May 2016 No. 94

ODD BOB

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



Bicester Branch outing outside St John the Baptist, Yarkhill

The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers invites Resident Guild Members to the

Guild Festival

to be held in Oxford on

9th July 2016

Come and ring at the Cathedral and other Oxford towers.

Ringing Times

09.15-10.30 New College,
09.00-11.00 Christ Church (invited band from 10.40, when the shutters will be opened),
12.30-14.00 St Giles,
14.30-15.30 Magdalen College,
15.00-16.30 St Mary Magdalen,
15.15-16.45 St Thomas the Martyr,
15.45-17.00 Lincoln College,
16.30-18.00 St Ebbes*,
17.00-18.00 St Aldates,
17.45-19.00 Carfax.

Eucharist

Eucharist in Christ Church Cathedral at 11am

Tea and Coffee

Drop-in for tea and coffee in St Giles' Hall (OX2 6HT) between 12.30pm and 2.30pm. There will be a display of some First World War items from the Guild Library.

* to be confirmed.

With thanks to the Oxford Society and the Oxford University Society for their hospitality.

Contents

Master's Mutterings **4**

Young Ringers Outing to Cambridge **5**

Why don't the church bells ring in Holy Week? **5**

N Bucks and St George's Day *Rolling Ring* **6**

Days Of Yore **7**

The Central Council and ringers **8**

Towers and Belfries Committee Report **9**

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme **10**

Librarian's Report **13**

News from the Branches **14**

Banbury 14

Bicester 15

Central Bucks 15

Chiltern 16

Chipping Norton 17

East Berks and South Bucks 17

Newbury 18

North Bucks 19

Old North Berks 19

Oxford City 20

Reading 21

Sonning Deanery 22

South Oxon 23

Vale of the White Horse 24

Witney and Woodstock 25

Points from Peals **26**

Paying Peal Fees electronically 27

Guild Officers for 2016 ..... **28**

Branch Secretaries 29

Diary of Events for 2016 ..... **30**

From your Editor…

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

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

Contributions for the next issue, please, by the end of October 2016.

Rob Needham

Data Protection Act 1998

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

© 2016 Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Master's Mutterings

You read this as final plans for the Guild Festival on 9th July take shape. This is our quinquennial opportunity to ring at towers in the centre of Oxford and come together in the Cathedral to worship. It gives us all the chance to ring with people from across the three counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, people we wouldn't normally come into contact with but who share a common interest and belong to the same Guild. Many friendships are made whilst standing in the queue to ring, and conversations lead on to people you know in common and towers you have visited. As with any ringing at different towers, particularly if you are less experienced, you return to your own tower with a new fondness for its familiarity and even its quirks!

Do join us on 9th July. Hot drinks will be available after the service in St Giles' Church Hall, and you can view the display of First World War items from the Guild library – or just take a break from the activity of the day.

There are plenty of opportunities to use our bells to celebrate this year. The official birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II takes place in mid-June and I am sure many communities will be holding special events. Do make sure that ringing is part of them.

In the autumn, we expect to welcome the Rt Revd Steven Croft as the new Bishop of Oxford. He will be invited to be Patron of the Guild and it would be lovely if there could be ringing across the Diocese at that time.

Church festivals also provide an opportunity to celebrate – make these the footnotes for your quarters and peals. These happen every year and can often be forgotten – but surely the fact that they happen every year is more reason to celebrate and remember their significance.

Finally, whilst remembering that every time we catch hold to ring is a public performance, do aim to make it an enjoyable experience as there is much to celebrate as we ring.

Hilarie Rogers, Guild Master

Young Ringers Outing to Cambridge

On Thursday 31st March, a group of 15 young ringers from the Oxford Diocesan Guild (8 from Abingdon, 2 from Wargrave, and 1 each from Harwell, Bloxham, East Hagbourne, Amersham and Newbury) joined with 12 younger members of the Ely Diocesan Association to visit some of the most renowned towers in Cambridge. After an early start followed by a long journey, we were more than happy to kick-start the ringing at St. Mary & St. Michael's tower in Trumpington. While it was slightly cramped up in the ringing chamber, the lovely-sounding ring of eight more than made up for it. It was in this tower, after the general ringing, that some of us attempted a quarter-peal of Plain Bob Triples, composed and conducted by David Thomas. After a few tricky patches and worried looks the band, consisting of four ODG ringers and four EDA ringers, completed the ¼ successfully in 43 minutes.

Whilst some were busy up in the ringing chamber, the other young ringers were making their way to the next 6-bell tower (St. Edwards). On the way, a few teams completed a travelling quiz, for the chance to win prizes later on. The tower of Great St. Mary came next; as a ring of 12, this was the highlight for many. Although it was sometimes a struggle to hold the bells up enough, they sounded great when struck properly. Next, there was a quick visit to St Bene't; this ring was challenging due to the long draughts and stretchy ropes. We then popped into Christ's College for some well-earned refreshments and a go on a mini-ring bell. Our penultimate tower was Our Lady's; this ring was considerably heavy (a 31cwt eight), with many boys scrambling for a go on the tenor. Finally, we headed over to St. Andrews, another 8, for our last ring of the day!

Overall, it was an incredible day out and even the weather was kind to us. Many thanks go to the Cambridge ringers and to the organisers, Alan Winter, Barbara le Gallez, Catriona Shearer and Susan Read who made this day possible.

Sophie Martin, aged 12

Why don't the church bells ring in Holy Week?

When I was four I was struck by a chocolate bell as big as I was. It was in the middle of a display of the local confiserie. It was resting in a giant nest elaborately decorated with icing sugar flowers and leaves, around which nestled a whole barnyard of chocolate hens, rabbits and ducks.
Why so many bells? Why the nest?
My great grandmother then told me the story, which was her explanation for the silence of the church bells during Holy Week.

Every year on Good Friday, she said, the bells in the church bell towers of every church secretly leave their perch and fly on magical wings to Rome to be blessed by The Pope.

The Pope, to whom miracles are an everyday occurrence, then duly blesses the bells, and his blessings miraculously turn into chocolate figures and shapes, after which the bells fly back to their home bell towers; upside down to avoid attracting attention by ringing, but still carrying the chocolates.

But, as the bells come close to home in readiness for Easter Day they start to feel the urge to ring. One by one, they ring out their joy and the chocolate blessings are flung out across the countryside for children to collect in the nests they have prepared and carefully positioned in their gardens.

Even to this day French children make nests and put them outside to collect their Easter chocolates.

So now you know why the bells do not ring during Holy Week!

Reproduced from an article by Joanne Harris in the Telegraph magazine

Submitted by Bill Bookless, Wargrave

N Bucks and St George's Day *Rolling Ring*

All the months of preparation finally paid off when 33 towers across North Bucks branch rang out as part of the 2016 St George's day rolling ring. It all started at a Guild meeting in the early summer of 2015 when a request was made for branches to support the Leap Year fund raising for the Guild's Bell Fund and a thank you from *Ringing for England* was mentioned.

Our branch rep Linda Maycroft came away from the meeting deep in thought. A few weeks later these thoughts were taking shape and were shared with the rest of the branch officers and Libby Alexander. Inspired by this, Doug Hird quickly drew up a plan for the wave of ringing; Gary Reading and Linda Maycroft met Libby, and the *Rolling Ring* challenge was born.

The idea was shared with members of the branch at the Autumn meeting and everyone agreed that it was something that they would support. As well as ringing for England and St George the branch decided to use the opportunity to meet the fundraising requests of the Guild's Bell Fund and Association of Ringing Teachers. To date about £300 has been raised and this will be split equally between the two.

The North Bucks St George's Ringing Wave commenced at Thornborough at 9.30am – the branch's only ring of 5 steel bells. 15 minutes later the bells of Buckingham rang out, the wave then weaved its way around the surrounding villages before making its way east towards Milton Keynes. The wave zig-zagged around Milton Keynes and the surrounding villages before heading east over the M1 to Newport Pagnell. The wave continued its journey as far as Olney before heading back west, taking in some further villages before reaching its final destination at Hanslope. Following the day's ringing some of the ringers met in *The Cock* public house for a well-deserved drink in true old fashioned bell ringers' style.

North Bucks was joined by a further 9 branches across the country who took up the Ringing for England's rolling ring challenge.

