



Editor's Foreword – Andy Clark

Hi everyone and welcome to this Q3 edition of the newsletter. A fortnight ago I worried I might be scratching round for content, but as ever, Barbara's request yielded plenty of articles, so we've ended up with a bumper edition!

Just the one date in the regular table below, which is for our Branch AGM at the end of November, kindly hosted by Bishop's Cleeve. I hope you can join us for this.

The eagle-eyed readers out there might have spotted the slight tweak to the branch website name in the footer of this newsletter. Please see Cara's item in the notices section at the rear for more info.

Without further ado, I'll hand you over to Mike for his welcome and round-up of the last quarter for what has proved to be a very busy time for the branch.

Date	Location	Time	Notes
Saturday 29 th November	Bishop's Cleeve	15:00 onwards	Branch ringing, short service, ringers' tea then AGM

Branch Chairman's Welcome – Mike Hartley

Greetings everyone,

Autumn is upon us, and I'm looking forward to seeing the colours, which people say are going to be particularly good this year. I hope you all had a good summer and managed to get away for a break at some point.

Cheltenham Branch Striking Competition

The main Cheltenham Branch event over the past three months was our striking competition for the Banner (the winning team competes for the G&B Association's Croome Trophy) and Cleeve Trophies (the best novice team). I'm very grateful to Stuart Tomlinson for organising this year's competition at Leckhampton which ran so smoothly. The Branch Ringing Master would usually perform this task, but the post remains vacant.

In 2024, five teams competed for the Banner Trophy, but none for the Cleeve. Thanks to Stuart's and branch towers' encouragement and support, no fewer than nine teams entered, of which five were eligible to compete for the Cleeve Trophy as well as the Banner. Participants and supporters enjoyed refreshments during the competition and an excellent bring-and-share supper in the evening, all efficiently coordinated by Gilly Whittingham and Barbara Pettit. It was fantastic to see so many less experienced ringers taking part. I hope they enjoyed the challenge, didn't find it too stressful and will take part again in 2026. Congratulations to St Mark's and Charlton Kings for winning the Banner and Cleeve Trophies (please see Andy's article later in the newsletter for the full results), and a big thank you to Greg Jones and Jeremy Alford of Tewkesbury Abbey for judging the competition and for their helpful comments.



Over the years I've met ringers who said they didn't like striking competitions. Personally, I think they are essential events in the ringing calendar and underline the importance of trying to achieve the best possible striking performances for Sunday services, weddings, funerals, quarters etc. The choice of the word 'Performance' by the Ringing World for entries on BellBoard, one definition of which is 'presenting a concert or other form of entertainment', is intentional.

Branch Tower Visits and Tower Captains

I've mentioned previously that Cheltenham Branch committee members have been visiting branch tower practices once a month on a rota. On my visits I've been struck by the dedication of our tower captains. These are really challenging roles requiring talent for building a team and managing the relationship with church authorities. I think we're very fortunate to have them.

I'm hopeful that some branch members will volunteer to join the committee's rota to increase the amount of support to branch towers' practice nights. The commitment would involve visiting a practice night once every other month. If you're able to help, please let me know.

Returning Ringers

Recruitment is hot topic at the moment, with the average age of ringers steadily increasing, so it's been great for me to see two lapsed, or partially-lapsed, ringers returning recently to more regular ringing with such enthusiasm. If you know of lapsed ringers, please think about encouraging them to come back. I'm sure they wouldn't regret it.

Branch AGM in November

Bishop's Cleeve have kindly agreed to host this year's Cheltenham Branch AGM on Saturday, 29th November, starting at 15:00. I do hope you'll be able to attend and take the opportunity to have your say on support, training, recruitment and other matters dear to your heart.

And Finally...

Congratulations to those of you who have achieved personal ringing milestones or celebrated significant anniversaries during the past three months. Tony Foster deserves special admiration for marking his 80th birthday by ringing his first quarter peal of 7-Spliced Surprise Major (Core 7 methods) at the first attempt.

And the best of luck to the several Cheltenham Branch members who form part of the Cheltenham District 12-bell team, which will be one of nine teams competing in the South West 12-bell striking competition at Newport Cathedral on 11th October.

