



In Touch

*The Newsletter of the North Bucks Branch of
The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers.*

**The Bletchley band that rang 720 changes of Grandsire doubles on
Wednesday May 18th 1898.**



**Quarterly Meeting
Bletchley 5th December 1998**

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Editorial

Well it's Christmas again already (or so you'd think by the shops. Not even Halloween yet, and Christmas displays – terrible isn't it (DON'T talk to Gareth Grayson about it though)).

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone in the branch a **Merry Christmas** from all the officers, and to once again express my thanks to all those who contributed to this issue of *In Touch*.

Just as a reminder (as I'm sure you have meant to do something), the closing date for the competition for the younger members of your tower closes on 15th January 1999 (2000's getting close isn't it!).

Entries to the competition, to write an article about your tower and bells and anything related to them. (No longer than 2 sides of A4 12 point type).

So for once, I'm not running out of space, so have a great Christmas and Happy New Year.

Until Next issue (probably my last as editor)

Bye



Copy Date for the Next Issue is :-

Monday 11th January 1999

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

NORTH BUCKS BRANCH

Minutes of Quarterly Meeting

held at Hanslope on 5th September 1998

Chairman's Welcome

Doug Hird welcomed everyone to Hanslope for the Quarterly meeting and the chance to ring on this fine ring of eight

In Memoriam

Doug Hird asked all to stand in silence for a few moments to remember Doug O'Neale who had recently died. He remarked that we shall miss Doug's enthusiasm, not only for ringing, but also at Guild meetings, where he was one of our branch representatives.

Apologies for Absence

Received from Malcolm Hooton, Bill Yates, Ann Fletcher, Andrew Spencer, Brian Newman, Alan and Tine Marchbank

Minutes of previous Meeting

These were published in the September edition of In Touch. The chairman complemented the editor on the production of this edition. It was agreed that they be taken as read and agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting, and there were no matters arising which had been carried over at the previous meeting from the Annual General Meeting

Election of New Members

Nominations had been received proposing two members -

Tower	Name	Proposed by	Seconded by
Newport Pagnell	Emily Payne	Gareth Grayson	Catherine Stacey
Olney	Hugh Stewart	Charles Knight	Sheila Ware

Both were elected without dissent. The Chairman welcomed them to the branch and Guild.

Officers reports

Secretary - The December Branch practice has had to be re-arranged and will now be held at Calverton

Ringling Master - The branch retained the Inter Branch trophy as already reported in In Touch. Congratulation to all who took part. The final of the Guild 6 Bell competition is coming up in October. Hanslope, as winners of our branch competition, would normally go to represent the branch. They are unable to raise a band on the day of the final due to other commitments. Buckingham, who came second, are also struggling to raise a band. The Ringing master queried whether he should ask Shenley if Buckingham were unable to get a band. The meeting agreed that Shenley should be asked if Buckingham failed to get a band. The branch practice at Lillingstone Lovell in August was one of the focus on rounds and call changes was very well attended and very worthwhile with several new ringers attending a branch event for the first time. The next focus on rounds and call changes will be at Calverton in December.

Treasurer - All towers have now paid their 1998 subscriptions. We currently have 207 members, 174 adults and 33 juniors. The balance in the branch account is £755.94. A small amount from this will go to the Guild Bell Fund from the raffles.. The raffle today raised £16.00 for the Bell Fund.

Guild Rep - No Guild Rep was present. The Guild Steward gave a short review of some of the items which had been discussed and recent Guild meetings. The Guild service booklet had reached the stage of some photo copied sheets, but copyright issues had not been addressed. Further drafts are unlikely before the Guild AGM next year. There had been some discussion about raising the Guild subscription. This will also be discussed at the branch secretary's meeting in October and unless they push for a rise, it will probably be unaltered next year. The revised Guild rules had been agreed at the AGM and were being printed. These do not include the Striking competition rules. These are being addressed separately and a draft has been prepared by John Wells.

Millennium Progress Report

Doug Hird reported that not much progress had been made. He has begun to talk to Tower Captains and ringers generally as to how we can move the project forward. We have also received 750 colour leaflets promoting ringing to be distributed to churches and other localities where they may be seen by non-ringers. These leaflets are available to take away from the meeting. More can be obtained if required.

