

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



Newsletter
Apr 2025

Guild Officers 2024-25

Post	Name	e-mail
President	Alistair Donaldson	president@pdg.org.uk
Master	Simon Dixon	master@pdg.org.uk
Secretary	Helen Allton	secretary@pdg.org.uk
Treasurer	Chris FitzGerald	treasurer@pdg.org.uk
Steward	John Beresford	steward@pdg.org.uk
Peal Secretary	Paul Mason	peal_secretary@pdg.org.uk
Report Editors	Gwynneth & Jim White	report@pdg.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Jonathan Stuart	newsletter@pdg.org.uk
Public Relations Officer	<i>[vacant]</i>	pro@pdg.org.uk
Webmaster	Richard Allton	webmaster@pdg.org.uk
Safeguarding Officer	John Beresford	safeguarding@pdg.org.uk
100 Club Co-ordinator	Cathy Dixon	100_club@pdg.org.uk
Youth Ringing Officer	<i>[vacant]</i>	

Newsletter News

This edition returns to a semblance of normal, leaving the PDG centenary year, and various royal events before that, behind us. For now, our regular publishing schedule is January, April and September, intended to coincide with branch AGMs and the two main Guild events each year.

Special thanks, as always, to all the branch correspondents and Guild officers who make these newsletters possible. In particular, Secretary Helen for spotting the typos and errors that I missed. Please keep sending in your stories and photos.

If you'd like to share copies of the Newsletter with any non-ringing members, direct them to the relevant part of the Guild website (pdg.org.uk/latest-news/newsletters) or download a copy and email it to them. A hard copy can be delivered in person (or posted), on request to me or the Secretary.

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. All copy for the next edition, for distribution at the Summer Festival, to arrive by **Sunday 31st August latest**, please. Thank you.

Jonathan Stuart

Contents

Guild Officers' contact details	2
Newsletter News	2
President's Preamble	4
The Secretary Searches	5
Treasurer's Tally	5
From the Bellboard Footnotes	8
Progress report, Corby, St. John the Baptist	10
A Novice's Introduction to Quarter Peals	12
Midland Youth Contest	13
GMC outcome	14
Ringling up and down in peal	15
Birth of a trophy	16
News from the branches	19
100 Club report	43
Guild future events calendar	44

President's Preamble

It's Spring – I think...

It is lovely to have some lovely sunny days recently, and I enjoyed feeling the warmth on my back as I walked into church recently for a “Ringing Up and Down in Peal” course. However, the overnight temperatures have been close to freezing, so that was the temperature I found when I stepped inside the church. On with the heaters ... Maybe by Easter the church interior temperature will have caught up with the outside temperature?

I have enjoyed taking two “Ringing Up and Down in Peal” courses recently at my home tower of Great Oxendon. I know I am biased, but I think this is the perfect 5-bell tower for this course. I thought all the students did really well, making great strides during the day. The less said about my inability to drive a Zoom session the better.

We had a good GMC meeting a few weeks ago. The decisions made will be revealed by your representatives and our Secretary over the next few weeks, and you will receive your special Centenary Annual Report this week – enjoy. This gives me an opportunity to thank our Report Editors Jim and Gwynneth White for putting the Annual Report together so well for several years.

Please do read the revised Safeguarding Policy within the new Report, review and act. Do speak to John Beresford, our Safeguarding Officer, if you have any comments or questions.

I am looking forward to seeing a great turnout at the Spring Meeting.

Alistair Donaldson

The Secretary Searches

... for some willing volunteers. The functioning of ringing relies on all the volunteers who give up their time. That can be taking on a tower role, liaising with the church, or taking on a role at branch level. The Guild is no exception. This year there are several posts that are vacant, or falling vacant, that I'd like to bring to your attention.

The Guild has been without a PRO for the last year. The role is outward looking; it should be about spreading the news of ringing through various events, news, web and social media channels. The role-holder shouldn't feel that they must do all of that themselves, and certainly not that they need to do all the talks that might be requested. There are a number of people who can have their arm twisted to help out in that regard! It is as much about knowing who to contact and who to call on. Enthusiasm and familiarity with web and social media would be valuable in this post. A way with words would also be helpful.

Jim & Gwynneth White are standing down as Report Editors having compiled the 2024 report. This is a task that requires most of its activity in the first quarter of the year, then ticks over for the other nine months. It is a role that works well as a shared role. Jim & Gwynneth have shown that being able to check each other's work is a strength of having joint role holders. You wouldn't need to be married to the other party - it could be a friend! It requires attention to detail and a fair amount of badgering people for information. Technically, it requires computer literacy to complete the report ready for printing.

The final role I want to bring to your attention is that of Master. Simon Dixon is standing down after 8 years in post. Possibly the most visible part of this role is running the ringing at Guild events, but there is more to it than that. The Master finds judges for Guild contests and has been organising the Second Saturday Sessions (although the admin has been more Mrs Master!). The Guild set up two subcommittees to drive activity in this area, and the incoming Master can shape those committees to reduce the administrative burden. The Master is also on the Guild Executive and as the Guild is a charity, is a trustee of the charity. That comes with certain legal obligations that the role holder has to comply with. The Master is also the administrator of the Guild's Training fund. The Master doesn't need to be the best ringer in the room. Ideally, they would have some experience of running ringing and the confidence to delegate the sessions that they feel would be better run by someone else.

All of the Guild's role descriptions are on the website and can be found here: <https://pdg.org.uk/homepage/officers>. Nominations for all officers need to be made in writing to the Guild Secretary and e-mail counts as in writing. Mail me on secretary@pdg.org.uk with your nominations or your queries about becoming a Guild Officer.

Helen Allton

Treasurer's Tally

Gift Aid Claims

Great progress with over 200 updated, or reconfirmed, Gift Aid forms received during 2024. I will be using them to collect additional monies from HMRC. No sense in letting that tax paid by you stay in the Treasury, if they have offered a way to add it to your donations. For those taxpayers amongst you who have not completed a Gift Aid form please do so – we can reclaim tax for your subscriptions and donations. So do not be shy.

Affiliation Forms

We have looked at every aspect of the process for sending out requests for Affiliation Fees from all the parishes in the Diocese, in an attempt to get back to the £4,500 level we achieved in 2019. There is a long way to go from the £520 collected last year.

Many parishes are saying that they did not receive the letter. In response, we have done the following:

1. Included Bell Grant stories in the Cross Keys digital newsletter sent out by the Diocese. This initiative starts in March 2025, and we hope that this will inform the parishes of our good work and encourage them to contribute towards it.
2. Ensured that all Branch Treasurers and Secretaries have a copy of the letter, so that several people can respond to any comment that a parish has not seen the letter.
3. Some branches compile mailings to all their members and towers. Again, we will be providing the letter to them so that they can include it.
4. I am looking to hold a copy of the letter on our website so that it can be pulled down by any member.

Surely these actions must work to restore this fund raising for the Bell Fund!

To cover action 1 above, I am seeking write-ups about any successful Bell Grant claims. Helen Allton and John Beresford have already received some, so we do not need duplications. Ideally the stories would include:

- Background to the problem which needed to be resolved.
- The financials
- (Lots of) pictures
- The process – good and (not so much) bad
- The outcome
- Any positive impacts on parishes and/or bellringers.

Online shoppers call to arms – are you aware?

Are you aware that there are schemes which enable online shoppers to give donations to charities whilst they shop? Does that sound too good to be true?

We are involved with two such schemes, my preferred one is Easy Fundraising, as it is more comprehensive and responsive to queries:

Give as you live

www.giveasyoulive.com

Easy Fundraising

www.easyfundraising.org.uk

Please use the links above to apply to join the scheme, as it will provide us with additional benefits and automatically link your donations to our charity.

They have signed up around 8,000 and 4,500 online retailers respectively, to donate to charities (either a fixed sum or a % ranging from 0.5% to as much as 15%!!) for online purchases completed through their websites or links. This includes all the supermarket chains, retailers such as John Lewis, insurers, including the comparison websites, and all the big companies that you know well. In return, the

platforms undertake to encourage members of large organisations like us, with almost 1,000 members, to consider joining the schemes.

In the last year, with only four members signed up, we have generated £250 of donations for PDG, and I would encourage more members to sign up. In total, these two schemes have raised around £80m in donations to good causes. Does it sound too good to be true? Your information will probably be used for marketing, but I have not noticed any more issues than buying direct from retailers, and this way charities receive donations.

Further, there are incentives of £5 per member that signs up via the links above, if they go on to generate £5 worth of donations.

If you sign up and nominate the Guild (charity number 258271), we start to benefit immediately. Give as You Live permits splitting your donations, so if you want to support up to five charities, they will do that.

Give as you Earn Scheme

Many of you will be aware of Gift Aiding, which enables an additional 25% to be reclaimed from HMRC on charitable donations. There is an even better scheme for higher rate taxpayers that you may not be aware of. You can ask your employer about the Give as You Earn (GAYE) scheme. Under it you can sacrifice an element of your salary, and have it diverted to a payment account which can ONLY be spent on donations to recognised charities. In effect, you can donate £100 by sacrificing only £40. In my company, we sacrifice from £20 to £700 per month for employees and they were then able to contribute large amounts to charity. There is an admin fee of 4% which can be covered by your employer, or it can be charged to the donors. In either event, this is a huge improvement for charitable giving available to higher rate taxpayers.

If you have any queries on any of the above opportunities for supporting our charity, call me on 07761 180369 or email me on treasurer@pdg.org.uk.

