

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD
OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



Newsletter
October 2020

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The deadline for the next Newsletter is : 28th February 2021
Please make a note of this date in your diary

Please send your contribution either through your
Branch Press Correspondent or direct to :
e-mail : christopherpearson@btinternet.com or Tel : 01536 420822

President's Prelude

Firstly I must thank Geoff Pullin for guiding the Guild for the last 6-and-a-bit years, maybe the last 'bit' since March being the most "interesting"? He will be a very hard act to follow – and there have been some illustrious Presidents during the 90+ years of the Guild before Geoff.

Where to start? In more usual times I would have tried to drop in on as many of the Branch meetings as I could – but that is clearly not going to be possible, at least this side of Easter it seems from the news of rampant COVID this week. I have therefore decided to take a Presidential Grand Tour (Virtual) of all the Branches during the winter months, to say "Hi" to you all, and to give you an opportunity to tell me what I should be focussing on to help us all with restarting ringing, recruitment, retention, and anything else during my term as your Guild President.

The Presidential Progress will look like this:

Each Meeting will start at 6pm, and will last no longer than an hour

- Culworth Saturday 31st October
- Wellingborough Sunday 1st November
- Daventry Saturday 7th November
- Kettering Sunday 8th November
- Towcester Saturday 14th November
- Thrapston Sunday 15th November
- Northampton Saturday 21st November
- Peterborough Sunday 22nd November
- Guilsborough Saturday 28th November
- Rutland Sunday 29th November

We will meet on the Zoom internet platform, and ALL members are invited to drop in.

To join this Zoom Meeting please either click on this link:

<http://bit.ly/PDGPresident> - which will load the Zoom application and open the meeting for you;

or, if you already use Zoom, open that application and input

- Meeting ID: 841 1780 3449
- Passcode: (Queens on 8 numerically)

If you cannot join me in my Presidential Parlour on the day for any reason I would still like to hear from you, so please do

contact me direct on 01858-463816 or

email: **president@pdg.org.uk**



I look forward to seeing you at one of these Virtual Meetings this winter. Why "Prelude"? I hope these meetings will be a Prelude to resuming real ringing ASAP!

Alistair Donaldson

President's CV

I learnt to ring at Winchester College (6, 11cwt) in 1967, ringing my first Quarter Peal later that same year, and my first Peal in April 1968. I was pleased to be able to ring a Peal at St. Mary Peterborough on the 50th anniversary with a special method and ringers including the conductor of that first Peal.

In 1971 I moved back home to Thames Ditton, Surrey just by Hampton Court, while studying at Kings College, London University. In 1976 I married local girl Janet at St. Nicholas Church Thames Ditton (6, 8cwt) and became Tower

Captain leading a largely teenage band.

1978 saw us move to Crewe as I worked for the Railways and we joined St Mary's Church, Wistaston Cheshire

(6, 5cwt – now an 8). I became a member of the Nantwich band (8, 14cwt) extending my ringing repertoire into Major.

In 1984 we moved again to Hethersett (8, 9cwt) just outside Norwich, Norfolk where the back 2 bells were unringable due to frame problems. So I joined the band at St Giles in Norwich (8, 13cwt) where I first ventured into ringing the Standard 8 Surprise Major.

Railway work required another move in 1986 to Kelvedon Essex (then 6, 21cwt) near Colchester where we were to stay until

2010 while our 4 children went to local schools. I joined the Essex Association and during that time I served terms as Secretary, Treasurer, Ringing Master and Master of the Northern District. In 1998 I assisted Brian Meads to set up a Branch Ringing School to train new Millennium Ringers from



scratch as well as develop other ringers. This School ran every Saturday morning at Coggeshall / Wethersfield / Felsted on simulators for 15 years! Soon after we added Intermediate and Advanced practices to help our new recruits develop which I ran and tutored for many years. In 2006 I set up a joint Surprise Major practice with the adjacent North West District which ran for many years. The latter two practices are still running!

Janet was appointed Vicar of St James, Deeping St James in Lincolnshire (6, 16cwt) in 2011 so we moved again and I joined the Lincoln Guild. In time I became Branch representative to the Guild Committee and led one of the four Working Groups under the Guild's Strategic Review specifically looking at how to develop the Branch & Guild organisation to better support ringers and ringing in Lincolnshire. I also joined the Peterborough Guild as we could see the Cathedral from the Deepings, ringing at Glington and the Cathedral. It was at the Cathedral that Robin Rogers took me in hand, introducing me to Mike Maughan. My Peal total when I arrived in 2011 was just 30. In 2012 alone I rang 30 Peals, the majority with Mike – I was hooked! I also called my First Peal that year.

On the other hand I thought my striking wasn't too bad when I arrived: Mike ensured I rapidly raised my game, even though I still fall short of his exacting standards. My Peal total is now over 300.

