



# MONMOUTH BRANCH NEWS

Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers

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## Dates for the Diary

- 21<sup>st</sup> Jun, 7:00pm (Bedwellty)**  
Branch Practice
- 27<sup>th</sup> Jun, 10:30am (Cowbridge)**  
Association Daytime Practice
- 10<sup>th</sup> Jul, 7:30pm (Usk)**  
Branch 8-bell Practice
- 19<sup>th</sup> Jul, (TBC)**  
Branch Training Event
- 25<sup>th</sup> Jul, 10:30am (Caerleon)**  
Association Daytime Practice
- 14<sup>th</sup> Aug, 7:30pm (Usk)**  
Branch 8-bell Practice
- 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, 7:00pm (Caldicot)**  
Branch Practice
- 29<sup>th</sup> Aug, 10:30am (Whitchurch)**  
Association Daytime Practice

## FROM THE BRANCH MASTER

Starting off with the branch practice at Usk in March - I'm not really sure how many were there as I was sat downstairs knitting, following hip surgery, with Matthew running it upstairs. I know there were a lot of ringers there though and nearly all came to the pub. There must have been close to 15-16 in the pub. There were lots of rounds and the method ringing went from Plain Hunt right up to Cambridge Surprise Major with ringing on 6 and 8 as required / requested. I could hear the practice was fast moving, so lots was fitted in Thanks to Matthew for running this very busy practice.

In April, we decided not to have a Branch practice due to Holy Week / Easter and the Association AGM both happening, but it was nice to see a good number from the Monmouth Branch at the AGM in Caerphilly.

As you will know, I am always looking for people who want to progress or consolidate their ringing and a Surprise Major practice had been requested. This was arranged for the end of April at Bassaleg. We had 12 there which was just about right and we rang Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and a touch of London (all requested methods) Some 4 spliced (also requested) and the Core 7. This will hopefully become a regular practice every 2/3 months with the next one planned for end June also at Bassaleg.

I also had a Surprise Minor practice set up for 21<sup>st</sup> May.

I'm also organising quarter peals as requested as firsts or consolidations, but requests have dried up somewhat. If there's anything you want to ring, please let me know. In the meantime, quarters for the really keen are being set up

On 8<sup>th</sup> May, it was the 80th anniversary of VE Day and so many towers in the Branch took part in this. There was ringing at Abergavenny, Blaenavon, Caerleon, Llantarnam, Mathern, Michaelston Y Fedw, Monmouth, Newport, Redwick, Rumney, Shirenewton, St Mellons, Tredunnock, Usk, Bedwellty also chimed. And Ebbw Vale and Llanedeyrn both had ringing on the following Sunday for special services at their respective churches. It was an amazing effort - well done all.

Coming right up to date now and of course it was the Branch striking competition on 17<sup>th</sup> May. Weather was fab and Michaelstone Y Fedw did a fantastic job of hosting us, even providing a bar in the village hall. The judges were able to sit in the churchyard on a glorious day. They had 10 teams to listen to - 6 in the call change section and 4 in the method. We had some great ringing and it was a lovely sociable day with some new faces about, which is always good to see.

The **cake competition** was back by popular demand and judged by Karen and Pauline - Debbie from MYF won this with Liz from Rumney coming 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The **most enthusiastic** prize (a soft toy cat) was won by Llanwern who were entering a band for the very first time - well done to them!

The **call change** section was won by St Mellons with a confident bit of ringing, with Rumney V coming 2<sup>nd</sup>. This team had read the rules and decided to ring

rounds only. They were good rounds and incurred few faults

The **method** section was won by Rumney City with a brisk piece of well struck ringing. Newport (with a good rhythm and excellent leading) came 2<sup>nd</sup> and these two teams will go forward to the Inter Branch Pitman Trophy organised for the summer months - Good Luck to them both.

Next Branch event is Sat June 21<sup>st</sup> - 7pm at Bedwellty - a little way to travel for most, but a ground floor ring with a set of 8 rather nice bells and great views across the valley.

Thank you to everyone who supports events and practices in the Branch

**Anne Hayman**  
**Branch Ringing Master**

## HOW SHOULD WE ARRANGE THE ASSOCIATION FINANCES FOR THE FUTURE?

As an Association, we're currently sitting on a total £16,700 in reserves which aren't being spent. This is spread over 4 bank accounts, only one of which is paying interest, and banks are starting to charge for small balance community accounts.

