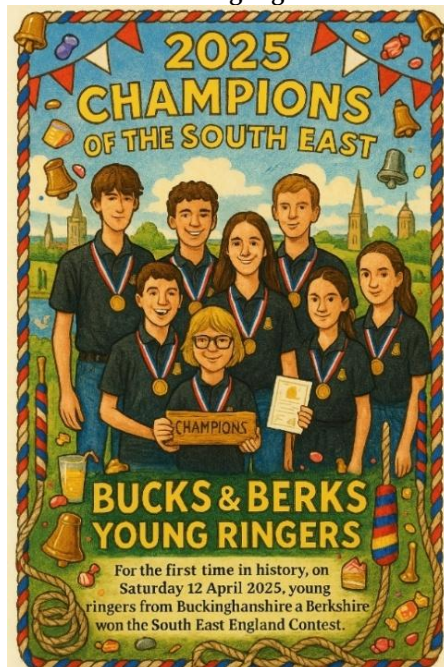


ODD BOB



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



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From your Editor

Check the Guild website at odg.org.uk and your Branch website. This *Odd Bob* and past issues are held on the Guild website. Don't forget the EBSB Fund Raising website address is bellfund.org.uk

Kathryn Grant

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.

Master's Mutterings

As I write, it is Holy Week when there is no tower bell ringing from Palm Sunday to Easter Day; it's the week when many ringers go on holiday without the craving to find a practice night or attempt a quarter or peal.

It's different for handbell enthusiasts, I know!

This year, however, I find myself rather more laid off than usual with an excruciating attack of sciatica and, fearing that I may not be able to ring for several weeks I have decided that I should explore different churches, those that I may not have rung in, or have no full-circle ringing bells. Probably, I am not the only ringer who hastens to the ringing room without a glance or thought about the curiosities of the building, or the charm of the surrounding 'God's Acre' but there is much more to wonder at in these astonishing, ancient places of worship that we are so privileged to use as the providers of the Exercise.

I have limped to Waterperry, Oxfordshire, which is an excellent Holy Week excursion which provides gardens alongside the Thame, a splendid café, extendable walks on the Oxfordshire Way and the simple, rustic church of St Mary, complete with medieval stained glass and Georgian box pews. The tall narrow Saxon chancel arch remains, and there is a wooden belfry which contains two bells hung in a medieval oak frame. The smaller bell was cast at the Bicester foundry in 1732, it has a restored medieval half wheel which must have belonged to an earlier bell, the larger bell was recast at Whitechapel in 1873 and may well have been hung by Alfred White.

Next would be a trip to reacquaint myself with St Mary Magdalene, Boveney, Berkshire another medieval survivor, which was never a parish church but a chapel of ease for the more familiar, nearby, St Peter's, Burnham. It was built beside an extinct wharf that was used for loading timber from Windsor Forest to take downriver to London. There is a timber belfry constructed on a frame which bears, at first glance, a remarkable resemblance to a bell wheel. There are three unringable bells the earliest of which dates from 1631. So, no ringing there, but an atmospheric picnic spot despite being under the Heathrow flightpath!

To complete my non-ringing excursion around the Guild I will explore St. Luke's, Stoke Hammond, the village and the church will be unfamiliar and require some investigation. There has been a settlement there since before the Norman Conquest. It was recorded in the Domesday Book as *Stoche* which was a commonplace name

denoting an Anglo-Saxon church or place of worship, the Hamon family owned the estate at the time of the survey. There are three bells, the earliest dated 1370, again they are unringable.

Stoke Hammond is the only Thankful Village in Buckinghamshire. Thankful Villages are settlements in England and Wales from which all their members of the armed forces survived World War.

There are so many more intriguing churches in the Diocese that a series of vignettes could be written - Binsey immediately comes to mind because it has the Treacle Well mentioned in Alice's adventures. If you have a church gem near you, please consider sending it for inclusion in the next edition of *Odd Bob*.

Meanwhile enjoy a summer of ringing and exploring churches and their bells!

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

ODG Towers and Belfries Committee's report

I'm writing this report having recently attended a national conference for bell advisors. This was particularly for Diocesan Bell Advisors: those people who advise the Diocesan Advisory Committees who deal with applications for works in churches and also in belfries. This year, it was also opened to people from the ringers' Guilds and Associations who give belfry advice to towers in their areas. In the ODG, we have a committee of twelve from around the Guild who respond to requests for advice and visits from towers. Several presentations at the conference related to the processes surrounding the increasing issue of church closures and dealing with any bells involved. One of the issues is how the local Guild gets to know that a particular church is potentially at risk, especially if it has no ringers or few bells. There was also a presentation on 'listing' of bells worthy of preservation and the criteria to be used. This then informs how they are to be treated in the event of a scheme proposal such as a rehang or other alteration, major maintenance, etc. This work has been ongoing for many years as data on bells becomes more complete and much is now in the 'Dove' database of bells and evolving rapidly.

One matter of concern at the conference was how the knowledge and experience of bell advisors is passed on to the next generation. The average age is rising, as it is across the ringing population. Here in the ODG we run regular courses in belfry maintenance, rope splicing and general belfry matters. You do not have to be an expert or even a Steeple Keeper to attend one of our basic courses or a rope course. At one recent course, barely half the attendees had visited their own local belfry! We make sure the courses are tailored to suit a variety of experience levels. We also encourage young ringers to join our courses, and we are looking at opportunities for young ringers' meetings to include belfry and rope work. Our 2025 calendar has: Rope Maintenance at Shabbington 31st May, *Secrets of a Steeple Keeper* at Stratfield Mortimer on 21st June and General Belfry course at Wantage on 18th October. Watch out for the adverts and get your applications in! We are also looking to run an advanced 'hands on' course. If you would like to host such a course, please get in touch.

Since the last issue of *Odd Bob*, our committee members have made visits, given advice, Tower Maintenance Award inspections or done Bell Fund grant inspections

at a number of towers including: Stowe, Chalfont St Peter, Goosey, Sunningwell, Eynsham, Shinfield, Buscot, West Hendred, Woodstock, Watlington, Taynton, Adderbury, Cropredy and Shellingford.

The Towers and Belfries 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 ask tbchair@odg.org.uk

Tony Crabtree, Chairman, Towers and Belfries Committee

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Since my last report in November there has only been one inspection, at Chalfont St Peter where they renewed a Gold award: congratulations to them. The awards for Adderbury, Cropredy and Sonning have all expired which means that the number of current awards is now only nine. However I hope that with the warmer weather, more Towers will look to renew some of the (many) expired awards.

The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is ninety-four, which is about 21% of the 440 towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been 173 inspections (of which twenty-six were preliminaries), resulting in 150 awards (105 Gold, thirty Silver, and fifteen Bronze).

The slow recovery after the pandemic is disappointing: there is still a large number (forty-four) of expired awards, and the T and 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 five out of the fifteen Guild Branches, with EBSB having re-gained the predominant position. The placings are as follows: -

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

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Freeland (SMV)	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 (SMV)	EBSB	Expires 29.09.26
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 30.11.26

Silver Award

Deddington (SS Peter & Paul) Banbury

Expires 31.12.25

There are no current Bronze awards

The results on p.5 reflect the situation as at 12th April 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, Towers and Belfries Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been two library enquiries since *Odd Bob* issue 111. These have been about:-

- identity of A.G.Newman in peal at Caversham on 8th March 1899
- loan of Revd Cyril Jenkyn's Military Cross to the steward of the CCCBR Rolls of Honour (borrowed on two occasions).

