

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2016
St Mary's, Thame (8)**

Service ringing at 3pm will be followed by a service at 3:30pm.
(Please note: only 30 minutes ringing before the service and no evening ringing.)

Tea and meeting will follow, the AGM not starting before 5pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 28th February 2015.
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
5. Donations from the surplus branch funds to the Guild Bell and / or Restoration Fund.
6. Donation to tower hosting Branch Officer and Tower Captain meetings.
7. Gift for outgoing auditor of the accounts
8. Secretary's Report
9. 100 Club report
10. Branch Representative's Report
11. Ringing Master's Report
12. Branch Outings
13. Election of Officers (Notice –all posts become vacant)
 - Chairman
 - Vice Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Ringing Master
 - Deputy Ringing Master
 - Training Officer
 - Branch Representative (2 representatives can be elected)
 - Newsletter Editor
 - 100 Club
 - Webmaster
 - Auditor
14. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates.
15. Any Other Business

If you would like a Tea at the AGM, contact Rosalie Gibson
phone: 01844 213 948 OR email: Rosalie.Gibson@btinternet.com
by Wednesday 24th February.

The Bells of St. Mary the Virgin, Thame

A ring of eight bells in F# tenor, 11 & 1/2 cwt (approx), cast at Whitechapel in 1876 from the metal of the former ring of six and hung in a nineteenth century oak frame. The bells are all inscribed 'Mears and Stainbank' Founders, London 1876 with a dedication on the tenor to Revd. E B Corbett, Vicar. William Edden. Richard Berry. Churchwardens.

In 1997 White of Appleton fitted a steel support grillage under the oak frame and the bells were fine-tuned at the Whitechapel Foundry.

There are numerous records in the Churchwardens accounts for repairs to bells over the centuries from the 1400's and the first mention of a bell being rung was whilst the Church was still under construction in the 1240's and Bishop Grosseteste lay dying. It is said that the bell rang without mortal assistance! The present bells were named in 1997, from the Fruits of the Spirit. As in Galatians Chapter 5. v22-25.

They are from treble to tenor:

Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Humility and Forbearance. There is also a Sanctus bell dedicated to Mary which probably dates back to the late 1500s.

Bell	Weight	Note	Diameter	Cast	Founder
Treble	3-0-27	F	27.75 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
2	4-0-21	E	28.75 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
3	4-0-16	D	30.75 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
4	4-1-19	C	32.19 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
5	5-1-16	Bb	35.00 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
6	6-1-15	A	35.94 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
7	8-0-18	G	39.69 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank
Tenor	11-1-11	F	44.56 "	1876	Mears & Stainbank

Treasurers Report

by Kay Bartholomew

**SOUTH OXON BRANCH OF ODG
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2015**

<u>Receipts</u>	£	<u>Payments</u>	£
Brought Forward 31/12/2014	2296.77	Guild Subscriptions	665.00
Subscriptions	1064.00	Guild Bell Fund	282.50
100 Club	730.00	Bell Restoration Fund	282.50
Donations	3.00	100 Club prizes	365.00
Refund of 100 club prize cheques	118.00	Newsletter printing	104.06
Interest on Deposit	7.38	Tower outing donations	68.00
		Postage/Stationery	13.96
Total Receipts	4219.15	Total Expenses	1781.02
		Balance Carried forward 31/12/2015	2438.13
	4219.15		4219.15

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2015**

	£
Balance brought forward 1.1.2015	2296.77
Receipts	1922.38
Payments	1781.02
Balance carried forward 31.12.2015	<u>2438.13</u>
Current Account Balance	1256.07
Deposit Account Balance	1152.85
Cash	29.21
	<u>2438.13</u>

Prepared by Kay Bartholomew

Audited by F D Norman

Date 1st January 2016

Date 14th January 2016

In 2015, the subscription remained at £8.00 and there were 139 Branch members of whom 133 were paid members, 5 were Honorary members and one member who, because their subscription was paid to another branch, paid us a donation.

The 100 Club was supported by 73 members and £182.50 was sent to both the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and the Restoration Fund. A further £100 to each fund was sent from Branch funds.

The £118 repaid into the account were unpaid prize cheques from the 100 Club for the years 2010-2014. The interest accrued on the account of £7.38 relates to the years 2014 (£1.63) and 2015 (5.75). Tower fees for the Branch outing of £68.00 were paid out of Branch funds.

