

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



September 2015, Autumn Issue



The summer is drawing to close. I hope you have been taking the opportunity to visit other towers. Several of the officers help out at other towers on a regular basis. Please let us know if your tower needs regular help and we will see what can be arranged.

On October 10th we have our joint 8-bell striking competition with the Reading Branch at Shiplake at 17:30. Shiplake is a very good 9cwt ring. It would be good if we could have a good number of bands from our Sonning Branch participating. So please encourage your band to enter! Details have been sent to tower correspondents. The closing date is Oct 7th.

Our “first Tuesday of the month” practices on at 2 pm at Binfield are well supported. Please come along if you would like to ring. All standards are catered for.

Steve Wells (Ringing Master)

Ringing Outing 17th October

Purley 6, 8½cwt 10:00-10:45

South Stoke S Andrew 6, 9 cwt 14:45-15:30

Pangbourne 6, 10 cwt 11:15-12:00

Whitchurch St Mary 6, 8 cwt 16:00-16:45

Streatley St Mary 6, 8½ cwt 12:30-13:15

LUNCH at a local place

All welcome for all or part of the day. Please contact Pam & Andrew Elliston (0118 969 5967) (email: Andrew.elliston@sky.com) to let them know if you are planning to attend/ or for more details. If you can car share please do, as parking is limited at some towers. More details available on the [website](#).

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 10th October

Shiplake (8)

5.30pm—Joint 8 bell striking competition with the Reading Branch.

Saturday 17th October

Branch Outing

Saturday 31st October—

Wed 11th November—

Quarter Peal Week

Saturday 21st November

Wokingham St Paul (8)

4.30pm Business meeting (no ringing afterwards)

Saturday 19th December

Arborfield (6)

10.30am—12 noon Branch Practice & mince pies

Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices

(2-4pm at Binfield) on 6th Oct, 3rd Nov & 1st Dec (provisionally).

Surprise Major practices (Wednesday

8pm –9.30pm) at Wokingham All

Saints on 14th October, 11th November & 9th December (provisionally).

Rescue plans at Sonning

In the previous newsletter (on our branch website) is a thought-provoking article by Simon Milford about how difficult it can be to get a seriously injured person out of the ringing room. A ringer had a heart attack while at St. Mary's, Sydney – the method of getting the ringer out of the tower had to keep the patient level. In Simon's words:

"So the only viable option was to remove the trapdoor in the floor of the ringing chamber, through which the bells had been lifted into the tower, and to lower the casualty through the trapdoor to the floor below."

This set the Sonning band thinking – how easy is it to access our trapdoor and can it be opened quickly? So, recently, Andrew Elliston and I investigated our trapdoor in the ringing room. First we moved all the furniture from one side of the room to the other and tried to lift back the carpet. We found that it was tacked down with large, old tacks that were difficult to remove, so now the carpet is left un-tacked, just a bit of carpet tape at one or two key points.



We found that the trap door was in fact two doors with about an 8 inch vertical drop between them. The upper door was part of the floor the ringers stand on, the lower door was in the ceiling of the back of the nave below. The upper door can be lifted out and the solid beams it sits on can be lifted from their sockets – both without any tools (see picture). The lower door is in fact two separate doors that meet in the middle, and again they can be removed without tools but require at least 3 people to do so.

When the trap is open there is a clear descent to the floor of the church below, but there are two (at least) problems. First, there is nowhere in the ringing room ceiling to attach lowering gear that can support the weight of the patient (and probably a medic). We think the solution is that the emergency services must be advised at the time of the call that an A-frame is required.

The second problem is that the church and separate tower at Sonning have their own alarm systems with their own security codes. The church is usually locked and alarmed in the evenings when the need to rescue a ringer is likely, but no ringer has a key to the church or knows the security

code. With the agreement of the vicar and PCC, we need to devise a solution for this that can be used quickly in an emergency.

So our rescue plans are ongoing; we have the answers to most of the questions raised by Simon's article. When we have all the answers they will be put in a comprehensive procedure and a copy left prominently in the ringing room.

Rob Needham (Sonning)

Remembering Ginny Coulson

Wednesday 25 August 2015

Waltham St Lawrence

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Katie Titford
- 2 Jacqueline Hazell (C)
- 3 Vikki Bulbeck
- 4 Rob Needham
- 5 Derek Smith
- 6 Derek Titford

Rung in memory of Virginia Coulson, our much loved friend and fellow ringer, who died on Sunday 23rd August, aged 81.

