

NEW

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 1

JANUARY 1989

NORTH AVON BRANCH

ABSON

ALMONDSBURY

BITTON

COLPAT HEATH

DOYNTON

ALVESTON

FILTON

FRAMPTON  
COTTELELL

DRYHAM

IRON ACTON

MANGOTSFIELD

OLVESTON

PUCKLECHURCH

SYSTON

THORBURY

WAPLEY

WARMLEY

TYTHERRINGTON

WESTERLEIGH

WINTERBOURNE

\*\* HAPPY NEW YEAR \*\*

Introducing the first of the new quarterly Magazines to you we would like to take the opportunity to tell you a little about us (item 5), and if you like the idea - we'll hear from you in future issues.

FIRSTLY - We need ideas for a name for this Masterpiece, must be original etc etc ! Ideas to Linda - address below.

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Out and About in the Branch  
Bob Doubles  
Tragic Ballad  
Did you know ? / Can you tell us ?  
Bitton Bells and Bitton Ringers

NEXT ISSUE -

The launch of the appeal for Frenchay Bells  
Articles and/or Information for the magazine to be sent to :  
Linda Drew. 8 Sydenham Rd, Cotham, Bristol. Tel 241860.

NORTHAVON BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman : Mike Powell  
Secretary : Linda Drew  
Ringing Masters : David Powell & Gerald Skelley

NORTHAVON BRANCH CALENDAR

January 14	Thornbury *	
February 11	Westerleigh *	
March 12	Frampton Cotterell (Bob Doubles course) 2:30 onwards	
April 1	Association AGM Stroud	
April 8	Striking Competition & Quarterly Meeting - venue to be confirmed	
May 13	Coalpit Heath *	Alveston River in 7.30
June 10	Pucklechurch *	2 pm 3.25
July 1	Branch Outing to Windsor	→ David or Gerry
July 8	Dyrham *	
August 12	Almondsbury *	
September 9	Quarterly Meeting Frampton Cotterell & Skittles Evening	
October 14	Mangotsfield *	
November 11	Winterbourne *	
December 9	AGM Bitton & Quiz Evening	

\* Branch Practise Evenings 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Dates to be confirmed in next issue for the following

Penn Trophy -  
 Croome Trophy -  
 Association Course - 15<sup>th</sup> APRIL Tewkesbury. Jim Swindell  
 Peal Week



## A TRAGIC BALLAD

It is of an old gent I'll have you know  
Who rang at St Paul's and at Cornhill also.  
He lived all alone with young William , his son,  
Who was promising well, though not yet forty one.

One evening the father admonished young Will:  
'You must come down to practice tonight at Cornhill,  
For afore you reach sixty, if no ill befalls,  
I believe I could get you a ring at St Paul's.'

'Oh Father, dear Father,' young William replied,  
'I can't tell you lies, though you know how I've tried -  
I've promised tonight (and I mean to be there)  
For to ring at St Martin's in Trafflegar Square.'

'My son,' quoth the sage, 'do not enter that tower -  
You never shall ring with that horrible shower!  
You'll change your mind quickly, avoiding disgrace,  
When I tell you it's CUMBERLANDS ring in that place!'

Said William, 'A young lady ringer I've met  
And on her my affections most firmly are set.  
Your rooted objections to me are no barrier  
For I love her, dear Father, and I'm going to marry 'er!'

'Now William,' said Father, 'just listen to me  
For if you insist it's cut off you will be,  
And when I expire and am laid into dust  
I'll leave all my cash to the Barron Bell Trust.

'I've rung all my life, and I still must insist  
That what you're describing can't ever exist.  
I've heard people tell that there's women what ring -  
But a lady - why, no , boy, there ain't no such thing.'

Next month they were married, that couple so bold,  
And the poor father's grief was a sight to behold.  
His brain is quite gone, the psychiatrist thinks,  
For he even goes wrong in three courses of Cinques!

But Will and his bride, also sad to relate,  
Just could not escape from the vengeance of Fate.  
When poverty pressed, their possessions they sold,  
And now live in Devon, near Itch-in-the-Fold.

And there they are forced to go up in the tower  
Ringing rounds and call-changes for hour after hour.  
But even that fate ain't as bad as it sounds -  
For they could be in Cornwall - and only ring rounds!

(Anon)

DID YOU KNOW.....?

Many of the complaints concerning excessive noise of church bells are based not on the volume of sound but on the harshness and general discord produced ..... Though it may well be true that the church has been there longer than the houses that surround it, this is no defence in law if it is established that a nuisance has been held to be created. Many ringers are unaware of this ruling.

CAN YOU TELL US.....? (For future issues)

If you are ringing your first quarter peal or peal,

Any gossip!

Possible ongoing features. We are interested in doing a Northavon Pub Guide for ringers (see item 5). Please tell us where you go, when, is it good beer?, Food available?, Juniors catered for ?...

Do you have any traditions in your tower that may be unusual or different? Do you have any claims to fame !?

Have you solved any particular problems or difficulties which you could tell us about and maybe help others ?

Have you any problems or difficulties unsolved that others may be able to help with ?

Any other ideas or contributions.

## ST MARY'S CHURCH - BITTON

### THE ELLACOMBE CHIMES

At Bitton we have the original system of Ellacombe Chimes. This is a method of chiming the bells devised by the Rev. H.T. Ellacombe, who was the vicar at Bitton from 1817 to 1850. In this method the bell remains still (in the down position) and is struck by pulling a rope attached to a hammer. The ropes are accessible in the church porch and enable a single person to ring the bells. Over the years several methods of chiming have been devised but the "Bitton" method is supposed to be kindest to the bells and least likely to cause damage.

