



Newbury Branch Newsletter

Christmas 2019



DIARY

*For an up to date diary ,
see the Events section at*

www.bellsnearnewbury.org.uk/

*And our branch facebook
pagebut coming up
soon.....*

Branch Quarter Peal Week

*which in 2020 coincides
with the ODG sponsored
Quarter Peal Week, held
every leap year. So get it
in the tower diary early
and get your bands lined
up for another successful
week.*



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The copy deadline for the Summer 2020 issue is 30th June. Please send contributions to the Editor at mdrobins@hotmail.com

From the Chair

There currently seems to be a certain amount of energy, 'buzz' in the Branch, I'm pleased to report.

Whether inspired by the fund-raising efforts at Lambourn or just local enthusiasm, there is now a significant drive to restore the bells at Hampstead Norreys to good order. The Branch has contributed £500 to this, and the project receives matched funding, so effectively this is a £1000 injection.

Although at very early stages, there is talk of getting ringing up and running again at one other tower in the Branch, and possible improvements to the bells at another. Let's hope these come to fruition as well.

The two Branch practices and mini outing/lunch continue to be well supported and my huge thanks goes to the organisers/ringing masters behind these events, and to the Branch members for supporting them. They are most enjoyable, friendly do's. They provide an opportunity to try new stuff that you might not get at your own regular tower practice, so do come along whether it's to ring rounds at a different tower, to ring a touch of Stedman or whatever.

The 200 club continues to provide a little moment of excitement at Branch events, as well as raising funds for the ODG bell fund. Cath Fittell has run it for the last several years but now wishes to hand over to someone else. I understand that the scheme has a momentum behind it, so the job is mainly administrative. If you would like to see this enterprise continue and have somewhere to keep the bag of balls, please jump up at the March AGM and volunteer.

Martin



Officers 2019/2020

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WOULD YOU LIKE HELP TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW
OR
WOULD YOU LIKE HELP TO PRACTISE SOMETHING ?

Contact Lucy at lucy.pahopkins@me.com

Suggestions:

Listening Skills

Grandsire Triples

Call Changes

Stedman Triples

Plain Hunt

Any of Std 8 Surprise Major

Ropesight

Ringling touches for any of the above

Plain Bob Doubles

Conducting any of the above

Grandsire Doubles

Rope splicing

Stedman Doubles

Tower Maintenance

Plain Bob Minor

Theory of bell ringing

Kent Minor

Ringling up and down

Cambridge Minor

DVDs available for loan

Our Chairman has obtained some training DVDs from The Central Council, which he will be making available for loan to towers or individuals.

The Subjects are: **Bell handling and Ringling up and Down and PR.**

Merry Christmas

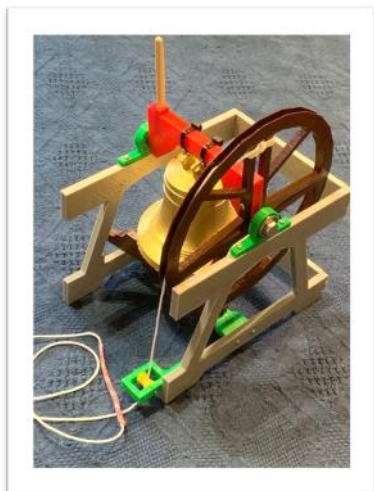


Model Bells

The photos below show model bells made on a 3D printer, which are available to order for £55 including postage and packing. They are an ideal means to teach a learner or non-ringing audience, how a bell, hung for full circle tower ringing, actual works. Without the need to climb into the belfry to see the full-size version first hand. The Newbury Branch now owns one of these, which will be made available for loan to any tower or individual in the Branch.

Anyone wishing to buy one of these bells, contact Lucy our Training Officer.

lucy.pahopkins@me.com or 01256 350718



Request from the Officers—Guild Report Annual Updates.

It will soon be time to send in our annual submission to the ODG for the 2019 Guild Report. Recent editions have contained out-of-date information because towers haven't checked and updated their respective entries thoroughly before sending it back. So, please ensure your tower entries are up to date with only current members shown, along with correct contact details, and that any out-of-date information is removed. Although primarily aimed at the Guild Report, the same principle also applies to anywhere else where tower info is to be found, such as the Branch website, Facebook page, Annual membership cards etc. Please inform the appropriate officer if discrepancies are found.

Thanks very much.

Ed



West Berkshire Community Champion Awards

I am very proud to let you all know that Marcus Allum has been awarded a 'Highly Commended' in the Lifetime Achievement category of the West Berkshire Community Champion Awards, 2019.

I don't think I can do better than quote from the Council's letter announcing this:

"The panel was extremely impressed by your nomination and the commitment and dedication demonstrated by Marcus during 48 years of bell ringing and service to his local community. The panel felt that the leadership shown by Marcus was inspirational, especially when encouraging younger people to get involved in bell ringing. The panel members felt that Marcus was very forward thinking in terms of trying to bring people together whilst preserving important traditions. The panel described Marcus as a 'leading light' and felt his achievements should be recognised and celebrated."

It's particularly touching that the initiative for the nomination for this award came from one of the group of new ringers who joined us at Yattendon in 2018, but it was supported by other ringers at Beenham and Yattendon, and by Martin Rice. Marcus thanks all who put time into writing their support.

I think there are many people in the Branch who have seen how Marcus has always made the encouragement of new ringers a priority. He having some difficulty counting up exactly how many people he's taught over the years, but reckons it's well over 100 (and of course I'm one of them).

Another pleasing aspect is that this is also public recognition of the contribution that bellringing makes to social and community life in the area.

The award will be presented at Shaw House in mid-January, but there may be some earlier celebrations *chez* Allum.

Tessa Allum



Newbury

November sees our annual tower dinner, and this year we returned to the Hare and Hounds in Speen for another very enjoyable meal. Very many thanks to Julia for the efficient way she organises this, to our visitors and, of course, to our loyal tower members.

Ringling continues at a good standard. We often ring well-struck rounds and call changes on ten on a Sunday morning, and what better way could there be to start your day?

