



Newbury Branch Newsletter

Christmas 2023

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Officers 2022/2023

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From the Chair

Have you noticed? We're getting older! At the pub lunch after ringing at Preshute (near Marlborough) at last month's mid-week ringing, the conversation at my end of the table seemed to revolve around hearing aids, cataracts, how long it takes to get over a cracked rib, how you need the handrail to get up to the ringing room now. It was quite a jolly conversation, but it wasn't what anyone under 65 might chat about.

We in the Newbury Branch are not unusual in our age profile, of course. We do have some younger ringers, which is a joy to see, but does anyone have any ideas on how to recruit and retain some teenagers? The Central Council (CCCBR) have been thinking about this and have engaged a marketing company (Yellowyoyo!) to promote bellringing to the wider community. There was an article covering their activity in the Ringing World of Nov 3rd (p 1070). If you are thinking about recruitment then it might be worth contacting the CCCBR to see if their work could help you. Indeed, the article asked for groups to pilot the materials, so I'm sure you would be welcomed with open arms. Contact simon.linford@cccbr.org.uk

Another organisation that is keen to help promote bellringing is ART – and they have awards (and cash) to give away. The deadline for applying is the end of December so there isn't much time. The award titles are: Promotion of Ringing; Band or Cluster of the Year; Excellence in Recruitment and Retention; Inspiring Leadership. These are national awards, so that's perhaps a bit daunting, but I bet some of the work going on here in the Newbury Branch would meet the expectations of the award givers. You don't need to be a member of ART, or even have heard of them. More at Ringing World Nov 10th, p 1109 and <https://bellringing.org/art-awards-2024/>

Have a great Christmas, and Happy New Year.

Martin



Newbury

On Saturday 18th March seventeen of the St Nic's tower and friends enjoyed the annual Dinner at the Craven Arms. In April, the tower was visited by a journalist from a Parisian newspaper, who was writing an article about bell ringing teaching in the UK during the run up to the King's Coronation. On the day of King Charles III's Coronation, Saturday 6th May, the St Nic's bells were rung for half an hour from 9.30am .



Later in May four St Nic's ringers made up half of the Newbury Branch band that won the Oxford Diocesan Guild annual eight-bell striking competition, held at Broadwell near Faringdon. On Friday 7th July, St Nic's won the Newbury branch six-bell striking competition ringing Grandsire Doubles, just pipping Bucklebury by one fault. St Nic's were commended for excellent tenor ringing (Andy Osborne). The same band represented the branch at the ODG competition on Saturday 7th October at Shipton-under-Wychwood, finishing a creditable second place out of eight, behind St Mary's Reading. Earlier on the same day, a St Nic's band finished third out of three in the ODG inaugural Raising and Lowering competition at Wigginton St Giles.

Links to both events below:

[6-Bell Striking Competition - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](https://odg.org.uk)

[6-Bell Raising and Lowering Competition - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](https://odg.org.uk)

Practice nights at St Nic's have continued to be well attended with the addition of two new ringers, Eric Edwards and Judy Rosen and two returning ringers Tom Wilkinson and Katie Pendlebury. In addition, the tower has continued to progress the skills of youth ringer Mawgan Bird. During the practice evening of Monday 10th July,



