

Sonning Deanery Branch Newsletter



January 2016, Winter Issue



A Happy Ringing New Year to You All.

We have monthly Branch Practices at White Waltham, Easthampstead and Wargrave coming up plus the regular "first Tuesday of the month" afternoon practices at Binfield. Please see the [Branch diary](#) for details (<http://odg.org.uk/sdb/diary/index.html>). These practices provide excellent opportunities not only to ring, but also to "network" with other ringers and towers. Please come along if you would like to ring. All standards are catered for.

Our support to towers that need help building and maintaining their band continues. However, this must be a two way process with regular visitors coming to a tower's practice over a long period of time and tower members going to other practices. If you are keen to develop your tower's skill base and can regularly visit another tower, we can try to develop a tailored training program for you at the other tower focusing on the skills needed at your own tower. This could include not only method ringing but such things as calling call changes, improving striking, calling touches, organising ringing etc. Please let us know if you are interested in such a tailored training program and we will see what can be arranged.

Steve Wells (Ringing Master)

New Year, New Challenges

2015 was notable for the string of major events that called for ringing, including the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, the 600th of Agincourt, the 70th of VE Day and VJ Day, the Queen becoming the longest reigning British Monarch and the 300th anniversary of the first recorded peal, not to mention on-going centenaries of events during the First World War. I hope that most of us managed to ring for at least some of those events.

The big national event in 2016 will be the Queen's 90th birthday. As with the Jubilee a few years ago there will be two opportunities to mark it. The birthday itself is on 21st April and there will also be 'official birthday' celebrations over the weekend of 10th - 12th June, with as many towers as possible asked to ring during the 'Patron's Lunch' between noon and 2pm on the Sunday. (For more information see: cccbr.org.uk/pr/queens90th.)

The other big initiative in 2016 is for ringing to play a major role in the Heritage Open Days on the second weekend in September, when visitors are welcomed to many historic buildings that aren't normally open to the public. Some towers (including my own) have held open days during this during this weekend in the past but there has never been a nationwide focus on bellringing before.

This year the Central Council is working with the Heritage Open Days co-ordinating body to ensure that we get maximum publicity. They are designing a special logo for use in ringing publicity and ringing already features on their website – *Ten things you never knew about bellringing* (11 December) see: heritageopendays.org.uk. If we can get a lot of towers open in the Branch then we should be able to increase our share of the publicity in local press and radio, so please start thinking about it in advance. If you need any help or advice, contact me on either chairman@sdb.odg.org.uk or 0118 978 5520.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 16th January

White Waltham (6)
4.30pm—6pm Branch Practice

Saturday 20th February

Easthampstead (8)
AGM
Ringing 3-4pm, Service, Tea, 5.15pm
AGM, Ringing from 7pm

Saturday 19th March

Wargrave (8)
10.30am—12 noon Branch Practice

Saturday 16th April

Binfield (6)
4-6pm 6 bell striking competition
6pm onwards Branch Practice

**Monthly Tuesday afternoon practices
(2-4pm at Binfield) on 2nd Feb, 1st
March, 5 April (provisionally).**

**Surprise Major practices (Wednesday
8pm –9.30pm) at Wokingham All
Saints on 10th Feb, 9th March & 5th
April (provisionally).**

Also on the publicity front, you will know (via your tower correspondent) that we are working on the possibility of a publicity and recruitment event in the Branch. We are considering hiring a mini ring to show the public what ringing is about, with a mixture of demonstration ringing, talking to people and explaining how it works, and letting them have a go – small bells are quite safe with amateurs. We would also have publicity material to hand out and contact details for where people can learn to ring. Of course the most important ingredient of such an event is having plenty of ringers present, not just to help with the demonstration but to provide the human face of ringing and encourage people to join us. These events have been very successful in other places, and we are currently exploring suitable venues – where there will be lots of people. We should have something definite to report by the AGM.

John Harrison, Chairman

Branch Ringing Outing

The Sonning Deanery Branch ringing outing took place on Saturday 17th October to 5 towers in the Pangbourne / Streatley area. All were 6-bell towers; in the morning we rang at SMV Purley, St James Less Pangbourne, and St Mary Streatley. Most of us took lunch together in the Boathouse Café of the Swan Hotel at Streatley, which is right next door to the church and overlooking the river. In the afternoon we rang at St Andrew South Stoke and finished at St Mary Whitchurch.

