

ODD BOB



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



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From your Editor...

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

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

Rob Needham

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As members should expect, a record of their membership is maintained on a combination of paper and computer systems. These records are used solely for the administration of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers and for notification of future events to members. They are not made available to anyone for commercial purposes. If any member wishes to inspect the records held, please contact the Guild Secretary.

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Master's Mutterings

Sleepless in Seattle is a film that I must have missed when it was released in the early 1990s; the title resonates with me. I can conjure with a new title, Sleepless in Wheatley, a familiar situation which makes me turn on Radio 4 during the dark hours and early mornings. Sunday mornings are particularly worthwhile, there is 'Profile' and 'Something Understood' and earlier, at 5.45, 'Bells on Sunday'. Often, I drift in and out of dozing but, always I wake instantly as the two minutes of ringing bring joy, and tears, at the same time. One morning it was Stedman Cinques from St Peter's, South Petherton, Somerset; I realise that the thing I miss most in this Covid Age, is the glorious sound of our church bells; it never ceases to thrill me.

Now, Sunday mornings are not the same at all. There are some towers where it has been possible to ring a few bells, briefly, and we are strangely and awkwardly attired; however, we are reminding towns, cities and villages that the bells are still there, hidden in the towers, mostly silent, but not forgotten.

Also, the enthusiasm for *Ringling Room* and handbells goes from strength to strength with many ringers gaining skill and confidence, keeping the ringing community together with new challenges and bringing considerable satisfaction and pleasure.

The 'business' of running the Guild carries on – committees, working groups, Branch meetings are happening, mostly on *Zoom* and occasionally on warm summer days well distanced in someone's garden. We acknowledge that it is difficult to keep in contact with all our Guild members and so we have introduced regular emails that are sent to the Branch Secretaries for cascading via towers to all ringers. If you are not receiving these updates please contact Ken Darvill, the Guild Secretary, who will be able to help. It is early days to know how our bands will be affected by the restrictions, it would be naïve to think that nothing will have changed; there will be ringers who will not return, there may be bands that are seriously depleted, there may be changed church services. There may be neighbours who have forgotten that bells make a noise and complain! Soon, Tony, Ken, Stuart and I will be contacting towers to ask for information but the Covid situation is so indeterminate at present that responses would likely be inaccurate.

Meanwhile, please continue to let us know about ringing and activities in your Branch. The website is being reviewed to make it clearer and easier to access, so send in articles and photos.

Keep cheerful, ring safely whenever possible and keep well.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

John Stuart White

John Stuart White was born on 5th August 1964 in Aston Clinton, Bucks. John was the first child of Arthur and Innes who were both keen choristers and ringers. Arthur and Innes would travel to many tower and Guild practices with John and it was inevitable that he would take up ringing. Having visited a tower John would come home and make a Lego model of wherever he had visited, an early sign of his creativity which was evident throughout his life. He enjoyed making Airfix models which he carefully hand painted before they were suspended with thread from the bedroom ceiling. Every shelf was filled with his Lego creations.



John joined the church choir and had an excellent voice. He learnt to ring soon after and made quick progress. He rang his first peal aged 10. The method was Grandsire Triples and was the first on the eight at Aston Clinton following augmentation. John had fun with Dad, Louise and me collecting newspapers around the village during fund raising for the two new trebles. He then helped Dad bundle them up prior to collection. John's enthusiasm

for all things concerning bells continued to flourish. Dad was an engineer and he made a small metal bell which John carefully hung with all the fittings including wheel and frame he made.

At the end of the garden was an apple tree in which he built a tree house. Old bell ropes were also installed for us all to swing on. John's next project was to create his own mini ring. He hung three flower pots for ringing complete with wheels from prams and plywood clappers. Having initially been hung in the shed they were then transferred to the tree house having been extended with a tower. I would ring these before I could handle a church bell and we scored three quarters of Plain Hunt on them. I recall John's concern about counting 210 extents, he overcame this by using a counting machine which on one occasion fell off the bench! Once allowed out on his bike, John would cycle to tower practices several nights a week. He enjoyed ringing hand bells both to tunes and methods.

John passed his twelve plus. He was successful in his A levels. He then worked for National Westminster Bank.

In 1983 John became tower captain at Aston Clinton. He soon set about giving the ringing chamber a refurb. Whilst working in Tring he recovered the carpet tiles which were going to be disposed of. The two of us spent a hot Saturday scrubbing them before fitting them in the tower. John believed in good handling and striking

and under his leadership the band won many local striking contests. They later went on to win at Guild level, something for which he was very proud. John's bell hanging skills continued to flourish. Whilst helping at a school party, Mum found the old school bell under a sink, originally hung in a turret. This was acquired and over many years John hung it for ringing. The craftsmanship is superb and it still hangs proudly in the corner of the ringing chamber. John taught a lot of people to ring and helped out on many Guild courses.

John had a great interest in the history of bell ringing. He researched and produced information leaflets on local rings including Aylesbury. He gained an excellent insight to bell installations and would give advice when asked. He loved church architecture.

Following the death of Innes in 1997 an appeal was launched to strengthen Aston Clinton tower and augment to ten. Arthur donated the treble in her memory and John played a major part in the project securing grants, fundraising, designing a frame and putting in hours of labour. Once completed he prepared a brochure of the whole project. He conducted the first peal on the ten.

John was a very active Guild member. He served the ODG Chiltern Branch as Ringing Master, Secretary and Chairman. He also served as Deputy Guild Master.

John organised many tower outings which were very popular. The coaches were always full, made up of local ringers and parishioners. John had a strong faith and was a keen chorister and was a valuable 'tenor' in the choir. A keen Chelsea fan, he enjoyed football. As boys we would play in the garden. Being the youngest I would end up in goal. John had a good sense of humour and enjoyed comedies such as Monty Python, Fawlty Towers and Reggie Perrin. We both enjoyed mimicking people. Any phone calls would always start as someone else! In more recent years John rang at Drayton St Leonard where he made many friends in The South Oxon Branch. He put his skills to good use at Great Haseley where he carried out maintenance.

Despite John's often jovial public demeanour, he battled depression and anxiety for much of his adult life. A battle that became too much and he tragically died on 5th March. He is now at peace. Sadly this coincided with Covid lockdown and only a handful of family and friends were able to attend his funeral. A number of quarters were dedicated to his memory. As soon as all restrictions are lifted a memorial service is planned with open ringing.

Rest in Peace John.

