

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter

January 2010, Winter Issue

January

Saturday 16th, Branch Practice at White Waltham.

The time for this has been changed and is now 4.00pm to 6.00pm (not 10.00am to 12.00pm as noted on the Branch Practice cards and as currently shown on the website).

February

Saturday 20th, Branch AGM at Twyford. Ringing from 3.00pm followed by service at 4.00pm and then tea, meeting and further ringing.

March

Saturday 6th, Branch Outing. Towers to be confirmed.

Saturday 20th, Branch Practice. Venue and time to be confirmed.

April.

Saturday 17th, 6 Bell Striking Competition at Shottesbrooke.

Competition between 4.30pm and 6.30pm. This will be followed by a skittles evening at the Jack O' Newbury pub.

Situations Vacant - Your Branch Needs You!

At the AGM on 21st February at Twyford, the current Branch Chairman and Branch Secretary will be standing down.

The Branch Chairman's main role is to Chair the two Branch meetings in the year and any officers meetings that are held. The Chairman also arranges the draw for the two branch striking competitions. To do this role you don't have to be an experienced ringer – just enthusiastic. The ability to chair meetings is also an advantage but not essential.

The Branch Secretary's main role is to act as the central point for all communication to branch members by keeping them informed of branch and guild events. Other jobs include minute taking and organising the venues for branch practices. As with the Chairman, you don't have to be an experienced ringer – just enthusiastic. Good organisational skills would be an advantage in carrying out this role.

If you think you have the enthusiasm to carry out either of these roles or any other officers' roles then please contact any of the officers. Also, if you think there is another person who would be interested, have a chat with them and then put their name forward to one of the officers.

If you want any more information about any of the officers' roles contact any of the officers who will be happy to fill you in with the details.

Rachel Moss

Branch Chairman

Is Change Ringing Music?

This is one of those perennial questions. Presumably it is prompted by the fact that you can't play 'ordinary tunes' on tower bells, not by ringing them full circle anyway. Dictionary definitions of music tend to talk about melody (a rhythmical and otherwise agreeable succession of tones) and harmony (an accordant combination of simultaneous tones). Not all music includes harmony, and change ringing shouldn't have any simultaneous notes, so let's focus on melody. Does ringing provide a rhythmic and agreeable succession of tones? It should certainly be rhythmic, and if it isn't, then blame the performers, not what they are performing. What about an agreeable succession, which sounds rather subjective? Does not liking Schoenberg mean it isn't music? What if you like it and I don't?

Back in the 1960s I went to a talk in Bracknell on computer generated music. The presenter started by asking the audience what they thought music was. The answer I remember was 'It's music if you can tell when a wrong note is played'. That clearly links music to the human mind, but to our in-built sense of what 'fits', rather than to personal taste. The presenter went on to explain that music occupied the middle ground between sound sequences that were completely random and those that were completely predictable. His subjective explanation was that we need some relationship between successive sounds to give coherence to the overall sequence, but that too much predictability leads to boredom.

He went on to demonstrate how a judicious mix of rules and randomness could produce something that sounded like Mozart on an off day. At the time, I didn't make a connection with change ringing, but when I started talking about ringing music, I realised that it too fits this definition. The rules of change ringing impose two constraints on the sequence of sounds. Every note must occur once (and only once) in each 'bar' of the music, and no note may occur more than one beat earlier or later than it did in the preceding 'bar'. Apart from that, anything is possible. There are thousands of different methods, and hence possibilities for what could come next.

So to answer the original question, change ringing clearly is music. A more relevant question might be whether ringers are musicians. As performers, they don't have to control pitch or intonation, and they don't need to read music. They don't even need to know what note they are producing. But they are still responsible for timing each sound, which requires far more skill to achieve when swinging half a ton of metal than when say moving fingers on a keyboard. Timing (or as we call it striking) is critical to the whole performance.

If some ringers don't see themselves as musicians, then it will diminish their sense of responsibility for the quality of their own performance, and hence the musical quality of the whole band's performance. Is it fair on fellow ringers, and the listening public, not to make the effort to perform like a musician?

Further proof that ringing is music come recently from musicians themselves. Last year I was asked to talk to the annual meeting of the southeast region of Making Music (aka Na-

tional Federation of Music Societies). The talk, which included two performances of change ringing on handbells, went down very well and stimulated a lot of questions. As a result, I was invited to write a series of one page articles about ringing music for their newsletter.

