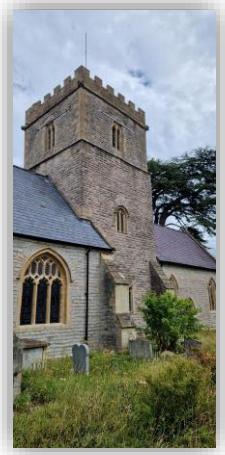




Bridgwater Branch

Newsletter

October 2025



What beautiful autumn days we have been able to enjoy, even our towers have remained warmish despite the darker evenings now. It has been a good year in our Branch, and I am so grateful to all those who have held office or supported in any way but especially all of you for faithfully turning up for practice and service ringing. I know from my own experience around the villages, that it does not go unnoticed.

Our AGM saw the re-election of most officers, but it would be so good to have some new people with new ideas and energy going forward. Could that be you?



I am pleased we will revert to having the Branch Striking Competition in April next year and hope things will run more smoothly from the Association. I am also very much hoping that we will have more entries for the new novice class in 2026.

As we approach Christmas, it would be lovely to see lots of you at St. Mary's on December 13th for some lovely ringing on lovely bells and a bit of Christmas cheer to help things along! See you there.

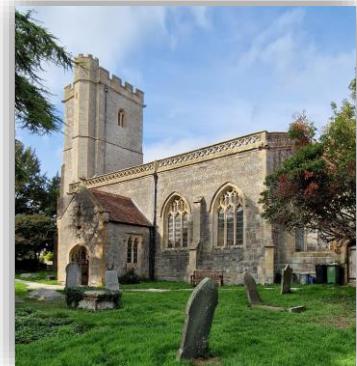
Very best wishes
Freda



Freda Prime
Branch Chairman

AGM Notes

It was great to have 25 members at our AGM on Saturday 11th October at Ashcott. The service and meeting were held in the church after an hour of ringing for all.



The meeting opened by remembering Peter Welch from Middlezoy who died 2nd July 2025, and Michael Hart of Burnham-on-Sea who died 19th July 2025.

The future of our branch participation in striking contests was discussed by the meeting, and it was agreed to revert to a six-bell competition at the April meeting. This will allow selection of the successful bands to represent us at the association contests later in the year, or failing that, give us time to form a branch band. The eight-bell representation would continue to be drawn from participants in the 8-bell practices.

The meeting also agreed that the now annual ringing picnic was to be continued, nominally with the scheduled practice on the second Saturday in July. Possibly ringing from 12:00 – 13:00, then a picnic, followed by open ringing till about 15:00.

Officers: The following branch officers were elected for 2025/2026:

Chairman – Freda Prime.
Secretary – John Hallett.
Treasurer – Margaret Trimm.
Ringing Master – Mick Howes.
Assistant Ringing Master - Cate Ovington.
Education Officer – Chris Gaunt.
Newsletter Editor – Julie Preece.
General Committee Rep – John Hallett.
Bell Maintenance Contact – John Hallett.
Press and Publicity Officer – Vacant



New Members – The following seven new members were elected to the Bridgwater Branch of the Association:

Danielle Filer - Goathurst

Alexandra Carpenter - St Mary's Bridgwater

Susan Redding - St Mary's Bridgwater

Samuel Williams - St Mary's Bridgwater - young ringer

Martha Williams - St Mary's Bridgwater

Shane Wright - St Mary's Bridgwater



Vinnie Salter – Burnham – young ringer



The Luxon (Improvers) Trophy was awarded to Jo Turner, from Middlezoy. Congratulations Jo.

John

Ringing Master's Report-2025



Overall, this has been a good year for ringing, both in practices and standards of ringing. It is so good to see attendance at the various practices remain high; let's go for even higher in 2026. The first 8-10 Practice was very well received, after the practice I had several ringers asking if we could have more of these. At the AGM I announced that for 2026 there would be two of these practices.

It is very pleasing to note that the overall standard of striking has continued to improve this year, and more ringers are happy to try out different methods.

