

October 2008

# Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter



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

The official quiz night results

A week of welcomes near Waterlooville...

"Did you know?"

Outing special.

News from Combe

Kate's story

Quarters

Plus much much more.....

## Branch Outing to Bristol - Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2008



Knowle

St Michael on the Mount

St Stephens (12)

Christchurch

St John on the Wall



Coach departure times,

- Woodstock 7.30am - Marlborough Arms
- Witney 7.45am - Woodford Way, car park is free and no restrictions.

Names please to: Lorna Smale (email: [lorna.smale@oup.com](mailto:lorna.smale@oup.com) tel: 01993 869299) or Anthony Williamson (email: [awill103@jaguarlandrover.com](mailto:awill103@jaguarlandrover.com))

## Bellringers Insurance worries.

The following was spotted by Lindsey Thornton on the e-ringing network and makes amusing reading.

### Correspondence from Bell Ringing Network



Post:

Does anyone have any advice or experience about getting insurance for a Wombel. Western Branch YACR is proposing to purchase a Wombel (David Horrocks version: <http://saxsim.co.uk/wombel.aspx>).

Reply:

I fear that you might have severe difficulties in getting the insurance you seek.

It has been my experience that Wombles are very

secretive creatures and unlikely to reveal the personal details necessary for insurance purposes. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that any attempt to talk to them directly results in them hiding down their little holes until the coast becomes clear once more.

Finally, I would advise you look upon these harmless folk as an asset to your environment and not the liability against which you need protection.

Kind regards.

## News from Combe...

Lots of progress is (still) being made and Service ringing (and attendance) is generally excellent – long may it continue! We have sadly said farewell to our Rector, the Reverend Geoff van der Weegen – see QP details below. We were joined by some friends from other towers on 31 May when we had a mini outing. We rang at Temple Guiting (see picture)



and Naunton, a wonderful set of bells. Naunton also has a fine pub so we were able to enjoy a well earned drink and lunch. Thank you to everybody who came along and made the day so enjoyable. Sadly, Rosemary Sanchez, a former member of Stonesfield tower, and resident of Combe, died. We were able to ring a hauntingly beautiful half muffled QP following her funeral. We held a tower open morning on 12 July. We started with a QP for the wedding anniversary of one of our ringers. This was then followed by a very steady stream of visitors climbing the tower to see the bells, wonderful views from the roof, some of them 'having a go', and tea or coffee with a slice of home-made cake!

Lorna Smale

## A week of welcomes near Waterlooville...

**Alison Merryweather-Clarke**

Friday:

While staying with my octogenarian Mum while she convalesced after having her gall bladder removed in July, I decided to maintain my sanity by sampling the delights of the local towers. (This admittedly rather begs the question of what Mum did to preserve her sanity!). So on Friday, having satisfied myself that my very yellow post-operative mother was not going anywhere for the evening, I set about finding a Friday ringing practice near the hospital. Before my very hasty departure from North Leigh, I had cast a cursory glance at the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild website, and vaguely remembered that two towers in the vicinity, one beginning with W and one with S, practiced on a Friday. I was pretty sure the W was Wickham, but a cursory root around at the back of the church revealed nothing more enlightening than a standard CCCBR bellringing leaflet with no contact and no mention of practice nights (the same was true of Southwick, which was on the way to Wickham, but turned out not to be the S), and I had to scour a church diary to find the tower captain's number. (Could a chance visitor to your church easily discover your practice night and contact details?) One phone call to the very helpful TC pointed me in the direction

of the elusive "S" tower, Swanmore (6 bells, 6 cwt tenor), where I had a very warm welcome and an enjoyable ring beginning with a stonking touch of Stedman doubles, followed by the daunting realisation that I was in the presence of relative ringing geniuses (including the chap who'd declared that he didn't ring Stedman who remains an enigma, and a visiting Winchester Cathedral ringer) as they proceeded to ring increasingly more impressive touches of Cambridge, Norwich and London. Throughout the evening, the non-Stedman ringer provided entertaining interludes by making numerous phone calls in search of a 10<sup>th</sup> ringer to complete his peal band for the next day (amazingly, he found someone!).

