

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2018
St. Helen's Church, Berrick Salome (6)**

The programme will be:

- 3.00pm Ringing
- 4.00pm Service, conducted by Revd Canon Ian Cohen
- 4.45pm Tea
- 5.30pm AGM

Tea and AGM will be held in the Berrick Village Hall (last property on the right as you drive towards the Benson end of the village). To help with catering, please could you advise Wendy Simon whether or not you will require tea. by Tuesday 20th February, on 01865 891304 or wendyesimon@gmail.com

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2017 AGM
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
5. Donations
6. Secretary's Report
7. 100 Club report
8. Branch Representative's Report
9. Ringing Master's Report
10. Branch Outings
11. Election of Officers:
 - a. Chairman
 - b. Vice Chairman
 - c. Secretary
 - d. Treasurer
 - e. Ringing Master/Training Officer
 - f. Deputy Ringing Master
 - g. Branch Representatives (2)
 - h. Newsletter Editor
 - i. 100 Club
 - j. Webmaster
 - k. Auditor
 - l. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates
12. Any Other Business

Berrick Salome

Our small 11th century Oxfordshire church is a gem situated amidst fields, 2 miles from the River Thames at Benson. Our tower contains a ring of six bells, with a 7cwt tenor. The treble is only 2 cwt and was originally cast in 1836. However, the second and fourth were cast in 1621, with the inscription H K. The third, fifth and tenor were cast in 1692 by Alexander Rigbee.



The construction of our bell tower has always been unclear, until 2013 when the timbers were dated very precisely by the University of Oxford when they came, armed with diamond drills, to take minute core samples from our timbers. Three of the trees used for the cross braces were felled in the spring of 1428 and one in the spring of 1429. At that period in history, there is some evidence that unseasoned oak was used for construction. The tower frame is confirmed to be as old as it looks and is a medieval survival of a type unique

in Oxfordshire. It was built at the same time that Joan of Arc was leading the French army to defeat the English at the Battle of Orleans.

During 2013/14 we raised money to have the bells refurbished. They had not been refurbished since 1908. They were reinstalled in June 2015.

Bell	Weight	Note	Diameter	Cast	Founder
Treble	2cwt	G	21.81 "	1836	W & J Taylor
2	2½cwt	F	23.88 "	1621	Henry Knight I
3	3¼cwt	Eb	25.63 "	1692	Alexander Rigby
4	4cwt	D	27.06 "	1621	Henry Knight I
5	5cwt	C	30.25 "	1692	Alexander Rigby
Tenor	7cwt	Bb	33.75 "	1692	Alexander Rigby

Treasurers Report

by Kay Bartholomew

SOUTH OXON BRANCH OF ODG**RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2017**

<u>Receipts</u>	£	<u>Payments</u>	£
Brought Forward 01/01/2017	2499.20	Guild Subscriptions	650.00
Subscriptions	1040.00	Guild Bell Fund	325.00
100 Club	700.00	Bell Restoration Fund	175.00
Donations	3.00	100 Club prizes	350.00
Refund of unpaid 100 club cheques	27.00	Newsletter printing	122.54
Deposit A/C Interest	2.90	Tower donations	55.00
		Honoraria	103.78
		Postage	6.60
Total Receipts	4272.10	Total Expenses	1787.92
		Balance Carried forward 31/12/2017	2484.18
	4272.10		4272.10

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2017**

Balance brought forward 1.1.2017	£ 2499.20
Receipts	<u>1772.90</u>
	4272.10
Payments	<u>1787.92</u>
Balance carried forward 31.12.2017	<u>2484.18</u>
Current Account Balance	1296.72
Deposit Account Balance	1161.34
Cash	26.12
	<u>2484.18</u>

Prepared by: Kay Bartholomew Audited by: Raymond Fergusson

Date: 1st January 2018 Date: 14th January 2018

Subscriptions were unchanged at £8.00 and we had a total of 130 paid members, 5 Honorary Members and one member who made a donation.

70 members supported the 100 Club which enabled us to send £175.00 to both the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and the Guild Restoration Fund. In addition, £150.00 from Branch funds was sent to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund.

Tower donations comprised £40.00 for the Branch Outing and £15.00 for a special practice at High Wycombe. Honoraria comprised £75.00 for the organist at Dorchester Abbey in respect of our AGM, £20.00 for Tower Captain's meetings and £8.78 for the Striking Competition Judges.

My thanks once again to Margaret Coombe for running the 100 Club and to Raymond Fergusson for auditing the accounts.

100 Club

by Margaret Coombe

South Oxon Branch of ODG 100 Club 2017

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	700.00	1 st Prizes: 11x£18 (Jan-Nov),	198.00
		1x£20 (Dec)	20.00
		2 nd Prize: 11x£10 (Jan-Nov),	110.00
		2 nd Prize: 1x£12 (Dec)	12.00
		3 rd Prize: 1x£10 (Dec)	10.00
		Total Prizes	350.00
		Transfers to	
		ODGCBR Restoration Fund	175.00
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	175.00
	<u>700.00</u>		<u>350.00</u>

The prize money was as follows:

<u>2017</u>	<u>1st Prize</u>	<u>2nd Prize</u>	<u>3rd Prize</u>	<u>Total £</u>
Jan	Gillian Hamilton	John Tchighianoff		28.00
Feb	Hilarie Rogers	Fran Butler		28.00
Mar	John Tchighianoff	David Perry		28.00
Apr	Stephen Hoar	Kathy Bainbridge		28.00
May	Jane Willis	Stephen Hoar		28.00
Jun	Liz Perry	Anna Herlihy		28.00
Jul	Geoff/Mary Riglar	Linda Blansjaar		28.00
Aug	Gillian Hamilton	Cathy D'Aeth		28.00
Sept	John White	John Tchighianoff		28.00
Oct	Marian Cherry	Fran Butler		28.00
Nov	Margaret Coombe	Brian Gray		28.00
Dec	Dorchester Tower	Robert Wells	Kathy Bainbridge	42.00
				<u>350.00</u>

Secretary's Report

by Jane Willis

The AGM was held at The Abbey Church, Dorchester on Thames; all officers remained in place, and four new members were elected to the branch. Richard Farrant from Dorchester, Jamie Firth and Robert Johnson from Benson, and Viv Muller from Little Milton were presented with their certificates by our very own Hilarie Rogers, Master of ODG. Annie Morrow from Dorchester was elected at the October Branch Practice. Thank you Dorchester for providing an excellent tea for the AGM!

The Branch Striking Competition was held in Shabbington, its anti-clockwise ring causing problems for at least one of the towers. Drayton St Leonard were the outright winners of the competition, with Little Milton being beaten into third position by the Ringing Master's Invitation Band, a band comprised of mainly newer ringers. More exceptional refreshments were consumed - thank you Shabbington! Visits to other towers were encouraged through Tower Twinning. This year, six Towers took part, with exchanges taking place between Dorchester, Drayton St Leonard, Marsh Baldon, Aston Rowant, Chalgrove and Benson.

Whilst the Striking Competition was taking place, several members from the Benson Tower were dancing the night away in celebration of the wedding of their ringer Benji Bateman to Hayley, the bells having been rung before and after the service. Andrew Gillard and Lucy Perry were married at Towersey in October – wonderful that both bride and groom could ring at their own wedding! Congratulations to both couples.

A number of “significant” birthdays and anniversaries have been celebrated by the ringing of Quarter Peals in towers throughout the district. Of particular note was that Margaret Coombe (Chalgrove) rang a quarter peal after her recovery from ill health.

Monthly Branch Practices and Surprise Major/Minor practices have taken place, alongside the well-attended monthly Grandsire and Bob Doubles practices. Do remember that Hilarie Rogers is always pleased to hear from you with training requests. Thank you also to the several towers who hosted visitors from the Bradfield course.

Kay Bartholomew had organised yet another excellent Branch Outing, this year fuelled by diesel instead of steam, with eighteen members transported in carriages pulled by a diesel locomotive on the Swanage Railway. Towers were visited along the line from Swanage to Corfe Castle. It seems that no-one got lost, and the day was rounded off with participants enjoying a tasty meal together at the Swan in East Ilsley. Thank you Kay for all of your hard work in putting these day trips together.

25 Years Ago

Perusing the minutes of the South Oxon Guild from 25 years ago reveals what a stable group Bell Ringers are! As are the Clergy....Rev Ian Cohen will once again lead the service prior to the AGM, as he did back in 1993. 1993's AGM was chaired by John

Tchighianoff. Patricia Newton had to leave early to attend a Guild meeting. Sue Dyke seconded acceptance of the accounts. First quarter peal certificates were awarded to Jeannette Barrington, Mark Walker and Shirley Smith, and Aston Rowant won the Holloway Shield in a closely fought final with Warborough. Subscriptions were £5 a year which must have represented a far higher proportion of a person's income than today's £8.00. Andrew Davis was wished every happiness on his forthcoming marriage to Teresa.

Election of new members

A few names have been put forward for election to the branch, but if you have any more, please could you let Amy Herlihy have them as soon as possible, at least a couple of weeks prior to the AGM

Distinguished Membership

Should you wish to nominate a branch member for Distinguished Membership please contact Jane Willis. 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

Branch Representative's Report

by John White

Guild General Committee Meeting, Sat.11th March 2017, held at Harwell, Oxon.

I apologise for the late delivery of this report. This has in part been due to the volume of material involved, which ran to some 50 pages of A4 and took me some time (and energy!) to summarise. However no criticism of the Guild Officers is intended, as the amount of material reflects the tremendous amount of work being done, for which we owe our continued thanks.

AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (Registered Charity No. 268390)

As is customary the AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund preceded the meeting.

Fund Raising

New money raised in 2016 was £10,600. In real terms this was an increase of £2,447, the total for 2015 of £19,153 having been augmented by a legacy of £11,000. However it should also be noted that the total for 2017 itself included money raised from the Sponsored Ringing Week of £2,257, which is a quadrennial event, and hence the real underlying trend is an increase of some £190. (*Author's note: It is pleasing that in 2016, at £2.85 per member, South Oxon was the fourth highest contributing branch per capita to this figure.*)

Grants

During the year five new applications for grants were received and the following provisional grants allocated: Blewbury, £1,250; Burford, £4,325; Loughton, £14,000; Stanton St John, £5,250 and Tilehurst, £10,000. Six grants totalling £31,105 were paid during the year towards eligible work at Blewbury, £1,180; Brightwell cum Sotwell, £6,200; Drayton St Leonard, £11,000; Old Marston, £4,230; Radley, £6,725 and Stratfield Mortimer, £1,770. During the year the Managing Trustees maintained the level of provisional grant allocations at 20% of the estimated costs of eligible work. The level of grant allocated depends upon the number of applications and the income available for distribution and may vary from year to year.

