

March
2005



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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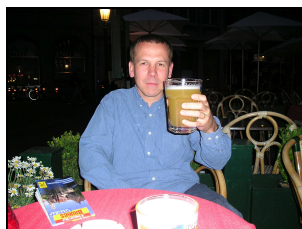
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Introducing your new Editor



Can I start by saying what a pleasure it is to be elected as Branch Newsletter Editor. I am well aware that I saw off some stiff opposition so I intend to give it my best

shot! Seriously, I am quite looking forward to this challenge. It's not something I have done before so please excuse my grammar.

I know you hear this every issue, but I need some articles. Please post or e-mail anything of interest no matter how big or small. I intend to introduce a few new ideas. I've changed the layout and I may change it again, please let me have your views. I have also

included some snippets from myself. I would like to keep each edition lively and interesting.

Above all I want to generate more interest in the Branch and that means more members reading it. PLEASE CIRCULATE THIS!

If you haven't seen a copy of this in your own tower, pester your tower captain.

Richard White.

Forthcoming Events – Don't miss out!

**Branch Practices –
7.30pm
Wed 30th March –
8 bell practice –
Clanfield**

**Tues 12th April –
6 bell practice –
Tackley**

**Tues 26th April –
8 bell practice –
Witney**

**Mon 2nd May – Guild
Open day and 8 bell
Striking Competition
– North Bucks**

**Tues 10th May –
6 bell practice –
Combe**

**Sat 14th May – ALL
DAY Branch Outing
– Reading Area**

**Thurs 26th May –
8 bell practice –
Woodstock**

**Wed 8th June –
6 bell practice –
Aston**

**Sat 18th June
Branch Striking
Competition –
Alvescot**

**Wed 22nd June –
8 bell practice –
South Leigh**

**Thurs 11th Aug –
6 bell practice –
Wootton**

**Make the most of
these events and
progress!**

Bampton Restoration Appeal *by Liz ROSE*



St Mary, Bampton

After almost a year since Bampton's Appeal Committee was put together and 9 months after our first fund raising event, the Appeal Fund now stands at approximately £16,200 (as at 22/02/05). Two-thirds of this sum has been pledged by individuals and charities and will be paid on completion of the work: and the remaining one-third is actually monies donated which are to

hand'. Most of the bell charities to whom we are applying will not 'spark' until we have raised two-thirds of the sum needed (total £40,000) locally, presumably to confirm willingness within the community that the project should be successful.

Witney & Woodstock Branch, O.D.G.C.B.R., recently awarded us a £50 donation at their AGM, for which Bampton would like

to record our grateful thanks. I have, of course, written separately to Anthony Williamson, as the new Chairman to express our thanks more fulsomely.

Liz Rose



Woodstock Ringers Meal *by Richard WHITE*



Waiting for dessert at the Kings Arms"

On Saturday 29th January about 20 Woodstock ringers and friends enjoyed their now annual ringer's meal. This year we enjoyed the gastronomical delights of The Kings Arms in Woodstock. The setting was very pleasant and the food appeared to go down very well with those in attendance not to mention the fine wine. Your editor couldn't quite stand the

pace so had to creep off early before coffee and mints so don't ask me what time everyone left. It is rumoured that the ringers may well take advantage of the Hotels Wednesday night half price champagne promotion, watch this space.

Competition Time

NEWSLETTER NAME REQUIRED..

Don't you think it's about time this newsletter had a name? Other Guild newsletters have names with ringing connections such as 'Quarter Turn', 'Last Whole Turn' and 'That's All'. How about something like 'Tail End' or 'The Odd Struck Times'

I'm sure someone out there can come up with a really apt name so get your thinking caps on and start e-mailing me. I'll put all the ideas to the Branch committee and we'll come up with a winner. There won't be a prize but at least you'll have the

honour of seeing your idea at the top of every newsletter so what are you waiting for?

Closing date 30th June 2005

Ed

Training Update *by Lorna SMALE – (Deputy Ringing Master)*

Congratulations to Mark Wastie (Witney) on ringing an excellent first Quarter Peal of Grandsire Doubles (all 10 extents) without any mistakes! Well done also to Angela Quantrill on doing such a splendid job of ringing the tenor at Church Hanborough to a very enjoyable Quarter Peal following the wedding of Cathy Rowland's daughter. Congratulations also to our new Branch Chairperson, Anthony Williamson, on a very creditable first Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Doubles. It was also his first time ringing half muffled bells! Training sessions are currently being arranged

once a month on a Saturday morning from 1000-1200 hrs. If anybody would like to attend any of these please contact me. They are structured around the students (no more than four at a time), for example, rounds and call changes, or bob doubles, but could equally be for a new method that you are trying to learn, or on conducting or calling call changes.