Chris FitzGerald, Guild Treasurer

From the Bellboard Footnotes

(1st January to 20th March 2025)

First quarter

Jonathan Cook (Whilton)

Adrian Cross (Pattishall)

Zack Pope (Whilton)

First quarter of Minor Inside

Holly Pedersen (Peterborough St Mary)

First quarter of Surprise Minor

Andrew North (Green's Norton)

First quarter of Triples inside

Clara Pedersen (Peterborough St Mary)

First quarter of Surprise Minor as Conductor

Nick Hiams (Crick)

First quarter of Spliced as conductor

Nick Elks (Cathedral)

First quarter of Major

Flynn Spires (Daventry)

First quarter of Surprise Major inside

David G Seymour (Barton Seagrave)

First quarter of Spliced Surprise Major

Diana Street (Cathedral)

First peal on 8

Jonathan Stuart

(Pattishall)

First on the Bells

Harrington - First quarter

Pattishall - First peal

since augmentation to 8

Castle Ashby - First peal
since overhaul in 2004



Whilton 1st Quarters band



Adrian Cross (back right) 1st Quarter



Pattishall 1st Peal on Augmented 8

Birthdays

Erin Marsen (King's Cliffe 16Feb25),

Ruth Stokes (Easton Neston 25Feb25)

Roy Snow (Peterborough St Mary 8Feb25)

James Thorpe (Wappenham 25Jan25)

Pam Bailey (Geddington 23Jan25)

Rusty Hartley (Cathedral 19Jan25)

50th: Caroline celebrated with quarters at Nassington & Yarwell (20Jan25)

60th: Jim Bence's celebrations continued with a peal at Rothwell (3Jan25)

65th: Tim Attride with a multi-method quarter at St Mary's (9Feb25)

80th: Ann Smith with a peal at Burton Latimer (27Feb25), Sally Hudson with a quarter at Nassington (17Feb25) and peal at Ufford (19Jan25), Maggie Nobel with quarters at Castor & St Mary (1Feb25)

92nd: Joe Rollings rang at Pytchley for his birthday (3Jan25)

106th: Arthur Gillet's birthday was marked with quarter at Cold Ashby (16Jan25)



Ruth Stokes' (far left) Birthday Band

People and events

Peterborough St John rang to celebrate Matthew Wyldbore day (15Mar25)

Peterborough St Mary rang for the Covid19 day of reflection (9Mar25)

Barrie Hendry rang a peal at Harpole, to have rung a peal at every tower where he has taught a band to ring (13Mar25)

The Ladies Guild rang for International Women's Day (6Mar25 at Cold Higham, Isham, Moreton Pinkney & Orlingbury)

Edith Weston rang a quarter and general ringing for the 80th anniversary of the loss of Lancaster PD431 with all her crew (4Mar25)

Paul Bailey's second knee operation was wished well with a quarter at Higham Ferrers (22Feb25)

Thinking Day was marked with a quarter at Peterborough St Mary, including a Queen's Guide (22Feb25)



Edith Weston band with the High Sheriff

Revd Ann Goldthorpe was welcomed to the Warmington Benefice with ringing at Cotterstock, Fotheringhay & Warmington (18Feb25)

Revd Neil Bullen was welcomed to the 4 Spires benefice with a quarter at Raunds before the Service for All Ages (2Feb25) and ringing prior to the induction service at the same church (30Jan25)

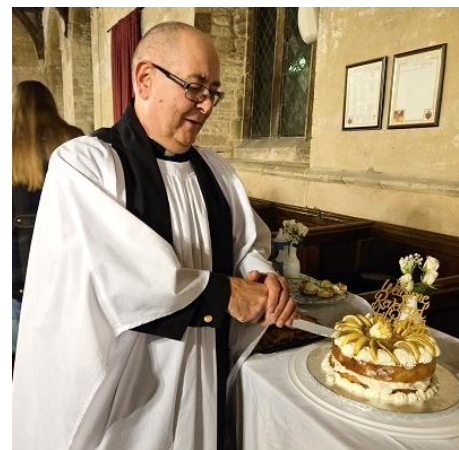
Joseph Booker's graduation with a BSc in Mathematics from Durham university was marked with a quarter of Graduation Doubles at Peterborough St Mary (12Jan25)

Louis Totaro's 25 years as tower captain at Oakham were marked with a peal called Oakham Delight Major (1Jan25). This also marked 100 years since the 7 & tenor were recast.

Murray Coleman's 60 years as Tower Captain at Rothwell was marked by a peal called Murrayville Delight Royal (7Feb25)

The 300th anniversary of the first 12 bell peal (Grandsire Cinqes at St Bride's London) was rung at Towcester (18Jan25)

Helen Allton



*Revd Neil Bullen
with Welcome Cake*

Progress report, Corby, St. John the Baptist

As reported previously, the bells were taken down and fittings removed for refurbishment, the work being carried out by O'Shea Engineering. The headstocks have been cleaned and powder coated and re-assembled with new Gudgeons and Bearings.



The bell wheels, which were in poor condition have been refurbished with new rims and shrouds by a specialist bell wheelwright, T. Atkinson & Son in Masham, North Yorkshire.



The frame has been cleaned down by local volunteers and given two coats of paint



The frame before painting, with undercoat, and with new topcoat





The refurbished headstock to the Tenor bell has been returned to the tower and is being stored securely on the intermediate floor below the Belfry.

Report: David Dainty

Photos: Andrew Gunstone and Isacc O'Shea

A Novice's Introduction to Quarter Peals

Although I have now successfully completed six Quarter Peals, I still see myself as a QP novice with the emotions to match. So, maybe it is the right time for me to share my experiences and recommend that if you have not already rung one, you give it a go.

First, the basics. A Quarter Peal involves the continuous ringing of a method, or a succession of methods, for at least 1260 changes. It takes around 45 minutes to complete. It is called a Quarter Peal because it is a quarter of the traditional 5,040 minimum changes needed for a Peal. (5,040 is the number of different changes available, or the "extent", when ringing 7 changing bells). Personally, I have never rung a Peal and, to be honest, do not have a particular desire to do, but I do value and am beginning to enjoy QPs. I confess that I initially found them quite intimidating and a bit stressful. Several times I have been supportively told to relax when I am ringing. Easier said than done of course, but it quickly gets easier.

The attraction to me of ringing a QP is that it is a challenge before I ring it, and a very satisfying achievement afterwards – if successful. And that's an important point; not all QP attempts are successful. If they were, it would hardly be a challenge. A couple of my attempts were unsuccessful but the other, more experienced, ringers were relaxed about that. Your performance really doesn't have to be perfect to achieve a QP – if you can quickly find your place after an error, then that is acceptable, and the attempt can continue.

If you are intending to ring a QP my personal advice would be:

1. know the method or methods you are ringing thoroughly – including, obviously, the bobs and singles (if appropriate),
2. try to join a band that does not contain too many novices – I still find it extraordinarily difficult to stay right when another ringer goes wrong,
3. make it clear to the rest of the band that you are happy to be put right if you make an error. For example, a quiet and calm “dodging with me now” can work wonders.

There is also the admin stuff to consider, such as knowing where the church is, arriving in good time, wearing clothing appropriate to the conditions, ensuring that your mobile phone is on silent, and that your smart watch isn't going to distract anybody by bleeping or flashing.

I find that the novice ringer is very often given a choice of which bell to ring – so you might want to give that some thought in advance.

You might be lucky and have one of those amazing conductors who have some sixth sense to know when you are about to make a mistake before you make it, but be ready to make allowances if the conducting is not like that. After all, the primary responsibility for staying right is yours.

Ultimately, being able to see your name on BellBoard against a successful QP entry is a sign to yourself (as much as to anyone else) that you have achieved a level of proficiency in that method or those methods. Over time, hopefully, you will enjoy it so much that you will want to search for an opportunity to ring the next one.

Andrew North (Syresham)

If you want to explore the chance to ring a QP the first stop may be your Tower Captain, or alternatively your Branch Ringing Master – they should be in the best position to judge whether you are ready, and help you prepare. The Guild also provides opportunities, plus there will be established ringers you might know with the contacts to make it happen.

Jenny Griffiths, Culworth Correspondent

Midland Youth Contest, Nottingham, 15th March

A report from a member of the Daventry competition band

The first tower we rang at was Clifton, Corpus Christi, which was a 6-bell tower. This was easily the funniest ring we had. The second tower we rang at was at Beeston, St John. This was an interesting tower as it was all simulator bells. The only thing we didn't like was that the noise of the 'bells' was projected from speakers, and the sound would cut off and not sound great. This tower was a 10-bell simulator tower.

The third we sadly missed ringing at, due to our competition slot (3:50 pm). This tower was located at Attenborough, St Mary, and is an 8-bell tower. The fourth and final ringing was at Bramcote, St Michael and All Angels. This was a 6-bell tower and was a nice ring. The only thing wrong with the bells is that one of the previous teams had broken a stay on the 2nd.

We chose Plain Hunt for the competition and our team was as follows:

- 1 - Freya (treble)
- 2 - Flynn (conductor)
- 3 - Zack
- 4 - Mathew
- 5 - Grace
- 6 - Sahib (tenor)

Overall, it was an amazing experience, and it was good fun to ring at all the different towers. Very well done to Sahib for his first ever competition ringing. He did very well tenoring behind and got a special mention for consistency.

We had some funny moments, the funniest being Zack having to kneel to ring at the 1st tower.

There were 10 teams in total, with one special team coming from Groton, New York State, USA who were over for a choir and bell ringing exchange. They are staying in Rugby, so they joined the Coventry Spires ringers.

