

ODD BOB



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



Peal of Grandsire Caters to celebrate the
50th anniversary of the Cookham Festival



“HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO RINGING IN YOUR AREA”

**Saturday 3rd Feb 2018
10am to 3.30pm
with bells available afterwards**

St Mary's Church rooms, Old Amersham

Led by Elva Ainsworth, PR Officer & Lesley Belcher, Ed Committee, ODG

Intention is that participants leave:

- Having reflected on the contribution, commitment and action they are willing to make to local ringing
- Understanding the three-step approach to making a difference
- Having shared and heard others' success stories
- With a clear focus and plan to move forward

***Suitable for any ringer who is keen to make a difference
to ringing in their area***

Each Branch/District to nominate two participants

Book your place by 5th January 2018 via [How to make a difference to ringing in your area](https://www.odg.org.uk/how-to-make-a-difference-to-ringing-in-your-area)
or pro@odg.org.uk



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From your Editor...

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

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

Contributions for the next issue, please, by the end of April 2018.

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.

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Master's Mutterings

As I write this, the Guild is still without a General Secretary, the first time I have known it and quite possibly the first time in its 136-year history. Ironically, this is at a time when communication is easier than ever and the days of photocopying and posting out notices are gone. Covering the vacancy has prompted me to look closely at the tasks asked of the General Secretary, and has resulted in some of those tasks being shared out amongst other officers. The resulting job is a slimmed-down one, and I do hope that one of you reading this will seriously consider taking it on.

A Guild such as ours can offer help and support to its members through the officers who hold specific posts. Our Safeguarding Officer diligently passes on current advice from the Diocese and other agencies. We have people with IT skills who take care of mailing lists and generic email addresses, and are currently setting up a new website. The Guild Library is an excellent resource available to all, and the Librarian is currently working on digitally recording items – if you can spare some time to help with this, please get in touch with him.

This newsletter is enjoyed by many, but would not appear without an editor, the same goes for the Annual Report. We have someone who keeps a record of the peals rung for the Guild, and yet another person who records our members as they are elected. Our new Public Relations Officer is working hard to help make ringing known, and is there for advice should you need it.

We have an Education sub-committee that runs specific courses throughout the year, and can offer other courses on request; it also produces educational leaflets. We have a bookstall to browse at Guild events, and your Guild Steward usually has a smaller stock of books to browse at branch meetings. Our Towers and Belfries sub-committee can visit and offer advice on your bell installation, and administers the Tower Maintenance Award, which is an excellent incentive to keep things in good order.

We have treasurers who handle our subscriptions and who arrange insurance for us. There is also a bell fund which can give grants for eligible work, and which has been pivotal to the success of a great many projects over the past 25 years.

I have mentioned only a selection of the help and support available at Guild level. In branches there is also advice and help. I am grateful to everyone who gives freely of their time and skill to help others and to keep the bells of this Diocese ringing. We need every post to be filled so that we can continue this work in the future, and I hope that you will all look out for any requests to fill posts and do what you can to help.

With best wishes to all members and thanks to everyone who rings in the towers of the Guild.

Hilarie Rogers, Guild Master

Public Relations report

Priority focus has been on updating the Guild website. Once a team had been formed with help from Doug Beaumont and Tim Hayward, we could get underway. The intention is to design a fresh, modern look on a platform that will make it easy for all Guild and Branch officers to view, edit and update. Tim Hayward has been appointed Webmaster and is being trained so that the structure and content of the website can also evolve organically over time. An initial structure and design will be available in November for comments and feedback.

Two new training events have been scheduled – one to help us know "How to make a difference in your area" on 3rd Feb 2018 and a second, "How to talk about ringing" on 21st April 2018 presented by Mark Regan of Worcester Cathedral. [*For details see the posters on the inside covers of this Odd Bob*].

Activity this year has included supporting local PR initiatives such as village fairs as well as *Ride n Stride* and the distribution of a number of Central Council initiatives that have flowed out of the structural changes being implemented.

Elva Ainsworth, Public Relations Officer

Education Matters

The Education Sub-Committee has continued to organise the usual courses (Radley, Michaelmas, Steeple Aston and 10-bell) and it is pleasing to report that, following a few years when there have been shortages of applicants, several groups have been over-subscribed in 2017. If you feel that there are any areas and topics which are not currently being covered, or if you need help or advice in organising training activities at tower or branch level, then please get in touch with us: (edchairman@odg.org.uk or edsecretary@odg.org.uk).

After some 18 months without an 'official' chairman, we are grateful to Tony Crabtree for taking on this role. Tony is a 'hands on' person with lots of good ideas. We are confident that he will lead by example and give the sub-committee new impetus and direction.

As you will probably have seen, our spring Training Meeting for 2018 has developed into a leadership workshop for branch delegates and the Guild Stewards. This is an exciting prospect and it takes place at Amersham on 3rd February. Please ensure that your branch is represented.

Those who have organised towers for the Radley and Steeple Aston courses and helpers for Radley and Michaelmas in recent years would appreciate a break. Thank you very much to Jo, Graham, Joyce and Keith for all you have done. Are these things that you might be interested in helping with? If so, please do get in touch (details above). Could I suggest that a few members who have benefited from Guild courses in the past might be keen to get involved?

On the subject of former courses, we would be interested to hear from any students, tutors and helpers who were present at the first Radley course in 1994, as 2018 will be the 25th such course.

We look forward to the conclusion of the current *Young Ringers' Award* in the spring. Please encourage any of the youngsters that you know who have entered this time to take advantage of any opportunities available to them and to maintain their records, so that their submissions reflect their dedication and progress.

Robert Newton (Education Sub-Committee Secretary)

What could ART Module 2 do for you and your band?

People will take part in an activity when they are enjoying themselves, feel a valued part of the group, and feel they are achieving something they want to succeed at. How do we make our ringers feel such things? Do we know how to build such a rapport with our ringers? How much time do we spend trying to work these things out?

Module 2F and Module 2C of the ART Training Scheme each give an insight into how to keep our ringers enthused and how to give them the confidence to aspire to new achievements. This, coupled with a structured method of progressing ringers via the *Learning the Ropes* scheme, can keep them enjoying success and wanting to progress.

Each Module provides a learning and development journey, with the initial Day Courses providing materials you as a teacher can use during the subsequent skills development period. This allows a teacher to build on the Day Course materials and techniques, using the additional online learning support available through ART's SmART Ringer website and practical teaching experience. The objective is to ensure ringers are enjoying their ringing as they progress from rounds to early method ringing, whilst at the same time ensuring that they are gaining and consolidating the all-important foundation ringing skills of bell control, listening, rhythm and understanding which will provide the maximum opportunity for future progression.

Module 2F – Teaching Foundation Skills explores in depth a range of ringing activities useful for providing variety and interest for those teaching in towers where method ringing is not the norm. The initial Day Course also gives delegates an opportunity to experience a host of interesting and entertaining techniques to develop basic ringing skills and to receive helpful tips and handy hints from their colleagues.

Module 2C Teaching Elementary Change Ringing also explores the all-important teaching topics concerning building skills for ringing progress. It goes on to provide the course delegates with loads of ideas of how to progress ringers to early method ringing. The skills to teach counting places, rope sight, learning first methods and other essential skills are approached in a simple step by step way.

Both Module 2F and Module 2C provide the teacher with the means of trying to understand the learning process from the ringer's view point, tuning in to really tick that particular individual's box. Both Modules also assist the teacher to understand the causes of people losing interest in the activity and how to avoid falling into these traps. These are skills which can then be put into action following the initial Day Course as you develop your teaching in order to achieve ART Accreditation at completion of each Module.

All ART Training Scheme Modules are based on university research which gives us an awareness of how to develop our judgement and perception to refine our teaching to provide the maximum satisfaction to our ringers. This in turn will lead to more enthusiasm, greater effort, improved performance and improved progression. All this will lead on to greater retention of ringers.