In grateful thanksgiving for her life.



How many are we?

In the late 1970s there were around 180-190 members in the Branch. By 2014 the number had fallen to 170 and in 2015 it fell again, by 6.5%, to 159. The officers felt that with many towers having problems recruiting and retaining ringers it would be sensible to try to understand how and why the membership was changing.

The first thing I discovered was that of those listed in 2014 but not 2015 four were already non-resident and two were duplicates, so the real change was from 164 to 159, which halves the real reduction to 3%.

The net reduction of 5 members is the difference between 18 new members who joined and 23 members who didn't renew. So the 3% is the difference between 11% recruited 11% and 14% lost.

Why did members leave, and how did we recruit those who joined? To find out I asked tower correspondents. A third of those who left had moved away, a sixth were in ill health or had died and the remaining half were for other reasons or unspecified. Of the recruits, half came from family or church connections and half were unspecified.

I asked tower correspondents another question – about members who never ring or who hardly ever do so. I didn't specify how many times a year counted as 'hardly ever', since there is clearly not a hard cut off. I know there are members like this who like to remain associated with the tower and are happy to pay their subscription to support the Branch. This isn't a new phenomenon – I remember quite a few members at my own tower in the 1970s never rang. So the number of members on the books has probably always been higher than the number of active ringers who ring week by week in our towers.

To get a more accurate picture of ringing in the Branch we need to exclude the inactive members from the total. Not everyone answered this question so the figure I got includes some uncertainty, but from the answers I did get I think the effective number of ringers in the Branch is probably between 10% and 15% lower than the number of members listed. So although we have around 160 members there are probably under 140 active ringers in our towers.

The figures above are all for the Branch as a whole, but there is quite a bit of variation between individual towers. One tower has over 20 members but many have far fewer than that.

It is common to express the strength of a tower band in terms of the number of ringers per bell, with the generally accepted level for a healthy band being at least two ringers per bell. That gives a reasonable margin for people to be on holiday, away on business, sick or otherwise unavailable, while still ensuring that all bells can be rung regularly for services.

Across the Branch there are only 1.3 nominal members per bell or 1.2 effective members per bell – well below what is considered desirable. Again there is wide variation between towers with a couple having more than two ringers per bell but many having fewer than one ringer per bell.

There are full details on the Branch website: odg.org.uk/sdb



John Harrison (Chairman)

Quarter Peals

Wednesday 22 July Waltham St Lawrence 1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Martha Hazell
- 2 Jacqueline Hazell (C)
- 3 Matthew Bulbeck
- 4 Vikki Bulbeck
- 5 Derek Smith
- 6 Derek Titford

To mark the passing of Peter Griffiths, longstanding resident of the parish.
To celebrate the Ruby Wedding of Derek and Jackie Smith, married 19th July 1975.
First Quarter inside: 3

Sunday 2 August 2015 Sonning 1274 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Rob Needham
- 2 Joyce Vernon
- 3 Pam Elliston
- 4 Andrew Elliston
- 5 Alan K Barsby
- 6 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 7 David Sullivan (C)
- 8 Keith Vernon

For Evensong.

Saturday 29 August 2015 Easthampstead 1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Bradley Herrington
- 2 Anna Barker
- 3 Barbara Wells
- 4 Rachel Moss
- 5 Stephen Wells (C)
- 6 Thomas Helyer

Rung for the wedding of Ben Adkins and Suzie Fenton.
First quarter peal 1.

Sunday 6 September 2015 Wokingham St Paul 1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Mary Ede
- 2 Susan E Davenport
- 3 Elizabeth J O'Brien
- 4 David Creasy
- 5 Lavina Sullivan
- 6 Geoffrey K Cook
- 7 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 8 Christopher P Cole

Rung prior to the last service celebrated by Rev. Deborah Davidson taking up appointment as Associate Priest in the Benefice of St. George & St. John Newbury

Wednesday 9 September 2015 Easthampstead 1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Christopher Otim
- 2 Anna Barker
- 3 Stephen Wells (C)
- 4 Barbara Wells
- 5 Thomas Helyer
- 6 Simon Chapman

Rung to mark Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II becoming the longest reigning British Monarch.
First quarter peal 1.



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