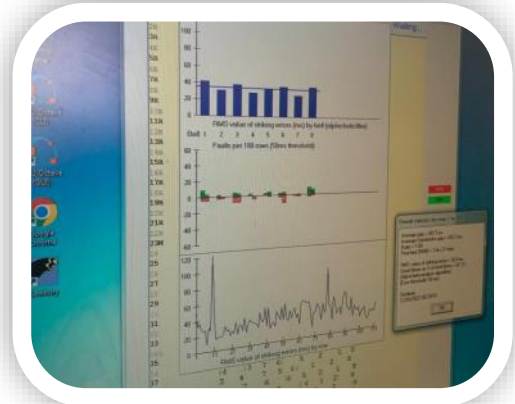
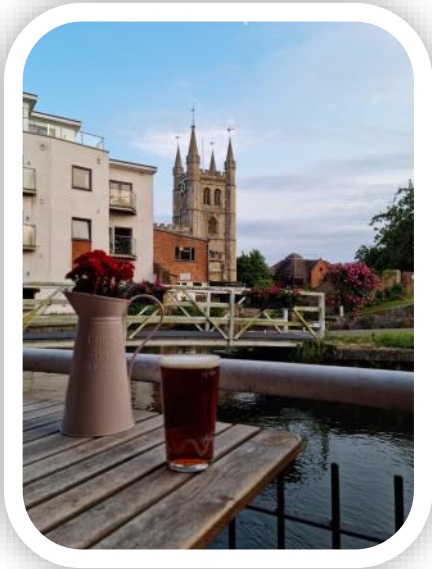
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Newbury (continued)

Newbury Fire Brigade conducted a mock exercise to remove a casualty from the tower (a record female attendance was recorded that evening!) (see Fire engine photo). The social side of the practice evening has continued to flourish with regular visits to the pub after practice.

The St Nic's bells were rung for two weddings on Saturday 2nd and Friday 8th September. On Tuesday 17th October the tower hosted a visit by 1st Inkpen and Kintbury Cubs, when twenty cubs and five leaders were given a tour of the tower, viewing the bells, and having a go at hand bell ringing and chiming a bell.

Cyril (Martin Rice's bellringing analysis computer program) continues to be used with great interest and fascination. The image here was taken of the Stedman Triples rung on Sunday 12th March.



David Bebbington

Streamlining the ODG membership process.

The ODG wants to make the way it keeps membership records, and the way it communicates with us, more efficient.

Currently there are several sets of data about membership – there's the information created when you are elected; there's the information collected each year when you pay your sub; and there's the information published in the Annual Report. There are other sets of data held at Branch level as well. So it seems a good idea to try and streamline these systems and get one process to cover all these aspects.

The system chosen to do this is commercial, professional software called membermojo. It's UK based software and is used by several other Guilds. The most basic record for each member is simply your name and your email address. All other information is optional but will include obvious stuff like your tower, your Branch, any official position you might hold, etc. Unfortunately, in the Newbury Branch we don't actually have everyone's email address, and if we don't have that you won't be able to be a member! We do have a list of names and towers so we will be making an effort to get everyone's emails over the next few weeks. Please let us know your email address! (There are special arrangements for people who don't have email.)

There are other advantages to membermojo. It will ensure we comply with GDPR. Your data will be held on a secure server administered by membermojo, rather than on PC's held by, for instance, the Branch Secretaries. You will be able to opt out of receiving emails you don't want. On the other hand you will get Branch and Guild news (if you opt in) more reliably, more directly.

The aim is to get the system up and running for the Jan 1st 2025 subscriptions. For 2024 the current system will continue. In 2025 you will probably still pay your sub via your tower and then via the Branch to the ODG, but hopefully you will actually get an email receipt! In due course it may be that you will pay your sub directly to the ODG, but that is some way off, and may or may not be the best way forward.

Meanwhile, once we have a complete set of email addresses, the system will be tested and trialled, and tweaked so that it works for us.

Martin



Aldermaston

THANK YOU MARK!

We're very fortunate in the Newbury Branch that we have our very own resident expert in bell installations, Mark Backhouse of Thatcham, last works manager at Whitechapel until they ceased trading in 2017. He kindly agreed to inspect Aldermaston's Warner installation of 1900 when the existing ring of six was rehung in a steel frame and augmented by adding a new treble and tenor (and retuning the new fifth). The bells were hung on plain bearings and the clappers suspended from staples by leather lined baldricks (so no twiddle pins) and with pulleys of heavy wood also on plain bearings. Moreover, to create an acceptable rope circle in the ringing chamber, several ropes were 'drawn' out of vertical introducing friction at the ceiling and floor of the intermediate (clock) chamber.