In short, the aim of ART Training Scheme Module 2F and Module 2C is to provide the teacher with a deeper understanding of the ringer's perspective alongside a set of tools to assist them to retain their ringers enabling them to provide strong bands in as many towers as possible.

Not to mention that the whole process – especially the initial Day Courses – encourage everyone to have a bit of fun and a few laughs!

Sign up for one now. There is nothing to lose and much to gain!

Pip Penney

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding

At the recent Diocesan Safeguarding Committee meeting I explained our concerns regarding the requirement for a Children's Officer in every tower, and the guidance in the handbook which does not allow us to take children up into the bells. The committee was pleased to hear, in detail, how restrictions may compromise our work with minors and were very keen to find ways to support us. The committee's immediate response was that whenever, and wherever possible, the guidance in the policy should be followed, and that sensible adjustments to recommendations may be made in order to ensure that ringing, and the teaching of ringing to children, can continue throughout the diocese.

I have been asked to meet with the diocesan safeguarding adviser, John Nixon, and have requested a date. We will discuss sensible adjustments to the guidance, which should make it easier for all our towers to comply.

I will provide clear and straightforward information to our towers as soon as I can.

There has been correspondence between one of our branches, the Bishop of Oxford and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser about the length of time that attendance books should be kept and where they should be stored. The response is copied below and this, too, will be another discussion item with John Nixon.

The procedures applied in the Diocese of Oxford are drawn from policies and guidance developed by the Church of England and are based on legislation and statutory guidance designed to increase safety and protection for children, young people, adults who are vulnerable and for those who work with them or share activities with them.

The purpose of the records is to have clear details about who has been present so that the information can be checked if concerns about the safety or conduct of an individual or group are reported. One of the important lessons that has been learned from historical cases is that accurate records can help to identify people who need to be interviewed and to eliminate some people from enquiries.

As long as records are made separately for each church where you ring, the registers should form part of the wider safeguarding recording for that church and be stored with these records in a secure cabinet. Records need to be retained for a long time because many issues of concern are raised several years after the alleged issue first arose. As a consequence we now advise that safeguarding records, including registers of attendance, should be kept for a minimum of 50 years.

John Nixon Oxford Diocese Safeguarding Adviser

And finally, I am aware that there is a directive that church volunteers must take part in safeguarding training. I circulated the link to online training:

safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org

and have suggested to the diocese training officer that she provides the name and contact details of a safeguarding expert who may be able to provide courses for our ringers.

Catherine Lane, ODG Safeguarding Officer

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Since the last report the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme has remained static with the number of current awards remaining at nineteen. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest is ninety, which is about twenty per cent of the four hundred and forty towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been one hundred and forty-one inspections (of which twenty-six were preliminaries), resulting in one hundred and seventeen awards (seventy-eight Gold, twenty-five Silver, and fourteen Bronze).

The number of expired awards has risen again and is now twenty-seven. The T & B committee continues to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards. Since the last report Clewer, Freeland, Harwell, Henley-on-Thames and Reading (St Giles) have all renewed Gold Awards while Radley and Horspath have gained Gold Awards at the first

attempt; congratulations to all these towers. With Horspath gaining an award the Oxford City Branch now have a current award for the first time ever. Chalgrove, Ellesborough, Dorchester and South Leigh are the towers whose awards have expired since the last report and it is hoped that they will attempt to renew (or improve) the award.

The number of Branches having a tower in the “current awards” list is now nine out of the fifteen Guild Branches, with EBSB having regained its predominant position, being just in front of the Reading Branch. The placings are as follows:

EBSB	5	(4 Gold, 1 Bronze)
Reading	4	(3 Gold, 1 Silver)
South Oxon	2	(Gold)
Sonning Deanery	2	(Gold)
Old North Berks	2	(Gold)
Witney & Woodstock	1	(Gold)
Banbury	1	(Gold)
Newbury	1	(Gold)
Oxford City	1	(Gold)

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

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 14.09.19
Horspath	Oxford City	Expires 28.04.19
Harwell (St Matthew)	Old North Berks	Expires 27.04.19
Clewer	EBSB	Expires 31.03.19
Radley	Old North Berks	Expires 01.03.19
Henley-on-Thames	Reading	Expires 01.03.19
Reading (St Giles)	Reading	Expires 01.03.19
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.18
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB	Expires 30.11.18
White Waltham	Sonning Deanery	Expires 31.10.18
Stratfield Mortimer (St John)	Reading	Expires 26.10.18
Thame (St Mary)	South Oxon	Expires 30.09.18
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury	Expires 31.05.18
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

Silver Award

Stratfield Mortimer(St Mary)	Reading	Expires 03.04.19
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Bronze Award

Fulmer (St James)	EBSB	Expires 30.11.17
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Expired Awards

Finchhampstead (St James)	Sonning Deanery Branch	Expired 31.07.07
Stoke Mandeville (S M V)	Chiltern Branch	Expired 31.12.07
Warborough (St Laurence)	South Oxon	Expired 31.12.07
Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery Branch	Expired 31.12.08
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expired 30.05.09
Purley (St Mary)	Reading Branch	Expired 31.01.10
Benson (St Helen)	South Oxon Branch	Expired 31.10.11
South Stoke (St Andrew)	Reading Branch	Expired 31.03.12
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery Branch	Expired 28.02.13
Wantage (SS Peter & Paul)	Old North Berks Branch	Expired 31.08.13
Letcombe Regis	Old North Berks Branch	Expired 30.09.13
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB Branch	Expired 31.10.13
Chalfont St Giles	EBSB Branch	Expired 30.09.14
Kintbury (SMV)	Newbury Branch	Expired 30.09.14
Tadmarton (St Nicholas)	Banbury Branch	Expired 30.09.14
Deddington (SS Peter&Paul)	Banbury Branch	Expired 31.12.14
Peasemore (St Barnabas)	Newbury Branch	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
Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading	Expired 30.11.16
Cropledy (S M V)	Banbury	Expired 31.12.16
Ellesborough	Chiltern	Expired 31.03.17
Chalgrove (SMV)	South Oxon	Expired 31.01.17
South Leigh (St James)	Witney & Woodstock	Expired 17.08.17
Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon	Expired 31.10.17

Towers & Belfries Committee

The committee has met twice since the last report, with an average attendance of five. Ten inspections/visits have been carried out, details of which are shown below:

- Black Bourton – 2 visits (Grant inspection)
- Clewer (TMA)
- Freeland (TMA)
- Henley-on-Thames (TMA)
- Horsepath (TMA)
- Little Hampden (Grant Inspection)
- Radley (TMA)
- Reading (TMA)
- Stratfield (TMA)

A rope splicing course was run for City Branch in March, a maintenance course was run at Englefield and two nearby towers in July, and a maintenance and rope splicing session at Stanford-in-the-Vale in October.

John Davidge, Chairman T&B Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been five library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 96. These have been about:

- Whether Wilfred Andrews was a Guild member, late 19th century
- Whether a ringer's relative killed in the Great War was a ringer
- Date of election of current Guild member
- Sources of information about members of other Guilds
- Information about ringers at Penn at the time of the Great War

The work on sorting through the miscellaneous papers and folders is near completion. They have been placed in box files and have been added to the development copy of the library catalogue. They will be transferred to the catalogue on the website, hopefully in the next week or two. Work continues on sorting material to weed out duplicate copies of meeting and report papers.

Trial electronic archive of Guild material. Branch secretaries were contacted during September seeking volunteers to scan or photograph the documents in the library for placing on the archive. One or two people have expressed interest but there is plenty to do, so if you were thinking about helping out, please contact me.

