

ODD BOB



Newsletter of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

website: odg.org.uk/



**900th anniversary peal band at Shipton-u-Wychwood,
see Chipping Norton report**

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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 2016.

Rob Needham

Data Protection Act 1998

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

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Master's Mutterings

I am now into my second year as Master and have visited each branch at least once, to ring, attend a meeting, or for a more sombre occasion such as a funeral or memorial service. Place names are becoming more familiar and more often than not I can identify the branch they belong to (but not, as one of my ringing colleagues can do, recall the colour of the sallies!). I have responded to invitations to attend specific things, for instance a special minor practice; an 85th birthday celebration; and to call a quarter peal for someone. Do get in touch at master@odg.org.uk if there is something in your branch that you would like to invite me to.

My second year in office did not start in the way I was expecting – nor even on the date I was expecting. As you know, the 2015 AGM at Cowley was not quorate and although we called “to the highways and byways” we only managed 49 people. We were therefore unable to conduct much of the business, including election of officers, and had to reconvene. I guess the AGM is not everyone's event of choice on a sunny Saturday afternoon. However it is YOUR opportunity to hear what is being done, ask questions, and vote for the officers you want. It is, in a small way, your chance to thank those who hold office – your attendance at the meeting lets them know you are supporting them in what can be time-consuming tasks. I am often reminded of the dedication of the many officers we have, carrying out their respective duties quietly, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their support of me and of the Guild.

As the nights draw in, and gardening and other outdoor pursuits become difficult in the evenings, why not attend a practice at another tower? Or if you are learning something specific, look at a neighbouring branch's website to see if they have a practice that would help you. Make sure you have a working torch – buy new batteries – and enjoy your ringing this winter.

Hilarie Rogers, Guild Master

ODG 6-Bell Striking Competition 2015

Sometimes there is a massive turn-out for this event, in which case heats are rung during the afternoon. However, nine teams entered, eliminating the need for the heats, and thus the competition was held in the afternoon and we all went home in the daylight! The event was held at Chalgrove in the South Oxon branch, a beautiful setting on a lovely day. Unfortunately, builders had chosen to join us, and plastic sheeting and piles of rubble took the edge off the view of this pretty church. Pretty it may have been but it presented quite a challenge, especially to small or short ringers without boxes and at least one team came unstuck on account of this.

Our judges, Nick and Lindsey Brett from Linslade, were brief and to the point:

Tower	Branch	%	Place	Comment
Caversham	Reading	72.3	8 th	The least experienced of the bands. The treble was quick at times and the tenor dragged. The whole piece was on the slow side.
Thatcham	Newbury	92.8	2 nd	A confident piece of ringing with good open hand-stroke leads. There were some faults among the little bells.
Drayton S. Leonard	South Oxon	83.8	6 th	This was the slowest piece of ringing and it took a while to settle down. There were some problems with leading.
Wokingham All Saints	Sonning Deanery	83.1	7 th	A faster piece of ringing but rather staccato. The 5 th was trying to push the ringing along.
Wallingford	Old North Berks	85.6	5 th	A faster pace but with some clipping at handstroke, otherwise consistent ringing.
Faringdon	V of White Horse	86.2	4 th	The leading was good. A splattering of trips.
High Wycombe	EBSB	93.8	1 st	Quite fast with a few minor trips. The tenor was perfect. There were a few errors in rounds at the beginning.
Woughton on the Green	North Bucks	87.0	3 rd	Slower ringing. There were a few clear rounds. The tenor was a bit slow but it was generally nice ringing.

Alan Marchbank, Deputy Master, announced that this was his last striking competition in his present role and he was also brief! He thanked the judges, the incumbent, the stewards and the tea personnel, and wished everyone a safe journey home. Congratulations to EBSB, triumphant once again, and it was good to see Woughton placed third, having not appeared previously in the final.

Bobbie May

Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund

2016 Leap Year Sponsored Ringing

The Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund AGM celebrated its 40th anniversary in September 2014.

Since its inception it has been able to assist bell restoration in the Diocese by granting over £400,000 to more than 200 projects. Better still, because it is a capital fund, all the money that has been raised is still invested and the grants have been paid from interest and dividends generated by the capital.

Every year there are activities that generate new money, for which the Trustees are very grateful, as only by increasing the capital can the Fund keep pace with rising costs. We are keen to ensure the *2016 Leap Year Sponsored Ringing* event is a resounding success.

The event was first organised in 1979 when branches were encouraged to organise a sponsored peal or quarter peal and donate the money raised to the Bell Fund. A special shield was provided by Bill Butler, and inscribed by Ted Gosling, for presentation to the Branch raising the largest amount of money. Bicester Branch won, raising over £231. We don't expect peals and quarters (but by all means ring them if you like), any ringing can be sponsored, so it presents a great opportunity to involve all levels and abilities and to introduce new members to the work of the Bell Fund.

In 2016 the Sponsored Ringing 'week' will be the 22nd to 28th February, The Shield will be presented to the Branch raising the greatest amount per head of membership. Sponsorship money can be Gift Aided to benefit from recovery of Income Tax.

Sponsor forms will be available on the Bell Fund web pages or from the Secretary alan.marchbank@btinternet.com

Alan Marchbank, Secretary, Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund

David Thomas' achievements

David Thomas is an exceptional young ringer who started ringing when he was twelve years old, over five years ago. He rang his first peal in 2013 and is now beginning to ring more advanced peals, including Surprise Royal, when he has time from his A-level studies. He took part in the Oxford Diocesan Guild band for the Ringing World National Youth Competition in both 2014 and 2015, contributing to the band's excellent results.

David has been Deputy Tower Captain at St Helen's, Abingdon since May 2013. He is quiet and thoughtful and runs a good practice night and Sunday service ringing.

We'd like to congratulate David on two major achievements this summer: in July he completed the second Module of the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) and was accredited as a Member of the Association of Ringing Teachers. This was a big compliment to him, because he is such a kind, sensible, observant and responsible young man. The certificate was awarded in St Helen's belfry on Sunday 26 July.



The second big achievement was conducting a peal for the first time. He conducted 5040 Plain Bob Royal to celebrate his 18th birthday, on his birthday, at his home tower. The peal came round two minutes after he became 18.

As it says on *BellBoard*, the peal was rung with the band's best wishes to the conductor on his 18th birthday!

Susan Read

Safeguarding Report 2015

This is a brief guide to assist leaders and helpers in the implementation of the Diocese of Oxford Safeguarding Handbook, which should be read for the complete policy, procedures and requirements for good practice. The safeguarding pages on the Diocesan website provide further information and guidance.

Code of Conduct – you should:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity
- Watch your own language, tone of voice and body language
- Ensure all communications with and about children are appropriate in their tone
- Do not use physical punishment to discipline children – this is illegal
- Always aim to work within sight of another adult
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children
- If known in advance, seek a parent's permission if a child or young person is to be seen on their own. Another adult must be nearby and the child or young person must know this
- Ensure that each group includes a female helper if possible
- Ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone. Display the Childline telephone number in a prominent place where children & young people can see it
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around
- Administer any necessary First Aid with others around
- Respond to accidents and make a note in the Accident Book
- Plan trips and holidays carefully, including sleeping arrangements
- Record any concerning incidents and give the information to your Group Leader. Sign and date the record, and also print your name in capital letters. See guidance on *Recording safeguarding issues*.

You should not:

- Invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting
- Play rough or sexually provocative games
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child or young person even in fun
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject any child, young person or group
- Show favouritism to any one child, young person or group
- Allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature
- Give lifts to children or young people on their own or on your own if possible
- Invite a child to your home alone

- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person
- Allow strangers to give children lifts
- Behave in work or in your private life in a way which would bring your role or the church into disrepute.