Richard White

Learning and Development

The Education Sub-committee has continued to meet via *Zoom* and, whilst it has been frustrating not to be able to run any courses, some very worthwhile discussions have taken place. In addition to the cancellation of all the 2020 courses, it has also been decided that the 2021 Radley Course will not take place. We appreciate that this will be a disappointment to many but feel that it is better to have a firm decision at this early stage. We remain hopeful that at least some of our usual courses can go ahead in the second half of next year. Behind the scenes, work has been progressing

on improving links to the education section of the Guild website and on an updated Young Ringers' Award.

A fruitful Training Meeting was held via *Zoom* on 13th June and resumed for a second session on 4th July. Thank you to the representatives of twelve branches in total for your input. It was useful to share an overview of what specific training and more general practices take place in each branch under 'normal' circumstances: clearly, there has been much good work going on but also huge variations of opportunity in different areas. At the same time, various suggestions were made about ways in which the Guild could support the branches with their training provision.

Much discussion has taken place about ways of developing skills during the pandemic. *Ringing Room* is proving to be a valuable resource in isolation for many groups: less experienced ringers, in particular, are learning and 'ringing' more complex methods than before without the complication of actually having to handle a bell! We are fortunate to have Lesley Belcher (ART Chair) on the sub-committee and hope that new courses being piloted (e.g. on hosting *Ringing Room*) will be useful to many of our members.

The benefits of handbells, either used in pairs or singly, have also been stressed. They have an advantage over *Ringing Room* in that hand and back strokes can be differentiated. Requirements for social distancing, good ventilation and handles not being touched by different people within 48 (preferably 72) hours are somewhat limiting. However, the 'rule of six' enabled groups of handbell ringers to progress from the park/garden/gazebo/boat to the garage to indoors, which is just as well with descending temperatures! Sadly, this option has disappeared during the 'Lockdown 2' of November. It is to be hoped that handbell ringing can resume in December, dependent on whatever 'tier' structure is then in place. Please remember to keep abreast of the Central Council guidance each Monday.

The other main discussion point has been how the Ringing Exercise will emerge from the pandemic. A (hopefully small) proportion of our members may not return to their towers for one reason or another and training of new recruits has been non-existent for over six months. It has been reported that less experienced members were nervous about participating in the restricted Sunday service ringing that was possible from July to October. It is probable that, at an appropriate time, this Sub-committee will organise a forum where the focus will be tower leadership. Perhaps there will be an upsurge in activity, as there was after the WWII ban.

Please get in touch with us if you need further guidance or would like to make any suggestions about the above: edchairman@odg.org.uk or edsecretary@odg.org.uk and keep cheerful – we will get through this!

Robert Newton (Education Sub-committee Secretary)

Little Horwood Bell Project

After lots of work behind the scenes submitting funding applications, commissioning reports, securing permissions, planning budgets, and some very generous donations, not forgetting lots of breakfasts consumed at our fundraising 'pop up café', we are delighted to confirm that work has well and truly started to restore our church bells to full working order.

We had the last chime at the beginning of September, which marked the start of the dismantling work, and we are now ready for the bell hangers to come in to lower



the bells from the tower and remove the old frame. Work is due to start on Monday 26th October (this is subject to a couple more reports which may delay this slightly), the bells will then be

removed and two new bells cast at Loughborough, one to replace the badly damaged treble bell and an additional bell which will bring our tower up to a ring of six bells from the current five.

Our Bell History workshops have now started, led by Julian Hunt, these are looking into the history associated with the bells, bell ringers and donors whose names were cast into the current bells. We will be creating a digital record of the findings and this will be available on our website. Everyone is welcome; these workshops are currently taking place via *Zoom* once a month on a Friday evening and again you can find all the information on the website. We would love to hear from anyone who has memories or photographs of the bells.



Looking forward, the new frame and bells are scheduled to be returned early next year.

We are very happy to be supported by the National Lottery Heritage fund and they are keen to see local involvement in the project. It would be great if you could take a moment to visit our website as the amount of ‘hits’ we get is one of the key measures – as they say, every little helps! Find us at www.littlehorwoodbells.co.uk

Nicola Ellison

Safeguarding

In these rather strange times, when ringing activities have for many been somewhat sparse, one might be forgiven for thinking that safeguarding is not really an issue. However, there are several ways in which we need to continue to have that same awareness of the issues that safeguarding concerns.

Firstly, though ringing in our towers has been much curtailed, there have been some very welcome developments in virtual ringing, chief among these being *Ringin' Room* and Handbell Stadium. These platforms have offered an opportunity for ringers to get together, with the help of communication devices such as *Zoom*, and many groups have made good use of them for virtual practices and even performances. Indeed they have proved effective teaching tools. However, if the young and vulnerable are involved in these ‘get togethers’, it is important to remember the basic principles of safeguarding. The main rule of thumb is to be aware. Organisers should make sure that parents are kept informed and, as with What’s App or other communication groups, receive a copy of any messages or invitations to participate.

The other area of online safety to consider is publication. I was recently asked to confirm the rules regarding the publication of photographs of young people. This should only happen with the express permission of parents, especially where names are also included.

I'm sure that many people, like us, found that the weeks of lockdown offered an opportunity to take stock of what is really important and to consider which aspects of our very busy lives we most value. It has certainly been a time to do some of the tasks that have been put on the back boiler for a long time. Similarly, with much less going on in real ringing terms, this would be a good time to put tower safeguarding arrangements in good order. Many towers have done very well with having the required paperwork in place but some are lagging behind here. Therefore, my second point is a quick reminder about paperwork that should be in place.

Where bands have young ringers, a permission to ring form must be completed by parents and a register of attendance kept for all ringers. At practices or other ringing, such as services, a 'responsible person' should be appointed to monitor behaviour. Any trainers should have a DBS check in place. In all towers, whether or not there are young or vulnerable people in the band, the captain should be DBS checked. Tower captains are church officers so under Diocesan and C of E regulations are required to have a DBS check. If this is not possible, then nor is being a tower captain. The final piece of paperwork that could be done is a notice for the tower naming the Parish Safeguarding Officer, with contact details.

I apologise if any of this sounds somewhat 'preachy' but it's not easy to treat safeguarding with levity. However, once paper work is in place and procedures become routine, it isn't really onerous and we can all get on and enjoy our all age ringing, both real and virtual.

June Wells, Guild Safeguarding Officer

Guild Steward report for Central Bucks, Chiltern, and North Bucks

Ringling has recommenced in more than half the towers in the three branches that I cover as Guild Steward.

Central Branch reports some of their tower are ringling three bells now, and Ann Pratt, amongst others, is trying to keep in contact with ringers, by regular emails. She says they have a lot of older ringers who she feels may reduce their ringling commitment in the future.

Chiltern Branch has eight out of its towers ringling – but only three or four bells in the main, although one tower, having 2 ringling families, can muster six bells on some Sundays. One or two towers have recommenced practices for 15 minutes – but this depends on the timing between Sundays and Practice Night and can only have three ringers on the same bells so is limited. Emails are sent each week, from some Tower Captains in an effort to keep the groups cohesive.

