



EBSB Branch Newsletter Autumn/Winter 25

Welcome to the latest edition of the EBSB Newsletter.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of the newsletter. Your input, whether through articles, updates, or sharing experiences, is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

A special thank you goes out to all the ringers who consistently attend and participate, making the effort to keep our towers ringing. It is your commitment and enthusiasm that form the backbone of our thriving community, ensuring that our shared passion continues to flourish.

Wishing you all joyful ringing and a wonderful time this festive season and as we head into 2026. May the coming year bring continued success and plenty more ringing.

Lyn Lee Newsletter Editor

Notes on ODG General Committee Meeting held on 22nd November at Kirtlington

Reports circulated prior to the meeting can be found on the Guild website at <https://odg.org.uk/publications/general-committee-meetings/2025-meetings>

Safeguarding:

The Safeguarding Officer, June Wells, reminded the meeting that ALL bell ringers should complete the C of E Basic Awareness Safeguarding Training. This training should be repeated every three years.

Guild Server:

The Guild Server Manager is making some changes to the generic email addresses used for tower correspondents so that there is more consistency across the Guild in the format used for the addresses. I will notify Tower Correspondents and officers if any of ours are changed.

Guild Library:

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian, would like to step down from this post in the near future and would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in taking on this role. There is a great deal of material in the library and if nobody can take on the storage and management of the library in its current state then some of it may be disposed of or stored elsewhere. There is a report on the Guild website outlining the plans for reducing the size of the library if necessary.

Finances:

The budget for 2026 was presented. Subscriptions will remain at £10 per member; peal fees will remain at 50p per participant.

2026 subscriptions will be collected through Branch Treasurers in the traditional way, but there will be some trials for collecting subscriptions through Membermojo with the view to using that mechanism in future. There are currently a number of discrepancies with Membermojo, particularly with new members where some subscriptions have been paid but the new members have not completed their Membermojo membership application (we have two in our Branch) or where new members have registered but their Branch Treasurers have not forwarded their subscriptions.

Guild Striking Competitions:

The Guild Young Ringers' band entered the Guild 6-bell striking competition this year (by special permission). The officers would like to amend the rules so that bands of young ringers can enter the 6- and 8-bell competitions in future. Although there was general support for this there was disagreement about the wording and details presented so the officers will reconsider this matter and present draft rules at the March General Committee Meeting.

Guild Rule Change:

Proposed new rules are available to see on the website (using the link above). The rules have been amended to accommodate the proposed re-structure of the Guild management. Currently we have various officers, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Guild General Committee (which meets twice per year). To streamline the structure and enable the officers to move decisions forward more quickly the proposal is to set up an "Executive" (consisting of the Guild Master, Deputy Master, Secretary, Treasurer and Communications Officer, plus up to 3 additional members) who will have power to make decisions and approve expenditures. Then there will be a "Scrutiny Committee" consisting of the Vice Presidents who are ringing members and one representative from each Branch. The Scrutiny Committee will keep a watchful eye on the actions of the officers. There was quite a lot of discussion on this matter and various amendments to the new rules were suggested but it was agreed by a majority vote that the new rules (with some modifications) should be put to the 2026 Guild AGM (16th May, North Bucks Branch). If you are interested in the future of the Guild, please look at these new rules and attend the AGM where you could add your comments and cast your vote to approve or reject this new structure.

Patricia Newton Branch Secretary

ODG Ten-bell Striking Competition – 22nd November 2025

The Guild General Committee meeting at Kirtlington was preceded by this annual ten-bell event, at Long Crendon, on another wet day – fortunately not as stormy as in Oxford last year. The contestants and judges were well supplied with warm drinks, biscuits and cake.

All bands managed to bring the set piece of 288 Grandsire Caters round without major incident. It was a neat, if slightly non-standard, two-part touch, with a half way row of 198765432T, and was a good test for everyone.

The judges – Rachel Bagley and Simon W Edwards – commented on the bands' performances and indicated how long a peal would have taken for each.

