Old North Berks Branch Newsletter

No: 166 December 2025



Branch Striking Competition: Charles and Rachel Morrish presenting the trophy to Richard Loyd for Blewbury

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*** WANTED ***

from next AGM
21st March 2026

New Chairman
New Joint Ringing Master
New Branch Secretary

Rob has been Chairman for 8 years
Richard has been a Joint Ringing Master for 16 years
Gill has been a Branch Officer for 26 years (Secretary for almost 22 years)

It's more than time for a change!

Please can you let Gill Loyd know if you are interested in taking on any of these posts (gillianloyd@gmail.com)

*** Don't worry: all current incumbents will give as much help as is needed during the transition ***

We really need to hang up our boots!

Editorial

Welcome to the December 2025 issue of our Branch Newsletter. Thank you for all your timely contributions to my first issue as your new Editor and special thanks to Daphne Pollard for all her handover support and to my husband, Paul, for computer assistance.

Congratulations to Ben at Harwell who has rung his first quarter peal.

Congratulations to Isaac Davies, who, by ringing the last required quarter peal (see QP details) completed Level 5 of Learning the Ropes.

Well done to all the bands who competed in our six-bell striking competition in June and congratulations to the winning band, Blewbury.

Congratulations also to Harwell for their eye-catching and winning float 'Oranges and Lemons' at Harwell Feast!

You will see from the poster opposite that several of our long-serving and key Committee members are stepping down next March. Our branch is very active and well organised, and if we are to keep this up then these roles need to be filled! Please think about whether you can step up and have a go - help and support will be given.

There will be Boxing Day ringing at Harwell from 10.30am to 12noon; all are welcome. New Year's Day ringing and social this year takes place at East Hagbourne; see the poster on page 31 for details. Hope to see you there!

Ellen Bramhill

Secretary's Report

At the Branch Committee Meeting in October, our Treasurer, Stuart Gibson, reported that so far in 2025 we have 237 paid up members (from 25 towers) along with the three Honorary and one Life members, plus four members who pay a subscription through another branch. This makes a total of 244 members (29 less than in 2024). No funds have been raised from social events to date, but continuing honey sales have yielded £261 and there were donations of £120 from the food sold at the striking competition. A grant of £900 was made for the emergency work on two of the bells at Sutton Courtenay. There is still an outstanding commitment of £3,000 to support the work at Sparsholt. The branch, at present, has funds in the region of £8,750, which is well in excess of the reserves required. This figure has again been boosted this year with the enhanced subscription, split to cover the donations to restoration projects and branch practice donations to host towers. The figure raised for each so far is £600 (£680 in 2024).

Nicola Turner has advised that restoration work should be carried out at Sutton Courtenay in late 2026/early 2027. The wooden headstocks on bells 3, 6 and 7 will be replaced with metal canon retaining headstocks. All fittings will be adjusted appropriately. The eight bells will be retuned and the bell frame shotblasted and repainted. The quote from Whites of Appleton (£26,549.00 + VAT), together with the quote and from A&C Shotblasting for the bell frame work (£4,950.00 + VAT), make a total of £31,499 + VAT.

Stuart Gibson, Branch Treasurer, has recommended that the AGM be asked to allocate £1,500 to this bell project.

Seven new members have been elected to the Guild at recent branch practices: Julie Harrison, John Harrison, Julia Gibbs, Eva-Maria Gibbs (Appleton), Anne-Marie Lawson (Cholsey), Reggie Baker (Steventon) and Jonas Munoz (Wantage).

Branch evening practices have been held at Little Wittenham, Long Wittenham, Wantage, Steventon, Drayton and Abingdon St Helen. Branch afternoon practices have been held at Abingdon St Helen, Marcham, Long Wittenham, Childrey and West Hanney. The afternoon practice at Sunningwell was abandoned as there were only five attendees, who were locked out of the tower owing to a misunderstanding. Surprise Major practices have been held at Drayton, North Moreton and Milton. Advanced practices have been held at Blewbury and Chilton.

Our six-bell striking competition was held during the morning of 14th June 2025 at Chilton. It was judged by our old friends Charles and Rachel Morrish, who were pleased with the number of teams entering and thought that the quality of ringing was very good. Six teams competed and the results were: 1st Blewbury, 2nd Wantage, 3rd Wallingford, 4th Abingdon, 5th North Moreton, 6th Cholsey. Thanks go to all the branch members who provided excellent refreshments that were enjoyed by everyone in the warm summer sunshine. Unfortunately, this year none of the first four teams were able to make up a team to ring in the Guild's six-bell striking competition in October.

The branch outing took place on 12th July. This was an extremely hot day (over 30˚C!) and so only the truly intrepid felt able to take part. Ringing was at Maidenhead, Burnham, Marlow, Hambleden and Henley on Thames, with own arrangements for lunch in or near Marlow. Our thanks go to Andy Bennett for arranging this fun day out for us. A barbecue had been planned at Laurence Hall, Cholsey, during the afternoon of 9th August. Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled through lack of support, caused mainly by a number of weddings taking place. The 2026 barbecue will be held in June or July in the late afternoon. Mandy hopes that many will be able to attend and bring their families and friends.

Our next social event, a barn dance and supper in Chilton Village Hall, will already have happened by the time you read this. Let's hope it was a very successful event with plenty of dancing and the usual good food! New Year's Day ringing and refreshments 2026 will take place at East Hagbourne.

