



# News from the Dunster Branch

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## **Greetings to all Dunster Branch members, ringing friends and supporters!**

This autumn edition of our Branch Newsletter reports on recent Branch events as well as the special ringing that took place across the Branch for the death of the Queen and accession of the King. A special welcome to our new members who were elected at the AGM (see below) and many congratulations to Jan Swan for being awarded our Achiever of the Year Award, for the second time!

*Susan Mew, Newsletter Editor*

## **Branch Skittles – Winsford win the trophy!**



We had a great evening on 15 October at our annual branch skittles match. It was lovely to see so many there (nine teams with 14 different towers represented) – particularly as it was three years since we were able to hold the last skittles evening. The staff at the Carew Arms were friendly and helpful and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Many thanks to those who helped organise the event – Mike Dewar for the overall arrangements, Martin & Liz Blazey for managing the team order and scoring, Elisabeth Powls for the quiz and for sorting out the money, Gwynie Poole for running the raffle, and Robert Taylor and Russ Coward for ‘sticking up’. And thanks to everyone who came along to make it a very enjoyable evening. Here is the winning Winsford team (including one member from Carhampton).

## **Branch AGM and new members**

Our AGM took place at Stogumber on 1 October and was very well attended. We had some good ringing, ranging from rounds to Cambridge Surprise Minor, took part in a short service led by Ringing Revd Rik Peckham, drank tea, ate lots of cake, and enjoyed chatting to ringing friends not seen for a while. At the actual meeting we re-elected our officers who were all willing to stand for another year. We also received reports from our treasurer, secretary, ringing master and education officer and discussed the fixtures and other events for 2023.

We were very pleased to welcome **six new members** to the Association: **Elaine Barrass** (Minehead), **George Thomas** (Minehead), **Bruce Oakley** (Dunster), **Ele Laker** (Wiveliscombe), **Graeme Harper** (Stogumber) and **Emma Kingdon** (Porlock). Unfortunately, Emma and Graeme were not able to be at the AGM, but we hope to meet them soon at some other Branch event.



*The pictures on the right show Chris Mitchell, Branch chair, with George, Bruce and Elaine. Ele is in the one below.*

Our annual ‘**Achiever of the Year Award**’ went to **Jan Swan**, for the second time. This year it was awarded for all the fantastic work she has been doing training a large group of new ringers at Sampford Brett, as well as starting up again our Branch training programme and Improvers’ sessions. *Here she is with Chris.* **Nick Kingdon** (Porlock), has achieved 50 years’ membership of the Association and his certificate has been delivered to him. Well done Nick!

## **Ringling for the death of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of King Charles**

Well done to everyone who helped ring for 'Operation London Bridge'. Most bands in our Branch seem to have managed some special ringing at the specified times, despite the kerfuffle around the exact timing of the Proclamation and when to unmuffle/muffle the bells and raise or lower the flag. Here are the reports from those towers that responded to my request for information.

**CARHAMPTON, DUNSTER AND WITHYCOMBE** [*Susan Mew & David Moore*]: On Friday 9 September, we joined in the national tolling at 12 noon with teams of three ringers taking it in turns to toll the tenors at Dunster and Withycombe. The next day, 10 September, we rang the four bells 'open' at 1pm at Withycombe for the accession of the King. On Sunday 11 September we rang the handbells to Queens and Kings outside Carhampton village hall, where services are being held at present. Later we rang Dunster's eight bells for the Sunday morning service – again 'open' for the succession. After 1pm on that Sunday, the bells were muffled again and the flags lowered to half-mast. Practices during the week were therefore on half-muffled bells. Finally, we rang for the funeral starting at 1000 on 19 September. Two of our ringers tolled the tenor again at Withycombe, and others helped ring the eight bells at Dunster before rushing home to watch



the funeral (and listen to the bells of Westminster Abbey) on the box. The ringers involved at these various sessions were: Emily Feldberg, Jonathan Greenhow, Richard Hatton, Evie Jupe, Susan Mew, David Moore, Bruce Oakley, Rik Peckham, Thea Tasker, Dave Walmsley and Lee Webber. Thanks to all of them for their flexibility re timing and to those who dealt with the muffles and flags.



