



# Newbury Branch Newsletter

## Summer 2022

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The deadline for the Christmas edition will be Sunday 18th December. Please let me have your news and photos by then, emailed to:

[mdrobins@hotmail.com](mailto:mdrobins@hotmail.com)

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## **From the Chair**

I am writing this from Derwent Water in the Lake District. It's all quite green up here! Doesn't seem to be much ringing though. On the way up I called in at Matlock for their Friday evening practice and there was not a soul around (well, no bell-ringing souls). Perhaps everyone is on holiday. This seems to be the situation in the Newbury Branch, with lots of practice nights being cancelled recently.

On the other hand, we had quite a good turn-out for the Branch Striking Competition and practice, with entries from Bucklebury, Newbury and Thatcham, together with ringers from various other towers. Newbury tower managed to win, and will represent the Branch at the Guild 6-bell competition to be held at Shaw on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

It is gratifying to see that the Branch Advanced Practice has been well attended recently. The standard of ringing, I thought, was particularly high at the Kintbury meet, and a welcome return of the practice after the Covid break.

It will be interesting to see if the practice cancellations are just a summer thing. I know that many towers are down on numbers and have to actively check that there will be sufficient attendance from week to week. This has its positive side, however, because it is also an opportunity to plan practices ahead, knowing who will be likely to turn up.

Here's to an active Autumn of ringing.

***Martin***



## **East Garston**

Well, we've actually done it, East Garston Bells are now with White's of Appleton for the start of their restoration/refurbishment.

Once the PCC had given the official go ahead things moved quite quickly. In the middle of May, White's installed a steel beam in the bell chamber to enable them to start work the following Monday. Work the next week continued at speed with lots of help from fellow ringers, Dave Thorpe, Charles Morrish, Martin Rice & George Rabbits. First job was the dismantling the bells from their fittings (a very dirty dusty job it was), next was the hoisting of the tenor above its bell pit to enable a new trap way to be installed, once these two stages were completed it was all systems go. The lowering of the bells on to the church floor went very smoothly. Tenor obviously first to clear the way for the remainder of the bells. All the bells were hand winched down with our helpers using guide ropes to keep the bells away from the walls. The tenor then had to have its headstock removed to enable it to be manoeuvred through the main door when transported. It also needed to be placed on a pallet mouth open and at an angle. The other bells were able to be placed mouth down onto their own individual pallets. Before the team from White's finished in the church, they made sure that we would be able to display the bells safely over the weekend and also demonstrated that the tenor would fit through the main door. We were arranging transport so they very kindly left a pallet truck and boards for covering the gravel path to the lytch gate.



***Jim & Joanna Bracey, the team from PJS, Darren & Sam from the Manor (left to right)***



### East Garston (continued)

We displayed the bells in the church for the weekend of 21/22<sup>nd</sup> May and were really pleased with the number of visitors and the interest we received. We had display board showing the different stages of the work and a couple of short videos showing the lowering of the bells which, both drew a lot of attention. Never missing an opportunity, we also put a donation box by the exit and were very grateful for the amount we received.

***Bells being lowered under the watchful eye of Martin Rice.***



***We were delighted to be able to welcome Sylvia Dodd on the Sunday, she regaled us with some stories of old and seemed to enjoy the occasion.***

On the Monday morning we still hadn't confirmed transport and it was a bit of a worry, however White's had pencilled in the following Thursday, just in case. Monday afternoon transport confirmed that they would be able to arrive the following morning at 8am. Now panic, no helpers in place & no forklift etc. We were saved by the workforce of our local Agricultural Engineers at PJS, after asking if we could have a couple of their lads to help, we were astounded when the following morning the whole crew turned up. With the help from the lads at our local manor who used their tractor/forklift and with the help of our local ringers the bells were removed from the church, transported down the long gravel path and onto the lorry within an hour. One of our villagers commented that who ever had done the organising had done a tremendous job. We laughed no organisation involved just a wonderful fluke. We are very grateful to everyone that helped and to JD Bracey of Lambourn for the transportation.



