

ODD BOB



Newsletter of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers
website: odg.org.uk/



Bicester Branch outing, 23 April at Aston

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From your Editor...

Don't forget to check regularly the Guild website at odg.org.uk/ and your branch website. This Odd Bob and past issues are held on the Guild website.

The EBSB Fund Raising website address is: bellfund.org.uk.

Rob Needham

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

As members should expect, a record of their membership is maintained on a combination of paper and computer systems. These records are used solely for the administration of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers and for notification of future events to members. They are not made available to anyone for commercial purposes. If any member wishes to inspect the records held, please contact the Guild Secretary.

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Master's Mutterings

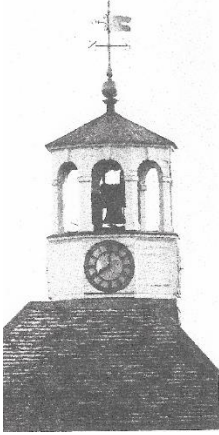
It is reasonable for me to think that as you are reading this you are likely to be an enthusiastic bell ringer with a certain amount of interest in Guild activities: well, I really hope so because we need you! And not just to ring bells for Sunday services and your own enjoyment, but also to help keep the structure and heartbeat of the Guild functioning efficiently.

We are short of a volunteer to steward three branches, Reading, Newbury and Sonning Deanery; also, we need a deputy treasurer to support Stuart Gibson with the finances. Both these vacancies have been circulated and sadly, there has been no response at all. I am hoping that by the time this edition is printed and circulated that we will have volunteers.

I am aware that some branches are finding it difficult to replace branch officers too, so please pause, reflect upon the pleasure that ringing brings to so many of us, and consider offering assistance. Your contribution will be warmly received and welcomed!

The wretched pandemic is still wreaking havoc everywhere, but there is no doubt that bell ringers are reasserting themselves and making the best of the prevailing circumstances. It was not Covid that caused consternation for the 10-bell competition – it was the Aston Clinton tenor bell itself! We have the evidence: the tenor being deftly removed from St Michael and All Angels by Whites. It is now welded and returned to its rightful frame in the tower.





While exploring the history of bells I came across this old photograph: a prize to anyone who recognises it! It comes with an explanation. Ancient cities and towns had regular markets – some still remaining. Usually each selling a different type of goods. They were held in squares and where streets widened, and their hours were limited to lessen their impact on local shop traders and the flow of traffic. Originally their times of opening and closing were taken from the sound of a routine bell from the nearby church, convent or monastic building. Later the town arranged for the bell to be rung either from a suitably positioned church such as Carfax in Oxford, or in some places, on a bell erected in the market place. In the late fifteenth century halls for markets were built

and bells were placed on top of them to regulate the hours of trade. You can still see them in towns in the diocese, among them, Chipping Norton, Thame, Wokingham and this one. And this one: do you recognise it? Here is the clue!

Many thanks to the Amersham band who efficiently took up the baton from Aston Clinton and the 10- bell competition was able to go ahead as planned.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

ODG 10-bell competition 2021

With the 6-bell and 8-bell competitions cancelled last year because of Covid, we were all waiting with bated breath for the arrival of the 10-bell. There had been hiccups in that the chosen venue, Aston Clinton, had to turn us down because of trouble with the tenor. Amersham quickly jumped into the breach but gave notice that there was 'something on' in the church and we would have to be gone by midday. This made for an early start, very early in some cases, if 6 teams were to be accommodated before 12 o'clock.

When Katie Lane, the Guild Master, looked out of her bedroom window onto a glistening white vista, she had the gravest misgivings. However, all our teams were made of stern stuff and everyone made the venue on time despite Storm Arwen, sleet and very high winds. Because of time restrictions, the results were to be given out at the afternoon venue, Cuddington, where the Autumn committee meeting was to take place. Our judges, Kate and Paul Flavell, like the troopers they are, duly turned up at Cuddington to give the results. Tony Crabtree, Deputy Master and Maître d' for the day, organized a grab for them at Chearsley, assisted by some locals, to while away the intervening time.

Paul explained that they marked in percentages, with the highest percentage being the winner. Some general points about striking were made and referred to all teams to some extent. There were comments about the tenor, which needed to be driven, little bells which needed to be kept off the big bells, rushed leading and uneven

ringing but all in all, they were complimentary about the performances and there were no method mistakes.

The results were as follows:

1. EBSB Branch 81% (see photo on back cover),
2. Reading Branch 75%,
3. Newbury Branch 72%,
4. Old North Berks Branch 66%,
5. Banbury Branch 65%,
6. Vale of the White Horse Branch 63%.

The meeting which followed was kept short. Katie was delighted that so many people had responded positively and thought it was a very successful occasion. Tony Crabtree was responsible for the successful running of the competition and thanked those who had rallied to the occasion. As a bonus, Katie announced that the organiser of the Oxford Botanic Gardens' 400th Anniversary had been in touch and wanted to involve bells in the celebrations this July. As many of the bells in and around Oxford as possible would be rung to signify the ending of this historic year. The meeting finished on this very positive note.



Presenting the Ted Peett (10-Bell) trophy

Bobbie May

Safeguarding Training Questions Answered

With changes in safeguarding training that the House of Bishops agreed with the CCCBR at the end of last year, there have been various questions about how they should be implemented within the Diocese of Oxford. Below are some of the things that I've been asked by Guild members in the past few months accompanied by the answers, verified with the Diocese:

Do all ringers need to complete the basic awareness training even if there are no vulnerable people in the band?

'I have confirmed this with the National Safeguarding Team and all ringers are required to complete Basic Awareness. This falls in line with the requirement for anyone who undertakes a role on behalf of the Church, ordained or lay, paid or volunteer, to complete Basic Awareness.'

Does anyone in the tower need to complete Foundation along with the tower captain?