There was a net surplus for the year of £141.36.

I should like to express my thanks and appreciation to my predecessor, Maureen Bosley, to Margaret Coombe for running the 100 Club and to Frank Norman who very kindly audited the accounts again this year in what was his final year as Frank has expressed a wish to retire.

100 Club

by Margaret Coombe

South Oxon Branch of ODG 100 Club 2015

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	730.00	1 st Prize 12 x £20	240.00
		2 nd Prize 12 x £10	120.00
		3 rd Prize 1 x £5 (Dec)	5.00
		Total Prizes	<u>365.00</u>
		Transfers to	
		ODGCBR Restoration Fund	
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	
			<u>365.00</u>
	<u>730.00</u>		<u>730.00</u>

The prize money was as follows:

<u>2015</u>	<u>1st Prize</u>	<u>2nd Prize</u>	<u>3rd Prize</u>	<u>Total</u>
January	Kay Bartholemew	Gt Milton Tower		30.00
February	Frank Messenger	Margaret Coombe		30.00
March	Anna Herlihy	Amy Herlihy		30.00
April	John White	Robert Patterson		30.00
May	Frank Messenger	Sue Dyke		30.00
June	Hilarie Rogers	Ann Thomson		30.00
July	Dorchester Tower	Warborough Tower		30.00
August	M&R Jewson	Catherine Mason		30.00
September	Chris Webb	David Watkin		30.00
October	Kay Bartholemew	Amy Herlihy		30.00
November	Japhia Slaney	Warborough Tower		30.00
December	Amy Herlihy	M&J Spence	Allan Smith	35.00
				<u>365.00</u>

Secretary's Report

by Amy Herlihy

We started 2015 with a "High Numbers" (or more correctly, Caters to Maximus) evening at High Wycombe just after the New Year. It was quite challenging for some – and a real treat for others! Our AGM was held at Chalgrove at the end of February. At the AGM we welcomed a new Newsletter Editor, Benji Coles, who takes over from Ray Fergusson. Maureen Bosley stepped down as Treasurer and Kay Bartholomew was elected to the office. All other officers remained in post. Our Chairman, Andrew Davis, announced he is hoping to stand down next year.

This spring has had some very sad times. Bill Simon from Berrick Salome died on 25th February and Glenys Gray of Chalgrove died on the 18th March. Our thoughts and prayers are with Wendy Simon and Brian Gray and their families.

Our branch striking competition was held at Aston Rowant in April. We had four teams competing, where one was a "mostly" novice band. It was excellent to see a group of new ringers at the competition. The experience of ringing under competition conditions can certainly be daunting, but a bit of nerves and a ton of concentration never hurt anyone! They did very well and we hope to see them again next year! Drayton St Leonard came in first in the competition.

We had a lovely branch outing in May. It was a V.E. Day outing, based around the Watercress Line Railway. We had enough attending to reserve our own carriage. We rang at five towers and ended the day with a great pub meal. Thanks to Kay Bartholomew who organized it!

Throughout the year our branch Tower Twinning has brought ringers together for shared practices. This continues to be a good way for people to get out of their own tower, not only to ring, but also to get to meet other bell ringers!

25 Years Ago

The AGM was held in Warborough in April. Andrew Davis (the Branch Representative) reported on upcoming Guild events and had several books for beginner ringers and offered to purchase books at the Guild meeting book stall. He also reported on the Guild Membership survey about multi-category membership which was not proceeding well. Andrew Gillard was presented with a Membership Certificate. Chinnor was the 6 Bell Striking Competition winner that year and would represent the branch in the Guild 6 Bell Competition. The Secretary, Tina Ruff, reminded everyone that subs were now overdue.

Election of New Members – Reminder

If you want to nominate a new member, please give Amy Herlihy the names of the ringers 2 weeks prior to the AGM.

Distinguished Membership

Should you wish to nominate a branch member for Distinguished Membership please contact the branch secretary. This award is given to a member of at least 30 years who is considered to have given meritorious service to the Guild or Branch. Details can be found here:

http://odg.org.uk/pdf/dm_nomination_form_2014.pdf

Reminder that many useful documents about bell ringing can be found on the web! Check out our branch web page: <http://www.southoxonodg.co.uk/> as well as the Guild Web page: <http://odg.org.uk/> Look on the Blog tab for musings from the Guild Master (aka Hilarie Rogers).

