

Banbury Branch Newsletter

May 2016

Meet the Master



Lionel Smith

I was born in Fawley (6 bells. 8cwt), Hampshire in October 1942. My parents attended All Saint's church where my father was churchwarden, bellringer and member of the choir.

I learnt to ring aged 12, when I was dismissed from the choir because the vicar decided I was no longer able to sing in tune. Sadly still true today.

Bellringing at that time was very much of the old school. We each had our own bell, mine was number 2, and learning to ring involved memorising a series of numbers so that we could get through a plain course of Grandsire Doubles. Expansion of the local Esso Oil Refinery during the 1950's brought in a new breed of ringers who could ring a range of methods. This proved a turning point for the tower and real progress began to be made. I rang my first quarter peal (Kent Treble Bob Minor) in January 1960.

In 1966 Fawley bells were rehung and a new ringing chamber was constructed higher up the tower. This coincided with the departure of our tower captain and my subsequent election to that position. The replacement of the plain bearings and the shorter draft made the bells easier to handle, thus making the tower much more suitable for teaching new recruits. Around this time Derek Jackson, a teacher at nearby Totton Grammar School, set up an after school bellringing club and asked if he could bring some of his new recruits to our practice at Fawley. This marked a new era in my ringing career and my life in general.

New ringers who had been taught by Derek, one of which was Elizabeth Banks (Liz), joined our band, and a number of other local young people were recruited. With Derek's support Fawley, together with friends from neighbouring tower Eling, made rapid progress. This band flourished and over the next few years were very active ringing quarter peals, mostly of doubles and minor. Our portfolio of Doubles was gradually increased with various quarters up to 69 methods / variations being scored.

In 1972 Liz and I were married in Fawley church and in 1977 we moved north and there began a 35 year stay in the North East. In the first few years we rang at Thornaby-on-Tees (8 bells 10cwt), a not very easy to ring set of Llewelin & James bells. We then moved to the parish of Whorlton-in-Cleveland (6 bells 7cwt) on the edge of the North York Moors. Within the same benefice we also had Carlton-in-Cleveland (8 bells, 15cwt). Both sets of bells were rehung during my period as tower captain. For a time I also served as Secretary and then Ringing Master for the Cleveland and North Yorkshire Branch of the Yorkshire Association. Because of my age I qualified for Life membership of this Association.

I have never had a great interest in ringing peals: my total is 19. On the other hand I do enjoy ringing quarters and I am a firm believer that ringing quarters is one of the best ways to learn a method. My total is somewhere in the upper 500's.

During our period in North Yorkshire our son Richard and daughter Frances were born and both learnt to ring once they reached the age of 11. Both took part in a number of quarters but it was not something Frances particularly enjoyed and she choose not to continue.

Richard however, once he went off to university, moved into ringing realms way beyond mine: he rings methods I've never heard of, belongs to the ASCY, is President of the Cambridge University Guild of Change Ringers and a Director of The Ringing World.

I retired in 2000 and in 2011 we decided to move South to be nearer to our children, one in Bristol and one in Cambridge, hence our arrival in Bodicote, half way between the two.

And his Deputy



Alison Varney

Some of us have known Alison for many years and she is a familiar face at several towers on practice nights, at branch events and ringing for weddings, She lives in Banbury, is a member of the Bloxham band and goes along to Crinklies. She also enjoys walking her dog. This Summer, however, she is planning a longer route and has given us the details.

Walking and ringing for charity

On Saturday 25 June an event has been organised by a ringer from Sussex, Julie McDonnell, to raise money for two charities, Anthony Nolan and Bloodwise, and to encourage more people to sign up to the donor register.

Julie has suffered from leukaemia herself and has planned a walk along part of the Pilgrim's Way in Kent from Wye to Canterbury, with ringing at several towers on the way. She has done a marvellous job enlisting companies to assist with transport and refreshments and arranging for special touches and quarter peals to be rung at some of the towers involved.

There are details on Julie's web-page, juliemcdonnell.wix.com/strikeback and there have also been posts on the bellringers group on Facebook. There is also information on the Virgin money giving site where it is possible to pledge money and keep up to date on progress:

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/bellringersstrikeback>.

Julie is also keen to generate as much publicity as possible and is being interviewed on the radio soon, there are articles planned in various publications and we shall apparently be getting a visit from ITV on the day (hopefully I shall be too near the back of the field to qualify!). If anyone is planning a quarter peal/special touch on or around that date and would like to record it to this event Julie would be very grateful.

