B&WDACR
Ilchester Branch
Autumn Newsletter 2026



The Striking Competition (held on May 2nd)

Held at Haselbury Plucknett, thanks to Jim Farrant and the PCC.
3 teams entered; could always accommodate more!
Lesley Knipe and Mike Hatchett were the judges (and thanks to them in dreadful weather).
Team 1 rang call changes, "steady ringing" good pace set by Tenor.
Team 2 rang doubles (Grandsire) enjoyable to listen to, "excellent ringing"
Team 3 rang call changes, had a little difficulty but restarted and recovered very well from that "ordeal" "last 30 changes were really good".
Team 4 (Scratch) rang "much faster", like the most experienced band (which they were!)

Results:
Team 1(Kingsbury) 25f
Team 2(PP) 7.5f
Team 3(Odcombe) 30f
Team 4(aka Friday Band) 4.5f
Many thanks to the Judges for their helpful comments and encouragement
Also to Sue Cave for Organising
Especially thanks to the Kingsbury team who came laden with goodies, the best part of the day!
Next year: Bring your tower team or come and join the scratch (you may even win!)
All are very very welcome.
Footnote: Each of the tower teams had a Novice (never competed in the competition before) so all were competing for the Novice cup which should be on display in all the towers.

Thanks Hammy for the write up.

The AGM (held at Kingsbury Episcopi on Sep 5th)

We had a really good turnout and enjoyable ringing. Ringing was followed by a lovely service taken by our very own Ben Rundell-Evans. He read a poem of his own named the Kingsbury Six which I'll add to the end of the newsletter.

Following a scrumptious tea, courtesy of the Kingsbury ringers (again) we had the tricky issue of voting in quite a few new officers.

Sue Cave stood down as Ringing Master – she has done the role for the last five years and we thank her for that. Lawrence Bignell has now been elected to this role and we thank him for taking this on, on top of all his other ringing responsibilities.

Margaret Bignell stepped down as secretary (many thanks Margaret) and after much discussion and some thinking time Debra Stringer from Martock has taken on the role. Thank you Debra!



Well done to the Association's Young Ringers who took part in the Ringing World National Youth Contest. What an experience and lovely to see familiar faces from our branch and neighbouring branches

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

Every year the trustees for the Edna Grabham Memorial Education Fund organise courses for ringing within the Bath and Wells Diocesan Association area. This year they invited those people who were not offered a place on the South West Course at Millfield School last October, to a free one day course. There were only eight people who were available for the dates selected and they were split into two groups of four and spread over two Saturdays.

Where else would you rather be on a Saturday than up a tower and on the end of a rope? It was a great privilege to accept that invitation from the Trustees and to spend the day surrounded by expert ringers and fellow improvers on 4 July 2026.

We started the day with tea and biscuits at Broadway Church but it wasn't long before Jill Hansford had us ringing the treble to reverse Canterbury. Much encouragement and guidance was imparted and any nervousness was quickly dispelled. We all were very thankful for the electric fan, and with the help of the extractor fan, the temperatures were just about kept at a manageable level.

Lunch was enjoyed at Seavington St Mary Community Cafe where we were able to relax in the cool thanks to their air conditioning! Fabulous food and very friendly staff who made us feel very welcome.

Our afternoon session was quite a long walk from the cafe, for those that needed to get their steps in for the day, to Seavington St Mary Church. A very cool and beautiful ground floor tower, where we continued to practice all that we had learnt in the morning. Bell handling, striking, rope sight, hunting, trebling, and covering; increasing confidence and all anxieties forgotten. More tea and biscuits were served to keep our strength up and hopefully improvements could be seen by the time we had to go home at 4pm.

So, on behalf of the four improvers, Sheryl and Stephen from Croscombe, Kimberley from Badgworth and Michelle from Huish Episcopi, a big THANK YOU to all those involved for making it an enjoyable and blessed day. Xx

Thank you Michelle for a fab write up of a great day - Ed

Four-score and ten (times two)





Sue Cave, Ilchester Branch Ringing Master, presented Gordon with a plaque from the B&W Diocesan Association celebrating 80 years of membership at the June Quarterly meeting

Not one, but two nonagenarians were in evidence in Hardington Mandeville, Somerset, last month. Ringers from all over Somerset gathered for ringing and a 90th Birthday lunch for Gordon Rendell on Friday 19th June.

Gordon was recently presented with a beautifully engraved wooden plaque of a bell, recognising 80 years of membership (Honorary Life Member) of the Bath & Wells Association.

Gordon is the Ilchester Branch Chairman, and runs the weekly practice at Hardington Mandeville, where he learnt to ring. Two of his grandchildren are also ringers there.

Roger Fox, a ringer from nearby Yeovil, and who has known Gordon for nearly all of his life, came along to congratulate him for joining the 90 club.

The Friday band and the wider ringing community wish Gordon and Roger many more years of enjoying The Exercise.

SUSAN IRVINE Vice Chair, Ilchester Branch

Article acknowledged to Ringing World (and Susan Irvine).

Some Special Ringing…..