Branch Representative's Report

by John White

Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund AGM

The General Committee Meeting was preceded by the AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund.

New money raised in 2014 amounted to £9,362, an increase of some £700 on that raised in 2013. Five new applications for grants were received during the year and provisional allocations made to Adderbury £460; Berrick Salome £3,300; Bloxham £890; Hinton Waldrist £950 and Old Marston £4,320. Grants paid during the year were to Adderbury £460; Bloxham £890; Hinton Waldrist £832; Horley £3,600 and Weston-on-the-Green £600.

During the year the Managing Trustees have been able to raise the level of grant allocations to 20% of the cost of eligible work (previously 15%). Investment income for the year was £22,459 and this is paid into the Grant Fund from which future grants are made. The latter now stands at £82,909. The value of the invested capital of the fund is now £597,796.

All the existing officers of the Fund were re-elected.

Guild General Committee Meeting

Correspondence

In response to a question raised regarding the use of e-cigarettes in ringing chambers the Master had sought clarification on the matter from the Archdeacon of Dorchester. The Archdeacon stated that in her view a similar stance to the use of tobacco should be applied and that the use of e-cigarettes was therefore not appropriate. However the matter was ultimately one for the ruling of individual PCCs. The Guild itself is not empowered to make rulings on such matters.

Reports from and Election of Sub-Committees

Education

Reported on the Steeple Aston Course, for which demand was down; the Ten-Bell Training Day at Aston Clinton, and the Training Meeting at Long Crendon which saw an increase in those attending and the number of branches represented. A grant was sought by Wolvercote tower towards the proposed purchase of a dumb bell and the General Committee approved an allocation of £230.

All the existing members of the sub-committee were re-elected with the exception of John Harrison, Alan Griffin and Alan Bentley who did not wish to stand again.

Towers and Belfries

Reported that thirteen inspections had been made during the year and maintenance courses had been run at Chalgrove and in the Vale of the White Horse Branch. The number of current awards under the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme remains unchanged at nineteen.

All the existing members of the sub-committee were re-elected.

Finance & General Purposes

Reported on progress with preparations for the next Guild Festival, to be held in Oxford on 9th July 2016, and that the possibility of a Central Council Meeting in the Guild after 2017 had been put on hold pending the Council publishing a proposed new format.

The Public Relations Officer plans to set up a network of branch contacts to generate a flow of “good news” stories within the Guild, and expenditure of £50 had been approved towards displays she was planning for the Guild AGM at Cowley on the theme of “What the Guild can do for you”.

Graham Clifton and Robert Newton were elected to this sub-committee.

Peal Secretary's Report

Appears in full in the now published Guild Annual Report for 2014. The total number of peals rung for the Guild was 259, a decrease of 16 compared with 2013.

Public Relations Officer's Report

The new PRO, Verna Wass, had done a great deal of work in her first year and a copy of her report appears in the Guild Report. The main areas of this include external communication such as The Door and press releases.

Children's Officer's Report

Katie Lane urged all towers to keep an attendance register and ensure at least two tower members are DBS checked. She also warned of the dangers of

inappropriate text-messaging and cyber bullying using email and social network sites. A full copy of her report appears in the Guild Report.

Guild Annual Report

This had just been published and was available for distribution. The cost of the report had decreased slightly.

Notification of Officers not willing to stand for re-election (at the Guild AGM)
The current Server Manager and Two Guild Stewards would not be seeking re-election.

Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2014

These appear in full in the Guild Report. The Guild's finances remain in a healthy state with an excess of income over expenditure of £1,419.46. The General Fund now stands at £14,434.22.

Management of the Restoration Fund

Total funds raised to date were £1,703, just over half the total raised in 2013. No grant requests were received in 2014 but two provisional grants remain to be paid, to Chearsley of £4,620 (augmentation from 3 to 6) and North Moreton of £900 (addition of a treble). The fund stands at £16,125 which, with ring-fenced funds and outstanding grants leaves £4,360 to allocate to future projects. A full report and accounts appears in the Guild Report.

