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ODD BOB

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

Why is Odd Bob called Odd Bob?

See p.9



Catherine Lane, Guild Master
2018 -2026

Thank you Katie - from all of us

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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 – we hope that odg.org.uk will be restored to full service shortly.

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 Holy Week unfolds, I find myself composing my final contribution to *Odd Bob*. The weather outside is cold and grey, and a persistent wind threatens to snap the heads off some lively orange tulips visible from my desk. Nearby, the cat eyes a pigeon strutting along the wall, eager to give chase but lacking the courage. She glances back to check that I am close, chattering at her potential quarry.

This week, I set myself a challenge involving a ringing friend: to identify churches that I have photographed with either no bells, or only chiming bells. This exercise not only tested my friend's knowledge of churches in the diocese but also brought to light architectural treasures often overlooked when rushing to service ringing or practice nights. Among the highlights were SS Peter and Paul in Worminghall, only reachable by driving across the village common, and St Barnabas, rising like a phoenix from the decaying wharf on the canal at Jerico.



Luna, who particularly likes the singles in Stedman

There was also St Bartholomew in Holton; in the fifteenth century, the nearby Lyehill Quarry provided limestone for the construction of Thomas Wolsey 's Cardinal's College in Oxford, now more familiar to us as Christ Church.

Throughout the last eight years, I have often enjoyed browsing the collection of Guild Reports that accompany the role. This time my exploration began with the 1926 annual Master's report, followed by the 1983 report, which included my election to the Guild as a member of the Waltham St Lawrence band in Sonning Deanery Branch.

In 1926 Cyril W.O. Jenkyn praised the 'great piece of work that has been done at Faringdon, where there is a new ring of eight hung in the most approved fashion and a new clock and chimes, and moreover a band that can ring Grandsire Triples'.

In 1983, Ron Thorne observed the remarkable size and diversity of our Guild, as well as the tremendous resources at our disposal. His insight was accurate then and continues to be relevant today. These qualities are not to be taken for granted by ringers. ODG ringers have the privilege of accessing thousands of pounds worth of equipment for a modest annual fee of £10. This alone is a significant blessing and one of the many advantages of being a ringer. It was the affordability of the Exercise that enabled me to learn, it was accessible and rewarding and didn't take very much out of my meagre housekeeping budget! It is an opening into a whole new, wonderful lifestyle that should be appreciated and valued by all ringers.

The time has come for me to step down. My tenure as Master has been filled with memorable experiences, valuable lessons, and the warmth of cherished friendships. I am deeply appreciative of the support and encouragement extended by so many.

Together, we have navigated the challenges brought by the Covid pandemic, celebrated our achievements, and fostered a spirit of unity that I will always treasure. I am confident that the Guild will continue to flourish in the years to come.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all our ringers and in particular the Guild officers. Your dedication, compassion, and steadfast commitment to our shared interests have inspired me each day. It has been an honour to work alongside such a passionate and talented community.

Catherine Lane, Guild Master

ODG Young Ringers

In addition to the monthly ODG squad practices there have several opportunities to meet and ring with other young ringers.

Midlands Young Ringers' Outing – Saturday 6 December

Reading branch ringers have to look at the map of the northern ODG to understand why we link up with the young ringers from Worcester, Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Derby and Peterborough. For the last couple of years this group has gathered for outings and a friendly striking competition. The day was long with a start from Reading at 7am, collecting ringers from Oxford Parkway station before enjoying ringing the twelve at Melborne. This was followed by Ticknall (10) and a pizza lunch, then Hartshorne (6) Ashby de la Zouch (10) ending with Coleorton.

2025 Young Ringers' Christmas Social Day – Monday 21 December

Open to all young ringers who can ring a bell on their own. This was the fourth young ringers' day held, and the largest to date, with twenty-four young ringers representing eleven of our fifteen branches. This year it was held at St Blaize, Milton and St Peter Drayton. Activities included tower bell and hand bell ringing, both tunes and methods. A packed lunch and games. We were joined at Milton by Chris Mundy, our Deputy Master, who, I think it fair to say, was amazed by the cheerful atmosphere (some would say noise).



All the young ringers

During the lunch break we took the opportunity to thank Daphne Pollard, who has for many years, provided the refreshments for our practices. Her lemon drizzle cake,



All involved with the day

chocolate brownies and peanut butter cookies have provided sustenance for many young ringers. She is taking a well-deserved retirement. Thank you Daphne.



Ringing hand bells on Monday 21 December

Midlands Young Ringers' Striking Competition – Saturday 21 March

This year it was the turn of the ODG (Colin Lee) to organise the event. Steeple Aston was the base for the day with the draw at 12:30pm and competition ringing starting at 1pm. An excellent venue with their hall opposite the church. A glorious sunny day which meant our judges could sit outside in the church yard. When not ringing their competition touch the bands could ring at Bletchingdon and Kirtlington.

The aim is to provide a friendly, supportive environment, to experience a striking competition. All the teams will go on in July to ring in the *Ringing World* National Youth Competition. Teams can choose to ring on six or eight bells, call changes or method. We entered two teams, the only team on the day to ring eight bell method, ringing Plain Bob Major conducted by Marc Jones from St Giles, Oxford. Our other team rang call changes on six conducted by Ethan Cook from Tilehurst. For most of the ODG six-bell band (along with youngsters from many of the other guilds) it was the first time they had rung in a competition, and all rung together. Our judges were Rachel Baggley and Charlie Linford, both first year university students, both of whom rang in their guilds' youth teams, Worcester and Brumdingers respectively. All the teams received useful feedback.



Six-bell band



Eight-bell band

Derbyshire retained the winner's trophy ringing call changes on six, Brumdingers were in second place with their six-bell method ringing. We look forward to meeting them all again in Nottingham in July.

Our thanks go to all the parents who helped on the day with stewarding at the towers and catering for one hundred people and continue to transport their young ringers to practices.

Last but certainly not least to the many towers we practice at over the year and the warm welcome we receive.

Jenny Page, General Committee Member

Librarian's Report

There have been two library enquiries since *Odd Bob* 113. These have been about: -

- two volumes of Oxford City Branch minute books were borrowed
- membership details for a Guild member

The future of the Guild library

A notice was circulated to all Guild members in early February concerning the future of the Guild library. The notice announced that the library, as currently constituted, will be changing both in its set up and procedures. The changes were expected to be:

- expand the electronic archive considerably to increase the amount of Guild material (past Annual Reports and *Odd Bobs*, and Branch records) available on-line.
- reduce the amount of material held as books and papers in order to make it reasonably practicable to accommodate the library in a Guild member's house.

There were two replies to the notice, neither of which were opposed to the changes. The two changes subsequently went forward as proposals at the Guild General Committee meeting in March and after discussion were passed.

For the record, the reasons for making these changes are two-fold: the amount of space occupied by the material in the library (now over ninety feet of shelving and fifteen boxes) is going to makes it increasingly difficult for any Guild member to accommodate it; and much of the content of the library is never consulted, particularly the published books. The information, which Guild members are interested in, is almost exclusively contained in Guild and Branch material. A portion of this has been made more accessible by storing copies of it on the Guild's electronic archive, but the process of storing it needs to be speeded up.

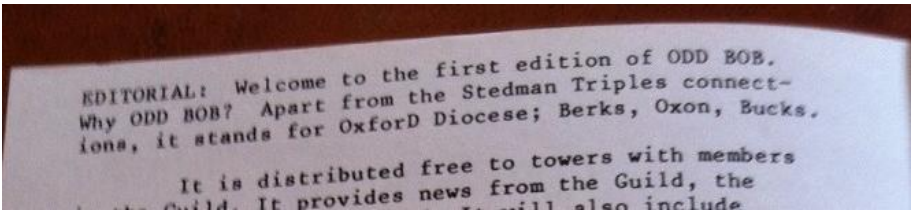
The first step in the disposal of library material will be off-loading the Bell News and *Ringing Worlds*. These take up approximately twenty-eight feet of shelving so represent nearly one-third of the total shelf space. Nearly all the pages of these publications can be found either online or on the *Ringing World's* 'First Hundred Years' USB Drive.

