

Sonning Deanery Branch ODG – Reports on 2023 for 2024 AGM

Branch Secretary's report

Our branch AGM was held in February and attended by 19 branch members from 11 towers, together with Katie Lane, Guild Master. All branch officers remained in post except for Sue Portsmouth who stood down as Bookstall Officer and was replaced by Jennifer Moynihan. 16 new members were elected in 2023.

In April we sadly lost Hugh Dempster, a long serving member of the band at Finchampstead Hugh rang his first peal at Pudsey, Yorkshire in 1964. He rang a total of 11 peals, 7 of them for the ODG. Hugh was a member of the Maidenhead band from 1975 - 1979, then rang in Suffolk during the 1980s, and in 1991 joined the band at Finchampstead where he has rung ever since, serving as tower captain from 2006.

On 11th April, two of our members, Rob Needham and Darren Smith, were interviewed on Radio Berkshire about bell ringing and recruitment for Ring for the King. Simon Farrar, Tower Captain at Twyford was also

interviewed on another day on Radio Berkshire about recruits for ringing for the coronation. The interview also included two learners from Aborfield, Andy and Anita, talking about how they got in to ringing and how their learning was progressing.

We held our branch 6-bell striking competition at St Michael and All Angels, Sandhurst on 24th April. All Saints Wokingham comfortably won the competition ringing Grandsire Doubles.

All our towers took part in ringing for the Coronation, including two peals (Wokingham All Saints and Wokingham St Paul) and six quarter peals (Arborfield, Easthampstead, Shottesbrooke, Sonning, Waltham St Lawrence (2)). The Sonning quarter peal included Geoffrey Harvey who also rang for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Ringers at several towers included recent recruits and Ring for the King recruits.

Jan Glen

Youth Officer's report

Regular Practices – Young ringers have had the opportunity to ring at special youth practices on average 3 times a month. Most months, there is a Berks and Bucks Young Ringers (B&BYR) practice, an ODG practice and a combined Reading/Sonning Youth practice. Practices are scheduled to be on different Sundays in the month to enable our young ringers to make the most of all the ringing opportunities.

Outings – Our ringers have taken part in B&BYR outings to London (February 2023), St Albans (October 2023) and Oxford (February 2024). In addition, some young ringers attended a Midlands group outing with ODG young ringers. In September 2023, we organised a well-attended mini-outing, joint with Reading young ringers to Sonning and Shiplake. There was lots of excitement amongst the younger ringers to grab the tenor at Sonning!

Competitions – Young ringers from the deanery represented B&BYR at SEECON 2023 (Surrey) and RWNYS 2023 (York), finishing a very respectable 4th and 6th respectively. Each competition was followed by tower outings, including a chance to ring at York Minster. This year, SEECON will take place in Hertfordshire and RWNYS 2024 will be in London.

Branching out – Our young ringers regularly attend branch practices, including the Elementary and Advanced practices. In the Christmas holidays, they descended en masse to the Tuesday afternoon practice and managed to work their way through a considerable amount of mince pies! Over the year, young ringers from different towers are starting to ring at each other's towers in addition to their home practices. This not only strengthens the regular tower bands in some cases, and develops individual skills, but also allows the young ringers to socialise and encourage each other. To me, this making new friends and wanting to ring in different towers is the most positive part of organising youth events.

Branching further afield – Our more experienced young ringers have been branching out, attending Reading 12-bell practices at St Giles, the Reading advanced practice at Shiplake and the 10-bell practice in Guildford. Two of our young ringers attended the ART M1 training course and are now working towards accreditation.

Quarter Peals and Peals – Over the last year, at least 6 of our young ringers have rung quarter peals, some of them many times! Particular highlights include Charley ringing over 60 quarter peals before the age of 13, James composing and conducting quarter peals, and a quarter of Bob Minor rung during the Christmas holidays by 4 of our young ringers, Charley, James, Charlotte and Becki.

Four young ringers also rang their first peals this year – Matt, James, Becki and Charley.

I would like to thank all the adult ringers in the branch who go out of their way to listen to, support, encourage, drive around and ring with our young ringers. It makes all the difference to them.

Looking ahead for 2024 – I would like to see if we can encourage more young people to take up ringing. I intend to contact local schools to advertise ringing as a 'skill' for the Duke of Edinburgh award. I'd also like to make contact with other youth groups such as the Scouts and Guides. For the Duke of Edinburgh award, a commitment of a minimum of 3 months is required, which gives young people the chance to progress and to see if they would like ringing to be a hobby for life.

In addition, if towers have young ringers who are not taking part in the weekend events available, I would like to organise for other young ringers to visit their home towers and offer support and encouragement if the tower captain feels that would be of benefit to their young ringer.

