



# Newbury Branch Newsletter

## Summer 2016



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The copy deadline for the Christmas 2016 issue is 9th December. Please send contributions by email as attachments, or on hard copy by post to the Editor: Mark Robins

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## From the Chair.

I'm writing this at the end of the hottest day of the year so far. Our thermometer, which is in the shade is reading over 33 °C. Just imagine ringing a peal when it's that hot; I'm sure some of our greatest peal ringers have. We are a tough and determined lot, ringers; we turn up on Sundays almost come-what-may, we attend practices on a regular basis.

The programme of activities that your officers put together each year supports the ringing in towers. The monthly practices give Branch members the chance to try different bells and meet fellow Branch members. I sometimes hear comments that suggests a member would never go to ring in tower other than their own one. Various reasons are given, such as "won't ring on strange bells" or "might embarrass myself in front of more experienced ringers." It seems to me that it's a question of confidence. I have some inkling of this as I still feel nervous when starting to ring in a new tower, such as on an outing. But there's always someone there who can help, encourage you and build your confidence.

I was pleased to see all the teams taking part in the annual six bell striking contest at the start of June. And the winners deserved to win. It would be nice to have more teams, especially for the Marshall Shield, for call changes. You can guess from the name why I have a particular interest in this – I presented the prize shield to the Branch some years ago. Of the teams taking part in this, I was impressed by the team from Great Shefford because their bells are hung anticlockwise, whereas Hungerford, where the contest was held, are hung in the more conventional clockwise way. If you haven't rung at an anticlockwise tower, go and try Great Shefford. The bells go well but you have to look left instead of right.

So as many of us go off on holiday, if you're staying in the UK, do seek out new towers and broaden your experience of ringing, make new friends, share a drink after practice and have a great time. I hope to see some of you around the Branch from time to time.

**Richard Marshall**



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## THATCHAM

“Please could you let me know what you are doing here” asked the Police Constable addressing the question to Tony (the tower Captain) and his wife (Sue). Both were aware that a Police car had following them into the Churchyard. Tony explained that we were ringing out the Old Year and ringing in the New Year with some other people and we needed to go through the door at the bottom of the Tower. The Police were very interested and we thought we might have some new recruits!! But no such luck.

We are very pleased to welcome Jake Reid from Newbury as a ringer into the Thatcham band. Jake rang his first quarter peal this evening, 22 June, on the treble to Grandsire Doubles. He rang very well and we look forward to the next one Jake!!

The Tower AGM was held on the 16 February and chaired very efficiently, swiftly and with humour by the Rev. Marion Fontaine. Ben Waller decided not to continue as Deputy Ringing Master and John Kape was elected in his place. Otherwise all the officers remain in the same position.



As many of you will know Bill Butler was taken ill in the ringing room on the 1 December 2015. Bill's illness continued through the Spring and early Summer. Many of us wondered if Bill would ever manage to ring again, but through sheer determination Bill climbed the stairs of the tower on Sunday the 12 June on his own, and when Tony arrived in the ringing room found to his surprise Bill waiting for him. Bill then proceeded to ring with everyone else before the Service. Bill has spent some time in hospital and we all wish him well with his recovery and future ringing.

We have not rung so many quarter peals as usual for the earlier part of the year. Most were rung for Even-song. We also rang quarter peals for:

- Newbury Branch Quarter Peal week.
- In memory of Pamela Hazelden, Mother of former Thatcham Ringer Sally Moon and Mother-in-Law to Adrian.
- To celebrate the 90th birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth II.
- St George's Day and 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare.

Personal achievements were: Graham John (first of Grandsire Triples as conductor)!, first Caters inside Amanda, 450 QP Sue, and birthday compliments to Janet, Roy and Cameron (Smith) and of course Jake his first quarter peal.

We have renewed the Tower Maintenance Gold Award which is valid until 10 May 2018 with a mark of 91%. Thanks to Richard and his helpers for all their hard work.

### ***Sue Smith***



## **Branch Quarter Peal Week**

Holding this event in February each year, usually gives us more than just ringing challenges to face, but also adverse weather conditions. In previous years, we have had deep snow and ice with sub-zero temperatures inside some towers to contend with, and another year, storm force winds, impassable country roads and floods. This year was different though with comparatively mild and calm conditions, allowing us to concentrate on the business in hand, ringing quarter peals around the Branch. The theme is always to allow ringers to progress, provide opportunities that aren't normally available and to give a focus on local ringing generally. This year saw a variety of methods and quarters rung in most of our ringable towers as follows:

- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> Peasemore - Plain Bob Minor, Highclere - Grandsire Doubles.
- Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Bucklebury – Grandsire Triples. Newbury – Grandsire Caters.
- Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> Yattendon – Call Changes.
- Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> East Garston – Grandsire Doubles. Kintbury – Plain Bob Minor.  
Shaw – Reading Differential Bob Doubles. Hungerford – Middlesex Bob Triples.
- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Bucklebury – Double Norwich Court Bob Major.
- Friday 19<sup>th</sup> Peasemore – Plain Bob Minor. Thatcham – Grandsire Triples.
- Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> Hungerford – Quedgeley Surprise Major.



