Bath & Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers

Chew Branch

Newsletter: December 2025

Welcome to the final Chew Branch newsletter of 2025. As usual there's information about forthcoming branch events, as well as reports from the Quiz in October and the AGM in November.

We also celebrate several milestone events and achievements in the lives of some of our members. It is particularly note-worthy that we have recently seen 3 of our members ring their 1,000th quarter peal.

And, rather unusually, this newsletter has something of an international flavour as we have reports from two separate visits by some of our members to towers outside of the UK.

Branch Events

Branch Practice

Saturday 20th December
3.00pm – 4.30pm
Holy Trinity, Abbots Leigh
(6 bells, tenor 11½cwt)
parking in the road by the church

All welcome

Ringing will cater for everyone, from rounds and call changes to surprise minor

Mince pies and mulled wine in the church after the ringing
(tea / coffee also available)



Christmas jumpers welcome!

Branch Events 2026

Saturday Branch Practices
3.00pm – 4.30pm

January 17th: Winford
(8 bells; tenor 13-3-26)
Tea / coffee after the ringing

The following venues have yet to be confirmed:

February 21st: Clapton in Gordano
(6 bells: tenor 6-0-15; ground floor)

March 21st: Compton Martin
(6 bells; tenor 15-1-23)

Everyone welcome

with ringing to suit all abilities

Report of Branch AGM

A well attended Branch Annual General Meeting was held at Congresbury on Saturday 15th November. Following ringing, members adjourned to the church room for tea and the business meeting.

Minutes of the meeting will be available in due course: the following is a brief summary of some of the main points.

Most of the Branch officers were elected for a further year, with the exception of George Wyatt who stood down as both the Deputy Ringing Master and the Tower Maintenance Contact. Peter Hill was elected Deputy Ringing Master and Bernard North, to be assisted by Russell Toogood, the Tower Maintenance Contact. Shirley Edwards gave notice that she wishes to retire as Treasurer in 2026.

Following discussion on the timing of the summer Branch Practices (currently 7.30pm – 9.00pm) it was decided to change these to 4.30pm – 6.00pm.

It was agreed to request a change to the association membership fees policy so that an element of the membership fee is retained by the branches to directly fund their activities.

Concern was expressed about the new association website which, although it has been live for some months, does not seem to be functioning well. In particular it was noted that branches do not yet have access to it to update their information and advertise events. It was, however, acknowledged that many of those working on the website are volunteers.

The following new members were elected:

James Cameron - Kingston Seymour
Chris Woodgate - Long Ashton
Hannah Burnage - Long Ashton
Yvette Loxton - Clevedon St Mary
Nathan Tindall-Doman - Portbury
Alana Tindall-Doman - Portbury
Amy Croker - Ubley
Charles Cameron – Ubley

We hope to see them at future Branch events

Report of Branch Quiz

The annual branch quiz was once again held in October at St Mary's Chapter House in Yatton. Nine teams competed with 40 participants - ringers from at least 10 different Chew towers, supplemented with other ringing and non-ringing friends. As usual, Glenn did a fantastic job as quiz-master, testing our knowledge of UK trees, food & drink, palindromes, as well as aerial views of familiar buildings, Desert Island Disc guests and Advertising slogans (some of us showing our age there!).



About to start

The half-time buffet provided sustenance for everyone and was swiftly demolished – thank you to Bec and everyone who provided the delicious goodies. And Jan did a great job organizing the raffle, with many donations of prizes (thank you all!).

The final results were close, with only a handful of points separating the top 4 teams. But the team with the highest score at the end was 'The Wonkies', from East Harptree and Chew Magna.



The winners (from left): Judith, Paul, Annie, Dawn, Phil

All together, we raised £319 for the Association Ringing Support Fund (previously the Bell Fund). Most importantly, it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Many thanks to Glenn and everyone involved.

Don't forget to make a note in your diary for next year - Saturday 17th October 2026 (to be confirmed) - and encourage your tower to enter a team (bell ringing knowledge not required!).

Lesley Chandler

Lesley has since received the following message from Margaret Lee (Ringing Support Fund Officer):

"Thank you for your brilliant donation to the Ringing Support Fund from the Chew Branch, please pass on our thanks to everyone."

Congratulations to . . .

Mike Fairey who celebrated his 91st birthday on 30th October

Mike has written a summary of his ringing career.

