



In Touch

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



**AGM – Downs Barn
Saturday 6th March 1999**

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Editorial

Hello everyone for my last time as Editor of In Touch.

I will unfortunately be unable to continue as editor due to School (and hopefully University) commitments and so I will resign at the AGM.

I have enjoyed my tenure as editor, brief as it has been, and would like to thank everyone who has contributed. (It's made my life a whole lot easier!)

Thanks Again

I have been approached by the UK Working Group on Landmines, who would like, on Monday 1st of March, a peal or quarter to be rung. Either muffled – in remembrance of those killed and injured by landmines - or un-muffled – in celebration of the Ottawa Treaty, banning the use of landmines which comes into force on this day.

I have enclosed a few copies of the information flyer with each tower's copies of In Touch this month. This gives you contact numbers and addresses for more information if you require it.

Thankyou.

For the Last time - Bye

Andrew

Copy Date for the Next Issue is :-

Monday 5th April 1999

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

NORTH BUCKS BRANCH

Minutes of Quarterly Meeting

held at Bletchley on 5th December 1998

Chairman's Welcome

Doug Hird welcomed everyone to December for the Quarterly meeting on a not particularly pleasant afternoon.

Apologies for Absence

Received from Bill Yates, Ann Fletcher, Andrew Spencer and Gareth Grayson.

Minutes of previous Meeting

These were published in the December edition of In Touch. The chairman hoped that everyone had had a chance to read them before the meeting. 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.

Election of New Members

Nominations had been received proposing four members -

Tower	Name	Proposed by	Seconded by
Stony Stratford	David Scrutton Georgina Eales Victoria Eales Charlotte Eales	Malcolm Hooton	David Joyce

All were elected without dissent. As none of them were present at the meeting the Chairman asked Malcolm Hooton to welcome them to the Guild on behalf of the branch.

Officers reports

Secretary - As mentioned in In Touch, copies of the information which will appear in the Annual Report were being circulated at the meeting. Members were asked to check this and mark up any corrections to names, tower correspondents, or ringing times. The branch copy of the Central Council Bellhandling Video may be borrowed free of charge from the Secretary; however a deposit of £5 will be required against its safe return.

Ringing Master - Only a brief report. An intensive training session was held at Clifton Reynes in October for Paul Hulley, one of the Olney band, to make progress with Plain Bob Doubles. This

was a very successful afternoon for Paul, although it did rather numb the minds of the helpers ringing non-stop plain courses on bob doubles! This was held as the result of a specific request with a specific aim in mind. If anyone else is interested in a similar training session then please let the Ringing Master know.

Treasurer - The balance in the branch account is £698.81. A small amount from this will go to the Guild Bell Fund from the raffles. Current membership is 207, 174 being adults and 33 juniors. The raffle today raised £7.50 for the Bell Fund.

Guild Rep - Doug Hird and Alan Marchbank attended the Guild General Committee Meeting in November. The main points discussed were the Guild Service Book, or more likely, collection of material suitable for use at Guild Services; The re-issue of Tower affiliation certificates; and the Millennium Project. Particular concern was expressed by a number of branches as to the practicality of simultaneous ringing on 1st January 2000, given that some ringers may well be working or away from their home tower. In addition, it was thought unlikely that ringers recruited now will be sufficiently experienced by then to ring at other than their home towers.

Millennium Progress Report

Doug Hird reported that another survey was being circulated by the Guild to establish how the project was progressing.

Some discussion followed on what we could achieve within the North Bucks branch. Recruiting new bands from scratch is extremely difficult and almost impossible in some areas of the branch due to the population of some villages being almost entirely dormitory and Milton Keynes people going back to their original home towns at holiday times, such that much of Milton Keynes is almost deserted at Christmas, Easter etc.

It is very unlikely that we will be able to ring in all the towers in the branch at midday on 1st January 2000. The best that we are likely to achieve is to ring in as many towers as we can at midday, and then to go round and ring at all the other towers later in the day, so that all the bells will be rung on New Year's Day. This is similar to what has been achieved for previous major celebrations such as the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. The major benefit to come out of the Millennium project is to recruit more ringers for Sunday service ringing and thus to work toward one of the major aims of the Guild - the ringing of Church bells for Sundays Services.

Forthcoming Events

Richard Stanworth gave details of the proposal for the Beginners Striking Competition which had been put forward at the previous meeting. It is proposed to hold the event on Friday evening 9th April 1999 at Wavendon. This is at the end of the Easter holidays, so hopefully some of our younger members will be able to take part. It will be a rounds competition, the requirement being to ring round for several minutes. It will be open for complete bands to enter, or for individuals to come along and we will make up teams on the evening. It is proposed to limit the number of experienced ringers to three per team. The exact rules will appear in the next In Touch.

