

Bath & Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers



Chew Branch

Newsletter: August 2026



Welcome to this summer edition of the newsletter, keeping you up to date with what's going on in the Chew Branch.

Forthcoming Branch Events

Saturday Branch Practices

Our regular Branch Practices are held on the third Saturday of most months. Ringing is aimed at all levels of ability, from rounds and call changes to Surprise, and whenever possible we provide tea, coffee and cake after ringing, giving opportunities for socialising as well as ringing.

If you've never been, or haven't been for a long time, do make a note of the dates and plan to come along. It's an opportunity to ring on different bells and meet other ringers in the area. You can be sure of a warm welcome.

Saturday 19th September

3.00pm – 4.30pm

Branch Practice

Backwell

BS48 3JJ

10 bells; tenor 17-3-9;
Toilet; roadside parking

Tea and cake in the church hall
after ringing

Book Stall

*Please note the time of this practice –
earlier than usual due to an event at the church
during the early evening*

Saturday 17th October
7.15pm

Branch Quiz at Yatton

Saturday 21st November
3.00pm

Branch AGM

St Andrew's, Clevedon

BS39 4HP

8 bells; tenor 14-1-20

Saturday 19th December
3.00pm – 4.30pm

Branch Practice

Ubley

BS40 6PJ

6 bells; tenor 12-2-10

10-Bell Practice

7.30pm – 9.00pm

on the 1st Saturday of month

alternating between

Wrington (36cwt) – September, November
and **Backwell** (17cwt) – December

(The venue for the October practice is yet to be
announced – it will NOT be at Backwell due to a
concert in the church)

Surprise Major Practice

7.30pm – 9.00pm

Yatton

on the 2nd Saturday of each month

from Cambridge to Spliced Surprise

Wrington Improvers Practice

7.30pm – 9.00pm

on the 4th Thursday of each month

simple Triples and Caters

Congratulations to ...

James Humphries on ringing his 100th quarter peal (Clapton in Gordano; 11th June)

Lynne Purcell on ringing her first quarter of St Simon's Bob Doubles on an inside bell (Nailsea; 21st June)

Clara Waller on ringing her first peal of Yorkshire Surprise Royal, a 19th birthday treat (Backwell; 23rd August)

Tower News

Backwell / Wrington

Saturday 22nd August saw 21 of us set out on a joint tower outing with a few extra 'friends' to deepest Somerset to ring at 5 towers with a lunch stop at the George Hotel in Crewkerne. First tower was Martock, a lovely 22cwt 8. The village and church were beautiful and we all enjoyed the bells. We then drove a short hop to Norton Sub Hamdon: 8 bells, 18cwt. Here we struggled a little with the bells as there was a lot of tower movement which unnerved several members!

Lunch, which had been pre-ordered, was very good. Only one person forgot what they had ordered and another forgot to pay before leaving!



Lunch at Crewkerne

Ringing then continued at Crewkerne, another 22cwt 8, followed by Dowlish Wake our only light ring of the day at just 7 cwt. It was a small ringing chamber here so we had to have a few in and a few out policy. Finally to our third 22cwt ring at Ilminster where we were fortified by some flapjack provided by Bec which seemed to be popular. A very fine tower with impressive bells and a lovely view from the roof afterwards.



Some of the ringers enjoying the view from the roof of Ilminster church

Many of us adjourned to The Dolphin pub for a post outing wind down before returning home. A good day out, fine bells, lovely scenery, interesting places and impressive churches. Thanks to everyone for their support and to organisers Tony and Ally G.

Rebecca Cox

Association News

The Association Striking Competitions take place on the afternoon of Saturday 26th September. The six-bell competition will be held at Ilton (tenor 12-0-18). Twelve teams are entered, representing 9 branches; Chew Branch is one of those who have entered two teams.

The eight-bell competition will be at North Curry (tenor 14-3-10). Nine teams have entered, representing eight branches: Chew is the only branch to have entered two teams as the rules allow.

The results will be announced at North Curry following completion of the ringing.

*Good luck
to the teams representing
Chew Branch*

National Youth Contest

Jan Wyatt writes

One of my favourite days each year is taking The Bath & Wells Young Ringers to The Ringing World National Youth Contest. Aged 18 or younger on the day of the contest, our team this year were Igi from Clevedon, Adelaide from Ilminster, Walter from South Petherton, Oscar from Taunton, Thomas from Norton Sub Hamdon, Evan from Crewkerne and Paddy from Curry Rivel. All the teams come in brightly coloured team shirts, ours being paid for by The Edna Grabham Memorial Fund set up to fund bellringers, particularly with educational events. The B & W Association and Matthew Higby Church Bell Engineers also help with funding for the day, which is very fortunate as many teams have to fund themselves.



On Saturday 4th July Nottingham welcomed around 350 young ringers from across the country for the 2026 Contest, a flagship event in the bellringing calendar and a celebration of skill, teamwork and enthusiasm among the next generation of church bellringers. St Mary's Church served as the main base and presentation venue, while competition ringing and open-tower visits took place around the city.

