

EBSB NEWS

www.ebsb.org.uk

November 2010

LORNA NEWTON STRIKING COMPETITION FINAL AT CLEWER



The Lorna Newton Final and Half Yearly meeting were held at Clewer this year. We were lucky to have a fine day as the excellent tea provided by Clewer ringers was served in the lodge some 50 yards from the church. We all enjoyed our cheese or ham ploughman's and home made cakes very much. It was an opportunity to sample Clewer's refurbished bells and all the ringers seemed very favourably impressed with the improvement in the ring. Judge Ken Darvill commented on the high standard of ringing by all the bands taking part and awarded the trophy to High Wycombe for their almost (only 8!) faultless performance. (Pictures of bands on p9)

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

11th December 2010

at

Old Windsor

See www.oldwindsortower.co.uk

Quiz and Raffle and Buffet supper

8.00pm at St Peters School Crimp Hill

Preceded by

Branch practice at St Peter and St Andrew 6.00 – 7.30pm

Tickets £5.00 each

Available from Branch Officers 01628 530241

TOWER NEWS

HAMBLEDEN

When Hambleden bells were augmented to 8 in 2007, it was always the intention that the first quarter peal on the 8 would be as local an event as possible.

However, with a novice band, this seemed a long shot but the fact that one of the Hambleden ringers, Ben Allen, was celebrating his 70th birthday in May, gave the necessary impetus to get things organised.

The quarter gave 4 of the local band their first attempt at a quarter. Ben rang the treble to Plain Bob Doubles and Barbara and James Oldham and Roddy Baird covered. The 'inside' bells were rung by 4 experienced ringers (Sheila Bruce, Becky Bruce, Charles Botting and John Walton) who had, in various ways, helped the local band, some for more than 25 years!

The quarter peal was of an excellent standard and there was great excitement as the bells stood at the end. Celebratory cake and champagne were shared with other members of the local band who had all turned out to give their moral support.

As well as a 70th birthday compliment to Ben, the quarter was also a pre-wedding compliment to John Walton and Louise Houghton for their wedding the following weekend.

A fantastic achievement – 4 firsts and the first on the 8! Here's to the next one!

Sheila Bruce

Oxford Diocesan Guild

Hambleden, Bucks

St Mary the Virgin

Monday, 31 May 2010

1260 Plain Bob Doubles with 7, 6, 8 covering

- 1 Benjamin J Allen
- 2 Sheila Bruce
- 3 Rebecca S Bruce
- 4 Charles M S Botting (C)
- 5 John E Walton
- 6 Barbara J Oldham
- 7 James B Oldham
- 8 Roderick A C Baird

First quarter peal on the bells since rehanging and augmentation

First quarter peal at first attempt: 1, 6, 7, 8
70th Birthday compliment to Ben Allen

Pre-wedding compliment to John Walton and Louise Houghton, to be married on 5th June at Wooburn, Bucks

CHALFONT ST PETER

Chalfont St Peter have recently won a gold award for the second time for the tower maintenance, thanks to Gerry Diss and Steve Ridlington-White who carry out the maintenance and monthly checks on the bells etc.



Hambleden's quarter peal band: l – r Ben Allen, Roddy Baird, Sheila Bruce, James Oldham, Barbara Oldham, Becky Bruce, John Walton and Charles Botting

FULMER

Monday 1st November 2010 was the 400th Anniversary of the dedication of St James Church Fulmer. To mark the occasion a candlelit service was held in the evening attended by Paul Williams, the previous Rector, who is now Bishop of Kensington.

Fulmer's six bells were rung on the previous day prior to a special Service of Thanksgiving for the 400th Anniversary held in place of the normal Sunday Morning Worship. This Service of Thanksgiving was attended by Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham. But the bells heralded the whole of the weekend Anniversary Celebrations with a celebratory peal rung on the afternoon of Saturday 30th October, an event that was greatly appreciated by the whole of the Village.

The Peal was 5040 of Minor (4m) in 2hr 28m: 3 extents of Cambridge S, 1 extent of Kent Treble Bob, 1 of St Clement's CB, and 2 of Plain Bob rung by:

- 1 John C Davidge
- 2 Kenneth J Darvill
- 3 Mandy R Salter
- 4 Keith D Waples
- 5 L Roy Woodruff
- 6 Robert J Crocker (C)

The oldest of Fulmer's bells is the Treble which dates back to 1540 and was transferred from the original medieval church: standing in moorish ground about half-a-mile north-west of the "new" Church dedicated in 1610. Two more bells were added in 1617, now the 5th and 4th, although the 4th is no longer the original one because it had to be recast in 1969.. The 2nd was installed in 1741, and the Tenor and 3rd were added in 1884.