The next Branch practice is at Calverton which will be a Focus on Rounds and Call Changes. All are welcome.

Richard Stanworth also mentioned the Guild Youth Training Day on 6th March. This is also the day of our AGM but there will probably be at least one going from Buckingham. If anyone is interested and wishes to share transport then please get in touch with him.

David Joyce pointed out that on the same Saturday as the Radley Course there will also be another Ringing World Road Show which is well worth a visit.

Any Other Business

Sheila Watts enquired about the publication of the list of ringing times in In Touch. Richard Stanworth said that it is hoped to produce a revised list from the information being collated for the Annual Report, and hopefully this will appear in the next edition of In Touch.

Sheila Ware requested support for the monthly Olney practice held on the fourth Monday of the month. Attendance has been falling off and they would welcome anyone able to attend.

The Secretary had a number of membership certificates for distribution to members.

Hugh Butler reported the Great Brickhill bells are effectively unringable due to some four inches of frame movement when the tenor is rung. It is possible to ring the front three but this is not very melodious. Various fund raising events are being planned during the next year. Doug Hird urged Hugh to seek assistance from the branch when any work is undertaken, as there are members with considerable experience of doing work on bells and it may be possible to save money by providing experienced help when required.

David Joyce requested that the officers consider any vacancies that may arise and notify members so that some thought can be given to finding people willing to serve. At the present time it was known that a new Guild Representative and Newsletter Editor will need to be found.

Vote of Thanks

The Chairman then thanked the Rev. Norman Thorpe for taking the service, the organist who played for use and Paul Faithfull and the Bletchley ringers for making the arrangements and preparing the tea. Members showed their appreciation in the usual manner.

The meeting was then formally closed

(Apologies if these minutes seem to over summarise the meeting during the latter part - the tape recording was not very clear)

From The Chairman

The Millennium

At our December quarterly meeting, we decided on a course of action for the millennium. This course recognised that it would demoralise our membership by setting an impossible goal. It is now clear that several voluntary organisations are facing significant difficulties with the celebrations.

The plan is:

During 1999

To continue to train bands.

To make use of such advertising as there is to recruit for long term Sunday service ringing.

To co-ordinate activities for general ringing on 1st Jan 2000.

During 1st Jan 2000

For towers with bands to ring for the special service.

For these bands to travel to towers without bands and ring throughout the rest of the day.

Here we have an attainable goal. We continue to do what we normally do, we try to gain some benefit from the extra interest and we concentrate on those locations where there are lots of people about to listen.

In hope of excellence

It can be pretty demoralising to spend all year teaching people to ring Rounds, Call Changes and Plain Hunt on five. Well, actually it gets demoralising when you find you have forgotten just how precise your striking has to be to keep up with Stedman Triples at Downs Barn. We have, in the past, tried to keep in trim by organising Branch Surprise Practices.

These worked quite well while people attended but eventually dwindled. They met with the problem that all practices suffer. Attendance is not compulsory so the Ringing Master cannot plan the ringing. A "Method of the month" helps but if someone learns a method and not enough turn up to ring it interest soon decays.

To make sure we have enough ringers, a good approach is to organise quarter peals. That way, there is an achievement if successful and some practice if not. So we are looking to arrange some during the year.

The aims:

Good striking

Good bells

Advanced methods

Quarter Peals

By 2000 we could have a band to compete in the Guild 8-bell competition.

Doug Hird

At Downs Barn

The Micro-band is progressing well with several now ringing Plain Hunt, some even understanding it.

The Christmas holidays were packed with ringing. An outing to Wavendon, Woughton, Fenny Stratford and Stony Stratford was an opportunity to learn and explore. Our thanks to helpers and the towers visited. Christmas ringing clashed with "present frenzy" but enough turned up to ring. Parenst watched as the old year was rung out and the new one rung in and a funeral was concluded with some good half-muffled ringing.

At Tyringham

Good progress is being made on these difficult bells. Two stays have been replaced. One because of a heavy landing and the Treble seemed to have an old weakness, causing it to set heavily. The new stay on this makes it easier to ring for the inexperienced. Individual ringers are now just about able to ring in rounds, provided that the rounds is fairly reliable. Our thanks to all helpers for their efforts.

Doug Aird

Ringing Master's Report

Branch Practices

Where were you all for the focus on call changes at Calverton in December ? Everyone who came to this practice was able to ring at least plain hunt, so the emphasis of the evening was not as advertised.

Once a quarter the branch practice focuses on rounds and call changes, especially for our new recruits who may feel intimidated by everyone ringing changes. 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.

