

# ODD BOB



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



Marking Cyril Crouch's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, see page 24



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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

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*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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The summer months of 2023 will have been memorable for many ringers. Amidst the continuous turmoil of world events the Nation united to celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and our ODG ringing joyously marked the occasion. In fact, there were a few veterans who had rung for the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II and found themselves honoured to ring at both coronations, seventy years apart, what an achievement! Furthermore, the *Ring for the King* recruits were supported and encouraged to take part too, and many of them have become keen Guild members.

In early July we held the Guild Festival, the first since 2016 due to the interruption of the Covid years. The Oxford Society of Change Ringers made arrangements for us to ring at many of the college and secular towers in Oxford city centre and, with our own volunteers, very many of our Guild ringers were able to experience some of the mysteries of the city's towers and bells. For some, the service in Christ Church cathedral was a high point of the day. It was our own members from Branches across the Guild whose contribution made it special by their participation through singing in the choir, reading the lessons, ringing handbells and preaching. Below is a small extract from Chris Tuckett's sermon:

*"We ring our bells for all sorts of reasons, if we are honest. We can and do ring for our own satisfaction and enjoyment. It can be just a pastime, but I suspect that we all, or at least those of us who have made it here to this service, have at least a part of us which tries to make just a tiny contribution to the life of the church in which the bells we ring are hung. We ring them to tell others that the church is here, we ring to share and express the pain and sorrow of others. We ring to share in the joy of celebrations, and we ring to proclaim hope – hope for a time when God will be all in all. But maybe we ring above all to offer ourselves to be the instruments through whom God may speak, through the bells we ring, to those who hear them. And let us, too, hear those same bells speaking to us."*

In mid-July we arranged to meet new ringers who had been elected to the Guild in the previous 12 months by inviting them for a morning's get-together and presenting a summary of ringing with the ODG. We had fun with the Stallpits mini ring, were given an introduction to handbells and a jargon busting tutorial with Joe, as well as

tea and cake of course! 2022 was the first time this event was held, and it is now a fixture in the diary of events. We must create a sustainable future for change ringing through positive initiatives, providing on-going teaching and learning opportunities and making very certain that our precious recruits, whatever age, and wherever they ring, are made welcome and valued from the very start of their ringing adventure. As one small step in this challenge we have arranged a follow up outing for everyone who came to the New Ringers' morning in July – it is a further opportunity to develop the fraternity and camaraderie that we share.

There are many initiatives throughout the Guild which successfully provide a variety of ringing opportunities as well as enjoyable social activities, every one of these events is testimony to the dedication of Branch officers and their ringers and bring real enjoyment to members. We all understand that it is not enough to plan a recruitment campaign; recruitment must be unremitting if we want bell ringing to be sustainable. Associations throughout the realm have learnt, partly through the Ring for the King campaign, that there is a limit to the towers that can cope with significant numbers of new ringers, young and old. We need the more experienced teachers to share their skill and wisdom, as much as we need new teachers. We need to understand that society has changed, adults and children have less time to learn to ring because there are so many other work commitments and activities available. We won't change that, so we have to change how we provide opportunities to teach and retain new, and experienced, ringers.

We will have to consider the financial implications of providing the facilities and resources that are necessary to run such a large territorial Guild in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must be enterprising with membership matters, communications, and how we promote ourselves as a vibrant, skilled and respected community.

We must be open minded and proactive because the management of change can be uncomfortable, unnerving, and hard work for the people driving it. If you have enthusiasm for ringing and knowledge in IT, Public Relations, engineering, teaching, systems management, data handling, publishing, design or any skill at all that will benefit your ringing community – please contact a Guild or Branch officer to volunteer.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master.

## **Membership and communications in the ODG**

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The ODG must be transformed into a modernised organisation, governed effectively but able to address the **needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century ringing**.

At the May 2022 AGM it was agreed that the Officers would undertake some preliminary work on actions that could be taken to update the way that the Guild works.

A work group has been formed to look at the priorities and is represented by ringers with knowledge of the ODG and who possess the skills required to facilitate change.

Catherine Lane – Master

Karen Pile – Secretary

Stuart Gibson – Treasurer

Richard Stanworth – Server Manager

John Payne – Membership secretary

Andrew Goldthorpe - Webmaster

Martin Rice – Membership Data Collector

Jenny Bennett – Experienced implementor of membership data base for the Lincoln Guild membermojo.co.uk

Many meetings have taken place during the intervening months and the time is now right to update the members. Consultation with members representing a wide variety of roles and experience across the Guild defined several priorities, two of which are linked and therefore covered by this stratagem:

***What needs to be done:***

The present ODG structure and roles predate **modern technological communication** advances and were put in place for historical needs.

- Develop our IT server capabilities.
- Implement a membership database.

***Key positive points in favour of having a Membership Database***

- Central place for keeping and accessing records.
- Improve Communications at all levels.
- Record details from paper membership forms.
- Maintain contact with members.
- Facility for members to update personal details.
- Level of interaction dictated by individual's own preference.
- Linked to Guild website.
- New members can be added at branch level.
- Welcome pack, inc. certificate, issued to new members.
- Consistency of information.
- Avoid copying and storing duplicate forms.
- GDPR compliance.
- Agreement to publicise name in annual report.
- Possible statistical analysis/training and development.
- Produce reports, e.g. membership renewal lists, insurance implications, membership demographics for training.
- Branch secretary/treasurer can have access.
- Main controllers being Membership secretary and Guild Treasurer.

Meetings are on-going but the group agrees that the Guild should proceed with holding the membership list on line versus an Excel spreadsheet. We are asking for your support and if there is anyone with skills that can help the setup process efficiently, please get in touch.

## Oxon Ringing School

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As Training Officer of my branch I have, for some years, concentrated on providing extra training at Abingdon to the learners of nearby towers. With the help of the many good teachers of ringing in and around our branch, we ran the **Branch Ringing School** providing training in bell handling (on Saturday mornings on silenced bells) and the skills needed to ring plain hunt (at evening practices in and around our branch).

In October 2022 Kirtlington joined in running Ringing School handling sessions and by spring 2023 we were running Saturday morning sessions in Abingdon, Dorchester-on-Thames, Kirtlington and Witney. It means we now operate in four of the ODG branches: Bicester, Old North Berks, South Oxon and Woodstock & Witney. All our four Ringing Centres have simulators so we may teach bell handling without upsetting the neighbours.

Each learner is encouraged to continue to receive ringing training in their own tower. However, an hour of concentrated one to one training a couple of times each month can make a big difference to how long it takes to learn to control a bell on one's own.

In the last year fourteen of our handling students have passed the first stage of ART's "*Learning the Ropes*" (LTR) scheme, proving that they can safely handle a bell unaided.

Research has shown that there are a number of techniques ("*foundation skills*") needed by a ringer before they can successfully ring plain hunt. These include controlling and hearing their bell and rope sight. There are a number of fun ringing exercises which may be used to encourage the development of foundation skills in learners. During the summer we have held special practices around the four branches for learners at that stage of their ringing careers. Five students have passed this next "*Foundation*" stage.

We recommend the excellent variety of training methods developed by the *Association of Ringing Teachers* (ART) and have registered as an "*ART Hub*" so that Oxfordshire people wishing to learn to ring may be directed to us. In September, we became the Oxon Ringing School and received a large welcome parcel of ART books and the promise of lots of advice and support.



We continue to offer high-quality training to learners over a wide area of Oxfordshire at the four Ringing Centres with the help of experienced teachers drawn from a wider area than before. In addition to teaching learners, we organise one day ART courses to help experienced ringers to hear about and share the best techniques for teaching ringing. Over the past year, four Ringing School teachers



**Nadine receives her Ringing School handling certificate**



**Ringing School teachers and students**

who have attended recent ART teaching courses have successfully passed assessment in their module.

