

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



**Newsletter
February 2022**



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President's musings

How refreshing it has been to meet many members at Branch AGMs and the GMC meeting in the last few months. It keeps my feet on the ground.

For example, one tower commented that it had hosted a branch meeting and not received a donation. There are various benefits of holding meetings at different towers: ringing at towers that have no band reminds the locals that there can be ringing, or ringing can assist the local ringers to develop their skills.

Is there a general approach across the Guild? It seems not. In some cases, branches ask for steeplage which goes to the host tower. Other branches offer a donation to a tower outside the branch but not to one within. Some branches ask for a donation for a focussed practice but not a branch meeting. In some branches a collection is taken, split between the tower and branch, particularly where a service was held.

To conclude, I would ask that Branches consider urgently if the Branch or Guild should be offering donations for ringing generally, and the best ways to support our towers in this post-Covid cash-strapped era.

Alistair

Newsletter News

This is our second new-style Newsletter, which we were due to release in February, but a combination of me suffering three weeks Covid lockdown, plus unexpected work demands, delayed it.

The overall objective is for the Newsletter to support the Guild's wider objective of increasing general awareness of ringing, and to draw in new ringers. So, we plan three editions per year instead of two, and are always looking for interesting news, articles and photos, contributed by the branches, by Guild officers and by members. We have also changed print supplier, to enable us to have colour on every page, and three editions per year, at the same annual cost as the previous arrangements. Additional copies are sent by the PRO to church and community organisations, including libraries.

Our stalwart branch correspondents rose to the occasion, despite some of them only just elected in January's branch AGMs. I am pleased to see that we have even more news from towers in this edition. Please send any comments, complaints or contributions for future editions to me at newsletter@pdg.org.uk. The next is planned to come out just after the Queen's Jubilee weekend (2-5 June), so that we can capture members' enthusiastic celebrations, in towers and elsewhere.

Jonathan

The Secretary Sings

But only on her own – I promise not to inflict that on you! The first stirrings of Spring are in the air and the glimpses of sunshine have put a spring into more than just the garden; I find myself in a positive frame of mind. The last few ringing events I've attended have been well supported and there has been lots of enthusiasm. It's great to see so many members coming together in a positive and engaging manner. Some are looking to progress; others want to encourage progression in others and still others have provided some excellent cakes. We all have skills that can enhance the community of ringers. There will be a body of initiatives in the next months that are aimed at progression at all levels, and we look forward to seeing you at those, be that as helpers, improvers or supporters. Aspiration is always a good thing; we might never achieve greatness ourselves, but we should admire it when we see it or hear it. I'll never hit a high C, but that's not to say that the spine doesn't tingle when I hear someone hold a high note. Similarly with ringing - we might not all be able to scale the heights

of complicated methods, ring peals of spliced or compete in the 12-bell striking contest. But we can all admire the skill, artistry or training and dedication that goes into those things. And we all ought to be able to take something from those heights – we can aspire to be better in our own little way.

I challenge you to let your ringing put a spring in its step. You don't know what you are capable of until you try.

Helen

Treasurer's Titbits

Thanks to all the membership who supported our nomination with the Ecclesiastical Insurance company for their bi-annual donations to charities. They eventually chose to contribute £1,000 (our second such award in the last 3 years). We have allocated it to our Training Fund which is really starting to become active in delivering skills levels to all parts of the membership. Please engage with the Training Team to identify sessions where a significant need can match our offer.

Last year I introduced the awareness of Amazon Smile to the Guild Membership as an opportunity to generate funds for our Guild objectives. Whilst our benefit from the scheme is acorn like at £20 the whole scheme has generated (according to Amazon) charitable donations of over £280 million globally with £14 million in the UK alone. Staggering to think that is 0.5% of the sales that have gone down the channel. You can nominate any charity of your choosing and I hope that you have considered this opportunity for donation. Go to <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/community/how-to-sign-up-for-amazonsmile>.

I have just written cheques for the first minor grants of the year. The Guild expenditure is already more to March 22 than for the full 2021 year. There are a number of major and minor grants coming and we look forward to supporting the return to ringing.

The 100 Club is receiving great support. 2022 has already reached 78% of 2021 and the prize % has been increased in the new version of the draw. So, more money for the winners from more participants – it is a winner. Well done Cathy and her Team.

Chris

How do you get from “walk” to “dosh”?

w	a	l	k
d	o	s	h

Well, it could be one of those word puzzles where you change one letter at a time to make a new word (solution later...) or I could tell you a story.

Summer 2019 I left teaching and took early retirement. One benefit of this was that I could relax more when I walked my dog (a big softie called Alexander who enjoys just ambling along and sniffing). In turn this meant that I noticed more of the plants in the



Alexander resting on a walk

hedgerows where we walked. I had already dabbled with making sloe gin and elderflower cordial, but here were loads of fruits that were generally left to wither on the plant or rot on the ground. What a waste!

So, I started collecting them and making jams (actually, mainly jellies where you strain the juice from cooked fruit before adding sugar and pectin to make it set).



Loads of tiny cherry apples

Sloe, elderberry, bramble, crab apple & rosehip were all produced this way.

Then friends, family and neighbours started to offer me excess produce from their gardens and along came plum, redcurrant, apple, rhubarb & ginger – mostly jams this time (where the flesh of the fruit appears in the final product). I was even given bags of

cherry apples from the landlord of our local pub (The Little Ale House in Wellingborough).

This is all well and good, but I then had dozens of jars of preserves – much more than we would ever use, so I started selling it for charity, just retaining enough money to cover the cost of the sugar and lemons needed to make the product. In 2021 it raised over £100 profit for the Guild Training Fund. So many people have been generous with their dosh and their comments, that I will probably do it all again.



A small selection of jams

Other preserves? I've drawn the line at chutneys (bad memories of acidic atmospheres when my mother made green tomato

chutney when I was a young girl) and marmalade (cost of buying the fruit). But I'm willing to experiment with other recipes like the apple & sage jelly using windfall apples and sage from our garden.

Cathy Dixon [Puzzle solution on p41]

Guild Management Committee Report

The GMC reports annually to the membership, and its full report is published in the Annual Report. This is an abridged version.

The Covid pandemic looks as if it is at last becoming part of “normal living” for us all, with ringing tentatively re-starting in the Summer. Hopefully we have seen the last of national lockdowns, though I suspect that masks are likely to be commonly worn for a while yet. We are extremely grateful to all the Officers for keeping the Guild going as far as was possible, ready to resume as soon as practicable. Special thanks to Helen Allton, our Secretary, for the considerable work she has continued to put in on a Facebook presence for the Guild, while also compiling and issuing regular communications to members, keeping us all informed, challenged and entertained throughout this last year.

Our finances continue to be healthy. The General Fund stood at £34,908 at the end of the year (2020: £35,791). The Bell Fund stands at £82,373 (78,285) and the Training Fund stands at £6,474 (£5,386). Notable receipts in 2021 included a charitable donation of £1,000 from Ecclesiastical Insurance to the Training Fund, the 2nd in 3 years thanks to Guild nominations.

The 100 Club has restarted, raising £300 this year.

MEMBERSHIP: The Guild has 893 members (2020: 919), comprising 833 (848) adults, 46 (59) students and 14 (12) associate members.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: This was held on 12th June attended by 40 members (2020: 60) once again through the virtual world of Zoom. Many thanks to the team of Helen and Richard Allton for masterminding the event so well.

AWARDS: 50-year membership certificates were announced for Pam Bailey, Rushden; Michael Fiander Guilsborough branch; Jim Hedgcock Guilsborough Branch; Andrew Parker Bulwick; John Weaver, Kettering. These will be presented when circumstances allow.

FESTIVALS: Thanks are extended to Northampton branch for arranging the belated (not the) Spring Festival Meeting at Abington on the 21st August and to

Thrapston branch for arranging the Summer Festival at Thrapston on 25th September in spite of continuing Covid restrictions.

BELL WORK: 2021 was a quiet year for bell work. The Guild Bell Fund stands at £79,171 (2019: £78,285) of which £16,000 (£1,400) has been allocated to 4 ongoing schemes. Grants amounting to £870 were paid to 3 Parishes: Earls Barton, Towcester and Wollaston parishes.

The Affiliation Letter was not sent out in 2021, but 15 parishes still contributed £ 405 (2019: £2,815) We are grateful for the help given by the Diocesan Office in distributing our emails and the continued support given by parishes in these difficult times.

Collections, Donations and Fund-raising events added £ 2,140 (2020: £2,066) to the Bell Fund.

TRAINING, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION: It is hoped to start ten-bell practices again soon, along with a brace of new initiatives during 2022.

