

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



Newsletter
April 2024

Guild Officers 2023-24

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Newsletter News

We are already a quarter the way through the Guild's centenary year, and this Newsletter will be distributed at the Spring Festival, the fourth event of the year. It includes reports of the previous three: January's Centenary Evensong, the Barn Dance, and the Nene Valley Challenge. You will also find details of other upcoming PDG100 events, and merchandise to celebrate the Guild's longevity.

Many thanks, as always, to all the branch correspondents and Guild officers who make these newsletters possible. Please keep sending in your stories.

Following changes to the distribution list for the last newsletters, we have had feedback asking for towers to be added or removed. Let us know of any further changes needed.

A reminder that, if you'd like to share copies of the Newsletter with any non-ringing members, this can easily be done by directing them to the relevant part of the Guild website (pdg.org.uk/latest-news/newsletters) or downloading a copy and emailing it to them. If a hard copy is preferred, one can be delivered in person (or posted), on request to me, the PRO or the Secretary for a small fee.

If you want any additional copies for members in your branch, please let me know, so that I can ensure enough copies are printed.

Please send any comments, complaints or contributions for future editions to me at newsletter@pdg.org.uk.

Jonathan Stuart

Contents

Guild Officers' Contact Details	2
Newsletter News	2
President's Preamble	4
The Secretary Celebrates	4
From the Bellboard Footnotes	5
Master's Musings	9
PRO's Prompting	9
Treasurer's Titbits	10
PDG100 Events Jan - Mar	13
ART Module 1 Course, Rothwell	15
BBC: Bells ring out in Wellingborough	16
Ringling for the Bishop's Enthronement	18
National 12 Bell Contest Eliminator	19
Young Ringers Striking Competition	20
Cold Ashby Rope Guides	21
To Kneel Before the King	22
Obituaries	22
News from the Branches	24
100 Club Report	43
Guild Future Events Calendar	44

President's Preamble

It was really good to see so many of you at the splendid Moulton Community Centre for the Guild Barn Dance on 10th February for the 2nd Event of our Centenary year. I really enjoyed myself dancing to the band, Kelly's Eye, trying to remember if one Do-si-dos with left or right shoulder first.... Luckily there were some experts on hand to guide me about the floor.

We had an excellent and filling Ploughman's supper at half time to boost our energies for round two, and a couple of those Centenary Birthday Cakes, looking strangely like the ones I helped the Bishop and our Secretary cut back in January at Peterborough.

Speaking of which, I thought the packed Cathedral Evensong at Peterborough went very well. I enjoyed singing the hymns, and the glorious closing voluntary (Carillon de Westminster by Louis Vierne) was played with verve by the organist to send us over to the Transept for tea. And more cake – dare I mention CAKE again?

I was pleased to support the Nene Valley Challenge on Saturday 9th March, signing several Challenge Cards at the conclusion of some good ringing at Wadenhoe, and then presenting certificates to all the intrepid ringers who had signed up for the day. The two groups finally gathered to ring on the lovely 8 at Thrapston, followed by a soup plus bread'n'cheese lunch - and then I somewhat inexpertly cut two by now rather familiar looking Centenary CAKEs. I even tried (successfully?) to avoid mentioning Neeen or Nen all day...

Thank you to all who worked so hard to make these first three Centenary events so successful. I am really looking forward to seeing many of you at Guilsborough Branch for the Spring Festival – perhaps with more Cake? Will we award the new Centenary Trophy to the top call change band? I hope so.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the band of Guild members who on 9th February rang a Peal of 5,056 changes of Plain Bob Major at Desborough to mark the exact centenary of the very first Peal rung there for the Guild, in 1924, using the same composition.

Alistair Donaldson

The Secretary celebrates.

By the time you read this, we will have held 4 events in the 100th anniversary year. That's one third of the way through and we've not had a disaster yet – I'll take that as a win! The range of events that you can read about from the first part of the year are replicated in the upcoming months. In the next 4 months, we have an Open Day, the AGM, a publicity day and a picnic. I am also pleased to tell you that Bishop Debbie has accepted our invitation to speak at the dinner to be held on **Saturday 12th October** at Kettering Park Spa & Hotel. Time to dust off your posh togs. Also, a chance to find out how different your ringing colleagues look when they're dressed up! Who will you not recognise?

At the Spring Meeting, a new trophy will be awarded to the best call changes band. This trophy, known as the Centenary Trophy, is to encourage those bands that would ring call changes for wedding or service ringing, occasions when they wanted to produce their best ringing. Call changes are hard to ring well. Concentrating and taking time to ring them well is to be rewarded.

June sees our AGM. Arrangements are a little in flux at present, with Northampton's decision to hold the town carnival on the same day as our AGM throwing our plans into disarray. We are regrouping and aim to let you have details shortly.

At the AGM we elect the Guild's officers. New officers are always welcome. Specifically, this year we need a new PRO to take that role from Cathy Dixon (who has been working too hard for quite some time) and we are looking for a new Report Editor to take over from Jim & Gwynneth White. They are planning to produce the 2024 report next year but want to hand the task on after that. It would make sense for them to work with a new editor in the production of the that report, before the new post holder(s) take it on for themselves in 2025. If you have an eye for detail and can collate information from multiple sources, get in touch. Job descriptions are available on the Guild's website. <https://pdg.org.uk/homepage/officers>.

From the Bellboard Footnotes

(1st January – 31st March 2024)

First quarters

Fiona Barclay (Dallington)
Daniel Counsell (Desborough)
Kaiden McCreath (Daventry)

First as Cover

Elaine Greatrex (Dallington)

First Inside

Charlotte Brierley (Harpole)

First Doubles

Andrew North (Green's Norton)

First Minor

Helen Camps (Arthingworth)

First on 8

Caroline Blackwell (Easton Neston)
Ann Archer (Uppingham)

First Major

Ian Bell (Uppingham)
Deborah Bray (Peterborough St Mary)



Carole, Justin, Shirley, Ian, Geoff, Kaiden, Alison and Richard (Kaiden's 1st qtr)

First Major inside

Jane Robinson (Castor)

Ian Larter (Peterborough St Mary)

First Treble Bob Major

Anthea Hiams (Woodford)

First of Major as Conductor

Thomas Saunders (Uppingham)

First on 12 in tower

Gwynneth White (Peterborough Cathedral)

First peal of triples

Thomas Saunders (Peterborough St Mary)

Tower Milestones

Pattishall rang their first quarter on their augmented 8 (12th March).

Cold Ashby rang their first quarter with their new rope guides (15th March)

The peal at Grafton Underwood (29th March) marked 100 years since the bells were installed. The first peal was rung on 15th March 1924.

The date touch at Fotheringhay (date touch 1st January) is believed to be the longest ringing on the bells since they were refurbished over 30 years ago.



Pattishall, 1st Quarter since augmentation

Incumbents

Revd Kris Seward has been appointed to the Wymarsley benefice, taking up his position in March. There was ringing at his current and future towers.

Yelvertoft (quarter 26th February) wished a fond farewell to Revd Kris Seward and Karen leaving to become Rector of the Wymarsley Benefice.

Brafield-on-the-green (peal 16th January) and Cogenhoe (not a peal 23rd March) welcomed him to his new parish.

Revd Greg Roberts was welcomed to the Tove Benefice with quarters on his licensing and first service.

Green's Norton (quarter 29th January), Easton Neston (quarter 3rd February) and Pattishall (quarter 12th March), welcoming Revd Marion & Paul Reynolds on their return to the Amelcote Benefice.

Birthday compliments

Birthdays where the number of turns around the sun was not disclosed include Dave Carling (peal Kelmash, 27th March), Diana Street (quarter Peterborough St Mary, 25th January), Sylvia Upex (quarter Peterborough St Mary 11th February), Cathleen Wilkinson (quarter Peterborough St Mary, 7th January), James Thorpe (peal Peterborough St Mary 24th January), Richard Allton (peal Haselbech, 3rd February).

Janet Burton had a special but undisclosed birthday (quarter Castor 7th January) With brownie points for husband Julian on not ringing!

Gillian Christie's 60th birthday was marked (quarter Peterborough St Mary 10th March).

Sue Marsden marked her 65th birthday by ringing (peal Cotterstock, 12th March).

Robert Wood celebrated his 70th birthday with an acrostic peal (peal Great Brington 22nd January)



Robert Waller (centre) and his 100th Birthday band

Pattishall resident Robert Waller's 100th birthday was celebrated (quarter Pattishall, 20th February), and Arthur Gillet was 105 years old (quarter Cold Ashby 13th January).

People

Bob Dennis celebrated the 60th anniversary of his first peal with a peal at Higham Ferrers on 11th February. The anniversary included two of the original band (peal Higham Ferrers 11th February).

The Mayor of Wellingborough, Valerie Anslow, is a ringer at All Hallows. A quarter was rung following the Civic Service at this church, in appreciation of her work. (quarter Wellingborough, 4th February).



Alan, Bob, Anthony, Richard. 60yrs since Bob's 1st Peal

Centenary of the Guild

It would be challenging to list all the towers that have rung for the centenary of the Guild. So far, there has been ringing at 51 different towers that has been linked to the Centenary event on Bellboard. Some performances to highlight:

The Peterborough St Mary's ringers kicked off the year, claiming first quarters for the centenary at St Mary's, Fotheringhay & Woodston on 1st January, and on 5th January, the date the Guild was founded, there was a peal of 5100 Stedman Caters at Rothwell, for which there is now a lovely peal board.



Peterborough St Mary Ladies Band

There were quarters at Castor & Peterborough St Mary's on the same date. A quarter at Cogenhoe marked the peal rung there for the 50th anniversary, and remembering Dorothy Stopps, who rang in that peal and was Tower Captain for many years.

