

DUNSTER BRANCH

The Dunster Branch has had an excellent year with significant achievements by many of our ringers. At times the Officers have been stretched rather thin, but hopefully the cracks haven't shown too much: Audrey - we're really glad to see you back in action!

At our 2009 AGM Martin Blazey (Ringing Master), Peter Pay (Assistant Ringing Master) and Andrew Palk (Education/Training Officer) retired from office. All were thanked for their tireless work for the Branch. The meeting elected Jon Rose as Ringing Master, Jo Evans and Sue Atkins as joint Deputy Ringing Masters and Susan Mew as Education and Training Officer. Sue Atkins of Exford was presented with our Achiever of the Year award for her untiring support and encouragement for ringing at towers on Exmoor.

During the year we have welcomed 17 new members and remembered Dick Pearse who died in February. Dick was a ringer at Carhampton for more than 70 years and a member of the Association for over 60 years. With excellent forethought Susan Mew organised a peal to be rung at Carhampton on New Year's Eve to mark his 90th birthday – Dick was delighted as it was where he'd rung his first peal in 1948.

Ringing has been very ably led by Jon Rose, our ringing master, assisted by Jo Evans and Sue Atkins. Early in the year Susan Mew and Jon organised a survey to help focus the training programme for the year. Most towers asked for help for their newer ringers so this has been at the heart of the branch training programme which has been superbly organised and led by Susan. On the side she has also helped with secretarial duties, organised various outings and activities for our young ringers and produced two newsletters.

Our monthly branch practices have been variably attended but we have usually managed to ring the named methods. We were very pleased to have an excellent attendance at our August practice at Minehead where we were joined by several members of adjacent branches. We have also enjoyed monthly advanced 6 and 8 bell practices – with the 8 bell practice now taking place at Old Cleeve. We are grateful to Taunton members who help with the 8 bell practices and to Wiveliscombe for hosting it for several years.

We are delighted that Timberscombe has a new band of ringers thanks to Andrew Palk who helped the remnants of the old band to train several new recruits. Their target was to ring for harvest festival with an all-Timberscombe band, which they achieved confidently.

Refurbishment or repairs have taken place at 3 towers during the year. Porlock bells have been refurbished and retuned; the structure of Minehead tower has been repaired; and Old Cleeve has a new ringing gallery that has transformed ringing there.

In July we had a very successful branch outing to North Devon with ringing at Crediton, North Tawton, Chagford, Bovey Tracey and Widecombe in the Moor and a pub meal to round off the day. It came as a surprise to most of us that the ringing included 2 weddings.

In September we hosted the Association 8-bell striking competition at Old Cleeve. The test piece was Single Oxford Bob Triples, and there was an excellent entry of 11 teams representing all except one of the Association branches. We are very grateful to Don Lawson from North Devon for judging and to Rev'd Tim Hawkings, Master of the Association, for presenting the Len Derrick trophy to the winning team from Axbridge. This is the first competition that Dunster has entered for many years and our team came a creditable 6th, which reflects the hard practice that everyone put in and Andrew Palk's unfailing encouragement.

Social events have been particularly well supported. Over 70 people attended the branch dinner at Oake Manor Golf Club in March and enjoyed the food, drinks and comfortable surroundings. As usual, the home-grown entertainment was excellent, and ably compèred by Dennis Brandrick.

Our annual skittles match took place at the Blue Anchor Inn in September and was won by Timberscombe. With over 80 people attending the arrangements were somewhat chaotic and the food disappointingly sparse but it was nevertheless an enjoyable evening.

In summary - Dunster Branch has had a successful and enjoyable year and we thank everyone who has supported and helped organise our various activities.

Jan Swan