

## **GUILD OF DEVONSHIRE RINGERS – NORTH EAST BRANCH**

### **Reports of the Branch Officers for 2010 – 11**

#### **CHAIRMAN**

A couple of weeks ago ringers from two Branch towers were in a pub in Cullompton reflecting on a successful and enjoyable joint practice that had just taken place. They had been joined by a few ringers from elsewhere in the Branch and the evening had provided opportunities for all the ringers present to ring both call changes and methods which they might otherwise not have been able to ring. It also allowed the less experienced ringers to see and hear good ringing in action as the Branch team practised for the forthcoming Guild Striking Competition. Everyone in the pub agreed that the joint practice was something which they wanted to repeat.

I recount this event as I feel it typifies what the Branch at its best can, and should, be all about. By pooling our resources we were able to achieve far more than an individual tower could on its own. The Branch's role is to encourage and support co-operation between towers and ringers to make things happen which otherwise would not be possible. This is the thinking which underlies the weekly events in the Branch Practice Towers at Huntsham, St Peter's and Bampton, the monthly advanced practice and the training events held at the Troyte Ringing Centre. All these events provide opportunities for learning and improvement for those prepared to ring outside their own towers. This is a theme to which the ringing masters also refer.

One issue of national concern taken up by the Ringing Foundation is also relevant to our branch and that is ensuring that the quality of ringing teaching is sufficiently high to train, retain and motivate new ringers so that they are able to make good progress to a level which gives them a sense of achievement in their ringing. The Integrated Teacher Training Scheme has been developed by Pip Penney and adopted by the Foundation. I am pleased to see that in Devon there is a group of committed ringers also keen to promote it and to train up a new generation of competent ringing teachers.

This is my last report as Chairman as I stand down after five years and I am encouraged by what I see happening in the Branch generally. Most of our affiliated towers are active and many are training learners. Branch quarterly events and practices are normally well supported and, again as our Ringing Masters note, members of the Branch are making clear progress and the standard of ringing is improving. I thank my fellow officers for all their hard work and thank you, the members, for your support.

*Les Boyce*

#### **COMMITTEE SECRETARY**

The committee continues to work hard delivering to the North East Branch of Devonshire Bell Ringers the training and education requested by members.

We meet once a quarter, to discuss every aspect of the North East Branch; from helping to arrange Quarter Peals, basic bell handling, method ringing training, tower maintenance and publicity. The meetings are lively and full of debate usually held in a pub after a good lunch with good humoured banter around the table. This makes for a very convivial meeting.

It has been a difficult year in as much there are so many different pressures upon people's time, that sometimes we wonder if we, as a Branch, are trying to do too much for our members? This is something which will have to be addressed in the coming months in order to produce a programme which members feel is worthwhile and will become involved in.

*Alison Milne*

## TREASURER

Please see the separate balance sheet

## PROGRAMME SECRETARY

We had a full programme of events for the year, with quarterly meetings at Halberton, Hemyock and a particularly splendid event at Cruwys Morchard.

Monthly eight bell practices were held through the year, mainly at Huntsham but also at Cullompton, where we were able to do some practice for the Guild striking competition.

The training programme at the TRC Huntsham covered raising and lowering in peal, Plain Bob Doubles and Plain Bob Minor. A Branch Mini seminars was held on Tower Maintenance but the tower captains' forum fell victim to overcrowded diaries.

The Annual Branch outing and the two mini midweek outings were all very enjoyable.

The Branch Dinner is still to come.

*Tony Trigg*

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

After very many years as Membership Secretary Alan Edwards has handed this responsibility over to myself. We have 100 members in the Branch, representing 13 towers, with 4 unattached members. When we renew membership at the end of the year I will take send tower secretaries the details we have, so that records can be updated and checked.

*Tony Trigg*

## RINGING MASTERS

Ringling in the branch has had a successful year relative to its resources. Attendance at branch meetings has increased, not least because of an increase in the call change ringer members attending. The monthly advanced practice has been generally well attended and useful progress has been made in both plain and surprise methods. The quarter peal week scored a high proportion of the attempts, and included some "firsts", and some of the ringling was high quality. The annual branch outing was a great success and there was some good ringling, and notably so on the 10 at Sidmouth. The branch entered the 10-bell striking competition with a band representing both call change and method ringers from the branch. In addition, the NE branch came 2nd in the 2010 Guild 8-bell striking competition. Individual towers have had their ups and downs, but ringling has been maintained and improved at most towers, most notably at Cullompton. Peal ringling remains confined to a very few individuals, who ring a lot of them.

Ringling is a - very public - performance art, and we should therefore aim to achieve the best striking we can, whether we ring call changes or advanced methods. Like playing the piano, doing it well requires dedication, practice, and correct technique. Training courses, whilst helpful, are too brief to do more than provide an introduction. To ring better, each ringer should take control of his own ringling career, and actively seek opportunities for improvement. If you want to ring methods, do not ask method ringers to come to your tower to teach you, as we've found that does not work. Instead, get out, and regularly attend the designated branch practices or other places where method ringling happens. Learners who show such dedication will find their opportunities for development increase because teachers are more willing to help such people, and will then offer them other opportunities, such as ringling in quarter peals. Many ringers in the branch, even quite good ones, would improve their ringling through better bell handling and control - just an hour of

one-to-one intensive retraining can make a spectacular difference, making ringing easier, more accurate and consequently more enjoyable. Better bell control should be the branch's top training priority, and both call change and method ringers can benefit.

