

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



September 2021, Autumn

Chairman's message



At Easter when I last wrote we were still looking forward to national restrictions easing and a gradual return to ringing. The legal constraints are now behind us (though the Church remains cautious) and we are all exhorted to continue being careful. So after months of hypothetical ideas about how to return to normal we now face the practicalities of getting ringing going again.

Some towers have already resumed service ringing and/or practices – generally more limited than before – depending on the local situation, as agreed between each tower captain and their church. Several bands are finding that their numbers are fewer than they were before, which isn't so surprising after a year and a half with no recruitment to replace natural losses, and with some people being cautious. That makes it harder to ensure there is a band for services and enough ringers for a useful practice. That's an extra load on the tower captain, and we can support our tower captains by trying to get back into the habit of ringing when required. As I said in the Spring, habit is a powerful factor that helps to keep us going but which once broken can be hard to restore if the space in our lives has filled with other things.

Many bands will be seeking new recruits, but raw beginners take a long time to train. A much better recruit is one who can already ring – a lapsed ringer. There are a lot of them – someone once claimed there were more lapsed ringers than active ones – and a lot of ringers (including me) have returned to ringing, sometimes after many years. In many cases, whatever caused them to give up – young family, demanding job, house move, whatever – is no longer a barrier, but their lives have adapted to not ringing. Bringing them back requires a trigger.

That trigger often comes through personal contact – someone they know or meet who is a ringer, talks about ringing and puts the idea into their head. There are 160 of us in the Branch, and between us we almost certainly know at least one former ringer. Maybe by talking about ringing to the people we know we can provide the trigger for someone to return.

In the Branch we are working out how best to restart practices, focusing initially on the ones for which the need is greatest. Your tower captain may already have discussed this with you, but in any case we are always happy to hear what you most value of what the Branch can provide, in terms of practices, support and training, so please get in touch if you would like to give us your views or seek help.

John Harrison, chairman@sdb.odg.org.uk

Branch towers and their ringing status

Recently our Ringing Master, Nigel Mellor, has been conducting a survey of towers and their ringing status since Covid restrictions eased. The questions asked of tower correspondents were:

1. Have you resumed ringing? If so is it just for church services and/or practices?
2. If you have resumed ringing:
 - How many of your ringers have returned? Have any left?
 - Do you have enough ringers to be able to ring all your bells?
 - Would you welcome other ringers to your practices and/or church service ringing?
 - Do you have a maximum number of ringers allowed in your ringing room?
 - Are you taking any specific measures to minimise the Covid 19 risk?
3. If you have not resumed ringing, what is the reason?

(Continued overleaf)

Branch towers and their ringing status (*cont.*)

4. Would your band benefit with help to resume ringing, e.g. skill recovery training, teaching new ringers?
5. Would you and your band welcome a return of branch practices, including mid week elementary and surprise practices?

Thirteen of our towers have already responded and Nigel would be delighted to hear from the other towers.

A very brief summary from Nigel of the responses so far is:

“Essentially most towers, but not all, are back ringing but with some missing ringers. Most are happy to have branch practices with a few notable exceptions.”

A full analysis of the responses will be published in due course.

Editor

Keeping bellringing going at St Andrew's church in Sonning

The pandemic meant that actual ringing of tower bells was not possible so what did the ringers at Sonning do to keep in touch?

Firstly we organised a Zoom session for approximately the start time of our usual Thursday evening practice. It started out being a time to ‘chat’ with others from our tower and some invited guests who had, before Covid-19, been ringing quarter peals with us on Sunday evenings. After a while just ‘chatting’ didn’t seem enough and quizzes became a regular feature each week. Several members offered and ran quizzes they already had, and everyone joined in. The next development was that each person was asked to prepare and ask three questions, the answers to which started with a letter they had been allocated the previous week.

These quizzes proved popular, but for variety we had a ‘treasure hunt’ now and again. This might be:

Tell/show us the oldest item in your house

Who is your favourite poet and why, or read a favourite poem

Show us a mystery object for us to try and identify

Tell us the story behind an object.

We really enjoyed these structured evenings with members coming up with some very interesting objects. We also learnt a lot to add to our knowledge (as long as we can remember it of course).

When our zoom session ended it was time for Ringing Room where we could have a go at bellringing methods using the computer. This proved more difficult for experienced tower bell ringers than for relative newcomers and some ringers felt frustrated about the lack of progress.

Now regular tower bell ringing is taking place again, after a gap of over a year, and we are fortunate to have lost just one member and gained a lot of knowledge.

Pauline Needham



Sonning's first quarter since lockdown

After 20 minutes of our Thursday evening practice at Sonning on 2nd September we still only had 6 ringers, so Pam, our captain, suggested we attempt a ‘spur of the moment’ quarter peal. The idea was to give Katie Thomas a chance to tick off one of her level 3 *Learning the Ropes* items. Katie had already done a quarter peal by ringing the tenor behind, so she chose to ring the treble to Bob Doubles. Some of the ringers wondered whether they would have the physical stamina to do a quarter peal, but in the event it all went well and Katie got warm congratulations when we finished. The details of the quarter are given on the back of this newsletter.

Rob Needham

Training Officer and ART Champion news



Think ahead. Small steps. Be kind. Be innovative. Share and support. All words that are emanating from the ringing world as it resumes ringing in a rather changed world.

So how can we move on and what support is there out there. Simon Linford continues to provide both entertaining and informative blogs which can be read on the Central Council, CCCBR website. CCCBR collaboration with the Association of Ringing Teachers, ART continues to try and gauge where and how support to the country can be channeled.