Linda Maycroft

Days Of Yore

Do you ever think what ringing must have been like a century – or two, or three – ago? We know so little about ringing conditions in the 17th and 18th centuries; bells rung full circle and to balance without stay or slider; ropes without sallies too (they were often fitted retrospectively after the rope itself was fixed to the wheel). Indeed we have no definite dating for when these "setting" devices – or various local uses of wedges, timber blocks and rope to hold the bell up – were first installed. There is a possible reference to payment to a carpenter for making "stayes" in the accounts of St Hugh's Lincoln for 1617. There is also a clearer and more specific reference at Ludlow in 1655, "payd to John Preece for stayes and rowles (*rollers – forerunner of today's pulleys*) wch keepe the bells from going over…." There must have been plenty of accidents and near-misses, particularly for learners. Even a century later, William Laughton in his account of the Rambling Ringers (1733), notes rings of bells in London without stays and sliders. These – as still done in some West Country towers today – were rung up (possibly only part-way to frame height), put into changes, then down again, without any need to set the bells or hold them on balance. Laughton and his friends often had to do considerable repairs and maintenance before they could ring. Incidentally, they seldom needed permission, they just turned up, found the belfry key-holder (if required) and rang. At Camberwell, for example, they found the treble out of its bearings and had to remove the wheel, lift the bell back into the gudgeons, and refix the wheel. Also the tenor wouldn't rise, being loose in the gudgeons and the U-bolt missing that secures to the headstock the pivot on which the bell swings. (We had a similar problem with the 6th at Iver only a couple of years ago when the bolt had a fatigue fracture – a very dangerous condition.) Heavy bells that jumped or bounced out of their bearings were quite common into the 20th century. I remember Albert Hunter at Ruislip telling me how he'd turned up to a practice at St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside in 1925, to be told the tenor was out of its bearings. He turned and was about to leave, but was told – "Don't go, they're putting her back now" – and so they were – all 53 cwt of her! A few weeks later William Pye turned her in, SINGLE HANDED, to 7,392 Cambridge Maximus – and kept her in the bearings! One of the all-time greatest feats in change ringing!

One item of earlier days that has always puzzled me were the FOOT STRAPS. It was common in the 17th and 18th centuries for there to be a pair of leather loops or adjustable straps fitted to the floor (or box) beneath each bellrope. The feet were slipped into each of these and you were thus restricted in movement. Laughton himself – and presumably other 18th century ringers – favoured these devices and was cross when they were absent or unusable, saying that they helped him to avoid slipping wheel if the bell had that characteristic. The consequences of a broken stay – or, indeed, overthrowing the bell with no stay at all – with your feet firmly secured, don't bear thinking about! It may be that some sort of "anchor" for the feet helped in handling the bells, which in those days required MUCH more physical effort to ring.

Today we have very little idea of what it was like to ring a badly-going bell on plain bearings, particularly if the lubrication had "run dry" as they put it. When peals were rung on such difficult bells it was usual to employ one or more "greasers" to lubricate the bearings from the frame while ringing was taking place (talk about risky as well as noisy) – it must have been terrifying! Washbrook provided greasers to tend to the Merton College bells in Oxford when they rang peals there in the 1800s, and at Drayton for the 11,328 of London Major in 1896. Even into the 1960s dry plain bearings could give trouble, and when conductor Joe Roast swapped ropes with a ringer, exhausted by struggling with just such a troublesome bell, the peal was not allowed by the Central Council, though recognised by the Essex Association. This caused some controversy in *The Ringing World* at the time.

David Rowlands

The Central Council and ringers

The Central Council is the (inter)national body that represents ringers. Most ringing societies of any substance are affiliated to the Council and they send representatives to be its members (ODG has 6). The societies pay an annual affiliation fee that averages out around 16p per ringer (the way the formula works means it is 7p for ODG members). The Council has no paid staff – all its work is done by volunteers, mostly by its members, either as officers or on one of its 15 working committees. Over half of current Council members serve on a committee (all ODG members do) or hold an office. The Council has done a lot for ringing during its 125 year existence, and many of the things we take for granted are due in one way or another to the Council.

But the needs of ringing have changed since the 1890s and there is a widespread feeling that the Council has not changed enough to match this. It has changed quite a lot, but rather slowly, and despite continuing to work on behalf of ringers, the Council is increasingly accused of being out of touch and unresponsive.

You might have seen the surge of media interest in ringing a few months ago, about whether ringing was a sport. Someone suggested trying to register ringing with Sport England (to give access to funding for training etc) but the Council declared that its purpose was to promote ringing for Christian worship, and doing anything else might upset the church. That unleashed a torrent of letters in the pages of *The Ringing World* and heated discussion on e-mail lists and Facebook groups.

Service ringing is of course an important part of most ringers lives because most of us are members of church bands, but it is only a part of what ringers do and what attracts them to ringing. A lot of ringing, including many quarters and nearly all peals, aren't rung for services. Nor are outings or competitions. Recruitment from within the church is falling so we need to draw ringers from the wider community, which is increasingly secular. Young people in particular can be put off by anything overtly religious. But if we can get them hooked on ringing for its physical, mental, social, musical (or sporting) attributes we are more likely to persuade them to take up ringing, including their share of service

ringing, in return for what they get out of it. If ringing is to thrive in the modern age we need to embrace the secular as well as the church aspects of ringing, which many of us already do.

Against this background – the Council being considered out of touch and seeming to cling to the ideas of its Victorian founders – I will be proposing two motions to the Council meeting in Portsmouth on 30th May. The first asks the Council to make a bold declaration of its purpose to serve the needs of modern ringers, including a mature relationship with the churches that own bells (not just C of E) and secular owners of bells. If passed, this will be a clear signal that enhances its reputation with ringers.

The second asks the Council to initiate a fundamental review of its rules and activities with a view to modernisation, where the group conducting the review would include ringers outside the Council (its 'customers' in modern jargon) and ordinary Council members (i.e. not the core establishment). If passed, this should enable the Council to catch up with the needs of modern ringers. I expect a lot of support from progressive members of the Council and some opposition from those defending the status quo. It should be an interesting meeting.

The day before, on the afternoon of Sunday 29th, there will be a 'Question Time' session, open to anyone, at which I imagine some of these issues will also be raised. Even if you can't get to Portsmouth, you will be able to watch the proceedings of both the Open Meeting and the Council Meeting live on the Internet. This is a first for the Council, and proof that it is willing to embrace modern developments.

All Council papers, including our motions (items 13 E & F of the Agenda document) and our supporting paper, are available on the Council website at: http://cccbr.org.uk/council/meetings/2016/

John Harrison

Towers and Belfries Committee Report

The committee has met once since November, with an attendance of nine. Eleven inspections/visits have been carried out, details of which are shown below:

Ambrosden (Inspection & report)
Appleton (Grant Inspection)
Berrick Salome (TMA)
Cookham (TMA)
Dorchester (TMA)
Fulmer – two visits (Frayed rope & TMA)
Great Coxwell (Inspection & report)
Old Marston (Grant Inspection)
Sonning (TMA)
Wardington (Inspection – poor "go")

A rope splicing course has been run at Hanwell and it is planned to run two more (in the Bicester and North Bucks branches) later in the year. A maintenance course is also being planned (again in the North Bucks branch) for later this year.

Earlier in the year there was a serious incident in the Ringing Room at Chalgrove which required the attendance of the emergency services. These, when receiving a request, will need to know the postcode of the church in order to achieve the fastest response. The committee strongly recommends that the postcode is prominently displayed in the Ringing Room and, if the ringers have any influence in that direction, also in the church itself. Some churches (mine included) do not have a postcode – in that case, use the postcode of the nearest building in sight of the church.

John Davidge, Chairman T&B Committee

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Since the last report there has been a recovery in the number of current awards in the Scheme, with the number of awards now standing at twenty, an increase of four. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is now eighty-four, which is about nineteen per cent of the four hundred and forty-two towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been one hundred and thirty-four inspections (of which twenty-seven were preliminaries), resulting in one hundred and five awards (sixty-five Gold, twenty-five Silver, and fifteen Bronze).

The number of expired awards has fallen and is now twenty-two. T & B committee members continue to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards. The award for Denham has expired since the last report and it is hoped that the band will soon attempt to renew it. Congratulations to Cookham and to High Wycombe who renewed Gold Awards and to Fulmer who renewed with a Bronze. Special mention should be made of Berrick Salome who gained a Gold after a first time entry, and Dorchester who returned to the current awards list with a Gold after an absence of ten years! Congratulations to both bands.

