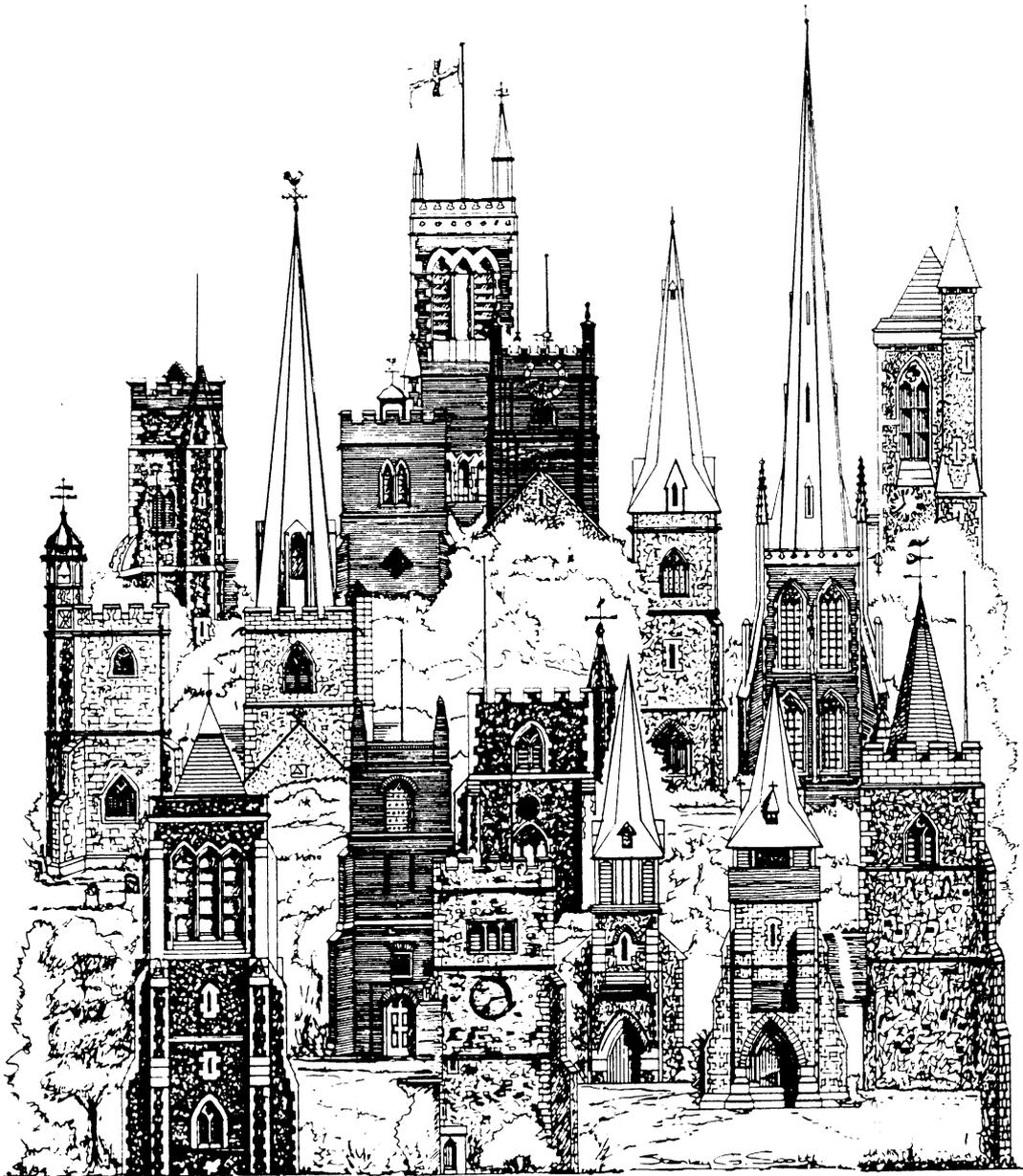


# Sonning Deanery Branch

**NEWSLETTER**  
**August/September 2006**



Oxford Diocesan Guild  
of Church Bell Ringers

# Ringing Master's Ramblings

Hello everybody, and welcome to the August / September bumper edition of the Newsletter.

