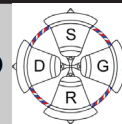


Autumn
2023
edition

Mere Branch News

Looking back over the last few months at the special bell-ringing and social events that have been happening in your local area, plus some dates for your diary...

**SALISBURY
DIOCESAN GUILD
OF RINGERS**



Branch members ready to ring the eight bells at Norton-sub-Hamdon

A great day had by all on our Summer Outing

A ring of twelve bells gave our ringers pause for thought on this year's summer outing, but that wasn't to prove the only test of their mettle with a 70-step climb up to the ringing chamber of another tower. But with these challenges met, it turned out to be a memorable day out for all!

The Branch Outing, held on Saturday 15th July, involved ringing at four different towers in South Somerset, and it was well attended with 19 members headed by Ringing Master, Nick Dallison, who skillfully involved everyone, whatever their ability.

Starting with the 12 bells at St Peter & St Paul's, South Petherton, proved challenging, but once the team had got used to the idea, everyone enjoyed themselves. The next tower at St Mary's, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, with

its six bells gave chance to relax into the day before a well-earned break for lunch at a range of venues.

Moving on to another St Mary's, this time at Norton-sub-Hamdon, provided the 70-step ascent before the eight bells could be rung there, but everyone got to the top and took it in turns to ring. The day rounded off with the final tower at the ancient church of St Michael & All Angels, at the fabulously-named Haslebury Plucknett. Here again were six bells, but this time with the test of a ground floor ring.

So all in all a great outing, with thanks due to Michael Williams for arranging this most congenial, enjoyable and rewarding outing, and to Nick Dallison for his ringing organisation on the day!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Tuesday 7th November – 'All Ringing Together' at All Saints, Kington Magna from 7.15pm (plus short meeting to elect new members)
- Tuesday 5th December – 'All Ringing Together' practice at St George's, Bourton from 7.15pm
- Friday 8th December – Branch Carol Service at St Leonard's, Semley, 7.30pm, preceded by ringing from 6.45pm
- Saturday 27th January 2024 – Member's Meeting & AGM at St Michael's, Mere, meetings in the morning, followed by lunch, ringing & church service

Grant recognises tower's importance

St Michael's Church, Mere, has been awarded a Heritage Lottery grant of £247,000 in the last few months. The money will be spent on repairing the four pinnacles on the church tower and supporting projects to explore the heritage of the striking church tower – a local landmark which can be seen on the approach to this attractive town in South Wiltshire.

And in a fitting celebration of this exciting news, local bell ringers rang for the project's launch party. Along with other members of the community, they will be very much involved in this important project over the next eighteen months.



Left: The tower at St Michael's Church, Mere

Below: Judith presents Sarah with her certificate



SPECIAL TUITION TO HELP IMPROVE LOCAL RINGING

In addition to our popular Branch Outing (see left), the summer saw a special event at All Saints, Norton Bavant, near Warminster. The 'Improvers and Helpers' session was organised by our branch to provide tuition for ringers keen to develop their technique, as well as offering guidance and advice to other members who can oversee these improvers during practices at their local towers.

At the event held on Saturday 24th June, Judith Williamson, Past President and a Vice President of the SDGR, was delighted to present newly elected Mere Branch member Sara Keith, with her SDGR membership certificate.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW RINGERS

Judith Williamson, SDGR Vice President, has been kept busy this summer making presentations. Congratulations to all for your achievements!

• **4th June, St James' Church, Shaftesbury.**
Guild Membership Certificates for Brian Jeans and Colin Battell (shown right). Janet Lowe (centre) had been presented earlier in the year with Hon Life Membership after fifty years as a member. Revd Helen Williams (right) led the thanks and the service that followed.



4th June

• **11th June, St Leonard's Church, Semley.**
Guild Membership Certificates presented to Liz Oatts, Andrew Oatts and John Cairns (shown right). Congratulations and thanks were led by Revd Kate Mc Farlane (right) who is shown discussing the nuances of ringing with Judith!



11th June

• **26th August, St James' Church, Shaftesbury.**
Recently elected guild members and new learners who had joined in the last twelve months, gathered to meet fellow ringers, branch officers and committee members for lunch and the chance to ring. Guild President, Pat Davidson, and Guild Ringing Master, Vicki Rowse, also joined the informal event for lunch (shown right), with tea and cakes later in the afternoon.



Lunch at St James'

Judith Williamson was joined by Pat Davidson and Vicki Rowse to present the following: ART Level 1 Bell Handling certificates to Andrew and Elizabeth Oatts (shown centre) and John Cairns (right), all of Semley; and a New Learner Welcome Pack to Motcombe's Eden Longridge (2nd from right).



26th August

Thanks are due to Janet Lowe, Len Roberts and Judith Williamson for the lunch, and to those who brought cakes.



Above: Nick cuts his surprise cake!

Celebrating with high tea at Zeals

Mere Branch Ringing Master, Nick Dallison, had a big surprise at the Member's Meeting on Saturday 9th September when a cake was produced for an early celebration of his 'special birthday' on the following day!

Not only that, but a touch of Bob Doubles had also been arranged for the event. After the initial surprise, Nick rose to the challenge and joined a band to ring on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year!

The meeting, held at St Martin's, Zeals, included the usual church service and an excellent tea thanks to the local team. During the meeting, Fred Shoter of Kington Magna was presented with his certificate for achieving the Association of Ringing Teachers, Level Two Ringing Skills, and Martin Ostler, who has recently moved back to Sturminster Newton, was elected both to the SDGR and as a member of Mere Branch Committee.



Above: The Bob Doubles band of Judith Williamson, Jay Dallison, Brian Goodliffe, Nick Dallison, Martin Ostler and Michael Williams. Below: Judith Williamson presents Fred Shoter with his ART Level Two Certificate.



A knock-out Skittles Night



With skittles matches, a quiz and supper on the menu our branch held its annual fundraiser at The Home Guard Club, Kilmington Common on Thursday 14th September.

Twenty six branch members, family and friends spent a very enjoyable time at the Skittles Evening playing three rounds of skittles. Nicola Sturrock, of East Knoyle, won the ladies' contest – after an exciting few knockout rounds between the top three scorers – while Paul Naish, also of East Knoyle, won the gentlemen's contest.

There were some challenging quiz questions, too, with Pat Kennedy (and her team) and Nicola Sturrock coming out as joint winners. In addition, there were also plenty of prizes in the Grand Raffle to be had, with Judith Williamson winning the bonus prize.

The event raised £157 for the Llewellyn Edwards Bell Restoration Fund and special thanks are due to Branch Chairman, Len Roberts, for organising the event, as well as the friendly staff at the club.



Top: Members enjoyed the social evening at The Home Guard Club, Above: Judith Williamson presents the winners with their prizes