



Editor's Foreword – *Andy Clark*

Welcome to the Q3 edition of the branch newsletter! This time, it's nice to be able to include some feedback on how well received our ringing is (see Page 4) – a reminder that our collective efforts are often appreciated far and wide.

I've done the usual update of the table below, to show the planned branch ringing for the remainder of Q4, but also a reminder of the usual caveat that it's wise to keep checking the branch website in case any details change.

Please get me any contributions for the next edition as and when you have some time available. So far we've enjoyed inputs from a wide variety of branch members and I'm very keen to keep it that way. I've already got a few articles lined up for the next one, but I'll never say no to a few more!

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Saturday 28 th October	Cheltenham Minster	19:00-21:00	Branch Training Session: Listening, striking and hearing your bell. If interested, please contact: deputyringingmaster@cheltenhambranch.org.uk
Saturday 11 th November	Childswickham	15:30	Branch ringing, tea and AGM
Tuesday 12 th December	Prestbury	19:30-21:00	Branch Practice (8-bell)

Listening to the Bells – *Liz Coke*

Most of you will remember that an eliminator for the National 12-Bell Competition was held at the Minster in March.

The Minster is open every day for two hours and I do a stint there once a month with another volunteer. With me at my last session was a lady I had not met before. I would say she was in her mid 70s and was disabled, but able to walk slowly with a stick.

We were chatting about the bells. She had seen the bells in the Minster before they were hung in the tower. She was also at the eliminator and she listened to the Cheltenham band ring their test piece and she was at the results.

She is trying to visit every cathedral in England and she had enjoyed the ringing so much she had considered travelling to Sheffield to hear the finals. She decided against it as there would be too many people there.

I was struck by how our actions by ringing the bells had affected her. We know that the bells are heard by passers by, and we know in Cheltenham that when there is ringing on a Saturday morning there are more visitors to the church. But we must not forget that we should strive for the best striking we can, because we never know who is listening.



Branch Outing – *Andy Clark*

On Saturday, 15th July, the Branch enjoyed a short afternoon outing to three towers followed by a pub meal. The weather was a little mixed, with bright sunshine in parts but also some gusty winds. However, compared to the day before, which was non-stop rain, it was a great improvement!

Assembling first at Didbrook, the group enjoyed the rehung ring of five bells. For those who visited prior to the rehang (myself included!), these are like night and day, and I would definitely recommend you try to visit. The internal layout is unconventional in many ways. Aside from being anti-clockwise, four of the five bells are arranged in more or less a straight line, with the ringer of the fifth then being some metres away. Our ringing at Didbrook included some Grandsire Doubles and Bristol Minimus with a tenor behind – a favourite for the Sunday service band at Didbrook.

The photograph below, taken at Didbrook, shows the band following the ringing (l-r): Ann, Simon, Kinsey (Golden Retriever!), Mike, Cara, Barbara, Stuart





Then it was on to another ring of five – this time at nearby Stanway (see photograph). These bells provide a different challenge. They go very nicely but do require a lot of pulling, particularly in changes. Ringing here included some call changes, Reverse Canterbury Doubles, Bristol Minimus with a tenor, and Stedman Minimus with a tenor (once the band had all worked out their starts!). Another enjoyable tower to ring at, with lovely surrounding scenery – surely some of the best countryside that Gloucestershire has to offer.

Then it was onto our third and final tower – Stanton. This time, six bells, but again, anti-clockwise! We were joined by two additional ringers for this tower, Matthew and Tim, which provided a welcome boost to our numbers. Here we rang plenty of call changes, but also some mixed doubles, Cambridge Surprise Minor and Norwich Surprise Minor. There had been a wedding in the church earlier that day, so the church was very nicely decorated with flowers – both inside and out – for our visit, as you can see in the group photo.

We had a further group photo, this time including our new manpower in the shape of Matthew and Tim, along with Andy and Emily who were the joint photographers for the earlier band photo.





Having fulfilled our quota of ringing for the day, it was onto dinner at the Mount, Stanton, perched up above the village. Without sounding like a broken record about the countryside here, this pub surely has one of the best views anywhere, and with a clear view through to the Malvern Hills – albeit with some large rain clouds lurking – what better way to finish the day, washed down by some of the Donnington Brewery's finest ale.

With thanks to Stuart for organising the outing, and to those who attended for all or part of the afternoon, although it was a shame we didn't have a few more ringers on the day.

Stuart has surely set the bar high for the next outing!



Reflecting on Ringing – *Various Contributors*

From Huw Davies:

When we resumed ringing for services at Compton Abdale, after lockdown, we were given a standing ovation by the congregation

From David Lyle:

We have had someone return to Prestbury having been sitting in her garden wondering what to do on a Sunday morning now the kids have left home

From the father of the Groom at a wedding at Badgeworth (a lapsed ringer):

Congratulations on your ringing, I was really impressed with the good striking (this in spite of the adjacent organ playing for most of the time!)

