

# Sonning Deanery Branch ODG – Reports on 2016 for 2017 AGM

## Branch Secretary's report

It is sad to report that Binfield suffered the death of two of its most experienced and regular ringers; David Fawcett died in May and only six weeks later Dave Creasy also died. In total six quarters and two peals were rung in their memory. Liz Harris took over from Dave Creasy as the Binfield captain.

The branch has held three series of regular branch practices throughout the year. The traditional Saturday BPs have been held, some in the morning, some in the afternoon and a couple in the evening, to engage with a wider set of members. There has also been a regular weekday practice on the first Tuesday of the month at Binfield, and a Surprise Major practice at All Saints Wokingham on the second Wednesday of the month.

The ART Loddon Hub has been active throughout the year and Vinni Sullivan organised several quarter peal attempts to help learners progress and achieve new levels with their ART Learning the Ropes scheme.

At the Branch AGM in February most of the officers were re-elected. Changes were that Josh Slade was elected to the new Youth Officer post, Sue Portsmouth was elected Bookstall Officer, and the post of Training Officer was unfilled. Also at the AGM the Branch agreed to book the Charnborough Ring for the weekend of the 2018 Hurst Show and mount another publicity and recruitment event.

Further to the appointment of a Youth Officer, each month on the second Sunday afternoon there has been a practice for Young Ringers. The practices took place at different towers to give the learners experience of different bells and handling. At Finchampstead in May, after the ringing, a quiz hunt was enjoyed around the churchyard and area close by. Young ringers from the Reading branch were invited to join us for the August practice at Wargrave and this swelled the numbers taking part.

In March Jane Mellor was assessed on her running of a learners' practice at All Saints, Wokingham and became a full member of ART (Association of Ringing Teachers). There was a module 1 course at Twyford on Saturday 17th June for branch ringers who wished to learn more about how to teach new ringers from scratch.

On 16th April Sonning rang a quarter peal to mark the exact centenary of the death of a Sonning ringer, Sgt Dennis Russell, in WW1. Also in April the branch held its 6-bell striking competition on the back six bells at Warfield. The weather was lovely, the competitors stood in the sunshine listening to the other teams' efforts, and the judge, Ian Rees, sat in a wooden summerhouse in the corner of the churchyard with the door wide open. The winners were Sonning.

Stan Scott of Easthampstead was 90 on 2nd June. Stan served for many years as Branch Secretary, Treasurer and Guild Representative and has rung at Easthampstead ever since

including considerable periods as Tower Captain. A peal was rung by the Easthampstead ringers and friends to celebrate his birthday and also his and Joan's 67th wedding anniversary.

Rebecca Gingell, a former Wargrave ringer, was married to an American ringer at St Mary's in Wargrave on the 29th July. After the wedding service they both had a ring, along with youngest sister Kitty, brother Freddie, and grandmother Joyce Hynd (a Henley ringer).

In September Freddie passed level 5 of the ART Learning the Ropes scheme and his sister Kitty passed level 5 in December. All the work and organisation that Vinni Sullivan put into their training certainly paid off. Also in December, Katie Thomas of Sonning, Anne-Marie Adams of Wargrave, and three brothers Benji, Eddie and Louie Bass of All Saints Wokingham gained their level 1 certificates. The branch congratulates them all.

In September St Mary's, Wargrave held an Open Day. In the bell tower people were encouraged to try Abel on the computer, try supervised bell handling, and watch demonstrations by the bell ringers. It was well received by over 40 people who climbed to the ringing room, and has given Wargrave one new ringer and possibly two. The Sonning ringers had a stall at the annual Sonning Show and had a couple of simple, free competitions to attract visitors to the stall where information on bells and ringing was on display. Three new learners are now being trained and a lapsed ringer from elsewhere in the Guild has restarted with the Sonning band.

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

Vikki Bulbeck put in a lot of work on behalf of the branch organising a well-planned Ringing Outing to the Maidenhead/Windsor area. On the day there was too high a ratio of learners to experienced ringers for the outing to be the success it deserved; some of the lack of attendance was due to a fairly late swap of dates with the joint 8-bell striking competition. In 2018 the branch plans to have a mini, half-day outing instead of the whole day, and the 8-bell striking competition won't be held in 2018.

On 26th October Sonning rang a quarter peal to mark the exact centenary of the death of another Sonning ringer, private Arthur Henry Norcutt, in WW1.

Martha Hazell and Vikki Bulbeck from Waltham St Lawrence and Kitty Gingell from Wargrave went on the ten bell course at Aston Clinton, and subsequently Vikki and Kitty rang a quarter of Grandsire Caters.

