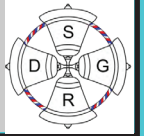


Spring  
**2023**  
special

# Mere Branch News

Bringing you up to date with happenings around our branch over the last six months, in addition to up-coming events planned for the rest of the summer...

**SALISBURY  
DIOCESAN GUILD  
OF RINGERS**



There's lots of ringing practice going on at the moment, in the run up to the King's coronation in May, but our patch has also seen its regular round of tower activity. And with plenty of new learners taking up the ropes, we can all look forward to hearing the glorious sound of bells ringing for church services and special events.

Meantime, it was good to hear positive feedback for our very own 'Mere Branch News', which your committee will now aim to bring you in spring and late summer each year. So don't forget to tell your 'Ring for the King' stories, and let us know about any special anniversaries, achievements and bell-ringing events at your local tower – with photos please! – so we can include them in the next edition...

## Get ready to ring for King Charles III



Church bells are to ring out across our patch and throughout the Nation during the Bank Holiday weekend to mark the Coronation of His Royal Highness, King Charles III

With the Coronation taking place at Westminster Abbey on 6th May 2023, ringers up and down the country have been making their arrangements to commemorate this auspicious event. But with so many bands doing the rounds to ring at as many towers as possible, the CCCBR\* are encouraging a large degree of flexibility in timing to suit church authorities and ringers.

Many towers are hoping to ring at

the same time as the bells are ringing in London, that is half an hour prior to the service starting at 11am. However, the guidance allows for ringing to take place at any suitable time during Saturday, Sunday or Monday over this year's special Bank Holiday weekend.

Meanwhile, bands are urged to mark their achievements on Bellboard <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/event.php?id=16546> as a record of this event.



### AWARD TO ZEALS STALWART

Ringers came together at Zeals practice night on 29th March to celebrate as Roy Stone (*above, with certificate*) was awarded Associate Life Membership by Branch Chairman Len Roberts (*standing behind Roy*).

Having learned to ring after retiring to Penselwood, from London, Roy was a regular at weekly practices and Sunday ringing at Bourton, Stourton and Zeals, until the start of the pandemic. He is also well known for setting the quizzes at the annual branch skittles event. Roy, accompanied by his wife Angela, enjoyed meeting old friends and new members, as well as listening to the ringing at his special award evening.

### MAKING A MARK WITH BELLS

Special dates and events are always worth marking and the band at Zeals tower rarely miss an opportunity to take to the ropes.

On 21st January they rang at both Stourton and Zeals to mark Ukrainian Unity Day, raising £80 for the Ukraine Appeal. Next an all-female band proudly stepped up at practice night to mark International Women's Day, on 8th March. And then a nine-strong team – including 10-year-old Rene Sibthorpe – came together to ring at Evensong on 15th March, led by the Bishop of Salisbury.

### EX-FIREMAN TAKES TO ROPES

New ringer Carl Upshall is a great example of what can be achieved with enthusiasm, regular practice and supportive tuition. Despite only starting to learn to ring in July last year, Carl progressed quickly with the basics, though he found both hand transfers tricky – especially with the old, sticky tail ends at St Mary's, Sturminster Newton.

But with regular lessons and a lot of rope time during practice and service ringing, his handling and striking are improving all the time. Having passed at Level 1 LTR after just 6 months, he is now well on the way to Level 2. And as an ex-fireman, his head for heights has been useful for assisting Tower Captain, Nick Dallison, with steeple keeping!

# Mere Branch News

## RINGING IN THE NEW AT STURMINSTER

The long-awaited arrival of 4 new bell ropes and a new tail for the tenor has been welcomed by tower captain, Nick Dallison and the band at St Mary's, Sturminster Newton.

"The old ropes were really past their sell-by date," said Nick. "And we'll all be pleased to get them up and in use."

A local charity bingo raised £600 towards the cost of the new ropes, showing just how valued the church bells are in the town.



