

Cheltenham Branch Bell Ringers – July 2015

Thanks and Congratulations

To the Minster for a very entertaining talk on ringing for the Cheltenham Science Festival on Wednesday 3 June.

To everyone who came on the Branch Outing on Saturday 6 June (see Anna's report below.)

To Warden Hill for hosting the Striking Competition, to the Minster for winning, and to Liz Coke for hosting a magnificent Pudding Party, on Saturday 13 June (see pudding photographs below).

To Stanway, and particularly to Simon Ridley, for a completed project and a wonderful rededication service and tea at Stanway Hall on Sunday 21 June (see Simon's article below.)

Coming up

Friday 24 July

7.30pm: Stedman Triples Practice (including Calling) at Leckhampton.

To help with planning, please let Stuart know if you plan to come.

There is a guide to calling Stedman Triples on the branch website at http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/publications/Calling_Crib_Stedman_Triples.pdf

Saturday 19 September

Afternoon outing around Churchdown - details to follow.

Towers

Bishop's Cleeve is back in action now their staircase is back from the restorers!

Ringers Leaving for University?

A note from Steve Coleman...

It's coming up to that time of year when people are leaving for university.

Regrettably lots of young ringers lapse at this stage, partly because they have so much else to do, but partly because they're not sure how to continue their ringing or whether they'd be made welcome. If you know of anyone starting university this autumn – or who has already started but doesn't ring there – please direct them to this website:

<http://www.universityringing.org/>

Autumn Training Day

Saturday 14 October

Accompanying this newsletter are details of the Autumn Training Day. The course details will also be on the G & B website (www.bellsgandb.co.uk) and applications can be made on-line or by post.

As in previous years, the course will be based at Wotton-under-Edge and will be using towers in the surrounding area.

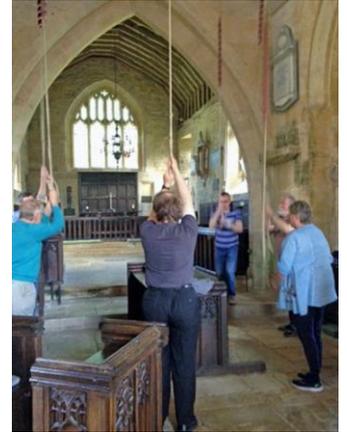
Enrolments should be made as soon as possible and in any case no later than Monday 14th September.

Contacts and Committee

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Branch Outing, Saturday 6 June

The afternoon tower outing at the start of June was enjoyed by ringers from a variety of towers across the branch. We started off at Hinton on the Green, where after sweeping up a few twigs from the ringing room floor, we enjoyed the bells. From here we moved on to St Eadburgh church, just outside Broadway. These were undoubtedly our favourite bells of the afternoon, rung from the chancel. After moving the pews out of the way to make way for the ropes, we took up the challenge of this 18cwt ring of 6 and were also lucky enough to learn about some of the history of the church from the local parishioners. The last stop was Stanton, where we were relieved to end the day with some lighter bells, even if we did have the challenge of no lighting to contend with! Finally we headed to the pub in Snowhill for a meal.



Striking Competition & Pudding Party, Saturday 13 June

The G&B Youth Team did the judging (excellently), the Minster came top, and everyone had a good time, so in a sense we all won.

The exact results have been circulated separately... so now on to the Puddings!



Stanway Restoration (report by Simon Ridley)

For those who have never walked the Cotswold way or been extras in a period drama, Stanway is a picturesque chocolate box village on the Gloucestershire Worcestershire border. Frequently used as a filming location, the village is one of the little known gems of the Cotswolds.

The most noticeable feature of the village is the stunning Jacobean Manor house, currently home to the 13th Earl of Wymess and March. Owned for over 800 years by Tewkesbury abbey and then the Tracy Family, the house is being extensively restored by the current Earl. Behind the house in the formal gardens can be seen the tallest single jet gravity fed fountain in the world, rising to over 300 feet when at full pressure. The estate also boasts its own water mill, brewery, cricket ground with pavilion, and tithe barn. However despite appearances, the village is tiny and home to just 300 inhabitants scattered over several miles, most of whom are tenants of the manor.