Any further developments concerning the future of the Guild library will be reported in *Odd Bob*, but if any member has any comment or query on the subject, please let me know.

In the meantime, the library service will continue as before. So 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

Why is Odd Bob called Odd Bob?


EDITORIAL: Welcome to the first edition of ODD BOB.
Why ODD BOB? Apart from the Stedman Triples connect-
ions, it stands for OxforD Diocese; Berks, Oxon, Bucks.

It is distributed free to towers with members
It provides news from the Guild, the

March 1982 first edition

Towers and Belfries Committee's Report

The T&B committee has met twice since November. New members are welcome. You don't have to be an expert. That will come with time as it has for all of us. Recent enquiries include:

Tower access: it is surprising how many towers are missing simple aids such as grab handles or stair ropes to the ringing room and sometimes even the most basic of aids up to the belfry. Indeed, at some recent visits the access was positively dangerous! Trap doors unsecured and poised to drop on your head, no hand holds, big gaps, no footholds, etc. The list is almost endless but the remedies simple. *Ringing World* (20 February 2026) had some pertinent observations on the subject!

Stretchy ropes: This issue continues and the symptoms aren't always recognised as a rope problem. We were asked about a bell that had become 'hard to set'. 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' 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. We cover the various scenarios in our belfry courses and if you want to learn more, then sign up for a course.

Since November's *Odd Bob*, we have run one belfry (see below) and one rope course with an average attendance of about fifteen. We think the new MemberMojo communications network is reaching more ODG members than the old 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! The dates for the remaining 2026 courses are fixed. The next is Secrets of a Steeple Keeper at Stratfield Mortimer on 20 June and then 17 October, venue TBA. Offers welcome! Email tbchair@odg.org.uk or tbsecretary@odg.org.uk if you fancy attending or hosting a course.

Since the last report, members did general/Bell Fund/TMA inspections or corresponded with: Buscot, Stanford in the Vale, Kencot, Hanslope, Buckingham, Caversham, Tadmarton, Theale, Clanfield, Turville, Newton Blossomville, Hambledon, Maids Moreton, Caversham, Hughenden, Wokingham All Saints, Britwell Salome, Ickford, Ufton Nervet, Lower Basildon, Shabbington, Witney, Hamstead Marshall, and Stanton Harcourt.

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.

Tony Crabtree, Chairman, Towers & Belfries Committee

Towers & Belfries Course - Tetsworth Church, 28 March

Until recently Tetsworth bells had been declared 'Unsafe to ring' during a QI inspection. After several years, with a visit by the Towers & Belfries Team, it was found that the ladder to the belfry was unsafe. As recorded elsewhere a working party was established to clear years of detritus, check everything was safe, then ring the bells again. This initial work allowed the bells to be rung for a celebration service, Christmas carol service, practices and to date, two quarter peals.

As acting Tower Captain at Tetsworth, hosting the Towers & Belfries course was an ideal opportunity to meet people with similar issues, looking after a set of bells that are 'out of sight, out of mind' on the other end of the rope. All aspects of the tower were checked and simple actions identified that can make the ringing experience so much better, without bankrupting a church's PCC.

We took away many ideas from the day including adding a handle at the top of the ladder to the ringing chamber and additional fixings for the belfry ladder. Testing the decibels, the ringing chamber is officially too loud! The course gave valuable advice on how to make improvements without risking damage to the fabric of the building. Topics covered were:

- inspection & maintenance
- working safely in the tower
- rope management - identifying wear points
- guide frames
- improving the ringing circle
- sound control
- improving bells - clapper alignment, odd-struckness

Tetsworth church was an ideal venue to teach ways to improve the sound control and comfort in the ringing room. It was great to see sound control in practice with Tony and the team trying out different measures with the before and after sound levels measured.

Superb extra expertise was shared in the coffee breaks. We all had specific points from our own towers. A happy way to learn and take back to our home towers improved ways of caring for our towers. Feedback from the Tetsworth community is that they really appreciate the interest in St Giles' church bells and are so pleased to hear them ringing out again. A practical, enjoyable day was had by all attendees on the Towers & Belfries course. Thank you to the ODG Towers & Belfries Committee.

Karen Pile and Andrew Davis



Photo: Andrew Davis

Summoned by Bells

Betjeman and Bells go together like Scones and Jam or Morecambe and Wise. John Betjeman loved the sound of church bells all his life, and they echo throughout his poetry and prose writing. The bells of St Endellion, near his holiday home at Trebetherick, welcomed him every time he returned to Cornwall, and in his *Shell Guide to Cornwall* he quotes approvingly a rhyme painted on a board in the ringing chamber there, written in Georgian times:

'Let's all in love and friendship hither come,
Whilst the shrill treble calls to thundering Tom.
And since bells are for modest recreation,
Let's rise and ring and fall to admiration.'

John Betjeman was one of the best-known poets of the twentieth century, his *Collected Poems,* published in 1958, selling in huge numbers. Knighted in 1969, made Poet Laureate, he died in 1984 and is probably unknown to younger generations, but in his poetry he captured the spirit of the age and spoke to many people about faith and doubt, the power of place, and his love of English architecture.

In 1934 Betjeman moved to Uffington (Vale of the White Horse Branch) on the Berkshire Downs, with its splendid cathedral-like church. There he learned the art of bell ringing, and the magic of campanology entered his soul. His poem 'Uffington' begins:

'Tonight we hear the muffled peal
Hang on the village like a pall;
It overwhelms the towering elms –
That death-reminding dying fall…..'

His knowledge of the technicalities of change ringing enabled him to set out in his poem 'Bristol' the numerical table of the peal he is referring to, 'the mathematical pattern of a plain course on the bells.' Here is the second verse:

'Ringers in an oil-lit belfry – Bitton? Kelston? Who shall say? –
Smoothly practising a plain course, caverned out the dying day
As their melancholic music flooded up and ebbed away.'

His 1945 collection of poems, appropriately entitled *New Bats in Old Belfries*, included a poem entitled 'On Hearing the Full Peal of Ten Bells from Christ Church, Swindon, Wilts' which begins:

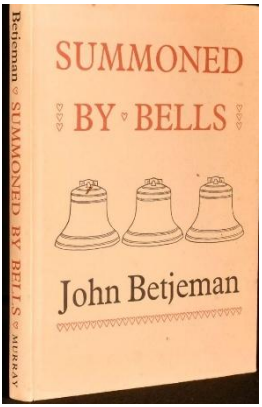
'Your peal of ten ring over then this town,
Ring on my men nor ever ring them down…..'
And the poem ends:
'New birth and death-reminding bells ring clear,
Loud under planes and over changing gear'.

When Betjeman moved to Wantage (Old North Berks Branch) in 1951 he again employed the sound of the eight bells of St Mary's Church to conjure up a joyful celebration of summer:

'Now with the bells through the apple bloom
Sunday-ly sounding,
And the prayers of the nuns in their chapel gloom
Us all surrounding,
Where the brook flows
Brick walls of rose
Send on the motionless meadow the bell notes rebounding.'

He later wrote 'This poem is meant to be like the sound of eight bells on a fine morning.'

So strong was Betjeman's love of church bells that when he came to write his long autobiographical poem in blank verse, published in 1960, he called it *Summoned by Bells*. For him the sound of bells evoked memories of the places that had been important to him, Oxford, Uffington, Wantage, the City of London, and churches all over the country where faithful ringers called their communities to worship. The sound of bells was to him both joyful and sombre, giving him comfort and hope, but also reminding him of his own mortality and his lifelong fear of death. But most of all, church bells reminded Betjeman of all the Church of England churches in which he had worshipped, as he describes in 'Church of England thoughts occasioned by hearing the bells of Magdalen Tower from the Botanic Garden, Oxford, on St Mary Magdalen's Day'. Betjeman is the poet of bells and bell ringers, and I urge you to get hold of a copy of his *Collected Poems* and enjoy them for yourself.



