

THE GLOUCESTER & BRISTOL DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS: WOTTON BRANCH CLANGOUR NEWSLETTER: FEBRUARY 2024

*Deadline for articles for the next edition of Clangour (June) is 28th
May 2024 to mattandsarah.lorkin@gmail.com*

DATES FOR THE DIARY

3rd February 2024 – Branch practice at Wickwar 4pm - 6pm

2nd March 2024- Branch practice at Upper Cam 4pm - 6pm

24th March 2024 – Horton Lunch

13th April - G&B AGM in the Stroud Branch

13th July 2024 Provisional date for Branch outing

NEWS FROM...

Cromhall

Peggy Collett

Like many towers across the country, Cromhall tower is struggling at the moment. We can usually ring rounds and call changes on the six bells for the Sunday morning services. We have kept up the Monday evening practises but usually have only five ringers, one of whom is at the stage of learning to plain hunt. We were grateful to Nik Gawler, who came along before Christmas, enabling us to practise plain hunt with a tenor behind.

Unfortunately Mark and Sue Wray are on grandparent duties each Monday evening for the foreseeable future, leaving only five ringers. There isn't an alternative evening when everyone is available to ring. We would be delighted to welcome any ringers who are free on a Monday evening to come and join us on an occasional, or better still, regular time.

We have issues with the tower roof as it leaks when it rains, filling up a container which has an overflow pipe to the outside. Not ideal but it does prevent the ropes and floor of the bell chamber from getting wet.



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The Surprise Minor practise on the afternoon of the third Thursdays of the month continue to be well attended. I haven't needed to cancel due to lack of numbers for some considerable time. We ring, or sometimes try to ring, a variety of Surprise methods including Cambridge, Ipswich, Bourne, Norwich, Primrose, and have all been asked to look at York for the February practise. If anyone would be interested in joining the practise, please send me your email address and I will add you to the contact list.

Dursley

Frank Byrne

Ringling for Christmas and the New Year

We had 7 ringers to ring for the 11:00 'midnight' service on Christmas Eve and the same number to ring for the 10:00 service on Christmas Day. This is the first occasion in living memory that we have not rung for the 08:00 Christmas Day Service, beginning ringing at 07:15. This is also the first year that the 08:00 service was the only one held at St James' on this day. Until now, the later service has been at St Mark's which had been closed during the year; another sad parting with tradition. Several people expressed regret at the absence of bells at the earlier time including some ringers. Others were thankful for not being disturbed so early or having a longer lie-in.

New Year's ringing began at 11:30 and finished soon after midnight. 12 ringers took part and the countdown to midnight was masterminded by the Assistant Ringing Master, Andy Binstead. All eight bells ring just before the hour, then each one drops out, in turn, leaving the tenor bell to ring 12 stokes, very slowly, completing the 12th exactly at midnight when all eight bells join in again to welcome the New Year. Getting the timing exactly right needs precision to the nearest second or two - often beyond us.

1824

The first ever full peal was rung at St James' on 10th May 1824. There were, in fact, two peals rung on that day, the first by the Painswick Youths; the second by the Bristol Youths. The Gloucester Journal, Mon. May 17 1824 records:

After they had been raised by the town ringers, The Painswick Youths, rang a complete set of 5040 changes which they brought round in three hours and eighteen minutes; when the Bristol Youths took their places, and completed the same in the space of two hours and fifty minutes. The town was remarkably crowded on the occasion, and a great treat was afforded to the lovers of the art. Uninterrupted harmony prevailed between the different parties, and their respective admirers, and the day concluded with the utmost hilarity and decorum.

The Gloucester Journal, Mon 7 June 1824, subsequently reported that the St. Nicholas Company of Bristol's peal was only an attempt to ring a peal of Grandsire Triples but in which they did not succeed, as the change 1,4,3,6,5,2,7 was twice brought up in the space of 20 minutes in the last part.

The Painswick Youths are noted as having rung the first peal at St James the Great Dursley which is recorded in the tower. Details:



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The Painswick Youths on Monday 10th May 1824 in 3 hours and 18 minutes

5040 Grandsire Triples Tenor 12cwt. 3 qrs. 14 lbs in G

1 John Mansfield	5 William Estcourt (Conductor)
2 Charles Holder	6 Thomas Bethell
3 James Chandler	7 Robert Selwyn
4 John Tunley	8 James Savory

To mark this 200th anniversary, a peal of Grandsire Triples will be attempted, same place, different bells, on Saturday, 11 May 2024.

Our two learners Karen and Joy continue to make progress. Joy is now competently ringing call changes and Karen will soon follow. An added bonus is that they both socialise after the practice. John Cole has rung his first QP of Spliced S Major and Lizzie Adkins her first of Stedman Triples, the first attempt coming adrift though no faults of hers.