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, Guild Librarian

News from the Branches

Banbury

In June, the annual branch striking competition took place at Adderbury, with ten teams representing seven towers ringing on the heavy front six bells. Steeple Aston won both the Method and Call Change sections, and the usual BBQ



afterwards was enjoyed near the church. Later in June, Jack from Steeple Aston, who rang in the striking competition, successfully rang the treble to his first quarter peal on his 13th birthday.

During July, to celebrate the inaugural Deddington Deanery Pilgrimage, a number of quarter peals in the branch were organised by our Ringing Master Lionel Smith. These were timed to occur as the walkers arrived or left the churches along the route. Nine of the ten attempts were successful and involved 27 branch ringers.

Our branch outing took place around towers north of Stratford ending with an evening meal at Wroxton.

At the beginning of August, we were very sad to hear the news that Banbury ringer Robin Green had died unexpectedly whilst travelling along the canal in his boat. Robin came to Banbury ten years ago from Sussex, joining the Banbury tower band. He rang regularly in the branch and supported our various activities and events; he was also a member of The Four Shires Guild. Robin lived on his boat and enjoyed navigating the canals and railways, ringing in new towers along the way. After he retired he took longer visits travelling on the canals, and it was during one of these longer trips that he died. Quarter peals were rung in his memory in the branch.

August also saw Bloxham Tower Captain, Alan Griffin celebrate his 80th birthday with a quarter peal of Plain Bob Major by ringing the tenor at Bloxham, [see photo on the back cover.].

During the Bank Holiday the Adderbury ringers held a garden BBQ to help raise funds for the church tower repairs. The garden used also had an all-weather putting green to add to the entertainment.

Our Branch Dinner took place in September at *The Gate Hangs High* at Hook Norton.

Heather Bletchly

Bicester

Since May the Bicester Branch has had its ups and downs – the Cole family's move up to Scotland happened and although it's left us all down we're glad that they've settled in so well and are ringing in their local tower – Inverness Cathedral!

More ups have been three first quarters by members of the Kirtlington band – Steve Vickars (now up to 10!), Judith Vickars and Ellis Seddon. Congratulations to them all – as Judith wrote in an article describing life in the first year of the new Kirtlington band, ‘Bell ringing is now in our blood’.

St Mary, Kirtlington, Oxfordshire
Saturday, 9 September 2017 in 40m
1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Judith Vickars
- 2 Kathryn Grant
- 3 Jeremy Adams
- 4 Ron Burgess
- 5 Hugh Deam (C)
- 6 Steve Vickars

Rung to celebrate the recent completion of
Lottery funded structural and internal works
at St Mary's, Kirtlington
First quarter peal – Treble

St Giles, Bletchington, Oxfordshire
Sunday, 8 October 2017 in 39 mins

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Katherine A Stonham
- 2 Ellie Seddon
- 3 Jonathan Cresshull (C)
- 4 Joanna E Knight
- 5 Steve Vickars
- 6 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke

First quarter peal: 2



Piddington ringers dedicated
their ringing for the 2017 BBC
Music Day to Wendy Taylor who
died in February.

*Photo from L to R: Chris Taylor,
Morwen Ashton, Pam Newall, Cheryl
Coggins, Rachel Pennington, and Tony
Pearce.*

Our annual 6-bell striking
competition was held in Islip on a
fine late summer evening in September with the traditional format of a BBQ and
competition combined. Eighteen ringers and 11 non-ringers came (including the
judges Hugh Deam, Judy Kirby and Paulina) so that we had three teams drawn
mainly from Ludgershall, Islip and Kirtlington, who finished in that order. An
evening of serious but enjoyable ringing and a lovely barbecue cooked by a
specially-imported Australian in a glorious garden, thanks to Sally Wale –
what's not to like!

The winning team, Jeremy Adams, Anne Martin, Andy Windmill, Richard
and Jan Haseldine, and Jill Bailey, representing Ludgershall, receiving the
trophy from President, Willie Haynes. It was particularly appropriate that Jan
Haseldine's father, Cliff East, had originally presented the shield.
www.bicesterbranch.org.uk/resources/clifford-east-shield/

As well as ringing all those quarters, Steve Vickars (with a grant from the
Bicester Branch) is installing an 8-way multi-bell interface box and two photo
sensors for Kirtlington tower, which, when fitted and connected to a PC or

laptop running Abel, will allow initially two and ultimately up to eight ringers (with the purchase of additional sensors) to ring tied bells with the simulator. We're all looking forward to trying it out!

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

On the 31st May Isaac Edney from Aylesbury rang his first quarter peal of Grandsire Triples. September 5th saw Adam Gibson from Aylesbury ring his first peal of Grandsire Triples at Aston Clinton. On October 14th a peal of Stedman Caters were rung at Long Crendon to mark Julie Haseldine's 50 years of ringing. A great achievement by all, huge congratulations!

On October 7th Aylesbury ventured out to North Leigh to compete in the Guild striking competition. They achieved 8th out of 10 with Thatcham winning overall.

October 14th also saw the friendly competition between Chiltern and Central Bucks branches for the Orchard Cup. There was a good turnout of 9 teams, good ringing, a lovely tea and a sunny day. The competition was won by Long Crendon. It also graced the front page of the Bucks Herald with extended coverage online.

This day was also the annual outing of Wingrave. With many people joining in, they started at Marlow, then on to Hitcham near Burnham, then on to Langley Marsh before the final church at Hughenden. A good day with a pub lunch was had by all.

Rachel Sheppard

Chiltern

Attendances at Branch practices, held from 9.30 to 11.30 on the third Saturday of each month, have continued to be well supported.

The Branch and the Guild gave huge support for the *Country Fayre and Music Festival* held at Slapton over the August bank holiday to raise funds for the restoration and augmentation of their bells. This included the hire of the Charmborough mini ring, and a large and very professional display about ringing. The event raised approximately £3,000 plus some other postal donations, taking their total to just over £25,000 out of the £80,000 needed. More funds must be raised before Slapton can apply for Heritage Lottery funding. Shirley Burrell is heading up the appeal and the village has more events planned before Christmas. Several potential new ringers had come forward at the Fayre and Richard Booth has started learners' practices at Marsworth for Slapton ringers.

At the half yearly meeting held in September at Wendover the Branch elected a record 13 new members, including 7 at Great Kimble – the Branch hopes they all enjoy their future ringing activities.

Alan Masters (Cheddington) has spent time and effort to create software on the Chiltern Branch website to present and create method diagrams and play methods, see: <http://chiltern.odg.org.uk/Methods/index.html>. Please note that the contents of the method diagram software are work in progress.

Please address any comments, suggestions or error reports to
AlanRMasters@btinternet.com.

Two bands from Great Missenden and Wendover entered the annual Orchard Cup striking competition held jointly with Central Bucks Branch, whose turn it was to organise the competition this year. The Guild organised a one day 10-bell course for 4 November held at Aston Clinton.

Clare Carpenter

Chipping Norton

As well as the usual monthly branch practices, there have been special practices focussing on Plain Bob Doubles & Minor, Grandsire Doubles, Surprise Minor and Grandsire Triples.

A tower captains' meeting took place in June and the branch autumn meeting followed the October practice at Kingham. Branch members have expressed their appreciation of the special practices and their wish for these to continue.

WW1 commemorative half-muffled quarter peals have continued at Hook Norton and a half-muffled quarter peal was rung at Chastleton in August for a second ringer from that tower who died in WW1.

The 90th birthday of Jim Wiggins, a former ringer at Wigginton, was also marked with a quarter peal in June.

Bell restoration work is in progress or planned at four Branch towers. Taynton has some work to be completed on the church building before the bells can be returned. Burford bells are about to undergo repairs which should be finished by early December. Fund raising is progressing at Ascott-u-Wychwood and Shipton-u-Wychwood for their respective projects. Major work at Enstone church that restricts access to the ringing room is due to be completed in November, and will enable ringing to recommence.

Our congratulations go to Mike & Denise Summers of Charlbury who celebrated their Golden Wedding in September and we send our best wishes to those members who are unwell.

