

RDL's Report 2017 to 2018

The focus of method learning during 2017 for the Newport, Olney and Sherington circle of ringers has been Stedman. This was prompted by the method for the Guild 10-bell competition at Olney in November. Although we were not able to put together a band for the competition, significant progress was made with this. Quite a few ringers who had never rung Stedman at the start of the year were ringing touches of Doubles and courses of Triples by the end. At the 10-bell competition, the Olney band did a fine job of looking after all the visiting bands and the event went well.

Meanwhile, in Bletchley, the band continues largely under its own steam with help from Fenny Stratford, and the Maids Moreton learners continue to make good progress. At Lavendon, there is some enthusiasm in the village for forming a new band and support from Olney is expected to be key in this.

Meanwhile, there has been a lot of activity on the Towers and Bells front. The sound control roof at Olney is now very nearly complete with only a few gaps to fill. The work has been entirely carried out by local effort with ringers from various towers helping out. At Lathbury, a potential new treble has been found, thanks to a bequest from Bob Winstanley to the Keltek Trust. This project now has the approval of the PCC. The sale of Astwood church is being watched with interest. The Keltek Trust has been made aware of the possibility that these bells may need to be rescued. Loughton's bells and frame have been removed and a transformed ring is expected in the next month or so. Hanslope's re-hanging seems to be imminent and Calverton are due to be augmented later this year. So plenty of progress on that front.

However, I think we should be clear that the majority of this activity is being organised and carried out by local ringers. This is what we all should be doing all the time. Having branch officers directly involved doesn't make a lot of difference. In fact, it can hinder progress as dependencies on someone outside a band can be built up and local experience is not gained. There is also the tendency for activities to be given a weight and respectability that they may not deserve by attaching the name of the branch or Guild to them. There is a lot of this in the Central Council and, I suspect, at Guild level also. On the other hand, ringers who are perfectly capable of helping are put off taking on Branch roles because of the pressure put on them by Branch members.

We should ask ourselves if ringing in North Bucks needs the branch officers it currently has. Is there anything to be gained by having a central focus or, with modern communications, education, and wealth, are individual ringers now better placed to guide their own destinies? When the branch was formed, ringing, and life in North Bucks was very different but is there merit in going back to basics and concentrating on the key roles? Chairman/President (an interested member of the local clergy), Secretary, Treasurer, Guild Reps. The Branch Committee, consisting of a representative from each tower could easily be set up on FaceBook. The education aspect is now pretty much wrapped up by ART and there seems little point in re-inventing that wheel.

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