



**Welcome to the EBSB Branch Summer newsletter.** It's been a hot one so far, I'm sure you've all been rooting through the cupboards to find the fan, especially for the poor people who have to ring up the heavier tenor bells. Thank you to those towers who have contributed to this edition, it's great to hear what you've been up to and as you will read later, initiatives to help your ringers progress.

Each story and article however, small weaves its own way through our ringing community like the blue line through a method and helps us keep in touch with other towers. There is always room for more though. Have you had fun at an afternoon tea or rung for a special occasion? Maybe you've had an open day to inspire the next generation or perhaps someone has reached a milestone, won an award or achieved something they thought out of reach. Did you host a branch practice, or have you been on an outing? Let's get everyone sharing their stories, you might inspire or help others with your ideas and activities.

So, here's the next edition, enjoy and send me your news for the Autumn edition.

**Lyn Lee**  
**EBSB Newsletter Editor**

## **B&BYR**

### **Ringing World National Youth Contest in Birmingham.**

#### **All Aboard the Fun Bus!**

We set off from Marlow way too early, but that was instantly forgiven when the party bus kicked into gear. There was a disco, and – most importantly – chocolate waffles. That's right: breakfast of champions.

We got to Birmingham early (because apparently our driver has superpowers), so we played catch outside a church while waiting for the ringing to begin. As you do.

*Theo's article on the Ringing World National Youth Contest serves as its own newsletter and is attached for you to read. Thank you, Theo for a fabulous contribution to our newsletter and it's great to see so many young people keeping the art alive.*

## **When is a contest not a contest? When only one band can win!**

Prior to the EBSB Branch 6-bell Competition at Penn on 14<sup>th</sup> June I had contacted directly all the likely entrants to establish whether they would be sending a band. Sadly, all responses were negative either because people were away or because they were otherwise engaged so with a week to go I had just one entry – from my own tower at High Wycombe, and I had seven ringers to choose from. Hughenden and Amersham got together to form a scratch band (with the help of one of the High Wycombe ringers and one from Chesham). So, to make the competition more worthwhile I organised another scratch band made up of Branch officers (including one of the High Wycombe bands and one from the other scratch band) plus Peter Barrett, Penn Tower Captain. Peter Ellis (from Reading) and his son were lined up to judge the competition and I knew that 14-year-old Dominic was very keen to do it and learn from the experience, and I was keen to give them a few teams to listen to. So, three bands took part in the contest, but since High Wycombe fielded the only eligible band, they would win the trophy and go forward to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell competition whatever happened in our Branch competition. The judges were not aware of the situation until after they had delivered their verdict.

High Wycombe rang first. The judges said they had controlled solid rounds, picked up a few faults as they went into changes then settled down. There was agreement on the rhythm and strong leading. Peal speed 2hr50; 24½ faults.

The Hughenden/Amersham scratch band went next. Their ringing was pleasant to listen to. Good rhythm. There were a few clips, some slow backstroke leads and some quick handstroke leads. Peal speed 2hr43; 31½ faults.

The Officers scratch band rang last. Their ringing never quite settled. There were some good spells, but they were not sustained. There were some slow leads, especially at backstroke. Peal speed 2hr45; 52 faults.

So, thankfully, the High Wycombe band were placed first and awarded the winners' trophy. The runners' up trophy remains at Amersham because they won that trophy last year.

We were very grateful to Judy Weaver and Peter Barrett for making the local arrangements and providing refreshments for the competitors to enjoy after their ringing.

*Patricia Newton  
EBSB Secretary*



High Wycombe



Hughenden/Amersham



Officers

# Guild 8-bell Striking Competition

Again, held on the morning of the Guild AGM, this time hosted by the S Oxon Branch, another keenly contested event unfolded on 17 th May. The test piece was a musical touch of Stedman Triples. It was relatively straightforward to call, especially from the 5th , which was what most conductors chose to do. Benson bells were rehung ‘the right way round’ (clockwise) some years ago and the main challenge now is the low ceiling and short draught. The judges – Liz and Phil Barnes from Kent – had the full benefit of clear and, arguably, rather strident sound at their listening position in the churchyard. Their recurring comments for several of the bands were the difficulty of some of the bells working together and slightly irregular leading.

