

ODD BOB



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



2024 ODG Young Ringers Band, see page 11



Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers

Young Ringers Christmas Ringing Day
Monday 23rd December

*Ringing, tower bells and handbells,
tunes and methods, games and cake*

10:30 – 12:00	Wingrave (post code HP22 4PF)
12:00 – 13:45	Pavilion – Stewkley Recreation Ground packed lunch, games
13:45 – 15:15	Stewkley (post code LU7 0HN)

An opportunity to come and ring with other young ringers from across the ODG.

Open to all young ringers (age 18 and under) who can ring a bell on their own.

Bring your own packed lunch

Cost £5 – to cover tower donations, hall hire, cake and soft drinks.

Please confirm you are coming to either -
Jenny Page jenny.page@btinternet.com (07860 721964)
or
Colin Lee colinlee.cml@gmail.com

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From your Editor

It gives me great pleasure to have edited this issue of *Odd Bob* for ODG. Check the Guild website at odg.org.uk and your branch website for up-to-date information, and past issues in electronic format. A reminder - the EBSB Fund Raising website address is bellfund.org.uk.

Judd Flogdell

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

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

When I write the Master's Mutterings for the November issue of *Odd Bob*, I usually reflect upon long summer days, hot and sticky practice nights and the opportunity for a refreshing pint in a nearby pub. Not this summer of 2024. It has been very wet, grey and not particularly hot, so, as the evenings lengthen, I feel a little cheated by the weather and sadly realise that visits to practice nights further afield will be few and far between because night driving, for me, has become more challenging - as much to do with potholes filled with water as my deteriorating eyesight.

Despite the capricious weather, bell ringing events continued apace and Branches kept busy with practices for all abilities, outings and picnics, fetes and celebrations of many different kinds. There is enthusiasm to train new ringers of all ages, to further develop opportunities for young ringers across the Guild, to run excellent courses for ringing and bell maintenance and to support one another by twinning practices and travelling to different towers to maintain Sunday service ringing. These events would not be possible without the dedication of the organisers who give their time, energy and skill; we must all be grateful for their contribution.

It was a few years ago that the ODG members agreed we should introduce a membership database which would enable us to calculate accurately the number of active ringers within our Guild and improve our communication systems so that we can provide every individual member with information that is pertinent to them. A small group of people have spent a great deal of time putting together all that is necessary to develop and introduce *Membermojo* which will ultimately reduce the administrative activities for Branch and Guild officers and will come into effect in a few months' time.

The ODG is not alone in recognising that the needs of the Church of England, and also their bellringers, have changed and continue to change rapidly. We have information at the click-of-a-mouse and communication is expected to be instantaneous. Many ringing associations are reviewing their organisation and seeking ways to reduce administration, strip it of out-of-date conventions so that ringing, recruitment, and the future of the Exercise can be the important focus. Chris Mundy, Deputy Master, has prepared, and presented to the F&GP, a document that will guide us to make the right decisions to secure a strong future for the Guild. The outcome of his work will be made available to everyone when the time is right for it to be taken further.

However, in every organisation, the management of change is always emotive. Often, I read back through the Guild Reports from 1851 and see how much has changed in the intervening years and I am frequently shocked by the intimidating language, the oppressive conventions of previous generations and the controversies that resulted when change took place. And yet, the ODG has grown, survived, flourished and become one of the most respected of the territorial ringing associations. Let us not forget that when we strive to develop future strategies; we must be progressive and optimistic, allow for constructive discussion, be aware that decisions should be made with the future of ringing as a priority, and avoid our own comfort zone of the past if it is no longer appropriate for the generation of the future. A lighter aside - The illustration below is from the Bayeux Tapestry which was embroidered about 1100 and is on my To-Do list so if anyone would like to come with me...?



Bellringers in the Bayeux Tapestry

The Tapestry shows acolytes walking beside the coffin of Edward the Confessor, who died in 1066 on its way for interment in Westminster Abbey. They are ringing 'spirit

bells' to keep evil spirits from entering the body before it reached its final resting place in the protection of the holy building.

Now, I hear you might be thinking 'What has this got to do with the ODG?' Well, Islip was the birthplace of Edward the Confessor born c.1004. Islip St Nicholas is in the Bicester Branch, on the River Ray just above the confluence with the River Cherwell and about five miles north of Oxford. A chapel associated with Edward the Confessor existed north of the church but was demolished in the 18th century. The TV series, 'Time Team' explored the area, but no trace of Edward's birthplace was revealed.



Our server manager, Richard Stanworth & his granddaughter

St Nicholas has eight bells; the trebles were cast in 1956 by Mears and Stainbank and the original 6 by George Mears in 1859 and were a complete ring from the Whitechapel foundry.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

The welcome morning for new ODG members' morning was held on a very wet, cold and blustery, Saturday in July. We had a good turnout and a lot of fun with the Stallpits mini-ring with Tony Crabtree and Chris Mundy in charge, handbells with Craig Robertson and Jon Mills tutoring, and the jargon-busting session with Joe Norton. We could not achieve this event without the hospitality of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, their garden and marquee – thanks to everyone who joined in, and made it fun despite the appalling weather.

ODG Towers & Belfries Committee's report

The T&B committee met in March 2024 by Zoom but the August meeting at Radley had to be cancelled; partly owing to the Chairman's house move. New members are very welcome. You don't need to be a belfry expert but if you are keen and willing to learn, you can gain a lot from the experience of the other members.

Various topics have come up this year from enquiries and inspections, including: **Emergency Lighting** – It is really important that ringing chambers have proper "emergency" lighting; in other words, if there is a power cut or the fuse blows, the light switches automatically to battery operation. The ringers aren't left in the dark,

even for a moment. The risk of being blacked out is too horrible to contemplate, yet many towers still don't have it. It is important to test the emergency light periodically and the onset of Autumn is clearly a critical time. If your light hasn't been tested recently, then you might still be at risk of black-out and you certainly won't get the marks credited to your next "Tower Maintenance Award" inspection sheet. You might have an emergency torch to help you get back down the stairs, but this doesn't count as Ringing Chamber emergency lighting.

Ash for Stays – there is increasing evidence that it is hard to find proper air-dried ash from healthy (not ash-dieback) trees. If you are replacing a stay, make sure you go to a reputable supplier. If you are making the stay yourself, then make sure it is correctly tapered, straight grained etc, to maximise its ability to absorb impacts and minimise the risk of premature breakage.

Stretchy Ropes - Unfortunately, we are seeing increasing instances of stretchy (often new) ropes giving the perception that the bells are "going" badly with difficulty ringing and teaching on them. Towers should "stretch" all new ropes with heavy weights for a week or so. This will stretch out the sally and tail even if it has a man-made "pre-stretched" top end.

Courses - We ran a rope course at Radley in February, a basic belfry course at Church Enstone in April and a "Secrets of the Steeple Keeper" course at St Mary's, Mortimer in July. The total number of students was rather less than in 2023. This could be due to Covid backlog or maybe variable success in publicising the courses through the existing guild distribution system. We hope that Membermojo will reach more members. Email tbchair@odg.org.uk or tbsecretary@odg.org.uk if you fancy attending or indeed hosting a course.

Inspections and Advice - Much of the committee's work goes on between meetings and courses with inspections and advice. Our twelve members have visited or advised nearly 30 towers so far in 2024 including Bell Fund grant inspections. Please ask if you would like a visit either for general advice, a specific problem or a Tower Maintenance Award (TMA). Towers are encouraged to ask for a TMA inspection and may get a certificate (bronze, silver or gold) besides lots of helpful advice or suggested improvements.

The T&B page of the ODG website <https://odg.org.uk/info/towers-and-belfries/> continues to expand with useful material. You will find contact details and the services offered by our members. If you can't find what you are looking for, please contact tbchair@odg.org.uk.

