

CHEW BRANCH

Our year started with the Quiz night which raised £300 for the Bell Fund, then early in 2010 we held our Quarter Peal fortnight which was very well supported, with excellent efforts from all participants resulting in 26 quarters, in 21 of the 33 towers in the branch, with many firsts in methods or as conductor. Congratulations to all.

It was a lovely afternoon for the 6-bell striking competition at Butcombe where we ate cake in the sunshine and listened; teams from Backwell and Easton-in-Gordano were worthy winners who went on to represent the branch at the final in Bath branch, with Backwell taking third place overall. Sadly, with too many competing interests, Chew branch could not find enough available ringers to field a team for the 8-bell striking competition this year, but we were able to raise a band to ring a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples for a Wells Cathedral evensong service in October.

There was great support for the June mini-outing to towers in Axbridge branch in June, on another brilliantly warm, sunny day and whether hiking over the hill from Winscombe to Compton Bishop and on to Axbridge, or pedalling the long way around, we enjoyed the fabulous views and good company. With up to 30 ringers taking part the ringing rooms were encouragingly crowded. Thanks to the locals who let us in, and who joined us. Attendances at other monthly branch meetings and at Saturday evening practices have been variable. We appreciate the many other demands, besides ringing, for our free time, but poor turnouts are disappointing for the organisers of events, so we will try holding fewer meetings in 2011 – it's a case of use it, or lose it, and we will reconsider the situation if demand increases.

At the end of the year branch membership totalled 246. The diocese mounted a ringing recruitment drive this year, and we hope that the significant efforts put in by many people in the branch will be rewarded by the attraction of new ringers. It is very early days yet to tell how successful the initiative has been, but some open towers attracted much local interest and we have over 20 new learners. For me the "Teach the Teachers to Teach" course held this year is being put into practice already.

On a final, sad note, we lost 2 longstanding members, (both HLMs) within 2 days of each other in November. John Brain of Backwell was a previous branch Chairman and Secretary, and a stalwart supporter of all ringing activities. Norman Yeo of Long Ashton died in his 104th year and had been ringing until aged 101. Both will be greatly missed.

Teresa Humphrey