'This should then be followed by Foundation if they undertake a role with children or vulnerable adults, for example as a ringing teacher.'

Who is responsible for enforcing the training requirements?

'It would be expected that the Tower Captain promotes and implements this requirement, as part of their oversight of the team of ringers. Within a parish setting it would be the PCC and Incumbent who hold responsibility for ensuring that the safeguarding learning and development framework is implemented., and those who fall within the requirements complete the appropriate pathways.'

When should learners complete the training?

'For any new ringers, Basic Awareness should be completed as part of their Induction process and then for any current ringers this should be completed at their earliest opportunity, and certainly by the end of 2022.'

What is the minimum age of ringer to complete training?

'We ask people to complete Basic Awareness in the Diocese from 16, and would recommend if they are completing it at home that they do this at a time when an adult is around that they could speak to or get support from if they needed to.'

My PSO says that ringers in general don't need to do the training and that this can be decided at Parish level?

'The Basic Awareness requirement for all Ringers is set as a National Church requirement so we can make sure we clarify this in a future safeguarding communication.'

Must vulnerable ringers complete the training?

'Yes, unless they have a mental age below 16.'

My PSO says that all tower captains must complete leadership training?

'The information about Tower Captains no longer being required to complete Leadership has been clarified within the safeguarding newsletter and updated on the Diocesan website.'

I'm an atheist. Is there a secular equivalent that I can complete?

There is no secular equivalent to the training as it is a C of E requirement for those performing a role within the Church. Questions asking 'How would a Christian react to....?' can be completed as a comparative religion exercise.

June Wells, Safeguarding Officer

Learning & Development Workgroup

The workgroup continues to meet via Zoom. Dorothy Hall and Colin Lee have joined the group but we have said a grateful farewell to Colin Newman who has 'retired' since he has moved outside the diocese. To date, no replacement chairman has been elected.

We are delighted to have been able at last to facilitate some 'in person' events. The Radley Course ran with just four groups (20 students) on 9th April to ensure 'safe', well ventilated towers and adequate support, but such was the demand for places that an 'overflow' course for a few of the disappointed applicants has been organised for 4th June. We anticipate that demand will also be high for the Michaelmas (advanced) on 24th September, Steeple Aston (basic) on 29th October and 10-bell (one on 5th November) courses.

Our Training Meeting took place at Witney on 30th April and was attended by representatives of ten branches. Updates of previous training provision within the branches indicate a steady if cautious return to branch practices and targeted training. Ideas were shared about the effectiveness of Ringing Room, the role of Recovery Champions, increased cooperation between towers and across traditional boundaries, and the return of ART courses. Part of the meeting was given over to a presentation by Elizabeth Mullett about courses and online resources. The range of

material available on our own website and those of other territorial associations and the Central Council is truly remarkable and has been greatly enhanced during the pandemic. See: <https://odg.org.uk/training/online-learning-resources/>

Other aspects discussed included the return of Tower Captains' seminars and courses on conducting.

There was general agreement that some students in the more basic groups at Radley are hampered by their poor handling and should be given more experience within their branch of ringing different bells and changing the speed of their bell effectively before applying for a Guild course. If any branch would like assistance from the workgroup or guidance about what is required, please contact us at edsecretary@odg.org.uk.

Two squads of young ringers (Bucks & Berks and ODG) continue to prepare for the RWNYS in Exeter on 2nd July and we wish them well. We are grateful to Colin Lee for taking over the training of the Guild squad from Colin Newman. A pre-pandemic survey indicated that there were then over 200 ringers under the age of 18 within the diocese but we wonder how many there are now. Both groups would welcome more youngsters so please encourage any that you know who show promise to get involved.

There continues to be a high level of interest in handbell ringing, not least the Badgers group, and it is pleasing to report that about half of the Guild sets of eBells have now been sold. If you would like to hire or purchase a set, you are advised to contact Stuart Gibson soon!

Robert Newton (Secretary)

YR training – Old North Berks branch

Young Ringer Practice, Drayton, 12 December 2021

It was close to Christmas with all the competing parties and events, so we were not surprised when only seven young ringers came, aged between ten and seventeen. Three came from our branch, two from Oxford City and one each from Reading and Vale of White Horse branches. There were ten adults, all ringers, including three parents and three ex-young ringers.

As usual, we rang rounds and call changes, games to test our ability to stand our bells and to ring facing outwards. For our more experienced young ringers we rang plain hunt on seven, grandsire triples and Cambridge minor, with help from some of the adults.

During Daphne's wonderful refreshments we rang Christmas carols on handbells. Many thanks to Drayton for hosting us.

Young Ringer Practice, Longcot, 9 January 2022

It was a cold bright day when we met in Longcot. Tony Crabtree had done us proud, providing us not only with the church bells, but with his mini-ring set up inside the church and a miniature set of eight toy handbells plus music for some simple carols.

It was good to meet one young ringer from Longcot we hadn't met before. Altogether there were twelve young ringers including one from Banbury branch,

three each from Oxford City and Vale of White Horse branches and five from our branch. Eleven adults were present including two ex-young ringers and four parents.

As usual, we rang rounds and call changes and games to test our ability to stand our bells. For our more experienced young ringers we rang plain hunt on seven and grandsire triples, with help from some of the adults.

On the mini-ring, all the young ringers attempted to ring them. Three of the most confident young ringers taught themselves to ring double handed and managed reasonable rounds between them.

We took advantage of the eight toy handbells and rang some simple, recognisable carols

Added into the mix was Daphne's excellent refreshments. Altogether a very happy afternoon with lots of smiles among the young ringers.

Many thanks to Tony for hosting us at Longcot and for providing the much-enjoyed extra activities.

