

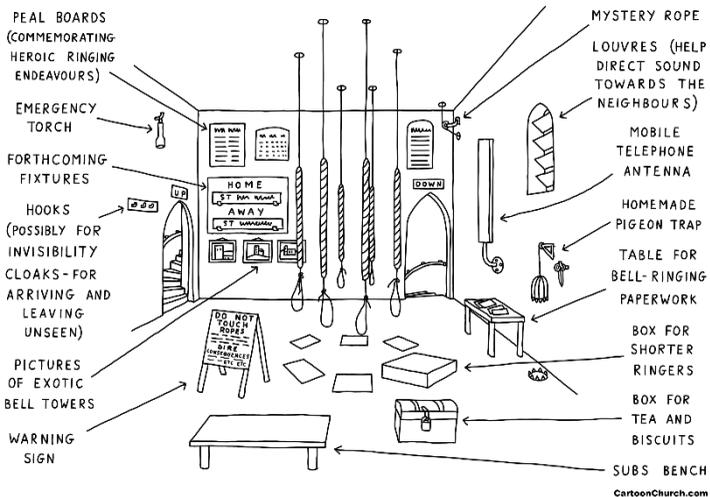
ODD BOB



Newsletter of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers
odg.org.uk/

THE RINGING CHAMBER

HOME OF THE BELL RINGERS





Many thanks to Dave Walker for 'The Ringing Chamber'- see his newsletter (diagramclub.substack.com).

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From your Editor

All the contributors hope you enjoy this issue of *Odd Bob* and the myriad of members' events and activities – check out odg.org.uk for even more.

Kathryn Grant

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

As members should expect, a record of their membership is maintained on a combination of paper and computer systems. These records are used solely for the administration of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers and for notification of future events to members. They are not made available to anyone for commercial purposes. If any member wishes to inspect the records held, please contact the Guild Secretary.

Master's Mutterings

As I sit here composing these thoughts on a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon in October, I am acutely aware that I ought to be outside. The autumn garden is in need of a little tender loving care before the inevitable arrival of the next seasonal storm, which is sure to bring its own brand of chaos.

Many of you may also be familiar with my cat, who has developed quite the reputation for making cameo appearances during our Zoom meetings. She has an uncanny ability to sense when a meeting has dragged on for too long, at which point she will stroll across my screen or settle herself in front of the keyboard – her way of insisting that my attention belongs to her, rather than to Guild business.

I need to submit something quickly before the cat or our *Odd Bob* editor reprimands me (Ed: as if she'd dare...) but what should I write?

We managed to ring through the heat and drought of Summer 2025 enduring long ropes, loosening ancient frames and very hot ringing rooms. But now, with the arrival of autumn, our schedules become especially full. This season brings a host of important events and opportunities for both new and experienced ringers. Notably, we look forward to the Michaelmas Course, which offers valuable instruction and practice. Alongside this, there are the Raising and Lowering and Six-Bell Competitions, providing ringers with a chance to hone their skills and enjoy a bit of friendly rivalry.

The New Guild Members Day stands out as a welcoming occasion for those joining our community, while the Steeple Aston Course and the Ten-Bell Training Day cater for those eager to develop further their ringing abilities. We are also pleased to see the Young Ringers' Practices restarting, offering younger members a supportive environment to learn and participate.

In addition to these practical sessions and courses, the smooth running of the Guild relies on a series of essential meetings. The Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Learning and Development Workgroup, and the Bell Fund Trustees all play a critical role in maintaining our operations. The Autumn General Committee meeting and the regular Branch Practices and Half-Year meetings ensure that communication flows and plans are coordinated across the Guild.

Together, these activities and gatherings make autumn a vibrant and vital time in our calendar, strengthening both our skills and our sense of community.

All these events rely heavily on the generous donation of time by numerous dedicated ringers. Their willingness to volunteer is the backbone of our activities.

I am deeply appreciative of the significant efforts and commitment these ringers offer to the Guild. Their contributions not only sustain our traditions but also foster a strong sense of community and continuity within our ringing circles. Without their dedication, many of the cherished events we enjoy simply would not be possible.

When the evenings draw in, I occasionally find myself delving into old Guild Reports, as well as articles and books penned by the more erudite members of the Oxford Diocesan Guild. Most recently, I turned to Bill Butler's works, discovering a wealth of insights and perspectives on the Guild's past.

'100 Hundred Years of the Oxford Diocesan Guild'. Shockingly it was published in October 1981, and we are already planning the 150th Anniversary in 2031. Perhaps there is someone who would enjoy writing a follow-on for 1981 to 2031.

Although I am unable to quote extensively from Bill Butler's writings, much of his commentary remains highly relevant to the difficulties and challenges that we continue to encounter in 2025. The themes he addressed in his reflections echo many of the ongoing issues faced by our Guild, highlighting a sense of continuity between past and present struggles. This recurring pattern serves as a poignant reminder that while times may change, the core challenges and aspirations of our community often endure across generations.

Here are just a few quotations for reflection.

Chapter 13, entitled 'Reports, Rules and Money!', offers valuable insight into the ongoing evolution of Guild regulations: 'The Rules also occupied the members during that time. On at least nine occasions alterations were proposed and finally the situation became so confused that in 1957 another special sub-committee was set up to revise them...at last this received the assent of members at general committee and was published as a sixteen-page booklet...everyone hoped that in future only minor revisions would be needed.'

Moving forward, Chapter 14, 'The Wind of Change', captures the transformation brought about by new generations of ringers: '...a new generation had been taught whose contact with the founders were more tenuous. These younger ringers had different standards, ideals and often different goals. They were more ambitious, frequently more highly educated and, in some cases, less tolerant.'

Bellringing, like many traditional crafts, is not without its difficulties. One of the most pressing challenges is the decline in the number of new recruits, which threatens the long-term sustainability of the practice. Additionally, the ongoing maintenance (see also p.7) required for historic churches, bells, and towers presents a significant responsibility for communities and societies invested in preserving this heritage.

While bellringing continues to be deeply rooted in tradition, it is essential that the art also embraces aspects of modernity to remain vibrant and relevant. The future of bellringing depends on its ability to adapt and evolve, ensuring that both its historic legacy and contemporary appeal are safeguarded for generations to come.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

ODG Towers and Belfries Committee's report

Forthcoming dates:

24 January - Rope maintenance

20 June - Secrets of the Steeple Keeper

17 October - Maintenance course

The T&B committee continues to mix in-person Summer meetings with Zoom in the dark months. New members are very welcome. You don't necessarily have to be an expert in towers or belfries. That will come with time as it has for all of us.

Our October meeting included a discussion on church closures. It followed the DAC Bell Advisors' Conference in Leeds, which was reported in *The Ringing World*, 2 May. A short article follows this report – 'the future for churches and bells?'.

Recent enquiries include:

Stretchy ropes: These continue to be an issue, and the symptoms aren't always recognised as a rope problem. A recent enquiry related to a bell that had become 'hard to set'. Yes, the bell was indeed 'fine-set', which didn't help, but the rope was stretchy and made the setting action just a little too tricky. Remember to 'stretch' new ropes before ringing. Although most new ropes have a 'pre-stretched terylene' also called 'polyester' top end, much of the stretch is often in the sally and tail so the rope must still have a heavy weight (25+kg) hung on it for a week or so before ringing. Get back to your supplier sooner rather than later if there is still stretch; especially in a man-made top. It may never disappear.

Internal sound: we have also had enquiries regarding the sound in the ringing room. In each case it was too loud for ease of ringing, conducting or general comfort. The remedies can be wide and varied and each case needed to be examined carefully. We cover this subject in our belfry courses and if you want to learn more, then sign up for a course.

Over the last few years, we increased the courses we run to three or four belfry and rope courses per year averaging sixteen students per course. We ran three in 2025, the most recent at Wantage. We think the new MemberMojo communications network is reaching more ODG members than the existing network so we expect the take-up of places to continue. Any branches wishing to run a local course are welcome to ask for help. The courses are pitched at all levels. You can look at a particular topic or indeed something you spot during the course that you hadn't considered before! We are looking for locations and dates for 2026 courses and will publish details when known. Email tbchair@odg.org.uk or tbsecretary@odg.org.uk if you fancy attending or hosting a course.

Our members have visited about twenty-five towers since the last General Committee plus email enquiries. Please ask if you would like a visit either for general advice, a specific problem or a Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) for which you may get a certificate (bronze, silver or gold) besides lots of helpful advice or suggested improvements.

The T&B page of the ODG website [Towers and Belfries - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](https://www.odg.org.uk) continues to expand with useful material. You will find contact details and the services offered by our members. If you can't find what you are looking for, please ask tbchair@odg.org.uk

Tony Crabtree, Chairman, Towers and Belfries Committee

The future for churches and bells?

The DAC Bell Advisors' April Conference in Leeds focused on church closures and the effect on bells. This was reported in *The Ringing World*, 2 May.

How will declining church use impact the future of bells and bell ringing? When a church falls into disuse what happens to the bells? How should a body such as ODG respond?

