

Oct
2007



Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter

Newsletter of the Witney and Woodstock Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

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Hello from your Editor



Striking Contest Ringers

Summer has come and gone, what there was of it. Our thoughts are with those affected by the floods. Clanfield and Bampton suffered particularly badly. The Branch practice at

Clanfield had to be cancelled as a result. The Branch outing in May seems a long time ago now. The turnout was fantastic. Coupled with a very competitively priced coach we broke even. I hope those who went got a good enough ring. The striking competition was also a great success. Anthony's idea of a barbecue was fantastic. Fortunately it was on one of the few hot days of the summer. What with practices being well

attended the Branch seems to be in good heart. The family managed a week away in Scotland. We had a lovely cottage in The Trossachs. Fortunately this coincided with the Inverary Ringing Festival. Scotland has few rings of bells. Inverary has a superb ring of ten with a tenor weighing 42cwt. We made the trip over there on the Sunday enjoying some fantastic scenery. The bells were well worth the trip
Richard White

1 June 2007 - Steve Coleman's visit to St Helen's Abingdon

Twenty-five or so would-be bell ringing teachers (or possibly already, hoping to brush up their skills) filled the sunlit belfry at West St Helen's in Abingdon for a magical two and a half hours. Magical in that we were in the presence of Steve Coleman who was about to show us how to teach an absolute beginner to ring, and then ring rounds in that short time. In words of one syllable ('yours' and 'mine') Steve Coleman did exactly that, ably assisted by his wife

Sue. The young man who had volunteered to be 'victim' was gently coaxed into the basic hand and back strokes whilst Steve took questions and suggestions from the floor. When asked how to correct handling errors he recommended going back through the various learning stages to isolate a fault. He also suggested keeping handling sessions going well beyond just starting to ring rounds. By the time we stopped for coffee the young man had put both strokes together, having had a

demonstration by Steve and Sue using the words 'yours' when it was his turn to take charge of the rope and 'mine' when Steve felt it appropriate to intervene, thus keeping the momentum going and ensuring that the new ringer was not unnerved by anything untoward. We rang rounds with our beginner as predicted. Magic!

Jane Carlo
Yarnton

Branch Striking Competition

WELL DONE TO ALL WHO TOOK PART

Well done to all the ringers who took part in this years striking competition at Church Hanborough. Thank you to Cathy Rowland for arranging permission to ring on the bells, Anthony Williamson for arranging the delicious barbecue so efficiently, Philip Curtis for judging, Bernard Coggins

for doing the time keeping, Mary Clark-Maxwell for the smooth changeovers, all the ringers for turning up and everybody else who helped in any way. The results were as follows:

Call Changes: 1st Woodstock, 2nd Combe, 3rd Bampton,

4th Church Hanborough, 5th Wootton, 6th North Leigh.

Method: 1st Woodstock, 2nd Combe, 3rd Bampton, 4th Church Hanborough, 5th North Leigh, 6th Wootton.
Lorna Smale

August 1957

Continuing our look back at Branch news 50 years ago. This issue we look at a copy of David Smiths newsletter from August 1957.

August always seems to be rather a slack month for ringing. We are all busy with holidays and work outside that not a lot goes on. However as it is some while since the last newsletter it will be quite easy to fill this page. I have recently visited the following towers: Cassington. Harry Floyd asked me if a few of us from Witney could go over "to help get the bells down". As it happened so many wanted to come that we filled 3 cars and had a very good evening. At long last I managed to ring a touch of Grandsire Minor. Hanborough. There were only about 5 local ringers at this practice with about 7 visitors from all over the place. From the ringing that took place I can see that the Hanborough

and Woodstock ringers are making quite good progress. The standard of handling is getting a bit better too. Clanfield. This was arranged mostly for the Witney lot but also to give the Clanfield ringers a chance to ring Grandsire Triples on their own bells again. Mr George Clarke had been up to oil them earlier in the day and they went very well indeed. Both he and Mr Farmer rang some good Triples with us. A very pleasant evening. Some local learners are being taught as well. Odd bits of news that I have heard of are as follows. The ringers at Northleigh want some help so that they can get on a bit. Witney ringers had a good evening out recently and went to Taynton, Barrington and Stow-on-the Wold. Kidlington ringers and friends had a days outing some while back and I hear it was a real success. There have been one or two Quarters attempted or rung.

