

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1994

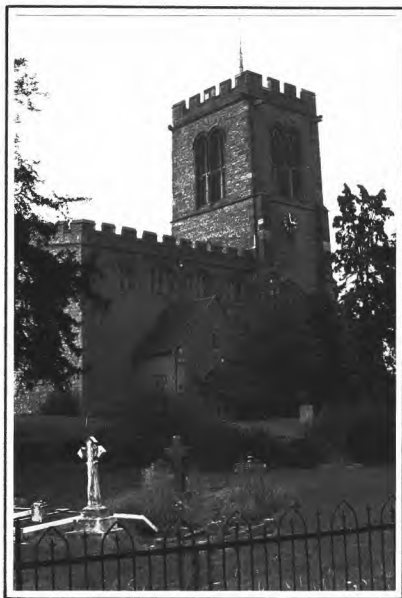
# IN TOUCH

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The Newsletter of the North Bucks Branch  
Of  
The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers

Founded 11th June 1904

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Special feature - Chicheley

# EDITORIAL

What is it about archaeological In Touch Editors? No sooner do they start to produce good results with the Branch newsletter than someone finds them a job in some far flung part of the country! Ok, so it is hard for the North Bucks Branch to match the experience of hundreds of skeletons, or prehistoric landscapes but we do try. Anyway, it is down to the humble In Touch reporter to put this issue together.

In the long term, however, the In Touch production team will be moving to Bournemouth. To produce a local newsletter you do have to be in touch with the branch and, while we still intend to do that, we will still miss out on some of what is going on.

In March next year the Branch will be electing a new team of officers. Could you take over In Touch? Think about it now. At the very least it gives you a good excuse to nose around other people's towers!

So, what do we have in this issue? Items about Castlethorpe and Chicheley, Simulators, a puzzle, ringing at Lathbury and Olney, some useful articles for those of us who are still learning and lots more! So on with the nosiness..

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# CASTLETHORPE

A number of years ago, when I was young and inquisitive, I was surprised to discover that the single bell at Gayhurst was hung for full circle ringing. Now, I had seen rings of three, four, five, six and eight but a ring of one seemed a little odd. After all wasn't full circle ringing developed so that bells could change positions, so what is the point if there is no-one else to change with?

I gave this no more thought until Scott Ayers, being young and inquisitive, told me that the bell at Castlethorpe looked like it was ringable, "with a wheel and stay and everything." This indeed turns out to be the case. The bell, has been hung with traditional fittings in a wooden frame. It has a few more modern features though. It has a modern design of clapper (no nasty old cast in crown staple) and ball bearings. According to the mouldings on the bearings, the work was carried out by the Whitechapel foundry. Unfortunately, the bad news is that the bell still can't be rung up. The stay is about two inches too long and hits the frame! We did draw a bit of a crowd while discovering this, however, as the bell still has a fine tone.

The fittings may be new but the bell certainly isn't. It was cast by Johanna Hille around 1440, wife of two bellfounders (no, not at the same time). It was once the second of three bells. The other two were cast by James Keene in 1620 but were sold, for £14 10/-, to the new church at Penny Stratford. The parish needed the money to cover the cost of re-building the tower which fell down in 1729. There is little chance of the tower falling down again. The stonework is in excellent condition and the belfry and intermediate floors are made of reinforced concrete.

DOUG HIRD



## BRANCH FUNDING AVAILABLE TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF RINGING SIMULATORS

Those of you who attended the June or September quarterly meetings, or the special simulator ringing day in August, will know that this sort of equipment is now becoming rather topical in our branch.

For your tower to your own you would need to find an old BBC-B computer for which a kit of chips, leads and sensor can be purchased for £75. A number of "Beebs" have been found around the branch, but this could be the ideal time for finding a home for one that you wish to dispose of. I gather that these can often be purchased for from £5 to £20 each nowadays. The model needs to meet the following spec, which should make sense to any Beeb owner - BASIC 2 and OS 1.2 or greater. If you wish to check any further technical details, please contact David Joyce on 0908-667025.

It was agreed at the September meeting that grants will be made available to assist towers to purchase their own simulators. Up to 6 grants of £40 will be made based on written application to the branch chairman before the end of November. Before doing so, please consider how you and your ringers would incorporate this into your practice nights as it would still need you to commit money and time to such a project as well as considering insurance or repairs. Although it is not feasible to attach "strings" to any grants it would be reasonable to hope that the branch and its individual members could be made welcome from time to time.

