
Chairman's Jottings

So what's the chairman done for the last 24 months? Well, here are just a few of the highlights.

As usual a number of towers have organised their own outings far and wide, and I've often been invited. Some I've not been able to go on, but I've really enjoyed those I have been able to do. One memorable moment of the Bucklebury outing was seeing highly experienced ringers struggling with the unaccustomed weight and style of the West Meon Campanile.

The branch celebrated the Royal Diamond wedding with a number of Quarter peals and a quite a few towers rang to mark the occasion. Here at Beenham, we thought it might be fun to ring a quarter in wedding attire, and that got us a picture and small article in the Newbury Weekly News

It has been good to see Hungerford going from strength to strength ringing a good number of Peals and Quarter peals. They even stepped over the border and rang a quarter at Shalbourne to celebrate the 100th birthday of a lady who had given a gift for the recasting of the treble

A few months ago I spent a very interesting morning trying, and to some extent succeeding, to teach a Radio Berkshire reporter to ring live on the radio. All this took part with out any rehearsals and very sparse knowledge of what was to come next. My thanks go to the East Garston Churchwarden for the initial contact, and to Tessa for following the event through. There is a very interesting photo on East Garston website of Charlie Baker attempting to ring with headphones, me controlling the bell and one of East Garston's new young recruits holding the mike a few inches from his mouth. We hope the morning played its part in promoting bellringing to a wider audience.

It is gratifying to see that there is a flux of new recruits recently. Those I specifically know about include (but are not limited to): Thatcham, Bucklebury, East Garston, Lambourn and Beenham. The East Garston open tower in October yielded one new ringer for Lambourn and two young teenagers – especially nice to welcome such youngsters to bellringing.

After 4 ½ years as ringing master I have stood down. I would like to thank the branch for their help and support. Also, thanks to those

towers that are always forthcoming in providing venues for branch practices and other activities. May I wish my successor all the very best in what can be a very rewarding role within the branch.

My thanks to all the committee who have worked hard during the last year and a half. I would like to give special and personal thanks to Ian Park, for all his efficiency as branch secretary.

So now we have a newly-elected set of branch officers and I would like to welcome Mark Robbins to the team as joint ringing master. I know that he will serve us well and would like to wish him all the very best.

I would also like to extend our thanks and welcome to David Wilcox who has kindly offered his services and will be our new branch Secretary.

As many of you will already know Tessa Huyshe from East Garston and Myself are marring on November the 29th at Beenham. Due to logistics its unfortunately not possible to invite all of you to the reception, but however we are having the tower open from 1.30 to 2.20pm and we would like as many of you as possible to join us to have a ring before the service and of course you are very welcome to stay to the service which is at 2.30pm.

We have chosen to set up home in Frilsham , the down side is that the Church only has two bells so Beenham will not lose out.

On other business I am very pleased to se see a selection of ringing courses being organised by Lucy Walpole and hope that will be well received.

Marcus Allum



East Garston's latest new recruit, you will notice that he's keen to learn as there appears to be a Diagrams book in his coat pocket. He is also a keen drinker of "old Specked Hen". By the way just to squash any rumours he's not modelled on the tower captain nor the branch chairman! He was our entry for the Best Scarecrow Competition of which more can be found at www.east-garston.com/pages/village-events/fete-2008/fete-2008.htm

The Ringing Master reports...

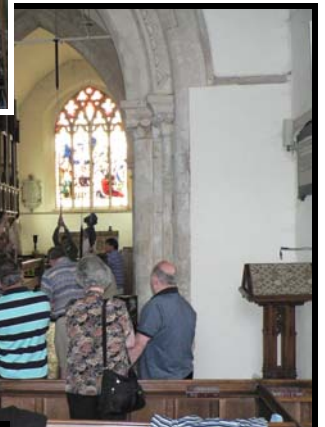
Not wishing to cover old ground, striking competitions etc have been well documented in previous editions. Current news though, includes an observed upturn in attendance at monthly branch practices with our visit to Bucklebury seeing possible record numbers. This is very encouraging and hopefully will continue with larger numbers of the more experienced among you boosting the skill level and giving the inexperienced, but aspiring, ringers chance to progress. Next month's practice will be at Lambourn where I hope to see a similarly good turnout. An important part of the branch practice was revived at Bucklebury; that is the visit to the pub after ringing. Social contact between ringers at all levels is important, especially to newcomers who feel more at ease ringing with people they have met over a pint. Hopefully this too will be a regular feature. Lastly on branch practices, any feedback, critical or otherwise, as long as it is

constructive, would be welcomed. These practices are run for the benefit of all so please feel free to comment if you have anything to say.

