



Old North Berks Branch Newsletter

No: 162

December 2023



Branch Quiz Night — 18 November 2023

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Editorial

Welcome to the Winter 2023 issue of the Branch Newsletter.

Congratulations to Blewbury on winning the Branch Striking Competition and representing the Branch at the Guild 6-bell Striking Competition in October.

Congratulations are due to Amelie Wymer who has rung her first Quarter Peal; to Michelle X who has rung her first Quarter Peal 'inside'; and to Christine Kowalczyk for ringing her first Quarter on 7 bells.

Congratulations are also due to Benjamin Small who has rung his first Peal.

Sadly Jackie Gardner, a long term member of Blewbury and the ODG, and also James Dyer, son of Andrew and Jenny of Cumnor, have passed away recently.

It just remains for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Daphne Pollard

Secretary's Report

Branch evening practices have been held at Abingdon, (St Helen), Sparsholt and Childrey, Aston Tirrold, East Hagbourne and West Hanney. Branch afternoon practices have been held at Benson, Cholsey, Radley, North Moreton and Steventon. Surprise Major practices have been held at Drayton, North Moreton and Milton. Advanced practices have been held at Cumnor and Harwell. These new 'advanced' practices, aimed to help with the transition from plain methods to surprise methods, have proved to be very popular and will continue next year.

So far in 2023 we have 246 paid up members (from 27 towers) along with the 3 Honorary and 1 Life members plus 4 members who pay a subscription through another branch. This gives a total of 254 members, fourteen more than in the previous year. The barbecue and outing raised £462 and continuing honey sales a further £300, both of which will be given to various branch restoration projects. The Branch donated £1,500 to the North Moreton augmentation project and there are several other possible projects on the horizon. Any proposed donations towards these will need to be discussed and put to the AGM next year.

There have been fourteen new members elected to the Guild since the May newsletter: Elizabeth McNeill, John Tuson and Sue Little (Abingdon), Valerie Stevens (Blewbury), Hector French (Childrey), Jazzy Gover, Julie Culley, Kelly Kersey and George Kersey (East Hagbourne), Susie Graney and Isaac Davies (Marcham), Chrissy Gidney (Steventon), Shelley Harris and Millie Gall (Wallingford). Sadly I have to report the death of Jackie Gardner, who was a long-standing Guild member and rang at Blewbury for many years.

We once again held our 6-bell striking competition on a sunny Saturday morning in June. This was a very successful event at Long Wittenham, with six teams enjoying the benefit of the recent rehanging of what once was quite a difficult ring of bells. Blewbury were the winners and they went on to represent the Branch at the Guild's competition. Our judges were Alan and Tine Marchbank and we would like to thank them for giving their time. The local ringers provided superb refreshments during the competition, which everyone enjoyed.

Our branch outing took place on 15th July, when we visited Fulbrook, Churchill, Chipping Norton, Chadlington and Shipton under Wychwood, with lunch in Chipping Norton and afternoon tea at Chadlington. Thanks go to Philip and Janette Roberts for organising this very pleasant outing. It was followed by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, attended by almost sixty members, partners and friends. As ever the food was excellent and thanks go to Stuart and Naomi for hosting the event.

The branch ringing school has evolved to become a part of the Oxon Ringing School, joining with the Bicester, South Oxon and Witney and Woodstock branches. It continues to offer extra training to learners from the ONB, but now at four Ringing Centres with the help of experienced teachers drawn from a wider area than before. Practices have been held for those who could already control their bell on their own, helping the learners to improve on their bell control, listen to their striking and develop their rope sight. One day Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) courses are also held to help experienced share the best techniques for teaching ringing.

Our next social event will be a quiz night and supper, which will be held in Blewbury Village Hall on Saturday, 18th November. Our annual New Year's ringing event is scheduled for 1st January 2024 in Drayton.

Gill Loyd

Ringling Masters' Ramblings

A relatively short Ramble this time because Charles has another contribution in this issue, and there is a limit to how much members can take from the Masters!

With so much negativity in the news at the moment, our hobby provides a wonderful escape for us all. We are extremely fortunate in our branch to have so many ringing opportunities available for us to choose from. If you look at the 2024 calendar in this issue you will see these, and it is an impressive list. The newly introduced 'Advanced' practices designed for those moving beyond standard plain methods are proving very popular and feedback indicates that they are very much appreciated. There should therefore be something for all members at whatever stage you are at in your ringing journey, and we look forward to seeing you at as many of these branch events as suits you.

We also continue to enjoy fabulous and popular social gatherings at various points in the year, and we hope to see you at the upcoming Quiz Supper in Blewbury and the New Year's Day ringing with refreshments at Drayton.

All of this, coupled with some exciting future restoration projects in the pipeline, makes us feel very positive about the health of our branch generally. We should not forget the tireless work of our tower captains who shoulder a lot of the responsibility for keeping the wheels turning every week. We have a lot to appreciate with our unique and practically 'free' hobby!

Many of you have feared losing Philip's legendary jokes, but we are assured that these will continue to feature as the most enjoyable section of 'Ramblings'!

Speaking of which.....

Why didn't the cheese want to be sliced?

Ans: Because he had grater things in mind!

Did you hear about the cheese factory that exploded in France?

