

Branch striking competition teams



Above: Caversham team: Alex Byrne, Ann Osborne, Ralph Elmes, Julie and James Champion, Jenny Page.



Above: St Mary, Reading: Peter Ellis, Jim Diserens, Louise (and Jennifer) Ellis, John Manley, Helen Diserens, Andrew Smith.

Right: St Laurence, Reading: June Saint, John and June Wells, Steve Ros-siter, Colin Parker, Jill Galloway:

Below: Pangbourne team: John Harland, Joyce Vernon, Sue Norbury, Len Palfrey, Michael Palfrey, Ann Gardner



Left: Tilehurst, in smart shirts, John Southern, Chris Johnson, David Bardwell, Eunice Wark (and mascot), Giles Winter, Jo Druce



No. 97

Reading Branch News

Michaelmas 2009

Goring wins branch striking competition



Goring team at St Mary, Streatley: Ian Judd, Robin Middleton, Josie Irving, Antoinette Jackson, Wendy Middleton, Andrea Gilbert

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Afternoon Practices

Second Monday of the month, 2 pm to 3.30 pm

14 September	Streatley (6)	2010	
12 October	Purley (6)	11 January	Caversham (8)
9 November	Nettlebed (6)	8 February	Goring (8) *
14 December	Pangbourne (6)	8 March	Swallowfield (6) *

* Towers marked with an asterisk are provisional

For more information, contact Jim Diserens (01491 824 504)

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12-bell practices at St Laurence, Reading, on the last Sunday of the month, from 1.30 pm to 3 pm. For more information, contact Steve Rossiter (0118 941 1146)

Old North Berks (ONB) branch runs training sessions from 2 pm to 3.30 pm on the fourth Wednesday of the month - see the ONB website www.onb.org.uk (Calendar) or contact Kate Crennell. Tel: 01235 834357 or KMCrennell@dpmail.co.uk

In memoriam

St Giles, Reading, 23 July, 1288 Grandsire Triples: Lindsey Barker 1, Peter Ellis (C) 2, Joyce Vernon 3, Helen Bennett 4, James Milford 5, Adrian P Grant 6, Chris Barrett 7, Keith Vernon 8. Rung half-muffled in memory of Father Michael G. Melrose, rector and vicar of the parish of St Giles since 1994. He died suddenly on Saturday 18 July 2009, and is greatly missed.

Remembering Marie with a peal at Radley

Sunday 2 August would have been Marie Cross's 100th birthday and it was decided that it would be fitting to ring her a peal at Radley church where for over 60 years she was tower captain. Nobody in the Oxford Guild needs any introduction to her unless they are very new members and this might also hold good for the Ladies' Guild and the Universities' Association which she was instrumental in setting up. Until 1944 Oxford and Cambridge were the only universities to have ringing societies.

As her 100th anniversary fell on a Sunday it was appropriate that we should ring the peal for Evensong. She would have taken a very dim view of anyone ringing a peal and then disappearing before Service ringing!

We rang her a memorial peal on 1 January 2002, when Patricia Newton rang the tenor. On Sunday Hilarie Rogers rang it: a fitting tribute to Marie who rang it on many occasions herself, believing that women could do anything that men could.

All the ringers taking part in the peal had associations with her, particularly to do with her interest in teaching. *Bobbie May*

Radley, Oxon, St James the Great, 2 Aug – 2 h 28; 5040 Surprise Minor (7m: 720 each London, York, Beverley, Bourne, Ipswich, Norwich, Cambridge)

1 William Butler 2 Bobbie May 3 Michael Hatchett

4 Stuart F Gibson 5 Timothy G Pett (C) 6 Hilarie Rogers

Arranged and rung to celebrate the life of the late Marie Cross on the centenary of her birth. 50th peal: 6

This report, with a photo of the band, appeared in The Ringing World, 4 September 2009, page 904.

Many outing reports comment on the difficulties of access to towers, awkward bells or other problems: no such opportunity for complaint was provided from our visits to Chenies (6), Amersham (12), Chalfont St Giles (8) and Hughenden (8). All the churches are picturesque in their various ways, the ringing chambers well kept, the bells friendly and the locals welcoming. Any weaknesses, it has to be admitted, lay with the visiting band!

