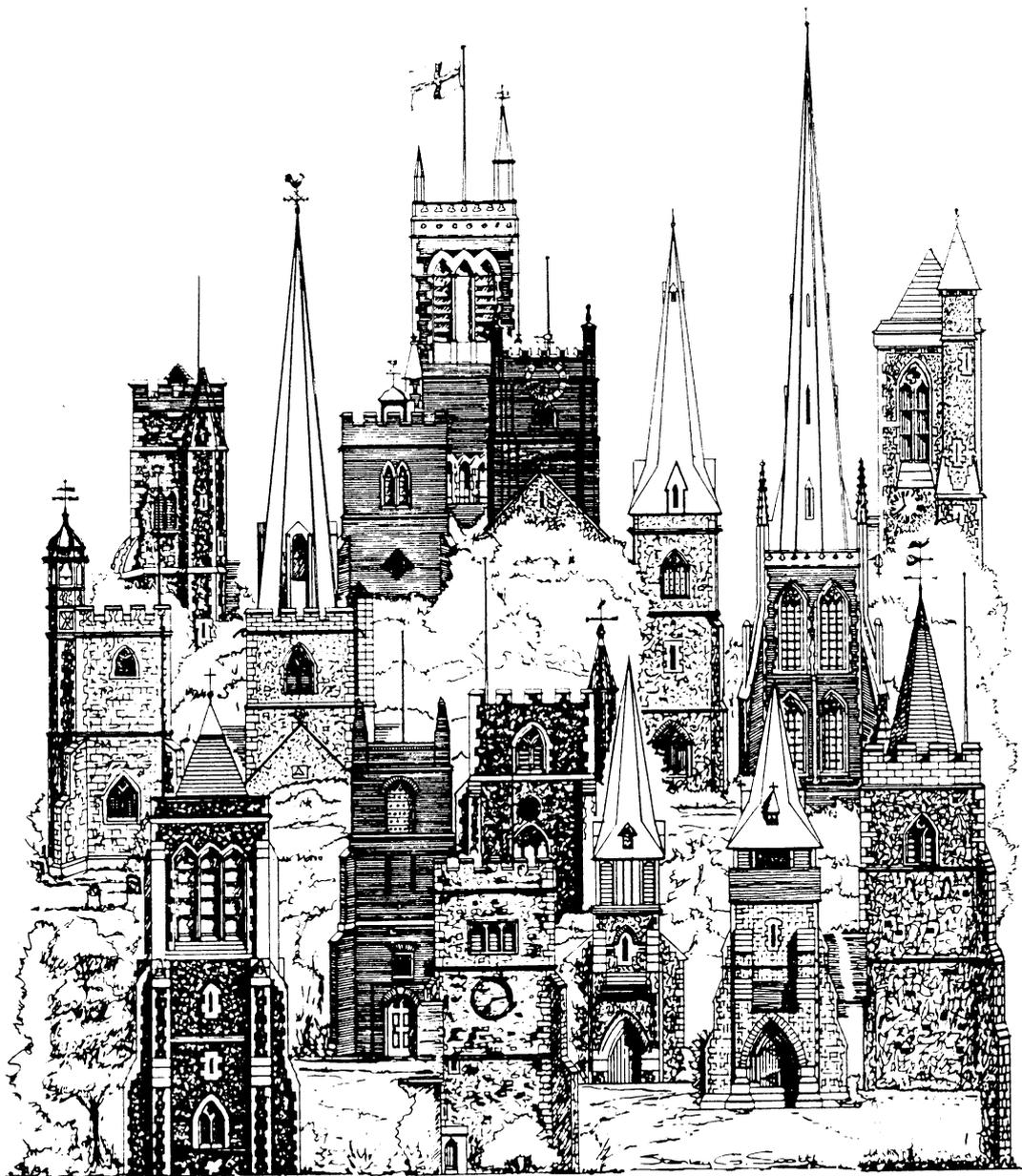


Sonning Deanery Branch

NEWSLETTER

May 2006



Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers

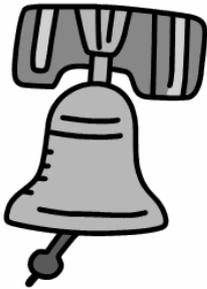
Ringling Master's Wotsits

Hello everybody, and welcome to the May newsletter.



