

Nov  
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## Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter

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

### The Bells in Scotland by Lindsey Thornton

#### Inside this issue:

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- Were you ever in Quebec?
- North Leigh has moved

#### Plus

Painswick Cup

Edinburgh Half Marathon (plus a bit of ringing)

From the Branch Secretary

Quarter Peals

There seems to be a bit of a Scottish theme going on; with the White's travelling to Edinburgh for Zoe's Marathon run, meeting up with Mary Clark-Maxwell to ring at two of the cities towers, and the Thornton's travelling to Aberdeen to stay with Lindsey's sister Alison Bell.

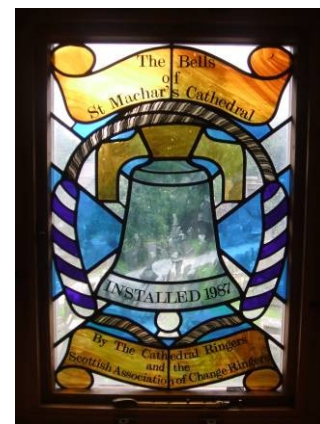
#### Lindsey and David ring for Sunday service at St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen (8 bells 14 cwt) on 14 June.

We were made very welcome and were pleasantly surprised when the tower captain informed us that we'd be ringing call-changes and plain hunt on 7 at the most! David had been a bit twitchy about ringing at the Cathedral for Sunday service, imagining Cathedral ringers would all be expert, and he'd be lucky to get a go on the treble or tenor. In fact we were possibly the most experienced ringers there. It's easy to forget how few churches in Scotland have bells hung for change ringing. Before the bells

were hung in St Machar's as recently as 1987, the nearest ringable tower was Dundee Cathedral, a 2-3 hours drive away. So there is no strong tradition of change ringing in Scotland, and it was noticeable that the tower captain was originally from England and a few of the other ringers too. The 8 bells themselves originally came from a London church, St Stephen's in West Ealing. It was spooky for me to realise that my sister, Alison Bell, used to live in West Ealing and moved to Aberdeen at more-or-less the same time as these bells moved up north. So it was a case of the bells following the Bells to Aberdeen! (My sister by the way, despite her name, has not been inclined to take up bellringing, shame!) We were told there is another ringable tower in Aberdeen now, the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St Mary of the Assumption, 8 bells (11 cwt). Apparently they are not easy to ring, as they were originally carillon bells and are stacked on top of each other in several tiers, which means the top bells are

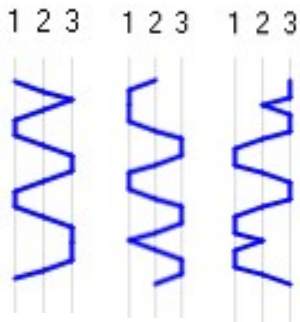
difficult to hear, and loud speakers have been installed in the ringing chamber. We were not in Aberdeen to ring bells, so we were only vaguely interested to hear this. However on our return home we discovered that a well-known tower-grabber and neighbour of ours flew up to Aberdeen for the day just to get these two towers ... mad!

Lindsey Thornton.



**Detail of the stained glass window in the ringing chamber (if you look closely you can make out the gravestones in the cemetery below.)**

## Were you ever in Quebec? By Alison Merryweather-Clarke



*'(although these Canadians are very keen, they practice for 3 hours on both Mondays AND Wednesdays!),'*

In May, I spent a very happy couple of weeks in North America, ostensibly to visit an Australian friend in New York and then visit French Canada with her, but with little contrivance and much happy coincidence, my holiday was topped and tailed by ringing in Toronto and Quebec, respectively. Toronto (St James; 12 bells, 21-2-10): I wasn't at all sure I would make it to the Toronto practice, since my flight arrived an hour late, one hour before the practice began and I was intent on visiting Toronto's more famous tower, the CN. However, common sense prevailed – after all, one can visit the CN tower any time, but not every night is practice night (although these Canadians are very keen, they practice for 3 hours on both Mondays AND Wednesdays!), and I found myself at 8pm, 2 hours into the practice, ringing a doorbell to the right of the blah blah blah\* (I'd been given VERY precise instructions by e-mail on how to attract their attention should they be ringing when I got there (which they were, but with such efficient sound control that I didn't hear them until I was right on top of them)). After just enough time to photograph the reflection of the tower in the glass skyscrapers opposite (a bit of a contrast to North Leigh!), I was let in and given a very warm welcome, not to mention (despite protestations of