### **East Garston (continued)**

***We are hoping that the bells will be back in time for Christmas.***



***The bells on display in the church***



Fundraising is still on going although we are nearly there. The same couple that hosted 3 Paella lunches last year are hosting 3 more lunches this year, they will be Fideua's (similar to a Paella but made with fine pasta rather than rice). We are also running the local lottery and are managing to put over £300 into the fund every month.

***Maureen Velvick***

## **Brownies Invade Hungerford Tower**

At the end of May, It was decided that St Lawrence Bellringers would host a visit of Hungerford's 1st Brownies to the tower. We were told that there may be something like 30 of them coming, so we needed to prepare for quite an invasion and to plan accordingly. Andrea, our Captain, called a strategy meeting where the plan was finalised and orders issued. The Brownies would be split into two groups with half outside trying out call-changes by numbers in the churchyard, while the others would visit the belfry, have a go at ringing and have the workings of the tower explained in terms aimed at their age group. Once the first group had been "processed" they would swop with the outside group and the whole thing would be repeated.



Having looked after a visit of the Cub Scouts to the tower some years ago, and remembering how rowdy they were, I was impressed at how quiet, attentive and interested the Brownies seemed. They all had a look at the bells and had a go at chiming them. Most needed help just to get the bell swinging, but seemed to thoroughly enjoy the experience. At the end of the visit, the Brownies and their supervising Brown Owls, Tawny Owls and other shades of owl, mums, dads etc, along with us ringers, formed a circle in the churchyard and sang the Brownie Closing Song, which goes like this, sung to the Westminster Chimes tune:



***"Oh Lord our God, Thy children call. Grant us Thy peace. And bless us all"***

So, all in all a very successful visit and enjoyed by all, visitors and hosts alike.

**Mark Robins**



## **Hampstead Norreys & Yattendon**

The big ringing occasion this year was, of course, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. In Hampstead Norreys, where the renovation of the bells has received considerable local support, bells figured largely in the village festivities and we were delighted to be invited to ring for each of the special events. This kept us pretty busy during the four days of the June celebrations.

On Thursday 2nd June we opened festivities at St Mary's, Hampstead Norreys, by ringing during the torch-light procession to the Dean (village green) for the lighting of the Jubilee Beacon. On Friday, again at St Mary's, we joined in with bells all over the country ringing before the 11.30am start of the Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's. On Saturday morning we were at Yattendon, announcing the opening of the Yattendon & Frilsham Fete, and back there again on Sunday morning for the church service. That evening, we completed the weekend at Hampstead Norreys for the Songs of Praise service at St Mary's. The band is not (yet) up to ringing methods, so ringing focussed on including 70 rings of Queens wherever possible.

We are still a combined team, ringing at services for both churches and practising at alternating towers each Tuesday evening. The newer members of the band are progressing with Plain Hunt, thanks to a training session with Lucy and Mike Hopkins-Till back in March. We hope to have a refresher soon. I'm please to say we've recently added another recruit to the team.

***Marcus & Tessa Allum***

## **East Ilsley**

We had been trying, since Christmas, to find a mutually convenient evening for our regular Monday evening ringers and partners to meet socially.

As a consequence, fourteen of us met in The Crown and Horns on the Monday evening in Holy Week to enjoy a meal and a few drinks together.

An altogether enjoyable occasion which we must repeat again before too long.


***John Hibbert***



## Platinum Jubilee Ringing

In line with celebrations across the country, the Newbury Branch did its bit. Some towers rang at the same time as the service at St Pauls Cathedral on Friday 3rd June, as suggested by the Central Council, others rang for local celebrations and organised events. Belboard introduced a new feature “celebratory ringing” button, which generates a certificate from a normal Belboard entry. Here are some of those generated from ringing in the Newbury Branch for the occasion:



**CELEBRATORY  
BELL RINGING**  
On Friday, 3 June 2022 in 42m  
**Thatcham, Berkshire**  
St Mary




**1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor**

- 1 Anthony D Smith
- 2 Angela M Brown
- 3 Rachel A Backhouse (C)
- 4 Mark D Backhouse
- 5 Janet E John
- 6 Graham A C John


Rung prior to the thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral for the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II.



