

PETERBOROUGH DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



Newsletter
January 2026

Guild Officers 2025-26

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Newsletter News

Welcome to the first Guild Newsletter of 2026, the first of three that we aim to publish each year (January, April, September), to coincide with Guild and branch main events. Having completed the Christmas/New Year busy ringing season, we are now into branch AGM time. If you elect a new Correspondent, do let me know.

Many thanks to all the current correspondents for achieving a full set of branch news in this edition, despite the demands of this time of year.

If you'd like to share copies of the Newsletter with any non-ringing members, direct them to the relevant part of the Guild website (pdg.org.uk/latest-news/newsletters) or download a copy and email it to them. A hard copy can be delivered in person (or posted), on request to me or the Secretary. If you want any additional copies for members in your branch, please let me know, so that I can ensure enough copies are printed.

After five years as Newsletter Editor, I am now looking for a successor to take over this year. So, if you've enjoyed reading past editions and are reasonably skilled in Word or equivalent, there's a new role waiting for you at the Guild AGM!

Please send any comments, complaints or contributions for future editions to me at newsletter@pdg.org.uk. All copy for the April edition, for distribution at the Guild Spring Festival, must arrive by **Sunday 22nd March** latest. Thank you.

Jonathan Stuart

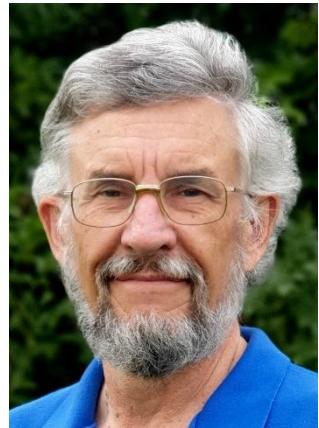
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President's Preamble

I hope you had a lovely Christmas. May I wish you a very Happy New Year.

I always look forward to January, as it gives me a chance to visit as many of the branches as I can. It is always good to hear what you have all been up to. As one of the Executive Team will be at your Branch meeting, it also gives you a chance to tell us what we can do to help you in the coming year.



There is, however, something **YOU** can do for the Guild.

Some of the current Guild Officers have said they will not be standing for re-election at the AGM in June. So, we need members to consider standing for the vacant or soon-to-be-vacant posts, or maybe nominating someone else for a post.

If you are thinking about standing, then please talk to the current or immediate past post-holder about what the role includes, or talk to the executive attending your AGM. Please feel free to contact me to discuss it anytime.

You can find the current role descriptions on the Guild website, but these can be varied.

Those standing down are:

- Secretary (Executive post)
- Newsletter Editor

Posts currently vacant:

- Public Relations Officer
- Youth Officer

The Guild can only run as it currently does through the voluntary support of a great many members – please give it some thought.



Your Guild Needs YOU!

Sadly, I have had to close the COOTS (**C**ome **O**ut **O**n **T**hursday**S**) Guild training project at the end of last year. During the last three years we have ‘scored’ 92 quarter peals, including 142 “firsts”. We’ve had a lot of fun, learnt a lot and improved our ringing in that time - which I believe will strengthen ringing back in the members’ home Branches. May I thank past Master Simon Dixon and all those who supported this project – we couldn’t have done it without you!

Alistair

Treasurer's Tally

Calling the membership to arms, to fundraise at no cost to yourselves. Read on!

Affiliation Letter

The Bell Fund at the end of 2025 has free funds of just over £30,000. That level would last **less than 2 years** if we continue to spend at recent levels. As a Guild we need to take actions to restore the Fund to previous levels, such as:

- 1. Reduce the size of grants** - The Stewards have already reverted to a 10% level of funding for projects. They would prefer to keep it higher, but needs must.

2. Increase affiliation fees from parishes

Historically, we received close to £5,000 per year, but since the COVID break we have received closer to £500. Apparently, the Diocesan mailings may only be reaching benefice treasurers, who do not always pass them on to the parish treasurers. At the end of 2025, I appealed to branch Chairmen to assist with the fund raising, and that has led to me receiving about £500 in the last few weeks. Thank you so much for all your help. If you can keep it going, that would be great.



The Affiliation Letter goes out in March each year to all the Branch Committees, and I would ask them to encourage the parishes to respond positively, especially those parishes that have benefited from the Fund in the past. I have data on who has benefited since 1994 if that would help.

If you can help with your own parish(es), email me at treasurer@pdg.org.uk. The letter will also be available on the Guild website.

- 3. Increase fundraising activity** - The Guild will continue its fundraising actions and I would ask any members who have a good idea, new or old, to raise funds for the Bell Fund.

One such idea is **Easyfundraising**. ONLY 4 members are signed up so far, yet we have been able to raise over £500. If all 970 members were signed up, that could raise £97,000 every year!

This organisation generates donations for charities through internet shopping. Easyfundraising has deals with over 8,500 retail websites to share in revenue brought via their portal, and has raised over £60 million for charities. To find out more, go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/how-it-works. I would be happy to discuss it with you. The scope includes internet groceries, insurance providers, holidays (a big opportunity) and everything else you do online.

If you sign up and raise £5 then we get a bonus of £5, so if all members sign up we could raise £10,000! The address to sign up and get the bonus is https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/support-a-good-cause/step-1/?char=304755&invite=8wshv0&referral-campaign=c2s&utm_campaign=web-referral Let me know if you use it!

4. **Gift aid Scheme** - A very significant number of the Guild Members are NOT signed up for Gift Aid. All taxpayers can claim Gift Aid, which adds 25% to subscriptions - £2.50 each, and it adds up if all do it.

I am sending lists to Branch Treasurers to chase up members. New applications cover four previous years. Gift aid application forms can be obtained from your Branch Treasurer and are on annual membership update forms.

5. **Excess Branch Bank Balances** - The Charity Commission gives our charity tax exempt status provided we use membership fees to meet Guild objectives. Most branches have increased bank balances over the last 10 years. I ask all branches to consider if they have excess funds over and above their needs. If so, could they donate it to the Bell Fund for the benefit of other members of the Guild?
6. **Give as you Earn Scheme** - Even better than Gift Aid, for higher-rate taxpayers, is the **Give as You Earn (GAYE)** scheme. You sacrifice an element of your salary, which is diverted to an account that can ONLY be spent on donations to registered charities. In effect, you can donate £100 by sacrificing only £40. In my company, payments from £20 to £700 per month contribute large amounts to charity. If you would like to hear more feel free to contact me.

If anyone has any ideas over and above those mentioned above, please follow up on them. If you need any help from me, just shout.

Chris FitzGerald, Treasurer, M: 07761 180369, E: treasurer@pdg.org.uk

His Master's Voice

I would like to give you all a brief update on our travels around the Guild, and the events that we have been involved in.

Summer Festival

The first major event I had to organise was the 8-bell striking competition for the Harry Wooding Memorial Trophy. Finding willing judges is usually a difficult task. However, Keith and Marilyn Brown from Market Deeping jumped at the opportunity to take on the challenge.

The event was hosted by the Peterborough branch at Castor. This proved to be the perfect venue, with lots of opportunities for catching up with friends. It was wonderful to see six branches represented (I am hoping for more next year!). All



teams rang triples for their test piece, and it was a closely fought competition, with Towcester retaining the trophy. An overrunning meeting meant an early adjournment to the pub, and no evening ringing.

Guild 10-bell practices

Two 10-bell practices have been held, the first at Kettering in September. Here fourteen ringers met, including a visitor from Bedfordshire. Ringing ranged from Bob Caters and Stedman Caters, to Cambridge and Yorkshire Royal. The November practice was held at Daventry with eighteen ringers in attendance, including two visitors from the Oxfordshire guild. With the bells half muffled for Remembrance Sunday, we rang a variety of methods: rounds and call changes, Plain Bob and Grandsire Caters and Yorkshire Royal. A few first blows in higher number method ringing were achieved as well. It was wonderful to see new and different members of the Guild at a 10-bell practice.

Branch visits

We joined several branches for both general meetings and special practices.

In August, Thrapston branch held a meeting at Stanion. We rang methods including Plain Bob, Stedman, Grandsire and Norwich Surprise Minor.

A little further afield, Wellingborough branch held an outing to Oxfordshire, including the fine 10 at Appleton and the campanile at White's, where I was asked to guest 'master' and run the ringing. We had a lot of fun managing plain hunt on 9 and rounds on 12. A very different skill set required!!

The Kettering branch outing to Leicester in October saw approximately thirty branch and Guild members and friends ring at three fine towers: Oadby, Aylestone and Leicester cathedral. Ringing catered for everyone, enabling some people to ring on 12 bells for the first time.

We were made very welcome at Rutland branch's 8-bell practice at Uppingham in October. We met lots of new ringers and enjoyed ringing rounds and call changes, Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Triples.

Guilsborough branch meeting was held at Yelvertoft in November, and included a special method of Westminster Surprise Minor (lots of dodging and accurate counting required). We rang a good variety of methods including All Saints on All Saints' Day at All Saints church followed by very fine tea and cake.

The last Saturday evening in November was spent with the Towcester branch ringers enjoying their annual dinner. It was a lovely evening and a great way to start the festive season.

I am very much looking forward to meeting more members in 2026.