Tony Crabtree, Chairman – Towers & Belfries Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been seven library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 110. They were about:-

- Membership enquiry from a Chiltern Branch member.
- Transfer of Great Missenden bells to the church from Missenden Abbey in the 16th century.
- Identity of a girl who wrote an article about bellringing for Oxford High School magazine around 1958.
- Peal at Stratfield Mortimer on 28/12/1903.
- Holifields in a peal at Kidlington on 5 April, 1913.
- Composer of peal at Shipton-under-Wychwood on 10th July 1906.
- Issues with peal records arising from there being two ringers called Thomas Langdon earlier in the 20th century.

There was also a query about my post of librarian, which I am looking to relinquish in the next year or two. Subsequent email exchanges showed it would have been impracticable for the enquirer to take the post on. If anybody in the Guild might be interested in being Guild librarian, please contact me.

And the usual message, if anybody would like to visit the library, you are very welcome to do so, please let me know. Books can also be borrowed. As an alternative I am happy to look up information, so please get in touch 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

Learning & Development Workgroup

The workgroup is now in the capable hands of chairman Chris Mundy, Jonathan Cresshull having left the group for family reasons. We thank Jonathan for his significant contribution to training and 'education', particularly in relation to the Steeple Aston Course.

The bands representing the ODG and the Bucks & Berks Young Ringers again performed creditably in the RWNYC in London, receiving praise from the judges in their respective sections: 8-bell method and 8-bell call changes. This has grown into a very large event, effectively now with four separate contests on six and eight bells, restricting the number of potential venues. We understand that Birmingham will host in 2025. Regional practices for all our young members, not specifically related to preparation for the RWNYC, are now taking place throughout the Guild so there should be one to attend not too far from you. Please encourage your young ringers to get in touch and take part if they are not already doing so.

The Radley Course in the spring was again very popular with five full groups. The feedback was generally very positive. Those wishing to ring Grandsire Triples could not be accommodated and a separate mini course was organised to cater for them on another day. Next year's course will be held a little earlier, on 29th March. The recent Michaelmas Course was less well supported with just 17 applicants, split into three groups to cover Stedman Triples, Cambridge and Yorkshire Major or Cornwall, Bristol and London Major. Again there was positive feedback although fatigue towards the end of the day seemed to be an issue for some.

The Steeple Aston and Grandsire Caters courses will have taken place by the time you read this. We are grateful to those members of the L&D Workgroup who have taken on aspects of the Steeple Aston organisation, notably student applications and helpers, as well as those in the Banbury Branch arranging towers and pubs.

A review of the Focus, Terms of Reference and Activities of the L&D Workgroup has formed a major part of our recent discussions. In particular, there is concern that the teaching of Foundation Skills within the Guild is, at best, patchy. How can we, as a group, support individuals, towers and branches so that progression into method ringing is better facilitated? There are branches from whom we hear very little. Please let Chris Mundy (edchairman@odg.org.uk) or myself know what you feel you need in your area, as these important discussions are ongoing.

Robert Newton, edsecretary@odg.org.uk

Another way of preventing damp and stiffness in our ropes

Like many other bellringers we at St Margaret's, Mapledurham found during wet periods and especially over the winter months, our ropes and even the sallies becoming damp. The sallies can be unpleasant to hold and the ropes stiff potentially to the point of being dangerous. We thought of building a rope warming tube that some use; though it would have been a difficult item to store in our relatively small

ringing chamber, so we considered other alternatives. Clearly the problem is the rope and sally absorbing water due to high humidity in our case possibly aggravated by being very close to the River Thames.

Like many we have polyester rope above the sally which is resistant to the problem, and we needed to prevent dampness getting into the rope and sally.



Protective rope covers in St Margaret's, Mapledurham conditions.

Our solution was to purchase some 100 mm medium duty lay flat polythene tubing. That fits closely but not tightly over the sally. Cut into 3-metre lengths to cover the sally and hemp rope tail below it and thus provide an impervious layer around the rope and sally (*see picture on left with covers installed*). We install the covers only when we anticipate high humidity

The damp stiff rope problem has been eliminated as has any rope/sally dampness. Any concerns that the polythene tube traps dampness in the rope/sally seems unfounded though the covers rarely remain on for longer than two weeks between bell ringing activity which must help that potential issue.

In preparing for this article, we timed how long it took to put the covers on with each being done simultaneously: It was 1m, 10 secs, which is quite fast, though of course we have done it before. Removal is quick and the covers easily stored during ringing. Time well spent to avoid dampness and protect the ropes and safer ringing. This seems a cheap and effective solution that has worked well for us over recent years. 300 metres of the tubing costs around £25. The tubes do get a bit "crumpled" after a while though at that price they can be replaced annually. (We have quite a bit left).

Roger Hopkinson, Steeple Keeper

ODG Youth Team at the 2024 Ringing World National Youth Competition (RWNYC) in London

Having travelled to Worcester, Exeter and York for the previous three competitions it was rather nice to return to London this year. Certainly those of us from the Reading Branch regard London as being on our doorstep. Not quite so close for other members of our squad of 14 ringers who used six different routes to meet at our first tower. Laura who came from Shipton-under-Wychwood, had a particularly early start as you can't get much further west in the Guild, and Evie from Stewkley went north to Milton Keynes to get a fast train in.

The RWNYC started as an 8-bell competition with method teams competing for the Whitechapel Trophy and call change teams winning the Ringing World Editor's Trophy for Excellence. Following Covid 6-bell teams were allowed to enter. 2024 saw another change with only the 8-bell bands being able to win one of the main trophies.

This year the 14, 6-bell call change bands and five 6-bell method bands competed at St James Garlickhythe. The 13, 8-bell call change bands and four 8-bell method bands competed at St Olave Hart Street. When not ringing their competition touches the bands had handbells, mini-rings and other towers to ring at with everyone going at some point to St Mary-le-Bow. A highlight for our aspiring tenor ringers.

In 2023 the ODG team entered as one of the five 6-bell method teams in York. It is a credit to how the squad has expanded and developed over the past year that we were able to enter the 8-bell method competition this year. We had some very stiff competition, just look at the number of peals the winning Yorkshire Tykes band have rung. (Ringing World article)



ODG squad ringing at St Lawrence Jewry

We finished equal 3rd with 7.5 points and received some very positive feedback from the judges, back bells keeping a good rhythm along with some areas to work on. It was another grand day out. We could walk to all our allotted towers, St Lawrence Jewry, St Mary-le-Bow, St Michael Cornhill, Christchurch Spitalfields, St Botolph without Aldgate and St Magnus London Bridge. St Paul's Cathedral was a fantastic location for the results.

t was great to see Sara Jones (ODG 2022 / 23) was a volunteer and Daniel Page (ODG 2015-2021) was one of the young judges for the 6-bell competition. Two of our parents were stewards and I met other ODG members throughout the day.

Jo Cresshull, the RWNYC organiser quoted a number of statistics in her final address, they included: 300 young ringers, 300 supporters, 140 leaders, 130 stewards, 13 towers across the city. We added 19000 steps to our list which included the final few for pizza before retracing our steps to our various main line stations and tubes to return home.

We look forward to 2025, if you have any young ringers please do encourage them to get involved. For more details contact Colin Lee on colinlee.cml@gmail.com or Jenny Page on jenny.page@btinternet.com

Jenny Page

Radley course

This year's course comprised of five groups – two Bob Doubles, one Grandsire Doubles, one Bob Minor and one Bob Major. We had five tutors, 26 students, 39 helpers, 15 towers, and of course Daphne and her wonderful team who looked after us at Radley at the start and finish of the day. If you have been wondering if you should apply to future courses, below is a student and a tutor's perspective of the day.