The Training Fund stands at £6,473 (2020: £5,386). 3 Grants were paid in 2021, totalling £850 (2020: £0)

PEALS AND QUARTER PEALS: 15 (2020: 15) peals were rung during the year, 2 of them on Handbells.

The total number of Quarter Peals rung in the Diocese was 63 (2020 63); 50 were rung in 31 Towers, of which 12 (12) were rung for service. The remaining 13 Quarter Peals were rung on Handbells. 4 (4) ringers rang their first quarter peal, and 2 (2) their first inside — congratulations to them all. No ringers (2020: 0) had the opportunity to conduct their first QP.

WEBSITE: Our new Guild website had 43 registered Users and at least 34,000 hits by the end of 2021 (metric not comparable with previous years), with more than 2,500 hits on the Events pages. Thanks to new Webmaster Richard Allton for the considerable work he has put in developing this on-line presence. This site will soon expand to incorporate up to 5 Branch webpages during 2022. The Guild Facebook pages have attracted 214 “followers”, up from 170 in 2021.

CONCLUSION: The Management Committee acknowledges the efforts made in member retention, bell restoration work and fund raising. It thanks all branch officers, members, incumbents and friends who develop and support change ringing.

Calendar Competition (reminder)

For the Guild's centenary, in 2024, the annual Guild calendar will be decorated with images of churches within the Peterborough Diocese. The competition is open to anyone and closes on the **1st September 2022**, with winners announced at the Summer Festival that month.

The calendar will be produced with images in landscape format. Many towers may look better in portrait than landscape, so submissions can be a single landscape image or a selection of images of a single church to produce a collage. Images may be an external view of the church or tower, of the bells or installation, or architectural



features of the church - be as inventive and artistic as you like. Images of a vibrant town centre church would be as interesting as an idyllic country church in a peaceful landscape. Images showing different seasons are particularly welcomed.

For details and rules, contact photos100@pdg.org.uk

Silencing a Bell for Teaching Learners

With the return to ringing, I'm sure some of you will have come across mumblings in the vicinity of the tower, concerning the disturbance caused by the ringing of the bells, in particular the teaching of learners. Whilst this may be tolerated as part of a weekly practice, separate sessions can cause an upset with the neighbours.

When we returned at Great Cransley, St. Andrew I had 2 new ringers to teach and wanted a quick solution. A search of the internet came up with several ideas. Being a regular cyclist, the use of old inner tubes was an obvious option and I found 2 old mountain bike tubes hanging at the back of the Bike Shed. Luckily, I hadn't yet taken them for recycling. (Decathlon at Rushden Lakes has an inner tube recycling bin.)





The method suggested using a single tube, but the No. 3 bell at Cransley was too large so I knotted the 2 tubes together and followed the instructions.

An old inner tube or two and 2 short lengths of rope is all that is required. Knots in the tube(s) will help to stop them moving about. Make loops in the ropes first then hook the inner tubes over the headstock.

To work out the amount of rope needed put the loops round the flight of the clapper and then tie the other ends of the rope to the tube(s) adjusting the length to get a secure fit, with the clapper in a central position in the bell. It does not need to be very tight as friction helps to keep things in position. With everything in place, it is important to ensure that the device is fixed centrally, so as not to slip sideways, and stay parallel to the wheel. To remove the silencer simply slip the nooses off the clapper and store it securely until it is needed again. The knots do not need to be to elegant but secure. If the inner tubes are not badly perished, they can remain in a serviceable condition for this purpose for several years.



David Dainty, Kettering Branch Press Correspondent

OBITUARIES

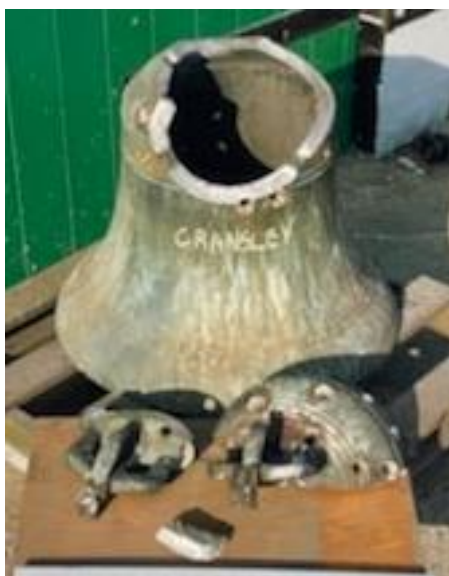
Gordon Smart (David Dainty, photo Mark Strupczewski)

Gordon was born in Kent in 1937 and grew up in Woolwich, south London during the 2nd World War. He led a very interesting and varied life, as an Agriculturalist, including producing rabbit meat for export to France, and as a hotel keeper. A regular churchgoer from his younger years Gordon served as Church Warden in the Devon parish where he lived before moving up to Great Cransley in Northamptonshire.

Shortly after arriving in the village in 1983 Gordon got involved with the Bell Fund Committee. The incumbent at the time had planned to use the bell repair fund for other purposes and the dispute resulted in the Vicar calling a general meeting of the village. Gordon recalled in his memoirs that the meeting was the largest held in the village, with over 100 people attending. The fund stood at £2,700 and the estimate to repair the bells was then £16,000. The Vicar argued that at the rate of fundraising it was unlikely that sufficient money would ever be raised and it would be better spent for other purposes. Gordon recounted his fundraising effort in Devon to repair the Church tower, and the incumbent suggested he should take the matter on, with the support of the vast majority of those attending the meeting. A committee was formed which set about raising the necessary funds, including village fetes, coffee mornings, hand-bell concerts, a sherry & mince pie evening at Christmas, etc.

By 1989 sufficient funds had been raised, the estimated cost having now risen to £26,000. However, the vicar refused to authorise the expenditure, so following legal advice a Bell Fund Trust was set up.

A specialist firm, Soundweld, based in Lode near Newmarket was refining techniques to repair cracked church bells. The Bell Fund Committee visited the workshop and were convinced that repair of the cracked 1 and 3 was feasible. The bells are a wonderful ring of six, with a tenor weighing 9-2-9, all cast by William Bagley of Chacombe in 1683, and the Bell Fund Committee agreed that welding was the best option to retain the authenticity of the bells. In September 1991 work started, using local volunteers.



One of the Cransley bells was in pieces and another badly cracked. These were sent to Soundweld and the other 4 bells to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry for refurbishment. One of these bells later also being sent on to Lode for welding.

The 4th bell was the first to be tackled. Welding took 3.5 hours and consumed 20 lb. (9.07kg.) of metal. The treble was more complicated. On removal of the last bolt securing the bell it literally fell into 4 pieces. The 3 pieces of the crown were welded together, then further supports and a backing bar enabled the crown to be welded to the main body of

the bell. The welding took 4 ½ hours and 56 inches of cracks were filled using 20lbs. of metal filler. The decoration and lettering were faithfully re-created using a handheld pencil grinder, taking 3 days to complete. Whitechapel found that the crown of the 3rd was also cracked, and it was transported to Lode for welding.

On completion of the works and re-installation of the bells in the tower at St. Andrew, Gordon learnt to ring and was a staunch supporter of the local band, continuing to come and sit and talk to ringers when ill-health meant he could no longer participate. The bells ring superbly, a fitting epitaph to Gordon for all his efforts.

Gordon put the fun into fundraising. He supported a wide range of organisations, including the League of Friends of Kettering Hospital, East Northants Association of the National Trust, The Children's Society, Cransley Bell Fund Trust and Kettering Bridge Club. He supported every event in Cransley, would donate the most fabulous-tasting homemade cakes and it was often Gordon selling raffle tickets. He won many prizes in the village show and his cross-stitch creations were marvellous. Ever the consummate fund raiser, after the lifting of the Pandemic lock-down in the summer of 2020 Gordon was on the Cransley Facebook page organising a Garage sale in aid of village institutions. Gordon passed away suddenly on Monday 6th September 2021 at Glenfield Hospital, Leicester.

Guildsbrough sad news (Anthea Hiams)

2021 saw the passing of a member, a past member and a dear friend of the branch.

Mary Kinchin died on the 21 January 2021 at the age of 83. Mary was born into a ringing family and, as such, had no choice but to learn to ring herself and it was through this hobby that she met her husband, John. They met at a meeting at Naseby and she joined the Guild on 3 November 1956. She rang two peals: Mixed Doubles at Great Oxendon and Plain Bob Major at All Saints, Leicester. She also rang numerous Quarter Peals from doubles to major. Sadly, Mary suffered with poor health in her later years which stopped her ringing. This did not, however, prevent her from attending our monthly meetings, with her husband. Meetings will not be the same without her.