We will always welcome you to the branch practices; they are for the benefit of **ALL** members, whatever level you ring at. Don't forget to bring your instructor to help out. We can only make a success of practices if we also have experienced ringers to help and provide a strong framework around the less experienced ringers

Look in the calendar at the back of the newsletter for the dates of the practices, but in particular the next focus on call changes is at **Milton Keynes Village on 19th March**

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.

Beginners Striking Competition

It is planned to hold a beginners competition at Wavendon on Friday 9th April, starting at 7.30 p.m. prompt.

Everyone is welcome. Come along and join in. You do not have to be in a band to enter. Come along and we will make up bands on the night. Complete bands are also welcome, so long as they conform to the rules below.

1. Each band will consist of six ringers and may have no more than three experienced ringers
2. Teams will be approved by the Ringing Master, whose decision on team membership will be final
3. The competition will consist of each team ringing rounds for three minutes.

4. Up to two minutes practice per team will be allowed
5. The start of the test piece will be notified to the judges by ringing two whole pulls on the treble
6. A judge will be appointed for the competition. The judge's decision is final

Richard Stanworth

Secretary's Report

Annual General Meeting at Downs

Barn

Saturday 6th March 1999

3:30 Ringing
4:30 Service
5:00 Tea
5:45 Business Meeting

Names for tea to Helen Stanworth (on 01280 814172) by Wednesday 3rd March 1999.

Election of Officers

We will be looking for some new officers at the AGM. There are definitely vacancies for Newsletter Editor and a Guild Representative. If you would like to get involved with the running of the branch then please let one of the present officers know so that we have some idea of who would like to volunteer their services. The elections are for all posts, not just the vacancies. It would make a change to have a contest for the posts.

Bellhandling Video

The branch 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.

Other Diary Dates

February

13th
Branch AGM

ODG Central Bucks
Aylesbury

Any information about forthcoming practices etc. for inclusion in this calendar should be sent to the secretary 1 week prior to the copy date for the next issue of the newsletter, or direct to the editor.

Helen Stanworth

Olney Monthly Eight Bell Practice

As some of you will be aware, for the last few years we have been holding a monthly practice at Olney. These practices were started at a time when none of the eight bell towers in the branch had a very strong band and it was felt that by pooling our resources we could provide an opportunity for some more advanced eight bell method ringing.

The practices have been well supported by a loyal core of people [not all from the North Bucks Branch] and also by some members of the Branch who come along on an occasional basis. However, in recent months our numbers have fallen and, if these practices are going to continue, we really need some additional support from Branch members.

This is not a practice for learners, but providing you can ring at least one method on eight bells you are welcome to join us.

Why not come along and take advantage of a chance to advance your eight bell ringing?

The practices are held on the fourth Monday of the month from 7.30pm to 9.00pm.

[Note - If the fourth Monday falls on a Bank Holiday then the practice is bought forward to the third Monday of the month].

The dates for the next four months are as follows:

Monday 25 January 1999

Monday 22 February 1999

Monday 22 March 1999

Monday 26 April 1999

If you require any more information please give me a ring on 01908 510105 or contact Sheila Ware on 01234 713667

Roy. Kears

Campanology, Musicality and Tonality: the nitty-gritty!

In response to the article in the last issue of 'In Touch', here are a few musical reasons for avoiding the middle six of an eight.

There are three possible rings of 6 in an 8-bell tower: the back, middle and front sixes. For the sake of simplicity, let us use the 'white notes' of a piano keyboard for our imaginary ring of 8: thus the notes from treble down to tenor are C B A G F E D C. These notes form a one octave major scale and it is the pattern of intervals between each note (i.e. the order of tones and semitones) that defines the sequence of notes as a major scale. This pattern, namely STTTSTT, has been the foundation for all Western music since the 17th century.

The back six of our eight are a true six (a true major six to be specific): the notes are A G F E D C. They are musically the best six to ring, albeit the heaviest six. The reason that they are a true six is because they are the lowest 6 notes of the C major scale, ending on the 'home note' of C. The pattern of tones and semitones from treble to tenor is TTSTT and the tonality of the six is very firmly fixed to the 'home note' of C.

The middle six of our eight is very poor by comparison. The notes B A G F E D (bells 2 to 7) do not form the lowest 6 notes of a major or minor scale, in fact they are correctly called the Dorian Mode – a medieval scale that declined in use in the 16th century. The pattern of intervals from treble to tenor is TTTST and to our Westernised ears there is no clear tonality, i.e. there is no musical 'pull' towards any particular home note. Although all 6 notes

can be found in the C major scale, the note C is not heard at all. If you are able to play the first few changes of Plain Bob for example, the sound is truly awful to a musical ear, and sounds inexplicably uncomfortable even to an untrained ear.