Looking forward to the millennium, it is becoming apparent that having sufficient ringers numerically to ring all the bells within the branch will not be enough. Many ringers will wish to ring at their own towers and not be sent somewhere else to ring on the day.

The Diocese has yet to send out guidelines to the clergy regarding the services on New Years Day 2000. Joint Benefices may well choose to gather in one of their churches rather than hold a service at each of the churches. Until such things are known, detailed planning of the ringing cannot be undertaken.

Some discussion followed on helping bands to progress. There are quite a few ringers, not just branch officers, willing to visit towers on practice nights to help out. An alternative way to progress is to join forces with another tower nearby. You may well double the number of learners at a practice but you will also double the number of helpers as well and provide the additional strength to make progress.

Forthcoming Events

Richard Stanworth gave details of the forthcoming branch practice at North Crawley

Any Other Business

Some towers had not received details of the training day at Bletchley. This is a Guild event which happens to be arranged in our branch. No other details are known other than those given on the notice sent out to towers.

David Middleton extended a welcome to anyone who would care to come to the Great Brickhill on a Monday

Andrew Jeffries asked if it wasn't a suitable time to try running the beginners Striking Competition again as we now had quite a few learners in the branch and this would encourage them with their ringing. It was agreed that the officers will discuss this and then raise it again at the December quarterly meeting.

A request was made to arrange the Officers meeting at a fixed time prior to each quarterly meeting. It was agreed that this was not a matter for the meeting and that the officers get together after the meeting and arrange the meeting date amongst themselves.

David Joyce announced that he had books available for sale at the back of the room.

Vote of Thanks

The Chairman then thanked the Hanslope ringers and all those involved with the service for arranging the ringing, tea and service. Members showed their appreciation in the usual manner.

The meeting was then formally closed

OBITUARY

Douglas John O'Neale

Doug O'Neale died suddenly as he walked through Milton Keynes City Centre on 4th September.

Doug, who had been involved with ringing at Great Linford since the rehanging in 1992, actually learned to ring in 1995 and very quickly became a reliably and dependable member of the Band.

A logical and practical person, Doug had little difficulty in understanding the principle theories of change ringing and he soon progressed to ringing the standard Doubles methods. An experienced manager from the computing industry, he was not shy to use his skills in the management of the Branch. At the first AGM he attended was elected as a Guild Representative. This brought new towers for him to ring at and new experiences to gain. During the recent debate about mini-rings he was one of those who were able to try out such an installation. In true Doug style, his summary of the experience reflected a balanced view.

He was very keen to see the social aspects of the exercise develop. A proficient cook he enjoyed the ringers curry nights and bar-b-cues hosting some at his own home and contributing in some way to them all. It was Doug who re established the 'quick drink' after practice night especially after he stopped working in London and established his own business in Milton Keynes.

At the funeral service held at on 15th September the church was filled with friends, relatives and colleges, many standing despite the additional seating. The Guild was represented by the Master and the Secretary and the Guild banner was displayed in the Chancel. Half muffled ring started as the coffin left the church with a band representing the Tower, Branch and Guild ringing a well struck touch of Cambridge Minor and continued for almost an hour. In the evening the practice was cancelled and instead the local ringers rang a half-muffled Quarter of Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles.

SAINT ANDREWS CHURCH, GREAT LINFORD

on

Tuesday September 15th 1998, in 51 minutes

was rung

A Quarter Peal of

1260 DOUBLES (780 Plain Bob, 480 Grandsire)

Treble. Lindsay R Atkinson.

4. Christine E Marchbank

2. Godfrey L Foat.

5. Alan J. Marchbank.

3. Brian Newman.

Tenor. Ros. Tyrrell.

Conducted by Alan J. Marchbank.

**Rung half-muffled, following the funeral of Douglas John O'Neale,
a member of the St Andrews band, who died suddenly
on 4th September 1998.**

From The Chairman

What can we do about Year 2000

The good news is that we have about 200 ringers and about 200 bells.

The bad news is that ringers are not concentrated where the bells are concentrated, and the worst case scenario is that everyone is going to ring exclusively at their home tower.