Although the date was known well in advance some key members of the band were unable to come, but help from Alan Ainsworth and John Potter at Amersham enabled us to use all 12 bells for part of our time there and ring passable call changes. We were joined by two of the missing regulars after lunch, and thus had enough strength for the eights in the afternoon, with the customary courteous cooperation of the children. Ringing lowlights included failure to complete our current target of 5-spliced Surprise Major at Amersham, but highlights after lunch included a well-struck course of Pudsey, 3-spliced and a first touch of Kent Major, rung under protest.

In some years this might be an Early Summer outing, but the fresh wind, and bright sun before a heavy shower (luckily while we were in the last tower) put it climatologically in the Late Spring classification. Whichever it was, the day was thoroughly enjoyed by all, while it expanded the range for the less experienced, and provided new towers for most. The social side was as relaxed as ever (and the organiser's attitude after lunch is shown in the photo). *James Milford*

Birth

Many congratulations to Sarah and Chris Barrett on the birth of their son Daniel Richard on Thursday 11 June 2009, a brother for Joseph. Daniel was born at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading, and weighed in at 8 lb 9 oz. A **quarter peal** was rung a week later at his parents' home tower, St Giles, Reading, in celebration of his birth.



Other forthcoming events and practices

Sept	12	6-bell branch Striking Competition Streatley (6)
	17	Advanced Practice, Caversham (8)
	21	Swallowfield (not Shinfield) minor practice - see below
	26	<i>ODG Michaelmas Training Day</i>
Oct	3	<i>ODG 6-bell Striking Comp (Vale of White Horse Branch)</i>
	3	Branch quiz night at Streatley, Morrell Room - 7.15 pm
	10	Branch Practice St Mary, Mortimer (8)
	15	Advanced Practice, Caversham (8)
	26	Shinfield or Swallowfield minor practice
Nov	31	<i>ODG Training Day at Steeple Aston</i>
	14	Branch practice, Nettlebed (6)
	19	Advanced practice, Caversham TBC
Dec	23	Shinfield minor practice
	12	Branch Advent Carol Service, St Giles, Reading (8)
	17	Advanced practice, Caversham (8) TBC
	21	Shinfield minor practice TBC

Branch Practices 4 pm – 6 pm, except in May - see above
 Advanced Practices (Shiplake or Caversham) 8 pm – 9.30 pm.
 Please see Tower notices for any further events.

The Reading Branch newsletter is written for and by members of the Branch and contributions are always welcome. However, the views expressed therein are those of the writers and not necessarily shared by the Editor or Branch Officers.

Please note: Shinfield's tenor has come adrift: The Monday 21 September minor practice will be held at **SWALLOWFIELD** as Shinfield's tenor bell is out of action. The tenor's gudgeon sheared on the wheel side, causing the bell to drop onto the wheel. Whites came at very short notice and made it safe. A faculty has been sought for the work which will take place ASAP. *Bobbie May* See branch website www.odgreadingbranch.co.uk

- **QUIZ NIGHT at Streatley in the Morrell Room**, by the church, on Saturday 3 October, 7.15 for 7.30 pm - this year's social event, don't miss it!
- **St Thomas of Canterbury, Goring-on-Thames**, which has been closed for extension and refurbishment work, is scheduled to reopen at the end of September. Normal ringing will resume thereafter.

Editorial round-up

Reading Branch ringers have had a busy summer. To begin at the end, Goring won the striking competition on 12 September - see below.

Shiplake's new bells have been cast at Whitechapel, and should be installed by Whites of Appleton early in the new year. See Cyril Crouch's report on page 6. Whites, by the way, came to Shinfield's rescue when the tenor's gudgeon broke at the beginning of September. See page 3.

The Reading Branch outing was organised by Steve Rossiter and June Saint, and took place in Hertfordshire, where Steve learnt to ring. It was a lovely day out - see page 9. There have been several tower outings, too. Caversham and Henley visited the West country, St Giles went to Buckinghamshire, and St Mary & St Laurence visited Kent. See pages 12-17.

