



Bath & Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers

www.bath-wells.org.uk

Summer 2026



News from the Dunster Branch

Contact us on Facebook: **Dunster Branch Bellringers** and on X (Twitter): **@WSomersetBells**

Coping with the summer heat in our Dunster Branch towers!

Ringling this summer has been hot thirsty work – even in those ringing rooms that are usually cold and draughty. The thick walls of our ancient churches have absorbed the heat and led to the purchase of new fans and other adaptations to try and cool us down a little. It's also given us the excuse (as if we needed one) for a quick exit after practices to the nearest pub! Well done to everyone for keeping the bells ringing when perhaps we'd have preferred to sit under a shady tree with a cool drink. But now we can look forward to the coolness of autumn, with improvers' practices re-starting on 2 September, our Branch meeting on 3 October and skittles evening on 17 October. We hope to see you there!



News from your Branch Committee

The new Committee met at the beginning of July. Amongst other matters, we discussed how ringing was going generally in the Branch, whether we should review our current range of activities and how to attract more members to participate in Branch practices. We also discussed future events including the skittles evening, branch dinner and that it is probably our turn to host the Association's 8-bell striking competition in 2027, when we will need lots of help from Branch members.

How to get involved and make the most of your Association membership

While some of our tower bands are self-sufficient in terms of numbers, others rely on neighbours to make a viable service band or practice. The Committee agreed that we can all benefit from visiting other towers and from ringing with ringers who are more experienced than ourselves. For example, for our improvers group, the opportunity to try out different bells in different towers is part of the fun. One of the great things about bellringing is that we will always be welcome if we visit another tower to practise or ring for a service. **Bellringers the world over are always friendly, welcoming and encouraging – whatever level we are at!** Perhaps you could plan to visit other towers here in West Somerset and persuade a ringing colleague to go with you. And don't forget to look up towers when you are away on holiday; it's a great opportunity to meet local people. You can usually find out details of times and who to contact, by searching association websites.

In looking at our offer of **Branch practices**, officers agreed that we want to encourage all members to join in and take the opportunity to progress with the help of our more experienced ringers. Branch practices also give us the chance to hear and actively listen to good ringing. It was agreed that we should make the



monthly **8-bell practices** open to anyone who can ring rounds safely without help. Our new ringing master, Andrew Palk (pictured), stressed that the aim of these practices is to help ringers make the transition to the 8-bell rhythm, starting with rounds and building up from there. We will always include rounds and call changes on 8 – as we did at the August 8-bell practice at Wiveliscombe (see right). **Six bell practices** are also open to all members and will include opportunities to tenor behind, hunt the

treble to methods and try ringing inside to different methods. But this practice will not usually include Plain Bob Doubles as this is covered at improvers, focus sessions and many tower practices.



The Committee also discussed the **Saturday Focus Sessions** which have had mixed success in terms of attendance. We propose that in 2027, these sessions will focus on the improvers level and be aimed particularly at those who work during the week and can't attend our Wednesday practices. But we will still need our more experienced members to come and ring! And of course, our Wednesday attenders will be welcome too. We discussed the **venue** for these sessions and wondered whether it would be better to hold most sessions at Minehead, where we have a large ringing room, simulator, white board, toilet and facilities for refreshments. Comments/suggestions welcome!

What do you think? Please send any comments about our events or practices to our Branch Secretary, Ann Birch at DunsterBranch.secretary@bath-wells.org

Here are the views of some of our members on joining in Branch practices and visiting other towers:

Time at the tail-end by Sarah Griffiths

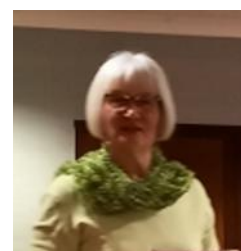
I'm a Dunster ringer; that's all well and good, but where would I be without the regular support of the Carhampton, Old Cleeve and Sampford Brett bands? Not forgetting the lovely 'Improvers'+ Helpers and Teachers. Bellringing is a group activity and the opportunity to ring with others, on their 'quirky bells' is wonderful! I love feeling part of a wider group of towers, who regularly support one another with service ringing, at special occasions and extra teaching sessions. Support is a keyword and without fail everyone I've met has been welcoming and patient. Learning a new skill requires practice and really, it's time on the end of a rope that makes a difference! Throw in the odd outing and a rather more regular pub visit- what's not to love?