Several of our towers have no ringers and no prospect of recruiting any. Most of these are in villages with small populations and little interest in the church. Some towers now have new bands but some of our existing bands have dwindled. This is how it has always been. Efforts to build up one band are often balanced by the completely unconnected failure of another, although such failures may not be entirely unconnected. Strong bands have historically reacted negatively towards the teaching of learners. The small number of ringers who teach, being too thinly spread, can only spend so much time on experienced ringers. After all, once ringers have been ringing for a few years, they should be able to show a little independence and make progress without being spoon-fed. The teachers tend to concentrate on those with potential over those who are already ringing.

So what can be done? As with any project, we have a choice.

1 Work harder. It is hard to imagine how this can be done as just about all of us are already ringing as much as is reasonable. We don't have the resources.

2 Work at our current rate but deliver less than was originally proposed. What was originally proposed was that all bells would be rung simultaneously on the 1st Jan 2000. It seems unlikely that simultaneous church services can be achieved so ringing for them

all would be futile. We have our best coverage in areas of population so only a few people will notice that some of the more obscure rings didn't ring at the appointed time.

3 Work at our current rate but deliver late. If we wait for another year we will actually be ringing on the correct date!

My preference is for the second option. It will keep the majority of the population happy, if they notice at all, and we can mop up the obscure rings later in the day like we usually do. Any volunteers for chiming at Cold Brayfield?

Doug Hird

Tyringham New Village Band

Tyringham has lacked a local band now for many years but an interest in ringing in the village is becoming evident. Teaching of the new band is planned to start in the near future so a self sufficient local band could be in place for Easter.

Olney Branch Organised Bob Doubles Course at Clifton Reynes

Can you imagine ringing plain courses of Plain Bob Doubles for 21/2 hours? Well we did, and it was most productive. Paul Hulley had previously succeeded in fighting his way through a couple of plain courses during the previous Thursday night practice at Olney. After a whole Saturday afternoon at Clifton Reynes ringing with a competent band, some quite presentable ringing was managed. By the end, Paul was able to ring the observation bell to two 120's with minimal prompting.

Doug Hird

Ringling Master's Report

Branch Practices

Once a quarter the branch practice will focus on rounds and call changes, especially for our new recruits as part of the Millennium Project. Please come along and join in as the more experience you can get of ringing on different bells, the quicker you will improve and gain in confidence.

All are welcome, and don't forget to bring your instructor to help out. We can only make a success of these practices if we also have experienced ringers to help and provide a strong framework around the less experienced ringers

The next focus on call changes is on **18th December at Calverton**

We will always ring plain hunt, plain bob and Grandsire at any branch practice for those who request it, so don't be put off if you can't ring the special method. This is merely a focus for those who wish to try something different.

Training Sessions

If you would like help at your tower over the next year then please let the Ringing Master know and he will see what can be done. Please remember however that we all have commitments to our own towers and can only help you out when we have the time available, so don't expect an instant response to your request for help. Please note that at any tower where we come to help we will expect to run the ringing and attempt to structure the session to give most benefit to those present.

Anyone who is able to help out at other towers on their practice night, please let me know as there are one or two towers in need of help to progress with change ringing.

Richard Stanworth

Secretary's Report

**Quarterly Meeting at Bletchley
Saturday 5th December 1998**

4:00 Ringing
4:30 Service
5:00 Tea
Business Meeting

Names for tea to Paul & Peggy Faithfull on (01908 - 379025) by Tuesday 1st December 1998.

Guild Rules

The revamped Guild rules have now arrived!

There will be one copy per member and these will be sent out to tower correspondents shortly.

Please ask your tower correspondent for your copy.

Annual Report

It's Annual Report time again!

If you did not like the way your name appeared in the report last year, then please let me know how you wish it to be printed, otherwise it will be submitted as in previous years.

Could I also ask you to send me any change of tower correspondent's addresses, phone numbers and any revised ringing times.

A copy of the information which will appear in the report will be available to check at the December Quarterly Meeting at Bletchley. Thanks

Bellhandling Video

The branch now has a copy of the video produced by the Central Council entitled 'Bellhandling - a tutor's companion'. This is aimed at those teaching bellhandling but may also be helpful to those learning to ring.