First

This superstar team of ringers successfully rang a Peal of 41 Spliced Surprise Minor on June 23rd. I have been told that not only was the average age 72 years but it was also the hottest day of the year!

https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=2000866



Second

Well done to Susan Irvine – rang her first peal of Cambridge Surprise Major inside (and has since followed it up with a peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major).

https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/pdf.php?id=1977667

Finally congratulations to Sue Cave – ringing a peal of Spliced Surprise Minor.

https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/pdf.php?id=1996149

Please keep sending me any special ringing in the Branch – all achievements should be celebrated!!

South-west ringing course (by Su Down).
Having taken up method ringing a year ago (after being a very lapsed child-taught ringer) I was fortunate to be awarded a place on the South-West Ringing Course 2026! I opted for the Triples and Major course which was a new course added this year.
The organisation, knowledge and experience level of the tutor and group helpers was phenomenal and to be able to ring in such a band, six times over four days, was such an invaluable experience. The emphasis on good clean striking and rhythm was the core message from our tutor, and it was a joy, not only listen to but be an actual part of. This is without doubt, what I will remember most, second only to the new friends and colleagues that I have made.
The only downside, and warning for any future attendees, would be that I am now unable to sleep without reciting methods over and over (and over and over…) whilst simultaneously counting to eight and back in rhythmical fashion!
Joking aside, if you ever get the opportunity to go as a learner, or a helper, I thoroughly recommend it.

Thank you Su!

Sadly we have lost some special ringers this year

David Ledger 1947 - 2026

David learnt to ring in Chudleigh, Devon, and was part of a Call Change band. He moved to Bower Hinton, near Martock, and is first listed under Martock in the 2010-11 report. He discovered that most people in this area are method ringers, so set about learning methods. As he was well able to handle a bell already, he soon picked up method ringing and rang regularly at Martock, Ash and Shepton Beauchamp.
So the Quarter on Bellboard at Curry Mallet in 2013 would have been one of his first, though it's not listed as THE first. He soon became a member of The Friday Band and has, together with Dawn and Lucy, attended most Fridays, even after he'd moved to Bridport, meaning that the practices were often a considerable distance for them.

https://bellboard.org/memoria.php?id=23792

John Pidgeon 1935 – 2026

John Pidgeon died at the beginning of August. Being in the Navy, he had rung in many different places, but I had known him as a South Petherton ringer since I came to Petherton in 1975.
In recent years he has been quite unwell and had been less able to ring. Instead he joined the Men's Shed where, having been a Naval dentist, he was particularly useful for extracting stubborn nails. I challenged everyone to make a church birdbox for our new Rector and his was certainly the most ambitious. He decided that it would be a miniature South Petherton church, which of course has an octagonal tower.
His funeral was attended by many ringers, some of whom were members of The Royal Naval Guild, and also friends from the dental world and members of South Petherton Shed, together with people from the village. On top of his coffin was a trug that we had made specially, filled with fruit, veg and flowers. His hat and glasses were part of the arrangement! At the wake we were treated to a splendid tea, and given pots of jam or chutney and little boxes of courgette cake which were made from fruit and vegetables that he had grown.
The bells were rung before and after the service.

Paul Reeves. 1947 – 2026

Although Paul was a member of Castle Cary Branch he was a great friend to the Ilchester Ringers. Many tributes can be found on the below link.
https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/memoria.php?id=23569

Jamie Russell-Fisher

With great sadness I have to report the death of Jamie Russel Fisher of Martock.
Jamie was one of the original learners that got Martock band "off the ground" just three and a half years ago.
Jamie was a regular supporter of Sunday Service ringing and was also keen to get involved in the technicalities of bell and rope maintenance.
He made several journeys to Avon Ropes and returned with repaired ropes, tail ends and stay blanks.
He also rang with the Kingsbury band and the Martock and Kingsbury bands joined together to ring for his funeral.
But Jamie's greatest joy was that Grandaughter Mary has learnt to ring and
has rung with the local young ringers, continuing the family ringing connection.
Dave Hammonds

And Finally!

The Kingsbury Six

Eighty-seven feet above life they rest,
Held up by ham stone and lime, three abreast,
Six bells that have seen centuries long past,
Five Rex Henrys have gone, but they stand-fast.

But still, they are not when called to ring out,
Going fast, then slow, and shifted about,
With the weight they swing they rock the tower;
Fear not, they seldom ring more than an hour.

Kingsbury Episcopi, the bronze six live,
A favourite for those quick to forgive,
A heavier ring with a climb quite high,
and a breeze that can freeze, up in the sky.

The six is the weight of a concert grand,
Best only turned in with a steady band.
The five has a rope that is far too long,
And the four feels like it's always up wrong.

The three is just fine and good for plain hunt,
The two is for learning and used to some grunt,
But the treble is best and always there,
When all at sea, and receiving 'the stare'.

For mourning, joining or lifting the cup,
The bells, they are rung to wake people up!
Above the clamour of life, they ring loud,
For those in sorrow or joy, they ring proud.

By Ben Rundell- Evans

On a very final note Helen Beaufoy is looking for a heavy door curtain for Seavington Tower. Please contact her if you have anything that might suit.

Any news or ringing achievements please!
Nicboyd4@gmail.com