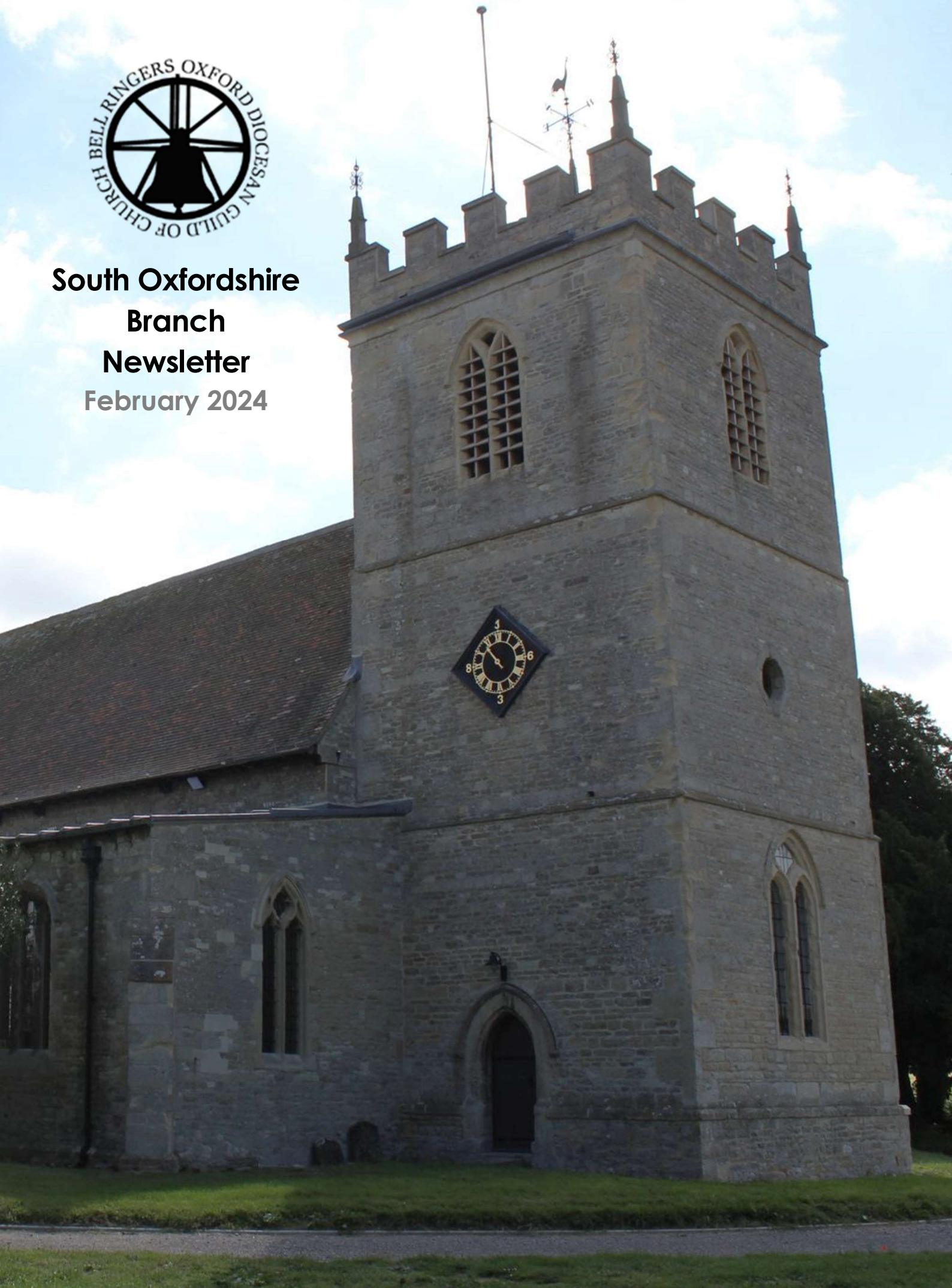




**South Oxfordshire
Branch
Newsletter
February 2024**



St Mary's, Chalgrove (6)

The six bells at St. Mary's Church in Chalgrove are housed within a finely crafted oak frame, re-hung in 2010 to ensure their continued functionality and preservation. Of the six bells, three date back to 1664, while two were cast in 1729. The Treble, originating from 1664, was recast in 1888. The bells are complimented with "Ting Tang", the Sanctus bell, which is often rung before services, dating from 1652.