Our annual spend of £2,775 is managed by 8 volunteers: 3 Treasurers and 5 Independent Examiners – volunteers who are hard to come by.

Although the membership fees in the two branches are more or less the same, the discounts you get for being a junior member or retired member are different depending on which branch you're in, but as a proportion of the expenditure of the Association, the branches spend very little.

Two thirds of our membership are over 60, and we're not investing in the future of ringing in South Wales

If we were to pool our resources, we could reduce costs and admin, and make better use of the volunteers we have.

We would have a bigger pool of funds which could be spent on projects that could really make a difference to the future of ringing locally, and we would have more flexibility in how we organise ourselves – we could run more activities which cross diocesan boundaries.

A group consisting of the Association Officers, Branch Chairs, and the three Treasurers have come up with a proposal for merging the Association Funds, but we need to make sure it works for you as members.

- A single online bank account with dual authorisation
- Reserves held in an interest bearing account
- An online membership system to make managing membership records easier.
- One Treasurer, one (or two) Membership Secretary/ies, and an Independent Examiner from each branch.
- Activities such as PR, Recruitment, Training and Bell Maintenance would be paid for from the central fund.
- Any group of members could apply for funding for a project that would benefit the Association.

We need to come up with a way of agreeing a budget, and make sure we provide a pool of money which is available for each branch to spend as it sees fit for those things that are important to them.

The proposals will be put to the Branches at their AGMs next year – nothing happens unless both Branches agree to it

Then the final proposal will go to the Association AGM for approval.

We recognise that there are going to be a few practical hurdles to overcome, and we want to hear from as many members as possible.

Look out for announcements on how we're going to consult with you at a local level, and please get involved in the conversation.

**Helen Phillips**  
**Association Chair**

# NEWS FROM THE TOWER

## Bedwellty

Our band of learners at Bedwellty has continued to make steady progress, with two learners, Sal and Helena, already ringing rounds and call changes, plus others now making progress towards ringing in rounds. With the help of supporting ringers, including Steve Avery who has joined some of our Monday night practices, we rang on 8 for the first time on 19<sup>th</sup> May, reminding us what a lovely ring of bells they are! Maintenance attention is now on the ropes, which have just been adjusted to sensible heights, a new rope fitted to the 3rd, and the tenor rope taken off for repairs. This should put us in great shape for future ringing as the band progresses over the summer.

Baby news has also been big this spring, with Beth Jones announcing a new grandson on 18<sup>th</sup> May, while Sal Starling is expecting a baby in the autumn. Congratulations and best wishes to all. Should provide even more special occasions to ring for in the future!

*Rob Bruce*

## Llanedeyrn

The training of 2 new ringers continues with one ringer almost ready to ring for Sunday services and the second trainee not far behind. We have a potential new ringer coming along for a demo and look around the tower end of May. Retention of the band remains good with 13 regular ringers.

VE Day Anniversary was a main event with an excellent service and ringing at St Edeyrns Church. The bell ringers put the poppy cascade in place and used the bell frame as an anchor point. And it was another bell ringer who decorated the church inside beautifully in flowers arranged in red, white and blue. After the outdoor service at the war memorial wreaths were laid and there was open ringing to celebrate the end of the war in Europe.

Some of the Llanedeyrn ringers continue to support our Blaenavon friends and ring once a month on their fabulous bells. Amanda and Martin also rang for their VE Day Anniversary service which was spectacular at St Peter's Church with bagpipes and drum band, a male voice choir and a lady's choir. It is always a pleasure to support and ring with our friends and in turn they ring at Llanedeyrn at least once a month.

This weekend marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary when the bells were refurbished at Llanedeyrn and a new treble added in 1994. A quarter peal will be rung on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May and following this it's the Bell Sunday service at our ancient church and I'm sure there will be plenty visiting the Unicorn Inn afterwards.

Overall things are looking exceptionally good at Llanedeyrn, and we remain committed to ringing and letting others ring at this lovely ancient tower.

*Martin Gilbert*

## Mathern

Ringling is currently suspended at Mathern while remedial work is done to the tower. This was delayed by a week so we could join the national ringing for VE day when we rang a quarter peal – details below. Several of the band then went on to the village hall for a fish and chips supper.