- 1) Old North Berks started the morning well and their ringing improved after half way. Their main problem was inconsistent leading. 3h08
- 2) Reading's ringing was controlled with excellent leading. Most faults were picked up at the back of the change. 3h16
- 3) North Bucks ringing was described as a valiant effort. There were some method mistakes but they had a good finish. 3h17
- 4) Central Bucks started very briskly. The front and back bells couldn't quite agree on the speed. 3h08
- 5) East Berks & South Bucks effort was described as measured. The good start was maintained with only minor blemishes throughout. 3h21

This was not quite the speed we had anticipated, but it seemed to work!

The results were: 5th N Bucks (78 faults), 4th C Bucks (56.5), 3rd O N Berks (46.5), 2nd Reading (42.5) and 1st EBSB (41). Another close finish!

Should the ODG be successful in its application for a place in the prestigious Tewkesbury Shield competition in May, our branch will be invited to organise the representative band.

Our branch band at Long Crendon was Annie Davies 1, Patricia Newton 2, Ken Darvill 3, Mick Francis 4, Charles Botting 5, Matthew R Johnson (C) 6, George Pickwell 7, David Cox 8, Robert Newton 9 and Tom Davies 10. My grateful thanks to the rest of the band.

Robert Newton



EBSB Band anticlockwise from front left
(Photos by Elizabeth Mullet)



Rachel and Simon presenting the trophy to Matthew

New Branch Members Outing

I started bell ringing in late 2022 when I saw an article in our village magazine saying the local tower was looking for people who wanted to learn with a view to “Ringing for the King” on Coronation Day in 2023 (which I am pleased to say I did do). Having missed the summer 2024 New Member’s Outing of EBSB, I thought I ought to get onto the 2025 run because not only was this a chance to meet other ‘newbies’ but also it meant I would be getting solid blocks of expert tuition from all the experienced ringers who were willing to give up their Saturday to help us further improve.

The outing was organised as a mini tower tour taking in Chalfont St Peter (6 bell), Chalfont St Giles (8 bell), and my own local tower at Holy Trinity in Penn (6 bell) for the half-dozen or so new ringers, with a slightly larger number of more experienced ringers so we each had a friendly guardian angel to ‘whisper in the ear’!

The seemingly springy first floor ropes at Chalfont St Peter were a little tricky to handle at first but as confidence grew, Vikki Bulbeck (Clewer) masterfully guided us through rounds and changes and into simple methods, making sure we all had a chance to try multiple bells so one practically understood the differences in weight and timing.

After an hour it was off to neighbouring Chalfont St Giles – long ropes but with a lovely smooth pull. Warmed up, we went straight into Plain Hunt Triples, which required me to concentrate. The benefit of having a ringer by your side, calmly advising you on the small tweaks to bring you back into correct timing, was hugely reassuring when your brain is trying to remember the place count, the likely bell you are going to be following, whether you need to pull harder or softer, and processing whether you are still manipulating the rope correctly.

During a break for lunch, Katie Lane (the Oxford Diocesan Guild Master) spoke enthusiastically about the history of the guild, and the role we all have to play in promoting the art of bell ringing to the public. She strongly encouraged tower visits as one means to move one along the plateaus in ability we all get. Then onward to Penn where the hour of ringing seemed to whizz by, starting with ringing up in peal (I was slightly less ap’peal’ing than the majority), plenty of simple methods and bell position swapping, and finishing with a slightly better ringing down in peal (I speak only of my performance!).

We are tremendously lucky in having these organised events and credit is due to Patricia Newton for all of her hard work in arranging and publicising them, and to all the Tower Captains who came along to help. I have always thought the EBSB branch, and indeed towers everywhere, positively welcome new and visiting ringers, so I would urge you to consider going along to both branch practice sessions and other tower practice nights. After all, ‘practice makes perfect’, and advice gleaned from such visits only improves things for your own confidence and thereby helps your local tower band.