Investments

Investment income during the year was £22,482, a slight decrease on the 2015 figure of £23,144, reflecting the overall economic situation with continuing low interest rates. New money raised is invested on a regular basis in accordance with advice received from the Diocesan Financial Adviser.

The market value of the investments as at 31st December 2016 was £574,012, an increase of £47,921 on 2015.

General Committee Meeting

Correspondence

The Bishop of Dorchester had written to thank all members of the Guild for their ringing, and the Association of Ringing Teachers had written to thank the Guild for its donation in 2016. The Guild had again been invited to enter a band in the Tewkesbury Shield Striking Competition.

Reports from and election of Sub-Committees

a) Education reported that whilst it had yet to persuade/elect a new Chairman it was grateful to Patricia Newton for acting in this capacity.

Another Ten-Bell Course, this time focusing on Grandsire Caters, was being planned at Aston Clinton for later in the year, one focusing on Cambridge and Yorkshire S. Royal having already been held there on 4th February.

The 2017/18 Young Ringers Ward Scheme starts on 1st April 2017. In addition, and unrelated to the Scheme, the sub-committee is keen to encourage dedicated practices for young ringers, being delighted by those already being arranged on a regular basis. The usual courses - Radley (8th April), Michaelmas (30th September) and Steeple Aston (28th October) are in the course of planning.

In the past the sub-committee has been in the happy position of having our Guild Educational Booklets printed at low cost, and would be very interested to hear from any Guild Member who currently has access to low or zero-cost printing or photocopying facilities.

There are concerns that when notices are distributed electronically, particularly those advertising courses, they do not always find their way on to tower notice boards.

Tower Captains are asked please to display them and encourage potential students to apply.

b) Towers and Belfries reported that the committee is working towards developing a course to help tower captains/steeple keepers to improve their bells as opposed to just maintain them, covering topics such as correcting odd-struckness.

The Tower Maintenance Award Scheme has declined slightly with the number of current awards having fallen by 2 to 17.

c) Finance and General Purposes reported on revision work on the Terms of Reference of the sub-committees and Guild Officers, this work being undertaken to reflect current practice or to expand areas of activity for greater efficiency.

The committee received views and discussed the difficulty some branches have in stewarding both the Eight-Bell Striking Competition and the Ringing Day on the same day. The decision was taken to retain both events on the same day (May Day Bank Holiday Monday) but to hold them in different but adjacent branches. The Guild's 15-Year Plan (which pre-plans which events are to be held in which branches) is to be revised accordingly.

The sub-committee was asked to consider whether new members could be elected at branch practices and whether any rule changes are needed for this to be possible. The rules currently state that new members can be elected at a General Meeting of the Branch or Guild, and it was felt that a branch practice, provided it was open to all members, could also be a General Meeting of the Branch provided that adequate notice was given to all towers, including the business to be transacted, and that no rule changes are required. An advisory sheet will be sent to all branches covering this subject.

Reports from:

a) Peal Secretary. A full copy of this report appears in the recently published Guild Annual Report for 2016.

b) Public Relations Officer. Bobbie May has continued to provide reports of Guild events to the Ringing World, and reported on the Guild's involvement with the BBC *Countryfile* extravaganza held in the grounds of Blenheim palace in August 2016 at which the Lichfield Diocesan Mobile Belfry was present.

c) Safeguarding Officer. Katie Lane presented her report. Whilst this subject continues to attract some (not altogether positive) attention it is worth repeating verbatim the penultimate paragraph of her report:

“Safeguarding children is not a difficult or daunting task. Thoughtful and sensible working practices are not restrictive; their aim is to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, and to make sure that, in the unlikely circumstances of a retrospective allegation, we have systems and evidence in place to support our members.”

I should report that Katie had recently held a meeting with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and as a result there will be a need to extend the policy and procedures previously circulated. The Guild's procedures are to be considered by the F&GP Committee and put before the Guild General Committee in November before final approval, but in order to provide towers with a “heads up” before then, and to allow

towers to think about their own appointments in advance, the Safeguarding Adviser's requirements are now that:

- Each tower with young ringers will be required to appoint a Children's Officer who must not be the same person as the Tower Captain or the person teaching children or vulnerable adults. (*STOP PRESS – At the Guild AGM on 20th May Katie reported that this requirement has now, for the time being, been relaxed, but the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer continues to deliberate on this subject*).
- There must be one man and one woman, both of whom must be DBS-checked, whenever children and/or vulnerable adults are present.

I must stress that at this stage these requirements and their finer details are subject to final approval by Guild General Committee.

d) Librarian. There were 12 enquiries and loan requests during 2016, two fewer than in 2015, continuing the slight downward trend since 2013. Approximately 40 different items of library material were acquired in 2016, and work is continuing on the trial electronic archive.

e) Webmaster. A proposal was put to refresh the Gild Web Site. As this document runs to 2½ pages I have not attempted to summarise it here, but will gladly provide a copy to anyone who so wishes. A proposal that the F&GP appoint a working group to scope, develop and launch a refreshed web site with a maximum expenditure of £1,000 and an on-going maintenance budget not exceeding £400 in the first year saw the maximum expenditure figure increased to £2,000 and was then passed.

Posts specified in Rule 9(c) & (f) (iii): Notification of officers not willing to stand for re-election. Those not seeking re-election at the Guild AGM in May are the current Deputy Master, one Steward, the Public Relations Officer and the Webmaster. The Guild Master, Hilarie Rogers, would be happy to stand down as Master this year if somebody comes forward for the post. Similarly the Safeguarding Officer would be pleased to work alongside someone for the forthcoming year with a view to standing down in 2018.

