

ODD BOB



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



A Bicester Branch Practice at Kirtlington, see page 11

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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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Master's Mutterings

The first months of the year are always busy ones for the Guild officers as all the Branches hold their AGMs in February, March, and April. This year, the deputy master, the secretary, the treasurer, and I, have managed to attend every one of them even when four have taken place on the same day; between us we have zipped across the territory, ringing at the venue towers, attending services, the AGMs and enjoying teas. Ringers are usually aware that they may have idiosyncratic tendencies – for example, collecting towers, ringing all the tenors, keeping records of quarters, peals, methods, ringing handbells in bizarre locations – the list is probably endless, and my little aberration? I really enjoy meetings!

It gives me pleasure to meet ODG ringers all around the Guild and I rejoice in the diversity of the discussion, priorities, social interactions and teas – all different and all with the same collaborative aim to ring together. The bells, churches, music, prayers, meeting arrangements, bring together that rich patina of ringing activities which form such an important part of our ringers' existence. We must not take it for granted; we have much to celebrate.

The summer months ahead will be hectic for all of us. By the time this edition of Odd Bob is published, the Ringing Day in the Chiltern Branch will have been accomplished, we will have revelled in the coronation of King Charles III, won, and lost, some recruits for *Ring for the King*, many of whom I hope will be encouraged to come to the new members' morning in July. We will be looking forward to the Guild Festival in Oxford when we can enjoy the privilege of ringing at the Oxford city centre towers and attending the service in the cathedral.



While in Christ Church Cathedral, take a look at St Frideswide's 13th century shrine, which has greater celandine carved on it. The greater celandine also grows in the churchyard of St Margaret's, Binsey where St Frideswide's holy well can be found and is the Treacle Well referred to in 'Alice in Wonderland' ('treacle' is an ancient term for a healing compound).

This ODD BOB is distributed at the Guild AGM in Broadwell. The AGM was at first planned for Witney but that would have been impractical as the Witney Fair was scheduled on the same day. Much effort goes into planning the event to provide interest and incentive to attend; my thanks to everyone involved with the arrangements especially our kind hosts, Annabel and Paul, who opened their own home and barn to accommodate us and helped facilitate so many of the arrangements. I have included a little background information below.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master.

Broadwell is a delightful village almost in Gloucestershire, with a fascinating history, only 36 dwellings and eight new bells! The information below is extracted from the Broadwell village website.

The five bells were restored and augmented to become a peal of eight over a three-year period from 2018.

The church was built in the late 12th Century and extended in the mid 13th Century when the spire was added. Broadwell was, in mediaeval times, a significant parish, taking in Filkins, Kelmscott and Holwell, and the scale of its church reflects this. Now, however, the parish is much smaller, with a population of around 80 in the village itself.

The church is a beautiful Grade 1 listed building. It had a historic (listed) set of five bells, the earliest (the 2nd) dating from 1350. These were re-hung in 1900 by Henry Bond of Burford to a poor design, and were located too high in the church tower – perhaps 70 feet above the ground. Oral history relates that the tower and its spire shook so badly when the bells were rung full-circle, that no-one dared to ring them after 1920.

Over the years the peal fell into total disrepair. The steel bell-frame corroded badly, causing significant damage to the tower masonry. The nuts and bolts that secure the frame were starting to shear apart. Inaction was no longer an option, and the 2014 Quinquennial Review recommended urgent action. Fortunately the local landowner, the late Roger Goodenough, who had looked after the church meticulously for 50 years, had left a sizable sum of money in trust for restoration of the bells, supplemented by other generous donations from individuals and trusts, including the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers. We were ready to start the restoration process in 2018.



Safeguarding

As the principles of safeguarding begin to become more established within the Diocese of Oxford and the C of E in general, I am beginning to hear of more parishes monitoring aspects of safeguarding within their ringing communities. Unfortunately, my inbox suggests that this has caused some consternation amongst some of you, so I thought, for the sake of clarity, that it was worth me reiterating what is required at a tower level, particularly with regard to training. Some of my messages suggest that the requirements are not yet fully understood by some.

The safeguarding section of the Guild website has a copy of the Guild policy on safeguarding as well as a useful checklist that can be used by towers when monitoring their compliance, but please do feel free to contact me at safeguarding@odg.org.uk if you have any questions you would like answered.

Regarding training, it is worth emphasizing that ALL ringers over 16 must complete the *Basic Awareness* online training module which can be found on the C of E safeguarding portal. This applies regardless of whether there are young or other vulnerable people within the local band. All Tower Captains and Trainers must also complete the *Foundation* module and get a DBS check. Unless asked specifically to do so by your parish there is no need to do the *Leadership* course, which is face to face. Most people should need no more than an hour to complete the training, which remains current for three years. If you haven't already done so, you should expect that at some stage your Parish Safety Officer will ask you to. This appears to be happening when new incumbents join parishes as they set out to get their 'house in order'.

Remember that this is not a process intended to impugn bellringers but part of the establishment of an overall safeguarding culture within the church. Ringers have long been a close knit and caring community so you won't find anything new in this.