If you are interested in extra tuition in bell handling or foundation skills, please view our website, <https://odg.org.uk/info/oxfordshire-ringing-school/>

Experienced ringers interested in improving their teaching of ringing should look at the ART website, <https://bellringing.org/>

Susan Read, ONB Branch Training Officer; Chair, Oxon Ringing School  
Steve Vickars, Bicester Branch Training Officer; Kirtlington Ringing Centre Lead

## **Evie's report on the New Ringers Session**

Back in July I brought Evie along to the new ringers session. We really enjoyed our day so I asked Evie if she would write a little report to encourage others to go along.

Here it is (mostly) in her own words, additions by me in italics!

Ailsa Knightley, Stewkley Ringing Master

—ooOoo—

On Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> July Ailsa and I (Evie) we went to The Croft in Steventon to the New Ringers Session.



When we got there we went to a white tent where we got assigned into groups. There were a lot of the people that were there I didn't know but they were all kind and friendly. The lady who was running it (Katie Lane) gave us a little chat (*about the wider ringing community and the structure of the Guild*) and then we all went to our first activity group. We were in group 3. We did hand bells first. We each had half an hour in each activity

When doing the hand bells we were divided into 3 we each had 2 bells. I had the 7 and 8 to start off we did rounds then we did dodging with our own bells, then dodging with our neighbour, which was much harder! (*Evie was very excited to be able to ring the heavy bells for once!*)



Next we did the mini ring. The mini ring is portable bells. At first they were hard to control but then it got easier. On the tiny bells we did rounds and call changes. So far so fun. (*Again, Evie was able to ring the 'big' bells!*)

Last but not least was the talk about the words that we didn't know. A lot of them I knew the meaning but towards the end there were some that I didn't know. There were even a couple Ailsa didn't know! (*This was a useful section on ringing terms that you hear but don't necessarily understand.*)

There were four kids including me. None of the kids were in the same group as me. My favourite activity was

the mini ring.

I am so happy that I was invited I had such a good time. Thank you.

Evie (Age 10), Ringer from Stewkley

## **OH NO! Not another Guild trophy!**

It seemed like a good idea at the time. A respectable raise at Shrivenham on General Committee meeting – and Ten-Bell contest – day last November led to my suggestion that a raising and lowering competition might be instituted. In my opinion it's a skill that's generally not emphasised sufficiently and one that the Guild should definitely encourage.

I began my ringing career at Hughenden where the bells were generally left up, but at many towers the raising and lowering are the first and last things that anyone listening outside will hear, setting the tone for what comes between. Interest in 'Devon style' call-changes has led to a national competition this year, which of course includes raising and lowering in peal. It's not easy but is so rewarding when done well.

This is not the first time that a R&L contest has been held in the Guild: I know there was one at Newton Longville for the Centenary of the N Bucks Branch – modesty forbids me from divulging which band was placed first – and doubtless there have been others.

I am grateful to the Guild for the opportunity to present a trophy in memory of my father, grandfather and two uncles, all of whom were Devonians who rang. It is appropriate that it's made of wood since all of them worked with wood for a living at some time, two of them exclusively. Discussions with a local Chiltern wood carver led to a design, and result, with which I am delighted! It was not inscribed with R&L because the Guild may decide to award it for other achievements in the future. 2023 will probably have the same significance for many in the future as 1953 did for me as a youngster, so Coronation Trophy seemed entirely appropriate.



I am also most grateful to the Chipping Norton Branch and the Deputy Master who were faced with organising not one but two contests on Six-Bell final day. The plan was that the draw would be arranged so that bands could take part in both contests but, sadly, few availed themselves of the opportunity. For various reasons, including illness at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, the entry dwindled to just three bands; congratulations to them for taking part and ringing so well.

The rules have been deliberately left 'informal' to allow any group of members who ring together to take part. They could represent a tower or branch, or could be from different branches. It is my fervent hope that at least three times as many bands compete in the next R&L contest – it's a trophy well worth winning!

Robert Newton

## **ODG 6-Bell Raising and Lowering Competition 2023**

Three teams rang at Wigginton (6-1-17) in the inaugural competition for the new Coronation Trophy. Sadly, a number of other teams had to pull out of the competition at late notice due to illness and injury. The trophy has been endowed by Robert Newton in memory of his father, grandfather and two uncles, all of whom were Devon ringers for whom raising and lowering was never the starter and pudding but often the main course. The hope – explained Robert – was that this competition could be open and fun with an enjoyable, have-a-go atmosphere.



The competition was won by Hook Norton (*see photo*) with 82%. They achieved a speedy rise with a little brief bunching, but – despite a mercifully brief power cut in the ringing chamber – a smooth lower with a very good transition from double to single clapping.

In a close second place came the Youth Band with 77%. Despite an uneven start to the raise, the team's lower excelled despite some bunching episodes interspersed with

very smooth passages. Their transition was slower with a 'not quite even' catch at the end.

In third place came Newbury with 61%. They produced a partly muddled raise and their lower was the slowest of the three – possibly too slow for comfort – and after the catch one bell chimed a further time.

Thank you to Robert Newton, not only for judging the competition but also for offering general advice on raising and lowering, which he admitted could sometimes be an afterthought even for top peal bands. His tips included: get the front bells up quickly to allow space for the back bells to come in and chime; and don't forget that in many respects it is the tenor that leads up, as the other bells can only go at the speed of the heaviest. The finest judgement is in sensing when to spread out the bells so that they sound evenly both on the approach and at the top. Robert's tips for lowering included a warning not to take the first coil too soon out of nervousness, as this can result in jerking a bell downwards too quickly; to keep short the untidy patch when double clapping becomes single (*'Get the bells down!'*), and to make sure that the back bells hardly swing at all at the end. Two extra recommendations were to read John Harrison's booklet on raising and lowering (still available at £2.50); and to listen to the ART *Raising and Lowering* DVD which includes an exceptional lower on 8 at Kingsteignton.



Finally, Robert explained how he had approached marking. Although all rows were marked, overall impression counted for a lot. Marks were divided equally between the raise and the lower with just a few marks allocated to the start and finish of each.

Thank you to the Chipping Norton branch for hosting, and especially to Sue Checkley and Geoffrey Stretton, who opened up, helped steward, kept track of the bands and understood how the electricity supply at Wigginton works!

Eliaabeth Mullett, Steward

## Steeple Aston Course 2023

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On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October nearly 70 Guild members were involved with this year's Steeple Aston ringing course in the north of the Guild.



This year we ran a full course with 5 groups, with 5 students in each group. Over thirty applications were received for the 25 places. Such was the demand for Plain Bob Doubles we ran three groups to cover this. There was also a Grandsire Doubles group and an eight bell group covering triples and major. It was good to see three school age students this year.

To try and split up the workload of arranging the course a small committee made the arrangements, as follows:

Heather Bletchly organised the 15 towers required and booked up pubs for the lunch time refreshments.

Graham Clifton took on finding helpers. Ideally we require 34 to cover all the groups.

Sue McCouaig arranged the application forms and booking-in the students.

Jonathan Cresshull booked up the tutors, produced all the course paperwork, and tied up all the loose ends.

Tutors this year were: Alan Marchbank, Craig Roberson, Steve Vickars, Colin Lee and Jonathan Cresshull.

The day starts with an hour's tutorial before everyone goes off to various towers in North Oxfordshire. Eventually, around 6pm, students and helpers return to Steeple Aston village hall for a meal together prepared by Vicky Clifton.

Each tutor gives a brief summary of the day and certificates are presented to those attending.

These courses can be quite tiring for the helpers. For those giving up the whole day it involves four and a half hours ringing. If you have benefitted from one of the Guild courses in the past, please consider helping, even for one ringing session. Without helpers we cannot run the course.

Thank you to all this year's helpers.



Graham Clifton

## Learning & Development Workgroup

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I am pleased to report that the vacant post of Chairman has been filled by Jonathan Cresshull and that the group has two new members, Chris Mundy and Sue McCouaig.

