

# Great Gransden Church Bells

## Blog 2019

**30th December 2019**

Not very much to report this week. Our Christmas ringing was very well supported. We had three services to ring for and seven ringers at each. We rang some very good call changes and we were able to include Ella in the ringing. She has now returned to Australia but hopes to continue her ringing at Randwick. Good luck Ella!

Thank you to everyone for your support during 2019. It has been an amazing year with many successful events both ringing and non-ringing. I hope we can continue into 2020 and look forward to our time together again.

A Happy New Year to you all.

**21st December 2019**

In a way I am looking forward to the Christmas break. It's been full on this year, and very enjoyable, but a few days off is needed to reflect on 2019 and look forward to 2020. However, it's not quite time to do that until we have planned for all the Christmas ringing and for our ringers' party on the 4th January.

We had chance to talk about this at our practice on Thursday last and it's all in hand with final details to be decided on the 2nd when we meet again. In the meantime the fun and challenges continue!

Unfortunately, the planned quarter peal on Tuesday 17th at Lt. Eversden was not successful due to it being very cold in the tower and one of the ringers missed the sally because of cold hands. Never mind, no damage and no injuries, and this is the only objective that we have not been able to meet this year. We did record it as piece of miscellaneous ringing because it was to mark the centenary of the founding of Save the Children. This was particularly relevant to Sue (ringing the tenor) whose daughter Claire works in Somalia for that organisation. Although we were disappointed not to succeed here is a photo of us smiling after the event, no doubt looking forward to getting home to the warmth! Thanks to Catherina for helping with this ringing.



L-R: Phillip, David, Sue, Catherina, Sheila, Hazel

On Monday this week we gave a ringing lesson to Ella, Georgia's twin sister who is on holiday from Australia for the Christmas period. Georgia had asked if it would be possible to give her a bell handling lesson and so it was arranged. There was only time for one lesson, but an intensive 90 minutes resulted in her being able to ring the bell (both strokes together) with assistance. On Thursday at practice Ella was able to ring Rounds with everyone else and did an excellent job considering her lack of training time. Well done Ella!!



Phillip helping Ella ring Rounds



Georgia and Ella ringing together for the first time.

## 8th December 2019

As we look forward to Christmas and the year-end our ringing continues unabated as we work towards achieving individual and tower objectives as well as other ringing events being enjoyed. We have three pieces of news this week!

First up is news that David and Sheila P visited their son Michael in Belgium and he arranged a surprise for them to ring at Ypres. Ypres is a ring of 8 bells hung by Taylors in 2017. David says, "We rang the back six - Rounds, Plain Hunt and Mexican Wave. We were made very welcome by the ringers and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. They have visited the UK on a ringing tour, I have invited them to our tower when they make a return visit."



David and Sheila (foreground) and Michael (right) visit Ypres tower

**On Monday 2nd December** we held the weekly tied bell practice with Sue and Tricia. Hazel and Georgia were away, and we took advantage of the time available for Sue to ring her quarter peal on the SIM, which she did in fine style to join Georgia as a member of the QPSIM club.



Sue ringing a QP on the SIM

**On Saturday 7th December** we rang a quarter peal for Georgia to ring her first of minor and thereby achieving her level 3 certificate in the Learning the Ropes scheme. This is Georgia's second quarter peal, the first being treble to Plain Bob Doubles in May. LTR level 3 requires two QPs. The ringing was very good throughout and a clip can be heard [here](#)



L-R: Phillip, Andrew, John, Cass, Georgia, Sheila

## 25th November 2019

Two more exciting events this week, starting with a master class for two of our ringers. We went to Holywell on Monday with four other experienced ringers. The object to give Sue the opportunity to ring tenor behind to doubles and for Georgia to ring touches



of PB5 and plain courses of PB6. Sue also rang courses of PB5. Altogether an excellent morning and very helpful for our ringers.

Many thanks to John, Naomi, Catherina and Sally for giving up their time to help us.



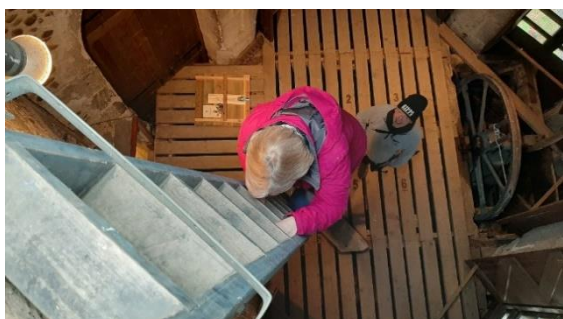
Holywell church

On **Saturday 23rd** we held our last expedition of the year by climbing to the top of our own tower. Partners of ringers were invited too, and Glyn and Ant joined us on a grey but calm day.

Eight of us ventured up the tower negotiating the small hatch into the old belfry and then a step ladder and through another hatch on to the tower roof. Some of the party were cautious, and rightly so because it is not every day we are climbing ladders squeezing through tight places and ending 80 feet up!

Everyone managed the climb with no problems and the views on the top were worth the effort. Although November is not the best time of year to do this the views can be better because the leaves have fallen and the trees don't obscure the nearby scene.

There were many photo opportunities, not least the group photo of smiles of achievement.



Climbing the tower ladder as seen through the hatch



The old vicarage to the west



L-R: David, Sheila P, Sue, Ant, Georgia, Glyn, Tricia, Phillip

## 15th November 2019

Saturday 9th November. An excellent day's ringing starting with a half-muffled quarter peal in the morning (our own bells) of St.Martins Bob Doubles. This was Sheila P's first in method. A recording of part of the quarter peal can be found [here](#).

In the afternoon we had a mini outing in South Cambs/Beds, visiting Little Eversden, Orwell and Potton. We were only nine ringers so were all pretty busy but took the opportunity (on these light rings) for our "improvers" to ring tenor behind to doubles (inc Stedman) and hunting the treble to PB5 & 6. Call changes on 8 was a treat. We finished in the half-light at 4 o'clock going our separate ways after a very enjoyable afternoon. Well done everyone!



Sheila Ps quarter peal band



Waiting to ring at Orwell



Ringling at Lt Eversden



Ringling at Potton

We had an almost a full house for half muffled ringing on Remembrance Sunday, ably assisted by visitors Mark and Rebecca. Ringing included some excellent call changes and Grandsire Doubles. The bells sound wonderful like this, humming on at the muffled backstroke. <https://youtu.be/736iZvpsEdU>

The weekly tied bell practices continue as we near the end of a busy summer and autumn full of exciting events. The tied bell sessions, visits to other tower practices and outings have given us a lot of experience and confidence. We are hoping for three ringers to complete Level 3 in the LtR scheme by the end of the year.

On Monday, using the sim, Hazel, Sue and Georgia were able to ring Plain Hunt 5 on the treble and tenor behind to GTs, culminating in a quarter peal for Georgia on the sim, an ambition on the "to do list" for a couple of months. Hazel and Sue will soon follow!

Tricia, ringing for eight weeks now, is ringing Rounds and basic call changes and ringing up and down. She rang for Sunday Service for the first time. In this practice session, as well as improving bell control she rang call changes on 4 bells.

The autumn colours are beautiful and as the afternoon light began to fade there were interesting reflections in the ringing room.



Reflections of Georgia ringing her QP on the SIM

#### **4th November 2019**

We had an excellent morning practising St.Martins Bob Doubles to help David and Sheila consolidate their learning.

Cass and John Boocock, and Bill Garner came over from Gamlingay and Catherina Griffiths came over from St.Neots. Several 120s were rung for David and Sheila



including the calling "bbbp", which means you have to think quite quickly to accommodate the frequent calls.

They also both rang a touch of Plain Bob Minor on the treble and the session finished with a very nice fall in peal.

Afterwards David and Sheila invited us to their house for refreshments where we enjoyed tea/coffee, biscuits/cake and a very pleasant social half hour before heading home.

Thanks to everyone for your help and hospitality.



Interlude when we talked about St.Martins



At David and Sheila's house: Phillip, Cass, Sheila P, Sheila G, John, David, Bill

## 2nd November 2019

On Wednesday 30th October four of us ventured across the border again into Biggleswade for the second of this round of visits. Hazel and Sue came along and were able to ring Plain Hunt on 9 for the first time, and some call changes. It was a very enjoyable practice and the ringing was very good.



Hazel and Sue at Biggleswade

Saturday 2nd November was the second in the series of Huntingdon District learners' practices at Hemingford Grey. Georgia and Hazel attended with Phillip and Sheila and two hours ringing and chatting to learners old and new were well spent. Touches of Plain Bob Doubles were successfully rung and Georgia rang a plain course of PB Minor, (another first).

