



In Touch

May 2014

Summer Social and Striking Competition : Maids Moreton

Saturday 7th June 2014

5pm to 9pm

Following the last two successful summer social and striking competitions held at Padbury and Old Bradwell, this year Maids Moreton have kindly offered to host the event on Saturday 7th June 2014.

For details of the rules for the competition, please see page 8.



Forthcoming Events.....

Date and Time	Event	Location
Saturday 24 May 5.00-6.30pm	Branch Practice	Wavendon
Friday 6 June 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	Hanslope
Saturday 7 June 5.00-9.00pm	Summer Social and Striking Competition	Maids Moreton (see above and page 6)
Saturday 21 June 5.00-6.30pm	Branch Practice	Olney
Friday 4 July 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	Shenley
Saturday 12 th July	Joint Practice 3.30-4.30pm, Picnic 4.30pm-5.45pm and Joint Striking Competition with Towcester Branch, 6pm	Stony Stratford & Wicken (see page 7)
Sunday 20 th July 7.00pm	Officers Meeting	Swan Revived Hotel, Newport Pagnell
Monday 4 August 2014	Centenary of outbreak of First World War	Ringling encouraged by the Bishop of Oxford
Saturday 16 th August 10.30am-12noon	Branch Practice	Bletchley
Friday 5 th September 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	Great Horwood
Saturday 6 th September	Ringling Roadshow	Newbury Racecourse (see page 2)
Saturday 13 th September 3.45-8.00pm	Half-yearly meeting	Newport Pagnell
Saturday 20 th September 4.00-5.30pm	Branch Practice	Olney
Friday 3 rd October 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	Emberton
Saturday 4 th October	Guild 6 bell Striking Competition	Old North Berks Branch
Saturday 11 th October	Branch Training Day	(tbc)
Saturday 18 th October 7.30-9.00pm	Branch Practice	Padbury ((tbc)
Friday 7 th November 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	East Claydon
Saturday 15 th November	Branch Quarter Peal Weekend	(tbc)
Saturday 22 nd November	10 bell Striking Competition	Bicester Branch
Friday 5 th December 7.40-9.00pm	Bob doubles, plain hunt and call changes practice	Whaddon
Saturday 20 th December	Branch Practice & Christmas Social	Olney (tbc)

Who's Who 2014—2015

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Information.....

OXFORD DIOCESAN BELL FUND (Registered Charity Number 268390)

Established in 1974, the Fund raises money which is invested in authorised charitable funds, the interest from which is applied to the repair and renewal of church bells in the Diocese of Oxford.

The Fund is often able to indicate a provisional grant very early in a project's life - often before a faculty is obtained - providing much needed encouragement and impetus at the start of such a major undertaking.

So far the Fund has supported more than 200 projects with grants totalling over £400,000.

For more information search
www.odg.org.uk/BellFund

Deadline for next edition . . .

The deadline for contributions for the next edition of *In Touch* is **Tuesday 5th August 2014.**

Contributions to intoucheditor@northbucks.org.uk please.

Nick Read

From the Chairman.....

Hello All

I was pleased to see a good turnout at the AGM and as a result of the working groups the officers are now working through the ideas which has meant some long sessions to see what we can implement and how.

For those who took part in the recent branch ringing outing I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did, it was very relaxing having someone else do the driving and there was enough of a challenge with the variety of towers split around a good lunch venue for which I want to thank Graham for organising for us all. The only thing that could have improved the day was if more folk had joined us, may be next time.

Brian

Out of the branch.....

Ringing Roadshow

What is the Ringing Roadshow and what's it for?

Ringling is a very local activity. You do it in your own tower and perhaps those nearby. From time to time the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers organises an event where ringers from all over the world can meet together and enjoy everything that ringing has to offer. The last such event was in 2008 – high time for another. It's a celebration of ringing in all its forms, mainly for ringers but with plenty for non-ringers to enjoy.

When is it and how long is it on for?

It's a one-day show from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on Saturday, September 6th, 2014.

Where is it being held?

In both the Grandstand and the Berkshire Stand at Newbury Racecourse.

For more information see:-

<http://www.ringingroadshow.co.uk>

Branch News

Branch AGM

There was a good turnout for the branch AGM held at Lillingstone Lovell on 1st March 2014. The afternoon started with ringing at Leckhampstead and Lillingstone Lovell followed by the service. An excellent tea was provided in the village hall where the usual business meeting was held. Minutes of the meeting can be found on page 12 & 13.



