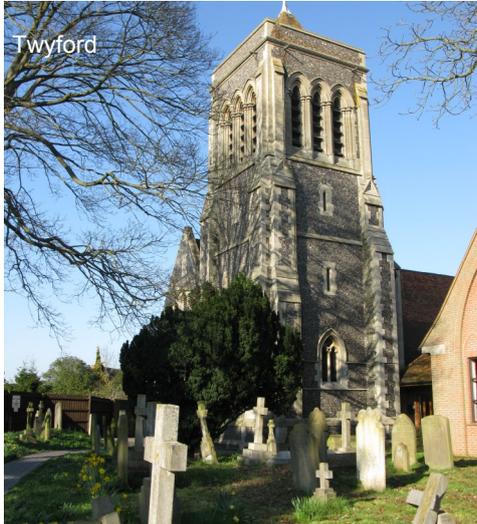


Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



April 2016, Spring Issue



Our annual opportunity to focus on good striking is upon us. On April 16th, our 6-Bell striking Competition is being held at Binfield, 4 - 6 p.m. This is also a good opportunity to meet the ringers from other towers and forge relationships. How about using this event as motivation to practice the striking in your tower? The Officers will be pleased to assist you in this training, but a good way to start is to ring rounds facing outwards!

Two years ago, a rounds and call change band won so you don't have to be expert method ringers! The judges make a big effort to come and it would be good to have as many bands as possible.

Now the evenings are getting lighter, how about visiting other towers? You will always be made welcome, will get valuable experience and help other towers out as well.

Steve Wells (Ringing Master)

Not just your average Guild AGM.....

If you think AGMs are boring, think again. Previously the **Guild AGM** stuck to the traditional format of service - tea - business meeting, with a bit of ringing beforehand. After last year's inqorate meeting, the Guild officers decided to change the format to something that would be attractive to far more members.

This year it will be in the Vale of the White Horse Branch on **Saturday 21st May**. The morning will include visits to White's Bellhanging works (with an opportunity to ring on the Balscote Ring of 12 bells, Tenor 1¾cwt) and ringing at various towers (with an opportunity to try Buckland's Saxilby dumbbell and simulator).

Over lunch there will be opportunities to have a go at handbell ringing (methods or tunes) and try out the Stallpits Ring (6 bells, Tenor 5lb) as well as displays of Guild activities, bookstall, and so on.

The formal meeting will be after lunch and the service afterwards will be a Songs of Praise, including a performance on handbells. The whole day will be rounded off with more ringing for those who want it.

I hope that many of us will go along to try out this new event, which the Guild is providing for its members.

John Harrison, Chairman

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 16th April

Binfield (6)
4-6pm 6 bell striking competition
6pm onwards Branch Practice

Saturday 23rd April

St George's Day ringing throughout the Branch

Saturday 21st May

Waltham St Lawrence (6)
10.30am—12 noon Branch Practice
& Oxford Guild AGM (see above)

Saturday 18th June

Sonning (8)
7pm—9pm Branch Practice

25th & 26th June

Ringing Stand/ demo @ Hurst Show

Saturday 16th July

Shottesbrooke (6)
7pm—9pm Branch Practice

Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices (2-4pm at Binfield) on 5th Apr, 3rd May, 7th June, 5th July (provisionally).

Surprise Major practices (Wednesday 8pm -9.30pm) at Wokingham All Saints on 13th Apr, 11th May, 8th June, 13th July (provisionally).

A Novice Bell Ringer from Wargrave visits America (part Two)

As you may recall from the last edition, my wife and I went over to America in August to visit our son and meet his new potential in-laws. They live in Chicago. During the trip we also took the opportunity to include a tour of Boston, Cape Cod and the Islands.

I had a great time with the Chicago bell ringers and we rang rounds; not always in time but never seriously wrong! And I was not the least experienced or the one who was most out of step. We were all of an equivalent level of bell ringing in-experience so I was not intimidated or embarrassed. I was very impressed by the amount of time and energy Tom is putting in building a band from scratch; in a tower that relies only on closed bells, a contraption, and a simulator. He should be applauded. I was made welcome and invited back when I am next in Chicago – an invitation I will surely accept.

Unfortunately I could not accept the invitation to attend the service ring at the local Riverside Church as I was moving on the Boston on the Sunday – maybe next time.

Onto Boston and The Old North Church. I was now feeling a bit less nervous – I will not say confident but I was looking forward to my date with history. As with Chicago I had an exchange of e-mails with Laura Dickerson who is an experienced ringer in The Old North Church band and who was extremely helpful when I requested the opportunity to ring with them. As with Chicago my tour commitments prevented me from participating in Sunday service ringing but I was made really welcome to the Saturday morning practice. I was also given contact details of other towers in the Cape Cod region where our tour would take us. Again the nature of the tour meant I could not take up the offer.



And, as my wife said, “this is not a bell ringing tour, we are touring North America not bell towers.” That put me in my place.

On the Friday we took a walking tour of Boston along “The Freedom Trail” to relive the history of Boston; and un-surprisingly this tour concluded at The Old North Church.

So, we got an early inspection of the church if not the bell tower (photo left).

I had researched the tower on the internet before we left Wargrave and was pleasantly surprised to see that the Boston tower was remarkably similar to the Wargrave tower in terms of the number of bells, their age, and their sizes so that relaxed my nerves somewhat. If I can ring at St Mary’s in Wargrave surely I can ring in The Old North Church in Boston!