May I wish all branch members and their families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Gill Loyd

Ringing Masters' Ramblings

This year has seen some mixed fortunes with regard to ringing within the branch. There has been a variety of highs and lows, particularly relating to the various practices organised for the membership.

Firstly though, a definite high was the six-bell striking competition held at Chilton in June. Six tower teams competed and enjoyed the great social atmosphere in the early summer sunshine, with practically everyone staying to the very end to hear Charles and Rachel cast judgement on what was a tightly fought contest. As always, the bacon rolls were a popular incentive for entering a team! Well done to all tower captains and teams for maintaining this long tradition in the branch. Congratulations to the winning team, Blewbury, and to all other teams who competed so well. Sadly the date chosen for the Guild six-bell competition proved extremely difficult for all of the first four ranked teams, and consequently ONB did not enter a team for the first time in recent years. On a plus side, however, ONB entered a branch team for the eight-bell competition, which is the first time for very many years; let us hope we might do the same next year. We hope to raise a team for the ten-bell competition taking place at Long Crendon on 22nd November.

Another high was the most enjoyable branch outing organised by Andy Bennett around Thames Valley towers. Despite the blistering heat which put off many, enough members turned up and enjoyed a terrific day out, which certainly helped ice cream sales!

Branch practices have become a recent talking point with mixed issues, especially that of attendance. We have witnessed from 'standing room only' through to meeting with just five ringers, and everything in between. ONB has always been very healthy in terms of the number of practices, probably offering more practices than any other branch. In recent years more practices have been added, (three evening branch practices and advanced practices), responding to the request of the membership. However, it has been disappointing to see that some practices have had very few attendees. At the October Committee Meeting it was decided that it would be a good time to take stock and look again at the branch offering before another full year of practices in the current format is arranged. To help with this, Oliver organised a Google survey to allow members to give information on what they are seeking from the branch. We were pleased that around 50 of you responded to the survey, providing insights into some of the members' wishes. A small work group was formed to discuss future directions and, failing to reach full agreement, it was decided to trial Colin Turner's and Oliver's more radical suggestions at the beginning of 2026. For more information, please see the article on changes to 2026 branch practices on page 8. We would like to thank Bridget Taylor for her work in organising all of the various practices on an ongoing basis.

For a few years I (Richard) have been trying to bow out from the role of Joint Ringing Master (JRM), but I have been persuaded to continue due to an absence of a willing volunteer from the membership. It is high time, after 16 years in the role, for some new thinking and fresh ideas to ensure the future health of the branch. Oliver is bringing some great ideas to the role since he became JRM, and I really hope that someone will come forward to replace me (Richard) between now and the March 2026 AGM.

Richard Loyd and Oliver Hyde

Striking Competition Bands 14th June 2025



Abingdon



Blewbury



Cholsey

North Moreton



Wallingford



Wantage





Charles giving striking completion feedback and results to a rapt audience

Changes to 2026 Branch Practices

Our monthly evening general practices, which are held on tower practice nights, are sometimes poorly attended by non-local branch members. Additionally our surprise major practices are not always well attended. Therefore, is it time now to consider changing the style of our branch practices in 2026?

The current offering each month is an evening general practice where all are welcome and branch business can be conducted; an afternoon practice where we ring to the abilities of those present; and an alternating advanced or surprise major practice.

You might remember that Oliver Hyde, Joint Ringing Master, asked branch members to complete a questionnaire and give their opinions on branch practices. He received over 50 responses, so thank you to all who replied. Various diverse opinions were expressed, including (in no particular order):

- It would be good if the more experienced ringers could attend practices where more basic methods are rung / Too many non-local visitors could put off locals from attending their own practice / It is difficult to ring at a practice that is being held elsewhere on your own practice night / Afternoon practices are valuable as some older ringers prefer not to drive in the dark, especially during the winter.
- The less experienced ringers are happy for the branch to hold advanced and surprise major practices for the more experienced ringers / All branch practices should showcase ringing.
- Branch practices could be held on Saturdays / should not be held on Saturdays.
- We still need some general practices where branch business can be conducted, such as the election of new members.

- The lack of support at some practices might indicate apathy and towers becoming more insular, with tower captains not encouraging attendance / Tower captains should encourage their ringers to attend to meet and ring with others, as there is more to ringing than only ringing at your own tower.

A working group, made up of Jenny Bennett, Bridget Taylor, Oliver Hyde, Gill Loyd and Colin Turner, was set up to investigate the various options. After two meetings it came down to whether or not we should continue with a similar practice routine, but with emphasis on holding regular practices for beginners and improvers, rather than holding general branch practices; or we could hold two practices per month with 'all ability' ringing at each.

It soon became apparent that we could not reach agreement. Therefore it has been decided to follow Colin's and Oliver's lead and make a radical change to the practices we hold in January and February 2026:

- The advanced and surprise major practices will cease, as will the general branch practices held on a tower's own practice night.
- There will be 2 practices per month, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.
- In one month the afternoon practice will be at a 6-bell tower and the evening practice will be at an 8-bell tower. This will be in reverse the following month.
- Towers chosen for these practices will have easy-going bells.
- Initially the ringing at these practices will be general and for all abilities, with the possibility of focusing on particular methods in the future.

This practice pattern will be radically different to our recent practice offerings. These new style practices will be reviewed and a decision taken by the membership at the AGM whether or not to continue in this way.

