

For me, symposia are one of the greatest opportunities for us to demonstrate that handbell ringing is the ultimate team activity. As ringers we depend on each other to create our music and on our audiences to listen and appreciate our efforts. What better way can there be to fulfil the International Handbell Committee's mission than the theme of 'Bridging The World Through Music'?

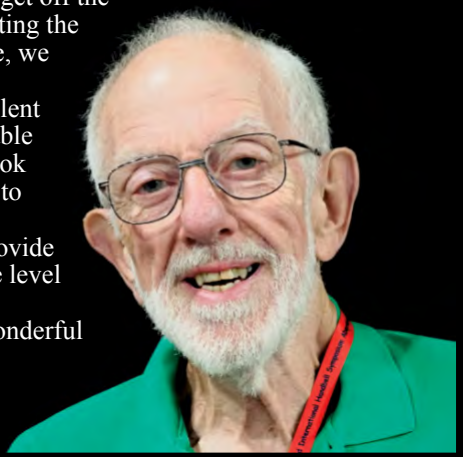
I look forward to seeing many of you again at the next symposium in Singapore, or at other events anywhere in the world!

Martin Winter
HRGB Symposium Co-ordinator

Dear Readers,

For several years HRGB had been planning the 2026 International Handbell Symposium to be held in the UK.

It did not start its life in Aberdeen, but it soon became apparent that we would need a new 'home', when the original selection failed to get off the ground. By accepting the offer of P & J Live, we were to enjoy the benefit of an excellent venue at a favourable price. The staff took every opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to provide the highest service level so as to ensure all attendees had a wonderful experience.



I hope you enjoy this Supplement.

Keith Rowland

Chair, HRGB

Acknowledgements
Sincere thanks to everyone who kindly provided articles, messages or photographs for this special Symposium Supplement. As we received so much material, some of it will also appear in the next issue of Reverberations.
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Dear Handbell Ringer,

Welcome to Reverberations Symposium Supplement 2026! I hope that, if you were able to attend the Aberdeen Symposium, then this delightful supplement will remind you of a wonderful week with beautiful music, great fun and good friendship. If you were not able to be there, and particularly if you have never attended a symposium, I hope that the photos and recollections included here give you some insight into these enjoyable events.



You probably know that International Handbell Symposiums take place every two years - each one organised by a different country's handbell guild - in this case, Handbell Ringers of Great Britain - HRGB. I hope that you might think about attending the 2028 symposium in Singapore or, looking further ahead, perhaps an event in Canada, South Korea, Australia or any one of the eight organising countries! The International Handbell Committee's mission is to spread friendship and cultural understanding across the world through the medium of music. Please do what you can to help that mission to succeed, and enjoy ringing bells at the same time!

Happy ringing, with friends at home and across the world!

Tim Willetts
Past Chair, HRGB
Immediate Past Executive Director, IHC

The Welcoming Party and the Deputy Lord Provost of Aberdeen City





The IHC Guild Members

The Symposium Opening Chord



"It is just a big Ringing Week"



Already several years into organising the event, about 3 years ago I responded with this phrase, when offering to take on leading the massed ringing hall. In some ways, I was correct – 9 pieces of music, some conductors, rows of ringers on foam lined tables, concert at the end. In others, it was so much more! A staffed AV team with access to the latest technology, conductors with different approaches, speaking different languages, hundreds of slides to keep everyone on track and in the right place, solo concerts in multiple languages each night, a coordinated flag waving scene, and even playing a wonderfully singing plant. There were new challenges as well, such as a podium height change conflicting with unchangeable lighting design decisions and requirements, and a host of other things that fall into the "if we did it here again" bucket. I had attended symposia before, but it is a different world being part of an amazing and experienced team leading it all. Being asked to conduct a piece for the Friday morning was a dream. Conducting *Mary Poppins Medley* in the concert, and it coming together, was beyond. The days were long, but the memories will last forever…

Aidan Fozard



Damien Lim, Executive Director of the Handbell Ringers of Singapore (HRSG)

"Regardless of challenges experienced previously, we come together as foster-siblings in the art of handbell ringing, putting aside our differences, finding alignments, and also cementing and developing current friendships further, and let this precious one week with our 'handbell family' be a moment of peace, reconciliation, progress and meaningful exploration into the benefits of handbell's future".

With Best Regards,

Damien Lim

22nd International Handbell Symposium 2026 Review

What a Wonderful (Handbell) ***World*** we experienced at Aberdeen! We made ***Connections*** with ringers from Iceland, Australasia, USA, Switzerland, Canada, Puerto Rico, South Korea, Japan, Hungary, Germany, Hong Kong, Singapore, Finland, France and, of course, the UK. It was so wonderful to mix and communicate across our world divides in such friendship!