Fulmer has recently been awarded a Bronze certificate for Tower Maintenance. *Geoffrey Cooper*

HIGH WYCOMBE

Having got off to a really good start, our fund raising for the restoration of our tower and installation of new bells has slowed considerably. Many local ringers have been extremely generous, for which we are most grateful, and we need to look further afield to raise the rest of the money (probably about £80,000). We have been applying for grants from trusts that are known to have supported other restoration projects, but we find that many no longer support "religious activities". We still seek donors for three of the bells – is anyone feeling rich?

Our current ring is on the Keltek Trust list, which has attracted interest in several of the front bells. We anticipate that at least four of them will go to other parishes. Our architect is busy pulling together the technical details so that he can go out to tender for the building works. Once we have those details and costs we will apply for faculty and we will have a more accurate figure for the total cost of the project. We are still hoping that we will be able to go ahead in the spring of next year. The situation regarding VAT is causing concern. At the moment, the bell work should be VAT exempt and we may be able to reclaim VAT on the building work, but financial rules seem to be changing almost daily.

Practices and Sunday service ringing continue on our front eight bells, and we hope that will be the case until the bells are removed. For our annual outing we visited two 10 bell towers (Olney and Kempston) – to keep our hand in on higher numbers, and we also rang at Newport Pagnell, Emberton, Turvey and Bromham.

We represented the EBSB branch in the Guild 6-bell competition held at Cowley. Sadly we only came 4th. Perhaps we were a bit ambitious ringing Cambridge (we were the highest placed band to ring minor), or perhaps our minds are too focused on the problems at our own tower. We certainly look forward to the day when 12 bells sound out again in High Wycombe.

When Sammy Martin (Josie's daughter) started at a full time boarder at Wycombe Abbey School in September, we said goodbye with mixed emotions – very pleased for her as she attends such a prestigious school, but sad that we would not see much of her in the tower. As things have turned out, Sammy does get home quite often on Sundays and joins us for service ringing. Josie has now brought her grandson, Aiden, to learn to ring. He has only been with us a few weeks and is doing very well – it must be in the genes!

Patricia Newton

PENN

John Davidge kindly invited four of our eight learners to attend a listening practice at Chalfont St Giles one Wednesday evening. In turn they all experienced ringing with the simulator for the first time and practiced ringing their bell in the correct place in rounds, either leading or in another position.

Meanwhile the other three who were standing out also listened and were asked to call out if the bell was slow or fast. They will endeavour to put their new listening skills to use in the tower at Penn and look forward to a further session on the simulator when they will try plain hunt.

Thank you John for this opportunity.

Alison Bayley

MEMBERSHIP

A warm welcome to the following new members of the Branch elected at our Half Yearly Meeting: Gordon Polley, Ann Murphy and Jill Haslam (Amersham) and Bradley Cox (Burnham).



HIGH WYCOMBE GARDEN PARTY

We thought you would like to see this picture, which features mainly bell ringers, and was taken at the 'Afternoon Tea at Number 3' on Saturday 19th June.

We were very grateful for the amount of support we received, and, despite a chilly wind, most people braved the garden. We raised £457.18p towards 'RINGAPPEAL'.

Gill Twissell

BRANCH QUARTER PEAL WEEK

23 – 30 October

Fulmer, Bucks. 23 Oct, 1260 PB Doubles: Josie Martin 1, Samantha Martin (1st inside) 2, Mandy Salter 3, David McKenzie 4, Graham Firman (C) 5, Katharine Firman 6.

Chalfont St Giles, Bucks. 23 Oct, 1250 Lincolnshire S Major: Sheila Bruce 1, Charles Botting 2, John Davidge 3, Jan Galloway 4, Fred Reynolds 5, Maryanne Roach 6, John Payne (1st in method) 7, Graham Firman (C) 8.

Bray, Berks. 23 Oct, 1440 Spliced Plain and Little Bob Major: Katharine Firman 1, Chris Nunn 2, Josie Martin 3, Patricia Newton 4, Trevor Scott 5, Graham Firman 6, Robert Newton(C) 7, John Payne 8. With best wishes to Ken and Angela Darvill for their 40th Wedding Anniversary on 24th October.

