

# Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



April 2011, Spring Issue



St Mary's, Twyford

## Branch AGM

The Branch AGM was held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011, at White Waltham. We started with ringing at White Waltham, including rounds, call changes and some more adventurous stuff as well. This was followed by a service of Evening Prayer, which included a very interesting reading from Ronald Blythe's "Akenfield". The reading was an extract from Chapter 3 - The Ringing Men. There was a persistent theme of music throughout the service, including psalms, hymns and prayers.

After the service we had tea in the Church, where large quantities of hot drinks were consumed, as well as sandwiches, cakes and sausage rolls. It was a rather chilly day so warm liquid refreshment was very much in order.

After tea there was the AGM itself - again held in the Church. Minutes will be provided on the SDB website in due course but a few notable events are worth mentioning. A few committee members decided to stand down this year, including Ken Davenport

*continued*

## Diary of Events

### Saturday 16th April

Waltham St Lawrence

6 Bell Striking Competition

4.30pm - 6.30pm

### Saturday 21st May

Wargrave

10.30am - 12 noon

Branch Practice

### Saturday 18th June

Shottesbrooke

10.30am - 12 noon

Branch Practice

### Saturday 9th July

Guild Festival

See back page for details

### Saturday 16th July

Hurst

7.30pm - 9pm

Branch Practice

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday 22nd October

Branch Outing (Bucks tba)

### Saturday 12th November

7.30pm Branch Quiz

St Paul's Wokingham Hall

Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices at All Saints, Wokingham on 3rd May, 7th June and 5th July 2-4pm (provisionally).

*Continued from front page...*

(Ringing Master) and Eric Bowes (Treasurer). They were thanked for their contribution to the operation of the branch over the years. Sarah Boyes had previously stood down as Newsletter Editor and she was thanked again for her hard work in producing many newsletters. The vacant posts were filled by John Manley, who moved from Deputy Ringing Master to Ringing Master, with Graham Slade taking on the Deputy Ringing Master slot. Sue Davenport had kindly offered to stand as Treasurer which was gratefully accepted. Alison Clayton has already taken over as Newsletter Editor.

New members were elected and some certificates were presented. See full details of the lucky recipients in the minutes.

After some discussion, and some education for the Chairman (me!), the meeting voted to donate £500 to Arborfield to assist them with refurbishment work there.

The Guild AGM next year, is to be held in the Sonning Deanery Branch on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Wokingham St Paul had kindly volunteered to host it. Please make a note of this date in your diaries as we as a Branch should support this event as there will be many visiting ringers who will need to be looked after on the day.

Guild subscriptions are due by 31st March so please make sure that they are paid in good time. The Guild Festival this year will be held in Oxford on 9<sup>th</sup> July - this is another date for the diaries (see back page).

After thanking Carol, who took the service ably assisted by the organist, all the people who helped to provide the delicious tea and the locals at White Waltham for allowing us to use their bells and their Church, the meeting closed and the day was rounded off by more ringing.

Thanks to all those who attended- it is your Branch and the AGM is one of the occasions when you can have your say in how it is run.

*Simon Milford*

**PS: Please save any bric-a-brac (CDs, books, plants, games) for Pam Elliston for our sale in Woodley Pagoda for the ODG Bell Fund on 17th June.**

## Us and Them (4)

In the last Newsletter, I discussed the pros and cons of recruiting from different groups. In this one, I extend that to thinking about the type of people that make good recruits, beginning with age.

Most discussions on the age of recruits grossly simplify things – usually along the lines ‘young good – old bad’, with a dividing line around 20. That is far too simple, and a sensible discussion needs at least four age bands. The boundaries are fuzzy, but for the purposes of this article I will consider: kids (under about 12), youngsters (in their teens), midsters (in their 20s, 30s & 40s) and oldsters (the rest).

Even that grouping is over simplified. The ability to learn physical skills does generally reduce with age, but individuals can vary a lot. For example one of the actors whom we taught to handle a bell for Midsomer Murders (with only a few hours tuition) was over 60, and I had a friend who took up wind surfing when he retired.

**Kids** – Some eminent ringers started very young. In our own Branch, Jonathan Carpenter learnt to ring when he was 6, and rang his first peal aged 7. The youngest person I taught was Charlie Herriott, then aged 9, who now rings things more advanced than I ever will. Often very young learners come from ringing families, and so don't need ‘recruiting’. Children of this age lack the strength needed to ring other than light bells, and they may not have the stamina for long lessons. Their attitudes are not mature, they can have a short attention span, and it isn't always easy for an adult to establish rapport with them. As a result, they might learn less rapidly than you expect, with a higher fall-out rate. With young children, you should probably consider each case on its merits, rather than target them as a group.