An all-ladies band rang a quarter at Peterborough St Mary on 25th January.

On 9th February a peal was rung at Desborough, to mark the 100th anniversary of the first peal, rung to the same method and composition. The peal band took a photograph in front of the peal board, and there is a picture of the original peal band with the same peal board.

In addition, some suitable named methods have been rung to celebrate the anniversary. Century Little Bob Triples was rung at Peterborough St Mary on 14th January, Centenarian Delight Royal at Rothwell on 2nd February, and Centenary Treble Place Minor at Yelvertoft on 2nd February.

100 of Bastow Little Bob Major has also been rung, this is within the scope of



Desborough 100th Anniversary of first peal

bands able to ring little bob – other ideas for minor and higher numbers are on the website.

Helen Allton

Master's Musings

Guild Training for 2024

In the last edition of the newsletter, we reported on all the training which took place during 2023, mainly on the second Saturday of each month. This year will be a lot quieter on this front, because both time and energy are being spent on the extra events to celebrate the centenary of the PDG.

We have held two 10-bell practices: the usual morning slot for the practice in January, which was well attended, but an evening practice in March (following the Nene Valley Challenge event in the morning) only attracted just enough to ring ten bells. We'll have to see if the change to a different Saturday in the month also deters people – 29th June rather than 8th June.

In terms of training courses, we have run another of the very popular “Ringing Up and Down in Peal” session and we still have a waiting list!

Although we might not be able to put on so many courses this year, we are open to suggestions for next year, either a repeat of any of the courses we have already run, or new ideas....

Simon Dixon (master@pdg.org.uk)

PRO's Prompting

PDG100 - Guild Centenary 1924-2024

The January 2024 edition of the newsletter gave a complete list of all the events planned to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the PDGCBR. The first three of these have now taken place – see the following pages for reports on these.

There was also a list of the items of merchandise on sale. Whilst we are now not actively selling the calendars, the other goods will be on sale at each monthly event this year or by contacting centenary@pdg.org.uk.

The other aspect of our centenary celebrations is, of course, ringing! The peal ringers hope to visit at least 100 different churches, ring a peal in every branch of the method sharing a name with that branch, and mark the key milestones with peals. So far, they are doing very well!

And there are targets for the non-peal ringers, too.



We would like all the churches in the Guild to have a piece of ringing specially arranged to mark the centenary – this could be a quarter or eighth peal or a course of a special method (Century Little Bob Triples and Centenary Treble Place Minor have been rung for example) or a touch with an appropriate number of changes (see the Guild website for ideas <https://pdg.org.uk/pdg-100/centenary-touches>).

During the year, it is hoped that there will be at least 100 “firsts” – pieces of ringing that mark a definite achievement for a ringer, whether this is an extended piece of ringing or attending Sunday Service ringing for the first time.

To help us to collate and acknowledge all these achievements an event has been set up on BellBoard – please add your contributions.

Cathy Dixon

Treasurer's Titbits

Fund Raising with NO effort – is it possible?

Over the last 12 months Secretary Helen and I have been trialling the “Give as you live” fund raising option that has been on the PDG website for over 12 months. I wanted to ensure that there were no visible downsides to using the process. It is NOT ONLY for online shopping as you will see at the end of this article.

The online shopping process is simple. The Give as you Live organisation have partnered with over 4000 retailers, offering to direct large groups of potential customers towards their websites. For this redirection, the retailers are willing to pay away a bit of their marketing budget to charities. I nominated the Peterborough Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers (Charity 258271) when I set up my account on www.giveasyoulive.com. I have been able to raise a fixed £17.50 from Saga for transferring my car policy and regularly achieve between 0.5% and 4.5% of my expenditures on online shopping. There was a scheme with Amazon which delivered 0.5% of all expenditure but which closed, and these guys have filled the void. You can nominate any REGISTERED charity on your account, but only one. I hope that you would consider the PDGCBR.

There is an additional reminder that you can pull down from the website which reminds you, if you go to a participating website, that there is a “Give as you live” option and it moves you over to their portal to make the payment. You will be reminded to pull in the extension as you set up your account.

There is no difference in the structure or look and feel of the websites that you buy from, but the credits will eventually go through to your nominated charity's bank account.

I cannot lie, there is frustration with the administration because the payment only comes after the following stages:

1. A change in behaviour needs to have happened, so although I received the big £17.50 for my first Saga Car policy, I did not get it as a returning customer.

2. The partner retailer needs to confirm that this is the only incentive that you are getting from the sale.
3. The retailer needs to confirm that you have paid the money for the transaction.
4. The retailer needs to have paid Give as you Live after receipt.
5. Give as you Live wait until at least £30 is accumulated in credits before it pays over the funds.

It was so difficult for me as the Charity Treasurer and an accountant to stop myself from checking the process to see if the £17.50 had got through. And it took nearly 9 months for it all to happen, but we have received our first £30 now. If we can get more than two people signed up, then we should have success.

An additional gain is that, if you use the button on our donations section on our website at pdg.org.uk/homepage/content-2/donations we will get additional credit from Give as you Live when you donate your first £7.50 through your purchases.

If you are anti online shopping, there is a new grocery card that I am going to investigate and trial to see if it has merit. It offers a small credit each week when you do your weekly shop at the supermarket. I do not yet know if it replaces any of those many points that you get for cashback, but I will report. If anyone wants to investigate further use this link <https://instore.giveasyoulive.com/charity/peterborough-diocesan-guild-of-church-bell-ringers/258271/0>.

Hopefully you will consider either of the options above for online shopping or grocery shopping. I will report on the Grocery shopping option when I have tried. Please give me any feedback on either option if you take them.

Chris FitzGerald, Guild Treasurer

PDG100 Choral Evensong

[With Thanksgiving for the Centenary of the Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers](#)

In 1924, what would they have thought of a gadget that instantly guides you step by step all the way from Badby near the source of the River Nene to St Mary's Church in Peterborough? After 1991, what would they have thought of St Mary's design and its modern, tuneful, eight bells that they would have found on getting there?

2023 left us with a deluge of wet weather, but the Guild's centenary year of 2024 soon turned to dry and cold. My



gadget said I could walk the 53.8 miles to St Mary's in 19 hours and 44 minutes and it would be 7 minutes quicker to miss it out and go straight to the Cathedral. But it didn't take us on the Nene Way and didn't tell us whether we would have to wade through any floods! We voted for diesel, lest the cold weather reduce the electric's range too far, and took the 1 hour 13 minute route via the A45 to the lightly filled Wellington Street car park. Our journey brought us down 551 feet nearer to sea level from the



*Guild Evensong overshadowed by Mars
(artist Luke Jerram)*

Northamptonshire highlands. Taking comfort in the patience of the Guild Steward in making the well-worn parking ticket machine work, it eventually coughed up a ticket for us.

Visiting St Mary's, after many years of not having done so, was my highlight of the day. It was fascinating to find a set of solo colour sallies on the top landing and a vast warm waiting room to be greeted, sorted, and invited to ring efficiently by Andrew Christie. For some reason it took me a few changes to get used to the tenor, the black sally, being in the centre of the far row!

We strolled down the cold empty streets to hear the constantly changing sound of multiple bells bouncing around the buildings until we entered the West Front green as the last few changes of Cambridge S Maximus came round and the bells stood. All part of the well-choreographed arrangements to suit this start of the centenary celebrations. Thanks to Richard Allton for conducting and congratulations to our Gwynneth for ringing her first quarter on 12 tower bells.

My mind went a bit fuzzy as I thought to myself that the welcoming duet outside the West Front look remarkably like the Secretary and President, but of the Coventry Guild – then I focussed and

We strolled down the cold empty



Cutting the famous PDG100 Cakes

recalled that neighbouring guilds had been invited to come along and join us.

Having got past the burly security chap, it was reassuring to see the PDG100 logo on the Choral Evensong service booklet. We recognised more faces in the 100 or so nave congregation.

I have fond, but probably faulty, memories of an intimate squash in the Choir (Quire?) at Bristol Cathedral for choral evensong, which shows how little I remember of Peterborough, but we do have six Anglican cathedrals nearer to us.

For all of 2024 so far, I have had a completely blocked right ear which caused me even more difficulty than usual in hearing what was going on. Standing by a loudspeaker, I couldn't hear the Canon in Residence, but then realised I had the text in the booklet in front of me! For a choral evensong we were blessed in having three hymns that we knew and could belt out, but even that seemed lost in the vastness of the cathedral's space – or was it my ears? I am sure that friendly Bishop John gave a good sermon and even pulled the microphone right up to his mouth, but I must rely on others to tell you about it.

With the service and processions complete, the organist played Carillon de Westminster by Louis Vierne, with the well-known quarter chimes emerging slowly through the foreground of urgent tinkling bits. We ambled around to the South Transept which had been laid out by the Peterborough Branch to provide us with refreshments while we chatted. I was too mean to buy enough parking time, so missed the cutting of the splendid PDG100 cakes. With the onset of the evening gloom, we set off to climb the 551 feet back up to Badby.

Geoff Pullin, Badby, Daventry.

PDG100 Barn Dance

A damp evening at the splendid Moulton Community Centre saw 80 ringers, family and friends enjoying a raucous barn dance led by local band, Kelly's Eye. There was no hanging back as dancers do-si-do'd and stripped the willow. For those welcoming the opportunity to chat or take a quieter approach to the evening, a second room was available for board games. The well supported raffle contributed to the event, along with the opportunity to purchase centenary merchandise for those who wished to.

The dancing and board games were paused for an excellent ploughman's supper followed by celebratory cake, the Guild Secretary's promise of birthday cake at every event holding



Let them eat (more) cake!

true. The Nene Valley ale flowed freely, and the well-lubricated dancers reminisced about the last Guild barn dance, in 1998. The conclusion being that greater frequency would be welcome.

