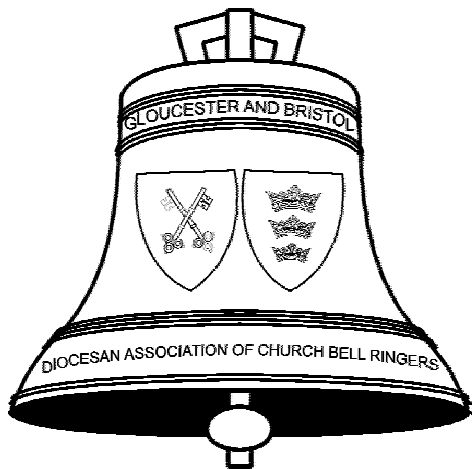


NORTH COTSWOLD BRANCH The GLOUCESTER and BRISTOL DIOCESAN ASSOCIATION of CHURCH BELL RINGERS

Founded 8th January 1878
(Affiliated to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers)

Registered Charity Number 281431



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER
2012

BRANCH OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

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LOOK TO! DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

7th January: Canon George Smith's Funeral, Bledington at 12 noon.

8th January 2013: Mickleton Branch practice at 7.30pm.

12th February : Bourton on the Water, Branch practice at 7.30pm.

9th March: Spring training day at Circencester.

12th March: Mickleton, **Committee meeting at 7.00pm,**
followed by Branch practice at 7.30pm.

9th April: Bourton on the Water, Branch practice at 7.30pm.

13th April: **Association AGM** (Tewkesbury Branch) with the Striking Competitions
– Penn at ?, Croome at ?. See website TBC.

11th May: Branch Tour, area tbc details in March's Newsletter. Organiser – .

14th May: Mickleton Branch practice at 7.30pm.

11th June: Bourton on the Water, **Committee meeting at 7.00pm,**
followed by Branch practice at 7.30pm.

9th JULY: Mickleton Branch practice at 7.30pm.

13th AUGUST: Bourton on the Water, Branch practice at 7.30pm.

10th SEPTEMBER: Mickleton Branch, **Committee meeting at 7.00pm,**
followed by Branch practice at 7.30pm.

8th October: Bourton on the Water, Branch practice at 7.30pm.

12th October: Autumn training day at Wotton-u-Edge.

26th October: Branch Striking Competition and AGM TBC.

PLEASE BE AWARE.

The Committee is currently reviewing some practice locations between the Committee Meetings, so please watch the above for alterations in venue in future editions.

Reminder from the Treasurer. Subscriptions are due for the new financial year that started on the 1st November 2012. Subscriptions are £10.00 Senior, £5.00 Retired and Juniors £2.50. Associates, the same as Retired. Gift Aid is possible; ask your Treasurer.

WANTED. The Committee has two vacancies. Our Chairman is seeking interested members, who wish to contribute to the running of the Branch. Please consider giving up a little time to help the Branch. It's only four short Committee Meetings a year.

The G&B Diocesan Association has a web site at www.bellsgandb.org.uk, on which the North Cotswolds Branch can be accessed via: www.bellsgandb.org.uk/branches.html.

ASSOCIATION BELL FUND GRANTS.

The Belfry Fund Committee would appreciate advance warning of any future bell-related works that are being considered. The reason for this is so that it can forward plan the accounts concerning any future potential grants.

Report on The North Cotswold Branch AGM and Striking Competition
27th October 2012

The Branch AGM and Striking Competition was held in St Eadburgha's, Ebrington, in the north east of the area. Despite the weather being cold the church was nice and warm on our arrival. The back room boys (and girls) at Ebrington had obviously planned meticulously, as the afternoon's events went off without a hitch. Six teams entered the competition, two from Great Rissington, 2 from Longborough, Mickleton and Cold Aston.

Methods and call changes were rung, and the results were as follow:

1. Mickleton Rose Bowl
2. Cold Aston
3. Longborough B
4. Longborough A
5. Great Rissington B
6. Great Rissington A

The Les Joynes Salver was awarded to Longborough.

The Association Ringing Master, Ms Hazel Bridges, acted as judge. Her general comments on all teams efforts were fluidity of pace, even gaps at both leads strokes with a wider handstroke lead to enable a rhythm to be heard. However, the competition was entered into by all with a commitment to do as well as possible, and she congratulated all teams on taking part.

As usual on these occasions circumstances as not being familiar with the bells and in some cases apprehension of being in a tower not previously visited was the deciding factor on the levels of striking.

The ringing tea that followed was masterminded by the local WI and there was plenty for all, with the added bonus of 'waitress service'.

The Evensong service, conducted by Rev Canon David Cooke, made special reference to bell ringers and the importance of their contribution to services in general.

