

## Summary of bands within the Branch

During October/November 2017 Rob Needham & John Harrison held short conversations with the tower captains within the Branch about the state of ringers and ringing in their respective towers. Some of the conversations were more extensive than the summaries below, but the aim here is to present the key facts in a more or less consistent way across them all.

Looking across the responses, the following features emerge:

- **Inactive ringers** – 30% of members are inactive (never or hardly ever ring) – far more than the 10-15% estimated after the 2015 survey. Quite a few members are at best semi-active.
- **Service ringing** – 30% of towers either don't ring(2), or ring for far fewer services than they would if enough ringers were available (3). Two towers have recently resumed service ringing.
- **Service ringers** – Several towers rely on visitors to make up numbers for service ringing
- **Joint bands** – Two pairs of towers operate as joint bands, sharing the load of service ringing and practices.
- **Practice visitors** – 10 practices (2/3 of total) have an average of 4 each regular visitors.
- **Repertoire** – What bands can achieve (alone or with regular visitors) varies a lot, with some being very limited..
- **Recruits** – 11 towers (2/3 of total) have recruited in recent years. The rest have not been successful or not tried.
- **Bands** – The majority of those who described their band did so using positive terms
- **Leaders** – Most tower captains were happy to do the job but of those who expressed an opinion, over half had either taken the job because there was no one else or commented on the desirability of someone else being willing to take over.

During the discussions several people commented on the need for and/or use of, support from the Branch. This included:

- The wedding volunteer e-mail list is useful. (Barkham)
- Help in the form of an adult able to supervise ringers would be welcome. (Twyford)
- Passing on what's been learnt elsewhere giving talks to schools would be useful. (Wargrave)
- Encouraging more use of branch practices could help with progress. (Arborfield)

The tables below summarise the responses of tower captains on different aspects of the ringing and ringers in their tower. These are necessarily brief summaries of sometimes longer comments, or in a few cases e-mail comments. Where no comment was made on a particular topic it is recorded as n/c.

The column showing number of ringers mostly shows three figures. The total is based on the number listed as Guild members for 2017, adjusted up or down for any that have since died, given up ringing, moved away or moved in. The active figure refers to those who normally ring for services and at practices. The inactive figure refers to Guild members who either do not ring at all or ring so infrequently that they are effectively occasional visitors. Semi active refers to ringers who do not fit either of these categories because they attend on 50% of occasions or fewer, for example never ringing for services or never attending practices.

	How many ringers	How often you ring for services	What you ring for services	Who comes to practices	What your practices achieve	How you recruit	How you describe band	How you feel about leading the band
Arborfield	9 (7 active, 2 inactive) + 4 developers	Most services, usually 6 now new ringers ring for services (previously fewer than 6 for ~50%)	Rounds, call changes, maybe Plain Bob Doubles	(Joint with Barkham) All active ringers + 2 regular visitors	Hard to balance teaching learners with improving skills of others.	Recently: 1 from congregation, 2 related to ringers, 2 just turned up. Previously 2 came via website but didn't continue.	Enthusiastic, good team spirit. Regular social activities. Too few strong ringers. Some long-standing members make little progress. Youngsters progressing well – some way to go.	Grown into the role. Persuaded to take it after a long period with no leader. Brought in new ringers to refresh the band. Trying to make it more visible in the Branch.
Barkham	3 (2 active, 1 inactive)	Recently started again. Rely on help from Arborfield	Call changes	Joint practice with Arborfield. Wedding ringing also shared	(See Arborfield)	2 recent (children of warden & priest)	n/c	No one else to do it. Happy to organise things.
Binfield	7 (6 active, 1 inactive)	Just started again, 1st, 3rd & 4th Sundays, with outside help	Rounds & call changes	Own band + 4 regular visitors	Trying to develop current skills	1 via Parish Magazine. 1 just turned up	Keen but weak. Determined. Shock of recent deaths pulled them together.	Didn't want the job but happy to do it since there is no one else.
Easthampstead	15 (13 active, 2 inactive - 1 at uni)	All services (AM)	Rounds up to plain Minor, occasional Triples	A few locals don't attend practices	Most ringing on 6 (limited by ability not numbers)	Children from Youth Club. Adults from congregation	Friendly, active, enjoy themselves	Happy to do it. Maybe do too much. Trying to encourage someone else to.
Finchampstead	15 (9 active, 6 inactive)	Most services	Plain Bob Minor with occasional touches	Mainly own band	Encourage people to ring different bells to increase flexibility	Tried school leavers. Interest but parents would not make regular commitment	Loyal but not progressive. Only a few will go elsewhere. No obvious need of help	Enjoys doing it to best of ability.
Hurst	5 (3 active, 2 inactive - 1 at uni)	Only occasional special service (with help)	n/a	No practice. Joint practices folded when Twyford focused on own needs.	n/a	No recruits for 5-6 years.	Virtual. Those that remain would be keen if band grew again.	Willing leader of nobody
Sandhurst Immaculate Conception	0	Never	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sandhurst St Michael	12 (most semi active)	Sun (AM) never Sun PM monthly (incl visitors)	(PM) Grandsire Doubles. Maybe Bob Minor	Typically 5-6 own + 5-6 regular visitors	Mainly what people already know. Doubles, up to Cambridge Minor. Worthwhile, especially with keen visitors	4 recent recruits. 2 moved away. 1 ringing but very busy.	Struggling. He despairs.	No tower captain. He resigned (because he can't ring on Sundays) and at each AGM no one will take it on.