Congratulations to Antoinette Jackson, for ringing her first peal of London Surprise Royal; to June and John Wells, for ringing 500 peals together; and to Sarah and Chris Barrett, on the birth of their son Daniel. See pages 8 and 18 for details. And a very warm welcome to Catherine O'Donnell and Jack Page, on becoming branch members - see next page.

Goring wins branch striking competition

The Reading Branch striking competition took place at St Mary, Streatley, on Saturday 12 September. It was a lovely occasion, with good ringing on a beautiful sunny evening. Those who weren't ringing listened in the churchyard or enjoyed the excellent tea in the Morrell Room, next door, provided by the Streatley and Goring bands. Two Caversham learners, Jane Havelock and David Sumner, came in order to experience their first branch event.

Ken and Angela Darvill were the judges.

There were six teams, and all rang Grandsire Doubles. Caversham was the first. Next came Pangbourne, then St Mary, Reading, followed by Tilehurst, then Goring; and last to ring was St Laurence, Reading. Throughout, the ringing was of an extremely high standard. Tilehurst definitely deserve a special mention for their smart matching shirts. Afterwards Ken Darvill gave out the results in the Morrell Room, which were as follows:

- 1st Goring, Team 5, with 16 faults
- 2nd St Mary, Reading, Team 3, with 17 faults
- 3rd Caversham, Team 1, with 17 ½ faults
- 4th St Laurence, Reading, Team 6, with 22 faults
- 5th Tilehurst, Team 4, with 26 faults
- 6th Pangbourne, Team 2, with 27 faults.

Ken Darvill said that all the teams had rung very well, on what "are not easy

St Giles's day out in Buckinghamshire

For any band planning an outing it pays to have members willing to arrange it in their own family heartland. St Giles made use of this, and not for the first time, on our Late Spring outing on 16 May, when local knowledge helped Colin Parker organise a first class lunch and Jill Galloway four towers, in their home territory in Buckingham and, as we understand, with minimum effort. A bonus for drivers is to be given accurate details of parking facilities for each tower in advance.



At Chalfont St Giles, Left to right: Kelvin Britton, Steve Bennett (with Michael); Markus Buss, Chris Barrett (with Joseph), Helen Bennett, Frankie Milford, Kate Davis, Lindsey Barker, James Milford, Sarah Barrett (with bump), Ruth Hine, Jill Galloway, Chris Phillips, and., in front., Colin Parker, relaxing after organising the outing. Photo Chris Phillips

own right – we had fun trying to spot all the birds hidden among the carvings. This church also has six bells, and like all the others we visited that day, the ringing chamber was on the ground floor – which made a pleasant change for us as anyone who has climbed the 52 stairs at Henley will appreciate! By the time we had finished here we were all ready for lunch, despite the enormous breakfast that most of us had had.

The first call after lunch was at St Mary, Black Torrington. Six bells and a notable wagon roof, and then on to St Michael's at Shebbear. This is yet another lovely little church, very old and with a ring of six bells. We followed this by a visit to All Saints, Bradford, which dates back to the 12th century and has six bells and an interesting Norman doorway. By this time most people were pretty tired and looking forward to relaxing over a good dinner, which we had at the Crossways Inn at Folly Gate.

The next day was Sunday and we were all up with the lark to be ready to ring for the morning service at Inwardleigh. This was a great pleasure as we were made very welcome by the Vicar and congregation. We then set off for our final tower, which was at All Saints, Okehampton. This fine church, on a hill at the edge of Okehampton, is much larger than the other churches we visited, and has a wonderful William Morris window featuring three pre-Raphaelite angels. We climbed up to the ringing chamber and joined the resident band in some West Country Change Ringing, which was an experience that none of us is likely to forget. It's hard to describe how awe-inspiring it was - it's probably something that you have to experience for yourself in order to realise how differently they do things, and how good it was.