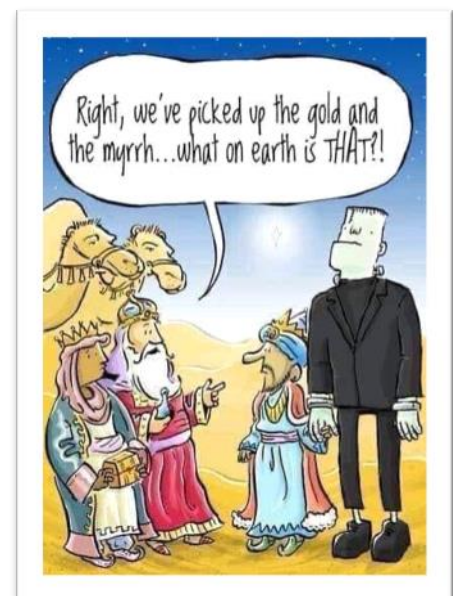
The Church Office asked us to set up a sign-in system at the base of the tower so that they would know how many people were up the tower in case of emergency. I didn't think that would work very reliably and, looking for a new project, suggested an electronic system. The result is shown in the picture. The little two-digit display confronts you when you enter the ringing room. Twiddling the knob and then pressing it updates the value and sends the information to a website. So, if you are wondering how many people are up the tower at St Nics at any time, just go to the ThingSpeak.com website and check us out on channel 806895, tag "ringers".



The other slightly less techy innovation is a notice to reserve car parking space in front of the west door. This gets put out at 6:30 pm on Monday evenings, so if you were thinking of visiting us, do come along and feel free to park right beside the tower.



Martin



Sue's Midweek Group

On 24 July, one of the hottest days of the summer, Sue's Midweek Group rang on the ground floor ring of St Margaret of Antioch, Hinton Waldrist. The bells are a light six and a pleasure to ring. Ringing was followed by lunch at the Horse and Jockey at Stanford in the Vale.

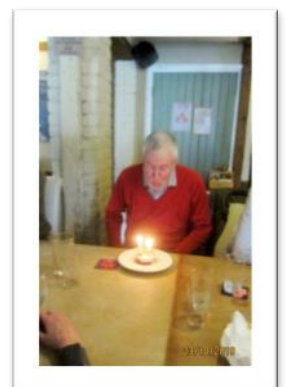
Hinton Waldrist was followed by one eight and four sixes in the following months all of which were well supported. We went to Overton and the Group caught up with David and Christine Holmes at lunch at the Vine. Di Bridle organised Chiseldon in November as I was unable to attend this meeting - thanks Di.



Hinton Waldrist and South Stoke



The penultimate tower of the year was Beenham where we were welcomed by Marcus, the Tower Captain and Chris Maslen. Lunch followed at the Cottage Inn, Upper Bucklebury known by most of the Group. Mike and Lucy attended for the first time. Pete Bridle secretly let it be known to one of the band that it was his birthday on that day 23 October, and was very amazed and shocked when he was presented with a cake and everyone sang Happy Birthday.



Please email me if you would like to be placed on the list for details of these practices. I am Sue Smith and ring at Thatcham. My email address is suesmithmrsad@waitrose.com

Sue Smith

Bucklebury

We've been keeping our practices going regularly, although what we ring seems to vary wildly; one week we're crowded out and ringing Bristol, the next it's bare numbers and down to minimus. That particular week was very instructive for us as we went through all 11 regular minimus methods, most of which only Mike had rung before. Our three girls are coming on, although their school extra-curricular events always seem to happen on Thursday evenings, which doesn't help their ringing progression.

Over late summer, the church had major works, including replacing the central heating system. The good news is that we now have a radiator in the ringing room; the bad news is that the heating is only turned on on Sundays!

When the radiator was installed, the contractors cleared out our cupboard under the steps to install pipe runs - the first time this has been emptied in living memory! Buried at the bottom, we found a fold-up board, dated 1887, marked up with various changes. On one side are some 'Cross changes' - Grandsire Doubles and Bob minimus with 5 as cover - and a course of Cambridge Delight Doubles. The plain course of Cambridge Delight Doubles is alternating bobbed leads of Grandsire and Double Grandsire, forming a 60 change plain course with the 4th following a repetitive 2 lead pattern (effectively going in and out of the hunt). This can then be doubled to 120 changes using a Grandsire Single halfway and end. It's no longer recognised as a method in its own right because it consists of two methods rung alternately.

On the other side of the board is a 120 of Stedman doubles written out. Of interest here is that at halfway and end there is a single made in 2-3 as the treble comes in Quick at the end of the plain course. I've never come across this before, so we just had to try it out! Mike came up with a line for the Cambridge Delight doubles and we had a go at that as well - not as easy as it looked!



Other odd things that we've tried are Middlesex Little bob major: basically the same as Little Bob major, but with the treble hunting to 5ths place instead of 4ths. This gives a dodge in 6-7 straight after a 7-8 dodge - interesting. We've also rung some Duffield major; I've always had a hankering to ring this and when it was requested, we grabbed the opportunity.

We welcome all ringers to our Thursday night practices - the more the merrier - and I'll always try to ring something that will benefit everyone, be it bob doubles or Bristol.

John Durham



We need to talk about Branch practices

In my 'From the Chairman' piece I said the Branch practices are well-supported. This is indeed the case for the second-Friday Surprise practice, and for the fourth-Wednesday mini-outing and lunch do, but there seems to be less enthusiasm for the traditional, first-Friday practices.

I would like to start a discussion about why they appear to be less well supported, and what changes might make them more attractive to Branch members – how can they be more useful, more enjoyable? Or should we recognise that they have outlived their role, and abandon them?

At present, Marcus Allum arranges and normally runs the practices, picking venues from all over the Branch. Should we just go to 6-bell towers? If you normally ring at a six-bell tower, do you fancy the challenge of ringing on higher numbers, or does it seem too scary? If your home tower has 8 or 10 bells, do you think that 6-bell ringing is less satisfying?

When we visit some towers the local ringers are often absent. Is this because Friday evenings are difficult for you? Do you think you will not be made welcome, even at your own tower? Should we change the evening of the Branch practice to coincide with the normal practice night of the visited tower? Are you just not interested in ringing at Branch do's?

Do you think the social side of the practices needs to be enhanced? Should we provide tea and cakes? Go to the pub afterwards? Have a meal afterwards?

Do think about these issues. We will have an agenda item at the Branch AGM and see if we can map a positive way forward.

Martin

Ringling at Shaw

With no current Sunday band, visiting groups and ringling for festivals has kept Shaw bells going recently. With that in mind, the church office has agreed that the bells may be made available for quarter peals to be rung prior to services. This would apply any Sunday, but ringling for the following key dates in next year's church calendar, would be particularly well received.