North Bucks also have some family groups, enabling five towers to ring on three to five bells regularly. Some are meeting on practice nights, on *Zoom*, to keep in touch and this seems to be 'attended' consistently. They have postponed their AGM until 5th December.

All are concerned regarding the long-term damage to the ringing fraternity. However, there are no reports of people not returning to the fold. They feel Practice Nights are “habit forming” and that link may be broken. Let’s hope it can be forged together again!

Ruth Groves

Towers & Belfries Committee

The T&B committee has met twice since the last Odd Bob report; using *Zoom* on 25th June (for “Return to Ringing”) and 7th October. The *Zoom* attendance has averaged about a dozen which is excellent with nearly all members and certainly higher than using face-to-face meetings. However, the quality of discussion and debate inevitably suffers in “virtual” meetings. There is no plan to change all meetings to *Zoom*! We are pleased to welcome Philip Dobson to the committee. The membership now broadly reflects the geography of the Guild after a lengthy period when some areas had no members nearby.

The scheduled belfry courses at Leckhampstead and Ivinghoe had to be cancelled which is a huge pity as these courses have been very popular. Luckily, the February rope splicing and belfry management course at Radley had beaten the lockdown by a few weeks and was very well attended and appreciated by students, and indeed the tutors too. Students enjoyed the wide range of artefacts (pulleys, wheels, etc.) which we used to explain the causes of rope wear and other issues such as rope handling.

There is a big demand for rope splicing and we are happy to support local courses with tuition. We want people to come ready to learn skills they can put to good use in their local towers, whether splicing ropes or spotting preventive measures so that rope wear can be reduced and rope life extended. There are many good splicing videos on YouTube (as well as some not so good...).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gb-6YwA2e2Y> is instructive.

At the last meeting, besides inspection reports and planning courses, we discussed the general availability of advice and website downloads. This has now widened to the material produced by CCCBR as well as ART, who are producing some excellent downloads with assistance from T&B experts. The CCCBR documents are being reviewed and updated. I am assisting with that. There have been discussions on the content of the ODG website and work is now starting to update the T&B page and the material available through it.

Since the last Odd Bob report, Committee members have been active, within lockdown constraints, with TMA (Tower Maintenance Award), grant inspections and general advice at the following places: Wendover (accessibility), Letcombe Regis (tenor bell), North Stoke (inspection), Weston on the Green (minor improvements), Letcombe Bassett (Bell Fund grant inspection), Ashbury (sanctus bell), South Leigh (raising guide frame), Little Horwood (rehaing), Aylesbury Holy Trinity (current situation), Daylesford (current situation), Hanslope (Bell Fund inspection), Great Tew (Bell Fund inspection), Dorchester Abbey (TMA) and Piddington (advice). There have also been many “return to ringing” inspections.

The Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) scheme continues and towers are encouraged to join in. Inspections are free and there is much to be gained from the inspection and the advice you may receive, so please get in touch if you would like a visit. The TMA report is given below in this issue of Odd Bob.

Tony Crabtree, T&B Chairman

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

It's been rather a long time since we prepared a report on the scheme so that there are rather more changes to report than would normally be the case. In addition, because of Covid and the effects of lockdown, the T & B committee has decided that the renewal date for all awards due for renewal in 2020 will be extended for one year.

Since the last report the activity in the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme has remained steady with the number of current awards still at seventeen. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is ninety-three, which is about 21% of the four hundred and forty towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been one hundred and sixty-six inspections (of which twenty-six were preliminaries), resulting in one hundred and twenty awards (ninety-three Gold, twenty-eight Silver, and fifteen Bronze).

The number of expired awards has risen again and is now thirty-two. The T & B committee continues to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards. Since the last report fourteen towers have renewed Gold Awards, while Wardington has gained a Gold Award and Cuddesden and Penn Silver Awards at the first attempt; congratulations to all these towers. Awards for seven towers have expired since the last report (see the "Expired Awards" list) and it is hoped that they will attempt to renew (or improve) their awards.

The number of Branches having a tower in the "current awards" list is now nine out of the fifteen Guild Branches, with EBSB having regained its predominant position, being just in front of the Reading Branch (in the last report it was the other way round!). The placings are as follows:

EBSB	5	(3 Gold, 1 Silver, 1 Bronze)
Reading	3	(Gold)
Banbury	3	(Gold)
Sonning Deanery	2	(Gold)
South Oxon	1	(Gold)
Newbury	1	(Gold)
Chiltern	1	(Gold)
Oxford City	1	(Silver)
Witney & Woodstock	1	(Silver)

The six Branches with currently no awards are Bicester, Central Bucks, Chipping Norton, North Bucks, Old North Berks, Vale of White Horse.

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Reading (St Giles)	Reading	Expires 30.03.21
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.21
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 30.11.21
Stratfield Mortimer (St John)	Reading	Expires 30.11.21
Thame (St Mary)	South Oxon	Expires 31.10.21
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury	Expires 31.05.21
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB	Expires 30.04.21
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 31.05.21
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB	Expires 30.05.21
Deddington (SS Peter & Paul)	Banbury	Expires 20.05.21
Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 30.06.21
Wardington	Banbury	Expires 31.12.21
Ellesborough (SS Peter & Paul)	Chiltern	Expires 30.04.21
Stratfield Mortimer (St Mary)	Reading	Expires 31.05.21

Silver Award

Penn	EBSB	Expires 30.06.21
Cuddesden	Oxford City	Expires 31.01.21

Bronze Award

Fulmer (St James)	EBSB	Expires 21.06.21
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Expired Awards

Finchhampstead (St James)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.07
Stoke Mandeville (St Mary V)	Chiltern	Expired 31.12.07
Warborough (St Laurence)	South Oxon	Expired 31.12.07
Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.12.08
Purley (St Mary)	Reading	Expired 31.01.10
Benson (St Helen)	South Oxon	Expired 31.10.11
South Stoke (St Andrew)	Reading	Expired 31.03.12
Wantage (SS Peter & Paul)	Old North Berks	Expired 31.08.13
Letcombe Regis	Old North Berks	Expired 30.09.13
Chalfont St Giles	EBSB	Expired 30.09.14
Kintbury (SMV)	Newbury	Expired 30.09.14
Tadmarton (St Nicholas)	Banbury	Expired 30.09.14
Peasemore (St Barnabas)	Newbury	Expired 28.02.15
Wargrave (St Mary)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.15
Great Milton	South Oxon	Expired 31.08.15
Hungerford (St Lawrence)	Newbury	Expired 30.09.15
Denham (St Mary)	EBSB	Expired 31.01.16
Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading	Expired 30.11.16
Chalgrove (SMV)	South Oxon	Expired 31.01.17
South Leigh (St James)	Witney & Woodstock	Expired 31.08.17

Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon	Expired 31.10.17
Cookham (Holy Trinity)	EBSB	Expired 31.12.17
Berrick Salome	South Oxon	Expired 31.01.18
High Wycombe (All Saints)	EBSB	Expired 28.02.18
White Waltham	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.10.18
Croprey (S M V)	Banbury	Expired 31.12.18
Clewer	EBSB	Expired 31.03.19
Radley	Old North Berks	Expired 31.03.19
Henley-on-Thames	Reading	Expired 31.03.19
Horspath	Oxford City	Expired 30.04.19
Harwell (St Matthew)	Old North Berks	Expired 30.04.19
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expired 30.09.19

The above results reflect the situation as at the 10th October.