In July 2010, the bells were carefully taken down for refurbishment, a process that involved meticulous attention to detail to ensure the preservation of their historical integrity. The refurbishment efforts, completed by November of the same year, aimed to enhance the playability of the bells while retaining their historical significance.

The re-dedication of the bells by the Bishop of Dorchester on January 23, 2011, marked a significant milestone in the project. Andrew Davies' account of the refurbishment can be found on the Chalgrove Church website: <https://chalgrovechurch.org/the-church/the-tower/>

The tower clock features only one hand, deliberately designed to stand out and add to its distinctive character. The numbers on the clock face are believed to reference the year 1863, marking a significant renovation or replacement of the face. Further renovations in 1996 and 2013 ensured the clock's continued functionality and visual appeal. The clock and striking mechanisms are hand wound twice weekly by the steeple keeper and a small team of assistants.

Bell	Date	Founder	Note	Weight Cwt Qtr Lbs
Tenor	1729	Abraham II Rudhall	F	16-0-14
5th	1729	Abraham II Rudhall	G	12-0-2
4th	1664	Henry II Knight	A	8-0-24
3rd	1664	Henry II Knight	B _b	7-0-24
2nd	1664	Henry II Knight	C	5-3-26
Treble	1664 (recast 1888)	Henry I Bond & Son(s)	D	5-1-0
Sanctus "Ting Tang"	1652	Henry II Knight	D#	1-2-0



Photographs of the bells and church tower taken from the Chalgrove Church website (chalgrovechurch.org)

South Oxon Branch ODG - Annual General Meeting 2024

Saturday 24th February 2024

St Mary's Church, Chalgrove

Ringling at 3pm will be followed by the service at 4.00 pm. Refreshments will be served in St Mary's Church after the service. The AGM will not commence before 5.00 pm

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM and EGM held on 28th October 2023
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
5. Donations
6. Secretary's Report
7. 100 Club report
8. Branch Representatives' Report
9. Ringing Master's Report
10. Election of Officers :
 - i. Chairman
 - ii. Vice Chairman
 - iii. Secretary
 - iv. Treasurer
 - v. Ringing Master
 - vi. Deputy Ringing Master
 - vii. Branch Representative
 - viii. Branch Representative
 - ix. Newsletter Editor
 - x. 100 Club
 - xi. Webmaster
 - xii. Independent Examiner
11. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates
12. Any Other Business

To help with catering, please could you email bells@chalgrovechurch.org by Wednesday 21st February if you will be attending.

Secretary's Report

Jane Willis

The 2023 AGM took place at the Pine Lodge in Little Milton. Twenty members representing twelve towers were joined by Guild Master Katie Lane and Guild Steward Patricia Newton. A long-standing vacancy was filled - Andrew Davis and John Hughes-D'Aeth joined forces to share the role of Ringing Master. The Webmaster role became vacant - grateful thanks to Benji Bateman for agreeing to take this on later in the year. All other Branch officers remained in place. Their fortitude is appreciated.

The highlight of the year was ringing to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III – every tower took part, with several quarters being recorded on Bell Board. Branch Practices have continued to be well attended – on occasions, as many as twenty ringers have taken part. Methods rung have included Rounds and Call Changes, Plain Bob Doubles and Minor, Grandsire, Stedman and Norwich. After a long break Tower Twinning recommended in January, with five towers taking part. Two more towers joined during the year.

Sadly, we lost Allan Smith from Aston Rowant during the year. Allan passed away in April. Prior to 2001, Allan chalked up several quarters, usually on the tenor. Following a serious illness, he gradually returned to ringing enjoying outings and ringing holidays and achieving more quarters on the treble.

Three of our ringers celebrated major milestones during the year. Certificates were presented to Christopher Rogers and David Watkin, both from Drayton St Leonard, to mark fifty years membership of the Guild. John Tchighianoff was appointed a Distinguished Member at the ODG AGM, in recognition of his commitment to the branch, to Benson and ringing in general over the course of almost half a century.

