

 Old North Berks Branch
Newsletter

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Editorial

Welcome to this issue of the branch newsletter for winter 2015. We eventually had a summer to speak of albeit a slightly distant memory now with the gales we've been having recently. The articles we have in this issue show we have an active branch with plenty going on for all, especially the young ringers' outings which seem to go from strength to strength.

We chose the picture for the front cover as there is a lot of activity around bell projects in the branch at the moment; it shows Tim and Isaac at St Helens, guiding the new clock bell through the ringing chamber trapdoor on its way to its final position in the bell chamber.

There is the final report on the North Moreton project from Richard, I'm sure he will be glad of the rest before the next project! There is also a report from the Brightwell project to give an update on their progress. Keeping with the bell project theme, we're doing well at Radley with a progress report in this edition.

Congratulations go to Matthew, Daniel and John for getting their first quarter peals and to David for his birthday and ITTS achievement.

Congratulations also to the band that represented the ODG at the RWNYC 2015 held in Oxford in July, with a strong representation from this branch.

The calendar for next year looks busy and I'm sure there'll be quite a few celebrations over the Christmas period to keep the social side of things going. Hopefully these will translate into some interesting articles for the next edition.

On a sadder note, with the passing on of Alec Samler, we include an account of the contribution made by him not only to ringing but to other community activities as well.

Our thanks again go to all our contributors; please keep the articles coming and let us have any feedback (good or bad).

Our best wishes for the season ahead and for the New Year.

Ian Minns

Finally, at this time of year, remember:

The main aim of mankind should be to make men kinder

Notes from the Chair

As I sit and ponder what to write for this Newsletter, I recall a comment from one of our ringing masters about the recruitment and retention of young ringers and of his concerns for the future of bell ringing. A lot has been said on this subject at Guild and National level and it is one that is hard to answer.

For my part I do bell ringing because I want to and find it interesting, I meet like minded people and there is a sense of duty, achievement and belonging (is this enough to pass on to any young ringer today?). Then there is the social side, something our branch is good at (skittles, quizzes, outings, etc.). Susan and Brian Read are doing great work involving young ringers at Abingdon and in the branch. I think the main thing is to make ringing "fun".

If you are a young/new ringer, what attracted you? Certainly, if your tower is lucky enough to have two or even three young ringers then the teaching and fun elements are a lot easier.

Sometimes you teach young ringers only to see them leave for university or move away, but we must live in the hope that one day they will return or go on and enrich another band elsewhere.

I hope towers are able to recruit new ringers (young and older) and that your bells keep ringing.
As we prepare for the festive season (one of hope), I hope as many of you will mark the event.
Wishing you all have a “fun” filled Christmas and a prosperous New Year.
From, myself and all the Branch Committee.

Philip Roberts

PS What do you call a man who collects a lot of Clocks?

Ans: A man with time on his hands, or just “Cuckoo”

PPS What did the Greek cheese say when it looked in the mirror?

Ans: Hello me!

PPPS There is a driver in our village who has a phobia of speed bumps! But he’s slowly getting over it!

Secretary’s Report

The Branch has been active over the summer period, and evening practices have been held at Aston Tirrold, Abingdon (St Helen), Cumnor, Abingdon (St Nicolas) and Milton. We have had monthly afternoon branch practices at Cumnor, Sunningwell, Brightwell, Radley and North Moreton. Our surprise major practices have been held at Brightwell, Goring and Wallingford. Most of these practices have been well attended, the only exception being the practice at Aston Tirrold.

Since our AGM only one new member has been elected to the Guild, John Hutchinson of Wallingford, who was elected at the August branch practice. Sadly we have lost one long-standing member of the Branch and Committee, Alec Samler of Chilton. Alec was well known in the branch, being tower captain at Chilton and a great supporter of Harwell and Blewbury for many years. He was also well known in The Scout Association, having been awarded the Silver Wolf. This is the highest award made ‘for services of the most exceptional character’.

Following the resignation of Lorna Curtis, our Guild Steward for the past six years, I am very pleased to say that Mary Friskney was elected to this post at the Guild AGM. Many of you will already know Mary through her role as Branch Training Coordinator and the Wednesday afternoon practices. Mary has been given a small bookstall by the Guild, so please contact her if you need to purchase any books and teaching aids.

Our branch outing on 18th July was organised once more for us by Philip Roberts of Harwell. His outings run as smoothly as a well-oiled machine, and this was no exception. Possibly one of the attendees needed better oiling, who mistakenly took her husband and passengers to Rodbourne Cheney instead of the first tower, Swindon Christ Church. We did wonder how we had managed to be the first there, a most unusual event I’m sure any who know us will agree. Personally I blame the ‘Dove’ application on our Sat Nav (otherwise I would have to blame myself!).

After Swindon we moved to the picturesque village of Purton, where the bells proved much more difficult to ring than those at our first tower. That, however, was only a warm up for the extremely long draught of Cricklade. Fortunately we had all been bolstered by an excellent pub lunch and many of us later sought refuge in the churchyard, our excuse being the opportunity to view some of the RAF Fairford air displays. Our penultimate tower was Highworth and this was followed by a most welcome afternoon tea and ringing at Faringdon. Thanks go to Philip and Janette, and everyone who contributed to the wonderful range of cakes, for planning such a pleasant day for branch members.

Thanks also go to Stuart and Naomi Gibson, who once again invited us to their home and hosted a superb barbecue for us. Over thirty members and friends enjoyed the late evening sunlight in beautiful surroundings. As ever the food was excellent and plentiful, and there was the usual fun to be had on the croquet green. As previously agreed, the proceeds of the barbecue and raffle were donated to the Radley Bell Restoration Fund.

Following on from their success at the branch 6-bell striking competition in March, the Wallingford ringers represented the Branch at the Guild's striking competition on 3rd October. Together with Roy Thorpe of Brightwell, they rang very well and were highly commended, being placed 5th. Although not all branches enter the Guild's competition, we should remember that there are 15 branches in total. Old North Berks consistently enters the competition and has often achieved a placing in the top 6. Well done, Wallingford (and Roy)!

I am writing this report before our next social event, a skittles evening and supper in Radley Village Hall. I hope that this goes well because it is the last event in our fund raising efforts for the Radley Bell Restoration Fund. In 2016 we will be turning our thought to the restoration of Brightwell bells. Branch members and towers have been very generous over recent years and we have contributed to many restoration funds. Please remember that from 2016 we are asking all members to contribute an additional £2 to the Branch when making their subscription to the Guild. This will be ring fenced by our treasurer and only used for bell restoration projects throughout the Branch.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Don't forget to come over to Blewbury on 1st January at 10.30am for our annual New Year's ringing and refreshments event.

Gill Loyd

Ringling Masters' Ramblings

Ringling in the Branch seems to be ticking along quite well and almost all of the arranged special branch practices have been very well supported. The current pattern of practices has evolved over the years to suit various needs, and it would probably be unwise to make any radical changes to what we are currently offering to branch members. However, we are always open to suggestions and if you have any thoughts please bring them along to the next ONB committee meeting for consideration. Thank you to all the branch officers for organising and attending these practices and of course everyone who attends to make them successful.

Several towers within the branch rang to celebrate the milestone of Queen Elizabeth becoming the longest serving monarch in British history. Well done to those who were able to organise general ringling or quarter peals. These special national events give us the chance to advertise ourselves within our local communities and give us the opportunity to recruit new ringers from the interest created. Next year, there will be a chance to celebrate The Queen's 90th birthday in June, so please try to think about organising this as early as possible with your ringers to make sure of their availability.

Our branch has an enviable track record of looking after its bell installations, and with Radley and Brightwell being the latest in a long series of ambitious bell restoration projects we can be very proud of the commitment and responsible care that we provide to our historic bell installations. Congratulations to all who have supported and led these projects during recent years, it is no easy task to obtain the funds and permissions required for these large projects.

In our last 'Ramblings' we mentioned our concern about recruiting ringers of a suitable age profile who will become the tower captains and branch officers of the future. It is quite easy for many of us, who were taught during the 'golden age' of ringling, to continue to enjoy our hobby and keep

our towers and branch going along. However, unless we look to the future and begin to recruit people now who will take over from us in a few years, we will face a major challenge in keeping our bells ringing. We have no magic answers, but hopefully we can all think about this when recruiting new ringers at our local towers.