John Davidge, T&B Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been nine library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 102. These have been about:

- Check name of ringer, Gilbert Goodship, in peal at High Wycombe in 1944
- Ringer in peal at St Giles Reading on 4/1/1969
- Membership of ringer from Chenies
- Check name of ringer from Bray, early 1950s.
- Book 'Church Bells of Oxfordshire' borrowed
- Membership of ringer in peal at Windsor in 1976
- Peal at Aston Tirrold on 11/12/1937 rejected by ODG
- Confirm ODG record of peal at Banbury on 9/9/1934
- Tower captains at Arborfield in years after World War II

Further annual reports and Odd Bobs have been added to the archive website. A list of what is on the archive website is held there, on the General Information page accessed via the "i" link on the Home page (<http://www.archives.odg.org.uk/>). There is always more scanning/photographing of Guild material to be done, so if anyone else would be interested in helping out, please let me know.

Much of the miscellaneous library material previously assembled in batches of papers has been sorted out and organised into folders. A certain amount remains, particularly larger items such as certificates and photos, and how to store them is a remaining library task to be completed.

The Covid-19 restrictions mean that it is not currently possible to visit the library. I am still however happy to look up information you need, so please let me know if you have any library queries.

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

News from the Branches

Banbury

On 20th October the Branch held their AGM, which had been postponed from 18th April, via *Zoom*. This was successful and everyone managed to connect up to take part and complete the business.

Since some relaxation of the lockdown, several towers in the Branch have resumed restricted ringing. The ringers have been ringing at Bloxham, masked, on Sunday mornings for 15 minutes on bells 1, 3, 5 and 7 to maintain social distance with the west door open for extra ventilation.

Dorothy Clifton reports that at Steeple Aston in August the ringers rang hand bells before and during an outdoor service held in the churchyard. In September the village held a scarecrow competition and fête with well-spaced stalls around the village, and the ringers served tea and cake at the tower door while Steeple Jack climbed the tower. For the next outdoor service in September the ringers risked ringing five bells for 15 minutes which received a warm response from the public. There was no ringing at the next service as two of the ringers had tested positive and were self-isolating, but the ringers hope to ring for the next service on 25th October.

At Banbury, Jean Davis reports that their last ring before lockdown was Mothering Sunday on 22nd March, and she expressed everyone's frustration about no ringing through a poem in the *Ringling World*. Heavy rain in June caused damage to the church vestry roof and water got into the newly restored organ. In the tower the safety quilting in the clock weights shute had to be taken out to dry. Ringing resumed on 9th August after a maintenance check and health and safety preparations in line with Covid guidelines that took place in July. The ringers rang bells 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, masked, with the doors open for ventilation. Richard Bentley went into hospital for a knee replacement and two ringers have elected to stay away for the present. They are regularly ringing five bells, and on six with the right combination of ringers. Call changes, ringing up and down and some simple methods have been rung. They rang for the installation of their new vicar Serena on 4th September. Since then there has been no ringing due to trouble with clock hammers through the spokes which cannot be pulled off, and are awaiting a visit from the clock mender on 26th October.



At Cropredy, Brenda Day reports that the ringers have kept in touch with one another since lockdown was relaxed by meeting on practice nights at the Brasenose Pub in the village. After performing a risk assessment they started ringing again on 2nd of August with three bells, increasing the next time to four bells. Some of the ringers, being uncertain about ringing after such a long lay-off, had a short practice a few days before. They have found that one of the biggest problems has been sharing out the few ringing opportunities between all of the available ringers, which won't be the case when they get back to ringing eight bells. At the start of lockdown they had three learners, two of whom were progressing from handling to rounds, which they hope to restart once they get back to normal ringing. They have received compliments and thanks from the villagers on hearing the bells.

At Adderbury, Zoe Lee reports that the ringers had tried keeping in touch via *Ringin' Room* which was difficult due to poor internet speeds. Access to the ringing chamber is restricted, ventilation is poor, the ropes are spaced so that correct social distancing cannot be maintained and most of the permitted 15 minutes of ringing is taken up with ringing up and down. Therefore, they have been ringing handbells before the 10.30am service, outside in good weather or inside, masked, when wet, much to the appreciation of the congregation and vicar. It has proved to be good PR for the congregation to actually be able to see the ringers whilst they are ringing as they have appreciated the effort and admired the skill shown. Thanks also to regular practices in Dave's back garden during the summer; a handful of the ringers have learnt from scratch some of the basics of handbell ringing whilst others have reacquainted themselves with it. Of particular note is the progress of the tower's newest learner Simon, aged just 8, who has gone from having no previous experience of method ringing (either in the tower or in hand) to mastering Plain Bob Minimus and is well on the way to mastering Plain Bob Minor in hand. Last Sunday the Lee family managed a performance with Dad and Simon ringing Plain Bob Minimus on 1-2 and 3-4 while Mum and Adam (aged 4) covered on 5-6 and 7-8. The church has been recording services via YouTube for members of the congregation currently unable to travel to the service in person. They have also captured some of the ringing and one such example can be found on the following link.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaPL5DK5rBE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1IP0OZGNbxRk1g-VWd4KOFTNdW94pX3MAX4UuMxaMLM0s - OtxlGTFfX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaPL5DK5rBE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1IP0OZGNbxRk1g-VWd4KOFTNdW94pX3MAX4UuMxaMLM0s-OtxlGTFfX8)

Rosemary Hemmings

Bicester

In common with everyone else ringing has been curtailed, but at least seven towers within the Branch have been able to ring for services, weddings, as well as VJ Day.

Stratton Audley marked the death of long-serving ringer, Ron Howarth, recently by plain hunting on three – with Ron's wife Dorothy and Old English sheepdog Brontë in attendance – particularly fitting as Brontë used to attend practice nights with Ron.

