

THE FOUR SHIRES GUILD OF BELL RINGERS

(Affiliated to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers)



NEWSLETTER No 137 - JULY 2013



Ruby Anniversary
1973-2013

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TOWER OF THE QUARTER: St PETER'S, WILLERSEY, GLOS.



(Photo: Chris Povey)

There has been Christian activity in Willersey at least as far back as the 8th century, when King Offa (of Dyke fame) presented the Abbot of Evesham with "seven manses or farms in Willersey". The Domesday Book (1084) mentions "a priest with six plow tillages", worth £4 p.a. The abbots of Evesham had Willersey manor house as their summer residence and so took a special interest in the parish church here, which is unusual in this area in being cruciform in plan with a central tower (the Old Church, Broadway, being another notable exception). Abbot Zattan (1379-1418) designed the magnificent pillars, based on those in Evesham Abbey. The present vaulting under the tower is, apparently, an excellent C19th imitation of the original C15th work – and it's well worth seeing. The 1801 Royal Arms of George III can be seen on the south wall of the Nave, but this board incorporates an interesting mistake. In the first quarter, three lions can be seen where there should be two. One wonders whether the artist was dragged off shouting and screaming to a dungeon in the Tower of London!

Please do not fail to see the name of Squadron Leader Henry Maudslay DFC on the War Memorial outside. He was the pilot of Lancaster Z-Zebra in the Dam Busters Raid on 17th May 1943 and was killed on that mission. He lived at Foxhill Manor nearby. (See photo on p.9)

St Peter's bells are a complete ring of six by Abraham Rudhall I, dated 1712. They are special in being the only complete ring by that founder in Gloucester Diocese, and particularly special in all being maidens (ie never tuned after being broken out of their moulds). As a bonus, they retain their canons. Additionally they don't appear to have been out of the tower since their initial installation, so accurate weights aren't known either! They have just been overhauled by Whites of Appleton. The clappers have been rebushed, the wheels have new soles and shrouds, the slider runners have been renewed and all the pulleys have been refurbished. This is the first major work since 1936, when Mears & Stainbank (now Whitechapel Bell Foundry) rehung the bells in a new steel frame with new fittings. Guild members have a chance to try them out, as an evening practice has been arranged for Saturday August 3rd (see calendar, back page).

Officers and Committee Members of the Guild

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The FSG website is: <http://www.fourshires.org.uk>

Subscription rates: £5 adult; £2 Junior

The deadline for the next issue of the FSG Newsletter (October 2013) is Sept 13th 2013

This Newsletter survives only because of the contributions you make to it. Without them it will fail. Articles can be submitted to the undersigned via email or to the postal address shown above, or to any committee member.

Please contribute something, however small (or large). You would be surprised the things people enjoy reading about. A few suggestions: an historical item; a funny story; a quarter peal report; poems; puzzles; tales, events past and to come; a ringing tour, even! Send them in. They will all be welcome.... and don't worry if you think your handwriting is unintelligible. It can normally be translated. Just send the stuff in!

(Caretaker) Newsletter Editor: Chris Povey Postal and email addresses above

If sending articles by email, please use MS Word (not the dreaded Works*) format for written articles, jpg format for photos, and scanned items in pdf or jpg formats. (I have the facility to scan photo prints if you haven't.) Please let me know ownership of photos for acknowledgement where relevant. If you have a long article, you might consider breaking it into parts. (* If you've only got Microsoft Works, then 'Save As' your article into Rich Text Format – ie, suffix .rtf – and send in this form.)

DID SOMEONE SAY THEY DIDN'T GET A JULY NEWSLETTER?

**IF SO, ASK WHETHER THEY PAID THEIR 2013 SUBS BY THE END OF JUNE.
IF THEY DIDN'T, THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T GET ONE – NO SUB; NO NEWSLETTER.
(AND IF THEY DID PAY, CONTACT THE EDITOR)**

NOTICE OF 2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND STRIKING COMPETITIONS

AT THE CHURCH OF ST MARY & ST MILBURGH, OFFENHAM, WORCS
BELLS: 6, 10-3-2 in F# (GF)



ON SATURDAY 12th OCTOBER 2013

ORDER OF THE DAY

- 2.15pm **Brazier Cup Striking Competition**
- 3.00pm **Newing Shield Striking Competition**
- 4.45pm **Service** in the Church (conducted by the Vicar)
- 5.30pm **Annual General Meeting** in the Church (Chairman: the Guild President)

Evening ringing: at Offenham after the AGM, using the simulator to provide the bell sounds!

The **AGENDA** for the AGM is:-

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting
(*published in the Jan 2013 Newsletter, no 135, pp.4 & 5; and on website**)
- 3 Matters Arising.
- 4 Guild Master's Report (*included in this Newsletter: see p.4*)
- 5 Treasurer's Report (*included in April Newsletter: p.4; and on website**)
- 6 Election of President (to serve for a 3-year term)
- 7 Election of Vice-Presidents (2nr; to serve for a 3-year term)
- 8 Election of Officers (Guild Master, Ringing Master, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer).
- 9 Election of Committee and Honorary Independent Examiner(s).
- 10 Election of Central Council representatives (2no; to serve for a 3-year term commencing with the May 2014 CCCBR meeting)
- 11 Life Member(s)
- 12 Confirmation of new members
- 13 Any Other Business (at the Chairman's discretion)
- 14 Results of the Striking Competitions.

(* available from the website for printing out if reqd: www.fourshires.org.uk; then select 'Newsletters')

Andrew Gunn, Honorary Secretary

Light refreshments will be available in either the Church or, more likely, the Village Hall across the road, from about 2.00pm.

As usual, donations of food will be gratefully received.

Teams intending to take part in the Striking Competitions should contact the Ringing Master (Sophia Lewis-Skeath) about their entry.

GUILD MASTER'S REPORT FOR THE 2013 AGM: YEAR 2012–2013

I am pleased to report that your Guild has been very active again, and your committee, elected at the last Annual General Meeting, has again been working very hard on your behalf. Our Honorary Treasurer, Michael Dane, will make his report at the 2013 AGM. The Guild accounts for the year ending 31st December 2012 were published in the April Newsletter.

The weekly practices have again been very well attended. The Ringing Master, Sophia Lewis-Skeath, has either run them or appointed a deputy to do so. Most of the towers we usually ring at during the year welcome the Guild back! However we have problems regarding some of the Oxfordshire towers, where payment is requested to ring at them. We shall try to address this with the various incumbents as soon as we can. Stuart Cummings has done sterling work again this year in arranging all the towers.

Our Christmas social event was held at Wellesbourne, where after ringing we moved over to the Church Centre for the Party itself. A magnificent variety of food was laid on, and having eaten, we settled down for Carol singing led by Sophia Lewis-Skeath, with accompaniment from Linda Dane on piano and Benjamin Lewis-Skeath on tuba. A raffle followed with tickets being sold by Stuart Cummings and Eliza Lewis-Skeath. The proceeds went to the bell restoration fund.

The Annual Dinner was held on Saturday 6th February 2013 at The White Hart Royal Hotel, Moreton-in-Marsh. The weather was far kinder to us than last year when snow prevented many getting to Moreton and threatened to cancel the event. This year's Dinner was thoroughly enjoyed by nearly 50 ringers and partners. Our guest speaker, Peter Bennett from the Llandaff and Monmouth DACBR (and a Guild member, too),

reminisced about the time he spent in the FSG area in his youth and his ringing exploits during that time with some of the old ringing characters then.

The Annual Ringing Tour for 2012 was a different format to other years in being a weekend event. Richard Lewis-Skeath organised it around Abergavenny, so that those who did not wish to stay on the Friday and Saturday nights could attend the Saturday towers without having to travel a great distance. All who tried this format thoroughly enjoyed it and said Richard did a great job. The 2013 outing will be to the same format in the Ludlow area.

The website under Roland Merrick is keeping everyone well informed about Guild activities. It contains the Guild Newsletter to be read online, although this is now one issue in arrears to prevent non-members having the same benefits as paid-up members. It also displays the latest information regarding the availability of Guild clothing for purchase.

The new Guild Rules, as agreed at the 2012 AGM, have been printed and a copy has been given to all paid up members. This booklet contains other information about the Guild, including a brief history

Chris Povey is editor of the Guild Newsletter and our thanks must go to him for producing an excellent product. The quality and content is outstanding. The printing is still being undertaken 'in house' by a steadfast volunteer team.

An abridged version of the Minutes of the most-recent Guild Committee meeting is

always published in the Newsletter, so that all members are as up-to-date as possible with Guild business. They can then inform the Hon Secretary about any items they wish to be discussed at these meetings or request clarification about items already discussed.

Our Bell Restoration Fund, which was set up three years ago, continues to offer grants to towers in our area of operation. Wyck Rissington's very successful restoration project this year was awarded one of the grants given. We intend to hold the 2013 Minimus Striking Competition at this tower in September. Other grants have been made to Welford-on-Avon, Hinton-on-the-Green and Cropthorne. The Rules and Constitution of the Fund are given in the Guild Rules booklet, and application forms are available from the Honorary Secretary.

I would like to thank all members of the committee again this year for their commitment and continuing hard work, and for the time they have given to attending the committee meetings held during this year. Thanks also to our CCCBR representatives for attending the Central Council meeting in Chester and contributing to the various CC committees. Finally I would like to thank Wendy Mace for organising the annual Guild walk, our President John Nicholls for organising the Inter Shires Striking Competition, and Isobel Murphy for the hard work in coordinating the FSG monthly Mid-week Tours.