Simon Linford  
President  
The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers



**CELEBRATORY  
BELL RINGING**  
On Friday, 3 June 2022  
**Thatcham, Berkshire**  
St Mary





**181 Grandsire Triples**


- 1 Rosemary Evans
- 2 Anthony D Smith
- 3 Angela M Brown
- 4 Janet E John
- 5 Rachel A Backhouse
- 6 Mark D Backhouse
- 7 Graham A C John (C)
- 8 Roy Partley

Rung prior to the thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral for the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II.


Susan E Smith II wishes to be associated with this performance.



Simon Linford  
President  
The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers





**CELEBRATORY  
BELL RINGING**  
Oxford Diocesan Guild  
On Friday, 3 June 2022 in 30m  
**Hungerford, Berkshire**  
St Lawrence




**Call Changes Including Queens**

- 1 Andrea Barletta (C)
- 2 David Cave
- 3 Cath Fittell
- 4 Jeanne Lambourn
- 5 Mark Robins
- 6 Walter Newton
- 7 David Thorpe
- 8 Maurice Barletta


Rung at 11.30 to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second



Simon Linford  
President  
The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers





**CELEBRATORY  
BELL RINGING**  
On Friday, 3 June 2022 in 43m  
**Midgham, Berkshire**  
St Matthew




**1320 Jubilee Doubles**

- 1 Roger Thomas
- 2 Joanne Waller
- 3 Carol Waller
- 4 Ben Waller (C)
- 5 Ken Waller
- 6 Helen Thomas

Rung to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, coinciding with the Jubilee Service at St. Paul's.



Simon Linford  
President  
The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers



## **Sue's Midweek Group**

As many of you will know I have not been well. I would like to thank John Kape, Peter Bridle and Tony for their help and support in arranging and managing many of the recent meetings.



With all Covid related restrictions lifted meetings resumed in ground floor rings. The first of these was in March with a visit to Shaw and the Red Lion at Chieveley. This was followed by ringing at the recently restored ring at Steventon and a return visit to the Cherry Tree at Steventon.



***Medieval oak headstock from the original ring at Avebury, now on display in the church.***

Peter Bridle was in charge of the ringing for the May meeting at Midgham, with John Kape looking after the lunch arrangements at the Coach and Horses. The June meeting was further away on the eight at Avebury with two members arriving on their motor cycles. Lunch was at the Waggon and Horses, Beckhampton.

The planned visit to Mapledurham in July was refused due to filming at Mapledurham House. A return visit to Chilton was arranged where a smaller number than usual rang here before adjourning to the Crown and Horns at East Ilsley

Most meetings have been well supported with a good standard of ringing.

**Sue Smith**



## **Newbury**

On the evening of Thursday 26th May the tower hosted the 1st Newbury Scout Group. After an introduction to Bell Ringing in the church hall, the nineteen scouts and three leaders (including the Arkala, Kerry Bird) were treated to ringing demonstrations in the ringing room, watching the bells in action in the belfry (while wearing ear defenders!) and the views of Newbury from the top of the tower. The scouts were given the opportunity to chime the towers bells while in the safe/down-position and have a go at ringing the handbells. Thank you to Martin, Tony, Andrew and Deb for helping on the evening.

On Friday 3rd June a St Nics band attempted to ring Platinum Bob Doubles for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Better success was achieved with this method post Jubilee rather than on the day itself! On Friday 1st July a St Nics band, consisting of David, Martin, Tony, Andrew, Andy and Eleanor won the branch six-bell striking competition at St Mary's, Shaw ringing a touch of Grandsire doubles.

Tony and Martin (Ringing masters) continue to challenge and motivate the band on Monday practice evenings, stretching and encouraging all. The tower is currently teaching one young student to ring as part of his Skills section of his Duke of Edinburgh award. If anyone knows of any other young people wanting to learn to ring, for their DofE award or for any reason, St Nics is well set up with several experienced teaching members available to help.