They have had two weddings in September and managed to ring three bells for each. Jeremy Adams reports too that they've rung three for a couple of Sunday services – and Janet James has done a fantastic cleaning job in the ringing room, removing many spiders!

At Chesterton, Hilary Walbank and Linda Honey marked VJ Day – Hilary read out the 'Cry for Peace' from the tower steps and Linda chimed the treble 75 times in remembrance (see video: [20201017_104201_194440923915307.mp4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20201017_104201_194440923915307.mp4)). They also chime every Sunday morning at 11am to remind the village that the church is open. Sally Cross at Bletchingdon also read the 'Cry for Peace' and Sue Macready tolled 75 times on VJ Day which was well received by the 20+ villagers. Additionally they ring (three bells) at services and chime before the *Zoom* services.

Fay Harris reports from Bicester that they have rung a couple of times for service ringing (three or four bells) but all weddings in Bicester and Caversfield have been postponed until next year.

Steve Vickars from Kirtlington says that they've been able to ring for services including Harvest, and most recently, for All Souls with a few practices too. They have been using *Ringling Room* enthusiastically as well – practising methods aiding the progress of all – and achieving first quarters for two ringers with two trebling in Doubles quarters for the first time. Gus Bridges, Charlie Bates and Steve joined three others on 29th October in a virtual quarter peal to mark the 90th birthday of Avrill Banton, Judith Vickars' mother.

At Weston-on-the-Green Mandy Jones reports that they've been ringing the tenor every Sunday at the time of the *Zoom* service, and 2, 4 and 6 whenever there has been an actual service in the church. They've rung for one wedding and one funeral and tolled the tenor 75 times for VJ Day. Jeremy Adams has helped a couple of times to make up three ringers, if necessary. They've been practising most Wednesdays, allowing the requisite time 'airing' between ringing days, with masks on, doors and windows open.

Charlton-on-Otmoor ringers rang four bells for the wedding of Islip's Dispensary Manager in September and, in Islip, ringing has been taking place before services (2,4,6 and 8) as well as tolling on VJ Day.

For those who haven't yet come across The Accidental Ringer (Mary Jones) has a blog with a variety of entertaining and informative pieces – one of the latest <https://dingdong887180022.wordpress.com/2020/10/31/should-we-charge-for-bell-ringing-lessons/> gives food for thought!

<p style="text-align: center;">Oxford Diocesan Guild Ringling Room, Oxfordshire Thursday, 29 October 2020 in 50m 1260 Plain Bob Doubles</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Sue Rhodes (Freeland)2 Michael Probert (Freeland)3 Charlie Bates (Kirtlington)4 Steve Vickars (Kirtlington) (C)5 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke (North Leigh)6 Gus Bridges (Bletchingdon) <p style="text-align: center;">Wishing a very happy 90th birthday to Avrill Banton for 30th October.</p>

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

We are delighted with the progress being made at Little Horwood, where the old five were not safe to ring and Heritage Lottery funding has helped towards returning to safe ringing and an additional bell – do please read the separate article (*see page 6*).



CBB chairman Jeremy Pratt, who is normally otherwise engaged ringing in London on these occasions, tolled the tenor at Chearsley at 11am for Remembrance on both Sunday 8th and Wednesday 11th November.

We are a very rural branch and many of our towers have band members who are relatively inexperienced or of more advanced years (or both). Therefore it has not been possible to use many of the online techniques that others have turned to during the pandemic. However, a number of bands are meeting via *Zoom*, have WhatsApp groups to keep in touch, and are even managing the occasional pub session with everyone suitably distanced. With the partial return to church services and ringing, at least half of our towers are managing some sort of ringing, generally on alternate bells. Both Aylesbury and Long Crendon have managed to ring a few more bells, up to six – Aylesbury because they have both family groups and plenty of space and Long Crendon because they have the extra bells as well as family groups. All towers that are ringing carried out appropriate inspections before the return. Additionally, Long Crendon have taken the time to paint the grillage, bell frame, fixtures and fittings and hope to take delivery of their new ropes before Christmas.



Long Crendon ringers on VJ day

A number of weddings around the branch have had the bells rung for them and we look forward to more activity as we are allowed.

Anne Pratt

Chiltern

We had a successful AGM in October (delayed from our usual March date), our first *Zoom* meeting – thanks to Mark Instone for arranging it and for moderating the meeting so that everyone could join in easily. Also in the meeting was Catherine Lane, ODG Master and we were pleased she joined us.

We have a very successful 100 Club which raises considerable sums for the branch and the Guild restoration funds but the monthly draws stopped from March. There was discussion at the AGM of several ways of dealing with the unallocated funds in a fair manner. It was finally agreed to hold a bumper Christmas draw this year and recommence the monthly draws in March 2021.

Just over half of our towers are now doing some ringing, mainly on Sundays, which is good to know.

Some towers have not restarted because of lack of room or ventilation, and some towers are keeping in touch with their ringers via emails, WhatsApp or outdoor socialising. No ringers have said they were giving up. Some towers had rug for VJ Day and for a wedding or funeral. Very few individuals have tried ringing via *Ringling Room* or similar. Maybe if your tower is not able to ring 3 or 4 bells you might at least ring 1 or 2 bells occasionally to remind local residents that the bells and church do exist.

We were told that Cheddington village have requested residents to ring bells outside their front doors on Christmas Eve (similar to the clap for NHS and essential workers during the Covid lockdown). Perhaps you might like to see if your village could do the same?

Slapton now have sufficient funds raised to proceed with the restoration of their existing 5 bells (i.e. not to augment to 6 as had been their original intention when the project was first proposed several years ago), although it is not known when the project will actually start. The branch is delighted that Slapton's project is finally going to proceed and has agreed to grant Slapton an additional £500, to be paid on or near completion of their project together with the branch's original grant of £1,000 already offered.

At the AGM a paper written by Mark Instone with observations on measures of success with regard to the “health” of branches was discussed. The various villages in the Chiltern area have a generally mature population with relatively few young people. The branch should not compare itself unfavourably with other branches or large towns that have bands ringing advanced methods on 10 or 12 bells, or that seek to focus more on teaching activities for young people, often involving technology based learning and fast results. Older learners are just as valuable and can be very loyal tower members. The meeting thanked Mark for his astute conclusions and agreed with them, noting that the *Zoom* platform made it difficult for everyone easily to discuss what measures we can hope to implement once ringing gets back to a more normal environment. We would need to revisit this again in due course.

All the Officers were re-elected. However, Philip Dobson asked for someone else to take over as Chairman next year to take the Branch forward. And Roy Woodruff wanted someone to take over as Treasurer. We are a small Branch and have been very successful in the past 5 years with everyone collaborating well, however without people willing to help with our organisation we will falter...

