



Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers
South Oxfordshire Branch



Branch Newsletter
February 2025

St Helen's Church, Benson (8)

The first church in Benson was almost certainly a wooden building erected during the Saxon period and of which there are no traces. It is quite likely that this church was founded by St Birinus, Bishop of Wessex. The earliest recognisable feature in the present church is a late 12th century window which has been re-set in the east wall of the south aisle. It probably belonged to a church with only a nave and chancel. Aisles were then added in the 13th century.

The first indication of bells is in the 1553 inventory which includes *4 bells in the steeple*. It seems clear from records however that by 1727 there were six bells in the tower although we have no information on this tower or of the bells. A decision was made in 1765 to replace the tower with the original intention of replacing the six bells. However it seems that funds were short and it was not until 1781 that the new tower was finally completed. At the same time it was agreed that timber on church land should be felled and sold in order to raise sufficient funds to purchase eight new bells to be installed in the tower. Thomas Janaway of Chelsea was contracted to cast the bells and these were installed anti-clockwise in a timber frame constructed by Edward Simmons. The eight bells are in the key of F# with a tenor weight of 14cwt 1qr 22lbs. The cost of the bells was £163.15.0

Two of the bells were subsequently recast, the 2nd in 1852 by C & G Mears and the third in 1922 by Mears & Stainbank.

In 1971 a new floor was installed in the tower to create a choir vestry and the ringing chamber was moved onto the new floor. In 1993 the tower captain, Stan Day, died and in his memory the seventh and eight were rehung with all new fittings.

However, over the subsequent years the bells were becoming increasingly difficult to ring and In 2009 a major overhaul of the bells was undertaken. The bells were rehung clockwise by Whites of Appleton in a new cast iron frame supported on steel beams. English Heritage gave permission to replace the oak frame on condition that we obtained a full archaeological survey. We now have a very detailed report on the original frame and the bells with much interesting information obtained from the County Records Office. We have also retained a section of the old frame.

The church clock is of interest as it has two X1s on its face. During the Second World War, the traitor Lord Haw Haw, broadcasting from Germany, announced that an RAF station near a church with two elevens on its clock would be bombed. RAF Benson was indeed bombed but the damage was only slight. The clock face was repainted in 2012 and it was agreed to keep the two elevens.

Bell	Date	Founder	Note	Weight (cwt-qtrs-lbs)
Treble	1781	Thomas Janaway	F#	5-1-2
2	1852	C & G Mears	E#	5-0-7
3	1922	Mears & Stainbank	D#	5-2-23
4	1781	Thomas Janaway	E#	6-2-12
5	1781	Thomas Janaway	B	7-2-2
6	1781	Thomas Janaway	A#	8-1-12
7	1781	Thomas Janaway	G#	10-0-16
Tenor	1781	Thomas Janaway	F#	14-1-22

South Oxon Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 22nd February 2025, St Helen's Church, Benson

Ringling at 3pm will be followed by the service at 4.00 pm.

Refreshments will be served in the Canons' Room at St Helens 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 2024 AGM and EGM held on 26th October 2024
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 :
 - a. Chairman
 - b. Vice Chairman
 - c. Secretary
 - d. Treasurer
 - e. Ringing Master
 - f. Deputy Ringing Master
 - g. Branch Representative
 - h. Branch Representative
 - i. Newsletter Editor
 - j. 100 Club
 - k. Webmaster
 - l. Independent Examiner
11. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates
12. Any Other Business
13. Date of next AGM – Saturday 28th February 2026

To help with catering, please could you email Benson@southoxon.odg.org.uk by Tuesday 18th February if you will be attending.

Secretary's Report

Jane Willis

The 2024 AGM took place at St Mary's Church, Chalgrove. Twenty-two members representing twelve towers were joined by Guild Master Katie Lane and Guild Steward Patricia Newton. All Branch Officers remained in place.

2024 saw a full programme of monthly Branch Practices and the introduction of regular Eight Bell Practices. Six towers have participated in tower twinning, and everyone finds the additional practices greatly beneficial.

Rosalie Gibson, David Parker and John Tchighianoff were presented with certificates celebrating fifty years membership of the Guild. The presentations took place at their respective churches, and incumbents and congregations were delighted to thank them for their dedication, their time spent organising ringing for royal events, service ringing, weddings and other local events, and for teaching generations of new ringers.

