

At the end of my second year as Ringing Master I am pleased to be writing my report about another very successful year of ringing in the Rural Branch.

With a full and varied programme of events over the last 12 months there has been plenty going on to get involved with.

This year's branch striking competition was held at Mathern, one of our closest neighbouring towers outside the branch when travelling west. James Joynson from the Wotton branch kindly agreed to judge the competition on the day and gave some very detailed feedback for the teams. There were not quite so many teams entered this year but there was still good support for the afternoon and a good standard of ringing by all. My thanks to all who helped out on the day in any way and it would be great to see more teams again next year. Coalpit Heath got the top score on the day and went on to represent the branch at the Croom Trophy competition held at Minchinhampton this year and they achieved 5th place. Congratulations Coalpit Heath.

At the association level for the Penn Trophy competition a team was entered with representatives from around the branch. Having had much more ringing together over the course of the year before hand in the form of quarter peals the band secured a really good result at the competition held at Bisley coming 5th overall a real improvement over previous years, well done to all involved. Continuing on from last year Catherine White-Horne has been a great support in organising ringing relating to the Penn Trophy band and I would once again like to thank her for her fantastic effort to do this.

This year Geoff Pick our assistant ringing master organised an excellent outing on May day bank holiday to South Wales, just over the bridge. With some nice easygoing bells for the day and direct travel along the M4 it was the recipe for a really good day out. With ringing ranging from rounds and call changes to surprise major there was something for everyone on the day and it was generally good ringing all round. For me it was hard to pick a favourite tower between the lovely bells at Caerphilly and Michaelston-y-Fedw, which had been recently overhauled and were also very nice. Great thanks go to Geoff for organising the outing!

This was the second year after COVID we had the opportunity to visit Gloucester Cathedral to ring the for evensong service, again the tower correspondent on the day told me we are the only branch to visit all year. There were a good number of branch members there in the afternoon with some new faces there for the first time; we also had some welcome support from some visitors boosting our strength on 12 bells. For the ringing on 12 we stuck to rounds and call changes but there was also some change ringing on the back 10 and a nice piece of surprise major on the back 8.

All this along with the branch practices, quiz, and BBQ show how active the rural branch is which is great to see. Unfortunately I am not always able to make it to quite a lot of the branch events especially through the summer and so again I am eternally grateful to Geoff for being at so many of the branch events and running the ringing in my absence. Thanks Geoff I really do appreciate it.

Thank you all for your support of the branch through another year of ringing.

Matt Johnson.

Ringing Master.