Having joined the choir as a 9 year old at the age of 14 I learnt to ring at St Peter's, Little Aston, a 9cwt ring of 6 bells. The village is roughly half way between Lichfield and Sutton Coldfield. My first peal was Grandsire Doubles by a local band in 1952. My first peal as conductor was Doubles in 9 methods at nearby Rushall in 1953. I conducted 38 of my 212 peals, including 2 handbell peals.

During the next 10 years or so we progressed steadily as a band at Little Aston, our peak being a peal of 21 Spliced Surprise Minor that I conducted in 1964. Other personal milestones were completing the Stedman 'family', doubles to cinques, with Caters at Llandaff Cathedral in 1984, and completing the Cambridge 'family', minor to maximus, with maximus at Cheltenham in 1997. In March 2009 we successfully rang a quarter peal of spliced surprise major, known as 'Horton's four', at Mark. The length was extended to 1,568 changes to ensure all the work for the inside bells, the methods being Bristol, London, Belfast and Glasgow. Eleven years ago we rang a peal of 8 surprise minor methods at Butcombe to celebrate my 80th birthday.

I regret not having kept a record of my quarter peals, but have recorded towers visited, my total to date being about 2,776. Regular ringing holidays and locally arranged outings account for most of these. As well as in the UK I have rung in Ireland, Australia, USA, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.



Mike (centre, holding the rope) in the ringing chamber at Wrington

Unfortunately we no longer have a band at Butcombe, but I now regularly support practice nights at Blagdon, Compton Martin and Wrington.

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Christine Hill on ringing her 1000th quarter peal on tower bells

Christine writes:

On 9 November 2025 I rang my 1000th tower bell quarter, Grandsire Triples at Backwell. My family have always mocked my record keeping habit, and I know a lot of people don't bother to keep records of quarters, but I'm quite glad that I have kept records of my ringing over the years. Looking back is nearly as good as going through photo albums, trying to remember what the occasions were and which ones were particularly eventful.

My first quarter was Plain Bob Minor at my home tower, Bramford in Suffolk, in 1974, about 2 years after my first lesson. Over the next 51 years I've clocked up 1001 tower bell quarters, calling 386 of them, plus 160 in hand (calling 62) and 7 on Ringing Room (calling 4 and not really enjoying any of them). Over that time I've also scored 551 peals and lost another 243. The lost peal records, which include the reason for the loss, are quite entertaining. They weren't all my fault.



Bramford Church, Suffolk

I've always enjoyed quarters much more than peals. It's a chance for some good, sustained ringing, but without the daunting prospect of having to ring for another 2 or 3 hours. I've been lucky to have been involved with at least 3 very active teaching bands over the years who rang quarters regularly for Evensong, and rang handbells as well, and my quarters include methods from Plain Bob Doubles to Surprise Maximus, and one quarter of Yorkshire S Fourteen. My leading method is still Plain Bob Minor. My favourite all time quarter was rung at Bramford to celebrate my parents' Diamond wedding anniversary, when the band included my mother and both daughters.

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Lionel Smith on ringing his 1000th quarter peal

Lionel rang his first quarter peal in the tower where he learnt to ring – All Saints Church, Fawley, Hampshire. Rung on 21st January 1960, it was the first quarter on the bells by an all local band; the method was Kent Treble Bob Minor and Lionel rang the three. On 28th October he rang his 1,000th quarter: Fawley Surprise Minor on the front 6 at Backwell, this now being his home tower.

Having lived in several areas of the country (Hampshire, Yorkshire, Oxfordshire and now Somerset) he's had a number of "home" towers, but for the most part they have been 6-bell towers. It is

not surprising, therefore, that just over 700 of his quarters have been of Doubles or Minor.

Lionel is particularly pleased that a high proportion of the quarters have been arranged to allow other ringers to gain experience and make progress in their ringing achievements: so there have been a lot of Plain Bob Doubles (143) and Plain Bob Minor (81). He's also enjoyed ringing methods that have names appropriate to the occasion: methods and variations named after the appropriate saint for patronal festivals, Golden Anniversary Bob Minor for his and Liz's 50th wedding anniversary, Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh Doubles for Christmas, to name but a very few.



The band who rang Fawley Surprise Minor at Backwell: Liz Smith, Tony Cox, Lionel Smith, Jan Wyatt, Rebecca Cox, Glenn Taylor (not in ringing order!)