Peter Quinn

EDITORIAL

I had a jolt recently when I was researching some information for Willersey as 'Tower of the Quarter' – I looked inside St Peter's Church for the first time and found an utter gem. It wasn't so much that I found St Peter's an utter gem – there are many gems around our area – but what hit me most was that although I first rang there almost 50 years ago and have done so many times since, it took a reason somewhat unconnected with ringing to get me to open the main door to see the undoubted glories inside. Without that reason there is a big possibility I might never have seen the interior of one of our local churches. What a dreadful reflection on a local ringer. As ringers we are inclined to head for the tower entrance door, get into the Ringing Room, ring, and get out, without giving the interior of the church more than a glance if the tower entrance is inside. If outside, well..... no chance. I know it works like this, because I've been guilty of such practices, too. The 'Tower of the Quarter' features hopefully

encourage us to look around in the churches in which we ring – "to stand and stare" as the poet William Henry Davies (aka 'The Super Tramp') wrote in his famous poem 'What is this life if full of care, etc' - as we might never see such wonderful things. How can we call ourselves locals if we fail to look at them? The problem we have in this country is there's so much history; it oozes out from every nook and cranny. Somebody once said to me Americans come to this country to see our history. Here they are regularly confronted by a bucketful of history in front of them; another bucketful is next door; and just round the corner there are umpteen more bucketsful – quite overpowering if the infrastructure in one's home country is less than 300 years old. Being surrounded by huge lumps of history is something we take for granted, because we grew up with them. However, we can so easily ignore our

historical treats through indifference. Please go inside our churches and take a look around. Should you not, take note of the last line of Davies' poem: 'A poor life this, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare'.

You will see (p.6) that we have an international contributor this time. Julia Heyns tells of her experiences in the Vale and in London with English ringing. She is clearly someone who is used to reporting on things, as she noticed and recorded so many aspects that we, being used to all this ringing stuff, probably miss – just like the history business in the previous paragraph. We probably operate in a 'bubble', and it's people like Julia who are able to tell us how important our art is in the culture of this country.

The Guild AGM is upon us once more. Please don't be put off by the seemingly long Agenda. It looks long, but it's likely to be short on time, as there is (at this point of writing anyway) nothing contentious on the horizon to my knowledge. Yes, there are a few elections to hold, but these will take only a few minutes. 'OK', you'll say, 'what's the point in me coming then?' The AGM gives all members a chance to have a word with the Committee about any aspect of the Guild's operation, whether it's good or bad. Comments at AGMs normally refer to aspects that need improvement: rarely about things done well. Yes, the Committee will happily take comments regarding improvements, but should anybody be moved to express satisfaction (or even beyond that) about how the Guild operates, then there will be much joy. As Peter Quinn says in his Report (p.4), the Committee do work hard. It would be nice to know whether this work satisfies the majority as much as whether it doesn't!

I've been repairing broken ropes again. I am saddened at how badly ropes are looked after in

some cases, as these are expensive items, and they don't come 'off the shelf' either. All are hand made, so a long delay between ordering and receiving is the norm. We seem to be losing 'the Steeplekeeper' in towers, the person who regularly goes upstairs to look around and checks everything is OK – and more to the point pick up defects as they start to occur. Hilary Bolton mentions the work John does in keeping things up to scratch (and Badsey bells are always 'well turned out'). So why are steeplekeepers seemingly disappearing? Is it because a lot of items in belfries are now long-lasting and low maintenance. For example: ball bearings, which require no work (in fact the advice is to leave well alone) as against plain bearings, which require regular oiling; and wheels and bells with more effective fixings to headstocks. However, stays are the same as always (Hilary mentions cracks starting to occur), and of course ropes. If bells are checked less frequently, the tell-tale signs of wear aren't picked up. Flax ropes are made

from a natural material, so all sorts of nasties can affect them. And they are expensive!

Our sympathies – certainly mine – go out to Sophia Lewis-Skeath, who has been suffering with some very painful back problems recently. I know just what it's like, having been through such an experience on a few occasions, including one at the Bell Tower on a Sunday morning after helping to pull up some of the back bells!

Stop Press: a report of the Ringing Tour around Ludlow has been included at the almost-12th hour! It was good: see p.14

Chris Povey, (Caretaker) Editor

(The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Four Shires Guild or its Committee. The Guild endorses no products or manufacturers advertised within the Newsletter – but would not allow such advertisements where the goods or services are knowingly questionable.)

FSG COMMITTEE MEETING, 4TH JUNE.

The Committee met on Tuesday 4th June at the Hon Sec's home in Ilmington. Sophia Lewis-Skeath, Michael Dane, Peter Quinn and Jackie Hands presented their apologies.

1) The Minutes of the March meeting were agreed subject to a correction that no peal fee was to be levied, ie continue as-is.

2) **Matters arising** were:-

Confirmation re the date of the 2014 Annual Dinner was awaited from Peter Q, but the expected date is 1st Feb;

The offer of 100 'hinge-pin-fix' Guild badges at £100 was agreed to be accepted (this had arisen due to an error by the supplier);

No letter sent yet to the Oxfordshire towers who charge for ringing at them;

Guild artefacts database: Chris and Stuart provided some date for this;

Old Minute Book: the possibility of it being deposited with the CCCBR Library was raised as an option, but was eventually rejected as the security was not as high as wished. Andrew had a form for deposits to be made at Gloucester Archives, where security was the standard required. Form to be completed for next meeting;

Guild EIG Insurance: this has not been as straightforward as expected, as even the published CC advice seems not to apply. The reply from EIG has been copied to the CC, who were unaware of the extra conditions that are being applied. Comments are awaited;

Ringing Tour, July: all arrangements made for the week-end around Ludlow. Thanks to Richard L-S for this;

Guild Walk on 28th Sept: Michael H to supply the

final details for the Newsletter Notice;

Minimus Comp, 14th Sept, Wyck Rissington: tower arranged; judge required (Peter Q to get); short evening ring afterwards 7.30-8.15pm

Inter-Shires Comp: John suggested Harvington for this and will pursue this possibility;

Offenham AGM arrangements: same format as before; Sophia L-S to obtain judge(s); Chris to liaise with Claire Penny re use of church or hall, an organist and the Vicar.

3) **Reports:** the following are highlights:-

Treasurer: although absent, Michael D submitted a written report. No problems at present with money or accounts;

Membership Sec: one more sub received;

Fixture Sec: Stuart is steadily compiling the list for the next Newsletter. There were some suggestions for towers at which the Guild hadn't rung for some time;

Newsletter Editor: Chris said the July issue is behind schedule again (!) and suggested a printing date of 11th July. Will probably be 14 sides this time. Will ask Peter Q to supply his Master's Report. The front page tower was agreed to be Willersey, as a large refurbishment of the bells had just been completed. Stuart to arrange a practice there within this period.

Mid-week (Vice-President's) Tours co-ordinator: it was reported that Isobel Murphy is carrying a float of £149.78 for this event;

CCCBR meeting report: there was nothing contentious at the meeting in Guildford, except, possibly, that a vote to raise the rep

fees to £30 each was accepted. Keith reported that he will be standing down and therefore somebody will be required to replace him (election at Guild AGM);

Bell Restoration Fund: an application had been received from Cropthorne for refurbishment work to a double pulley by Taylors, and the purchase of a length of polyester rope to replace six worn top ropes. All work complete (work of splicing 6 ropes done FOC by a Guild member). Agreed to give a grant of £60 towards this work. Andrew to inform the applicant and arrange payment.

4) **Items for discussion:-**

Peal Books: the most recent peals list is required for Sandra to write then up. Chris and Peter K have the two peal books and need to liaise over what is available and how best to get the info to Sandra;

FSG tea towel: Hazel Davies said she has a tea towel printed with the Guild's area of operation. It's framed. She has asked whether the Guild would like it, as she's wanting to dispose of it. None of the Committee recall a Guild tea towel. The Committee agreed to have it and left it with Stuart to liaise with Hazel over it.

5) **Any Other Business:-**

None

Next Meeting: 3rd September 2013, at Ilmington. (NB: these notes do not supplant the formally-agreed Minutes.)

“TIE UP YOUR SHOES AND RING THE BELLS!”

As you will see below, Julia came to the Vale of Evesham from Hamburg to learn more about specialist shoe making. Tom Sandham encouraged her to see English bell ringing, which fascinated her. In addition to shoe making, Julia writes and presents articles on various subjects for Radio Hamburg and said she intended doing one on English bell ringing. As she had to spend a short time in London, a visit to see the ringing at St Paul's was arranged so she could see what happens at the top end of the spectrum. The St Paul's ringers were extremely kind to Julia and all thanks are due to them for accommodating her in this way. Julia's spoken and written English is excellent, as you will see below. Although I agreed to her condition of writing the article below that I would correct any grammatical errors, I knew I would have to do little: her wording is almost unaltered. Pretty good, eh? We were sad to lose Julia, as she is a delightful - and very pretty - lady. Her observations of ringing and ringers in her article, particularly how ringing is a great leveller, are very perceptive. We hope she will return one day to see us all again. Alan Ainsworth, one of the St Paul's ringers, told me Julia would be overwhelmed with orders for her shoes if she stayed in London. Perhaps she might take that advice! Chris Povey

This article will tell you about a 3 months bell-ringing experience of a German shoemaker from Hamburg. It's a story which I have told to so many people by now and there will more to come: and a radio show in September.

Let's start at the beginning.

In November 2012 I arrived in Badsey for a 4 months internship in England. I'm a shoemaker and was willing to learn a lot more about orthopedic bespoke shoes at Bill Bird Shoes, placed in Blockley, Gloucestershire.