Sadly, four former branch ringers have passed away during the year. Robin Dyke learnt to ring at Benson in the early 1960s and rang regularly at Wallingford and Goring before moving to Warborough. Olive Lawrence learnt to ring in Brightwell Baldwin in the late 1970s and was later appointed Tower Captain. Olive was a driving force in having the bells rehung. Clive Bosley rang regularly at Benson for several years until ill health curtailed his activities, and Deirdre Mann, who learnt to ring at Great Haseley, and who offered great support and encouragement to recent ringers at the tower.

A look back at 25 Years Ago

The 2000 AGM took place in Benson with twenty-four in attendance representing eleven towers. The AGM was preceded by ringing at Benson, and afterwards at Chalgrove.

Ringing had taken place at noon at every tower in the Branch to celebrate the new Millennium, and thanks were extended to those who had taught others to ring especially for the occasion. Three teams took part in the Branch Striking Competition – which commenced with a loud bang and a broken stay! However, the competition continued, and once again, Chinnor took first place.

First quarter peals had been rung by Pat Cox and Alan Booker, (Great Milton) Charlotte Rogers (Drayton St Leonard) Robert Wells and Claire Armit (Brightwell Baldwin). A peal had been rung at Chalgrove to celebrate Brian and Glenys Gray's Ruby Wedding.

Details of an outing to Salisbury recorded a stop at Andover, with a 70 step climb to the ringing chamber. The sway of the tower challenged several of the ringers. The coach got stuck on a humpback bridge on a bend in a single-track road, and had a 400 metre reverse up a lane to Britford Church!

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](http://odg.org.uk/main/pdf/dm_nomination_form_2014.pdf)

Ringling Master's Report

Andrew Davies and John Hughes-D'Aeth

Branch Practices continue to be well supported, with a good mix of rounds, call changes and method ringing. An important note for 2025 is the change to summer practice times. Having spoken to everyone who attends over the last few months, it was clear that the later time in the Summer causes problems with evening commitments. Therefore all the Branch Practices this year will run from 4:00 – 5:30pm. We can review whether this works in the Autumn, then decide how we proceed for 2026.

Alongside the regular Branch Practices, we have instituted a monthly Branch 8 bell practice with the aim of giving members a better opportunity to ring changes on 8. These practices, alternating on Friday and Saturday afternoons, have proved popular and will continue throughout 2025. After an initial rush with over 20 people at the first few practices, attendances have settled down at between 14 and 18, including some very welcome helpers from (just) outside the Branch. The repertoire has expanded to include everything from Plain Bob and Grandsire to Bristol and Superlative Surprise. With Great Milton losing its team of ringers, the Friday practices are planned to continue there to keep the bells ringing.

Tower Twinning is very popular, I'll continue sending out the schedule. Please let me know if your Tower would like to join in via my contact details; bells@chalgrovechurch.org or chalgrove@southoxon.odg.org.uk.

100 Club Report

John Tchighianoff

We had 69 subscriptions to the 100 Club which is an increase on the previous year. The figures are as follows:

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	690.00	First prizes: £15 (Jan - Nov)	165.00
		Second prize: £10 (Jan)	10.00
		Second prizes: £11 (Feb – Nov)	110.00
		December prizes (1 st : £25, 2 nd : £20, 3 rd : £15)	60.00
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	345.00
	690.00		690.00

Prize winners in the year were:

2024	First prize	Second prize	Third prize	Prize money (£)
January	Lisa Ramsey	Christine Wasmuth	-	25.00
February	Kay Tuckwell	Michael Rothery	-	26.00
March	Warborough Tower	David Watkin	-	26.00
April	Anita Clayton	Jane Willis	-	26.00
May	Rosalie Gibson	Hilarie Rogers	-	26.00
June	John Hughes-D'Aeth	Wendy Simon	-	26.00
July	Gordon Smith	Andrew Davis	-	26.00
August	Rosalie Gibson	Sara Scotland	-	26.00
September	Christine Wasmuth	Kay Tuckwell	-	26.00
October	Sue Dyke	Sacha Mogg	-	26.00
November	Andrew Davis	Kate Allen	-	26.00
December	Annette Cook	Robert Wells	Gordon Smith	60.00
Total				<u>345.00</u>

Branch Representatives' Report

Amy Herlihy and Japhiah Slaney

As usual the guild has been a veritable beehive of activity. Over the past year there have been competitions, tower inspections, meetings, training days and some really deep thinking. See below for the most standout points. Perhaps uppermost, the guild restructure proposal!

