



Oxford City Branch Hugh's News

Produced fortnightly by Paul and Hugh, with a few contributions from other ringers

Monday 27th July 2015



The Great Essex Expedition on Saturday 11th July

On Saturday July 11th a nefarious collection of Oxford area ringers assembled in North West Essex to drink Jägerbombs, dance round handbags



and... no, wait a mo, instead of the 24-hour party that our TVs had promised us, found awaiting a land of pretty villages, open farmland, and winding country lanes. The intention was to 'bag' the towers in an area known as the 'fields', a group of villages with names ending in -field! However five towers in a day was going to be pushing timings to the limit, so an early executive decision was made to wimp out of the most challenging, the heavy, long-draught and unguided 8 at **Great Bardfield**. So first was to be the Norman tower at the top of the hill overlooking **Finchingfield**, village of a million picture postcards, and just a year before witness to the massed peleton of



Finchingfield



Wethersfield



Gosfield



Toppesfield

the Tour de France pouring over the picturesque bridge by the pond and racing up the hill past the church. The 15cwt 8 are long draught, rung from the open tower floor, with a tendency to be challenging, as the tenor ringer found out when his rope handling skills deserted him on a regular basis throughout the ringing, largely variations on plain hunt but with efforts at Grandsire Triples, but despite this a steady trickle of visitors came in to say how lovely they thought it all sounded. Obviously all got cloth ears! Finchingfield is also noticeable for the size of its boxes – only a clown could get their toes over the edge, those of us with normal sized feet could use them as sofas!

We then followed the route of the Tour to **Wethersfield**, another foursquare Norman tower and another long draught 8 (11cwt, this time), with the added complication of a huge wooden pillar in the centre of the ringing chamber – in the words of the tower captain 'to make sure everyone knows their methods by places'! More trouble for the tenor ringer, who was really having an off day, and eventually demoted himself in disgust to the treble. The ringing went rather better, but Wethersfield is rather off the tourist trail,



despite once having been home to Patrick Bronte, so there were no appreciative tourists this time. There was a concerning incident when I tried to phone the lunch choices through when I was told that the menu on the pub website was 'only an example' – would we be fed in time? After a trek through the countryside on roads no, lanes - that must have tested the patience of some of the convoy, I am happy to report that the **King's Head at Gosfield** did indeed feed us satisfactorily, though serving food in reverse order to that in which it was ordered caused confusion! It was only a couple of minutes off the

scheduled time that we made the couple of hundred yards from the pub to the church, to be greeted by the tower captain whose immediate response to the person he was chatting to was 'Told you it was a hold-up at the pub!' After the morning's heavy eights, **Gosfield's** 9cwt 6 were light relief, though complicated by the first four bells being in a row down one wall – another fiendish Essex scheme to make sure everyone knows their place! Much regular six-bell fare, Plain Bob Doubles and Minor and St Simons was rung before our time was up, and another bout of cross-country travel navigating by musket and sextant took us to the final tower at **Toppesfield**. This turned out to be the Joker in the pack – a Georgian brick tower with a ringing chamber, accessed by a vertiginous stair, concealing an extremely short draught 14cwt 8. These were augmented and rehung in a new frame in the noughties, but English Heritage insisted on the retaining of the original frame, so the new one was fitted underneath it! Coupled with moving the ringing chamber upstairs, the result is a set of bells just above the ceiling that are really quite challenging to ring, and they were not the ideal end to a long day. The tower captain was very phlegmatic about our efforts. I rather think he's used to startled visitors by now! **Adrian Gray**



The final ring on Sunday 19th July!

Essential Work being done on the Bells at Old Marston

As most of you will no doubt be aware, the bells of St. Nicholas in Marston are currently undergoing a course of repair work which is set to take between 8 and 12 weeks to complete. The bells were removed from the tower by White's of Appleton last Monday and Tuesday, with the old wheels all having gone to good homes! The Cowley ringers have kindly moved their practices to Friday evenings during this interregnum so we will be visiting them regularly during this period. **Hugh Deam**

Dates for your Diary

Full details from Hugh Deam at: [hugh.deam at btinternet.com](http://hugh.deam.btinternet.com) or mobile: 07899-871079

Saturday 1 st August	Practice at Horspath (6) - Stedman Doubles and Plain Bob Minor	10.30am-12 noon
	<i>This is specifically for those who are already ringing these methods and are looking to ring or conduct touches.</i>	
Saturday 8 th August	Witney & Woodstock Practice at South Leigh (8)	10.30am-12noon
Saturday 22 nd August	Roy Jones Memorial Ringing Morning. Islip (8) 9.45am Kidlington (8) 11.00am and Wolvercote (6) 12.15pm	3.30pm-5.00pm
Sunday 30 th August	Surprise Major Practice on the Simulator at Headington (8)	10.30am-12noon
Monday 31 st August	Bank Holiday Practice at Chilton (6). St Clements and Little Bob Minor	10.30am-12noon
Saturday 5 th September	Weston on the Green (6) Ringing up and down practice	10.30am-12noon

For more details go to the Oxford City Branch website: www.oxfordcitybranch.org.uk

Any information or photographs for inclusion in **Hugh's News** please email me: [paulclucas at hotmail.co.uk](mailto:paulclucas@hotmail.co.uk)