Your views on these changes are very much appreciated and so, in the meantime, if you would like to offer your thoughts, please can you email me at gillianloyd@gmail.com.

Gill Loyd

Tower Talk

Abingdon

On Friday 15th August we rang at St Nicolas's for VJ Day. It was pleasing that several of our young learners were able to take part as, although they are regular attendees at our Friday practices, we don't see them very often for Sunday service ringing (details and photograph in miscellaneous performances section). Our performance received good local publicity, being featured in the Abingdon Blog, which included a short clip of the ringing: see http://abingdonblog.co.uk/?p=34116 .

On Thursday 21st August we rang at St Nicolas's for a special service to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the death of John and Jane Blacknall; to remember the generosity of the Blacknall legacy over the past 400 years; to celebrate the restoration of the monument; and to give thanks for the recent generosity of donors who have contributed to the restoration.

On Saturday 13th September we opened the tower at St Helen's for tower tours as part of the Heritage Days weekend. We arranged the visitors into groups of six with one group having a talk on bellringing in the ringing chamber whilst another group was being shown the bells. This proved extremely popular and we estimated that we had about 100 visitors during the day, including some quite young children. The most popular question in the belfry was '*how did we get the bells in and out?*' One young lad suggested we took the spire off, whilst another thought we took them through the louvres!



Dan Gillett presenting Isaac Davies with his Learning the Ropes Level 5 certificate

On Tuesday 21st October we were very pleased to ring for the Induction and Licensing Service for St Helen's new Rector, the Rev Dr Jennifer Brown. Her husband Chris is tower captain at Long Wittenham so we expect Dr Brown to have a good understanding of bells and bellringers and we are looking forward to a cordial relationship with her. Two days earlier we had rung a quarter peal of Little Bob Royal for Evensong and to welcome Dr Brown to the parish.



Congratulations to Hannah McNeil who passed her Learning the Ropes Level 2 recently. Her certificate was presented to her at Abingdon in October.

Tim Pett

Appleton

Our learners continue to progress well and all are ringing rounds and call changes. Eva and Clare are plain hunting on five bells and Clare has just attended the Steeple Aston course where she was in the Bob Doubles group tutored by Joe Norton. Unfortunately, Julia fell off her motor bike earlier in the summer and broke her wrist which means that she has not been able to come ringing but she is now on the mend, and we hope to see her very soon.

John and Julie attended the day organised by Katie Lane for new Guild Members at Wheatley in October. As well as meeting Katie, they were able to ring at three towers, Wheatley, Chearsley and Cuddington, which was the first time they had rung in another tower, and they said that they really enjoyed meeting Katie and ringing with other new Guild members.

We are now starting to practise ringing carols on handbells ready for the Christmas Carol Service. We continue to practice on Friday evenings (7.30-9pm) and visitors are always welcome.

Michele Winter

Blewbury

Our practice nights are usually well attended by Blewbury ringers and visitors alike. So, thank you again to our visitors, who swell our numbers and provide some extra experience to help us learn new things. We had a short break from ringing at Blewbury while plaster work was going on in the church. Thank you to Goring, Aston, and Cholsey towers for letting us practise there in the meantime.



St Birinus Pilgrims with some of the Blewbury ringers

Apart from our regular Sunday ringing, we will have rung for three weddings, a thanksgiving service, a funeral and a burial. Also, in September we rang during the St Birinus Pilgrimage as the walkers passed through the village. The walk was organised by Robert Gardner in memory of his late father, Ian 'Bob' Gardner, a keen Blewbury bell ringer.

We were pleased that our tower team won the branch six-bell striking completion in June, but sad that none of the first four teams were available to represent the branch in the Guild competition.

As the nights draw in, we are grateful for the new lights installed along the church path to guide us and our visitors to and from our Friday evening practices, and we look forward to an outing to St Albans area at the end of November.

Christine Kowalczuk

Cholsey

We have lost one of our regular ringers who has moved up north (their gain!) and another has had Major operation therefore we are sometimes a little short of ringers. We are very grateful to Rachel and Jo who regularly come over from Aston Tirrold to join us.

Mark Collett has just been on the Steeple Keepers course which he enjoyed ;so we now have a fully trained Steeple Keeper.

My daughter Alison who came back to ringing recently, after an absence of approx 30 years, has just rung her first quarter peal at Chalgrove where she is now a regular ringer.

Jenny Jeskins

East Hagbourne

A few of the team went away on the Sally Forth ringing trip at the end of April to the Swaffham area of Norfolk.

The bells were rung on Thursday 8th May at 6pm for about half an hour to commemorate VE Day.

We would like to thank our Tower Keeper, John Napper for putting the flag up on the tower for St George's Day.

On Saturday 14th June we rang for the wedding of Lewis Neofitou and Sophie Dodd. We would like to wish them every happiness for the future.

Paul Batho, one of our ringers, organised a very successful tower ringing outing on the afternoon of Saturday 19th July starting in Standlake. We rang at four towers during the afternoon with a nice tea break at Bampton Garden Centre. We concluded the outing in Stanton Harcourt followed by a meal at The Harcourt Arms. Many thanks to Paul for organising this fun afternoon. We all enjoyed the outing and are looking forward to the next one!