During the coffee break handbells were rung by several members of the company.



General ringing at Hemingford Grey



Handbell ringing

## **25<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

Yet another busy week. This time, on Tuesday 23rd October we arranged a visit to Abbotsley church and specifically to the tower to see the clock and bells.

David Crabb, head clock-winder met us and guided us through the tower expressing his enthusiasm for the work he does looking after the clock and pointing out historic graffiti and other interesting things. He also demonstrated the winding of the clock.

Access to the clock room is fairly easy although a small set of steps need to be negotiated down into the room. Here can be found 17th century clock (believed to be early 1600, and with only one other of its kind still working, which is in Caxton church nearby).



Abbotsley church clock

A further climb to the top of the tower where we scrambled into the belfry and into, and onto the bell frame. The bells have been removed, except the tenor which is hung



dead for the clock to strike and sit on baulks of timber on top of the bell frame. The bell frame is ancient, probably late 16th century.

We took a lot of photos in here, our first visit for everyone and managed a group photo in the frame of the tenor bell. I had the impression that a few of us really felt at home amongst the bells, although it was a bit dusty!!!



B-F: Phillip, David, Tricia, Sue, Sheila P, Georgia



Sue and Sheila P in the bell frame



Treble on the left, No3 on right

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and give our grateful thanks to David Crabb for giving up his time for our visit. Certainly one for the record!!

### **24th Oct - more good ringing on practice night**

There were only eight of us but we managed a lot, including: First plain courses (3) of Plain Bob Doubles for Sue, very ably assisted by Georgia standing behind and giving excellent instruction (good teamwork). Plain Courses of Grandsire Doubles for three ringers, and Plain Hunt 6 for the same. This is Tricia's 6th week as a ringer and she is ringing unassisted Rounds with just a stand-by minder (who was able to confidently leave her to take the photo!).

Well done everyone!



Practice night 24th Oct 19.

Clockwise: Tricia, Chris, Sue, Sheila P, David, Georgia

## 18th October 2019

It was a red-letter day for Sue Taylor on Wednesday 16th October when she scored her first quarter peal (at first attempt) by ringing the treble to Plain Bob Doubles. We had planned this for some time and Sue had been practising to "get up to speed", encouraged by the band and help from her former mentor Elinor Cole from Caxton.

Sue still rings at Caxton, under Elinor's tower captaincy, as well as Gransden and we were delighted when Elinor accepted our invitation to be part of the quarter peal band. Elinor has been attending our practices at Gransden which has also been a great help for our general ringing.

The quarter peal was accomplished in 42 minutes without any problems.

After the ringing everyone adjourned to Nutbells for tea and cake and we were joined by Sue's husband Anthony, and Georgia, both of whom had videoed some of the ringing whilst listening outside.

It was a lovely occasion and we hope to continue with our success by ringing more quarter peals and enjoying refreshments afterwards!!



L-R: Sheila P, David, Sue, Elinor, Sheila, Phillip



Advanced tea party: Elinor, Sue, Ant, Georgia

## 5th October 2019

Some lovely ringing at Gt Gransden this morning. It was a quarter peal of Ipswich Surprise Minor rung by members of the Hunts District and included 2 of our ringers, 2 from Gamlingay and 2 from St Ives.

It was a Hunts District quarter peal but rung in memoriam Dorian George, Phillip's brother. Dorian used to be a ringer and his name is on a peal board in St. Neots tower where he rang in a peal of Grandsire Triples in 1976.

Our practice this week was augmented by three ringers from Bluntisham. We knew we were going to be short of ringers (probably only 4 of us) and we asked if we could join forces with our ringing friends. Phil Marshall offered to come over to us as it was their turn.

We had some good ringing which included St. Simons and St. Martins and Plain spliced, a course of Stedman and touches of Plain Bob Doubles and Minor, and Grandsire 5. Tricia, who has only been ringing four weeks rang Rounds almost on her own and was congratulated on her skill.

## 12th October 2019

### Annual Outing to Leicestershire

This year we were joined by ringing friends from five different towers with whom we have shared practices or other ringing events during the year: Gt. Gransden, Bluntisham, St. Ives, Offchurch (Warks), Ratby and Desford (Leics).

We visited five towers just to the south of Leicester, Gt. Glen (8), Arnesby (6), Countesthorpe (8), Blaby (6) and Whetstone (8) and ringing included Plain Bob, Grandsire, St. Martins, Cambridge 6 and R&CC.

Lunch was taken at the Bull's Head in Countesthorpe, with thanks to Becky and Cameron who looked after us exceedingly well. Handbells were rung after lunch.

After the last tower most of us were able to adjourn to Rebecca and Mark's house where we were treated to a sumptuous salad tea and cake.

Many thanks to the ringing masters who managed the ringing and to M&R for their end of day hospitality.



Left: Gt Glen 8 bells 9cwt



Right: Arnesby 6 bells 7cwt





Lunch at the Bull's Head, Countesthorpe



Countesthorpe 8 bells 10cwt



Phillip, Rebecca and Mark ringing Plain Bob Minor



Blaby 6 bells 10cwt



Whetstone 8 bells, 8cwt

## 26th September 2019

Bell ringing in the Gransdens isn't just about ringing bells, it includes learning about and experiencing other aspects of church towers.

On Tuesday afternoon of the 24th September five of our ringers held an exciting expedition to Little Gransden church where, with the churchwarden's permission, we climbed the tower to see the clock and bells.

First stop - the clock room, from where the bells used to be rung. The clock is a two-train mechanism by Smiths of Derby (from the Midland Steam Clock Works) with a

pin-wheel escapement, currently hand-wound but soon to be converted to electric winding.

Continuing up the steep, dusty, but otherwise in good order narrow staircase we soon arrived at the bells. The timber frame is dated 1657 (we think, but date indistinct) and houses 3 bells, the oldest by Tobias Norris dated 1616. The others are 16th C. The fittings are derelict but the tenor is still chimed for service. This is a good example of how bells used to be hung and the differences between these and the modern fittings at Gt Gransden were discussed.

There were good photo opportunities throughout and eventually we descended to the bottom of the tower very happy with our adventure, and very dusty!!

Happy days!



clock weights

L-R: Phillip, David, Sheila P, Lynn, Georgia  
The bell frame



Lt Gransden church clock



## Tied Bell Practice



A really enjoyable tied bell practice was held on Monday afternoon 23rd with progress being made in all areas.

Plain Hunt 5 on the treble on the SIM is getting better but still needs a little more dynamic striking accuracy holding up and cutting in. Some beautiful touches of Grandsire

Triples on the tenor (using No2 bell) were rung by both Hazel and Georgia. I have suggested a quarter peal on the SIM. Note to self - arrange!

Finally, Georgia rang the tenor up and down single handedly simply because she wanted more practice on it! It's not a heavy bell (13.5cwt / 650kgs) but it does require some skill, strength and understanding.

New ringer Tricia is handling on her own, with help now and then. She is practising adjusting rope length and standing the bell. The use of video has pointed out some improvement areas which are being worked on.

Everyone now has copies of "A Ringers Guide to Learning the Ropes" and it has already prompted a lot of interesting questions and this leads to enthusiastic discussions, which we don't have time for on Thursday nights.



Georgia ringing up the tenor solo

## 18th September 2019

Short blog this week due to limited admin time!!

We had another good practice last week. The highlight was a ladies' band who rang a very respectable few leads of Plain Hunt on 6





Plain Hunt Minor Ladies Band



Georgia ringing up the tenor with moral support!

The other photo is of Georgia ringing up the tenor, with Phillip supervising, during our tied bell practice this week.

### 9th September 2019

This week's excitement, two of our ringers (Georgia and Hazel) and their mentors (Phillip and Sheila G) attended the Hunts District learners' practice at Hemingford Grey on Saturday the 7th. The expectation was to ring Plain Bob Doubles inside which was duly accomplished, and in good style. This included an unaffected touch for both Georgia and Hazel (first attempt) In addition, call changes on eight were rung giving a good opportunity for us to ring on the 8 bells.

The last touch was a course of Plain Bob Major in which Georgia was asked to ring the treble. This was the first time she had rung changes on 8 bells and with some guidance managed a very good job. Compliment of the day was from Jez who commented how well Georgia had led the bells off into Rounds for this ringing.

It was a lovely practice and good to meet new ringers all with the same thing in common, improvement and skill development.



Hazel ringing Call Changes



Georgia ringing Call Changes

## **Practice - Thursday 5th September**

We miss Alasdair who has now gone off to University, but we are keeping in touch via social media. In his place we have been fortunate to welcome Christine (hopefully a returning ringer) and Tricia, a new ringer recruited at our taster session.

