

ODD BOB



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



Bicester Branch ringing outing, see page Bicester8

Contents

Master's Mutterings	4
ODG Towers & Belfries Committee's report.....	5
Tower Maintenance Award Scheme.....	6
Librarian's Report	6
Paying Peal Fees electronically	7
News from the Branches	8
Banbury	8
Bicester	8
Central Bucks	9
Chiltern	10
Chipping Norton.....	11
East Berks and South Bucks.....	12
Newbury	13
North Bucks	14
Old North Berks	14
Oxford City.....	15
Geraint Jones	15
Reading	15
Sonning Deanery	16
South Oxon.....	18
Vale of the White Horse	18
Witney and Woodstock	19
Guild Officers for 2023/2024	21
Branch Secretaries	22
Diary of Events for 2023/24.....	23

From your Editor...

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

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

Rob Needham

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

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Master's Mutterings

It has been a long winter with grey skies, unremitting rain and in April, still, there is little suggestion of warm sunshine and idyllic evenings in a pub after practice night! When the sun shines and ringers are closeted in a tower with just a glimpse of blue through a small window, we can sometimes feel locked away and eager for fresh air. Not this winter. The pleasure of ringing has been enhanced by being inside and unaffected by the elements.

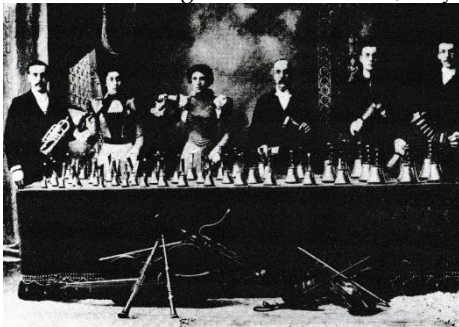
My first task in this edition of Odd Bob is to thank Rob Needham for his expert contribution to so many editions of Odd Bob. He has developed it over many years into an informative, enjoyed and eagerly awaited publication: thank you, Rob, from all the Guild members for your skill and dedication.

I believe that there are many initiatives to encourage ringing taking place throughout the Branches. Alongside courses, practices dedicated to learners and more advanced ringers are constantly being introduced. The teaching of ringers is a lengthy and continuing process; perhaps we should develop more opportunities to speed up the process, especially for younger recruits who benefit from fast-paced and focussed learning techniques. But, and it's a big but, progress to advanced methods should not sacrifice good striking. There is a quotation from a deputy master, in post about 50 years ago and who remains a respected Guild ringer "....ringers nowadays are placing too much emphasis on the ability to ring advanced methods and not enough on good striking. It is very difficult to concentrate on striking and ringing an unfamiliar method at the same time. Consequently, the ability to strike one's bell by listening to it and automatically making any adjustments should be mastered before any attempt is made to ring more advanced methods." There has been much change in the ringing fraternity, but that tenet remains.

Looking back through reports and documents it is certain that recruitment has been a challenge for a long time. In 1974 Bill Butler wrote that recruitment had decreased in nine out of 15 Branches. I expect that there is a statistician who could look at membership figures and provide an up-to-date comparison, although I suspect that the demographic age-range will be the significant difference. We have many keen recruits who are valued for their much-needed support for service

ringing and local practice nights but are unlikely to provide the required numbers for Ringing 2030. So, it is essential to find more ways to recruit, intrigue and therefore retain, younger generations to ensure a succession of ringers well into the next decades. If you have ideas, please share them!

I very seldom mention handbell ringers. (My close ringing friends will know why!) By the end of the eighteenth century virtually every village in England had its band of handbell ringers who probably rang tunes rather than methods. They rang most of the time without an audience but came out to the public at Christmas to ring carols in streets and on village greens. The reward of mulled ale and mince pies may have been the encouragement. In addition, they would ring on May Day, at parties in the



'great houses' and at the graveside of a deceased ringer. The grainy photo is the Storey family, father, mother, three sons and a daughter, with their handbells as an advertising poster in the USA in about 1900. The family had left England in 1895 and settled near Buffalo, NY state travelling through New York and Pennsylvania as full-time professional musicians. My goodness, it is highly unlikely that such

an occupation would be provided by a careers' advisor today!

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

ODG Towers & Belfries Committee's report

The members have met twice since the last ODD BOB. We were delighted to hear of the successful restoration at Slapton. We discussed the visits and inspections done since the last meeting. Recurring themes are sound control, both interior and exterior (generally, how to reduce excess sound levels) basic maintenance schedules, and stretchy ropes. A further recurring theme is communicating what the committee can offer and details of courses. Despite strenuous efforts, the messages fail to reach a significant proportion of ODG members and sometimes don't even get to all towers. We know that some of those ODG members that got missed would have liked to see the information. They tell us so! Of course, there is a wealth of information on the ODG website diary and T&B pages. However, analysis of the "hit counter" shows that there are surprisingly few hits! Requests for Tower Maintenance Award inspections are now picking up again.

We held a successful rope course at Radley in February [*see picture on back cover – Ed.*] and in April the Chipping Norton branch hosted the ODG General Belfry and Maintenance course. David Salter attended and writes: "This was held in Church Enstone which proved to be a great venue for holding such an event. The course was superbly arranged and delivered by Tony Crabtree and other members of the Towers and Belfry committee. Whilst the number of students was low compared to previous events, this did mean that more time could be spent answering their questions and delving into the detail. Topics included general health and safety, rope management, pulleys, guides, sound control and maintenance schedules. There was an opportunity

to ring the bells and understand how small changes can make a significant and positive difference to the experience a ringer may have whilst ringing. We were grateful to Graham Clifton for his assistance, expertise and for sharing anecdotes from his time as a bellhanger. Overall the event proved to be very informative and an excellent forum for students to share experiences."