Best wishes, Mike



Leckhampton (and Friends) July Outing to Dorset – *Chris Hickey and Stuart Tomlinson*

This year we visited Dorset (centred around Dorchester) for our annual ringing trip and were blessed with great weather and beautiful countryside. We started on Wednesday afternoon with two lovely six bell towers: St Peter's Shaftsbury, situated at the top of Gold Hill (remember the Hovis advert!), followed by Motcombe.

Thursday was based around Dorchester, ringing at Cattistock, Bradford Peverel, Charminster, Dorchester and Fordington. A variety of methods were rung, including Lessness at Fordington – a method we have been practicing at Leckhampton. The evening meal at The Brewers Arms, Burnside was excellent, and the staff were very helpful when one of our ringers arrived rather late (they kept his meal warm and even cooked him a fresh batch of chips). The delay was due to a Satnav gremlin sending him way off course, rather than human error!

On Friday we headed west towards Lyme Regis. Our first ring was at Lodders – a lovely ring of six in a beautiful countryside setting (the flower borders by the churchyard path were worthy of a country garden), made famous by the bellringing folk song: “And so to Lodders we will go, before the air is filled with snow, so swing my dear, and chime my dear, the air is ringing love tonight”. Chris was a bit disappointed by the lukewarm reception to her rendition of this song and would like to point out that amateur singers have their place at Eisteddfod celebrations too! Next, we rang at Bradpole – a local training centre and a fine ring of eight. This was followed by Lyme Regis, where we had open ringing followed by a decent quarter peal of Plain Bob Caters. The only problem was that we had a lock-in (see the write-up below) which delayed our ringing at the next towers – Whitchurch and Askerswell.

Saturday was our final day and arguably included some of the best bells and ringing. We were joined by Anna Bayley and Philip Pratt (boosting our ringing capability) plus their children, William and Holly. It’s lovely to see them each year and watch the children growing up. We started on the lovely 10 at Wareham where we finished with spliced Little and Plain Bob with an unusual Yorkshire ending. Next was the six at Corfe Castle – the mist / drizzle adding to the atmosphere of the impressive castle ruins.

One of our special methods for the trip was Duffield Major and Royal – the plain course is quite short, but being a principle and with 3rds from the back and 6th from the front it took a few goes before everyone was relatively comfortable with it. A bit different but one we will certainly try again.

In the afternoon we had general ringing followed by a quarter of Grandsire Caters on the impressive 26cwt 10 at Kingston. Well done Alison for managing the tenor and to Harry for conducting. Our final tower was the pleasant eight at Swanage, followed by a very good evening meal at The New Inn, West Knighton.

A few of us stayed overnight and joined local bands for service ringing – Reg / Isabel rang at Sturminster Marshall and Barbara / Jon / Stuart rang at Upwey where we received a very warm welcome and were encouraged by the good number of local ringers.

Thanks to Stuart for organising the towers, and to Gilly and Keith for arranging the meals, money and suggestions for accommodation and parking. A great holiday and we look forward to next year’s trip.



The lock-in at Lyme Regis!

We had just finished our quarter peal and were ready to head off to the next tower. Just one problem – the first ones down the stairs found the bottom door locked. For the next half an hour or so (until we were finally released), those at the bottom of the stairs tried various ways (including the usual credit card!) to see if the door would open whilst those of us still in the ringing room were phoning local ringers as well as some mutterings about which emergency services to contact and an assessment of what food / drink supplies we had! I am ashamed to say that this included sampling some rather fine fudge which was in the tower – maybe for just such an eventuality?

Keith Reading's 'view from the outside'!

We arrived back at the church as the quarter peal was ending, following some fine ice cream and a paddle in the sea. Soon, we heard banging from behind the door and were told that the door was locked. We passed a tool under the door, but the lock still refused to move. We tried phoning various local ringing contacts, but without success. Gilly contacted the next tower captain who said he would expect us later and would try to contact someone from the Lyme Regis tower.

Meanwhile, a lady arrived to lock up the church and she divulged where some keys were kept, but alas these didn't fit the lock. She then asked if we had Betty Wood's phone number, which we didn't. This was rapidly turning into an escape room experience!

After searching the church for clues, I spotted an events board which had Betty's number on it. I called the number, she answered, and after explaining the predicament, she said she would be with us in five minutes. When she arrived, we tried all the keys she had, but without success. She then said there was a bag of keys in the safe – accessing this was tricky due to poor lighting, but once opened we found a bag containing around 50 keys! We inspected these systematically and soon spotted a bunch labelled 'Tower inside and out'. I assumed that the outside tower door lock was faulty so tried the three mortise keys, unlocking the door on the second attempt, much to the relief of the captives!

