

# ODD BOB



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



Sonning Deanery Branch Elementary outing, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August



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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. This Odd Bob and past issues are held on the Guild website.

The EBSB Fund Raising website address is: [bellfund.org.uk](http://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

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When events of national significance occur, I search through the old Guild Reports for details of how ODG ringers marked the occasions. At this point I should add that it is mightily easy to become distracted by the content of the reports, occasionally astonished, and often amused by, the language, content and personalities that appear. Much has changed and yet much remains the same. There are many tributes to worthies but there is also a most surprising amount of admonishment for failure to comply with Guild expectation; comments are made that would cause great reproach today!

The death of King George VI and proclamation of Queen Elizabeth II would surely have been recorded in the 1952 Guild Report. It was noted, in two sentences, by Elliot Wigg: *"At the beginning of the year 1952 the members of the Guild played their part in expressing the sorrow of the nation at the death of a beloved King, through muffled peals and quarters. Now in the coming year of 1953 I have no doubt that the Guild will in the Diocese of Oxford, join with ringers everywhere in voicing the nation's joy at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II."*

In 2022, in the age of instant, easy communications, it was the centuries old tradition of ringing bells throughout our Guild, the country and across the world, that communicated in the villages, towns and cities, the nation's mourning for Queen Elizabeth and the proclamation of King Charles III.

As soon as the *Operation London Bridge* became live, steeple keepers and ringers of the ODG marked both occasions, muffling bells, mustering bands, the old, the young, the experienced and the new recruits, often travelling between towers to make sure that our bells were heard far and wide.

The haunting sound of muffled bells, the single tolling by a lone ringer, the very public performance in prominent locations created a soundscape that reflected the joy and sorrow of The Queen's remarkable, long reign and proclaimed the new monarch.

It was a superb effort which was appreciated by many people; bell ringers certainly contributed to the occasion in a unique and unforgettable way.

Many of our towers managed to upload their performances onto BellBoard, but it has been a far more complicated task of accurately collating all that information than I had, naively, expected. There was no single piece of data that could be used to search BellBoard for every piece of ODG ringing so Deputy Master, Tony Crabtree, spent hours looking for ODG towers and performances related to the death of the Queen, the Proclamation of the King and the funeral arrangements. I am grateful for his efforts because I would not have managed the undertaking myself.

There were in the region of 578 performances uploaded to BellBoard involving 225 towers (including some single bell towers and a mini ring) and 7 handbell locations.

Most were muffled or half-muffled and there were nearly 100 with the footnote for the Proclamation of King Charles III.

There were:-

- 497 pieces of general ringing or tolling
- 67 quarter peals (in 51 towers)
- 4 peals in 4 towers
- 8 quarter peals in hand
- 2 peals in hand



The towers in Oxford City centre were rung by members of the Oxford Society many of whom are also ODG members. The invitation from the Oxford Society to visit Tom Tower to observe, and for some people play a part in swinging Great Tom, was an opportunity not to be missed. Tom Tower is on St Aldate's, over the entrance to Christ Church College and the Diocesan Cathedral; Great Tom weighs 6 and a quarter tons (5669.905kg) and is 85 inches (2.159m) in diameter. Wearing ear defenders, it was possible to ascend the ancient staircase to stand next to the massive bell. I was accompanied by a

Ukrainian refugee who had arrived from the warzone just a few days' earlier and found herself among the bell ringers listening to the awe-inspiring sound of a bell which is about 500 years old; she gazed in wonderment.

In the photographs are Colin Lee, Guild Steward and Young Ringers' coach, swinging Great Tom with his son Simon, and with Sara, who are both under 18. Sara is a member of the ODG youth team for the national 12 Bell competition. John Pusey, who taught Sara to ring at St Giles, Oxford, is closely observing his protegee!



Catherine Lane, Guild Master

## Roger Barnes (1949-2022)

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Bellringer, antiquarian bookseller, local historian and folk musician, Roger died tragically on the 30th of June as the result of a fall at home.

Born in Berkshire, Roger moved with his parents firstly to Kent and then to Lancashire where as a teenager he developed his interest in folk music and Morris dancing with Garstang Morris. He learned to play a wide assortment of instruments, including guitar, banjo, bagpipes and

particularly anglo concertina on which he became a masterful player. He took up bellringing when he was 14 after being discovered making rubbings in Preston Parish Church's graveyard and went on to become an accomplished ringer and teacher.

In 1990 Roger moved with his children and second wife Margaret to Ducklington where he continued to work for Whitbread brewers. Five years later he realised a dream and opened Church Green Books in Witney, dealing in antiquarian books, and retired from work in 2005. He was awarded an M.Sc in History from Oxford in 2009, and continued to develop the bookshop as well as his other interests in music and genealogy.

Roger joined Ducklington Morris as dancer and musician, and also founded the band Hullabelloo, drawing its members from the traditional folk sessions held at The Bell in Ducklington. He rang at many local towers, including Christ Church in Oxford, and was inspirational in developing the team at St Bartholomew's, Ducklington as Tower Captain for a number of years. He taught several of the current band, and was always looking to expand their methods repertoire. As a church warden he was the driving force behind the new vestry and improved ringing chamber, undertaking much of the finishing work himself.

Quick to help and see the good in others, and a profoundly kind man, Roger let his actions show his Christian faith. Discreet when it mattered, his generosity of time and gentle support made him a reliable friend to many.

He enjoyed life – a drink with family and friends, sharing music, Lancashire cheese and working on projects – and his enthusiasm, creativity and kindness were widely appreciated.

Many aspects of life in and around Ducklington had Roger at their centre, and he is sorely missed by all those who knew him.

Richard Ford

## **William (Willie) Haynes, 1938 – 2022**

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Seven years ago in the *Bicester Advertiser* (1/1/2015) when Willie was 76, he is quoted as saying, "I started going up the tower with my father, Henry, when I was around six in about 1944, just after the bells had been allowed to start ringing again. It was when I went up to the Charlton church to organise my father's funeral that they asked me to carry on from him. I was not elected in those days – I was expected to carry on, so I did."

In the 70+ years since, Willie taught numerous beginners. Many have sent comments of appreciation – as an example – 'I'm really sorry to hear the news of his death. I only met him a couple of times but he seemed a real character. Big shoes to fill.'

He worked all over Oxfordshire's churches particularly Islip, Bletchington, Banbury and Bicester. One of his proudest moments came when he was invited to ring for the Queen on the bells of Westminster Abbey in 1992.

Willie was elected to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers in 1951 and was a member of the Towers and Belfries committee from 1994 – 2009 (15 years). Another committee member, John Davidge remembers him as a very useful, likeable and knowledgeable member of the committee. He was President of the Bicester Branch of the ODG from 2001 until his death. He rang numerous quarters and full peals (11) including a peal in Islip in 2003 to mark his own retirement and his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Amongst his papers, following his death, we found a letter from 10 Downing Street 9/11/1982 acknowledging Willie's letter to the Prime Minister and to say it was receiving attention – wouldn't we all like to know what that was about?! And also there was the souvenir *Ringling World* issue from the 1977 Silver Jubilee – had Willie not died the day before HM Queen Elizabeth II he would almost certainly have taken a great interest in the ringing to mark that event.

His wife, Bet, died in 2008 – although the garden, ringing and dogs plus his family were a great solace – he missed her greatly. May he, with Bet, rest in peace.

Kathryn Grant





## Branch Ringing School

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We've been running the Ringing School in the Old North Berks Branch for the last few years. We concentrate on teaching new ringers to handle a bell for the winter (October to March). And for the summer (April to September) we help those who can handle a bell to improve on their bell control and listening skills, the "foundation skills" needed before they can start to ring plain hunt successfully.

We use the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) syllabus, Learning the Ropes (LTR). Currently we train learners to LTR1, *Bell Handling*, and LTR2, *Foundation Skills*. Presentation of an ART LTR Certificate is always well received!

In advance of each Ringing School season, we arrange for an ART tutor to come and deliver a one-day training course on teaching the skills we are about to deliver. Therefore, in October we arrange an ART Module 1 course on *Teaching Bell Handling*. In April, we arrange an ART Module 2F, *Teaching Foundation Skills*.

Those who attend the ART course are invited to come and practise the skills they have learned in the safe environment of the Ringing School with a mentor on hand to help and advise. It isn't easy to remember all the details that the tutor imparts on the one-day course, but several weeks of mentored practice helps immensely.

### ***Winter teaching bell handling for learners, expanding!***

We know that it is difficult to give new learners the attention they deserve during a



*Isaac receiving his LTR L2 certificate*

normal practice night. The Ringing School focusses on providing extra bell handling sessions for newer learners to help local tower captains and their learners. Attending an extra hour of teaching each Saturday morning can really help a learner to improve and join in with ringing in their own tower more quickly.