We have received positive reports about the RWNYC in York, which was held on the same day as the Guild Festival. Both the ODG and Bucks & Berks bands

performed creditably in their contests and the squad members all benefited from a well-organised weekend. Our grateful thanks to the leaders and supporters, without whose dedication these opportunities would not be available to our youngsters. We hope that there will be more regional practices for young ringers within the Guild as well as joint events with groups from other guilds and associations.

“Excellent course – perfect pace – friendly group of people – plenty of rope time – great helpers – tailored to individual needs – easy bells.” These were some of the comments which students returned on their feedback forms following the Michaelmas course on 30<sup>th</sup> September. Methods practised by the groups were Cambridge S Minor (tutors Jo Druce and Giles Winter), Stedman Triples (Dorothy Hall), Cambridge/Yorkshire S Major (Patricia and Robert Newton) and up to London/Bristol S Major (Matthew Johnson). My grateful thanks to my fellow tutors and forty wonderful helpers. We hope that the students attending the Steeple Aston and Grandsire Caters courses will have enjoyed a similarly beneficial day by the time you read this.

Dorothy Hall has been busy updating the L&D section of the Guild website. A range of resources are now linked from it, including a new Central Council document on Leadership and the recently released Recruitment videos, which are free to download and use. Please make good use of the website and encourage others to do the same.

Robert Newton (Secretary)  
*edsecretary@odg.org.uk*

## **ODG Towers & Belfries Committee's report**

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We finally seem to have got “return to ringing” behind us and the coincidental extreme hot, dry weather with unprecedented levels of problems in belfries. Loose wooden frames, or headstocks making the bells go badly, or wheels nearly becoming detached. We ran a campaign to alert churches but please don't relax now. Make sure you still inspect regularly!!

Topics to come up recently have been fly infestation, belfry access and “wobbly” ropes. These are sometimes caused by guides that are too high, too low or non-existent, by rope holes being out of line, or maybe a need for “flapping boards”. We also visited a tower where the bad “go” of the bells was finally traced to frame movement. We had to tie the bells before watching and listening in the belfry and finally discovering the cause. We are also seeing increasing instances of stretchy ropes leading to the perception that the bells are “going” badly. An initial recourse is to hang a heavy weight on the rope for a week or so. If the problem persists and is traced to a stretchy polypropylene “top” then the “top” may need replacing. We continue to visit towers to advise where sound inside or outside is too loud or soft. Sometimes, the remedy is quite straightforward. Ask us!

We continue to run belfry and rope courses. We recently ran an advanced “hands on” course at Windsor. This was definitely a spanners, oil can and boiler suit session! We also ran a very successful Rope Course in Steeple Aston Hall while it was vacant during the Steeple Aston ringing course in October. This included mending, maintenance and preventive maintenance, also minor improvements to either reduce

rope wear or improve the ringing experience. We made use of belfry artefacts at “ground level” for ease of teaching. During 2023 we taught 60-70 students!

Next year will see Rope Courses at Radley on 10<sup>th</sup> February and Steeple Aston on 26<sup>th</sup> October. There will be a General Belfry Course somewhere in the Chipping Norton Branch on 27<sup>th</sup> April. We have some invitations for an advanced “Hands-On” course and will publish details of those when known. Email [tbchair@odg.org.uk](mailto:tbchair@odg.org.uk) or [tbsecretary@odg.org.uk](mailto:tbsecretary@odg.org.uk) if you would be interested.

Most of the committee’s work goes on between meetings with inspections, advice and courses. We meet two or three times a year; lastly in August 2023. We mix in-person meetings with Zoom. In-person in the summer and then Zoom in the winter to avoid driving in the dark nights! The Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) is still active. Towers are encouraged to ask for an inspection.

The T&B page of the ODG website [odg.org.uk/sub-committees/towers-and-belfries/](http://odg.org.uk/sub-committees/towers-and-belfries/) continues to expand with useful material. You will find contact details and the services offered by our members. If you can’t find what you are looking for, please ask [tbchair@odg.org.uk](mailto:tbchair@odg.org.uk)

Since the last Odd-Bob, committee members have been active with TMA, Bell-Fund grant inspections and general advice at the following places: Kencot, Broadwell, Haddenham, Shilton, Hinton Waldrist, Piddington, Kirtlington, Stoke Poges, Turville, Great Milton, Aston Tirrold, Hughenden, Sonning, Stewkeley, West Hendred, Stanton Harcourt, Goring, Streatley, Witney, East Garston, Little Wittenham, North Moreton, Kelmscott, West Wycombe, Theale, Arborfield, Brightwalton, Padworth, Burford, Slapton, Purley, Reading St Lawrence and Compton Beauchamp – nearly 10% of ODG’s towers!

Tony Crabtree – Towers & Belfries Committee Chairman

## **Tower Maintenance Award Scheme**

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Because of Covid and the effects of lockdown, there was little desire, need or ability for bands to do any work on their bells and therefore to have them inspected, so activity was negligible and, with the exception of Chalfont St Peter and South Leigh, all awards expired.

Since the last report in April 2023 the activity in the *Tower Maintenance Award Scheme* has had a very slight recovery, with five towers: Adderbury, Bletchingdon, Chalfont St Peter, Cropredy, Freeland and Sonning all having had inspections and achieving Gold awards. Congratulations to them all, Bletchingdon especially, as they gained a Gold award at the first attempt. The award to South Leigh has now expired but it is hoped that they will renew it in the near future.

Because of this increase in activity, the number of current awards has risen slightly, from two at the time of the last report to five now. We hope that as tower activity increases, towers will look to renew their awards. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is eighty-nine, which is about twenty-one per cent of the four hundred and forty towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been one hundred and sixty-two inspections (of which twenty-seven were preliminaries), resulting in one hundred and thirty-one awards (ninety-two Gold, twenty-six Silver, and fourteen Bronze).

Because of the pandemic, and the slow recovery, the number of expired awards has risen, and the T & B committee will try to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards.

The number of Branches having a tower in the “current awards” list is now only five out of the fifteen Guild branches, with Banbury having gained the predominant position. The placings are as follows:

▪ Banbury	2	(Gold)
▪ Bicester	1	(Gold)
▪ EBSB	1	(Gold)
▪ Sonning	1	(Gold)
▪ Witney & Woodstock	1	(Gold)

### Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

#### Gold Award

Bletchington (St Giles)	Bicester	Expires 04.10.24
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 13.11.24
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 19.12.24
Cropredy (S.M.V)	Banbury	Expires 19.12.24
Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning	Expires 25.01.25
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney& Woodstock	Expires 16.04.25

There are no current Silver or Bronze awards.

**The above results reflect the situation as at the 12<sup>th</sup> October and because of the effects of the pandemic, the list of expired towers has been omitted for the time being (if your tower is not on the list above, its award has expired).**

John Davidge, T&B Committee

## **Librarian’s Report**

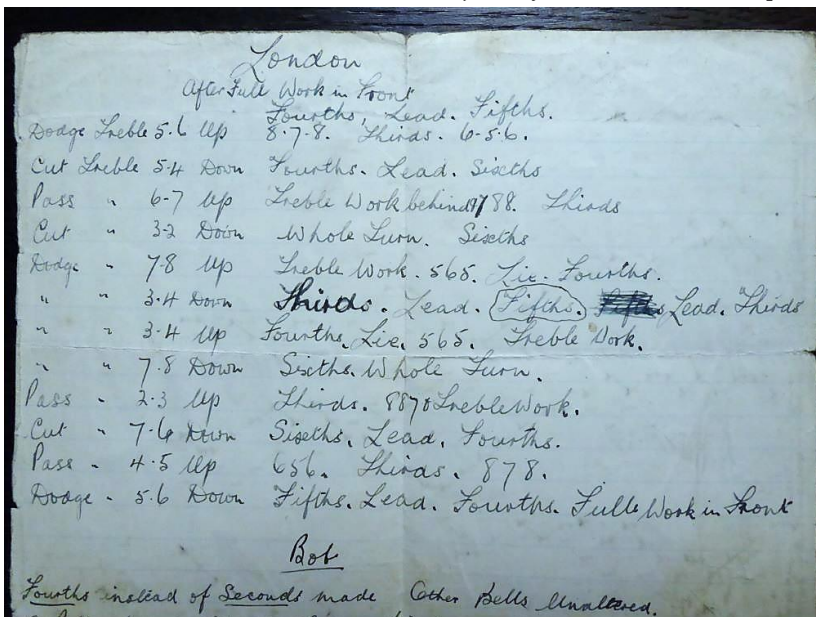
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There have been six library enquiries since ODD BOB issue 108. These have been about:

- When Colin Walter, deceased member at Aston Clinton, had joined the Guild
- Officers and members of the Vale of the White Horse branch
- Peal at Chastleton on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov. 1911
- membership information about Reading Branch member
- Maps of towers in the Guild
- Acquisition of the book *The Voice of the Church*, published this year

Work on adding Guild publications to the electronic archive is continuing. Annual reports for 1893, 1894, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1966/67, 1968, 1968/69 and 2022, and ODD BOB 108 have been added since the previous edition of ODD BOB. Further annual reports from 1896, 1899 and 1996-1998 are in the queue to be added.

The processing of the papers donated to the library from the estate of William Butler has been completed. The items have been catalogued as far as practicable. The papers from Frank Hopgood and Willie Haynes are still to be dealt with. In the meantime however, aficionados of London Major may be interested in this photo



from the Hopgood papers of a description of the method, probably written out by Thomas Newman of Caversham.

The RW – First Hundred Years USB Drive was purchased for the library recently. It can serve as an illustration of how compact such storage is: the original Ringing Worlds for 1911-2011 take up about 19' of shelf space; the images of them are all fitted onto this one USB Drive.

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](mailto:peals@odg.org.uk)) to obtain the details. Thank you.

Stuart Gibson



## News from the Branches

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### Banbury

The Branch held their Six-bell striking competition at Lower Heyford in June with picnic at the church afterwards. There were two categories: methods and call changes. The winners of the method category were Steeple Aston with Bloxham second and Adderbury third. The winners of the call change category were Steeple Aston with Bloxham second and Cropredy third.

In August the Branch had a half day outing to Warwickshire ringing at Warwick, St Nicholas, Radford Semele and Lighthorn. This was held on a Friday and was well attended.

Branch practices have been held at Adderbury, Cropredy, Banbury and Wardington in recent months and the half-yearly meeting was held at Tadmerton in October.

### Bloxham Tower

Alan Griffin says: "I'm afraid I have had to cancel the practices on Fridays.

I suddenly got a deep vein thrombosis, (in the same leg as my arthritic hip), so I couldn't stand for more than a couple of minutes.

We are still ringing every Sunday morning. We usually get at least six ringers. I am grateful to Colin who usually manages to come from Adderbury to ring with us and runs the ringing.

If my leg improves, we might be able to re-start the practices."

Rosemary Hemmings

### Bicester

The Branch celebrated the King's Coronation in May with a quarter peal, and many towers ringing on or around the day itself. Also a few held a 'ding' (chime) for the King, which gave a lot of pleasure to visitors, some of whom may listen/ or even ring in the future.

In September 45 people came to this year's Branch striking competition and BBQ in Islip, which was won by Ludgershall – 7 teams had entered, and each team had very encouraging remarks from our two judges, Chris and James Mundy.

Congratulations to Weston-on-the-Green ringer, Mandy Jones, who rang her first Quarter at Bletchington in June. Kirtlington ringer, Judith Vickars, has been awarded the ART accreditation in teaching Module 2F, and Liping Liu and Gill Davies have passed their ART *Learning the Ropes* L1.

Steve Walker (Bicester) has been teaching new ringers in Ambrosden with the help of local ringers, Emma and Laurence Odell, and Steve Vickars has been tutoring at the Radley and Steeple Aston Bob Doubles courses this year.

Richard Haseldine has organised monthly practices of Stedman Triples and Cambridge Surprise Major plus in Bicester to give branch ringers the opportunity to ring more advanced methods.

At the Guild Festival service in July, Steve Vickars was asked to read the prayers – on other sunny days we've had encouraging numbers at our Branch Practices: Brill holds the record with 19 whilst those at Middleton Stoney and Launton were well

supported. Day practices at Bletchingdon have been regularly held, and the Oxon Ringing School goes from strength to strength with regular practices at Kirtlington.

The Bicester Branch is now the proud possessor of a model bell, made by Robin Noble, in memory of Willie Haynes, our past President. On the case and model are two plaques, which were engraved by Keith Thomas. One is worded *The Willie Haynes Memorial Bell*, while the other is *In Memory of Willie Haynes, President Bicester Branch, ODG 2001 – 2022*.

The late Stephen Cameron, Tower Captain at Charlton-on-Otmoor after Willie, was mentioned on Radio 4's *The Life Scientific* (13 June) by Anne-Marie Imafidon who said that she had met bellringers through a shared interest in group theory!

Finally, we were sad to receive news of the untimely death in May of Morwen Ashton – a stalwart of the band at Piddington and much missed.

Kathryn Grant  
[bicester.odg.org.uk/wordpress/](http://bicester.odg.org.uk/wordpress/)

## Central Bucks

In Central Bucks we have had our first Branch BBQ, hosted brilliantly by the East Claydon ringers; we send them our heartfelt thanks, especially to Kate Edgar and her partner James who's been brilliant at the deck. It was well attended despite having a couple of other events happening at the same time.

The event clash has carried on throughout the summer which meant that some of our regular events (including our Branch Outing), even when moved, have had to suffer in terms of attendance, and some even had to be cancelled.

However, the end of season has been more promising culminating with the Orchard Cup, our friendly competition with our neighbours, the Chiltern Branch. With 4 teams from Chiltern and 5 from Central Bucks many congratulations go to Aston Clinton who came on top and won the trophy this year. Many thanks to Chiltern, and specially to Cheddington ringers, for hosting and organising the event. We are looking forward to next year when it will be hosted by Central Bucks.

Cristina Galatanu

## Chiltern

We're glad to report that Chiltern Branch is currently enjoying one of its more successful periods with increasing attendances at Branch Practices and several new members making steady progress with simple methods. We've also been delighted to find several towers having the confidence and numbers to enter the friendly Orchard Cup competition with Central Bucks Branch, where for several years we have had few entrants.

These successes do, however, need continued encouragement, and we have several branch officers keen to take a break from their roles and would welcome new blood participating in branch management. We also have some branch towers still suffering from the effects of Covid lockdowns, with some older ringers retiring and others moving away to be nearer to family members, leaving numbers depleted. This has been partially ameliorated with some towers combining practices with neighbours, and a number of Branch members making efforts to ring at multiple

towers on Sundays to help meet the Guild's objective of ringing for all main services. Hopefully 2024 will see a continuation of these positive developments, with more new recruits and events to develop their skills, so that all towers have Sunday bands.

Chris Potter, Training Officer

## Chipping Norton

The Chipping Norton Branch AGM was held in March at Charlbury. There was a change of officers with David Salter (current Ringing Master) also taking on the role of Chair and Geoffrey Stretton becoming the new Treasurer. The outgoing officers were thanked for their invaluable contribution. At the end of the business meeting, Mandy Gasson-Shields was presented with the well-deserved Claire Tarrant award which is for those showing significant improvement/contribution through the year.

For the Coronation in May there was a lot of ringing in and around the branch. In Chipping Norton the band included two returnees who had responded to an appeal launched earlier in the year for more ringers. At Shipton, on Coronation Day morning, rounds and call changes were rung by members of the tower band so that two learners could take part on this historic occasion. At Chadlington, one lapsed ringer returned after over 30 years and three new recruits were taught. All rang after the Coronation Service on the Saturday and again before the village celebrations on the Sunday.