The student's view

"Having been fortunate to secure a place on the Plain Bob Minor course back in January, it was with mild trepidation and a little nervously that I set off for Radley Church rooms last Saturday morning. Would I be good enough? Would I make a fool of myself? Would I mess it up every time? Well I needn't have worried at all! On arrival, there was coffee and biscuits and an excited buzz of anticipation in the church rooms. We gathered in our groups and met our tutor, in my case Joe, and organised getting to our first tower. On arrival we had an hour's tutorial where Joe patiently and brilliantly explained the mechanics of Plain Hunt and then Plain Bob, there was a kind of *Eureka!*... moment when he explained bobs and singles.

During this our helpers arrived, and we then got to take it in turns to ring some Plain courses of Plain Bob, with Joe standing by. This repeated for each of the 5 students and carried through the 2nd and 3rd towers gradually introduced Bobs and singles, until we were all ringing touches at the end of the day. The helpers were wonderful, both ringing and standing with us learners. It was then back to Radley Church rooms for supper and presentations to round off an excellent and very well organised day. Thanks to Lindsay and all the tutors and helpers involved and I'm already looking forward to next year."

Andy Dudley

The tutor's view

"As a new tutor, I was not quite sure what to expect, but it was a great day and superbly well organised. I was given details of my students several weeks before the course and so was able to speak to each of them individually before the day of the course to understand what stage they were at, and what they were looking to achieve on the day. I was encouraged that they all seemed so keen and were looking forward to the day itself.

After coffee and a general introduction to the Course from Lindsay we split into our various groups. In our group we had a theory session where we discussed a number of "pointers" to use whilst ringing to help guide you to the next "piece of work" and we discussed the areas people found most difficult – and what tips people had to help with those. Our first practical session was on the excellent bells at Radley where everybody had several opportunities to ring the method.

Lunch was at a local pub which gave us chance to get to know each other better as well as having some nice food. Our first tower after lunch, Sunningwell, had slightly more challenging bells but all the group did well on them, and we tried some different exercises to do some intensive dodging practice. Our last tower of the day were a delight – ringing in the extensive organ loft at Chilton. These were lovely bells and even had a tutor room next to the ringing chamber and a kitchen immediately below for afternoon refreshments. All the students were able to ring Bob Doubles well at this tower with minimal assistance, so it was great to see the progress which had been made during the day.

We then gathered back at "HQ" for a meal together, and de-brief on what everybody had been up to during the day. It had been a really, great course. I was so pleased to see the progress the students made during the day - so they could go back to their towers much more confident in ringing Bob Doubles. Many thanks to Lindsay who had done so much of the mammoth organising task to ensure the day went smoothly and to the volunteers who provided a great meal for us in the evening as a lovely way to end the day".

Chris Mundy

It was a very successful day in all the groups – the feedback across the board was excellent. If you are thinking of applying in future – please do, we would love to see you.

Lindsay Powell

Safeguarding News

There have been no major changes in the way that Church safeguarding policy affects the activities of ringers recently, but the Diocese has been tightening up on the way that it applies current legislation. Effectively this has a small effect on the requirements for Tower Captains within the diocese. Those who have no young people within their bands will no longer need an enhanced DBS check. Tower Captains who teach or supervise those who teach youngsters will still need the check.

The safeguarding compliance of leaders of groups of young people drawn from a number of different parishes e.g. Youth Striking Competition teams, will continue to be monitored by the Guild SO. However, as the monitoring of compliance with Diocesan Safeguarding Regulation is in general the responsibility of parishes, the F&GP committee have discussed the issue of monitoring of groups of Guild members who teach across more than one parish e.g. where groups of members come together to form ringing schools, will be left to the PSOs within the parishes in which they teach. We recommend that teachers share details of DBS check and C of E training with the Tower Captain and SO of parishes in which they teach, if this is different from their own. For further information on these issues, see the following documents -

[Church of England Roles Eligible for a Criminal Record Check](#)
[Activities Eligible for an Enhanced DBS](#)

June Wells, Guild Safeguarding Officer

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Because of Covid and the effects of lockdown, there was little desire, need or ability for bands to do any work on their bells and therefore to have them inspected, so activity was negligible and with the exception of Chalfont St Peter and South Leigh, all awards expired.

Since the last report (in January) activity has started to pick up, with four towers (Bray, Ellesborough, Dorchester and Cookham) all renewing an award. Congratulations to them all.

The number of current awards has risen slightly, from eight at the time of the last report to twelve now. We hope that more towers will look to renew their awards. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is 89, which is about 21% of the 440 towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been 176 inspections (of which 27 were preliminaries), resulting in 144 awards (102 Gold, 28 Silver, and 14 Bronze).

The slow recovery after the pandemic is disappointing and there are still a large number of expired awards, and the T & B committee will try to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards.

The number of Branches having a tower in the “current awards” list is now only six out of the fifteen Guild Branches, with Banbury having gained the predominant position.

The placings are as follows:

Banbury	4	(3 Gold, 1 Silver)
EBSB	3	(Gold)
Witney & Woodstock	2	(Gold)
Sonning	1	(Gold)
Chiltern	1	(Gold)
South Oxon	1	(Gold)

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 13.11.24
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 19.12.24
Cropredy (S.M.V)	Banbury	Expires 19.12.24
Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning	Expires 25.01.25
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 16.04.25
South Leigh (St James)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 13.11.25
Wardington (St Mary Magdalene)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.25
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB	Expires 22.04.26
Ellesborough	Chiltern	Expires 02.05.26
Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon	Expires 25.05.26
Cookham (S.M.V)	EBSB	Expires 29.09.26

Silver Award

Deddington (SS Peter & Paul)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.25
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There are no current Bronze awards.

The above results reflect the situation as at the 9th November and since the pandemic, the list of expired towers has been omitted (if your tower has had an award in the past and is not on the list above, its award has expired).

John Davidge, T&B Committee

News from the Branches

Banbury

Cropredy Ringers' Quarter Peal

On Wednesday 28th August Cropredy ringers rang a first quarter with Ben Humphrey. Ben had learned to handle a bell with his Grandfather Keith Abbott when he was a child. Having graduated and returned to the Banbury area to work he came back to ringing with us at Cropredy. The quarter was special in having a Grandfather and Grandson ring together. We rang it at Hanwell where Keith had been Tower Captain for many years and it was dedicated to Jeff Chard, a much respected vicar of Hanwell, who had died recently. It was also dedicated to Anne Abbott, Ben's Grandmother. All in all, a very special occasion.

Brenda Day



Ringers: 1. Keith Abbott (C), 2. Brenda Day, 3. Heather Bletchly, 4. Andries Bosland, 5. Luke Wilson, Tenor, Ben Humphrey

Branch Striking Competition

We had a most enjoyable Striking Competition at Cropredy on Sat 29th June. The sun shone and all present were able to sit out in the churchyard.

There were six teams: Adderbury, Bloxham, Cropredy (2), Steeple Aston and Wardington. Mark Sayers was the judge, ably helped by Bob Reeves. Steeple Aston won the Method trophy and Adderbury won the Call Change Cup. It was very satisfying to note that each band had at least one person ringing in their first ever striking competition and Wardington had THREE first timers. Bloxham's team also featured two under 18s, as well as the largest age range, from 11 years to somewhere around seven decades older than that.

Congratulations to all who took part, especially those teams who had been working hard on new skills so their team could enter. The ringing for the day ended with a nicely struck plain course of Stedman Triples which was followed by the picnic in the churchyard. The raffle was generously supported and made £96 for Branch maintenance funds.

Zoe Lee

Branch Outing

On 16th August, the Branch held their annual outing just over the county border in Northamptonshire to Greens Norton, Pattishall, Moreton Pinkney and Eydon followed by a meal at the George and Dragon, Chacombe. This was a well-attended and enjoyable day.