Last winter (Oct 21 to March 22) we taught up to five learners at a time on a one-to-one basis in Abingdon. Over the course of the winter 15 learners attended in Abingdon and 8 of them achieved their ART LTR1 qualification in bell handling, involving safety in the tower, raising, lowering and ringing a bell, changing speed and setting the bell as needed.



This winter the **Old North Berks Branch** is collaborating with the **Bicester Branch** and holding the Saturday morning sessions alternately in Kirtlington and Abingdon with the hope that we can assist learners from a wider area of the ODG. (Both towers use tied bells with a simulator.)

The sessions are pre-arranged so that the four or five learners are each taught on a one-to-one basis with an ART trained teacher for an hour.



*Teaching at the first Winter School  
22-23 session*

### **Summer teaching foundation skills at a variety of towers**

In summer 2022 we invited learners to come and consolidate their skills at a different practice night each week with the agreement of the tower captain. The local ringers joined in with our exercises to strengthen the band. We had a lot of fun and the local bands enjoyed our visits. Over the summer we arranged to visit twenty practice nights, with twelve learners and seven new teachers.

On 22 October 2022 we have scheduled a one-day course on teaching bell handling at Kirtlington. Those attending the course are offered the option to practise teaching at the Ringing School whilst being supervised, so that they may be more confident that they have remembered all the things they were taught on the day course and become a better ringing teacher sooner. In due course, those teachers will be offered ART assessment and hopefully become accredited ART Teachers.

During winter 2021/2 six of our new teachers were successfully ART assessed in teaching bell handling. During summer 2022, five of our teachers were successfully ART assessed in teaching foundation skills and become full members of ART.

It is fun to teach together in the Ringing School and a camaraderie has developed between the learners. Using a tower where a full simulator is in place allows a number of teachers to teach simultaneously on a one-to-one basis without annoying the neighbours.

We hope that our success with training teachers and new ringers will help more and more towers in the ODG to have confidence to recruit and bring back the bands of ringers so many towers need.

Susan Read  
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Old North Berks Branch  
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Steve Vickars  
Branch Training Officer  
Bicester Branch  
steve.vickars@gmail.com

## Oxford Diocesan Guild 8-Bell competition 2022

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This year's 8-Bell competition was held in the Reading Branch at Goring-on-Thames, followed by the AGM in the Canterbury rooms adjacent to the church. This is the first time these two significant calendar events have been held sequentially. It was tried, this time successfully, to counter the effect of declining numbers at Guild meetings. Not only was the meeting quorate but the Canterbury Rooms were bursting at the seams with Guild members. Perhaps we were just pleased to see each other after so many virtual meetings.

In addition to this the competition attracted 10 teams, which must come close to being a record, though one had to withdraw with complications of an unspecified kind and I heard one member say, "I am the Covid substitute for Team X". The surprise was that there weren't more, since Covid is still ravaging local practices.

Our judges were Kate and Paul Flavell who stepped into the breach, not for the first time, and Paul announced that it would be their 90<sup>th</sup> Striking Competition, which must also be a record. However, they seemed very happy to be with us and were greeted with loud applause. No surprises at the outcome with EBSB placed first with 84% Reading St Mary 2<sup>nd</sup> 82% and Banbury Branch 3<sup>rd</sup> 79 %.

Unfortunately, the host team, Goring, didn't complete the test piece. It is only recently that they lost their leader, Ian Judd, who would so much have enjoyed the afternoon.



*The winning EBSB team: Treble Sheila Bruce, 2. Patricia M. Newton, 3. Angela M. Darvill, 4. Kenneth J. Darvill, 5. John C. Davidge, 6. Martin T. Whitaker, 7. James White, Tenor Robert H. Newton (c)*

Although Goring have quite rightly been considered by most Branch members to be a nice light ring, they have developed some falseness which found out a few teams who were not accustomed to ringing them. The judges commented on rushed leads, small bells not giving bigger bells enough room, varying speeds among the bells and, strangely, quite a few missed dodges in the set piece of Plain Bob Major. The test pieces were judged in percentages against perfect accuracy.

While the competition was taking place, there was handbell ringing in the churchyard, enjoyed by many in the afternoon sun. As if that wasn't enough for the Goring competitors, they also produced a very welcome tea. Thank you, Josie and the Goring band!

Moving on to the AGM, Katie Lane, Master, started the meeting right on time. Business was brisk and new aims were stated for the Guild in line with recent CC developments. Top table had obviously put a great deal of thought into this and there wasn't any dissent. Ken Darvill stood down as General Secretary after significant input over the years and Karen Pile was elected in his place. Susan Read stood down as Assistant Treasurer but Stewart Gibson believed that he could

manage the post as well as his own! David Smith of South Leigh was awarded a certificate of Distinguished Membership. The certificates for the 2021 10-bell competition were presented and the meeting finished very punctually after about 45 minutes.

Bobbie May

## **Oxford Diocesan Guild 6-Bell competition 2022**

The annual competition for the silver cup is held each year at the beginning of October in one of the fifteen branches of the ODG. The 2020 competition didn't happen, for obvious reasons. It was good to have the opportunity, post lockdown, to hold the 2021 competition which should have been in North Bucks Branch. Then came the petrol crisis and most of those who managed to make a team despite covid, decided they couldn't risk running out of fuel! Happily, the 2022 competition did take place, albeit with a below average entry of seven teams, on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Our hosts were the Newbury Branch and we were made very welcome at St Mary's, Shaw-cum-Donnington. This is a lovely ornate church just to the north of Newbury. It is adjacent to Shaw House, an early symmetrical H-plan Elizabethan mansion and one of the best-preserved Tudor buildings in England.

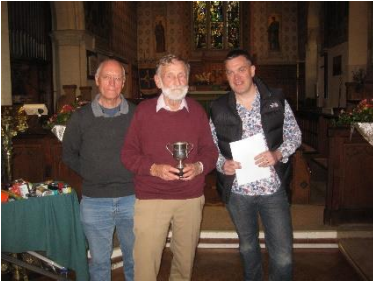
The bells are an easy-going 7cwt six but there was enough odd-struckness to challenge the teams. Our judges were Jason Carter and Gordon Belcher from Swindon. They made very helpful comments and were unanimous in their decision.

The cup was awarded to the team from All Saints' Faringdon representing the Vale of the White Horse branch with 240 Grandsire Doubles. It was a very impressive piece of ringing and a credit to the band and particularly to Daniel, their teenage conductor! The full results, with the "podium" positions also earning certificates were:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Faringdon, All Saints: Vale of the White Horse – 10 faults
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Newbury St Nicolas: Newbury Branch – 14 faults
- Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> St Mary's Shenley & All Saints' Loughton: North Bucks – 16½ faults
- Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading, Minster Church of St. Mary the Virgin: Reading Branch – 16½ faults
- 5<sup>th</sup> Wantage, Ss Peter & Paul: Old North Berks – 17 faults
- Joint 6<sup>th</sup> High Wycombe, All Saints': East Berks South Bucks – 23 faults
- Joint 6<sup>th</sup> Church Hanborough, Ss Peter & Paul: Witney & Woodstock Branch – 23 faults.



*Faringdon team (l – r):  
Cheryl Watson 4, Kay Chamberlain 1,  
Julian Watson 5, Daniel Watson 3 (c),  
Peter Hunt 6 and Jon Chamberlain 2*



*Jon Chamberlain receiving the trophy with judges:  
Gordon Belcher (left) and Jason Carter (right)*

Tony Crabtree

## **Learning & Development Workgroup**

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There has been just one Zoom meeting of the workgroup since the last Odd Bob, at which the discussion centred mainly on follow up from the Training Meeting, and review of and preparation for courses.

A *Conducting Grandsire Doubles* course was held in South Oxfordshire on the afternoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> September, led by Patricia Newton. Nine students had the opportunity to call various touches of up to 120 changes – all seemed to benefit from the experience.

The Michaelmas ‘advanced’ course took place on 24<sup>th</sup> September. The number of applications was so low by the closing date that the decision was taken to cancel half the towers and reduce the number of groups from four to two. Perhaps this was a blessing in disguise as several potential helpers were unavailable, mainly owing to holidays or tower outings. Methods covered ranged from Stedman Triples and Cambridge Minor in one group to Cambridge, Yorkshire, Superlative, Bristol and London S Major in the other one. The helpers were first rate and the feedback from students was generally very positive.