The Prayer for peace in our troubled world between 600 ringers in harmony, so why the divide and conflict? And a communal worship to commemorate Hiroshima Day saw a uniting moment.

Throughout the week we were transported across the world, ***Bound for South Australia*** (with a bit of joyful piracy), our concentration was so intense! We were elevated into new realms of enjoyment as we played ***Tai Mo Shan***, which is the highest peak in Hong Kong, before transcending into our own ***Celtic Peace***.

Sweet Caroline surprised and delighted us and then, out of the blue and under her umbrella, in popped ***Mary Poppins*** with *Chim Chim Cher-ee*, and *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, which went with such speed that we were almost propelled to other ***Galaxies***!

We could have been dining at the famous ***Shiretoko Fantasy*** in Japan with its laser and light show for our final dinner in P&J Live. Then, home to all corners of the globe.



What ***A Highland Blessing*** the whole event had been!

Jenny Elmes
Sou'westers team and Lady St Mary HB Ringers

Massed Ringing Conductors


Mihyun Kim


Suzanne Maslen


Greig Ashurst


Naomi Kato


Joyce Lo


Annie Hergott


Damien Lim


Sandra Winter


Susie Dingle

Three Generations

I was a symposium novice, attending for the first time, along with my daughter, Sarah, and my 13 year old granddaughter, Megan.

Organisation was superb from the moment of registration, with every step being clearly explained, including how to get hold of the music: however, when it arrived, I thought I had made a very big mistake! We usually play level 1 or 2 music and, until a year ago, worked from numbers rather than notes, so being faced with level 3+ and above seemed rather a big leap. Nevertheless, we carried our bells (very glad mine were only C6 and D6!) on the train to Aberdeen, set up, and went to meet our fellow ringers. Again, this could have been very daunting with ~600 people present, but everyone was very friendly.

The next day was long as we rang for most of the day and the introduction to the pieces was challenging, but the conductors were brilliant and eased us into the pieces, with humour and tolerance. This was when we met Arthur. Arthur was wonderful, with a gentle sense of humour and relaxed approach. He willingly (and presumably very ably) translated all the conductors' instructions into Japanese, along with the daily notices, and he even sang for one piece of music (just once, as he informed us, he only sings once for free)!

On two of the days, there were 'cultural' workshops in the afternoon and these were enormous fun. It was also a great opportunity to actually talk to people! The ringing schedule meant that opportunities for meeting people were a little limited, especially if you attended the evening concerts, so the workshops had several benefits, not least giving the brain and the wrists a rest.

The pieces of music were quite varied and it was amazing how the same bells could sound so different when playing a piece from Hong Kong or Japan. The Singapore conductor, Damien, conducted by beating a rhythm on a drum and this was actually really helpful as it was quite difficult, with a new piece of unfamiliar music, to watch the conductor and not lose your place in the music, especially, if like me, you can't read music and therefore it was not easy to find your place if you lost it! I was probably responsible for a large number of what Damien referred to as "jazz" notes (ie. just plain wrong), but they did get fewer the more we rehearsed.

Bound for South Australia was conducted by a lively lady with a plan in her mind as to how she wanted the piece to flow and, with "Ahoys", singing, and various other features, she provided a fun end to our final concert. This in itself could have been overwhelming, but I had decided by that stage that if there was a section I could not manage, I would just miss it out and join in again when I could, which produced fewer "jazz" notes, and made it more enjoyable as I wasn't panicking about what I couldn't do and enjoying what I could, which by the end of the week was most of it.

Martin and his team worked so hard to make everything as easy for the participants as possible, from providing a hole punch, to raising the podium, so those at the back of the hall could see the smaller conductors.

Would I go again? Yes, definitely - even if you are not very experienced, give it a go if you have the opportunity.

Hilary Dowson





New Friends: (left to right)
Eunice Chan, Jocie McCord-Bullock, Megan Soames

Attending Aberdeen as an Individual rather than a Team Member

Aberdeen proved to be a different experience from the other five Symposia that I have attended over the years; for those, I was part of a team. This time, I went as an individual.

Not being in a team, I had freedom with my choice of bell allocation. Once I had obtained the music from Bells of Whitechapel, I settled on taking the 18G and 17A bells with their associated accidentals, so five bells in all. Chimes, mallets and a singing stick were also required for multiple pieces.

Preparation was different. This time I spent quite a bit of time:-

- air-ringing the music without any aural cue
- listening to YouTube recordings of the pieces alongside reading the score
- putting the two operations together

Finally, I played along to the recordings, but was conscious that they could be different to the interpretations that the Symposium Conductors might have. This phase triggered ear worms, so I guessed I must have internalised the pieces reasonably well.