The July Branch practice went well, with nearly 20 people attending. We rang a variety of methods, including Grandsire, Cambridge and Plain Bob.

August saw the wedding of Judith Burbidge (now Bowler) at Easthampstead church (pages 3 and 4), and also the building of a new tower at Arborfield (page 2).

Some towers (including Easthampstead and Wokingham All Saints) took part in the National Heritage Weekend on 9th and 10th September. This proved to be a popular event, and hopefully we might get some recruits from it!

The Branch Daytime Practices continue to be popular, with several people turning up to ring Single Oxford Bob Minor (amongst other methods!). The Surprise Practices at Wokingham All Saints are also well-attended, and the band are now ringing Ashted and Lessness, as well as the standard eight.

John Harrison, the Branch Training Coordinator, has recently put out a call for training requests. Please have a think, and contact John with any courses you are interested in. The list of courses is on page 6.

## Quarter Peal Week

This year, Quarter Peal Week will run from Saturday 4th November to Sunday 14th November. The aim is to get as many people ringing as many quarter peals in as many towers as possible (at least one per tower would be good!). Please start thinking about what quarters you will ring. The idea is that people will try something new, so there should be lots of first quarters, lots of firsts in methods, and lots of first conductors! If there is something in particular you would like to ring or conduct, but there is not an available band at your tower, let me know and I will try to arrange a quarter peal for you.

**Louise Marshall**

# Ringling Round a Picnic

At St Bartholomew church, Arborfield on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August, a group of Sonning Deanery Branch members enjoyed a pleasant picnic in a quiet and secluded part of the churchyard. The weather had been variable with some rain during the morning, but it cleared up by 11am and the sun was out for the duration of the picnic. A variety of outdoor games were provided by members present, and some indoor games also, (in case it we were forced to eat in the church hall due to wet weather).

In the event no children were at the picnic so the adult 'children' enjoyed the games instead. The most popular game was the giant sized Jenga provided by Andrew Moss. This was set up on a tile laid on the grass, and by the time the tower was built it was imitating the leaning tower of Pisa. We didn't expect the tower to stay standing for long, but by the great manual skill typical of bell ringers we managed to counteract the lean by placing bricks off-centre on the top. In the end a puff of wind collapsed the tower right at the end of the picnic hour.



*"Does it have bells?"*



*Our Training Officer shows us how to do a 'single'*

Which reminds me, there was Branch Practice ringing for an hour before and after the picnic. Our Ringing Master, Louise, and other experienced ringers tried to keep us all in order, with mixed success, and we enjoyed a variety of ringing from call changes through Grandsire doubles, Stedman doubles, Plain Bob minor, Cambridge surprise minor and Norwich surprise minor.

Our thanks go to those members of Arborfield tower who booked the hall and tower, provided hot and cold drinks in the church hall, and brought several games to the event.

**Rob Needham**

## The Finished Article

Despite having their first date on the Ides of March 2003, Judith Burbidge and Jonathan Bowler married at SS Michael and Mary Magdalene Easthampstead on 5<sup>th</sup> August. The ringing build up to the wedding started on 8<sup>th</sup> July with a Peal of Lincolnshire Surprise Major at Easthampstead, where Judith is Tower Captain. On 29<sup>th</sup> July a further peal, this time of Rutland Surprise Major, was rung at Berkhamsted, where Judith learnt to ring and where her parents, David and Margaret, both ring. Judith rang in both peals.