June Wells, Guild Safety Officer

Learning & Development Workgroup

On 4th February a pilot Tower Leaders' Workshop was held at Kidlington. Each branch was invited to nominate one experienced and two 'novice' leaders so that there would be a blend of experience and support. There were 28 attendees. The day was led by Patricia Newton, with input from Elizabeth Mullett, Tony Crabtree, Steve Vickars and Robert Newton. Topics included qualities, roles and responsibilities of leaders; Safeguarding; the Towers & Belfries sub-committee; courses and other support available from the Learning & Development Workgroup; ART courses; online resources. The afternoon session began with the challenges of running a practice and keeping a band together. Then a range of practical activities were introduced in the tower, chosen to develop the abilities of individuals and bands. Thanks are due to all who contributed, not least the Kidlington ringers who kept us fuelled with delicious refreshments. It is hoped that there will be follow-up workshops for those who did not attend, particularly from those branches which were not represented this time.

The very successful Radley Course, organised by Lindsay Powell, took place on 15th April, with four groups covering between them: Grandsire Doubles, Plain Bob Doubles and 8-bell ringing (Grandsire Triples, Plain Bob Triples and Major). It was so good to be based at Radley again for the beginning and end of the day. Feedback by students and tutors indicated that significant progress had been made across the board. Special thanks to Daphne Pollard and her team, who again provided a sumptuous evening meal – and we had been told to expect something 'lighter' this time!

A reminder that the Michaelmas ('advanced') Course is being planned for 30th September and the Steeple Aston Course (parallel with Radley in terms of methods offered) is scheduled for 28th October. However a course organiser is needed for

Steeple Aston – is this a role that someone who has benefited from attending courses in the past might take on? Please give this some thought and contact me if you are interested. The tasks involved could be shared.

The *Ring for the King* media coverage has resulted in a ‘spike’ of potential recruits, many of which have been paired with ART accredited instructors. Several enquiries from people in areas where no ART instructors are located have been directed to the Guild and have, hopefully, been allocated a suitable nearby tower. It is disappointing that the media, having been given this material in the autumn, chose not to launch its coverage until the end of February. Whilst they may not have been ready to make a significant contribution for the Coronation, I hope these recruits will continue to play their part during His Majesty’s reign. The first obvious focus might be the King’s 75th birthday on 14th November.

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

Towers & Belfries Committee Report, November 2022 – April 2023

The Towers & Belfries Committee has met twice since the last Odd-Bob; 11th January by Zoom and in person at Radley on April 3rd. We meet again in August.

We discussed and progressed issues relating to:

- Stretchy terylene topped ropes
- Inspection documentation storage and retrieval
- Previous and future belfry courses – aiming to provide at least four p.a.
- The Bell Fund
- Best lubricant for plain bearings
- Sourcing ash for stays
- Filming a lecture and discussion of the features of the Master’s Bell
- Reporting and discussing advice, Bell Fund inspections and visits for:
Clanfield, Broadwell, Lechlade, Leckhampstead, West Woodhay, Combe (Berks), Clifton Rennes, Goring, Streatley, Lavendon, Theale, Sonning, Little Milton, Woodstock, Bladon, Stanford in the Vale, Great Milton, Kirtlington, West Wycombe, Kencot, Piddington, Turville, Stoke Poges, Hughenden, Aston Tirrold, Stanton Harcourt, East Garston and Little Whittenham.

A particular point for concern over the last few years is the increase in stretchy ropes which make nominally easy-going bells needlessly into hard work. The cause is frequently poor spec “pre-stretched” polyester tops which are, in fact stretchy (and will be so for the rest of their life). A related problem is that even new ropes with good polyester tops may have stretchy sallies and tails but people now tend not to bother to hang a weight on the end after installation, because they don’t realise the sally may still need stretching! We discussed ways of informing towers how to watchout for and resolve any issues.

We ran a general belfry course at Radley in February and a general course at Speen in April. At Speen, 35 students and tutors attend a theory session before starting belfry visits.

For folks who have attended the general course, we have an advanced “hands-on” course planned for September and a rope course at Steeple Aston at the end of October. There may be other courses depending on invitations from host towers.



Speen course

Sincere thanks to our twelve hard working volunteer members: Anthony Williamson (Secretary), Phil Roberts, Alan Marchbank, Andrew Slater, Chris Potter, Len Palfrey, David Bardwell, Graham Clifton, Philip Dobson, John Davidge and Steve Vickers. We welcome new members.

Tony Crabtree – Towers & Belfries Committee Chairman

Librarian's Report

There have been 8 library enquiries since ODD BOB issue 107. These have been about:

- Peal at Islip on 26 Dec. 1913
- Ringer at St Aldate's, Oxford during 1920s/30s
- Pages 35/36 of Hudson/McClenahan's Collection of Right Place Surprise Major methods – pages missing in some copies
- Membership information about Vale of White Horse branch member
- Membership information about S. Oxon branch member
- Copy of 1991 Report on bells of Henley-on-Thames and their history
- Coronation ringing at Central Bucks branch tower
- History of bells at Watlington, Oxon

Work on adding Guild publications to the electronic archive is continuing. Annual reports for 1954, 1955, 1956, 1956/57, 1958, 1958/59, 1964/65 1966 and 1973-79, and ODD BOBs nos. 10 – 19 and 87 – 92 have been added since the last edition of ODD BOB. Further annual reports from the 1960s are in the queue to be added along with ODD BOBs 78-86.