Jennifer Moynihan

Ringling Master's report

Of all the branch practices we run, our Elementary practice continues to be the best attended. On one occasion too well attended with over 22 people which made it a challenge to run. As a general plea to our members, it is helpful to know whether you are planning to attend a practice and it is greatly appreciated when you do let the organiser know.

The ringling standard of those that have been attending the elementary practices has generally improved such that I have changed the approach to some of the elementary practices to include more advanced ringling. Based on this we should review 'what do we need for 2024'? The Wednesday elementary practice has tended to become more of an intermediate practice, particularly when we are being hosted by a tower that is their normal practice night (Finchampstead, Waltham St Lawrence). At these practices as well as the usual elementary exercises we have spent time on Plain Bob, Grandsire and simple treble bob methods.

Binfield Afternoon Practices have been held in every month except September. They have been well supported. Practices have mainly focused on developing individuals' needs of rounds and call changes and simple plain methods to develop plain hunting capabilities. When possible, plain methods have been spliced and regular surprises methods rung. Is there a case for also alternating with another tower to run an 8-bell practice?

The advanced practice has become the least well attended and has not really recovered since the pandemic. I would like to encourage members of the branch to come along to this practice. It is not restricted just to surprise major and can be an opportunity for those members that are progressing beyond Plain Bob and Grandsire. Anyone who wants to learn to ring the treble to surprise or treble bob methods are always very welcome.

During the year other members of the branch,

particularly those that attended the ART M2 course (October 2022) have run some of the elementary practices. I plan to continue this approach in 2024 as on a personal basis it means I can reduce the number of practices I attend in a year. We currently on average organise 5 practices a month and I am grateful to Steve Wells and those others that have run practices when I am not available.

The 6-bell striking competition was held at Sandhurst and judged by Steve Wells. 3 teams entered with All Saints Wokingham coming first. Hopefully in 2024 there will be a few more tower teams entering the competition. All Saints Wokingham were also unable to put together a band for the Oxford Guild 6 Bell Striking competition which was held in October. I also tried to enter a team for the Guild 10-bell striking competition but was unable to put together enough ringers.

As part of the Branch programme to develop elementary ringers, two quarter peals were organised by Jane Mellor to help three members, Jan Glen (Binfield), Julie Greenway (Wokingham All Saints) and Jennifer Moynihan (Arborfield) ring their first quarter peals.

Last year in my report I congratulated James Moynihan, Becki Shuttleworth and Charley Smith, three of our young ringers who rang their first quarter peal during 2022. This year all three have rung their first peal, well done!

113 Quarter peals and 8 peals have been recorded for the Branch on the Ringing World's Bellboard website during the year, this is about double that achieved in 2022. The leading tower once again was Shottesbrooke with a total of 70 quarter peals and 3 peals. The branch towers celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III recording 8 quarter peals, 2 peals as well as general ringling in most of the towers.

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

Nigel Mellor

Safeguarding report

Although this role has not been an official role in the Branch I have been asked as part of my role as Training officer to be aware of ringers safeguarding responsibilities.

Safeguarding is a Parish matter, and all Tower Captains are responsible for liaising with their church's safeguarding officer to ensure all their ringers comply with the Oxford Diocese Safeguarding policy for bellringers.

This link takes you to the ODG Safeguarding page where all the links to various topics can be found:

- Safeguarding <https://odg.org.uk/info/safeguarding/>
- Safeguarding Checklist <https://odg.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Safeguarding-check-list-Feb-2022.pdf>
- Permission to Ring Form -download
- ODG Safeguarding policy -download (updated January 2024)
- Training portal <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>

- Covid Safety at a glance <https://odg.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Guidance-at-a-glance-2.5.pdf>
- Safeguarding Q&A - download
- ODG Anti-Bullying policy - download (updated Nov 2023)

Quick fire reminders:

- All ringers are required to complete Basic Awareness Module from age 16+
- All Tower Captains should be BDS Cleared
- All Tower Captains and Ringing teachers must complete the Foundation Course
- All parents complete permission to ring form - 18 & under
- All Towers should display Parish Safeguarding Officer details

Don't forget CCCBR also has many Safeguarding links:

- <https://ccabr.org.uk/safeguarding/about/>
- <https://ccabr.org.uk/safeguarding/resources/>

Jane Mellor

Bookstall Holder's report

The bookstall has been very quiet this year, with only 3 book sales. For the Coronation, I ordered and supplied ringing badges.

Going forward, the stock in the bookstall is very old and some of it is outdated. I would like to know if people still value the bookstall? Would more people buy from it if the stock was refreshed? Do people tend to just look for methods etc on line now?