As you'll see later in the newsletter, John Harrison has been given an award, and Sonning won the Striking Competition. There was also a Branch Practice after the competition, which was... a long time ago! (But was good, as far as I can remember.)

Most towers in the Branch rang for the Queen's 80th birthday on 21st April. Many thanks to all who were involved, and congratulations to those who successfully rang quarter peals.



The May Branch Practice was at Sandhurst St Michael's on May 20th, and was very good despite being poorly attended (actually 10 people was excellent attendance given that it clashed with the Guild AGM, and everybody I'd spoken to told me they weren't coming!). We rang lots of Cambridge (minor), Reverse Canterbury, Plain Bob, Single Oxford Bob, Norwich, Stedman and Plain, Little and St Clements spliced.

All towers should have received (or will receive soon) copies of the ODG annual report, and the latest OddBob. Please have a look at these (especially the articles about Communications and Emergency Lighting in OddBob). Remember that anybody can write for OddBob, so *please* if you have anything of interest, write it down and send it to Rob Needham, who has just been elected OddBob editor. And don't forget to send it (or anything else) to Daniel for the Branch newsletter too!



Louise Marshall

Binfield & Warfield

Binfield and Warfield are continuing to share practice nights. This is decided on a week-by-week basis so check with Simon Feather (simon@feather.me.uk 01344 453514) or John Harper (jr.harper@ntlworld.com 01344 425785) before coming to a practice.

Sonning Open Day

On the Sunday and Monday of the 'Whitsun' bank holiday, Sonning village is open to visitors. There are usually about six private gardens open (not all on the same day) and they are delightful. There will also be a large number of 'scarecrows' dotted about the village, including one made by the Sonning bell ringers. There will also be visits up the tower from 2 to 4 pm on both Sunday 28th and Monday 29th May, for a good view from the roof.

A special parking field is made available, so no difficulties there, and you can buy a map which shows the location of the gardens and all scarecrows. When you have seen them you can vote for your favourite scarecrow. The last time this event was held there were about 70 scarecrows round the village, and I can recommend this as a day out.

Rob Needham

Hello Louis

Alan Smith and Ann Daniels, Sonning bell ringers, have had a baby boy, Louis Joseph Edward Daniels-Smith. He was born at 1.04pm on 04/05/06, and weighed 8 pounds 6 ounces.

Alan and Ann have been regular ringers with Sonning since before the millennium, and they were married at St. Andrew's church, Sonning. We of course rang after their wedding (including a short ring by Alan himself), and several of the band enjoyed their reception afterwards



Daytime Practice

I have booked the tower for another daytime practice. The date is Tuesday 6th June, at the same time 2-00 to 3-30 at All Saints Wokingham . As with the previous ones, I will confirm that it is going ahead when I know that there will be enough people present to make it successful, so please let me know if you intend to be there.

We will ring whatever methods people wish. Last time, we ranged from Plain Bob to Surprise, and we rang both six bells and eight bells. If there is a method you would particularly like to ring, please let me know, so I can ask other people to look at it too.

Please reply if you think you will come. Remember, it will only go ahead when we have enough people to ensure no one is disappointed .

John Harrison

Surprise Major practices at All Saints Wokingham

It is five years since we started inviting Branch members to join us for special Surprise Major practices, and it seems worth an update, since not everyone will remember the original announcement.

Our aim was then, and still is, mutual benefit. Having visitors enables our Surprise ringers to ring more than we would at our normal practices. In return our visitors can also enjoy an evening of Surprise ringing that they might not get at their own towers. It is also tidier having a whole evening planned, because it means our non-surprise ringers get a night off. (We offer to arrange something special for them, but they don't always take up the offer).

One thing we always do is make sure there will be enough people to make it work. For each practice, I send out e-mail invitations, and only confirm the practice when I know we have enough people. Otherwise it would be unfair on visitors who don't get what they came for, and on our other ringers who lose their practice. If you are not already on the invitation list, and would like to be so, then please let me know. We aim to hold the practices every two months, and the dates are known in advance, but if you just turn up without telling us, you might be unlucky. In any case, it is not very helpful.