As always recruitment can be an issue, so often we see new ringers, who we think are doing really well, suddenly drop out. This isn't just a Branch problem; it is something that happens everywhere. I had been teaching two new ringers (14 years old) in Middlezoy, really keen and doing well, then exams loomed, and they attended less and less, now they have completely dropped out. The problem is that when people do stop, getting them back is a massive problem. If anyone has an idea of a way of solving this please step forward, a lot of thinking outside of the box is probably required.

Association Striking Competitions

This year there was a 'hiccup' in the organisation for this and getting teams organised for both the 6 and 8 bell entries became a major headache. It soon became apparent that providing a team for the 8 Bell was not going to happen so focus was on the 6 bell. Unfortunately, due to circumstances I had to withdraw myself and my sincere thanks go to Charles Pipe-Wolferstan for taking up the reins and running our Branch team. My thanks also to Michael Munt for finding replacement ringers to finally make up the team. The competition was very close with only 9 points separating all 7 teams, and 5 points between first place and sixth, which was our Branch. Hopefully next year will see fewer 'hitches'.

Cossington 800 – 12 July 2025

When I was asked to organise some ringing for this event I decided to include a special composition as the opening ringing, this would be a composition made up of both Minor and Doubles methods, and total 1,800 Changes.

A strong band of ringers from various towers made ringing this long 'Quarter Peal' possible and on one of the hottest days of the year so far (around 32 Degrees C) we successfully completed the ring in a good time of 61 minutes.

Cossington, Somerset
Blessed Virgin Mary
Saturday, 12 July 2025 in 61m (11-2-4 in F#)

1800 Minor, Doubles
720 Plain Bob Minor, 360 Grandsire Doubles, 360 Plain Bob Doubles, 360 Reverse Canterbury

1	Kay Smith
2	Cate Ovington
3	Chris Gaunt
4	Wilf Goodman
5	Michael T Howes (C)
6	Michael Munt

Rung to celebrate Cossington Church 800th Anniversary and open a week of Flower Festival & Historical Displays.

£6.00





In addition, I requested other Towers to gather a team to ring for 45 minutes in slots throughout the day. The response was good and there were bands from the following Towers:



Westonzoyland
Wembdon
Chedzoy
Ashcott
Bridgwater



This was a great day of ringing and many of the locals from Cossington mentioned how good it was to hear the bells ringing throughout the day, my thanks to all who contributed.

My thanks to all Branch Members for your continued support throughout this year and I look forward to continuing to have lots of great Practices and attendance for 2026.



**Mick Howes – Bridgwater Branch
Ringing Master**



In Remembrance of...

Peter Welch – Middlezoy

Sadly, Peter Welch died after a period of illness on Wednesday 2nd July 2025, aged 95.

Peter joined the Association in 1997 and after his 28 years of ringing was awarded the status of Member Emeritus after he could no longer join the ringers in Middlezoy Tower.



He had been Tower captain there for some years.

Rest in Peace Peter

Gerald Brown – Bridgwater



Sad to report that Gerry Brown, a very long standing and reliable Bridgwater branch member died peacefully 19th October 2025 in Musgrove hospital aged 88. His daughter Shirley was beside him.

Gerry has long been associated with Cannington, Bridgwater and Durleigh ringing. He rang 31 peals, conducting 2, and rang in some 1176 quarter peals, conducting 280, around the branch and the association.

Gerrys funeral will be at St. Mary's Church, Cannington TA5 2HS at 12.45 on Tuesday 4th November, then to the crematorium, TA6 4SR at 2pm. There will be a wake at Rich's Cider Farm from 2:45. There will be open ringing from 12:00.

Rest in peace Gerald.



Michael Hart, 3rd October 1939 to 9th July 2025

Father Michael Hart, a recent Branch member at Burnham on Sea, died on 9th July 2025.

His funeral was held at the church of Our Lady and The English Martyrs, Burnham on Sea, on 22nd August.

Michael had a long association with bellringing, having first learned to ring in the mid-1950s in Oswestry. He conducted his first peal at Whittington in the early 1960s and became a keen peal ringer, even ringing 4 peals in one day!