Rosemary Hemmings

Bicester

In the last six months, we've had at least three 'stand-out' events as well as a host of regular ones. In September Steve Coleman came to Bletchinghamdon to give a talk to a packed and entranced audience on 'Ropesight - how to get it and how to survive without it' and on the 'Best way to learn methods'. Later that month the Launton Handbell Ringers came to Islip Village Hall to give a much-appreciated recital of traditional and folk music, popular classics, children's nursery rhymes as well as secular music ending with an opportunity for all to 'have a go'. We held our annual striking competition and BBQ in Islip (judged by Hugh Deam and Maarit Kivilo) – amazingly the rain held off (the flooding/ road closures in Islip put off all but the most intrepid) and five teams entered. Islip's B team narrowly beat the Youth Team. Further details and a full report can be found on the website - bicester.odg.org.uk/ In recent months Charlie Macke has been awarded ART's Learning the Ropes Level 4 certificate (and Charlie has rung her first Quarter Peal at Bletchinghamdon as has Vikki Fielden, who, along with Sally Cross, have also gained Level 3); Jo Strange Level 1; and Andy Dudley has been awarded his M1 teaching handling certificate. Bletchinghamdon's bells have been much used whilst White's work at Kirtlington's during October meant they were out of action.

Regular Branch Practices have been held at Souldern and Charlton-on-Otmoor – particularly appreciated since both are suffering from depleted (or non-existent regular bands). There has been an inaugural Triples Try-out practice in Islip during August led by Steve Vickers, as well as Doubles Daytime practices in Bletchinghamdon.

Finally we have all been saddened by the death of Ron Burgess in August – he and Jane, his wife, have been such supportive ringers to many in the Bicester branch over the years – always with great cheerfulness and encouragement and made ringing fun for whatever stage of a ringer's skill. Thank you Ron for all you've done.

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

Making a difference, month by month, practice by practice

After lockdown the Central Bucks Branch was in something of a quandary. Nearly all the Committee had either moved away or decided to step down. At the first AGM after lockdown I was the only man standing in my existing role as Treasurer, with a few hardy stalwarts with previous experience but unwilling to take on an actual role. At that AGM all we asked was for people to offer to join the Committee, not necessarily to take on an official position.

From that point we have moved to have a hugely supportive team, with most roles filled and, for the first time since then, I am holding fewer than three titles! My main role now is as Ringing Master for the branch – what a learning curve. I have had to work with the other members of the Committee supporting them as they learn their roles and to take on more as Ringing Master, and as we don't have one, Training Officer. I have had to organise branch practices, outings and striking competitions. At the start I felt very inadequate as Ringing Master for the branch. I had been running Stewkley for some time, sometimes with a very experienced band, then two families left, leaving more of a learner band. With other commitments it can feel as though you aren't doing enough, so I had to decide what I *could* do rather than what I couldn't.

With the support of my Stewkley ringers we started offering to visit any towers struggling after lockdown. To start, three or four of us visited a local tower every week for their practice for three months. We have since more recently done the same for another month. A testament to our work there is that in our striking competition last Saturday they entered two teams (as did we) and they beat us! Maybe they should now be helping us.

About a year ago I started a once a month "special" practice at Stewkley on our normal practice night, concentrating on a specific method. We were alternating between Grandsire and Plain Bob, but it soon became clear that the wish was to concentrate on just Plain Bob, so we now have Plain Bob night once a month. We have had 23 ringers at the last few, so proving popular. To start we struggled through Plain Bob Doubles, now we have several people that are attempting touches or taking the plunge and having a go at Major. This is incredibly rewarding. Some towers come *en masse* so we benefit from their experienced ringers as helpers or solid ringers to support the learners. I also realised there were more advanced ringers that were unable to progress at their own towers so have begun occasional more advanced sessions starting with Stedman. Again, to start we struggled to get through a plain course of Doubles but now are teaching touches of Doubles and even having a bash (quite literally!) at touches of Triples.

Our aim in 2025 is to start working towards surprise ringing – starting with Treble Bob Hunt, via Little Bob and Kent, aiming for Cambridge - and no doubt other methods along the way. Every third Wednesday at Stewkley - Special Practice of

Plain Bob Doubles, Minor, Triples, Major or Grandsire Doubles or Triples. My message to other areas struggling to progress is support each other. Share a practice once a month or visit, by arrangement, in groups with a focus in mind.

John Chantler

Orchard Cup Hosts

On Saturday, 12th of October, the Winslow Bell Tower got competitive (in a friendly way!). In a first for our church and tower, we were proud to play host to the Orchard Cup, a 6-bell striking competition for the Central and Chiltern Branches. We were joined by more than 30 bell ringers from towers around the surrounding area, including Aylesbury, Cheddington, Little Horwood, and Stewkley. The towers competed in teams of six (some towers put forward more than one team) to perform a 5–10 minute set piece of work involving a “method” or “call changes”. While each team took their turn in the bell tower, Tony the judge from the Oxford Diocesan Guild officiated, teams, supporters, and Guild members enjoyed tea and homemade refreshments provided by some of the many bakers among the ringers and friends of the bell tower community. Thank you very much to all who kept the ringers refuelled. As this was a first-time experience for all of us in the Winslow bell tower, we entered the competition with no expectations on the result other than to enjoy the afternoon, meet ringers from other towers, and be inspired by the many skilled towers we are fortunate to have in our surrounding area. So when the results came in with a second place to Winslow (and a 5th place for our second team), we were thrilled.



Orchard Cup ringers

Congratulations are in order for Aylesbury, the winner of the Orchard Cup, and to all the teams and ringers who joined us in this spirited and friendly competition. In the meantime, we were also delighted that by hosting the competition, we were able to raise £80 towards new ropes. Our tower’s participation would not have been possible had it not been suggested by Oliver Rhodes and so very well-supported by our bell ringers and tower supporters. Special thanks to our ringers Di, Jo, Jan, Lorraine, Kate, Janet, Richard, and Mick – as well as to all our other ringers who were not available for this event but support us throughout the year.

Andrew Wishart

Chiltern

Chiltern Branch has continued to hold regular monthly practices with varied attendance levels and several of the newer recruits making steady progress with methods. We celebrated the augmentation and re-hanging of the bells at Slapton with a well attended branch practice. The local ringers remain keen to welcome visitors and new recruits. Most of our towers continue to struggle with recruitment and several are dependent for Sunday ringing on help from other towers. Fortunately we have many members willing and able to ring at two or more towers each Sunday.

Some towers have also started sharing practices to ensure sufficient people are present to extend the repertoire of methods rung. Local initiatives have also led to some additional Saturday practices outside of the more formal Branch practices being organised to help specific members or towers to advance their ringing. Of necessity such practices are arranged at relatively short notice, but details can generally be found on the [Chiltern Branch](#) website.

We are also pleased to report that our Chairman (Ruth Groves) has managed to return to ringing after a long period of illness during the Summer."

Chris Potter

Chipping Norton

Monthly Branch Practices

At our Branch AGM in March, we discussed the need for recruitment and how to improve striking. On the former I'm pleased to see a general trickle of new learners come forward to 'give it go'. Some have fallen by the wayside, and this is to be expected when they realise how difficult ringing can be. Branch Practices continue to be well attended with numbers generally between 10 and 20. All branch practices are themed, either around a specific method, or on exercises designed to improve listening skills and better striking. Anyone wishing to attend a branch practice can find details on the branch website chippy.odg.org.uk. Please email our branch Ringing Master brm@chippy.odg.org.uk beforehand as details may have changed.

Around The Towers

In recent months there has been many notable events throughout our branch. At Shipton-Under Wychwood, two ringers, Laura Cooper (13) and her mother Tracey, attended the Bradfield Ringing Course in August. Laura's attendance being part sponsored from the PCC Bell Fund.

