

# ODD BOB



**Newsletter of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers**  
website: [odg.org.uk/](http://odg.org.uk/)



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## **From your Editor...**

Don't forget to check regularly the Guild website at [odg.org.uk/](http://odg.org.uk/) and your branch website.

In particular the EBSB Fund Raising website address is: [bellfund.org.uk](http://bellfund.org.uk).

Contributions for the next issue, please, by the end of April 2020.

Rob Needham

## **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

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## **Master's Mutterings**

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For a long time, I have marked the passing years by the amount of daylight at practice nights. After the long summer evenings when it is warm and light at nine o'clock, we now have the winter months when we arrive in darkness to a dimly lit church, and possibly chilly ringing room. What a contrast to the heat of the summer when sandals and shorts are the preferred dress code and a ringing room with a fan is a positive blessing.

The summer brings a plethora of wedding ringing, tower outings, fetes, barbecues and a general air of celebration. We have had much to celebrate with the ODG Team winning the Ringing World National Youth Striking Competition in July at St Francis Xavier, Liverpool. It was a superb achievement for everyone involved in the preparation and the successful outcome and, again, I am delighted to congratulate Izzy (South Oxon), Daniel (Reading), Corey (Central Bucks), Ben (EBSB), Thomas (Reading), Sophie (Old North Berks), Dougie (North Bucks) and Josh (Old North Berks) not forgetting the adults who, nurtured, coached, persuaded and supported all the team, especially Colin Newman and Jenny Page. Thank you all for putting our younger ringers right in the spotlight.

The success of the ODG young ringers neatly takes me to our more mature ringers – of which I am one! From time to time I overhear comments which can be translated to something like, 'There are an awful lot of old ringers and we need to do something about it'. Yes, we do need to recruit, retain, encourage and support young recruits and there is much going on in many parts of the ODG to achieve this. More needs to be done and more will be done.

We also value our stalwart ringers; older, maybe wiser, often hugely experienced, sometimes just taking first steps into their ringing journey. In my travels around the Guild territory, especially away from the city and larger town centres, these are the ringers who keep the small churches and village bells sounding out across the local communities; communities who most appreciate hearing their bells being rung for services and practices. The more skilful the rounds, call changes or doubles, the

more pleasure our ringing brings to many non-ringers and worshippers alike; the music is a resonant comfort and an echo of centuries.

So, let us make all young ringers feel excited about developing their ringing knowledge and skills, welcome them on every occasion and cherish the loyal, steadfast members too.

And finally, by the time this Odd Bob edition is in the towers, Christmas will be just a few weeks away. At this time ringing comes to the fore, congregations will expect to hear the bells at carol services, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, ringing out the old year and bringing in 2020. Enjoy the festivities and recognise how important our ringing is to so many people who never see us, but they hear our message.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

## **Module 1 course at Abingdon**

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On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June, I attended a one-day course towards *Module 1: Teaching Bell Handling*, through the ART Teacher Training Scheme. This session was specifically organised for young ringers in the Oxford Diocesan Guild, with 7 attendees from Year 9 through to university, alongside some additional helpers. I was the only Oxford University Society representative due to an unfortunate mismatch with term dates. The session was motivated by the understanding that in order to secure the future of ringing, we must engage the younger generation.

Practical sessions were held on the 10 bells at St Helen's in Abingdon with theory sessions in the nearby parish centre. The practical sessions showcased some interesting techniques for teaching specific aspects I saw for the first time, though testing them out with both left- and one-handed ringers presented unexpected challenges! These ranged from fielding wayward ropes to exercises for dealing with specific idiosyncrasies. The theory sessions discussed various teaching philosophies and constructively drew on ideas from coaching in other skills, such as canoeing, cycling, and cricket.

The session was organised by Susan Read, and presented by Pip Penney. Lunch comprised no less than four varieties of sliders with matched toppings and accompaniments, and a crunchy apricot slice to finish – many thanks to Susan for all her hard work in preparing this. The standard order of events for such a course was complicated by an afternoon wedding, for which we rang a musical touch of Grandsire Triples; the bride was only 20 minutes late, which didn't disrupt the day too much and gave us more time with our desserts!

I personally chose to attend because most of my teaching experience has been only as a short term substitute, so I thought I would benefit from the long term progress arc and the structure and support that ART provides. My own handling issues, including a persistent "floating hand", also led to a lack of confidence in teaching handling, but this was somewhat resolved in the practical sessions, culminating in a demonstration of effective prompting. I look forward to completing the rest of the module, with online resources and a teaching logbook to tap into with support from my ART mentor, and a final assessment to become accredited.

Craig Robertson

## **Younger Young Ringers outing – Six ring sixes!**

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This time our outing wasn't interrupted by a single TV personality, unlike the previous two outings! On Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August we visited three quiet village churches with particularly light bells in the South Oxon Branch. We met with six younger ringers (9 – 14 years) from the Old North Berks, Oxford City and Vale of White Horse branches. There were also two older teenage ringers, three parents and five older ringers.



Berrick Salome, (6, 7 cwt) tower was built from wood and was somewhat small, but very attractive in the afternoon sunshine. We were surprised to find an art class taking place in the churchyard with about six elderly artists studiously drawing the church. We hope we didn't disturb their peace too much!

The second tower, Drayton St Leonard (6, 6cwt) had been rehung and retuned a few years ago. The bells had a glorious tone with a lovely hum. Despite their lighter weight, the tenors were not quite so easy for child ringers as the first

tower but we rung some plain bob doubles with the help of some of the older ringers.

At the third tower, Shabbington (6, 6 cwt), Daphne brought out the cakes and drinks she had brought for everyone. She is renowned for her home made cakes and scones and everyone tucked in before we enjoyed another easy light six, ringing Stedman and plain bob as well as rounds and call changes.

The nine year old needed some help to ring in the right place, but the others all rang (and called) decent call changes. Five of them trebled to Bistow Doubles (something new for many of the adults). And two rang inside to doubles methods. It was a pleasure watching the young people ringing together and even managing to ring the tenors, something only one from a light tower had been able to do before.

Outings like this are hopefully helping our young ringers not only to enjoy ringing more, but to realise that there are others like them to meet and ring with.

Susan Read, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

## **Extra handling lessons for new learners in the Old North Berks Branch!**

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It is difficult to give new learners the attention they deserve during a normal practice night. So since March 2019, the Old North Berks (ONB) Branch Ringing School has focussed on providing extra "Learning the Ropes 1" (LTR1) Rope Handling practices for the newer learners in the ONB branch. Attending an extra hour of teaching each Saturday morning can really help a learner to improve and join in with normal ringing in their own tower more quickly.

In the eight months since March, twenty-seven ringing teachers from in and around the ONB branch have helped teach, and fifteen learners have taken part at the LTR1 Rope Handling sessions. We hold the lessons at a tower where a full simulator is in place so that a number of teachers are able to teach on a one to one

basis with many learners at the same time and not annoy the neighbours. It is fun to teach together and a camaraderie has developed between the learners too.

Several branch members attended ART courses to learn how to teach ringing this year and have taken advantage of the Saturday morning sessions to get more practice and confidence in teaching ringing. Hopefully by the end of the year, four ringing teachers will have been accredited and more are working toward accreditation from in and around the ONB branch.