My interest in this was sparked by the fact that Wye is the first tower and I spent 3 years ringing there during term time, although not very expertly! Also, having just experienced the annual Bodicote bellringers walking trip to Scotland for the first time am now slightly fired with enthusiasm for walking, although I don't think we did as many as 14 miles in one go while we were there. Hopefully the North Downs will also be a bit warmer than the Cairngorms, so we probably won't need the whiskey!

I have a sponsor form, which I shall be carrying around ringing practices, but it's probably just as easy to go directly to the Virgin site if anyone wants to contribute to this worthwhile cause.

AROUND THE TOWERS

Adderbury

We had a very busy Christmas period ringing for all three Services on Christmas Day. We also rang in the New Year and welcomed our usual visitors from the village while we rang after midnight.

The series of Quarter Peals, rung on half muffled bells, continues with the local band attempting to ring a QP on the 100 year anniversary of each of those recorded on the village war memorial who died in service during the first World War. The most recent of these was to commemorate the death of the great uncle of one of our ringers and, as it was during April, we decided to ring April Day Doubles.



Our spring tour this year was to Nottingham, being an old stamping ground of Colin Lee who went to university there. We enjoyed some good ringing at a mixture of towers ranging from ten bells in the city centre to a five bell tower, and a six bell tower attached to a condemned church with a two and a half hundredweight tenor. Quite a challenge for most of us used to the somewhat heavier bells at Adderbury! Many thanks to Colin for organising a very enjoyable weekend.

Trevor Trivett

Banbury

The last few months in Banbury tower have been full of little mysteries. Where did the last muffle disappear to when we took them off after Remembrance Sunday? How did we fit 40 plus brownies and their leaders into the ringing chamber on a cold November evening? Whose were the footsteps on the stairs when we thought we were all safely locked in the church at a March practice night? Why did the Pepperpot Lot fail to win the quiz at Tadmarton? How will the new vicar reach the bell rope he needs to pull during his installation service?

Well all of these have been resolved. James

and James from Whites found the muffle lurking under the frame in a very dark corner (if you can call it that in a circular tower) during the annual inspection in December. The brownies etc. sat very close together on the seats, steps, boxes and floor but still had room for some to try backstrokes. The footsteps belonged to Camila, our churchwarden, in need of some support to investigate the alarm going off in the choir vestry building works. Steeple Aston were much better at answering the questions correctly! And Barry, Richard and Robin have secured the chiming bell rope about 20 feet above the ground (to deter wannabe ringers thinking it might be fun to have a go when no one's looking) ready to be let down from above when needed.

While these things all needed our attention we have managed to maintain Sunday ringing and practices on most weeks. We rang for a wedding in January when the hats rivalled ladies day at Ascot. In February our AGM took place and we were pleased that Bill Harvey, who reached his 85th birthday in April, was able to attend. He no longer rings due to health problems but remains a friend to the ringers. A ringing training session was held in February which Nick and Penny attended.

Jean Davis

Deddington

In addition to our normal ringing on Sunday morning and practice nights, we also rang for three weddings. In May we rang for a couple, who, having married elsewhere earlier that day, had asked for the bells to be rung before their reception at the Unicorn Hotel. This we did for about thirty minutes. There were visiting ringers on two occasions from the Welsh College's Society and the St Mary Abbots Guild in Kensington. On Sunday 10th May we rang before the service to commemorate VE day and on Saturday 15th August we rang before the parade and Church service to commemorate VJ day.

The Branch also rang as usual on Boxing Day morning. The standard of ringing in general is progressing slowly. We have put some effort into practicing and learning new methods and the newer members have continued to learn and improve their skills. Attendance on the whole has been very good, on Sundays we have managed to ring all 8 bells on most occasions and practice nights have been very well attended.

We held a tower open morning on Saturday 27th June, a day that coincided with the farmers market.

A R O U N D T H E T O W E R S

It was very well attended and we had over sixty visitors during the morning who were allowed to see the bells, see the view from the top of the tower and watch the bells being rung. It was not easy moving three groups of people at a time around the tower, but we managed it. The only disappointment was that we did not manage to get anybody interested in taking it further. Our annual dinner was held on 3rd October with 17 members and relatives attending the May Fu II restaurant.

The bells have continued to be maintained by Whites of Appleton and there have not been any mechanical problems. However the ropes have become worn over time and repairs have had to be made to them by cutting out the worn parts and re-splicing them. They will need replacing in the not too distant future.

The year ended with ringing on New Year's Eve.

Colin Cox

Mollington

We are still here ringing for most Sunday services and practice when we can.

Towards the end of September someone had the bright idea of ringing hand bells for our Church carol service, but as Bob pointed out there was only Ann left from the original team! Nothing is impossible so a new team was started from scratch. It took several weeks to get everyone together so I was substitute many times before it was decided who was ringing what. In the end it was Barrie Salter, Ann, Debbie, Geoff, Bob W., and Clare Salter with of course RAR conducting. After a lot of nervous apprehension, it went off very well.