In Ascott under Wychwood bells were rung on the afternoon of Coronation Day. Bells continued to ring for special Coronation services at Chipping Norton on the Sunday morning and in the wider Benefice the bells rang at Churchill, Kingham, Little Compton, Salford and Spelsbury over this same weekend. At Hook Norton, general ringing took place in the morning before the Westminster Abbey service, with bells tolling at Swerford and Wigginton. During the afternoon Quarter Peals were rung at Swerford & Wigginton. Ringing continued on the Sunday morning at commemorative services in Hook Norton, Wigginton and Swerford. A Coronation Peal of Grandsire Triples (5040) was rung in 2hrs 58 mins at Hook Norton (photo on back page), followed by lunch at the Brewery.

A number of Quarter Peals have been rung within the branch including Grandsire Doubles at Swerford, and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Place, Plain Bob & Grandsire Doubles at Wigginton on Coronation Day. A Quarter of Cambridge Surprise Major (1280) was rung on the 9<sup>th</sup> July as a tribute to Rev. Geoffrey Clement, Vicar of St Mary's, Shipton on leaving the parish for a new post in Suffolk. This was rung by a band of invited ringers from the local area which included Geoffrey himself.

Generally it has been a busy year for the branch following a number of recruitment drives. February marked the start of a particularly busy time for Chadlington with eight wanting to learn to ring, having seen the *Ring for the King* initiative. So, an extra 1½ hour tied practice on Thursday evening was run to teach ringing up & down first, then backstroke only followed by handstroke only, before combining both strokes. Rapid progress was made by those who were able to attend regularly with one a returning ringer after 38 years. During April the learners moved to the normal practice night integrating into open ringing, the majority now being competent handlers, with no assistance required.

On Coronation Day, rounds were rung for the King including some with a band comprising completely of Chadlington residents. The following day all the new ringers, with one exception, again rang rounds for the King with only two still requiring some assistance. Due to other commitments three dropped out shortly after this but five very keen ringers remain, now all members of the OGD and regularly ringing for Sunday service, weddings, and starting to tackle plain hunting and covering. A satisfying and very successful year with many thanks to all the helpers who made this possible.

Chipping Norton's new recruits have been receiving tuition in recent months from David Salter (Branch Ringing Master) assisted by Mick Austin of Hook Norton and other local ringers. Practices are now being held fortnightly on Fridays. Further afield the bells have been rung for ten weddings at Churchill and Kingham so far this year and visiting bands have been made welcome. At Shipton a surprise touch of Grandsire Triples was rung during their regular Friday practice on the 29<sup>th</sup> Sept to celebrate the Golden Wedding anniversary of Andrew and Sallie Pickett of Leafield.

Recently there has been several outings organised from within the branch. March saw an outing to the Warwick area visiting St Nicholas & St Mary's in Warwick, Radford Semele and Southam. A good lunch was taken at the Roebuck, the oldest pub in Warwick, and thanks go to Dan Austin from Hook Norton for organising.

In September the Hook Norton ringers enjoyed yet another outing, this time a successful weekend trip to Norfolk. The motivation behind the trip was to visit George Risborough, a Norfolk ringer and longstanding friend of Hook Norton tower. Saturday's ringing began at Felmingham, a 15cwt balcony ring of 8 where we set the day off nicely with some Yorkshire. This tower had a lock-down project displaying methods using golf tees! The second tower, Knapton, was a fast six (5cwt) where we rang Norwich which seemed appropriate. The third tower was Upper Sheringham, an easy six (6cwt) where the ringers could sit on comfy cushions. We lunched at the Crown in Sheringham, where we were delighted to be joined by George himself. Holt was the 4<sup>th</sup> tower – more Yorkshire at this 7cwt eight plus admiring the organ loft. The 5<sup>th</sup> and final tower was Cromer, an 11cwt eight in a huge (certainly lots of steps) flint tower. We also rang for Sunday service the next day to help out the local band. A massive thanks to Jonathan Muller for organising the trip – he overcame a host of problems and gave the band a fantastic group of towers to ring at, excellent accommodation and brilliant company.

In October the branch hosted the ODG 6-Bell striking competition. For the first time this included a raising and lowering competition. Beautiful weather, excellent ringing and superb refreshments made for a really memorable afternoon. Congratulations to all who entered the competitions at Shipton under Wychwood and in particular our branch's own Hook Norton band who won the raising and lowering event at Wigginton despite a power cut during their performance [*see also page 10*]. They also took part in the main striking competition where all bands rang to a very high standard. Many thanks to all the branch members whose contributions made the day such a success: to Mike and Joy Brooks for all the arrangements at St Mary's and making the tea and coffee; the stewards Chris Stevens and Andrew Pickett at Shipton; Geoffrey Stretton and Sue Checkley at Wigginton; Nicki and Tim

Unwin for the legendary bacon rolls; and everyone who contributed cakes. Thanks also to our Ringing Master, David Salter, for his meticulous planning so everyone knew what was required.

Robert Newton presented the ODG with a new trophy for the raising and lowering competition, [see page 9], which he awarded to the winning Hook Norton team with Sally Austin pictured receiving it on behalf of the band [see page 10].

And finally, the Branch has a new web site [chippy.odg.org.uk/](http://chippy.odg.org.uk/) Our thanks go to our new webmaster Keith Mitchell for all his hard work in setting it up with the help of the VOLL Web Studio Ukrainian team. Please do visit the website to learn more about their involvement.

Geoffrey Stretton – Branch Secretary

## **East Berks and South Bucks**

It seems a long time ago now, but since the last edition of ODD BOB we have celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III. There was special ringing at 25 towers in the branch, including 3 peals (Cookham, High Wycombe and Windsor Curfew Tower), 2 date touches (High Wycombe and Marlow), 4 quarter peals (Amersham, High Wycombe, Hughenden and Marlow) and lots and lots of call changes and other general ringing. At Winkfield, non-ringers were invited to chime the bells before the “official” full circle ringing where 28 people, aged from 2 years to 80 plus, were able to take part in the celebratory ringing.

Many of the new recruits who came forward to *Ring for the King* are still learning, making running of practices at some towers a little challenging – but having too many new recruits is a good problem to have. Three were elected to the Guild at our Half Yearly Meeting in October and we hope that many more will achieve the required competence before too long.

Seven years ago Peter Jasper set up the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers, largely as an after school activity for pupils at the High School at which he was teaching. At our AGM he stepped aside and the monthly practices are now under the leadership of Simon Smith. Peter still helps out with outings and striking contests, and the young ringers continue to do well. They came 4th in the South East England Contest and 6<sup>th</sup> out of 17 teams in the call change section of the RW National Youth Contest at York.

The Branch 6-bell competition was won by a band representing Windsor Castle Curfew Tower, but their band did not meet the tower membership requirements for the Branch contest so the winners’ trophy was presented to Amersham. Amersham then represented EBSB in the Guild contest where they were placed 6<sup>th</sup>.

The Lorna Newton Contest is a knock-out contest that takes place over the summer months. Five teams qualified for the final contest at Chalfont St Giles. The tower membership requirements for this contest are more relaxed so when the same band representing the Curfew Tower was placed first they were presented with the winner’s trophy. Congratulations to Amersham, Chesham, Bray and Lane End who also rang in the final.

Frank Blagrove, who had been tower captain at Windsor Parish Church for several decades, passed away last year. Since then a lot of work has been done by Vikki Bulbeck, with help from various people from the Guild Towers and Belfries

Committee, to improve the go of the bells. A peal of Grandsire Triples was rung there on 11<sup>th</sup> October, marking the first anniversary of Frank's death.



The Branch Fund Raising Committee continues to take sweatshirts, polo shirts, preserves, etc. to Guild and Branch events. They had a particularly successful stall at the Beaconsfield Country Fayre in August where the takings exceeded £400. A new batch of "sally" mugs has been purchased which are bone china with blue sallyes and are selling at £7.50 each. Details of stock available can be seen on their website, [www.bellfund.org.uk](http://www.bellfund.org.uk).