Touch

One of the aims of the policy is for church groups to provide a warm, nurturing environment for children and young people whilst avoiding any inappropriate behaviour or the risk of allegations being made. Child abuse is harm of a very serious nature so that it is unlikely that any type of physical contact in the course of children and youth work could be misconstrued as abuse. All volunteers must work with or within sight of another adult. All physical contact should be an appropriate response to the child's needs not the needs of the adult.

- If any activity, for example bell-ringing, requires physical contact make sure that the young person and their parents are aware of this and its nature
- There must be no physical punishment of any kind nor should any sanction ridicule or humiliate a child
- Avoid unnecessary informal touching
- Avoid taking young children to the toilet, but when unavoidable make sure another adult is informed, or organise a toilet break for the whole group
- Young children may sometimes need comforting; make sure they are responded to warmly but with other adults around
- First Aid should be administered with others around. Enter details in the Accident Book
- Very occasionally it may be necessary to restrain a child or young person who is harming himself or others. Use the least possible force and inform the parents as soon as possible. All such incidents should be recorded and the information given to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Colleagues must be prepared to support each other and act or speak out if they think any adult is behaving inappropriately.

Transporting Children By Private Car

- Transport and travel arrangements are the responsibility of parents if they make informal arrangements among themselves. They are the responsibility of the church if church workers organise or provide them
- Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to giving lifts to and from a church activity
- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should normally be over 25 and should have held a full driving licence for over two years
- All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts

during church activities. Insurance company should be informed that lifts may be given. Driving minibuses requires separate arrangements

- All cars that carry children should be considered to be clean and in a roadworthy condition
- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are no seat belts children should not be carried
- Take care in assisting children to board or leave vehicles, taking account of the guidance on touch
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number. There must be a seat belt for every passenger
- If a child is known to have a disability or special need, consideration should be given whether to have a non-driving adult in the car. This adult should sit in the back, behind the driver, with the child in the seat beside him or her
- Any driver who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence should inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer
- Any driver who has an “unspent” conviction for a drink driving offence or for Dangerous Driving or Racing on the Highway should not transport children
- There should preferably be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own, the child must sit in the back of the car
- To ensure that these guidelines are adhered to it would be appropriate to obtain a signed undertaking, covering the above issues, from those people who are prepared to transport children in their cars
- Drivers who are not children’s workers should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process.

Registers and Consents

- A Registration Form should be completed for every child or young person who attends groups
- A Register should be kept of all children and young people’s groups that meet regularly. For one-off events a list of the children should be kept
- All Registers and lists should be retained
- Written parental consent should be obtained for all activities that involve leaving the church premises
- Each group should have at least 2 adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female
- If groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with doors open then one person per group is allowed
- Young people aged 16 and 17 may help with groups but should be supervised by an adult helper who will be responsible for ensuring good practice and that child protection procedures are followed. Young people under 16 may help with other things but should not have responsibility for children

- Additional adults may help on one or two occasions but must be responsible to an appointed worker. Thereafter they should become part of the team and be properly appointed through the normal recruitment process.

Please do not hesitate to call me or email me any queries that you may have and I will endeavour to answer your query or put you in the right direction for further information.

Katie Lane

Educational matters

During the year John Harrison, who served as Chairman and Alan Bentley, who had been Secretary, retired from the committee. We thank them for their service over the years and wish them well for the future. Consequently we needed people to fill those posts; Mike Hopkins Till was elected as Chairman and Robert Newton as Secretary.

The Education Committee has continued with its standard fare of courses, training sessions and support of the bookstall, which contains many useful books on all aspects of ringing. The courses are spread through the year and distributed across the Guild, starting with basic method ringing at Radley in the spring. There is more advanced ringing on the Michaelmas Training Day based in the south and east of the Guild in September, moving back to some basic methods at Steeple Aston in late autumn, and finishing with some 10-bell ringing early in December. This year the 10-bell day is to be based at Newbury and Thatcham. The committee has also run a training day for teachers of ringing, but interest this year has waned a little, so we are resting this session for the time being.

While we have enjoyed many successful years of running the above courses and training sessions, we do not intend to be complacent. We are always keen to hear of needs that we might be able to satisfy in terms of courses or training sessions. Guild members should contact either the Chairman or the Secretary to discuss ideas for courses or training that are not easily satisfied in their local tower. Contact us at edchairman@odg.org.uk or edsecretary@odg.org.uk and we will be pleased to discuss and take ideas to the committee for development and action.

Mike Hopkins Till, Education Committee Chairman

Towers and Belfries Committee Report

The committee has met twice since April, with an average attendance of nine. Twenty-seven inspections/visits have been carried out, details of which are shown below:

- Berwick Salome (grant inspection)
- Bray (grind out chip after clapper loss)
- Burford (advice on a quote)
- Chesham Bois (two visits – review tower movement with structural engineer, advice to improve ringing circle)
- Cholsey (inspection)
- Clanfield (grant inspection)
- Ellesborough (TMA)
- Faringdon (inspection)
- Freeland (TMA)
- Hambledon (attend with Whitechapel re. frame movement)
- Little Horwood (inspection for frame decay problem)
- North Moreton (grant inspection)
- Piddington (two visits – inspection & advice on correcting wheel alignment)
- Reading St Giles (TMA)
- Reading St Mary (advice re tenor gudgeon)
- Shabbington (grant inspection)
- Slapton (review rope guide proposal, advice on fundraising)
- South Leigh (correcting odd-struckness)
- South Stoke (advice on access)
- Stanford-in-the-Vale (Two visits – assess re-ordering possibilities/correct odd-struckness))
- Stoke Lyne (inspection & frame tightening)
- Taynton (two visits – advice on quotes, inspection)
- Waltham St Lawrence (Advice on odd-struckness and clapper alignment)

Two rope splicing courses have been run in the Vale of The White Horse branch and a bell maintenance course in Newbury in October. Following the accident at Cholsey, the Risk Assessment guidelines on the Guild website have been reviewed and updated, and the revised version will be posted there shortly.

The recent decline in the number of current TMA awards, with an increasing number of towers not renewing their awards, is causing concern. Committee members are continuing their efforts to get towers to renew.

John Davidge, Chairman T&B Committee

Tower Maintenance Award Scheme

Since the last report there has been a significant fall in the number of current awards in the Scheme, with the number of current awards now standing at sixteen, a decrease of four. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest remains at eighty-three, which is about eighteen per cent of the towers listed in the annual report last year. There have now been one hundred and

twenty-nine inspections (of which twenty-three were preliminaries), resulting in ninety-nine awards (sixty-one Gold, twenty-four Silver, and fourteen Bronze).

The number of expired awards has risen and is now twenty-eight. T & B committee members continue to contact the expired towers with the aim of persuading them to renew their awards. The awards for Fulmer, Great Milton, Hungerford and Wargrave have all expired since the last report and it is hoped that they will soon attempt to renew them. Congratulations to Freeland, Harwell and Sonning, which have all renewed Gold Awards and congratulations also to South Leigh who, having been inspected for the first time and gained a Bronze Award came back a few months later and gained a Silver.

The number of Branches having a tower in the "current awards" list remains at nine out of the fifteen Guild branches, with EBSB no longer holding its predominant position, having been overtaken by Reading Branch. Details as follows:

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

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

The main features of the award scheme are as follows:

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

Gold	85% +
Silver	70 – 84%
Bronze	55 – 69%
- The award takes the form of a certificate that is current for two years from the date of inspection (rather like an MOT) and can be displayed in the tower
- Towers holding current awards are listed in Odd Bob and the Guild Report
- Each inspection is carried out by judges from the Towers & Belfries committee and the detailed results of the inspection are made available to the tower

- Inspections can be requested at any time, via the Secretary or the Chairman of the Towers & Belfries committee (addresses near the back of Odd Bob), irrespective of whether the request is for an initial inspection or to try and improve an existing grade.