There are complex processes which should be followed before official closure or disposal explained in guidance on determining the future of a church building (link also mentions [bell ringing groups](#)) <https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/61f2fd86f0ee5/content/pages/documents/20210831-doc-library-determining-church-building-futures.pdf>. It also provides links and examples of how churches may transform for community purposes, but gaps may exist between procedures and there actually being people at local level to implement them.

Can bell ringers play a role in picking up intelligence of potential closures to ensure rings remain available for future generations? Do we as ringers actually understand the historic significance of rings within our local towers? Do we know what protections may exist through old documents or statutory listings to protect bells or ensure they are maintained in a usable form? Can/should we do anything to at least try and prioritize which rings survive in usable forms?

Sadly, we already know of rings lost through church disposals in the past and examples of towers where shortly before closure significant investment in the bells may have been made. How might we help the Bell Fund Trustees to prioritize grant awards towards significant rings or churches least likely to close?

The Bell Fund, thanks to some generous donations, bequests and beneficial investment performance, wants to increase its support for projects with good long-term prospects. Unfortunately, history points towards some applications agreed in principle never developing into completed projects but also some potentially sound projects failing to develop through a lack of suitable local expertise to develop and deliver them. What can ODG and its bell fund do to help such projects move from dream to reality?

Hopefully this short article will have you all thinking about the future but remember an organization with ageing volunteers and limited time will need your help if it is to ensure resources are used to best effect in preserving important installations and ensuring ringing continues into the 22nd Century and beyond.

Chris Potter, Towers and Belfries Committee

Librarian's Report

There have been four library enquiries since May's *Odd Bob*. These have been:

- visit to library to examine Sonning Deanery Branch minutes
- loan of Revd Cyril Jenkyn's Military Cross to the steward of the CCCBR Rolls of Honour
- whereabouts of the original of the Oranges and Lemons print by H.E.Tidmarsh
- books and papers relating to the Banbury Branch were borrowed

I have been doing further work on the future of the Guild library. In May's *Odd Bob* I gave a report about my contact with the Oxfordshire History Centre, asking whether they would be in a position to transfer material from the Guild library to their archive facility in Cowley. This was in connection with the fact that filling the post of librarian when I finish holding it has not so far been successful. The Oxfordshire History Centre replied that this is likely to be possible for the Guild's archival material such as minute books but less likely for non-Guild material such as printed books.

Since the March meeting I have produced a document setting out issues relating to the library and its future. The document is intended go to the Guild Committee for discussion and setting out next steps and I intend to report on this in a future edition of *Odd Bob*. If any member has any comment or query on the future of the Guild library please let me know.

And the usual message, if anybody would like to visit the library, you are very welcome to do so: please let me know. Books can also be borrowed. As an alternative I am happy to look up information, so please get in touch if you have any queries.

Doug Beaumont, Guild Librarian

Learning and Development Workgroup

11 April - Radley Course

24 October - Steeple Aston Course*

4 July - RWNYC, Nottingham

7 November - 10-bell Course*

26 September - Michaelmas Course*

* dates to be confirmed

The RWNYC in Birmingham provided another inspiring opportunity for young ringers from around the country to come together for a fun-filled festival of ringing (see pp.39-40). The Bucks and Berks Young Ringers, drawn from the EBSB and Sonning Deanery Branches, enjoyed their best ever result: second in the eight-bell call-change competition at Erdington. The band representing the rest of the Guild in the eight-bell method ringing section at Edgbaston was placed third. Although not significant, it is interesting that both bands were awarded the same score: 8.5/10. Congratulations to all the youngsters who took part.

This year's Michaelmas Course had sufficient applicants for just three groups, with most of them opting for Cambridge and/or Yorkshire S Major. Surprise Minor and Superlative and Bristol S Major were also available at either end of the spectrum.

Some follow-up practices are being arranged so that the students can build on what was achieved during the day. We are grateful to our tutors, and to the very dependable helpers who provided a solid framework during more than four hours of ringing. Some comments were again received about the possibility of reducing the length of the course, perhaps by altering lunch arrangements.

Jon Chamberlain and Louise Gill stepped into the breach and took on the organisation of the Steeple Aston Course, which went very smoothly. In a change to previous courses, everyone brought a packed lunch rather than visiting the pub. This might have been more successful had it not been for the change in the weather, which made some of the churches uncomfortably cold. Our heartfelt thanks go to Jon and Louise, to the five tutors and all those involved; not least Vicky Clifton for her delicious evening meal. As was the case with Radley, the number of applications exceeded the places available, but it is of concern that only one-fifth of the applicants were aged fifty-five or under.

The workgroup continues to seek ways of supporting the development of Foundation skills throughout the Guild. Please look out for the occasional M2F courses, which are available for members to attend and discover useful exercises to adopt in working with their learners. We encourage co-operation and mutual support between neighbouring towers in sharing expertise in teaching on an *ad-hoc* or a more formal basis. We continue to look for venues which could be centres of development for members in the surrounding area.

A further request for you: please get in touch with Chris Mundy or myself if you have any suggestions about the above. Please help us to help you.

Robert Newton, Secretary, Learning and Development Workgroup

Learning to Ring

I learnt to ring bells at Great Tew in North Oxfordshire in 1969. Great Tew was very much an agricultural village and farming played an important part of everyday life including bellringing. Great Tew had a good band of aging men. Sunday ringing was always for evensong so they could feed livestock or milk cows on Sunday mornings. Service ringing often consisted of a quarter peal; they would meet at 4.45pm raise the bells go straight into a quarter of Grandsire Triples and ring straight down. The ringing was of a high standard with the ringers ringing the same bell to the same composition every time.

They came to realise that, if they did not train some new recruits, ringing would die out. It was about September time when harvest was over, I was told by the tower captain Mr Bert Morley to be at the church at 7pm on Monday night to have a go at bellringing. I did not really want to go but as we lived next door to him, I thought I had better give it a try.

There were about eight of us and we had two hours on tied bells. We then went Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for two hours on tied bells. Friday night the bells were open, and we had our first go at ringing rounds. Practices then continued twice a week at Great Tew with the intention we would be good enough to join the

band for Christmas ringing. The first service I rang for was Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. After ringing we were sent round the back of the organ with a small candle to pump it: Great Tew church did not get electricity until 1973.

After Christmas we continued to practice twice a week, Fridays at Great Tew and one other night at a different tower. This continued until Easter when lambing season started, and we then only had one practice a week. By this time, we had two bands of eight who could ring call changes on the 22 cwt bells all under sixteen.

When we started learning method, we first learnt Plain Hunt on five by remembering the numbers, each of us having a different bell: I started on the fifth. We then moved on to Grandsire Doubles, again by remembering the numbers for a plain course. We also practiced Grandsire on handbells having one bell each. After mastering Grandsire, we were given the slow work for Stedman written out and told to learn it, parrot fashion. After ringing Stedman Doubles we moved on to Grandsire and Stedman Triples. When we went to Branch Practices, we found most people were ringing Plain Bob which we had never rung: this all seemed strange dodging in the wrong places and the wrong way round. We used to cycle to other local towers to ring, one of which was Swerford. The bells were awful, but girls were ringing there, which was an attraction. We also had bellringing lessons at school. We went to Hook Norton school and Canon Elliot Wigg who was the Guild Master used to run a bellringing class on Friday afternoons. In fact, when Hook Norton secondary school closed in 1971 a band from the school rang all eight bells on the last day.

Right from starting to learn to ring we were encouraged to help look after the bells, from adjusting ropes, greasing clappers and fitting muffles. I remember one school summer holiday four of us painted the bell frame. This would never be allowed nowadays - Great Tew has a two-tier frame and the bottom frame was ten feet above the floor.

I remember we were keen to join the Guild as many other young ringers were being elected but we were not allowed until we were up to quarter peal standard. Once we had motorised transport we would be out ringing most evenings, and we were always in demand for weddings.

Graham Clifton, Vice-Chairman, Banbury Branch

Fellowship of St Birinus

On 14 September at Dorchester Abbey Steve Vickars was one of fourteen people who received the award of the Fellowship of St Birinus. He was nominated by Gareth Miller, Rector, for all his work over several years as Tower Captain of Kirtlington bells. For his work in leading practices, training and recruiting not only at Kirtlington but in other towers in the benefice and further afield.

The Fellowship of St Birinus held its first meeting in May 2009 when, the then Bishop of Dorchester, founded the Fellowship with the support of the Rector of Dorchester Abbey. It is seen as a modest way in which people can be honoured who have given exceptional



service in some way or other to their church and community over a number of years. Members of the Fellowship receive a certificate showing why they were nominated and a lapel pin badge showing the symbol of St Birinus.

On 21 September, Steve rang in a quarter peal of St Clement's College Bob Minor at Bletchington in celebration.

ODG Six-Bell Competitions – Raising and Lowering, and Striking Final, 4 October 2025

This year's Guild six-bell raising and lowering competition was held at Garsington. The church is situated on a hill above Oxford and has the most breathtaking views of South Oxfordshire and over to the Cotswolds. However, on such a windy day bands were not able to take full advantage of such great views!

Challenges with the judging position meant that the judge (Robert Newton) ended up in the church (see p.28) so all bands had to enter and leave very quietly!