The tower is now completely surrounded by scaffolding and our architect, Amanda, has said that the bells should not be rung while this is up. Those visitors that have sat in the ringing chamber when the bells are ringing have often said 'did I feel movement?' The answer is yes – the tower does move but has done so for several centuries with no problems. The work includes re-pointing the tower with lime mortar, replacing some very weathered stones and repairing the bell chamber pierced stone windows. On the west and south sides, several chunks fell out some years ago. Welded stainless steel mesh was fitted inside and the stonework was wired back to the mesh to prevent any more pieces dropping to the ground. The contractors have done a 3D scan of the windows so they can be accurately reproduced. North and east sides both have cracks which will, hopefully, be pinned.

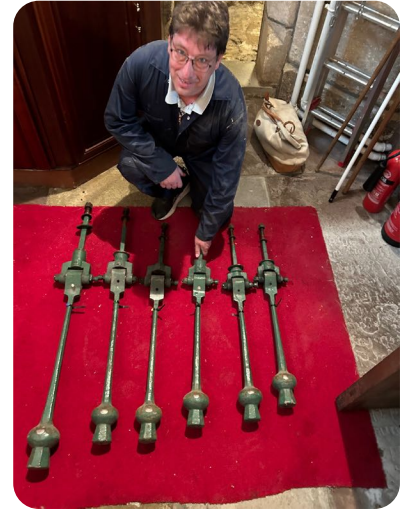


The solar powered clock will also have its numbers repainted. For reasons unknown, it seems to be missing a '5' and there is ongoing discussion as to whether this should be rectified. The gnomon will also be treated for rust.

This means that we have had to cancel our usual Thursday practices. However, we are going 'on tour'. On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays we will be found at Tidenham, who themselves have been 'on tour' recently. On the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday we will be at Caldicot which may give some of our ringers an opportunity to ring on eight bells instead of six. We are grateful to these two towers for allowing us to ring there. We don't normally have a practice on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday as there is a Monmouth Branch practice at Usk which some of the ringers go to who normally attend our practice.

So what about 5<sup>th</sup> Thursdays? There happen to be two of these while the work is going on – one at the start (May) and one at the end (July) so at the suggestion of one of our regular attendees – thanks Simon Lockhart – we will have a working parties to clear out the ringing chamber in May and hope to have it re-decorated ready to return everything in July. We hope to be back to normal by mid August.

We are also taking the opportunity to get the clappers refurbished. Back in 1970, when the bells were overhauled by Taylors, the clapper balls were welded where they struck the bell. Matthew Higby came to check them recently and recommended that the shafts should be twisted 90° to present a new face to the bell. They will then be left in the forge overnight to anneal. He said that while the weld was supposed to be 'soft', it was still too hard and was damaging the bells. He also noted that at least 2 clappers were missing their bushes completely! Oops. The clappers have now been removed and are awaiting transport to Matthew's workshop. Very many thanks to Simon Lockhart for his help. It was a lot easier than expected and only took the two of us just an hour to get them out and down to the ground floor.



**Andrew Mead**

## Michaelston-y-Fedw

Michaelston ringing has continued in our normal rhythm of Thursday night practices but we have also introduced a monthly service ring too. During Holy Week there was a concerted effort to clean the ringing chamber and its now tidier than its been for many years. In addition, there was a small group working upstairs making sure all the various nuts and bolts were tight.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April, we had a special practice led by Pip Penney which was much appreciated by everyone. Great to have a different perspective. We also rang for the VE Day celebrations, which started a village-wide social event in the neighbouring village hall.

The big event over the past few months has been the striking competition. We were pleased to enter a band, despite a number of our ringers being away or otherwise incapacitated. Thank you to Debbie Russell for all her work in organising the practical aspects of the day, including the barrel of beer!

**Matthew Turner**

## Rumney

Its been another busy few months for the Rumney ringers. In our own tower, we're pleased to report that the ringing room redecoration project has been completed, complete with new carpet. As well as the usual run of Sunday ringing and practices, we also rang to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day.

We were very pleased with the performance of our various bands in the striking competition. We had been practicing hard for about 6 weeks leading up to the competition. We're particularly pleased with our two call change bands that included our younger ringers, participating in their first striking competition. Overall, 14 Rumney ringers participated in the event.

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> May, a special "Bell Sunday" service was held at Llanedeyrn to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rededication of the bells at St Edeyrn's after they were rehung and augmented to six. This was organised by our Ministry Area team to give thanks for both the bells at St Edeyrn's and also the ringers across the three churches in our Ministry Area with bells – Llanedeyrn, Rumney and St Mellons. It was great to see ringers from all three churches ringing before the service, as well as welcoming ringers from further afield.

