

EBSB NEWS

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April 2011

Guild 10 Bell Striking Competition Amersham - 27th November 2010



After the 2009 contest, you may recall my observation that it is unwise to be drawn to ring first and that being placed fourth in the table of results was our lowest position in the history of this event. I am pleased to report that we made the most of our 'home' advantage this time, assisted by being drawn sixth out of the seven competing branch bands.

The test piece was a challenging touch of Little Bob Royal, with a spattering of singles to shift the back bells into very unfamiliar positions. Amersham bells sound wonderful when struck accurately but it is not easy to achieve really precise ringing on them because of the brightness of sound, which becomes a harshness with any clips or clashes. Several bands seemed to take a while to settle down and our cause was certainly helped by having a clear idea of what we were trying to achieve from the start.

Our band was: Angela Darvill 1, Katharine Firman 2, Patricia Newton 3, George Whiteside 4, Ken Darvill 5, Graham Firman 6, Charles Botting 7, Martin Whitaker 8, Alan Ainsworth 9, Robert Newton (C) 10.

The judges (Ian Wilgress and Jim White), who were reasonably comfortable in a camper van located in the churchyard, commented on each band's performance. The general feeling was that some had succeeded in getting to grips with the challenges of the touch and the bells to produce consistent ringing. Others had achieved good ringing only in patches. Our ringing was described as *confident and rhythmical throughout – clearly, they meant business!* Needless to say, we were delighted with their adjudication:

Position		Rang	Faults
1 st	East Berks & South Bucks	6 th	27
2 nd	Central Bucks	7 th	30
3 rd	Reading	2 nd	51
4 th	Old North Berks	1 st	64
5 th	Vale of the White Horse	3 rd	72
6 th	Newbury	5 th	86
	North Bucks (did not finish)	4 th	

Our thanks to John Davidge for again organising the band and practices.

Robert Newton

Ringling World Centenary

The day of celebration has been widely publicised in the Ringing World, and many branch members will agree that it was a wonderful occasion.

A band of youngsters represented the Oxford Diocesan Guild in the Young Ringers Striking Competition held at St Saviour, Pimlico. Our team was selected after a couple of special practices (organised by Robert in his capacity as Guild Master) and came from North Bucks, Central Bucks, Sonning Deanery and Reading branches. Competitors were invited to ring call changes or 8-bell methods. The Guild team rang a competent touch of Grandsire Triples. This won the change ringing section of the contest. They were awarded gold medals and placed 3rd overall (out of 12 entries) – a most creditable performance.



In the church hall alongside St Saviour's, a number of suppliers exhibited their wares, and our branch fund raising committee took the opportunity to have a stall for the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. In four hours we sold nearly £500 worth of ringing memorabilia, preserves and cards. As a bonus we had reserved seats in prime position at Westminster Abbey for the Centenary service. You may have spotted us on page 332 of the Ringing World.

Patricia Newton

A brief update on High Wycombe:

Our fund raising is still going well. We have now collected about £175,000, with gift aid and interest to be added. At the time of writing, we are waiting for quotes from building contractors. When these arrive we will have a much better idea of the total cost of the project and we will be able to apply for the faculty. If all goes well work could start in the summer and the new bells be installed in time for Christmas – but am I being too hopeful?

When the bells are removed, we will have various fitments to dispose of. Some may be sold along with the bells to other parishes, but if anyone would be interested in making an offer for any fitments I should be pleased to hear from them. For instance, bell wheels can make attractive garden furniture. We will have up to 13 wheels available in sizes ranging from 5ft 1in to 7ft 6in diameter.

Patricia Newton
e-m: newtons2@tinyworld.co.uk

BRANCH QUARTER PEALS

Two Branch quarter peals were rung on Saturday 12 March:

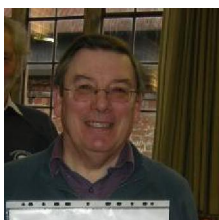
Amersham, Bucks: 1260 Grandsire Triples. Josie Martin 1, Samantha Martin 2 (1st in method), Valerie Simmonds 3, Jan Galloway 4, Alan Bain 5, Patricia Newton 6, Robert Newton 7 (C), John Payne 8.