Monday:

As I approached Catherington (8 bells, 8 cwt tenor) on Monday evening (having abandoned my bemused Mum who'd come home from hospital that day!) I was lulled into a false sense of security by extremely lumpy called changes from the early learners' practice as I arrived. Thankfully some waiting visiting ringers amended my delusion before we entered the tiny ringing room closely packed with a warmly welcoming band who efficiently demonstrated the delights of Glasgow, Lincoln and Superlative

Surprise Major (and many other surprises!) but didn't laugh at my Grandsire Triples and were very happy to talk me through a touch of Stedman Triples.

Tuesday:

Havant (8 bells, 15 cwt tenor) (after my poor neglected mother had forlornly said "You will stay in with me for ONE evening before you leave, won't you?!"), where I had managed to catch the last 10 minutes of service ringing on Sunday morning, was a contrast in every possible way except for an even warmer welcome, as they started off by welcoming some Ghanaian visitors to their enormous ringing room, providing an opportunity to see the bells in the equally spacious belfry. When the practice finally started (after handing round the tower bottle of port!) we rang some very faltering bob triples (which they had learnt a lead at a time), minor, doubles and plain hunt and I felt more at home, although I was caught off-guard by the disarming question from one affable ringer, "So, what sort of standard are we then?!" All I could do was tell him how scared I'd been at Catherington and what a relief it was to be ringing with them and having such a laugh!

Wednesday:

I finally did some homework before going to the Purbrook (6 bells, 5cwt tenor) practice. Louise had scared me at the Tackley

Cont p5.

## From the Branch Secretary – Anthony Williamson.

The year got off to a great start with another of Richard White's quiz evenings. There were a wide variety of questions plus interval brain teasers; with real ale and delicious food provided by each team. Later in the year Richard and his tower volunteered to host the Oxford Diocesan Guild's AGM. It's not a task to be taken lightly because there's the church service, ringing and teas to be organised. Although a team effort, special mention must go to Sylvia Stevenson who took charge of the teas and ensured that the catering went smoothly. Many thanks to all those who made sandwiches, baked cakes, gave food, washed up and cleared the tables. It was a great success; a few of the ringers mentioned to me that it was one of the best teas that they'd attended. These two events made a profit, which have helped supplement other Branch activities, particularly the Striking Competition barbecue.

Our February AGM was hosted by Yarnton. Membership now stands at 188. Louise Brown has kindly agreed to take on the role of Ringing Master, with Lindsey Thornton and Kate Everett as deputies. Brian Curtis was elected as our website editor. David Rose (Bampton) was presented with a certificate in recognition of 50 years membership with the Oxford Diocesan

Guild and Peter Coveney (Eynsham) was elected an Honorary member. In April there was another meeting, held after a Branch Practice at Aston, to present a long service certificate to George Wiltshire (Aston) and elect him along with Peter Clarke and Terry Hester (Witney) as Honorary members. It's a pity that there's no certificate to acknowledge the election of Honorary members for their thirty years continual service to the Branch. With this in mind I'd like to organise a meal in October or November to celebrate the Branch's Life and Honorary members.

And finally... "method of the month" on my tower poster. It has certainly caused an interesting reaction; varying from "pointless", in the case of Double Antelope Place Doubles, to being well received. My idea was to show that there are a wide variety of methods out there and to have a focus each month that introduces something beyond Grandsire and Bob Doubles at Branch Practices. Clearly you can't please all the ringers all the time. Cadbury Doubles has been suggested as one of the monthly methods; it appears on a peal board at North Leigh. After searching for the method on the ODG website links with no luck, I was surprised to be told that we are no longer "allowed" to ring such methods because they

were declared illegal in the 1960s.



## Striking Contest

The Striking Competition for Witney and Woodstock Branch was held at Stonesfield tower this year. After a worrying few weeks before hand the turnout wasn't so bad as I thought. We had 5 bands for the Call Changes and four for the Method. John White kindly offered to judge along with his father Arthur. I would like to say a big thank you to Anthony for organising the barbecue and to Rachael for making us all feel so welcome at her house and garden. David and Marilyn Floyd were very welcome floating understudies. Generally the standard was higher than last year. In the Call Changes for the first time ever, with 20 points each it was a draw between Stonesfield and Combe, so they will have to fight amongst themselves for the trophy. In the method Combe came first with 21 points.