We now have another lockdown. Like everyone, we hope that our members and their families are keeping safe and well and send our good wishes to everyone affected by coronavirus.

Clare Carpenter

Chipping Norton

Some towers in the Branch have resumed ringing. Six out of the nineteen towers have rung for services on Sundays or for weddings. Nine towers have very small ringing chambers which cannot be ventilated adequately and do not allow for social distancing. Some churches in some benefices do not hold services at present because of staffing issues. Those towers that share ringers have decided that they cannot ask them to travel as previously. Also, there are a large number of senior members who come into the vulnerable category who must be considered.

Hook Norton tower is now able to ring regularly on Sundays and has rung Plain Bob Doubles using ringers from three households. Shipton-u-Wychwood ring when the Sunday service is held there. Chipping Norton has rung for some special Sunday services.

Wedding ringing has taken place at Chipping Norton, Churchill, Shipton-u-Wychwood and Spelsbury following the rearrangement of some weddings.

The postponement of many others may mean a busy time in 2021 or whenever things get back to 'normal'.

Hook Norton tower has been holding virtual practices, using *Ringin' Room*, followed by *Zoom* pub sessions which are eagerly anticipated by the participants.

As Charlbury tower has a small ringing chamber, the ringers are greeting the congregation with handbell ringing in the churchyard.

Christine Harris

East Berks and South Bucks

My report for the last edition of Odd Bob ended by questioning whether we would have to wear face masks and rubber gloves to be able to ring again. Well, I was partly right. With face masks, sanitizer, social distancing and limiting ringing to 15 minutes at least half the towers in EBSB have been ringing to some extent. Some just for a special occasion and others for Sunday services and even practices. Some have their ringers on a two or three week rota to enable everyone to get the chance to join in, but sadly others have found that their ringing chambers are too small to allow more than one or two bells to be rung. Wherever ringing has taken place it has been greatly appreciated by the congregations and residents. Villagers in Denham are particularly fortunate: here the Covid-19 restrictions would limit them to ringing 1, 4 and 7, but they have an Ellacombe chime and they have been using that since access was allowed to the church.

Ringers really are like one big family. Many bands have been keeping in touch with each other via the traditional methods of visiting, telephoning and email, and many have embraced newer technology using *WhatsApp* and *Zoom*. A few bands have also been experimenting with *Ringin' Room*. As restrictions lifted some started to meet for coffee, handbell ringing or for walks. Winkfield even had a tower outing to Dorset – no ringing but they enjoyed a coastal walk, pub lunch and tea. It is great that there has been so much contact and care shown between ringers.

For the first time since it was presented, the Young Ringers' Award has come to EBSB – well partly. Holley Wakeling was taught to ring by Jacquie Hazell at Waltham St Lawrence (SD), and she now has dual membership at Clewer where Vikki Bulbeck has taken her under her wing. Holley set herself targets for the YRA, and was successful in all apart from one quarter peal that was cancelled due to lockdown. She has also been a regular member of the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers, taking part in the Ringing World National Youth Contest and other striking competitions. Although a presentation in person was not possible, Holley received a gold award and now holds the YRA trophy.



During lockdown Pete Wiltshire of Turville, an engineer by profession, was rightly concerned that under the Covid restrictions it would be impossible to train any new recruits. He designed and built an apparatus which he named *The RACK* (Ringers' Answer to Covid Kit), a 'garage' device to enable beginners to learn the basics of bell-handling while complying with social distancing. The RACK can be

seen at [youtube/iFu0qkafiC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iFu0qkafiC8)

After much discussion between the Branch officers, our AGM (that should have been in April) was held via *Zoom* on Saturday 31st October. Sadly it meant that some members who lacked the technology were not able to join us, but the meeting was attended by 22 branch members and Katie Lane, Guild Master. All the officers agreed to continue in their current posts and were re-elected. Matthew Johnson was elected to the previously vacant post of Ringing Master. We look forward to the time when he can run some practices for us. Despite there being very limited ringing opportunities at present, we elected five new members and re-elected two returning ringers. We remembered ten members (or past members) who had passed away since our last AGM, including three who had died recently. Myles Hawkins had been a long standing member of Chalfont St Giles; Roger Hazell was a member at Aston Clinton latterly but spent most of his ringing career at Hughenden where he and his wife Gill were part of a very successful band; Graham Jones joined Langley tower in the 1970's having graduated from Leeds University, sadly spinal surgery in 2008 left him wheelchair bound so he was unable to ring at all for the last twelve years.

Activities of the EBSB Fund Raising Committee have been very limited during recent months. A few sales of some preserves, including our celebrated Superlative marmalade, have continued to some of our regular customers, but with no ringing meetings and no opportunities for running stalls at markets and fetes very little else has been sold. Observant ringers will have noticed that the Ringing World has been advertising “sally” mugs. Yes, they are ours!!! We have supplied the mugs to Taylors at Loughborough for a number of years for sale in their museum shop. Presumably they have passed them on to the Ringing World. The mugs are, of course, available from our committee at a much lower price (see our website: www.bellfund.org).



As I write this report we are back in lockdown with churches closed again and ringing cancelled. We hope that it won't be for so long this time. At least many towers are now Covid-ready so that when we are allowed back we can pick up where we left off, but we all look forward to the day when we can get back to some sort of normality and proper ringing!

Pat Newton

Newbury

After a strangely quiet summer, things have stirred in the Newbury Branch with some towers finding ways to make themselves heard on Sunday mornings despite the ongoing virus crisis. Newbury has been ringing on a limited number of bells



Hungerford's 'Covid-19' ringers

regularly for some time, as has Speen. East Ilsley has rung on 4 for the last two monthly Parish Eucharist services and, following a full inspection and safety assessment, Shaw has rung on two bells for services. Hungerford has just had their first ring on four bells, limited to even numbers and only for 15 minutes, and plans to do this every Sunday until things change. Of course, precautions are vital and current distancing guidelines are observed, so this is probably as far as it goes for now.

There are three ongoing bell refurbishment projects in progress in the Branch. Lambourn had four cracked bells and, following quite involved work to erect a lifting frame above the bells, they were lowered in July and

taken to Soundweld for repairs, then on to Nicholson's in Bridport for refitting, with planned return in late October. Alas delays, including flooding at the works, has put things back to November, with a likelihood of them now being rehung in time for Christmas.



St Mary's, Hampstead Norreys is progressing well. The bells were removed by Taylor's in June. There had been some concern about the lowering of the Tenor as, since its original hanging, foundation beams had been added to the tower. But with skill and a little persuasion, this was achieved. There was considerable appreciation from the local community who were able to view the bells while on the church floor. Taylor's are now in the process of strengthening the frame, which had suffered

damage from Death Watch Beetle and 400 years of neglect. The bells are expected back in the church in late October for blessing before returning to their place in the belfry. The next step, when conditions allow, is to recruit new ringers for the Hampstead Norreys band.