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

Current Tower Maintenance Scheme Awards

Gold Award

Sonning (St Andrew)	Sonning Deanery	Expires 30.11.17
Freeland (S.M.V)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 31.07.17
Harwell (St Matthew)	Old North Bucks	Expires 30.04.17
Ellesborough (SS Peter & Paul)	Chiltern Branch	Expires 31.03.17
Reading (St Giles)	Reading Branch	Expires 31.03.17
Chalgrove (SMV)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 31.01.17
Adderbury (St Mary)	Banbury	Expires 31.12.16
Cropredy (S M V)	Banbury Branch	Expires 31.12.16
Henley-on-Thames (S M V)	Reading Branch	Expires 30.11.16
Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading Branch	Expires 30.11.16
Chalfont St Peter	EBSB Branch	Expires 30.11.16
White Waltham (St Mary)	Sonning Deanery Branch	Expires 30.09.16
Thame (St Mary)	South Oxon Branch	Expires 30.09.16
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury Branch	Expires 31.05.16
Denham (St Mary)	EBSB Branch	Expires 31.01.16

Silver Award

South Leigh (St James)	Witney & Woodstock	Expires 31.08.17
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Bronze Grade

NONE

Expired Awards

Dorchester (SS Peter & Paul)	South Oxon	Expired 30.09.05
Finchampstead (St James)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.07.07
Stoke Mandeville (S.M.V.)	Chiltern	Expired 31.12.07
Warborough (St Laurence)	South Oxon	Expired 31.12.07
Easthampstead (St Michael)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 31.12.08
Winkfield (St Mary)	EBSB	Expired 31.05.09
Purley (S.M.V.)	Reading	Expired 31.01.10
Benson (St Helen)	South Oxon	Expired 31.10.11
South Stoke (St Andrew)	Reading	Expired 31.03.12
Cookham (Holy Trinity)	EBSB	Expired 31.05.12

Mapledurham (St Margaret)	Reading	Expired 30.11.12
Wokingham (All Saints)	Sonning Deanery	Expired 28.02.13
Henley (S.M.V.)	Reading	Expired 31.08.13
Wantage (SS Peter & Paul)	Old North Berks	Expired 31.08.13
Letcombe Regis (St Andrew)	Old North Berks	Expired 30.09.13
Bray (St Michael)	EBSB	Expired 31.10.13
Clewer (St Andrew)	EBSB	Expired 31.05.14
Thatcham (St Mary)	Newbury	Expired 31.05.14
Chalfont St Giles	EBSB	Expired 30.09.14
Kintbury (S.M.V.)	Newbury	Expired 30.09.14
Tadmorton (St Nicholas)	Banbury	Expired 30.09.14
Deddington (SS Peter & Paul)	Banbury Branch	Expired 31.12.14
High Wycombe (All Saints)	EBSB	Expired 31.12.14
Peasemore (St Barnabas)	Witney & Woodstock	Expired 28.02.15
Fulmer (St James)	EBSB Branch	Expired 30.04.15
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
		John Davidge

Librarian's Report

There have been 9 library enquiries since Odd Bob issue 92. These have been about:

- request to borrow the book *Campanalogia*
- request to borrow HLRoper's list of ODG peals (up until 1956)
- information about the Howards of Wooburn from early Guild reports
- membership no. of Sonning Deanery/Reading Branch member
- H. Steel, ringer at Mortimer killed during the Great War
- information about Virginia Coulson, recently deceased member
- John Day's book *Belfry Life in Birmingham*
- date of election of Chipping Norton branch member
- names of Faringdon ringers at the time of the Great War

I have been making progress with sorting the miscellaneous papers. I had previously separated them by subject into folders. The folders have now been placed in box files, and these placed on bookcase shelves. I have also sorted out the stand-alone Guild Annual Reports and placed them on shelves. The next stage is to add a summary description for each folder to the catalogue.

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

Doug Beaumont

News from the Branches

Banbury

This summer has been as busy as usual with many weddings to find enough ringers for. In June, at Cropredy, ringers Stephen and Brenda Day celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary with a garden party, and a band of local ringers rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples beforehand. In Adderbury, Elizabeth Holmes the daughter of Adderbury ringers Chris and Charlotte Holmes, got married. A band of mainly past & present Adderbury ringers rang for the service and joined the guests afterwards in the churchyard with a jazz band and Morris Dancing to celebrate.

In July, a group of twenty or so people enjoyed a ringing outing to towers around the Vale of White Horse area. Starting at Wantage and then Childrey the visit progressed after lunch to Uffington, Shellingford, Longcot and Stanford in the Vale. The day was rounded off with an evening meal nearer home, and our thanks go to the hosting towers we visited.

Also in July, our annual striking competition took place this year at Horley for the first time. There were nine teams ringing in total either for the call change section or the method ringing section. The customary BBQ afterwards hosted by the Horley ringers and friends was as tasty as ever. Also in July, the branch celebrated its 90th anniversary (with the details below, kindly submitted by Elizabeth Smith).

The 90th Anniversary of the Banbury Branch

The idea was born while idly reading the peal boards in the ringing chamber of St Mary's, Banbury. Amongst the peals rung to commemorate a variety of events, both local and national, was one rung on 18th June 2005 to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding, on 20th June, of the Banbury Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild. It didn't require a mathematician to realise that the 90th anniversary was looming on the horizon, and there was soon wide-spread agreement that it should be marked in some significant way.

The Banbury Branch is the most northerly of the 15 branches that make up the Oxford Diocesan Guild. There are 30 towers in the branch, 24 of which have 5 or more ringable bells. There is one ring of 10, 8 of 8, 10 of 6 and 5 of 5 bells.

It was quickly decided that, during the period 20th June until the end of July, we should aim to ring quarter peals in as many of our towers as possible, involving as many branch ringers as could be persuaded to join in. We got off to a rather slow start but by the end of July we had attempted 23 quarters in 18 different towers, scoring 19 of them – a very creditable achievement. There were 9 different conductors and 46 branch members took part.

Some performances are worthy of particular note. Two ringers rang their first quarter, both at the first attempt. Freddie Taylor of Steeple Aston rang the treble to PB Doubles at his home tower, and Liz Collett of Waddington rang the tenor, also to PB Doubles, at Rousham. There were a number of other firsts, and some ringers for whom the quarter was the first for very many years. Quarters were rung on some of the more challenging

rings in the branch, including Cambridge S Minor on the 6 at Wardington (tenor 16³/₄cwt) and 5 doubles methods on the 5 at Duns Tew (tenor 14¹/₂cwt).

Unfortunately among the failed attempts was what should have been a first quarter for Rachel McLoughlin of Wardington; she rang the treble to PB Doubles at Hanwell but after 8 extents there was a mishap (nothing to do with Rachel) and the attempt came to grief. Primrose S Minor failed at North Aston, a mixed method attempt failed at Mollington, and Stedman Doubles at Lower Heyford folded up suddenly in the way only Stedman seems able to do!

Our thanks go to the incumbents at the towers for allowing us to ring, to all the branch members who took part, and to Lionel Smith, Deputy Ringing Master, for much of the organisation. We look forward to celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Banbury Branch!

At the end of August, after an enjoyable summer, we were most saddened to hear the news of the death of a good friend and local ringer, Claire Tarrant. Claire spent a lot of time over many years ringing within our branch, regularly supporting Steeple Aston practices and branch activities. She also co-organised an annual North Oxon ringer's weekend visit each May and had planned to do the same next year. Quarter peals at Banbury and Steeple Aston have been rung in her memory and she will be very sadly missed.

Heather Bletchly

Bicester

I can't think of many other branches who might have managed to attract 20 new ringers in the last six months but the Bicester Branch has done so! Kirtlington (which doesn't have any resident ringers) has 12 potential recruits (2 more had to drop out early on) who have started learning thanks to wonderful help from Ron and Jane Burgess, plus Tim, Phil and Ernie from Kidlington, Sue and Jane from Bletchingdon and our President, Willie Haynes. Anyone who is free on a Monday evening to come over to Kirtlington to help or provide encouragement will be most welcome.