So far, only one practice didn't go ahead, but a couple of others came very close to doing so. No process is foolproof of course, if several people go sick on the same day for example, but the risk of disappointing people is much lower.

Over the years what we ring has varied from the routine to the exotic. We always ring the basics like Cambridge and Yorkshire. We usually manage to ring several of the Standard Eight. We have from time to time rung other things like Ashtead, Lessness, Glasgow (and I think Wokingham). What we ring depends on what people want. If someone is just starting to ring basic Surprise, then we ring more of that. If someone asks to ring a special method, then we try to get enough other people to learn it. We aim for everyone to benefit.

If you are interested in joining us, then please contact me.

John Harrison 0118 978 5520 john@jaharrison.me.uk

Winners by a Fault

The Branch 6-bell striking competition took place at White Waltham on Saturday April 22nd and four teams took part. The draw for order of ringing took place at 4pm, and the All Saints Wokingham band, which was drawn last, was kindly allowed to ring first by the host team of Shottesbrooke/White Waltham.

The judges were Jim Diserens and Tim Pett, and they sat somewhere in the churchyard. They had to listen to the bells above the noise of traffic and aircraft, but the bells were loud enough for this not to be a real problem. The steward for all teams was Ba Wells who had broken her arm and could not ring for her band.



The White Waltham band provided a really nice tea, which we took while the judges were working out the results. They did this quite quickly, and we assembled in the body of the church for their comments. There were some useful comments made by both judges and then the number of faults for each team was announced; the three top teams that get a striking certificate were very close. Easthampstead, which rang Grandsire Doubles, came third with 39 faults, All Saints Wokingham, which rang Plain Bob Minor, was second with 33 faults, and the winners were Sonning, which rang Grandsire Doubles, with 32 faults. So the event was won by just one fault, a truly exciting finish to an afternoon of good ringing.

The Branch wishes to thank the judges, the steward, and White Waltham band for the excellent tea.

Rob Needham

John Harrison's Contribution to Ringing Recognised at Civic Ceremony



Known to many across the country for his tireless work with the Central Council Education Committee, John Harrison's contribution to the Wokingham All Saints Bellringers and the local community was recognised at an awards ceremony held at Wokingham Town Hall on Saturday April 29th 2006.

The award was presented to John by the Mayor of Wokingham.

Jon Tutcher, a Wokingham ringer, read out the following citation to the assembled local citizens:

"Since his election as a member of the Wokingham All Saints bellringers in 1978, John Harrison has been at the heart of everything the local bellringers have been involved in – from training new ringers to installing sound control to protect local residents, from overseeing the rehangings of the All Saints bells to making the trophies that ringers compete for in local striking competitions.

An integral member of the All Saints community, John has an unmatched passion and commitment to bellringing and the preservation of its traditions and standards.

Of the 27 years since 1978, John has been an All Saints Officer for 20 of them, being:

- Tower Foreman for 12 years (an office he currently holds)
- Steeple Keeper for 5 years
- Secretary/Treasurer for 3 years

In those years where he hasn't held an All Saints office (and most of those where he has), John has been a Sonning Branch or Oxford Guild Committee member, predominantly responsible for the education and training of new and developing ringers. John has been responsible for the teaching and development of many tens of local ringers – a major contribution to the preservation of this historic art.

Being Tower Foreman entails many hours in the tower itself (John leads from the front) – two or three 30 or 40 minute sessions for services on a Sunday plus one or two 1 to 2 hour practices during the week. In addition, much time is spent phoning ringers to ensure adequate support for special services, weddings, and additional practices.

During his tenure, John has architected and driven to completion the following major projects:

- Implementation of sound control in the All Saints tower in 1982 to enable additional practices with vastly reduced disturbance to the local community.
- The removal, refurbishment, and rehang of the All Saints bells in 2004 to improve their sound and to assure their life for a further 100+ years.
- The extension of the All Saints church clock manual winding mechanism to extend the period between clock windings from 4 days to 8 days
- The overhaul and painting of the frame in which the bells are hung.