Donations

A recommendation that £750 be donated from Guild funds to both the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and the Restoration Fund was approved subject to ratification at the Guild AGM in May. A grant of £200 was recommended to the Ringing World.

Master's Item for Discussion

This was a new initiative by the Master and for this meeting a representative from each of the fifteen branches was asked to provide a response and ideas regarding the attraction of new ringers and the retention of existing ones. Each representative was asked to speak for a maximum of two minutes. A summary of the responses will be circulated with the minutes.

From the Ringing Master

by Hilarie Rogers

The targeted practices still seem to be the best way of providing training for those who want it, and an opportunity to ring together regularly. These are Monthly afternoon Doubles practice alternating between Grandsire and Plain Bob – we have a new venue in Berrick Salome to add to Little Milton Surprise Minor every other month

Surprise Major (with help from other branches) every other month (alternating with above). We have recently invited ringers from neighbouring branches to join us as numbers had dwindled.

We decided to give the monthly 8-bell practice a rest as it was difficult to find a time when enough ringers could muster.

The Tower Twinning has continued to be popular and enjoyable, giving towers the chance to visit another tower and to benefit from them attending their practice.

Do ask if there is anything we can help you with, or if you would like a concentrated session on something particular.

TOWER NEWS

Aston Rowant

by Robert Newton

We held a successful outing to Milton Keynes in October, visiting Woughton on the Green, Wavendon and Simpson. Michael Smedley was able to join us from his new home near Peterborough and the morning ended with a convivial lunch by the canal just south of Leighton Buzzard.

2015 was a bumper year for quarter peals: including five of Doubles. Two of them were in April, when we welcomed our new Rector, Rev. Maggie Thorne and celebrated St George's Day; in June, to mark the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta (this was the first of Minor for Wendy and Adam); in September to celebrate HM the Queen becoming the longest reigning British monarch; in October in fond memory of Gordon Smith's wife, Marjorie and in November as a get well wish to Wendy's husband, Ron, following his stroke. It is pleasing to report that Ron is now at home and making slow but steady progress.

Successful twinning practices were held with Dorchester. Generally, we have enough to ring six bells on practice nights and we are still working on several methods up to and including Cambridge. The Stedman is more successful than formerly, even with singles! Sunday service ringing is usually on four or five bells, following the departure of Michael and Richard, although we did manage to ring all six for a couple of services leading up to Christmas.

Our handbells were again well used over the festive period. Apparently this is one of the major highlights for Y6 at the village school and I am convinced that the focus and teamwork that are necessary have more benefits than merely impressing parents and grandparents at their Nativity service! Our new Rector has previous experience of tune ringing and we were delighted that she was able to join us for practices during a very busy time leading up to the village

carol service. The wife of one of our assistant clergy also used to be in a tune ringing group, so she boosted our numbers as well.

Now all we need is a couple of new people on the ends of ropes!

Benson

by John Tchighianoff

2015 has been an encouraging year in the tower as we have been joined by three young learners – all boys this time.

We started the year by ringing a Quarter of Grandsire Doubles in January which was the first in method for Sally and was also rung to celebrate the birth of my granddaughter Isabelle Dorothy.

Messy Church is held twice a year in St Helen's and is proving to be very popular with young children. In 2014 I had taken some of the children to look at the bells and in 2015 we invited them to ring tunes on handbells. We have been asked to repeat this on future occasions.

We rang the bells at 9.00am on 8th September to celebrate Maureen's 'special' birthday and this was followed by an excellent breakfast at The Waterfront where we were joined by some of her and Clive's family and friends. A week later we rang a Quarter to celebrate her birthday and also Golden Wedding Anniversaries of two of our ringers and one of our churchwardens.

The following day was an important national day and at our usual practice Maureen presented our three learners with Certificates she had made to say that they had rung rounds on that day to celebrate HM The Queen becoming the longest reigning British Monarch.

Sadly we were all shocked when our very popular vicar, John Burrell, died suddenly and unexpectedly on 28th May. We rang a Quarter of Bob Triples on 30th July in his memory. This date was chosen as his widow Suzan's two sisters had come from abroad that week and were able to listen to the Quarter together with John's sister from Kidlington.