The AGM at Lillingstone Lovell Village Hall

Once the formal part of the meeting had been concluded Leslie Belcher (RDL for the Buckingham Area) presented four areas the branch officers had been discussing i.e. 1. The future of branch practices, 2. Training and development activities, 3. Communication within the branch, and, 4. Social Events. Break-out groups were formed to discuss the four areas and each groups findings and recommendations have since been discussed by branch officers and an update can be found below.

Our grateful thanks go to the ringers and helpers of Lillingstone Lovell and Leckhampstead for hosting the event.

Giving you the Branch that you Need

During the past four months the branch officers have been thinking hard about how to give the branch the type of branch it needs and deserves. This started with the observation that branch practices were being less and less well-attended - average attendance has fallen from 16 in 2012 to 11 in 2013 with some practices not even having enough ringers for the bells! In a branch with approximately 250 members this seemed to indicate that its relevance was not apparent to a large number of people. As part of this review four breakout sessions were held at the AGM in March. This article aims to give a flavour of the discussions and ideas that came out of these sessions and what the branch officers are doing to take these ideas forward.

Branch Practices

Plenty of ideas have been put forward to make branch practices more relevant and accessible. First of all the good news - everyone thinks they are a good idea and their frequency should not be reduced.

Timing

Their timing has been much discussed, as it has been in the past, with a number of options being suggested:

- Saturday morning just before lunch
- Friday evening
- Saturday evening
- Roving practice visiting local tower practices

We recognise that there is no perfect solution. What is good for one person won't be good for another: there are a number of local practices on Friday evening; Saturday morning is prime time for children's activities (and their parent taxi service); whilst such families will find weekday evenings difficult to fit in. We have decided to experiment with the timing of the branch practices for the rest of the year. Practices will run at different times on a Saturday, with the morning and evening practices having a designated pub for people to have lunch or a drink in afterwards. In addition the 8-bell band is visiting local tower practices. How successful this is and any problems it incurs will be fed into the branch meeting debate at the end of the year.

Format

What we do at the branch practices is something else that has occupied us. The motivations for people going to branch practices and for the branch to hold them are varied. Thankfully these can align. People interested in ringing at new or different towers work with the branch's desire to keep towers without a resident band ringing and promoting interest in the church and local community to form a new band, something that has happened at Bletchley. Meeting up with friends from other towers is also important, so we are looking at how to improve the social element. A number of ideas have been suggested - bell ringers teas and going to the pub after the practice. There is an element of organisation involved with these but we are hoping to roll out some of these initiatives over the next months.

Ringling

Finally, let's not forget the ringing. Attempts to differentiate practices (plain, surprise and general ringing) just didn't work because we often didn't get the numbers to allow us to differentiate - we needed everyone who could come. To promote and coordinate learning, special methods will be advertised targeted at different standards of ringers. There will be lots of other ringing so no one should feel excluded if they can't ring the method or haven't had time to learn it. We will also end each practice with the equivalent of a service-touch with the focus on good striking from the more experienced ringers.

Branch News contd.

COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

As a result of your feedback we've looked hard at the how, what and why of our communications. You should all see some changes over the next few months.

Our aim is to reach as many people as possible by using as many formats as we can and as many time-scales as we can without being intrusive. To get people to block out branch events in their diaries well in advance we'll use an annual printed calendar card and host a full year's diary on the website. In Touch will be sent to each tower outlining the three month calendar in printed format, whilst those on email will be given at least three week's notice of all events and finally a reminder will be sent two days before each event.

Email and text

Everyone seems to appreciate the email alerts and information that is sent out through Yahoo groups and so we will continue to use this, whilst recognising that it doesn't reach everyone in the branch. In fact the branch currently only holds email addresses for 60% of its members. We're also looking at sending out the reminder about branch events via a text alert, however this looks as though it will be a 2015 opportunity due to cost and the necessity of collecting mobile numbers and ensuring we have permission to use them in this way. If anyone knows an easy and cheap way of doing this please let us know.

In Touch

We have decided to go back to printing and sending a copy of In Touch to each tower by post. It felt like a good idea at the time to distribute In Touch by email however it appears that there are too many towers where it is not being printed out as a tower resource and made available to the 40% of people who do not have access to email. We have heard of instances in which towers have not attended branch events because the dates and times were not available in the tower. To minimise the cost it will be printed in black & white and we will try to deliver as many as possible by hand rather than paying for postage. We are proud of In Touch and see it as a valuable way of building a sense of a learning and fun community within the branch.