The number of Branches having a tower in the “current awards” list remains at nine out of the fifteen Guild Branches, with EBSB not having regained its predominant position, having been overtaken by the South Oxon Branch. Details as follows:

South Oxon	4	(Gold)
EBSB	4	(3 Gold, 1 Bronze)
Reading	3	(Gold)
Sonning Deanery	2	(Gold)
Banbury	2	(Gold)
Witney & Woodstock	2	(1 Gold, 1 Silver)
Chiltern	1	(Gold)
Newbury	1	(Gold)
Old North Berks	1	(Gold)

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

The main features of the award scheme are as follows:

- There are three award grades (Gold, Silver, and Bronze) based on the results of an inspection using a marking sheet that is made available, in advance, to participating towers to enable them to prepare for the inspection. The grades will be based on the percentage of the "perfect" mark (currently 235), as follows:

Gold	85% +
Silver	70 – 84%
Bronze	55 – 69%

- The award takes the form of a certificate that is current for two years from the date of inspection (rather like an MOT) and can be displayed in the tower
- Towers holding current awards are listed in Odd Bob and the Guild Report
- Each inspection is carried out by judges from the Towers & Belfries committee and the detailed results of the inspection are made available to the tower
- Inspections can be requested at any time, via the Secretary or the Chairman of the Towers & Belfries committee (addresses near the back of Odd Bob), irrespective of whether the request is for an initial inspection or to try and improve an existing grade.

If you haven't already started, why not consider taking part? We will provide you with all the details of how you will be marked so that you can plan what has to be done to get an award; if asked, we will even do a preliminary inspection before you start, to help the process. If you do gain an award you can be confident that your tower and bells are in a good, safe condition and, whether or not an award is gained, you will be given useful information on how they can be improved.

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

High Wycombe(All Saints)	EBSB	Expires 28.02.18
Berrick Salome	South Oxon	Expires 31.01.18
Cookham (Holy Trinity)	EBSB	Expires 31.12.17
Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 30.11.17
Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon	Expires 31.10.17
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 31.07.17
Harwell (St Matthew)	Old North Berks	Expires 30.04.17
Chalgrove (SMV)	South Oxon	Expires 31.01.17
Ellesborough (SS Peter & Paul)	Chiltern	Expires 31.03.17
Reading (St Giles)	Reading	Expires 31.01.17
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.16
Cropredy (S M V)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.16
Henley-on-Thames	Reading	Expires 30.11.16

Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading	Expires 30.11.16
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 30.11.16
White Waltham	Sonning Deanery	Expires 30.09.16
Thame (St Mary)	South Oxon	Expires 30.09.16
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury	Expires 31.05.16

Silver Award

South Leigh (St James)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 31.08.17

Bronze Award

Fulmer (St James)	EBSB	Expires 30.11.17

Expired Awards

Finchampstead (St James)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.07
Stoke Mandeville (S.M.V.)	Chiltern	Expired 31.12.07
Warborough (St Laurence)	South Oxon	Expired 31.12.07
Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.12.08
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB	Expired 31.05.09
Purley (S.M.V.)	Reading	Expired 31.01.10
Benson (St Helen)	South Oxon	Expired 31.10.11
South Stoke (St Andrew)	Reading	Expired 31.03.12
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 28.02.13
Wantage (SS Peter & Paul)	Old North Berks	Expired 31.08.13
Letcombe Regis (St Andrew)	Old North Berks	Expired 30.09.13
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB	Expired 31.10.13
Clewer (St Andrew)	EBSB	Expired 31.05.14
Chalfont St Giles	EBSB	Expired 30.09.14
Kintbury (S.M.V.)	Newbury	Expired 30.09.14
Tadmarton (St Nicholas)	Banbury	Expired 30.09.14
Deddington (SS Peter & Paul)	Banbury Branch	Expired 31.12.14
Peasemore (St Barnabas)	Witney & Woodstock	Expired 28.02.15
Wargrave (St Mary)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.15
Great Milton	South Oxon Branch	Expired 31.08.15
Hungerford (St Lawrence)	Newbury Branch	Expired 30.09.15
Denham (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expired 31.01.16

John Davidge

Librarian's Report

There have been 4 library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 93. These have been about:

- Bell Restoration Fund war loans
- List of recent Guild Distinguished members
- Request for talk to be made for Blue Plaque ceremony for Rev. F. E. Robinson
- Copy of Fabian Stedman's will.

The Blue Plaque ceremony mentioned above is to take place on 22nd May at Drayton, where Rev F.E. Robinson, first Master of the Oxford Diocesan Guild, was Rector for many years. John Harrison will first give a description of Robinson's life, then I am due to give a short address on Robinson's legacy, which I am in the middle of looking into.

Review of the library. A paper went before the committee meeting in March which reflected the course to be taken recommended by the F&GP committee. Before any changes should be made regarding the library itself, a trial electronic archive is to be set up on the website, consisting of a selection of Guild material. This will allow us to learn lessons of use should a decision be made to embark upon a larger scale electronic archive. It is hoped to complete the trial in time for the committee meeting in November.

The usual reminder, if you would like some information, or would like to visit the library or borrow a book, you are very welcome to, just let me know.

Doug Beaumont

News from the Branches

Banbury

November 2015 saw the arrival of Adam Lee, second son of Zoe and Colin Lee who are both Adderbury ringers. This has been a busy year for Zoe who has also been our branch Ringing Master over the same time and co-ordinating the branch practices.

In the New Year Honours, Cropredy ringer Les Underdown was awarded the BEM. In spite of not being born in Cropredy, Les Underdown has devoted 75 years of service to the village. He began at 9 years of age, pumping the old bellows organ at St Mary's, then progressed to bell ringing at aged 12, learning on tied bells during the war. For many years he was Tower Captain and is still a member of the band. He was on the PCC, has been a sidesman, and helped at the Church Fete. At 17 he joined the Village Hall Committee, only retiring a few years ago.

From 1948-1950 Les saw national service in the Royal Air Force. Since 1952 he has served on the local Royal British Legion Committee filling a number of roles and is now President. During that time he has done much welfare work, been standard bearer since 1961 and been on parade at every Remembrance Day Service since then.

In the 1960s he was a co-founder and organiser of the Cropredy Boat Club to the benefit of many residents. His musical talents included membership of the Jubilee Singers and playing his keyboard in the day-care Rowan Ward at the Horton Hospital. He also assisted at the Banbury Stroke Club until its closure.

His award of the British Empire medal for services to the community is well deserved.

(This article is courtesy of the Cropredy Crier)

Also awarded the BEM was Tricia Campbell, Churchwarden of Bodicote church. Congratulatory ringing was held at Bodicote and Banbury to celebrate.

During April, Wardington Tower Captain, Rachel McLoughlin, rang her first quarter peal of Bob Doubles at Hanwell. Rachel had previously attempted this as part of the Branch 90th Anniversary ringing last year but it failed through no fault of hers.

At our recent AGM we welcomed Guild Master Hilarie Rogers. The meeting was held at Bodicote after a branch practice where there was much discussion held about the future format of the Half Yearly Meeting which was agreed to be less formal. There was little change to the elected officers; existing Deputy Ringing Master Lionel Smith became Ringing Master and Alison Varney filled the Deputy RM role.

Heather Bletchly

Bicester

This year's AGM was held on Saturday 20th February at Caversfield, thanks to the arrangements of Anthony Cole and a service led by Mrs Penny Wood, who is becoming the unofficial chaplain to the Bicester Branch! She had also found *Ten Commandments for the Bellringer* which we all enjoyed, see: www.horfieldringers.org/bell_anthology.htm.

Although we were relatively few in number, we were able to elect 8 new members from Kirtlington, Stratton Audley and Islip before heading to the warmth of the Bure Farm pub in Bicester for lunch.

We've held two Branch practices in Bletchingdon already this year, followed by the challenge of ringing at Stratton Audley and admiring some of our newer ringers coping with the bells more adequately than their elders. Congratulations to all our newer members and for the encouragement they bring to the more jaded! Three from the Bicester Branch enjoyed the Radley course and made good progress there.