We had a very enjoyable evening with lovely company, wine, food and cats on laps. A big thank you to all the teams that took part, see you all again next year!  
Louise Brown

See photo p4.

## Kate's Story



After weeks of deliberation; having seen the Witney Way advert, it was with great trepidation that I took my courage into my hands and went along one Tuesday evening in September 2006 and climbed up into the bell tower of St Mary's to have a go at this new hobby of bell ringing – something that has always apPEALed to me for some time.

It has proved to be a challenge – fascinating, fun and good exercise (including the spiral stairway into the tower). I have met many really friendly people – all most welcoming, helpful, encouraging and above all EXTREMELY patient – all of which I really appreciate.

I would say to the uninitiated that it is certainly not as easy as it looks. It is not a case of great strength but is a skill to be acquired over many years. There is always something new to learn. I have lots of years to catch up on! Above all, it is enjoyable and, of course, the bells are joyful listening. I am glad I went along. I hope in future to be able to ring for weddings and also summon up enough courage to visit and ring in other towers.  
Kate Crompton

### Southern Bells by Jean Richards

On a recent trip to New Zealand, I had the good fortune to join the ringers at the First Church of Otago in Moray Place, Dunedin for service ringing on a Sunday morning.

reached by a short, wide staircase with carpeting that wouldn't be out of place in a luxury hotel. The ringers, too, were all smartly turned out in matching polo shirts embroidered with details of the tower.

but whatever is being rung, all visitors are specifically invited to ring the treble which (as the card indicates) is actually the southern-most of all the bells. So, although I may still have much to learn about the art of change ringing, I can at least take pleasure in knowing that I have rung the most southerly bell in the world.



Bell	Weight	Note
Treble	2-0-17	B
<i>Most southerly ringable bell in the World</i>		
2nd	2-1-5	A#
3rd	2-1-5	G#
4th	2-3-1	F#
5th	3-1-13	E
6th	3-3-5	D#
7th	5-1-11	C#
Tenor	6-3-26	B

*Cast in 1975 by Whitechapel Foundries, London*

As in other regions with historic links to Britain, New Zealand has a tradition of change-ringing but in such a sparsely populated country there are just seven towers with ringable bells – two each in Wellington and Christchurch and the remaining three in Auckland, Hamilton and Dunedin. Of these Dunedin, which lies at the head of the Otago peninsula in the south east corner of South Island, is the furthest south and as a result proudly boasts of having the 'Most southerly ringable bell in the world'.

Because of its claim to fame as having the southern-most ring in the world, Dunedin receives many visitors so not only is it a very friendly and welcoming tower but it also has a well-rehearsed system for dealing with visiting ringers. In addition to signing the visitors' book, UK-based ringers are invited to add a pin to a map of the British Isles to indicate the location of their home tower. They are also presented with a small souvenir card, as shown in these pictures, to mark their visit.

**\*STOP PRESS\***

**Quarter Peal Church Hanborough**  
Sunday, 21 September 2008

**1260 Plain Bob Minor**

- 1 - Lindsey Thornton
  - 2 - Marilyn Floyd
  - 3 - Lorna Smale
  - 4 - Brian Curtis
  - 5 - David Floyd
  - 6 - Graham Clifton ©
- Rung prior to Evensong, as part of the 900 years celebrations of the founding of this church, at which the Bishop of Oxford dedicated the new Altar Frontal.

On the morning that I was there, we rang a mix of method and call changes

The First Church of Otago was opened in 1873, just 25 years after the first settlers arrived in Dunedin. It is a Presbyterian church and is understood to be the only Presbyterian church outside Britain to have change ringing.

The 60-metre spire contains twelve bells cast at the Whitechapel Foundries in London in 1975. Of these bells, eight are hung for change ringing but all twelve can also be played from a clavier. The light and spacious ringing chamber is beautifully kept and is



*"In addition to signing the visitors' book, UK-based ringers are invited to add a pin to a map of the British Isles to indicate the location of their home tower."*

**David Thornton from Stonesfield and Timothy Smale from Combe show off the Branch Striking contest shield. (see report page 3)**



## Did You Know? by Richard White

Lorna has bravely organized this years outing. The destination is Bristol.