The raising and lowering competition is a relatively new competition for the Guild and is open to any band in the Guild who ring together on a regular basis. The competition consists of a judged raise, a short break once the bells are up and then a judged lower.

The ground floor ring at Garsington are fairly light (8-1-6) and go well but there is a reasonably long draft. Five bands entered this year – which is the highest number of entries we have had!

The results were then delivered in Cuddesdon village hall at the same time as the Guild six-bell Striking Competition results.

Robert made some general comments about the ringing and said that all bands had a fairly rapid rise. It is important to chime all bells to start, but typically rising faster tends to reduce the number of faults. The lower is easier to achieve smooth ringing. The winners were Hook Norton with a score of 88%. Congratulations to them for retaining the title and trophy for the third-year running! The judge commented that they delivered a smooth raise, the rounds at the top were excellent and the lower was very good. He felt they could have lowered a little quicker but it was still very good with an excellent finish.

Runners up were Longcot with 86%. Whilst they had a slow start with the chiming, it quickly came together with a rapid rise and just a few gaps. The rounds at the top were excellent. The pull off at the top was not quite as good but the lower was excellent and good transition into the single chiming at the end.

The 'bronze' goes to North Bucks with 84%. The judge felt bells 1,2, and 3 were rung particularly well with this band. It was a brisk rise after slightly slow chiming at the start, and everybody managed to keep up. It was a good smooth lower although perhaps just slightly drawn out.

Bands competing:

1. Witney (joint fourth): Andy Hayden, Ruth Leatherdale, Debra Scrimshaw, Dana Josephson, Dan Neal, Andrew Goldthorpe.
2. Hook Norton (first): Jonathan Muller, Sally Austin, Selina Harris, David Salter, Dan Austin, Mick Austin.

3. ODG Youth Band (joint fourth): Marc Jones, Evi Woodland, Laura Cooper, Isaac Davies, Kit Margey, Simon Lee.
4. North Bucks (third): Ted Fawcett, Becky Fawcett, Doug Hird, Simon Head, Alan Marchbank, Graham Bartholomew.
5. Longcot (second place): Jonathan Wright, Peter Hunt, Cheryl Watson, Daniel Watson, Julian Watson, Kit Margey.

Chris Mundy, Deputy Master

Striking final

This year's final took place on a cool and breezy afternoon at All Saints, Cuddesdon (Oxford City Branch, 12-3-7) and was ably judged by Colin Newman and Tom Sherwood from St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Most bands rang Plain Bob or Grandsire doubles.

Deserving winners were Reading St Mary (Reading) with 13 faults and a peal speed of 2h 49m. As well as general commendation, the judges praised the band for the best tenor ringing of the afternoon. Hook Norton (Chipping Norton) came second with 13.5 faults and a peal speed of 2h 55m. The judges noted the long stretches of excellent, clean ringing. Longcot (Vale of the White Horse) came third with 23 faults and a peal speed of 3h 8m. The judges described the ringing as 'sedate and positive' and praised a particularly good early second part of the test piece.

High Wycombe (EBSB) was placed fourth with 30 faults and a peal speed of 3h 4m; EastHampstead (Sonning Deanery) fifth with 36 faults and a peal speed of 2h 53m; Old Marston (Oxford City) sixth with 54 faults and a peal speed of 3h 4m; and Witney (Witney and Woodstock) seventh with 63 faults and a peal speed of 3h 5m. This competition is geographically based, with the competing towers representing their branches. However, this year the association-wide ODG Young Ringers were also welcomed after competing in the raising and lowering competition earlier in the day. They were marked by the judges at 62 faults with a peal speed of 2h 53m.

On one of the first autumnal days of the year, the excellent spread of tea and cakes in the village hall was most welcome. Many thanks to Stuart Flockton, tower captain at Cuddesdon, for hosting the competition; to the judges for braving a rather wintry south porch for their judging; and to the refreshments team for warming us all up.

Elizabeth Mullett, Branch Representative, Oxford City Branch

Autumn greetings from *The Ringing World* team!

At the end of a busy summer producing your magazine while leapfrogging each other's holidays, we were delighted to spend a weekend in Sheffield at the Central Council AGM and Roadshow. We met lots of readers and other creators in the world of ringing – seeing an eBell being 3D-printed in front of us was quite something! Our big news of autumn is the *Little Blue Ringing Book*, which will be printed in just a few weeks and is already available to pre-order. It focuses on methods ranging in difficulty from Plain Bob Doubles to Little Bob Major. Like its companions, the 'green book' and the 'purple book', it aims to contain everything you might meet at this stage of ringing, and much more besides – with explanations, diagrams, and tips aplenty.

We're already looking ahead to our **Christmas special issue** of *The Ringing World* which is a bumper triple issue in full colour - and we'd love your help to make it sparkle! Anything happening in the first ten days of December is especially welcome, as the issue goes to press mid-month. If your tower is planning a carol service, Christmas tree festival, or any other festive ringing, please send us your photos and short write-ups. If you get early snow or a picturesque frost, don't forget us, and help us share the joy of Christmas ringing!

Start preparing for Christmas and the next year for yourself as well. Don't forget the annual [Ringing World Diary](#) and [Ringing World Calendar](#), both ideal for planning and for gifts. We would be thrilled to see a copy of the calendar on every tower noticeboard – please send us a photo of yours! We've also launched a brand-new '**Bell Ringers' Outing' Tea Towel**, illustrated by award-winning children's illustrator Sarah McIntyre. It's a fun and colourful addition to any kitchen, and makes a perfect stocking filler, or a thank-you for the ringing organiser in your life.

- Other stocking-sized ideas include: **Methodoku Mayhem** – a puzzle book full of ringing-themed Sudoku-style challenges that will stretch both ringers and puzzle-lovers. Sit by the fire at Christmas and learn how methods fit together at the same time!
- **The First Hundred Years USB stick** – a digital archive of the first century of *The Ringing World*, perfect for anyone who wants to explore the history of ringing in their family or village at the click of a button.

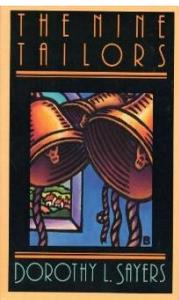
Looking further ahead, the **2026 RWNYC** is already very much on the horizon, and we're really looking forward to zipping around Nottingham on the trams! And beyond that, we've started preparing for the **6,000th issue of *The Ringing World***, a major milestone for the magazine shortly after Easter.

William Bosworth, Editor, *The Ringing World*

Dorothy L Sayers and the Bells

Dorothy L Sayers was born in Oxford in 1893 and eventually went on to study at Somerville, describing herself as 'I that am twice thy child' in relation to the city. She became famous in her lifetime for many things: as a copywriter for Bensons Advertising Agency, writing slogans such as 'Guinness is good for you' and the invention of 'The Mustard Club', and from 1923 as the writer of mystery stories featuring her detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. She also wrote plays, some of which were performed at Cathedral Festivals (Canterbury and Lichfield) and some transferred to London's West End.

While she was at Godolphin School in Salisbury her father raised the money to renovate the bells in his parish church at Bluntisham-cum-Earith, Cambridgeshire. The family had moved there when Sayers was about five for the increased income it brought to her father. Dorothy was at school when the bells were refurbished and rehung, but she wrote home that she was 'terribly excited about the bells' and in her holidays had to be forbidden to enter the belfry because she kept getting in the way



of the workmen. Sadly, the bells were housed in a wooden frame which made them unsafe to ring ‘properly’ – as in change-ringing – and they could only be chimed. However, they were still beautiful, as far as Dorothy was concerned!

During the 1930s the idea came to Dorothy to write a detective story about bells, and she embarked on *The Nine Tailors*. The title comes from the quotation ‘Nine Tailors make a Man’, which she quotes at the end of the book. In the Fens, when a man dies, they toll a bell nine times, for a woman six and for a child three, and then a chime for every year of the person’s age. Villages were

small enough that people would know by the number rung who it was who had passed away. Of course, the story centres on a supposed murder, and the twists and turns are legion! For this, though, Sayers had to work very hard. She found a copy of Troyte *On Change Ringing* on a Fenchurch Street bookstall, and set herself to master the art before she wrote the book. She never pulled a rope, but she could write out methods and Stedman’s Principle, before she started to write the story. It took her longer than she expected but she was determined to get everything as correct as possible. She did make a couple of minor mistakes, often for the benefit of the story, but on the whole, it is pretty accurate and gives a good description of what is meant by and involved in change ringing. New ringers might find it helpful to read this book!

The Dorothy L Sayers Society helped to raise funds to renovate and restore the bells in Bluntisham church and in 2004 a ring of eight working bells (an additional two, added to Henry Sayers’ bells) was installed by Taylors of Loughborough with an iron frame to enable them to be rung to changes. Dorothy L Sayers would have been delighted!

Jasmine Simeone, Bulletin Editor, Dorothy L Sayers Society

Dorothy L Sayers Society award to Sarah Hillier

Sixteen year old, Sarah Hillier, of the St Stephen’s, Clanfield band, was awarded the Dorothy L Sayers Society award for the young female bell ringer of the year.