A more advanced simulator is also available (about £1000 custom built) and it is hoped that we will be able to borrow the Central Council machine during early 1995 - keep in touch for further information.

DAVID JOYCE

# A QUARTER OF A QUARTER

A quarter attempt on a practice night? - and minimus at that? Well why not when as late as 8pm. we have just one ringer per bell. The latest recruit could ring call changes on Sundays and was willing to try his hand at second cover for a long length (enormous for him!) so off we went in fine style with two cover bells on our right.

Unfortunately, after about a quarter of a quarter, fatigue or cramp (or both) set in and so that was that. A pity that we can't record it as a sixteenth (in the ancient style which noted 'a sixscore performed in masterly manner') as it was a valiant attempt by Phil and with good humour and team work, and that is what ringing is all about.

And where did this take place? You have had some good clues, so mentioning the third day of the week should clinch it!

JVL



# CHICHELEY

Chicheley bells may not be the easiest in the Branch to ring but they are one of the most rewarding. Any complete ring by a single founder is special and this ring of six, cast in 1718, by Abraham Rudhall is no exception. One of the characteristics of a Rudhall ring is the way that the design of each bell is altered depending on its position in the ring. For all of the bells, the diameter of the shoulder is just a little over half the diameter of the mouth, but the height, relative to the diameter, falls from treble to tenor. The result is a very recognisable Rudhall sound.

The bells were quarter turned and rehung by Alfred Bowell of Ipswich and rededicated on St Lawrence's Day, 10 August 1905. One of many local jobs by this company. One of the factors which brought Bowell so much work was his ability to compete financially by making maximum use of existing fittings. In the case of Chicheley, he left the magnificent bell frame alone. The frame has the same date as the bells, is carved with the makers names and, best of all, is set diagonally in the belfry. Bletchley used to have a similar frame (they were also a complete Rudhall ring once) but it has been replaced by a modern steel one.

Shortly after the bells were rehung, the local band joined the Branch, making them one of the first bands to join up. Membership continued until 1948, by which time 38 ringers had been elected members from Chicheley.

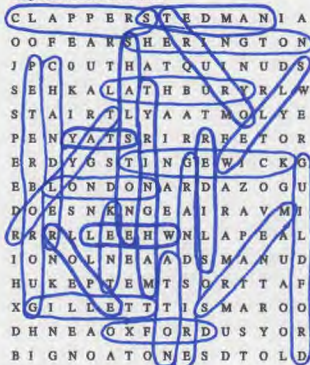
The first peal on the bells was of Treble Bob, rung by the Emberton band on 14 October 1905. Another 12 peals have been rung since but none by the local band. According to the Newport Pagnell Deanery Magazine, the band were quite active both in and out of the village. One report tells of the band driving to Shenley in 1921 to attend the Branch meeting.

Ringing now is carried out by the local band which has joined forces with North Crawley, the next village. The practice alternates between the two towers. The ringing is reliable, if not "academic," but it is better to ring rounds every Sunday than Surprise Minor occasionally.

## FIVE FIVES. . . THE SOLUTION

Yes it was possible, but not easy!

The answers to last issue's word square have been marked below. How many did you find? The hard ones were the diagonal and backward ones.



DOUG HIRD

## OLNEY

Ringers in the "far North" will already be aware of a new, regular practice night at Olney. It is held on the fourth Monday of each month, starting at 7.30 and is attended by ringers from several nearby towers. Newcomers are, however, always welcome. It is good to hear one of our finest rings being put through their paces occasionally so put the following dates in your diary:

September 26th  
October 24th  
November 28th

## RINGING AT LATHBURY

Yes, Lathbury!

Ringers from a number of Branch towers joined forces to tackle this rather difficult ring for the village's annual event, the Lathbury Market on 11th September.

Unfortunately, the third is still out of action and one of the railway sleepers it is resting on prevents movement of the fourth's slider. This limited our ringing to Treble, Second, Fourth and Fifth and also kept the bells below the balance. The result was still quite impressive, however, and the sound of the bells attracted a good number of visitors.

After the first go, an impromptu meeting of the Towers & Bells Sub-Committee formed itself while we considered the work in hand. A number of conclusions were arrived at. A fine job having been done by Charles Knight on the Third's headstock straps, it's gudgeon straps now need to be replaced.