To end, here's a verse from his Magdalen poem which sums up his love of campanology:

'In country churches old and pale
I hear the changes smoothly rung
And watch the coloured sallies fly
From rugged hands to rafters high
As round and back the bells are swung'.

The Venerable David Meara, Archdeacon Emeritus of London,
President, The Betjeman Society

208th Anniversary Dinner of the Appleton Society of Change Ringers

This dinner has been held since 1818 when 'three bells and a sance belle' were replaced the previous year with a ring of six bells given by the then Lord of the Manor, Robert Southby, and dedicated on 4 March when the villagers were given the day off and the Appleton Society of Change Ringers was formed. (Robert Southby apparently paid for a great feast for the community in which the treble was upturned and filled with beer, to appease the locals for enclosing the village green.) Two more bells were added in 1854 and a further two in 1861.

About seventy ringers and friends came to this year's dinner (held in the village hall since 1961) on Saturday 7 March. The March 4th song originally composed by the village schoolmaster John Harding was first sung in 1818 (more verses were added in 1854 and 1977) and is still sung at the celebrations along with handbell ringing and speeches.

These details thanks to https://theoxfordsausage.com/ and Rosemary Page *Ringing with Pride: the Story of Appleton's Bells.*

Last year, Appleton's appropriately named Rector, Wealands Bell (see also p.35), concocted this grace from lots of ringing vocabulary:

A Grace for the Appleton Bell Ringers

Heavenly Father, our strength and *stay* in all life's *changes*, we *stand* and *raise* our eyes in thanksgiving for this food and wine and fellowship; we *look to* you for everyone who *caters* for our needs. *Lower* our sense of entitlement; and, nourished by these gifts, *lead* us as we *go* from here on a *plain course* before us to share our goods to the *extent* we can; our hearts not *void* of charity but *framed* by service to our neighbours: *that's all*. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

This year's was a piece of jovial doggerel, sung to the tune Belfry Praise (AMR 496):

Eternal Father, for your gifts
of food and wine and song,
we praise and magnify your name
with a ding-dong, ding-dang-dong.
Help us to share your bounty
in East, West, South and North;
that, strengthened by your grace we might
into the world March Forth.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

He goes on to say: 'It is in the singing and ringing that the evening takes on something of the quality of a Thomas Hardy novel. The repertoire may have not changed drastically even since the days of Jane Austen. There is still a rich mixture of folk songs and solid hymns, with a Nunc Dimittis thrown in near the end, redolent of an age in which the sacred and secular were still contented bedfellows, and even those who wore their religion more lightly than their perpendicular collars would

happily belt out a canticle or metrical psalm. In the main, it's a diet of old favourites like 'Widecombe Fair' and 'Ilkley Moor' that make the running, with 'Hole in my Bucket' added as a special treat for many years by members of a certain local family of well-known booksellers.

'There is a wonderfully relaxed quality to the performances, with a very fine line dividing performers and audience. There is no printed programme: some of the Appleton Ringers and their guests have been attending this dinner (which Hitler never managed to cancel, though Covid did) for half-a-century or more, and they all know who's up next.

'Eventually come the handbells, as a line of men (mostly on the mature side) tuck their ties into their shirts and take their seats for the 'lapping'. With the hypnotic quality of clockwork, at the quietest of commands from one end of the line, each ringer sounds his bell with that characteristic jerk of the wrist, then passes it into his neighbour's lap, removing from his own lap the bell that has appeared there from his other side. To an untrained eye, it seems incredible that the ringers should know which note of the octave has been passed to them. But of course they know, and the gentle melody pours on, flowing out like water over stones in a brook.

'And so the barrels slowly empty, and the evening ends, and the locals make their way homeward; slowly, perhaps, but steadily enough: thankful for another year of the Appleton bells, and ready to ring them once again before church the next morning.'

Look To – Ian McMillan on BBC Radio 4 7/12/2025

The tower captain is holding the rope in his hands and the sally's stripes are like a barber's pole. There's a sense of anticipation in the air; not just anticipation: campanological anticipation. Iron mouths are about to speak. The tower captain looks around the ringing chamber like a minor royal inspecting a guard of honour.

'Look to' the captain says. 'Treble's going, she's gone' and the eight bells of All Saints ring out across the valley, and the teenaged me, ringing bell number four, is in heaven. Not just heaven: campanological heaven. We're doing call changes today for Morning Prayer; last Thursday we were practising Tittums, the wonderfully-named pattern of eight bells that sounds, to the untrained ear, like teetum, teetum,

For many years I had the joy of being a bell ringer for Sunday services, for weddings (for which you got a small fee), for funerals when the bells rang half-muffled with a deep mourning sound, and on practice nights which were always Thursdays. Of course, being a bellringer is not like being a piccolo player: the piccolo player can rehearse in a small room and then perform on a huge stage but the bell ringer practices and performs in the same arena and mistakes as well as triumphs can be heard for miles around. Like life, really.

For me, as a poet, one of the main joys of bell ringing is the language; I've mentioned some shining jewels already: the leader is a *Tower Captain,* the room where the bellringers stand is a *ringing chamber* and the stripy bit on the rope is the *Sally.* The smallest bell is the *Treble* and the largest one is the *Tenor. Call changes* are when the *Tower Captain* calls out which bells should ring when. And *Tittums,*

glorious *Tittums,* that aforementioned method for ringing eight bells which goes 152 637 48, from tenor to treble. And *Campanology,* of course, a word that only people, who never ring bells, call bell ringing, except, ironically, as I did earlier. And bells are always female.

In the pub after practice night, we would have endless debates about whether ringing was a science or an art, a skill or a craft and we could never quite decide. That is, until one Thursday night in 1974 when I lost concentration for a moment: I must have been thinking about the previous week's edition of Bells on Sunday, which was a splendid ring of six from somewhere in Norfolk. Very melodious, Norfolk.

My rope wrapped around my body and as the bells swung I was taken swiftly into the air like a trampolinist and flung around the ringing chamber, catching glimpses of my fellow ringers and the room in a way that I'd never seen them before and as I bounced above their heads I realised that bell ringing was a way of seeing the world differently, as a place of almost mathematical order that could at any moment be disrupted. And that's stood me in, well, good philosophical stead, ever since.

Look to, Ian's going, he's gone. Ah, that sounds like Tittums too.

Presenter of The Verb © Ian McMillan

Exercise with the Exercise

This is a combination of learning a method with keeping fit! It involves one's stairs at home denoting the places when ringing a method.

The hall at the bottom of the stairs is first place, the first step of the stairs is second place, the second step is third place, and so on. Always face the same way, i.e. up the stairs, don't try to turn around on the stairs. For safety I feel that the stairs should have at least one banister rail.



So to ring Bob Doubles as bell 2 one would stand on the first step, take one step down to the hall, another step in the hall, step up to the first stair (2nds place), up to the next stair (3rds place), up to the next stair (4th place), up to the next stair (5th place), another step on the same stair, step down one stair (4th place), step down one stair (3rds place), step up one stair (4th place), step down one stair (3rds place), step down one stair (2nds place), step down one stair (lead)... and so on.

It is surprisingly good exercise, one gets quite tired just ringing a Doubles method plain course, and one can 'ring' the places much faster than one does in a tower with real bells.

