

St Botolph's Church Saxilby

Annual Parochial Church Meeting - 2026

Tower Captain's Report for 2025

Keeping the bells ringing proved a real challenge in 2025, there were highs and there were lows. With 6 bells and only 5 regular local ringers for the first half of the year, we were heavily reliant on support from visiting ringers, particularly our friend Richard Sutton from South Scarle on most Sunday mornings and Martin Mitchell on our practice nights. There were several occasions when we only managed 5 bells.

By the middle of the year, we had 5 learners in training and things were looking up, with Chris Rainthorpe and Peter Watson leading regular Silent practices at the Tuesday night Ringing School, in addition to the regular practices on a Thursday night. Then tragedy struck when we lost Peter who died suddenly from a heart attack on Sunday 8th June, having rung for his last service earlier that day. (*A copy of Peter's obituary in the Lincoln Guild Report is given below.*) The ringers gathered in tribute to Peter at the practice on 13th June, with the bells half-muffled.

Keeping going after this sad loss was a difficult time for the ringers, but it helped when Gail Dove came back to us on a regular basis and then we had 2 ringers from Gainsborough supporting us regularly on our practice nights. For the rest of the year, we managed to ring all 6 bells on most Sundays. The quality of ringing was variable, but everyone tried their best; most of the time it was call changes, with some simple methods when possible. In total, we rang for 48 services during the year, and we had 41 open practices. The bells rang in the New Year, and there was special ringing for VE Day80 and VJDay80.

The bells had become increasingly difficult to handle, particularly in the cold weather, so it was a great relief to the ringers when the planned repair work by John Taylor and Co eventually got under way at the end of September. The work involved lifting the bells, cleaning and replacing bearings, full refurbishment of all the clappers, re-screwing of all wheels, re-painting and re-aligning ceiling bosses. We were extremely grateful to three of our ringers (Chris, Gail and Paul) who provided local labour saving £1456.00, to the Lincoln Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers for a very generous 30% grant and to the PCC for paying the final bill; the final cost was £6,179.90 (+VAT). It was a pleasure to start ringing the bells again on 19th October after a 3-week break and to feel how much better they were to ring – definitely money well spent.

In October, we enjoyed another of our annual ringing outings when we rang at Alford, Willoughby. Spilsby and Old Bolingbroke, followed by an evening meal at The George & Dragon, Hagworthingham.

In November, some of the ringers attended Jenny Clarke's Wellbeing Event in the Village Hall and we were delighted to gain 2 new recruits from the day; arrangements were then made for their training.

We ended the year with a Social in the church hall after our last practice before Christmas. Good striking, albeit just call changes, at Christmas, concluded another busy year.

David Turner (Tower Captain)

PETER WATSON – Saxilby

Peter first started ringing at St Botolph's Church, Saxilby, in early 1973 under the tuition of the late Walter Cox, tower captain at that time. He soon developed into a very capable ringer and a loyal member of the band. He regularly attended practices and Service ringing for the next 15 years, achieving 18 Quarter Peals up to treble bob standard, taking part in numerous Striking Contests and being part of the winning band in 1982.

His other interests took him away from ringing in September 1987, but the Saxilby ringers were delighted to have him back 36 years later when he accepted an invitation to have another go. He returned in January 2023 and soon became a loyal, dedicated and much-loved member of the band. His renewed enthusiasm quickly led him to assist in training others, registering with ART and helping with a weekly silent ringing school. It was a tragic loss when Peter died from a heart attack on Sunday 8th June 2025, having rung for his last service earlier that day. A dear ringing colleague and friend, taken so suddenly and sadly missed,
David Turner