Jim Bence

Youth Officer vacancy

Unfortunately, I've had to step down from the role of Youth Officer at this time, for personal reasons, which is disappointing as I've not yet made progress. There is such a great opportunity here to make positive changes for the future. I wish the best to whosoever steps into this role and would be happy to discuss ideas should this be of interest. Contact Jim Bence for information (master@pdg.org.uk).

Cat Hemmington

From the Bellboard Footnotes

(1st September – 31st December)

First Quarter

Richard Garner (Cold Ashby)
Kirsty Pearce (Desborough)
Clive Skinner (Guilsborough)
Conor Turvey (Marston St Lawrence)

First Quarter on the treble

Kev Winter (Peterborough St Mary)

First quarter of Treble Bob

Fiona Barclay (Crick)

First quarter inside

Philip Barker (Guilsborough)
Lisa Upstone Turvey (Marston St Lawrence)
Steve Brown (Peterborough St Mary)
Thomas Mullett (Wollaston)

First Quarter of Minor

Ricky H Smith (Orlingbury)

First quarter of Major

Andrew North (Long Buckby)

First Quarter of Surprise Major

Christopher Rainthorpe (Brigstock)

First quarter of Royal

Simon Sweeney (Higham Ferrers)

First quarter of Royal inside

Nigel Buckby (Higham Ferrers)

First Quarter on 12

Olivia Hunt (Towcester)

First quarter as Conductor

Richard Gale (Marston St Lawrence)
Flynn Spires (Staverton)

First quarter of Triples as conductor

Joseph Booker (Peterborough St Mary)

Towers

West Haddon had their first peal rung in the upstairs ringing room. This was for Christmas.

Greetham rang the first quarter peal since a £50k refurbishment earlier in the year. Rung on Armistice Day to the memory of men from the village - nine in the Great War and six in the Second World War - who did not return. In 1923 the re-casting and re-hanging of the bells was paid for by public subscription, to serve as the village war memorial for those who died in the service of their country. They also rang prior to,

and during, morning service when the bells were re-dedicated by the Bishop of Peterborough on 14th September.

Also for Remembrance Day, **Rothwell** rang the first quarter peal on the melodic minor 8.

Pattishall had the first peal on major on the bells after their augmentation to 8 in 2023.

Clergy

A quarter peal was rung at Northampton All Saints on All Saints Day to congratulate **Revd Oliver Coss** on becoming an Honorary Canon of Peterborough Cathedral.

Peterborough St Mary's rang a quarter peal to welcome to **Revd Shilo Varughese** and his family, who has joined St Mary's following serving his curacy at St Kyneburgha's Castor. The band included representatives of both towers.

A quarter peal was rung at the Cathedral before the service of thanksgiving for the ministry of the **Bishop of Brixworth**.

Events

Northampton All Saints pupils, teachers and helpers at Northampton Ringing Hub's weekly Ringing School rang on the front six at the request of the Rotary Club during its display on the Piazza in front of the church raising funds for polio causes, following World Polio Day on 24th October.

A band from the area rang a peal at Swansea Minster. The peal was rung for the Trafalgar Day Service, commemorating the service of Royal Marine Major Lewis Roteley, who was on HMS Victory at Trafalgar, and is buried in this churchyard. A wreath was laid at his



memorial during the service by the Lord Lieutenant of Glamorgan, the High Sheriff of West Glamorgan and the Lord Mayor of Swansea.

As well as ringing for Remembrance Day, the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain was marked with ringing at Duston & Higham Ferrers.

Children in Need was marked by a quarter peal of Pudsey Surprise Major at Rushden.



YFC Past Members (Photo: Emma Lovegrove)

At Greetham a band rang for the Leicestershire and Rutland Young Farmers Carol Service, this was by a band of past Members of YFC clubs.

The Annual Orlingbury Conkers Match was marked with a quarter peal at Orlingbury.

Northampton St Giles rang to mark the 100th anniversary of the St Giles Girl Guides.

A peal at Market Overton was rung in support of The Lodge Community Trust, and all who have been a part of it.

Engagement

Michael Christie and Lou Middleton (Peterborough St Mary, 7th December)



Weddings

Tessa Berridge and Henry Gray (Benefield, 20th December)

Daniel Hill & Lucy Francis (Great Doddington, 8th November)

Sarah Buckby to Howard Galley on 30th August (Higham Ferrers 14th September)

Ruby Weddings

Andrew & Gillie Christie (Castor, 12th October)

Andrew & Rosemarie Gunstone (Corby, 19th September)

Andrew & Gillie Christie

Golden Weddings

Elaine & Andrew Greatrex (Guilsborough, 19th December)

Clyde & Beverley Banks (Castor, 27th September)

Cathy & Alex Mason (Corby, 4th September)



65th Anniversary

Pat and Roy Phillips on 10th September (Towcester 14th September)

Births

Ezra, Grandson to Stephen Todd (Stanion, 6th December)

Clyde & Beverly Banks

Wilfred Thomas Linzey, Grandson to Thomas Birkett (Stanion, 6th December)

Madison Mia Hasley (Peterborough St Mary 7th December)

Baptism of Elizabeth Michel by the Rt Revd John Holbrook, Bishop of Brixworth (Orlingbury 21st September)

Birthdays

1st Roux - grandson of Andrew Gunstone (Cold Ashby, 21st October)

20th Rosie Thorpe (Llanfeugan, 24th October)

60th Maggie Winter (Castor, 19th October), Wendy Bloom (Towcester, 14th September)

70th Julian Burton (Peterborough St Mary, 22nd October)

80th Mick Scott, church warden & former tower captain at Marston St Lawrence (28th November) A real family affair, with two daughters and a grandson ringing.

High Numbers

There was a long length of Glasgow Surprise Major rung at Whilton on 13th September. The band rang 10080 changes, being twice the length of a normal length peal. This took 5 hours and 56 minutes and was the first long length by 5 of the band.

In the peal week in Wales, at Radyr, Ruth & Paul Curtis rang their 5,500th peal together.

In the peal at Raunds rung on 30th December, Bob Crocker rang his 5,600th peal.

In a peal at Wadenhoe on 11th December, Robert Wood rang his 900th peal. It feels appropriate that it was longer than usual, being 7,200 changes long.

Stuart Weston rang his 900th quarter peal for the candlelit carol service at Peterborough St Mary.

Helen Allton

New Guild Logo

You will notice that the front cover of this newsletter looks different from past edition, it is your first chance to see and get to know the Guild's new logo.

The previous logo had certain limitations, which were made particularly evident when compared to the anniversary logo.

The monochrome logo was available in only a relatively low-resolution image - it was on a white background and changing colour was problematic. There was also an issue in the use of the logo. Most social media avatars are circular. Our old logo of the circle with the curlicues on the top mean that the circle always sat off-centre in the social media circular space, which just looked wrong.



Julian Burton's birthday (Photo: Elaine Wilkinson)



Whilton long length band (Photo: Richard Agrave)



After the 100th anniversary logo, the old logo suffered in contrast and so I made moves to introduce a new logo. There needed to be a common link to the old logo, a family resemblance, if you will, but it needed to be updated and to introduce colour to our identity. Retaining the bell, headstock and clapper of the core of the old logo ensures continuity to the new logo. A clear capital letter font has been selected, and our name now reads round in a continuous circle, simplifying the format in this area. This is now surrounded by a ring representing a sally, providing an area for colour and interest as well as a clean outer edge.

Selecting colour proved interesting. Most sallies are red, white and blue, but that means we'd have a red or blue bell, which felt rather artificial. With black lines, that would mean there were four colours in the logo, which complicates reproduction in some cases. Instead, I made the decision to adopt the colours of the diocese's logo, the blue of the letters and gold of their cross and crossed keys. We are dedicated to the diocese of Peterborough, and so our logo reflects that link by using their colour scheme within our identity. By introducing colour of these tones, the logo works equally well on a light or dark background.

This has been tested by the clothing embroidery company and sewn successfully. All clothing orders from the beginning of 2026 will have the new logo.

The logo is available in various resolutions, for use in different situations. It can be printed in greyscale and remains legible, if a colour printer is not available. Alternatively, it is also available in monochrome, should that be required.

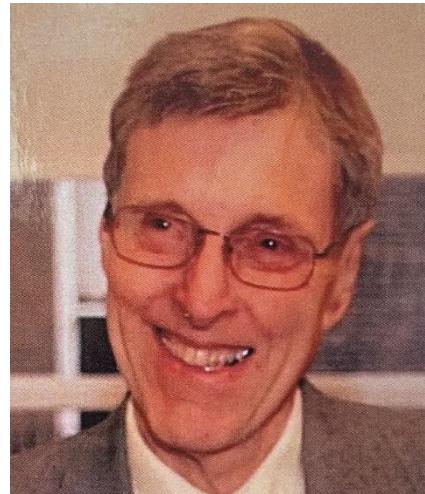
Helen Allton secretary@pdg.org.uk

Obituaries

Philip Lindley (7 May 1936 – 17 June 2025)

Philip Douglas Lindley was born on 7th May 1936 in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire. After local primary schooling, he was sent to Shrewsbury School. When he left Shrewsbury, it was still the time of National Service for boys, and Philip joined the Royal Navy. His initial training was at Chatham before joining H.M.S.

