



BATH & WELLS DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION TAUNTON BRANCH NEWSLETTER

May 2015

Number 36

Branch News

Branch Outing on May 9th attracted a record number of entrants. The 38 runners and riders for



both the Junior Novice Stakes, the Pensioners Hurdles and the Experts Triples required a degree of



marshaling by our Clerk of the Course, Jill, never required or seen before. However, leaving the paddock at 8am prompt meant that one rider was at risk of being left at the starting gate at this early stage. The lead was taken at the start by Berry's and the steady pace achieved from early on the flat meant that the field reached the first fence, St Peter's at Wincanton, in fine style

if not a little earlier than anticipated; indeed, an unprecedented lot earlier. There were no fallers on the course here, though some landed uncomfortably as might be expected of the less experienced riders in unfamiliar surroundings. A plain hunt or two struggled over rough ground, Grandsire went well but Lincoln surprise minor required much use of the whip. Moving on round the second turn, the field reached St Michael at Mere in fine form with good going underfoot. Plain Bob triples took an early lead at this point, then Grandsire triples came through strongly, and Yorkshire major, though being in touching distance, never quite achieved the pace expected.

In the jockey's enclosure at Gillingham, the Phoenix proved a delightful break and a restorative for most. Some foreswore the custom having brought their own hay and oats, grazing in the spring sunshine afield. From the off, at Gillingham St Mary's for the Chairman's handicap at 3pm, the course was firm to good going; Call Changes at 1 to 4 on with 2 in the lead troubled no-one but lost out to Cambridge major on this occasion, which came through to win by a short head over an insecure Robert the Major. The final event of the day, the Milborne Port St John selling plate was a truly



memorable occasion, inspired by the venue, seen here. All those involved completed the course in grand style, though there were minor hiccups along the way, with a number tiring as they entered the final straight. Steadman started strongly and while faltering at the first hurdle recovered a second wind to finish well. The difficulties facing this field proved to be mostly at the 7th and 8th where several stumbled at setting. Running out a clear winner here by several lengths was "Tippling Philosopher" providing plentiful teas and refreshments, but media frenzy, as seen page one above, delayed the final departure before the runners were finally corralled back in their horsebox for home.

The four young ringers in the group were generously supported by the Edna Grabham Memorial Trust.



Grateful thanks go to the present Trustees and in memoriam to Edna herself. This is precisely the use of the

fund that she so specifically stated in her founding bequest and it is certain too that she would have taken immense pleasure at seeing the benefits and rewards that were apparent in this instance, as all who were present could see. Click on this hyperlink to go straight to the EGMET website; www.treblesgoing.org.uk/index.html Well worth a visit.

If you believe that you may have an occasion in which the Trust can help with support, then visit the EGMET website as here for full details and contacts. If you don't ask then you'll never know.

In Memoriam It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the recent passing of Paul Williamson of Ash Priors and previously long serving Tower Captain of Staplegrove. His funeral will take place at Ash Priors on Monday 18th May at 1.30pm. Ringing by an invited band will take place before the service, with guests, who wish to show their respects in ringing, having an opportunity following the service. A full appreciation and tribute will follow in Newsletter in June.

Branch Ringing at Wells Cathedral Every year we have the opportunity to ring for Evensong at our Diocesan home, the Cathedral Church of St Andrew, Wells. As usual our branch turn comes



round on the second Sunday in June, being this year **Sunday June 14th**. The event will follow the customary format; arrival at the tower door at the public, south, entrance to the Cathedral next to the glass doors, before 1.30pm. After this the tower entrance door has to be closed to avoid the mischance of inadvertent, or intentional, public access. Ringing will commence around 1.45pm for the Service, which itself begins at 3.00pm. As long as you can ring rounds and call changes reasonably

confidently then this is an opportunity not to be missed. To ensure you will be counted amongst those attending and not locked out, please contact Jill, well beforehand, on (01823) 433190 or by e-mail at TauntonBranch.RingingMaster@bath-wells.org

In addition to the ringing experience, the day provides the opportunity to enjoy Wells on a leisurely Sunday either before or after ringing, or both. A pleasing arrangement is to take a picnic to enjoy on the green beforehand, assuming the summer sun will be shining.

St Mary's Appeal

What we expect to be the last peals rung on the current bells took place in February (a band of College Youths whose striking, as one might expect, was outstanding as they rang Bristol Surprise Maximus) and April (a band ringing Stedman Cinques for the Bath and Wells Association). There has not been any great clamour to ring last peals at St Mary's. Their reputation as a difficult and unrewarding ring goes before them!