At Purley we were greeted with the comment: "Have you got your swimming costumes?" A large, full-immersion baptismal pool was set up just outside the ground floor ringing area at the back of the church. At South Stoke we found we were on the route of a 100 mile run taking place that day; some very weary runners came past while we waited for the church tower to be opened.

To my mind the weather was just right for a ringing outing, clear, dry and not too sunny, which would have meant people wanting to be outside rather than ringing inside. The ringing session at each tower was run by a different ringer: Pam Elliston, Rob Needham, Graham Slade, Geoff Harvey and Nigel Mellor. There was about 45 minutes of ringing time at each tower, and all standards were catered for from rounds and called changes to Cambridge Surprise Minor. In total 18 ODG members plus a ringer from Kent rang at some time during the day.

Ten ringers did all five towers, and nine ringers did fewer towers, usually just the morning or just the afternoon ones. We had three ringers from Reading Branch on the outing and we were most grateful for their support. Unfortunately the relatively low number of ringers taking part (at £1 per tower rung) indicated that the branch would make a loss on the day, but every cloud has a silver lining as at Streatley the local ringer forgot to open the tower for us, and when he finally arrived he was so embarrassed that he refused to take the tower fee; this resulted in a slight surplus on the day which goes into branch funds. Our thanks to Pam and Andrew Elliston for booking all the towers and organising the whole day.

Rob Needham (Sonning)

A Novice Bell Ringer from Wargrave visits America (part One)

My wife and I went over to America in August to visit our son and meet his new potential in-laws. They live in Chicago. During the trip we also took the opportunity to include a tour of Boston, Cape Cod and the Islands.

Whilst reading about the tourist attractions in Boston I came upon Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem of Paul Revere's Ride to warn of the British march on Boston. An extract of which I reproduce below.

Listen my children and you shall hear

Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,

On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;

Hardly a man is now alive

Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march

By land or sea from the town to-night,

Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch

Of the North Church Tower as a signal light...



The Old North Church in Boston

As a novice Bell Ringer at St. Marys in Wargrave I thought this would be an ideal opportunity to visit an American bell tower and surely there would be none better than the oldest bell tower in North America – that of The Old North Church in Boston Massachusetts. When I started my research I also found a bell tower in the University of Chicago. Those two locations were perfect for my trip so I sent off a cold call e-mail to an address that I found on the Internet. I got an immediate response from both Chicago and Boston. Both Tower Captains welcomed me — even when I told them how much of a novice I really was.

My first experience of ringing in America was at the University of Chicago - Mitchell Bell Tower (below) and I had tremendous encouragement from Tom Farthing, the Tower Captain, who was in regular e-mail contact with me prior to my visit. Despite the bell tower being closed during much of August and September (holidays etc) luckily I was there just before it closed!



I managed to make my way to the Mitchell Tower and met Tom in the foyer prior to climbing up into the Belfry. He explained that the band was very inexperienced as he was building it from scratch so I should not feel intimidated. That was music to my ears as I was very nervous. A stranger in a strange bell tower. I have to admit to being a little disappointed when he told me that for various reasons the tower had to operate with closed bells - basically the neighbours did not like the noise from the bells!



I felt confident when Tom asked me to ring up the treble and thankfully I managed that without any mishaps. When I looked closely around the tower I was surprised to see a

contraption in the corner that I thought a bit Heath Robinson. Tom explained it was a weighted practice fly-wheel that he and his brother had built and was what he uses to introduce beginners to bell ringing.

To be continued in the next edition...

Bill Bookless, Wargrave

High Fives at Wargrave

On Sunday 27th September, four ringers at St Mary's they were presented with their Level 1 certificates, and at the same time their teacher Vinni Sullivan was presented with hers too, the ART Module 1 'teaching bell handling' certificate.

The five then rang rounds for service, albeit only for very short stretches, and at times not very accurately. After ringing their bells down, the students posed for a picture. (Left to Right: Val Salisbury, Bill Bookless, Carlos Soares, Laura Lord).

They are now working towards Level 2 and 3, and five new recruits are working hard on Level 1. Much credit must go to John Coombes, the tower manager, for his time and input which has enabled us to build up our numbers of ringers able to ring for Sunday Services.