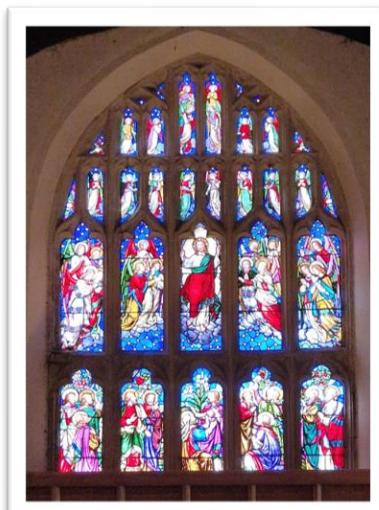


He had been ordained at Lichfield Cathedral in the late 1960s. He became a well loved and respected priest latterly in Pembrokeshire when he retired.

After his retirement Michael became a catholic and was ordained in 2016 in Walsingham Abbey where he became a part-time chaplain. Michael moved to Burnham-on-Sea in August 2020 to be nearer his family and continued to assist the local parish priest in Burnham on Sea.

He joined the Bridgwater Branch and continued to enjoy his bellringing right up to a month before his death.

Rest in Peace Michael



2025 Striking Contest & Picnic – Shapwick 26th July

We met at Shapwick for this year's striking contest, the weather overcast, but dry.



Then teams' names were drawn for the order of ringing, and the competition began.



Freida Prime
Nancy Routley
Chris Gaunt

Ben Routley
Henry Routley
Peter Cresswell

Winners – Ashcott

Helen Weldon	John Hallet
Julie Preece	Mick Howes
Tim Langston	Brian Wilde



Runners up – Westonzoyland



Jackie Hubbard
Michael Munt
Ruth Henderson

Terry Warman
Dave Glidden
Richard Hubbard

3rd Place - Wembdon

Mick Howes	Peter Cresswell
Jo Turner	Henry Routley
Chris Gaunt	Ben Routley



‘Novice’ Ringer & Team



Cate Ovington
Alan Kent
Margaret Johnson

Kay Smith
Mick Howes
Michael Munt

Scratch Team

Ringing Order 2025		
Tower	Ringing Order	Result
Worleseyfield	Team ring good team bellringing 3rd best	40 points (2)
Ashcott	Good steady 65% Good team even weight	37% 3rd (1)
Novice 1	Round slow ground then higher	25 (2nd only 1 fault - 2)
Worle, John.	21st strong and fast, 100% even and ringing	65 points (3)
Scratle Bells	65 out width ~	62 1/2 points

Following the completion of the ringing it was down to the village hall for the picnic...unfortunately the weather was not ideal for sitting outside so the presentations were carried out in the hall.



Many thanks to Charles Pipe Wolferstan for judging the competition, and his encouraging comments to all.



The trophy being presented to Henry Routley, on behalf of the Ashcott Team



Jo Turner being presented with her certificate for entering the novice competition, incurring only 1 fault during her ring.

Matthew Higby Visit

On Saturday 23rd August 21 ringers from the Bridgwater Branch gathered at the Charmborough Farm Rural Business Park to visit Matthew Higby's engineering works. Matthew is a renowned local, national and international ringer and all-round guru on everything bell ringing. His company, started as a sole trader in 1996, specializes in the conservation, restoration or replacement of church bells, together with their associated fittings and supporting frameworks, in addition, the Charmborough Farm site is also the site of the Potter's Yard Campanile.



The Bell Tuning Lathe

The afternoon started with a brief but fascinating presentation, by Matthew, covering the work of his business, a little of how new bells are cast (not done on site), old bells are restored and something of the black art of tuning of bells, once done by "adjusting" the bell metal with a hammer and a tuning fork, but these days a giant lathe and sophisticated computer software are better suited to the job.

The presentation concluded with a brief look at bells as historical artefacts, special bells worked on and the role of the Keltek Trust in bell conservation.