Finally, we were invited to the home of Mischa Thompson in Okehampton, whose late husband Denis was responsible for installing a mini-ring of six bells - the Denmisch Ring – in the garage. This consists of six Saxilby simulators which were fascinating, and much admired and envied by all of us. Mischa would like to open up the simulator to more people, and is keen to maximise its potential as a teaching aid. Anyone interested in visiting can contact her at mischa@mdthompson.me.uk.

Everywhere we went there was a kindly welcome from the local ringers; it was fascinating to learn of the different ways that they handle the bells in Devon, and quite a culture shock for some of us. Thank you to everyone who helped us, and especially to Roy without whom it would all have been a lot more difficult.

Good company, lovely scenery and a great chance to extend your experience and confidence. What more could anyone want! *June Romans See branch website for a photo of the millennium window in St Petroc, Inwardleigh, including picture of the wolf with St Petroc's cloak.*



Future team members? Left to right: Niall Byrne, Daniel Page, Tomas Byrne and Maggie Page, in Streatley churchyard

bells”, and they had all improved as they rang. He made the following comments about each team:

Team 1: Good to listen to – some handstroke leads a bit wide.

Team 2: Leading let them down. 30 strokes were faultless.

Team 3: Very quick pace – a good rollicking speed.

Team 4: A bit syncopated to start with, afterwards ringing was marvellous.

Team 5: Excellent rhythm, particularly the tenor.

Team 6: Improved as they went along.

Robin Middleton, representing the Goring team, received the trophy from Ken Darvill. Goring then announced that they would probably be unable to represent the Reading Branch at the Oxford Diocesan Guild six-bell contest on 3 October as many members of their team would be unavailable. So it looks as though St Mary, Reading, the runners up, will go forward in their place. However, a final decision has yet to be made by Goring.

At the end of the evening, the names of two new members were put forward by Caversham: Catherine O'Donnell, and Jack Page. They were unanimously elected as branch members. Catherine used to ring at Uckfield, in Sussex, and joined the band thanks to the Caversham tower open day in April. Jack Page started ringing last year, when he was 11, and has made great progress.

Below are the members of each team - team photos on front and back pages:

Team 1: Caversham: Ann Osborne 1, Julie Champion 2, Jenny Page 3, Ralph Elmes 4, Alex Byrne (C) 5, James Champion 6.

Team 2: Pangbourne: Joyce Vernon 1, Michael Palfrey (C) 2, Ann Gardner 3, Sue Norbury 4, John Harland 5, Len Palfrey 6.

Team 3: St Mary, Reading: Helen Diserens 1, Louise Ellis 2, Peter Ellis (C) 3, Jim Diserens 4, John Manley 5, Andrew Smith 6.

Team 4: Tilehurst: Jo Druce 1, Eunice Wark 2, Chris Johnson 3, David Bardwell 4, Giles Winter (C) 5, John Southern 6.

Team 5: Goring: Andrea Gilbert 1, Antoinette Jackson 2, Wendy Middleton 3, Josie Irving 4, Ian Judd (C) 5, Robin Middleton 6.

Team 6, St Laurence, Reading: June Saint 1, June Wells 2, Jill Galloway 3, John Wells 4, Steve Rossiter (C), Colin Parker 6.

Shiplake's old bells fall silent!

The bells at Shiplake rang out for the last time at the practice on Tuesday 8 September 2009. Since then preparatory work has continued in readiness for stripping out the old bells and to prepare for a completely new ring of eight.

The new bells were cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry; bell Nos. 4 to 8 on 24 July in two sessions, and the front three on 21 August.



Casting of Shiplake's new bell No 4 at Whitechapel on 24 July

At the time of writing all the bells are at the foundry awaiting tuning. Subsequently, the new bells will all be delivered to Whites, Church Bell-Hangers of Appleton, near Oxford, so that they can make the new bell frame and fittings

returned in time for an early dinner, and afterwards set off for Inwardleigh, our first tower.



At Inwardleigh, left to right: Joyce Vernon, David Bowyer, Diana Attfield, Ruth Bowyer, Joyce Hynd, June Romans, Caroline Leeming, Roy Smith, Keith Vernon, Pam Cooper, Joan Bennett, Viv Bloundele. Photo: Mike Romans.