I checked the lock and found it to be a dead lock latch which had been turned twice, preventing it being opened without a key.

With thanks to Mark Symonds, who was meeting us at the next tower (Whitchurch) for being so flexible on timings.

After all the excitement, dinner at the Coach House Inn in Winterbourne Abbas was very good, and we recommend this pub if you are in the area.



Above - Group Photo at Wareham:

Pat, Reg, Harry, John, Sally, Jon, Chris, Stuart, Graham, Alison, Keith, Gilly, Barbara, Isabel, William, Anna, Steve, Tony, Peter, Philip & Holly.

Below - Ringing at Dorchester:





First Quarter Peal on Eight – *Shaun Bailey*

When I was first asked to ring a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples on an inside bell, I felt a mixture of pride, excitement, and nervousness. I was pleased to be trusted with the opportunity, but I couldn't help wondering whether I was ready for the challenge.

Earlier that day, I decided to visit the church as I had never been there before. Outside I met a very friendly lady, taking a break from visiting local residents with her home-made scones. When I explained the purpose of my visit, she told me how much the village enjoys listening to the bells and said she could even tell them what time to open their windows! At first this felt like extra pressure, but as I started revising the method structure — the order of work, bobs, singles, and so on — that thought quickly faded away.

When the ringing began, my mind was full of prompts and advice I'd received. The next thing I heard was "Rounds, please" — quickly followed by "Not you Shaun!" and the very reassuring "Relax." The conductor's instruction to "go again" set us back on track. From then on, things improved greatly, thanks to the quiet encouragement and smiles of the band. In what felt like no time at all, I heard the most welcome words: "That's all."

I'm very grateful to everyone at St Mark's for their support and coaching, and to the quarter peal band for their encouragement throughout. I am already learning that the challenges of ringing are endless — and other methods have already been suggested!

Onwards...

Prior's Norton, Gloucestershire
St Mary
Wednesday, 16 July 2025 in 46m (10–3–18 in F#)
1260 Grandsire Triples

1 Ray Talbot
2 Simon J Ridley
3 Michael J Seagrave
4 Shaun A Bailey
5 Andrew L Haynes
6 Ian D Bucknell
7 Stuart Tomlinson (C)
8 Hilda C Ridley

1st inside on 8: 4
Circled tower: 2



A Significant Birthday for Tony Foster – *Andy Clark*

Tony started to ring at St Saviour's, Oxton, in the Wirral in 1963 and has now gone on to complete 110 peals, the first of which was within a year of learning to ring. Of the 110, Tony has conducted 18, although is now a bit "rusty" (his words, not mine!).

Tony had a break from ringing from just before the Millennium until 2022, but is now enjoying being very active again, typically ringing 3-4 days per week.

On the quarter peal side, Tony has rung around 400, with well over half in the last three years! Tony has rung at around 1,400 towers but hasn't kept a full list.

Tony's favourite form of ringing is Spliced Surprised Major, so Tony was very pleased to be part of the quarter peal below of the Core 7-Spliced, marking VJ Day but also celebrating his 80th birthday. Tony wanted to thank the band for their support in this quarter peal.

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
Minster Church of St Mary
Friday, 15 August 2025 in 49m (21–2–1 in E_b)
1280 Spliced Surprise Major (7m)
7m: 256 Cornwall; 192 Bristol, Lessness, London,
Yorkshire; 128 Cambridge, Superlative. 36 com.
Composed by MBD

1 Hilda C Ridley
2 Stuart Tomlinson
3 Mike Seagrave
4 Catherine J B Jack
5 Mike Hartley
6 Anthony P Foster
7 Richard Knight
8 Mark B Davies (C)

For VJ Day.
80th birthday compliments to the ringer of the 6.
First Core 7: 2, 6.

A further quarter peal celebrating Tony's birthday was rung on Thursday 25th September at Oxton, Wirral (Tony's first tower) comprising 1295 changes of Plain Bob Caters. That performance was followed by a quarter peal day which included a mixture of Wirral and Gloucestershire ringers.