Another attendee wrote: "I did just want to thank you for the course yesterday. It was good to hear from experts about what should be done and share with other steeple keepers what problems and solutions they have encountered. All courses like this take a lot of time for those giving them and inevitably displace other social/family commitments. Thanks for your time and enthusiasm. I really enjoyed the day and learnt a lot. I hope to resolve the problems at my tower that we know about. I'm now better informed".

Our next course is *Secrets of a Steeple Keeper* at St Mary's Mortimer on 6th July. Hopefully, all ODG members will have seen the poster! After that, we have another rope course at Steeple Aston at the end of October.

Tony Crabtree (T&B Committee Chair). tbchairman@odg.org.uk

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

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

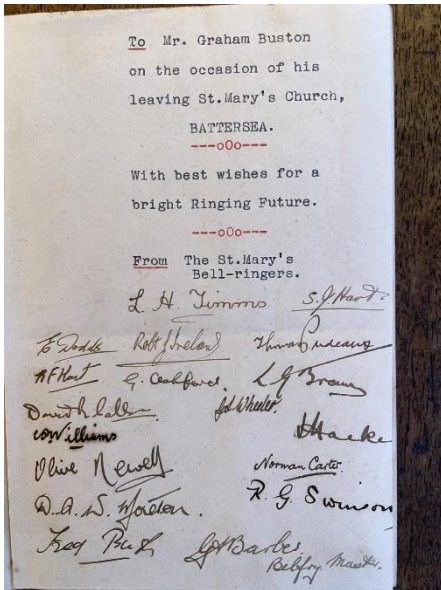
There are no current Silver or Bronze awards.

John Davidge, T&B Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been eight library enquiries since ODD BOB issue 109. These have been about:

- Check Chipping Norton branch material in library
- Start year of captaincy at Central Bucks branch tower
- Pre World War II ringer in Bicester branch
- 1965 Ringing World article on clapping
- Copy of Charles Troyte's book *Change Ringing*
- Election date for VOWH branch member
- Vinyl records in library, in connection with book being written
- Appearance of Guild title on peal boards.



The enquiry about Charles Troyte's book *Change Ringing* led to the return of a book to where it had originated, St Mary Battersea. Troyte's book was presented to Graham Buston of Battersea by the ringers there when he left the area early in the 20th century. It has been within the ODG area since then, and the owner, who is not a ringer, wanted to see if a suitable new home could be found for it. Following the enquiry, contact was made with the Battersea ringers. They confirmed that they would like to acquire the book for the tower, and it is now back where it originally came from. A photo of the page with the inscription of the Battersea ringers is shown.

There have been 3 "old" annual reports added to the Guild electronic archive since ODD BOB 109, those for 1896, 1899 and 1996. The latest report, for 2023 has also been added.

The cataloguing of the books and papers from Frank Hopgood, William Butler and Willie Haynes has now been finished. The first box of this material was originally delivered in early 2022, with work continuing on and off since then to complete it. Work can now therefore go back to cataloguing of other miscellaneous material.

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

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

Paying Peal Fees electronically

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

Stuart Gibson

News from the Branches

Banbury

The Branch held their Carol Service at Cropredy last December. Boxing Day ringing was held at Deddington.

The quiz and fish and chip supper were held at Bodicote in March.

Over the past months Branch practices have been held at Wardington, Horley and Banbury.

An Intermediate Advanced practice was held at Steeple Aston in April.

Rosemary Hemmings

Bloxham News

I haven't managed to restart practices at Bloxham yet. I have an appointment with a surgeon this week, so I am hoping to get my hip replaced.

We ring call changes regularly every Sunday morning, helped by Colin Lee who comes over from Adderbury before going back to ring at his own tower. We usually manage to ring 7 or 8 bells, and some of the learners are now calling changes, which is encouraging.

We rang the bells in celebration of phase 1 of "*Building our Future*" at the church. We rang a quarter peal of Stedman Triples for it, organised by Colin Lee. We now have a kitchen and toilets in the church.

I'm afraid the new, upstairs ringing floor at Bloxham has been postponed for another year! I don't know when it is going to happen! We are still the heaviest ground floor ring in the world!

Alan Griffin

Horley News

In February, ringers gathered at the Church of Saint Etheldreda, Horley, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the bells being augmented to six and the wooden frame restored in February 2014. Prior to 2014 the bells had been unringable for 25 years. Ringers from the Oxford and Coventry Diocesan Guilds enjoyed tea and cakes as well as some excellent ringing.

On 20th April, members of the Banbury Branch rang at St Etheldreda, Horley at the wedding of David Tite (Banbury Branch member and Horley ringer) and Eleanor Voss.

Alison Tite

Bicester

Our AGM held in Kirtlington in February was a highlight in many ways but mainly because we were able to elect nine new members – a record in recent years. Thanks to the efforts of several Branch ringers, we've had more teachers able to encourage and help newbies at regular towers and three branch practices since November, as well as special practices and the Oxfordshire Ringing School.

The ODG 10-bell striking competition held in Bicester meant that there was print and TV publicity for that as well as welcome interest from locals. Steve Walker has also been busy helping a new band in Ambrosden, as well as some ringers in Piddington where numbers have dropped off recently.

On 27 April our branch outing was to five towers around the Lambourn area of Berkshire – some outings are memorable for their ringing achievements, others for a variety of different reasons. The 2024 Bicester outing was memorable for high level access to ringing chambers, an anti-clockwise ring, great lunch, one of the longest draughts ever, and ringing with a broken stay (not caused by anyone on the outing). [A photo of the 'survivors' is on the front cover – Ed.] Our thanks go to Jeremy Adams who organised the outing, and to those who opened the towers for us – and particularly Stefan in Lambourn who provided us all with coffee too!