Cookham, Berks. 1297 Stedman Caters: Ken Darvill 1 (C), Alison Bayley 2, Marcia Dieppe 3, Sheila Bruce 4, Katharine Firman 5, Martin Whitaker 6, Geoff Hopkinson 7, George Whiteside 8, David Cox 9, Fred Reynolds 10.

MEET OUR NEW TREASURER

The AGM this year was held earlier than usual with Easter coming at the end of April. It was hosted by Hambleden ringers this year who organized a lovely service and provided us with an excellent tea prior to the meeting. We elected twelve new members plus three re-elections and one transfer to the Guild at the meeting and there has been one change to your Branch Officers.

After 7 years as our Treasurer for which he receives our sincere thanks, Graham Firman has decided that he wished to stand down this year. We are pleased to announce that our new Treasurer will be John Dieppe (Bray) and wish him well with his new responsibilities. John's contact details are:



Telephone: 01628 623497

Address: John Dieppe

9 Springfield Park

Holyport

MAIDENHEAD

SL6 2YN

Email: treasurer@ebsb.org.uk

GUILD MATTERS

The following items relevant to our Branch were discussed at the AGM of the Bell Fund and General Committee Meeting held in Great Brickhill on 12 March 2011:

1. EBSB (and particularly the individuals concerned) were congratulated for raising £2030 of the £5129 donated by Branches to the Bell Fund in 2010 (total income from all sources was £8257).
2. The Bell Fund has made a provisional allocation of £7000 towards High Wycombe's project; payment is anticipated to be made in 2012.
3. The Guild Festival will take place on 9 July and will include ringing in Oxford city, a service at Christ Church Cathedral and lunch. All members are encouraged to attend.
4. Updating and maintaining the ODG website has now begun.
5. North Bucks Branch is working on "The Big Ring Pull": a recruitment and training project. They intend to have a mini ring in Milton Keynes shopping centre in the autumn followed by a 2 week intensive training programme at 2 towers equipped with simulators. A request will be made to the AGM in May for part funding from the Guild, and the Education Committee are assisting with training the trainers.
6. The Belfry Maintenance course in Long Crendon in June is now fully booked and a waiting list being compiled with a view to organising another such course.
7. The Belfry Care and Maintenance Booklet is being updated. Copies of the existing booklet are available to Towers for a small donation.
8. The Guild Public Relations Officer role is still vacant and Branches were urged to try to identify possible candidates from within their ranks.
9. Although the Government has stated its intention to simplify CRB checking, no definite plans are yet on the table and this is unlikely to occur before early 2012. It was pointed out that Diocesan policy is somewhat more rigid than that suggested in Chris Mew's recent article (Ringing World March 4).
10. Branches were urged to arrange ringing for the Royal Wedding on 29 April and to consider similar plans for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.
11. 2012 being a Leap year, there will be a sponsored ring in aid of the Bell Fund at the end of February.
12. The AGM will be asked to approve revised Branch rules; the alterations are ones of clarification of actual practice rather than substance.

Maryanne Roach & Margaret Carlyle

OBITUARIES

MAJOR PHILIP TOCOCK 1918 – 2009

It was with great sadness that the Dorchester Branch of the Salisbury Guild learnt of the death of one of its most influential ringers, Philip Toccock of Fordington.

Phil passed away at home at the age of 92. However, to those who knew him, his death came as a shock as he was, quite simply to us, invincible.

Phil learnt to ring at Cookham in 1933 and he rang his first peal at Burnham in September 1935. In 1936 Phil made his first visit to Dorset when, following his enlistment in the Royal Tank Regiment, he was stationed at Bovington and was made welcome at both Wool and Lulworth. It was whilst at Lulworth that in April 1938 Phil and his two brothers Tom and Maurice, together with Bill Shute and Cecil Smart rang a peal of Bob Minor. This was the only peal Phil ever rang with his two brothers and remained one of his proudest achievements. It was also during this period that Phil held the position of Branch Chairman and commenced the format of the twice monthly branch practices which continue to this day.