The failings discovered on this bell are likely to also be present in the others so the same work is planned for the whole ring. It is likely that the metal needed will be subject to a minimum order quantity anyway so sorting out the whole ring at the same time is probably inevitable.

The cost of this work is likely to represent only a small part of what will ultimately be needed as all of the wheels will need rebuilding and the clappers will need to be sorted out (the back four still have cast in crown staples). We hope to have some estimates in the near future so that we can make a start on fund raising.

Meanwhile, progress goes on, if slowly. Perhaps we will have them ringing again by Christmas.

DOUG HIRD

## Easy 'bob calling for 5, 6 or 7 bells continued:

Last time we were calling from the treble so now it is time to move on to call from a working bell. This bell can be either affected by calls or unaffected, which means that you can call some touches even if you do not know what happens at a bob. This is what we now consider, and it is assumed that you can ring a working bell correctly through a plain course of the method which you are going to call and be unaffected. The general rule is to call a Bob whenever you will not be affected by it, and at this stage it is necessary to consider Doubles and Minor and Triples separately:

### Doubles:

Grandsire - ring the 3rd bell, and shout 'Bob' every time you pull your handstroke lead shortly before making thirds place. (Four minute touch.)

Methods having four blows in fifth place - ring any bell and shout 'Bob' every time you pull the sally in fourth place just before making long fifths. This gives the extent of 120 rows. (Five minute touch.)

Stedman - ring any bell and shout 'Single' (not Bob) each time you pull the sally in third place when going in quick. (Five minute touch.)

### Minor:

Plain Bob, Double Bob, St Clement or Cambridge - ring any bell and shout 'Bob' each time you pull the sally when lying at the back just before the single dodge in 5-6 down, and also each time you pull the sally in fourth place on your way up to the single dodge in 5-6 up. Start with whichever comes first. (Five minutes for the Plain methods; ten minutes for the Cambridge.)

Kent or Oxford - ring any bell and shout 'Bob' each time you pull the sally when making fourths place just before going into the slow work, and also each time the treble comes to the front to dodge with you at the end of your slow work. Start with whichever comes first. (Ten minute touch.)

### Triples:

Grandsire - ring any bell except the 2nd and call as for Grandsire doubles. BUT this gives a fifteen minute touch which is fine for a wedding, but too long for an ordinary practice.

Plain Bob - ring any bell and call each time you pull the sally in sixth place just before making long sevenths. Shout 'Bob' each time for a ten minute touch or shout 'single' for a seven minute touch.

Stedman - ring any bell and shout 'Bob' each time you pull the first handstroke of your last whole turn, then count five blows and again shout 'Bob' as you pull your sally when making thirds place on your way out of the slow work. (Seven minute touch.) If you ring the 2nd bell, the first call is at the going-off!

Calling from an unaffected bell somewhat restricts choice of touches and methods, so next time we will proceed to using a bell which may be affected. This opens up a wider field of choice.

JOHN LONSBROUGH

## In the Archives

Work on the archives has picked up recently. Firstly, our peal records are now almost complete now that most of the Peterborough DG peals have been added. Thanks are due to Bill Yates for the loan of the Towcester Branch copies of Annual Reports. Secondly, following a request from Roy Keeves, I produced a complete account of the 32 peals rung there. Using a combination of Oxford DG and Peterborough DG reports, Barry's old Ringing Worlds and the Bodleian Library in Oxford, a full account was produced. If anyone is interested in peals rung in their own tower, I can search the knowledge mines again quite easily! I already have complete records for many towers.

On the practical side, the study of bell profiles is going well with the addition of Cast-lethorpe's bell and the ring of six at Much Marcle, Herefs. (It was a good opportunity to increase our data on Rudhall bells)

DOUG HIRD

# WINNERS!



At the Branch six bell striking competition, which took place prior to the quarterly meeting in June, the winners were Bradwell with 21½ faults followed by Buckingham with 38 faults. The Bradwell band now go on to take part in the Guild competition in the Sonning Deanery Branch in October.

## BITS & BOBS

On Thursday 1st September Uncle Barry missed his own practice. It must have been something substantial, so it was. A peal at **Blisworth**. Unfortunately, a simultaneous peal attempt at the other end of the tunnel, at **Stoke Bruerne** had to be abandoned when one of the band felt unwell.

