

*G & B Diocesan Association of
Church Bell Ringers
Cheltenham Branch Newsletter
August 2006*

Recent firsts: well done

Rosemary Askew: 1st QP (Tenor to Plain Bob Doubles)
Jan Balderstone: 1st QP (Tenor to Plain Bob Doubles)
Max Drinkwater: 1st QP Pudsey Surprise Major, 1st Peal Plain Bob Major
Pat Hickey: 1st QP Lincolnshire Surprise Major, 1st QP Pudsey Surprise Major
Jeremy Hitchings: 1st QP on 10 (Treble to Grandsire Caters)
Nathaniel Hitchings: 1st QP Minor as Conductor (Plain Bob)
Quentin Jackson: 1st QP Treble Bob Royal in-hand (Kent)
David Lynch: 1st Peal as Conductor (Plain Bob Major)
Sue Millen: 1st QP Grandsire Doubles as conductor
Hazel Sweetman: 1st QP of Major (Treble to Plain Bob)

G & B Association Competitions

The G & B Association striking competitions took place on Saturday 8th April at Wanborough for the Penn Trophy (8 bells) and Hannington for the Croome Trophy (6 bells). I am sure all of you know the results: **Cheltenham Branch won both competitions!** The only other time Cheltenham has won the Penn Trophy was in 1996. Only two branches have won both competitions in the same year in the past; Bristol and Wotton-Under-Edge, the last time being in 1993.



The Penn Trophy winners

Conrad Warford, Stuart Tomlinson, Philip Abbey (C), John Ridley, Richard Knight, Hilda Ridley, Simon Ridley and Mark Davies who rang 168 Stedman Triples

The only other time Cheltenham has won the Croome Trophy was last year, and each time Cheltenham was represented by Charlton Kings. Ringing 240 Grandsire Doubles, the band was 1 Alan Smith, 2 Hilda Ridley, 3 Richard Knight, 4 Quentin Jackson, 5 John Ridley (C), 6 Simon Ridley.

St. Mark's was awarded a "highly commended" for the Best Kept Tower Competition for the second year running.

Well done Cheltenham Branch!!

Nibley Trophy

On Saturday 24th June Cheltenham Branch hosted the Young Person's Striking Competition for the Association at Woolstone. About 25 young ringers took part on a lovely sunny day, and had fun playing with the balls, frisbees and Prestbury's model bell in the churchyard in between ringing. A team made up of 2 Bristol Rural, 1 Forest and 3 Swindon young ringers won the competition, with a complete band from Cheltenham coming second. Well done all of you. After the results, food and skittles were enjoyed at the Shutter Inn at Gotherington.

Banner Trophy

Our Branch striking competition for the Banner Trophy was held on Saturday 10th June at Buckland. Again we had a lovely sunny day, so it was pleasant to lounge in the churchyard talking to friends and being amazed at how Rosie and Daniel have grown; both fully-fledged toddlers now! This year we made 2 draws so that not everyone would have to wait right from the beginning before it was their turn to ring. Then we were off to the Gardener's Arms in the village for a good meal and lots of chat, during which David Bagley and Alison Batchelor from Tewkesbury Branch gave us the results. Our thanks to them both for judging the competition for which 11 teams from 8 towers, with 53 ringers entered. Badgeworth were the clear winners with St Mark's a close second, so well done to Badgeworth who will represent Cheltenham Branch in the Croome Trophy competition next year. No pressure!

Cleeve Trophy

On Saturday 1st July we held our Cleeve Trophy Afternoon at Leckhampton. It was a very enjoyable, relaxed afternoon for the 21 ringers who attended, with some general ringing followed by refreshments in the Church cottages before we got down to the competition itself. The standard of all three teams was good, with Warden Hill coming first, closely followed by Bishop's Cleeve and Prestbury; each of whom were awarded Highly Commended Certificates. Thank you to Mike Clifford, Mary Lynch and Bob Bennett for judging the competition and to Leckhampton for hosting it.

It was particularly pleasing to see some ringers entering a striking competition for the very first time, and I hope it has given them confidence to join in the competition(s) again next year.