On Saturday 23rd April Anthony Cole arranged another superb outing – this time by minibus (thanks to a last-minute rescue by Teresa Carter) to Herefordshire. The towers had been organised by Ian Smart's sister Sarah, who lives locally and greeted us to the ground floor ring in Tarrington with welcome coffee and biscuits. After ringing at Stoke Edith we had a superb lunch at the *Crown and Anchor* in Lugwardine followed by ringing there, and then on to Weston Beggard before finishing at Yarkhill (*see front cover photo*). To complete the gastronomical feast we stopped for fish and chips at Stow-on-the-Wold en route home.

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

As mentioned in the last Odd Bob, our branch outing was successfully moved to March 2016. We had a lovely sunny day to explore the City of London by bus and foot, ringing at five towers along the way with the obligatory pub lunch! Many thanks go to Ryan Noble for organising these for us. Over forty ringers from CBB and friends met at the first tower, Garlickhythe – the 'Jubilee Bells'. This was over twice the number we had expected which was very encouraging but provided some interesting challenges in organising the ringing, so everyone had a go within the times available! To end the day some of us were lucky enough to journey back to the train station via a bus tour guided by Jeremy and Anne Pratt who pointed out the 'sights' as we passed. Everyone enjoyed the day.

The Branch AGM was held at North Marston in February, which was attended by around thirty members who enjoyed a lovely tea and general ringing as well as dealing with Branch matters.

Other Branch practices have continued, both 'improvers' and general Branch practice on the second Saturday of the month. These are reasonably well attended by both branch members and visitors and offer something for all levels of competence.

The following towers rang to mark the Queen's 90th birthday:

Aylesbury – Stedman doubles, Bob Minor and Grandsire
Bierton – a QP of grandsire doubles
Chearsley – 25 mins of call changes
Cuddington – a peal of Yorkshire Surprise Major
East Claydon – touches of Grandsire, then joined the villagers for bonfire
Great Horwood – general ringing
Haddenham – a QP of grandsire doubles
Long Crendon – 5040 changes of Queensgate surprise royal beacon and fireworks
Quainton – general ringing
Stewkley – general ringing
Whitchurch – call changes, Bob Doubles and Grandsire coinciding with the lighting of a beacon
Wingrave – call changes, finishing off with the firing of the bells

The following towers rang to mark St George's Day:

Marsh Gibbon – with afternoon tea to finish
Wing – inclusive of wedding ringing!

Rachel Sheppard

Chiltern

The Branch AGM was held in March and all the principal officers were re-elected. Thanks are due to those members who have volunteered to assist with the roles of Ringing Master and Training Officer; however, a permanent Secretary is still required.

The Branch hosted the Guild's General Committee in March, and thanks go to all those members who assisted in the arrangements.

The Branch continues to be reticent in declaring its achievements. Although there is anecdotal evidence that several towers in the Branch did some special ringing to mark the 90th birthday of HM The Queen, practically nothing was reported to the Secretary. One tower gave its less experienced ringers the opportunity to ring something special, relevant and achievable; 90 rows of Queens were successfully rung.

Colin's Classes (held monthly at Aston Clinton) and the Branch Monthly Outing (arranged by Richard Booth of Marsworth) continue, and are open to all, including non-members of ODG.

Wendover are investigating whether an old set of handbells in their possession are worth refurbishing; they are currently at Whitechapel Foundry for assessment.

Brian Robson, Interim Branch Secretary

Chipping Norton

The first two Branch practices of 2016 were held at Fulbrook and Wigginton on Saturday mornings and followed by pub lunches.

Three new members have been elected so far this year, Mark Burt of Burford, Stephen Pulman of Charlbury and Elaine Griggs of Hook Norton.

We also welcomed John Collett who has returned to the area and we congratulate both him and his brother, Michael, on marking the 70th anniversary of their learning to ring.

Several Branch members took part in sponsored bell ringing for the ODG Bell Fund in February.

The Branch AGM was held at Hook Norton in March, where we had an excellent service led by the Revd John Acreman. Our thanks go to the ringers for all their contributions to the service and the refreshments. We were pleased to welcome Colin Lee, our Guild Steward.

Nigel Harrison was elected Branch Ringing Master with Mick Austin and Keith Mitchell as assistant ringing masters. The other officers remain as before.

A meeting to review Branch practices has now been held.

We were sorry to report the deaths of three more former members, Penny Carpenter of Chipping Norton, Roy Newman of Little Compton and Rosie Woods of Chipping Norton and formerly Swerford.

Hook Norton continues to mark WW1 centenaries with quarter peals.

Restoration work is being planned at Taynton where fundraising started in April.

In September, Charlbury marks the 300th anniversary of a peal of bells being made by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester.

Several towers in the branch rang to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday.

Christine Harris

East Berks and South Bucks

In October, Cookham bell ringers took their outing to Derbyshire to combine a weekend of team ringing with the chance of catching up with ex-Cookham ringers, two of whom conveniently now run a B&B. Everyone gained from ringing at the varied towers of Bonsall, Wirksworth, Brassington, Bakewell, Edensor, and Matlock, the concentrated practice ensuring that new targets were achieved.

St Mary's, Amersham hosted an ART (Association of Ringing Teachers, formerly ITTS) course in November when 14 people from five different towers were trained by Pip Penney. They were introduced to the key principles of the new approach to teaching bell-handling and put them into practice with each other in the tower. The new-found skills are now being used to help improve current handling and to train brand new learners. Attendees are enjoying the support, technology and resources of the ART, as well as connecting and supporting each other. A practical and thoroughly useful exercise!

EBSB was pleased to come second (18 faults) to Reading Branch (13 faults) in the Guild 10-bell contest at Warfield in the Sonning Deanery in November, the test piece being 288 Little Bob Royal, and the contest judged by Mike Wigney.

Not only were all three of the eliminator rounds for the 2016 National 12-bell striking contest in March in the ODG, but two of them were in the East Berks and South Bucks Branch – at Amersham and High Wycombe (*see photos on back cover)*. In the preceding months the two local bands found it hard to give high enough priority to their ringing practice due to all the preparations required: food and refreshments, PR, liaison with the Police and local press, arranging extra activities and negotiations with the pubs etc. Amersham was particularly pleased that coverage included a radio interview and two newspaper articles. A number of people came to see what was happening and subsequently put their names down for "taster" sessions, and High Wycombe have a new recruit who came forward having heard the bells ringing on the day. Unfortunately, neither band will be going forward to the Final, High Wycombe coming 6th with 72% and Amersham 8th with 60% in their respective competitions. However, everyone enjoyed the challenge (although some still smell of frying bacon!)

There was special ringing for the sponsored week in aid of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund at Beaconsfield and Cookham (including a first quarter peal and first as conductor), and by the High Wycombe band (first of Caters and first of Minor).



Another special quarter peal was rung at Beaconsfield as a farewell to Revd Kevin Beer and as a first quarter attempt for Jen Slade who was taught to ring by Kevin. A splendid quarter of Plain Bob Triples was achieved with a virtually faultless performance by Jen. To judge by the whoops of pleasure from her as we finished, Jen was delighted and she brought the band cakes to celebrate. Beaconsfield ringers consider it marvellous to have had Kevin as curate; he raised the profile of ringing in the Parish and they wish him well in the Wallingford Benefice.

The Branch was pleased to welcome the Guild Master to their AGM when the main discussion points revolved around the need to re-develop the Branch website in a Content Management System, and the inter-relationship between the two 6-bell striking competitions operated in the Branch.

Maryanne Roach

Newbury

[*Nothing received from the branch.*]

North Bucks

Branch Quarter Peal week was held in November and coincided with Remembrance Sunday, so a number of quarters were rung half-muffled and/or dedicated to the fallen of WW1. In total eleven Quarter Peals were rung, including a number of firsts. Of particular note was a quarter of eleven doubles methods and variations rung at Simpson following on from the recent Branch training day on this subject,

The Branch Practice and Christmas Social was held at Stony Stratford, with ringing beforehand, followed by a fish and chip supper and a quiz.

The Branch Annual General Meeting was held in Great Brickhill at the beginning of March. Ringing at the church was followed by a short service, and then a fine ringers' tea was provided in the village hall. The AGM was held after this – two officers stood down, and all other officers were re-elected. Two new members were proposed and elected to the Branch and Guild.