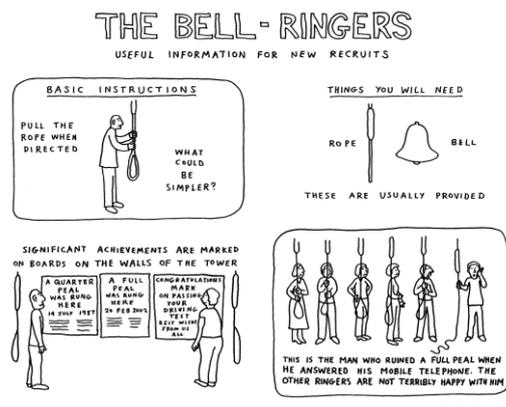
Placing	Rang	‘Peal speed’	Faults
1 Reading Branch	4th	2h 54	50
2 EBSB Branch	2nd	2h 56	51.5
3 Newbury Branch	6th	2h 59	91.5
4 Old North Berks Branch	3rd	3h 06	98
5 Oxford City Branch	1st	3h 14	106
6 North Bucks Branch`	5th	3h 15	116
7 South Oxon Branch	7th	3h 02	132
8 Banbury Branch	8th did not complete the test piece		

So – another very close call at the top, with our friends from Reading managing to turn the tables from the 2024 result and both bands again demonstrating the benefit of brisk, purposeful ringing.

Our band was Patricia Newton 1, Annie Davies 2, Fiona Wheeler 3, Charles Botting 4, Matthew Johnson (C) 5, Ken Darvill 6, Stephen Wheeler 7 and Robert Newton 8.

We look forward to the next Guild competitions on 4th October. Anyone for the ‘Raising & Lowering’ one? It’s open to all. Why not get a band together?

*Robert Newton*



# Tower News

## **A Celebration at Hughenden**

On Tuesday 15th July, Hughenden ringers and ringing friends from towers in High Wycombe, Amersham, Turville and Chesham gathered together as usual for ringing practice. Everyone except Verity, our Ringing Captain, knew this was not going to be a normal practice.

At 8pm, under a contrived excuse to leave the ringing chamber, we made our way to the back of the church where Verity discovered what everyone else already knew! She saw a table laid with bottles of sparkling wine, soft drink and cake, and realised that this was to celebrate her birthday. Verity gasped with surprise and joy and castigated everyone for being so secretive.

Her birthday this year was a “big one”. All present wanted to use the occasion as an opportunity to show their appreciation for the exceptional time, energy and enthusiasm she has given to leading the ringing at Hughenden. She has made it a welcoming and fun place to be, not only for members of the band, but also for those from nearby towers.

After singing “Happy Birthday” we presented her with a gift of a bird box containing a solar powered camera, which we knew was something she had coveted.

Refreshments followed, accompanied by the sound of banter and laughter, rounding off a most convivial event.



Photo by T.J. (Tracey Jones)

L to R

Verity, Francoise, Jan, Stuart, Liz, Maria, Muriel, Sheila, Laura, Ros, Keith, Diane, David, Geoff, Annie, Rachel. Out of view were T.J., and Cliff.

*Cliff Davies*

***Congratulations Verity! Enjoy being 21 again, looks like you had a wonderful evening!!***

## **Cookham**

Finally, after more than seven months of being unable to ring at Cookham due to the massive church re-ordering project, we were able to recommence practice night ringing again on 13th May, and service ringing from Sunday 8th June.

PLEASE NOTE: Practice night remains on Tuesdays, but at the new, slightly earlier time of 19.30-21.00 hours.

Visitors always welcome!