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2016

These showed an excess of income over expenditure of £1,396.76, broadly similar to 2015 (£1,033.81). The balance of the General Fund (day-to-day income and expenditure) therefore stood at £16,864.90. Probably the only notable variances in any of the classifications of income and expenditure were slightly higher expenditure on Ringing Events (£961.32 compared to £659.90 in 2015, due in the main to expenditure on Ringing World National Youth Contest travel subsidies of £165; Ringing Award Scheme Prizes of £75 and the Guild Festival, £150); a lower expenditure on the Guild Library in 2016 (£205.84 compared to £555.35 in 2015) and a lower claim by Guild Officers for their expenses (£269.06 compared to £464.38 in 2015).

Management of the Restoration Fund (Registered Charity No. 284053)

Income was similar to 2015 at £2,104.59 (£2,221.44 in 2015) and grants paid likewise at £5,185 (£5,982 in 2015) resulting an excess of payments over receipts of £3,080.41. Grants were paid to Horspath £185 (replacing pulleys) and Drayton St Leonard, £5,000 (new bell). The Restoration Fund is also holding money in restricted funds for two future projects planned for Longworth (£10,700.96) and Taynton (£8,225.00).

Donations to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers' Restoration Fund and the Ringing World

The meeting recommended donations of £750 to each of the two funds and £250 to the Ringing World, subject to ratification at the Guild AGM in May.

Terms of Reference of the sub-committees

These had been revised by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and included making the Terms of Reference more consistent across the committees and reviewing memberships and quorums. Delegated expenditure is now authorised where appropriate. The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in two years.

Guild Festival

Branches had been asked to provide their feedback on the future of the Guild Festival following the disappointing attendance at the Festival in 2015. Having collated these further thought will be given to the future of the Festival.

Any other business

Guidance was sought by one member as to the protocol to be followed in the event of the death of the Monarch or a senior member of the Royal Family. The Master had sought the advice of Bishop Colin who stated that advice will be sent to ringers at the time although this will be suggestive only and it will be up to individual incumbents as to how their bells are actually rung.

Guild General Committee Meeting; Sat. 25th November 2017, held at Great Brickhill, Bucks.

Correspondence

The Guild's Report Editor, Heather Browning, had requested that all material for the Guild Report for 2017 be submitted to her by the end of January 2018.

Reports of Sub-committees

- a) Finance & General Purposes reported that at their June meeting they reviewed how to manage the Guild without a Secretary. Having given this considerable thought the Master had arranged that various tasks were allocated to the branch secretaries and this was working well. Ken Darvill from Beaconsfield had also offered to deal with e mails and some other jobs until the end of the year.

Tim Hayward was appointed Webmaster at the September meeting and will take on the role when the new web site has been developed.

Elva Ainsworth, Public Relations Officer (PRO), updated both meetings on her ideas. Nine out of the fifteen branches responded to her e mail that had asked what their particular needs were and she is working through the best ways to provide support.

The September meeting endorsed the proposal to hold a training day on 'How to Present Ringing', currently being planned for 21st April 2018.

Slightly less positive was the review of the Guild Festival following the feedback from the March General Committee Meeting. The festival would be discussed by the F&GP closer to the date of the next scheduled event in 2021, perhaps considering whether the frequency should be extended to mark significant anniversaries only.

Striking Competition methods for 2018 had been agreed as Double Norwich for the 8-Bell and Plain Bob Royal for the 10-Bell.

- (b) Education reported that the Radley, Michaelmas and Steeple Aston courses had taken place as usual and applications for the latter two courses had shown a sharp increase.

Those who currently organize the helpers for Radley and Michaelmas courses and the towers for the Radley and Steeple Aston courses wish to relinquish their roles and new volunteers are sought for these essential tasks.

A Leadership Workshop for branch delegates and the Guild Stewards is to be held at Amersham on 3rd February.

The 2018 Radley Course will be the 25th such course and in seeking to make the day special the sub-committee would be interested to hear from Guild members who were tutors, students or helpers on the early courses, especially the inaugural one in 1994.

- (c) Towers and Belfries reported that nine inspections had been carried out since the last report, the majority in connection with the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme (TMA).

One rope splicing course, one maintenance course and one combined course had been run.

Interest in the TMA had improved slightly with the number of current awards having risen to 20. The number of towers participating or expressing an interest in the scheme is 90, being about 24% of the towers in the Diocese.

Two key members of this committee will shortly be standing down and whilst it is important that they be replaced, Guild members are asked that the name of any potential candidate is provided to the Committee *before* the candidate is approached in order to ensure that anyone proposed possesses the appropriate technical expertise.

Central Council Representatives' Report

Our Guild has six CC Representatives, all of whom contribute to the Council's work by serving on working committees and representing the Guild at the Central Council's

AGM. Those for the 2017-2020 triennium are Ken Davenport, John Harrison, Lucy Hopkins Till, Graham John, Alan Marchbank and Tim Pett.

The need for reform had been under discussion for some time and at the 2016 AGM a Council Review Action Group (CRAG) was set up to prepare a report and motions to be presented at the 2017 AGM, and all seven substantive motions were carried.

Ringling World finances still depend heavily on donations, with 70% of quarter peals being accompanied by a donation but only 25% of peals, which take more space.

Next year's meeting at Lancaster will be in a new format, more like a conference, with most of the sessions being open to ringers who are not Council members.

For more information about the Council's work see <https://ccabr.org.uk> or talk to one of the Representatives.

