

## Branch Secretary's report

We were concerned about having a quorum for our AGM in February and following feedback it was clear we would get a better attendance holding it via Zoom again. It was attended by 28 branch members together with Katie Lane, Guild Master, and Tony Crabtree, Deputy Master. All branch officers remained in post except for Holley Wakeling who stood down as Youth Officer and Jacquie Hazell who stood down as Branch Representative. Later in the year, those vacancies were filled by Jennifer Moynihan as Youth Officer and Vikki Bullbeck as Branch Representative. The meeting held a minute's silence in memory of Arthur Moss and Mary Spence, both from Wokingham, All Saints, who sadly died since the previous AGM. 12 new members were elected in 2022.

At the end of January, we were finally able to resume regular branch practices. We initially ran the practices in the three towers with ground floor ringing rooms but moved to the usual tower rotation later in the year. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our branch six-bell competition due to a lack of teams wishing to take part. The branch Elementary practices are very popular and, with the addition this year of a second monthly practice, our learners are making good progress. A very successful Elementary 'team' outing was held in August with the team ringing at three towers with a pub lunch in the middle and a celebratory drink in the pub at the end. The team also took part in the joint eight-bell competition with Reading branch.

Regular youth practices are being held and are normally attended by around 3-5 young ringers. Young ringers from the branch also regularly attended the

Berks and Bucks YR events and a joint event was held with them in December.

Our branch hosted the Guild ringing day on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. We were fortunate with lovely weather, so the queue for our 4-bell tower at Barkham could enjoy the sunshine during the short wait. The day was well attended with a constant stream of ringers at all towers. Our ringers took part in the Guild 8-bell competition in May and came 4<sup>th</sup>. In October, 9 ringers from the branch attended an ART M2F course arranged by our Training Officer, Jane Mellor, and run by ART tutor Clare McArdle. The attendees are now helping to run the elementary practices to help develop their skills.

Arborfield has had great success in recruiting new ringers following a 'boosted post' on Facebook to be seen only by people within 5km of Arborfield. Out of the 20 responses, 9 attended an interest meeting, of which 5 are now attending practices just for them and are being taught using the ART methodology.

All our towers rang at some point to mark the death and funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, and 8 towers rang for the proclamation of King Charles III.

In September we sadly lost Derek Titford. Derek was Tower captain at Waltham St Lawrence from 1997 – 2018 and will be much missed by many. We also sadly lost a past ringing member at Sandhurst, the son of our member Michael Paterson. Simon passed away in April just before his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Jan Glen

## Ringling Master's report

Ringling practices had a slow start, partially due to the current restrictions at the time, the first practice of the year was an Elementary one at Binfield on 1st February. Out of a total of 36 branch practices (excluding Young Ringers) held in 2022, 23 were at Binfield. Of the 10 planned Saturday practices, we held 6 which had an average attendance of 11.1 ringers. Overall the average attendance was 11.8 for the 36 practices held in 2022.

Elementary practices were the best attended during the year. With the popularity of the Elementary practices, we took the decision in September to introduce an extra practice each month. A total of 14 Elementary practices were held in 2022 with an average attendance of 12.85. With the easing of Covid restrictions we started to alternate which towers in the branch these practices were run at and hold them on both Tuesdays and Wednesdays to avoid always clashing with tower practices held on a Tuesday. Our training officer, Jane Mellor, organised an ART M2 F course which was run at Twyford in October. As part of the ART accreditation scheme, it is required that you can demonstrate the skills taught at the training and so we made the decision that those who attended the ART training would have the opportunity to

run the Elementary practices with the support of their assigned mentor.

When I started the Elementary practices in 2019 the long-term goals for the group of ringers attending the practices were to:

- Improve bell control, change of speed and ability to dodge without the bell 'dropping'
- Full understanding of the concept of place; can ring call changes by place
- Plain hunt with good striking

A number of those that are attending these practices have now achieved or are close to achieving these goals and are ready to move on to an intermediate level. Consequently, I am expecting that we may change one of the Elementary practices to do this. Alternatively, if the Advanced practice attendance continues to decline, we may need to change the scope of that practice.