Ann Elliot of Great Oxendon died on the 17 February 2021. Ann was taught to ring by Derek Griffin, along with her late husband Alan, in the 1980's. She was

dedicated to the ringing at Great Oxendon, even after Alan's death. Ann was our branch secretary for 2005 and 2006. She suffered poor health in her later years, which stopped her from ringing and attending meetings. She will be sadly missed.

Frank Mellor was, technically, not a member of the Guild but he looked forward to and attended our branch meetings, with his son Martin, for many years. He was a very popular visitor. Frank died on the 13 June 2021, aged 92. Frank learnt to ring as a teenager, just after the wartime ban was lifted. He rang his first peal at Hinckley in 1947 aged 18, when he rang the tenor to Stedman Triples in 2 hours 58 mins. Stedman was always his favourite. In total he rang 9 peals, 8 drumming behind and 1 on the treble, for his 21st birthday. He stopped ringing in his early 80's when the ringing became too hard and ladders and stairs were impossible for him to manage. He continued, however, to accompany Martin to our branch meetings, listening and watching from his wheelchair and enjoying a pint and a drop of whiskey in the pub afterwards. We will indeed miss him.

May they all rest in peace.

Getting back to ringing at Desborough

The St Giles Benefice comprises four churches. Of the other three: All Saints Braybrooke has no bells, All Saints Dingley has a ground floor ring of 5 and St Mary's Brampton Ash has a first floor ring of 6. St Giles has a ring of 8.

How has ringing been in the Benefice since March 2020?



St Giles ringing chamber is on the first floor; a completely enclosed space measuring a mere 13 feet by 13 feet with a trapdoor entrance and a window that doesn't open! Ringing as we know it has been off limits throughout – a single bell was chimed once worship resumed, the tenor was tolled for funerals and the Ellacombe apparatus was utilised from time to time.

Plans were made to ring the 5 bells at Dingley during the 'window' in November 2020 but it was found that the ringing chamber had been used to store all the spare chairs and furniture so access to the ropes was not possible. Services at Brampton Ash were limited but just as

we thought we may be able to ring for Christmas we were hit with further restrictions.

Fast forward to May 2021. Following an inspection of the ringing chamber and the bells, a risk assessment was put together and permission sought to hold our practice night at Brampton Ash. The first-floor ringing chamber is completely open, numbers limited to six on a weekly rota and ringing was restricted to 45 minutes. It was a joy to be ringing again BUT not all our ringers wanted to ring there. The bells are heavier than St Giles and the ropes have a tendency to 'fly' which had put off a number of our less experienced ringers.

Discussion that evening following the Bram practice focussed on a return to Sunday Service ringing at St Giles. 'If we keep the trapdoor open, if we ring on 6, take precautions and limit the ringing time, surely we can get away with a service ring?' This was agreed by all concerned. There were huge smiles behind the masks and possibly more than one tear in an eye when we rang for the first time since March 2020 the following Sunday. 'How did it go?' the Curate asked. 'Actually, I have to say it was pretty emotional!' came the reply.

But to make real progress and to include all our ringers we had to be practising at St Giles. There was more discussion and some amusing but fairly ludicrous suggestions. 'How about installing a metal grill where the trapdoor is so we can keep it open and the ringer of the 7th has somewhere to stand?'

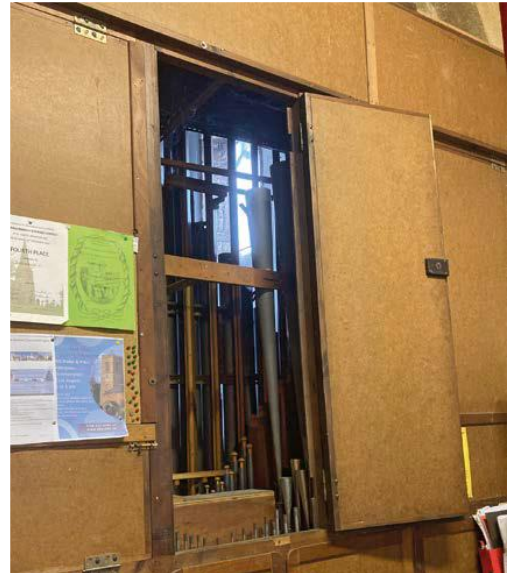


'How about we lengthen the rope and the 7th ringer rings from the ground floor?' 'Well if Mick rings the 7th we needn't even lengthen the rope.' 'Could we bore through the stonework and install an extractor fan?'

Then the voice of reason – 'When the floor for the ringing chamber was put in the remaining part of the archway was just boarded over, that could be removed. And what about the door to the organ loft – what's behind there? The next day two of us found that the door to the organ loft led directly into the body of the church, providing a clear passage for ventilation, and the boarding at the top of the arch on the opposite wall was prised away. Our main barrier - lack of ventilation - had been overcome.

The next Monday saw a welcome return to practice night at St Giles. Yes, we still wear masks, we have the door to the organ loft open, we have the trapdoor open when ringing on the front six and between rings and someone acts as doorkeeper so that the West door can be kept open to provide a through put of fresh air. We stagger the practice – beginners at 7.15pm until 7.45pm, others joining then until 8.30pm. We never have more than required in the ringing chamber, with extras going downstairs to wait their turn. The modification to the arch boarding is in hand.

However, there has been an addition to the risk assessment - Danger to hearing when the organ starts up! There was a wedding last Saturday and beautiful though Widor's Toccata may be we could ring only by sight, the oft heard 'listen to the striking' was not an option!



Jane Marsh

News from the Branches

CULWORTH BRANCH

Our focus in this edition is on Paul Bennett. Paul was awarded the Culworth Branch Presidents Cup at the AGM in January for his services to bell ringing and you can see from his article below that he keeps himself very busy in his area of the branch. Paul is tower captain and clock keeper at Evenley church. He is always willing to make up the numbers if we are short and still has time for choir, rotary, gym, the new community hospital in Brackley and his friends, family and grandchildren (to name but a few!) He is also an accredited ART teacher, frequently putting those skills to use. He was officially appointed Treasurer to the branch in January. Well done, Paul, you deserve the cup and your enthusiasm is an example to us all. Here are just a few things he is up to.

News from Astwick and Kings Sutton

Deep in the South of Northamptonshire is Astwick benefice, where a small band of ringers has kept active throughout the virus crisis. We service the bells of four churches (Evenley, Croughton, Kings Sutton and Aynho) and practice as much as we can on Tuesday evenings, but our numbers preclude ringing for Sunday

services at two of our grandest churches, the 8 bells of Aynho and Kings Sutton. This saddens me. If the tradition of ringing is to continue even at a minimal level it needs promoting across these and the neighbouring villages. Raising 8 bell teams for weddings, when all ringers must travel, becomes a challenge.

All is not lost! Our group hosts 18 members of the Guild and we received regular visits from 2 members who are listed as “Unattached”. This total of 20 includes 10 who are not ringing, limited by age or medical issues (possibly three may return to some level of activity in the future). Our call for cover is therefore limited to 10 at present. We are sometimes able to draw help from over the Oxfordshire border.

All our 26 bells are ringable. We rotate our practice night through the four churches, ring for service at two, cover the marriages at all these and provide support for Brackley’s Sunday services and Monday practice night. Ringing 8 bells at the three towers in this area has been rare (even Rounds only). This is now seen as a remarkable achievement and, for its rarity, is all the more satisfying.

Our Astwick ‘Christmas Party’ took place in November when 19 ringers and partners met at the Cartwright Arms when lockdown allowed. We had a good evening together. We were joined by Peter Phillips, 92-year-old Tower Captain at Aynho, (now not ringing) and Paul Richardson, a 94-year-old ringer who has joined Kings Sutton team from Daventry. Paul has never been daunted by the 46 step climb to the ringing chamber but has recently been incapacitated by a fall at home.

A trickle of interest in ringing is producing some results but the ageing process hampers our progress.

Paul Bennett

DAVENTRY BRANCH

Events

Although several towers were ringing as best they could under the prevailing regulations, no branch ringing was arranged and instead another non-ringing event was arranged. The Branch Walk around Borough Hill, Daventry took place on Sunday September 12.

With the imposition of “Plan B” imminent, we weren’t expecting many on Saturday December 11 for the restart of ‘normal’ meetings but only thirteen

turned out for the ringing, tea, meeting and Carol Concert at Weedon. The ringing ended with a bang – the tenor clapper dropped out!

Luckily it had held in for the successful quarter peal (see below) preceding general ringing and everyone had had a ring. Brian Foley was to be in the quarter but was not well enough to ring or be with us. We wished him well and to recover soon and left him a detached

clapper. He later reported that the crown staple had fallen out despite a recent check. Unusually, it was held by a bent-beam turret nut. It is now re-secured with an old-fashioned split pin.