Until August we ran LTR2 Foundation Skills sessions at a different tower practice night each week but numbers dwindled as our learners improved in their ringing and incidentally learned that they were welcome to choose whichever nearby practice they would like to attend every week. So those Branch Ringing School practices are currently suspended. They are perhaps better suited to the lighter evenings. We intend to restart them in April 2020 when the clocks go forward.



*Learner Lyn Thornton with teacher Ryan Mills*

Susan Read, Branch Training Officer  
training-officer@onb.odg.org.uk

## **Education in ODG**

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Colin Newman has been elected as the new chairman of the Guild's Education sub-committee (EDC), and whilst getting to grips with the workings of the group as it stands today, he is also looking at opportunities for change in order to meet the needs of today's ringing community.

There was no training meeting held in the last year (bad times) however one is currently being planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2020 (good times) and there will be more information on this distributed via the Branch Secretaries. Continuing on the good news, unlike the training meeting, all of the 4 traditional courses have been run, providing development opportunities at all levels from Plain Hunt to Advance Surprise Major and higher numbers skills. The number of applicants for the last Michaelmas course was surprisingly low and something for the committee to try to understand.

Looking forward, as mentioned above, the EDC will be looking to understand and implement any changes required to better serve the needs or the ever-changing ringing population. The name of the group is currently under review, as it seeks to identify more closely with its working practices, and a draft set of working objectives is under development into which the group will align its day to day activities. How this way of working will interface into current Guild practices is not quite understood, but it should be good fun trying to find out 😊

Also, and amongst other things, key items on the forward horizon include:

- A review of the Guild Young Ringers Award (YRA) to help it fit in the lives of the modern youth.
- A review of the current Guild courses on offer to understand if there are any gaps, and if so fill them.
- Youth 'Roadshow'. A three stage tour of the Guild encouraging the 130+ ringers under the age of 21 identified within the Guild, to join their ringing counterparts for some fun and games.
- A review of Branch level training, what we can learn from it and where we can help.

## **Development success – and an opportunity**

The hard work put in by the team representing the Guild at the Ringing World



*This year's 'whole team' wedged into Jenny Page's Vauxhall Zafira*

National Youth Contest (RWNYC) paid off this year when they were placed overall first in the competition, bringing home the Whitechapel Trophy for the first time. This group is by no means a closed membership, quite the contrary, it meets monthly at various locations around the Guild and is always looking for new blood to replace those who ultimately become 'too old' to take part. The practice itself is focussed on doing the simple things well, and any ringer under the age of 18 who can hunt the treble to Triples unaided is welcome to come along. If interested,

please make contact via [RWNYC@odg.org.uk](mailto:RWNYC@odg.org.uk)

Finally, if anyone has ideas for the Education group, any specific training requests, or would like to get involved, do please make contact via [edc@odg.org.uk](mailto:edc@odg.org.uk) which will reach both the Chairman and the Secretary.

Colin Newman

## **Young Bell Ringers' Outing to the Vale of White Horse**

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I organised a half term outing with four towers with the help of Tony Crabtree. When we arrived at the first tower, a funeral was about to start. I am very grateful to the tower captains who had already arranged to swap over two of the towers so that our outing would not be too disrupted.

The outing was attended by thirteen young ringers from five branches of the ODG. Eight more mature ringers accompanied them, one of whom, Paul Lucas, kindly took lots of photos.

The following report was received from Simon Fuentes, a French national aged 12. I wish I could write as well as this in another language!

Suesan Read

## **Report about bell ringing**

On Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, all the young bell ringers went on a special trip in the Vale of the White Horse around Oxfordshire.

First we arrived at Longcot but we didn't have to climb any stairs as the bell ringing chamber was on the ground floor: no exercise in the early morning!



Our next destination was Faringdon. Unfortunately, the church had a tune mechanism with many cables on the roof, and when the bell ropes touched them it made an awful sound. Then we had a ploughmans lunch cooked by the hard working of Daphne: thank you, Daphne!

Our afternoon was full of surprise with another church in Shrivenham; there was a hidden passage behind the eagle stand and the stairs were very cramped.

Our last stop on the trip but was supposed to be our first was Stanford in the Vale, which was a cosy and roomy place to finish the day.

Thank you to Susan for organising that Autumn event.

Simon Fuentes

## **Central Council report**

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This was the first Council weekend under the new regime and there were significant differences. It took place over the first weekend of September, it was open to all ringers, there were many presentations from the new workgroups and there was a mini-roadshow. Quite a lot of non-Council members took part, including the meetings, and generally the feedback was very positive.

The venue was Goldsmith's College in New Cross, South London where relatively cheap accommodation was provided in the student hostel, albeit in single rooms. This had the advantage that apart from tower bell ringing, all the events were contained within the relatively compact campus. The weekend started on Friday with ringing at various City and nearby towers although this was not well supported. There was also a tour of St Paul's Cathedral ringing room and belfry which was



much appreciated by those who attended. In the evening there was an informal dinner in the form of a hot buffet followed by a quiz, ably hosted by quizmaster Phil Barnes.

The first part of Saturday morning was taken up by presentations from the 4 workgroups on their 2018/9 projects and plans for the future. The disadvantage was that all 4 sessions took place simultaneously although they were largely repeated immediately afterwards so that it was possible to attend two of them.

These were followed by the AGM of the Ringing World Ltd which was the last meeting for the retiring editor, Robert Lewis, who was presented with a commemorative bell in appreciation of his 19 years' service. Also retiring was the board chairman, Nigel Orchard, who was replaced by the Reverend Canon David Grimwood. In his final report, Nigel noted that the quality of the paper had continued to improve and he alluded to the success of Bellboard and the RW National Youth Contest (incidentally won by the ODG this year!). We were assured by the treasurer that the finances are in a healthy state largely due to the continuation of generous donations from ringers. Perhaps the most controversial part of the meeting was the motion from the Board to change the charitable objects from a religious focus to an educational one. As expected there was a lot of discussion on this with a few eminent ringers speaking against the motion although the majority were clearly in favour. The result was that the motion was carried by an overwhelming majority on a show of hands.

The main Council meeting took place after lunch with a break for refreshments halfway through. The formal part of the meeting consisted chiefly of the presentation of the accounts and reports from the Executive and workgroups. The new structure had resulted in the winding-up of the Administrative Committee, and the eight member Executive had assumed the role of supporting the workgroups and their leaders. It would be impossible to detail here all the good work that the workgroups have carried out in their first year which has been well documented in the Ringing World and online. However, one notable achievement that is worth mentioning was the introduction of the new Framework for Method Ringing. This had several years of discussion and refinement with input from many notable ringers and was finally implemented by the Executive on February 24<sup>th</sup> with an effective date of 1<sup>st</sup> June. All the previous Decisions of the Council were retired from the same date.

One of the final acts of the meeting was to elect Simon Linford as the new president to replace Christopher O'Mahony who has retired and is returning to Australia. Christopher will be remembered mostly for his role in helping to transform the Council by setting up the CRAG consultation group which then led to the implementation of the new structure which so far seems to be working extremely well. Simon will have a hard act to follow but if he lives up to his supporting statement he will "make a difference at a time of change that needs to be grasped" with "a reputation for doing things, changing things, persuading others, making people believe the very difficult can be done".

Following the Council meeting there was a simple act of worship led by David Grimwood in the main hall of Goldsmith's College. This had a rather different format from usual with readings and music, played by a local group and a course of Yorkshire S Major on handbells. The president's reception and Council dinner was held in the evening with guest speakers Diana Evans, from Historic England and the Reverend Canon Stephens Evans, Rector of St Marylebone.