Since I was interested to spend my leisure time with the local community, I went to the local pub where a film club was going on once a month.

In January the lovely people invited me to have a beer with them when the movie was finished. Tom told me that he was a bell-ringer. A bell-ringer? I have never ever met a bell-ringer in my life before. To be honest, I never really thought about how the bells of churches are used these days. By now I know that there is a big difference between German bell-ringing and the English way...

Tom invited me to come along, to see how this is being done in Badsey. So I went the following Monday to the local church. I was astonished how many people came to ring the bells. All of them were very kind and open

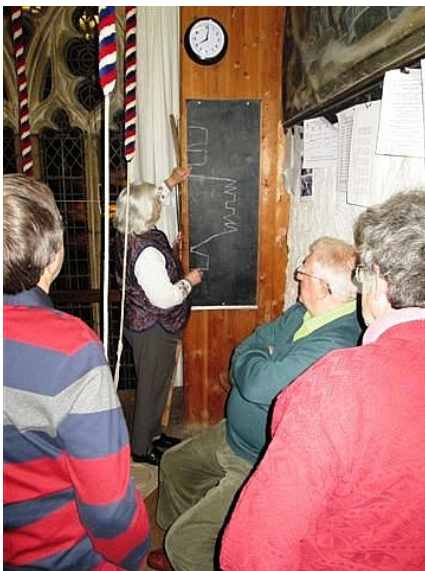
to me and I noticed the sparkle in the eyes when they took the ropes and started bell-ringing.

I couldn't really figure out how they knew when it's their turn. Some explanations helped, but I realised it's a really big subject to ring the methods. As if it wasn't enough excitement, the bell-ringers gave me a quick introduction how to take the sally or the back-rope – and let me have a go with someone standing beside me. It was really exciting for me, and it made me laugh that everybody in the village could hear me learning how to ring the bell. Thank you for your patience, Badsey! The chocolate that was passed around was really good after this excitement. This was the very special moment, when the bell-ringing bug hit me.



Me trying ringing a bell at Badsey with John

Tom said, if I was interested, he would pick me up next evening to visit another tower in Offenham. So I met even more enthusiastic bell-ringers next day. This time there was a teacher, Claire, who gave the bell-ringers even more instructions if there was the need. It was interesting and good to see that bell-ringers of different levels were ringing the bells together. After this evening I decided to use my dictaphone to record sessions and to make a radio show about the culture of English bell-ringing which I run once in each month in Hamburg on a local radio station.



At Badsey with Hilary explaining a method



At Offenham with Claire, Christina and Stephanie

Tom told me about the 12 bells in Evesham tower and so I went with him on a Sunday. In Evesham I met some people who I'd met before and even more bell-ringers. Chris was so kind and took me up to the bells, gave me ear protectors and the bell-ringers downstairs were ringing the bells. This was awesome, I've never seen big bells like this, nor when they were in use, magical and beautiful.

It helped a lot to understand how the English bells work. Chris also showed me a little model downstairs and let me participate of his knowledge about the technical things of the bells.

My next place was Willersey, where David showed me the bells as well. Each tower has its own spirit and sound, which was really nice to see and to listen.



At Willersey with David

Since then I went bell-ringing two or three times a week. If I was not ringing I enjoyed being with the people and trying to understand the calls, methods and the system of balance and speed.

So many people tried to give me as much information as possible about bell-ringing. Lucky me got a picture-puzzle of Evesham bell-ringers and a calendar from Robert. Thank you again!

But time was running out. At the end of February I was supposed to be heading off to London, where I was going to do another internship at a shoemaker for a month.

My last Sunday in the Cotswolds Chris and all the others let me ring rounds in Evesham and on the last session in Offenham I managed for the

first time to stand the bell. That was a great experience and I still think gratefully back to these moments and to all my lovely teachers and patient bell-ringers who I met.

Chris had a special surprise for me. He arranged a meeting with the bell-ringers of the St. Paul's Cathedral in London! Even they were open to me joining the bell-ringing session on a Sunday. They were showing me the bells in action and let me record it.



Ringling at St Paul's Cathedral

Since they knew about my few bell-ringing skills, they let me have a go at St Michael's Church, Cornhill, in the City of London. I failed to stand the bell, but it was a special moment anyway.

On Easter Sunday I went a second time to the St Paul's Cathedral. Since it was Easter Sunday they were ringing a quarter peal, which was almost meditational for me.

The Tuesday afterwards I went back to Hamburg.

Thinking back to all the people I met through bell-ringing, I can't believe how good your culture is. I am impressed how open and kind everybody was. Keep your culture up, which doesn't care about class society, money, age differences, levels – it's a social and challenging thing, which is good for those who like to be in a community.

Thank you and best wishes,

Julia Heyns

Very special thanks to: Tom, Chris, Claire, Martin, Robert, Hilary, Tim, Alan, Robert – and everybody else I met who wasn't mentioned.

FOUR SHIRES GUILD CLOTHING

A few people have asked about Guild clothing recently. It is still available. All items have the FSG badge embroidered on the left breast (except the reversible fleece, which is both sides) and come in many colours. More detailed descriptions of these products are available on the FSG website: www.fourshires.org.uk.

Clothing with Guild Logo Prices at 1st June 2013 (notice the addition of the lambswool V-necked jumper):-

KK403 Polo Shirt £14.50

R16 Reversible Fleece with Waterproof Lining £27.50

SS50 Half Zip Fleece £21.50

SS24M Sweat Shirt £17.50

SS51 Full Zip Fleece £22.50

H730 Lambswool V-necked jumper £31.00

If choosing colours from the web site (www.fourshires.org.uk) just hover the mouse over the colour, otherwise I can email you the colours.

Payment is cash/cheque with order to:

Peter Quinn, 22 Mountford Close, Wellesbourne, Warwick. CV35 9QQ

Tel 01789 840827; Mob 07785793500; Email peter@quinn22.fsnet.co.uk

Please make cheques payable to The Four Shires Guild of Bell Ringers

CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING, GUILDFORD 2013...

Do you ever wonder what goes on in a Central Council Annual meeting? I hope this short account will help and I'll come back to this question later.

This year it was the turn of the Guildford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers to host the annual meeting and a very good job they made of it too. The main business meeting on Bank Holiday Monday May 27th 2013 took place in Guildford's United Reform Church, which contrasted with the last two meetings I've attended that took place in large conference type hotels.

On the day, Guildford was blessed with brilliant hot sunshine, which heated up the modern church building quite considerably during the afternoon. In fact it reminded me of the last time I was in the URC as a 15 year old playing in the brass band for the BBC Songs of Praise programme. This was also on a blazing hot summer day.

Over the three years I've been going to the meetings, I've begun to realise what a very small world it can be in the Central Council. You're constantly meeting ringers at the CC who you've seen before in different settings. This can be quite a challenge to those like me who are just moderately average in remembering names. We always get over this at the meeting by wearing name badges carefully recycled from previous meetings.

As to the meeting itself, the main business of the day is to receive reports back from the 16 committees comprising the Council and where required elect/appoint new members to the committees. Reports varied in length and were pre-published in The Ringing World Central Council Supplement (26 April 2013). The assembled 200 or so

representatives attending were able to question the various committee chairs. If ever you contemplate becoming Central Council President please be aware that the most relevant skill you must have is the ability to time manage and control a meeting. Fortunately our current President does have this skill and the meeting finished at a reasonable time in the afternoon and didn't go on into the evening, which I believe has happened in the past.

With so many committees I suppose it's inevitable that overlap does from time to time occur. This year I picked up that the Education Committee and the Ringing Centres Committee are focusing on some similar issues of training new and existing ringers. After some initial defence of each approach peace did seem to break out with an agreement to keep in touch and make sure no unnecessary duplication occurred.

An item of interest to many was the decision to run another Ringing Roadshow next year. This will be held at Newbury Racecourse again, on September 6th 2014.

The extract below is from the monthly blog of Kate Flavell, the Central Council President (see <http://cccbr.org.uk/blog/2013-06-18/>) relating to regional outreach meetings that you will be seeing in the future.

There was quite a long discussion at the Council meeting of the Future of Ringing Project. Following work by the Recruitment and Training Forum, proposals were

discussed concerning an immediate need for outreach to ringers across the country and to this end moves are afoot for regional meetings. These meetings are aimed at grass roots ringers and will fulfil several purposes, particularly to listen to expectations and needs at local level. It is also intended to improve awareness of what the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme involves, what the Council provides in the way of services already and to engage local support both personal and financial. The Council is seeking to arrange a good geographical spread with the help of local associations and details will be made known as soon as possible.

So concern with the future of bellringing, curiosity over what the CC looks like and does and a wish to represent local ringers for a three year term are all things that may make you an ideal candidate to replace me at the end of my three year term. Just before the next CC meeting in 2014 I shall be stepping down as one of the two Four Shires Guild's CC reps and this will give someone else the opportunity to attend the next meeting of CC scheduled for Maidstone in Kent in 2014. Please make contact with me (or Chris Povey, who's the other FSG Central Council rep) if you need more details and be aware that this will be an item at our forthcoming AGM.

Keith Murphy – FSG CCCBR Representative

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Our admiration goes to John Kinchin for generating money towards the purchase of new ropes. Here at Badsey we have run a fund for many years, generated from a percentage of what we are paid for weddings, anniversaries, peals, quarter peals and visiting teams etc. From this fund we are able to sustain routine out-goings - namely ropes, minor repairs, affiliation fees; in fact anything appertaining to the routine maintenance of our lovely and historic bells. After all, we as ringers get much pleasure and enjoyment from this. We have not asked for backup from our PCC as far back as I can remember. Although we operate our own fund, consideration is given to the Vicar and PCC in any decision. Absolutely nothing is done without their prior knowledge and approval.

