

# Banbury Branch Newsletter

June 2017

## Cropredy Uncovered



The removal of the church roof halted ringing at Cropredy for several months but it is now back on and the bells were rung on April 22<sup>nd</sup> the Branch AGM day. It must have been an interesting experience for both the builders who had returned to nail the lead down and for the occupants of neighbouring properties who got not only method ringing but hammering between touches!

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the ringers were untroubled by the fabric of the building but faced problems with the bells and fittings.

In 1894 the vicar wrote '*....if we wish our Cropredy bells still to sound over the Cherwell Valley we shall have to bestir ourselves and do something towards having them rehung. It is about six years since Mr Robinson, warden of the Diocesan Guild, told us that the bell frame must be strengthened and some of the bells quarter turned. The frame has not got stronger since then and a different bell has now to be used for the morning day bell for fear of accident to the old one.*'

It seems however that ringing carried on regardless and he continued to remark on events in the Deanery Magazine. '*Shortly before Christmas (1895) an accident .... befell the big bell ... and the clapper fell out. We have to content ourselves with five bells until it can be repaired.*' There is no report as to when this was done and in 1900 he was lamenting the lack of ringers.

By 1905 it was obvious that ringing could not continue with the bells as they were and a fund for rehanging them was set up a year later. Some ringing still took place until in 1908 '*the bells were thoroughly examined by an expert and the work deemed to be urgent and the total cost would be a little under £200.*' Fund raising then took place in earnest.

It was so successful that the Bell News carried an article in January 1909 -

### ***'Dedication of the Bells at the Parish Church***

*Through the energy and devotion of the Rev. Maurice Maltby and Mrs. Maltby, the parish, with the aid of churchpeople and others in the neighbourhood, have succeeded in raising nearly the whole of the £200 required for the purpose of rehanging the bells. The sum already raised is about £181, which is very creditable for a country parish, and especially at a period of depression in trade. The contract was placed with the firm of J. Mawle and Sons, engineers, of Banbury, in conjunction with Messrs. Warner and Sons. The whole of the old wood framing has been removed and also the old floor, and iron and steel girders and framework replace these, to which the bells are hung. The bells have been turned, and*

*new rope guides have been fixed, and in arranging the iron framework sufficient space has been left for the hanging of two extra bells at any future period. The present ring consists of six bells, and the remaining two, to complete the octave, will shortly be hung.'*

It was to be almost one hundred years before this final aim was achieved in 2007. During that time the tenor bell was repaired in 1932 and when ringing resumed after the WW11 ban it was *'not only a matter of great rejoicing but resulted in an appreciable increase in the numbers attending services'* The bells evidently provided a real wakeup call!

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## Farewell to Three Branch Stalwarts

### Jim Flux



We are sad to report the death of a village stalwart. Jim Flux died unexpectedly on January 8th. After he and his late wife, Jean, settled in Deddington in 1989 Jim became involved in virtually every aspect of life of the village, including the church bell ringers.

Deddington News

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### Les Underdown



Les was born on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1930 and started to learn to ring at the age of 12. This would have been on tied bells as there was a war on at the time. The precise date at which he became tower captain is not known but he held this position till about 1995. During his time as captain he taught many people to ring and although he did not approve of teaching people to ring properly before they could ring up and down, his enthusiasm meant that few people gave up even after 5 practice sessions of swinging the bell  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up. There are still three members of the band who were taught by him.

Eventually he decided that the level of method ringing became too complicated for him to be the "leader". He did, however, carry on with ringing the tenor behind. It was a well-known fact that when Les rang the tenor he was always a fraction late, perhaps the result of learning to ring on tied bells with no indication of striking quality.

In 2012 he celebrated 70 years ringing and was presented with a certificate by the bishop. He was very proud of this fact and the certificate hung on the wall in his dining room.

In 2013 health issues initially stopped him from attending the entire practice session and later that year he had to give up ringing altogether.

Apart from bell ringing Les was, over the years, involved in many activities in Cropredy for which he was awarded the British Empire medal.

He died on April 8<sup>th</sup>

Andries Bosland

## Roger Stranks



Roger was one of the longer serving members of the Banbury Branch joining the Guild in 1956 at Duns Tew. He remained a member of Duns Tew tower all his life. During that time he taught many many people to handle a bell as well as looking after the bells.