Susan Read, Training Officer, ONB

Radley Course: Bob Minor, Longcot – 9th April 2022

It was a beautiful sunny day when we met at Longcot for the Bob Minor group of the Radley course. The setting was stunning; Longcot church nestled in its picturesque graveyard with a back drop of the Uffington White Horse. There were 5 eager students from all over Oxfordshire and a myriad of helpers to facilitate the teaching. After a short tutorial, with tea and biscuits, the students got down to some real ringing. For some it was their first experience of Bob Minor whilst others were there to build on their existing skills.

After some serious ringing practice everyone took a break and drove to the Prince of Wales in Shrivenham where a traditional pub lunch was enjoyed. There was just time to fit in a little practice in the pub with some handbells someone had sneaked in

with. Feeling rather lethargic the group walked round to Shrivenham Church for some more ringing, including ringing all 10 bells as well as Bob Minor. The church had a wonderful window display of the old bell frames and clappers.

Finally, the students and helpers returned to Longcot for more tea and biscuits and, of course, more Bob Minor. It was a fantastic day enjoyed by both learners and helpers. The tuition was excellent and everyone

agreed there had been a great improvement in their skills. A big thank you to the organisers, Lindsay Powell and Tony Crabtree, and to all those who came along to help.



Katy Taylor, student

Tony, thanks ever so much for all you did for us on the training course yesterday. The way in which you structured the day and, with the assistance of a great team of helpers, were able to guide and coach us as we got to grips with Bob Minor, was impressive and ever so valuable.

I really did get a huge amount out of what was a very enjoyable and worthwhile day – I'll definitely be signing-up for more courses in the future.

Thanks again and best wishes,

Dave Pierce, student

[See also the photo on the back cover – Ed.]

Towers and Belfries maintenance course – Twyford

On the 19th February 2022, eleven keen students, with Tony Crabtree, Anthony Williamson and Len Palfrey, spent a very informative and practical day at St Mary's church, Twyford. The group comprised nine ringers, as well as two partners who are not ringers themselves but are keen to assist with maintenance.

The day started with presentations by Tony, Len and Anthony, setting out the programme for the day, giving health and safety guidance, and providing a background to problems that we might encounter, and ideas for improvements. We were also provided with copies of Anthony's very comprehensive checklist and schedule for tower inspections.

The whole group went up into the tower either to observe and listen, or to ring the bells up (and ring them down again) ahead of the belfry visits, to get a feel for any potential problems.

We were then divided into groups to inspect the bells, using Anthony's checklist; to look at the bell model, together with headstock and clapper, and examples of wear and tear on stays, pulleys, bearings and other bell gear, with Len; and to learn how best to correct odd-struckness on the wheel, as well as helpful advice for putting on a new rope, with Tony.

We all learned a great deal during a very busy and enjoyable day, and as a result at least one tower has now had a full inspection, including the tightening of a couple of stay bolts and a new rope on one bell.

Huge thanks and appreciation to Tony, Anthony and Len, and to Simon Farrar, the tower captain at Twyford; see you in a tower somewhere soon!

Sue Portsmouth, Sonning

Towers & Belfries Committee

The Towers & Belfries Committee met in April at Radley and it was good to meet in person. We agreed to alternate Zoom with face-to-face meetings going forward. We reported on recent activities.

Since the first post-covid course at Ivinghoe in the autumn, we have held more courses:

- Belfry course at Twyford in February for the Sonning Deanery Branch. Eleven students, including two non-ringers attended. There is a fuller report in this ODD-BOB (see above).
- Rope course at Radley church hall also in February with twenty students and helpers.
- “Hands-on” practical belfry course at Langford in March where some of the Twyford students put their new theory to the test by giving the bells some much needed TLC.

More courses are planned later in the year with a belfry course in the early autumn in the centre of the Guild, followed soon after by another rope course. Watch for the posters. Please let me know if you would like help to organise a local course in your Branch.

The committee discussed the problem of stretchy terylene topped ropes. Whilst the increasing adoption of terylene/



The Master's Bell training aid

polypropylene/polyester (however people describe it!) is great for rope life, lack of wear, non-shrink in wet weather etc, there is an emerging problem of occasional dodgy batches of terylene. Pre-stretched terylene should be totally non-stretch from the day the rope is put on the bell. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, occasional

reels of stretchy terylene get supplied to the rope maker and sometimes, a tower will get some ropes with a stretchy top. The new sally and tail-end will soon stretch out but there may still be some residual stretch in the terylene top. The ringers assume (and hope) this stretch will also disappear. IT WON'T... EVER!!! In cases like this, the tower would be wise to check out the situation before too long. Please contact the committee if you aren't sure.

Return-to-ringing, Tower Maintenance Award (see report below), Bell Fund grant and other inspections are resuming as life and ringing start to return to normal. Visits or advice have happened at Halton, Woodeaton, Stoke Poges, Langford, Farnham Royal, Stony Stratford, Aston Clinton, Sandhurst, Iver, Whitchurch, Ruscombe, Wavendon, Witney, St Aldate's and Slapton. Please get in touch if you would like advice, an inspection or some help at: tbchair@odg.org.uk or tbsecretary@odg.org.uk

Tony Crabtree – Towers & Belfries Committee Chairman



Students at Langford on 10th March

Tower Maintenance Award (TMA)

The Tower Maintenance Award Scheme was established in 2000 to encourage bands to improve the standard of maintenance in their towers, and to offer a tangible result when certain standards were met. Unlike a competition, there is no limit to the number of awards that can be made when the required grade is achieved and re-inspections can be asked for at any time to improve an existing grade. All of the checks in the inspection for an award are aimed at minimising the likelihood of mechanical failures (e.g. broken ropes, clappers falling out!) as well as identifying other things that might need professional attention, thus keeping maintenance costs to a minimum, and these are the main benefits to any tower taking part.