Our next excitement will be the May Ringing Day when two towers in the Branch (Woodeaton and Islip) are added to the Oxford City Branch's programme for the day.

Pam Holley & Kathryn Grant
bicester.odg.org.uk/wordpress/

Central Bucks

Ringing in the Central Bucks Branch continues with keen teams wanting to show improvement. As a result we have begun a regular "special" practice on the 3rd Wednesday each month at Stewkley at which we ring only one method, previously agreed. Currently we are switching between Plain Bob and Grandsire, doubles through to Major. This has allowed individuals to practice with a team of competent ringers around them leading to more chance of success, and others having a first go at a touch, despite ringing the method for years! We have had over 20 ringers at some of these practices so they plan to continue!

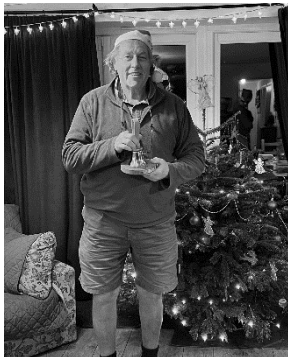
Our monthly Branch Practices on the 2nd Saturday of the month also continue to be well supported.

Our AGM was held in February and we still are juggling roles within the Branch but hopefully that is now being resolved.

We sadly also remember two ringers who have recently passed away: Janet Frost, Wingrave, 29 March 2024 and Jackie Hawkins from Cuddington.

Bunt Scott presentation

On 20 December 2023 the Stewkley bellringers presented Bunt Scott with a handbell to show their gratitude for his years as Tower Captain. Although he was officially Captain from 2004 he had in fact been acting as Captain for several years before, supporting Chris Carter as his health was failing.



The engraving reads "Presented to BUNT SCOTT by the bellringers of St. Michael & All Angels Stewkley in gratitude for his services as Tower Captain" and "BUNT SCOTT TOWER CAPTAIN 2004 – 2022".

The handbell is in fact an old servants' bell rescued from a stately home, so is over 100 years old. It was thanks to a chance conversation at a ringing event that a fellow ringer, Tony Crabtree, offered to help out. He collects old bells and converts them in to mini sets of handbells. Also, a thank you to Irene Gordon, one of our ringers, for the idea!

Bunt continues to ring with us on Sunday mornings and to offer assistance to me on maintenance issues.

Long Crendon Bellringers

To continue our training and progress of our young ringers, a quarter peal was rung at Chearsley on 24th February. Sophie Ingham and Tobias Haseldine both rang in the quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles, in memory of the Bishop of Buckingham, who had recently passed away.

[See photo on back cover – Ed.] From left to right: Treble, Tobias Haseldine, 2, Sophie Ingham, 3, Julie Haseldine, 4, Andrew Haseldine (C), 5, James Haseldine, Tenor, Kay Bartholomew.

On 4th March, a national newspaper (Telegraph) carried a photograph of James Haseldine carrying out maintenance on the bells of Salisbury Cathedral.

Ailsa Knightley
Cristina Galatanu
Andrew Haseldine

Chiltern

The 2023 Guild Annual report accounts section 7 gives the impression that Chiltern had no members during the year. I'm glad to say this wasn't the case but problems with the bank and changes of branch officers meant that money wasn't transferred from branch to centre in a timely manner. We actually had over 100 active members with branch events generally attracting around 20 ringers. Although a few members have decided not to renew for 2024 the increase in branch subscriptions to allow for a donation to the bell fund has been well received. This may be in part because the bell fund has been a topical issue in the Branch as it made a significant grant to the Slapton Bells project. This has changed a silent 5 bell tower into a significantly enhanced 6 bell one featuring 2 bells re-located with help from the Keltec trust to replace a badly cracked old bell and treble. A new band has been recruited for the bells and is making progress with help from other nearby towers, including those within Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire due to Slapton being at the edge of the Diocese close to these county boundaries.

We are indebted to Vanda Instone for her help as interim Branch Secretary setting up the branch practice schedule for 2024 before stepping down at the 2024 AGM. Reminded by the Master of the requirement under Branch Rules to have at least a Chair and Secretary two long term members of the Branch Committee took these roles and we're glad to welcome a younger member to the role of Branch Representative. Whilst many of our towers are meeting the Guild's objective of ringing for all main services most would like new recruits to strengthen their bands. We continue to encourage mergers of practices and other initiatives to allow bands to progress by having sufficient experience present to try new methods. We are also pleased to see our ringing masters welcoming and encouraging everyone at Branch Practices which has helped boost attendances at these events which historically many learners seem to have regarded as events only for experts.

Chris Potter, Training Officer

Chipping Norton

In recent months there has been a number of notable events for the branch.

In December 2023, in Shipton, a quarter peal of 1260 (one extent of Reverse Canterbury Doubles + 1140 of Plain Bob Doubles) was rung by:

1. Tracey Cooper
2. Cheryl A Watson
3. Chris Seers
4. Daniel J Watson (conductor)
5. Christine Stevens
6. Keith Mitchell

This was rung to commemorate David G Mitchell, brother of Keith.

In February 2024 some of Shipton Ringers, together with some from the Fairford area, visited St James Church, Colesbourne, Gloucestershire to ring as part of the Colesbourne Estate Snowdrop Festival.

In March the Chipping Norton branch AGM was held at Hook Norton. The number of people attending was a bit low compared to recent years but that only meant there was more cake and sandwiches to share around, all wonderfully supplied by the local Hook Norton ringers. Each year the branch makes an award in memory of the late Claire Tarrant and this year the shield was presented to Ken Wakefield of Spelsbury.