We had a very good practice with Chris slotting into call changes and a bit of hunting on the treble almost as she had never been away. We hope she will be able to join us on a regular basis.

In between ringing we let Tricia have a go at handstrokes and backstrokes and she was made welcome by the others as the evening went on.

During the evening Georgia said she wanted to ring the tenor, having not yet done so. Tower Sec wrote it on the white board. Not to be outdone Sue also asked to ring it. Excellent! so we made the opportunity for it to happen. Both did very well ringing the bell solo. Georgia then asked if she could ring it in Rounds. Of course, so let's do it - and we did!

We also successfully rang St.Martins for David and Sheila P and Plain Hunt 6.

Such a satisfying evening with enthusiasm glowing from everyone.

## **1st September 2019**

We had discussed holding a tower open day at our AGM in April. We didn't plan a date but as the summer crept on it seemed that the 31st August could be a likely contender. Previous open days had met with little success so we didn't make a lot of arrangements for the day and decided that if anyone turned up we would make it up as we went along.

This was a good plan because four people attended plus most of our ringers to meet and greet and generally provide hospitality to visitors.

Our firsts guests were Elaine and her grandson Albie from Spaldwick. Albie wants to learn to ring and Elaine had seen our taster session advertised on the Hunts District website. We were able to give them a tour of the tower, by which time Tricia had come into the church having seen our advert on Touchbase (the village email system). Tricia's arrival was shortly followed by Chris Morton, a potential returning ringer. Chris last rang in 2004.

We rang up the bells and showed Albie the basics of handstroke and backstroke. We did the same for Tricia and let Chris ring a bell to re-acquaint herself, with which she had no problem. Local ringers then gave a demonstration of call changes before the refreshment break.

After coffee and cake (yum, yum) we returned to the ringing room, rang some Plain Bob Doubles and carried on with further basic teaching.

At the end of the session we showed Tricia the clock and the bells and demonstrated the simulator.

The outcome was potentially 1 new recruit, 1 returning ringer and 1 new junior ringer for another tower. Overall a very successful morning and most enjoyable.

Many thanks to all the local ringers who supported this event and helped enormously with welcoming our guests.



Elaine and Albie in the belfry



Albie, Elaine and Tricia



Chris ringing the No 3 bell



Lynn, Tricia, Albie, Georgia, Matt enjoying cake!



Sheila G, Sue, Elaine, Tricia, Matt, Lynn, Georgia



## 25th August

Ringing was unaffected by the tower break in and has continued as usual including a tied bell practice, a normal practice and service ringing today.

Georgia is making progress ringing PB5 inside and Sue is gaining confidence in treble ringing ready for her first quarter peal planned for October. We are grateful to Elinor (Bourn) for joining us on Thursdays for the time being. Tied bell practice gave us the opportunity to practice hunting on the treble to doubles on the sim. This is rather tricky but good attempts were made with some success. Good results are coming out of continued practice at ringing tenor behind to doubles and triples.

There were eight for service ringing today and we had some very nice striking. Ringing included Plain Bob 5, Plain Hunt 5 and call changes.

The service ringing schedule changes from September to reflect the new service times. Details will be forwarded to ringers this week.



Practice on Thursday 22nd August. L-R Sue, Georgia, Matt, Elinor

## 18th August

### Tower broken into

Between 9.00am Friday the 9th and 8.30am Sunday 11th August intruders forced the turret stair door and smashed through the locked hatch protecting the old belfry.

The ladder was manoeuvred onto the boarding on the old bell frame and the bolts on the tower roof hatch were unbolted. We don't know if the culprits gained access to the tower roof, where on later inspection we found no apparent damage.

The break-in was discovered on Sunday morning when the bell ringers arrived. An immediate inspection assessed the limit of access and how much damaged had been done. No other rooms in the tower were entered and we suspect that the criminals were carrying out a reconnoitre on the state of the lead roof of the church, which can be seen from the old belfry and tower roof, and possibly looking for our alarm system, although there was no damage to this.

Rev Rachel, the PiC, immediately decided to keep the church locked during the day when not in use, and also contacted a locksmith in Cambridge who came out on Monday to re-secure the turret door. The hatch was repaired on Wednesday.

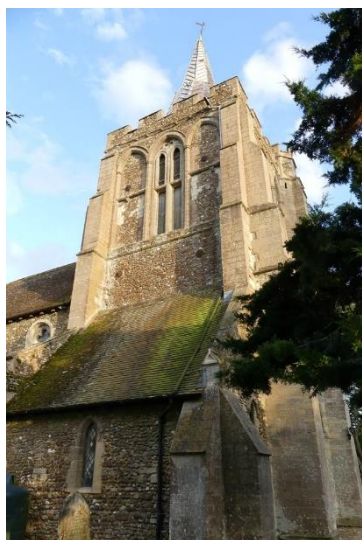
We posted an alert on relevant Facebook pages which reached over 2000 people (as at 22 Aug over 2500), and Rev Rachel circulated details around the diocese and deanery, and the local villages using the village email scheme. A full report was made to the police and our local community PC Richard Braddick was informed.

### **10th August**

Opportunities continue to present themselves and this week four of us tripped across to Bourn for their practice. This was another opportunity to ring on eight and enjoy the company of the resident band, which also rings at Caxton. We rang call changes on 8, Plain Hunt 5 and 6 and Plain Bob Doubles. The halfway break gave me an opportunity for some photographs including the group selfie.

The church has a lovely atmosphere, especially in the summer when the cool interior gives some respite to the heat of the day and the ground floor ring is very welcoming.

Thanks to Elinor and the Bourn ringers for welcoming us to their practice.



At our practice on Thursday we were able to ring Plain Bob and St Martin's 5 (not spliced), call changes, Plain Hunt 6 (whilst the entire band sucked gobstoppers) and practice on the treble for Sue's first QP (16th Oct).

Thanks to Elinor for coming to support us, without whom we would not have been able to achieve this. Alasdair is going to university in September and we will lose his loyalty and ability, so the team will suffer a technical set back in the short term.

Also included during the practice, and most importantly - the annual reminder about dealing with emergencies in the tower, including the emergency evacuation procedure, location of fire extinguishers and our postcode for the emergency services.



Gobstoppers in!!! Waiting to ring Plain Hunt 6  
L-R: Lynn, Georgia, Sheila P, Sheila G (sitting) Elinor



## 2nd August 2019

Back to normal, I thought!

No, another exciting week starting with a quarter peal for Alasdair at Bluntisham of Plain Bob Minor. We had planned this on our last visit to that tower on the 18th July when, because we were due to meet short for our own practice, decided to have an away day. Alasdair rang Plain Bob Minor so well that we decided to organise a quarter while we could before he goes off to university in September. The local ringers were very pleased to help.

We rang it on Tuesday 30th on the back six and had some very creditable ringing, especially bearing in mind that he had not ring "all the work" at the calls previously and never rung a "single". Also, a good achievement because this was his first quarter peal of minor, so he had no previous experience even ringing the treble. He is all set now to carry on his ringing in Glasgow if he wishes to pursue this when he is at uni.

Many thanks to Phil and Cecily Marshall and David Buist for helping us in this quest. Another box ticked.



Alasdair's first QP of minor  
L-R: Cecily, Alasdair, Sheila, Phil, Phillip, David



Our practice on Thursday brought us together for the first time in a couple of weeks. Some of our ringers have been unavailable recently and Sunday service ringing has been in short supply due to the rota of services. So it was a joy for us all to meet up again and we also welcomed Elinor Cole from Caxton.

We have a close association with Caxton because Sue is a member of that tower also, having rung there for several years before moving to Gransden, and we want to grow our relationship with that tower if we can. Sue is almost ready to ring her first quarter peal on the treble and as Elinor is her former mentor, we had invited her to be part of the band.

Elinor came along to practice Plain Bob Doubles with Sue on the treble as part of this preparation and we rang a couple of extents which were very successful, so we now need to make further plans.

Also on the menu this evening were: Sheila P calling PB5 with herself unaffected, Alsadair turning the tenor in to Plain Hunt 6 , Georgia and Hazel ringing PB5 inside and Lynn trebling to PB 5.

A very enjoyable time with no sign of things quietening down. We have an outing to plan for October, a tower open event on 31st August and visiting ringers due on the 20 September. Some of us will visit Bourn next Tuesday and tied bell practices continue.

### **29th July 2019**

The following piece of news is not important from the ringing point of view especially when first quarter peals have been rung but it is important for the tower - the annual spring clean.

Apart from the ringing room, which is regularly hoovered and dusted, the whole of the tower clean-up has been completed. Carried out over a few weeks when work starts on top of the old bell frame and gradually works through every level, inspecting the installation as it progresses.

