

TAUNTON BRANCH

The AGM was held at Taunton St James, and all the Officers were re-elected to serve another year. A very warm welcome to the 17 new members elected to the Taunton Branch this year; long may they continue their interest in ringing. Congratulations to Harriet Manning (15) and Tormey Slater (10) who were presented with the Ringer of the Year trophies. The Chairman presented long service certificates to Frank Morris (65 years), Mick Woolacott and Alan Lee (60 years), Pam Bellamy, Sandra Verrier, Alan Cooke, Robert Comins, Robert Cooke, Christopher Summers, Nigel Maggs and Rosemary Tuhey (40 years). Sadly we report the death of Jim Sargeant of Bradford on Tone.

Broomfield was the host tower for the 6 bell Branch Striking Competition in February, which has been renamed the Dugdale Striking Competition, as attribute to the late Jeremy Dugdale. Mrs Stella Dugdale, Rowena, Richard and Rupert Dugdale were welcome visitors to the meeting, and they presented the newly engraved trophies to: Langford Budville (method), Creech St Michael (call changes) and Bishops Lybeard (rounds).

Sherborne and the surrounding area was the venue for this year's Annual outing in May. It was well supported and enjoyed by all and our thanks to Martin and Tom for their excellent organisation. At the June meeting Birthday wishes were given to Dennis Whatmore who had celebrated his 90 years young in traditional style taking part in a quarter peal a few days before. The Up and Comers enjoyed their August outing to local 6 bell towers in the Ashill area.

The comprehensive programme of Training Courses continues, well attended and much appreciated by the newest recruit to the long standing ringer. Courses have covered basic handling up to doubles and minor methods, and our thanks go to Jill and Mike Hansford and Pearl Jeanes who give generously of their time, and to our growing band of helpers for their unstinting support. Our heartfelt thanks go to Hillfarrance tower who provide the majority venue but also to all towers for their welcome and excellent teas.

In June the St Mary's, Taunton band represented the Branch in the Association 6-bell Striking Competition, and in September two teams entered the 8 bell Striking Competition. Our Young Ringers mornings continue in school holidays, and we combine with Dunster Branch members. In September a combined team took part in the first Association Young Ringers Striking Competition. In October Association quarter peal fortnight was well supported and resulted in 20 quarter peals including many 'firsts' for our improving ringers.

Fund raising for the St Mary's Restoration Appeal continues and currently stands at £39,000. Many events have been organised during the year including Open Tower days, which have proved popular. Many people have taken advantage of the opportunity to view the bells, chime a bell and make the long climb up 162 steps to enjoy the views of Taunton and beyond.

Finally it gives great pleasure to report that Jill and Mike Hansford were awarded Honorary Life Membership at the Association AGM, a well deserved honour to a couple who do so much for the Ringers of the Taunton Branch and beyond.

Pearl Jeanes/Valerie Contreras