We are very lucky in as much that John does any rope splicing if needed, and with the help of Gordon he keeps on top of any regular routine maintenance, which pays its own reward. It's amazing how nuts can suddenly go missing from bolts, and cracks become evident in stays with use.

Hilary Bolton

I was overjoyed to receive this letter. I could not have written it better. The subject and its benefits are something I've been meaning to mention in the

Newsletter for some time, because, like Hilary, I feel passionate about it, too. There has been a similar 'Rope Fund' at Evesham Bell Tower for something like 50 years (started by my predecessor). We, too, use this Fund to provide ropes and other maintenance works, plus affiliation fees to the Worcs & Dists Assn. Money for the Fund comes from similar sources to those Hilary mentions. As ringers we really ought to be contributing to the equipment from which we derive so much pleasure. PCCs will take us far more seriously if they can see we are paying for the basics. As said previously, most PCCs are having a bad time financially at present, so any help they are given will be appreciated. Bells are generally low on the priority list (they don't keep the wind and rain out, they don't heat the church and they don't provide music for the hymns), so expenditure on the bells will also be low priority unless your PCC is rich (rare).

What happens to donations to the tower from visiting ringers? Does it go to the PCC? If so, does it go into a dedicated fund in their accounts? If so, well, OK. If not, it will get lost and it will be difficult get it out. Form a tower fund (although legally, this money may still belong to the PCC. Some simple accounts will satisfy them – and any of your ringers who are interested to know). Ed

FROM THE ARCHIVES 100 YEARS AGO

The Old Minute Book records the following for the quarter 1st July to 30th September 1913:-

September 26th '13:

A committee meeting of the Guild for the purpose of arranging the Programme for the Autumn meeting at Willersey was held in the Parish Room at the Rectory, Moreton-in-Marsh on Friday September 26th 13. The Rev Spencer Jones in the Chair. Also present Rev H. Highley, Messrs E. Harris, F. Bird, - Bird and A. White.

The date of meeting was fixed for Oct 29th and the Competitions to commence at 2.0pm. It was decided that the competitions be taken in the usual sections, namely Rising & Sinking,

Rounds, Call Changes, Method. It was proposed by Mr F. Bird, seconded by Mr E. Harris, that all the items be Rung concurrently by each Competing Team. It was agreed to ask Mr F.J. Johnson of Hinton to be good enough to officiate and judge on this occasion.

Divine Service was fixed to commence at 4.30pm, the Rev H. Highley undertaking to secure a Preacher.

Tea was decided to be provided for 5.30pm. The Sec having reported that the stock of Certificates was exhausted, it was decided to purchase another 50, the Chairman and Secretary to select a new Pattern.

An opinion was expressed that it would be desirable to have a larger type of Certificate printed, suitable for fixing in Belfry's (sic), but it was decided to have the matter placed on the Agenda for discussion at the Autumn meeting.

This concluded the business, and the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman for presiding, also for the use of the Parish Room.

(Signed)

Spencer Jones
Chairman

FROM THE ARCHIVES 40 YEARS AGO

There was no meeting of any type held by the reformed Guild between 1st July and 30th September 1973, so there is nothing to report here. There will be much to report from 1st October to 31st December 1973, as there

was a Committee Meeting to discuss the forthcoming Annual General Meeting and the AGM itself (the first of the reformed Guild) that was held in October 1973. Stand by for a lot of info next time! CMP

RINGING RULES

These Rules caught my eye, as they are over 150 years old. I like the bit about 'idlers' in the tower!

RULES
FOR THE RINGERS
AT DUMBLETON CHURCH
January 1, 1857.

1.--Any Ringer not being present at the proper time, unless for sickness or any other just cause, shall forfeit Sixpence.

2.--No Bell shall be rung except by the proper Ringer, or with his consent; and no Idlers shall be allowed in the Belfry, except by the consent of the head Ringer.

3.--The head Ringer shall receive and divide all Money in the Belfry.

4.--No drink, swearing, quarrelling or bad language shall be allowed in the Belfry.

The present head Ringer is William Churchley.

Signed on behalf of all the Ringers, by
WILLIAM CHURCHLEY

Witness,
R. WEDGWOOD, Rector.

RICHARD SELF, BOOKSELLER AND PRINTER, EVESHAM

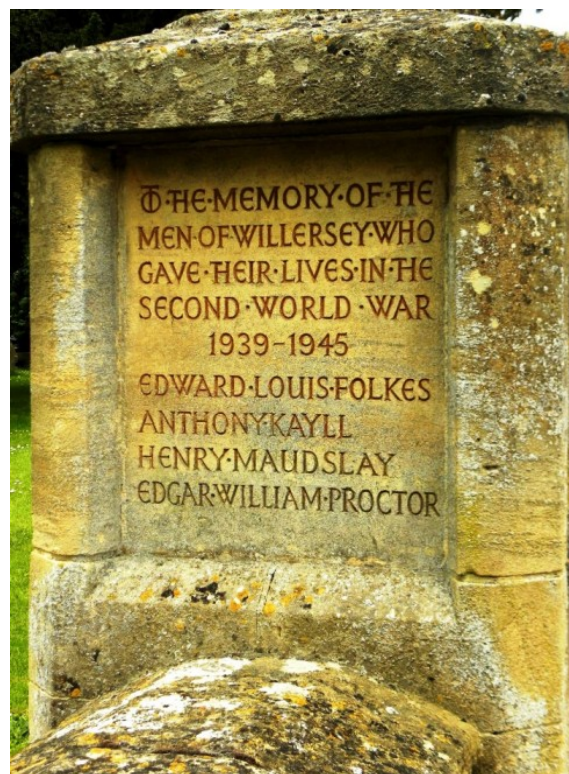
Are there similar rules of similar period elsewhere, in which the Rector/Vicar is a signatory?

CMP

DAM BUSTER'S MEMORIAL AT WILLERSEY

Here is a photo of Henry Maudslay's name on the War Memorial outside St Peter's Church. The Memorial is adjacent to the main entrance gate. Squadron Leader Maudslay DFC and his crew were killed when his Lancaster was shot down near the Dutch border on his return from the raid. Maudslay was 21.

Prior to moving to Willersey in 1937, his family lived at Sherbourne.



A Memorial Service was held at Willersey in May, the 70th anniversary of the Dams Raid.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER...

Allen Turner has been busy with his camera again. He sent in the following photos, one of those attending the practice at Whichford on 8th June and the other of ringing at Saintbury on 22nd June.



Attending at Whichford were a goodly number:-
L-R: Mick Austin, John Wheeler, Ted Copson, Richard Lewis-Skeath, Sally Austin, John Carroll, Peter Kenealy, Eliza Lewis-Skeath, John Nicholls, John Hearn, Michael Haynes, Stuart Cummings, Michael Cummings, George Osborn, Hilary Bolton and John Bolton (and of course Allen Turner, who took the photo).



Ringling at Saintbury (unfortunately I cannot identify all).
From tenor round: Andrew Roberts (tenor), Clive Sparling (7th), ringer of 6th unidentified; ditto ringer 5th, Steve Bowley (4th) Joanne Roberts (3rd), Robert Chadburn (2nd), treble ringer unidentified.

THE CUMMINGS' CONUNDRUM...

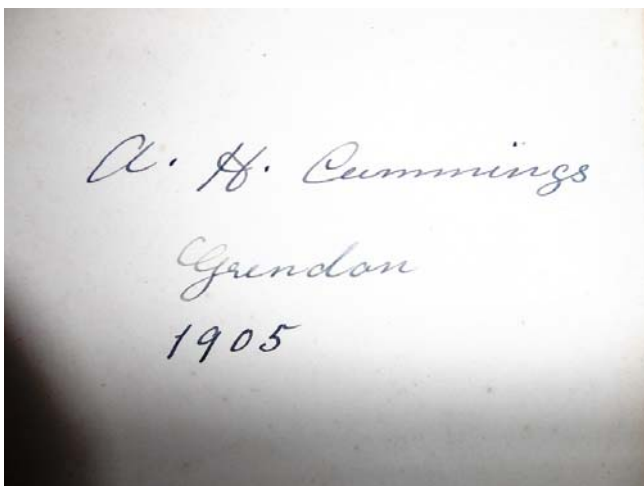
Stuart and Michael Cummings were handed an old book recently. This is not an unusual occurrence: certainly not one to write about here.

It was a book about bells and bellringing. Agreed that's a bit more unusual, except that the book is moderately rare, but still nothing to make them shout from the rooftops.

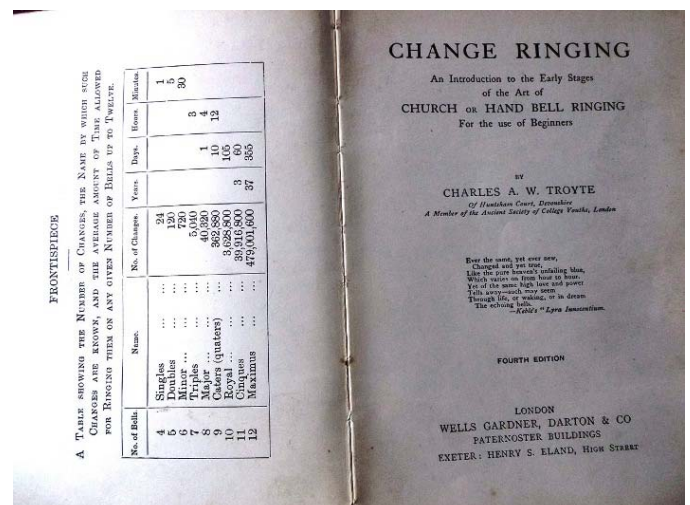
The book belonged to their grandfather, Alfred Henry Cummings, proved by it being signed and dated by him. This was a revelation to them, as they had absolutely no idea at all that he was ever a ringer! That they were surprised is something of an understatement. The book had been handed to Allen Turner, who then handed it on to Stuart and Michael.