In the meantime, thank you for all that you are doing, and please encourage your new recruits to come along to branch events or other practices in your area if you can. See you all soon.

Richard Loyd and Nick Clarke

Guild and Branch Annual Subscriptions

A gentle reminder of the decision at our AGM in March, that all branch members will be asked to pay an additional £2 along with the Guild Annual Subscriptions (£8) from next year onwards. The extra £2 will generate over £500 annually and this will be kept in branch funds, ring-fenced so that it can only be used towards bell projects in our branch.

Please can all tower secretaries note that this will make a total of £10 per member each year when they pay Stuart, our Branch Treasurer, at the beginning of 2016.

Old North Berks has a great record for supporting restoration and other bell projects in the branch. Recently we have supported the North Moreton augmentation and rehang with a donation of £3000, we have just completed our efforts to support the Radley rehang with £1500, and we have another vital project about to commence – the rehang of Brightwell bells.

We want to continue to help our towers as much as we can, both now and in the future. Unfortunately the additional £2 cannot be gift aided, but please be assured that it will be put to very good use in towers near you – or even in your own!

Thank you to all branch members from the Branch Committee.

TOWER TALK

Abingdon

We rang half-muffled at both Abingdon towers for Remembrance Sunday but unfortunately there were not enough ringers available to attempt a quarter-peal.

On the day before, a “new” clock bell was installed at St Helen’s with the expertise of Graham Clifton and Mark Walker, ably assisted by Hugh Bishop, Margaret Brock, Isaac O’Shea, Tim Pett and Brian Read. This had come about because when our new bells were installed the louvres were partially bricked up to provide sound control after which some local residents complained that they could not hear the clock well enough. It was realised that the 8th bell from the old ring was a perfect match for the ring at Long Crendon, whereas their 8th was a more recent recasting which did not match the other bells. So a swap was an obvious solution. The old Abingdon 8th was retuned and installed at Long Crendon several years ago and now the old Long Crendon 8th has been installed in St Helen’s hanging from a girder above the other bells. It still has to be wired up to the clock striking mechanism but this new position should provide more sound outside the tower.

Tim Pett



Isaac helping to get the bell into position above the other bells

Appleton

At a Friday practice in July the gudgeon sheared on the wheel end of our sixth bell's headstock. As a result the bearing and wheel were both smashed and the bell wedged horizontally in its pit. On the following Monday morning Whites of Appleton made the bell safe and the headstock was removed and taken to their workshop.

The next Friday practice was spent trying out various combinations of bells to give us a ring of six and an eight that sounded bearable. None of them sounded particularly musical as the sixth, being in the middle of the ring, is a vital bell.

White's fitted new gudgeons to the existing headstock, new bearings were fitted and a completely new wheel was manufactured. We were extremely pleased when the bell was rehung early in September and we were able to ring all ten bells for the last two weddings of the year.

Our next big event will be the 198th March the Fourth celebration dinner which will be held on 5th March, 2016.

Sylvia Harrison

Blewbury

I will begin this report by sending 'get well' wishes to Peter and Richard. They have both recently had operations and are not able to ring at the moment. Now they are gaining in strength day by day and we are hoping to see them back in the tower by Christmas or early next year. We have missed them on Sundays and at our practice nights.

We have had a record number of weddings to ring for this year, eight in all, and I cannot recollect there being this many in over twenty years. Perhaps church weddings are becoming more popular, but only time will tell if this is the case. These weddings have substantially increased the ringers' coffers, however my one bugbear is that brides now see being 'fashionably late' as meaning they can turn up at almost any time they chose. It seems as though the days when five minutes was the normal have long gone (at least in Blewbury). It is now more like fifteen, although the most extreme this year was well over twenty minutes (and she could have walked to the church in a fraction of that time). I wonder if she had the same confidence that her honeymoon flight would have waited for her had she arrived late at the airport. Fortunately our confidence was restored somewhat when our most recent bride actually arrived early and waited in the car until it was time for the service to start.

In September we put a notice in our village bulletin, asking if anyone would like to learn to ring. We were delighted when Christine and her daughter, Natasha, came along to see what happens and then expressed an interest. They have been coming to tied practices for the past few weeks and are both making good progress. I would think that, by the time this report is printed, they will both be coming along to our practices and ringing rounds and call changes unaided. We would like to give our thanks to Mary Friskney, who has been coming over to help with the teaching. Not only has Mary taught our learners, but she has also taught Matt and Michael how to teach, which is invaluable. Another bonus is that Mary has stayed to our practice and helped all our other learners.

We are also very happy that Jackie has returned to ringing after a break of about six years. Jackie saw our appeal for more ringers and decided that, despite her very busy job, she would like to come back. After a couple of goes on the third one evening, she is now ringing as though she has never been away!

At the beginning of October we were asked to ring to celebrate the 100th birthday of Oliver Ashford, Blewbury's second centenarian. For the past three years we have dedicated our annual Boxing Day quarter peals to our first centenarian, William Robinson, whose birthday is on Christmas Day. We think that it is quite something to have two esteemed elderly gentlemen both living in our village, and so we decided to ring a quarter peal for Oliver. As our local band has been sadly depleted of method ringers in recent years, we enlisted help from Goring, Harwell, Drayton and Chilton to enable us to ring a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples. This was to have been Matthew's first quarter peal on eight and he was very much looking forward to ringing the tenor for us.

Unfortunately, when the day arrived, Matthew awoke feeling unwell and was not able to ring. As it was too late to find a substitute, I was pleased to stand down so that a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor could be rung. This was Michael's first quarter of treble bob, and so we still managed to score a 'first' for one of our ringers. Since then, we have received two lovely emails from Oliver's friends and family, who have thanked us, saying 'how appropriate it was to have such a quintessentially English introduction to the celebratory lunch, particularly for all the overseas visitors from Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and USA'. It feels good to be appreciated so much!

Not everything has been about ringing, though. Matthew's 21st birthday coincided with a practice night, and his parents arranged a super surprise party with the bellringers for him in The Blueberry. Our 'occasional Sunday breakfast' club has continued in each other's homes throughout the year, and we have enjoyed sampling the bacon and sausages of the various butchers in the area. Thanks go to Nick for thinking up this great idea. Our next social event will be a Christmas dinner in the Red Lion, and we are waiting with baited breath to hear from Matt and Jo what theme they have chosen this year (although it will be hard to match the 'Wild West' of last year!).

As ever, I would like to thank all our regular visitors, who come along to our practice nights and help us at weddings and with ringing for other special services. We couldn't do it all without you!

Gill Loyd

Chilton

We are sorry to report that our previous tower captain, Alec Samler, died in August, we have written an obituary for him in a separate file. I am compiling a list of his peals and quarters for the history of our tower, please can you let me know of any which Alec rang with you, or any recorded on peal boards in your tower which I can photograph.

We welcome visitors to our Monday evening practices, 7.30 to 9pm, particularly from those towers with several learners who may be reluctant to venture into other towers and can gain confidence by ringing on our easy-going bells with their own tutors.

Please phone (01235 834357) beforehand to check we are having an evening practice and remember that we do not ring on the evenings of Bank Holidays.

Kate Crennell

Cholsey

John Moneys' 90th Birthday

On 12th July we celebrated John Money reaching the grand age of 90 yrs. There was a small Party at Chez Jeskins, and John was presented with a picture of the entrance door to the Bell Tower. He still comes to ring for service on Sunday Mornings, and, as he has been barred from driving due to eyesight problems, he comes on his bicycle.

On January 10th next year we are going to have an open day and try to recruit a few more bellringers.

Jenny Jeskins



Cumnor

Our band is making steady progress with two beginners having recently joined us, Claire and Jill. We also have more experienced ringers who have returned to the fold, Mark Benstead, mentioned in our previous newsletter, and Marion Setford, who rang at Cumnor for many years and now have some time to return to ringing. As well of course as our regular band, numbers on a practice evening are sometimes up to about a dozen.