- Ash Wednesday Feb. 28th 7pm
- Mothering Sunday 22 March 10am.
- Easter Day April 12th 4pm
- Pentecost. May 31st 4pm.
- Harvest Festival Sept.27th 4pm
- Carol Service Dec. 20th 5pm.
- Carol Service For elderly Dec 22nd.2.30pm.



If anyone would like to take advantage of this, please contact the church office at:

Shawchurchoffice@btconnect.com

Roy Pratley

It's 8-spliced, but not as we know it!

I always believe that ringing should be fun, so how about a little touch of 8-spliced - with a difference. Anybody up for the challenge?

		12345678	
Grandsire triples		12537468	
Grandsire triples	s	17624538	
Grandsire triples		17463258	
Grandsire triples	s	13572468	Queens
Plain bob major		15236784	
Little bob major	b	14735826	
Bastow Little major		13487652	
Bastow Little major	b	18347652	
Bastow Little major	b	14837652	
Bastow Little major		13468275	
Little bob major	b	15263748	Tittums
Bristol Surprise major	b	16523748	
Superlative Surprise major	b	15348672	
Yorkshire Surprise major	s	18372564	
Lincolnshire Surprise majors		12364857	
Plain bob major	b	12345678	

248 changes, 8 methods, Queens, Tittums - and it's true.

Kent, or it's little brother Kent Little (220 changes) could be substituted for the Bristol.

All methods should be part of a surprise ringer's repertoire, with the possible exception of Bastow Little - a very useful training method.

Each part goes from rounds to Queens - transposing Queens by Queens gives Tittums, transposing Tittums by Queens gives rounds - so the parts could be rung in any order, or substituted by a different fragment such as:

		12345678
Plain Bob triples	s	13257468
Plain Bob major	b	13276584
Little Bob major		15743826
Plain Bob major	b	15732468
Bastow Little major	b	13572468

Have Fun!

John Durham



Lambourn's Yorkshire Outing

Early October and Lambourn Valley ringers were heading to Yorkshire on a 3 day outing arranged by their friends and fellow ringers Charles & Rachel Morrish. Charles & Rachel moved to Didcot from Yorkshire a couple of years ago and befriended Lambourn whilst house hunting. Charles who was commuting at the time used to cycle around the Lambourn area and call in to the practice at Lambourn where he was welcomed in true Lambourn style.



Friday: The first stop was Harthill (8), not far from the M1. We were there early afternoon and the tower was a perfect start. The bells rang beautifully and the ringing left us all on a high. Next Stop: Whiston (8) once again the ringing was of a very good standard. Then off to Halifax where we had all booked into the Travelodge for 2 nights.

All the ringers made their own travel arrangements/routes however Charles was keen to show us the area so we followed them across some extremely beautiful countryside & up & down some extremely steep hills! Well done to Amanda at the wheel.

After checking in at the Travelodge which is a converted mill and is also home to a gym, restaurants and a few small businesses, it was off to have a quick bite to eat and then join the Halifax (12) evening practice.

Whilst looking for somewhere to eat Charles & Rachel showed us an impressive building(s) which had a central courtyard. It's called the "Piece Hall", a cloth hall of 315 separate rooms built in 1779 for handloom weavers to sell the woollen cloth pieces they had produced. It was going to be demolished but one local council vote saved it & after redevelopment it was re-opened in 2017. It's beautiful like an area you would find in Venice enhanced in the glow of soft evening light & the sound of trickling water.

The Halifax practice was extremely well attended, as well as a good number of the local ringers & we visitors there were 5 keen learners. How were we going to cope!! As it turned out we coped very well & George Rabbitts (East Garston) was complimented on his Tenor ringing.

After a long enjoyable day it was for a quick drink and then to prepare for Saturday.



Continued overleaf:

Lambourn outing continued:

Quick meet up for breakfast at the local Sainsbury and we're off.

1st stop: Northowram (8), 2nd: Oxenhope (8) . We are now in "Last of the Summer Wine" countryside and think we recognised "Nora Batty's house"

Charles had decided to have a long lunch at our next stop which was Haworth (6) as there was plenty to do and see, Bronte country. The high street was cobbled, very steep and lined with a mixture of shops, pubs and houses & unbeknown to Charles whilst arranging the outing, it was also playing host to a "Steampunk" weekend - hundreds of people dressed up in bizarre and elegant dress - apparently it's a genre of science fiction that has an historical setting and typically features steam-powered machinery rather than advanced technology. Unfortunately we didn't get to see the steam train which was reportedly stopped in the station. The people were as interested in what we were doing as we were with them and were quite happy to chat whilst enjoying a drink in one of the pubs, where the bar staff were dressed in steam punk character.



We all but one managed to get to the church at the top of the High Street in time for the ringing. The - all but one - was young George, he was enjoying himself so much that he decided to miss the ring and meet us at the car afterwards.

Next stop: Bingley (8) - Yorkshire Tail Ends - having heard about these previously from Bruce Laurie and then from Charles & Rachel - we were a little concerned as to how we would manage. They were great, very comfortable to hold and manage & we think they should be introduced to the Newbury Branch. Ringing down was a bit of a daunting challenge, will the hand manage the coils? but once you start to lower it seems to sort itself out.



5th & last stop of the day: Saltaire (6): Another nice ring & a very impressive tower, 60+ steps to the ringing chamber and although we were all tired the enthusiasm remained and the ringing was good.

A lovely drive across some stunning countryside took us back to Halifax for the evening. We were on a road so high that in the dusk you would have thought we were flying over some of the villages especially with the house lights twinkling below us.

The evening meal had been arranged for the restaurant next to the Travelodge and didn't disappoint, 24 of us sat down to eat and a genial evening followed. We were by the end of the evening looking forward to bed although it was one of those days that you have enjoyed so much that it's a shame for it to end.

