

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



July 2010, Summer Issue

July

Saturday 17th, branch practice, Wokingham St Paul's, 7.30pm - 9.00pm.

August

Saturday 21st, branch practice, Finchampstead (6), 7.30pm - 9.00pm.

September

Saturday 18th, branch practice, Waltham St Lawrence (6), 7.30pm - 9.00pm.

'Follow the Yellow Brick Road...'

As bellringers we're usually encouraged to follow the blue line, not the yellow brick road, but during May it was all about Dorothy & friends at Sonning. 'Why?' you might ask. It was time for the Sonning Scarecrow Festival!

Hearing that the church had adopted a Wizard of Oz theme, (and possibly equally critically we were kindly given 30 feet of yellow felt) we thought it fitting that we should follow a similar theme that maximised our unique location. A group of us then spent many hours creating a vast tableau, measuring about 60 feet long in total, making the characters out of a range of materials - brown fur for the lion, a hessian sack for the scarecrow, a space blanket for the tin man and an old gingham tablecloth for Dorothy. Luckily the weather was kind so we were able to spread it out in the Price's garden to complete our pinning and sewing!

For the festival itself the weather was pretty good, although a stiff wind on the Sunday meant it took on sail-like properties and some running repairs had to be made so that it was ready for Monday. Having experienced guiding/ scout leaders in the group paid dividends, as their combination of roping and knots meant there was no danger of it blowing away. We also included a recruitment noticeboard at the foot of the tower so hopefully we may even have attracted some new ringers.

As usual there was a mind-boggling array of over seventy scarecrows from the very



Sonning, St Andrew's

topical ('a hung parliament' suspended above the main road and an air crew grounded by a smoking volcano) to the more traditional. All showed great ingenuity and, with about 4,000 visitors over the two days, proved a great attraction. With teas and open gardens on the go, not only is this a great fund raiser for the village but also a good day out. It's next on over the late May Bank Holiday 2012, so I think it's safe to expect a few Olympic themed ones then!

Alison Clayton

Us and Them (2a)

In the last newsletter, I discussed the relationship between ringers and non-ringers, and cautioned against seeing it only in narrow terms of recruitment. I argued the merits of informing the communities around us about ringing, regardless of the need to recruit. In this article I will discuss some of the ways that ringers can develop their relationship with non-ringers. There are many opportunities to communicate with them, if you can recognise them and exploit them.

Your parish magazine is an easy target, which has a regular, interested readership. Editors are always keen to include articles from groups within the parish. There are lots of things you can write about, including quarter peals (especially if the dedication is church-related), outings (add some anecdotes, as well as where you went), life events of ringers (births, marriages, deaths, farewells & arrivals) AGM reports (new officers, notable events, significant discussion), spring-cleaning the tower, social events and fund raising or charity activities. Often on the back of reporting an event, you can explain things about ringing as well, for example what a peal is and why ringing one is an achievement, how striking competitions work, how it is possible to 'lose' a peal or quarter, how big bells are, how old they are, the existence of the wider ringing community, and so on.

Looking outside the parish, there's your local newspaper. It will be more choosy than a parish magazine, but providing there is a good story to be made out of your news, and ideally a picture to include, then ringing is as good a topic as anything else. It helps to make yourself known to the local news reporter for your area, so you can find out what they need and discuss the sort of stories that you might be able to provide.

Direct interaction with non-ringers needs a bit more targeting. One way is to seek out all the groups in your area and contact them. You might be surprised how many groups there are. When we did this some years ago in Wokingham, we found over twenty identifiable groups in the town, plus another dozen within the church. Not all of them responded to our invitation, but some other groups heard about us and contacted

The missing soldier

In Sonning's ringing room for many years have been photographs of two soldiers killed in the 1st World War. The photos were both in the same frame, together with a third photo of a stone plaque that bears the inscription, 'Remember the men of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers numbering 120 who fought and fell in the Great War.'

The title of the frame is, 'St. Andrews

Church, SONNING,' so we have always supposed that the two soldiers were both St. Andrew's ringers and members of St. Andrew's church. But this is where the mystery begins. In the body of the church, set into the wall, are plaques that name the St. Andrew's Sonning members who fell in the Great War. Surprisingly, one of the soldiers in the photographs is named on the church wall, but the other soldier does not appear. Why is he not remembered in the church? Why does the ringing room have his photo? Was he perhaps a Sonning Deanery ringer of another tower and not from St. Andrew's?

