

Peterborough Branch Steward's Report 2021 - Nick Elks

Since the resumption of (almost) regular ringing in Summer 2021 I have attempted to visit the towers without a local band in order to check the condition of the bells, fittings, frames and environs. I have assumed that towers with a local band are able to check their own bells - unless I have been specifically asked to check them out for them.

Lutton have woodworm in the headstocks and part of the frame. I have classed these as unringable and informed the Dove Stewards. Taylors have been out at my request and have confirmed my diagnosis and are in agreement that they should not be rung full circle. A quote is/has been given to the Churchwarden to fit new headstocks, though I suspect that they will not be getting this work done any time soon - there is a lack of money, and it is doubtful how much longer the Church might remain open due to the dwindling congregation. The bells can still be chimed, but not rung full circle.

Wittering were inspected - there is a fair amount of debris around the frame and one or two bolts that hold the wheel to the bell are missing. Otherwise they remain in good condition.

Lower Benefield bells were checked and were found to be in good condition - no missing bolts or significant wear evident in the bell fittings. There is a problem with a lot of flies in the ringing room, but nothing else of note.

Oundle bells have had their wheels repaired and treated in the past couple of years. The frame has some slight damage due to rot from dripping water above and beetle infestation. The frame has been treated with insecticide, and there is no longer water dripping onto the frame from above, and it could do with being repaired to avoid any further deterioration. The bells remain ringable, though they could do with a complete overhaul at some point if funds become available.

Cotterstock bells have been checked and apart from a loose crown staple in No4 and the start of a crack in No1 stay, they remain in good condition. have been rung for a few peals/quarter peals since August.

Polebrook were inspected and found to have a damaged/collapsed bearing on the treble. This has now been replaced and that bell goes a lot better now than it has done for several years. A good clean up was required with several years worth of debris around the frame. The metal frame is in need of repainting, it is quite exposed to the elements and there are many patches of corrosion in evidence. A work party is in the planning to accomplish this repainting task.

The Cathedral has had some attention recently in a bid to improve the go of the bells. The No11 clapper has been rebushed, bells #7, #8 and #10 have been checked and altered for oddstruckness, and a project is underway to improve the sound from the trebles to better reach the ringing chamber. There is also now a Hawkear installation in place to provide data so the band can work on improving their striking, both individually and collectively. The Hawkear installation needs some tweaking, but it is now up and running.

Yarwell are due to be getting some new ropes soon, and I have given advice to the Churchwarden on what to order.

Other towers in the branch are either being actively maintained by the local band, or there is no ringing at present. I shall attempt to get to those latter towers over the coming months to ensure they do not fall into disrepair.

Nick Elks - Branch Steward