

November 2009

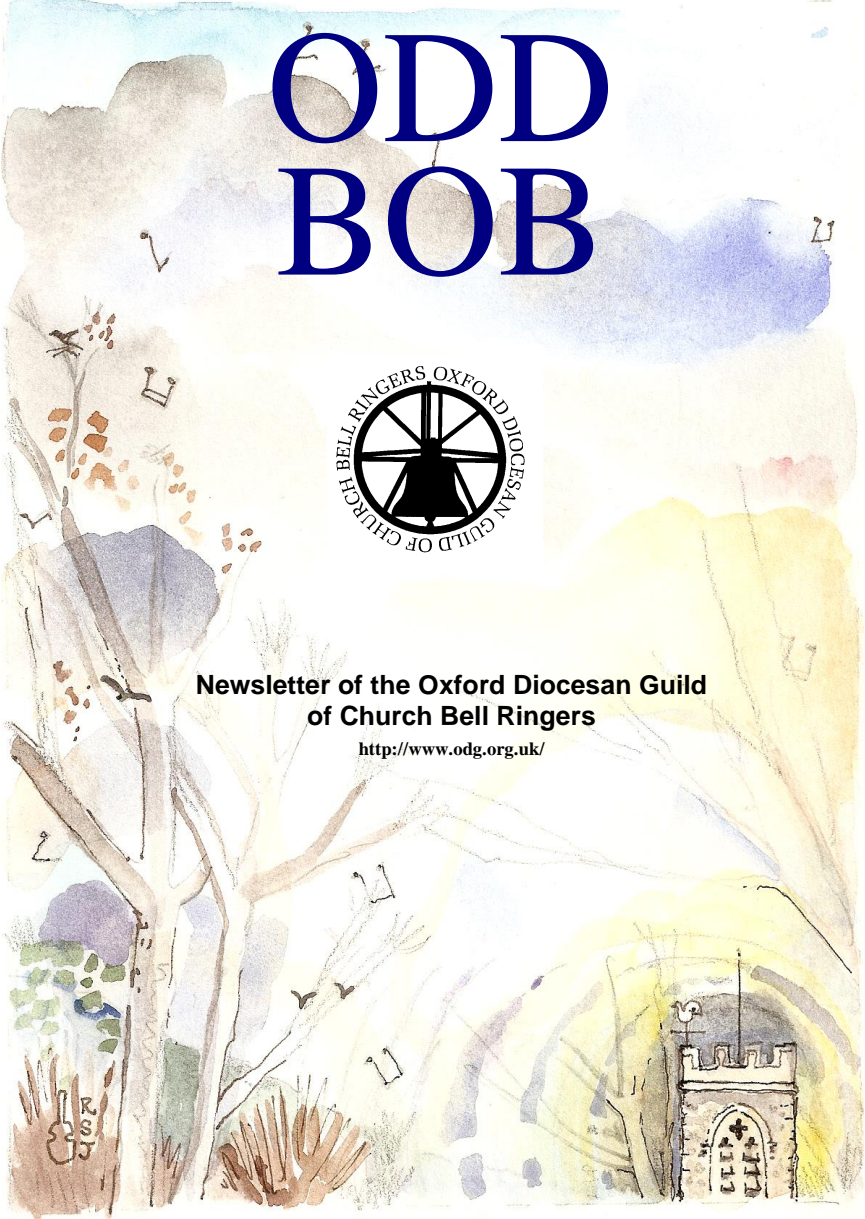
No79

ODD BOB



**Newsletter of the Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers**

<http://www.odg.org.uk/>



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From your Editor...

The cover picture is another of Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson's watercolours that she has kindly provided for Odd Bob. I am most grateful for these lovely paintings; unfortunately this is the last one. I propose to put on the next issue's front cover a photograph of some aspect of church bell ringing in the ODG – in other words I'm setting a little competition with no prize but lots of kudos! So, in the spring get snapping and send me your entries; editor's decision will be final. Editor's email address is oddbob@odg.org.uk.

Don't forget to check regularly the Guild website at www.odg.org.uk/ and the many branch websites.

In particular the EBSB Fund Raising website address is: www.bellfund.org.uk.

Contributions for the next issue, please, by the end of April 2009 at the latest.

Rob Needham

Data Protection Act 1998

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

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to thank the membership (at least, those who were present at the AGM) for their confidence in electing me Master. It is both a tremendous honour and a huge responsibility to be appointed to the 'top job' in one of the leading territorial ringing societies. I am very aware that it is not a task to be undertaken lightly and I will do my utmost to serve the Guild to the best of my ability, hopefully for a few years if that is your wish.

Many of you will know that I have more 'inside knowledge' than many of what being Master might entail, since my wife, Patricia, was Master from 1989-96. I was aware of just one vote against at my election – I wonder who that might have been!

My ringing career began in earnest about 50 years ago, at Hughenden. Apart from three years at college from 1965-68, I have been truly resident in the ODG ever since becoming a member. In that time I have noticed a great many changes (no pun intended) within the Guild, and within ringing as a whole. I am very aware of the time and effort that has been, and continues to be, invested by individuals, towers, branches and the Guild as a whole to the development of ringers and bands.

That being the case, I wonder if any members can solve a mystery that has been puzzling me. For many years the Guild's Education Committee ran a very successful residential ringing course at Easthampstead Park College. For a variety of reasons, including cost and the suspicion that prospective students were being dissuaded by the need to give up a whole weekend, it was decided to

offer a one day course at the same time of year (September), and the ‘Michaelmas Training Day’ has evolved. This year, the course had sufficient applicants to run only three groups instead of the projected six. The group with which I was involved had a very successful day ringing Cambridge and Double Norwich Major, but with only three students. Why is there such a poor response to this course when Radley and Steeple Aston are usually over-subscribed?

I know that many branches are able to provide appropriate training and targeted practices at a variety of levels but, equally, I am aware that some cannot. Surely, there must be a ‘market’ for what this course has to offer. As a Guild, I feel we should be very concerned if our training is limited to a basic level. So – is the problem timing, or advertising (the notice was sent out twice), or format? The branch secretaries discussed this issue at their meeting recently and their thoughts have been fed back. If you have any, please let a member of the Education Committee know your views as well.

I hope to meet many of you on my travels around the Guild. Please be aware that my memory of faces is not perfect but that it is certainly better than my memory of names! I hope I will be forgiven if I momentarily forget yours.

Robert Newton

Communication within the Guild

When I looked at my report for the last issue of Odd Bob, I realised just what a lot has happened! On a personal level, my communication with Guild Officers and with Branch Secretaries is far more straightforward thanks to the email distribution lists that have been set up for those groups. These are helpful not just for one-way traffic from me, but for messages to pass from any one of us to the others [*very true!* – Ed.]. These lists are maintained centrally on the Server, so users don’t need to worry about keeping anything up to date themselves (apart from notifying any change of their own email address to the Server Manager).

The other noticeable change has been to the website, implemented and run by Chris Johnson the new webmaster. Immediately after his election, webmasters from each branch were invited to a meeting with Chris and members of the Communications Implementation Group (Hilarie Rogers, Robert Newton, John Harrison). This gave everyone a chance to talk about not only the guild website, but branch websites and how these might work together.

Extensive work is taking place on the membership database, working out the detailed requirements before anything is set up.

Aidan Hopkins was elected to the new post of Server Manager at the AGM, with Keith Anderson elected as Deputy. Both of them together with Chris Johnson have invested a great deal of their time and expertise, for which we are grateful.

Hilarie Rogers on behalf of herself, Robert Newton and John Harrison

Arthur 'John' Rance 25/12/1915 – 23/09/2008

Obituary by Sue Davenport, John's daughter.

John was born in Bracknell, Berkshire when it was a small market town. He worked on the family farm but the development of the new town meant he could train as a handicraft teacher, an occupation he continued until his retirement.

John learnt to ring at Binfield, where his father and grandfather were members of the church choir, in the late 1920s. He was taught by his father who was tower foreman. In his early ringing career he was known as Arthur to distinguish him from his father Alfred John who was normally called John or Jack. He was elected a member of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers in 1930.

He met his future wife Joan in the ringing chamber at All Saints Wokingham where she learnt to ring and where they later were married on 15th April 1939. A partnership that lasted over 60 years until her death in August 1999.

Ringing of more advanced methods was not widespread during his early ringing life and involved travelling to neighbouring branches by train or bicycle. In the late 1930s he rang peals with George Gilbert of Burnham, Bucks who proposed him and Joan for membership of the SRCY in 1938. John was not a prolific peal ringer, ringing 66 in total spread over 50 years, although he enjoyed ringing quarter peals.

Recognising the difficulties he experienced in gaining opportunities to ring more advanced methods during his early years, he organised many outings, particularly quarter peal days, for people to practice methods. He also arranged local outings to enable his grandchildren to gain experience when they were first learning to ring. In later years some of his most pleasurable ringing was when he was able to ring a quarter peal with as many of the family as possible. The quarter rung for his 80th birthday was of special significance as 5 of the 6 ringing members of the family took part.