Results:

- 1st: Worcestershire
- 2nd: Birmingham
- 3rd: Derbyshire
- 4th: Daventry PDG
- 5th: Nottingham (method)
- 6th: Leicestershire
- 7th: Oxford
- 8th: Nottingham (changes)
- 9th: Groton (USA)
- 10th: Coventry

Text Flynn Spires, Photos Justin Baker



Zack kneeling to ring at Clifton

GMC outcome

Saturday 1st March saw the meeting of the Guild Management Committee (“GMC”). This committee comprises all Guild officers and two representatives from each branch. Its remit is to approve the report of the previous year, make recommendations to the Guild’s Annual General Meeting and approve transfers of funds – plus anything else that happens to come up.

At this year’s meeting the following items were agreed or discussed.

- The 2024 accounts of the Guild, the Bell Fund and the Training Fund were approved.
- Reports from the Guild’s officers and committees were received, reviewed and approved.
- The profit from the Centenary activities over the previous three years was rounded to £3,500 and was transferred to the Guild’s Training Fund, with the agreement that the remit of the Training Fund will be extended to include funding for Youth Ringing across the Guild.
- A transfer of £10,000 will be made from the Guild’s General Fund to the Bell Repair Fund.
- To increase the Guild’s visibility with parishes across the diocese, and to try to increase the returns from the Affiliation Letter to parishes, all projects in receipt of a grant from the Bell Fund will be required to provide a report on the project that was funded. To take effect going forward, existing grant recipients to be strongly encouraged to provide such a report.
- The Guild is in receipt of a donation of a set of 17 handbells, a set of two octaves and two accidentals. They are to be assessed for value, condition and potential work to improve them. They will then be available for loan (short term or long term) from the Guild.
- After the success of the events in 2024, the Guild will plan to hold an annual social event from 2026. This will be some rotation of events, including dinner, quiz, outing/challenge and open day. Watch your calendars for next year!

Helen Allton, Guild Secretary

Ringling up and down in peal

The Guild held one of its ever-popular 'ringing up and down in peal' courses at St Helen's Church, Great Oxendon, on 8th February. The five learners - Jane Smith and Joanne Leaning (Cottingham), Martin Pickles and Sarah Rice (West Haddon) and Sharon Williams (Wollaston) - arrived at the church eager and ready to go, having

previously attended an informative online theory session with course leader Alistair Donaldson.

Supported by a team of nine experienced ringers, each learner was able to have two attempts at ringing up in peal, and two at ringing down. The open aspect of the tower at Great Oxendon also meant that the learners could pick up tips by watching other raises and lowers, as well as taking part.



Learner ringer Jane Smith said: "This was a really useful course. It's so generous of Alistair and all the experienced ringers to give their time to help us learn, and I certainly noticed a marked improvement from my first attempt to my last. Now we just need to keep up the practice!"

Text Jane Smith, Photo Helen Churchman

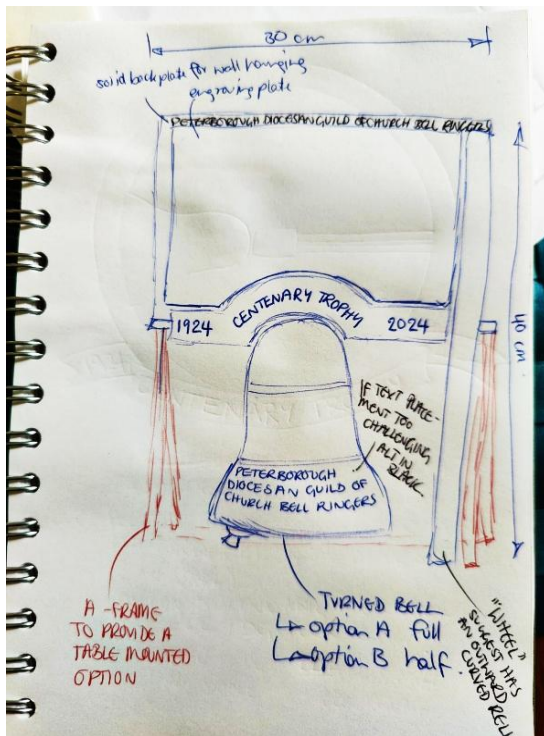
The birth of a trophy

The 100th Anniversary Committee had been discussing how to mark the anniversary, and one idea was to create a new trophy for the 6-bell contest. This contest is open to all towers within the Guild, and the bands can choose to ring methods or call changes. The Weaver Shield was presented by John & Barbara Weaver and has been awarded every year since 1986 to the winners of the contest.

The Committee suspected that the Shield winners had probably never been a call change band and mused that this might be a disincentive for call change bands to enter. In which case, what could we do about that? A new trophy seemed a likely answer, changing the format slightly from a contest with a single winner to a contest with two winners, one in each category.

I said I'd get the trophy sorted, but that was easier said than done. I don't have the ability to translate visual ideas onto paper. My first move was to find someone to get the random ideas in my head into a format that someone else could understand. A former colleague, Deborah Norris, is an excellent designer, admittedly one more used to plastic & metal and medical devices than wood and trophies, but she bravely





Design concept by Deborah Norris

undertook to turn my wittering and hand waving into something that could potentially be made.

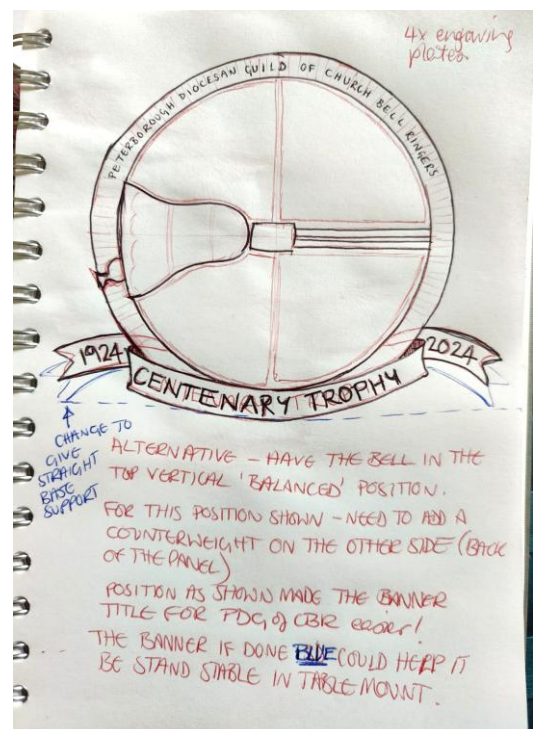
I met her, armed with images of the Guild’s current trophies and several others that had elements I either liked or disliked. I wanted something that could hang and stand but that incorporated a three-dimensional turned bell element. Deborah worked wonders and made a series of design sketches. Some were based on what I had wanted; some were to explore other possibilities. All of them helped fine-tune what the finished item would look like. As anticipated, what we ended up with looked nothing like what I thought I wanted initially!

I took the designs to Jon Hunt, of JH Woodcraft, a woodworker who lives in Thrapston. We discussed the designs and the practicalities of

making them in wood. There were practical modifications, and he suggested a different means of mounting the trophy, such that it could stand on a table or hang on the wall. This is a very neat solution to the problem of some towers having a central table or window ledge, and others not having the level place to display a trophy.

Jon also asked what I wanted the trophy to be made from. He was keen to re-use timber removed from belfries in restoration work, so I asked towers that had or were undertaking work if they had any wood. Too many metal bell frames, it seems, and some offerings were not usable, so part of the bell was made from reclaimed timber and the remainder of new oak. The bell comprises four sections, with the top and 3rd of oak from the frame at Beeston, Nottingham. That was where Richard and I met, and the frame section was from a project to augment and rehang the bells in 1999. The 2nd section from the top, the darker band, is a pulley from Ashwell in Rutland. The final portion was a piece of oak that Jon already had in stock.

Either side of the bell is a pair of mini sallies (or as Deborah described them, “floofy bits”), which provide some visual interest and act as a space filler. Provided by Avon Ropes to a custom specification, the colour scheme reflects our



100th anniversary logo, with the red, white & blue sally passing through the letters.

The brass was provided by Rutherfords in Wellingborough. They also engraved the text, selecting a font that was decorative, while still being clearly readable. The aim of the brass plates in the lower section was to give plenty of space for future winners, with the back being available to double the space for recording the trophy holders. Long may it be used.

When work on assembling the trophy started in January 2024, I thought I'd allowed plenty of time – it turned out a little tighter than anticipated. There were a few delays, and getting the trophy between different crafts people added time that hadn't been factored in. This meant I didn't collect the trophy until the Monday before the competition on the Saturday. I used the time to have the trophy photographed professionally, for publicity and insurance purposes. That all meant there was no time to show it to anyone ahead of the contest, so the first time it was seen by more than those involved was when it was presented to the winning team in the church at Cold Ashby. The appreciative gasp when it was pulled out of its box was worth the wait!



Chris Bulleid (R) receiving the trophy from Alastair Donaldson

The first winners were Pattishall, and Chris Bulleid can be seen receiving the trophy. Thank you to all those involved, for offering their skills, materials and expertise to create something that I hope will still be in use at the Guild's bicentenary.

The Centenary Trophy will be awarded for the second time at the Spring Meeting in April. Read about who won it in the next edition.

Helen Allton

Supplier's details

JH Woodcraft - <https://www.facebook.com/WorkingWithTheGrain>

Avon Ropes - <https://www.avonropes.co.uk>

Rutherfords - <https://rutherfordsgifts.co.uk/trophies>

Leigh Dedhar Photography - <https://www.leighdedhar.co.uk>

Photo credits:

Design images by Deborah Norris

Pattishall Presentation, Richard Allton

News from the Branches

Culworth Branch

Malcolm Taylor

Malcolm (Malc as we affectionately knew him) rang at St Peter's Church in Brackley for over forty years, only giving up in the summer of last year due to ill health. He was our steadfast and reliable tenor ringer, never happier than bringing up the rear and giving a gentle "nudge" if necessary! He tenored to many a quarter peal over the years. He was also happy to service ring, and ring for weddings throughout the Culworth Branch when asked.