At the time of writing, we are anticipating the Steeple Aston course on 29<sup>th</sup> October and *Grandsire Caters* course at Shrivenham on 5<sup>th</sup> November. The Radley course is planned for 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

Congratulations to the two bands of young Guild members who participated in the RWNYS at Exeter on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. All of them evidently had a great deal of fun and benefited greatly from the experiences on offer in addition to the contest itself. In this the Bucks & Berks squad achieved its highest placing so far: 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Call change section. The band representing the wider Guild had a last minute band change: the tenor ringer dropped out owing to Covid, the treble ringer switched to the tenor and a nine-year old reserve with a recently broken arm was drafted in to ring the treble! Nevertheless they came a creditable joint 4<sup>th</sup> in the Method ringing section. Both groups are looking forward to competing again in York on 8<sup>th</sup> July next year but both have lost some ringers who are now too old. There must be a number of suitable youngsters in the Guild that are not yet involved who would benefit these squads and gain benefit themselves.

Robert Newton (Secretary)

## Steeple Aston rope course, 29<sup>th</sup> October

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Thank you to Tony, Anthony and Philip for a very educational and enjoyable initiation into the art of rope splicing and rope management at the course held in Steeple Aston on Saturday 29/10/2022. The course was so much more than “just ropes”, it was a great introduction into how the whole “bell system” works and what to look for in terms of early signs of wear, with simple guidance as to how to rectify the causes at an early stage. Even though there were only five of us on this particular course it was good to meet other ringers and hear their anecdotes and stories whilst gently “working” the ropes.

The lunch was fabulous too, so thank you Vicky.

As a lapsed novice bell ringer, I found this an incredibly useful course as it was so much more than what could be inferred from the title. I would recommend it to all bell ringers (lapsed and current) as it provides you with the knowledge (and some tools) as to what you could do if something happened during ringing (for example, a rope coming apart). With the knowledge provided and a bit of practice you could make the repairs and then carry on ringing. You will also learn and be able to pass on what I would call a “traditional skill” that needs to be learned, maintained and passed on to future generations.

Thank you all for the time together.

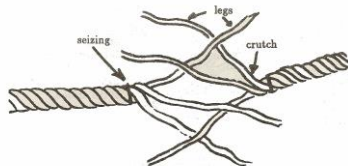


Fig. 2 shows the correct way to marry two three strand ropes before short splicing.

Pip Squire, Broadwell & Kencot

With the advent of modern ropes, I feel that rope wear and breakages will become less of an issue. However, many towers still use traditional hemp ropes or are transitioning to modern ropes that still that need these techniques to repair them. This course and the accompanying belfry maintenance course have given me a better understanding of the resources available and the techniques needed for me and my team to maintain our towers. I also met a group of like-minded people with a wealth of knowledge, keen to keep traditions going.

Nigel Findley, East Hendred & West Hendred

## Towers & Belfries Committee Report, March – October 2022

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The Towers & Belfries Committee has met twice since the last ODD BOB: 14<sup>th</sup> April and 24<sup>th</sup> August in person. We agreed to meet again in January 2023 by Zoom, and in person in April & August.

We discussed and progressed issues relating to:

- Stretchy terylene topped ropes
- Revitalising the TMA (Tower Maintenance Award) system following covid
- Post-covid belfry inspections (April)
- Dry weather belfry inspections (August)
- Inspection documentation, storage and retrieval, non-ringing steeple keepers
- Previous and future belfry courses – aiming to provide at least four a year

- Mileage costs of attending meetings
- The Bell Fund
- Suggested inspection report templates, AND

Reporting and discussing advice and inspections for: Fulmer, Lower Basildon, Ruscombe, Witney, Stoney Stratford, Windsor St John's, Aston Clinton, Slapton, Ufton Nervet, Woodeaton, Whitchurch, Little Rollright, Iver, Chastleton, Little Compton, North Leigh, Lathbury, Halton, Little Milton, Great Haseley, Stoke Lyne, Bledlow, Ivinghoe, Sandhurst, Wokingham, Finchampstead, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer, Wargrave, East Hendred, West Hendred, Lambourn, Reading, St Mary & St Laurence, Hughenden, Kencot, Oxford St Aldates, Combe (near Newbury), Theale, Whitchurch, Stoke Poges and Farnham Royal.

A particular concern has been the extreme dry weather and the extraordinary quantity of loose nuts & bolts in belfries all over the Guild. We have been working hard to alert, educate, correct and generally mitigate the problem.

We ran a general belfry course at Ambrosden in October and a rope course later in October at Steeple Aston (using the hall while the ringing course students were out at the towers). We have two rope courses planned for 11<sup>th</sup> Feb and end of October 2023. There will hopefully be a general belfry course at Shaw-cum-Donnington on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2023. There may be other courses depending on invitations from host towers.

Sincere thanks to our thirteen hard working volunteer members; Anthony Williamson (Secretary), Phil Roberts, Alan Marchbank, Andrew Slater, Chris Potter, Len Palfrey, David Bardwell, Graham Clifton, Philip Dobson, John Davidge, Mark Curnow and Steve Vickars. We would welcome new members.

Tony Crabtree – Towers & Belfries Committee Chairman

## **Librarian's Report**

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There have been five library enquiries since OddBob issue 106. These have been about:

- Any ringers at East Garston during Rev. C.W.O. Jenkyn's time there
- Ringing in past years at Kirtlington, Weston-on-the-Green and Bletchington
- Method in peal at Chalfont St. Peter on 23/9/1989
- Photo album for Banbury Branch
- Peal at Abingdon, 28/12/1918

Work on adding Guild publications to the electronic archive is continuing. Annual reports for 1905, 1906, 1912, 1953, 1954 and 1995 have been added since OddBob 106.

There is a modest number of photographs in the library, stored in a number of locations. Sorting them out is a task currently being undertaken, placing them in one box and cataloguing them.

The project reported in OddBob 106 to give the books in the library an airing is now complete. The project involved inspecting each book, which has led to my gaining an overview of what is in the library. It is worth setting out for the record some of these findings. To begin with: the bequest of Alan Pink, a well-known ringer from Oxford who died in 1980 aged 74. He left his collection of ringing books and related items to the Guild. These consisted of:

- Method diagrams, compositions and other change ringing books
- Manuscript method diagrams and compositions in 23 books and files. These are collectively a monumental work of handwritten material which Alan Pink must have worked on over much of his ringing career
- Ten albums of photographic views of churches. A significant proportion of English churches with bells will be contained in this set
- Two copies of *Campanalogia Improved* by J.D. and C.M. One is dated 1766 and the other, published in 1705, is the oldest book in the library
- Several hundred letters about various ringing topics from various ringers such as Murray Coleman and Ernest W. Tipler. These will be a trove of ideas about composition during the mid-twentieth century
- Alan Pink had an interest in churches generally. This is reflected in the set of about 20 books he left to the library about English churches and cathedrals.

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**

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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



## News from the Branches

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### **Banbury**

In June members of the branch met at Horley one Friday evening for the annual striking competition and barbecue. There were two categories, call changes and methods. The call changes category winner was Steeple Aston, with Wardington second and Banbury third. Steeple Aston also won the methods category, with Adderbury second and Cropredy third. During the last six months the branch has held branch practices aimed at all abilities at Hanwell, Steeple Aston and Wardington.

The branch entered a team into the 8-bell striking competition and came third [see page 10].

In September bells in the branch were rung half muffled or fully muffled for the Queen's death, proclamation of the new King, and the Queen's funeral.

In October, the Half Yearly Meeting (HYM) was held at Somerton with ringing beforehand at Souldern and Somerton. Two new members were elected and one member was re-elected.

### **News from Bloxham**

Alan Griffin reports that Bloxham started ringing for services again after Covid at the end of 2021. We have eight Guild members at the moment, and usually manage to ring all eight bells every Sunday, because Colin Lee and his nine-year-old son Simon cycle here from Adderbury. Simon even rings up our tenor!

We rung half-muffled at the announcement of the death of the Queen, and again for three quarters of an hour before her funeral in Westminster Abbey.

I have taught two learners since Covid and am currently teaching a ten-year-old girl who is making good progress.

We started having Friday practices again at Bloxham at the beginning of October, so please come and join us if you are available.

### **News from Somerton**

Neil Clare of Somerton reports that Somerton hosted the HYM in October and the ringers rang as per *London Bridge* procedures, fully muffled and half muffled tenor. This was recorded on BellBoard. They have alternating practices between North Aston, Somerton, and Lower Heyford on Thursday evenings.

Graham Clifton reports: In June we rang a quarter peal of bob triples to mark Jack Knowles 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Jack has now started his working life by joining the team at Whites of Appleton Ltd. He will be doing an apprenticeship in engineering.

Like so many other towers, we were very involved in marking the sad passing of HM Queen Elizabeth. The bells were fully muffled with the tenor open at backstroke. This was the first time any of us have ever rung like this and it was extremely moving. Many villagers said how much they appreciated our ringing.