Here are a few facts about the bells and churches in this fine city.

1. Bristol has more rings of bells than any other city (if you exclude greater London). There are 22 rings in all if I've counted correctly.

2. The city lost four rings during the blitz

3. The ten bells at St Nicholas are one of those destroyed. The church and spire still remains. The clock on the tower is the only church clock with a second hand.

4. St Mary Redcliffe tenor is the seventh heaviest ringable bell in the world. The church is outstanding. If you get a chance, have

a look in the churchyard where you will find a tram line embedded in the ground. This was flung from Redcliffe hill when a high explosive bomb landed on Good Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1941.

There is also a tombstone commemorating the church cat. For fifteen years the cat lived in the church and was buried in the churchyard.



Richard White

## Lord Carey visits Stonesfield

On September 6th. Stonesfield ringers had the honour of ringing for a service in Stonesfield church conducted by ex-Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey. The service celebrated the 10th. anniversary of Cicely's Fund, which helps hundreds of children in Zambia orphaned by Aids. It was founded in memory of Cicely Eastwood who died in a road accident while working in Zambia on her gap year.

Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson

Continued from p2

branch practice by encouraging me to attempt Cambridge for the first time in ages, and I was so shocked at how completely I had forgotten it. I knew I'd get the chance at Purbrook, which was the only tower I had visited before, and is reminiscent of Ducklington both in the size of the bells and the number of children learning – when I arrived they were having a tied practice, and the children scampered up like monkeys to remove the clapper ties afterwards. I did indeed get to ring Cambridge, along with their year 10 learner (do we have any year 10 Cambridge ringers? If so, please come and visit North Leigh!)

Thursday:

At Hambledon (6 bells, 10 cwt tenor), after yet another very warm welcome (by this time, my Mum was totally flummoxed at my spending every evening with total strangers who were so concerned about how she was recovering!), I was asked to call Stedman from the 3, making singles with the 2, and the resulting embarrassing hash revealed that I always take the easy way out in calling myself to make cats ears first instead of coat hangers (so that it's easier to see when the other bell's coming up for the 2<sup>nd</sup> single), although they were gracious enough to say "yep, that's about our standard too!". Following that disaster, I opted for the perceived safety of the tenor for the next touch of RCPD, thinking that I surely couldn't mess up covering,

only to be terrified by warnings as we pulled off that the rope has a tendency to jam between the wheel and the frame, which to my relief were unfounded. Remarkably, they did allow me to ring Stedman again, though not to call it, and asked me to visit again.

Friday was my promised night in with my Mum, although I must say that by that time I was quite happy to forego the fantastic 10 bell practice at East Meon – I had embarrassed myself quite enough that week on 6 bells, who knows what could have happened with another 4!

The ringing week ended with a return visit to Havant on their Vicar's last Sunday (when he presented the ringers with a new bottle of port) and I was welcomed like a long lost friend.

All in all I had a fantastic week visiting 5 very different towers that all gave me such a warm welcome whether or not I was able to contribute anything valuable to their ringing, all taught me a different lesson, and all invited me back. My biggest regret is that I failed to request Double Antelope Place Doubles at any of the towers, but I'm sure Swanmore would be prepared for it if I ever visit them again – Lorna, would you like to join me?!

## Send your articles to

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### Branch website

See us at:

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

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### Woodstock,

Tuesday, 20 November  
2007

#### 1260 Grandsire Triples

1 Zoë White  
2 Lorna Smale  
3 Mary Clark-Maxwell  
4 Victoria Davey-Wilson  
5 Bernard Coggins  
6 Brian Curtis ©  
7 Richard White  
8 Ian Davey Wilson  
Rung to commemorate the  
60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of  
HM The Queen and HRH  
the Duke of Edinburgh

## Quarter Peals

### Combe,

Friday 21 March 2008  
**1260 Stedman Doubles**

1 Marilyn Floyd  
2 Richard White  
3 Lorna Smale  
4 David Floyd ©  
5 Brian Curtis  
6 Anthony Williamson  
Rung half muffled for Good  
Friday.