The North Bucks branch minute books (to 1978) have been catalogued and placed in the library. The processing of the bequests of books and papers of William Butler, Willie Haynes and Frank Hopgood is underway but is likely to take some time owing to the volume of material.

To continue on the series setting out serendipitous items of information uncovered while looking through books in the library: this one concerns inscriptions that can be found in many of the books, in particular that of Thomas Trollope of Oxford. He donated many books to the library, as evidenced by his signature or a note on the label that he had donated the book. A library enquiry occasioned the necessity to look through the Oxford City branch minutes which revealed that City branch ran a library and Trollope regularly supplied books for it. The 1939 entry reveals that

Marie Cross, whom many will remember, was elected branch secretary and “The question of custody of the library gave rise to some discussion as the new secretary was living 4 miles out of the city [in Radley]. It was finally decided to leave the books in her care.” The meeting of June 9th 1945 saw the branch library cease and the books “given by Mr T. Trollope” transferred to the General Guild [library]. What must be one of Trollope's last donations to the Guild library was Tom Ingram's *Bells in England*, which bears the inscription “Presented by T. Trollope Esq. on his 92nd birthday.” Thomas Trollope died in 1960 at the age of 97.

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

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

Paying Peal Fees electronically

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

Stuart Gibson

News from the Branches

Banbury

The Carol service was held last December at Wardington with ringing before the service and then mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. The quiz evening and supper was held at Steeple Aston in March. The AGM was held at Cropredy in April with ringing at Cropredy and outside the Guild at Farnborough in Warwickshire. Heather Bletchly was elected as Branch Chair, Graham Clifton as Vice Chair, Zoe Lee as Ringing Master, Graham Oliver as Webmaster and David Vere as Branch Representative. The other officers were unchanged.

Rosemary Hemmings

Sue's Bell

Reverend Sue Burchell was our Branch Chairperson for over 15 years. Sue sadly died in August 2021. She was an experienced ringer and long serving member of the Banbury branch who was very supportive of the ringing activities. At Sue's funeral, a collection fund was made. Consideration of options was taken, as to how to use this fund in her memory. With some further donations and branch funds it was finally agreed to purchase a model bell as a training and demonstration aid for use of our branch members.



It was soon discovered that these models are hard to source. A branch member had purchased a model over ten years ago and found the old contact details for the *Penyard Model Bell*. Contact was finally achieved with Rev. Robin Noble who explained he had paused making models due to some ill health but he planned to resume model making activity in the near future. He agreed to make one for our branch, and he was also able to make a bespoke carrying case for the model.

In April this year, the model was collected and presented at the Branch AGM where it was renamed as "Sue's Bell" and bears an added dedication plaque.

Thanks are given to everyone who contributed to the fund; to Rev Noble and to Keith Thomas for the plaque.

Heather Bletchly

Steeple Aston

Since the start of the year we have had two new people learning to ring in readiness to ring for the coronation. Both are now ringing rounds competently on their own and ring for service. We have a full program of ringing planned for the coronation. First, a peal attempt by current and past Guild officers. General ringing on the day of the coronation for all our ringers. Then a quarter peal for a celebration songs of praise service. This will give Lewis Knowles, one of our young ringers, the chance to attempt his first quarter peal.

Our Christmas handbell ringing round the village was again very successful. Despite the weather being very cold we kept going out every night and probably got the sympathy vote as people were very generous. We raised just over £1,600 for *Maggie's* an Oxford based cancer charity.

Graham Clifton

Bicester

Since November, the Bicester Branch has been in full swing (geddit?) – the Winter Ringing School at Kirtlington has run eleven times and also hosted the Young Ringers when eleven came from six branches. In common with some of the other practices, food at the Young Ringers featured strongly but at Branch Practices, especially Caversfield and Weston-on-the-Green, food features strongly too! There have been record attendances at our seven Branch Practices in the last six months (no discernible correlation however with the food provision...). We were also delighted to welcome Simon Cole, visiting from his not-so-new home in Norfolk, at the branch practice in Stratton Audley.



Steve Vickars has led focussed practices at Bletchingtondon in the day and evening which have proved popular – as a result three members (Sally Cross, Julie Penny and Gerald Bushby) have rung quarter peals, and Gerald has also completed ART's *Learning the Ropes (LTR) Level 3*. It was fitting that Lesley Belcher, Chair of ART, who has done so much to help the new Weston-on-the-Green team, was able to present Andrew Wilkinson with his M1 Teaching Certificate for teaching of Handling. Later Nick Dutton achieved *LTR Level 1* and Christine Redford her *LTR Level 3*. Congratulations to all our learners and those who are rediscovering the ability to ring methods they once did effortlessly!