A few nuts needed to be tightened against the wheels and the weather proofing on the west facing lancet window in the belfry needed to be replaced. Overall the bells and fittings are in excellent order!



Phillip and Henry in the belfry - a good job done!!

## **26th July 2019**

After the excitement of the striking competition last Saturday we returned to our normal ringing activities with a tied bell practice on Monday and normal practice on Thursday. Temperatures have been at record levels this week gradually building to 38 degrees C on Thursday.

Our tied bell practice was slightly different this week because we rang the bells "open". Sue suggested that it would be good to actually hear our Plain Bob Minimus! Agreed! Whilst we were ringing David P came along for 20 minutes to help out which was much appreciated.

Phillip had drawn a diagram on the white board explaining our mission to the end of the year. Quarter peal planning must get underway!!

We knew we would be short of ringers on Thursday and in hindsight we should have cancelled the practice, but in the end six of us turned up which included two visiting ringers, friends of Sue and we rang call changes and a bit of plain hunt 5. This at least gave them an opportunity to grab a new tower.

Cynthia rings in the North Norfolk area around Cromer, and Jane rings at Elsworth and Caxton. We invited Jane to join us at Gransden if she ever wanted to. Of course, Cynthia would be welcome too but Cromer is a bit too far away to come for a practice night!

By 8.45pm we had had enough. Although the tower was cooler the humidity was high and we were all tired from the heat of the day. The temperature was in the high 20s even late into the evening.

No picture this week - energy completely sapped!!

## **20th July 2019**

In recent months our ringers have been travelling to other nearby churches to ring their bells as a means to broadening their experience and meeting other ringers. We have not all been able to visit every tower on the list but between us we have sampled the bells at:

Biggleswade (10), Gamlingay (8), Caxton (6) (I hasten to add, before the striking competition embargo!!!), Waresley (4), Toft (6), Gt Paxton (6), Lt Paxton (6), Bluntisham (8), Hilton (6).

Visiting other towers gives novice ringers confidence in bell handling and especially catching hold for the first time on an unknown bell. Many of the towers visited have been specifically to practice for the district striking competition. Others, such as Bluntisham, have been "exchange visits".

We would like to thank all the towers for allowing us to ring their bells. We are looking forward to our tower outing in October when we will be visiting Leicestershire and returning to Biggleswade to get more 10-bell practice. Plans for 2020 include a trip to London.

### **Hunts District Striking Competition**

We were excited to be able to enter the district striking competition again this year. This presented new challenges for us, firstly because we were ringing on different bells – Caxton (last year's competition was each teams' home tower) and secondly because two of our ringers have been ringing for less than two years.

It was a very close competition. We rang call changes and were placed 4<sup>th</sup> out of 5 with two teams drawing for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and overall only 14 faults between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> placings.

Many congratulations to St.Neots on winning the competition and to the other teams too for making a very enjoyable afternoon.

1<sup>st</sup> St.Neots (6 faults)

2<sup>nd</sup> (joint) Gamlingay and St.Ives (8.5 faults)

4<sup>th</sup> Gt Gransden (12 faults)

5<sup>th</sup> Huntingdon (22 faults)

Well done everyone!



Striking Competition Team July 2019  
Sue, Sheila, Lynn, Georgia, Alsadair, Phillip  
Photo by Sue Taylor

### **7th July 2019**

We had a great afternoon on our tower's first "mini outing". This is part of our plan to ring at as many "new" towers in the nearby area to gain experience on different bells.



Today's expedition was to Great Paxton and Little Paxton, both light sixes (and very nice too); and rounding up with a cup of tea and a try at a mini ring (quite a different technique required on these bells!!)

At each tower we practiced our test piece for the forthcoming District striking competition (only two weeks away now but we still have one more tower to visit before then!!)

Many thanks to Mary Parnham for meeting us at the Paxtons and to Catherina for providing a welcome cup of tea to end the day.



Great Paxton



Interior of Great Paxton church



Ringling at Great Paxton



Little Paxton church



Ringling at Little Paxton



Ringling at Little Paxton



Ringling at Parkway



The Parkway Campanille



Happy ringers after a welcome cuppa at Catherina's house

## 5th July 2019

Not much ringing this week because there was no Sunday service ringing, but we made up for it on Thursday at practice when we decided to fire the bells to mark the American Day of Independence.

There is a story behind this. Many years ago, an American lady working in the UK visited our tower on practice night, which happened to be July 4th. We welcomed her as we do all our visitors, but as a special honour we fired the bells. The ringer was Nancy Perry and she used to ring at Washington DC. She returned to the UK many times after that first visit and we became good friends. And so, if 4th July falls on a Thursday we always fire the bells for Nancy.

In more recent years we made friends with another American lady, Christine Tankersley, who learned to ring at St. Neots whilst her husband was on an assignment here. Christine has returned to the USA, but we send our best wishes to her also.

The photograph shows the ringers having fired the bells during the practice. Well done everyone!



Firing party. L-R: Sue, Lynn, Matt, David, Sheila, Hazel, Georgia

## **27th June 2019**

Rev Rachel had asked me if I could arrange a visit to the top of the tower for her and a trainee Baptist minister, Jamie Reeves, (training in the village for one month). Diaries co-ordinated and we chose the 27th June. I had explained that there is a bit of a scramble to get to the very top, but this didn't deter the intrepid visitors.

We only had an hour so it was quite a quick, but comprehensive visit, Rachel taking pictures in every room and a video of the clock and chimes working.

Finally, to the top of the tower and we emerged into the grey day but with quite good visibility. Unfortunately, I have been on the roof so many times I didn't think to take any photos of the views. However, there will be more trips later in the summer, as promised for our ringers. Watch this space!





Rachel nearing the top of the ladder



Jamie climbing through the hatch



Safely arrived and smiling

## 26th June 2019

We are always looking for new ringing experiences and opportunities. With the district striking competition coming up we need to ring on different bells to gain experience in readiness for Caxton. We would normally go to Caxton for a practice but the rules of the competition have banned all teams from doing this (stupid in my opinion!). So we have arranged several towers between now and the competition on the 20th July, the first being at Toft. Seven of us were able to visit this Tuesday and we rang our test piece several times, and very well indeed.

We also rang Plain Bob Doubles with Georgia, Hazel and Sue each ringing the tenor. This was first time they had done this "live", previously only done on the simulator. The tenor is only 8.75cwt and they all managed it very well and successfully. Quarter peals next I think!

We had a very enjoyable evening.

Thanks to James Wrycroft, the local ringer, for meeting us.



L-R: Sheila G, Alasdair, Georgia, Hazel, Sue, David, Phillip



Interior of Toft church

The next adventure is our mini outing on July 6th - watch out for this news!!

### 23rd June 2019

Good practice on Thursday when Georgia trebled for the first time to St.Martins Doubles. She had been doing a lot of work writing out methods by place notation. This gives an insight into blue lines and method structure. Methods included Plain Bob minimus to major, Cambridge Minor and Stedman doubles - impressive!

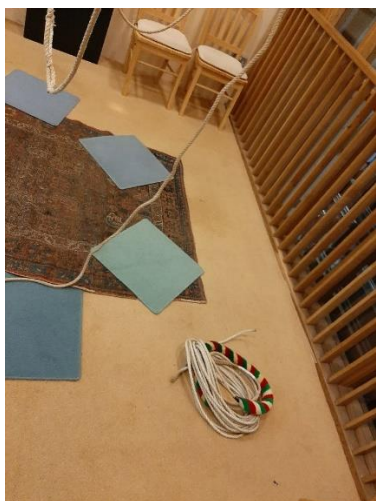
Lynn called some call changes and we had a practice at our competition test piece coming up in July, although not all the band were present this evening. Our ringing accuracy is definitely improving with the help of the weekly tied bell practices - keep it up.

After the practice Georgia took a photograph of the sun setting on the church tower. We don't often see this at 9.10pm! One for the album.



Sunset on the church 20th June 2019  
Photo by Georgia

Also this week, David and I started to look at swapping some ropes to our reserve set so that we can have new tail ends fitted to the existing ones. The sallies are good, and it is cheaper and just as effective to have new tail ends machine spliced. The photos show the work being done to change the 5th bell rope.



Old rope coiled up  
and new tail end ready for tucking



David waiting instructions from ringing room  
for rope length



Rope fitting completed



Chair hung on rope to stretch out unevenness

On Friday we held our Ringers and Singers Summer Supper. This is for bell ringers and members of the church choir, and all partners. By co-incidence it was held on the longest day. That being said it was a little cool in the evening and although we started off outside at the first venue there was less enthusiasm for al-fresco as the evening progressed. This didn't cool our enjoyment as about 26 ringers, singers and partners enjoyed socialising at three different venues each hosting either starter, main or sweet course.