Christine Harris

East Berks and South Bucks

On 13th May, a peal of Grandsire Caters was scored at Cookham to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the annual Cookham Festival. One of the ringers, David Rothera, was also in the peal of Yorkshire Major rung on 12th May 1967 for the first Cookham Festival. *[See photo on front cover.]*

Having won the Branch 6-bell contest at Fulmer in June, High Wycombe again represented the EBSB Branch in the Guild contest where they were narrowly beaten into second place by Thatcham.

In March the High Wycombe band qualified for the final of the National 12-bell Striking Contest – the first time for 10 years. The final was held at Southwark Cathedral in June. All had hoped that the recent re-hang of Southwark bells would make them easier to ring, but that was far from the case.

They were rather too challenging for the High Wycombe band which was placed tenth out of the ten finalists. Despite the terrorist attack in the area a few weeks beforehand, the Southwark band organised an excellent day with a vast array of beers on offer in the beer tent.

In the last edition of *Odd Bob* Maryanne Roach reported that there had been no nominations for two important positions that had fallen vacant. Although not elected, I have been acting as Branch Secretary since April. At our recent Half Yearly Meeting there were several officers elected – Secretary, Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Independent Assessor and two Branch Representatives to bring the officers up to full strength. We are very grateful to all who have come forward to fill these positions. The new 100-Club organiser, Margaret Carlyle, announced that there were now 210 members, allowing for an extra prize.

The meeting was preceded by the final of the Lorna Newton Striking Contest. This is a knock-out contest over the summer months with five bands (Amersham, Bray, Chesham, Lane End and Winkfield) reaching the final which was held at Chalfont St Peter. Judges Alison Bayley and Ruth Monks declared Bray to be the convincing winners.

On Saturday 23rd September, the local band rang a peal at Bray of 3-spliced Surprise Major (Cambridge, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire) to congratulate Derek and Wenda Fowles on their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Derek and Wenda have both been ringing at Bray for more than 50 years and have been very active at Branch and Guild level during that time. At the time of the peal they were enjoying a trans-Atlantic cruise.

Pat Newton

Newbury

Since the previous *Odd Bob* it's been all go in the Newbury Branch. There have been numerous new ringers joining bands, ringing for special occasions, and some new and successful initiatives to bring the branch together while enhancing skills, providing opportunities for our members and, of course, allowing us to enjoy the exercise to the full.

We are all very pleased and proud that Thatcham won the Guild 6-bell striking competition, no mean feat considering the opposition. We seem to be doing well at Guild level over the past couple of years, and long may that trend continue.

On 15th June, many of our towers took part in the BBC's Music Day, where they featured bell ringing and called for bells to be rung nationwide at 7.00pm. Our local paper, the *Newbury Weekly News* also printed an article highlighting the theme 'uniting people through music' which we hope will have a positive effect on recruitment.

Also in June, our annual branch outing took us to Hambleden, Hughenden, Wooburn, Hitcham and Stoke Poges. Although numbers attending have dwindled in recent years, this annual event remains alive and well, and a perfectly sunny day with some very good ringing was enjoyed by all.

Di Bridle's weekday ringing and pub lunch outings, reported on in the last edition, have seen excursions to towers outside the Branch, including Liddington near Swindon with their new six, and South East to Hannington near Basingstoke, also a fairly recent re-hang. These outings are attracting a wide range of abilities and have become a popular and well established monthly event with something for all levels in a relaxed and sociable atmosphere.

As a joint initiative with the neighbouring W&P Andover Branch, we have tested the water with a monthly Surprise Major practice, to give opportunities to practice the standard eight, from Cambridge Major up to a possible eight spliced. This month also saw a non-standard method introduced, Lessness SM. This proved popular with at least seven having done the homework and it was rung very nicely.

St Mary's, Shaw recently celebrated its 175th birthday with a special service taken by the Bishop, and a quarter was rung for this before the service.

Around the Branch towers are busy with maintenance (new ceiling bosses for Speen), muffle replacement (Midham), training (all) and ringing for services, practices and just for enjoyment. Quarter peals and occasional peals are always on the agenda with commemorative quarters rung in honour of ringers lost in the First World War, with others planned. Hungerford and Thatcham have both held floral festival events at which ringers have set up displays.

So, the exercise is alive and well in the Newbury Branch and we look forward to a busy autumn and Christmas ringing season to take us into 2018.

Mark Robins

North Bucks

In June the branch summer social and 6-bell striking competition was held at Newton Longville. There was ringing for all, along with tea and cakes, and followed by the striking competition. This year the striking competition was won by Shenley and Loughton, who went on to come 9th in the Guild 6-bell striking competition in October.

The inter-branch joint practice, picnic and striking competition with Towcester branch was held in July. There was a joint practice at Towcester, with a picnic tea in the Chantry House, followed by the striking competition. As usual, the competition had three sections: rounds and call changes on eight, Bob Minor, and Stedman Triples. This year Hawkear was used for the first time to judge the striking. The results of the competition were as follows:

Section	Winner
Rounds and Call Changes	North Bucks
Bob Minor	Towcester
Stedman	Towcester

The branch outing to Northampton was held at the beginning of September, with ringing at five churches, four of which were in easy walking distance of each other. A fine day was had, although the outing was not as well attended as in previous years.

The branch practice and autumn meeting was held in the middle of September at Emberton. The branch practice was followed by tea and cakes, and then the autumn meeting.

As part of the Milton Keynes 50th birthday celebrations a challenge was started to ring a quarter peal in every tower that was within the boundaries of the new town of Milton Keynes in 1967 (11 towers in all). So far, 6 successful quarters have been rung as part of this event.

As well as all of this we have been holding monthly branch practices, a monthly 8/10 bell practice, and a monthly doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice.

Gary Reading

Old North Berks

We have had an active summer, with many of our monthly afternoon practices and our surprise major practices being quite well attended. Our monthly evening general practices have not always been well attended and it is very difficult to guess which ones will be less or more successful. However only one or two additional ringers at a practice can make a big difference and we would like to thank all those who have supported the Branch, helping to make all these occasions fun with a lot of good ringing.

Our Training Officer, Susan Read, organised an intensive ringing course from May to July under the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) *Learning the Ropes* syllabus. Five learners attended and one could ring rounds fairly confidently before the end of the course. From September onwards Susan has set up a Branch Ringing School, initially continuing to teach those who attended the intensive course. Later this year more new beginners will be taught to handle a bell. This is a remarkable teaching initiative and towers in the Branch will benefit from having more new ringers.

On a sad note, over the summer months we were sorry to hear of the deaths of John Pearce of Appleton, Jim Blond of Blewbury and Helen Walker of Didcot. All three ringers had been faithful members of their towers and will be sadly missed.

Our branch outing was organised by Philip Roberts of Harwell on a damp Saturday in July. Over twenty branch members and friends visited Royal Wootton Bassett, Wroughton, Liddington, Wanborough and Lambourn. This excellently organised outing included a pub lunch in Wroughton and afternoon tea at Lambourn, and was followed by a well-attended barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson. As usual, the food was excellent, but the croquet green was too wet for play. Thanks go to Philip, Janette, Stuart and Naomi for arranging a good day for the Branch. The proceeds of the barbecue and raffle went into the branch fund and will be used for future restoration projects.

Our next social event will take place in November and will be a barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall. Thanks go to Philip and Janette Roberts for organising this for the Branch. Barn dances in the past have always been great fun, with everyone showing off their dancing skills.

Ringling to celebrate New Year will be held at Appleton on 1st January 2018 from 10.30am to 12.30pm, with light refreshments available to get the year off to a good start.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

This year's half-yearly meeting and striking competition in May was held at St Thomas. We had an excellent turnout and 7 bands entered the striking competition. Congratulations to St Aldates who won and to everyone else for joining in. It was particularly heartening to see so many new members of the branch present, both in the competition and just enjoying the day. As in the previous year, the Stallpits mini ring provided an extra point of interest in what was a hugely enjoyable afternoon.