Andy Cartwright says: I find joining in practices at other towers, benefits me in ways I can't achieve purely ringing at my home tower. I go from a 6-bell home tower to 8 bell, 10 bell and 4 bell towers. I quite often ring at two different towers on a Sunday morning. It increases your focus, concentration, and bell handling and control as no two towers are the same; you get to ring, meet and make friends at other towers; you're invited to ring at special events at other towers such as carol services and weddings. I guarantee it will make you a better ringer, and I would recommend everyone to try ringing at a neighbouring tower.



And here's a few thoughts from Tina Coggan: Joining a Branch practice and ringing at other towers has benefited me in several ways. Your bell handling improves as no two towers are the same. It's fun and the experience of ringing on 6, 8 or 10 bells really focuses your mind, improves your concentration and builds your confidence too. Yes, you can do it! At each practice there's always something included for all levels of experience. So, wherever you are on your bellringing journey you'll get a warm welcome and plenty of encouragement.



Achievements and notable performances since the last newsletter

18 May 2026: **Andy Eadon** and **Joanne Eadon** (Dunster) passed **Level 1** of Learning the Ropes. [Left]

28 May 2026: **Tricia Johnson** (Carhampton) passed **Level 1** of Learning the Ropes. [Middle]

6 July 2026: **John Jones** and **Michelle Musto** (Dulverton) passed **Level 1** of Learning the Ropes. [Right]



28 July 2026: **Sarah Griffiths** (Dunster) rang her first quarter peal on the treble and passed **Level 3** of Learning the Ropes. Here's a photo of Sarah with the two Daves who rang in the band.



16 August 2026: **Emma Kingdon** (Porlock) rang a quarter peal with friends and family members to celebrate her 21st birthday. Here are photos of Emma with her special birthday cake made by George Thomas for the Friday evening practice at Minehead.



Here are details of these two **quarter peals**:

28 July at Carhampton: **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: 1 Sarah Griffiths, 2 Susan Mew, 3 Emily Feldberg, 4 Andrew Palk (C), 5 David Walmsley, 6 Dave Isom. First on the treble.

16 August at Minehead: **1260 St Simon's Bob Triples**: 1 Nicholas Kingdon, 2 Michael Munt, 3 David Davies, 4 Emma Kingdon 5 Joseph Barrett, 6 Kelvin Britton, 7 Andrew Palk (C), 8 Mark Davies. Specially arranged as a 21st Birthday compliment to Emma. First in method for all except 1 and 7.

Congratulations to everyone on their achievements.

Belfry Project Updates

Sampford Brett [Martin Blazey reports] I am delighted to report that Sampford Brett bells are now back in action and going better than ever. This is due to the tremendous generosity of so many people. New running boards were made and installed by two of our residents at no cost. Replacement pulleys have been installed. The clappers and bearings were removed, serviced and returned by Nicholson Engineering, ably assisted by volunteer help from Mark Philipson and Paul Duddridge.



Thanks, and congratulations, to all the Sampford Brett bellringers who organized our various fund-raising activities and to everyone who supported them, both from within the village and from the wider community. That so much money can be raised in such a short space of time is remarkable – thank you.

We have also upgraded the speakers in the ringing chamber, courtesy of Andy Winter, for when the simulator is being used.

Normality has now returned with our regular Thursday night practice supported by many visitors, our Tuesday 'learner' practice which is moving into method ringing plus the training sessions run by Jan Swan who, with helpers, is teaching several 'beginners'.

