

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



March 2023, Spring

Chairman's message



There's a lot going on in the Branch. As well as the traditional Saturday practice the monthly diary includes a midweek daytime practice, two elementary practices, an advanced practice and two youth practices run jointly with neighbouring branches. That's a huge increase from the single monthly practice when I first moved to the area.

That activity is only possible because the ringing masters and other officers put in so much effort to organise and run the events on your behalf. Their reward is seeing people benefiting from the opportunities that are provided, in some cases making significant progress, which enables them to get a lot more out of their ringing.

However, despite the increased opportunities, around half our members never attend any Branch ringing at all so they don't gain any benefit from it. If you are one of those we would welcome your views on why you don't attend Branch events, and what you think we could do to help you get more from your ringing. Contact me at: chairman@sdb.odg.org.uk or talk to any of the officers.

One event that you can attend regardless of ability is the AGM. 'Meetings' aren't to everyone's taste, but there's ringing before it, plus tea and socialising, and we normally exceed our quorum of 20. We thought we might not during Covid (with no tea or ringing) but numbers turned out to be quite high. With things back to normal this year we didn't worry, but only 19 members came, so technically we couldn't conduct the business. We decided to continue since there was nothing controversial, but we could not approve the accounts and we could not have voted on any major decision. The AGM is your opportunity to have a say and to approve (or not) what the officers have done on your behalf, and how they spend your funds. So I hope we will see more of you next year, if not before.

One thing the officers have discussed a lot is how best to provide more opportunities for members whose ringing is neither 'elementary' nor 'advanced'. It's not easy because the range of interests is quite wide, but we would like to do more.

One suggestion is 'practice matching'. I mentioned last time that some bands don't quite have enough to ring things they would otherwise be capable of. Some experienced ringers already help such towers, but they are thinly spread (and many are also involved in running Branch events). The extra person at a practice doesn't have to be an expert to be useful – he or she could be someone hoping to make progress at about the same level as the band. Hence the idea of trying to match individuals who can't progress at home with other bands at a similar level where welcoming a visitor could be mutually beneficial. We don't know what matching might be possible but we will be talking to tower captains shortly to try to find out. If you are interested, please let us know.

Last time I briefly mentioned the opportunity of recruiting on the back of the Coronation. *Ring for the King* is now in full swing, and there has been lots of TV and radio coverage (including Rob Needham and Darren Smith being interviewed on BBC Radio Berkshire). The response has been massive, with ART alone handling over 1000 requests from people looking for somewhere they can learn. All recruitment is good, but a massive surge could overload the ability to train and absorb so many new ringers in a short time. If you think you need any advice or help, please get in touch with Jane, our Training Officer training@sdb.odg.org.uk or talk to any other officer.

John Harrison, chairman

Bell Ringing interview on BBC Radio Berkshire

On Sunday 19th February Darren Smith, Arborfield Captain, and myself, Sonning Deputy Captain, had an exciting 20 minutes live on *BBC Radio Berkshire*, talking about bell ringing. No chance of correcting or cutting out bits – we just had to go for it – all a bit daunting!

I was telephoned on the Wednesday before the interview by a pleasant-sounding chap called Sam, who after a bit of a chat about bell ringing and the *Ring for the King* initiative, persuaded me to agree to an interview about bell ringing on Radio Berks. It was only then that I found out it would be at 8a.m. on Sunday! That was a clue that the interview was going to be live.

The next day I discovered that the Branch had also been approached and an email from Jane, our Training Officer, suggested Darren (recruitment success) and Jennifer and James Moynihan (Young Ringers activities). They agreed to take part (the Moynihans by phone as they would be away at the weekend) and I forwarded their details to Sam at Radio Berks. This information was not passed on to the producer or the interviewer, so when, at five minutes to eight, I said I was being joined by Darren they were quite surprised! It is a credit to the interviewer, Bridgitte Tetteh, that she took the last-minute change in her stride, and we both had a fair share of the questions and broadcasting time. However, she did say that interviewing over the phone did not mix well with a live interview, so unfortunately the Moynihans were excluded.