Once I had arrived in Aberdeen and registered, I discovered I was allocated to the end of a table with Bellfolk from East Anglia. This worked out quite well: my bells fitted onto the other end of their range, so I moved to the middle of the row. This was one of the best positions from my point of view: nicely in the middle, next to adjoining notes, a few rows from the front but not at the back, and seeing the conductor was not a challenge.

Suddenly ringing with so many people was a step up from the 12-bell tunes I normally ring, but past experience helped and I soon settled in. I found it very enjoyable working on the selected pieces with the conductors, even if I felt under prepared for the two extra surprise pieces we played.

Jane Holland
Tantony Ringers.
NW Region.



HRGB Flag Bearer, ***Jocie***

Three Generations - Again!

Hi! I'm Jocie. I am 11 and the youngest HRGB member to attend the International Symposium 2026. It was my first ever symposium and it was one of the best experiences of my life!!!

At the Opening Ceremony, I had the privilege of walking down the aisle with the British flag representing HRGB. My favourite piece from the event was *Bound For South Australia,* as it is a joyous tune and in the performance I got to carry the British flag and play percussion with my new friend Eunice. Even though I loved the chaos of *Bound For South Australia*, I thoroughly enjoyed every single piece of music and would like to thank the conductors for their hard work and enthusiasm when leading us.

Watching the solo performances was great! The way people played handbells so creatively blew my mind, but being able to perform in Gen-3 with Mum and Nanna also felt amazing!!!

During the closing banquet, I enjoyed sitting with the people I had interacted with the most over the week - Megan, Lucas and my newest friend Eunice. This is another reason the Symposium was so amazing; I got to meet so many new and old friends as the week went on. We had a great time, the food was next level and I can't wait for what comes next!!!

Finally, I would like to thank all of the green shirts and the organising committee for all of their time and commitment towards running such an amazing event. I hope I am able to come to more of these wonderful experiences in the future, but right now I can't stop thinking about the brilliance of Aberdeen!

Thank you once again,

Jocie McCord-Bullock



At this moment, I'm on a sleeper train down to London from Aberdeen, struggling on how to start this entry. How about I just tell you what happened?

This year, I was lucky to be able to conduct the Northern Bell Orchestra and perform with the Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers. For NBO, we premiered my new piece called *Bell Orchestra*, which was written specifically for this event and for the group. For Maghull, we performed *Meditation on Blaenwern*, arranged by Malcolm Wilson. Both performances went really well! For NBO, especially, I was really nervous because our last rehearsal had been a month ago. But that also made everyone lock in and do their best, which resulted in a fabulous performance. As the conductor and director for this performance, I tried my best to keep the team calm and composed. For example, I sent messages on WhatsApp reflecting on the rehearsals, took selfies to ease the mood, and even sent Aidan a thank you message to read out instead of the piece description. I guess it worked!

Is anyone else amazed by massed ringing? Six hundred people playing a piece - even with different backgrounds, abilities, and ringing styles, they sounded good! And there's always this satisfying moment when everyone plays a chord together, or shakes together, isn't it fabulous? I really enjoyed the 11 pieces that we did. Not only were the pieces varied, the conductors were equally diverse in their respective approaches. Each brought their own conducting style, which I think is one of the real benefits of the symposium. Ahoy!

What else...oh! I made new friends from Iceland, Hungary, New Zealand, Korea, etc, etc. There are just so many opportunities to meet new people, no matter if it's in classes, ringing tracks, lunch, dinner, or just standing in front or behind you during massed ringing. And sharing our own stories, and listening to others' stories, is always enjoyable. You get to know how different cultures are on the other side of the world! Sometimes, long-lasting connections start from unexpected encounters like these. It's really interesting.





As this is starting to get long, I'll end with asking myself this question - What does a symposium mean to me?

It is a precious opportunity to meet people around the world who are as nerdy as you about handbells, or even nerdier. Everyone is here because they like this art form, this 'unusual' instrument. So you can feel a sense of synergy between one another, even if you have not met each other, or don't even know the names of each other. We are all connected by this thing called handbells, and this is also why I love it.

Isaac Wan
NBO



The Chord of Eight



In a world of fear and strife,
How do we find our peace in life?
In a world that's lost its way,
How do we find our brightest day?

With a **prayer**, hope stretches high above the **mountains**,
As **connections** chime across the **galaxies**.
Together in harmony, **peace** like a **fantasy**,
A **blessing** on our **wonderful world**.
Hand in hand we sing a **shanty**,
A beacon of our **compassion**.