The Oxford City Branch

are holding an extra meeting at Kidlington on September 14th. As this is on 'our ground' we are joining in with them although I have had to leave all the arrangements to their secretary. I am not running a coach. Will those of you who want tea please write to Mr. J. Adams, 166 Cricket Rd. Oxford.
BRANCH AUTUMN MEETING. This will be held at STANTON HARCOURT on Saturday Oct 5th. Full details of this will be circulated soon, but in the meantime will tower Foremen please ensure that I have complete lists of New Members to be elected and the names of those due for certificates. (FULL names in each case). I expect that quite soon some of you will be starting to teach learners. Now the standard of bell handling in this branch is LOW so it is most important to see that bad habits are not passed on.

Continued on p5

OTHER EVENTS AUGUST 1957

Steve Davis
snooker player
is born

Steven Fry
is born

Malaya declares
independence
from UK.

Oliver Hardy dies



The Bampton and Clanfield Outing – 29/9/07 *by Demelza SMALE*

The Bampton and Clanfield Outing on 29 September inspired Demelza to write the following about our day!

You could hear the bells chiming in the distance, echoing all around the village of Windrush. The sound of gushing water dampened by the thunderous bells. A clean shaven man appeared out of the dark shadows surrounding the churches thick and impenetrable walls, wanting to explore, but first he had to get over his greatest fear, the graveyard, in its worst, at night. He walked silently up to the gate and pushed the solid, cold iron, hard. A load creaking noise sounded as the metal slowly drew towards him to reveal a mass of dead corpses rising from their graves. "NO" he shouted in panic to the quiet air of the early evening. "Pull yourself together, there are no ghosts in this world, the bodies are buried!" Cautiously he drew his right foot away from his left and started to inch towards the large church door. With every step crunching on the gravel beneath him he spun around, his eyes darting back and forth restlessly. He reached the ancient oak door and turned the handle, it was like ice. His feet entered the church before his body did and hit a bare flagstone floor. The slap echoed all around the

church before it came back to the young and fearful man, sending cold shivers down his spine. He shivered even more so as he walked forwards to see that in fact the bells were ringing of their own accord. No humans to be seen. Six of them being rung beautifully but backwards. As he listened to the reassuring sound he knew so well he realized the bells were turning over in an anti-clockwise fashion. His head started to spin.

He spun around on the spot, the church dizzy in his eyes. He thundered out of the open door, back into the deadly cold night, it was darker now and growing more so as he ran at high speed along the gravel path. Touching the cold iron only once more before he was swinging his leg over the back of his pure black stallion. At the slightest move of his heels the midnight black horse began to gallop away towards Great Rissington. All was deadly silent. No bells ringing, that was spookily unusual. Although his heart rate did start to decrease as he thought about entering this tower, having visited it once before, he was still frightened, although he would not admit that to her when she asks, like she always does. As he stepped inside the church he saw that it was immensely dark the only

light being the moon shining through the bright and beautiful stained glass window which did add a certain thrill, as all that could be seen was the blue light as it bounced off the cold walls of the church. Again there were six ropes dangling dangerously through the ceiling but this time in the middle of the church. He walked towards one of the ropes, more aware of everything around him than you would have thought necessary. He pulled a gloved hand out of his sleeve to hold the rope the colour of dark, red blood. All lay perfectly still. She was not here, he hissed to himself almost silently. In the distance, a long way off, he thought he could hear the eight dings and dongs of Shipton-under-Wychwood and thought he should investigate there next. He must find her, sooner rather than later. He was nearly there. All he faced now was a steep, towering spiral staircase. He stepped and stepped, again and again, stumbling slightly in the darkness as his feet climbed upwards in search of the next stone step. Little bursts of light did appear every twenty steps or so through minute, rectangular windows in the side of the wall but did not offer enough light. He climbed on upwards past the door where eight ropes were

being pulled to some well struck method, this time though by people, and he carried on up right to the trapdoor, leading to the roof. That was where he would find her, he thought happily to himself, a feeling of immense pride warm around his body. She will be there dressed in nothing but her simplistic clothing and she will be impressed that I have found her so early on in the evening, before midnight, that's good. He climbed on up thinking of her thin, pale, beautiful figure that no one could improve, other than perhaps himself pressed against her pale lips in the moonlight, looking over the village. The church steeple keeper they call her, but only a myth in their eyes. Young children are told stories about her and her lover standing on a different church roof every night watching and looking and kissing and talking in whispers. That is of course after she has been found.

