

EBSB NEWS

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November 2023

The Season for Striking Competitions

EBSB 6-bell Contest Saturday 10th June 2023 CHESHAM

The contest was judged by Brian and Deidre Watson who announced the following results.

1st Windsor Curfew Tower	41 faults
2nd Amersham	45 faults
3rd High Wycombe	58 faults
4th Chesham	60 faults

However Windsor were then disqualified because they had 2 ringers who were not listed as members of the Curfew Tower band so did not comply with the contest rules. The winners and runner's up trophies were presented to Amersham (Jan) and High Wycombe (Sheila) respectively.



Amersham went on to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell Striking Contest held at Shipton-under-Wychwood on Saturday 7th October where they were placed 6th. The contest was won by the band from Reading.



Lorna Newton Striking Contest Final

Saturday 14th October 2023

Chalfont St Giles

Congratulations to the five teams that got through the knock-out stages of the Lorna Newton Contest to qualify for the final. Annie Davies and Robert Newton judged the ringing at Chalfont St Giles and announced the following results:

1st Windsor Curfew Tower	18 faults
2nd Amersham	22 faults
3rd Chesham	29 faults
4th Bray	31½ faults
5th Lane End	60 faults



Amersham



Bray (plus mascot)



Chesham



Windsor Curfew Tower



Lane End



Proud winners!

With thanks to Angie Bass of Chalfont St Giles for taking the photographs.

The competition was followed by the Branch Half Yearly Meeting.

Guild 10-bell Contest **Saturday 25th November 2023** **Bicester**

Having had two worthwhile practices, at High Wycombe and Cookham, in the week beforehand, hopes were high that EBSB might be able to defend its 'title' successfully. We had become familiar with the musical touch of Little Bob Royal, although it seemed to drag on far too long for some of us, and were becoming more used to ringing with each other.

Bicester has a fine Gillett eight, augmented to ten in 1998. The ringing chamber ceiling is low: tucks in tail ends can be felt passing through bosses and back strokes need to be pulled through to ensure the sallies end up where they should! The main issues, however, are the lack of audibility of some front bells and niggling odd-struckness in various parts of the circle.

Following the withdrawal of two of the seven original entries, we had to ring first: always a disadvantage. We had no issues with method mistakes and felt we had rung reasonably well, if not quite as consistently as we would have liked. We listened to at least parts of the other four test pieces and felt that there was a possibility of our being placed first again. There was particular interest in the Reading Branch performance as we regard them as the main 'threat'. It was noted that one of the small bells was rung consistently slowly in their test piece. From the judges' comments it was evident that, from their judging position, they could not hear that bell as clearly as the graveyard pundits could on the other side of the tower!

The results in ringing order:

Branch	Percentage score	Peal 'speed'	Placed
East Berks & South Bucks	77	3h05	2 nd
Vale of White Horse	74	3h02	4 th
Reading	83	3h10	1 st
Old North Berks	76	3h00	3 rd
Newbury	71	3h06	5 th

Judges Kate and Paul Flavell commented on the overall high standard and that some bands had rung too fast.

Our band: 1 Vikki E M Bulbeck, 2 Ann Davies, 3 Angela M Darvill, 4 Patricia M Newton, 5 Martin T Whitaker, 6 Matthew R Johnson (C), 7 Tom Davies, 8 Charles M S Botting, 9 Euan R M Thomas, 10 Robert H Newton.



Robert Newton

Editorial:

The last EBSB News was circulated in May and contained lots of exciting information about what had been rung for the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. I have received little tower news for this newsletter but I am sure there is lots of activity in the Branch getting all the new recruits up and running. At my home tower of High Wycombe we taught 3 new recruits in the month or so prior to "Ring for the King", one of whom has since transferred to Marlow, and they are all doing well. We now have 3 further recruits who are getting to grips with handling the bells, so our practices are very busy. It can be a little frustrating for more experienced ringers to share their practice time, but we have all been there and need to show patience and encouragement to our newbies. Four new ringers were elected to the Guild at the EBSB Half Yearly Meeting (2 from Hughenden, 1 from High Wycombe and 1 from Clewer), all of whom have attended Branch/Guild events, and I hope that there will be several more reaching the standard to join the Guild by the time of our AGM in April.

The programme of events for next year is at the end of this newsletter, and I thank all tower correspondents for dealing with the bookings. We aim to get diary cards out in due course. You will see that the Branch is hosting the Guild AGM and 8-bell Striking Competition next year. This will be at Stoke Poges on Saturday 18th May. Lots of help will be required from Branch members prior to and on that day – preparing and serving food, stewarding, etc, so please note the date in the diary and be prepared to volunteer when the call for help goes out.