Branch calendar

Along with this quarter's edition of In Touch you will find copies of a branch calendar – one for each member plus some spares for the tower. All of the information on the card is available electronically however this should allow those less-electronically connected members of the branch to have access to the same information as everyone else. For the rest, it will be an ever-present reminder of events; email notices are useful but it is sometimes easy to lose track of them amongst lots of other emails.

Branch calendar contd.

We hope for 2015 to produce a full year's calendar in advance, so that everyone can plan ahead – an activity that will keep us officers on our toes but something that is done in a lot of other branches.

Website

If anyone has logged onto the website recently you will see that it is in the process of changing. It retains all the excellent archive material that the archivist has pulled together over the years, but to this is being added more of the communication pieces that people have been asking for. The menu is more accessible and there is a full year of events with details including maps. We are also looking to add Google Calendar. The website is in the process of being modified and tested by the officers on different machines and software. Once we have something that we are happy with then we'll ask you for your feedback and ideas. It seems silly to ask for them now, when we already know some of the big things that need changing and adding.

A number of different suggestions have been made about how to improve communication between the branch officers and the towers. These include officers taking responsibility for three or four towers, and a network of Tower Captains or designated tower representatives. We have not had time to explore these ideas in any depth. They haven't been forgotten and we will come back to them later in the year when we have had chance to gauge the success of our first wave of initiatives and decide on what else needs to be done. In the meantime if you have any ideas or feedback please don't hesitate to let us know.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

The AGM itself produced little new thinking on training & development, aside from a suggestion that the development of more advanced ringers has been neglected. There will be a branch training day on 4th October, slightly earlier in the year than previous ones so that we won't suffer so much from cold towers. The subject of this course has yet to be decided.

Eight and Ten-Bell ringing

We have been looking at how to develop some of our more experienced ringers. Twenty-one ringers expressed an interest in improving their 8-bell ringing, ranging from people who wish to learn plain hunt to those who wish to extend their Surprise Major repertoire. In order to cater for this wide range in ability, two initiatives have been started. The first is a monthly 8-bell practice which will take place at the practice night of each of the 8-bell towers in the branch – a practice run by the branch for the benefit of the 8-bell band and the local ringers. It is not intended that the local ringers are displaced by this event, but to draw on their expertise or help them depending on the tower.

Branch News contd.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT contd.

Regular Sunday Evensong Quarter Peals will be arranged to consolidate the progress people make from this band. Finally we have entered a team for the ODG 8-bell striking competition. We've had two practices including a Quarter Peal at Newport Pagnell of Cambridge Surprise Major which included a first for the treble ringer. Once the striking competition is over we'll be looking to arrange Quarters for other members of the 8-bell band.

To promote ringing on higher numbers we have decided to keep the quarterly Branch Practices at Olney and also to hold monthly 10-bell Quarter Peals for Evensong there. Our 2014 target is to enter a band into the ODG 10-bell striking competition in November. We are also considering holding an annual practice at a 12-bell tower to allow people to hear 12-bell ringing in the flesh and then have a go themselves.

Targeted interventions

Finally we have started looking at how to accelerate individuals and bands by targeted interventions. A number of opportunities are being explored and piloted – two of our talented youngsters have been given the opportunity to attend advanced learner practices in which they are pushed (very willingly) to extend themselves with a very strong support band. There is also an attempt to build up a band so it can ring bob doubles without any outside help on a practice and Sunday. These are not branch initiatives; however the opportunities for our branch are being identified by branch officers and mentored by them. Obviously these pilots are resource-intensive so are limited. We will explore over the next six months the best way of making these interventions and if possible scaling them up - perhaps by sharing the initiatives with neighbouring branches and guilds.

SOCIAL

There is a strong turnout at branch events with a social component and this is something we wish to build on. We have not had a lot of time as officers to think strategically about this, but it looks as though it will become more prominent in our thinking over the next months. We have, however, already started organising some events which, if successful, could become a regular part of our calendar. Graham Bartholomew heroically arranged a coach outing for the Branch visiting towers in Hertfordshire. You'll find a full report of this event elsewhere in this issue of In Touch. We are also looking to organise an Annual Dinner in February and are investigating different formats and venues, mindful of people's budgets.