On Monday, 9 October 2023

1280 Spliced S Major (4m: C, Y, N, R)

1 Anthony Bulteel; 2 Carole Bucknell; 3 Jonathan Adkins; 4 Ian Bucknell

5 John Cole; 6 Andrew Binstead; 7 Andrew Ward; 8 Philip Pope (C)

1st Spliced – 5. Rung in thanksgiving for St Mark's Church, Dursley (Woodmancote) which had its valedictory service in March 2023

On Wednesday, 18 October 2023, In 48 minutes

1280 Cambridge S Major

1 Lorna E. Swan; 2 A Ball; 3 Teresa J. Humphrey; 4 A Roy Shallish

5 G Skelly; 6 Mervyn A. Arscott; 7 Keith E. Beale; 8 Matthew R. T. Higbly (C)

On Monday, 15 January 2024

1260 Stedman Triples

1 Tony Natt; 2 Lizzie Adkins; 3 Carole Bucknell; 4 Ian Bucknell

5 Andrew Binstead; 6 Philip Pope; 7 Jonathan Adkins (C); 8 John Cole

In memory of Joan Winter, dear friend of 2&7, whose 75th wedding anniversary to her husband Dennis would have been today.

First in method: 2



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THE QUIZ OF A NIGHT TIME.

Terry Chivers

The branch ringing meeting on the 21st October 2023 was held at Coaley and with a late start time of 4-30 pm with ringing extending to 6-30 pm. This was followed by an adjournment to the adjacent village hall and a monumental quiz which commenced at 7-30; more or less.

Our quiz mistress for the evening was the delightful Lizzie, who took delight in confusing us with her craftily compiled crafty questions. The thing with quizzes is how easy the questions are if you know the answers. So many found it difficult! There was the question about Sally Gunnel's Olympic event which saw many not lasting the distance and we fell at the first hurdle. There was the Sally round which wasn't what we thought it was going to be. It was all about "Sally's." What was the name of that guy that played the piano with his feet? Why did Uncle John duck back in the alley with that tall girl? Ah, yes, memory; got his name now.

When it got to "I knew her so well" I knew that I didn't. We moved from discs to Discworld and then I was on a remote planet and in my element. That's one point. But Lizzie had got above herself, and everybody else, with the aerial views of Gloucestershire. It was just a pity that some attendees were from South Gloucestershire.

There was what must be a simple round. Twelve questions and the answers were the months of the year. But in what order? Came the answers. One wrong, that meant there were at least two wrong. Came the next wrong answer. Did that pair with the first wrong answer? Or was it a new wrong answer which would mean you now had four – at least – wrong answers. The agony and no ecstasy. There was an interval for food. The whole evening was expertly mistressminded by the Branch Secretary, Sarah. The food came from the Fish and Chip shop in Dursley under the direct control of Sarah, and everything was quickly of her trolley. Where did that come from? She had driven to and from the metropolis to collect and deliver our orders. We ate in style as Sarah had negotiated a deal to borrow knives and forks from the hall. She counted them out, and she counted them back – one was missing. One was found; no financial penalty.

Came the reckoning as the scores were summed and the pecking order declared. There were eight teams taking part, six of which were sandwiched between teams from our eight bell towers.

A good night was had by all – probably and subject to official confirmation.

Your author thanked Lizzie for the work that she had put into compiling the questioning and organising the prizes. But your author failed miserably in forgetting to thank Sarah for her mistressful organisation. Sorry Sarah. Did he thank people for coming? He doesn't remember. Well thanks for coming, even if it is late. And thanks to all the others that I have forgotten to thank for whatever it was that you contributed; it was very much appreciated!

Here's to the next time, and a merry meeting 1.

1 This is the answer to a quiz question. What is the question?



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Returning to ringing after a long gap

Ros Davies

I learned to ring back in the mid-1970s. I had noticed two girls who sat across the aisle in my classroom holding closed fists but moving their thumbs up and down in a rhythmical fashion. When I enquired what they were doing they explained they were practising bellringing. Further enquiries revealed that one was learning to ring at the tower closest to my home. It wasn't long before I joined her at Thursday night practices and in no time I was hooked. The three of us soon formed the core of our school band which grew to about a dozen of us, ringing handbells in our lunchtimes and quarter peals for occasional Sunday evening services.

Fast forward three years to the start of my student apprenticeship (or gap year as it would now be known): where I met my husband to be, Chris. The key attraction was the possibility to advance my sailing skills and I bade good-bye to bellringing for all time, as I thought.

In the mid-1980s we moved to a house close to the church in Slimbridge and, to be honest, Chris was not at all keen on hearing the bells. They were not rung particularly well much of the time and he would often ask me if they were supposed to go da-ding-da-dong-ding-dong in a syncopated rhythm. Interestingly though, I well remember they were ringing the Friday night that my younger son was born at home. In time, I became less keen on the bells myself because the local band would ring at midnight on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and invariably woke up one or other of our young sons. Many years passed and we enjoyed sailing as a family. I chose to keep my ringing past a closely-guarded secret. I figured that if I revealed the truth, local ringers would try to bring me back into the fold.