Ans: There was nothing left but de Brie!

Richard Loyd and Charles Morrish

Last week I was thinking about my final ramblings, what jokes to add and reminiscing about my time as joint ringing master. Then I hear "bob" and realise I am in the middle of a touch of Grandsire triples and wonder where I am!

I know Charles will be of great benefit to the branch in his new role.

Philip Roberts

Ringling Masters Report

Well, it's finally happened, retirement that is! So now I have to address the Branch Ringing Masters responsibilities.

As you know, I have had a lead in time to get used to it. The first lesson is just how difficult it is. Hats off to Richard and Phillip who have between them kept this active branch more than just ticking over.

Generally, attendance has been very good, but this brings organisational problems with it. In a previous piece, I said how important it is to fulfil our aspirations and above all, enjoy our ringing. I leave each meeting wondering whether or not I have done my bit to promote this.

There is a distinction between learning and advancing at your weekly tower practice night, and using the depth of experience available at Branch practices for the same purpose. In the second case, knowledge and skills should be polished up, rather than being a venture into the unfamiliar.

I am all for giving people a gentle nudge forward, and in many cases, the Branch practice is a good place for it. For example, if you regularly treble to PB Doubles, why not step up to treble to St. Simon's? If you are competent at an inside bell to PB Minor, why not try PB Major if you have done your homework first? If you have tried a bit of conducting, but it usually goes awry and you can't put people right, ask to call the same touch with a steady band that allows you to complete the touch?

All these things I want to promote, but how difficult I find it without people telling me what they need and providing feedback on events. Please, please talk to me. Be honest with your abilities, set realistic advances that above all will give satisfaction to all the participants.

Now for my first real input into furthering ringing within the Branch. I have, for a long time, come to the conclusion that a host of basic principles are never fully explained to new ringers, probably because of the rush to boost numbers of competent ringers and individuals desire to progress. One aspect is striking. Do we all really understand what is expected? Can we pinpoint where problems lie? Have we listened sufficiently to understand whether or not what has just been rung was any good?

This is absolutely fundamental. I can't stress enough, ringing is a team effort. Suppose you ring flawlessly yourself, but everyone or even just some of the others in the band are mediocre or poor, no-one will be any the wiser. More especially, you will lose enjoyment and in the worst case, just ring elsewhere, or give up altogether.

In order to tackle this, I have put together a short course on listening skills. A pilot trial will run this autumn. Once again, this is to iron out the content and presentation in order to improve the concept.

I assure, this is intended to make participants think about ringing in new or different ways. We will discuss the problems and solutions, and just take time away from remembering numbers and blue lines or anything else that so occupies the mind during ringing, that at the end it is just a relief to finish and never thinking if it was good or bad. This course will not be hugely technical. Much of the content I am sure you will already know at the back of your mind, but never realised the relevance and importance. As they say, "this is not rocket science" the objectives are readily understood. The problems we all have in achieving them are often never aired. This is the chance.

Attendance for the pilot course is by invitation, however future courses will be advertised within the Branch. I do hope to see some of you there.

Final thought: enjoyment comes in small ways. This autumn, I rang Stedman Triples at Yarkhill in Herefordshire. Why is this special? Because Fabian Stedman was raised there, his father being Rector. It just felt right.

Charles Morrish

TOWER TALK

Appleton

Three of our recruits from the “Ring for the King” campaign have continued to ring regularly at practices and for services. Chantal and Walé are now ringing rounds and call changes and Clare has moved on to plain hunting. David and Barbara are now teaching four more recruits, including three generations of one family!

We have rung three quarter peals since the last report; one in July as a farewell to the Rector Philip Parker, one in August in Memory of Norman Leslie and one in September to celebrate the life of James Dyer (son of Andrew and Jenny) who passed away, from cancer, in August. Our thoughts are with Andrew, Jenny, Clare and James’ wife Keeley.

We continue to practice on Friday evenings (7.30-9.00), our priority at the moment is concentrating on getting our learners to ring rounds and call changes on 6 or 8 bells and plain hunting, and ring on Sundays – visitors are always welcome.

Michele Winter

Blewbury

We still manage to ring all eight bells most Fridays. We always like to welcome our visitors, and we enjoy venturing out to other towers to ring too.

In September, some of us went along to man the bell ringing table at Blewbury’s Clubs and Societies event in the Village Hall. We had a good afternoon chatting to people and consuming tea and cake, and a couple of people expressed an interest in trying out ringing. On our part, we resisted the temptation to change our Friday night allegiance to the Blewbury Wine Appreciation Society.

In October, eight local uniformed Home Guard enthusiasts, complete with full uniform and dummy rifles, were seen wandering around Blewbury village. They had come to visit St Michael’s Tower where some of their relatives who were members of Blewbury Home Guard had been positioned on the roof to watch for enemy aircraft or fires during the war.

In November, we are hosting the Branch Quiz night in Blewbury Village Hall and once again our very own Anne Hales is travelling down from far flung northern climes to be our Quizmaster. It is always a very good social event and arrangements are currently underway to get everything ready. By the time you read this, it will all be over, the victorious team will no doubt have scoffed their prize, and some of the raffle winners will have squirrelled away their prizes to donate to the next event.

