

OXFORD DIOCESEAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS
NORTH OXON BRANCH - QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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St Michael's, Lavendon

ST MICHAELS LAVENDON

Building

St. Michaels has occupied its dominant position in the centre of Lavendon for over 900 years.

The lower three stages of the Tower, Nave, and western half of chancel were completed in the 11th century.

The Christian builders were astute enough to use an old pagan site. Put it under new management, so to speak.

Major work was carried out in the mid 13th century when advanced building techniques were used to pierce the nave walls and erect both North and South aisles.

Pleasant early English lancet windows were put into the chancel at this time.

In late 15th century, porches were added to both North and South aisles, the clerestory added, aisle windows inserted and a belfry stage added to the Tower.

The interior of the church is splendidly simple. Items of interest are an ornamented 12th century piscina in the Lady Chapel. A graceful early English piscina in the South wall of the chancel and 2 simple sedilia below the perpendicular windows.

Bells

The bells are an easy going six. Tenor 10½ cwt.

4 of the bells date from 1689 and were cast by Alexander Rigby of Stamford.

In 1974 they were augmented to six with a new treble, and the cracked fifth recast and hung in a new frame by Taylors.

Tom Flemming took on the mammoth task of training a new team from scratch, and did this to such good effect that a team is now always available for Sunday ringing.

Practice Wednesdays 7.30 - 9.00 p.m.

Branch course

The branch course, postponed from November, will be held on Saturday, March 26 at St Mary's, Woughton between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. There will be courses for those willing to learn to Plain Hunt, and for those wishing to learn Plain Bob Doubles.

Names to Brian Baldwin, 28 Passmore, Tinkers Bridge North, Milton Keynes, Bucks, telephone Milton Keynes 670579 by March 12. We also need helpers - names to Brian, please.

Bonus for helpers Whilst the other courses are doing their theory, John Murray will instruct a course on how to conduct - with a chance to put theory into practice at the practical session.

Easthampstead experiences

On Friday 24th September 1982, having quelled for a while my apprehensions about spending 3 days with a group of complete strangers, I set off for Easthampstead. Along the way I collected a 16 year old to whom I'd agreed to give a lift, and who I hoped would be joining me on the Plain Hunt course. No such luck! He was on to elementary conducting. Not very good for the old ego.

Arriving at Warfield in plenty of time, Bobbie May established who we all were and in next to no time I was feeling quite at home ringing rounds, albeit on 10 bells for the first time. After lunch we separated into our groups and in the company of Marie Cross and her band of helpers, we six learners moved back to Warfield. In a strange, dream-like atmosphere we showed, on silenced bells, what we could do. Amid a welter of friendly criticism and encouragement we were then made to do what we could do well. Then on to Shottesbrooke, a splendid memorial - filled church standing parkland. This time the emphasis was on our ears, ringing rounds and call changes with our backs to the rest of the band.

At last, we moved on to Easthampstead Park to be allocated our rooms, unpack and re-assemble for dinner, a well prepared and adequate meal but not really worth any further comment. After a brief run-down of the layout of Easthampstead Park and its delights, into the Orangery for 'The theory of plain hunting.' (Wish I'd thought to take some squared paper and coloured pens - but we managed).

After this, there was a choice of activities and we settled for a trip round 'The Towers of Britain' on slides in the company of Bill Butler. Very enlightening; given the difficulties of access to some ringing rooms or the strange situation of them when you do arrive, it's a wonder that some bells get rung at all. It merely confirmed my suspicion that we really are a bunch of head-cases after all!

The onset of a cold meant I had to settle for an early night so I missed the get-together for handbell ringing.

On Saturday, after kippers for breakfast, it was back to the Orangery for more theory and some plain hunting on handbells. Then, after coffee, it was out to Binfield to meet our helpers for more practical ringing.

The talents of our small group ranged from those with a simple understanding of plain hunt to those who could only ring rounds. Because of our small numbers, and a dedicated helper to each student, we each had close and individual attention and by the time we reached our third tower of the day, the incredible wooden structure in the east end of Swallowfield church which creaked so ominously, the plain hunters were being talked through Bob Doubles and the rounds ringers dodging happily between adjacent bells, having hunted through the static bells. It was a tired but very happy group that returned to the Park that evening.

On Sunday, we tackled the intricacies of plain hunt on handbells, one of us even managing a bob.

It really was a most enjoyable weekend, and my disappointment that I was the only representative from the North Bucks branch was far outweighed by everybody's friendliness and the terrific encouragement and support I got from Marie Cross and her helpers, not to mention insights gained into the broader aspects of ringing from the evening lectures. Roll on September '83 - I'm going back for more.

Jo Nevill, Beachampton

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NORTH DUCKS BRANCH

The Annual General Meeting of the branch will be held at
Lavendon on Saturday March 5

Programme

- 2.15 All Saint's, Emberton (6), 9 cwt
3.00 St Michael's, Lavendon (6), 11 cwt
4.15 Service, followed by tea and meeting in Lavendon
Village Hall

DRAFT AGENDA

- 1: Apologies for absence & welcome to guests
2: Minutes of last meeting
3: Matters arising therefore.
4: Election of new members
5: Official reports : Secretary
Treasurer
Ringing Masters
6: Election of officers for 1983/4
President Secretary
Chairman Treasurer
Ringing Master Two committee representatives
organist
7: Programme 1983/4
8: Any other business
Any other items of business, and nominations for the various
officer posts, should be in the hands of the secretary before
the meeting.

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