*Raising the tenor at Withycombe (9/11), handbells at Carhampton (11/9) and the bands at Withycombe (10/9) and at Dunster (19/9)*

**CROWCOMBE** [*Robert Kennedy*]: Friday 9 September at noon: tolling half muffled on a single bell, following the announcement of the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Saturday 10 September at 1115: call changes and plain hunt; ringing for the Proclamation of King Charles III. Sunday 11 September at 1730: half muffled Queens and plain hunt for a Service of Remembrance for the Queen. Sunday 18 September at 1947: tolling half muffled on a single bell - a national Moment of Reflection to mourn the passing of the Queen and to reflect on her life and legacy. Monday 19 September at 1000: half muffled rounds and call changes before the Queen's funeral.

**EXFORD, WITHYPOOL AND CUTCOMBE** [*Sue Atkins*]: Exford church arranged for ringing on Friday 9 September - fully muffled for one hour, rounds and call changes. Some members of the public came and sat in the church while we rang. On Saturday 10 September we rang open, to celebrate the accession of King Charles III, also for a wedding service that was on that day. The muffles were replaced for services leading up to the late Queen's funeral. On Monday 19 September we rang fully muffled from 1000 to 1045 with help from Withypool ringers, again rounds and call changes. At the churches in Withypool and Cutcombe the tenor bell was tolled from 1000 to 1030 as we did not have enough ringers and muffles to cover all three churches.

**MINEHEAD** [*Andrew Palk*]: On hearing the sad news about HM Queen, I, like many others up and down the country, spent the evening putting muffles on the bells. We rang the back eight half muffled at 12 noon the following day as per the protocol. We ended this ringing by fading rounds (dropping out each bell one by one) leaving Simon Robinson to toll the tenor 96 times. Instead of cancelling our practice that evening, I decided that continuing to ring, but with a different 'sound' would be better than complete silence, so we rang the minor six (bells four to nine) half muffled for an hour. Then, it was muffles off, ready to ring all ten bells open the following day for the Proclamation.



For all ringing after this date: the following Friday, Sunday and the day of the funeral, we rang the minor six fully muffled, apart from the tenor on one stroke, which produced a very haunting sound! A big thank you to everyone who took part.

**MONKSILVER** [Joyce Bates]: Two of the Monksilver ringers, myself and Bryony Gray, rang at Sampford Brett on the morning following the announcement of the Queen's death. Bryony, Tina Coggan and Jacob Murphy (a new ringer) and I also rang at Sampford Brett before the funeral on Monday 19 September. At 1030 we returned to Monksilver church where, together, the four of us took it in turns to chime the tenor bell 96 times.

**OLD CLEEVE** [John West] Day of the Queen's death: Linda Wear, Jeanne Webb and Tim Webb rang the front three bells for 10 minutes and then Linda rang the tenor with the back stroke muffled 96 times. This was the first time that Jeanne had rung for 17 years. Queen's Funeral: Bob Foyle, Bruce Freeman and John West rang the front three bells half muffled for 20 minutes and then each rang the half muffled tenor for 10 minutes leading up to 1100.

**John West** [see photo on right] recalls 'at the age of 14 I rang for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Phillip Mountbatten in 1947. I also rang for the funeral of King George VI in 1952. Those were the days when we seemed to have many more ringers, at Danbury, in Essex, where I rang. We had 6 bells and 15 ringers.'



**SAMPFORD BRETT** [Jan Swan]: on 9 September, to mark the Queen's death, we had general ringing on half-muffled bells with the tenor open. This included tolling 96 times, rounds & call changes, 120 St Martins Doubles and 40 Plain Bob Doubles. The ringers were: Jan Swan, Martin Blazey, Derek R Smith, Mark Philipson, Jane Grellier, Andrew Harrison, Bryony Gray, Joyce Bates. Guy Morgan wishes to be associated with this and would have rung had he been fit enough. On 19 September, prior to the Queen's funeral, again we had general ringing on half-muffled bells with the tenor open. This included rounds, Queens and tolling 96 times. The ringers were: Jan Swan, Mark Philipson, Robert Yandle, Derek Smith, Bryony Gray, Tina Coggan, Joyce Bates, Elizabeth Crabb, Julian Russell, Guy Morgan, Steffi Penny, Jacob Murphy, Trudy Dale and Colin Dale.