Patricia Newton

Notes on ODG General Committee Meeting at Steeple Aston on Saturday November 25th 2023

The ODG General Committee met in the Village Hall at Steeple Aston, following the 10 bell striking competition at Bicester.

Chris Mundy, Deputy Master informed us that the Ashmolean Museum has asked if the Guild could provide some handbell ringing for the One World Family Festival at the museum in February 2024. A group of Oxford ringers will ring at lunch time on Saturday 10th February.

The main points of discussion were:

- **Case for Change** is an initiative to update the way the Guild communicates with members by developing the IT server capabilities and implementing a membership database. A work group has been set up and much discussion has taken place. Jenny Bennet, from Wantage, has experience of Membership Mojo which she used very successfully for the Lincoln Diocesan Guild. This has also been used in Essex and Birmingham. It is an online membership database, which would be a central place for keeping and assessing records. It could, in future, be used for subscriptions but does not need to be initially. It would improve communications with members. Members have control of the data held about them and it is fully GDPR compliant. Through it the Guild could email members, but members would also be able to email groups. Stuart Gibson, Guild Treasurer, pointed out that he is investigating the process of the Guild getting charitable status so gift aid can be recovered. This system would help as data of all members would be required. Membership Mojo has its own server. The general feeling was that it would be a good move.
- Katie Lane has suggested that a QR code for the ODG would be a useful and up to date way of communicating with the public, with QR codes on posters, banners etc with links to information about the Guild, Learning to Ring or virtual version of a ringing day for example.
- Robert Newton informed the meeting that a training day for tower captains will be held on Saturday 3rd February for 3 branches of the Guild, Central Bucks, North Bucks and Chiltern, following a very successful similar meeting last year of 30 tower captains, 3 from each branch. Dates for next year's courses have been set: Radley 13th April, Michaelmas 28th September and Steeple Aston 26th October.

- Tony Crabtree from Towers and Belfries stressed the need to still stretch new ropes even with pre-stretched Terylene tops as problems with the “go of the bells” can be caused by stretchy ropes.
- Subscriptions for 2024 will go up to £10, £3 for branch and £7 for the guild. Non-resident members’ subscription will also be £10. Peal fees remain at 50 pence per ringer for 2024.

Advance notice of the next Guild Festival was given. It will be held in 2031, which coincides with the 150th anniversary of the founding of the guild. It was agreed to go ahead and book venues now.

Chris Mundy thanked Steeple Aston ringers for hosting the meeting and providing an excellent tea. Thanks were also given to Karen Pile, Guild Secretary.

Jan Galloway, Branch Rep

Oxford Diocesan Guild New Ringers’ Outing – Saturday 18th November

It was with a little nervous excitement that I set off to my first ever Bellringing outing. First stop, the beautiful old church of St Nicholas in Cuddington, where we arrived in good time. I gasped with the shock of cold air on entering the old church, but Katie Lane’s welcome smile was warm, large name stickers were stuck on and a heater appeared. We were ready.

My start was not auspicious for the day, having a little panic that I couldn’t even do plain hunt, I thought I could ring the tenor behind, but a new bell, new people, and predictably it all went wrong. I humbly sat down quickly ...thinking to myself that competence before confidence was the preferred order of things! Anyway nobody seemed to mind, and having now found other beginners on the bench, we were all soon able to relax. A big shout out to Stuart, who having noticed my concentrated (actually terrified) face when I did start to ring, took it upon himself to make me smile for the rest of the day. I am still smiling now.

Second stop was Chearsley, another beautiful old church for lunch and more ringing. Tony Crabtree had brought his lovely handbells. It turns out they were his 21st birthday present, and originally servant bells from the West Country. They have been refurbished, and have a wonderful tone. They were so popular, what with experienced ringers keen to practise together, and new ringers practising plain hunt, that Tony, having to leave early, left them behind entrusting Joe with their safe keeping. Thank you Tony. It turns out it’s fairly easy to count out and ring the plain hunt on the handbells, trouble is there is a delay with the tower bells I was thinking, how am I going to keep time with them.....

Final stop the third lovely old church in Shabbington, and the trap door to the bell tower. By now I realised how many experienced ringers were needed around us to support us beginners. They worked hard, all day, providing each and every one of us an appropriate (and different) level of practice. I got a few new top tips, and a few old reminders about catching the sally higher up so as not to bump the stay. Sorry bell. When I was clueless about the weight of bells I have learnt to ring, they worked it out pretty quickly. Everyone was patient, calm, encouraging and I felt very supported. The day was spent talking almost completely about ringing, bells, churches, watching what beginners ahead of me were doing, and listening. There was no time for much other conversation and no mobile phone signal (a welcome escape). The other Caroline had recently moved into the area and told me how welcoming the visit to the pub after practice (or even some towers apparently have a cup of tea) had been when she knew nobody in the area.