Phil's ringing career was dictated by his military service and in 1948 he departed for Oldham where he was stationed until 1951, following which there was a posting to the Suez Canal. It was here that Phil, never one to be deterred when it came to ringing, even in a country with no bells, restored a peal of seventeen hand bells, recruited a number of volunteers from the Sergeants' mess and with much patience and perseverance mastered some basic tunes and change ringing. Phil and his band even featured in a talent show for Forces Broadcasting ringing amongst others "Home Sweet Home" and "The Blue Bells of Scotland". These renditions were followed by the ringing out of the old and ringing in of the New Year. Further postings resulted in Phil ringing in the Oxford/Arborfield area (1958-1961), Liverpool (1962-1963), Catterick (1967-1969) and Oxford (1969-1982) following which he retired and returned to Dorset.

After Phil's retirement he soon reacquainted himself with his old friend Cecil Smart who by now was Tower Captain at Upwey. There being no resident band at Upwey, Phil began the task of recruiting and training one and through his efforts a strong team was formed. Although at his passing Phil was no longer Captain he maintained a strong connection with us, visiting us regularly and providing all the support and help we could ever have hoped for. His loss to Upwey is enormous and he will always be remembered.

Phil held the posts of Assistant Ringing Master and Vice Chairman of the Dorchester Branch and also the position of Vice President of the Salisbury Guild. He continued to teach and inspire learners in many towers in the Branch as well as continuing to ring peals of Major, Surprise and Royal. Phil moved to Dorchester in the 1990s and began to run Fordington. He was instrumental in the augmentation of the bells to an 8, the two new bells being in memory of his daughter Diane and his wife Ethel, both of them greatly missed.

Phil was much moved on the occasion of his 90th birthday when bells, not just across the county but across the country, pealed out in celebration. He even had a method, Toccock Surprise, named after him with a peal rung at Milton St Blaise. A peal of Cambridge Surprise Major was also rung on the newly augmented 8 at Fordington in his honour.

Although Phil's ringing achievements such as the 875 towers visited, the 309 peals and more than 200 quarter peals may have made him seem like a "Tower Grabber" this could not be farther from the mark. Phil was the first to agree that his greatest achievement and his abiding passion lay in the scores, probably hundreds of people that he taught to handle a bell. He had ceaseless dedication to bringing out the best in every ringer no matter what their level of ability. Those of us who have been taught by Phil and those of us who have rung with him will attest to this and every ringer who has stood in a tower with him has been privileged to do so, their ringing ability can only have been enhanced by meeting this amazing man.

Phil's funeral held at St George's, Fordington was attended by ringers from far and wide. Many quarter peals in his memory have also been rung across the county.

ANDREA JACOB

(This obituary was published in The Ringing World and is reprinted at the request of Ken Darvill as many of our members will have known and rung with Philip)

G H G (GEOFF) LISTER

Geoff Lister died peacefully in his sleep in Wexham Park Hospital on 29 December aged 92 years. He has been a member of the ODG for over 70 years. Geoff learnt to ring in 1938 aged 21. He was taught by Ernie Eldridge at Cookham and at All Saints, Maidenhead, the church he attended all his life, as did his parents and grandparents before him. He rang his first quarter there in 1939 and on his return from active service in World War II he continued to ring at All Saints. He was still attending the 8am service until November of this year. Geoff's nephew Robert (Stoke Poges) keeps the link with Maidenhead, regularly ringing with the Boyne Hill band. Geoff's last ring was at Stoke Poges on Christmas Day 2005 with Robert.

Geoff loved his ringing and rang 6 peals between 1952 and 1977, 5 at Boyne Hill and 1 at Cookham. Three of his peals are commemorated with peal boards – 50% of his total!

Geoff's funeral at All Saints was very well attended by his friends with Grandsire Triples being rung half-muffled. He will be very sadly missed.

DAVID ROBBINS 1938 - 2011

David has been a much loved member of the Chalfont St Peter band and has sadly died of leukaemia.

Although he didn't take up ringing until about 6 years ago, he did support the ringers for over 10 years and helped at weddings before he learned to ring. His wife Val had been an enthusiastic ringer for several years and he had been joining us in the pub after our ringing and also on outings, when he enjoyed looking at various churches. He particularly enjoyed our punting outings too! Finally, when we became very short of ringers he agreed to have a go. It was probably a case of, 'if you can't beat them, join them'!

David was a reliable and helpful member of the band. Although he did not aspire to ringing methods, he was remarkably patient over his slow progress and endeared himself to everyone with his friendly smile and humorous comments. He is sadly missed by all who knew him.