**TIMBERSCOMBE** [Elisabeth Powls]: We cancelled our practice on Thursday 8 September and Kate and I clambered around the 6 lower bells to put on our muffles after I had checked how to put them on via YouTube! On 9 September we had 8 ringers, so we could have rung all 8 but I hadn't envisaged having enough ringers, as we had Bruce Oakley to help us out. We rang half muffled to Queens and back, appropriate I thought, tolled the tenor for 20 minutes and then all of us again making up the required hour. We rang again on Sunday 11 September without muffles for the accession of Charles on 6 bells to Kings this time! When we finished the flag was lowered to half-mast. Before the

actual funeral we had a wedding to celebrate. I think the bride will remember that her bells were rung half muffled. Realising that we would have 8 on the day of the funeral, Kate and I muffled the top 2 bells hanging onto beams as these two are above the 6 with no floor between. Health and safety check, don't fall down! Again, we rang to Queens and tolled the tenor finishing in time to get back for the televised funeral. What a roller coaster for Alan Hines, our American ringer. He arrived in time to ring for the jubilee and left just after the funeral ring. [Alan is on the right in the photo.]



**WEST QUANTOXSHED** [Mark Philipson]: 9 September: the tenor was tolled 96 times and then 696 changes were rung in the following methods/principle: 120 St Martins, 120 Stedman, 360 Grandsire. The ringers were: 1 Jane Grellier 2 Jan Swan 3 Mark Philipson (C) 4 Derek R Smith 5 Martin Blazey (C) 6 Bryony Gray. On 19 September: Mark tolled the tenor 96 times prior to the Queen's funeral. In the evening of funeral day, a quarter peal of 1260 doubles (7 methods) was rung half muffled by 1 Bryony Gray 2 Sara Coward 3 Jan Swan 4 Mark Philipson (C) 5 Derek R Smith

6 Andy Winter. Most methods: 3. Martin Blazey would like to be associated with this as he was due to ring before contracting COVID. Thank you Sara for stepping in at short notice.

**WINSFORD:** We know the bells were rung fully muffled, but have no other details.

**WIVELISCOMBE** [Martin Valuks]: On 9 September the half muffled bells of St. Andrew's church were rung at midday to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Along with many other churches across the country Wiveliscombe's ringers wanted to mark this occasion.

*Here is a picture on the right of the Wivy band.*



**FINALLY**, I'm sure we all had lots of appreciative messages from our church congregations and local people. Here is one example of a message sent from the Churchwarden to a Tower captain: *'Could you forward on my personal thanks to your bell ringers for today's funeral day ringing. I was up on Grabbist Hill when you started and can assure you it was an incredibly moving sound. We have been rewarded by your ringing skills at this difficult time.'*

## **Other news from towers around the Branch**

### **Margo Long (Castle)**

We were very sorry to hear that Margo had died on 1 October. Margo was a long serving and loyal member of the Dunster band. She was a Lay Reader and took several services for us at Branch meetings. She was also a regular attendee at Carhampton practices and used to enjoy joining us in the pub after practice!



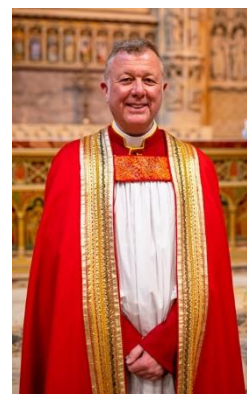
*Maureen Hawkins writes:* Margaret Long came to West Somerset from Birmingham many years ago and lived with her mother. After her mother's death, she moved to Blue Anchor and remained there ever since. Whilst at work one day, Margo approached me and asked about bell ringing. I invited her to come to a Dunster practice and that was the start of her long, loyal service to Dunster Church. Margo was the name chosen by her to save confusion with another Margaret in the tower. Later Margo became a Lay Reader and took many of our services at Branch meetings and ringing-related events. In her later years, after retirement, Margo was married at Carhampton Church to Peter Castle, a friend from childhood. Our

sympathy goes to him. Margo was always a cheerful person in the tower and well liked. RIP