A great evening all round and the second PDG100 event completed.

Sarah Bence, Rothwell.



Nene Valley Challenge

On 9th March, a group of intrepid new bell ringers took on the Nene Valley challenge. Each participant had set themselves a personal challenge to ring at four different towers within the Nene Valley. There were a good mix of challenges including ringing rounds, call changes, Plain Hunt and more. Of course, this would not have been possible without the help and support of some brave and dedicated experienced ringers to help us learners, and do the all-important task of signing off our cards as we completed our challenges at each tower.

The day started with an early morning registration at Thrapston, before heading to St John's Church in Cranford for the first challenge. This being the first tower, we were all excited and ready to go. The bells were lighter and vastly different to what most of us were used to, so this was a big learning curve in bell control. All managed to complete their respective challenge and got the all-important first signature on the challenge cards.

We then moved onto St James, Grafton Underwood, a very pretty church with a beautiful stained-glass window commemorating the men of the United States Air Force who were stationed at a nearby airbase and lost their lives in WWII (it's well worth a visit). This was another church with different bells, lighter again and another learning opportunity for all the challengees. Everyone got several attempts at their respective challenges, and all got their cards signed.

Church number three was St Nicholas in Twywell, another lovely church with some interesting carvings and history. We all completed our challenges and were appreciating how much of a challenge the day was, and how it was helping our ringing skills. We were all beginning to set our sights on returning to St James in Thrapston for our final ring of the day. There was a lot of nervous excitement at the prospect of ringing on eight bells, with some in our group having to ring Plain Hunt on seven for the first time as their challenge. Our two groups came together at Thrapston, and the ringing challenges were organised with precision to make sure everyone got a chance to ring and get their final signature, which also meant we could relax and begin to breathe again.

After the ringing, we were treated to a lovely lunch and cake. Most importantly though, was the awarding of certificates to all the challengees for completing their challenges. A fantastic day was had by all, new ringers' confidence increased, and we all felt like we had learned a lot in one day. We all appreciated the opportunity to ring at several towers and to have the opportunity to significantly improve our skills. The helpers were very patient and did an exceptional job of calming nerves and helping with our ringing, we really cannot thank them enough for helping us achieve our respective goals.

A lovely and challenging day was had by all, and we are very much looking forward to next year and another Nene Valley Challenge.

Hannah Conlon

Organiser's note - a separate route took another set of "challengees" north from Thrapston to Wadenhoe, Aldwincle and Islip before returning to Thrapston. So, in all 17 received certificates after lunch - well done to all of them!

ART Module 1 Course at Rothwell, 30th March 2024

Ten ringers, seven of them locals from the Peterborough Guild, gathered on Holy Saturday (between Good Friday and Easter Day) to be trained as Bell Handling Trainers (Train the Trainers) by Nick Brett from nearby Rugby. We set up around a convenient table at the back of the lovely spacious church. Thanks to Murray Coleman for allowing us to ring. Rothwell has a good spacious rope circle upstairs in the ringing chamber too, allowing the students to work in pairs without catching each other's ropes. All was going well until a local choir arrived to practice for a concert in church the next Saturday.... They sang very well, but they drowned out poor Nick's presentations.

Most of the students had done some teaching before, but said that they had learnt a lot from the day. Amongst comments I heard was that they liked the very "structured" approach, including the Logbooks. These were felt to be useful to both record past successes and point the way forward. Other comments were that the "shadowing" technique was new and would be used again where appropriate, but most useful was the explanation of common faults and how best to correct them.

Many had never seen the extent of whole-part-whole breakdown before – and were sure to use that again. It was felt that the smaller steps would be most effective. I will certainly be using more of the “practice with bell down, then raise” method.

A final comment was that these courses were very necessary, boosting both teaching skills and confidence. Indeed, there should be more of them! I hope all ART “graduates” will spread the worth of these courses to those they ring with, especially those who they think would benefit from attending. I am very happy to arrange another Module 1 (Handling) course, and I have already had requests to arrange both a Module 2C course (Rounds to Plain Hunt) and a Module 2F (Rounds to Methods) later in the year. This I am very happy to do if the demand is there – we need 8-10 students to be able to put these courses on.

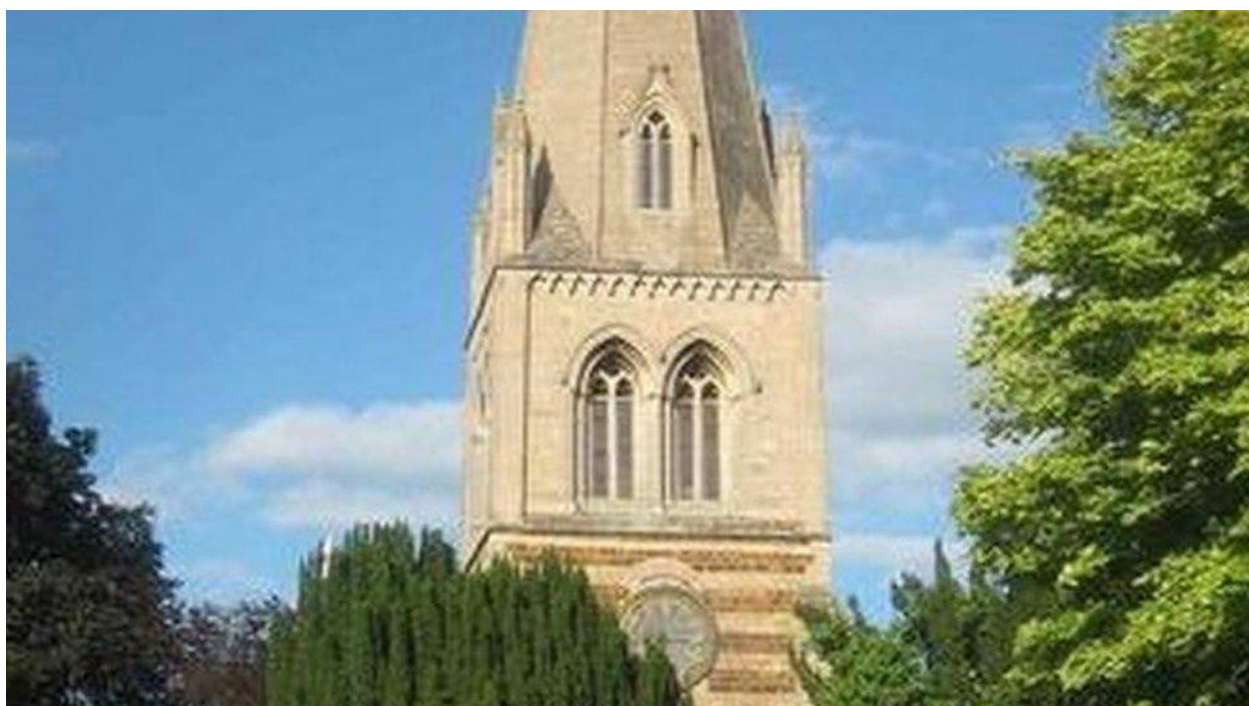
So please do contact me as soon as possible to let me know if you are interested – see <https://events.bellringing.org/en/courses-for-teachers> for more details of these courses.

Alistair Donaldson
president@pdg.org.uk

BBC: Bells ring out in Wellingborough for 100th anniversary

By Martin Heath, BBC News, Northamptonshire, 8th January 2024

The 100th anniversary of the Peterborough Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers was marked with a full peal at All Hallow's Church, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire. The specially written full peal involved eight people and took about three-and-a-half hours to complete.



The tower at All Hallow's Church (Anthony Edwards)

The Guild held its inaugural meeting at the Granville Hotel in Wellingborough on 5th January 1924. The guild covers churches across the diocese of Peterborough, including Northamptonshire as well as Rutland and the area around Peterborough.



A team of eight rang the full peal at All Hallows, Wellingborough (Anthony Edwards)

The bells at All Hallows were rung in a series of 5,100 sequences in a peal specially composed for the occasion by one of the ringers, Richard Allton.

There has been no regular ringing at the church since the Covid lockdowns and Bob Addie, a churchwarden at All Hallows, enjoyed hearing the bells again.

"It was really 'wow, this is good, this is what it is all about'," he said. "Now, we need to grow on that [by] encouraging people to learn to ring."



Image Source: Martin Heath/BBC

Churches have been suffering [a shortage of ringers](#) in recent years, with some sharing their team with neighbouring places of worship and some sets of bells falling silent.

Cathy Dixon, from the guild, said: "We've got about 900 members currently who are spread across our area, which includes about 250 different sets of bells.

"We haven't got enough ringers and it does take years to train up to be at the standard to ring peals like the group did in Wellingborough." A recruitment campaign to find enough new ringers to allow bells to be rung across the country to mark the King's coronation [attracted around 2,000 recruits](#), but it is not known how many have stayed on.

The guild has celebrated its anniversary in other ways, including the launch of centenary clothing and the production of a commemorative jigsaw showing many of the churches in the diocese.

A commemorative 1000-piece jigsaw showing churches in the diocese was produced for the anniversary.



Image source: Martin Heath/BBC

[[Link to original BBC article](#)]

Ringling for the Bishop's enthronement.

We were very pleased to welcome the new Bishop of Peterborough on Sunday 3rd March. There had been several dates pencilled in the diary that the Cathedral had asked us to keep in mind to ring for the Enthronement service. As it turned out, the date that was finally chosen wasn't one of these and we already had a visiting band booked to ring for Evensong on the 3rd March. However, we are a flexible group and so it was decided that we would ring our quarter peal to welcome Bishop Debbie following the Installation service. This resulted in the service being topped and tailed with some lovely ringing and made bells a significant part of the musical element of the day.