Finally, just making it onto the list of 300+ first peals in 2015, James rang his first peal on 28th December at Nettlebed – minor in five methods. The ringers were all members of the ODG band which entered the Ringing World National Youth Contest and all were age 18 or under. Congratulations to James.

Berrick Salome

by Wendy Simon

Following the completion of the bell refurbishment project, the tower and works have been checked by the "Towers and Belfries" Guild inspectors. Using their marking system they highlighted the amount of work and attention to detail that

ensured the project had been carried out to the highest standard. This was recognised by awarding a Gold for Tower Maintenance, an achievement that I know Andrew Davis, our Steeple Keeper, is extremely proud of. Christmas at Berrick is always special, with our unique Oxfordshire church in a charming country setting, but this year was extra special as we were able to celebrate Christmas with our newly refurbished bells. In preparation for Christmas Eve, Andrew had set up a light inside the belfry itself to illuminate the bells as they swung. As dusk fell, the dreadful weather gradually subsided, and a full moon had risen by the time the congregation walked up Church Lane. The hedgerows were alive with myriads of tiny candles, providing a magical start to the evening as people approached the church. And then, once in the churchyard, everyone was delighted to see the bells swinging in the tower on their new fittings. The tower lighting certainly added a new and exquisite experience to Christmas Eve.

The bells experience did not stop here: the team including our regular visitors from Chalgrove, with Alice on leave from University, rang joyously on Christmas Day. We rang again the following week at Epiphany, firstly for the Family Service, but then for a special quarter peal to welcome in the New Year. Villagers commented that it was a delight to hear, it was dedicated to all those in the community who have given so generously to the refurbishment of the bells.

The team of ringers from Henley have developed a strong link with Berrick and Chalgrove, spending a morning in October having an extended practice with help from our team. This has allowed their less experienced ringers gain in confidence on bells that are much easier to ring than those at Henley, not to mention without disturbing their townfolk.

A peal is being planned for the spring to celebrate the refurbishment of the bells.

Chalgrove

by Andrew Davis

As you will be aware St Mary's church in Chalgrove is currently shut for major refurbishment, it is reassuring that most of the community were concerned that the bells would fall silent. We have continued to ring for Sunday services, although with fewer numbers as the logistics of ringing and attending a service at another church conflict. Brian is on the road to recovery having had a prolonged spell on crutches before and after a hip replacement. His determination to return to ringing has benefited us all, as it has meant practice nights continue to be lively with a mix of methods. With my A4 copy of the blue line as a "comfort blanket" I can just about get through Cambridge.

With the refurbishment of the church the tower has spent several months surrounded by scaffolding, initially for repairs to the stonework, it was found that the louvers were almost life expired. These have now been replaced with new oak and beautifully made frames for the new stainless steel mesh. An

advantage of having this work done is that we have gained a fixed platform in the belfry that is ideal for three people to stand on whilst watching the bells being rung.

Despite the church being closed in October we hosted the six bell striking competition, treating the village to an afternoon of some superb ringing. Reading the comment in "Odd Bob" about the rubble (not sure where?) and boxes made me smile. As a Steward on the day I did tell everyone they needed to use a box to ring our 16 cwt tenor. One ringer remarked as I led them in to the tower "I don't need a box to ring here!" Suffice to say they didn't do very well with their test piece.... I couldn't help feeling smug as I thought - I told you so!



Christmas found us ringing at Chalgrove and Berrick Salome, our carol service was held in the Nave of the church amongst the scaffolding around the crib and safety tape. With a congregation of 200+ using glow sticks and a few site lights to read their service sheets the choir lead the singing making this simple gathering together for worship truly special. It is probably something that no one involved will ever experience again in their lifetime.

In the New Year we welcomed the Henley area ringers for a Saturday morning practice, Chrissie, now living in Henley returned and met up with all of us for a good chat. As the Red Lion was fully booked after ringing had finished we turned the ringing chamber into a small cafe, pulling the ropes into the clock room above and setting tables, complete with table cloths, for lunch. Margaret, Jeanette, Teresa and Mary laid on a good spread, 18 of us sat down to soup, rolls, cake and plenty of tea. It was a lovely occasion and demonstrates the fellowship that bellringing brings.