And in Islip, Teresa Carter and Keith Thomas (who still comes over from Steeple Aston to help us) are teaching 5 beginners who are all making good progress and making everyone else re-energised. With young recruits at Caversfield – who are now ringing so well that they 'stole' the Clifford East Shield from Islip in the Branch striking competition in September (*see photo on back cover*). Judges Alison Merryweather-Clarke and Louise Brown provided encouragement for the three teams who entered and we all enjoyed the BBQ afterwards in Islip.

Our monthly Branch Practices have been excellent for all those who come – but we could do with even more willing to travel and/or leave the security of their own tower! In addition to organising them, Anthony Cole also held a second *Ringing Up and Down* course at Bicester in July – our Treasurer, Sally Wale, who attended it said, 'It was superbly organised with a low number of learners and plenty of experienced ringers to help.'

Finally on Monday 25th May, ringers from Bicester rang a quarter peal to celebrate the life of one of Bicester's own, Bill Knapton, who died at the end of April, aged 92. Bill rang at Bicester and Caversfield for many years, only retiring about 18 months ago after a heart bypass.

St Edburg (15-0-7), Bicester, Oxon

Monday 25 May 2015

1260 Plain Bob Doubles in 42 mins

1 Janet Smith	4 Jeremy Adams
2 Sarah Cole	5 Anthony Cole(C)
3 Simon White	6 Steve Walker

Kathryn Grant

Central Bucks

Central Bucks Branch continued with an active schedule of ringing activities during the summer. The regular 2nd Saturday evening Branch Practice was generally well attended but we may try a daytime format with refreshments during some of the winter months. Good progress is being made at the Aylesbury 8-bell Branch Practice held on the first Tuesday evening of each month and a new 6-bell Advanced Practice at Birtton each 2nd Wednesday is attracting just enough ringers.

The monthly branch mini outing, which was popular with several ringers from the surrounding branches, has been suspended for the winter but may re-emerge in the spring in a slightly different guise.

Unfortunately for the second year running our Branch Outing, usually held in September, failed to materialise, partly due to date clashes, so this may be moved to early spring instead.

The Orchard Cup striking competition, held annually between Central Bucks and Chiltern Branches in memory of Fred Orchard, was a very enjoyable afternoon despite Chiltern Branch being unable to field any teams. Six teams from our Branch put on very creditable performances with the honours going to Aylesbury once again and the tea was superb!

Jane Vowles

Chiltern

The Chiltern Branch again borrowed the Mablestead mini-ring (kindly loaned by Alistair Donaldson) for demonstration at the Towersey Festival (this year held at Thame showground) over the August bank holiday weekend. The project was again spearheaded by John King with considerable assistance from John Smith and Chris Potter. The weather was not kind! There was significant interest in the bells, which may generate some recruiting prospects.

The Branch's training initiatives continue to attract good attendances. Colin Walter runs monthly classes at Aston Clinton on Saturdays, and Stoke Mandeville holds a training evening each Tuesday – both include participants from other branches.

Various towers have rung for this year's historic milestones – Magna Carta, VJ Day, VE Day, Agincourt, etc. Ellesborough rang a quarter peal (1320 Plain Bob & April Day jointly conducted by all the ringers) to celebrate the WI Centenary; they were rewarded with cream teas and an invitation to join the WI celebrations in the church. One tower rang 63 courses of Plain Hunting to mark The Queen's record reign; in response to another tower captain who said "How boring" the response was, "For our tower, that was an achievement."

Marsworth continues to flourish, with extra practices and quarter peals. Richard Booth runs regular branch outings for all levels of ability on the first Tuesday of each month. Marsworth activities (and those of Cheddington and Mentmore) can be viewed on their web site www.cmmbells.org.uk. Marsworth also hosts courses run by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART).

Now the sad news – to report the passing of former Tower Captain of Wendover, Bob Gerhardi, aged 90. Bob enjoyed a distinguished career as a ringer at Wendover for very many years (some members remember being taught by him in the early 1960's). Although he had not rung for some time, he attended meetings when he was well enough. He will be sorely missed.

And the good news! A wonderful wedding was the highlight of the summer at Great Kimble, when Julie Bunker (Tower Captain) and Matthew Smith (Deputy) were married in July. The weather behaved itself and many ringers did what they do best, by making joyful sounds before and after the wedding. Julie looked stunning, and Matthew looked like the cat who got the cream! We wish them well – they most certainly deserve it!

Weston Turville bells have been recorded striking individually, to be used in a future TV programme (a sit-com of some sort). The "plot" is that a newly-formed band progresses to ring a hymn tune. Having been told that this was not possible, the answer was that the individual notes would be "digitally arranged". The producers have been told to expect critical comment from any ringers who happen to see the programme!

Brian Robson, Interim Branch Secretary

Chipping Norton

The 70th anniversary of V.E. Day and the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta were marked with ringing at some towers in the branch. The latter coincided with an Open Gardens event at Kingham, in aid of the local Air Ambulance, for which members rang.

Congratulations go to Alison Minson, who has rung her first quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles, and to Dan Glyde on conducting his first quarter peal, Plain Bob Doubles.

The Branch Outing took place in July with ringing at Rousham, Bletchington, Charlton-on-Otmoor and Woodstock. It was a very enjoyable afternoon and had been arranged by Claire Tarrant, our Branch Ringing Master, who was very unwell as many were aware.

Also in July, a joint practice was held at Burford with the Cirencester Branch of the G & B Association, giving ringers opportunities to ring more advanced major methods but some triples methods were included too.

The extent of Claire's illness became apparent later that month when she was diagnosed with cancer. She passed away on 22nd August in the Katharine House Hospice. About 200 family members, friends, colleagues and ringers attended her memorial service at Spelsbury on 8th September when there was open ringing before and after the service, in celebration of her life.

In the Branch, quarter peals have been rung at Burford and Hook Norton in her memory.

Ringing to mark Queen Elizabeth II becoming the longest reigning British monarch took place at several towers.

As part of the 900th anniversary celebrations at Shipton-u-Wychwood, a peal of Grandsire Triples was rung by Branch members and others on 12th September (*see photo on cover*). It was also 25 years to the day since the previous peal on those bells. The ringers were, L-R: D.Glyde, K.Mitchell, K.Murphy, Sally Austin, N.Harrison, Jenny Lewis, Chris Seers, K. Davenport (C).

Another quarter peal was rung at Wigginton to mark the 21st birthday of Nick Burchell. The band comprised Nick, his mum, dad and aunt, together with Sally and Mick Austin.

Further WW1 centenary quarter peals have been rung at Hook Norton on the anniversaries of the deaths of local men and, on one recent occasion, family members were listening to the ringing outside the tower.

The names of six new members elected since the Branch AGM were confirmed at the Branch meeting that followed the practice at Taynton in October, when there was discussion about the meetings and practices to be held in 2016.

Nigel Harrison is now Acting Branch Ringing Master following our sad loss of Claire.

Christine Harris

East Berks and South Bucks

EBSB Branch was shocked and greatly saddened by the sudden and unexpected death of our Secretary, Dr Peter Mackie, at the beginning of September. Peter was Tower Captain at Stoke Poges from 2007, and added to that the role of Branch Secretary in 2012. Peter was also a valued member of the High Wycombe 12-bell squad. He will be sorely missed by all his ringing friends. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his wife and family.

About 20 EBSB ringers enjoyed a walking ringing outing arranged by Katharine and Graham Firman at the beginning of May. Ringing started at Nettlebed where the original church (a grade II listed building) dates from just after the Norman invasion, although it was rebuilt in 1846. The band then



enjoyed a colourful walk to Ewelme passing the watercress beds and the grave of Thomas Chaucer, son of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, before lunching and ringing at the challenging ground floor ring.

