

ODD BOB



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



Holy Trinity, West Hendred, Old North Berks branch

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From your Editor...

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

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

Contributions for the next issue, please, by the end of April 2012.

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

Thursday 8th September is a date that will long remain in my memory. It began with an early 'phone call from Hilarie Rogers to tell me of the sudden passing of Ann Mayou. Not long afterwards, I discovered by email that Frank White had died. It is said that things come in threes and, sure enough, Hilarie was soon 'phoning again to tell me that Jim Diserens had had a fatal heart attack while he and Helen were visiting Brian, their son, in Germany. These three members have all made significant contributions to the Guild in various ways.

Ann was our Children's Officer for the last five years, a post for which she was ideally suited. She was a retired head teacher, took part in school inspection teams and, at the time of her death, was Chair of Governors at Lord Williams' School in Thame. She always kept us fully informed of the developing legislation regarding child protection and was calm and positive in the face of the inevitable changes, not least when a new government caused the proposed simplification of the system to be postponed, at best.

Frank was one of our Vice Presidents. For many years he was a very well known figure around the Guild. His abilities as a craftsman and bell hanger were widely recognised throughout the ringing fraternity and the trade. Many of the rings of bells around this diocese and beyond are such a pleasure to ring because of Frank's skill and attention to detail. Having been unwell for some time and well into his nineties, his death was far from unexpected, but how we will miss his straight talking and ready wit!

Jim had been very influential, particularly in the Reading area, throughout his long ringing career. He was a member of the General Committee for many years and served the Guild as a Central Council Representative, Deputy Master, and as a Steward for two 'stints', the second for ten years ending in 2006. In his day, he was an accomplished heavy bell ringer, often ringing the tenor to peals of multi-spliced S Maximus. As it travelled the country, the regular band of which Jim was a part was affectionately known as 'The Flying Circus'. Jim rang in the

first handbell peal of Bristol S Maximus. He also produced a range of peal compositions, some of which, such as his one-part eight-spliced S Major, are widely regarded as classics.

I extend our deepest sympathy to the families of these three members, all of whom will be sadly missed.

As a firm believer in the value of striking competitions, I offer my congratulations to all the bands that entered our eight and six bell contests this year and produced such creditable ringing. It is good to see some different bands in the top few places, which is a good sign of the strength of ringing throughout the diocese. What I find a little worrying, however, is that the number of entries yet again did not warrant the use of the 'semi-final' towers that had been organised. In the case of the eight bell event, it takes out two towers that could otherwise be used for the Ringing Day. In the case of the six bell event, nine entries indicate that only 60% of the Guild's branches were represented. It could be that there is reluctance to take part, perhaps because the band members feel they do not stand a chance of winning. If the aim of every band is merely to win, then all but one band will fail to do so. If the aim is for every band to do its best, there is a chance that all will succeed.

Rewarding as it may be to receive trophies and certificates, the true benefit to the ringers involved is to be focused as a team in producing the very best of which it is capable. Practising for such events does much to raise the standard of ringing generally, and this applies equally well to local and national contests, and everything in between.

Robert Newton

My early ringing experience

[This article was submitted just too late for the previous Odd Bob. Allan is a keen and regular member of the Waltham St. Lawrence band and is making steady progress in the art. Ed.]

There's more to this Bell Ringing lark than at first meets the eye!

I started my training in church bell ringing back in November 2010 after Tony Boyd sent out an invitation. Having now had several practices at Waltham St. Lawrence church (near Maidenhead), I can almost ring a bell correctly. Under the watchful eye of Derek, the tower captain and my teacher, I have progressed from the Back or 'Tail' Stroke pull, through to the Hand or 'Sally' Stroke.

The other bell ringers are all very patient and friendly and encourage me at every attempt to improve my technique, to keep control of the bell rope, and to hone the skills required to go solo – which I hope to do very soon. It really is great fun trying to master the discipline, and I would encourage anyone to give it a try at their local bell tower.

We practice on Monday from 7.30 to 9pm, then retire to the pub (called *The Bell*) beside the church on the village 'green' for some socialising.

I have also learnt that the Bell Foundry in Whitechapel, London is the longest continuously running manufacturing company in Britain, and has been making bells for more than 440 years.

Many churches are having difficulty in finding people to regularly provide the necessary man or woman power to ring for services and other special occasions. Will you come and join us in this most enjoyable pastime, so that we will always have the pleasure of hearing church bells being rung?

Allan Crisp, Novice Bell Ringer

Netherlands comes to Buckinghamshire

In the depths of last winter, an email came my way via the enquiries section of the Central Council website. It was from a Dutch lady asking if it would be possible to see some church bell ringing whilst a group of them was in this country for a week in the summer.

Thus began a six-month correspondence, culminating in eight ringers waiting slightly anxiously for the arrival of a Dutch coach and 32 passengers, on a lovely summer's day! Would they arrive? Would they be interested? Would everyone be safe? Would they understand what we were saying?

Well, from the moment their coach drew up to the moment they left, they were spellbound by the whole thing! I think we often forget that people don't always know how bells are rung, how the patterns of sound are made, and this is particularly the case for people with only one ring of bells in their own land!

This was a group on a week's tour of the Buckinghamshire area, visiting places like Eton and Waddesdon Manor, and places where Midsomer Murders had been filmed. We rang rounds as they disembarked from the coach and were welcomed into Bierton church by Linda, a novice ringer from my own tower, who happens to be Dutch. We chose Bierton because it has a central tower and the bells are rung from the ground floor at the crossing, so the ringers are in full view.

After welcoming them, I gave a brief demonstration of how a bell is rung, using the Master's model bell, and John rang a bell so they could see. The gasps of amazement were audible, and this was repeated throughout the visit. They had an opportunity to chat informally with us (Linda was a great favourite!), and we did a couple more short pieces of ringing. Then Linda spoke for a few minutes in Dutch about her experiences learning to ring. Finally Robert gave a brief explanation of how the patterns are made up, with paper and pen, and when he joined up the line to make the hunting path of the treble it was as if he had pulled a rabbit out of a hat! They were such an appreciative audience.

To finish with, six of them came to the front and with a handbell each walked through plain hunt – we were all willing them to get it right and when rounds came up we all clapped. A course of Bob Minor on handbells was rung by three of us as a finale, and they departed very reluctantly to the sound of more rounds on the church bells. Many of them said it was the highlight of their week, and my Dutch correspondent has asked if we can do it again for next year's group.

Thanks to Bierton for allowing us to use their church, and the ladies who made the coffee; also to Pete, Mike, Arthur, John, Maureen, Linda and Robert for giving up most of a morning to make this happen. I am looking forward to next year!

Hilarie Rogers, ODG General Secretary

Central Council bell restoration articles

The Bell Restoration Committee now has a variety of articles available for use in bell restoration projects. These currently include:

- General article to introduce BRC (this is a good starter article)
- Fundraising for bell restoration (lots of ideas)
- Getting the best from your bell hanger (comparing tenders and making the best decision)
- Gift Aid
- Starting your project
- Faculty applications
- Organising your dedication service

An article is in preparation to assist in applying for Heritage Lottery funding and more will follow.

If you are interested in obtaining an article please contact me on jay.bunyan@btinternet.com

Below is the text of the general, 'starter' article.

Jay Bunyan, for the Bell Restoration Committee

Introducing the Central Council's Bell Restoration Committee

The Bell Restoration Committee is one of the busiest of the Central Council's committees although a lot of its work goes on behind the scenes.

The Committee's main role is:

Promoting the restoration and provision of rings of bells, by investigating and sharing information on sources of funds and other resources, and on fund management, charitable status and Gift Aid.