inexperience and jet lag, my biological clock insisting it was 1:00 am) my first ever go of bob caters (dodgy in many places, right and wrong!). I also got to visit Toronto's more famous tower after all, and was chauffeur driven there in a ringer's very flashy Jag. Quebec (Holy Trinity, 8 bells, 16-2-4; St Matthew's Bibliotheque, 8 bells, 15cwt): After lots of fun in Niagara Falls, New York and Montreal, we arrived in Quebec on practice night (coincidentally!), so I took this opportunity to get acquainted with the friendly and enthusiastic local ringers before their imminent May Ringing Weekend (another happy coincidence; my friend is VERY tolerant!). I was gob-smacked when Douglas the TC, insisting that they were a weak band, invited me to run the practice (before we'd even touched a rope and he had any idea of my abilities), which I declined to do. Knowing that he had trebled to the first peal on the bells after they were rehung in 2007, I pointed out that unlike him, I had never rung a peal, and then had to emphatically disabuse him of his assumption that I had rung hundreds of quarter peals instead (don't laugh – I really wonder whether he had ever met a "run of the mill" English ringer like me before!). I thought I was surely safe in agreeing to call some changes, but sadly not; although ringing calls seem to be the only dialogue in French

Canada not requiring fluency in French (pity, I was rather looking forward to yelling "levez vous!"), I was required to translate down-calling to up-calling. This, combined with the fact that my first change unfortunately never really happened as it involved the two least confident ringers, led to my downfall. We stuck mostly to plain courses of bob doubles after that embarrassing disaster, and I was also introduced to a new singles principle (not sure it really is, with every bell doing something different – what's the definition of a principle?), called the Shipping Forecast (see figure drawn with Mark's clever BlueLine programme). Now that WOULD be a controversial method of the month! The May Ringing Weekend brought some extremely enthusiastic and dedicated North American Ringers (plus a few English and Australians), ranging in ability from visitors from distant cities for whom Quebec is the nearest tower and this is their only annual ringing opportunity, to TCs and ringing masters from Toronto, Seattle, New York and Boston, and it was a real eye-opener to see the lengths they go to in adverse circumstances, with neighbouring towers perhaps 16 hours away, to learn methods in isolation on handbells.

**Were you ever in Quebec?**

(Continued from p 2)

A typical ringing outing to the UK, I am told, will take in 100 towers in 2 weeks; easily more towers than I've rung at. At Seattle, where they've just celebrated their bells' first anniversary, there was such a good response to an advert for learners that the TC (Rebecca, who some of you may know from her days at St Giles – she's pictured ringing some complicated surprise major on the idiosyncratic 4 in St Matthew's with her knee on the protruding boxing housing the stairwell) told me that she was able to stipulate the fitness and time commitment required and select the 8 most appropriate candidates to teach! Meanwhile, there are not one but two displays about campanology inside Quebec Cathedral, in prime position right in front of the door when you walk in to the main church area, and all the time we were ringing in St Matthew's, Douglas was standing outside doing a bilingual spiel to the tourists about the delights of bellringing. Now, it really is time I replaced that notice detailing bellringing practices which has mysteriously disappeared from our church porch..... But in the meantime, Quebec is a fantastic place to visit, the ringers are very keen to receive and learn from visitors and I would love to go back – who wants to join me?

**North Leigh has moved!**

Alison Merryweather-Clarke

On May 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, for the first time in nearly 1000 years, St Mary's church, North Leigh moved – from the Woodstock deanery to the Witney deanery! The celebratory service marking our absorption into the benefice of Cogges with South Leigh was on Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup>, squeezed cosily between the dress rehearsal and first night of our Wind in the Willows production directed by, narrated by, and starring ringers. Toad was otherwise engaged (as is so often the case, popular fellow!) and so was unable to join us in ringing to celebrate this once in a thousand year event, so Director, Narrator and Barge Woman (and her husband, who, according to the script, is "such a fellow for shirking his work", but certainly didn't on this occasion!) were especially grateful to be joined by Anthony Williamson from Combe (in the blue corner, representing the Woodstock Deanery and seeing us off the premises) and Les Curwood from South Leigh (in the red corner, sizing us up for the Witney Deanery). Together we managed to ring some enjoyable call changes and plain hunt, and look forward to encouraging each other in our future ringing and worshipping – but Woodstock, we'll miss you, please let us back to visit from time to time!