The video may be borrowed from the secretary free of charge. However a deposit of £5 will be required against safe return of the video.

Helen Stanworth

The Bucks Standard 10th January 1891

Strike Among Bell Ringers - On Sunday last a strike occurred amongst the bell ringers of the parish church, and in consequence the bells were rung for morning service by Messrs E and H Langley, the vicar's sons. In the evening several other gentlemen undertook the duty. It appears that annually the bell ringers receive a gift of £3 from the churchwardens, which, on this occasion was given out by Mr. T. T. Coles the parish churchwarden, a sovereign of which the men alleged at night was a bad one, being simply an ordinary card counter Mr. Coles being certain that all the coins he gave were good, refused to give another. In consequence, the men neglected, as is their custom, to ring out the old year and ring in the new, and on Sunday again were not at their posts. The vicar and churchwardens have now discharged them all.

Doug Hird

“Listen to that!”

Tales from Newport Pagnell

We were unfortunate one Sunday evening when the stay on our third broke after weeks of crash landings. This was expected and the problem was solved in advance so as not to disrupt our evening ringing. The last thing we want on a Sunday eve is a rope we can not reach. We usually manage to replace a stay within two days and this gave us a stay on the bell for Wednesday. The problem with stays at Newport and Shenley are that they have to be almost exactly the right length. There is no room for stays that are too long (of course this applies to Middleton and Bletchley and one of the bells at Loughton) as the slider does not allow it. The sliders are great blocks of metal that “slide” along a metal rail, similar to a monorail but without the train.

On the evening of our practice I checked to see that the stay was going to fit comfortably into the parking bay, but to our dismay it was too long. Thankfully it was not long enough to wedge it self as has happened before. This however, wobbled my plans for the evening, and from there I made the practice up. So there you have it, you wanted a normal practice, and you don’t get it. You have a ring of eight; and you can only ring seven. If you want to practice plain bob doubles well, who wants to turn the back five in? I could have abandoned the practice, but that’s boring. The practice was interesting and eventful yet we all survived.

There is a wide variety of “I prefer” among all ringers yet some of these are not musically suitable. One bell can be out of action in the eight, or you may only have seven ringers. So which seven if any at all do you ring? If like us the third is out, then you can’t exactly ring the back six but you do get the best ring of seven, musically. Being a fairly average piano player, I have a vague concept about the tuneful quality of music and what is good rhythm and that which is not. What then, from my point of view is the best ring of seven, and why?

Missing	Autonomous Comment
Treble (1 st = 2 nd)	The second is what the tenor is not. Put the two notes together then they are only a clash. Clashing with bells that are slightly out of tune is not a musical quality.
2 nd	Because of the note gap between the 1 and 3 this seven sounds too powerless and is also hard to strike. Front bells should ring quite quickly and this is hard to achieve with a prominent loss.
3 rd	A good strong start. If the 4 moves in, it hard to notice a change in rhythm. The fact that the 1 and 2 are together gives it clear power.
4 th	Doesn’t sound bad. Once you get to the fifth you are reaching lower hum notes (more dominants) and that distinguishes the gap too much.
5 th	Nice start with the front four bells. The back three must be rung slowly to compensate for the missing treble to the back bells. Too quick and again the low hum notes dominate the gap.
6 th	This has the same effect as missing the 3. The back 7 and 8 are together, finishing the rounds off evenly. It sounds slightly better if the seven and eight slow down in turn.
7 th	Not bad. To get the right effect, all the bells should slow down as much as possible. This is because of the boom notes are given time to develop.
8 th	FORGET IT! If there is a need, hold the treble right up at both leads. This will compensate for no tenor.

The best seven? Miss the 3, 6 or 7 and concentrate on rhythm and it gives good results.

Gareth Grayson

More Musical Notes.

This is in defence of a six, which is probably thought of as quite vile. The middle six is musically better than the front six of an eight. This is because 3,4,5,6 and 7 create a true minor five, if you add the 2nd then you won't get a true minor six but it is the closest you will get to a proper six on an eight. By proper I mean a range of notes that actually create a scale. The front six does not create a simple scale because it is a mixture of front notes. Therefore, although strange to the ear, the middle six does not sound that bad.