Rob Needham, *Odd Bob* Editor, 2006-2024, issues 76-110

Safeguarding is for Everyone

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

News from the Branches

Banbury

Branch Quiz and Supper

The Branch held its annual quiz and supper in Bodicote church hall in March. Seven teams from across the Branch took part in the quiz and the worthy winners were the 'Bloxbury' team (not a new tower, rather a combined team from Bloxham and Adderbury!). The fish and chips supper went down very well, as did the delicious puddings which the teams brought along. Many thanks to the Bodicote team for hosting the evening once again.

Alison Tite, Tower Captain, Horley

Deddington

The news from Deddington is that David Field is now Tower Captain and Jen Childs is Deputy Captain.

Although we manage to ring for Sunday services, practice night in Deddington is on hold as several ringers are currently incapacitated. Our tower open day last June attracted over forty-five people coming to see the bells rung and see the bells and then go on the roof. We recruited three new ringers but unfortunately, we are now down to one staying the course.

David Field, Tower Captain, Deddington

Somerton Bell Ringers' skittles

Somerton church bell ringers successfully hosted its first skittles event in the village hall on 28 March. Ringers from the Bicester Branch also joined us. We had a raffle with some supper prizes along with a hot meal followed by a choice of sweet. Somerton Social club opened the bar for us, to quench our thirst.

Revd Andrew Foran and Chris Adamson won the skittles. Revd Andrew arrived at the idea of having a service for Bell Sunday a couple of years ago and has rung at Somerton. Chris has been ringing at Somerton and managed the bar along with helping to set the skittles up. There was a stand-off for last place between Jon and Fiona McLoone and Amanda and Cecily Good. Amanda and Cecily won.

We finished off with playing killer, which Sue McCouaig won. All those playing started with three lives, and every time you missed a skittle, you lost a life.

We made a small profit of just over £140. This was split 50/50 between Somerton Social club who let us borrow the skittles and the Banbury Branch. We plan to host a similar skittles event next year.

Neil Clare, Tower Captain, Somerton

Banbury

'C---all Change' at Banbury Tower!

It's been quite a year for our popular town tower! Barry Davis, our very well-known Tower Captain has stepped down from the role after captaining thirty-five plus years, running it together with his wife, Jean. We hope Barry will continue to enjoy ringing now, without the responsibilities.

As many ringers know, Barry and Jean jointly ran the tower activities extremely efficiently for many years. They kept a very busy, well-known and popular town tower running smoothly - helping develop new learners/members over the years, welcoming many visiting bands and many large weddings.

And last, but not least, Barry captained the popular well-attended weekly Wednesday evening tower practices! Ringers from local towers, and beyond, attended regularly.

He also captained New Year's Day ringing for many years, which brought ringers from far & wide! Perhaps this could be reintroduced by Tower or Branch next New Year?

Roman Sadowski has now taken over the Captaincy. More about Roman shortly.

Dina Bentley has also decided to step down from the Treasurer role which she has carried out diligently since 2003! She is handing over to 'new to Banbury' ringer, Odette Dawkins. Dina significantly helped the tower return to ringing - and run smoothly after our lengthy 2024/5 pause. She kept the wedding bookings going whilst Barry gradually handed the reins over to us all. Richard Bentley deserves a



Banbury Tower Ladies - Dina Bentley, Catherine Blackburn and Penny Simpson ringing with our regular Banbury Tower ringers on International Women's Day, Sunday 8 March 2026.

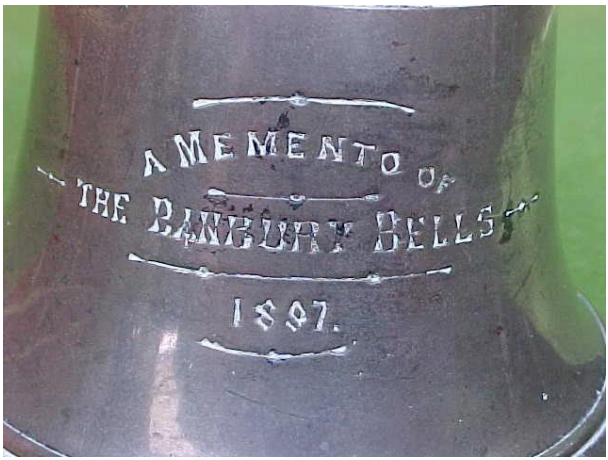
mention too - over the years, he supported his wife Dina whilst helping train new learners and chair our tower meetings. Both can now enjoy ringing without the responsibilities.

So, it's been quite a year of change for all of us. Now over to new Tower Captain - Roman. Roman says:

'I moved to Banbury two years ago to be closer to family, from Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire where I was Tower Captain for more than twenty-five years.

'I particularly enjoy teaching and encouraging ringers at all stages, with a strong focus on improving striking and building a supportive team. Living within easy walking distance of Hanwell (6, 7cwt) I also help teach a new band, sharing resources and ringers with several local towers (including a few outside ODG territory).

'We welcome ringers of all abilities, and any other interested people, to all our practice and service ringing. Unfortunately, we cannot do much about the fifty+ steps to the ringing chamber, but you will be rewarded with a magnificent 1930 Taylor's 10!' Roman has enlisted Julian Masters and Odette Dawkins as Assistant Tower Captains. Both happen to be 'new to Banbury area' this past year or so.



To conclude, Oxford ringer Len Porter contacted us about his discovery and purchase of a beautiful handbell called Banbury with the inscription - A Memento of Banbury Bells 1897.

We are delighted to see it back home, and ringer Joe Burchell has bought it for Banbury Tower in remembrance of his ringing wife, Sue Burchell.

Len initially told us 'the handbell is four inches in diameter, and six inches tall (to the top of the handle). It's in wonderful condition and for a non-musical-handbell it has a quite good tone. The seller was in Bournemouth.'

He explained 'According to *Church Bells of Oxfordshire*, in 1897 for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, three new bells were added to the ring of eight, for the carillon machine, which was renewed and enlarged to play twenty-one tunes (there is no mention of the handbell). All the eleven bells were recast in 1930.' Thanks, Len.

The handbell will soon be proudly displayed in Banbury Tower. Roman has discovered the bell was cast by Gillett & Johnston.

Penny Simpson, Tower Secretary, Banbury

Bicester

At our AGM in February, two new members were elected. Sue Macready retired as Tower Captain at Bletchingdon, after twenty-six years, and Sally Cross has taken over. Stephen Walker (who has been teaching new ringers at Ambrosden) asked particularly for help in recruiting ringers for St Edburg's, Bicester.

In conjunction with ART, the Oxon Ringing School https://bellringing.org/oxon-ringing-school/ uses Kirtlington as well as St Helen's Abingdon (ONB) and Dorchester (South Oxon Branch) for practices. Also raising and lowering in peal practices have been held at Bletchingdon in January attended by a total of eleven students and Doubles daytime practices have been organised as well as monthly Branch Practices.



At the Branch Practice in Weston-on-the-Green, in March, a record twenty ringers came from across the Branch (and beyond). Although a challenge to cater for so many, our Ringing Master, Richard Haseldine manages the practices with aplomb as well as organising an eight or ten bell practice in Bicester most months.

For the Guild Ringing Day on 4 May all seventeen of Bicester Branch's towers were available, including Chesterton's three and Fritwell's four bell towers. Thank you to all who helped particularly our Vice-President, Teresa Carter.

Pam Holley, Branch Secretary

Central Bucks

A few members attended the practice for Cambridge and Yorkshire in March following the Michaelmas course last year. Cambridge is now being rung regularly at Stewkley so anyone who wants to practice will be welcome there.

Following the AGM, Central Bucks Branch welcomes Graham Gulliver as chairman. The first event for this year will be the branch striking competition to be held at Winslow on 9 May. This will probably be history by the time you read this; you may be in the winning team!

Later in the year, it is Central Bucks Branch's turn to host the Guild six bell striking competition. This will be held on Saturday 3 October at Chearsley. It would be good if some Central Branch towers entered for this - there are plenty who are capable.