Prior to Covid lockdowns, the scheme had run fairly successfully with there being consistently around twenty current awards at any time (mainly Gold). Obviously the lockdowns have changed all that, so that there are now only two towers, Chalfont St Peter & South Leigh, with current awards, having achieved awards in this time. My congratulations to them!

We now need to make every effort to recover the situation, so could I ask anyone who is reading this to either, get the tower to ask for another inspection (if you've had a previous award which has now lapsed), or if you haven't already started, consider taking part? We will provide you with all the details of how you will be marked so that you can plan what has to be done to get an award; if asked, we will even do a preliminary inspection, before you start, to help the process. If you do gain an award you can be confident that your tower and bells are in a good, safe condition and, whether or not an award is gained, you will be given useful information on how they can be improved.

The main features of the award scheme are as follows:

1. There are three award grades (Gold, Silver, and Bronze) based on the results of an inspection using a marking sheet that is made available, in advance, to participating towers to enable them to prepare for the inspection. The grades will be based on the percentage of the "perfect" mark (currently 235), as follows:

Gold	85% +
Silver	70 - 84%
Bronze	55 - 69%
2. The award takes the form of a certificate that is current for two years from the date of inspection (rather like an MOT) and can be displayed in the tower.
3. Towers holding current awards are listed in ODD BOB and the Guild Report.
4. Each inspection is carried out by judges from the *Towers & Belfries Committee* and the detailed results of the inspection are made available to the tower.
5. Inspections can be requested at any time, via the Secretary or the Chairman of the *Towers & Belfries Committee* (addresses in the Guild report), irrespective of whether the request is for an initial inspection or to try and improve or renew a grade.

John Davidge, T&B committee

Librarian's Report

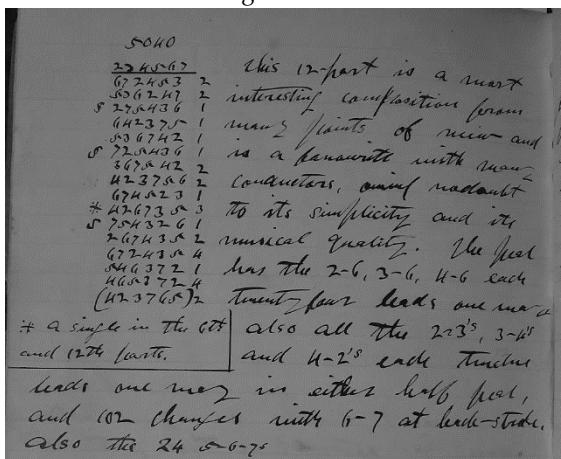
There have been 5 library enquiries since ODD BOB issue 105. These have been about:

- Borrowing the CD gazetteer of ODG towers with bells
- When the 3 Camps who rang at Amersham started ringing there
- Length of membership of a Central Bucks member
- Borrowing of two books recording new Guild members
- Membership of Rev B Long during the 1920/30s

With the dehumidifier up and running as reported in ODD BOB 105, a project to give each book an airing is underway. This involves taking books from the shelves in batches of 10 or 20 and checking their condition. They are then given a light dusting and left to air for a day or so before being replaced on the shelves. The books are in about the same condition as when I acquired the library in the year 2000 – most in good condition, a small number with pages that have become discoloured at some time since their production.

Work on the electronic archive is continuing. PDFs of ODD BOBs going back to 2015 are now on the archive website, and annual reports for 1995, 1912, 1905, 1906, and 1953-1959 are currently being processed.

In January, the library acquired a box of ODG related material from the collection of Bill Butler, kindly donated by his son Richard. Amongst the items is a box of papers from the first half of the twentieth century, including a number of letters from Ernest Morris seeking information for his books about bells and a letter from one renowned composer to another, Rev. C.D.P. Davis to J.J. Parker. Also amongst the material is J.J. Parker's notebook containing many peal compositions of Grandsire Triples, including the famous 12-part. This page is shown in the photograph.



If anybody would like to visit the library, you are very welcome to do so, please contact me. Books can also be borrowed. As an alternative I am happy to look up information, so please let me know if you have any queries.

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

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) to obtain the details. Thank you.

Stuart Gibson

News from the Branches

Banbury

Last December the branch carol service was held at Bodicote followed by mince pies and mulled wine with ringing beforehand. In March the branch social evening quiz and supper was held in Wardington village hall and was well attended – this was the first social gathering for two years.

The branch AGM is due to be hosted on 30th April by Adderbury ringers, with ringing at Kings Sutton and Adderbury and the service, meeting and tea in Adderbury Church.

Sadly, in March Diana Reeves a long-time member of the branch from Mollington died; her funeral was held in Mollington on 7th April. Several quarter peals have been rung in her memory.

Somerton, North Aston and Lower Heyford

The ringers of North Aston, Somerton and Lower Heyford are sharing practices on Thursday evenings with North Aston and Somerton alternating and Lower Heyford being on the last Thursday of the month.

Bloxham

We started ringing again at the end of 2021, and are now ringing regularly for Sunday morning services. We have eight ringers at Bloxham so we usually get to ring all eight bells to call changes on Sunday. The Adderbury tower captain and his nine year old son cycle here from Adderbury to ring every Sunday morning, They then cycle back and ring at Adderbury from 9.45 to 10.30! I am currently teaching two learners. As soon as they can handle safely on their own, I am hoping to start having Friday practices again at Bloxham; (report by Alan Griffin).

The branch has planned a series of general practices, advanced practices and outing to take place over the next six months.

Rosemary Hemmings

Bicester

We've held branch practices at Bicester, Bletchingdon, Islip, Ludgershall and Kirtlington since November, our AGM in February at Weston-on-the-Green, a focussed practice at Bletchingdon in March, and a branch outing to five towers approximately 20 miles west of Oxford on 23 April.

