

DUNSTER BRANCH

At the beginning of the Branch's ringing year (the AGM in October 2012) a presentation was made to Sue Atkins, in recognition of her considerable contribution to the running of the branch as Assistant Ringing Master, as she stood down from the post. Tom Mitchell was elected in her place and Andrew Bawden was elected to the new post of Assistant Education and Training Officer. The composition of the rest of the committee remained the same, under the chairmanship of Joan Hopwood.

This year the award of Achiever of the Year was made to Julie Oliver (Dunster) who had to relearn to ring "wrong-handed" following problems with her right hand. Maureen Hawkins (Dunster) was presented with a certificate to commemorate her 60 years membership of the branch.

Happily the branch has not had to record the death of any of its members during the year.

Seven new members were elected - a welcome, albeit modest, increase over the previous year's four.

Recruitment remains a concern and to that end the branch once again took a stand at the Dunster Show in August, to raise awareness of ringing and hopefully recruit new ringers. Although the stand - and in particular the Saxilby bell, once more kindly loaned by the Taunton branch - was busy all day, with a lot of interest shown, it is not yet clear whether any potential new members have been recruited. The decision will be taken next year whether to repeat this enjoyable but demanding exercise.

The branch's main activity has once again been the two programmes of monthly practices and training sessions. There have, however, been a number of changes:

Of the three monthly practices - organised by the Ringing Master, Jon Rose - the Saturday practice has continued as before, with a different venue and specified method each month. Attendance has in general been satisfactory. The 6-Bell practice, however, has been suspended, due to poor attendance figures. Part of the reason for this is thought to be that individual towers are now achieving more in their own practices, making the need for an additional practice unnecessary. The 8-bell practice has had better attendance figures and continues, although now with a change of venue two or three times a year to make it easier for members in different parts of the branch to attend.

The branch has once again run a full programme of training sessions, organised by the Education and Training Officer, Susan Mew. Most have been held at Minehead, where the use of the simulator has allowed extended sessions to be held, and the take-up of the pre-booked places has generally been excellent.

Three of the branch's towers have had significant work carried out on their bells during the year: Timberscombe have had their ring of eight overhauled and re-hung and Bicknoller have added a sixth bell to their ring of five. There was a contribution in each case from the Association Bell Fund, but the majority of the funding was raised by a great deal of hard work by the ringers of the towers concerned. Dulverton had new headstocks, wheels and clappers fitted, but was unable to obtain a grant from the Bell Fund.

The branch's young ringers have enjoyed a full programme of tower outings during the year. The number in the group remains small, however, and their programme has been helped by combining on a number of occasions with the Taunton Branch young ringers.

The branch outing, in July, was a tour of South Somerset, ringing at six towers: Yeovilton, Wincanton, Evercreech, Martock, Somerton and Huish Episcopi.

The branch's social activities - the branch dinner in March and the skittles match in September - were, as usual, well supported and remain a popular part of the branch's activities.

Financially the branch is solvent - but only just. The number of fund-raising events held - raffles etc. - has declined in recent years while the call on the branch's funds to support activities such as the training programme, the young ringers etc. has continued. This is a problem that the branch will need to address in the coming year.

Glenys Tonks