So how did I come to restart ringing? In the summer of 2021, Chris had an overnight diagnosis of cancer and was given three months to live. After eight weeks at home, he chose to move to The Hollies in Dursley so he could access end-of-life care when he needed it. While he was living there, we would listen to the bells being rung on practice nights and Sunday mornings, and he took a great interest. He derived great pleasure from listening to them and would often ask me what I thought they were ringing. He would also comment that this was the way bells should be rung: a metronomic beat and not the syncopated rhythm he had heard so often in the past. As fate would have it, he passed away on a Thursday evening to the sound of the Dursley bells.

At the start of 2022, there was a move in Slimbridge to have the bells rung for the Jubilee. Someone was putting together a list of people who thought they might like to learn, along with two or three people who had rung before. Following Chris's enthusiasm for the bells, I decided to return to ringing and added my name to the list. Then I waited to be contacted. And waited... and waited.

Then, as luck would have it, one Saturday afternoon while I was cutting my front lawn, the bells started ringing for the first time in ages. I put my mower away and hastened up the tower in my grubby gardening clothes. When the bells stopped, I entered the ringing chamber and briefly explained that I used to ring about 50 years previously and was interested in seeing whether I was still able to do so. James Joynson was disbelieving that I could have lived so close to the church for nearly 40 years and had not been in the ringing chamber in all that time. He encouraged me to try some back strokes and hand strokes, and I established that I probably could ring again. I stayed for the rest of the practice which included a plain course of London, as I recall. About a week later, the local tower captain who is one of my neighbours phoned saying he had had an intriguing phone call. Andrew Ward who had been at the Branch practice had phoned to say that someone living close to



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the church was a lapsed ringer. "So tell me Ros, is it you? And if it is, how come I've been your neighbour for all these years and didn't know this?!"

So, the cat was out of the bag and my return to ringing was about to become a reality.

[Next time: How I got up to speed from a standing start...]

John Davis of Chipping Sodbury died in 2023.

John was born and grew up in Willesden, North-West London, where he met Margaret. They married in December 1968 and moved to Chipping Sodbury, a few months after John's job relocated to Bristol. They had two sons, Adrian and Colin, and three granddaughters, Jasmine, Edie & Lara. Margaret predeceased him in 2009.

John was an active member of St John's, Chipping Sodbury, and his first introduction to the world of bells came when Alan Pidgeon roped him into a DIY team preparing for the 1984 rehanging. Regular weekend working parties installed a new floor & ladder, repointed walls, carried out various work in the ringing room and shifted tons of rubbish.

Adrian was the first of the family to learn to ring. John started soon after, and was gradually followed by Colin, and then Margaret; she was heard to say on more than one occasion 'if you can't beat them, join them'. While always happy to ring behind, and sometimes turn in the treble, John never ventured far beyond Bob Doubles and Grandsire. He rang the occasional quarter, always willing to help if someone was needed to cover behind.

Regular service ringing was important to John, as was passing on the basics of the art to learners. He thoroughly enjoyed supporting those that were progressing past basic bell handling, notably at the basic practices held in Dursley. He was a keen, social ringer, and in later years enjoyed joining the ringers of Abson for their mid-week practice.

By profession John was a graphic designer, and he loved to employ his skills. He produced a set of pop-up Branch publicity banners which have been used on many occasions, and for several years he designed the Wotton Branch newsletter, Clangour, which he took from a run-of-the-mill ringing magazine to 'something quite special'. But the high-point must be the 130-page hardback book that he designed to celebrate the first centenary of the Wotton Branch.

His ringing subsided in later years, having been diagnosed with Lewy-Body Dementia. He moved into residential care in late 2020, and died on 3rd December 2023, aged 77.

Tony Cope 9th June 1945 - 27th January 2024

Huvin Thompson, Slimbridge Tower

It is with great sadness that I have to advise of the death of Anthony Richard (Tony) Cope of Ryall's Lane, Slimbridge, on Saturday 27th January 2024.

Tony was 78 years of age and had been suffering from various health issues for some considerable time. He had not been able to ring for many years. He came from a bell ringing family, ringing with his father Bill in particular at Fareham in Hampshire as well as at Bath before settling in Slimbridge several decades ago. He and his father rang locally and taught many young students to ring at Slimbridge in the early 1990s. Tony retired from ringing when his father died and had a heart valve replacement operation in 2003. Years of surfing and squash playing at a relatively high level, also



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caught up with him and arthritis meant he had difficulty getting about. Unfortunately he fell at his home early last week and broke his femur. He was admitted to hospital where he sadly died on Saturday morning. Thoughts and prayers are with Pat, his wife and their children Jenny and Christopher.



