

Ringling Masters Report 2003.

First of all please accept my apologies for not being with you today. It is a special day for my Daughter, with 85 guests invited to a celebration Birthday Party and as I am 50% responsible for her I just have to be there. I hope you have a successful AGM and my thoughts will be with you.

Since the last AGM the Branch have held 20 Practices plus the Banner and Cleeve Trophy competitions, rung at Gloucester Cathedral, had an Outing, and supported 2 Association Training Days. My thanks to Pat Hickey for taking some Practices and for arranging the Outing to South Worcestershire. This was a great success enjoyed by 25 Members. Good Towers, not too hectic, and best of all no unpleasantness, but a happy enjoyable day all round. The attendance at Gloucester Cathedral was amazing 28, so my thanks to all of you who came along and represented the Branch at OUR CATHEDRAL. The Banner and Cleeve Trophies were competed for on the same day at Childswickham, with 46 Ringers taking part, up on the previous year. Sadly only 1 Tower, St Christophers, rang for the Cleeve Trophy, when according to our Membership records at least 5 other Towers could have competed. I would stress that although the two Competitions are held on the same day for convenience, they are completely separate and there-is nothing to prevent the same Band entering both Competitions providing they meet the criteria. The Cleeve Trophy is meant to encourage the less skilful ringer and it is hoped that next year more Towers will put in a Band to make it more competitive. The Branch entered Bands in the competitions for the Penn and Croome Trophies and while they did not win they both achieved good results and were in no way disgraced.

Our Branch Membershsip is 123, and our Branch Practices have been attended by 71 members which sounds quite good until you analyse it. 30 Ringers have only attended 1 practice (23 of these when it was at their own Tower). Of the remaining 41 only 2 have a 75% attendance record, 6 a 50% record and 20 a 25% attendance record. Efforts were made last year to run the practices with methods specifically asked for by Members but sadly the attendance of those who made the requests has not been inspiring. 6 Bell Surprise Practices do not seem to be popular, neither do Practices with other Branches.

8 Ringers attended the Joint Practice at Ashchurch.

8 Ringers attended the Joint Practice at Elkestone. (6 of these were Elkestone Ringers only 2 other branch members attended).

8 Ringers attended the Joint Practice at Cheltenham. (5 from Tewkesbury).

DO YOU WANT THEM TO CONTINUE? Please let you Branch officers know. If you do want them to continue then support them.

One aim I had when I became one of the Ringing Masters 3 years ago was to try and improve striking in the Branch, but in this I feel I have failed. Over the last 7-8 months I have deliberately sat back and let others ring so that I could observe why some ringers striking is so poor. Nine out of ten times it is caused by poor bell handling so I would ask Tower Captains and other instructors to insist on correct handling at the onset as it is so difficult to correct bad habits later. Another fault is Ringers guessing their position when dodging "under" or leading, especially with even bell methods with no fixed Tenor. Striking is noticeably better when they know

to lead from the Tenor each time. With attention to these two points striking generally would be much better.

To the "expert" Ringers I would say, please find the time and patience to help those less capable than yourselves otherwise you could finish up with a clique of a few "experts" but few Towers to ring at as most will be silent.

(In our Branch we currently have 19 ringable Towers, 5 bells and above, but only 8 are capable of ringing on Sundays without outside help?.) To the improving I would say, watch, Listen and learn. Do not be offended if someone has to speak sharply or loudly to correct you, as speed of correction is essential if the ringing is not to fire out. To the beginner I would say, take heart, we all had to learn once and the reward when you become a useful member of the Band is well worth it.

I would remind all of us of the aims of our Association, which are:

- 1) To promote the ringing of bells for Divine Service.
- 2) To practice ringing to obtain a higher standard of ringing. Let us all pull together so that as a Branch we can achieve this in as many Towers as possible.

Finally a thank you to all who have supported me in so many ways over the last 3 years. Sorry if I have offended anyone by not being politically correct at times, but that is my style and I see no reason to change at this late stage of life. I hope to continue to give my full support to the new Branch Officers and hope that you also will give them your full support as well and make Cheltenham Branch the envy of others in the Association.

Thank You,

Mike Clifford.

15-11-2003.