Day time practices continued to be popular and were held every month except January and July with an average of 11.4 people attending. There has been a decline in the number of

people attending the Advanced practices with only 5 being held during the year. Towards the end of the year, we made the decision to alternate between a Tuesday and a Wednesday, but this made little difference

Our branch 6 bell striking competition was cancelled this year. We originally tried to hold it in April however no tower was able to put a band together. We tried again in July and apart from All Saints Wokingham, no other tower could put a band together. All Saints Wokingham were also unable to put together a band for the Oxford Guild 6 Bell Striking competition which was held in October. In 2019, 7 bands entered including young ringers and those attending the elementary practices, should we continue to try and hold a 6-bell striking competition within our branch? On a more positive note, the branch entered a band into the Oxford Guild 8-bell striking competition. This was held at Goring on Thames, we came fourth out of 9 bands entering the competition. We also held in November a joint 8 bell striking competition with the Reading branch, 2 bands from each branch. Sonning Deanery was represented by All Saints

Wokingham and one that was made up of ringers who attend our Elementary practice, we came 2nd and 4th respectfully. I tried to enter a team for the Guild 10-bell striking competition but was unable to put together enough ringers.

62 Quarter Peals and 4 peals have been recorded for the Branch on the Ringing World's Bellboard website during the year. The leading tower was Shottesbrooke with a total of 28 quarter peals and one peal. This peal was rung to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen and had a number of 'firsts' in it: A first peal for Holley Wakeling, first as conductor for Simon Smith and the first peal by a local band since 1989. Congratulations to all involved. Congratulations also to Matthew Steele who rang his first peal of Plain Bob Major at Twyford in December.

Well done to James Moynihan, Becki Shuttleworth and Charley Smith, three of our young ringers who rang their first quarter peal during the year.

May I express my thanks to everyone who has supported Branch ringing activities throughout the year.

Nigel Mellor

## Youth Officer's report

**Activities this year** – Youth practices have been planned for each month, but have not always taken place due to lack of numbers (one was cancelled due to the death of Queen Elizabeth). Successful practices have been held at Arborfield (twice), Hurst (two of our young ringers rang their first quarter peal at this event) and Easthampstead, plus a joint practice with Berks and Bucks Young Ringers (BBYR) in Maidenhead. I would like to thank all the adult volunteers who help with the practices, in particular Steve Wells. Ringer numbers at the Sonning Branch youth practices have varied between 2 and 6 young ringers.

Two young ringers are also regular attendees of the Elementary practices.

**Links with BBYR** – Strong links have been made with the BBYR. They also hold practices once a month and these are well attended by a number of young ringers from the Sonning Deanery. In fact, there are always more Sonning Deanery young ringers at these events than at specific Sonning events! Sonning Ringers have attended practices at Warfield (twice), Windsor, Maidenhead and Wraysbury. One of the Sonning young ringers was part of the BBYR band at the Ringing World Youth Championships this year and others are keen to take part in this event and SEECON next year. An outing to London to ring at 5 towers (joint with the Surrey Strikers and Go Bellistic) is planned for 11th February and there are a number of Sonning ringers planning to go.

**Links with other groups** – Links have been made with the ODG youth band and with the Reading Branch youth band. One young ringer from Sonning attended the ODG pre-Christmas ringing and social. A joint practice is planned for 12th February, with the Reading band, at Sonning.

**Publicity** – There is a Young Ringers mailing list. Going forward, I need to check that this is up to date. The problem

we sometimes have is that e-mails go to parents, not the children, which can mean that not all young ringers get to hear about practices, so please bear with me if you get e-mails asking for you to publicise events to your young ringers!

In future, I would like to ask Tower Captains for a list of their younger ringers so that I can check the e-mails are reaching everyone. I advertise all Sonning events, BBYR events, ODG events and any others that I receive notice of.

**Going forward** – In light of the fact that BBYR practices are much better attended than separate Sonning practices, it has been decided to proceed with regular joint practices with the BBYR. The BBYR covers Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. It receives some funding from the EBSB branch and some funding from the guild. It is not a branch specific group. The BBYR pay a donation to each tower they ring at, and also hire a minibus to take ringers to competitions. It has been agreed in principle that Sonning Branch will support BBYR with some funding going forward.

Other practices, either separate Sonning practices, special events or joint events with other branches, will be organised on an ad hoc basis as interest arises.