The branch practice was held here on 12 August and well attended by about thirty ringers. Our practice night is Wednesday, and on the day when the Queen became the longest serving monarch, 9 September, we did attempt a quarter peal to commemorate the event. Unfortunately we did not complete it but the spirit was there!

One important anniversary was celebrated on 20th September 2015, by an all women band, who rang a peal of 5088 Yorkshire Surprise Major at Lincoln College, Oxford, to commemorate the 20 year anniversary of the first ladies' peal rung by the Oxford Society on 23rd September 1995 – our Tower Captain, Jenny Dyer, rang the treble. It would be interesting to know how many all women bands there are in the world and how many all women peals have been rung.

We are looking forward to a busy ringing season ahead of us at Christmas and in the New Year and hope we will continue to flourish and improve our ringing in 2016.

Gerard Ledger

Harwell

Harwell continued to ring and practice throughout the summer despite being a little short on numbers during the holiday period.

We have three keen young ringers who are all progressing very well. Occasionally, as a special treat, they are allowed to ring the tenor and last time they each managed to stand it!

We had a very good turnout for our half-muffled ringing before the Remembrance Day service in the High Street.

Several of the Harwell ringers rang at Alec Samler's funeral service. He is much missed at Harwell as he must be at Chilton.

One of our ringers missed a couple of Sundays as she had decided to cycle to Edinburgh from Harwell. If you are interested, you can read how she got on at

<http://harwell2edinburgh.blogspot.co.uk>

Debbie Greenfield

Letcombe Regis

In June some members of our team enjoyed ringing for the only wedding ceremony held at our church so far this year, and for four of our ringers this was a new experience.

During ringing for a Sunday service in July we were unexpectedly joined by a lady ringer called Judith. She had been selling her wares on her stall at a Craft Fair being held at the Richmond Retirement 'Village' adjacent to the church, and when she heard the bells ringing she felt moved to come and join us! Similarly, on the last Sunday in September we were joined by five members of a party of mature ex-Nottingham University students. They were on a reunion outing and staying overnight nearby and had asked if they could join us for Service ringing. We were delighted to have them and our youngsters got to hear and ring with some 'professional' ringers. One lady who climbed our tall, steep ladder with aplomb was very visibly pregnant!

Ending on a sad note, in July we said goodbye to Dan Clark-Frew (27) who learnt to ring here almost two and a half years ago. He and his wife were married in our church in 2013 and we rang for their wedding. Dan decided to change career and he and his wife have moved to York where he is training to be a chemistry teacher.

Anne Williams

Milton

It has been fairly quiet here and we continue to practice with the support of our regular visitors. Numbers vary so the cloth is cut to suit the numbers attending. One week we met only four, however during the evening we rang at least a couple of courses of each of the 11 standard minimus methods. We are currently in a period of interregnum as Colin Patching retired in June after 23 years in post. The Church of England moves slowly in such matters, so there is no replacement on the horizon at the moment.

We hosted the branch practice in October, however it was disappointing that only three people, other than those who would have been at the practice anyway attended. With only eight present it meant that everyone had to ring all of the time, but it was good practice for Claire and Edward. It seems that more people attended the Committee meeting three days earlier, perhaps in this virtual age people prefer to talk about ringing rather than actually doing it? Food for thought perhaps?

We are pleased to be able to host some practices for the roaming Radley ringers, whilst their bells are refurbished.

North Moreton

North Moreton Rings Again.

After a two and half years, the bells of North Moreton ring out again. It gave the small committee enormous satisfaction to get this lovely set of bells to ring, after so much renovation work. The project, which started modestly enough, in March 2013, with the much needed renovation of the five ancient bells, expanded to the provision of a ringing gallery, new vestry, kitchenette and WC, plus the augmentation of a new treble and replacement of the Sanctus bell. The new bells were provided by the generosity of two sets of donors and are inscribed to the memory of young people. Our very small, but hardworking committee under the leadership of Richard Loyd and with unfailing support of the North Berkshire Branch of the Ringing Guild are delighted this project is reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

Practice nights are on Mondays, between 7.45 and 9.00pm. Two visiting bands of ringers have already paid us a visit and both were complimentary. 'A lovely ring of six' they all agreed.

The last time any major work was done was in 1905, when the existing frame was built, allowing us a space for the new treble. It must have been in mind to augment the five bells at the time and one wonders what prevented that from happening. Probably the usual problem of 'cash-flow'! What historical record shows is the appeal for funds began in 1900 and it took five years to raise the required sum of £400.00. Our current project will be well over £150K – how times change. From the PCC records, the words of encouragement from the Bishop of Oxford at that time, to raise the £400 are attached.

Beryl Jones



THE VICAR AND CHURCHWARDENS OF NORTH MORETON earnestly appeal for help in the necessary work of securing their Church Tower, which has shown signs of collapse, in consequence of the succession of dry seasons having alarmingly increased the cracks which have been visible for many years.

For some months past it has been unsafe to ring the bells, and, to prevent further danger, the Tower has been now shored up by Messrs. Wheeler, Builders, of Wantage, under the direction of the Architect, J. H. Christian, Esq., of Whitehall Place, whose plans for thoroughly carrying out the necessary repairs, by underpinning, &c., will involve an expenditure of over £400.

North Moreton has so seriously diminished in wealth and population during the last 25 years that it is impossible this work can be accomplished without external aid, even with liberal contributions from owners of property in the Parish.

The Church is a most interesting one, containing in the south-east Chantry a beautiful window of 13th century stained glass, and a unique piscina.

The Bishop of Oxford has permitted the following letter to be printed with this Circular:—

"I strongly recommend the Appeal of the Vicar and Churchwardens of North Moreton
 "to all who are interested in the Architecture and Archæology of Berkshire, and I
 "confidently hope there is no question about their raising adequate funds for repairing the
 "Church Tower.

(Signed) "W. OXON.

"THE PALACE, CUDDESDON,
 "November 17th, 1900."

Donations will be received and acknowledged by the Revd. W. H. YOUNG, Vicar, or they may be paid direct into the "North Moreton Church Restoration Fund," at the Wallingford Branch of the London and County Bank.

Radley

Well, progress has been made with our re-hang project, see the separate report later in the newsletter for the details.

A Quarter Peal was rung on the Sunday evening to mark the centenary of the death of Pte Smewing who died on 17th June 1915; and also as part of the 'Save Our Bells' weekend. Another Quarter Peal was rung on 6th September to mark the centenary of the deaths of Ptes Collins and Woodley who both died on 25th September 1915; and also to say farewell to the bells prior to their refit and rehang.

Edward was chosen to be part of the ODG band for the Ringing World National Youth Contest, which this year was held in Oxford on Saturday 11th July. Oliver was the 'reserve' but unfortunately he was not needed to ring. However, they both enjoyed the day ringing at numerous towers in Oxford.

While the bells are away, we have been holding our Thursday practices at either Sunningwell or Milton (at the kind invitation of Colin and Nicola). This is the first time that several of our ringers have rung on 8 bells and all have done very well. A few of us prefer Milton simply because it is a ground floor ring and age doesn't help with having to negotiate the stairs and ladder at Sunningwell.

Daphne Pollard

Wantage

Due to holidays and work we have been short of experienced ringers at both practice nights and Sunday mornings. However, this has allowed more practice times for our inexperienced ringers whom I am pleased to report are making very good progress. We have been able to maintain ringing for the Sunday morning service and on occasions had more than 8 ringers, mainly from the inexperienced group. This has been rewarding as their striking has improved and we are receiving good comments from the congregation. We had 2 Tower open days, the first for 2 hours in the morning and the second 3 hours in the afternoon, which has raised nearly £400 for church funds. This has been popular with just over 200 people seeing the wonderful views from the tower. However, due to the difficult access to the tower involving climbing ladders, we have 9 ringers sited at various sections of the climb and on top of the tower. It can be very stressful at times!

We rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Major for our Patronal Festival and rung various methods and call changes to celebrate the Queen becoming the longest reigning British Monarch. We also rang for the centenary of the founding of the Women's Institute on Sunday, 13th September.