John was a major contributor to the fund raising for the All Saints “Community” appeal – he has been going out to local communities and schools and “lecturing” to them about bellringing. Not only does this spread the message about the church and bellringing, it generates funds through donations for his efforts. In addition, John has organised tower open days and evenings for the same purpose.



Refurbishment of the All Saints bells involved changing the old wooden bell “headstocks” to metal. John found someone that could convert these headstocks into small wooden bells that have been purchased, with the funds raised again going to the All Saints “Community” appeal.

Not only is John a very good ringer, he has seen some notable achievements by the All Saints band during this time as tower Foreman, most notably the winning of the Oxford Guild 6 bell and 8 bell striking competitions in 1988, and the ringing of the world's first peal of Wokingham Surprise Major in 1990.

In short, John is like no other ringer. His commitment, passion, loyalty, and drive have held the Wokingham All Saints bellringing band together for more than 27 years – a monumental achievement, and one that deserves to be recognised.”

Jon Tutcher.

Quiz competition results

Early this year Pam and Andrew Elliston organised a quiz sheet competition to raise more funds for the branch. A competitor paid £1 for a quiz sheet and could send or give the completed answer sheet to Pam & Andrew Elliston. All the correct answer sheets were put in a draw, which was made at the 6-bell striking competition at White Waltham.

The first prize was 20% of the profit made by the quiz, and this was won by Tricia Amos of Finchampstead. The second prize went to Chris Jones, a ringer at Shinfield. The remaining profit from the quiz came to £30.80, and this has been added to the branch's general fund.

Congratulations to the winners, and we hope everyone who had a go enjoyed the challenge of the quiz; the table below gives the answers. The branch thanks Pam & Andrew Elliston for organising this event

1. 26 = Letters of the Alphabet	16. 80 = Days Around the World
2. 7 = Wonders of the World	17. 4 = Horses of the Apocalypse
3. 12 = Signs of the Zodiac	18. 3 = Men in a Boat
4. 54 = Cards in a Pack (with Jokers)	19. 15 = Men on a Dead Man's Chest
5. 32 = Degrees Fahrenheit at which Water Freezes	20. 13 = Unlucky for Some
6. 18 = Holes on a Golf Course	21. 168 = Hours in a Week
7. 90 = Degrees in a Right Angle	22. 7 = Colours of the Rainbow
8. 3 = Blind Mice (See How They Run)	23. 39 = Steps (by John Buchan)
9. 24 = Hours in a Day	24. 13 = a Baker's Dozen
10. 57 = Heinz Varieties	25. 3 = Coins in a Fountain
11. 29 = Days in February in a Leap Year	26. 1760 = Yards in a Mile
12. 64 = Squares on a Chess Board	27. 1812 = Overture (by Tchaikovsky)
13. 76 = Trombones in the Big Parade	28. 8 = Pints in a Gallon
14. 1600 = Pennsylvania Avenue is the White House	29. 1001 = Arabian Nights
15. 12 = Days of Christmas or Disciples of Christ	30. 180 = Maximum Score at Darts

DIY and recycling

Reading Dave Sullivan's article about painting at Wargrave reminded me of some DIY we did at All Saints Wokingham last year. We have never been satisfied with the audibility of our bells – they were loud enough, but we would have liked them a bit clearer. After the bells were renovated, things got worse. They made a glorious sound, but it was much fuller and more reverberant.

We had been advised that internal sound management is not an exact science, and that the best solutions were obtained by trial and error. We have a large clock room between us and the bells, and we decided to try making this less reverberant, so a clearer sound would come down to us. We wanted soft, heavy material on the hard surfaces of the clock room walls. Since it was trial and error, we didn't want it to cost a lot, so we appealed for donations of old carpets. There was little response to the first request, so we asked again, and over the next many weeks we had offer after offer, all of which we accepted because we didn't want to appear ungrateful, and anyway we didn't know how much we would need. Rolls of carpets (and underlay) of shapes and colours piled up.

The work took two of us two long half days. Some pieces needed cutting while others had to be 'stitched' together (with string). Each strip, typically 5 feet wide and 12 feet long, was 'stitched' to a wooden batten, that we then hung from hooks in the ceiling boards. There was quite a lot of fiddling to cut and fit around the beams that support the clock and winding platform, door and window openings, lights, clock-face drive shafts, and so on.