Patricia Newton

## Newbury

Things have been moving well in the Newbury Branch over the past four months.

The Lambourn Valley towers Great Shefford, East Garston and Lambourn have joined forces and now have monthly joint practices with mutual help for ringing events. The return of East Garston bells was celebrated in the Branch, and the band is now going from strength to strength with novice training. Our *Marshall Shield*, awarded for notable effort and achievement in advancing ringing in the Newbury Branch, was this year, awarded to Maureen Velvick [*<-photo*] for her role in getting East Garston bells repaired and restored to ringing, along with recruiting and training new ringers.

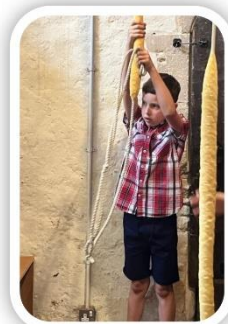


Hampstead  
Norreys, East Ilsley

among others, are also doing well with recruiting and training new ringers. Some of the newcomers were thrilled to *Ring for The King* on Coronation Day, notably ten-year old Thomas Craig [*photo->*] of Hampstead Norreys, who also received a letter from our MP in recognition of his achievement.

Most towers in the Branch did something for the Coronation, all of which will have been recorded on BellBoard. Some towers rang quarters on the day, while others had rounds, call changes (including Kings) and others – open ringing.

Our team was pleased to win the Guild 8-Bell competition in May at Broadwell, with Erin as the test piece. Quite easy to make mistakes in Erin, but none were made and the team presented a very nice piece of ringing. Having left before the end of the competition, we were unaware of the results until later in the day, when upon enquiring with Tony the organiser, we got the response, "I have a cup for you".



Following success at our Branch Competition, St Nicolas, Newbury went on to take part in the Guild 6-Bell competition, and we also entered a band in the new raising and lowering event which, although over 50 miles away, was a bit of fun once we'd got there.

Our two monthly practices, one for general ringing and one advanced, continue to be well supported. Numbers are often unpredictable but there is usually a good crowd to make for an interesting and useful practice with standard fare plus feature methods often rung. Most recently, Chieveley Bob Triples was rung at Chieveley.

We also continue with "Sue's Midweek Group" ring and pub lunch event held once a month, which is known for being friendly and welcoming to all.

So, with Remembrance Sunday and Christmas just around the corner, we look forward to the busy ringing season ahead.

For up-to-date forthcoming events and other Newbury Branch information, visit: [www.bellsnearnewbury.org](http://www.bellsnearnewbury.org)

Mark Robins

## **North Bucks**

Doug Hird

## **Old North Berks**

Branch practices of all descriptions are generally very successful and attendance numbers are steady or improving. The afternoon, advanced and surprise practices are particularly well supported. The evening branch practices are less well attended, but still provide good opportunities for local bands when even a few additional branch members attend. Sadly, I have to report the death of Jackie Gardner, who was a long-standing Guild member and rang at Blewbury.

We once again held our 6-bell striking competition – on a sunny Saturday morning in June. This was a very successful event at Long Wittenham, with six teams enjoying the benefit of the recent rehangings of what once was quite a difficult ring of bells. Blewbury were the winners and they went on to represent the Branch at the Guild's competition. Our judges were Alan and Tine Marchbank and we would like to thank them for giving their time. The local ringers provided superb refreshments during the competition, which everyone enjoyed.

Our branch outing took place on 15<sup>th</sup> July, when we visited Fulbrook, Churchill, Chipping Norton, Chadlington and Shipton under Wychwood, with lunch in Chipping Norton and afternoon tea at Chadlington. Thanks go to Philip and Janette Roberts for organising this very pleasant outing. It was followed by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, attended by 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 £462.00 for branch funds, which will be used in grants to branch bell restoration projects.

The branch ringing school has evolved to become a part of the Oxon Ringing School, joining with the Bicester, South Oxon, and Witney and Woodstock branches. It continues to offer extra training to learners from the ONB, but now at four Ringing Centres with the help of experienced teachers drawn from a wider area than before. Practices have been held for those who could already control their bell on their own,

helping the learners to improve on their bell control, listen to their striking and develop their rope sight. One day Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) courses are also held to help experienced ringers share the best techniques for teaching ringing.

Our next social event will be a quiz night and supper, which will be held in Blewbury Village Hall. Our annual New Year's ringing event is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 in Drayton.

Gill Loyd

## **Oxford City**

Rachel Croft

## **Reading**

### ***Happy Birthday Cyril***

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July was the 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Cyril Crouch who has been a bellringer at Shiplake for over 50 years and Tower Captain for many of those. The occasion was marked by the ringing of a peal on Shiplake bells by eight friends of Cyril. The peal consisted of 5088 changes of Lessness Surprise Major and took 2 hours and 54 minutes to complete. The peal was conducted by Joanna Cresshull (nee Knight) who attended Shiplake Primary School and was taught to ring at Shiplake by Cyril 25 years ago. She is now a member of the Oxford Cathedral band of ringers.

In his years at Shiplake, Cyril has taught countless people to ring and was the driving force behind the creation of the Central Council of Church Bellringers accredited Shiplake Ringing Centre, which is used extensively for the training and development of ringers. He also played a large part in the installation of a completely new replacement ring of 8 bells at Shiplake in 2010. Cyril also sang in the choir and is still an active member of the PCC. His significant birthday was celebrated with his wife Mavis and all their children and grandchildren at a hotel in Cambridgeshire.

The photo on the front cover shows Cyril with the peal band from left right:

John Wells, June Wells, Robert Partridge, Cyril, Steve Rossiter, Giles Winter, Joanna Cresshull, Patricia Newton, Robert Newton.

### ***Branch Striking Competition***

The Reading Branch 6-Bell Competition was held on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> September at South Stoke, Oxon. Unfortunately we had a late withdrawal, so four teams competed.





Overall the ringing was of a good standard with our Judge, Tim Pett, complementing all the teams. In his comments he mentioned that the four bands fell into two pairs with St Marys & St Laurence being the overall winners slightly ahead of St Michael's Tilehurst, followed by St Thomas of Canterbury Goring slightly ahead of St Peter's Caversham.

Following the presentation of the trophy to a representative of St Mary and St Laurence, the Branch Chair, Giles Winter, congratulated the winners, and expressed his thanks to both Tim Pett for coming to judge, and to the ringers of South Stoke for their hospitality on the day.

### ***Reading Branch win Guild 6-bell competition***

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October a band of ringers from The Minster church of St. Mary the Virgin, Reading represented the Reading Branch in the Guild 6-bell striking competition at St. Mary the Virgin, Shipton-under Wychwood in Oxfordshire.

The competition was held on the back 6 of a 14cwt ring of 8. We rang 240 changes of Grandsire Doubles, conducted by Pete Ellis.

The full band was:

1. June Saint
2. June Wells
3. Gill Carlill
4. Stephen Rossiter
5. Pete Ellis (c)
6. John Wells

Eight teams entered from around the Guild, and I am delighted to say that Reading was placed first with 38 faults, beating our neighbours Newbury, with 44 faults, into second place and Faringdon third with 51 faults.

### ***Other News***

St Bartholomew's, Nettlebed continues to have lively practices on Wednesday evenings. We are so fortunate to have Pete Ellis help and teach us all, keeping us on our toes – or maybe I should say keeping our brains working.

Most of our attendees come from other towers and some from other branches, but it all adds to a good mix with lots of fun and chatter interspersed with plenty of ringing and challenges of new methods.

We aim to start at 8pm if anyone would like to join us.



## **Our Youth**

The joint Youth practices with Sonning Deanery have proved to be a successful initiative. In September we had a mini-outing ringing at Shiplake, a Reading Branch tower, followed by at Sonning, obviously a Sonning Deanery tower. The October practice at St Giles-in-Reading was well attended with a wide range of method ringing undertaken.