Raza Rizvi



(photo of Holy Trinity, Penn)

Tower News

News from Hughenden

Congratulations go to one of our ringers, Revd Tracey Jones (TJ) who in January will be licenced as Associate Vicar for St Nicholas, Cuddington in the Central Bucks Branch. While she is looking forward to ringing at several towers across the Wychert Vale Benefice, she's assured us that she'll maintain her strong links with Hughenden and still plans to ring with us often. We wish her every success and happiness. Our Christmas ringing season began with the local Scouts Annual Carol Concert, and as you can see, several enthusiastic youngsters were welcomed into the ringing room to have a closer look before the service. Back in October we welcomed Councillor Sarfaraz Khan Raja to our ringing room. In his capacity as Chairman of Buckinghamshire Council, he held his Civic Service at Hughenden, attended by distinguished guests including His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire and the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire. To mark the occasion, we rang methods and call changes to greet his guests as they made their way up the path to join the service.

Looking further back to Bank Holiday Monday in August, we welcomed 98 visitors into our ringing room for tower talks and ringing demonstrations during our Tower Open Day.

Ringling friends from near and far helped make the day a great success in spreading awareness of ringing, and the resultant feedback received, made it all worthwhile.

In addition to all this, we've welcomed two new learners this year, Maria and Muriel. They're progressing well, and we look forward to them adding to our numbers on a Sunday very soon.

Verity Nicholls



Marlow

The Peterborough Ringing Outing!

Hi everyone! Our tower group went on a brilliant two-day outing around Peterborough, and it was so much fun!

We started at Little Paxton, which was amazing because the ringing floor was made of glass! You could see straight through it while ringing the 5 — it felt a bit like floating! The bells were light and easy to ring, which made a great start to the weekend.

Next was Buckden, where Catherine of Aragon (one of Henry VIII's wives) might have heard the bells when she was there in 1533. The bells were much heavier than at Little Paxton, so everyone got a good workout. I was in charge of the ringing here, and at age 10, it made me feel very important!

After that we went to Brampton, which was anticlockwise! That was a bit strange at first but really fun once we got used to it. There were 14 ropes, most of them simulators.

Then we rang at Yaxley, where the 5 and 6 were very deep set, the treble was very 'vibratey', and the 3 was just right.

Next was Alwalton, which only had five bells — four in a square and one tucked in a corner, which looked funny but rang beautifully especially ringing minimus.

The next morning we went to Peterborough Cathedral, which had twelve bells! To reach them we had to climb 125 steps and cross a bridge high up inside the tower before we could start ringing — it was amazing! I rang plain hunt on twelve, which was definitely a highlight.

After that we rang at St Mary's in the city centre, which had different coloured sallies, so we called changes by colour instead of numbers — "Blue over red!" and "Green after yellow!" It was hilarious and worked surprisingly well.

Our final stop was St John's, also in the city centre, where there were eight very heavy bells. I rang the 1, 2 and 3 — the 3 was hard work but fun.

It was such a brilliant outing and everyone loved it. We rang at lots of towers, learned loads, and laughed the whole time. I can't wait for the next one!

🧙‍♂️ ✨ Theo (the Tower Wizard)



Hambleden

The Hambleden band has had a lively and enjoyable few months, with plenty of progress and plenty of smiles. Summer saw several ringers taking big steps forward — including one who mastered ringing a touch of Bob Doubles for the first time — and by early autumn others were confidently tackling new skills such as covering and even making strong strides in Stedman Doubles. September also brought a memorable Sunday when we managed a touch of Bob Doubles and rang on all eight bells, thanks to a wonderfully full turnout of nine ringers.

We've also been lucky to welcome a couple of returning ringers during the autumn, both of whom previously rang elsewhere and have quickly rediscovered their confidence. Their visits have not only added to the fun on practice nights but also helped ensure we could ring for several Sunday services and the Christmas services when we would otherwise have been short. It's been great to have fresh energy in the tower, and we hope they'll continue to drop in whenever they can.