A look back at 25 Years Ago

The 1999 AGM took place in Thame with thirty-two members in attendance representing fourteen towers. The AGM was preceded by ringing at Thame, and followed by ringing at Shabbington!

Three towers took part in the Branch Striking Competition, with Chinnor taking the prize. Drayton St Leonard won the Holloway Shield and Great Milton were awarded the Guild prize for the Best Kept Tower competition. Two Branch Outings took place. The secretary reports that "The Branch Outing for October ambitiously aimed to visit five counties but was thwarted when somebody moved one of the churches"! They enjoyed a champagne reception at Stowe School, and had an outing to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in the same year.

Andrew Davis achieved his 100th quarter, Kay Bartholomew and Christopher Rogers each conducted their first quarter.

Some things don't change – such as John Tchighianoff being Chairman – and the report from the Guild Public Relations Officers who explained that she is trying to set up a network of email users throughout the Guild to disseminate information quickly.

Distinguished Membership

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

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

Ringling Master's Report

Andrew Davies and John Hughes-D'Aeth

Branch Practices have been very sociable and well supported. Both John and myself have aimed to make them fun and inclusive, to ensure everyone has a ring and chance to try something different. At each tower we start with "Rounds" to get the feel of the bells and the pace they need to be rung at. Asking people what they want to ring, I keep hearing two methods mentioned, "I don't mind" and "Whatever" I'm yet to find the Blue Line to either! Please let us know what you want to try, we're lucky to have enough people to help.

The Branch Practices have highlighted the lack of opportunity within the Branch to ring changes on 8. We have therefore decided to organise a series of 8 bell method ringing practices, alternating on Friday and Saturday afternoons. The first practice (at Benson in January) proved very popular, with 24 people attending. We rang lots of Grandsire Triples as well as Stedman, Plain and Little Bob Major and rounded off with half a course of Cambridge. Future practices are planned at Great Milton, Dorchester, Thame and Warborough.

I am pleased to report that Tower Twinning has become very popular, we started last year with five towers and now have seven taking part. Always enjoyable, a chance to meet new faces and try different bells and ideal to crack that elusive method. There is always room for more to join in, please contact me for more details; bells@chalgrovechurch.org

100 Club Report

John Tchighianoff

We had 62 subscriptions to the 100 Club. The figures are as follows:

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	620.00	First prize: £13 (Jan)	13.00
		First prizes: £15 (Feb – Nov)	150.00
		Second prizes: £10 (Jan – Nov)	110.00
		December prizes (1 st : £16, 2 nd : £12, 3 rd : £9)	37.00
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	310.00
	620.00		620.00

Prize table

2022	First prize	Second prize	Third prize	Prize money (£)
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January	Dorchester Tower	John Tchighianoff	-	23.00
February	Clive Boseley	Hilarie Rogers	-	25.00
March	Peter Logan	Christine Wasmuth	-	25.00
April	Cathy Hughes-D'Aeth	John Tchighianoff	-	25.00
May	Anita Clayton	Ray Fergusson	-	25.00
June	John Hughes-D'Aeth	Fran Butler	-	25.00
July	Mark Wasmuth	Warborough Tower	-	25.00
August	Mark Wasmuth	Paul Smith	-	25.00
September	Ray Fergusson	Kay Tuckwell	-	25.00
October	Paul Smith	Warborough Tower	-	25.00
November	Anita Clayton	Robert Newton	-	25.00
December	Sue Dyke	Shirley Smith	Fran Butler	37.00
Total				<u>310.00</u>

Branch Representatives' Report

Amy Herlihy and Japhiah Slaney

The guild has been busy throughout 2023. Training days, workshops, a glorious AGM, and of course the fantastic Guild Festival. In the background, driving the cogs, we had committee meetings, officers and workgroups all working hard for the ODG ringer.



The ringing chamber at Bampton. One of the towers opened for the 2023 AGM.

See below for the latest issues of interest:

Finance

As expected for some time the annual guild member subscription has increased from £8 to £10. £3 of this goes to the members branch with the remainder to the guild. The biggest cost increases have been in insurance, IT, and Young Ringer costs. It is hoped

that this small rise will bring the accounts back into balance which have been in deficit for a few years.

The guild continues to consider becoming a registered charity as the ODBF has become. With the nearing of a one-to-one digital presence between ringer and guild this could streamline a gift aid statement and boost guild funds.