To prove that the afternoon events had been well planned and thought out, the final piece on the organ was entitled 'Carillon de Westminster': very apt for a ringing afternoon.

The AGM was a chance to reflect on the past year's events and give thanks to members who contribute so much to the branch, year in year out. As regards the future it was encouraging to see new members, who are also new to ringing, join the Branch this year.

So if you have never been to the Branch Striking Competition or have not been able to do so for some time, please don't dismiss it as 'not for me'. You will be pleasantly surprised to find it is friendly and fun, and worth an entry in your diary for the last Saturday of October 2013.

RK.

The Bell Tower at Ebrington Church.

The Bells of Ebrington have been calling people to worship, announcing village births, marriages and passing; advertising events and celebrations for the past several centuries, only silenced during World War II. The village would have first learnt about Nelson's success at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 by a celebratory peal rung, when heard from an adjacent tower. Church towers are surprisingly often positioned on hills and in valleys to ensure they can be heard from the next in the 'chain' to communicate such news as well as sharing celebrations. The bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar was celebrated in 2005 in like manner.

Parts of the visible footings of the present Ebrington Church Bell Tower include much of the surviving remnants of the original early Norman church on this site, dedicated to St. Eadburgha. Eadburgha was reputed to be a grand-daughter of the Saxon King Alfred and she also founded Pershore Abbey, being the first Abbess. The 'old church', in Broadway, is the only other church in this area dedicated to St. Eadburgha.

Rising above the Norman foundations, and as far as the visible external shoulder-line about half way up the present tower, this part of the structure is believed to be 14th century, with dressed local stone rubble filled walls five feet thick in places. The top half of the tower is believed to be 17th century, with the roof area dating from the mid 19th century, replacing an earlier roof, which was destroyed by fire when enthusiastic villagers chose to light a signalling beacon to celebrate some long forgotten event. Charred timbers are still visible in the ceiling of the ringing chamber where molten lead must have flowed down igniting the lower levels.

Early church bells pre-dating the existing ring of six were probably installed in the earlier structure; evidenced by the remains of wooden bearing supports embedded in the internal walls some 1/3 of the way up the present tower, and these would have been rung from the ground floor as chiming bells, not the full circle ringing as is now employed at Ebrington and elsewhere, almost exclusively as an English tradition.

Of the present bells, three were cast, most probably by the itinerant bell-founder Henry Bagley, using a casting pit in the churchyard, in 1678. Another bell was cast in 1687 and a further bell was commissioned and cast in 1679 by a Matthew Bagley of Chacombe. A final bell, recast by Taylors of Loughborough in 1955 when the bells were last re-hung, still carries around the bell-mouth its original inscription " William Bagley made mee 1642 AD"; thus the earliest bell is also the newest.

The bells are tuned to F Sharp. Tuning was always done after casting, chiselling out by hand bell metal inside and above the bell-mouth ring; the marks still being clearly visible. The current Treble bell, the lightest, weighs 5 cwt 0 qtr 15 lbs and the Tenor bell, the heaviest, weighs 12 cwt 2 qtr 12 lbs.

The faceless turret clock, was made by a local blacksmith around 1748 and has a novel horizontal crown escapement. The clock is run sparingly as it is rather fragile; however it keeps near perfect time, unaffected by temperature. It chimes the hours only, off the tenor bell.

Old ringing traditions are maintained at Ebrington; the ringers tend to ring 'Grandsire Plain Course' and 'Bob Doubles' with and without Bobs; 'Plain Hunt' as well as a local peal of called changes 'George Surprise' named after George Rouse, a previous Tower Captain. Another local specialism is 'firing' the bells, when each of them rings out simultaneously, traditionally rung to wish Every Success to the happy couple as the bride and groom leave church after their wedding. There is also the other local tradition, shared with St James' in Campden, of ringing for doubting Thomas' Day, 21st December – from 5:45 am till dawn, followed by a traditional Ebrington farmhouse breakfast.

The Ringers are pleased to continue to be of service – with the tradition of anonymity associated with their craft. Learners, visitors and returners are always welcomed to join at Practice nights, 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. The present band of ringers is as keen as their ringing forebears to maintain the traditions and keep the bells ringing for the next generations.

Peter Banton bells@ebringtonchurch.org.uk

FOR THE RECORD

A Quarter Peal of Killamarsh Treble Bob Minor was rung at Great Rissington on the 6th Decemeber 2012, Treble Isobel Murphy, 2. Steve Coleman (C), 3.Sue Coleman, 4.Jeremy Meyrick, 5. John Nicholls, Tenor Bill Nash. First Quarter in method for 4, 5, and 6.