Malc was also steeple keeper at St Peter's for many years, keeping an eye on the bells and checking the timekeeping of the church clock, along with Ian Chapple's help latterly.

Coincidentally, a full peal was rung at St Peter's on Boxing Day, just a few hours after Malcolm's passing, therefore this was dedicated to him. He would have been so very proud, had he been able to know this.

He'll be remembered and missed by the ringing community. RIP Malc.

Julie Blencowe

Culworth Bells

The five bells at Culworth have long been known as challenging to ring for those without extra good style. Some time ago a quarter peal by a branch team was lost when one ringer had to take two paces to catch a wayward sally, causing giggles amongst the other ringers, and destroying concentration on the method.

The tower captains have always maintained that those taught to ring at Culworth could take on any bell. They do not engender the same sense of trepidation as did Middleton Cheney before the mezzanine floor was installed but still need careful handling.

The dearth of ringers happy to ring the bells persuaded Martin Rowling the tower captain, to install rope guides to make the bells easier to ring. Having spent some months persuading the DAC



that the job could be done unobtrusively, and without spoiling the view of beautiful West window, the work was given the go-ahead late last year. The scheme, devised by Martin, involved fixing three steel bars into the ringing chamber wall and attaching five rope guide "jugs" to constrain the movement of the ropes. The metalwork is all painted white to blend with the walls. The work was done by Martin Rowling, David Kirkham, and Trevor King using equipment kindly lent by David and Maurice Shepherd. The jugs were supplied by Taylors Bellfoundry.

Ian Chapple

Culworth Branch AGM

The AGM was held on Saturday 18th January at a particularly cold St. Michael's Church, Aynho. although a warm welcome and service was taken by the Revd. George Frost, preceded by ringing conducted by our soon-to-be-elected Ringing Master, Nick Chatt.

22 members attended the meeting and New Members June Irani (Woodford Halse), David Leigh (Aynho), Nick Chatt (Nether Heyford), were proposed and accepted.

The branch currently has 87 adult members, 5 student members and 4 associate members. The election of the new committee saw the re-election of Martin Rowling as Chair, with other committee members retaining their roles. Newly elected as the branch Ringing Master is Nick Chatt, and Duncan Lilly is elected to the committee as a relative newcomer to ringing. Duncan started ringing for the Coronation of the King. I, Jenny Griffiths, have taken on the role as Press Officer - a role assigned to me because I looked up when I heard my name mentioned during the meeting!

The meeting discussed how to encourage more members to come to Branch practices, and it was agreed to continue joint practices with Daventry Branch, where possible. Graham White volunteered to take on the organisation of the Branch Outing in March, in the Market Harborough region (this will be reported on in the next issue).

The Chair then presented the President's Cup to Paul Bennett, for his contribution to recruitment and training of ringers, and for his treasurership and other extensive support to the work of the branch - well done Paul!

Alistair Donaldson, President of the Guild, was welcomed to the meeting and, after a short report, presented certificates for achieving a 'First' during the Guild Centenary Year to Stephen Naghi, Duncan Lilly and Andrew North.

The Chair also mentioned (with some satisfaction) that the Culworth church bells will soon be provided with a guide frame. The process of dealing with the church authorities had not been easy, (but please see other report of this installation from Ian Chapple).

The meeting culminated with a hearty tea, consisting of every conceivable type of cake, sandwich, quiche and pastry you could imagine, but more importantly, a hot cuppa (which was well needed!)

Jenny Griffiths

Daventry Branch

Meetings

It was a particular pleasure for me to read that January's Guild 10-bell practice at the Cathedral was well supported. It was the tenth anniversary of the first of this series that I instigated, and which was inundated with 37 ringers at St Giles, Northampton on 24th January 2015. I'm afraid that the weather, distance and the number of steps to climb curbed my own enthusiasm to go this time! Happily, the Daventry Branch had four representatives attending. I hope I made up for it by ringing my first half-course of Bristol S Royal at the March practice at Kettering. London next?

January

The weather was colder than the weather forecast indicated, but there was a reasonable turn-out for the branch AGM in Daventry on the third Saturday. Twenty-four people rang on 8 or 10 bells. Gillie Morley (Badby) and Sue Sutherland (Welton) rang and were welcomed and later elected as new members.

We appreciated the output of the new church boilers for the short service led by the Rector, the Revd Dawn Stokes, with the congregation, in true CofE tradition, sitting mainly at the back.

A good spread was laid on in the hall by Liz Heath and Janice Barker, with cakes provided by the young and old of the tower regulars. Shirley Waterhouse proposed the vote of thanks while Revd Dawn and organist Martin Heath were still with us.

Before making a quick getaway, Chris FitzGerald mentioned the Guild financial matters that he reported in the January Newsletter. Helen Camps, the branch treasurer, reported that the accounts had been externally examined by Lynne Williams, a former treasurer of Byfield church. Alan Brooks of Badby, our previous examiner since 1971, has moved out of the area.

Justin Baker's report included details of the Young Ringers event in Nottingham on 15th March, and the new arrangements for the Ringing World National Youth Competition to be held in Birmingham on 5th July. He will encourage a team to enter. He also gave out a series of "PDG100 Firsts" certificates. Among them were first quarter peals by Kaiden McCreath, Flynn Spires and Anne Prestwick, and one for me: "First quarter peal of Mental Block Bob Minor". You never stop learning!

Liz Reading from Cold Ashby held the reins of power for half a minute while Jane Rands was re-elected to the Chair. Alison Buck retired as secretary with no

replacement but remains as 100 Club rep. Jane made a presentation to Alison, thanking her for 10 years in post.

Additional committee members are Jim Grennan (who volunteered to organise outings), Theresa Baker (encouraging school, D of E and other young recruits) and Jenny Lunn. Helen Camps, besides continuing as treasurer, volunteered to be membership secretary and progressive quarter peal organiser.

Justin, safely re-elected as ringing master, outlined some significant changes to the format of our monthly programme. We shall only hold a service before quarterly business meetings, and otherwise start later at 3.30pm, with tea still at 5pm. We were recommended to invite the incumbent to join us for tea when there was no service, to maintain contact with the clergy. To build on last year's joint meetings with Culworth branch, several evenings will provide joint 8-bell ringing, including two off-territory visits: Pattishall in June and Cropredy in November, with some sprints (or mini-outings!) to deeper Culworth: the swaying tower of Kings Sutton in July and the most southerly tower in the diocese at Aynho in September.

I mentioned that Daventry Branch was formed on 31st July 1925. It was agreed to hold a centenary dinner to celebrate, and Jane has volunteered to arrange it.

Returning to the tower, evening ringing was attended by 17 and varied between plain hunt on nine, an attempt to ring Cornwall Surprise Major, up to Little Bob Royal.

When Gwynneth got to Wetherspoons, the WiFi loaded an earlier message from Alison and Ian Willgress sending their best wishes to the branch (from Wales), hoping the meeting goes well.

February

The persistent 3C ambient, with no sunshine, meant that central heating made little impression on church temperatures at Flore and Nether Heyford. At Flore, there were three regular visitors from Northampton among the 22 who rang, and three more who didn't ring. It was the first ring with "strangers" for new Flore ringer, Liz Carter.



Nether Heyford

The Rural Dean found two new ringing hymns for us, and his final blessing incorporated the grace for the food we were about to eat. No delays there then!

Jenny Lunn proposed the vote of thanks to the Revd Stephen Burrow for permission to ring at two of his churches and for taking the service, to Liz Carter for accompanying the hymns at the piano, and to Ann Maud and the Flore regulars for the fine tea.

The nice raise at Heyford was by two each from Daventry, Culworth and Northampton branches. Again, 22 people rang under Justin's direction, from rounds, calls, plain bob through to Cambridge S Minor.

March

Justin was occupied elsewhere so, with Richard Hobbs at the helm, Kislingbury bells were raised but then the treble rope broke! Sandra, with your intrepid correspondent, untied the fractured rope from the wheel, before pulling the bell off to ring itself down. A quick short splice rendered the rope ringable, and we were back in business. Fortunately, there was no service, so we were able to make up ringing time until 5pm. Of the 29 participants, some had disappeared before the rope was refitted, and six didn't ring. The sun went down, and so did the temperature, but we tucked into a huge tea provided by Sandra Blair and helpers in the church, the same helpers who produced tools for the splicing most efficiently. All were thanked by Jane Rands on our behalf. Fourteen made their way to Holy Sepulchre, Northampton, where we were met by Colin and Debbie Sampson. Seven, including visitors from Moulton and Turvey, joined us. We rang a range of triples and major with Jim White in charge, before dispersing.

Daventry youth team achieved an impressive 4/10 overall and 3rd in the Change Ringing section of the Midlands Youth ringing contest on 15th March (see separate article).

Ringling progress

After her first peal in December, Hannah Baker rang a quarter of Bristol S Major on 22nd February, when back in Manchester.

A quarter peal of Plain Bob Major on 5th January, conducted by Luke Groom, was Flynn's first on 8.

A visiting peal band at Daventry on 1st February rang Grandsire Caters with an 11-year-old tenor ringer!

A quarter peal of Plain Bob Major was organised by Brian Foley at Weedon on 18th January in memory of Hugh Johnson, conducted by Jim White.