The guild made donations in 2023 in assistance of organizations maintaining, promoting, and training bell ringing. These were ODBF £2000, Ringing World £750, and ART £500.

Amazon Smile is no longer available for donations to ODBF. However, you can leave them a legacy. The charity that helps with all sorts of bell restoration projects has now produced a leaflet to encourage the idea.

Digital

A lot of work is going into finding a suitable membership database for the guild. This will ultimately reduce server costs and allow more direct communication with the guild members. The database has not yet been settled on, but there is hope that it will be up and in use in the next year.

The Ring for the King campaign has increased numbers. But it is not so clear what percentage of these ringers are carrying on. There is a thinking that; 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it'. With this in mind, a membership database would be useful to keep track of these sorts of issues too.

Other

It is hoped that our tower notice boards can be brought into the 21st by utilizing QR codes on Guild posters. These speckled dots of information can be scanned by mobile phones and lead to web links, virtual versions, and calendar events to help spread the message to both ringers and non-ringers alike. Hopefully we can see some designs coming out shortly.

The observant member may have noticed that the Guild 2022 Annual Report had a white cover again. The same as 2021. It had been hoped to continue with a different colour each year to lend distinction. But this year it was not to be.

Have you ever washed a pair of 'pre-shrunk' trousers and had them come out as a pair children's shorts? Well, if one of your bells starts feeling a little springy it could be the 'pre-stretched' terylene top. Towers and Belfries reports multiple cases of new ropes not being fit for purpose due to the synthetic portion – the part from just above the sally upwards- being a little better marketed than made. If your ropes could do with a look over, Tony Crabtree and team are more than happy to help.

Posts

We have a new Deputy Guild Master, Chris Mundy, who is also newly on the Learning and Development Workgroup. Those of us attending our December branch practice at Shabbington shall have met him already.

There are several guild posts that could be filled: One more Central Council Representative. We are allowed six. Each one gives us more voting power within the CC. Odd Bob editor is coming up as Rob Needham steps down. The Learning and Development Workgroup Chairman is vacant. And two Joint Minutes Secretaries are needed.

Events

The Guild 2023 AGM was held on 20 May 2023 in Broadwell, West Oxfordshire. It was an absolutely lovely day and we were treated to the views (and acoustics) of several low passes from the giant heavy air lift planes of Brize Norton. The hosts set out several activities to accommodate a large number of ringers. In fact, there was so much on offer, one had to choose between two routes for tower grabbing or a tour of Whites of Appleton. All wrapped up with the 8 Bell striking competition too. For a full report with photos, please see: <https://odg.org.uk/publications/agm/agm-2023-2/agm-2023-report/>

This year's Guild AGM, which aims to be equally as fun. It is lined up for Saturday 18th May in the East Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire Branch.

The Guild Festival will be held in 2031 which is a bit longer than the usual 5 year wait. It's being set in 2031 to combine the festival with the 150th anniversary of the Guild. Should be a good event!

The new Raising and Lowering Competition now has a trophy. A magnificent carved wood affair presented by Robert Newton and called the Coronation Trophy, as it was inaugurated in 2023. It already has its first winner, Hook Norton, who won the first competition in October. Want to see it? Then get a band together and put your oar in. The rules for what constitute a band are not strict. It is all about giving more attention to that first and last bit of our exercise.

If you ring hand bells you have probably heard them a lot. Otherwise, even for us mainstay tower bashers, each occasion is of note. This year the Ashmolean Museum are presenting their 'One World Family Festival' and they have requested ODG to make a showing. So, if your ears are twitching for a listen, get down there Saturday 10th February. Full schedule here: <https://www.ashmolean.org/event/one-world-family-festival-2024>

Bell Fund Activity for 2022 (reported in March 2023)

The ODBF paid grants throughout the year towards the completed projects of: Aston Clinton and Sandhurst. Levels of provisional grant allocations were maintained at 20% for eligible restoration works and up to 15% for augmentation elements. The level of grant allocated depends on the number of applications and the income available.

Guild 2024 Dates to note:

- **Saturday 10 February:** Radley Rope Management & Splicing
- **Saturday 13th April:** Radley Course, for improving Grandsire and Plain Bob on various numbers. Radley, Abingdon.