Finance

The Central Council (CC) is a federation of ringing societies that aims to do things that are best done, or can only be done, nationally. Over the last few years the CC has run at a financial deficit. Despite this, it is increasing expenditure in an attempt to promote bell ringing on a national level with hopes of reducing a gradual decline in ringers across the board. The current affiliation fee (the amount guilds pay to be involved) is 40p per ringer. Last year it was 20p. Before that things were calculated differently on more of a per guild basis. This is particularly pertinent to us, as we are one guild with many ringers. These last two years have been a soft intro towards the target amount of £1 per ringer. At this rate the CC should cover currently projected expenditure. This is a sizable sum as it would seem inevitable that our guild subs would have to go up to accommodate this extra outlay.

Maintenance

- The guild is getting on 150 years old. And the magnitude of the Guild Library reflects this. Doug Beaumont, 24 years Guild Librarian, has housed the archive running back to the 19th century. It currently consists of 7 bookcases and 20 boxes. He will be giving up the role presently. Do you have a spare room? It is acknowledged that the chances of finding a suitable location in the form of a

volunteer is vanishingly small. The guild will investigate alternative means of storage.

- The Tower and Belfries Committee (T&B) continues to extend the invite to assist towers with know-how on the physical aspect of our exercise. The bells themselves, wheels, frames, mortar etc. They will come and have a look at whatever problems you have and give ideas on solving any hiccups that might be interrupting your band's progress. Need help in that direction? Fire them off an email: tbsecretary@odg.org.uk
- Tower and Belfries are always on the lookout for new members. It is a bit of a Marmite game; mucking about in cold, oily, cramped, cobwebby places is not everyones cup of tea. But if the thought of caring for venerable lumps of bronze, often centuries old, that quite literally keep our exercise rolling appeals, then perhaps it is for you. They would love to hear from you.
- It is one of the most dreaded moments in a bellringers life, breaking the stay. But, mechanically speaking, that is what they are there for. Do you hesitate to switch on the kettle because the fuse might blow? However, good ash for new stays is becoming harder to find. Ash-dieback is part of this. On procurement, consider what you are getting. T&B can help with this.

Digital

- Management of the guild website, which is also shortly to be hosting our own South Oxon website, is described as functioning as expected. The position of Assistant Webmaster is still vacant. If you think you can help, put your name in in time for the guild AGM in May.
- MemberMojo, the guilds membership software, is now being used. Although inclusion of Date of Birth requirements for insurance purposes has raised some trepidation, the onboarding of well over 2000 members of the largest guild in the world has been hailed as a great success.
- Odd Bob, the guild newsletter, as opposed to this branch newsletter, is in need of a new editor. Historically, Odd Bob has been one of few channels for the guild to communicate with its members directly, and the sole vein of information between branches. There are renewed talks, with the operation of MemberMojo, that it be turned over to a digital only publication without a physical copy. Assuming it continues, there is some thought on whether this should be a twice or once yearly publication.

Other

- There has been an amendment to the guilds safeguarding procedures. Mainly, Tower Captains only have to complete DBS Checking if there are young/vulnerable people in the band. With vulnerable persons, only if there is involvement with personal care, finances or travel arrangements.
- Last year a Central Council/Taylor's initiative to create a new Mobile Belfry came into fruition. This is a sort of exposed bell tower. Purposely created to show off the way bells work. It is as big as it can be, but small enough to be driven around the country and dropped off en location to publicise and demonstrate the exercise. It is called the Touring Tower and ODG voted to back the project with a donation at our last AGM.