Roger was usually happy to ring the tenor behind and never aspired to ringing many methods.

The first of his five peals was at Duns Tew on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1993 ringing the treble to doubles in 14 methods. His son Simon also rang in this peal. It was rung to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of a local resident.

The four other peals were all covering on the tenor at Great Tew. The last on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2007 was in thanksgiving for the life of the Rev. Abbott Conway.

Two of these peals were to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays of both Roger's parents; this must be a unique event?

Roger was always ready to stand in and help out at other towers in the area ringing for weddings and funerals.

When Steeple Barton bells were rehung Roger gave freely of his time to assist the bellhanger Geoffrey Armitage in installing the bells and frame.

Roger also was involved with ringing at Westcote Barton, Sandford and Great Tew.

Roger very much enjoyed coming with me on jobs for Whites of Appleton and assisting. He particularly enjoyed helping with the refurbishment of St Paul's Cathedral bells. He often would recall how pleased he was to get a ring there when the bells were tried out, although with the long draft there and his slightly agricultural style the sally did not always come down where it was expected.

Away from ringing Roger did so much in and around the Duns Tew area for so many people.

He also served Duns Tew church in many ways and was churchwarden for many years.

I also knew Roger through the farming community and he was a very keen supporter of ploughing matches and particularly enjoyed judging.

He died on March 21<sup>st</sup>. He had a very kind and gentle manner and will be missed by so many people.

Our thoughts are with Myrtle, Simon, Heather and all the family. May he rest in peace.

**Graham Clifton**

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Well done to Jack and his mum from Steeple Aston. They attended the Branch Practice at Banbury where, for their first outing on 10 bells, they both rang confidently and competently.

Well done to Maisie who, in spite of an unfortunate experience with her rope at Bloxham, was not put off ringing and returned the following week.

# TOWER TALK

## Adderbury

Our big success at Adderbury since the last newsletter was to win one of the sections in the church Best Dressed Christmas Tree competition. Our certificate is proudly displayed in the ringing chamber. We also were pleased to renew our Gold Maintenance Award and thanks go to our Steeplekeeper Trevor Hubbard for his efforts.

We have enjoyed several tower meals when the abilities of our culinary members never ceases to amaze! In early May we enjoyed a weekend tour in Somerset ringing at a variety of towers with 5, 6, 8 and 10 bells. We joined with the service ringing at Ilminster Minster on the Sunday which we thoroughly enjoyed and agreed that perhaps we had saved the best until last.

Of course we do ring the Adderbury bells in between these social activities and our efforts are improving with Colin gradually expanding our repertoire of methods. We continue with our programme to ring half muffled Quarter Peals on the 100th anniversary of the death of village personnel in World War 1 and are about half way through the list on the War Memorial.

However, like most towers, we are always seeking new recruits and have started training them early on in their lives. Simon, who has been coming to ringing since birth, has just started his training, although it may be a while yet before he can handle our bells! His brother is keen to join in too and avidly watches to ensure that Simon's handling is up to scratch.

No prizes for guessing who his teacher is!

**Trevor Trivett**



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## Banbury

Looking back to the end of last year in November the Chipping Norton Branch 'borrowed' Banbury tower to host the Guild ten bell Striking Competition. In December the church windows weren't decorated this time but the ringers were asked to provide a Christmas display in the portico. It was bell themed based on a poem by Leonard Clark.



This year Jean has been out of action for a couple of months due to a leg problem but can now climb the tower steps again albeit slowly! Practices have continued most weeks with the usual variation in the numbers attending. Do check beforehand if you are planning to come along. Visitors joined us for Sunday ringing in March and St John Hackney came in April on route to a weekend tour round Hereford. Our team won the branch quiz at Tadmarton with a little help from our friends. Penny was elected a member at the AGM, a welcome addition to the band as Robin has disappeared up the cut again! **Jean Davis**

## Bloxham

My three learners are making excellent progress. They have now been ringing for a year, and they have come every week for an hour's lesson on the simulator. As a result, we are often able to ring all eight bells on a Sunday morning.