The Branch carol service was also at Mollington and Ann made sure ever one had a mince pie and a glass of wine or two!

The Monday morning gang still find jobs to do even in the winter months. One was cleaning all the stain glass and luckily none got broken. However now the grass is beginning to grow, the mowers are out once more.

We still get requests to ring quarters and have already had two rung this year. Later in the year we are expecting some visitors who have arranged outings in the area.

Clare had enjoyed ringing hand bells so much she decided she would like to try tower bells so Bob agreed to teach her. She is doing very well. As she lives in Banbury, will practice and ring on Sundays with them, but hopefully will still have time to ring with us as well.

On April 21st we rang some Plain Hunting and Bob Doubles to celebrate the Queen's Birthday. The ringers still get involved in village activities

and the next big event is the Village Fete in May. Many are manning stalls and in the arena there is going to be a Talent Competition with the hand bell ringers taking part. They will do anything for a laugh!!!

I must finish by thanking Barrie Salter, Helen, Brenda and Rachel for supporting our practices. Without them we wouldn't be able to have any.

Diana Reeves

Steeple Aston

Steeple Aston Ringers have had a busy few months, fitting in events between their regular Tuesday evening practices and Sunday ringing.

The handbell ringers again braved the weather (no snow this year) to go house to house in the village in the weeks preceding Christmas.

Sally Cooper reported that the Christmas ringing had gone very smoothly and that we had raised £1,235 of which £1,200 was sent to Katharine House Hospice. We had a tower dinner at the Red Lion and enjoyed the usual good food, excellent company – and a drink or two! We have welcomed new ringers, including Pam and her son Jack who are very enthusiastic and improving weekly.

Housework needs to be done and the tower was thoroughly hoovered a few weeks back which necessitated changing the Hoover bag – all our male ringers got involved with this gruelling task which took at least ½ an hour much to the hilarity of the lady ringers. The following week the warm weather had enticed hibernating flies at the top of the tower to wake up ... and die all over the floor... which meant they needed hoovering up!

We rang a quarter peal to mark the Queen's 90th Birthday. On Sunday June 12th we will be attempting a full peal to mark the Queen's birthday. This will follow a Big Bring and Share Lunch in the churchyard at 12.15pm. More details at

www.steepleastonbellringers.com

Cathy Fleet

If you're coming to Banbury practice on Wednesday nights be prepared for more dodging than usual – the ladybirds have woken up!!

People in the news

British Empire Medal for local ringer



In spite of not being born in Cropredy, Les Underdown BEM has devoted 75 years of service to the village. He began at 9 years of age, pumping the old bellows organ at St Mary's, then progressed to bell ringing at aged 12, learning on tied bells during the war. For many years he was Tower Captain and is still a member of the band. He was on the PCC, has been a sidesman and helped at the Church Fete. At 17 he joined the Village Hall Committee only retiring a few years ago. From 1948-1950 Les saw national service in the Royal Air Force. Since 1952 he has served on the local Royal British Legion Committee filling a number of roles and is now President. During that time he has done much welfare work, been standard bearer since 1961 and been on parade at every Remembrance Day Service since then.

In the 1960s he was a co-founder and organiser of the Cropredy Boat Club to the benefit of many residents.

His musical talents included membership of the Jubilee Singers and playing his keyboard in the day-care Rowan Ward at the Horton Hospital. He also assisted at the Banbury Stroke Club until its closure. His award of the British Empire medal for services to the community is well deserved.

This article is courtesy of the Cropredy Crier

Sue Burchell and Rosemary Hemmings made an appearance in the Banbury Cake in December when they were pictured taking part in the traditional Christmas concert to raise money for the Banbury Branch of the Royal British Legion and the Town Mayor's Charity Fund.

Belated congratulations to:

- Roger and Myrtle Stranks (Golden Wedding)
- David and Anne Wetherall (Golden Wedding)
- Colin, Zoe, and Simon Lee (on the birth of Adam)

We are sorry to report the death in November 2015 of Norman Cooper, a former ringer at Adderbury.

THE BELLS.—The bellringers have handled their bell in an excellent manner throughout their Christmas ringing, which has been admired by practical bell ringers around the neighbourhood. Mr. J. Walton, of Adderbury, visited the belfry on Boxing Day and rang his favourite tenor through a draught of changes in which he handled his bell by ear, with an excellent fall on their beautiful peel of six. It is over sixty years ago since he made his first call in Deddington belfry, and the whole of the ringers of that time are now laid to rest in Deddington Churchyard. Mr. Walton expressed himself as very fond of change ringing if done properly, but the beauty of bell ringing is the rising and falling of the bells.