...and a Ringing Milestone for Hilda Ridley

Hilda Ridley marked her 60 years of ringing at Leckhampton, where she learnt to ring, with the peal below. The performance was also a celebration of the centenary of the birth of Eric J Taylor, Hilda's father and formerly Tower Captain at Leckhampton.

Leckhampton, Gloucestershire

St Peter

Saturday, 14 June 2025 in 2h 50 (9–1–14 in A_b)

5088 Lessness Surprise Major

Composed by R Baldwin (using Byroc)

1 Ian D Bucknell

2 Simon J Ridley

3 Hilda C Ridley

4 Richard L Thumwood

5 Stuart E Tomlinson

6 Gregory J M Jones

7 Bernard H Taylor (C)

8 Malcolm P Taylor

To celebrate Hilda's 60 years of ringing at the tower where she learnt.

To mark the centenary of the birth of Eric J Taylor, once Tower Captain here and responsible for the restoration of the bells in 1972.

With thanks to Stuart for stepping in at a few minutes notice.

Painting the Frame at Winchcombe – *Edward Kain / Andy Clark*

A big thank you to Stuart Tomlinson for painting the frame at Winchcombe, over the course of around 20 visits between March and August.

Stuart notes that while the frame did need painting, he didn't need to spend too much time cleaning the frame or scraping off loose paint or surface rust. So, most of his time could be spent painting, with an added bonus being the good lighting in the tower. Stuart felt that the combination of less preparation time, easy access to the bell tower and having good lighting saved a lot of time compared with his previous bell frame painting jobs. In total, Stuart applied two coats of Hammerite 'straight to rust' smooth blue paint and used approximately 30 cans (of 750ml size).

The photos on the next page show the frame before painting (top photos, with the old red paint) with the two lower photos showing the freshly painted version.

Edward Kain notes that the Winchcombe band are thrilled with the work completed.





Branch Striking Competition – *Andy Clark*

Mike has already provided a good summary of the branch's striking competition, so my article here will just provide the full results and a couple of supporting photographs. As Mike said in his welcome, attendance was really strong for this year's competition, with a total of nine teams competing compared to about half that number in 2024's competition.

The judges, Greg Jones and Jeremy Alford, both of the Tewkesbury branch, placed the bands in the following order for the Banner and Cleeve Trophies. A well done to the St Mark's A team, captained by Simon Ridley, for winning the Banner Trophy, who will go on to represent the branch at the Association Croome Trophy in Spring 2026.

Meanwhile, an equally significant well done to the Charlton Kings band who won the Cleeve Trophy. Two of the band for Charlton Kings are relative newcomers to bellringing, with Alma having been ringing for three years (having also taken part in the National Youth Team Contests), while Peter has been ringing for two years after coming along in response to the 'Ring for King' initiative.

Position	Banner Trophy	Cleeve Trophy
1 st	St Mark's A	Charlton Kings
2 nd	Stanway & Didbrook	St Mark's B
3 rd	Charlton Kings	Leckhampton B
4 th	Leckhampton A	Minster B
5 th	St Mark's B	Winchcombe
6 th	Leckhampton B	
7 th	Minster B	
8 th	Winchcombe	
9 th	Minster A	

It was a very pleasant afternoon, despite the showers, so thanks to all for helping to organise and support it.

The top photo over the page was captured by Cara and shows a nice rainbow in a (brief) gap between showers, while the bottom image shows Hilda Ridley receiving the Cleeve Trophy on behalf of the Charlton Kings team, from judge Greg Jones.





The Minster Outing to Bristol – September 2025 – *Richard Knight*

This was a project over two years in the planning which in the end turned out better than alright! Walking tours are better in many ways than motorised ones and we therefore determined in early 2023 that we would like to take the train to Bristol and do a short walking tour of city centre towers.

