



Editor's Foreword – *Andy Clark*

Welcome back!

A short-ish but varied newsletter for this third quarter, which I hope will be of interest. We have also reached a milestone, with this being the 10th edition since the newsletter was re-launched back in 2022. It's great that we've reached a reasonable place in terms of having a steady stream of things to write and read about, with only some low-level nagging required from my end. Thanks also to Becca Ridley and Barbara Pettit for helping with proof-reading and in providing me with an ear for me to bounce ideas off.

Just one future date to mention for now – 9th November – for the Cheltenham Branch AGM, which this year will be at Didbrook, and the lovely ring of five bells. Didbrook is also the subject of an article later in this newsletter, so please keep reading!

Thanks for the contributions and see you again for the Q4 newsletter which should land in your inbox early in the New Year.

Leckhampton (and Friends) July Ringing Trip to Somerset – *Pat Hickey (with input from Stuart and Jon)*

This year we chose Somerset for our annual long weekend away. One of our ringers (Jon Hill) learnt to ring at Wembdon, near Bridgwater, 60 years ago. We planned the trip around this and visited towers he enjoyed in his early years of ringing. This included the towers where his father was the Rector at Hatch Beachamp & Beercombe (1952-57) and Vicar at Wembdon (1963-75). Jon also invited his old 1963 school mate Graham Nabb to join us as he also started ringing in 1964 at Cossington.

We drove down on Wednesday (it is a long weekend!) and visited Yatton, Long Sutton and Huish Episcopi on the way. These were all lovely bells, easy going and nice to listen to. We finished with a delicious meal at Ciao Amore in Taunton. Most of us stayed at the Premier Inn at Rushton, although a couple did brave camping this year. Previously this trip has been in the Autumn, and it was good to be out and about in better weather.

On Thursday, we rang at Wembdon including a quarter peal of Beverley & Cambridge Minor, then Bridgwater – where the newly augmented 12 were memorable. After lunch an incident blocking the M5 made driving to Woolavington difficult with traffic queues everywhere, before we ended the day ringing at Street and Glastonbury.

Friday morning did not promise much weatherwise, but as the day went on it improved, and we had some welcome sunshine. We enjoyed beautiful views of the Exmoor moorland and abundant foxgloves. We rang at Exford, Selworthy and lunch at the Periwinkle tea rooms – gorgeous location and good value, Minehead (lovely 10 bell ring) and Dunster. Last tower of the day was the 1cwt eight at Tolland – the lightest church tower eight in the world. Appropriately Reg & Isabel Hitchings were with us – they ring at Warden Hill in Cheltenham, the lightest church tower six in the world! Tolland bells went very well and were easy to handle (once you remember not to pull the backstroke!). We finished ringing there with a half course of Superlative, followed by an excellent meal at the very popular Bear Inn, at Wiveliscombe.

Having just had tower t-shirts designed and made we wore them for a group photo at Selworthy. Thanks to Philip (Avon Ropes) for getting these made for us, they are very smart, and will look good when ringing



for weddings, as we are in full view of the congregation at Leckhampton. These should also be great for publicising ringing – one of our group had three separate ringing enquiries on the day we wore them.

Our last full day of ringing was around Taunton. We were joined by Philip, Anna and their children for the day. We rang at Taunton St James, Taunton St Mary Magdalen, Taunton Wilton, Hatch Beauchamp and Beercrocombe. We enjoyed all the bells but especially the bells at St Mary Magdalen where we had open ringing followed by a quarter peal of Grandsire Caters for a Wedding – a glorious ring of 12. The next morning, many of us joined Sunday Service ringing at a local tower, and then made our way home after another successful trip.

A big thank you to all the local ringers that met us at each tower and made us so welcome. Also, to all our ringing friends, without whom we wouldn't have managed the many larger rings on this trip. Thanks also to Stuart, Gilly and Keith for arranging it all – planning and booking the towers, meal venues, accommodation and parking suggestions, donations.

A great trip and we look forward to the next one!