There's still more overleaf:

Lambourn outing continued:

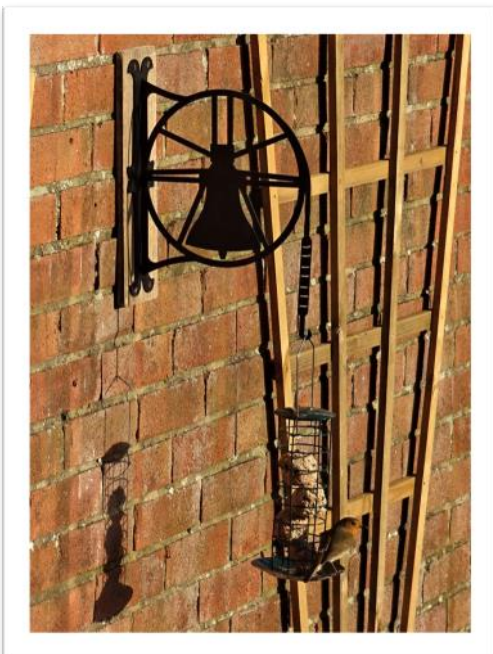
Sunday morning saw us up and out to ring for the Sunday service at Sowerby (8), Charles and Rachel used to ring here regularly when they lived in Halifax. Since the Tower Captain died a couple of years ago there has been no local band, so our ringing was greatly appreciated, even more so because it was their Harvest Festival. Some of us stayed for the service where at the end we were thanked by the vicar and clapped by the congregation before joining them for refreshments.

Sowerby is stunning inside, with a balcony and large sweeping staircase. It was used recently for the filming of the church scenes in Gentleman Jack. There was a display of some stills from the film in the church and the vicar was telling us that the film company as well as paying for the use of the premises had had parts of it redecorated. Apparently they wanted to touch up the gold in and around the chancel with gold paint but were told to get a faculty it would need to be gold leaf & so the gold leaf has all been refurbished.



For anyone thinking of going that way, the Travelodge was extremely comfortable and a good price, local amenities are close by for breakfast & dinner and all the towers were within a good travel distance.

Maureen



Not just for hanging baskets.

When Winter arrives and the baskets are all put away until Spring, these bell profile hangers are great for bird feeders. As demonstrated by this helpful Robin, posing seasonably for the camera.

Mark

Here he is again in a more formal pose



Beenham

Beenham continues to share practices with Yattendon and Hampstead Norreys ringers, alternating between Beenham and Yattendon towers. Those who joined for Ringing to Remember are continuing progress, with most up to Plain Hunt standard and two of them achieving first Quarter Peals this February. We have also acquired another learner in Ena Bernard, and Lindsay Mayo, our seasonal visiting ringer from New Zealand, was able to join us again this year.

We'd like to acknowledge our thanks to John Manley who joins our practice nights and church services. It must be a considerable adjustment for him to move from Spliced Maximus to helping us with rounds, call changes and elementary plain hunt! His tolerance and help for all standards of ringers at Beenham are very much appreciated.

The combined towers enjoyed what is now becoming a regular summer social event. Rosemary and Chris Maslen generously hosted this year in their lovely garden and we all much enjoyed a wonderful spread and plentiful libations. On what could have been a wet day in this year's erratic weather, we even had sunshine.



Hampstead Norreys – Silent Knights

'Silent Knights' is the restoration of the bells at St Mary's Hampstead Norreys (most of the bells were originally cast by Knights and have been unringable for the past three years). John and Sheila Craig, non-ringers but skilled project manager and fundraiser, have in a comparatively short time raised all the budgeted funds for the planned restoration. This includes an extensive grant from the Heritage Lottery.



A Letter of Intent has been sent to Taylors – effectively an order, subject to a faculty from the Diocese. It is hoped that the works will start in the second half of 2020. One of the next activities in the project is to outreach to local communities to promote the art of bellringing, and to recruit and train ringers to extend the existing band.



Marcus Allum



The Hungerford St. Lawrence Bellringers have been as busy as ever, practising regularly on a Wednesday evening and ringing for Sunday Services as often as we are able. During our Sunday morning service ringing, we do rely on our local core band of eight ringers, if everybody is able to turn up, but we do benefit from and appreciate one regular visitor.

In addition to the above, we have rung a quarter peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major for the 70th Birthday of Mike Winterbourne (one of our regular visitors), a quarter peal of Union Triples for evensong on the 30th June. On the 21st July we rang a quarter peal of Lunar Delight for the Birthday of Mike Saunders and the visit of the Bishop of Oxford. The method also was chosen for the 50th Anniversary of the original Moon Landings.

In August we rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples to celebrate the 300th quarter peal for Rebecca Browning (one of our regular Sunday morning visitors). In September we rang a quarter peal to celebrate the life of Lewis Cobb, a leading ringer at Bishops Cannings and friend of the Hungerford Bellringers. In October we rang a quarter peal for evensong, and to celebrate the birth of Daisy Lillith, first Granddaughter of local ringer Cath Fittell. There was also an excellent Peal rung by a regularly visiting band, of 5152 Spliced Surprise Major, comprising 23 different methods. We also recently rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples which was a first on the treble for Andreas' daughter Amelia.



In addition to that, in July we all went on a very enjoyable 'Rail – Ramble – Ring' Outing, organised by Andrea, to the centre of London. We all piled onto the 08.46 Great Western Express at Hungerford (and Newbury) to enjoy a day of good weather, good bells and good lunches. We rang first at St. Clement Danes, a 15th century Wren church with 10 lovely bells, which is also the central church to the RAF. We then walked about 20 minutes to St James Garlickhythe, where we were all able to ring the delightful light 8 "Royal Jubilee" bells. From there we had a 12 minute walk to lunch at the Crosse Keys, a spacious and imposing Wetherspoons Pub (of course) in a converted bank with a rich history, high ceilings and stained glass cupola above the bar! From there a 10 minute walk took us to St Magnus The Martyr at London Bridge, right by the river where we all enjoyed a 26 cwt 12. After a 15 minute walk from there we were at St Katherine Cree, which was a light 6 with the tower and ringing chamber right on the street! Disturbingly, passers by (mostly tourists) would stop and stare and giggle and take photos while we were ringing! So finally, another 5 minute walk took us to our last tower, St Olave, an 11 cwt 8. From where some of us swiftly ran for the early train, whilst other took it easy, mooched about a bit more and caught the later one. However, we all eventually arrived safely home sometime in the evening, totally exhausted but delighted with our day out.



David Thorpe

Bradfield Ringing Course 2019

I was lucky enough to be selected to attend the Bradfield Ringing Course which is a residential event held at Bradfield College over four days in August. Here is the website for the 2020 course: <http://www.bradfield-ringing-course.org.uk/>.