During August and September we rung five Quarter Peals featuring members of Shipton tower. 1288 of little Bob Major – 48min. Tracey Cooper first in method. 1260 of Grandsire Doubles – 44min. To celebrate 25 years of marriage of Christine (ringer) and Graham Stevens and a 21st birthday of their daughter Zoe. 1320 of Cambridge Major – 48min. To congratulate Louisa Seers and Stephen Denly on their recent engagement.

1260 of Grandsire Triples – 50min. An 80th Birthday compliments to Joy Brooks, and also Jo Cook and Alison Minson on Tuesday, 24th September. All long serving members of Shipton tower.

1260 of Bob Triples – 50min. Rung before the Service of Installation of the new Vicar of the Wychwood Benefice, Rev. Sarah Sharp.

Bells were rung on Pentecost Sunday in Chipping Norton to mark the opening of the Branch Community Hub. The Hub is a unique one-stop shop for anyone in need of a lift in life and is in the former NatWest Bank building in the Marketplace. Ringing also took place for the 80th anniversary of D-Day and the Chipping Norton Festival in June. The bells have been rung for twelve weddings across the Benefice and several visiting bands have been made welcomed.

Chadlington bells were rung for service and to celebrate the 100th birthday of Joyce Watson a local resident on the 12 May. They also rang out on the 6th June for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day Landings in 1944. This was followed a few days later at Hook Norton where a Quarter Peal - 1288 of Grandsire Triples was rung on the 8 June to commemorate D-Day. Later in August we enjoyed a lovely summer evening garden party, and our thanks go to Mandy and Nigel for hosting it. Mandy followed this up in September by ringing her first Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Doubles inside.

The Guild event of October was the 6-bell Raising and Lowering and the 6-bell Striking Competitions, held at Shottesbrooke & Twyford, and Hook Norton were very happy to win this up and down competition for a second time, thus retain the inaugural Coronation Trophy won by them only last year at Wigginton. However, we were overjoyed to come third in the later 6-bell striking competition.

Congratulations to all Hooky ringers involved. With celebrations closer to home a Quarter Peal was rung on 12 Oct to mark the 175th anniversary of the founding of Hook Norton Brewery.

My thanks to David Salter, Mike Brooks, Chris Harris, Ken Wakefield and Sally Austin for their contributions.

Geoffrey Stretton, Branch Secretary

East Berks and South Bucks

Last year 22 new members were elected in the Branch, many of whom were “Ring for the King” recruits. A new members’ outing was organised for them visiting Clewer (6), Cookham (10) and Shottesbrooke (6). Packed lunches were consumed in the church hall at Cookham where Katie Lane (Guild Master) joined these new members to show them some of the Guild property and to talk to them about the Guild and Guild activities. Sadly, the date chosen (10th August) was not popular so only five new members attended but they really enjoyed the experience, and we plan to organise a similar event next year, avoiding the middle of the school holidays.

EBSB hosted the Guild 8-bell Competition and AGM at Stoke Poges. It was a busy and exhausting day for those involved but we were delighted to be presented with the 8-bell Competition trophy and the Sponsored Ringing trophy.

The Branch 6-bell Competition was held at Hitcham. Only three teams took part. Judges, Nigel Mellor and James Moynihan, gave the following results: 1st were High Wycombe 19 faults, 2nd Amersham 31 faults, 3rd Clewer 102 faults High Wycombe represented the Branch in the Guild 6-bell Competition and were pleased to be placed 2nd.

14 teams took part on the Lorna Newton knock-out contest that takes place over the summer months. Five teams qualified for the final contest at Fulmer but sadly Beaconsfield/Penn had to withdraw at short notice. High Wycombe took the Winners' Trophy with Marlow, Hughenden and Lane End following close behind. Congratulations are due to all these bands for reaching the final.

The Bucks and Berks Young Ringers had a great day out in London on the day of the Ringing World National Youth Contest. They took part in the call change category as an eight-bell band. They did really well coming joint 4th out of 13 teams with a score of 8/10, and their medals were presented under the dome of St Paul's Cathedral.

Just a week after the Youth Contest, Sian Robinson and Peter Jasper, who organises the B&B band, were married. The ceremony took place at All Saints Marlow, where Peter and Sian both ring, and the happy couple left the church by boat. What a wonderful setting for a wedding.



*Peter and Sian Jasper on their wedding day
Photo: Mark Sisley*



Friends and family who rang for the wedding of Peter and Sian

Photo: Mark Sisley

At St Michael's Church, Bray teas are served every Sunday during July and August. The ringers took their turn to host this one Sunday. Apart from providing and serving homemade cakes and scones they also offered tower tours. Many visitors took the opportunity to see the ringing chamber made famous in the Midsomer Murders bellringing episode. A total of £300 was raised during the afternoon which was donated to Thames Valley Adventure Playground.

Patricia Newton

Newbury

Highlights for the last few months have been our monthly elementary and advanced practices and our mid-week ring and lunch dates, largely all supported well and popular with our members. We held our branch 6-bell striking competition in the Summer, where Bucklebury won and went on to take part in the ODG competition in October. The Marshall Shield was also awarded that day, to Peasemore for recruitment and training. We had a team take part in the ODG 8-bell competition, held at Stoke Poges in May.

Our member records in the new Membermojo system are now activated and all members will be able to log in. We have also commissioned our new website, which is now hosted by the ODG, linking all relevant branch information, including our diary and past issues of our Summer and Christmas newsletters since 2015. All branch news is covered in detail in our newsletter, which can be found on our website - newbury.odg.org.uk

Mark Robins

North Bucks

The North Bucks Branch organises two types of practices each month. Saturday morning practices focus on ringing and often have a method to work on. Thursday afternoon ringing is of a more social nature but often develops into a master class. Both of these are being well supported.

A number of 10-bell practices are also being held at Olney. Although their original purpose was to develop a band for the Guild 10-bell competition, they have found more value in bringing developing ringers into higher numbers.

This year's branch outing went to neighbouring Towcester Branch of the PDG. Along with the usual rings of 5 and 6, we made a point of trying out the new ring of 8 at Pattishall as it is quite likely that this tower will be used for next year's inter-branch striking competition.

In November we are organising a new course. "how to Judge a striking competition." This will be held at Old Bradwell. Expect a full report in due course. Attendees have signed up from branches throughout the Guild so perhaps it won't be so difficult for Branch secretaries to find judges for their competitions next year.

Doug Hird

Old North Berks

Following the success of the 2024 AGM during the morning and the lunch afterwards at North Moreton, it was decided at the October Committee meeting that we will continue with 'face to face' AGMs during the morning. The 2025 meeting will be held on 15th March and the Abingdon ringers kindly offered to be hosts. However, we will continue to have our February and October Branch Committee meetings by Zoom meeting. Therefore members can attend from the comfort of their own homes rather than having to face sometimes long drives in the dark. The only downside is that coffee, tea, cakes and a sociable chat afterwards is not possible!

Branch practices of all descriptions are generally very successful and attendance numbers are steady or improving. The afternoon and advanced practices are particularly well supported, with many branch members enjoying the opportunity to ring more complex methods on the way to learning to ring Surprise Major. Sadly I have to report the recent deaths of Kate Crennell, formerly of Chilton, and Peter Corderoy of Blewbury. Peter was a long-standing Guild member with over seventy years' membership, joining in 1952. He was also Tower Captain at Blewbury from 1996 to 2015 and will be much missed.

Our 6-bell striking competition was held once again during a warm June morning in Radley. It was judged by Jonathan and Jo Cresshull of Oxford, who were impressed by the number of teams entering (eight) and the quality of ringing. Wantage claimed

victory with an impressive 10.5 faults, and they went on to represent the Branch in the Guild's 6-bell and raising and lowering competitions.