Alison Merryweather-Clarke

**From Ian Davey-Wilson**

Following Victoria's death, I have been heartened by the sympathy and warmth of bell ringers in the Branch and beyond. On the day after she died, I went for a walk in Kirtlington and was greatly cheered by hearing the bells ringing, which I later learnt was a quarter peal dedicated to Victoria's memory. That was the first of many dedicated quarter peals that I know would have delighted Victoria. Thank you to everyone for your support and friendship during this difficult time.

**Quarter Peals****Woodstock, Oxon.**

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2009

A Quarter Peal of Doubles, two extents of Reverse Canterbury, five of Plain Bob and three and a half of Grandsire. 1260 Changes

- 1 – Jimmy Clark
- 2 – Jane Burgess
- 3 – Claire Fairbairn
- 4 – Malcolm Fairbairn
- 5 – Richard White ©
- 6 – Ian Davey-Wilson

In memory of Victoria Davey-Wilson, ringer in this tower who died on 28th March 2009.

**Kirtlington, Oxon.**

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2009

A Quarter Peal of Grandsire Triples  
1260 Changes

- 1 – Lindsey Thornton
- 2 – David Floyd
- 3 – Marilyn Floyd
- 4 - Anthony Willaimson
- 5 - Hilarie Rogers
- 6 – Brian Curtis ©
- 7 - Lorna Smale
- 8 – David Thornton

First in method – 4.

In memory of Victoria Davey-Wilson who passed away yesterday.

## Edinburgh Marathon (plus a bit of ringing) – Richard

White

### From The Branch Secretary

The new website, created by Ian Davey-Wilson, has been a tremendous success and is an excellent addition to Branch communication. Please can members send Ian photos of their towers and details of local amenities. It's always useful when planning an outing to know if there's a local pub that serves food and whether the church has a WC available.

News from this year's Guild AGM (see the ODG website for full details):  
 Honorary Membership has been replaced by Distinguished Membership. Branch subscriptions are now due by 31 March; anyone whose subscription is unpaid will cease to be a member. Personal accident policy now has the upper and lower age limit removed. Cover can be extended to non-members assisting with work done on bells.  
 There was a request for special ringing, preferably Stedman triples, between 13 and 21 February 2010 to commemorate Rev F E Robinson.

#### Branch News

We enjoyed another excellent quiz evening earlier in the year, organised by Richard White.

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At the end of May, Zoe, Richard, Joseph and George White made their way to Edinburgh. The purpose of this journey was because Zoe had bravely entered the Edinburgh Marathon. Zoe was born in the city and her Grandmother still lives in South Queensferry in the shadow of the Forth Bridge. As many members are probably aware, Mary Clark-Maxwell moved to Edinburgh over a year ago so when Zoe wasn't running there would be plenty to fit in. George enjoyed his first flight and took it all in his stride. Our visit coincided with some very warm weather. If we had known the weather was so good in Scotland we would have holidayed there more often. It was so warm that I was forced to go to Tesco to purchase shorts, T-shirt and summer shoes.  
 On the Friday we went to Edinburgh Zoo. On Saturday we met up with Mary. With the sun still scorching we set off for the nearby park where we enjoyed a picnic. Sunday was the big day. We set off early from our hotel and headed for the City Centre. Wishing Zoe the best of luck, we left her at the starting line. Richard, Joseph and George then walked down to Holyrood at the 1 mile point. It was bit hot to run a marathon. After a short while Zoe went past, we then set off to meet Mary and do a bit of tower grabbing. Scotland has