The church of St Petroc at Inwardleigh is quite small but very beautiful, set high on a hill with lovely views across to the edge of Dartmoor. The church boasts a ring of six bells, and a nice Millennium window with some intriguing pictures. We especially liked the one of the fox and bath towel – which we later found out was actually a wolf with St Petroc's cloak. Ah well, it would still make a very good name for a pub. Inwardleigh itself is a small place and it seems incredible that it once had its own school and post office.

After ringing, some opted to return to the hotel for an early night, while others set off for the pub. We all managed to make it to breakfast the next morning, after which we set off again for Inwardleigh and another session on the bells – a good opportunity to practice in preparation for the Sunday service. Roy and his wife Judith entertained us all to coffee afterwards, before we made our way to the next venue, Northlew.

St Thomas of Canterbury at Northlew is another beautiful church, very old with some wonderful carvings. There is an amazing rood screen which was restored as a war memorial after WWI. This is worth a visit in its

Ringling resumed at the 13-cwt eight at Winford, recently augmented from six, not the easiest of bells to handle, but by mustering all our reserves, we managed to get through a course of Glasgow.

Then we went to Rowberrow, a very rural 7-cwt six, for sundry touches of Doubles and Minor, and then, after saying goodbye to a number of members of the party, set off back to Weston. Here a very welcome tea was provided by Andee and Joe in the church rooms at St John's. This was followed by ringing on the recently rehung bells (12-cwt eight). Joe and Andee had worked very hard to lead the rehanging project, and we were able to confirm they are now very easy-going and pleasant to ring.

That brought ringing to a close for the day, and a very pleasant evening was then spent in Weston-super-Mare's stylish new Italian restaurant, Bottelino's.

We had a couple of appointments for the Sunday morning, firstly at Banwell, a challenging but rewarding 24-cwt ten, where we joined the locals. Most of them were acquainted with our esteemed Branch Secretary, who used to ring there. Then it was back to Weston to ring at St John's with one or two locals, including Roger Masterman, brother of Bernard Masterman from Oxford. Like Bernard, he is blind - and also rings very well.

And so to the promenade for a coffee to round off the outing, ending where we began, with views over the sea to the two islands, before starting the journey back to Reading. It just remains for me to thank Joe and Andee for organising an excellent and memorable outing. *Doug Beaumont*

Henley Tower goes to Devon

This year's outing took us to Devon, for a trip around many of the lovely churches in the Okehampton area. The venues were investigated and booked for us by Roy Smith, formerly Tower Captain of Henley, who must have put in hours of effort prior to our arrival.

There were seventeen of us in the group, including two children - a broad mixture of experienced and novice ringers as well as a few non-ringing spouses, and including ringers from Reading and Shiplake. We were, thanks to Roy, all able to book into the same hotel and adjacent campsite, which made a convenient starting point for our excursions.

The weekend began for us on 24 April, and by mid-afternoon most people had arrived. The weather was typical for Devon, sunny one minute and raining the next, but we are an intrepid lot and, ignoring the threat of a downpour, several of us set off to explore the area around the Meldon reservoir, which is about a mile away from the hotel. This was well worth a visit, as the views from the dam are spectacular and the walks are fairly easy. We

for each bell and temporarily assemble them in the new frame.

By 7 or 8 October all the old bells will be on the ground floor of the church ready for collection by the bell hangers. Building and construction work in the tower will then continue for about three months until the first parts of the new frame arrive for installation just prior to Christmas. The remainder of the frame and the new bells will arrive early in the New Year and will be hoisted up the tower for installation.

Once the new bells are in place, the rope guides re-installed and the sound management system completed, the first test ringing is likely to take place towards the end of January. Normal ringing will resume following the dedication service likely to be held in February. *Cyril Crouch*

Last peal and quarter peal on old bells

The last peal on the old bells was rung in excellent style on Saturday 11 July, some weeks before they were removed to be replaced by the new eight which will be hung in a new frame lower in the tower.