His services to ringing included serving on the ODG General Committee and its Education sub committee. He was also the first non-clerical Chairman of the Sonning Deanery Branch.

Although after two minor heart attacks he slowed down considerably, he still attended ringing practice and went on outings. He rang regularly at his home tower Binfield until 2007 when transport difficulties prevented his going. However he continued to ring at the neighbouring tower of Easthampstead, and attended their ringers barbecue on the 19th September.

He had other interests besides bell ringing, notably gardening. He was president of the local Fuchsia and Geranium Society, and a member of the Natural History society, but his favourite pastime was woodturning. He kept in touch with former work colleagues, meeting for lunch once a month. He enjoyed being with his family and the previous Sunday was spent at lunch with several generations of his family.

Sue Davenport

From Oxfordshire with love...

Almost 20 years after leaving the county and ringing circles of Oxfordshire, Ron and Anne Thorne, now of North Devon, may have been surprised to learn that six of their 'old' friends had contacted their local tower captain. They had requested permission to ring a full peal (Oxfordshire length not Devon) to mark Ron and Anne's Golden Wedding. Permission was granted and the six gathered at Warkleigh church on the morning of 30th August to ring a well struck peal of Minor.



Ron was tower captain of Bodicote tower and Guild Master of the ODG; he is currently a Vice President. He was also Banbury branch secretary and Anne, his able helper, organised many a branch dinner. We must all have been poorer then, because the preparation for the dinner was that about eight people would receive ingredients and recipe from Anne – down to 'one Oxo cube'! We all

followed orders and arrived at Bodicote Church House with food piping hot at the appointed hour, and for very few pennies a good meal was enjoyed by all.

The friendship has been kept alive by meeting up at least twice a year. Anne is one of only two people to have made it to every one of the North Oxon May Bank Holiday outings, Ron has been to all but one (Foot and Mouth kept him home one year). Once the dilapidated farm they had bought had a good cooker installed they invited their ringing friends down to try the local bells and have 'a bit to eat' back at the farm. Anne's cooking skills are legendary! Each year Ron has organised ringing at six 'new' towers, and we finish up eating a large meal back at the farm – except the year of the floods when the firemen who rescued the sheep ate our food because we could not get through.

The peal once rung was, not surprisingly, followed by an invitation for a 'spot of lunch', and the peal band and 'groupie' were well fed before departing late afternoon.

Dorothy Clifton

Tewkesbury Shield Contest – 3rd May 2008

Following its success in the Guild 10-bell competition in November, it was down to the EBSB Branch to organise a band to represent the Guild in this prestigious annual event. With some of the band that rang at Aston Clinton unavailable, it was decided to make use of some recent Tewkesbury experience and we are grateful to John and June Wells for their support and participation.

The test piece was a full course of Cambridge S Royal and we were drawn fourth out of the eight teams. Listening to the test pieces, it was amazing how variable nine leads of Cambridge could sound; from the sedate (Oxford Society and Derby Diocesan Association) to the manic (Coventry Cathedral Society).

We managed to avoid being daunted by the large tower, felt we had got to grips with the bells quite well and were pleased with our efforts.

Before and after our ringing there were opportunities to chat to other contestants, to explore the Tewkesbury Food and Drink Fair and to look in sympathy at the remedial work being done on buildings just a stone's throw from the Abbey following the devastating flood just ten months previously.

Devonians Mike Mears and Ian Avery were the judges. They gave some very detailed and helpful comments on each team's performance. They said that our ringing began a little hesitantly and tailed off slightly towards the end, but that the middle section was the best ringing of the day. The full results were:

Posn.		Rang	Peal time	Faults
1 st	Gloucester and Bristol D A	3 rd	3h22	27.5
2 nd	Oxford DG	4 th	3h28	28.5
3 rd	Derby DA	5 th	3h40	34.5
4 th	Oxford Society	1 st	3h42	38.5
5 th	University of London Society	8 th	3h30	46.5
6 th	Worcestershire and Districts Association	2 nd	3h30	50.25
7 th	Coventry Cathedral Society	7 th	3h14	87
8 th	Hereford DG	6 th	?	121

Our thanks to John Davidge for organising the band, and to Cookham, St Laurence Reading and Cirencester for hosting our practices.

Robert Newton

Bellringing – Thoughts of a Novice

I decided that I needed a new hobby. I'd always fancied having a go at bell-ringing, so I thought, "Why not?".

I've never considered myself to be a "Brain of Britain" but I didn't think that I was particularly dense either. But when I went along to a ringing practice one evening, everyone was speaking a different language! And I really didn't understand the book they gave me, except the bit that says, "It can take a lifetime to become a good bell-ringer"; that I can believe!

The other members of the group were very friendly and offered lots of advice. But my first teacher was left handed, and I am not. It didn't occur to me that this would matter when it seemed that all you have to do is pull on a rope – but it really does, or at least it did to me, and this may explain some of my early difficulties! A change of teacher to someone who was right handed and I was soon (well, fairly soon!) on my way.

It is coming up to three years now and even the book is beginning to make sense, so I have no intention of giving up – and it's not just my bl**y-minded persistence that has kept me going. I remember the feeling of achievement when I was first asked to ring for a Sunday Service – and later, for a wedding! If I didn't enjoy it so much (and if everyone was not so outstandingly patient) I would never have got this far. The rest of the group have a good laugh when things don't go quite right. When they say things that I don't understand (and there is still a lot of that!), I just say, "I love it when you talk dirty".

If you would like to try, “come up and see me sometime” – at the Church on a Thursday evening at 7.30.

That’s all! Stand please. [*That’s what they say when they want you to stop!*]

One of the Team, a member of Chiltern Branch

ODG 8-Bell Striking Competition

The final of the ODG 8-bell striking competition took place on Monday 5th May at Tilehurst. A pleasantly warm and dry(!) afternoon, a rewarding and challenging ring of bells and seven bands in attendance, keen to do battle with the set touch of Double Norwich CB Major. This was the mouth-watering prospect at Tilehurst on Guild Ringing Day.

Judges Cath Merlane and Ian Fielding were located in the garden of the Rector, Rev. John Rogers, to whom we were grateful for this facility, and for the use of the bells and of the rooms and courtyard attached to the church. We were also indebted to the Tilehurst ringers for their tremendous hospitality and to the Reading Branch for its organisation.

At the start of the ringing, one question was on my mind. Would the first band (Oxford City Branch) be able to reproduce the form which won the contest for them a year ago? They very soon settled into a promising rhythm but their hopes were to be dashed by a couple of method mistakes, the second of which was terminal. The other six bands all completed the touch with varying degrees of confidence.

The judges commented that there were some problems with odd struck bells – 3, 5 and 6 seemed to give most bands difficulty. Other problems were some erratic handstroke leading, and the desire of some bands to start the touch after exactly a minute whether their rounds had settled or not. The combination of the method and bells made quite a challenge to which most bands responded with patches of good ringing, although few were able to maintain a consistent beat throughout. The winning piece was a notable exception, improving to a very high standard as it progressed.

Position	Rang		Faults
1 st	3 rd	St Mary & St Laurence, Reading	32.5
2 nd	7 th	Reading Branch	36.75
3 rd	5 th	High Wycombe	38.25
4 th	4 th	East Berks& South Bucks Branch	42
5 th	6 th	Newbury Branch	44
6 th	2 nd	Goring	75
	1 st	Oxford City Branch	Disqualified

So – local knowledge and expertise have again come to the fore, and as far as the winning band is concerned, normal service has been resumed, after the 2007 glitch, as soon as possible.

Robert Newton

Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund Report

I reported to the September meeting of the Trustees that the amount of new money raised this year to date is £7480.06. This comprises:

- Donations from branches – £1,849.55
- Donations from 4 towers – £132
- Donations from 5 P.C.C.s – £105
- Individual donations – £182
- Donations from the funeral service of Dick Lee – £154.57
- Donation from Guild Handbell Day – £100
- Ringing Day proceeds – £726.24
- Sponsored Quarter Peals – £3,630.70 (plus the Gift Aid to be reclaimed)
- Donation from the Guild – £600 (includes £50 approved in 2007 but not paid and £550 for 2008).

The Trustees thank all those involved with the arrangements for the Ringing Day and in consequence the very satisfactory result. They also wish to thank all who rang and supported the Sponsored Quarter Peals. This event takes place each Leap Year and although the amount received is less than in 2004 it remains a very useful addition to the Fund.

Investment income received for the first half of the year amounted to £9,953.28 (The Trustees target for 2008 is £20,000).

Following inspections by members of the Towers and Belfries Committee and their confirmation of satisfactory work, the grants have been paid to Winslow and Wendover. The inspection at Whitchurch noted that there was some outstanding work. This has been completed and the grant has been paid.