Jill Garlick has started to organise training sessions for the team about every two months. These began in April and to date we have had four sessions which ran for about an hour each time. They have included Middlesex Bob Triples, Stedman Triples, Plain Bob Doubles and ringing and calling short touches of Grandsire Triples. The sessions have been well attended and enjoyed by all. Thank you to a few experienced ringers from another tower in the benefice who came to help out.

We have held three quarterly meetings of HSCR since April all of which have been well attended by members.

Sunday 12th October was 'Ringer's Sunday' and there was a special Evensong at 6pm to celebrate this special day. The service was followed by light refreshments. It was a very enjoyable evening.

On Sunday 9th November we rang the bells for Remembrance Sunday for Evensong at 6pm. The bells were rung half muffled.

We are now getting ready for our Christmas festivities which includes our wonderful Christmas Tree Festival from the 5th to 13th December, everyone is welcome!

On Tuesday 31st December we will ring in the New Year starting at 11.30pm.

Shirley Goss

Harwell

Congratulations to Ben for his first quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles on the treble. Also, a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung in August to celebrate the wedding of one of our ringers. We rang for four weddings this year, including one on the day of Darren's wedding in Aldermaston, after a barren few years! Many congratulations to Elizabeth and Naomi who have recently been awarded with ART Learning the Ropes Level 2.



Harwell band for Ben's first Quarter Peal

At the end of May, we entered a float '*Oranges and Lemons*' in the Harwell Feast parade. It was a great team effort, both on and off the float, and we won!

We rang for VE day and visitors rang for VJ day.

There was an open tower in conjunction with the Harwell Hare Trail art event in July. Harwell ringers, family and friends came for a BBQ at our house in August.

The bells will be out of action soon due to remedial work needed on the clappers.Once again, Harwell bells will be ringing on Boxing Day (10.30am - 12noon) and we welcome any visitors.

Philip Roberts



Harwell band's winning float *'Oranges and Lemons'* at this year's Harwell Feast

Milton

As is usual, not all the recruits we started off in the Spring have stayed the course. Beccy and Lou are now able to ring unaided, and this has boosted our numbers on Sundays. Some others who have not been able to commit as much time are at varying stages of ability.

Our practices have been boosted by regular visitors Steve and Sue Nobes, formerly of West Hanney. We rang together 45 years ago and had lost touch due to house moves and life in general. A chance perusal of Bellboard revealed a chance ring by them at West Hanney for VE Day and contact was re-established.

Having rung at Milton to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day we were determined to mark the anniversary of VJ Day too. Lou and Beccy were able to participate in this event. Rather poignantly Beccy's grandfather was released from the East on VJ Day. Also, two of Nicola's great uncles were released, one from Changi and the other from the Burma railway.



Milton ringers marking VJ Day

We ordered a new set of ropes at the beginning of the year. Other than the originals supplied when the bells were installed in 2002, we have only had one additional set. Many have had new tails spliced in, but we decided that, after 23 years' service, with almost 600 peals on them in addition to normal weekly practices and service ringing, they didn't owe us anything. The fact that the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme, allowing a grant equivalent to the VAT to be applied for, might disappear made us bite the bullet. When

the new ropes arrived the tail ends were just too tight - impossible to even get a marline spike in to open the rope up. At our request the tail ends were reworked and are now looser and are all in use.

As a result, we now have some spare ropes which still have some life left in them. They are suitable for bells up to 7cwt with an overall length of 55'. If you are interested in having some of them, please contact me.

Colin Turner

North Moreton

It was a busy October weekend for North Moreton. On Saturday 11th October, 'An Auction of Promises' was held in the newly refurbished village hall. It proved to be a fitting venue for a superb supper and sparkling wine. Simon, the auctioneer from Jones and Jacob was masterful in extracting some wonderful bids, for a really eclectic mix of promises. I am pleased to reveal that a 'Celebratory Quarter Peal' at All Saints, raised a magnificent £260. A second quarter peal was offered and purchased. As the promise indicated an 'expert performance' I trust that the North Moreton band will be on top form! In total the auction raised over £4,000 for church funds: a magnificent result!

On the following Sunday, we celebrated Harvest Festival and a very convivial lunch followed, which continued long into the afternoon. The occasion was only slightly marred by the Tenor bell becoming unringable. The clapper shaft broke, putting it out of action, but only for the day. Thanks to the Nickless's, father and son, a temporary repair was carried out, so Monday practice went ahead as usual.

Beryl Jones

Radley

Radley Church was closed after Easter until the beginning of September for building work. We were able to practice on a Thursday for a few weeks before work needed to start in the balcony area and then we were not allowed in for 10 weeks until the middle of August. Since then we have been able to practice on a Thursday. Since services re-started at the beginning of September we have been able to ring for services again.

Lily and Kate continue to progress although having had to catch up since not having rung for the 10 weeks of closure. Numbers on both Sundays and Thursdays fluctuate for various reasons. As usual, the bells will be half-muffled for Remembrance Sunday and the practice nights before and after.

Daphne Pollard

Sunningwell

The tower is benefitting from an influx of new ringers, which greatly assists with the tendency of more senior ringers to become less active over time. There is regular ringing prior to Divine Service on Sundays, which is much appreciated by churchgoers and villagers alike.

Ringers from other towers often visit, both as part of externally organised ringing courses (including training courses) and by bands wishing to ring quarter or full peals.

Mike Wykes

West Hanney

St James, West Hanney, tower is out of action until December while it undergoes refurbishment. This will allow the tower to be accessed from inside the church so that it can be used for purposes other than ringing the bells.