Sunday was taken up entirely with a mini road show comprising speaker events and exhibitions. The speakers covered a wide range of topics, some of these gave further information about the work of the workgroups and others about more personal ringing-related activities. For example, Graham John talked about his composition library, Simon Linford the pickled egg project, David Pearson on setting up a youth band, Alan Regin on Ringing Remembers, Bill Hibbert on the science and history of bell tuning and many others. Again, as 3 or sometimes 4 of these sessions took place simultaneously it was impossible to attend more than a few of them.

The exhibition stands covered most aspects of bell founding and hanging and the bell related companies were well represented. There were also dumbbells, software, publications, ART and a very innovative 3D printing machine which could print model bells for use as training aids. There were several mini rings outside on the college green and inside a very interesting training aid designed like a maypole.

Overall, the weekend was a huge success but only 149 Council representatives attended which was disappointingly low. It compared with 163 last year at Lancaster and was the lowest attendance for over 20 years. An attempt will be made to find out if this was due to the change of date, the venue or some other reason by reviewing and summarising all the feedback. The next meeting weekend has already been booked for the first weekend in September 2020 at Nottingham University so it will give more of an idea as to whether the date is the problem rather than the venue.

Tim Pett, ODG Representative

## **The Guild website**

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We have had a small number of articles provided for the website, which have been gratefully received. Please do send any news or event information – big or small – to [webmaster@odg.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@odg.org.uk).

In the meantime, work is ongoing to keep improving the website. I am always open for suggestions and discussion (all constructive of course) on any matters web-related, so please do get in touch.

Tim Hayward, ODG Webmaster

## **Towers & Belfries Committee**

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The three 2019 courses were very popular; Wheatley, Checkendon and the rope splicing and rope management module at Radley Church Hall which was very busy. Nearly 50 ODG members attended the courses as students with four or five committee members and helpers at each course. We have been developing the course to get the most out of it. We now meet at a single location and create the variety of tuition opportunities by assembling a range of artefacts in the nave of the church. For instance: timber and iron headstocks, different pulleys, rope bosses, wheels and ropes. The experimental Friday course was well attended. The main issue was timing the test ringing to fit the break times at the nearby school!

We will have three courses in 2020: a rope course at Radley on February 8<sup>th</sup> and two general tower courses on June 6<sup>th</sup> at Leckhampstead (N Bucks) and 19<sup>th</sup> September at Ivinghoe. Invitations for all these courses will go out as soon as possible but expressions of interest are welcome at any time.

There is a big demand for rope splicing and we are happy to support local courses with tuition. We want people to come ready to learn skills they can put to use in their local towers, whether splicing ropes or spotting preventive measures so the rope wear can be reduced and rope life extended.

Since the last *Odd Bob* report, Committee members have been very active with TMA (Tower Maintenance Award), grant inspections and general advice at the following places: Stoke Goldington, Dorchester, Stratfield Mortimer, Broadwell, Hampstead Norreys, Stanton St John, Witney, Thame, Warfield, Eynsham, Little Horwood, West Challow, Weston on the Green, Cookham, Marlow, Cheddington, Shipton under Wychwood, Calverton, Steventon, Bray, Aylesbury Holy Trinity, Hulcott and Burghfield.

At its last meeting, besides inspection reports and planning courses, we discussed the general availability of advice and website downloads. We considered how best practice could be shared across the country and CCCBR. The committee had further discussions on clapper alignment and particularly how to measure and correct this. If you want your bells not to be “odd-struck” or for the clappers not to wear out prematurely, then get in touch! Several more towers are getting alive to the topic and we expect to receive more enquiries in the coming months.

The Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) scheme continues and towers are encouraged to join in. There are 22 “current” awards and a further 28 recently “expired”, representing 50 towers or about 19% of the ODG. Inspections are free and there is much to be gained from the inspection and the advice you may receive, so please get in touch if you would like a visit.

Tony Crabtree – Chairman

## **Librarian's Report**

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There have been six library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 100. These have been about:

- Young Ringers Award recipients 2004 – 2011
- Earliest lady ringer at Wooburn
- Ringers called S. Paice in Reading/Wokingham area in 1880s
- Two lady ringers with name P. Holloway, mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Restoration of bells at Henley in 1928 and a ringer there, C. Bonner
- Membership information about ringer at Abingdon

Electronic archive: annual reports for the following years are now on the archive website: 1881-1883; 1913-1918; 1936; 1940-1943; 1947. Many thanks to Rob Needham of Sonning for doing the bulk of these. If anyone else would be interested in taking images (scans or photos) of Guild material, please let me know. For information the archive website address is <http://www.archives.odg.org.uk/> .

The Guild library catalogue is now shown on the recently refurbished Guild website and can be found under the Archive>Documents tab. This is a version dating from 2015. If an up-to-date copy is needed, I can supply one in spreadsheet format, please let me know.

The company which has been binding the Guild's copies of the Annual Report, Odd Bob and the Ringing World have had premises in Reading for many years. To my surprise, I found their offices empty in September when taking the latest set of Odd Bobs for binding. Their website had to be consulted to find the new location, in Bourne End near Cookham. At least they stayed in the Guild.

The usual reminder, if you would like some information, or would like to visit the library or borrow a book, you are very welcome to, please let me know.

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

## News from the Branches

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### Banbury

In June the branch held their annual six bell striking competition at Tadmarton, followed by a barbecue in the village hall. The method section was won by Banbury with Steeple Aston second and Bodicote third. The call change section was won by Tadmarton A with Steeple Aston second and Bodicote third. Bloxham, Tadmarton B and Wardington also took part.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July the branch held their annual outing to the Tamworth area, ringing at Poleswoth, Drayton Bassett, Tamworth, Kingsbury and Nether Whitacre, followed by a meal at the *Bowling Green* pub near Overthorpe.

In July Dave Tuckey, who had been a long time member of the branch and tower captain of SS Leonard and James of Rousham, died. A quarter peal of St Clements Minor was rung in his memory at Mollington the day before his funeral at Rousham.

A training session for ringing up and down was held recently at Cropredy.

During the last few months members have rung several quarter peals including one of Canterbury Pleasure Place Triples at Cropredy for Archie son of Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and one of Bob Triples at Cropredy for the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cropredy Bridge battle. Also at Cropredy a quarter peal of Hunslett Bob Triples was rung, which was a first in method for everyone. At Steeple Aston a quarter of the *Ringing World* method of the month, Painswick Surprise major, was rung and was a first for nearly all the band. In September at Hanwell a quarter peal of September Doubles was rung.

In October the Half Yearly Meeting was held at Banbury with ringing beforehand at Bodicote and Banbury, and was attended by 27 members. Harry Gibson was elected to be manager of the branch website and four new members were elected to the branch.

Rosemary Hemmings

### Bicester

The highlight since May for the Bicester Branch was the Striking Competition and barbecue at Islip in September when 45 members of the Branch (and supporters) came. First started in 1978, the Clifford East shield (engraved again by master engraver and previously Branch member, Keith Thomas) has been awarded to Bicester 11 times, Islip 10, Caversfield 1 and this year's winner – Ludgershall – now 3. It was a wonderfully sunny evening and we were grateful to Katie Lane and David Cornwall who judged the competition for us. Seven teams took part and particular mention should be made of the Weston-on-the-Green team (only ringing for a year now) plus the Young Ringers. Perhaps the winning team next year will be bold enough to enter the Guild 6-bell striking competition!