Let the sound of bronze, the dings and dongs,
brighten up your day.
Let us all rejoice together in our special ways.
Let the sound of bronze, the dings and dongs,
bring peace into your day.
Let us stand as friends together, driving hate away.

Eight nations band together to stand for what is right.
Eight leaders band together to help our dreams take flight.
Eight notes band together to make a harmony bright.
Eight bells band together to ring throughout the night.

Lucas Chan
EART, HRGB

It was an honour to attend the 22nd International Handbell Symposium in Aberdeen from August 3 to 8, 2026.

Throughout the symposium, I learned a lot, and it left me with many lasting memories, as it was my first time taking part in it. The theme this year was 'Bridging the World Through Music'. Before setting foot in Aberdeen, I only thought it was a nice slogan. However, once I stood alongside hundreds of handbell ringers from around the world, all ringing the same music, I felt a profound sense of teamwork and understood the real meaning behind the slogan as we connected with other ringers from across the globe.



On top of that, during the Friendship Reception night and the Banquet, I shared my handbell journey and exchanged souvenirs with many kind-hearted ringers. Not only did I get to understand others' ringing experiences, but I also received numerous compliments and praise from others, which made me feel proud of myself. Yet, my biggest takeaway was stepping out of my comfort zone to interact with other ringers.

Among the 11 massed ringing pieces, three of them left me in awe. The massed ringing shocked me when everyone started ringing the 16th notes of *The Prayer*, and all the handbells blended into unison. During the hand chimes part, it completely gave me goosebumps as the sounds echoed through the hall. As the music built to its peak, it brought a sense of peace as everyone rang their hearts out, sharing the same peace.

On the other hand, *Galaxies* was completely the opposite. It felt energetic and powerful when the drums entered, brightening the atmosphere as everyone enjoyed and jammed to the music together. Although some rhythms were quite difficult to grasp, when everyone played together, it encouraged me to keep trying until I got a handle on the rhythm. In the finale, the hand chimes vibrated until the sound faded naturally. At that moment, I felt as if I was floating and flying freely in the galaxies…

Lastly, the piece that truly connected and bridged all the ringers was *Bound for South Australia*. It brought pure joy and fun, while strengthening the bond between ringers. It was heartwarming to see everyone shout "Ahoy!" and sing the lively sea shanty in unison. It also required us to communicate with nearby handbell teams, working together to perform the 'waves', whereby ringers in the back row played the bass melody and it gradually moved forward. This created the effect of the melody traveling toward the audience, mimicking waves

slowly sweeping forward. It definitely brought out the core idea of the slogan — uniting through music.

Throughout the journey, I felt both small and ginormous at the same time as there were hundreds of ringers ringing in unison. Yet, each of us is vital in the symposium. If even one person had been absent, the sound wouldn't have been the same.

After the event, I left with new friends, a deeper understanding of different cultures, and a greater passion for handbells. The symposium was not just an event; it was a massive step in my personal growth. I stepped out of my comfort zone to connect with experienced ringers, willing to help bridge the world through music.

Yui Pak Yui, Clayton

22nd Symposium, Aberdeen 2026

It was great to see some green, green grass as we approached Aberdeen Airport. Even the occasional shower later in the week was enjoyable, as Lynn pushed me in a hired wheelchair between our hotel and P&J Live, the massed ringing venue.

Even more enjoyable was the sound of massed ringing, which filled most of the next five days. I admired the stamina shown by most of the other 5/600 ringers around me. And the chair provided for me (and everyone else) was very comfortable to ring from. The sound of the bass hand chimes will remain with me for a long time, even when I am no longer able to hum the other pieces or join the boats as they arrive in South Australia.



What a feast of handbell music! What a brilliant opportunity to meet and greet handbell musicians from so many countries around the world. How heartening to sit and pray with people from so many diverse countries on Hiroshima Day (I used some of the material at Morning Prayers here in Burnham on my return home) and to think about the value of handbell ringing as a contribution to World Peace. YES! YES! YES! I am glad to have attended one International Handbell Symposium, even at my great age.

Approaching Heathrow, however, the grass is still khaki…

Cliff Blundell

My First International Symposium - Aberdeen 2026

From countries right across the globe,
Seven hundred came to ring,
All gathered there in Aberdeen,
To make their handbells sing!

The mass ringing was amazing,
My highlight, without doubt,
Seven hundred ringing all at once,
That's what it's all about!

The music was so varied,
Some lively and some calm,
Each piece brought something different,
With its own distinctive charm.

The conductors were all brilliant,
Each had their special spin,
Some kept me concentrating,
While others made me grin!

The days were pretty intense,
With ringing hour by hour,
By evening my brain was frazzled,
And I'd run right out of power.