The Peterborough Diocese beckoned and in 2013 Janet was appointed Vicar at Welford, Sibbertoft and Marston Trussell, so I became a resident member of the PDG, this time in Guilsborough Branch. During this time I served the Branch as Ringing Master and Chairman, amongst other things promoting development of ringers with regular QP days. I am a great believer in the development of ringing through Quarter Peals – I have rung nearly 1,500 now.

In 2018 Janet retired, and we moved to Market Harborough, from where I support ringing in the Maidwell group of parishes south of the border while also ringing at Market Harborough area towers.

I was honoured to be nominated by Derek Sibson and elected to the Cumberlands in 2015.

I have been Ringing Master of the Golden Oldies mid-week Surprise Major Group for 3 years.

During my ringing career I have been a resident member of 7 Guilds: Guildford, Chester, Norwich, Essex, Peterborough,




Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, moving 9 times! Our moving days are over we hope.

To support recruitment I have an 8-bell portable Mini-Ring by Matthew Higby stored in my garage.

Finally I am a great believer in the National 3/4 day Ringing Courses, ever since I helped at Coggeshall on the Essex Ringing Course. Since 2001 I have attended as a Student then Helper and lately Tutor on the Sparsholt / Wantage / Bradfield Ringing Courses. More recently I have also helped on the Hereford Course. There is a great social atmosphere on these courses, especially the residential ones, but the concentrated study of methods and practice with good bands enormously benefits the students. As the National courses are significantly oversubscribed I am pleased that some Guilds such as Leicester are now running their own long weekend courses.

Alistair Donaldson

The Secretary Surveys



I think it is fair to say that the Guild has, in nearly 100 years, not had to face a year like 2020 before. If my crystal ball had been functioning, I'm not sure I'd have signed up for this job... In March, we'd just held the GMC meeting and were looking forward to starting planning the Guild's centenary celebrations when we were all sent home and told to stay there. Whilst ringing ceased for longer during WW2, this is the longest peacetime cessation of ringing. It is noticeable from the reports of the 1940s that even though ringing was largely stopped, the life of the Guild continued, albeit in modified form. There were 10 peals for the Guild between 1940 and 1945. Handbell ringing came to the fore, as it has again.

Then there were social events and annual meetings, which we've been denied this time. However we have other opportunities that were not available 75 years ago. We have phones, e-mails, text, skype, facetime and the almost ubiquitous Zoom to keep us in touch with family and friends. Zoom quizzing has become a regular part of the weekly routine for many in the last few months. And we can also use technology to ring. Ringing Room is the most commonly used remote ringing platform. The fact

that a band does not have to be physically co-located means that it has allowed ringers to practice not only locally, but with people across the country and, indeed, the world. Like all ringing, some people have got it right away, for others it just doesn't come so easily. It's also generated a whole new language of explanations for mistakes, which just shows how inventive ringers can be.

For some of us the resumption of services means we have been able to ring some bells, and while it is a pleasure to make a noise again for the church, it doesn't half sound strange! I know that for many more it is not yet sensible for them to consider ringing, for many different reasons. Throughout this time, it has been important that ringers stay in contact. As we move into a probable winter of discontent that remains the case. We need to maintain continuity and a sense of community while we are unable to come together as one in our hobby. It may be some time yet before we can say that this is over, meaning that regular communication will continue to be vital. Branches and towers need to make every effort to stay in touch with their ringers; we will need them and they may well need us.

September also saw a first for the Guild – the first time we've held a virtual AGM. After much deliberation this was the best option available to us, although not one that was within anyone's comfort zone. This was run via the Zoom platform and was ably chaired by the outgoing president, in what he fervently hopes was both a first and last time. Watching the footage while I wrote my minutes was a very strange experience - I seem to be incapable of sitting still! Many thanks to my fellow executive, members who spoke and my techy husband for all their support and efforts before and during the meeting. That it seemed to go well doesn't mean I want to do it again, but at least we'll know what to do next time.

At this I was delighted to announce winners of a competition hosted via the Guild's Facebook page and weekly update e-mails, inviting entries for a virtual Ringers' tea – seeing as we couldn't have a real one. After much deliberation from the exec, the winners were Sarah Bence for her Pizza Pin wheels in the savoury section and, for the sweet section, Anthea Hiams for her chocolate cupcake display. Both can be rightly proud of their culinary and pictorial skills and we'll be placing our order for a Ringers' tea as soon as we're allowed to!





I prefer to finish with a look to a positive future, to when ringing will be back as part of our lives and our collective soundscape. I might have forgotten a load of methods by then, but they'll come back too (I hope). The Guild will continue to support ringing and ringers, as it has since its inception, no matter what is thrown at us. And maybe there is a way to see this enforced downtime as an opportunity. How many pub conversations have you listened to where someone has had great ideas, but no time to actually turn them into something. Now there is time. Elsewhere in this newsletter is the report of a project to improve the bells at Preston. That's just the sort of project that could be sparked by this period of inactivity. What would you like to see in your tower? What would make it a better place to return to, to ring in, to teach in? Go on, get those dreams off ice and onto paper.