As I write, we have just returned from our tower outing to West Oxfordshire. We followed our now tried and tested format of ringing, brunch, more ringing, tea and cake, and then more ringing – all followed by a Thai meal back in Blewbury to recuperate. A tiring but very enjoyable day.

Christine Kowalczuk

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

Practices and Sunday service ringing have continued and been pretty well supported recently. We have no exceptional items to report, just a reminder ...

If you are coming to St Agatha's in the coming months – be that for a Branch Practice (of one sort or another), or simply to say 'hello' on a Tuesday evening (7:30 to 9pm) – do please bring a torch. There is no street-lighting in Brightwell. Don't let that put you off – all welcome!

John Dowling

Cholsey

We are still maintaining a good number of ringers and with the help of Aston Tirrold we are now learning Grandsire Doubles. Next step Triples when the Aston ringers come back from their course.

We entered the striking competition this year and came 6th (out of 6) – someone has to be last. However we enjoyed it on the day.

Three of us attended the very useful ART course at Abingdon on Teaching new ringers, so we are hoping for a few new recruits.

We have said goodbye to one of our young ringers; Cameron, and we are pleased to hear that he has already rung at a Tower in York where he is at University.

Our new Steeple Keeper is going on the Rope care and maintenance at the end of the month; so we hope that we will be well organised.

Jenny Jeskins

East Hagbourne

The tower Spring clean took place on Saturday 20th May, it is surprising how many spiders take up residency in the stairway and the ringing chamber plus all their cobwebs! The ladybirds are back again too.

One of our quarterly meetings took place on Tuesday 6th June in the parish room following a short ringing practice.

The Church Fete was held on Saturday 10th June starting at 1:00 and was held in and around St Andrew’s Church. We opened the tower to visitors for a small fee. This proved to be very popular and over 100 visitors went up to the ringing chamber and then up to see the bells that were all down for safety reasons. A very big thank you to Daniel, Rob and Jeff who did a great job welcoming visitors and telling them about our lovely ring of eight bells.

On Sunday 11th June about eight ringers turned up to ring for evensong at 5:20 as we needed to get the bells up. We arrived in very warm sunny weather. We raised the bells and were happily ringing when there was an almighty crash overhead! At first, we thought that a clapper had flown out of one of the bells but as we looked out of one of the two windows in the tower, we noticed that it had started to rain. We decided to carry on ringing but the lightening and the thunder were getting louder and louder and the rain by now was torrential. The view from the tower was incredible if a bit scary, we had not experienced anything like it before. One of our young ringers was worried about getting her hair wet but really, I think we were all going to get drenched! When we had finished ringing, we tentatively went down the steps but were greeted by a torrent of water running down the church path. The church porch was flooded as was the church so no shelter there. A mad dash down the flooded path and road to the cars and then home. Needless to say, I looked like a drowned rat by the time I got home!

The bells were rung on Saturday 24th June for our only wedding this year!

Some visiting ringers came and rang the bells late morning on Wednesday 2nd August, they were a mixed band some from the local area and some from further afield.

Sadly, the Duck Race did not happen again this year but instead the bellringers ran one of the Summer Teas in church. The teas were a great success and there was a good turnout making just under £150.00 for the tower. Well done to all the cake makers and waiters/waitress on the day.

On Tuesday 12th September the Old North Berks branch practice was held at St Andrew's East Hagbourne. There were visitors from local towers who came to ring our lovely bells. The tower welcomed quite a few ringers and there were over 19 ringers in the tower which was fortunate as a few of our usual band were away. A good ring enjoyed by all.

A quarterly meeting of HSCR took place on Tuesday 3rd October following a shorter ringing practice.

Ringer's Sunday took place on Sunday 22nd October, the bells were rung for the Ringer's Evensong at 6:00. A big thank you to Revd. Dr Jacqueline Baily for a very interesting talk and to Fr Jason for taking the service and for playing the organ for the bellringing hymns, the service was followed by light refreshments. Jacqueline is the daughter of Pam Tait and the granddaughter of the late Alfred Webb who was tower foreman at St Andrew's for many years. There were over 30 people at the evensong service, it was lovely to see friends from the Churn Benefice bellringing family some of whom joined us in the tower to ring before the service. A very enjoyable evening.

We rang the bells half muffled on Remembrance Sunday and left the muffles on for the practice on the Tuesday evening. It is a little bit different ringing bells half muffled and it gave all of our ringers the chance to have a go.

We are now getting ready for our Christmas festivities which includes our wonderful Christmas Tree Festival from the 9th – 16th December.

Shirley Goss

Harwell

We held an open tower in July this year. The weather wasn't at its best but nevertheless we welcomed 60 visitors. They were able to visit the ringing chamber, bell chamber and the top of the tower. Michael was one of our visitors who came back to learn more about the bells and ringing, he has now put both strokes together ringing unaided. Our other learners Elizabeth and Naomi are also progressing well with rounds and call changes. We ring at Chilton on a Monday as well as Thursday with our learners.

In August Benjamin rang his 1st peal of Cambridge Major, with family and university friends. This started his 21st birthday celebration and was also dedicated to Jeremy Parsons the new rector of Harwell and Chilton. Details of the Peal are in the Peal Section.

This year we are again ringing on Boxing Day, 10:00-12:00 and all are invited to join us for ringing and refreshments.