The Wedding day itself was a beautiful, bright sunny day. The Church was decorated beautifully by local ringers and flower arrangers, Margaret Bearne and Barbara Wells. Many of the female guests, as per the bride's instructions, wore hats. The service was preceded by ringing by local ringers, university friends of Judith and ringers from Berkhamsted who have known Judith since she was young. The service, conducted by Rev'd Guy Cole, included music and words chosen by Judith and Jonathan and involved friends and family. The readings were read by Judith's mother Margaret and Jonathan's brother Tim. During the signing of the register, Geoff Knaggs played the second movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. As Jonathan and Judith had met while playing clarinet in a local concert band, this was entirely appropriate. To the surprise of both Jonathan and Judith, they exited the church under an arch of bell ropes. Two of these were held proudly by Judith's most recent ringing pupils, Josh Parrett and Tom Kemp, both aged 11. At this point the rest of the Easthampstead band were in the tower ringing a touch of Stedman Triples, as requested by the bride. This was conducted ably, as ever, by Stan Scott. The touch was followed by some firing, another surprise for the bride.

The CIOB headquarters at Englemere near Ascot was the place chosen for the reception. The lawns were the perfect location for all the photos, taken by Paul and Kathy Brown, friends of Judith and Jonathan. Paul also made the rings. The meal was followed by the speeches. Judith's father, David, spoke of the things that the bride and groom have in common as well as embarrassing Judith with a tale of a drunken journey home from a University bar crawl. Jonathan, after describing Judith as a 'finished article' went on to describe her as a 'jewel'. He also paid complements to the 'stunning' bridesmaid, Emma, Judith's sister



and praised her for her ironing skills. The Best Man, Jonathan Large, spoke for 6 minutes and 45 seconds (the sweepstake was won by Judith's Godmother, Jill) and was very amusing and entertaining.

Following a relaxing interlude of a couple of hours, during which we found out that England had scored over 500 in the test match, more guests arrived and we were entertained by Nick Barnett's Jazz band, with whom Jonathan usually plays. Following the happy couple's first dance to American Patrol, the guests enjoyed a summer evening dancing on the terrace and listening to the band. Jonathan joined them for a couple of tunes, including 'This is the Start of Something Big', playing the saxophone.

To quote one of the guests, 'it's the best wedding I've been to for a long time'.

**Rachel Moss**

## Sonning bells heard in Germany?

At St Andrew's last night (Thurs. 14<sup>th</sup> Sept.) two people came and recorded the sound of our bells; they had one microphone hanging out the tower window nearly to the ground, and another on the tower roof. (You know what they say, "Distance lends enchantment"!)

The Bavarian State Radio has commissioned an English musician living in Germany to make a CD of Victorian English brass instrument Christmas music. He now has all the music recorded, and wants to start and end the CD with the sound of English bells (well, they are a type of brass!). When he was younger he lived in Caversham and often heard the evocative sound of Sonning bells across the river on Sunday evenings. And they are in the key of E<sup>b</sup>, which apparently is the key of a lot of brass instrument music.

The mechanics of the recording went well, but when we pointed out the bits of poor striking they said that it was the charm of bells that they weren't exactly even! The chap in charge of the project offered to give the tower several free copies of the CD when it is produced, and to put all the ringers' names on the CD notes that goes with it. We hope we may be able to sell these CDs to add to the funds for the necessary repairs to the stained glass windows, so there's something to put on your Christmas list!

**Rob Needham**

## Heritage Open Days

Every year, during a weekend in early September, hundreds (or thousands) of historic buildings across the country, that are not normally open to the public, open their doors to visitors. In Wokingham, there are always some buildings open, and the Wokingham History Group organises conducted history walks round the town.

Several years ago, we opened All Saints tower on one of these days, and this year we repeated the exercise. Over the last few years, we have learnt how to be better at publicity, and on this occasion it paid off handsomely. We hoped for around 60 people, and reckoned we could comfortably cope with 80-90. But we had 130, and somehow, during four and a half hours, we managed to send them all away very happy, and considerably less ignorant about bells and ringing. Fortunately, we had put a lot of thought into the organisation beforehand, drawing on the experience of over a dozen tower visits (for very much smaller parties) as part of our community involvement over the last few years.