only sixteen rings of bells, four of which are in Edinburgh. Having met Mary, we caught the bus and headed for St Cuthbert. Mary kindly offered to take the boys to the park whilst I went up the tower. The church was very grand, more like a town hall than a church. The tower contained a 21cwt ten. Unfortunately there were only six of us but we enjoyed some very well struck Grandsire and Cambridge.  
 Afterwards I went down to Princes Gardens where I found the boys having great fun on the swings. We then all had an ice-cream before taking a walk in the gardens. At midday we made our way to St Andrews and St Georges (one church). These bells were rehung in 2006 having been unringable for a long time. For some reason they ring these bells after the service I think this is because the service coincides with St Cuthberts. This was another grand church with two staircases to the ringing chamber. Having been made most welcome I was asked to open a door behind me. The church choir then emerged from the door, through the ringing chamber and down the stairs. I guess they must sing from a gallery behind the ringing chamber although I did wonder if they'd been locked in there since the previous Sunday! I joined in some

call changes on the 14cwt eight before meeting up with Mary and the boys. Time was getting on so we walked to Waverley Station to catch the train to Musselborough where we would meet Zoe at the finish. The train journey was short but the walk into the town was lengthy. We finally found Zoe who had completed the marathon in 4 hours 31minutes. By now none of us had any energy to walk back to the station so we caught a bus back to the City Centre.

We had a thoroughly enjoyable time. Thanks Mary for showing us round.

Thanks from Zoe to those who sponsored her. She raised over £600 for The Alzheimer's Society.

Richard White



## WOOTTEN-UNDER-EDGE STRIKING COMPETITION 1816

### PAINSWICK RINGERS SILVER CUP – by David Thornton

Here is a very interesting article written by David which has appeared in The Ringing World.

I thought I'd share with readers of The Ringers World the details and pictures of a lovely Georgian silver mug which I recently purchased at a local auction and has an interesting bellringing inscription.

The pint mug is engraved with the following contemporary inscription on the front ....

*"This CUP was RUNG for on the 5th of June 1861 at Wootton Underedge (sic) by PUBLIC*

*ADVERTISEMENT and was WON by the PAINSWICK RINGERS as declared by three Umpires from three separate (sic) Companies"*

with a further inscription underneath the foot.....

*"The CHASING and ENGRAVING of this Cup together with a PEAL of twelve choice hand BELLS was given this COMPANY by their zealous Friend Mr. Thomas Spring of LONDON. A Native of this Town"*

The actual mug itself has a 1 pint capacity and is made from sterling silver, fully hallmarked for London 1815, made by William Bateman (grandson of

the well-known lady silversmith Hester Bateman)

Originally the main body of the mug would have been plain, the floral chased decoration probably added in the Victorian period as was the fashion at the time.

In the 18th and 19th century silver cups were often donated by local dignitaries and land owners for prizes at agricultural / livestock shows and sporting events such as horse racing and cricket matches. I have been buying and selling antiques for nearly 30 years and ringing for almost as long! In all this time I have never come across a piece of this age made from silver with a bellringing connection. A rare piece indeed!

There are some details on the Internet about Painswick (Gloucestershire) their impressive peal of bells and The Painswick Youths, however I'd be interested to find out more about this competition. Was it a 'one off' or an annual striking competition? Who was Thomas Spring and what was his connection to the Painswick ringers? Are the twelve hand bells still in existence?

If anyone would like to see this unique piece of bellringing history (before it finds a new

home!) then you are welcome to come along to one of our practise nights (Wednesdays 7.30pm) at St James the Great, Stonesfield, Oxfordshire and I will bring it along. I can be contacted at

[david.thornton21@btinternet.com](mailto:david.thornton21@btinternet.com)

David Thornton



### From The Branch Secretary

(cont from p 4)

This was the best turnout so far for such an event; it was won by Wootton (or was it Stonesfield?) Later than usual, because of terrible weather in February, the Branch AGM was held at Witney. New committee members are Jean Richards (treasurer), Liz Lawrence (one of two deputy ringing masters) and Ian Davey-Wilson (website editor). Twelve new members were elected, which brings membership to 181 for 2009.

The Branch Outing to Wiltshire was organised by Richard White. Well-

researched towers, fine weather; an interesting lunch break at Bradford on Avon and a memorable final ring at Marlborough, all made for another very enjoyable day.

Congratulations to Wootton and Witney for winning the striking competition; call-changes and method respectively. Many thanks to Louise Brown and Alvescot for the organisation and barbecue.

The Branch social event in September was hosted by Wotton at the Killingworth Castle pub.

There was delicious food provided and an Aunt Sally competition.

