



# Newbury Branch Newsletter



## Christmas 2015

### Some Diary Dates

#### January

- 15th Branch Practice
- 23rd Branch Committee Mtg  
At Thatcham

#### February

- w/c 13th Quarter Peal Week
- 20th Branch Dinner

#### March

- 5th AGM in Newbury

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The copy deadline for the Summer 2016 issue is 30th June. Please send contributions by email as attachments, or on hard copy by post to the Editor

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# From the Chair

Well, it's the Christmas season once again. Another year almost over and time to reflect everything. We are haunted by World events that seem out of our control and often too remote to have a significant impact on us. Perhaps we should pull up the drawbridge, isolate our islands from the outside but that's merely playing ostrich. When we ring we tell the World that we are here, that we care and we want to make a difference, however small. My wife and I joined the climate change march in London and it was so moving to be amongst so many people all speaking with one voice. In ringing, we make a noise, to attract attention and tell everyone that they're not alone.

I hope that you will make your voice heard through ringing over Christmas and on into the New Year, at your home tower and by visiting other towers in the Branch or further afield. Many of us ring only at our home tower because we feel safe, that no-one will judge us if we're novices or make mistakes and if we go elsewhere, we'll be looked down on. But ringing is not like that. Lots of towers have barely enough ringers to ring at all so when you step through the door, they're likely to be really pleased to see you. So do get out and about, visit other towers, go to Branch practices when you can (I know, I don't get to many myself).

Looking into the New Year, we have our annual quarter peal week coming up, the Branch AGM on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March in Newbury, our ringing outing to Oxford on 9<sup>th</sup> April and six bell striking contest in June. This year, the Guild is holding its Ringing Day and Eight-Bell Striking Competition in our Branch on the May Day Bank Holiday, Monday 2 May.

Don't forget to check out our web site: [www.bellsnearnewbury.org.uk](http://www.bellsnearnewbury.org.uk). There is useful information and various resources there and you can also post notices. We'd like to link up to any Tower web pages too, so do send us the link if you haven't done so.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Richard Marshall

## ADVERTISEMENT

The Branch Training Officer is planning a one day course on **CONDUCTING** in the New Year. Anyone interested in attending, please contact Lucy Hopkins Till

## NOTICES

### Quarter Peal Week 2016

will be from

Saturday 13th to Saturday 20th February.  
Please get your quarters planned and await  
further details. The Branch Dinner will be held  
on Saturday 20th, and the venue will be

The Furze Bush at Ball Hill. 7.30 for 8.00 PM

### The Guild 8 Bell Striking Competition & Guild Open Day

Which is held on May Bank Holiday, will be  
hosted by our branch this year.

Details to follow

### The Branch AGM

will be held in Newbury this year. As the  
Church Hall is otherwise booked, other local  
venues are being investigate and will be noti-  
fied in due course.

## Officers 2014/2015

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## THATCHAM

Firstly I would like to wish everybody in the Branch a Happy and Healthy New Year. Two articles one on the Striking Competition and the other on three Victoria Cross recipients from Thatcham are elsewhere in the Newsletter.

So far this year we have rung thirty four quarter peals with two more attempts in the book. Most of them were for Services. We also rang them for:

HM Queen Elizabeth becoming Britain's longest serving Monarch.

50 years since the foundation of the Barfield Handbell Ringers and remembering Jennifer Butler who was a founder Member

For the start of Thatcham Festival of the Arts. Congratulations to Joanna and Nicholas Marshall Smith on the birth of their first child Ivy and first grandchild of Richard Marshall.

In celebration of the life of Simon Lipscombe.

In thanksgiving for the life of Margaret Buckeridge, sister of Rosemary Evans.

Ben Waller and his band have rung another first in the method, Enfield Bob Triples. We watch with interest to see how many they ring next year as there are quarter peals in new methods which appear in the Ringing World at other towers on a regular basis.

Congratulations to Heather McCarthy who has mastered Plain Bob Doubles and will be moving on to Plain Bob Triples soon. Also congratulations to Amanda Miles on ringing a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples which was her first inside in the method.

An enjoyable evening was spent for our annual dinner at The Winning Hand organised by Jo Waller. The food was excellent and is to be recommended. The Winning Hand now has a room at the side of the building suitable for parties. – Well done Jo for tracking this one down.



We thank our regular visitors, Martin, Angela, John and Ros for their support with practice nights and quarter peals and also the Thatcham Officers for their hard work.