Helen Allton

News from the Branches

08

Culworth Branch

JOHN LEWIS

John passed away on September 19th following a long period of ill health. He was a skilful and respected member of the ringing



community.

John was a long standing ringer at St Peter's in Brackley where he taught many young; and not so young people to ring. John and his wife Joan were regular Brackley ringers but as time progressed, they found the ground floor lighter ring of six at Whitfield was more amenable and became regular ringers there for both service and practice ringing. John was also in charge of the bells in Shalstone, often asking for help with ringing for weddings.

John and Joan were regulars on our annual Brackley Area Ringing Tours, John more often than not volunteering to be one of the drivers. We journeyed the length and breadth of the country which also included Northern and also Southern Ireland.

John was a perfectionist when it came to striking and often said "I like to hear it done right". He would wear a beaming smile when we did 'get it right' but sadly we often disappointed him!!

Bell ringing wasn't Johns' only passion in life. He owned several vintage tractors and before his illness regularly took part in charity vintage ploughing competitions.

John will be sadly missed by so many people in so many different ways.
May he rest in peace.

Julie Blencowe

EYDON TOWER NEWS - We would like to offer our thanks to the Culworth Branch Steward, David Kirkham and his stalwart assistant, for checking over our bells back in July and finding a problem with the No.4 bell wheel we were not aware of. No.3 bell which sits above the main frame has a wooden rope shoot box to safely allow its rope to pass by the wheel of the 4th . But the wheel was found to have been rubbing the front face of this box and both were beginning to show signs of damaged. Appropriate changes were duly made to the shoot box structure over the next week and the problem has been resolved which indicates that annual inspections are needed.

After months of no ringing activity we were really pleased to be given permission to ring for the VJ Day 75 years anniversary on the Sat 15th August by our rector Stevie, so Bert Manton, Gary Denby and I, rang the treble, 3rd and 5th . The fifteen minutes of PH on 3 and a lot of call changing went down well with the villagers who commented on how uplifting it was to hear



the bells ringing again. We have since managed to ring 3 alternate bells for two Sunday services, firstly with Sally Stephens and secondly with Paul Richardson stepping in.

Geoffrey Stretton

WHITFIELD have managed to ring for a couple of services, socially distancing by getting 2 families to ring.

LOIS WEEDON – instead of a “ramble and ring” we just had a “ramble”. 9 ringers walked the 12 miles from Lois Weedon to Canons Ashby, stopping off at Moreton Pinkney for the required flapjack break whilst Ian checked on the timing of his clock in the church. Fortified we continued to Sulgrave for our picnic lunch and then back to Weston and Lois Weedon. Well done Trevor and Louise for organising another good walk just before the “rule of six” came into force!

Joy Kirkham - Culworth Correspondent

Daventry Branch

Branch meetings

Eighteen rang, and three didn't, on the nice four at Kilsby in March. Two courses of Kilsby Treble Place Minimus were appropriately successful. Barby's five bells were put to good use by 21 ringers with six locals not ringing as they were busy with teas. Many methods were rung before the lower chimed to a stop ready for the Revd Nigel Fry to start our service with Michael at the organ.

After an ample tea in the church, the success of the Branch Quiz was reported and Alison Buck thanked for arranging it. 53 contestants took part and a profit of £48.17 was made. In view of the national media concern about the coronavirus, it was agreed to cancel the coach outing. Further it was agreed to go to the Birmingham suburbs in May 2021. Barby ringer John Thompson, who learned at Badby, was elected a member.

Branch General Management Committee Rep, Ian Willgress, reported the return after 80 years of Harpole from the Daventry Branch to the Northampton Branch and that the new bell for Church Stowe was due to be cast next week.



The Branch Ringing Master reported a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles at Flore on Feb 23 marked the completion of the tower stonework restoration and was David Foster's first inside, ringing the second to Plain Bob Doubles conducted by Ian Willgress; a branch quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor on Feb 27 at Badby was the first of minor for Kim Gibbard ringing the treble and conducted by Gwynneth. In the evening eleven gathered at Crick after carefully being shepherded through the nave by Nick Hiams to avoid falling roof plaster! New member John had his first ring on eight, inside to Plain Bob Triples.

The next time we met as a branch was in September.

Coronavirus

Daventry practice on March 17 was to begin after the tower AGM had ended, but all was cancelled due to coronavirus. Later government emergency regulations stopped ringing until June and then under very restrictive precautions.

So the initial lockdown took instant hold and became unrelenting for some months. The Guild AGM was postponed, there was no ringing for Easter or the 75th anniversaries of VE and VJ Days.