**New members** – I would like to ask the Tower Captains if they have capacity in their towers for new, young ringers? The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme may be a good way to attract new recruits as individuals have to commit to either 3 months or 6 months of 1 hour a week skills-based activities. Please let me know if there is capacity at particular towers and I will be happy to contact the nearest secondary schools to talk about bell ringing and try and recruit new ringers.

Thank you to all Tower Captains and others for their continued support.

Jennifer Moynihan

## Training Officer's report

During 2023 ringing within the branch has returned to a semblance of normality. I have been able to focus on creating events for training for both learners and teachers.

Pre-pandemic the elementary group had encouraging numbers so this gave me a focus on where to start. The monthly practices restarted in January 2022 and were well received. Nigel Mellor was able to complete on his ART, Association of Ringing Teachers Modules by being assessed by Kate Flavell in July.

Whilst Nigel and I taught the elementary group, the need to widen the teaching of this elementary level was identified and this resulted in me organising an ART Module 2 Foundation course being held in October at Twyford. Clare McCardle from Birmingham agreed to be the tutor and 9 members of our branch attended from 6 different towers.

After the course the elementary practices were increased to twice a month to allow different branch members who attended the ART course to run a practice towards their accreditation process. As an ART member I intend to continue to encourage all the attendees to work towards their accreditation.

Thanks to the enthusiasm from the elementary group, including all the experienced ringers who support, I organized a tower outing day on Saturday 20th August with three local towers and pub lunch ending up at Hurst for the Branch practice. It was a successful day enjoyed by all and included great views from the top of Shottesbrooke tower.

John Harrison has continued to offer training events to the

branch. He has conducted 3 simulator sessions which is fewer than usual due to the restoration project at All Saints Church Wokingham. On 19th February he organised a Saturday Bell Maintenance day with 11 attendees. On 21st June he held a Splicing Course for 6 people and a Listening Course on 3rd August where 6 people attended. Thank you John.

I started the year with 5 focused handling practices. Nigel and I ran a Saturday morning elementary theory to practice morning on 9th April where 9 people attended.

On 1st December Simon Farrar ran a focused Raising and Lowering in Peal course at Eversley, a lovely light six, with 6 people attending with 3 other helpers. Thank you Simon.

In 2023 Nigel Mellor Ringing Master will continue to run the elementary practices twice a month and I will try to keep the ART teachers practicing. We foresee that with the progress the elementary group are making one of the practices will become an intermediate level looking to ring doubles and minor methods appropriately.

I hope to organize a quarter peal morning and pub in the Spring to consolidate many of the learners ringing and as the outing was such a success in 2022, I will organize another this year. I will try to send out information at the beginning of each month reminding all, of the practices and training being offered that month.

Please approach me if you require any training or have ideas of what you can contribute to training. Thank you.

Jane Mellor

## Branch representatives to the Guild

The March Committee meeting was preceded, as the norm, by the AGM of the Bell Restoration Fund.

The Committee meeting then followed and received reports from the sub-committees and members were elected to serve on them.

Donations to the Bell Fund, Ringing World and ART were discussed and sums put forward for agreement at the AGM in May.

The November Committee meeting followed on from the 10 bell striking competition. A draft budget was discussed. Guild subscriptions to remain at £8.00 (£5.00 to Guild and £3.00 to Branch).

The Committee meetings are held twice a year a different Branches – often involving long distance travelling. With reports being given beforehand the meeting is not long winded. Travel often taking longer than the meeting!

Sue Davenport.

## Bookstall Holder's report

There is nothing significant to report for 2022 in respect of the Bookstall.

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.

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.

The bookstall holds copies of two Whiting Society publications, written by Stuart I. Bamforth, which are available for members to peruse.

- An Introduction to Ringing Multi-Method Doubles – Doubles Series – Book 1

- A Compendium of Plain Doubles Methods – Doubles Series – Book 2

The Little Purple Ringing Book published by The Ringing World (listed below) is very interesting and practical, so if anyone would like a copy, please ask.

Opening cash balance £ 9.97

Sales during year Little Purple Ringing Book (A5)  
(To be confirmed) 2 Guild badges £10.90

Purchases during year Beginners Handbook Qty 2 - £5.00  
Bell Club Pack Qty 1 - £10.00  
Ringing Circles Qty 2 - £8.00

Expenses £0.00

Closing cash balance £ (2.13)

Sue Portsmouth

## Safeguarding report

As a Branch there is no specific stipulation for Branch events regarding Safeguarding. The responsibility lies with the Parish and their Safeguarding Officer to ensure compliance within their organisations. As bellringers we are guided by our Central Council, CCCBR which provides clear documentation and guidance for ringers to liaise with their Parish Office and Incumbent. Our Safeguarding Officer at Oxford Diocese Guild level is June Wells. We have an adult Youth Officer who is currently overseeing the required permissions documentation for the Youth practices.