We are trying to recruit more ringers by writing an article for the Parish magazine and also on the 'Wantage Streetlife' website. This is the first time we have used the web to encourage new ringers so it will be interesting to see the response we receive.

Peter Rolfe

Training Report

Monthly afternoon training sessions continue to be well attended. Thanks are due particularly to the helpers who come along.

Gill organised a local outing in April intended mainly for those who come to the afternoon sessions. It was well attended and people seemed to enjoy themselves at three contrasting rings.

There is support locally at various towers:

- ◇ Jill Garlick is encouraging the Aston Tirrold ringers. A couple of the youngsters there are venturing out to East Hagbourne and trying to get to grips with plain hunt.
- ◇ Gill and Richard have been encouraging the North Moreton ringers, who are now practising on Mondays.
- ◇ Susan and the Abingdon ringers continue to do terrific work with youngsters.

There are of course many people we don't hear about, who week by week continue to teach in their own towers. If there is a particular need it would be worth contacting the branch officers to see if something could be set up to help.

Mary Friskney

RWNYC 2015 Band



The band which represented the ODG at the Ringing World National Youth Contest which was held in Oxford on Saturday 11th July 2015. You will see that the 4th, 5th, 6th and 8th (left to right) ringers were from the ONB Branch – Callum Cockburn (Harwell), Edward Walker (Radley), David Thomas and Isaac O'Shea (Abingdon). Oliver Hyde (Radley) was the 'reserve'.

Young Ringers' Event (Milton – Steventon) – 28th May 2015

We arranged for the young ringers to ring at Milton and at Steventon and to walk in between. And a friend of one of the mothers lived close to St Michael's, Steventon, and invited us all to eat our refreshments in her lovely garden.

We met with seven young ringers and five adults. We rang rounds, called changes and plain bob doubles on the easy bells of Milton before setting off for Steventon on foot along the ancient Causeway path with all the adults except Daphne who drove to Steventon to set out the refreshments for us.

I locked up the tower and returned the key to Colin and Nicola's house. By the time I returned to the church there was no sign of the youngsters or other adults – I caught up with some of the girls when they paused to stroke a horse. And the rest were delayed at the level crossing in Steventon, allowing me to catch them up too.

The kind friend was extremely hospitable with a warm sunny garden. Daphne's cakes were, as always, quite delectable. The family's spaniel was very friendly and great fun. And the litter of kittens in the house proved to be a wonderful attraction.

It was sad to leave such an attractive house and garden, but we knew there were two more young ringers waiting for us at Steventon church.

With the extra ringers we rang Stedman Doubles and Cambridge Minor before the parents came to collect our young ringers.

Of the nine young ringers, seven were from the Old North Berks Branch, one was from Oxford City Branch and one from the Reading Branch. Ages of the young ringers ranged from ten to seventeen years.

It was a happy afternoon with warm summery weather. Many thanks to Daphne for the refreshments and to the towers for hosting us.

Susan Read

Young Ringers' Event (Ringing at Chilton and Rounders) - 12th August 2015

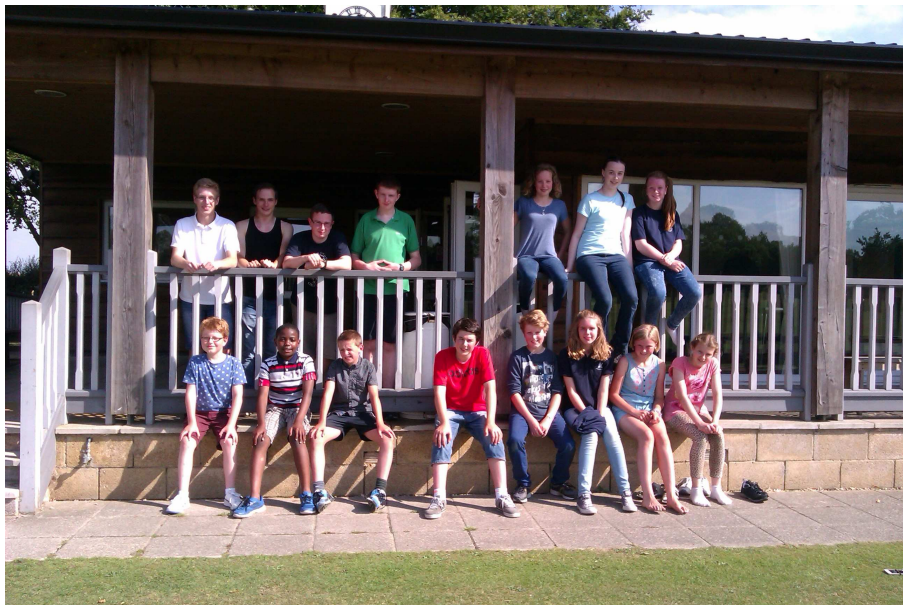
We rang on the easy ring of six at Chilton on a warm afternoon and were pleased to have fourteen young ringers with us and a number of adults. Ringing ranged from rounds to surprise minor. We moved from the church to the sports ground a mile or so down the road at the Harwell Campus.

Tim had organised permission for us, not only to use the pitch, but to borrow a rounders bat and ball and even better, to use the Sports Pavilion! He kindly organised us into two teams – the girls and the boys, including in the teams almost all the adults present, with Reg Sidlow as umpire. We played two games with keen interest in the game from all concerned and enjoyment of the sunshine and the fresh air. The result was a draw!

Afterwards, we enjoyed the excellent refreshments provided by Daphne in the Sports Pavilion.

We would like to thank the Rutherford / Harwell Rec Soc for allowing us to use the rounders pitch and pavilion, the PCC of All Saints, Chilton for the use of the bells, and of course Daphne for the super cakes!

Susan Read



Young Ringers' Event (Wallingford – Benson) – 29th October 2015

The idea was we should ring at two towers and walk between them so the young ringers could chat and get to know each other. But logistically this was difficult – how to get back to the cars? So we parked at Benson and started the outing with a bus ride for sixteen of us to Wallingford.

Two of the mothers spent the time in a coffee shop nearby while the thirteen young ringers rang on the front six in St Mary-le-More, aided by five adult ringers. Ringing ranged from rounds and plain hunt (all young ringers) to London surprise minor (with help).

Then the "treasure hunt"! The young people were arranged in three teams, each with two or three adults and given question sheets, maps and instructions. They were sent off at two minute intervals with warnings to stay together and to avoid any of the animals grazing on the Wallingford Castle meadows.

Logan (10) struggled as his wellies slipped and amazingly didn't fall over on a very muddy patch. The girls all found the top of the castle mound, which wasn't meant to be part of the route. And the older group of boys thought the girls must have the right route and followed them. The younger boys found the enormous bull and some cows very close to their route so chose a different path. At Benson Lock some of the girls found the answer to a question so nonchalantly stood in front of it hoping the boys wouldn't see it! But the boys noticed! One of the questions asked about a transformer – and the younger boys were disappointed not to see a machine coming to life like those in the cartoons on TV.

It took about an hour to walk to St Helen, Benson and everyone remembered to leave their muddy boots and shoes in the porch. Gina had put out the cakes, satsumas, drinks and tea ready for us in the excellent church room. Then we rang on the eight bells where we rang rounds and call changes, Mexican Wave, plain hunt and plain bob triples.

By 4.20 the non-ringing mothers had marked the treasure hunt and the younger boys were amazed to have won and were presented with torches as prizes before a quick photo of the group was taken. Everyone found their boots and shoes and we dispersed to our homes, looking forward to the next young ringers outing in the Christmas holidays.

For those interested in statistics, the young ringers came from the Old North Berks Branch (8), Reading Branch (4), South Oxon Branch (1) and Oxford City Branch (1).

Susan Read



QUARTER PEALS

Abingdon, St Nicolas, 30 May 2015. 1292 Spliced Minor (3m): Comp. Phillip S George and Traditional: Hugh Bishop 1, Susan Read 2, Sarah Barnes 3, Brian Read 4, Tim Pett 5, David Thomas (C) 6. First Spliced and First Spliced as Conductor – 6. Rung as a compliment for Rebecca Taylor and Matthew Franklin, who were getting married today in Crewkerne, Somerset.