Administering such funds as are from time to time available for distribution by the Council for bell restoration. Some £100,000 has been given in the past 10 years

Information is offered on:

- Establishing a fund
- Registering a fund as a Charity
- Fund Raising
- Tax efficient ways of giving
- Duties of Trustees
- Fund raising ideas
- Charitable Trusts that may be sympathetic to your cause (via Funderfinder)
- A range of items for sale that may appeal to the general public
- Ways of involving your local community in the project
- How to get advice on Fund Management and Fund Administration
- Where to go for other help

The Committee also offers practical help:

- **By loaning** appeal brochures
- **By providing** a model Gift Aid donation form

- **By speaking:**
 - to gatherings of ringers,
 - to PCCs
 - to those involved in fund raising or bell restoration
- What else does the committee do?
- Publishes information on bell restoration topics in *The Ringing World*, or on the Central Council website and through Central Council publications. The booklet *Organising a Bell Restoration Project* is being revised and the new version will be available shortly
 - Provides speakers at conferences and meetings about bell restoration funds and associated subjects
 - Raises awareness of the Central Council's own Bell Restoration Fund, particularly to attract legacies for restorations
- Further information may also be obtained from the Central Council website at cccbr.org.uk.

Ringer Availability Register

[This is a shortened version of a Branch's promotion of their Ringer's Register or Standby Scheme. I know some other Branches have similar schemes. Ed.]

Has the rise in weekday weddings caused you problems?

Do school holidays in the wedding season deplete your ringers?

At the Central Bucks Branch AGM earlier this year we decided the answer to these questions was YES and that we would set up a register of people willing to be on a central 'Standby' list particularly with mid week ringing in mind.

Now I know many people will say that there are ringers at towers near to them that they can call on and, yes, these are always likely to be the first port of call. However, my experience is that this is not always enough, especially for towers with more than 6 bells and most ringers out at work or school.

I have set out below a version of the advertisement that we put in our Branch newsletter. In practice, pared down versions of the information are usually submitted. We intend to put the register online but only if we can protect access and get the permission of all concerned.

The register is not used a huge amount BUT it is a real boon to the desperate. I try to encourage towers that use it to come up with a person to add to the list. I haven't yet approached the neighbouring branches of Chiltern and North Bucks to see if any ringers at the 'boundary' towers are willing to be included but that may yet happen.

I would be interested to learn of other schemes, past or present, and any tips to make ours better.

SCHEME SAMPLE ADVERTISEMENT

SHORT OF RINGERS FOR AN EVENT? Make contact for info on who might be available to help with: **tower, event, date, timing** & any other requirements. Note your ringer will NOT be chosen for you but the latest list sent or talked through to you.

e.g. Little Claydon, Wednesday 31st June, Wedding, starts 12noon ringing from 11.45-12 and 12.30-1pm approx. Anticlockwise, hoping for good Grandsire ringer if poss.

WILLING TO HELP? To sign up to the list if you are willing to help out with weddings & funerals either mid week or weekend, please let the organiser know your details ready to pass to anyone in need. Necessary info is:

Name, usual tower, phone number and/or email, typical weekly availability, known out of action weeks plus anything else you want to mention (e.g. bell weight limit, ringing prowess, access issues)

e.g. Sally Clapper, Little Claydon, sallyclapper@hotmail.com, 01296 123456 weekdays except Wednesday, Saturdays. Bells no heavier than 10cwt, usually rings 6 bells. Car.

ORGANISER : Name, Phone Number, Email address

Diana Slevin CBB Secretary

Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund Report

The amount of new money raised up to 30th October 2011 is £6,929.26. This is ahead of the amount raised at the comparable time last year and if maintained will give rise to another good year of fund raising. This amount is composed of:

- Donations from branches totalling £2,293.64
- Donations from 5 towers totalling £443.10
- Donations from 6 P.C.C.s totalling £221
- Individual donations totalling £527 (plus gift aid tax to be recovered)
- Annual Ringing Day proceeds of £1,408.58
- Grant from the Guild of £500
- Collection from the AGM service at Islip £52
- Share of Festival Service collection at Christ Church £115
- Donation from Guild Handbell Day £43
- Profit on course arranged by Towers & Belfries Committee £25
- HMRC tax refunded on gift aided donations £468.29
- Various miscellaneous donations totalling £215
- Donations to date in memory of Frank White (£40) and Jim Diserens (£25)
- Guild contributions to administrative expenses (50% of peal fees) £552.65.

The proceeds from the annual Ringing Day were very encouraging and thanks are due to all who stewarded towers and supported this event in any way.

To date only one grant has been paid to Arborfield (£1,275). I anticipate that at least one other project will be completed and the grant paid by the end of the year.

At their last meeting in September, the Trustees approved provisional grants to Great Shefford (£2,930); Oxford SMV (£2,830) and Steeple Aston (£1,580). These grants are expected to be due for payment during 2011 and 2012. The Trustees received an update on the project at High Wycombe. This is proving to be a complex project where the details still remain to be finalised. The Trustees have accrued £14,000 towards this very major project. At the time of the meeting there were two application forms which had been issued but not yet returned. Since the meeting I have been informed that one project is unlikely to proceed within the three year period of the provisional grant offer as the church has to meet major unexpected costs of higher priority work on the fabric.

The Trustees continue to work closely with the Diocesan professional advisor to maximise the investment income that is available to pay grants as well as to maintain the overall value of the investment portfolio during these challenging times. I am sure that it will be appreciated that this is by no means an easy exercise! Investment income received by 30th September 2011 totalled £15,298.01 compared with my forecast income for the year of £20,000.

The Trustees are very appreciative of all the financial support of the Bell Fund, in particular during these difficult financial times.

Application forms for regular donations by bank standing order (or for single donations), with an associated Gift Aid declaration to allow the income tax to be recovered, are available from me or by downloading from the Guild website. The Trustees commend this tax efficient form of financial support and thank those who already donate in this manner.

Brian Gatward, Hon. Treasurer

Restoration Fund Report

As of the 30th September the fund has received £996.10, which is about a third of what it had received by the same time last year. A legacy of £5,000 specifically for work at one tower has also been received. The analysis of the income is as follows:

- Donations from 4 branches totalling £323.50
- Donations from 1 tower of £80
- The Guild donation of £500
- Individual donations totalling £35
- A specific legacy of £5,000
- Interest from investments amounting to £57.60

Three grants have been paid out this year to North Marston (£470), Arborfield (£195) and Shinfield (£350). There are no outstanding grant applications, only one unpaid awaiting an inspection at Bray (£141).

The Trustees would like to thank the towers, branches and individuals for their financial support of the Restoration Fund and please don't forget, as it is a charitable fund, donations can be gift aided!

Stuart Gibson, Hon. Treasurer

Education matters

The Michaelmas Course in September again showed strong demand, and we ran four groups from Surprise Minor up to advanced Surprise Major. In the pipeline is the basic course at Steeple Aston in October and a 10-bell course at Aston Clinton in December. We also plan to run a training meeting in February 2012, where we can share and discuss ideas and approaches with people interested in training from all branches.

We have been working closely with North Bucks Branch to develop a major programme of teacher training in preparation for the Branch's *Big Ring Pull* recruitment drive. The training will be in three stages with an initial ITTS course from The Ringing Foundation in October and a day of intensive supervised practice run by the Guild in November. This will be followed by a period of mentored practice run by the Branch over the months between then and the recruitment event in February.

The 2011 Young Ringers Award scheme is now in its final months. We are planning a maintenance event for the participants in November. Please continue to encourage any of the participants known to you (and any other young ringers). The awards will be presented at the Guild AGM in May.