- The Guild AGM is in our branch this year. Warborough marks the spot. 17th May. This is the chance for all guild members to come along, see what is happening and pipe up about what they think should be going on. As we are the local ones, we are all encouraged to attend to make sure we have the quorum of 50. Help with baking, serving teas and taking donations will be appreciated. Activities to try include the Touring Tower.
- The guild is made up of branches. The branches have towers, and the towers have ringers. These ringers are individually members of the guild. Currently the guild makes decisions at General Committee Meetings (GCMs) where Branch Representatives and elected officers come together and decide on future action. There are two GCMs per year. Sub-Committees are also formed to champion specific areas. The guild committee at large, feel in principle, that this is a very slow and cumbersome way of moving forward and responding to the challenges of the modern world.

A proposal for a new guild structure is being considered. This would involve a core of officers, about six, to form an Executive Committee. They would be the sharp end of the guild. Meeting monthly with most of the power of the current committee they could be much more agile in acting on the guild affairs at hand. Other officers of the guild would remain largely unchanged but with non-executive powers. Branch Reps would demob with branches instead putting up one member each to form a Governance and Scrutiny Committee to oversee the Executive. These would report back to their branches making sure everyone is on the same page.

This will inevitably form part of discussions at the AGM. Perhaps, in all likelihood, this will need a couple more meetings (1year) to get to a point where it gets voted on.

The proposals are available on <https://odg.org.uk>

So, in essence, this is an effort to try and get the guild to be able to make decisions faster. Or, in computer chip speak, that is like upgrading from a 63 nanohertz to a 380 nanohertz processor!

- Have thoughts on any of these topics? Then come along to the AGM and let yourself be heard.

ODBF

The Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, the charity that helps with bellringing restorations and augmentations, has found itself in a good position within the current economic climate. This has been explained as a result of it being an investment fund whose capital is kept. All funds raised/donations received are invested. Only the interest from the fund is used as grants for towers on their particular projects. Interest rates have increased recently. It is on this basis that the guild has chosen not to give ODBF a donation this year.

Guild 2025 Dates to Note

- Saturday 29th March: Radley Course, subject to demand, for improving; Plain bob doubles, Grandsire doubles, Plain bob minor, Grandsire triples, Plain bob major.
- Monday 5th May: Ringing Day to raise money for the Bell Fund. Old North Berkshire Branch
- Saturday 17th May: Guild AGM, Touring Tower, and 8-bell Striking Competition. South Oxon Branch, Warborough. This is our branch. Be sure to make it.
- Saturday 27th September: Michaelmas Course, Advanced practise day.
- Saturday 25th October: Steeple Aston Course, subject to demand, for improving; Plain bob doubles, Grandsire doubles or possibly triples or major.

Treasurer's Report

Kay Bartholomew

Receipts and payments for year ending 31st December 2024:

Receipts	£		Payments	£
Subscriptions	1150.00		Guild Subscriptions	805.00
100 Cub	690.00		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	445.00
Donations	9.00		100 Club Prizes	345.00
Refund of Cancelled Cheques	68.00		Newsletter Printing	45.00
Deposit Account Interest	<u>12.48</u>		Postage/Stationery/Meetings	36.44
			Domain Name Renewal	14.39
			Cancelled Cheques	<u>68.00</u>
	1929.48			1758.83
Balance B/Fwd 1 January 2024	<u>3151.80</u>		Balance C/Fwd 31 December 2024	<u>3322.45</u>
	<u>5081.28</u>			<u>5081.28</u>

Prepared by: Kay Bartholomew, 1st January 2025.

Examined by: Raymond Fergusson, 7th January 2025.

Subscriptions were increased to £10 per member in 2024 of which £7.00 was sent to the Guild and £3.00 retained in Branch. At the year end we had 118 paid members, 2 Honorary Members and 3 members who paid a donation.

The 100 Club was supported by 69 members. £345.00 was given in prize money and £345 together with a £100.00 donation from the branch was sent to the Diocesan Bell Fund. We no longer need to pay the website business fee as it is now under the umbrella of the Guild, but the Domain Name Renewal is still paid and remained at the same price of £14.39.

The Branch had a surplus of £170.65 at the year end.

My thanks to John Tchighianoff for taking charge of the 100 Club and Raymond Fergusson for examining the accounts.

Website update

Benji Bateman

This year, with help from Andrew Goldthorpe (ODG Webmaster) and Richard Stanworth (ODG Server Manager), our Branch website has been successfully migrated to the ODG server. We have been assigned a Branch-specific ODG sub-domain to use: <https://southoxon.odg.org.uk/> which is the same sub-domain as our generic email addresses.