In September, the Trustees approved offers of provisional grants to Benson and Great Brickhill. These grants are forecast for payment during 2009. They confirmed their support in principle to an application from Shiplake, but await final details of the costs of the project before offering a provisional grant. An application from Bierton was referred back for more detailed information on the costs of the work.

The Trustees thank everyone for their financial support of the Bell Fund in so many ways.

Brian Gatward, Hon. Treasurer

Restoration Fund Report

The amount of money received this year to date is £1,532.46, which is much improved over this stage last year:

- Donations from 7 branches totalling £621
- Tower donations of £80
- Other donation of £38.21
- Interest received from investments amounting to £193.25
- A donation of £600 from the Guild (includes £50 approved in 2007 but not paid and £550 for 2008).

The grants offered to Cookham (£740), Wendover (£910) and St. Giles, Reading (£235) have been paid.

The Trustees have approved a provisional grant to Olney (augmentation to 10 bells). Current indications are that this work will be completed in early 2009.

Everyone will be well aware of the volatility in the financial markets over the recent months and the associated difficulties for investors. In order to minimise risks the Trustees continue to retain a significant investment with the Central Board of the Church of England Deposit Fund. This policy also ensures that funds are readily available for grant payment.

The Trustees wish to thank everyone for their financial support to the Restoration Fund and remind individual donors who are tax payers of the additional benefit to the Fund where donations are gift aided.

Brian Gatward, Hon. Treasurer

ODG 6-Bell Striking Competition Final

This took place on Saturday October 4th at All Saints, Milton Keynes. A good afternoon was spent with 9 bands competing for the ODG 6-bell trophy at All Saints, Milton Keynes Village.

The church with its ground floor ringing room afforded excellent facilities for the judges to sit in the north vestry just alongside the tower, which was so much better for them than huddling in a car in failing daylight and deteriorating weather.

Richard and Helen Stanworth were the stewards, checking bands in, collecting information, and assisting with timings of practices and rounds etc.

During the early part of the competition there was almost a crisis when the Churchwarden (who was unaware of the competition), brought a party of people in for a look around the church! They were somewhat miffed to be asked to keep very quiet and hastily guided away from the chancel and out of the south door!

The bells were certainly enough of a challenge to make this an interesting competition. Alan Shephard from Dunstable, the chief judge, said the bells sorted the competitors into two distinct groups, the top three and the following six. Liz Middleton from Radbourne assisted Alan in the task of judging the nine teams.

Tine Marchbank and her hospitality team comprising ringers, past ringers and non-ringers, provided an abundance of tea that was consumed throughout the afternoon in the warmth and comfort of the Village Hall just opposite the church.

From the results you will see that Reading was victorious and the judges presented Stephen Rossiter with the trophy.

I would like to thank all the ringers who took part in the competition, our judges Alan and Liz, Richard and Helen Stanworth, the Incumbent and ringers at Milton Keynes Village, and Tine and her band of helpers. You all contributed to make this, my first ODG organisation, a success.

Results, in the order in which they were placed:

Branch	Tower	Drawn	Faults	Position
Reading	St Mary & St Lawrence	8	14	1
Vale of WH	Shrivenham	7	18.5	2
EBSB	High Wycombe	2	23	3
Chiltern	Aston Clinton	5	69	4
Sonning Deanery	Sonning	1	76	5
North Bucks	Hanslope	4	89	6
Oxford City	Kidlington	6	187	7
Banbury	Bodicote	9	216	8
South Oxfordshire	St Mary Chalgrove	3	215	9

Alan Marchbank

Education Committee Report

Since the last Odd-Bob we have put on the following activities for Guild members.

John and June Wells ran the Michaelmas Training Day for more advanced students, which replaces the traditional Easthampstead Course. This was enjoyed by those who attended but was short of students and we have asked Branch Secretaries to investigate why this was before we finalise next year's programme. Any criticism or suggestions, positive or negative would be welcome.

Laying the Right Foundations was a course for instructors and tower captains that was very well received and we are considering asking Alan Bentley to organise this again.

Hilarie Rogers is in charge of this year's *Young Ringers' Award* scheme, which will continue to the end of the year. This is very useful for introducing young ringers to the world of ringing outside their own tower and we hope branch officers and tower captains will encourage all young ringers to participate next year.

A Cambridge Royal course on 29th November is under preparation by Alan Bentley. It'll probably be too late when you read this but you can always contact Alan on:

01296 581 965 or e-mail arb99net@ntlworld.com

Further copies of the Guild's Educational leaflets have been printed and are all available from the bookstall. Consideration is being given to putting these on to the Guild Website.

The committee would like to thank all course tutors and helpers for their time and dedication and incumbents who have allowed their bells to be used.

Jon Chamberlain

Southern Bells

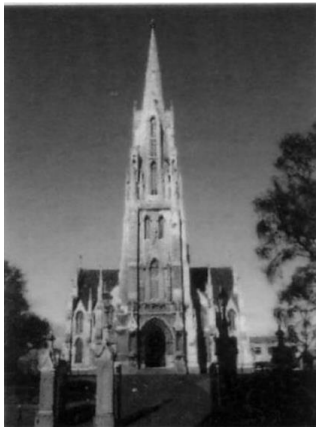
On a recent trip to New Zealand, I had the good fortune to join the ringers at the First Church of Otago in Moray Place, Dunedin for service ringing on a Sunday morning.

As in other regions with historic links to Britain, New Zealand has a tradition of change-ringing, but in such a sparsely populated country there are just seven towers with ringable bells – two each in Wellington and Christchurch and the remaining three in Auckland, Hamilton and Dunedin. Of these Dunedin, which lies at the head of the Otago peninsula in the south east corner of South Island, is the furthest south and as a result proudly boasts of having the ‘Most southerly ringable bells in the world’.

The First Church of Otago was opened in 1873, just 25 years after the first settlers arrived in Dunedin. It is a Presbyterian church and is understood to be the only Presbyterian church outside Britain to have change ringing.

The 60-metre spire contains twelve bells cast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London in 1975. Of these bells, eight are hung for change ringing but all twelve can also be played from a clavier. The light and spacious ringing chamber is beautifully kept and is reached by a short, wide staircase with carpeting that wouldn't be out of place in a luxury hotel. The ringers, too, were all smartly turned out in matching polo shirts embroidered with details of the tower.

Because of its claim to fame as having the southernmost ring in the world, Dunedin receives many visitors, so not only is it a very friendly and welcoming tower but it also has a well-rehearsed system for dealing with visiting ringers. In addition to signing the visitors' book, UK-based ringers are invited to add a pin to a map of the British Isles to indicate the location of their home tower. They are also presented with a small souvenir card, as shown in these pictures, to mark their visit.



On the morning that I was there, we rang a mix of method and call changes but whatever is being rung, all visitors are specifically invited to ring the treble which (as the card indicates) is actually the southernmost of all the bells. So, although I may still have much to learn about the art of change ringing, I can at least take pleasure in knowing that I have rung the most southerly bell in the world.

Jean Richards, Witney and Woodstock Branch

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Since the last Odd Bob report in April, two awards have been made under the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme. White Waltham has gained a Bronze award, and St Giles, Reading a Silver. This means that there are twelve towers with current awards – maintaining the previous high level. One tower (Linslade) which previously held an award has moved to another Diocese and therefore no longer comes within the scheme. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is now at fifty-five and there have now been forty-six inspections (of which fifteen were preliminaries), resulting in twenty-eight awards (eleven Gold, nine Silver, and eight Bronze).

Eight awards have expired (at the end of their two year period) and the towers concerned are listed at the end of this report.

The main features of the award scheme are as follows:

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

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

If you haven't already started, why not consider taking part? We will provide you with all the details of how you will be marked so that you can plan what has to be done to get an award; if asked, we will even do a preliminary inspection, before you start, to help the process. If you do gain an award you can be confident that your tower and bells are in a good, safe condition and, whether or not an award is gained, you will be given useful information on how they can be improved.

The award to Thame means that the South Oxon branch now joins the branches represented in the following list of current awards, but still only seven out of the fifteen branches are there – how about trying to get your branch included?

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Ellesborough(SS Peter & Paul)	Chiltern Branch	Expires 28.02.09
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 30.04.09
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB Branch	Expires 30.11.09
Chalfont St Giles	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.01.10
Purley (St Mary V.)	Reading Branch	Expires 31.01.10
Thame (St Mary V.)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 31.01.10

Silver Award

Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 31.12.08
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.05.09
Cookham (Holy Trinity)	EBSB Branch	Expires 30.09.09
Reading St. Giles	Reading	Expires 31.10.10

Bronze Grade

Tadmarton (St Nicholas)	Banbury Branch	Expires 31.01.10
White Waltham	Sonning Deanery	Expires 31.03.10

Expired Awards

Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 30.11.04
Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon Branch	Expired 30.09.05
Deddington (SS Peter & Paul)	Banbury Branch	Expired 30.04.06
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB Branch	Expired 31.07.06
Finchhampstead (St James)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.07
Stoke Mandeville (St Mary V.)	Chiltern Branch	Expired 31.12.07
Warborough (St Laurence)	South Oxon	Expired 31.12.07
South Stoke(St Andrew)	Reading Branch	Expired 30.06.08

John Davidge

A Cautionary Tale

Back in the summer (if that's what it was) I was asked to go to a local tower to reinstall their ropes a few days before a rededication service, at which it was hoped that the bells would be rung. The church concerned had been the subject of a re-ordering, which had involved the removal of the pews and, as part of this re-ordering, the bells. These had been rung from the ground floor with a fairly long unguided length, and now were to be rung from a newly created ringing room which was also to be used as a meeting room for other organisations. The old ringing space on the ground floor was now to be used as a crèche.