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Introducing the Mobile Belfries Trust

THE MOBILE BELFRY TRUSTEES (www.mobilebelfries.org)

We invite you to consider booking a mobile belfry or portable mini ring for an event in 2024 or 2025. We have been operating the Charmborough Ring since 2017 and taken it to almost 200 events. We recognised that the ring was popular during the summer months, so we were not able to satisfy all the potential bookings, and the ring has its limitations in the time it takes to erect and dismantle. So together with the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, we started looking at developing a new mobile ring.

The Touring Tower

The aim was to build a structure that was lighter, and so open up the number of vehicles able to tow the mobile belfry, and also to use hydraulics so that it was self-erecting and could be ready within 30 minutes of arriving at an event.

We talked to bell-hangers and the group that operates the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry. John Taylor & Co offered to join our team, bringing not just their Computer Aided Design expertise, but they generously offered to donate the bells and fittings. The Loughborough Foundry Museum had also recently been awarded a large Heritage Lottery Fund grant, and we met up with Chrissie Van-Mierlo the Museum Director who provided some useful advice on how the new belfry could be used for outreach projects with young people.

Covid slowed us down, although the need to help ringing recover after the pandemic added urgency to our project, and it became one of the Central Council's strategic objectives. We are pleased to announce that we expect to receive delivery of the completed mobile belfry around the end of January 2024. The new mobile belfry is realistic enough that you could comfortably teach someone to handle on the bells. The tenor feels as though it is about 3cwt.

The Mobile Belfries Trust

As the project progressed, the partners saw the benefit of bringing the three mobile belfries under one banner. There didn't seem to be any point creating a new trust for this so the Trustees of The Charmborough Trust agreed to change its name, and three new Trustees have come on board. The new ring and the Charmborough Ring will be both owned and operated by 'The Mobile Belfries Trust' who will also promote the use of other smaller portable mini rings, and the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry.

You can find further details of all of these on our new website www.mobilebelfries.org

PR and recruitment

There are those who have taken mobile belfries to events such as County shows with no apparent recruitment success. However, there is definitely a difference between the presence of mobile belfries at large, untargeted events, where it is difficult to follow up enquiries or really give the impression of the richness of our art, and the use at specific local recruitment events, and in schools, universities, and scout and guide camps.

If used correctly and with good, quick, follow-up, there is plenty of evidence that mobile belfries do recruit new ringers, and the presence of rings at any event is good for ringing PR, engaging with new audiences and raising awareness, which might spark interest at some point in the future.

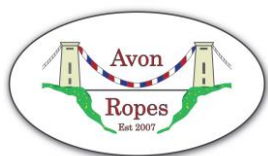


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We are now taking bookings for 2024 and 2025. We have a standard charge for taking a mobile belfry to an event within 50 miles of one of our bases of £225 for the first day. See our website for further details and a map.

The Trustees are particularly interested in opportunities to take the mobile belfries into schools, scout and guide camps and university freshers fairs, and offer a reduced rate of £150 for the first day.

With the Central Council also working on improving the branding and marketing of bellringing as the first pillar of its Ringing 2030 project, we are hoping that mobile belfries and mini rings can leverage that, and make a valuable contribution to the publicity of ringing and recruitment of new ringers.



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WOTTON BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman	Chris Cooper
Ringing Master	James Joynson
Assistant Ringing Master	Vacant
Secretary	Sarah Lorkin
Treasurer	Gill Carey
Clangour Editor	Sarah Lorkin
Publicity Officer	Terry Chivers
Management Committee Rep	Chris Cooper

REGULAR PRACTICES

Monday

Chipping Sodbury	19:30-21:15	Edna Cooper
Cromhall	19:30-21:00	Sue Wray
Stone	19:30-21:00	Jeremy Sargent
Yate (1 st and 3 rd only)	By arrangement	Barrie Fletcher

Tuesday

Wotton-under-Edge	19:30-21:00	Adrian Davis
Upper Cam	19:30-21:00	Alex Reeves

Wednesday

Berkeley	19:30-21:00	Tim Soanes
Coaley	19:30-21:00	Terry Chivers
Horton	19:30-21:00	Rex Isaac
Hawkesbury	18:30-20:00	Colin Dixon

Thursday

Dursley	19:30-21:00	Elizabeth Byrne
Tortworth	By arrangement	Fen Marshall
Stinchcombe	19:30-21:00	James Joynson
Wickwar	19:15-21:00	Peter Juniper

Friday

North Nibley	19:30-21:00	James Joynson
Slimbridge	19:30-21:00	Huvin Thompson

10 bell practices are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at Berkeley from 7.30 - 9pm.



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