### **News from Minehead** [Andrew Palk]

We held a small party after our practice on Friday 30 September to say a fond farewell to Simon Robinson, as he leaves us to take up a new position as Interim Dean of Truro Cathedral. Simon learnt to ring soon after becoming our vicar about six years ago. He has been instrumental in making sure the recent works on our bells got off the ground, particularly dealing with the politics that unfortunately became necessary with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). I understand that he has already had a 'go' at the Cathedral.

*Here's a photo of Simon in his splendid new robes.*



### **Three level fivers**



Some of us were pleased to be able to ring for Charis Armstrong's wedding at Brushford on 24 September. Charis learnt to ring at Sampford Brett and was our first Branch member to achieve Level 5 in the Learning the Ropes Scheme. After the wedding, Charis decided to come back to ringing and she came along to the Sampford Brett practice on 29 September. Our other two Level 5-ers were also there so it was a good photo opportunity! Here's a picture of them (left to right): Charis Armstrong, Bryony Gray and Jane Grellier.

## Carhampton tower outing

Our tower outing took place on 17 October when we visited three Devon towers – St Paul’s Tiverton, which has a lovely, easy-going ring of six, Cadbury and Bickleigh. The towers were recommended by Tom Mitchell and we were very glad that he and Chris were able to join us for the day. Sadly the key holder didn’t show up at Cadbury so the band entertained themselves by walking through plain hunt in the churchyard! We enjoyed the lovely countryside, beautiful weather, good company and a leisurely pub lunch. And the ringing was pretty good too. Here are a couple of photos at Bickleigh.



## No reports or news from your tower??

If there is no report of your special ringing or any other news from your tower, it means that no-one from your band replied to my email (sent via the secretary who holds the mailing list). If you have any news to share, please send it to me at [DunsterBranch.News@bath-wells.org](mailto:DunsterBranch.News@bath-wells.org) for inclusion in the next branch newsletter. This will probably be in March 2023. [Susan Mew, editor]

## Other news and updates



Not a headline you expect to see in a Dunster Branch newsletter! BUT – 1000+ Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies are descending on Minehead for this Jamboree and the organisers have asked for bellringing to feature as one of the activities. What an amazing opportunity to promote ringing to young people! The ringing is being organised by CCCBR and ART but the Bath and Wells Association, and in particular the Dunster Branch, have been asked to provide helpers.

At the moment it looks like there will be three activity sessions (Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning) with four activities on offer at each session. In one of the indoor arenas there will be a mobile belfry (e.g. the Charnborough ring which has 8 bells), handbells, e-bells and large screens showing ringing videos. If the weather is kind there will be a second mobile belfry outside.

If you are interested in helping with this major event, please let me know ([janswan2000@gmail.com](mailto:janswan2000@gmail.com); 01984 633787); I won’t take your interest as a definite commitment at this stage! We’re going to need helpers for the three activity sessions and probably also for setting up on Friday and taking down Sunday afternoon. Helpers on the mobile belfries should preferably have some previous experience of ringing them but there will be lots of other jobs to do too. And my last request: please can any members involved with scouting or guiding identify yourselves? You have a special role in all of this!

*Jan Swan, Dunster Branch Education Officer*

## Branch 8 bell practices

These are taking place on the second Thursday of the month and are open to anyone interested in gaining more experience in ringing on eight bells and who can plain hunt on five bells or more. The first practice took place at Old Cleeve in October and was well attended. The next practice is on 10 November and will be at Wiveliscombe, starting at 1930. We aim to be at a different 8-bell tower each month, so check with Mark Philipson, ringing master, if you don’t know where to go!



## Dunster Branch training events

**Training courses** on kaleidoscope ringing (making places and dodging), Plain Bob Doubles and call changes have been held during the last few weeks. Still to come this autumn we have:

- Plain Hunt on 19 November, 1000 – 1200 at Sampford Brett
- Kaleidoscope ringing on 26 November, 1400-1600 at Minehead.