The latest Survival and Recovery Newsletter from ART/CCCBR is here: [https://ringingteachers.org/application/files/8716/2487/7230/Survival Recovery Newsheet Issue 6.pdf](https://ringingteachers.org/application/files/8716/2487/7230/Survival_Recovery_Newsheet_Issue_6.pdf)

In this newsletter you can read about an online refresher course for all ART teachers or those who have attended M1 and M2F and read about the Method-Toolbox, which is constantly being updated. <https://ringingteachers.org/resources/Method-Toolboxes>

There is a very topical article regarding CO² monitoring and some results from around the country. Interesting reading for tower captains preparing to keep their ringers safe and it includes links to John Harrison's articles after his studies at All Saints Wokingham.

At All Saints Wokingham we have managed to keep going throughout the restrictions despite mitigations and with a much-reduced core of ringers. There was only one Sunday Service where we could not raise a band. Our ventilation challenge is that we have no window, but thanks to John Harrison's CO² monitoring studies and the use of our new air conditioning unit which stirs up the volume of air and dilutes the particles we breathe out, we feel more confident ringing.

Slowly we are returning to weekly ringing on both practice night and on Sunday mornings as our church opens up more services. Jane is now teaching her lockdown online learner who could ring plain bob in just 4 hours. Here's a link to the article and challenge of teaching lockdown learners, by Pip Penny. <https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox/lockdown-learners>

If there are any members of the branch who would like a refresher handling session Jane is looking at organising a "Get Back On the Bell" practice.

So how do Tower Captains encourage, nurture and persuade others to rejoin. See this link: <https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox/tower-captains-guide>.

There is information on how to improve ringers' confidence, where to look for support with courses and training through ART and emphasis on group learning. The Loddon Hub at Twyford is used as an example of a group of 6 towers that support each other so maybe we can create some more clusters of towers within the branch to support ourselves even if it's only with 2 or 3 towers. Something for the Officers to chat about.

Take care as you ring.

Jane Mellor, Training Officer and Branch Recovery Champion

Peals, Quarter Peals & interesting rings

By searching on *BellBoard* I have found the following performances from May until now, listed in alphabetical order of member's surname. My apologies to any members whose performances I have missed.

Vikki Bulbeck, Shottesbrooke, Clewer: 5 tower bell quarters

Chris Cole, St Paul's: 4 peals and 3 quarter peals, all in hand

John Harrison, All Saints: 8 quarter peals in hand, 1 tower bell quarter at All Saints (see below)

Jacqueline Hazell, Waltham St Lawrence: 3 tower bell quarters, 1 quarter in hand

Nigel Mellor, All Saints: 5 quarter peals in hand, 6 virtual in hand quarters, 1 tower bell peal, 1 tower bell quarter

Janet Menhinick, Sandhurst: 4 peals and 21 quarter peals in hand, 2 virtual 'in hand' quarters, 1 tower bell peal, 1 tower bell quarter

Sue Portsmouth, Sonning, 3 tower bell quarters, 68 virtual quarter peals on Ringing Room

Graham Scott, Eashampstead: 13 'in hand' quarter peals on Ringing Room

David Sullivan, Wargrave: 11 quarter peals on Ringing Room, 2 tower bell quarters

Vinni Sullivan, Wargrave: 15 quarter peals on Ringing Room, 2 tower bell quarters

Holley Wakeling, Waltham St Lawrence: 3 tower bell quarters



Peals, Quarter Peals & interesting rings (cont.)

From all the worthy rings that I have summarised above, I show a few below on the basis that they have a dedication specific to the branch, involve several branch members, or I just like them – the editor's decision is final!

All Saints, Wokingham
Monday, 12 July 2021 in 41m

1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor

- 1 Stephen C Bates
- 2 Jane A Mellor
- 3 Stephen R Smith
- 4 John A Harrison
- 5 Tom Blomley
- 6 Nigel A L Mellor (C)

To welcome into the world Esme Melody Ruth Smith, born 5th July 2021, granddaughter to 3.

First quarter in the tower for 17 months.

First Treble dodging - 1.

Finchampstead, Berkshire,
5 Garrett Road
Friday, 27 August 2021 in 2h 20

5088 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1-2 Mike Pidd
- 3-4 David G Maynard (C)
- 5-6 Christopher P Cole
- 7-8 Nigel A L Mellor

Rung with the band's best wishes to Adrian Nash for a speedy recovery.

First peal of Surprise on handbells: 7-8

First peal in the house.

Sonning, Berkshire
St Andrew
Thursday, 2 September 2021 in 47m

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Katie Thomas
- 2 Geoffrey M Harvey
- 3 Rob Needham
- 4 Peter Kemm
- 5 Pam Elliston (C)
- 6 Sue Portsmouth

First away from tenor 1.

The Bellerophons, Ringing Room
Thursday, 15 July 2021 in 54m

1250 Drivel List Treble Place Major

- 1 Sue Portsmouth (Sonning)
- 2 Lavinia Sullivan (Wargrave)
- 3 Rosemary J Humphrey (Redditch)
- 4 Christine B J de Cordova (Whitehaven)
- 5 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke
(North Leigh) (C)
- 6 Simon J O Head (Bletchley)
- 7 Catherine A Colman (Bury St
Edmunds)
- 8 Barbara D Murray (Preston)

Rung by *The Bellerophons* as a 50th birthday compliment to Neil Ephgrave, who is renowned for his delightful drivel.

Also celebrating the following list of drivel: Gummi Worm Day, Orange Chicken Day, Tapioca Pudding Day, Be a Dork Day, and finally (making a good pair), Hot Dog Day and Pet Fire Safety Day.



Wokingham, Berkshire
2 Murdoch Road
Sunday, 25 July 2021 in 37m

1264 Plain Bob Major

- 1-2 Marcia L Dieppe
- 3-4 Janet E Menhinick
- 5-6 Christopher P Cole
- 7-8 John A Harrison (C)

Another Lawn Quarter



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