Whirlwind. His service on *Whirlwind* saw him in the Mediterranean and in Bermuda, where the ship carried out joint exercises with a fleet of the U.S. Navy. Philip later bought *Whirlwind*'s bell before she was decommissioned and used as target practice in Cardigan Bay in 1974. He went on to complete articles with a small accountancy firm in London and, after qualification, he joined a larger practice. He then went into industry, finally working for Mercedes Benz UK, which relocated from West London to Milton Keynes in 1984. So it was that in 1986, Philip and his wife, Ray, moved to Yardley Hastings.



Philip and Ray were regular church goers. He became a church warden which was when he was asked, or more likely told, that he should learn to ring bells. And learn to ring bells he did, in the winter of 1987. He attended the first of what has become the annual St Andrew's Day ringers' supper in 1988.

In 1992 we had to rehang our bells. The headstocks were warping and throwing gudgeon pins into misalignment on their bearings. We had to raise what at the time seemed an enormous amount of money; £10,000. Philip was a great help during the subsequent fundraising period, and was instrumental in organising a series of fund-raising concerts, known as *Ring the Changes*. He did more than his fair share during this period and was very helpful in ensuring that, six months ahead of schedule, we, the ringers repaid the £4,000 loan which the Yardley Hastings Society had granted us. And so it was that Philip became one of those ringers that many tower captains dream of. He was regular, reliable, attending every practice, every Sunday service, he was there. If he wasn't coming, he told you.

He went out to other towers, he was a regular at the Bozeat practice, he attended branch practices and for twelve years was a member of the Newport Pagnell mid-week group, at the time organised by Tim Wooding. Philip also holds the Yardley record for the most distant rings of bells rung, namely St George's Cathedral, and The Swan Bell Tower, in Perth, Western Australia, rung in his early retirement on his fairly regular visits to that country. He thus exposed himself to ideas and practices beyond St Andrew's. Over time Philip learnt doubles methods and rang touches of Plain Bob, Grandsire and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure, simple by some standards but he did push himself to plain courses of Stedman. So, he was the sort of ringer who was missed if he wasn't there and was a genuine asset to St Andrew's tower.

Philip slowly withdrew from ringing some six years ago through ill health, and Covid put an absolute stop to it, but he still took an interest and would ask questions about how we were doing and what we were ringing, but he couldn't be persuaded to "grab hold."

He sadly died on 17th June 2025. The ringing at the Branch Striking Competition which was held at St Andrew's the day after his death was dedicated to Philip's memory and an open quarter peal was rung for him in his tower on the afternoon of his funeral.

His passing was marked by the tower WhatsApp group with the following words.

"He was a lovely man, bless him."

"A real gentleman and a character."

"A really good chap, I'll miss him."

We will all miss him. May he rest in peace.

Tony Finke

News from the Branches

Culworth Branch

Whitfield ringers were greatly saddened by the sudden death of Will Adams at the end of November, following a massive non-recoverable stroke.

Will learned to ring before he moved to the village, but at that time we were a "silent" tower. He felt that this wasn't right, and was one of the driving forces in getting our bells rehung back in the 1980s. He was a founding member of the band and continued ringing until a fall resulted in a frozen shoulder about a year ago. He was tower captain here for many years and initiated our annual away trips during the October half term. These continued for about twenty years, with us visiting towers all over the British Isles and Ireland.

Latterly, Will suffered memory loss, which meant he could only ring rounds and call changes. However, he continued to turn up for service ringing.

He will be greatly missed.

On a happier note, we are delighted to welcome Alison Jarvie-McHattie as a new member. She is ringing for services with the band at Whitfield.

Ian has been busy splicing ropes for Helmdon, Wappenham and Thorpe Mandeville. We expect to see long life and much less weather dependence in future. New ropes are on order for Whitfield and Brackley. They are expected in late spring.

Best wishes,

Sara and Ian Chapple

Quarter peal success for local band

On the evening of 24th November, a local band rang a quarter peal of 1260 Grandsire Doubles, at St Lawrence church Marston, for the occasion of Michael Scott's 80th birthday. The quarter peal was particularly personal for Mick, as not only was it a complete surprise for his special birthday, instigated by his fellow ringers, but three of them were related to him; two of his daughters and one of his grandsons!



After the successful ring, the usual "Monday band" joined the tower for their evening practice night, which was then followed by celebratory drinks and a small buffet (nothing unusual following for our Monday evening practices, but with the addition of birthday cake and bottles of bubbly!)



Mick has lived in Marston St Lawrence most of his life and as well as running a successful local builder's business, has had much to do with the church, being churchwarden and for some time, tower captain. He is well known and respected in the Culworth Branch and takes an active interest in all that goes on in his village and church.

The Quarter Peal band were:

1. Conor Turvey (grandson) - 1st quarter peal
2. Lisa Upstone-Turvey (daughter) – 1st inside
3. Jenny Griffiths
4. Nicola Upstone (daughter)
5. Richard Gale (conductor) – 1st as conductor

Many congratulations to Mick and to the band of ringers!

Branch Correspondent: Jenny Griffiths

Daventry Branch

First Quarter

On Thursday, 18th September there were only five present at Staverton practice, so they rang a quarter peal. Well done Flynn for conducting!

September meeting

Justin reported that the ringing at Everdon took place with fourteen ringers (one of whom was from Northampton branch) and two non-ringers. Grandsire, PB5, Stedman, Everdon Bob (at least twice) & Winchendon Place.

Tea was had by nineteen (including helpers, Anne Ford & Jan Clark, who didn't come to the tower).

After quite a trek via Oxfordshire, eight Daventry branch ringers joined seven Culworth branch ringers at Aynho from 7pm. We rang call changes twice, Plain Hunt 7 & 8, Grandsire 7, PB7, Stedman 7 and Little Bob 8. Striking was quite tricky and we learned that it was better to keep the bells moving rather than trying to space out. We finished just after 8.30pm.

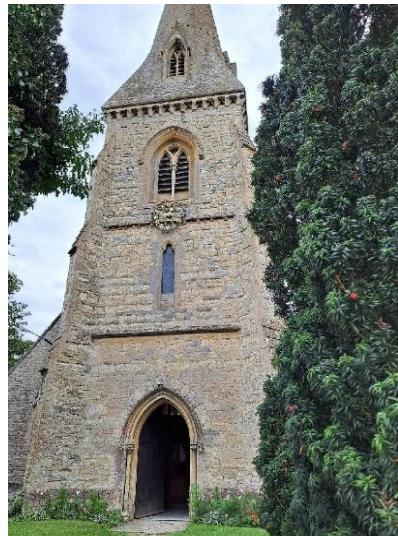
Mini Outing

Fourteen ventured out in 'Storm Amy' (well, it was at least windy) to three 6-bell towers in Buckinghamshire on Saturday 4th October morning: Swanbourne, Little Horwood and Steeple Claydon. Thanks to Jim Grennan for organising it, not without some difficulty, as two of the original towers gave "back word" as they say in Lancashire! Little Horwood were the nicest, having been augmented to six with the addition of two bells cast by Westley and rehung by Whites in 2021.

We were not sure how you ring for services at Steeple Claydon, as the west door of the tower looks like the main way into the church and you ring from the ground floor. Lunch was taken at the Old Thatched Inn at nearby Adstock.

October meeting

We met at Nether Heyford, because the planned venue, Badby, had no bells. It was a joint meeting with Culworth branch. Justin coaxed 27 to ring, and we welcomed six of their members as well as two from Northampton branch and a visitor from Stamford. The bells were kept going with call changes, Doubles and Minor to suit those present.



Steeple Claydon

Graham White, newly licensed as a lay minister, took the service, concentrating on today as St Luke's day. A good ploughman's tea and cake was enjoyed in the hall thanks to the Heyford group ringers.

Jane chaired the quarterly branch meeting. Justin ran through many ringing happenings since the last meeting and outlined the young ringers' events upcoming until December 2026!

There was some discussion about PCCs not making a donation to affiliate to the Guild Bell Fund. Before Covid, 165 contributed annually, since Covid the number is only 15 across the diocese. Afterwards, information from two PCC Treasurers was passed on to Chris FitzGerald about the need for 'an invoice' and for a PCC Treasurers email list at the diocesan office.

The discussion on the format of our 2026 programme brought forth little new at the meeting and nothing in direct response to the emailed message from Sue, our secretary, circulated to members on 8 October! Meeting on different days and at different times was discussed. The present format gives the opportunity for members to attend only in the afternoon, only for tea and chat and quarterly service & meeting, or only in the evening, or for two or all three parts! It was decided to keep with the similar format. It was pointed out that if all members came along we couldn't cope, so we just need to encourage a few more each time. It was suggested that branch events should only be scheduled once a month. The dinner or quiz will follow on the same day as a ringing practice. Joint meetings seemed to be acceptable, although the long-distance pairings selected in 2025, to Culworth's 8-bell towers, was deemed to be a bit excessive.

Jim Grennan, our steward, reported having inspected Preston Capes wheels which require attention and, if I heard correctly, Graham mentioned them needing new headstocks.

Evening ringing, with Nick Chatt in charge, took place at Upper Boddington. 14 rang, including lowering and raising the bells in the middle of the session to give more opportunity to practice. Ron Goodey met us but couldn't be persuaded to ring. The location was a bit far in the dark, yet was originally chosen as being close to Badby!

Guild 10-bell practice

Held at Daventry on Saturday, 8th November, the bells were half-muffled for Remembrance. Jim Bence led the session with eighteen ringing, including eleven from Daventry and two from Banbury branches.

