

March
2007



Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter

Newsletter of the Witney and Woodstock Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

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PLUS MUCH, MUCH MORE.....

From your Editor

The branch has kept itself active over the long winter months. It was excellent to see Witney Police Station bar packed for the Branch Quiz night in January. I don't know what sort of reputation bell ringers have in the wider community. When I booked the bar I was told that I would be responsible if there were any problems! To the best of my knowledge there was no disorder. Congratulations to the Oxford City team who

were winners. Well done to Stonesfield who were the top Branch team. Amanda who worked tirelessly for free running the bar thought you were a very friendly bunch. We made nearly £100 which went towards Branch funds. Bamptons bells are back in the tower following a dedication service. Well done to all the Bampton ringers for all their efforts. It is as much as I can do to find time to Hoover Woodstock ringing chamber!

The Branch AGM brought changes in the committee. A big welcome to Mel Leggett our new Chair and good luck to Anthony Williamson who has taken on secretary. I'd like to thank my wife Zoë for her three years as secretary. Not any easy task with three young children and a baby. I am currently organizing the outing. It is on Sat 12th May. We're off to Bedfordshire. See you on the coach

Richard White

Ringing Masters Update. – Lorna Smale

Further to this year's AGM at Aston, you might like to know that your Ringing Masters are the same! Bernard, Mary and I are more than willing to help in any of our towers. Please let us know if you require assistance. We are currently in the process of arranging the ringing programme for the next year. You will all soon receive a new card with the details of forthcoming practices. Meanwhile, even if you still have your current cards, please display Anthony's poster in your tower and encourage your

ringers to visit our website: www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk. I'm really excited about the way Branch Practices are going. We have been trying a different approach at our 6 bell practices, with the intention of finding out in advance what the tower is trying to achieve and would like help with and then passing on ideas to help them progress as a team. This year it has been great to help in towers with many new recruits and where we haven't held a Branch Practice for some years.

Best of all at towers like Standlake, Northmoor, Bladon and Alvescot, it has been an absolute pleasure to ring with local ringers. We try very hard to encourage ringers to attend Branch Practices in their own towers as well as other practices. The benefits of meeting new people and other ringers, where you can learn and experience other ways of doing things are untold. I hope our enthusiasm is infectious and that we will continue to see more of you over the coming year.

Lorna Smale

Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson accuses bell ringers of 'slow work' on the A44 – By Lindsey THORNTON

“They are also deeply unpleasant. Like bellringers’ they wish to impose their beliefs and their way of life on everyone else”



Jeremy being pursued by Lindsey

That loveable petrol-head Jeremy Clarkson has added bell ringers to his growing list of targets for abuse. In a recent *Sunday Times* article he complains about the slow drivers holding him up between his hometown Chipping Norton and Oxford on the A44:

“Show me someone who drives slowly and I’ll show you a catastrophic bore. Someone whose life is empty, shallow and pointless. But there’s more to it than that.

They are also deeply unpleasant. Like bell ringers, they wish to impose their beliefs and their way of life on everyone else. They are people with an antisocial personality disorder, manifested in amoral behaviour without empathy or remorse. And that’s the dictionary-definition of a psychopath.”

I wonder if the ringers at Chipping Norton church realise their neighbour thinks they all deserve ASBOs and Restraining Orders? I think Jeremy needs to be enlightened! Doesn't he know the benefits of bell ringing?:

- It can be dangerous (crash helmets required for those dodgy stays)
- It causes pollution (I mean noise pollution that doesn't cost the planet)
- It annoys some people (and Jeremy's very good at that too)
- It doesn't require any physical fitness and it's a good excuse for going to the pub for a few beers
- It would give him something to talk about other than fast cars
- It would sort out his back problems (caused by squeezing his big frame into too many small fast cars)

Personally I'm looking forward to the day when Jeremy plays the dame in the Chipping Norton Theatre pantomime, another custard pie in his face perhaps! (Remember Oxford Brookes University?).

How about the Ringing Roadshow coming to Chipping Norton next year, preferably in the field opposite his house?

“Jeremy we're coming to get you!”

Lindsey Thornton
Psychopath and Bell
ringer, Stonesfield

P.S. Jeremy Clarkson's full article can be found on the website:
http://driving.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/driving/jeremy_clarkson/article648860.ece

BAMPTON BELLS RINGING AGAIN.

The front six bells were returned to St. Mary's on Thursday 15 February and left on display in the church over the weekend, for public viewing.

On the following Monday, the bells were hoisted to the belfry and the re-hanging commenced. This was completed by Wednesday 7 March and at 4.00 p.m., that afternoon the bells were given a trial ring. The ringers were very pleased with the handling of the bells, and service ringing and practices started the following Sunday and Monday respectively.

All the bells have been reweighed and Bampton now has a tenor weighing 23cwt 4lbs in the key of D flat.

Dave ROSE.

Chairman's Chatter – Mel LEGGETT

“It was a while before I discovered a wider group of people, in the Branch, who shared this rather esoteric interest and supported each other in all manner of ways ”

ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY?