The band comprised four members of the Sunday Service band together with four friends from the ODG. This was only Tower Captain Cyril Crouch's third peal, his last being PB Triples on the treble in 1952! It also celebrated the award of a First Class Honours' degree in Medieval History to Jo Knight of the local band. The band is really looking forward to repeating the event on the new ring! Hopefully it will not be the last peal rung on some at least of the old bells, as three of them are already earmarked to help with augmentations of a ring of 3 to 6 and a ring of 4 to 5 whilst another is likely to be used to augment a chime of 4 to 5.



Left to right: Doug Beaumont, Stephen Smith, Roy Woodruff, Jo Knight, Cyril Crouch, Hilarie Rogers, Chris Tuckett, Bob Partridge

Last peal: Shiplake, Oxon, St Peter & St Paul, Saturday 11 July, 2 hr 50 min (9) 5056 Plain Bob Major, comp. J R Pritchard

1 Stephen R. Smith	2 Hilarie Rogers	3 Douglas J Beaumont
4 Joanna Knight	5 Christopher M Tuckett	6 Cyril Crouch
7 Robert A Partridge (C)		8 L Roy Woodruff

To celebrate Jo Knight's achievement of gaining a first-class honours degree in medieval history. First inside and first major: 6.

This report appeared in The Ringing World of 31 July 2009, page 779

Last quarter peal: Shiplake, Oxon. 7 September, 1260 PB Minor (7,8, covering): Michael Bland 1, David Bowyer 2, Mavis Crouch 3, Joyce Vernon 4, Robert Partridge (C) 5, Jo Knight 6, Keith Vernon 7, Derek Brown 8.

South Stoke celebrates tenor's anniversary with quarter peals

The church of St Andrew, South Stoke (6 bells – 9 cwt), held a flower festival and a celebration over the August Bank Holiday weekend, to mark the four hundredth anniversary of the tenor bell being cast and installed in the tower.

During the three afternoons when the tower and church were open we had in excess of one hundred people visiting the clock room and the belfry.

The layout and accessibility of the belfry enabled visitors to view four bells very clearly and, with good quality two way radios, I was able to demonstrate the treble bell ringing (clapper tied). This created plenty of interest and was an excellent PR exercise. Several people left with flyers in their hands.

On the Sunday morning before Songs of Praise service the following band (mostly from Goring) rang a **quarter peal:** Wendy Middleton 1, Antoinette Jackson 2, Ian Judd (C) 3, Andrea Gilbert 4, Robin Middleton 5, Robert Small, 6. They rang Stedman, St Martin, St Simon, Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles.

The celebrations closed on the Monday evening with another **quarter peal** by an invited band from our branch, comprising: Bobbie May 1, Susie Black 2, Susan Norbury 3, Stephanie May 4, Len Palfrey 5 (C), Robert Small 6. They rang Stedman, Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles, St Simon and St Martin. It was Susie Black's first quarter in more than one method. It was a most successful weekend. *Robert Small, Tower Captain.*

Congratulations: 500 peals together – and 1st of London Royal

Congratulations to June and John Wells, on ringing their 500th peal together, and to Antoinette Jackson on her first peal of London Royal, at Aston Clinton, Bucks, on 13 June - 5040 London No 3 Surprise Royal, Comp. TG Pett. The

Newman from East Huntspill. In all, including those who choose not to ring, twenty six people attended, the largest number we have had for several years.

Next was Wraxall, a 22-cwt eight. The low ceiling makes the sound come and go a bit, and they're not easy to ring, but are nevertheless a fine peal of bells. Here we rang, among other things, three leads of Bristol, some plain hunt and 139 of Grandsire Triples.

After the morning's exertions, lunch at the highly recommendable Prince of Waterloo in Winford was most welcome. Afterwards, Ralph led the handbell ringers among us outside to entertain the locals in the front garden.