The redesign of the tower space and the upper room was done by an architect and agreed by the PCC without the involvement of the ringers. When we arrived, we were given a message from the incumbent to the effect that "when we had finished, would we please ensure that the ropes were secured in such a way that they would not interfere with the use of the room for other purposes". A message which, I feel, clearly indicated the priorities of the re-organisation.

The height of the new room was only nine feet from floor to ceiling which would make ringing “interesting”!

The real show-stopper was the fact that when the bells were rung from the ground floor the sallies did not reach the ceiling whereas now they had to pass through it. On the other side of the ceiling were pulleys and neither they nor the ceiling bosses would allow the sallies through. Worn ropes from another tower (with specially selected thin sallies!) were tried but to no avail, so the bells were not rung for the rededication and have not been rung since. The pulleys and bosses are about to be replaced, and the ceiling height raised around the ropes to allow room for the sallies to rise, but at a cost of about £5000, more than half of which will be coming from the ringers.

The moral is, get involved! There are, and have always been, incumbents who have little time for ringers and ringing, regarding them as an anachronism in a modern church – a view not always shared by the congregation and even the churchwardens. Architects, with a few exceptions, have little or no knowledge of the dimensional requirements of ringing. The best defence for ringers is to be an active part of the church organisation; if possible have a member of the band (who is interested) serve on the PCC and even better, on the Fabric sub-committee (or equivalent). Once you know about plans which may affect the bells or ringing then try and ensure that suitable technical advice is obtained. There are at least two sources of free advice; the Towers and Belfries committee exists for this purpose and, if we don't have an answer, we generally “know a man who does”. If a faculty is to be applied for, the Diocesan Advisory Committee (who initially has to approve applications) has a Bells Advisor who can have considerable influence. To misuse a cliché – forewarned can be forearmed!

John Davidge, Chairman, T&B committee

Librarian's Report

There have been six library enquiries since the previous Odd Bob edition. These concerned:

- Three *Ringing Worlds* borrowed for peals analysis work
- Information about ODG members active during the 1950s and 1960s
- Information on, and photo of, Marie Cross
- Details about Richard Buckland, ringer at Beaconsfield during the late 19th and early 20th century
- Towers & Belfries Committee 1994 report on Fringford
- The book on William Shaw, bellfounder of Bradford, W Yorks.

Work on sorting the miscellaneous material has continued at a modest pace during the summer, with a couple of new categories set up, and a couple of folders sorted. Secretaries' old material was added to the archive a year or so ago, and so the amount of material to be dealt with has in fact gone up overall, rather than down. My current preoccupation is with Guild Festival material, and whether and how to divide it up. One section for Festival correspondence and

one for Festival programmes, menu cards and Service sheets seems the most promising way at the moment.

With a damp summer again in 2008, the humidity has again been rather high at times. If anybody knows anything about dehumidifiers, e.g. do they generally do what they say on the tin, do they produce buckets of water when in operation, and other information would be very helpful.

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

Doug Beaumont

ODG Group Personal Accident Insurance

Guild members are covered whilst ringing or attending to routine maintenance work to the bells in any church or bell tower, or whilst travelling to or from a church or bell tower to practice or take part in bell ringing anywhere in the United Kingdom. ("Routine maintenance" means any works for which approval in accordance with the Care of Churches Measure is not required – separate cover can be arranged where needed in connection with these more major items of work).

Insurance is extended to include members teaching bell ringing and persons under instruction by a Guild member at a church or bell tower within the Diocese of Oxford.

The members of the Towers and Belfries Committee are specifically covered for carrying out their duties on behalf of the Guild and the level of temporary total disablement is increased to £300 per week.

Benefits payable

Age Range (years)	Temporary Total Disablement	Permanent Disablement or Permanent Partial Disablement	Death
16 – 70	£200 per week for up to 104 weeks	£25,000	£25,000
7 – 15	Nil	£2,500	£2,500
71 – 75	Nil	£2,500	£2,500
76 – 85	Nil	Nil	£2,500

Medical expenses up to £1,250 are payable for those aged 16 – 70 years and up to £125 for the other age groups.

Claims and queries should be directed in the first instance to:

The Honorary General Treasurer
Mr.B.J.Gatward
Grangemead
Bath Road
Devizes, SN10 1PH (01380 721009)

Claims must be confirmed in writing.

Please remember that it is a condition of all policies that claims must be reported to the Insurers as soon as practicable. A claim that is not notified within a reasonable time may be rejected.

News from the Branches

Banbury

At the AGM in April, which was held at Banbury, Long Service Certificates for 50 years membership were presented by David Joyce, Banbury Branch Steward, to Richard Bentley and Barry Davis who are both Banbury ringers. Various changes of Officers took place. The most significant of these was the election of the Reverend Sue Burchell, Tower Captain of Great Tew, as the new Branch Chairman following the death of Abbott Conway.

Once again the Striking Competition and Barbecue was an enjoyable branch event. This year Bodicote (A Team) came first, beating Steeple Aston by one point into second place after a three year reign at the top. Tadmarton came third. The judges were Marilyn and David Floyd.

Our annual outing organised most ably by Roger Stranks was to the Redditch area. The first tower was Beoley (8) after which we travelled a short distance to visit the Redditch Needle Museum where we had a fascinating and interesting tour round. I don't think any of us realised the intricacies of needle-making so it was quite an eye-opener. After lunch and a wander round the museum and Bordesley Abbey, we moved on to Ipsley (6), Bromgrove (10), Stoke Prior (8) and finally Feckenham (8). We then walked back to the Lygon Arms in Feckenham for a delicious meal after which we all climbed into our cars for the journey home.

Sue Burchell our Chairman and Tower Captain of Great Tew was ordained as a priest at Dorchester Abbey at the beginning of October.

Plans are already afoot on next year's calendar and our branch will be hosting the Ringing Day and 8-bell Striking Competition in May.

Heather Hughes

Bicester

Since our last report there hasn't been a huge amount to write about, although the Bicester ringers arranged a barn dance in St Edburg's School Hall on 20th September with Tinkers Ditch providing the music. It was an enjoyable event and over £700 was raised for the St Edburg's Renewal project, with your correspondent winning a bottle of champagne (the nearest £1 coin, slid towards the bottle, won – a great fundraising idea with one happy winner!).

Our Branch Practices have continued monthly (and also a Triples practice on the 3rd Monday of the month at Bicester). The Ludgershall Branch Practice on 5th September coincided with a torrential downpour – roads, and houses in nearby Piddington were flooded, but intrepid Ludgershall ringers, encouraged by Cliff East, went on with their practice! We have produced a small yellow card with the dates of Branch Practices (modelled on that printed by the Witney and Woodstock Branch); if anyone would like a copy please let me know.

General ringing has continued, except at Kirtlington where there is no local band, and ringing for weddings during the summer – one held at Ambrosden recently must hold a record – the bride arrived 90 minutes late!

Our Branch AGM will be held on Saturday 21st February in the morning, followed by a pub lunch in Bletchingdon.

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

We have had a number of events over the summer, the most noteworthy probably being the re-hanging of St Lawrence, Winslow; a project completed in a relatively short time thanks to the dedication of the local ringers and their supporters. The blessing took place on 12th October, alongside their patronal festival and a welcome to their newly ordained Deacon. This was followed by a 'bring and share' lunch for all. A lovely occasion.

Branch practices continue on a monthly basis, for both ringing and social meeting time! The attendance at these has increased, which is good to see. We have also started a monthly 'progression' practice at North Marston on a Tuesday, which has been well received. Until December we are focussing on basic methods but it is planned to 'grow' these as the bands develop. On the third Thursday there is the 'advanced' practice at Haddenham / Cuddington for those who are more experienced. This can include spliced Surprise Major and it is good to see visitors from neighbouring branches attending. Other types of practice are being planned too.

We have also started monthly quarter peals, with help from other ODG members – thank you, to give those interested the opportunity to ring, especially where there are not enough available ringers at the local tower. Several CBB members have benefited from this already and more are waiting.