***Repurposed old wooden pulley
on the ceiling of the clock room
to eliminate rope friction.***



***Clock room showing bridge on rope
chute to inhibit the formation of a
standing wave***

Continued overleaf

Aldermaston (continued)

Mark's Rolls-Royce recommendation was a complete re-hang to modern standards but, as that was beyond the church's slender resources in the foreseeable future, his poor man's recommendation was to replace the pulleys with modern ones and re-site as necessary to eliminate draw in the direction of swing and, where necessary, install extra floor and ceiling pulleys in the clock chamber to reduce friction. This was the solution the PCC accepted.

Mark kindly offered his practical expertise which, with (very) unskilled local labour, has resulted in a much improved ring of eight. There's much more we could and should do but, in the meantime, thank you Mark for all your help and advice!



New wide pulley (to accommodate sally of 6th that comes through clock room floor).



New double pulley of 6th in the belfry beside the old hole elongated by rope wear

John Manley

ODG Ten Bell Striking Competition

Who'd have thought that Little Bob could be so tricky! Well, we didn't find it at all easy to get into a rhythm and ring without mistakes. This year, the ODG Ten Bell Competition was held at Bicester, a grab for some of us and augmented in recent years. The acoustics weren't great and it was far from easy to hear the little bells inside the ringing room, which really didn't help.

The composition prescribed was a bit tricky in that it gave a challenging coursing order for most of the time. In fact, as the judges pointed out, we weren't the only team to exude a sense of relief when the plain course resumed towards the end of the test piece!

As usual at Guild level, the judging was harsh and the debrief—detailed and precise and the results were fairly close. Inevitably, method mistakes lead to multiple faults before steady ringing resumes and we had one or two to add to our less-than-brilliant striking, so we lost some points and came fifth out of five participating teams.

On a positive note though, The Newbury Branch was there, and we were one of just five out of a possible fifteen branches who could have been represented. Looking at it another way, we can't win 'em all and having won the Eight Bell in May, graciously gave the others a chance this time around!



Mark

A photograph of a whiteboard displaying the results of the ODG Ten Bell Striking Competition. The board is set up in a church, with the altar and stained glass windows visible in the background. The results are as follows:

Rank	Branch	Score	Points	Rank
1	COSE	305	77	2
2	VOWH	302	76	4
3	READING	300	83	1
4	ONB	300	76	3
5	NEWBURY	300	71	5

Beedon—Centenary Plaque

In April, the people of Beedon celebrated St Nicholas Church's 800th birthday and centenary of the first peal on the bells.

A plaque has now been put up to mark the event, accompanying the original peal board from 1923:



Mark Robins



Hampstead Norreys & Yattendon

We continue to have plenty of people at practice, although with a lack of experienced ringers we're struggling to move on from Plain Hunt. Our numbers have been boosted by my brother and his wife, who are teaching their daughter to ring. We are also regularly joined by two of the Aldworth ringers who want more practice ringing six bells (Aldworth tower having just three).

Following the tragic killing of much-loved and respected Hampstead Norreys residents David Barlow and Celia Geyer on their honeymoon in Uganda, we rang a quarter peal half muffled. Thanks to Angela Brown, Maureen Velvick, Helen Pratt and George Rabbits who joined Tessa and me for this tribute to the couple. Ringing in a church lit by remembrance candles, with the condolence book open nearby and watched by members of the Hampstead Norreys community was a very moving experience. We also rang for their funeral, but open ringing at the request of the family. Over 500 people attended, in the church, in the village hall where the service was relayed, and standing in the freezing cold in the churchyard. 130 people watched online across the world.

We enjoyed a ringing tour in S Oxfordshire in November, the first outing for some of our team, and below is a reprint of the article written by one of our newer members for the local newsletter.