Miles Baker has joined the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths and rang his first peal with that society on 12th January - Bristol Surprise Maximus at Amersham! That beats my struggle with Bristol Royal!

New member Sue Sutherland has started to organise service ringing at her home tower, Welton, joined by Liz from Daventry. She has offered to take up branch secretarial duties from April.

Helen Camps, besides ringing a lot more quarters with COOTS, organizes service ringing at Great Brington once a month and highjacks youngsters (safely, of course) from Daventry. Her inaugural branch quarter peal organisation was very successful! Zack Pope and Jonathan Cook (both Daventry) rang their first quarter peal on 2nd



Jonathan and Zach's 1st QP band, Whilton

March. Jonathan rang the 5th and Zack the tenor to Plain Bob Triples at Whilton, conducted by Justin Baker.

Daventry practices have averaged 20 people so far this year, attracting regulars from four branches. The hectic evenings sometimes start at 6.30pm with muffled bells for initial bell handling. At 7pm unmuffled on the front six, practising for youth competitions and for early method practice, thanks to several experienced ringers who come early. Finally, the normal 8 and 10 bell practice from 7.30pm ranging through triples, major and one or two surprise major methods, call changes on 10, plain hunting, Plain Bob and Grandsire Caters and Little Bob Royal hopefully taking us back into surprise royal before the end of the year!

Meanwhile, Hellidon's practices on Tuesday mornings remain somewhat less hectic, peaking at plain hunt on five. Despite it being colder in the church than outside several times this year, it attracted an average of 10.7, and 1.7 who watch! It takes all sorts ...



Important business at Hellidon at 3° Celsius

People

Simon Dolan, a Newnham member of the branch since 2022, died on Christmas Eve, after fighting cancer for just over 12 months. Newnham church was crammed full supporting his wife and children at his funeral on 17th January, preceded by half-muffled ringing.

We had a message over Christmas from Ed Mortimer in Canada, our narrow boat member from 2014. Sadly, he has bulbar ALS, a form of motor neuron disease which is increasingly impairing his speech but not his reading. We wish him, family and friends, well in making the best of the challenges to come.

Up the towers

Daventry tenor clapper ball is staying clamped tight to the wooden shaft (see last Newsletter). The high tensile (not stainless) bolts and Nyloc nuts seem to be doing

the job. At Church Stowe, the tenor clapper arrived back from Loughborough before Christmas after 're-weighting'. The bell still needs a firm hand, sometimes four, to get it up right.

To overcome such problems at Badby, the drastic plan for Nicholson's to rehang all six bells with new headstocks and clapper assemblies will start on 16th June, aided by the Guild's £8,400 grant. We have some volunteers but are looking for an experienced helper or two available then, and in week commencing 1st September for hoisting the bells back. We were very gratified to hear that the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme to cover VAT has been extended, although only for a year.



The great arched headstock, which has helped Badby 3rd go up wrong for the last 93 years

The branch now has a new 100 m reel of 10 mm diameter pre-stretched polyester available at £2.50/metre for splicing to any takers.

Geoff Pullin

Guilsborough Branch

As spring breathes new life into the countryside, it's been a busy and rewarding few months for the Guilsborough Branch.

Our AGM took place at Guilsborough Village Hall on 4th January and was accompanied by a wonderful spread laid on by Carol Isaacs. Many thanks to Carol and her band of willing helpers for their hard work! The meeting reflected on a fantastic centenary year and looked ahead to new opportunities.

A special mention goes to Cathy Harwood, who rang her first quarter peal in over three decades! Her last was at St Paul's, Burwood, New South Wales, Australia, in 1989, and she marked her return with a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles at Dallington on February 12th, a wonderful achievement.

We also enjoyed Branch Practices at East Haddon and Cold Ashby, giving members a great chance to ring together and develop their skills, as well as to sample some fine home baking.

If you'd like to join the new Guilsborough Branch WhatsApp group, please send your number to Fiona at fbarclay@me.com.

Fiona Barclay

Kettering Branch

Branch Annual General Meeting

The year started with our Annual General Meeting, held on 18th January at Isham St. Peter. A broad cross section of ringers arrived from 3pm onwards. Aably organised by Bill Adcock, there was ringing to suit everyone, culminating in a service touch of Stedman Doubles.

Revd. Denise Maud led the Ringers service. The organ voluntary at the end of the service was composed and played specially for the occasion by Colin Ashworth. It was a delightful piece including, appropriately, Queens and Tittums.

We moved to the Village Hall, where those present enjoyed an absolutely delicious tea organised by Margaret Buchanan, Tower Captain, and the Isham team.

The first main item of the meeting was the Branch Report. Our Secretary, Nick Watts, had done an excellent job capturing the successes of 2024 and the enthusiastic mood of the branch.

Our Treasurer, Kim Beasley, reported on the year, and was busy both before and after the meeting collecting subscriptions and reporting that 91% had already paid up.

Steward, Andy Bimson, and his team have been busy with inspection and repairs around the branch, ensuring our bells are safe and well maintained. Andy was particularly pleased to report the completion of the Harrington project (as far as the bells are concerned anyway).

The following new members were elected, and we look forward to welcoming them to our branch meetings:

RoseMarie Gunstone, Corby
Jean Wilkins, Cottingham
Laura Conolly, Great Cransley
Catherine Cadbury, Harrington
Ann Hanson, Harrington
Val Willis, Harrington

Several 'first' certificates were presented to individuals who had achieved a personal first during the centenary year.

The following new officers were elected by the meeting: Ringing Master, Andrew Gunstone (Corby); additional Assistant Ringing Master, Sally Counsell (Desborough); and two new committee members, Diane Atter (Wilbarston) and Hannah Conlon (Cottingham), thus helping to ensure continuity in the branch.

The Committee recommended that Branch Meetings should revert to the second Saturday of the month from March onwards and was agreed by a majority of those present.

The great work across the branch, supporting newer ringers, will continue in 2025, including the 1st Wednesday morning practice at Rothwell, which re-commenced on 8th January and, in spite of the cold spell of weather, saw some 19 ringers attending for an intensive 2-hour session, lead by Branch Chairman, Jane Marsh. The activities included people starting to ring rounds, moving onto Plain Hunt and ringing treble to Bastow Doubles. Those present included three ringers from the new band formed at Cottingham and four from Harrington preparing to form a local band.

In addition, Nick and Helen Churchman are working on developing theory sessions.

For those ringing beyond Bob Triples, two invitations were offered to attend regular tower practices. Jim Bence said Rothwell would welcome ringers on Wednesday evenings from 7.30pm - 9pm (except the 1st Wed which is a 10-bell practice). He reminded those present of the value of doing homework before attending and the readiness to accept helpful criticism. Bill Adcock invited those same ringers (looking beyond Bob Triples) to come along to Desborough on the 1st Monday of the month from 8pm.

After the meeting, ringers returned to the tower for a variety of ringing under the leadership of our new Ringing Master, Andrew Gunstone.

Branch Meeting Harrington, SS Peter & Paul 15th February

The meeting was well attended, with more than 20 ringers climbing the ladder up into the newly created ringing room, for the first Branch meeting there for many years, following the re-hanging project. The following day, what is believed to be the first quarter peal was rung on the bells, involving a group of local ringers who had participated in the restoration project. The Bellboard report is set out below.

Peterborough Diocesan Guild

Harrington, Northamptonshire

St Peter and St Paul

Sunday, 16 February 2025 in 47m (8-2-8 in A)

1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Murray Coleman
- 2 Jane E Marsh
- 3 Nich Wilson
- 4 Nick Churchman
- 5 Kim Beasley
- 6 Alistair Donaldson (C)

This Quarter Peal was dedicated to Sally Brookshaw who devoted a huge amount of time and energy in working to bring the project to restore Harrington Church bells to a successful fruition.

This is believed to be the first Quarter Peal on these bells as they have been unringable for over 60 years.

£6.00

The local Harrington ringers have since started regular practices in the tower on Thursday afternoons, supported by experienced ringers from the Kettering and Guilsborough Branches.

Branch Meeting Kelmarsh, St. Denys and Arthingworth, St. Peter 8th March

Our thanks go to Nich Wilson of the Guilsborough Branch for facilitating the ringing at Kelmarsh. We were fortunate to have a lovely bright sunny afternoon for our visit to the west side of our branch

Andrew Gunstone kept ringers busy throughout the afternoon with something for everyone from rounds & call changes through to Cambridge Surprise Minor and Beverly Surprise Minor.

24 ringers were present at Kelmarsh, including visitors from neighbouring Branches and one who had made the journey from Cannock in Staffordshire.

In advance of the meeting Andy Bimson, Branch Steward visited the Belfry following a request from the Tower Captain, Kate Morse, who reported issues with the clapper on no.5 bell. The clappers from that bell and two other bells were removed for servicing and re-installation with new washers.

Eighteen ringers made it up the narrow spiral staircase to the restricted ringing room at Arthingworth, where the wide range of ringing continued.

On 10th February, Rounds & Call Changes were rung at Great Oakley, St. Michael following the thanksgiving service for the life of Jeffrey Talbot, late husband of Diana Talbot, tower captain at Great Oakley for many years.

My thanks to members of the Branch Committee for helping with material for this report and Simon Pearce for photographs of Kelmarsh, Andrew Gunstone and Isacc O'Shea for photographs relating to the Corby project.

David Dainty



An atmospheric image of Kelmarsh church



Ringers waiting at Kelmarsh

Northampton Branch

After a busy year in 2024, with the Centenary year celebrations across the Guild, Pitsford Tower in the Northampton Branch rang in the New Year and Liz Moore joined some of the local ringers who are members of the Guilsborough Branch.