Our branch outing took place on 6th July, and we visited Moreton in Marsh, Broadwell (St Paul), Stow-on-the-Wold, Great Rissington and Broadwell (SS Peter and Paul), with lunch at the Bell, Stow-on-the-Wold, and afternoon tea in Broadwell. Philip Roberts told us that he had been arranging our branch outings for at least twenty years and that this will be his last. Both he and Janette were thanked for all the hard work they had both put into making some great days out for branch members. The outing was followed by a barbecue for the last time at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, which was attended by over fifty members, partners and friends. As ever the food was truly excellent, and our grateful thanks go to Stuart and Naomi for hosting this event for us for the past twenty years. The good news is that this does not mean the end of outings and barbecues, as Mandy Winters, our Social Secretary, has some interesting plans afoot for next year.

At our October Committee meeting we heard that the fifth bell at Sutton Courtenay is currently unringable because of a broken gudgeon. It will be repaired most probably in spring 2025, with the gudgeons being replaced and the twisted wooden headstock with a metal headstock. The faculty is in process and a grant has been awarded by the ODG. It was agreed that a grant of £500 will also be made from our Branch funds. More work at Sutton Courtenay is likely to take place over the coming years.

Our next social event will have taken place by the time you read this, which is a skittles evening with fish and chips supper, being held at the Wallingford Sports and Social Club on Saturday, 9th November. Our annual New Year's ringing event is scheduled for 1st January 2025 in Cholsey.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

Nothing to report this time.

Reading

Our Saturday, mid-week and surprise practices continue to be well attended. Our 6-bell striking competition was held in September at Shinfield with Tilehurst winning. It was great to see Tilehurst go on to represent the branch and win the Guild 6-bell competition.

On Michaelmas Day, Reading Minster hosted a farewell service marking the retirement of Olivia, Bishop of Reading. A peal was rung prior to the service by members of the local band ably supported by ringers from the Reading Branch of the ODG.

On Sunday, 29 September in 3 hours 13 minutes. A peal of Grandsire Triples composed by Alan S Burbidge. Following the service, some of the peal ringers and others from the local band served tea and cake to the 250 members of the congregation showing just how good ringers are at multitasking.

Reading Branch Outing - 12th October 2024

We had a successful and thoroughly enjoyable outing in South Oxfordshire. In total, 27 ringers from across the branch attended, with 21 of those coming for the whole day. Towers represented were Henley, Caversham, St Mary's Reading, St Giles Reading, Tilehurst, Mapledurham, Goring and Pangbourne. It was great to see such a broad spectrum from across the Branch. The Abbey Church of St Peter & St Paul in Dorchester was our first stop. As we had from beginners to experts there was the whole range from rounds, through Bob Triples and on to Bristol Major. This was the theme for the day with everyone getting plenty of ringing opportunities to enjoy. Our next stop at St Helen in Abingdon was just as varied and successful. Many had not rung on 10 bells before, so another new challenge was presented. The highlight was perhaps the very enjoyable Grandsire Caters featuring Joan Bennett of Henley. This was the first time Joan had rung this in 25 years and it bought back both happy and poignant memories.

Despite the Abingdon traffic being dreadful we all managed to reach *The Chequers Inn*, in Berrick Salome for lunch. The kitchen managed to serve all 22 lunches in very good time to allow us to reach our next destination, St Helen in Berrick Salome. We were fortunate with the weather so that we were able to potter about the church grounds for this ground floor ring of six, although one or two newer ringers did not realise how loud bells could be.

This was followed by tea and cake next at the Waterfront Café in Benson. Our final tower was St Helen, Benson. Again there was the whole range of ringing including London

Major. A lovely day was had by all, and a big thank you must go to Steve Rossiter, June Wells, Doug Beaumont and Jenny Page who each ran a tower. To June Saint for her admin skills on the day. Finally, a really big thank-you goes to Jenny Page who organised the outing.



Reading Branch Outing at St Helen, Benson

Lindsey Barker

Sonning Deanery

Members from Aborfield/Barkham, Easthampstead and Wokingham All Saints represented our branch at the Guild 8-bell competition at Stoke Poges in May and came a respectable 5th place. Ringing at Sandhurst has been limited for some while because of the state of the bells and there is now an active project to get them restored.

In June the Hurst band hired the Touring Tower for the Hurst show with other branch members assisting. The tower was funded by the show as an “attraction” and community support and was included in a children’s ‘Olympic challenge’ which ensured a good number of visitors. Names of people interested in learning more about bell ringing were noted and passed on to the relevant towers.

Shottesbrooke hosted the Guild 6-bell competition on behalf of the branch in October. The lovely Shottesbrooke estate provided a great location for the competition and the Shottesbrooke team did a fabulous job with the organisation and



providing delicious refreshments for everyone. I’m sure it’s not often that the judges get to listen from the library of a manor house. The striking competition had a high entry rate (9 bands out of the 15 branches) which was very satisfying. It was handsomely won by Reading branch who were acknowledged by most listeners to be an obvious win. However, the next 6 bands were spread over only 10.5 points, so it was very close and made the judges assessment very tough. The raising and lowering competition was held at Binfield tower and was won by Hook Norton. Great competitions and a wonderful way of meeting ringers from far and wide.

Jan Glen, Branch Secretary

Hurst (and friends) on tour - September 2024

It was not too early a start as most active ringers departed from Hurst in anticipation of our tower outing to Oxford and ringing at the first tower at St Giles for 10.00. The outing on 28th September had been planned for us by the Oxford Society Secretary and a crisp but clear Saturday morning, coupled with coffee stop for those in need,

greeted the day. Numbers swelled as we were joined by fellow ringers from Twyford (5) Sonning (3) and Shottesbrooke (2) and it was certainly a full house as the last ringer entered through the trap door to the ringing chamber having climbed a rather rickety looking ladder and dismounted at the top. And so the brain was engaged into first gear as we rang rounds on the eight bells of St Giles. Soon the band was ringing Stedman Triples whilst the younger ringers of Grace and Olivier were honing their technique in call changes. With so many ringers the rope time passed quickly and before long it was time to return down the rickety ladder. Tower one complete, and a team photo outside ensured a record of the occasion.



Hurst Tower Outing to Oxford

Due to a last-minute hiccup the planned second tower was not available to us. But no tower outing is complete without a lockout, so off we dispersed to have some free time and pub lunch in Oxford.

The afternoon started with a visit to the historic tower of Magdalen College and a brief chance to see the scholarly buildings of this magnificent college. As we entered the tower the packs for student freshers' week were in storage, at least reminding us that the students had not returned, and we would not be waking them up by ringing at 14.00. The ringing room was a contrast to St Giles and the presence of sofas in the ringing room perhaps captured some of the ambience of student ringing.

Graham Slade, Tower Captain, Hurst

Sonning Deanery Young Ringers

After a busy summer of exams and waiting for exam results, our young ringers have been back to regular ringing. Congratulations to Charley Smith who has rung over 25 quarter peals already this year, Becki Shuttleworth who recently rang her first peal of Lincolnshire Surprise Major and Charlotte Lee who rang her first quarter inside this summer.

At the beginning of October, SDB, Reading, and Berks & Bucks Young Ringers joined up for a mini tower outing. We walked from Shottesbrooke to Waltham St Laurence and back, ringing at both churches. Ringing ranged from plain hunt to Norwich Surprise Minor. It was a lovely afternoon, and the rain thankfully held off! More recently the youth bands of Berks & Bucks, Middlesex and Surrey met for a tour in London. They rang at four towers along the Docklands Light Railway including The Isle of Dogs (Cubitt Town), the location of the first ever all Ladies Peal in 1912. 8 female ringers rang some rounds in celebration of this first achievement reflecting on how things have changed over a century.