Apart from that we've had plenty (nine) of Branch practices in a variety of towers across the Branch with numbers ranging from 7 to 19. The practice designated for Caversfield in August turned into one at Stratton Audley due to a bolt suddenly falling from the stay of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Your correspondent is convinced that it was the Branch ringing master's method of ensuring that we all appreciated the improvements made to the tower and the new ringing floor in Stratton Audley. At all

the practices we've been able to extend our repertoires with something for everyone which has been encouraging. It was great to welcome back Anthony and Samuel Cole at Souldern in October when they were south of the border. Full details of all practices are given at <http://www.bicesterbranch.org.uk/>

We've been lucky to have the help of members of the Oxford City and Witney and Woodstock branches at some practices – particularly the two focussed practices arranged in May at Kirtlington and Bletchingdon for five Bicester Branch ringers who were concentrating on Grandsire. Unfortunately the recruitment event also at Bletchingdon in October hasn't resulted yet in potential ringers but it's hoped another one might yield a more positive result.

More ringers, Mandy Jones; Sue Carter, Andrew Wilkinson, and Gerald Bushby; Rosemarie Weigand and Charlie Bates have been awarded ART LtR Levels 1; 2; and 3 certificates respectively.

We rang a May Branch quarter peal (which was Gareth Ricketts' first) in Charlton-on-Otmoor in memory of Stephen Cameron who died in April. Sadly, two other members of the Branch (or members previously) have died recently – Philip Curtis in August and Tony Pearce of Piddington in September. May they rest in peace.

Kathryn Grant

## **Central Bucks**

The Central Bucks Branch has had a happy ringing six months, with the normal schedule of 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday practices and last Wednesday Progressors practices continuing. Additionally members, together with regular visitors from outside the branch, join the monthly Surprise Royal practices at Long Crendon, and more advanced ringers are now working on the 'Pickled Egg' Surprise Major methods at a monthly practice at Cuddington. We are delighted to see a number of new recruits making progress in towers across the branch and starting to take part in branch ringing.

Unfortunately we had to postpone our striking competition in May due to weddings and other commitments ruling out most of the bands. Instead we competed for the Branch Trophy at the same time as the *Orchard Cup* (our friendly against the Chiltern Branch) in October. We spent a very pleasant afternoon at Aston Abbotts ringing, listening to ringing and enjoying a splendid tea. The winning band was Stewkley who were awarded both the Trophy and the Cup by John and Ann White who had come from Towcester to judge for us. It was particularly lovely to see a good many relatively recent recruits ringing in their first striking competition.

For the first time in a number of years we were pleased to have a band in both the Guild 8-bell and Guild 6-bell competitions and hope to be able to do the same next year.

On a beautiful day in September 26 ringing members and friends travelled to London for our annual outing. The sun shone, we had some good ringing, interesting bells and churches on a '*Rowing and Rugby*' route from Fulham to Twickenham, using public transport and walking between towers. This is expected to be our last 'One Day travel card' trip, so thanks to our Chairman and organiser, Jeremy Pratt,

who even managed to include a boat race for us this year – the annual Great River Race was taking place, with all sorts of boats being rowed from Docklands, where we rang last year, to beyond Richmond. A river marathon of 21.6 miles which we watched as we walked from Putney to Barnes.

We seem to be losing incumbents at the moment, and a quarter was rung at Wing as a farewell to their vicar. A couple of weeks earlier a quarter was unfortunately lost when the clapper broke at Waddesdon – approximately 680 changes were therefore rung as a retirement compliment to their vicar following her final service.

On a sadder note, a quarter was rung at Quainton on the day after his funeral to celebrate the life of Richard Samways, former ringer at the tower and at Steeple Claydon, Ringers in the band included the Guild Master, who is a member of our branch, and past and present officers of the Central Bucks Branch

Anne Pratt

## **Chiltern**

Monthly branch practices, which focus on helping everyone to stretch their capabilities, have continued to be well supported, including regular visitors from our neighbouring branches of Central Bucks and the Western District of the Hertfordshire Association. Practices always conclude with a chat over tea and cakes. As we have a relatively small number of towers in Chiltern, we occasionally book a practice at a tower in a neighbouring branch to give our ringers a change of scene and to avoid overuse of our own towers; such practices are welcomed by members.

Slapton's restoration and augmentation project has stalled as the church tries to come up with a new HLF grant application.

Colin Walter has retired as the tower correspondent at Aston Clinton after too many years to count and has been succeeded by Stephen Wooler.

The Branch half yearly meeting was held in September. As part of our discussions we focused on training and what support learners feel they need to help them progress. This was preceded by a very interesting and informative presentation on a section of the Chiltern branch website which is maintained by Alan Masters. Alan has created a Methods section which can be used to select a wide range of methods, show how bobs and singles change the blue line and show any methods selected spliced with others. It's a really useful tool for both learners and budding conductors too. We recommend all ODG members to have a look at it and Alan would welcome any comments on it so he can continue to develop it (see details on how to contact him on the Methods page). Find the website at

<http://www.chiltern.odg.org.uk/Methods/index.html>

Clare Carpenter

## **Chipping Norton**

Ascott-u-Wychwood bells are ringing again after recent restoration work, as are those at Shipton-u-Wychwood. The Bishop of Dorchester dedicated the bells there on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June. The congregation consisted of local parishioners, donors and representatives of organisations that had given grants to the project. Several relatives of John MacVicker, the former tower captain, were in attendance, and later went to see the re-cast third bell which bears his name. Following the service and refreshments, there was open ringing.

The Branch nearly has its full quota of towers back in action though Chadlington has just had remedial stonework on the tower which has prevented ringing for a couple of months.

Over the year, clergy vacancies have been filled and a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung at Burford in August to welcome the new Vicar, and his family.

Three new members, all from Leaffield tower, were elected at the July Branch practice at Enstone.

Special practices have continued on the third Tuesday of most months.

The autumn meeting was held at Shipton-u-Wychwood in October after the branch practice. A good number of ringers attended as it was the first opportunity for many of them to try the bells following the restoration work. We were pleased to welcome the Guild Master, Katie Lane and the Deputy Master, Tony Crabtree. Both were able to stay for the meeting, which, as well as covering routine business, gave an opportunity to ask questions about subjects of interest.

We are sorry to report the deaths of two honorary members. Pat Stratford, a member of Hook Norton tower, who also rang at Swerford and Wigginton, died in June.

Michael Collett had a long association with Burford tower, having learnt to ring there over seventy years ago. Latterly he lived in Cheltenham, where he continued to be an active ringer until prevented by illness. He died in October. Our condolences go to their families.

Christine Harris

## **East Berks and South Bucks**

The summer months seem to be the time for Striking Competitions. First the Branch 6-bell competition was held at Turville; the judge, John Harrison, placed High Wycombe first above Amersham, Chesham and two bands from Clewer.

High Wycombe represented the Branch in the Guild 6-bell competition where they came second behind Abingdon, but the “winners” of the day were the Chalfont St Peter ringers who hosted the contest and provided an excellent tea for the contestants. Several of their ringers are new recruits who have only been ringing for a few months. It was a great opportunity for them to listen to some very good ringing, and if their ringing skills develop as well as their cake and sandwich making skills then the future for the local band looks good.