- **Saturday 27th April:** General Belfry Course, for understanding bell maintenance. Enstone, Chipping Norton Branch.
- **Monday 6th May:** Ringing Day to raise money for the Bell Fund. Oxford City Branch
- **Saturday 18th May:** Guild AGM, Activity Day, and 8-bell Striking Competition. EBSB Branch
- **Saturday 29nd June:** Introduction to Steeple Keeping, Stratfield Mortimer, St Mary's Church
- **Saturday 6th July:** New ODG Members' Day. Welcoming and encouraging new guild members. (Abingdon)
- **Saturday 28th September:** Michaelmas Course
- **Saturday, 5th October:** 6-bell Striking Competition & Raising & Lowering competition, Sonning Deanery
- **Saturday 26th October:** Steeple Aston Course, showing rope splicing, maintenance and management.
- **Saturday 23rd November:** General Committee Meeting (Banbury branch) & 10 bell competition (venue tbc)

Treasurer's Report

Kay Bartholomew

Receipts and payments for year ending 31st December 2023:

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Payments</u>	<u>£</u>
		Guild Subscriptions	560.00
Subscriptions	896.00	Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	440.00
100 Club	620.00	100 Club Prizes	310.00
Donations	4.00	Newsletter printing	35.60
Refund of Unpaid 100 Club prize cheques	35.00	Meetings/Hirings	50.00
Deposit A/C Interest	9.16	Website Business Fee	86.31
AGM collection	57.70	Domain Name Renewal	14.39
Total Receipts	1621.86	Total Expenditure	1496.30
Brought Forward (01/01/2023)	3026.24	Balance Carried Forward (31/12/2023)	3151.80
	<u>4648.10</u>		<u>4648.10</u>

Balance sheet as at 31st December 2023:

	£
Brought Forward (01/01/2023)	3026.24
Receipts	<u>1621.86</u>
	4648.10
Payments	<u>1496.30</u>

Balance Carried Forward (31/12/2022)	<u>3151.80</u>
Current A/C Balance	1962.81
Deposit A/C Balance	1188.99
	<u>3151.80</u>

Prepared by: Kay Bartholomew, 1st January 2024.

Examined by: Raymond Fergusson, 7th January 2024.

Subscriptions remained at £8.00 and we had at Year end 112 paid members, 2 Honorary Members and one member who made a donation. The 100 Club was supported by 62 members and £310.00 was sent to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. In addition, £100.00 was sent from Branch funds, together with £30.00 from the AGM collection, making a total of £440.00.

The website business fee increased this year to £86.31, but the Domain name renewal remained at £14.39. The Branch made a surplus of £125.56 the year.

My thanks once again go to John Tchighianoff for running the 100 Club and Raymond Fergusson for examining the accounts.

Website update

Benji Bateman

In a bid to keep our Branch website regularly updated, I agreed to take on editorial duties. The live website needed a lot of attention, the last regular updates were from 2017 and a large proportion of the information was outdated. After experiencing difficulties with passwords and service subscriptions between successive Webmasters, I made enquiries about hosting our site on the ODG server.

After exchanging emails with Andrew Goldthorpe (ODG Webmaster) and Richard Stanworth (ODG Server Manager), they agreed to host our website on their server. This brings about benefits such as no annual hosting fee (refer to Treasurer's Report), WordPress support (an easy-to-use content management system used by our current website), technical support with establishing the website and managing editorial access.

The first stage of migration will be to get a sandbox site working on their development server. This will give tower captains and other Branch officers the opportunity to review the existing content and propose edits as required. Once the website functions and has updated and accurate information, it can be cloned to the live server. We will be given an odg.org.uk address to which we can redirect our existing domain.

The timescale for this transition is not easy to estimate since there are technical challenges involved, but I will work with the elected Web Master to complete it as soon as practicable. A regularly updated website with benefit members of our Branch, Guild and our visitors.