*Marcia Dieppe - Ringing Master,  
Holy Trinity Cookham*

## **Penn and Beaconsfield Single Method Practice.**

Like many towers, both Penn and Beaconsfield are trying to grow their respective bands both in terms of numbers and capability. In terms of capability, once able to handle a bell, progress seems to slow to a crawl as learners do not have a strong band around them and time spent practicing a (specific) method on a normal practice night is short.

The solution, at least for Penn and Beaconsfield, was to pool resources to deliver, twice monthly, an additional practice session, one at each church. This was called the Single Method Practice (SMP). At the start of the programme, back in September 2024, a roadmap was produced that outlined a logical progression from plain hunt, through grandsire and finally, plain bob. The progression from one method to another was dependent on whether the session called for a plain course or a touch and was influenced by how the previous session went. At all times, the band was told what they would be ringing at least seven to ten days before that session. Apart from a bit of plain hunt to 'warm-up' that was all that was rung - *repetitio est mater studiorum*.

Pooling both bands, and roping in a few friends, meant that there were sufficient experienced ringers to constitute a strong supporting band and enough remaining to stand behind learners. Only a handful of learners were included in the programme and generally no more than two in an eight-bell attempt. Clearly more learners can be included in an attempt, as happened, but careful placement of a learner and their supporting ringer is critical – for example, not on consecutive bells. With careful placement, learners can be given thirty plus minutes practicing the specified method.

Feedback from the fifteen or so ringers (not all attended each practice) of the first year of the SMP is positive. Not only does it help with progression of those leaning basic methods, but there is much more fluidity between the two churches in terms of band members ringing at either/both churches on Sundays, practice nights, weddings, outings etc. The plan is to start the SMP sessions again in September. Nothing is cast in stone. Partner with a local tower and see what works for you.

*Andrew Williams, Penn & Andrew Halford, Beaconsfield.*

*What a brilliant idea! Thank you, Andrew & Andrew, for sharing. If anyone is interested in adopting this idea for their tower and ringers (yes please) get in touch with another tower near you.*



## **St Lawrence West Wycombe AKA The Golden Ball**

We were pleased to ring for VE Day on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May. It's always busy on top the hill due to the beacon lighting, so it's always lovely to receive comments about hearing the bells, (nice ones I might add). I was delighted that our learners Anne & Natalie were able to ring with us, it's always great to see what you are working towards when you are a learner.

After ringing had finished and the bells were down, we had a little session with some of the ringer's children, aged from 5-12 years old. Lots of jangling ensued but everyone enjoyed themselves and hopefully will be keen to learn sometime in the future.

This event was the last ringing we had for a few weeks due to the church being used for some filming. When I say some filming, it was a military style operation which turned the top of the hill into a filming village. Keep a lookout for future programmes that might feature our church in. There's always filming going on around and about our area.

We also hosted the EBSB Branch practice in July. It was great to see so many new faces in our tower, we've not hosted a practice for a very long time, so it was a great opportunity to show our bells off. We rang everything from rounds and call changes to Grandsire Triples up to Kent TBM. Our bells and my brain had not been used so much in such a long time, but it was so nice to spend an afternoon with everyone.

Practices are going to start back again in September, I'm sure you all appreciate how tricky it can be organising practices during the summer holidays. We're usually there every Thursday 7.30pm onwards except the first Thursday when we join up with our friends at Lane End.

I recently got to have a go on a bellringing simulator up in North Yorkshire. We were visiting friends in Sharow, Nr Ripon and I was invited to go along and join in with their silent practice on a Wednesday morning. Well, first thing was tackling the 2 scary staircases. Then, having never rung on a simulator before, I had the basics explained to me and then we were off. I was pleased to have been able to help the next upcoming band of ringers who are very keen and are raising money to have their bells refurbished and the ringing chamber taken down to the floor below. I admired their enthusiasm and excitement and managed to get back down the stairs without too much stress.

*The next generation getting a grip on the ropes... Peter 11, George 10, Thomas 12, James 8 & Louis 5 (I asked Peter if he'd like to be Tower Captain anytime soon, he's thinking about it!)*



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## **Ringling at Hambleden – Spring and Summer Highlights**

It's been a lively few months at Hambleden, with steady progress from our learners, plenty of positive press, and the return of some very satisfying eight-bell ringing.