A peal of Grandsire Caters was rung at Cookham (a rare event) to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta. The Royal Barge *Gloriana* docked just prior to the end so that the band was able to make their way down to the river to watch the magnificent sight of her departure. The following evening, an all-Cookham band rang a quarter peal to mark the event. High Wycombe rang a quarter peal of Yorkshire S. Royal during a 'Liberteas' event.

The occasion of HM Queen Elizabeth II becoming the longest reigning British Monarch was marked in various ways by many of our towers. For example, call changes based on Queen's, 63 call changes (63 being the number of years for which Queen Elizabeth has reigned), firing the bells, and singing *God Save the Queen* instead of saying the Belfry Prayer or toasting Her Majesty.

Our much appreciated Novices Practices, which cover anything from rounds to plain courses of Grandsire and Plain Bob Doubles, have, in some cases, evolved into training practices which focus on methods, including PB minor and touches. Places are restricted so as to ensure that each student gets lots of opportunity to ring and each is allocated a personal mentor.

The *Lorna Newton Trophy* (a knock-out 6-bell striking competition of three rounds involving all Branch towers) was won by the High Wycombe B team, closely followed by Beaconsfield.

Maryanne Roach

Newbury

[Nothing received from the branch.]

North Bucks

An open towers day was held in April for the Hanslope restoration project. The day attracted ringers from as far afield as Portsmouth, Bath Abbey, Cheshire, Essex, Gloucestershire and Yorkshire, and a total of £600 was raised.

The Branch summer social and 6-bell striking competition was held in June, and was kindly hosted by Whaddon. They laid on extra parking by the church, and provided plenty of food and refreshments. The striking competition was judged by Robert and Pat Newton, whose comments were constructive and helpful – they noted that unevenness of the sound inside the ringing room made it difficult for the lighter bells to strike well. The winners were Woughton, who went on to represent the branch at the guild striking competition at St Mary, Chalgrove.

The inter-branch striking competition with Towcester Branch was held in July. The afternoon's events started with a joint practice on the six at Potterspurty. This was followed by a picnic which was held on the Bury Mount at Towcester. After the picnic, the ringers met at Towcester for the striking competition. This year it was a closely fought contest again, but North Bucks managed to win by 2 to 1.

The branch outing in August was to central London. It was a gloriously sunny day which was enjoyed by everyone. All the towers were within a short walk of each other. The outing started at St Clement Danes and finished at St Olave (which was unfortunately a lock-out).

The Branch autumn meeting and Commemoration Supper was held in September at Bradwell. It commemorated the lives of EJ Webb, WG Spires and AJ Fennermore – local ringers who died a hundred years ago in the First World War. The practice was followed by a short church service, the Chairman's Cup competition, the autumn meeting itself, and finally a fish and chip supper.

The Branch Training day was held in October. This year the course was on doubles variations. Everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed the day, and went back to their towers to practice what they had learnt.

As well as all of this we have been holding Branch Practices and monthly bob doubles, call changes and plain hunt practices.

Gary Reading

Old North Berks

The Branch has been active over the summer period. We have held an afternoon and an evening practice each month, together with our bi-monthly surprise practices. We would like to thank everyone from other branches who have kindly supported us and helped to make these fun occasions with some good ringing.

Sadly we have recently lost one long-standing member, Alec Samler of Chilton. Alec was well known in the branch, being tower captain at Chilton and a great supporter of Harwell and Blewbury for many years. He was also well known in The Scout Association, having been awarded the Silver Wolf. This is the highest award made 'for services of the most exceptional character'.

Following the resignation of Lorna Curtis, our Guild Steward for the past six years, we are very pleased that Mary Friskney was elected to this post at the Guild AGM. Mary is well known throughout the Branch through her role as Branch Training Co-ordinator and the monthly Wednesday afternoon practices.

We had a very successful outing in July and would like to thank Philip Roberts of Harwell for once again organising this for us. Approximately twenty-five branch members and friends visited Swindon (Christ Church), Purton, Cricklade, Highworth and Faringdon. We all enjoyed a warm and sunny day, which also included a pub lunch in Cricklade and afternoon tea at Faringdon. Thanks also go to Stuart and Naomi Gibson, who once again invited us to their home and hosted a superb barbecue. Over thirty members and friends enjoyed the late evening sunlight in beautiful surroundings. As ever the food was excellent and plentiful, and there was the usual fun to be had on the croquet green. The proceeds of the barbecue and raffle were donated to the Radley Bell Restoration Fund.

The bell augmentation and restoration project at North Moreton has now been completed. Practices have been reinstated on Mondays, 7.45 – 9.00pm, and all are welcome. Dove has now been updated, both with the augmentation and the weight of the tenor, which is 13cwt rather than 12cwt as previously thought.

The restoration of Radley bells by Whites of Appleton is under way, and the bells have been retuned at Whitechapel. A total of 21 lbs of bell metal were removed from the bells during the tuning process and the tenor now weighs 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. An astonishing fund raising weekend was held in the village, and enough was raised in two days to cover the total cost of the re-hanging. It is hoped that the bells will be ringing again later this winter.

The next bell restoration project is at Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. The bells will be rehung next year with new fittings by Whites of Appleton. The total cost is in the region of £45,000, however there is currently some concern that the tower needs strengthening and so costs might increase. So far £35,000 has already been raised or pledged, which is a fantastic achievement.

Our next social event is a skittles evening and supper in Radley Village Hall. This will be the last event in our fund raising efforts for the Radley Bell Restoration Fund. In 2016 we will be turning our thoughts to raising funds for the Brightwell restoration project.

Gill Loyd

Oxford City

The Guild AGM this year was due to be held in Oxford. Unfortunately only 49 members were present and 50 were needed to be quorate, so the business section of the meeting had to be rearranged.

We have continued to hold monthly branch practices, with attendance ranging from 6 to 20. These are open to ringers of all abilities and are an excellent way to progress with methods which are not always easy to raise the numbers for on a tower's practice night. We take every opportunity to encourage more ringers to attend these practices.

There is an encouraging growth of learners taking up ringing at present. This was reflected in this year's attendance at the Steeple Aston course, which saw eight Oxford City branch learners enrolled. As one of the learners myself, I can say that the course was, as usual, excellent, and not only aids progress in the given method but gives the participants more confidence to get out and about visiting other towers. It was notable that four of those on the course came from Headington, where there has been a recent influx of very keen learners. At present, St Andrew's, Old Headington is shrouded in scaffolding as masons repair the stonework, but inside, enthusiastic ringing continues.

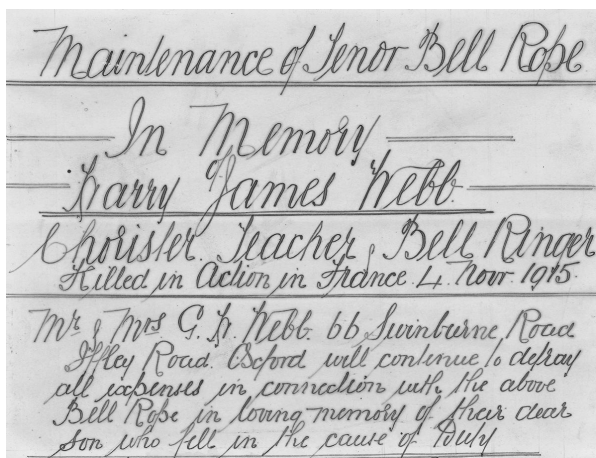
In the last month two of the newer ringers, Rachel Croft and Emma Vincent (Headington's youngest ringer), have rung their first quarter peals – congratulations to them both. Rachel Croft rang the treble to 1260 changes of Plain Bob Doubles. L to R: Paul Lucas, Katy Routh, Claire Fairbairn, Rachel Croft, Jonathan Cresshull (c), Chris Griggs.