November meeting

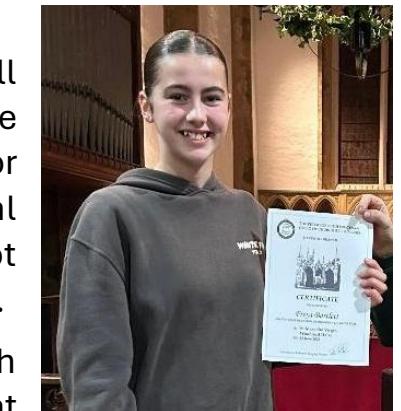
After the Storm Claudia downpour on the Friday, it was still damp but mild on Saturday. Eighteen rang at Byfield and five didn't climb the stairs. Justin kept us ringing, with rounds for Daisy from Newnham, call changes, plain hunt, and several of the usual methods. In the warm church we enjoyed the hot soups, sandwiches and cakes provided by the Byfield team.

Justin used the opportunity to present Freya and Laura with their First Quarter Peal certificates. That reminds me that Susan Rose was belatedly presented with her certificate in September, for a quarter on 1st June.



Susan's (delayed) certificate

There were also 18 at our new venture into Oxfordshire. 13 had been at Byfield and were met by three from Culworth Branch and two from Banbury Branch. After negotiating the very narrow streets around the church in darkness, we had a warm welcome. Ringing covered the whole range up to Cambridge Surprise Major half-course, finishing with a lower of the 8.



Freya's 1st 1/4 Certificate



And Laura's

Branch quiz

Saturday 22nd November saw our annual branch quiz, very ably organised by Alison Buck, take place in Daventry Band Hall, complete with half-time fish and chip supper delivered by Trawlers. 39 contestants made up six teams and answered a diverse range of questions, thanks to our quiz master Nigel Allcott. "The Fourth Bell" team won the table quiz, while "The Young Ones" and "The Cereal Killers" tied for second to the eventual winners, "Welton Wobblers" with just one point in it. A fabulous evening was had by all.

December with carols

On the second Saturday there was a good gathering in Whilton church, which was nicely warm! 22 people rang and another eight were hovering around. The bells were kept going with rounds, calls, plain hunting on 5 and 7 and several methods to suit the assembled company. Alison and Gillie were still getting over their encounter with Preston Capes bells at the previous evening's carol service. They got no sympathy from Carole!

Whilton and Norton ringers produced and served a good Christmas tea, complete with turkey, stuffing and cranberry sauce rolls and Christmas tree cakes. We were joined by curate Revd Rachel Kurkinen. Sue Sutherland proposed the vote of thanks. Revd Rachel (who took our service at Norton in July as Rachel Cooley) led 26 of us in our carol concert, with Martin Heath at the organ. Gwynneth had assembled the order of service with six carols and a nostalgic re-run of the song "The Monday Club Ringers meet at Braunston Tower / Ringing Doubles, Bob Doubles, Bob Doubles" to the tune of Tit Willow from The Mikado. There were four bell-related readings. We started spot on 6.30pm and mulled wine and mince pies were being enjoyed forty minutes later.

Badby practices

The prolonged absence of Badby bells has found the Wednesday practice nights continuing to wander around. Our thanks go to the host towers for allowing us to use their bells which, to the end of the year, have been: Newnham & Staverton (8 times), Everdon & Weedon (3), Charwelton (2), Litchborough, Weedon, Welton (1 each). Latest information suggests a February return of the bells.

People

We were sorry to hear that Alan Bailey of Byfield, Jackie's husband, had died on 5th November. He had been ill for some time and died peacefully at home. Alan never learned to ring – "to let Jackie get away from him" – he used to say. He was well into motorbikes and photography. He took many photos on our branch coach outings including the 2014 to 2018 group photos. His funeral was held on Tuesday, 2nd December, with open ringing afterwards.

(Alan's photos: <https://gcspullin.wixsite.com/daventrybranch>)

Geoff Pullin

Guilsborough Branch

Cold Ashby 2025

Things go from strength to strength at Cold Ashby. Our learners are making huge progress and all have rung quarter peals this year.

Back in January we set out to ring one quarter peal a month and have actually ended the year having rung 19 altogether. A wide variety of methods and a good selection of ringers.

We rang a peal back in September, organised by Paul Mason, which included three family members to remember Paul Reading, 15 years since he died.

A new peal board has been added to Cold Ashby Tower. It records two peals rung back in 2008 for two weddings that year, one was Tom Reading to Gaby in Slovakia in May and the second one was Peter Reading to Aline in Cold Ashby. The peals were rung by members of the family from the Reading side and the Jacklin side.



I am extremely grateful to Murray Coleman for making the board and to Howard and Vicky Murphy for the lettering.

I was absolutely delighted to be able to persuade two of my sons and three of my grandchildren to ring with me at Cold Ashby during our family Christmas celebration. Peter and Tom haven't rung since their dad taught them many years ago, yet they competently rang their bells up, rang rounds and call changes and then rang down.

The grandchildren have learned to ring in East Grinstead and St Albans and are all doing really well.

I know that Paul would have been very impressed with them all ringing Cold Ashby bells, and I have to admit I did find it quite emotional. A Reading family first!

I didn't intend to ring 100 QPs this year, following my 111 last year, but when mid-December arrived and I was at 95 it seemed a shame not to! Many thanks to all the ringers who have rung with me this year, especially Anthea for organising the last four on the 31st and to Alistair who rang in 80.

Liz Reading

Branch Quarter Peal Day

The Branch held a quarter peal day in September. Six quarter peals were attempted, with three being successful. Clive Skinner achieved his first ever quarter, ringing the tenor to plain Bob Doubles at Guilsborough, and in the same quarter Phil Barker



The Reading family at Cold Ashby

achieved a first on an inside bell. Fiona Barclay achieved a first in method to Plain Bob Minor at Spratton and Kelvin Broad achieved a first in method to Carlisle Surprise Minor at Yelvertoft. Thank you to everyone who took part. It was a good day of ringing with some wonderful achievements. Well done everyone.

Anthea Hiams

Let Steeple Bells be Swungen

When it was suggested, back in 2015/16, that a new group take up bellringing in Maidwell, we relied heavily on the kindness of ringers from other towers in the benefice to help us learn this mysterious art. As progressed, we were determined to repay their kindness by helping to ring at their services in our own and the neighbouring benefice, particularly as most towers did not have a full complement of ringers. Sunday mornings often saw a carload of Maidwell ringers heading out to a couple of other towers. A favourite was ringing at Great Oxendon, followed by East Farndon or Clipston, as this generally allowed for a bacon buttie breakfast at Waterloo Farm in between services. However, people move away and there are now fewer Maidwellians who make the weekly journeys to other towers in the benefice, but we still do whatever we can, whenever we can.

It has therefore been brilliant this year to see a similar story emerge at Harrington. A completely new band of ringers, learning to ring on their refurbished bells and making excellent progress, to the point where they too are willing and able to ring at other towers. We now have a true 'benefice band', made up of ringers from Arthingworth, Draughton, East Farndon, Harrington and Maidwell (as well as more experienced people from outside the benefice, who kindly offer their services – no pun intended!), which can be called upon for service and wedding ringing. A particular joy over Christmas was that we were able to organise ringing for all the carol services within the benefice (with ringable towers!). Thank you to everyone who agreed to ring at this very busy time of year – it was very much appreciated.

Fiona Howes

A Learning the Ropes milestone

It's been almost six years since a dear friend signed me up for bellringing lessons (presumably in an attempt to have SS Peter and Paul in Scaldwell struck by lightning). This year I finally managed to complete the ART level five certificate which allegedly makes me a "Change Ringer".



A happy band at Guilsborough having achieved the fifth QP needed for the certificate.

My heartfelt thanks to the many ringers who helped tremendously along the way, (and who are very relieved not to have to pay any more attention to Fiona's little blue book of ticks) and especially to Elaine Greatrex, without whom I would have long ago given up.

Elaine Greatrex organised a family outing to seven towers to the west of Wellingborough in October. A real mix of ringers participated, and a fun day out was had. Thank you to all the tower captains who were very accommodating.

Fiona Barclay

Kettering Branch

Branch tour to Leicester area, 11th October

The tour was very well attended, including ringers from other branches and wider afield. Three towers were visited and the ringing organised by the Branch Ringing Master, Andrew Gunstone, at the first two towers, which ranged from rounds and call changes through Plain Hunt and Plain Bob to Grandsire Triples and Cambridge Surprise Major.

Oadby, St. Peter 8. Tenor 12-3-15 in G, 22 ringers attended.

Aylestone, St. Andrew 8. Tenor 15-3-21 in F, 25 Ringers attended.