Bell ringing requires the development of concentration, gentle exercise and memory. These skills are sadly side-lined in modern society, but are the essential components for healthy hearts and minds. I am glad to have found bell ringing. I had a lovely day and I will be back for more.

Caroline Pritchard, Ring for the King Recruit, High Wycombe

Tower News

Windsor, St John's

How do you follow a legend?

Well, that's a tricky question. Frank Blagrove was a legend. His ringing abilities were renowned. The more you look into his achievements the more you appreciate his contributions. However, much has already been said since his death and now I'd like to focus on his bells.

And they were Frank's bells. No one went into the tower at Windsor, St John's unless invited by Frank. That included the church, other ringers and bell maintenance experts. Frank looked after the bells, clock and flag. And he did it with no fuss, stress or self-promotion for many, many decades.

However, people and bells become tired and worn and aged. So the last few years of Frank's time at Windsor the bells were rung less and maintained less and their glory became former glory.

Then came Covid. As we know, everything stopped. Frank decided that enough was enough and handed the keys to me. A little bit of a challenge and a huge responsibility. But also time to reflect and plan.

The idea was to find out what was what and then see what could be done. Frank was very much of the 'keep it in house' if at all possible persuasion so that is what we decided to do. (We being Lesley Cross from Clewer and myself, and Rob Taylor-Ailes, also from Clewer, has taken on the flag and clock duties. Although really we're all Windsor ringers too now.) Whites very kindly carried out an inspection which gave us a lot to ponder but we decided that now was not the time for a massive project and fund raising campaign as St John's was part way through a 3 year £300k organ renovation project. One has to be realistic and timing is everything - as all bell ringers know!

So we chipped away at the bells. Greasing, tightening, straightening, securing, replacing. Time and time again. Even during the heat of 2022 summer where the temperatures reached 45C amongst the bells. Slowly the bells improved. New ropes were added just in time for Frank's funeral in November 2022 and a quarter peal was rung on all eight bells for the first time in years. A fitting remembrance.

We continued with fine tuning how the bells handled, until in early 2023 we came to a bit of a dead end. We needed more help, suggestions and hands on experience. So I contacted Tony Crabtree of the ODG Towers and Belfries committee and in the time honoured way said 'help'. He, and the committee were great. They organised a training/inspection/maintenance day at Windsor in September 2023. They arrived with tools, experience and ability and worked with us all day to improve our cranky bells. Sorry, Frank, they're ours now. Thank you to all the team. And, my, did that do the trick! Don't get me wrong, there is still a list a mile long of things that need doing and we were up there the next weekend doing quite a few of them but they are much improved.

In fact they were so improved that we thought it was time to ring a Peal and this fulfilled our hope of commemorating the first anniversary of Frank's death in October. Now Frank, amongst all his other ringing achievements (did you know that he used to ring quarter peals on two bells at the same time? And that on the 7th and 8th at Windsor. Not light bells. To Major. And conduct them too?) was a very firm believer in championing first time peal ringers. His 1744 peals included 97 first time peal ringers.

It was, therefore, the logical time to give Rob his first chance at ringing a peal. The band came together on the afternoon of 11 October and we very successfully rang a peal of Grandsire Triples in 3 hours exactly (see below). Rob rang really well. And Lesley rang her first peal on eight bells. A grand achievement by all concerned. Thank you to all the band.

So, Windsor, St John's is back on the map. We continue to work on the bells regularly so hope they will stay viable for a good few years yet. We would appreciate assistance at our irregular Friday evening practices which will be advertised during the week before each instance by Rob. And if anyone would like to book a ringing event at Windsor then please do feel free to contact me.

Vikki Bulbeck, Tower Captain

07768 272265 vikki@gardens@hotmail.com

Middlesex County Association & London Diocesan Guild

Windsor, Berkshire St John the Baptist Tenor: 17–2–11 in E ♭

On Wednesday, 11 October 2023 in 3h

5040 Grandsire Triples

Composed by J. J. Parker

1 Rob Taylor-Ailes

5 Stephen R Smith II

2 Mary E Gow

6 Stephen J F Mitchell

3 Edward C Westlake

7 James White (C)

4 Vikki E M Bulbeck

8 Lesley S Cross

Remembering Frank T. Blagrove, former tower captain at this church, on the first anniversary of his death.

First peal: 1. First on eight: 8

Maidenhead:

Better Late than Never!