The Northampton Branch AGM was held at Harpole in January. Thank you to Revd. Nic Edwards for the use of the Church and the bells. Also to Bridget Paul for arranging a lovely tea. The AGM was the first one held since we lost our Chairman, Selwyn Griffiths, earlier in the year. As a new Chairman hadn't been appointed, Louise Griffiths, the Northampton Branch Treasurer, kindly chaired the meeting. Several committee members stood down from their positions to concentrate their time on the Northampton Ringing Hub. We thank them for all their hard work whilst on the committee.

Debbie Sampson has taken over the role of Ringing Master from Giles Willson, and our first Branch practice this year on the afternoon of 22nd February at Cogenhoe was a triumph, with twenty-three members from across the Guild and beyond attending, as well as members of the Peterborough Guild committee supporting us. Thanks to them we could ring a range from rounds and call changes, plain hunt to surprise methods. Marcia Morgan and Jenny Monk from Cogenhoe very kindly provided tea with lovely cake, so a big thank you to them and to Cogenhoe Church for the use of the church and the bells.

Martin Bull, Ringing Master from Duston Tower, was made a member of the Northampton Branch of the Peterborough Guild.

Pitsford Tower have also started ringing regularly for Sunday Service on the fourth Sunday of each month and for special accessions.

As a Branch, Northampton would like to thank those from across the Guild who have supported us throughout the last year.

Liz Moore, Branch Secretary

Peterborough Branch

The Branch held its AGM on 18th January 2025 at St Kynaburgha Church, Castor. Around 40 enjoyed ringing the bells, before a short service then the AGM. After a lovely tea, provided by the local band, there was more ringing.

The review of the year noted the events held in the year. In particular, the ringing across the Branch in support of the Guild Centenary, including QPs at all but one of the ringable 4, 5 and 6-bell towers, and general ringing at 3-bell towers. There were lots of firsts in the year, from first QPs, first in methods, first as conductor and a first Peal. The Branch Committee is unchanged, although Nick Elks did announce his intention to stand down as Branch Steward at the next AGM.

Ten ringers across a range of towers were elected as new members, including four junior members.

In looking at the programme for 2025, the main discussion was whether to reinstate the monthly branch 8-bell practice on a Friday evening, as this clashed with another practice. A compromise, from discussions after the meeting, is to hold a practice on the second weekend each month - one month at Castor at 7.30pm on the Friday evening, and the other month on a Sunday afternoon at St Mary's Peterborough. The first of these was held at Castor in March.

Since the beginning of the year we have held two young ringers sessions, one at St Mary's in Peterborough and the second at Nassington, and a Surprise Minor Social at St Mary's. A busy programme of events is planned for the rest of the year.

St Mary's Peterborough

We have had a steady start to the year, with many successes in partnership with the St Kyneburgha ringers at Castor. By mid-March we'd rung 15 QPs, with most attributed to a first in or most methods rung.

Helen Allton joined us on New Year's Day, to ring most in Doubles methods for her and Hilary Hardie. We had hatched a plan to have this as a warm-up to a date touch of Grandsire Triples at St Kyneburgha's. Helen didn't stay for the warm-down quarter at Woodston, and hopefully she'll come back again.

We celebrated with Joseph Booker in mid-January by ringing Graduation Doubles after he returned from Durham University with a BSc in Mathematics. Joseph has since gone on to ring his 50th quarter.

Ian Larter beat his previous record by ringing fourteen Doubles methods and Hilary Hardie bettered her New Year's Day record by ringing seventeen Doubles methods in a quarter.

Clara Pedersen rang her first inside to Plain Bob Triples and daughter Holly is not far behind, ringing a quarter of Plain Bob Minor inside. Both started just two years ago and are a credit to the Castor band and the Ringing School.

As the band gets stronger, we are now ringing the Triples equivalent and scored a quarter of Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place Triples.

In a quarter of Grandsire Triples, Deborah Bray achieved her 75th and Andrew Christie and David Banks have now rung 400 together, achieved since 2013, when David returned to North Cambridgeshire.

In mid-February, Elaine Wilkinson, our Branch RM, chose St Mary's to ring her 600th quarter, in which she conducted 10 Doubles methods.

We like to ring particular variations, to mark the solemnity of an occasion, and started Lent with Ash Wednesday Doubles.

Finally, we were honoured to have Colin Ashworth over on 16th March where he rang three quarters in Peterborough to mark the 50th anniversary of his first quarter at Stanground. This concluded with a very enjoyable quarter of Little Bob Major at St Mary's, with Simon Dixon conducting.

Andrew Christie Ringing Master, St Mary's

St Andrews Church, Ufford

Practices have continued monthly and so the bells remain in good order. A peal was rung on 19th January.

Nassington

Ringling for the new pattern of Sunday services across the Benefice has settled down, and we have brought new ringers into service ringling.

Our busy practices on Monday evenings and Friday mornings continue each week. The ringers who learned to ring in 2024 are now moving onto Plain Hunt and trebling to Bob Doubles, and it won't be long before they progress further. We've been challenging the more experienced ringers with our methods of the month, including St Clements Minor, Stedman Doubles and Double Oxford Minor.

Two QPs have been rung since the New Year, one in February to celebrate Sally Hudson's 80th birthday, which was followed by cake.

St Kyneburgha, Castor

Growing a tower band has many different aspects:

Recruitment

Use every opportunity to recruit. Open days are fine, as are events like open tower days but these are not as good as selling on a one-to-one basis. Here are two examples:

I regularly went into church a few minutes late, as I was the last out of the tower. Having caused disruption several times, sitting next to the same person, I apologised and said it was because I rang. A conversation along the lines of "that's always interested me", a short visit into the tower, and we had a new ringer. When you ring, if you have a ground floor tower an audience is often there watching. If they are watching and listening, and an interest is sparked, keep that going. Let them have a chime, usually children will break the ice and their parents will be less embarrassed about "playing".

Restaurants make walk-ins feel welcome, with a view to growing their clientele. If someone walks into your tower, the most important aspect is to make them welcome. Learn and remember their name, smile and treat the potential ringer as well or better than you own ringers. If there is a good feel, you get a return visit. Finally, talk positively about bells at every possible opportunity, as you never know who is listening or might be motivated to join.

Keeping your band

Once you have recruited, make sure the environment is safe and challenges the ringers potential. Encouragement is key. We all learn at different rates, age being a big factor. People don't turn up to fail but to enjoy and grow their skills. A well-placed word and a smile are worth any number of certificates (except children, who like formal recognition). Allow struggling ringers time and dignity, this will help stop ringers disappearing over the horizon.

Social

This aspect of a band cannot be overestimated. Drinks afterwards (non-alcoholic included), a chance to decompress and review, and to just socialise. Events like tours to towers (and a lunch etc.), Garden parties, annual dinners and so on with partners is always helpful. We rely on our partners who are prepared to let us loose and become "brass widows/widowers". Having an encompassing event helps with support. If you have handbell ringers, keep them involved too, as this can be a useful resource of new people, for both bands.

Sharing

Go to other towers and invite them to come to you. Go on tours, allow ringers to use your bells, get a reputation as "inviting". Share expertise, as this can enable you to ring more advanced methods, while being a mentor to stand by advancing ringers. Also, share the work in the tower. Ringers bring many different skills, and love to be able to contribute.

Finally

Enjoy yourself, ringing is such good fun.

Julian Burton, Tower Captain

Castor Ringing School

At the start of 2025, we set up extra handling sessions for a group of new recruits to try out bell ringing. A couple are continuing, so they are joining the main Saturday morning sessions, where we have two other learners.

The sessions continue to be busy, but occasionally there are fewer than usual pupils at the session. This means they have extra time, and this is showing both in their improved handling and their ringing of the various methods.

Hilary Hardie, Head Tutor

Branch Correspondent: Hilary Hardie

Rutland Branch

AGM

A very successful and lively AGM was hosted by Uppingham on 11th January, with pre-meeting ringing at Preston and Uppingham towers. Once the plentiful tea had

been consumed, and the serious details of the meeting were concluded, the fun part of awarding certificates began.

A significant number of people achieved a 'first' in the centenary year of Peterborough Diocesan Guild. Some ringers achieved their first Quarter Peal, another their first QP on 8 bells, Thomas Saunders for his first conducting a method. Towers that rang celebratory call changes '100 for 100' were also acknowledged.



Some of the recipients of 'First Certificates', including two collecting on behalf of members unable to attend.

New Years Eve at Edith Weston

The weather could hardly have been wilder this New Year's Eve, but it takes more than gale-force winds to stop the Edith Weston band from having a good old ring. After a convivial - if abstemious - dinner, they battled the elements to reconvene at church to ring out the old on sweetly half-muffled bells.

By midnight, with muffles now off, the tenor sounded out 12 times, and the merry band rang in 2025 with a few rather well-struck (in the circumstances!) rounds.

In the meantime, villagers and visitors gathered in the church to enjoy the occasion, and the new year was toasted with a welcome glass of fizz. Visitors even included a couple from Vancouver, and another family from Mexico! It was a great experience, and much appreciated event for the village.



The Edith Weston ringers

ART Module 1 course at Uppingham

Six Rutland ringers embarked on an exhilarating journey with the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) Module 1 course on 25th January. The Module 1 course is all about mastering the basics of bell handling. From teaching absolute beginners to ring rounds like pros, to safely raising and lowering a bell, this course had it all. Most of the training took place in the ringing chamber, where practical exercises were mixed with theory, to ensure new ringers get positive feedback, learn in their preferred style, and progress steadily.