Finally, we are looking at how to make the various practices more social – teas and coffees, bell ringers teas, quizzes and designated pubs, but to be honest we haven't had time to really think about and organise these. If anyone would like to organise anything at a branch event for fun or to raise money for a bell-ringing project or charity then please choose an event

SOCIAL contd.

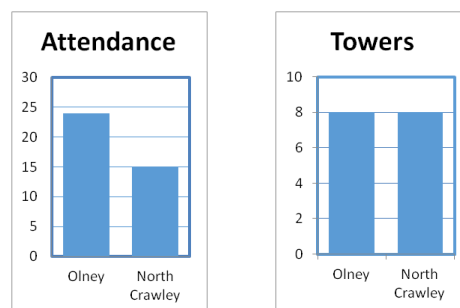
and let us know so that we can include it in our advertising.

In conclusion...

If you are still reading this article, we hope that you can see that we are thinking very hard about the branch; its purpose, the needs of its members and how we can meet them. Not only are we thinking, but we are now taking action. We recognise that moving the branch to a new place will take time (years in fact) and we only have a limited amount of time that we can commit to this as we all have other responsibilities. There will be some ideas that we action that won't work but as long as we have enough ideas that do and are prepared to drop those that don't then there is no reason why we can't be successful. Please have patience with us as we struggle to get this right, but be impatient for us to build a better branch.

Lesley Belcher on behalf of all the officers

Branch Meeting Round-Up



Olney (10 bell)

One of our best attended practices for a long time with 24 branch members present and ringing. A busy practice to run which cycled a number of times between rounds and call changes, plain methods, to a touch of Stedman Caters and an unfortunately unsuccessful bash at Yorkshire S Royal. Hopefully everyone, whatever their ability, had a good ring. The officers are targeting an attendance ratio of 2.5 members to bells – any more than this and it will be hard to give everyone a good ring - so target achieved.

North Crawley (6 bell)

A non-ringing tower on the North-East corner of the branch. Proved a bit of a hand-full mainly because of the ropes – a bit long and quite stretchy. However they improved with ringing. We met with 14 members and a visitor, so a bit short of our target and it felt like it when a couple of ringers had to leave, exposing a lack of experience in depth with an outing taking away a number of regulars. Everyone had a good ring, with a range of doubles and minor methods being scored and struck very well considering. We were joined in the tower by an older villager who was very pleased to hear the bells being rung, and had many stories to pass on to Linda. A beautiful village with a very popular pub next to the church, so we should remember this for future summer meetings.

Branch News contd.

Summer Social and Striking Competition : Maids Moreton

As publicised on page 1 this years summer social and striking competition is being held at Maids Moreton on Saturday 7th June.

Thy rules for the striking competition are as follows:-

Aims

- a) to encourage good striking, in a competitive but friendly atmosphere.
- b) to reap the benefits of socialising between towers.

Who Can Take Part

- a) A tower may enter more than one band.
- b) A tower band should comprise at least 50% tower members. Any ringers in a band who are not tower members must have some links with that tower, e.g. as regular visitors. They should also be Branch members.
- c) Alternatively, two towers may join forces to ring as a joint team.
- d) Other bands may enter the striking competition however unless they meet the eligibility criteria for the ODG 6-bell competition they will not be eligible to be chosen to represent the Branch at this competition.
- e) The Branch can agree to provide a coach/conductor for a tower which asks for it. This person will be a Branch member.

The Ringing

- a) Two minutes' practice will be allowed prior to the test piece, after which all bells should be stood.
- b) Bands should signal that they are ready by ringing the treble for two whole pulls.
- c) The test piece is one minute of rounds, followed by 120 changes of any method or 120 rows of call changes. If call changes are rung, then at least two bells (other than the treble) must be brought to lead and at least 12 changes must be called. Plain courses of a method, or plain hunt, are acceptable.
- d) The test piece should finish with some rounds but these rounds will not be judged.

Entry to the ODG 6-Bell Striking Competition

- a) The ODG 6-bell striking competition is open to one team from each Branch. A Branch wishing to participate must be represented by a Tower Band from within the Branch.
- b) The Tower Band must consist of members who normally ring together at the same tower for Sunday Services, whether or not they ring at more than one tower and shall be chosen by the Tower in any way it thinks fit. One substitute member shall be permitted who shall be a member of the Branch in which the tower is located.