Daily life changed beyond all recognition with little or no road, rail or air traffic and a reliance on deliveries by supermarkets and volunteers. Our new Guild Secretary kept us busy by setting up a new Guild facebook site and sending weekly emails with puzzles - even providing a series of exercises to keep our limbs in ringable condition.

The Daventry Tuesday evening Zoom practice organised by Leanne ventured into trying the Ringing Room program and established that it is best used via laptops rather than Apple devices. However the weekly meet soon ended up as a 'pub chat'. I understand the Heyford group also maintain a Friday virtual pub meet on Fridays.

In June, news of churches being able to open emerged and at the end of the month I was able to record an interview for BBC Radio Northampton Sunday Breakfast programme that short spells of service ringing on well-spaced bells was likely to begin soon. I hadn't anticipated the reluctance of churches and their congregations to return. The use of Zoom on-line had become well embedded in the population in general and the development of the Ringing Room program for bellringing had some advocates.

A review of the 2 metre distancing rule, with a view to increasing the numbers of bells and towers that could ring, got submerged by the autumnal rise in the virus, so we seem stuck in a rut!

A survey of Daventry tower confirmed we could ring 5 bells, nominate five ringers using face covering, each to ring one bell up, ring and lowers. We were ready after a 19 week break to ring on August 2 for the first Sunday service in Church and have been able to continue, although some week's the service is still via Zoom to



allow hearty singing (at home). At Badby our first ring on three bells followed the funeral of a well-known villager on July 23 and has continued for Sunday services but these are only one or two a month.

I have been told of ringing at Byfield (3 bells), Litchborough (3 bells), Staverton and Weedon (2,4,6,8 or 1,2,4,6,8 with "a couple" on 1,8). Comments from the general public and congregations about it being nice to hear the bells again were reported by several towers and made it feel even more worthwhile than it felt in practice!

Some parishes have not resumed services in the church (Braunston, Hellidon) or the bells are too close (Everdon) to make it worth ringing.

In August, when thanking Carole for restarting ringing on five bells, the Revd Dawn Stokes, Vicar of Holy Cross, Daventry, noted that the Bell Ringers have not had their monthly services for some months and offered to hold one with a maximum of 34 people at 2 metre distancing. Chair Jane Rands arranged it for Saturday, September 12 at 4.30pm when 17 met for the service. It was lovely to catch up with people not seen for six months. Revd Dawn produced a special service which combined some elements of our usual ringers' service with other prayers appropriate to ringing and the present time. She was ably assisted by Clare Glover who also did the homily. Clare is on placement at Holy Cross as part of her training to be a vicar and is married to Kilsby ringer, James Glover. James inherited

a set of 15 handbells from Peter Box and sent these so we could have a go on them after the service (the bells being wiped and no sharing allowed!) Six of us thought we were going to ring rounds on the front ten. At first glance the bells looked to be in order but we did not check. The result was NOT rounds but a pretty sound once we got used to it. (We got a 'round' of applause!!). Twelve of us adjourned to the churchyard for a picnic and a lot of chat. There was a lot to catch up on and most of us stayed until it got too chilly to sit out. It was a brilliant suggestion by Revd Dawn and we are very grateful to her and Clare for all the efforts they put into the service and also to Dawn's husband who arrived as we left the church to help with the special cleaning!



The dispersed gathering in the churchyard

People

From March we have kept in touch through emails, Zoom meetings and phone. Paul Richardson reported that after Emily fell in December and then later broke her left arm they were both allowed in the hospital in mid-March for an X ray and he had to smile to see the large waiting area in the hospital with only a few chairs all two meters apart and three in a pair.

Dorothy FitzGerald saw the recommendation to exercise and practice methods by trotting up and down the stairs but thought that that was a rather dangerous occupation so refrained!

In April it was announced that the Revd Malcolm Ingham (currently Rector of Alwalton and Chesterton near Peterborough but in Ely Diocese), has been appointed as Rector of Badby, Newnham, Charwelton, Fawsley and Preston Capes. He and wife Liz will live in Badby vicarage with effect from some date even now yet to be established!

Peter Box died on May 7 from coronavirus in Walsgrave Hospital. He was cremated on June 4 at Rugby. So that people could pay their respects at the roadside, the cortege left Peter's house in Kilsby and headed to St Faiths Church, where a dozen people had gathered and James, and his children Bea and David rang Peter's handbells outside Kilsby Church as the cortege paused on its way to the crematorium, with Peter's cap laying on the coffin. At St Marys, Barby, another dozen people awaited the cortege while a tower bell was tolled. Peter was looking forward to his 90th birthday in November and had been planning his party for some time. He had been a churchwarden and tower captain at Newnham and rang at Badby, Preston Capes and helped rehang Fawsley bells. He moved to Kilsby in 1996 and rang at Barby and in the Rugby area.