Sue Smith

8 December 2015

# Sound reduction measures at Newbury

As part of the Ringing Road Show activities back in September 2014, the Devonshire ringers held their striking competition at St Nic's on the Sunday afternoon. Much of the ringing was of an excellent standard, as would be expected, including ringing up and ringing down.

Unfortunately, one of the shop-keepers in Bartholomew Street found the sound (noise) unbearable. She wrote to the Newbury Weekly News complaining how the ringing was incessant (there were many breaks, of course, as bands changed), the ringing was driving her customers away (not sure how many of the Road Show visitors went to her shop...) and she was going crazy (um...).



After some debate at the tower AGM the following January it was agreed to put some sound control measures in hand. Advice was sought from the ringers at Thatcham and from the Guild (John Davidge). After visiting Thatcham and Amersham to look at their sound reduction installations I decided to opt for the timber boarding option rather than cement block work. I submitted a design to the church who checked whether the work would require a faculty. Since the design didn't involve any fixings into the stonework I was able to go ahead.



Three large sheets of 25mm plywood were purchased, plus several canisters of expanding foam, some hinges, some pulleys and some rope. I retrieved my tower scaffolding from my shed down the garden and erected it in the bell chamber, perching it on lengths of timber slung between the window-ledges and the bell frame.

The installation all went fairly straightforwardly. As you can see from the photos, there was already some boarding in place but, on the side facing the town, much of it had been removed. I patched up the gaps using the plywood, fitted more plywood to the top of the openings and included a fairly large opening hatch. Everything was held in place with expanding foam, and this was also squeezed into all the gaps around the existing boards.

Continued overleaf

One of our ringers used to work for the Environmental Health department for West Berkshire and had access to some professional sound level recording equipment. Before the measures were put in place the sound level was 87dB ("rather loud" I think was the description.) Since installing the extra boarding I have recorded the sound level at 70dB (about the same as the sound from a slowly passing car.) For those without a technical bent, a reduction of 17dB is really a reduction by a factor of ten to the power one point seven, or fifty-fold.

There was recently a letter to the Newbury Weekly News complaining that the author could no longer hear the bells...

Martin Rice

### **What I do at Christmas when I'm not ringing**

**By Richard Marshall**

Christmas is a time for celebrating, giving presents and catching up with old friends. There are lots of seasonal customs, such as Christmas pudding, Christmas trees, festive food, carol singing and Mummings' plays. If you've never heard of or seen a Mummings' performance, it's something you really ought to do.

I've been leading the Cold Ash & Hermitage Mummings for over 20 years having revived the lost tradition through a community play in Cold Ash in 1993 that was based on events in the village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As far as we know, there had been mummings performing in Cold Ash right up to the First World War but they died out and apart from a few occasions between the wars there had been nothing here until this revival.

Each year, usually on the two Friday evenings before Christmas, 12 of us tour six local pubs and perform the play. The play is about death and resurrection – probably an allegory for the dying of the Old Year and the birth of the New Year. Similar plays were performed around England in the villages and towns by farm labourers who had no work, and so no money, during the winter. They would knock on the door of the local squire, perform their play and get perhaps a few shillings and some food and drink. Now we go to pubs, which are usually so busy that it can be hard to get in the door.

My character is the Doctor and it's my task to revive the Turkish Knight who has been slain in mortal combat by King George. There is a story in there somewhere but it's hard to find! Other characters include Father Christmas, Princess Sheba, Jack Vinney and Beelzebub. It's played for laughs and often topical news items are added in – in the oral tradition from which it comes, it's never the same twice running.



## HUNGERFORD

Well at St Lawrence's we have been continuing with our usual mix of Sunday services, Wednesday night practices and Sunday evening quarters as is the norm here. We have also rung for significant events, including the following:

Wednesday, 9 September 2015 in 30 mins

**Hungerford**, Berkshire

St Lawrence

### **Rounds and Call Changes Including Queens**

- 1 Brenda Abrahams
- 2 Rebecca Browning
- 3 Jeanne Lambourn
- 4 Minna Mackenzie
- 5 Kathy Bossom
- 6 Margaret Winterbourne
- 7 David Thorpe
- 8 Mike Winterbourne
- 9 Mark Robins (C)

Rung at 5.30 PM to commemorate Her Majesty the Queen becoming the longest reigning monarch.