Entry to the ODG 6-Bell Striking Competition contd.

c) North Bucks Branch will choose the Tower Band to represent it based on the results of the Branch 6-bell striking competition. The chosen Tower Band will be the highest placed Tower Band that entered the Branch 6-bell striking competition.

Branch band at the Guild 8-bell Striking competition

The North Bucks Branch is back! A branch band entered the Guild 8-bell striking competition on the May Bank Holiday Monday, had a good day out and did some decent ringing.

With Cambridge S. Major being the method for the test piece this was always going to be a bit of a challenge.



The North Bucks Band

Only 7 bands entered, 4 of those being tower bands, so this must have been considered too challenging by most of the 15 branches. For North Bucks, we knew we had enough ringers to ring the method but not all in the same place. So, a bit of organisation was needed to get the band together for a quarter peal in the method at Newport Pagnell a few weeks before the event. In a second session at Newport it was quickly decided that the band would benefit more from repeating the plain course a few times. This had the desired result and the last course had no method mistakes and the striking was beginning to settle down.

On the day, cars were shared and various routes taken. Some took in the open day towers to get in the mood. Impressively, we all arrived at Witney in good time and very nearly got to ring first. Ringing second though gave us a chance to get an idea of a sensible speed to ring and that there was a bit of odd struckness to think about. With a little encouragement from David Phillipson, the band repeated the performance of the previous day, possibly ringing slightly better due to the lighter weight.

Branch News contd.

Branch band at the Guild 8-bell Striking competition contd.

The challenge was now with the judges and while enjoying the excellent ringers' tea in the churchyard we could tell that the bands were going to be closely matched. So it turned out.

The results were:

High Wycombe	5.5 faults
Oxford City Branch	5.75 faults
St Mary with St Lawrence, Reading	7.5 faults
Tilehurst	13 faults
North Bucks Branch	17.5 faults
Banbury Branch	23.5 faults
Chiltern Branch	31 faults

So North Bucks was the first of the branch bands and finished not far behind 4th place. Not a bad start to a long term project. We rounded off the day in traditional style at The Fleece, listening to the last couple of bands.



The band enjoys some well-deserved refreshment

Thanks to all the band members, Lesley for organising people, David for conducting, Nick Read for standing in for the second practice and Newport Church for the use of the bells. Now we turn our attention to building on our success for next year and the 10-bell competition later this year.

Doug Hird

Joint Practice, Picnic and Joint Striking Competition with Towcester Branch

On Saturday July 12th there will be a joint practice at Stony Stratford from 3.30pm-4.30pm This will be followed by a 'bring your own' Picnic in the Great Ouse Meadows (see map below)



Use the Long Stay Car Park on Horn Lane – parking is free. This is equidistant between the church and the picnic area. There is a map at the car park showing how to get to Millfield via a path leading off Ousebank Way. The picnic will be here beside the river.

The striking competition will be held at Wicken starting at 6pm. The competition has 3 sections - rounds and called changes on 8, plain bob minor and stedman triples. Each branch enters a band and the winner of the most sections is deemed the winner of the main trophy and the winner of the Stedman receives the George Holland trophy.

The NBB 8-Bell Band

As part of the branch's aim to develop some of its more experienced ringers, an 8-bell band has been formed. Twenty-one people expressed an interest in joining at or after the AGM.

The range of ringing abilities within this group is wide going from those looking to learn to ring on eight to those who are quite experienced and are looking for an opportunity to extend themselves in ringing Surprise and enjoy good striking on eight.

Branch News contd.

The NBB 8-Bell Band contd.

We will be holding branch 8-bell practices **once a month rotating around the local 8-bell towers**. These practices will be held on the practice night of the local band but be run by the branch. Hence the day of the week on which the practice will be held will vary month by month. This should allow everyone to attend at least some practices.

The first practice was held at **Hanslope in April**. Impressive progress was made, and the standard of some of the ringing at this practice was excellent. Some people dusted the rust of some of their 8-bell ringing from the dim and distant past whilst others were pushed well beyond their previous experience thanks to some coaching from the Hanslope ringers. We rang three lots of Surprise Major and finished with some Superlative focussing on the striking. **May's practice will be held at Stony Stratford.**

In addition to the monthly practice **Quarter Peals** will be organised for the more experienced ringers. Ideally these will be rung for Sunday Evensong which will also help us establish stronger relations with the churches. Quarter peals will also be arranged for the less-experienced ringers as they become ready for them.