Bea, James and David Glover ring Peter's handbells as cortege pauses



Ten days later, Jill let us know that Mike Harvey of Weedon had died. He entered Northampton General Hospital in September 2019 for a bowel operation and after fighting infections, he was moved to Daventry to rehabilitate in late March. Liver cancer was diagnosed in late April and he passed away peacefully on May 17, aged 78. Mike expressed a wish to have a green burial, so he rests at Greenhaven, Lilbourne, surrounded by trees and wild flowers after a small family funeral.



Mike Harvey and his 60th birthday presentation –see website for details!

Peter Box had a spell of organising outings for Rugby District. One of these was filmed by the BBC and used in the Ringers' Songs of Praise TV broadcast in 1991. Helen Allton found it on YouTube and around the same time re-published some Guild silver and golden anniversary photos. This combination with Mike's death resulted in me receiving stories, reminiscences and identifications from current and some former branch members including Freda and Mike Bennett, Richard (Pip) Danby and John and Sue Townley.

In January, Michael Houghton told us that he needed treatment for cancer but this was delayed by coronavirus until after a scan in June showed that the main tumour had only grown about a millimeter since January. The specialist considered that two or three cycles of chemo ought to be enough to deal with it and they started in August.

In May, Alison Willgress' sister Jan Collins was diagnosed with cancer of the pancreas. She underwent a 9-hour operation at Leicester and the doctors were pleased with her progress when we last heard.

We heard about our waterborne division: Ed Mortimer in May still cruising the canals and rivers of France; and in September of Sue and Cassie (like a coiled spring) who are heading northwards on their canal boat.

On June 27, Paul Goudime (Susie's husband) died peacefully in the Horton hospital. Paul started to ring in August 2006 with others from Hellidon and was elected a branch member in November 2007. He hasn't rung in recent years.

Hilary Chammas who is Hugh Johnson's sister and still rings at Daventry on her family visits, lives in Beirut. After the huge explosion in August Hilary replied that all her family was safe. The apartment, on 5th floor, had shattered glass, doors blown open and objects flying. It was frightening, the huge bang, the whoosh of wind and the building rocking. Things can be mended but not lives. We were very lucky.

I hope to report a lot more real ringing next time!

Geoff Pullin - Daventry Correspondent

Guiltsborough Branch- no news this time

Kettering Branch

With the onset of the COVID 19 Pandemic and Full Lock-down imposed on 23 March 2020 there has been little Branch activity from that time.

The Branch Committee at its last meeting decided to seek the views of members by conducting an on-line questionnaire, using the Survey Monkey software, as a way of taking into account the views of Branch members in drawing up the Branch programme for 2020/21. The survey was sent out electronically to members where an email address was held, with other members being sent a paper form for completion. The committee were keen to know what Branch members thoughts were on all aspects of the programme. A total of 51 members responded to the survey, and broadly speaking people were happy with the current setup.

Bill Adcock and I accompanied by family members completed the



Round Rutland Water Sponsored Cycle Ride on Saturday 5th September, following the full circuit including the peninsula. We will be collecting monies pledged when the opportunity arises.

Requests for bell inspection before a 'Return to Ringing' were received from St John the Baptist, Corby and St. Margaret's, Isham. The Branch Steward Andy Bimson inspected the bells at both towers which were found to be fit to ring. Separately Corby has discovered an infestation of woodworm in the timber panelling to the Ringing Chamber leading to its removal.

News from the Towers

With limited ringing taking place there is little to report.

Desborough St. Giles ringers have been meeting for a drink at their usual watering hole, once licensed premises were permitted to re-open, on normal practice evenings to keep in touch.

A number of smaller towers in the Branch have rung a single bell for 15 minutes before Sunday service including All Saints, Wilbarston

Saints Peter & Paul's, Kettering resumed ringing of 6 bells on 6 September, following the approval of a risk assessment completed by the Tower Captain, Pat Edkins, by the Rector. With ringing limited to 15 minutes prior to Sunday service

Thank you for taking the time to read our segment! Until next time...

David Dainty – Kettering Branch Correspondent

Northampton Branch - no news this time

Peterborough Branch.

Peterborough Branch Ringing Master Report

Well it's been a strange few months for bell ringing, as it has for everyone else. Whilst we started off the new ringing year with two good 8 bell practices in February and March 2020, after that all planned events had to be cancelled. In addition to the 8 bell



practices, this included workshops on Striking and on Ringing Up and Down in Peal; social events such as the Branch outing and the afternoon tea ring; and the Branch Ringing at the Cathedral for Evensong. I cannot see any Branch events taking place for many months to come.

The very helpful Guild advice on return to ringing was communicated to all Tower Captains and Correspondents in the Branch, and I then dealt with any queries or provided advice, as requested. I am aware of some Towers ringing for Sunday services with all necessary precautions in place, however, many others are yet to return.