Dunster: [David Moore] On the fundraising front, we've made significant progress. Following some negotiations with Nicholsons Engineering over volunteer labour, we've been given a price reduction, and together with a grant from the Association Bell Fund, we've been able to confirm our bell works for January 2027! We're so pleased and excited that this is happening; just the small matter of the Faculty now. We're currently awaiting first response to the initial application, fingers crossed! We'd all like to say a big 'thank you' for the support and encouragement we've received during our fundraising; much of our monies raised were through events, which were well attended by friends from the Branch – thanks very much. We'll let you know when it's all completed.

Otherwise, it's been quite a busy time in the tower lately, with a wonderful peal of Bristol Surprise Major rung by a visiting band in June; a resounding success and appreciated by the village judging by the

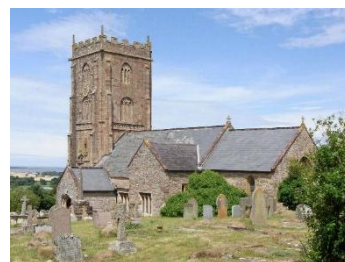
feedback! We also rang for two weddings, the front 6 in both cases. We're very grateful to our friends from other towers who support us for these. Special thanks to Mark Davies from Minehead for great calling too! 1st July saw us host Improvers; well attended and good fun for all.

Other news

Wiveliscombe: [Ann Birch] RECRUITMENT: We are pleased to be able to report that we have started recruiting new ringers at Wiveliscombe. There hasn't been a regular band at St Andrew's for quite some time which is a shame for a small town and a lovely ring of eight bells. We held two Taster Sessions in May, one on a Saturday morning and the other on a weekday evening, which were advertised on the town's Facebook page. About a dozen people turned up over the two sessions at which we gave an overview of bellringing, showed everyone the bells, did some demonstration ringing and then gave anyone a go who wanted to. Not everyone who attended wanted to take it further, but enough did to make it worth starting to teach. So, we are holding two sessions a week, one on Monday mornings and the other on Wednesday evenings. We have a mixture of brand-new ringers and returning ringers (of different abilities) with a couple more wanting to wait until September to start. We are very grateful to our teachers from surrounding towers for giving their time to help us out. Hopefully, perhaps by the time of the next newsletter, we can report that we have restarted a regular practice night!

ST ANDREW'S DAY OF MUSIC: On the last Saturday of June St Andrew's held a Day of Music to raise money for their Organ Fund. This involved various local music groups and individuals performing for a half-hour slot from 9.00am to 9.00pm. The bellringers had an early afternoon half-hour spot and a band formed of ringers from nearby towers and the Branch rang some Plain Bob and Grandsire Triples. A few people came up to the tower to watch the ringing, but mostly the performance was enjoyed outside. Maybe next year an all-Wivey band will be ringing!

Old Cleeve: We continue to hold monthly practices, normally on the fourth Monday, and we ring for one service a month, on the second Sunday. We were sad to learn that **Jeanne and Tim Webb** are leaving the village and moving to Cumbria to live near family. Although Jeanne hasn't rung for many years, she was Branch Chair at the end of the 1990s and Tim continued to ring until relatively recently. They oversaw the renovation of the bells in the mid-1990s and established a new band, with help from the Branch. They will be much missed in the village. On 18 August, a band made up of those who regularly support the monthly practices and service rings, rang rounds and call changes to coincide with a tea party for Jeanne and Tim taking place in the village. A **quarter peal** was rung on 24 August by members of the Dunster Branch, most of whom remember Jeanne when she was Branch Chair. Here is the Bellboard announcement:



24 August at Old Cleeve: **1288 Canterbury Pleasure Bob Triples:** 1 Linda Wear, 2 Kelvin Britton, 3 Susan Mew, 4 David Davies, 5 Nicholas Kingdon, 6 Martin Blazey, 7 Andrew Palk (C), 8 Mark Davies. Specially arranged and rung by members of the Dunster Branch to wish Jeanne and Tim Webb well on their move to Cumbria. Jeanne was a member of B&WDACR for 56 years, a Member Emeritus and a former chair of the Branch. Both Jeanne and Tim were stalwart supporters of ringing at Old Cleeve for many years. First in method for all except 7.