Ringers often left records of their performances in the form of painted peal boards which still hang in the belfries of great cathedrals and quiet village churches throughout the country.

It is from one of these painted peal boards that we know that the first peal was rung at Bitton on 9th July 1901 on the original six bells.

### THE OCTAVE AT BITTON

St Mary's church at Bitton has a ring of eight bells with a tenor of about 14 cwt. It has a reputation of having some of the most tuneful and pleasant bells to be found in any country parish church. They are tuned in the Key of E.

Until 1936 there were six bells and they were hung on wooden frames. The bells were not so easy to ring as they are today.

In 1936 the six bells were restored and rehung and two new treble bells were added in memory of Blanche Ellen Taylor the wife of Frank Henning William Taylor, MA, who was vicar of Bitton at that time.

The bells were rehung on metal frames and ball-bearing mountings and the original six were brought in tune with the two new ones. The bells were dedicated on 5th December 1936.

### THE ORIGINAL SIX BELLS

	Cwts	Qtrs	
Treble	6		1694
2	7		1633
3	7	2	1633
4	9		1669
5	11	2	1740
Tenor	18		1913

## THE NEW EIGHT BELLS

	Cwts	Qtrs	Lbs	Date	Note
Treble	4	2	16	1936	E
2	5	1	3	1936	D Sharp
3	5	3	22	1694	C Sharp
4	6	2	8	1633	B
5	7	0	6	1633	A
6	8	2	20	1669	G Sharp
7	11	1	2	1740	F Sharp
Tenor	14	2	11	1913	E

It will be noticed that the overall weight of the present back bells was reduced quite considerably, particularly the tenor which was reduced by 3.5 cwt. The bells were made smaller by a method known as "chip tuning" which involves the skilful removal of large chips of metal from the outer rim of the bell, until its note and tone are correct. It is also believed that some form of "skimming" of the bells on a lathe was used.

## INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions on the bells are as follows:-

Treble	I was added to this ring by sev. gifts, 1694 procured by 1. Bush and Rog. Harding L.C.
2nd	W.H.A.B., anno dommin, 1633
3rd	W.H.A.B., anno domini. 1633
4th	Robert Anthony Woodward, C.W., 1669, W.P.R.P.
5th	Mr John Palmer and Richard Francis, churchwardens, 1740.
Tenor	Come when I call to serve God all, 1633, W.H.A.B.

## THE BITTON RINGERS

Tower Captain : Sue Jay (Bristol 322424)  
Secretary : Anne Boulton (Bristol 322227)

Practice Night : Mondays 7.45 pm - 9.00 pm

Service Ringing : First and Third Sundays 9.45 am - 10.30 am

We feel confident in claiming that Bitton Tower holds the record for having the most, longest serving, least experienced ringers in the North Avon Branch!

The majority of the present band have been ringing since the late 60's and early 70's, but never progressed beyond sloppily rung "Cross, Queens, Whittington, and Titums". However, contrary to popular belief, there was an active band "practising" from that time to this!

The light dawned when, a couple of years ago, a Bitton ringer ventured into another tower and came back to reveal that there was actually more to ringing than "Cross, Queens, Whittington and Titums"! About the same time an Association Practice was held at Bitton, and we dared to attend. The shock to the visitors was so great that they firmly took us in hand. We now like to think we haven't looked back, and we would like to thank our visitors for their help and patience.

### Claims to fame :

Apart from the claim above we think we may also hold the following records (Please correct us if you disagree!) within the Branch -

Highest proportion of female ringers (10 to 6)

Youngest average age (35)

Greatest justification for a creche (10 children under 5 - obviously these are not ringers - yet !!)

Longest training period prior to an 'All our own ringers' quarter peal (we aim to achieve this in 1989 by which time it will be over 18 years)

### Traditions :

Christmas and Easter mornings we ring from 7 am to 8 am

Ringling for Weddings and special occasions we always do some Firing

Ringling in the New Year - we hope this tradition has been revived this year after a short break

Ringling with half-muffles for deaths in the parish

Pub Guide :

Our regular post-practice Pub is the White Hart in Bitton.

This used to welcome the ringers each monday but unfortunately has just changed hands. We can only report that they have started live music on (all?) Monday nights, but we will update this at a later date - unless we have moved to the Swan at Swineford!

So - now you know all about Bitton! We hope that in future editions each tower can give us similar notes about themselves. We are very interested in your local 'ringing' pubs so we can visit them soon to give them 'Bell Ratings' for a Ringers Pub Guide. Any other contributions to this guide which are not printed in this magazine should be sent to Sue Jay, phone no. above.

#### NEW YEAR AT BITTON

Last year two new ringers made it their ambition  
To revive at Bitton what once was Tradition.  
They'd ring in 2000, they thought they'd be fine -  
But the rest of the tower said 'No - '89'.

Throughout '88 these two worked through the dangers  
Of learning control, then rounds and call-changes.  
So the ringers were ready but it just wasn't right -  
Something was needed to start off the night.

Thus a party was set to begin around eight,  
And by shopping in Scotland, a Haggis we ate.  
But down this far south, bagpipes aren't at their best -  
So in Bells it was toasted - drank some, rang the rest !

(RCP/ACF)