I spoke at the Guild's General Committee meeting at Bucklebury on 8th March about my contact with the Oxford History Centre (OHC), the repository for archival material of Oxfordshire County Council.

The contact with OHC was made because the search for a member who would be able to take on the post of librarian had so far been unsuccessful. Two people had expressed interest but did not have the space available in their homes for the contents of the library. It was therefore felt that if no librarian can be found, alternatives have to be considered such as the possibility of transferring the library to the care of the OHC.

OHC's response was:

- they may well accept ODG's own archive material such as minute books.
- they are less likely to take the published books.

Accepting this as a way forward would mean that books and material not accepted by the OHC would need to be dealt with in some other way, and operation of the library would change significantly.

I also suggested to the Committee meeting that if the OHC path was followed, before any items were removed to the OHC, they should be photographed and the images loaded to the electronic archive.

After discussion it was agreed by the meeting that a work group should be set up to come up with a way forward for implementing any chosen option, and to decide what should be kept by the Guild and what should not be kept.

If any member has any comment or query about the OHC contact and its possible ramifications, please let me know.

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

Learning and Development Workgroup

Another very successful Radley Course took place on 29th March. Again oversubscribed, the day was ably organised by Lindsay Powell. Our thanks go to her and to the tutors and helpers for their commitment in helping the students to progress.

Demand was not so great for the Training Meeting at Bletchington on 5th April. Just two representatives from each branch would have ensured an attendance of at least thirty but only fifteen, representing ten of our fifteen Branches, were able to make it. We are grateful to Dorothy Hall for her organisation, to Steve Vickars and Elizabeth Mullett, in particular, for their input and to the two 'guinea pigs' who bravely came along after lunch for demonstration purposes. Delegates reported on the pattern of practices happening in their own Branches, whether 'general', 'basic' or 'advanced'. We often read what works for these and the remaining five Branches in *Odd Bob*.

However, the main discussion centred on those factors preventing inexperienced ringers moving on from rounds and call changes to successful and accurate method ringing. A traditional Branch Practice does not usually lend itself to providing suitable activities owing to the lack of time and the range of abilities to be catered for. Ideally the learner will have been exposed to appropriate exercises in their own tower. All too often we encounter students on courses who think they can ring plain hunt on five but have little concept of changing the speed of their bell or of which place they are in.

So, are we giving our learners sufficient time and practice at fine bell control on different bells, adjusting the length of rope to enable variations of speed; listening carefully to live and recorded ringing; developing ropesight with plain hunt on smaller numbers, for example using Bastow and Cloisters; and making use of Kaleidoscope sequences to perfect their striking? Do we take time to explain some of the ringing jargon, which experienced ringers take for granted?

Tony Crabtree has been running regular Friday evening sessions at Longcot aimed at addressing these issues for some time now and people have been prepared to travel considerable distances to attend. Even the keenest would find travelling there from the north and east of the Guild off-putting. The Oxon Ringing School has also been working on these skills in its area. It would be wonderful if two or three more centres could be established to address these issues. Please give this possibility some serious thought and let us know if we can help you.

Huge congratulations to the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers on their victory (see full details on pp.12-15) in the SEECON striking contest at Twyford (Berks) on 12th April, beating six other bands from the South East, some representing their county associations. What a great result! An ODG band did not fare quite as well in the equivalent Midlands event although one band member is apparently building a reputation for Hoovering cake! Both squads are eagerly anticipating the RWNYC. Look out for details of regional practices for young ringers, which are continuing to take place throughout the Diocese. We are also delighted to announce that Jon Chamberlain and Louise Gill have offered to take over the organisation of the Steeple

Aston Course, so watch out for information about this and our other courses, as below.

Key dates:

5th July – RWNYC, Birmingham

27th September – Michaelmas Course

25th October – Steeple Aston Course

1st November – Grandsire Caters Course, Shrivenham

Robert Newton, Secretary, Learning and Development Workgroup

ODG Six Bell Competitions – Raising and Lowering, and Striking Final, 5 October 2024

Oxford Diocesan Guild's annual six bell competitions took place on a glorious sunny day in October at Shottesbrooke and Binfield respectively. The Shottesbrooke park estate in Berkshire, home to the head office of the Landmark Trust, formed a picturesque background to the ringing.

Judging the raising and lowering competition, Robert Newton commented that all bands had done well but the winner, Hook Norton, had achieved a smooth and measured raise and, on the lower, a good transition from double to single clapping and an excellent finish. This was only the second year that the trophy had been awarded and Robert warmly encouraged more bands to enter next year.

Bands from nine of the ODC's fifteen branches competed in the six bell striking competition final. Matthew and Debbie Taylor, this year's judges, noted the exceptionally high standard of ringing on Shottesbrooke's lovely bells. The most successful bands demonstrated consistent, settled ringing with precise leading and a sense of common purpose. Overall there were very few method mistakes, and fewer than ten faults separated the top three bands. The judges' advice included the importance of a good pull-off; careful attention when moving out of lead and the 'sparkle' of a really nice piece of ringing.

In third place, with 33.5 faults, came Hook Norton; High Wycombe were placed second with 32 faults and this year's winners were Tilehurst with 25 faults.

Listening to the ringing and judges' comments was made even more enjoyable by a superb lunch and tea provided by the ringers of Sonning Deanery (especial thanks to Jan and Vikki).

Elizabeth Mullett



Presentation of Raising and Lowering Competition Trophy by Guild Master, Catherine Lane (winners: Hook Norton)



Six bell striking competition final runners-up, High Wycombe (L to R, treble to tenor): Sheila Bruce, Patricia M. Newton, Verity Nicholls, John E. Hearn, Robert H. Newton (C), George T. Pickwell



Six bell striking competition final winners, Tilehurst (L to R, treble to tenor): Joanne P. Druce (C), Eunice A. Wark, Elizabeth A. Evans, D. Giles Winter, Colin R. Cairns, David R. Bardwell

Photo credits: Charley Smith, Shottesbrooke

Safeguarding is for Everyone

Having been ODG Safeguarding Officer for some years now, I have learnt what a contentious issue safeguarding is. Safeguarding means protecting a person's health, well-being and human rights; enabling them to be free from harm, abuse and neglect. In a ringing context, this translates into having care, consideration and respect for all those that we ring with, especially the young and vulnerable within our membership. In my time as a ringer, I have always found that the majority of bands are doing just that.

I'm sure most of you reading this will be saying, 'As if I didn't know that'.

However, I am still amazed to hear not a small number of ringers still talking about the current requirements with which the C of E expects its church groups, including ringers to comply, as if it is news. This has been in place for over four years now, and the Guild has used a number of methods to communicate the requirements to its members but the responsibility for monitoring compliance lies with the individual parishes in which most of us ring. As is often the case in large organisations, there are some parishes that are only just beginning to wake up to the fact.

In the interests of getting the message out to as many people as possible, it is worth me reiterating what the Oxford Diocese expects of the ringers within its churches:

- All ringers must complete the online Basic Awareness training module available on the C of E portal
- Tower captains must also complete the online Foundation module available from the same site
- Some tower captains deemed by their parishes to have a significant impact on the safeguarding culture within the parish must also complete a face-to-face leadership course available through the Oxford Diocese website
- Tower captains with young people in their band need an Enhanced DBS check.