Exmoor Benefice: [Carol Cottle] We are part way through our ringing at the various towers in the Benefice, on our Tuesday night practices. It has been really nice to welcome some Branch ringers who have turned up to join us, and all are welcome. We are currently unable to ring at Withypool as the inside of the tower is being painted, and those who have rung there will appreciate how needed that is. We are currently checking the bells and frames in the towers as the dry weather seems to have caused some problems, particularly with Winsford, where we are awaiting a visit from Mike Hansford. We are planning on holding an Open Tower at Winsford on 19 September, from 2-4pm. We have put a notice in the Across Exmoor magazine and Exmoor News and Paul Morris from Winsford Tower has produced a rather eye-catching poster which we are planning on placing around the villages in the Benefice.

We had a tower outing at the end of May. Our first tower was East Anstey, but that was unavailable on the day, so we started at Dulverton instead, which gave us the chance to ring their lovely 8 bells. From there we went into the wilds of Devon and our next tower of St. John the Baptist, Witheridge. These were a heavy ring of 8 but fortunately lunch just along from the church at the Mitre Inn fired us up for the afternoon. From there the next stop was St. Marys at East Worlington, which were a lovely ring of 6. Our last tower was St. Mary the Virgin at Bishops Nympton. A very steep climb up to a ring of 6 bells with the longest ropes we had even seen. It was a great day out and we are in the process of planning another outing on 17 September.

Timberscombe: *[Elisabeth Powls]* On Sunday, 29 June it was Reg Holcombe's 90th birthday. He stopped ringing with us pre-COVID. Firstly, we couldn't ring and then with shoulder pain and other commitments he retired. He did ring with us for the Queen's funeral as a one-off, something he wished to do. I had a request from Mary, his wife, an ex-ringer herself, saying he would like to mark his birthday with a Sunday ring. He came to a few practices beforehand and had no problems; once a ringer always a ringer at heart. Anyway, a successful ring and a very eventful day. *Here is a picture of Reg (third from the left) with the Timberscombe band.*



Mike Boys is getting on extremely well with teaching our new learners. He has two who are progressing, hopefully joining us soon, another on her way and a fourth waiting in the sidelines until he is able to start. It is lovely to think we will have some new blood to begin to replace us 'oldies'! A big thank you to Mike.

Carhampton: *[Susan Mew]* We had an enjoyable outing at the end of June, efficiently organised for us by Rik, to four towers in the Bridgwater Branch: Nether Stowey, Over Stowey, Fiddington and Holford. The only disappointment was the lack of a pub lunch owing to a kitchen fire at the Cottage Inn, so we had a picnic with handbells instead, in the grounds of Fiddington village hall. The group included several people who haven't been ringing very long, but they rose to the challenge and did extremely well. On the way home, everyone stopped in Susan's garden for tea and cake and more handbell ringing, which was a nice, relaxing way to end the day. *Photo shows a happy band of ringers on the Carhampton Annual Outing*



In July, we rang the church bells for the opening of the village fete and had our usual information stall with the opportunity to 'have a go at handbells'. Although quite a lot of people had a go at our quizzes and handbells, sadly we didn't get any new recruits signing up this time, but it all helps to raise awareness of who we are and what we do. In July and August, we've held two extra practices, aimed at helping people to progress towards ringing touches of Plain Bob Doubles, and on **19 September** we will again be opening the tower for **Heritage Open Days**, with the opportunity to climb to the top (55 steps) to enjoy the fabulous views from the roof. There will be a coffee morning in the church at the same time. Bacon butties and other goodies available. All welcome!

