

Sonning Deanery Branch

Newsletter



January 2017, Winter Issue



Chairman's message

The New Year is an opportunity to look back as well as forward. 2016 saw the biggest project the Branch has undertaken when we hired the Charmborough Ring (charmborough.org) and took it to the Hurst Show for two days in June, thanks to over two dozen volunteers. We got fewer recruits than we hoped from the taster days after the show, but we got a lot of interest from people who could see for themselves what goes on in a bell tower. The event was so popular that the organisers invited us back next year. All the helpers would be willing to do it again but we weren't quick enough booking the bells, which will be in Essex that weekend, so we hope to return in 2018.

Another new departure was the formation of The Loddon Ringing Hub, with Hurst, Sonning, Twyford, Waltham St Lawrence and Wargrave pooling their teaching resources and using the *Learning The Ropes* scheme promoted by ART (Association of Ringing Teachers – ringingteachers.org).

Another positive development is the increase in young ringers in the Branch – several of our bands now include young ringers. Our neighbouring branches (Reading and EBSB) have both introduced (slightly different) programmes of activity for young ringers, and at the AGM there will be a proposal for Sonning Deanery to follow suit.

Also at the AGM we will need at least two new officers to replace people who are not standing for re-election. To a large extent we rely on those who have served for many years and are willing to continue in office, but for local ringing to thrive we need new people with ideas and enthusiasm to help make it happen. The roles we need filling are Training Officer and Bookstall Officer (contests for other roles are of course welcome too). These two roles provide services to our members over and above the regular 'turn up and ring' practices.

25 years ago Sonning Deanery was a leading Guild branch developing its own training courses. That was led by Hugh Baxter, our then Ringing Master. Since then our courses have evolved under subsequent training officers, and will no doubt continue to do so.

Our bookstall has an even longer history. It was set up in 1984 to make it easier for members to acquire useful ringing publications, and above all to be able to see what they were buying before deciding to do so. It regularly appears at Branch events and there is a suggestion that it could also spend periods between events in Branch towers so that all our members can benefit from it as well as those who are at the events. That of course will be a decision for the new Bookstall Officer to consider.

Both roles are essentially co-ordinators – responsible for ensuring that things happen but not necessarily for doing all the work themselves. For example courses have been run by people other than the Training Officer, and the Bookstall Officer can delegate someone else to take it to a tower and ensure its safe return. Fuller descriptions of both jobs are on the website: www.odg.org.uk/sdb/documents/other/JobDescriptions.pdf

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 20th February

Sandhurst (6)

AGM

Ringing 3-4pm, Service, Tea, 5.15pm

AGM, Ringing from 7pm

Saturday 18th March

Easthampstead (8)

10.30am—12 noon Branch Practice

Saturday 22nd April

Warfield (10)

6 bell Striking Competition

4pm—6pm

Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices

(2-4pm at Binfield) on 7th Feb, 7th March, 4th April (provisionally).

Surprise Major practices (Wednesday

8pm —9.30pm) at Wokingham All

Saints on 11th Jan, 8th Feb & 8th

March (provisionally).

Striking competitions encourage a periodic focus on the quality of our ringing, within a sociable context. Not all of our members take part in them and we are considering whether they could be changed in any way to the benefit of members. But to do that we need to know what members think – what currently attracts or doesn't attract them and what they might find more enjoyable and/or worthwhile. By the time you read this you should already have received an invitation to take part in the survey. Please take the time to do so since it will help us.

Finally I hope you will join me in thanking my fellow officers for their support during 2016 and I hope that in 2017 your ringing will bring you pleasure, and whatever progress or challenges you attempt will be successful.

John Harrison

Reflections one year on.... from Wargrave



At the end of October half term 2015, Kitty and Freddie Gingell had their first handling lesson at Wargrave. We have used 'Learning the Ropes' throughout, and although both have a natural aptitude, this has undoubtedly helped their progress.

Most of their ringing has been at the weekly Wargrave practice and Sunday mornings to fit in around increasing levels of school homework. A couple of dedicated branch training practices, and two level 4/5 practices arranged by the newly formed Loddon Ringing Hub have facilitated the mastery of Plain Hunt, Plain Bob, Treble Bob Hunt and Little Bob.