Finally the band will be looking to improve its striking by practicing for and entering **striking competitions**. The first of these was the ODG 8-bell striking completion (see separate write-up.) Two practices were held for this and a Quarter Peal of Cambridge Surprise Major scored, which included a first for the treble ringer. Attention has now shifted to the Inter-Branch striking competition against Towcester on 12th July.

If anyone else is interested in joining the 8-bell band then please contact me for more information.

Lesley Belcher

Branch Outing

On the morning of Saturday 12th April the coach made pick-ups from Olney and Tongwell in Milton Keynes and transported 26 ringers and friends/relatives to Middlesex on the first branch outing arranged for a number of years.



The outing outside Rickmansworth Church

Branch Outing contd.

First stop was Hillingdon to ring a Gillett & Johnston 10, with the back eight being similar weights to Newport Pagnell. Very welcome refreshments were provided by the Hillingdon ringers during which we were joined by two further branch members who had travelled by car, plus dogs Charlie and Polly. The next two towers, Great Stanmore and Bushey provided light rings of eight (both 12cwt) which were excellent for all ages, abilities etc.

On then to the Coach and Horses at Rickmansworth for a very enjoyable lunch which had been pre-booked in advance. The next tower, i.e. Rickmansworth, was within walking distance of the lunch venue where a very good 20cwt 10 were enjoyed. This tower was familiar territory for the organiser of the outing, Graham Bartholomew as it used to be his 'home tower'. The outing then proceeded to Langleybury, a nice light six, and the day finished at Kings Langley a very good 11cwt 8 and the church here holds some very interesting artefacts from a local Abbey including the tomb of the first Duke of York. A big thank-you goes to Graham Bartholomew (RDL from Milton Keynes) for making all the arrangements and for supervising the outing on the day.

The cost of the coach was met by fees from the attending ringers, a very generous donation from a Branch member, and a subsidy from the general Branch funds.

Training

ODG—Michaelmas Training Day

Want to advance your repertoire of methods?

**Saturday, September 27th 2014
10.00 – 18.00**

Cost £15

The aim of the day is to provide the opportunity for students to learn more advanced methods than those offered on the Radley and Steeple Aston one-day courses.

The day will start with tutorials in the first Tower followed by practical ringing in other nearby towers. The course this year will not be centred around Shiplake but in various parts of the Guild.

Groups will be formed to cover the following range of methods:

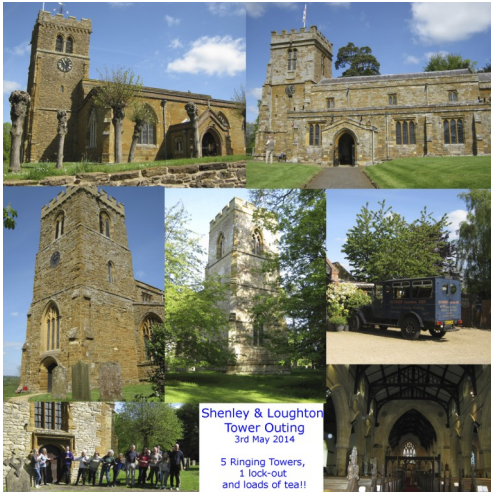
- Surprise Minor
- Stedman Triples
- Basic Surprise Major (e.g. Cambridge, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Superlative)
- Advanced Surprise Major (e.g. Pudsey, Rutland, London, Bristol, Spliced)

Further details and application forms can be obtained by sending an SAE to Ann Osborne. 10 St. Michaels Road. Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4RP or E-mail annosborne.1@btinternet.com by 18th August 2014.

Tower News

Loughton and Shenley Day Out Saturday 3 May 2014

A local day out was planned for seventeen Loughton and Shenley ringers in south Northamptonshire. There was a good mix of ability with seven Big Ring Pullers who were well supported and encouraged by the more advanced ringers.