Please let Jan Swan know if you'd like to reserve a place.

**Improvers' practices** continue on Wednesday mornings, 1030 – 1200. Anyone who can handle a bell without assistance is very welcome. Venues will be:

2 Nov: Huish Champflower	23 Nov: Old Cleeve
9 Nov: Exford	30 Nov: Bicknoller
16 Nov: Brompton Regis	7 Dec: Winsford



*Rik Peckham was presented with his Learning the Ropes Level 2 certificate at the AGM*

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding those involved in bell ringing activities from abuse or allegations of abuse is crucial, whether that is young people or adults. **It is the responsibility of all members** to ensure that our towers and ringing activities are safe for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Child means any person aged under 18 years. Vulnerable Adult means any person aged over 18 years who is, or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is, or may be unable to take care of or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Our Association is committed to ensuring that our procedures comply with the safeguarding guidelines issued by the CCCBR, the Dioceses, and legal requirements. **Individual towers and members must ensure they are aware of and compliant with these guidelines, policies and requirements.** The Safeguarding page on the B&WDACR website has recently been updated. There you can find further advice and links to the current guidance, go to <http://bath-wells.org/safeguarding.php> You can also consult our Association Safeguarding Officer, Steffi Penny, at [safeguarding.bathandwells@gmail.com](mailto:safeguarding.bathandwells@gmail.com)

## Association Annual Reports

Copies of the 2021/22 Reports were collected at the AGM, but not everyone taking copies signed the list to say they had done so. So we're not sure which towers have received reports and which have not! Please let Mike Dewar [DunsterBranch.Secretary@bath-wells.org](mailto:DunsterBranch.Secretary@bath-wells.org) know if you haven't yet got any reports and we will work out how to get some to you. So far, we do know that the following have got reports: Carhampton, Crowcombe, Dunster, Minehead, Porlock, St Decumans, Sampford Brett, Timberscombe and W. Quantoxhead. If your tower is not listed here, please contact Mike Dewar as soon as possible.

## Association training events

The Association Education Officer, Jill Hansford, is planning some training for those needing help with teaching new people, increasing their confidence in doing so or helping to organise their tower or run practices. All tower contacts should have received a message from Jill to pass on to members of their band. If you reply directly to Jill at [jillhansford1@btinternet.com](mailto:jillhansford1@btinternet.com), please make sure you copy in our Branch Education Officer, Jan Swan. Jan says:

*Would you like some guided practice on teaching people to ring? If so – Jill Hansford is running a session on 26 November from 2-5pm, which could be just for you. It will be equally suitable for those who have attended an ART Module 1 course and those who haven't. Venue to be confirmed, depending on attendees and where they are travelling from.*

*Also on 3 December from 2-5pm she is holding a session for people who have been thrown into running or helping to run the ringing at their tower. Again, venue to be confirmed, depending on attendees.*

*Please let Jan Swan know if you're interested in either session or would like to find out more about them.*  
[DunsterBranch.EducationOfficer@bath-wells.org](mailto:DunsterBranch.EducationOfficer@bath-wells.org)

## 70 years on.....

*An item from Guy Morgan (Sampford Brett)*

On Tuesday 9 August I was invited to join the Exmoor Benefice band for practice at St Mary's, Luxborough. 'So what' you might say, 'that's nothing special, it's just another local tower'. However, as you might guess, there was more to it than that.



I had last rung at Luxborough nearly 60 years ago and started my ringing career there ten years before that! My parents bought Luxborough Stores and Post Office in 1946 and I lived there until I moved away in 1962. My father, Frank Morgan MBE, had learned to ring at Bitton in North Somerset when he was a lad and naturally began to ring at St Mary's soon after he moved to Luxborough and also became a Church warden. I found myself being taught to chime the treble as a five minute bell when I was about eight years old, hence the '70 years on...' title. I definitely wasn't ringing full circle on Coronation Day in 1953, as I've recently found a photograph proving that I spent most of the day entirely covered in a crepe paper Yeoman of the Guard suit! I seem to recall that it rained and when I was cut out of the suit at the end of the day my white underwear had been stained a delicate shade of pink!