All of the above is currently non-negotiable but there is always hope that things will change over time. Most ringers are happy to comply with the requirements but there will always be the vocal minority who kick against the rules. No matter how pointless you feel the requirements are, it's worth remembering that the bells we ring are the property of the Church and if we want to continue ringing them, we must comply with what the church asks. You should expect that at some stage you might be asked by your Parish Safeguarding Officer to show evidence of training/DBS.

Information about the implementation of safeguarding procedures within the tower can be found on the ODG website, along with the Guild Policy on safeguarding and other useful information. The CCCBR website also has a safeguarding tab with useful resources.

June Wells, Guild Safeguarding Officer

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, General Treasurer

Berkshire 2025 – SEECON Heads West

The South East England Contest (SEECON) is the main 'warm up' competition for the *Ringling World* National Youth Contest for those bands whose patch border the M25. The annual competition held for the first time in 2016 was this year hosted by the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers in the Reading and Windsor area. The competition is run on similar lines to the RWNYP with bands from all over the South East competing in a fun striking competition at the twelve-cwt ring of eight in Twyford. In addition, there was a chance to enjoy open ringing at several towers in the area. The judges for the contest were Will Beech, a former Essex Young Eagle and Euan Thomas who had previously competed for the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers (B&BYR) as well as Young@Herts.

SEECON saw well over forty ringers compete representing seven teams with some ringers only learning to handle a bell within the last year. Parents and friends of the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers manned the cakes and refreshment stalls at lunchtime, and at the end of the day, as well as running the ringing at the towers which made for a fun day all round. The contest itself was held in the middle of the day with teams having a chance to grab some lunch (making the day of the local Fish and Chip Shop owner who did a roaring trade for an April Saturday afternoon!).



Team Photo (all treble to tenor clockwise from front right)

- 1) Sam Boughton 2) Becki Shuttleworth 3) Theo Boughton (with Clapper the Swan)
- 4) Ollie Painter 5) Jack Francis 6) Emily Shuttleworth 7) James Moynihan (C)
- 8) Charley Smith

Results were as follows:

1 st Bucks and Berks Young Ringers (B&BYR) (85%)	4 th – W&P Youths (74%)
2 nd – Young@Herts (80%)	5 th – Kent Young Ringers (69%)
3 rd – Essex Young Eagles (77%)	6 th – Surrey Strikers (63%)
	7 th – Sussex Young Ringers (51%)

A huge thank you must go to all the team leaders for wrangling their young ringers to the right tower at the right time and also to all those friends and parents on the Bucks and Berks SEECON Organising Team without whom the event would not have been possible. Simon Smith, my partner in crime as the winning team leader gives us an insight into the day from inside the B&BYR camp and one of the youngest competitors, Theo Boughton has also written his take on his 'Best Day Ever' (p.15)!

Peter Jasper, Head Honcho of the Bucks and Berks SEECON Organising Team

SEECON 2025 – Behind the Scenes from inside the B&BYR camp

What do you do when your usual partner in crime is elevated to 'Grand Master Extraordinaire of the entire contest? That was the conundrum I found myself facing at this year's South East England Contest (SEECON) for young ringers, held on Saturday 12th April in Twyford, Berkshire, and surrounding towers.

The weekend before the big day, I was enjoying some family time away and therefore utterly useless when it came to the final Bucks and Berks Young Ringers (B&BYR) practice and prep. On the day itself, however, on top of a few additional jobs, we mostly treated it like any other youth competition – tagging along on tower grabs and doing my best to wrangle eight teenagers with wildly varying requests.

Much to the delight of our teenage cohort, this year's competition had a rare and wondrous feature: a local venue. That meant no crack-of-dawn start, though we still kicked things off at our usual rallying point – Marlow, Buckinghamshire. This is familiar territory for B&BYR – it's home turf for some and a regular haunt for the rest.

The day began with a slightly more solemn start than usual when my daughter attempted to ring up the tenor. For a worrying moment, I wasn't sure if she'd make it all the way or if we'd be serenading Marlow's parishioners with a mournful, two-thirds-raised toll. Either way, the locals were treated to an early morning bell sound that fell somewhere between 'funeral peal' and 'excited youth chaos'. Thankfully, things soon settled into a jollier rhythm as bands launched into their morning tower grabs.

Our next stop was Wargrave – a delightful eight, albeit one we don't get to visit very often. With a tower full of ducks stoking the boundless youngsters' enthusiasm, our lot had a few solid goes at Call Changes and Plain Hunt, mainly in anticipation for the competition piece.

Rather than gathering all teams at one tower, the organisers cleverly paired groups for a shared grab. We were partnered with the Surrey Strikers, heading next to Waltham St Lawrence – a charming six with an open balcony perfect for photos. Both

bands were clearly focused on the upcoming test piece, doing their best to rehearse an eight-bell test piece on six bells (a bit like rehearsing a choir on kazoo, but they made it work). Some more advanced methods were also attempted, interspersed with tree-climbing and frisbee flinging for stress relief – textbook youth ringing behaviour.

Lunch was in Twyford – sandwiches for some, but fish and chips seemed to be the true competition favourite. As we arrived, the tension was beginning to simmer. A team was mid-test piece, and despite a few hiccups, it sounded good. Registration and the pre-contest pep talk went smoothly, and before long, our eight ringers were rope-in-hand, cheering each other on.

The practice run of the test piece was... fine. The conductor, ever the realist, noted it was well below their capability. But when the signal came and the test piece began in earnest, the band pulled together for a solid performance – no major mishaps, though a few thought some of the transitions could have been smoother. Their concerns were somewhat eased by the rousing applause of the ever-gracious Surrey Strikers as we left the tower.

Next stop: Bray. A lovely, if slightly heavy, eight. Now reunited with the other teams, I was hugely impressed with the standard of ringing on show. With the competition behind them, the ringers branched out into a smorgasbord of methods – from rounds and call changes to Plain Bob Triples, Grandsire, Stedman, Bob Major, and even a finishing flourish of Bristol Surprise Major. Not bad for a Saturday afternoon!

The final tower – and host of the all-important results – was Clewer. This ground-floor six rings heavier than expected but offers a welcoming end to a long day. With cakes, drinks, and a whole lot of anticipation, all teams gathered for the announcement.

Cue the traditional guessing game: where did we come? Based on past performances, most of us placed B&BYR around third or fourth. Of course, we'd only heard snippets of two other teams' pieces, so it was all pure speculation. When third place was announced and it wasn't us, eyebrows began to raise. Then came second – still not us. Now the disbelief began to set in.

And then it came: 'Bucks and Berks Young Ringers – winners of SEECON 2025'. Cue the cheers, the hugs, the stunned silence, and the reluctant acceptance that yes, we'd actually done it!

A huge thank you goes to everyone who made the day a success – those who staffed the towers, provided refreshments, played taxi, and gave up their Saturday to support young ringers. Special thanks to our two judges for their kind and constructive feedback, and most of all, to Peter and Sian for their tireless work organising the event.

Now all eyes are on the '*Ringing World* National Youth Contest' in Birmingham this July. Best of luck to everyone – and see you there!

Simon Smith, B&BYR Team Leader

My Best Day Ever – SEECON 2025!