The visiting ringers happened to be the Birmingham band practising for the national 12 bell striking competition and so the gathering congregation were treated to some fabulous Cambridge Max as they waited for the service to begin. It was quite a wait, with guests being required to be in their seats an hour before the service started. Considering the service itself was 90 minutes long, it was a marathon effort, and the one member of our quarter peal band who had been invited to the service said she welcomed the 130-step climb up the tower after the service, as it was nice to stretch her legs!

The Cathedral band rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Caters following the service, and we hope it finished off the day's events in an appropriately grand style as people began their journeys home. The Cathedral Company of Bellringers extends a very warm welcome to

Bishop Debbie and we would be delighted to see her in the ringing chamber should she care to join us one day.

Helena Thorpe, Ringing Master

A message from Bishop Debbie

I was delighted to be installed as Bishop of Peterborough on Sunday 3rd March and enjoyed the wonderful sounds of bells that greeted me. My last role was as Bishop of Southampton and whilst I bring experience from there, I am aware that there is much to learn in a new context. I am enjoying getting out and about, meeting people and exploring the wonderful communities of the diocese. I am married to Paul, who teaches Physics at Surrey University, where he spends three days a week, working from home on the other days. We have two adult sons who are both married, and we love spending time together as a family. I look forward to getting to know you and am grateful for your ministry which enhances our worship and presence in so many places.



Bishop Debbie (credit Rachel Barnes)

Debbie †

National 12 Bell Contest Eliminator

On Saturday 23rd March 2024, Towcester entered the National 12-Bell Striking Contest eliminator at Reading.

Due to illness and injury in the band, regular practice beforehand had been difficult. However, we did manage two dedicated practices at Towcester in the week before the main event.

We set off with a very a very positive mindset, even though we knew we were up against Birmingham, ASCY and Guildford to name a few. Three of us in the band had never rung in a 12 bell competition, so nerves for some were taut, to say the least.

On arrival, bacon and/or egg rolls were available and copious amounts of tea/coffee and homemade cakes were for sale.

To our relief, Towcester drew fourth place in the draw, which enabled some ringers to head off for a bit of retail therapy or others to go to the pub just for a chat and a soft drink only. No alcohol, as yet, to blunt the senses!

At 13.15, we made our way up to the belfry and, after a short practice, dedicated ourselves to ringing the test piece to the best of our ability on, to many of us, unknown bells.

Huge sighs of relief and spontaneous hugging at the end, the like of which had never been seen before! We were pleased with our efforts and eagerly headed up to the pub for a well-deserved pint!

As expected, Birmingham, ASCY and Guildford went through to the final contest. Congratulations to them. We were pipped to the 4th place post by Norwich who had a 2% lead on us. So, 5th (nearly 4th!) out of 8 was considered by us all as a good achievement and many were satisfied with that.

Thank you to Reading for the catering and organising arrangements. Hosting an event like this is no mean feat.

Quality 12 bell ringing, good company, food and drink makes a very successful day out.

Jayne M Horne

Young Ringers Striking Competition

Saturday 9 March 2024

We arrived at Oaks in Charnwood at 1pm to register and get our time slot for ringing. Our Peterborough Diocese Group were picked for a 4.20pm ringing slot. This worked out perfectly as it meant we would have time to visit the bell foundry. So, we all decided to head off in the cars and head to Taylors & Co bell foundry at Loughborough. Just in time to meet Justin and Theresa who then joined us at 2pm.

The 12 (very light) bells were rung up and we soon jumped in to ring rounds and call changes. Grace arrived with us at 3pm. Then all 6 of our group joined in to ring rounds and call changes on 12. What an experience!

Then it was back to Oaks in Charnwood, ready for our slot in the competition. We headed up to the tower for our practice and got the feel of the bells. After a slight issue with realising I needed a box to hold my backstroke up, it was soon time for us to begin the competition. Matthew was our



(l to r) Flynn Spires, Zack Pope, Niamh Montgomery, Matthew Allcott, Freya Bartlett, Grace Allcott

conductor, and he called Queens in to Kings, back to Queens and then back to rounds. This took us about 10 minutes, roughly 234 changes.

Then it was back to the village hall afterwards ready for the results, ahead of tea.

We were very happy with the results and to hear that we had got 3rd place out of 5 places for the rounds and call change ringing groups. The feedback from the judges was for us to think about doing a method next time! High praise, as we had only started practising as a group three weeks before and three of our group have only been ringing for six months. We all agreed we are looking forward to the next competition that we can take part in!

Freya Bartlett

Cold Ashby Rope Guides

I am pleased to report that, in my professional capacity, I have now completed the installation of rope guides at St Denys church in Cold Ashby. The handling of these bells is now much improved. The bells are very light and therefore naturally flighty. Also, the rope circle is quite small, and the ceiling is a little higher than is desirable, so the new rope guides simulate a lower ceiling, and everyone should find the bells much easier to handle.

This installation is not as conventional as most. The small ringing room also houses a full-size staircase, which is the access to the upstairs pews. In order that the staircase could be accommodated amongst the ropes, it was designed so that the tenor ringer stands on the bottom step, which is probably



around 3 feet square. The tenor ringer therefore stands about 8 inches higher than the other ringers, so the tenor rope is also set higher. With this in mind, I decided to put a step in the rope guide frame so that the tenor rope boss is also higher. Whilst the design of this is unusual, it works very well. The step in the guide frame can be seen in the photos, one with all the bells set at backstroke.

Paul Mason

To Kneel Before the King

As the reigning monarch is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, it seems fitting to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III by way of a church kneeler.

Such a kneeler has been presented to St Andrew's Church, Cotterstock. It is designed by Jacksons of Hebdon Bridge with all materials being purchased and donated by a generous lady, a former ringer, and sewn by myself.

The top panel depicts the coronation regalia of crown, sceptres and orb above a scroll with the text "King Charles III May 6 2023". Our constituent countries are depicted as the English rose, Welsh leek, Scottish thistle and Northern Ireland shamrock, one on each of the side panels. It is sewn in pure wool tapestry yarn with 10 stitches to the inch in 22 colours, giving depth and complexity to the design. It took in excess of 100 hours to complete.



The community of Cotterstock is proud of its church bells, which were refurbished and augmented to six in 2016, and are rung for services and other events including the 2019 six-bell striking competition. The bells also serve as the war memorial for the village, with each being tolled as the names of the fallen are read out. Villagers regularly express their gratitude to the ringers for their services to St Andrew's church.

The kneeler was presented in memory of all those who have rung for royal occasions, events, and services over the centuries.

Angela Whiteway, Ringer, Warmington Benefice

Obituaries

Chris Klein-Wassink (13 Dec 1933 – 24 Jan 2024) (Culworth Br.)

We first met Chris in the early 90s when she and her husband moved to Helmdon. A need for a plumber the day they moved in meant a visit from Barry (Bash) Saunders. They got chatting, as Chris so often did, and discovered a mutual interest in bell ringing. Chris learned in Oxford, in her teens, and this is where she did most of her ringing, with a short spell in Yorkshire while at college. She was a 12-bell ringer, organising away trips for the

band each year. Sadly, all her ringing records were lost overboard during her move to Spain, where she lived for some years.

Within days of her conversation with Bash, she came to Whitfield to meet us and demonstrate that she could indeed handle a bell, happily sharing a session with a couple of teenage boys. She quickly became a regular member of our group. (Helmdon at that time didn't have a band.) It took her a little while to get used to 5 and 6 bell ringing instead of larger numbers, but we soon came to depend on her to help keep us right, and extend our repertoire. She joined us on day outings and, after her husband died, on away trips of several days. She was always good company, with plenty of chat and leg pulling. She enjoyed a glass or two of red wine and often seemed to be the one who provided it. Her other "vice", smoking, she considerably kept to herself. The trips were full of fun and sometimes resulted in a silly poem about the events we shared.



When Helmdon's ringing chamber moved upstairs, Chris played a major part in helping train a new band, having substantially helped with the funding for the improvement to the tower. However, she continued to support ringing in Whitfield, and the "après bells" at our house.

Sadly, her health was beginning to fail over more recent years. She had several falls and suffered a broken hip, and later pelvis. She never healed well or quickly and didn't ring again after the Covid lockdown. She hoped to come and stand behind people, even if she could no longer handle a rope, but had become too frail.

She was funny, generous, and is sadly missed. It was pleasing to see that the bulk of the congregation at her cremation were ringers.

RIP Chris. We will try to achieve the good striking that you cared about so much.

Ian & Sara Chapple

Mary Poyner (Rutland Br.)

Mary died on Friday 26th January. She was a life-long bellringer and taught many new ringers and rang many peals. During the lockdowns of the covid pandemic she and her husband, Harry, rang several quarter peals on hand bells, in the garden of their home in Whissendine.

She was proud to have rung for the Coronation of two Monarch's, Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, and in 2023 for the Coronation of King Charles III. On the latter occasion, she chimed the three clock bells sited in their garden, recalling events of 70 years previous.

Sue Webster

Alison Milner (Daventry Br.)

Alison Milner learned to ring at Braunston in 2008 and rang for several years. She was a member of the branch from 2009 till 2022. She died on 15th January after a long vigorous fight with cancer.

The bells heralded her funeral at Braunston on 16th February. The start was delayed because so many of her dog-walking friends were gathered on Borough Hill Daventry for a drive past. Such were the numbers and groups of people who she had touched, that some 200 gathered in the church. A large choir of Braunston Singers filled the back of the church.



Alison Milner in 2010

Our narrow boat member, Sue with Cassi, was at the funeral and is still very slowly sailing her way towards Braunston – but is not sure when she will arrive.

News from the Branches

Culworth Branch

The branch year started off on 20th January with the ringing, service, tea and AGM hosted by Helmdon church. Visitors joined in with our ringing practice.