Emma Vincent rang the treble to Plain Bob Doubles. L to R: Katy Routh, Malcolm Fairbairn, Claire Fairbairn, Ed Nicholson (c), Emma Vincent and Paul Lucas.



Headington rang to celebrate the Queen's longevity as Monarch on June 9th, and for the 800 year celebration of the signing of Magna Carta on 14th June. On the 21st June Old Headington opened its gardens and the bell tower was open to some 60 people, many of whom were delighted by what they saw. Many had a go at chiming a bell. Headington has also been the venue for several Surprise Major practices, using the new simulator, and attracting ringers from far and wide.

St Aldate's ringers rang a quarter peal in memory of Harry Webb, a ringer at St Aldate's who was killed in action on 4th November 1915 (pictures below).



The details are: Wednesday 4 November at St Aldate's, Oxford
1260 Stedman Doubles in 40 minutes

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Catherine M. A. Lane | 4 Jonathan Cresshull (c) |
| 2 Katherine Stonham | 5 Simon L Edwards |
| 3 Dorothy Hall | 6 Catrin Morgan |

Most towers are managing to maintain regular practice nights, although there have been some changes and cancellations over the summer. Marston's bells have been undergoing some work, so their practices have been moving to share with North Hinksey, Wheatley and Cowley.

Hugh Deam has continued to organise various practices and outings throughout the year, and reports that: “The structured mixture of mini-outings, all-day outings and specific method outings that started out as an experiment in 2011 has steadily grown in popularity. From visiting 21 different towers with 34 ringers taking part in 2011, we have expanded to 29 towers with 74 ringers this year. Although primarily made up of Oxford City Branch ringers, roughly a quarter of the total comes from the generous support from ringers in neighbouring branches, in particular our excellent working relationship with Witney & Woodstock Branch. Between January and October this year we have organised 11 outings, including trips to Somerset, Essex, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, plus our regular visits to Chilton and Freeland. Opening out the responsibility for organising outings has proved beneficial and has given each event a distinctive character. In particular, thanks are due to David Parks of Swindon, Heather Banyard of Wheatley, Peter Trowles & Tim Hillsdon of Kidlington, Adrian Gray of Wolvercote, Lindsay Powell & Charlotte Furneaux of Cowley, and Darren Washington for their organising efforts. Several are already pencilled in for organising an event again in 2016 and others have also come forward to try their hand next year, with plans for the Spring months already well advanced.”

Oxford City Branch AGM will be held on 14th November at Horspath. We will be looking to elect a new Ringing Master, as Katie Lane had to stand down earlier this year. We wish her all the best, and I would like to give her my particular thanks for all her help to me in my new role as Branch Secretary.

Lindsay Powell

Reading

We still aim in the Branch to hold three practices a month. The second Wednesday in the month we hold an afternoon Surprise practice, which caters for the retired members of the Branch, and is usually held at St Giles in Reading. This means that quite a few can get there by public transport although due to building work taking place we have been to Caversham for the last two months.

On the second Saturday of the month we try to visit towers who have asked us to help with particular methods or require help in any way.

The third Thursday in the month the Surprise practice takes place at Shiplake from 20.00 to 21.30. As with all practices numbers vary.

In September our 6-bell striking competition took place at Streatley; this year was disappointing with only five teams taking place with Goring being the winners. An excellent tea was held in the Morrel Rooms and thanks to the Goring ringers for providing it.

On Saturday 10th October the second joint 8-bell striking competition with Sonning Deanery branch was held at Shiplake with four teams entering and the Reading Branch being declared the winners. Again another excellent tea was served.

Ken Baker

Sonning Deanery

The Charmborough ring of bells proved very popular at David and Joyce Goodwin's wedding earlier this year, and the branch is planning to use it in the future at a major recruitment exercise somewhere in the branch.

On 2nd May, to mark the 300th anniversary of the first recorded peal in Norwich in 1715, a quarter peal of Plain Bob & Grandsire Doubles was rung at All Saints, Wokingham. On 3rd May a quarter peal of Plain Bob Major was rung at St Andrew's, Sonning.

On the actual 70th anniversary of VE Day, Friday 8th May, Waltham St Lawrence rang 600 Plain Bob Doubles with a completely local band. On 9th May All Saints, Wokingham rang a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Major.

In June Rob Needham became a full member of the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) and Vinni Sullivan and Jane Mellor went on the Module 1 ITTS course, so ITTS expertise is gradually building up in the branch.

Our chairman has canvassed towers for their support of a major recruitment exercise in the branch that includes the use of the Charmborough mini-ring of bells. The most popular event at which to hold the recruitment exercise, as chosen by the towers that responded, was the Hurst show; some towers favoured an event more directly linked to their tower.

To mark the day on which our Queen became the longest reigning British monarch, Wednesday 9th September, the following branch towers rang that evening: Easthampstead (quarter of Plain Bob Doubles), Finchampstead (long touch of Plain Bob Doubles), Hurst, Sandhurst, Sonning, Twyford, Waltham St Lawrence, Warfield, and Wargrave.

On October 5th, Julian Pettifer (Twyford) and Simon Roberts (Hurst) were successful in their first quarter peal on 8 bells – congratulations to them both. The quarter peal celebrated the life of Arthur Maurice Priest, a Hurst ringer, who died on this date exactly 100 years ago following injuries sustained at the Battle of Loos.

Also in October was the joint 8-bell striking competition between Reading and Sonning Deanery branches, this year organised by the Reading branch and held at Shiplake. Reading Branch bands came first and second and Sonning came third. Our thanks go to Reading branch for organising the competition and for the excellent tea.

The following week was the Branch Outing, organised by Pam and Andrew Elliston, to five 6-bell towers in the Pangbourne/Streatley area. In addition to all members of our branch, members of neighbouring ringing areas were invited. Thank you to Pam and Andrew for organising an excellent day's ringing.

A busy month, October – the two members who did the Module 1 ITTS course earlier in the year, Jane Mellor and Vinni Sullivan, attended Teacher Module 2 ITTS courses (not the same one). This course takes the teaching of new ringers who have basic bell handling skills through to method ringing.

Wargrave band is growing in numbers; recently another three learners have started their tuition there: Helen, Kitty and Freddie. And even more recently, Jayne has started and Rob is a returning ringer– we wish them all every success with their ringing.

Rob Needham

South Oxon

This summer/autumn has seen hubs of activity in the South Oxon Branch. In June the bells at St Helen's Church, Berrick Salome were returned after considerable refurbishment by Whites of Appleton. A Service of Rededication was held on Sunday 13th September with a good turn out! In July Shabbington hosted a *Bells Open* afternoon to raise money for work to repair their tenor. The event was alongside a National Gardens Scheme open garden, which made for a lovely setting!

At the end of July Drayton St Leonard launched their Bell Restoration Project with a presentation to the village – complete with a quilt with a patchwork pattern of plain hunt.

In October Chalgrove hosted the Guild 6-bell competition – complete with safety tape to keep straying bell ringers away from the extensive refurbishment work inside and outside this lovely church with medieval paintings! Well worth visiting – once you can get back into the church.

Dorchester tower had a clear-out and found an old South Oxfordshire Branch newsletter which had an interesting quiz. The newsletter is titled: *Newsletter No 36, October 1983*. It was the newsletter for the Autumn Meeting which was held at Tetsworth on Saturday 29th October 1983. I hope to locate the answers before our AGM but in the meantime, for a little fun, the quiz is reproduced below.

Not so long ago the secretary of another branch rang me to ask if I could arrange a gentle tour for her and her lady friends – with ground floor rings please as they were feeling geriatric. This gave us quite a bit of entertainment – and at the time I noted that the majority of ringing chambers in our branch are reached via a staircase or ladder. And what a lot of steps there are. Perhaps ringers would like to tackle this quiz – answers at the meeting!