Lionel would add that he thinks it unlikely he'll manage another 1,000!

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George Wyatt on ringing his 1000th quarter peal

George has reached 1,000 quarter peals in a remarkably short time. His first was on 31st May 2009 at Portishead, when he rang the 6 to Plain Bob Doubles with 7, 6, 8 covering. He was 12 years old. He achieved his 1000th at Portishead on 9th November with a quarter of 7 Doubles Methods. In between he has rung quarters in many counties of England as well as in Scotland, Wales and the Channel Islands. Much further afield, he has rung them in the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand. The bells he's rung to quarters have ranged in weight from the 72cwt tenor at Exeter Cathedral to the ¾oz treble on his own Micro-ring.

As he's not yet 30, George has every prospect of ringing another 1,000, and quite possibly far more!

Phillipa James

on ringing her 150th quarter peal
(3 Doubles Methods; Weston in Gordano;
23rd November)

Alison Pemble

on ringing her first quarter peals of Triples inside
(Plain Bob Triples; Backwell; 8th October).
(Grandsire Triples; Backwell; 9th November)

The band who rang quarter peals of the 12 Doubles Variations named after the months of the year, each rung during the appropriate month

The quarters started on 1st January with January Doubles and finished with December Doubles on 5th December. With a couple of unavoidable exceptions the band was Alison Pemble (treble), Les Curwood (tenor), Jan Wyatt, George Wyatt, Lionel Smith and Elizabeth Smith (C). All the quarters were rung at Clapton in Gordano.

Tower News

Chew Stoke

John Bone has, reluctantly, resigned as Tower Captain at St Andrew's, Chew Stoke, as he can no longer ring due to ill health. Unfortunately a lack of ringers means there is currently no activity at the tower. However, Hazel Wedlake has taken over the role of Tower Captain and is actively trying to recruit new ringers. She can be contacted at: hazelwedlake@gmail.com

Nailsea

On Saturday 29th November the bells rang out to announce the start of the Holy Trinity and Tithe Barn joint Christmas Fair. Many of the ringers were involved in other activities and performances during the fair and it was great to be part of a community event.

Whilst we are short of our own ringers at Nailsea we are very grateful for the help we receive from others towers, most especially Backwell and Tickenham. With this help we usually manage to practice on Tuesday evenings, ring for special occasions and, in the last couple of months, there have been 2 quarter peals rung for the Sunday evening service.

Caroline Watson

In Memoriam

We record the death of Alan Strong, who died in September at the age of 93. He was a member of Backwell tower for many years: a peal rung there in October was dedicated to his memory.

Branch Bookstall

The bookstall at the AGM did brisk trade selling various ringing books and the Ringing World Christmas cards and general greetings cards. The stall will be appearing again at the Branch Practice at Abbots Leigh on Saturday 20th December (but minus the Christmas cards – if you haven't written yours by then you really are leaving it a bit late!).

This is an ideal opportunity to browse a wide selection of ringing books and choose ones that will help you to progress in the range of methods you can ring.

The stall now has copies of the latest book from The Ringing World – The Little Blue Ringing Book – packed with methods ranging in difficulty from Plain Bob Doubles to Kent Treble Bob Minor and Little Bob Major, and a huge amount in between. It comes in 3 sizes: A4 (ideal as a tower copy), A5 and A6 (a handy pocket size).



Packs of blank greetings cards, featuring churches and flowers, also available.

Payment by cash or bank transfer (details available on the day).

International Ringing Trips

Italia 2025

In October Peter and Christine Hill from Yatton joined in a ringing trip with a difference - a tour to Northern Italy to see demonstrations of, and join in with, many of the various systems of full circle ringing in Italy.

A long but uneventful coach trip from Harwich to Italy via Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Switzerland gave us the chance to admire autumn leaves, lakes and mountains before arriving in Reggio Emilia.



Reggio Emilia

Here and in Lucca and Modena on the following days we were treated to demonstrations of ringing on a mix of chimed bells and bells rung full circle. The full circle ringing in this area is definitely not for the faint hearted - the ringers use very short ropes to ring within arms length of the swinging bell, and further ringers stand on the frame to assist with the bigger bells. At Lucca and Modena particularly, the bells hang at the top of tall and disconcertingly wobbly towers, and the Italian liking for open staircases round the inside of towers all add to the sense of adventure. However local ringers were very welcoming, provided hearty meals of local food and wine and were complimentary about our demonstration handbell touch.