High Wycombe, Bucks. 24 Oct, 1280 Cambridge S major: Meryl Kennedy 1, Katharine Firman 2, Josie Martin 3, David Cornwall 4, Andrew Ottaway (1st Surprise) 5, Alan Bain 6, Graham Firman (C) 7, John Hearn 8. For Evensong.

Cookham, Bucks. 24 Oct, 1296 Little Bob Royal: George Whiteside 1, Mary Cross 2, Mandy Salter 3, Marcia Dieppe 4, Claire Fisher (1st Royal) 5, Patricia Newton 6, Freddie Daniel (1st Royal) 7, Charles Botting 8, Robert Newton (C) 9, Oliver Cross 10. For Evensong.

Amersham, Bucks. 28 Oct. 1264 Double Norwich C B Major: Alison Bailey 1, Jill Wigney 2, Valerie Simmonds 3, Maryanne Roach 4, John Davidge 5, Charles Botting 6, Roy Woodruff 7, Ken Darvill (C) 8.

Amersham, Bucks. 30 Oct, 1282 Yorkshire S Royal: Valerie Simmons 1, Angela Darvill 2, Alison Bailey 3, Jan Galloway (1st in method) 4, Katharine Firman 5, Alan Bain (1st in method) 6, Martin Whitaker 7, Geoff Hopkinson (1st in method) 8, George Whiteside 9, Ken Darvill (C) 10.

STEDMAN MINIMUS FOR SERVICE RINGING

In recent months, at Burnham, we have often struggled to keep the bells ringing for services when only two or three of us have been present in the tower, and one of them, Leslie Hart, on his way between ringing at Dorney and Hitcham for their services. Fortunately these struggles have given a reason for practising bell control in some unusual ways.

Rounds on two or three are not very inspiring but Queens on four or six can sound pleasing. How, you might ask, do two people ring Queens on 4? More easily than ringing Rounds on 4 would be my response! Each person is responsible for two bells (could it be three?). Two whole pulls are rung on the treble before standing. The second ringer then rings two whole pulls on the 3rd. The 2nd and 4th are rung similarly before the whole exercise is repeated as often as necessary. On 6, apart from needing to use the back bells, each ringer would have to cross over the circle, needing great care, perhaps unless Tittums were being rung.

What if there are four people who would like to ring something more exciting than Plain Bob Minimus and do not want to learn Reverse or Double Plain Bob or any of the other minimus methods? Stedman Minimus can provide an interesting challenge with different hunting practice (6 blows in 4th place) for a novice treble ringer. It has certainly helped Jessica to learn Stedman (now Doubles) and Bradley to hone his plain hunting skills (useful when struggling with Plain Bob Doubles inside).

Cliff Blundell

SNAPSHOTS

It's funny the odd images that stick in your mind when you remember where and when you've rung in the past. Ringing in the cold embrace of a marble angel on the old and difficult five at Quainton, for example. Jim Diserens taking off his pullover while ringing; Fred Scott pulling up Langley tenor (16cwt) in six great heaves; Harry Baldwin stemming a nosebleed while continuing to ring.

Charlie Poulter, who regularly suffered a "petit mal" seizure while ringing, would carry on ringing although not "with us", and keep perfectly in place until he "returned" from limbo. Ringing in a quarter and not having been affected by a bob in ages, I was, myself, ringing on "auto-pilot" and dreaming nicely, when Harold Rogers's face suddenly appeared in front of me shouting, 'Wake up, five!' He had walked across the belfry while wielding 30ft of unguided rope.

In the old, tiny, ringing chamber at St Margaret's Uxbridge, the entrance trap-door opened beneath the treble rope and it was not unknown for a visitor, unaware of this, to lift up both trap and treble-ringer. You had to handle neatly there for within the restricted rope circle was a table and chairs which it was only too easy to lasso, if you weren't careful. A highlight of ringing there was a peal of Grandsire with a local band, when 14-year-old David Hilling called Parker's One-Part. Bert Impey was tower captain in those days and he had a very loud voice: we used to swear that when he called his bobs in St Margaret's, they also made them at St Andrew's a quarter-mile up the road. Tom Bannister, a place notation ringer, used to look at his feet or the peal boards but never at you: it was rather disconcerting.