9 May 2009 - Ringing chamber at St Michael, Rowberrow: Left to right: Jenny Page, Ann Osborne, Sue Sawyer, Viv Bloundele, Janet Elmes, Diana McClure, Julie Champion, Roy Smith, Marion Newman, Monica Trow (in front of Marion), Richard Newman, Gill and Joanna Hopkinson, James Champion, Alex Byrne, Chris Field; Ralph Elmes (behind); Andee and Joe Beaumont, with Tomas Byrne and Doug Beaumont (kneeling) in the front row. Nina and Niall Byrne and Judy Smith were outside, exploring. Photo: Roger Hopkinson.

was also the first tower on Saturday (we had been able to hear the clock all night), followed by Harrietsham and Leeds, home of the famous Esquire Youths. Leeds was the only ten of the tour: unfortunately we were unable to ring at All Saints, Maidstone, because the clapper on the eighth broke the previous weekend. However, East Farleigh proved to be a suitable replacement, and offered better views over the Medway. The final tower was a bit of a squeeze at Maidstone, St. Michael, but some good ringing and the end to an enjoyable couple of days. *Peter Ellis*

Caversham visits Weston-super-Mare

The ringers at Caversham enjoyed a very pleasant time in Weston-super-Mare in early May, for our annual weekend away. Joe and Andee Beaumont took it upon themselves to organise a further outing for us down there, the first one in that area having been about fifteen years ago. The early arrivals met in Weston on the Friday afternoon: Ralph and Janet, Roger and Gill, Monica, Jenny, Viv, Diana and Ann, [and Doug].

A fresh cold wind was blowing large breakers against the shore as we drove along the coast road on the Friday evening to Kewstoke, a 9-cwt six just over the hill from Weston. With views out over the Bristol Channel to Steep Holm and Flat Holm, it felt a long way from Reading, and set us up well for the weekend. We made good use of the bells, with various Doubles and Minor methods, including the special method, London Minor. James and Julie rolled up during the visit to Kewstoke, to complete the outing's set of over-nighters. Then it was back for a refreshment at the Major from Glengarry in Weston, and then to our homes for the weekend, the Braeside B&B and the Royal Grosvenor hotel.

The weather calmed down for the rest of the weekend, and Saturday saw us taking in a very pleasant circular route to the northeast and east of Weston. First was Clevedon, notable for having very high steps up to the belfry. These are a 14-cwt eight, quite loud but nevertheless tuneful, and we warmed up with some Grandsire and Plain Bob and Call Changes.

Some of the outing's day-trippers joined the over-nighters here – Alex and Nina and family, Joanna and Alex, and also Chris Field, tower captain at Weston, Roy Smith, who used to ring at Nettlebed, and his wife Judy, and Sue Sawyer, who used to ring at Caversham.

We next went to Portishead, a 15-cwt eight, some of which have minds of their own. In the ringing chamber there were several wooden peal boards commemorating various Ladies' Guild achievements. Here we rang Stedman and the special Major method, Bristol. We were joined by Richard and Marion

band was: Ian G Judd 1, June D Wells 2, Antoinette JR Jackson 3, Noel J Diserens 4, Robin PD Middleton 5, Robert A Partridge 6, Timothy G Pett (C) 7, Patricia M Newton 8, E John Wells 9, Robert H Newton 10.

Reading branch outing to Rossiter country, north of London



St Mary Magdalene, Enfield: L to R, back/middle row: Robin and Wendy Middleton, Antoinette Jackson, Markus Buss, Jim Diserens, Steve Rossiter, Ruth Hine, Kelvin Britton, Kate Davis, John Wells, James Champion, middle/front row: Lindsey Barker, Viv Bloundele, Bobbie May, Helen Diserens, June Wells, Diana McClure, Julie Champion, and, front row: June Saint and Ian Judd

This year's branch outing was organised by June Saint and Steve Rossiter in Hertfordshire, where Steve learnt to ring, and it took place on 6 June. We went in a minibus, expertly driven by Steve. In spite of M25 road works, he got us to the first church in time: 9.30 am at St Giles, South Mymms. For those of us who only know South Mimms service station, it was a revelation: a beautiful 800-year old church in a pretty village, with six lovely bells (11 cwt). Ian Judd was in charge: we rang Grandsire, Bob Doubles, London and Bob Minor. The young man who let us in complimented Reading ringing.