It is hoped that Wednesday evening ringing at **Calverton** will be resumed shortly.

Gillett and Johnson engineers have completed their repairs of **Newport's** clock mechanism and it is keeping time again. If only the tune machine would play something recognisable as a tune!

**Emberton** ringers rang for the Emberton Street Fair and challenged visitors to a "have a go" session during the day. All of the funds

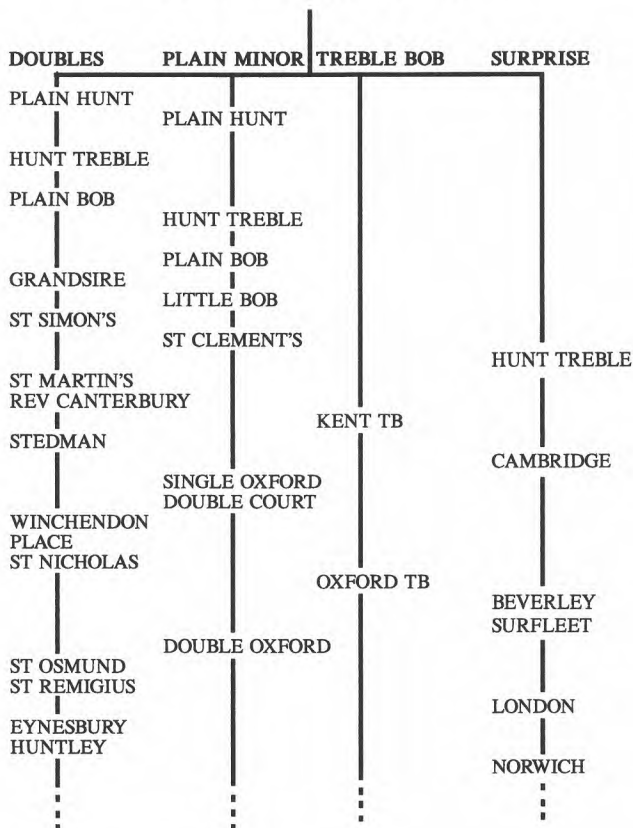
raised are to go towards the church restoration.

On Tuesday 6th September the **Buckingham** ringers rang to note the induction of their new Vicar.

Ringers at **Great Brickhill** also look forward to ringing for the induction of their new Rector, who is expected in November. The clock here is out of action at the moment as it was struck by lightning in the recent storm.

The **Towcester** Branch was victorious at the inter-branch striking competition at **Hanslope**, their Call Changes and Grandsire Triples getting the better of us. The bells still present quite a challenge to good striking even though they go a little better following their recent rehanging.

# How to progress beyond Call Changes in a six bell tower



There are many possible ways of picking your path through all of the possible methods when you start learning - the progress "tree" is well suited to anyone planning a ringing career in this branch.

The logic behind the sequence shown is that you get well acquainted with some of the "building blocks" in your early days so that as you progress to the later methods you have already met some of the elements that make up the new line. However you choose to learn the lines, you must make sure that you will understand any jargon that may be used to put you right. Pam Copson's little books have an excellent explanation of the common ones, so buy a copy from Godfrey if you don't already have one.

To start with you need to master plain hunting, and after a while, hunting the treble to methods - trebling to plain bob is much easier than to St Simon's or St Clement's, so you may wish to break that up into 2 stages. You need to have developed your ropesight to cope with these methods on the treble before you ring any method inside. Trebling to Little Bob is a good test of your skills!

The reason for learning doubles before minor is to get your leading and rhythm as good as possible before racing on ahead. Plain Bob is best learnt before Grandsire because the calls are simpler in Plain Bob and because in Grandsire there are Bobs and Singles to be learnt. You will also find that a lot of the later methods have a Plain Bob feel to them as well as the same sort of Bobs.

The main value in learning Grandsire is that it gives you practice in dodging in 4-5 before you progress to Stedman. Grandsire is also the first choice method for Triples, Caters or Cinques if you move upwards from a six bell practice or meeting. A lot of people will also argue that it is one of the nicer methods to listen to - I tend to agree but remember that nothing badly struck ever sounds good.