The young ringers at St Alfege, Greenwich

These events are great opportunities for ringers to broaden their social circles and ringing experiences, as evidenced by James Moynihan who recently went to London

to ring a successful peal of Surprise Minor with people he had met through youth ringing events.

If you have any young ringers in your towers, please encourage them to come along to one of their local youth events.

Claire Shuttleworth, SDB Youth Officer

South Oxon

Sadly, one of our former branch ringers – Robin Dyke – died in June. Robin learnt to ring at Benson in the early 1960s when he moved to the area for work at the Hydraulics Research Station. After Robin and Sue were married, he rang regularly at Wallingford and Goring before moving to Warborough. Robin was a very keen ringer until the early 1990's when he was no longer able to ring. He was a member of the ODG, the Oxford Society, The Universities Association and was elected to the Ancient Society of College Youths in 1965.

Monthly Branch Practices and the recently introduced 8-bell Practices continue to thrive within the Branch, and six towers participate in tower twinning. Everybody agrees about the benefit of these extra practices.

St Helen's Church, Benson held a Heritage Open Day on Saturday 14th September as part of the national event. As well as many heritage activities and displays in the church and the churchyard, the bells were rung in the morning and the afternoon and visitors were invited to the ringing room for an explanation about ringing and demonstrations. A camera and monitor had been set up and visitors were able to watch the bells during the ringing. This event was very popular and there was a continuous flow of visitors in the ringing room.

Renovation work continues at St Leonards Church, Watlington. The bells have been successfully removed from the tower and transported to Whites of Appleton. Painting of the bell frame is well underway. One of the bells had been sent by Whites for a welding repair, at which time a further four small cracks were identified. This confirms that a thorough and close inspection of your bells is worthwhile from time to time.

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

We were saddened to hear of the death in July of Eleanor Banks who was a long-time ringer at Uffington.

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

The Vale Mini-Ringers has been a regular event in our calendar for over a year, with events held at Hinton Waldrist, Shrivenham and Stanford-in-the-Vale over the past few months. At the Shrivenham May-Day event, the young ringers helped man the ringers' stall, demonstrating how to ring the Stallpits mini-ring and encouraging/helping non-ringers to have a go.

We held our Branch 6-bell competition in Uffington in May this year. Seven teams entered with Stanford in the Vale being 'most improved'. Faringdon were overall winners for the 3rd year in a row, and went on to represent the Branch at the Guild 6-bell competition in October.

This year's Oxfordshire Historic Churches 'Ride-and-stride' in September saw a group of us travel to Fyfield with a day's hiking finishing at Littleworth. We managed to visit nine churches and chapels (current and former), with ringing where available. Many thanks to all the open churches and much needed refreshments.

We held a very enjoyable annual Branch meal at the start of October at the Prince of Wales pub in Shrivenham. Excellent food and good company all round. Finally, congratulations go to Kit Margey who received Level 1, 2 and 3 *Learning the Ropes* certificates.

David Wright

Witney and Woodstock

Ron Burgess

The funeral of Ron Burgess, long time ringer at both Kidlington and Woodstock, was held at St Mary's Kidlington on 2nd July 2024. There was ringing before and after the service, with ringers from his home towers being joined by friends from further afield. In total, more than 25 people rang in his memory.

The Kidlington ringers did the final ring before joining the congregation, and then Phil Sampson tolled a bell 77 times, one for each year of Ron's life. When the open ringing had finished, a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung. The band consisted of one current Kidlington ringer, two ex-Kidlington ringers, one Woodstock ringer, the Guild Master and three others who have rung with Ron many times (there were even people in reserve who weren't used, such as the desire to celebrate Ron's life).



Ron Burgess

Ron, who was Tower Captain for almost 15 years and who showed amazing patience and skill as he taught countless people to ring, will be greatly missed, especially by his ringing friends at Woodstock and Kidlington.

Ernie Canning

Ernest Edward Canning ("Ernie"), a Yarnton ringer, passed away peacefully at the John Radcliffe Hospital on the 9th of May 2024 aged 86. He was much loved and is sadly missed by children Helen and David, Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren. The funeral was held at St Bartholomew's Church Yarnton on the 19th of June.

Lesley Smith, Kidlington Tower Captain

Branch 6-Bell Striking Competition – 8th June 2024

The competing teams were superbly hosted by Lawrence Clarke at Black Bourton, with David Harding providing the technical support, and the weather played its part, keeping warm and sunny all afternoon. Steve Vickars and Tracey Cooper kindly agreed to judge the competition, and the photos show Steve presenting Emma Somerfield with both trophies. Our thanks go to Richard White and Anthony Williamson for organising a great day.

Andrew Goldthorpe, Branch Secretary

The results were:

Call changes

- 1 Clanfield (13)
- 2 Combe (29)
- 3 Freeland (46)
- 4 Woodstock (50)
- 5 Witney (60)
- 6 NL (85)



Method

- 1 Clanfield (26)
- 2 Witney (37)
- 3 Woodstock (48)
- 4 Freeland (52)
- 5 NL (54)



Witney & Woodstock Branch Autumn Outing, 12th October

Thanks to the excellent organisation of Richard White, our Branch Ringing Master, 19 members enjoyed an Outing to the Bedford area, where a varied set of towers were made available for us, and the ringing catered for a wide range of experience. The ringing started at St. Andrew's, Bedford - a modern church with a light peal of 8 (5-2-22) where the ringer on the 4 is surrounded by railings, then onto Bromham St. Owen in a lovely setting in parkland - eight bells (22-3-18). An excellent lunch followed at Corner 5, Box End Park, Bedford, then in the afternoon we visited St. Andrew's, Ampthill - which had an interesting Plaque on the wall with 10 'Rules For the Ringers' back in 1884 - eight bells (13-3-6), and St. Peter de Merton, Bedford - eight bells (12-1-0).

After a break for afternoon tea we rang at our last tower; St Paul's, Bedford - twelve bells (28-3-6) where several members had their first opportunity to ring rounds and call changes on twelve and the ringing room was accessed via a walk along the church rooftop which gave us panoramic views of Bedford. Rounds, Call Changes, Plain Hunt Triples, Plain Bob Triples, Stedman Triples, Grandsire Triples, Grandsire Caters, Kent Minor and Cambridge Surprise Minor were all successfully rung during the very enjoyable ringing day.

Debra Scrimshaw, Witney Tower

St James the Great, South Leigh

Our Tower log has lasted 50 years! The final entry in the current volume of South Leigh Tower log, in which we record ringing and bell maintenance, marks the last service taken by our benefice vicar, Rev. Simon Kirby. Like many Towers, we struggle to find enough ringers for Sunday service as most churches worship concurrently, leaving no opportunity for ringers to nip across to the next Tower. On that Sunday, Witney Tower generously cancelled their own Tower ringing and moved *en masse* to South Leigh, giving Simon a good send-off with ringing on all eight bells.

Next month we start a new logbook, hopefully opening with the induction of a new vicar.