Abingdon, (30 St Amand Drive), 4 June 2015. 1260 St Clements Bob Minor: Susan Read 1-2, Joe Norton 3-4, Tim Pett (C) 5-6.

Abingdon, St Helen, 14 June 2015. 800 Minor (2m): Sarah Barnes 1, Priscilla Morris 2, Tim Pett 3, Peter Heritage 4, David Thomas (C) 5, Isaac O'Shea 6. Rung for the 800th Anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta.

East Hagbourne, 21 June 2015. 1260 Grandsire Doubles: Matthew Addison 1, Jill Garlick 2, Shirley Goss 3, John W Napper 4, Alan Foster (C) 5, Daniel Dawson 6. Rung for Evensong. First Quarter for 1 and 6.

Radley, 21 June 2015. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Daphne Pollard (C) 1, Edward Walker 2, Ann Belcher 3, Audrey Fowlie 4, M Ian Minns 5, Maurice Belcher 6. To mark the centenary of the death of Pte Smewing of this parish, died 17 June 1915. Also as part of our 'Save Our Bells' weekend to raise funds to rehang the bells.

Drayton, 22 June 2015. **1260 Plain Bob Minor**: Daphne Pollard 1, Beryl Yeats 2, Marcus Gover 3, Claire Ward 4, Debbie Greenfield 5, Nick Clarke (C) 6. 1st of minor inside: 2 and 3. Silver wedding anniversary compliments to Marcus and Jackie Gover.

Abingdon, St Helen, 26 July 2015. **1250 Yorkshire S Major**: Rebecca Franklin 1, Susan Read 2, Hugh Bishop 3, Brian Read 4, Matthew Franklin 5, Peter Heritage 6, Tim Pett (C) 7, David Thomas 8. Arranged and rung specially to celebrate the Golden Wedding of Reg and Carole Sidlow, both local ringers.

Abingdon, St Helen, 2 August 2015. **1259 Grandsire Caters**: Susan Read 1, Stuart Gibson 2, Nick Clarke 3, Brian Read 4, Matt Franklin 5, David Beacham 6, Tim Pett (C) 7, David Thomas 8, Isaac O'Shea 9, Alan Griffin 10. Rung for Evensong.

Abingdon, St Helen, 11 August 2015. **1260 All Saints Doubles**: Richard Ford 1, Julie Minch 2, Michael Probert 3, Neil R Ephgrave 4, Alison T Merryweather-Clarke (C) 5, Caz Woodruff 6. Rung on the front 6 to celebrate the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of Gerry and Brian Wood, Caz's Mum and Dad, and the birth of Alfred Clement Josiah Gillie, Richard's grandson, on the same day.

Abingdon, St Helen, 6 September 2015. **1260 Plain Bob Triples**: Comp. David L Thomas (no. 1): Susan Read 1, Jeanette Thomas 2, Ieuan Hallas 3, David Thomas (C) 4, Sarah Barnes 5, Brian Read 6, Isaac O'Shea 7, Josh Ball 8. First quarter peal: 8. 50th Birthday Compliment to Jeanette Thomas. For Evening Service.

Radley, 6 September 2015. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Daphne Pollard (C) 1, Oliver Hyde 2, Ann Belcher 3, M Ian Minns 4, Edward Walker 5, Maurice Belcher 6. To mark the centenary of the deaths of Ptes Collins and Woodley of this parish, died 25 September 1915. Also to say farewell to the bells prior to their refit and rehang.

Abingdon, St Helen, 4 October 2015. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Josh Ball 1, Tim Pett 2, David Thomas (C) 3, Sarah Barnes 4, Peter Heritage 5, Hugh Bishop 6. First quarter on the treble – 1.

Blewbury, 4 October 2015. **1320 Cambridge Surprise Minor**: Michael Winter 1, Josie Irving 2, Mark Vincent 3, Richard Loyd 4, Nick Clarke (C) 5, Stuart Gibson 6. Rung to celebrate Oliver Ashford's 100th birthday.

Wallingford, 25 October 2015. **1260 Grandsire Doubles and Plain Bob Doubles mixed**: John Hutchinson 1, Nuala Clements 2, Keith Anderson 3, Roy Thorpe 4, Chris Tuckett (C) 5, Phillip Mills 6. Rung to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt. First quarter peal for John Hutchinson.

Abingdon, St Helen, 1 November 2015. **1260 Grandsire Triples**: Comp. Traditional: Susan Read 1, Ieuan Hallas 2, Ryan Mills 3, Brian Read 4, David Thomas 5, Sarah Barnes 6, Isaac O'Shea (C) 7, Reg Sidlow 8. For Evening Service.

Appleton, 1 November 2015. **1259 Grandsire Caters**: Barbara H Payne 1, Clare E F Dyer 2, Andrew J Dyer 3, Sylvia M Harrison 4, Jenny A Dyer 5, David A J Endacott 6, Peter J Heritage 7, Michael J Harrison (C) 8, Bernard J Stone 9, Peter H M Day 10. For Evensong, also wishing Jenny a Very Happy "significant" Birthday.

East Hagbourne, 15 November 2015. **1260 Middlesex Bob Triples**: Mary Napper 1, Jill Garlick 2, Shirley Goss 3, John W Napper 4, Mark Cooke 5, Alan Foster 6, Jeff Powell (C) 7, Nick Balshaw 8. For Evensong, and to celebrate the Ruby (40th) Wedding Anniversary of Trevor and Shirley Goss.

PEALS

GUILDFORD DIOCESAN GUILD, **Abingdon, St Helen**, 9 May 2015, 3h15, **5088 Cornwall Surprise Major**: Comp. D F Morrison (No. 1170): Peter Bridle 1, Beryl R Norris 2, Janet E Menhinick 3, Toby Arkless 4, Mike Pidd (C) 5, Kathryne R Arkless 6, Vernon B Bedford 7, Martin J Turner 8. Rung to mark the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

Milton, 26 May 2015, 2h37, **5056 Bristol Surprise Major**: E John Wells 1, June D Wells 2, Cynthia E Howell 3, Colin M Turner 4, John C Sheppard 5, Kenneth R Davenport 6, Peter Bridle 7, Bernard F L Groves (C) 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 27 May 2015, 2h22, **5024 Bromford Surprise Major**: John C Sheppard 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Cynthia E Howell 3, Timothy G Pett 4, Stuart P B Talbott 5, Colin M Turner 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Peter Bridle 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 7 June 2015, 2h29, **5040 Ringmaster Alliance Major**: John C Sheppard 1, Alison R Williams 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Cynthia E Howell 4, Richard L Thumwood 5, Colin M Turner 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Peter Bridle 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 28 June 2015, 2h32, **5088 Patching Delight Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Ruth Stokes 3, Michael J Dew 4, David G Salter 5, Christopher C Stokes 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8. The first peal in the method -38-1456-1256-18-34-58.14-34.58 1e12 (d) Rung as a retirement compliment to the Revd Colin Patching on completion of 23 years as Rector of Milton.

Cholsey, 30 June 2015, 2h59, **5184 Spliced Surprise Major (4m)**: E John Wells 1, June D Wells 2, Peter H Mackie 3, Martin J Turner 4, Colin M Turner 5, Bernard F L Groves 6, W John Couperthwaite (C) 7, Ian G Campbell 8.

ST JAMES' GUILD, **Milton**, 6 July 2015, 2h41, **5088 Bristol Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, Paul N Mounsey 2, Brian Bladon 3, David J Dearnley 4, Colin M Turner 5, Nicola J Turner 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Claire F Roulstone 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 12 July 2015, 2h36, **5152 Tanfield Delight Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Colin M Turner 2, Cynthia E Howell 3, Richard L Thumwood 4, John C Sheppard 5, Timothy G Pett 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Peter Bridle 8. Rung as a compliment to Hannah Martin on her graduation from the University of Leeds.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 16 July 2015, 2h30, **5056 Uplands Delight Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Helen J Piper 2, Richard L Thumwood 3, Timothy G Pett 4, Robert J Crocker 5, Bernard F L Groves (C) 6, Colin M Turner 7, Peter Bridle 8.