Rosemary Hogan & Hilary Jelly

MEMBERSHIP

A warm welcome is extended to our new members elected at the AGM at Hambleden on 9 April.

AMERSHAM

Dulcie McClerie (re-election)

BEACONSFIELD

Timothy Swinhoe-Standen

BRAY

Oliver Cross
Mary Cross
Carl Friedmann

CHALFONT ST PETER

Lucy Betts

CLEWER

Mai Bell

COOKHAM

David Herbert
Martin Gostling

MARLOW

John Fee

TURVILLE

Samantha Thurman-Baker

WINKFIELD

Jonathan Hemsley

WEST WYCOMBE

Nicola Payne

Alan Keen – transferred from South Oxon Branch

Joseph Smith – re-election (lapsed member from S Oxon Branch)

Hazel Smith – re-election (lapsed member from S Oxon Branch)

Teaching to Teach

For many years, both Hitcham and Dorney Towers have struggled with falling numbers of ringers, due to various circumstances. Invariably this is due to members moving away from the area, going to University, or other factors taking over. As I am sure you will agree, when this happens it is really upsetting, as it is extremely difficult to replace these people. To teach and train a bell ringer takes not only a long time, but also a good degree of expertise and knowledge. We have been fortunate in being able to welcome new members who were already good ringers.

However, with this in mind, we have not had the luxury of new ringers coming forward needing to be trained, and we have, I guess, become rather complacent in this respect. So you can understand our sheer delight when recently six new ringers suddenly appeared, five at Hitcham, and one at Dorney. This then posed the question, "how do we teach them?" and keep their interest levels intact?

After making a few enquiries, we found out that John Davidge, at Chalfont St Giles, would guide us through this process, and we duly turned up to be taken through the various steps involved.

We were initially fairly apprehensive, as the prospect of teaching someone to ring a bell was pretty daunting. However, John took the opportunity to break the process down into "bite sized" chunks, which started to give both confidence and technique. This was allied to the fact that "teaching" someone of John's ability took the initial stress out of the process. It gave a degree of comfort.

Initially we were taken through how to teach the back stroke, where the learner holds the tail, and then the hand stroke, with the learner concentrating on the Sally. The one aspect which really gave the confidence factor, was the appreciation that even though the learner has either the tail or the sally, "you" still have absolute control over the bell, and what it is doing. Following this John then showed us where things can go wrong. What a shock it was when he just walked away from the bell he was ringing. It was interesting to see just what happened, and we did retrieve the situation. This was the same when he held on to the Sally for too long.

It was an extremely useful experience, and has given us the ability to take a person who has never rung before, and commence the process of teaching them what is involved. This was down to the really patient, calm and expert way in which John took us through the various elements, and we would like to thank him for the time he spent with us.

The other pleasing aspect to report is that one of the new ringers at Hitcham is doing very well, but we still have to sort out the others.

Roger Webb

John Davidge's article on Teaching to Teach printed in our last newsletter is reprinted below. John would welcome anyone else who wants to learn how to train new ringers.

Unless a band, any band, recruits and trains new members it will eventually die. Some bands don't want to train new people because "it lowers the standard" and these usually enjoy a higher and higher standard of ringing until, suddenly members move away, die, or are unable to ring due to age or infirmity. The band then collapses and there may well be no-one left with any experience of teaching. Other bands would like to teach but have no-one with the confidence to do so.

It wasn't always like this and perhaps "lack of confidence" is now partly due to the modern preoccupation with risk and blame. When I was in my early twenties (and I'll leave you to work out how long ago that was!) I was just given (by the Vicar) a ten-bell tower with a minimal band and left to get on with it, which led to some "interesting" teaching sessions, both for me and the learner!

A number of towers in the Branch have, in the past, expressed the need for help in this area and so the **Branch Officers have asked me to run a course to try and address the need, and the purpose of this article is to let you know: -**

a) that the course exists b) what is covered and c) how it is organised

The course covers three main areas, a step-by-step approach to handling a bell, identifying and correcting handling faults and “disaster recovery” (on the basis that getting the first two right reduces the need for the last).

The course will be for an evening, by mutual arrangement, at Chalfont St Giles, although for those living in the “outer reaches” of the Branch, I am prepared to travel. I am also prepared to be there if required, when “students” prepare to teach their first learner although there is an obvious caveat here in that I cannot be in two places at once!