From the Banbury Guardian January 1909

Branch Members enjoying the quiz and social at Tadmarton



Quiz Master Malcolm Hensher



Anyone for a raffle ticket?



Do you know the answer dad?



The AGM on April 16th at Bodicote

This year's meeting followed the new style of a Branch practice before the service, followed by tea and the business meeting with no ringing afterwards. Thirty Three people attended. The service was taken by Liz Smith with Malcolm Dutton playing the organ. Hilarie Rogers and Colin Lee represented the Guild. The minutes of the previous half yearly meeting, the last tower reps meeting, the accounts, the secretary's report and the ringing master's report had been sent out and with a few amendments and explanations were all accepted.

Five new members were elected. Lionel and Alison were elected ringing masters and the other officers remain the same. Thanks were recorded to Heather, David and Zoe for their hard work in 2015. A decision was made that in future the half yearly meeting will consist of a full branch ringing practice held on a Saturday, followed by a short business meeting (with tea & cake where possible).

Tower reps were asked to be more proactive in passing information to members. Not all towers do send reps. It was agreed that the Tower Reps meeting should have delegated powers to make decisions except where money was involved.

The 90th Anniversary Branch peal board was on display and has since been put up in Banbury ringing chamber. For further details see information board in this newsletter.

Ringling Specials

The end of the year saw the Branch final celebration to mark its 90th Anniversary. When quarters were rung in June and July it had been planned to also ring a peal to mark the occasion. However this was not possible for various reasons and it was not until December that a band was finally assembled. On the afternoon of Sunday December 13th a peal of Grandsire Caters was rung at Banbury.

On Saturday March 5th the first peal was rung on the 8 bells at Cropredy at the second attempt. It was rung as a belated Golden Wedding compliment to Brenda and Stephen Day. Sadly only three of the original band were available to ring in this attempt.



Left the Banbury peal band

Right the Cropredy peal band



On April 21st quarter peals were rung for the Queen's 90th birthday at Banbury and Steeple Aston. There was also one at Tadmerton on April 23rd.

Well done to:

Harry Gibson (Bloxham) - first peal

Rachel McLoughlin (Wardington), Freddie Taylor (Steeple Aston), Liz Collett (Wardington) - first quarter

Answers to Wordplay 6: home, sally, over, call, up, weight, light, quick, slow, blows, changing.



The Newbury Branch hosted the 8-bell Guild Striking Competition this year, with ringing on the 11cwt 8 at St Mary the Virgin, Chieveley. Although the weather was glorious in the morning, it was pouring with rain by the time the competition started at 4.00pm so we, like most of the teams, sat in the church, unable to hear the bells but thoroughly enjoying the wonderful selection of sandwiches and cakes laid on for us.

Eight teams entered, the rules having been changed to allow an enthusiastic youth team, made up of young ringers from across the Guild, to join in. The bells were not difficult to ring, but most teams found them challenging to strike really well. That said, the judge commented that the test touch of Little Bob Major was generally rung to a good standard. The number of faults for each team ranged from 14 to 44, with East Berks and South Bucks being declared the winners. We were reasonably pleased with our effort, judged "consistent but not confident" and receiving 29 faults – we were placed 6th.

Our thanks to Zoe for getting a team together.

Lionel Smith

Information Board

- Guild support to the Ringing Foundation will be discussed at the Guild AGM at Faringdon on May 21st. Air your views there.
- Branch Practice dates for July to December will be published soon.
- Cropredy have obtained a Heritage Lottery grant for roof repairs but still need to raise £20,000
- The Guild 10 bell Striking Competition is to be hosted by the Chipping Norton branch but is being held at Banbury in November.
- There may be a branch quarter peal month in August.
- Any members who would like to attend a ringing course contact Lionel

Dates for 2016

- June 4th Striking Competition – Cropredy (note new venue)
- June 10th – 12th ringing for the Queen's 90th birthday
- July 2nd Branch Outing - Kettering area
- July 9th Guild festival – Oxford
- September 10th branch Dinner – Somerton
- October 6th Reps meeting – Bodicote (TBC)
- October 15th Half Yearly meeting – Deddington
- December 10th Carol Service – Hanwell

2017

- April 22nd AGM - Wardington

If you would like to contribute to the next edition with a puzzle, picture, wordsearch, article etc. then please send your contributions to Barry and Jean Davis at 61 Springfield Avenue, Banbury, Oxon or alternatively

E-mail bjdbellringer@btinternet.com

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