We very much hope that not only will we be developing new talent for this area but as the young people move on to new localities, perhaps attending university, they will continue to ring. Indeed, Tom Sherwood has gone to Bristol University where he is helping to develop ringing locally. Jennifer Ellis will soon be moving to pastures new having been our Youth representative in the Branch, actively supporting the practices as well as developing her own ringing.

Lindsey Barker

## **Sonning Deanery**

All our towers took part in ringing for the Coronation, including two peals (Wokingham All Saints and Wokingham St Paul) and six quarter peals (Arborfield, Easthampstead, Shottesbrooke, Sonning, Waltham St Lawrence (2)). The Sonning quarter peal included Geoffrey Harvey who also rang for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Ringers at several towers included recent recruits and *Ring for the King* recruits.

All our regular branch practices have been well attended, except for the Advanced practice which has been cancelled several times due to lack of numbers. The bi-monthly elementary practices continue to be very popular and it's great to see the ringers improving and growing in confidence.

Jennifer Moynihan, our youth officer, reports:

“Young Ringing activities are continuing and regular practices have restarted after the summer holidays. Young ringers are increasingly attending practices at each other's home towers as well as Elementary, Branch and Advanced practices.

On the 17th September, we held a joint Sonning/Reading mini-outing which was attended by young ringers from as far afield as Oxfordshire! We rang at Shiplake, walked along the Thames to Sonning and then rang there. Thanks to Claire Shuttleworth for organising the towers and Simon Smith for running the ringing. Currently, the plan with Reading is to have a monthly practice, alternating between Reading and Sonning venues.

Berks and Bucks Young Ringers (BBYR) meetings are every month and these always involve several young ringers from Sonning Deanery. Simon Smith (Shottesbrooke) is now involved in the organisation of these practices.

Our young ringers are also invited to ODG events and several ringers attended an ODG/Coventry joint outing on the 2nd September. Our young ringers are also invited to Old North Berks Young Ringers practices, but these often clash with other events. The ODG, BBYR and Sonning events are all on different weekends in the month to allow our ringers to ring in as many places as possible (subject to parents being willing to drive them!).

The branch supported BBYR with £100 this year, which was very much appreciated, and I will propose after Christmas that we do the same for 2024. The BBYR offers our ringers regular practices, trips and access to ringing competitions (SEECON and RWNYC).

Two of our young ringers recently attended their ART M1 course and are now progressing towards achieving accreditation (thanks to Nigel Mellor for mentoring). The same two ringers attended the Michaelmas course (one in the Cambridge/Yorkshire group and the other in the Bristol/London group)."

Following a successful day last year, we had our second elementary outing in August. We started at St Andrews, Clewer, then to St James the Less, Dorney, followed by All Saints, Maidenhead and finishing at our own branch practice at St Mary, White Waltham. A very successful day which enabled learners to progress and consolidate their ringing skills. Socialising is an important part of the day and



lunch at the Pineapple pub in Dorney was very enjoyable. Well done to all the elementary ringers who took part and thank you to all the helpers and especially to Jane Mellor for organising the day.

Jan Glen

## South Oxon

Branch Practices and Tower Twinning sessions provide our ringers with regular opportunities to meet together, learn new methods and rehearse old favourites – as well as offering social time! All have been well attended, jolly occasions. The Branch was well represented at the ODG festival.

From personal experience, I can testify that ringing the bells at St Leonards, Watlington can be a terrifying experience. Well done to their fairly new band of ringers for facing the fear and carrying on – and for deciding to undertake a Bell Restoration Project. Whites of Appleton recommended a full restoration of the bells, including the replacement of plain bearings with ball bearings and spindles which will make the bells easier to handle. Watlington needed to raise £80,000 to complete the project. To date, with the support of the ODG, Oxfordshire Historic Churches,

Oxfordshire County Council, and various Trusts and individuals, they have raised an amazing £50,000. Any contributions will be welcomed.

Branch members were delighted to congratulate our Chairman, John Tchighianoff on his inclusion in the list of *Distinguished Members* in recognition of his decades long dedicated service to ringing in the South Oxon Branch. As well as ringing continuously at Benson since moving there in 1971 and teaching numerous new ringers, he has served two stints as Branch Chairman – from 1992 to 2004 – and from 2016 to date. During the covid pandemic, John maintained communications with branch members via email and Zoom meetings, and then became a Recovery Champion, encouraging towers and ringers to return.

John took on the role of Branch Ringing Master during a vacancy, organising and attending Branch Practices, along with joining numerous local practices to ensure that the bells do not fall silent. He also administers the 100 Club! Certainly a force to be reckoned with!

It is always good to hear that young members continue their ringing when they leave for university. Harry Turner learnt to ring at St Mary's Thame, and has now been elected Master of the University of London Society of Change Ringers. Harry has been regularly ringing in London with the UL since moving there to study at King's College, and has progressed at a phenomenal rate. Harry has been calling quarters, ringing peals (including internationally!), and perfecting the art of running a practice for rowdy students. Harry will be in charge of running the society for the next 12 months – no minor achievement.

And finally, news from St Mary's, Chalgrove. Chalgrove's ringing family increased when Faye and Jonathan welcomed their new baby daughter, Edith, sister to Dorothy. No doubt several celebratory Quarters are in the offing!

Andrew Davis, our joint Ringing Master and Deputy Chair, had the privilege of escorting his daughter Lucy down the aisle to wed her groom. Having impressed upon Lucy the importance of not keeping the ringers waiting, Andrew and Lucy arrived 8 minutes early, and had a chance to listen to the excellently struck Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles on a very special day.

Jane Willis

## **Vale of the White Horse**

Our Branch 6-bell striking competition was held at Shellingford in May. Overall, seven teams entered, with a mix of experienced through to new ringers. Everyone rang well, and Longcot won the trophy for the most improved team. For the second year in a row, Faringdon won the Greenley Shield, and went on to represent VOWH at the Guild 6-bell competition in October, where they achieved a creditable third place.

June saw the Shrivenham tower outing to the Cotswolds, travelling by train, bus and foot, and including a steam train from Cheltenham Racecourse to Winchcombe. The trip included enjoyable ringing at Cheltenham St Mark, Winchcombe St Peter and Stroud St Lawrence. The only hiccup on the day was a cancelled train and a number of unexpected taxis back home from Stroud.

In July, we held the first Vale Mini Ringers event at Stanford-in-the-Vale. An enthusiastic group of our young ringers got a chance to help construct and then ring on the Stallpits mini-ring, and have a go on the church bells. Cakes, scones and drinks made sure everyone had enough energy for the day. Follow-on events have been held at Shellingford (September) and Longcot (October) and we're expecting this to become a regular on the Branch calendar.

This year's Oxfordshire Historic Churches *Ride-and-stride* in September saw a group of us travel to Burford and the surrounding area, with ringing at Asthall St Nicholas, Swinbrook St Mary, Widford St Oswald, Fulbrook St James the Great, and Burford St Mary. Many thanks to all the open churches and much needed refreshments on a very hot day.

We held another well-attended training workshop at Longcot in September focussed on ringing and trebling up and down in peal.

The Prince of Wales in Shrivenerham was the chosen location for our Branch dinner in October. Excellent food and good company all round!

Finally, congratulations for the following notable achievements:

David Wright, Molly Sutton, Richard Roberts and Vanessa Naworynsky all achieved their first quarter peal at the first attempt.