Branch Practices continue to be reasonably well attended and a full programme for the coming year is published via the branch website <https://chippy.odg.org.uk>. If anyone wishes to attend, please do email David Salter (branch Ringing Master brm@chippy.odg.org.uk) in case dates change, and so avoid disappointment. This year we have introduced a few 'special' practices which will focus on how we move 'towards better striking'. We have yet to see how successful this will be!

In April the Chipping Norton Branch hosted the ODG General Belfry and Maintenance course. [See the report in ODG Towers & Belfries Committee's report on page 5 – Ed.]

Along with regular visitors and friends this year's Hook Norton tower outing was in and around the Devizes area. All towers, lunchtime food and pub arranged by Dan Austin (Deputy Ringing Master).

First tower was St Mary's, a nice, slow turning 17cwt 6 and former parish church. Listed bells that were easy to strike and a lovely old-fashioned sound. Second church just a five-minute walk, known as the castle church, now parish church; impressive Norman tower inside and out with a good ringing circle, 8 bells 19cwt, very nice.

After an excellent lunch by the Kennet and Avon Canal we went on to Melksham, a Taylor 8, 18cwt, nice ring where major & triples methods & plain hunt were rung. Finally on to Calne, a 23cwt 10, a light and spacious ringing chamber and easy-going



bells. Here we managed to ring Grandsire & Stedman Caters, Little Bob Royal, plain hunt and call changes, where everybody excelled themselves.

Everybody seemed to have enjoyed the day, the ringing, and the company... success!

David Salter, Chairman & RM

Linda Hoare (1947-2023)

My sister Linda was born at Upton, a small hamlet about a mile from Burford, where our mother had been born in 1909. Our Father, James Westmacott (whose name appears on several peel boards in the ringing chamber) had all his life been a keen ringer from his early years at Minety near Malmesbury.

As soon as we were old enough his three daughters, Mary, Jane and Linda, were introduced to the art of ringing. Burford's bells were the most wonderful for a learner ringer – the second being the only one to be a little temperamental. Eventually, Linda became the most proficient of the three of us and liked nothing better than outings to other towers. She had a "thing" about ringing the tenor bell which I believe she did at York Minster. Even when a tenor needed more than one person to get it off, she was not perturbed. On one occasion the tower captain of a visited tower said, "She will never ring it" to which Mr Bill Dixon (tower captain at Burford and a wonderful teacher – very strict) replied, "If she gets it off she will ring it", and of course she did!

On marriage, my ringing lapsed until I took it up again at Wooton-under-Edge for a short while. Jane also lapsed but she again returned to ring at Burford, but Linda rang even after an accident involving two broken arms. It was the greatest sadness to her that ill health made it impossible for her to continue with something she loved.

She would have been so touched and delighted that the Burford bells were rung before her funeral.

Note 1: When our father died in 1969 a half-muffed quarter peal was rung after the funeral.

Note 2: When we started ringing at Burford it was a very family orientated tower with two Dixons, two Collets, two Sodens and four Westmacotts amongst the band, and the chairs around the chamber were well occupied with ringers awaiting their turn on the ropes.

Mary Blakeman

East Berks and South Bucks

Branch activities for 2023 ended with a well-supported practice at Hughenden followed by delicious seasonal refreshments in the beautifully decorated Church House.

Our annual Tower Captains' meeting in February was attended by Tower Captains from 16 different towers. Most reported that they are still struggling compared with where they were pre-Covid, but many towers have new recruits so there is hope that we will eventually bounce back. At the AGM in April, 29 new members were elected to the Guild plus two re-elections. We hope they all continue to make progress and remain members for many years. To encourage them we have a new members' outing planned for August.

Following the draw for the Lorna Newton Contest (knock-out style) several bands had to drop out because, despite their best intentions, they could not get a complete band to take part. Ten teams go through to the second round.

We were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Rt Revd Dr Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham in February. Although he had been President of EBSB Branch we did not have much contact with him in that capacity, but many ringers will have met him and been inspired by one of his sermons. Quarter peals were rung at Amersham and High Wycombe in his memory. Our thoughts and sympathy are with his wife, Lucy, a frequent visitor at Amersham practices and friend of ringers there.

As far as I am aware, only five towers contributed to the Leap Year Sponsored Ringing Week. Quarter peals were rung at Amersham (in memory of Bishop Alan), Cookham (to welcome their new vicar) and two at High Wycombe. Hughenden rang about 25 minutes of Plain Hunt and Call Changes on three separate occasions to involve each of their newest recruits in turn. Chalfont St Peter did not ring anything special but made a donation to the Bell Fund. Congratulations are due in particular to Caroline Pritchard who rang a 6cwt tenor behind to a quarter of doubles at High Wycombe, having only started to ring in March 2023 as part of the Ring for the King recruitment drive.

The AGM was hosted by High Wycombe. A most enjoyable service was followed by tea and cake, then the meeting. At the AGM the post of President was retired in honour of Bishop Alan. A new post of Vice Chairman was created and filled by Rob Taylor-Ailes. Lyn Lee was elected as Newsletter Editor; Angela Darvill stood down as Branch Rep, leaving a vacancy in that post. All other officers were re-elected for another year.

The Bucks and Berks Young Ringers squad seems to be going from strength to strength. We wish them luck in the forthcoming Ringing World National Youth Contest in London.

Patricia Newton

Newbury

After the flurry of activity last Summer and Autumn, with ringing for Royal events, Armistice, Guild competitions etc, we then went into our usual Christmas ringing around the Branch, which is always a busy season for us, as it probably is everywhere. Things have reverted to business as usual since the New Year with novice and advancement training at most towers, notably the three Lambourn Valley towers, who pool their resources with impressive results, and the new band at Hampstead Norreys since their rehang.