The appearance of the book made them, and others in their family, delve more deeply into their grandfather's life.

Their grandfather signed the book A H Cummings, together with the place he lived in at the time, Grendon, and the date, 1905.



The book itself is the fourth edition of 'Change Ringing' by Charles A W Troyte, who was a prominent ringer in late Victorian times and who lived at Huntsham Court, Huntsham, Devon. He was clearly well-off, living in such a smart place, and he was able to indulge himself to a large extent with ringing. The book was popular, running eventually to five editions (I believe, but please correct me if this is wrong). Natural wastage and perhaps a general lack of knowledge from non-ringers has led to few copies in circulation now. Troyte's writing is typical of the late Victorian era, when the British Empire covered much of the globe and Britannia ruled the waves: a rather flowery style. However, he gives some useful information about ringing the standard methods of the day.



So how did grandfather Cummings get to be in Grendon, which is near Polesworth up in North Warwickshire? Stuart has found out that Alfred was born on February 13th 1880 at Fyfield, near Bledington. He moved to North Warwickshire to learn the trade of a blacksmith. Stuart believes he was around the Dordon, Polesworth and Grendon area, and worked in Grendon.

Alfred was clearly ringing bells in this period, as the date of his signature in the book reveals. Grendon has a ring of 6 bells, so it's likely he rang there. 'Dove' tells us that Grendon had two bells (the 3rd and the 6th) recast in 1906 by John Taylor & Co, so Alfred would have experienced the excitement these two bells must have caused.

While in North Warwickshire Alfred married a local girl, Minnie Clarke, from Dordon. She was born on 19th November 1885. They were married in Polesworth Church on 11th April 1911.

Stuart has discovered that Alfred and his new bride moved to Lower Brailes later in 1911, to take over the blacksmith's business at The Forge there. He spent the rest of his working life in Brailes, shoeing horses and undertaking general blacksmith's work.



Alfred didn't go off to fight in the First World War, but did War Service at The Brailes Institute V A Hospital as various certificates record.



Stuart and Michael's father and two uncles were ringers at Brailes, but neither of them can recall any of these mentioning that Alfred rang. They think it is unlikely he was ever a Four Shires Guild member (of the Old Guild).

Stuart says The Forge at Lower Brailes is still in use, but the thatch was removed from the roof in the 1950s or 60s.

Alfred looks all that Longfellow's 'The Village Blacksmith' says he should be:

Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.

While Michael might agree he doesn't quite have this build, Stuart certainly does! You can imagine him at a forge and an anvil, with a big hammer in his hand banging seven shades of hell out of a piece of iron to make a big horseshoe, and then getting hold of a Shire's hoof to fit it...after which he runs up Brailes tower to pull up the tenor!

I, too, was lucky enough to have been given a copy of Troyte's book. It is also a fourth edition. It used to belong to Harry Baker, an Ebrington ringer. He'd signed it 'Harry J Baker, Ebrington' in the same style of writing as Alfred Cummings. Harry had lent me the book to read when I was learning to ring there. I returned it, but soon after he died. I enquired whether the family wished to keep the book (none of them was a ringer) and they said they were pleased to pass it on, as it would have gone in the bin.

When the Saydisc record 'Bells of the Cotswolds' was being made in the late 1970s, we visited Ebrington. I was asked to call the touch that would be recorded. I thought a touch from Harry's book would be appropriate and, as Ebrington had a reputation for being the butt of North Cotswold humour, I chose Grandsire Minor: nicely unusual.

The funny thing about this recording (and other recordings on the record) is that they feature very regularly on Church bells on Sunday on the radio at some ungodly hour on a Sunday morning and Sunday night. So, when you see Grandsire Minor from Ebrington is to feature on this programme (again), it's me calling it. Some might think it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience to feature on Bells on Sunday, but those still around from that recording session can say we've done it many times.....!

Words: CMP
Info and photos: Stuart and Michael Cummings

NEW FEATURE, A LIMERICK COMP! FIRST ENTRY BY A. N. OTHER (aka Tim Pinner)

Tim thinks there should be a competition for Limericks based on ringing. His entry is below.

There was a young ringer called Grey,
Who while ringing got carried away,
Grey pulled too hard,
By about half a yard,
And that's how Grey broke the stay.

Any more from anyone else? Please send them in.

Tim sent me another, but I don't have sufficient room to include it. He says he will print it out and distribute it to as many towers as he can. Look out for it. Thanks for offering to do that Tim.

Notice seen in The Baker's Arms, Broad Campden: "I want my children to have everything I have, so I can move in with them."

THE 'CHALLENGE SHIELD': PART 2. WHERE IS IT NOW & CAN WE HAVE IT BACK?

In this concluding part I continue what history can be gleaned from the Old Minute Book about the Old Guild's Challenge Shield and speculate on what has happened to it since the Old Guild ceased.



'The FSG Challenge Shield'

27th March 1923 – 'The Committee instructed the Secretary to have the names of the 3 towers who have recently joined inscribed upon the Guild's Trophy.'

28th April 1923 – 'The Sec also reported that the necessary inscriptions relating to the 3 towers & had been added to the others on the 'Shield'.'

6th October 1923 – '... Mr Evans raised the question, should the towers which have joined the Guild since the Challenge Shield of the Guild was purchased, contribute something towards the cost of the Shield if they compete for it. After some discussion it was decided to put the matter on the Agenda for the Half-yearly meeting of the Guild.'

27th October 1923 – 'Ilmington having gained the highest number of points was duly awarded the Challenge Shield & Moreton was awarded the certificate which is second prize. The business arising out of the minutes was, should the new towers contribute something towards the cost of the Challenge Shield if they compete for it, this matter was settled at the Annual Meeting at Shipston but was again brought at the Committee Meeting held at Ebrington on Saturday Oct 6th, 1923, when after a lengthy discussion it was decided to settle the question at the half-yearly meeting of the Guild. It was considered by the Moreton & Ilmington teams that as the Shield was bought & paid for it could not be bought again & also that it would prevent young struggling towers from joining the Guild if they are to be penalised at the very start, by being charged for something that had been bought several years ago. On the question being put to the Meeting, it was rejected by all present. The Sec reported the death of Brother Samuel Marshall Russell who died on May 14th 1923 from the effects of wounds, gas and the hardships he endured while being a prisoner of war. The Meeting showed its respect & sorrow by standing in silence. The Meeting also decided that

his name should be enrolled with the names of the fallen brethren on the Shield.'
25th October 1924 – 'Ilmington having gained the highest number of points on the years ringing namely 565, was awarded the Challenge Shield of the Guild.'

And so ends the Old Minute Book on this subject. Very sadly we don't have the continuation book, but the main information about the Shield and its purpose as both a memorial and a prize for the Striking Competition winners is there. The accompanying photograph shows it was a wonderful thing. Very few ringing societies have anything quite like this.

The obvious question is: where is it? Very sadly we don't know. We do know the Old Guild petered out in either the late 1930s or the early WW2 years, in the latter case probably due to the wartime ban on ringing and concurrent call-up of young men to the forces. It's very likely the Guild's possessions stayed with the people who had them when it all ceased. This certainly happened with the Spencer Jones Cup (found in the village that won it last) and probably the Old Minute Book. This might have happened to the Shield, too. I have tried to discover which team won it last. Without a Minute Book for that period, this is difficult. However, Len Dowdeswell, Ringing Master at Stow-on-the-Wold for a long time, wrote a short history of the Four Shield Guild. It is a photocopied manuscript publication and had limited distribution locally. In addition to some notes from Tony Brazier, Len says the Shield and Cup were last competed for in 1938, when Mickleton won the Shield and Great Wolford won the Cup.

Two stories circulate as to what eventually happened to the Shield. The first is that it was put in a large chest in the Church – but this referred to a chest in Ilmington Church, not Mickleton (although there has long been a close working relationship between Mickleton and Ilmington ringers).

The second is based on a note made by me when I was talking to someone about it – and I can only imagine it was Tony Brazier, who had asked me to write an article about the Guild in conjunction with Len Dowdeswell for a forthcoming item in *The Ringing World*. I had a list of questions, one of which was, 'Shield – last time it was seen?' The note regarding the answer I received was, 'Mickleton, early 1950s; Church at Mickleton. Peal was rung; Fred didn't want the responsibility.' I'm pretty sure 'Fred' was Fred Kinchin (but I'd like to know if I am correct in thinking this); and I guess he didn't want to take responsibility for keeping the Shield. I tried to follow up this story by finding if there

were any survivors of a peal at Mickleton in (probably) the early 1950s in which Fred rang. I found one. Don Niblett was a survivor. I rang Don, but he had no recollection of the Shield being spoken of, let alone seen, so that story hit the buffers.

Of the former story 'the chest' in Ilmington Church was opened and searched some years back, but nothing was found. In addition, John Kinchin (who is no direct relation to Fred Kinchin incidentally) said the likely places in Mickleton Church had been searched in the past, but nothing was found.