The branch outing to Oxford was held at the beginning of April. It was a lovely day; the sun shone and the bells rang. We had over thirty people attend the outing, and we rang at St Thomas (10), Christ Church (12), St Giles (8), St Mary Magdalen (10), Lincoln College (8), and Carfax (6). Ringing ranged from rounds and call changes to Grandsire Cinques.

The branch took part in a successful *Rolling Ring* for St George's Day; (*Ed.* – *see the separate article on page 6*).

Gary Reading

Old North Berks

We had a good end to 2015 and a good start to 2016. Our autumn skittles evening with fish and chip supper, held in Radley Village Hall, gave sixty-three branch members and friends a chance to display their bowling skills. Everyone had a lot of fun and we would like to thank the Radley ringers for all their hard work in making the occasion such a success. An amazing £346 was raised towards the ONB Branch contribution for the Radley Bell Restoration Project. Our annual New Year's Day ringing and refreshments event took place in Blewbury and was also very well attended.

In March we held our six-bell striking competition and AGM at the recently augmented ring of North Moreton. The competition was well supported with five teams entering, and as usual this was a very sociable occasion. Our thanks go to Ian 'Judge' Judd of Goring for his expert judging skills. Ian said that he thought that the bells were now outstanding and vastly improved since his previous visit more than thirty years ago. Once again it was especially pleasing to have a team made up entirely of young branch members. The team from Abingdon, ringing Cambridge Surprise Minor, were victorious and they will represent ONB at the Guild's six bell competition in October.

After over twenty years' continuous service as a branch officer in various roles, Nick Clarke finally stood down as joint ringing master and refused to be persuaded to continue. We would like to thank Nick for everything he has done for the branch over many years. We will miss him greatly, but are sure that he

will continue to support branch events. Philip Roberts of Harwell gallantly stepped into the breach and is now one of our joint ringing masters alongside Richard Loyd. We would also like to thank Mary Friskney for all her efforts as training co-ordinator over the past three years and are very pleased that she is now our Guild Steward. Sadly no one felt that they could follow in Mary's footsteps and the training position now remains vacant.

The work to rehang the bells at Radley has all been completed. The finishing touches were a new access ladder and the redecoration of the ringing chamber. The Radley ringers wish to thank Guild for its grant and branch members for all their support during this project.

The rehanging of Brightwell bells started when they were removed by Whites of Appleton at the beginning of April. Strengthening work also needs to be carried out on the tower whilst the bells are out. Fortunately, sufficient funds for the whole job have already been raised and include an ODG grant towards the cost of the bell restoration.

Susan Read continues to organise events for the young ringers in ONB Branch and the Guild. The most recent was an outing to Cambridge, and this was held jointly with young ringers of the Ely Diocesan Association at the end of March. The day included ringing at all the Cambridge towers, a quarter peal and a treasure hunt, and was enjoyed by all.

So far this year we have held two social occasions for our monthly afternoon practice ringers. In January we had lunch together before ringing at Brightwell and in April we held a 'mini' outing, ringing at three towers in the neighbouring Newbury Branch. Starting with Chieveley and Peasemore, we then enjoyed a very generous pub lunch at the Crown and Horns prior to ringing at East Ilsley. Our next social gathering will be our full day outing in July to various towers in Hampshire, with a pub lunch and afternoon tea. This will be followed in the evening by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

At our AGM in November we re-elected the Committee members from the previous year. We were unable to find someone to stand as Ringing Master, so that position has remained vacant. Much of the discussion at the meeting was over how to inject some enthusiasm into our Striking Competition, which will be held in May this year. The introduction of more relaxed rules for bands wanting to take part, but without entering the formal competition to represent the Branch in the Guild competition seems to be bearing fruit, with several towers who don't normally enter expressing an interest. We also hope there will be enough individuals keen to join in to form scratch bands. Another attraction this year will be the chance to try the Stallpits Ring which Tony Crabtree is bringing along, as many of us have not had the opportunity to try a mini ring before.

On 23rd March, Ringing for England encouraged towers to open to the public, and two Oxford towers decided to do this. St Giles, Oxford, reports that they advertised opportunities for people to come up the tower to 'See How the Bells

are Rung' – something they have never attempted before because of the steep steps up to the ringing chamber. Four visiting times half an hour apart were advertised, for up to five visitors at a time, aged 10 or over – and they presented the event as information for the public rather than as a recruitment exercise. Visitors were invited to book times in advance, and about a dozen did so; twice this number turned up on the day. So far this has not resulted in any new recruits, but it is early days yet.



Wolvercote's dumb-bell is now being used regularly for their practice nights, by both learners and those wanting to practice new methods. It is hoped it will be making an appearance at Wolvercote's village fete this summer to garner interest in the bells locally.

Throughout the year there have been many opportunities to practice together despite the lack of formal branch practices. Hugh Deam continues to organise outings and practices on Saturdays, and Colin Taylor organised a very well attended outing to the North Cotswolds. Two of us have attended the module 1 *Association of Ringing Teachers* basic bell handling course, and we are beginning to teach new recruits at Cowley using the tools picked up from the course.

The Steeple Aston course in November had eight City Branch members attending as learners, and one as a Tutor. The triples and major practices continue to be held intermittently on Sunday afternoons on the simulator at Headington, and St Giles holds a monthly advanced major practice. For those members moving into Surprise Minor, the St Aldates practice allows plenty of opportunity to ring with an experienced supportive band.

Lindsay Steff

Reading

The last few months have been an eventful time for the Reading Branch. Aside from hosting a number of well-attended monthly branch and surprise major practices, ringers in the branch have been busy supporting a number of successful projects. During the February school half-term holiday, Shiplake hosted a young ringers day which was attended by 18 young ringers from across several branches of the ODG. A big 'thank you' to the organisers and helpers for providing the young ringers with a very enjoyable day filled with ringing, theory exercises and cricket!

Elsewhere, teams representing the Reading branch have enjoyed considerable success; first winning the Guild 10-bell Striking Competition at Warfield, and then coming sixth of eight teams in National 12-bell Striking Competition eliminator held at St Laurence, Reading. Enthusiastic thanks were given to the team responsible for organising the eliminator, particularly Gill Carlill, Pete Ellis, June Wells and June Saint. All those attending agreed that it was a very

successful and enjoyable day. The 10-bell team will also compete for the Tewkesbury shield on Saturday 7th May.

On a sad note, the branch has recently lost a number of key ringers and supporters: Julie Champion of Caversham, Don Wark of Tilehurst, Janet Allum of Bradfield, and Vivien Bloundele of Henley. They will be much missed by all.

The Branch AGM provided a good source of discussion regarding the future of local ringing and several opportunities are now being investigated. There were also several changes to the branch officers: Colin Newman replaces James Champion as joint Ringing Master, Joanna Knight replaces Ken Baker as Branch Secretary, David Bardwell replaces Chris Johnson as Branch Webmaster, and Anna Sherwood was elected as Branch Youth Representative. Heartfelt thanks to James, Ken and Chris for their dedication and hard work over the last years.

Going forward into the summer months, there will be more branch practices designed to cater to the needs of our ringers; Reading branch plans to enter the Guild 8-bell striking competition; and we are planning more events for the young ringers of the branch. Watch this space!

Joanna Knight

Sonning Deanery

Shottesbrooke rang in the New Year in traditional style, and afterwards the ringers were treated to mince pies and mulled wine by Lady Christian Smith who lives next to the church.

In early January, Zoe Lee, a Sonning ringer, gained her Level 1 *Learning the Ropes* certificate and, like Sue Portsmouth, another Sonning ringer, is enjoying ringing at other towers in the area on their practice nights.

At the branch AGM in February the Deputy Ringing Master, Graham Slade, stood down and Nigel Mellor was elected to the post; all other officers were re-elected. It is good to report that, at the AGM, thirteen new branch members were elected to the ODG. It was good to see Hilarie Rogers (Guild Master) and Mary Friskney (our Guild Steward) attending our AGM.

Also at the AGM, it was agreed that the branch should mount a *Mini Ring Pull* (a smaller version of the *Big Ring Pull* recruitment exercise mounted by North Bucks branch). We will use the Charmborough Ring and the venue will be the Hurst Show over the weekend of 25th & 26th June. The officers have been working on organising sufficient helpers at the Show, planning the initial 'taster session' and ongoing training of recruits, and producing publicity and display materials.