The band was very experienced with only one of the members probably still a novice but more experienced than I was. I was made very welcome. We rang rounds and call changes which I am glad to report I managed quite successfully. They tried changes beyond my experience during which they recognised my novice status but they were very encouraging when I made an error and told me where I was going awry but in a friendly non-threatening manner. A great bunch of people whom I would not hesitate to visit again.

There were two surprises during the session.

- One group who were on a guided tour wandered into the Belfry whilst we were in the middle of rounds practice. Cally Perry, the bell captain cried “stand” – which I am glad to report I managed superbly well first time. The tour guide said “it’s OK we are just going up into the bell chamber.” To be politely but firmly told by Cally, “not just now you’re not - come back in two hours.” A non-plussed guide turned her brood around and departed the tower. However my wife and I were then dressed in hard hats and ear defenders and escorted up into the bell chamber by the Tower Captain whilst the others rang rounds – they are well equipped for tourists in The Old North Church they even had a bench for us to sit on and watch the bells ringing.

- And when we came down from the bell chamber Chris, my wife, was invited to try her hand at ringing. She declined twice but after persistent encouragement from Laura and Cally she agreed and had her first taste of assisted bell ringing in Boston. I don’t know if she will become a bell ringer but she did at least try it and was encouraged to do so by the team.

After the practice session we all adjourned to the park buying pizzas on the way and had a picnic on the grass in the sun.

A great day with great people. An experience I will long treasure.

Bill Bookless, Wargrave



Branch Recruitment Stand & Demo at Hurst Show



The Branch is hiring the Charmborough Mini-Ring (photo: left) for the Hurst Show over the weekend of 25th-26th June. This is a major opportunity for us to publicise ringing and recruit ringers for our towers.

We will be able to demonstrate ringing to a couple of thousand people. They will see the bells being rung, not hidden away in a tower, and they will be able to observe the skills and finesse needed to control a bell – with not a swinging monk in sight.

We will also be able to explain ringing to them, and talk about the enjoyment we all get from it..

There will be opportunities for anyone to have a go between ringing demonstrations, to find out what it feels like on the end of a rope. Small bells are good for this because they are completely safe, even in the hands of a complete novice.

We have already started planning for the event.

Steve Wells will be co-ordinating all the ringers we need on the day – to ring and talk to visitors.

Rob Needham is working on publicity material for the event.

Jane Mellor is looking at group training after the day to give interested people the best introduction to ringing.

John Harrison will be managing the event and dealing with local press and radio.

The most important ingredient in the day's success will be you!

We need volunteers:

- To help set up and dismantle the ring (photo: right)
- To demonstrate ringing
- To talk to people and explain about ringing.



Your enthusiasm about ringing might make the difference between someone walking away or agreeing to take it further – possibly as a new member of your band.

We will be operating during the whole of the show's opening times, from 10am to 5pm on both days, and we need a full team throughout that time to be most effective.

Please consider how you and your tower band could benefit from this event, and please volunteer to help make it a success! Please let Steve know when you can be available.

John Harrison, Chairman

Peals, Date touches & Quarter Peals

Saturday 30 January 2016 in 2 hrs 53 mins
Wokingham All Saints
5088 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1 Kristin L Fitch
- 2 Geoffrey K Cook
- 3 John A Harrison
- 4 Alan K Barsby
- 5 Stephen R Smith (1)
- 6 Jon P Tutcher
- 7 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
- 8 Stephen R Smith (2)

For the tower Dinner Day.
 First peal: 1. Circled the tower: 3.

Sunday 24 January 2016
Sonning
2016 Plain Bob Major in 73 mins

- 1 Simon C Farrar
- 2 Rob Needham
- 3 Geoff Harvey
- 4 Andrew Elliston
- 5 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 6 Kenneth R Davenport
- 7 David V Sullivan
- 8 David Willis (C)

A date touch to mark the 79th birthday
 on 22nd January of Geoff Harvey.

Sunday 10 January 2016
Wokingham All Saints
1264 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Barbara E Wells
- 2 Jane A Mellor
- 3 Susan E Davenport
- 4 Kenneth R Davenport
- 5 Thomas Helyer
- 6 Stephen R Smith
- 7 Stephen C Wells (C)
- 8 Nigel A L Mellor

First major quarter: 5 and to
 celebrate his 18th birthday.

Sunday 7 February 2016
Sonning
1260 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Rob Needham
- 2 Joyce Vernon
- 3 Pam Elliston
- 4 Peter Kemm
- 5 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 6 Andrew Elliston
- 7 Alan K Barsby (C)
- 8 Keith Vernon

Sunday 21 February 2016
Sonning
1264 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Stephen R Smith
- 2 Jane A Mellor
- 3 Geoff Harvey
- 4 Andrew Elliston
- 5 Andrew C P Gunstone
- 6 Alan K Barsby
- 7 David Sullivan
- 8 David C Willis (C)

Sunday 6 March 2016
Wokingham All Saints
1280 Bristol Surprise Major

- 1 Mary Spence
- 2 Jane A Mellor
- 3 Geoff K Cook
- 4 Stephen R Smith
- 5 Jonathan P Goodchild
- 6 Kenneth R Davenport
- 7 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
- 8 John A Harrison

For Mothering Sunday

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