Diary of events

South Oxon Branch members may be interested to know that it is the branch's turn to host the Guild Spring General Committee Meeting and Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund AGM, held on the second Saturday in March, and it is currently planned that this will be at Little Milton on the afternoon of 10th March 2018.

Guild Budget for 2018

This currently projects a deficit in 2018 of £2,395. The various items of income and expenditure are all projected to be broadly in line with recent years which have usually seen a surplus of something exceeding £1,000. The exception in 2018 relates to the costs of developing the new web site which means that web site expenditure is anticipated to be in the order of £3,000 in contrast to the more usual annual expenditure of £300.

Subscriptions for 2018

With the Guild having healthy reserves that would be more than able to absorb the anticipated deficit the Guild's General Treasurer, Stuart Gibson, was happy to propose that subscriptions for Resident Ringing Members, Associate Members and Non-resident Ringing Members remain at £8 per head and this was agreed by the meeting.

Peal Fees for 2018

These will remain at 50p per participant.

Management of the Restoration Fund (Registered Charity No. 284053)

Total funds raised so far in 2017 are slightly down at £1,917 but remain comparable to the same period last year (£2,055).

There has been only one grant request in 2017 and the Trustees were able to make a provisional offer to Chinnor of £185 for the replacement of gudgeons. One other provisional grant remains outstanding until the proposed work is completed, to Longworth of £1,300 towards the augmentation to 6 bells.

In addition to its General Fund showing a balance of £11,137 the Restoration Fund also holds restricted funds that have been raised in connection with the proposed projects at Longworth (£14,429) and Taynton (£24,495).

New Website

The meeting enjoyed a visual presentation given by Elva Ainsworth and Tim Hayward. Among the proposals is a new map of towers and the branches, developed using Google maps and linked-in to the Dove website. It is also possible that three separate grades of log-in will be made available; one each for the public, Guild members and Guild Officers.

Any other business

Robert Newton made reference to proposals that were currently being aired to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War on Sunday 11th November 2018, namely that following the traditional half-muffled ringing in the morning, muffles be removed to provide open ringing later in the day, and also that a campaign might be launched to recruit 1,400 new ringers, being the number of ringers who lost their lives in the war. Robert expressed his reservations about the practicalities of removing muffles half-way through the day and that recruiting new ringers in connection with those who had lost their lives in war might be seen as inappropriate. He asked that views on the ideas be communicated to him in order that he could pass these on to the Central Council.

The Guild's Safeguarding Officer, Katie Lane, reported on a recent meeting she had attended with the Oxford Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. Katie had met with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser earlier in the year when the Adviser had stipulated that in future 1) each tower with young ringers will be required to appoint a Children's Officer who must not be the same person as the Tower Captain or the person teaching children or vulnerable adults, and 2) there must be one man and one woman present, both of whom must be DBS-checked, whenever children and/or vulnerable adults are in the tower.

Many had expressed their reservations about these requirements, not least that in the vast majority of cases they would not be practical. Katie therefore offered a different solution, namely that her name and contact details together with those of the local Parish's Safeguarding Officer be displayed in every tower in the Diocese. Nevertheless the Committee has asked her to find out how many towers in the Diocese *could* appoint their own Children's Officer before they consider the matter further.

Branch Striking Competition 2017

I was exhorted by our former Branch Secretary to produce a report for this for *Look To* earlier in the year but I regret that I didn't have the capacity at the time to do so. Nevertheless I hope that this report will serve for the record and perhaps encourage a few more entries for 2018.

The competition was held on Saturday 22nd April at Shabbington, a light and easy-going six but presenting a slight challenge in being anti-clockwise, something that is becoming rarer as the years go by as rings are re-hung in new frames.

Three bands entered this year and with two of the regular towers not able to present a team we might otherwise have had a record turn-out. I believe that the wedding of a certain Branch Newsletter Editor may have had something to do with one tower's absence!

The competition was judged by a long-standing ringing friend of the author, Barry Eglesfield, who rang in the author's first peal almost exactly 42 years previously. Barry is well known in ringing circles in North Bucks and the surrounding area.

All the bands successfully completed their test-pieces and a resume of Barry's comments together with the faults marked for each team in the order in which they were drawn to ring is as follows:-

Band	Faults	Position
<p>Little Milton Rang Plain Hunt on 5. Seemed to struggle a little in getting used to the bells but their ringing eventually settled. They had a nice rhythm in their opening rounds. Their backstroke leads were slow at times.</p>	29	3
<p>Ringing Master's Invitation Band Rang Called Changes. This band also had a nice rhythm in their opening rounds and they settled into their changes quite quickly. There was a problem in the middle of their piece with one change but otherwise their ringing was quite good.</p>	19	2
<p>Drayton St Leonard Rang Grandsire Doubles. This test-piece was rung very well and the judge had to listen quite attentively to pick up their faults.</p>	4	1

The Shabbington ringers had provided refreshments which were gratefully received and enjoyed by all. We extend our thanks to them and to Barry for coming to judge.

As always it is not so much the winning of Striking Competitions but the taking part that counts, and the focus of practising before taking part in a competition is always effort well spent when it helps to improve striking overall. There are very few bands that have been able to win the first competition they ever enter, and quite a few that have had to start by coming last and gradually work their way up the rankings. Will we see a few more have a try in 2018?

From the Ringing Master

by Hilarie Rogers

Branch practices were mostly well attended during 2017, with John White and myself sharing the running of them, apart from a couple which took place when John and I were away with the High Wycombe band ringing in the 12-bell competition heats and final. Thanks to the branch officers who stood in for us. People had the chance to ring things that are not always possible in their home tower. Do bring a few from your tower along in 2018 – and if there is anything in particular that you would like to ring, a quick email in advance would give us the chance to prepare!