John Harrison, Education Sub-Committee Chairman

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

In the period since the April report the scheme has continued to gain ground with the number of current awards now at twenty five – the highest ever. The number of expired awards is now eleven. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is now at seventy-three, about sixteen per cent of the towers listed in the annual report. There have now been seventy-eight inspections (of which twenty-one were preliminaries), resulting in fifty six awards (twenty-six Gold, twenty Silver, and eleven Bronze).

Congratulations also to the bands and steeplekeepers of five towers who gained awards for the first time: Henley-on-Thames and Wantage, who gained Silver Awards (Wantage from a preliminary inspection); Denham and Freeland who gained Gold awards, and to Letcombe Regis who gained a Bronze. Special mention should be made of Denham who, after a three-year programme of refurbishment by the local band, have joined Chalfont St Giles and Ellesborough in gaining a Gold Award with a 100% mark – congratulations to all concerned.

Ten out of the fifteen branches now have towers in the “current awards” list, with EBSB maintaining its pre-eminent position from Reading (the gap is closing!). The details are as follows:

Banbury	1	(Silver)
Central Bucks	1	(Gold)
Chiltern	1	(Gold)
EBSB	6	(Gold x 4, Silver, Bronze)
Newbury	3	(Gold, Silver x 2)
Old North Berks	3	(Gold, Silver, Bronze)

Reading	4	(Gold x 2, Silver x 2)
Sonning Deanery	2	(Gold, Silver)
South Oxon	3	(Gold, Silver, Bronze)
Witney & Woodstock	1	(Gold)

If your tower is in one of the remaining five branches, how about trying to get your branch included by gaining an award?

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 Odd Bob), 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.

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Chalfont St Giles	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.03.12
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury Branch	Expires 30.04.12
Cookham (Holy Trinity)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.05.12
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB Branch	Expires 30.06.12
Harwell (St Matthew)	Old North Berks	Expires 30.09.12
Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading Branch	Expires 30.11.12
Reading St. Giles	Reading Branch	Expires 31.12.12
Winslow (St Laurence)	Central Bucks Branch	Expires 31.01.13

Chalgrove (SMV)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 31.01.13
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 28.02.13
Ellesborough (SS Peter & Paul)	Chiltern Branch	Expires 28.02.13
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 31.03.13
Denham (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.08.13

Silver Award

Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 31.10.11
Hungerford (St Lawrence)	Newbury Branch	Expires 30.11.11
South Stoke (St Andrew)	Reading Branch	Expires 31.03.12
Clewer (St Andrew)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.05.12
Peasmore (St Barnabas)	Newbury Branch	Expires 30.06.12
Thame (St Mary V.)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 30.11.12
Cropredy (S.M.V.)	Banbury Branch	Expires 31.12.12
Henley (S.M.V.)	Reading Branch	Expires 31.08.13
Wantage (SS Peter & Paul)	Old North Berks	Expires 31.08.13

Bronze Grade

Benson (St Helen)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 31.10.11
Fulmer (St James)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.05.12
Letcombe Regis (St Andrew)	Old North Berks	Expires 30.11.13

Expired Awards

Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon Branch	Expired 30.09.05
Dedington (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 Branch	Expired 31.12.07
Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.12.08
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expired 31.05.09
Purley (St Mary V.)	Reading Branch	Expired 31.01.10
Tadmarton (St Nicholas)	Banbury Branch	Expired 31.01.10
White Waltham (St Mary)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.03.10

John Davidge

Towers and Belfries Committee Report

Since the last report in February, the committee has met three times with an average attendance of eight. Fourteen inspections/visits have been carried out, details of which are shown below.

- Freeland (Tower Maintenance Award inspection – Gold)
- Wokingham All Saints (Tower Maintenance Award inspection – Gold)
- Arborfield (Grant Inspection)
- Shinfield (Grant Inspection)
- Clewer (Internal sound control)
- Cookham (Clapper alignment)
- Bray (Emergency inspection – broken gudgeon)

- Letcombe Regis (Preliminary Tower Maintenance Award inspection – Bronze)
- Henley-on-Thames (Advice on rehangng, Tower Maintenance Award – Silver)
- Aldworth (Grant inspection)
- Buckland (Internal Sound control)
- Uffington (Internal Sound Control)
- Wantage (Internal Sound Control, Preliminary Tower Maintenance Award inspection – Silver)
- Hambledon (Poor going bell)

The committee has requested clarification from the DAC as to whether a faculty should be required to replace a broken gudgeon (as this is just a like-for-like repair) and is awaiting a response.

A successful maintenance course was held in June based at and around Long Crendon. Twenty-one people attended and the feedback was very positive. Another course is planned for November, this time in the Abingdon area. A rope splicing course is also planned (for the Spring).

At the request of the Master, the Chairman attended a DAC advisers meeting run by the Council for the Care of Churches. Whilst most of the meeting was concerned with the conservation and repair of ancient bell frames, and showcased the work of Hayward Mills (now Taylor’s) there were two points made which deserve wider publicity. These were:

1. Virtually all bells stolen were taken from storage or display.
2. Thefts of metal (bells, lead, copper etc) stolen from churches while scaffolding was in place, would not be covered by insurance.

At the request of the Education Committee, their bell maintenance booklet has been revised and brought up-to-date, and work is in hand to do the same for the Sound Control booklet.

John Davidge

Librarian’s Report

There have been six library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 84. These have been about:

- Two enquiries concerning Membership details
- Peal at Stratfield Mortimer rung in 1903
- Loan of book “100 Years of Oxford Diocesan Guild”
- Offices held by Eric Wood (of Drayton, Berks)
- Recordings of bells on Guild website

After the Ringing World Centenary celebration in March, a suggestion was made that a set of accounts of the day should be put together to create a record of the event. I agreed to gather the information, and eventually received about ten accounts altogether. I will print them out, and put them with a copy of the Service sheet and programme for the day to complete the record.

Sorting out of the miscellaneous and non-catalogued books and papers has reached the stage where I can place items on shelves and record them in the Guild library catalogue. The items are currently in boxes, but once catalogued will take up shelf room. In addition, the steady supply of new material takes up about six inches of shelf room per year. I am currently in the process of moving some items about in order to keep Ringing Worlds and Guild Annual Reports together. This all raises the question as to how much space there is available in the bookcases. The answer is, not a great deal, at least there will not be once the extra items are placed on the shelves. This suggests that another bookcase will need to be purchased before too long. I will write about this again when I have made further progress with the project.

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

For a number of years, the Guild has arranged Group Personal Accident Insurance cover for Guild members and those under instruction by a Guild member. Full details of the cover and benefits payable are on the ODG website: odg.org.uk/reports/odg_insurance_definition.php

2011 ODG 6-bell Striking Competition

The annual Guild 6-bell striking competition was this year hosted by the Reading Branch and the recently refurbished bells at Streatley were chosen to test the skill of the teams taking part.

The day and the venue were perfect for an afternoon of sitting in the sunshine and enjoying some of the best 6-bell ringing the Guild can produce as 9 teams, each representing their Branch, tried hard to impress the Judges.

Richard and Claire Yates from Towcester had agreed to be our judges and were able to sit in the dappled shade of a tree to listen to the teams ringing a test piece of 1 minutes rounds followed by 240 changes of their choice. In practice all the teams but one chose Grandsire Doubles as the method, most relying on 2 extends, but 1 team rang Morris's 240, which made listening more interesting.

An excellent tea of sandwiches, cakes and other savoury delights, accompanied by excellent, freshly brewed tea, was provided throughout the afternoon by the Goring and Streatley ringers.