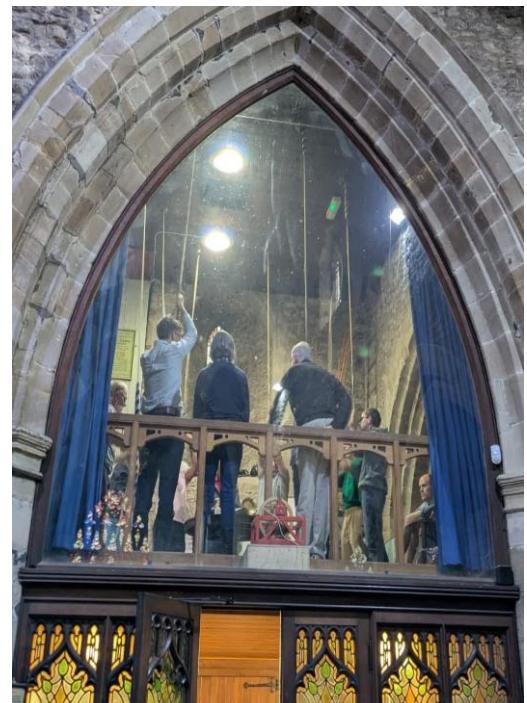
Leicester Cathedral Church of, St. Martin 12. Tenor 25-0-20 in D, 27 Ringers attended.

The tour included a break before visiting the Cathedral, allowing everyone time to reach Leicester City Centre and enjoy some lunch before gathering outside the Cathedral to wait to go up to the ringing chamber.

At the Cathedral the reins were given to Jim Bence the Guild Ringing Master who involved everyone in ringing on 12 bells, which for quite a few of those present was a completely new experience.



Ringing at Aylestone, St. Andrew



Aylestone, St. Andrew



Ringing the 12 Bells at Leicester Cathedral

Lots of rounds call changes were rung, then Plain Hunt and Plain Bob, Cambridge Major, Yorkshire Major, Grandsire Triples and Stedman Triples.

Various comments were made by the ringers: “a great turnout”; “great experience”; “stunning sound” and “expert ringing”; “a kinda scary walk across the roof to the cathedral belltower”.

Wilbarston 8th November

Lots of things to do and see were provided at Wilbarston, All Saints.

In addition to ringing in the tower, Andy Bimson, Branch Steward, gave a demonstration of rope splicing. The Guild Wombell was available for anyone interested to find out what it feels like to ring a church bell. Unfortunately, it lacked the accompanying sound, due to an IT glitch (nobody could remember the password). Please note that Wombell is now being stored at Stoke Albany by the Kettering Branch Steward, Andy Bimson. Anyone wishing to borrow it should contact Andy directly on 07816 787639.



Information Boards at Wilbarston

A presentation on Bellringing and the planned refurbishment project at the neighbouring church of Stoke Albany was on display.

A copious supply of tea and cakes were provided at the close of the meeting. The event was attended by some thirty people.

Rothwell 13th December

The meeting was attended by eighteen ringers, including two visitors from the Bedfordshire Association.

The ringing was organised by Bill Adcock, one of our assistant Ringing Masters, and later the Ringing Master, Andrew Gunsone, following his attendance at the Second Saturday Ringing Up & Down session at Grafton Underwood. Ringing ranged from rounds and call changes, including the first opportunity to ring on 10 bells for some newer ringers, through Plain Hunt and Plain Bob to Grandsire Triples and Stedman Triples to Yorkshire Major.

The ringing concluded, those gathered went downstairs for mulled wine and festive nibbles.

Branch Steward's Activities

The Branch Steward, Andy Bimson, has been busy at several towers, with the assistance of his team of helpers.

Cranford, St. John

A previous inspection identified the need for works to address the excessive play on the clappers. The clappers were taken out and brought to Andy's workshop, where he replaced their bushings.

Grafton Underwood, St. James the Apostle

This tower has been used for several of the Second Saturday Sessions, in particular for the raising and lowering of bells. A request was received from the organisers for some attention to the ropes. Again, Andy and his team visited the tower and took down the ropes. Andy set to work in his workshop using some ropes donated from Moulton and other materials to assemble a replacement set of ropes, including one from Moulton and two new top ends, spliced onto the original tail ends and sallies.

Isham, St. Peter

Following a report arising from the Quinquennial inspection, the PCC requested an inspection of the bells and fittings. Andy, assisted by Paul Salter, carried out a thorough inspection which confirmed nothing of major concern other than some routine maintenance requirements.

Training Initiatives

The regular Branch First Wednesday morning sessions for newer ringers continues to be well attended, helping those ringers who started on the Exercise as part of the late Queen's Jubilee celebrations and Ring for the King initiatives to develop their skills, moving from rounds and call changes to Plain Hunt and Plain Bob.

The meetings are normally led by Branch Chairman, Jane Marsh, who was indisposed for the December practice and Nich Wilson, the recently elected Guild Training & Recruitment Officer, accepted the invitation to take the helm.

A pilot session for a full training day on moving on to Plain Bob, was organised for Friday 31st October to coincide with school half-term. It aimed to encourage young ringers to participate. This was declared successful and a full day session is planned for the New Year.



The clappers of Cranford St John

Helen and Nick Churchman have been holding additional practices in the Welland Valley Benefice, to help those who have rung their First Quarter on the Treble to advance onto ringing inside to Plain Bob Doubles and Minor. These sessions are supported by members of the Rothwell Band and other Branch committee members.

Elsewhere, local tower practices have been supported by members of the Branch committee, in particular:

The Harrington Thursday afternoon practice lead by Janet Donaldson,

The Warkton Thursday night practice lead by James Moore, and

The Rushton Tuesday night practice lead by Mick Dainty from Desborough.

The Branch Officers and Committee are very grateful for the time given by more experienced ringers as they continue to encourage and develop others.

Training needs and opportunities are a regular feature of our committee meetings and outline plans will be confirmed at the first meeting following the Branch AGM.

Stoke Albany Renovation Project

One evening after Tuesday night practice at Wilbarston, three of the ringers, Penny Benson, Andy Bimson and Jonathan Seymour, got their heads together over a drink and formulated a plan to give the bells in the neighbouring church of St. Botolph in Stoke Albany a full renovation. Before the end of the evening, some £20,000 had been pledged to start the project. Other local ringers have joined the group to help with the organisation of fund-raising events. The complete details of the proposals are expected to be presented at the Branch Open Day in May 2026.

The plan is to remove the bells for re-tuning and then reinstall them with entirely new fittings, including headstocks, wheels, sliders, stays, and a rope guide in the tower. Additionally, to address concerns raised by the recent Quinquennial, better access to the belfry is to be provided.

Four quotations have been received from bell hangers, and the group is currently reviewing them to choose a preferred contractor.

News from the Towers

Corby, St. John the Baptist

Two Quarter Peals have been rung, the first to recognise the Golden Wedding of one of the Tower Captains, Cathy Mason. The second to recognise the Ruby Wedding of the other Tower Captain, Andrew Gunstone.

It is still the aim to organise a full peal on the refurbished ring. However, some acoustic issues must be addressed before this can be organised.

Peterborough Diocesan Guild

Corby, Northamptonshire

St John the Baptist

Thursday, 4 September 2025 in 44m (7-3-19 in B_b)

1260 Badgeworth Bob Minor

- 1 Alistair Donaldson
- 2 Liz Reading
- 3 Helen Camps
- 4 David G Seymour
- 5 John Beresford
- 6 Andrew Gunstone (C)

First in method for all.

A compliment to Cathy Mason, tower captain, and Alex Mason on their golden wedding anniversary on 6th September.

£6.00

PDGCBR

Corby, Northamptonshire

St John the Baptist

Friday, 19 September 2025 in 43m (7-3-19 in B_b)

1296 Cambridge Surprise Minor

- 1 Sue Marsden
- 2 Isaac O'Shea
- 3 Murray Coleman
- 4 Alistair Donaldson
- 5 Simon Dixon (C)
- 6 Andrew Gunstone

Rung for the Ruby wedding, 21/9/25, of Andrew & Rosemarie Gunstone. Local ringers at Corby.

£6.00

David Dainty

Northampton Branch

Our Branch outing organised by Debbie Sampson in September, entitled “A Grand Day Out”, was very successful with around twenty ringers attending from the branch, along with ringers from other branches within the Peterborough Guild. We started at All Saints, Mears Ashby in the morning, followed by St. Mary’s, Wilby. After lunch at the Lilacs pub in Isham, the final tower of the day was St. Peter’s, Isham.

Monthly practices also continued, with St. Botolph’s, Church Brampton hosting in October and in November at St. Peter & St. Paul, Abington, which were both well attended.

Geoff Brown has been doing some maintenance on the bells at St. Benedict, West Hunsbury in readiness for the forthcoming AGM in January 2026. This included greasing the bells and making sure all the nuts were fully tightened.

Extreme Commitment to Wedding Ringing

I was asked if I could supply a band to ring the bells of St Colomba for a wedding at Collingtree. “Of course,” said I, but then found I had great difficulty in getting a band together. Ringers seemed reluctant to commit themselves. Collingtree has a ground floor ring of 5, tenor 12-2-2. Sadly, they don’t have a band, so the bells are seldom rung. I also later learned that the wedding was on the same day as the Guild 8 bell striking competition.

One of my band members from Wellingborough had committed to ring in the competition at Castor, some 60 miles from Collingtree. We knew logistics would be

tricky. I managed to find a replacement ringer, but then another band member was taken ill on the day.

We arranged to meet at Collingtree Church to ring at 12.30pm for the 1.00pm wedding. Sadly, my long-distance ringer arrived with a poorly inflated back tyre, a little worrying, since they faced a 90-mile round trip!