Nicky Kauert

Wantage

Ringing at Wantage is healthy at the moment with 12 regular ringers, most of whom turn up most of the time. We have not missed ringing for Sunday service and always get eight to ring for the few weddings we have had; thanks to those helpers from other towers when we are a little short. Our standard of ringing is quite good and our repertoire varies from rounds and call changes to Stedman Triples, Cambridge Minor and currently learning Norwich Surprise Minor with other ringers learning Plain Bob and Grandsire in between. We frequently welcome visiting ringers from other towers to our Tuesday practices, which helps out us and them and makes ringing more varied and enjoyable.

We have regular Monday evening tied bell practice nights for learners. We have had two learners, one of whom has unfortunately dropped out but the other is making progress.

Apart from the regular ringing, we welcomed a total of 54 people to the tower on the Guild Open Day on 5th May: a good number bearing in mind we were the last tower of the day.

Even though the Tower Captain was away in June, we entered a team in the Branch Striking Competition and came second of the six teams that took part. But due to a wedding at Wantage on 4th October, we were not able to participate in the Guild Finals, when the winning team (Blewbury) were also not available



Wantage QP band 29th July 2025: Dave, Sarah, Andy, Jenny, Teifi and Graham



Wantage Churchwardens, Curate, Verger and Administrator with Jenny, Andy and Teifi

We rang a couple of times to celebrate VE day; a touch of 92 changes of Grandsire Doubles and call Changes on 4th May; and Grandsire Doubles, call changes and Plain Hunt on 8th May.

On 29th June, we rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles for the Patronal Festival and to congratulate/celebrate the ordination of our new curate Thomas Frances Caroe. This was followed by general ringing on the 1st July for all those who were not in the quarter peal.

We joined the Steventon ringers for a very enjoyable practice on the ten tied bells at Abingdon on 27th Aug. Thanks to Jeanette at Steventon for arranging this and Susan at Abingdon for the use of the bells. We are not used to ringing on ten bells and it was a very valuable experience.

There was also a very enlightening visit from some of the other people involved in other aspects of the church (church warden, curate, administrator etc.) to the ringing room and amongst the bells to show them what we do, how we do it and give them an appreciation of what we can provide for them. Hopefully we'll be having another session soon for those that couldn't make it.

We are planning on doing the usual half muffled ringing for Remembrance Sunday and to ring for as many Christmas and New Year services and events as we can get ringers for.

Andy Bennett



Wantage Curate and Churchwarden with Andy among the bells

Branch Outing 12th July 2025

On Saturday 12th July, a very hot day of 30˚C or higher, saw a few adventurous members of the branch go on an outing to the Maidenhead/Henley area of the Guild. Whilst we had enough ringers attend to ring all the bells all the time it would have been nice to have more people to experience different bells, ring with different people and visit a part of the Oxford Guild that may not have been visited for a while. There was a good variety and quality of ringing, and all abilities were catered for. I gather everyone enjoyed themselves and no-one was left out.

There was a mixture of ease of bells, ranging from some relatively challenging bells at Henley-on-Thames (although not as difficult as the local tower captain led us to believe) to some very easy, lovely sounding ones at Burnham.

Some towers were easily accessible by car (Maidenhead, Burnham) where others proved very challenging. So much so that at least one person couldn't ring at Marlow due to no parking space anywhere in town. Henley-on-Thames also proved a little tricky. That is probably due to the popularity of these lovely, picturesque towns on the Thames; everyone wants to visit them.

It was a stunning day to visit some lovely areas, with Hambleden being probably the prettiest village and the best kept ringing room too: very neat and tidy.

Let's keep our fingers crossed that next year's outing will be a bit more comfortable as far as the temperature goes and we have an equally varied selection of towers, ringers, abilities and fun.

Andy Bennett



Picture of all ringers who stayed on to the last tower of the day, at Henley-on-Thames

Barn Dance 15th November 2025

It was very heartening to see so many faces, from a number of towers, at the November barn dance held at Chilton Village Hall on Saturday 15th November. The triennial ONB Branch event was a great success and featured dancing and music played by The Mad Hatters. Fifty-seven ringers and friends attended and contributed to a warm pre-festive atmosphere.

Halfway through the evening, ringers and friends of Chilton and Harwell towers laid on a magnificent supper with a range of desserts provided by a number of bakers from across the Branch. There wasn't much left at the end of the evening!

Thank you to everybody for attending and for encouraging friends to attend, and for your contributions (however small) to this event.

Mandy Winters





Oxon Ringing School (at Abingdon, Dorchester and Kirtlington)

Learning to ring can take a long time if the only training given is by a distracted tower captain for five minutes at a time during a busy practice night. Learners progress faster with bell handling if they are given additional one to one training more than once a week for the first few weeks, ideally with someone who is trained in teaching ringing.

The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) was set up by experienced ringing teachers and experts in training to work together on a syllabus to equip new ringers with the basics of ringing. ART shares the most efficient techniques for training new ringers as day courses for tower captains and those interested in teaching ringing.

Oxon Ringing School (ORS) was set up within the ODG to provide ART courses for tower captains and trainers and to offer extra training for learners in bell handling and in controlling a bell.

ORS is running an ART one day course in teaching bell handling on 21st February 2026 at Dorchester on Thames. It will be advertised on the ART website as well as through the ODG. I would like to recommend the day course to experienced ringers from our branch and Guild.