The Society visited the St Stephen’s



band on 4 June to read an extract from the book and Seona Ford, Chairman of the Society, presented Sarah with her award.

Sarah is planning some bell ringing activity as part of her DofE Gold Award this year and the prize will go a long way to making this achievable. Well done indeed!

Bellringing – YouTube video

In late April, out of the blue, the bellringers of Buckingham, Maids Moreton and Stowe in North Buckinghamshire, were contacted by Kalyn Franke, who runs a YouTube channel called Girl Gone London. Kalyn's videos cover a wide range of subjects, looking at UK matters from the perspective of her experiences as an American living in the UK.

Kalyn explained that her current project was making a series of videos about English pastimes, and that, after producing videos on narrow boating and model railways, she was now looking to make a video about bellringing.

After several emails and conversations, on Wednesday 9 July Kalyn and her husband, Guy (an experienced cameraman), arrived at Saint Edmund's church in Maids Moreton to join the local ringers for their weekly practice evening. Several other ringers from the local North Bucks area, including Ted Fawcett, the North Bucks Branch Ringing Master, kindly joined the practice that evening.

Through a busy evening, Kalyn and Guy learnt about the basics of bellringing, interviewed ringers, visited the belfry, and watched the ringing. Kalyn even had a go on a rope, under very close supervision from local Ringing Master, Laurence Gibson, who did a terrific job in ably assisting Kalyn and explaining the fundamentals of bellringing.

Having filmed a range of material that evening, Kalyn has subsequently pulled it all together and produced her video, which is now on YouTube. The video can be seen at: <https://youtu.be/M3gnM7psyEA>).

One of the main aims of the video was to inform and excite people about ringing and to encourage folk to give it a go. Hopefully, through this engaging and informative video, some folk will do just that and become new ringers, helping this wonderful activity, one of England's great traditions, to continue to survive and indeed thrive.

Assisting with the making of the video was great fun and a most enjoyable and interesting experience. A big thank you to all those involved.

Dave Pearce, Maids Moreton

Safeguarding is for Everyone

Please review p.11 of May's *Odd Bob* - all ringers must complete the online Basic Awareness training module available <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>

News from the Branches

Banbury

This year the Banbury Branch celebrated its centenary. A dinner was held at the Whately Hall Hotel on 20 June one hundred years, to the day, that the Branch was formed. The next day a peal of Grandsire Caters was rung at Banbury to mark the occasion. The Branch aimed to ring centenary quarter peals in all the towers of the Branch during the year – Somerton rang a quarter peal on 12 September.

In March the annual quiz, and fish and chips supper was held at Bodicote Church Hall and was well attended. On 21 June the Branch held its six-bell striking competition at Tadmarton; the call change section was won by Bloxham (see below) and the method section was won by Steeple Aston. In August the Branch organised a half day outing to Blockley, Longborough, Broadwell and Kingham followed by a meal at the Joiners Arms in Bloxham.

The Branch held its AGM on 12 April at Steeple Aston. David Field stepped down as Treasurer and Alison Tite was elected in his place. Janine Coaker was elected as our second Branch Rep. The half yearly meeting was held at Adderbury on 18 October.

Rosemary Hemmings, Branch Secretary

St James, Somerton

We were invited to ring at Middleton Stoney church by their Church Warden for a special service to celebrate the new facilities added to the church, such as kitchen, toilets, flower room and organ repositioning following its restoration, finishing with internal church decorating. The Bishop of Oxford, The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft thanked us.

Middleton church is part of the Akeman



Benefice (and in the Bicester Branch) set in the grounds of the private Jersey Estate. To get there, you go through the iron gates next to the traffic lights on the main road. We have returned since for ringing practice.



I had hoped to pull a team of ringers together for the ride and stride this year, but this was not possible. To help us achieve this next year, and to continue ringing across the benefice, you are more

than welcome to join us. We are a friendly team who ring for enjoyment, meeting others, the challenge of keeping such traditions alive and the opportunity to ring in marvellous historic buildings. We usually practice on Thursday evenings between 7.30 – 9pm, typically Somerton at the beginning each month, other local churches in between and Lower Heyford at the end.

Neil Clare, Somerton Tower Captain

Bloxham

With my four new learners who started a year ago, we now usually manage to ring all eight bells every Sunday. We have eleven members of the band, but seven of them are beginners, which makes practices difficult, particularly on such heavy bells.

One of my beginners, aged only nine, rang call changes in the Bloxham band at the Branch six-bell striking competition in June, which we won!

I have to rely on a few ringers from other towers at practices in order to teach my ringers how to plain hunt, and to ring Bob Doubles. However, we are making progress slowly.

Alan Griffin, Bloxham Tower Captain

Bicester

There have been several causes for celebration since May: several members of the Branch have been recognized for their progress – Pam Holley ART Learning the Ropes, Level 2, Liping Liu and John Mayo Level 3 (he, August Deeming, and Barbara Summers have also rung their first quarter peals), and Julie Penny Level 5.

Branch Practices have been held at Woodeaton (where there is no longer a resident band), Caversfield (attracting sixteen ringers from seven towers), Launton (amongst the twelve were four young ringers) and Ludgershall – at each we've been able to ring a variety to suit a range of ringing abilities.

Kirtlington has celebrated the tenth anniversary of the resumption of regular ringing at Kirtlington with a quarter peal rung by a local band on 17 August and on 1 November held a Festival of Ringing with opportunities for visitors to chime/ ring as well as ringing a half-muffled quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples with three local

ringers in the band before All Souls' service. Additionally, the Oxon Ringing School has continued to hold handling and foundation sessions throughout the year.

Thanks to Helen and Rob Parkinson we held a Branch barbecue in their home in Bicester in early September (our striking competition had to be cancelled as too many were away) – of the twenty ringers who came, six were aged between fourteen and eighteen – perhaps, as a result, mini-Olympics were also arranged and everyone had a great time preceded by an hour's general ringing at St Edburg's.

A quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples (a first of Triples for Anne Martin) was rung for, and included, Jeremy Adams, our long-standing and much appreciated President and joint Ringing Master, who is retiring and moving away in November. This was followed with fizz and cake in St Edburg's by a gathering of Branch ringers to wish him well.

Finally, we were sad to learn of the death of Jane Singleton (nee Danson) in September – she had been a very good - and encouraging to all - ringer in Islip, Bicester and Caversfield over many years. Records show her peal of Grandsire Triples on 4 July 1998 to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NHS and the first peal in the method for the Guild of Medical Ringers. A quarter peal was rung in her memory in Bicester.

Pam Holley, Branch Secretary

Central Bucks

Things have been fairly quiet in the Central Branch recently. The attendance at Branch Practices could definitely be better (note to self!). To remind everyone, they occur on the second Saturday of the month (13 December, Cuddington at 10am). Check on the website cbucks.odg.org.uk. Special practices are held at Stewkley on the third Wednesday of the month focusing on improving peoples' Grandsire, both doubles and triples.

We usually hold the Orchard Cup around this time of year. It is a competition between Chiltern and Central and was, we think, started when the two areas split to encourage a bit of healthy competition and encourage people to progress. These days striking competitions seem to scare people away so we are looking to find another way of competing between the two Branches.

On Saturday 14 June Stewkley Church hosted the Central Bucks Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild 'Fun with Bells' day. Visitors were offered the chance to have a go at ringing on the mini-ring, playing with the handbells and climbing to the roof of the beautiful Norman church tower to admire the views. The mini-ring was designed by, and is owned by, Tony Crabtree. He kindly offered to bring his mini-ring after judging a striking competition for us. He enjoyed it so much and found us so friendly he offered to bring it to us for an event. The mini-ring is a portable bell tower (when deconstructed it fits in the boot of his car) that mimics a real tower - but to the embarrassment of the ringers is actually very different to ring and gave us all, amongst much laughter, quite a challenge! The great thing about the mini-ring is anyone can have a go, ringer or not, so all visitors, from the smallest to the oldest

were able to try.

The Deputy Master of the Guild, Chris Mundy, kindly organised a team of four handbell ringers who impressed anyone listening with the beauty of these bells rung well. Again, anyone could have a go, some ringers had a go at two-bell ringing, but, all who wished, were able to manage to ring one bell in time with the others.

The most exciting opportunity for many was the chance to climb right to the top of the ancient bell tower. This involved forty-two stone steps in a spiral staircase, followed by two very old wooden step ladders, taking visitors through the belfry. The oldest bell was cast around 1575 and is 'listed'. The weather was perfect to admire the views - the Whipsnade Lion, the Mursley Water Tower, farms along Dean Road, and the cricket match in action at the recreation ground. We demonstrated the bells allowing people to see ringing in action, both in the ringing room and in the belfry. Some brave souls even had a go!



The day was used to fund-raise for some repairs required to the bells and with refreshments and plants for sale. A new resident to the village was inspired to join our band and we were very pleased to see her on the following Wednesday for practice! Many thanks to all who helped on the day and to all those who visited.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM in February.