Our church website is updated frequently with progress on the refurbishment; www.chalgrovechurch.org

Dorchester

by David Parker

I am pleased to say our band in Dorchester is thriving, in spite of most of us becoming aware of our advancing years. We have twelve regular ringers, with the customary mix of skills. Since March 2012, we have acquired five new ringers, four of them complete novices, and they have all made excellent progress, especially with handling. There are times when our striking for services – rounds, call changes or plain hunt – is really rather good, and lately as often as not on all eight bells. Our new recruits have been Nick Jenkins, Mandy Hipkins, Ian Brace and Gerry Wells. We were fortunate to have a trained ringer, Diana Vass, move into the village, and although she had not rung for many years she was keen to take it up again and has set a good example by going to practices in other towers, such as Benson and the monthly Branch doubles practices.

We are grateful to Diana who has also been promoting interest in bell ringing by writing a series of articles about ringing for the Dorchester News. Thanks also to Nick Jenkins for agreeing to be our steeple keeper, a new office for us which is intended to involve a ringer more widely and to make sure we retain our recently acquired gold tower maintenance award. Gerry has agreed to be Nick's assistant. Ian has distinguished himself by taking on the editorship of the Dorchester News (as well as learning to ring).

Teaching new ringers is a regular feature in all towers and it is no easy task. It is essential to instil good handling early, as it is linked to safety, and I have been most grateful to John Metcalfe for the patient instruction and teaching he has given for many years. Sadly, he has not been well recently, and I may not be able to rely upon him so much in future. So we shall be keen to take part in any Branch initiatives – such as an area 'clinic' – focussing on handling.

Two of our 'old hands', Alan Isherwood and Frank Norman, while remaining as determined as ever, are finding they need to have a rest after only a few minutes' ringing. It is so good to continue to have their support that we make appropriate adjustments for them. Alan is keen to continue as treasurer, as are we. Nick Forman and Chris Hill remain important to us - two younger, strong men who can raise the heaviest bells with ease. Hardly a month goes by without there being a funeral in this elderly village for which Chris so often tolls the tenor. He (on a rota with hon. sec. Gillian) also winds the clock and flies the flag (with Mandy's help). Yes, we all have little duties besides ringing the bells. In the last year we have broken new ground in two important respects. Firstly, we have started having an annual meeting. We chose the first Tuesday in January as a time when we were all likely to be in residence, and our meeting a year ago was so successful (loads of lively discussion, as well as the official stuff like electing officers) that we agreed to repeat the exercise this year. It too was a success, helping us to learn a lot more about ringing in general and helping us to get to know each other better. Secondly, partly as a result of our discussions, we took the plunge and applied for the twinning scheme. Almost

to our surprise, we all thoroughly enjoyed the experience of ringing in another tower, meeting other friendly ringers, and even improving our ringing!

It is always sad when we bid farewell to one of our ringers, and we have lost two in the last year. Isabel, who started to ring five years ago when she was twelve, moved to Burford where I gather they were delighted to welcome her (she was just starting to ring triples). Then Klaas van der Zwaal moved back to his native Holland. He fell in love with bell ringing when he came to England as a physics teacher over a decade ago. With his strong physique, he became a valuable member of our team, not only for ringing the heavier bells but also for replacing broken stays – on the rare occasions that has happened, I hasten to add!

Looking to the future, the big ringing event this year will be to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday when no doubt ringers across the land will be ringing peals and quarters. We would be doing well to ring a quarter (as we lack an experienced ringer to call one), so we may settle for Devon call changes.

Drayton St Leonard

by Hilarie Rogers

Our energies have been taken up with planning our bell restoration work, and raising approaching £80,000 to undertake it! We finally obtained the DAC's approval to re-cast the bells and undertake structural work to stiffen the tower in May 2015. We made our first presentation to the village at the end of July and started fund-raising.

We held events (Puddings Evening; Organ Concert given by James Anderson Besant); produced and sold Christmas Cards; and many individuals in the village gave money and arranged small events. We were also overwhelmed by the generosity of fellow ringers who made donations to this project.

By Christmas we were ready to place the order for the work and we are looking at an April date for the removal of the bells with the structural work following on. Because bats have recently decided our church is a good place to rest, we have limited times in which we can work. As yet we do not have a date for the new bells to be hung.