Last of the Summer Wine on Borough Hill Daventry

The carol concert, led by the Rector, had us singing six carols with masks on. There were four performances: Unringable (by Michael without reading glasses and Barbara), Wash Night (a dazzling presentation by Heyford), The Three Bells (Badby) and Bells of Paradise (Bugbrooke). Finally, mulled wine in the hot chapter house prepared us for our journey home. As usual the Telegraph cartoons in Gwynneth's programme were a highlight, with Christmas and Covid themes this time!

On the last Saturday of January, Daventry ringing room eventually had ten ringers, and stayed around a dozen by management at the bottom of the stairs. Other than a half-course of Cambridge S Major, all ten bells were rung, enabling several to ring on ten for the first time or for a year or two. There were 32 of us at some time during the day, of whom 21 rang.

The vicar, Revd Dawn, took our service. We were pleased to see that Michael Haighton was fit enough to be at the organ for the hymns. Deena Johnson was busy making cups of tea as she gets used to having Hugh back at home after several weeks in Northampton and Danetre hospitals. We ate our own food, sat around the pews.

With our AGM underway, we were delighted to elect five new members from Newnham and to hear that Newnham practice night has changed to Thursday.

There was no volunteer for Branch Ringing Master. The Guild Officers asked that we send a representative to the Guild's annual Recruitment and Training

Committee and Jim Grennan volunteered. The Treasurer, Christine Rodhouse offered to do one more year and Steward, Brian Foley, gave notice of wanting to retire next January. The committee was enlarged to include Gwynneth and Jim Grennan.

To avoid clashes with the Guild events it was proposed and agreed that we move our meetings to the 4th Saturdays. The subsequent committee meeting changed this to the 3rd Saturday to avoid Bank Holiday weekends, subject to ratification. The meeting also agreed that the branch Wombell should be donated from its recent resting place in Litchborough church, to the Guild for use throughout the diocese for publicity, recruitment and training.

People

We were very pleased in October to welcome Nicole Rolph as a new Daventry resident, a ready-made ringer from Halesworth via Manchester University and elected a member at our December meeting.

Alison Buck has had two eye operations for cataracts in August and November so was out of what ringing there was for a few months.

Revd Michael Houghton had a welcome respite from cancer treatment, only to have a serious illness over Christmas followed by an unexpected need for more cancer treatment. We were pleased to see him at the organ at our AGM and wish him the best for his current chemotherapy.

Jackie Gibbard of Willoughby was very belatedly diagnosed as suffering from long term B12 deficiency and in October we were pleased to hear that she had come home after 16 weeks in hospitals and nursing homes. The treatment is very slowly starting to reverse the appalling effects of pain and lack of balance. A broken wrist in January has not helped but we hope she continues to get better with Kim's constant attention.

A 'surprise' gathering was held at Newnham on Saturday December 7 for Bob and Maureen Sinclair who were returning to Darlington after nearly 40 years in the village. Villagers, ringers and their sons and families came to mark the occasion. Bob was a branch committee member in 1983-5, Branch Ringing Master from 1992 for 7 years, while Maureen was Branch Librarian 1985-6 & 1990 and committee member in 1992-3. They both rang at Towcester in the early 1990s where Ben and Dominic learned to ring. More recently they have taught another new band at Newnham, currently totalling eight and now all branch members.

Ringling

By the constant use of emails, Daventry practices have been running on all ten bells since July, when more than six were allowed again to gather indoors. An hour limit, face covers, a number limit, open window and door, still seem to be working such that Carole is able to offer eight and ten bell ringing with sometimes Yorkshire S Royal! Daventry rang on Friday October 29 before a vigil in church for the UN Climate Change conference COP26. Appropriately, on the Sunday morning of COP 26 the ten ringers were faced by a prolonged heavy downpour that flooded local roads. Bishop John was welcomed to the Deanery confirmation service by ten bells on December 10.

The first Hellidon Tuesday morning practice since March 2020 was held on September 7 and attracted 11. Fears of having forgotten how to ring a bell were soon banished. The CO₂ meter proved that an open arch ring has very adequate ventilation.

The Braunston Monday Club afternoon gatherings began again, but fortnightly, on September 20, with Michael Houghton taking the reins.

Brian Foley arranged the first locally organised quarter peal for a long time with Plain Bob Major at Weedon on October 3, conducted by Ian Willgress, in memory of Michael Harvey, who passed away on May 17, 2020.

On December 11 before our first ringing meeting, Gwynneth organised a quarter peal of Yorkshire S Major, also at Weedon, conducted by Ian Willgress, dedicated to branch members who have died during Covid. It was Christine's 100th quarter.

We were pleased to see that Miles Baker of Whilton is taking his university opportunities seriously, having rung his first quarter on 8 'inside' in October on the 3rd to Plain Bob Major at St Oswald, Durham. When home, he took part in the first Baker family quarter peal at Whilton on December 22 when Hannah rang her first quarter peal, treble to Plain Bob Doubles, conducted by Gwyneth White - see details and photo at



Hannah Baker receives her first QP certificate

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1479022>

Towers

In December Ian reported that difficulties in getting the render to stick to the tower masonry will continue to prevent the try-out and use of the new bell installation at Church Stowe until well into 2022.

The two Brians have been busy at Dodford, stopping the noise from the rope slap in the wooden ceiling guide chutes. Odd bits of green twist still come down from the carpet muffling and we were privileged to have the vicar sweep them up after one wedding!

Geoff Pullin

GUILSBOROUGH BRANCH

This year the AGM took place via Zoom, because of the restrictions placed upon us due to the Coronavirus pandemic. All tower ringing had ceased and sadly remained so for most of the rest of the 2021. Monthly branch meetings will resume in February 2022. Some members have continued to ring using the virtual platform 'Ringing Room' which maintained weekly practices for some prior to us getting the go ahead to resume ringing on tower bells.

October 2021 saw East Haddon celebrate the 400th anniversary of the original four bells of their ring of six. The second, third, fourth and tenor were cast by Hugh II Watts in 1621. It is fascinating to think that they were installed just a few years after the death of Elizabeth the first! The four ring well today, and the whole ring is tuned well, and are much complimented by visitors. A day was set aside for ringing, with efforts by their own band, plus others from local towers. Refreshments ensured that the day went well. A quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor, by branch members, kicked off the proceedings.

The Christmas Fair at Scaldwell, towards the end of December, provided an opportunity for an open tower, encouraging all people great and small to have a go at ringing. A screen and cameras enable those having a go to see what was happening to the bell they were chiming. Another laptop had bell tower virtually ringing quarter peals of Plain Bob Doubles throughout the day. Three of the bells at Scaldwell also turned 400 in 2021. The second, fourth and fifth were also cast by Hugh II Watts in 1621 and have been rehung several times. The band at Scaldwell installed a new set of ropes in celebration.

Our steward Rob Palmer and his team have continued to maintain the branch bells as and when restrictions have allowed, ensuring especially that it is safe to commence ringing following the enforced long break.

We would like to thank the clergy, tower captains, tower contacts members and friends for their contributions in what, for the most part, continued to be a difficult year.

THE BELLS OF EAST HADDON

East Haddon Church tower houses a fine ring of 6 bells. These are of historical importance in the world of campanology; records show that on 31st December 1756, the first ever recorded peal of 5040 changes on 5 bells was rung at East Haddon by “a Society of Old Ringers, each man aged upwards of 50 years of Age rang 5040 changes, which takes up several Peals of five bells; and completed in three Hours and ten Minutes.” The press cutting from Northampton Mercury from the time does not reveal their names.

The tower as we see it now differs widely from the original structure. In 1673 the tower needed rebuilding following some collapse of stonework. Until that time just the original four bells were present.

And in 1731 it was possible to install a fifth bell, by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester. The bells and their origins are:

Treble	Taylor of Loughborough, 1928
2nd	Hugh Watts, Leicester, 1621
3rd	Hugh Watts, Leicester, 1621
4th	Hugh Watts, Leicester, 1621
5th	Abraham Rudhall, 1731
Tenor	Hugh Watts, Leicester, 1621

The treble weighs 5 cwt., the tenor weighs 15cwt (745kg).

Each bell carries an inscription, cast into the metal when the bell was made.

TREBLE: The gift of Thos. Smart, Churchwarden 1928

No 2: CELORVM CHRSTE PLATIAT TIBI REX SONVS ISTE

No 3: IH'S : NAZARENVS REX : IVDEORVM FILI : DEI MISERERE : MEI

No 4: IH'S : NAZARENVS REX : IVDEORVM FILI : DEI MISERERE : MEI

No 5: RICHd BOSWELL AND FRA : STANLEY CHURCH-WARDENS

TENOR: CVM .SONO . SI . NON . VIS . VENIRE . NVNQVAM . AD . PRECES .