Alongside our usual methods, we've enjoyed ringing some more advanced pieces for the Harvest Festival, including Bob Doubles, Grandsire Doubles and Plain Hunt on six. We've also been working steadily on Stedman, with a number of ringers now able to ring a plain course. Practices have been lively, with several touches of Bob Doubles achieved — sometimes even with ringers who didn't know when the calls were coming, which made it all the more entertaining!

Finally, in the spirit of variety (and a bit of fun), the band spent the autumn learning the Westminster chimes to practise standing and teamwork. On the final practice night of November, a group of four — now proudly nicknamed “the A Team” — rang it straight through without a single mistake. It sounded fantastic and was a great way to round off a busy and enjoyable autumn of ringing together.

Jon Boughton
Tower Captain

Bray

Bray Ringers Celebrate a 40th Anniversary

On November 13th, Bray bellringers celebrated the 40th anniversary of the restoration of the bells.

Our six largest bells were cast at various times between 1612 and 1914 and the treble and second in 1948. In the early 1900s the bells had been installed in a strangely designed steel frame and this had never been entirely satisfactory either for the ringers, as the frame movement made the bells difficult to ring, or for the tower itself as structural engineers who were consulted in the early 1980s believed that the stonework was being damaged. In 1985 the bells were rehung in a new frame by the Whitechapel bellfoundry who also retuned the bells and supplied many new fittings. As any of who have rung there in the last 40 years will attest, the bells are now excellent in both sound and go.

Reports of the trial ring on November 1985 report a cold wet evening. This was impeccably replicated in 2025 as past and present members of the band gathered to enjoy ringing and cake, and to look forward to the next 40 years of ringing at Bray.



L-R: Mary Cross, Olly Cross, Thos Cross, Claire Boyles, Abby Cross, Charles Botting, John Noakes, Maggie Ross, Katharine Firman, Elisa Musson, Margaret Carlyle, John Payne, Sean Wright, James Gladwyn, Graham Firman.

High Wycombe

Every year a Christmas Craft Fayre is held in All Saints' church. The chairs are cleared away and tables erected to enable charities and businesses to set up stalls for the day. For many years I have held a stall selling preserves, cards, knitted goods, etc for the Fund Raising Committee that raises funds for the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. This year's takings were about £180, so well worth the effort. The craft fayre is opened each year by our handbell group ringing carols from the mezzanine floor – always appreciated by the organisers and customers.



The church has been cleared again and 30 Christmas trees erected. These are decorated by various groups, and one of our ringers, James Vockins, always decorates one on behalf of the ringers. Many of the items on the tree are home made by James, latterly with the assistance of his 3D printer. Such talent! The church is open every day until 23rd December for people to view the trees



Patricia Newton (Tower Captain)

2025 Lorna Newton Contest Final

The final of this year's Lorna Newton Contest took place at Chalfont St Giles on Saturday 11th October and was followed by the Half Yearly Meeting. Congratulations are due to the five bands that qualified for the final and entered a band on the day, and thanks are due to Matthew Johnson for judging.

The results were:

1 st	Hughenden	24 faults
2 nd	High Wycombe "B"	29½ faults
3 rd	Lane End	33 faults
4 th	Clewer/Windsor	41½ faults
5 th	Winkfield	60 faults

The winning team



Matthew presents the winners' trophy to Verity Nicholls, Tower Captain of Hughenden, the runners' up trophy to Françoise Allen of High Wycombe and the wooden spoon to Jill Glennerster of Winkfield.

Branch practice & Christmas Social Burnham

The 25 members who attended the branch practice and Christmas social at Burnham on 13 December. Various methods were rung from call changes and plain hunt to half a course of Yorkshire.

After the ringing, most attendees went to the church hall to enjoy the fine spread put on by the Burnham ringers. The fresh bacon butties were especially popular. It was very good to see Cliff Blundell, one of oldest (possibly the oldest) active ringers in the Branch at the event.

At the end of the evening, the draw was made for the Lorna Newton competition.