St Nicholas, Newbury are also doing well, where Martin Rice's CIREL striking measuring system is put to good use.

Our two monthly branch practices, one for all-comers and the other for advanced 8- and 10-bell ringing, remain well supported, while our monthly mid-week ring and lunch event goes from strength to strength. This event offers a relaxed sociable atmosphere which appeals to many of our members, making it so popular.

Looking ahead, our team for the Guild 8-Bell striking competition is raring to go, and the usual Summer round of weddings, outings and social events are likely to make this a season to look forward to.

For Newbury Branch information, visit: <https://bellsnearnewbury.org.uk>

Mark Robins

North Bucks

At the AGM in March at Buckingham we had a change of officers. After many years of service, holding several branch posts, Barry Eglesfield stepped down as ringing master. Ted Fawcett of Shenley has taken on the role. Martin Petchey also stepped down as Chairman and was replaced by David Phillipson.

The branch continues to arrange monthly ringing practices and the more social midweek sessions, all of which are being well attended. Graham Bartholomew, our assistant ringing master, is continuing to coordinate our efforts in striking competitions following the promising results last year. The challenge is to find enough time to do all the ringing that there is to do.

Doug Hird

Old North Berks

This year we held our AGM face-to-face for the first time since 2019. Now that our annual 6-bell striking competition takes place in June, we decided to hold the AGM at midday rather than in the evening, with ringing at Long Wittenham and North Moreton beforehand. The meeting took place in North Moreton Village Hall and was followed by a delicious light lunch kindly provided by the local ringers, giving everyone the opportunity to socialise. The meeting went very smoothly, with no changes to branch officers.

At the AGM we discussed the rehang of the five bells at Little Wittenham. The Faculty has been approved and the funds already raised, so the work will take place in July. A Faculty has also been submitted to rehang the eight bells at West Hendred. Fund raising for this project is about to start, and it is hoped that the work will be completed in 2025. There are also several other projects in the pipeline.

Our monthly branch practices have been fairly well attended, as have the alternate monthly surprise major and advanced practices. Our monthly afternoon practices continue to be popular and are very well attended. Additionally, one of our joint ringing masters, Charles Morrish, is bringing some new ideas for ringing in the branch, one of which is a listening skills course. He has run three so far, all of which have been well attended and appreciated by members at various levels of expertise and experience.

Seventy branch members and friends took part in a quiz night, held in Blewbury Village Hall in November. Thanks go to the Blewbury ringers who provided a tasty two-course supper. The quiz was prepared and hosted by Anne Hales who returned from Cheshire especially for this event. Nine teams took part and the winners were 'Bats and Belles' of Wantage.

Ringing and refreshments took place on 1st January at Drayton. Once again this was a very popular event, with over fifty attendees. Thanks go to the Drayton ringers

and friends for their hospitality and for providing a wonderful range of soups and cakes. Our April mini outing was held on the 24th, when nineteen of us rang at Drayton St. Leonard, Warborough and Dorchester Abbey, with lunch in the George at Dorchester.

Our next social events will be our branch outing and barbecue in July and a skittles evening in Wallingford in November.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

The City branch's year has been bracketed between the Guild Festival last summer which brought ringers from around the Diocese to what are largely Oxford Society towers in the city, and the Diocesan Bell Fund ringing day this May bank holiday Monday which will we hope bring many to ring in smaller towers in and around the branch.

We hear that while St Mary's Wheatley is undergoing renovation, its ringers have been practicing anticlockwise in Shabington.

The prolific handbell group that meets at John Pusey's house has recorded an average of one quarter every five days. The branch has elected sixteen new members of the Guild in the past year.

Sadly, we also record the deaths of Jennifer Barson who rang in Cowley, David Coombs who rang in Wheatley, and Andy Dunn who as well as recording a couple of hundred quarters in his first decade with the Guild also designed, created and maintained the Branch's website for most of the last twenty years.

Geraint Jones

Reading

Reading Branch is still busy with well attended Branch Practices that cater for everyone. Lunch after the midweek practices still proves popular. The Branch was pleased to be busier still in March when we hosted the 12-bell eliminator at St Laurence, 120+ ringers arrived in Reading from across the country. The bacon rolls to start the day and the tea and cake to finish it proved to be particularly popular.

Eight teams competed for the top three places to go on to the final at Chilcompton, Birmingham. The College Youths and Guildford were successful, the team representing Reading came 7th.

A request from the band at Mortimer led to a very successful Plain Hunt course at St John the Baptist, Padworth. The four learners all made progress with two even plain hunting to Bob Doubles by the end of the day. The excellent lunch provided by Charlie one of the ringers, perhaps helped progress. Thankyou Charlie, and thanks to Jenny for organising the day.

We are always pleased to welcome visitors who are often in Reading for business. Our most recent one in Reading itself was all the way from California. Laura acquired her first taste of ringing in Oxford about 5 years ago. Her "home" tower is Seattle but as it is 800 miles from where she lives Laura is obviously a dedicated ringer.

St Bartholomew's, Nettlebed continues to have lively practices on Wednesday evenings with thanks to Pete Ellis for keeping us all on our toes with new challenges. We are still short of our own ringers but are well supported by regular visitors from Caversham, Henley, High Wycombe and Marlow. Practices were a problem during February when three of us were in different parts of the southern hemisphere. The rest of the team were made very welcome at St Giles, in Reading.

Some of us recently learnt Bourne Surprise Minor. I doubt there will be many opportunities to practice it, although we were able to ring a plain course at April's Reading branch practice and have it spliced with Cambridge, St Clements, Little Bob and Plain Bob. A surprise treat indeed.

Our newest recruit has recently had a baby in the middle of extending his house so chaos has reigned. Hopefully he will find some time to keep up his ringing skills very soon. We wish Ondrej, and Natalie with baby Emilia, many congratulations.