The interviewer started by mentioning the recruitment drive *Ring for the King*, and this was followed by how we both got involved in bell ringing. Darren then talked about his band at Arborfield, which has a surprisingly young average age, and also about the recent Young Ringers trip to ring bells in London. Darren went on to explain that towers need to be proactive in recruitment of ringers, and that he used Facebook for a recruitment campaign last September which has resulted in five new ringers.

Next Rob covered a bit of the history of bells, their growth in numbers and the enthusiasm for ringing through the 17th and 18th centuries. He explained that bell ringing was very good physical exercise, to the extent that more wealthy people used exercise machines that felt like ringing a real bell but they made no noise – hence the word dumb-bell! Rob explained that bells were a means of communication with the local area and were not just about marking church events.

After a short music interlude, Darren countered some of the myths about ringing, for example the myth that you have to be strong, and explained that it's all about technique, which is what a new ringer is taught. Boys and girls, men and women, young and old can become good ringers, and you don't have to be a churchgoer.

Bridgitte asked how the bell is rung and how it physically works, so Darren went on to explain about the wheel, the rope and the bell assembly, and how it enables full-circle ringing. He also mentioned that the bells, though heavy, are well pivoted using ball bearing races, and therefore can be rung by quite light people such as children.

Rob was asked how he learnt to ring, and he explained that his trainer (Pam Elliston) stood beside him and pulled the rope with him until he developed the right strength and length of pull to ring unaided. Rob stressed that this is still a valid teaching technique today. Rob went on to confirm that there is enough time right now to get new ringers trained and able to join in with their band for the coronation ringing, but that very soon time would run out.



Bell Ringing interview on BBC Radio Berkshire (continued)

Darren talked about the special ringing that many towers, including his own, had done last year, and he explained about the bells being fully muffled for the Queen's funeral and how the muffling is done.

We finished by explaining ways that a new ringer could get in touch with a local tower. Darren mentioned tower websites, and also the general website bellringing.org that one can use to find bell ringing teachers nearby, and Rob went into more detail about how to find and contact the ringers at a local church with bells.

Darren has created a YouTube video that uses the interview sound recording, and it can be listened to at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhr4dzRl3xo

Postscript: Similar local radio events about *Ring for the King* were taking place around the country that Sunday as a result of a promotion to local radio stations by the CCCBR.

Rob Needham

News from All Saints, Wokingham

All Saints Wokingham is still out of action as a church because of its refurbishment. However as a belfry life continues well, although access is across what is effectively a builders yard. It's now official that we will not be back in by Easter, but the official reopening with the bishop has been set for 23rd May so we hope the constructors hand the church back by then!

Steve Smith



Peals, quarter peals and interesting rings

Two towers in the branch, Sonning and Wargrave, rang on Commonwealth Day 13th March to mark the 10th anniversary of the signing of the *Flag for Peace* charter by our late Queen. Here is a picture of the Sonning band.

—ooOoo—

By searching on *BellBoard* I have found performances of the frequent ringers from the start of November 2022 until now, listed in alphabetical order of member's surname. My apologies to any members whose performances I have missed. The Shottesbrooke band are now ringing quarters and peals frequently.

Vikki Bulbeck, Shottesbrooke & Clewer: 41 Quarter Peals (QP) 2 Peals (P)

Chris Cole, St Paul's: 5QP (2 in hand) 2P

Lesley Cross: 18QP 1P

Ken Davenport, St Paul's: 7QP (4 in hand) 4P in hand

Pam Elliston, Sonning: 6QP

John Harrison, All Saints Wokingham: 7QP (3 in hand) 3P

Jacqueline Hazell, Shottesbrooke: 29QP

Martha Hazell, Shottesbrooke: 24QP

Nigel Mellor, All Saints Wokingham: 12QP (5 in hand) 16P (1 in hand)

Janet Menhinick 22QP (16 in hand) 15P (5 in hand) 1200th peal on 3rd Feb

Sue Portsmouth, Sonning 4QP + 88QP on Ringing Room (RR)

