

Great Gransden Church Bells

Blog 2017

Friday 29th December 2017

Gransden ringers and friends held their Christmas party on Friday 29th December at Nutbells in Lt Gransden. We squeezed 17 into the kitchen and dining room for a three-course meal prepared by various ringers. Instructions were to change "venue" between courses so that we could mix it up a bit.

After the meal we had intended to ring tunes on handbells, but in the end we decided on one of David's quizzes; always enjoyable. The result was very close, only one point in it!

The evening ended with a presentation of small gifts to Phillip and Sheila for hosting the party and leading the ringing during the year. A Happy New Year to everyone.



Busy doing the quiz



Runners-up



Sheila and Phillip thanked for hosting the party



Winners

28th December 2017

We rang a quarter peal this morning, for Christmas. Plain Bob Doubles, by a local band. Well done everyone, some very enjoyable ringing. I decided to not call the traditional 10 extents and a sixty, in preference to two blocks of 360 being each of three bells observation, calling the remaining bell observation in between the other extents. I then called four extents (1 for each bell) and we finished with a sixty.

27th December 2017

We have been busy learning Plain Bob Minor during the Autumn and early winter months. We don't always have the chance to ring it but we have been successful in completing plain courses on a couple of occasions. Practices are pretty well supported as usual and we can usually ring Plain Bob Doubles and call changes. Recent practices have tried to focus on quality of striking, and on the whole we manage reasonably well. We often receive comments from parishioners about how much they enjoy the bells.

Lynn, our new ringer, is now ringing Rounds competently and is eager to move on to call changes. Sheila and I took her to St. Neots on the Friday before Christmas to experience the heavy 10 bells. Lynn managed very well. A return visit in due course would be helpful.

On the 23rd December the clock stopped. This is the third time in recent weeks and clearly there has been a problem which I had not yet identified. A couple of hours in the tower traced the fault to a seized pulley on part of the going train winding mechanism. This was removed and inspected and a vain attempt to get it to run freely. Alas, this was not possible, so the clock has to remain stopped for the time being.

A quick email to the Cumbria Clock Company with photographs was dispatched on Christmas Eve in the hope that they can help as soon as they return from the Christmas break. I expect, however, that it will be into the New Year before a replacement part can be obtained.

I also emailed the village via Touchbase to let everyone know about the clock and received a lovely email from a resident saying how much they enjoyed the clock chimes.

Ringing for our Christmas services was very well attended, with eleven at the Nativity service in the afternoon. This included family members who we don't see very often but who are always very welcome to join us.; Michael and Martin Prest, and Rebecca, Mark and Daniel Banner. We had only six for the midnight service, but this was all we needed, and we enjoyed some very nice ringing.

27th September 2017

I thought I would write a line or two to confirm that we are still in the land of the living! It has been fairly quiet on the ringing front in recent weeks and there has not been very much to report.

With autumn coming into bloom the evenings are getting darker and although we are still arriving for practice in the light it very soon becomes dark and we are reminded of the shorter days to come. The curtain has been taken down from the ringing room

window because the sun doesn't bother us anymore and the cooling fan has been taken upstairs out of the way.

The annual tower clean-up is almost finished, just the staircase to vacuum from top to bottom and the task will be complete for another 12 months. Next maintenance job is servicing the clock which is done in December.

There are two exciting things to report now. The first is that Christine, who visits us on a Thursday but is really a St. Neots ringer, is spending the week in Tulloch on a ringing course. We are excited to hear how she progressed during the week. We are organising her first quarter peal which will be in October.

The second is that we have a recruit. her name is Lynn and she had her first ringing lesson this week, during which she learned how to ring up a bell (without handling a coiled tail end) and progressing to the backstroke; and ringing the handstroke from a bell part down, raising it to the up position.

14th July 2017

A good practice last night although with only seven in attendance. We rang several extents of Plain Bob Doubles, which helped Matt and Christine (St. Neots) consolidate ringing the treble. We also rang call changes, with the tenor turned in, and some Mexican Wave, finishing with a very good ring-down in peal of all six bells.

We will be ringing this Sunday but will not be able to practice for two weeks due to holidays. There are insufficient ringers to guarantee any ringing during the summer months and we hope that numbers will improve in the autumn!

3rd July 2017

It has been a while since I blogged! We had a couple of extra-ordinary ringing events in June, one being BBC Music Day, and the other a quarter peal for Peter Wilcox on his consecration as Bishop of Sheffield. Both events have previously been reported on the welcome page.