**Matthew Turner**

## St Woolos

Spring has brought plenty of ringing progress at Newport. Practices have been generally well attended, and covered everything from tied bell handling and rounds for learners, through to 7 core spliced surprise major, which we are now able to ring on a regular basis on Tuesday nights. Quarters averaged one per week, including those rung for special services, and achieved an impressive number of firsts for ringers from St Woolos and the local Monmouth Branch. This was added to by a number of quarters rung on Wednesdays at Bassaleg, using mainly St Woolos ringers.

- Peter Bray (1<sup>st</sup> Cambridge Surprise Minor, and 1<sup>st</sup> Plain Bob Major)
- Simon Lockhart (1<sup>st</sup> Cambridge Surprise Minor)
- Karen Jones (1<sup>st</sup> Plain Bob Minor)
- John Deer (1<sup>st</sup> on 8 covering)
- Rob Bruce (1<sup>st</sup> Surprise Maximus)
- Rowan Rushton (1<sup>st</sup> spliced surprise major)

It was particularly nice to see an increase in 10 and 12 bell ringing, both on Sunday mornings when we managed rounds on 12 quite a few times, and in quarter peals, helped by practice quarters of Cambridge Surprise Royal, for the Tewkesbury Shield. This 10 bell competition band was organised by Matthew Turner, and included 7 St Woolos ringers, so it was good to see the team managed a creditable 5th position out of 9 bands, on a glorious Saturday at Tewkesbury Abbey. We did less well in the branch 6 bell striking competition, held at Michaelstone, as we were pushed into 2nd position by a strong piece of ringing from Rumney "United". Hopefully this will focus our efforts for the Association Pitman contest, still to come this summer!

St Woolo's bells continue to be popular with visiting ringers too. In February the Friends of Dorothy Society came to Newport to ring on the "Paul 10" as well as visiting Bassaleg (where Paul Williams learned to ring) and ringing a touch in hand at his grave in St Woolo's Cemetery. We also hosted a tour from Dorset who arrived unexpectedly one Sunday morning, giving us 24 ringers, which enabled us to ring Little Bob Maximus for Sunday service!

Looking forward, preparations are now in full swing for Newport to host the South West 12 bell competition on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, which will hopefully be a great day to put both St Woolos, and South Wales ringing on the map!

### *Rob Bruce*

## Trellech

We're making steady progress with our ringing. Now that we have all 9 of our ringers reasonably proficient with ringing Plain Hunt we are able to start learning methods with an emphasis on counting places and by reference to the circle of work. First on the list is Cloisters followed swiftly by Grandsire. The 5 weddings we will ring for this summer will provide a useful focus for further improvement.

We have hosted a couple of visits: in March, ringers from Lydney to practise their bell raising and lowering technique and a visit from the Fire Service Guild of Bellringers in April organised by Andrew Phillips.

A celebration to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE day was held in St Nicholas Church which included a session of bellringing amongst a full programme of entertainment and refreshments.

In keeping with our support to the church, a group of our bellringers set about repairing the church boundary wall which was damaged by passing heavy traffic. Although none of us are professional builders, we did a reasonable job and the work (free of charge) was much appreciated.

Sadly, we report the death of Ed Rogers, past Tower Captain at Trellech who, despite great fortitude, lost his battle to Lymphoma on 27<sup>th</sup> April. Ed was instrumental in reinstalling the 6 bells in Trellech Tower at the Millennium and took the role of Tower Captain for some years later. An encouraging leader he created an enthusiastic and enjoyable atmosphere in the ringing tower - we will miss him.

### *Nigel Morris*



# TEWKESBURY SHIELD

A band from the Monmouth Branch entered the Tewkesbury Shield competition on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May. This is a 10-bell striking competition and, as the name suggests, is held at Tewkesbury Abbey. The competition is open to bands from across the UK and places are allocated by a ballot. We were pleased to be awarded a place this year and the test piece was a plain course of Cambridge Surprise Royal.

To practice for the competition, four quarter peals of Cambridge Royal were rung to make sure we were as familiar with the method as possible. For the last quarter peal we were able to make use of the newly-installed "Hawkear" system at St Woolos. This is essentially a computer-based striking judge which gives a range of information and insights on the ringing. It's a very useful tool.