Misha and Oleg both came on the Hereford Ringing Course just after Easter. Oleg was in the Plain Hunt group, and Misha was in the Grandsire Doubles group.

Misha and Maisie have entered the Oxford Guild's "Young Ringer" award this year.

June 10th is the "Bloxham Family Fun Day". I will be manning a bell ringing stall, so I am hoping to get some more learners. **Alan Griffin**

## Steeple Aston

.Practices continue to be popular and on a couple of occasions we have had 19 people present.

It is good to have 3 teenagers ringing. Zoe comes when school commitments allow. Hannah is now ringing rounds and call changes and also brings her dad John along with her who is also doing well.

Jack continues to progress well. He has entered the Guild Young Ringers award scheme. He has a number of tasks to work towards during the year. Having attended a branch practice and the branch AGM to receive his membership certificate the next goal is his first quarter peal.

In January we marked the birth of Olivia Clarke first grandchild to Nick & Lydia Powell with a quarter peal.

Our Christmas handbell ringing was its usual success raising £1200 for Macmillan Cancer Care. The handbells are always popular with younger people and they seem to enjoy coming out with us round the village.

Sadly Malcolm Hensher has not been able to ring since last October due to heart problems so it was good to see him back with us on Easter Sunday. We all hope he will return to better health soon.

At our tower AGM we agreed to spend some money on a new vacuum cleaner for the tower and some new rope bosses to help reduce rope noise. Both of these have been done. All the officers were re-elected with one addition. Jack was elected assistant steeple keeper to help Graham.

Our annual tower dinner took place on the Tuesday in Holy Week. Eighteen people enjoyed a pleasant evening at the Red Lion. Later in the year we have a BBQ and a tower outing planned.

I would like to thank our regular visitors for their help and support, it is much appreciated.

**Graham Clifton**

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## Winter - Spring Round Up

In early December Adderbury church, in conjunction with the Children's Society, held a 'Decorated Christmas Tree Festival.' This has become an annual event in the village calendar.

Adderbury ringers' entry can be seen on the right.

The striped "ropes" were pipe cleaners, each with a small bell on the top end and a lego person on the other end representing a bell ringer. There were a dozen bells which lit up in coordination with the carols which they played, and the tree was topped with a model of the top of the church tower and spire (made by bellringer Chris). All of the other decorations were bell themed. Adjacent to the tree were recruitment flyers, we just hope that they yield some new potential ringers!

We were pleased to be announced as the winner of the category for Best Decorated Adult Tree.



**Trevor Trivett**

Jean and Barry Davis were also involved in the festival. They designed and made the decorations for the Adderbury History Association's entry which was called 'Made in Adderbury'. The decorations reflected some of the things that had been made in Adderbury over the centuries. The History Association won Best Decorated Community Tree.



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Question: where would you find tadpoles, cobwebs and wallflowers all together in one place?

Answer: at the Branch Quiz with Jacks Lads, Dolly Mixtures, Armless and Old Rosie, Forty members and guests gathered at Tadmarton village hall on March 18<sup>th</sup> for the annual social and tricky questions evening ably organised as usual by Lindsey and Co. and Vicki Clifton. Following jacket potatoes, salads and desserts we drew the raffle which made £84 for the Guild Bell Fund. Then Lionel and Liz Smith took over as quiz masters with seven rounds of loosely bell ringing themed questions - how hard could that be? Well nobody knew that the Post Office bought 85,000 Morris Minor vans between 1953 and 1972!! Eventually the Dolly Mixtures came out on top by half a point ending yet another enjoyable event on the Branch's calendar.



# Making Progress

## Quarter Peal Fortnight

In all 12 quarters were attempted, of which 9 were successful - a very creditable performance.

The statistics are: 8 different towers, 28 ringers and 5 conductors, with a further 3 towers and 5 ringers involved in the unsuccessful attempts of Plain Bob Doubles, London Surprise Minor and Grandsire Triples.

We scored 3 Doubles Quarters (April Day, St Simons, 2 methods), 4 Minor (Plain Bob, Double Oxford, Kent Treble Bob, Beverley Surprise) and 2 Major (Plain Bob, Lincolnshire Surprise).

A good number of "firsts" were recorded, which is a promising sign of progress within the Branch, and much of the ringing was of a very pleasing standard. All in all a very good effort.