In general ringing terms we have had a quiet period when we have been gently getting on with the business of ringing for services and a wedding, and on practice nights. However, we have met short on a couple of occasions and last week we decided to cancel the practice. Sheila and I went to Gamlingay instead and had a very pleasant ringing session there.

We are short of ringers. We can't always ring all six due to holidays and other reasons. Our efforts so far in recruitment by advertising to the general public has not yet born fruit. We are placing an advertisement in Roundabout for six months and have recently created a Facebook page. The latter has shown some interest in what we do, which is encouraging, but has not rewarded us with any volunteers. It is early days!

Andrew and Alasdair have finally completed their GCSEs and we hope to ring a celebratory quarter peal when they receive their results, but holidays will determine when we can do this. It is good to see them back in the tower after quite a lot of absence due to revision priorities. Their capability is partly why we need more ringers.

They will leave us in 2 years' time to head off to university. It will take that long to train up new ringers, so we must recruit now!

26th May 2017

We were pleased to welcome some visitors to our practice last night by pre-arrangement. Frances Smith, who rings at Huntingdon asked if she could bring some of her learners to help them gain experience on different bells. They had already visited several other towers in the area on their practice nights.

Frances, who rings with her husband Nick, introduced us to Mike and Jerry who started to learn at the beginning of the year. They have made good progress, benefiting from two handling practices a week in the early stages and ringing regularly for practice and on Sunday. They are able to ring Rounds and are just moving on to call changes.

We were also able to make use of Frances and Nick's experience to help us ring St. Simons Bob Doubles, and we were able to ring a couple of extents and plain courses.

We were short on local ringers partly due to GCSE examinations, but the sun shone (we had to erect the "summer" curtain to prevent the dazzle) and a good practice was had by all.



L-R: Sheila P, Sheila G, Janet, David, Matt, Frances, Nick, Jerry, Phillip, Mike

21st May 2017

We have been a little short at practice recently, mainly due to Andrew and Alasdair being in the middle of GCSE's, which has understandably taken priority for them. But, on Thursday last they turned up at practice and we were delighted to see them. We took advantage of this and gave them a good dose of Plain Bob Doubles, and used them to help David and Sheila ring St. Simons. It took four attempts, but we finally did manage a few plain courses. Thanks to everyone who came to the practice.

Today, Sunday 21st, we were pleased to see Hazel Pettit in the tower again after a break of many years. Hazel used to be a regular ringer, but family and work commitments meant that she was unable to regularly. Hazel is now just retired and hopes to join us for practices and some Sunday ringing. We encouraged her to ring and after a few moments of solo practice, in other words, a "ting tang", she rang call changes pretty much perfectly. Well done Hazel.

We had a total of nine ringers which meant that I was able to take a break and listen to the bells outside on this beautifully sunny morning.



L-R: Sheila P, Hazel, Steve

Fete Ringing

Also today, we rang the bells immediately before the church fete, which was held in Old Dixies, David and Sheila Prest's home. The house is very nearby, and it was a good opportunity to announce our presence to everyone flocking in to the garden. One person said afterwards that it was lovely to hear the bells as she drove into the village. This is encouraging feedback especially at a time when we are looking for new ringers.



Fete Ringers waiting to start.

L-R; Matt, Sheila P, David, Sheila G.

29th April 2017

Excellent practice last Thursday which focussed on Plain Bob Doubles. This gave plenty of opportunity for Alasdair to ring unaffected touches inside, and Christine to ring touches on the treble, practising for her first quarter peal, and for Matt, practice for his first quarter on the treble. We also managed to ring a couple of courses of St. Simons which was also successful.

We have an exciting Sunday coming up when we will ring a quarter peal to welcome Susanne and Matt's baby boy, Reuben. This will be at 5.00pm.

Finally for now, we have created a Facebook page for Great Gransden bellringers which we hope will reach a wide audience, especially in the community, so they get to know more about us, and hopefully want to come and ring. This can be found at

<https://www.facebook.com/greatgransdenbellringers/>

Please follow our ringing exploits and "like" the page.

21st April 2017

Last minute apologies meant that there were only five at practice last night. Not wanting to waste an opportunity we decided to ring a quarter peal on the back 5. Ringing doubles without a tenor cover is fairly challenging when not practiced regularly. It is particularly important to have steady leading and not to rush the bells, keeping them held up. This produces better striking and makes ringing the tenor a lot easier. I am pleased to say that we made a good effort of this unplanned challenge and a reasonable quarter peal was scored in 46 minutes.