We started at Long Buckby with a ring on 8, and moved on to the 6 at East Haddon. A quick five minute journey found us at The Althorp Coaching Inn at Great Brington for a pleasant pub lunch before walking up the lane to ring at St Mary's and discover the history of the Spencer Family. The next tower at Weedon Bec was a lock-out so we retired to The Old Dairy Farm, near Weedon for well-deserved tea and cake, where we sat outside in the warm sunshine. We were then ahead of ourselves and travelled to Easton Neston for a delightful ring of 8 whilst admiring the Northamptonshire countryside bathed in the afternoon sunshine. A few further miles south down the A5 found us at our final tower of the day at St. James's the Great, Paulerspury. This tower was a special event for one of our ringers, Robin Starr, who has been ringing for almost ten years, and was keen to notch up his 100th tower.



The weather was unusually warm and dry for a Bank Holiday Saturday, but there were plenty of refreshments provided during the day.

Hilary Reading

Quarter Peal at Loughton



A quarter peal was rung at Loughton on Saturday 8th Feb 2014 as 18th Birthday compliment to Jenny McIntyre, daughter of Anne McIntyre (full details can be found on page 13).

Sunshine in the Salcey Benefice

The GATE Ringers (Stoke Goldington, Weston Underwood and Ravenstone) and friends were invited to join the Roade and Ashton ringers (yes, over the Branch border....), for a spring outing around the Salcey Benefice.



The weather on the Saturday of the May bank holiday weekend was beautiful, and we really enjoyed the Northamptonshire churches and countryside. We rang at Collingtree and Courteenhall, and then on to Roade and Ashton, the home towers of their band. Finally, we all enjoyed a convivial lunch at the White Hart, Grafton Regis.

Our grateful thanks to Alan and Shirley Cozens for arranging the outing, and inviting us to join them. We're now looking forward to the next joint venture – ringing for Evensong at Peterborough Cathedral!

The GATE Ringers

Guild AGM & 21 years of Downs Barn Bells

The Guild AGM was held on a warm and sunny spring afternoon at Downs Barn, Milton Keynes. This weather may have helped to generate the best turnout for some years, at a meeting which marked both the 21st birthday of the bells and a changing of the guard at the top of the Guild.

Prior to the AGM ringing was available at Great Brickhill, Woughton-on-the-Green and Downs Barn where the 'service touch' was rung by a band drawn exclusively from the branch's 'Big Ring Pull' recruitment project held two years ago.



The 'Big Ring Pullers'

The service was conducted by the Rev Andy Jowett, Minister of Downs Barn church. This was followed by a sumptuous ringers' tea during which a special cake was cut by Pat Newton.



The delicious cake made and donated by John Dutson proprietor of Dutson Baker on Heelands, MK

Before the cutting of the cake Alan Marchbank explained the reason for the cake:-

"In the mid 1980s the development of Downs Barn "grid square" was well underway. The Strategic plan for the area included a Place of Worship and community facility. Peter Green had been installed as the Minister and was working hard on the building project and creating a congregation.

Each development area in the city is provided with an architectural feature funded by the Development Corporation, (DC) and for Downs Barn this was to be a vertical feature. Various ideas were suggested, flag poles, clock tower, but Fiona Maybray a ringer who

was living on the main Downs Barn Boulevard, thought that if we were having a church, and the DC would pay for a vertical feature why not go for a combination of the 2 and go for a bell tower on the church.

The community was balloted on the various ideas and decided that the vertical feature should be a bell tower.

The local ringers formed an appeal and raised enough money to buy the old six bells from Kingston Herefordshire, which were being replaced. So now there was a church with a bell tower and bells. The next challenge was making them co-incident!

Fund raising was slow, but in the early 1990s whilst Pat Newton was Master, the Guild adopted the project to install the bells into the tower to mark the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Diocese. This was a very serious undertaking, with the design and construction work all being undertaken by volunteers from the Guild to make the project affordable.

The six bells were recast by Taylors, into a new small 8. The Treble was given by Sheila Watts of Emberton, North Bucks, the second, by the North Bucks Branch. Pat Newton Guild Master, gave the Tenor.

Many people did a vast amount of work for the project. Graham Clifton from Steeple Aston and Bernard Stone from Oxford, built the frame, and many others were involved in painting it etc. Malcolm Hooton from Stony Stratford, North Bucks made all the pulleys and rope bosses. Whites of Appleton provided all the ringing fittings and fitted the bells up into the frame.

The whole assembly was then dismantled and loaded onto a lorry bound for Milton Keynes.

That lorry load of parts and the bells arrived on the Friday evening of the first bank holiday weekend of May 1993, was off loaded and stored over night in church. Next day a large group of volunteers from Branch and Guild set about installing the frame and bells. By 7 pm on the Saturday evening, Stedman Triples were sounding out over the area.