John Chantler, Branch Secretary

Chiltern

The branch continues to hold practices on the third Saturday of the month which are often well attended and include a range of methods as members try to develop their

skills. Sadly, many towers are still struggling for numbers and several of our churches, whilst ringing for Sunday Services, are heavily dependent on visitors to get all of the bells ringing.

It was disappointing that attendance at the AGM in March was particularly low, although encouraging that we managed to fill all the officer positions and that one of our younger members agreed to become a Ringing Master.

Most recently we received the sad news that one of our long-serving members, Derek Peters of Aston Clinton, has died.

Chris Potter, Branch Secretary

Chipping Norton

Claire Tarrant Award



Each year the Chipping Norton Branch award the Claire Tarrant shield to a member of the branch who has made a significant contribution to ringing, either by assisting others or in their own development. Claire was Chipping Norton Branch Secretary for thirteen years and Branch Ringing Master at the time of her death. The award is made annually in memory of Claire and the service she gave to the branch.

This year's award winner is Mick Austin of Hook Norton. The photo shows Mick (right) receiving the award from our branch Chairman, David Salter.

Chippy Branch Change of Officers

The Chipping Norton branch AGM was held in March and there has been a change of officers. David Salter, after five years as Ringing Master, has decided to step down. Dan Glyde of Burford was duly elected as Ringing Master. David will continue as Branch Chair but felt that it was time to take a small step back due a personally busy 2026. At the time of writing, Dan successfully led his first branch practice at Spelsbury, where twelve members were able to practice several doubles and minor methods.

The other change is that Dan Austin has also stood down from the Deputy Ringing Master role after five years. Dan has made a solid contribution to the branch and been able to support other ringers with their learning. The final change is the election of Sally Austin as Branch Spokesperson. This is the new role that has been created within the Guild's proposed new organisational structure, and her election pre-empts this change.

Sally Austin - Fifty Year Membership Anniversary

Many of us will not remember Saturday 13 March 1976, but Sally Austin will remember this date as the day she became a member of the ODG, fifty years ago. I am sure that all those people who know Sally would like to congratulate her on this

significant milestone.

Bellboard reveals that she has been listed 487 times as Sally Franklin and 614 times as Sally Austin. During her membership she is listed as having rung almost 1100 quarter peals/peals across twenty counties of England and Wales.

Trevor Withell, Branch Secretary

East Berks and South Bucks

2025 finished on a high, with a well-attended Branch practice at Burnham followed by seasonal refreshments served by the local ringers. The tower was packed with twenty-nine ringers taking a turn in the small eight-bell ringing chamber. We were pleased to see 95-year-old Cliff Blundell at the social but sadly a hand injury prevented him from ringing on this occasion. Cliff has been a member (and former tower captain) at Burnham since 1960.

Members who attended the 2024 Guild AGM at Stoke Poges will remember a bell being on display and a member of the Hartley family giving a short history of the bell. This bell is now mounted in an oak frame in St Giles Church. The 'Hartley' bell was cast in 1908 and was originally hung in St Wilfred's Chapel of Ease, Stoke Poges. It was salvaged after the chapel was demolished and was eventually returned to St Giles Church. Our annual EBSB Tower Captains' meeting was held in St Giles where we were able to see the bell in its new location.



Representatives of nineteen towers attended the Tower Captains' meeting and gave an update on the status of ringing in their towers. Although some are struggling, there were positive vibes from others, and it was good to hear that neighbouring towers are working together to improve their ringing.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to electing eighteen new members at our Branch AGM, some of whom have been attending Branch practices already. We look forward to ringing with and supporting them in the future.

Patricia Newton, Branch Secretary

Newbury

It is still all-systems go in the Newbury Branch. Our elementary practice, held on the first Friday of the month, continues to thrive with a 'feature method' and all the usual standard ringing available. Numbers attending have steadily increased, in fact, at a recent practice held at Peasemore, you couldn't have got many more through the door. The advanced practice, held on the third Friday, also attracts a good following and a feature method or methods, is also available. With spring in the air, April's practice, held on the six at Shaw, included Primrose Surprise, Tulip Delight and Snowdrop Treble Bob to test those attending. 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. If things continue to go to plan (they seldom do!), we are hopeful that we will field not one, but two, teams for the forthcoming Eight Bell striking competition. The Newbury Branch continues to provide and enjoy Sunday service ringing at most of our towers. There are also very active tower practices, training events and outings featuring throughout the year. Our website, notwithstanding the recent cyber-attack, is linked via the Guild website and includes our diary along with the latest and past issues of our Summer and Christmas newsletters since 2015, so please go and have a read once the system is fully operational again.

Mark Robins, Branch Secretary

North Bucks

At the Branch AGM in March there were no changes in officers, some new members elected and a grant awarded to a young ringer to go on the Radley ringing course. As there was nothing contentious to discuss, the meeting finished in record time.

Monthly practices at this time of year focus on 8-bell ringing ahead of the Guild competition which this year will be held on home ground at Bletchley. The touch has been tried out at several tower practices and by the actual band at a Branch Practice so preparations are in hand.

We heard at the Branch Practice at Calverton that the renovation of the bells at Stony Stratford is planned for the end of this year.

Doug Hird, Branch Secretary

Old North Berks

2026 began with ringing and refreshments at East Hagbourne on 1 January. This was very well attended by over forty branch members. I would like to thank the East Hagbourne ringers for their hospitality and for providing a delicious selection of soups, savouries and cakes.

Once again, we held our AGM at midday on a sunny Saturday in March, this year in Blewbury village hall. Before the meeting there was ringing at Chilton and Blewbury. After the AGM over thirty branch members enjoyed a splendid lunch of jacket potatoes with various fillings, followed by cakes. I would like to thank the Blewbury ringers for their hospitality and for all their hard work in preparing such tasty food for us.

Rob Nickless stood down as Chairman after eight years in the post. This role was taken on by Richard Loyd, who had stood down as a Joint Ringing Master after sixteen years in service. Jenny Bennett was elected as Joint Ringing Master. Mandy Winters stood down as Branch Social Secretary, and this was taken on by Frances Higham. Thanks were given to the retiring officers for all their hard work over the years, and thanks were given to the new officers for volunteering their time to carry out these roles. I had hoped to stand down as Secretary after twenty-seven years as a branch officer but, unfortunately, no one came forward to take on this position.

At the AGM we decided that regular practices organised by the Branch would include a monthly evening practice held on a tower's own practice night, with a

renewed emphasis on ringing what is requested by the host tower. A monthly afternoon practice will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Bi-monthly Intermediate practices that are aimed at all those who would like to go beyond Plain Bob and Grandsire (to include methods up to Cambridge Surprise Major) will be held during the evening of the first Wednesday in the month, starting in May. Bi-monthly Surprise Major practices for experienced and novice Surprise Major ringers will be held on the first Saturday morning of the month, starting in June.

Our 2025 autumn social event was a barn dance in Chilton village hall. The attendance was excellent with over sixty branch members, their families and friends. There was plenty of dancing and an excellent supper was provided by the Harwell ringers.

Our annual mini outing took place on 22 April and sixteen members took part. Our first ring was on the pleasant six at Great Haseley, and this was followed by the eight bells at Great Milton. We enjoyed a buffet style lunch at the Six Bells in Warborough and then went on to ring the eight bells in the local tower. Possibly it's time to rename the pub!

Gillian Loyd, Branch Secretary

Oxford City

St Nicholas, Old Marston

Even through the late autumn and winter there was no hibernation of ringing at Marston, either on our own bells or with visiting other towers for quarter peals. In late October we went down to the West Sussex towers of Funtington and South Harting, with a lunchbreak at the most august venue we've encountered to date, having the opulent morning room of Lordington Park reserved for us.