Marcus Allum

Hamstead Norreys and Yattendon Autumn Tour

This year's tower tour had our group of 17 ringers visiting five churches across South Oxfordshire. Our party consisted of ringers from Yattendon, Hamstead Norreys, Beenham and Aldworth. We were able to visit some new churches, ring their bells and practise our ringing on different bells. Most of the churches we visited had six bells: Benson had 8, a new experience for a few of us. Spending 45 minutes at each location meant everyone had an opportunity to ring with different people and try out the different styles of ringing.

We were greeted at each church by the tower representative who showed us to the ringing chamber, often accessed via a set of steep ladders or narrow staircase! For beginners like me we would ring rounds. Next up the skill level are call changes where a nominated person calls out the changes in the order that the bells ring. You need to be following what's going on to make sure things run smoothly! Finally, for the experienced there is method ringing which follows ever more complex patterns, with slightly odd and obscure names. These methods can be rung for extended periods – a full peal might take nearly three hours to ring.



Great Hasele

Continued overleaf



Wall paintings at Chalgrove



Ringing at Benson

Everyone remarked on the lovely tone of the bells at Great Haseley. The churches were beautiful and of note were the wall paintings at Chalgrove and the stunning setting of Ewelme. A huge thank you to Marcus Allum for organising the day which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



Ewelme

Richard Beasley

Bucklebury

After the intense burst of activity over the Coronation period, things settled down into our regular routine of Sunday service ringing and Thursday practices.

The 'Ring for the King' initiative gave us two learners, both of whom took part in the Coronation ringing. Sadly, one of them, Chris, managed to break a shoulder bone whilst doing some building work at home and is currently unable to lift one arm fully and so is out of action. As I write this, the other learner, Nigel, is also out of action awaiting a hip operation. A pity since he was just getting the hang of call changes and taking first steps towards change ringing, however we are anticipating that both of them will be back ringing in the new year.



It's always a challenge to decide what to ring on practice nights. With learners in the band it becomes a bit easier since half of the time is dedicated to giving them the rope time they need to progress, but what to do for the rest of the band? At Bucklebury we are fortunate in that, apart from the learners, all the band and our regular visitors are Surprise ringers. We always seemed to meet one short for Surprise major, so we were ringing mainly minor. Often I'd pick a theme, say Oxford, and ring Single Oxford, Double Oxford and Oxford treble bob; other times I'd pick up a method book and pick something at random to learn and ring. Lately however, we have started becoming more systematic and are working our way through the 41 regular Surprise minor methods.

Lately peals of the 41 Surprise minor methods have become popular, but what is the significance of these particular methods? Surprise minor is a class of methods, having a treble bob path for the treble, and every time the treble moves from one set of dodges, i.e. 1-2 to 3-4, 3-4 to 5-6 and the reverse, an 'internal' place is made, such as 2nds, 3rds or 4ths rather than just 1st and 6ths. There are hundreds of methods with these properties, but if we are purists and add the restrictions that they must have Plain Bob lead-heads and no 5-6 places (except the half-lead) or single changes, then there are only 41 methods with these restricted properties. Many of these are familiar and regularly rung locally: Cambridge, Beverly, Surfleet, London and Norwich spring immediately to mind, but others are more esoteric – Cunecastre, Wearmouth and the like.

What is the best way to learn these methods? The 'approved' way is to learn work above and below the treble. For example, if we ring London when we are below the treble and Cambridge when above, then that is York. Similarly, Wells (a London variation) below and Cambridge above gives Durham. Currently we are working our way through the methods with Carlisle above the treble, and have ticked off Carlisle (Cambridge below), Chester (Beverly below), Munden (Surfleet below) and Alnwick (London below).

With any luck this little project will keep our brains exercised for a while yet. If anyone fancies a bit of different Surprise minor, come along to Bucklebury on a Thursday – but contact me beforehand to find out what the current method(s) are.

John Durham

Shaw

We have had a couple of visiting bands in the Summer. The first was in August with the Bradfield Ringers and second was a team from Hampshire. We have also had some weddings this year. My thanks to the ringers who helped out.