St Mary Magdalene (left to right):
Stuart, Keith, Reg, Isabel, Bob, Barbara, Pat, Gilly, John, Chris, Graham, John, Steve, Philip



Selworthy photo (left to right):
Bob, Jon, Barbara, Keith, Gilly, Stuart, Chris, Pat, Paula, John, Malcolm



Cheltenham Minster August Ringing Trip to Wolverhampton – *Cath Jack*

On Saturday 31st August, a bright sunny morning, 23 members and friends of Cheltenham Minster headed for Wolverhampton for our annual outing. Organised by Reg Hitchings, possibly with an agenda in mind, a wonderful time was had by all.

From rounds and call changes to Surprise Maximus, taking in the day's special method, Lessness, and everything in-between, the standard of striking and level of concentration and fun was high. Starting at Wood Green, Willenhall, a very cosy tower requiring the next band to file up before the last band filed down, like a striking competition – very efficient use of time. Then on to the light ten at Wednesbury, where a course of London Royal was the highlight, in another rather cosy space. Lunch at Penn offered a choice of a local Art Exhibition and buffet (selected by the majority of this cultured group), while the usual suspects found a pub nearby serving local ales.

The quality of ringing continued after lunch at Penn, and finally on the 33cwt twelve at Wolverhampton St Peter's, where panoramic views of Wolves' Molineux were enjoyed from the ringing room window. Those not looking out of the window rang a very creditable half course of Yorkshire Max to round off a great outing.

Our thanks go to all our friends who came from far and wide to join us – from Liverpool, Tewkesbury, Worcester, Charlton Kings, and St Marks Cheltenham. Also to the four towers that hosted us, but most of all to Reg Hitchings for organising the whole successful day. The group photograph below was taken at Wolverhampton St Peter's.





50 Years of Ringing at Leckhampton for Stuart Tomlinson – *Paula Ware*

Stuart was recognised for 50 years' ringing at St Peter's Leckhampton with a presentation from Rev Gary Grady during the Sunday morning service on 22nd September. A bell-themed handmade card signed by members of the current band was also presented by Barbara Pettit. Stuart then spoke for a few minutes about how he started ringing and here are some details from his talk.

Stuart started ringing at St Peter's in September 1974 and was taught by Eric Taylor and his family. He became interested as his sister Lesley (Tucker) had started a couple of years before at St Mark's Cheltenham. At that time and over the next few years there were lots of youngsters learning at St Peter's and Stuart said that he certainly wasn't the best prospect but stuck with it.

He was fortunate that there was a major bell restoration project completed in 1972, so when he started, the bells were a joy to listen to and relatively easy to ring – and they still are! Much of the money raised for this project was through collecting / selling old newspapers and these were still being collected and stored in an old shed at the Rectory for a couple of years after Stuart started ringing.

There have only been three Tower Captains at Leckhampton since 1974 – Eric Taylor, then Terry Jones and now Stuart for the last 20 years. We currently have a good number in the band, including quite a few enthusiastic and loyal learners. Stuart thanked Rev Gary and his fellow ringers for being so supportive and recognising that ringing is very much a team effort.

The photos show the handmade card for Stuart, and Stuart having a short presentation with Rev Gary Grady and Barbara Pettit.





Didbrook Hatchments – *Simon Ridley*

You may remember that some years ago, the bells at Didbrook were rehung and the tower was restored. To allow for the restoration works to take place, two ancient funeral hatchments were removed from the church for safekeeping. Upon their removal, they were found to be in extremely poor condition and in danger of becoming part of history themselves.

Somehow, I was persuaded to project manage a restoration of these hatchments by the then churchwarden, Malcom Foster, who had started the project but been unable to complete it.

A funeral hatchment is a heraldic display that depicts the arms, crest, and supporters of a deceased person, usually within a black lozenge-shaped frame. They were traditionally used to announce the death of a member of a titled or landed family and were often displayed on the front of the deceased's house before being moved to the church for the funeral. In Germany, the approximate equivalent is a Totenschild, literally "shield of the dead". The funerary hatchment was usually placed over the entrance door of the deceased's residence at the level of the second floor, and remained in situ for six to twelve months, after which it was removed to the parish church. The practice developed in the early 17th century from the custom of carrying an heraldic shield before the coffin of the deceased, then leaving it for display in the church. Funerary hatchments also survive displayed in homes or local museums. In medieval times and later, helmets and shields were sometimes deposited in churches, and helmets (made for the purpose) survive for example in the churches of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire and King's Nympton in Devon.