Hilary Hardie - Ringing Master

Castor.

Castor Tower is regularly ringing for Sunday Service. Wearing masks, using hand gel, not changing ropes, and wearing gloves, the ringing chamber looks more like an operating theatre than a band ringing for service. Despite all these precautions, the biggest complaint is “our glasses steam up”, we are a resilient bunch.

Currently the worse part of being a tower captain is disappointing ringers who cannot ring because of the confused rules and conflicting legislation and advice. For example we can only be together for 15 minutes, yet with the same PPE you can work at 1 metre spacing in a factory for 8 hours. Where is the consistency with HMG advice?

Given the demographic of ringers sensible precautions and care for others is part of our DNA. Unless we get back to real practice soon our skills will start to be lost. Even more alarming many ringers may not be returning to ringing. If football, a contact sport can be played, then why not a none contact practice like bell ringing? At least we do not back slap and kiss each other when timing goes well, our equivalent to a goal.

So a plea to CoE, CCCBR and others, start allowing ringing at 1m spacing for 45 minutes, as we do wear masks. Encourage practices after a 48 hours fallow period and encourage a return to ringing even under “the rule of six” before it becomes too late and we score an own goal.

Julian Burton - Tower Captain.



NASSINGTON

As with all other towers, we cancelled all ringing from the middle of March 2020 due to Coronavirus restrictions.

This was particularly disappointing as on Monday 16 March we had held our usual Monday evening practice at Wittering. This was the first practice, which had been held there for a number of years. A new Wittering band had been learning to ring at the Castor Ringing School and attending practices at Nassington to improve their handling and ringing. Five of their ringers, Polly Bridges, Nicola Silk, Geoff Bridges, Fran Brough and Trish Harris, who were now able to ring Rounds competently, were able to ring their own bells for the first time as a band. Tea and cake was had in the church afterwards to celebrate. So then we all went into 'hibernation' until the evening of Monday 1 June, when we held our first virtual practice in Ringing Room. This we continued to do for a number of weeks before reverting to Friday mornings, which was a more convenient time for all concerned, meeting each week for a chat together on Zoom before practicing. We have improved over the three months from Rounds and Call Changes to being able to ring Plain Hunt Doubles and Plain Hunt Minor with good striking. We have also rung Grandsire Doubles and Bob Doubles. In addition, we have been able to ring on eight bell and even ten bells, which, of course we are never able to do on 'real' bells in our six bell tower. We have found that although it is not the same as ringing 'real' bells, it has allowed us to meet regularly to socialise and learn new skills.

Since Sunday 19 July 2020, we have been able to ring 'real' bells for Sunday Service each week, with strict precautions in place, of course. We have been able to ring, successfully, Bob Doubles on occasions. We think this is pretty good considering we have not been able to hold 'normal' practice sessions as we would in pre-Covid times.

We held a socially distanced picnic at Cotterstock in August and rang their bells, with strict precautions in place, for the first time in many months, much to the delight of many local villagers.

This was a most enjoyable occasion for all those able to attend.

Thus, here at Nassington, we have been able to maintain the spirit of our band, both virtually and also, more recently, to ring 'real' bells during these strange times.

Brian Hardie - Tower Captain



Ufford.

We hadn't rang the bells since Christmas 2019, so following a good clean and oiling we managed to ring for VJ Day.

We are hoping to be able to ring for Christmas this year too.

Sally Hudson. Tower Correspondent.

Terry Wright - Peterborough Correspondent

Rutland Branch

Retirement of David Murcott

We report the retirement from ringing of David Murcott, after 60 years. David has been a huge supporter and contributor to Rutland Branch, whilst also being a member of the Market Harborough Branch in the Leicestershire Diocese.

He has been Tower Captain at St. Andrew's church in Great Easton for 36 years, a lovely ground floor 6 bell ring. Although this falls into the Leicestershire Guild catchment, many from Rutland have been invited to join David's well organised Tuesday practice nights where Plain Bob, Stedman and Surprise methods are all rung. Throughout the Rutland Branch he has helped lead peals/quarter peals or been a respected part of the team for major events, celebration, weddings and funerals.

David has also been ever helpful when asked to assist with teaching new ringers in the Rutland Branch, and around many local towers. His attention to detail and quiet encouragement has ensured the pupil always develops excellent handling skills. He has been Ringing Master for a 3 year term and an active member of the Peterborough Guild for 34 years (Leicester Guild also for 34 years).

On behalf of Rutland Branch we congratulate David on his many ringing achievements and thank him, and his wife Glenys, for all they have done in support of bell-ringing in Rutland.

VJ DAY ringing

The coronavirus restrictions, and the guidelines that we are



currently adhering to, limited our ringing opportunities to acknowledge VJ Day on 15th August. Just six towers achieved ringing for the occasion: Caldecott; Gt. Casterton; Preston; Ketton; Uppingham & Whissendine.