The Bucks and Berks Young Ringers entered the Ringing World National Youth Contest for the second time. They had a great day in Liverpool ringing on lots of different bells, including the very heavy twelve at the Cathedral, and coming 19<sup>th</sup> in the contest.



The Hughenden ringers put on a surprise celebration for their Tower Captain, David Cornwall, to celebrate his 80th birthday and to thank him for his dedication to ringing at Hughenden for the past 70 years. On their practice night David turned up at the tower but with so few other ringers present he was persuaded to abandon the



practice and go to the pub for a drink. Little did he know that many friends were already waiting at the pub and they all shouted ‘SURPRISE’ as David opened the door. His face was a picture and he was momentarily lost for words! A light hearted speech was given by Andrew Ottaway, deputy Tower Captain, and a beautifully constructed poem was read by its author, Verity Nicholls. Hand bells were rung to the tune of ‘Happy Birthday’ and Verity had made a delicious cake.

Hughenden also hosted the final of the Lorna Newton Striking Competition and the Branch Half Yearly meeting on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October, providing superb refreshments including fresh scones. The judges, Andrew and Julie Haseldine, gave helpful comments to the contestants and placed Amersham first, followed by Bray (Delight), High Wycombe “B”, Cookham, Lane End, Clewer and Dorney/Hitcham.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October the Bray ringers said farewell to Katharine and Graham Firman as they left for Bosham. The Firmans moved to Maidenhead in the mid-70’s and have been extremely active in ringing at Branch and Guild level and further afield. They have both served as Tower Captain at Bray, Katharine for 3 years and Graham for an impressive 34 years! In the EBSB Branch Katharine has been Secretary (twice) and Ringing Master while Graham has been Chairman, Treasurer and Webmaster, and they have both served as Guild Peal Secretary. Perhaps their most unique contribution to ringing in the area is with handbell ringing. They are both extremely competent handbell ringers, scoring peals in advanced surprise maximus methods and their home became a centre of excellence with ringers travelling from all over the country (and abroad) to ring with Katharine and Graham. We are most grateful for all they have done for ringing in the area and they will be greatly missed (although they are promising to return for further handbell peals!)

Sadly two members have passed away recently, Les Hollingbery of Clewer and Brian Edwards (father of Claire Roulstone) of Beaconsfield. Brian had suffered a major stroke last November from which he made very little recovery. His passing was marked at Beaconsfield by a local band quarter peal and a peal of Rutland Surprise Major conducted by Claire.

Pat Newton

## Newbury

The last report saw Lambourn embark on the task of raising a further £20,000 to have their four cracked bells removed and sent for repair, following an already expensive dismantling and inspection. Well, thanks to their diligence and resourcefulness, the required amount has been reached and the task of removing the bells is underway. It is hoped the bells will be back in action by Christmas.

Another of our branch towers, Hampstead Norreys, has now embarked on fundraising for essential repair work to the frame and fittings, before they are fit to ring again.

Our Branch Outing saw us exploring rural East Wilts, just over the border. A mix of country sixes and eights around Devizes and Bishops Cannings, with an excellent pub lunch at the *Red Lion*, All Cannings, enjoyed by all. Our Branch 6-bell striking competition was held at Shaw church with the lovely summer weather allowing a picnic atmosphere to prevail among the waiting teams. Thatcham won the event and went on to represent us at the Guild event in October.

In these times of dwindling bands, our *Marshall Shield* was awarded to Beenham and Yattendon for the highly successful recruitment effort, with nine new ringers, a credit to Marcus and Tessa Allum.

We now have three, well established monthly meetings, a first-Friday general practice, a second-Friday Surprise Major practice, and a mid-week ring and pub lunch in a relaxed atmosphere. These popular meetings, together with more specific training events organised by Lucy our Training Officer, allow plenty of opportunity for those wishing to progress, and make for a lively and progressive branch. With numerous tower outings and busy tower practice nights, in addition to Sunday service ringing, there is always plenty going on in the Newbury Branch.

Mark Robins

## North Bucks

The Branch has had a full programme of quarterly Branch Meetings, monthly Branch Practices and mid-week meetings over the last quarter. A particular highlight was when we crossed over the border to hold the October practice at Leighton Buzzard, where 30 members and friends enjoyed the 34cwt 12, quite an experience as the majority of branch ringers are more used to much lighter rings of six.

The Hanslope ring of eight are with Whites of Appleton at present for refurbishment. Progress is good with one or two welding challenges.

The summer period has seen some local tours by individual towers and the Branch. Emberton and friends set off for Bedfordshire on 18<sup>th</sup> May; four towers



were enjoyed in a leisurely fashion, two coffee & tea stops, and a pub lunch! They started at Meppershall, rung from the chancel, then on to the lovely 8 at Campton. We had hired Campton village hall because a tea shop couldn't be found, and thanks go to Wendy's mum for the lovely cakes, and Harvey for his

scones. Lunch was enjoyed at *The Guinea*, Moggerhanger before ringing at Tempsford, then it was on to the last tower at Willington.

The Branch tour in September also crossed into Bedfordshire with five towers starting at Bromham, via Carlton, Oakley and Bozeat to Castle Ashby.

The Guild six bell competition at Chalfont St Peter had a pleasing outcome. Whilst the band (*see photo*) managed a modest sixth place, the judges commended the excellent ringing of the treble. They did not know that the treble, Jen, was a nervous last minute replacement and went home delighted.

The Branch has a new Chairman, Martin Petchey and the previous incumbent, Graham Bartholomew, is retained on the Committee as Assistant Ringing Master.



Brian Baldwin

## Old North Berks

Once again we have had an active summer, with our monthly afternoon practices (apart from one) and our surprise major practices being quite well attended. As usual our monthly evening general practices have not always been well attended and it is impossible to know which ones will be successful. We discussed this at our recent autumn Branch Committee meeting and have decided to continue with these practices for another year. We would like to thank all those who have supported the Branch over the past months.

Our Training Officer, Susan Read, has held events for our younger ringers during the school holidays, which include ringing and refreshments. The Branch Ringing School is running a course for new learners. Initially held at a variety of towers, this is now being held at St Helen's Abingdon using the excellent facilities of the simulator. The eleven learners are really pleased to be able to make good progress so they can take more advantage of the practices in their own towers. Additionally Susan has organised two successful ART courses on how to teach bell handling.

At the ART AGM earlier this year, our Branch was highly commended for the work of the Branch Ringing School. In particular the judges were impressed by two facts, firstly that between thirty and forty teachers from the entire branch teach our learners, and secondly that visiting so many towers brought the branch together and helped the learners to feel more confident to visit other towers and take part in Branch events.

A new rope guide has been installed at Steventon, bringing the restoration to a positive conclusion. Funds have now been fully raised to rehang and retune Long Wittenham bells, and the work will be completed by Whites during 2020.

The Branch outing in July was once again very successfully organised by Philip Roberts of Harwell. Over twenty branch members and friends visited Dunstable, Ivinghoe, Linslade, Whitchurch and Quainton, and enjoyed a pub lunch in Linslade

and afternoon tea at Whitchurch. It was followed by an excellent barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson with over 50 in attendance. Once again the food was superb and there was fun on the croquet green. Thanks go to Philip, Janette, Stuart and Naomi for arranging such a good day for the Branch.

Our next social event will be a quiz night and supper in November at Brightwell Village Hall. Thanks go to Roy Thorpe and his ringers for hosting the event and to Anne Hales for devising and comparing the quiz.