Cont p4

"A clean shaven man appeared out of the dark shadows surrounding the churches thick and impenetrable walls"

Bampton and Clanfield Outing (cont)



B & C Outing, team photo



Ringling at Gt Rissington – Brian is showing off his one-handed ringling skills

“All of a sudden rage hit him like a bullet; you could almost smell the smoke of the gun that had just been fired”

He was at the top now. His levels of carelessness increasing as did his excitability. He reached the trapdoor and pushed. He slid it gently and silently over his head so he could climb through. He was now bathed in moonlight from top to toe, uncovering his perfect figure and shoulder length, black hair. Stunning in every way. He got up and looked around himself in a slow, circular movement. She was not there. There was no shining beauty. No glowing gorgeous figure. All of a sudden rage hit him like a bullet; you could almost smell the smoke of the gun that had just been fired. He was filled with the most hurtful despair he had ever felt, he ran, the words of the gods filling his mind. “Find her tonight, or lose her forever.” Faster and faster he went, straight towards the edge of the roof. He jumped, and flew off the edge, with dignity that most men could not have found, before landing in a dark and muddy irrigation ditch.

Now, just off horseback, came a murderous looking man. Frightening if you ever did see him. His face wore a sour look with a hint of sadness but

determination also. His hair was very dark now but not sleek and shiny as before but matted with mud. His clothes and boots filthy like a tramp would wear and a rough torn look about him. He stepped ever closer to who he was longing to find, though he knew not of it yet. He was again entering a grave yard but not through a normal route. He entered by climbing over a large, flat stone stood upright, deep into the ground. His horse left amongst the others in the well walked field. A tall tree he spotted to his right; he began to climb and it was from here that he could see all that he wanted to. His beautiful steeple keeper that would be his tonight, stood tall and slender in the moonlight. A loud noise struck from the church, one loud, low dong. It must be one o'clock for it was not the bells he heard. This meant it was gone midnight now, would she accept him now, for he had taken so much time in reaching her, he pondered to himself. He leaped carefully out of a tree just as a cat would have done and made his way to the tower of Fulbrook, where six small

bells hung in the tiniest of towers. He made his way up the outside of the tower by use of vines because his way had been blocked at the inside door. He did not mind this however because when he reached the top it would show his almighty strength and determination. Although, saying this he was having a terrible time trying to climb a tall stone building in the dark, and to make things worse he could feel the drip, drip, drip of water falling onto him, growing heavier and heavier by the second. He finally reached the top of the tower, and as he felt over the top of the cold, wet stone, frozen hands touched his and began to pull. He threw his body over the top with great effort and landed with a hard and painful bang of flesh and bones colliding with concrete. It was a few minutes before he pulled himself up off the floor and into the arms of a beautiful lady. She spoke in a soft whisper with obvious affection in her voice and not even caring to hide it. She said “you're terribly late, what kept you?” He began to explain his tale when she spoke again, this time with more passion in her voice, “Let's leave this place, we'll celebrate being together at long last at Asthall, we know they're a pleasant ring of six.”

Demelza Smale

From the Branch Secretary – Anthony Williamson.

In May, Jon Chamberlain, the Oxford Diocesan Guild Master, organised a meeting with the Branch committee to discuss communication within the ODG. A Guild working group has been set up to investigate ways of improving communication and he is looking into ways to establish a direct line between the Guild and individual members. He sees electronic communication as a way forward but did not want to disadvantage those without internet access, so a system of distribution would have to be agreed at Branch level. Greater use of email would mean up-to-date contact details and better membership information being held at Guild level.

The Branch celebrated the installation of John Pritchard as Bishop of Oxford on 8th June. There was general ringing at Aston, North Leigh and Church Hanborough, with quarter peals at Combe, Eynsham and Woodstock.

Many thanks to Richard White for organising such an enjoyable outing to Bedfordshire in May. Breaks for lunch and tea made for a well paced day, his research into the churches and local history were much appreciated. Thanks also to Lorna Smale for arranging the striking competition,

hosted by Church Hanborough. There was a good turn out with six towers competing. Congratulations to Woodstock who swept the board winning both call changes and method. Bampton have vowed to return in strength next year. The barbecue proved popular and there was an array of drink and delicious puddings brought by each tower.

News from the towers: Combe held a Handling Clinic at the end of May, the aim was to help build confidence and develop a safe and consistent style. Thanks to Lorna for running the morning, it was a great success.

In June, South Leigh celebrated the centenary of their bell restoration with a peal of Stedman Triples. The following weekend there was an exhibition, "Bells" theme flower festival and Songs of Praise service.

Northmoor - Mark Jackson has taken over as tower captain and correspondent. On Saturday 30 June, they rang for the wedding of Nicholas and Debbie Robinson, with the assistance of some members of the Aston tower. Help was required for a while because both Nicholas and Debbie are members of the tower. Half way through their

ringing the bride and groom appeared in the tower and joined in.