On Saturday 12th April, I got to be part of something amazing – **SEECON 2025**, the South East England youth ringing Contest! It was such a fun day and I was really proud (and a bit nervous) to be ringing for the **Bucks and Berks Young Ringers**. We were the host team this year, so there was a lot going on – but it was also super exciting!

In the morning, we did some open ringing at All Saints, Marlow (that's my local eight bell tower by the river) and then we went on to ring at Wargrave. Everyone was buzzing already and there were loads of young ringers everywhere – from Kent, Hertfordshire, Sussex, Essex, Winchester & Portsmouth, and Surrey. It felt really cool being part of such a big event with so many other people my age who also love ringing.

Then it was time for the contest! It was split across three towers – Twyford, Shottesbrooke, and Waltham St Lawrence – but the judges listened to our ringing at Twyford. We tried really hard to ring evenly and stay calm, even though we were all feeling a bit nervous. The grown-ups call it 'striking' when the bells sound really even, and that's what we were aiming for. I think we did a good job!

In between ringing, we had lunch and loads of us played **frisbee in the sunshine**. It was honestly one of my favourite bits – just running around and laughing with people from all the different teams. Everyone was really friendly and it was nice making new friends (and also showing off my awesome frisbee throws!).

Oh – and I can't forget the **mascots**! Our team has **Clapper the Swan**, because the River Thames connects Bucks and Berks. Clapper is really cool, even if some people keep thinking he's a duck or a goose! Kent had an orange octopus called Oscar (he's got enough arms to ring all eight bells on his own!) and Essex had a blue duck called Eric the Eagle. Surrey's was my favourite – a fluffy, warm mascot called Granny C (that stands for Grandsire Caters!). Not all the teams had mascots though – maybe they'll bring some next year?

Later in the afternoon, we did more open ringing at Bray and Clewer, and then everyone gathered at St Andrew's, Clewer, for the **results ceremony**. I was so nervous waiting to hear the names... and then they said: "**The winners are team six ... the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers!**" **THAT'S US!**

I felt **SO proud** I nearly jumped out of my shoes! We all cheered and hugged and high-fived each other. It felt incredible to win, especially in front of all the other teams and after working really hard in our practices.

SEECON 2025 was honestly the best day ever. I can't wait for the *Ringing World* National Youth Contest in Birmingham in July!

Theo Boughton, a very excited ten-year-old from B&BYR

Rescue in the Tower

In 2024 we hosted a visit from the local fire fighters. They realised that extracting a casualty from the bell chamber could be quite challenging, and since they need to be prepared for any eventuality in their area they asked to run a training exercise in the tower, which took place in March 2025. It was a joint exercise between Wokingham



and Bracknell Fire and Rescue service, and the Ambulance service HART (Hazardous Area Rescue Team). The exercise involved two casualties, each in the pit under a bell, and each with different injuries. The objective was to remove them safely, having first worked out how to do so in a difficult and unfamiliar environment. The fire and rescue teams and the ambulance team have different skills and knowledge, and they carry different equipment. The exercise was to test their ability to work together and to deploy their complementary capabilities effectively.

One casualty was an 80kg dummy. Getting it safely up the stairs and into the bell chamber before the exercise started was a challenge in itself. The other casualty was



the Wokingham Fire Service Chaplain. She wasn't actually injured but had to behave as if she were. Unlike the dummy she could complain about things like the lifting harness digging into her neck, and the helmet they gave her to protect her head being pushed down over her face so she couldn't see.

In both cases the first challenge was to work out how to move the casualties out of the pit, across the bell frame and down the stairs, without making their injuries worse (in one case a spinal/neck injury and in the other a severe leg fracture). There weren't many options, and it was interesting watching the teams decide what they were, and how best to proceed.

They also had to bear in mind their own safety. Moving around a bell frame requires care even if you are familiar with it, but most of the team had never been in a bell chamber so it was an alien environment in which an incautious move could have led to a fall, so they had to plan in their own protection as well as that of the casualties.

The teams carry packs of equipment they might need, including ropes, harnesses, lifting gear and a stretcher. They were lucky that there are beams above where the casualties were that could support lifting gear.

The first casualty was fitted with a lifting harness – not easy within the confines of a bell pit when you have an injured leg. The ropes from her harness went over pulleys slung from the overhead beam, which could be pulled by rescuers in other bell pits. Getting her high enough to move across the top of the adjacent bell proved difficult but they managed it with a bit of help from her good leg. Once they got her to the door, she was able to 'bum shuffle' down the narrow spiral stair with her weight carried by the rope, a rescuer behind to guide her and another below to support her injured leg. It would have taken a long time to get her all the way down, so when she reached the clock room, they let her get up and stop being a casualty.

The second casualty had different injuries and needed to be kept straight. That made lifting out of the pit more difficult, and since the casualty was a dummy, it couldn't cooperate. The ambulance team had a special stretcher, like a sheet of stiff plastic that could be rolled up around the casualty to support him in a stiff tube. Unfortunately, the bell pit was too narrow to open it let alone get the dummy onto it. So, they had to use a different stretcher (the one the dummy came up on). It didn't wrap round so they had to lash the casualty to it, including arms to avoid them catching on anything. The stretcher came out of the pit OK, with a rope on one end going over a pulley like the other one, but then they met another problem. The door is quite narrow, and the stretcher had to be turned head on to fit through it, which was made more difficult by the presence of a bell wheel. Once past that obstacle the stretcher was lowered down the stairs, guided by rescuers and with the weight carried by the rope above.

The exercise took longer than planned (two and a half hours) so with the clock rapidly approaching 11pm the teams were keen to gather up their equipment and get away, pausing for a team photo before they went.

As host for the evening, and a civilian observer, I found it interesting to watch a lot of people in a confined and slightly hazardous space, all of them trained but not all having worked together before, collaborating to rescue seriously injured people (albeit not for real on this occasion).

John Harrison, Wokingham, All Saints



The rescuers after the exercise

News from the Branches

Banbury

Bloxham Tower

We have just re-started our Friday practices since I now have a new hip!

I have been teaching four learners for the last few months. A dad, and his two sons aged thirteen and eight, also another eight-year-old. They are making good progress and can now handle a bell on their own.

We usually manage to ring six, seven or eight bells every Sunday morning, assisted by Colin Lee and his son Adam who come over from Adderbury. We ring call changes but I'm hoping we can start ringing methods again now we can practise.

Alan Griffin

Steeple Aston

On 30th November 1974, three Steeple Aston ringers, Dorothy Minett, Ronnie Knight and Fred Darvill and two from Great Tew, Joe Burchell and Graham Clifton gathered to ring their first peal along with tower captain Harry Adams to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Sir Winston Churchill.

On 30th November 2024 a repeat peal was arranged to mark the 50th anniversary.

Saturday 30th November 1974

5040 Grandsire Triples

2 hours 56 min.

1 Lewis Knowles

2 Colin Lee

3 Sally Austin

4 Rosemary Hemmings

5 Jack Knowles

6 Dan Austin

7 Graham Clifton (c)

8 Lawrence White

First 8 bell peal 1 & 5

Saturday 30th November 2024

5040 Doubles 2 methods

2 hours 50 min.

1 Ronnie Knight

2 Dorothy Minett

3 Harry Adams

4 Joe Burchell

5 Graham Clifton (c)

6 Fred Darvill

First peal 1,2,4,5 & 6

The first peal received coverage in the local press being the first peal at Steeple Aston for a long time and because it contained five first peelers. The second peal was very well received by the village with lots of comments of how much people enjoyed it. Handbells. The Steeple Aston ringers were again very busy around the Christmas period with their handbells.