Our AGM was held in Ludgershall in mid-February when we had a record turnout of members – our much-missed President, Willie Haynes, has been replaced by Jeremy Adams and other officers have stayed in post.

In mid-April Richard and Jan Haseldine organised our Branch outing to six towers: Great and Little Gaddesden, Studham, Kensworth, Whipsnade and Eaton Bray, when twenty-five ringers (including some non-ringers and one dog) enjoyed a wide variety of ringing – and another well-chosen pub in which to revive.

Finally, Piddington is proud to have been awarded bronze under the Towers and Belfries scheme. And the Branch is proud too!

Kathryn Grant

bicester.odg.org.uk/wordpress/

Central Bucks

Back in November 2022, Central Bucks welcomed a nice visit, hosted by Aylesbury tower, of quite a few ringers from our neighbouring Chiltern branch in preparation for our friendly, yearly Orchard Cup competition.

December saw a busy Branch practice at Stewkley with loads of cakes, in preparation for the AGM held in February to celebrate the augmentation of Little Horwood's 6 bells.

Branch practices have carried on, hosted so far by Winslow, Cuddington and North Marston, which have been well attended.

Aylesbury St. Mary's have rung a 1290 Plain Bob Doubles: 1 Isaac Edney, 2 Bruce Owen, 3 Rachel Sheppard, 4 Grant Edney, 5 Duncan Purchase (conductor), 6 Jack White, this being the first quarter for Rachel Sheppard ringing inside.

Quinton managed to ring call changes for Sunday service, even though bell 5 had its tail end snapped during ringing for a funeral a couple of weeks before.



Cristina Galatanu

All the Bierton Ringers, from new learners to experienced, rang some rounds on the morning of the Coronation and then went home to watch the event. On Sunday we rang again after the morning service for the bubbly quaffing crowd and may have even recruited some more ringers!

John Chantler

Ring for the King was a nationwide initiative for churches across the nation to

ring for the Coronation over the weekend of 6th/7th May. Following the Coronation service in Westminster Abbey, Long Crendon bellringers rang a quarter peal of 1259 changes of Grandsire Caters taking 47 minutes to complete. The ringers taking part were Katie Lane 1, Julie Haseldine 2, Ruth Stokes 3, Simon Edwards 4, Chris Stokes 5, Andrew Haseldine (conductor) 6, Richard Horne 7, Chris Mundy 8, James Stonham 9, James Haseldine 10. The following day we were called on to ring at Brill for their Coronation thanksgiving service and then quickly back to Long Crendon to ring for our Civic Service, and then again at the start of the village "Big Lunch".



Andrew Haseldine

Chiltern

The last few months have been a time of quiet consolidation for Chiltern Branch. Attendance at our monthly branch practices has remained strong, indeed stronger than pre-pandemic levels and have provided opportunities for members to extend their repertoires. It has been particularly pleasing to see members who have returned who were ringing Plain Bob pre-pandemic now ringing touches of Stedman and venturing towards Surprise. At the other end of the spectrum, we are delighted to welcome ringers to branch practices who can only ring rounds. We are confident that it won't be long before they too are progressing towards methods. Our AGM saw all our current Branch Officers remain in post, although our Secretary has given notice that he is actively seeking a successor.

The Branch is hosting the May Day fundraiser for the Bell Fund this year. This represented a challenge of a geographically small branch so we found a solution by including additional towers at each end of the routes which commence within EBSB and finish in Central Bucks.

Like most branches we have sadly said goodbye to long standing members and special mention was made at the AGM of Judy Woodruff, Roy's wife. The Woodruffs have been longstanding supporters of the Chiltern Branch right from its foundation. Since the AGM, Colin Walter, who ran many teaching sessions at Aston Clinton and was a faithful supporter of branch practices and tower practice nights for many years, has also died.

We have been pleased to welcome some experienced ringers moving to live within the branch and to elect several new members recently taught following a particularly impressive recruitment drive at the two Missenden towers. We're hoping they will soon progress to learning methods and will be organising appropriate training sessions for branch members as an addition to our monthly practices.

The branch has also been discussing how best to fund raise for the ODG Bell Fund. With the end of the 100 club and many people no longer carrying cash, the box passed around at branch meetings has been less effective. The AGM therefore agreed that we would raise the Branch element of the annual subscription from £3 to £10 (thus £15 when including the £5 to ODG centrally) from 1st May. It is hoped that this will enable the Branch AGM to agree substantial donations to the bell fund, replacing their previous sources. The branch is also looking at payment terminals which would enable a click and pay at meetings as we move towards a cashless society. This is not without its challenges at branch level and it may well be that a guild-wide solution is the answer.

It would be untrue to pretend that it doesn't take hard work to keep Chiltern Branch vibrant, as our small communities face the challenges faced by towers and ringers up and down the country. We look forward to the resumption of the Orchard Cup in the autumn, and to the possibility of a Branch striking competition for the first time, which will be run in the spirit of co-operation and inclusion for which Chiltern Branch is well known.

Chris Potter & Mark Instone, for Secretary

Chipping Norton

[No news from the towers.]