St Peter & St Paul, Preston

At last the work on our lovely bells has been completed! We have a peal of six bells and were warned some time ago that these were in need of repair and renovation, and that one was indeed in bad shape and should not be rung very often.

It has taken a very long time to decide exactly what we should do, agree the estimates from Taylors of Loughborough, and obtain the necessary Faculties, and raise the money to pay for it all!

In addition to restoring the peal of bells, we realised that we had a very early (1400 approx) Sanctus Bell hanging high up on the wall, which may well not have been

used since the

Reformation. This aroused considerable interest, and we decided that we must try to restore this to use as well.

The work started in May and involved dismantling the frames, wheels etc. which were taken back to the Foundry at Loughborough for repair. All bolts, screws etc were inspected. The alarm was raised when a crack was discovered in the beam holding the 3rd bell.

This had hitherto not been visible.

Water was getting in and the beam was becoming dangerous. It was decided to re-inforce the beam with a new RSJ, but as this involved drilling into the main wall a new Faculty was required. Somehow this was obtained within 48 hours, (surely a record!) and work was not interrupted by this





Sanctus bell before

unexpected addition.

Our precious Sanctus bell was returned and installed, and the electronic device by which it is to be rung was tried out.

The team from Taylors, Andrew, Chris and Roy worked extremely hard and were very interesting and knowledgeable about the work they were doing.

We are so grateful to everybody who helped us to raise the large sum of money needed for all this work, and we must particularly express our thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund who were exceptionally generous. We had hoped to have an Open Day to celebrate the completion and re-hanging of the bells, but of course this is impossible under current regulations.

However, we hope that this will take place sometime next year, and that as many Rutland bellringers as possible will be able to try out the bells in the near future.

Mrs Jane Micklethwaite. Preston

Sue Webster Press Correspondent, Rutland Branch.

Thrapston Branch - no news this time

Towcester Branch.

As I nervously set pen to paper/fingertips to keyboard - this being my first branch newsletter, my predecessor Nic Boyd is busily packing up her house in readiness for her move. I'm sure you would like to join me in wishing Nic and her husband Kevin good luck, good health and happiness in their future home in



Somerset. Undoubtedly Nic will continue to ring bells there with as much enthusiasm and commitment as she has here. On a personal level I'm sure many of you know that Nic took up bell ringing in memory of the death of her most loved brother Bob and when my Bob (my son) died she was so supportive and understanding we formed a close bond so I will very much miss her and as I have said to her, it has been a long time since I'd found a friend as good as she is, so she will be especially missed by me.

Pre lockdown i.e. 1 week before, March 2020, I attended the ART conference, I was truly inspired by the guest speaker Bonita Norris, she's from Wokingham and as she said "not a mountain in sight" ... Bonita Norris (born 1987) was the youngest British woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest at the age of 22, when she accomplished her dream with no previous climbing experience. She delighted her audience at the conference telling of her rivetingly rocky journey from a novice climbing wall to 29,029 feet above sea level: her story leaves you inspired to overcome your own personal mountains including the current situation we find ourselves in.

I'm reflecting on my bad luck to have to produce my first newsletter during a global pandemic but rather than focussing on all the cancelled events which I know we're all sad about I thought I'd focus on the good things that are

happening so that ringers can get their bell ringing fix.

Many bell ringers within the branch have turned to technology to continue their hobby of bell ringing using Abel, Mobil, Ringing Room, Dumb bells and simulators and hand bells.

Our Branch Ringing Master Alan Faiers has consistently run twice weekly Ringing Room sessions in conjunction with zoom throughout lockdown and a variety of people have joined in not only from this branch but from Derbyshire and Buckinghamshire.

These sessions have improved peoples skills and one person successfully rang inside for the first time! I too have gained more experience from these sessions and have at last managed to escape from constantly ringing bob doubles and progressed onto a touch of grandsire ☺. Many thanks to the experienced ringers who have supported learners during these sessions. Alan has printed hand bells on his 3D printer with electronics inside to ring along with Abel on his computer. He has also used a dumb bell and simulator software to ring a quarter peal of St Clements and Double Oxford spliced. Alan asked for any interest in a Ringing Room striking competition at the September Guild



AGM and is hoping this idea will take off.

John Armitage has installed a dumb bell and simulator in his garage and invited people to come and ring, I understand that some of the Roade Ringers have used this during lockdown.

I'm sure you would be delighted to join me in wishing Margaret and Chris Bulleid a very Happy 40th Lockdown Wedding Anniversary this month and they too have been busy, ringing two quarter peals on hand bells one for VE day and one to celebrate 50 years since Chris's first peal. Chris has also orchestrated the return to service/wedding/funeral ringing at Holy Cross Pattishall adhering to all guidelines for everyone's safety. It has been great to be on the end of a rope at long last.