I was wondering whether the bookstall should be replaced with a 'recommended, source and supply' service whereby I can recommend books I see, and people can order them through the bookstall if they can't buy them themselves over the internet. I could provide recommendations using email or WhatsApp or put a short note in each newsletter.

I welcome thoughts and suggestions from members.

Jennifer Moynihan

Training Officer's report

Since the AGM in February 2023 the following events have been held.

- John Harrison held a rope splicing course in March
- A 'firsts' quarter peal morning was held in March and again in September when 5 people gained their first quarter peals.
- Jane Mellor held a rope skills course in April with Darren Smith to secure improved bell handling and control for a few of the elementary band. This was successful and very beneficial to the participants.
- The Elementary Outing was organised in August at Dorney, Clewer, Maidenhead finishing at White Waltham as the Branch Practice. Enjoyed by all.

The elementary practices continue to be well received creating good progress for many ringers with regular practices. The ringing standard has widened now so this creates questions about how we address the teaching for early elementary ringers.

When I first took the post of training officer, I aimed to increase the number of good teachers within the branch. I want all ringers to feel they can contribute to Sunday ringing and events within the branch and are valued whatever their ability.

I still feel that the number of teachers within the branch needs to be increased. If the branch were to do a recruitment campaign the new ringers need to be progressed and embedded into local towers. The aim would be for each tower to have several teachers.

Thinking ahead:

- I would like to identify some new teachers and organise an M1 course around a small recruitment.
- I wish to organise an evening meeting of ringing for the M2F teachers who attended the course in October 2022 to share teaching ideas and to establish who is ready for accreditation.
- More ringers are ready for quarter peals, so I wish to repeat a Saturday quarter peal morning very soon.
- I also wish to run another focused Saturday morning for early elementary ringers to include theory and bell control.

If anyone thinks they would like to contribute to teaching in any way, please be in touch.

Next February I am planning on standing down as Training Officer as I feel we need to keep changing the committee members to keep ideas fresh and moving forward within the branch. I'll be looking for my replacement!

Jane Mellor

Webmaster/Postmaster's Report

Website – The website has been kept up to date throughout the year. Updates included results and pictures from the 6-bell striking competition as well as newsletters, meeting papers and regular updates of the diary. Tower and officer contact details have been updated whenever I was made aware of any changes. In September I created a resource area for downloadable material, initially crib sheets for three special methods. odg.org.uk/sdb/download/

Reference information on the website includes contact details for officers, an events diary, information and contact details for Branch towers, services offered by the Branch including training courses, newsletters, reference documents, past events, history of the Branch and useful external links. The website is at: odg.org.uk/sdb/

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

The Members list includes all members who provided an e-mail address plus some non members who regularly ring in the Branch, and former members who have opted to remain

in touch. It had 169 addresses at the year end.

The Wedding volunteer list goes to 40 ringers (6 more than in 2022) and was used twice in 2023 (4 fewer than in 2022).

The Quarter peal volunteer list goes to 12 ringers (same as in 2022) and was used once (not used in 2022).

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 against spam, which is held so I can deal with it before it reaches members. Spam to the list is relatively rare and the most frequently trapped messages are from members who thought they were replying to one of the officers but whose mail systems sent their message to the list despite it being marked for reply to sender).

During the year there were two occasions when some ISPs, notably GMail, blocked mail from ODG addresses. This was a side effect of a Guild server upgrade and was resolved by the Guild server manager.

Details of e-mail services are on the website at: odg.org.uk/sdb/services/email.html

John Harrison

Branch representatives to the Guild

[Awaited]

Sue Davenport.

Treasurer's Report
Sonning Deanery Branch Accounts
Year to December 2023

<u>AGM Balance Sheet</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>
<u>General Fund</u>		
Subs	£ 1,262.00	
Subs to Guild		£ 785.00
Newsletter		£ 90.00
Hall Hire		£ 75.00
Course Subsidy		£ -
Competition Judges		£ -
Postage, stationery etc		£ 26.79
Tower fees		£ 50.00
Donation RW		£ 24.00
Badges	£ 266.56	£ 260.00
Books	£ 10.00	
Young Ringers		£ 100.00
General funds totals	£ 1,538.56	£ 1,410.79
Carry over of 2022 balances	£ 3,323.89	
<u>General fund balance at 31/12/2023</u>	£ 3,451.66	
 <u>Bell fund</u>		
Interest	£ 223.76	
Donation	£ 109.75	
Tower grants		
Bell fund 2022 totals	£ 333.51	£ -
Carry over of 2022 balances	£ 2,543.50	
Bell fund balance	£ 2,877.01	
 Actual branch funds	£ 6,328.67	
 Members paid	158	

Signed: S Davenport



Treasurer

I certify that these accounts are in accordance with the books, statements and vouchers given to me by the Treasurer.

Signed: S Smith



Examiner