Well done to everyone, it was good fun. And then, for some of us, to the pub!

20th April 2017

I have just completed two organised tours to the top of the tower. The weather was beautiful enabling panoramic views of both villages. The top of the tower is rarely visited due to the challenging access, but for able bodied people it is a rewarding adventure, with stops on the way to see the clock and bells.



The Old Vicarage



Church Street



Looking towards Lt
Gransden

6th April 2017

We were delighted to welcome Reuben to our practice this evening. Reuben was born on Wednesday 29th March and Susanne and Matt wanted to introduce him to us as soon as possible. Reuben slept all through the practice, perhaps already used to the sound of the bells, being a "hidden" attendee for the last nine months! Congratulations Susanne and Matt.



2nd April 2017

Just six of us this morning, but that was enough! We rang a 120 Plain Bob Doubles, followed by 60 on thirds call changes. We enjoyed some good striking. Comment made that the heating is now off in the ringing room, and Spring has sprung. Good!

In church afterwards, a villager told me that she enjoyed the bells this morning as she walked to church and she knew that she was not late! How nice to know that people listen to and appreciate our efforts?

29th March 2017

Well, it's been fairly quite lately. Practices and Sunday ringing have continued but there hasn't been a lot to report.

We are routinely ringing plain courses of St. Simons as well as touches of Plain Bob Doubles, but this can sometimes depend on everyone being there.

We have lost Christine as she has now gone back to St. Neots practices on a Friday now that she does not have to ferry one of her sons to sports sessions on a Friday. It has been good to have her with us on a Thursday for the last couple of months, during which time she has learned to Plain Hunt on 5 and 6, and to call changes. I am sure she will keep in touch, and I know that she wants to be kept informed about Susanne's baby! Talking of which, Susanne is still ringing even though her baby is due within the next couple of weeks. We hope to arrange a quarter peal for them in due course.

The boys have missed a few sessions lately due to intense revision and school work as they near their GCSEs. This is a hectic time for them and we wish them luck. It will be quite a few weeks before they can relax.

25th February 2017

In 2016 the bell ringers were left an amount of money by the late Mrs Anne Bradbury. Anne loved to listen to the bells and would often spend time in her garden on a summer evening enjoying our practising. We wanted to commemorate her life by ringing a quarter peal on the anniversary of her death but were too late to do so last year, so we planned ahead for 2017 and as the date fell on a Saturday it enabled us to muster a local team to ring. On the 25th February we rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles,

Anne's companion and friend came to the church to take photographs, and a recording was made which will be sent to Anne's only surviving relative.

20th February 2017

Nice practice last Thursday when we thought there would only be six of us due to half term absenteeism. But, the Stevens family visited from Swavesey and this took our numbers up to ten. We were able to ring a lot of Plain Bob Doubles, St. Simons and St. Clements (the latter requested by Daniel S). Rounds and call changes were also rung, and Andrew rang a supervised touch of Plain Bob Doubles for the first time. Well done everyone!

Sunday's ringing was very good indeed, attracting favourable comments from members of the congregation. The main event was a long touch of call changes, but we also rang Plain Hunt 5.

11th February 2017

We have had a few good practices this year with some welcome resources visiting, which has really benefited the band. It was good to see Alasdair on Thursday having had a couple of weeks off after a minor op, and Andrew came along, having a break from his technical work with his school "am dram" production.

Christine continues to work on her Plain Hunt on the treble, Matt is getting to grips with the treble to Plain Bob Doubles and Alasdair will soon be ringing a touch inside. St. Simons continues to be a challenge but the increased opportunities to ring it are helping us get through plain courses.

All in all, we are doing pretty well, but we do need new ringers if we are going to continue to grow as a team.

27th January 2017

It has been a bit quiet on the ringing front since Christmas with a few ringers missing early on. Practice last night was excellent with all but two ringers turning up and we had two "occasional" visitors. This helped us to ring Plain Bob Doubles, St. Simons Doubles, Plain Hunt on six (a first for Martin and Matt), as well as call changes (a first for calling them for Christine).

The striking was pretty good too and there was a lot of enthusiasm. We could definitely make quick progress if we had all these ringers every week. Never mind, we will take every opportunity to push on and encourage everyone in their ringing.