**Youngsters** – For decades, teenagers were the main source of recruits. That's when most of my generation learnt. Teenagers have many things in their favour. They are used to learning (it is their ‘day job’) and in terms of strength and energy they are becoming more like adults than children. They have their lives before them, so if they stick at ringing in the long term, your training will have a big payback to ringing at large. On the downside, modern teenagers have a lot of pressures on their time, with homework and other sporting or recreational activities. At some point, they are likely to find they are doing too much, and need to drop something. Ringing is something they can drop without wasting any parental fees for lessons and equipment, so unless you have got them motivated to the point that they value ringing over other things, it may be what they drop when the pressure becomes too great. If you do motivate them, and give them opportunities, then they are likely to do well. Of course, someone else may reap the benefit if they leave home when they start work, as many of them will.

**Midsters** ~ These can be ideal recruits. They still have good learning powers (two of my fastest learners were in their late 30s) and they have an adult outlook on life, so they can apply themselves. They have the potential not just to be good ringers, but to be good leaders too. They are at the stage in life where the world is opening before them, and they are building their abilities. These strengths can also be a weakness, since these seemingly ideal recruits are also ideal for many other things, including building a career or starting a family. They should have learnt to balance competing pressures, but even so you may find them hard to recruit. If you do, and they get hooked, they should reward the effort.

**Oldsters** – Our population is living longer and retiring earlier, so that there are lots of people aged 50+ looking for ways to spend their time. Many of them want to remain active, and are looking for new challenges. Their growing numbers

make them an easier recruiting target. They are more likely to make an effort to support a local tradition than youngsters can, and because of their prior life skills, they are often be useful members of a band in terms of organisation and getting things done, even while they are still learning ringing skills. The key question is whether or not they can develop into effective ringers. Some undoubtedly do, but many never become fully competent performers, despite investing considerable effort in trying to learn. As a generality, the ability to learn new physical skills does decline with age. Individuals can vary, especially if they have continued to learn new skills throughout their lives. But for most oldsters, the last physical skill they learned was driving a car in their teens – over half a lifetime ago – so learning to ring can be a real struggle. So in general, oldsters will take longer to learn, and fewer of them will master ringing than their younger peers.

Quite apart from the age of individual recruits, it is worth considering the age mix of your band. Ringing is an all-age activity, and there is much to be said for a diverse mix of ages. You might want to increase the diversity of ages in your band, or you might want to preserve the current balance, whether it be mostly young, or mostly some other age group. Of course, there may be offers that you can't refuse, like a supermarket's BOGOF (Buy One Get One Free) where the parents of young ringers want to take up ringing, or vice versa.

In the next article I will discuss the motivation of potential recruits – what motivates them to take up ringing – and how that might influence the eventual outcome of your recruiting .

*John Harrison*

## News from Twyford

Twyford Bellringers are continuing to go from strength to strength under the guidance of The Guv'nor (Tower Captain, Simon Farrar). Regular Friday night practices are well attended with a growing variety of methods being rung, including Kent and Stedman. There's even talk of not coming last in striking competitions and ringing a few quarters to celebrate the up-coming Royal Wedding!

It's been a busy few months. We now have our very own polo shirts with our tower badge embroidered on it, organised by Alistair 'Big Al' Vorster. Big Al is also responsible for the Twyford Bellringers' growing presence on You Tube (eg. 'Twyford Bell Ringers 006'). Going all corporate has certainly helped to knit the team together, and it solves the problem for a girl-about-town like me of what to wear to practice. Unfortunately, we've not managed to get our regular Sonning boys (Andrew Elliston and Rob Needham) or Wargrave Dave to wear one... yet...

In November, we enjoyed a tower outing together and there was a significant first for one beginner (me!). The Twyford (Or Sonning) Saturday Exeat Ringers/ Twyford and Regional Towers outing (names attributed by 'Sweary' Nat Burton and Sonning Andrew) on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November saw eight of us: The Guv'nor, Richard 'Sunroof' Bennett, Big Al, John 'The Money' Rowe, Rachel 'Not at all to be referred to as Mrs Guv'nor' Leitch-Devlin, Sweary Nat, Roy 'Rusty Rover' Russell and Sonning Rob visit St Mary's, White Waltham, St John Baptist Shottesbrooke and St Lawrence, Waltham St Lawrence. We rang rounds, called changes, Plain Hunt, Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles. The bells at St Lawrence were already half muffled in readiness for the Remembrance Day Service the following day. It was a great experience for us to ring on different bells, especially the even-trickier-when-half-muffled bells at Waltham St Lawrence. At least the food and beers at The Bell were on hand to console us afterwards. A great morning; thanks to all three towers for letting us ring.