Traditionally, I should be thanking everyone for their support and vote of confidence, but we're all familiar with the hush that comes over a meeting when any post falls vacant and replacements are sought. This time, Lorna, who I defy anyone to resist (!), had got to me first. I was able to take off the sling just before the meeting and I'm told that I'll get the use of my arm back in a month or two. Seriously (why?), the job of Chairman is one which really only involves making sure that (hopefully, the right) decisions are made in the shortest possible meetings and, mainly, that all the others, who do the real work, are supported to the hilt. And it is, actually, quite an honour. So, thank-you! Now, my record, when it comes to branch practices, is far from exemplary, and I'm very conscious of how few people I know in the branch, and how many towers I've never visited. Consequently, I've got some catching up to do. I'm also not an advanced ringer. So, I need to sort

out for myself, let alone for you, just what it is that I'm now chairman of, and why.

For me, ringing was a way of becoming involved in village life. When I started it was a means of meeting others and doing something which seemed part of the essence of a small community and was a functional contribution to church activities. It was a while before I discovered a wider group of people, in the Branch, who shared this rather esoteric interest and supported each other in all manner of ways.

Now, I guess, there are two aspects of ringing which we enjoy: skill development and social diversion; some people just want one, some the other, and some both. We've all experienced a "quiet night" at some time or other; two bells don't make for an exciting practice, and they don't sound too good on a Sunday either, and it's difficult to create a "buzz" of conversation on your own, so we need the others around us to make it all enjoyable on both levels. This is what it's all about.

Now, they say, "You can lead a horse to water, etc....", and no-one could have done that more patiently and doggedly over recent years than our present and previous Ringing Masters and committee members. At a local level we're a relatively small group of people, so whatever we do cannot rely on getting a huge turnout. But, whatever *is* organised, we need to keep in mind that someone, and we all know who these people are, puts an awful lot of time and effort into trying to fulfil this function of support for US, AND WE NEED TO SUPPORT THEM IN RETURN!!!.

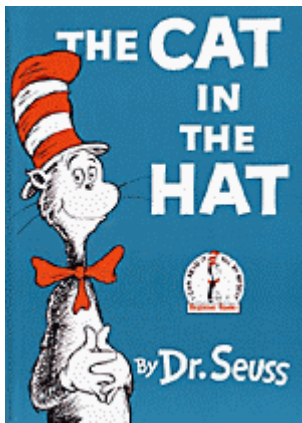
Mel Leggett

"Write a short piece for the Newsletter", they said...
Oh Dear

From the Archives

A look at Branch news fifty years ago – by Richard White

Other events from March 1957:



Dr Seuss' – The Cat In The Hat is published.

UK colonies, Gold Coast and British Togoland become Independent Republic of Accra.

Egypt re-opens the Suez Canal

Treaty of Rome establishes the EEC.

One of the hazards of taking on the post of Branch secretary is that you are passed on boxes of books and papers from your predecessor (ask Anthony). When my wife Zoe took on the role, Rachael arrived with about five boxes. Not wanting to clutter the house (and being a bit nosey) I had a good sort through. There were some real gems hidden away. I sent a number of old reports to the Guild librarian. I also found some Branch newsletters prepared by David Smith, a regular contributor to this publication. The first newsletter is dated 1st March 1957, fifty years ago this month. I thought it would be good to reproduce them for your enjoyment as I intend to send them on to the Guild librarian.

Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter No. 1 March 1957.

Some while ago I had the chance of buying a duplicating machine for a very low price and it has proved most useful for all sorts of things. Now that you all have entrusted me with the job of Hon. Sec. I think it is a good idea if this same duplicator is pressed into service for the Branch. One of the snags of our branch is that we are very much

spread out and while I can get out my motorcycle and dash about to different towers, other people have no idea what is going on in them. Thus I hope to include in this News Letter items of news, hints on ringing and anything else that will be of interest. I hope to produce a sheet about once a month and would much value your comments and help. I suggest that this sheet is passed round next practice night or on Sunday.

The main item of news is the Annual Meeting at Combe. This was well attended and we had members from most of the towers in the branch, as well as visitors. Combe is very lucky to have a fine ring of six and they were a treat to listen to. There was ringing at Stonefield too, and in the evening at Woodstock.

I have been told that the Handborough ringers have only £80 or so to raise for their bells. The whole job of rehanging and a new treble has cost them (I think) about £300, all of which has been raised by the ringers. A first class example to us all.

“What is the best thing for plain bearings?”

That is a question one often hears. The answer strangely is CASTOR OIL. You can get the veterinary grade from Boots and it is vastly superior to grease, gear oil, machine oil or neglect.

I am always learning something new. I found out the other day that there are 2 unringable 5 bell towers in the branch. They are Blackbourton and Broadwell. The first has a tenor of 7cwt and the other is 15cwt.

There is an excellent little book out called “Beginners Grandsire”. If anyone wants a copy I can get them one. 1/6d. each.

David J Smith
(See Ringers Rhymes page 6)

It's interesting to note the competitive price of rehanging and augmenting Hanborough bells. We could pay for that with just three quiz nights! Some things don't change. Both Black Bourton and Broadwell bells are still unringable. Please don't contact me or David for a copy of Beginners Grandsire. I doubt it's still the same price anyway.