At the universities of Oxford and Cambridge it was usual to hang the funerary hatchment of a deceased head of house over the entrance to his lodge or residence.

In the 21st century the display of funerary hatchments has largely been discontinued, except in the case of royalty and occasionally by the higher nobility, but many ancient funerary hatchments survive displayed in parish churches throughout England.

Didbrook is lucky to have two such examples dating from the 18th century. In 2022 these underwent an extensive restoration process involving removing (carefully!) the canvas from the frames, repairs to both this and the paintwork, extensively cleaning and then remounting and framing. The work was carried out by Stewart Meese, a specialist fine art restorer based in Stratford Upon Avon. The hatchments were returned to the church and (nervously!) hung by myself and Malcolm Taylor in November 2022. As an aside, cleaning means cleaning each paint stroke with specialist chemicals and a cotton bud. The hatchments are some 6-feet across.

We were pleased to be able to complete the project in time for Malcolm Foster to see them in situ, before he sadly passed away.

When you attend the Cheltenham Branch AGM in November, please do take time to admire these pieces of unusual historic art (see photo overleaf showing one of the two hatchments following the restoration). There is some additional information about them on the table by the bell ropes.





Branch Notices – All

Deaths

We were sorry to learn of the passing of Michael Mulvey, a longstanding ringer at St Lawrence Church, Barnwood, who was known to many in the Cheltenham Branch. Michael's funeral will be held on Thursday 7th November (please see email from Barbara with the specific timings and locations, including the ringing on the day).

AGM – 9th November

Just one further reminder, in case you missed the mention in the foreword, that the branch AGM will be held at Didbrook on 9th November. Barbara has emailed the timings, with service ringing (starting at 15:00), the AGM and service at the church, before dinner at the Mount Inn Pub in Stanton.

At our AGM we are asked to approve the nominations for Association Officers. In the list below there are two vacancies. If you are interested in being nominated for either (or both!) of these posts you can find the duties on page 69, rule 7 of the 2023 Annual Report. The roles are not onerous but can contribute to the smooth running of the Association. If you are interested please approach a member of the branch committee regarding nomination:

- Chairman: Currently Roger Haynes, willing to stand again
- Honorary Secretary: Currently Fiona Hartley, willing to stand again
- Honorary Treasurer: Currently Bridget Lazenby, willing to stand again
- Ringing Master: This position will be vacant going forward
- Peal Secretary: This position will be vacant going forward

3,000 Quarters for Reg

Congratulations to Reg Hitchings on ringing his 3,000th quarter peal. I've popped that performance, along with his very first, in 1976, in the panel below. Of this tally, 2,200 have included Reg's wife, Isabel. Reg's favourite quarters have included those rung by his family, including a memorable quarter peal of Grandsire Caters at Trinity Wall Street, New York, in 2010.

<p>Linton, Herefordshire St Mary the Virgin Friday, 6 August 1976 in 39m (8–1–20 in A) 1300 Doubles (1m/1v) Plain Bob and April day</p> <p>1 Reg Hitchings 2 Beryl Paton 3 Steven Cousins 4 Alan Paton 5 George Cousins (C) 6 Fred Oakley</p> <p>1st Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Cheltenham, Gloucestershire The Bicycle Ring Friday, 2 August 2024 in 27m (1lb 7oz) 1260 Newton Bob Minor</p> <p>1 Isabel Hitchings 2 Alison Grey 3 Barbara Pettit 4 Henry J Stephenson 5 Andy Clark 6 Reg Hitchings (C)</p> <p>1st in method for all.</p> <p>3000th quarter peal 6.</p>
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Central Council Blog

Barbara emailed about this, but in case you missed it, all ringers are now able to subscribe to a weekly blog. Please visit the Central Council website if this is of interest. It is free to subscribe and keeps everyone in touch with what the Central Council is working on behalf of all ringers.

Please also visit the Central Council website for details of the AGM weekend, held this year in Exeter.