This year our Training Officer, Jacquie Hazell, is organising branch training sessions on the first Friday of each month. The training sessions alternate between Basic (up to Bob Minor) and Advanced (usually Surprise methods). Students who wish to take part need to notify Jacquie in advance.

At the end of March, two of our younger members, Freddie and Kitty Gingell, joined other ODG youngsters for a Youth Ringing Outing with young members of the Ely Diocesan Association, and rang at towers in the Cambridge area.

To mark the Queen's 90th birthday on Thursday 21st April, the following towers rang: Binfield, Easthampstead (quarter), Sonning (quarter), 10 Finchampstead ringers (including their newest beginners), Waltham St. Lawrence (including Holley aged 12 and Kirsty aged 11.

For the St George's Day *Rolling Ring*, the following towers rang: Easthampstead (quarter), Sonning, Waltham St. Lawrence, Warfield, Wargrave, All Saints Wokingham (quarter).

On the first day of May Sue Portsmouth (*2nd from left in photo*) achieved her first quarter peal at her first attempt by ringing the treble to Plain Bob Doubles – our hearty congratulations to her.

The ODG Ringing Day, organised this year by Newbury Branch, attracted 11 Sonning Deanery ringers, six from Sonning and five from Waltham St Lawrence.



Rob Needham

South Oxon

This past winter has seen lots of activities in many of our towers – lot of hand bell ringing and encouraging activity from young ringers!

We held our AGM in Thame this February. It was lovely to visit this **large** active church. We were able to have the AGM meeting (and tea) in the "corner"– with room to spare. We are very sympathetically sad to Thame ringers about their issue of not being able to ring for extended periods of time – but very grateful for their hospitality. At our AGM Andrew Davis stepped down as Chairman and John Tchighianoff has taken over. Many thanks go to Andrew for his time leading the branch.

As I have reported several times, Tower Twinning has been very successful in our branch. This year Dorchester ringers have joined in and found it an excellent experience. I'm sure that ringing skills improve on these visits to other towers – but I'm also sure that the increased sense of community is equally as important.



This spring has seen the Drayton St Leonard bells taken out of the tower and go to Whitechapel foundry for recasting. The tower is having work done too. In the autumn, when all the work is complete, we expect that it will be a real treat to ring there.

Berrick Salome, which had all of its bells refurbished last year, hosted our branch 6-bell competition. We had three bands, which all rang well; the winners were Drayton St Leonard.

Congratulations need to go to James Anderson-Besant who rang his first peal as part of the 300 Peal initiative. We also had first quarter peals from Japh Slaney and Isobel Anderson-Besant.

The answers to the quiz that I included last time still have not completely surfaced! I hope to have them by the next Odd Bob, by either visits to all the towers or quizzing folk with long memories.

Amy Herlihy

Vale of the White Horse

Almost forty ringers and friends attended the annual dinner which was held at the *Horse & Jockey*, Stanford in the Vale in February.

We supported the Guild Leap Year Sponsored Ringing with an attempt to ring either a quarter peal or other special performance at each of the ringable towers in the branch. By the end of the week, seven quarters had been scored, and all but a few of the bells in the Vale had been rung.

Longcot hosted the Branch AGM in March. After thirteen years as Branch Chairman, Julian Stevens had decided to stand down. He was thanked for all he had done for the Branch and presented with a handbell, the leather strap of which had been stamped with his initials and those of the Branch. Jackie O'Hagan was elected in his place, a position she had last held in 2002. We also have a new editor of the Vale News, Katharine Timberlake. Tracey Wright has done a great job for the last nine years and was presented with a tub planted with spring flowers by way of thanks. All the other officers were re-elected unopposed. Six new members were welcomed to the Guild, two from Shrivenham, two from Faringdon and two unattached.

The St George's Quarter Peal Day in support of the *Ringing for England* campaign visited nine Branch towers. Unfortunately only five quarters were successful this year, one due to a lock out, the others being lost near the end – rather dramatically at Uffington when the treble clapper failed!

We are sad to bid farewell to Tom Edgeworth, Faringdon Tower Captain, who is moving to Herefordshire. Clare Knock takes over, assisted by Caroline Phillips.

Notable achievements have included a first peal for Duncan Saunders (cover to eleven Doubles methods at Shellingford), and first quarters for Peter Foot, Wendy Tynan, Eve Warner and Katharine Timberlake. Their quarter was rung at Faringdon and was a sequence of **call changes** which included every possible change on five bells. (*Ed. Here is my paraphrased version of an excellent explanation provided by the conductor.* "The main body was a block of call changes that used every possible change (120) on five bells, called every fifth handstroke (and therefore ten blows in each change before moving on). This lasts for 120 x 10 changes = 1200, which is slightly too short for a quarter peal. So, instead of starting in rounds, call the bells into queens first and start the sequence in queens; at the end of the sequence call the bells from queens back to rounds. This takes 3 extra calls at the start and another 3 at the end; if you call those calls at the same rate as the main block (every fifth handstroke) that adds another 60 changes to the quarter to take it up to 1260. (See also Steve Coleman's *The Bellringer's Early Companion.*)"

We also congratulate Nicola Roberts who has recently been accredited as a teacher with the Association of Ringing Teachers.

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

At our branch AGM in February, we were pleased to elect nine new members from seven towers. One South Leigh recruit, Heather Horner, has always wanted to ring bells but has only recently managed to make space in her busy life and grasp the opportunity to learn. Heather also enjoys looking at old buildings as a member of the volunteer group *Oxfordshire Buildings Record*, so the opportunity to visit church towers now provides a double thrill – the weight of bell metal has been added to the weight of history.

History also holds a fascination for another of our new members, Andrew Goldthorpe. Living in close proximity to Witney Church, Andrew has often enjoyed listening to ringing but entertained no thoughts of participating. A chartered surveyor and former manager of historic buildings, it was curiosity and the opportunity to explore more of the historic church that took Andrew to the tower on an open day last September. Seeing the ringing chamber with its impressive array of peal boards, Andrew knew he had to give ringing a try and he appreciated the warm welcome. Andrew says, "Like most novices, it surprised me how much more difficult it was to learn bell control than I had imagined it would be, never mind the terminology! It soon became apparent how much time and effort goes into teaching a new recruit and, more importantly, keeping them motivated and enthusiastic. The enthusiasm has never been a problem with me as I was immediately hooked, and remain so. I am now coming to terms with my first methods, and the challenges of ringing by ear and the blue line. Having rung Witney's magnificent Tenor for the first time, I have now worked my way around most of the bells and have a better understanding of just how different individual bells can be to handle. The decades of experience surrounding me in the various towers I have visited can sometimes feel a bit daunting although never overbearing. The willingness of all the experienced ringers to help bring on a novice has been very gratifying, and I am now keen to help recruit more regular ringers to Witney tower as I always find it a thrill when we are able to ring all eight bells."

Andrew enjoyed joining in the celebratory ringing, including obligatory Queens call changes, as part of the Witney celebrations on the Queen's actual birthday, where Her Majesty's health was toasted by those ringers who didn't rush off to subsequent Morris dancing or singing. Even the bells had been spruced up for the occasion.

St George's Day heralded more celebratory ringing, this time in Combe, Ducklington, North Leigh and Freeland, the latter being the result of a joint practice with the Oxford City Branch giving us the rare opportunity to explore seven methods. We are grateful for regular support from members of the neighbouring City and Bicester branches for mutually beneficial practices.

Congratulations to Hazel Howarth, Fiona Methley (age 13), Jane Morrison and Katie Walton for ringing their first quarter peals, and to the following for achieving *Learning the Ropes* certificates: Heather Horner, Evadne Vallance, and Katie Walton (level 1); Ian Craig, Pauline Day, David Duthie, Fiona Methley, and Robert Walton (Level 3).

Here is a photo of the band at Freeland after Katie's first quarter peal, specially arranged to celebrate the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of her parents Marguerite and Austin Jennings.



The band in order, l-r: Katie, Alison, Mike, Julie, Neil and Rob. With Moss the photographer's dog who enjoyed listening to the music!

Alison Merryweather-Clarke

Points from Peals

The total number of peals recorded to date this year is 92 compared with 87 in the same period last year.

Firsts: A number of firsts have been recorded; congratulations to all concerned.