Announcing the results Richard thanked the Guild for asking them to Judge the contest and reflected on his early ringing career in the Buckingham area. He went on to comment that with such a high standard of ringing as the competition demonstrated, the Guild was clearly in good shape. The ringing had generally been to a very high standard and was a great credit to all who had taken part. He was pleased to hear bands making full and effective use of the practice time by getting into changes and testing the odd-struckness of the bells in changes as well as in rounds. He proceeded to give his comments and score for each team in the order in which they rang.

Tower	Comments of the Judges	Faults	Place
Reading St Mary	Practice was not good – ringing too fast. Test piece slightly steadier, band used to ringing fast? Very few faults in initial rounds. Very good ringing throughout	13	1 st
Thatcham	Polished piece of ringing with a strong rhythm. Long spells with no faults. Rang more rounds than required	15	2 nd
High Wycombe	Test piece improved as it progressed and settled. The opening rounds were very accurate and established a good rhythm. A few minor method errors collected faults	19	3 rd =
Wantage	Measured and steady piece of ringing. Much clean ringing until the last 60 changes when odd clips and hesitations crept in and picked up faults	19	3 rd =
Sonning	Good ringing and a good rhythm. The ringing improved as it progressed. Most faults were in the initial rounds and the first 120 changes, and very few faults thereafter	23	5 th
Drayton St Leonard	Confident ringing with good rhythm. The first 30 changes contained the majority of the faults	29	6 th =
Farringdon	Measured ringing which improved as it progressed. The first half contained more faults than the 2 nd half. Occasional lateness of the tenor upset the rhythm	29	6 th =
Witney & Woodstock	Sedate pace with a good rhythm. Inaccuracies in the treble moving to 2nds place picked up faults	43	8 th
Aston Clinton	Rang more than 1 minute of rounds. The unfortunate mistake when moving from rounds to changes took a long time to recover. The ringing did not completely settle down after this trip	51	9 th

So the 6-bell trophy returns to Reading. Stephen Rossiter collected the Cup From Richard Yates and congratulations were given to Thatcham, High Wycombe and Wantage in coming 2nd and 3rd equal respectively.

Alan Marchbank, Deputy Master, thanked Richard and Claire for playing their part diligently and providing good, encouraging feedback. He also thanked the catering team who had provided the teas, and all the towers for entering and making it a very enjoyable afternoon.

Alan Marchbank

News from the Branches

Banbury

Although it seems quite a while ago, a number of towers in our branch rang to celebrate the Royal Wedding at the end of April. Steeple Aston had a visit from Radio Oxford and the bells were played live on air.

In June our Striking Competition took place at Tadmarton and there was an entry of eight teams. Our judge was Michael Uphill from London. There was a mixture of ringing methods chosen as well as call changes. Banbury were the winners, and the runners up were Bodicote and Steeple Aston. The competition is, weather permitting, usually followed by a barbecue. However, due to rather unpredictable weather, although we had the burgers and associated other delights, they had to be eaten indoors at the village hall.

A visit to Foxton Locks and surrounding towers was the venue for our annual outing at the end of July. Almost thirty ringers and friends met at the first tower at Welford (8) where we first enjoyed a cuppa and biscuits before we started to ring. This was followed by St Dionysius (10) at Market Harborough and then on to St Andrew's at Foxton (6). Our long break at Foxton Locks with Museum and Visitor Centre gave time to have lunch and a leisurely walk round, as well as important things like an ice cream, before driving on to St Michael's at Hazelbech (8). The last tower of the day was St Mary the Virgin at Badby (6) where some stayed on to enjoy an evening meal whereas others made their way home. We were blessed with good weather throughout the day.



Heather Hughes

Bicester

We managed to hold our striking competition on 3rd September for the first time for several years and combined it with a BBQ. Around 24 people (14 ringers and their families) gathered in Islip and we organised ourselves into three teams to compete for our impressive shield (and champagne). The competition was kindly and expertly judged by Lorna Smale and Brian Curtis from the Witney & Woodstock branch, and their decision was: 1st team C (Branch Officers) with 73%, 2nd team A (Bicester) with 61%, 3rd team B (Islip) with 58%. It was a fine evening from every point of view. The winning team's name was engraved on the Cliff East Shield within hours of the evening by our Guild representative, Keith Thomas – we must be the only Branch to have a resident expert!

Branch Practices and alternating monthly, notional Triples practices between Bicester and Islip have continued with some new methods (to us) tried during the summer. Branch ringers have helped out at other towers – particularly for weddings in Kirtlington, where there is no resident band, and Brill. Peter Nicholas reports that at Brill, ‘Ringing has been somewhat spasmodic this year due to there only being three ringers and our recruitment drives don’t seem to have the desired effect. However we carry on and have managed regular service ringing. Three blind mice anyone? Unfortunately one of the remaining three decided to retire from ringing in September so we are now down to two. This as you can imagine has its own problems, as we had a run of weddings in September and into October, so thank you to all our friends from Long Crendon, Woodeaton, Islip and Wheatley who helped us out with these. We couldn’t have done it without you!

A peal was successfully rung on September 25th at All Saints, Brill to celebrate the marriage of Fiona Stirling, daughter of the Vicar, and Ian Pamplin. We have rung several quarters throughout the year, with the local ringers attempting a variety of methods from Grandsire and Plain Bob through to Stedman and Cambridge!’

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

Since the last report the schemes we launched have been paying off. Mid week ringing has proved popular and a group of regulars lucky enough to be available mid week during the day has been established, with others joining in when they can. The standby register of ringers for weddings and funerals has come to the aid of a number of towers and it is great to be able to call for assistance.

We are looking for ways to attract more teams to take part in striking competitions. Our own 6-bell competition in June is always vulnerable to towers being committed to weddings and fetes and not being able to field teams. However at North Marston this year Aylesbury beat arch rivals Wing, and committee members past and present, lured no doubt by the promise of tea, had fun as a scratch team.

So we were delighted when a new team from Drayton Parslow took the plunge and joined the stalwarts to represent CBB at *The Orchard Cup* at the delightful ring at East Claydon in October. I am pleased to report that this inter-branch 6-bell striking competition with Chiltern Branch was again won by a Central Bucks tower. Aylesbury scooped the prize retaining the Cup for the fourth year.

For our outing in September we headed west and visited six great venues: Pebworth, Middle Littleton, Salford Priors, Fladbury, Cropthorne and Pershore Abbey. And we nearly made a tower grab in Evesham at lunchtime where a peal was about to start! This was a marathon for the first pick-ups, it being a 12 hour day but also an excellent day.

This is perhaps the point to say a big *Thank You* to all non CBB towers, ringers and judges who have helped and made CBB members very welcome.

The natural movement of ringers has seemed to have a particular effect this autumn. Several key branch players and good ringers are moving on to University and other pastures new. A particular mention must be made of Ryan Noble who, after only 5 years of ringing, left for University in September having become North Marston Tower Captain where he hosted the CBB striking competition. He has also run the CBB website, has been a Branch Steward and has organised the mammoth Branch Outing in September – and completed his 50th Peal. A peal of 5088 Winslow Surprise Major at Winslow, Bucks, was rung to mark Ryan’s departure for University [*see photo on back cover*].

We hope the natural balance means that some new ringers will move in to maintain equilibrium but above all we will have to work hard to recruit and develop new talent.

Diana Slevin

Chiltern

The Branch congratulates Mr Barry Cowper, on being elected to “Distinguished Membership” of the Guild in recognition of his long service. He has been very active in the Guild’s affairs and is currently a Trustee of the Guild, the Bell Fund and the Restoration Fund, and a member of the Guild’s Finance & General Purposes Committee. He is, of course, also Chairman of the Chiltern Branch – a post he has held for several years.