Thanks were given by the Vice-Chairman, the Chairman having been very actively involved in the preparations for the event.



Alan Ainsworth 90

It all started at the AGM. I asked Katie Lane if she knew how Alan was. She said, "You know he is 90 in October, don't you?" I replied, "Ah, yes. I must organise something at Amersham." Katie said she would love to be involved in it.

For those who did not know him, Alan was tower captain at Amersham for 38 years and was the main instigator in replacing the old lumpy 6 with 8 sparkling new Taylor's bells in 1983. He was also the main mover in augmenting to 12 in 1993. He was an avid peal ringer and encouraged many people to progress their ringing. He moved to York in 2019 and is no longer able to ring.

So, I started by looking at Pealbase, to see the names of people I knew who had rung peals with Alan and then in early July, sent out emails inviting people to ring.

Everyone was delighted to be asked to ring to mark this auspicious occasion. I soon had a list of about 16 people, for two dates in October, Thursday 2nd which was Alan's actual birthday and also Saturday 4th, for those people who would not be able to make a midweek date.

There were some people prepared to ring a peal, but most preferred to ring a quarter peal. We decided to ring a QP of Stedman Triples on the Thursday and a QP of Yorkshire Major on the Saturday. All seemed well and the bands were arranged. However, as Robert Burns said "There's many a slip twixt cup and lip".

As the date drew nearer, I had a couple of people drop out for health reasons and so I had to find replacements. At the last minute things changed again and I was one short for the Stedman and took the decision to ring myself. Sadly we lost the quarter about 40 minutes in, mainly due to my mistakes. We were all disappointed. Luckily, our quarter of Yorkshire on the Saturday was successful.

I had arranged some bubbles and nibbles for both bands and we duly toasted Alan on both occasions and reported our efforts to Alan, who was very touched. Several peals and quarters were rung elsewhere, 23 performances in total, showing how Alan Ainsworth is viewed in the bellringing community.

Jan Galloway

Tower Captain Amersham

The band from the quarter peal on Saturday 4th October, anti-clockwise front left,

Ros Garrett-Bowes, Margaret Burbidge, Janet Menhinick,
Carolyn Crawley, Jan Galloway, Jillian Parker, Ken Darvill, Steve Crawley



EBSB Branch Programme for 2026

Sat	Jan 10	Penn (6)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	Jan 24	Maidenhead (8)	14.00-16.00	
Sat	Feb 7	Stoke Poges (8)	10:00-12:00	Tower Captains' Meeting
Sat	Feb 28	Turville (6)	14.00-16.00	
Sat	Mar 14	Hughenden (8)	10:00-12:00	Focused practice – Grandsire Triples
Sat	Mar 28	Lane End (6)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	April 11	Farnham Royal (8)	14.00-16.00	Surprise practice
Sat	April 25	Hambleton (8)	15:00-18:30	Branch AGM
Sat	May 9	Chalfont St Giles (8)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	May 23	High Wycombe (12)	14.00-16.00	
Sat	Jun 13	Clewer (6)	17:00-19:00	Branch 6 bell striking competition
Sat	Jun 27	Burnham (8)	10:00-12:00	Basic practice – Plain Hunt 6/8
Sat	Jul 11	West Wycombe (8)	16.00-18.00	Branch Practice followed by barbeque
Sat	Jul 25	Chalfont St Peter (6)	19.00-21.00	
Sat	Aug 8	Slough (10)	14.00-16.00	
Sat	Aug 22	Amersham (12)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	Sept 26	Hitcham (6)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	Oct 10	Cookham (10)	17.00-19:30	Final of Lorna Newton Contest followed by half yearly meeting
Sat	Oct 24	Old Windsor (8)	10:00-12:00	Surprise practice
Sat	Nov 14	Beaconsfield (8)	10:00-12:00	
Sat	Nov 21	Windsor (8)	14.00-16.00	
Sat	Dec 12	Bray (8)	17.00-19.00	Branch practice and social gathering