The afternoon was hard work, but very well worth it, to see the obvious interest of

the visitors, some of whom came from as far away as Australia and America. We had good press coverage too. The Wokingham Times took a picture of us with the first group of visitors, and we had a photographer from 'Totally Wokingham' (a local glossy aspirational magazine) who took pictures in all parts of the tower.

In some ways, our tower is ideal for events like this. We have access to all levels by stairs (no ladders) and although the walkway is narrow, we can safely let visitors enter the bell chamber. To cap it all, the tower has a roof, also with easy access. From here visitors get a superb view over the town and the surrounding countryside. (There are some pictures on our website, see: <http://www.allsaintswokinghambells.org.uk/ASTower/Roof/Roof.html>)

**John Harrison**

## **Training Matters**

So far, I have requests for a total of 30 places on 17 courses. From the arithmetic, you will see that means requests are thinly spread, and none of the courses yet have enough people. But since those requests came from just 8 members, there must be a lot more of you who would find a course useful, but haven't yet replied. Please do so – as well as benefiting yourself, you will benefit those already on the waiting lists.

Just to remind you, the courses we offered are:

Elementary bob calling	Ring with a simulator
Conducting	How to learn a method
Bell handling	Heavy bell handling
See yourself handling on video	Change ringing on handbells
Raising and lowering in peal	Teaching bell handling
Leading up and down in peal	Calling changes
Listening skills	Ringing handbells
Bell maintenance	Anything else (state what)
Rope splicing	Specific methods (state which)

All you have to do is let me know which you are interested in. Then as soon as we have enough for your course(s) someone will contact you to agree a suitable date.

**John Harrison – Training Co-ordinator**  
**0118 978 5520**

# A memorable weekend in Inveraray

Inveraray could not be more different from the Thames Valley. The sky does not glow orange at night, the views from the hill looking over Loch Fyne are superb, and even with the tourists it is a very peaceful place. All Saints is the Episcopal church (though now mostly used by the Catholics) tucked round the back of the high street, unlike the imposing classical style Kirk that forces the high street to go round it on either side. All Saints church building is quite small, in complete contrast to the adjacent bell tower, which dwarfs it. In fact it dwarfs the town, standing proudly above its surroundings, and dominating the view from almost every direction. The bells are equally impressive. With a Tenor weighing over two tons, they are the worlds second heaviest ring of ten, and the sound is majestic.



*Inveraray from the West, with the bell tower dominating the town*

The tower and bells were a gift of Niall Diarmid Campbell, tenth Duke of Argyll, and were erected as a memorial to the thousands of Campbells who never came back from World War I and all previous wars. Construction began in 1923, with the bells hung eight years later in 1931. There were plans to join the tower to the church, but the delay in raising funds, and the outbreak of World War 2, prevented it happening. Lightning struck the tower in 1944 and damaged the stonework. The Duke died just after the war, and the tower and bells were left derelict until the early 1970s when the late Norman Chaddock moved to Inveraray, with the vision and drive to get them restored, and to train a local band. Surprisingly, the tower was not dedicated when it was built, perhaps because the project never completed. Recognising this, the local pastor performed a short dedication before we rang on the Saturday afternoon.



*The bell tower seen from the hill North of the town*

I have been to Inveraray most years since 1999 when I used to travel regularly to Glasgow on business. In between ringing, there is the opportunity to walk in the woods or up the hills with glorious views over Loch Fyne, and of course there is the inevitable socialising on The George. There seems to be even more than the usual camaraderie among ringers, especially when you get to know the many regular visitors, as well as the Scottish contingent.

But above all, it is the glorious bells and the extended ringing that make the weekend what it is. The sound of Inveraray bells cannot fail to move anyone who hears them. The slower pace of heavy bells I find more stately and dignified, when you attune yourself to the feel of the bells and the rhythm of the ringing. This year, I had the added bonus of being invited into a quarter peal on the Saturday morning, in memory of Olive Rogers, who was a great supporter of Inveraray until shortly before her death.