On Sunday 7th May there was an attempt for a peal of Yorkshire S Major at All Saints', Boyne Hill, specifically arranged to celebrate the Coronation. Sadly, after less than a quarter of it had been completed a rope strand broke, started to unwind, and the peal was lost.

Fast forward to the Patronal Festival on Wednesday 1st November. A new set of ropes had been fitted and 'tested', there were several changes of personnel owing to the afternoon start before the evening service and a respectable peal was duly rung for both All Saints' Day and the Coronation. Rumour has it that yet another fine peal board will soon adorn a wall in the ringing chamber.

The details:

Oxford Diocesan Guild

Maidenhead, Berkshire All Saints, Boyne Hill Tenor: 15–0–13 in E

On Wednesday, 1 November 2023 in 3h

5058 Yorkshire Surprise Major

Composed by C Adams

1 Vikki E M Bulbeck

5 Robert H Newton

2 Stuart F Gibson

6 Edward C Westlake

3 Kenneth J Darvill

7 Timothy G Pett (C)

4 Patricia M Newton

8 James White

Rung for the Patronal Festival and in celebration of the Coronation of HM King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

My thanks to those – 13 in number - taking part in either attempt, to those who attached and adjusted the ropes and to Doreen Young for the 'nudge' to mark this very special event.

Robert Newton

Turville:

Since the Coronation we have been delighted to have been able to purchase 6 new bell ropes from funds raised over the years mainly from weddings (of which we get few in our tiny church and village). The new ropes were installed on 13th October.

Our band membership is now 8, a huge increase from the 3 that we were before Covid!

Rachel Wallace

Programme for 2024

Sat	Jan 6	Hughenden (8)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Surprise practice
Sat	Jan 20	Slough (10)	14:00-16:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Feb 10	Beaconsfield (8)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Tower Captains' Meeting
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Feb 10</i>	<i>Radley</i>	<i>TBA</i>	<i>T & B Rope Management Course</i>
Sat	Feb 24	High Wycombe (12)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
Sat	Mar 9	Farnham Royal (8)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Mar 9</i>	<i>North Bucks Branch</i>	<i>afternoon</i>	<i>Guild General Committee Meeting</i>
Sat	Mar 23	Burnham (8)	14:00-16:00	Branch Practice
Sat	April 13	Lane End (6)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>April 13</i>	<i>Radley Course</i>	<i>All Day</i>	
Sat	April 27	High Wycombe (12)	15:00-18:30	Branch AGM
<i>Sat</i>	<i>April 27</i>	<i>Hook Norton</i>	<i>TBA</i>	<i>T & B General Belfry Course</i>
<i>Mon</i>	<i>May 6</i>	<i>Oxford City Branch</i>	<i>All Day</i>	<i>Guild Ringing Day</i>
Sat	May 11	Iver (8)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>May 18</i>	<i>Stoke Poges (8)</i>	<i>All Day</i>	<i>Guild AGM and 8 bell striking competition</i>
Sat	May 25	Turville (6)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
Sat	Jun 8	Hitcham (6)	17:00-19:30	Branch 6 bell striking competition
Thurs	Jun 13	Maidenhead (8)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
Sat	Jun 22	Marlow (8)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Jul 13	Bray (8)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Jul 27	Penn (6)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Aug 10	Clewer and other towers	10:00 onwards	New ringers' event
Sat	Aug 17	Amersham (12)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Sept 14	Old Windsor (8)	19:00-21:00	Branch Practice
Thurs	Sept 19	Chalfont St. Peter (6)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
Sat	Sept 28	Windsor St John (8)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sept 28</i>	<i>Michaelmas Course</i>	<i>All Day</i>	
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Oct 5</i>	<i>Sonning Deanery</i>	<i>afternoon</i>	<i>Guild 6-bell contest</i>
Sat	Oct 12	Fulmer (6)	14:30-18:00	Final of Lorna Newton Contest followed by half yearly meeting
Sat	Oct 26	Horton (6)	14:00-16:00	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Oct 26</i>	<i>Steeple Aston Course</i>	<i>All Day</i>	
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Oct 26</i>	<i>Steeple Aston</i>	<i>TBA</i>	<i>T & B Rope Management Course</i>
Sat	Nov 9	Chalfont St. Giles (8)	14:00-16:00	Branch Practice
Sat	Nov 16	Winkfield (6)	10:00-12:00 (noon)	Branch Practice
<i>Sat</i>	<i>Nov 23</i>	<i>Reading Branch</i>	<i>All Day</i>	<i>Guild 10-bell contest and General Committee Meeting</i>
Sat	Dec 14	Chenies (6)	17:30 onwards	Branch practice and social gathering