Other possibilities must be considered, the most dreadful of which must be: was it stolen and then melted down for its metal? It is difficult to understand how anybody, even a thief, might do this to something that was a memorial to Fallen ringers (now possibly; but then?).

There is another possibility. It comes from a very interesting story told me by David Hart. Harts Silversmiths (aka The Guild of Handicrafts) in Campden held a centenary exhibition in 2002. In preparation for this they were sifting through some drawings and came upon one of a cup made for the Derby Rowing Club. It stood about 18 ins high. Their engraver at the time was from Derby, so he asked if he could take the drawing to show the Club, which, happily, was still in existence. They knew nothing about the Cup and were greatly surprised. Very luckily, somebody mentioned it to an old member. His reply astounded them: "Ah! I'd forgotten about that Cup. It's been in my bank vault for 50 years. I'd wondered what to do with it." And so, a forgotten and very valuable item (worth about £25k!) came back into being. It was on display at the centenary exhibition.

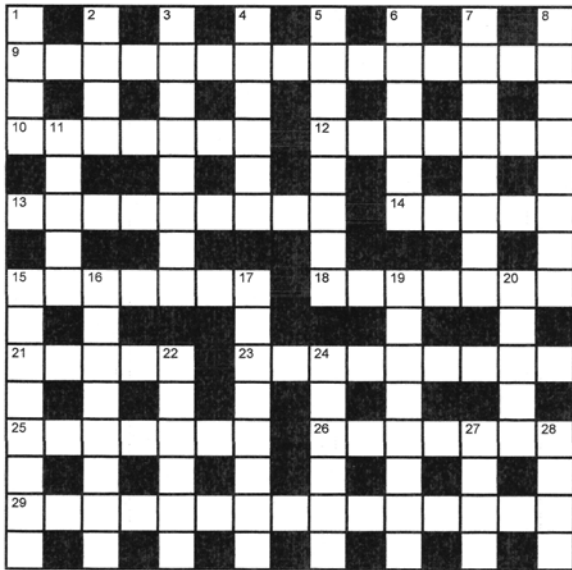
Is the Challenge Shield still in existence? If so, it really ought to see the light of day again. Could we have a thorough search of lofts, chests (church and private) and even in places that don't seem obvious, for example bank vaults!! The Guild is extremely lucky to have been given the Newing Shield as a replacement, but it would be truly wonderful to have the Challenge Shield, too.

David Hart tells me Harts Silversmiths are sifting through their many thousands of drawings to form a database for historical purposes. They haven't found the Shield drawing yet, but must be getting close. When they do, the Newsletter will display it.

CMP

EL PRESIDENTE'S CROSSWORD

El Presidente, *cruciverballist extraordinaire* and Editor's friend, keeps providing the goods for your enjoyment.....!!



Answer to the crossword in the April 2013 Newsletter



Across

- 9 St Simon's type – with places front and middle (10,5)
- 10 Rue slap, but look carefully (anag). (7)
- 12 The basis of moving from one change to another. (7)
- 13 The Head of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. (9)
- 14 Not a description of active ringers! (5)
- 15 Thee late W.N? It could describe you years ago (anag). (7)
- 18 Towers are mostly this end of the church. (7)
- 21 Eg, Ascot, Villa Park, The Belfry. (5)
- 23 Bell tower. Usually one detached from the church. (9)
- 25 How many presents does Santa carry? (7)
- 26 The Bob in Plain Bob. (7)
- 29 Well-known method, not just in the city of 'dreaming spires'. (6,6,3)

Down

- 1 Wasp could exchange (anag). (4)
- 2 Rang up to get a knot on a tree. (4)
- 3 County of cheese and cat! (8)
- 4 Regnal could be 'Compleat' near the water (anag). (6)
- 5 There is to be another at Newbury Race Course. (8)
- 6 Dig or take in a hand. (6)
- 7 Between Bass and Tenor. (8)
- 8 Remedial action when the ropes have shrunk. (8)
- 11 Take away the correct amount. (5)
- 15 St James, between Stratford and Wellesbourne. (8)
- 16 This would definitely stop a ringer! (8)
- 17 Heighten. (8)
- 19 The coast is losing its attraction to landfill sites. (8)
- 20 Vaughan Williams or Rackstraw say. (5)
- 22 You can't ring without this. (6)
- 24 Rather put out. (6)
- 27 Ugly mug on jug! (4)
- 28 Should be paid on time. (4)

RECENT MID-WEEK MONTHLY OUTINGS REPORT

The Mid-Week outings are still well attended, with ringers coming from around the Midlands.

The April outing, organised by Pat Halls, took us to Oxfordshire. The first tower, St Lawrence, Caversfield, with its light ring of 5 (5cwt), presented an easy start! Of note here were the graves of 40 airmen, mostly aircrew from Australia, who were killed in WW2. We then progressed to St Mary, Ambrosden for something of a contrast: a heavyish 8 (20cwt). The ring included a rare and listed bell by Edward Hemins. Lunch was taken at the Red Lion in Islip, after which we sampled the light bells of St Nicholas, Islip (8, 9cwt). From there we progressed to St Mary the V, Charlton-on-Otmoor, where we rang their heavyish 6 (15cwt), which was a good mix of ancient and modern. A day of contrasts in bells: thank you Pat.

Joy Pluckrose organised the May outing, which took us to Leicestershire. We met at Market Harborough. St Dionysius has 10 bells, 18cwt. The back 8 are Taylors, 1901, with two trebles dated 1990 from the Dutch foundry of Eijsbouts. This seemed strange to me, as Loughborough is so close. There is a peal board here recording a

peal of Stedman Triples in 1936, conducted by Arthur Manning. Arthur came to live in Broom, near Bidford-on-Avon, as manager of Broom Flour Mills. He was a member of Bidford Church choir. He was a Bidford ringer, but also wanted good method ringing, so went to Stratford and Evesham, too. He is buried in Bidford cemetery. I was one of six ringers who carried his coffin at his funeral. Also at Market Harborough was a plaque to Jack Gardner, Heavyweight Champion of Great Britain. We were in the Grenadier Guards together as amateur boxers. We won the London District Championship; he the heavyweight and I the light-heavyweight. On to the next tower, which was the 6 (14cwt) at SS Peter & Paul, Great Bowden. These were mostly old bells by Watts and Eayre, and a modern Taylor treble. Lunch was taken at The Black Horse, Foxton. We motored to Illston on the Hill, where the bells of St Michael & AA (6, 9cwt) were enjoyed. Our last tower was St John the Bapt, Billesdon, where the 8 (12cwt) made a good conclusion to the day. The tenor here is a very ancient bell by Johannes de York, dated about 1400. Thank you for the day, Joy.

The June tour, arranged by Chris Seers, took

us into north and east Gloucestershire. We had 5 towers instead of the normal 4. The first tower gave us an easy start on a warm but overcast day: St Laurence, Wyck Rissington, whose 4 bells (6cwt) have just been rehung by Whites of Appleton. And a good job they've made of these, too, as they ring very easily. The next tower was St John the B, Great Rissington, where the bells (6, 11cwt) are rung from the chancel crossing as at Broadway and Fairford. We then went to St Mary Mag, Sherborne (6, 10cwt), which is next to the rather fine Sherborne House. There an old bell in this ring dated about 1400; the founder is unidentifiable. Lunch was at The Sherborne Arms, Aldsworth, after which we went to Coln St Aldwyn, with the unusual dedication of the Decollation of St John. There are 8 bells (8cwt). The last tower of the day was St Mary, Bibury, with its complete ring of 6 (9cwt) by Abraham Rudhall II, dated 1723. These were very nice and an excellent end to an excellent day. Thank you Chris.

Frank Spiers

THE 2013 GUILD RINGING TOUR

It was not my intention to include a report of this tour in this issue, as by rights, having taken place in July, it should appear in the October issue. However, I went on the tour, it was very successful, it took place in glorious sunshine and it included some lovely countryside. It seemed a travesty to delay it until October, particularly as the printing date for the July issue followed by a few days.....So, out of sequence but not out of the minds of those who went, here it is.

The 2013 Guild Ringing Tour took place around Ludlow in South Shropshire. That area, S. Shropshire and N. Herefordshire, is very much 'the land that time forgot'. Indications of a slower way of life occur after crossing the Severn. Those indications are much larger after Abberley Hill; and the rate of change accelerates as Ludlow approaches.

A few intrepid members chugged down there on the Friday to rendezvous at a campsite just outside Ludlow. The weather was fine and dandy, and simply encouraged such a move. There was another advantage; the chance to ring at Stoke Lacy in the evening, and therefore to grab another tower. There were favourable reports of Stoke Lacy's bells, so this was a good bonus for the early birds.

The Saturday towers started at 9.00am at Holy Trinity Church, Wistanstow, just north of Craven Arms. Luckily for those travelling from home that morning to join in the tour, the day dawned magnificently and the journey was a pleasure. I arrived at Wistanstow a few minutes past 9.00am, but there were probably a dozen already waiting to go into the tower. The Church has a central tower with a ring of 8, tenor 9-2-18. Various 8-bell touches were rung here, but perhaps not as well as we might have done. OK, we were warming up....



Holy Trinity, Wistanstow.

The second tower was St John the Baptist, Stokesay. It was in a superb location, adjacent to Stokesay Castle. The brilliant sunshine allowed some excellent photos of the Church and Castle, and some of the party managed a quick tour round the Castle (you get so much extra on a FSG ringing tour....). Stokesay has 6 bells, tenor 9cwt. The village itself is merely the castle and one or two houses. However, it is the parish church of nearby Craven Arms. Even though the bells were a bit of a mix of founders, they were nice, and a variety of methods were rung. It was a very pleasant visit. As might be imagined, the interior of the church was from a past age: all box pews, and a large and magnificent one at the front for the Lord of the Manor and his family.

