

## The History of The Clifton Handbell Ringers (Full version)

The original Clifton Handbell Ringers were formed around 1890. The band was composed of male members of Clifton Parish Church. Under the guidance of Mr James Fearnley, a Clifton joiner, they began by playing a few simple tunes with about two dozen bells belonging to Clifton Parish Church, St. Johns. Their efforts were popular and their membership grew, as did their fame. Around this time the team began to enter local and national Handbell Competitions. A larger set of bells was bought by public subscription and there were enough members to make two teams of around twelve ringers each. Eventually they had about two hundred bells.

The start of the Great War in 1914 brought about the demise of the original Clifton Handbell Ringers and the team disbanded on the 21st of February 1915 and the bells were put into storage at a local mill. The bells remained there for 60 years until rediscovered by Mr. Peter Fawcett who was researching the history of the original team. He realised that there were 50 bells missing, however he cleaned and repaired what bells he could and gathered together a small group of enthusiasts. The present Clifton Handbell Ringers was re-established in 1975 and shortly afterwards a junior team was formed.

In 1978 a junior team was formed.

The junior team that was formed in 1978 is still in existence but is now called The Clifton Village Handbell Ringers. The team of 8 play off a square table using the traditional Yorkshire "off the table" style of ringing. They have been successful at a number of music festivals in the North of England and they entertain a wide variety of audiences across the north of England in venues as prestigious as The Harrogate International Conference Centre and The Bridgewater Hall. In 1996 the Clifton Village Handbell Ringers represented their country at an International Symposium of Handbell ringing in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The team have recently appeared on Look North alongside Harry Gration.

To ensure the future of the organisation, an ambitious fundraising programme was started and combined with help from various funding bodies, enough money was raised to ensure delivery of 140 new handbells in March 2001 and June 2004 replacing the set dating from 1908.

The aim of the organization is to continue the traditional art of "off table" handbell ringing by means of public performance. We are very pleased to be able to do this at this performance this evening.



Current Team



Original Team in 1908