

## Master's report 2010-11

It's been really good to see the progress into method ringing that a lot of members have made this year, especially the freshers. Friday night practices at Benets have been the focus for this. Several people tried plain hunting for the first time in Michaelmas, before moving onto bob doubles, and now grandsire, stedman and treble-bobbing. Sunday afternoon quarters have been used well, and almost every one has been a first of some kind or another – Jenny, Will, Helen and Edward have rung their first quarters in the last year (Jenny and Edward both took up ringing at Cambridge), and Nahum, Teifi and Helen have rung their first inside. Hopefully from this platform everyone can make even more progress next year! I am aware, though, that there hasn't been the same progress drive among more experienced members, so maybe this is something that my successor can work on. Quarter peals at GSM have been very useful though, and certainly a tradition worth continuing, especially since they give the opportunity for people to move into 10-bell ringing.

We made the decision in October not to advertise the first practice at Benets in the same way we usually do, since last year several people came and never came back! As a result, the first practice at Benets was poorly attended and fairly miserable. Since then, however, it has become the best attended ringing session of the week. Ringing at all other times has generally been well attended, although there was a slightly concerning lull in the middle of Lent term. Attendance on a Sunday evening has been particularly variable, and we often rely on non-student members and Cambridge Youths whose help is very much appreciated. It would be nice if a few more people could drag themselves out of bed earlier on a Sunday morning as well.

There is still a bit of a split between people who come to Benets, and those who come to StAG and particularly to GSM. I'd encourage as many people to come to StAG practices as possible – the bells are easier to ring than Benets and so it's a good place to make progress in new methods on 5 or 6 bells as well as on 8. GSM ringing is often a fresher-free zone, but I hope that this term more of you will take the opportunity to ring there regularly – they're lovely bells and we don't ring terrifying 12-bell methods, so if you're good enough for service ringing at Benets, you'll be good enough for evening ringing at GSM.

We ran three Saturday afternoon training sessions at StAG in Michaelmas term. The first was very popular, although we only managed to keep two learners, with another two starting in Lent term. In hindsight, some initial training for the teachers might have been helpful, and reduced the amount of steeplekeeping required.

There's been a wide range of social events this year. In May Week we enjoyed the traditional rounders match, punt outing and the Alternative Dinner, which was enjoyable despite the severe austerity measures. The Freshers' Week squash and pub crawl were both well attended, and for once most of the freshers who came actually became active members of the Guild. 15 students (plus two recently-students) were at the Christmas meal at Robinson, which was really good fun and a good mixer between those who normally come to StAG and those who normally ring at Benets – thanks to Steve and his kitchen team for organising the food. Socials are still organised on a slightly ad hoc basis – thanks to Matthew and George for arranging formals and Luke for leading a pub crawl around Mill Road – and I found myself coordinating fewer and fewer as dinner organisation stacked up, so appointing someone other than the Master to arrange these next year could be a good idea.

We've all benefitted from the assistant master's enthusiasm for cycle outings, of which there have been three this year. Thankfully he has a knack for arranging them on sunny days, so they've all been enjoyable and given us the opportunity for lots of quarter peals even when attendance has been on the low side.

There was a much higher turnout of younger members on Guild Week this year, probably due to the availability of camping. I'd encourage all the students to think about coming along to Guild Week this year, even if just for a couple of days – the non-residents are really friendly, they don't expect you to be an incredible ringer (which is something I worried about!) and you improve loads over the week.

The SUA was a very successful weekend for us this year, and we brought home both the 6-bell and 8-bell tankards from an enjoyable day out in London. We returned to London the next weekend for the London Outing, and in February a few of us made it along to the Joint Outing with the OUS around Watford. We also had a great time at Freddie's house for New Year, where Freddie rang his first peal, Max organised another excellent outing (to Wales), and a date touch of London and Yorkshire major was scored. In between the ringing, we experienced some local industrial history and enjoyed a game of poohsticks at Ironbridge, and sampled a variety of locally brewed beverages.

The dinner at Jesus was a great success, and had a very high student turnout (15, compared to 7 last year). Helen and Steve rang in the dinner touch for the first time, a particular achievement for Helen who'd never heard of stedman before.

Our occasional 'social' handbell nights still attract the same 5 people every week despite every attempt to promote it to more people. Bringing handbells along to Benets at the end of last term did introduce lots more members to handbell ringing but was a bit distracting to the towerbell ringers. Meanwhile, those very keen resident members have been taking part in several handbell peals for both the Guild and the Youths, culminating in a Guild peal of Bristol Maximus in April.

Tune-ringing on the streets of Cambridge at Christmas raised £75 towards restoring the Guild handbells, and generous donations of non-resident Guild members doubled this. Tune-ringing practices were also great fun and a good way of getting freshers into the Guild.

Much of this year's success is due to the hard work of the other officers, on whom I have dumped all the difficult tasks. George and Matthew have done a lot of work very efficiently, and Max has taken on far more than the assistant master's traditional duties, including organising dinner day peals. I'm very grateful to everyone who's done some little (or not so little) thing to help me out, and also to everyone who's been so enthusiastic at Guild events over the past year. I hope you've enjoyed it and are looking forward to next year!