



In Touch

February 2009

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting this year will be held at St. James the Great, Hanslope on Saturday 7th March.



3.30pm
Ringing

4.30pm
Service

5.00pm
Tea

5.45 - 8.30pm
Meeting
followed by
further ringing

Please telephone numbers for tea to Sheila Blenkhorn - 01908 510105 by Wednesday 4th March.

AGM Discussion Document

Hopefully your eyes will be drawn to the colourful chart on the right - this is a table representing the current and predicted state of ringing at towers within the branch. Green indicates an active band, red indicates no active band, and orange somewhere in between.

The issue of declining numbers of ringers has been at the forefront of the branch committee's mind over the past few months. This issue of In Touch therefore includes a discussion document concerning the future of ringing in the Branch - this has been put together by the committee to generate interest in how the branch can encourage new members, increase the number of towers with an active band and promote branch activities.

Please read the discussion document and bring your thoughts to the AGM, where it is hoped that this will be a lively topic on the agenda.

Tower	2008	2013	2018
Beachampton	Red	Red	Red
Buckingham	Green	Green	Green
Leckhampstead	Orange	Red	Red
Lillingstone Lovell	Green	Orange	Red
Maids Moreton	Red	Red	Red
Shalstone	Red	Red	Red
Stowe	Orange	Red	Red
Thornborough	Red	Red	Red
Tingewick	Orange	Red	Red
Whaddon	Green	Orange	Red
Bletchley	Red	Red	Red
Bradwell	Green	Green	Green
Calverton	Red	Red	Red
Downs Barn	Red	Red	Red
Fenny Stratford	Orange	Red	Red
Great Linford	Green	Green	Green
Loughton	Green	Orange	Red
Milton Keynes	Orange	Red	Red
Old Wolverton	Green	Orange	Red
Shenley	Orange	Red	Red
Simpson	Red	Red	Red
Stony Stratford	Green	Green	Green
Wavendon	Red	Red	Red
Woughton o/t Green	Green	Green	Green
Chicheley	Red	Red	Red
Clifton Reynes	Red	Red	Red
Emberton	Green	Orange	Red
Hanslope	Green	Green	Green
Lathbury	Red	Red	Red
Lavendon	Green	Orange	Red
Newport Pagnell	Green	Green	Green
North Crawley	Red	Red	Red
Oney	Green	Green	Green
Sherington	Red	Red	Red
Stoke Goldington	Red	Red	Red
Tyringham	Orange	Red	Red
Weston Underwood	Red	Red	Red
Great Brickhill	Orange	Red	Red
Newton Longville	Red	Red	Red
TOTALS	Green: 14, Orange: 8, Red: 17	Green: 8, Orange: 6, Red: 25	Green: 8, Orange: 0, Red: 31

Who's Who 2008 – 2009

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A second note . .

from the Editor

So, welcome to this edition of In Touch. I received a few comments about my first edition in November - but thankfully all positive !

I'm once again grateful to everyone who has sent contributions. It is very exciting to read about the progress at Olney - there is activity at the tower every Saturday, even in the bitterly cold weather of recent weeks.

Much of this issue is dedicated to the forthcoming AGM and in particular the discussion document analysing the current state of ringing and how to sustain or improve things for the future. I would urge you all to

read this (a lot of effort has been put into this already by the committee) and come along to the AGM at Hanslope to discuss further. I always think that the three letters A G and M do sound dull when put together, the phrase Annual General Meeting is hardly more inspiring, however, don't let my editorial ramblings put you off! I will be at the AGM and hope that many of you will be too.

Just one more thing: the deadline for the next edition of In Touch is:

Tuesday 5th May 2009

Jonathan

Message from the Chairman

Over the past two or three months the officers have been reviewing the state of the Branch as we see it and what it might look like in ten years time if we carry on as we are. The North Bucks Branch is facing problems of poor attendance at branch events, declining membership, and a lack of new recruits at towers within the branch. These are problems being faced by guilds, branches, towers and ringing in general everywhere. We see this situation as a 'wake-up call' and an opportunity to examine alternative ways of doing things.

We looked at the Guild objectives and how the Branch performs against these objectives. A discussion document was prepared which formed the basis of our discussions. This collected together some information on towers and membership and identified areas where we are failing against the objectives. The appendices look at membership numbers over the last eight years with the RAG status table highlighting the state of ringing in five and ten years time if the current trend continues. The whole of this discussion document has been included in this edition of In Touch.

There were three main areas of change identified by our initial discussions which subsequently were formulated into proposals which will be put to the AGM. These largely stem from the following paragraph in the Discussion Document:
We would state however that a closer association between the branch and the church authorities in the churches, parishes and deaneries where we operate would only benefit our aspirations. The Church is going through similar issues to ourselves with diminishing attendance numbers, scarce resources, expensive infrastructure maintenance, etc. and so we need to open channels for effective communication at all levels.

On this basis we looked at how our branch boundary aligned with benefice and deanery boundaries. We found that we covered the whole of the Newport and Milton Keynes Deaneries, and most of the Buckingham Deanery, with two towers in the Mursley Deanery, excluding rings of less than five bells. In order to bring about a closer association between the branch and church authorities we propose that the North Bucks branch cover the Buckingham, Milton Keynes and Newport Deaneries.

Newton Longville is part of the Benefice of Newton Longville and Mursley, with Swanbourne and Little Horwood. It seems logical that, as all the other towers in this benefice are in the Central Bucks Branch, Newton Longville should transfer to the Central Bucks Branch to be with the rest of this benefice.