I rang my first quarter peal, covering on the six, on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November, a 1260 Grandsire Doubles in 45 minutes. Contrary to popular belief, I knew it was going to happen after about 15 minutes of ringing; there were only six of us at practice that night and it was all going quite well (apart from my cut finger bleeding all over the rope). I think it was the first time in a while that a quarter has been rung by the home team, so I am happy with that! The sense of achievement and relief at not messing it up was fantastic; thanks to Roy, Richard, Rob, Andrew and Simon for hanging on in there with me!

In January we experienced the madness that is method ringing on hand bells thanks to long-standing ringer George Roberts; and Simon and Richard were part of a team that successfully rang a peal of Stedman Caters at Wells Cathedral on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, the WAGS went shopping and to the pub from Hot Fuzz! On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February we held a tower open day, giving demonstrations and tours to approximately 100 people of all ages. Our youngest 'ringers' were 3 or 4, with many parents taking the opportunity to have a lesson with Simon or Richard at the same time as their children were chiming. We have many potential new recruits as a result and hope to be able to open up again sometime during the summer, hopefully combining ringing with a trip out on to the roof for those daring enough.

We continue to enjoy a healthy post-ringing social life too, with regular de-briefs at the Duke of Wellington or the Royal Oak pubs. We also enjoyed a rather good Christmas Dinner at the George & Dragon following a tip-off to get in early from Victoria 'Massive Rabbit' Parkin, our woman on the inside! Look out for a tasting tour to Twyford's Bingham's Brewery at some point in the near future and maybe a Surrey Hills or Basingstoke ringing trip, where visiting some pubs might also be involved. Look out also for Victoria cycling around the locale with her rabbit, Oscar, in the shopping basket. Ding-dong!

*'Sweary' Nat Burton*

## Ringling World Centenary Day

A group of us from the branch went to the Ringling World Centenary day on Saturday 26th March. The day was probably improved by the TUC March taking place on the same day as many roads had been closed and there was very little traffic. Throughout the day, various towers were open for ringing.

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry was open. There was an impressive display of ringing art at the ROA Gallery. This included embroidery, sculpture, cartoons and paintings. The Central Council Rolls of Honour of ringers who died in the two world wars were also on show. Some of us went on guided walks around the London Bridge and Monument area. The Guide pointed out old and new buildings including the church of St Andrew Undershaft where we saw the plaque commemorating Fabian Stedman. If you get the opportunity to go on one of these walks they are really informative and the guides know so much about the history of the area and future plans for more buildings. Two mini rings and a beer tent were set up in the Dean's Garden at Westminster Abbey.

The Abbey was filled with ringers for even-song. The Dean commented that it was unusual to see so many ringers at a service. After tea and cake in Central Hall, we were treated to an excellent musical touch of 100 changes on 24 handbells lasting 7 minutes. The first Young Ringers' striking competition had taken place at Pimlico earlier in the day, and medals were presented to all members of the 12 bands who took part. The ODG band did really well, being awarded an 'A' and coming third. The day ended with an excellent varied handbell concert by the Wandle Ringers conducted by Sandra Winter. Congratulations to The Ringling World for celebrating their centenary with such a well organized and enjoyable day.

*Pam Elliston*

## Quarter Peal

20th February 2011

All Saints, Wokingham

1250 Cambridge Surprise Major

- 1 Mary Spence
- 2 Mhairi C Miller \*
- 3 Barbara G Smith
- 4 Stephen R Smith
- 5 Nigel AL Mellor (C)
- 6 Neil G Curnow
- 7 John A Harrison
- 8 Jon P Tutcher

\* 1st Surprise Major inside  
For Evening Service

**The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers**  
invites Resident Guild Members to the **Guild Festival**  
to be held in Oxford on **9th July 2011.**

**Festival Lunch**  
Festival lunch  
**12.30pm** in the Newman Rooms. Lunch tickets by 1st June £12.50 (cheques to Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers) with sae from Mr R Newton, The White House, 11 Plowden Park, Aston Rowant, Watlington, OX49 5SX.

**Eucharist at the Cathedral 11.00.**

**Ringling Times**

New College	09.15-10.30
Christ Church	09.00-10.40
Magdalen College	14.30-15.30
St. Mary Magdalen	15.15-16.30
St. Thomas	15.15-16.30
Lincoln College	16.00-17.00
St. Aldate's	17.00-18.00
Carfax	17.45-18.45

Come and ring at the Cathedral and other Oxford towers.

With thanks to the Oxford Society and the Oxford University Society for their hospitality.

Poster Design by Emily Rogers

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