Which tower has:

1. 43 steps – with an additional - 5 but only – 1 on practice nights?
2. 41 steps – and a fire extinguisher in the west window alcove?
3. 34 steps – and a ladder which has to be removed before you can ring?
4. 11 steps – and a memorial stone to Robt Kent 1780 set into the side of the window?
5. 0 steps – but a 100-4 bet on a stone under a mat?
6. 2 steps – and a grating under the carpet?
7. 45 steps – and some false teeth set into the wall of the staircase?
8. 19 steps – and the words 'Built 1853' in the south window?
9. 15 steps – and 25% of the ropes against a wall?

Amy Herlihy

Vale of the White Horse

Two WW2 evacuees from London who remained in the Vale after the war ended have been celebrating remarkable milestones. Alan O'Shaughnessy has been ringing at Buckland alongside his wife Kathleen for 55 years, 53 of them as Tower Captain. A peal of Cambridge Surprise Major was rung there on March 25th to mark this achievement. Alan has taught more than eighty new ringers over the years, and was the driving force behind the project to rehang and tune the bells in 2010.

A peal of Grandsire Doubles was rung at Hinton Waldrist on 27th May, Norman Leslie's 85th birthday. He and Doreen arrived at the end of the peal with a cake and a bottle of bubbly to share, and were surprised to find the church filling with ringers and friends from near and far, many bearing plates of food, to celebrate the occasion with him. Fortunately a bigger cake had been arranged!

The Branch striking competition was held at Stanford in the Vale in May. Eight of our ten towers with members were represented, and judges Alison Merryweather-Clarke and Susan Read had the tricky job of

working out which team should be awarded the Greenley Shield. Faringdon beat Shrivenham by the narrowest of margins, and went on to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell competition in October, where they were delighted to be placed fourth.

Tony Crabtree's Stallpits mini ring has had several outings this year, one of which was a visit to Zoë Williams' garden in Stanford in the Vale on a gloriously sunny afternoon in June. The mini ring was erected at its lower height to enable Zoë to ring from a wheelchair. After mastering the rope handling technique she rang her first plain hunt on 'tower' bells, having learnt to ring handbells on the computer program Abel.

Regular monthly training sessions are well attended and have included plain hunt, raising & lowering in peal, Cambridge Surprise Minor and Plain Bob Triples. Practical courses on rope splicing and tower maintenance have also been held, as well as theory workshops on conducting & coursing order.

Several enjoyable outings have been arranged this year, and all were blessed with good weather! Uffington ringers and friends headed off to the Chippenham area to ring at six towers that were open for general ringing on the day of the Gloucester & Bristol Association AGM in April. The Historic Churches Trust sponsored *Ride & Stride* in September was a good excuse for a ringing outing, as a group of twenty or so walked or cycled between the towers at Clanfield,



Kathleen & Alan O'Shaughnessy

Alvescot and Langford, as well as visiting quite a few others without bells along the way. Tom Edgeworth organised an excellent branch outing to the Forest of Dean which began with a brief foray into Wales to Trellech, where Tom learnt to ring. The other towers visited were Newland, Lydney and St Briavels, where a superb 'ringers tea' was served in the village hall.

The project to restore and augment the bells at Longworth was launched with a wonderful *Festival of Bells* organised by Valia Battat – a full report appears elsewhere in Odd Bob.

Lucy Laird

Witney and Woodstock

On the 18th July the Witney and Woodstock Branch had its annual social at the Turner Hall, North Leigh, after ringing at St Mary's church. This social turned out to be slightly different for many attendees. Let me explain more... First there was the obligatory BBQ and fortunately the weather was fine and warm enough to eat outside. However, to finish off the BBQ there was a bit of a competition, Each tower attending the social was asked to produce a Tower Desert worthy to be judged on the day by a suitably enthusiastic individual who modelled himself on the Great British Bake Off judge Paul Hollywood. The response was fantastic and the entries tasted superb, so the decision was extremely difficult. After the Judge tried the desserts a few times and expanded his waistline a few inches, there was an overall winner – so congratulations to Jane Burgess on her superb summer fruits creme brûlée. A special mention needs to go to Fiona who produced an excellently decorated chocolate torte and came a close second. Like all cooking competitions there is always something that goes wrong, and unfortunately one dessert needed a hammer and chisel to get into it – left in the oven a little too long I think!

The second bit of excitement was the raffle, which was expertly organised by Anthony. However, this was a raffle with a difference – you didn't know what the prize was going to be as they were all carefully wrapped up. The prizes themselves were – well, when you next ring at Freeland tower look on the shelf and you'll understand why there was so much laughter. Finally, the third bit of excitement, which caused so much debate and thought, was the Tower Quiz. Ten photos of towers in our branch and all that was required was to recognise the tower and guesstimate the tenor weight. I'm sorry to say that the highest score was 5 out of 10 for tower recognition and slightly less for the tenor weight. Excuses came in thick and fast but the best one was, "We only ring at that tower when it's dark." Overall, I believe the social was a great success so thanks to the organisers and helpers, Julie, Alison, Katie, Caz and Anthony; we are all looking forward to the next one!

North Leigh has had an exciting few months, enjoying lots of co-operation with neighbouring branches, and all of our 6 ringers achieving a ringing first of one kind or another. We are very proud of 2015 First Pealers 105 and 106, Julie Minch and Robert Walton, who rang their first peals on 24th May to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the first recorded peal. We are also excited that Fiona Methley is enjoying her Young Ringers Award Scheme and has become a useful

ringer supporting our band. As part of her 6 month report, she writes, “I have enjoyed the last few months of bell ringing and feel that I am more experienced in my ringing and that I have learnt lots of new methods. My favourite part was after a practice in August where there were only 6 people, and so I had to ring constantly. I trebled to seven different methods including my first go at a minor method (Plain Bob Minor), St Simons Doubles, and touches of All Saints doubles and spliced doubles. I was able to support the other ringers by ringing the treble so that they could practice for an **event** coming up. It made me very exhausted however I enjoyed it. I realised how much my ringing skills had improved so that I could just join in with methods like that without having to practise too much. I also really enjoyed the Branch events as I got to meet and ring with lots of other people from other towers, and am also pleased that I have had the chance to ring on 8 bells and plain hunt on 7 at Burford where everyone was very friendly.

The **event** we were practising for was a QP of All Saints Doubles to celebrate the Diamond Wedding anniversary of Gerry and Brian Wood, Abingdon residents and parents of our tenor ringer, Caz Woodruff; also for the birth of Richard’s grandson Josiah. We’re grateful to the Abingdon ringers for the use of their bells for the occasion.”

The annual Woodstock and Witney autumn outing took place on Saturday 10th October and was also a huge success with fantastic towers and some lovely sounding bells (*see photo on back cover*). Pershore is a "plum location" for a ringing outing to be centred upon. The truncated yet still lofty abbey dominates the skyline with 125 steps (123 upwards and 2 downwards) to negotiate by way of reaching the famous ringing ‘cage’ up above. In the shadow of the abbey is St. Andrew’s Centre, formerly the parish church, which is now rented by the abbey at the cost of a pound of Pershore plums per year. Our lunch was at *The Pickled Plum* pub on the High Street, further evidence of the significance of fruit farming to this area, and they catered for everyone’s needs extremely well! The climb to the ringing chamber at the penultimate tower (Great Comberton) is also one of the great idiosyncrasies to be found in ringing, being a winding and particularly cramped set of steps. Many thanks to Anthony and Julie for organising the event and keeping everything running smoothly.