Branch practices have been held monthly on the second Saturday of each month. Attendance has been variable. Garsington in January and Cowley in July had huge turnouts, whereas only six of us attended the September one. We intend to discuss Branch practices at our AGM in November and see how we can encourage more members to attend. Andrew Freer, our new Ringing Master, has also run a *Ringling up and down* training course at Marston, which didn't have a huge attendance, but those who came gave very positive feedback, and it seems we have the demand for another one which will be organised in the near future. Several members have taken advantage of the Guild training on offer, and we have several members keen to attend future courses in the Guild.

Hugh Deam continues to organise outings which many members of the branch enjoy, this being a chance to ring at a variety of towers in Oxfordshire and beyond. All outings, branch practices and training sessions are advertised on our website.

In July there was a gathering at North Hinksey to celebrate Douglas Wilks' astonishing ringing career spanning 70 years. At 91 years old, Doug is showing everyone that ringing keeps you in good shape. There was tea, cake, and of course Doug took part in a quarter peal:

1260 doubles: Reverse Canterbury, Plain Bob, Grandsire.

Treble. Dawn McNulty	2. Douglas Wilks	3. Judy Kirby
4. Hugh Deam (c)	5. Bernard Masterman	Tenor. Ray Rook

In October this year two Headington ringers, Rachel Croft and James Scott-Brown, were married at St Andrew's church in Headington. Eight of us rang to celebrate the happy occasion. There were also two quarter peals dedicated to them, with the bride ringing in the second:

St Giles, Bletchington, Oxfordshire on Sunday 15th October

1260 Doubles. 8 methods: 240 St Remigius, Winchendon Place, St Simon,

120 St Martin, 60 Plain Bob Doubles, 120 All Saints, RCPD, Grandsire

Treble. Judy Kirby

2. Hugh Deam (C)	3. Colin P Taylor
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4. Alison T Merryweather-Clarke	5. Neil R Ephgrave	Tenor. Michael Probert.
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Rung to celebrate the marriage at St Andrew's, Headington of two Headington ringers, Rachel Croft and James Scott-Brown. Most methods: 3.



St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, Tuesday 17th October
1344 Plain Bob Major, composed by
Cameron A Waters.

- 1 Isobel C Patterson
- 2 Isobel L Fray
- 3 Rachel Croft
- 4 Craig M Robertson
- 5 Jonathan D Wright
- 6 Hannah Guggiari
- 7 David S Phillips
- 8 Cameron A Waters (C)

*Rachel and James getting married at the church
where they ring – Headington St Andrew*

Lindsay Powell

Reading

The Reading Branch has been a hive of activity during the summer this year! Not only have all the regular practices been running as planned, we have also hosted one of the most publically well-known society events of 2017 – the marriage of Pippa Middleton to James Matthews on Saturday 20th May at Englefield Church. The ringers who rung for the service were all local to the area and the ringing was very well received by those attending.

On the same day as the Middleton wedding, the Branch was honoured to provide the location for the Guild AGM at St Michael's, Tilehurst. The meeting was well-attended and the activities provided (including the Charmborough Ring) were well-received. Special thanks to the ringers and congregation at Tilehurst and everyone who helped make the day a success!

Also during May, the Reading Branch represented the ODG in the Tewksbury Shield 10-bell competition and came a very credible 5th out of 10 teams. As in previous years, the band had a thoroughly enjoyable day ringing the lovely bells at Tewkesbury Abbey and exploring shops and pubs prior to the results being announced.

In addition to all the ringing going on in the branch, there have been a number of successful outings held during this summer too. In June the Reading St Mary & St Laurence band and friends had a lovely three days in the Peak District, and in October the Tilehurst band held a very enjoyable weekend trip to the Cotswolds.

Another cause of excitement for the branch was the participation of several of its young ringers in the Oxford Diocesan team in the Ringing World National Youth Competition on Saturday 1st July in Birmingham. The team did very well, scoring a B- for their Plain Bob Triples and grabbing a number of the towers (including ringing Grandsire 15 at St Martin's) in Birmingham city centre. The Reading Branch is very fortunate in the number of young ringers that we currently have active in our towers.

As the summer began to draw to a close, in September the Branch held its annual 6-bell striking competition at Shinfield which, as in previous years, was very well attended with seven teams entering. Tilehurst emerged victorious and went on to perform admirably at the Guild 6-bell competition. Many thanks must go to Lindsey and Bobbie May and her team for organising the venue and the tea, and to Tim Pett and David Thomas for judging.

Friday 20th October saw a very successful quiz night organised by Rosa Bardwell to raise funds for the Tilehurst Bell Restoration Project; over 100 people attended and were thoroughly entertained by a brilliant set of questions and a tasty fish and chip supper. A big thank you to Rosa, David, Jo, Giles, Colin, Martin and Jenny for all their hard work, and to the ringers of the Branch who came along in support. £740 was raised to add to the Restoration Fund.

Joanna Knight

Sonning Deanery

This branch report starts with the very sad news that Binfield has suffered the death of two of its most experienced and regular ringers. David Fawcett died in May, and only six weeks later Dave Creasy also died. The branch was well represented at their funerals and in total six quarters and two peals were rung in their memory. Any support that ringers from other local towers can give to Binfield would be much appreciated. Their practice night has changed from Tuesday to Monday evenings and Liz Harris is now their tower captain.

Each month on the second Sunday afternoon there has been a practice for Young Ringers in the branch. The practices take place at different towers to give the learners experience of handling different bells. At Finchampstead in May, after the ringing, a quiz hunt was enjoyed around the churchyard and area close by. Young ringers from the Reading branch were invited to join us for the August practice at Wargrave and this swelled the numbers taking part. Numbers were also most encouraging for the September practice at Shottesbrooke. We hope the young ringers are enjoying these practices.

Rebecca Gingell learnt to ring as a teenager at Wargrave some years ago. She met her future husband Chapman while working and ringing in New York and they celebrated their marriage at St Mary's in Wargrave on the 29th July. After the service they both had a quick ring, along with youngest sister Kitty, brother Freddie, and grandmother Joyce Hynd (a Henley ringer). The previous day Beccy and Chapman took a break from wedding preparations and decorating the church to ring a celebratory quarter at St Mary's, together with Kitty and Freddie. [Photo on back cover.]

In September Kitty & Freddie passed their level 5 of the ART *Learning the Ropes* scheme; congratulations to them both. All the work and organisation that Vinni Sullivan has put into their training has certainly paid off.

On Saturday 9th September St Mary's, Wargrave held an Open Day. In the bell tower people were encouraged to try Abel on the computer, try supervised bell handling, and watch demonstrations by the bell ringers. It was well received by over 40 people who climbed to the ringing room, and has given them one new ringer and possibly two.

Several personal events were marked by peals or quarter peals during the last few months: Stan Scott's 90th birthday, Stan and Joan's 67th wedding anniversary, 30th wedding anniversaries of Chris & Sarah Cole and Alan & Helen Barsby, Martha Hazell's 25th birthday, ruby wedding of Stephen & Barbara Smith, Mathew Steele's first quarter at the age of 12, and Allan Crisp's 60th birthday.

The Sonning ringers had a stall at the annual Sonning Show with a couple of simple, free competitions to attract visitors to the stall, where information on bells and ringing was on display. Three new learners are now being trained and a lapsed ringer from elsewhere in the Guild has restarted with the Sonning band.

On Sunday 8th October, due to the increase in numbers of ringers at both Arborfield and Barkham towers, they were able to ring simultaneously at both towers for the morning services – all 10 bells ringing – for the first time in over a decade!