All the towers of The Brickhills and Stoke Hammond Benefice are currently in the North Bucks Branch whereas nearly all the other towers of the Mursley Deanery are in the Central Bucks Branch. We therefore propose that towers of this benefice transfer to the Central Bucks Branch. The only active tower in this benefice is Great Brickhill.

The Lenborough Benefice (Padbury and Hillesden) is part of the Buckingham Deanery but the towers are currently in the Central Bucks Branch. These are the only towers in the Buckingham Deanery which are not part of the North Bucks Branch. We therefore propose that the towers of this benefice transfer to the North Bucks Branch.

Looking at the Branch management arrangements, the Guild rules only require us to have a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Guild Representatives. We also see the need to continue to have a Newsletter Editor and Archivist. We need to foster the relationship of the branch with the members, towers, and churches in each deanery. We have put together a detailed specification for a new post of Deanery Liaison Officer. There should be three DLOs, one for each deanery. The role of the DLO will be to maintain and develop ringing, maintain and develop the bells, maintain and develop church and deanery contacts. The role of the DLO will be to encourage support from within their Deanery to assist with the role. You will see from the full role specification that it is too much for just one person.

The third area we looked at was the timing of branch activities. Friday nights no longer seem to be popular. Saturday events are quite well supported. We therefore propose to cease Friday practices after May this year and move to Saturday afternoon events. Other areas to address are the possibility of practice targeted at a particular area, or activity, such as a deanery practice or Plain Bob Minor.

These are undoubtedly only the first stages in moving forward to address the Guild objectives and arrest the decline in the number of ringers in the branch. Please see the AGM agenda for the wording of the proposals that will be debated.

The officers believe that these proposals are so fundamental to the future of the branch that I will be writing to all paid up members individually to make them aware of these proposals and to encourage them to come to the AGM at Hanslope.

With best wishes

Richard Stanworth

News From Olney

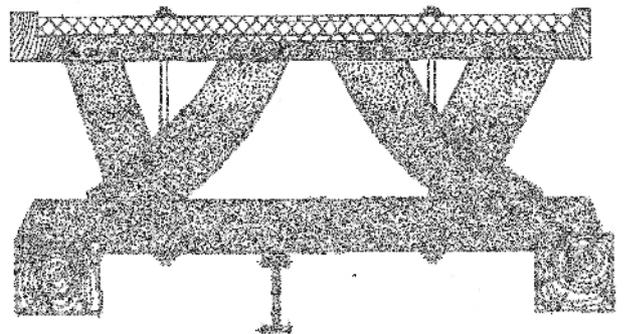
Extract from the Olney Bells Diary

12th December 2008 - the frame is out !

We are pleased to confirm that the frame has now been removed. We can also confirm that all of our worst fears about the extent of rot, death watch beetle damage etc. were more than confirmed. The photo opposite is the mid-section of the 18" square foundation beam that lay along the north wall. The damage that can be seen was hidden by the base beam of the fourth frame which was put in place by Alfie Bowell in 1903. Now that we know what was 'not' holding the bells in place we are totally amazed that we could even ring a 25cwt ring of eight as well as we did.

The western frameside of the sixth has been removed and will be preserved (see diagram below). It will be stored against the north wall of the ringing chamber as a feature; this is the same side as the clock pendulum so it would not intrude or hinder the rope circle. In this way everyone who visits the tower to ring will be able to see the preservation at first hand.

For a number of reasons it was not possible to move the frameside totally intact. Firstly the weight involved; the base beam alone was nearly 11' long and 12" by 7" and is too heavy for two people to lift. Secondly when we tried to extract similar pieces the dowels remained intact but the tenon joints themselves collapsed. Thirdly the weight and size of the frameside intact was too unwieldy to safely remove and lower into the ringing chamber. The dowels in the two side assemblies remain intact but those in the top and bottom beams had to be removed so the frameside was moved in four pieces. Because the dowels in the main could not be driven out they had to be drilled out and, where old ones can not be refitted, will be replaced with modern dowels when we reassemble the frameside. When we closely examined the tenon joints we concluded that the tenon joint was drilled separately to the mortice joint and drilled slightly offset so the effect of driving the dowel into place would tighten the joint; this is obviously very good for achieving a tight joint but makes it virtually impossible to drive the dowel back out.



14th January 2009 - the bells are at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry

Following the return of the tenor bell from being welded by Soundweld in Newmarket, all ten bells are now at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London where they will be tuned as a complete ring of ten bells.

Work was completed today on the installation of the weather proofing and sound control to the inside of the north louvre. The installation comprises of galvanised steel channel which is bolted into the stonework and then a double thickness of staggered scaffolding board is inserted. The outside layer is treated with a waterproofing layer of black bitumous like paint. This particular section is 2.7m high by 2.03m wide (9' x 6'9") and in the centre is a top hinged door which can be

open or closed depending upon the level of external sound required. Prior to this installation any wind and weather coming in from the North had unobstructed flow through the belfry. Once the other three louvres have been treated in similar fashion the reinstated frame, bells and fittings will be substantially more protected from the elements than was ever the case previously.

Yesterday the two sections of the RSJ which had been removed from the belfry in November were removed from outside the west door and disposed of courtesy of our good friends at Projector Lifting. Today all of the timber which had been outside the West door was removed also to various good homes or, in the case of the badly eaten and rotted wood, good fireplaces.

3rd February 2009 - latest update

Many of you will have taken part in the working parties that have been held in the tower on each of the Saturdays in January and we must thank you all for your efforts. Work has also been continuing on all five levels of the tower and significant work was completed recently in the clock room to remove the diagonal oak timbers which previously supported the early 17th century frame and also to remove the internal roof that was in place above the clock. Numerous items of work remain and we can advise you that working parties will continue on every Saturday morning until further notice from 0930 until approximately 1230 lunchtime.