Philip Roberts

Marcham

On the 9th October 2023, All Saints Church Marcham had their first AGM in many years. The newly opened CROWN (Oak Taverns) public freehouse in the village was the chosen destination where 7 supporting ringers sat down to discuss roles within the tower. We are proud to announce that MARCHAM finally has a new TOWER CAPTAIN and a supporting Ringing Master. Dan Gillet from St Helens Abingdon has kindly agreed to take the role of tower captain and young guild ringer Isaac Davies has been appointed Ringing Master. General maintenance of the Bells and Tower remain in the capable hands of James Crafer and Doug Simmons with Julie Davies overseeing treasury and secretarial jobs. Michelle X will continue to promote publicity for the tower. There were discussions concerning change of the chosen practice night (MONDAY 7.00-8.30pm) it was suggested that an alternative night may aid with attendance, however, it remains the same for now. Marcham would like to extend invites to ringers who wish to improve from rounds to plain hunt, including doubles methods and covering. The Marcham band of ringers are steadily moving forward with their art of method understandings and have a new goal of completing a quarter peal in memory of Berice who dedicated herself to keeping the bells ringing for many years. We marked our AGM date with 180 plain bob doubles successfully rung and called by the Marcham BAND under guidance of their ringing master and captain.

Marcham ringers would like to thank the guild and all the support shown by visiting bands and ringers offering teaching classes, afternoon visits, and helping to keep our bells ringing.

Personally (Michelle X) I must also give thanks to an APP we have found to be very useful with communication concerning events: practices, days out and Sunday service ringing. SPOND is the APP name and it has allowed us to communicate easily and offered a controlled area for method homework suggestions in an orderly manner. Abingdon ringers have also agreed to give the platform a trial. I feel this app could help many towers with attendance, band placing, guidance, and I feel it would be selfish of me not to pass this on for your consideration in the new world of technologies. The app works via email or smartphone/computer/tablet.

Michelle X



Left to right: Doug Simmons, Dan Gillet, Michelle X, Julie Davies, Isaac Davies, James Crafer, Bob Anderson.

Milton

We have had quite a busy six months. We held our annual half day outing on 29th August. We visited five towers in the Long Crendon area. First off was the three-bell tower at Ickford where the ringing room has recently been moved upstairs to allow a toilet to be installed. The second tower was also a ring of three, Oakley, where a toilet has also recently been installed. Unlike Ickford this has been installed in the ground floor ringing room, with the result that the treble is the only bell able to see the other two ringers. A handily placed mirror aids vision to the ringers of two and Tenor! Brill was next, following ringing we had the normal break for tea and cake. Ludgershall and Piddington completed the day where a variety of Doubles methods were rung.

At practices we continue to ring methods to encourage Matthew and Emily. Matthew is now wrestling with Plain Bob Doubles inside and Emily competently rings the treble. We usually ring a selection from Cambridge S, for Alban to treble, Double Oxford Bob, London S and Beverley S to keep every one else's grey matter ticking over.

We have only had one wedding requiring bells this year, so Emily and Mathew were able to earn their first money from their hobby.

Charles had a significant birthday which coincided with one of our practice nights. Luckily, for Charles, we had several visitors that evening, so he was able to call a touch of Grandsire Triples. We were also able to ring Stedman Triples, Yorkshire S Major and finish with three leads of Bristol S Major.

Amongst the peals rung at the tower were one to mark Daphne's 80th birthday and one in memory of Kath Baldwin.

Colin Turner



Radley

Ringing at Radley continues on Sundays and Thursdays as usual. Unbeknown to me, the other ringers had decided that the practice on 13 July would become a birthday party to celebrate my 80th birthday which was the following day. I knew nothing about this until flowers, cake and non-alcoholic bubbly appeared. Some ringing did take place though.

There were three weddings during the summer that required bells. New ropes were installed in time for Remembrance Sunday, and as usual the muffles were left on for the practice the next Thursday.

Daphne Pollard

Steventon

I wrote to Rev Phil recently, our associate vicar at Steventon, to describe one of our practice nights. I knew that he'd enjoy hearing about the inclusiveness of it, which is all down to us being a ground floor ring close to the congregation and, in warm weather, to us being able to ring with the door open to passers-by on the road.

There were fifteen of us at our peak that evening, with thirteen living in Steventon. The babysitter for one of our ringers babysat in church for a change. We had ringers from every decade of life up to their 80s, other than 20-29 and 50-59, with four aged under ten. All had a go at ringing except for the four-year-old.

There was a point of particular seeming chaos when six bells were ringing rounds, with me doing handstroke for one of the under-10's, who is turning into a competent young ringer. Behind me was another ringer on our tenor for the first time, being overseen by one of our helpers. In front of me, charging up and down the main aisle, were two of the children who were being babysat. My ringer was a little distracted and wanted to turn round and watch them. I decided not to mention it because it's good practice to be relaxed enough to ring without being able to see your rope. Spare ringers were on child watch, to make sure that the two young runners didn't head towards us. A local villager came to watch with his two-year-old because his son had had a big sleep and needed evening entertainment. They sat on the floor by the font and Dad later had a go at chiming a bell. The 12- and 9-year-olds being babysat both had a go at ringing properly. Meanwhile, our 89-year-old ringer learnt another new method, easily keeping up with the younger team members, but what he thought of the race track that was happening, goodness only knows. Hopefully his hearing aid didn't pick it up!