Lorna Smale

Email: lorna.smale@oup.com or
Tel: 01993 869299

QUARTER PEALS

Combe, 9/3/05, 1260 Plain Bob Doubles
1-Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson, 2- Lindsey Thornton, 3- Dave Rose, 4 – Anthony Williamson (1st inside), 5- Lorna Smale ©, 6 – Mel Leggett. Rung half muffled in memory of Barbara Eileen Clare Gibson (1/9/38-4/3/05), former Churchwarden, following the funeral earlier this day.

Church Hanborough, 8/3/05, 1260 Grandsire Doubles
1- Mary Clark-Maxwell, 2- Jenny Haviland, 3- Lorna Smale ©, 4- Louise Brown, 5- Bernard Coggins, 6- Angela Quantrill (1st QP on the tenor/2nd for many years after the 1st!) Following the marriage of Mr Glynn Robert Humphreys and Miss Alison Lucie Rowland (daughter of Cathy, Tower Captain at Church Hanborough). Wishing them a long and happy life together.

Stonesfield, 6/2/05, 1260 Grandsire Doubles
1- Lindsey Thornton, 2- Jenny Haviland, 3- Mark Wastie (1st in method), 4- Steve Goddard, 5- Lorna Smale ©, 6- Simon Haviland. For Evensong

Chairman's Chatter – *Anthony Williamson*

First and foremost, please can I encourage you all to support the Branch's many activities this year, particularly the Branch outing. More of that later...

It was something of a surprise for me to emerge from this year's AGM as the new Branch chairperson. The post was not hotly contested - you could have heard a pin drop when nominees were asked to be put forward. Nevertheless I am very pleased to take on the role and firmly believe in the Branch's

aims of promoting and encouraging ringing through practices, meetings and social events. On behalf of the Branch, I would like to thank Dave Rose for his chairmanship for the past two years. Before the AGM there was a very good short service given by Roger Humphreys, the vicar of Woodstock. During this he mentioned that when he arrived at Woodstock, ten years ago, the bells were silent.

Since then, through the

enthusiasm and dedication of his ringers, the bells now call people to worship. This is a similar situation to my church at Combe where after a long absence we are ringing for services again. Help given by more experienced Branch members has been invaluable to all us beginners. At the AGM we heard that there had been low attendance at Branch practices. This is very disappointing because they are run

"I am very pleased to take on the role and firmly believe in the Branch's aims..."

'This Branch has a wealth of skilled ringers that support these evenings so let's take advantage of this resource.'

Chairmans Chatter (continued)

for the benefit of Branch members. They provide the perfect opportunity to broaden skills and try a different set of bells. In my own experience, the practices have helped my progress and there's always someone available to assist. This Branch has a wealth of skilled ringers that support these evenings, so let's take advantage of this

resource. And finally...the Branch outing. Please clear your diaries for 14th May, as this is one of the main social activities organised by the Branch. It promises to be an excellent day out, around the Watlington area, with a good mix of six and eight bell towers, plus a pub lunch. To book your

place, please contact either Steve Goddard (01993 845707) or Lorna Smale (01993 869299).

Anthony Williamson

Stonesfield Hand Bell Ringers

by Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson



Stonesfield Hand bell Ringers had a busy Christmas, with three performances, including a Candlelit Carol Service in such stygian gloom that we could hardly see our bells, let alone the music. However, in spite of all the wrong notes, our local composer, Nick Hooper, was so taken with the sound of the hand bells that he decided he would like to use them in his latest T.V.score. So I lugged the bells round to the recording studio and spent a morning ringing each bell in turn, swinging them and using dampening effects. I don't expect the sound will be at all recognisable in the finished score! Nick also recorded the sound of a musical saw...the saw-player was coming out of

the studio as I and the bells went in. Odd things go on in our village! Anyway, the play is called "The Girl in the Cafe", a serious sounding drama by Richard Curtis, starring Bill Nighy, and due to go out around May.

Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson

"Nick Hooper was so taken with the sound of the hand bells that he decided he would like to use them in his latest TV score"

DID YOU KNOW?

The first person to ring 1000 peals was The Rev F E Robinson. Vicar of nearby Drayton from 1878 to 1908 and former Guild Master.

He rang the 1000th at his home tower on 9th August 1905.

Of the 1241 he rang, 861 were of Stedman Triples and he conducted 719 of them.

In the days of plain bearings and limited transport this was no mean feat.

From the Ringing Master – *Steve Goddard*

Hanslope

*venue of
this*

*years
Guild 8
bell
contest*



Hello all.

First my apologies for the recent cancellation of the practice at Freeland, I hope the news got out. They have been looked at by Whites and are in need of a bit of attention. Instead of recapping on what has happened I just want to advertise some

forthcoming events. I hope to have a band up and ready for the eight bell striking competition early in May.