Richard White

From the Branch Secretary – Anthony Williamson

Many thanks to Shirley Warren and the ringers at Aston for stepping in at short notice to host our AGM this year. Bampton was to have been the venue but their bell restoration work had encountered some delays – the bells are now back in action and by all accounts sound wonderful. Twenty-one new members were elected, which brings Branch membership up to one hundred and eighty two. Mel Leggett is our new Chairperson and I have taken over as Branch Secretary. Thanks

to Zoë White for all her hard work over the past three years and for her guidance with helping me get started. I've inherited numerous files and have enjoyed reading old Branch newsletters and correspondence. A subject that has continued to crop up over the years is lack of support for Branch practices. They provide an opportunity for those who wish to improve their ringing skills through help and support from more experienced ringers. Having attended the practices over the past

few years, there does appear to be a misunderstanding that they only for more experienced ringers. This could not be further from the truth; help is at hand for any level. Hopefully you should have seen a poster of Branch activities that I sent out recently. It's intended to advertise events around the Branch and Guild each month. Please support the Branch Outing (12th May) and Striking Competition (9th June).

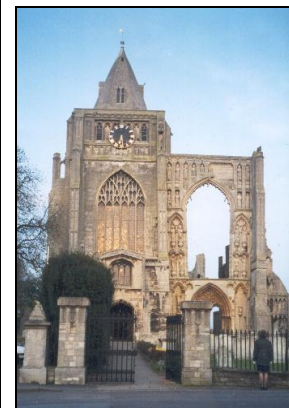
Anthony Williamson.

Did You Know?

The original bells of Crowland Abbey are said to have been the first tuned ring in England? In the early tenth century Abbot Turketyl had a great bell cast for the Abbey, called Guthlac. Egelric (Abbot 975-984) added six more to complete the tuned peal; they were named Bartholomew, Beccelm, Turketyl, Tatwin, Pega and Bega.

The tenor of the current ring of 6 dates from c1499 and the front 5 date from 1788 through 1903.

Taken from CCCBR web-site



Crowland Abbey,
Lincs.

Witney and Woodstock Branch Outing 2007

Saturday 12th May



Bedfordshire



**Coach departs Welch Way Car Park, Witney
8.15am
Marlborough Hotel, Woodstock
8.35am**

**Adults £13 Under 16's £10
Names Please to Richard White
(Contact details on back page)**

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Quarter Peals

Women's World Day of Prayer

Women's World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women who come together to observe a common day of prayer held on the first Friday in March each year, and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service. Through Women's World Day of Prayer women are encouraged to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of the wider community.

At Woodstock two services were held during the day. I suggested to Richard that it would be nice to ring. He suggested I got together a women's band, better still – ring a quarter. After a few phone calls at very short service I organised 6 women all members of the branch. We met at Woodstock and rang a very enjoyable quarter. Afterwards we toasted our success in the Marlborough Hotel.

Many thanks to all those who rang. Next year perhaps we can ring all eight.

Woodstock, Oxon
Friday 2nd March 2007
1260 Grandsire
Doubles
1- Jane Burgess
2- Zoë White
3- Jenny Haviland
4- Lindsey Thornton
5- Lorna Smale ©
6- Mary Clark-
Maxwell
Rung for Women's
World Day of Prayer.

Happy 90th Jim

Jim Howard, senior ringer for Tackley, will be celebrating his 90th birthday on 2nd April. He is a keen and competent ringer, able to ring the bells up and down and ring different methods with no problem. He is also very good with new ringers. The staircases up to the tower are very steep but Jim has no trouble with these at all. Jim's ringing career began in a strange way. He

was out for a walk around the village, when, on passing the church, was asked by the crowd gathering by the gate if he was joining them. On discovering that they were going to learn how to ring the bells, he decided to have a go, and joined them then and there. That was on 2nd October 1985 – yes, only 22 years ago! Having caught the bug, he went on to ring the bells regularly at Wootton, Woodstock and Bladon, as well as Tackley, getting in as much practice as possible. He has also rung in many bell towers throughout the country, including in London. The Tackley ringers held a small surprise party for him after ringing on Tuesday 27th March, as his birthday this year falls in Holy Week, when we do not ring. Jim does not like a fuss being made of things, but he did appreciate our efforts! Jim is an inspiration to us all. He is always out walking round the village, has been on the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee for many years, and to be actively bell ringing at his age is an accomplishment indeed.

Barbara Summers

Ringer's Rhymes (from Branch Newsletter 1957 see p4)

No.1

Light bell Ringers must beware
Lest bent arms their style impair.
"Hands right up" and "Hands right down"
"Pull it STRAIGHT" then folks won't frown.
Then you'll have no cause for terror
When you're offered Bampton tenor!

No.2

What is all this horrid jangle
Coming o'er the fields at Langle
Struck so bad t'would raise a dead man?
Ah! It's Witney ringing Stedman!

D.J. Smith - 1957



Branch Striking Competition

Saturday 9th June
Call Change and Method sections
Venue to be confirmed
Watch Branch Web-site
PLEASE ENTER A TEAM