Going on a course like this is a great way to step up to the next level if you feel like you have got stuck in a rut with your ringing, whether you have just learnt to handle a bell and are learning how to ring rounds or you would like to learn a method where there is never quite enough people to ring it at your practice night. Each learner gets to ring two or more times each ringing session with the tutor next to you and experienced helpers, so you can hear and see when your blows in the wrong or right place. This is really helpful because sometimes when ringing at home and there are not enough experienced ringers around you are never quite sure if you are in the right place or not. Even though each group is aimed at one area e.g. Plain Bob, the learners may be all at different levels of experience, some may be doing their first blows inside whereas others want to learn how to ring a touch – it doesn't matter because everyone learns differently and as there is only one learner ringing at a time, you can ring what you have come to learn and when you have done that the tutor will encourage you to learn the next steps.

You get to ring at local towers within a 30 mile radius of Bradfield (everyone car shares) and they try to find towers with easy bells to ring so you can concentrate on what you are trying to learn rather than having to worry about what your bell is going to do next. This is when I found out that my home tower was classed as difficult and was put in as the novelty tower on the evening tour – I was a bit offended! Of course I think my home tower is an easy ring so it is fascinating to find out that one persons 'nice bells' are someone else's 'never ringing there again'.

There are tutorials related to the group you have chosen and extra tutorials about other bell related subjects such as rope splicing, tower maintenance and hand bell ringing. The students and helpers come from all over the country and the world and it is a great way to meet other ringers.

I really enjoyed my time at the course and I even managed to learn another Surprise method that I wasn't expecting. If you want to improve your ringing please apply and you can even apply for a grant towards the fees from the Branch.

You can also volunteer to be a helper, which is fun and is a great way to help people improve their ringing. The change in the learners ringing between the start and end of the course is amazing.

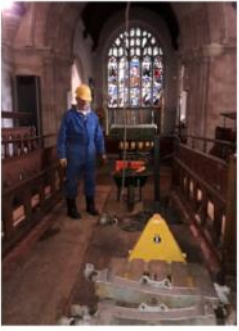
I would like to thank the organisers of the Bradfield Course for giving me the opportunity to attend and to Newbury branch for helping with my fees.

Frances Allison

Aldermaston



Lambourn Bell Refurbishment—update.



A month or so ago, Nicholson's Bellhangers returned to Lambourn with a view to lowering the four bells requiring welding to be sent away, and to lower headstocks to go off for refurbishment. However, the new steel framework (bottom left), intended to support the bells and lifting equipment while lowering them, was found to be unsuitable as it allowed the bell and lifting mechanism to move freely along the bearers without any means of control or braking, and the whole frame tended to tilt if the weight of the bell was outside the limits of the four fixing points. Anyway, it was decided that a modified design would be necessary and that all that we volunteers could do was to remove the headstocks and the centre of the bell frame, to make the hatch fully accessible. We also volunteered to enjoy some more of Amanda's excellent home-made cakes while we were at it.

There would now be a delay of some weeks while the steel supporting frame was redesigned and remade. So, we spent our time lowering all eight headstocks to the floor and loading up for despatch, also the centre section of the frame was lifted out and placed out of the way, ready for the bells to be lowered. It is expected that the remedial work will be complete early in the New Year so the work can resume.



Mark Robins



The newly installed steel lifting frame, required because of the lack of a suitable strong-point above the bells. The oak beam visible in the roof space, isn't adequate by modern standards, to lift the required weight, nor does it allow the lifting point to move as needed.



The Team

Amanda, Maureen and Bruce from Lambourn, Tim from Nicholson's , Mark and Dave from Hungerford

Peals, Long-lengths and Record Attempts

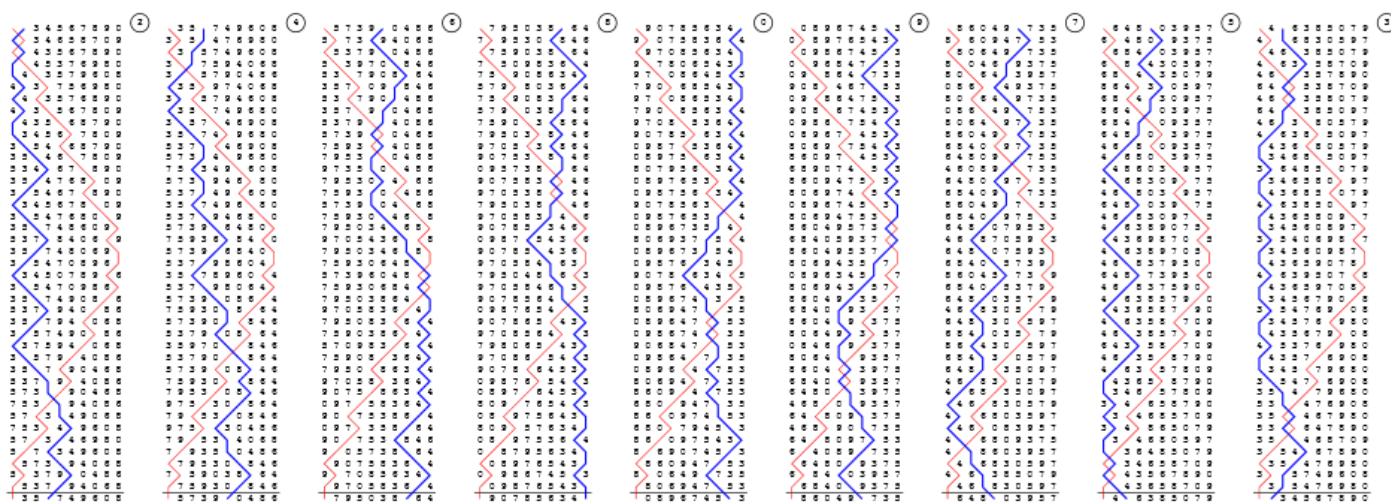
The following article was written by Graham John from St Mary's Church, Thatcham, for publication in their parish magazine, hence it is written with non-ringing readers in mind. Nonetheless, it is very informative and explains the background to peal ringing, particularly long-length and record attempts, so should be of interest to our readers too.

If you have walked past St Mary's tower on a Tuesday morning, you may have heard the bells ringing fairly quietly, as the sound control is on. You might also have wondered why they are ringing. The answer is that we have a band of regular visitors from nearby counties (Hampshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire) who visit a couple of times a month to ring a peal.