The Branch Striking Competition was held at Drayton Parslow and won by Aylesbury. Unfortunately, late in the day, they were not able to represent us at the Guild event so we did not enter a team. We plan to rectify that situation next year! The Orchard Cup striking competition between us and Chiltern Branch was held on the newly refurbished back six at Wendover. The Wendover ringers and the Chiltern Branch must be proud of these beautiful bells. After a number of years Aylesbury were successful in winning back the cup for Central Bucks, on a lovely sunny afternoon. We all enjoyed the social occasion and wonderful tea provided for the event.

The Branch Outing to EBSB was also enjoyed by an increased number of members, with much appreciation of the towers we visited. We ended the day by the river at Marlow on a warm, late summer evening – perfect.

One of our ringers, Ryan Noble, has been working hard on his Young Ringer's Award under the mentorship of Alan Bentley from Aston Clinton. A very successful visit by the Litchfield mini-ring to Aylesbury town centre, to promote ringing, was organised by him recently – well done! Ryan also achieved his first peal at the end of September, together with Halisi Drysdale; congratulations to them both.

Heather Dobson

Chiltern

The Great Missenden ringers have established a link with the local Combined School and are working with a group of children from years 4 to 6 to show them the tower and its bells. They also saw the hand bells, which are used at the end of term carol concert in church, and each child had the chance to have a go at ringing a bell. They have been introduced to rounds, queens and tittums on the hand bells and even an attempt at calling changes! All the children are enthusiastic about both the big bells and the set of 12 hand bells, and all love the chance to say, "Look to, treble's going, she's gone". Last year 10 children took part – this time it is 14! They thoroughly enjoyed the chance to go up the tower and see the bells – even got a glimpse of what noise they can make!

The refurbishment and augmentation of Wendover's bells has been completed, and the dedication service took place on Saturday 18th October after the Branch's half-yearly meeting. The annual Orchard Cup striking competition between Chiltern and Central Bucks branches took place that afternoon, and was won by St Mary's, Aylesbury.

The generosity of members of the congregation, those in the village and other friends has meant that Little Missenden has achieved its funding target in what seems a very short time. In addition to many individual donations a very successful Old Time Music Hall evening was arranged, raising around £2,000. A similar sum was generated from the sponsorship of several stalwart and very determined ladies, who walked 55 miles along the Thames Path, getting soaked to the skin on the final day! Work on the bells has started as originally planned and, with help from local ringers, Whites were able to remove the bells in just one and a half days. The bells are now at the works, ready to be fitted with the new metal headstocks, before being brought back for re-hanging with all new fittings. It is doubtful whether they shall be back in time for Christmas, but all fingers are tightly crossed!

Two 16 year old French exchange students visited Weston Turville one evening and were taken up the tower to see the bells; they stayed on to watch the practice evening and even had an introductory lesson on ringing backstroke. A 22 year old German lady on a work experience exchange with Bucks County Council wanted to see something "particularly English" during her 6-week stay, and was persuaded to visit a Weston Turville practice night. She was so enthusiastic that she came every week, and had reached the "supervised rounds" stage before her visit ended. These activities may not have done much for bell ringing on the Continent, but discussion of the subject within County Hall has increased significantly!

Otherwise, the Branch continues with its routine of monthly practices and I can report that membership numbers are stable.

Brian Robson

Chipping Norton

Our Autumn Meeting was held in early October and we enjoyed ringing Chadlington's bells once again. The church had undergone extensive renovation over the previous 12 months and the bells were inaccessible. In addition to ringing we were able to use the newly-created meeting room and enjoy refreshments served from the new kitchen. Quite a treat!

Five new members were elected to the Guild – Lynn Adams and three sisters, Rebecca, Katherine and Elizabeth Glynne-Jones, to swell (and rejuvenate!) the Burford band. Mary Heckman, who rings at Charlbury, was the fifth new member elected.

The Branch was surprised and delighted to win, for the second time in succession, the Sponsored Ringing Week trophy. We are less successful in increasing the attendance at monthly Branch Practices. The numbers remain steady, but many members are obviously happy ringing at their home towers and not so keen on moving further afield.

The Shipton-under-Wychwood band is to lose one of its valued ringers. Brian Sellars, who began his ringing career at Churchill 12 years ago, moved to Shipton at the end of 2000. He and his Australian wife, Hedy, are off to a new life in her home city, Adelaide, with their two young children. We are very sorry to lose him, especially as he is one of our Stedman Doubles team, but look forward to hearing about his ringing exploits in the antipodes!

Most of you will have heard about the accident suffered by Charlbury ringer Tony Merry in May. No doubt you recall the headlines – “Ding Dong Merry” and so on! Journalists had a field day but did, with guidance from Tower Captain Mike Summers, stress the “dramatic rescue” by the fire brigade rather than giving the general public the impression that ringing was dangerous. Fortunately Tony has made a complete recovery and used his experience to publicise his return to ringing and his unimpaired enjoyment of the craft. You can read his account in full on the Branch web-site, www.chippy-bells.org.uk.

Anne Hoyle

East Berks and South Bucks

At our AGM, held this year at Cookham on 26th April, Katharine Firman was elected as our new Ringing Master, David McKenzie standing down from this role after three years in office. Marcia Dieppe also stood down as Branch Representative after seven years service. All other officers were re-elected unopposed.

Having won the EBSB 6-bell contest, High Wycombe represented the branch in the Guild contest at Milton Keynes. Ringing second did not give much opportunity to assess the opposition, but they were not disappointed to be placed 3rd, very close behind Shrivvenham (2nd) and St Mary & St Lawrence Reading (1st).

One of the consequences of the branch's success in winning the Guild ten-bell competition is that we get a chance to represent the Guild in the Tewkesbury Shield Contest. Although not all our branch band were available for this

competition, we still managed eight EBSB members and included a couple of ODG members with recent experience of contest ringing at Tewkesbury. We were pleased with the result: ODG second with 28.5 faults to Gloucester and Bristol on 27.5 faults. Our feeling about our ringing was borne out by the judges who said that the middle of our course was the best ringing of the day.

The branch Lorna Newton 6-bell competition was held at Penn this year, followed by our Half Yearly Meeting. The winners were Chesham, only the second time they have lifted the trophy despite regularly appearing in the final, and it was also particularly pleasing to see Hambleton in the final for the first time, which reflects the great progress this novice band has made.

This summer we ran a Novices' outing, visiting 6 towers with twelve ringers unaccustomed to ringing outside their own tower, and a supporting band of more experienced ringers as helpers. It proved to be a very enjoyable and successful day with a notable increase in the confidence of our novices, and we will be repeating this next year.

As another new venture for EBSB, we are holding some special practices on ten and twelve bells at Amersham to widen the experience of those who do not often have the opportunity to ring on higher numbers. We are looking forward to these practices and, if successful, they will become a regular feature in our programme. Details of these and all other EBSB events can be found on our website: www.ebsb.org.uk.

Mandy Salter

Newbury

A successful day was had by those who went on the branch outing to Worcester on May 8th.

We had a very successful branch social event at East Garston in July. The weather was largely kind to us, there was a mini-ring, a number of activities and a very good tea, which were enjoyed by a goodly number of branch members.

Attendance at the monthly branch practices has been quite good this year.

Over the last few months there have been a number of training events run by Lucy Walpole and these have been reasonably well attended. Further events are planned over the coming months.

A meeting of tower representatives was held on October 5th in Hungerford with 11 branch members in attendance. There were expressions of disappointment that there had not been a band in the Guild 6-bell striking contest. This was due to holding the social in preference to a branch 6-bell contest; however, the branch is intending to have a competition next year. The meeting, however, was pleased to note that the branch had fielded a band in the Guild 8-bell contest.

The branch is organising a Quarter Peal week between 16 and 22 February next year. This will be an opportunity for as many people as possible to ring in a quarter and we are encouraging everyone to join in, whether it be for the first quarter, first inside, first as conductor etc.

David Wilcox

North Bucks

Maids Moreton hosted our Summer Social at the beginning of June. The emphasis was intended to be on a little ringing and a chance to chat over a cup of tea and a slice or two of cake. However a full tea had been prepared which was enjoyed by all present after which there was little enthusiasm to ascend the tower for further ringing. An unscheduled business meeting was held during the tea at which Alan Marchbank was elected as Assistant Ringing Master. Following his election as Deputy Guild Master he is now an ex-officio member of the Guild General Committee, so he stood down as a Guild Rep for the branch, but agreed to fill this role. It was also announced that Sheila Watts and Sheila Ware would be unable to continue as Newsletter editors after the next edition of *In Touch*. We thank them for all their work on producing such a good newsletter. Members were asked to give some thought to finding a new editor. It subsequently transpired that discussion following the meeting found us a volunteer to take on this job.

The Autumn Meeting was held at Shenley in September and we were pleased to elect two new officers to fill vacancies. Jonathan Griggs was elected as the Newsletter Editor and David Phillipson was elected as a Guild Rep.

Olney Bells came out in July and the two new trebles have been cast, so we now have a ten bell tower in the branch, although the bells are currently spread around the country. Additional work was found to be needed as the back bells have been turned so often that there is no more space to drill them. This will involve welding to fill the old holes. Partly as a result of this, the bells will not now be installed until next year.

