

Buckingham Deanery RDL - Lesley Belcher

Six teams entered the branch 6-bell striking competition and summer social held at Whaddon this year, with Woughton tower going on to represent the branch in the ODG 6-bell striking competition. In the final Woughton were eventually placed 3rd – well done!

The 8-bell band continued to meet joining the weekly practice of the various 8-bell towers within the branch. These stopped in the Autumn mainly due to “organiser’s burnout.” They have now been replaced by a monthly open practice at Olney for people to practise both their 8 and 10-bell ringing. Again, the 8-bell band provided ringers to represent the branch at the ODG 8-bell striking competition; a touch of Plain Bob Triples securing 2nd place and well-deserved drinks in the pub afterwards.

The Branch again beat Towcester in the inter-branch striking competition held in July. And this year we did it without cheating – bands organised just beforehand and no practising!

There has been considerable activity this year concentrated on recruitment, training and retention.

A listening and striking workshop was held at Olney (so that we could use the simulator) for members of the Shenley and Loughton bands. A number of resources were purchased and are available for people to borrow on-line. The Branch Training Day in October concentrated on Doubles variations and was led by Simon Head and Terry Page. Once everyone got their head around variations and how to learn them much progress was made and a Quarter Peal of eleven doubles methods and variations was rung by course participants’ during Branch QP week.

A recruitment, retention and training group (Linda, Lesley, Sheila and Patricia) has researched and documented best practice which can be found on the Branch website. During the summer a census of all ringable towers with 5 or more bells was completed. The results of these two exercises were presented at the Autumn Meeting and encouraged various bands to recruit. Since the last AGM we estimate that the Branch now has about 40 new ringers who are learning to handle a bell or secure foundation skills. A lot of this recruitment has been outside of Central Milton Keynes complementing the Big Ring Pull which pulled in recruits mainly into the CMK area.

To underpin this activity, four Branch Members have this year attended the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) course on teaching change ringing whilst two others have been accredited for teaching bell handling.

Ringing, mainly of peals and quarter peals, has commemorated the centenary of the deaths of all Branch ringers who were killed during WW1. This will continue over the coming years.

Ringing in the Buckingham Deanery continues in a number of clusters: Padbury and Hillesden; Lillingstone Lovell and Leckhampstead; Maids Moreton, Buckingham and Stowe; and recently Stony Stratford, Calverton and Whaddon. In July, the Branch marked the death of Hugh Butler, long-time Tower Captain at Whaddon. Despite this loss, Whaddon practices continue helped by their Branch friends and reinforced by the monthly Bob Doubles, Plain Hunt and Call Changes practice which are now permanently at Whaddon. The practices are very well attended and good fun. Maids Moreton has also taken steps to secure its future with a very successful open day and intensive bell handling sessions for 13 new ringers. Stowe practice on a Monday night is starting again to help develop their skills.