Jenny Lewis

East Berks and South Bucks

2022 ended a bit flat. The Bray ringers spent considerable time organising an evening of food, fun and games following the final Branch Practice of the year, but unfortunately the social was cancelled due to lack of interest. Perhaps everyone was busy getting ready for the first “normal” Christmas for a couple of years. 2023 has started better. Seven Branch Practices held so far have attracted an average of 16 attendees.

Our annual Tower Captains’ meeting was also well supported with 20 people attending representing 17 towers. Experiences were shared of returning after Covid, dealing with maintenance issues during the very hot weather last summer, and recruitment, and the meeting provided a good opportunity for networking between officers and tower captains.

Hughenden held a recruitment campaign in October posting adverts on Facebook, on public notice boards, in parish magazines etc., and attracted 14 new recruits. They are being taught partly on normal practice night with extra sessions during the week and are making steady progress. It is encouraging that most of them have stuck with it. Several other tower captains reported at the meeting that they had new recruits, and that was before the media coverage on 23rd February when *Ring For The King* was advertised on TV, encouraging people to learn to ring in preparation for the Coronation. A good number of contacts were received and several towers now have multiple new recruits.

Other news from Hughenden was the retirement of David Cornwall as Tower Captain after about 50 years in the post. To mark the occasion there was a special service on Sunday 29th January when David walked down the aisle through a bellringers’ guard of honour to be presented by the Vicar with a specially engraved commemorative handbell supplied by *Bells of Whitechapel*. The ringers also held a celebratory dinner [*photo on back page*] to thank David for his years of service.

Patricia Newton

Newbury

We took part in the Guild Ten Bell competition in November, where we did not seem at our best, but enjoyed the occasion. Mistakes made during the test piece put us quite low in the finishing order.

Following the usual Christmas ringing calendar, which is always busy in the Newbury Branch, the main event was the return and rehang of East Garston bells in February and they are now ringing again. We look forward to our next Branch Practice, which will be held there, so we can all try them out.

Otherwise, we have had an encouraging trickle of new recruits, including some via ART and *Ring for the King*. There have been a number of tower dinners and our AGM was held in March at Bucklebury.

Our advanced (third Friday) practice, which is held jointly with our neighbours in the W&P Andover Branch, and our first Friday practices, are on-going with good levels of support.

For up-to-date forthcoming events and other Newbury Branch information, visit www.bellsnearnewbury.org.

Mark Robins

North Bucks

Milton Keynes Job Show

In North Bucks we were recently given the opportunity to have a stand at a Job Show. One of the Olney ringers was the event organiser and made all the arrangements. Branch members manned the stall for two days and took a total of 45 names, of which, 60% were in our branch.

In two follow up sessions at Loughton, six of these new people had a go, along with one local who heard the bells and the husband of one of the helpers who showed an interest.

So far we have seen several of these at other towers already so, for a free opportunity, this can be classed as a success.



Doug Hird

Old North Berks

Our AGM was once again held successfully by Zoom meeting, and was hosted by our Chairman, Rob Nickless. Charles Morrish stepped down from his role of Vice Chairman to take on one of the Joint Ringing Master roles from September when he retires. Jenny Bennett was elected as our new Vice Chairman. Sadly I have to report the passing of Jean Hazard, a former branch member and a ringer at West Hanney for many years.

The branch ringing school has continued over the winter and spring months. Handling sessions have been held weekly in Abingdon and the Ringing School has given six new teachers of ringing the opportunity to teach in a supportive environment. Four are close to qualifying as ART members and two have already been successfully assessed by ART. Of the learners, five have now the ART *Learning the Ropes* level 1 (bell handling) qualification.

For our younger ringers, rather than six outings a year we now have monthly Sunday afternoon practices held at various towers. Daphne Pollard has provided her delicious cakes, scones and biscuits on each occasion. Numbers have varied between 4 and 11 young people plus their parents and tower captains, who have occasionally made up the numbers necessary for some of the more advanced methods being rung.

The project to augment the North Moreton bells from six to eight has progressed



extremely well. The two new bells were cast at the end of March at the Royal Eijbouts Foundry and hung by Whites of Appleton towards the end of April. These bells incorporate the Royal Cyphers of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, and complete a truly historic octave dating from 1350 to 2023. They will be rung for the first time for the Coronation on 6th May.

The barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall, which had been postponed in 2020 and 2021, finally took place on 12th November. It was a great success, with almost seventy attending. Thanks go to the excellent band, *Jigworks*, and their caller, and to the Harwell ringers and friends for providing a superb supper for everyone.

Ringling and refreshments took place on 2nd January at Steventon. This was a very popular event, with almost forty attendees. Thanks go to the Steventon ringers and friends for their hospitality and for providing a superb range of soups and cakes on such a cold morning. In April we held a successful mini outing to Islip, Blethingdon and Kirtlington with a pub lunch.

Our next social events will be our branch outing and barbecue in July, and a quiz night and supper in Blewbury Village Hall in November.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

Oxford City Branch have continued to have well attended branch practices with the chance for ringers to practise new things and try different bells. The branch AGM was in February at Cuddesdon, and we are pleased to have 11 new members elected.