Fund-raising is going well and we need just under £10,000. We have a few events planned for the first half of the year – and we are also waiting to hear if we have been successful with a couple of outstanding grant applications.

We hope to be able to post some photos of the work on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/DSLBellRestorationAppeal/> .

I do hope that we will be able to welcome you to ring on our new bells in due course.

Great Haseley

by John White

At the time of writing Hilarie has had her already busy work schedule increased, not only by the Drayton St Leonard bells project but also with the additional workload of assisting the recently bereaved Guild Secretary, and so it has fallen upon me to write the Great Haseley report this time around.

Delivery of a new set of ropes was taken in May 2015, replacing the old set which had seen longer than average service. We are very pleased with them, although those who attended the branch practice in January 2016 will know that in damp weather the tail ends become extremely stiff. The author has past experience of using a DIY "Rope Warmer" which can be quite easily constructed using a length of gas pipe or similar, erected vertically on a stand with a 60 watt light bulb in the base of the pipe. The tail ends are then dropped into this pipe, being prevented from direct contact with the bulb by a suitable perforated barrier. If the bulb is timed to switch-on an hour or two before ringing the drying effect can be quite spectacular. Not yet having the time to construct one of these we have improvised by using our electric oil-filled radiator set in the middle of the ringing chamber with the ropes tied to fall nearby. The effect has been found to be equally as good.

October 2015 saw the induction of the Rev. Simon Cronk as the new Incumbent of Great Haseley and Great and Little Milton, and this was marked by a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles rung concurrently with the induction service at Great Milton. Japhiah Slaney from Marsh Baldon rang the tenor behind for his first quarter and should be complimented for an excellent effort, barely a year after starting to learn to ring. Japh becomes the second Marsh Baldon ringer achieve this milestone following the start of the new band in 2012 and we hope that in due course others from his home tower will emulate his achievement.

Work has been going on in the belfry for some years now to replace the protective mesh over the louvres and construct sound-reducing measures. With this having to be done in spare time progress has naturally been slow, but within a short time of this article being published the author may finally be fitting his replacement turret door at the top of the spiral staircase, the existing one having now got to the stage where it almost doesn't exist at all!

Having had no local ringers for some years ringing at Great Haseley has continued through the untiring work of Hilarie Rogers who ensures, as far as she is able, that a band is available to ring on Monday evenings and once a month for Sunday service. With all the ringers coming from other towers this understandably means that there are sometimes insufficient numbers available on Mondays, but those practices that do take place have often had some very good striking. The regulars have also risen well to new challenges, the latest being All Saints Doubles. Hilarie is to be thanked for her conscientious work,

something that I know is also appreciated by the congregation and villagers of Great Haseley.

Great Milton

by Pat Cox

2015 was a quiet year overall for the GMB. We rang for all the regular services, and the special days. There were 4 weddings, and 5 bands of visiting ringers. We had a Spring Clean of the Tower, with thanks again to Bob Hutton for the loan of 'the tools to do the job'.

The 2 major events of the year were the retirement of the Reverend Victor Story in March – this involved us in a special ringing session and a present from the Ringers; and the induction service of the Reverend Simon Cronk in October. We rang before the service, and then went down into the Church to join the celebration.

It was a special year because of these occasions – so maybe although it seemed a quiet year, it was, none the less, an important one.

Little Milton

by Jane Willis

As usual for Little Milton, we have more to report on the social side than the bell ringing front! Practices continue two or three times a month, followed by visits to The Lamb, where we are often provided with "free chips" as a token of our good custom! We had a very enjoyable Christmas meal there too, accompanied by Geoff and Mary from Chalgrove, and Graham from Great Milton, and of course our stalwart support and mentor, Chris Rogers from Drayton. A very social evening.

We continue to ring for the family and benefice services at St James, and our ringers quite often help out at Great Haseley and Great Milton too. Weddings are thin on the ground on Little Milton, but we did ring for one last year. We regularly host Bob Double and Grandshire practices and the odd Surprise Minor practice, and were pleased to be able to host the Bradfield Ringers in 2015. The major achievement of the year must be the Peal which was rung by our two superstar Hughes D'Aeth ringers, accompanied by visitors from St Albans and HCACR Western District, to celebrate the induction of our new Rector Simon Cronk on 1st November 2015. The peal consisted of 5040 changes in 7 different "methods", named after English towns: London, Wells, York, Beverley, Surfleet, Cambridge and Norwich

Marsh Baldon

by Catherine Mason

We recently celebrated the fourth anniversary of the establishing of our band. We now have six Guild members and a learner, Lorraine, who started in November and is making good progress. With five bells in our tower we can usually muster five ringers for our service ringing once a month, with an instructor on hand to keep an eye, raise the bar, or join in when the warden, Ian, disappears for duties.