It was a delightfully relaxed scene and the visiting Dad and son even managed to join us at the North Star for a short while afterwards.

Jeanette Davey

Sunningwell

It was reported in the last Newsletter that a shortage of available ringers sometimes precluded Sunday ringing. Thus it is good news indeed that three new ringers have joined the band, all with significant ringing experience, so this should improve the availability, not only for Sunday ringing, but additionally to accompany weddings when requested.

Sunningwell continues to be a regular venue for ringers from other towers, both as part of organised courses and by bands wishing to ring full or partial peals.

Mike Wykes

Wantage

Along with our regular Sunday morning ringing and Tuesday Practice nights where we have anything between 5 and 8 ringers, our ringing levels have lowered slightly since the last newsletter, we have had to cancel a few sessions here and there. We are grateful to those regular visitors who join us and swell our number, helping us to maintain our ringing standard.

The quarter peal that was scheduled for later this year (mentioned in the last newsletter) has yet to be attempted due to illness and holidays. Wantage marked the occasion of the Coronation of King Charles III by having general ringing prior to the Civic Service that was held at 4pm on Sunday 7th May and there was a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles rung on Monday 8th May, to mark the occasion. There have been no other civic or significant events where the bells have rung.

We have rung for a few weddings during the summer, also with help from other towers.

We did intend entering a team in to the Branch Striking Competition held at Long Wittenham on 10th June, but again were foiled by illness and holidays. Some of our members did join the day and 2 of us joined scratch teams on what was a very well organised and fun day.

We have yet to make any plans for a tower outing, so watch this space. And Wantage currently have no new recruits in the pipeline, so it's very much the status quo here at the moment.

Jenny Bennett

The Benefice of the Wantage Downs Towers

West Hendred:

The PCC have agreed to the rehang of the six bells in this tower. The Faculty has been submitted to the DAC and we await their comment. The No.5 bell is in particularly poor shape but is safe in the tower. The other 5 are rung regularly with a struggle. Whites of Appleton and Nicholsons have quoted, with Whites being the preferred contractor at a quoted cost of c£50k. Fundraising has started in the background as we can't commit until the faculty is granted.

East Hendred:

The 6 bells (3 listed) of this tower remain ringable with the help of Tony Crabtree and his team. The PCC wish for these bells and fittings to remain as original as possible so only the usual maintenance has been carried out. The clock and carillon will have a major overhaul early next year, just before the clocks 500 birthday. The tenor bearings will need attention soon as they are worn.

Ardington:

The 6 maiden bells of this tower (Taylor's, formerly of Oxford) have remained fixed since the introduction of an electronic system some 20 years ago. Also the Victorian clock was disengaged from the bells at the same time and only drives the hands – something the locals comment on when the hands and chime don't align. The bells are in almost unused condition but the frame is compromised as when originally fitted in the 1880's the bell frame (and tower) had to be hacked about to make it fit! Since being fitted, the tower has had a flat roof removed and a stone spire fitted. Whites of Appleton have come up with a plan to replace the wooden frame with a steel frame that will allow for more room. They have given a rough estimate of c£100k. Thankfully the bells are safe in the tower. By the time you read this I will have put this reframing project to the PCC and I am hopeful of a positive commitment to explore all the options and maybe secure early funding before I set off with abstaining the required Faculty.

Lockinge:

The 4 bells of Lockinge All Saints church have remained unring for over 80yrs, maybe longer. The bells are currently safe and medieval frame is stable, but is fitted without tolerance to the tower internal wall. With frame movement apparently mortar from the external wall fell on passers by when the bells were rung. As the medieval frame cannot be touched, the solution might be to relocate the bells to a new frame in the middle chamber of the tower. Currently this would mean one ringer would have to ring from within the toilet! Whites are considering a plan and costings. This project may be pursued by the PCC after the church heating and lighting upgrade has been completed. So far no one has said no.

Nigel Findley
TC of the lot!

Oxon Ringing School

As Training Officer of my branch, I have for some years, concentrated on providing extra training at Abingdon to the learners of nearby towers. With the help of the many good teachers of ringing in and around our branch, we ran the **Branch Ringing School** providing training in bell handling (on Saturday mornings on silenced bells) and the skills needed to ring plain hunt (at evening practices in and around our branch).



With the help of experienced teachers of ringing from other branches, by spring 2023 we were running Saturday morning sessions in Abingdon, Dorchester-on-Thames, Kirtlington and Witney. It means we now operate in four of the ODG branches: Bicester, Old North Berks, South Oxon and Woodstock & Witney. All our four Ringing Centres have simulators so we may teach bell handling without upsetting the neighbours.

Each learner is encouraged to continue to receive ringing training in their own tower. However, an hour of concentrated one to one training a couple of times each month can make a big difference to how long it takes to learn to control a bell.

Research has shown that there are a number of techniques ("foundation skills") needed by a ringer before they can successfully ring plain hunt. These include controlling and hearing their bell and ropesight. There are a number of fun ringing exercises which may be used to encourage the development of foundation skills in learners. During the summer we have held special practices around the four branches for learners at that stage of their ringing careers.