Alison Bayley (Penn) bravely agreed to be a “guinea pig” to try out the format, so anyone needing to find out a bit more can give her a ring – phone number in the Guild Report.

The Branch Officers hope that this course will fulfil a need and help towers to “stand on their own feet” and secure their future.

John Davidge

EMAIL USER GROUP

Your Committee would like to encourage those ringers within EBSB that are not already members of the EBSB Group to join. To do this, just send an email to Mandy Salter (thesecretary@ebsb.org.uk) asking to register.

The Secretary and users are finding this a quick and easy method of communicating across the Branch to:

- **Provide reminders of Branch practices, training courses and outings**
- **Distribute Newsletters and Minutes of meetings**
- **Issue results of striking competitions and quarter peal weekends**
- **Notify everyone of the winners of the 100 Club draws**
- **Prevent delays in distribution of information when tower correspondents are on holiday**
- **Save unnecessary journeys by notifying everyone when practices or service ringing are cancelled or times altered**
- **Make it easy to ask around for quarter peal/wedding/carol service ringers**
- **Gather information comprehensively and quickly eg questions about payment of wedding fees**
- **Involve ringers in discussions about recruitment and training, ringing for special events etc**

Once you have registered with Mandy, you can “post” items to the Group very simply; just send an email to ebsbbranch@googlegroups.com and all the users will get a copy.

Don't delay, register today

Christmas Social

Our 2010 Christmas Social was hosted by Old Windsor Ringers who entertained us with an excellently presented quiz which was great fun to do (combined Cookham/Bray team being the winners!) as well as providing a wonderful buffet meal. Father Christmas guested as our quizmaster for the evening. Pictured are ringers at Old Windsor before the event and everyone in the hall later.



BRANCH OUTINGS



Post Christmas Outing

The 2010 Branch outing visited towers to the North of the Guild, starting at Olney, a recently augmented 10. After lunch we rang at Newport Pagnell, Great Brickhill and North Marsden. Despite the recent snow it was quite well attended although driving in the dark along the very narrow, twisting roads for the last tower was as challenging as the bells.

Novices Outing

Our Novices Outing on 19 March proved to be extremely popular with 23 novices and 8 helpers. It was quite difficult, with so many ringers, for John Davidge to ensure that everyone had a good ring at the towers but he rose to the occasion and I think everyone had a good time. We were blessed with beautiful Spring sunshine which enhanced our enjoyment of the day.



NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THAT

A saying often attributed to the actor, Michael Caine, of course. A friend once said to me that I'd accumulated more completely useless information than anyone he knew....I've been unloading this burden for years, but still seem to have an abundance of it. When we talk to other ringers, young and old, but particularly old, we pick up all sorts of information that may be true or may indeed have been distorted by repetition. Like, for example, the statement that the name Stedman, as in Fabian's Principle, is a corruption of Saint Edmund. Indeed, Frank Corke, a noted conductor of Stedman in the 1930s, sometimes delighted in causing consternation by starting into changes with "Go! St Edmund's!" And did you know that – no matter how simple it seems now – it took more than 50 years to work out how to extend Stedman's Principle logically from five bells to seven? Some controversies over the "legitimate" ringing of Stedman continued right into the 20th Century: that dogmatic genius, the Rev Law James for example insisted that the Quick Six was the bob and did his utmost to put the concept across to the Central Council. It was one of the few "bees in his bonnet" that he lost.

While on the subject of St Edmund, I'd like to endorse Cliff Blundell's advocacy (November 2010 EBSB News) of Stedman Minimus – we are very fond of it at Iver and ring it every week: it sounds even better on five bells with a cover. If you want fast and exciting Minimus ringing, try Bristol Surprise: though you need a good treble ringer who knows when to do the "lightning".

There are some facts I'd like more of! Ringing at Beaconsfield has often been a "family" affair and Harry Wingrove used to describe the early 20th century as the time of "The Three Bs (or bears)" – the Bagley, Batting and Bucklna families, who dominated ringing at the time. Harry was taught to ring by Richard "Dickie" Buckland, who was a prolific peal-ringer and conductor. Frank Sinkins from Slough told me how he and others used to walk the 12 miles (each way) to Beaconsfield practices every week to benefit from Dickie's tuition. Alas, other than his peals which can be extracted from the records, we know virtually nothing about Richard Buckland or his ringing family. There was no obituary in The Ringing World when he died and I guess this lack of information is why he gets no mention in Bill Butler's excellent "100 Years of the Oxford Diocesan Guild" (1981). If your tower doesn't have a copy, borrow one from the Guild Librarian. For some reason I never asked Harry or George Swift – or indeed any of the "old timers" – about Dickie, and I've regretted it ever since.