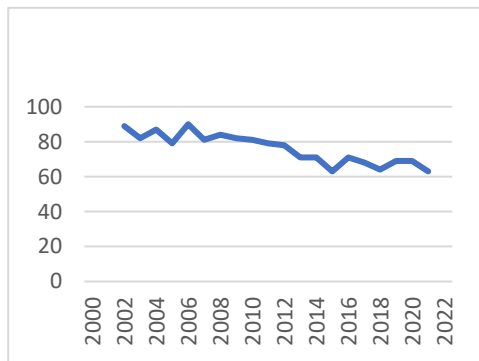
At Bicester's branch practice several members had their first experience of ringing on 10 bells whilst an amazing 18 ringers from 7 towers came to the practice at Bletchingdon in January. The practice at Islip on Shrove Tuesday drew a crowd as well, lured by the prospect of pancakes afterwards hosted by Sally Wale. We've been glad to welcome two experienced ringers, Emma and Laurence Odell, to the branch, now living in Ambrosden. In addition we have welcomed Katie Lane and our guild steward, Colin Lee, to some of our practices.

At our AGM on 19 February, we elected five new members but sadly we reported the deaths of Eric Ball of Middleton Stoney (5 November 2021) and John Hadfield, Bicester (5 February 2022). Branch members were able to ring quarter peals in their memory (recorded on *Bellboard*). Although the AGM was hindered by a 36-hour power cut, our hosts at Weston-on-the-Green ensured that the refreshments were of a high standard!

The focussed practice at Bletchingdon in March was intended to help the seven students make solid progress (aided by eight experienced ringers) on Grandsire or Bob Doubles – many thanks especially to Ron and Jane Burgess, and Clare, of the Witney and Woodstock Branch who helped all afternoon, and to Steve Vickars who was responsible for its organisation.

As branch training officer Steve has also encouraged members to attend the ART Module 2F (Foundation) course at Longcot and arranged the branch outing too – Langford, Broadwell, Black Bourton, Clanfield and Aston. Fourteen ringers, three non-ringers and one dog came and had a wonderfully sunny day out combined with a delicious lunch at The Plough, Alvescot. Another event to make us all feel that life is becoming ‘normal’.

Congratulations to Christine Redford who rang her first quarter peal in Bletchingdon in January – and to all our new recruits who are helping to offset the rather depressing picture shown by our membership graph. We appreciate you all!



Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

Most towers in the Central Bucks Branch have returned to regular ringing although the monthly branch practices have not yet resumed. However, there have been small groups of ringers ringing in each other’s local towers. In May the committee will meet to make and publish its decision on resuming branch practices.

The AGM was held on 12th February at East Claydon. The current officers all agreed to stand for another year, therefore the committee was elected as a block.

Kate Edgar, Branch Rep, Central Bucks Branch

New bells and frame, St Nicholas, Little Horwood

Due to bad decay in our old timber bell frame, we realised in early 2016 that serious work was needed to get our five bells ringing safely again. Two years later, we eventually got a faculty approved to allow us to install a new steel frame, and to increase from a ring of five to a much better ring of six. The old treble had been badly chip tuned, so we also got permission to purchase two new bells and were asked to retain the treble on display down in the church.



To obtain this faculty, we were asked to arrange a number of surveys: a structural survey of the tower to ensure it was strong enough to support six bells, a dendritic examination of the old frame timbers to establish their age, and a comprehensive survey on the frame and bells to provide an historic record. We also had debates with a number of experts, including Historic England and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, to agree that the ancient timber frame could be replaced with a modern one of steel.

With our fund raisers having obtained sufficient funds, with a major donation from the National Lottery, we were able to contract out the project to bell hangers and builders – so that with help from village

volunteer labour, work started in late 2020, somewhat hindered by Covid restrictions. We had steel beams permanently installed in the tower roof above the bells on which to attach the winches. Bells and frame were then winched down through three trap door openings, and the bells went off to Appleton to be retuned and for new fittings. The frame timbers were retained for later inspection by DAC and four massive timber support beams were also removed from under the old frame.

It was then a great few days at the end of September 2021 when we could reinstall the frame and bells; very much a joint effort between villagers and Whites' three bell hangers. We hoisted and positioned several tons of steel beams, followed by our precious six new and renovated bells, at the top of the church tower. Girders were positioned, hundreds of nuts and bolts were tightened, bells and bearings carefully positioned and heavy clappers were hung inside bells, even using laser sensors to obtain millimetre accuracy.

And then on the final afternoon, as the perfect finale, we were treated to a brilliant display of expert ringing by the Whites bell hanging team – and other professional ringers who appeared simply because they knew there were new bells ready to be rung. A happy conclusion to a long and eventful project.

If readers want to see great photos of this historic event, check them out on our website littlehorwoodbells.co.uk. Click *Photo Gallery* and then *Gallery of Photos*.

Paddy McCowen, Little Horwood

Chiltern

We recommenced our monthly Branch practices in January 2022, and in order to encourage members to attend we used the same tower (Wendover) for its central location within the Branch and its excellent ventilation (open mezzanine ringing floor). Many thanks to Wendover for hosting us for 4 months. We are now planning to use other towers across the Branch that provide good ventilation and access to the ringing room.



The monthly practices cater for all ringing abilities including bell handling, rounds, Plain Hunt and methods up to Cambridge minor and are attended by between 12 and 18 ringers. We are now planning additional practices that focus on one method at a time, for a few learners. Of course these will depend on much support from experts in the chosen method.

We have welcomed three new members to the Branch since January, and are pleased to have permission to use the attached photo of the presentation of the two certificates we have thus far requested.