East Garston's project is now well underway with fund-raising for long-overdue repairs, notably to their cracked treble.

On a sad note, we mourn the loss of Di Bridle and Geoff Dodd, both prominent and well-known local ringers to whom many of us owe a lot, having freely given their time and expertise over the years to mentor and bring on many new and upcoming ringers. They are both sadly missed.

Mark Robins

North Bucks

[No news received – Ed.]

Brian Baldwin

Old North Berks

2020 has been a very quiet year in the ONB Branch. All scheduled events, including our annual outing and barbecue, and our autumn social evening, have been cancelled. We have rescheduled the barn dance and supper to November of next year, hoping that things might have settled by then. The only event we have held since the end of February was the branch committee meeting via *Zoom* in October, which proved to be very successful. We are now planning to hold our postponed AGM on *Zoom* in the middle of November.

Sadly we have lost two long standing members of the Branch since the last edition of *Odd Bob*, Denis Parfoot of West Hanney and Brian Hunnisett of Blewbury.

The restoration project at Long Wittenham continues and the faculty has now been granted. It has been agreed that the bells can be retuned, which, as anyone who has rung at Long Wittenham will know, is a very good thing. Whites will be carrying out the work hopefully starting before the end of this year.

Up to March, eight boys from Abingdon School were attending an after-school ringing club at St Helen's, Abingdon each week. This club started in 2011 and has been run in collaboration with various Abingdon ringers. Since lockdown in March, the school has continued to run a full timetable online with the boys participating from home online using *Zoom* and *Ringing Room*. When we are allowed to ring again, it will be interesting to see whether the experience of ringing plain hunt on *Ringing Room* helps the boys to ring better plain hunt in the tower.

It seems unlikely that branch ringing, as we remember it, will return for some time to come. Several towers in the Branch have started very limited ringing for services or special occasions. It was pleasing to see that some towers made efforts to ring at least a few bells for a brief period to mark the 75th anniversary of VJ Day.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

[No news received – Ed.]

Reading

What have the ringers of Mortimer and Burghfield been doing during lockdown? We have embarked on the new adventure of handbells of course. This is very different from church bells and has pushed us to think a lot more about how we ring.

During the summer we were in Padworth churchyard, in the open. There was something rather peaceful about sitting in a church yard with the sun shining, under an ancient yew, watched only by the occasional curious horse in a nearby field and ringing these bells which are over one hundred years old.



Peter MacNaughtan

Swallowfield has been able to continue with weekly zoom meetings which were originally more socially oriented with quizzes and local news but have gradually morphed into *Ringing Room* events. After a very tricky start we have now moved onto more competent ringing and regularly cover Little Bob, St Clements, Kent, Oxford, Cambridge, Beverley, Surfleet and most recently York Surprise Minor. With a little help from our friends in Wokingham, Shinfield and Eversley, our confidence is building and we are able to slowly get our "virtual rope sight" back and continue progressing. It keeps us going through the long winter evenings as we dream of normal ringing resuming once again in the future.

Tom Blomley

Sonning Deanery

After the first Covid lockdown had finished, and after limited real ringing had resumed, our Deputy Ringing Master sent a comprehensive questionnaire to the 16 towers in Sonning Deanery Branch. Five did not respond, but the results for the other 11 towers are summarised below by our DBRM.

Ringling in Sonning Deanery during Covid-19

Prior to the second lockdown on Nov 5th, three quarters of our towers reported ringing in some form during Covid-19 restrictions: 8 towers ring on Sundays and 7 use *Ringingroom.com* weekly.

Most towers only ring 3 or 4 bells each Sunday for 15 minutes with most ringers participating on a rota. Social distancing, family bubbles, masks, hand sanitiser and ventilation all feature.

Most towers have had significant success with Ringingroom.com although the technology has defeated some. *Zoom*, *Discord* and *Skype* feature. It is noticeable that learners have progressed their method ringing relatively quickly when they don't have a tower bell to control as well. Several have progressed from Plain Hunt to ringing "inside" and some from plain methods to surprise minor.

Only two quarter peals have been rung, both of Cambridge Minor as this seems easier to ring than plain methods on *Ringingroom.com*.

Steve Wells (DBRM) & Rob Needham

Handbells in a changed world

"I'm off to ring a quarter peal, see you later."

I suppose that is a phrase many of us have heard as our partners disappear off to some cold, damp tower to ring a physical quarter peal. Many months on during a pandemic it might sound a little daft. Not here. Nigel (BRM) has worked hard to learn to ring handbells over the last 2 years and, with the complete loss of tower bell ringing, increased his determination to keep ringing through handbells.

At All Saints Wokingham, John Harrison has organised outdoors, socially distanced



handbell practices and quarter peals outside in all elements (not quite, but they did get wet). Nigel decided to buy some motion sensor controls purchased from Graham John which gave him the ability to join online ringling using *Handbell Stadium*. Throughout lockdown and summer the *Stadium* became more sophisticated, with a lounge background



with chairs and sets of suspended handbells ringing in ghostly fashion (*see pictures*) – although you can now choose to have ‘men in black’ in situ.

Great while the controllers work but when they stop working and no more can be purchased (due to the whole of the ringing fraternity having bought the stock) it drives you to other methods to keep ringing. Nigel used this website <https://www.handbellringing.co.uk/topic/handbell-controllers> to make his own motion sensors from the basic electronics mounted on Harris wallpaper scrapers! (Or fillers, but wallpaper scrapers sound better.) This site explains how to build the controllers whether you can solder or not. And, of course, they were beautifully finished off with neatly sewn neoprene covers by me; and while he rings, tucked away in the home office, I have about an hour’s peace!

Happy handbell ringing to all you who have already accessed *Handbell Stadium* and for those who have not, it’s a challenge worth trying as it’s one of the nearest things to normal ringing right now.

Jane Mellor

South Oxon

As you may expect, there is very little ringing news to report from the South Oxon Branch. The good news is that some of our towers have resumed ringing in a socially distanced, masked fashion when services in their churches recommenced. They have all received appreciative and positive comments from parishioners.

Handbells have experienced a bit of a revival over the last few months. Aston Rowant regularly rang outside during the summer – Robert Newton commented that their handbells had been used more this summer than during the previous ten combined! Dorchester Tower have also been practicing handbells – in the Abbey Cloister Garden. Nick Forman reports that the first couple of weeks were “interesting” as they got used to the handbells, but they soon became more proficient and now can reliably ring plain hunt, Bastow Minimus, Bistow Doubles and Plain Bob Doubles. After several years of not using their handbells, they have been amazed at how easily their learners have been able to progress with methods by using the handbells.