Wednesday, 11 November 2015 in 45 mins

**Hungerford**, Berkshire

St Lawrence

Tenor: 12-1-8 in G

### **1260 Grandsire Doubles**

- 1 Kathy Bossom
- 2 Angela Brown
- 3 Ursula Osmond
- 4 Mark Robins
- 5 Mike Winterbourne (C)
- 6 Steve Lowman

Rung half muffled immediately following the Two Minutes

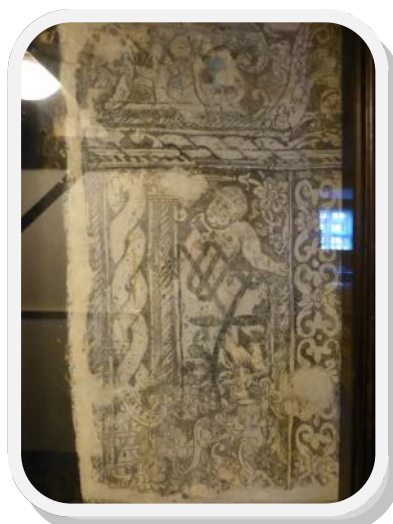
Silence on Armistice Day, in memory of the fallen.

## Hungerford Autumn Outing



The highlight of the past six months was our weekend outing to Gloucestershire, centred on Tewkesbury. Weekends away have been a popular annual feature at Hungerford for a few years and we have been to various parts of the country, usually in the Autumn. So, with accommodation at the Royal Hop Pole Hotel in Tewkesbury High Street secured at a very good rate (Wetherspoons prices), we set off up the A419 on a perfectly sunny Saturday in September, to the first tower, South Cerney. This was followed by the nice eight at Bisley, the six at Brockworth and the tiny six at Warden Hill in Cheltenham. These are claimed to be the lightest tower ring in the world, but are really a mini-ring with stays installed in a church. Nonetheless, we enjoyed seeing who could make a decent job of it and who couldn't! Eventually enough of us got the hang of it and we rang Grandsire Doubles.

Saturday evening saw us installed in this very interesting hotel that Wetherspoon's has made from three adjoining mediaeval buildings with exposed wall paintings and quirky sloping floors, so old it must be haunted, but alas there were no reports of visitors in the night, not the supernatural kind anyway.



The evening meal was a lively affair with speeches and prize giving as usual and the bargain Wetherspoon breakfast was also excellent even if we had to share the eating area with the usual early lager drinkers, then off we went on a glorious sunny Sunday morning to our rendezvous at the Abbey.



We were very well received and looked after at the Abbey. The home team filled in and we rang very respectably from rounds up to Grandsire Cinques so that everyone had a good ring and very memorable one. With the weather being perfect, we were then taken up on the roof to enjoy the spectacular views of Tewkesbury and the Gloucestershire countryside beyond. Following this, we headed out of town to Winchcombe for our final ring of the outing. We made a very good job of this nice 8 and enjoyed some Cambridge and Stedman to finish the outing in grand style.

*Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas from Hungerford*

*Mark Robins*



# ODG SIX BELL STRIKING COMPETITION 2015

This year's ODG Six Bell Striking Competition was held in the South Oxon Branch at Chalgrove on Saturday the 3 October attracting entries from 8 teams representing their branches. Thatcham represented the Newbury Branch having won the Branch Striking Competition at Midgham.

As there were only eight teams in the competition it was not necessary to have heats and the final started immediately. Chalgrove are a pleasant 16cwt six which were refurbished and rehung in 2010. We were drawn to ring in second place. The test piece was one minute of rounds and 240 changes of a method of the band's choosing. We rang Grandsire Doubles and we felt we had given a good performance.

We were provided with tea in the Village Hall from where it was possible to hear the bells ringing.

After the teams had all rung the Judges, Nick and Lindsey Brett from Linslade, Bedfordshire, gave the results in the Village Hall:

First	High Wycombe	93.8%
Second	Thatcham	92.8%
Third	Woughton on the Green	87.0%
Fourth	Faringdon.	86.2%
Fifth	Wallingford	85.6%
Sixth	Drayton St Leonard	83.8%
Seventh	Wokingham All Saints	83.1%
Eighth	Caversham	72.3%

The Judge very briefly commented on each team. Thatcham – A confident piece of ringing with good open hand stroke leads. Good speed and faults shared equally between every bell.



Again not quite there as we were second for the fifth year running.

Alan Marchbank, Deputy Master of the ODG, announced that this was his last striking competition in his present role and congratulated High Wycombe as worthy holders of the Trophy.