The later doubles methods eventually build up the full set of "front works" that go with the 2 "back works" learnt. There are also plenty of other back works that can be bolted onto these front works - visit Woughton to see a well laid out chart of these.

Don't be too keen to dash down the list to see how fast you can learn them all - you will be much more welcome if you take the time to learn well enough to strike the method well before moving on. You should also make sure that you know the starting point (place bell) for each bell, not just your favourite, as well as the Bobs and Singles. As you progress further you should also put something back for your fellow ringers by learning to call some touches in these methods too.

There are plenty of methods to learn that go way beyond the end of the chart that I have created, but you will be less likely to find enough others that know them to ring without prior warning in most towers. Equally anyone who has gone charging off the bottom of the page and missed out some of these methods has missed out on some rewarding methods. Some seem easier to ring than they look, others are the opposite.

Why not ask your tower captain which of these methods he or she has missed out in their career, and more important ask them why - they might even do us an article for the next newsletter?

DAVID JOYCE

## HALF TERM OUTING

On Tuesday 25th October 1994 there will be a day of serious bells for our younger ringers. We have been to most of the easy rings, now we shall experience a few more challenging ones:

|       |   |       |               |
|-------|---|-------|---------------|
| 10.30 | - | 11.00 | Haversham     |
| 11.15 | - | 12.00 | Tyringham     |
| 1.30  | - | 2.15  | Sherington    |
| 2.30  | - | 3.15  | Chicheley     |
| 3.30  | - | 4.15  | North Crawley |

All of these are subject to confirmation, but we usually get to ring where we want to don't we! Contact Doug (0908) 614741 for up to date information.

# NEW BOOK REVIEW

Sitting next to Cocks' Church Bells of Bucks in Milton Keynes Library is a new booklet about bells. **The Rings and Chimes of Buckinghamshire Churches** by J E Hearn promises quite a lot as a title as there are an awful lot of bells in Bucks. The wonder is that they are squeezed into something about the same size as this year's Habitat catalogue! So how was it done?

This booklet concentrates on the author's interest (one shared by many of us) in smaller rings of bells. The ones, twos and threes. It is divided up, in a nice, rather old fashioned way, into hundreds, so it is easy to pick out our local towers.

The accounts are largely based on the author's own visits but where this was not possible, he has relied on existing publications. This would be alright if you could tell which were which, but you can't. There are also a number of typographical errors and actual inaccuracies which compound the problem somewhat. For example, Newton Blossomville, Little Woolstone and Walton are described as being rung from the ground floor. The first two definitely are not and the last? Well, the bells are on the floor themselves which does make them rather hard to ring! Also, there is no mention that the bells from Akeley are in the safe keeping of Aylesbury Museum.

Each tower's entry consists of a description of the whereabouts of the tower and a brief summary of the bells. For each bell he tells us who cast it, sometimes when, and sometimes it's note, the weight and diameter. The weights are given in hundredweights, quarters and pounds, even though the weight is actually estimated and no other dimensions are given. Considering that Elphick's Sussex Bells & Belfries was included in the Bibliography I would have hoped for a little more analysis of bell profiles, especially as these are such rarely seen bells. Hearn also doesn't reproduce inscriptions which can often be interesting and informative. He also

omits all mention of bell frames. This is really surprising as the ones, twos and threes represent our most unspoilt installations. For example, there is no mention of the excellent bell frames at Willen or Astwood.

This booklet is more in the style of a Ringing World report of an outing than Cocks' Church Bells of Bucks. It's strength is in identifying what bells are where rather than providing an analysis of bell profile or distribution and the lack of any comment on Bell frame design is a pity.

On the plus side, however, it is good to see that someone sees the need to document our rarely heard bells and has tackled the task in a manageable way. To provide an up to date account of every bell in Bucks, researched and written as well as, or better than Elphick's works is going to be a huge undertaking. The job is more likely to be done piecemeal, if at all.