CVPIES . IRE

In 2010 the bells were refurbished with new headstocks, clappers, and bearings, and the wheels were refurbished/replaced. The bells were also re-tuned, and the frame (by A. Bowell of Ipswich, 1905) was cleaned and protected against

corrosion. Our refurbishment programme occupied some 3 months over December 2010 to February 2011, with expertise supplied by Steve Westerman from Taylors, and the labouring work done by a team of 9 volunteers from East Haddon. We worked through the coldest winter for 30 years, with almost all the work done in the (unheated) belfry. Substantial work was needed to the floors of both belfry and clock room to get the bells out and back in.

While the bells were away at the foundry, the team cleaned and waxoyled the bell frame, and cast a substantial concrete beam to secure the ends of the frame and prevent further movement.

The work was funded by a mix of grants, local fundraising efforts, and the generous support of the local branch of the Guild.

In the last few years we had a new floor built into the tower to give a totally new ringing chamber. This chamber has a large window looking out over the congregation.

Three Scaldwell bells turn 400

Three of the bells at SS. Peter and Paul, Scaldwell turned 400 years old in 2021. Bells 2, 4 and 5 were cast by Hugh II Watts in 1621, and have been re-hung several times.

They are inscribed as follows:

No 2: IH'S : NAZARENVS REX : IVDEORVM FILI : DEI MISERERE : MEI 1621

(Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, O Son of God have mercy on me)

No 4: CELORVM CHRSTE PLATIAT TIBI REX SONVS ISTE 1621

(O Christ the King of Heaven, may this sound be pleasing to Thee)

No. 5) CVM SONO SI NON VIS VENERE NVNQVAM AD PRECES CYPIES IRE 1621

(If you be unwilling to come when I call, To prayers you'll not wish to go at all)

The tenor weighs in at a touch of 10 hundredweight (or over 500 kg in new money) and is tuned to G. We celebrated the great birthday with a new set of ropes for all five bells, and are very grateful to Rob, Colin and Gordon from the Guild's steward team for their help to install the new ropes, and their maintenance throughout the year.

Fiona Barclay

KETTERING BRANCH

Kettering continues to get ringing back in the new normal through the autumn and into the new year.

Our first Branch ringing meeting was held at Rushton, All Saints and Geddington, St. Mary Magdalene. It was the first meeting under the direction of our new Ringing Master, Toby Bence, who was elected to the role just prior to the first Lock-down of the Pandemic. Toby ran a very effective meeting getting all those attending involved ranging from Rounds and Call Changes to Surprise methods. Attendance totalled 24 and included 4 Guild Officers (Ringing Master, Secretary, PRO and Webmaster). Those not ringing were able to chat outside the churches and enjoy the warm sunshine.

In contrast, our next meeting was attended by only 7 ringers, including the Guild President, Alistair Donaldson. Alistair's presence was very fortunate as the Key Holder at our first tower Great Oxendon, St. Helen had forgotten all about the appointment. However, being local to the tower Alistair managed to source a key. Thanks go to Nick Watts, committee member for taking on the role of Acting Ringing Master with the ringing including Plain Bob, Grandsire, Stedman and an attempt at Cambridge Surprise Minor. We moved on to St Andrew's, Arthingworth, where all were subjected to falling debris and some unusual noises at the start of ringing. On finishing we went up to the belfry and couldn't find anything untoward with the bells. We did, however, find a dead pigeon and a lot of sticks and other nesting material which the crows/jackdaws had pushed through the mesh behind the louvres.

The November ringing meeting was held at St Mary the Virgin, Burton Latimer, following the Guild 10 Bell Practice which took place at Kettering SS Peter and Paul earlier in the day and reported elsewhere. The Guild Ringing Master, Secretary, PRO and Webmaster joined 20 other members. Toby Bence our Ringing Master kept the bells ringing with something to suit everyone including some quite ambitious methods for the more experienced attendees.

Our pre-Christmas ringing meeting was held at St Botolph, Barton Seagrave on 11th December, attended by 24 Branch Members. The ringing was organised by members of the Branch Committee and ranged from Rounds and Call Changes through to Stedman Triples and Plain Bob Major. Seasonal refreshments were kindly provided downstairs by Committee member Nick Watts and his wife Mary.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 8th January at St John's, Cranford. After tea and coffee, the Ringers' Service was led by Revd. Graham Bell who reflected on his own ringing experiences. The AGM followed. The Branch formally agreed to move monthly meetings to the 4th Saturday of the month. A proposal was made to attempt to organise joint meetings with adjacent Branches of the Guild in the coming year. The Guild PRO and Steward raised matters including the proposed review of Guild rules to permitted funds to be provided to the new Ringing Centre to be created at The Old Black Lion and adjacent Church of St. Peter. The meeting was followed by open ringing organised by Bill Adcock with a range of methods including Plain Bob and Little Bob Spliced.

The Branch Steward, Andy Bimson, has been busy keeping the bells in our towers in good order. In most cases, routine works to lubricate bells and tighten bolts was required. At St. Mary Magdalene, Cottingham, an inspection following a broken rope whilst ringing for a wedding, discovered significant timber decay to one of the main beams for the timber frame. A representative from John Taylors, Loughborough, visited to advise on remedial treatment. An inspection prior to our Annual General Meeting at St John's, Cranford, a bell rope was seen to be rubbing on and has cut through the overflow pipe of the header tank located on the floor below the bell chamber. The plumber who installed the pipe was obviously not being aware of the movement of the ropes.

News from the Towers

Cransley, St. Andrew

Practices at Cransley have reverted to the Traditional Tuesday evening slot, with a group of visitors from Kettering to support local ringers including 2 learners, and with regular support from Cathy Dixon Guild PRO. A team of 6 ringers rang for the first time in over 12 years for Sunday service on 19th December.

Great Oakley, St. Michael

Diana Talbot reports that Matthew Higby & Co. have been in touch and have the hanging of the 2 new trebles at Great Oakley on their list and plan to commence work in a few weeks' time.

Isham, St Peter

Thanks to Margaret Buchanan for an update. The Isham band were very keen to start practices again and we have continued every Monday since May 17th. We have been happy to welcome visitors from other towers where practices have

been suspended. We have had some lovely comments on the village Facebook page: "It was wonderful listening to the bells last night. We sat out eating a BBQ and enjoying the chorus of bells." Our ringing for 2022 was recorded and posted on Facebook too!

Rhys brought the ULSCR band on their Nene Valley Summer Tour in August and a band from Steyning in Sussex came in November.

We have been so grateful for the support of Cathy and Simon Dixon. They have put up with our irreverence in the belfry and manage to keep very patient with us! Please note – Simon read on a board in the belfry that a peal by a Ladies band was rung in 1922. Quite historic because the tenor was turned by a lady – a first Simon thinks! He wondered if a peal could be rung 100 years later, so the Ladies Guild have organised exactly that, for May 13th.

Kettering SS Peter and Paul

Jane Sibson reports that the Kettering Band got back to ringing in September and have rung for several weddings in addition to ringing for Sunday Service along with Thursday practices

Rothwell, Holy Trinity

Murray Coleman advised very little to report from Rothwell. Our weekly routine of Sunday Service and Practice ringing has resumed, but with Covid19 regulations requiring face coverings to be worn, maximum ventilation to be applied and numbers to be restricted to a sensible level. Even so, ventilation problems prevent the "pensioners' Wednesday morning sessions restarting with its potential 16+ attendance. Always hopeful that things will improve.

David Dainty

NORTHAMPTON BRANCH

Returning to ringing has been slower than we would have liked; quite sensibly there has been a lot of caution to protect all ringers from COVID. The main priority has been retention of ringers i.e. getting them back into the tower.

Within the branch the towers which are actively ringing (practices, Sundays and other events) are Abington, Cogenhoe, Duston, Harpole, Northampton Town Centre (except St Giles), St Benedict's and Wootton. Feedback from everyone is they are pleased to have been back ringing.

Spectacle wearers have had challenges when ringing with face masks; due to misting up. Following a recent ski trip, the Branch Ringing Master has found a solution. Ski goggles provide a great seal so no more misting up! Please note the helmet should not be necessary for most towers.

Branch practices did restart; at Cogenhoe in September we had 16 ringers and were able to ring a range of methods for all the abilities. There were a few less ringers to Duston in November but, all are pleased that these practices have restarted.

January 2022, with the surge in Omicron variant of COVID several of the towers suspended ringing; this also impacted on the AGM which we held virtually.