Workshops provided lots of choice,
And sight reading brought much fun,
Sweet Caroline and Mary Poppins,
What a joy they were when rung!

The evening performances,
Were quite a sight to see,
Their talent was fantastic,
And hugely impressed me.

The green shirt team were everywhere,
And worked hard all week through,
So here's a special shout-out,
And a massive THANK-YOU too!

And then the grand finale,
Broadcast across the world,
Hundreds of bells rang out as one,
As every note unfurled.

Now home again, the bells have stopped,
But the tunes still fill my head,
They're ringing in the daytime,
And when I go to bed!

My first symposium,
An experience I'll treasure,
To ring with so many from around the world,
Was something beyond measure.

*By **Rachel Loveland***





Dear Handbell Ringers of Great Britain

On behalf of the Handbell Ringers of Japan, please accept our warmest congratulations on the outstanding success of the 22nd International Handbell Symposium in Aberdeen. The legacy established by Mrs. SunJoo Shin and David Davidson when this event was first envisioned has certainly been carried forward, and it was truly felt throughout this Symposium.

We would first like to express our sincere appreciation to Martin Winter and the entire Symposium Committee. Their efficiency, kindness, and thoughtful attention to detail were evident throughout the week. Thanks to their dedicated work, we genuinely experienced the warmth of British hospitality.

P&J Live was also an excellent venue — spacious, well equipped, and highly suitable for an event of this scale. It was a wonderful choice that supported both the musical and community aspects of the Symposium.

For many participants from Japan, this was their first symposium, and they enjoyed it wholeheartedly. The Final Concert was especially well received; many viewers in Japan sent their congratulations and expressed how much they loved the performance.

We are also pleased to share that HRJ will be celebrating its 50th year next year and will hold a commemorative event. We remain humble in following HRGB's remarkable path of 75 years of handbell ringing, and we will continue to spread handbell music to the world.

We are very happy that friendships were revisited and new ones formed. We sincerely believe that the Symposium is a vital event for strengthening international ties within the global handbell community, and the Handbell Ringers of Japan will continue to support this important gathering.

We look forward to meeting everyone again in Singapore.

Warm regards,

Noriko Musha,
Executive Secretary, Handbell Ringers of Japan




Canada


Australasia


Japan


USA


ENDEAVOUR
80




DAMP IT!


23rd
International
Handbell
Symposium
1 - 6 August
Scan to
learn more!
2028
Singapore


KONG
ELITE
OUTH
RINGERS



Executive Director, International Handbell Committee

Congratulations to HRGB on a terrific job of a massive undertaking. The equipment, the organisation, the venue and more... all were spectacular and so suitable for our organisation. I am still marvelling over the fact that 15 countries were represented this year and at the number of family units present. This, I believe, is a tribute to the quality of the event and to our purpose of promoting Peace through the Art of Handbell Ringing. As I said at the banquet: "In a world that too often focuses on our differences, the IHC reminds us that music is the universal language — one that truly transcends borders, cultures, and beliefs."

I look forward to meeting you all in Singapore in 2028, for what will be, I'm sure, a new and different experience for us all.

Patsy Andrews-Vert

Executive Director, International Handbell Committee

Handbell Society of Australasia representative

I was privileged to be the Handbell Society of Australasia's representative at the IHC Meeting as our President, Carmel Daveson, was regrettably not able to attend.

Our Australian and New Zealand ringers participated as two home groups, or by joining a handbell choir from another country such as UK and USA. The Symposium was a truly international experience, and we all enjoyed the many opportunities to share music, culture and communicate openly with people of all ages and nationalities.

Thank you for selecting such a diverse range of massed ringing music from the Guild nations. Experiencing the development of each piece from learning with our home choirs through its interpretation under the baton of each conductor during our rehearsals was inspirational. Thank you!



We congratulate HRGB for the two surprise music pieces - and idea with so many learning elements for everyone involved. Well done!

Immediately after the live stream concert we received positive feedback from family and friends in Australia and around the world on the quality and coverage of the telecast and their favourite tunes. Congratulations!

Our sincere thanks to HRGB for their fantastic organisation of the 22nd International Handbell Symposium. Special thanks to the Green Team, headed by Martin Winter, who were always available, friendly, helpful and unflustered no matter what we asked. Always smiling and caring.

The P&J Live facilities for workshops, the massed ringing hall and the banquet dinner were excellent. The professional catering was tasty, plentiful, efficiently served and inclusive of all our dietary requirements. We appreciated the large dining spaces with tables sized to encourage ringers to share their meals and talk to different Symposium participants at each meal. Thank you!

