

DUNSTER BRANCH Secretary's Report

The Dunster Branch has had another excellent year with significant achievements by many of our ringers. Ringing has been most ably led by our ringing masters, Martin Blazey and Peter Pay, and we have benefited from an extensive education programme led by Andrew Palk. Our monthly branch practices have generally been well attended with the named methods achieved each time. We have also enjoyed monthly advanced 6 and 8 bell practices and a range of themed training sessions and have welcomed over 20 new members.

At the AGM in October 2008, two of our key officers stood down. Joan Hopwood retired after three years of conscientious and efficient work as our secretary. Susan Mew stood down as Chairman after seven years of outstanding leadership. We are indebted to both for their commitment to the Branch and are very grateful that they continue to provide invaluable support. We welcomed Mike Ellicott as our new chairman and Audrey Westall as secretary.

The AGM service was taken by Ian Billinge who sadly passed away in March. Ian was a key player in the refurbishment of Crowcombe's bells earlier in 2008 and was tower captain as well as a previous deputy chairman of Dunster Branch. We were also sad to lose Gerald Stowell of Old Cleeve during this past year.

Jan Swan of Sampford Brett was presented with our Achiever of the Year award, and Natalie Sharp from Exford was presented with an award for her achievement as a young ringer.

With a very welcome increase in the number of young ringers in our Branch, Susan Mew instigated a programme of young ringers' events that have included outings to various local towers, training sessions and quizzes. These events have provided a great opportunity for our young ringers to meet each other and to realise that they are not the only ringers under 50!

A completely new ring of eight bells has been installed at Tolland; we believe they are the lightest ring of tower bells in the country (tenor 1 cwt 3 qtr 24 lbs; treble 3 qtr 7 lbs). Congratulations to Rev'd Margaret Armstrong for bringing another unringable tower back into action.

In July we had a very successful branch outing to the Mendips. Our thanks go to Martin and Liz Blazey for their meticulous organisation and for the quiz that kept us occupied on the coach.

Our annual dinner took place in March at Oake Manor Golf Club and was attended by over 80 people. The food was first-rate and we enjoyed home-grown entertainment provided by several of our towers. Our annual skittles match took place at the Blue Anchor Inn and was won by the Dunster team (again!).

Overall the Branch has had a successful and enjoyable year and we thank everyone who has supported and helped organise our various activities.

Jan Swan