Our new rector in the Astwell benefice, Rev Hugh White, led the service and Jenny Howse played the organ. Hugh talked about the subconscious contribution ringers made to the church and commented on the fact that a lot of ringers were 'ring and run'.

We were joined by Simon Dixon from the Guild. At the meeting Chris Skermer resigned as secretary and Andrew North (Syresham) was duly elected as new secretary.

Ian Chapple resigned as Ringing Master, this position remains empty.

New members were elected at Kings Sutton, Brackley, Charwelton, Marston St Lawrence, Greatworth and Eydon.

Congratulations go to Greatworth/Marston St Lawrence, who were awarded the Presidents Cup for their recruitment and training.

In February we had a joint branch practice with the Daventry branch. We joined them for their practice at Byfield and then they joined us for our practice at Woodford Halse

in the evening. We were definitely outnumbered by the Daventry branch, who turned out in force on this occasion.

Culworth Branch Outing, Saturday 16th March 2024 - a tale of six churches

Just two pick-up points this year, due to the local road closures and disruption from the construction of HS2, but an early start from Greatworth in their village minibus, gave us great optimism, as the sun was breaking through and there was a forecast of good weather. After picking up the remainder of the band from Brackley (with Duncan experiencing a 5-mile detour to pick-up!), we headed south towards sunny Middleton Stoney.

All Saints' Church, in the Akeman Benefice (the name taken from the old Roman road which ran through the area), is in the idyllic setting of Middleton Park behind the large black wrought iron gates with a 'Private' sign. I've seen them for decades whilst driving past, always wondering what lay behind. The gates opened automatically, and we meandered down a long single-track drive through the park of the Jersey Estate. About two-thirds of the way down, we met with the others joining our outing, in front of a large towered church with a grassy path, currently undergoing restoration and refurbishment and having a particularly large Commonwealth Graves cemetery in the churchyard. The tower has 6 bells, ground floor ringing, accessible through one of the narrowest doors we'd ever seen! But soon after squeezing through and ringing up, we had several warm-ups of call changes, plain hunt and a touch of Bob Doubles, giving everyone a chance to begin the day with a ring, and finishing with a tight ring-down.

By this time, there was blue sky and sunshine as we headed in good spirits towards St Mary the Virgin church on the edge of the village of Kirtlington, recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086, with the oldest part of the church supporting the central bell tower. Here was an 8 bell first floor ring in a large open ringing chamber, with the earliest three bells cast by Henry III Bagley of Chacombe in 1718, at his foundry at that time in Witney, and the present ring of eight being completed by John Taylor & Co., casting the treble in 1938. A lovely mellow sounding ring, we were soon pounding out call changes,



plain hunt and Grandsire Triples. Ringing on 8 bells was something new for many of us, so we left with a sense of achievement.

A quick 10-minute journey through the beautiful stone-built villages in this area, we were at Bletchington, to St Giles' Church dating from the 13th Century. Having been extended and modernised over the centuries, with a very ornate organ and beautiful stained-glass windows, the church provided us with a modern-looking ground floor ring of 6 bells, with flexible ropes from being in the homemade "rope-warmer". The church lies amongst the buildings of Bletchington Park, with a pretty churchyard spilling with primroses and daffodils. It was noted that a young Christopher Wren lived here at the rectory with his family. A wonderful ring for all our abilities, including a touch of Bob Minor and Cambridge Surprise, leading us towards a happy group picture outside the church and the beckoning of lunch awaiting at The Chequers, Weston-on-the-Green.

After a hearty lunch, well-earned drink and convivial chatter, we had to drag our thoughts back to the reason for our outing! But not far to go, as we were visiting St Mary's Church at the centre of Weston-on-the-Green for our next stop. All but the 13th century bell tower had been rebuilt in the mid-1700s by the Bertie family who lived in Weston Manor, resulting in a characteristic box-like Georgian church with plain round-arched windows, but with no east window. The plain wall is dominated by an altarpiece of the Ten Commandments. The current six bells replaced the original three in 1870, cast by Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel, and we were by now becoming more confident with our ringing and methods, with smiles and positive comments all round.

Our next stop was Islip, where Edward the Confessor was born in 1004, and St Nicholas' Church, which stood imposingly on a prominent bank. The first-floor whitewashed ringing chamber was accessed by a small outer door at the base of the tower, with a long steep spiral staircase to the 8 bells, the oldest of which is the Sanctus dating from 1652. The current ring was completed in 1956 and re-fitted and re-hung by Whites of Appleton in 1908 and again in 1993. We launched ourselves into more call-changes, plain hunt and Grandsire and another tight ring-down, so we were surprised that we were then heading towards our final tower - the day had gone so quickly! This was at another St Mary's Church, but at Charlton-on-Otmoor, which towers over the surrounding cottages and can be seen from some way off because of the flat landscape. The church dates from around 1200 and by 1553 the bell tower had five bells. All were recast or rehung over the years, with the last new treble bell being cast at Whitechapel in 1998. Access to the rather musty ringing chamber on the first floor was by a near-vertical ladder but, that aside, we all managed scale it to ring our final methods and call changes with confidence and pride.

As we clambered aboard the minibus to come home, we were just beginning to feel the first spots of the forecast rain. We all agreed it had been a fantastic day out and, for some, the beginning of ringing at many more towers. Huge thanks go to Dave who ably chauffeured us from church to church, navigating some distinctly awkward accesses (and

even managing to have a ring himself!). Also, to Ian and Sara for organising a comprehensive, very enjoyable day of ringing, not that far from home.

Outing report Jenny Griffith

Branch correspondent Joy Kirkham

Daventry Branch

Branch AGM

Daventry ringing chamber was soon up to temperature on the cold third Saturday afternoon in January, with the heating on for one-to-one training sessions from 2.30pm. Ringing on 8 and 10 bells took us up to service time. 26 rang, including two regular visitors, and another seven were making teas or came straight to the tea and meeting.

The curate, Revd Lesley Tomalin, who lives in Creaton and is on secondment to Daventry for urban experience, was tasked with our service. Two hymns were accompanied by Martin Heath at the organ.

Daventry 'Ring for the King' members, Liz Heath, Janice and Jeremy Barker, volunteered to provide tea which they did with aplomb and were included in the vote of thanks proposed by Freya and carried with acclamation.

The AGM got underway at 6.17pm with Chris FitzGerald, the Guild Treasurer attending to keep an eye on us.

Brian Foley was, unfortunately, not well enough to attend but sent in his final report as Branch Steward. George Wrycroft from Napton, a member from 2015, volunteered and was elected as Brian's replacement.

Alison Willgress agreed to remain as our GMC representative on the understanding that she and Ian were looking to move to West Wales, but it didn't look very imminent. Leanne stood down to reduce committee numbers and so that Ian's contributions to the committee could still be captured until he moves.

It took three minutes to elect new members: Anne Prestwick (Nether Heyford), Stan Richardson and Florrie King (Byfield), Susan Rose (Badby) and Flynn Spires, Zack Pope and Jack Pope (Daventry). All but Susan and Florrie rang with us during the day.

The annual all day car outing was scheduled for May. Carole suggested there were a lot of towers around Birmingham and Warwickshire that we haven't visited, and the committee was left to pull the details together for Alison B.

Alison W suggested that the committee consider some "bells & whistles" to add to our hosting of the Guild's Summer Festival at Byfield on 14th September in celebration of PDG100, perhaps including something for our non-ringing family members to join in.

BRM Justin Baker asked us to challenge ourselves to complete some new targets during this centenary year. He also mentioned a SWOT analysis to see how tower and benefice

bands are progressing. His most recent challenge ended up with us training lots of learners!

Chris FitzGerald advised that the Guild will be sending out a message about the affiliation scheme to all PCCs in April, and asked us to try to persuade our PCC that it is a worthy cause. Proceedings ended with us singing 'Happy Birthday' to Ian Willgress (and to Dorothy FitzGerald, Anne Ford and Val Hartley, who for some extraordinary reasons were celebrating elsewhere!)

By the time we got back to the tower at 7.30pm, there were 17 left to ring. Well done the lads from Daventry who stayed to the end and turned up early for ringing on Sunday morning.

Outings

Oh how warm Byfield Church was, and how welcoming, on a drizzly February afternoon! The joint meeting with the Culworth Branch (CB) started in good time. Justin sorted through 23 ringers (4 CB + 19 DB) allowing for some short ropes and the one box. Six more were church-bound, organising the tea etc. There were plenty of rounds, call changes and Plain and Grandsire Triples, with an excursion into Stedman. The eight bells were



Cosy at Byworth

lowered in peal in time for the Guild service, taken for the first time by the Revd Greg Shaw (an Associate Priest who lives in Badby and I didn't recognise him!). He had been well-briefed and met a mutual target of completing the service within 30 minutes so as to get to the food, despite it being Lent. We had three hymns accompanied by Meriel Gardner on the Clavinova, and we remembered the recent deaths of Alison Milner (Braunston) and Christine Klein-Wassink (Helmdon).

Hot soups were available with a fine array of sandwiches and cakes. A vote of thanks was proposed by Lisa Kingston.

We were at Woodford Halse in good time, despite parking difficulty and more heavy rain. Ian Chapple organised the ringing, with intermittent exchange of those waiting downstairs with those upstairs. Twenty (6 CB + 15 DB) rang. The bells were rung down by 8pm.