In the last edition of Odd Bob we welcomed the renewed interest of the members of St Michael & All Angels, Halton in the Branch’s activities, and elected four members from that tower. Unfortunately an inspection of the bells has identified the need for some significant maintenance, so the bells there are out of action until further notice – hopefully not for long. Ringing has also been suspended at St Giles, Cheddington, when severe rot was found around the trapdoor between the middle floor and the ringing chamber. This required removal of the ringing chamber ceiling, which also removed the support to the rope guides, and there is an on-going risk of debris falling during ringing. Hopefully all the necessary work will be included in the planned restoration, although there will no doubt be time and financial implications. A third setback has occurred – at Holy Cross, Slapton, where they had hoped to start a major restoration in 2012. Sufficient sponsorship and other financial support for the necessary work on the bells has not been forthcoming, and under the prevailing financial conditions generally, and at Holy Cross in particular, the PCC has decided to suspend the bell restoration project for the foreseeable future.

The Chiltern Branch has an annual (friendly, although the winner holds the Orchard Cup, which was donated by the late Fred Orchard!) striking competition against the Central Bucks Branch. It is hosted by each Branch alternately and this year was held at East Claydon. In the past the competition was won pretty regularly by Aston Clinton (Chiltern), but recently the Aylesbury (Central Bucks) team has made all the running; they won again this year, just beating Aston Clinton. With the help of a couple of friends, Little Missenden entered a hybrid band and were pleased to come third, again by a fairly small margin.

This event is always followed by the Chiltern Branch Half-yearly Meeting, this year with a fairly short agenda, which happily included the election of two new members to the Guild.

2012 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Branch, and we are looking for appropriate ways to celebrate. Hopefully a decision on how to mark the occasion appropriately will be taken by the time of our AGM in April; however, if anyone (in Chiltern Branch or elsewhere) has suggestions on how best to mark such a milestone we would be pleased to consider them. This will be in addition to ringing for the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen's Accession, and for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, details of which are still being determined. No doubt there will be various other events of national and local significance, as well as the routine tasks of service ringing, so it could be (another) busy year.

Brian Robson

Chipping Norton

Just over 50% of towers in the Branch marked the Royal Wedding with celebratory ringing and over the last few months some Branch members have reached significant anniversaries.

David and Margaret Hopewell had their Ruby Wedding in April, and John and Mavis MacVicker had their Diamond Wedding in May. This was marked with a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples rung at Shipton-u-Wychwood and conducted by Graham Clifton, Mavis's nephew. The band joined the Branch practice later the same evening at Asthall.

Congratulations also to Claire and Cliff Tarrant on their Silver Wedding in October.

A quarter peal of Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles was rung to mark the 80th birthday of Tony Picking at Fulbrook in August, with his wife Tricia achieving her first quarter peal. Some other Branch members have reached that same milestone, including John Benfield of Chipping Norton.

At the younger end of the age group, we welcome Imogen, daughter of Selina and Jonathan Muller, ringers at Hook Norton, born in October.

The attendance at Branch practices is variable with a small nucleus of ringers supporting regularly. This reflects the state of ringing in the Branch with some Benefices and towers finding themselves very stretched to cover Sunday services every week.



Tony Picking and Burford Benefice ringers outside Fulbrook church

The Leaffield tower band continues to make further progress with an increase in numbers, and has held fund-raising events, including a quiz, an organ recital and other planned events. They held an Open Tower afternoon which attracted a good response from local villagers and others, and had their first tower outing in September, visiting Ducklington, Bampton, Langford and Lechlade.

The Autumn Meeting was held at Chipping Norton in October, a ‘meeting’ sandwich, with ringing both before and afterwards to try and cater for more members. Matthew Summers was re-elected following his return to ringing at Charlbury. It was good to have the support of Hilarie Rogers and Colin Lee, our Guild Steward, on this occasion but the turn-out from the Branch was rather disappointing. This is something we need to review for the future.

The Benefices of Shipton-u-Wychwood and Chipping Norton have each welcomed new incumbents to their ministry teams. This gave an opportunity for towers to combine their resources and was greatly appreciated.

Christine Harris

East Berks and South Bucks

Our annual summer walking outing this year visited Chalgrove, Berrick Salome and Benson. We had a very welcome break for tea at a riverside café in Benson, and following our ring there we walked along the river path to Wallingford for an evening meal. The out of branch practice in September was held at Shiplake and Twyford.

The Branch 6-bell striking competition in June was won by High Wycombe A with Beaconsfield as runners up. This year we introduced a new trophy for second place in this competition, a smaller edition of the winner’s plate. Beaconsfield improved on their position in our Lorna Newton 6-bell competition, winning the trophy with Lane End as runners up. The competition was judged and trophy presented by Robert Newton, nephew of Lorna Newton.

This year we have held a number of novices’ practices, following on from our very well supported novices’ outings. The ringing has been rounds and call changes, plain hunt and plain bob with a limited number of ‘novices’ and a designated band of helpers. These practices have always been oversubscribed and have been very useful as well as enjoyable.

Sadly two of our Honorary Members have died this summer. Arthur Newton died in June aged 99. He had been a loyal and regular ringer at Hughenden for over 70 years, ringing his last peal in 1996 and his last quarter for his 90th birthday in 2001. He has also served the EBSB Branch as Ringing Master and Deputy RM. Bob Rance who died in August was an enthusiastic, committed and reliable member of the Bray band for over 50 years and was still ringing regularly there until June this year. Both will be very much missed.

Mandy Salter

Newbury

In general Branch practices have been well attended, with the exception of only four turning up at Lambourn in September! The ‘Quarter Peal and Curry’ events have taken a break recently, but look to be returning again soon.

May saw the Branch come a closely fought sixth in the Guild eight-bell striking competition at Childrey. A successful Branch outing was had to the Monmouth area, organised by Mark Brock of East Garston. The initial rain in the morning didn't put a dampener on the day; a variety of methods were rung throughout the day by the 31 ringers attending, and the 16 non-ringers attending enjoyed their day too.

The Branch six-bell striking competition was held in July, ably judged by Tony Crabtree of Shrivenham. During the ringing a variety of games were available in the churchyard, and the competition was followed by a superb tea. 'Thatcham Tigers' won the competition, and thus went forward to represent the Branch in the Guild Six-bell Competition.

In September the Branch used the Charnborough Ring to great effect at this year's Royal County of Berkshire Show, to help recruit ringers to the Branch (or the participant's local tower if they were not a Branch resident). It is estimated that around 400 people had a go on the bells over the weekend of the show, with 26 expressing interest in taking up the art, the bells proving to be popular with people of all ages. Thanks are due to Marcus and Tessa Allum for all their hard work making the arrangements necessary for this successful event.

At the beginning of October Thatcham represented the Branch in the Guild six-bell striking competition at Streatley, coming a creditable second in a very close competition.

General news from around the towers of the Branch includes the re-hanging of the Branch's only ring of three bells at Aldworth in the summer. Hampstead Norreys need to raise £15,000 by Christmas to allow the first phase of work to be carried out on the tower, which is to include a full re-hang of the bells. And there is also good news regarding the bells of Great Shefford; they are to be re-hung early in 2012.

Ben Waller

North Bucks

The Summer Social and Branch Striking Competition were held at Clifton Reynes. Nine bands took part in the competition judged by Barry Eglesfield. This was one of the best turnouts ever for this event. Hanslope won and Great Linford came second. Unfortunately neither Hanslope nor Great Linford was able to raise a band to represent the branch at the Guild competition.