Ringing to celebrate New Year will be held at Wantage on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 from 10.30am to 12.30pm, with light refreshments available to get the year off to a good start.

Gill Loyd

### ***Angela Smith: her contribution in Abingdon***

For the ringers in Abingdon it was memorable to celebrate with Angela Smith, her 90th birthday in August this year [*see photo on back cover*]. She must be one of (if not the) longest standing members of the Old North Berks Branch and the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers, having started to learn ringing when she was at school in Abingdon in the 1940s. At that time her family lived above the Bank in the Abingdon Market Place.

She tells the story of how she was taught by Albert Lock on the 6 bells at St Nicolas' Church in Abingdon. Albert, (a local stone mason in Abingdon who lived in East St Helen's Street) was, at the time, tower captain at both St Nicolas' and St Helen's towers. During those years, Angela remembers doing a lot of tower grabbing, and Albert's wife often acted as a chauffeur. Angela describes Albert as being a very good ringing teacher, who 'stood no nonsense' but, at the same time, was not 'draconian'! He had a reputation for being insistent on 'decent striking' and as he was regularly heard to say, 'nothing like well struck rounds' – something we have all often heard Angela say!

Angela has always been modest about her ringing achievements, but the archives tell another story – she rang a total of 30 peals ranging from Doubles to Cinques. Her first peal was the treble to Cambridge S Minor at Steventon on 20th June 1949. She rang most of her peals with Malcolm S Cloke (15) and Alan R Pink (14), and 22 of them were for the Oxford Diocesan Guild. Her leading conductor was Alan Pink (11) and leading peal tower was St Ebbe's, Oxford (7). Most of her peals on 8 bells were Kent Treble bob or Plain Bob but she did ring one peal of Cambridge Surprise Major and one of Double Norwich inside. She only rang 2 peals on more than 8 bells, Grandsire Caters and perhaps her most impressive peal, Stedman Cinques at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. This was conducted by Walter Judge, took 3 hours and 48 minutes and was rung half-muffled by friends and colleagues of the cathedral belfry as a tribute to Victor Bennett who had passed away 4 days previously. Further to all this, one of Angela's peals was in celebration of her 21st birthday. And another significant peal, which was her last, was of Grandsire Caters (depicted on a peal board in St Helen's) in 1956 commemorating the visit of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II to Abingdon for the 400th anniversary of the granting of the Borough Charter. This peal was rung with other 'notables' of that era – her mentor Albert Lock, along with 2 members of the previous generation of the White family

(local bell-hangers in Appleton) – Francis and Frederick. Also, one of the current White generation members Brian, which happened to be his first peal, and Marie Cross (Radley tower captain who contributed significantly to teaching ringing in Abingdon at that time).

Angela was North Berks branch representative on the ODG committee from 1954 to 1957. However, after she was married in 1962, she had a break from ringing and returned in 1990 when her family had grown up.

This account is by way of giving recognition to Angela's long service (of more than 40 years) to bell ringing in Abingdon, along with her endless encouragement and interest in all of us as we learnt the exercise and achieved our ringing milestones. We feel fortunate that Angela continues to ring regularly with us for Sunday ringing at St Helen's.

Margaret Brock and Tim Pett

## **Oxford City**

[*No news received – Ed.*]

## **Reading**

The St Mary and St Giles team won a hard-fought ODG 8-bell striking competition on Monday 6th May.

It was fantastic to see members of different towers in Reading Branch pulling together, as well as having representation from the branch in the ODG Youth team.

## ***Tilehurst wins striking competition – again!***

The 2019 Reading Branch striking competition took place at St Mary, Purley-on-Thames (six bells – 8-1-27), on Saturday, 14th September. There were six entries, representing five of Reading Branch's 23 towers (St Giles-in-Reading entered two teams).

The Tilehurst team came first, beating the St Giles 2 team by two points. Many congratulations to Tilehurst, who also won in 2016, 2017 and 2018! Caversham came third, beating Pangbourne by one point. St Giles 1 came fifth, three points ahead of Mortimer.

It was good to see four young ringers in the competition. Congratulations to Tom Sherwood, who rang the tenor in the winning team, to Jennifer Ellis, who rang for St Giles 2, to Daniel Page, who rang for Caversham, and to Joseph Barrett, who rang for St Giles 1.

St Mary, Purley, was a lovely setting for the competition, and the weather was perfect for sitting in the sunshine while the church bells rang out. Many thanks to the Purley band, who served morning coffee with a splendid selection of delicious cakes and biscuits.

## ***Mensa weekend***

In early September it was Reading Town's turn to host the Mensa National AGM which took place at the Penta hotel in central Reading.

It was a perfect opportunity to promote bell ringing to a very receptive audience. Giles Winter led sessions at St Giles-in-Reading where participants were able to listen to some change ringing, try backstrokes and have a look at the bells in the tower.

Lindsey Barker

## **Sonning Deanery**

We have recently learned the sad news of the death of Laurie Hall, who was a long-standing member of the ODG and a very active ringer until the end of the 1990s. Laurie was tower captain at St Bartholomew's Church, Arborfield from the 1960s until 1999, and was Branch Ringing Master in 1971 and 1972, and joint Ringing Master from 1973 until 1976. Laurie's funeral took place at Easthampstead Crematorium on 30<sup>th</sup> October. At his funeral service were six ringers including our Chairman, four Arborfield ringers, and his joint Ringing Master Geoff Harvey.

A quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles was rung at Arborfield in Laurie's memory on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

Since the last issue of *Odd Bob* a number of Sonning Deanery Branch ringers have been progressing in the *Learning the Ropes* programme. In May, Tabitha Mills of Wargrave reached Level 1, in July Joseph Godfrey of Twyford achieved Level 3, and in September Edward Grant of White Waltham reached Level 1 and Imogen Reason of Wargrave and Benji Bass of All Saints Wokingham achieved Level 3. Karen Daffey of Sonning passed her Level 2 in November. Benji also achieved his Bronze certificate in the ART *50 Ringing Things* challenge, which aims to encourage ringers of all ages, to experience a wide range of ringing activities. On 25<sup>th</sup> October, Katie Thomas, a ringer at Sonning, rang her first quarter peal at St James, Finchampstead. Congratulations to them all.

The ART *Loddon Hub* has continued to be very active, with Vinni Sullivan organising a number of quarter peal attempts at various towers within the Branch.

St Nicholas, Hurst continues with its regular Monday evening practices, and all the learners are doing well, supported by Graham Slade, Vinni Sullivan and Simon Farrar.

Attendance at the Young Ringers practices arranged by Rob Needham and run by Nigel Mellor and Steve Wells, has been rather variable lately, evidently due to other commitments on the day, but it is still encouraging to know that there are a number of young learners within the Branch and that they are progressing well at their individual towers. Two of the Branch's young ringers, Elliott and Connor, were in the Triples & Major group on the recent Steeple Aston course.

Sue Portsmouth

## **South Oxon**

Regular branch practices continue to take place, with only one “lock-out” so far this season! Our "First Tuesday" afternoon practices have diversified this year following feedback from those attending. They started by alternating between Plain Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles. This year we have had two practices where we rang other methods, by request; and at the beginning of October we ran a basic Triples practice ringing Grandsire and Plain Bob, with a couple of courses of Stedman for those who normally come to help.