First established in 2011 as part of The Ringing World's centenary celebrations, the National Youth Contest has since become one of the most important annual gatherings for young ringers. It gives competitors the chance to perform in classes suited to different stages of development, from rounds and call changes to more advanced method ringing on six or eight bells.

Beyond the competitive element, the day offered plenty for participants and supporters to enjoy. Open towers, handbell opportunities, mini-rings, workshops and informal meeting points helped create the sense of a city-wide ringing festival. For many young people, the occasion is as much about discovering new towers and meeting other ringers as it is about the marks awarded by the judges. Teams had spent months preparing for their

performances, with practices focusing not only on technical accuracy but also on listening, rhythm and confidence under pressure. The contest format encourages ringers to work together, support one another and perform as a band, making it a valuable experience for both newer and more experienced participants.

The atmosphere throughout the day was welcoming and energetic, with team leaders, families, volunteers and supporters all playing a part in keeping the event moving. As ever, the contest underlined the strength of youth ringing nationally and the importance of giving young ringers opportunities to aim high, travel, perform and feel part of a wider community.

As medals were presented and teams gathered at the end of the day, the lasting impression was of a contest that is about far more than results. Nottingham provided the setting for a day of music, friendship and encouragement, showing that the future of bellringing is in lively and capable hands. No, we didn't win, but we did have a great day. Next year the contest will be in Guildford. If you are a young ringer who would like to be involved, do get in touch, you can find my contact details in our Annual Report.

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of the following members.

Roland Robert Warden (Bob) 1929 -2026

Bob Warden, a member of the band at St Mary's, Walton, Clevedon, has died aged 96. Bob was at the heart of the process to fundraise and replace the unringable four bells and instal a new peal of six. Then, at the age of 75, he started learning to ring.

Bob had real determination. He eventually mastered Bob Doubles, although calling a bob often resulted in confusion! He went on to become a reliable tenor ringer for various doubles methods. He was also a drummer as a younger person and played in a band, an interest he kept all his life. The rhythm in drumming played a new role in keeping time in the ringing chamber.



His father was a vergers at Holy Trinity Church, Coventry. He was evacuated during the war but was in the city at the time of the blitz. He went to school in Coventry and then on to technical college to study electrical engineering. He worked for the electricity board on power cables, came to Clevedon in 1963 with S W Electricity Board but eventually formed his own business (Rotec) supplying power cables to the industry.

He married Doreen and had three children and later 11 grandchildren. Sadly, Doreen died in 1992. He married his second wife, Maureen, and they were very happy together.

He was an exceptional engineer and was genuinely skilled at many things including rewiring, upholstery, mechanical engineering, woodwork, rebuilding engines and car maintenance. Hence his passion for bellringing.

Bob was a sincere Christian and valued the church greatly. He brought solutions not problems (as good engineers do) and was every inch a gentle man.

John Neal

A half-muffled quarter peal in memory of Bob was rung at St Mary's, Walton, on Thursday 25th June.

Patricia Mary Jones (Pat) 1946 -2026



Pat learnt to ring as a youngster in Magor, South Wales, where she was born. Her family moved to Long Ashton where she joined the band, remaining a member until she left home. She met and married Huw and they set up home in Backwell, raising their family there, which meant a break from ringing until she joined the band at Backwell in the nineties. She was a most loyal member and acted as secretary and treasurer for many years. Whilst never an advanced ringer, she was a valued member of the team and enjoyed her ringing and

the camaraderie involved. She rang several quarter peals, mainly at Backwell. Always willing to help in any way with her presence, advice or cake-making skills, she will be sadly missed by us all.

Rebecca Cox

A quarter peal in memory of Pat was rung at Backwell on 5th July, the Sunday after her memorial service in the church.

Roger Lyons 1948 - 2026

Bell ringer, horseman, farmer, a gift for rearing champion livestock, a family man and someone known throughout the South West for his kindness, friendliness and the permanent twinkle in his eye and smile playing around his mouth. Roger!

Most important in his life was his love and long marriage to Alison. Their children grew up on the farm and witnessed Roger's skills in rearing livestock that were unequalled - his prize lambs and bulls were renowned. He was a special man who tried to excel at everything he did and loved all he did in life.

In spite of still farming full time, when he reached 76 he decided he must learn to ring bells! To achieve a level of competence starting at this age was very impressive. There was the odd unexpected 'excitement' during the early learning phase which would produce a slightly surprised look on his face, quickly followed by his calm wry grin! He persevered and progressed well.

Roger was suddenly and instantly killed in a terrible accident, caused by others, on the road outside his home. The next evening the tolling of a half muffled bell sounded out across the quiet countryside to his home, exactly 24 hours after his death. Two days later we rang 60 on thirds at East Harptree, honouring his memory. About seventy friends and relatives wandered the churchyard and in and out of the church: an intensely moving and spontaneous event that underlined the significant part and importance bells traditionally play in our lives.

Roger's last ringing was at practice night only days before his death when he rang perfect call changes in his local East Harptree Church; his best ever ringing, and his look of pleasure and pride in achieving that remains with all of us.