Midgham

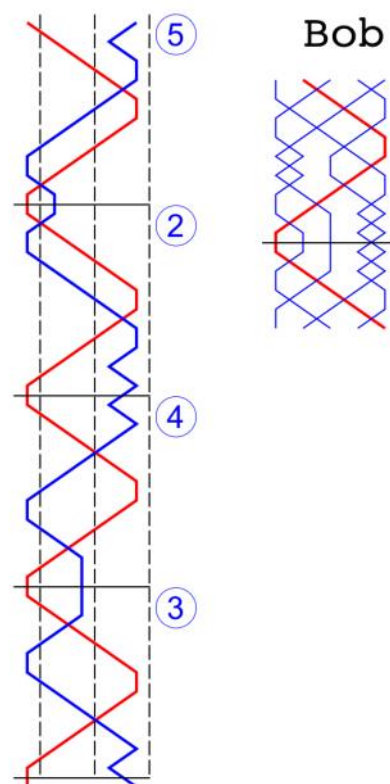
Unusually there were no weddings at Midgham this year, but every fourth Sunday in the month we have had an afternoon service. Thanks go to John Manley who brought new recruits to ring before service. Thanks also go to Angela Brown and Di Hibbert for their contribution.

Roy Pratley

Why not try this on Thursday?

For those with practice night on Thursday December 21st, which is the shortest day and Winter Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, how about giving this a try? Winter Solstice Doubles, which is St Augustine Doubles with an Ascension Bob.

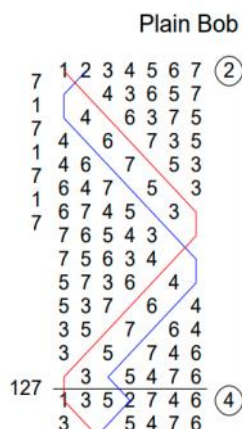
Winter Solstice Doubles



Place Notation for beginners (like me!)

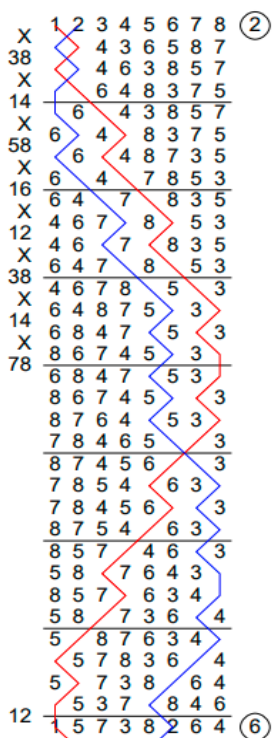
A few times recently I've noticed puzzled looks when place notation is mentioned. Well, I'm no expert but I find it really useful to have a working knowledge, so thought it might be helpful to explain a bit about it here, at least as far as I understand it.

I'll start by quoting Ron Christopher, a mentor to many including myself and who's words have stuck with me. During a discussion with Ron in the tower on how complex some methods can be, he said "Change ringing is simple, you can do one of only three things. You can go in, go out or stay where you are". Essentially true of course and the building blocks for everything else we do in change ringing. So, here goes:



Place notation can be found where a blue line diagram shows numbers in the margin, this says that the bell in the adjacent row stays put or "makes a place" and all other bells swop places with their neighbours. Here are two blue lines showing this:

On the left is the start of the line for Plain Bob Triples. You can see that the numbers in the margin are next to the gaps between the rows. The first 7 tells us that the bell in 7ths stays put or "makes a place" so the others all change with their neighbours. This process is repeated until the treble reaches the back and makes 7ths. The rest of the lead is not shown because the notation is a mirror image of the first 7 rows, but the lead end is shown because it is a 2nds place method and that needs to be spelt out. The rest of the whole course of Plain Bob Triples can be derived just by repeating the places and changes until rounds reappears. Calls follow the same notation principle, ie. A Plain Bob bob is 14 and a single is 1234. Also, when written out, full stops separate rows, so notation for Plain Bob Triples would be written 7.1.7.1.7.1.7