Now on to another subject that needs a quick plug. Following a trawl around the towers, it was decided that it would be a good idea to hold a branch quarter peal week. It will be 16th – 22nd February 2009. Further details will follow, but generally the aim will be to ring as many quarters in the branch as possible in the chosen week, with as many ringers, towers and conductors participating as possible. Benefits should be various but overall it is hoped to promote ringing in general and quarter peal ringing, both within the ringing community and with the public through the media. Watch this space for more details.

Mark Robins

Pictures from Worcester



Hungerford

Oops! Nearly missed the deadline this time but here we are with news from St Lawrence' Hungerford. Most of the plans announced in the last edition did in fact come to fruition and we had an excellent Autumn outing to North Devon. Having toured this area some five years ago, the repeat visit was partly due to Geoff Dodd making it known that the two eights in Ilfracombe had thus far eluded him and have not been added to his tower collection, but also because it is a lovely part of the world and worth visiting again. So off we went on the Friday evening to meet at the first tower, a light six at Heanton, overlooking the Torridge estuary and the ex- RAF now Royal Marines base at Chivenor.

Not all made it to this tower and we all eventually met in the hotel bar later. The following morning, sausage, egg and beans behind us, we set off for the days ringing, with Mortehoe, Georgeham and Braunton all before lunch. On arrival at Braunton, we were met by the tower captain holding the clapper from the fourth, it having fallen out the previous Sunday. All was not lost though and after a quick phone call, we were able to divert up the hill and ring at Heanton again for those who missed it the previous evening. Following lunch at Wetherspoon's in Barnstaple (another GKD collectable), we rang at Barnstaple and then on to Goodleigh, the last ring of the day. We were blessed with good weather for both days, the only sunshine for several weeks! After dinner, we were treated to method ringing on handbells, led by Mike and Lucy. Audience participation was encouraged and most of us had a go, convincing me at least, that handbell ringing is very tricky stuff.

So, to achieve the objective of 'grabbing' both the Ilfracombe eights, I had arranged for us to ring for Sunday services at both towers, a rare treat for the residents too, as ringing has lapsed at both towers lately owing to dwindling numbers. So, delightful it was to ring them on Sunday morning and particularly so, given the very high standard that we achieved with a fine touch of Stedman and a course of Double Norwich. For the final ring of the

weekend, we stopped at West Down with the added bonus of coffee at Sarah's brother's house which is next door to the church. Finally, as if we hadn't eaten enough already and with the M5 beckoning, we called in for a grand carvery Sunday Lunch in South Molton.

Meanwhile, back at home, our quarter peal attempts have continued on Sunday evenings as normal with our staple diet of Grandsire, Plain and Oxford Bob plus occasional Stedman and Surprise Major. Lately though, we have had two consecutive successes at April Day Triples, the first of which was a first for the whole band including Myriam who rang the treble, so pats on the back all round for that one. We also rang Hungerford Surprise Major which went well and nearly rang a peal of Superlative which went less well when a rope parted after over two hours ringing. Our practices continue to be lively and well attended with Double Norwich and London Minor being worked on. Sunday service ringing remains at a high standard and well attended.

I think that about covers everything except that here is the quarter composition I used for those who'd like to try it. Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who ring at Hungerford, local and visitor alike. Your continued support is vital and very much appreciated, so thanks very much.

1260 April Day Triples

PPPPB 23654

BBPPP 53246

PPBBP 34265

Repeat 5 time

The bobs are grandsire singles which I think is the right terminology. Easy to ring and call with the 7th as observation, quite musical (queens) and we enjoyed it with it being a nice change from the norm.

Mark Robins

Summer gliding evening 2009

I had decided that this year would be the last gliding evenings I would arrange, however after a very successful couple of evenings, I have had a few requests for another one, so I am planning to organise 1 or 2 evenings (depending on demand) in May/June 2009. If you are interested please let me know and I will make a note. This will definitely be my last year so please don't miss out. Contact Details: Telephone: 01488 648294, Mobile: 07775731732, email: maurentar-box@btinternet.com

Maureen Tarbox

Lost rings of bells in Berkshire

While our neighbour Hampshire has lost eight rings of bells with five and over (3 eights, 2 through bombing, 4 sixes and one five) Berkshire has been more fortunate with only two rings, one four now converted into a private house at Hatford where the bells went to Lemptford, Hertfordshire after a private sale and had trebles added to make them into a six and the five at Braywood which went to Beer in Devon

However the six at Great Shefford in our own Branch can also be claimed as a lost ring, an easy going ring I recall they were and the only anti-clockwise ring in the branch, I had them for 2 peals, the first on September 19th 1954, we were too ambitious with our method and after a few extents substituted it for a quarter peal of April Day Doubles.

The second attempt was on Boxing Day December 27th 1958, the band from away arrived an hour late and were still inebriated from the day before so a quarter peal of London Surprise Minor was substituted and we went on to Speen after lunch and rang the first peal on the bells there, one in 6 minor methods the first of many I have rung on the Speen bells.