Swallowfield and Shinfield report

As with many towers around the country, following the resumption of ringing after Covid, we found that many of our regular ringers had left ringing or found other pastimes and pursuits. We embarked on a recruitment drive, taking advantage of the Kings coronation last year and merged the two towers of Shinfield and Swallowfield (which are in the same church benefice), with weekly practices and service ringing taking place at alternate locations. Fortunately, the recruitment of eager parishioners was a great success and almost all who started have stayed on. Many of them are now taking part in regular Sunday ringing, now that they have progressed sufficiently to be able to ring call changes and plain hunt with confidence. This Easter Sunday, for the first time in many years, we were able to have two groups of ringers, ringing simultaneously at both Shinfield and Swallowfield – a great milestone and evidence that we had definitely turned a corner and were ringing back to pre-Covid levels. Despite the increase in numbers, we will continue the policy of pooling ringers as it means we have more trainers available for learners, but also greater chances of being able to ring more advanced methods as well.

Lindsey Barker

Sonning Deanery

A date touch composed and conducted by our chairman, John Harrison, was rung at All Saints Wokingham on the first day of the new year. A date touch is a composition such that each bell rings 2024 times to match the year number. This was successfully achieved, and was more notable because the band featured both an 80 and an 86-year-old and a 16-year-old.

We entered three teams in the joint Reading/Sonning 8-bell striking



From L to R: James Champion, Stephen Smith, Alan Barsby, Nicola Lee, James Moynihan, Geoff Harvey, John Harrison, Kristin Fitch.

competition, hosted by Reading at Tilehurst on 20th January. Congratulation to the Reading teams who came 1st and 2nd.



We held our own very successful 6-bell striking competition at Shottesbrooke on 20th April, judged by Marcia Dieppe. Eight teams took part with a mix of experienced through to new ringers. Thanks to the local ringers for providing excellent refreshments during the competition. Congratulations to the winning Shottesbrooke team, pictured here.

Congratulation to one of our young ringers, James Moynihan, for conducting his first peal in April. At our AGM in

February, James was elected as Deputy Branch Ringing Master, significantly lowering the average age of the committee. Congratulations also to two other young ringers; Becki who rang her first peal inside (Cambridge Major at Hurst), and Charley, who rang her first peal inside at the age of 12.

Sadly we record the death of Roy Russell who died towards the end of 2023; he was a Wargrave ringer for many years.

Jan Glen

Sonning Deanery Young Ringers

Since November the young ringers in SDB have been very active. Not only do they ring at their home towers but frequently visit other towers' practice nights and branch events. Between them they have managed to clock up an impressive amount of notable ringing. A quick search on Bellboard found 7 Peals (conducting 1), and 53 Quarter peals, including conducting 8, 5 in hand and 1 combined Youth&SDB Officers quarter.

In December the school holidays allowed our young ringers to descend on-mass to the Branch afternoon practice at Binfield with the added attraction of mince pies and cake on offer. The holidays also brought the opportunity to join up with the ODG young ringers for their Christmas ringing and social at Shiplake.

On the first Sunday of every month our young ringers join up with EBSB to attend Bucks&Berks Young Ringers. This gives a great opportunity to ring together with others of their own age, and in April they travelled to Bushey in Hertfordshire for the South East England Contest (SEECON).

Last year SDB young ringers started meeting once a month with young ringers from the Reading branch. This allows an opportunity for some local ringing with other young ringers and a chance to visit some different towers. We have rung at Shiplake, Sonning, Caversham and St Giles in Reading,

This May we are at Twyford and in June we will be in Nettlebed. We also plan to have another mini walking outing later in the year based around Shottesbrooke. All these practices will be run by Becki, one of the young ringers,.

Claire Shuttleworth, SDB Youth Officer

South Oxon

In April 1974, Rosalie Gibson, David Parker and John Tchighianoff were elected to the ODG. They have given of their time and expertise unstintingly for over half a century, ringing for national celebrations, attending innumerable practices and countless services and teaching many people to ring along the way. Rosalie and John are currently serving Tower Captains at Thame and Benson, and David has undertaken the role at Dorchester for several years. Certificates acknowledging their 50 years of membership were presented to each of them in services at their respective churches.

Recognising the lack of opportunities within the Branch to ring changes on eight bells, the Ringing Masters decided to organise a series of monthly Branch 8 bell practices, starting in January and alternating on Friday and Saturday afternoons. The first three (at Benson, Great Milton and Dorchester) were very well attended, with over 20 people there, and the repertoire extending from Plain Bob and Grandsire Triples to Cambridge and Yorkshire S Major. The most recent practice at Thame saw lower numbers, but this allowed several members to brush up their Stedman Triples. We intend to continue these practices throughout the summer and would very much welcome any experienced 8 bell ringers who would like to come and help out.

At Great Haseley in April, a peal of Surprise Minor was rung in memory of Deirdre Mann, who sadly died just before Christmas. Deirdre learnt to ring at Great Haseley in the early 1970s and lived close to the church for most of her life. Although she hadn't rung for many years, she loved to hear the bells and was a great friend and supporter of the ringers.

Ringers at St Leonards, Watlington have made excellent progress with their bell restoration project. To date, they have raised £75,000 of the £80,000 target. A Faculty has been approved and Whites are on standby to undertake the work. Watlington residents and local ringers were delighted to welcome a band from the Ancient Society of College Youths who rang a peal of Spliced Surprise Major on St Leonards Feast Day, publicising the bell restoration project in the best possible way.