On 19 March we held our AGM by Zoom, again to encourage members to attend. We were pleased to welcome Katie Lane, Guild Master, to the meeting. We were able to elect a new Chairman (Andy Grover) and a new Treasurer (Simone LeBoff). Philip Dobson had stepped up to take the Secretary role in November 2021 as Clare Carpenter had moved out of the area and was formally elected into that role. Roy Woodruff has stepped down from being Treasurer after many years' of service to the Branch in various roles, indeed he was there almost at the inception of the Branch. He will be greatly missed.

The restoration of the bells at Slapton is underway. The bells were removed to Blyth & Co. in October 2021. Completion of the project now depends upon the sale of some church land which fell through, at the last minute, in January. The PCC are actively pursuing a number of avenues in order to ensure the bells, augmented from 5 to 6, are returned as soon as possible.

Philip Dobson

Chipping Norton

[No news received – Ed.]

East Berks and South Bucks

We have continued to hold one or two Branch practices per month. Some have been well supported others not so, but our two new Ringing Masters (Matthew Johnson and Vikki Bulbeck) have made good use of the time and the ringers present to make all practices purposeful. Although it did not feel appropriate to hold a Christmas Social at our final practice of 2021, the local ringers at Winkfield made us very welcome and supplied hot punch, mince pies and other scrummy refreshments.

The Tower Captains' meeting in February was attended by 19 people representing 14 towers. It was a great opportunity to meet again in person, to share our experiences of returning to ringing after the pandemic and to thank those who had helped out at other towers. It was decided to hold the Lorna Newton Knock-Out Contest this year despite several bands wishing to withdraw because of Covid caution and lack of numbers. Needless to say there was a fair amount of discussion about Safeguarding at this meeting as well.

The AGM at Chalfont St Giles was preceded by a short but meaningful service and refreshments. At the meeting the retiring Treasurer (Michael Bayley) reported that 47 members had not renewed their Guild subscriptions for 2022 (some moved away, some retired from ringing due to age or health issue, some just given up) but we then elected 19 new members and hope that there will be more later in the year. All officers were re-elected, with the exception of Rosalind Garrett-Bowes taking over as Treasurer and Angela Darvill taking her place as Branch Representative. Peter Jasper (Young Ringers Organiser) reported that the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers have



L to R: Thomas A Monks, Alison M Bayley,
Anna K Bayley [C], Ruth M Monks,
Philip M Pratt, Michael J Bayley

met once a month with 10 to 15 youngsters attending each time. They joined with the Surrey Association for an outing to London and took part in the South East England Contest in Essex coming 3rd in the 8-bell section. They are looking forward to going to Exeter for the Ringing World National Youth Contest in July.

The reason for Michael Bayley stepping down as Treasurer is that he and his wife Alison have moved to Aston Clinton – our loss is Chiltern Branch's gain! Alison has been Tower Captain at Penn for 43 years and Michael has been Steeple Keeper. They will be greatly missed by the local band and within the Branch. The Bayley family (*see photo above*) rang a quarter peal

in recognition of Alison and Michael's contribution to ringing at Penn.

Also at our AGM we remembered those who had passed away in the last year – Daphne Hutson, Peter Legge, Gilbert Runnicles, Eileen Stevenson, Lionel (Tony) Timms, Stan Barlow and William Butler. Fitting and appreciative words were expressed, and all will be remembered with gratitude for their contributions.

Having won the Guild 10-bell Striking Competition at Amersham in November, a band from EBSB is busy practising Yorkshire Royal in preparation for the Tewkesbury Shield at which they will represent the Guild. We wish them the best of luck.

Patricia Newton

Newbury

Towards the end of 2021 we were hearing with trepidation about the spread of the Omicron variant, and how that might put us back where we started. Well mercifully, it seems to have come and gone through the Autumn leaving the ringing community largely unscathed and those who have had a dose of it, only mildly affected. So, with lockdowns and mask wearing becoming more a memory than a necessity, and as the weather is now warming up, we look towards weddings, fetes and other local events, which, for the Newbury Branch at least, make for a busy ringing schedule through the Summer.

Along with many other towers in the Branch, we plan to ring a quarter peal to herald the opening of Hungerford's *Picnic in the Park* to celebrate HM the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Some towers have been practicing Platinum Bob Triples but, with a large audience and wanting to make a good job of it, the Hungerford Band are going for good old Grandsire Triples, with Platinum reserved for another day this Summer.

East Garston's restoration project, reported to be making good progress in the last edition, is now up and running with preparations to remove the bells scheduled for the next few weeks.

Our monthly mid-week ring and pub lunch events, organised by Sue Smith, are now a well-established and popular Branch event, bringing ringers at all levels together for a relaxed and sociable day.

Most towers are now back to ringing as normal, but recovering our skills has, for some, taken longer than expected. So, plenty of bread-and-butter methods, but not so much challenging new stuff. That said, we hope to get our Advanced Practice back off the ground this month, under the leadership of Mike Hopkins Till, where we have widened its scope from essentially a surprise practice, to an eight-bell practice, where Stedman, Double Norwich and the like will be on the agenda. So, a busy Summer to look forward to and best wishes to all from the Newbury Branch.

Mark Robins

North Bucks

Ringing in North Bucks is starting to return to normal. We have a full schedule of Branch events planned and, so far, attendance has been enthusiastic. We have noted a slight reduction in membership which seems to be reflected in attendance for tower practices generally. Recruiting and teaching seems to have made a start though, and those who can teach are in demand. We are going to have to do a lot more of this in the next few years. Recognising that many bands are struggling, the bands of the Newport Pagnell Deanery are working on ways to pool resources. It is expected that this will build on traditional allegiances but may draw in towers over the borders in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Interesting times.

