

St Margaret's bellringers give Altrincham its very own sound

It was debuted on Wednesday morning.



Residents near Dunham Road may have noticed something a little special drifting from the tower of St Margaret's Church on Wednesday morning - the sound of a brand new bellringing method being heard for the very first time.

The band at St Margaret's has officially named a method 'Altrincham Surprise Minor', filling a gap that local ringers say has long needed filling.

"There are methods called Knutsford, Trafford and Stretford but nothing named after Altrincham," said

Alastair Roberts, Ringing Master at St Margaret's.
"We wanted to change that."

Bellringing methods - the term used in the trade rather than "tunes" - have a rich tradition of eccentric naming. Chocolate Cake, The Empire Strikes Back and The Beatles are all genuine examples.

"Bellringing tunes are actually called methods and they have all sorts of peculiar names," explained Tower Captain Andrew Darling. "Bellringing music isn't like ordinary music - it is quite mathematical. It is made by constantly changing the order in which bells sound, while avoiding repetition."

Technically, claiming a name only requires ringing a method for around half an hour, but the St Margaret's band went further. "We decided to do a bit more than this and rang a full quarter peal - that's when you ring for about 45 minutes without a break," said Andrew Roberts, who conducted the ringing.



St Margaret's Church

The method itself wasn't composed from scratch. "There are lots of unnamed methods," Andrew Roberts explained. "I had a look at some of them and I just liked the look of it."

Andrew Darling, who also coordinates the Cheshire School of Bell Ringing, said Easter provided the perfect window. "Altrincham Surprise Minor is quite a complicated method, but we have an experienced band at St Margaret's and three of our students were back from university. The Easter holidays seemed like a good time to have a shot at ringing it."

Despite the nerves, it came together first time. "We were all quite nervous but in the end we managed to ring it at the first attempt," said Alastair Roberts. "I was really pleased with how it sounded. We hope the locals enjoyed it too!"

Altrincham Surprise Minor can be viewed [here](#).

Anyone interested in taking up bellringing can contact Andrew Darling at dunhambells@gmail.com.