Situations Vacant (November 2006)

We shall be very sorry to lose both Bob Bennett as Chairman and Philip Abbey as Joint Ringing Master at this year's AGM. Both have given sterling service to the Branch and we thank them for the time and effort they

Please turn over

have spent on our behalf. If you would like to volunteer yourself or nominate another ringer for either post, please let me know in writing (letter or e-mail). Before you nominate someone, please ensure you have their permission. If you are undecided whether to volunteer and would like to know what the job(s) entail(s), please contact Bob or Philip for "insider information"!

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 9th September (all day): The **Branch Outing** has been kindly organised by Janet. Links to StreetMap are provided on the Branch website at: http://cheltenhambranch.org.uk/outing_2006.htm

Time	Ringling
8:45	Depart Cheltenham (suggested time)
10:00-11:00	Hungerford, S Lawrence (8 12-1-8) SU334687
11:30-12:30	Kintbury, S Mary the Virgin (8 12-1-14) SU383669
<u>Lunch</u>	Suggested venue: Winterbourne Arms , directions and menu on their website.
14:30-15:30	Shaw-cum-Donnington, S Mary (6 7-0-12) SU475683 Ringing for Wedding
16:00-17:00	Thatcham, S Mary (8 13-2-7) SU516673

Thursday 14th September at 7:30 pm: Branch Doubles and Minor practice at Stanton (rescheduled from 20th July). Everything from Rounds to Cambridge will be rung, depending on the attendance.

Tuesday 19th September at 7:30 pm: Joint practice with Gloucester Branch at Gloucester Cathedral. Everybody welcome for 10 and 12 bell ringing for all abilities.

Saturday 14th October: Autumn Training Day – each tower should have details and application forms; if you haven't seen these please ask your Tower Secretary.

Young Ringers' Events

During the Easter holidays the Branch ran a Young People's Ringing Event at Leckhampton. For 4 of the 8 participants it was the first time that they had rung out of their own tower on 'big bells'. During the morning everything was rung from backstroke to rounds to a touch of Cambridge. I should like to thank Alice King for contributing the following article about it for us.

"The juniors' ringing morning at Leckhampton was quite difficult for me because I started learning (and am now on plain hunt on five) at Badgeworth and am used to heavier bells than at Leckhampton. I enjoyed it after a while because I had a lot of help from Janet, Elizabeth, Max, Simon, Barbara and Chris. There were junior learners from Badgeworth (myself), Warden Hill, Prestbury, Woolstone and Leckhampton. There were 8 ringers and 7 helpers, which adds up to 15 people in total. The session was from 10am to 12am and halfway

through at about 11am we had a break for about ten minutes. Before the break I had absolutely no confidence. But then again, they had lots of jaffa cakes. *Note to all junior learners: jaffa cakes really do help!*

So, after I had had one too many jaffa cakes I had tons of confidence and proved that I could ring the Leckhampton treble! (But only by myself with supervision and not in any methods either!)

All in all I had quite a nice day (in the end!)"
Alice King, 12, Ringer at Badgeworth

Thirteen People and 2 Dogs: On 2nd August the Branch had a successful Young Persons' Outing, taking the train from the race course to Toddington. We walked to the tower, enjoyed a picnic and then rang. Later, after refreshments in the Flag and Whistle cafe, we returned on the diesel train. Thank you to Janet for organising it, and to Joan and Owen for vehicular support and drinks.

News from Bishop's Cleeve

A quarter peal was rung on 2nd April to commemorate Golden and Ruby Wedding Anniversaries within the Parish and was the first quarter for Jan Balderstone who rang the tenor to Plain Bob Doubles. Another quarter peal was rung on 4th June in celebration of Violet and Bernard Jackson's Diamond Wedding Anniversary (parents of Marilyn Hall and Angela Hill) in which Rosemary Askew achieved her first quarter, as tenor to Plain Bob Doubles.

"We had a very successful outing on Saturday 24 June, visiting towers at Childswickham, Saintbury, Willersey and Broadway. In all, 19 attended and we rounded off the day with dinner at a local pub. Mike Clifford hosted the day and our thanks go out to him for a very successful and enjoyable day." AH

News from Leckhampton

On 2nd April Leckhampton rang a quarter peal of Gainsborough which is a variation on Lincolnshire, where the 5-pull dodge and lead is replaced by "Dodge, Lead, Dodge, 2nds, Dodge, Lead". This was a first in method by all the band (Barbara Pettit, Max Drinkwater, Jacqui Hyde, Sue Drinkwater, Cathy Heathcote, Terry Jones and Huw Davies. This was also Sue's 500th Quarter Peal. Congratulations Sue.