Previously it was advised that the tenor bell had been returned from successful welding at Soundweld in Newmarket and that all ten bells were at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London for tuning. What we were not aware of at that time was that our bells arriving at Whitechapel brought the total number of bells awaiting tuning to more than 140. That fact together with us awaiting the completion of the casting of the new headstocks means that the bells will not be returned to Whites of Appleton until after Easter. Whites then have to build the frame, manufacture all of the fittings, assemble, test, etc. A realistic view, agreed with Whites, is that the bells should now be back in the tower and ready for ringing for the Patronal Festival on the 29th June and for the Cherry Fair. Unfortunately they will not be back in working order for Easter but that was always a tight call in any event.



Works will continue. The sound and weather control has been completed on the inside of the North Louvre but there are still a further three louvres to go. One of the oak beams supporting the belfry floor has been found to be rotten and this will need to be replaced. The clock engineer needs to visit to move the clock within the current supports as agreed by all parties and authorities. The pendulum case in the ringing chamber has been dismantled so that it can be moved to the new location and reassembled. The list of works goes on and we are extremely grateful for all the volunteer labour that has been provided so far to get us where we are today.

Regular bell ringing practices are now being held every Monday evening at various towers around the area. We are regularly using the bells at Stoke Goldington and Clifton Reynes and we will be going further a field as the weather improves and we go into Spring. We would like to thank Owen Warren, Mike Davies and the authorities involved in allowing us the use of their bells.

David Phillipson and Charles Knight

Discussion Document - the future of ringing in the Branch

At the Officers meeting held on the 9th November 2008 at Haversham, David Phillipson raised an issue under AOB which was minuted as follows:

State of Ringing

David raised the issue of the future of ringing in the branch and how to encourage new ringers and participation within the branch. Officers moaning at meeting will discourage rather than encourage. We need to look at the state of ringing at our towers, how the branch is organised and how do we encourage new ringers. There is no coherent recruiting plan. There are also some more fundamental issues. There is a lack of contact with the church and thus we do not benefit from the synergy being developed within church groups, such as the deaneries. We need to be better organised and recognise where the church can help with recruitment and training across the branch.

We need to plan what we can do and how we can move forward. All officers should consider this before the next meeting, which will concentrate on discussing this subject.

There was no intention to criticise the branch officers either individually or as a group. What was raised are problems which are symptomatic of problems being faced by guilds, branches, individual towers and ringing in general everywhere. We regard our current situation as more of a 'wake-up call' and an opportunity to examine alternative ways of doing things.

As a first step in putting this document together we went back to basics and looked at our objectives:

Guild/Branch Objectives

- (a) the encouragement of the attendance of its members both at service ringing and at public worship;
- (b) the recognition of the position of ringers as Church workers;
- (c) the recruitment and training of new ringers, so that there may be regular service ringing in all the towers within the Diocese where the bells are ringable;
- (d) the promotion of interest in the care of all the bells within the Diocese; and
- (e) the promotion of the art of change ringing.

Then it was decided to collect a few facts to aid in discussion, highlight issues, etc.

1. Membership numbers from the Treasurers records for years 2001 to 2008 are as follows:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Adults	182	177	167	172	172	173	176	166
Juniors	34	29	28	18	22	13	15	17
TOTAL	216	206	195	190	194	186	191	183

See Appendix 2 for full details per tower.

2. Number of towers with three or more bells within the Branch:

Bells	no. of towers	unringable	with members	total no. of members
3	13	3		
4	3	3		
5	9	1	5	25
6	22		16	100
8	7		4	44
10	1		1	8
	55	7	27	183

See Appendix 1 for full details of the 3 bell towers

3. Alignment with Deanery Boundaries

The branch covers virtually the whole of three deaneries in the North Eastern corner of the Diocese with several anomalies.

All towers in the Newport and Milton Keynes Deaneries are within the branch.

All towers in the Buckingham Deanery are within the branch except Padbury and Hillesden which are in Central Bucks.

Most of the towers in the Mursley Deanery are in the Central Bucks Branch.

Observations

-  In a period of 8 years the total membership numbers have fallen by over 15%.
-  The number of junior members has halved in the same period.
-  Of the 39 towers with 5 or more bells there are 13 towers with no members in 2008.
-  In 2001 there were 9 towers with no members.
-  The difference between 2001 and 2008 of towers with no members is the three 8 bell towers referred to below.
-  The average number of members in the 8 bell towers with members is 11.
-  3 of the 7 towers with 8 bells in the branch have no members and have had no members for at least the last three years, i.e. Bletchley, Downs Barn and Newton Longville.

Performance Against Objectives

The following comments are based on a view of the Branch performance against these objectives and again is not intended as targeted criticism of the officers either individually or collectively. There are a number of ringers who individually can claim to be fully meeting all of these objectives, but this is not about the individual.

(a) and (b) We do not want to provoke debate on the issue of ringers and church attendance in this paper. That is a long and rocky road and is not at the core of the issues for discussion in this paper.

We would state however that a closer association between the branch and the church authorities in the churches, parishes and deaneries where we operate would only benefit our aspirations. The Church is going through similar issues to ourselves with diminishing attendance numbers, scarce resources, expensive infrastructure maintenance, etc., and so we need to open channels for effective communication at all levels.

(c) Our failure to even come close to meeting this objective is the core issue and problem which will lead to the demise of the branch and the exercise in all but a few pockets of activity. The falling numbers of members, acute shortage of junior members and our failure to provide training and development opportunities will put ringing in the same league as hedge laying and thatching, as an interesting old art that was practised once.