After the course, participants registered on the SMARTringer website for a multiple-choice test. Full accreditation as a ringing teacher follows the completion of a logbook with a mentor.

A huge shoutout to Rebecca for an inspiring course, to Sue for making Uppingham available, and to Ted for tying the bells to protect the neighbours' ears.



Rutland Branch members visit Taylor's of Loughborough

On Wednesday 19th February, several members of the Rutland Branch took a trip to Loughborough to visit the Bell Foundry, Workshops and Museum. We all met up with our guides at the museum, before viewing a short film on the history of Taylors, then taking a detailed tour around the site, examining Bells and associated hardware at various stages of (dis)repair. The details of the task being undertaken were explained as we went along, including carpentry for stays, pulley blocks, sliders etc, metalwork for the headstocks and frames, and casting for the bells and the larger structural elements of the frames. We didn't see any actual casting being done, maybe next time, nor did we see any ropes being made, as that is on a separate site.

One fascinating area was the tuning workshop, where we saw a few sets of bells in progress. Those with perfect pitch were able to distinguish the quality of the work.

One highlight was seeing the Greetham bells on the workshop floor ready for their refurbishment, having been removed from the Tower in mid-January.

A last visit to the education room for a cuppa (for those who could find a cup ...) and a second short film, completing the visit with a short ring on their internal tower of 8 very light bells. A fitting end to a great visit. Many thanks to Sue Baker for arranging the trip.

Plain Hunt Workshop

On Saturday 1st March, five ringers from across the branch attended a practice session at Preston church for learning/improving their ability to plain hunt. The session, led by Sue Baker and Ian Bell, began with a look at the theory of plain hunt followed by the practical ringing part.

The participants rang plain hunt doubles on their bell of choice, surrounded by five experienced ringers and with one experienced ringer standing beside them. All five ringers made excellent progress during the morning, gaining a new confidence to put their learning into action in their home towers. Ringing Master Ian Bell expressed his thanks to all those who took part for their commitment and enthusiasm and to

everyone who helped make the workshop possible. There were a few ringers who were unable to attend so we are looking at repeating this workshop sometime soon.

Ringling at Peterborough Cathedral

Sunday 2nd March proved to be something of a red-letter day for some Rutland ringers, participating in ringing before Peterborough Cathedral's Evensong Service for Rutland. One of our ringers said, "as it's been an ambition of mine for a little while, I was eager to join in. The adrenaline carried me up the many stairs without too much huffing and puffing, into a large Hogwarts-esque ringing chamber. There we were put through our paces on 8, then 10, then 12 bells, closely observed and very much supported by a host of more proficient ringers."

It was a truly exhilarating experience, one never to forget. All felt very grateful to have had the privilege of ringing such fabulous bells, and grateful too for the warm welcome and support from our hosts.



Plane crash commemoration.

On 4th March, the bells at Edith Weston rang to mark the 80th anniversary of a plane crash. It was 80 years to the day, at 4pm, that a pilot encountered a problem while trying to land the RAF Lancaster at the nearby North Luffenham Airfield runway. The plane crashed about 100 yards east of the village church and caught fire, killing everyone inside.

Villagers in Edith Weston gathered outside of the memorial at St Mary the Virgin Church, to honour the eight airmen killed in the 1945 crash. Relatives and close family friends of the crew travelled from across the country to attend the commemoration.

At 4pm the bells were rung by local ringers, then a band from St Kyneburgha's Church in Castor, rang 1440 Plain Bob Doubles, six extents in whole pulls, half muffled, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the loss of Lancaster PD431 with all her crew.

Sue Webster, Rutland Branch Correspondent.

Thrapston Branch

Life in the Thrapston Branch, a little like the River Nene now the winter floods are hopefully over, 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 practice and progress on 6-bell methods as well as 8-bell methods at Thrapston. We are now able to spread our wings a little further and include towers that have not been rung at for a number of years, as part of Branch Meetings.

St. Mary's Titchmarsh now has a regular weekly practice with learners from the Village community, and we are looking forward to helping them progress with their ringing. Thanks to Steve Harrall for starting the ringing band again.

New learners are also making progress at St. James' Thrapston, and it is heartening to see two "young" people involved, hopefully continuing ringing into the future. Thanks to Chris and Frank Jenkins for the teaching and training.

We are looking forward to hosting The Guild Spring Festival in April and hope the chosen towers, Great Addington and Twywell, meet with approval.

Happy Ringing.

Alison Byrnes

Towcester Branch

I began writing this report following a very successful mini-outing in gorgeous spring weather. The first tower we visited was St Mary's, Blakesley (5, 12cwt) where we were joined by ladies of the village, and served with tea/coffee and biscuits; a very unexpected but certainly welcome treat. The ropes, for me at least at just 5'3" tall, felt short with long drops, but I did notice other ringers were also asking for boxes to stand on. With such a good turnout of ringers, we rang several doubles methods, the highlight being a touch of Blakesley Doubles.

Onwards to our next tower, St Michael's, Church Stowe (5, 13-3-12). A recently restored tower making the lovely bells ringable again. Of course, I had to try to spot the nine church towers that are supposedly visible from there. I couldn't, but instead indulged in the beauty of the area. Once inside, the ringing included All Saints which was the method for the day. We cannot have an outing (albeit on just two towers) without a pub lunch. Some ringers fell into Peggotty's at Pattishall, so it would have been rude not to!!



St Michael's, Church Stowe

Thinking back to the cold winter months (which seem to get longer each year) and reminiscing about ringing during the festive season. Unfortunately, many towers did not manage to ring in the New Year. Some ringers took the opportunity to be away during the darkness of late December and early January, and those who didn't get away suffered with horrendous coughs and colds that circulated over and over again, preventing many towers from having enough ringers to ring.

AGM

The branch AGM took place at Greens Norton, 25th January. Low numbers attended this year for many reasons including, perhaps, the clash with Burns Night celebrations. Committee members were appointed with no changes from 2024. Chairman was away enjoying a trip to New Zealand to visit family, and sent back a report (see below). Two new members were welcomed to the branch: Bob and Cassia Lorrimore from Blisworth, with Bob also taking up the mantle of Ringing Master for the Blisworth tower.

Peals and Quarters

Various notable performances are listed in the Secretary's BellBoard Footnotes, including a 1st peal of Grandsire Triples, at Holy Cross, Pattishall, to mark the augmentation to 8. The band included all the ringers of the final peal rung on the original 6. This was Chris Bulleid's first peal of Grandsire Triples as conductor, and he was heard to mutter "not doing that again!" as the bells finally came round.

On 8th February, a peal of Bristol Surprise Major was rung at Easton Neston in memory of Jim Linnell (b: 07 Feb 1931 d: 15 Sep 2023). Jim was latterly tower captain at Greens Norton, but Easton Neston was his main tower, where he rang a total of 54 peals. The band for this peal had rung a collective 312 peals with Jim.



In memoriam, Jim Linnell 1931 - 2023

A peal of Surprise Minor was rung at Wappenham on 25th January, as a birthday compliment to James Thorpe.

General ringing

Ringing in Branch Towers continues to go well. New ringers from 2024 are making excellent progress and certainly becoming very valued members of the towers, with pure dedication and determination, and very brave to make it through the winter months in towers lacking suitable heating.

Support is now being advertised within the branch for towers that do not have their own resident band, especially for Weddings. The branch committee wishes to develop this to include Sunday service ringing and special events within the branch.

Tower News

The Grand Union Benefice comprises the villages of Blisworth, Stoke Bruerne, Shutlanger, Grafton Regis, Alderton and Milton Malsor, giving a total of 26 bells, covered by one small band of dedicated ringers. The band rings at Blisworth each Wednesday evening from 7.30pm and is so well supported by so few that I feel it is worth a mention. Somehow, they cover each church, often ringing up to two to three times on a Sunday and never miss a service ring.

Their new Ringing Master, Bob Lorrimore, was running a recent practice night. After ringing the tenor half-way up, he realised that one of the two ropes at the tail end had become detached through gradual fraying that had unfortunately gone unnoticed. He completed the ringing up, set the bell and looked for an urgent solution. From the small first aid kit in the Belfry, he used two Elastoplasts to hold the frayed ends together, and continued with the usual Blisworth determination to ring, no matter what! Chris Bulleid came to the rescue a few days later and fitted a replacement tail end – thank you to Chris.

The newest recruit to Blisworth, Sam Green, is gaining experience and gathers more skill each week. Sam is now an established member of the band, and we all notice her amazing energy, commitment, and huge smile even on cold winter evenings.

We really appreciate the organisation of the band, primarily by Chris Lea, and the hard work by everyone connected with Blisworth, who make sure each service in the benefice is supported – lift sharing and time management. Well done to you all.

If anyone wishes to join the band on a Wednesday evening, they would be made extremely welcome. I certainly recommend it, especially for the hot tea and lovely biscuits at half time.

Branch training

Branch training continues to grow, with the hard work of Margaret and Chris Bulleid and Nigel Williams.

A regular Wednesday practice at Bradden provides a great opportunity to ring on 5, offering an easy introduction for new ringers. A ground floor ring, with a short draft, makes them ideal for teaching the first steps of bell handling. Progress is going well, with many new ringers hunting to 4 or 5. Nigel reports, “this sort of progress is not achievable without the regular support and help of more experienced ringers and helpers, with a special mention to Margaret Bulleid, Alan Faiers, John Pardoe, Geoff White and Luisa Barrios”.