Sally Monkhouse



May they rest in peace

Branch Bookstall

The Branch bookstall will be set up in the church hall at the September practice at Backwell. The usual range of ringing books will be available for you to browse and buy.

Although it is still late summer, and many of us would hesitate to mention Christmas at this stage of the year, we hope to have the new range of Ringing World Christmas cards on view. As these cards have very recently gone to the printer we may only have proof copies for you to see and from which you will be able to place orders should you wish.



Reports of Branch Events

June

Although the venue for the June Branch Practice was advertised as Long Ashton, in fact it had to be changed to Barrow Gurney, another 8-bell tower a couple of miles away. The practice was well attended and, as always, the less experienced members were welcomed and given plenty of opportunity to ring alongside those with many years of experience and expertise. It has become a tradition to have refreshments at these practices and, thanks to Ronny and the Long Ashton ringers, we were not disappointed – the chocolate cake seemed to be especially popular!

July

Some 15 members from across the Branch enjoyed the Mini Outing/Walk on Saturday 18th July. Featuring two towers during the afternoon, we started at Butcombe, one of our southern-most towers, before going across the border into the neighbouring Axbridge Branch. It was another day

of above average temperatures in the long sequence of very hot days, but despite this 5 intrepid members completed the walk between the two villages, and 2 more were on their bikes.



The five intrepid walkers passing Blagdon Lake

To those of us in cars, the first part of the walk appeared a fairly gentle downhill stroll, but the final stretch, from Blagdon Lake up the steep hill to the church, was undoubtedly more taxing for those on foot. Thankfully, tea, coffee, cold drinks and a selection of home-made cakes were available on arrival at the church.

At both towers the ringing was aimed at all levels of ability, from call changes to surprise.



Butcombe Church



Blagdon Church

August

Yet another hot Saturday afternoon but despite this, and the fact that it was the peak holiday season, there was a good attendance at the August Branch Practice at Nempnett Thrubwell, including several visitors from the Axbridge Branch.



These bells were rehung by Matthew Higby and Co in 2025 so for many it was their first chance to try out the greatly improved ring of six.

As always, there was a range of ringing to suit all abilities and, again as is now the custom, there was a great selection of home-made cake and very

welcome cups of tea. Thanks to Andrew for organising the drinks and to all those who made the delicious cakes.

Other News

Bellringing feature in the Mendip Times

Our ringing master, Bec, has written an interesting article about ringing in the September edition of the Mendip Times. Hopefully it will result in a few enquiries from readers interested in taking up this endlessly fascinating (and perhaps addictive?) pursuit. Many towers, not only here in Chew Branch but right across the country, would welcome new recruits.

You can see the article online

Young Ringers Festival 2026

Taking place on Sunday 13th September this is an afternoon of ringing aimed at all young ringers in the Bath and Wells Association. There will be ringing at St Nicholas, Radstock (6 bells, 11cwt), The Potters Yard Ring (12 bells, 1.25cwt) and St John's, Chilcompton (12 bells, 19cwt). Between 5.00pm and 6.00pm in Chilcompton churchyard and church hall there will be a BBQ, games and the opportunity to try out a mobile belfry.

Details on the B&W website. Contact Matthew Higby if you hope to go – he doesn't want to run out of burgers!
higby.bells@gmail.com

If there are young ringers in your tower, do think about taking them along. It will be the ideal opportunity for them to meet up with other youngsters and have a fun-filled day out.

Model Bells

In many (or perhaps most) churches it is not easy to get into the bell chamber to see the mechanics of how a bell works when it is rung full-circle. It is much easier, and safer, to have a working model bell as a visual aid, helping learners and visitors to understand just what is happening when the ropes are pulled and the bells ring out from somewhere high up in the tower.

The model allows you to explain clearly the many different parts of the bell as well as the position of the bell when it is "down" and when it is "up" ready for ringing. It also allows a demonstration of the two strokes involved in ringing – handstroke and backstroke.



They are finding this model extremely useful.

This particular model, made by George Wyatt, was recently purchased by the Dundry ringers and is now mounted on the wall of their ringing room.

Throughout the summer they hold monthly "open tower" days when visitors can climb to the top of the tower to admire the stunning views and then go into the ringing chamber to learn a bit about ringing.

*Thank you to the cake bakers
who provide such tempting treats
at our Branch Practices!*

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be published in the autumn. Whenever you have some news from your tower, please send it to the editor: it will be kept on file until the next newsletter is compiled.

The newsletters are now available on the Bath and Wells Diocesan Association website: see under *Branches - Chew*

Contact Details

Newsletter Editor: Elizabeth Smith
lizandlionel43@gmail.com

Branch Chairman: Glenn Taylor
ChewBranch.Chairman@bath-wells.org

Ringling Master: Rebecca Cox
ChewBranch.RingingMaster@bath-wells.org

Deputy Ringling Master: Peter Hill
ChewBranch.DepRingingMaster@bath-wells.org

Secretary: Lesley Chandler
ChewBranch.Secretary@bath-wells.org

Treasurer: Shirley Edwards
ChewBranch.Treasurer@bath-wells.org

Tower Maintenance Contact: Bernard North
bernardnorth@btinternet.com
07508 297263