In March we had a good gathering in yet another nice and warm church, this time Bugbrooke. Justin got 31 to ring, including visitors from three other branches and there were two who didn't. There was a good representation of recent learners from six towers, getting used to the heavy slow-turning five-bell ring. The Guild Secretary was

encouraged to ring in the service touch, but her Stedman was cut short by the top end of the treble rope making a sudden unplanned appearance on the ringing chamber floor. We felt a bit smug that Gwynneth was ringing it at the time! Our service was taken in 25 minutes by vicar Revd Nic Edwards, with three hymns accompanied by Martin Heath at the organ. This was his first service with us and, having also been well briefed, he talked us through Psalm 118 without a mention of bells. Then followed a fine tea at the back of the church. A new servery, tables and chairs have replaced the back pews. Liz Heath proposed the vote of thanks, including those who had rallied around to help Gwynneth while Jim White recovers from his successful hernia operation a week before.

I made an unexpected “belfry grab” by climbing the heritage ladders to recover the top end of the broken rope from the treble knowing that Jim is unable to get there for a while.

At Kislingbury, 21 rang, including a visitor from Bromyard. Sandra had a ring, and we were pleased to ring with her recent recruit, Rachel. Our new steward made an appearance, only to be advised several times that he had been needed earlier at Bugbrooke!

Ringling (not mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter)

Congratulations to Hannah Baker (Whilton) who rang her first quarter peal inside to triples (Plain Bob) on 11th December at Fallowfield with the Manchester University Guild.

The start of PDG100 was marked by a quarter peal of Plain Bob Major by branch members at Weedon on 4 January, conducted by Ian Willgress. Ian also rang his first peal for 7 years at Rothwell on 5th January, celebrating PDG100 with 5,100 of Stedman Caters, conducted by Bob Dennis.

Congratulations to Helen Camps for ringing her first quarter of Yorkshire S Major – at Woodford conducted by Simon Dixon on 1st February. She also rang the treble with COOTS to Bourne Surprise Minor, being her first of minor! Not to mention four quarters on Lundy Island in March.

People

We were sorry to hear that the Revd Stephen French died on 6th December at Wolverhampton. Stephen retired after 16 years as the Rector of Bugbrooke, Harpole, Kislingbury, and Rothersthorpe in 2022. During that time, he led at least one of our branch meeting services each year. They were always in his dressed-down, characteristic style with his own service sheets, sometimes with a new-to-us ringers’ hymn.

Greg Taylor, who was learning to ring at Preston Capes before returning to Australia when his visa expired, sent his best Christmas wishes. He added that it was so hot that his cousin from Leicester nearly expired!

Mick Pardoe, who also had been a Braunston ringer, died and his funeral was held there on 20th March. Mick (1 Jan 1930 – 20 Feb 2024) was elected a member of Daventry Branch in 1996 and remained a member until 2002.

Ed Mortimer, a former narrow boat member and now in Alberta, Canada has set up a change ringing group. He is using handbells that are normally used by the handbell tune choir. He is hoping to come over this year and asks that if we hear of an octave set of hand bells for sale, he is interested.

A memorial service was held for Margaret Waddy at St Lawrence's, Long Buckby on Saturday 13 April. Afterwards her and Richard's ashes were interred together in the churchyard.

Geoff Pullin

Guilsborough Branch

The AGM took place in person on the 6th of January at Guilsborough. Soup, scones and tea and cake were enjoyed by all. There were significant changes to the branch officers.

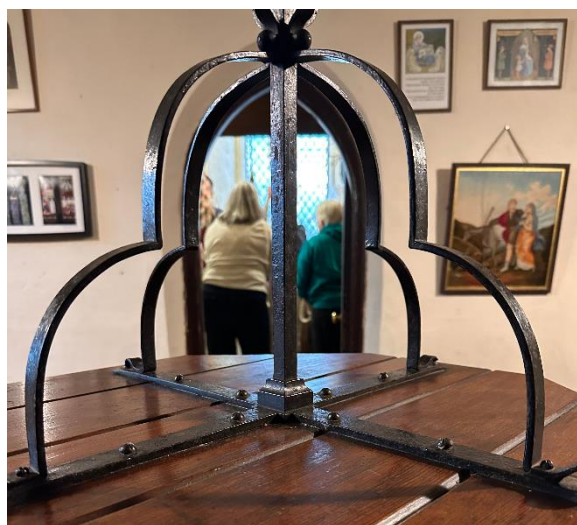


An excellent spread at the AGM

Fiona Barclay takes over from Elaine Greatrex as Chair (and also remains as Press Correspondent), Elaine has taken the position of Secretary (and is also covering the position of Treasurer) and Anthea Hiams is now Deputy Ringing Master. Other positions were unchanged, and we welcome new committee member James Glover.

Branch practices were held at East Haddon, Cold Ashby and Guilsborough.

Fiona Barclay



Ringing at Cold Ashby

Kettering Branch

Kettering Branch AGM

This year, our Annual General Meeting was held at Desborough St. Giles on Saturday 20th January, the church having featured on the front cover of the Ringing World. That edition included details of the tower and the challenges faced in returning to ringing after the Covid pandemic, due to the restricted space and access to the ringing chamber and limited ventilation.

With a very good attendance, we faced challenges in keeping the ringing going with the limited space in the ringing chamber and restricted access by a short ladder through a trapdoor. Members of the branch committee worked to get bands together ready to ring, when the previous piece of ringing finished. Ringing ranged from rounds and call changes to Stedman Triples and Yorkshire Surprise Major.

The ringers' service was led by the Revd Hannah Jeffrey, the incumbent, who shared her understanding of and previous experience as a ringer. She included a reading from John Betjeman's "Summoned by Bells". Once again, we were helped by Richard Bimson, son of our Steward, Andy Bimson, who travelled from the Loughborough area to play the organ for us.

The ringers' tea took on a new slant, with a variety of soups and a roll to start, followed by a selection of hot puddings with a choice of custard, cream, or ice cream. Our thanks in particular go to Liz Adcock, wife of Bill Adcock, for heading the kitchen team, and to all the Desborough ringers and supporters for their hard work and contributions to make this a successful meeting.

The Ringing World of 6th January featured a history of the Guild and, before the meeting commenced, we tried to replicate the photograph taken at the Kettering Branch AGM during the 50th anniversary year, which was captured alongside the tower at Rushton, All Saints with some 45 members present. On this occasion our photographer Simon Pearce captured those present in the Desborough Community Hall.



*Christian Harford (Stoke Albany)
1st Qtr Certificate*



*Jessica Cosby and Jessica Pearce receiving
1st Quarter Certificates from Jane Marsh*

50-year awards and first Peal certificates were awarded.

The AGM followed, the existing officers were re-elected, with the addition of a Deputy Ringing Master, to which Bill Adcock was elected, to provide cover should the Ringing Master be unavailable. Andy Bimson, Branch Steward,



Kettering Branch members celebrating the Guild Golden Jubilee (1974)



Kettering Branch AGM Desborough (2024)

indicated his wish to vacate the role the following year and a Deputy, Christian Harford, was elected to facilitate a smooth continuation of the excellent work being undertaken by Andy. We were joined by the Guild President, Alistair Donaldson and PRO, Cathy Dixon. Alistair spoke about the progress, or lack of, with the Old Black Lion/St. Peter's project in Northampton and Cathy gave a recap on the start of the Guild Centenary celebrations and outlined the programme for the rest of the year.

Ringling Meeting 17th February 2024

Our first Branch Ringling meeting of the year visited two towers, Warkton St. Edmund and Grafton Underwood St. James.

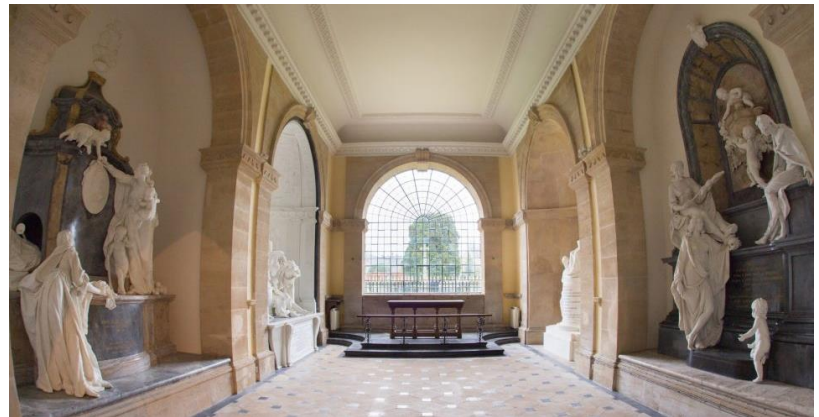
The meeting was very well attended including a lot of the new ringers coming along, in total some 41 ringers and friends. The ringling was led by Chris Pearson, Ringling Master with ringling ranging from rounds & call changes, through Plain Bob & Plain Hunt,

Grandsire Doubles through to the month's nominated methods of St. Simons and Stedman Doubles.

With so many present, a plan was put in place to keep the ringing going throughout the afternoon, lining up the next band to follow straight on when the previous band hung up the ropes. Bill Adcock, Assistant Ringing Master, supported by committee members, organised the ringers.

Drinks were provided by the Warkton Ringers and one of the local team, Michael Moore, gave guided tours of the world class Montagu Monuments in the church, for non-ringers and those waiting to ring. We were joined by Liz Reading and Anthea Hiams from the Guilsborough Branch and Richard Bimson from Wymeswold in Leicestershire.

We Moved on to Grafton Underwood, and the pace of ringing was kept up until a rope broke. Fortunately, the Guild Bell Adviser, Nick Churchman, was on hand and after a short interruption, during which an emergency repair was effected, we were ringing again.



The Montagu Monuments at Warkton, St. Edmund

Non-ringers were able to view stained glass windows in the church, including the window dedicated to the United States Air Force station at the local airfield during WWII, and the more recent works by Thomas Denny.

Nick Watts, Branch secretary kindly provided further refreshments.