Summary of the Northampton AGM:

Jennie Higson stood down as the Chair due to other commitments, we thanked her for her work and major contribution to ringing in the branch and are extremely pleased that she will remain on the committee.

Giles Willson was elected as the new Chair – big shoes to fill (good job Giles has size 12's to replace Jennies size 3 feet)?!!

Giles will also remain as the Ringing Master and Press Correspondent (please note, he is not trying to take on all the officer roles in the branch but, since he has retired this should stop him from getting up to too much trouble).

Ray and Barbara Starmer moved from the region to Wigan in 2020, Ray carried on as the Branch Treasurer, for which we were very grateful. We are pleased that we do have a new Treasurer elected and welcome Louise Griffiths to this important role. Liz Moore continues as the Secretary and 100 Club organiser.

Geoff Brown, Selwyn Griffiths and Robin Hickmott were voted onto the committee.

We all hope to have productive, high-quality ringing in the Branch during 2022.

Giles Willson

PETERBOROUGH BRANCH

This year started just like last year, with our AGM being held via the facility of Zoom, after it became clear that a significant number of folk weren't going to attend in person. This duly passed and most of the Committee were re-elected for another year in office. Our Press Liaison Officer, Terry Wright, resigned at the meeting, and I wish to pay tribute to the work he has done in this role over the last five years.

Ringling at practice and for service is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, although the picture is very varied throughout the Branch. There are pockets of growth such as Nassington, where the ringers under Hilary Hardie's leadership are growing both in developing their skills, and numbers learning the ancient art. Nassington has also helped establish an active band at Wittering, where they are now ringing for Sunday service. Five of the Wittering band were elected at the AGM, along with five other new ringers, so numbers are definitely on the rise.

Some towers have amalgamated some of their practice nights; St. Mary's in Peterborough and Glinton being such an example. Warmington is another tower that is attracting ringers and with the help of experienced ringers are extending their repertoire of methods. Interestingly, during the times when we were unable to ring tower bells, they decided to ring handbells. This was a significant challenge to some but the ability to meet up on a regular basis was one reason why we didn't lose anyone. Warmington is possibly the only tower in the branch that practices on handbells as well as tower bells.

However, there have been losses, as Bulwick no longer hold a practice, and that was a tower where you could regularly go to ring Surprise Minor. There is now no such practice within the Branch. Some towers such as King's Cliffe have yet to restart but are confident in starting in the future.

The Castor Ringing School goes from strength to strength, with a large number of enthusiastic learners turning up each Saturday morning, being taught by a group of dedicated teachers, many of whom are graduates of the School. It was a great



Julian Burton receives his First Peal certificate

privilege to be invited to present a First Peal Certificate last Saturday to Julian Burton, rang at Thornhaugh, conducted by David Banks. This peal was exactly fifty years to the day when David himself rang his first peal.

The Branch is looking forward to hosting the Guild AGM in June and welcoming ringers from all the other Branches in the Guild.

RUTLAND BRANCH

There is no doubt that ringing in Rutland has been affected by Covid over the last months. Ringing is taking place, with as much Sunday, funeral and wedding ringing as the clear guidance allow. However, there seem to be fewer ringers available to ring for those special occasions.

On the brighter side we have learners at Lyddington, Preston and Whissendine and teaching is taking place, thanks to the tireless work of Alan Ellis and other tower captains and volunteers.

There are more learners from Gretton. The church of St James the Great, with a ring of 5 bells, is one of two towers in Northamptonshire that are in the Rutland Branch, the other being Harringworth. With the incentive of several weddings booked for the year 2022 in the benefice, and Tower Captain Sally Watts being the only bellringer, a recruitment drive seemed an urgent requirement. Sally liaised with the Guild and organised an open tower event to coincide with a coffee morning and gift day happening in the church one Saturday morning in October. Several Rutland ringers were in attendance, and with the Guild "Flying Squad" in support, demonstrations of ringing were provided and those interested were able to have their first go at handling a bell. The event was a huge success, far exceeding all expectations with nine individuals expressing an interest in taking it further and learning how to ring.

The Gretton recruits, along with two more from Ayston, a church conservation managed church within the Uppingham Benefice, are receiving training at the Uppingham tower, which is equipped with a simulator. Brian Newman is leading the training with Cathy Dixon, Guild PRO, and Guild President, Alistair Donaldson both giving their time to help. 2022 will see many of these recruits becoming competent ringers.

After so many enforced postponements and changes of plan, in October 2021 the Preston bells were eventually rung in celebration of the extensive refurbishments and remedial work that was carried out during the summer months of 2020. The organisers of the project were finally able to greet

members of the village and Rutland bellringers to enjoy the sound of the bells. Alan Ellis organised the ringing and managed to accommodate all 15 ringers at some stage during the morning.

Thanks to modern technology it was possible for everyone to view the bells in motion while they were being rung. With only a smart phone up in the tower, communicating with a laptop on the ground floor, the images were projected onto a large screen for everyone to enjoy. Later in the morning, the ringing was suspended, to hear the C14th Sanctus bell chimed from the ringing chamber. A quiet sound, best heard outside the church, but we all wondered at the parishioners that this bell had summoned through the ages.



The Sanctus Bell
Church St Peter & St Paul Preston
c 1400 foundry of John Barber, Salisbury

On a Saturday morning in December, we held a Plain Bob training event at Uppingham, led by Guild Ringing Master Simon Dixon and Public Relations Officer, Cathy Dixon, and supported by other Guild Officers. The morning was a combination of theory and rope time, with lots of ringing practice supported by very experienced ringers. We had eight “students” with ten “helpers”, which included four Rutland ringers; Peggy Jennings, Ann Archer, Brian Newman & Thomas Saunders. Each student could say what they wished to ring and gain from the session. With a very competent band around them and a helper standing by for advice if needed, goals were achieved. It was a very constructive, friendly, beneficial morning enjoyed by all.



We in the Rutland branch have received much help and support from the Guild ‘Flying Squad’ in recent months and are very appreciative of this. We offer our thanks especially to Simon and Cathy Dixon and to Alistair Donaldson for giving of their time to visit us and assist where they can.

Sue Webster

TOWCESTER BRANCH

Since our last newsletter we've had the dreaded Omicron variant to deal with and ringers have returned to yet again wearing masks whilst ringing, with steamed up glasses creating a hazard for some, and also vigorously keeping hands clean with the use of anti-bacterial gel.

Many people from our branch participated in the Cornwall Tour in Autumn 2021 brilliantly organised by Nigel Williams who has supplied the excellent piece for the newsletter below, sadly I was unable to participate as I had had knee replacement surgery at the end of September. (Gutted, as was my husband, the Branch Ringing master turned nurse! Not too sure who was most upset.)

Cornwall Ringing Tour - Autumn 2021

This ringing tour was originally organised for the first weekend of 2020, however Covid19 put paid to that. By the spring of 2021 things looked a little more promising with an increasingly vaccinated populace giving many hope that a good traditional ringing tour could take place again. One by one, tower secretaries felt confident enough to give permission for their bells to be rung by visitors as general ringing steadily restarted in the Summer of 2021.

20 or so ringers travelled to Cornwall from Pattishall, Greens Norton, Towcester, Bedford, Wells, Buckingham, and Shepton Beauchamp to meet for lunch at the Lanivet Arms where we entertained the pub with courses of PB Minor and Major, rung by Ann and Andrew Spencer, Lesley Knipe and Jonathan King. Ringing at the lovely ground floor 13 cwt eight at Lanivet



Cambridge Surprise Maximus at Truro Cathedral

opened with Stedman Triples, followed by Cambridge Major, Grandsire, call changes and 4 spliced S Major. We then drove to Truro, to the newly refurbished eight at Kenwyn, to ring Bristol Surprise Major, Cornwall Surprise Major, Little Bob Major, a first of plain hunt on seven and Grandsire Triples for Geoff White. A short drive from the Kenwyn suburb brought us to Truro city centre and a

welcome coffee break whilst Evensong was taking place in the cathedral. At the cathedral we opened with a bob course of Grandsire Caters, followed by a touch of Grandsire cinquies conducted by Barbara King. Many of our less experienced ringers rung rounds and call changes on 10 and 12 bells for the first time. The bells are a little challenging to ring with a long draught and vaulted roof affecting the audibility, however work is in progress by the local ringers and Taylors to improve the handling and sound levels in the ringing chamber and this on-going project is proving to be effective. We then rang a course of Little Bob Maximus, followed by more rounds on twelve and finished with a half course of Cambridge Surprise Maximus.

Many of us celebrated our very satisfactory first afternoon of ringing at The Old Ale House conveniently positioned close to the cathedral. Most folk then made their way back to check into the Merchants Manor in Falmouth.