Our grateful thanks to our hosts who welcomed us all to their beautiful houses and gardens and organised their own menus, and the many who provided food. We all brought liquid refreshment and any unconsumed was taken to the next venue. A lovely, relaxing evening with good food and good company.





Finally for this week, I watched lots of the finals of the National 12-Bell Striking Competition, this year held in Exeter, and send an email at the end of the ringing congratulating the broadcasters on their production. To my surprise it was read out. Here it is:

"Thanks for the excellent production today. Have enjoyed watching and listening from Cambridgeshire and feel very involved even from afar. The best day's entertainment. Phillip George Gt.Gransden"

The whole contest can be viewed on [YouTube](#)

### 17th June 2019

Well, everything came together on Sunday 16th. All eleven ringers were present for the 8.45am ringing. We also welcomed a non-ringing visitor and our youngest 2-year-old recruit!

Alasdair had just finished his A level exams, the last one being on Friday. "Hopefully", he says, "things will now be back to normal"; and Georgia was back from holiday. Sheila took the photo so unfortunately does not appear in our happy group, but she took several photos at church because it was Music Sunday, and she also uploaded pictures to the church F/B page and shared the entry with the RSCM as a record of our contribution to the day.



Happy ringers on Sunday 16th June 2019

We rang call changes for the entire ringing session and started with competition standard, which we more or less kept up throughout. It was lovely to have a house-full. A short recording of some of the ringing can be found [here](#).

Georgia rang at Dartmouth whilst she was away. Subsequently, Dartmouth Bell Ringers changed their cover photo for their Facebook page and the new photo includes Georgia. Fame in Devon too!



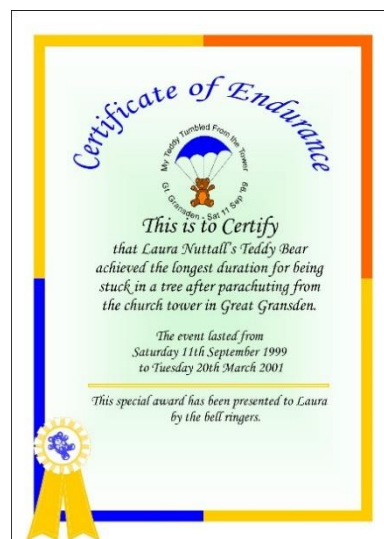
Dartmouth Bell Ringers Facebook page June 16th 2019

## 10th June 2019

Saturday 8th June ..... it had been raining all morning and the forecast was not looking good, windy, rainy and cool. It was decided to put the church heating on for the wedding in the afternoon. As we rang the bells up we wondered how long we would need to ring because it was not a good day for hanging around outside after the ceremony.

As the time drew near the rain stopped and the bride was able to take her time for photographs before entering the church, and after the ceremony the sky was brighter.

A break from tradition for this wedding, the couple left the church by the north door, followed by the guests and then after some photographs came back into the church through the north tower door to process out again through the line of guests who celebrated by throwing (organic) confetti over them. A lovely touch! Until now, confetti has not been allowed in the churchyard!



After the service the bells rang out and we had some lovely call changes (60 on thirds, called by Sheila G). A quick dash downstairs afterwards to see what was happening and we were pleased that the bride and guests were still in the churchyard. Up in the tower again we fired the bells, our traditional salute to the married couple. This was executed with excellence and the team included Sue Taylor who had never fired bells before. Well done everyone!

It was a splendid afternoon and much enjoyed by ringers and choir who all put on a good show.

Laura, the bride, is a resident of the parish and it was her teddy which got stuck in the tree when it parachuted from the tower in 1999 but did not fall from the tree until 2001. A special certificate of endurance was presented to Laura in 2001 to mark the occasion.

It all happens in the Gransdens!!!

### **7th June 2019**

We have had a very busy springtime as you will have read. There is currently a slight lull in events due to holidays and exams. As a result we met with just six ringers at practice last night and perhaps there was a bit more chatter than ringing! Nevertheless we did some useful work starting with practice for the striking competition. The ringing was a bit slow and lumpy as we got "warmed up", but two further attempts during the evening improved our performance and we rang quite well in the end. We will need to focus more as we near the competition which is on 20th July.

We also rang Penultimus Doubles, or rather, tried to ring it. Unfortunately, the overall experience of the band limited success but we have agreed to try it again when other ringers are available.

We weren't able to ring any method but did have several bouts of Plain Hunt 5, each ringing it on a different bell. This was very useful especially for Georgia who rang the 4th to changes for the first time.

Sweets at half time, as usual, and the weekly notices - wedding on Saturday, no ringing Sunday, tied bell on Monday afternoon and practice again next Thursday.

Coming up! - mini outing on Saturday 6th July, two competition practice sessions, and on a non-ringing theme our annual Ringers and Singers event on Friday 21st June when all the ringers and choir members (and spouses) get together for a summer party. More news on this later!

### **30th May 2019**

Our busy ringing schedule continues as this week we had two lots of extra ringing.

The first was Tuesday evening when Gt Gransden hosted the service of the Archdeacon's Visitation when all the churchwardens within the deanery are sworn into office. This is a legal requirement for churchwardens as they have, with the incumbent,



legal responsibility for the building and activities sponsored by the church in their parish. We rang two lots of call changes and the ringing was of a very high standard and would have challenged anyone entering a striking competition.

We were able to leave the bells up because we were ringing a quarter peal on Wednesday in the morning. We had planned this for a few weeks confident that Georgia would be ready. One of the motivators was for her to ring her first QP within 12 months of her first ringing lesson (11th June 2018). Georgia is the first ringer at Gransden to have achieved this and we are pleased for her and as a tower to mark this occasion. The other motivator was simply that she is very keen on ringing and is a key member of the band. The quarter peal also co-incided with her graduating from the University of Hertfordshire (the results came through on Tuesday) and we included this in our celebrations for her.

A creditable quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles was rung in 43 minutes with Georgia ringing the treble. We thank Cass Boocock (Gamlingay) for helping us with this.

After the ringing we all piled back to Nutbells for tea and cake and to enjoy the "après ring" social chat and relaxation. We were also very pleased to welcome Priest in Charge Rev Rachel to join in our celebrations.



L-R: Cass, Sheila P, Georgia, David, Sheila G, Phillip



Tea and cake after the quarter peal

Thanks to everyone for supporting our ringing in Great Gransden.

## 24th May 2019

We had a busy ringing day on Thursday 23rd. An (early) start getting the bells up at 9.00am for a funeral later in the day. It is unusual to ring for funerals, but we had been requested to do so before and after the service. The bells were also requested to be rung open and we rang some very creditable call changes, starting with 60 on thirds, and then another set piece.

We had quite a long wait for the service to end (1hr 10 minutes), but some of the ringers were in the choir and others in the congregation so we all knew when to head off to the tower. We only rang for ten minutes afterwards to give the cortege chance to get to the graveside and then the bells fell silent. We waited for the mourners to return before ringing the bells down.

Our duty done we headed home for a few hours break before heading off in the evening to Bluntisham for their practice instead of ringing at GG. We had arranged this some weeks ago as a reciprocal arrangement after some of their ringers visited us (see Blog of 5th April). We weren't expecting too many locals being there and Cecily asked Sheila to run the practice. In the event there were a good number, seven of us and six of them so we had a really good evening.

On arrival it was interesting to see the ongoing refurbishment of the interior. In fact they have just started this week. The floor is being replaced and the pews exchanged for chairs.

The ninety minutes just flew by and we rang call changes on 8, Grandsire triples, Plain Bob minor, Stedman doubles and Plain Hunt 7. It was good for us to have the opportunity to ring on eight bells which was done with great confidence. Bluntisham is a ground floor ring and although easy going require slightly different handling skill because of the total length of rope. Everyone managed very well and we tick off yet another tower which is helping us gain valuable ringing experience.

Many thanks to Cecily and the Bluntisham ringers for making us welcome at their practice.



Refurbishment of interior



Jon, David Buist, Robert Bramley



Robert, David(taking pic), Cecily, Georgia



Michael and Jon



Jon, Sheila G, Lynn, Sheila P



Georgia, Lynn, Sheila P

## 11th May 2019

### Bees in the Belfry!

An unusual week in one respect. The tied bell practitioners have worked hard over many weeks and during our frequent chats the idea of visiting the top of the tower was mentioned. We set a date and looked forward the adventure. However, it was not to be. Hazel had to work, Lynn was unavoidably absent due to family business and Sue was delayed due to a business meeting. That left Georgia and me but we decided to go for it because we were ready for the climb!