ORS offers training for learners from our branch. We aim to help new ringers learn to handle a bell and to assist those who can already ring on their own but need better bell control before they can tackle plain hunt successfully



Special Offer for our Branch Members:

We have a few vacancies for learners at the Saturday morning and Wednesday evening sessions in Abingdon, each lasting one hour. Please ring me to book a free taster session.

Susan Read, ONB Branch Training Officer and Chair, Oxon Ringing School
07941 580468

ART Ringing Masterclass Weekend in Bristol

Michelle X (Abingdon) and Mary Leneis (Steventon) both completed the last of the five levels of the ART Learning the Ropes syllabus in 2024. As a result, ART invited them both for a weekend in Bristol on 18th/19th October 2025.

The Bristol ringers, together with Stephanie Warboys and ART, had arranged a fantastic weekend programme for the ten graduates of the Learning the Ropes scheme. Each graduate was provided with a personal trainer with whom they discussed the methods they wanted to be able to ring and improve on. Michelle and Mary and their trainers were given a timetable of towers where they were met by a team of expert ringers to ring the methods they aspired to. Their personal trainers stood with them and helped as needed as our graduates rang, with the remainder of the bells all rung by expert ringers. They were thrilled with the weekend and reported for the ONB Branch:

"Working with Bristol's finest, they provided me with three new tower grabs: Backwell (10, 17-3-9) where we were permitted extra time as the coaching was going so well; Barrow Gurney (8, 11-0-19), an unexpected iconic film location; and then into Bristol for the Cathedral itself (8, 21-01). After a full day of fabulous tutoring, we retired to our lodgings for the evening with the option to ring at Redcliffe St Mary (12, 50-2-21) and Bristol Cathedral the following morning.

I am so pleased that I continued with all the levels of the Learning the Ropes curriculum because the rewards are life long memories. Thank-you, Bristol and all the wonderful helpers, who made the weekend such a success."

Michelle X

"I had been unaware that finishing Level 5 of the ART scheme provided this outing, so I had no expectations going in. I met my tutor at the first tower and he did a little assessment asking me to ring a touch of Little Bob Major (my first, I admitted later). We spent the day working on various skills as he identified them and it was just incredible to ring with a highly qualified band that just didn't go wrong. I have helped on courses and I know it is exhausting, ringing every time while the learners ring every fourth time. These stalwarts (including ONB's own Seb Small) were spot on, all day.

In the evening, both groups of students met up at Bristol Cathedral and each of us got to ring something. I managed to get through half a course of Cambridge Major, to my surprise. In the evening the remaining ART students met for dinner and discussed many things between us, including a debate on the pros and cons of fat sallies.

Sunday morning was, for me, the cherry on the cake. A service ringing tour had been organised and we got to ring first at Redcliffe, then at the cathedral again, at Christ Church and finally at a lovely little six at the Lord Mayor's Chapel. At the end of all that, my watch said I'd climbed sixteen flights of stairs but I think it missed a few. It is about 90 steps in the Cathedral alone - by the time I dragged myself to the train station at noon, I knew I had had a thorough workout in both the quads and the brain.

It was a properly amazing weekend provided entirely by ART and made lasting memories I will treasure!"

Mary Leneis

Tower Bells

Quarter Peals

Wantage, 29 June 2025. **1260 Grandsire Doubles**: Dave Endacott 1, Jenny Bennett 2, Graham Stoter 3, Sarah Macdonell 4, Andy Bennett (C) 5, Teifi Walters 6. Rung prior to Choral Evensong for Patronal Festival. Also as a compliment and with congratulations to Frances Caroe, our curate who was ordained this morning by the Bishop of Dorchester in Dorchester Abbey.

Appleton, 24 July 2025. **1280 Grandsire Caters**: Michele Winter 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Sarah J Ockwell 3, Craig M Robertson 4, Jenny A Dyer 5, Andrew J Dyer 6, Colin M Turner 7, David C Ockwell (C) 8, Peter H M Day 9, David K Barrington 10. 80th birthday compliments to Roger Mitty, long-time member of The Appleton Society.

Blewbury, 1 August 2025. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Val Stevens 1, Gillian Loyd (C) 2, Christine Kowalczuk 3, Ellen Bramhill 4, Richard Loyd 5, Andrew Forman 6. Rung in celebration of the lives of Charmian and Angwin Marples, and for the dedication of the new altar frontal. First on the treble: 1.

Abingdon, St Helen, 2 August 2025. **1280 Bristol Surprise Royal** (Comp. OVFO): Adam S Greenley 1, Joanna E Cresshull 2, Catherine E Morley 3, David C Bath 4, Benjamin D Constant 5, Hannah F V Baker 6, Jack E Page (C) 7, Estella J Haynes 8, Douglas J Beaumont 9, Claire F Roulstone 10. Rung after conductor malfunction; not peal number 1234: 5.

Drayton, 6 August 2025. **1260 Plain Bob Triples**: Jeanette Owen 1, Bridget Taylor 2, Tom Palmer 3, Nick Clarke (C) 3, Mary Leneis 5, Michael Winter 6, Oliver Hyde 7, Frank Cullen 8. First of triples: 3 and 5. Birthday compliments to Mary.

Drayton, 11th August 2025. **1260 Doubles** (2m/v 600 Grandsire, 660 April Day): Nick Clarke (C) 1, Bridget Taylor 2, Jim Gulliver 3, Tom Palmer 4, Mary Leneis 5. First in more than one m/v: 3.