Between November and March our repertory company of ringers drawn from several different towers besides Marston have scored Doubles and Minor quarter peals at Swalcliffe, Eynsham, Weston-on-the-Green, Church Hanborough, Ducklington, North Aston, Sunningwell, Long Wittenham, Charlton-on-Otmoor, Witney, South Stoke, Marcham, and Tackley. These quarters have been proving very useful for those just starting out on multi-method Doubles, along with conducting, as they dove-tail in part-conducting with those inured to it. Across the ten quarters we had eleven different ringers doing some conducting, with never the exact same band. We have also held a spring outing to towers in the EBSB, namely Hitcham, Burnham and Bray, where, once again, several of the attendees took the opportunity to achieve some firsts in method, particularly in trebling, and half of those with us did some conducting, from ringing St Mary Doubles at Hitcham, St Mary to Stedman Triples at Burnham and Plain Bob Major and a touch of Grandsire Triples at Bray, with its 24cwt tenor.

Hugh Deam, Tower Captain, Marston

Reading

Reading Branch held its AGM in February and we were delighted with the number of new ringers seeking election; eighteen ringers were elected at the AGM and we

ratified the election of twelve more who were elected at Branch Practices during the year.

Sadly, we also held a minute silence for two members who had died in the last year namely Robert Small and Ian Millar, both of South Stoke.

Erratum In the last issue I reported on the achievements of the Page Three Society. I mistakenly thought that Jenny and her two sons, Jack and Daniel, were the only members. They were, of course, the founding members. Membership is extended to anyone who rings a peal or quarter peal with all three of them in it and not for another Guild or society. There are currently seventy-one members.

Lindsey Barker, Branch Secretary

Sonning Deanery

The diverse mix of practices developed over the last decade or so seems to be working well. In addition to the traditional third Saturday of the month general practice, we offer a monthly weekday afternoon practice, an elementary practice, a focused intermediate practice and an advanced practice. Attendance is generally good but varies so, to avoid the risk of having too few for a viable practice, we invite indications of interest beforehand and then confirm or cancel accordingly. Out of fifty-five potential practices in 2025 we confirmed forty-two and cancelled thirteen. Interestingly, the least popular (five of the thirteen cancellations) is the traditional Saturday general practice.

Jan Glen, Branch Secretary

Kent to Cambridge

Twyford St Mary's was the venue for the 28 March training day. Two and a half hours on treble bob skills working from Kent to Cambridge for five people and seven helpers. This balance of helpers enabled steady ringing for all to achieve and improve their level and understanding of the methods. 'Forwards' proved to be a great Principle in learning to develop skills for places, except you do have to remember not to dodge at the lead end when progressing to Kent!

An excellent morning guided by James Moynihan who had realised a need within the Branch. Thank goodness for the sustenance of custard creams!

The Royal Oak in Ruscombe was super-efficient at serving our delicious lunch. It's so lovely to have time to chat with ringers outside the ringing room. Welcome to Luke and Jodie who have moved to Bracknell from Bristol who have joined Easthampstead tower and the Branch. Great to welcome new ringers.





The afternoon proved successful. A Quarter peal of Cambridge Minor at Shottesbrooke with Luke ringing his first surprise quarter and a very creditable 576 changes of the same at Waltham St Lawrence allowing Jill Hurdle to settle into her treble bobbing.

Well done all.

Andrew Michell, course attendee, said:

'We are very grateful for the teachers who set aside time on Saturday at Twyford, providing individual hands-on tuition. The training was very instructive, and good for progress - it's always helpful to try a different set of bells too.

'We had a very enjoyable group lunch at the Royal Oak (with animated discussion on a large variety of subjects, including the repairs to the unringable bells at Ruscombe). I very much enjoyed ringing the quarter peal at Shottesbrooke, in such a beautiful setting.' Jane Mellor, Training Officer

On 18 April, Bucks and Berks Young Ringers entered the South East England Striking Contest (SEECON) held in New Alresford, Hampshire. With a growing band this year, for the first time in the ten-year history of B&BYR, we entered two bands: a six-bell call change band (The Bucks and Berks Cygnets) and a six-bell method band (The Bucks and Berks Swans).

The Cygnets, conducted by Theo Boughton of Hambleden (see p.36 of *Odd Bob* 112), came joint eighth out of nine teams. We are so proud of this young, novice team which consisted of several who had only learned to handle a bell in the past year. In addition, I am delighted to report the Swans, ringing Plain Bob Doubles and conducted by James Moynihan of Wokingham, won the whole contest for the second consecutive year, a huge achievement for the band in the run up to the *Ringing World* National Youth Contest in July. We even found ourselves featured on the ITV Meridian weekend bulletin!

If you are lucky enough to have one of the victorious band in your tower, then don't forget to congratulate them on an excellent win and if you know any young ringers, under the age of eighteen, who would like to be a part of our thriving B&BYR team, then please encourage them to come along to our practices which are usually the first Sunday of the month 3-4.30pm (please email the Youth Officer below for details).

Peter Jasper, (B&BYR Team Leader) and Claire Shuttleworth, (SDB Youth Officer)

South Oxon

A request around the Branch for news revealed that two peals have been rung, and a third is planned! October 2025 saw the retirement of Revd Simon Cronk as Rector of the United Benefice of Great Milton, Great Haseley and Little Milton. To mark the occasion and wish him well, a peal of 41 Spliced S Minor was rung at Little Milton on 17th October. There was a certain symmetry about this, as the last peal at Little Milton had been to herald Simon's arrival in 2015. After an unusually short interregnum, a new Rector (Revd Lucie Spiers) has been appointed, and a peal attempt is planned at Great Haseley to welcome her in July.

The bells of Great Milton rang out to celebrate the hundredth birthday, on 20 April, of Evelyn Rogers who has lived in the village for nearly seventy years. Evelyn is the mother of Christopher, who now rings at Drayton St Leonard. On 19 April, a touch of 100 Grandsire Doubles was rung by local ringers and on the 'big day' a peal of 5088 London S Major was scored. Happy birthday Evelyn!

This year, St Mary's Church in Thame celebrates the 150th anniversary of the rehanging of its ring of bells. In 1876, Dr Richard Lee, a local surgeon and the fifth son of a former Vicar of Thame launched an appeal, to fund essential work to the bells. The campaign successfully raised £240 19s 0d.

On the evening of Saturday 20 May 1876, the original bells were rung for the final time before being removed and sent to Mears and Stainbank of Whitechapel. Two of the bells had cracked, and it was decided that all six would be recast, with two additional bells commissioned to create a ring of eight.

The newly cast bells were returned and installed in the church during July 1876. On Friday, 11 August at 1pm, they were first rung in a peal of Grandsire Triples by a band of ringers from Appleton. A further peal is planned in August to commemorate this anniversary.

Jane Willis, Branch Secretary

Vale of the White Horse

In March, we helped our neighbouring Guild (Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association) by providing a venue and a band of helpers for the G&B bellringing training day. Four eager trainees practiced their bell handling techniques, their plain hunting as well as raising and lowering in peal. There was a healthy supply of cakes on hand to keep us energised.

Regular well-attended training evenings have been taking place at Longcot on the first Friday of the month. Topics have ranged from listening and place counting through Plain Hunt to advanced major practices. The first Sunday of the month also sees regular ten-bell ringing at Shrivenham, with ringing ranging from call changes up to Redcliffe depending on the attendees. Branch Practices also continue at each of our ringable towers throughout the year, and are usually well attended, with a range of ringing and a regular raffle.