Above: The pristine new ropes waiting to be installed at St Mary's Sturminster Newton

Meantime another new arrival has been welcomed in the form of Revd Mary Gubbins, who took up her post a few weeks ago, on 28th March. She'll be taking the service at the Member's Meeting in May.

And last, but by no means least, two new learners from the 'Ring for the King' campaign have recently started, while another is just at the stage of putting both strokes together.

"It's so good to see such interest in ringing coming out of this national event," reflected Nick, who is one of our Mere Branch Committee Members. "We all need to do our bit to recruit new members to make sure the bells ring out from as many towers as possible, not only this year, but in the future."

## CELEBRATING WREN

East Knoyle is recognised as the birthplace of Sir Christopher Wren and February 2023 marked the 300th anniversary of the death of this famed architect, astronomer, scientist and mathematician.

To celebrate his life, a number of events were organised in the village, including a special service at St Mary's Church on Sunday 19th February, where the six bells were rung by a band of local ringers.

## RECORD NUMBERS OF RINGERS BEING TAUGHT IN YOUR BRANCH

"We're all thrilled that 2023 has started on a positive note for ringing in our area, especially after the difficulties of recent years. At Semley alone, a staggering 10 recruits decided to learn to ring following an introductory session! Accommodating them all has been tricky, but thanks to a few trained teachers, weekly sessions have been arranged at Margaret Marsh."

"Meanwhile, groups of new ringers are also being taught at Sturminster Newton, Stalbridge, Mere, Zeals, East Knoyle and Tisbury. And with over 30 learners now being taught across the Branch, this is something of a record. Huge thanks are due to those who are now actively teaching, having taken up training. However, I would urge all towers to accept a degree of responsibility to formulate their own recruitment and teaching plans to safeguard ringing for future generations. Resources are available to facilitate and help organise your own tower recruitment days."

"Several new learners have come from referrals by ART (Association of Ringing Teachers). And I can also report that the ART teacher training courses have been very successful. Fourteen Mere Branch members

Branch Chairman, Len Roberts reflects on the importance of new recruits, teaching and regular practice events...



Above: Members at a recent ART training day

have attended a Module 1 course, with one having completed accreditation at that level to become an Associate Member of ART – congratulations Roger! Meanwhile, six members have attended a Module 2 course."

"Another Branch record is the very worthy nomination of Nick Dallison for Guild Ringer of the Year Award and 10-year-old Rene Sibthorpe for the Junior Award, congratulations to both. Our thanks to Nick and his team of helpers for the very successful Improvers and All Ringing Together practices, which are continuing on a regular basis."

"Things are now looking very positive and if we all work together, the future for ringing across the Branch will begin to look secure for the next generation of ringers."

Len Roberts, Mere Branch Chairman

## Join your fellow ringers on our summer outing

Following the success of last year's outing, we're intending to go off for another round of ringing this summer, on 15th July.

Provisionally we're hoping to visit towers in East Somerset, near Yeovil – hopefully we'll be able to include South Petherton, Stoke sub Hamdon, Norton sub Hamdon and Hazelbury Plunknett.

There's the added attraction of being able to visit Montecute House, to make an ideal day out if you want to come along with partners and family. And, if the weather is kind to us, then Ham Hill with its far-reaching views could provide the ideal site to picnic for an hour or so at lunchtime.

Car sharing will be the ideal way to travel in groups from your local towers and we will aim to ring two towers in the morning and two in the afternoon. Details will be sent round shortly in the form of a flyer for



Above: Mere Branch members enjoyed ringing during last year's summer outing

towers to display. In the meantime, please pop the date in your diary. We look forward to seeing you there on this special day!

## And finally...

**A reminder of our next Mere Branch Member's Meeting, to be held on Saturday 20th May at St Mary's, Sturminster Newton. There'll be ringing from 2.30pm, with a service at 4pm, to be followed by tea and the meeting. It's a great chance to get together to ring, chat and discuss future plans for the branch.**