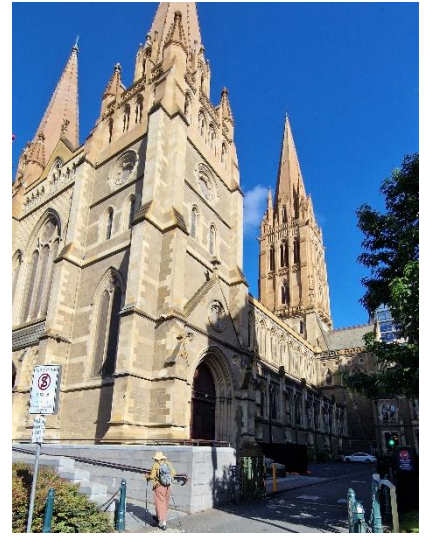
The Saturday morning sessions, run by Margaret Bullied at Cold Higham, are also proving popular with a mixture of ringing exercises, handling, listening, theory and ringing rounds to call changes to early method ringing.

The Training Committee have arranged two full training days for 2025, on 26th April and 27th September. These are an opportunity for intensive, focused training and development, with the benefit of ringing together away from home towers.

Ringers' visit to Melbourne Australia and Christchurch, NZ

Jonathan Stuart, Towcester Branch chairman, headed off to Australia and New Zealand on Boxing Day, to visit his children and grandchildren who all live over there.

Arriving in Melbourne, Australia, and not wanting to miss the chance of a Sunday ring, he contacted St Paul's Cathedral (29cwt 12) and turned up for service ringing at 9am. Fortunately, the local team were shorthanded, due to the summer holidays, and welcomed the visitor, despite severe jetlag causing some method errors. Brian Pettit, RM, and the band were very understanding! The connection with Peterborough Guild aroused some interest, as Mike Stone, a former Peterborough Cathedral tower captain, now lives in Melbourne.



*St Paul's Cathedral,
Melbourne Aus*



Nic Boyd (centre) at the Cathedral

A double-win for Jonathan, when some of the band then headed across town to the Catholic Cathedral (12cwt 8, anticlockwise) to ring for their 11am service, where Tower Captain Calvin Chai was equally welcoming (and forgiving).

By strange coincidence, in early February another (former) Pattishall ringer, Nic Boyd, was in Melbourne and

sent a WhatsApp, "Had a ring at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne. Saw a certain Jonathan Stuart in the visitors book!!"

Jonathan's route took him to Christchurch, NZ, and an opportunity to ring at Papanui (6cwt 8). The Christchurch Cathedral tower, which fell in the 2011 earthquake, has not yet been rebuilt, and a project to install a new ring at Upper Riccarton is waiting a UK bellhanger to become available. Papanui is currently the only ringable tower in the area. Another great welcome was given to a foreigner, by Robbie Richards, tower captain, and the local band.



St Paul's Papanui

If you are ever visiting Australia or New Zealand, be sure to look up local towers on the ANZAB website anzab.org.au.

Odette Dawkins



Christchurch Cathedral, awaiting reconstruction



Papanui's welcoming band

Wellingborough Branch

The Wellingborough Branch held its AGM at Irthlingborough. Three new members were elected, Eugenia Caraccioio Di Torella from Bozeat, Mike O'Brien from Earls Barton and Alex Bishop from Higham Ferrers. Guild Centenary Year 'First' Certificates were presented to John Beresford, Pam Bailey, Jackie Brandon, Jack Brown, Fiona Lock, Cat Hemmington, Cathy Dixon, Simon Dixon, Thomas Coulter-Brophy, Pete Dyer, Julie Tarling and Joshua Horne for their achievements for a first in their personal goals. A big well done to all.

We have held Surprise practices at Burton Latimer and Orlingbury, an afternoon practice at Wilby, and an evening practice at Finedon, all of which have been well attended and beneficial.

Bozeat

The PCC are progressing the faculty application for the installation of a new bell pit floor and clock room ceiling. Slow progress, but progress none-the-less.

Easton Maudit

We entered a team in the annual Macmillan Cancer Quiz Night at Great Doddington. Sadly, we didn't win, but a good night was had by all, and the event raised £1,405.65 for the charity.

We are still liaising with the DAC on the faculty application for the rope guide installation. They are "broadly in support" but require additional information before a faculty will be issued. Hopefully not too long now ...

The RSPB are installing swift boxes into the belfry louvres, ready for the spring and, hopefully, providing roosts for homeless swifts.

Tony Manktelow

Castle Ashby

On 5th January, five ringers by the name of Paul McNutt, Paul Mason, Nicholas Wilson, John Stanworth and Richard Allton rang a full peal of 20 doubles methods, taking 3hrs 17mins, which is reckoned pretty good going, especially when you consider that it is nonstop. One of them turned up and put his slippers on, another had a bit of fluffy carpet, but apart from that there were no special preparations, and after a couple of rounds off they went. It was a still day so you could hear them all over the village, and a lot of people told me how nice it was to listen to. They are one of the heaviest sets of bells in the region, with the tenor weighing just shy of a ton so when I turned up at 5.15pm to hear them finish, I expected to find them fairly cream crackered, but no, they might have spent the afternoon tidying their stamp album or some such activity. They thanked me, made a generous donation to the tower fund, and asked where the nearest boozer was.

Patrick Lovering

Earls Barton

[Mike O'Brien](#)

At the Branch AGM in January, Mike O'Brien from our tower was elected as a member of this branch. At very short notice, the branch secretary was able to arrange for a membership pack to be available for me to collect at the meeting. I delivered it to his wife, who then took it to Mike who was already in hospital. I understand that Mike was surprised and very pleased indeed to receive his membership certificate and badge, along with the other information within the pack. Sadly, he died two days later. On the evening of the day of his private family funeral, we rang our bells as our special tribute to him. His wife and son came over to listen and stood with a few other people from the village who knew him. Our Vicar wrote a special and personal prayer for Mike, which I read out before a minute's silence was observed, and then half-an-hour of ringing followed from all the band that were able to ring.

He will be sadly missed by us all.

Andy Smith

Ecton

We have now started to ring our practice nights on the first Wednesday in the month, alternately at Wilby and Great Doddington, as they are part of our benefice and don't get rung on a regular basis.

David Dicks

Finedon

Finedon is currently only able to ring six bells, with the help of visitors for Sunday services. There is currently a new learner, who should shortly be able to join the regular band, helping us to ring with a home team on practice nights and on Sundays. We were pleased to host the branch practice this month, and as a result rang all eight bells in rounds, call changes and triples.

John Beresford



Ladies Guild Quarter Peal team, Orlingbury

Orlingbury

A Quarter Peal was rung by members of the South Midlands District of the Ladies Guild, to celebrate International Women's Day.

Ladies Guild

Orlingbury, Northamptonshire

St Mary

Thursday, 6 March 2025 in 46m (10-2-18 in F)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

Jointly conducted by 1-5. Pam 60, Penny 240, Laura 240, Elaine 240, Rosemary 480.

1 Pam M Bailey (C)

2 Penelope Bellis (C)

3 Laura Kang Ward (C)

4 Elaine Woolward (C)

5 Rosemary K Hemmings (C)

6 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke

First time conducting in a QP: 1 & 2.

First time conducting on tower bells: 3.

Rushden

It is not often we get requests for the bells to be rung for a funeral. The family of a long-standing member of St Mary's congregation were delighted when we agreed to ring between the service and the wake that was being held in the Church Hall.

We have continued to ring on Friday evenings and for Sunday services, although being shorthanded at times. Paul's return to ringing was short lived, as he is now recovering from his second replacement knee operation.

Pam Bailey

Wilby

In February, the Branch held an afternoon ringing meeting at Wilby. The meeting was well attended with 18 ringers, and ringing included Rounds, Call Changes, Stedman Doubles, Cambridge Minor and Grandsire Doubles. A big thanks to Julia at Wilby for leaving the heating on after the Bible Study session in the morning. It was definitely appreciated!

Jenny Ball

Wollaston

Following on from my last report – yes, Harry did kindly present us all with a potato at our New Year's Eve ringing event, and very nice they were too!

It has been a quiet year so far, apart from having two returning ringers come to refresh their ringing skills. Activity will pick up as we move through March towards summer, with ringing for special occasions like St George's Day, the celebration for VE Day and Bell Sunday, plus we have two weddings to look forward to.

Jean Rose

100 Club

Since the last newsletter was published, there have been three draws:

MONTH	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	4 th Prize winner	4 th Prize value
January	182	156Ke	£60.06	22Th	£21.84	23To	£14.56		
February	185	92Gu	£61.05	33We	£22.20	172Ke	£14.80		
March	182	9Pe	£38.22	8Ke	£25.48	172Ke	£18.20	78Pe	£12.74

You will note that there are four winners for the March Draw. Because there are now consistently high numbers of members contributing, it was decided at the GMC meeting in March to increase the number of winners each month, to improve the chances of winning a prize.

This is such a good way to raise money for the Bell Fund, so if you are a member of the Guild and are interested in contributing, 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 2025

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 12th, 2025

Grafton Underwood – Leading up and down in Peal 10:30 (booking required)
Gt Addington – Guild Spring Meeting 15:00

May 10th, 2025

Moulton – 10 Bell Practice 10:30
Caldecott - Learning and Calling Touches 15:00 (booking required)

June 14th, 2025

Weedon Bec – Stedman Practice 10:00
Barton Seagrave – Guild Service, Tea & AGM 15:00

July 12th, 2025

Higham Ferrars – 10 Bell Practice 10:30

September 13th, 2025

Castor – Guild Summer Festival 16:00
(Ringing, Yarwell 14:00, Wansford 15:00)
Location tbc – Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30

November 8th, 2025

Location tbc – Guild 10 Bell Practice 10:30