## ***David Bebbington***

## **Blessing of Three trees at Shaw**

On Sunday 22nd May 2022, Six ringers rang Grandshire Doubles for this special occasion

Left to Right, John Kape, Rod Brown, Chris Pack, Chris Maslen, Rosemary Evans, Roy Pratley.

## ***Roy Pratley***



### **ODG Eight Bell Striking Competition**

This year the competition was held on the Saturday of the AGM instead of May Bank Holiday, a welcome change to the norm as it makes it so much easier to raise a band and there is the added (bonus?) of the chance to attend the AGM afterwards. The venue was Goring on Thames, and we all duly arrived on a sunny, warm day. Parking is a bit of a challenge, with first-come first-served in the town, but we were early, so we found one. Then we walked in to town for coffee and ice cream to await the proceedings. Ringing there brought back memories of the last time I rang there, which was just after their neighbour and rock star George Michaels' funeral, which saw the approach roads literally impassable for the volume of flowers left by fans!

Anyway, the competition followed the usual format and we all rang the same test piece, which was a simple touch of Plain Bob Major. Here are the results:

1st	84%	EBSB
2nd	82%	Reading St Mary
3rd	79%	Banbury Branch
4th	78%	Sonning Deanery
5th	Equal 75%	VOWH and Newbury Branch
6th	74%	Reading Branch
7th	69%	Oxford City Branch
8th	68%	Goring on Thames



The ringing was of a very high standard and our Branch team did very well considering the opposition. As usual at this level, the scores are quite close.

### **Newbury Branch Six Bell Competition**

This took place at Shaw on 1st July. Newbury won and will go on to represent the Branch at the Guild Six Bell competition to be held on Saturday 1st October which we will be hosting in the Newbury Branch. Further details once finalised.

***Mark Robins***



## **Thatcham**

For the first time for many years, we did not ring out the Old Year and ring in the New Year as our numbers were very reduced. We had reverted to wearing masks again just before Christmas, which some of our members find unacceptable and I was self isolating for a number of weeks as Sue was due to have an operation in late January. My thanks to Rachel Backhouse for keeping the ringing going during this difficult time.

With the advent of spring and the removal of all covid restrictions the number at our Tuesday night practices increased with a number of regular visitors enabling us to ring all ten bells and surprise major on many evenings. We were pleased to arrange a quarter peal for Kevin Rogers for him to ring his first of Grandsire Triples.

We marked the 70th Anniversary of the Accession of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with a quarter peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major on 6 February. All tower members were given the opportunity to ring for the Platinum Jubilee on 3 June, which we marked with 181 Grandsire Triples and a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor.

There was no change to current Tower Officers at our AGM in March. We did not hold our usual Christmas Dinner. Instead we held a mini outing to Overton followed by a pub meal at The Vine at Hannington, on 12 July. It was much enjoyed by those who attended. We were pleased to see Richard and Trish Marshall at The Vine following Richard's recent heart procedure.

We rang well struck half muffled quarter peals of Grandsire Triples in memory of Ian Judd on 12 February and of Cyril Lewington on 28 July, both of whom were good friends of the Thatcham ringers.

Our retired member, and former Secretary Margaret Robinson has recently suffered a stroke. We send our best wishes to her and John.

Ron Christopher has recovered from his operation in December, but has now been diagnosed with cancer in the liver. A quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung for his 90th birthday on 13 August. Ron enjoyed listening to the quarter peal from his home a short distance from the tower

We have been invited by Thatcham Town Council to take part in the Festival of Arts in October. Rachel Backhouse is making the arrangements. It is hoped this will generate some new recruits.

***Tony Smith***



## **David Cave, senior Hungerford Ringer—a bit of history**

This all started a few years ago, for Hungerford anyway, when a lady emailed me to let me know that her mother and father Pat and David, had retired to the town recently and were now resident within earshot of St Lawrence' bells. Her father David had been a bellringer in his younger days and is also a church-goer, so she wondered if he might come and watch us ring on a Sunday morning for old times sake. Well, I translated "watch us ring" to "ring" and he has been a stalwart Sunday service ringer with us ever since. Well into his 90's now, retired GP David has plenty of tales of yesteryear to tell and regularly entertains us to them while sitting out. Anyway, the events that inspired me to put this short article together were as follows:

David recently visited some acquaintances at St Stephens, Rochester Row, (Westminster) where He and Pat were married, and met Stephanie Pattenden, who remembered the person who taught David to ring just after the Second World War.