Double-handed ringers bring a different problem: when ringing by "ropesight" we tend to look at the ringer as well as their rope, so you had to remember to look twice at Frank Blagrove, Bernard Collins or Alan Rix when they were ringing two bells. Try ringing treble to a 120 of Grandsire Doubles with Frank and Tony Price ringing 2 & 3 and 4 & 5, or turning up at Stanwell, to find the tower captain, Chris Fynes, ringing the treble and tenor to Cambridge! Frank Blagrove and the two Price brothers ran a peal of minor all double-handed at Preston Candover in the 60s. Come to that Stephen Wheeler has rung the 6 and 7 (which are not close together and are heavy) to a touch at Iver, before now.

Another happy memory is of ringing the 4 at Beaconsfield in quarters when Luis Stenning would think it was normal Sunday ringing and come and chat to you amicably, in the doorway. Even now, if there's a cold draught when ringing the 4, I like to think it is Luis's ghost stopping by for a chat.

David G Rowlands

RECRUITMENT

EBSB Committee have devoted considerable time to discussing issues of recruitment and concluded that, whilst, of course being open to specific requests for assistance or advice, there are so many local issues that this needs to be a tower-based initiative. However, this article is intended to provide a motivator and (no doubt partial) checklist of ideas for towers considering activity of this type.

Naturally, our prime objective is to ensure that the bells are rung regularly for Sunday and other services and this service to the Church should be central to any recruiting campaign. However, we are all aware that ringing offers much more. It is a cheap, absorbing hobby bringing together people of all ages and walks of life. The traditions, the social activities, the personal interest and satisfaction to be gained, and the inherent companionship of ringers throughout the world, are all factors to be presented to would-be recruits:

- Unique hobby
- Very sociable group participation — make friends for life
- Highly satisfying, a combination of physical and mental effort
- Great when moving to a new area, going to university or away from home on business
- Scope for travel throughout the UK, plus Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Southern Africa and the USA
- Service to the Church
- Craft almost 400 years old
- Plenty of opportunity locally

Church groups are more likely to be influenced by the 'service' aspect but all groups will probably be interested in other aspects of ringing. Recruiting family groups is often very satisfactory as they tend to support each other. Likewise, friends and lapsed ringers are good groups to approach.

There are pros and cons with all **age groups**:

- Children – commitment by the parents is also needed as they may have to transport the children to and fro. Children tend to take part in so many organised activities these days that fitting in another one can be difficult. It may be necessary to “borrow” another local tower if one’s own bells are too heavy or otherwise too difficult for teaching children.
- Young people – young people tend to learn more quickly than more mature recruits because they are constantly in a high learning situation at school. But on the other hand young people can lose interest more quickly if other (peer group) interests come along; the activity needs to be seen as “cool” and recruitment may only work if it is a group activity. This age group may leave for university/college as soon as they have been taught (although hopefully they will continue to ring elsewhere).
- Young adults – may have many conflicting family/work commitments
- Middle aged people - “Empty nesters” may welcome a new activity and friends, although they may still be commuting to work and find it difficult to get to weekday practices
- Retirees – early or young retirees may have most time to devote to ringing. Older recruits usually are willing to give the commitment needed to learn, and set themselves high standards.

Some **methods of recruitment**:

- One of the easiest methods is to stand up at the end of service and announce that the ringers are ready to take on the next x people who would like to learn to ring!
- Special Ringers’ Service (see article on Amersham in this newsletter).
- Posters around church
- Parish pew leaflets and newsletter
- PC monitor in church showing bells ringing above
- Sunday school, Youth Groups – presentations, make ringing part of summer camps
- New parishioners’ events
- Tower open day – “come and try” sessions
- Schools/Colleges – participate in Assembly, set up ringing as official school/after school activities/clubs
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme – necessity to learn a “skill”
- Guides, Scouts
- Adult education college - provide a course for their portfolio
- Museums, Libraries – posters, displays
- Local events - shows, fetes, carnival – handbell ringing, mini ring
- Community websites - entries in Clubs/Organisations section
- Local council websites – entries in lists of local organisations
- Local organisations (eg Rotary, Lions, Inner Wheel, Townswomen’s Guild, Women’s Institute, U3A) – offer presentations about ringing
- Local adult social groups – organise special evenings as part of their programme
- Articles/advertising in local newspapers, magazines, radio - contact local papers to invite reporter to visit and publish article
- Letter box drop – deliver letters inviting residents, members of electoral roll to learn to ring
- Posters in shop windows