More recently some service ringing has resumed at other towers within the branch on a restricted number of bells and for 15 minutes only - Towcester being one of these. The planned works to Towcester to renovate the installation are due to take place before the end of the year.

In order to continue meeting weekly during lockdown Pattishall, Greens Norton and Towcester have held regular zoom quizzes which has been a lifeline for many and it's been great to see familiar faces and to chat with everyone.

As a branch we would all like to congratulate Richard Yates on his well-deserved Honorary Life Member of the Guild.

Sadly I have to report that my banana loaf submitted to the Guild bell ringers virtual tea won no prizes ;(heyho I'm sure it would have been greatly appreciated in real life as it was delicious.

Hopefully in 6 months' time the situation may well have improved for us all and we can get back to ringing on all the bells, keeping everything crossed for that eventuality.

Meanwhile stay safe and remember 'hands, face and space'

Jill Cooke -Towcester Correspondent

Wellingborough Branch - no news this time



Other News

The Passing of an Era

At the recent virtual AGM our President, Geoff Pullin (now could there be a more apt name) retired after 6.25 years in post during which he marshalled the Executive with his usual enthusiasm and attention to detail. In his vote of thanks at the meeting Simon Dixon instructed someone to buy a new pair of sandals for Geoff as a parting gift of appreciation. I guess as he had worn through at least 1 pair on official business during his period in office. As sandals are a very personal thing I went in a different direction. Having sought information on his tittle of choice it was concluded that Geoff had only ever been seen with beer in his hand and ALWAYS in a handle glass – never a straight one. So, I sought some sets of beer for him. Just in case I failed to tickle his palate with the selections, I got the banker for Geoff of some Doom Bar (sorry again Simon for not meeting your high CAMRA standards). I had hoped to pass the “sandals” on at a bell ringing event but as time was passing, and he would be getting thirsty, I delivered them to Geoff’s home this week. With his PR hat on he passed the Executive the below picture with some words of thanks. Check out the straight glass as he gets stuck into the HobGoblin– what is that all about Geoff???

Geoff deserves a lot more than a few beers for his work over his term. He has attempted to bring a sense of fun and involvement of all standards of bell ringers. His “wee note book” is always at the ready to capture the tit bits of

knowledge that need to be shared. Alongside his Presidential duties he has also fitted in the maintenance of the website within 15 minutes of an event which never ceases to amaze me. Geoff said his reason for stepping down was that he did not think that a President should be 80. I have never believed he was that age seeing him scurry up towers and tie up bells and get the tools



out to do the next fix. He has been and will continue to be an inspiration to us all. Thanks for your time Geoff.

WEBMASTER'S WITTERINGS

As at the date of the postponed AGM, the website's most popular pages during 2020 are listed below. Most people arrive at the Welcome page then move onto other pages, so one visitor can count several times as they scroll through different pages. Some visitors may of course be robots! The relative page numbers however still give an indication of the most popular pages. Not surprisingly the Events page, which is usually 4th or 5th, sank down the list out of sight!

Welcome! was Home	9150
Latest Guild News	3018
Biographies <i>all 3 pages combined</i>	1265
Keep Fit <i>new 2/5/20</i>	1200
Bell Maintenance	1113
Guild Officers	904
Towers	863
Bits & Bobs	815
Branch Officers	766

During the (first?) coronavirus lockdown, I spent some interesting time researching the early Guild officers and adding their biographies to the website with hyperlinks from the Guild Officers page archive lists. I had to expand the original Obituaries page into three Biographies pages to make it more manageable. I am always glad to receive archive information to add so that it can be shared more widely.

A Donations page was added to list all the ways of contributing to the Guild. This was prompted by a member asking how to word a bequest to the Guild in their will.

During the lockdown a new page was added to accumulate the physical exercises that Helen Allton's brother kindly put together for us and Helen published weekly by Facebook.

Also the photographs that Helen published of anniversary gatherings were added as another new page. I have received several helpful messages filling in names but I hope to fill in a lot more, so please let me know of any you recognise.



Don't forget, that information cannot be published if you don't tell me – I would rather be told twice than not at all – don't leave it to 'them'!

Geoff Pullin

Guild Quiz.

Guild Quiz available from branches or from the Guild Secretary.

Specialist subject is UK tram stations.

Cost £1 per sheet, entries to be returned by the end of January for a chance to win cash prizes for the most right answers.



The Peterborough Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers New Website



Welcome!



Bell Ringing



Learning to Ring



About This Guild



Latest Guild News



Guild Officers



Branch Officers



Tower Information



Events



Competitions



Guild Newsletters



Guild Shirts



Bell Maintenance



Bell Fund



Bits & Bobs



History



New Website Address <http://www.pdg.btck.co.uk/>.