Gareth Grayson

Downs Barn The Micro-Band

Of the great crowd of 20 or so enthusiastic youngsters who tried out ringing at the start of Summer, we have retained three. Samantha Louise Mulcahy, Nickki Dowset and Glenn Thomason, along with Karen Hillary who started a few weeks earlier. Progress is now rapid and reflects their enthusiasm and willingness to take the initiative. Practices usually start with "Can I do...?" and after surprisingly little effort on my part, they usually can. Guided by the little yellow books and cards, new challenges are sought out and sorted out. It won't be long before we can get to work with some new learners.

Doug Hird

QUARTER FAILED PEAL INSTEAD!!

Lathbury were blessed with their very first visiting ringer on a Sunday morning. It was quite a shock to the resident band as he strode in without even thinking that we might not realise he was a ringer. His greeting was equally obscure, "hello, I can ring surprise" at Lathbury, we didn't think so. Then as if it wasn't obvious, "how many bells have you got, 6?" He rang okay and Newport was short for a quarter so it seemed a reasonable answer. It was a 4:30 collection and the method was Stedman, which after three attempts failed miserably. A start with Grandsire to relax us and then into Stedman. You could here the rhythm stop as some of us forgot what to do. A quarter of Stedman on the back six at Newport? NO, we didn't think so either. So we rang a Peal instead, yes a Peal. Well more like a Devon Peal of Called Changes. Quite a sound came from the tower that evening, the harmonics rang out beautifully and it was incredibly good fun.

Catherine Stacy

PEALS & QUARTERS

QUARTERS

?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

Newport Pagnell

SS Peter & Paul

Sunday 4th October

60 changes of Devon Call

Changes, 20 minutes

- 1 Richard ?
- 2 Catherine Stacy
- 3 Charles Knight
- 4 Gareth Grayson
- 5 Hugh Butler
- 6 Doug B Hird

Rung for evensong.

?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

Stoke Goldington

St. Peter

Monday 28th September

1998

1260 Stedman Doubles

- 1 Sheila Watts
- 2 Natalie Green
- 3 Ian Thompson
- 4 Jonathan Griggs
- 5 Roy Keeves (Conductor)
- 6 Owen Warren

Rung as a compliment to
Owen Warren on his 80th
birthday

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

North Bucks Branch

Calendar 1998/9

NOVEMBER

6th	8.00	Branch Officers Meeting	
14th	10.00 & 2.00	<i>Bell Handling Workshop</i>	<i>Bletchley</i>
20th	7.30	Branch Practice Special Method = St Simon's & St Martins Doubles	Fenny Stratford
28th		<i>Autumn General Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Thatcham</i>

DECEMBER

5 th	3.30	Quarterly Meeting	Bletchley
18 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Focus on Rounds & Call Changes Please note change of <u>venue</u> for December branch practice.	Calverton

1999

JANUARY

15 th	7.30	Branch Practice Special Method = Little Bob Major	Stony Stratford
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FEBRUARY

19 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Special Method = Winchendon Place & St Nicholas Doubles	Thornborough
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MARCH

6 th	*3.30	Annual General Meeting	Downs Barn
6th		<i>Youth Training Day</i>	<i>EBSB</i>
13th		<i>Spring General Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Pangbourne</i>
19 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Focus on Rounds & Call Changes	Milton Keynes Village

Items marked * were unconfirmed as at 12 October 1998

Italicised events are Guild events

Other Diary Dates

November

14th		ODG Central Bucks Branch Practice Reverse Canterbury & All Saints Doubles	Padbury
28th	7.00	PDG Towcester Branch Practice	Bradden

December

5th	7.00 for 7.30	PDG Towcester Branch Dinner	Towcester Town Hall
12th		ODG Central Bucks Branch Practice	Leighton Buzzard

January

9th		ODG Central Bucks Branch Practice	Long Crendon
30th	3.30	PDG Towcester Branch AGM	Wicken

February

13th		ODG Central Bucks Branch AGM	Aylesbury
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Any information about forthcoming practices etc. for inclusion in this calendar must be sent to the secretary 1 week prior to the copy date for the next issue of the newsletter, or direct to the editor.