John Chantler, Branch Secretary

Chiltern

Chiltern Branch, despite its small size, continues to enjoy good support at most of its Branch Meetings with a variety of methods rung and an increasing number of members developing skills with touches of common methods. We also held a special practice in the summer for members to practice Cambridge Major. This was well attended on a very hot afternoon, and plans are in hand to hold further similar practices whenever sufficient helpers are available. A number of members together with ringers from the neighbouring West Herts district are also making good progress at regular morning practices on the last Saturday of the month at Cheddington: these are organised by one of our younger members and give much hope for the future of ringing as older members inevitably retire.

Towers within the Branch are also increasingly working together to ensure viable band sizes with several members ringing at multiple towers on Sundays. There is little doubt that villagers like hearing their bells and miss them if they fall silent. An example of these amalgamations has been the Great and Little Missenden towers which now work together to ensure both churches have bells for Sunday services

with practices alternating between the towers. A further outcome from this being that the Little Missenden PCC are positively backing works needed to the bells which may not have happened if, following several of their long-standing ringers retiring and moving away, the tower had fallen silent.

The Branch also congratulated the band which rang a commemorative peal at St Mary's, Weston Turville on Wednesday 14 May 2025 to mark the seventieth anniversary of Roy Woodruff's first peal and Arthur White's only peal as conductor, rung at the tower, on 14 May 1955. Nigel and Richard rang the same bells their fathers had rung seventy years earlier. The composition was not the same as in 1955, as there were only five bells then - the sixth bell having been added in 2000.

Chris Potter, Branch Secretary

Chipping Norton

6-Bell Competitions on 4 October; Hook Norton's Hat-Trick!

Two years ago, the inaugural ODG Raising and Lowering Competition was held at Wigginton. As it was one of our benefice towers, the Hook Norton band felt we really ought to enter. Knowing the bells well we hoped we wouldn't disgrace ourselves - and to our delight, we won! Granted, we did have home advantage and only two other bands entered, but a win's a win.

Last year, we decided to enter again to prove it wasn't a fluke. No home advantage this time - yet we won again! Still only a couple of other bands, but we were definitely more pleased with ourselves than the first time.

By this year, an element of pressure (and expectation) was beginning to build. So, with a mix of excitement and trepidation, we set out for Garsington on the first Saturday in October to defend the beautiful carved wooden trophy. The bells there were harder to ring than we expected, and we weren't entirely satisfied with our performance - but it turned out everyone else found them tricky too. With four other bands competing this time, we were thrilled to win again! For the first time, we felt genuinely satisfied that we could not only win on unfamiliar bells but also hold our own against some very good competition. Of course, that means the pressure is *really* on for 2026....

The Raising and Lowering Competition runs alongside the Guild Six-Bell Striking Competition - some might say the more prestigious of the two! By default (though we'd love another Branch tower to challenge us next year!), Hook Norton have represented the Chipping Norton Branch for the past three years. Two years ago,



*The winning band with the Coronation Shield –
1 Selina Harris, 2 Sally Austin, 3 Jonathan Muller, 4
David Salter, 5 Dan Austin and 6 Mick Austin.*

at Shipton-under-Wychwood, we didn't do particularly well. Last year, with expectations low, we surprised ourselves by finishing a very satisfying third - beaten only by High Wycombe and Reading Branch.

This year, our public aim was simply not to come last - though secretly, we hoped to match our 2024 result. With tight timings between Garsington and Cuddesdon, we just made it to our slot and enjoyed hearing the band before us as we arrived. The Cuddesdon bells were a joy to ring - beautifully toned and easy to handle, if a touch loud in the chamber. Dan conducted us flawlessly, and we completed our 240 of Plain Bob feeling we'd done ourselves justice: not a winning performance, but a fair reflection of what we can achieve (see p.12).

The village hall was a short (and rather blowy) walk from the church, but the promise of tea and cakes was irresistible. While we didn't hear much of the remaining ringing, the cakes were excellent and the company even better - a lovely chance to catch up with old friends from around the Guild.

Our focus, if we're honest, was on the Raising and Lowering results - anything else would be a bonus. So, we were genuinely shocked and delighted to come second in the Striking Competition, just half a fault behind Reading Minster! To come so close to such a strong band was well beyond our expectations. But then we couldn't help thinking... half a fault... what if...?

John Collet and Michael Haynes

It is with great sadness that we have lost two highly respected and experienced



ringers, John Collet and very recently, Michael Haynes (of Milcombe).

John passed away peacefully on 17 July 2025, aged 93, at Katharine House Hospice, Banbury. John, with his brother Michael (Mike), had his first ringing lesson in November 1945 in St John the Baptist, Burford and was admitted to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers in March 1946. He rang his first quarter peal in 1946, at Burford, and rang in the peal at Burford in 1947 for the royal wedding and continued to ring in and around Burford during his working life. He retired to Boston in Lincolnshire and bellringing was a significant part of his life becoming President of the Eastern Branch of The Lincoln Guild. John was also an accomplished chorister, and in 1947 was invited to HMV in Oxford St. London to record 'Hear my Prayer' and 'O for the Wings of a Dove'. His enthusiasm for ringing will be long remembered by all those he met.

Until only a matter of weeks ago, Michael Haynes was a regular ringer at Hook Norton, and it was a shock to many members of the Branch that he had passed away so suddenly. He would have been known to many throughout the ODG, Chipping

Norton and neighbouring Branches and can be remembered as a caring ringer able to share his knowledge with younger ringers.

'Ringing to Remember': VE Day 8 May and VJ Day 15 August

To commemorate both 80th Anniversaries, the Chipping Norton Branch was able to ring at ten of our towers supported by almost forty members of the Branch. Towers that rang on VE Day were Ascott-under-Wychwood, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Church Enstone, Chadlington, Hook Norton, Spelsbury, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Swerford (GD & PBD QP), and Wigginton (PBD QP). Many thanks to all thirty-four ringers who participated in the 80th Anniversary ring to commemorate VE Day.

On VJ day, the Branch was able to ring three quarter peals: Swerford completed a quarter of Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles; Wigginton a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles; and Hook Norton finished the day with a quarter of Plain Bob Triples.

New Peal Boards at Hook Norton

On 8 June 2025, two new Peal Boards were dedicated during a morning service led by Revd Janet Faulk. The boards represented peals rung to celebrate the following occasions

- Silver on Black - For the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II - 2 June 2022
- Gold on Black - For the Coronation of HM King Charles III – 8 May 2023

Notice of this special dedication service had been given several weeks earlier at another service and it became apparent that, after the announcement, 99% of the parishioners had no idea what a peal board was. This was not so surprising as they hang in ringing chambers where only ringers are able to marvel at them. This provided the ringing team with the opportunity to explain their significance to the congregation and presented a photographic display of bellringing social history of Hook Norton between 1899 and 2018.

The new boards will eventually be hung in the ringing chamber, out of sight from the public along with the others, but at least now, the congregation has a better understanding of what they represent to the ringing fraternity. The photo display

board has become a permanent feature in the North Aisle of St. Peter's church. Many thanks to Geoffrey Stretton and Jonathan Muller for arranging this.



Bellringing Motorcyclists

In August our Branch Chair and Ringing Master (David Salter) joined other 'Bellringing Motorcyclists' for a trip to Vernet-les-Bains in France to ring the only set of bells in France rung in the English way.

St Georges Anglican Church in Vernet-les-Bains was established in 1911 through



funding including Rudyard Kipling, and Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Beatrice.

This was in response to the growing interest from wealthy English visitors in the early 1900s and Frances only monument to the Entente Cordiale of 1904. Vernet-les-Bains has a ring of ten cast by Taylors and was installed in 2019 through the enthusiasm and drive of Geoff Ladd, an expat originally from Leeds.

Geoff moved to Vernet-les-Bains and was instrumental in getting the project going and regularly runs a Ringing School for other expats and other local ringers that he has taught. During his brief visit David was joined by other visiting ringers from Catherington (Hampshire) and was able to ring several Quarter Peals and a Peal (details on BellBoard).

Trevor Withell, Branch Secretary



East Berks and South Bucks

We are extremely proud of the young ringers in our Branch who rang with the Bucks and Berks Young Ringers in *The Ringing World* National Youth Contest (see pp.39-40). They came second in the eight-bell call change competition at St Barnabas, Erdington. Apart from the competition ringing they had a most enjoyable day in Birmingham ringing on dumb bells, mini-rings, on the eights at Harborne and Erdington Abbey and the sixteen at St Martin's in the Bull Ring (quite a daunting prospect for a ten-year-old). There was also spare time to play games in the churchyards, and eat waffles and burgers, even if they were consumed while walking between towers. Their monthly practices have resumed after the summer

break, and they look forward to ringing outings and the South East Contest in the coming months. I understand that there are youngsters learning at Turville and Windsor and at Marlow for their D of E awards so hopefully there will be more ringers to add to their squad soon.

The result of the EBSB Branch six-bell contest at Penn was a foregone conclusion because only one eligible band entered. However a scratch band from Hughenden/High Wycombe/Amersham/Chesham delivered a good performance, and a band of mainly Branch officers also competed. The judges, Peter and Dominic Ellis, placed the 'eligible' High Wycombe band first. They then represented the Branch in the Guild six-bell contest where they were placed fourth.