During the winter months Marston managed to arrange several Saturday afternoon joint practices at Branch towers that have not been in a position to resume weekly evening practices (Cowley and North Hinksey), plus a practice at Iffley and a ringing up and down session mixed with method ringing at Cowley. The opportunity to ring during the daylight hours seemed to be a big draw and we averaged 14 ringers per practice across the 6 sessions.

We were able to ring two quarter peals on our bells over the Christmas period, and in January our youngest ringer, Lydia Poole, rang her first quarter peal inside to celebrate her 11th birthday, and she has subsequently part-conducted two quarter peals.

We had a successful quarter peal day on the Saturday before Christmas, taking in Cuddesdon and Sunningwell, plus a general ring sandwiched in between at Stanton St John.

Hugh Deam's first full scale outing since 2019 took place in March, and was extremely well supported, with 22 ringers from far and wide taking part. We rang at Chearsley, Thame and Great Haseley, where we rang a course of Ipswich Surprise Minor, a first for one of our outings.

Our Easter Monday morning combined practice at Kirtlington (also the first since 2019) was enthusiastically supported as well, with a record number of ringers showing up.

Sara Jones (St Giles) has been busy with gingerbread creations, including this model of Tom Tower in Oxford.



Rachel Croft

Reading

Reading Branch is maintaining a busy schedule. Our Branch practices are well attended and we are ringing for weddings, funerals and memorial services. Towers are supporting one another, particularly when weekday ringing is required, which keeps our retirees busy.

The Branch has a number of young ringers that we wish to encourage and support in the obvious hope that they will continue ringing wherever life takes them. Our recent stars have all gone off to university but they are all supporting ringing in their new "homes".

A new development in the Branch is our joint youth practices with Sonning Deanery young ringers which has given all involved a broader perspective of ringing amongst young people in our area.

Peter Ellis organised an afternoon outing for about 18 Nettlebed and Caversham ringers, which was thoroughly enjoyable and we were very grateful to him for this. We went to Warborough, Benson, and Wallingford followed by a delicious curry. It was a good challenge for our learners to ring heavier bells and for those of us who usually only ring on 6 bells. We were extremely fortunate with the weather as the day before it had been raining deluges and flooding local roads.

Mortimer is preparing to ring for the Coronation. After a piece in the village magazine encouraging people to come and learn to *Ring for the King* we have one new recruit. Rope handling and ringing in rounds are progressing well and our new recruit will be able to ring for the King.

Meanwhile the band, with 3 towers to ring at, (St John the Evangelist, St Mary Virgin both in Stratfield Mortimer and St John the Baptist, Padworth), is leaning to both call and ring Coronation changes.

Lindsey Barker

Sonning Deanery

Sonning Deanery Young Ringers

Sonning Deanery Young Ringers have had a very active few months. Two of our members rang their first quarter peals at a youth practice in November at Hurst [photo on back page – Ed]. We also had a festive practice with mince pies at Easthampstead in December, some of our members had a festive ringing day with ODG youth ringers, and we held a very successful joint practice with Reading Young Ringers in February at Sonning.

Part of the joy of bell ringing is the experience of meeting new people and ringing in new places. Our young ringers have definitely had lots of experience of that this year! In February, our ringers went as part of Bucks and Berks Young Ringers on a ringing outing to London, getting the opportunity to ring with other ringers from all over the South East. They rang at some very prestigious churches, including St Margaret's Westminster which is the parliament church.

In March, young ringers from the Deanery were part of the Berks and Bucks Young Ringers team at SEECON, a youth ringing contest. The team came a very credible 4th place overall, ringing rounds and call changes. The contest was followed by an outing to 4 other towers in Surrey. A great day was had by all and it was good practise for the RWNYS in York in July.

There are regular joint Reading/Sonning practices, as well as Berks and Bucks Young Ringers practices planned for this year. In addition, ringers are encouraged to attend ODG youth practices and YCRA events. I am very grateful to Peter Jasper, Simon Smith, Jenny Page, and Jennifer Ellis who organise BBYR, ODG and Reading youth practices

Jennifer Moynihan, Sonning Deanery Youth Officer

Firsts Day

On 25th March our Training Officer, Jane Mellor, arranged for two quarter peals to be rung at All Saints Wokingham for 'first' quarters. Both quarters were successful, with Jan Glen, Julie Greenway and Jennifer Moynihan scoring their first quarters; congratulations to them all.

Rob Needham

Adedayo, an Arborfield ringer departs

This afternoon, 2nd April, we successfully completed (by the skin of our teeth) a quarter peal of 1260 Plain Bob Doubles to mark Dayo's departure. It was also Dayo's first ever quarter peal (what a way to finish!). Thanks to all those involved, or who came along to wish her well.

You can see a photo of the band and a photo of Dayo with her gifts (a bellringing book, naturally!); plus some vouchers and a brooch attached.