You will see from the chart on the front page of In Touch some particularly gloomy predictions for the branch in 5 and 10 years time, if we do nothing but continue as at present. We have used a commonly used business tool, RAG status, to highlight the forecast (Red, Amber, Green). The prediction is that in ten years time ringing activities, including branch membership and the training and development of new ringers, will be restricted to no more than 8 towers out of 39 within the branch (with 5 or more bells).

The current model of monthly branch practices on a Friday night with special methods that benefit hardly anyone is broken and needs fixing. We need to take a radical look at the rest of our model at the same time.

(d) Our second area of failing 'the care of all bells'. With 7 listed unringables we have the highest number of any of the 15 branches in the Guild; we will need to get to 5 or below if we want to rid ourselves of this dubious distinction! When were these towers last visited and formal reassessments carried out? When did anyone in the branch last visit any of the 14 three bell towers listed as being under our care? If there is even a church out there with a single bell in a turret that cannot be rung due to the absence of a rope, the relevant church authorities should know who to contact; is that the case at present?

(e) We have the opportunity to address our failings against the last two objectives listed above. We have

the opportunity to make a difference, we have the opportunity to do something that is newsworthy and we can truly promote the art of change ringing.

Ideas for the future

- 🔔 Branch practices on Saturdays
- 🔔 Quarter peal days
- 🔔 Groupings of towers into 'self help' groups
- 🔔 Bell handling trainers as a resource
- 🔔 Branch outing; walk, tower plus pub event
- 🔔 Novice training days
- 🔔 Targeted recruitment e.g. Newton Longville, Bletchley
- 🔔 Belfry maintenance training sessions
- 🔔 Deanery liaison officer(s)
- 🔔 Closer ties with church and deanery officials
- 🔔 Joint meetings with neighbouring branches
- 🔔 Calendar of inspection visits
- 🔔 Branch visits to 3 bell towers
- 🔔 Re-appraisal of unringable towers
- 🔔 Training and Development planning
- 🔔 Branch targets for monitoring performance
- 🔔 Branch-wide recruitment campaign
- 🔔 Regular ten bell practices
- 🔔 More social functions
- 🔔 Novices outing
- 🔔 Branch quarter peal week
- 🔔 Rope splicing for beginners
- 🔔 Ringers quiz
- 🔔 Others ??????

David Phillipson
(original submission 5th December 2008)

Appendix 1: 3-bell towers in North Bucks Branch

Tower	Weight	Deanery	Status
Astwood	10cwt	NP	U
Cold Brayfield	3-3-4	NP	
Hardmead	8cwt	NP	U
Haversham	7cwt	NP	
Lillingstone Dayrell	6cwt	B	
Little Brickhill	6cwt	M	
Newton Blossomville	5cwt	NP	
Radclive	7cwt	B	
Ravenstone	8-1-8	NP	
Stoke Hammond	10-1-19	M	
Thornton	6cwt	B	
Westbury	5-3-19	B	
Willen	6cwt	MK	U

B = Buckingham, M = Mursley, NP = Newport Pagnell
MK = Milton Keynes, U = unringable

Appendix 2: Towers in North Bucks Branch, 4 bells or more

Buckingham Deanery			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Beachampton	B	5							1/0	
Buckingham	B	8	14/3	13/1	6/1	6/1	6/1	6/1	9/1	8/1
Leckhampstead	B	5	6/0	6/0	6/0	5/0	5/0	4/0	4/0	4/0
Lillingstone Lovell	B	5	9/1	7/1	8/1	9/0	9/1	9/0	8/0	9/0
Maids Moreton	B	6	6/1	6/1	6/0	7/0	7/0	7/0	8/0	
Shalstone	B	5					1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0
Stowe	B	6	4/0	6/0	5/0	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/1	4/1
Thornborough	B	5			1/0					
Tingewick	B	5	7/0	5/0	5/0	6/0	6/0	6/0	6/0	6/0
Whaddon	B	6	3/1	3/1	4/2	6/1	7/2	9/1	7/1	7/0
Adults / Juniors			49/6	46/4	41/4	43/2	45/4	46/2	48/3	39/2
Total			55	50	45	45	49	48	51	41

Milton Keynes Deanery			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bletchley	MK	8	7/1	7/1	7/1					
Bradwell	MK	6	9/0	9/2	9/2	9/2	9/2	8/2	8/2	8/2
Broughton	MK	4	Unringable							
Calverton	MK	6								
Downs Barn	MK	8	4/0	3/0	2/0		0/1			
Fenny Stratford	MK	6	7/2	6/2	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0	4/0
Great Linford	MK	6	4/4	4/4	4/3	11/4	11/8	11/5	10/5	9/6
Loughton	MK	6	7/0	8/0	7/0	6/0	8/0	8/0	7/0	9/0
Milton Keynes	MK	6	3/0	3/0	3/0	4/0	4/0	2/0	2/0	2/0
Old Wolverton	MK	6	4/2	9/1	8/1	9/0	8/0	7/1	7/1	4/1
Shenley	MK	6	8/0	9/0	7/0	7/0	6/0	6/0	6/0	6/0
Simpson	MK	6	3/0	3/0	3/0	3/0	3/0	3/0	1/0	1/0
Stony Stratford	MK	8	8/4	7/3	6/2	7/1	7/0	8/0	9/0	10/0
Wavendon	MK	6	3/1	2/1	2/0					
Woughton on the Green	MK	6	4/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	7/0	6/0	7/0
Adults / Juniors			71/14	75/14	67/9	65/7	65/11	64/8	60/8	60/9
Total			85	89	76	72	76	72	68	69

