

Sonning Deanery – Reports for 2011 AGM

Secretary's Report for 2010–11

On 6 March the Branch Ringing Outing visited 6 towers in/near the Vale of the White Horse.

In April the 6-bell Striking Competition at Shottesbrooke was won by Wokingham All Saints, with Easthampstead 2nd and Sandhurst 3rd; Twyford entered a team for the first time in many years, and received commendation from the judges despite finishing 5th of 5 entries. Several towers rang for St George's Day and the Girlguiding centenary. Three training courses have been held: on 'Elementary Bob Calling' & 'Rope Splicing' in April, and 'Raising & lowering in peal' in October.

For the biennial Sonning Scarecrow Weekend in May, one face of the tower was decorated with a yellow brick road. In August, Sonning ringers and choristers visited their former vicar, now at Upton Snodsbury in Worcestershire, for a service and wander up the tower and round the village. In September, Waltham St Lawrence ringers and friends visited the Isle of Wight, ringing at 3 towers. The Heritage Open Day in September at Wokingham All Saints was very successful, with 80 visitors touring the tower and enjoying a very clear view from the top.

In addition to monthly branch practices on Saturdays, weekday practices continue, usually held on the first Tuesday of the month at All Saints Wokingham. Attendance at branch practices varied but were often poor, and the 8-bell striking competition did not take place because no tower could raise more than 7 ringers on the day. Whereas Sandhurst and Twyford have gained new members, ringing at Hurst has ceased and a shortage of ringers has been noted at Wargrave and Arborfield; even with guests from Reading branch, Sonning no longer manages to ring for every evensong. Easthampstead lost two long-serving (40 yr) members when Margaret and Nigel Bearn escaped to the country to live near Winchcombe.

Confusion extended our Quarter-peal week through the 1st 2 weeks of November, but fewer quarters than usual were rung.

In mid-year, Alison Clayton took over from Sarah Boys as newsletter editor.

Pam & Andrew Elliston

Webmaster/Postmaster Report

Website – When I took over as webmaster I gave the site a major overhaul. I aimed to build on what Aidan had done before me, but to add more material, give it a face lift, reinforce the connection with the Guild website, and restructure it to make it easier to use. Many of the new ideas I incorporated came from other successful websites, notably the Guild's and some of the other branches'. I asked the other officers to review the revised site before going live, and it received favourable feedback.

The website includes full contact details for officers, an on-line diary, contact details for towers organised by practice night, number of bells and map, details of training courses (with an application form), full list of all Branch and Guild services, copies of all newsletters since 2005, reference documents, reports and pictures of events, the history of the Branch, and a list of useful ringing links.

The website is at: <http://odg.org.uk/sdb/>

E-mail lists – Although I didn't realise it at the time, I also took over the job of Branch Postmaster, responsible for managing all the Branch e-mail lists (Members, Officers, Towers) and for solving any problems associated with the tower lists hosted by the Branch (currently 4).

The most frequent problems are caused by people who change their e-mail address without telling me, either because they don't receive information sent out, or because mail to their old address comes back undeliverable.

Please tell me if your e-mail address changes. If you manage a tower e-mail list, please tell me when you change anyone's address, because the change you make does not automatically get copied to the members' distribution list.

John Harrison, February 2011

Training report for 2010

This report was initially prepared as the Branch submission to the Guild Training Meeting on 6 February.

Courses run:

- Elementary bob calling (April),
- Rope splicing (April)
- Raising & lowering in peal (October)

Courses waiting:

- Method learning (so far failed to find a suitable date in time to organise it)
- Maintenance (nearly enough students to justify running it)
- Other courses have one or two people waiting, but too few to run them

Website:

- The training pages on the Branch website at: <http://www.sdb.odg.org.uk/training/>
- Prospectuses for all course offered
- Status reports of all course topics
- On-line form for people to request courses

Monthly Saturday practices:

- Mixed support (Max 16 min 4, apart from AGM 27)
- Time varies between morning, afternoon or evening (no clear preference for any one)
- Turn up on spec.

Monthly weekday practices:

- Variable support (max 11, min 5, but several cancelled for lack of support)
- E-mail invitations, and only confirmed when we have enough

Concerns

- Low turnout for Branch practices
- Of those who do turn out, few are the less experienced ringers who could benefit most, and many are more experienced ringers who themselves derive limited benefit from doing so.
- The number of experienced, proactive ringers in the Branch able to share the work of training is very small.

Post script

Average attendance at Saturday practices (excluding AGM) in 2010 was 10.1 whereas in 2005 it was 17.4

John Harrison, January 2011