Rob Needham

South Oxon

South Oxon Branch had a very quiet summer with very little extra activity to note. The autumn has gained pace with a few significant events. On Friday 25th August, a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles was rung at Berrick Salome, St Helen's Church, in 45 minutes. This was a birthday compliment to Wendy Simon. The ringers were Margaret Coombe, Jeanette Barrington, Wendy Simon, Brian Gray, Andrew Davis (c), John Tchighianoff. This quarter peal was particularly notable in that it is the first quarter peal that Margaret Coombe rang after her recovery from ill health.

Another happy event was the wedding of Andrew Gillard and Lucy Perry. They were married on Wednesday 25th October at Towersey, St Catherine's Church. The newlyweds would like to thank everyone who came and rang for the wedding. It's also lovely to note that Lucy learned to ring so that both bride and groom could ring at their own wedding – congratulations to Mr and Mrs Gillard!

And on a continued upbeat note, Thame tower, which has had reduced ringing because of a previous noise nuisance complaint, are very pleased that their practice night is able to be a normal length of time once again!

Amy Herlihy

Vale of the White Horse

Rather unusually, we held our Branch AGM at St Mary's Longworth, a church with unringable bells! However, restoration plans are underway and several locals are learning to ring at the neighbouring tower of Hinton Waldrist, so we thought it would be a good opportunity to introduce the village to the wider world of bell ringing. The Stallpits mini-ring was erected under the tower and Vale ringers enjoyed the first full-circle ringing in the church for nearly 100 years. Handbells were rung (tunes and method), rope splicing was demonstrated and there was an exhibition of the history of Longworth bells. We were pleased to welcome the Guild Master (Hilarie Rogers) to the service and meeting. All

the Branch Officers were unanimously re-elected apart from Ann Stevens who resigned from running the Bell Fund raffle. Ann was thanked for her fundraising efforts and Becky Vardy agreed to take over.

We were also delighted to learn that the new treble, which will augment the ring to six, had been cast. Donated by Mr and Mrs Frost, longstanding worshippers at Longworth, the bell is dedicated to Norman Leslie, his twin brother Dennis and their good friend Frank White. Sadly, Dennis and Frank are no longer with us, but Norman & Doreen were delighted to attend the casting of the bell, one of the last two to be made at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London.

Seven bands entered the Branch 6-bell striking competition, which was judged by Andrew Freer, Ringing Master of Oxford City Branch. The *Greenley Shield* was presented to Shrivenham, and the Ringing Master's Trophy for the most improved tower was awarded to Longcot. A box of the appropriately named 'Heroes' chocolates was given to Norman Leslie, taking part in a striking competition for the first time in recent years, and ringing for both the Faringdon and Hinton Waldrist bands! The Shrivenham ringers represented the Branch at the Guild competition in October, and were pleased to come fifth.

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

Michael Probert from Freeland reports on our branch annual social which was hosted by Freeland on 22nd July. After ringing at St Mary's church we moved next door to the *Oxfordshire Yeoman* where, after drinks, we enjoyed basket meals. This was followed by an entertaining and amusing raffle and if that wasn't enough excitement for one night, the rain which had prevailed for most of the day held off and enabled a competitive game of Aunt Sally to bring the evening to a close.

Congratulations to Zoe Monkley of Freeland who rang her 1st QP on the treble in July. Neil Ephgrave of Freeland is also to be congratulated on ringing his first Surprise Major QP (Cambridge) on the 6th at South Leigh on 25th June. This was followed by ringing his first blows in Yorkshire Surprise Major with a successful QP at Longcot on 23rd September.

Melanie McGregor, Steeple Keeper at St Mary the Virgin, Freeland reports on how to win a Gold Steeple Keeping Award:

- Appoint a steeple keeper – and be nice and helpful to them
- Send the steeple keeper on a tower maintenance course – go with them – and take another ringer or two. Your steeple keeper needs friends
- Obtain the scoring sheet
- Score yourselves
- Decide if you are ready for an assessor's visit, or whether you want to get some of the simpler requirements ready first. In Freeland we use the Monday before Easter, when we don't practice, for an annual spring clean. The agile ascend to the bells and clock armed with hoovers and brushes, those who prefer to stay below attend to the ringing chamber and stairs

- Develop a simple maintenance programme (as you learnt to do on the maintenance course), carry it out and record what you did
- Welcome the assessor. He (or she) is very knowledgeable so ask lots of questions. They are more than happy to share and advise. They may find things that are beginning to go wrong before they get serious – this is our experience in Freeland – giving you time to prevent an expensive repair
- If you don't win Gold straight off, look at how you have been scored and see where the points were lost. The assessor will come back and re-score you once you have done any remedial work needed.

Why are you doing it? You want safe reliable bells, that you can ring whenever you want to, don't you? It's just like giving your car an annual service and MOT, but it's free. Your churchwardens and incumbent will be happy that you are maintaining their kit to an external standard. Your ringers will have bells that are a delight to ring, and you get a nice shiny certificate to go on the ringing room wall. Go on – have a go!

Lindsey Thornton, Stonesfield tower captain, reports on our branch outing to Warwickshire, Saturday 14 October. This year's well-supported Branch outing took place in Warwickshire on a warm sunny autumn day, starting in Harbury village. We arrived to a warm welcome, the outing organiser had clearly done his research and arranged that our first tower at 10am coincided with All Saints church coffee, cakes and raffle morning! A great start, and this ring of 8 bells was good too. Our journey to the next tower took us past Windmill Hill and an intriguing windmill viewpoint overlooking an expansive Warwickshire countryside to St Laurence, Lighthorne, an appropriately light ring of 6. Our lunch stop was at *The Leopard Inn*, Bishops Tachbrook. This is the most critical and demanding stage of any bellringing outing, choosing which real-ale to go for. Feeling virtuous I went for Monty Python's Holy Grail (Golden Ale tempered over burning witches) by Black Sheep, an excellent choice. I think most would agree the food was exceptional too. Afterwards we headed into historic Warwick for our next ring on 8 at St Nicholas. Followed by St Peter's, Barford (6) and lastly St Peter's Wellesbourne (8) where I amazed myself by ringing Stedman Triples, my Holy Grail, and a perfect end note. I would like to thank my chauffeur Sue Rhodes (Ringing Master) for sharing her fab Fiat 500 and on behalf of the ringers I would like to congratulate and thank Michael Probert for his excellent choice of church towers, bells, fine pub, and in such a beautiful part of the Warwickshire countryside.

James Gibbons, Church Hanborough tower captain, reports on his advice for 'Keeping up the numbers'. Like, I suspect, many other local towers, we here in our 6-bell tower at Church Hanborough are usually short for ringers as we only have two regulars to call on at the moment. Despite this problem, we have managed to cover the several weddings and funerals that have come up on our 2017 calendar and have only had to cancel one Sunday service session to date this year.

This is due to two factors. First, we have regular help from the other church in our benefice at Freeland together with further support from other towers, in particular Stonesfield and both South and North Leigh.

Second, we use an email pool to which local ringers both within and without the Witney and Woodstock branch can add or remove their names, which means that it is so much easier to drum up support. It is surprising how willing ringers can be to make up band numbers at two days (or sometimes even shorter notice) to ring at other local towers.

This week too I was so pleased to be asked if our email pool could be used by Witney who were three short for a wedding; within hours they were up to a full band of eight. I would encourage other towers to consider establishing a similar email pool.

David Harding, St Mary's Black Bourton tower captain, writes: The rededication service for the new ring of six was on Sunday, November 5th, taken by Area Bishop Colin Fletcher. The new band of Black Bourton ringers rang the bells for the first time after they were blessed, during the service. Afterwards there was open ringing session for ringers who had attended the service. We at Black Bourton are extremely grateful to the family of Jackie Wheeler who donated the funds to enable us to complete the restoration and cast a new treble in her honour. We also thank the village for its dedication and support in fundraising over the last few years.