Maintenance work at St Mary's in Thame resulted in a visit from their Mayor, who attended a practice evening in order that he could view the new bell ropes which had been partly funded by a generous grant from the Town Council. The Mayor enjoyed his evening – perhaps a new ringer in the offing when he hangs up his mayoral chain!

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

The Branch entered a team for the Guild ten-bell competition in November. To add some extra pressure, they were filmed during their practice session, later appearing on the local Meridian news on afternoon TV! The band finishing a creditable 4th place in the competition.

The Vale Mini-Ringers has now become a regular event in our calendar, with events held at Hinton Waldrist, Shellingford, Shrivenham and Stanford-in-the-Vale over the past few months. The enthusiastic young ringers enjoy constructing and ringing the Stallpits mini-ring and having a go on the church bells. The Shrivenham

event included a tour of the tower (clock chamber, bell chamber and views from the roof). Cakes, scones and drinks help them through the day.

Regular well attended training evenings have been taking pace at Longcot on the first Friday of the month. Topics have ranged from listening and place counting through Plain Hunt to advanced major.

We held a very enjoyable Branch quiz in February, with the team from Faringdon coming out as eventual winners – their expertise on local pubs being the deciding factor. Thanks to Uffington for arranging an excellent evening with great food during the interval.

The Branch AGM was held at St Mary's Longcot in March, with ringing, 'Songs Of Praise', refreshments and the AGM itself. All Branch officers were re-elected at the meeting. Thanks to all those officers continuing in role, our hosts for providing a lovely selection of cakes and drinks, Norma Fergusson for leading the service, Diane Clarke for playing the organ and Guild Treasurer Stuart Gibson for joining us.

In March, a band of Shrivenham ringers came together to ring after a memorial service for Captain Ron Johnson, one of the last surviving WW2 glider pilots and resident of the village.

Very special congratulations are due to Lucy Eyles of Longcot on the arrival of her son Pippin in November. A quarter peal was rung to celebrate, with mum on the treble.

We were saddened to hear of the death in December of Philip Laird who learned to ring at Shrivenham.

David Wright

Witney and Woodstock

We started the year with well attended branch practices at Eynsham in January, and Church Hanborough in February, which also hosted our Branch AGM, attended by the ODG Master Katie Lane. In March we went to Broadwell, where an EGM was held to elect Michael Kelly, Anita Knipe, Hilary Sharrocks, Alan Mordue, Vic Fletcher, Robert Brown, Clare Crossley, and Neil Crossley, all new ringers at Standlake, as members of the ODG.

In April, a number of branch ringers including Heather Horner, Debra Scrimshaw, and Amy Thomas attended the Radley Course. At the end of April, Richard White,



our redoubtable Ringing Master, organised a splendid outing to 5 towers in Wiltshire, including Devizes and Amesbury, and attended by 27 ringers. We also held an EGM to elect Paul Molyneux, Cat Berisford, James Gervers, and Chris Borton of Broadwell, and Simon Jackson, Pauline Briggs, and Dom Walker of Wootton, as members of the ODG,

Spring Outing to Wiltshire

On 27th April, a band including Witney ringers, Andrew Goldthorpe and Dana Josephson, rang a peal of Plain Bob Major dedicated to Revd. Canon Toby Wright in grateful thanks for his service at St Mary's, Witney, and with congratulations on his appointment as Dean of Wells Cathedral.



The Peal band: Andrew Goldthorpe, Rosemary Hemmings, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Katie Lane, Craig Robertson (c), Dana Josephson, Simon Edwards, Peter Spain.

The week after, on the 4th May, Ruth Leatherdale rang her first Quarter Peal inside of Plain Bob Minor to launch the Witney Beer Festival.

The Quarter Peal band: Andrew Goldthorpe, Ruth Leatherdale, Hugh Deam, Paul Lucas, Alison Merryweather-Clarke (c), Howard Smith.



Andrew Goldthorpe

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Diary of Events for 2024

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

Some of these dates may change, so you should check the odg.org.uk web site for diary updates on an ongoing basis.

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

MAY 2024

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Peasmore (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	4	NBB	BP	Lavendon (6)	10.00 – 11.30
Sun	5	VOWH	EP	Shrivenham (10)	16.15 – 17.00
Tues	7	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	SDB	AP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	8	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	10	South Oxon	8 Bell BP	Great Milton (8)	14.30 – 16.00
Sat	11	EBSB	BP	Iver (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	11	Reading	BP	Whitchurch (6)	10 – 11:30
Sat	11	NBB	8-Bell practice	Bletchley (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	11	W&W	BP	Bampton (8)	10:30 – 12:00
Thurs	16	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Sat	18	SDB	BP	TBC	TBC
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	Cheddington (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Tue	21	VOWH	SC	Uffington (6)	19.00 – 21.00
Wed	22	Reading	BP	Englefield	11 – 12:30
Wed	22	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stoney (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	23	NBB	Midweek	Clifton Reynes (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Hambledon (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	25	South Oxon	BP	Brightwell	19.00 – 20.30
				Baldwin (6)	
Tues	28	Chipping Norton	BP	Kingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00

JUNE 2024

Sat	1	NBB	SC	Stowe (6)	4.00 – 6.00
Tues	4	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	7	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	8	Reading	BP	Swallowfield (6)	10 – 11:30
Sat	8	W&W	SC	Black Bourton (6)	14:00 – 17:00
Sat	8	South Oxon	8 Bell BP	Warborough (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Sat	8	EBSB	SC	Hitcham (6)	17.00 – 19.30
Sun	9	VOWH	EP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Wed	12	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	13	EBSB	BP	Maidenhead (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Thurs	13	Bicester	BP	Weston-on-the-Green (6)	7.30 – 9pm
Fri	14	Newbury	BP/SC	Speen	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	15	NBB	10-Bell practice	Olney (10)	10.00 – 11.30
Sat	15	SDB	BP	Hurst (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Tues	18	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	19	VOWH	BP	Lyford (3)	18.45 – 19.15
Wed	19	VOWH	BP	Buckland (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	19	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	20	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30