On the day after the Queen's death, it was planned to hold a surprise practice on our bells. As only 8 people had indicated that they would be attending, those 8 people rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples.

On the day of the funeral all 13 of our ringers turned up to ring for an hour before the service.

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October we again hosted the Guild Ringing Course. Although numbers were down this year there were three groups covering Plain Hunt, Bob Doubles and Grandsire Doubles. Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October has been booked for the 2023 course.

We will now be concentrating on handbell ringing in preparation for our annual event of ringing carols round the village at Christmas.

Rosemary Hemmings

## Bicester

As with most other ringers, the past six months have been overshadowed by the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II and the associated ringing for that, as well as, in the case of the Bicester Branch, the death on the day previously (7 September) of our long-standing President, Willie Haynes, of Charlton-on-Otmoor. A tribute to him appears elsewhere in *ODD BOB* [see page 7 – Ed.].

To date 7 quarter peals <https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/memoria.php?id=15418> and a full peal (a first for Steve Vickars and Plain Bob Minor / Cambridge too!) have been rung in Willie's honour.



*Bicester Branch practice at  
Weston-on-the-Green*

It was especially good that two of our young learners in Islip were amongst the band who rang on the death of HM The Queen and for the Proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III – throughout the Branch most towers were able to toll or ring for both events – and many reported appreciative comments.

Branch practices in the last six months have attracted an average of 14 ringers (apart from the one in Souldern in September which turned into a quarter peal for Willie!). This has included a variety of ringing abilities but generally led to productive and entertaining

practices. It was especially good to have a practice at Launton followed by drinks, courtesy of Mike and Eleanor Shakespeare, who have recently moved back to the area and whose son was married at Kirtlington a few days later – Mike and Eleanor had been Bicester Branch members for many years.

Congratulations to Bletchington who have achieved Gold in the Tower Maintenance scheme – all that work done during the pandemic – decorating, new lighting in the belfry, plus emergency lights, painting the ringing room and the belfry walls – was well worth it! And congratulations too to our newest member, Diane Lavender, who has moved to the area from Beverley and is now one of the Bicester band.

At the beginning of October the Old North Berks and Bicester Branch launched a Ringing School at Kirtlington when four learners from Witney and Woodstock Branch and five teachers/ mentors from ONB and Bicester attended the first one, which is now running as a regular event. This was followed by a learning to teach bell handling session on 22 October.

In addition to all that, members have rung at a number of weddings which have been held throughout the summer. It's been good to have happy as well as sad events to enjoy.

Kathryn Grant

## Central Bucks

After the Half Yearly Committee meeting back in May, Central Bucks Branch have restarted the monthly branch practices held every second Saturday of the month, usually from 10am till noon. Also, the (slightly more) Advanced 8-Bell Ringing hosted by Stewkley and Haddenham, alternating every third Wednesday of the month, to make access easier across the Branch. Both schedules are updated regularly on the Central Bucks website's noticeboard.

The past 6 months we have seen ringing for a mixture of events that couldn't have been more poles apart – from the impressive and well-deserved Diamond Jubilee celebrations to the sombre and emotional news of Queen Elizabeth II's death followed by the Proclamation of King Charles III.

Most tower have done their bit to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's life and



reign, from more advanced ringing to call changes or tolling, with a special mention going to one of our youngest ringers, Evie, from Stewkley.

“The rule of thumb for teaching children is to wait until they are at least 10. Evie was so desperate to join us that I agreed to give her a go, aged just 8! She has been amazing. She is ringing completely independently and has started change ringing. The only children of her age I have come across before come from families where everybody rings so they have no choice and they are usually reluctant ringers! Evie (and her Mum) are so keen they are always there waiting for me, both practice nights and Sundays. Evie has even been to a few other

nearby towers to have a go. Her progress has been incredible and we so hope she continues to ring with us for a very long time.”

Ailsa Knightley - Ringing Master

Aylesbury St Mary has also seen a rollercoaster of ringing from celebrating Duncan Purchase's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday by ringing 1320 Plain Bob Doubles to the sad loss of one of our young ringers, Julian Griffin, only 17 years old, marked by 1273 Grandsire Triples rung half-muffled prior to the Service of Thanksgiving.



Julian Christopher Griffin 16.01.05 - 17.09.22

#### **Oxford Diocesan Guild**

**Aylesbury**, Buckinghamshire

St Mary

Friday, 30 September 2022 in 49m (21-2-12 in Eb)

#### **1273 Grandsire Triples**

C M Meyer

- 1 Sue Haines
- 2 Ailsa Knightley
- 3 Anne Pratt
- 4 Duncan Purchase
- 5 Grant Edney
- 6 Roger Powell
- 7 Jeremy Pratt (C)
- 8 Isaac Edney

Rung half-muffled prior to the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Julian Griffin, aged 17, a ringer at this church

St. Laurence's Winslow ringers have been active through the summer! In May we ran a coffee morning on behalf of the Church's fundraising appeal for roof repairs, and in June took part in the St Laurence Festival. With tower visits on both occasions, we have gained a recruit and stimulated interest. The band has further increased with a ringer newly resident in Winslow appearing one Sunday and sticking with us.

We will have rung for 10 weddings in 2022, well above the norm, and with a number not on Saturdays, thus ruling out working ringers, we have relied on friends from other towers. Their support is much appreciated. We are also very grateful for continued outside assistance to improve our standard of ringing.

With the celebratory Platinum Jubilee followed all too soon by the memorial ringing for the Queen, we have certainly been heard across the town.

Cristina Galatanu, Central Bucks Secretary

## **Chiltern**

We recommenced our monthly Branch practices in January 2022, using the same tower (Wendover) for four months. These were well attended with up to 20 members present and enabled us to elect a few new members to the Guild. We then used other towers across the Branch from May. Unfortunately these do not seem to have been as popular: attendance has fallen off and we are encouraging members to use monthly practices to develop their skill and extend their repertoire.

A number of towers across the Branch were able to ring in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth II and in proclamation of the succession of King Charles III. Ringing fully muffled but for the tenor (half-muffled usually) was a new experience for many (if not all) of us. A few quarter peals within the branch were recorded on Bellboard – we hope to increase that number for the Coronation.

Sadly, due to ill health, our 100 club manager has had to stop ringing and this valuable fund raising activity is currently suspended.

It is with regret and sympathy that we have to record the death of Judy Woodruff in the summer. The funeral, in August at Aston Clinton, saw the church full to overflowing, which was a fitting tribute to Judy, preceded and followed by ringing of all 10 bells by many ringers from across the country. She will be greatly missed by the Branch, Guild and family.

The restoration of the bells at Slapton continues to prove a slow process: the sale of land upon which completion depends has been fraught with obstacles and awaits the third prospective buyer to finally go ahead with the purchase.

Aston Clinton discovered their tenor had quite a severe crack and were pleased to accept grants from ODG and Chiltern Branch towards the cost of repair. The bell now sounds better than it has for a long time.

Towers in the branch continue to experience varying fortunes as we return to ringing after the pandemic. Some towers are struggling but there is also positive news and progress being made in others.

One positive in particular since ringing has restarted is that we are seeing a number of young ringers at branch practices. In a branch with no large towns or universities this is particularly pleasing to see, as is the rapid progress that they are making.

With great difficulty and much arm twisting we managed to fill the main posts of the Branch committee. The average age of members increases by about 12 months each year and we need to recruit younger ringers in order to sustain the Exercise in the Branch.

Philip Dobson

## **Chipping Norton**

We have had a varied and active summer of ringing in the Chipping Norton Branch. As with many branches, much of the ringing at the beginning of the summer was in celebration of the Jubilee of HM The Queen and subsequently in memoriam for HM Queen Elizabeth II. In between, well-attended branch practices continued to take place on the last Tuesday of every month, various peal and quarter peal attempts were made, some more successfully than others, and visiting ringers contributed to a lively summer of ringing.

Early in May there was quite a stir in Shipton under Wychwood when the Bikers ringing tour arrived at 10.30 to ring the bells. Around 30 leather-clad bikers arrived just in time for tea and cakes, boosting the church fundraising at the Church coffee morning. The ringing was superb, including staples such as Grandsire, Stedman and Cambridge as well as rounds and call changes, and lovely comments were made on the local village Facebook page. The Bikers had come from far and wide: Liverpool, Preston, Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight, South Wales, Wiltshire and more, for their annual get together. They were joined by our illustrious ringing master David Salter, also a biker, our branch chairman, Chris Seers, a lapsed biker, and our ringing Vicar Geoffrey Clement, also a biker, who joined in the ringing at Shipton. We had many comments about how lucky we are to have a Vicar who not only rings, but is a Biker too! The Bikers went on to Hook Norton, where they were welcomed by tower captain Sally Austin, for more excellent ringing, including a beautifully struck touch of Oxford Bob Triples.

The Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II was marked across the branch with two full peals, Grandsire Triples at Shipton under Wychwood (the first full peal since the restoration of the bells) and Yorkshire Surprise Major at Hook Norton. In addition, a quarter peal was rung at Swerford, and rounds and call changes at Chadlington.

A 'mini branch outing' within the branch ensured there was ringing in towers not often heard, with ringing from rounds and doubles to Plain Bob

Minor, Stedman and Cambridge at Chastleton, Little Compton, Kingham and Churchill. Burford ringers celebrated the Jubilee by ringing at Burford, Fulbrook, Leafield and Taynton – and on a separate occasion at Asthall. At Leafield teas and coffees were accompanied by (Queen) Victoria sponge cakes. This was appropriate since the tenor bell in the complete ring of bells cast by J. Taylor and Co. in 1874 for the new church was the gift of Queen Victoria, as evidenced by the inscription on the bell.

In the summer Fulbrook tower welcomed back their tower captain, Dan Glyde, who had graduated from Nottingham University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. In Dan's absence, John Radcliffe had ably held the fort, arranging a team to ring regularly for Fulbrook's 9.30 services, and muffled for the lying-in-state and for the funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

Sadly many of the towers in the Chipping Norton branch no longer support a full complement of ringers, nevertheless, single bells were tolled on 9<sup>th</sup> September at Chipping Norton, Chadlington, Enstone and Spelsbury and on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September prior to the state funeral at Salford, Chipping Norton, Ascott, Chadlington and Spelsbury. Half muffled ringing took place in the evening at Spelsbury and a quarter peal, fully muffled, was rung at Shipton under Wychwood in advance of the state funeral.

Mike Summers, tower captain for Charlbury, wrote a mini diary of the programme in Charlbury:

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September – I went up the tower and raised the flag to half-mast. Bell chimed 96 times – once for each year of the Queen's life.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September – we rang the 5<sup>th</sup> bell for an hour, but rather than chime it, which is pretty exhausting, we took it fully up and rang full circle. This gave us two advantages; we could toll slowly by controlling it on both hand and back stroke, and we could stand for a few seconds while someone else took over. In the end there were four of us on this duty, ringing for five to six minute intervals. Although we couldn't see it, there were reports that many people came down to the church and stood for a while, silently listening then moving on.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September – I was there on the tower roof, waiting for the clock to strike 11 o'clock, then took the flag up to full mast. It will stay at full until Sunday afternoon, when it will go down to half-mast again. During this time the bells will be rung open (not muffled) to



*The Grandsire band at Shipton*

welcome the new King. After that we go back to mourning the Queen; the flag goes back to half-mast and the bells will be muffled until after the funeral.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September – Ringing (open) for 9:45 service; Sunday afternoon, back up the tower to take the flag back down to half-mast. We put the muffles on before the Wednesday practice, then worked on what we were to do before the funeral.

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September – Ringing half muffled for Charlbury Commemoration Service at 11am (360 Grandsire)

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September – We picked a team and successfully rang 1260 Grandsire Doubles half muffled between 10 and 11 am before the state funeral.

Mike Summers

Burford ringers recently spent a sunny afternoon across the county boundary in Warwickshire to ring at three towers. The first tower was Welford-on-Avon, which has a complete ring of eight bells by John Taylor & Co. The six bells at Tysoe include four bells by Richard Saunders of Bromsgrove, dating from 1719, which results in a pleasant sounding and easy-going ring. The ringers enjoyed refreshments at Tysoe before the finale at Brailes, where the 29cwt tenor is the third heaviest bell in the UK in a ring of six (and the 5<sup>th</sup> is 22cwt). The challenge was enjoyed by all. At the end of the day, several ringers followed Satnav which led them home to Oxfordshire by crossing a ford, fortunately with very little water in it and encountered in daylight before the clocks changed.

Jenny Lewis

## **East Berks and South Bucks**

Having won the Guild 10-bell contest last year, EBSB sent a band to represent the Guild at the Tewkesbury Shield. Sadly, two days before the event one of our key ringers tested positive for Covid and was rapidly replaced, but that meant moving the band around. After a rather nervous practice we rang quite well and the judges comments were positive but we were disappointed to be placed 6<sup>th</sup> out of 8. It was a lovely day out, though. The sun shone and it felt so good to be doing something “normal”.

Several other contests have taken place during the summer – the Branch 6-bell at Clewer (won by High Wycombe “A”), the Guild 6-bell where High Wycombe ended up joint last (must try harder next time!), the Guild 8-bell which the EBSB Branch were delighted to win and the Lorna Newton Knock-out Contest. Only 8 teams took part in this Lorna Newton Contest this year, with just three (High Wycombe “B”, Bray and Marlow) ringing in the final at Lane End. The ringing and results were in that order.

The Bucks & Berks Young Ringers [see back cover] achieved their best placement yet in the Ringing World National Youth Contest at Exeter, being placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the call change section. They also enjoyed ringing at a selection of other towers ranging in weight from 11lb 9.5oz (the Frank Mack garage ring) to the second heaviest ring of bells in the world (Exeter Cathedral). Monthly practices have now resumed after a summer break and the youngsters will be practising hard for the South East England contest in the Spring.



Since the previous ODD BOB was published there have been two major national events. At least 20 bands rang for the Platinum Jubilee in June with quarter peals being rung at Amersham, Chalfont St Giles, High Wycombe, Marlow, Maidenhead and Windsor Curfew tower. There was also a peal of Plain Bob Triples at Marlow that was the first peal attempt for three of the band (Cordelia Thompson, Sian Robinson and Jonathan Gallop). Well done to them. The churchwarden at Farnham Royal requested that their bells (which hadn't been rung for some years) should be rung in celebration. The bells were inspected and several problems found. Following a number of visits and a lot of hard work by John Davidge, all eight bells were rung by an experienced band for the occasion.

During the period of mourning for Queen Elizabeth II there was tolling and/or ringing at 27 or more towers in the branch. It was good that so many towers managed to get something together at such short notice, and at a time when so many people were on holiday. Some steeple keepers must have been very busy fitting, removing (for ringing for the Proclamation of King Charles III) and re-fitting muffles (for the Queen's funeral). Quarter peals were rung at Amersham, Bray, Clewer, High Wycombe and Maidenhead.



*Hughenden QP band. David Cornwall at back, centre*

Three Branch members deserve particular mention. Congratulations to 16 year old Euan Thomas on his election to the Ancient Society of College Youths.

Congratulations to David Cornwall on completing 70 years membership of the ODG. He rang in a quarter peal (his first for more than two years) on 21<sup>st</sup> September at Hughenden to mark the occasion. The band rang Yorkshire Surprise Major and celebrated after with a pub lunch.



Finally, sincere congratulations are due to John Davidge who was awarded the British Empire Medal in HM The Queen's Jubilee Birthday Honours List, on 2nd June 2022! This special List marks the public service of individuals across the UK in celebration of Her Majesty's 70 years of service. Although John was awarded his honour for services to the community in Chalfont St Giles, it also recognises his immeasurable service to many communities of bell ringers and to the upkeep and conservation of St Giles church. Apart

from being a long-serving tower captain at St Giles, John has been Chairman of the ODG Towers and Belfries Committee and Chairman of the EBSB Branch.

Patricia Newton

## **Newbury**

With Lambourn and Hampstead Norreys restoration projects now complete, the focus has been on East Garston, where the formidable fund-raising team raised the required funds and got the go ahead from the PCC very quickly, allowing work to progress. Removing these ancient bells from the tower was no mean feat, but Whites of Appleton, ably assisted by some, by now quite experienced, volunteers got them out and despatched for repairs. It is hoped that they will be back in the tower and ringable by Christmas.

Of course the main focus throughout the Branch for the summer was the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, which saw most of our towers ringing specially for the occasion. In May we took part in the ODG 8-bell Striking Competition, held at Goring on Thames, where we gave a good account of ourselves by coming equal 5<sup>th</sup>.

In October, St Nicolas, Newbury represented the Branch at the ODG 6-Bell competition, held at Shaw-cum-Donnington, where we came an impressive 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Of course all active towers rang for the Royal State Funeral, mostly half muffled, and with open ringing and some quarter peals to mark this sad event.

Our regular midweek ring and pub lunch outings remain as popular as ever, as do our monthly all-comers and advanced practices. Recruitment and PR has also been on the agenda, with Scout group visits to St Nic's, Newbury and the Brownies visiting St Lawrence, Hungerford. So, the Newbury Branch is alive and well and as active as ever.