Obituaries

Robert Newton

Belinda Wood

David and Belinda Wood were leading members at Aston Rowant in the 1980s and were key in building up the band after the bells were augmented and made properly ring-able in 1978. After David retired from his job with the Army at Wilton Park in Beaconsfield, where they had rung previously, they moved to N. Oxfordshire as David had secured a post at Bloxham School. Later they moved to Cumbria. David sadly lost his battle with cancer and Belinda moved to be near her daughter in Northchurch where she was still very much involved with ringers and ringing for a while. She spent her last few years at a care home in Beaconsfield, within the sound of the bells, and passed away in mid-December at the age of 86.

Meg Way

Meg lived and rang at Chinnor in the late 1980s and 90s before moving to Devon with her husband Ron over 20 years ago. She rang countless quarter peals in our area, very often out ringing every day of the week, and will be remembered as a leading member of the 'flying squad', which provided bands for service ringing at undermanned towers. She learned to ring at Ashted, Surrey, as a teenager and was later a member of the Curfew Tower band at Windsor Castle, ringing about forty quarter peals there including one for the marriage of Charles and Diana. It is remarkable that her enthusiasm never rubbed off on Ron, as he never took up ringing. They were both regulars on ringing days out in N. Devon and N. Cornwall after their move and it was on one of these trips that she was taken ill and made her final journey to hospital. Her funeral was held at S Molton where, at Ron's request, the bells were rung open before and after the service by some of her many ringing friends.

Tower Reports

Aston Rowant

Robert Newton

We have enjoyed another successful year, with well-supported Sunday service ringing and practices. However, this is only with the dedication of those wonderful people who travel some distance to ring here. Now we have a fixed 9am service on every Sunday except when there are five in the month, there is less uncertainty about when to turn up! It also means that the Newtons can assist in raising the bells and ringing in a couple of touches before heading off along the M40 in time for service ringing at High Wycombe, so we usually ring all six for a while but lower two threes!

Practices can be busy and we try to cater for everything from bell-handling to Cambridge, with a variety of Doubles methods to create interest, exercise the little grey cells and prevent us getting too set in our ways with Grandsire and Plain Bob. Cambridge can still be a struggle but we have managed to ring a simple touch or two: congratulations to Adam on ringing his first quarter in the method at Great

Haseley and his first on eight at Thame. We have enjoyed and benefited from our twinning practices with Chalgrove, Benson and Little Milton. There were three Tuesdays when we did not practise: our dinner in Holy Week, a social evening in July and safeguarding training in October. The hand bells were again well used by the Y6 children at the school Christingle service, which was much appreciated by parents and staff, and the children seemed to enjoy themselves as well.

Four quarters have been rung here during the year:

7th February; 1260 Plain Bob Doubles; Wendy's 1st in the method inside and a compliment to Phoenix on his 18th birthday

2nd May; 1260 Grandsire Doubles; rung in fond memory of Allan Smith, former ringer and steeple keeper

6th May; 1320 Plain Bob Doubles; Adam's 1st quarter as conductor; to celebrate the Coronation

14th November; 1260 Doubles (2m); a 75th birthday compliment to His Majesty the King.

We were delighted that Shirley Smith was able to ring with us briefly prior to the two 'royal' quarters, as she has also done on a few Sundays to make up the numbers.

Benson

John Tchighianoff

I am pleased to report that our numbers in the tower are growing. Chris and Lisa have been learning over the last year and are now ringing regularly on Sundays and practice nights. They are both seeking election to the Guild at our Branch AGM. We also have three more learners who are making progress.

Unusually we had no weddings to ring for during the year. However, we were pleased to ring for the Coronation on 6th May. This was the first time Chris rang without a minder. It was good that with help we were able to ring all the bells in the three towers in the benefice.

In June we mounted a display on bell ringing in the Parish Hall in support of an event run by The Bensington Society History Group. In September the church held a Heritage Open Day at which we gave demonstrations of ringing. This was well attended by visitors and resulted in one of our new learners. Next year we are hoping to set up a video link so that visitors will be able to see the bells whilst they are rung. We again took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in church at the beginning of December and this was very well attended.

We were very pleased to welcome an ASCY band who rang a peal on the morning of Monday 6th November (a warmup for a peal later in the day at Watlington!). The peal was announced on the village Facebook page and received over 90 likes and many favourable comments.

We are most grateful to John, Cathy and Japh who come twice a month to our Wednesday practices. This enables us to ring all eight bells which we are not normally able to do without their help.