A peal is the bellringing equivalent of a marathon, taking about 3 hours to complete and comprising 5,000 changes where each sequence of the ten bells is unique. For experienced practitioners, it doesn't require the physical exertion of a running marathon, but it does require continuous mental concentration to ring without error. In fact, a serious mistake can often result in the conductor stopping the attempt, and the peal is "lost". As with any other musical instrument or sport, performing to a high standard needs many hundreds of hours of practice, and peals provide a great opportunity for bell ringers to train themselves to ring to higher standards.

In November, 25 years ago, the church gave permission for a long length peal to be rung – an ultra-marathon. Not only was this over twice the length of a normal peal, it was also the record length of one of the most difficult ringing methods ever rung, known as Wootton Rivers Surprise Royal, requiring intense concentration for six hours of continuous ringing. The band was made up of some of the best ringers in the country at the time, and as with any record attempt it was umpired.

Bellringing "methods" are not learnt by numbers, but instead by learning a pattern drawn through the path of a bell, commonly known as a "blue line". The blue line for Wootton Rivers Surprise Royal is shown below, in this case drawn through the path of the number two bell where the bells are numbered one to ten from lightest to heaviest i.e. down the scale from highest to lowest note.



Continued overleaf:

Thatcham peal article continued:

Peals rung for special occasions, such as Royal Weddings and Jubilees, are often commemorated by a peal board hung in the ringing room, and there are many of these at St Mary's Thatcham. This year, a peal board has been commissioned by the local band to commemorate the record length rung 25 years ago, and it will be hung alongside the other boards in the tower.

The bells at St Mary's are in the key of F. The treble, the lightest bell, is note A and weighs 3¼ cwt (165kg) and the tenor, the heaviest bell, is note F and weighs 13 cwt (671 kg). Five of the bells are nearly 400 years old, and have been rung for church, civic and national events throughout that period. If anyone would like to see the peal board and those commemorating other events, they are most welcome to come up to the ringing room whenever ringing is taking place and the tower door is open.

Graham John



Christmas doubles variations.

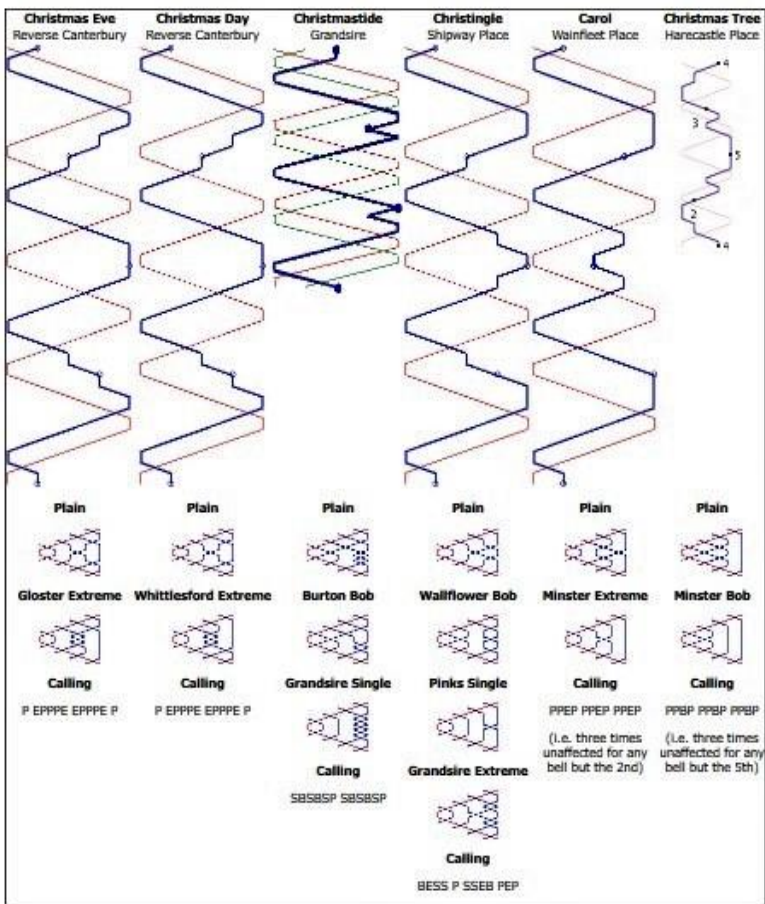
And now for something topical AND seasonal. Christmas doubles variations. This is a small sample for the doubles ringers among us, which ought to be pretty much all of us. The six variations opposite are based on standard methods, notably the first three which are based on good old Reverse Canterbury or Grandsire. The calls are shown in a column below each base method. Christmastide is particularly do-able, as it only has one unusual call, so why not have a go?

These examples are borrowed from a collection originally put together by Malcolm Morley, a ringer from Little Shelford in Cambridgeshire.

Here is the link:

<http://www.cambridgeringing.info/Methods/Doubles/Christmas.htm>

Mark (ed)



Ride and Stride 2019

Saturday 14th September 2019 was the chosen day for the Royal County of Berkshire Churches Trust annual sponsored cycle/run/walk event around local churches, raising funds for repair and maintenance of churches and chapels in Berkshire. Half the money raised goes direct to the church nominated by each participant, and the other half goes to the trust. Rachel and Mark Backhouse took up the challenge from Thatcham - riding a tandem!

Rachel bought me the tandem as a present for my 50th birthday as she was fed up being left behind on the hills whenever we went out on our solo bicycles. The advantages are that we can now cycle up hills that Rachel would previously have pushed her bike up, and we arrive together. The disadvantages are that we still have to get off and push on the steepest hills that I could have managed on my own, and I cannot get away from the back seat driver!

We were not great cyclists, and in Kent only used the tandem to go 1 ½ miles to church and back on Sunday mornings, Monday evenings (bell ringing practice night), and occasional visits to other local churches bell ringing. We probably never went more than about 10 miles in one journey, and have only used the tandem twice since moving to Thatcham 20 months ago, so a sponsored cycle ride was a big challenge.



Armed with a list of churches participating in the event and Ordnance Survey maps with contour lines to warn us of hills, we planned a couple of routes, visiting churches either side of the Kennet valley, decided we might manage 10 or 12 churches, and started seeking sponsors. Most people signed up for a set amount just for attempting the challenge, but a few sponsored us an amount per church which gave us an incentive to push ourselves and not give up early.