Mark Robins

## **North Bucks**

### **Old North Berks**

Ringling in the ONB Branch is now almost completely back to normal, and various branch practices have been held over the summer months. Almost all of our towers rang on the death of the late HM Queen Elizabeth II and for her funeral, and also for the proclamation of King Charles III.

Sadly I have to report the death of Berice Large, who was a long-standing Guild member and rang at Marcham.

In June we held our 6-bell striking competition for the first time on a Saturday morning. This was a very successful event at North Moreton, with six teams entering. Wantage were the winners and they went on to represent the Branch at the Guild competition. Our judges were Keith Osborne from Kent and William Stungo from Berkshire, and we would like to thank them for giving their time. Local ringers provided a superb breakfast during the competition, which was enjoyed by all. The event was so successful we have decided that future competitions will be held on Saturday mornings.

The branch outing took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July to Weston on the Green, Aynho, Adderbury, Sandford St. Martin and Stonesfield, with lunch at the Red Lion, Adderbury and tea at Sandford St. Martin. Almost thirty members attended and thanks go to Philip and Janette Roberts for organising this popular event. The outing was followed by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, with a record number of attendees (almost sixty members, partners and friends). As ever the food

was excellent and thanks go to Stuart and Naomi for hosting the event. The day and a raffle raised £554.00 for branch funds, which will be used in grants to branch bell restoration projects.

The Branch Ringing School continues, with Susan Read arranging for twelve learners and eight trainee teachers to attend different practice nights each week during the summer. Both the learners and the trainee teachers increased their confidence and ability to ring / run practices. The winter school involves bell handling sessions on Saturday mornings alternately in Abingdon and Kirtlington.

The barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall, which was postponed from November 2020 and 2021, is now scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Let's hope that we can finally go ahead with it this year! Our annual New Year's ringing event is scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2023 in Steventon.

Gill Loyd

## **Oxford City**

The Oxford City branch has had some very successful branch practices, with lots of people ringing new things with the support of a more experienced band than their home towers may be able to provide. This has included ringing up in peal, first blows in plain hunt, ringing the tenor behind, and treble bobbing to a method. We look forward to helping people continue to progress and then take their new skills back to their home towers and build on them further.

Sunday ringing has restarted at both North Hinksey and Stanton St John, with support from the Marston ringers. Cowley have resumed their practices on the third Thursday of the month with help from the same band.

Headington tower hosts a monthly surprise major practice on the simulator, usually on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month. The practices from May to August were successful and enjoyable (the September practice had to be cancelled). Any aspiring or established Cambridge Major ringers and beyond (regular methods include Yorkshire, Superlative, Bristol, Cornwall and Lessness) are welcome to come along.

At the beginning of June, St Aldate's ringers Joanna Knight and Jonathan Cresshull celebrated their marriage.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June Headington had an Open Tower to accompany the Open Gardens, and had a busy afternoon with 42 visitors and a dog. Unusually, two visitors returned for the following Wednesday practice, and began to learn to ring. One made excellent progress but then returned to college in Lincoln. The other decided it was not for her. Our loss may be Lincolnshire's gain.

Much ringing was done in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June. Then in September tolling, half and fully muffled ringing after the announcement of the Queen's sad demise and to mark her funeral, as well as ringing open bells to celebrate the accession of the King.

The tradition of ringing a bell on discharge from hospital may not be widespread these days, but in July St Mary, Wheatley were approached by a local family to have the church bells rung to mark the successful completion of their young son Ryan's treatment for acute leukaemia. Before normal ringing practice about 8 children came up to "play" with the ropes under bell ringer supervision. They were thrilled to be able to chime the bells, and even persuaded the adults to have a go too. About 40



family members and friends gathered in the sunshine outside the church to join the thanksgiving. Later, after our ringing practice, the family, who run our regular pub *The King and Queen*, treated us to drinks.

Marston's newest ringer, Lydia Poole (10), who only started learning last year, rang her first quarter peal for the Platinum Jubilee (group photo attached) and has been able to adapt well to ringing at several different towers this summer.

Rachel Croft

## **Reading**

Reading Branch is really getting back on its feet in the last few months. We have three different monthly practices. The general Saturday practices are well attended as are the Surprise practices which are attracting many ringers determined to broaden their repertoire. The new mid-week general practice has been very successful, perhaps because we follow it with a pub lunch.

### ***Reading Branch outing***

Thanks to the excellent organisation of June Saint, the Branch enjoyed a fairly local outing to Winkfield in EBSB Branch, then Shottesbrooke, Hurst and Wargrave in Sonning Deanery Branch. We enjoyed all the bells and although we mostly rang basic methods such as Plain Bob, Stedman and Grandsire the stronger members of the group did manage some 8-spliced. As I sat eating a splendid lunch I realised that the age range was close to 70 years. Where else do you get people of all ages enjoying their hobby?

### ***Plain Hunt Course***

With a good smattering of learners across the Branch, Jenny Page saw the need for some basic training so she organised a Plain Hunt course at Shiplake. The four learners who took part made significant progress and it was a very productive day all round.

Now news from various towers including some of the highlights from the Platinum Jubilee and ringing for the both the old and new Monarch.

### ***St Michael's, Tilehurst***

In the middle of last year, St Michael's began teaching 3 new ringers, and on 3<sup>rd</sup> June all 3 were members of the band who rang to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. For Ethan and Dominic this was their first experience of ringing "open" on 6 bells and they coped well with ringing rounds. Our other new member, Anne, also had the chance to ring rounds and call changes.

The ringers who rang rounds and call changes for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee from left to right: Anne Davis, Rosa Bardwell, Cindy Wrapson, Giles Winter, Ethan Cook, Colin Cairns, Eunice Wark, Liz Evans, Dominic Taylor, David Bardwell, Jo Druce.



After the general ringing, 8 members of the band rang a quarter peal in honour of this memorable occasion – 1260 Grandsire Triples.

The ringers at Tilehurst were asked to ring by Jeff King as a surprise to his wife on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. This was to mark the occasion of their Golden Wedding Anniversary. When they married at St Michael's 50 years ago, they were not able to afford the cost of the bells. On the day, Jeff suggested to his wife an outing to the church to mark their day and organised for us to be ringing at the same time. We were all delighted to take part in the quarter of Plain Bob Triples.

### **Ringling at St Michael's for the Monarchy**

On Friday, 9 September 2022 Colin R Cairns and Elizabeth A Evans tolled the tenor in memoriam Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

On Saturday, 10 September there was general ringing of Plain Bob Minor and Plain Bob Doubles, rung open following the Proclamation of King Charles III.

On Wednesday, 14 September members of the local band rang fully muffled with tenor open at backstroke in memoriam — HM Queen Elizabeth II.

On Monday, 19 September a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles was rung fully muffled on the back 6 with the tenor open at backstroke before the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey.

### **St Giles, Reading**



*Band for Plain Bob Doubles*

open for the service on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> and for an hour prior to the State funeral on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September.

In October the tower was proud to ring a peal of Bob Triples to remember Keith Vernon who had been a stalwart of the St Giles band.

Two quarter peals at St Giles for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee were successful, with a quarter of Yorkshire scored on the Saturday[see back cover] and Plain Bob Doubles on the Sunday. Special congratulations to Daniel who scored his first quarter at his first attempt with barely a mistake – one to watch for the future!

To mark the death of Queen Elizabeth, Chris Barrett tolled the tenor on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> for an hour. The bells of St Giles were rung fully muffled with the tenor half

### ***St Bartholomew's Nettlebed***

St Bartholomew's Nettlebed managed to ring three times over the Jubilee weekend. Dominic Ellis (aged 11) rang his very first quarter peal, which was Grandsire Doubles, on the Thursday morning with the rest of his family, plus James Champion and David Byers.

In the evening we had open ringing for us all before the lighting of the village beacon. This was fitted in around all the entertainment at *The Cheese Shed* next door, who were hosting this event complete with a band and guest singer.

On Sunday morning we had more open ringing before the village picnic. How blessed we are to have help from the Ellis family!



*St Bartholomew's band Grandsire Doubles*

### ***St Mary and St Laurence***

Along with other branch towers, the bells at St Mary and St Laurence were rung to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. St Mary's were rung fully muffled on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September, then open for the national proclamation of His Majesty King Charles 3<sup>rd</sup> on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>, and again open for the Reading Proclamation on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>. They were then rung fully muffled for the Civic memorial service on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> and again before the State Funeral on Monday 19<sup>th</sup>. Quarters were scored on both these occasions.

St Laurence's bells were rung half muffled to a Quarter on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> and then open for the Berkshire County Proclamation on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>. Many thanks to all the band and members of other tower bands who helped with this achievement in a very busy time.

### ***Shiplake***

And last but not least Shiplake's 8 bells rang half muffled with the tenor open before the funeral, followed by 30 minutes tolling.