Our rounds on Sunday are improving, and we can now ring 10 minutes of quite respectable simple call changes with our two more experienced ringers. Laura has passed Level 2, and Vinni has attended the ART Module 2 course, and is working towards full accreditation.

All this would not be possible without the regular help and support we get from several Sonning ringers, especially Rob and Andrew, and other visitors. I am particularly appreciative of the time and support Rob Needham, my mentor, has given me; attending many of the tied as well as open practices, and arranging for us to use the simulator at Sonning. Jacquie Hazell the branch training officer has also been very supportive. The commitment the learners have shown, and their willingness to work hard to get it right, even when it has been proving

challenging has been most impressive; high fives were definitely in order for their achievement!

Our new aim is being to ring all eight on Sundays and to master "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star".

Vinni Sullivan, Wargrave

Peals & Quarter Peals

Saturday 5 December 2015 in 2 hrs 54 mins

Wokingham St Paul

5088 Lessness Surprise Major

Composed: Richard I Allton

- 1 David A Cornwall
- 2 J Alan Ainsworth
- 3 Catherine M A Lane
- 4 Geoffrey K Cook
- 5 Christopher P Cole
- 6 David Sullivan
- 7 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 8 Jon P Tutcher

For the Feast of St. Nicholas

Sunday 27 September 2015

Wokingham All Saints

1264 Plain Bob Major

- 1 Kristin L Fitch
- 2 Mary Spence
- 3 Jane A Mellor
- 4 Rob Needham
- 5 Lavinia M Sullivan
- 6 Neil G Curnow
- 7 David V Sullivan
- 8 John A Harrison (C)

Rung for Harvest Festival evening service.

Sunday 5 October 2015

Hurst

1288 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Julian Pettifer (1st quarter on 8)
- 2 Simon C Farrar
- 3 Pam Elliston
- 4 Rob Needham
- 5 Andrew Elliston
- 6 Richard Bennett
- 7 Graham E Slade (C)
- 8 Simon Roberts (1st quarter on 8)

Rung to mark the life of Arthur Maurice Priest, ringer of this parish, who died this day 100 years ago following injuries sustained at the Battle of Loos.

Sunday 11 October

Wokingham All Saints

1260 Stedman Triples

- 1 Mary Spence
- 2 Barbara G Smith
- 3 Barbara E Wells
- 4 Jane A Mellor
- 5 Stephen C Wells
- 6 Jon P Tutcher
- 7 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
- 8 Stephen R Smith

First quarter of Stedman Triples - 1.

Sunday 25 October 2015

Wokingham All Saints

1250 Yorkshire Surprise Major

- 1 Kristin L Fitch
- 2 Jane A Mellor
- 3 Julie B Goodchild
- 4 Geoff K Cook
- 5 Stephen R Smith
- 6 Jonathan P Goodchild
- 7 Nigel A L Mellor (C)
- 8 John A Harrison

For evening service on St Crispin's Day, the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. First Treble to

Sunday 8 November 2015

Wokingham St Paul

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Geoffrey M Harvey
- 2 Geoffrey K Cook
- 3 Susan E Davenport
- 4 David Creasy
- 5 Christopher P Cole
- 6 Alan K Barsby
- 7 Kenneth R Davenport (C)
- 8 Elizabeth J O'Brien

Half muffled for Remembrance Sunday

Wednesday 25 Nov

Waltham St Lawrence

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Sophie Jenner
- 2 Jacqueline Hazell (C)
- 3 Martha Hazell
- 4 Sam Maynard
- 5 Derek R Smith
- 6 Vicki Bulbeck

1st quarter at 1st attempt: 1

Ringling at Shottesbrooke and White Waltham

The Diocese of Oxford are considering separating Shottesbrooke and White Waltham Churches. However, it may be helpful to explain that the ringing at each church will be unaffected. Shottesbrooke and White Waltham will remain a committed and inseparable band serving the two churches.

Practices will remain as they are, continuing to serve our representative churches. These practices will follow the existing pattern of 1st and 3rd Fridays at Shottesbrooke and 2nd, 4th and 5th Fridays at White Waltham.

Sunday service ringing will be under the guidance of the two tower captains, Lesley Graves and Bob Packer. Each Tower Captain will support the other tower.

Lesley Graves and Bob Packer

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