Mursley Deanery			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Bow Brickhill	M	4	Unringable							
Great Brickhill	M	6	10/2	10/2	9/2	11/1	11/1	12/0	7/0	7/0
Newton Longville	M	8	1/3	2/3	1/0	1/0	1/0			
Adults / Juniors			11/5	12/5	10/2	12/1	12/1	12/0	7/0	7/0
Total			16	17	12	13	13	12	7	7

Appendix 2 continued: (Towers in North Bucks Branch, 4 bells or more)

Newport Deanery			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Chicheley	N	6								
Clifton Reynes	N	6	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0
Emberton	N	6	7/1	6/1	7/1	7/2	7/2	7/0	7/0	7/0
Hanslope	N	8	16/3	13/3	14/4	13/3	13/3	14/2	14/2	14/3
Lathbury	N	5	Unringable							
Lavendon	N	6	6/0	6/0	6/0	6/0	9/0	8/0	8/0	8/0
Moulsoe	N	4	Unringable							
Newport Pagnell	N	8	3/5	3/2	2/4	6/1	6/1	6/1	12/1	12/1
North Crawley	N	6								
Olney	N	10	4/0	1/0	1/2	1/0	1/0	1/0	5/1	6/2
Sherington	N	5								
Stoke Goldington	N	6	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0	1/0
Tyringham	N	5	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0	5/0
Weston Underwood	N	6								
Adults / Juniors			43/9	36/6	37/11	40/6	43/6	43/3	53/4	54/6
Total			52	42	48	46	49	46	57	60

All Deaneries			2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<i>Unattached</i>			8/0	8/0	12/2	12/2	7/0	8/0	8/0	6/0
<i>Adults</i>			182	177	167	172	172	173	176	166
<i>Juniors</i>			34	29	28	18	22	13	15	17
<i>Total</i>			216	206	195	190	194	186	191	183

Role Specification: Branch Deanery Liaison Officer

Overview: Consistent with the re-organisation and re-focusing of the activities of the Branch to more closely follow the structures of the Church, Benefices and Deaneries, there is a need to lead ringing (A Ring Leader?) activities on the geographic definitions of the Deaneries.

The Branch will support and enable the development of ringing activities in 3 Deaneries – Milton Keynes, Newport and Buckingham through 3 Deanery Liaison Officers.

This Specification sets out the key accountabilities, activities and targets for each of the post holders for the first year of the change to this way of operating. You will not be able to carry out all the tasks yourself and the Branch will encourage you to involve other ringers to assist you in achieving these objectives.

Principle Accountabilities

(1) Leadership of ringing activities especially recruitment and training. (2) Develop the ringing of Church bells as a service to the Church in the Deanery. (3) Develop the maintenance and serviceability of the bells in the Deanery. (4) Establish and develop a working relationship with the Church at Benefice and Deanery level to ensure that the Exercise and the Branch are understood and valued as a major contributor to the work and life of the Church. (5) Develop ringing resources within the Deanery to achieve points 1 to 3 above.

Principle Tasks

Promote and develop the ringing of Church bells for Service by the recruitment, training and inclusion of ringers of all levels, ambitions and abilities. You will be an ex-officio Branch Officer

and attend Branch Officers' meetings (there are about 4-6 meetings a year). Make regular contact with the local ringers, Clergy, and PCCs. You may be asked to act as a Deanery Bell Ringing Advisor and be invited to attend relevant Deanery Synod meetings. Co-ordinate activities within the Deanery so that as many bells as possible are rung regularly. Arrange the running of Branch ringing activities when they are in your Deanery. Either do this yourself or arrange for it to be done by members of towers in your "patch".

Targets for Achievement by March 2010

Establish contacts throughout the Deanery with ringers, tower officials the Clergy and Deanery Synod members so that they understand your role and that they may contact you for help and assistance about ringing in the area.

Collect data about the ringers in the Deanery so that you and the Branch may better understand the profile, abilities and needs of the ringing population.

From local knowledge and data collected update the tower RAG status in the Proposals paper and re-forecast the state of ringing at each tower in your Deanery.

Develop an action plan for 2010 to address the areas of concern identified and quantify the likely level of resources needed for progress.

Targets for Achievement by March 2011

Halt the decline in the numbers of learners and particularly young people learning to ring in North Bucks.



All around the Belfries

Newport Pagnell

Newport's practices are never the same twice. Now that the environment on the ringing platform is more or less sorted out – the 2nd rope now falls on the floor, not the stairs – we can concentrate on developing our ringers. We now have ringers coming to terms with plain hunting at last and yet more new ringers. It still seems like a “learners’ practice” but that’s most of the point of a practice. It won’t be long before Newport re-appears in the quarter peal columns though as some of our plain hunters need toughening up.

Doug Hird

Great Linford

We had our tower meeting on 2nd February 2009 which was attended by 9 ringers with 3 sending apologies for absence. Ione Chadwick took the chair as Peter our Vicar was unable to attend (but she returned it before the end of the meeting!!).

We learned that we are quite flush with money and have decided to give 10% of our wealth to the Church. We re-elected Alan Marchbank as Tower Captain and Steeple Keeper and Trudy Hutchins as our Treasurer. Simon Head was elected as Assistant Tower Captain and John Marchbank as Assistant Tower Keeper. Ione took on the role of Tower Correspondent and Alex Marchbank took the job of Wedding Co-ordinator. This was a result for Alan - he got rid of half his duties! Ione is also appointed cake co-ordinator.

