

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



January 2015, Winter Issue



St Mary's, Wargrave

2015 Subscriptions due

All towers will shortly be receiving a list of members. This list was compiled from subscriptions and information sent to me for 2014. Can you please update and amend as necessary. It is essential that I receive **all Branch subscriptions by 28th February 2015** to enable me to collate and forward to the Guild Treasurer. Many thanks.

Sue Davenport, Branch Treasurer

Diary of Events

Saturday 17th January

Sandhurst St Michael (6)
9.30—11 Branch Practice

Saturday 21st February

Twyford (8)
Branch AGM (ringing 3-4; Service 4pm; Tea 4.45pm and AGM 5.15pm. Ringing from 7pm.

Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices (2-4pm) at Binfield on 6th Jan, 3rd Feb & 3rd March (provisionally).

Saturday 21st March

Sonning (8)
10.30am—12 Branch Practice

Monthly Surprise Major practice at All Saints Wokingham. 2nd Wednesdays: 14th January, 11th February & 11th March.

Branch Practices

The custom of holding a Branch practice at a different tower each month was established in 1898 and has persisted ever since. The aim then, as now, was to cross-fertilise ideas and skills between members of different bands. In the early 1980s attendances of thirty were common, and practices ran for three hours – from 6pm to 9pm. By the mid 1990s, with lower attendance, practices were shortened to two hours, 7pm - 9pm, and in the last few years most have been only an hour and a half. For the last 10 years practices were also held at different times of the day to see whether one time was more popular than another, but no clear pattern emerged.

Attendance can vary a lot from month to month. On some occasions the tower is packed (like the December practice at White Waltham, when it was hard to give everyone enough rope time) but on other occasions the numbers are barely adequate.

When the Branch introduced midweek daytime practices nine years ago, members were asked each month to say whether they intended to be present, and the practice was confirmed when there were known to be enough. That approach has worked well. When plenty are present people could look up specific methods knowing that they would be able to ring them, and on the few occasions when there weren't enough for a practice it was cancelled so no one had a wasted trip. The same approach has been used for the Surprise Major practices introduced last year.

At the business meeting in November, there was a consensus among tower representatives present that we should extend this approach for Saturday practices. That means you will receive an e-mail invitation each month, and the practice will be confirmed when enough people have said that they expect to attend. This will help the ringing master to plan, and will also tie in with the other decision – to focus on a couple of special methods each month.

This system relies on e-mail, which most members now have. You should already receive periodic messages about practices, etc. If you don't, then please check that the Branch has your correct address. Contact: postmaster@sdb.odg.org.uk

If you don't have e-mail, then please contact the secretary, Rob Needham (0118 926 7724) to discuss alternative means of communication.

If you want to discuss any other aspect of Branch practices, please contact the Ringing Master, Steve Wells: brm@sdb.odg.org.uk or 01344 452202.

John Harrison (Chairman)

Easthampstead "U18 Boy Band"

At a recent practice night, our youngsters rang some very respectable rounds together, whilst the adults sat out and had a rest! L-R Tom Wood (13), Charlie Wood (12), Bradley Herrington (11), Tom Helyer (16), Christopher Otim (17), Connor Bannister (14).



Branch Recruitment

Several Tower representatives at the November business meeting raised recruitment as a concern. This has traditionally been entirely a matter for individual bands with various approaches taken including seeking recruits from church choirs, youth clubs or schools, promoting ringing through local publicity, open days and talks, word of mouth and personal contacts. Many bands would like to recruit more ringers but find it difficult to do so.

The discussion at the meeting led to a suggestion that we should consider whether it would be useful for the Branch to play an active role in recruitment, and if so, what. There are two broad roles the Branch could play. One is to support the recruitment activities of individual bands, for example by providing advice, information or resources. One example of this is the recently compiled list [on the website](#) of existing recruitment resources.

The other would be to do things that are more effective when done on a larger scale. For example, during the Big Ring Pull, North Bucks Branch hired a mini ring and ran a day of demonstration in Milton Keynes shopping centre. 80 people signed up for the subsequent 'have a go' day, of which about half went on to an intensive learn to ring course and subsequently joined 14 local bands, and enabled practices to re-start at two formerly silent towers. Less ambitious examples might include developing coverage of ringing on local radio, providing a central contact rather than lots of individual bands trying to do the same.

Rob Needham and John Harrison (secretary and chairman) agreed to develop some ideas on recruitment for discussion at the officers meeting in January and the conclusions will be circulated ahead of the AGM in February.

There's more to a Branch Outing than just ringing...