Rob Needham

## Ringling Master's report

Practices have been held as follows:

- Monthly Saturday Branch Practices: every month except October when a tower outing was held. The average attendance was 10.8 with 18 different methods rung.
- Monthly Tuesday afternoons at Binfield: held all except two months. The average attendance was 9.7 with 19 different methods including four minimus methods.
- Monthly Surprise Major practices at Wokingham AS: held eleven times. An average of 11.6 people attended. The "standard eight" methods featured plus Glasgow, which is work in progress.
- Monthly Youth Practices: have occurred 8 times with an average of 11.4 attendees including helpers. Other than rounds and call changes, the methods have been mainly simple plain hunt.

We are grateful to those towers for letting us ring and for the support of our members.

The October meeting was replaced with a Branch Outing to

Bray, St Mary, Hitcham Dorney, Clewer and Boyn Hill. Our thanks go to Vikki Bulbeck of Waltham St Lawrence (SDB) and Clewer (ESB).

Three towers entered the 6-bell Striking Competition at Warfield in April with Sonning, Wokingham AS and Warfield coming 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively.

The joint Sonning Deanery and Reading, 8- Bell Striking Competition was cancelled by Reading.

Quarter Peals in memory of David Fawcett and David Creasy were rung in June and August respectively at Binfield where they rang.

Several towers are receiving help from the Branch to assist in teaching people to ring bells and to develop their band's capabilities. This is a long term commitment and we are grateful to those ringers who now support other towers on a regular basis.

Steve Wells

## Youth Officer's report

This was a new Branch Officer role for 2017 and Josh Slade was first appointed to the role at last year's AGM. Unfortunately he moved away from the area in mid-year and stood down, and since then the Secretary, Rob Needham, has been acting Youth Officer. The Youth Officer does not have to run a practice session because they are supported by the Ringing Master and other experienced helpers.

A training session for Young Ringers (YRs) on the second Sunday afternoon of the month started in March 2017. There have been a possible 11 practices so far, of which 8 have taken place. The July, November and December YR practices had to be cancelled for lack of numbers. The practices were held at a variety of towers within the branch to give YRs experience of different towers and bells.

An analysis of the YR practices that did take place shows an average YR attendance of 5.5 youngsters, with roughly the

same number of helpers. Rob & Pauline Needham organised a quiz after the ringing at Finchampstead in May that was popular, and in August the Reading YRs were invited and they considerably swelled the numbers. Arborfield YRs supported the practices the most often, and there was regular support from Easthampstead and Twyford YRs.

The YRs are contacted via their parents' email addresses, which are held in an email list that only the Branch Postmaster and Youth Officer have password controlled access to. There are currently 11 YRs on the list. Towers that wish to add a new YR to the list should seek agreement from a parent and give their email address to the Postmaster or Youth Officer. The YR does not need to be already a member of the Guild, but does need to be learning at a tower within the Branch.

Rob Needham (Secretary)

## Bookstall Holder's report

There is nothing significant to report for 2017/2018 in respect of the Bookstall. It is taken to Branch Practices, and is otherwise housed in the ringing room at Sonning.

As Rob stated in his report to the last AGM, the bookstall is simply an 'at cost' service to members of the branch and cannot make a profit. It enables members to browse what books, etc. are available, and it can save members the task of ordering items themselves.

There is a small cash balance, and I have ordered two further copies of 'Ringing Circles' through Central Council Publications, having found this very helpful myself.

With the advances in on-line purchasing, I do not believe that the bookstall can expand any further, but it does still appear to offer a useful service.

I also have copies of two Whiting Society publications,

written by Stuart I. Bamforth, which are available for members to peruse at Branch practices.

- An Introduction to Ringing Multi-Method Doubles – Doubles Series – Book 1
- A Compendium of Plain Doubles Methods – Doubles Series – Book 2

If anyone has suggestions as to what other publications could usefully be held, I shall be pleased to receive them.