When we arrived in the belfry we encountered quite a few bees and on attempting to access the roof the activity, whilst not aggressive, caused us some concern, so we abandoned the assault on the summit!!

Not to waste the rest of the afternoon we did some tied bell practice which was particularly helpful for Georgia because she is building up stamina for a quarter peal and so rang the tenor (treble bell) to a 480 of Grandsire Doubles with an accuracy score of 28%. Pretty good going.

Going back to the bees. Not having encountered bees inside the tower before I contacted the churchwardens and an arrangement was made for a pest controller to visit. Bee keepers were initially contacted but they showed no interest. Our intention was not to eradicate the bees but to assess the situation and take any necessary remedial action.

I met Andy from Ace Pest Control and we ventured to the top of the tower. It was a much colder day and there was no activity at all in the tower. On the top a few bees were coming and going through a water drain in the roof gully and into a space under the roof. First thing to establish was that they are honeybees, which Andy confirmed. We had an interesting discussion the result of which was that it would be difficult to eradicate the nest without considerable expense.

I wrote a report to the churchwardens and Rev Rachel suggesting that we take no action unless the bees come into the tower permanently, and that any tower tours to



the roof are carried out in the colder seasons when the bees are dormant. (see report on file).

Note: I will arrange a tour for all the ringers and friends later in the year.

### Another busy practice

Ten of us on Thursday, including Michael, back home for the weekend. Lots of opportunity for treble ringing and standing behind practice. We rang Plain Bob Doubles, call changes and St.Martins, the latter was a bit of a struggle but we got through it.

The striking competition trophy has to be returned for engraving. We took the opportunity this evening to take a group photo of the winning team and of all the ringers present.



Striking Competition Winners 2018  
Back: David, Alasdair.  
Front: Hazel, Sheila G, Phillip, Sheila P



Practice night ringing 9th May 2019



Practice night ringing 9th May 2019



Back: Michael, Lynn, Hazel, David, Alasdair  
Front: Georgia, Sheila G, Phillip, Sheila P



## Kettering Ringers

On Saturday 11th we welcomed ringers from the Kettering branch of the Peterborough Guild of Ringers. They arrived in good time and rang Plain Bob, Stedman, Cambridge and Little Bob. Old ringing acquaintance Murray Coleman was one of their number and Gransden was, surprisingly, a new tower for him. Several ringers commented on how nice the bells are and how impressed they were with our notice boards organising ringing events etc. They also liked the cctv set-up.



Kettering branch ringers

## **27th April 2019**

We don't very often have the opportunity to give a tower tour and we were excited to be able to organise one for a group of non-bell ringers who simply wanted a "bell ringing experience".

Holly Jones contacted me to ask if we could arrange something and I explained that we could give a standard tower tour which would include visiting the ringing room, clock room and belfry. During the tour we would see the clock chimes in action and watch a bell being rung full circle in the belfry (with appropriate safety precautions taken). We also offered some basic 1:1 tuition for those of the group who might like to try.

The long-awaited date arrived and Sheila G and I welcomed Holly and her friends to the church detailing again what we had planned. The tour started with the ringing room, taking in the panoramic view of the church and a brief introduction into bell ringing. Then upward to the clock room where the clock and chimes were demonstrated and one of the old clappers, removed in 2000 when the bells were re-hung, was handed around for them to "try the weight".

Finally to the belfry where, with ear plugs fitted, we were able to demonstrate the 2nd bell being rung and other explanations were given as to the working of the bells. There were a lot of questions.

Time for coffee, and back on the ground floor we were joined by local ringers who had kindly agreed to come along and give a demonstration of some ringing. After ringing the bells up we rang call changes and Plain Bob Doubles. Our ringers were able to answer a lot of questions from our visitors, which included two ad hoc visitors who happened to call into the church and whom we invited to join us in the ringing room.

The general reaction from our guests was one of amazement. They have never realised that there was so much to bell ringing and what can be found in a bell tower. Our reaction was one of gratefulness in being given the opportunity to show non-ringers our working environment.

The visit lasted about two hours and was a complete success. We look forward to the next tower tour.



Holly Jones on the spiral staircase  
outside the clock room



Group in the clock room



In the clock room



In the belfry



Leaving the belfry



General ringing



General ringing



General ringing



1:1 tuition



Group in the ringing room

We were invited to write an article for ArtWorks, the magazine for the Association of Ringing Teachers.

**19th April 2019**

Although we don't normally ring church bells during Holy Week other ringing activities continue. This week our tied bell/sim practice was on Monday and after a bit of dodging



practice for Hazel, ringing down for Sue and Plain Bob Minimus for all of us (the latter finally coming together) we dug out some handbells and tried lapping.

To start with we rang Rounds standing in a line. Ringing the bells up for handstroke and down for backstroke. This was too easy, so we then introduced Plain Hunt when each ringer rang the handstroke, swapped places as required by Plain Hunt and then rang the backstroke, and so on. This was also successful.

Then, on to the lapping. Sitting in a square facing each other, this time the ringers remain in their seats and they exchange bells. This is more difficult because the ringers need to know the place notation, (when to swap with who) which was a recent topic as part of our theory work. The Plain Hunt was going so well I thought the ladies were going to ring a quarter peal of it, so took the opportunity to snap them in action.

From there we went on to Plain Bob, which needed a bit more guidance but was equally good fun. More of this at another time I think!



Lapping Plain Hunt Minimus



Happy handbell ringers: L-R Hazel, Lynn, Sue, Georgia

## Fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral

The shocking news of the fire at Notre-Dame cathedral prompted an enormous amount of comment on social media and the national news. A request was made from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to every parish church to toll a bell at 7.00pm on Maundy Thursday for seven minutes. Most churches don't ring their bells during Holy Week but over 1000 churches countrywide are known to have answered the call to show solidarity with the people of France for their 850-year-old cathedral.

We were happy to take part in this ringing and David & Sheila Prest chimed the 5-minute bell at the appointed time. The old No 3 bell was used because it can be heard all over the village and it is one of the oldest bells in the tower (1658). An email was sent to the village email list to advertise this. All our ringers wish to be associated with the ringing.

## Ringers Annual Meeting

Holy Week is the usual time for us to hold our annual ringers' meeting and everyone gathered at Nutbells for this on Maundy Thursday, after the Notre-Dame chiming. Apologies were received from Lynn, Hazel and Susanne (plus Reuben) but everyone else attended and tucked into beer, wine, soft drinks and nibbles.

We had very interesting discussions about what we had done in the last 12 months and what we have planned for this year. The minutes record it all but suffice is to say that we have a busy schedule with lots of exciting opportunities.

Sheila G was elected as tower captain, David P as deputy tower captain and Phillip G as secretary/treasurer. No other nominations.

We always try to keep the website and F/B page up to date, but to help reach an even wider audience we are investigating the feasibility of using Twitter and Instagram. Watch out for tweets in future.

### **13th April 2019**

This week we made our second visit to Biggleswade and once again enjoyed the bells and the friendly welcome given to us. It was the turn of Georgia and Hazel this time and as with last week Rounds and Call Changes were successfully rung and different bells tried out.

When ringing Plain Hunt there was an opportunity for the two to watch different bells to see if they could follow the path, which they did, at least in parts. This inspired them to comment (when we were leaving) that they would like to return and try Plain Hunt 9 on the treble. Game on, this is exciting!

With thanks duly given to Charlotte our host the conversation on the way home was all about bells, with anticipation of further adventures. A subsequent email from Charlotte invited us to return at any time. Very pleasing.



Hazel (left) and Georgia ringing Rounds at Biggleswade

Today we rang a quarter peal in memory of David Armitstead. David was tower captain at Somersham and Sheila and I had rung with him a lot in recent months. He had been suffering from cancer and became very poorly suddenly and passed away on Sunday 7th April. The quarter peal was a Hunts District event but we had been unsuccessful last Saturday, and we all agreed that the re-run today should be to his memory. Ringers included Sheila and me plus four from other towers in the district.

**5th April 2019**

Our busy schedule continues. On Wednesday 3rd April we made the first of two visits to Biggleswade on their practice night to give Lynn and Sue the opportunity to ring on ten bells for the first time. This light ring of ten (13cwt) are ideal for beginners and novice ringers and both Lynn and Sue rang very well to Rounds and call changes. On taking off their coats it was revealed that they were, by co-incidence, wearing identical tee shirts which drew the comment from locals that it must be our tower trademark! Now that's an idea, we'll have to dig out our tower tee shirts and re-introduce the idea!

During one of the ringing sessions we were ringing Rounds quite nicely with Sheila on the treble and me on the tenor when Charlotte (tower captain) shouted something which we thought was "stand". So we duly obliged at the next handstroke but everyone else carried on ringing (the middle 8). Everyone wondered what was happening, not least Sheila and I, until the ringing stopped and we all fell about laughing because we had mis-heard the instruction. Huh! these people from outlying villages!!!