So, we formulated a plan. We'd go into church, ring up the bells, ring the bells for the arrival of the bride and come out again during the first hymn. We'd inflate the tyre with a small compressor that works when plugged into the car's cigarette lighter, then go back into the church at the second hymn, ring the wedded couple out, and check the tyre to see if it had gone down.

We went into church to ring, but we had to move quite a lot of stuff, including a heavy old chest full of paper, to have room to ring the bells. We rang up the 5 bells, then as we pulled off for the first ring, the treble rope broke! Fortunately, the bell rang itself down, but it meant that we could now only ring on 4 bells.

During the first hymn we filed out to look at the car tyre. It was flatter than ever! Fortunately, under an accumulation of life's belongings in the boot of the car was a spare wheel and a jack but, unfortunately, not a spanner to undo the wheel nuts. While one of us jacked up the car, the rest of us searched our cars for useful tools. Another ringer found a spanner in their car which, miraculously, fitted the wheel nuts of the flat tyre. The pressure of the spare tyre was checked, regulated and then put on in place of the flat tyre. Our long-distance band member then left for Castor.

The four remaining band members filed back into the church at the second hymn and rang after the wedding. We put everything we had moved back into the ringing chamber.

I was very proud of my band – both for their efforts in ringing seldomly rung bells, and for helping each other in a very difficult situation. What a team! Well done all and thank you so much.

Debbie Sampson

Correspondent: Liz Moore, Branch Secretary

Peterborough Branch

Castor Ringing School

It has been another busy year at the Ringing School. We continue with the progression from handling through to rounds and Plain Hunt to various methods.

In the year, new ringers from various towers started to learn. Some tried it for one or two sessions and then decided it wasn't for them. Wittering tower recruited several potential ringers, so in January we ran additional handling sessions for them after the main session. Unfortunately, only one of those has continued learning.

Many of the ringers who started have progressed, and we now have a cohort ringing Plain Hunt on a regular basis, and they will move onto trebling and methods in time. It always surprises me that as one group progresses, another group of new learners arrives! Having learnt to handle a bell safely, some ringers have returned to their towers to learn methods.

We have had several LTR passes in the year, including level 4, with a graduation from pupil to helper. Also, congratulations to mother and daughter, Clara and Holly Pedersen, for passing level 5.

At the 2024 AGM, it was suggested that the helpers could benefit from a session making sure that they are on top of all the methods that might be called. Two sessions on Saturday afternoons were held over the past year. They have been fun, and an enjoyable learning experience for us all. We will continue with these events every 3-4 months over the next year.

Hilary Hardie, Head Tutor

St Mary's, Peterborough

It's been a quieter lead up to Christmas than in 2024. Nonetheless we've focused on numerous firsts in our QP campaign:

Kev Winter trebled to his first quarter

Joseph Booker conducted his first Triples

Seventieth Birthday Doubles was rung to mark Julian Burton's birthday

Steve Brown rang his first inside to Grandsire Doubles.

We squeezed in just four quarter peals this time around, when Yolande Hasselo revisited from Calgary. Her enthusiasm is contagious and it is good that we have met someone eager to share the love of ringing across the world.

In mid-December we rang a quarter in memory of June Pitcher on the eve of her funeral. June learned to ring in the late 1990s and predominantly she did most of her ringing in the city centre churches, through to the start of the pandemic. She rang 223 quarters and 2 peals.

Only 40 quarters were rung at St Mary's in 2025, compared to 50 in 2024. However, plans are formulating for 2026, aiming to keep as many members of the Peterborough Branch as possible off the streets of Peterborough and gainfully engaged up one tower or another.

Andrew Christie, Ringing Master St Mary's Peterborough



Holly (l) and Clara (r) receive certificates

Nassington

Our learners have moved on and are now ringing Plain Hunt competently on different bells, and some are trebling to Bob Doubles or ringing inside. So, our Monday and Friday practices concentrate on this, plus Stedman and other methods for the more experienced ringers. We have rung across the Benefice for several weddings and funerals.

We rang the bells half-muffled at Nassington for Remembrance Sunday and supported other towers where they needed extra ringers. In preparation for this, our newer ringers practiced slow (whole pull) plain hunt for a couple of weeks beforehand. December is always a busy month, with normal Sunday morning ringing plus ringing for all the extra services across the Benefice.

We have welcomed several visiting bands across the Benefice. Several QPs have been rung at Nassington in the period, including one in support of Yolande's return visit, one for Caroline's 25th QP and in December to celebrate Chris Burgess's 80th birthday.

Branch Correspondent: Hilary Hardie

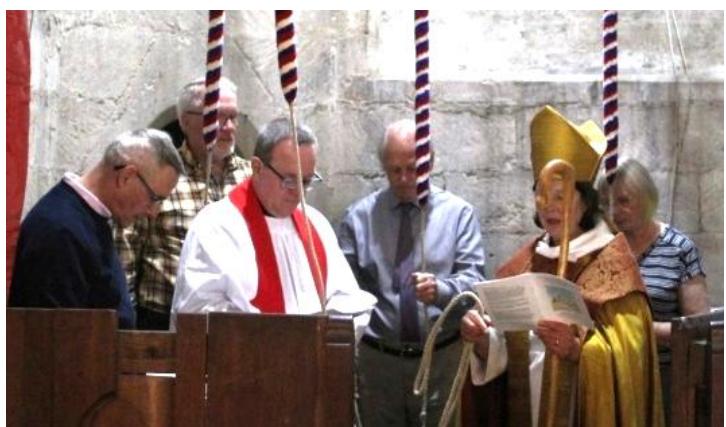
Rutland Branch

Greetham bells in action again

The village of Greetham held a celebration on September 12th to welcome back the bells and to hear them ring in their re-tuned state. There had been much publicity; on local radio, local papers and on social media. Many villagers expressed their pleasure at hearing the bells ring out once more.

The significance of the bells as the village war memorial was portrayed by one of villagers, who wrote and delivered a short account at the village celebration "The Story of the Bells", emphasising that although the men who died as a result of war did not hear the bells, we can remember them every time that we do! A very thought-provoking and poignant reminder for everyone.

On September 14th the bells were re-dedicated by the Bishop of Peterborough. Both events were well attended by villagers and Rutland dignitaries, the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff to name just two.



Rededication of the bells of Greetham

Safari "Ring for your Supper"

It may have been a cold, wet, dark October evening outside but the three churches visited were warm and welcoming and an enjoyable time was had by all. All ringers

had an opportunity to ring; our experienced teams, new ringers still needing support, and visitors alike. Something for everyone.

Brooke was the first tower on the ringing trek, where a large crowd of eager ringers gathered and waited their turn to ring. We met up with many old friends, became acquainted with new ones and generally caught up with each other's news. Scrumptious canapes were on offer to set us all off on our venture.

Onward to Ashwell, where the recently refurbished bells awaited. For the majority, this was the first time of ringing in this tower.

Then to Cottesmore, a village renowned for having the best fish 'n' chips in Rutland and the reason for this being the final tower of the evening. Inside the church, tables had been set out, covered with bright red/white checked tablecloths. A supporting team of helpers welcomed everyone with the offer of a hot cup of tea or coffee. Being an upper floor ring, only a few could be in the atmospheric ringing room at a time, but everyone had an opportunity to ring before the 9pm watershed.

The entire evening had a really warm and cheerful feel and was enjoyed by all who supported the event.

Workshops

During 2025 we ran several workshops, on Plain Hunting and Plain Bob Doubles. These were so popular with ringers wanting to progress their skills that we had to put on extra sessions to get everyone through a workshop before the year end. The success of these workshops was achieved by the willingness of experienced ringers to give their time to ring around the learners enabling them to develop.

More and different workshops are being planned for 2026.

In Memorium

It is with great sadness we report the death of John Beadman, of Braunton. He died peacefully in his sleep during the evening of Christmas Day.

John had been Brooke tower captain from the installation of the bells in 1990 until 2018, when he gave up ringing. He was Branch chairman for several years in the 1980s and 1990s, and tower captain of Oakham for a while in the 1970s. Bellboard only shows about 40 quarter peals and 2 peals, mostly after 2000, but there were many more than that in the 1980s and 1990s. John's son, Richard, says his best estimate would be 250 quarter peals and 6 peals.

Rutland lost two more ringers who both died on Boxing Day; Stella Wilkinson of North Luffenham and John Hennessy of Barrowden.

May they all rest in peace.

Sue Webster, Rutland Branch Correspondent.

Thrapston Branch

“Ring at every available opportunity.” I recently came across this quote when clearing out various archived papers. It was from an advice sheet issued at the start of Covid, but it seemed apt to partner it with the progress of Thrapston Branch through this year.

We have been able to meet regularly for a monthly afternoon practice on the third Thursday of the month. Initially most of our practices were at Wadenhoe but, as the months grew colder, we succumbed to warmer practices at Thrapston. Our newest ringers and members are progressing well and have certainly seemed to have caught the “Ringing Bug”.

We have also progressed to evening ringing practices through the warmer months, where we were able to support the more isolated and rural towers in the branch as they valiantly keep ringing going in their parish. We are always pleased to hear compliments from local residents, such as “It was lovely to hear the bells ringing” and, so far, we have had no adverse comments.

We have also been able to enjoy the social side of bellringing, finishing our practices at one of our local hosteries, although sadly, as is the current trend, we have seen several closures in the last year. We also enjoyed a summer barbecue, with thanks to Chris and Frank Jenkins for hosting it, originally in their garden, but the English summer weather didn’t play ball and we retreated indoors for a lovely evening.