Graham Scott, Easthampstead 1QP +13QP on RR 1P

Simon D Smith, Shottesbrooke: 20QP 1P

Stephen R Smith, All Saints Wokingham: 2QP 3P

Vinni Sullivan, Wargrave 7QP +23QP on RR



Below is a small selection of peals or quarters based on young ringers involved, and/or a 'first' for one or more of the ringers, and/or mostly SDB ringers in the band. *Ed.*

St John the Baptist, Shottesbrooke, Berkshire

Sunday, 6 November 2022 in 41m

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Charley Smith
2 Jacqueline M Hazell
3 Martha C Hazell
4 Vikki E M Bulbeck
5 Simon D Smith (C)
6 Lesley S Cross
Charley's 1st QP on treble (aged 11) ; 1st QP away from tenor; 9th QP this year (1st ever QP on 1/1/2022, her 11th Birthday).

St Michael and St Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead

Wednesday, 23 November 2022 in 42m

1300 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Barbara E Wells
2 Noah Whitfield
3 Elliott W Aldridge
4 Graham N Scott
5 Daniel Chafen (C)
6 Andrew I Mitchell
For Confirmation service.
First QP inside: 2

All Saints, Wokingham, Berkshire

Sunday, 1 January 2023 in 73m

2023 Spliced Bob Major (2 methods)

Composed by John A Harrison

1 Lynne G S Jordan
2 Nicola M Lee
3 Daniel C M Chafen
4 Alan K Barsby
5 Pete Jordan
6 Anthony W Gordon
7 Stephen R Smith
8 John A Harrison (C)
Rung to welcome the New Year.
First date touch: 2, 3

St Paul's, Wokingham, Berkshire

Sunday, 13 November 2022 in 48m

1260 Grandsire Triples

1 Derek Palmer
2 Steven J Field
3 Richard M Bishop
4 Elizabeth J O'Brien
5 Alan K Barsby
6 Christopher P Cole
7 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
8 Peter J Davenport
Half Muffled for Parish Mass and Act of Remembrance.

St Nicholas, Hurst, Berkshire

Sunday, 27 November 2022 in 48m

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Becki Shuttleworth
2 Claire Shuttleworth
3 Owen Slade
4 Rob Needham
5 Graham Slade (C)
6 James Moynihan
1, 6: First quarter at first attempt.
Rung by two members of SDB Young Ringers

All Saints, Wokingham, Berkshire

Saturday, 4 March 2023 in 46m

1264 Plain Bob Major

1 Kristin L Fitch
2 Jane A Mellor
3 Daniel C M Chafen
4 James H Moynihan
5 Steven J Field
6 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
7 Graham E Slade
8 John A Harrison
Rung during open day for the church's *SpaceForAll* restoration programme.
For the birth of Reuben George Slade, grandson of 7.
First quarter on 8 and first away from cover: 4.

St Andrew's, Sonning, Berkshire

Saturday, 19 November 2022 in 53m

1260 Grandsire Triples

1 Rob Needham
2 Geoffrey M Harvey
3 Lavinia M Sullivan
4 Kenneth R Davenport
5 Pam Elliston
6 Robert Partridge (C)
7 Alan K Barsby
8 Andrew Price
Congratulations to Geoff Harvey on the 70th anniversary of his first peal, which was at St Stephen's, Ealing.
Kelvin Britton and Sue Portsmouth would like to be associated with this quarter.

St Mary's, Twyford, Berkshire

Tuesday, 27 December 2022 in 2h 56m

5056 Plain Bob Major

1 Simon C Farrar (C)
2 Graham E Slade
3 Holley F Wakeling
4 Matthew J Steele
5 Nigel A L Mellor
6 Daniel J Page
7 Richard I Bennett
8 Jack E Page
First peal: 4
First major: 3

All Saints Wokingham, Berkshire

Saturday, 28 January 2023 in 3h 4m

5152 Berkshire Surprise Major

1 Kristin L Fitch
2 Janet E Menhinick
3 Stephen R Smith
4 Graham E Slade
5 John A Harrison
6 Kelvin R Britton
7 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
8 Jon P Tutchter
Rung on tower dinner day.
First in method for all except 2.

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