Level 3 was reached in August, well before the target date set for their Duke of Edinburgh award. 20 minutes of call changes on the 10 at St Dunstan's Stepney on Sunday 21st with sister Becky, was followed by their first quarter on Tuesday 23rd at Wargrave. This must have been one of the hottest, most humid days of the year, but both rang very well. Their second quarter was on the following Saturday at Twyford, and the standard even better. They completed their Level 4 (minor route) assessment with a quarter of Plain Bob Minor at Twyford on 19th November. Freddie had rung Little Bob at a branch training practice which Kitty was unable to attend. So she learnt Little Bob Minor overnight and rang two faultless plain courses at Wargrave on Sunday 20th. It

was great to have elder sister Becky and her fiancé Chapman ring in these. (Becky learnt at Wargrave about 10 years ago). Practice night on 23rd November needed them both to call a plain course of Plain Bob Minor to complete Level 4. Amongst much hilarity this was achieved, and both have now been awarded their Level 4 certificates. Progress has been made for level 5 with a quarter of Grandsire Triples in December, again with Becky and Chapman.

Plain Bob Doubles is now rung regularly at Wargrave on Sundays, and on October 30th we rang a striking competition standard extent with Kitty and Freddie inside. I also derived great pleasure after some good rounds on 6, when Dave pointed out that I had taught the entire band to ring! I was busy taking pictures!



Bill Bookless has been a stalwart member of the band since he started to learn; always reliable and working hard to improve. His diligence and willingness to accept, and act on, advice means he has made steady progress. Mexican Wave was mastered during November, and it was a great pleasure to award him with his Level 2 on the ART 'Learning the Ropes' scheme on the 23rd. Bill is now learning to cover and is ringing advanced place making and call changes (first steps towards plain hunt) all with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Thank you to all our ongoing ringers, visitors & locals, learners and the more able—we couldn't have got this far without you!

Vinni Sullivan (Wargrave)

Branch Ringing Outing, October 2016



Outside St Andrew, Sherborne St John

On Saturday 15th October members of the branch enjoyed a ringing outing to five towers in the area to the north of Basingstoke. There was an interesting variety of towers both in terms of number of bells and ease of ringing. The first tower, St Stephen, Baughurst (near Tadley) had a small, wood panelled ringing room with very light bells. We were warned that there were very low projecting concrete beams up the spiral staircase and that the best way was to go on all fours. There was just room for 9 of us to squeeze into the extremely small ringing room (you had to stand very close to the panelling or face sideways!) and, as the staircase stopped at this level, we wondered how the bells were accessed for maintenance etc. We were told that they were fortunate to have an engineer who had designed a ladder which fitted under the bench and when opened out ingeniously went up to the trapdoor in the corner of the room.

They also had another piece of his work, a beautiful nesting set of boxes disguised as a table, in the centre of the room. The bells sounded good in spite of being so light.

The last tower of the morning was All Saints, Monk Sherborne, a 5-bell, anticlockwise ground floor ring with plenty of room round the bells. We entered the church through a very impressive porch with huge oak beams dating from the 14th century. The oak had been felled and then the trunk split so that beams were symmetrical in terms of the grainning. With a ground floor ring there was an opportunity to explore the many interesting features in the church which included fascinating stone carvings and interesting peal boards. Another light set of bells but they felt heavier than we expected and went well. We rang mainly Minimus methods with the 5 covering.

Lunch was at the Swan, Sherborne St John. With our table and meals pre-booked we enjoyed a leisurely meal with plenty of time for socialising. Leaving our cars in the pub car park we walked to the next tower.

St Andrew was a ring of 6, reached by a steep wooden ladder (with no rails!) and through a trap door. Here we were joined by six more ringers who were doing the afternoon only, three from Easthampstead and three from Bray (EBSB) so it was tight fit again. The bells went OK, although a couple of ringers reported their ropes suddenly jumping sideways. Here was a very old bell dated 1390, easily the oldest bell I have ever rung.