Below are the links to the Central Council Safeguarding, the Church of England Training Portals and our Guild Safeguarding Information. All Tower Captains have been reminded of their responsibility with Safeguarding.

The **Central Council** has comprehensive information about safeguarding requirements. Please see this link <https://cccbr.org.uk/safeguarding/resources/safeguarding-in-church-of-england-settings/> It specifies the training levels we need to complete as ringers and leaders. This should be agreed at Parish level but as we have Branch Practices in various churches now we need to be compliant at tower level.

**This is the link to complete the C0 C1 courses.** <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org>

The **Central Council** has produced an excellent guide for clergy, PCCs and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers which explains how ringing 'works', through individual towers, territorial and non-territorial bell ringing associations, and the work of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.

The guide focuses particularly on how church bell ringers are trained, safeguarded and organised. Please share with your Priest and PCC.

**"From Practice to Perfect"** was distributed to all Diocesan Safeguarding Advisers in December 2022 by Lisa Clarke, National Safeguarding Learning and Development Manager for the Church of England.

Access to all the CCCBR Safeguarding information can be found here: <https://cccbr.org.uk/safeguarding/>

The **Oxford Diocese Guild** Bellringers Safeguarding page can be viewed <https://odg.org.uk/info/safeguarding/> which also includes the 'Permission to Ring Form' for the Youth.

Jane Mellor

## Webmaster/Postmaster's Report

**Website** – The website has been kept up to date throughout the year, including results and pictures from the striking competition, newsletters, meeting papers, regular diary updates & tower / officer contact details notified to me.

The website [odg.org.uk/sdb/](http://odg.org.uk/sdb/) has officer contact details, an events diary, Branch towers information and contacts, plus services offered by the Branch including training courses, newsletters, reference documents, reports and pictures of events, history of the Branch and useful links.

**E-mail services** – I manage: Members, Officers, Towers, Wedding volunteers and Quarter peal volunteers e-mail lists

The Members list includes all members who have provided an e-mail address together with some non members who regularly ring in the Branch, and former members who have opted to remain in touch. It has 167 addresses.

The Wedding volunteer list goes to 34 ringers and was used six times by four towers during 2022.

The Quarter peal volunteer list goes to 12 ringers but not been used since before the pandemic.

I provide occasional support if needed to the tower lists, which are separately managed by each tower. Currently these are: Arborfield, Warfield and Wokingham All Saints.

The lists are protected from spam, which they trapped so I can deal with it before it reaches members. Spam to the list is rare and the most frequent trapped messages are from members who thought they were replying to an officer but managed to send their message to the list instead.

In September I detected a major problem with Gmail blocking all messages from mailing lists. It affected 20% of our members and was resolved by the Guild server manager adding features to satisfy the Gmail (Google) servers.

For details of e-mail services see: [odg.org.uk/sdb/services/email.html](http://odg.org.uk/sdb/services/email.html)

John Harrison

## Treasurer's Report

General Fund	Income	Expenditure
Subs	£1,225.00	
Subs to Guild		£755.00
Newsletter		£90.00
Hall hire		£96.00
Course subsidy		£17.50
Competition judges		£10.99
Postage, stationery, etc		£38.55
Tower fees		£45.00
Course donation	£31.00	
<b>General fund totals</b>	<b>£1,256.00</b>	<b>£1,048.04</b>
Carry over 2021 balances	£3,115.93	
<b>General fund balance (31/12/22)</b>	<b>£3,323.89</b>	

Bell fund	Income	Expenditure
Interest	£35.54	
Donation		£123.60
Tower grants		
Bell fund 2022 totals	£159.14	
Carry over 2021 balances	£2,384.36	
<b>Bell fund balance (31/12/22)</b>	<b>£2,543.50</b>	
<b>Actual Branch funds</b>	<b>£5,867.39</b>	
Members paid		153
Accounts inspected by Simon Smith.		
		Sue Davenport