



In Touch

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

November 1983 edition.



NEWPORT PAGNELL: TOWER AND BELLS

The present tower was built in about 1550 replacing an earlier tower at the east end of the present Church. The old tower evidently contained some bells as in 1520 Richard Potter of Newport left 4d to the bells in his will and in 1509 John Warren gave 6d towards making the great bell.

In 1714 Browne Willis recorded that the tower contained five bells which were not very good. These bells were re-cast in 1749 by the Whitechapel bell founders into a ring of eight with a tenor of about 22 cwt. There can be little doubt that the local band made good use of their new bells as the 'Northampton Mercury' contains a number of reports of their activities, their greatest being 'a deal of 5040 changes on 8 bells' on Christmas Eve 1782. In 1793 the Newport band wrote a letter to the paper in which they protested against a letter published in the 'Buckinghamshire Herald' which accused them of accepting payment for ringing to celebrate the surrender of Valenciennes.

The Churchwardens accounts show that the band remained active throughout the nineteenth century. Ringing for special occasions such as Christmas, New Year, Coronations and November 5th was rewarded from Church funds. In 1887 Queen Victoria's Jubilee was celebrated when a new tune machine was made and an extra bell cast by Gillett and Co. of Croydon. In 1911 Gillett and Johnston re-cast and re-hung the bells which were by then showing signs of old age. The first peal on the new bells was rung on July 15th 1911. The band was made up of ringers from Newport Pagnell, Bletchley and Stony Stratford and was "perfectly satisfied with the splendid tone of the bells, the 'go' of them being perfect." The splendid tone is a result of the introduction of 'Simpson' tuning by the Croydon bellfoundry in 1911 making these bells unique in their character among the more traditional rings of North Buckinghamshire.

The band has continued to flourish since then with learners even being taught on the 4th bell with its clapper tied during the silence of World War Two by Reg Howson. The present band is in a healthy state, ringing for Sunday services in the morning and evening. Practices are well attended by the local band and members of nearby bands and a wide range of methods up to Double Norwich and Cambridge Major are rung.

NOTICES ABOUT PRACTICE NIGHTS

All towers should now have received a copy of the Central Council poster for displaying the day and time of practices. Please check that your tower is displaying the notice. Extra copies if needed can be obtained from Doug Hird.

DOWN'S BARN BELLS: A STATUS REPORT

For a long time now you've been hearing little bits about bells in a new church at Downs Barn, Milton Keynes. The project has now reached the stage where serious thought is required.

Outline plans for the church building have been approved and the architect is now involved in the detailed planning. He has been put in contact with the Whitechapel Bellfoundry.

A search for bells is being conducted. A few 'leads' have arisen and are being followed up. If anybody hears of suitable bells becoming available, please let me know. In the first instance we are looking for a ring of six or eight with a tenor of 6 to 12 hundredweight.

A group of people is to be formed to handle fund raising and anything else that may be required. Again, any volunteers, please contact me.

David Ockwell

BARN DANCE

Another highly successful barn dance was held at Wavendon Village Hall on Saturday 9th July. Over a hundred people gathered for an energetic evening of dancing under the guidance of caller John Todman, to the tunes of Music Folk. Even the extreme heat could not dim our enthusiasm, although the bar did good business as perspiring dancers sought to quench their thirst. Even without the expertise of supercook Philippa Harrison (now learning Chinese cookery in Hong Kong) the food was as delicious as ever and our thanks go to Norma, Margaret, Angela and Anne for their hard work in preparing and serving it. The evening raised a total of £55 towards the bells for Downs Barn. Thanks are also due to the organisers.

We look forward to another enjoyable barn dance next year!

DIARY

BRANCH PRACTICES

December 2nd Chicheley
 16th *Olney*
January 6th Drayton Parslow
 20th Bletchley
February 3rd Buckingham
 17th Olney
March 3rd A.C.M. at Simpson

BRANCH OFFICERS

President: Very Reverend John Bone.
 Archdeacon of Buckingham

Chairman: Brian Baldwin, 28 Passmore,
 Tinkers Bridge North. (MK 670579)

Treasurer: Brian Baldwin

Secretary: Doug Hird, 19 Priory Street,
 Newport Pagnell. (MK 614741)

Joint David Ockwell, 38 Walsh's Manor.

Ringin Stantonbury. (MK 315816)

Masters: Derek Stainsby, 32A Bradwell Road,
 Loughton (Shenley Church End 492)

Committee John Murray, 1 Brookfield Cottages,

Reps: Primrose Lane, Old Bradwell. (MK 312539)
 Chris Barnett, 20 Passmore.
 Tinkers Bridge North. (MK 606022)