We recommend the excellent variety of training methods developed by the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) and have registered as an "ART Hub" so that Oxfordshire people wishing to learn to ring may be directed to us. In September, we became the Oxon Ringing School and received a large welcome parcel of ART books and the promise of lots of advice and support.

We continue to offer high-quality training to learners over a wide area of Oxfordshire at the four Ringing Centres with the help of experienced teachers drawn from a wider area than before. In addition to teaching learners, we organise one day ART courses to help experienced ringers to hear about and share the best techniques for teaching ringing.

If you are interested in extra tuition in bell handling or foundation skills, please view our website, <https://odg.org.uk/info/oxfordshire-ringing-school/>

Experienced ringers interested in improving their teaching of ringing should look at the ART website, <https://bellringing.org/>

Susan Read
ONB Branch Training Officer;
Chair, Oxon Ringing School



A bell handling lesson held in Kirtlington



Abingdon

Branch Striking Competition — Saturday 10 June 2023 — Long Wittenham



The Vice Chairman presenting the Trophy to Gill Loyd of Blewbury.



Blewbury



Cholsey



North Moreton



Wallingford



‘Scratch’ band

Social Events Report

The BBQ in July was a great success with over 50 people attending. Many thanks, once again, to Stuart and Naomi Gibson for hosting the event and to all the ringers who contributed food and time for our summer party.

Now that autumn is here, we have our quiz night and supper on November 18th to look forward to – it’s at Blewbury Village Hall. Please let me know the names of people attending to assist with catering. I predict a riotous evening !

Our New Year’s Day ringing and social will take place at Drayton this year (on 1st Jan 2024) from 10.30 -12.30. Thanks to our friends at Drayton for hosting it and for enabling us to ring in the new year with gusto.

Advance notices concerning two other events in 2024.

The Spring mini-outing will take place on 24th April 2024 and will involve ringing at three towers with a pub lunch after the first two towers. More details to follow in the new year.

Now, I would like to invite you all to put on your thinking-caps with regard to our social event scheduled for November 2024. We had hoped to return to Radley for a skittles night with a fish and chip supper. However, Radley village hall is likely to be unavailable due to long-promised renovations and so we need to devise another type of social event.

If anyone has any ideas, please let me know.

However, in the meantime I have a suggestion for consideration: how about an ONBB Pudding Club and Cheese Tasting event? It would be a light-hearted team night involving the tasting of many delicious desserts and a selection of cheeses (food intolerances would be acknowledged). Extra points could be awarded for silly dessert and cheese puns!

We could dress up (optional) and start with a fizzy drink.

The Pudding Club tasting could run like this:

- 5 categories of desserts plus GF: Tarts and pies, Chocolate, Cheesecake, Trifle, misc puddings and GF – 4 desserts within each category
- 5/6 teams of 10 people each (sign up to a category in advance)
- Team members complete an evaluation card for each dessert, circling one of four comments: *Please come home with me, Fab-u-lous dahlings, Gorgeous or Lovely*

Identify the Baby Cheeses competition might look like this:

- One large plate of cheese for each team, containing 10 cubes of 4 different cheeses plus crackers and nibbles
- Individual sheets to record answers (maybe some clues ?)
- Top three winners crowned: *Le Grand Fromage, Citizen Camembert, Rev Gorgonzola (or the Lincolnshire Poacher)*

Anyway, please let me know your thoughts – we have a bit of time to decide.

Mandy

Email: social-secretary@onb.odg.org.uk

p.s. the date for next July’s outing and BBQ will be circulated as soon as I have it.

Branch Outing & BBQ – 15 July 2023



Group photo on the Outing.



The BBQ begins.

Gill and Naomi were presented with flowers.





Good show at the BBQ.

Branch Quiz Night - 18th November 2023

Seventy members of the Branch took part in the Quiz Night which was extremely good fun and showed what a clever bunch we all are! The half-time break offered an opportunity for a delightful and tasty two-course supper which resulted in empty plates all round. In addition, Philip Roberts ran a raffle which further contributed to the fund-raising. The quiz raised £376 and the raffle a further £160, so a total of £536.00. Not bad for a good night!

The quiz was prepared and hosted by Anne Hales who returned from Cheshire specially for this event. She was assisted by Gill Loyd who kept a watchful eye on the scores. At the end of the evening, there was not a great difference between the scores of the nine teams. However, the quiz was won by Bats and Belles, the team from Wantage. Well done to all of you!

Many thanks too, to the Blewbury ringers and friends who prepared all the food and managed the event, proving to be successful and welcoming hosts.

Mandy Winters



The Quizmaster and her assistant



Score sheet – ONB Quiz November 23

Team Name	R.1	Total	R.2	Total	R.3	Total	R.4	Total	R.5	Total	R.6	Total	R.7	Total	Table Quiz	Grand Total
Up to no gooders	9	9	8	17	5	22	7	29	6	35	9	44	7	51	22	73 ⑥
Lucky 7	9	9	7	16	6	22	5	27	8	35	7	42	9	51	25	76 ④
Small + 1	5	5	6	11	5	16	6	22	5	27	7	34	7	41	24	65 ⑧
Wells Bells	7	7	7	14	6	20	5	25	2	27	7	34	5	39	22	61 ⑨
Bells + Bells	9	9	8	17	7	24	7	31	9	40	9	49	9	58	25	83 ①
Abingdon	8	8	6	14	6	20	7	27	7	34	9	43	8	51	25	76 ④
The Oldrey Clays	9	9	9	18	5	23	4	27	4	31	9	40	4	44	26	70 ⑦
Speed Dating	9	9	9	18	6	24	6	30	8	38	10	48	9	57	25	82 ②
We thought this was																
Bernie's Bunch..	10	10	7	17	6	23	6	29	8	37	9	46	9	55	25	80 ③

The score sheet.



