

### **2023 ODG AGM, 8-BELL COMPETITION & ACTIVITY DAY**

Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup> dawned warm and sunny and a perfect day to be out in the West Oxfordshire countryside for the ODG AGM and 8-bell striking competition. Our host tower was Broadwell in the Witney & Woodstock Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild. The bells used to be a heavy five rehung at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were only rung for 10 -15 years before it became clear that they were much too high in the tower and dangerously and inadequately bedded into the thin stonework. They were then “clocked” for about 100 years, until the project to restore them was hatched in late 2017. Despite a covid hiatus, it was all complete by Summer 2021. They might have become a six, but for the timely discovery of the two redundant trebles from Camberley, Surrey. There was just room to fit eight, hung much lower in the tower and the results speak for themselves. They are a very fine 15½ cwt eight and being much enjoyed by the emerging local band and visitors alike.

There was a major festival in the town at Witney on the day, so Broadwell was chosen for the AGM. The morning had several activities including the competition. Trips around White’s bell hangers works and ringing the Balscote bells at Appleton proved very popular. There was a choice of two open-tower routes. There were three towers around Burford: Asthall, Taynton and Fulbrook which were all relatively recently restored and a route up the Thames from Aston via Bampton to Clanfield.

The 8-bell competition was held during the morning at Broadwell. The gradual, albeit nervous, post-Covid ringing recovery was underway and the competition attracted seven teams with the set-piece being a five course touch of Erin Triples. All teams completed the test piece although few managed to avoid any trips. Our judges were Colin Newman (recently moved from Reading Branch to Bristol) accompanied by Matt Jerome and Anna Sherwood. It’s nice to see the younger generation taking a prominent place at these events. They declared Newbury Branch the winners with Reading Branch close second. The results and judges’ comments were delivered after lunch and just before the AGM:

Comments	Faults	Team	Placed
Peal speed of 3hr 6, grew in confidence. No faults. Accurate.	25	Newbury Branch	1 <sup>st</sup>
Peal speed of 3hr 1, solid structure. Excellent 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> course	27	Reading Branch	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Peal speed of 3hr 8, back bells worked well together. Consistent trips	43	North Bucks Branch	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Peal speed of 2hr 57, good rhythm, mistake in the third course. 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> courses were good	44	EBSB	4 <sup>th</sup>
Peal speed of 3hr 6, strong confident start, some methods mistakes but a good 4 <sup>th</sup> course	45	Banbury Branch	5 <sup>th</sup>
Peal speed of 2hr 57, ambitious pace. Faults occurred. 4 <sup>th</sup> & 5 <sup>th</sup> courses were good	53	Vale of White Horse	6 <sup>th</sup>
Peal speed of 3hr 4, shaky start, some inconsistent leading and mistakes	54	Oxford City	7 <sup>th</sup>



Broadwell church with refreshment horsebox



The winning Newbury Branch team

The church is situated in a stunning location by the fishponds and across a field from the farm and the Molyneaux Barn where the AGM and remaining day's activities were being held. The Stallpits mini ring was available throughout the day outside the barn which was also home to the Guild bookstall, the lunches and the Ringing World stand & displays. Inside the Molyneaux's house was have-a-go handbell change ringing. There was something for everyone.



This may be the first AGM to have been held in a barn! It started promptly and was duly completed very efficiently in under the hour with Katie Lane, the Guild Master in the chair. The mini ring could be just heard in the distance throughout the meeting, keeping the children amused! It's good to make ringing fun for the youngsters. Such was the attraction of the event that well over seventy members journeyed across our huge Guild (Berks, Bucks and Oxon) to one of its most Westerly towers. The papers and minutes will be available on the ODG website <https://odg.org.uk/>

The AGM was followed by service ringing at Broadwell prior to a short Songs of Praise service which opened with Oranges & Lemons on handbells and included our favourite ringers' hymns. Ringing continued after the service to accompany the dismantling of the stands, the mini ring, the packing away and the return to the peaceful empty field, barn and church.



Huge thanks are due to those who made the event happen in this new ODG location. The Witney & Woodstock Branch, White's of Appleton, the ODG Officers, organisers of the various activities, the Rev'd Harry MacInnes and particularly to Paul & Annabel Molyneaux who opened their barn and house for the day.

Tony Crabtree