With newly acquired knowledge we were allowed to explore the "factory floor" and see, up close, the work in progress, bells, wheels, headstocks, bearings and bell frames.

As bellringers we are usually separated from the bell hardware by a length of rope, it was therefore interesting to be taken to a clean area of the works where bell ropes are manufactured.

The process is quite simple; flax fibres are spun into a yarn; 12 lengths of yarn are twisted by a machine into strands and finally 3 strands are twisted together to form the rope.

Matthew demonstrated the process in the ropewalk and explained how the sally is inserted during the twisting and finally shaped on the finished rope.



The Ropewalk



The Potter's Yard Campanile

The afternoon concluded with a visit to Potter's Yard Campanile, built and installed by Matthew and his colleagues. This is a 12-bell mini-ring with a tenor weighing just over 1cwt.

The original bells were cast, in the 1980's, by the Whitechapel foundry, now fitted to steel wheels and with counterbalanced clappers to improve the handling of the bells.

Everybody who wished to were able to have a go, for some this was the first time ringing on a very light ring of bells but after a few pulls, to get the measure of the bells, rounds, call changes and even plain hunt were rung on 12 bells.

Rightly proud of his creation, Matthew makes the Potter's Yard Campanile available, by prior arrangement, to bands of visiting ringers for quarter and even full peal attempts...*something for a branch outing in the future perhaps?*



It is fair to say that a very interesting, informative and enjoyable afternoon was had by all. Thanks are extended to John Hallett for organising the visit and of course to Matthew Higby, for giving up an afternoon of his limited spare time to host us in his workshop.

Association Polo and Sweatshirts.

Why not smarten up your tower band with nice Association polo or sweatshirt with B&WDACR badge and your tower name embroidered.

RFX polo shirts and sweatshirts are available from Janet Wyatt with any profit going to the Association.

Garments with a Bath & Wells DA logo with any Tower or Branch name embroidered above the logo.

Polo shirts £19 [RX101 Pro RTX Pro Piqué Polo Shirt](#)

Sweatshirts £25 [Pro RTX Pro Sweatshirt - Linela Embroidery Ltd](#)

Hoodie £28 [Pro RTX Pro Hoodie - Linela Embroidery Ltd](#)

Regatta Fleece £33 [Regatta Ladies Thor III Fleece Jacket - Linela Embroidery Ltd](#)

Each garment is embroidered to order and usually take about 2 weeks to get to you. £1 from each garment sold goes to The Association.

Almost any colour available.

Janet favours the unisex style as they are generous and long, but women's fit is also available.

You can pay by cheque but BACs is easier.

Janet will send the bank details if you wish to place an order.

To contact Janet direct for orders or enquiries:
janwyatt@live.co.uk



Branch Practices & Meetings 2025

8th November – Woolavington (8 Bell)

13th December – Christmas 12 Bell Ring

Looking forward to 2026:



10 Jan - Huntspill (6 Bell)



14 Feb - Cannington (6 Bell)

14 Mar - Bridgwater (8-10 Bell)

11 Apr - Holford – Striking Competition and 6 Monthly Meeting

Branch Practices 1100-1230hrs

Striking competition-times to be confirmed

As usual an email will be sent out two weeks in advance with details for each practice, and I will also send out the ‘polite’ reminder one week before.

To date the Branch Practices have been well attended, if you have not yet attended or feel you may be out of your depth, please do try and attend, there is always something for all levels of ringing abilities

Remember we are all capable of expanding upon and improving our ringing, and of course, IT'S FUN!

Mick Howes: Bridgwater Branch Ringing Master

A Visitor to Westonzoyland:

David Langston asked to visit Westonzoyland, a tower he had always been curious about when passing on a train to or from Devon

He was cycling from John O' Groats to Lands' End for Charity and stopped for a ring with us, during his journey.



On completing his trip David messaged
"Thanks again for your most warm welcome
at Westonzoyland. Next time I'm passing on
the train I'll look out for that wonderful tower
with particular keenness." David



Please send any local news and items for the Newsletter to
BridgwaterBranch.News@bath-wells.org