Whilst the peals were being rung, we took the opportunity to measure and record decibel readings at various locations in the centre of Taunton and nearby residential and business areas. Further readings will be taken when the new bells are fitted to assist with adjusting the sound control. The various readings will also enable a factual response to any adverse comments about sound levels after the new bells are fitted!

Fund-raising is still the main focus of everyone's attention. We are delighted that with two new sponsors coming forward, all but three change ringing bells and one chime bell are now sponsored. This, together with receipt of another grant, brings funds raised up to the two thirds mark.

One of the remaining unsponsored bells is being advertised as 'The Somerset Bell'. It will be cast with the Somerset Coat of Arms and motto "Somorset Ealle", meaning "All the people of Somerset",

Rosemary Tuhey



which seems very fitting, since we hope people will be attracted to put a couple of pounds in the kitty for the opportunity to sign a commemorative book and be a part of posterity!

Having had much practice, Tower Open days run like a well-oiled machine and sometimes bring along some interesting visitors. The most recent included the great-great niece of the donor of the present treble bell, two people from Australia clutching census records showing a grandmother recorded as a boarder living in the parish of St Mary's in the late 1800's and the donor of the 5th bell in the new ring.

We continue to be very grateful to all the ringers from other towers who help out with our fund-raising whether it be donations in lieu of wedding fees and helping out on Open Days to providing a venue for a PR photo shoot with Taunton Rotary who, thanks to Rachel Davies, have chosen the Bells of St Mary's as one of their charities this year.

Branch Practice Donations

Tom Harris



In the absence of further general comment on this subject and rather than leave it 'blowing in the wind', I hazard a further suggestion which members may care to consider, and I even venture to suggest adopting as a standard future policy. I do believe that it covers most eventualities but, clearly, may fly in the face of some towers current custom. I put it forward only as a suggestion, which, I believe, still allows individuals to make their own choice as the occasion dictates. These thoughts only apply to our own branch activities and I strongly appeal to any ringer visiting any tower elsewhere outside of our branch, either within or without our Diocese, to proffer just a small donation, if nothing else, as a mark of respect and thanks for a nice evening.

Some branch towers actively discourage donations; others yearn in hope. I would suggest that any formal event, defined by being listed in the branch diary, should attract the, by any of today's standards, small donation of £1 per ringer, regardless of whether they feel they are teaching or learning. That creates a level playing field and seems to me both fair and just. We are all teaching and learning, just at different levels and to attempt to discriminate on any grounds here, I submit, is both unfair and miserly.

At the other end of the scale, it is my opinion that, in order to encourage inter-tower practice ringing, no-one should expect, or be expected, to pay anything when visiting a neighbouring tower, either to help or to learn. Indeed, I would go so far as to discourage payment at these sessions as being counter productive and dissuasive, as it is likely to put off both the curious, the interested and the expert. We all want more ringers at our weekly sessions. This, under a payment scenario, if one goes to 2 or 3 other towers each week, either learning or helping, means that the bank balance is, on



an annual basis, going to be hit by a cricket score. I am the first to embrace the principle of altruism but my personal view is that this would be taking the whole matter one step too far; with one exception. Where it is known that a particular tower is actively fund-raising for a specific cause, not just wear and tear on ropes, which, lets be honest, individually is absolutely minimal over the lifetime of a rope, then I would support a small donation to that end in this case.

The other scenario to be considered is the 'Training Course'. There are so many of these on offer now as to be justifiably considered in their own right. Both students and helpers gain such a lot from these events that there can be no question that all should contribute generously, for the benefit gained from the course and also towards the cost and generosity of the refreshments where provided. As to the level of contribution, this comes down to one's own conscience. I have witnessed from 50p to £5!

Finally, I would be interested, on behalf of Newsletter readers, to know what the general custom is now across the branch when hosting visiting ringers? My impression is that it is still one of those ringing curiosities where a state of universal random applies. I have rung at towers within the last year or so, where each visitor gives £1, where the group pays on the basis of £1 or £2 per rope, or where a fixed fee, say £20, applies regardless of how many may be ringing. What do you do or expect? Responses and comments please to me, as below, before June 10th, for inclusion in the next edition.

Training Programme

Nicola Welch



A good time was had by all the Churchstanton ringers who attended the course of instruction offered by Pearl over the last three weeks. This culminated with a morning spent ringing at both Churchstanton and Clayhidon with a leisurely lunch taken at The Half Moon. Many thanks to Pearl and Annie for their time and commitment to help us all improve our skills.