Our Inter Branch competition against the Towcester Branch was held at Hanslope, judged by Jon and Kay Chamberlain. They judged the Towcester Branch as the winners by two sections to one.

The major topic at the Autumn Meeting, held at Old Wolverton, was '*The Bring Ring Pull*'. Planning for this branch recruitment project is moving forward and we now have a date for the recruitment day in the Milton Keynes shopping centre – Saturday 11th February 2012. The two week training course for new recruits will follow, starting about two weeks after this date. As this will clash with our normal AGM date it was agreed that the AGM in 2012 will be held later in March. Two teacher training sessions were held in October and early November aimed at increasing the number of teachers ready for the

training course next year. As part of the *Big Ring Pull*, a simulator has been installed at Nepwort Pagnell so that these bells can be used for the BRP training course, as well as for other events. The simulator is a branch resource so we hope to make use of the silenced bells for other activities.

Work on bells in the branch has included a new treble added at Lillingstone Lovell to augment the ring to six, and the re-hanging of the five bells at Beachampton.

Richard Stanworth, for Helen Stanworth

Old North Berks

The Branch was very sorry to lose two of its long-standing members during the same week in September. Both Frank White and Jim Diserens were respected Honorary members, well known throughout the Guild and wider ringing circles, and they will both be sorely missed within their own towers and the Branch. Between them they had amassed an amazing 143 years of faithful membership of the Guild.

Our monthly, midweek, evening branch practices have continued to be fairly well attended over the summer months, as have both the surprise major practices and the monthly, midweek, afternoon sessions aimed at beginners and improvers. Earlier this year we elected Jill Garlick to the trial post of Training Co-ordinator for a twelve-month period, and she has been arranging additional Saturday morning training sessions with specific aims in mind, such as conducting and ringing up and down in peal. We would like to thank branch members for their continuing support, especially those who have tutored at any of our sessions, and also the experienced ringers who came along to assist. Jill is doing a tremendous job and we hope that she will be happy to continue in this post.

We held another successful outing in July and would like to thank Philip Roberts of Harwell for organising this for us. This year we visited the area surrounding Lechlade, also ringing at Stratton St Margaret, Broad Blunsden, Alvescot and Bampton. As is our usual custom, the towers were punctuated by frequent refreshment stops and our thanks go to Janette Roberts for organising a superb afternoon tea in the church at Alvescot. We also thank Stuart and Naomi Gibson for giving us another super evening after the outing with a barbecue at their home. The food, as ever, was excellent and the croquet once again very entertaining as dusk fell and it became even harder to aim for the hoops.

We would like to thank the Wantage ringers for representing the Branch in the Guild's six-bell striking competition and congratulate them on being placed equal third. This is a great achievement for them, having returned to competition ringing after a break of thirty-eight years.

Our next social event will give branch members and friends the opportunity to dust off their dance shoes and show off their skills on the dance floor. We are holding an autumn barn dance and supper in the East Hagbourne village hall, with the Mad Hatters band providing music and entertainment. Our thanks go to Jill and the Hagbourne ringers for organising the event.

Gillian Loyd

Oxford City

On a perfect day of pure autumn sunshine and a crisp blue cloudless sky twenty nine of us hit London for adventure. First we dropped into St Mary-le-Bow. Thanks to Leon Thompson's hard work, we were ringing these famous bells that, if heard at one's birth, designate one as a 'Cockney'! A very historic church designed by Sir Christopher Wren, destroyed by the Great Fire, then bombed in World War 2. Here the more experienced ringers rang Stedman Cinques with the great Tenor behind – the 41cwt bell that is tricky to handle. We were bemused watching the strong ringers ring it up, trying to stand it, and to ring down!

Walking the East London streets we came to St Katherine Cree with the only ringing at ground level in London. The church has no parish but dedicates its ministry to the world of finance. It has a beautiful interior and a long history, escaping both the Great Fire and the Blitz. Ringers found the newly restored bells good to ring.

More walking of London streets brought us to the two churches of St Botolph, a Saxon Saint – one at Aldgate and one at Bishopgate. The bells at Aldgate are tuned to an old concert pitch. Both sets of bells were 'a bit of a challenge', especially the tenors. Both towers moved, as had St Mary-le-Bow, but at Bishopgate the movement was easily seen, with the crack between the tower and the church caused by damage from an IRA bomb.

Next we moved onto the bells and new bell frame at Christ Church, Spitalfields. Comments were unanimous: 'beautiful to ring', 'a deep rich tenor', 'a great sound', 'absolutely lovely'. Finally, after a very interesting, long walk through the ethnic Bangladeshi street markets in Brick Lane, we arrived at St Matthew's, Bethnal Green. Here a successful touch of eight-spliced was rung; this is a standard ring for accomplished ringers, but they all seemed very pleased.

A beautiful day, the excitement of ringing in new locations, and a day of camaraderie and positive experiences in one of the greatest cities in the world. Thanks to all who organised such an impressive itinerary, especially Leon Thompson!

Katie Lane

Reading

Branch Practices are still continuing with three per month although numbers attending are very variable.

In June the Branch Outing was organised by Jenny Page from Caversham, and towers were visited in the Alton and Petersfield district on a day when the weather was perfect.

At the end of July Alex and Nina Byrne's family moved from the Reading area to live in Germany; they will be missed within the Reading Branch.

In September the Branch six-bell competition was held at Purley on Thames and attracted nine entries which included three teams competing in the Novice competition for the John Butler trophy.

The winners of the Topper trophy, and therefore the team to represent the Reading Branch in the Guild 6-bell competition, was St Mary's, Reading. The winners of the John Butler trophy were Caversham Novices. The judges were Hilarie Rogers and John White from the South Oxon Branch. Thanks go to the Purley Ringers for the excellent tea arrangements.

On Saturday 1st October the Reading Branch was host to the Guild 6-bell striking competition, which was held on a very sunny and warm afternoon at Streatley. Again many thanks to the local ringers for the arrangements and tea.

The Branch was very sad to hear of the passing of Jim Diserens in Germany. He had held several posts in the Branch, such as Newsletter Editor and joint organiser of the Monday afternoon practices.

Ken Baker

Sonning Deanery

The branch has continued with its usual schedule of branch practices on the third Saturday of the month, and a weekday practice on the first Tuesday of the month. The Saturday practices are sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening, but the attendance figures do not seem to favour any particular time. Steve Wells, a regular supporter of the Tuesday practices, has had a serious heart operation and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

The branch 6-bell striking competition was won by Sonning tower in April, so it represented the Sonning Deanery Branch in the ODG 6-bell final. St. Andrew's came a very creditable 5th out of 9 teams; exactly halfway in terms of team position, but much nearer the winners than halfway in terms of faults.

Several towers have organised their own ringing outings. On the late Bank Holiday Monday, 30th May, St Andrew's Sonning set off for a ringing outing to the Gerrards Cross area of Buckinghamshire. As well as ringing at three towers during the day they also visited the Quaker Meeting House at Jordans.

In June, John Harrison ran a Branch *Learning Methods* course for four members of the branch. The course was very interesting and covered about six different techniques that in combination enable one to learn a method thoroughly. The students then put their learning of a new method into practice and all managed to ring their new method without too much help.

In July All Saints, Wokingham had a successful outing to towers in the Wimborne area, finishing up at Wimborne Minster where All Saints' choir were singing Choral Evensong.

Waltham St. Lawrence has lost two members and one learner in recent months, although the loss of members is, thankfully, now offset by two experienced ringers who have moved back to the area from the south coast.

In September All Saints, Wokingham opened the tower to the public as part of Wokingham's Heritage Weekend. They hosted 105 visitors who enjoyed demonstrations, talks on ringing and the view from the tower roof. All Saints are also attempting to ring 100 different methods to mark the centenary of the Ringing World; at the start of November they had reached 70 methods.