The result was very successful. That was doubly confirmed on the first morning ringing after we had been at work, when someone walked in and said "you've been improving the sound haven't you". There was a downside though – the carpets don't reflect light as well as the previous whitewashed walls, so the clock room is now a bit gloomy.

We didn't use anything like all of our stock of carpet, but by chance, another tower just down the road had also got a new ring of bells which sounded too reverberant in the ringing room ... So a lot of our unused carpet is now in St Pauls.

Dave's article in March mentioned entering for the Guild Tower Maintenance Award. That's something we haven't done for a while, but we must do so again. I hope there aren't any marks to be lost for poor colour coordination or amateur stitching of wall coverings.

John Harrison

Quarter Peals

19 March 2006
St Michael's Sandhurst
1260 Grandsire Doubles

1. Fiona Sherren
2. Janet E. Menhinick
3. Graham C. Steele
4. Simon Paterson
5. Derek Palmer (c)
6. Michael J. Sherren

Rung to celebrate the life of Walter R. Hillary, former tower captain, steeple keeper and loyal member of the band for 40 years, who passed away on 9th March 2006, aged 79 years.

23rd April 2006
St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Plain Bob Minor with cover

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

Rung for the St. George's day evensong

14th April 2006
St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Plain Bob Minor with cover

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

* 800th quarter

31 March 2006
Immaculate Conception Sandhurst
1260 Grandsire Doubles

1. Kathy Hindry
2. Ruth Bockett-Pugh
3. Janet E. Menhinick
4. Simon Paterson
5. Derek Palmer (c)
6. Genine Leslie

In memory of Walter Hillary

13th April 2006
St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Reverse Canterbury Triples

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

Rung for the Maundy Thursday service

14 April 2006
St Michael's Sandhurst
1260 St Simon's Doubles

1. Janet E. Menhinick
2. Genine Leslie
3. Michael J. Paterson
4. Derek Palmer
5. Simon Paterson (c)
6. Clifford Hales

Rung Half-muffled on Good Friday
No 6 - First quarter since 1955 (51 years, Last quarter Coleshill, Warwickshire)

16th April 2006
St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Plain Bob Minor with cover

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

2 April 2006
St Michael's Sandhurst
1440 Norwich Surprise Minor

1. Graham Steele
2. Michael J. Sherren
3. Simon Paterson
4. Michael Paterson
5. Derek Palmer
6. Janet E. Menhinick (c)

In Memoriam Walter Hillary

Queen's 80th Birthday Ringing

Immaculate Conception, Sandhurst
1260 Plain Bob Minor

1. Fiona Sherren
2. Ruth Bockett-Pugh
3. Elizabeth S. Menhinick
4. Derek Palmer
5. Genine Leslie
6. Janet E. Menhinick (c)

St. Mary's, Twyford, Berkshire
1344 Plain Bob Major

1. Brian Snell
2. Pam Elliston
3. Ken G Baker
4. Jo Pocock
5. Rob Needham
6. Andrew Elliston
7. Chris J Brown
8. Michael Dane (C)

SS Michael & Mary Magd, Easthampstead,
Berkshire
1320 Cambridge Surprise Minor

1. Paul Fox
2. Nigel F. Bearne
3. Margaret Bearne
4. Daniel C. M. Chafen *
5. Judith Burbidge
6. Stephen C. Wells

1st quarter of surprise

All of the above were rung on 21st April 2006 to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Queen Elizabeth II.

St. Lawrence's
Waltham St Lawrence
1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1. Tony Evans
2. Virginia Coulson
3. Jackie Hazell
4. Derek Titford
5. Michael Dane (C)

St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Plain Bob Triples

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

Wokingham All Saints and Wokingham St Paul's shared ringers and rung for approx. 30mins at each church.



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Forthcoming Events

Tuesday	6th June	Branch Daytime Practice	Wokingham, All Saints	3:00-3:30pm
Saturday	17th June	Branch Practice (with strawberries & cream)	Barkham	5:00-8:00pm
Saturday	15th July	Branch Practice	Sonning	2:45pm