Leckhampton had a successful quarter peal day in June, scoring 3 out of 4 quarters: Variable Hunt Plain Bob Major at Mangotsfield; Rutland at Coalpit Heath and Stedman Triples at Thornbury. Then on 8th July they rang a local band peal of 5120 Bloxham Surprise Major to welcome the Rev. Anne Dowdeswell as Assistant Curate at Leckhampton. It was first in method for the Association and by all ringers in it: 1. Angela Newing; 2. Barbara Pettit; 3. Max Drinkwater; 4. Stuart Tomlinson; 5. Sue Drinkwater; 6. Cathy Heathcote; 7. Huw Davies; 8. Terry Jones (c)

Good Striking

by M B Clifford

As most of you know I am computer illiterate, so imagine my surprise when I was away at Christmas and my eldest grandson bounded down the stairs, from the computer room where else, and announced "Grandpa you are famous, you are on the Internet". Suspecting that my wife was carrying out her threat to get rid of me by selling me on e-Bay, I leapt up the stairs on my recently replaced right knee and there it was on the Cheltenham Branch Website: by the retiring Ringing Master Mike Clifford, "Let us make striking in our Branch the envy of the Association" or words to that effect. How easy to make these throw away remarks but how difficult to put them into practice.

Over the last three years I have given talks about ringing to 1552 people from various groups. Although their knowledge of ringing has been virtually nil, the question most frequently asked is "Why do the bells all sound jangly at times?" You see the general public has no idea whether you are ringing call changes or Gobbledegook Surprise Maximus, but they do know when the striking is not good.

I know that striking is always receiving the attention of Branch Officers but maybe a few observations from someone who has been forced to take a back seat for a while, but has had the opportunity to observe how others ring, might be helpful.

Responsibility for good striking rests on all of us and we must always do our utmost to achieve it.

We must accept three things:

1. There are some people who although able to ring several methods will never be good strikers due to a lack of coordination.
2. We cannot all be experts like the College and Cumberland Youths in our midst.
3. Some experts must take this into account when setting standards for loyal Sunday Service Ringers. Shouting at people and constantly picking them up during ringing is unhelpful and usually means the striking gets worse as people become unnerved.

In my opinion the reasons for poor striking are:

1. Poor bell handling/control.
2. Failure to learn a method properly before trying it out.
3. Not looking at others, especially when dodging or leading.
4. Not listening for your bell in the ring.
5. Being too grand to be corrected, or too sensitive.

Now to take the reasons in order.

1. **Handling:** Failure to teach proper bell handling from the start is a major problem as bad habits picked up during teaching are almost impossible to correct at a later date. I have seen several cases where ringers are being held back because they look for the sally

every time. How can they look around to see where they should be when they are doing this? The responsibility for teaching handling must be on a proper basis from the start. It would be helpful if each Tower could have someone responsible for this or bring in outside expertise if necessary. Tower Captains have too many other responsibilities and it would be beneficial if the load could be shared.

2. **Methods:** Learn a method properly, by which ever way suits you best, before you try to ring it. A glance at the book on practice night is insufficient. Remember that even practice night is a public performance. For Sunday Service ringing attempt only something which most of the band are capable of ringing correctly. Do not try to be too clever.
3. **Looking:** When ringing look around to see the bell you should be ringing after/over. When dodging look for the bell you should be following when dodging under; just as important as the one you ring over/after. Do not look at the floor or the ceiling as so often happens, you will find no help there. Remember that a smile to someone who is unsure can be very helpful. When ringing with no tenor cover, look for the last bell to take your lead and do not rush; a common fault.
4. **Listening:** I am not one who agrees with ringing masses of rounds before you start a method. My experience is that even if you spend ages getting the rounds right it still generally goes pear shaped when you start the method. Use the time of rounds to detect if your bell is striking late or early so that you can drop it into the correct position at every stroke. Try to pick out your bell from the others so that you will hear if you are not striking correctly. This is not always easy but essential if you are to strike well. It must be appreciated that those with a hearing impairment, who are often loyal members of the band, will find difficulty with this and allowances must be made for them.
5. **Finally:** For the very few who consider themselves too grand to be corrected I would just say, "think again, none of us are perfect". To the over sensitive, remember a mistake has to be corrected quickly and people have to speak loudly and abruptly if the ringing is not to fire out. Remember that while we all make mistakes most ringers always try to do their best. So let us all spend a little more time and patience helping the weakest members of the band to improve by *encouraging* them.