First peal: Kristin L Fitch.
First peal on handbells: Colin G Newman
First on an inside pair: Colin G Newman
First Minor: Valia E Battat
First of Grandsire Triples: Anna E Sherwood
First on 8: Andries Bosland
First of Surprise: David R Bardwell
First Bristol Surprise Major: Anna E Sherwood, Colin R Cairns
First 8-spliced: Anna E Sherwood
First peal on 10: Daniel J Page, Anna E Sherwood, Robert P Sherwood
First on 10 handbells: Janet E John
First Surprise Royal: Jenny M Page
First Yorkshire Royal: Anna E Sherwood
First Surprise Royal in hand: Stephen M Jones
First on 12: Janet E John
First maximus in hand: Stephen M Jones
First of Grandsire as conductor: Joanne P Druce.

A handbell peal of Titan Delight Royal rung for the Guild was the first handbell peal in the method.

Personal Milestones: Significant milestones recorded (some of them have taken a number of years to achieve) since the last report include:

Jenny M Page (50), Stephen R Smith II (200), W John Couperthwaite (750 as conductor), Peter Bridle (1,000 of Royal), E John Wells (1,200 for the Guild).

Peals together: Benjamin J Carey & Stephen S Russ, John S Croft & Robert H Newton (handbells) (100), Timothy G Pett & E John Wells (200), Patricia M Newton & Robert H Newton (1500)

Most in methods hand (6): Janet E John

Most Surprise Minor (41): Antoinette J R Jackson, June D Wells, Christopher M Tuckett, E John Wells

Most Surprise Minor as conductor (41): Stuart F Gibson

Circled the tower to peals: E John Wells (Shiplake)

Completed the Surprise Major alphabet: Nicholas K Allsopp.

Events:

Several peals were rung to celebrate the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Other events marked were: Easter, St George's Day and the first peal on the bells since augmentation to 8 (Cropredy).

Peals were rung to welcome Revd Dale Gingrich to the benefice of Bloxham, Milcombe and South Newington, as a farewell compliment to Revd Kevin V Beer, leaving Beaconsfield to take up an appointment at Wallingford, and to mark Geoffrey Hopkinson's 40 years as a ringer at Beaconsfield.

Personal events: Peals were rung:

For the births of Harriet Elizabeth Wheeler (grandchild for Janet and Graham John) and Edward Neil McGregor Wilson

To celebrate the birthdays of Kelvin R Britton, Hamish O'Mahony, Stephen Rossiter, Anna Sherwood, and Michael R Spencer

As a wedding compliment to Carole Bain and Timothy Potter

As a golden wedding anniversary compliment to Brenda and Stephen Day

As a diamond wedding anniversary of Maureen and Philip Sherwood.

In memoriam: Ringers and friends remembered were Andrew D Barnsdale, Vivien Bloundele, Julie Champion, N David Lane, Alec Samler, and Don Wark.

Ken Davenport, Peal Secretary

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

Guild Officers for 2016

Master	**Hilarie Rogers** *master@odg.org.uk* 4 High Street, Drayton St Leonard, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 7BA (01865 890163)
Deputy Master	**Alan Marchbank** *depmaster@odg.org.uk* 6, Broadway Ave, Giffard Park, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK14 5QF (01908 611434)
General Secretary	**James Champion** *secretary@odg.org.uk* 7 Westleigh Drive, Sonning Common, Reading, RG4 9LA (0118 9723169)
General Treasurer	**Stuart Gibson** *treasurer@odg.org.uk* The Croft, Milton Hill, Steventon, Abingdon, Oxon. OX13 6BD (01235 820491)
Assistant Treasurer	**Susan Read** *deptreasurer@odg.org.uk* 30 St Amand Drive, Abingdon, OX14 5RG (01235 529779)
Librarian	**Douglas J Beaumont** *librarian@odg.org.uk* 184 Kidmore Road, Caversham, Reading, Berks, RG4 7ND (0118 946 1714)
Report Editor	**Heather Browning** *reporteditor@odg.org.uk* 41 Kiln Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berks RG40 3PJ
Odd Bob Editor	**Rob Needham** *oddbob@odg.org.uk* 15 Bodmin Road, Woodley, Reading, Berks RG5 3RZ (0118 9267724)
Peal Secretary	**Ken Davenport** *peals@odg.org.uk* 47 Brookside, Wokingham, Berks. RG41 2ST (0118 9786554)
Public Relations Officer	**vacant** *pro@odg.org.uk*
Membership Secretary	**John F Payne** *membership@odg.org.uk* 53 Walker Road, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 2QU (01628 624490)
Minutes Secretary	**Joyce Vernon** *minsec@odg.org.uk* 121 Mayfield Drive, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5JR (0118 9474281)
Webmaster	**Alan Bain** *webmaster@odg.org.uk* 5 Norgrove Park, Gerrards Cross, SL9 8QT (01753 880249)
GUILD WEBSITE	*odg.org.uk*
Server Manager	**Richard Stanworth** *serveradmin@odg.org.uk* 11 Valley Road, Buckingham, MK18 7BW (01280 814172)
Assistant Server Mgr	**Ken Darvill** *serveradmin@odg.org.uk* 3 Copners Way, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, HP15 6SQ (01494 713217)
Safeguarding Officer	**Katie Lane** *safeguarding@odg.org.uk* Catchmole Cottage, 12 High Street, Wheatley, Oxford, OX33 1XX (01865 874026)
Guild Stewards	**Mary Friskney (*Newbury, Old North Berks, Sonning Deanery*)** *steward@newbury.odg.org.uk* Mary Friskney, 10, Church Lane, Wallingford, OX10 0DX (01491 200743) **Tony Crabtree (*Oxford City, Vale of the White Horse, Witney & Woodstock*)** *steward@city.odg.org.uk* 1 Stallpits Road, Shrivenham, Swindon, SN6 8BG (01793 784064 and 07860 835903) **Colin Lee (*Banbury, Bicester, Chipping Norton)*** *steward@banbury.odg.org.uk* 38 Rochester Way, Twyford, Banbury, OX17 3JX (07743 775150) **Ruth Groves *(Central Bucks, Chiltern, North Bucks)*** *steward@chiltern.odg.org.uk* The White Cottage, Hyde Heath, Amersham, Bucks HP6 5RW (01494 783978) **Patricia Newton *(EBSB, Reading, South Oxon)*** *steward@southoxon.odg.org.uk* The White House, 11 Plowden Park, Aston Rowant, Watlington, OX49 5SX (01844 352926)

General Committee members

Heather Bletchly	**Kathy Bossom**	**Wenda Fowles**
Mike Hopkins Till	**Jenny Page**	**Ken Wakefield**

Central Council Representatives *ccreps@odg.org.uk*

L. P. A. Hopkins Till	**Alan Bentley**	**John A Harrison**
Timothy G Pett	**Bobbie May**	**Ken R Davenport**

Towers and Belfries Sub-committee

Chairman **John Davidge** *tbchairman@odg.org.uk*
Rowallan, Back Lane, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4PD. (01494 873325)

Secretary **Anthony Williamson** *tbsecretary@odg.org.uk*
3 Church Cottages, West End, Combe, Oxon, OX29 8NS. (01993 891 680)

Education Sub-committee

Chairman **TBA**

Secretary **Robert Newton** *edsecretary@odg.org.uk*
The White House, 11 Plowden Park, Aston Rowant, Watlington, OX49 5SX (01844 352926)

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

Branch Secretaries

Banbury **Heather Bletchly** *secretary@banbury.odg.org.uk*
4 Gauntlets Close, Bloxham, Banbury, OX15 4NY (01295 720918)

Bicester **Kathryn Grant** *secretary@bicester.odg.org.uk*
Church Key Cottage, The Walk, Islip, Oxon, OX5 2SD. (01865 373972)

Central Bucks **Rachel Sheppard** *secretary@cbucks.odg.org.uk*
5 Barrie Close, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 8JF

Chiltern **Brian Robson** *secretary@chiltern.odg.org.uk*
interim secretary

Chipping Norton **Christine Harris** *secretary@chippy.odg.org.uk*
Beechwood, 4, Banbury Road Crossing, Chipping Norton, OX7 5AP (01608 641809))

East Berks & South Bucks **Maryanne Roach** *secretary@ebsb.odg.org.uk*
9 Lollards Close, Amersham, Bucks HP6 5JL (01494 721991)