John Harrison

The Ringing World article about the talk to MMSE is at: www.jaharrison.me.uk/New/Articles/MusicRing.html

The series of articles for the MMSE Newsletter is at: www.jaharrison.me.uk/Ringing/Music/

Tower Social

On the second Friday of each month Arborfield tower has a coffee and cake social in the church hall after the evening practice. This has become a time of chatting, discussing tower events and happens so automatically that it requires no forward planning at all.



We have found this time has boosted tower commitment and comradeship between its members and visitors that regularly help us out. You would be most welcome to join us anytime.

Hilary Pollock

Weekday Branch Practices

Once a month, (usually on the first Tuesday of the month) the Sonning Deanery Branch holds a weekday Branch Practice at All Saints, Wokingham. These weekday practices are in addition to the long-established Saturday Branch Practices and do not replace them. The branch officers hoped that a weekday practice would prove popular with members who are retired, not working, 'resting', and students during holidays/vacations.

John Harrison kindly does the organisation each month and you may have seen some of his emails that ask if you plan to attend. In this way he ensures that there will be enough members at the practice to make it viable. Attendance varies, but we practically always have at least 6, and sometimes as many as 10. We ring whatever the members present want to practice; we have rung all sorts of things from rounds to Cambridge Surprise Major.

At the November practice Hilary Pollock said that she would bring a cake to the next practice (the last before Christmas), so it was a surprise



to find that the attendance at the December practice was lower than usual. However, this meant that there was more yummy chocolate cake for those who were there. Here we are finishing up our second pieces; thank you Hilary!

Why not make a New Year's resolution to give the weekday practice a try? We will be delighted to see some new faces at the January practice and beyond.

Rob Needham

What Gets Longer Every Year?

The length of peals and quarter peals are pretty much fixed. They may vary a bit (above the required minimum) to fit the method, or for the convenience of the composer, but not in any systematic way. But one type of ringing performance offers no such freedom – the date touch. It must have exactly the number of changes for the year in which it is rung. Otherwise it isn't a date touch! There have been a few retrospective date touches, like the one of 1881 changes rung on the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Guild in 1881, and the one of 1945 changes to mark 60 years since the end of World War 2, but there is still no choice. Whether you ring Minor, Triples, Major or whatever, you still have to ring the correct length.

Because each year is different, there are no books of date touch compositions. Sometimes a few appear in The Ringing World, or on one of the e-mail lists, but most people have to compose their own. Some years are a doddle for some types of method. For example, 1984

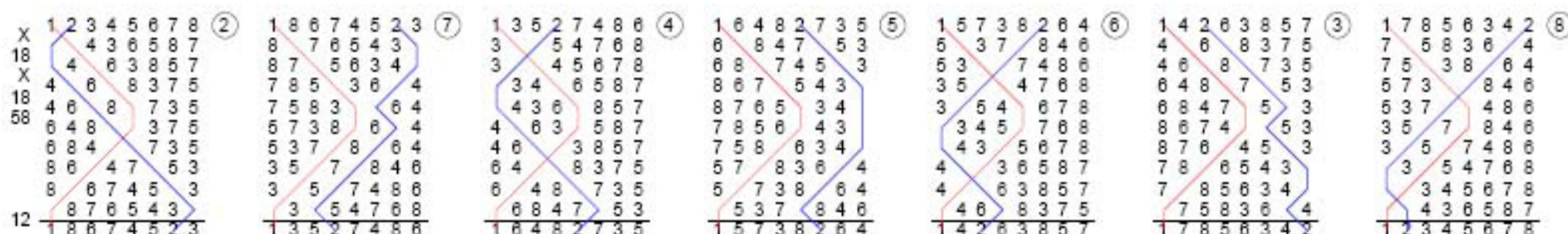
was good for Surprise Major, because it is a multiple of 32. 2000 was good for most Major, as it is a multiple of 16. 2002 was good for Triples as it is a multiple of 14. Beyond that, you need to combine methods with different lead lengths. For example, 2008 can be obtained by splicing Plain and Little Bob Major. An extra change can be obtained by starting at backstroke (ie the first change is while the Treble leads) so Plain and Little could also do 2009.

But what about 2010? That was the question I asked as the New Year approached. How could I get 10 changes of something simple enough for anyone to ring, to add to the 2000 that I could easily get with Plain Bob? A quick look in the Central Council methods collection showed about a dozen 'Little' methods with Treble hunting to 5th place. The simplest was Middlesex Little Bob, which is similar to Little Bob except that the half lead dodges (when Treble makes 5ths) are in 6-7, with 4 blows in 8ths. It looks an interesting method in its own right, so maybe we should ring more of it. It is printed below.