On the day itself, we met at Tewkesbury Abbey in good time for the draw. Unfortunately, we were drawn to ring last but we filled the time exploring the town and having a leisurely lunch. It was soon time to climb the 160 steps to the ringing chamber, which is no small feat in itself. Whilst waiting for our ringing slot to start we were able to watch the tower's resident peregrine falcons on the CCTV system. After a short wait, it was time for the results. The judge, Simon Edwards from York, made the following remarks about our ringing:

"This piece was mostly very nice, with a good, consistent pace. The two sets of rollups around the halfway lead were particularly well-struck. Overall, a good touch, with some very good patches in it – if I was to discount the first and last leads, this band would have been placed much higher."

The final results were as follows:

1	St Paul's, Birmingham	51 faults
2	St Mary, Redcliffe	54 faults
3	Stonyhurst Ringing Society	74 faults
4	Cheltenham	77 faults
5	Llandaff & Monmouth	84 faults
6	Leicester Diocesan Guild	91 faults
7	Hereford Diocesan Guild	99 faults
8	Oxford Diocesan Guild	126 faults
9	Breadsall	DNF



The Monmouth Branch band was represented by the following ringers:

1. Helen Phillips
2. Debbie Turner
3. Philip Hopkins
4. Peter Elliott
5. Robert Bruce
6. Peter Bennett
7. Barry Hayman
8. Andrew Phillips
9. Matthew Turner
10. Mark Bennett

Overall, a lovely day out and thanks to everyone, both those who rang on the day and those who rang in the practice quarters, for their support.

**Matthew Turner**

## A WORTHY 'FIRST'

The nerves were running high and the tension was palpable.

We'd had a good practice on the Tuesday before but could we replicate what we'd achieved then? We were the same band, ringing the same bells and doing the same changes – but would it be alright on Saturday?

We encouraged those who were the most nervous. "You'll be fine. Now try to relax." That's easier said than done!

"Look to, treble's going, she's gone." The pull off was a little shaky but by the second whole pull we were in the rhythm. Yes, these rounds are good, we are going to be alright.

And we were. We rang rounds and call changes until the bride arrived – early! We spent the time of the wedding ceremony sitting in the churchyard enjoying the sunshine and telling the 'learners' that they'd done well. The ringing after the wedding was also good.

Yes, I am 'just' talking about the first time Melanie and Dai Jones had rung for a wedding at Llanfrechfa where John Hopkins taught them to ring. And, yes, it was nerve wracking for them - especially as we had the tower door open and people could stop and watch us ringing. But they did very well and should be proud of themselves managing to ring these 'not easy' bells as well as they do and regularly on Sundays for service. Keep up the good work!

*Jenny Mole*

## CHAIRS CHALLENGE – WINNER!



During the year members of the Association were challenged to arrange three things and an overall winner would be announced at the Association AGM in April.

The contenders were, Joy Kipling, Pauline Morris, Peter Bray and St Mellon's tower. Other than Joy who received hers at the AGM certificates were awarded at the Branch AGM's earlier in the year, for taking part in the challenge.

The overall winner was Pauline Morris, who arranged a number of events during 2024, from an All Ladies quarter peal, an event at Caerphilly for Bell Sunday, a session called Festive bells where tower and handbells were put to good use attempting to ring carols, and finally arranging to call my first Quarter peal.

The challenge was good for me as it made me get up and do things that I'd been thinking about but never got around to.

The highlight of the year for me was the visit to St Giles, Church in the lost village of Imber, this was somewhere I'd wanted to go since I'd seen a documentary about it on television. The bells are only available to ring at certain times

of the year and even then can access can be denied at short notice, due to the fact the access to the church means driving through Salisbury Plain, which is controlled by the military.

The prize, The Core seven and beyond, book by Simon Linford.

This has been sent to both branch newsletters as the challenge covered the whole Association and people from both branches helped me achieve my goals.

*Pauline Morris*

## BELL MAINTENANCE GROUP UPDATE

On March 8<sup>th</sup> the BMG ran a bell maintenance course at St. Hilary for 6 members of the Association and at the same time a rope splicing course for another 3 members was held in the churchyard there.

In April we visited Caldicot, both to carry out an inspection and to sort out oddstruckness. The bird proofing on the south louvre was re-attached and the door leading on to the roof was repaired and bolted shut. We found two poorly aligned pulley boxes which the local ringer who was with us said he could deal with. The afternoon was spent correcting oddstruckness on the back four bells. Bells 5 and 8 were both slow at backstroke, bell 7 was quick at backstroke and bell 6 needed no adjustment. All four bells are now evenly struck.

May found us at Llantrisant for a week helping to remove the bells, fittings and frame for transport back to Nicholson Engineering in Bridport. Llantwit Major's 6 clappers were also carried in Nicholson's van. Please see the Llandaff Branch Newsletter for further details.