Anyway, we had a great evening and thanks to the Biggleswade ringers for welcoming us. We look forward to our second visit next week with Georgia and Hazel.



Lynn with striped tee shirt   Sue with striped tee shirt

We were due to have six at practice this week, others having prior engagements, but Alsadair was unavoidably distracted (by a dead pigeon in his house) just before the practice and David sent apologies for lateness. However, Phil Marshal from Bluntisham contacted us asking if three of them could come over to ring and of course we welcomed them to do so.

The result was an excellent practice with Georgia ringing two different extents of Plain Bob Doubles on the treble and Lynn almost ringing one without assistance. Good progress indeed! We also rang a very good course of Plain Bob Minor for David, and some call changes.

Many thanks to Phil, Cecily and Robert for visiting us. We look forward to our visit to Bluntisham soon.





L-R: Georgia, Lynn, David, Cecily, Phillip (front), Robert, Phil, Sheila G

Tied bell practice on Friday saw further improvement and understanding of Plain Bob Minimus. We are almost ready to ring on open bells. Keep up the good work everyone.

### 30th March 2019

We are keen to build on recent experiences and to maintain the energy and enthusiasm currently being experienced. You could say "we're on a roll".

Following our successful visit to Caxton on the 5th March we arranged a return visit but this time with more of our ringers and on a Thursday instead of practicing at Gransden. Caxton bell are much lighter than ours and the trebles are a bit "flighty" to less experienced ringers and although we arrived with nervous apprehension everyone adapted to the bells after a few moments ringing.

We had asked if Catherina could join us for an hour and she kindly obliged. Thank you Catherina. This helped us ring Plain Bob Minor and to have a spare ringer for standing behind for plain courses of Bob Doubles and Grandsire. The best ringing of the evening was a practice for our test piece in the forthcoming District striking competition in July. (We are practicing early!).

A request from the tower officers was for us to have rung the bells down by 8.30pm but as we started at 7.00pm we still had 90minutes ringing. Thanks to Elinor Cole (T/C) and the church officers for allowing us to visit for our practice night. We will return!



Ringling at Caxton on our practice night

L-R: Phillip, Alasdair, Sue, Georgia, Sheila G, Sheila P, Hazel, David, Catherina

Tied bell practices are a more or less fixed Friday afternoon event running for two hours from 2.30pm. We began the sessions to learn bell control and progressed to using the simulator to develop listening skills. We still use the sim but we are spending more time at the moment learning to call changes and ring Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Minimus. The objective is to be able to call changes and Plain Hunt from either 1,2 or 3 and ring PB4 on 1,2 or 3.

We are progressing well and ringing courses quite well. The students are realising how quickly everything happens on only four bells but this is an excellent starting point for learning where you pass the treble and about course and after bells. The practice includes a lot of theory when everyone takes part in the discussion and asks questions. It is very exciting.

This week we were looking at the blue line and explaining how we can identify where each bell starts on the line. This led to a closer look at the actual rows and from there how the method is put together. There followed a brief lesson on place notation, explaining what it is and how we can write out a method from it. There was a keenness to try so homework for the week is to use place notation to write out Plain Hunt and Plain Bob on 4,5, and 6 bells. This is even more exciting!!

This weekend will be the second time we have not had a service at Great Gransden. Consequently of course there has been no ringing, and what with our practice being at Caxton this week we are really missing our bells. So, roll on Thursday practice when we can ring our lovely bells again.

More exciting things to come - Four of our novices are visiting Biggleswade to experience ringing on ten bells. There will be a report in two weeks time.

## **16th March 2019**

We are in exciting times as our ringers are given new challenges and experiences. The weekly tied bell practices are really paying off. They give opportunities which are not always possible on a practice night, namely one to one mentoring and group discussion. That is not to say that we don't discuss ringing on a practice night - we do, but in a small group of three or four more detail can be studied.

We had a challenging practice on Thursday because we did not have quite enough ringers to succeed in a touch of Plain Bob Doubles. Those learning the method are not strong enough to deal with slipping off the blue line and with no minders available we rely on instruction from the conductor which can be directed at several people in quick succession. Not easy to do and very easy for ringers to be confused by what is being said.

But, we had some positive results from our efforts. Hazel, Georgia and Sue called Plain Hunt 5 from the treble and we rang plain courses of Grandsire 5. We also practiced our striking competition test piece with good results. We have several ringers at roughly the same stage and it is simply practice and experience which will see us on the next level.

Our weekly silent bell control practice on Friday yielded excellent results. We silenced four bells and had dodging and place making practice and ringing up and down, ending the session with each ringing tenor behind to Grandsire Doubles on the sim.

Achievements - Standing ten times at backstroke - tick! Call changes at backstroke (called by Sue) - tick! Plain Bob Minimus (first blows in the method for Georgia) - tick!

Worn out at the end of the session - tick!

Looking forward to our next ringing - definitely!!



Tied bell practice 15th March 2019  
L-R: Sue, Georgia, Hazel, Phillip

## 8th March 2019

On Tuesday 5th March four of us visited Caxton, our neighbouring parish, for their practice night. We should have been five but Sheila G was poorly with a cold. We were welcomed by Elinor (tower captain) Debbie and Martin.

As there were only seven of us in total we all had the chance to ring quite a lot. The main purpose of our visit was to experience different bells. Georgia and Lynn have only rung at five other towers (apart from Gransden) and they found the lighter Caxton bells (10cwt) and a longer draft quite different to ours. We had some good ringing after the initial familiarisation of the bells. Sue regularly rings at Caxton it being her former home tower, and although she is used to most of the bells there she does not often ring the tenor, which she did very well this evening.

Overall, we had a very pleasant evening which was very beneficial and we hope to return with our whole band for further practice.

Thanks to Elinor, Debbie and Martin for your hospitality.





L-R: Elinor, Debbie, Georgia, Lynn, Phillip, Martin, Sue

Our practice at home on Thursday this week was due to be on the frugal side. Three ringers had sent apologies and at the last minute Sheila G called off due to illness. We turned up with five and a plan to work on Plain Hunt for Georgia and Hazel, but after 15 minutes Alasdair arrived so making us six in number.

As Sheila G was absent David (as deputy tower captain) was in charge. We started by having a not so good ring up (Note to everyone: need to practice this!) but the call changes which followed were very good. When Alasdair arrived we went on to Plain Hunt, safe in the knowledge that we had a tenor to lead off! This was successful so we then swopped 3 and 4. This endeavour went well, so we then swopped 2 and 4, so having a three way swop. This was also well rung. Now, it might be easy for ringers to transpose two numbers in a sequence, but to transpose three is more difficult. The result showed that there is definitely some ropesight kicking in and this was very encouraging.

Following this we decided on Plain Bob with Georgia on the treble and Hazel the two. A plain course was successfully rung, so to test the limits of our capability we tried an extent. This would mean that both Georgie and Hazel would have to work hard and concentrate on their own without a minder. We started well, (calling 2nds obs) and got to the end of the second course. Suddenly one of the more experienced ringers made a mistake and this put the others off and we lost the touch. However, it was an excellent attempt and there is no doubt that we will very soon achieve this goal on our way to ringing quarter peals.

Well done everyone, a really useful practice.

### **1st March 2019**

It is amazing how much can be squeezed into an hour and a half on a practice night, and how quickly the time goes. Last night's practice was full on but all abilities were catered for in a mixture of call changes and change ringing. Well done Sheila G for organising us. We were so busy we nearly forgot the half-time sweets!!!

It included: Ringing up 4 in peal for Lynn, Plain Bob Doubles (120) on the treble for Georgia and Sue, Plain course of Grandsire on the treble for Lynn, Plain course of Plain Bob Doubles inside for Matt (first time), 120 St. Martins for David and Sheila.

Ring down 6 in peal for Georgia. Lynn was encouraged to ring the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> bells to Rounds, which she did very well.

We also had time for the striking competition band to have their first practice (call changes). The competition is in July but we always begin our preparations well in advance. This year we will field a "new" team and this will be an excellent opportunity for our novice ringers to experience competition ringing.

During the notices we confirmed our mini outing on the 6<sup>th</sup> July to three local towers, and our short trip to Caxton on Tuesday next for two of our ringers to experience different bells.

Another highlight of the evening was the presentation of a Level 2 certificate (in the Learning the Ropes scheme) to Sue. Now on to level 3 and preparation for quarter peals!! Well done Sue!