For two weeks leading up to Christmas we tour around the village every night ringing carols at every house. This year our chosen charities were the British Heart Foundation and our own Church Roof Repair Fund. £900 was sent to each. The handbells are greatly enjoyed by our younger ringers and without their help we would not be able to get round. The handbells were rung during the Mother's Day service and we are also taking part in Noye's Fludde at Charlbury Church.



Both the church bells and handbells will be used in the village celebrations to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, along with a poppy cascade down the side of the tower.

Graham Clifton

Banbury Tower

Following a long pause in ringing, Banbury Tower is returning to what it does best, with all ten bells being rung.

Sunday ringing restarted

mid-February from 9.10-9.55am. The Tower band are pleased to welcome ringers from other towers who can't ring at their tower each week. It's good to see younger ringers attending Wednesday practice and Sunday ringing too!

Barry Davis and Roman Sadowski are now jointly running the weekly Banbury Tower practice on Wednesday evenings from 7.30-9pm. All ringers welcome.

This incorporates Branch Practice on the 1st Wednesday of the month. Again, all ringers welcome.

Following our long pause, by co-incidence we have recently welcomed several experienced ringers to our tower, one from out of area, and hope to welcome several more. This means our ten bells will be heard ringing out across Banbury more frequently again.

'We hope to ring on the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, Thursday 8th May too.'

Penny Simpson

Bicester

At our AGM held on 17 February eighteen members from eight towers came together – six new members were elected from three towers. On a less positive note, we decided to reduce the number of Branch Practices held to one per month as some, particularly those held in towers with small or non-existent bands were poorly attended (there weren't enough ringers for those scheduled for Ludgershall, Ambrosden, Piddington over the winter – not helped by the flooding over Otmoor!). Amazingly however sixteen ringers from seven towers came to the February practice in Islip and then twenty ringers in March at Weston-on-the-Green. Credit goes to our Joint Ringing Masters, Richard Haseldine and Jeremy Adams, who manage to cope with feast and famine!

Since November Liping Liu rang her first quarter peal, Julie Penny has passed ART Learning the Ropes Level 4 and in December Christine Redford and Charlie Bates achieved their first 8-bell quarter peals to Plain Bob Triples at Kirtlington where the Oxfordshire Ringing School Handling and Foundation sessions have benefitted many members. The tireless Steve Vickars, with Judith, took the Kirtlington handbells into the local school to introduce Years 5 and 6 to ringing.

Our Branch Outing in April, arranged by Richard Haseldine, took us to five towers in Northamptonshire - Staverton, Badby, Newnham, Flore and Greens Norton. All chosen for their easy going – and two with ground-floor rings (much appreciated). Nineteen ringers, including two visiting ringers from Faringdon and Hanslope, from six Branch towers came – with two non-ringers and three dogs. Again, there was something for everyone and we all enjoyed the ringing and each other's company.

Pam Holley and Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

(No report received)

Chiltern

Chiltern Branch monthly practices continue to be well attended with some of our towers also holding additional Saturday open practices to help members develop methods they don't have the opportunity to ring in their home tower. We have been delighted to welcome new ringers who are only ringing rounds and call changes whilst we have also made Stedman and simple Surprise a feature of all recent branch practices. It has been particularly pleasing to see ringers whose method ringing ability was quite limited when they started attending our practices making really good progress. Much of this is down to the welcoming atmosphere at our practices, helped, no doubt, by tea and cake being a key feature of almost every monthly meeting. Ringers know that they can come along and have a go at methods which are new to them and this strategy is paying dividends. As a rough estimate, between 40 and 50% of our membership have attended a Branch Practice in the past twelve months.

After an inspection at Stoke Mandeville several significant repairs were identified which initially brought questions about the future of ringing at the tower. We are pleased to report that funds were raised quickly to undertake all the required works and, with assistance from an ODG Bell Fund grant, Whites, with some local helpers, successfully completed the required work during March and the bells are now ringing regularly again. If any ringers are nearby on Tuesday evenings they will be very welcome to help at the regular practices on these interesting bells.

At our AGM in March, hosted by Great Missenden, all of the branch officers were re-elected, and we were delighted to vote another young ringer into the Guild. We look forward to another successful year and hope to see more of our towers managing to raise a band for our friendly Orchard Cup striking competition against Central Bucks Branch in October. We are one of the smaller branches in the ODG but we hope to make our presence felt as our ringers move forward together.

Chris Potter

Chipping Norton

In March, our Branch AGM was held in Burford and thanks must go to the local team for the excellent refreshments. All officers remain in place with the exception of

Trevor Withell who joins the team as our new branch secretary. Secretaries are generally hard to find so we are exceptionally pleased that Trevor volunteered, and our thanks must also go to Geoffrey Stretton who held the post for the last two years, as well as being branch treasurer. During the meeting it was announced that this year's recipient of the Claire Tarrant Shield should be Laura Cooper (Shipton-under-Wychwood) having shown exceptional progress in learning to ring and even managed to score her first peal just days before her 14th birthday. The shield was presented to Laura by the Chairman, David Salter.

Shipton-under-Wychwood tower has been busy with their ringing. Not only the peal that included Laura Cooper, which took place at Cowley St. James, Oxford when they rang 5040 Minor (3600 Cambridge Surprise, 1440 Plain Bob with Laura ringing the second, they also notched up four quarter peals between November 2024 and April 2025 scoring several 'firsts'.



David Salter presenting Laura Cooper with the Claire Tarrant Shield

Hook Norton tower had a busy Christmas season with a lot of extra services to ring for, plus the team enjoyed a lovely Christmas party. The evening was very well attended and there was a fabulous spread of food, thanks to the hosts and all the cooks who contributed, and the beer that made it up the hill from the brewery (of course!).

In the last three months the Hooky team has attempted some quarter peals, Selina Harris rung her first Cambridge Surprise Major inside, and Dan Austin conducted his first Stedman Triples and Surprise Major. Perhaps more notably, Sally Austin rang her 1000th quarter peal. Congratulations to Sally on achieving this milestone.

Back in October last year, David Salter (Ringing Master) received a seemingly random email asking if he knew anyone with a set of handbells in E Flat and if they could ring Benjamin Britten's Noye's Fludde. Fortunately, Graham Clifton and the Steeple Aston (Banbury Branch) handbells were perfect, and we quickly organised a team of willing volunteers. Huge thanks to Graham, Diana Gardner, Jack and Lewis Knowles for doing a terrific job in rehearsing and eventually performing, not once, but three times in St Mary's Church, Charlbury. The event was organised by the Oxford Concert Party. For those not familiar with Noye's Fludde it was intended by Britten to be the ultimate community opera and to be performed by both professionals and amateurs. Apparently, Britten was so taken with the sound of handbells after hearing them in a church, that he included them as a late addition to his score.

On 13th February, the bells of Chipping Norton, rang out to welcome HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of his visit to the Theatre and the Branch Trust in Chipping Norton.



Left to Right - Diana Gardner, Lewis Knowles, Jack Knowles, David Salter, Graham Clifton



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh with Bishop Gavin and members of the Branch Trust

Branch Practices continue to be held on the last Tuesday of each month and a full programme can be found on the branch website www.chippy.odg.org.uk. In January and February, we held our Branch Practice on Saturday morning followed by lunch in Hook Norton Brewery and a local hotel in Chipping Norton - both events proved very popular. We welcome anyone from other branches to come to our Branch Practices, but it's best to advise the Ringing Master first (brm@chippy.odg.org.uk) in case arrangements change.