Childrey, 4 August 2015, 2h56, **5152 Spliced Surprise Major**: Colin M Turner 1, John C Sheppard 2, Beryl R Norris 3, Timothy G Pett (C) 4, Matthew S Pearson 5, W John Couperthwaite 6, Peter Bridle 7, Martin J Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 11 August 2015, 2h39, **5056 London Surprise Major**: W John Couperthwaite (C) 1, Beryl R Norris 2, Colin M Turner 3, Cynthia E Howell 4, Matthew S Pearson 5, John C Sheppard 6, Martin J Turner 7, Peter Bridle 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 16 August 2015, 2h33, **5152 Ribblehead Delight Major**: Hannah R Martin 1, Colin M Turner 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Michael J Dew 4, Timothy G Pett 5, John C Sheppard 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Peter Bridle 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 30 August 2015, 2h40, **5056 Bristol Surprise Major**: Colin M Turner 1, Brian Bladon 2, Kenneth R Davenport 3, Nicola J Turner 4, Mark Edwards 5, Peter Bridle 6, Richard L Thumwood 7, Timothy G Pett (C) 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Drayton**, 17 September 2015, 2h46, **5152 Nunburnholme Surprise Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Robert J Crocker 2, Helen J Piper 3, Peter Bridle 4, Cynthia E Howell 5, Richard L Thumwood 6, Colin M Turner 7, Bernard F L Groves (C) 8.

Abingdon, St Helen, 20 September 2015, 3h05, **5040 Plain Bob Royal**: Comp. Henry J Tucker: Susan E M Read 1, Christopher M Tuckett 2, Lorna Curtis 3, Brian J Read 4, Matthew D Franklin 5, Isaac J O'Shea 6, Simon L Edwards 7, Stuart F Gibson 8, Timothy G Pett 9, David L Thomas (C) 10. First peal as Conductor and First peal in the method – 10. First peal of Royal – 6. With the band's best wishes to the conductor on his 18th birthday.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 20 September 2015, 2h40, **5152 Yorkshire Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, Nicola J Turner (C) 2, Brian Bladon 3, Peter Bridle 4, Beryl R Norris 5, John C Sheppard 6, Mark Edwards 7, Colin M Turner 8.

HEREFORD DIOCESAN GUILD, **Abingdon, St Helen**, 22 October 2015, 3h13, **5040 Yorkshire Surprise Royal**: Comp. R C Kippin: Heather A Kippin 1, Neil Bennett 2, Alexandra J Hajok 3, James Clatworthy 4, Ian P Hill 5, David F Moore 6, Roman E Sadowski 7, Rebecca J Cox 8, John P Loveless 9, Robert C Kippin (C) 10.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Sunningwell**, 26 October 2015, 2h40, **5040 Surprise Minor (7m)**: Brian Bladon 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Colin M Turner 4, Robert J Crocker 5, Peter G C Ellis (C) 6. Rung in memory of Private Alfred Edmund Cripps 21365, 4th Bn. Grenadier Guards, who died in action in France on 25th Oct 1915. A ringer at this church.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 29 October 2015, 2h35, **5088 Bristol Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, Nicola J Turner (C) 2, Brian Bladon 3, Colin M Turner 4, Claire F Roulstone 5, Stuart P B Talbott 6, Peter G C Ellis 7, Peter Bridle 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 1 November 2015, 2h39, **5152 Quantock Hills Surprise Major**: John C Sheppard 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Cynthia E Howell 3, Timothy G Pett 4, Colin M Turner 5, Richard L Thumwood 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Peter Bridle 8.

APPLETON SOCIETY, **Appleton**, 7 November 2015, 2h57, **5075 Grandsire Caters**: Comp. S H Stanford (arr from Henry Johnson and W T Elson): Michele Winter 1, Julie A Haseldine 2, Andrew J Dyer 3, Jennifer A Dyer 4, Josie S Irving 5, Stephen H Stanford (C) 6, Christopher C Stokes 7, John H Napper 8, Stuart F Gibson 9, Andrew J Haseldine 10. Rung half muffled in memory of The Fallen. 150th as conductor.

Abingdon, St Helen, 10 November 2015, 3h02, **5042 Bristol Surprise Royal**: William Butler 1, Beryl R Norris 2, W John Couperthwaite 3, Colin M Turner 4, Graham A C John 5, Vernon B Bedford 6, Bernard F L Groves 7, Timothy G Pett (C) 8, Peter Bridle 9, Ian G Campbell 10.

Alec Samler
1929 – 2015



Alec Frederick Frank Samler was born in Upton; he was christened 27 October 1929 in All Saints' Chilton; the family moved to live in South Row, Chilton soon afterwards. He had two younger sisters Frances born 1931 and Esther in 1932. His father and grandfather had both worked outdoors and Alec followed in their footsteps. He much preferred walking round the village watching the wildlife to being indoors. He used his working skills to do odd jobs such as grass cutting around the village. After official retirement he worked part time at the Chilton Garden Centre and persuaded them to donate a Christmas tree to stand on top of the church tower, thus beginning a tradition which continues to this day.

He went to Chilton primary school and Didcot secondary school. Every year he attended the service held at the memorial stone at the end of the runway of RAF Harwell because in 1944 he had watched the planes taking off for the D-Day landings of World War II. He was interested in Scouting, became a District Commissioner for Didcot Scouts, and helped at many weekends camping at Youlbury. He was awarded Scouting badges, the silver Acorn in 2000 and later, in 2006, their highest honour, the silver wolf. The photo above was taken in Chilton Village Hall during the presentation ceremony.

Chilton's 4 bells were rung from the ground floor without rope guides when the tower was rebuilt in 1847. The bells were restored in 1892 when the cracked old Wokingham tenor was recast and 2 new trebles added to make 6 bells hung from an extra small wooden frame above the original one. Early in the 1950s Bill Corderoy, tower captain in Harwell, brought over some helpers including Doug Jordan from Harwell, to form a band of mostly young people from Chilton and taught them to ring, sometimes in Chilton, sometimes in Harwell where the bells were easier to ring.

Both Alec and his sister Frances were in the band, together with Pat Bray, David Lawson, Peter Davies, an apprentice in the local Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Daphne Newton, Marion Dore, Cynthia Blissett, Mary Mulford and Major Morland, from West Ilsley who started learning at the age of 70. The young people were soon able to ring methods and peals. Both Frances and Alec rang in a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles on 11 September 1955 before the commencement of the joint Anglican and Methodist service to mark the 100th anniversary of the local

Methodist Chapel in South Row. This was mentioned in Frank Denzey's book 'All Saints and Sinners' published in 1980 where the chapel was described as 'now sadly redundant'.

Alec's first peal in Chilton was rung on the tenor on 26 September 1955, conducted by his future brother-in-law, David Lawson, who married Alec's sister Frances in 1956. Alec married one of the other ringers, Pat Bray, in 1958. They had 2 sons and 2 grandchildren with whom they celebrated their golden wedding in Chilton Village Hall in April 2008 when Stuart Gibson arranged and conducted a quarter peal for them.

The bell restoration of 1892, with the swinging of the extra bells made Chilton tower unsafe, so ringing of all 6 bells was stopped in 1960. Bell four was left with a rope and rung for service and a clock hammer rang on the tenor to chime the hours. To continue his ringing Alec visited nearby towers at Harwell and Blewbury and participated in peal ringing there. His name can be found on peal boards in both towers. In Harwell he rang quarter peals of Grandsire Triples with the bells half muffled as a tribute to his teacher, Bill Corderoy, 1900–1987, and later to Doug Bosley 1920–1989 who had helped Bill with the training of the Chilton young ringers. Alec was tower captain in Harwell from 1987 to 1990. In Blewbury he also rang peals including some commemorated on peal boards in their ringing chamber and a quarter peal to celebrate the Golden wedding of Rene and Claude Corderoy on 15 June 1990.

During the 1990s it was found that the frame of the All Saints' bells was rotten and if nothing was done the bells would fall down and damage the church extension to the tower which had been built in 1970. The Parish decided to celebrate the new millennium by producing a booklet of village history, 'Up in the Downs', which has several photos of Alec as a child, and to help restore the bells to ringing order, by setting up a project to raise the money.