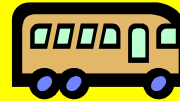
The branch outing planned for 14th May is firming up and without giving too much away it will be in the Berrick Salome area in East Oxfordshire with lunch arrangements at The Chequers in Berrick Salome. Details for this will be out by the end of March. The striking competition will be on 18th June hopefully at Alvescot. Details of this will be out late April. The Ringing Cards with future events will be out soon

and we will try and get them out to you all.

All the Best

Steve Goddard

**BRANCH OUTING
SATURDAY 14th MAY**



BOOK IT NOW!

Contact:

**Zoe White 01993 812424
Lorna Smale 01993 869299
Steve Goddard 01993 845707**

The Flowerpot Men! – *by Richard White*

From as early as I can remember I seemed to spend most of my time in ringing chambers or at least running around in the church yards. As a family, we all rang. I was the youngest so there was little chance of me not doing so. Weekly practices at Aston Clinton, twice ringing on Sundays and a Branch practice somewhere almost every Saturday night meant that bells were permanently ringing in our ears. Once I could be trusted to go out on my bike it became nearly every day of the

week! Some would say that was more than enough. This was not the case with my brother John. As with everything, he took this all a lot more seriously than me. Not only was he quicker to pick up new methods but he had an expert knowledge of the mechanics in the belfry. He would always leave early on a Friday night to tinker in the belfry. As kids he had an idea of hanging flowerpots for ringing. He noted that they sounded a little like bells when you hit them. All he needed were pots of the correct profile

and pitch. He set about approaching grandparents for unwanted terracotta pots, only small ones mind. The wheels as I recall were off of prams as bicycle ones would prove a little big. The rest of the fittings were made of wood and nails for such things as gudgeon pins. Clappers were cuts of plywood. This did not make a particularly distinct sound so he simply pushed drawing pins in. At the time we lived in a Victorian house. At the back was a corrugated iron shed.

Continued

**BRANCH
STRIKING
CONTEST**

**SATURDAY 18th
JUNE**

ALVESCOT

**PLEASE ENTER
A TEAM.**

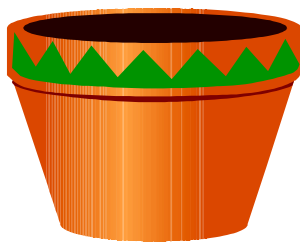
Send your articles to

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See us at:
www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk

The Flowerpot Men (continued)



In the corner he constructed a platform on which the frame and "bells" sat. I think he first installed a ring of three. The ropes were a length of plastic cord with tape for sallies. At this time I was about 7 years old. I had never rung a church bell but I soon got to grips with these. They could be rung full circle and even had stays which is more than can be said for recent mini-rings. The tail end was held in the left hand and the sally caught with the right. Ringing friends of similar age were invited over to try them out. Not long after installation Dad said the shed had to come down due to home improvements. John salvaged some of the corrugated iron and

constructed a tower. Looking back it was a bit of an eye sore. Mum wasn't very happy about it because it was too close to the washing line and the neighbours must have been a little worried. It was decided this too had to come down so the bells (sorry pots) never found a home here.

At the end of the garden we had a tree house. The base of which was an old front door. The structure was extended with a tower and the pots found a new home. It was during this period that The 98 London Road Flowerpot Youths had their most active period. My sister Louise, although a ringer wouldn't entertain the idea of having a go so John and I would regularly ring two. It was not long before the first quarter peal. The method was Plain Hunt on three. Graham Proctor was elected to the society and the date was set. John was concerned with the calling (or rather the counting). An extent on three as I'm sure you

realise is only 6 changes. 1260 changes divided by 6 is, yes, a whopping 210 extents! He overcame this by borrowing a counting machine. After every extent he would hit the button. On one occasion it fell off the bench and clunked onto the floor and had to be retrieved. And so it was that I rang a sort of quarter before handling a church bell. We even had quarter peal boards made of thick card, painted black with white writing. The whole structure had a distinct lean, complete with louver windows. In 1980 we moved to Twitchell Lane. For some reason the new house occupants were not interested in keeping the installation or the fine tree house. Sadly the whole structure was dismantled and the pots 'broken up' (or filled with geraniums). Sadly this famous ring of three joined such towers as St Brides, Fleet Street as a lost ring. Once we had moved John didn't construct a new ring. He did continue to practice his bell hanging skills. My mother salvaged the old school bell which she found underneath a sink whilst helping at a school Christmas party. Over a long period of time John hung it for ringing and it now takes pride of place in the corner of Aston Clinton ringing chamber.

Mini-rings seem to be two a penny nowadays. Most of them are real cast bells. Some are improvised. I doubt many have been so ingenious or constructed solely by one so young.

Richard White

Ringling at Rousham during the Branch cycle outing last August