We now look forward to 2026 and our AGM, with a very pleasing number of new members to elect and more returning ringers joining us.

One of the other quotes on the Covid advice sheet was “use the skills of all your ringers and think about what you can do differently to sustain ringing for the future”. Thrapston Branch is very much following this advice.

Dennis Thrift, Alison Byrnes

Towcester Branch

August Mini Outing

Gathering together for the August Bank Holiday weekend mini-tour is a joy, and it was well attended. This year we even had a lovely dry and sunny day. We stayed local and visited Flore, Nether Heyford and Harpole. A great choice of towers, allowing some of our newer ringers a chance to ring away from home.

October Quiz and Open Ring

Our annual quiz night and open ringing at Towcester has become a real tradition in the branch, with seven teams of quiz enthusiasts participating for the fish and chip supper, supplied by Marlin, and an excellent quiz hosted by Hilary Aslett.

Not so many this year climbed the steps into the Towcester tower for the open ringing, but those who did managed rounds, call changes to Grandsire Caters. Some newer members were ringing for their first time on 10 and 12 bells.

Fish and chip supper was greatly enjoyed, and well organised by Margaret and Chris Bulleid – a great night out had by all.

November Branch Practice at Wicken

We all went over to Wicken to hold a morning training ring at the beautiful bells of Wicken. An excellent turnout by branch members.

December Ringing

It has been hard to keep up with the huge amount of ringing throughout the branch for the Christmas festivities and the lead up to Christmas Day. Most churches rang, most towers managed to cover the services with many ringers rushing around to support carol services. Sadly, some towers did not manage every service but overall, we hold a good record for covering towers and sharing our skills.

Well done to all ringers and to visiting ringers including the wider Bulleid family who wonderfully support Pattishall. Always such a joy to see them all together.

Branch activities

62nd Annual Branch Dinner, The Boat Inn, Stoke Bruerne

The Towcester Branch gathered in fine style for its Annual Branch Dinner at the ever-welcoming Boat Inn, Stoke Bruerne. Our thanks go to licensee Andrew Woodward, who extended a warm welcome to all 38 attendees and ensured we were well looked after from first sip to final fare.

The food was delicious, the service excellent, and the wine flowed with such enthusiasm that conversations positively flourished. For one evening only, the familiar cold-tower uniform of woolly jumpers and sweatshirts was cast aside, replaced by smart suits, elegant dresses and, dare we say it, a touch of sparkle. Proof, if any were needed, that bellringers scrub up remarkably well.

Proceedings were kept firmly (and energetically) on track by our MC, Chris Bulleid, while Chairman Jonathan Stuart took wine with various guests and appeared to spend most of the evening on his feet, either demonstrating remarkable stamina or simply unable to sit still with such good company.

We were treated to a series of entertaining speeches from Revd Lulu Pelly, Helen Allton, and Sarah Bence, the latter having unearthed some fascinating and little-known facts about Holy Cross, Pattishall, reminding us that history can be every bit as intriguing as the dessert menu.

A particular highlight of the evening was the superb handbell ringing performed by Chris and Margaret Bulleid, together with Jonathan and Barbara King, providing both musical excellence and a reminder that bell ringers can indeed hit the right note without climbing a tower.

The raffle proved to be the star turn of the night, raising an impressive £160 for Northamptonshire Health Charity, and giving everyone a chance to test both their luck and their optimism.

All in all, it was a thoroughly convivial evening, full of laughter, good food, fine company and generous spirits, leaving everyone in agreement that the Towcester Branch knows how to ring the changes both in the tower and at the dinner table.

Report: Jill Cooke

Branch Ringing

Marathon Ringing Effort for Remembrance Sunday

On Sunday 9th November there were five services scheduled in the Grand Union Benefice. Two at 9.30 at Stoke Bruerne and Milton Malsor, two at 11.00 at Blisworth and Grafton Regis and one at Alderton at 2.00 pm.

Blisworth was a Parade Service with the Scout Organisation and the primary school. The Act of Remembrance was held by the War Memorial in the churchyard, commencing at 10.50, with the two minutes silence at 11.00. Many villagers attended the Act of Remembrance, then filed into church for the family service. The service at Grafton Regis was by the Soldier in the churchyard and again the two minutes silence was observed at 11 am.

For the bell ringers: Peter Banks, Polly Randall and Chris Lea, it was an early start over to Stoke Bruerne for 9 am to be joined by Mark Rogers and Chris Clayson to ring the five bells half-muffled. Peter, Polly and Chris then drove straight over to Grafton Regis, to be joined by Sam Green to ring four of the five bells.

Chris Clayson, being Church Warden of Courteenhall, then travelled straight over to join the other ringers for the Service of Remembrance. Mark came back to Blisworth, to be joined by Bob and Cassia Lorrimore, Matthew Rogers, Carolyn Fairs and Jenny Lunn to ring the 6 half-muffled.

In the afternoon, Polly, Carolyn, and the two Chris rang four of the five bells for the Alderton Service.

A Herculean effort by the eleven Blisworth ringers, working around family commitments. On days like this, we recognise the need for more ringers to join us and lapsed ringers to come forward, perhaps just for a one-off effort.

Do you know anyone that has ever wondered “What's it all about”? Come and have-a-go! Please contact any member of the Towcester Branch for more information.

Blisworth Advent Windows

From 1st to 24th December, an Advent Window was unveiled every night at 6.30 pm, to be followed by the singing of an unaccompanied carol, mulled wine and nibbles.

My theme was the Sound of Bells, and the carol, Ding Dong Merrily on High. The window silhouette was of bells, musical notes and stick people (Lowry-fashion) holding ropes with sallies in the Northampton Saints R.F.C. colours.

Six days before the start I had no ropes but then through a friend I heard of Maypole Bells & Ropes Ltd, based in Sittingbourne, Kent. Following a telephone conversation with Trevor, three ropes were manufactured and delivered to me within three days. Excellent Service!



Consider Maypole when you next need new ropes in your tower, or a light pull or a pet lead.



Many of us quickly got used to a glass of mulled wine every evening, but with hindsight, we would have been in better voice if it had been drunk before we sang the carol!

Chris Lea

Branch Training

Margaret Bulleid continues to provide and develop the brilliant and very well attended Saturday morning training sessions at Cold Higham, mainly aimed at bell handling and improvement. A variety of ringing exercises, learning methods and targeted training is available – a great opportunity to improve your own ringing with support and one-to-one focus where needed.

There are new recruits at Greens Norton and Bradden, with two more coming from an open event at the Greens Norton Show, run by John White.

Some advanced branch ringers reported they had benefited from the Guild Stedman training event held at Pattishall.

Odette Dawkins

Wellingborough Branch

Since the last newsletter, the Wellingborough Branch has held Surprise practices at Mears Ashby and Earls Barton, an afternoon practice at Bozeat and an evening practice at Irchester. In September we had a very enjoyable outing to Oxfordshire, ringing at Cumnor, Appleton, Bletchingdon and Kirtlington, but the highlight of the day was visiting Whites of Appleton. Members of the Branch were challenged ringing those dinky bells, and others were interested in the foundry side, seeing the bells and the wood workshop where they make the wheels.

Eight teams entered the Branch Quiz in December and Rushden were the winners.

Pam Bailey

Bozeat

Ringing at Bozeat was suspended for a few weeks in December when the work started on installing a new floor under the bells. We were very optimistic about achieving Christmas ringing, as progress was fairly rapid. Since the

old floor was removed some time ago it has been very noisy in the ringing room, and we are looking forward to more peaceful practices. In the meantime, practices were transferred to the tower of our welcoming friends from Hanslope, where very useful practices on 8 were held.



Bozeat is trialling a different way of keeping ropes dry. An old tub with reusable packet of desiccant. Book optional (it's just covering the hole). Updates on effectiveness to come ... Is this a more environmentally friendly method? Thoughts welcome!

Chris Downey

Easton Maudit

The rope guide faculty was eventually received from the Diocesan office, and an order has now been placed with Whites of Appleton. Whites envisage installation during the second quarter of 2026.

A quinquennial inspection was carried out in church during December. The only issue concerning the bells was the state of the ceiling above them (at the top of the tower/base of the spire) which will need replacing sometime during the next 5 years.

Tony Manktelow

Earls Barton

After many years, we have unanimously decided to change our practice times to 7.00pm - 8.30pm but still on a Thursday. We are also happy to see visitors at our practice by prior arrangement with Andy.

Andy Smith

Ecton

The Branch ringers rang at Ecton to mark the Wedding of Thomas Coulter-Brophy at the end of August, which was held at Fawsley.

Ecton ringers also decided this year to ring alternately at Wilby and Gt Doddington for our practice nights on the first Wednesday of the month, as they are part of our Benefice.

David Dicks

Irchester

The Bellringers decorated the ringing chamber with their Host of Angels for St. Katherine's Festival of Angels. The larger ones of these will hang until after the Christmas festivities. We also rang for the Carols by Candlelight service.



Marion Whittaker

Irthlingborough

Seventeen of us enjoyed our Annual Dinner at the Duke in Woodford on Saturday 8th November.

We rang half-muffled for the Remembrance Service in November, which included one of our learners.