Liz Smith

## Radley 2017

I attended this one day course, organised through the ODGB Education Department by Ann Osborne, on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April. The aim was to give learners of all ages and competence levels the opportunity of dedicated rope time on a chosen method ranging from Plain Hunt, Grandsire Doubles & Triples, to Plain Bob Doubles to Major.

After registration, we split up and headed off for a tutorial followed by three ringing sessions. The Plain Hunt group visited Garsington, Little Milton and Wheatley. In all, 15 towers were visited by 25 students and around 125 helpers. The warm and sunny day provided a great backdrop to the day, with a pub lunch and evening meal giving the opportunity to socialise and swap experiences. While waiting for the Little Milton tower to open, we performed the moves for Plain Hunt in a kind of routine that probably would have made *You've Been Framed* rather than *Britain's Got Talent*! Nevertheless, it was an interesting way to think the method through.

The benefit of ringing in different towers with varied weight bells, concentrated work on improving technique, together with willing and cheerful helpers made the day one I would strongly recommend to learners in the Branch.

Once again, my thanks to all who all made the day a success. All that remains is practice, practice, practice!

Kevin McNiff Cropredy

## Oxford Diocesan Guild 8-bell Striking Competition 2017

This year's Guild 8-bell competition was held on Bank Holiday Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May at Islip. Not too far for us to travel and a nice set of bells.

Nine teams took part. We listened to the other teams and thought that the standard of ringing was generally very good. This was borne out by the comments of the official judges, Tim Pett and Barry Eggesfield.

We were very pleased to come fourth out of the nine, which must be a record for the Banbury Branch!

The results and judges' comments were as follows:

Ringling order	Team	Remarks	Faults	Position
A	Thatcham	Treble was pushing, tenor was good. Most faults due to holding up	44½	6th
B	Oxford City	Good rhythm. Occasional slow back-stroke leads	33	3rd
C	High Wycombe	Very good rhythm. One small method mistake, quickly recovered	30	1st =
D	ODG Youth Team	Rather uneven. Tenor slow at hand-stroke	58	8th
E	Tilehurst	Slower speed than some teams. Good beat. One clash, quickly recovered	38	5th
F	EBSB	Rather uneven. Small bells tending to push	55	7th
G	St Mary Reading	Very good beat. Improved as it progressed	30	1st =
H	Banbury	A bit fast but good	37½	4th
I	North Bucks	Small bells tending to ring too close to the larger ones	104	9th

Tea, sandwiches and cake were provided by the local ringers. Our thanks go to them, and to Alan Marchbank, Guild Deputy Master, for organising the event. And well done to all the teams who rang, especially the Banbury band: Zoe Lee, Liz Smith, Rosemary Hemmings, Lionel Smith, Sue Burchell, Chris Holmes, Colin Lee and Graham Clifton.



Thanks to Lionel for cajoling us all into taking part.

Unfortunately, Rosemary had to leave before the photo was taken, but, as you can see, Simon was our first reserve. Let's try to do as well, or even better, next year.

**Sue Burchell**

# Information Board

- 29 people attended the AGM at Wardington.
- 5 new members were elected but our numbers are down on 2016.
- £100 grant was agreed for the Guild Restoration Fund.
- Guild guidelines are in place in the event of the Queen's death.
- Safe Guarding procedures were discussed and further action will be considered at the next reps meeting.
- The Guild AGM 2018 will be held in the Banbury Branch.
- Towers/Ringers can contact Lionel if they need specific ringing support.
- Lionel and Alison will remain as Ringing Master and Deputy for another year.

## Dates for 2017

- June 10<sup>th</sup> Striking Competition - Adderbury
- July 8<sup>th</sup> Branch Outing - Warwickshire
- September Branch Dinner
- September 21<sup>st</sup> Tower Reps meeting - Bodicote Church Hall
- October 21<sup>st</sup> Half Yearly Meeting - Venue TBC
- October 28<sup>th</sup> Steeple Aston Course
- December 9<sup>th</sup> Carol Service - Bodicote

## 2018

- April 21<sup>st</sup> AGM - Horley (TBC)
- May Guild AGM in Banbury Branch

*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](mailto:bjdbellringer@btinternet.com)*

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