The week ended with a dinner at a local hostelry, where we reflected on the achievements (not just the above quarters, but also those noble efforts where valuable experience was gained), while enjoying some fine fare.

### **Quedgeley Surprise Major Band**

**Mark Robins**



## 90th Birthday of H M The Queen

Thursday 21st April was the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II and a number of towers in the Newbury branch rang in celebration of this event.

Quarter peals were rung at Hungerford (April Day Triples conducted by Mark Robins), Thatcham (Yorkshire Surprise Major conducted by Graham John) and Bucklebury (90th Birthday Surprise Major conducted by John Durham).



April Day Triples at Hungerford

30 minutes of call changes were rung at East Ilsley with ringers from Great Shefford, Compton and Sutton Courtenay as well as from East Ilsley; Beedon, Peasemore and Chieveley had half an hour's general ringing at each; Midgham had half an hour's ringing helped by ringers from Bucklebury; Great Shefford rang rounds and call changes and then some of the ringers went on to Brightwalton to ring call changes after an informal Open Church when about 25 villagers joined the ringers to toast The Queen; Aldermaston rang and then across the road to see a beacon lit and partake of refreshment; Speen also had general ringing; Beenham ran 2 touches of 90 Grandsire Doubles; and at Yattendon 90 rows of call changes were rung.

Earlier in the week Tim Pink's monthly surprise band had rung a quarter of 4 Spliced Surprise Major at Hungerford "in anticipation of the 90th birthday of H M The Queen".

The Queen's Official Birthday took place during the weekend 10th to 12th June and, again, a number of towers in the Branch rang for this event.

Bucklebury and Brightwalton rang for half an hour and three quarters of an hour respectively on the Saturday; on Sunday Great Shefford rang rounds and call changes and Thatcham rang Grandsire Caters. Quarter peals were rung on Sunday at Compton (Reverse Grandsire Doubles) and on Saturday two quarters were rung in towers outside the Branch but by Branch members with help from relatives. These were Grandsire Triples at Farnham Royal and Single Oxford Bob Triples at Wooburn.

It was good to see so many towers taking part and particularly pleasing that towers are helping each other when ringers are low in number.

***Di Bridle***

***Ringling Master***

## **Branch 6 Bell Striking Competition**

Arranging the Branch Striking Competition for the first time was a bit scary, especially as I was going to be away the week before, but made much easier as Mark and Richard have been involved in organising this for many years.

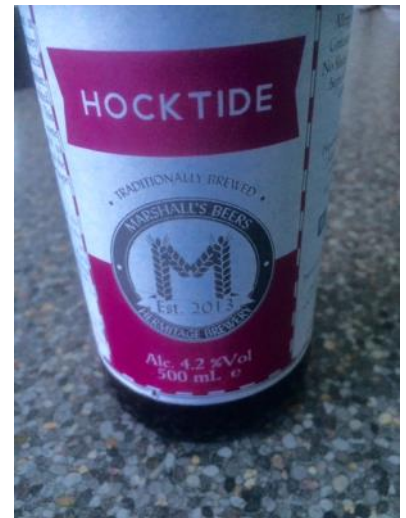
First thing, find a tower that had relatively easy going bells, somewhere to shelter if cold or wet, had a kitchen so cups of tea or coffee could be distributed and somewhere where the judges could sit in relative comfort. I, therefore, decided the back six at Hungerford would fit the bill; the next thing was to find judges and luckily John and June Wells, the first couple I asked, were available.

After this it was sit back and wait for entries. There were five entries, two for the call change contest and three for the change ringing contest and we were able to field a scratch band as well.

The results were:

Call change contest:       1st Hungerford with 89 faults  
                                      2nd Great Shefford with 145 faults.

Change-ringing contest:   1st Hungerford with 32 faults  
                                      2nd Thatcham with 34 faults  
                                      3rd Scratch band with 66 faults  
                                      4th Bucklebury with 101 faults



So the home teams won! In fact it was very close between Hungerford and Thatcham and the judges had to check their marks a few times before eventually declaring the winner. Also congratulations to Great Shefford as a relatively new band and also to the two young ladies (aged 12) in the Bucklebury team taking part in their first striking competition.