Drayton St Leonard once more represented the branch in the Guild 6-bell competition at Chalfont St Peter. Being drawn to ring last didn't help the nerves. Linda Blansjaar rang in her first Guild competition, along with John White, Amy Herlihy and Daniel, Hilarie, and Christopher Rogers. They were placed third, behind Abingdon and High Wycombe.

Dorchester ringers held a summer BBQ in August and presented their recently retired Tower Captain, David Parker, with a print created by well-known local artist, Patricia Drew [*see photo on front cover*]. This was in recognition that David had served more than 20 years as Tower Captain at Dorchester, and he continues to ring as an essential member of the band. The picture incorporated many aspects associated with the Abbey tower and bells, including ropes, knots, a ‘blue line’ for Bob Doubles, and the inscription and motifs from the tenor bell. The artist said that she greatly enjoyed an afternoon in the ringing chamber sketching ideas and learning about the traditions of bell ringing. Nick Forman took over as Tower Captain at the start of 2019.

Two recent recruits to the Chalgrove tower, Faye Buttery and Jonathan O’Hara, were married at Chalgrove church in August. The regular ringers did them proud, despite competition from a Brass Band! In true bell ringing fashion, whilst on honeymoon in Devon, Faye and Jonathan visited two towers and were introduced to Devon Changes.

Sadly, Graham Griffiths from Great Milton Tower passed away in July. Graham began ringing at Great Milton in 1995 and was a founder member of the present band. For the past few years he has been their Tower Captain. Graham was a master at repairing anything mechanical – Little Milton’s clock is certainly missing him! He was also the Webmaster for the South Oxon Branch, keeping information bang up to date. Graham was a whizz with technology, and loved helping everyone with their computers if they had a problem...or even if they did not! Graham is greatly missed by all who rang with him.

Jane Willis

## **Vale of the White Horse**

This year’s Branch striking competition was held at Hinton Waldrist in May, with ringers from eight of our Branch towers making up six teams.

Oxford City ringers Lindsay Powell and Elizabeth Mullett were slightly apprehensive about judging their first ever striking competition, but they were all smiles when they returned with the results, the only hiccup having been a passing villager trying to engage them in conversation!

The first three teams were within a few faults of each other with Shrivvenham winning the *Greenley Shield* and Longcot receiving the Ringing Master's award for the most improved tower.

It was good to see a couple of our younger ringers taking on conducting roles, with Daniel Watson (11) calling the changes for the Longcot band, and Stella Johnson (17) in charge of the scratch band.

The now traditional bring and share feast that we enjoy alongside the ringing was rounded off this year with birthday cake and glasses of bubbly in celebration of Norman Leslie's 89th birthday the following week.

Tony and Erica Crabtree enjoyed an afternoon rubbing shoulders with royalty at the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May. Tony has contributed hugely to ringing both locally and further afield and we are delighted that his hard work has been recognised.

Our Branch Outing to Oxford was organised by Tony Crabtree. We walked between the six towers and enjoyed a picnic lunch on Christ Church Meadows in the glorious June sunshine. There was a slight hitch getting in to St Aldates when we set off the alarm, but all was well in the end!

The Uffington ringers hosted a Branch Quiz in July, with nine teams vying to take home the Golden Clapper. The winning team was 'Woolstone Warriors', second place going to Shrivvenham and the last podium spot taken by 'Sally Ho'. Thank you to Elaine Baber and Eleanor Banks who provided an excellent ploughman's supper with delicious puddings, and to Caroline Phillips for setting the questions. The evening raised £220 for the Branch Bell Fund.

The Branch Annual Dinner in October was once again held at the Woodman in Fernham. Attendance was up this year, so we had the Banqueting Hall all to ourselves. The food was excellent and an enjoyable and relaxed evening was had by all.

Congratulations to new parents: Nicola and Steve Roberts (twins Jonathan and Sophie), Jenny and Tom Taylor (Joseph – first grandchild for Tony and Erica Crabtree), Isobelle (née O'Hagan) and Danny Taylor (Eden), Tom and Claudia Edgeworth (Oliver), and Ali and Rob O'Hagan (Milly). We also celebrated the marriage of Shellingford tower captain Louise Terry and Robert Harrison.

We send best wishes to Valia Battat, Hinton Waldrist tower captain, as she heads off to a new job as chef at the BAS research station on South Georgia, home to penguins, elephant seals, whales and icebergs! Tom Edgeworth will be in charge until she returns home in the summer.

Lucy Laird

## **Witney and Woodstock**

At SS Peter & Paul, Broadwell, the five un-ringable bells were removed at the end of July with local helpers from Broadwell and the branch (what was expected to take two days took five in very hot weather conditions). Next stage is to install a steel frame lower in the tower with a view to re-installing and augmenting to 8 in time to ring for Christmas.

St Laurence, Combe, had a very successful "two towers and a pub" outing in August to Astall and the recently refurbished bells at Taynton.



St James, South Leigh, now combines practices with ringers from St Mary's, Witney, alternating weeks at Witney (Tuesdays) with those at South Leigh (Thursdays). Visiting ringers to South Leigh will also receive a very warm welcome to enable us to exercise the rarely rung but lovely eight bells.

Significant South Leigh QPs and personal milestones: Heather Horner rang treble to Plain Bob Doubles QP at Bletchingdon on 20<sup>th</sup> May in celebration of her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. Interestingly, birthday compliments were also due to Andy Goldthorpe, the tenor ringer, with the relevant number of years reversed (57)!



The band R-L, birthday girl to birthday boy! Thanks also to Christopher A. Moxon, Michael Probert, Lorna Curtis and Alison Merryweather-Clarke for their support.

Heather Horner also rang tenor to Doubles at Bletchingdon in September to celebrate Battle of Britain Day. Richard Law rang his first QP (tenor). Christopher A. Moxon rang his first QP to Plain Bob Doubles.

At St. Mary's, Freeland, a peal of Grandsire Minor was rung on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> July. The peal was rung to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the church and also the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday year for Melanie and Sue. It took 2 hours 34 minutes to ring 5040 changes. The band was: 1 Melanie McGregor; 2 Michael Probert; 3 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke; 4 Susan H Rhodes; 5 Neil R Ephgrave; 6 Simon D G Webb (C). Congratulations to Melanie on ringing her first peal. The method of Grandsire Minor was chosen as this was the method rung for the first peal at St Mary's on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1900. Then the same number of changes was rung in a slightly quicker time of 2 hours and 31 minutes.

St Bartholomew's, Ducklington, organised a Summer outing and this year, for the first time, went distinctly further afield. Instead of travelling around the county in a convoy of cars, we set off from a local village station and caught a train on the Cotswold line going north – we were on our way to Worcester Cathedral!

Worcester Cathedral has a regular ringing floor where the ropes are attached to the cathedral bells. Below it, however, there is a teaching floor where 'bells' are linked to computers – the simulators. The 'bells' feel real – a real sally to pull with a real-bell-feeling weight at the end of it which can 'break' a stay, so you have to move the bell correctly. As a group, we rang these bells up, watching each other to get the round right, as we are used to at home. These bells produce a sound through internal speakers rather than over the city, so you can hear what you are doing (and the city, mercifully, cannot). Once the bells were up, we stood them, then got connected to our individual simulator. We faced away from the centre so we could see our screen, we put on earphones so we could hear our own round, and we were off. From then on, each individual was ringing within a perfectly timed round, it was Ringer vs Machine, and it was a real challenge!