St Cuthbert's, Clungunford was the next stop. It was a strange experience walking into the church, as there were no pews, just lots of large tables and chairs, each table were laid with table cloths and cutlery. Did they need to welcome us quite so fully? Sadly it wasn't for us, but for a large dinner that evening. It was a good idea to use the church for other functions, we were told. Unlike Stokesay, the flat floor throughout the nave and the use of chairs rather than pews clearly helped in this endeavour. This tower had only three bells until the mid-1990s. Two bells (the 5th and tenor) are medieval bells from the Worcester and Gloucester foundries. A redundant



St John the Bapt, Stokesay

church provided two trebles to make 5, and new treble cast by Taylors completed the 6. The tower is unusually located; it is attached to the north wall of the nave in the middle. The access to the Ringing Room is a little convoluted, with a near vertical ladder as part. Sophia L-S does not like these at all, but she managed: just. I imagine the augmentation work included a new frame and new fittings, as the bells went well. The rise provided some mirth, as Michael and Stuart Cummings caught hold of the 5th and tenor of this 7½cwt ring (they ring at Brailes: 29cwt tenor). They were reminded that they only had small bells this time and were asked not to overtake the bells in front of them.



St Cuthbert's, Clungunford

Still in brilliant sunshine we broke for lunch at The Sun Inn, Leintwardine. This was the recommended watering hole, and very pleasant it proved to be. When arranging, Richard L-S had enquired about food, but was told they didn't do any, but the fish & chip shop next door did this and would bring anything ordered around to the pub garden. And so it turned out: a very novel arrangement, but perfectly executed! Not only that, the pub had some decent local ales on tap. Ah! the joys of sitting in a quiet pub garden in (by now very hot) sunshine, enjoying well-cooked and large portions of fish & chips with good ale in the land that time forgot. As I said earlier, a FSG tour gives you so much more.....

Eventually we had to move to ring at St Mary Magdalen's Church, Leintwardine, which was a shortish walk up the road. As the photo shows, the tower is quite ancient. There are 8 bells here, tenor about 13cwt. Dove doesn't show exact weights for the back 6 bells, which were all cast by Abel Rudhall in 1755, only for the two trebles, which were cast by Mears & Stainbank in 1953. This suggests the back 6 weren't removed from the tower for the removal of their canons, and, if so, they would not have been tuned or weighed. There were a few problems with their 'go', so the bellframe may be old, but some of this must have been due to tower movement, which could be felt when standing next to a wall. A bells website says the back 6 aren't well-toned, but I'm inclined to be more charitable and say they are a ring with some character, and I didn't mind them. Some touches did not go, but the last touch of the visit, some Original Major called by Richard, proved they could be handled and struck.



St Mary Magdalene's, Leintwardine

We chugged onwards to St Mary the V Church, Bromfield, with its 6bells, 8-2-19 tenor. Abel Rudhall cast five of the 6 bells in 1737. The odd one out is the 5th, cast by John Taylor in 1890, so it may be safe to assume Abel Rudhall originally cast this, too. We were informed the bells were on plain bearings. They didn't go badly for that, but the squeaking above during ringing pointed to the pulleys being on plain bearings, too, and that they hadn't been lubricated. This was a shame, as the bells sounded quite good outside (better than inside). Again, a variety of methods were rung before our time was up.



St Mary V's, Bromfield

I arrived in Ludlow early and, being totally parched, headed for a very old teasop in Broad Street I've known for many years. A notice requests one waits to be seated and then a uniformed waiter takes your order. I asked for a pot of tea. A little later a uniformed waitress arrived with a tray, upon which was a teapot, a secondary pot with hot water, a jug of milk, a sugar pot with tongs for the cube sugar, a tea strainer, and cup and saucer. What a delightful and comforting sight! The tea was indeed leaf tea, as the strainer proved, and it was a life-saver. I wasn't sure what this lot was to cost, but I didn't care because it was just what I wanted: £4 on Broadway, Campden, Stow prices? Dunno, because I don't go to such places in that way. After four cups of thirst-quenching tea, I asked for the bill. The cost? £2.10. What a treat!

St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, was the climax of the day. Incorrectly billed as a ring of 8 in the Notice of the tour in the Newsletter (I should have known much better, as I played a part, albeit very small, in bringing about the augmentation), the 10 bells, tenor 16-2-16 in E, were to give us a challenge: 10 bells being outside the comfort zone of some on the tour; a long drag of 138 steps up the tower; and the end of the day in by now searing heat (up near 30 degrees). Lastly, the church is in the middle of the town, and as only two buildings rise above the general roofline (the castle and the church), any bad ringing would be heard by lots of people, ie we were very much 'on show'.

Ludlow had a 25cwt 8 until recently. A scheme to augment to 12 foundered, because it was thought the considerable tower movement experienced at that time with those bells would be increased to an unacceptable degree. This was later proved by some dynamic testing, which recommended that a



St Laurence, Ludlow, rising above the rooflines

ring of 10 with the 7th bell at the time as the tenor would be a more sensible option, to contain, or preferably reduce, tower movement. This was the path that was adopted and the present ring is the result. The bells were down, so had to be risen. What should we do: pull up 10, or the back 8? Sense prevailed and we pulled up the back 8. The bells went nicely. The trebles were pulled up. We now had 10 bells: here goes! Rounds and call changes proved the recent work had provided an excellent 10; and they went well. In my humble opinion there's nothing quite like 10! Yes, occasionally a bell might not make the back-stroke, which was probably down to tower movement, but all-in-all they were very good indeed: a worthy ring. Tower movement is still significant. As Michael Cummings remarked: 'They say Brailles moves, but so does this place'. Indeed, when sitting out it is possible to feel this movement, but more remarkably it does not stop when the bells have been set, as it's possible to feel the movement gradually damping down afterwards: interesting!



Ringling at Ludlow

We rang a very nice course of Grandsire Caters. Stedman Triples was thought to be a safer option than Caters, and a good touch resulted. The time came to fall the bells and there was some discussion about how many to bring down: 10 or 8? The argument for 10 won, but we were aware it had the potential to go pear-shaped if all the bells weren't kept up tightly together. It is extremely pleasing to report that the fall was accomplished successfully, indeed extremely successfully, such that there was jubilation about its quality and that the memory of this fall would live long. What a wonderful end to a wonderful tour!

Richard had arranged a venue for a post-tour dinner later in the evening, but I was unable to stay for it, as I had to be home for a function. Also, too, Richard had arranged for those who were staying overnight to have another ring at Ludlow next morning. It was a memorable tour. Thank you Richard for all your hard work.

I emailed Richard to thank him for arranging such a good day. I also asked whether he might be minded to organise another in this format for 2014. He replied saying he would if he were asked. I replied saying, 'Oh, you will be asked....' CMP

GUILD MINIMUS STRIKING COMPETITION FOR THE 'MINI-MOUSE TROPHY'

TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, 14th SEPTEMBER 2013, AT WYCK RISSINGTON, GLOS, (4, 6-2-27)

The 'Mini-Mouse' Striking Competition is to happen again this year. Remember, it's intended to be **FUN**, so come along to have some fun. This year it will be on a genuine 4, so no messing about with a tenor covering.

It's an early evening event, with the competition just before the evening practice, so the programme will be as below.

- 6.00-7.00pm:** Striking Competition
7.00-7.30pm: results in the church (or churchyard if nice), with cheers and groans as appropriate
7.30-8.15pm: evening practice ringing for those who haven't rung in the competition

Teams can be associated with a tower, or any four FSG paid up members can form a team with a name. No ringer can ring for more than two teams. All teams get a warm-up practice of 3 minutes. A maximum of about 10 whole pulls of rounds before the test piece, which is to be of at least 96 changes in any Minimus method. Rounds before and after not marked. No rising and falling in this event. That's it for the Rules!

Names of teams and ringers names in them to me by Saturday 1st September if possible; otherwise turn up on the day and 'fit in'.

Organiser (*to whom all thanks, Ed*): Peter Quinn 01789-840827 (peterquinn22@googlemail.com)

(The 'Committee' team won it last year – but only just. Surely there must be some who can wrest it away from them?)

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GUILD LAPEL BADGES NOW AVAILABLE!



At long last, the new Guild lapel badge is here. It is slightly different to the previous version, as its design is now the same as the clothing badges (the 'standard' Guild badge). It is slightly '3D' too, as some features are raised.

£4 each from the Hon Sec.

(The original badges cost £1 in 1976!)

Historic Churches 'Ride & Stride'

The chance to help with the upkeep of ancient churches by being sponsored to cycle ride or walk between churches in the four Shires will occur on September 14th. Here are the websites:-

General site:-

<http://www.rideandstrideuk.org/>

Gloucestershire:-

<http://ghct.org.uk/ride.php>

Worcestershire:-

<http://worcestershirechurches.blogspot.com>

Warwickshire:-

<http://warwickshirechurches.org.uk>

Oxfordshire:-

<http://www.ohct.org.uk/bike.htm>

2013 GUILD WALKING TOUR

Saturday September 28th.