If any member of the L. and M. has a bell maintenance query or would like their peal of bells inspected (free of charge) then please do get in touch with me and the BMG will do its best to help.

**Joy Kipling**  
**bmg@llanmon.org.uk**

## SPONTANEOUS APPLAUSE!

At the Caerleon practice on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June we had two ringers doing Plain Hunt on 5 (one of whom also needed practice in covering on the tenor), one who could hunt the treble to methods, four of us who could ring touches of Grandsire Doubles and the Tower Captain, Phil Sergeant, who has spent many months trying to get plain courses of Grandsire Doubles into his head.

Recently, Phil, guided by Peter Bray, has been trying to ring touches of 120 changes with him as observation bell. A couple of less than perfect attempts at the practice didn't help Phil's morale. Just before we ended the practice I suggested we had one more try. The person who had been ringing the treble had a bad back and declined to ring again so we were left with the rest of us all ringing and no one to stand by Phil.

Peter called Phil observation and if the rest of us were dodging with him at the back we were grinning at him. We all concentrated hard. Bob, single, bob... all still going OK.

Bob, single, bob – that's all..... Stand.

Everyone had smiles on their faces, Peter rushed over to give Phil a high five and we all broke into spontaneous applause. Well done, Phil – another milestone reached. And a wonderful way to end a practice.

**Jenny Mole**

## LLANTARNAM AND FRIENDS SPRING OUTING.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May saw a group of 16 ringers and 2 spouses from across the Association arrive at English Bicknor on what was a dry but cold morning for a day of ringing in the Forest of Dean.



English Bicknor was our meeting point, and the car park is adjacent to the school which you have to walk through to get to the church. Once you are in the church, you access the ringing chamber by a short metal staircase. Some of the less experienced ringers were a bit apprehensive about these as they are a 10cwt anticlockwise ring. But everyone managed very well.

Newland was our next stop, which is known as the Cathedral of the Forest. These were a 16cwt 6 despite not being rung often they went well. Parking was by the 16 Almshouses which were built in 1615, and bear an interesting inscription 'these Almshouses for eight men and eight women Parishioners of Newland and the habitation adjoining for a

lecturer, were founded A.D. 1615 by Mr William Jones citizen and Haberdasher of London, and he appointed the worshipful Company of Haberdasher governors. Mr Jones was born in Newland and apprenticed in Monmouth, hence the bequest of the Almshouses in Newland and Haberdashers school in Monmouth when he died.

Kaplan's Café in Coleford, was our lunch venue, which had been pre booked because of the size of the party and the large menu choice, you could have been there all day just deciding what you wanted to eat. We were well looked after with excellent food and service.

Hewesfield was the only ground floor ring of the day, rung from the chancel with the treble being in the choir stalls, (a readymade box!) The church is set in a dip at the bottom of a hill, which makes it look very squat. The bells were okay but the 4, 5 & 6 were all in a line so quite a difficult circle. The tenor is 15<sup>th</sup> century, which is believed to be the oldest bell in the forest.

St Briavels just a few minutes away were the only eight we visited, this again had a metal spiral staircase to reach the ringing chamber, a lot higher than the previous one. These were a nice ring and the day ended with a lovely touch of Stedman triples.



The group at St Briavels before heading off to the pub.

*Pauline Morris*

## 200 CLUB DRAW

March - at Bassaleg

Prize	Number	Winner
£30	103	Lynn Hair (Rumney)
£15	36	David Llewellyn (Llandaff)
£10	85	Blaenavon Tower
£10	176	Meriel Gainsbury (Llandaff)
£10	165	Harriet Moncrieff (Penmark)

April - Association AGM at Caerphilly

Prize	Number	Winner
£60	63	Alan Bartley (Caerphilly)
£30	167	Jasmine Willcott (Rumney)
£20	55	Yvonne John (Cadoxton)
£20	71	Barbara Gordon (Caerleon)
£20	196	Lisa Drury (Merthyr Tydfil)

The Association has a "200 Club" which is run both as a bit of fun for the membership and to raise funds for the Bell Restoration Fund.

Since its inception in 1994, the 200 Club has been a most valuable source of regular income. By the end of 2024, the 200 Club had raised a total of £29,000 for the BRF - an impressive and valuable contribution.

The 200 Club operates on very simple principles; there will be one draw per month and entry into the draw is £1. Half of the subscriptions are given to the BRF and the other half (less any small admin expenses) is returned in prizes.