The inscription under the mystery soldier reads, 'Lce. Corporal Arthur H. Norcott, 3rd Batt. London Scottish, killed in action – France, October 26th 1917'. Does this name mean anything to another tower in the Branch? I would be most grateful for any information that any reader can supply.

Rob Needham



us. As a result we have directly interacted with around 2300 people in 40 different groups over a period of six years. They included scouts/guides/cubs/brownies, Rotarians, history societies, women's groups, retirement associations, members of other churches, U3A (University of the 3rd Age) groups, and primary schools (which accounted for half of our total number of people). You can invite people to you (to see the tower and bells) or you can go to them (and give a talk). We do both.

The way you organise tower visits will depend very much on the nature of your tower. We are very lucky, with stairs giving good access to all levels including the roof, which has superb views. We also have a walkway in the bell chamber, and we have an interesting clock room. You might be less fortunate, but that doesn't mean you can't do anything. Even if access to the bell chamber is difficult, you can show a bell being rung, and use a model bell to explain what is happening upstairs. Better still, if you can put a video camera upstairs, you can show what the bell is doing on a screen in the ringing room. If you do take visitors upstairs, you need to plan and manage it properly to ensure their safety. Tower visits need several of you as hosts, and it can help if you share the load around your ringers. They won't all have everything in their heads, so it is worth preparing some notes of interesting features in different parts of the tower, for them to use as a prompt. You can see All Saints Wokingham tower visit notes at: <http://allsaintswokinghambells.org.uk/docs/VisitNotes.pdf>

In the next article, I will talk about giving talks to groups of non-ringers, with some thoughts about the type of message we would like to put over.

John Harrison

2010 Six Bell Striking Competition

The day dawned bright and sunny, and five teams from around Sonning Deanery converged on Shottesbrook for the annual Branch 6-bell striking competition. After pulling the bells up, and some wrangling about what to do with the complicated electrical system (the tower has the only electrical supply in the church!), we were almost ready to start.

The judges (Jim and Helen Diserens) went off to find a spot to park their car so that they could clearly hear the bells, but not see who was ringing. We then pulled numbers out of a hat (cycle helmet actually) to decide the order of ringing.

There was a range of methods rung, including rounds, Grandsire Doubles, Plain Bob Doubles and Cambridge Surprise Minor, while the non-ringing teams enjoyed either the sunshine and scenery on offer at Shottesbrook, or the ales on offer at a nearby hostelry.

After the competition ringing had been completed there was time for one more touch for those who wanted it, while the judges deliberated.

The judges presented their findings in the church, to an audience which included those who had chosen the scenery option but, sadly, not those who had chosen the hostelry option, as they didn't make it back until after everyone had gone home!

A summary of the judges' general comments was that there was some very varied ringing. They offered congratulations to the bands that got together a team and entered. They advised that bands that ring doubles should put their strongest ringer on the tenor if possible (though it might not always be possible). The tenor can make or mar the piece. The bells sounded very nice outside.

The results were:

1 Wokingham

All Saints 18 faults Cambridge Minor A joy to listen to. Obviously an experienced band. The odd irregularity. Maybe marked more strictly than the less experienced teams.

2 Easthampstead 24 faults Grandsire Doubles

A good rhythm with the occasional irregularity. Nice ringing

3 Sandhurst 44 faults Grandsire Doubles

Erratic leads caused most faults. Cartwheeling or open leads are acceptable, providing it is consistent. A reasonable rhythm.

4 Sonning 58 faults Plain Bob Doubles

Settled a bit, but then got scratchy. The knock-on effect [see below] led to many faults

5 Twyford 67 faults Rounds

A valiant go. Some were quite good at the times when they settled. It was a nice slow pace, and he was quite impressed. There



was a knock-on effect if one bell held up or pulled in, a mark of an inexperienced band. It is vital to keep the rhythm. The tenor rang very well.

Congratulations go to Twyford for entering a team with one member who has only been ringing seven months, and two who had not rung outside their home tower before this week.

The environmental prize (a virtual award!) went to Sonning, with 50% of the band making their way to Shottesbrook using cycle power. Sonning also took the (again virtual) award for youngest ringer to take part, with Llewelyn Milford-Moore ringing the tenor at the ripe old age of 14 years (and having cycled to get there).

For pictures of the teams please see the SDB website events page:

<http://odg.org.uk/sdb/events/index.html#6B2010>

Simon Milford

Ringers Wanted at Wargrave.