Doug Hird

Old North Berks

Our AGM was held successfully by Zoom meeting. It was once again ably hosted by our Chairman, Rob Nickless, and was attended by twenty-nine members, including the Guild Safeguarding Officer, June Wells, and our Guild Branch Steward, Patricia Newton. All branch officers remained in position apart from Janette Roberts, who wished to stand down after many years of service as a Branch Representative. The Chairman thanked Janette for all the work she had done for the Branch and Dick Peters was elected to take her place. Our Treasurer, Stuart Gibson, reported that in 2021 the membership of the Branch was 247, a decrease of 14 from 2020. Fourteen new branch members were elected to the Guild and this was thought to be a good sign that things are improving after Covid.

The branch 6-bell striking competition, usually held in March, has been postponed until June. This will, hopefully, give more bands time to practice and prepare for the competition.

The ONB Branch Ringing School has taken place in Abingdon each Saturday morning. Sixteen teachers on a rota have been teaching twelve learners from our branch and three other branches. In collaboration with the VOWH Branch, there has been a day course which was designed for anyone teaching a new band. Our offerings to young ringers have changed from six outings a year to monthly Sunday afternoon practices. Numbers of young ringers at these events vary between twelve and fourteen.

Branch practices resumed at the end of February, although one surprise major practice had to be cancelled through lack of attendees. We are holding a 'mini' outing of three towers and a pub lunch at the end of April and this is being well supported. Our main branch outing is planned for July and this will be followed by a barbecue. The barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall, which was postponed from November 2020 and 2021, is now scheduled for this coming November. All events are of course subject to Covid regulations.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

[No news received – Ed.]

Reading

In February Reading Branch managed a successful AGM which, although not rammed to the rafters, enabled us to elect a full complement of officers including two members completely new to office. We have subsequently met and had a successful meeting to plan the rest of the bell ringing year.

Our branch practices are getting back on track and we have enjoyed well supported gatherings at Nettlebed, Tilehurst and Padworth already this year. Our advanced practices are up and running at Shiplake, again well supported, and Jennifer is rallying the young ringers for the bi-monthly youth practices.

We will be trialling a midweek practice and hope that we will have a Branch Outing that we will be able to report on in the next ODD BOB.

On a sad note though, we said goodbye to Ian Judd who died earlier this year. Mourners from across the world of bell ringing attended Ian's funeral at St Mary's in

Streatley. Of course many of Ian's ex-colleagues and pupils from Reading School were also there including those who knew him in both capacities. A particularly touching tribute has been a peal from a band consisting of ringers all of whom had a close association with Reading School. And many other peals and quarters were rung in Ian's memory, see *Bellboard*.

Lindsey Barker

Sonning Deanery

At the end of January we were finally able to resume regular branch practices. Advanced practices have been held at Hurst, and Elementary practices at Binfield. Both have been well attended and especially the elementary practice where novice ringers are very keen to develop their skills. As I attend the elementary practices, I can vouch that they are both very beneficial and enjoyable.

The daytime mid-week Binfield practice is also running again, as are the regular Saturday practices. We are currently holding branch practices in the three towers with ground floor ringing rooms for better ventilation and easier social distancing. However, we expect to start rotating the practices around the other towers soon, now that people are more comfortable 'living with covid' and the rates are dropping. Unfortunately, we had to postpone our six-bell striking competition due to a lack of teams wishing to take part.

Following feedback, it was decided to hold our AGM in February via Zoom, which resulted in a good attendance. We all hope that next year the AGM will be in person, and it will be preceded by the usual ringing and tea.

St Andrew's, Sonning

Sonning tower resumed live ringing as soon as the easing of lockdowns permitted, and luckily one can get good ventilation in the ringing room with windows and hatch open, fans on, and the door to the tower stairs open.



Sonning is again having its *Scarecrow Trail* around the village, this year at the start of the Jubilee weekend, an event well worth a visit. Sonning tower is again taking part with a large decorated banner hanging down the side of the tower. The theme of our banner is of course the queen's Platinum Jubilee.

In April our congratulations went to Becki, our newest and youngest ringer, who passed her Level 1 of the ART scheme *Learning the Ropes*.

Wokingham All Saints, update

Wokingham All Saints church will be closed for the rest of the year to enable a major restoration and refurbishment to make it a more versatile community resource. The nave has already been stripped (see photo from the ringing balcony). Most of the work doesn't affect the tower and we are hoping to be able to continue ringing, at least out of working hours. However, at the time of writing we are still waiting to meet the contractor to agree what will or will not be possible.



Jan Glen

South Oxon

We held our AGM in person this year, at Aston Rowant. What a joy it was to meet “face to face”, ring the bells and enjoy a ringers tea once again. Branch Practices recommenced in April – a very well attended event, and an “Everybody Welcome” practice takes place at Berrick Salome on the second Saturday of each month.

Some of our towers are suffering a shortage of ringers, but practices and service ringing continue when sufficient numbers are available. Several of our members are helping out at towers other than their own – one good thing to come out of the dreadful pandemic.

Dorchester have attracted two new learners. All of their ringers have made good use of *Ringingroom.com* during the lockdowns and are now putting their new methods into practice.

One of Thame’s young ringers commenced at Kings College London in September and has joined the University of London Society of Change Ringers. Harry has progressed in leaps and bounds, ringing his first quarter peal inside of 1260 Plain Bob Doubles on 27th November last year, and then his first peal inside of 5040 Cambridge Surprise Minor on 12th February this year!

The bells of South Oxfordshire churches will be ringing out for Queen Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee, and no doubt we will be ringing for several weddings over the next few months.

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

Having missed the deadline for the November edition of Odd Bob, this report includes highlights since May 2021.

As restrictions eased during the year, ringing recovered at different rates depending on the bands and the individual ringers. Nearly all the Vale towers reported having at least one ringer who would not be returning, and with several ringers moving away, our membership is currently at its lowest level since 2013. We did however welcome one new member (Kit Margey of Longcot) at the AGM.