If you have any questions about the 200 Club or would like to join then please contact the 200 Club Coordinator - [200club@llanmon.org.uk](mailto:200club@llanmon.org.uk)

## BRANCH TRAINING UPDATE

Following on from the annual February ringing course, where some courses were not run due to an imbalance of numbers, the next Monmouth Branch training day on 19<sup>th</sup> July will look to cover the courses that were left out of the February course.

Depending on responses and numbers, I will be looking to run either a full day course, or a series of half day courses, for Beginning Plain Bob Doubles and Touches of Bob Doubles.

Those students that were unable to get a place on the same courses in February, will have first priority for places on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Other interested PB5 students are also welcome to enquire about space availability on the courses and will be considered on a first come first served basis.

The aim is to have a max of 4 students per course, which allows for students to get plenty of rope time to progress.

Please contact me via email if :-

1. You want to be a student on **Beginning Plain Bob Doubles** (am or pm or both)
2. You want to be a student on **Touches of Plain Bob Doubles** (am or pm or both)
3. You are able to be a **helper** on either course (am or pm or both)

Alternatively, complete the online form **for students and helpers** at the following link.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdmMcMD\\_15PLZDLnGe7-8bHUIyXHZOq5h555pMqx6rYLaog/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdmMcMD_15PLZDLnGe7-8bHUIyXHZOq5h555pMqx6rYLaog/viewform)

Towers for the training sessions will depend on participants, and will try and be as central as possible to students and helpers on each course.

The remaining Monmouth Branch scheduled training session for 2025 is as follows

- Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025 (propose to run a Learning to Ringing Up / Down in peal course)

**Andrew Phillips**

**MonmouthTraining@llanmon.org.uk**

## AN 'IN-HOUSE' INTENSIVE GRANDSIRE COURSE

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March the bells of St Cadoc's Church, Caerleon, were ringing intermittently for a couple of hours in the afternoon. This was because we were having an 'in house' training session to learn a specific 'method' – in this instance: Grandsire Doubles.

Often at our practice on a Wednesday evening we are short of experienced ringers to help the 'improvers' learn something a bit more advanced so we had that dedicated practice to help the Tower Captain, Phil Sergeant, together with Karen Jones and Sandra Hitchen. I asked some other ringers to come to help at the session so that we had enough experienced ringers (5 needed when we ring 6 bells) to allow just one learner in at a time.

The afternoon was productive although we still need a lot of practice before we will be able to ring a touch of Grandsire with just the local band. However, plain courses of Grandsire Doubles with the regular Caerleon Wednesday practice night band (apart from me), were rung for V E Day and that really was a milestone.



So, my thanks go to Jane Craddock, John Hopkins and Sue Hiscox for giving up their Saturday afternoon to be 'fillers in' and encouragers. Some of our other regular Wednesday people, Lindsay Horth, Stephen Taylor and Peter Bray, did their bit by being willing to fill in as necessary.

**Jenny Mole**

## MONMOUTH BRANCH QUARTER PEAL WEEK

Our Branch will be holding a quarter peal week from 25<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025.

This is a great opportunity to organise some special quarter peals to help members of your band achieve their first quarter, a first in method or even a first as a conductor.

The aim is for as many members in the branch to ring quarter peals in as many church towers as possible. Those who can, could even organise handbell quarters if they wish to do so.

Bands with enough capable ringers will be encouraged to arrange their own quarter peals.

Please can you then submit the achievement to BellBoard under Monmouth Branch Quarter Peal Week.

If you would like to ring a quarter peal but don't have enough capable ringer in your tower, please let us know and we'll find a band/tower for you to achieve your goals.

Please can you also let us know if you are available to help other towers if they are short of ringers.

For more information, please see contacts below.

**Wendy Reilly - 07950352477 / [wendy.reilly1962@gmail.com](mailto:wendy.reilly1962@gmail.com)**

**Anne Hayman - 07884392955 / [annejones5040@gmail.com](mailto:annejones5040@gmail.com)**

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## MONMOUTH BRANCH SPRING OUTING

At one of the branch committee meetings around the start of the year, I (perhap foolishly) volunteered to organise an outing for the Monmouth branch. I'd never organised anything like this before, but I love ringing at different towers, and wanted to encourage more people to do so too. How hard could it be?