We have retained our two paid domains, <https://southoxonodg.co.uk/> and <https://southoxonodg.uk/> which are now automatically forwarded to the above ODG sub-domain. Dove's guide still uses the old addresses for each tower; I am in conversation with Tim Jackson, a Dove's Guide Steward, to update these links. As detailed in the Treasurers' report, these paid domains have an annual fee of £14.39, which we could retire once they are considered redundant.

The website has been refreshed with a basic layout, showing Branch towers, Newsletters, Recent Look Tos, Branch Officer and Tower contacts, as well as a calendar showing upcoming Branch events including weekly practices. All personal information such as telephone numbers, email and home addresses have been removed to help ensure privacy.

Whilst translating over the website I did note that Graham Griffiths spent considerable time and effort putting together special articles about occasions such as Branch outings and Striking Competitions. Going forward, we could add an additional page to highlight notable events, if this is something we agree would be beneficial to highlight successes in the Branch.

Please do take time to look at the website and provide feedback and suggestions. Many details, such as weekly Tower practices and Sunday ringing times were copied from the old site, which are likely to be outdated.

Tower Reports

Aston Rowant

Robert Newton

There are very few 'changes' to report. The bells are generally rung, bright and early, for Sunday services but not always all six. We are very grateful to those Watlington ringers, in particular, who came to help us on several occasions, mainly but not only while the bells were out of their tower. Shirley Smith has been able to help out sometimes for a few minutes as well. We hope that Alan Keen will soon have his new hip and be able to return. Sadly, owing to timing issues and other commitments, we were not able to raise a band to ring for the Nine Lessons & Carols service.

Practices continue to be well supported from the surrounding area. We aim to ring a variety of methods each week and have dabbled with Devon Place Doubles: similar to Single Court Minimus, which has been our staple on Sundays for some years. There are no dodges to execute in either of these methods! Cambridge continues to be the pinnacle of complexity for us and we seem to be getting more reliable at staying on

the line. Our *tower tours and cream teas* afternoon in the summer is now well established. We welcomed about a dozen visitors to view the clock and bells, and several of them had a go at backstrokes, but others seemed interested only in the tea! Despite some encouraging vibes from a local family, no new recruits resulted from this, although we have recently gained a D of E candidate.

Four quarter peals were rung and it was helpful that all of these significant dates fell on Tuesdays, so the practice had an early start on those evenings.

- 23rd April; 1299 Grandsire Doubles; for St George's Day.
- 1st October; 1260 Plain Bob Minor; a compliment to the conductor (Tricia Newton) on her 70th birthday.
- 5th November; 1320 Cambridge S Minor; a compliment to Kay Bartholomew on her birthday, also celebrating the birthdays of Adam Lockwood and Paul Smith.
- 17th December; 1290 Doubles (Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob); specially arranged and rung as a compliment to Shirley Smith on her 90th birthday.

Shirley sat through the quarter, listening intently, and joined us for a course of Grandsire afterwards.

The handbells were again used to good effect at the school Christingle service, by both Y6 pupils and, to great acclaim, the school staff!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Gordon Smith for his generous support of Aston Rowant ringing over many years, both as a Chinnor resident and more remarkably travelling from Little Milton in recent times. He has decided that the timing of our services, in particular, makes things very difficult. We are most grateful for the significant contribution he has made and miss his input.

Benson

John Tchighianoff

Numbers in our tower are unchanged and we normally only ring five or six bells on a Sunday. We have recently been joined by a ringer who has moved into the village and we hope that he will want to stay with us.

We are very grateful to our regular visitors who join our practices twice a month and this enables us to ring all eight bells. We were also pleased to welcome ringers from Watlington on several occasions whilst their bells were being rehung.

In September the church again held a Heritage Open Day and we gave demonstrations of ringing which were well attended with a steady flow of visitors during our two ringing sessions. This time we set up a video link with a monitor in the ringing room so that the visitors were able to watch the bells turning whilst we rang.

We again took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in church at the beginning of December and this was very well attended. The theme this year was Christmas Carols' so inevitably we chose 'Ding Dong Merrily on High'.