I must have graduated to full circle ringing before I was ten, taught by my father and the tower captain Arthur Tarr, as, in 1955, I went to Ilminster Grammar School as a boarder. I was introduced to Edna Grabham, of EGMET fame, by an uncle of hers (Mr Barfield) who lived in Churchtown and, as a result, got permission from the headmaster to attend practice on Tuesday evenings and to ring for Sunday services. I remember her as something of a dragon in the tower but a kind lady at other times. She often invited me to Sunday lunch with her family at Staple Fitzpaine and took me on tower grabs around the area. If I'm honest, I left Ilminster having only progressed as far as plain courses of Grandsire Triples but with an enduring understanding of the need to listen as much as look when ringing. I notice that the ART Learning the Ropes scheme (a great innovation) now suggests an exercise for learners whereby they ring facing out of the circle so that they have to listen to improve their striking. Edna Grabham had me doing that sixty five years ago!

Looking back, ringing at Luxborough was 'interesting' to say the least, though I wasn't aware of it at the time. Arthur Tarr always rang the treble. He was nicknamed Robin for the very good reason that he was a small birdlike figure with a distinctive ringing style which included a bob of his body on every hand-stroke. I generally rang the two when I was at home. We rang rounds and call changes with the changes called from a board attached to the door at the back of the ringing chamber. That needs a word of explanation. On the board a course of plain hunt minimus with the tenor covering was written out with the changes numbered from 1 to 24. Arthur simply called out the next number and everyone looked at the board and rang after the bell indicated. As far as I remember the system worked quite well! Sadly the board is no longer in the tower, however, there is a very fine plaque on the wall commemorating Arthur Tarr and his immense contribution to the church over many years. I recently found a picture of the Luxborough ringers taken, I think, sometime in the late 1950s, including my father but not me, so I assume that I took the photograph.



After I left school my ringing career stalled for twenty years or so, was revived in South Wales and then paused again in the late 1970s until I arrived back in West Somerset a few years ago and was induced to return to the tower but that's another story!

*Luxborough ringers in the 1950s. From left to right W? Ford, Frank Morgan, Arthur Tarr, Steve Chapman, Charlie Bowdler*

## ***Diary dates***

All members are welcome at our **branch practices** which generally take place on the first Saturday of the month. We ring anything that the members present would like to ring. This ranges from rounds and call changes to various methods. The final two practices in 2022 are:

Saturday 5 November 1500 - 1700: Branch practice at St Decuman's

Saturday 3 December 1500 - 1700: Branch practice at Minehead

The fixture list for 2023 will be confirmed soon.

Our **8-bell practices** continue on the second Thursday of the month, from 1930 to 2100. The next practice is on Thursday 10 November and will be at Wiveliscombe.

Our next **social event** will be on

Saturday 19 March 2023: Branch Dinner at Oake Manor Golf Club

***All members are very welcome at all our Branch events. Please encourage other members of your bands to come along too!***

## **How to contact the Dunster Branch**

*Chair:* Chris Mitchell

*Secretary:* Mike Dewar

*Ringing Master:* Mark Philipson

*Education Officer:* Jan Swan

*Bell maintenance contact:* Chris Mitchell

*Vice Chair:* Martin Blazey

*Treasurer:* Diana Radford

*Assistant Ringing Master:* Jane Grellier

*Newsletter Editor:* Susan Mew

*General Committee representative:* Mike Dewar

Phone numbers and email addresses for all branch officers are listed on the back of your fixture list.

Details can also be found in the B&WDACR Annual Report and on the website: <http://bath-wells.org/>

And don't forget you can follow us on Twitter: **@WSomersetBells** and Facebook: **Dunster Branch Bellringers**

***And finally, please send me your news and updates for the next Branch Newsletter, probably out in March 2023. Don't wait to be asked!!***

*Susan Mew, Branch Newsletter Editor*

[DunsterBranch.News@bath-wells.org](mailto:DunsterBranch.News@bath-wells.org)