A BAND IS ONLY AS GOOD AS IT'S WEAKEST MEMBER

Good striking and happy ringing to everyone.

Our Branch has won both the six and eight bell Association Striking Competitions this year. We should all be striving to reach this standard. With dedication and support it is possible. MBC

H M Queen Elizabeth II's 80th Birthday

On 21st April Quarter Peals to celebrate H M Queen Elizabeth II's 80th birthday were rung at Bishop's Cleeve (Plain Bob Doubles), Cheltenham Parish (Grandsire Caters); Leckhampton (Rutland Surprise Major), St Christopher's (Plain Bob Doubles), and Winchcombe (Grandsire Doubles).

St. Mark's Bell Restoration Update

"On Monday 18th July during practice at St Mark's the tenor headstock suddenly failed resulting in a rather dramatic end to ringing. Cracks up to 8 inches long and half an inch wide have opened up causing the stock to bow and the bell to drop.

The bells have been inspected by Malcolm Taylor and Simon, and the Tenor has been declared unsafe. It is currently still hung but has supporting timbers in place under the bell in case the stock should fail completely.

The remaining 4 bells will continue to be rung for service and weddings in 2006 (pending no further problems) however several cracks in other headstocks and some bearing problems were noted during the inspection. The remaining bells will fall silent within two years. This appeal has now become all the more urgent, with progress so far:

- Now raised £32k, over 40% of total project cost of about £80,000
- Successful with 5 grants (one local charity giving £5000 - their biggest ever grant)
- Treble bell has been given
- The DAC have approved the bell restoration faculty.

Still to go:

- Faculty for restoring the west end balcony as a ringing room is under discussion, result hoped for by September
- Awaiting outcome of G & B Grant application
- Applications being made to big grant giving bodies including Sports and Arts, Heritage Lottery, Barron Bell, Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, ENTRUST to name a few. The Diocesan funding officer has taken an interest in the project and is offering his services for free!

Up coming events:

- Concert with St Mark's own specially commissioned piece, with a nationally recognised choir.
- Heritage weekend in conjunction with St Mark's.

- Sponsored peals and quarter peals in October festival week
- Another open day on 14th August 2007. Please put the date in your diaries. All requests to: ahajok@worcestershire.gov.

A recent event raised £375 (after expenses). The committee would like to thank all those who supported this event and particularly Janet and Hilda who kindly helped us with the ushering and organisation.

It is hoped to begin the work (which may in itself take one year) at the end of 2007 or beginning of 2008.

Simon would also like to ask if anyone is willing to help accommodate a homeless local band for a while. St. Mark's now have several learners who are beginning rounds and need to keep up their "rope time". If anyone is willing to accommodate a practice on a Monday or offer bells for learners please do get in touch.

Many thanks for your support, real progress is being made in this very complicated project.

Alf French

Most of you will have already heard the sad news that Alf French of Twyning has died.

Alf became a member of the G & B at Twyning in 1983, was awarded a proficiency certificate in 1986, and served as Ringing Master of the Tewkesbury Branch in 1991. He rang in 3 G & B peals, all of which were Minor.

"He built some of the early ringing simulators in the days when computers were not generally available. The first was used by Twyning tower. He subsequently built a simulator for the G & B, specially designed for simplicity in use. It was portable and was aimed at training learners in the basic methods.

The G & B simulator was a masterpiece of electronic design. He must have spent hundreds of hours in adapting the electronics and in re-writing the software. It remained in use in various towers until overtaken by advances in PC technology.

After retirement he assisted professional bellhangers by providing voluntary labour during restorations, a valuable contribution in keeping costs down." HNE

Midweek practices?

Would any of you be interested in the idea of an occasional mid-week ringing group in a relaxed style; centred around a pub lunch? Please let me know if this would appeal to you, so we can see whether it would be viable. Even better: would you be prepared to organise it? Thank you.