It was good to see Geoff and Peter Holden, notable local ringers whose names appear on many peal boards throughout the Branch. Peter is hoping to ring a peal at North Leigh next January to celebrate his father's ninetieth birthday.

In response to the problem of ringers not attending Branch Practices, we are now trying a different approach by having a few practices on Saturday mornings. Towers tend not to cancel their own practice night if it coincides with the Branch Practice and also people seem reluctant to take part in Branch Practices through anxiety and lack of confidence. However, there are always plenty of people who are delighted to help those who want to progress. So far the Saturday practices have been a great success.

Anthony Williamson

## Send your articles to

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Branch website

See us at:

[www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk](http://www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk)

## From The Editor

Sorry it's been a year since the last newsletter. I hope I've included as many quarters as possible. If I've missed any forgive me. I've counted 11 'firsts' in the quarters published which is very encouraging. I'll try and not leave it so long until the next issue

Best Wishes

Ed

### Witney

Sunday 14th September 2008  
1260 Plain Bob Doubles  
1 Kate Targett  
2 Mark Wastie  
3 Richard Ford  
4 Alison Merryweather-Clarke  
5 Terry Hester ©  
6 Darren Washington  
Witney Feast songs of praise service for the dedication of the new Diocesan flag, donated by the bellringers.  
First quarter peal 1

### Woodstock

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2008  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1 Ian Davey-Wilson  
2 Jane Burgess  
3 Victoria Davey Wilson  
4 Bernard Coggins  
5 Malcolm Fairbairn  
6 Richard White ©  
First Minor 1 & 2  
40<sup>th</sup> birthday compliment to the conductor

### Witney

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009  
**1260 Grandsire Doubles**  
1 Kate Targett  
2 Richard Ford  
3 Michael Probert  
4 Peter Coveney  
5 Terry Hester ©  
6 Laurence Organ-Jennings  
First Grandsire 1 & 2  
First attempt 6 (aged 14).  
For the Bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin, Naturalist, on 12<sup>th</sup> Feb 1809.

### Combe

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
1260 Winchendon Place Doubles  
1 Lindsey Thornton  
2 Brian Curtis  
3 Anthony Williamson  
4 Lorna Smale ©  
5 David Thornton  
6 Jean Richards  
First in method 3 & 5  
To welcome the Rev'd Roy Turner to the joint benefice of Combe and Stonesfield.

## Quarter Peals

### Stonesfield

Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
**1260 Grandsire Doubles**  
1 Amanda Millard  
2 Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson  
3 Lindsey Thornton  
4 Edward Johnson  
5 David Thornton ©  
6 Jenny Haviland  
To celebrate the arrival of The Revd. Roy Turner as new Priest-in-charge for Stonefield and Combe Longa

### Combe

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2009  
1260 Reverse St Bartholomew Doubles  
1 Marilyn Floyd  
2 David Floyd  
3 Louise Brown  
4 Brian Curtis  
5 Lorna Smale ©  
6 Jean Richards  
Rung half muffled for Good Friday.

### Bladon

Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor  
1 Anthony Williamson  
2 Marilyn Floyd  
3 Lorna Smale  
4 David Richards  
5 Brian Curtis  
6 David Floyd ©  
First Cambridge -4  
First Treble Bob - 1.

### Bletchington

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1 Jimmy Clark  
2 John S White  
3 Malcolm Fairbairn  
4 Ian Davey Wilson  
5 Louise Brown  
6 Richard White ©  
First Minor inside - 4.

## Quiz Night



Can I start by apologising for my appalling maths. Congratulations to Wootton who were the official winners. When running a quiz night, do not attempt to add up the scores when you have consumed a few pints of real ale.

On a positive note, we had a huge attendance and made a hearty profit for Branch funds.

Until the end I thoroughly enjoyed it.

See you next year

Richard White

### Woodstock

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009  
1260 Plain Bob Triples  
1 Jimmy Clark  
2 Hilarie Rogers  
3 Mary Clark-Maxwell  
4 Lorna Smale  
5 Brian Curtis  
6 John S White  
7 Richard White ©  
8 David Thornton  
Rung to mark the retirement of Revd Canon Roger Humphreys as Rector of Woodstock and Bladon. With best wishes to Roger and Celia from all the ringers.