Saturday called for an early breakfast. Most of the towers were in the western district and the first was at Paul, a 14 cwt 6 at 9:30am. A 50-minute drive from Falmouth, the small village sits on the hillside and overlooks Mousehole and Mounts Bay. A short drive back into St Mary's church, Penzance, having to fight through the driving rain and winds. The 23 cwt Taylor eight were rung up in peal, only 7 bells sounded until we got a fair way up when, finally, the sixth spoke. The bells had not been rung since the first lockdown back in January 2020 and required a little extra effort to get the best from them. 5 Spliced Surprise Major (Y,C,L,S,R) and justice was done to this magnificent ring.

Penzance served as a good limber-up for Buryan. We were lucky to get permission to ring the heavy ring at Saint Buriana, the heaviest six in the world, although those at Queen Camel would argue to the contrary with the claim that their bells are still the heaviest six; collectively. Regardless of your view on this, Saint Buriana was well worth the visit. The church, the immaculate ringing chamber, the grand sound they made was inspiring. Rounds, call changes, Grandsire, Stedman and a course of Cambridge Surprise Minor were rung with a good



Nigel adding weight to Margaret's pull-off

degree of accuracy. Margaret demonstrated that you don't need lots of weight and muscle to comfortably manage a 37cwt bell.

On to The Logan Rock Inn for a cosy lunch at this traditional Cornish granite-built pub with our own room and log fire, a welcome refuse away from the raging wind and rain.

Refreshed after lunch, onto the 12 cwt 8 at Gulval followed the final tower of the day, the 9 cwt 10 at Carbis Bay. A lockout! A quick call to Roger the key holder, an octogenarian who had fallen asleep, well that happens. A short while later Roger and his wife arrive blaming one another for the faux pas. A strange ringing chamber, no peal boards, notice board, etc. various boxes and a ladder had to be moved to make a circle to ring. We were offered ear plugs as they are loud. No one took up the offer -



The Gulval treble rope

Strange that? I counted 10 ropes and spotted we were short of a tail end on the treble! "That's fine you can ring that from a box", Rogers' wife exclaimed. That's what we did, ringing the treble with 3 feet of rope under the sally was interesting and certainly a first for all. Despite this we managed to ring a touch of Grandsire Caters and some Cambridge S Royal.

We all sat down for dinner at the salubrious Royal Cornwall Yacht club in Falmouth in our own dining room.



On the morning of Sunday (3rd October) yesterday's bad weather had given way to a reasonable autumn day in Cornwall. Another early breakfast and a drive over to the Lizard, lots of Cornish

lanes with many friendly granite walls and kerb stones just waiting to pounce upon an unsuspecting alloy wheel!

Our first ring was at St Anthony-in-Meneage, at the south-eastern end of the Helford estuary, starting at 9am. I had been given a tip that this ring of eight was special and often missed by visiting bands, probably as they are off the beaten track. These in my humble opinion are one of the finest eights at their weight (12 cwt), they reminded me of Llanfeugan in Powys. The six had been recently augmented and it took two attempts to get the additional trebles to fit sonically, the first two new trebles were scrapped, and a different founder employed to cast new ones. Just goes to show it is worthwhile pushing for perfection and not settling for second best! Our ringing was lifted and inspired by these bells with a touch of Stedman Triples, 5 Spliced S Major and a course of Cornwall Surprise Major. Congratulations to Michael Cash and the locals on creating a magnificent ring of eight, we will be back one day soon!

The next church was Manaccan, a 7 cwt six, where we were ringing for Sunday Service. Unfortunately, one of the cars headed directly to Constantine, our next tower.

A course of Norwich Surprise Minor was added to our normal 6 bell repertoire at Manaccan, then on to Constantine, another very nice six where we found the missing car and occupants!



Carbis Bay

Constantine church offers an eating and drinking area with hot drinks available via a machine, payments and donations were collected on trust via a swipe of your phone or card. Forward thinking which should be adopted at other churches. Lunch at the remote Trengilly Wartha Inn at Nancenoy, known as the real 'centre of the universe' by locals. The Trengilly served up a lovely lunch helped down by a selection of quality ales and wines. Some spare time was allotted in the afternoon to discover some of the many delightful things offered by the Helford and Budock Vean including Trebah and Glendurgan Gardens. The final ring of the day was at Mawnan, there was an option to take a walk along the Helford estuary for those that wanted to work off their lunch. The 3 cwt ring

of six at Mawnan was enjoyed by all. Afterwards a quarter peal of Cambridge was rung:

St Mawnan (3-1-23 in E)

1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor in 35 minutes

Treble Leslie E Perry

2 Barbara A King

3 Beverley Perry

4 Andrew Spencer

5 Christopher E Bulleid

Tenor G Nigel Williams (c)

After the quarter we enjoyed a traditional Cornish cream tea at Rosemary Cottage.

Monday morning offered a lie-in with breakfast at 8am and the first tower, St Budocus at Budock Water at 9.30. 144 Stedman Triples and 8 spliced Surprise Major were successfully and



The peal band Treble to Tenor (L to R)

accurately rung by the then depleted band. On to another lovely six at St Piran, Perrenarworthal and finally to the eight at All Hallows, Saint Kea, where we rounded up our tour with Little Bob Major, a touch of Stedman Triples and Cornwall Surprise Major.

Lunch was enjoyed at the picturesque Heron Inn at Malpas on the upper reaches of the River Fal and a couple of miles from Truro.

Thanks to everyone that took part and helped make this special tour one that will be remembered by many, not least because of the quality of the Cornish bells. It's very tempting to consider a return to Cornwall, there are many more gems to uncover!

Nigel Williams

On the 27th November 2021 a quarter peal of 1260 Grandsire Triples was rung for the Towcester Branch Dinner Day by Paul Bestwick, Alan Faiers, Margaret Bulleid, Nigel Williams, Jonathan King, Chris Bulleid, Barbara King and Jonathan Stuart on the lovely but very cold Easton Neston eight in the afternoon.

After much discussion as a Branch, we decided to go ahead with our annual dinner which we had sadly had to postpone last year, due to Covid, with Richard Yates remarking it was the first time in 57 years that it had had to be postponed!

Our thanks go to Celia Stanworth for kindly supplying the article about the dinner below.



58th Annual Christmas Dinner

On 27th November 2021, 33 members of the branch met for the 58th Annual Christmas dinner at the Boat Inn in Stoke Bruerne. A fabulous starter was served, with lots of jealous looks across the table as people eyed up their neighbours' plates.



When the mains arrived, there was some swapping of vegetables, before everyone tucked in with the enthusiasm to be expected from a bunch of hungry string-pullers.

Desserts arrived and were eaten surprisingly quickly for people who had already munched on two good-sized courses.

Drinks were refreshed throughout the evening by the staff, and the ringers leaned back to enjoy the speeches. They were of excellent quality. The

Archdeacon of Northampton, Richard Ormston, regaled us with some stories of his ministry, and a superb grace penned by his own fair hand before we ate:

*For bells and clappers, ropes and stays
For practice nights and ringing days
For long-term ringers, rookies too
For laughs among the tower crew
For Christmas celebration time
For tempting food, for warming wine
We thank you Lord for all these joys
So bless these ringing girls and boys
Amen*



Other guest speakers Richard Stanworth and Annie Wood both did a fine job of speaking and toasting. There was the traditional handbell touch, rung with aplomb, and a raffle raising £144.90 for the Pattishall Bell project (although this amount may not be hugely accurate as I think we counted the money 4 times and got different amounts each time...but it was late in the evening!)

A great time was had by all, and a huge congratulations to the Boat Inn for keeping us fed and watered, and running a Covid-secure evening (well, you didn't think I was going to get to the end without mentioning it did you!?!)



We received a lovely email from the Archdeacon after the event in which he said 'Thank you for inviting me to a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

Great company, plenty of laughter and a tribute to the warmth and dedication of our wonderful bellringers. The handbell ringing was stunningly good.'

Celia Stanworth

Various towers in the branch rang the bells throughout December and especially on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Bells were also rung on New Year's Eve with ringers feeling optimistic that 2022 will hopefully be a better year! Many people commented about how good it was to hear the bells again ... including non-bell ringers!

Tower news

Ashton & Roade

Ringers from Ashton and Roade towers are making great progress with assistance from a band of volunteers organised by Chris Bulleid. Until recently our progress had been slow as we are all inexperienced, but we are now attempting Plain Hunt and hope to ring this at both towers for the Queen's June Jubilee celebrations with a completely home-grown band. In the meantime, we will ring Queens for Her Majesty's accession to the Throne on February 6th.