David Salter

East Berks and South Bucks

The last practice of 2024, at Amersham, was well supported. Twenty-four ringers plus three non-ringing husbands enjoyed seasonal refreshments in the church afterwards, and the opportunity to chat and socialise.

The annual Tower Captains' meeting, hosted by Penn, was attended by representatives of seventeen towers. A questionnaire had been circulated in advance asking about the state of ringing in each tower. Generally, there was a need for more experienced ringers at towers to help progress the bands, and also the desire for more focused Branch Practices to cater for less experienced ringers. Support and co-operation between neighbouring towers was recommended and members should be

encouraged to attend Branch Practices. Rachel Wallace (Turville Tower Captain) was presented with her first quarter peal certificate.

Two Branch members have conducted their first quarter peals – Sam Boughton (aged fourteen) called Grandsire Doubles at Marlow, and Verity Nicholls called Plain Bob Doubles at High Wycombe. Sam has also been appointed Ringing Master at Hambleden where his father has taken over as tower captain. There has also been a change of tower captain at Marlow with Mick Francis taking over. Sam's younger brother, Theo (aged ten), was appointed Tower Wizard at Marlow with the responsibility of tracking attendance and writing articles. See p.36 for a poem written by Theo following his appointment.

We are very proud of the youngsters in the Branch who took part in the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers band in the South East England Striking Competition. The competition was hosted by them, and they did extremely well to be placed first, beating six other teams (see full details on pp.12-15).

Only nine new members were elected at our AGM in April, but, of the thirty-six that were elected in 2024, most are still ringing and making good progress. John Davidge stood down as Branch Chairman - a post he has held since 2001. During that time John has been extremely supportive, regularly attending Branch Practices, running training practices, helping with tower maintenance and inspections, etc., etc. Rob Taylor-Ailes was elected in his place, and we look forward to working with him as Chairman, with Robert Newton as Vice Chairman. Ken Darvill also stood down as webmaster after many years' service, and was replaced by Rory Haines. A vacancy remains for a Branch Representative; all other officers were re-elected. At the AGM we remembered Herbert Druce of Penn who died in May last year at the age of 109 years and 122 days. Herbert was the fifth oldest man in the UK.

Patricia Newton

Newbury

In March we held our AGM, where our elementary and advanced practices passed on to new management. The first of these, together with our mid-week ring and lunch events, continue to be well supported and popular with our members. There are now numerous new recruits in the Branch and novice training is in full swing. We are now settled into the new Membermojo system which seems to be working well for us. Our new website is now fully up and running, hosted by the ODG and linking all relevant Branch information. This includes our diary and past issues of our Summer and Christmas newsletters since 2015. All Branch news is covered in detail in our newsletter, so please follow the link and have a read.

Here is a link to our website:

[Bells Near Newbury – Church bell ringing near Newbury \(odg.org.uk\)](https://odg.org.uk/bells-near-newbury)

Here is a link to our latest newsletter:

[Christmas-2024.pdf](#)

Mark Robins

North Bucks

After much chasing and encouraging, our annual subs payment was sent to the Guild Treasurer more or less on time. An encouraging start to the Membermojo era.

At Old Wolverton a teaching session was held to guide new conductors of Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles. This seemed to help several to try conducting at subsequent tower practices. The Cambridge six practice using the simulator at Loughton continues to make steady progress.

Branch Practices continue to be well supported. As preparation for the Guild eight-bell competition, eight and ten bell towers are preferred and several attempts at the competition touch have been made. Meanwhile, quarter peals are being rung at Newport Pagnell that focus on quality rather than complexity of ringing.

Doug Hird

Old North Berks

Once again we held our AGM at midday, this year in the parish hall of St Helen, Abingdon. Prior to this there was ringing at both the Abingdon towers, St Nicolas and St Helen. Following the meeting, we all enjoyed a superb lunch of jacket potatoes with various fillings, followed by cakes. We would like to thank the Abingdon ringers for their hospitality and for all their hard work in preparing the delicious food for us.

The AGM went very smoothly, with only two changes to Branch officers. Daphne Pollard had already advised that she wished to stand down after many years as our newsletter editor. Mark Cooke also had advised that he too wished to stand down as Branch webmaster, again after many years in the role. Both Daphne and Mark were thanked for all their hard work and dedication to the Branch. Fortunately we were able to find replacements for both these important roles, and we would like to thank Ellen Bramhill and Mary Leneis.

At the AGM we discussed the rehanging of West Hendred bells. The problem with the new grillage had been resolved and it is hoped that the faculty will soon be approved and the work take place later this year. Two bells at Sutton Courtenay will both be rehung later in April and have new headstocks, gudgeons and clappers. It is hoped that this work will be completed in time for the Guild Ringing Day, which takes place in ONB Branch on 5th May.

Branch Practices of all descriptions are generally very successful and attendance numbers, with a few exceptions, are usually excellent. The practice calendar is very busy, but seems to be providing opportunities for our members, whatever their level of skill. We are encouraging members to attend these various practices, especially when their home tower is host. The most vulnerable in terms of expertise and attendance are the six Surprise Major practices. ONB has a good history with these, however in recent years we have quite rightly focussed on recruitment and young ringer engagement. We are now hoping to focus on more advanced ringing development. The advanced practices are a useful step towards this goal, and we would like to accommodate and encourage more basic surprise major ringing for new aspiring members.

Over fifty Branch members and friends took part in the social on 9th November, a skittles evening at the Wallingford Sports and Social Club with a fish and chips supper. Split into six teams, the victorious winners were the Cholsey Clangers. Ringing and refreshments on 1st January was hosted by Cholsey. Once again this was a very popular event, with more than fifty attendees. Thanks go to the local ringers for their hospitality and for providing an interesting range of savouries and cakes.

Our annual mini outing will be held on 23rd April, and we are planning to ring at Hungerford, Aldbourne and Great Shefford. The Branch outing will be in the Marlow/Henley on Thames area on 12th July. However the barbecue will be a separate event during the afternoon of 9th August at Laurence Hall, Cholsey. In November we are arranging a barn dance in Chilton Village Hall. So, a busy summer ahead and plenty to look forward to!

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

(No report received)

Reading

June Wells organised a short outing in February, to give some learners experience on different bells. The first tower was All Saints, Chilton (6) followed by coffee in Goring. Then to St Thomas of Canterbury, Goring (8). Lunch followed at the Pack Saddle in Chazey Heath. Very good, freshly cooked food but rather a long wait for some of us. Finally, we rang at St Margaret, Mapledurham (6). Experienced ringers and learners alike enjoyed a very sociable day with a variety of towers and a wealth of new experiences.

As well as our regular Branch Practices a number of Reading ringers meet roughly monthly to enjoy ringing on the twelve bells at St Laurence in Reading Town centre. Both experienced twelve bell ringers and novices enjoy the challenge of ringing on higher numbers. Another development opportunity has been the semi-regular quarter peals enabling various ringers to complete their first quarter peal or perhaps their first quarter peal of Cambridge for example or as in my case my first quarter of a major method. At St Giles we have rung Plain Bob, including two first quarters on eight, and Yorkshire, Turramurra and spliced surprise major. At St Laurence we have rung two good quarters of Grandsire Cinques and one of Kent Maximus, again with a number of firsts.