We decided we would have a tower outing around Bedfordshire when the weather improves. We will need to recruit some help with this as we would like to ring at a few 8's, so an advert will be placed in In Touch. We agreed we needed to ring a few more Quarter Peals and that we would instigate a method of the quarter (like method of the month but it goes on for longer) and culminate in ringing a Quarter of it. We agreed Brian needs to ring a Quarter Peal of Kent TB Minor soon. Attendance at Branch meeting and practices was commended by Alan (well he would wouldn't he?).

We discussed the proposal of the branch Officers to re-focus ringing on the Deanery structure and discussed the situation in Stantonbury Parish - 3 good sets of bells but only 2 rung regularly. It was agreed we should discuss what could be done to get Downs Barn bells ringing regularly with Bradwell Ringers and the Clergy.

We recognise that we need to recruit a couple of learners as Ione and Betty are now competent Sunday service ringers and we discussed who might be encouraged to join us from the congregation.

Alan wants to put a plastic clapper in the Tenor so that it can be more easily rung up the right way single-handed. Whites of Appleton have been asked to quote to make the clapper.

Alan Marchbank

Stoke Goldington and Weston Underwood

There is no regular ringing at either of these towers. Ringing takes place with the help of ringers from Newport and Hanslope for special services including the Christingle service at Stoke Goldington and a recent wedding at Weston Underwood. However Olney ringers have used Stoke Goldington bells for practice while theirs are being augmented.

The next ringing at Stoke Goldington will be on February 23rd for the induction of the new Vicar, the Rev. Janet Lawrence, by the Bishop of Buckingham.

Owen Warren

Emberton

The snowy weather took its toll on our practice nights during the early part of 2009, and unusually for us we have cancelled two practices. We generally like our open ringing chamber into the Church, but in freezing weather it can be very cold indeed! The annual nag from the tower captain for the Guild subs produced unexpectedly pleasant results this year – two more tower members would like to join up, so that is a boost to our numbers. Finally, methods practiced in January include Quirister Doubles (have a look at it - rather entertaining), and Snowdon Treble Bob.

Sheila Ware

Woughton on the the Green

A fall of stone from the East Window of the tower has caused temporary suspension of ringing at St Mary's. The window mouldings were fixed to the soft crunch stone at some point in the past with the wrong type of rendering and water has got in behind the rendering. We are using St Thomas as an alternative for practice nights, however we join the Woburn ringers on the first Thursday each month. We have had to create an access point in the dilapidated rear wall/fence of the churchyard to enable a MEWP (Cherry Picker) to get in and help our new architect (Bruce Deacon) inspect the windows. In the short term a safety barrier is being placed around the tower.

On a purely ringing note if anybody would like to join us on a Thursday evening at 8.00pm they would be very welcome. We are just six ringers at the moment and London is our current focus. If any one of those ringers cannot make the evening then the whole practice changes, so a minimum of six would be useful. 2009 has 30 weddings already booked so the extended Woughton ringing fraternity will be called upon.

Brian Baldwin

Hanslope

Spooky goings on occurred at Hanslope recently. On a Sunday morning in January we all met as usual for service ringing and climbed the tower. As we assembled in the ringing chamber we could hear above us the rhythmic ticking of the church clock. Nothing unusual about that you may think, except that Hanslope has an electronic clock with no tick !

Climbing up to the clock room to 'check it out', we found nothing amiss and we couldn't hear the ticking. But back downstairs in the ringing chamber and there it was - the regular tick of a clock. We opened the window but the sound was definitely coming from inside the tower.

There is much evidence that there is a ghost in Hanslope tower: the ghost of an old clock winder. He has been seen by several people. Some ringers have seen him in the entrance to the ringing chamber. A few years ago we were all gathered in the ringing chamber and we heard someone climb the steps. Assuming it to be another ringer, we expected someone to enter the ringing room. But the footsteps continued up and into the clock room above, where we clearly heard someone walk across the floor. Three of us went up to see who it was and, as you would expect, there was no

one there! Could the ticking clock be related to the old clock winder?

We haven't been put off going up the tower - we still ring regularly. And by the way - you can't use fear of ghosts as an excuse not to come to the AGM at Hanslope on 7th March!



Jonathan Griggs

Woolstone

Holy Trinity, Woolstone, which is managed by the council, has a ring of 3 bells all cast in 1662 by Anthony Chandler of Drayton Parslow. The bells hang in the original frame in a timber tower.

A report has recently come into my possession of a survey and quote from Whitechapel Bell Foundry dated 2003 which I was unaware of. The survey indicates that the bells were hung for full circle ringing but due to many years of neglect they are now unsafe to ring. The second bell also requires welding.

Given the state of the tower and the frame Whitechapel quoted to weld the second and rehang the bells for chiming. The work is believed not have been undertaken.

A sad tale of 300 years of neglect.

Brian Baldwin



Simpson

No band at this tower at present and the Woughton band look after weddings and special occasions. We had a bit of a scare last year when a creaking in the ceiling of the chancel and movement in the floor of the ringing room suggested a problem. Careful monitoring of this has not shown any recurrence and therefore we are being sensible with no extensive ringing. We will keep an eye on the problem. There was a major invasion by birds last year who pecked their way through the plastic netting that has been there for several decades. The clearance of twigs took two of the large builders bags. The replacement of the netting and attention to rather DIY pulley wheels are an intro into the remedial work necessary in this tower.