The **Surprise Major** practices (held every other month) have continued to attract a small number from our branch and others from neighbouring branches, both to improve and to help. The **Surprise Minor** practices which alternate with these have continued apart from once in December when numbers were low.

The monthly afternoon **Doubles** practice alternating between Grandsire and Plain Bob has benefitted from more helpers coming each month, for which we are grateful. In a departure from the norm, the December practice took place in the late morning and was followed by a pub lunch.

The **Tower Twinning** has continued to be enjoyable, giving towers the chance to visit another tower and to benefit from them attending their practice. Do consider it if you are not currently participating.

Do ask if there is anything we can help you with, or if you would like a practice concentrating on a particular method, and we will see what we can do.

TOWER NEWS

Aston Rowant

by Robert Newton

We continue to ring regularly for Sunday services but generally using only four or five of the bells. On Tuesdays we usually hold a worthwhile practice on all six, with something other than call changes, Plain Bob, Grandsire and Stedman included at some point. We find that ringing up accurately in peal here is extremely challenging but often achieve a presentable lower. I am, as ever, very grateful to those who travel considerable distances to support our activities.

We had a relatively busy year for weddings and (just) managed to avoid damaging any cameramen or their equipment. Some people just don't seem to comprehend or believe warnings. We've now resorted to erecting a barrier to keep the unwary/foolhardy from getting anywhere near the ropes! We borrowed some old ropes to keep the bells ringing while our set was being refurbished. The new sallies and tail ends look really impressive and handle well, although, with hindsight, it might have been a mistake to go for the thicker rope on the tenor.

There has been some limited progress with recruitment. Catherine started ringing in the spring and was making good progress until her husband's job took them to Moreton in Marsh after only a few months. We gather that she has been ringing there, so our loss is the G&Bs gain! Phoenix began in the summer holidays and learned to handle very quickly. He promises to be a great asset when he is a bit older and stronger.

Four quarter peals were achieved during 2017. In February, 1260 Grandsire Doubles was rung as a compliment to Francis Flynn and Ron Hawkins for their birthdays. Sadly Ron (Wendy's husband and a former ringer here) suffered a series of strokes and passed away in March. In August, 1260 Plain Bob Minor was rung as a 'round number' birthday compliment to me, the length being ten changes short of the optimum! We were delighted to ring two further quarters of Grandsire: for Shirley and Allan Smith's Diamond wedding in September and Adam Lockwood's 18th birthday in October.

Our usual social events (dinner in Holy Week and summer gathering) again took place and were much enjoyed by all.

The handbells were put to good use before Christmas: our MP even had the pleasure of listening to them during the service of Lessons and Carols, and a very capable Y6 group delighted their families at the school Nativity. Unfortunately, we couldn't make it to Chinnor to ring carols at the Christmas Tree Festival because of the snow!

Benson

by John Tchighianoff

Looking back over the last twelve months there have been several opportunities for special ringing. The first of these was in April when we rang for Benji and Hayley's wedding. It was a wonderful occasion and several of us joined their celebrations in the evening.

A few days later a group of us visited James in Gloucester Cathedral where he was organ scholar for his gap year. James took us on a tour of the cathedral and on to the top of the tower via the bells. We were all amused to find a sofa in the organ loft high above the nave. In the evening we attended a sung Eucharist.

In July we rang for the induction service of Patrick who is the rector of the newly combined benefices of Benson with Ewelme, Brightwell Baldwin, Cuxham and Easington. As Patrick has come from a parish without bells it was great to receive so many favourable comments about the bells after the service had finished.

In November we rang a Quarter of Grandsire Doubles to celebrate the 70th wedding anniversary of HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Congratulations to Izzy as this was her first quarter inside.

Recently we have started teaching Marie from Ewelme and Diane from Brightwell Baldwin and hopefully it will not be too long before they are able to ring in their own towers.

Berrick Salome

by Wendy Simon

We have had several visiting ringers this year, but have lost two of our regular ringers – one to University and one through illness. With the help of Chalgrove, we continue to ring on the first Sunday of the month for family service. Our practices have discontinued, as we double up with Chalgrove on a Wednesday evening.

The Branch Grandsire Doubles practice is held at Berrick on alternate months. A peal, organised by Colin Turner, was rung in September.

Chalgrove

by Andrew Davis

Our practices continue weekly with our loyal group, assisted by Wendy. Through “word of mouth” we have gained a couple of new recruits. Starting our practice earlier with a silenced bell has meant they have mastered bell control and are then able to join in rounds during the open ringing. I am fortunate in that having a safe access space underneath our bells means that only the one being silenced needs to be rung down. If anyone is interested in making silencers for their tower I am happy assist, they are very simple to make, fitting takes a couple of minutes.

We still ring a lot of Minor, including Little Bob and Plain Bob spliced together. Cambridge, for me I still need my copy of the blue line on the floor for comfort! Sunday’s have been a struggle, we appreciate Wendy’s support in making up the numbers.

The refurbishment of the church is now complete, if you haven’t visited yet please check our updated website to see what has and is happening,

www.chalgrovechurch.org

Dorchester

by David Parker

For us at the Abbey, the past year has been one mainly of consolidation, with only a few major changes, the most significant of which has been the retirement of two of our ‘old hand’ ringers, John Metcalfe and Frank Norman.