For at least the last hundred or so years, Stanway has not been a place that ringers frequented - and with good reason. The ring of just four bells was one of the roughest in the area in both handling and sound. Their challenging nature meant only the most experienced ringers could or would want to ring. None the less, the bells did play an important and active role in village life and were rung as frequently as the aging installation allowed. Much of the income that enables the church and manor to remain financially viable continues to come from the wedding packages offered by the manor house, in which the bells feature.

At their last restoration there were four bells dating from 1625, 1904, 1826 and 1638. There was also a small Sanctus bell, not part of the main ring but hung for chiming. Both the Sanctus and Tenor bells are maiden and are listed for preservation.

In 1904 these bells were re-hung in a new wooden framework, which sat upon three much older beams spanning the tower, possibly dating from part of the tower's construction in the 15th Century. The running gear they were hung from were a mixture of second hand parts obtained from Henry Bond's foundry floor and newer components, often copies of older parts. (The treble had a medieval clapper.) The bells were not tuned to any recognisable diatonic scale and the frame was unstable. Even when first installed, the installation cannot have been satisfactory and the bells were rarely rung despite there being active bands at several neighbouring villages.

In the year 2000, when the bells were rung for the millennium, there was already discussion of what to do in the long term, but in such a small village restoring the bells would always be a challenge. However on New Years Day 2013 the long-standing problems with the installation reached a sudden and terminal conclusion.

The church and community were keen that something should be done. A full re-hang was the only option, preferably also tuning the bells. Shortly before the sudden enforced silence, a long-standing member of the community died and left money to be donated towards a bell fund. A collection at the funeral added another substantial figure and a proposal was put forward to rehang, tune, augment and finally "sort out" the old 4.

Fast forward 18 months and after a great deal of fundraising, consultation and physical labour the bells now sit resplendent on new fittings having been tuned by Whitechapel and re-hung by Whites of Appleton Bell hangers. The Tenor and 2nd bells have also been welded, having previously has pepper pot tops. The old frame has been modified and strengthened and the long empty 5th pit filled with a new Whitechapel treble. For those who remember it, the old ringing room has been transformed from something resembling a gardener's shed, to a comfortable and smart area.

The new sallies are possibly the most unusual in the area – if they catch on remains to be seen.

The bells were rededicated in a packed church on the 21st June followed by afternoon tea in the Manor.

It goes without saying that restorations do not happen without very significant gifts of time and expertise from volunteers. The parish would like to thank Malcolm Taylor, Mike Seagrave, Bob Sanders, Andy Slade, John Ridley and Ray Talbot for their technical advice, skills and on site assistance during the restoration.

Restorations also do not happen without significant financial gifts from grant bodies and private individuals. We are particularly grateful to Grant-making bodies including The Gloucestershire Environmental Trust with tax contributions donated by Cory Environmental, The Gloucester and Bristol



Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers, The All Churches Trust, Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust, The Council for the Care of Churches and The Four Shires Guild of Bell Ringers. Also, to personal donors including The 13th Earl of Wemyss and March, the late Joyce Stevens, The Hughes Family and Mrs Hilda Ridley.

The community are extremely proud of their bells and would like them to be rung as often as possible. If you would like to visit, please contact Simon Ridley via 3leadsofbristol@gmail.com

Details of the bells:

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|-------------------------------------|---|--------|----|
| Treble Bell | Cast 2014 by Whitechapel of London | 5-1-3 | C# |
| 2nd Bell | Cast 1625 by James Keene of Worcester | 5-0-6 | B |
| 3rd Bell | Cast 1904 by Henry Bond (I) of Burford | 6-0-7 | A# |
| 4th Bell | Cast 1826 by John Rudhall of Gloucester | 9-1-17 | G# |
| Tenor Bell | Cast 1638 by John Martin of Worcester (?) | 11-0-2 | F# |
| Sanctus Bell (not part of the ring) | Cast in 1694. | | |

More photos from Stanway