Materials – if you are arranging an exhibition or open day, there are lots of suitable pictures available to download and print from the Central Council website: <http://prc.cccbr.org.uk/pubs/bellsAndBellringing.php>

Printed copies of a recruitment leaflet for distribution to the general public are available from John Harrison at leaflets@cccbr.org.uk

There is a downloadable recruitment poster (with space for inserting local ringing and contact information) <http://www.cccbr.org.uk/pr/pubs/poster/>

ODG have exhibition stands which are free-standing, triple-fold and comprise six panels 600mm wide by 1 metre high (plus materials for use). They are contained in carrying bags, easily transported by car and are available on request from pro@odg.org.uk (they are currently stored at Whites of Appleton.) There is also a smaller set available from: depmaster@odg.org.uk.

A mini-ring could enhance many of these activities but unfortunately ODG does not have its own. However, it may be possible to borrow one from a neighbouring association.

Good luck – and please keep your emails coming in to the User Group (for details on how to join the User group if you are not already a member please see article in this newsletter) with more ideas and comments on what has worked/not worked in your experience.

Maryanne Roach

Ringers' Service at Amersham



The Rev Tim Harper interviewing Jan Galloway and Andrew Melvin Left to right: Chris Potter, Jan Galloway, Andrew Melvin, Valerie Simmonds, Chris Nunn, Maryanne Roach, Gordon Polley, Delia Meehan, Ken Draper (missing from picture: Jill Haslam, Dulcie McClerie, Alan and Marion Ainsworth, Alan Bain, Nick Balderson, Jonathan Potter, Peter Sippett)

Designed mainly as a way of ensuring that the congregation got to know the ringers (who usually creep in, or out, during the first hymn) and that the ringers felt part of our church family (but we hope with additional potential regarding recruitment), our Rector, Tim Harper, warmly welcomed the suggestion that we have a Bellringers' Service. This was advertised in the pew leaflet for several weeks in advance.

We requested that several rows of pews were reserved for us in the centre of the church so that we were visible. We wanted ringers to take as many as possible of the lay roles in the main Sunday service and our Head Sidesman volunteered to teach those of us unused to taking part what to do prior to a ringing practice; although we couldn't welcome people as they came into church, because we were, of course, ringing at that stage, we did the readings, led appropriately-prepared intercessions, and delivered the bread and wine, as well as taking the collection, guiding people to communion, and collecting the Sunday School (this was a favourite because it entailed wearing yellow fluorescent jackets and stopping the traffic!) In addition, it was our Rector's idea that he interview two ringers as part of his sermon, and we also got a short "plug slot" at the end of the service.

The hymns were chosen from Roger's Bailey's website (www.ringing.info/hymns.html) (after arranging a session with our organist to make sure that the music would be well known, even if the words were not), although the addition of "Unchanging God" unfortunately, turned out to be less successful – perhaps that is better reserved for services where most are ringers? As the hymns are not in our hymn book, our parish secretary kindly printed them out on a sheet which was handed out instead.

The Rector also made the very successful suggestion that we provide drinks in the churchyard afterwards, so, as the delightful weather in early July was in our favour, that gave us an added opportunity to talk to people.

We don't have sufficient expertise in handbell ringing but, if we had, that could, of course, have also been incorporated, and the proximity of Holy Communion meant that we could not have an "open tower" immediately after "our" service – although several people had ventured up the tower, been given a brief explanation of ringing, and shown the bells, only a few weeks previously during the church fete.

Other groups in our church are now considering raising their profile in this way and we are keen to make the Ringers' Service an annual event, so we'd be glad to hear other ideas via the EBSB User Group.

Maryanne Roach

This article was published in the Ringing World on 17th September

SCIENTIFIC

One of my call-change ringers at Iver was on holiday, and hearing bells being raised at the local church on the Sunday morning, went along to have a ring. He was greeted pleasantly with "Are you a ringer?" and his affirmative was followed by "Do you ring Glasgow?" The perverseness of chance struck me forcibly – even today when the frontiers of ringing complexity continue to be pushed back, how many towers would you strike where the Sunday Service band rang Glasgow regularly? (We rang it at Beaconsfield during the 1990s.) Let me just say however, that Steve was made welcome, they started with some rounds for him, then rang their Glasgow ("there was a lot of arguing," he said) and finished up with some call-changes to service time.