Regrettably our bells could not ring out for the VE Day Celebrations in May, but Brightwell Baldwin overcame this by resurrecting a recording made of their bells on Remembrance Sunday 2018, which was broadcast throughout the village. The Sanctus bell was chimed 75 times in Little Milton to commemorate VJ Day. Ringers at Thame have been visible through their new flags, flying proudly from St Mary’s Tower. Ringers organised a plant sale, with funds raised being used to purchase a new flag of St George and a Union Jack which have been flown as symbols of hope for town and country.

Members of Chalgrove Tower were excited to hear of the birth of a potential future ringer....Dorothy O’Hara was born to Faye and Jonathan during the summer. Tower members are looking forward to celebrating Dotty’s birth with a quarter peal when social distance requirements are eventually removed.

We are all looking forward to the day when normal life can resume, and our bells can ring out to celebrate the end of these difficult days.

[*Pictures of the ringers for Bishop Colin's farewell at Dorchester-on-Thames are on the back cover – Ed.*]

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

[*No news received – Ed.*]

Witney and Woodstock

Thanks to Christopher A Moxon, the Yorkshireman who brought Oxford Treble Bob Minor to West Oxfordshire! Less than 2 years ago Chris came out of ringing retirement to support the South Leigh ringers in their first solo performance on the



centenary of Armistice Day, and threw himself into supporting ringing in the branch, often ringing at 5+ towers a week. After 44 peals of minor and major in his previous ringing life, Chris stooped to our level to ring his first doubles and triples QPs, but also encouraged some of us to up our game and ring more treble bob minor QPs, including Oxford, among the 28 he's rung with us. Our good wishes to Chris on his move back to Yorkshire are accompanied by anticipation of a WW branch outing to God's Own County when current restrictions are a

distant memory! See photo: *L to R, Andrew Goldthorpe, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Lorna Curtis, Michael Probert, Chris Moxon, Heather Horner.*

Thanks to Bryn and Leland's remarkable *Ringling Room*, Chris is still able to join our virtual practice nights. Many local ringers have enjoyed the benefits of virtual ringing with other Martini ringers anytime, anyplace, from anywhere, be it in focussed sessions introducing them to *Ringling Room* or regular late-night sessions with ringers way above their pay grade, some of them from other branches of the ODG, some from other continents. Some grasped the concept of counting places for the first time and progressed from tentative plain hunt in the tower to ringing touches of bob doubles on an affected bell. Others who would normally ring as many QPs as they have hot dinners have adjusted their expectations and counted it a triumph to finally score a QP of plain bob doubles in *Ringling Room* after a month of failed bob minor attempts. Still others have consolidated Cambridge minor and taken their first steps into other surprise methods.

Thanks to members of the CCCBR for their painstaking negotiations with the Church of England and PHE regarding returning to ringing. Who would have imagined the excitement of being able to ring three bells for 15 minutes? It was worth sweating over every crossed "t" and dotted "I" of the risk assessments to get back to the thrill of making heavy metal music, however limited, and that "on the balance at backstroke" feeling.

The postponement of a planned peal attempt and a yearning to ring face to face motivated Alison Merryweather-Clarke to learn handbells. Grateful for the support of evangelical handbell ringers in Oxford City, ONB and VOWH branches, and regular practices in *Ringin' Room* and at Grandpont Nature Park in Oxford, she was able to ring in a handbell QP in the garden of Daphne Joslin in the South Oxon Branch the day after Daphne's 100th birthday in August. Alison has been joined by four other handbell novices and beginners in regular handbell practices in North Leigh, providing entertainment to passers-by on the village green. Toby Goss rang his first course of bob minor in hand with Alison and Lorna Curtis, possibly the first in hand in the branch this millennium, but hopefully the first of many.

St Mary the Virgin, Freeland

Neil Ephgrave, Freeland Tower Captain for the past 7 years, is standing down as he and his wife Amanda are soon to be moving out of the village. Freeland ringers would like to take this opportunity to thank Neil for his excellent work whilst being Tower Captain.

We owe a massive debt of gratitude to Neil for his superb leadership during this period. The progress our band has made in that time has been immense. He has devoted many hours into driving our band onwards and upwards. The improved striking for service performances and our ability to ring an extended repertoire of methods are evidence of the guidance and support Neil has given to our tower.

Neil has taken numerous ringers from the first stages of bell handling, to service ringing and on to ringing their first Quarter Peal. Neil has been responsible for conducting so many of our successful Quarter Peals. He is indeed going to be a very hard act to follow and we are going to miss him greatly. We send Neil and Amanda all our very best wishes for life in their new home.

Ringers at St Mary's and their friends would like to wish Lucy McGregor, a Freeland ringer, many congratulations on her marriage to Simon Moxon. The wedding took place at St Mary's on Saturday 10th October.

St James the Great, South Leigh

Since the March lockdown, South Leigh ringers Heather Horner (Tower Captain) and Richard Law have kept up some of their bellringing skills at a weekly South Leigh *Ringin' Room* session, supported by Chris Moxon (Ringing Master), as well as Alison Merryweather-Clarke and Andy Goldthorpe amongst others from neighbouring towers. *Ringin' Room* has enabled Heather and Richard to make great strides in their understanding of methods and bellringing theory.

In September, following an invitation from the vicar to ring at Sunday Service once a month, some ringers enjoyed a return to ringing on 2 or 3 bells allowed according to Covid guidelines, and parishioners commented how much they appreciated hearing the bells again even in a limited way.

On Remembrance Sunday, the Associate Vicar David Spence led a short service with no socialising in the churchyard at the front of the church and we obtained permission to toll one bell to follow the two-minute silence. A number of parishioners gathered, standing in isolation away from each other but in strong community spirit, to hear the roll call and prayers and to see laid out on the war memorial the 23 crosses and poppies for the men from this village who lost their lives.

In October we said a sad farewell to Chris Moxon, who has returned to his native Yorkshire to live nearer his family. We are hugely grateful to Chris for helping to guide our novice band through the last two years. Fortunately, we have not lost him completely as we are delighted to welcome him as a regular visitor to our *Ringin* Room.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Michael Probert, Evadne Adrian-Vallance

Paying Peal Fees electronically

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

Stuart Gibson

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Diary of Events for 2020

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

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

[Because all forthcoming ringing events have been cancelled or postponed as a result of the coronavirus lockdown, there are no diary entries to publish – Ed.]



The EBSB AGM on Zoom



The Three Masketeers



The Abbey



The Great Unveiling

Ringers for Bishop Colin's farewell at Dorchester-on-Thames