Lindsey Barker

### **Sonning Deanery**

All our regular practices have, in the main, been well attended. The weekend practices are now back to rotating around all the towers. The Elementary practices are very popular and to help progress the learners, these have now been extended to two practices per month with the second practice changing days of the week and towers to avoid always clashing with the same towers' normal practices.



Our branch hosted the Guild Ringing Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. We were fortunate with lovely weather, so the queue for our 4-bell tower at Barkham could enjoy the sunshine during the short wait. The day was well attended with a constant stream of ringers at all towers. Many thanks to the towers outside SDB who supported the day (Shinfield, Swallowfield and Winkfield). The day raised £1151 for the Guild Bell Fund.

Jan Glen

### ***Sonning Deanery Branch Elementary Ringing Group***

Nigel Mellor, Branch Ringing Master, developed this ringing group before the pandemic hit in 2020. That seems such a long time ago now especially as this group of ringers reformed in January 2022 and have been practising every first Tuesday evening of the month at Binfield Church. At first enthusiasm outweighed the abilities with over a dozen ringers at each month's practice.

Both Nigel and Jane Mellor have introduced the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) methodology that helps ringers from handling a bell through to starting to plain hunt, using many interesting and often amusing exercises. This level establishes the key foundation skills required to move onto change ringing: handling and bell control, listening, ropesight, rhythm and striking, and all the group members have shown good progress.

Nigel's assessment by an accredited ART assessor was postponed due to the pandemic but he was finally able to be assessed in July by Kate Flavell from Kingston.

As the group have worked hard each month and gradually progressed, Jane organised an outing within the Branch to give the learners experience of ringing in different towers but within a safe environment. Many thanks to Vikki Bulbeck, from Clewer and our local ART assessor, who joined us at Waltham St Lawrence and Shottesbrooke assisting with the teaching and supporting the ringers.



You can't get ringers together without food so the Horse and Groom in Hare Hatch was an excellent choice (thank you for the suggestion Graham) providing the much needed calories for the rest of the day. It was an absolute pleasure taking this group and the helpers out for the day. Everyone rose to the challenge and the ringing was at an acceptable standard at every tower for the villagers to hear, except at Shottesbrooke where there were only sheep!

Once the ringing at Shottesbrooke finished and energy was waning Vikki allowed us a roof top view over the park. A lovely surprise for all.



Even when we all reached Hurst for the Branch practice every member rang, and they are not the easiest of bells, and the group certainly had a healthy buzz from the day. Some stayed to the pub which was such a good time to talk about things others than, “up slow” “down quick”.

Thank you to all the helpers; what invaluable support you gave and well done to all the elementary band.

Jane Mellor, Branch Training Officer

### ***Sonning Deanery Branch Elementary Outing***

On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August, a group of ringers from Sonning Deanery Branch had a delightful day of ringing across the towers of Berkshire [see front cover]. The day was organised by Jane Mellor, the Sonning Deanery training officer, in order to give inexperienced ringers the opportunity to gain confidence ringing in other towers, to build key skills, and to have a pub lunch together!

The ringers visited the following churches:

- St. Lawrence (Waltham St. Lawrence)
- St. Mary (White Waltham)
- St. John the Baptist (Shottesbrooke)
- St. Nicholas (Hurst)

At each church, the ringers practised rounds, call changes, Kaleidoscope, Boomerang, Plain Hunt and Bob Doubles. The elementary ringers were ably supported by a band of experienced ringers who provided support when and wherever needed (physical and mental!), whether that be helping a ringer to learn the sequence for new methods, supporting a nervous ringer with their handling of the long draughts or providing steady bands around ringers as they developed their skills.

At St Mary, the elementary ringers were treated to a display of Norwich Surprise by the experienced ringers; whilst at St. John the Baptist, the ringers all climbed up to the parapet for fabulous views over Shottesbrooke Park. At the branch practice at St. Nicholas, some of our ringers were able to ring plain hunt on eight for the first time. Our experienced ringers rang Bob Triples, Norwich, and Cambridge Surprise.

At the end of the day, everyone retreated to the pub, exhausted but happy. It was agreed that the day had been a great success and it was interesting to hear different people’s views as to their favourite bells/towers/parts of the day.

We would like to thank Jane and Nigel Mellor for organising the day and all the tower captains and experienced ringers who gave up their time to make the day a big success. It was fabulous!

#### ***An Elementary Outing Haiku:***

*The lovely bells rang*

*Happy the ringers that day*

*Practise made perfect*

Jennifer and James Moynihan (Aborfield)

## **The Elementary Outing 20<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

No two bellringing days out are ever the same. However, one thing is constant – the selfless care and interest demonstrated by the more experienced ringers aka ‘helpers’ towards the learners. I’m always amazed how they turn out in good numbers to teach and share their experience. Their keen sight picks up all the little foibles one is so blissfully unaware of.

There’s always good food and cheery banter too!! The outings provide an opportunity to get to know each other better as ‘people’ outside of just ring/practicing together week-by-week.

This last outing was very special because there were teenagers among us who were having such a great time and happy to be ringing in towers other than the one they were used to practicing at.



Adedayo Ajibola

## **Arborfield news**

Having lost several regular ringers since 2019 (4 due to health problems, 1 to relocation, 3 to university and 2 for other reasons) Arborfield and Barkham were in need of some new blood. So on 31<sup>st</sup> August, £10 was spent on a "boosted post" on Facebook which ran for a week, to be seen only by people living within 5 kilometres of the centre of Arborfield.

The response was extraordinary; in total it resulted in 20 new names. A date was proposed for an interest meeting, which was then hastily unarranged, as the date fell during the period of mourning the Queen's passing. The interest didn't wane, though; in the weeks following the Queen's funeral, we held two separate interest meetings; in total 9 people came along.

From those 9 people, we now have a group of 5 learners who are attending separate weekly meetings just for them. 2 of the 11 other new names are still interested, but haven't been able to come so far. We will contact them again when our current learners are ringing independently. We also have a sixth learner, who is a school friend of one of our young ringers; he also started in September and is coming on very well, attending our regular Friday practices.

The learners are being taught using the ART methodology, as recently learnt by our tower captain Darren. He has a mentor from Eversley Church in Hampshire, who is helping prepare him to become accredited in *Learning the Ropes, Module 1*.

If you are in need of some new learners, we cannot recommend highly enough the benefits of advertising on Facebook. We may have been lucky with the time of year; the fact it coincided with the Queen's passing when church bells were front and centre in the public consciousness, and also with the recent influx of population in the Arborfield area. Hopefully you would get some interest at least, maybe you will get too much to handle?!

Darren Smith

## **All Saints Wokingham**

We have just received news that the church renovations are likely to extend until March next year. The original idea was to re-occupy the church by Christmas but it looks like it'll be Easter now. Ringing continues despite this, thanks to the cooperation of the builders, although it is strange ringing for service when the church is totally empty. It should also be noted that during this rebuilding activity evening services are rare, so we are ringing in the evening only once a month instead of each week.

Stephen Smith

In early October, ringers from the Branch attended an ART M2F course arranged by our Training Officer, Jane Mellor. The course was run by Clare McArdle, ART tutor. A report of the course is in the SDB branch newsletter:

[odg.org.uk/sdb/newsletters/2022/autumn.pdf](http://odg.org.uk/sdb/newsletters/2022/autumn.pdf)

## **South Oxon**

Monthly branch practices have been reinstated since the last edition of Odd Bob. The first session at Brightwell Baldwin attracted ringers from at least eight of our towers, and we have since held practices at Great Milton, Shabbington, Warborough, Chalgrove and Great Haseley. All were well attended (one by uninvited guests in the form of a swarm of flies) and were enjoyable, informative sessions.

The bells rang out joyously for the Queens Diamond Jubilee weekend – we are lucky to have a “flying squad” of wonderfully supportive ringers who dashed from tower to tower to help make up bands where regular numbers are low. Sadly they were called into action once again in September to mark the death of Queen Elizabeth II and for the proclamation of our new King Charles III. Ringing at Thame was made more special when the Sanctus bell was pulled by TC Rosalie Gibson’s great grand-daughter Sydney (aged 3 yrs.11mths.) The fourth generation in Rosalie’s family to become a ringer.

Celebrations have taken place at Drayton St Leonards to mark 50 years of continuous service to the Oxford Diocesan Guild by Chris Rogers and David Watkin. Testimonials were presented to both of these dedicated ringers during service ringing by their vicar.

Ringling at St Helen’s Benson on a hot summer’s day has always been an uncomfortable experience. The covid pandemic and the need for better ventilation if ringing was to continue provided the impetus to get something done about the non-opening window. A member of their congregation came up with a design to convert a small half circle section of the window to an opening panel – and this was eventually made and installed by personnel at RAF Benson. A great new partnership has been formed!