Thanks to Mark for organising the tower and opening up the church, to Richard for timing the bands and a special thank you to Kathy for organising the next door's summerhouse for the judges and also serving the tea and biscuits.

Also not forgetting Richard's beer which went down really well.

***Di Bridle***

## Guild 8 Bell Competition

This years Guild 8 Bell Competition was hosted by the Newbury Branch and held at Chieveley. Rod Brown and his team laid on a very grand tea with home made cakes and sandwiches, so a big thank you to the Chieveley ringers who made it such a success. The results are shown below and the Newbury Band came second, the best placing in this Guild event in recent years. The test piece was:



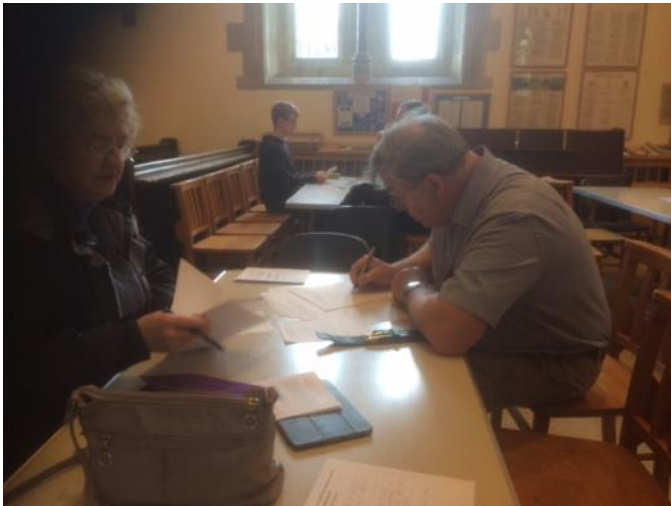
256 changes of Little Bob Major

W    B    H  
-    3    S    Repeated

Ringing order	Band	Placing	Faults	Judges' Comments
1	High Wycombe	3rd	20	The ringing sounded uneasy and didn't settle but there were several good patches.
2	Tilehurst	7th	34	Rounds good but lost the rhythm going into changes and never really settled. Second half better than the first.
3	St Aldate's Oxford	5th	28	Settled down well and was going well until the fire-up. It recovered but didn't really settle down again.
4	Newbury Branch	2nd	18	Good rounds but unsettled going into changes. Second half better than first.
5	Banbury Branch	6th	29	Consistent but not confident. Lots of rushed leads. Second half not as good as the first half.
6	ODG Youth Team	8th	44	Band obviously not comfortable with the method. The result would have been much better without the faults from method mistakes. The last few leads settled down well.
7	EBSB Branch	1st	14	Confident ringing. The last few leads were very good.
8	North Bucks	4th	23	Good ringing except for the crunch at the half-way single. It didn't really settle afterwards.

***Some photos from the day are overleaf...***





On the same day as the Guild 8 Bell competition takes place, it is customary for the hosting branch to also stage the Open Day. The towers in the branch were organised into routes for visitors to follow and ring at as many towers as possible. The day hosted by the Newbury Branch was a great success, with a lot more visitors at some towers than was anticipated and quite a lot of money collected by way of admissions, for Guild Funds.

**Mark Robins**



**Branch Outing**

On Saturday 16th April, off we all went in our cars to the Reading area. Morning towers were Twyford, Hurst and Wargrave, with a pub lunch, followed by Sonning, Shiplake and finally, Caversham. There were too few of us to justify a coach, but a respectable number and good mix of abilities to make for a good outing.

Thanks go to Julia Deady for her meticulous organisation, making it a successful day out. Here are some views taken during the day:





## **Speen News**

The silence from Speen in recent newsletters is down to inefficiency, not inactivity. Although we have had our lean patches, our numbers were reinvigorated last year by the arrival of Ros Brandwood in the area and by the addition of Kevin and Lin Rogers. So it seemed a good time to venture out again and try some different bells, as we hadn't had an outing for some years.

We decided a mini-outing would suit us well and kept it to three towers on a July Sunday, which turned out a glorious afternoon, just right for the bikers among us.

All Saints, Upper Clatford was a good place to start – on the level, six bells, slightly lighter than Speen and a lovely sound. We let ourselves in gently with rounds and call changes and then a couple of touches of Grand-sire Doubles and Bob Doubles.



St Peter's, Goodworth Clatford, gave us a chance to ring on a fairly light eight, all good stuff for bell control among the less experienced. The old hands had fun with April Day Bob Doubles.