L-R: Alasdair, Sheila G, Matt, Lynn, Sue, David, Georgia, Hazel, Sheila P, Phillip

## 23rd February 2019

Half term has reduced our numbers but we had eight for practice. Unfortunately Sheila G felt unwell part way through and had to go home. David stood in as deputy T/C and although we couldn't fulfil our plans for the practice we made good use of the time and had some useful ringing.

The ringing included call changes (called by Georgia), Mexican Wave (places only) and the achievement of the evening was ringing Plain Hunt on 5 with three novices ringing the front three bells. Although no "minder" was available, we got through several leads and even managed to swop 2 ringers to give experience on different bells. The same three ringers are all on Level 2 of the LTR scheme and will need to ring Plain Hunt on three inside bells in order to achieve Level 3. They are well on the way to managing this.

During the ringing (before Sheila G left the practice), she quietly continued a Level 2 assessment for Sue Taylor and was happy to announce success. We expect the presentation of the certificate at our practice next week.

Celebration of the day was for Georgia's 21st birthday. Ringers had signed a card for her and she had brought cake for everyone, which was lovely. Happy birthday Georgia!



L-R: Georgia reading her birthday cards with Lynn and Sue.

Weekly SIM practice (Friday) was for Lynn only but this was good for 1:1 mentoring and discussion. We talked about improving ringing style to optimise bell control, being able to focus on listening and correcting striking errors, and the technical aspects of up and down dodges. We then practiced dodging and place making. Lynn then rang 120 Grandsire Doubles on the tenor to score a 25% error rate which is a very good score for a novice ringer.

### **10th February 2019**

A winter cold and pre-engagements limited our numbers at practice last Thursday to six. However, we made good use of our time, particularly enabling Georgia to ring a 120 Plain Bob Doubles on the treble for the first time (with no minder). A little help was needed as one might expect but we got through it. Another step on the learning curve! Matt was able to rig the treble to the back five which gave us all the challenge of ringing more slowly to help the tenors. The result was pretty good, but we do prefer to ring all six with the tenor behind!

On Friday we held the weekly tied bell practice, sometimes known as the "sim" practice. Georgia and Sue attended on this occasion and we started by ringing without focussing on the sally when it is caught. It is important not to focus on the sally because this helps the ringer see more of the other ropes. It saves time and makes the ringing style more fluent. This was successfully achieved but it is an ongoing discipline until it becomes automatic. I'll be watching!!

We also practiced dodging and place making and learned Cambridge front work. Of course, this block of work will not be used in real life just yet but the skill is in controlling the bell and remembering the order of work. This was well done.



This was followed by ringing the tenor behind to Grandsire Doubles where striking accuracy is measured and the results are gradually improving week on week.

We finished the session by ringing Rounds on 10 bells. This is a new experience as we are only used to ringing six bells. This prompted lots of discussion about visiting 10-bell towers and cathedrals, something to consider for future outings!

### **3rd February 2019**

On Thursday 31st Jan our new Priest in Charge, the Revd Rachel Blanchflower was licensed in Great Gransden Church. Rachel will be PiC for the benefice group.

To celebrate the occasion we rang a quarter peal in the morning and of course we rang the bells before the service, and as requested, afterwards too.

The ringing was a true celebration as we had most of our own ringers and visitors from St. Edward's church in Cambridge where Rachel had been an ordinand. St.Ed's ringers had contacted me to ask if a few of them could ring with us. We are always pleased to welcome others and we were delighted that they were able to join us. There was lots of chat in the ringing room as well as a lot of ringing which made for a very friendly event. Call changes were rung and afterwards several comments received from parishioners about how nice the bells sounded.

After the service and further ringing a reception was held at the school when the opportunity was made to chat with friends old and new.

Details of the quarter peal and general ringing can be found [here:](https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1269600)  
<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1269600> and [here](https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1269736)  
<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1269736>

The photographs show the quarter peal band and some general photos taken in the ringing room including our friends from St.Edward's.



Quarter peal band  
Back: David, Phillip. Front: Hazel, Sheila P, Catherina,  
Sheila G



**20th January 2019**

What a great week?

First major event was Georgia being presented with her Level 2 certificate having achieved the award last week. Here she is amongst some of her ringing friends in the tower on Thursday practice night.

Her dedication and determination to succeed, and her commitment to the job have enabled her to reach this level in only 7 months. She is already working on Level 3 skills. Well done Georgia.



L-R: Matt, Sue, David, Georgia, Hazel, Sheila P, Alasdair, Sheila G

The second major event, and a real red-letter day for us was our tower winning the Huntingdon District Striking Competition. Just to re-cap, this is the story!!

In October 2018 Gransden Ringers entered the Huntingdon District striking competition. The ringing of each tower entry was recorded and judged independently.

The results were announced on Saturday 19th January 2019 during the Huntingdon District AGM and I am very excited to say that we came FIRST out of six teams in the "advanced" section. The winning team comprised 1. Phillip George (cond), 2. Hazel Pettit, 3. Sheila Prest, 4. Alasdair Catmur, 5. David Prest, 6. Sheila George. We rang call changes.

We owe this success to all our ringers who supported us in our quest. They rang in some of the practice pieces and supported us during our extensive preparations. They are a first class team!

Thanks also to the competing towers, without whom there would be no competition.

The photograph show Phillip and Sheila receiving the district trophy and individual tower award from Sally Mew (Dist Sec) and Geoff Durrant (Dist Chairman).



L-R: Sally Mew (District Secretary), Sheila, Phillip, Geoff Durrant (District Chairman)

If you would like to hear our test piece please follow this link.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_6JL2kSDgsk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6JL2kSDgsk)

## 12th January 2019

Only seven at practice due to unavoidable engagements by some, but we had an excellent practice which included call changes called at backstroke, quite tricky because it requires different bell handling skills; Plain Bob Doubles for Georgia on the treble (first time and very well executed); and a 120 of Plain Bob Minor - a rare achievement but well rung and quite a challenge for a novice band.

This was a good opportunity to assess Georgia for her Level 2 in the LTR scheme. Results next week!!!

We also discussed the forthcoming licensing service of the Rev Rachel and how we would resource ringing the bells after the service because Phillip, Sheila P, Sheila G and Hazel will be in the church unrobing from the choir. All being well we will have six others, and seats will be reserved for the ringers because we anticipate having a full church.



## 8th January 2019

We have just our annual dinner (5th Jan), this year hosted by David and Sheila Prest. Eleven sat down to a bring and share three course meal and enjoyed the relaxed banter, jokes and one of David's quizzes (more difficult this year - we all failed to make the connection between places discovered from the given clues!)

Nevertheless, we had a great time and we look forward to a new year of ringing, refreshed after the Christmas holidays.



Sheila P, David, Alasdair



Lynn's pavlova



Georgia's trifle



Adrian, Matt, Susanne, Sheila P,  
David



Georgia, Lynn, Sheila G, Hazel,  
Matt



George, Lynn, Sheila G

## 4th January 2019

Our first practice of the New Year was a chance to dust off some cobwebs and think about the year ahead. Some are still away or poorly from the winter cold virus but we were able to ring Plain Hunt on 5 and some very creditable Kaleidoscope. Feature of the evening was experience on the heavier bells for Lynn (5), Georgia (4) and Sheila P (6, rung before but not for a long time). Although the bells are only 13.5cwt they turn quite slowly and certainly feel the weight. Some call changes were rung to the achievement to all concerned.

During the notices we talked about the forthcoming licensing of our new Priest In Charge, Rachel Blanchflower on the 31st January. We are trying to arrange some ringing immediately after the service, as requested by the organising committee, and need to find enough ringers, but I think we can manage it. We are looking forward to

welcoming Rachel and will arrange a quarter peal for her in the morning of the licensing.

Meanwhile, Christmas is not quite over, we have our ringers' party on Saturday at David and Sheila's house. Not to be missed!!

## **2nd January 2019**

After a busy Christmas period when we rang for four services within 48 hours we were able to take a break and enjoy family festivities.

As usual we planned to ring a date touch on the 1st January which this year included guest ringers, Jackie Latham (Linton), Vee Webster (Cherry Hinton), Catherina Griffiths (St.Neots), a regular on these occasions! and Mark Banner (Desford Leics).

We rang three methods, Plain Bob, Double Bob and Single Oxford and the ringing was very enjoyable and well struck. It took an hour and ten minutes, about the right pace, and was the 24th New Years Day date touch to be rung here.

After the ringing, all except Vanessa came back to Nutbells for coffee and a chat. Vanessa had to make a long trip to Wales and was not able to stay. Mince pies, biscuits and coffee were enjoyed amidst the chat about ringing.

Thanks for your lovely ringing everyone!



L-R: Sheila, Vanessa, Jackie, Phillip, Mark, Catherina