We are saddened to report the death of Brian Gray, Tower Captain at St Mary’s, Chalgrove. Brian, born in Chalgrove, had served St Mary’s all his life, a bellringer for 75 years, tower captain for 35 years, known by everyone in his community and so many in the ringing world. Brian’s old favourite, Grandsire, was rung at his funeral in his memory.

Ending on a cheerful note, Andrew and Lucy Gillard, ringers at St Catherine's Towersey, became the proud parents of Joseph William Gillard in July. No doubt a ringer in the making!

Jane Willis

## **Vale of the White Horse**

Having resumed the usual pre-covid programme of Branch practices, training evenings and social events earlier this year, we were also able to hold our annual 6-bell striking competition in May, having last competed for the Greenley Shield in 2019! We were made very welcome by the local band at Hinton Waldrist who had laid on a wonderful spread of delicious food in a beautifully converted barn opposite the church, which the owners very kindly allowed us to use as a base for the evening. Judges Elizabeth Mullett and Sara Jones from Oxford City Branch had six teams to place in order and the eventual winners were Faringdon with 8 faults, closely followed by Shrivenham with 8½. The Ringing Master's Trophy for most improved band was awarded to Hinton Waldrist.

Faringdon went on to represent the Branch at the Guild 6-bell competition in October and were delighted to come first, ringing Grandsire Doubles ably conducted by Danial Watson.

Daniel also rang in the ODG team at the National Youth Contest at Exeter in July. As well as achieving a very commendable joint 4th out of the 7 method teams, the youngsters also grabbed a few other towers during the day, with the 72 cwt 12 at Exeter Cathedral being a particular highlight of the day.

There was lots of activity in the Vale for the Queen's Jubilee, with quarter peals at several towers and general ringing at others to coincide with local celebrations. Ashbury invited villagers to a very successful open tower, and the Hinton Waldrist ringers hosted Tony Crabtree's mini ring at the Kingston Bagpuize Jubilee party in their Millennium Park where a good number of visitors were also introduced to ringing. Hopefully some of those introduced to ringing at these events may decide to take learn as part of the CCCBR initiative to *Ring for the King*.

The Shrivenham handbell ringers were invited to take part in a performance of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde* with New College School at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford. All the pupils (reception to year 8) took part, either in the orchestra, singing or playing animals. They were supported by a small ensemble of professional musicians and two singers who took on the roles of Noye and his wife, alongside Alexander Armstrong as the voice of God. It was an amazing experience for all concerned!

Another first since 2019 was the Branch Annual Dinner in October at the *King & Queen* in Longcot, where a good number of Vale ringers and friends enjoyed good food and a relaxing evening.

Thank you to all the Vale ringers who took part in the ringing to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whether it was tolling a single bell, general ringing or commemorative quarter peals. We were also pleased that a number of 'lapsed' ringers came forward and volunteered to help mark this unique and momentous occasion.

I am sorry to have to report the deaths in October of two ringers, Berice Large and Kathleen O'Shaughnessy, who have been involved with our Branch for many years. Berice was an associate member of VOWH and a valued member of the band at Hinton Waldrist. Her home tower was Marcham in the Old North Berks branch. Kath, who was taught to ring by Dennis Leslie in 1960, was a stalwart of the Buckland band until lower back problems led to her retirement from ringing in 2018 at the same time as her husband Alan retired as Tower Captain.

Lucy Laird

## **Witney and Woodstock**

### ***St James the Great, South Leigh***

Two bells were tolled on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and again for the funeral.

Eight bells were rung in celebration of the Proclamation of King Charles III.

Two well-attended Branch practices have been held at St James in May and October.

Many thanks again to the band from Marston tower who have come on the occasional Saturday to support the progress of South Leigh ringers.

Practices are on the first and third Wednesday evenings of the month from 7:30 – 9:00. All welcome.

Evadne Vallance, South Leigh Tower Correspondent

### ***St Laurence, Combe***

Combe ringers were honoured to ring with many other towers in the branch for the funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and are looking forward to ringing for the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.



We have one new regular ringer on Sunday mornings, Jackie Morrison from Virginia, home to one of the 50 odd towers in the USA and Canada that ring methods (English change ringing).

**Elaine Sherrott, Combe Tower Correspondent**

### ***St Mary the Virgin, Witney***

Witney Ringing Society, with the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, is raising funds for the maintenance of the 8-bell peal at Grade 1 listed St Mary's, Witney, and augmentation to 10-bells, by casting a new Covid Commemoration Bell and a new Community Bell.

Enormous sums have already been raised to maintain the Grade 1 listed fabric of St Mary's, with more required to replace the floor and central heating. This means that the bell fund, run entirely on donations from ringers over many years, has become severely depleted in keeping the bells maintained.

The bells were last re-hung in 1938 by Taylor's of Loughborough, who replaced the old Elm frame with a cast iron frame and re-cast the front three bells at the same time. The bells have had little spent on them since then other than essential maintenance. Unfortunately, the cast iron frame and fittings are now beginning to rust, the timber wheels and fittings are old and need re-furbishing, and the belfry would benefit from modernisation and weather proofing.

Following the tragic Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in the closure of some towers in the branch, it was decided to launch an appeal to both create a bell maintenance fund, and to raise funds for the casting of two brand new bells to augment the peal to 10 bells. Each new bell will be significant and allow the town to enjoy the ringing for generations to come. The first new bell will be the *Commemoration Bell* – a bell dedicated to the people of Witney who have died during the coronavirus pandemic and to mark this historic time. The second new bell will be the *Community Bell* – a bell that will be funded by various groups and donors within the community. If the appeal can raise surplus funds, we would also like to make improvements to the historic church clock and carillon, which were donated over 150 years ago but are now in need of modernisation.



Andrew Goldthorpe

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## Diary of Events for 2022/23

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](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 2022

Tue	01	SDB	EP tbc	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	4	Newbury	BP	Speen (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	09	SDB	AP tbc	Hurst (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	12	W&W	BP	Stonesfield (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	12	EBSB	BP	Chalfont St Peter (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	12	Chiltern	BP	Aylesbury (8)	10.00 – 12.00
			CM	(in Central Br.)	
Sat	12	Central Bucks	BP	Aylesbury (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	16	Central Bucks	AP	Stewkley (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	19	SDB	SC	Wokingham AS (8)	11.30 – 13.00
Sun	27	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
Mon	28	W&W	8-bell	Bampton (8)	19:30 – 21:00

### DECEMBER 2022

Fri	2	Newbury	BP	Great Shefford (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	3	South Oxon	BP	Benson (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Sat	3	OCB	BP	Kidlington (8)	15.00 – 16.30
Sat	10	Central Bucks	BP	Stewkley (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Hurst (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP	Cheddington (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	21	SDB	EP tbc	Finchampstead (6) tbc	19.30 – 21.00

### JANUARY 2023

Tue	03	SDB	EP tbc	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	6	Newbury	BP	Lambourn (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	7	OCB	BP	tbc	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	14	Central Bucks	BP	Winslow (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	18	Central Bucks	AP	Haddenham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP	tbc	10.00 – 12.00
Sun	22	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
		tbc			

## FEBRUARY 2023

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Yattendon (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tue	07	SDB	EP tbc	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	08	SDB	AP tbc	Hurst (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	11	OCB	AGM & BP	tbc Wheatley (6)	14.00 – 15.00, 15.00 – 16.30 tbc
Sat	11	Central Bucks	AGM	Little Horwood (8)	14.00 – 17.00
Tue	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	25	South Oxon	AGM	Little Milton	3.00 – 6.00
Sun	26	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
	tbc				

## MARCH 2023

Sat	4	Newbury	AGM	Bucklebury (8)	Times TBC
Sat	4	OCB	BP	TBC	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	15	SDB	EP tbc	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	18	SDB	BP	Sonning (8) tbc	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	tbc	10.00 – 12.00
Tue	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Sun	26	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
	tbc				

## APRIL 2023

Sat	1	OCB	BP	tbc	15.00 – 16.30
Sat	15	Chiltern	BP	tbc	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	19	SDB	EP tbc	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	22	SDB	SC tbc	Sandhurst (6) tbc	tbc
Sun	23	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
	tbc				

## MAY 2023

Tue	02	SDB	EP tbc	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	6	OCB	BP	tbc	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	17	SDB	EP tbc	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Wokingham	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	St Paul (8) tbc	tbc
Sun	28	OCB	SP	Headington (8)	15.30 – 17.00
	tbc				



*The Bucks & Berks Young Ringers at the Ringing World National Youth Contest*



*St. Giles-in-Reading band for Yorkshire quarter*