John was taught by the legendary Marie Cross and this put him in a strong position for teaching since Marie left him with a great collection of threats of what might happen

to the unwary if they failed to do exactly what she said. Many of our current band have been taught by John, and they now give our band a firm and reliable nucleus. Frank and his wife Chris took up ringing when they moved into Dorchester some 40 years ago. Chris acted as our secretary and treasurer for many years, giving support to tower captain Doreen Stoneham and then to me for many years before, tragically, she died suddenly about ten years ago. Frank continued with his many activities in the Church and village, and, as many of you will know, he audited the accounts for the Branch until last year. He seemed to value the support and companionship of the bell ringers as much as we valued his skills as a ringer and his knowledge of all to do with bells. Sadly, as with John, the passing of years has been making ringing more difficult and less enjoyable, and both he and John have decided to take their leave, with our very best wishes for the future. They are sorely missed.

We are left with twelve regular ringers, and in the last year have had an average attendance of eight at practices and nine at Sunday services (thanks to occasional visitors). We have had ten weddings in the last year, and for all except five of those we managed to ring all eight bells with our own ringers, but for the other five we were very grateful to support from our neighbours - special thanks to Amy, Muriel and Gordon - to make up the number.

As in most towers, we are a mixed ability group (which has its problems for the ringing master!). The enjoyment of the group depends strongly on the good will of the more experienced members and their willingness to spend time providing support for the learners. I am grateful for piles of good will and thankful for the restraint of the frustrated members! Consequently, in the course of the year we have our newest recruits Richard Farrant and Annie Morrow-Andrew ringing plain hunt. At most practices we can now include Bob Doubles, sometimes touches, and occasionally Grandsire, but we have to wait until our next twinning visitation before we can tackle triples. We have become keen supporters of twinning (after initial reluctance, sorry everyone) and we would like to apologise to our host towers for not having managed to take very many ringers to 'away' fixtures. We hope to do better in future as we do find invariably that our hosts give us lots of good tips on handling as well as help with method ringing.

Another addition to our ringing life which might be worth highlighting is that earlier this year we decided to subscribe, as a tower, to the Ringing World. Thanks to Diana's enthusiasm. Some of you may be surprised that we did not subscribe already, as indeed you might be, because we have come to realise how good the journal is for showing us what goes on in other places and for making us feel more involved with the wider fellowship of bellringing. The pages of reports of peals and quarter peals do not concern us much (if at all!), but we plan to change that by setting ourselves a target of ringing a quarter peal for 11 November 2018.

Finally, it remains to say you are always welcome to come and join us at our practices on Tuesdays, 7.30 – 9.00pm. May I suggest you telephone me first on 01865 340402 to say you are coming so that we can look out for you, and just occasionally we have to cancel a practice if there is something going on in the Abbey.

Happy ringing!

Drayton St Leonard

by Hilarie Rogers

We have spent the past year enjoying our new bells! We have been delighted to host a branch practice and a Surprise Minor practice, as well as welcoming 3 towers for Twinning. We have even had some visitors on our practice night. The Radley course and the Bradfield course both held a session here.

We have set up a programme of routine maintenance, with myself largely undertaking the monthly jobs and Christopher and Japh (both of whom assisted the bellhanger) responsible for the 6-monthly and annual maintenance. Our new muffles were used on Remembrance Sunday and also for quarter peals in August and December to mark the centenary of the death of two members of the village in the Great War – men remembered on our War Memorial.

Our new clapper ties were used when I began to teach a new recruit, who sadly needed to take a break due to health issues followed by pregnancy. She does hope to return. They were used once more when I started to teach a recruit from Marsh Baldon who again had to give up, this time due to work commitments. Undaunted, I subsequently gave handling lessons in December to a newcomer to the village who rang some 30+ years ago and is now starting to ring rounds with us on a Wednesday.

In common with many towers, we rang a quarter for the Platinum Wedding Anniversary of HM the Queen and HRH Prince Philip.

We were very pleased to win the branch 6-bell competition at Shabbington in April, but needed a re-shuffle of our band when we competed in the Guild competition at North Leigh in October, as Charlotte had that week given birth to twins, Sophie and Jack. Japh was recruited to ring the tenor for us, Amy moved from tenor to treble, and we came a respectable 6th.

Great Haseley

by John White

All has been fairly quiet at Great Haseley over the last twelve months. A number of Monday night practices have had to be cancelled due to insufficient numbers being available. As there is no local band if one or two of those who do come regularly are unavailable then a practice is not viable.

This is a pity because as many will know Great Haseley bells are one of the best sixes in the area and despite repeated appeals to the local populace nobody will come forward to learn to ring. There are many experienced ringers who would gladly have Great Haseley bells to ring on each week and this is emphasised by the fact that the bells are often requested for peal attempts. However these have to be very carefully managed as there are a number of residences right under the tower and any attempt has to be allowed to coincide with a justifiable reason for the bells being rung for nearly three hours. One such occasion was permitted in 2017 and an experienced ODG band

rang a well-struck peal in all 41 regular Surprise Minor methods on 8th April. This was on the same weekend as a Music Festival was being held in the church. The bells are also often on the “circuit” for the practical sessions of residential ringing courses and the Bradfield Course made its usual annual visit in August.

We do well with those practices that we are able to run and usually have good striking into the bargain. Since learning to ring at Marsh Baldon, Japh Slaney continues to attend regularly and he is now advancing steadily with his method ringing. Izzy Anderson-Beasant from Benson has also come when she has been able and we do our best to help her hone her skills. The remainder of the band rise to occasional challenges and apart from the standard fare of Grandsire and Plain Bob we also have excursions into less well-known methods, among the latest being St Osmund Doubles. We do continue to ring on the first Sunday of the month for the Family Service, something made possible by Hilarie Rogers’ continued work in getting a band together.