We struggle to encourage members to attend our monthly branch practices. The exception was in July at Newport Pagnell when there was a good turnout to our first practice there since the ringing gallery was installed.

Only three official teams entered our branch striking competition at Stoke Goldington with a branch 'scratch' band making a total of four. Ed Houghton from Wing judged Hanslope to be the winners and they went on to represent us in the Guild competition which we hosted at Milton Keynes Village in October. Despite being on home territory Hanslope only managed to finish sixth out of the nine teams that competed. Our annual inter branch competition against the Towcester Branch was postponed from the summer and has been rearranged to take place in November.

Unfortunately we have recently lost two long standing members through death, David Taylor of Newport Pagnell and Anne Stainsby of Loughton. Anne had been elected an Honorary Member at the AGM in March this year.

Helen Stanworth

Old North Berks

We were very fortunate to hold our branch outing in July on one of the few dry, sunny Saturdays of the summer. Thanks to Philip Roberts' excellent organising skills, more than twenty branch members and friends visited Yarnton, Combe, Church Hanborough, South Leigh and Witney. Ringing was to

a very high standard throughout the day and, at one tower, our Stedman Triples was even compared favourably to that of a well-known peal band, who had visited recently – praise indeed! It was a shame though that Philip was not able to put his organising skills into practice at the lunchtime break, where a ‘kitchen nightmare’ scenario meant that pre-ordered food took up to two hours to be served and resulted in late arrivals at the next tower. Still this was more than made up for by the swift service of afternoon tea with lashings of jam and cream!

As has been the usual in recent years, our outing was followed in the evening by a superb barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson. More members and friends joined the outing stalwarts for plenty of good food and fun on the croquet lawn. Play continued until well after dusk, becoming incredibly confusing. Fortunately a neighbouring firework display provided an entertaining diversion and the croquet finished for another year.

It is a shame that our branch practices don’t seem to be quite as attractive as our social events. Apart from the September practice at Blewbury, when several appeared to have returned from summer holidays raring to ring, attendance this year has been waning. Just a thought – if every branch member made the effort to come to at least one branch practice a year (in addition to any at their own tower), what a difference that would make!

However it is very good to see some new faces at our surprise major practices, with experienced ringers moving into the area and others starting out on the road to the standard eight. Everyone is always welcome and we will do our best to make sure that you get a chance to ring anything that you are learning. Our daytime mid-week training sessions for beginners and improvers, kindly organised by Kate Crennell, welcome all-comers as both students and helpers.

Two of our towers have recently changed their practice nights. Cholsey now ring on a Tuesday (8.00 – 9.30pm) and East Hendred now alternate with West Hendred on Wednesday evenings (7.30 – 8.30pm). Visitors to the Hendreds are advised to contact Dave Trotman on 01235 833531 to check the venue.

Gillian Loyd

Oxford City

Despite another summer of under-whelming weather the branch summer outing managed to find an oasis of sunny skies on the Dorset coast with excellent towers such as Swanage, Corfe Castle and Worth Matravers to match, as well as a splendid lunch in an exquisite tea room in the latter village. The first branch picnic and ringing evening held in May at the spectacular location of West Wycombe church was well attended, and so another such event was added in July at Northmoor, and plans are afoot for a brunch and ringing morning next year.

Susie Pavelin of Marston tower rang her first quarter peal at Cowley in August.

It is now forty years since St. Giles had a major rehang of their bells. An estimate has been given for work to be done and there is confidence that the sum

of £30,000 can be raised. An overhaul of the St Giles' bells would certainly be a great fillip for the City Branch as an easy, accessible ring of 8 in the city centre would be an asset.

The sound of St Giles' bells is immortalised by *New Bats In Old Belfries* (1945), a collection of poems by Sir John Betjeman. *Before the Anaesthetic, or A Real Frigh*t describes a stay at the nearby Radcliffe Infirmary:

"Intolerably sad, profound

St Giles' bells are ringing round,

They bring the slanting summer rain

To tap the chestnut boughs again."

St Giles' oldest learner recently celebrated his 90th birthday and three slightly younger learners rang handbells at his party. There is another ringer over 80 who only started to learn in her seventies after belated retirement from paid employment; other ringers include an Estonian and two Australians.

Kidlington won the branch 6-bell competition and went forward to the Guild 6-bell striking competition in October in Milton Keynes Village, coming seventh out of nine teams.

St Aldate's practice nights have been curtailed to 45 minutes twice a month because Pembroke College has objected to the noise of church activities. In truth Pembroke enjoys the sound of the bells but not the drumming and tuneless singing that emanates from the church; unfortunately the ringing has been caught up in the hostilities. As a result the St. Aldate's band needs all the help it can get from branch members to make sure that this good city centre six does not fall silent by default.

The branch is delighted to welcome new members from Stanton St. John and looks forward to including them in branch events.

Katie Lane

And a report from a Wheatley ringer:

Visit to Swan Bell Tower, Perth

Today was my birthday and after a long lie in we left the house in order to get to the Swan Bell Tower. The Bayliss family (Wheatley ringers) joined us later but until then I managed to ring with the Perth ringers a lot. The ringing felt strange as the bells were very different and I went wrong a couple of times. It was, however, very exciting as there are 18 bells so you can change the key of the rounds, although we only rang 10 of them. We also got polo shirts which you can only get if you ring there, and the ringers kindly gave us and our family coffee.

The Swan Tower is an amazing building as it is fairly new and made mostly from glass. You can see into the bell chamber from different levels including from above,



and can see the bells ringing too. There is also a viewing platform, to see Perth from high up. When you ring you can watch the bells moving, and also see moving shadows through windows. These are people watching you which is disconcerting, but interesting for them.



Emily Hess

Reading

It is with sadness that I have to report that Daphne Howcutt, a ringer at Tilehurst for 40 years, sadly passed away recently.

Branch Practices still take place on the 2nd Saturday of the month with varying numbers attending; the Advanced Practice also has varying numbers attending.

The Monday afternoon practices now take place on the 2nd Monday of the month. For full details of our Branch Practices please see our Branch web site.

The Reading Branch was host to the Guild Ringing Day and the 8-bell striking competition on Monday 5th May. Tilehurst was the venue for the Striking Competition who also provided an excellent tea. Thanks go to the Tilehurst ringers for the superb arrangements for the competition and tea.

The Branch Outing this year took place on Saturday 14th June (a nice sunny day) to Gloucestershire, and five towers were visited with a good selection of ringing to suit all capabilities. Lunch was taken at *The Old Spot* pub in Dursley. Thanks go to Jim Diserens for organising our outing.

The Branch 6-bell striking competition took place at Whitchurch-on-Thames on Saturday 3rd September (on another sunny afternoon) and the Whitchurch ringers provided an excellent tea. There were nine teams taking part this year, the winners being St Mary's, Reading. The judges were Charles Botting and David Cox.

Our Advent carol service will take place on Saturday 13th December at Tilehurst.

Kenneth Baker

Sonning Deanery

It has again been a fairly busy time for the branch since the last issue of Odd Bob. The May practice was held at Sonning in the morning and various triples methods were rung. June saw the branch visit Binfield with strawberries and cream at 'half time', which were greatly enjoyed by all present. The July practice was held at Twyford with various methods being rung up to surprise. The August practice was held at Shottesbroke but being in the middle of the holiday season the number of ringers present was reduced from other practices.

September saw the branch 8-bell striking competition which was held at Wargrave. Two teams entered and a third scratch team also entered on the day. The main competition was won by Wokingham All Saints with Easthampstead coming second.

The October Practice was held at Waltham St Lawrence and a mix of doubles and minor methods were rung.

On the social side a branch dinner was held in October at Don Beni's in Wokingham which 20 people attended and a good time and good food was had by all. Our thanks to Hillary Pollock from Arborfield for organising the event, and for the fun quiz and prize that she kindly donated.

A number of towers in the branch have held outings during the summer with Easthampstead visiting Essex including the glass tower at Basildon, and Wokingham All Saints going to the Meon Valley. Sonning had two outings: a quarter peal day at four different towers in the Compton area, and a tower outing visiting five towers in the Haddenham area [*photograph on back cover*]. Our thanks go to Pam & Andrew Elliston for organising these enjoyable events. The local captain, Fred Simmons, who let us in for our quarter peal at Compton, must have enjoyed listening to our ringing because he asked us back to ring a quarter on Tuesday 11th November for Armistice Day.

Andrew Moss

South Oxon

The hot news from the South Oxon Branch is that Hilarie Rogers has spent the last 12 weeks learning to ring one handed! This is not out of some need to increase the complexity of ringing – but due to a rather badly broken wrist from a fall in a tennis tournament in July. We all hope that by Christmas she will have more use of both arms.

The Branch Spring Outing on the 10th of May was to the Isle of Wight. This event was well attended and the group reported that it was an excellent day out, although a little hair-raising for the ringers in the car that almost missed the ferry back in the evening. Many thanks go to Kay Bartholomew for organising the event.