We may not be 'Bound for South Australia' specifically, but returning to our homes in the southern hemisphere with new friends, fond memories and the massed ringing tunes replaying in our ears.

We are looking forward to continuing our journey promoting world peace through the spirit of music when we renew our handbell ringing friendships closer to home in Singapore at the 23rd Symposium in 2028.

Best wishes

Carol Davis

2026 Handbell Society of Australasia representative,
in absence of President, ***Carmel Daveson***

Arthur Syin

It was a privilege to be translating at the 22nd International Handbell Symposium in Aberdeen. KUDOs to all the ringers and conductors from around the world and a big THANK YOU to the HRGB for making this a wonderful event!!

第22回ハンドベル世界大会で通訳を務めさせていただき、本当に光栄でした。リンガー、指揮者の皆様やイギリス連盟の方々のおかげで素晴らしい大会でした。



Seven Biddenham Handbell Ringers went to Aberdeen. Four are seasoned symposium attendees – three of us were 'Newbies', including myself. So what was it like for a Newbie?

Impressive – the organisation was immaculate, and the green shirts actually looked as if they were thoroughly enjoying themselves. Everything was where we needed it, when we needed it. Goodness knows how they managed that! They put on an excellent programme for the non-ringers. Also impressive was the angular exterior architecture of the P & J Convention Centre.



Tiring – the days seemed very long, particularly those without workshops. A lot of time on the feet and having to concentrate. Enjoyable, yes – but tiring.

Surprising – I was surprised at just how good all the mass ringing pieces sounded – I'd wondered about *Celtic Peace* for 600 ringers, but it worked really well. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the final concert. All the conductors were great and I was pleased that *Sweet Caroline* was included.

Scary – yes, the seven of us from Biddenham playing *Fantasy on Greensleeves* as the first item at Wednesday evening's concert in front of all those ringers was very scary for me. We survived! (And *Compassion* with the East Anglian Regional Team on the Tuesday was much better, as there was someone behind me playing the same bells!)

Emotional – *The Prayer* – such a beautiful piece – I knew the change to C Major in Bar 29 would bring tears to the eyes and in the final concert that did indeed happen. And the Hiroshima Day Service.

Friendly – it was good to talk to our overseas visitors over mealtimes. The family from Canada – mum, son and non-ringing dad. The lovely ringers from the U.S.A. Enthusiastic Monica directly behind me – no Scottish sightseeing for her – she was heading straight back for an advanced ringing event in Michigan! And from the UK, the Scottish ringers.

Contrasting – all my five workshops were excellent – it was good to do three that were completely unrelated to handbells. I particularly enjoyed 'North East Scots Language and Culture', but I just couldn't master the technique of making origami cranes, despite assistance from a smiling and amazingly patient Japanese gentleman.

Entertaining – our brilliant translator Arthur and the effervescent conductor from Singapore, Damien Lim, to name just two.

Cool – in the literal sense. Good to escape the heatwave for a week!

Good – the 'Aloft' hotel just across the way. Five of us stayed there and the location was just right, with good breakfasts.

Not Quite So Good – the food in the P & J at lunchtime and evening. But to be fair, catering for 600 people all at once has got to be so difficult, and everything was edible….

A holiday – lovely to get away and do something different and absorbing. And an opportunity for me to relax for a few days afterwards and do some sightseeing, including a 'Rabbie's' tour and a bus trip further north to Fraserburgh to see where my Scottish Granny's family came from. Not forgetting Dunnottar Castle, which had been on my 'bucket list' for years.

Back to earth with a bump – the return train sat for an hour at Doncaster due to a plastic bag on the wires, and on arrival at Kings Cross in 35°C there were no trains out to Bedford…..

Rosemary Harris,
Biddenham Handbell Ringers



Robert meditating

Non Ringers' Programme

Whilst the 650 ringers were 'enjoying' their 12 hour days, comprehensive luxury coach tours were laid on each day visiting Aberdeen, Stonehaven, Dundee, Ballater, Crathes Castle, Fraserburgh (Museum of Scottish Lighthouses), Cullen, Macduff (home of Scottish whisky distilling) and Huntley, with the services of a knowledgeable, entertaining and humorous local guide, who imparted his wealth of history and culture of the local area all thrown in.