Saturday dawned dry and sunny – ideal for fair-weather cyclists, if a bit hot. Participating churches were open from 10.00 am until 6.00 pm, so we started off at about 9.30, straight past St Mary's and on down to the station where we joined the canal towpath heading east. Leaving the canal at Midgham lock we headed uphill to **Brimpton** where we signed in at our first church. On then to **Aldermaston** down a lovely wide, level lane until the final stiff climb to the church where we had our form signed by a gentleman hosting a heritage open day. The narrow lanes to **Padworth** were rather hillier than we had expected, but we did manage to find the church hidden in the woods.

Forsaking the south side of the river we headed down, across the A4 and up to Douai Abbey before the short downhill to **Upper Woolhampton** where we were met by a lovely lady who offered us cold drinks and home made biscuits! The downhill from Douai Abbey now became an uphill as we retraced our steps before heading west and down to **Midgham** where we signed ourselves in. Back down to the A4 and back to **Thatcham** where we signed in at St Mary's, our 6th church and the end of our loop to the east.

Heading west now, past our front door but not stopping for fear we would never start again, we struck out for **Newbury**, again using the canal towpath for part of the route, signing our own sheet at **St Nicholas'** as the church was closed, and signing in at **St John's** before heading further west on the south side of the valley. The ride to **Enborne** was further than I expected, but nothing to the trek to **Hamstead Marshall**, having to practically circumnavigate Hamstead Park to get to the church.

Continued overleaf:

Mark & Rachel's Ride and Stride continued:

By this time Rachel had really had enough, but we braved it out and pressed on to **Kintbury** where we were met by a lady arranging flowers, who kindly took our photograph as proof we'd made it that far west. Homeward bound now along the A4 back on the north side of the valley for a long stretch uphill to the bridge over the A34 followed by a glorious downhill section to our twelfth and final church at **Shaw** where we were met by another lovely lady with drinks and cake who had sat in the church all day just to greet two bicycles (three cyclists)! We took the easy option of returning to the A4, rather than attempting Kiln Road, to get home via Lower Way and Green Lane. Total distance 40 miles!

Thanks to generous sponsors from the church congregation, the bellringers, handbell ringers, choir, Mark's U3A Mah Jong group, Rachel's work, and our family we expect to have raised about £500 when it is all collected.

Mark and Rachel Backhouse

P.S. Rachel says she's not doing it again next year!

Great Shefford

Great Shefford Bell Ringers have a team of 12 regular ringers to assist on all occasions throughout the year. In 2019 the team rang on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Sundays of the month and continue to assist in Bright-walton on the 4th Sunday. Also, with the temporary closure of the Lambourn Tower while their bells are out of action, we have enjoyed the company of the Lambourn Ringers to our Tower on a number of our Wednesday practice nights. Our newcomers are progressing well and have started to plain hunt in Grand-sire.

The attached photo was taken at our Christmas Dinner on 11 December at The Great Shefford.

Peter Birtwhistle



Speen

Our July outing may seem a long time ago but was just too late for inclusion in the last newsletter. As previously, it was a “lazy Sunday afternoon” sort of outing in lovely sunshine. Our first tower had to be rearranged - the ringer who was expected to open up was also having a lazy afternoon after a good lunch and had completely forgotten – but Helen Brown came to the rescue with a welcome to Kingsclere. From there to Hanington, Wolverton and Burghclere before a welcome stop at the pub. Many thanks to Ros Brandwood for organising the afternoon.

Meanwhile, we have continued to ring regularly on Sundays (I think we’ve only missed one this year) and are gradually (very gradually) increasing our repertoire. And it was a pleasure to be joined by some of the Beenham ringers before the licensing service for Janice Macdonald, who moved from their Aldermaston parish to a new ministry at Speen.

Ringling for Remembrance Sunday was a bit special this year as it marked the 10th anniversary since the band was re-formed. It is thanks to Rebecca Browning, Mark Robins and Dave Thorpe, who showed remarkable patience and stamina in training total novices to get the new band off the ground.



Mary Hills

Speen’s new pulley

In September / October, after finally getting around to taking a long look at the problem with the “lumpy” three at Speen, I discovered that the pulley, being a little sluggish, had actually become somewhat oval in shape. This worn pulley was therefore transferring its distortions into the “lumpy” feeling when ringing the bell. It was actually a “wrench” to have to replace a beautifully turned hardwood pulley dating back a hundred years or so with a plastic one, but it was in fact the only way to get the bells up and running with a minimum of downtime. Whites of Appleton were brilliant as usual and provided a new pulley block from stock, with a custom-made back plate at no extra charge and the new block fitted perfectly. Speen ringing was therefore uninterrupted and whilst I was up there I cleaned out all the other remaining, very clever, Victorian pulley greasing tubes and filled them with fresh grease. Reports from the ringers were very favourable, also regarding the improvement on the 5, so there is now no excuse for any bad striking at Speen! I do plan to refurbish the old pulley block and have a new pulley turned, so that this lovely piece of engineering is not only preserved but will also provide a spare for the future.

David Thorpe

Thatcham

The Thatcham band has two gallant tandem ringers who have been raising money for the Berkshire Churches Trust and a Church nominated by them. As you will see from a separate report, Mark and Rachel Backhouse have cycled miles to and from various churches. I wonder if they would be prepared to carry out another sponsored cycle ride on their tandem for another worthy cause when they have had a suitable rest? I think you will all agree that it is a good way of raising money.



When one of our long serving members reaches the grand age of eighty years, they are presented with an inscribed Taylor's bell. John Robinson, our tenor ringer learnt to ring in February 1994 at Thatcham, and reached that age on Tuesday the 22nd October (conveniently Tuesday practice night). He was presented with a suitably inscribed bell by Tony, the Tower Captain. The practice finished early and we went to the White Hart where the drinks were on John.

Fourteen ringers attended the Annual Dinner at the Hind's Head, at Aldermaston. Numbers were a bit lower than previously but a good time was had by all. Graham and Richard organised some quizzes. Graham won Richard's quiz and won a bottle of wine and Graham's boat theme quiz ended in a tie between Richard and Sally. The prize was also a bottle of wine and Richard let Sally have it.



Practices and Sunday ringing are well attended with rounds and call changes to surprise major and surprise royal being rung. The special methods are still popular with a different surprise major method and surprise royal being introduced nearly each month and are being enthusiastically rung by our band and visitors. Many thanks to our regular visitors who come and help out for special services and quarter peals. We really appreciate it.

