

Survey results

This note summarises the results of a web based survey of members views on Branch practices and related issues. They were invited to visit the Branch website and provide their views by filling in a simple form.

Response

Between November 2011 and January 2012 there were 38 responses. That represents just over 30% response of the 122 members on the Branch members e-mail list, and just over one in five of the total membership (~170). The table shows a fair spread across Branch towers.

Tower	Replies
Arborfield	3
Barkham	0
Binfield	3
Easthampstead	3
Finchampstead	4
Hurst	2
Sandhurst St Michael	1
Sandhurst Immaculate Conception	0
Shottesbrooke	0
Sonning	8
Twyford	1
Waltham St Lawrence	3
Warfield	1
Wargrave	1
White Waltham	2
Wokingham All Saints	5
Wokingham St Paul	1
Unattached	0

Awareness and attendance

Respondents were asked whether they were aware that the Branch held regular practices on the third Saturday of the month, and if they had ever attended one. A quarter of the respondents were not aware of the practices. Such a high figure among those motivated to respond to the survey shows a failure in communication.

Third Saturday practices	Yes	%
Aware and have attended	23	60%
Aware but not attended	5	13%
Not aware and have attended!!	5	13%
Not aware and never attended	10	26%

Desirable features of a practice

Feature	Count	%
Friendly welcome	33	87%
People you know	23	61%
Chance to get to know a wider circle of ringers	16	42%
Opportunity to ring methods you don't often ring in your own tower	20	53%
Help with method learning	0	0%
Help with method ringing	15	39%
Chance to learn a new method in advance and ring it at the practice	16	42%
Regular time of day	12	32%
Regular place	0	0%
Different place every month	16	42%
Able to make a contribution to helping others	21	55%
Other (see below)	7	18%

Other aspects seen as desirable were:

- Beginning to call, standing beside others
- Happy to fill in. Don't like to be pressured
- Opportunity to ring on 8 (or more)
- Opportunity to stretch my children
- Help keep alive a sense of community in the Branch

What deters people from attending

27 people (71%) mentioned one or more factor that deters them from attending Branch practices. The commonest – 10 (26%) was being too busy or having competing activities. Other factors were mentioned only by one or two people each. They included:

- Personal factors (medical conditions, night driving, non-ringing partners, lethargy,)
- Administrative factors (evenings difficult, mornings difficult, Saturdays difficult, movable time, forgetting / not sure where/when)
- Practice related factors (not friendly, learners pushed outside capabilities or too many at once, not able to ring method more than once, poor attendance / lack of support from others, low standard compared with former years)

Finding out about practices

Members were asked how they had heard about Branch practices. Most were considered useful, with a strong preference for e-mail reminders and announcements in the tower (which relies on tower captains / correspondents).

Information received by:	Have received	Consider most useful
Notice in tower	10	6
Announcement in tower	16	14
Branch diary card	16	10
Branch website (diary page)	9	2
Reminder e-mail in previous week	15	17
Word of mouth	10	0
Practice was at my tower	9	3

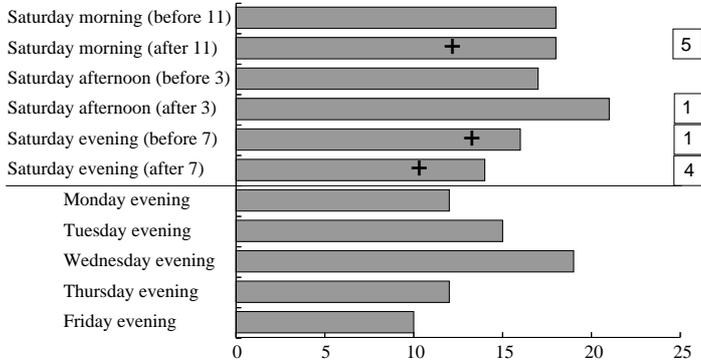
Availability for practices

One of the objectives of the survey was to see whether there was any consistent preference for some times rather than others. Members were asked when they would normally expect to be available. The responses show a very slight preference for late Saturday afternoon, from just over half of respondents. For a weekday evening practice, Wednesday was preferred scored above other days.