Brian Baldwin

Branch Christmas Social

A few lines about the Branch Christmas Social – this year hosted by Whaddon. Everyone squelched through the mud in the Churchyard, but were delighted to find a warm Church and a cheering smell of Mulled Wine (shame it was all for a later event, not the ringers)! However, there was some good ringing to be had, followed by a Service of Lessons and Carols led by the local Rector. The singing was hearty and we were all OK once we had fathomed out which carol was in which carol sheet and which number belonged to which carol. Never let it be said that North Bucks ringers cannot use initiative! We met the new Great Linford tower mascot, Polly the dog.

After the Service, everyone moved to the local Jubilee Hall and were greeted by nicely laid tables with festive napkins and crackers. The cups of tea were most welcome, and then the Fish & Chips arrived. Silence descended as we commenced the serious business of eating, despite there being a "warm up quiz" on each table. Mince pies followed for those who still had room.

Alan Marchbank doubtless is an excellent Deputy Guild Master, but it has to be said that he is an even better Quiz Master. Six rounds of about ten questions each had been devised on varying subjects – all highly entertaining (especially if you liked football?). We worked in table teams, and fought long and hard to match the victorious Whaddon table. But we forgave them when they shared their prize of a large tin of Roses Chocolates. The runners up received much appreciated chocolate bells – a light ring of five.

Thanks must to go everyone who contributed to such a fine evening.

Bits and Bobs

From the Archives . . .

Hot off the film reader this week are some snippets from The Bucks Standard in Newport from 1900.

After several months of mixed news from South Africa came the news of the relief of Mafeking in May. As soon as the message was received at the post office, "the chimes of the parish church were set in motion, and the National Anthem was played a few minutes after the welcome news." Not to be outdone by the bells, "Mr. John Odell, Corporal Odell, his son and four others stationed themselves on the roof of Mr. Odell's house near the church and fired several volleys, which attracted quite a crowd."

At Ravenstone, "the villagers, numbering about 20, mounted the top of the steeple, and stood round the Old Flag, and sang God save the Queen. Flags were flying in all parts of the village, and the church bells were rung at intervals throughout the day until a late hour in the evening."

A few days later, at Newport, the rope having been re-threaded at the top of the flag pole by Master Mitchell, the message was received that "the British flag flies over Pretoria." Again, "the chimes of the parish church were set in motion and the National Anthem was being played within a very few minutes, and the new flag was run up over the church tower."

Doug Hird

Newton Blossomville Church

Last summer Anne Stainsby donated a picture of Newton Blossomville church to the branch. The picture is an etching by local schoolmaster Arthur Snaith. Anne wished it to go to a good home within the branch - so if anyone can offer it one then please contact the In Touch editor. Perhaps it should be hung in a local belfry?

Interestingly, from the Internet I have found an Arthur Snaith who was the schoolmaster at Hanslope Bottom School between 1943 and 1953. Does anyone know if this is the same gentleman ?

Jonathan Griggs



Running Out . . .

As mentioned in the last edition of In Touch, Nicki King has been training for the London Marathon, which is on April 26 2009. She has been running all through the coldest winter in the last 13 years and by the end of January had logged over 300 miles of training.

If you would like to sponsor her efforts please visit her JustGiving page <http://www.justgiving.com/nicolakingfilm09>, or sign a traditional paper form when you see her or Doug at a Branch meeting or ringing event. Cheques can be made out to 'The Stroke Association'.

She is aiming to raise £750 for The Stroke Association, who support people who have had strokes and their families, they also research the treatment and causes of strokes.

Thanks, Nicki King

Secretarial News



Tower Information

The Secretary sent out a letter or email to all tower correspondents towards the end of last year, giving the details that are held about them as tower correspondent, and of the bells and ringing at their tower. They were asked to check these details, amend as necessary and reply by the middle of January. So far, about half of the letters have been returned. If you have not yet done so, please return the letter, or reply to the email, even if everything is correct, so that we know that we have the correct details. We try to maintain accurate information. We can only do this with your help.

CCRB Ringing Trends Questionnaire

The Secretary sent a copy of the CCRB Ringing Trends Questionnaire to all towers in December; so far less than half have been returned. Please fill this in and return it to the secretary as soon as possible. If you have mislaid it please contact the secretary, who will send you another copy.



Quarters and Peals



St Mary the Virgin, Woburn

27 November 2008

1260 Stedman Triples

1. Roy Woodruff
2. David Braunton
3. Bob Tregillus
4. Roger Powell
5. Bob Wood
6. Raymond Watkin (c)
7. Brian Foley
8. Howard Collings

In memory of P David Taylor of Hanslope and Newport Pagnell and Ballyfaskin, County Limerick.

St Mary, Shenley

23 January 2009

1260 Grandsire Doubles

1. Anne McIntrye
2. Raymond Watkin
3. Derek Stainsby (c)
4. Ann Birch
5. John Brockman
6. Gary Reading

Rung to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first full peal on the bells following their re-hanging and augmentation (from 5 to 6 bells) the previous year.

Details about the work carried out on the bells was researched and an article written by Ted Fawcett and published last year in the church magazine.

St James the Great, Hanslope

1 February 2009

1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor

1. Nick Gray
2. Tony Gray
3. Stuart Grout
4. Jonathan Griggs
5. Ian Thompson
6. Richard Haseldine (c)

For Sunday Service

Australia & New Zealand Association

St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney

11 February 2009

1287 Stedman Caters

1. Rachel Perrins
2. James Perrins
3. Lexi Prabhakar
4. Ruth Stokes
5. John Fryer
6. Tom Goodyer
7. Esther Perrins
8. Bill Perrins (c)
9. Chris Stokes
10. David Phillipson

Rung half muffled before the service for the victims of the Victorian Bushfire Disaster.