Heather Horner, South Leigh Tower Captain

Guild Officers for 2024/2025

Master	Catherine master@odg.org.uk (01865 874026 / 07885586104)
Deputy Master	Chris Mundy depmaster@odg.org.uk (07801 930587)
General Secretary	Karen Pile secretary@odg.org.uk (07786 473055)
General Treasurer	Stuart Gibson treasurer@odg.org.uk (01235 820491)
Assistant Treasurer	Katherine Stonham deptreasurer@odg.org.uk
Librarian	Douglas J Beaumont librarian@odg.org.uk (0118 946 1714)
Report Editor	Heather Browning reporteditor@odg.org.uk
Odd Bob Editor	Judd Flogdell oddbob@odg.org.uk (07947 777362)
Peal Secretary	Ken Davenport peals@odg.org.uk (0118 9786554)
Public Relations Officer	[Vacant] pro@odg.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Jenny Bennett membership@odg.org.uk
Minutes Secretary	Lindsay Powell minsec@odg.org.uk
Webmaster	Andrew Goldthorpe webmaster@odg.org.uk
Server Manager	Richard Stanworth serveradmin@odg.org.uk (01280 814172)
Assistant Server Mgr	[Vacant] serveradmin@odg.org.uk
Safeguarding Officer	June Wells safeguarding@odg.org.uk
Guild Stewards	Peter Robson (<i>Newbury, Reading, Old North Bucks</i>) Steward-1@newbury.odg.org.uk (07942 589683) Tony Crabtree (<i>Chipping Norton, Vale of White Horse, Witney & Woodstock</i>) Steward-2@city.odg.org.uk (01793 784064 and 07860 835903) Patricia Newton (<i>EBSB, Oxford City, South Oxon</i>) Steward-3@southoxon.odg.org.uk (01844 352926) Colin Lee (<i>Banbury, Bicester, Central Bucks</i>) Steward-4@banbury.odg.org.uk (07743 775150) Steve Rossiter (<i>Sonning Deanery, Chiltern, North Bucks</i>) Steward-5@chiltern.odg.org.uk (01494 783978)

General Committee members

Angela Darvill
Bobbie May

Jenny Page
Ken Wakefield

Mike Hopkins Till

Central Council Representatives ccreps@odg.org.uk

John A Harrison
Alan Marchbank

Lucy Hopkins Till
Timothy G Pett

Graham John

Towers and Belfries Sub-committee

Chairman Tony Crabtree tbchairman@odg.org.uk
(01793 784064 / 07860 835903)
Secretary Anthony Williamson tbsecretary@odg.org.uk
(01993 891680)

Learning and Development Workgroup

Chairman Chris Mundy edchairman@odg.org.uk
Secretary Robert Newton edsecretary@odg.org.uk
(01844 352926)

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

Branch Secretaries

Banbury Rosemary Hemmings secretary@banbury.odg.org.uk
Bicester Pam Holley secretary@bicester.odg.org.uk
(07912 216767)
Central Bucks John Chantler secretary@cbucks.odg.org.uk
Chiltern Christopher Potter secretary@chiltern.odg.org.uk
Chipping Norton Geoffrey Stretton secretary@chippy.odg.org.uk
(01295 574 610)
East Berks & South Bucks Patricia Newton secretary@ebsb.odg.org.uk
(01844 352926)
Newbury Mark Robins secretary@newbury.odg.org.uk
(01488 683645)
North Bucks Brian Baldwin secretary@northbucks.odg.org.uk
(07899 795500)
Old North Berks Gillian Loyd secretary@onb.odg.org.uk
(01235 850459)
Oxford City Geraint Jones secretary@city.odg.org.uk
Reading Lindsey Barker secretary@reading.odg.org.uk
Sonning Deanery Jan Glen secretary@sdb.odg.org.uk
South Oxon Jane Willis secretary@southoxon.odg.org.uk
(01844 279468)
Vale of White Horse David Wright secretary@vowh.odg.org.uk
(01793 783056)
Witney & Woodstock Andrew Goldthorpe secretary@witneyandwoodstock.odg.org.uk
(07709 461597)

Diary of Events for 2025

The Guild website lists dates for both Guild and Branch events. Some of these dates may differ from what is listed below, so please check the odg.org.uk website for diary updates on an ongoing basis. Any changes or revisions should be sent to the ODG webmaster.

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

NOVEMBER 2024

Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Denham (8)	10.30 - 12.00
Weds	27	Reading	BP	St Lawrence (12)	11.00 - 12.30

DECEMBER 2024

Tues	03	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 - 21.00
Fri	06	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	07	South Oxon	BP	St Mary's Church, Thame (8)	16.00 - 17.30
Weds	11	SDB	AP TBC	Wokingham AS (8)	19.20 - 21.00
Sat	14	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	17.30 - 19.00
Sat	14	Reading	BP	St Giles (8)	10.00 - 11.30
Sat	14	W&W	BP	Standlake (6)	10.30 - 12.00
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 - 15.30
Wed	18	SDB	EP	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 - 21.00
Thurs	19	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 - 21.30
Sat	21	SDB	BP	Sonning (8)	10.30 - 12.00

JANUARY 2025

Tues	07	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 - 21.00
Weds	08	ONB	AP	Milton (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Weds	08	SDB	AP TBC	WokinghamAS(8)	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	11	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 - 11.30
Weds	15	ONB	BP	Cumnor (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Weds	15	SDB	EP	TBC	19.30 - 21.00
Thurs	16	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 - 21.30
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Finchampstead (6)	16.30 - 18.00
Sat	18	EBSB	SP	Hughenden (8)	14.00 - 16.00
Mon	20	VOWH	BP	Faringdon (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 - 15.30
Weds	22	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	14.00 - 15.30
Weds	22	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 - 12.30
Sat	25	Chipping Norton	BP	St Mary Virgin (8)	11.00 - 12.30

FEBRUARY 2025

Sat	01	EBSB	Tower Captain's Meeting	Penn (6)	10.00 - 12.00
Weds	05	ONB	SP	Wallingford (10)	19.30 - 21.00
Fri	07	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	08	Reading	AGM	TBC	10.00 - 11.30
Thurs	13	ONB	BP	Radley (6)	19.30 - 21.00
Mon	17	VOWH	BP	Shrivenham (10)	19.30 - 21.00
Thurs	20	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 - 21.30
Sat	22	Hook Norton	BP	St Peters (8)	11.00 - 12.30
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	14.00 - 16.00
Weds	26	ONB	BP	Chilton (6)	14.00 - 15.30
Weds	26	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 - 12.30
Sat	TBC	W&W	AGM	Standlake (6)	11.00 - 14.40

MARCH 2025

Weds	05	ONB	AP	TBC	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	08	EBSB	BP	Windsor St John (8)	14.00 - 16.00
Sat	08	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 - 11:30
Fri	14	ONB	BP	Appleton (10)	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	15	Burford	AGM	St John the Baptist (8)	15.00 - 17.30
Sat	15	VOWH	AGM	Stanford-in-the-Vale (8)	15.00 -
Thurs	20	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 - 21:30
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Marlow (8)	10.00 - 12.00
Weds	26	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	14.00 - 15.30
Sat	29	Radley	Guild Course	Radley and nearby towers	09.30 - 20.00

APRIL 2025

Weds	02	ONB	SP	Brightwell (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Fri	04	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Mon	07	ONB	BP	Marcham (6)	19.00 - 20.30
Sat	12	Banbury	AGM	Steeple Aston (8)	TBC
Sat	12	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 - 11:30
Sat	12	EBSB	BP	Hambleden (8)	10.00 - 12.00
Thu	17	VOWH	BP	Ashbury (6)	19.30 - 21.00
Weds	23	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 - 12:30
Sat	26	EBSB	AGM	Clewer (6)	15.00 - 18.30

MAY 2025

Weds	07	ONB	AP	TBC	19.30 - 21.00
Sat	10	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (12)	10.00 - 12.00
Sat	10	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 - 11:30
Tues	13	ONB	BP	Milton (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Thurs	15	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	20.00 - 21:30
Fri	16	VOWH	SC	Longcot (8)	19.00 - 21.00
Weds	26	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 - 12:30
Weds	28	ONB	BP	Sunningwell (6)	14.00 - 15.30
Weds	28	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 - 12:30

JUNE 2025

Weds	04	ONB	SP	Drayton (8)	19.30 - 21.00
Mont	09	ONB	BP	Little Wittenham (5) Long Wittenham (6)	18.30 - 19.15
Weds	25	ONB	BP	TBC	19.30 - 20.30 14.00 - 15.30



Young Ringers Band Shirts, see page 11