From Gail Jones:

As I ran from the tower into church (Cheltenham Minster) on Sunday morning, a lady I passed said she loved hearing the bells and that they were a little piece of heaven to her



Mini Ring Minimus – Andy Clark

Friday 4th August brought a handful of ‘firsts’ to the Hitchings’ Mini Ring at Alma Road, Cheltenham. The first was a quarter peal of the 11 Plain Minimus methods – with 120 of each giving us a quarter peal of 1320 changes. First was the Plain Bob ‘Group’ – Plain Bob, Reverse Bob and Double Bob, and then onto the Reverse Canterbury ‘Group’ – Canterbury Place, Reverse Canterbury and Double Canterbury Place. Then perhaps the most difficult – or at least unfamiliar of the groups – the Court ‘Group’ – comprising Single Court, Reverse Court and Double Court. Then the final two methods to finish – St Nicholas and Reverse St Nicholas.

None of these methods are particularly complicated when rung individually, but given the low number of bells, a small mistake, particularly at the change of method, by just one or two members of a band can quickly lead to a problem! The other issue, I think, is that these are methods that most ringers – myself included – rarely ring! As it was, despite an early false start and a regroup, the quarter went well, and apart from a few crunches in the Double Court (‘wrong’ places being the usual culprit!), there weren’t really any method mistakes to speak of. For those who haven’t rung it, Double Court involves a lot of places – six at the front, ‘far and near’ places, then six at the back. So a simple line, but one that does require concentration, particularly when you’ve just rung the Single version and the Reverse version and your mind is already whirring about which method is coming next in the sequence!

This was the first of 11 methods for both Reg (conducting) and for Barbara. It turns out I had rung it before, but had forgotten all about it, so no first for me, even though it felt like it! Thanks to Lesley for tenoring behind for us. Perhaps onto a peal of these methods?!....

It was then onto the second quarter of the evening, more minimus – this time 1272 changes of Plain Bob Minimus. This was a significant ‘first’ for Lesley, who rang the treble, which was her first away from the tenor. Given the speed at which these bells turn, which means you can quickly get left behind if you aren’t careful, Lesley managed well and we were pleased to score the quarter peal. Well done to Lesley and we look forward to more milestones in the future, on these and other bells.

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
The Bicycle Ring	The Bicycle Ring
Friday, 4 August 2023 in 26m (1lb 7oz)	Friday, 4 August 2023 in 27m (1lb 7oz)
1320 11m Minimus	1272 Plain Bob Minimus
5 extents ea: Plain Bob, Reverse Bob, Double Bob, Canterbury Place, Reverse Canterbury Place, Double Canterbury Place, Single Court, Reverse Single Court, Double Court, St Nicholas and Reverse St Nicholas	1 Lesley Wells 2 Isabel Hitchings 3 Reg Hitchings 4 Andy Clark (C) 5 Barbara Pettit
1 Isabel Hitchings 2 Reg Hitchings (C) 3 Barbara Pettit 4 Andy Clark 5 Lesley Wells	1st away from cover 1 200th this year 3
Most Minimus methods 2 & 3 Most Minimus Methods as Conductor	



A Ridley Wedding – Simon Edwards

Saturday, 2nd September saw the long-anticipated wedding of Simon Ridley and Rebecca Meyer at St Peter's, Stanway. Despite an unpredictable forecast, the weather ultimately turned out perfectly – the sun came out at the most opportune moments, bathing the happy couple in radiant glory.

As an active G&B ringer, I've known Simon, and his parents, for many years. Becca, however, hails from Sussex, so is not quite as local! Whilst I first met her in December 2014, on a quarter peal day in London, I really got to know her in 2016, when she moved to Bristol to study Mathematics. It has been a delight and pleasure to see their relationship blossom and develop, and watch their journey as they moved out of Simon's bachelor pad to a new house, and fall under the ownership of Kinsey, The Goodest Boy.

A little while back, when the couple were fretting over the wedding arrangements, I gallantly (or foolishly?) volunteered to take on the important job of organising the celebratory ringing for the weekend – a not insignificant task, with two prolific ringing families and many friends in attendance. However, I love a challenge, and was only too pleased to take on this role. Soon enough, I had a spreadsheet compiled, accommodating ringers who wanted to ring a quarter peal on the Friday night and / or Saturday morning. I was fortunate in that everybody was quick and helpful in replies, which made my life that much easier. This isn't to say there weren't a couple of hiccups, necessitating a couple of ringers stepping in at the last minute – my thanks to them, and indeed to everyone concerned for their patience and co-operation. Happily, there was a 100% success rate from these arrangements, with many of these being rung at towers at which Simon or Becca have an association. The quarter peal at Charlton Kings – one of Simon's many home towers – on the Thursday was rung by the couple, their families, a groomsman and a bridesmaid. Meanwhile, the peal at Didbrook was rung by a band from the Ancient Society of College Youths, of which both Simon and Becca, and many of their families, are members. Becca had separately arranged for the bells at Walsoken, Norfolk, where her grandparents are buried, to be rung on the day itself. In total, four peals and 10 quarter peals were rung and dedicated to the occasion.