Quarter peals have been rung for the following events:

- The Priesting of Revd Leonard Onugha and the Licensing of Revd Nichola Hulks
- In affectionate memory of Sue Marshall
- To welcome Fox John Marshall-Smith born on 8 July, Grandson of Richard Marshall
- Two QP's for St Mary's Wedding Open Evenings
- Retirement compliment to Rev'd Marion Fontaine prior to her tea party.

There also have been two QP'S rung of Wootton Rivers Surprise Royal by the Tuesday peal band. They are trying to ring a peal of this difficult method, but at the time of writing have not managed to accomplish this feat.

Continued overleaf:

Thatcham continued:

The saga of the air conditioning has rumbled on and eventually the faculty and other necessary requirements were fully settled in time for the winter. So the equipment has been installed and there will be a report in another Newsletter on how well it is working in the summer.

The bell hangers from the Taylor Bell Foundry are returning to Thatcham Tower on the 6 January to work on the bells. The back four are having new bearings and all bells are having pulley refurbishments. The band are looking forward to the bells being easier to ring.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all Members of the Branch.

Sue Smith



Christmas Delight anyone?

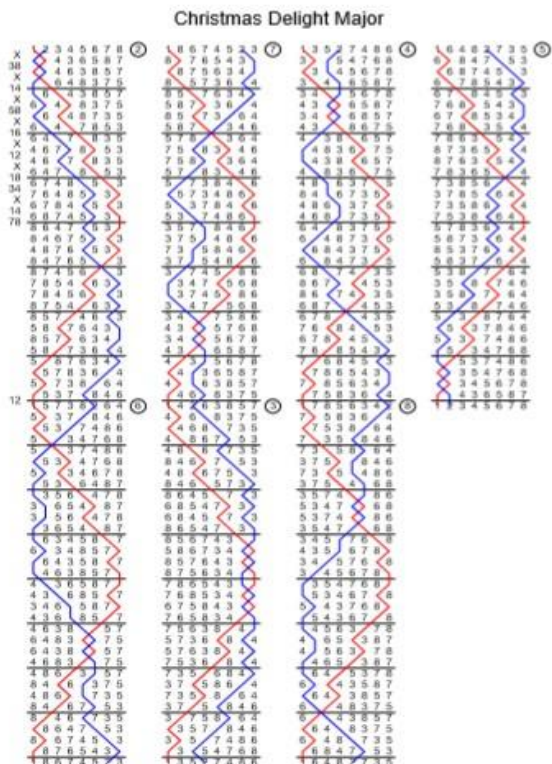
Here is yet more seasonal AND topical stuff. The line for Christmas Delight Major. More than a bit 'Yorkshirey' you may observe, so quite a simple change from the standard stuff. Rung very nicely at Hungerford on the 15th, for the Mayors Carol Service.

And now for something else that is also both seasonal AND topical. This link will take you to

The Muppets Christmas Bellingringing video.

Apologies for any adverts.

<https://youtu.be/yslzPF3BfpQ>



Ed

Guild Six Bell Striking Competition

This year's ODG Six Bell Striking Competition was held on the 5 October at St Peter, Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire on Saturday the 6 October attracting entries from eight teams representing their branches. Thatcham represented the Newbury Branch, having won the Branch Striking Competition and were drawn to ring seventh in the order of ringing.

The Judges were from the London County Association and the results were as follows

First	Abingdon	38 faults
Second	High Wycombe	40 faults
Third	Drayton St Leonard	44 faults
Fourth	Thatcham	48 faults
Fifth	Wokingham All Saints	50 faults
Sixth	Woughton on the Green	78 faults
Seventh	Aylesbury	98 faults
Eighth	Oxford St Giles	135 faults



As a band we felt we had produced some good ringing with no clashes or clips at all and very few other faults.

Sue Smith

Guild Ten Bell Striking Competition

This year the Guild chose Warfield near Wokingham, for the ten bell competition. We had our usual practice the evening before, at Thatcham, with them being a similar weight ten. The test piece of Grandsire Caters went well several times through and the band was placed for hopefully, a good ring on the day. The day of the race, Saturday 23rd November, was wet and cold and we all mustered for tea and bickies beforehand. We listened to Reading, on first, giving a very good test piece. We were next and rang without any mistakes, but we never really settled into a decent rhythm, and found consistent speed and striking quite a challenge. That said, we were well represented on the day and, I feel, gave a good account of ourselves regardless.

1st	Reading	29 faults
2nd	EBSB	40 faults
3rd	Sonning Deanery	69 faults
4th	Old North Berks	85 faults
5th	Newbury	102 faults
6th	Banbury	103 faults

Here is the commentary from the ODG write up for the day:

People made a Herculean effort to attend in atrocious weather conditions, especially those from the North of the Guild. Unfortunately, the Ted Peet trophy couldn't be presented as it seems to have been lost! Instead, young Jack Page, conductor of the Reading band was congratulated by the judges. You might have heard more about him in the Birmingham area! The judges were thanked warmly by Deputy Master, Tony Crabtree, as were the Warfield ringers for their arrangements and a splendid lunch.



Mark Robins

John Allum

Many of you will have read in previous branch newsletters about my great-uncle John Allum, a bellringer at Yattendon, who was killed in September 1918 on the Somme.

Returning from the Belgian Grand Prix this September, we made a diversion to visit his grave at the war cemetery at Templeux-le-Guerard, a small village in Picardy. We eventually tracked down the small cemetery extension on the other side of the village. Entrance was difficult to find – up a rutted track, and via a gate that appeared to be padlocked (it wasn't) and a small, overgrown area with a few tombs of local families. Then we emerged into the immaculately maintained war cemetery. We easily found John Allum's grave, and were able pay him tribute and (once Tessa had located the visitor's book in a small alcove behind a brass door) to sign the visitor's book.

The surrounding villages nearly all have their 'British Cemetery', although of course they include graves of other nationals – Canadian, Australian, occasionally German. They are on land donated freely and in tribute by local French villagers and are peaceful and very moving. So my great-uncle, farmworker from West Berkshire, after all the horrors he no doubt experienced, at least was laid to rest in rolling farmland, among fields and trees.



The extension cemetery at Templeux-Le-Guerrard.



John Allum, d 27th September, 1918 aged 36



Marcus Allum

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