We are currently somewhat short of numbers at Wargrave.

Our practice is from 7:30 to 9:00 on Wednesdays. We are practising Plain Bob, Grandsire and Reverse Canterbury Doubles. Anybody who would like to polish their skills in these methods, or indeed in any others, would be most welcome. (Stedman Doubles learners especially welcome.) For more information please ring me on 0118 940 1378. Dave Sullivan

New members at Sandhurst St. Michael

At the branch practice at Barkham on Saturday 15th May a short branch meeting was held. The only item on the agenda was the proposal to elect three new ringers at Sandhurst St. Michael as members of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers. The proposed new members are Louise Thomason, Lyn Newman and Jayne Durandt. We are delighted to welcome them as full members of the Branch and Guild, subject to ratification of their membership at a subsequent General Meeting. Rob Needham

Quarter Peals

20th June 2010

St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Doubles: 60 Stedman, 240 Grandsire,
240 St. Simon's, 240 St. Martin's, 480 Plain

Bob

- 1 Andrew Elliston (C Stedman)
- 2 Pam Elliston (C St Martin's)
- 3 Rob Needham (C Grandsire)
- 4 Joyce Vernon (C St Simon's)
- 5 Alan K Barsby (C Plain Bob)
- 6 Keith Vernon

Conducted by ringers 1 to 5

20th February 2010

All Saints Wokingham,
1260 Stedman Triples

- 1 Jon P Tutcher
- 2 Richard H Johnston
- 3 Edward JW Manley
- 4 Kenneth R Davenport
- 5 John A Harrison
- 6 Neil G Curnow
- 7 W Nigel G Herriott (C)
- 8 Christopher P Cole

Rung in memory of Rev FE Robinson, who
was buried in this churchyard on

19th February 1910

30th May 2010

St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Rob Needham
- 2 Pam Elliston
- 3 John Middleditch
- 4 Joyce Vernon
- 5 Peter Kemm
- 6 Robert Partridge (C)
- 7 Alan K Barsby
- 8 Keith Vernon

Rung to mark the annual visit of the
Sonning/Ligugé Twinning Association

14th March 2010

All Saints Wokingham,
1280 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1 Mary Spence
- 2 Graham E Slade
- 3 Julie B Goodchild
- 4 Richard J Woodward
- 5 Neil G Curnow
- 6 Nigel AL Mellor
- 7 Jonathan P Goodchild (C)
- 8 John A Harrison

For evensong on Mothering Sunday. 1st as
conductor.

11th April 2010

St. Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire
1280 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Brian Snell
- 2 Pam Elliston
- 3 Rob Needham
- 4 Alan K Barsby
- 5 Andrew Elliston
- 6 Richard Bennett
- 7 Ken Davenport
- 8 Simon Farrar (C)

Rung as a 12th birthday compliment to Ed-
ward Farrar

28th March 2010

All Saints Wokingham
1376 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Elizabeth J Davenport
- 2 Mhairi C Miller
- 3 Katie J Tutcher
- 4 Phillippa H Mitchell
- 5 Edward JW Manley
- 6 Graham E Slade
- 7 Jon P Tutcher
- 8 John A Harrison (C)

For evening service on Palm Sunday

The Bob Calling (and some singles) course (abridged)

On a beautiful sunny day, Saturday 10th April, Sonning Deanery Branch members met at Binfield for a morning of Bob Calling training. The purpose of the course was to give members who had very little or no experience of bob calling a chance to try calling a touch. The course was organised and given by Rachel Moss, our chairperson until recently, and she was helped by John Manley, our Deputy Ringing Master, and Andrew Moss our ex Secretary. The remaining members were bob calling trainees, and all benefited from several practice sessions of calling a touch in their chosen method.

The training started with some guidelines from Rachel that are applicable to calling any touch – I particularly liked the advice, 'Work out how to recognise when you have finished the touch before you start.' It reminded me of my first driving lesson – learn how to use the brake to stop the car before moving off! Rachel also handed out some useful summary tables of exactly when to call the bobs and what you did at the bob.

As this was the first step on the long journey to becoming a conductor, the methods and touches were kept to the most common and well known ones. In the first half of the morning three members practised touches of Bob Doubles, and in the second half of the morning three other members practised touches of Grandsire Doubles. All trainees called some touches successfully.

All the trainees learnt a lot from the course and we owe Rachel our thanks not only for the excellent tuition and handouts but also for the hot drinks and cakes she provided.

Rob Needham

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