The bells were taken out for retuning, the tower was strengthened with a concrete ring beam and a new steel frame made with all 6 bells at the same height in the tower. Alec was appointed tower captain in 2001 and recruited 9 Chilton residents to learn to ring. He rang with friends from other towers in the quarter peal following the service of rededication of the bells on 7 January 2001. Alec was tower captain until January 2015, helped by fellow ringers who took over some tower administration. He came regularly and punctually to service ringing until his last stay in hospital.

We decided that some of his ringing friends may be still working and unable to attend his funeral, so we arranged a special 'Memorial practice for Alec' in the evening of 7th September in Chilton. The photo below was taken by Richard Loyd, it shows branch ringers who rang doubles methods including his favourite, Grandsire.



Branch members celebrating Alec's memory 7th September 2015

Alec died on 25th August 2015, the funeral was held in All Saints' Chilton on 30th September 2015 at 11am. His widow, Pat, had requested open ringing for an hour before the service because she thought Alec would prefer that. We are grateful to Alec's many ringing friends who came to ring some excellent touches of Grandsire and Stedman Doubles. The church was full and some of the non-ringers were heard to say how beautiful the bells sounded. The service was taken by the Rev. Pam Rolls neighbour to the Samlers for many years; she read a tribute from the family. There was also a tribute from the Didcot Scouts who were grateful for his support of County Activities and his knowledge of the countryside. They said '*He was always smiling and a real gentleman, ready to help others wherever he could.*'

Kate Crennell

Branch Outing and BBQ – 18th July 2015

On Saturday 18 July some 30 odd ringers assembled at Christchurch, Swindon, (10) some at the appointed 9.30, others a little later thanks to road works and diversions. This 10 bell tower provided a pleasant ringing experience; relative novices were able to ring comfortably as well as more experienced ringers. The bells were light and easy to control, and much appreciated by the assembled company.

A short drive took us to St Mary's, Purton, (8) a lovely looking church nestled in an attractive stone built village. The bells here provided more of a challenge and some of us, after having had a ring, chose to explore the church and surroundings. I was interested to read on a plaque in the church that the village had lost more than 50 of its menfolk during the First World War; one wonders if there were ringers amongst them. It also caused one to reflect how a small village coped with a loss like that.

After lunch in the White Hart at Cricklade we went to ring in the church of St Sampson, (6) a Breton Saint, it appears. I know it is not unique, but this was the first time I had experienced bell ropes amongst the choir stalls. The bells are also set anti clockwise and have a very long draught, which provided for interesting ringing; one ringer aptly described ringing here as 'character forming'. Some of our number had rung there before and some of those declined the opportunity to ring there again; enough said!!

As it was a lovely day, some of us relaxed in the churchyard, either basking in the sun or sitting in the shade of a vast cedar tree right opposite the church door. We reflected on those who had sheltered there in the past and the christenings, weddings and funerals they had attended. If only trees could talk!!

Whilst there, we were treated to a Spitfire and Hurricane fly past from the air show at Fairford. That sound is so distinctive and so emotive!

Our next stop was at St Michael, Highworth, (8) where there are lovely bells, which everyone enjoyed ringing. Not a lot more to say, really!

Our final church was All Saints', Faringdon, (8) where we had tea and cake before ringing. I understand that access to the ringing chamber used to be via ladder; thank goodness it is now much easier. The bells here had a good reputation amongst those who had rung here before and the rest of us were not disappointed.

Ringling outings are about so much more than ringing. They are about a fellowship of ringers, from teenagers to octogenarians, along with their guests. I had a fascinating discussion with some French guests who were most impressed by the openness of some of the churches we visited, particularly Faringdon, where there was a dog bowl! They are about experiencing different bells in different towers and appreciating the differences, and in some cases making you appreciate your own tower, either for its bells or its access.

It was a most enjoyable day, and thanks are due to Philip for having organised the towers and the admin; to those who took charge of ringing at the individual towers and endeavoured to cater for all abilities and interests, and of course, to those who made the tea and provided the cakes. Were people not willing to give of their time and effort, we would not have outings, and the branch would be the poorer for it. Thanks, everyone.

In the evening, many of those who had been on the outing, and quite a few who hadn't, assembled in the garden of Stuart and Naomi's lovely home in Milton Hill, for the annual branch Barbeque and Croquet evening. They have this down to a fine art, with marquee and tables set up, and the aroma of grilling meat greeting visitors as they arrived. It was a splendid spread, and thanks to those who did the preparation and clearing up, did the cooking, made the salads and the desserts.

A raffle was held. Thanks to those who donated prizes and to those who bought tickets; £65 was raised for the Radley fund. It was good to hear of the progress that fund has made, and to have an update on the North Moreton situation. A date for your diaries, 20 September, when North Moreton will celebrate its new bells; we're all invited!

All in all it was a very pleasant evening to round off a very pleasant day.

Anne Hales



A View from the Gallery – North Moreton Update

This really is my final brief update for the North Moreton project. As many of you will already know, and will also read from Beryl's article in this newsletter, the bells are now ringing out regularly and lovely they are too! If you haven't yet had the opportunity to ring them, then do come along to a Monday evening practice. The very enjoyable opening event with the Blewbury Brass Band Concert and Harvest supper was very well attended by the village and branch ringers (see picture below).

Frustratingly, other parts of the project to complete the kitchen, toilet and vestry have taken much longer than hoped for. This is largely due to Thames Water, who have been 'too busy' over the summer to oversee the new sewer connection for the church, despite an estimated 21 day promise at the beginning of July. If only we could be 'too busy' to pay our water bills!

The other frustration has been the electrics – a long story, which I will not bore you with here, but will happily rant on about over a pint if desired! Once all the builders are finally finished and away, we have some things to do to make the ringing gallery more comfortable. These include coat hooks, carpet tiles (to go under Beryl's magnificent Asian rug), a small portable heater, and bench seating at the gallery and window ends of the ringing chamber. All of this will happen in the course of time, and we wish the North Moreton ringers well for many future years of pleasurable ringing on their very fine new and ancient peal of six bells.

Richard Loyd



Radley Bells Re-hang Report

Well a lot of progress has been made since our last report (fortunately).

The vicar wanted to have a major event to raise the outstanding funds in one go rather than a lot of little events. We needed a further £20,000 to add to the £17,000 we already had or were promised. We distributed leaflets and gift envelopes to all houses in the village on the 4th June, asking people to join in a special 'Save Our Bells' weekend on 20th and 21st June.

The church was transformed into a 'café' for the weekend with plenty of refreshments supplied by members of the PCC, together with a cake and honey stall run by the ringers. We had exhibitions in the church giving a history of the bells from earliest times and an explanation of the work that now needed to be done. As well as demonstrating ringing on the tower bells, we hired the Charm-borough ring for the Saturday. This proved very popular – it was sited near the main road, on the approach to the primary school, lots of traffic and even the buses slowed down to have a look at what was going on. Susan Read loaned her set of hand-bells, together with one of her ringers, who encouraged people to 'have a go', this proved very successful. A member of the congregation had made a large, papier mache bell for people to post their donations in. It got so full that it became difficult to get any more in by the Sunday!

At 5pm on the Sunday, the Vicar announced that **over** £20,000 had been raised! We rounded off the weekend with a quarter peal dedicated to a soldier from the village that died in the First World War. It was learnt later in the week that the final total was an amazing £33,500, so we had the money needed for the re-hang plus extra. Some of the donations had been given with the bells as the priority, but any excess should be used for the Church in general.

We said goodbye to the bells on 6 September with a quarter peal for two other village soldiers who died in the Great War, and on 7/8 the bells were removed from the tower (after a little persuasion). Whitechapel have re-tuned them (they've been on a strict diet, as 211 lb was lost between the 6 bells during tuning). They're now back at Whites for final fitting. We're keeping our fingers crossed that they will be back in time for Christmas.

In the meantime we're completing some of the other work identified as needed in the tower including renewing the electrics in the bell and ringing chambers and providing 'landing strips' and 'flight openings' for the resident bat population.