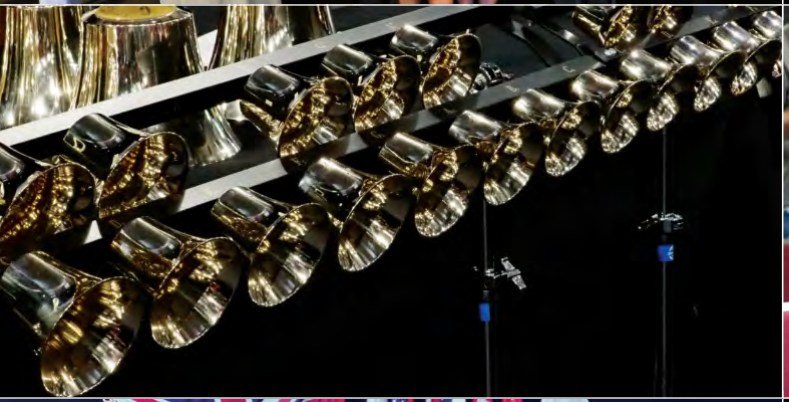
We would rejoin the ringers for our evening meal, then were treated to an evening's entertainment featuring solo concerts.

Thank you to the organisers for a most enjoyable 'holiday'. We saw and learnt far more about the North East of Scotland in 3 days than I could have managed by any other means. It was an honour to attend the Final Concert and Banquet, where we were made extremely welcome by such a friendly congregation (plural of bellringers?). I am enjoying rewatching the YouTube and my own clips.

Michael Turner
Non-Ringer






















BLUE JAYS

My First Symposium

Sweaty gloves, aching legs, tired eyes, and DESPERATE for a cup of tea… but I can't wait until I get the chance to do it all again. Those were my thoughts while driving home from my first ever symposium. Fortunately for me, it took place in my home country, so the drive there only took about three hours. When I arrived, I joined the Scottish Ringers in welcoming everyone with *The Skye Boat Song*. I felt very honoured to be welcoming ringers from all over the world, many who were in Scotland for the first time.



The pieces selected for the Symposium were fantastic, and they only grew on me as the week went on. *Bound for South Australia*, conducted by the wonderful Suzanne Maslen, gets an honourable mention as the piece that grew on me most. Previously, I have never been a fan of singing during a handbell concert; if I had wanted to sing, I would've joined a local choir like some sort of normal person… but in a team of over 600, it sounded natural and there was no awkwardness to it. Many people had genuine smiles on their faces throughout this whole piece. Suzanne had a great way of putting her own spin on the piece and keeping us thoroughly entertained in the process.

To break up the massed ringing, we also chose from a selection of workshops. I left Mr Abe's "Painting with Bronze" workshop with new knowledge about how to effectively ring pianissimo to fortissimo. The tranquility of 30 people from different corners of the world ringing a beautiful chord together… pianissimily was so calming that I almost got whiplash from arriving at Aidan's anarchic (but amazing) conductor's workshop, where we blasted party blowers at each other at full volume. I'm now confident that I can both ring a bell really quietly and conduct most time signatures with or without a ping pong ball or party blower.

I got the chance to do what most handbell ringers dream of doing, I joined a cult. We called ourselves Chaos Corner, and it really was the best chaos. Emily, Eddie, and our newest members, Lucas and Derek. Some of the notes, and all of the laughs. While I learned a lot from the conductors, I learned the most from ringers around me, (shoutout to Derek who sacrificed one of his precious 10 minute breaks to teach me how to ring a polyrhythm). By the end of the week, we were truly sounding amazing. The concert was something to be proud of and I'm sure we'll remember this event for years to come.

Kirsty Richardson
Jordanhill Parish Church Handbell Ringers

John Inchul Lee/KHA

To the HRGB members who worked hard at this Aberdeen Handball Symposium.

HRGB, all staff members and Martin and Sandra, you really worked hard.

It was an event that left a lasting impression as an excellent International Handball Symposium.

All of our Korean team returned home safely, and easily because you lent us handbells.

Thank you very much.

I hope HRGB continues to develop even further.

Thank you.

John Inchul Lee**,** KHA










Fire exit

Four Intrepid Handbell Ringers

Four intrepid handbell ringers from Kinder Ringers made the long journey to Aberdeen, Scotland for the 22nd International Handbell Symposium from 3rd to 8th August 2026.

The cooler weather up North was a relief from the current heatwave at home and we were soon settling into our hotel and unloading handbells.

We had the music sent to us in advance and had had a look at the massed ringing music, thanks to practices organised by the Northern Bell Orchestra. The Symposium venue, P&J Live (Post and Journal) or The Exhibition and Conference Centre Aberdeen (TECA) was impressive in its size and facilities. The 'green shirts' or organising committee were there to welcome us and answer our many and varied questions. Small gifts and badges were exchanged at the welcome reception.

Our allotted space in Hall C was next to a group of Canadian Ringers "The Eh Team", as Canadians are known for saying "Eh" as a greeting and fortunately they were very friendly. We even became their official team photographer as a group photo was required every day as they wore their different team shirts. In return they supplied us with Canadian sweets in the breaks. In front of us were a team from New York USA who were very enthusiastic, joining in all the actions for the performance, whereas we were too busy concentrating on getting the right notes in the right places.