Lastly, on to St Andrew's, Hurstbourne Priors, a lovely eight, so good for some more rounds and call changes, plus Reverse Canterbury, which is becoming something of a signature tune at Speen.

Many thanks to Ros Brandwood for organising the visits and to those who joined us for the afternoon.

## ***Mary Hills***



## Hungerford News

In the Autumn we received news of our new vicar, due to arrive in the Spring, and things around St Lawrence's were about to change. Reverend Mike Saunders, duly arrived in March from Eversley amidst quite a grand ceremony presided over by the Bishop of Reading. The Eversley ringers joined us for a quarter of Grandsire and then to ring for the service. Rev'd Mike has wasted no time in getting St Lawrence's on the move with a distinct brand of "inclusive" church activity and a reorganised parish team. We have not escaped his attention in that he is very pro-ringing and has expressed a desire for carols to be rung on our handbells during the Christmas services. There is a plan on the drawing board for that, which will require the assistance of experts from outside the parish as none of us has much idea how to go about this.



2016 started well with an excellent date touch of Grandsire Triples on New Years Day. This year lends itself numerically to date touches with 2016 being divisible by 14 (triples) and 16 (major), so there may well be more to follow before the year is out. Other quarters have been rung for significant events since then.

Our veteran ringer Brenda Abrahams, decided to hang up her rope and retire from ringing as her 93rd birthday approached. In recognition of Brenda's loyal service as a ringer since the 1970's, we decided to lay on a special tea party for her, with speeches from the vicar and presentations, Brenda will continue to be a friend of the tower and will join us for social occasions.



Sunday ringing has continued with six being the norm. We have been augmented recently by David Cave, an experienced ringer who has retired to Hungerford from Kent and who is a great asset on Sunday mornings and for weddings. Of course, thanks also go to our core band, Dave, Cath, Jeanne, Brenda, Rebecca, Kathy and Minna without whom the bells would not be heard on Sunday mornings.

Following this year's AGM, it was decided that it would be a good idea for others to take a turn in running the weekly practice. This would allow a varying approach to the way things are run and has proved quite successful so far. Our practices continue to be quite lively evenings and we are grateful for regular attendance and support from Steve, Mike, Mike, Margaret, Jenny Ursula, Rebecca, Martin, Eleanor, Eava and anyone else who decides to call on us.

## **FAME AT LAST!**

### **Hungerford's appearance on Radio Berkshire's Andrew Peach show**

One day in February, I got a call out of the blue from Radio Berkshire, saying that the Andrew Peach breakfast show would be visiting Hungerford that Friday during its "A4 Tour" and asking if they could feature the bells with the topical subject "Is bellringing a sport?" the main theme. Envisaging a few seconds at most, I agreed but was then shocked to hear that we would be featured throughout the 7.00 to 9.00 AM programme with various discussions and features at regular intervals.

The reporter 'Sonning Brigitte' duly arrived at 7.00 AM and we were hooked up live to "Peachy" in the studio. Minna came along to help out and later, Brenda too joined in.

There were a number of featured discussions with each of us on air, and then Brigitte had a go at ringing. All in all, quite a surreal but enjoyable couple of hours of celeb status and probably good PR for local ringing too!



## **HADCAF**

### **(Hungerford and District Community Arts Festival)**

is held every June and July featuring a wide variety of shows, concerts and activities that would come under the broad heading of art.

This year it was requested that we lay on a tower open evening as part of HADCAF which would be a good spotlight on bellringing as well as a possible recruitment aid.

The evening was duly organised and hosted by the ringers under the direction of Minna Mackenzie and Dave Thorpe, and helped by a supporting band of ringers. Discussions on the history and culture of bells and ringing, and the practical side of how a bell is rung, was rounded off with an opportunity for the visitors to have a go.

The evening was a great success and well done to Minna and Dave and thanks to the supporting band of ringers for laying this on.



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We held our tower dinner at the Furze Bush, Ball Hill this year, expertly organised by Cath and Dave. A favourite venue for us, it was a grand evening as always with fine food and good service. In the entertainment department, last year's "who am I" game caused obsessive inter-table rivalry and suspected cheating, so a more sedate quiz was decided upon for this year to avoid any unruly behaviour.



However, with the questions being ringing related, some non-ringing partners managed to excel with their knowledge of the exercise, while conversely, some ringers let themselves down badly by revealing gaps in their knowledge and were further disgraced by arguing with the judge, who'd decision is, of course, always final!

The usual speeches and medal awards ceremony rounded off the evening and a reluctance to leave the premises indicated that a good time had been had by all.

**Mark Robins**