Sadly, Olive Lawrence died in February. She was tower captain of Brightwell Baldwin for many years but also rang in Benson every week and took part in a lot of ringing in the Branch. She rang several quarter peals. She also rang one peal in 1990 but was

disappointed to learn that the peal was false even though we came into rounds after ringing for three hours. The Guild Banner was displayed at her funeral in Brightwell Baldwin, the tenor was tolled before the service and the bells were rung open after the service.

We were very sad when Clive Bosley died in December after several years in a care home in Watlington. Clive and Maureen learnt to ring in Benson and they were both part of the group that helped our fund raising for the bells to be rehung in 2009. Clive was instrumental in obtaining grants from local businesses and his interest in photography left us with many records of the work. Although he never quite mastered method ringing he was always fun to be with and a loyal member of our Wednesday and Sunday ringing. Clive now rests in peace after a long illness.

Berrick Salome and Chalgrove

Andrew Davis

Practice nights are very busy and sociable, starting and finishing ringing rounds. After a chance conversation with Naomi we have welcomed Alison, who learnt to ring as a youngster in Cholsey. Her mother is Tower Captain there and very pleased to be able to ring with her occasionally. She's hit the ground running and with Annette is now learning PB Doubles. Sunday ringing is often a struggle, work and family commitments have meant we rarely ring all six bells. We did manage to ring for all of our Christmas schedule at Chalgrove and the Carol Service at Berrick Salome. As always, we are grateful to Gordon who joins us most weeks.

At Berrick Salome we manage to ring on the first and third Sunday of the month. The hope that we may gain some new recruits didn't come to fruition, there simply isn't the time these days. Meanwhile we have completed several quarter peals, as the bells run nicely this year we're aiming for one every few weeks.

Dorchester

Nick Forman

Another good year! We now have 14 ringers able to ring for services plus three aspiring ringers learning to handle a bell and working towards their Learning the Ropes Level 1 assessment. All these ringers either can or are working towards ringing Plain Hunt on five and 11 are able to ring Plain Hunt on seven. William, Matt & Jane have all graduated during the year from the handling lessons to being able to ring for services.

We practiced on 48 Tuesdays (exactly the same as last year!). Since September we have also run twice-monthly Foundation Skills practices using the simulator. We rang for eight of these practices. I am pleased that these practices are well attended and are developing the skills of our less experienced ringers. A big thank you to the more experienced ringers who make these practices possible and help to develop the skills of the newer ringers.

We rang for 58 Sunday services including nine Evensong services. There were no Sundays on which we were unable to raise a band for the 10:30 service but we were unable to raise a band for the July Evensong. The average number of ringers at practices is up on last year but the average for Sunday services is virtually unchanged. The number of practices with eight or more ringers is up by 50% but we have only

managed to get eight or more ringers for Sunday services on 24 days, down from 31 last year.

We rang for three weddings at the Abbey this year, slightly lower than in previous years. There were seven funerals during the year for which we tolled the tenor. In addition we rang half-muffled for the funeral of John Crowe, Rector from 1987 to 2004.

For the first time for many years we rang out the old year and in the new year with nine ringers enjoying the evening together before ringing before and after midnight. There have been many comments from villagers about how much they enjoyed the revival of this tradition and thanks go to Julia Sadler for making it all happen.

Our three twinning sessions were very successful with Benson, Aston Rowant and Chalgrove. These sessions continue to deliver the benefits of being able to ring methods that the band can't do on their own and also to give experience of different bells. We rang at Warborough on three occasions for weddings.

We continue to be part of the Oxon Ringing School running around 48 sessions (two per day) in three terms on Saturday mornings. Generally, there is one handling and one foundation skills session on each occasion.

Drayton St. Leonard

Hilarie Rogers

We continue to practice twice a month, with Japh, John and Cathy as regular visitors, and Catherine joining us when she can. Paula responded to a request on the village email for anyone interested in learning to ring, and we have been teaching her recently. During the autumn, we added Stedman to our repertoire; and have several minimus methods available for the times when numbers are low.

In October we had a very enjoyable evening ringing handbells at John and Cathy's!