*Across the fields to the bell tower (school in the foreground)*

**John Harrison**

# Quarter Peals

## St Michael's Sandhurst

13th May 2006

### 1320 Norwich Surprise Minor

1. Genine Leslie
2. Michael Sherren
3. Simon Paterson
4. Michael Paterson
5. Derek Palmer
6. Janet E Menhinick (C)

Quarter sponsored by Bob and Jenny Oakley to celebrate the first birthday of their grandson, Thomas Peter Dentith on 15th May 2006.

## St. Andrew's, Sonning

23rd July 2006

### 1260 Middlesex Triples

1. Rob Needham
2. Brian Snell
3. Pam Elliston
4. Alison Clayton
5. Jo Pocock\*
6. Andrew Elliston
7. Michael Dane (C)
8. Ken G Baker

\* First in method

## St Andrew's, Sonning

16th July 2006

### 1260 Mixed Doubles

(420 Grandsire, 360 Plain Bob, 240 St Simons, 240 St Martins)

1. Andrew Elliston
2. Pam Elliston
3. Brian Snell
4. Alison Clayton
5. Ken G Baker (C)
6. Keith Vernon

For evensong.

## Easthampstead

30th July 2006

### 1260 St Clements Minor

1. Margaret Bearne
2. Nigel Bearne
3. Barbara Wells
4. Judith Burbidge
5. Stanley Scott
6. Steve Wells (C)

Rung as a farewell to Rev Beatrice Pearson and Rev Andy Marshall, both of whom have been curates of this parish.

## St. Andrew's, Sonning

6th August 2006

### 1260 Reverse Canterbury Triples

1. Pam Elliston
2. Ken G Baker
3. Jo Pocock
4. Louise Marshall\*
5. Rob Needham
6. Daniel Chafen\*
7. Michael Dane (C)
8. Andrew Elliston

Rung to celebrate the marriage of Judith Burbidge and Jonathan Bowler on 5th August 2006.

\* First in method

## Easthampstead

10th August 2006

### 1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Stan G Scott
2. Margaret Bearne
3. Andrew P Moss\*
4. Nigel F Bearne
5. Rachel Moss (C)

\* First inside

# More Quarter Peals

## Twyford

25th August 2006

### 1260 Grandsire Doubles

1. Pam Elliston
2. David C Willis
3. Brian Snell
4. Adam Kilgour
5. Chris J Brown (C)
6. Andrew Elliston

## St. Andrew's, Sonning

27th August 2006

### 1260 Plain Bob Minor

1. Andrew Elliston
2. Pam Elliston
3. Rob Needham
4. Alison Clayton
5. David Willis
6. Michael Dane (C)

Birthday compliment to Holly Kilgour  
(daughter of 4), 3 today.

## St. Andrew's, Sonning

3rd September 2006

### 1288 Grandsire Triples

1. Brian Snell
2. Rob Needham
3. Joyce Vernon
4. Pam Elliston
5. Andrew Elliston
6. Ken G Baker\*
7. Michael Dane (C)
8. Keith Vernon

\* 950th quarter peal

## Easthampstead

10th September 2006

### 1260 Cambridge Surprise Major

1. Rachel Moss
2. Judith Bowler
3. Barbara Wells
4. Margaret Bearne
5. Daniel Chafen\*
6. Simon Feather
7. Louise Marshall
8. Steve Wells (C)

Rung for civic service choral evensong,  
for National Heritage day.

\* 1st of surprise major

## Your Quarter Peal or Peal not listed?

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## Forthcoming Events

Tuesday	3rd Oct	Branch Daytime Practice TBC	Wokingham, All Saints	2:00-4:00pm
Saturday	21st Oct	Branch Practice	Wokingham, St Paul's	7:30-9:00pm
Saturday 4th to Sunday 14th November - Quarter Peal Week				