Newbury **Mark Brock** *secretary@newbury.odg.org.uk*
Old Cottage, Front Street, East Garston, Hungerford, Berks, RG17 7EU (01488 648373)

North Bucks **Gary Reading** *secretary@northbucks.odg.org.uk*
11 Cottage Common, Loughton, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK5 8AE (01908 662483)

Old North Berks **Gillian Loyd** *secretary@onb.odg.org.uk*
Dornie Lodge, Bessels Lea Road, Blewbury, OX11 9NW. (01235 850459)

Oxford City **Lindsay Steff** *secretary@city.odg.org.uk* (01865 777486)

Reading **Joanna Knight** *secretary@reading.odg.org.uk* (07540 266427)

Sonning Deanery **Rob Needham** *secretary@sdb.odg.org.uk*
15 Bodmin Rd., Woodley, Reading, RG5 3RZ. (0118 9267724)

South Oxon **Amy Herlihy** *secretary@southoxon.odg.org.uk*
3 Ford Lane, Drayton St Leonard, OX10 7AS. (01865 400 864)

Vale of White Horse **Lucy Laird** *secretary@vowh.odg.org.uk*
32 Colton Road, Shrivenham, Swindon, Wilts, SN6 8AZ. (01793 783519)

Witney & Woodstock **Robert Walton** *secretary@witneyandwoodstock.odg.org.uk*
acting secretary (01993 881139)

Diary of Events for 2016

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

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

MAY 2016

Sat	21	Sonning	BP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	10.30am–noon
Sat	**21**	**Guild**	**AGM**	**Vale of the White Horse Branch**	
Wed	25	ONB	BP	Childrey (8)	2–3.30pm
Thu	26	Banbury	BP	Great Tew (8)	7.30–9pm
Fri	27	EBSB	BP	Hughenden (8)	2– 3.30pm

JUNE 2016

Wed	1	CN	BP	Shipton-u-Wychwood (8)	7.30–9pm
Wed	1	ONB	SP	Drayton (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	4	Banbury	SC	Adderbury (8)	TBC
Fri	10	ONB	BP	Appleton (10)	7.30–9pm
Sat	11	EBSB	SC6	Hitcham (6)	5–7pm
Sat	11	Banbury	Advanced Practice	Banbury (10)	7.30–9pm
Sun	**12**	**Guild**	**Ringing for the official birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth**		**noon – 2pm**
Thu	16	VOWH	BP	Shellingford (6)	7.30–9pm
Sat	18	Sonning	BP	Sonning (8)	7.00–8.30pm
Wed	22	ONB	BP	Harwell (8)	2–3.30pm
Fri	24	EBSB	SP	Maidenhead (8)	2.30pm
Sat	**25**	**National**	**National 12-bell SC final**	**SS Peter & Paul, Aston (12)**	

JULY 2016

Sat	**2**	**National**	**Ringing World National Youth Competition**	**London**	
Tue	5	CN	BP	Little Compton (5)	7.30–9pm
Sat	9	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	5.30–7.30pm
Sat	**9**	**Guild**	**Guild Festival** (*see inside front cover*)	**Oxford**	**All day**
Sat	16	Sonning	BP	Shottesbrooke (6)	4.30–6pm
Thu	21	VOWH	BP	Hinton Waldrist (6)	7.30–9pm
Sat	23	EBSP	SP	West Wycombe (8)	7–9pm
Wed	27	ONB	BP	West Hanney (6)	2–3.30pm

AUGUST 2016

Tue	2	CN	BP	Chipping Norton (8)	7.30–9pm
Wed	3	ONB	SP	Goring (8)	7.45–9.15pm
Wed	10	ONB	BP	Childrey (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	13	EBSB	BP	Turville (5)	7–9pm
Sat	20	VOWH	BP	Highworth (8) and Coleshill (6))	4pm
Sat	20	Sonning	BP	Wokingham, All Saints (8)	4.30–6pm
Wed	24	ONB	BP	Sutton Courtenay (8)	2–3.30pm

SEPTEMBER 2016

Fri	2	CN	BP	Burford (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	10	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (12)	7–9pm
Wed	14	ONB	BP	West Hendred (6)	7.30–8.30pm
Thu	15	VOWH	BP	Buscot (4) and Hannington (6)	7pm
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Finchampstead (6)	4.30–6pm
Fri	23	EBSB	BP	Winkfield (6)	2.30–4.30pm
Sat	**24**	**Guild**	**Michaelmas Training Day**	**Various**	**10am – 6pm**
Wed	28	ONB	BP	Milton (8)	2–3.30pm

OCTOBER 2016

Sat	**1**	**Guild**	**SC 6**	**Penn (EBSB)**	
Tue	4	CN	BP and business meeting	Ascott-u-Wychwood (6)	7-8.30pm
Wed	5	ONB	SP	Appleton (10)	7.30-9pm
Sat	8	EBSB	SC + HY + BP	Lane End (6)	5-7pm
Thu	13	ONB	BP	Radley (6)	7.30-9pm
Sat	15	Sonning	SC 8	Twyford (8)	TBC
Wed	19	VOWH	BP	Buckland (8)	7.30-9pm
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Bray (8)	7-9pm
Sat	**22**	**Guild**	**Steeple Aston Course**	**Steeple Aston**	**9.15am – 8pm**
Wed	26	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	2-3.30pm

NOVEMBER 2016

Tue	1	CN	BP	Churchill (8)	7.30–9pm
Fri	4	EBSB	SP	Wooburn (8)	2.30–4.30pm
Tue	8	ONB	BP	Wantage (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	19	EBSB	BP	Cookham (10)	5.30–7.30pm
Sat	19	Oxford City	AGM: 2.30pm ringing, 3.30pm service, 4pm tea, 4.45pm meeting, 5.45pm ringing	Kidlington	
Sat	19	Sonning	Tea, Business Meeting	Arborfield (6)	4.30 tea, 5pm meeting
Mon	21	VOWH	BP	Faringdon (8)	7.30–9pm
Wed	23	ONB	BP	Chilton (6)	2–3.30pm
Sat	**26**	**Guild**	**SC 10**	**Chipping Norton Branch**	
Sat	**26**	**Guild**	**Autumn General Committee Meeting**	**Chipping Norton Branch**	

DECEMBER 2016

Sat	**3**	**Guild**	**Ten Bell Training**	**TBC**	
Mon	5	CN	BP	Chadlington (6)	7.00–8.30pm
Wed	7	ONB	SP	Sutton Courtenay (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	10	EBSB	BP + Social	Beaconsfield (8)	6pm onwards
Mon	12	ONB	BP	Marcham (6)	7.30–9pm
Wed	14	ONB	BP	Drayton (8)	2–3.30pm
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Wokingham, St. Paul (8)	4.30 – 6pm



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

MICHAELMAS TRAINING DAY

Want to enjoy learning the methods you're struggling with, have a mentor and good ringers round you?

Then try the Michaelmas Training Day

Saturday, September 24th 2016
10.00 – 18.00
Cost £15

The aim of the day is to provide the opportunity for students to learn more advanced methods than those offered on the Radley and Steeple Aston one-day courses.

The day will start with tutorials in the first Tower followed by practical ringing in other nearby towers.

Groups will be formed to cover the following range of methods:

1. Surprise Minor
2. Stedman Triples
3. Basic Surprise Major (e.g. Cambridge, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Superlative)
4. Advanced Surprise Major (e.g. Pudsey, Rutland, London, Bristol, Spliced)

Further details and application forms can be obtained by sending an SAE to Ann Osborne, 10 St. Michaels Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4RP or e-mail annosborne.1@btinternet.com by:

15th August 2016



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Education Committee

STEEPLE ASTON ONE-DAY COURSE

Saturday 22nd October 2016
9.15 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

This course will provide tuition & practice on basic methods from Plain Hunting to Plain Bob Major.

Applications are invited from Guild Members only.
Priority will be given to members who have not attended before.

Cost: £25

For further details and an application form please email
steepleastoncourse@odg.org.uk

or write, with SAE to:

Richard Stanworth, 11 Valley Road, Buckingham, MK18 7BW

The Application Form will also be available on the Guild web site: www.odg.org.uk

Closing date for applications is 31st August 2016



The 2016 National 12-bell Striking Competition – High Wycombe team



The 2016 National 12-bell Striking Competition – Amersham team