St Andrew, Great Linford

15 November 2008

5040 Surprise Minor

(8 methods: 1 extent of each; Carlisle, York, Bourne, Beverley & Surfleet, Ipswich, Cambridge, Norwich)

1. Alan J Marchbank
2. A John Stanworth
3. Benjamin J Carey
4. Alan M Shepherd
5. Edith M Robinson
6. Philip D Bailey (c)

Rung for the 100 anniversary of the first peal on the bells.

Priory Church St Peter, Dunstable

17 January 2009

5024 Double Norwich Court Bob Major

Comp. St Arthur P Haywood

1. Richard W Yates
2. Julie A Haseldine
3. Richard A Home
4. Richard Haseldine
5. Robert J Marchbank
6. Alan J Marchbank
7. Alan M Shepherd
8. Andrew Haseldine (c)



OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS NORTH BUCKS BRANCH

Agenda and Officer Reports for the AGM on the 7th March 2009

AGM Agenda

- 1 Chairman's welcome
- 2 In Memoriam
- 3 Apologies for absence
- 4 Minutes of previous meeting, as published in In Touch
- 5 Matters arising from minutes
- 6 Election of new members
- 7 Officers Reports, as published in In Touch
- 8 Proposals:
 - a) The North Bucks Branch will consist of all towers in the Buckingham, Milton Keynes and Newport Deaneries. Towers in the Buckingham Deanery which are currently in the Central Bucks Branch will transfer to the North Bucks Branch. Towers in the Mursley Deanery which are currently in the North Bucks Branch will transfer to the Central Bucks Branch.
 - b) The officers of the branch shall consist of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Guild Representatives, Newsletter Editor, Archivist and three Deanery Liaison Officers.
 - c) Practices and other branch events will take place on Saturday mornings or afternoons
- 9 Election of officers
- 10 Forthcoming events
- 11 Any other business
- 12 Vote of thanks

Chairman's Report - Richard Stanworth

We still struggle to communicate with all members directly. Please complete one of the membership information forms if you haven't already done so and also keep the Secretary informed of any changes. The Christmas celebration was again well supported and enjoyed by all, as was the summer social.

The officers are looking to the future of the branch and have put together a plan to take the branch forward and reverse the downward trend in recruiting ringers. I urge you to support their proposals and forthcoming branch events if you can.

Finally I would like to thank the other officers for their work in helping to run the branch.

Secretary's Report - Helen Stanworth

The established pattern of branch practices and meetings continued during the year with attendance at meetings steady but average attendance at practices down to just ten.

Membership of the branch decreased by eight in 2008, with 10 new members elected. There are now 26 towers in the branch with members.

The Officers have met on six occasions during the year to deal with the business of running the branch. Between meetings informal discussions have taken place by e-mail.

As part of the usual preparations for the Annual Report, tower information sheets were again sent out to all towers for which we have contact details, requesting that they check these details and correct any mistakes. The rate of return is about 50 per cent, much the same as in previous years. If your tower has not yet returned the sheet, please do so, even if the details are correct. That way I can ensure that the branch records are kept up to date.

In March we organised an Open Day throughout the branch in aid of the Olney Bells appeal and raised a total of around £900, including tax recovered through Grant Aid. The two new trebles have been cast and, because of delays caused by additional work found to be necessary, the project is now expected to be completed later in 2009.

The Christmas Celebration and Fish and Chip Supper were held at Whaddon and attracted a similar number as last year. The supper was followed by an informal quiz organised by Alan Marchbank and was generally enjoyed by all who came. This event now seems to be firmly established on the calendar.

Ringing Master's Report

No report received

Guild Representative's Report

No report received

Archivist's Report

No report received

Treasurer's Report

Please see following page.

Service of Thanksgiving for the life of David Taylor

Friday 28 November 2008

When David Taylor's funeral took place in Ireland in September 2008, there was quite a number of family and friends who for various reasons were unable to attend. It was therefore decided to hold a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of David at St James the Great at Hanslope in November 2008.

The service was very well attended with representatives from all aspects of David's life, from fellow members of the village football team to many of his old bellringing friends. There were also quite a large number of David's family, including his two sisters and brother and their families. The service was taken by the parish priest, Fr Gary Ecclestone and there were two addresses. The first was from Alan Cozens who taught

David to ring and who regaled us with stories of the antics that David, and others, got up to on various ringing outings and holidays. Secondly, David's sister Stella Daniels gave us a fond and interesting account of David's life and work. Finally, following the closing prayers, the service ended with the Ringer's hymn. There was open ringing both before and after service.

After the service there was a chance for everyone to meet up and chat over a cup of tea and a biscuit, which made a nice social end to the afternoon.

It was requested that the retiring collection from the service plus a couple of other donations in David's memory were given to the Hanslope Bell Fund and the sum total of £230 has now been paid into the account.

SB

What's on and where



MARCH

7th 3.30 AGM Hanslope

14th Spring General Committee Meeting Sonning Deanery Branch

APRIL

4th Radley Course Radley

11th Guild Handbell Day

17th *7.30 Branch Practice Loughton

MAY

4th Eight Bell Striking Competition Banbury Branch

4th Annual Ringing Day Banbury Branch

15th *7.30 Branch Practice Thornborough

16th Annual General Meeting Central Bucks Branch

JUNE

6th *4.30 Summer Social Clifton Reynes

19th *7.30 Branch 6-Bell Striking Competition Weston Underwood

AUGUST

21st *7.30 Branch Practice Calverton

SEPTEMBER

12th *3.30 Autumn Meeting Woughton

NOVEMBER

21st *7.30 Joint Practice with Towcester Branch Towcester

Items marked * were unconfirmed as at 3rd February 2009
Italicised events are Guild events