We then went up to the Lake Garda area where we could ring in our English style at a number of towers, as well as listen to the local ringers ringing their “concerti”. Veronese style bells are rung full circle with ropes and wheels, but no sallies or stays. The bells are counterbalanced and relatively slow turning. They swing outside the towers and are very

loud, so ringing time is limited, but we were made very welcome, with more food and wine produced at many towers.

A trip east of Lake Garda took us to the final different ringing system. The Ambrosian system involves ropes and wheels but is very hard to describe – the bells are basically rung up, allowed to fall off the balance in a slow sequence, swing back, ideally producing chords with the later bells in the sequence and are then pulled up again by climbing hand over hand up the rope. You really have to see it!

Our route home retraced the journey down, but before getting the ferry we diverted to visit Dordrecht, and get back to familiar ringing techniques. We enjoyed an excellent meal after general ringing and successful quarter peals on both the 10 in the Grote Kerk and the light 8 in the Klockhuys.

Christine Hill

Ypres and Dordrecht

Jan Wyatt writes

Having wanted to ring in Ypres for a very long time, I was delighted to be invited to join Helen Parkin's tour to Dordrecht and Ypres recently. We had to make our own arrangements for travel and accommodation, but Helen had organised our ringing and many of our meals. Five of us travelled from Portishead, one by plane, the others in my car setting off early Wednesday evening for an overnight stay at Ashford Travelodge - convenient for Le Shuttle. I had not experienced the Channel Tunnel before and found it to be a pleasant and trouble-free experience.

We drove straight to Dordrecht in the Netherlands: it should have taken about 3½ hours, but traffic around Antwerp made it much slower. We eventually made it to our hotel, and within 30 minutes had a taxi arranged to take us to The Klockhuys for my first ringing on mainland Europe.



The Klockhuys, with the bells above the table set at backstroke

We were welcomed by Paul de Kok who had laid on a lovely supper of cold cuts and cheese, including wine and beer as well as teas and coffees. This was to be the theme of our time in Dordrecht with Paul providing our lunches and dinners along with all we could drink. The bells were set at backstroke above the dining table so as soon as we finished eating, ringing commenced. Lovely light easy-going bells, a ring of 8, tenor 79kgs (well it is Europe, they don't do cwts).

The next day we were able to ring on the bells in The Grote Kerk, 10 bells 850kg. Another easy ring of bells, available for as long as we liked as sound control is excellent.

Dordrecht, one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands, has a long-standing connection with bellringing. The city's Grote Kerk is renowned for its historic carillon - a set of 67 tuned bells played from a keyboard in the church tower. The origins of bellringing in Dordrecht date back to the Middle Ages, when bells were first used to mark time and signal important events to the townspeople.

On Saturday morning we set off for Ypres, in the Flanders region of Belgium, a 2½ hour drive. You will know of it as it is internationally recognised for its moving history and the role it played during the First World War. The city's Belfry of Ypres, a UNESCO World Heritage site, houses another world-famous carillon with 49 bells that has been an emblem of local identity and collective memory since the Middle Ages. However, we were aiming for the 8 bells, 323kgs, hung for change ringing in St George's Church where we spent an enjoyable few hours ringing to our hearts content.



St George's Church, Ypres

In the evening, we attended the very moving Menin Gate Last Post Ceremony held every evening at 8pm to remember the courage and sacrifice of those who fell in defence of the town. We rang again at St George's for the Sunday Service then later it was a quick 1½ hour drive back to the Tunnel and the UK. With four of us in the car the all-inclusive cost for our 4 day trip was just under £600 per person.

Branch Events 2026

A reminder of the timing of our Branch Practices

Winter
3.00pm – 4.30pm

Summer (British Summer Time)
4.30pm – 6.00pm

Next Newsletter

It is hoped to publish the next newsletter at the beginning of February. So reports of Christmas socials, special ringing etc etc will be most welcome. Please send your news, and photos, to the editor by **21st January** – or sooner if possible.

All are welcome at our Branch Events so do please make a note of the dates in your diary and plan to come. It's an opportunity to ring on different bells and to meet other ringers in the area.

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Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and much enjoyable and successful ringing in 2026