Next stop was Christchurch (10 bells – 24 cwt), Southgate, which gets its name because it was the south gate to Enfield Chase, formerly a royal hunting ground. Here we were joined by Wendy and Robin Middleton, Kate Davis, and Steve’s father, Peter Rossiter. Steve was welcomed as an old friend – this was where he had learnt to ring on 10 bells. Steve was in charge and we rang called changes, plain hunt, Stedman and Grandsire Caters and Yorkshire Royal spliced with Little Bob. Jim Diserens, who had not been feeling well, rang the 24-cwt tenor, and immediately felt much better.

St Mary Magdalene (8 bells – 9 cwt), Enfield, came next. We were given a warm welcome by Peter Rossiter, the tower captain. Steve learnt to ring here on “lumpy 19-cwt bells”, replaced about 10 years ago with much lighter bells, which go beautifully. They were of special interest to Reading ringers, as they are very similar to the ones Whitechapel is casting for Shiplake. John Wells was in charge, and we rang called changes, Yorkshire Major, Grandsire Triples, plain hunt, and Bristol Major. Underneath the ringing chamber, there is a very pleasant room where one can sit and watch the bells ringing, on a television screen.

Peter Rossiter very kindly took the group photograph outside the church at Enfield (on no less than six cameras), and we said goodbye to Wendy and Robin, and to Kate. It was lovely to see them, and very good of them to make the long journey for just two towers.

We had lunch at The Ridgeway Tavern, which served good food at moderate prices, after a long wait – in spite of June Saint having phoned in the order a couple of hours earlier. It made us late for the next tower, St Mary the Virgin (8 bells – 10 cwt) at Monken Hadley, but Steve phoned to warn them, and the outing proceeded without a hitch. The road to Monken Hadley could be called Millionaires’ Row – large houses with huge security gates. The church itself was lovely, with very nice bells. Jim Diserens was in charge, and we rang called changes, Grandsire and Stedman Triples, and five leads of Surprise Spliced Major.

After a tea-break in Barnet (important, as there’d been no time for coffee or dessert at the Ridgeway), we rang at St John the Baptist (8 bells – 22 cwt) in Chipping Barnet, lovely bells, with a wonderful deep sound. There was a stuffed kangaroo on top of the clock cupboard – a memento of the tower captain’s visit to Australia. June Wells was in charge and we rang called changes, Grandsire and Bob Triples, and spliced surprise major: BFLG – Bristol, Belfast, London and Glasgow..

The last tower was St Nicholas (6 bells – 6 cwt) at Elstree. The local ringer who let us in said that the treble and second bell were “a bit flighty”, and the less experienced ringers (such as myself) wholeheartedly agreed with him, but of course it didn’t worry the good ringers. Antoinette Jackson was in

charge, and we rang Grandsire and Stedman Doubles, Bob Minor, and Cambridge.

There was one unfortunate incident, at the end of a lovely day: Markus Buss hit his head as he got into the bus, and ended up with mild concussion – the perils of being tall. The sing-along on the return journey may have exacerbated his condition. We’re pleased to report that he was soon ringing again. Apart from poor Markus, we all had a good time. Thank you, Steve and June, for organizing a most enjoyable outing. *Diana McClure*

St Mary & St Laurence visit Kent in May



Hungry for lunch? Left to right: Nigel Herriott, Louise Ellis (and Jennifer), Jenny Herriott, Nina Byrne, June Saint, Peter Bevis, Helen McGregor, Helen Diserens, Steve Rossiter, Alex Byrne (with Niall and Tomas), Colin Parker, Jill Galloway, June Wells, John Harrison, John Wells and Nick McMahon.

This year’s tour was a two day affair – and an early start for most and a battle with the traffic on the M25. Benenden proved to be a world away from the hustle and bustle, however. We rang a decent peal of Superlative, disturbed only by people in the church dismantling scaffolding and taking it outside. After a quick lunch, the tour proper started, with plain bearings at Biddenden and LBFSG at Headcorn. Most of the party stayed overnight at the pub in Lenham, and we had a candlelit dinner for 18 when the electricity failed. Lenham