David Wright

## **Witney and Woodstock**

### ***St Giles Church, Standlake***

It's been a number of years since the bells at St Giles church, Standlake, have been rung regularly. In an attempt to rectify this, and with the King's Coronation only a few weeks away, a call went out on the village Facebook site in March this year for would-be bellringers to make some noise for the coronation in May. While this seemed like a tall order, a group of volunteers got together and made up for what we lacked in knowledge and experience with bags of enthusiasm. At this stage we were chiming, but since then we've embarked on proper training in the form of weekly sessions with Catrin and Ian at St James', Aston, plus at St Mary's, Witney, and St Peter and St Paul's, Broadwell. To this we've added Saturday morning Ringing School at St Helen's, Abingdon, St Mary's, Witney, St Mary's, Kirtlington, and St Peter and St Paul, Dorchester. We've progressed at varying speeds, but we're all well on the way to completing our Level 1 in bell handling, and we're looking forward to being able to ring the Standlake bells. Some of us have even begun to take part in simple rounds, although the mysteries of change ringing, Plain Bob Minor and Grandsire are among the many which await us. We're still brimming with enthusiasm, and a welcome spin-off of the venture has been the group's friendship and team spirit (together with plenty of ribbing), not to mention the occasional evening at the local pub.

The Standlake ringers (Alan, Anita, Clare, Michael, Neil, Robert and Tamsin) are all very grateful for the expert teaching, patience and encouragement of so many who have given up so much of their time over the last six months to help us, as well as to those who have generously allowed us to join their weekly practice sessions.

## **Nigel Eagle**

With apologies for missing the previous edition, a Quarter Peal was rung to celebrate the life of Nigel Eagle on the day of his funeral in Stanton Harcourt, where he rang for over 50 years, and was Tower Captain for nearly 40 years, and very much more to so many people.

## **Branch 6-Bell Striking Competition**

The 2023 competition was hosted by Bladon on a warm and thundery afternoon.



Five branch towers entered the Call Change competition, and Three towers entered the Method competition. Steve Vickars of Woodstock & Kirtlington, and Hugh Deam of Marston kindly gave their time and expertise to judge the competition whilst sheltering from the elements as best they could outside the tower.

After the judges had rung a touch of Bob Minor and lowered the bells, a few of us went over the road to The White House for a drink and a meal, whilst others left for the end of the Witney Music Festival.

Church Hanborough made a clean sweep by winning both the Call Changes and the Method competition.

## **Combe tower Ring for the King**

Combe celebrated the coronation of King Charles III by ringing 30 minutes of call changes, followed by *Ding for the King*. We were thrilled with the response with over 50 people who queued to chime the bells (under supervision). All the names of ringers and dingers were recorded for the church archives. Especially pleasing was the positive feedback from our dingers, and the 3 people who said they would like to learn to ring as a result. [See photo on back page – Ed.]

## **ODG combined AGM, 8-Bell Striking Competition, and Activity Day**

It was Witney & Woodstock branch's turn to host the Guild AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> May, and to experiment with a new format for the day. For the first time, the 8-bell Striking Competition, Guild Activity Day, and AGM were all hosted on the same day at the same venue, Broadwell.

Broadwell is one of the most recent additions to ringable towers in the Guild, having recently been augmented from an unringable 5 to a ground floor 8, so it proved a good attraction. [Details of Broadwell are in the previous ODD BOB, page 5 – Ed.]

## **Witney & Woodstock Branch Outing**

The branch was treated to a most interesting outing to the Stamford and Rutland area on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023. On learning of the itinerary, it seemed like a long way to travel but it was well worth the early start for those that hadn't chosen to stay over and make a weekend of it.

Once again, the outing was superbly arranged by our Ringing Master Richard White. We took in an array of 6 and 8 bell towers as we visited Oakham (with its massive tenor), Easton on the Hill, and Uppingham, plus two towers in Stamford. Incredibly, 3 of the 5 churches were dedicated to All Saints but we managed to not let

this confuse us! The experience level was mixed which led to plenty of opportunities for us all to ring, including call changes, Plain Hunt, and touches of Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob, and Cambridge. There was lots of support and encouragement along the way – it’s always so nice to hear bells whether ringing or listening, especially when it is a newly discovered tower with different sounding bells – time just whizzed by!

For lunch we enjoyed a delicious meal at *The Tobie Norris* in Stamford, a historic pub named aptly after a former bell founder in the town.

Over 20 people joined in the day from various Towers within the branch which allowed for a good chance to catch up with friends or introduce ourselves to new ringers. We managed to avoid too many people banging their heads in stairwells and although we sadly missed seeing any

Peregrines at Stamford All Saints we did get showered with various types of bird-related debris, no injuries but quite some amusement! Towards the end of the day, we had time for a stop at the lovely Brasserie in Uppingham for a much-appreciated cuppa and slice of cake before our last ring of the day.



Many thanks to Richard White for organising such a lovely day out and to all the volunteer drivers and the hospitable folk who opened their Towers to let us enjoy. I would definitely recommend future outings especially to new ringers and I’m looking forward to next year’s trip already!

Rachel Mackenzie (Witney Tower)

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## Diary of Events for 2023/24

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 2023

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Great Shefford (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	7	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	Bicester	BP	Stratton Audley(5)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	11	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	11	CBB	BP	Hardwick (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	15	SDB	EP t	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	17	Newbury	AP	Hungerford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	18	SDB	BM & BP	Wargrave (8)	TBC
Sat	18	Banbury	BP	Horley (6)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	22	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	28	CNB	BP	Ch/Norton (8)	19.00 – 20.30

### DECEMBER 2023

Fri	1	Newbury	BP TBC	Yattendon (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	2	South Oxon	BP	Shabbington (6)	16.00 – 17.30
Tues	5	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	6	Bicester	BP	Charlton-on-Otmoor (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	9	EBSB	BP and Social	Hughenden (8)	17.30 – 19.00
Sat	09	CBB	BP	Wooton	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	13	SDB	AP	Underwood (6)	
Fri	15	Newbury	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	16	SDB	BP	Newbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Mon	18	Bicester	BP	Twyford (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Tues	19	SDB	BP	Kirtlington (8)	19.30 – 20.30
Wed	20	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
				TBC	19.30 – 21.00

### JANUARY 2024

Tues	2	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	5	Newbury	BP TBC	Lambourn (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	6	EBSB	SP	Hughenden (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	10	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	11	Bicester	BP	Weston-on-the-Green (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	17	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	19	Newbury	AP	Bucklebury (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Warfield (10)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	20	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	14.00 – 16.00
Wed	24	Bicester	BP	Piddington (5)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	27	CNB	BP	Churchill (8)	11.00 – 12.30

## FEBRUARY 2024

Fri	2	Newbury	BP TBC	Shaw (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	6	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	7	Bicester	BP	Ambrosden (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	10	EBSB	Tower Captains' Meeting	Beaconsfield (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	10	CBB	AGM	Aylesbury (8)	14.00 - 18.00
Wed	14	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	16	Newbury	AP	Thatcham (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	17	SDB	AGM	Wokingham StPaul (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	17	Bicester	AGM	Kirtlington (8)	11.00 – 12.30
Tues	20	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	21	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (12)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	24	South Oxon	AGM	TBA	TBA
Sat	24	CNB	BP	Asthall (6)	11.00 – 12.30

## MARCH 2024

Sat	2	CNB	AGM	Hook Norton (8)	14.30 – 17.30
Sat	2	Newbury	AGM	Chieveley (8)	14.00
Tues	5	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	12	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	13	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	15	Newbury	AP	Highclere (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	19	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	20	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Burnham (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	23	SDB	BP	TBC	TBC

## APRIL 2024

Mon	1	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	2	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	10	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	13	EBSB	BP	Lane End (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	17	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	TBC	TBC
Sat	20	Banbury	AGM	Deddington (8)	TBC
Sat	27	EBSB	AGM	High Wycombe (12)	15.00 – 18.30
Sat	27	Bicester	Outing		All day

## MAY 2024

Tues	07	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	Bicester	BP	Bletchingtondon (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	11	EBSB	BP	Iver (8) (TBC)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	18	SDB	BP	TBC	TBC
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	22	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	22	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stoney (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Turville (6)	10.00 – 12.00



*Coronation Peal of Grandsire Triples rung at Hook Norton, see page 19*



*Coombe Tower – Coronation ringers, see page 30*