Here is the email exchange that followed:

*From David:*

*"Pat and I were married on 15.8.1955. What was even more delightful was to meet someone who had rung with Doris Colgate. She taught me to ring. Giving up a good portion of her petrol ration to come to Shipbourne, a very ordinary 6 to teach a band of youth to ring I wonder whether she ever wondered whether it was worth it. In my case she gave me a hobby and a host of happy and forgiving friends."*



*From Stephanie:*

*"I met him at St Stephen's Rochester Row ( Westminster) last Sunday and one of our other ringers suggested we should ring something for him to celebrate his ??67th wedding anniversary. So we did. And the short touch is now on Bellboard. He seemed very keen for this so I thought I should send him the link. And I hope I have got the details correct re the number of years for which he has been married!"*

This link takes you to the anniversary piece, rung for Pat and David:

[Ringin' World BellBoard](#)

So, it seems learning Platinum Bob Triples was worthwhile for more reasons than one, and it will come in handy in three years time!

**Mark Robins**

## **Lambourn Valley Way, Sponsored Walk**

A huge thank you for the support & sponsorship we received for our Lambourn Valley Way sponsored walk, raised in excess of £2500. We started off from White Horse Hill at 8pm on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April & finished at Donnington Castle around 3pm. We had perfect walking conditions, a cold frosty start followed by sunshine and a light breeze which was a real bonus & helped us to thoroughly enjoy the views and surroundings. Special mention must go to our drivers for dropping us off and picking us up & to our support driver, Nick Annetts, who met us at various points along the way to keep us fed and watered. A great effort from all those involved.



We have now raised 2/3rds of the monies required and our PCC has sent the official order for the work to commence. The first stage is scheduled to start in week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> May and will hopefully be completed by November.

We continue to fundraise for the final 3<sup>rd</sup> needed and with that in mind we will be running the "Save Our Bells" local lottery for another 12 months, starting in June. 50% of monies raised is given back in prizes, for the year 21-22 this equated to a monthly prize fund of £360 distributed in the following way: £216 first prize, £108 second prize & £36 third prize a very good return for just £5 per month. If you would like to join but haven't received a flyer please email: [eastgarston@bellsnearnewbury.org.uk](mailto:eastgarston@bellsnearnewbury.org.uk) by May 31<sup>st</sup> and we will come back to you. Remember, you have to be in it to win it.

Once again, we'd like to thank everyone for their continued support.

***Maureen Velvick on behalf of East Garston Bell Ringers***



## **Speen**

Ringling has continued pretty consistently at Speen for both Sunday services and practices, when we can usually muster at least six. We had a particularly successful practice some weeks ago when we were joined by an Australian couple from Adelaide: Peter and Hannah were visiting their mothers in Southampton and Witney so we were perfectly placed en route between the two.

We rang both in February and June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee - nothing too complicated but lots of Queens.



For anyone planning a trip to northern France, Mary Hills recommends the bell foundry at Villedieu les Poeles as worth a visit. They cast the bells which were installed in Notre Dame in Paris in 2013 and which remained in place during the fire of April 2019."

## ***Mary Hills***

## **Cyril Ernest Lewington**

**9<sup>th</sup> November 1936 - 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

### ***Some memories and thoughts about Cyril from his family.***

Cyril was born to Florence and Walter in 1936 and grew up with his siblings, Brian, Bruce, Chris and Joyce in Church End Lane, Tilehurst. Some of the happiest times Cyril talked about regarding his childhood was working on the farm next door. Uncle Reg and Auntie Dolly who owned Ford's farm were so kind to the family, that every spare minute was spent with them driving tractors and enjoying the farming life. Cyril's parents were keen bell ringers and he followed suit with campanology becoming a big part of his life.

Cyril spent his National Service years based in Malaya as a radar engineer which enabled him to visit other Asian countries including Singapore and Hong Kong. His cine camera went with him and it created great memories. His National Service paved the way to him becoming an electronic engineer.