Sadly, we record the death of Julian Elkington. He has not rung for a couple of years but he will still be missed at Henley.

We were also saddened to lose two longstanding members of Reading Branch, Cyril Crouch who died in December and James Milford who died in January.

Cyril worked hard as part of the team that replaced the old ring at Shiplake with the lovely new bells, as well as teaching a number of people across the years. James also encouraged learners on his return to St Giles, Reading from his time in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Both are a sad loss to the Exercise.

Lindsey Barker

Sonning Deanery

We held our Branch six-bell striking competition in April. Six bands took part including a Youth band with an age range across all the bands of eight to eighty-seven. It was a close competition with only two points separating first and second place which were Easthampstead and Wokingham All Saints respectively, with Arborfield not far behind in 3rd place.

This year our twice monthly elementary practices have now been split into an elementary practice and a focused practice. The elementary practices help ringers progress from rounds to change ringing, and the focused practices concentrate on a particular method each month. Both practices have been well attended.

Jan Glen



After a rather long wait our new ropes arrived in early March. They are settling in nicely and we are getting used to their individual quirks; slightly bouncy, stiff tail ends (but this is improving) and just different!

We were delighted to be able to ring for the installation service of our new Rector, Revd Gemma Donnel, on 10th April. The church was full for this special service, led by the Bishop of Reading, the Rt Revd Mary Gregory with the ringing heard and appreciated by all. Revd Gemma tolled the treble from the vestry during the service, managing a steady rhythm for ten tolls, having had some expert tuition from one of our ringers beforehand!

Judith Witting and Tricia Amos, Finchampstead

The new ropes at Finchampstead

SDB Young Ringers

Again, our SDB Young Ringers have clocked up a lot of ringing and quarter peals individually as well as meeting regularly with Bucks and Berks, and Reading young ringers. This gives them chances to ring at different towers and ring with others their own age.

Our branch hosted the South East England Striking competition at Twyford on behalf of Bucks and Berks Young Ringers. A fabulous win for the Bucks and Berks band which included members of our branch. See details on pp.12-15.

This is a first for B&BYR and is a great achievement especially considering the small geographic area B&BYR covers. This notable achievement even made it into the *Henley Standard*!

Claire Shuttleworth, SDB Youth Officer

South Oxon

Two long-standing Branch Officers retired at our AGM, held in February. Thanks were expressed to John Tchighianoff for his twenty years plus service as Chairman, and to Kay Bartholomew for her work as Treasurer (ten years in the current stint, plus a previous spell of five or six years as combined Secretary/Treasurer). Andrew Davis was elected Chairman, and Cathy Hughes-D'Aeth Treasurer. Japh Slaney was thanked for agreeing to take on the role of Deputy Ringing Master alongside his commitments as a Branch Representative. We are ever grateful to all those who take on roles within the Branch.

Work on the Watlington bells has now been completed, and a Branch Practice was held there in April. To encourage attendance, Watlington's invitation included the following comment – 'For those of you who have had the experience of ringing at Watlington previously you can be confident that you will notice a big difference. After a complete re-hang, replacement of the old plain bearings, new headstocks, wheels and clappers the out of tune odd-struckness is no more and they no longer drop like stones at inconvenient moments. They've been on a bit of a diet too and whilst still a hefty 21cwt they amply reward the effort with a glorious sound.' Everyone had a good time!

The Branch eight bell practices continue, alternating between the second Friday and the second Saturday of each month. The repertoire is varied, starting with Plain Bob Major and Grandsire Triples and extending through Stedman to Surprise Major (Cambridge, Superlative and Bristol). Attendances have generally been good, and it has been pleasing to see many Branch members trying new things and making progress.

It has been a while since we have had a Branch Outing, but it was good to hear that Chalgrove and Henley bell ringers had joined together to tour five towers in the South Oxfordshire Branch, with the purpose of 'having fun, concentrating on ringing rounds and making new friends'. In keeping with tradition, a pub lunch was involved, followed by a sumptuous ringers' tea later in the afternoon!

Jane Willis

Vale of the White Horse

The Vale Mini-Ringers has been a regular event in our calendar since July 2023, with events held at Hinton Waldrist, Longcot and Shellingford over the past few months. The young ringers are all progressing well, with most now ringing on the tower bells. Regular well-attended training evenings have been taking place at Longcot on the first Friday of the month. Topics have ranged from listening and place-counting through Plain Hunt to advanced major practices.

Branch Practices continue at each of our ringable towers throughout the year, and are usually well attended. Although we only had four ringers at Buscot and Coleshill in October, we managed to squeeze over thirty into the Faringdon tower in January. The Branch AGM was held at Stanford in the Vale in March, with ringing and 'Songs Of Praise' in St Denys followed by refreshments and the AGM in the village hall.

Branch Officers elected / re-elected at the meeting were:

Chair	Jackie O'Hagan
Vice Chair	Clare Knock
Secretary	David Wright
Treasurer	Lucy Laird
Ringing Master	Tony Crabtree
Deputy Ringing Master	Joe Norton
Branch Rep	Cheryl Watson
Training Officer	Tony Crabtree
Bell Fund Raffle Organisers	Becky Vardy and Joe Norton
Newsletter Editor	Hugh Baxter

Thanks to all those Officers continuing in role, our hosts for providing a lovely selection of cakes and drinks, Paul Eddy for leading the service, Margaret Williams for playing the organ and the Guild Master and the Guild Treasurer for joining us.

As winners of the 2024 Branch Quiz, Faringdon won the responsibility for arranging this years' quiz which took place at Faringdon in April. Six teams entered, with the early leaders from Shrivenham being pipped at the post by the eventual victors from Highworth. Thanks to the Faringdon team for arranging a very enjoyable evening, and to the Crown Coaching Inn for the excellent food. Everyone is looking forward to next year's event.

Congratulations to Tatum Rowley for her first quarter peal (on the sixth at Faringdon). In the same quarter peal, Kit Margey conducted his first QP (at the first attempt) – well done both!

David Wright

Witney and Woodstock

David Smith, former Tower Captain of St James the Great, South Leigh, and an elected Life Member of the ODG recently passed away. There was a Thanksgiving Service on 11th April at St Mary's, Cogges, and afterwards at Cogges Manor Farm.

Louise Brown, a ringer for many years at Church Hanborough and former Branch Ringing Master, passed away in April after a long illness. She was an excellent ringer, known by many, and will be missed by all. A Thanksgiving Service was held at Tackley Crematorium and there was celebratory ringing for the life of Louise at Church Hanborough and Woodstock.

Thanks to the excellent organisation of Richard White, our Branch Ringing Master, more than twenty members enjoyed an outing to the Gloucestershire area, where a varied set of towers were made available for us and the ringing (rounds, call changes, Plain Hunt Triples, Plain Bob Triples, Stedman Triples, Grandsire Triples, and Cambridge Surprise Minor) catered for a wide range of experience with an enjoyable lunch at the Old Spot in Dursley (and tea too).