*Richard Johnston & Sheila Scofield*

## EDUCATION OFFICER

Mike Hatchett resigned as Education Officer at the start of July. His full report on Training in 2011 is available on the Branch website. Key points are summarised here:

Seven training events have been run so far this year –

- Raising and lowering in peal (January)
- First steps in method ringing (March)
- First steps in method ringing for Cullompton (May)
- Plain Bob Doubles (May)
- Plain Hunting (June)
- Moving on from Plain Bob Doubles (August)
- Plain Bob Minor (September)

All these events were successful in enabling the learners participating to make progress, but some learners found this more difficult because of problems with bell handling and control, particularly making coils in ringing up and down and being able to shorten or lengthen the tail in hunting and dodging. Other learners were not always aware of the importance of knowing where to pass the treble in a method and its significance in alerting the learner to the next piece of work, while many have no concept of what the “course bell” means.

Two further events are planned for this year:

- Introduction to method ringing for Silverton (29<sup>th</sup> October)
- Extended ringing session (12<sup>th</sup> November)

Thanks are due to Sheila Scofield for organising the helpers and Pat Hatchett for doing the catering for these events.

Several factors led Mike to feel it was time to step down as Branch Education Officer:

- The lack of comment or feedback from tower captains about the suitability or otherwise of the training programme which makes planning difficult.
- The difficulty in finding helpers as capable ringers are not prepared to keep training dates free in their diaries
- The difficulty of helping learners with handling problems if there is no competent ringers from their home tower present to take back the tips to work on after training.
- The lack of opportunity in North East Branch for consolidating the training through extended ringing such as quarter peals.

As a result of these factors Mike feels that the training programme has increasingly become divorced from ringing in the Branch and that he should stand down. The Branch must therefore review its future training programme and decide how it should proceed in future.

*As Branch Chairman I would like to take this opportunity to give my sincere thanks to Mike and Pat Hatchett on behalf of the Branch for all their commitment and hard work in running the Branch training programme over the last six years at Troyte and before that at Thorverton*

*Les Boyce*

## PUBLICITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Whilst the last year has been an active one, little done in the North East Branch has been calculated to grip the attention of the world at large. Consequently, it has been difficult to engage the local media in promoting our interests. The Committee sensibly decided not to participate in the 2011 Mid-Devon Show; the affects of the loss of exposure roughly being equal to the benefits derived from past participation. A notable exception to this however, was last year's splendid performance of the Bampton "to ring or not to ring" team in raising well over £3,000 in support of the Help for Heroes charity. This was quite well covered by a press whose interests generally seem not to extend much beyond covering umpteenth division football. Nevertheless, I continue with the Chinese water torture in the hope that eventually the constant erosion will return a result or two.

The Branch/Troyte Ringing Centre website continues to promulgate items of interest but would benefit from some "new blood" submissions of news material - my prosaic style is becoming tedious! So, please, reports of tower outings, course attendances and so on written by others will be warmly welcomed. I can see much merit in expanding the site contents to include a "forum" to which anyone might seriously contribute to the benefit of The Exercise but the possible adoption of this will depend upon general support.

With regard to the website, I should like to thank the webmaster, Ken Smith, for his technical help and being a last line of defence in limiting the degree of public embarrassment which I might otherwise suffer. Similarly, Roger King at Ringing Round Devon has been a stout friend.

*Dermot Elworthy.*

## BELL ADVISER

The Branch Bell Adviser is a new post which was set up toward the end of last year. The primary objective of the post is to carry out inspections of bell installations in support of Quinquennial Surveys. However, I am happy to provide advice at other times if asked to do so. My Terms of Reference can be found at [http://www.troyterringingcentre.org.uk/bell\\_advisor.htm](http://www.troyterringingcentre.org.uk/bell_advisor.htm) and perhaps may be worth a look.

On 26 March I gave a presentation on Tower Maintenance at St Peter's, Tiverton, which was well received by the small number that attended.

There has been little call on my services.

I accompanied James Clarke the DAC Bell Adviser on an inspection of the installation at Clayhanger which is currently unusable. The installation is interesting in that it consists of three bells with half wheels. The parish does not have the funds to restore the ring, and is unlikely to have them within the foreseeable future, so the object of the inspection was to provide a report on the best way to preserve the bells safely and possibly make one available for chiming.

I was asked by the Tower Captain of Cullompton to comment on recommendations made by the DAC Bell Adviser in his Inspection Report in support of the Quinquennial Survey. I did not agree with all his recommendations which is quite interesting in that the Tower Captain now has three views on what should be done – a professional bell hanger, the DAC Bell Adviser and mine! I think they are in descending order of cost!

*Jack Ward*

A copy of this report and the balance sheet is available on the Branch website at:  
[http://www.troyterringingcentre.org.uk/ne\\_index.htm](http://www.troyterringingcentre.org.uk/ne_index.htm)