When I was learning Surprise back in the dark ages, Glasgow was considered the height of complexity, even for those of my friends who applied the adage "Right-place method, 5 minutes" (ie to learn it), "Wrong-place method, 5 hours" and although Glasgow had been first pealed as long ago as 1946, peals of it were rare. Nowadays they are almost commonplace and the height of complexity has shifted to things like Double Darrowby (first rung in 1981). One mind-blower that has remained a pretty constant challenge to the great ringing intellects, however, is Scientific Triples. Since it was first conquered by Robin Leale's band in 1958, I think only about ten peals of "Scientific" have been rung (and three of those were conducted by Robin).

Present-day surprise ringers and those adept on higher numbers, might think that there would be little to challenge them in mere triples. "Scientific" would soon convince them otherwise! It is quite the most difficult thing I have ever encountered! Devised by the ringing genius John Carter in 1904 as (a) "Puzzle for the puzzler; brain-fodder for the scientist" (the Bell News, July 28 1906), Carter's own peal composition (involving three different types of bob) was a first difficulty to be overcome, so another genius, Albert Pitman, produced a "simpler" composition (that is a relative term!) in 1951. This was what Robin Leale first called, though he later called Carter's original as well.

Understanding the plain course is difficult enough but there are three places WITHIN each lead/section where a bob can be made, known as the Red, Blue and Green positions, and one effect is that within 32 changes any ringer may be required to ring five different place bells, and that with any one place bell there may be several places where the same work occurs: you have to know which one! For anyone wanting a real challenge in change-ringing, let me recommend "Scientific". I wonder if we will ever see a non-conducted peal of it rung?

David G Rowlands

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

Lorna Newton Competition Pictures



Bray rang 1st and were Runners Up (19 ½ faults)



Winkfield rang 2nd and were 5th (33 faults)



High Wycombe rang 3rd and won with 8 faults



Chesham rang 4th and came 3rd with 22 faults



Wooburn rang 5th and came 6th (40 ½ faults)



Cookham rang 6th and were joint 3rd with Chesham



Old Windsor rang last and came 7th (50 ½ faults)



Robert Newton presenting the trophy to Sheila Bruce



Katharine Firman receiving the Runner Up Trophy



John Bauld with the wooden spoon for Old Windsor

Recruiting with Handbells and Visitors

Some little time ago, Maryanne Roach asked us to tell the Branch committee and members about our recruitment/training methods. I have only seen one response, from Mark Instone, and have felt guilty ever since reading it! Perhaps I can assuage some of my guilt by putting something on paper for the next Newsletter (a rare enough event in itself!)

Some of Maryanne's points may have arisen after she had visited us at Burnham for a practice when only our current two young learners, Jessica and Bradley, were present along with Angela and me and Lynn, one of our daughters, and a grandson, who come over from Reading most Tuesdays to help out. Since that visit we have also been joined, most weeks, by Josie Martin with one or more child, grandchild or friend. Maryanne contributed greatly to that practice and Lynn and Josie still do at others. We have also been helped by visits from Langley ringers in the past even as we have for weddings this year. In fact, without these visitors, we are often limited to ringing only four bells. We usually use the set of handbells, which we keep in the tower, if there are only three people present.

Some people ask how we manage to recruit young people at Burnham. I usually counter the question by asking how, and why, we cannot recruit older people? Our success with young people is almost entirely due to the handbells which we use with Burnham Clangers from Year 3. Not always, but often, by the time they reach Year 5, most children see learning to ring tower bells as a natural progression. Unfortunately, of course, the next natural progression is after Year 13 when they move on to University, as have three of our teenagers recently. While it is gratifying to know that some of them, over many years, have gone on to ring in other places, it is rather galling that we do not attract graduates from other places to join us at Burnham.

As at Langley, frequent attempts to recruit adult ringers have fallen on deaf ears. Talks to local clubs, tower open evenings (surely, everyone in Burnham must have been up our tower?), articles in Parish magazines, tune ringing on handbells with more than a passing reference to tower bells and change ringing, have been almost totally unsuccessful. Might we be able to recruit more children if we were able to work more closely with local schools? Could a Ringer in Residence scheme help to link bells and bell ringing to subjects in the curriculum? History and Geography could, possibly, be illustrated with information about foundries and events taking place when bells were cast. Would composing or proving touches be a useful maths or computer exercise? Is actual bell handling an appropriate form of physical activity? Could our link with churches enliven a religious studies syllabus? Would it be too far fetched to suggest that pubs might also be available for such a scheme?