The next tower, St James, Bramley, was the only 8-bell tower of the day. It was a ground floor ring with long draughts on the ropes and was considered the most tricky to ring of the towers for the outing. However, the bells sounded fine, and an added interest was some fine and very old murals on the walls of the church.

St Mary, Silchester was our last tower, a small church standing near the Roman remains of Calleva. The five bells were rung from the back of the church and the ringing area was partially separated from the rest of the nave by a thick rope on low, movable stands. We rang more Minimus methods with a cover; a number of Minimus 'blue lines' had been thoughtfully printed in advance by Pam. However, there was plenty of interest in the church and a nice touch (no pun intended) were the portable information stands. Of particular interest was the wooden screen which had been lost at the time of the Reformation and recovered over 300 years later in 1865 in a barn. The screen is decorated with a mix of Tudor roses and the pomegranate symbol of Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon. At the end of the session the ropes were very carefully tied up and locked out of harms reach; it is a sad sign of the times that being a rather isolated church it is broken into quite frequently.

Our thanks go to Pam Elliston who did the tower bookings and all the organisation on the day. It was an enjoyable day out and not too much driving involved.

Rob & Pauline Needham (Sonning)

Peals, Quarter Peals and longer touches

Wokingham, All Saints

Saturday 5 November 2016

5088 Lincolnshire Surprise Major

- 1 Geoffrey K Cook
- 2 Kenneth J Darvill
- 3 James M Champion
- 4 Alan K Barsby
- 5 John A Harrison
- 6 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
- 7 Christopher P Cole
- 8 Douglas J Beaumont

Rung for All Saints Tide.

Wokingham, All Saints

Saturday, 31 December 2016 in 1h11m

2016 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1 David Sullivan
- 2 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 3 Geoffrey K Cook
- 4 Robert P Sherwood
- 5 Anna E Sherwood
- 6 Stephen R Smith
- 7 Nigel A L Mellor
- 8 John A Harrison (C)

Rung to say farewell to 2016, 'the year of the date touch'.

Waltham St Lawrence - 19 August

1299 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Martha Hazell
- 2 Jacqueline Hazell
- 3 Lavinia Sullivan
- 4 Kate Titford
- 5 David Sullivan (C)
- 6 Vikki Bulbeck
- First Grandsire: 4

Wokingham All Saints- 6 November

1264 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Kristin L Fitch
- 2 Mary Spence
- 3 Bradley Hetherington
- 4 Barbara E Wells
- 5 Jane A Mellor
- 6 Stephen C Wells
- 7 Stephen R Smith
- 8 John A Harrison (C)

First Major: 3

Wargrave — 23 August

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Kitty Gingell
- 2 David Sullivan
- 3 Joyce Vernon
- 4 Lavinia Sullivan
- 5 Simon Farrar (C)
- 6 Freddie Gingell
- First quarter at first attempt: 1 & 6

Wokingham St Paul—13 November

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Susan E Davenport
- 2 Geoffrey K Cook
- 3 Alan K Barsby
- 4 Dave Creasy
- 5 Geoffrey M Harvey
- 6 Christopher P Cole
- 7 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 8 Elizabeth J O'Brien
- Rung half muffled for Remembrance Service

Wargrave— 27 August

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Freddie Gingell
- 2 Geoffrey M Harvey
- 3 Vikki Bulbeck
- 4 Lavinia Sullivan
- 5 David Sullivan(C)
- 6 Kitty Gingell
- First away from tenor: 1, First cover 6

Twyford— 19 November

1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Freddie Gingell
- 2 Kitty Gingell
- 3 Rebecca Gingell
- 4 David Sullivan
- 5 Lavinia Sullivan (C)
- 6 Chapman Knott

First minor: 1,2. First inside: 2
1 & 2: Completed Level 4 (minor route) of the ART scheme.

Guild Subscriptions

The subscription for 2017 remains at £8.00 split £5.00 to the Guild and £3.00 to the Branch. All subscriptions have to be with the Guild Treasurer by 31st March 2017 to ensure your membership for the year. Can I request that all members/Treasurers ensure their subscriptions are with me by 28th February 2017 at the latest.

Sue Davenport, Branch Treasurer

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