The next blue line is for the first lead of Yorkshire Surprise Major. This introduces an "x" into the notation, which simply means that every bell changes places with its neighbour, only possible of course, with an even number of bells. So following the notation down the rows, the first row has no place made, the second has bells in 3 and 8 making a place while everyone else changes and so on down to where the treble is at the back (half-lead) then is mirrored down to the lead end as with the Plain Bob Triples.

As I said, I'm no expert and there are plenty of finer points to get into if you want to, but I find this working knowledge really useful when writing out methods from notation or setting up ABEL to try things out, as methods are expressed this way in bellringing computer programmes. I hope this is useful to some.

Mark Robins

Sue's Midweek Group

The second half of this year started with a visit to Broadwell, a recently restored 15cwt ring of eight near RAF Brize Norton. We were made very welcome. The local ringer shared her considerable knowledge of the various historic items in the church. We adjourned for lunch at The Clanfield Tavern, via a mile long single track lane, which was being used by large tractors from the adjacent farms.

In August, John Kape kindly arranged for us to go to the 7 cwt six at Padworth. The church is adjacent to a school and daytime ringing is only permitted during school holidays. Having had difficulty in finding a nearby pub that didn't require a significant deposit, I decided to go to the Hillier's Garden Centre at Aldermaston for lunch. Although I was apprehensive about this choice, most members of the group seemed to enjoy the change of venue.

I arranged for the Group to go to the 8 cwt six at Streatley in September, followed by lunch at The Four Points Aldworth. Unfortunately, Tony & I were unable to attend as I had a hospital appointment. My thanks to Martin Rice, for being the Ringing Master and to Maureen Velvick for supervising the lunch arrangements.

In October, we returned to the eight cwt eight at Englefield, followed by lunch at the Queen's Head, Bucklebury. In November we returned to the popular 9 cwt six at Preshute, followed by lunch at The Royal Oak, Marlborough.

The ringing has been of a good standard, ranging from call changes to surprise major. My thanks to members of the group for their attendance, which has made these outings possible.

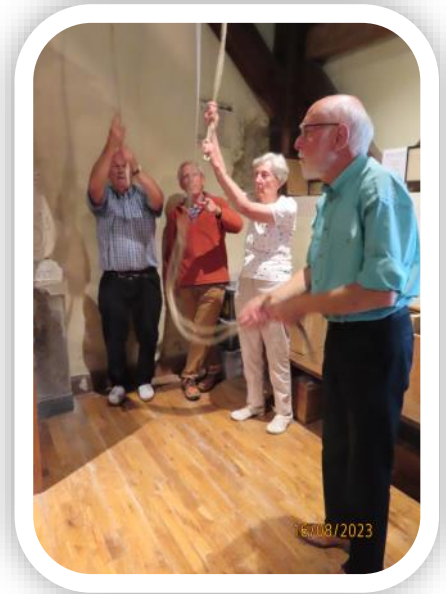


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Sue's Midweek Group (continued)

There was no outing planned for December. This was fortuitous as early on Sunday morning 26 November, I became very ill. Tony consulted our daughter-in-law Sarah and they decided to call an ambulance. When Tony described my symptoms, I was classified as high priority. I was given a full range of tests. After a couple of hours, much to everyone's surprise I was told that I had tested positive for Covid. Subsequently, Tony, Sarah and our son Graham all contracted Covid. It was not until 9th December that Tony and I tested negative. Thank you to all those who sent messages of support.

With my best wishes for a Happy Christmas and New Year. The first meeting of 2024 will be at Thatcham on 17 January.



Sue Smith

Speen

Practices and Sunday ringing have continued fairly regularly at Speen since the last newsletter and we are particularly pleased to have seen quite a lot of new faces, not least from Lambourn and East Garston. We think the practice on 3 August was a record for a Thursday practice with 15 attending.