Hurst has been very short of ringers and has not held any practices for some time. But recently an initiative by Simon Farrar (Twyford tower captain) and Graham Slade (Branch deputy ringing master) has revived ringing for the service on the first Sunday of the month and a practice on the Monday before that. Ringers from Twyford are helping to support this revival of Hurst ringing.

The Branch's 8-bell striking competition was held in October and it was good to see some relatively new ringers prepared to have a go in the competing bands. The competition was won by a combined Wokingham All Saints, Sonning and Waltham St. Lawrence band. Twyford are to be congratulated on being the only band to be a 100% 'own-tower' band.

The Branch ringing outing in October was to the Wallingford/Dorchester area; we started at Wallingford and finished at Dorchester with four other towers and a lunch in between. Our thanks to Pam and Andrew Elliston for the excellent organisation and running of the day.

Rob Needham for Pam Elliston

South Oxon

Our spring branch outing was held on Saturday 14th May, visiting: St Peter and St Paul at Long Compton, St Lawrence Church at Mickleton, with a picnic lunch at Hidcote Manor Gardens, St. Thomas a Becket's Church at Todenham, and finally visiting St Laurence Church in Combe. I am afraid I wasn't able to attend, but there is a lovely description of the day by Jane Willis on the branch web page southoxonodg.co.uk/html/spring_outing_2011.html. Here is a quote that I felt painted a lovely picture of the outing:

"After quite a long drive, we arrived at St Laurence Church in Combe and discovered that the organisers had kept the best until last! The bells were a dream to ring, with a beautiful clear tone. There were many beautiful aspects to the interior of the church, including interesting wall paintings and 14th century decorative floor tiles, an oak tree on the village green, a cricket match taking place on the playing field, a Norman Church, fabulous sounding bells – a perfect English scene."

Congratulations are due to the South Oxon branch band that rang in the Guild 8-bell competition at Childrey on Monday 2nd May. The band finished 3rd out of the 9 teams that entered, behind Reading branch and High Wycombe, thus earning themselves a calligraphy certificate! After practising for the few weeks beforehand, they rang the set touch of Grandsire Triples without mishap, setting a good rhythm on the way. The band was: Kay Bartholomew, Sue Dyke, Wendy Simon, John Tchighianoff, John White, and Christopher, Daniel and Hilarie Rogers.

Although I know Kay will not be pleased with more attention, I think we should all give special congratulations to Kay Bartholomew for ringing her 100th peal this spring. Perhaps she has already added a few more to that number!

The Guild Festival that was held on 9th July saw a good number of South Oxon Ringers out and about in Oxford. This was a fantastic chance to ring at Christ Church Cathedral and other churches and colleges in central Oxford. The Eucharist service, held in the Cathedral, featured an interlude of hand bell ringing which was just magic!

We have decided not to have an Autumn Meeting. This is a trend that appears to be common throughout the Guild. It was felt that there was very little to be gained by the Autumn Meeting and it is not actually required. We will use the October branch practice for electing new members and presenting certificates.

A final but very sad point is that Ann Mayou, Shabington Tower Captain and Guild Children's Officer, died suddenly at home on Wednesday 7th September. She rang at many towers in the branch and she will be sorely missed. Many quarter peals have been rung in memory of Ann.

Amy Herlihy

Vale of the White Horse

We visited Uffington for the Branch 6-bell striking competition in May. Nine teams representing seven towers took part, and we were pleased to welcome ringers from Stanford in the Vale again after a break of several years. The Greenley Shield was awarded to Faringdon who went on to represent the branch at the Guild competition in October.

The usual Branch ringing outing at the end of June was dropped this year in favour of taking advantage of a 'ready-made' outing to Oxford for the Guild Festival in July. It was a very enjoyable day, with no need to book towers or organise a lunch venue, and the opportunity to attend Eucharist at the Cathedral, so thank you to those who did all the hard work so we didn't have to!

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

Our annual striking competition was held at Woodstock in June; although numbers were slightly down on last year, we still had five towers doing battle. Despite nerves and inadvertent firing, everyone claimed to have enjoyed themselves. Many thanks to Alan Marchbank for travelling so far to judge the competition, and for his positive and helpful comments. Woodstock swept the board and went on to represent the branch at the ODG's six-bell competition in October.

In July we repeated last year's *Firsts Fortnight* with the aim of encouraging those who wanted to progress to something new. This year twenty-eight members took up the challenge, and achievements ranged from ringing rounds and call changes to first quarter peals and new methods. Certificates were presented at the summer social, held at Combe, where thirty-five members attended a very enjoyable Aunt Sally evening and barbecue.

We're extremely grateful to members from other branches for giving up their time and petrol to support our occasional Stedman Triples training practices around the branch. Progress has been such that a first QP attempt is being planned at Witney in November. Next year we hope to run regular surprise major training practices jointly with the City branch.

Richard White kindly organised the branch outing in October to Huntingdonshire. As always, it was well researched and planned, with superb towers and a wonderful riverside walk from Hemmingford Abbots to Hemmingford Grey.



Where's Baxter?

Congratulations to Freeland ringers Marie Middleton and Neil Ephgrave who rang their first quarter peals recently. Since then Neil has rung another quarter peal, this time inside to Bob Doubles, which is a remarkable achievement after only five months ringing.

Ringling skills are gradually improving within the branch. Members are attending ODG training courses, surprise methods are attempted more frequently, and branch practices and single method and minor method evenings are well supported.

Cassington bells may soon ring out again. Their PCC have been in contact with Whites and have drawn up plans for refurbishment of the tower and bells.

Anthony Williamson

Points from Peals

Guild members took an active part in peal ringing to commemorate the Royal Wedding. The village of Bucklebury, which is in the Newbury Branch of the Guild, is now well known as the home of Kate Middleton, and the parish had a day of festivities to mark the occasion. This included both open ringing and a peal attempt at a new Delight method named after the hamlet of Chapel Row where the Middleton family live. Sadly, the peal was lost due to a swap after over two hours of ringing. However, on 11th May 2011, a second attempt was successfully scored. This was Ros Durham's first peal for 27 years. Other peals in celebration were rung at Abingdon St. Helen, Aylesbury, Benhilton, Curdridge, High Wycombe, Oxford St. Thomas the Martyr, and Waltham St. Lawrence. A new Alliance method was also rung at Milton and aptly named Kate & William.

On 10th June 2011 HRH the Duke of Edinburgh celebrated his 90th birthday, marked by a special service in St George's Chapel, Windsor. A peal at the parish church of St. John the Baptist, Windsor, was specially arranged and rung for this occasion. It has also been noted that the bells at the Curfew Tower were pealed too, but this was not credited to the Guild.

The following personal achievements should be recognised: Simon Read's first peal as conductor, Roger Baldwin's 4,000th peal, David Salter's 1,000th different tower to a peal and Graham Slade's 35th anniversary of his first peal.

In terms of methods, a method named Brighton Delight Major was rung for the first time at Drayton on 21st July. This method was devised by Frederick Dench in 1897 to improve on Kent Treble Bob. It was not rung at that time because the Revd E Bankes James soon identified ways to improve Brighton Delight, and produced Bristol Surprise!

A new method, Aberdare Delight Major, was rung to mark the Golden Wedding of Ann and Geoff Hopkinson of Beaconsfield who were married at Aberdare on 7th August 1961. A new method named Scarlatti Surprise Maximus was rung on handbells, and Scarlet Surprise Maximus and Worthington Surprise Royal were rung on handbells for the first time.