Darren Smith

Branch ringers on BBC Radio Berkshire

On Tuesday 11th April four Sonning Deanery ringers were talking on Radio Berkshire about bell ringing and the *Ring for the King* recruitment exercise. First Darren Smith, tower captain at Arborfield, talked about the number of learners at Arborfield and that he holds a separate training session for them each week; that ringing is a sociable activity; that there is a wide range of ages of both sexes that ring; and that Arborfield plan to ring a quarter peal for the coronation, preceded by a ringing session for the less experienced ringers. Darren has produced a recording of his interview at fb.watch/jOO3TEIgvv/

A little later Simon Farrar, captain of Twyford, talked on Radio Berkshire about having recruits for ringing for the coronation, including some 10-year-olds. He also mentioned that one of his ringers, an 18-year-old, is now teaching his parents to ring. Simon explained how he got into bell ringing at the age of 17 and that, through bell ringing, he has made so many friends since.

Simon was immediately followed by Anita and Andy, learners at Arborfield, and they described how they got into ringing – first was Anita, and then she encouraged her husband Andy to take up ringing. Their learning is going well and they have made new friends through ringing. On coronation day they explained that Arborfield plan to ring a quarter peal, but, as less experienced ringers, they will be taking part in other ringing on the day. Darren's recording of Simon, Andy and Anita's interview is at fb.watch/jQT2ZHSNot/

Branch striking competition

On the 24th April the branch held its 6-bell striking competition at St Michael and All Angels, Sandhurst. The judge was Steve Wells, our Deputy Ringing Master. All Saints, Wokingham, comfortably won the competition ringing Grandsire Doubles.

Rob Needham

South Oxon

What do you do when only six people turn up for a tower practice in an eight-bell tower and no one else is expected? Benson ringers solved the problem by ringing a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor to celebrate the 80th birthdays of three of their tower members – Mike Francis, Clive Bosley and our indefatigable Branch Chairman, John Tchighianoff.

Ringling at Thame was hampered at the beginning of the year due to an electrical fault in the Tower. Service ringing continued, but evening practices could not take place until mid-March, after the installation of new lighting. Regular maintenance often falls to the Tower Captain, and Rosalie has been kept very busy, admitting electricians on no less than ten occasions. Other maintenance visits have included lightning conductor checks, clock maintenance and adjustments and alarm servicing, along with welcoming several visiting bands. All of this work does mean that the bells are in tip top condition for Coronation Ringing.

The oldest bell in St Leonards, Watlington dates from 1587. Three others were cast in the 17th century, and these bells may have been recast to the bells currently in use. Whites of Appleton inspected the tower recently and commented that the last major overhaul was in 1906, when the current frame was installed and two bells added. They deemed that significant restoration work is required to ensure that the bells will continue to ring out into the next century.

Whilst relatively inexperienced, Watlington's current band of ringers are a keen group, and have put in place a major bell restoration project. The cost of the works is anticipated to be in the region of £75,000 and bid writing has begun. Watlington will be looking for support from ringers within the Guild – advice, financial and maybe volunteer labour as progress is made. Watch this space!

Some of our towers are suffering from a shortage of ringers, but it is good to see that the larger towers within the Branch continue to attract and teach new ringers. Five towers are taking part in Tower Twinning, and monthly Branch Practices continue to be well supported, offering ringers a chance to ring something new, as well as catching up on ringing news.

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

The Guild 10-bell competition was held at Shrivenham in November, with 6 teams attending from the 15 Branches. Each team had to perform the same test piece – 269 Grandsire Caters. The top 3 teams were very close with VOWH achieving an historic second place just 2 points behind East Berks & South Bucks and 2 points ahead of Reading Branch. Attendees also enjoyed all the refreshments and watching the video link of the bells as the other teams performed.

We held two well attended ringing up and down workshops at Longcot in January and March. These were aimed at those who can already ring up and down reliably but want to develop their skills ringing up and down in peal.

Following ringing across the Vale for the King's proclamation and the Queen's funeral, our towers are gearing up for ringing for the Coronation in May, with several new recruits showing an interest in learning to *Ring for the King*.

The Branch AGM held in March 2023 in All Saints' Church Faringdon, was very well attended for ringing, 'Songs Of Praise', refreshments and the AGM itself. Five new members were elected, including 3 under the age of 16. In addition to a number of changes of Officers, we approved a new role of Branch Training Officer. Changes were:

- Chair: Tom Edgeworth (was Jackie O'Hagan)
- Secretary: David Wright (was Lucy Laird – many thanks for 20 years devoted service as secretary!)
- Treasurer: Lucy Laird (was Wendy Tynan)
- Branch Rep: Cheryl Watson (was Maggie Minchinton-Smith)
- Training Officer: Tony Crabtree

Thanks to all those Officers continuing in role, Faringdon ringers for hosting (and providing a lovely selection of cakes), Hugh Baxter for leading the service, Diane Clarke for playing the organ, and Guild Master Katie Lane for joining us.

I am sorry to have to report the deaths of two ringers.

Alan O'Shaughnessy died in February. He retired as Buckland Tower Captain in 2018, having been in post for almost 60 years, during which time he taught many new ringers.