After a very wet night it was a relief to see the sun as we drove to Beenham, our first tower of the day. St Mary's is in a very pretty location; inside, a lot of the walls are decorated with nineteenth century murals including a magnificent 'Last Supper'. At the back of the church is a photograph taken in 1988 showing the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie. He came to celebrate Holy Communion and preach and I was told he was ticked off by the tower captain for walking in amongst the ringers while they were ringing.

In the north aisle is a cabinet with two volumes of Thomas Stackhouse's History of the Bible in it. I was amused to read that he wrote this not at the vicarage but at Jack's Booth (now the Spring Inn) on the Bath Road. He often went there on Saturday nights, drank deeply, and preached on the sin of drunkenness the next morning!



At our second tower, St Mary's in Bucklebury (left), I saw what is described as 'the finest Norman entrance in the county and one of the best to be seen anywhere in England'. Carved around 1150, it depicts row upon row of chevrons, rosettes, faces and flowers. The interior of the church has lots of heraldic monuments and some imposing hatchments (a hatchment is a distinctive rendering of a dead person's arms, painted within a lozenge shaped frame). The printed guide directed me to the window of the Winchcombe family pew which features a sundial and tiny fly. The fly looks real, but is painted on the glass. A most unusual feature is the main stained glass window behind the altar which shows very realistic looking robbers and a beardless Christ looking up to heaven.

Next The Butt Inn in Aldermaston Wharf for a most enjoyable lunch break before our third church. Aldermaston St Mary's is set in beautiful grounds and is full of reminders of Lords of the Manor. Here I could see the ringers up on a balcony as I explored. There is a splendid alabaster monument to Sir George Forster and his wife (c.1530). The carving is superb with angels at the pillows and a little dog at Lady Forster's feet as well as sixteen tiny weepers around the outside of the chest which are said to represent the couple's children. In the north window are two 13th century roundels which are said to be the oldest glass in the county. A couple of us went exploring the area round the church, which included a pretty lake and the very ornate Aldermaston Manor (right), until recently a hotel and conference centre. It is an Elizabethan style courtyard house with an imposing tower and elaborate twisted chimneys from an earlier 14th century house.



Our final tower of the day was St. John the Baptist's Church at Padworth (right). This a perfect example of a little Norman parish church – and is one of the smallest in the county. It was entirely built in 1130 although the windows and the roof of the nave were replaced in Tudor times and the porch was added in 1890.



I'm sure I speak for everyone, including those not in the photo who only rang in the morning, when I say it was a really interesting and enjoyable outing. Many thanks to Pam and Andrew Elliston and Rob Needham for organising it.

Pauline Needham, Sonning

Peals & Quarter Peals

Saturday 6 December 2014

St Paul, Wokingham
5088 Pudsey Surprise Major

- 1 Jon P Tucher
- 2 Catherine M A Lane
- 3 J Alan Ainsworth
- 4 Ellis N Thomas
- 5 Alan K Barsby
- 6 John A Harrison
- 7 John G Pusey
- 8 Kenneth R Davenport (C)

For the Feast of St Nicholas.
Birthday compliment to Sue Thomas

Saturday 26 December 2014

St Paul, Wokingham
5040 Grandsire Triples

- 1 J Alan Ainsworth
- 2 Catherine M A Lane
- 3 John A Harrison
- 4 Alan K Barsby
- 5 David Sullivan
- 6 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 7 Christopher P Cole
- 8 Geoffrey K Cook

On the 150th Anniversary of the first peal in the tower, same method and composition (J Holt (10 part)).

Sunday 12 October 2014

Wokingham All Saints
1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Judith Atkinson
- 2 Susan E Davenport
- 3 Jane A Mellor
- 4 Kenneth R Davenport
- 5 Jonathan P Goodchild
- 6 Nigel A L Mellor
- 7 John A Harrison (C)
- 8 Kristin L Fitch

Rung before evensong in memory of Mary Cole, a former long serving ringer at All Saints

Sunday 9 November 2014

Wokingham St Paul's
1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Elizabeth O'Brien
- 2 Susan E Davenport
- 3 Geoffrey Cook
- 4 Dave Creasy
- 5 Alan K Barsby
- 6 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 7 Christopher P Cole
- 8 Peter J Davenport

Rung half muffled for Remembrance Sunday mass, and remembering Percy Blackman killed in action 11th November 1914, uncle of 2, great uncle of 1 and 8.

Sunday 7 December 2014

Sonning
1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Pam Elliston
- 2 Geoffrey M Harvey
- 3 Joanna Shepherd
- 4 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 5 David C Willis (C)
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 Alan K Barsby
- 8 Keith Vernon

For evensong and a 92nd birthday complement to Rose Willis, mother of 5.

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