Our next social event was the Christmas party which took place after an early finish to the practice on Wednesday 17th December, and we are also planning to have our usual New Year's party, followed by ringing in the New Year.

We hope to ring for as many of the Christmas services as we can, but several of our regular service ringers also have commitments at other churches, and I suspect this is the same for other towers too!

We hope to have Josh Horne back with us ringing again soon, after his recent operation and wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Margaret Bull

50th Anniversary Surprise Party

A surprise party was held at St Peter's church, Irthlingborough, on Wednesday 17th September, for Alan and Margaret Bull, in commemoration of them running the bellringing at Irthlingborough for 50 years - a golden anniversary.

This was a lovely evening with food, wine and a local dark ale on a pump supplied by one of our Coronation learners, Paul Smith, an ex-publican who likes to keep his hand in. This ale went down a treat and was enjoyed by many!

A presentation of garden vouchers, a golden anniversary rose and a picture of St Peter's painted by a local artist were given in appreciation of their hard work and commitment to bellringing in Irthlingborough.

Many past ringers travelled from afar, and we had someone from each decade that Alan and Margaret have been here. Lots of reminiscing and sharing of memories took

place and the 1980s teenagers enjoyed a good catch up. Thirty or more years had passed since we had last seen each other.

Thank you to Alison Brynes for making the anniversary cake, which had fifty small decorative bells on it, and to everyone else who contributed to making the evening a success.

Margaret and Alan Bull moved to Irthlingborough in September 1975, and in the words of the late Revd John Phillips, they were an answer to prayers. Irthlingborough, in the early 19th century, had a regular peal band, ringing all sorts of Surprise Major including Irthlingborough Surprise Major. Sadly, that band gradually passed away and by the 1970s Irthlingborough was struggling to keep the bells going with a local band.

Margaret immediately took over the ropes in the role of tower captain and Alan helped with bell maintenance, supporting Margaret and teaching new learners.

By the early 1980s, we had a local band able to ring Surprise Minor and Major, with some help of some local visiting ringers. Lots of teenagers learnt to ring, myself included, and I have many memories of crazy tower grabs on open days, ringing tours in Kent, Somerset and Suffolk. Margaret and Alan have always been very hospitable, and to this day have various social events at their house every year.

Margaret was 13 when she learnt to ring at Ospringe in Kent. She says she was attracted by a couple of boys there! Margaret moved to Southampton in 1969, where she met her future husband, Alan, through a ringer called Patrick Harrison. Patrick eventually became their best man when Alan and Margaret were married in Southampton in 1971. Alan learnt to ring while he was at university in Southampton, and in 1972 they moved to Trumpington in Cambridgeshire for his work.

Alan was taken under the wing of a certain Miss Willers, the tower captain at Trumpington, and with learner and Surprise practices, Alan's ringing progressed.

On moving to Irthlingborough in 1975, Alan called many quarter peals and some peals. The QP's were instrumental in helping progress a local band that they had started to build up.

To quote Margaret, "Like everywhere, we have had some more successful periods than others, but it has all been good. We have met lots of lovely people, rung in loads of great places and long may it continue".

Thank you, Alan and Margaret, for your commitment, enthusiasm and dedication. You have stood steadfast through thick and thin.

Jayne Horne



Alan & Margaret, with cake

Mears Ashby

At Mears Ashby we rang to celebrate the village Christmas lights switch on, and for the Nine Lessons and Carols on the Sunday before Christmas.

Pete Dyer

Orlingbury

It's always good to have new recruits, and at Orlingbury we have over the years been blessed with a steady influx to replace those who could no longer climb the 45 steps to the ringing room, due to old age or infirmity. Imagine then how pleased we were last summer to welcome a new young member, Rebecca Johnson, a readymade, albeit lapsed, ringer recently moved to the area. She has settled in very well. Since joining us Rebecca has exploited her newly rekindled hobby whilst on holiday, by ringing at Holy Trinity Wall Street, New York, for Sunday service with the local ringers. As campanologists, we are fortunate that we can just turn up at a church anywhere in the world and be made welcome. So, next time you are on holiday or visiting a new area, take a moment to look up Dove Online and find out what bells the local church has and when they ring. You will be helping them, while grabbing another tower for your records!

Tim Samson

Rushden

After ringing for a wedding, it was a pleasure to receive feedback from the happy couple. *“Walking out to the bells was a feeling we can never put into words. Thank you to all the bellringers.”* It is not often we get such positive feedback from a wedding party. It was truly appreciated.

The Rushden team won the Branch Quiz which was held at Earls Barton in December.

We continue to ring on Friday evenings and Sunday Services. We are always grateful for the support of friends and visitors from other towers who come to support us.

Pam Bailey

Wellingborough

Following several years of stagnation, a new band of learners has been formed, thanks in part to the publicity of the 2024 PDG100 peal and an open day held in August 2025. We now have another four recruits, making a cosy band of eight. Progress is slow but steady. We practice most Wednesdays, and always socialise in the pub afterwards, which of course is an important part of being an enthusiastic band!

Sunday service ringing has resumed, presently on the first Sunday of the month and, with help from the Orlingbury ringers, all eight bells are rung.

In the near future, a lift and clean of the bearings will be carried out followed by a complete de-rusting and painting of the enormous two-tier frame. In addition, the

tune barrel (sometimes referred to as a carillon) will be cleaned and rebuilt. New light fittings have been fitted in each of the four stages of the tower, making access and maintenance much safer, so the future is looking bright at All Hallows!

Tim Samson

Wollaston

It has been a busy second half for 2025, we have rung for two weddings and for VJ Day. In August, a home band, plus a few regular ringing friends, rang a Quarter Peal to mark the final service the following day by our incumbent Adrian and his wife Louise, before they move to a new post at Holy Trinity, Boston, Lincs. Adrian and Louise attended the whole time and watched the successful performance, which was also the first attempt at a Quarter for Ben. The afternoon finished with tea and cake.

Regular practices continue each Wednesday evening from 7.30-9.00. We are pleased to see visitors, new learners and returners to ringing. All welcome.

Christmas has seen an abundance of ringing (which makes up for last year when half the team went away for Christmas, and we didn't ring at all!). We rang for our All-Age Nativity Service, Carol Service, Christingle Service and Christmas morning Communion Service. Some members even helped at Irchester and rang for their Christmas Eve midnight service.

The ringing has been very good with many appreciative comments. We are fortunate that our village loves the sound of bells. I am very grateful for the faithful support of the ringers at Wollaston and those friends who help us out on a regular basis. It is great to have your friendship and your skill.

We look forward to ringing in the New Year on 31st December and saying hello to 2026 with a few nibbles and a few drinks. There may even be a New Year potato from Harry?

Jean Rose

Branch correspondents: Marion Whittaker/Pam Bailey



*Christingle: (back) Jack, Su, Mel, Ben, Thomas
(front) Jean Enya, Paul, Kate
(photo Jack & Ben's mum)*

100 Club

Since the last newsletter was produced, we have made four draws:

MONTH	No. of paid-up members	1 st Prize	1 st Prize Value	2 nd Prize	2 nd Prize Value	3 rd Prize	3 rd Prize Value	4 th Prize	4 th Prize Value
September	183	92Gu	£38.43	96We	£25.62	118Gu	£18.30	179Pe	£12.81
October	189	117Da	£39.69	12We	£26.46	19We	£18.90	164We	£13.23
November	187	1Ke	£39.27	141Pe	£26.18	81Ke	£18.70	78Pe	£13.09
December	187	184Cu	£39.27	89Th	£26.18	92Gu	£18.70	20To	£13.09

We continue with four winners for each draw, and the eagle-eyed reader might note this time that one lucky number was drawn twice in two separate months! The method of drawing numbers is totally random.

From time to time, numbers do get withdrawn/reallocated, sometimes due to ringers moving away or ceasing to ring, but occasionally just due to the annual subscription not being paid. To try to avoid this, I do send up to three monthly reminders by email and enlist the help of the branch representatives if that method fails. If you feel you are not getting reminders, please check your spam folder and/or get in touch.

During 2025 we raised over £1,000 for the Bell Fund, as well spreading a little joy to those who receive a cheque in the post! If you are a member of the Guild and are interested in contributing, or want an additional number for the draws, or know someone else who might be interested, please get in touch.

Cathy Dixon 100_club@pdg.org.uk

GUILD EVENTS 2026

Please watch out for announcements about future Guild Events, broadcast through the usual channels, including the Guild website www.pdg.org.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/PDGCBR.

January 10th, 2026

10 Bell Practice, Rothwell (10:30)

February 14th, 2026

Quiz and Supper, Nether Heyford Village Hall (19:00)

March 14th, 2026

10-bell Practice, Peterborough RC Church of SS Peter, Paul & Andrew (10:30)
ART Module 1, Teaching Bell Handling, Rothwell, all day (booking essential)

April 11th, 2026

Brooke & Braunston (Rutland Branch), Spring Festival (15:00)

May 8th, 2026

10-bell Practice, venue tbc (10:30)

June 13th, 2026

Irchester (Wellingborough Branch) – Service, tea & Guild AGM

July 11th, 2026

10-bell Practice, venue tbc (10:30)

September 12th, 2026

Brackley (Culworth Branch) – Summer Festival
10-bell Practice, venue tbc (10:30)

November 14th, 2026

10-bell Practice, venue tbc (10:30)