Mary Hills

Hungerford

Although there are just eight of us now, our loyal Sunday band continues to support us for services as always, with the usual fare being rounds and call changes and occasional doubles, depending on those attending and for services, the aim is always for decent striking and ringing worth listening to as the congregation arrives. On a personal level, we are grateful to Rebecca, who comes from Newbury to ring with us, thrilled with Mike's progress on his return to ringing, and thankful to Jeanne, Cath, Dave, Andrea and Maurice, for fitting Sunday mornings in around busy lives.

As a tower we have made a few changes recently (pun unintentional!). With lots of Summer holiday absences and then moving into darker and colder evenings, our practices have become a bit hit-or-miss, so, as an experiment, we've reduced practices to two per month with the other Wednesday evenings offered for visiting bands, quarter peals, training sessions etc. So far, the remaining practices have been well supported and, of the "spare" Wednesdays, only two have been silent, with quarters occupying the others. This trial will run until our AGM in January, when we'll review how it's gone and decide what to do from there. Having said all that, when we do practice, and on a good day, we attract ringers from all over our Branch and neighbouring towers in Wiltshire and Hampshire. There can be a dozen or more present and a wide variety of methods are rung. An essential part of the practice is of course, the debrief over a beer or two at the pub and this part of the evening continues unabated.

As is the trend these days, recruiting is an ever-present challenge for bellringing. Hungerford town is awash with lapsed ringers (ok slight exaggeration), but so far, we have failed to attract any of them back. After a talk to the congregation as a possible source or recruits, we had just one expression of interest. So, recruiting remains on the agenda with other avenues to try in due course.

In September we rang, half-muffled again, for a funeral, which was attended by Robert Grange, tower captain at Hungerford in the 70s and 80s. Robert (fourth from the left) was instrumental in having the bells re-cast in 1978 and we were very pleased for him to join us for the ringing and to renew old acquaintances.



Continued overleaf

Hungerford (continued)

As mentioned in the last edition, we rang half-muffled for the passing of our old friend Walter Newton. On this occasion, we rang Walter's own composition while his widow Barbara listened outside. We also rang half-muffled for Remembrance Sunday as we usually do and had a quarter peal of Grandsire for the afternoon service. The composition called this time was the usual one composed by Sgt A P Wakley of the North Staffordshire Regiment during The First World War, so appropriate for the occasion.

In total we have had thirteen quarter peals and two peals this year. Both peals were performed by a band who regularly visit us, and the quality of the ringing was, as usual, superb. The quarters have mostly been by our regular quarter peallers, gathered from local towers and with a variety of methods and reasons for ringing them. The latest one, for the Mayors Carol Service, was also Mike's first for thirty years, so well done Mike.

Sunday 16th July 2023

1260 Grandsire Triples

composed by Walter Newton

1 Cath Fittell

2 Maurice Barletta

3 Eleanor Rice

4 Andrea Barletta

5 Dave Thorpe

6 J Martin Rice

7 Mark Robins ©

8 Mike Clark

**Rung half-muffled in memory of
Walter Newton, ringer since 1943
and loyal member of St Lawrence'
Sunday Service band for many
years. RIP**

Here is a link to the list of quarters and peals: [BellBoard \(ringingworld.co.uk\)](http://BellBoard(ringingworld.co.uk))

Sunday 12th November 2023

1260 Grandsire Triples

composed by Sgt A P Wakley

1 Cath Fittell

2 Rebecca Browning

3 Angela Brown

4 Andrea Barletta

5 Mark Robins (C)

6 Mike Winterbourne

7 Michael Hurst

8 Maurice Barletta

**Rung half-muffled in memory of
the fallen.**



Mark Robins



Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter.

The deadline for the Summer Edition will be 28th July 2024

Mark Robins—Editor

Merry Christmas