I always put any non-standard bits at the start of a date touch, rather than the end, for obvious reasons! Once that was fixed, I found it was easy to produce a very simple composition.

So unless you own a time machine the answer to the question in the title is a date touch. And given that inevitable fact you might not expect anyone to remark on it. But one of the bands that rang a date touch on 1st January this year added the footnote 'The longest date touch for all the band'. Well I never!

John Harrison



4th October 2009

St Mary, Twyford

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Rachel A Leitch-Devlin
- 2 John A Harrison
- 3 Andrew C Elliston
- 4 Richard H Johnston
- 5 Simon C Farrar (C)
- 6 Victoria L Parkin

A compliment to the Rev Geoff Pugh, ordained deacon at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on 3rd October.

First quarter at first attempt: 1

First quarter for 8 years: 6

29th November 2009

St. Andrew, Sonning

1260 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Brian Snell
- 2 Rob Needham
- 3 Alison Clayton
- 4 Pam Elliston (C)
- 5 Alan K Barsby
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 Simon Milford
- 8 Peter Kemm

Rung to celebrate the life of Ian Stewart MacLeod, father-in-law of No. 1

20th December 2009

St. Andrew, Sonning

1288 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Lavinia M Sullivan (C)
- 2 Pam Elliston
- 3 Alison Clayton
- 4 Brian Snell
- 5 Alan K Barsby
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 Simon Milford
- 8 Rob Needham

24th December 2009

White Waltham

1260 Plain Bob Doubles.

- 1 Naomi Andrew
- 2 Lesley Graves
- 3 Roger Martin
- 4 Caroline Andrew
- 5 Graham Firman (c)
- 6 Derek Brayne

Rung for the candlelit carol service. 1st quarter peal: 1

Quarter Peals

22th October 2009

Easthampstead

1250 Superlative S Major:

- 1 Stephen C Wells (C)
 - 2 Judith Bowler
 - 3 Margaret Bearne
 - 4 Nigel Bearne
 - 5 Ann Martin
 - 6 Barbara Wells
 - 7 John Manley
 - 8 Rachel Moss
- Ist in method: 3

6th December 2009

St. Andrew, Sonning

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Simon Milford
- 2 Rob Needham
- 3 Brian Snell
- 4 Andrew Elliston
- 5 Pam Elliston (C)
- 6 Peter Kemm
- 7 Alan K Barsby
- 8 Keith Vernon

Escape to the Country

Margaret and Nigel have spent the last 2 years trying to 'Escape to the Country' and it's not been easy! After numerous false starts and let downs, they finally moved to Bishops Cleeve in Gloucestershire on 17th December. They have been very regular and loyal members of Easthampstead Ringers for 39 years, joining the tower in 1970. To mark their going and to wish them well, we cancelled the practice on 10th December and 16 members of our band met in the Golden Retriever for drinks and a meal, much enjoyed by all. Then eight of us went on to the church to ring a farewell quarter peal. A well struck 1260 of Stedman Triples (Margaret's favourite method), ably conducted by Eddie, was rung to say goodbye and to thank them for all their support over the years.

Barbara Wells

8th November 2009 in 47mins

St Mary, Twyford

1320 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Rachel Leitch-Devlin
 - 2 Simon Farrar (C)
 - 3 Victoria Parkin
 - 4 Jillian Galloway
 - 5 Colin Parker
 - 6 Tony Ellis
- Rung half muffled on Remembrance Sunday

13th December 2009

St. Andrew, Sonning

1288 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Joyce Vernon
- 2 Pam Elliston
- 3 Rob Needham
- 4 Alison Clayton
- 5 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 David Sullivan (C)
- 8 Keith Vernon

22nd November 2009

St. Andrew, Sonning

1280 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Mary Webb
- 2 Pam Elliston
- 3 Rob Needham
- 4 David Willis
- 5 C M S Botting
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 Simon Milford
- 8 David Sullivan (C)

14th December 2009

St. Lawrence, Waltham St. Lawrence

1260 Doubles: 60 Plain Bob, 600 St Simon's,

- 600 St. Martin's
- 1 Derek Tittford
- 2 Virginia Coulson*
- 3 Rob Needham
- 4 Simon Shaw
- 5 Jo Pocock (C)

Hopefully the last quarter rung with the old ropes.* First quarter inside since her shoulder operation.



10th December 2009

SS Michael & Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead.

1260 Stedman Triples

- 1 Steve Wells
- 2 Ann Martin
- 3 Margaret Bearne
- 4 Rachel Moss
- 5 Barbara Wells
- 6 Nigel Bearne
- 7 Eddie Martin (C)
- 8 Paul Fox

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