Inherited cash balance	£15.27
Sales during year	£ 9.10
Purchases during year	£ 6.00
Expenses	£ 0.00
Closing cash balance	£18.37

Sue Portsmouth

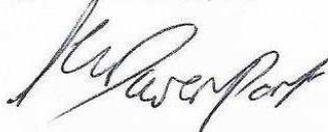
**Accounts**  
**Sonning Deanery Branch Accounts**  
**Year To December 31 2017**

**AGM Balance sheet**

<b><u>General fund</u></b>	<b><u>Income</u></b>	<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>
Subs	£1,281.00	
Branch Outing	£0.00	
Interest		
Subs to guild		£795.00
Newsletter		£72.00
Postage, stationery etc		£5.30
General fund totals	<u>£1,281.00</u>	<u>£872.30</u>
Carry over of 2016 balances	£1,711.79	
<b><u>General fund balance</u></b>	<b><u>£2,120.49</u></b>	

<b><u>Bell fund</u></b>	<b><u>Income</u></b>	<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>
Interest	£19.36	
Fundraising	£84.60	
Bell fund 2017 totals	<u>£103.96</u>	£0.00
Carry over of 2016 balances	<u>£3,361.59</u>	
<b><u>Bell fund balance</u></b>	<b><u>£3,465.55</u></b>	
Actual branch funds	<u>£5,586.04</u>	
Members paid	160	

Signed: S Davenport



Treasurer

I certify that these accounts are in accordance with the books, statements and vouchers given to me by the Treasurer. No matter has come to my attention that gives me grounds for concern.

Signed: I M Davis FCIS



Examiner

Sue Davenport

## Training Officer's report

In the absence of a Training Officer the Branch has organised no formal training. However two listening courses initially arranged for members of All Saints Wokingham were opened to Branch members and a total of 11 ringers attended.

The officers decided to conduct a survey to determine the range of members' training needs. This should have been done in the late summer but was held up until after the year end by technical issues with the Guild server.

John Harrison (Chairman)

## Branch representatives to the Guild

Two Guild Committee meetings were held this year, as per usual. The March meeting commenced with the Bell Fund AGM. The Guild Web site and a decision was made to update this. It has been out of date for at least one year.. A sum of up to £2000. Was agreed by meeting for this. The Central Council proposed reform was discussed and the general feeling was the meeting supported the proposed forms. This was also discussed at the AGM.

At the November meeting a presentation of the work to date on the new website was presented. There is still a lot of work to do.

It was agreed that subscriptions would remain at the same level for 2018.