This year’s branch striking competition was held at Ducklington. Minutes before starting we received a text saying that the judge’s car wouldn’t start – many thanks to Andrew Kenyon and Malcolm Fairbairn for stepping in to judge at short notice. Six teams took part: Witney, Woodstock, Ducklington, North Leigh, Freeland and Combe. Congratulations to Ducklington who won both call changes and method – it was good to see so many of their latest recruits joining in.

Sue Rhodes

(With many thanks from the Branch chairman to Sue Rhodes for organising this Witney and Woodstock report)

Points from Peals

The total number of peals recorded to date this year is 202 compared with 192 in the same period last year.

Firsts: A number of firsts have been recorded including many first peals; congratulations to all concerned.

- First peal: Elinor S F Bailey, Lucy E F Bailey, Peter A Blower, Ashley R Gray, Jacqueline M Hazell, Celia H Leeson, Julie Minch, Pamela Reeve, Anna Sherwood, James F P Vockins, Robert W Walton, Sarah Whittaker.
- First inside: Neil R Ephgrave.
- First on 8: Daniel W Glyde, Jenny J Lewis, Jonathan D H Norton, Christine Seers
- First of Treble Bob: Elizabeth J O'Brien
- First Surprise Minor inside: Jane C Spencer
- First of Surprise: David L Thomas
- First of Stedman: Joanna E Knight, Isaac J O'Shea, David L Thomas
- First of Treble Bob in hand: Janet E John
- First Surprise in hand: Janet E John, George M Salter
- First spliced Surprise Major: Robert P Sherwood
- First of Caters: Joanna E Knight
- First of Royal: Joanna E Knight, Isaac J O'Shea, David L Thomas
- First peal as conductor: David L Thomas
- First Grandsire as conductor: Jon Chamberlain.

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

Joe D R Norton (50), George M Salter (350), L Roy Woodruff (1000), Martin J Turner (2000), June D Wells (600 in hand). Peals together: John S Croft & Robert H Newton (100), June D Wells & Stephen A Rossiter (100), John S Croft & Graham G Firman (100), Martin J Turner & Peter Bridle (300), and June D Wells & E John Wells (1000).

Most Minor: Jane C Spencer (10).

Most Surprise Major: Joanna E Knight (23).

Most Surprise Royal: W John Couperthwaite, Beryl R Norris, John C Sheppard (14).

Most Surprise Major on handbells (27): Christopher P Cole, E John Wells, June D Wells.

Circled the tower to peals: David A Cornwall (Aston Clinton), Joe D R Norton (Shellingford).

Events: the anniversaries of a number of historical events occurred and were suitably remembered by peals: 300th anniversary of the first recorded true peal, rung May 2nd at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich (including a handbell peal – rung in St Peter Mancroft Church), the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta on the 15th June 1215, the 70th anniversary of VE Day, the 70th anniversary of VJ Day, the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo.

Royal occasions celebrated were the birth of HRH Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, daughter to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and HM Queen Elizabeth II becoming Britain's longest reigning monarch.

Peals were rung for Kathy & Alan Bentley moving to Dorset, David Phillipson 50 years as a bell ringer, and farewell to the vicar of Ambrosden, Canon Charles Masheder.

A peal on the handbells owned by Neville & Anne Parkin celebrated 40 years since the first peal on these bells rung by the same band and in the same method.

Church events marked were: Wokingham, St Paul the anniversary of the consecration of the Church, Chearsley first peal on the bells, Shipton under Wychwood the 900th anniversary of the church, Shiplake the 5th anniversary of the first peal on the new bells.

Personal events: Peals were rung for the birth of Eliza Lily granddaughter to Valerie and Bernard Groves and to celebrate the birthdays of Alan Barsby, Peter Bevis, William Butler, Helen McGregor, Valerie Groves, Norman Leslie, Joe D R Norton, David L Thomas. Peals were also rung as a wedding compliment to Simon Bond and Helen Matthews, and as a 35th wedding anniversary compliment to Helen McGregor and Peter Bevis.

In memoriam: Ringers and friends remembered were Philip Chalk, Bill Crouch, Dot Davies, Norman Gillibrand, Roy Jones, Michael Barry Kipling, Dennis Leslie, Peter Mackie, and Rita Pocock. A handbell peal in the church at Stratfield Saye, remembered Stratfield Saye ringers: Joseph Binge, Thomas William Binge, Albert George Broadhurst, Charles Kersley, and John Robert Series who were killed in the first world war.

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 2015/16

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

DECEMBER 2015

Wed	2	Bicester	BP	Charlton on Otmoor (6)	7.30–9.00pm
Wed	2	CN	BP	Shipton-u-Wychwood (8)	7.00–8.30pm
Wed	2	ONB	SP	Milton (8)	7.30–9.30pm
Fri	4	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	8.00–9.30pm
Sat	5	Guild	10 Bell Training Day	TBC	
Sat	5	South Oxon	BP	Benson (8)	4–5.30pm
Wed	9	Reading	SP	St. Giles, Reading (8)	1.30–3pm
Sat	12	Reading	BP	Mapledurham (6)	10–11.30am
Sat	12	EBSB	BP & social	Old Windsor (8)	7.30pm
Mon	14	Bicester	BP	Bicester (1)	7.30–9pm
Wed	16	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	2.00–3.30pm
Thu	17	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	8–9.30pm
Sat	19	Sonning	BP	Arborfield (6)	10.30am–noon
Sat	19	Chiltern	BP	Little Missenden (6)	9.30–11.30am
Tue	29	EBSB	Outing	Post Christmas Outing	TBC

JANUARY 2016

Sat	9	CN	BP & pub lunch	Fulbrook (6)	11 – 12.30pm
Wed	13	Reading	SP	St. Giles, Reading (8)	1.30–3pm
Sat	16	Sonning	BP	White Waltham (6)	4.30–6pm
Thu	21	Reading	SP	Shiplake (8)	8–9.30pm
Wed	27	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	2–3.30pm

FEBRUARY 2016

Wed	3	ONB	SP	Harwell (8)	7.30–9pm
Mon	8	ONB	BP	Steventon (6)	7.30–9pm
Wed	10	Reading	SP	St. Giles, Reading (8)	1.30–3pm
Sat	13	CN	BP & pub lunch	Wiggington (6)	11 – 12.30pm
Sat	13	Reading	AGM	TBC	
Thu	18	Reading	SP	Caversham (8)	
Sat	20	Sonning	AGM: ringing, service tea, AGM	Shiplake (8)	8–9.30pm
			BP	Easthampstead (6)	3 – 4pm, 4.00, 4.45, 5.15, 7 – 8.30pm
Wed	24	ONB	BP	Marcham (6)	2–3.30pm

MARCH 2016

Sat	5	CN	Ringling, service, AGM, ringing BP	Hook Norton (8)	3pm, 4pm, 4.45pm, 5.30pm
Sat	19	Sonning		Wargrave (8)	10.30am – 12
Sat	19	ONB	SC & AGM	TBC	noon
				North Moreton (6)	SC 3pm, Service 5pm, Tea 5.45pm, AGM 6.30pm
Wed	30	ONB	BP	Sunningwell (6)	2–3.30pm

APRIL 2016

Wed	6	CN	BP	Charlbury (6)	7.30–9pm
				TBC	
Wed	6	ONB	SP	Cholsey (8) TBC	7.30–9pm
Tue	12	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	7.30–9pm
Sat	16	Sonning	6-bell SC followed by BP	Binfield (6) TBC	4.00 – 6pm 6pm onwards

MAY 2016

Tue	3	CN	BP	Kingham (8) TBC	7.30- 9.00pm
Wed	6	ONB	SP	Cholsey (8) TBC	7.30–9pm
Tue	12	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	7.30–9pm
Mon	9	ONB	BP	Didcot (3), Long Wittenham (6)	6.30–7.15pm, 7.30–8.30pm
Sat	21	Sonning	BP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	10.30 – 12 noon
				TBC	
Wed	25	ONB	BP	Childrey (8)	2–3.30pm



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