Harwell, 24th August 2025. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Ben Williams 1, Darren Williams (C) 2, Mark Vincent 3, Philip Roberts 4, Ian Gillingham 5, Karen Bishop 6. First quarter peal: 1, first quarter peal covering: 6.

Harwell, 28 August 2025. **1260 Grandsire Triples**: Karen Bishop 1, Bridget Taylor 2, Christine Kowalczuk 3, Mark Vincent 4, Stuart F Gibson 5, Darren Williams 6, Nick Clarke (C) 7, Philip Roberts 8. Rung for the wedding of Darren and Lucy. Wedding anniversary compliments to Karen and Gordon (32 years). First triples: 1.

Abingdon, St Nicolas, 19 September 2025. **1260 Grandsire Doubles**: Samuel Fuentes 1, Simon Yarrow 2, Kevin Beer 3, Isaac Davies 4, Josh Ball (C) 5, Michelle X 6. To celebrate 20,000 patients at the Abingdon Surgery. First in method: 4

Steventon, 28 September 2025. **1260 Grandsire Doubles**: Jeanette Owen 1, Richard Loyd 2, Mary Leneis 3, John H Napper 4, Stuart Gibson (C) 5, Bob Mannix 6. Rung to mark Rev. Phil Sutton's retirement from ministry at this church, with great sadness but

with very best wishes from the local ringers and congregation. The following village ringers wish to be associated with this quarter peal: Jack Jarvis, Simon Baker, Reg Baker, Oliver Hyde, Richard Binning, Tom and Mary Clare Palmer, Bridget Taylor and Trish Napper.

Abingdon, St Helen, 19 October 2025. 1**296 Little Bob Royal**: Susan Read 1, David Thomas 2, Richard Youdale 3, Simon Yarrow 4, MarkVincent 5, Brian Read 6, Tim Pett (C) 7, Peter Heritage 8, Kevin Beer 9, Josh Ball 10. Rung to welcome the new Rector, the Revd Dr Jennifer Brown, two days before her Licensing Service.

Abingdon, St Nicolas, 11 November 2025. **1260 Plain Bob Doubles**: Susan Read 1, Josh Ball 2, Samuel Fuentes 3, Brian Read 4, Kevin Beer (C) 5, Jeanette Thomas 6. Rung half-muffled on Remembrance Day. First quarter inside: 3



Abingdon QP band 19th September 2025



Steventon, 28th Sept 2025: QP band with Rev Phil Sutton pictured with one of his trainee Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

Miscellaneous Performances

Abingdon, St Nicolas, 26 April 2025. **Tolling**: In memorium, Pope Francis: Five minutes each continuous up-to-the-balance tolling on Tenor, by Josh Ball, Michelle X, and Peter Heritage. 1 Peter 4:4-5 KJV '*Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead*'.

Abingdon St Nicolas 8 May 2025. **VE Day General Ringing**.



Ringers who celebrated VE Day at St Nicolas, Abingdon

Appleton 11 July 2025. **90 Grandsire Doubles**: Clare Saunders 1, David C Ockwell (C) 2, Isaac Davies 3, Andrew J Dyer 4, Catherine E Hampson 5, Bernard J Stone 6. Rung as a 90th birthday compliment to Audrey Stearn (Grandmother of 5, Mother in Law of 2).

Blewbury, 2 July 2025. **Call Changes**: Mandy Winters 1, Christine Kowalczuk 2, Ellen Bramhill 3, Lindsay Lott 4, Helen Aitkins 5, Gillian Loyd 6, Richard Loyd 7, Matthew Phillips 8. Rung during the interment of Jane Ollington (also known as Jane King), who lived in Blewbury for sixty-four years and who loved to hear the sound of Blewbury bells.

Abingdon, St Nicolas, 15 August 2025. **VJ Day General Ringing**: Plain Bob Minor, Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire Doubles, Cambridge Minor: Priscilla Morris, Elizabeth McNeill, Crispin Mugabi, Samuel Fuentes, Susan Read, Peter Heritage, Josh Ball, Tim Pett, Daniel Gillett, Kevin Beer, Brian Read. Ringing at 6.30 pm to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day.



Blewbury band who rang for Jane Ollington on 2nd July 2025



Abingdon band for VJ Day general ringing on 15th August 2025
Band left to right in the order listed on p26