One of our newer ringers, who had only attended two practices before last year's AGM, made astonishing progress this term and recently rang for Sunday service for the first time. Another ringer, who started ringing for their Duke of Edinburgh Award, now rings regularly at both their home tower and Hambleden—and was invited to join the wedding band far sooner than expected.

We've had an unusually high media profile this term. Articles written by our younger ringers have appeared in the parish magazine, Ringing World, and the Hambleden Valley Group Magazine, including one originally intended for just a few local villages but which ended up going as far as Princes Risborough and Stokenchurch. One Friday in April, a reporter from the Henley Standard visited practice night and produced a glowing half-page spread, complete with photo—though the claimed wedding earnings might have been a little generous! ... Don't believe what you read in the press eh?

The ringing itself has been equally eventful. April saw three of our ringers enter the county competition for the South East and win—a huge highlight of the year so far. We also rang all eight bells for Sunday service at the end of April, a rare and very welcome achievement with our local band.

Behind the scenes, we invested in a new industrial vacuum cleaner—lightweight, affordable, and ideal for the annual tower clean, which we split between two teams this year. The bell chamber was tackled first (with the new vacuum), followed by a thorough spring clean of the ringing room and stairs. The only mishap came when one ringer accidentally put a foot through the ceiling—just as the clock began to strike!

Bell Sunday in May brought another media milestone, with one of our young ringers featured on BBC Radio. We also rang for VE Day 80 on 8 May, with a full team striking excellent rounds, call changes and plain hunting for the village.

We've enjoyed visits from ringers near and far, including a long-staying Australian visitor, and one Friday in July was a particularly productive practice, with three of our team gaining confidence in Stedman Doubles.

To top it off, the May edition of Oddbob featured the tower (and it's wizard 🧙) across a record number of pages, and June saw a glorious summer social hosted by one of our ringers—complete with cakes, bubbly, and plenty of good cheer. We also raised £767 through a well-supported tea-and-cake fundraiser for the church's new loos and kitchenette project, helped by lots of footfall from local walking groups.

With growing confidence in method ringing, enthusiastic learners, and a real sense of community in the tower, Hambleden has had a rewarding spring and summer—and we're looking forward to whatever the autumn brings.

Jon Boughton

Hambleden Tower Captain (and ceiling wrecker 😄)

### **Branch Practice at Amersham Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> August.**

Thank you to everyone who came along and rang at Amersham on Saturday, we rang from rounds and calls on 12 to plain hunt on 9, with Grandsire Caters and Stedman Triples mixed in for good measure. Thank you, Amersham, for hosting us! There's something for everyone, so pop along to the next one.

## EBSB Programme of Branch Practices and events

Sat	Aug 9	Amersham (12)	10:00-12:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Aug 23	Wraysbury (8)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Thurs	Sept 18	Old Windsor (8)	10:00-12:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Sept 20	East of branch	10.00 – 15.00 pm	New Members' Outing – by invitation
Sat	Sept 27	Turville (6)	10:00-12:00	Training Practice (book place to attend)
Sat	Sept 27	Local Branches	All Day	Michaelmas Course
Sat	Oct 4	Oxford City Branch	pm	Guild 6-bell contest and Raising & Lowering contest
Sat	Oct 11	Chalfont St Giles (8)	17.00-19:30	Final of Lorna Newton Contest followed by half yearly meeting
Sat	Oct 25	Wooburn (8)	10:00-12:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Oct 25	Steeple Aston area	All Day	Steeple Aston Course
Sat	Nov 8	Beaconsfield (8)	10:00-12:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Nov 15	Maidenhead (8)	14:00-16:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Nov 22	Bicester Branch	All Day	Guild 10-bell contest and General Committee Meeting
Sat	Dec 13	Burnham (8)	17:00 onwards	Branch practice and social gathering