Marion Wilson

Ringling Recovery

The Ringing Recovery initiative in the Towcester Branch is continuing and has mainly focused on three towers: Blisworth, Roade and Ashton. Each band had responded positively to the Return to Ringing events held at their towers in June and July 2021, and had welcomed the offer of additional support from the Branch at their weekly practices. A request for helpers was sent out by Chris, our 'Recovery Champion', and fourteen experienced ringers volunteered to join a helpers' rota. Since the beginning of November, two or three experienced ringers have joined each of the Wednesday practices at Blisworth and at Roade/Ashton. This has given the local ringers the opportunity to build their confidence, to brush up on bell control skills and for some to try plain hunt, Plain Bob or Grandsire with a solid band around them. The support has been much appreciated by the local ringers and many new friendships have been made.

In addition, Saturday morning practices at Cold Higham resumed in October. These friendly practices focus on developing foundation skills and we welcome early-stage ringers from across the Branch. Bell handling training continues at Pattishall where three new recruits are currently 'Learning the Ropes.'

Margaret Bulleid

Holy Cross, Pattishall

The project to rehang and augment the bells at Pattishall is underway, thanks in part to the generous grant from the Guild Bell Fund. The order has been placed and we expect Nicholson's Engineering to be on site to remove the bells and frame in July. The profiles and sound signatures of the existing bells will be carefully measured and used in the design and tuning of the new bells, to ensure that they are a perfect match to the existing 1908 Gillett & Johnston bells. The new frame is to be installed in October and the bells hung for ringing again in November. The site work will be assisted by local labour and if anyone is interested in helping out, please get in touch with chris@bulleid.co.uk. This is an excellent opportunity for those with an interest in bell installation and maintenance to gain some experience.

Jill Cook

WELLINGBOROUGH BRANCH

Irchester

Not much news from Irchester this time. I expect most of the branch know that our practice night has been changed from Fridays to Thursdays 6:30 until 7:45pm.

Orlingbury

Our only news of any interest is first quarter peal at first attempt by Cathy Samtani and Steve Smith both of Orlingbury. Ringing at Orlingbury has returned to normal.

Ecton

Ringing has restarted at Ecton, practises have returned at 7:30 on Wednesdays

Wollaston

St Mary's Wollaston rang for our outdoor Carols & Christingle on Christmas Eve and also rang for Christmas Day. Up until last year, the ringers have traditionally rung in the New Year so it was great to be able to do that again this year. We rang the bells from 11.40pm until 12.15am with John Beresford pulling a very slow 12 on the tenor bell, followed by all the other 5 bells joining in with fast rounds. We then welcomed the New Year with a few bottles of bubbly and a potato from Harry – it makes a change from a lump of coal. (Ask Harry Curtis about that !!)

Planned work to replace ropes 1, 2, 3 and 4 has had to be put on hold due to John's accident. Once John is fully recovered, we hope to pursue this work in late spring.

We have now welcomed more learners to our tower, with Jack, Julie and Thomas becoming quite accomplished, and Mel learning how to ring rounds. Ben and Roger are new starters but show great promise. We welcomed Jack into Wellingborough Branch as a Guild member at our AGM in January.



I am very grateful to Kate, Enya, Janet, John, Harry and Martin for their support to the Tower over this last year.

Great Doddington

Unfortunately, no practises at the moment, except by arrangement. A peal attempt is scheduled in April by Paul Mason and friends.

Bozeat

Bozeat weekly practices (Thurs 7.30 – 9.00pm) & Sunday service ringing (8.45 - 9.15am) are now back in full swing with recent learners beginning to make helpful contribution to the Sunday service ringing. Since lockdown restriction eased, we have reinstated tied-bell practices and have three learners who have now progressed to basic handling level and are starting to repay their training with attendance at practice and on Sundays. Visitors always welcome on practice nights and Sundays!

Easton Maudit

Ringling at Easton Maudit has been regular through most of lockdown as the ringing area is open to the church and there is plenty of natural ventilation! We rang every Sunday for morning and evening services right up until regular services resumed at Bozeat again. We now ring at Easton Maudit for every evensong (3rd and 5th Sundays: 5:30-6pm) and for occasional special services. Visitors for Sunday evensong ringing are welcome to join us.

Earls Barton

Here at Earls Barton we, at long last and thanks to Janet and John, recently rang all 8 of our bells. Perhaps not the best struck Plain Hunt on 8 but it was at least struck and to most of us it sounded great after so long ringing 2/4/6/8 or other permutations of same. The repairs to the beam between the 5th and 6th were completed last year and thanks to the Branch for the donation towards the cost. Two of my pre-Covid beginners seem to have disappeared without trace but I have gained a very keen young man who has just started to learn to ring with us.

Thomas Coulter-Brophy

Puzzle Solution (see P7)

w	a	l	k
t	a	l	k
t	a	l	e
s	a	l	e
s	o	l	e
r	o	l	e
r	o	s	e
d	o	s	e
d	o	s	h

100 Club

It was a huge relief to be able to resume the monthly draws in September 2021 after all the COVID restrictions. All paid up monies were rolled forward, and with the introduction of email reminders and online banking payments, we haven't been too badly affected. The recent winners are:

MONTH	Subscribers	1 st	Prize	2 nd	Prize	3 rd	Prize
Sept 2021	172	94To	£56.76	104W	£20.64	144P	£13.76
Oct 2021	172	34N	£56.76	146P	£20.64	61K	£13.76
Nov 2021	169	170K	£55.77	16G	£20.28	76To	£13.52
Dec 2021	168	51G	£55.44	123G	£20.16	160K	£13.44

Look out on the Guild website and Facebook page for details of monthly winners. My thanks go to all the Branch representatives who have helped recruit new members, collect subs and pass on information.

Cathy Dixon (100_club@pdg.org.uk)

Second Saturday Sessions

Does your ringing need a boost? Are you looking for a step up, or is the step you are on just a little crumbly? Help is at hand!

As part of a new initiative to maximise the use of expertise across the Guild, events will be happening on the **Second Saturday** of each month. This will include the ongoing 10-bell sessions, focussed practices on method ringing, and courses on wider aspects of ringing such as running a practice, tower maintenance etc.

To make them more effective, the number of students on each course will be limited, but popular courses will be repeated across the Guild. Each student will be asked to pay a small donation of £2 which will go towards the tower being used.

Please let Simon Dixon (master@pdg.org.uk) know of suggestions for content for these sessions, which will be advertised on the Guild website (www.pdg.org.uk) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/PDGCBR>) and details sent out to Branch Ringing Masters and local Tower Correspondents.

The Ringing World

The article on page 14 “Getting back to ringing at Desborough” was previously published in The Ringing World, the bellringers' magazine, which contains many interesting articles as well as valuable advice on ringing, training, recruitment, safety, maintenance and all manner of issues associated with the Exercise. It needs your support as an individual or as a tower.

There are many options, in addition to regular print subscriptions:-

People can download one-off **electronic issues** for £1.90 (bb.ringingworld.co.uk/issues.php) if they want to try.

Donations are welcome to help with a covid deficit (<https://www.ringingworld.co.uk/donate.html>).

2022 Calendars and diaries are now available to order from the shop (shop.ringingworld.co.uk) and lots more products coming).

Tower Subscriptions have just been launched, so ringers can share online access for about £20 a head (<https://www.ringingworld.co.uk/images/pdf/RW5756TowerSubsArticle.pdf>)

GUILD EVENTS 2021 - 2022

Please watch out for announcements about future Guild Events, broadcast through the usual channels, including the Guild website www.pdg.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/PDGCBR.

April 23rd, 2022

KETTERING BRANCH - Spring Meeting and Tower 6-bell Striking Contest

14:00 – 15:30 Stoke Albany, open ringing

15:00 Wilbarston, 6 Bell Contest, followed by open ringing, tea & meeting

19:30 Brampton Ash, evening ringing

May 14th, 2022

Location tbc - Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30

June 11th, 2022

THRAPSTON - Surprise Major Practice 10:00

PETERBOROUGH BRANCH - Annual General Meeting

14:00 Peterborough St Mary's

14:30 Peterborough Cathedral

15:30 Peterborough St John's

16:00 Service, tea & meeting, followed by evening ringing

July 9th, 2022

Location tbc - Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30

September 10th, 2022

Location tbc - Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30

September 24th, 2022

RUTLAND BRANCH - Summer Festival and Inter-branch 8 bell Striking Contest

15:30 – 16:40 Belton in Rutland, open ringing

16:00 Uppingham, Ringing Contest and tea, followed by open ringing

18:00 Uppingham, meeting

19:30 Lyddington, open ringing

November 12th, 2022

Location tbc - Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30