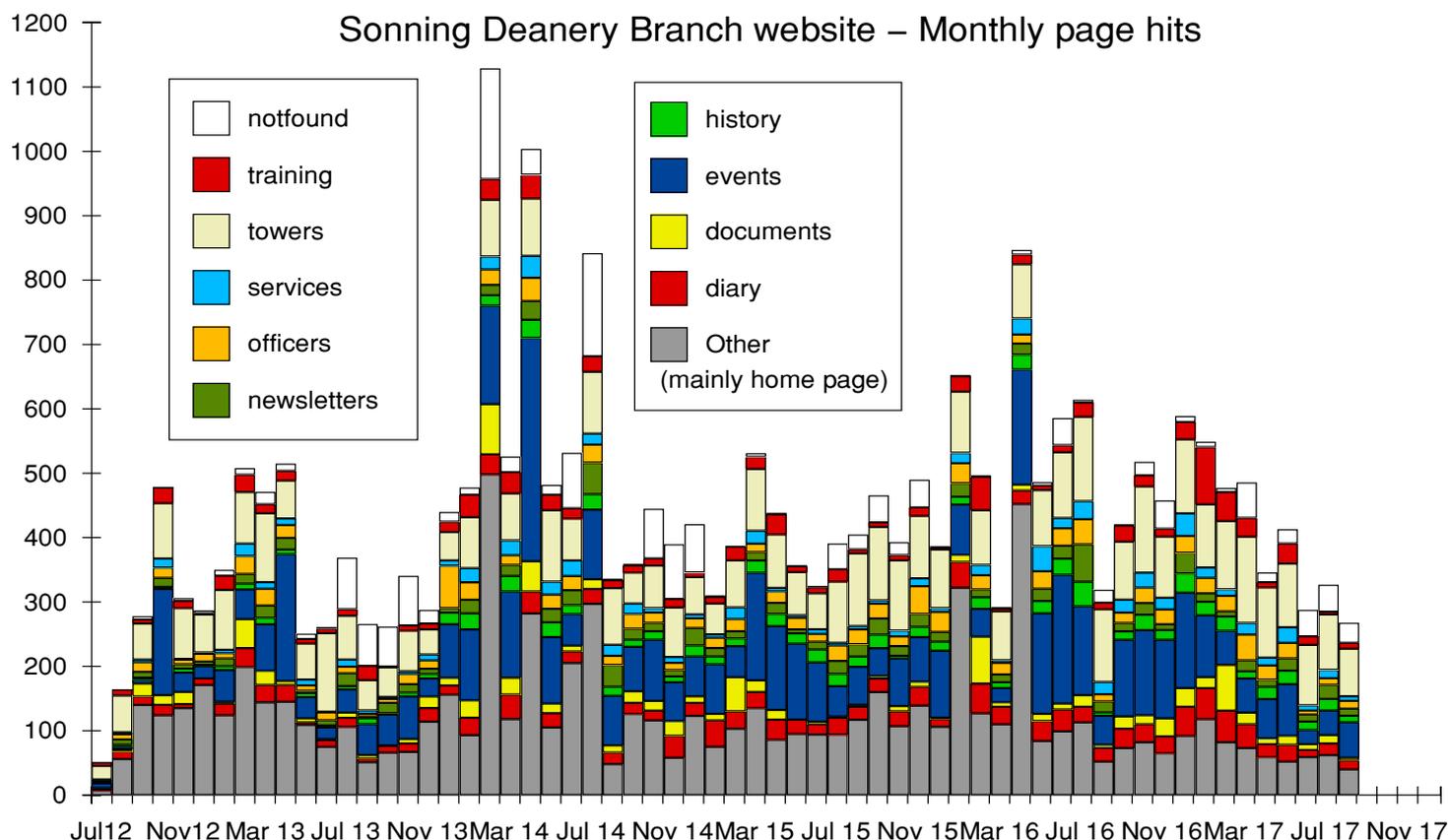
Sue Davenport

## Webmaster/Postmaster's Report

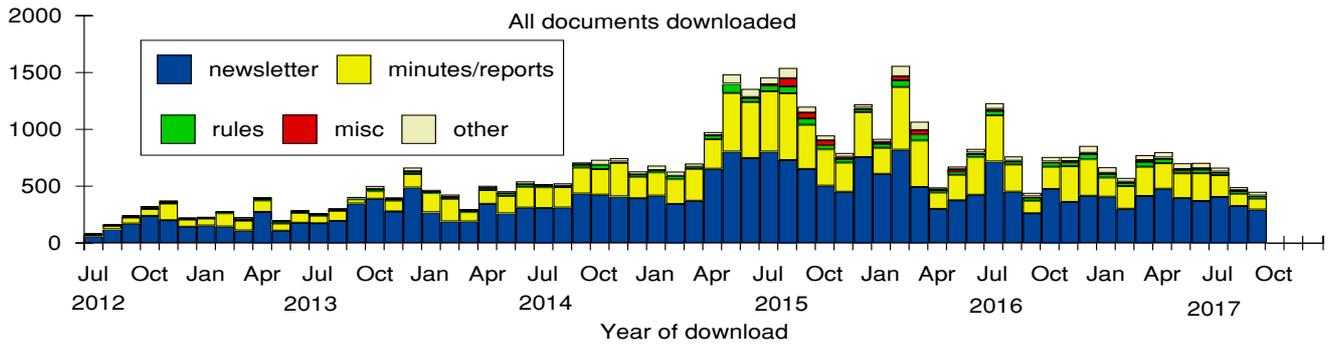
**Website** – The website has been kept up to date throughout the year. The main changes have been revisions to the diary and adding newsletters and meeting papers. During 2017 there were no additions to the events pages.

The site includes full contact details for officers, an on-line diary, contact details for towers (organised by practice night, number of bells and map), details of training courses, full list of all Branch and Guild services, copies of all newsletters since 2005, reference documents, reports and pictures of events, the history of the Branch, and a list of useful ringing links. The website is at: [odg.org.uk/sdb/](http://odg.org.uk/sdb/)