Three members of the Baldons Band – Fran, Carys and Catherine - took part in the Branch 6-bell Striking competition at Aston Rowant last April. The band was formed by four novices and two instructors, and came fourth ('last', but 'fourth' sounds better). Despite great nerves we enjoyed this immensely. Ringing by candlelight added to the challenge!

Japh, who joined the band as a beginner in October 2014, rang his first quarter peal (tenor behind to Grandsire Doubles) at Great Haseley on October 26th, 2015, one year after he first touched a bell. We're basking in reflected glory.

One Saturday morning in October our practice was relocated to Berrick Salome, where we enjoyed ringing their newly hung bells. As relatively new ringers a visit to an unfamiliar tower always presents some challenges and we appreciated this opportunity to test our skills with light, easily rung bells, which contrast somewhat with our five.

We enjoy our twinning visits, and try to make up for the paucity of bells in our tower with a surfeit of rock cakes with the tea and coffee.

We continue to practice on Saturday mornings 10am-12noon (starting with a half-hour of individual tuition for our learner) with the help of our faithful instructors, Hilarie Rogers and John White, and their band of loyal helpers. We are very grateful for the instruction and encouragement that we receive.

Shabbington

by Caroline Lewis

We have managed to keep our little band going with the help and support from Gordon and Chris which is greatly appreciated. In July we held a fund raising event for the tenor bell repair which was a great success. We had a constant stream of people coming into the church to sample the delicious cream teas and cakes that were on sale. Everyone who came enjoyed a lovely afternoon. Our two young ringers Jasmine and Dylan along with their families were amazing helpers on the day and all worked very hard. A grand total of £696 pounds was raised. Also many thanks to the bell ringers who came to help in the tower. We are very pleased to have the tenor bell restored and back in working order. The fund was topped up with a grant from Oxford diocesan guild of church bell ringers plus village fund raising. We are looking forward to another year of happy ringing!!

Thame

by Rosalie Gibson

Thame has little activity to report from the past twelve months as our practice times are still curtailed. We have therefore been unable to have any visiting bands or quarter peals let alone a full peal which we are asked for from time to time. I was on tender hooks when we held the Branch Practice at the end of

October but fortunately did not have any comeback from that. We continue to practice on a Monday evening but only until 8.30.p.m.

We also lost three months of practice time from August until the beginning of November due to the Church having the electrical system completely renewed but we were allowed access to the Tower for Service ringing and Weddings.

We rang for 23 weddings, most of which the brides were late for and on several occasions often up to almost 30 minutes. Does anyone else have this problem? As usual we rang on November 11th with the bells half muffled for Remembrance Day and rang for several extra services at Easter and Christmas.

On September 3rd we rang to celebrate the Diamond wedding of John and Julia Hussey, both members of the Church congregation. Julia does many tasks in the Church, most notably arranging flowers in particular for the Chapel dedicated to those who lost their lives in the two World Wars and John used to be a bellringer , and also for many, many years until recently raised and lowered the flag as well as supplying new ones as they became tattered and torn.

On December 21st we abandoned Practice night for our Christmas Meal at the Fisherman at Shabbington which was very enjoyable. As we have also been there for the previous two years it looks set to possibly become a fixture.

This year we have the Branch Service and AGM on the 27th February and are looking forward to hosting that.

Warborough

by Sue Dyke

We had five weddings to ring for last year and we are always grateful to see Alf as he enjoys coming over to Warborough to help us out. At the last wedding of the year there was some delay as the Venezuelan bridegroom could not be found and turned up about twenty minutes late and the bride about 10 minutes afterwards – they certainly got their money's-worth!

We generally manage to ring call changes on 6 bells on Sundays and our newest recruit, Sue P, is making good progress with the rest of the band.

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