The conductors came from all the eight guilds involved in the organising committee and were different in their approaches and styles. The podium had to be raised by a foot to allow people at the back of the hall to see the conductor. It was very difficult to control such a huge number of ringers and in some cases three limbs were required to bring in all the different parts.

The massed ringing practices were very varied as all the pieces were so different. It was quite a relief though when the Workshops began on the Wednesday and we could do something other than ring handbells!

On Thursday the day started with a moving all faith service to remember those killed at Hiroshima for Hiroshima Day. Each day started with Notices and Lost and Found announcements. At one point a toy Echidna had been found and it was still there on Saturday, so I hope it found it's way home.

Two surprise pieces were added to the concert programme, sponsored by Bells of Whitechapel, and conducted by Aidan Fozard and Nick Hanson. We had a couple of run-throughs but it was mainly rung by sight-reading. However being well-known tunes it didn't seem to matter.

The final piece for the concert was a fun piece requiring special effects to represent raising the flags and rigging on a ship and hauling on the ropes. This also included actions, stomping, calling "Ahoy" and singing, which all added to the performance.

The evening concerts each day showcased some fantastic teams from countries as varied as Hungary and Hong Kong, including our own Northern Bell Orchestra and Maghull Parish Handbell Ringers. Also a three generational team

featuring Linda, Beth and Jocie. There was also a scratch World handbell choir formed of ringers who had met at previous Symposia and had had just 90 minutes practice, but was so good it had to have an encore. The ringing 'tracks' workshops, who had also only had two days to practise their pieces, gave amazing performances.

After the build up to the final live-streamed Concert attended by the Deputy Lord Provost of Aberdeen City, the Banquet



and Closing Ceremony was a chance to wind down and meet more new friends. Many people involved in organising the Symposium were thanked including the Japanese Interpreter, Arthur Syin, who seemed to be ad-libbing a bit as the conductors frequently commented "Did I say that?".

The next Symposium President Foon Lyn Yap was introduced for Singapore in 2028 and the IHC Symposium flag handed over in a moving ceremony.

Jeanette Jenkins
Kinder Ringers



Aberdeen Symposium 2026 - What Just Happened?!

Way back in September 2021, I got a call from Helen Secker to ask me if I would like to take her place on the initial visit to a possible symposium venue in Glasgow, as she was back at work. Little did I realise, but this was the start of what would be the beginning of five years of living and breathing symposium. But what things did I learn along the way?

1. When you think everything is under control, the world gets turned upside down. In the spring of 2024 we got the notification we were dreading that Newcastle was not going to be built on time. But we were offered Aberdeen as an alternative and what a piece of good fortune that turned out to be.
2. Feeding people isn't as straightforward as you think. Nearly 25% of everyone attending had some form of dietary needs. All of this information had to be collected and shared with the catering team, who then worked incredibly hard to produce menus that everyone could eat.
3. I needed to learn the skills of a tour operator to plan a programme for the many non-ringers accompanying their ringing partners. In fact there were more than four times as many non-ringers than we had expected.
4. I needed to become a transport consultant arranging daily shuttle bus services between the venue and hotels.
5. I didn't know that it was so difficult for people to decide what size shirt they wanted, who knew that potential shrinkage could be such an important factor?
6. International customs bodies seem to take a delight in making things difficult. Why is it necessary to take three weeks to release a parcel of music sent in the post from Japan? Why does it take over a week to release bells that have all the correct paperwork? Why did Canadian customs refuse to release bells for shipping from Canada?
7. I had no idea just how much space 675 polo shirts, 635 Symposium bags, 635 Symposium books, 2000+ pieces of music and other items take up. The house was literally full to overflowing.
8. If you search for them, there are businesses out there who will come up with creative solutions to help you. Who would have thought that it would be cheaper and more environmentally friendly to buy and transport foam from Sussex to Aberdeen and back than source it locally; but it was, and with no wastage going to landfill.
9. There is an amazing well of support from businesses, especially handbell businesses, for us. The level of sponsorship offered was fantastic, over four times our expectation.
10. Handbell ringers are, almost universally, polite, helpful and especially generous with their time and skills; not only in offering official help but in supporting each other throughout the event. Seeing everyone ringing, learning, making and renewing friendships and above all enjoying themselves made all of the hours spent organising and running the Symposium completely worthwhile.

Martin Winter
HRGB
Symposium
Co-ordinator




The International Handball Committee
Martin Winter





Tartan Dress

And finally…



The Symposium Final Chord


INTERNATIONAL
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