After a quick poll on the association Facebook group to see who would be interested, and where people would like to go, it was determined that the tour would be around the Gloucester area, and a date of 31<sup>st</sup> May was set. I started trying to contact towers to find out if they'd be available. From talking to others who organise towers, my experience was very similar to theirs - it's a lot harder these days to get hold of tower correspondants. An unfortunate side effect of data protection rules is that individual contact details are no longer published in annual reports or on association websites. Contact is now via web forms, or generic tower email addresses which seem to rarely get responses. However, once I'd got in contact with one tower I was able to get individual contacts for other nearby towers which made things a lot easier!

Although I'd hoped to get Gloucester Cathedral, that turned out to be unavailable, and attempts to get other 12-bell towers in the area proved fruitless - so I settled on 4 towers over the day.

The day started on the top of Churchdown hill overlooking Gloucester and the surrounding areas, with the 6 bells of St Bartholomew's Church. From here we headed into the centre of Gloucester to ring on the 8 bells of St Mary de Crypt - a special request from one of the tour attendees as one of the very few towers in the area they hadn't previously visited! The centre of the ringing room in St Mary's has a large glass window in the floor looking dow into the church. For the benefit of those with a fear of heights, the conveniently provided a rug which could be placed over the window.

After a detour to a local pub for lunch, we then moved onto Barnwood for the 8 bells at St Lawrence Church. Rob Bruce learnt to ring here in the 70's, and he'd managed to get in touch with his teacher of the time who joined us for the session. Finally, the day ended at Upton St Leonards, for the heaviest 8 of the day (15-3-10) at the Church of St Leonard.

From the feedback I received from the attendees (16 ringers from across the Association), everyone enjoyed the day, which has encouraged me to look at organising an Autumn tour. Many thanks must go to those who helped me out by running the ringing at the towers on the day.

**Simon Lockhart**

# TOP TIPS FOR RINGING SPLICED

## Top tip #1 - Learn the methods

Knowing the line isn't the same as knowing the method. To ring a single method you've already learned course and after bells, passing the treble, structure, and grid. Now you need to learn with total certainty how each place bell begins and how it ends. Learn the calling positions too so you can be ready to receive each call (or no call) when it comes. Know that the bobs and singles take effect in the old method before you begin the new. Learn which is the pivot bell for each method. Careful study at home really does pay off in the tower.

## Top tip #2 - Mental rhythm

As you go through a touch of spliced learn to dial your concentration up and down. Learn to direct your thinking in the middle of the lead to the method you're ringing. Then dial it right up: either side of the lead end your brain should be on fire with the new possibilities.

## Top tip #3 - Bite size chunks

For each lead of each method you need to have an immediate action: "in", "out", "make 6ths". This is especially true for the exceptions, like 5th place bell Superlative, 6th place bell Pudsey, or any of London.

## Top tip #4 - Use your thinking time

While you're doing your immediate action, that gives you 2 or 3 blows to remember what comes next, check where your course bell has gone, and dredge up any supplementary info like: "when I get to the front is it lead and dodge or dodge and lead?" or "is it 4 dodges behind or 3 in this method?"

## Top tip #5 - Plan ahead

As you get half way through the lead, be thinking how it's going to end. You should've learned both the place bell order and the line. If you forget one, then the other will save you. Make sure you have line in mind to carry you through to the place bell you will next become.

## Top tip #6 - Prepare for the Lead End

As you approach the lead end consider whether you can be affected by a bob or single. Know which place bell you will become if there is one. Know the row where the call might be and tick it off if it goes by plain.

## Top tip #7 - Be alert (Your county needs Lerts)

When you come to the row where you know the change of method will be called, prick up your ears, fluff up your tail, and wait eagerly to hear and react. If there's no call, then call to yourself the method you've just been ringing. Execute your immediate action for the new method. Rinse and repeat.

## Top tip #8 - Asking's free

If no method is called, or mid lead you forget the method, say "what method?" and someone will tell you.

## Top tip #9 - Be robust

If the conductor calls much too early, no problem. Say "too soon" and then execute the change that's been called in the right place it should be.

If the call 's late, or corrected late, do a mental reverse on your immediate action, and try and jump to where you should now be. Check with your course bells and the treble to make sure you got it right.

Wait till the crisis passes and then give the conductor a smug little smirk to let him know you're not so easily put off.

Happy splicing!

*Peter Elliott*

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## SAVE THE DATE - ASSOCIATION QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October - Doors open 6:30pm for a 7pm start

Llantarnam Village Hall, Cwmbran, NP44 3BP

More details to follow..