How it works: you have to pull your bell a few times and the simulator paces the round at your speed. On the screen, there are six ropes which light up one after another as each bell sounds; you hear the sound through your earphones. You have to pull your sally to ring your bell in the right place. There is a little tab at the bottom which lights up – green if you timed your bell perfectly, red one way if it was too early, red the other way if too late, yellow one way or the other if you were a bit off but not too bad. When you have had enough you can stand your bell and get your score; (my tab was red so often, I chose not to find out). The machine was precise, and unforgiving.

The concentration needed to listen, really listen, listen intently and respond appropriately when you are used to getting information by other means is like being immersed in a new language which you have to learn and use on the spot. It is an intense experience. So when it was suggested we bring our bells down and switch off our computers, I was ready. We were all exhausted and, in a pleasingly democratic manner, we were all on the Useless spectrum!

After that, to soothe us back to contentment, we were given a tour – of the ringing chamber, and of the bells, and then the climb to the top to see the view over Worcester. It is a lovingly maintained tower (the bell chamber is so clean!) and credit must go to the tower team and their captain, Mark, who made us welcome, who helped us out, and to whom the team at Ducklington give their thanks.

Inspired by the challenge, we have now purchased a simulator (which we call the Stimulator). Although some of us did not enjoy the experience, missing the contact and camaraderie of ringing in a group, I, for one, want to use it to practice so that when I ring the tenor, my bonging is not sliding about in a space accommodatingly created by the generosity and greater experience of my companions, but beats at the back in a regular and reliable manner.

Andrew Goldthorpe, Marysia Hermaszewska,  
Michael Probert, Evadne Vallance, Anthony Williamson

## **Paying Peal Fees electronically**

If you would like to pay peal fees electronically, instead of sending in cheques, then please contact the peal secretary ([peals@odg.org.uk](mailto:peals@odg.org.uk)) to obtain the details. Thank you.

Stuart Gibson

## **Guild Officers for 2018/19**

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### **General Committee members**

**Angela Darvill**  
**Bobbie May**

**Wenda Fowles**  
**Ken Wakefield**

**Mike Hopkins Till**

## Central Council Representatives *ccreps@odg.org.uk*

L. P. A. Hopkins Till

Alan Marchbank

John A Harrison

Timothy G Pett

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## Towers and Belfries Sub-committee

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## Education Sub-committee

Chairman

TBA

Secretary

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## Diary of Events for 2019/20

Some of these dates may change, so you should check the [odg.org.uk](http://odg.org.uk) web site for diary updates on an ongoing basis.

TBC	To Be Confirmed	AGM	Annual General Meeting	AP	Advanced Practice
BP	Branch Practice	EP	Elementary Practice	HY	Half Yearly Meeting
QM	Quarterly Meeting	RCP	Ringing Centre Practice	SC	Striking Competition
SM	Surprise Major	SP	Surprise Practice	CM	Committee Meeting

### NOVEMBER 2019

Fri	1	CN	BP	Asthall (6)	7.30 - 9.00
Sat	2	EBSB	SP	Burnham (8)	7.00 – 9.00pm
Wed	6	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Thu	7	W&W	BP	Cassington (6)	19.30 – 21:00
Fri	8	Newbury	BP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	9	CBB	BP	Soulbury	7.00 – 8.30
Tues	12	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	7.45 – 9.15
Sat	16	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	2.00 – 4.00pm
Sat	16	Banbury	BP	Somerton (8)	11.15 – 12.15
				Lunch at the Bell,	1.45 - 2.45
				Lower Heyford	
				Lower Heyford (6)	
Sat	16	Chiltern	BP	Aston Clinton (10)	9.30 – 11.30
Mon	18	VOWH	BP	Faringdon (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	21	Bicester	SP	Weston-on-the-	7.30 – 9.00
				Green (6)	
Wed	27	ONB	BP	Chilton (6)	2.00 – 3.30

### DECEMBER 2019

Wed	4	ONB	SM	Harwell (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	4	CN	BP	Charbury(6)	7.00 – 8.30
Thur	5	Bicester	BP	Charlton-on-	7.30 – 9.00
				Otmoor	
Sat	7	EBSB	BP and Christmas Social	Beaconsfield (8)	5.30 onwards
Sat	7	South Oxon	BP	Aston Rowant (6)	16.00 – 17.00
Mon	9	ONB	BP	Drayton (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	11	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	2.00 – 3.30
Sat	14	Chiltern	BP and Christmas refreshments	Cheddington (6)	9.30 – 11.30
Mon	16	Bicester	SP	Kirtlington	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	21	Sonning	BP	Twyford (8)	4.30 – 6.00
Thur	26	Banbury	BP	Deddington (8)	10.30 – 12noon

### JANUARY 2020

Wed	1	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	10.30 – 12noon
Sat	4	CN	BP & pub lunch	Chipping Norton(8)	11.00 – 12.30
Tues	7	Bicester	BP	Islip	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	18	Sonning	BP	Waltham St	4.30 – 6.00
				Lawrence (6)	
Tues	21	Bicester	SP	Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	22	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	2.00 – 3.30
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Chenies (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	25	South Oxon	BP	Dorchester on	16.00 – 17.00
				Thames (8)	

## FEBRUARY 2020

Sat	1	CN	BP & pub lunch	Leaffield(6)	11.00-12.30pm
Wed	5	ONB	SM	Drayton (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	13	ONB	BP	Harwell (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	13	Bicester	BP	Weston-o-t-Green	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	15	Bicester	AGM	Bletchinghamdon	6.00 – 9.00
Sat	15	Sonning	AGM: ringing, service, tea, meeting	Finchampstead (8)	3.00, 4.00, 4.45, 5.15
Sat	15	CBB	AGM	Wingrave	
Sat	22	South Oxon	AGM	Ewelme (6)	15.00 – 17.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Dorney (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	26	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	2.00 – 3.30

## MARCH 2020

Fri	6	Bicester	BP	Ludgershall	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	7	CN	BP	Burford (8)	3.00, 4.00, 5.00
Sat	7	Newbury	Ringing, service, AGM	Thatcham (10)	10.00, 11.00, 11.45
Fri	13	EBSB	SP	Stoke Poges (8)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	21	EBSB	BP	Hambleden (8)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	21	ONB	SC & AGM	Steventon (6)	SC 3.00 – 5.00 Service 5.00 Tea 5.45 AGM 6.30
Sat	21	Sonning	BP	Arborfield (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	25	Bicester	SP	Ambrosden	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Chalgrove (6)	16.00 – 17.00
Tues	31	CN	BP	Swerford(6)	7.30- 9.00pm

## APRIL 2020

Wed	1	ONB	SM	Sutton Courtenay (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	1	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stony	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	18	Sonning	SC (6-bell)	TBD	Afternoon
Tues	21	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	25	EBSB	AGM	Maidenhead (8)	3.00 onwards
Sat	25	Bicester	Outing	TBC	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	25	South Oxon	SC	Thame (back 6)	7.30 onwards

## MAY 2020

Mon	4	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	6	CN	BP	Shipton-u- Wychwood(8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	9	Sonning	BP	White Waltham (6)	4.30 – 6.00
Wed	13	ONB	BP (TBC)	West Hanney (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	20	Bicester	SP	Piddington	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	23	South Oxon	BP	Towersey (4)	19.00 – 20.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	27	ONB	BP (TBC)	Sunningwell (6)	2.00 – 3.30





*Angela Smith's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration*



*Central Bucks Branch outing at Barnes*