Great Milton

by Pat Cox

2017 has been a quiet year for us - we have had problems with illness and injury and therefore have been very grateful for the help from our friends in Little Milton. We managed to ring for all the special occasions as well as regular services and weddings.

Stefan d’Anger leaves Great Milton in the Spring - so that is au revoir to a regular ringer, a knowledgeable church man and a good friend.

Otherwise, we are still all together and look forward to a healthier, happier and generally better year all round.

Little Milton

by Jane Willis

The bells at St James have rung out regularly throughout the year, both for services, and our usually well attended practice evenings. We were delighted to ring for the wedding of a young woman who had lived in the village throughout her childhood and teenage years. Our tower is a magnet for training events – we play host to a large number of visitors each year. Monthly Branch Grandsire and Bob Double practices alternate with Berwick Salome. We accommodated a Radley Course in April and welcomed Bradfield Ringers during the summer.

Throughout life, we have been led to believe that showing a degree of confidence will get us successfully through any situation. Without really considering the challenges presented by ringing bells hung in an anti-clockwise fashion, we duly dusted and polished our (empty) trophy shelf and with some trepidation entered, once again, the Branch Striking competition. And as always happens, we left Shabbington humiliated and dejected, scoring the highest number of points over the evening, and thus achieving bottom place, this time defeated by a scratch band of newish ringers, adding insult to injury. We have licked our wounds and commiserated over a few pints and are now seeing if we can dredge up more baseless confidence to enter the 2018 competition.

Strangely, given our performance in the competitive arena, members from our tower continue to be invited to support service ringing at Great Haseley and Great Milton and we are always pleased to oblige. We remain eternally grateful to those ringers who come to support us at our Tuesday evening practices, the Chalgrove three – Geoff, Mary and Margaret, and Graham from Great Milton. And of course our undying gratitude is expressed to the imperturbable, steadfast Chris Rogers. We would certainly be a poorer place without their stoical attendance.

Shabbington

by Caroline Lewis

Our practices continue weekly with a very loyal band of ringers. Assisted by Gordon Smith from Little Milton and Chris Rogers from Drayton St Leonard. Many thanks for all your help and support which really keeps us going.

Not very much to report this time. We rang for Easter Sunday, Remembrance and the Christmas services.

We are ringing for a Wedding in March, the first in along while, which will be lovely! We are all looking forward to another year of happy ringing!

Thame

by Rosalie Gibson

We started 2017 with two new learners, Harry, who had first visited the Tower with the local Explorer scouts unit, came along his Dad Graham. We arranged these beginners practices on a separate night from the normal practice, using tied bells to keep the neighbours sweet! In March Graham and Harry were advanced enough to join the Monday night practices. Harry now rings for Services and is learning to ring the Tenor behind for methods.

We then started to teach Cheryl who brought along her daughter Rowan and two learners which Towersey had asked us to help with.

Once these were ready to join normal practice nights the Towersey learners elected to join the practice nights in their own tower.

In November we had another visit from the Explorers and 2018 has started well with another learner who had visited the Tower with them and is already proving very keen. In February the Environmental Health officer from S.O.D.C received another complaint from 'our unfriendly neighbour' but she was advised that he did not consider the ringing of bells to be a nuisance and that he would be taking no further action. We have therefore now extended our practice nights gradually back to finishing at 9.00.p.m

We had a problem with the clock in April and actually received complaints about that, this time because of the lack of striking! Once checked we were able to have the clock working but it took until September before it was striking again.

As always, we rang for a large number of weddings throughout the year. Thame appears to be a popular venue for these. We also have a good response for Service ringing on Sundays, nearly always having about ten ringers, although practice nights are often more sparse, but always useful.

The maintenance team continue to do a great job of checking the bells every three months so that when White's do their annual service in December very little needs to be done.

We took the last Monday before Christmas 'off' and enjoyed a meal together at the Spread Eagle before doing our usual marathon of ringing on Christmas Eve/Christmas day.

Warborough

by Sue Dyke

We continue to tick along ringing most Sundays with our 6 regular ringers. We haven't been asked to ring for so many weddings this year and we are always very grateful to Alf Cooper, Philip Mills, Gillian Johnson and David Parker for helping us out when we are short of our own ringers.

Branch Secretary

Jane Willis

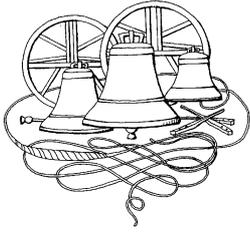
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Newsletter Editor

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OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF
CHURCH BELLRINGERS



South Oxon Branch
2018

Sun 14th January	Tower Captains' and Branch Officers' Meeting	
27th January	4pm	Dorchester (8)
24th February	From 3pm	AGM at Berrick Salome (6)
24th March	4pm	Brightwell Baldwin (6)
28th April	7.30pm	Striking Competition at Drayton St Leonard (6)
26th May	7pm	Benson (8)
23rd June	7pm	Towersey (4)
28th July	7pm	Ewelme (6)
August	No practice	
Sun 16th September	Tower Captains' and Branch Officers' Meeting	
22nd September	10-bell practice (time and venue TBA)	
27th October	4pm	Autumn Meeting and Practice Chalgrove (6)
8th December	4pm	Warborough (8)