The front six of our eight sound the notes C B A G F E and the pattern of intervals is STTTS. Although they are not the lowest 6 notes of a major scale, there is a strong sense of C major tonality. This is because the first note, or treble, is C itself and the tenor note E belongs to the chord of C major. This six possibly sounds better rung as minor rather than doubles, but by all accounts the sound is far more musical than the middle six.

If the above all sounds too technical, then here are the results of a test which puts the theory into practice. We at Hanslope conducted a small experiment on handbells, using a blind-folded guinea-pig – a proficient ringer, but of self-confessed limited musical knowledge. We rang plain hunt on the three sixes possible within an eight and asked for a comment on each. The comments were: first six 'sounded correct'; second six 'sounded terrible, awful, not at all musical'; third six 'OK, quite good but not as good as the first 6'. The order that we rang in, need it be said, was back six, middle six, then front six.

Of course there is a far simpler point that should not be overlooked: if the back six (the true six and the best option) are too heavy – then simply ring the lightest six available: the front six!

*Natalie Green
Hanslope*

Bob Doubles Course at Clifton Reynes

A stoic band of local ringers including the branch ringing master recently devoted a large chunk of their Saturday afternoon quality time to guiding me through the obstacle ridden territory of my first method, Bob Doubles.

A succession of half hearted attempts by me to overcome the mysteries of successful BobDoubles ringing had previously convinced my colleagues at Olney that a more intensive session was needed. And so we gathered at Clifton Reynes, on the appointed hour, 2pm, 16th October.

Richard checked my understanding of the basics and off we went. Two and a half hours later I was warm, having been ringing the whole time, Richard was cold, after standing behind me the whole time, and everyone else was just as good at Bob Doubles as they had been when they started. Me? Well I'd rung Bob Doubles on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th several times and finished off with a touch on the third, just. The fog had cleared in my mind, it really is the same method on every bell, and the end result was even rather polished at times (I think). However, although everyone was still being very kind, I think we'd all had enough by that stage.

Of course the biggest test came at 9.30am the next morning, and yes, I did it! My thanks go to Richard and Helen Stanworth and their family, Sheila Watts, Sheila Ware, Charles Knight and Doug Hird. It undoubtedly was the best way to crack the problem.

*Paul Hulley
Olney*

PEALS & QUARTERS

QUARTERS

Maids Moreton
S Edmund
Monday 2nd November
1998
1260 Plain Bob Minor
1 Helen Stanworth
2 Ann Fletcher
3 William Yates
4 Peter Nicholson
5 David Goodger
6 Michael Tinsley (C)
In memoriam George W
Holland

Stowe
Assumption of BVM
Monday 16th November
1998
1260 Grandsire Doubles
1 Ann Fletcher
2 Helen Stanworth
3 Lawrence Gibson
4 David Goodger
5 Willaim Yates (C)
6 Peter Nicholson
To celebrate the
Confirmation of three lads
from the parish who were
confirmed
at Buckingham the
previous day by the
Bishop of Buckingham

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

North Bucks Branch

Calendar 1999

FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

6th *3.30 Annual General Meeting Downs Barn

6th Youth Training Day EBSB

13th Spring General Committee Meeting Pangbourne

19th 7.30 Branch Practice Milton Keynes Village
Focus on Rounds & Call Changes

APRIL

3rd Handbell Day Reading

9th *7.30 Beginners Striking Competition Wavendon

16th *7.30 Branch Practice Wicken
Special Method = Cambridge Surprise Major

17th Radley Course Radley

MAY

3rd Guild Eight Bell Striking Competition Witney & Woodstock

15th Afternoon ringing Shenley*
Guild AGM Loughton*
Christ the Cornerstone
Evening ringing Downs Barn*

21st *7.30 Branch Practice Lathbury
Special Method : Reverse Canterbury

JUNE

5th *3.30 Quarterly Meeting & Striking Competition Bradwell

5th 10 Bell Course (S. Royal) Bicester Banbury

18th *7.30 Branch Practice Great Linford
Focus on Rounds & Call Changes

JULY

<i>10th</i>		<i>Guild Festival</i>	<i>Gt Missenden</i>
<i>10th</i>		<i>Guild 10 Bell Striking Competition</i>	<i>Long Crendon</i>
16 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Special Method : Double Oxford	Twyford
31 st	*6-8.00	Striking Comp'n v Towcester Branch	Wicken

AUGUST

20 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Special Method : Grandsire Triples	Newton Longville
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SEPTEMBER

4 th	*3.30	Quarterly Meeting Evening ringing	Olney Lavendon
<i>10-12th</i>		<i>Easthampstead Course</i>	<i>Easthampstead</i>
17 th	*7.30	Branch Practice Focus on Rounds & Call Changes	Stowe

Items marked * were unconfirmed as at 14 January 1999

Italicised events are Guild events