Berrick Salome and Chalgrove

Andrew Davis

Practice nights have continued to be well supported, Jonathan and Faye have had to step back to look after their young family. We always start and finish our practice by ringing rounds, with anyone sitting out scoring the striking. I can recommend this as there is something magical and calming when listening to well struck rounds. All of the

team are progressing well, from the first steps in learning to attempting Little Bob Minor. As always, we are grateful to Gordon who joins us most weeks.

Unfortunately, Sunday ringing has been a struggle, work and family commitments have meant we rarely ring all six bells. Sadly, this also impacted on our Christmas schedule as there wasn't enough of us available, other than for the Carol Services.

With my Berrick Salome hat on, we usually manage to ring on the first and third Sunday of the month, there is hope that we may gain some new recruits in the next year or so. Meanwhile we often attempt quarter peals, we have been known to complete the odd few as well...

Dorchester

Nick Forman

The band made good progress during 2023 ending the year with 11 of us able to ring Plain Hunt on seven (though not all at the same time of course!). Our raising and lowering in peal has improved considerably, though still needs more work. We have 12 regular "experienced" ringers once one of our number returns from maternity leave and are lucky to have three youngsters when they are able to join us. We have three new learners who have started to ring in the last couple of months.

We rang on 48 Tuesdays and for 52 Sunday services during the year as on some Sundays there are two services. There was only one Sunday in the year, in August, where we were unable to raise a team of four or more. "Special" ringing included the new Rector, Jane Willis' licencing service in February and Coronation Day ringing in May where 11 of us rang for the Coronation, nine for a wedding and then six of us rang for the Coronation in Warborough. Our three twinning sessions were very successful with Little Milton, Chalgrove and Shabbington.

We joined the Oxon Ringing School in the Spring and are now one of the four ringing centres in the School. The School teaches around 12 learners every Saturday where the learner gets one-to-one teaching for an hour, which really helps them to develop their handling skills. Annie attended the teaching training course in September and is now joining David and I, along with teachers from elsewhere in the School to teach on a Saturday morning. Our newest recruits are signed up with the School and hopefully will make good progress over the next three months.

Drayton St. Leonard

Hilarie Rogers

Our Wednesday practices have continued twice a month during the past year. Japh, John and Cathy are regular visitors, and Catherine joins us when she can. We have stretched our brains by attempting different doubles methods and variations! Plain Bob with Pinks single and Reverse Canterbury bob keeps us awake. When numbers are lower, we get out our sheets of Minimus methods, and in the Autumn we rang St Nicholas Minimus regularly in preparation for St Nicholas' Day at the beginning of December. It is an important Festival in the Netherlands, where Linda comes from, and she was pleased to ring it.

We have continued to ring for Sunday services, usually on either 5 or 6 bells. We still ring, however, if numbers are lower than that, as the village likes to hear us. In common with most towers, we rang for the Coronation of King Charles III.

We welcomed three sets of visiting ringers; one group rang a quarter peal and the other groups were part of the Radley and Bradfield ringing courses. We were also pleased to welcome 20 ringers to the July branch practice.

Great Haseley

John Hughes-D'Aeth

Although Great Haseley has no local ringers, we have once again kept the bells ringing during 2023. My thanks to all the "friends of Great Haseley" who have supported our efforts.

We have continued to hold practices on the fourth Monday of each month, other than December (obviously). We have expanded our repertoire this year to include Norwich, Primrose and London, in addition to the standard fare of Plain and Little Bob, Grandsire, Stedman and Cambridge. Whilst these have not always been a complete success, we have definitely made progress and some of our ringing has been very pleasing. Anyone out there who wishes to improve their 6 bell method ringing – at whatever level - is most welcome to join us in 2024. We have also managed to raise a band for most of the major Parish and Benefice Sunday services during the year.

We celebrated the King's Coronation in style, scoring a peal of Spliced Minor and a quarter peal of Stedman Doubles over the weekend. Two other quarters were rung on the bells during 2023; one of Doubles by a visiting band, and a first of Cambridge Minor for Adam Lockwood from Aston Rowant (well done Adam). We rang for one wedding, hosted the Bradfield course (again) and welcomed two other visiting bands. We also had some less welcome visitors, with the mild and damp autumn bringing a plague of flies as well as a couple of the local bat population. Thankfully the bats didn't hang around, but the flies needed more aggressive treatment to remove them.