May also saw a peal of note in that Daniel and Christopher Rogers rang their first peal on 8, a peal of Ramsey Surprise Major at Cholsey. Other members of the band were: Hilarie Rogers, Robert Newton, Robert Partridge, John and June Wells, and Tim Pett (conductor). It was first blows in the method for the entire band.

Our September branch practice was notable in that it was a 10-bell practice, and as we don't have a tower of 10 in our branch we are most grateful to Wallingford for hosting this practice. Thanks should also go to the experienced helpers who came along to fill out the numbers. For those of us who have never been in a tower with 10 bells, much less had the chance to ring them – this was a real treat!

The Autumn Branch Outing was held at towers local to our branch, Long Wittenham and Sutton Courtenay – followed by a pub lunch. This was a half day event that was very well attended, so well that we had to “look to” rather sharply so that everyone had a chance to ring.

Finally, we would like to send a welcome to our new members: Wendy Hawkins, Jennifer Flynn and Timothy Spalton from Aston Rowant; Jane and Jennifer Willis from Little Milton; Gill Skinner from Chinnor; and Elizabeth Rhodes from Drayton St Leonard.

Amy Herlihy

Vale of the White Horse

We have had a busy six months here in the Vale. Branch membership continues to increase, with four new Guild members elected in September. Training evenings and branch practices are well attended, and our newer recruits are making good progress. Carina Lobley rang her first quarter peal at Faringdon in September, and Darran Ricks conducted his first quarter at Ashbury in May.

Tony Crabtree organised a very enjoyable branch outing aboard a newly restored classic “Bristol” bus in June. We rang at Avebury, Bromham and Lacock where we paused for a picnic lunch and a wander round. The bus driver then had to negotiate some very narrow country lanes on the way to and from Bremhill. We arrived at Calne in time for a fortifying visit to the local tearoom before our final ring on what proved to be the most challenging bells of the day.

Nine teams representing seven towers entered the branch striking competition at Longcot. Shrivenham were the eventual winners of the Greenley Shield, with Uffington judged most improved band. Shrivenham went on to represent the branch at the Guild 6 bell competition and were delighted to be placed second.

Faringdon hosted an entertaining branch quiz night in October. Thanks to Caroline and I for Phillips for setting the questions, and to Cheryl Watson and Doreen Leslie for providing a superb Ploughman's Supper.

Ending on a sadder note, we rang a quarter peal of Cambridge Major in memory of Carolyn Baxter, who died in August, having been unwell for some time. Carolyn rang with her family at Uffington where her husband Hugh is Tower Captain.

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

In May this year it was the turn of Witney and Woodstock to host the ODG's AGM. There was ringing during the day at Bladon and Witney with the service and meeting at Woodstock. With so much to organise, it was good to see everyone rally round in support. Although a team effort, special mention must go to Sylvia Stevenson for taking charge of the teas and ensuring that the catering went smoothly.

Our Striking Competition was held at Stonesfield in June. We had five bands for the call changes and four for the method. John and Arthur White kindly offered to judge, and David and Marilyn Floyd were very welcome 'floating' understudies helping out where needed. The results were a draw between Stonesfield and Combe in the call changes and a win for Combe in the method. The judges' comments about what makes good striking were greatly appreciated and they had not been caught out when Stonesfield went straight into the method without the customary one minute's practice. Despite the poor weather, it was a very enjoyable evening.

Over the summer there were successful open tower events at Combe and Witney. The latter ran from 10am until 5pm and congratulations must go to Terry Hester and Mark Wastie for arranging this marathon event during which well over a hundred people visited the tower. There was ringing throughout the day, with rapturous applause after each ringing demonstration.

Lorna Smale organised the Branch Outing to Bristol in October. Switched to the autumn because of difficulties with the arrangements, it remained a mystery tour right up till the last week. Everything came together on the day with five enjoyable towers available, most within walking distance around the city centre. The day was very well attended and many said it was one of the best. [*A photograph of members on the outing is on the back cover – Ed.*]

Anthony Williamson

Points from Peals

Following the Guild AGM and the election of the new master, Robert Newton, a peal was specially arranged at Longcot to welcome Robert into his new post and also to thank the retiring master, Jon Chamberlain, for his hard work and commitment.

A number of personal milestones were reached over the past six months: Tim Pett celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first peal, which he rang at Gressenhall, Norfolk on 13th August 1958. To mark the occasion Tim organised a return visit to this recently augmented ring of ten, ringing the peal on the same bell that he rang fifty years ago. On another note, Tim has also rung peals in a thousand different towers, which was achieved earlier this year with a peal at Tanglely, Hampshire.

Congratulations to Mike Hatchett who rang his 1,000th peal. The conductor, Bill Butler, also called Mike's first peal at Horton, Bucks on 26th August 1952. Congratulations also to Bobbie May who rang her 750th peal, which was coincidentally also her 500th peal with Bill Butler.

This year marked the centenary of the first peal of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, which was rung at St Mary le Tower, Ipswich on 15th August 1908. Although no tower bell peals were rung for the Guild to commemorate this event, a peal in the method was rung on hand bells.

In terms of anniversaries, a peal was rung at Warkleigh, Devon, by friends of Ron and Anne Thorne to celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Peals were also specially arranged and rung to celebrate the Golden Wedding anniversary of Marion and Alan Ainsworth of Amersham, and a peal was rung to congratulate Hilarie and Christopher Rogers on their Silver Wedding anniversary. Geoff Hopkinson, tower captain at Beaconsfield, celebrated his 70th birthday in July and a peal was also arranged to mark this event.

Other footnotes relate the 500th peal on the bells at St. Laurence, Reading and a peal to mark the appointment of the new incumbent at Aston Clinton, Revd Elizabeth Moxley.

Sadly, a number of members have passed away recently. John Rance, of Binfield, Berks, was the longest serving member of the Oxford Diocesan Guild, having been elected in 1930. It was therefore fitting that Guild members rang a peal to his memory on the day of his funeral.

Jean Darmon, a member of Amersham tower for some 30 years from the 1960s to the 1980s, rang many handbell peals for the Guild. A towerbell peal was rung at Amersham and ringers who had rung handbell peals with her on many occasions dedicated a handbell peal to her memory.

A peal was also rung as a tribute to the life of Chris Rowson who died on May 14th. Chris called the first peal of Bristol Maximus in hand on March 29th 1972; the same composition was used for the peal and two members of the original band, Bernard Groves and David Moore also took part.

Claire F. Roulstone

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Miss Louise Marshall

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Diary of Events for 2008/09

*	Subject to confirmation	AGM	Annual General Meeting	AP	Advanced Practice
BP	Branch Practice	EP	Elementary Practice	HY	Half Yearly Meeting
QM	Quarterly Meeting	RCP	Ringling Centre Practice	SC	Striking Competition
SM	Surprise Major	SP	Surprise Practice	CM	Committee Meeting

NOVEMBER 2008

Sat	1	Banbury		Steeple Aston Course	
Tues	4	Bicester	BP	Islip (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	6	Chipping Norton	BP	Hook Norton (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	7	Newbury	BP	Lambourn (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	7	Witney & Woodstock	BP	North Leigh	
Sat	8	Central Bucks	BP	Winslow, Bucks	6.30 – 8.30
Sat	8	Banbury	SP	Adderbury	
Sat	8	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (8)*	7 – 9pm
Tues	11	Central Bucks	BP	North Marston (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	14	Old North Berks	BP	Appleton (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	15	Sonning Deanery	CM	St. Paul's, Wokingham (8)	5.00 – 7.30
			BP		7.30 – 9.00
Sat	15	Old North Berks		Barn Dance, Blewbury Village Hall	
Sat	15	Chiltern	BP	Stoke Mandeville	7.00 – 9.00
Sat	15	Oxford City	BP	Stedman Triples, Witney (8)	10.00
			AGM	Iffley (6)	4.30
Sat	15	North Bucks	BP	Joint Practice, Downs Barn	7.30
Mon	17	Bicester	BP	Triples/Maj Practice Bicester (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	20	Central Bucks	BP	Haddenham (8)	7.45 – 9.00
Fri	21	Banbury	BP	Mollington	
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Dorney (6)	7 – 9pm
Sat	22	Guild		ODG Autumn General Committee Meeting, Brightwell ODG 10-bell striking competition, Wallingford	
Tues	25	Vale of White Horse	BP	Buckland	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	26	Witney & Woodstock	BP	South Leigh	