I mentioned Rev Law James above. The James Brothers – ie Law and Bankes, not Frank and Jesse from Missouri! – apparently were both brilliant but very different men: Law being the noisy dogmatist who brooked no opposition to his notions, Bankes the quieter, though equally determined. I learned a lot about them from Chris Woolley (the handbell genius of Bushey), who had Rev Bankes James as his Headmaster at school. Imagine having a Headmaster who dragooned you into ringing his inventions in your spare time at boarding school! Luckily Chris enjoyed the stimulus, despite BJ's strong personality (and right arm?). Bankes James it was who invented a system of ringing shorthand that developed via John Carter into the Place Notation we know today. He also invented Bristol Surprise Major and the notion of splicing Little and Alliance to get true extents in doubles and minor: Chris was actually present when BJ hit on this idea and they were ringing the first 120s and 720s by the end of the week. One of the Alliance minor methods, Seafield, was named after their school. In the doubles field, Frank Blagrove later refined the splicing of Little and Alliance to take advantage of the "irregular" lead ends to obtain true 120s without using any bobs. My recollection of ringing Little and Alliance doubles is that the treble has to know which Alliance methods have only a single dodge up and down in 4-5; most of them have a double-dodge (each lead having 17 changes).

When Arthur Craven was about to give that useful method Yorkshire Surprise Major to the ringing world in 1902-3, he had actually devised what is now called Belgrave, and it was Bankes James who suggested that if he arranged for 7ths place to be made when the treble lay behind he would have a much better method! Craven did, and so we got Yorkshire! Though, like BJ's Bristol, Yorkshire is a very popular method today, it was a slow starter after being pealed for the first time in 1903, and wasn't described in the Rev C D P Davies's 1927 "Surprise Methods" volume in the Jasper Snowdon series. It didn't really become popular until the 1950s. Among other ideas from BJ were "Granta Treble Bob" (a means of keeping the tenors out of the slow in Kent), "Qualis" (ie "what is it?") which consists of alternate leads of major and triples and Silchester Surprise which he devised as a complex challenge for composers. He also devised a system for extending major methods to caters (over which his brother and John Carter were at loggerheads) and the thirds-place bob used in the first peal of Double Norwich Caters: a peal which upset all the rigid minds (including brother Law) of the time, who were anti- even-bell-methods being rung on an odd number with a cover. Bankes James was also a great chess player and would play blindfolded in tournaments, when Chris was taken along to move the "men" for him. Also, apropos the "regular methods must have plain bob lead-ends" campaign mounted by his brother, BJ wrote "it is written in the law that the sins of the fathers shall descend on the children, but I know of no argument to show that the children should submit to the punishment if it is in their power to escape it."

D J Rowlands

DIARY DATES

14 May	Branch Summer Outing		Daytime
21 May	<i>Guild AGM - Islip</i>		
3 June	Cookham (10)	Friday Daytime Practice	2.30 – 4.30p-m
11 June	Dorney (6) 6 Bell Striking Competition followed by Practice		5 – 9pm
18 June	Cookham (10) Saturday afternoon Higher Numbers Practice		5 – 7.30pm
25 June	Bisham (3) Marlow (8)	Branch Practice	6.30 – 7pm 7 – 9pm
2 July	Chalfont St Giles (8) Novices Practice (separate notice for details)		
9 July	<i>Guild Festival – Oxford</i>		
23 July	Denham (8)	Branch Practice	7 – 9pm
13 August	Fulmer (6)	Branch Practice	7 – 9pm
19 August	Stoke Poges (8)	Friday Daytime Practice	2.30 – 4.30pm
26 August	Amersham (12) Friday Evening Higher Number Practice		7.45 – 9.15pm
27 August	Old Windsor (8)	Branch Practice	7 – 9pm
10 September	Hughenden (8)	Surprise Practice	7 – 9pm
24 September	Out of Branch Practice	Daytime	