Ringing Meeting 16th March 2024

Our next meeting took us to the 8 bell tower of Burton Latimer, St. Mary. The ringing was again led by Chris Pearson, who kept things going with some 24 ringers attending, with visitors from Guilsborough and Rutland Branches. The special methods picked for this occasion were Little Bob Major and, after some uncertainty as to the method name, Bistow Little Bob Triples. There was plenty of opportunity for new ringers to gain experience.

Minimal interference with the ringing was caused by the intermittent sounding of the church security alarm, possibly pigeons on the church roof, and in the absence of the Secretary members of the Branch committee set about mastering the high-tech Quooker hot water tap to serve teas and coffees.



USAAF memorial window, Grafton Underwood

Other News

The funeral of David Laing CBE, who died on 3rd March 2024, was held at Grafton Underwood St. James the Apostle on 15th March. An architect by profession, he served as High Sheriff of Northamptonshire 2010-2011 and subsequently as Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire. The Branch Secretary, Nick Watts, was asked to organise the tolling of a bell before the service and ringing after. Nick tolled the bell before the service and, as suitable muffles were not readily available, he was joined by George Potter, Cathy Samtani, Caroline Mitchell, and James Moore to ring the bells open to celebrate David Laing's life after the service. David Laing had the idea for, and sponsored, the modern stained-glass windows in that church.

Harrington, SS Peter & Paul

A group of Fundraisers, New Ringers, Supporters and Volunteers visited Taylors' Bell Foundry in Loughborough and, as part of the Foundry tour, were able to see the Harrington Bells pristine and ready for re-hanging. The project to re-hanging the bells with necessary supporting works is due to commence on 2nd April for the following 5 weeks.



The Harrington Bells, pristine and awaiting transport

News from the Towers

Isham, St. Peter

36 village children and our Ukrainian family were invited on May 8th 2023 to ring a bell for the King. It was a joy to welcome 15 children who were presented with certificates to mark the occasion. They enthusiastically chimed a bell and many of the parents were encouraged to have a go as well.

As a direct result of this, we now have 3 new learners aged 12 and 13, in the tower. We are delighted to welcome Stanley Norris, Edward Barton and Logan Bradshaw who have made very good progress and already can handle a bell unaided. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cathy Dixon who is teaching the boys, and all the long-suffering residents of Isham who live near the church and have had to endure non-melodious cacophonies on Monday evenings over the past 6 months. The boys have been welcomed into the Diocesan Guild of Bellringers. A great year to join on this 100th Anniversary of the Guild, with all the special events around the diocese that we will be attending and enjoying. The belfry has a new curtain, sporting the new logo, to prevent draught from the tower, and all the ringers have a T-shirt to wear at forthcoming events.

We will be ringing an 1/8 peal on St. Peter's Day for the 100th anniversary, and to celebrate the life of Paul Cockayne we will be ringing one of his favorite methods in the

next few weeks. He has been much missed in the belfry, and for the hours he spent keeping the church clock working well.

Contributed by Margaret Buchanan, Tower Captain

Cransley, St. Andrew

A team has been entered in the Rounds and Call Changes striking competition

Rothwell, Holy Trinity

A team has been entered in the method striking competition at the Spring meeting,

Welland Vally Benefice

The joint Benefice ringers are to enter two teams in the Rounds and Call Changes competition at Guild Spring Meeting at Guilsborough. It has been decided to enter an all-female team and an all-male team to promote healthy competition.

David Dainty

Peterborough Branch

Branch news

At the AGM in January, it was suggested that we should bring together young ringers across the branch. A successful first event was held in February and five young ringers, plus two learners, joined us at St Mary's Peterborough on a Sunday afternoon. It was a good opportunity for these ringers to get to know one another both through ringing and through chatting. Thank you to the teachers and ringing parents for supporting it. As always at a ringing event there was cake. A second event is planned for April at Nassington, and we expect it to then continue every 6 weeks or so.

The regular 8 bell practice at Castor on the first Friday each month is in abeyance for the moment due to lack of support from within the Branch, but other activities and events are planned for the year.

Glington and Maxey

As always, we are indebted to our many non-resident ringers who continue to help us out for special events, as well as stalwart members who regularly arrive for Sunday morning ringing.

As part of the Nine Bridges benefice, Glington has been in interregnum for several months. However, we now have a new incumbent, Revd Keir Dow, formerly curate at Easton on the Hill. The bells of Maxey were rung for his installation and a quarter peal at St. Benedict's, Glington was rung by a band from St. Mary's, Peterborough.

St. Mary's ringers have been joining us on the first Thursday of the month, a visit for which we are always grateful. St. Mary's have also helped by joining us to ring for several events both in Glington and Maxey.

Sadly, Maxey tower is out of commission at the moment, but Maxey ringers regularly attend practice night at Glinton, often service ringing too, and are always very welcome.

The national trend, as commented on in "The Ringing World", is that ringing has serious issues to address in attracting younger ringers. Although most of our ringers are representative of an ageing population, we have been fortunate in having several younger ringers come to Glinton and wishing to continue ringing. With enthusiasm and encouragement from the Branch, we herald the start of a Young Ringers' Group. Watch this space!

We are also fortunate that our tower attracts several visiting bands, which the village always comments on favourably.

Our ringing for Coronation Day was a most joyful occasion, and hopefully this success is to be repeated with a village festival and D-Day celebration in June. We will Ring out for Peace with the nation on June 6th. We look forward with great anticipation to this event.

We meet every Thursday from 7:30pm until 9:00pm. If the lights are on do come on in!

Nassington

The last three months have seen our regular service ringing and busy practices. With a change in service times across the Benefice, we only ring for 3 services a month at Nassington, so ring each month at Thornhaugh, which is appreciated by the village.

Several new learners are now ringing independently and ringing regularly for services. We have been able to present a number of Level 1 LtR certificates. We've also welcomed a returning ringer, who says she is remembering Bob Doubles after a 30-year gap.

We continue with a method of the month, so over the last quarter we have been ringing Grandsire, with a QP of it rung in February, Bastow Little Bob Minor and Little Bob Minor as well as Bob Doubles and Bob Minor.

St Mary's Peterborough

2024 started off with a flurry of quarters and date touches, both at St Mary's and nearby towers.

St Mary's were pleased to host ringing ahead of the Guild Centenary service at the Cathedral, and for the Branch AGM. It is good to have had a year of normality following the pandemic, to help springboard us to the business-as-usual antics and ruses that our ringers were accustomed to prior to lockdown.

Ringers who join us at St Mary's for Thursday evening practices will have noticed that numbers have grown to around twenty. This gives us a happy challenge to fit in a busy schedule, which in turn means it can feel like a full workout session. We endeavour to meet everyone's development needs, including helping two new recruits master their bell handling.

In turn, these skills in mastering new methods are cemented home by ringing a quarter. They are especially beneficial as a concentrated training session and ordinarily would

take weeks to reach. We are a big advocate of ringing quarters, not only to advance your ringing personally but also the health and wellbeing benefits that these additional sessions provide, and a real sense of achievement.

It's taken a while to help grow our core band and in addition to our two new recruits, we also have 4 members mastering Plain Hunting. In recent weeks we have welcomed Steven who has moved to Peterborough and is building on the basics from his previous tower.

Although these efforts are time-consuming, the rewards are heartening in investing in new recruits and band members. We've only been able to build our band back up because of the support from such a great group of ringers. A big thank you to those who pitch up most weeks, and especially the St Kyneburgha ringers. If you welcome a challenge that leads to a quarter or even a peal, you are very welcome to join us.

Similarly, we endeavour to make St Mary's bells available to visiting bands, so drop us a line if you wish to make a booking.

Andrew Christie

Ufford

We have continued to hold a monthly practice at St Andrews on the first Thursday of each month at 10.30. The bells are certainly benefiting from regular use.

On 13th February 2024 in 3h 4m, a 6040 Anniversary Treble Place Minimus was rung at St Andrews by a group of ringers from the Lincoln Diocesan Guild. I am not aware of a previous peal being rung on these bells.

Yarwell

After all the excitement of the new bell arriving and being installed in December, we are back to normal service ringing. In February, the clappers on the existing bells were removed and taken to Loughborough to be overhauled. On their return 3 weeks later, the existing bells were lifted so the main bearings could be cleaned, which completed the project. Since that time, the bells are a delight to ring and we look forward to welcoming more ringers to enjoy them.

Hilary Hardie

Rutland Branch

Quarter Peal Celebration Challenge

In celebration of PDG100, we have commenced a challenge to achieve a Quarter Peal in every Rutland tower by the end of this centenary year. To date, five QP's have been rung, just 29 more towers to go. We are encouraging as many of our new ringers as possible to achieve their "first".

New Ringing Teachers

Uppingham tower hosted an Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) course on 27th January, with interested teachers from Rutland and Shropshire. The teacher was Rebecca

Odames from Leicester. Everyone had a most educational day and went home buzzing with enthusiasm.

Those from Rutland included Thomas Saunders, Brian Newman, Sally Watts, Alan Ellis, Ian Bell, Ted Phillips and Alan Wordie. All are now available to teach the ART way.



Saturday morning teaching at Uppingham will resume after Easter. Well done to all the new trainers for stepping forward, and good luck in transferring your new found skills onto others.

Branch Dinner

Our annual Branch dinner was held in March, at The Barnsdale, Oakham, where we enjoyed good food and good company. Our speaker this year was Keith Townsend, who has a passionate interest and hobby in Astronomy. He gave a most interesting and informative presentation on the planets, even providing 3D glasses for us to view the screen.



Ashwell Bells

In July of 2023, the bells of St Mary's Ashwell were removed and subsequently taken to Taylors of Loughborough for refurbishment. Up to that date, the bell tower was in a very poor state and a great deal of work was needed to make all safe and the bells ringable again.

In February 2024 the bells returned. The Tower Captain, Louis Totaro, was able to offer a viewing of the bells before they were rehung. This was a very exciting moment and approximately 20 people took up the opportunity. On February 29th a short 'test ring' was successfully undertaken.