Sue Smith

We were encouraged by the Lord Lieutenant of Royal Berkshire to ring on 9<sup>th</sup> September in celebration of HM Queen Elizabeth II becoming Britain's longest reigning Monarch. Many of our towers took up this invitation – Thatcham marked the occasion with a quarter peal of Plain Bob Royal. Other towers reporting commemorative ringing included Newbury, Hungerford, Chaddleworth, Brightwalton, Great Shefford, East Garston, Speen, Midgham, Beedon, Peasemore and Chieveley. The event was also marked by our ringers in the Swan at Great Shefford and Ye Olde Red Lion in Chieveley!

Some towers are also marking the centenary of the First World War. At Thatcham on 22nd March 2015 a quarter peal of 1259 Grandsire Caters in memoriam Pte Harry John Addison (great uncle of Sue Smith) of the Suffolk Regiment who died in Flanders Fields on 11 March 1915.

East Garston have been ringing half-muffled on the centenary of each death recorded on the village war memorial, and local historian Dave Knight has been posting details of each individual and their military service around the village.

#### News from the Lambourn Valley

There is a healthy amount of collaboration going on in the valley at the moment. Lambourn's Thursday practice is usually attended by several East Garston ringers and also regular visitors from outside the Guild, so although there is quite a high proportion of learners, good progress is being made – also greatly helped by attending Hungerford's practice. There is also mutual help between East Garston and Great Shefford, the latter being somewhat easier for East Garston's young ringers than their home tower! Hopefully we will be seeing some "first quarters" in the near future.

Mark

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THIS BOOK FIRST BELONGED TO

## Thomas John Fowler

Who gave it to William Butler in the mid 1950s.

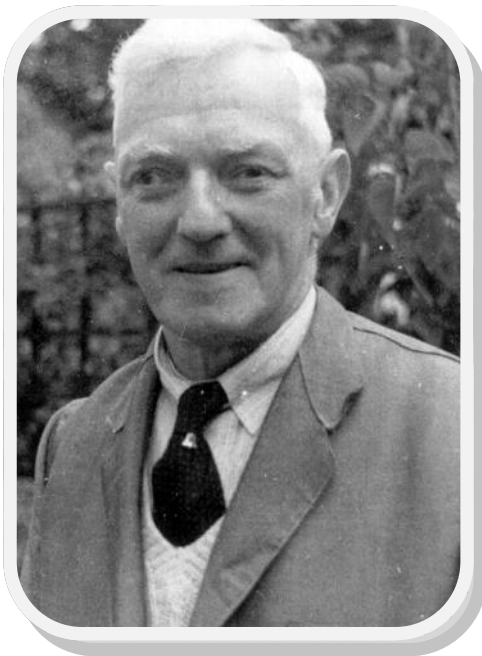


“Uncle John”, as he was affectionately known to many ringers in the East Berks and South Bucks Branch, rang at Cookham, Berks. Born within the sound of Bow Bells in March 1888 he moved to Cookham whilst a small child, sang in their choir for sixty years, and took up ringing in 1912, although he didn’t make much progress until after WW1, in which he served as a Warrant Officer.

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By today's standards he wouldn't be termed an outstanding ringer, although he rang sixty-two peals from Grandsire Doubles to Cambridge Surprise Major. However, Uncle John could "get things done in the ringing chamber!" He was tower captain for forty years; ringing master of the East Berks and South Bucks Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild for twenty-five years and was responsible for the augmentation of the six bells to eight at Cookham in 1926. Throughout most of his life he helped the up-and-coming youngsters at the meetings and practices he attended. In appreciation of all his work the members of the Oxford Diocesan Guild paid him the highest honour they could and elected him a Vice-President of the Guild in 1954. He died on March 9, 1959.

Bill Butler learned how to handle a bell in the week after Christmas in 1945 and, mainly because he wasn't really interested in practical ringing, didn't get very far until after his next birthday in August 1946. Then "the ringing bug" overwhelmed him and in four successive tower practices at Clewer he mastered hunting the treble at the first, then Grandsire Doubles "inside", ringing Plain Bob Minor at the third and Kent Treble Bob Minor at the fourth!



At that period, books on bells and ringing were almost impossible to find and, as an avid reader, Bill wasn't able to obtain any of the books he wanted! One of these was "*The History and Art of Change Ringing*" by Ernest Morris. This was published in 1931, the year after Bill was born.