Whites of Appleton came to service the bells and fittings in May and generally gave them a clean bill of health. This is comforting, but (in the absence of local expertise) we are planning to ask them to return every two years, just to be on the safe side.

We know that the local community very much appreciate our efforts and are pleased to hear the bells being rung. We intend to continue to put them to good use in 2024.

Little Milton

Cathy Hughes D'Aeth

We have continued to hold practices on the first and third Tuesday of each month and have rung for every main Sunday service throughout 2023.

During the year we have welcomed visiting bands from the Oxford City Branch and Hampstead Norreys/Yattendon. We rang for one wedding and for the opening of the Church Fete in July. We have also enjoyed twinning with both Dorchester Abbey and Aston Rowant.

To celebrate the King's Coronation we rang the bells leading up to the service at Westminster Abbey. Then, on Monday 8th May, we rang a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles to mark the occasion, with help from Kay Bartholomew.

Whites of Appleton carried out their two yearly maintenance visit in May. All was well except for a crack in the 2nd stay, which has been replaced.

Once again a huge thank you to Chris Rogers, John Tchighianoff, Amy Herlihy, Katie Lane and Stuart and Caroline Flockton for their support and patience, which have helped to keep our practices viable.

Warborough

Sue Dyke

Once again Warborough bells have been fairly quiet during the past year as we now only have 2 resident ringers. We have, however, been able to welcome quite a number of visiting bands during the year: Nettlebed outing, 3 quarter peals, The Bradfield Course, the Abingdon Summer School, The Michaelmas Course, The ODG Young Ringers Practice and the Long Crendon outing. The village always enjoys the sound of the bells and I often receive positive comments following the ringing. Also, with the help of the Dorchester ringers we rang the bells for two weddings in 2023. With the help of the Dorchester ringers, we joined in the "Ring for the King" celebrations by ringing Rounds and Call Changes, including Kings and Queens. As Warborough is a ground floor ring this attracted quite an audience from the village. Once again, I would like to thank the Dorchester ringers for their unwavering support in 2023.

Watlington

Peter Logan

2023 has been an exciting year for us. We started the year by considering the implications of Whites' recommendations following their inspection of the bells in 2022. It was obvious however that we needed to take action to restore the bells and so we started the fundraising process. Our first grant was pledged by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust in February which was a great encouragement, and we now have grants totalling £58,000 from thirteen different bodies, with several further applications being considered.

It took six weeks to open a bank account for the Bell Fund but this was finally achieved in April and we were able to start accepting donations from individuals. We are very grateful for the many donations received since, most of which have come from local people, and which is also hugely encouraging. We are particularly grateful for the special peal rung by members of the Ancient Society of College Youths at our tower in November to support our efforts and which significantly boosted our fundraising.

Overall we have now raised £65,000 and our target is almost within reach.

Our website at <https://sites.google.com/view/watbellfund/home> has more information.

Our band of ringers has also developed well this year, starting with five fairly inexperienced ringers and ending with eight slightly more experienced and one very experienced ringer who is able to guide us forwards. In the past eighteen months, we have successfully integrated four new starters with no previous experience of ringing. 2024 will hopefully also be another exciting one with completion of the restoration project a very real prospect in the near future. And, although we will have to interrupt our progress for a few months whilst the bells are away being worked on, we look forward to welcoming more new ringers to the tower and continuing to develop as a band.

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**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF
 CHURCH BELLRINGERS**
 South Oxon Branch Practices
 2024

Date	Time	Tower
27th January	4:00 – 5:30 pm	Great Milton (8)
24th February	3:00 pm onwards	Chalgrove -AGM (6)
23rd March	4:00 – 5:30 pm	Benson (8)
27th April	7:00 – 8:30 pm	Great Haseley (6)
25th May	7:00 – 8:30 pm	Brightwell Baldwin (6)
22nd June	7:00 – 8:30 pm	Ewelme (6)
27th July	7:00 – 8:30 pm	Warborough (8)
28th September	7:00 – 8:30 pm	Tetsworth (6)
26th October	4:00 – 5:30 pm	Dorchester (8)
7th December	4:00 – 5:30 pm	Thame (8)