Although there is still work to be done, this was a huge milestone achieved.

On Easter Sunday afternoon (31st), St Mary's Ashwell will be hosting a celebration service for the bells, from 3pm. There will be ringing beforehand and a QP after.

Sue Webster

Thrapston Branch

Life in the Thrapston Branch, a little like the river Nene, is gently proceeding onwards. Our monthly practices at Wadenhoe have commenced again with the milder weather and are proving popular. We have been able to welcome new, older, and returning ringers to practise and progress on 6-bell methods as well as rounds and call changes. Thanks to Chris Jenkins for organising these practices and guiding the newer branch members through the exercise. We have also started an evening practice at Islip on the first Friday of each month, as the weather becomes warmer. Again, ringers old and new are making progress, once the 39 steps have been negotiated.

The Cumbria Clock Company are also frequent visitors to St Nicholas' Church. The church clock was returned last year, after an eighteen-month restoration, but despite valiant attempts it still stops after a few days, much to the concern of the village, and back comes Cumbria Clocks for a bit more tweaking. One day soon, we hope, all will be well. We know little about the clock's history, except it is dated 1821 and made by a local clockmaker from Twywell, and looks to be a fine piece of craftsmanship.

Another fine piece of clock craftsmanship was recently found and rescued from a skip in one of our more rural villages. This one was made by Thomas Eayres of Kettering in 1735. Why it was in a skip is a long and complicated story best told over a pint or two, but thankfully it was rescued and is now being restored, hopefully to find a happy and permanent home. A new pendulum measuring 8 feet in length is being made for it and we look forward to seeing it tick away for many years to come.

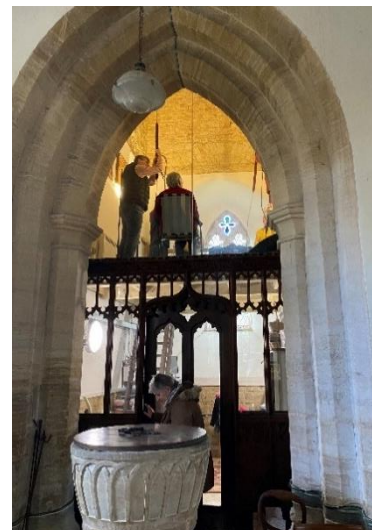
In March, The Thrapston Branch hosted The Nene Valley Challenge. We served forty-eight lunches at the church hall in Thrapston, following which Alastair Donaldson presented the Ringers with their Certificates of Achievement. We look forward to some more of our towers taking part in the May Centenary event.

Happy ringing,

Alison Byrnes

Towcester Branch

On 24th February, the branch practice was at St Mary the Virgin, an upstairs ring of 5 at Grafton Regis, scheduled 14.00 - 15.30, so we could all get back home to watch the rugby. (Some of us might be of the opinion, “why did we bother?”, depending on your allegiance.) Ringing was designed to cater for all abilities, and it was good to see some of the Saturday morning learners appear again later the same day, a tower grab for them and others. Approximately 20 people attended and a mixture of rounds, plain hunt 5, Grandsire, Bob Doubles, April Day and call changes was rung. It was a lovely bright sunny but frosty start, the church was chilly but the ringing room was warm. Tea, coffee and biscuits were provided by the lovely Blisworth ladies. It was good to see Mark Rogers there,



Grafton Regis 1st Floor Ring



St Mary the Virgin, Grafton Regis

who seems to be recovering well from his recent shoulder injury. We look forward to his return to ringing soon.

In the church there was a very interesting historical display about Elizabeth Woodville born in the village in 1437 and married King Edward IV at St Mary the Virgin in 1464.

The next Branch practice was held at Greens Norton on the 23rd March. There were 16 ringers, including Richard Yates, who rang one-handed. It was great to see Richard participating.

All abilities were catered for, from rounds to Cambridge Minor. And all ages, from 12 to over 70. Ringing is definitely a hobby for all!

Phone call joy

How a single phone call out of the blue can bring massive changes to a Tower!

At the end of January, I received such a call one evening about 6 pm, as I was dishing-up dinner. Following a few expletives under my breath regarding timing, I took the phone from my husband. On the other end was a very nice lady who told me her name was Cassie. She announced that she was a Bell Ringer with her husband, Bob from Stewkley (8) near Leighton Buzzard and they had moved into Blisworth just before Christmas. How fortuitous, as the previous Sunday we only had four ringers due to illness and injury, so the bells had remained silent. Bob and Cassie very soon slotted into our band effortlessly, bringing with them a wealth of ringing knowledge and skills and, being much younger than most of us, will keep Blisworth (6) ringing.

I am sure members of Towcester Branch, and the Guild will soon get to know them. Our gain is Stewkley's great loss.

(My thanks to Chris Lea (Blisworth) for providing this article for the newsletter.)

We, too, at Pattishall have enjoyed the company of Bob and Cassie, and as Chris said, they bring a wealth of ringing knowledge and skill, and have enabled Pattishall to benefit as well from their new 8.

Training has continued at Cold Higham every Saturday 11:00 – 12:30, run by Margaret Bulleid, a friendly practice developing foundation skills including bell handling, bell control and striking and listening, and even the more-experienced ringers who come to support benefit too! The tea, coffee and biscuits are great as well!!

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter and continued happy ringing.

Jill Cooke

Wellingborough Branch

Since our last report, the Wellingborough Branch held its AGM at Wellingborough, Surprise practices at Earls Barton and Orlingbury, and general practices at Orlingbury and Higham Ferrers.

Bozeat

Bozeat are pleased to report that their learners are progressing well and moving into call changes and plain hunt. Visitors are always welcome to our Thursday practices.

Easton Maudit

PCC have approved the installation of swift boxes in the tower, although it may be a bit late for this year's broods. We have asked for quotes for the installation of rope guides.

Tony Manktelow

Earls Barton

Still very busy in the Belfry this year. At most practices and Sunday services there are more of us to ring than number of bells, but NO augmentation is planned just yet!! Our 11-year-old ringer, Robin, is now ringing plain hunt on 5 and 6, and recently received Band Congratulations for achieving service standard. Some of our ringers have been working away as far afield as Melbourne Australia, Dubai and Sunderland, and others holidaying in Cyprus and Texas, but there's still been plenty of us left to keep all eight bells ringing twice each week. Other than that, a local (declining!!) population of ladybirds is using the Belfry as a boarding house and cemetery, so a tower spring clean is now planned very soon. *Andy Smith*

Mears Ashby

News from Mears Ashby is that Tim and I have now completed the pulley refurbishment.

Pete Dyer

Stanwick

Our Tuesday afternoon practices are increasing in numbers, sometimes 12 plus. Those who were beginners last year are now ringing call changes. We now have several “drummers” for Grandsire, Bob Doubles and Steadman. The Standard of ringing is also improving. Watch out at the Striking Competition! *Sam Chambers*

Rushden

A Quarter Peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor was rung by Wellingborough Branch committee members for the Installation of Debbie Sellin as the 39th Bishop of Peterborough.

Two Eighth Peals have been rung, one prior to the Christingle service and the other for the Easter Sunday service. An ideal opportunity for ringers who are no longer able to stand for 45 minutes. *Pam Bailey*

Wollaston

The Wollaston Band are continuing to ring regularly every Sunday and every practice night on a Wednesday. We are sometimes joined on a Wednesday by members from other towers and we really appreciate the help they give us in learning methods. It makes the learning process so much easier if there is a steady band around the learner.

As with most towers, we did not ring during Holy Week, but all six will be ringing gloriously on Easter Sunday to proclaim the risen Lord.

We are looking forward to ringing on Bell Sunday in May, as we have every year since the initiative first started.

I am very grateful for the commitment of the band at Wollaston and thank them for their support.

Jean Rose



*Back: Jack, Ben, Mel & Thomas;
front: Enya, Kate & Jean*

100 Club

Just a few months of this anniversary year have passed, and we have nine winners:

MONTH	No of paid-up members	1 st Prize winner	1 st Prize value	2 nd Prize winner	2 nd Prize value	3 rd Prize winner	3 rd Prize value
January	162	28Ru	£53.46	183No	£19.44	95We	£12.96
February	164	1Ke	£54.12	52Da	£19.68	19We	£13.12
March	164	48Gu	£54.12	36To	£19.68	128No	£13.12

I'm pleased to announce that, to date, 17 new members have signed up for the 100 Club, the target being to get 100 new members to mark the 100th Anniversary of the Guild which is being celebrated this year.

So, if you are interested or want an additional number for the draws, or know someone else who might be interested, please get in touch.

Cathy Dixon 100_club@pdg.org.uk

GUILD EVENTS 2023 – 2024

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 13th, 2024

Guilsborough Branch – **PDG100** Spring Festival 14:00 onwards
(Spratton, Cold Ashby, Guilsborough)

Great Oakley – Bell Maintenance 10:00 (booking required)

May 11th, 2024

Across the Guild – **PDG100** Tower Open Day

June 8th, 2024

Northampton Branch – **PDG100** Guild AGM

June 29th, 2024

Venue tbc – 10 Bell Practice

July 13th, 2024

Stanwick Lakes – **PDG100** Guild Day Out

August 10th, 2024

Rutland Water – **PDG100** Tour & Picnic

September 14th, 2024

Venue tbc – 10 Bell Practice

Daventry Branch – **PDG100** Summer Festival 15:00

October 12th, 2024

Kettering Park Hotel – **PDG100** Guild Dinner

November 9th, 2024

Venue tbc – 10 Bell Practice

Syresham – **PDG100** Quiz and Fish & Chip Supper

December 28th, 2024

Towcester – **PDG100** Guild Carol Service