Diary Dates for 2026 and 2027

Heritage Open Days: 11-20 September. This is a national annual event and it's good for promoting our towers and what we do in them. It's probably too late to register for this year but make a note to try it in 2027. Check out <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

Saturday 3 October: Branch meeting at **Timberscombe**, 3-7pm: ringing, short service, tea, meeting and more ringing for those who want to stay.

Saturday 17 October: Annual Branch **Skittles** Match at the Carew Arms, Crowcombe at 1830 for 1900 start. Numbers will be limited to 60. More details will be circulated in due course.

Saturday 20 March 2027: Branch **Dinner** at the Minehead Golf Club. Details to follow.

Ringling development and training

Our '**focused development sessions**' are continuing in 2026. Everyone is welcome. It would be helpful if you could let Jan know if you'd like to join us, either as a 'learner' or as a 'helper', by emailing her at janswan2000@gmail.com A full list of practices is set out in the Branch Fixture List. The next two sessions are as follows:

Date	Time	Location	Main Topic	Also included	Entry requirement
5 Sept	1030 –1200	Bicknoller	Reverse Canterbury Doubles	Hunting the treble and covering to doubles	Able to/or learning to ring Plain Hunt doubles.
7 Nov	1030-1200	Sampford Brett	Treble Bob Hunting		Able to hunt to minor

Other regular Branch practices

Improvers' practices: our Wednesday morning sessions from 1030 to 1200 start again on **Wednesday 2 September**. Anyone who can ring a bell independently is very welcome to join us. It is a good opportunity to meet other ringers and to try different bells in other towers. We are a friendly group, and we have fun! The venues for the autumn will be confirmed in due course. If you are fairly new to these practices, please make sure Jan has your email address so that you receive alerts and reminders.

Monthly 8 bell practices: these continue as usual on the **second Thursday** of the month. We will ring rounds, call changes, plain hunt and various methods, depending on who's there!

Monthly 6 bell practices: these take place on the **third Tuesday** of the month. There will be opportunities to tenor behind, hunt the treble and try various methods. But we will not normally be ringing Plain Bob Doubles.

Venues for all these practices (except Improvers) are listed in your 2026 fixtures card. The Branch Secretary also sends monthly email reminders.

Safeguarding: Just a reminder that it is the responsibility of **all members** to ensure that our towers and ringing activities are safe for children, young people and vulnerable adults. Further advice and links to the current guidance, can be found at <http://bath-wells.org/safeguarding.php> . If you have any concerns, you should consult your parish safeguarding officer.

Ringling World

Did you know that there is a weekly magazine for bellringers that's been produced since 1911? It's published every Friday and is available by subscription in print or online. It includes a wide range of articles aimed at different interests and levels of ringing. There are hints for new learners as well as advice on more advanced methods, and reports of belfry projects, outings and ringing holidays. It's fun to read about ringing in other parts of the world of ringing – both in this country and on other continents. Maybe your tower could become a subscriber? It's useful to have the magazines available for people to read at practices when they are not ringing or to take home to read in between practices. Not all the articles will be of interest to everyone but there's always something that is. Why not give it a go?



How to contact the Dunster Branch

Chair: David Moore

Treasurer: Tina Coggan

Ringing Master: Andrew Palk

Education Officer: Jan Swan

Newsletter Editor: Susan Mew

General Committee representative: Ann Birch

Vice Chair: Michael Boys

Secretary: Ann Birch

Assistant Ringing Master: Mark Philipson

Assistant Education Officer: Jane Grellier

Tower maintenance contact: Chris Mitchell

Phone numbers and email addresses for branch officers are listed on the back of your fixture list.

Details can also be found in the B&WDACR Annual Report and on the website: <https://bath-wells.org>

And don't forget you can follow us on X (Twitter): **@WSomersetBells** and Facebook: **Dunster Branch Bellringers**.

Newsletter items: Reports from your towers or from individual members are always welcome. And photos liven up the newsletter too. But please make sure your photos are **less than one MB** and preferably in JPEG. Send news to the editor, Susan Mew at DunsterBranch.News@bath-wells.org