Other noteworthy peals include a peal at Hurst to mark the centenary of the augmentation and rehunging of the bells. The 700th peal was rung in the tower at Hughenden, and the first peal of Major was scored on the bells at Buckland since they were rehung.

Sadly, the Guild has lost a number of members over the past six months, all of whom had made a significant contribution to ringing. Peals have been dedicated to the memory of Jim Diserens of Wallingford, Arthur Newton of Hughenden, Frank White and Harry Winter of Appleton, and David White of Rodbourne Cheney. Peals were also rung in thanksgiving for the life of Rod Pipe, conductor, composer and influential member of the St. Martin's Guild.

Claire F. Roulstone, Peal Sec.

Guild Officers for 2011/12

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Diary of Events for 2011/12

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

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

NOVEMBER 2011

Sat	26	Central Bucks	8 Bell Advanced Practice	Cuddington	7–8.30pm
Sat	26	EBSB	Improvers Practice	Winkfield (6)	05–Jul
Sat	26	Guild	SC (Ten Bell)	Shrivenham	
Sat	26	Guild	Autumn General Committee Meeting	Clanfield	
Sat	26	Chipping Norton	8 and 10 Bell Practice	Aston Clinton (8)	7.30pm onwards
Sun	27	Reading	Higher Numbers Practice	Reading St Laurence	1–2.30pm

DECEMBER 2011

Fri	2	Newbury	BP	Thatcham	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	3	Guild	Ten Bell Training Day	Aston Clinton	
Sat	3	South Oxon	BP	Warborough (8)	4 – 5.30pm
Tue	6	Central Bucks	8 Bell Progress Practice	Aylesbury	7.30–9pm
Tue	6	Sonning	Branch Practice TBC	All Saints, Wokingham	2 – 4pm
Wed	7	Chipping Norton	BP + Nibbles & mulled wine	Charlbury (6)	7.30 – 9.00
Thu	8	Banbury	SP	Cropredy	7.30pm
Sat	10	Banbury	Carol Service	Steeple Aston	7pm
Sat	10	Central Bucks	BP	Steeple Claydon	6.30–8.30pm
Sat	10	EBSB	BP + Social	TBC	
Sat	10	Reading	BP + Mince Pies etc	TBC	
Mon	12	ONB	BP	Caversham (8)	6–8pm
				Sutton Courtenay (8)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Thu	15	Reading	Advanced Practice	Shiplake	8–9.30pm
Fri	16	Banbury	Doubles and Minor Practice	Cropredy	7.30pm
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP + 100 Club Christmas	Monks	7pm – 9pm
			Draw	Risborough	
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Warfield	10am – 12pm
Tue	20	Central Bucks	6 Bell Progress Practice	Stewkley	7.30–9.00pm
Mon	26	Banbury	Boxing Day	Deddington	10.30am – 12pm
Tue	27	EBSB	Post Christmas ringing outing		daytime

JANUARY 2012

Mon	2	Banbury	New Year	Banbury	10.30am – 12 noon
Mon	2	ONB	Ringling and Refreshments	Harwell	10.45am – 12.30pm
Tue	3	Sonning	Branch Practice TBC	All Saints, Wokingham	2 – 4pm
Fri	6	Banbury	BP	Tadmarton/ Swalcliffe	7.30pm
Fri	6	Newbury	BP	Speen	7.30 – 9.00pm
Thu	12	Banbury	Doubles and Minor Practice	Steeple Aston	7.30pm
Sat	14	Reading	BP	Streatley TBC	6–8pm
Thu	19	Reading	Advanced Practice	Shiplake	8–9.30pm
Sat	21	Banbury	SP	Banbury	7.30pm
Sat	21	Sonning	BP	Wokingham All Saints	10am – 12pm
Thu	26	Banbury	Tower Reps Meeting TBC	Bloxham	7.30pm
Sat	28	South Oxon	Branch Practice	Shabbington	4–5.30pm
Sun	29	Reading	Higher Numbers Practice	Reading St Laurence	1–2.30pm

FEBRUARY 2012

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Stanford Dingley	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	4	Banbury	Quiz & Social TBC		
Tue	7	Banbury	BP	Adderbury	7.30pm
Tue	7	Sonning	Branch Practice TBC	All Saints, Wokingham	2 – 4pm
Sat	11	Reading	AGM	Goring	
Tue	14	ONB	BP	Wantage (8)	7.30pm – 9pm
Thu	16	Banbury	SP	Mollington	7.30pm
Thu	16	Reading	Advanced Practice	Shiplake	8–9.30pm
Sat	18	Banbury	Doubles and Minor Practice	Wardington	10.30am – 12pm
Sat	18	Sonning	Ringling + Service + Tea + AGM + BP	Easthampstead	3pm onwards
Sat	25	South Oxon	AGM	Chalgrove	From 3pm
Sun	26	Reading	Higher Numbers Practice	Reading St Laurence	1–2.30pm

MARCH 2012

Fri	2	Newbury	BP	Peasemore	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	3	Chipping Norton	Ringling 5.00pm, Service 6.00pm, AGM 6.30pm, followed by further ringing	Shipton-u-Wychwood	5pm onwards
Sat	10	Banbury	Annual Dinner	TBC	
Sat	10	Guild	General Committee Meeting	VOWH Branch	2.30pm onwards
Sat	10	Reading	BP	Checkendon	6–8pm
Wed	14	Banbury	BP	Banbury	7.30pm
Thu	15	Reading	Advanced Practice	Shiplake	8–9.30pm
Sat	17	ONB	SC	Sutton Courtenay (6) TBC	3–4.15pm
Sat	17	ONB	AGM	Sutton Courtenay (6) TBC	4.30–8pm
Thu	22	Banbury	SP	Somerton	7.30pm
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Watlington (8)	4–5.30pm
Sun	25	Reading	Higher Numbers Practice	Reading St Laurence	1–2.30pm
Sat	31	Banbury	Doubles and Minor Practice	Croprey	10.30am – 12pm

APRIL 2012

Sat	14	Banbury	BP	Hanwell	11am – 12.30pm
Sat	14	Reading	BP	Pangbourne TBC	6–8pm
Tue	17	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	7.30–9pm
Thu	19	Reading	Advanced Practice	Shiplake	8–9.30pm
Sat	21	Guild	Radley Course	Radley	
Sat	21	Banbury	AGM	Steeple Aston	pm
Fri	27	Banbury	SP	Deddington	7.30pm
Sat	28	South Oxon	SC	Chinnor (6)	7pm
Sun	29	Reading	Higher Numbers Practice	Reading St Laurence	1–2.30pm

MAY 2012

Mon	7	Guild	Striking Competition, South Oxon Branch		
Mon	7	Guild	Annual Ringing Day, South Oxon Branch		
Thu	10	ONB	BP	Sunningwell (6)	7.30pm–9pm
Mon	14	Banbury	BP	Bodicote	7.30pm
Fri	18	Banbury	SP	Steeple Aston	7.30pm
Sat	19	Guild	AGM, Sonning Deanery Branch	Wokingham, St. Paul's	
Sat	26	Banbury	Doubles and Minor Practice	Hanwell	11am – 12.30pm

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

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**Maximum of 25
students**



June A Saint, June D Wells, Louise M B Ellis, Peter R Ellis, Stephen R Rossiter(C), E John Wells – winners of the Guild 6-bell striking competition 2011



Winslow Surprise Major band: 1 Halisi Drysdale, 2 Julie A Haseldine, 3 Kay Bartholomew, 4 Richard Haseldine, 5 Ryan S Noble, 6 Murray A Coleman, 7 Andrew Haseldine (C), 8 James A Haseldine