This is Ernest Morris. He was born in July 1889, the son of Josiah Morris, the verger and ringer at St Margaret, Leicester. Josiah as a ringer was known as "The Rhythm King", so it was inevitable that his sons would be *capable* ringers, for Josiah maintained there were only two kinds of ringers, graceful and disgraceful!

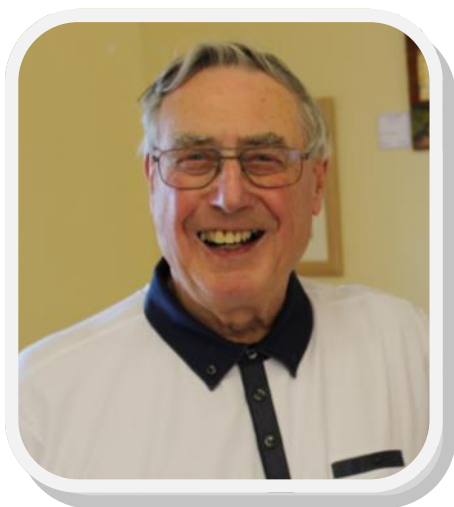
With this background, it was inevitable that Ernest would become a good ringer. He was the sixteenth person to ring one thousand peals and the first to ring two thousand. He helped many others to ring their first peal, lectured on courses and gave talks on the radio, but really achieved fame as an author of books on bells and ringing. He died unexpectedly on April 21, 1962, failing to recover from an operation he had on the earlier Good Friday.

*The History and Art of Change Ringing* is a weighty book of 673 pages and 122 illustrations. The foreword was written by Canon G F Coleridge, well-known later as Master of the Oxford Diocesan

Guild, but at that time, President of the Central Council. The book contains a tremendous number of facts and observations about bells and ringing, the result of nearly a quarter of a century of research. In the days before the web, it was a most wonderful acquisition, and referred to constantly.

And Bill Butler did refer to it! In his sixty years of possession it was always close to hand and used so much he had to rebind it. (Fortunately, as an ardent collector of books on bells he had several other copies of this book as well!) It seemed a good idea to repeat Thomas John Fowler's gift and pass this copy onto someone new.

Bill chose his grand-daughter, Katherine Butler, a ringer of some years. She rang her first peal, Cambridge Surprise Major conducted by Bill, in December 2010, and will be leaving Durham University next year.



Bill Butler  
November 2015

## Three Victoria Cross Recipients in Thatcham



Unusually, Thatcham is home to three recipients of the Victoria Cross (VC).

During the Boer War, Private William John House (1879 - 1912) of the Royal Berkshire Regiment received the VC for rescuing a wounded soldier while under enemy fire on 2 August 1900.

On 28 September 1914, Second Lieutenant Alexander Buller Turner of the Royal Berkshire Regiment was posthumously awarded the VC.

During World War II Alexander's brother Lieutenant Colonel Victor Buller Turner (1900 -1972) of The Rifles was awarded the VC for gallantry, in the field on 27 October 1942, while commanding a battalion of The Rifle Brigade with the Eighth Army in North Africa.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is providing Commemorative Stones to the home towns of the 504 servicemen from the British Isles, who were presented with the VC during World War I. Thatcham Town Council commissioned Stones for William House and Victor Buller Turner.

All three stones have been installed in the Broadway at Thatcham and were unveiled at a Ceremony held at 5.00 pm on 28 September 2015, exactly one hundred years after Alexander Buller Turner received his posthumous VC.

The Ceremony was attended by the Mayor of Thatcham, various military personnel and our Rector Revd Mark Bennet who conducted the prayers. The Stones were unveiled by soldiers from The Royal School of Military Survey based locally at Hermitage.

We were asked to ring immediately following the ceremony and arranged for one of our band to notify the ringers in the tower that it was time to start ringing. A well struck quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was a fitting end to this historic occasion.



**Oxford Diocesan Guild**

**On Monday, 28 September 2015**

**Thatcham, Berkshire  
St Mary**

**1260 Grandsire Triples**

- 1 Rosemary Evans
- 2 Angela Brown
- 3 William Butler (C)
- 4 John Kape
- 5 Anthony D Smith
- 6 Adrian J Moon
- 7 J Martin Rice
- 8 Roy Pratley

Following the unveiling of Commemorative Stones for three Victoria Cross Recipients in Thatcham Broadway.



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*Wishing you all a  
Merry Christmas  
and a very  
Happy New Year*