Our Branch AGM was held at Buckland in March, with ringing and 'Songs Of Praise' followed by refreshments and the AGM. Branch Officers elected / re-elected at the meeting were



G&B March bell ringing day at Longcot in VOWH

Chair	Jackie O'Hagan
Vice Chair	Clare Knock
Secretary	David Wright
Treasurer	Lucy Laird
Ringing Master	Tony Crabtree
Deputy Ringing Master	Joe Norton
Branch Rep	Cheryl Watson
Training Officer	Tony Crabtree
Bell Fund Raffle Organisers -	Becky Vardy and Joe Norton
Newsletter Editor	Lucy Laird

Thanks to all those officers continuing in role, our hosts for providing a lovely selection of cakes and drinks, Revd Jim Mynors for leading the service, Bernard Martin for playing the organ and the Guild Master for joining us.

Congratulations to Eddie Lucas for his first quarter peal (on six at Stanford in the Vale).

Congratulations also to Dave Endacott (ONB member, but a regular ringer in VOWH branch) on his ninetieth birthday. Dave (left) 'celebrated' by joining the Longcot band for a QP of 1290 Spliced Major (2m).



David Wright, Branch Secretary

Witney and Woodstock

. On Saturday 11 April, in fine weather, twenty-five branch ringers and friends attended the latest Witney and Woodstock Branch outing to Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire organised by our redoubtable Ringing Master, Richard White.



The day started at Totternhoe at the foot of the Dunstable Downs, a pleasant ring of eight where rounds and call changes, Grandsire Triples, and Plain Bob Triples were rung. We then travelled to the very light six at Whipsnade where some Cambridge and April Day were rung. Lunch was taken at the delightful Old Hunter's Lodge at Whipsnade.



The afternoon towers included a windswept Edlesborough, perched on top of an ancient barrow with far reaching views, where a full range or call changes and method were rung, including Cambridge, on its slow and steady six. We then moved onto Linslade where several of us were temporarily frustrated by the tower door swinging closed and locking us out!



The final tower of the day was Leighton Buuzzard, a truly exceptional 35cwt ring of twelve cast by Taylors and modelled on the superb bells at Evesham. This was a first opportunity to ring on twelve for many on the outing with rounds and call changes on twelve, and Grandsire Caters and Stedman Caters being rung.

Andrew Goldthorpe, Branch Secretary

Guild Officers for 2026

Master	**Catherine Lane** *master@odg.org.uk* (01865 874026 / 07885586104)
Deputy Master	**Chris Mundy** *depmaster@odg.org.uk* (07801 930587)
General Secretary	**Heather Browning** *secretary@odg.org.uk*
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GUILD WEBSITE	***https://odg.org.uk/***
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Safeguarding Officer	**June Wells** *safeguarding@odg.org.uk*
Guild Stewards	**Peter Robson (*Newbury, Reading, Sonning*)** (07942 589683)
stewards@odg.org.uk	**Tony Crabtree (*Vale of White Horse, Witney & Woodstock, Oxford City*)** (01793 784064 and 07860 835903)
	Patricia Newton (*EBSB, South Oxon, Old North Berks)* (01844 352926)
	Colin Lee (*Banbury, Bicester, Chipping Norton)* (07743 775150)
	Karen Pile *(Chiltern, Central Bucks, North Bucks)*

General Committee members

Alan Marchbank **Mike Hopkins Till** **Catherine Hughes-D'Aeth**
Andy Bennett

Central Council Representatives *ccreps@odg.org.uk*

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

Towers and Belfries Committee

Chairman	**Tony Crabtree** *tbchairman@odg.org.uk* (01793 784064 / 07860 835903)
Secretary	**Anthony Williamson** *tbsecretary@odg.org.uk* (01993 891680)

Learning and Development Workgroup

Chairman	**Chris Mundy** *edchairman@odg.org.uk*
Secretary	**Robert Newton** *edsecretary@odg.org.uk* (01844 352926)

EBSB Fund Raising website address is: *bellfund.org.uk*

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Vale of the White Horse	**David Wright** *secretary@vowh.odg.org.uk* (01793 783056)
Witney and Woodstock	**Andrew Goldthorpe** *secretary@witneyandwoodstock.odg.org.uk* (07709 461597)

Diary of Events for 2026

Sunday 17 May	Bell Sunday
Sunday 24 May	Young Ringers' Practice youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 20 June	T&B Secrets of a Steeple Keeper, Stratfield Mortimer tbsecretary@odg.org.uk
Sunday 28 June	Young Ringers' Practice youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 4 July	*Ringing World* National Youth Competition, Nottingham
Saturday 12 September	Midlands Young Ringers' Autumn Outing youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 26 September	Michaelmas Course edsecretary@odg.org.uk
Sunday 27 September	Young Ringers' Practice youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 3 October	Guild 6-bell Striking Competition, Chearsley
Saturday 17 October	T&B General Belfry Course venue tbc tbsecretary@odg.org.uk
Saturday 24 October	Steeple Aston Course steepleastoncourse@odg.org.uk
Sunday 25 October	Young Ringers' Practice youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 7 November	10-bell course
Sunday 22 November	Young Ringers' Practice youngringers@odg.org.uk
Saturday 5 December	Midlands Young Ringers' Winter Outing youngringers@odg.org.uk
Monday 21 December	Young Ringers' Christmas social youngringers@odg.org.uk

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	Ringing Centre Practice	SC	Striking Competition
SM	Surprise Major	SP	Surprise Practice	CM	Committee Meeting
IP	Intermediate Practice	FP	Focussed Practice	BM	Business Meeting

MAY 2026

Tues	12	VOWH	SC	Hinton Waldrist (6)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	16	Chiltern	BP	Bledlow (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	19	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	20	SDB	FP	Wargrave (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	23	EBSB	BP	High Wycombe (12)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	23	South Oxon	BP	Warborough (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Weds	24	Bicester	BP	Middleton Stoney (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	28	Banbury	BP	Wardington (6)	19.30 – 21.00

JUNE 2026

Tues	2	SDB	FP	All Saints Wokingham (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
Sat	6	ONB	SM	Harwell (8)	10.00 – 11.30
Weds	10	SDB	AP	All Saints Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	11	ONB	BP	Aston Tirrold (6)	19.00 – 20.30
Sat	13	EBSB	SC	Clewer (6)	17.00
Sat	13	South Oxon	AP	Thame (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Tues	16	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	17	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	19	VOWH	BP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	20	Chiltern	BP	Great Kimble (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	20	SDB	BP	Sandhurst (6)	10.30 – 12.00
Weds	24	ONB	BP	Sunningwell (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	24	Bicester	BP	Bletchingdon (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	25	Banbury	BP	Wardington (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	27	South Oxon	BP	Benson (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Sat	27	EBSB	EP	Burnham (8)	10.00 – 12.00

JULY 2026

Weds	1	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	1	ONB	IP	Chilton (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	7	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	10	South Oxon	AP	Great Milton (8)	14.30 – 16.00
Sat	11	EBSB	BP	West Wycombe (8)	16.00 – 18.00
Sat	11	Banbury	SC	Wardington (6)	pm
Mon	13	ONB	BP	Long Wittenham (6)	19.30 – 20.30
Tues	14	SDB	AP	St Pauls Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	15	SDB	FP	Finchampstead (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	16	VOWH	BP	Buscot (4)	18.45 – 19.15
Thurs	16	VOWH	BP	Coleshill (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	18	Chiltern	BP	Stoke Mandeville (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	18	SDB	BP	Easthampstead (10)	10.30 – 12.00
Sat	18	SDB	SC	Shottesbrooke (6)	16.00 – 18.00
Tues	21	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	22	ONB	BP	Childrey (8)	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	25	EBSB	BP	Chalfont St Peter (6)	19.00 – 21.00
Sat	25	South Oxon	BP	Chinnor (6)	16.00 – 17.30
Tues	28	Bicester	BP	Caversfield (5)	19.30 – 21.00