Thu	20	NBB	Midweek	Woughton-on-the-Green (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Marlow (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	22	South Oxon	BP	Ewelme (6)	19.00 – 20.30
Tues	25	Chipping Norton	BP	Burford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	26	Reading	BP	Nettlebed (6)	11 – 12:30
Thurs	27	Bicester	BP	Launton (6)	7.30 – 9pm

JULY 2024

Tues	2	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	6	NBB	BP	Milton Keynes Village (6)	10.00 – 11.30
Wed	10	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	11	Bicester	BP*	Woodeaton	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	13	W&W	BP	South Leigh (8)	10:30 – 12:00
Sat	13	EBSB	BP	Bray (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	13	Reading	BP	Tbc	10 – 11:30
Sun	14	VOWH	EP	Shrivenham (10)	14.00 – 16.00
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	17	SDB	EP	Finchampstead(6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	18	VOWH	BP	Shellingford (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	18	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 – 21:30
Thur	18	NBB	Midweek	Maids Moreton (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	20	NBB	Inter-Branch Competition	Bletchley (8)	5.00 – 7.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Twyford (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	24	Reading	BP	Tbc	11 – 12:30
Thurs	25	Bicester	BP	Souldern	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	27	EBSB	BP	Penn (6)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	27	South Oxon	BP	Warborough (8)	19.00 – 20.30
Tue	30	W&W	BP	Witney (8)	19:30 – 21:00
Tues	30	Chipping Norton	BP	Chadlington (6)	19.30 – 21.00

AUGUST 2024

Fri	2	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	6	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	10	W&W	BP	Tackley (6)	10:30 – 12:00
Sat	10	Reading	BP	Pangbourne (6)	10 – 11:30
Sun	11	VOWH	EP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Tues	13	Bicester	BP	Caversfield (5)	7.30 – 9pm
Wed	14	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	15	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Sat	17	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	17	NBB	10-Bell Practice	Olney (10)	10.00 – 11.30
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Easthampstead (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP	Monks	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	20	SDB	BP	Risborough (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	21	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	22	NBB	Midweek	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Great Brickhill (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	TBC	19.00 – 20.30
Tues	27	Chipping Norton	BP	Charlbury (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	28	Reading	BP	South Stoke (6)	11 – 12:30
Wed	28	Bicester	BP	Charlton-on-Otmoor	7.30 – 9pm

SEPTEMBER 2024

Tues	03	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	7	W&W	BP	Witney (8)	10:30 – 12:00
Sat	7	NBB	HY	Wavendon (6)	4.00 – 6.00
Sat	7	Bicester	SC	Bicester	6pm
Sun	8	VOWH	EP	Buscot (4)	14.00 – 16.00
Wed	11	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	14	Reading	SC	Tbc	10 – 11:30
Sat	14	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	18	SDB	EP	Shottesbrooke (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tue	17	VOWH	BP	Stanford-in-the-Vale (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	19	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Thur	19	EBSB	BP	Chalfont St Peter (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Thu	19	NBB	Midweek	Calverton (8)	2.00 – 4.00
Mon	23	Bicester	BP	Brill	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	21	SDB	BP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP	Ivinghoe (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	24	Chipping Norton	BP	Little Compton (5)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	25	Reading	BP	Tbc	11 – 12:30
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Windsor St John (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Lewknor (6)	19.00 – 20.30

OCTOBER 2024

Tues	1	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	5	NBB	BP	Lillingstone Lovell (6)	10.00 – 11.30
Wed	9	Bicester	BP	Stratton Audley	7.30 – 9pm
Wed	9	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	12	EBSB	SC & HY	Fulmer (6)	14.30 – 18.00
Sat	12	Reading	BP	tbc	10 – 11:30
Sun	13	VOWH	EP	Longcot (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Tues	15	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	16	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	17	VOWH	BP	Buscot (4)	18.45 – 19.15
Thu	17	VOWH	BP	Coleshill (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	17	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Sat	19	NBB	10-Bell Practice	Olney (10)	10.00 – 11.30
Sat	19	Banbury	HY	Wardington (6)	tbc
Sat	19	SDB	BP	White Waltham (6)	16.30 – 18.00
Tues	22	Bicester	BP	Islip (8)	7.30 – 9pm
Wed	23	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Thu	24	NBB	Midweek	Stoke Goldington (6)	2.00 – 4.00
Sat	26	EBSB	BP	Horton (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	26	South Oxon	BP	Dorchester (8)	19.00 – 20.30
Tues	29	W&W	BP	Witney (8)	19:30 – 21:00
Tues	29	Chipping Norton	BP	Shipton-U-Wychwood (8)	19.30 – 21.00

NOVEMBER 2024

Tues	5	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	8	Bicester	BP	Ludgershall (5)	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	9	W&W	BP	Ducklington (6)	10:30 – 12:00
Sat	9	EBSB	BP	Chalfont St Giles (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	9	Reading	SC	tbc	10 – 11:30
Sun	10	VOWH	EP	Shellingford (6)	14.00 – 16.00
Wed	13	SDB	AP tbc	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	16	EBSB	BP	Winkfield (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	16	SDB	BP & BM	Binfield (6)	TBC
Tue	19	VOWH	BP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	19	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Wed	20	SDB	EP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	21	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Tues	26	Chipping Norton	BP	Spelsbury (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	27	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Wed	27	Bicester	BP	Ambrosden (8)	7.30 – 9pm



Rope splicing course at Radley, see page 5



Quarter peal band at Long Crendon, see page 10