This item by Nicola reflects upon a recent weekly series of morning sessions run specifically for a 'tower group', the aim being to point the way to cohesion and progress both for the group and individually. Many bands find themselves

in the "struggling" band category, being a situation where, without an experienced ringer amongst the group and little or no teaching experience available, the band lacks direction and expertise to progress beyond the stage of basic fumbling around.

The aim of this short-term, somewhat experimental, initiative is to inject a stimulus into the, or any, group which will point the way to proper and logical ringing progress and which the group will use as an example and experience to take forward themselves. It is not intended to be either a long-term or continuing programme nor should it be regarded as a 'quick-fix'.

Following the positive outcome of this initiative it is possible that in certain circumstances it could be repeated. Should you or your band be in a position to consider this then the first consideration is, 'Are your band prepared to commit to 3 once weekly morning sessions'? Without a full, or virtually full, band commitment the idea is not viable. The next step after is to make personal contact with Pearl, our Education Officer, in the usual way, either on (01823) 412804 or by e-mail at TauntonBranch.EducationOfficer@bath-wells.org

There have been so many excellent courses held over the last year. Some learners have progressed from basic handling through raising and lowering to simple method, others, of a more leisurely persuasion, have simply consolidated their rounds and call changes. In small numbers we have even included out-of-branch members on courses, when space has allowed. In every case much progress has ensued and most have subsequently been able to contribute by very significantly enhancing their own tower ringing. Every step forward, however slight, brings great rewards both for the individual and no less to the home band for service ringing.

Association News

The ties with the Association badge mentioned by Roy Rice at the AGM are now available.

The cost is £10 each and they can be ordered via Jade Longmoor, Banwell Tower Secretary, who, on contact, will confirm payment options. Please use e-mail to Banwell@bath-wells.org



A Purdue Mystery

A brilliantly alert family member of an eminent ringer of the Ilchester Branch recently spotted an item up for auction in Crewkerne. The story unfolds, *"My daughter has been to Lawrence's Auction rooms this morning and says that there is an engraved brass plaque (Lot 121) in tomorrow's sale. It records the gift of "these bells" in 1903 by Mary Purdoe or Purdue. She is concerned that it might have been stolen from a church, so I thought it would be worth mentioning to you all in case it is from your church. Much more likely that it's from a redundant church that's been turned into a house I think, but just in case I thought I'd mention it."* Purdue is a famous Somerset bell-founding name of the 17th C.

It becomes even more intriguing a couple of days later. *"I thought that members would like to know that Lot 121 at Lawrence's, Crewkerne, (the brass plaque recording the gift of bells from Mary Purdue) sold for £230. We didn't solve the mystery of where it came from, but somebody must have thought it was quite special!"*

Finally, a further contact with the auctioneers revealed that it actually sold for £18, so confusion reigns. Maybe it'll turn up in a car boot sale in due course, so if anyone spots it, do grab it for a fiver for the B&WDACR archive resources.

Bi-Monthly Quiz



Last month was back to basics, with our original Newsletter Quiz format. "Where is this bell to be found and what is its background?"

As usual, a microcosmic first and only prize is available to the first correct, or in the event approximately correct, reply and background story received in the Editorial suite of the Newsletter Office complex by the closing date.

The ship is SMS Derfflinger, a WW1 battlecruiser of the German navy. After many naval engagements she survived the war, but on the outcome of the armistice she was taken with others of the German fleet to Scapa Flow and scuttled in 1919. The wreck was raised in 1939 and broken up at Faslane naval dockyard in 1948. The recovered and preserved bell was presented to the German Federal Navy in 1965 then returned to Scotland and now hangs outside the Church of St Michael, Eirisgeidh, Outer Hebrides. The first and only prize this month has not been won, so the prize rolls over to the next Quiz. By that time it may actually have reached a visible size within the wavelength of natural light.



If you have an item of interest, or news of events in your area or tower, then please send me details and I will do my best to include it in the next edition, which it is aimed to publish around 15th June.

Where there may be items containing contentious views and opinions, it must be clearly understood that these do not necessarily reflect the policy or editorial opinion of the Newsletter or those of the Taunton Branch executive committee.

It will be extremely helpful if Tower Captains will continue to print off one copy for their tower notice board and bring it to the attention of all their ringers.

Any ringer who discovers that they aren't receiving this by e-mail can do so simply by notifying me of their e-address, which will be held totally confidentially.

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