Whilst the big day dawned cold and grey, things gradually brightened up, with the sun breaking out as Becca arrived at Stanway church (in a vintage 1913 Overland car, much to the delight of her motorhead family!). Knowing her meticulous organisation, there is no doubt she planned this timing down to the nth degree! The service, taken by Reverend Andrew Whitehead – a friend of Simon's from their days at Lancaster University – was thoughtful and personal, and very fitting for the occasion. In place of an organ, the music was led by the Accidental Brass Collective band, of which Simon is a member; they were utterly superb. However, there was no doubt who stole the show; a ringbearer named Kinsey, who was enthusiastically led down the aisle by Lawrence. Naturally, there was open ringing on the five bells, both before and after the ceremony. The service touches, ringing the bride in and out of the church, were rung by Euan Thomas, Phil Ridley, Ben Meyer, Andrew Brown and Simon Edwards. With 50+ ringers' ears, and numerous video cameras, trained on the tower, this was probably the most stressful part of the whole weekend from my perspective! There were also two family touches post-service, with Becca – ably helped up the stairs by her two lovely bridesmaids, Rachel and Heather – leading the way.

Having concluded the ringing, it was off to Stanway House for the reception. Photographs were taken in front of the fountain, the tallest in Britain with its 300-foot jet, which played especially for the occasion. Of course, this caused problems when the wind changed direction – Kinsey revelled in his unexpected shower! A sit-down meal in the tithe barn, with fabulous food, preceded the speeches, which contained the perfect balance of touch and humour. A free bar and hog roast made for a convivial evening which continued well into the night, in the most beautiful of settings.

I am sure I speak for everyone concerned in wishing Simon and Becca the heartiest of congratulations, and every blessing for a long and happy life together, as well as a huge and heartfelt thanks for allowing me to be a small part of your special day. The many photos already give testament to the special memories created.

Oh, and the dress? It was white, of course. Becca looked gorgeous, naturally. I think that's about all I am qualified to say!...

Two of the performances are below. Please see Bellboard for the remainder.

Cheltenham, Charlton Kings, Gloucestershire St Mary Thursday, 31 August 2023 in 46m (17–0–13 in Eb) 1264 Double Norwich Court Bob Major Brian E Whiting no 3 1 Rachel E Bagley 2 Susan P Meyer 3 Rebecca L Meyer 4 Simon J Ridley 5 Hilda C Ridley 6 Quentin S A Jackson 7 Andrew D Meyer 8 Simon S Meyer (C) Pre-wedding congratulations to 3&4. Rung by family and friends	Cheltenham, Gloucestershire St Mark Friday, 1 September 2023 in 2h 55 (16–1–2 in F) 5024 Cambridge Surprise Major Composed by T B Worsley 1 Quentin S A Jackson 2 Hilda C Ridley 3 Malcolm P Taylor 4 Simon W Edwards 5 Bernard H Taylor (C) 6 Andrew D Meyer 7 Simon S Meyer 8 Simon J Ridley Pre-wedding compliment to Simon J Ridley & Rebecca L Meyer, due to be married the next day at Stanway
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Cheltenham Minster Ringers' Outing to Herefordshire – *Mike Hartley*

The Annual Outing is probably the most popular agenda item at Cheltenham Minster's AGM. This year there was much enthusiasm for a walking tour of Bristol city centre's towers, following last year's successful tour of Oxford.

It was very disappointing therefore when our Bristol trip had to be cancelled, virtually at the last minute, due to a broken clapper at one church and an unsafe tower at another. Making arrangements for a different outing with only two weeks' notice felt like a pretty tall order but knowing that most members of the Minster band were already available was a good start.

Herefordshire was a great suggestion as an alternative, and thanks to some extremely helpful tower correspondents, one of whom was on holiday in Scotland, hasty arrangements were made to enable us to ring at two churches. Firstly, we rang at St James the Great, Colwall, a delightful 10 cwt ring of ten bells located in a remote village on the western edge of the Malvern Hills. Our host had kindly turned up early to tackle plagues of flies and bees in the ringing chamber.

Following a good lunch at The Farmers' Arms in Wellington Heath, and an interesting drive meandering through "bucolic" Herefordshire, we rang at the detached tower of St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury, on the rather grand 19 cwt new ring of ten, a great improvement we felt on the former ring of eight.

Saturday, 9th September, turned out to be the hottest day of 2023, and while it was a shame having to cancel the Bristol outing, all was well that ended well as many of us felt we were better off spending the day in Herefordshire rather than wilting in the heat of a large city.

We're already looking forward to our 2024 outing, possibly following a similar format to this year's, with some nice (but not too much) ringing and allowing plenty of time for lunch, coffee and tea!