### Combe

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
**1260 Reverse Canterbury**

1 Amanda Millard  
2 Lindsey Thornton  
3 Anthony Williamson  
4 Brian Curtis  
5 Lorna Smale ©  
6 Jean Richards  
First in method – 3

To thank the Reverend Geoff  
van der Weegen for all his love  
and support over the last 18  
years and to wish him and Judi  
well with his early retirement.

### Stonesfield

Sat 29<sup>th</sup> March 2008  
**1260 Grandsire Doubles**

1 Edward Sherlaw Johnson  
2 Rachael Sherlaw Johnson  
3 Lindsey Thornton  
4 David Thornton  
5 Lorna Smale ©  
6 Simon Haviland  
For Geoff and Judith van der  
Weegen in appreciation of  
Geoff's 18 years as Rector of  
Stonesfield and Combe.

### Combe,

Tuesday 3 June 2008  
**1260 Grandsire Doubles**

1 Jenny Haviland  
2 Lindsey Thornton  
3 Anthony Williamson  
4 Brian Curtis  
5 Lorna Smale  
6 David Thornton  
Half muffled in thanksgiving for  
the life of Rosemary Sanchez  
following her funeral.

### Combe,

Saturday 14 June 2008  
**1260 Plain Bob Minor**

1 Marilyn Floyd  
2 Roger Barnes  
3 Anthony Williamson  
4 Brian Curtis  
5 Lorna Smale  
6 David Floyd ©  
Rung to celebrate the  
90<sup>th</sup> birthday of local  
parishioner Geoffrey  
Green.  
First of Minor - 3.

### Combe,

Saturday 12 July 2008  
**1260 Kennington Bob  
Doubles**

1 Amanda Millard  
2 Lindsey Thornton  
3 Anthony Williamson  
4 Lorna Smale  
5 Brian Curtis  
6 Jean Richards  
As a 35<sup>th</sup> wedding  
anniversary compliment  
(14/7) to John and Jean  
Richards - Congratulations!  
and prior to an Open Tower  
morning.

### Stonesfield,

Wednesday 13 August 2008  
**1260 Plain Bob Doubles**

1 Cathy Rowlands  
2 Elizabeth Lawrence  
3 Brian Curtis  
4 Lorna Smale ©  
5 Louise Brown  
6 Anthony Williamson

### Stonesfield,

Wednesday 20 August 2008  
**1320 Cambridge  
Surprise Minor**

1 Lindsey Thornton  
2 Marilyn Floyd  
3 Brian Curtis  
4 Richard White  
5 David Floyd  
6 Lorna Smale ©  
1st in method as conductor

### Stonesfield,

Wednesday 27 August  
2008  
**1260 Plain Bob Doubles**

1 Anthony Williamson  
2 Edward Sherlaw Johnson  
3 Lindsey Thornton  
4 Brian Curtis  
5 Lorna Smale  
6 David Thornton  
1<sup>st</sup> inside 2.

## Branch Quiz night

This years quiz was  
held on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>  
January at Woodstock  
bowls and tennis club.  
Last years venue at  
Witney Police station  
bar could not be used  
as sadly it has closed  
down.

If my records are  
correct 8 teams took  
part. The guest ales  
were Hook Norton Best  
and Chiltern Brewery  
Beechwood Bitter both  
of which were  
consumed before the  
end of the night. The  
buffet supplied by each  
team was even better  
than last years and  
there was more than  
enough food to go  
around.

The results (if I have  
written them down  
correctly) are as follows:

Snow Joke – 89pts  
Marmite convention –  
87pts  
Woodstock – 87pts  
Ding Dong Beasties –  
86pts  
Wootton Wizards –  
82pts  
Slate Miners – 82pts  
Minimus + 2 – 79pts  
Norfolk 'n' Tune –  
73pts.

Many thanks to Lindsey  
Thornton and Noel  
Reynolds for arranging  
the venue and all those  
who took part. A healthy  
profit was passed on  
toward branch funds.  
Also thanks to Janet  
Stiles and Dad for  
collecting the  
Beechwood Bitter

See you next year.

Richard White