ONBB New Year's Ringing & Refreshments



Monday, 1st January 2024

St Peter's, Drayton

10.30am — 12.30pm

Everybody welcome



QUARTER PEALS

Appleton, 2 July 2023. 1230 Grandsire Triples: Barbara H Payne 1, Sarah J Ockwell 2, Michele Winter 3, Craig M Robertson 4, Peter H M Day 5, David C Ockwell (C) 6, Robin O Hall 7, Bernard J Stone 8. Farewell to Philip Parker on his last Sunday as Rector of Appleton.

Appleton, 4 August 2023. 1260 Grandsire Triples: Sarah J Ockwell 1, Barbara H Payne 2, Michele Winter 3, David L Thomas 4, Peter H M Day 5, David C Ockwell (C) 6, Bernard J Stone 7, Jack A Knowles 8. Remembering Norman Leslie. Together with his brother Dennis, he rang frequently at Appleton including taking part in long length peals.

Abingdon, St Helen, 20 August 2023. 1260 Plain Bob Doubles: Sarah Barnes 1, Bridget Taylor 2, Josh Ball 3, Michelle X 4, Tim Pett (C) 5, Samuel Fuentes 6. 1st quarter on an inside bell - 4. To celebrate the engagement of Sarah Barnes and William Carr.

Appleton, 17 September 2023. 1260 Grandsire Triples: Sylvia M Harrison 1, Barbara H Payne 2, Jenny A Dyer 3, Andrew J Dyer 4, Michael J Harrison 5, David C Ockwell (C) 6, Peter H M Day 7, Bernard J Stone 8. Celebrating the life of James W A Dyer. Remembering Tim Harrison.

Brightwell, 24 September 2023. 1260 Plain Bob Doubles: Billy Fisher 1, Dominic Ellis 2, Simon G Lee 3, Amelie A E Wymer 4, Daniel J Watson (C) 5, Isaac E Davies 6. 1st Q: 4. Average age: 13yrs. Rung by ODG young ringers. This performance included a first quarter-peal ringer on bell 4.



Band anti clockwise from front left
(Image: Jenny Page)

Abingdon, St Helen, 8 November 2023. 1296 Grandsire Caters: Alison Felton 1, Susan E M Read 2, J Caroline Flockton 3, Lorna Curtis 4, Brian Read 5, Peter Felton (C) 6, Stuart J Flockton 7, Simon L Edwards 8, John G Pusey 9, Alison T Merryweather-Clarke 10.

Blewbury, 11 November 2023. 1260 Grandsire Triples: Christine Kowalczyk 1, Gillian Loyd 2, Ellen Bramhill 3, Josie Irving 4, Jill Garlick 5, Mark Vincent (C) 6, Charles Morrish 7, Richard Loyd 8. Rung half-muffled on Armistice Day. 1st quarter on 7 bells – 1.

Appleton, 12 November 2023. 1259 Grandsire Caters: Claire L Bell 1, Barbara H Payne 2, Craig M Robertson 3, Sarah J Ockwell 4, Michele Winter 5, David K Barrington 6, Peter H M Day 1, David C Ockwell (C) 8, David L Thomas 9, Bernard J Stone 10. Half-muffled in memory of the fallen.

PEALS

Milton, 16 May 2023, 2h34, **5088 Burnopfield Delight Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Nigel A L Mellor 3, Beryl R Norris 4, Richard L Thumwood 5, Claire F Roulstone 6, Timothy G Pett (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 4 June 2023, 2h39, **5130 Elford Alliance Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Richard L Thumwood 3, Beryl R Norris 4, Charlotte A Boyce 5, Mark Edwards 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 11 June 2023, 2h33, **5088 Lessness Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, Nicola J Turner (C) 2, Timothy G Pett 3, Richard L Thumwood 4, Katherine A Stonham 5, Michael J Dew 6, Alan M Eyles 7, Colin M Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 11 July 2023, 2h36, **5088 Lowther Castle Delight Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Richard L Thumwood 4, Claire F Roulstone 5, Ian Roulstone 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 16 July 2023, 2h36, **5088 Zwingenberg Castle Delight Major**: Charlotte A Boyce 1, Claire F Roulstone 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Fiona M Wheeler 4, Richard L Thumwood 5, Stephen A Wheeler 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8. Birthday compliments to Daphne Pollard and Pauline McKenzie.

Harwell, 12 August 2023, 3h4, **5056 Cambridge Surprise Major**: Natasha Claus 1, Laura S Watt 2, Alexander J Speakman 3, Sebastian C Small 4, Benjamin H Small 5, Edward A S Walker 6, Matthew N Jerome (C) 7, Anna E Sherwood 8. First peal: 5. First peal of surprise: 3. A birthday compliment to Benjamin, 21 tomorrow. To welcome the new parish vicar to Harwell & Chilton, Rev Jeremy Parsons.



ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 16 August 2023, 2h32, **5040 Yarkhill Alliance Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Nicola J Turner (C) 2, Cynthia E Howell 3, Claire F Roulstone 4, Richard L Thumwood 5, Robert J Crocker 6, Ian Roulstone 7, Colin M Turner 8. In thanksgiving for the life of S Kathleen M Baldwin who died today.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 27 August 2023, 2h36, **5040 Cotton Alliance Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Richard L Thumwood 2, Charlotte A Boyce 3, Beryl R Norris 4, Martin J Turner 5, Simon L Edwards 6, John R Martin (C) 7, Colin M Turner 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 31 August 2023, 2h43, **5120 Superlative Surprise Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Richard L Thumwood 2, Simon L Edwards 3, Nicola J Turner 4, Colin M Turner 5, Anthony M Bulteel 6, Simon W Edwards 7, Euan R M Thomas (C) 8. First peal as conductor.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY, **Milton**, 24 September 2023, 2h35, **5124 Consett Alliance Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Charlotte A Boyce 2, Alan M Eyles 3, Robert J Crocker 4, Colin M Turner 5, Claire F Roulstone 6, Richard L Thumwood 7, John R Martin (C) 8.

OXFORD SOCIETY, **Appleton**, 11 November 2023, 2h54, **5057 Grandsire Caters**: Michele Winter 1, Stephen H Stanford 2, Craig M Robertson 3, David C Ockwell 4, Alex J Parsons 5, Simon L Edwards 6, Alan T Winter 7, David L Thomas 8, Alan M Eyles (C) 9, Bernard J Stone 10. Half-muffled in memory of the Fallen. 700th peal with the Society: 10.

ODG 6-bell Raising & Lowering Competition

The Raising & Lowering Competition was held at Wigginton on Saturday 7 October. The ODG Youth Band took part and one of the ringers was Isaac Davies of Marcham. Three teams entered the competition and the Youth Band came second.

Branch Practice at Childrey on 14 June 2023



Three branch officers taking in the view while others do the ringing!
Bridget Taylor, Gill Loyd, Jenny Bennett.

NEXT ISSUE

Deadline for copy for the next issue in June 2024 is 17th April 2024. But please don't wait until then, send your news, pictures, and quarters in as they happen.

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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.

Programme for 2023

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.

Monday, 1st January – Ringing and Refreshments – Drayton (8) (10.30am–12.30pm)
Wednesday, 3rd January – **Advanced Practice** – Milton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Tuesday, 9th January – Branch Practice – Wantage (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 24th January – Branch Practice – Brightwell (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 7th February – **Surprise Major/Royal Practice** – Wallingford (10) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 14th February – Branch Practice – Steventon (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 28th February – Branch Practice – Chilton (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 6th March – **Advanced Practice** – North Moreton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Friday, 8th March – Branch Practice – Blewbury (8) (8.00–9.30pm)
Saturday, 16th March – AGM – Zoom Meeting (7.00pm)
Wednesday, 20th March – Branch Practice – Chilton (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 3rd April – **Surprise Major Practice** – Harwell (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Tuesday, 9th April – Branch Practice – Brightwell (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 24th April – Mini Outing and Lunch
Wednesday, 1st May – **Advanced Practice** – Blewbury (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Thursday, 9th May – Branch Practice – Wallingford (10) (8.00–9.30pm)
Wednesday, 22nd May – Branch Practice – Benson (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 5th June – **Surprise Major Practice** – Drayton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 12th June – Branch Practice – Sparsholt (4) (6.30–7.15pm)
Childrey (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Saturday, 15th June – Striking Competition – Radley (6) (from 10.00am)
Wednesday, 26th June – Branch Practice – Cholsey (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 3rd July – **Advanced Practice** – Abingdon St Nicolas (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Monday, 8th July – Branch Practice – Marcham (6) (7.00–8.30pm)
July (TBC) – Branch Outing and Barbecue
Wednesday, 24th July – Branch Practice – Radley (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 7th August – **Surprise Major Practice** – Sutton Courtenay (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Thursday, 8th August – Branch Practice – Aston Tirrold (6) (7.00–8.30pm)
Wednesday, 28th August – Branch Practice – Long Wittenham (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 4th September – **Advanced Practice** – Chilton (6) (7.30–9.00pm)
Tuesday, 10th September – Branch Practice – East Hagbourne (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 25th September – Branch Practice – Childrey (8) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 2nd October – **Surprise Major Practice** – Milton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Monday, 7th October – Branch Practice – North Moreton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 23rd October – Branch Practice – Marcham (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 6th November – **Advanced Practice** – Drayton (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 13th November – Branch Practice – Cholsey (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Saturday, 16th November – November Social Event
Wednesday, 27th November – Branch Practice – Steventon (6) (2.00–3.30pm)
Wednesday, 4th December – **Surprise Major Practice** – Brightwell (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Thursday, 12th December – Branch Practice – Harwell (8) (7.30–9.00pm)
Wednesday, 18th December – Branch Practice – Blewbury (8) (2.00–3.30pm)