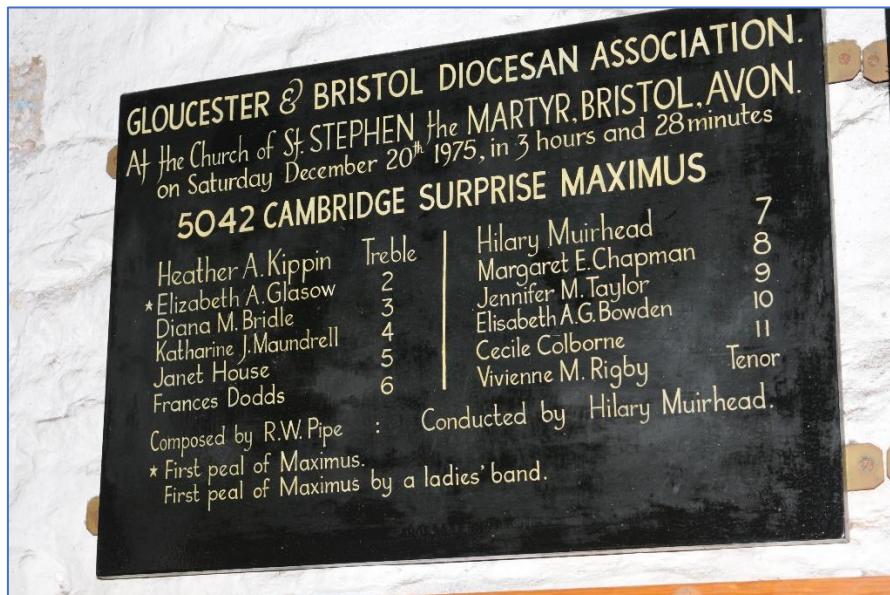
In the early stages communication proved to be difficult and led to a postponement to this year. We were lucky to have Bristol local Chris Stanley as our point of contact who gave up most of his Saturday to guide us.

An early Autumnal morning saw us driving to Bristol (no leaves on the line – just engineering works) and a short ring at St John on the Wall – difficult to spot unless you knew it was there. A wide variety of methods was rung including multi spliced Doubles and Rhyll Surprise Minor, though a trouser malfunction nearly sabotaged the call changes! (Our lips are sealed...)

An unbelievable selection of coffee and pastry shops both before and after led us to the Lord Mayor's Chapel which boasts a wealth of historic information about the city and various holders of the office. Ringing ranged from rounds and call changes to Wells Surprise Minor and we coped well with the very loud bells and a cosy ringing chamber. Lunch was at a nearby Greene King pub (not serving Greene King beer) in a packed sports bar where we analysed the failure of Manchester United to appoint a decent manager.

Probably the best ringing of the day followed at the Cathedral where the ring of eight would rival the back eight at the Minster. We managed some very acceptable Grandsire and Stedman Triples and - (it would have been rude not to!) - Bristol Major.

Finally we went to the 12 at St Stephens which provided the most poignant moment of the day. Liz Coke (nee Glasow), who was tower captain at the Minster until her untimely death in March this year, had done most of her early ringing (and was married) there and is mentioned on various peal boards in the tower – including the first all-ladies 12 bell peal in 1975 (see image below). We did her memory decent justice with some well struck Grandsire Cinques and Yorkshire Royal.





All topped off with a final cup of tea before the sports enthusiasts decamped to listen to Women's Rugby World Cup Final (brilliant display by England) and the Ryder Cup (ditto by Europe).

Huge thanks to Cath Jack as organiser, the 20 Ringers who took part, Katie the dog (pictured!), Steve Jones, who dog sat and Charles Beardsell who produced some beautiful photographs. We cannot wait for the 2026 edition.....





Branch Notices – All

Lost Property

I have mislaid in a tower somewhere a copy of Diagrams. It is a slightly battered red copy, inscribed inside to Paul. If it turns up please can you let me know. Sarah Collacott, Prestbury Tower, 07732 570134 or sarahssewing@hotmail.co.uk

Youth Ringing Team

Ian and Carole Bucknell are currently putting together a programme of events for the youth team for next year – starting in September 2025 – and are ready to welcome new youngsters to the team.

Any young ringer up to the age of 19 who can handle a bell in rounds confidently can join the group.

Can we please ask all Branch Officers and Tower Captains to help us promote the G & B Youth Team to any young ringers in their local branch and please contact any of the Association Officers. Alternatively, contact Ian & Carole Bucknell at ianbucknell3@gmail.com.

Branch Website

A note from Cara, our webmaster:

Please note that the branch website has moved to: <https://www.cheltenhambranch.co.uk>.

Please update any links you might have, and please do let me know if you spot anything wrong on the website, however small.

The old website became unavailable at the beginning of October.

Finally, A New Book

Last but not least, Ian Bucknell has now produced a book 'On Their Shoulders We Stand and Ring'. Please contact Ian on the email address above if you would like to buy a copy. A launch event was held in August.