YES! I am desperate and hope that some of my ravings may help someone to come up with a workable solution. We will continue using our handbells to recruit youngsters and, occasionally as last Christmas, an adult to the tower. We would even be happy to lend you a set of handbells or simple music (much originally arranged by Bill Birmingham in the 1950s) if you think they might be useful to your tower. I take some slight comfort in knowing that most voluntary and leisure groups are struggling to keep their numbers up. I happen to believe that bell ringing, on both tower and handbells, is something we should work hard to sell to the community at large, as one of the few truly English folk arts, even if one discounts its call to worship,

Could the Ringing Foundation and the William Hartley Memorial Fund (for handbell ringers), be asked to assist?

Cliff Blundell

FROM LANGLEY TO CAMBRIDGE – AN EPIC JOURNEY WITHOUT LEAVING THE TOWER

One of the questions which a vibrant band of ringers has the luxury of considering is what form future development can take. At Langley, we had augmented to eight in 1997 and moved from six to eight bell ringing. We had a nominal Cambridge Major band but this relied on the same eight ringers being in the tower at the same time. As a result, opportunities were limited and so too was the facility to teach others. It was apparent therefore that we felt the need, as a band to make Surprise Major part of our weekly repertoire rather than a rare treat.

How to achieve this aim, then? It was clear that, if such a skill were to be sustainable, we would need a core of significantly more than eight ringers, otherwise a week's illness, heavy homework or a move resulting from a change of job or university entrance could end these plans abruptly. We could not look to any neighbouring towers for support as they too lacked regular Surprise Major bands, and even had we been able to, one could hardly arrive as a visitor at a practice with four or five learners in tow. Branch and Surprise Practices might offer a solution but a number of our ringers have difficulties with Saturday practices, especially given the number of weddings we are ringing for.

The solution presented itself in a half remembered story told to me by the late George Swift, about how Bill Pye taught a band to ring Cambridge Major from scratch in the 1920s. If he were capable of this feat it should be possible to teach a band starting with a core of four or five experienced ringers.

Starting off: Any initiative to teach several learners Cambridge Major at a time had to be broken down into small, manageable steps, Stage 1 was to close the sound control! Ringers were asked to learn one lead of Cambridge at a time and indeed, initially, we were doing just that, ringing one lead and setting the bells up. Some attempts worked rather better than others. Ringers would then learn a different bell and swap bells so that they had then rung two bells. All ringers were encouraged to learn the "telephone number" [lead end order] for Cambridge and even when we moved beyond single leads, the shout of "lead end at back" was essential to remind uncertain learners of exactly where they were.

We now have fourteen ringers who are part of the Cambridge Major project and half courses of Cambridge are regular features on Tuesdays, Thursdays and even some Sundays. Ringers learn at different rates and some of our ringers are now learning Yorkshire. The eventual plan is that within the space of the next few years we should be able to master, at the very least, the Cambridge "family" as well as offering a facility for ringers from neighbouring towers to get experience of ringing Surprise Major. This is very much a work in progress and we wouldn't want to submit all our efforts as test pieces in striking competitions just yet but our success underlines the fact that one tends to move either forwards or backwards. Not bad for a tower ringing largely call changes into the 1970s.

Mark Instone

Teaching to Teach

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

DIARY DATES

13 November	Burnham (8)) Surprise Practice	7 – 9pm
25 November	Amersham (12) Thursday Evening Higher Number Practice (10/12)	7.45 – 9.15pm
27 November	<i>Guild Autumn General Committee Meeting and 10 Bell Striking Competition</i>	
11 December	Old Windsor (8) Branch Practice	6 – 7.30pm
	Followed By CHRISTMAS SOCIAL – tickets available from Branch Officers	
28 December	Post Christmas Ringing Outing – <i>details available soon please keep date free</i>	
8 January	Bray (8) Surprise Practice	7 – 9pm
22 January	Hitcham (6) Improvers Practice	5 – 7pm
29 January	Cookham (10) Higher Number Practice	5 – 6.30pm
12 February	Chalfont St Giles (8) Surprise Practice	7 – 9pm
24 February	Amersham (12) Thursday Evening Higher Number Practice	7.45 – 9.15pm
25 February	Maidenhead (8) Friday Daytime Practice	2.30 – 4.30pm
26 February	Chalfont St Peter (6) Branch Committee Meeting	6.30pm
	Followed by Practice	7 – 9pm
12 March	Quarter Peals	
19 March	Novices Outing	