Langford – I've had two enquiries from outside the Branch for contact details. It's one of our towers without members and all contact has been lost. After a bit of detective work (Croxford's, the Diocesan Year book, emails and phone calls) I've managed to establish that the bells are rung for weddings and the occasional service. Andrew Tinson is tower captain and has been a member of the Branch in the past; he recalls ringing with Terry Hester and Geoff Holden a number of years ago. When asked if I could arrange some ringing there he was very keen that the bells should be used, so please let me know if you are interested in a visit and I'll set up a Saturday morning – look out for details on one of my posters.

Finally, an appeal for copies of Odd Bob missing from the Branch records. Do you have any of the following and would you kindly donate them to the Branch? 1-4, 14, 15, 18, 19, 29, 31-58 (1991-2000), 60, 63, 68.

Anthony Williamson

Newsletter August 1957 – cont from p2.

You may be able to ring well with all sorts of technical faults, but if these are allowed in a learner they will definitely hinder his progress. Take special care to see that the rope end is adjusted so that he can only just reach it at back, that he gets his arms RIGHT UP and RIGHT DOWN and catches the sally with BOTH FINGERS OF EACH HAND. If you insist on the right way from the very beginning you will soon have a good ringer. I am at any ones disposal for help or advice in this matter. I hope soon to be making a set of slides that will show the correct way of handling. When ready I can bring round my projector and show them.

David Smith

Send your articles
to

Richard White
26 Hill Rise,
Woodstock, Oxon
OX201AB
PHONE:
01993 812424

E-MAIL:
zoe_white25@hotmail.com

Branch website

See us at:

www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk

Quarter Peals

Combe.

Friday, 8 June 2007

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

1 Demelza Smale
2 Brian Curtis
3 Anthony Williamson
4 Amanda Millard (1st inside)
5 Lorna Smale (C)
6 Dave Pullin.
Rung in celebration of the marriage of Amanda and Alistair Millard (18/05/07 at Gretna) and to welcome the 42nd Bishop of Oxford, the Right Reverend John L. Pritchard, on the day of his inauguration.

Woodstock

Friday 8th June 2007

1260 Doubles
5 ½ extents Grandsire and 5 of Plain Bob
1 Mary Clark-Maxwell
2 Jane Burgess
3 Zoë White
4 Malcolm Fairbairn
5 Richard White ©
6 Ian Davey-Wilson
First inside -2
Rung to celebrate the enthronement today of John Pritchard as Bishop of Oxford.

Eynsham

Friday, 8 June 2007

Six extents of Grandsire and four and a half extents of Bob Doubles

Treble - Fred. Bennett (Eynsham)
2 - Hugh Deam (Marston)
3 - Roy Jones - conductor (Marston)
4 - Charles Smith (Eynsham)
5 - Pete Butler (Eynsham)
Tenor - Peter Lloyd (Marston)

Combe.

Saturday, 7 July 2007

in 42 mins
1260 Bob Doubles
1 Amanda Millard
2 Demelza Smale (1st QP inside)
3 David Richards (1st in method)
4 Anthony Williamson
5 Lorna Smale (C)
6 Jean Richards (1st on tenor).
Rung prior to a Tower Open morning.

Stonesfield.

Wednesday, 29 August 2007

1260 St Simon's Bob Doubles

1 Jenny Haviland
2 Anthony Williamson (1st in method)
3 Lindsey Thornton
4 Brian Curtis
5 Lorna Smale (C)
6 David Thornton.
In thanksgiving for the lives of Brian Hodgson of Stonesfield, former leader of the Labour Group on Oxfordshire CC, and Abbott Conway, ringer and vicar of Great Tew.

Notable Peals

THE OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD

South Leigh, Oxon

St James the Great

On Thursday 31st May 2007

In two hours and thirty minutes

A PEAL OF STEDMAN TRIPLES

5040 Changes

Tenor: 10-2-26 in G

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. William Butler | 5. L Roy Woodruff |
| 2. Roger Barnes | 6. Timothy G Pett |
| 3. Lorna Smale | 7. Clive Holloway |
| 4. John Pladdys © | 8. Richard E White |

For the centenary of the first peal on the bells, Stedman Triples, rung on May 31st 1907, immediately following the dedication of the new 8.

Bampton, Oxon

St Mary the Virgin

On Friday 1st June 2007

In two hours and fifty six minutes

A PEAL OF STEDMAN TRIPLES

5040 Changes

Tenor: 23-0-4 in D

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Lorna Smale | 5. John H Napper |
| 2. Charlotte Everett | 6. Graham J Clifton |
| 3. John Pladdys © | 7. Clive Holloway |
| 4. Roger Barnes | 8. Stephen W Goddard |

First peal on the bells since restoration and refurbishment. Rung on the anniversary of the first peal of Stedman Triples on the bells, June 1st 1906.