A huge thank you must also go to Richard Betteridge for organising the whole project, David Nixon for his tireless hard work in the tower, and all the other helpers who have completed a mammoth task in such a short time.

A Branch practice will be held on the 25th of November at 10.30am and regular practice nights have started on Thursday evenings.

Neil Ephgrave, Freeland tower captain, reports on a Welsh ringing weekend on the 8th – 10th of September. A band of ringers from Witney and Woodstock joined Kevin Musty on an outing to South Wales. Kevin, originally from Swindon, recently moved to a small village in South Wales and immediately set about making contact with every tower in his area. As we had joined him on several occasions for ringing trips he organised in Wiltshire and surrounding areas, it was our great fortune that he invited us to ring in his new territory. Set over a long weekend with two nights away we enjoyed many excellent towers and lots of good hospitality. Ringing at Dyffryn, Cadoxton, Neath, Llanelli, Sketty, Bridgeend, Gorsienon, Aberavon and Aberdare we attempted a QP at each and got most. At Gorsienon we had the honour of ringing for a wedding. It was an excellent trip and all the towers are well worth a visit. Cheers Kevin, looking forward to the next invite!

Zoe Monckley from Freeland reports on our branch striking competition, and Zoe's first! In a car with 4 other ringers, we are discussing Tackley church, bells and village. I sit quietly. I have nothing to contribute. I hear the slight nerves as the others compare who has rung there before, and for what events. We arrive. It is a pretty church, but by this stage even the stupendously large display of cakes doesn't get much recognition from me. When are we ringing? A Tupperware

box is put into use as a raffle pot and the draw is made. Method ringing order, we are second, but I'm not ringing in the method! Call change order, also second, at least that is easy to remember. Where is my tenor ringer? Check my phone. Call him. A few minutes pass, Tackley have started ringing, they sound dreadfully good. My tenor ringer arrives, phew!

I gather my band and we wait on the stairs. Now anyone who knows Tackley church will know that those stairs are horrendously steep and awkward. The band before us finish, my nerves are calmer now that we are actually doing it. We have our two minutes practise and I'm very glad that there are a few more experienced ringers on my team to help. We ring. I'm shouting loudly for each change, something goes wrong, I deal with it. We are nearly at the end – I look at the tenor and I'm on the same stroke. As I'm on the treble this is a big oops. I listen. It sounds OK. Do I sort it or try to leave it? My band sorts it out without me saying anything. One minute to go, I bellow, "Let's get these last rounds good" and it is done.

Back downstairs and I can finally appreciate the lovely cakes and refreshments put on by Tackley – everything I tried was super tasty, well done guys! It turns out that a competition is a great place to just start talking to random ringers. Everyone is super friendly, and everyone can understand the nerves, which is good as my first opening gambit for conversation was how much my plate was shaking!

What struck me most however, was how supportive of the other teams people were. There was a team ringing a method piece, and everyone could hear that they weren't the best, but the comments I heard were, "These guys are less experienced and doing really well", "So many teams wouldn't even put a team in but they have, and they are having a really good go", and "Kudos to them for trying".

At last, the judges have made their decisions. Comments included "One change caused mayhem", "There were some perfect rounds at the end", "These bells seemed to go better when rung faster" and various comments about the standing of the tenor, which appeared from the laughter of a certain person to have been mainly his fault. North Leigh and Ducklington teams shared the first and second spots, with North Leigh getting the method and Ducklington the call changes. My team came 4th out of 5 – not bad for my first ever striking competition. Finally, it was time to pile into cars for a tasty pub meal and chatter – a lovely way to end a good evening.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke summarises a number of significant quarter peals which have been achieved in the branch during the past six months:

- 1st QP Dawn Chambers, James Gibbons, Heather Horner, Barbara Summers
- 1st away from cover Zoe Monkley
- 1st minor Andrew Goldthorpe, Robert Walton
- 1st triples inside Jane Burgess, Rebecca Smith
- 1st surprise major Neil Ephgrave, Michael Probert

- 1st major as conductor Neil Ephgrave
- 1st blows in Yorkshire Surprise Major Neil Ephgrave; also his 300th QP
- 1st royal Alison Merryweather-Clarke.

Fiona Methley earned her *Learning the Ropes Plus – Ringing Doubles* certificate after ringing her first QPs of Grandsire and St Simon doubles. Alison Merryweather-Clarke and Michael Probert celebrated their 250th QP together, which was also Mike's 1st on ten bells, at Shrivenham. This was one of several QPs that we could never have attempted without the help of many experienced members from other branches and guilds who have welcomed us to their practices, rung and conducted our QPs and run various courses, including a Conducting course rung by our Steward Tony Crabtree, and the Michaelmas and Steeple Aston courses. Thank you to all who have supported us and provided opportunities.

Sue Rhodes, branch ringing master, reports that Witney and Woodstock were the hosts of this year's ODG 6-bell striking competition, which was held at North Leigh tower. There were 10 entries from the guild with the home team making 7th place! Tea and cakes were in abundance and a good time was had by all. Thank you to everyone who supported the event and, in particular, North Leigh for the use of their bells and excellent facilities.

Andrew Goldthorpe

Points from Peals

The total number of peals recorded to date this year is 231 compared with 235 in the same period last year.

Firsts: A significant number of firsts have been recorded as ringers, particularly younger members, have made progress. Congratulations to all concerned.

- First Peal: Bradley Herrington, Daniel C M Chafen, Adam K Gibson
- First Peal as Conductor: Alison T Merryweather-Clarke
- First Peal in hand: Anna E Sherwood, Pip Dillistone
- First Peal in hand as conductor: Colin G Newman
- First TB: Michael Probert
- First TB Royal in hand: Daniel J Page
- First TB Royal in hand: Christopher M Tuckett
- First Surprise Minor: Thomas A Monks, Ruth M Monks, Anna K Bayley, Matthew J Bayley
- First Surprise Major: Matthew Stone
- First Surprise in hand: Daniel J Page
- First Spliced Surprise Major as conductor: Anna E Sherwood
- First Bristol Surprise in hand: Colin M Lee
- First Bristol as conductor: Anna E Sherwood
- First Horton's 4: Daniel J Page, Anna E Sherwood.
- First London Royal: Joanne P Druce, Anna E Sherwood, D Giles Winter
- First Spliced Surprise Royal: Anna E Sherwood
- First Stedman: Rosanna Cretney
- First Bristol Maximus Joanna E Knight, Anna E Sherwood

- First Bristol Maximus as conductor: Colin G Newman
- First Spliced in hand: Colin G Newman
- First on 12 in hand: Colin G Newman

Personal Milestones Significant milestones recorded since the last report include:

Janet E John (50 on handbells), E John Wells (400 as conductor), Graham A C John (500 on tower bells), E John Wells (700 on handbells), W John Couperthwaite (800 as conductor), Kenneth R Davenport (1,000 for the Guild), E John Wells and June D Wells (1,400 for the Guild), June D Wells (1,500), E John Wells (1,700), Robert H Newton (2,900).

Congratulations to Bernard F L Groves for his achievement of 2,000 peals on handbells, the first person to reach this milestone.

Most methods: (Surprise Minor 18) Catherine M A Lane, (Surprise Minor 23) Anna E Sherwood and David L Thomas.

Events Peals were rung for Royal Occasions marking the official birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and for her Sapphire Jubilee.

Peals were also rung for Patronal festivals at Tilehurst and Lambourn, and to celebrate the start of ministry at Sutton Courtenay for Revd. Helen Kendrick, and at North Leigh for Revd. Margaret Dixon, and for the 50th anniversary of the Cookham Festival.