Time	Available	%	Current
Saturday morning (before 11)	18	47%	
Saturday morning (after 11)	18	47%	5
Saturday afternoon (before 3)	17	45%	
Saturday afternoon (after 3)	21	55%	1
Saturday evening (before 7)	16	42%	1
Saturday evening (after 7)	14	37%	4
Monday evening	12	32%	
Tuesday evening	15	39%	
Wednesday evening	19	50%	
Thursday evening	12	32%	
Friday evening	10	26%	

The boxed figures on the right of the graph below shows the number of events per year in each time band¹. Significantly, only 1 event is held at the most popular time, and the least popular time had almost the most practices.

The '+' markers show average attendance at practices (from 2005-2011) held at these times. The comparison between late morning and late evening is consistent with the survey results. The difference between early and late evening is also consistent, but might not be reliable, since relatively few practices were held at this time.



Member availability v time & practices per year

Weekday practices

Only a minority of members are available for daytime (weekday) practices. 5 of the respondents (13%) had attended one. 10 people said that the choice of day (currently Tuesday) would not make a difference, with all other days offered as alternatives, and Monday or Friday more popular.

Other comments

Members were invited to add any other comments. Some focused on practices, but others were more general. The list below summarises points raised.

Practices overall:

- The practices I've attended were encouraging, helpful and useful. The content and format are OK.
- Encourage new ringers to attend Branch practices. They may feel that they are not experienced enough.

Content and scope of practices:

- Dedicated time at Branch practices to ringers of modest ability, who may otherwise feel out of place.
- Consider having different practices: a standard one – Plain Bob, Grandsire, etc, and an advanced practice – Surprise Major (for participants able to attempt more than the Treble).

Organisation and timing:

- Practices could be better advertised (eg Ringing World and e-mail reminders).
- A 'directions & parking' sheet would be helpful and/or include directions etc in reminder e-mails.
- Variety of practice times is probably a good idea.
- Branch could attend individual tower practice nights, especially those where progress is very difficult.
- Consider Branch Visit Practices [where the Branch practice supplements a tower practice].

Contributory factors:

- Officers taking an interest in ringers at individual towers may help to generate more interest in Branch practices.
- Officers should not assume that everyone knows what is going on, or even knows what the Branch does

Other training issues:

- More sessions for beginners who can't go to other towers would be useful. Half an hour a week isn't enough for people just starting to ring.
- Don't offer courses on topics where there are never going to be enough people to run them.
- Help individual ringer's to develop core skills, and help settle new ringers into bands through setting expectations.

Actions and recommendations

Based on the results from the survey, some changes have already been made:

- The website now includes enhanced descriptions of Branch activities for the benefit of new members
- The information about location of towers and visiting them that was already on the website has been upgraded to include more information.
- Branch officers have been asked to include a link the relevant tower entry on the website in any messages advertising Branch events.
- The list of Branch courses has been revised to remove courses on individual methods, for which there is negligible demand, and which are catered for by Guild courses.

The following additional actions are proposed:

- Prepare an introductory sheet explaining about Branch activities (with a link to the website) to be given to all new members when they join the Guild. (Currently they only receive a letter from the Guild Master, a certificate, and a copy of the Guild Rules.)
- Find out why there is such a large difference between the number of members and the number included on the members e-mail list. 30% seems very high for the number of members without e-mail.
- Encourage tower captains and tower correspondents to announce Branch events regularly during their practices.
- Ensure that the Branch sends e-mail reminders to members shortly before all Branch events.
- Consider the possibility of introducing more Branch practices with a specific focus of some kind.
- Consider ways in which individual bands could be better supported.
- Consider whether it would be worth altering the balance of practice times to align more with the apparent availability of members

¹ 10.30–12.00 was counted as 'after 11.00'.