Hopefully by the next newsletter we will be able to conclude the Radley re-hang reports with a successful outcome.

Daphne Pollard and Ian Minns



Bells 2-6 waiting to go!



The fourth on its way down.



The Tenor eventually makes it through the trap door!

St Agatha's Brightwell cum Sotwell, Bell Restoration Project

As some of you will know, our back four bells are on plain bearings and although being regularly lubricated have become increasingly difficult to ring. We had White's of Appleton come and carry out an inspection who recommended a full restoration of the bells.

As three quotes were required by the D.A.C., we went ahead and had inspections and quotes from White's, Whitechapel, Taylors and Nicholsons. During these inspections, it was discovered that the crown of our seventh bell was cracked. This really meant that urgent action was required before the other bells with cast-in staples developed a similar problem.

All four quotes and reports were studied and considered and White's were chosen as being comparable in price and of course more local and well known to us.

The work entails drilling out the old crown staples, fitting new headstocks, clappers, sliders and stays, wheels, ropes, guides etc., tuning of the bells, also strengthening the oak frame.

Our Architect arranged for a structural survey of the tower which was found to be in need of repair and strengthening. Quotes have been obtained but the full nature of the work has yet to be decided upon.

All this started to add up to a much larger figure required and an estimated overall sum of £45,000 was envisaged as our target.

It has been four or five years since a committee was set up to raise money for our Church Extension, this included one of our ringers David Greasby as project manager. It was suggested that the same group be re-convened plus two more ringers, under the chairmanship of Mr Tony Lascelles. Tony has been a tower of strength with his organisational skills with publicity from all angles, Oxford Radio, all the local newspapers, church displays, "Save our Bells" leaflets and pledge forms and keeping the rest of the committee hard at work. Within only four months the target figure has been reached with grants and pledges and private donations, all of which now have to be redeemed.

The Oxfordshire Diocesan Guild Bell Fund offered £6200, Oxford Historic Churches Trust £5500, Church PCC £4500, ONB Branch £3000, St Agatha's ringers fund £3000, also great local village community support and bell ringers far and wide.

Village events have been: an Open Garden and Autumn Fair at the home of Anne Elliot raised £2800 (700 attended), a Safari Supper raised £1800 (over 100 people), a Sponsored Organ Recital by Derek Nightingale (50 pieces by 50 different composers – a three hour stint) raised £2500. Many personal pledges and gifts as well as a pub quiz, Christmas card sales, have all contributed generously to our final total. Our sincere thanks to you all.

It is hoped the work will commence on the 4th April 2016, this being the date given by White's of Appleton and it is anticipated that it will last for four to five months.

Roy Thorpe

STOP PRESS – Skittles Evening

A very successful Skittles Evening, with Supper, was held at Radley Village Hall on Saturday 14th November. 63 members attended and all enjoyed the evening. A total of £346.00 (including £112 for the Raffle) was raised towards the ONB Branch contribution for the Radley Bell Restoration Project. A full report, with photos, will appear in the next Newsletter.

Daphne Pollard

David Thomas' achievements

Congratulations to David Thomas on two major achievements this summer. He has been Deputy Tower Captain at St Helen's, Abingdon for over a year, and in July, he completed the second Module of the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) and was accredited as a Member of the Association of Ringing Teachers. This was a big compliment to him, and is not only due to his being a good ringer, but because he is such a kind, sensible, observant and responsible young man. The certificate was awarded in St Helen's belfry on Sunday 26 July.

The second big achievement was conducting a peal for the first time. It was rung to celebrate his 18th birthday at his home tower.

As it says on Bell Board, the peal was rung with the bands best wishes to the conductor on his 18th birthday!

David was also chosen to be part of the ODG band for the Ringing World National Youth Contest which, this year, was held in Oxford on Saturday 11th July.

Susan Read



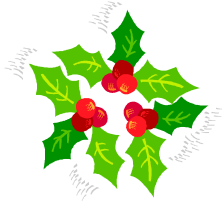
Abingdon Young Ringers' photos (supplied by Susan Read)



Three of the Abingdon young ringers who rang for their primary school "graduation service" in July: Jack, Izzy and Phoebe, all 11 years old. Jack and Izzy are good rounds ringers and Phoebe is ringing plain hunt well.



Another photo – the boys who started to learn to ring at the Abingdon intensive ringing course in August, Oliver, Augustine, Tyler and Logan. Augustine and Logan can now ring rounds, but the other two haven't been in the tower recently.



ONBB



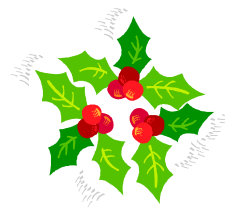
***New Year's Day
Ringing &
Refreshments***

Friday, 1st January 2016

***St Michael and All Angels,
Blewbury***

10.30am – 12.30pm

Everybody welcome



Old North Berks website

The Old North Berks website can be found at www.onb.odg.org.uk. The website is a valuable tool providing up to date information and a means of contacting the branch officers and the towers within the branch. It should be the first port of call for details about branch events. Why not visit it now and add it to your favourites. If you spot any incorrect or missing information then please contact the webmaster at webmaster@onb.odg.org.uk.

Or would you like to include something on the website. Why wait for the Branch Newsletter to report a special event in your tower. Maybe there has been a special birthday or a first quarter or you have been on a tower outing. Just email the webmaster with the details and maybe a photo. Let's hear about these events as they happen.

Liz Woodhouse

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NEXT ISSUE

Deadline for copy for the next issue in June 2016 is 3rd May 2016. But please don't wait until then, send your news, pictures, and quarters in as they happen.

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ONB Branch Programme for 2016

Please make note of the varied start and finish times which are designed to mirror local requirements for practices. The Surprise Practices are intended for all levels of Surprise ringing and we particularly welcome branch members who wish to learn Cambridge major from minor standard. Please contact Richard Loyd if you would like to be added to his email reminder list for the Surprise practices.

Friday, 1st January – New Year's Ringing and refreshments – Blewbury (8) (10.30am-12.30pm)
Wednesday, 27th January – Afternoon Training – Brightwell (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 3rd February – Surprise Major Practice – Harwell (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Monday, 8th February – Branch Practice – Steventon (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 24th February – Afternoon Training – Marcham (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Saturday, 19th March – Striking Competition and AGM – North Moreton (6) (SC 3.00pm, Service 5.00pm, Tea 5.45pm, AGM 6.30pm)
Wednesday, 30th March – Afternoon Training – Sunningwell (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 6th April – Surprise Major Practice – Cholsey (8) (**tbc**) (7.30–9.00pm)
Tuesday, 12th April – Branch Practice – East Hagbourne (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 27th April – Mini outing and lunch
Monday, 9th May – Branch Practice – Didcot (3) (6.30–7.15pm) and Long Wittenham (6) (7.30–8.30pm)
Wednesday, 25th May – Afternoon Training – Childrey (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 1st June – Surprise Major Practice – Drayton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Friday, 10th June – Branch Practice – Appleton (10) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 22nd June – Afternoon Training – Harwell (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Saturday, 16th July – Branch Outing and Barbecue
Wednesday, 27th July – Afternoon Training – West Hanney (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 3rd August – Surprise Major Practice – Goring (8) (7.45–9.15pm)
Wednesday, 10th August – Branch Practice – Childrey (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 24th August – Afternoon Training – Sutton Courtenay (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 14th September – Branch Practice – West Hendred (6) (7.30–8.30pm)
Wednesday, 28th September – Branch Training – Milton (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 5th October – Surprise Major/Royal Practice – Appleton (10) (7.30–9.00pm)
Thursday, 13th October – Branch Practice – Radley (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 26th October – Afternoon Training – Cholsey (8) (**tbc**) (2.00–3.30pm)
Tuesday, 8th November – Branch Practice – Wantage (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Saturday, 12th November – Quiz and Supper – Brightwell
Wednesday, 23rd November – Afternoon Training – Chilton (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 7th December – Surprise Major Practice – Sutton Courtenay (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Monday, 12th December – Branch Practice – Marcham (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 14th December – Afternoon Training – Drayton (8) (2.00–3.30pm)