Personal events Peals were rung for the birth of Frederick Bannister Frye; for the birthdays of: Anna K Bayley, Bill Butler, Abby Cross, Jackie Garner, Elizabeth Menhinick, Robert Newton, Beryl Norris, Stanley Scott, Martin Turner, Matthew S Turner, John Wells, and Stan Scott (90); for the wedding of Tim Forster and Laura Caine; for celebrating the wedding anniversaries of: Chris & Sarah Cole and Alan & Helen Barsby (30 years), Derek & Wenda Fowles and John & Meryl Black (50 years), and Stan & Joan Scott (67 years).

In memoriam Ringers and friends remembered were: Kathleen Brown, Dave Creasy, Dave Fawcett, and William Morris. The centenary of the death of Gunner Walter Markham, killed in action 21st August 1917, was commemorated.

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

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Diary of Events for 2017/18

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

NOVEMBER 2017

Wed	1	Bicester	BP	Bletchington (6)	7.30–9pm
Fri	3	Newbury	BP	Bucklebury (8)	7.30–9pm (TBC)
Sat	4	Guild	10 Bell Training Day	Aston Clinton (10)	
Mon	6	W&W	BP	Freeland (6)	19:30–21:00
Mon					
Tue	7	CN	BP	Spelsbury (6)	7.30–9pm
Thu	9	ONB	BP	Wallingford (10)	8–9.30pm
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	Weston Turville (6)	9.30-11.30am
Sat	18	Sonning	Tea, Business Meeting	Wokingham All Saints	4.30pm tea, 5pm meeting
Mon	20	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	7.30–9pm
Wed	22	ONB	BP	Chilton (6)	2–3.30pm
Sat	25	W&W	BP	Black Bourton (6)	10:30-12:00
Sat	25	Guild	Autumn General Committee	North Bucks Branch	
Sat	25	Guild	10 Bell SC	North Bucks Branch	

DECEMBER 2017

Fri	1	Newbury	BP	Hungerford (8)	7.30–9pm
Fri	1	CN	BP	Burford (8)	7–8.30pm
Sat	2	W&W	BP	Yarnton (6)	10:30-12:00
Sat	2	South Oxon	BP	Great Haseley (6)	4pm
Tue	5	CN	BP	Chipping Norton (8)	7 – 8.30pm
Wed	6	ONB	Surprise Major	Brightwell (8)	7.45 – 9.15pm
Wed	6	Bicester	BP	Charlton-on-Otmoor (6)	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	9	Banbury	Ringing Advent carol service	Bodicote (6)	4.45 6pm
Sat	9	EBSB	BP & Social	Cookham (10)	6.45 pm on
Mon	11	ONB	BP	North Moreton (6)	7.30–9pm
Wed	13	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	2–3.30pm
Sat	16	Chiltern	BP	Little Missenden (6)	9.30-11.30am
Sat	16	Sonning	BP	Twyford (8)	4.30–6pm
Mon	18	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	7.30 – 10pm
Tue	26	Banbury	Boxing Day ringing	Deddington (8)	10.30 – 12noon

JANUARY 2018

Mon	1	Banbury	New year day ringing	Banbury (10)	10.30 – 12noon
Fri	5	Newbury	BP	Shaw (6)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	6	W&W	BP	Witney (8)	10:30 – 12:00
Sat	6	CN	BP and pub lunch	Hook Norton (8)	11.00 - 12.30pm
Tue	9	Banbury	BP	Adderbury (8)	7.30 – 9pm
Sat	13	EBSB	SP	Hughenden (8)	6.00–8.00pm
Sat	13	CBB	BP	Cuddington tbc	7 – 8.30pm
Sat	13	Reading	BP		
Mon	15	VOWH	BP	Shrivenham (10)	7.30–9pm
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	Monks	9.30-11.30am
				Risborough (6)	
Sat	20	W&W	BP	Alvescot (6)	10:30 – 12:00
Wed	24	ONB	BP	West Hanney (6)	2.00-3.30pm
Thur	25	W&W	BP	Wootton (6)	19:30 – 21:00
Sat	27	EBSB	BP	Chenies (6)	4.00-6.00 pm
Sat	27	South Oxon	BP	Dorchester (8)	4pm

FEBRUARY 2018

Fri	2	Newbury	BP	Thatcham (10)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	3	CN	BP & pub lunch	Fulbrook (6)	11.00-12.30pm
Mon	5	W&W	BP	Eynsham (6)	19:30-21:00
Wed	7	ONB	Surprise Major	Harwell (8)	7.30-9.00pm
Sat	10	EBSB	BP	Winkfield (6) TBC	4.00-6.00pm
Sat	10	CBB	AGM	Quainton (8)	2.30pm
Sat	10	Reading	BP		
Tues	13	ONB	BP	Abingdon, St Nicolas (6)	7.30-9.00pm
Fri	16	EBSB	BP	Penn (6)	2.00-4.00pm
Sat	17	W&W	AGM	Combe (6)	18:00
Tue	20	VOWH	BP	Uffington (6)	7.30–9pm
Sat	24	South Oxon	AGM	Berrick Salome (6)	From 3pm
Wed	28	ONB	BP	Sutton Courtenay (8)	2.00-3.30pm

MARCH 2018

Sat	3	W&W	BP	Bladon (6)	10:30-12:00
Sat	3	Newbury	Ringing, Service, Tea, AGM	Kintbury (8)	3 – 4, 4 – 4.45 4.45 – 5.15, 5.15 – 6.15pm
Sat	3	EBSB	SP	Maidenhead (8)	6.00-8.00 pm
Sat	3	CN	Ringing, Service, AGM, ringing	Chadlington (6)	3pm, 4pm, 5.00pm
Sat	10	CBB	BP	Stewkley (8)	7 – 8.30pm
Sat	10	Reading	BP		
Thur	15	VOWH	BP	Coleshill (6)	7.30–9pm
Sat	17	Sonning	BP	Warfield (10)	10.30 – noon
Sat	17	ONB	SC, Service, Tea, AGM	Cholsey (8)	3.00, 5.00pm 5.45, 6.30pm
Wed	21	W&W	BP	Aston (6)	19:30-21:00
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Brightwell	4pm
				Baldwin (6)	
Wed	28	ONB	BP	North Moreton (6)	2.00-3.30pm

APRIL 2018

Wed	4	W&W	BP	Northmoor (6)	19:30-21:00
Wed	4	ONB	Surprise Major/Royal	Wallingford (10)	8.00-9.30pm
Wed	4	CN	BP	Shipton-u- Wychwood (8)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Mon	9	ONB	BP	Steventon (6)	7.30-9.00pm
Sat	14	EBSB	Walking Outing	TBD	9.30am-5pm?
Sat	14	Sonning	SC – 6-bell, followed by BP	Finchampstead	4.00 – 6pm 6pm onwards
Sat	14	CBB	Branch Outing		
Sat	21	W&W	BP	Church Hanborough (6)	10:30 - 12:00
Sat	21	VOWH	AGM	Stanford in the Vale (6)	3pm (tbc)
Sat	28	South Oxon	SC	Drayton St Leonard	7:30pm
Sat	28	EBSB	AGM	Bray (8)	3.00-6.00 pm

MAY 2018

Wed	2	CN	BP	Charlbury (6)	7.30-9.00pm
Tues	8	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	7.30-9.00pm
Sat	12	EBSB	Training Practice	Cookham (10)	6.00-8.30 pm
Sat	12	CBB	SC	East Claydon (6)	7 – 8.30pm
Fri	18	VOWH	Branch 6-bell Striking Competition	Longcot	7pm
Sat	19	Sonning	BP	St Paul, Wokingham	10.30 – noon
Wed	23	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	2.00-3.30pm
Sat	26	South Oxon	BP	Benson (8)	7pm



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Names L to R: Freddie Gingell, Pam Elliston, Chapman Knott, Kitty Gingell, Tony Gordon, David Sullivan, Vinni Sullivan, Rebecca Gingell



Names L to R: Lionel Smith, Alan Griffin, Alison Varney, Bob Reeves, Liz Smith, Martin Saunders, Sue Burchell, Rosemary Hemmings