Peals

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 28 May 2025, 2h42. **5184 Oganesson Surprise Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Colin M Turner 3, John N Hughes-D'Aeth 4, Timothy G Pett 5, Richard L Thumwood 6, Claire F Roulstone 7, Ian Roulstone (C) 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Long Wittenham,** 9 June 2025, 2h45. **5040 Surprise Minor** (7m): Nicola J Turner 1, Michael Chester 2, Richard J Clements 3, Colin M Turner 4, John R Martin (C) 5, Christopher J Pickford 6.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Marcham,** 9 June 2025, 2h44. **5040 Surprise Minor** (12m): Michael Chester 1, Colin M Turner 2, Nicola J Turner 3, Richard J Clements 4, John R Martin 5, Christopher J Pickford 6.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 28 Jun 2025, 2h38. **5056 Spliced Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Colin M Turner 3, Gwen Rogers 4, John N Hughes-D'Aeth (C) 5, Harry M Turner 6, Peter G C Ellis 7, Philip Rogers 8. 2,500th peal: 8. Most spliced: 6.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 20 Jul 2025, 2h35. **5088 Johnstone Castle Surprise Major**: Nicola J Turner 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Colin M Turner 3, Richard L Thumwood 4, Lucas J Williams 5, Ian Roulstone 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Claire F Roulstone 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 22 Jul 2025, 2h32. **5024 Superlative Surprise Major**: Sally A Brown 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Colin M Turner 3, Claire F Roulstone 4, Michael J Dew 5, Oliver J Hyde 6, Richard L Thumwood 7, Ian Roulstone (C) 8. First peal in the method: 6.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 14 Aug 2025, 2h40. **5024 Tennessine Surprise Major**: Cynthia E Howell 1, John N Hughes-D'Aeth (C) 2, Colin M Turner 3, Timothy G Pett 4, Nicola J Turner 5, Richard L Thumwood 6, Ian Roulstone 7, Claire F Roulstone 8. To mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day.

OXFORD SOCIETY **Abingdon**, St Helen, 23 August 2025, 3h5. **5000 Yorkshire Surprise Royal** (Comp. R O Hall): Alan M Eyles [110] 1, Hazel M Rothera [187] 2, Dorothy G Hall [219] 3, Robin O Hall [174] (C) 4, Matthew O Hall [242] 5, Peter W Spain [167] 6, John P W Taylor [37] 7, Christopher I Griggs [349] 8, Mark D Tarrant [14] 9, Jonathan Cresshull [51] 10. All the band ran Abingdon parkrun (5000m) before this peal. (Individual parkrun totals shown). The first such performance on 10 bells, and by members of the same Sunday service band.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 24 Aug 2025, 2h44. **5088 Bristol Surprise Major**: Timothy G Pett 1, Michele Winter 2, Colin M Turner 3, Claire F Roulstone 4, Patricia M Newton 5, Nicola J Turner 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Robert H Newton 8. Arranged and rung in memory of Laura Ivey OAM of Perth. Six members of this band toured Australia in 1999, the other two subsequently.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 8 Sep 2025, 2h40. **5152 St Silas Delight Major**: Robert J Crocker 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Colin M Turner 3, Claire F Roulstone 4, Nicola J Turner 5, Lucas J Williams 6, Peter G C Ellis (C) 7, Richard L Thumwood 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 28 Sep 2025, 2h44. **5088 Yorkshire Surprise Major:** Nicola J Turner 1, Cynthia E Howell 2, Colin M Turner 3, Ann F Eyles 4, Simon L Edwards 5, Timothy G Pett 6, Alan M Eyles (C) 7, Richard L Thumwood 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 3 Oct 2025, 2h47. **5152 Moscovium Surprise Major:** Catherine E Hughes-D'Aeth 1, Nicola J Turner 2, Colin M Turner 3, Janet E John 4, Cynthia E Howell 5, Richard L Thumwood 6, John N Hughes-D'Aeth (C) 7, Graham A C John 8.

ST BLAISE SOCIETY **Milton**, 19 Oct 2025, 2h43. **5152 Silk Willoughby Surprise Major:** Michael J Dew 1, Charlotte A Boyce 2, Colin M Turner 3, Nicola J Turner 4, Cynthia E Howell 5, Marc Hart 6, Richard L Thumwood 7, John R Martin (C) 8.

APPLETON SOCIETY, **Appleton**, St Laurence, 8 November 2025, 3h, **5076 Grandsire Caters:** Michele Winter 1, Simon L Edwards 2, Stuart F Gibson 3, Christine C Darby 4, John H Napper 5, Peter H M Day 6, Simon A Bond (c) 7, Christopher M Mundy 8, David C Ockwell 9, Stephen H Stanford 10. Half-muffled in memory of the Fallen. 800th peal: 1.



The Oxford Society Parkrun and Peal band 23rd August 2025
Band shown in the order 3015948762

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Old North Berks Branch 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



New Year's Day
Ringing & Refreshments



Wednesday 1st January 2026



St Andrew's Church
East Hagbourne



Ringing from
10.30am - 12 noon

Refreshments available from
11.30am - 12:30pm



Everybody welcome



Please support the branch social events
if possible

Branch Practices and Events Diary for January to April 2026

In this trial period, all the evening and afternoon practices are open to ringers at all levels from learning to plain hunt, up to and including surprise methods.

Day	Date	Event	Location	Time
Thurs	1st January	Ringing & Social	East Hagbourne (8)	10.30am – 12.30pm
Mon	12th January	Evening Branch Practice	Chilton (6)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Weds	28th January	Afternoon Branch Practice	Brightwell (8)	2.00 – 3.30pm
Tues	10th February	Evening Branch Practice	Cholsey (8)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Weds	25th February	Afternoon Branch Practice	Steventon (6)	2.00 – 3.30pm
Weds	11th March	Evening Branch Practice	Marcham (6)	7.30 – 9.00pm
Sat	21st March	AGM	Blewbury	12 noon
Weds	25th March	Afternoon Branch Practice	Blewbury (8)	2.00 – 3.30pm
Weds	22nd April	Mini outing & lunch	TBC	

Branch practices for April and beyond will be arranged after the AGM in March.

Next Issue

Deadline for copy for the next issue in June 2025 is 30th April 2025. But please don't wait until then, send your news, pictures, and quarters in as they happen.

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