Start at **Moreton-in-Marsh**, ringing 10 - 10.45am,
(please park carefully and considerately in this area)

Walk to **Longborough** and ring 12 - 12.45pm

Followed by Lunch at 'The Coach & Horses' or bring your own sandwiches (approx 1 - 2 pm)

Walk to **Bourton-on-the-Hill** and ring 3 - 3.45pm

Return to cars by about 5 pm

As always this day is intended for anyone to enjoy: non-ringers who enjoy a walk and looking around our lovely churches and villages; ringers who prefer to drive between towers rather than walk; and of course those who enjoy both walking and ringing. The total distance walked is not great, around 6 miles and there are no hard hills. The organiser is Michael Haynes, who will lead it. If anyone has any queries please get in touch with hynmicha6@aol.com.

AROUND THE TOWERS

QUARTER PEALS AND OTHER RINGING



L-R: Tom Sandham, Clint Evans, Robert Chadburn, Matthew Kemble, Chris Povey, Robert Hall, William Hall, Sandra Parker

Badsey, Worcs, 6th April, 1260 Grandsire Triples: William Hall 1, Robert Hall 2, Sandra Parker 3, Tom Sandham 4, Clint Evans 5, Chris Povey (C) 6, Robert Chadburn 7, Matthew Kemble 8. Rung to celebrate Robert Hall's 75th birthday (9th April), and for completing 60 years of ringing.

Offenham, Worcs, 23rd April, 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Chris Povey 1, Matthew Kemble 2, Roland Merrick 3, Tom Sandham 4, Claire Penny (C) 5, Sandra Parker 6. Rung to celebrate St George's Day. 1st Grandsire as C.

Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos, 3rd June, 1280 Diamond D Major: Clive Sparling 1, Richard Lewis-Skeath 2, Chris Mew (C) 3, Karen French 4, Sophia Lewis-Skeath 5, Robert Reeves 6, Mark Sayers 7, John Gwynne 8. Rung to mark the 60th anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

Offenham, Worcs, 9th June, 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Christina Ireland 1, Tom Sandham 2, Robert Hall 3, Martin Penny 4, Chris Povey (C) 5, Claire Penny 6. For Offenham Wake. 1st Q: 1 **Congratulations Christina!!**

Ilmington, Warks, 10th June, 1280 Double Norwich Court Bob Major: Jonathan Tallis 1, Richard Lewis-Skeath 2, Karen French 3, Peter Quinn 4, Chris Mew (C) 5, Michael Dane 6, John Nicholls 7, John Gwynne 8. 92nd birthday compliment to HRH Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh.

WHICHFORD, Warks Saturday 22nd June 1260 Grandsire Triples

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 Jane Gilbert | 5 Sally Austin |
| 2 Ted Copson | 6 Richard Lewis-Skeath |
| 3 Mick Austin | 7 John Nicholls (C) |
| 4 Nick Allsopp | 8 Peter Kenealy |

Rung to celebrate the 95th birthday on the 19th June of Rob Harvey, our senior member, who has been ringing for 84 years.

Temple Guiting, Glos, 28th June, 1260 Doubles (Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob): Chris Povey 1, Claire Penny 2, Tom Sandham 3, Matthew Penny 4, Martin Penny (C) 5, Andrew Gunn 6. A birthday compliment to Tom.

(Please let me have details of quarters. I cannot guarantee to see them on Campanophile, Bellboard, or wherever. I do some, but probably not all. Ed)

PEOPLE AND PLACES:-

Church Lench bells are out of action at present due to a dislodged lintel in the tower. The Church Surveyor has sought specialist advice. The work to replace the lintel is imminent, but it will take 6-8 weeks (from the end of June) before the bells can be rung again.

Blockley bells are also out of action at the moment. Anne Bourne tells me a crack has appeared in the tower wall near where part of the bellframe is attached. Professional advice has been sought and a temporary fix is proposed. This will allow the bells to be used for essential ringing until a full rehang of the bells, long flagged up as necessary, can be undertaken. No extra ringing will be allowed in the temporary-fix period, so the bells will not be available to visiting bands. The rehang work could cost £90-£100k. Additionally, major work is required to the tower roof, which is leaking badly.

Dumbleton's work, undertaken by Taylors, has been completed, although a crack was found in one of the cast-iron gate-ends of the historic 1892 Taylor bellframe (see last Newsletter for its significance). The crack appears to have existed for some time, and seems to be a stress crack. Taylors have quoted for undertaking a specialist and guaranteed weld. The PCC are minded to undertake a proper repair, thus keeping the frame original. It is hoped this bellframe can be listed in its own right in due course

Evesham's Bell Tower requires stonework repairs, for which an appeal for £500,000 has been launched recently. Ringing is unaffected, although it may be suspended for some time while the Tower is fully scaffolded in, probably, 2015.

A rehang at **Stanway** may be moving closer, as a site meeting involving

interested parties was held recently. This work will include underpinning the present 5-bell frame, retuning the bells and rehanging them on new fittings. The plans may include an augmentation if resources allow. The proposals at Stanway were outlined in the July 2012 Newsletter.

Temple Guiting's bells are receiving far more use since their augmentation to 6 in 2011. Donations towards the bells have consequently increased. The PCC here is accounting 'bell money' separately and this means maintenance work is starting to be funded. While the sums involved are still small, this is a major improvement on the nil maintenance expenditure previously. A good case for 'tower money' having a separate accounting stream!

Offenham now has a simulator system. This allows the fully-muffled bells to be rung without making any external noise (electronic switches on the wheels activate a speaker in the Ringing Room to give the relevant bell sounds), so learning can go ahead without annoying the neighbours. Sunday ringing is always 'for real', though. There is a strong possibility the evening ringing after the AGM will be with the simulator making the sounds! If you've never tried this system before (the ringing action is unaffected), come then!

Pebworth's tenor may still be out of action. Any updates available?

Whichford's bells are having minor work. Peter Kenealy reports the pulleys on the back six are being refurbished, and some new ropes are on order.

DIARY OF GUILD SATURDAY MEETINGS AND EVENTS

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jul 6 th | NO PRACTICE. <u>GUILD RINGING TOUR, 5th – 7th JULY</u> | | |
| Jul 13 th | TODENHAM, Glos | 6, 12-2-10 in F (GF) | |
| Jul 20 th | BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER, Glos | 8, 12-1-22 in F# | |
| Jul 27 th | BUTLERS MARSTON, Warks | 6, 14-0-20 in G (GF) | |
| Aug 3 rd | WILLERSEY, Glos | 6, 12cwt in G | |
| Aug 10 th | BADSEY, Worcs | 8, 15-0-4 in F | - <u>NOTE: 7.00-8.30pm</u> |
| Aug 17 th | BRAILES, Warks | 6, 29-0-16 in C | |
| Aug 24 th | SALFORD PRIORS, Worcs | 8, 15-0-14 in F# (GF) | |
| Aug 31 st | BLADINGTON, Glos | 6, 8-0-13 in G | - <u>NOTE: 7.30-8.45pm</u> |
| Sept 7 th | WELLESBOURNE, Warks | 8, 11-1-17 in F# (GF) | |
| Sept 14 th | <u>MINIMUS COMPETITION AT WYCK RISSINGTON, Glos.</u> | NOTICE p.12 FOR DETAILS. | |
| Sept 21 st | CHERINGTON, Warks | 6, 5-3-22 in B (GF) | |
| Sept 28 th | ILMINGTON, Warks | 8, 12-3-26 in E (GF) | |
| | <u>(ALSO GUILD WALK AROUND MORETON DURING THE DAY: SEE DETAILS p.16)</u> | | |
| Oct 5 th | EVESHAM, Worcs | 10, 14-2-26 in F# | (10-bell practice) |
| Oct 12 th | GUILD AGM AND STRIKING COMPS AT OFFENHAM, Worcs. | NOTICE p.3 FOR DETAILS | |
| Oct 19 th | STOW-ON-THE-WOLD, Glos | 8, 27-2-24 in D | |
| Oct 26 th | HINTON-ON-THE-GREEN, Worcs | 8, 10-0-24 in G | |

For any alterations to this programme, check the FSG web-site (<http://www.fourshires.org.uk>), or Campanophile's diary (<http://www.campanophile.co.uk>). Meetings are from 7.30pm until 9.00pm unless otherwise stated. All are welcome. You do not have to be a FSG member and we are especially pleased if members of the local band wish to come along and ring.

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The Guild carries Public Liability insurance through the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group for all its activities. Non-members attending these activities are also covered by this insurance, providing they abide fully by the Guild's Health & Safety and Child Protection policies. (Both policies now appear on the FSG web-site, so their contents are available to all, whether members or non-members.)

TAG-END:

ELECTIONS REQUIRED AT THE 2013 AGM

Every year the Guild Rules require that members are elected to the posts of Guild Master, Hon Treasurer, Hon Secretary and Ringing Master (the Guild Officer posts). In addition, six members are elected to serve on the Committee.

Under the newly agreed Rules, every three years the Guild needs to elect members to the posts of President, Vice President (2nr at present) and Central Council Representatives (2nr required). This year these posts additionally come up for election.

Regarding the Central Council reps, Keith Murphy has indicated that he will not stand again. Chris Povey, the other rep, is likely to stand again, so one person will be required in this respect.

It helps greatly if the attached proposal slip is used to put candidates forward. It means the candidate doesn't have to be there, as his/her permission is already signified.

Firstly, please consider standing for these posts. Secondly, please propose candidates (and please use the slip!)

Events for 2013: book the dates:-

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Minimus Striking Comp. | Saturday 14th September at Wyck Rissington. See Notice p.16 |
| Guild Walking Tour | Saturday 28th September. See notice on p.16 for details |
| AGM & Striking Comps | Saturday 12th October at Offenham, Worcs. See Notices p.3 & above. |
| Inter-Shires Trophy Comp | Saturday 16th November; tower tbc (details in Oct Newsletter) |