Only twelve towers took part in the Lorna Newton Knock-out Competition this year. It is rather disappointing to see so many towers unable to get six ringers together for this, when at one time the competition was extremely popular and keenly contested. It also provides an excellent opportunity for bands from different towers to join together for ringing and socialising. Judge, Matthew Johnson, congratulated the five teams that qualified for the final which took place at Chalfont St Giles.

Hughenden took the winners' trophy with High Wycombe 'B' being runners-up. Winkfield were presented with a suitably decorated wooden spoon while Lane End and Clewer/Windsor took third and fourth places respectively.



At the Tower Captains' meeting in February it was suggested that some of the Branch Practices should be focused on a specific (basic) method. The programme was modified to include Plain Hunt and Plain Bob Doubles training practices but the numbers attending were not as encouraging as we had anticipated. Our second attempt at a New Members' Outing wasn't much better supported, although the five who did attend found the day very useful. In addition to ringing at three towers – Chalfont St Peter, Chalfont St Giles and Penn, Katie Lane joined them at lunchtime to give a short talk on the history, property and activities of the Guild. Our thanks are due to Vikki Bulbeck for running the ringing at all these novices' sessions, and to the experienced ringers who supported them.

Membermojo continues to cause concern, with many members, including some tower captains and tower correspondents, still not signed up to receive mailings from the Branch. If you are reading this and haven't yet set your mojo preferences please do so.

Patricia Newton, Branch Secretary

Newbury

Under new management, since our AGM in March, our Branch practices have thrived. The elementary practice, held on the first Friday in the month, has increased in support with a 'feature method' and all the usual standard ringing available. As a Branch practice for all comers, it provides support and opportunities that may not otherwise be available to members. The advanced practice, held on the third Friday, also attracts a good following and a 'feature method' is also available, numbers and skill levels permitting. In addition to the usual eight bell towers, sixes and tens are now included in the schedule, allowing Minor and Royal to be included. Our mid-week ring and lunch dates continue to attract a good crowd, who enjoy a relaxed event among friends and have proved ever popular. We missed the Guild Six Bell competition this year with our Branch winners unable to attend due to absences, but we are hopeful to field a team for the ten and eight bell events.

The Newbury Branch continues to thrive with Sunday service ringing, tower and Branch practices, training events and outings featuring throughout the year. Our new website is now well established, hosted by the ODG and linking all relevant Branch information. This includes our diary and past issues of our Summer and Christmas newsletters since 2015. All Branch news is covered in detail in our newsletter, so please follow the link and have a read.

Here is a link to our website: <https://newbury.odg.org.uk/>
and a link to our latest newsletter: [Summer-2025-2.pdf](#)

Mark Robins, Branch Secretary

North Bucks

Ringing Master Ted continues to keep an eye on ringing throughout the branch by attending tower practices. He reports that many bands are making good progress. A course on 'listening to your bell' was interesting and challenging for all. New ringers for Thornborough are being looked after at Padbury and some more new ringers for Wavendon will soon be started at Milton Keynes Village.

Towers and bells inspections have been carried out at such diverse towers as Buckingham and Newton Blossomville. Both were found to be in better condition than expected.

Preparation for the Guild ten-bell competition is going well with practices at Olney and an *ad hoc* joint effort with Central Bucks and Bedfordshire ringers at Leighton Buzzard. Meanwhile, the regular branch Saturday and Thursday practices continue to be well attended.

Doug Hird, Branch Secretary

Old North Berks

Over the summer months the attendance at our Branch practices had been very mixed, with the monthly general practices on a tower's practice night being the least well attended by non-local ringers. Additionally, our recent surprise major practices have not always been well attended. Therefore, we are wondering if we might need to change the style of our Branch practices in 2026. We have set up a working group to investigate various options and to put their recommendation to the next AGM. In the meantime, practices will continue in the current format.

Our six-bell striking competition was held on a very sunny morning in June at Chilton. It was judged by our old friends Charles and Rachel Morrish, who were pleased with the number of teams entering and thought that the quality of ringing was very good. Six teams competed and the winners were Blewbury, with Wantage and Wallingford very close on their heels. Thanks go to all the Branch members who provided an excellent brunch that was enjoyed by everyone outside in the warm summer sunshine. Unusually none of the first four teams were able this year to make up a band to ring in the Guild's six-bell striking competition.

The Branch outing took place on 12 July. This was an extremely hot day (over 30 degrees!) and so only the truly intrepid felt able to take part. Ringing was at Maidenhead, Burnham, Marlow, Hambleden and Henley on Thames, with own arrangements for lunch in or near Marlow. Our thanks go to Andy Bennett for arranging this fun day out for us. A barbecue had been planned at Laurence Hall, Cholsey, during the afternoon of 9 August. Unfortunately, this event had to be cancelled through lack of support, caused mainly by a number of weddings taking place. The 2026 barbecue will be held in June or July in the late afternoon. We hope that many will be able to attend and bring their families and friends.

At our October Committee meeting we heard that restoration work will be carried out at Sutton Courtenay in late 2026/early 2027. The wooden headstocks on bells three, six and seven will be replaced with metal canon retaining headstocks. All fittings will be adjusted appropriately. The eight bells will be retuned and the bell frame shotblasted and repainted. It is hoped that a grant of £1,500 will be made from our Branch funds. This work is to be done in conjunction with a much bigger tower project, which will reorder the lower rooms in the tower and improve the access to the ringing room and bell chamber and upgrade the lights, install emergency lighting and some heating.

Our next social event, a barn dance and supper in Chilton Village Hall, will probably already have happened by the time you read this. Let's hope it was a very successful event with plenty of dancing and the usual good food! Our annual New Year's ringing event is scheduled for 1 January 2026 in East Hagbourne.

Gillian Loyd, Branch Secretary

East Hagbourne

A few of the team went away on the Sally Forth ringing trip at the end of April to the Swaffham area of Norfolk. The bells were rung on Thursday 8 May between 6-6.30pm to commemorate VE Day and we would like to thank our Tower Keeper, John Napper for putting the flag up on the tower for St George's Day.

On Saturday 14 June we rang for the wedding of Lewis Neofitou and Sophie Dodd. We would like to wish them every happiness for the future.

Paul Batho, one of our ringers, organised a very successful tower ringing outing on the afternoon of Saturday 19 July starting in Standlake. We rang at four towers during the afternoon with a nice tea break at Bampton Garden Centre. We concluded the outing in Stanton Harcourt followed by a meal at The Harcourt Arms. Many thanks to Paul for organising this fun afternoon. We all enjoyed the outing and are looking forward to the next one!

Jill Garlick has started to organise training sessions for the team about every two months. These began in April and to date we have had four sessions which ran for about an hour each time. They have included Middlesex Triple, Stedman Triples, Plain Bob Doubles and ringing and calling short touches of Grandsire Triple. The sessions have been well attended and enjoyed by all. Thank you to a few experienced ringers from another tower in the benefice who came to help out.

We have held three quarterly meetings of HSCR since April all of which have been well attended by members.

On 'Ringers' Sunday' (26 October) there was a special evensong at 6pm to celebrate followed by light refreshments. A very enjoyable evening. And on Sunday 9 November we rang the bells half muffled for Remembrance Sunday evensong again at 6pm.

We are now getting ready for our Christmas festivities which includes our wonderful Christmas Tree Festival from 5-13 December - everyone welcome.

On Tuesday 31 December we will ring in the New Year from 11.30pm.

Shirley Goss

Oxford City

St Nicholas, Old Marston

St Nicholas ringers have been industrious once again this year organising ringing opportunities for ringers in the tower, the City Branch and neighbouring Branches, with eleven weekday quarter peal outings to towers in six different counties as well as Oxfordshire, four Saturday QP outings and two all-day outings, first Warwickshire in March and then Buckinghamshire in September, where an impressive twelve of the eighteen attendees took on conducting duties.

We were also pleased to have been able to provide an eclectic (and often unforgettable) mix of lunch or brunch venues, ranging across pubs, cafes, tearooms, coffee houses, community hubs, garden centres, a couple of country estates (Greatworth Park and Lordington Park), a refectory, a cricket pavilion (Lighthorne CC) and even an airport (AV8 at Cotswold Airport).

Marston also hosted the Oxford City Branch six-bell striking competition in June, and managed to retain the trophy with a third straight win.

Hugh Deam

All Saints Cuddesdon hosted the Guild six-bell striking competition in October, and nearby St Mary Garsington hosted the raising and lowering competition. The competitions have been written up elsewhere (see p.11), but not perhaps the weather....

At lunchtime that day, the skirts of Storm Amy passed over Garsington, which stands on what passes in these parts for an exposed bluff. Such was the combination of wind and heavy rain that Robert Newton, who was to be judging from his car, was unable to hear how many bells we rang in a test before the competition. So it was that he suffered the indignity of being hidden in the children's corner in the church, and the business of the competition was conducted in whispers. It was a fine autumn afternoon by the time I cycled over to Cuddesdon for the results.