DOUG HIRD

## Handbell Quarter Peals

16 Wandsworth Place, Bradwell Common.  
Monday 22nd August 1994  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1-2 Alan J Marchbank  
3-4 Ron Snack  
5-6 Godfrey L Foot (C)

16 Wandsworth Place, Bradwell Common.  
Monday 29th August 1994  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1-2 Alan J Marchbank  
3-4 Ron Snack  
5-6 Godfrey L Foot (C)

16 Wandsworth Place, Bradwell Common.  
Monday 12th September 1994  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1-2 Alan J Marchbank  
3-4 Ron Snack  
5-6 Godfrey L Foot (C)  
7-8 B Douglas Hird

**Correction:**

Stowe, The Assumption of the Blessed

Virgin Mary

Thursday 9th June 1994

1260 Stedman Doubles

- 1 Jonathan P Humbert
- 2 L Gibson
- 3 Richard S Stanworth
- 4 David Goodger
- 5 William A Yates
- 6 Antony Lloyd

**New quarter peals:**

Downs Barn, The Cross and Stable.

Sunday 3rd July 1994

1260 Stedman Triples

- 1 Barry R Eglesfield
- 2 Nigel Williams
- 3 Ruth Stokes
- 4 David J Maybrey
- 5 B Douglas Hird
- 6 Christopher Stokes
- 7 Richard W Yates (C)
- 8 Simon Martin

Rung for the christening of Reuben Evan Maybrey.

Stowe, The Assumption of the Blessed

Virgin Mary

Friday 8th July 1994

1260 Stedman Doubles

- 1 Richard W Yates (C)
- 2 Richard Stanworth
- 3 Antony Lloyd
- 4 Peter Nicholson
- 5 William A Yates
- 6 Gerald Kingston

1st in the method - 4.

Rung as a farewell to Antony Lloyd who is leaving to live in Norwich.

Emberton, All Saints.

Saturday 9th July 1994

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Emma Price
- 2 Phil Haslam
- 3 Jill Joyce
- 4 David Jones
- 5 David Joyce (C)
- 6 Sheila Watts

1st quarter - 1.

Rung as a compliment to Phil and Wendy Haslam on their 5th wedding anniversary, and also for Phil's 34th birthday.

Maids Moreton, St Edmund.

Sunday 10th July 1994

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Helen Stanworth
- 2 Lawrence Gibson
- 3 David Goodger
- 4 Antony Lloyd
- 5 William A Yates (C)
- 6 Gerald Kingston

Rung for confirmation service and a farewell to Antony Lloyd with best wishes from all ringers in this area.

Calverton, All Saints.

Sunday 7th August 1994

1260 Stedman Doubles

- 1 Barry R Eglesfield (C)
- 2 Nicola A King
- 3 Ruth Stokes
- 4 B Douglas Hird
- 5 Christopher Stokes
- 6 Bob Winstanley

A quarter peal of Bristol Surprise Major at Woburn on Sunday 11th September has been withdrawn due to the quality of some of the ringing.



The Emberton quarter peal band

# NORTH BUCKS BRANCH DIARY

|                    |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
|--------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>October 94</b>  |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Sat 1              | tba  | Guild 6-Bell Striking Competition                                                      | Sonning Deanery<br>Branch<br>Kempston |
| Fri 21             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Grandsire Caters &<br>Cambridge Surprise Royal<br>confirmed |                                       |
| <b>November 94</b> |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Fri 18             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: London Surprise Minor<br>confirmed                          | Maids Moreton                         |
| <b>December 94</b> |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Sat 3              | 3.30 | Quarterly Meeting<br>confirmed                                                         | Old Wolverton                         |
| Fri 16             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Stedman Doubles<br>confirmed                                | Stoke Goldington                      |
| <b>January 95</b>  |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Fri 20             | 8.00 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Bristol Surprise Major<br>to be confirmed                   | Downs Barn                            |
| <b>February 95</b> |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Fri 17             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Double Court Bob Minor<br>confirmed                         | Fenny Stratford                       |
| <b>March 95</b>    |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Sat 4              | tba  | Anual General Meeting<br>confirmed                                                     | Bletchley                             |
| Fri 17             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Bob Doubles<br>to be confirmed  | Shenley                               |
| <b>April 95</b>    |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Fri 21             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Little Bob Minor<br>to be confirmed                         | Lavendon                              |
| <b>May 94</b>      |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Fri 19             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Erin Triples<br>to be confirmed                             | Olney                                 |
| <b>June 94</b>     |      |                                                                                        |                                       |
| Sat 3              | 4.15 | Quarterly Meeting<br>and 6-bell striking competition<br>confirmed                      | Woughton                              |
| Fri 16             | 7.30 | Branch Practice<br>Method: Winchendon Place and St Nicholas<br>to be confirmed         | North Crawley                         |