We were pleased to welcome both the Radley Course and the Bradfield Course last year, as well as visiting groups from Old North Berks Branch, Long Crendon, Goring and Gloucestershire. Three visiting bands have rung quarter peals, including family and friends of David and Jill Eldridge from Berinsfield on the occasion of their golden wedding in January this year. For many years David played the organ for us, and still returns to play for Harvest and our Carol Service.

Great Haseley

John Hughes-D'Aeth

Although Great Haseley has no local ringers, we have once again managed to keep the bells ringing during 2024. My thanks to all the "friends of Great Haseley" who have supported our efforts; your help is very much appreciated.

We have continued to hold practices on most fourth Mondays, although three of them fell on Bank Holidays and so were not viable. In March and May we rang quarter peals instead, of Stedman (a first for Japh) and Cambridge respectively. Our practice night repertoire has expanded to include Bourne, York and Beverley in addition to Plain Bob, Grandsire, Stedman, St Simons, Cambridge, Norwich and London, plus the occasional touch of Spliced. It is good to see progress being made and some

(although not all) of our striking has been excellent. Anyone out there who wishes to improve their 6 bell method ringing – at whatever level - is most welcome to join us in 2025. We have also managed to raise a band for most of the major Parish and Benefice Sunday services during the year, including the Carol Service in December.

A peal of Spliced S Minor was rung in April by an ODG band in memory of Deirdre Mann, who died in December 2023. Deirdre was a local resident and former Great Haseley ringer, who loved the sound of the bells and was a great friend to the ringers. We once again hosted a group from the Bradfield course in August, and welcomed three other visiting bands during the year.

The bells and fittings seem to be in good shape, but we are planning to ask Whites of Appleton to give them a biennial service during 2025, just to check that nothing is amiss.

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 over the coming year.

Great Milton

Cathy Hughes D’Aeth

Following the existing team’s decision to disband, I have agreed to take over as the Tower Correspondent at Great Milton. Starting in January, I hope to raise enough ringers to ring for the 10.30 am service on the 3rd Sunday of each month. If anyone is able to help, please contact me.

Little Milton

Cathy Hughes D’Aeth

We have continued to hold practices on the first and third Tuesday of each month. From October we changed the practice time to 2.30 – 4 pm; this was initially a winter experiment, but it has proved popular and we intend to make it permanent. We have also rung for every main Sunday service throughout 2024.

We rang three quarter peals during the year; two of Grandsire Doubles and one of Cambridge S Minor (a first for Japh Slaney). We welcomed one visiting band, who rang a quarter peal of Doubles.

We enjoyed a twinning session with Shabbington in March. On 20th August we cut our practice short to gather in the back of the church (with friends) and celebrate Raymond’s 80th birthday with drinks and cupcakes. We hosted a Branch practice in January 2025.

Finally, a huge thank you to our regular helpers; Chris Rogers, John Tchighianoff, Amy Herlihy, Katie Lane and Stuart and Caroline Flockton. Without your support and patience, our practices would no longer be viable.

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: The Old North Berks and the Cholsey ringers on their outings, 2 quarter peals, the Bradfield Course and The Michaelmas Course. A Branch Practice and an 8-bell practice. Also, John Hughes-D'Aeth organised and rang a peal of 5100 Beacon Hill Alliance Major on 19th December which was rung in memory of my late husband Robin, who was a Branch member for many years.

The village always enjoys the sound of the bells and I always receive positive comments following the ringing. Also, with the help of the Dorchester ringers we rang the bells for three weddings in 2024.

Once again, I would like to thank the Dorchester ringers for their unwavering support in 2024.

In memoriam: Robin Dyke

Robin passed away on 27th June 2024 after several long-term illnesses.

Robin learnt to ring at Benson in the early 60's when he moved to the area for work at the Hydraulics Research Station and was elected to the ODG on 13th May 1961. After we married, he rang regularly at Wallingford and Goring before moving to Warborough in 1986. He was a very keen ringer until the early 90's when he was no longer able to ring due his illnesses. Robin was also a member the Oxford Society, The Universities Association and was elected to the Ancient Society of College Youths in 1965. During the early years we regularly attended practices around the Guild: Dorchester, Wallingford, East Hagbourne, Appleton and many of the Oxford Towers including Christchurch.

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