At Cuddesdon, the Guild Youth band which had entered the raising and lowering competition was allowed to ring amongst the six bell bands, although prohibited for now from entering the competition. There also was another high point of the competitions: a village hall barely big



enough to contain everyone, and an ample supply of tea and cakes. Our thanks to the Guild Master who organised those.

One of our young ringers recently seized an opportunity to ring at the only full-circle ring in the north Pacific, and sends a photograph of the spider at St Andrew Honolulu, which appears to show signs of the sort of evolution that happens on isolated islands.

Geraint Jones, Branch Secretary

Reading

Reading Branch's six-bell striking competition was held at St Mary's Purley on Saturday 13 September and it turned out to be a very interesting morning of ringing.

We welcomed our judges – Justin Read and Peter Bevis from the Channel Islands – who were going to be in the area, and, after letting them have a ring on the bells and get settled, the competition started with Mortimer, Caversham, Reading and Tilehurst all ringing a variety of methods.

After the ringing the judges gave their comments and the results. They enjoyed listening to the ringing, and thanked all of those who took part with first place awarded to the Reading band and Steve Rossiter was presented with the Topper Trophy.

*The
Reading Team
L-R Kelvin
Britten, Gill
Carlill, Steve
Bennett, Steve
Rossiter (c),
Sarah Bennett,
June Saint*



The Reading team competed in the Guild six-bell competition in October and successfully retained the trophy.

Reading Branch Outing -11 October 2025

We had a successful and thoroughly enjoyable outing in West Berkshire. In total sixteen ringers from across the Branch attended, with eight of those coming for the whole day. Towers represented were: Henley, Caversham, St Mary's Reading, St Giles Reading, Tilehurst, Whitchurch and Pangbourne.

St Mary's in Hampstead Norreys was our first tower. As we had beginners to experts there was the whole range from rounds and call changes, through Stedman Doubles and on to spliced minor. This was the theme for the day with everyone getting plenty of ringing opportunities to enjoy.

Our second ground floor ring was another St Mary, this time in East Ilsley. Several of us now appreciate a ground floor circle. Again, the full spectrum of ringing from Plain Hunt on seven to Surprise Major in this eight-bell tower.

Next we went to Peasemore where we enjoyed an excellent lunch at The Fox before the six bells of St Barnabas. From here we drove to Great Shefford to our third St Mary's. Encouraged by the experts, the less experienced ringers were surprised at how quickly they adapted to the anticlockwise circle.

Cream tea was next in Hungerford - not the finest we had ever had - but enjoyable nonetheless. Then on to our final tower of St Lawrence. With just eight ringers it was rounds and call changes on eight, but the surprise was limited to minor. Our final ring of

the day was rounds in age order from the most senior on the treble to the youngster on the tenor, if you can call late fifties young!

A great day out and a big thank you to Jenny Page for her excellent organisation as always.

Celebrations

2025 has also been a year of celebrations for some ringers in Reading Branch.

This year the Page Three Society celebrated the tenth anniversary of its formation as well as other milestones for two of its members. There are only three members, Jenny Page and her two sons, Jack and Daniel. Hence the name. Daniel's 1,000th peal was Orion S Maximus at St Martin-in-the-Fields. His first peal (and the first Page Three Society Peal) was Plain Bob Minor in hand on Alderney on 9 August 2015.

Daniel is also the youngest person to have completed this feat. Jack, his older brother, rang his 1,000th peal as conductor.

Lindsey Barker, Branch Secretary

Joyce marks 70 years of Church Bellingring at St Giles, Reading

On Sunday 20 July, Joyce Vernon, a cherished member of the bellringing community in Reading, celebrated an awe-inspiring seventy years of service at St Giles. To mark the occasion, Joyce and ringers from around Reading rang for the service at St Giles, followed by two quarter peals with her granddaughter Lucy and son-in-law Steve taking part in one of them.

A member of St Giles church for eighty years, Joyce first climbed the steps of St Giles bell tower as a teenager. The vicar was on a recruitment drive and had sought



Joyce takes centre stage pictured here with family and ringing friends

new talent from the youth club! Through the church and ringing Joyce met her late husband, Keith, and together they became the bedrock of St Giles.

Over the years, Joyce has shown remarkable dedication and commitment to St Giles. As well as taking on the role of tower captain, she has served on bell ringing committees, organised events and carried out a huge amount of fundraising to enable the bells to be re-hung.

Thanks to Joyce, St Giles' bells have rung out for Sunday services and church festivals with peals and quarter peals organised to celebrate births, weddings, royal occasions and to mark final farewells. As the vicar says, 'the bells and the bell ringers are our noisiest advocate'!

Joyce has taught many members of the community to ring, and they speak fondly of her kindness and supportive approach, particularly her role in making St Giles tower a welcoming, friendly place to learn. Today, Joyce continues to inspire those around her by her determination to keep learning new methods and her willingness to support others.

On Sunday it was great to have all Joyce's family at St Giles to mark the occasion, and she especially appreciated her family members taking part in the ringing. There aren't many activities which multiple generations can enjoy together, but bellringing is one of them.

Helen Bennett

Sonning Deanery

Our Elementary and Focussed practices continue to be well attended, although fewer members now attend the Elementary as they have progressed to the Focussed intermediate practices. Our last Focussed intermediate practice included Treble Bob and Grandsire Triples. Hopefully some of our newer learners will start to attend the Elementary practices.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Branch 8-bell striking competition due to a lack of bands entering. However, the bells did not go to waste as a quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples was rung.

In August we held a Branch BBQ which was kindly hosted by St Paul, Wokingham. The weather was kind to us and the event well supported by members who enjoyed delicious food and good company. The evening was rounded off with an interesting bell ringing focussed quiz.

Jan Glen, Branch Secretary

Summer teaching of bell handling. August 2025

Two learners, two youth teacher trainees, two mentors and lots of hard work to help Isaac learn to ring before he had to go back to Durham. We all did it with a little fun along the way. Isaac brought his mum to learn too and as they are both Turkish and Nes doesn't speak fluent English there were challenges.

It was thanks to Benji, a returning ringer from about six years ago, enthusing a friend to learn how to ring. Isaac arrived very excited to learn but his mum was a

little nervous. Becki became quite adept at Nes's Google Translate and gradually Nes was able to relax.

Nigel and Jane were Becki and James' mentors with the Association Ringing Teachers ART, Module 1 which is a course to teach teachers how to teach handling a bell. We all started on 7 July and by 23 July Becki and James had taught for twelve hours. Isaac (being younger and speaking English) managed to ring both strokes after eight hours of teaching and Nes



rang independently in the last half hour on 23 July. A great achievement by all.

Keen to watch how his friend was progressing Benjy came along only to find himself learning to teach too. His willing brother, Louie, has also decided to reignite his ringing and now Benjy is seeking a Module 1 course so he can go back to Bangor university and teach even more students. Lots of good luck to him.



Here Becki, James and Benjy are teaching the tension exercise to Nes, Isaac and Louie.

The ART M1 module teaches techniques and skills for handling teaching by an ART Tutor. The approach is to break down the whole action into component parts using exercises before adding them together again to teach the whole part whole action. It is a clear and structured process for the teachers to follow. When ready the teacher is then assessed for accreditation by an ART assessor. For the learner there is a scheme called Learning the Ropes which is a progressive learning scheme from handling to ringing quarter peals from level 3 onwards. Each level requires skills to complete with certificates of achievement, and a badge if you want.

Becki and James were assessed for accreditation as an M1 teacher on 1 September. Kate Flavell, an ART assessor, passed them, so they are now ready to use their skills and grow more bellringers as they progress themselves. Good luck to both of them.

Jane Mellor, Training Officer



Two learners, two teachers, two mentors and a great friend

St Michael's Sandhurst

On 26 June 2025, the years of planning and fund raising came together when the Sandhurst bells were finally removed from the tower.

With our bell-hanger, Neil, and help from the gentlemen of our local band, the bells were eventually persuaded to leave the bell-frame. This was not an easy task, as in the 1950's three steel beams were added to support the bell-frame on a concrete ring. Unfortunately, no thought was given to the gap that would allow the bells to be lowered to the ground. A solution was found that created a lot of dust when the bricks and plinth were gradually ground away until there was just enough room for the tenor to be lowered on a tilt.



Newly painted beams and wall easement!



Rector, Neil, and the Sandhurst Gentlemen with the bells out

Nicholson's at Bridport are undertaking the works. The original cast staples have been removed and the bells tuned, which Nicholson's assure us will 'Now form a very fine, musical peal of bells'.

The tower is currently awaiting the return of the bells, and as part of the project, we will also be getting a floor below the bells that will allow much easier inspection of all the working parts.

We look forward to Sandhurst being able to host a monthly six bell practice in 2026. Meanwhile, I would like to thank the guild for their contribution to our fund-raising appeal.

Mike Sherren, Tower Captain, Sandhurst

South Oxon

The South Oxon Branch hosted this year's Guild AGM at St Laurence Church, Warborough. The mobile belfry, sited under the chestnut trees on Warborough's beautiful village green, was in almost constant use. Visitors also enjoyed open ringing at Watlington and Warborough. The AGM and church service were well attended.