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Shottesbrooke	2 (2 active) Operate as joint band with White Waltham	Yes, relying on White Waltham support to make up 4 or 5	Call changes & Plain Hunt	Joint practices with White Waltham at alternate towers	Try to develop whole band but make slow progress	Tried Church events, publicity & word of mouth, but with no success	Loyal, long-serving ringers	Doesn't feel confident about leading and 'can barely ring myself'. Relies on others to run the ringing
Sonning	17 (12 active, 5 inactive)	Sun AM – Most Sun PM – 25%	Mainly rounds & call changes (apart from some evening quarters with outside help)	(At least) 2 regular experienced visitors	Focus on learners & less experienced. Surprise Minor & Triples with help from visitors supporters)	Stall at Sonning Show. Website linked to local Facebook groups. 3 being taught. 1 lapsed ringer joined.	Enough ringers and teachers not to need help	n/c
Twyford	10 (7 active, 3 inactive) & support from Hurst (1)	~ once per month (because often only one adult present when two are needed)	Plain Bob Doubles	Locals + 6 to 8 regular visitors	n/c	Mostly youngsters	n/c	n/c
Waltham St Lawrence	14 (7 active, 2 semi active, 7 inactive) (the 2 ring elsewhere for services)	All services (but only 4-5 ringers without visitors)	Plain Bob & Grandsire Doubles (more if there are visitors)	~10 (~7 locals + ~3 regular visitors)	Plain Bob & Grandsire Doubles (but more with visitors)	Advertise via Parish, local Facebook groups & village festival. Previous success via local school	n/c	n/c
Warfield	6 (5 active, 1 inactive)	90-95% of services (if 4 or more ringers)	Sometimes Minimus at best unless visitors	4 regular visitors but only 80-85% of practices held.	n/c	Tried large youth group a while ago but no success.	n/c	n/c
Wargrave	14 (6 active, 8 inactive) + 1 learner + occasional returner	Most services. Average attendance 7 (but 1 of those now at uni)	(with local ringers) Plain or Grandsire Doubles	Well supported, plus 4 or more regular visitors	Stedman Doubles, Plain Bob, Kent & Surprise Minor, Triples.	n/c [have recruited]	n/c	n/c
White Waltham	6 (4 active, 2 inactive - students) Joint band with Shottesbrooke	Most services, even if only a few ringers.	Typically 2 – 4 bells. Call changes, hunt, maybe Plain Bob.	Joint practices at alternate towers. Core group up to 6. Rarely outsiders.	Progress difficult. 1 young member progressing slowly into methods but held back by weak band around him. Use Minimus to practise dodging & place making.	Open tower sessions (3 this summer) – fair interest in bells, but no recruits. Regular article/ invitation in the parish magazine but no response.	Small but loyal band. Wide spread of ability. Struggling to progress and attract new members. Morale can become low for ringers who want to progress or ring quarters but can't	Elected Tower Captain. Keen to lead the band and to teach. Wants things to improve, to stop them getting worse.

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Wokingham All Saints	16 (15 active, 1 inactive – sick)	All services Average attendance: AM – 10, PM – 7 May be 6 occasionally) Mostly need outside help for quarters	Sun AM: Raise in peal, Rounds up to Yorkshire Sun PM: Rounds up to Stedman, Lower in peal	Up to 14 local + up to 4 visitors	Currently spending a lot of time with basics for recent recruits, but also developing method repertoire of more advanced ringers. We always want to do more to improve striking but rarely do so.	Frequency varies. Some via website others from church. Most adults but some youngsters. Of 15 trained since 2000, 6 gave up, 4 moved away, 5 remain	Fairly strong but striking can be very variable. Less insular than it used to be. Strong social unit.	Happy to do serve as long as needed but rotation would be healthier. One of a team, with separate ringing master, deputy, steeple keeper, etc, and we meet regularly to agree plans.
Wokingham Saint Paul	9 (8 active, 1 inactive)	All services (AM) Typically 6 + 3 visitors	Grandsire Triples, Plain Bob Minor or Grandsire Doubles Maybe Cambridge or Yorkshire	Typically 6 + 2 or 3 regular visitors	Basic methods for less experienced learners. More advanced methods to help retain interest of regular visitors	Annual open day but little yield. Recent recruits – one just turned up, one from church (but dropped out)	Fairly enthusiastic. A bit polarised – high or low ability with nothing in the middle.	Happy to do the job but it would be good for someone else to bring in new ideas.
Total / summary	160 (106 active, 12 semi active, 42 inactive)	12 – All or most 3 – A lot less 2 – None		10 practices have regular visitors (average ~4 each)		11 have recruited 5 not recruited		3 – no one else 5 – good to have new blood

Sonning Deanery Branch – State of ringing & ringers survey, v5 – JAH – 18 Nov 2017