Andrew Goldthorpe

Guild Officers for 2025

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Central Council Representatives *ccreps.odg@membermojo.co.uk*
John A Harrison **Lucy Hopkins Till**
Alan Marchbank **Timothy G Pett**

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Reading	Lindsey Barker <i>secretary@reading.odg.org.uk</i>
Sonning Deanery	Jan Glen <i>secretary@sdb.odg.org.uk</i>
South Oxon	Jane Willis <i>secretary@southoxon.odg.org.uk</i> (01844 279468)
Vale of the White Horse	David Wright <i>secretary@vowh.odg.org.uk</i> (01793 783056)
Witney and Woodstock	Andrew Goldthorpe <i>secretary@witneyandwoodstock.odg.org.uk</i> (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 <https://odg.org.uk/> website for diary updates on an ongoing basis. Any changes or revisions should be sent to the ODG webmaster.

Codes for the 4th column of the tables below

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	Ringier Centre Practice	SC	Striking Competition
SM	Surprise Major	SP	Surprise Practice	CM	Committee Meeting

MAY 2025

Tues	6	SDB	EP	Warfield (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	7	ONB	AP	Harwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	10	WWB	BP	Woodstock (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	10	Reading	BP	Checkendon(8)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	13	ONB	BP	Milton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	13	SDB	AP	St Paul's	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham	
Thurs	15	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	16	VOWH	SC	Longcot (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Shottesbrooke (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Tues	20	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	21	SDB	FP	Wargrave (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	22	WWB	BP	Broadwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	Bray (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Weds	28	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stoney	19.30 – 21.00
				(6)	
Weds	28	ONB	BP	Sunningwell (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	28	Reading	BP	Padworth (6)	11.00 – 12.30
Sat	31	Guild	Rope maintenance course	Shabbington	9.30 – 15.15

JUNE 2025

Tues	3	SDB	FP	All Saints	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Weds	4	ONB	SM	Drayton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	5	EBSB	BP	Horton (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Fri	6	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Mon	9	ONB	BP	Little Wittenham	18.30 – 19.15
				(5)	
				Long Wittenham	19.30 – 20.30
				(6)	
Weds	11	SDB	AP	All Saints	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Sat	14	EBSB	SC	Penn (6)	17.00 – 19.00
Sat	14	WWB	SC	Stonesfield (6)	tbc
Sat	14	Reading	BP	Nettlebed(6)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	18	VOWH	BP	Buckland (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	18	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	18	VOWH	BP	Lyford (3)	18.45 – 19.15
Thurs	19	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	21	Guild	Secrets of a Steeple Keeper course	Stratfield	10.00 – 13.00
				Mortimer	
Sat	21	SDB	BP	Wargrave (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Mon	23	WWB	BP	Bampton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	25	ONB	BP	Abingdon St	14.00 – 15.30
				Helen's (10)	
Weds	25	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	25	Reading	BP	Englefield (8)	11.00 – 12.30

Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Farnham Royal (8)	17.00 - 19.00
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JULY 2025

Weds	2	ONB	AP	Blewbury (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	8	ONB	BP	Wantage (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	8	SDB	AP	St Paul's Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	12	WWB	BP	Aston (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	12	Reading	BP	Goring(8)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	15	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	16	SDB	FP	Finchampstead (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	17	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	17	VOWH	BP	Buscot (4)	18.45 – 19.15
Thu	17	VOWH	BP	Coleshill (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	19	SDB	BP	Arborfield (6) TBC	10.30 – 12.00
Tues	22	Bicester	BP	Caversfield (5)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	23	Reading	BP	Shiplake (8)	11.00 – 12.30
Weds	23	WWB	BP	South Leigh (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	23	ONB	BP	Marcham	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	26	EBSB	EP	Hitcham (6)	19.00 – 21.00

AUGUST 2025

Fri	1	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	5	SDB	FP	Warfield (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	6	ONB	SM	North Moreton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	9	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	9	WWB	BP	Wootton (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	9	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 – 11.30
Weds	13	ONB	BP	Steventon (6)	19.00 – 20.30
Weds	13	SDB	AP	All Saints Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	16	SDB	TBC	Various towers & St Paul (8)	16.00 – 19.00
Tues	19	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	20	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	21	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	Wraysbury (8)	19.00 – 21.00
Weds	27	Bicester	BP	Launton (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	27	ONB	BP	Long Wittenham (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	27	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 – 12.30
Thurs	28	WWB	BP	Woodstock (8)	19.30 – 21.00

SEPTEMBER 2025

Tues	2	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	3	ONB	AP	Chilton (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Mon	8	ONB	BP	Drayton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	9	SDB	AP	St Paul's Wokingham	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	13	WWB	BP	Langford (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	13	Reading	SC	TBC	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	16	VOWH	BP	Uffington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	17	SDB	FP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	18	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Thurs	18	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	EBSB	EP	TBC	10.00 – 15.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Twyford (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Mon	22	Bicester	BP	Ambrosden (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	23	WWB	BP	Witney (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	24	ONB	BP	Childrey (8)	14.00 – 15.30

Weds	24	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 – 12.30
Sat	27	EBSB	BP	Turville (6)	10.00 – 12.00

OCTOBER 2025

Weds	1	ONB	SM	Milton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	7	ONB	BP	Abingdon St Helen's (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	7	SDB	FP	Warfield (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	11	EBSB	SC & HY	Chalfont St Giles (8)	17.00 – 19.30
Sat	11	SDB	SC	SDB Sonning (8)	16.00 – 18.00
Sat	11	Reading	BP/Outing	TBC	10.00 – 11.30
Weds	15	SDB	AP	All Saints Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	16	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thu	16	VOWH	BP	Shellingford (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	18	Guild	Basic Belfry course	Wantage	10.00 – 15.00
Sat	18	SDB	BP	Finchampstead (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	22	WWB	BP	Clanfield (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	22	SDB	EP	Finchampstead (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	22	ONB	BP	West Hanney (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	22	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 – 12.30
Fri	24	Bicester	BP	Ludgershall (5)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Wooburn (8)	10.00 – 12.00

NOVEMBER 2025

Tues	4	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	5	ONB	AP	Drayton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	8	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	8	Reading	BP	TBC	10.00 – 11:30
Sat	8	WWB	BP	Cassington (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Tues	11	SDB	AP	St Paul's Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	12	ONB	BP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	15	EBSB	BP	Maidenhead (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Tues	18	VOWH	BP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	18	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	19	SDB	FP	Wargrave (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	21	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	25	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	26	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	26	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 – 12.30
Thurs	27	WWB	BP	Broadwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	TBC	SDB	BM	Warfield (10)	17.00

DECEMBER 2025

Weds	3	ONB	SM	Harwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	9	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	13	EBSB	BP	Burnham (8)	17.00 – 18.00
Mon	15	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	17	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	14.00 – 15.30

Marlow

At the AGM, they gave me the name,
Tower Wizard—what a claim to fame!
I track attendance, write with cheer,
For newsletters far and near.

Sunday mornings, my task is clear—
Wake my brother, get him here!
Service ringing calls us all,
To chime the bells, both great and small.

Quarter Peals we strive to ring,
Saturday mornings, let them sing!
Focused practice, skills take flight,
Plain Hunt, Leading—doing it right.

A special peal, a joyful sound,
For Bishop Bull, as love surrounds.
With steady hands and hearts so true,
We rang in honour, strong and new.

Practice nights bring quite a crowd,
Twelve or more—it's made us proud!
Sunday mornings, all eight sound,
And with the right team, Triples abound.

Through every chime, each rising tone,
The bells remind—we're not alone.
With ringing hearts and spirits free,
The tower sings in harmony!



Theo Boughton, see also pp.15 and 25.