Oh that I had them the other way round, one can always have regrets afterwards, one cannot foresee the future, now fifty years later they hang silent. I am told they have bars across to stop them from being swung, silent and forgotten in the Lambourn Valley with Boxford and Welford sharing the same fate. Yes, I have the distinction of being one of only five who have rung a quarter of doubles on the five at Boxford, the peal never followed. I also rang at Welford on three occasions, one for a service before the wheels were removed by what was to be an enthusiastic local band taught at Highclere in preparation for their own bells being restored, another scheme that fell through.

One cannot overcome local apathy, a tower that has stood for years, probably the only round one in Berkshire. Although unusual, Welford also has a round tower below the steeple. That of Great Shefford probably condemned for all eternity, are they chimed? Probably the next best thing is at Inkpen, or do they remain totally silent? As far as I know, my two quarter peals are all that were ever recorded at Great Shefford.

Next door, East Garston has had plenty of ringing done there, its first peal was on May 16 1954 and there have been many more since, including London Surprise Minor. Its local band has kept the bells ringing, all power to their elbow with a happy band of ringers on what are not an easy ring.

Geoff Dodd

200 Club

May

1 st	Marcus Allum	Beenham
2 nd	Roy Prately	Thatcham
3 rd	Jane Johnstone	Lambourn
4 th	Ken Tarbox	East Garston

June

1 st	St Lawrence Belfry	Hungerford
2 nd	Thatcham Tower	Thatcham
3 rd	Mrs J Chapman	Aldermaston
4 th	Marcus Allum	Beenham

August

1 st	John Maher	Kintbury
2 nd	Lynne Salt	Aldermaston
3 rd	Mrs Prately	Thatcham
4 th	Eric Griffiths	Newbury

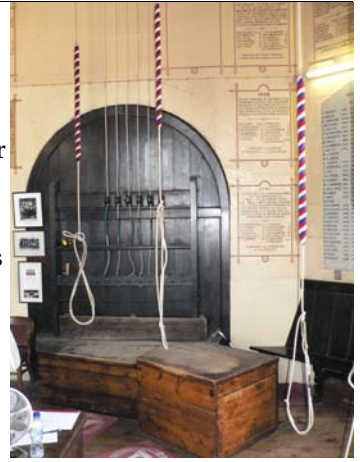
September

1 st	Joyce Pack	Newbury
2 nd	Betty Eley	East Garston
3 rd	Kintbury Bellringers	Kintbury
4 th	Christopher Vaughan	East Garston

St Paul's Cathedral

One of the most easily recognised landmarks in The City of London is St Paul's Cathedral. Of the two towers at the western end of the Cathedral, the northwest tower contains a ring of twelve bells with a tenor weighing in excess of 60cwt whilst the other tower houses Great Paul. The original service bell cast in 1700, affectionately known by the ringers as 'The Banger', also hangs in the northwest tower and predates the peal of twelve by 178 years.

After climbing the 118 steps to the ringing chamber you get the feeling of entering a somewhat forbidding room steeped in ringing history. On the walls are recorded details of many peals rung for past royal and historical occasions. The ringing chamber ceiling is approximately thirty feet high and the ropes have no guides. Each ringer stands on a box, the treble box being about six inches high, whilst the tenor box is just over three feet high.



The St. Paul's Cathedral Guild of Ringers was originally formed with fourteen ringers drawn from members of The Ancient Society of College Youths. The fourteen members were chosen to provide thirteen service ringers plus one spare. For many years thirteen ringers were required because the tenor always had a strap rope tied in under the sally. Another ringer standing on the floor could then give the ringer on the box a helping hand. With the present day development of single-handed heavy bell ringing, however, the strap rope is now seldom used. For one peal attempt of Stedman Cinques several years ago, the strap rope was being used. During the second course of the peal the strap rope became untied. The ringer on the box carried on and completed the peal single handed whilst the disgruntled strapper coiled the strap rope up and sat and listened for over three and a half hours.

Two non-ringing gentlemen associated with The Cathedral had early influences on the bells and ringing. Lord Grimthorpe, an architect associated with The Cathedral at the time the bells were being cast, stipulated that the front bells should be cast with plenty of weight. Hence the treble's weight of over 8cwt. John Stainer, The Cathedral organist at the same time, said that Stedman Cinques was to be the method rung for Sunday services and this tradition remained for a great many years. Present day Sunday service ringing now, however, often extends to Surprise Maximus.

One amusing anecdote recalled from past times:

One Sunday morning a prominent ringer from Liverpool came up to the ringing room but was not invited to ring. Afterwards he confronted Alfred Peck and asked 'Why wasn't I invited to ring Mr Peck?' 'Well,' said Alfred. 'It could have been for either one of two reasons. Either it was because we didn't know who you were or perhaps it was because we did'.

The London Correspondent

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