We were saddened to hear of the deaths of two local ringers. Phil Tilling, former Tower Captain at St Mary's Ashbury who died in December and Carl Oberman, a stalwart member of the Uffington band, who died in February.

The annual Branch outing was a casualty of covid, although a number of Vale ringers joined the annual Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust sponsored Ride & Stride in September for a walk around 7 Oxfordshire churches to the northeast of Lechlade, ringing at 3 towers along the way including the newly restored and augmented 8 at St Peter and St Paul, Broadwell. One 'highlight' of the day was crossing a ploughed field where muck spreading was in progress!

In September, with training once again possible, we hosted the first ART session to be held in the UK since March 2020. Good use was made of the newly constructed kitchen, mezzanine level and toilet facilities within St Mary's Church in Longcot. Then in November Shrivenham hosted a ten-bell training day, the first ODG course to take place since the start of the pandemic.

Another post-pandemic first was a Branch Practice in October when we visited three towers and enjoyed a cake competition at the final tower.

The 2022 AGM was the first 'in person' business meeting to be held in the branch for 2 years. All the officers were re-elected unopposed, although several indicated that this would be their last year in post. As many have been serving the branch in some capacity or another for decades, they feel that it is time for new faces to take up some (or all) of the officer positions.

Our younger ringers have had a busy year. Daniel Watson and Molly Sutton had a wonderful time with the Guild youth team at the Ringing World National Youth Contest at Worcester in September, and together with Kit Margey have been joining the ONB Young Ringers' practices. They all produced interesting entries for the ODG lockdown award competition. Daniel scored his first QP at first attempt (aged 14) in October. He was all set to ring his first and then the pandemic arrived! He has since rung his first peal (again at first attempt) and conducted 2 QPs. Kit has also rung his first quarter (aged 10 and also at first attempt), on the Stallpits mini ring, as part of the celebrations for the opening of the new facilities at Longcot.

And finally, congratulations to Louise Harrison, Tower Captain at Shellingford, and her husband Robert on the birth of their first child, George Robert Harrison who was born last May.

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

St James the Great, South Leigh

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our Tower Captain, Heather Horner, our ringers have increased, so that we are now able to hold regular, well-attended practices on the first and third Wednesday evenings of the month from 7:30 – 9:00. Taking it in turns to be Ringing Master, the practices are both instructive and fun, all welcome.

We are most grateful to the band from Marston tower who have come monthly to support the progress of South Leigh ringers.

Ringing to remember Ted Venn

There will be ringing in the Black Bourton area on Saturday, 23 July, to celebrate the contribution to ringing of Ted Venn. Ted rang in the Witney and Woodstock area over many years, and among his numerous contributions he trained a band from scratch at Woodstock in the early eighties.

Ted died in 2019, and although there has been some peal and quarter-peal ringing in his memory, there has been no opportunity for any general ringing. Teaching and giving everyone a chance was at the heart of Ted's ringing philosophy, and this event will reflect that.

If you rang with Ted and would like to participate, please contact David Parker for further details.

E-mail: bromyardbellringers@gmail.com Phone: 01885 488891 or 07811396020

St Mary's Witney

A bell maintenance and augmentation funding project were launched at the recent Ceremony of Remembrance held at St Mary's to commemorate the victims of the Covid 19 pandemic. The money raised will not only provide essential maintenance but will cover the cost of two additional bells. Each new bell will be significant and allow the town to enjoy the ringing for generations to come:

- The Commemoration Bell – A bell dedicated to the people of Witney who have died during the Covid-19 pandemic and to mark this historic time.
- The Community Bell - A bell that will be funded by various groups and donors within the Witney community. There will be opportunities to sponsor specific parts of the bell and assembly, add an inscription and be part of the installation, and to witness the bells being cast at the foundry.

If you are interested in donating or would like to find out more information, please send an email to witney@witneyandwoodstock.odg.org.uk.

Look out for fundraising events throughout the year.

Andrew Goldthorpe

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Diary of Events for 2022

The latest version of the Guild website now publishes dates of both Guild and Branch events, provided a Branch submits its dates to the ODG webmaster. Below are dates that I have been sent by Branch Secretaries – Ed.

Some of these dates may change, so you should check the 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

MAY 2022

Sat	14	Reading	BP	Shinfield (6)	10-11:30
Sat	14	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	14	South Oxon	BP	Berrick Salome (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Chenies (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Great Milton (8)	19.00 – 20.30

JUNE 2022

Sat	11	Reading	BP	St Giles-in-Reading (8)	10-11:30
Sat	18	EBSB	SC	Clewer (6)	17.00
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	18	Sonning	BP	Sandhurst (6)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Marlow (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	25	South Oxon	BP	Shabbington (6)	19.00 – 20.30

JULY 2022

Sat	9	Reading	BP	Henley (8)	10 – 11:30
Sat	9	EBSB	BP	Hitcham (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	16	Sonning	BP	Binfield (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	16	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Hughenden (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	23	South Oxon	BC TBC	Warborough (8)	19.00 – 20.30

AUGUST 2022

Sat	13	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	20	Sonning	BP	Hurst (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Thurs	25	EBSB	BP	Penn (6)	10.00 – 12.00

SEPTEMBER 2022

Sat	10	EBSB	BP	Iver (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Sandhurst (6)	16.30 – 18.00

OCTOBER 2022

Sat	8	EBSB	SC/HY	Lane End (6)	17.00
Sat	15	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Chesham (6)	14.00 – 16.00

NOVEMBER 2022

Sat	12	EBSB	BP	Chalfont St Peter	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	19	Chiltern	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	19	EBSB	BP	Hambleden (8)	13.00 – 15.00

DECEMBER 2022

Sat	10	EBSB	BP/Social	Bray (8)	17.30 (TBC)
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Students and helpers on the Radley Course, Bob Minor group, [see page 8]



The winning 10-bell band, EBSB, [see page 4]