A quarter peal was rung at St Andrews Chinnor to celebrate Sue Bailey's Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Sue, and her daughter Chris, were in the band – the first time they have rung a quarter together despite both having learnt to ring more than thirty years ago.

Attention has now moved on from the highly successful Watlington refurbishment to re-establishing ringing at St Giles Church in Tetsworth. Branch Chairman Andrew Davis organised a major clean up – five sacks of detritus were removed from the tower - and the bells finally rang out! The Tetsworth bells will be heard again at a special evensong service in late November, ensuring that the community are aware of their presence, and with the hope of attracting new ringers.

Congratulations were recorded to our Branch Ringing Master, John Hughes-D'Aeth, who conducted a 'double peal' of Stedman Cinques at Exeter Cathedral in late September. Exeter are the second heaviest ring of bells hung for change ringing in the world; the tenor alone weighs over 72 cwt. The peal comprised 10,001 changes, took eight hours twelve minutes and is the longest ever rung on such heavy bells.

Jane Willis, Branch Secretary

Vale of the White Horse

We held our Branch six-bell competition at Longcot in May this year. Eight teams entered with Stanford in the Vale being 'most improved'. Longcot were the overall winners of the Greenley Shield, and went on to represent the Branch at the Guild six-bell competition at Cuddesdon in October where they finished an impressive third. The same band also entered the Guild six-bell raising and lowering competition at Garsington, achieving second place.

This year's Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust sponsored 'Ride & Stride' in September saw our group travel to Faringdon visiting the five churches in the town followed by a day's hiking to visit six more churches and chapels (current and former). We rang at the three with bells and finished up at Longworth where we hope soon to restore another ringable tower to the Branch. The Stagecoach bus home concluded a lovely day out. Many thanks to all the open churches and much needed refreshments.

The 2025 annual Branch Dinner was held at The Woodman in Fernham in October. A group of ringers, friends and family enjoyed excellent food and company. Thanks to Cheryl for arranging the event this year.

Also in October, we held our annual Branch Outing in the Cotswolds. We rang at six towers: Bourton on the Hill, Blockley, Moreton in Marsh, Broadwell, Stow on the Wold and Burford. Much needed food and drinks were provided at the Inn on the Marsh in Moreton. Many thanks to Alice and Kit for arranging.

David Wright, Branch Secretary

Witney and Woodstock

The Witney and Woodstock Branch held its annual bellringing outing on Saturday 11 October. This year we went to the Forest of Dean; we rang in five towers: each one was remarkable in its own way. Ringing in different towers is useful to ringers gaining experience of handling bells of different weights and rope lengths. The first tower was in the village of Longhope and coincided with their annual scarecrow festival – see image. The second tower, Westbury on Severn, is not attached to the church, the church had burnt down and been rebuilt to the side of the original church leaving the tower as a freestanding building. Lunch was taken at the Severn Bore, where sadly the bore had appeared the week before, so we missed that, a good reason to go back! We went to Newnham where the strong glass used in champagne bottles was invented. Then on to Little Dean which was conveniently next to a micro-brewery and café for afternoon tea. Booking recommended and where the fermentation vessels are in the bar area. Finally, we went to Newent, home to the largest unsupported wooden ceiling in the country and trickiest bells of the day in the loveliest ringing chamber I have been in.

Janet Wood, Combe

In June, we held our six-bell striking competition with Witney winning the Method competition, and coming Joint First with Church Hanborough in the Call Changes competition. This meant that Witney was able to enter the Guild six-bell striking competition in October, the first time a Branch band has entered in several years. We came seventh (see p.12) – despite there being room for improvement, we all enjoyed the experience and look forward to a Branch band hopefully entering again next year.

Andrew Goldthorpe, Branch Secretary



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	Colin Lee (<i>Banbury, Bicester, Chipping Norton</i>) (07743 775150)
	Karen Pile (<i>Chiltern, Central Bucks, North Bucks</i>)

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John A Harrison **Lucy Hopkins Till**
Alan Marchbank **Timothy G Pett**

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Diary of Events for 2025/6

The Guild website lists dates for both Guild and Branch events. Some of these dates may differ from what is listed below, so please check the <https://odg.org.uk/> website for diary updates on an ongoing basis. Any changes or revisions should be sent to the ODG webmaster.

Codes for the 4th column of the tables below

TBC	To Be Confirmed	AGM	Annual General Meeting	AP	Advanced Practice
BP	Branch Practice	EP	Elementary Practice	HY	Half Yearly Meeting
QM	Quarterly Meeting	RCP	Ringling Centre Practice	SC	Striking Competition
SM	Surprise Major	SP	Surprise Practice	CM	Committee Meeting
FP	Focussed Practice				

NOVEMBER 2025

Mon	24	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	26	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	26	Reading	BP	TBC	11.00 – 12.30
Thurs	27	WWB	BP	Broadwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00

DECEMBER 2025

Tues	2	SDB	FP	Hurst (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	3	ONB	SM	Harwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	3	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	5	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	9	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	10	SDB	AP	All Saints	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Sat	13	EBSB	BP & Social	Burnham (8)	17.00 – 19.00
Sat	13	Central Bucks	BP	Cuddington (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	16	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	17	SDB	FP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	17	ONB	BP	East Hagbourne (8)	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	Aston Clinton (10)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Easthampstead (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Fri	26	Banbury	BP	Deddington (8)	10.30 – 12.00

JANUARY 2026

Tues	6	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	10	EBSB	BP	Penn (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	13	SDB	AP	St Pauls	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Sat	17	Chiltern	BP	TBA	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	17	SDB	BP	All Saints	10.30 – 12.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Tues	20	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	21	SDB	FP	Wargrave (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	Maidenhead (8)	10.00 – 12.00

FEBRUARY 2026

Tues	3	SDB	FP	Warfield (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	7	EBSB	Tower Captains/ Meeting	Stoke Poges (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Weds	11	SDB	AP	All Saints	19.30 – 21.00
				Wokingham (8)	
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	18	SDB	EP	Finchampstead (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP	TBA	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	21	SDB	AGM	Hurst (8)	15.00 – 18.30

Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Turville (6)	10.00 – 12.00
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MARCH 2026

Sat	14	EBSB	FP	Hughenden)8)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14/00 – 15.30
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP and AGM	TBA	10.00 – 13.00
Sat	21	SDB	BP	TBC	TBC
Sat	28	EBSB	BP	Lane End (6)	10.00 – 12.00

APRIL 2026

Sat	11	EBSB	SP	Farnham Royal (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Tues	15	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14/00 – 15.30
Sat	18	SDB	SC	TBC	TBC
Sat	25	EBSB	AGM	Hambleden (8)	15.00 – 18.30

MAY 2026

Sat	9	EBSB	BP	TBC	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (12)	14.00 – 16.00

ODG Young Ringers at *The Ringing World* NYC

For those who have not already read about *The Ringing World* National Youth Competition held on 5 July in Birmingham here is an account of the success of ODG Young Ringers who came a very credible third in the eight-bell method competition.

This year six teams entered which was a 50% increase from the four teams in London in 2024. The format of the contest continues to evolve. This year there were five categories, eight-bell method, six-bell method, eight-bell call changes, six-bell call-changes and basic call changes. The leader of the Yorkshire Tykes team likened this to the Football Leagues: Premier League, Championship, Division One, Division Two and Conference. She even said we have 'promotion and relegation' with some teams dropping out and others re-joining. It was great to see Bedfordshire enter the basic call changes: last year they came to London but didn't enter the competition, and are now strong enough to compete again.

It is always encouraging to chat to other leaders at events like this. We all have the same challenges. How do you get all your young ringers in the same place to practice? How do you ensure you have more ringers joining the squad as young ringers in your team become too old to ring.

Whilst the competition element provides a clear focus for the day there is so much more. This is a day about taking part regardless of which contest you enter: for instance, ringing on the ten at St Paul, Jewellery Quarter and a mini-ring; handbells at St Martin in the Bullring and then the challenge of ringing on the sixteen there. The practice at holding bells up at back stroke paid off. It was good to meet the Bucks and Berks team there and also to see Tom Sherwood ex-ODG young ringer who was one of the many graduates from previous RWNYC's providing support and guidance.

We then put our day bus passes to good use, first to ring at the ten at St Mary Moseley, fun and games working out which side of the road we needed to stand, then on to our competition touch on the eight at Edgbaston. We were all on the top

deck in case we could see any of the cricket as we passed. Our final tower was the eight at Harborne and then time for a quick game of cricket in the church yard before our final bus back for the results.

Food is high on the agenda for our monthly practices with copious quantities of cake, so it is not surprising we rounded off our day with pizza before all heading off on different trains to the various destinations across the Guild from which our fourteen-strong squad come.

Monthly practices have resumed, please contact either Colin Lee or Jenny Page for details. There are also practices for young ringers run more locally throughout the Guild. For details of these, do contact Colin Lee (for the northwest and central areas), Tony Crabtree (in the southwest of the Guild) and myself (in the southeast).



Jenny Page, General Committee member



The 2025 ODG Young Ringers Squad