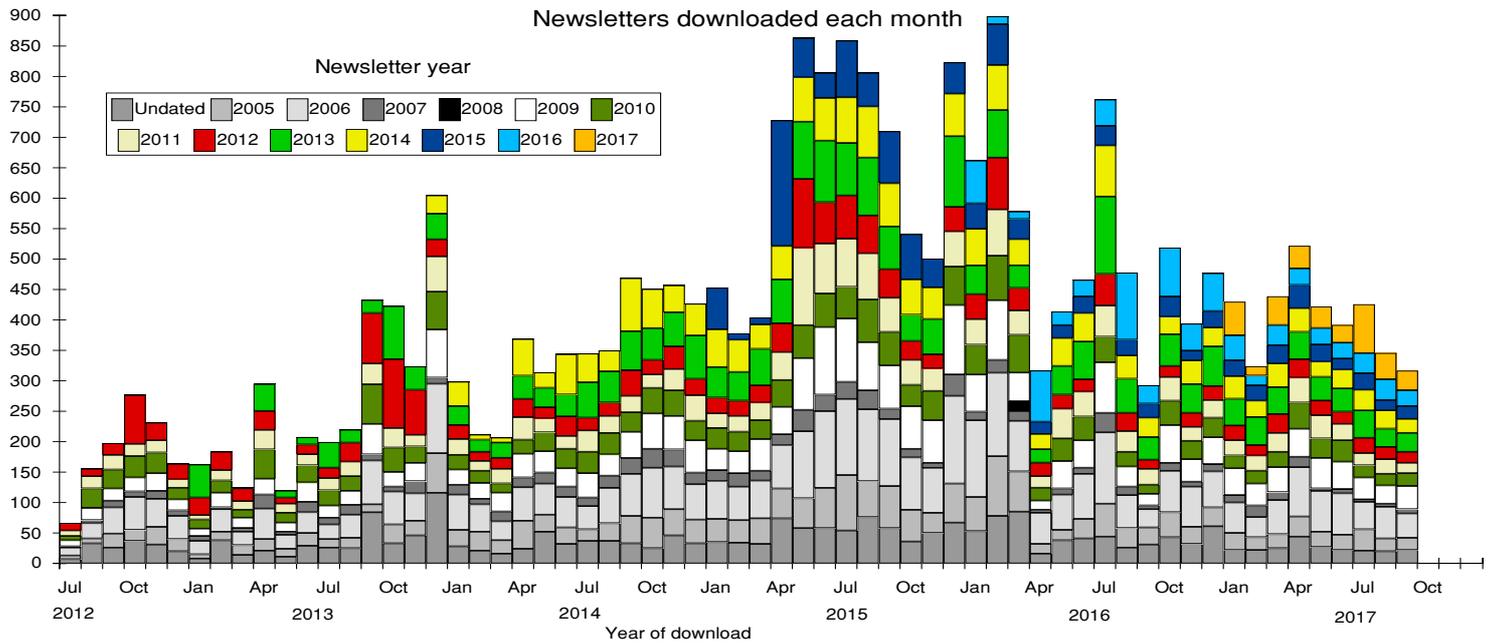
The graph below shows a summary of website traffic over the last five years. Each column represents the number of page hits in a month, coloured according to topic. Unfortunately the analysis data stopped when the Guild server was updated in the summer, so there are no data for the last few months. The first half of the year shows a steady downward trend, with the biggest reduction being the events pages – hardly surprising since there are no reports of events since the 2016 8-bell competition. There were fewer hits on the diary and home page as well. Hits on the towers page remains consistently high. With no data for half the year it's difficult to compare 2017 with previous years.



The next graph shows the number of documents downloaded over the same period. It shows a reduction compared with previous years, even allowing for the missing months of data. Over half the downloads were newsletters.



Many newsletters for previous years were downloaded, with 2017 only accounting for 10%, similar to previous years. There were 373 downloads of 2017 newsletters. Allowing for only three editions covered by the data gathered, that is somewhat less than one per member per edition. How many were downloaded by members is unknown.



In January I developed and ran a web based survey of members views on striking competitions. There should have been another survey in the autumn about members' training needs but this was delayed because services we had previously used were withdrawn from the Guild server. The survey was launched just into 2018.

**E-mail services** – I manage the following Branch e-mail lists – Members, Officers, Towers, Wedding volunteers and Quarter peal volunteers. The number of addresses subscribed are: Members 176, Weddings 34, Quarters 11, Young ringers 21. The members list has grown (166, 152, 141, 136 in previous four years) and includes some non-members who regularly ring in the Branch. The quarter peal volunteer list was created at the end of the year, so the numbers should grow as it becomes known.

I provide support if needed to the Younger ringers list and the tower lists, all separately managed. Towers that currently have lists are: Twyford, Warfield and Wokingham All Saints. Easthampstead has a list that has been unused since 2011.

When Branch or tower officers' change, or change addresses, I ensure the relevant 'official address' is redirected.

Problems on the Guild server cause loss of e-mail services for about a week in the autumn.

Several people consulted me about spam. All of the mailing lists include features to trap suspect messages. This works well and I regularly delete spam (sometimes several a day) that none of the members ever sees.

What I can't do is prevent messages being sent direct to individual addresses (whether personal ones or 'official ones'). If anyone has used the address from an infected computer then it can be 'harvested' and used by spammers. When the 'from' address is faked to be one from the same address book as the 'to' address it can easily bypass filters that only allow known addresses through. The advice I give is to treat such messages as you would any spam – just delete them. The problem will eventually go away when the spammers move on to using a fresh set of addresses.