AUGUST 2026

Sat	1	ONB	SM	Sutton Courtenay (8)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	4	SDB	FP	Finchampstead (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	5	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	7	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	8	EBSB	BP	Slough (10)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	8	South Oxon	AP	Warborough (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Tues	11	ONB	BP	Abingdon St Nicolas (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	12	SDB	AP	All Saints Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	15	Chiltern	BP	Ellesborough (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	15	SDB	BP	Twyford (8)	16.30 – 18.00
Tues	18	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	19	SDB	EP	Shottesbrooke (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	22	EBSB	BP	Amersham (12)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	22	South Oxon	BP	Tetsworth (6)	16.00 – 17.30
Weds	26	ONB	BP	Radley (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	26	Bicester	BP	Launton (6)	19.30 – 21.00

SEPTEMBER 2026

Tues	1	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	2	ONB	IP	Long Wittenham (6)	19.00 – 20.30
Weds	2	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	8	SDB	AP	St Pauls Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	10	ONB	BP	Harwell (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	11	South Oxon	AP	Great Milton (8)	14.30 – 16.00
Sat	12	Bicester	SC	TBC	18.00
Tue	15	VOWH	BP	Lyford (3)	18.45 - 19.15
Tues	15	VOWH	BP	Stanford-in-the-Vale (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	15	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	16	SDB	FP	Waltham St Lawrence (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	19	Chiltern	BP	Aston Clinton (10)	10.00 – 11.00
Sat	19	SDB	BP	Wargrave (8)	10.30 – 12.00
Weds	23	ONB	BP	Brightwell (8)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	23	Bicester	BP	Souldern (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	26	South Oxon	BP	Thame (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Sat	26	EBSB	BP	Hitcham (6)	10.00 – 12.00

OCTOBER 2026

Sat	3	ONB	SM	Drayton (8)	10.00 – 11.30
Tues	6	SDB	FP	Warfield (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	7	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	8	ONB	BP	Wallingford (10)	20.00 – 21.30
Sat	10	EBSB	SC/HY	Cookham (10)	17.00 – 19.30
Sat	10	SDB	SC	TBC (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Weds	14	SDB	AP	All Saints Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Thurs	15	VOWH	BP	Shellingford (6)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	17	South Oxon	AP	Brightwell cum Sotwell	16.00 – 17.30
Sat	17	Banbury	HY	TBC	Pm
Sat	17	SDB	BP	Finchampstead (6)	16.30 – 18.00
Tues	20	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	21	SDB	EP	Twyford (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	23	Bicester	BP	Ludgershall (5)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	24	EBSB	BP	Old Windsor (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	24	South Oxon	BP	Dorchester (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Weds	28	ONB	BP	Steventon (6)	14.00 – 15.30

NOVEMBER 2026

Tues	3	SDB	EP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	4	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	4	ONB	IP	Milton (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	10	ONB	BP	Wantage (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	10	SDB	AP	St Pauls Wokingham (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	13	South Oxon	AP	Great Milton (8)	14.30 – 16.00
Sat	14	EBSB	BP	Beaconsfield (8)	10.00 – 12.00
Tues	17	VOWH	BP	Uffington (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	17	SDB	BP	Binfield (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Weds	18	SDB	FP	Wargrave (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	21	EBSB	BP	Windsor (8)	14.00 – 16.00
Sat	21	Chiltern	BP	Monks Risborough (6)	10.00 – 12.00
Sat	21	SDB	BP	White Waltham (6)	16.30 – 18.00
Tues	24	Bicester	BP	Bicester (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	25	ONB	BP	West Hanney (6)	14.00 – 15.30
Sat	28	South Oxon	BP	Little Milton (8)	16.30 – 17.00
Sat	28	SDB	BM	Binfield Parish Council office	15.30 – 17.30

DECEMBER 2026

Weds	2	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
Fri	4	VOWH	AP	Longcot (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	5	ONB	SM	Brightwell (8)	10.00 – 11.30
Weds	9	ONB	BP	Cholsey (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Sat	12	EBSB	BP	Bray (8)	17.00
Sat	12	South Oxon	AP	Benson (8)	16.00 – 17.30
Mon	14	Bicester	BP	Kirtlington (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	23	ONB	BP	Blewbury (8)	14.00 – 15.30

JANUARY 2027

Weds	6	ONB	IP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	6	Banbury	BP	Banbury (10)	19.30 – 21.00
TBC	TBC	ONB	BP	TBC	19.30 – 21.00
Tues	26	Bicester	BP	Islip (8)	19.30 – 21.00
Weds	27	ONB	BP	TBC	14.00 – 15.30

The Benefits of Bells

I suppose I've always been broadly positive about bell ringing.

It's true that when we lived in the Close at Lichfield, just yards from the cathedral tower, and with two small children to put to bed, practice-night was neither the easiest nor the most enjoyable moment in our week. I say 'moment', though it felt much more like a moderately generous slice of eternity. Of course, on the great occasions, when the service ended and hundreds of happy punters spilled out through the great west doors onto the sun-kissed piazza, with the organ in overdrive, and the ringers filling the Staffordshire air with what they had rehearsed and perfected while we had been trying to make ourselves heard with the next instalment of 'The Gruffalo', all was immediately and completely forgiven in the sheer splendour of the day.

And my life up to then had contained plenty of bells. The small village church of my earliest childhood had just two bells, light and clear in tone. My godfather, short and stout, rang them at great speed and with immense seriousness, getting faster as the service-time approached, then skidding to an unlikely halt as the play-over of the introit hymn began.

Later in life, as a member of several choral foundations, I was never far from the tolling of some impressive bell, whether the noontide boom of Great Peter at York, or the more melodic offering of Magdalen College, which manages to cut through even the densest of the traffic that inches forlornly between Carfax and the Cowley Road.

Now, as I live and work with the famous ring-of-ten in the church of Saint Laurence, Appleton (where the bell hangers come from), I really do see the benefits that ringers and ringing bring to even the smallest of parishes.

One of these is social. Ringers, like singers in those places fortunate enough to have a regular church choir, are part of the warp and weft of the local community. It's a fact that they may often have to race off to another tower once they've finished

ringing in yours, but you do get to see them eventually! Sometimes, indeed, they play a full part in the worshipping life of a church, even as wardens or members of the Parochial Church Council. The church is of course rather more than social; but it is never less than social, and the greater the variety and number of those who express their sense of belonging through activities centred on the church, the greater is the strength of the whole town or village, and many more are the opportunities for the church to serve.

Another benefit concerns history. With so much of our sense of reality reduced to the virtual, the digital and electronic, there's nothing quite like the tuneful clanging of an enormous lump of metal from a mediaeval stone tower *(mutatis mutandis)* to remind us that the split second of time through which we're currently hurtling (like Saint Bede's famous sparrow through a mead-hall) by no means constitutes the fullest extent of reality. Like brass bands and Morris dancers, ringers are a kind of living monument to the skills and concerns of those who have gone before us. In encouraging us to widen our contemporary horizons, they do not merely celebrate and perpetuate a past but invite the present to attempt a wiser way of living, so that a better and yet brighter future may emerge. (Such a noble purpose may not be at the forefront of every ringer's mind every week, but one cannot limit the effects of such an iconic cultural activity.)

A third benefit of the bells is naturally theological. The final purpose of all ecclesiastical activity (from scholarship to sculpture and from robe-making to ringing) is the propagation of the gospel of Christ. Just as church musicians are in the business of getting the notes right as a way of telling the truth, so those who fill the skies with cascades of Kings and Queens are perforce pointing the way to the one who came to be the Prince of Peace. Therefore, when two ringers asked to be confirmed last year in our parish, it was a very special joy.

So, with clergy everywhere, I would like to thank all those who ring in our sacred spaces for all of these their inestimable benefits. Practice makes perfect only slowly, in life as in singing and ringing, but I pray that you will all have many long years of climbing up and down the tower steps and pealing out your beneficent sounds into our cities, towns and villages.



Revd Wealands Bell, Rector of Appleton with Besselsleigh, Oxfordshire