Norman Leslie died in March (aged 92). He learnt to ring at Hinton Waldrist and was elected to the Guild in 1953. He was also a member of the Oxford Society, the Appleton Society, and the Ancient Society of College Youths. He rang at least 44 peals including a long length of 10259 Grandsire Caters at Appleton in 1971. He served as Faringdon Tower Captain, retiring in 2006, and was a familiar face at Branch events until very recently. He and his wife Doreen ran our fundraising raffles for 22 years, raising over £3500 for the Branch and Guild Bell Funds.

Finally, congratulations for the following notable achievements:

- Daniel Watson achieved first peal as conductor (Stedman Triples!) aged 15.
- Hedley French, Trevor Howard, Jenny Howard and Kit Margey all achieved their first quarter peal at the first attempt.

David Wright

Witney and Woodstock

[No news received – Ed.]

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Diary of Events for 2022/23

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

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

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

MAY 2023

Tue	02	SDB	EP tbc	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	3	Bicester	BP	Piddington	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	6	OCB	BP	tbc	10.30 – 12.00
Wed	17	SDB	EP tbc	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Wokingham	10.30 – 12.00
				St Paul (8) tbc	
Mon	22	Bicester	BP	Brill	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	24	Reading	BP	Nettlebed (6)	11 -- 12:30pm
Thu	25	VOWH	SC	Shellingford (6)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	27	South Oxon	BP	Berrick Salome (6)	7.00 – 8.00pm
Sun	28	OCB	SP	Headington (8) tbc	15.30 – 17.00

JUNE 2023

Fri	2	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	2	Newbury	BP	Beedon (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	7	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stoney	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	10	EBSB	SC	Chesham (6)	17.00
Sat	10	Reading	BP	Tilehurst (8)	10 – 11:30
Wed	14	EBSB	BP	Fulmer (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Thur	15	Reading	Surprise	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	16	Newbury	AP	Hungerford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Arborfield (6)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP	Marsworth	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	21	VOWH	BP	Lyford (3)	18.45 – 19.30
Wed	21	VOWH	BP	Buckland (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	21	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Watlington (8)	7.00 – 8.00pm
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	Wraysbury (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Wed	28	Reading	BP	Caversham (8)	11 – 12:30

JULY 2023

Fri	7	Newbury	BP	Beenham	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	8	Reading	BP	Pangbourne (8)	10 – 11:30
Sat	15	SDB	BP	Waltham St	10.30 – 12.00
				Lawrence(6) tbc	
Sat	15	Chiltern	BP	Stoke Mandeville	10.00 – 12.00
Tue	18	VOWH	BP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	19	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	20	Reading	Surprise	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	21	Newbury	AP	Newbury	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	22	South Oxon	BP	Drayton St Leonard (7)	7.00 – 8.00pm
Tue	25	Bicester	BP	Woodeaton	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	26	Reading	BP	Shiplake (8)	11 – 12:30

AUGUST 2023

Fri	04	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	4	Newbury	BP	Speen	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	16	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 18.00
Thur	17	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	18	Newbury	AP	Bucklebury	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	19	SDB	BP	White Waltham (6) tbc	16.30 – 18.00
Wed	23	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Sat	26	EBSB	EP	Clewer (6)	10.00 – 12.00

SEPTEMBER 2023

Fri	1	Newbury	BP	Hampstead Norreys	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	9	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	16	SDB	BP	Shottesbrooke (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	16	Chiltern	BP	Ellesborough	10.00 – 12.00
Tue	19	VOWH	BP	Stanford-in-the-Vale (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	20	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	21	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	15	Newbury	AP	Thatcham	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	22	Bicester	BP	Ludgershall	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	23	South Oxon	BP	Marsh Baldon (5)	7.00 – 8.00pm
Wed	27	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Thur	28	EBSB	BP	Clewer (6)	10.00 – 12.00

OCTOBER 2023

Fri	6	Newbury	BP	Great Shefford	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	14	Reading	BP	tbc	10 – 11:30
Tues	17	Bicester	BP	Islip	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	18	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	19	VOWH	BP	Buscot (4)	18.45 – 19.30
Fri	1	September	BP	Hampstead Norreys	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	19	VOWH	BP	Coleshill (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	19	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	20	Newbury	AP	Highclere	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	21	SDB	BP	Finchampstead(6)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	21	Chiltern	SC with Central	Cheddington	14.00 – 16.00
Weds	25	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Aston Rowant (6)	4.00 – 5.00pm
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Bray (8)	14.00 – 16.00

NOVEMBER 2023

Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Chieveley	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	11	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	11	Reading	BP	tbc	10 – 11:30
Wed	15	SDB	EP	tbc	19.30 – 21.00
Thur	16	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20 – 21:30
Fri	17	Newbury	AP	Hungerford	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	18	EBSB	BP	Marlow (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	18	SDB	QM	Wargrave (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	Weston Turville	10.00 – 12.00
Thu	21	VOWH	BP	Uffington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Wed	22	Reading	BP	tbc	11 – 12:30
Wed	22	Bicester	BP	Bletchington	19.30 – 21.00



*Celebratory dinner to mark the retirement of David Cornwall
as Tower Captain of Hughenden*



First quarter for Becki Shuttleworth (Sonning) and James Moynihan (Arborfield)