DECEMBER 2008

Tues	2	Witney & Woodstock	BP	Yarnton (may be on 9 th Dec.)	
Wed	3	Chipping Norton	BP	Charlbury (6)	7.00 – 8.30
Wed	3	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	5	Newbury	BP	Shaw (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	5	Oxford City	BP	with Wheatley	7.30
Sat	6	Banbury	CS	Deddington	6.30
Mon	8	Banbury	BP	Bodicote	
Tues	9	Central Bucks	BP	North Marston (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	10	Old North Berks	BP	Cholsey (8)	8.00 – 9.30
Sat	13	Central Bucks	BP	Cuddington (8)	6.30 – 8.30
Sat	13	Banbury	SP	Banbury	
Sat	13	EBSB		Christmas Social, Burnham (8)	*
Sat	13	North Bucks		Christmas Celebration, Whaddon	4.30
Mon	15	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	18	Central Bucks	BP	Haddenham (8)	7.45 – 9.00
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	Monks Risborough	7.00 – 9.00
Sat	20	Sonning Deanery	BP	St Michael's, Sandhurst (6), (with mince pies)	10.30 – 12.00
Fri	26	Banbury	BP	Deddington	10.30 – 12.00
Mon	29	EBSB		Post-Christmas Ringing Outing	Daytime

JANUARY 2009

Thur	1	Banbury	BP	Banbury	10.30 – 12
Thur	1	Old North Berks	BP	West Hanney (6)	10.45 – 12.30
Fri	2	Newbury	BP	*Kintbury (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	8	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	9	Banbury	BP	Tadmarton	
Sat	10	Central Bucks	BP	Gt. Horwood (6), and dinner	6.30
Sat	10	Banbury	SP	Bloxham	
Sat	10	EBSB	SP	Hughenden (8)	7 – 9
Sat	10	Oxford City	BP	Kidlington (8)	10.00
Fri	16	North Bucks	BP	Bletchley	7.30 *
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Barkham (4)	10 – 12
Mon	19	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	23	EBSB	BP	Higher Number Practice, Amersham (12)	7.45 – 9.15
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Dorchester-on-Thames	7 – 8.30
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	Iver (8)	7 – 9
Sat	24	Oxford City	BP	Kirtlington (8)	10.00
Sat	24	Newbury		Training, Thatcham	2 – 4

FEBRUARY 2009

Fri	6	Newbury	BP	*Peasemore (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	6	Bicester	BP	Ambrosden (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	7	Banbury	SP	Bodicote	
Wed	11	Banbury	BP	Banbury	
Sat	14	Central Bucks	AGM	Wing (6)	2pm
Sat	14	EBSB	SP	Advanced Surprise spliced 5+ Stoke Poges (8)	7 – 9
Sat	14	Oxford City	BP	Headington (8)	10.00
Mon	16	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Tues	17	Old North Berks	BP	Abingdon, St Helen (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	20	North Bucks	BP	Emberton	7.30
Sat	21	Sonning	BP & AGM	All Saints, Wokingham (8)	
Sat	21	Bicester	AGM	Bletchington	10.30am
Mon	22-	Newbury		Quarter peal week	
- Sat	28				
Fri	27	EBSB	BP	Higher Number Practice, Amersham (12)	7.45 – 9.15
Sat	28	Newbury		Training, Thatcham	2 – 4
Sat	28	EBSB	CM & BP	Committee Meeting, followed by BP at Chalfont St Giles (8)	6.30 7 – 9
Sat	28	South Oxon	AGM	Warborough	

MARCH 2009

Mon	2	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	6	Newbury	BP	Aldermaston (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	7	Newbury	AGM	Kintbury (8)	3pm
Sat	7	Chipping Norton	AGM	Burford	*
Sat	7	North Bucks	AGM	Hanslope	3.30 *
Mon	9	Banbury	BP	Cropredy	
Sat	14	Banbury		Branch Dinner	
Sat	14	Guid		Spring General Committee Meeting, Sonning Deanery	
Sat	14	EBSB	SP	Bray (8)	7 – 9
Thur	19	Banbury	SP	Steeple Aston	
Sat	21	Old North Berks	AGM	Radley (6 bell striking comp) (service, tea & AGM)	3.15 – 4.15 4.30 – 8.00
Sat	21	Oxford City		Branch Outing, Gloucestershire	
Mon	23	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Tetsworth	7 – 8.30
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Clewer (6)	7 – 9

Sat	28	Newbury		Training, Thatcham	2 – 4
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APRIL 2009

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	*Compton (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	4	Guild		ODG Radley Course	
Sat	4	Banbury	SP	Great Tew	
Sat	11	Guild		ODG Handbell Day	
Tues	14	Bicester	BP	Souldern (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Mon	20	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Wed	22	Old North Berks	BP	West Hendred (6)	7.30 – 8.30
Sat	25	Banbury	AGM	Hanwell	
Sat	25	South Oxon	SC	Brightwell Baldwin	7 – 8.30
Sat	25	EBSB	AGM &	AGM followed by	6pm
			BP	Branch Practice at Denham (8)	until 9pm
Sat	25	Oxford City	BP	6 Bell TBC	10.00
Sat	25	Newbury		Kintbury (8) – ringing	4 – 5.00
				tower reps. meeting	5 – 7.00

MAY 2009

Fri	1	Newbury	BP	*Thatcham (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Mon	4	Guild	SC	ODG 8-bell Striking	
				Competition, Banbury Branch	
Mon	4	Guild		ODG Annual Ringing Day,	
				Banbury Branch	
Wed	6	Bicester	BP	Charlton (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	9	EBSB		Branch Summer Outing	
Sat	9	Oxford City	HY	Half-Year Meeting, Marston	
Mon	11	Old North Berks	BP	Drayton (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	14	Banbury	SP	Cropredy	
Sat	16	Guild	AGM	Guild AGM, Central Bucks	
				Branch	
Mon	18	Bicester	BP	Triples/ Major Practice, Bicester	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	21	Banbury	BP	Adderbury	
Sat	23	Oxford City		Branch Picnic	
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Lane End (6)	7 – 9
Sat	30	Oxford City	SC	6-bell Striking Competition	*

JUNE 2009

Thur	4	Bicester	BP	Stratton Audley (5)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	5	Newbury	BP	*Chieveley (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Mon	8	Old North Berks	BP	Steventon (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	13	EBSB	SC	6-bell competition followed by	5pm
				Branch Practice at Fulmer (6)	7 – 9
Sat	13	Oxford City		Branch Summer Outing	
Sat	27	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	7 – 9
Sat	27	South Oxon	BP	Thame	*

JULY 2009

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	*Beenham (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	4	Oxford City	BP	10-bell practice, St Thomas'	19.00
Sat	11	EBSB		Novices' Outing	
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	West Wycombe (8)	7 – 9
Sat	25	South Oxon	BP	Lewknor	7 – 8.30*

AUGUST 2009

Fri	7	Newbury	BP	Hungerford (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	8	EBSB	SP	Burnham (8)	7 – 9
Tues	11	Old North Berks	BP	Brightwell (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Chesham (6)	7 – 9

SEPTEMBER 2009

Fri	4	Newbury	BP	*Shaw (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Thur	10	Old North Berks	BP	Chilton (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	12	EBSB	BP	Cookham (10)	7 – 9
Sat	26	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (6)	7 – 9
Sat	26	South Oxon	BP	Ewelme	7 – 8.30

OCTOBER 2009

Fri	2	Newbury	BP	*Newbury (10)	7.30 – 9.00
Mon	12	Old North Berks	BP	Sutton Courtenay (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	10	South Oxon		Autumn Outing	*
Sat	10	EBSB	SC	Lorna Newton Final and	5pm
			HY	Half Yearly Meeting and	6.15
			BP	BP at Chalfont St Peter (6)	7 – 9
Sat	10	Oxford City		Branch Outing, Bedfordshire	
Sat	24	South Oxon		Autumn Meeting, Aston Rowant	4.30
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (8)	7 – 9

NOVEMBER 2009

Fri	6	Newbury	BP	*Midgham (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Fri	13	Old North Berks	BP	Letcombe Regis (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	14	Oxford City	AGM	Branch AGM, Wheatley	
Sat	14	EBSB		Quarter Peal Day	
Sat	28	Guild	CM	Guild General Committee meeting, Great Milton	*
Sat	28	Guild	SC	Guild 10-bell striking competition, Great Milton	*
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Hambleden (8)	7 – 9

DECEMBER 2009

Fri	4	Newbury	BP	*Bucklebury (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	5	South Oxon	BP	Benson	7 – 8.30
Sat	5	Oxford City	BP	10-bell practice, Mary Magdalen	*
Tues	8	Old North Berks	BP	Wantage (8)	7.30 – 9.00
Sat	12	EBSB		Christmas Social, Penn (6)	
Sat	29	EBSB		Post Christmas Branch Outing	

**Oxford Diocesan Guild of
Church Bell Ringers**

Established 17th January 1881

RADLEY ONE-DAY COURSE

Based at Radley (near Abingdon)

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or send A5 s.a.e. to:

**24 Nursery View, Faringdon, SN7 8SJ
Tel: 01367 242647**

**Closing date for applications is
31st January 2009
after which places will be offered (limited to 25)**



Witney & Woodstock branch members on their outing to Bristol, October 2008



St. Andrew's, Sonning and friends on their tower outing, October 2008