On his return, Cyril enjoyed many cycling holidays with the Roving Ringers, ringing at churches and bell towers up and down the country. These too he caught on cine film. It was through bell ringing that he met Gilly, soon to become his wife. They married in 1962, with Tom arriving shortly after, followed by Emma, Becky and Sarah, all within a space of 5 years!

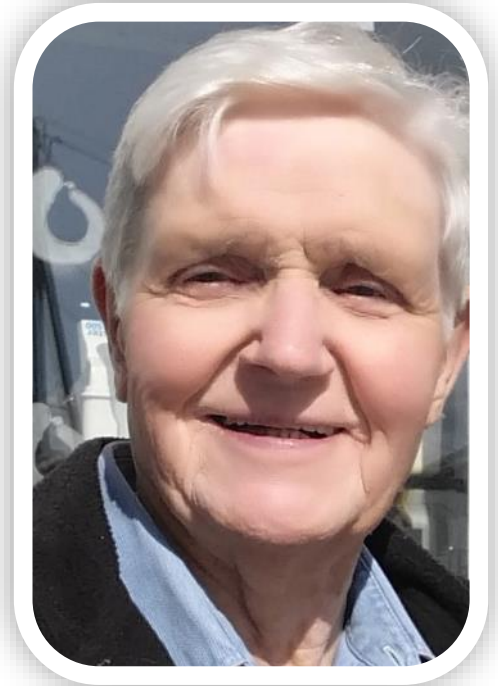
Hours were spent working in the garden at Waven, Bucklebury which you would think was a peaceful occupation but he often found himself fighting for territory with Gilly's ferocious bees.

He was the tower captain at St Mary's, Bucklebury and raised the church flag at Christmas and Easter. He also took on the role of parish clerk for many years.

Cyril's keen interest in archaeology led him and a group of fellow enthusiasts to discover many roman remains in the field behind Waven with a few pieces going to Newbury Museum.

His biggest love in life after Gilly and his children, was music. He taught himself to play instruments including the trumpet and kettle drums which he played for the Newbury Symphony Orchestra.

He enjoyed amateur dramatics and in the 60's and 70's was a member of the Bucklebury Players. He had a few starring roles in plays such as 'Hobson's Choice' and 'When We are Married'. He sang the 'Galloping Major' in a production of 'The Good Old Days' which caused much hilarity in the audience, as his galloping caused the dust from his wig to fill the stage!



## **Cyril Lewington (continued)**

Sadly in 2001 he lost Gilly to cancer and this had a profound effect on his life and he missed her dearly. Despite having prostate cancer and heart surgery, over the following years, he continued playing in orchestras, singing in choirs and started teaching a 'science and sound workshop' in primary schools around the local area, which from the wonderful reviews, the children and staff thoroughly enjoyed.

Up until last year, Cyril joined his family on holidays, surfing in Polzeath, visiting the ancient ruins of Pompeii and the Norwegian fjords. They also all enjoyed day trips, especially to Wells in Somerset to visit the Cathedral he so adored.

The bells were rung open before and after the funeral service on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July in celebration of Cyril's life. Mainly ringing touches of Grandsire Triples but also a plain course of Cambridge Minor. Thanks to the Newbury Branch ringers and visitors that were able to ring: Marucs Allum, Angela Brown, Graham Brown, Rosemary Evans, John Harrison, Chris Maslen, Roy Pratley, John Slater, Tony Smith, Eunice Wark.

-:-



**Fred Simmons**

*a poem by his wife Barbara*

**Fred**

*His family were the love of his life  
His daughters, their children  
And of course me  
His dear wife*

*Secondly, church bells  
Which he loved to ring  
And maintaining them  
Was an important thing*

*Thirdly, his garden  
Growing veg, fruit and flower  
He was happy out there  
For hour upon hour*

*Anything else was  
“When I have time”  
Which was not very often  
If the weather was fine*

*But that’s how he was  
that was his way  
But oh how I wish  
He was still here today*

**Barbara**

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter.

*Mark Robins—Editor*