The Installation Team

Left to right Brian Newman, Bernard Stone, Alan Marchbank, Philip Briwn, Graham Clifton, David Joyce, Godfrey Foat, Doug Hird. Also part of the team was the late Ron Snack who was very camera shy, and David Maybray who probably took the photo.

Guild AGM & 21 years of Downs Barn Bells

Today we are celebrating 21 years of bells ringing out from Downs Barn and it is most fitting that Pat Newton now a Vice President of the Guild and wife of Robert who retires as Master today, should cut the cake. The cake was made and donated by John Dutson, a local baker from Heelands, who's daughter Viv and grand daughter Lauren are both ringers at Great Linford.

Ring Out! Downs Barn Bells!



Pat Newton, who donated the tenor bell at Downs Barn, cuts the cake

The Guild AGM then took place, chaired by Robert Newton, Master of the ODG. After six years as Master, Robert Newton retired from the post, and Hilarie Rogers was elected to succeed him. All the other officers were re-elected. The meeting also filled the long-standing vacancy for a Public Relations Officer, electing Verna Wass, who had been doing the job in an acting capacity since February.



The assembled members at the AGM

During the AGM Lauren Hollis, a young ringer from Great Linford, was presented with a Young Ringers Award by Robert Newton, Guild Master who explained the award was based on a young ringer's achievement and progress throughout the year.



Lauren receiving her certificate from Robert Newton, Guild Master

The collection at the service raised £105.70 which has been donated to Cross and Stable.

The donations raised in respect of the birthday cake raised £60 which has been given to the Organ Bursary at Gt Linford, where Lauren Hollis, the bakers Grand Daughter, is learning the organ



The handover of the badge of office from Robert Newton to Hilarie Rodgers the newly-elected Guild Master

**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS
NORTH BUCKS BRANCH**

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on
1st March 2014 at Lillingstone Lovell**



Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman, Brian Newman, welcomed everyone to Lillingstone Lovell for the Annual General Meeting.

Apologies for Absence

Received from Robert Newton (Guild Master), James Champion (Guild Secretary), Ted Fawcett, John Brookman, Anne Birch, Ros Tyrell, Catherine Stanworth, Michael Tinsley, Helen and Dan Richardson, John Stanworth, Joanna Taylor, Jeannie Choy and Dean Meakins.

Minutes of previous Meeting

The minutes of the Autumn Meeting held at Downs Barn in September 2013 were published in the November edition of In Touch and distributed at the meeting. No comments were made regarding the minutes so the Chairman deemed this as acceptance of the minutes as a true record.

Matters arising from previous Meeting

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

Officer's Reports

Officer's Reports were published as part of the AGM pack issued prior to the meeting and included with these minutes.

Alan Marchbank clarified that in the Secretary's report, Great Linford won the 6 bell striking competition but Woughton went on to represent the branch at the ODG striking competition. It was also pointed out the incident referred to in the Guild Representative's report took place at Great Brickhill. Alan clarified the position regarding Guild insurance, in that the Guild provides personal accident insurance but not general Public Indemnity insurance except for specific Guild events. People who are learning to ring who are not members are covered by the accident insurance if they are being taught by a Guild member within the Oxford Diocese.

In respect of the accounts Alan Marchbank considered that the Branch was holding too much cash in the accounts and that more of it should be used for ringing purposes.

Adoption of the reports and accounts was proposed by Richard Stanworth and seconded by Hazel Dallen. This was agreed on a show of hands.

Election of New Members

Nominations were received proposing 4 new members:

Bradwell Emily Guinness, proposed by Ian Green, seconded by Christine Abbott

Old Wolverton Michael Pearce, proposed by Mick Nimmo, seconded by John Mercer

Padbury Roberta Jefferies & Jean Stuchbury, proposed by Richard Stanworth, seconded by Helen Stanworth

All were duly elected.

Election of Officers

Chairman Brian Newman, proposed by Linda Maycroft, seconded by Simon Head

Secretary Gary Reading, proposed by Jonathan Griggs, seconded by Roy Keeves

Minute Secretary Patricia Rosewell, proposed by Hazel Dallen, seconded by Linda Maycroft

Treasurer Sheila Watts, proposed by Brian Newman, seconded by Hugh Butler

RDL Newport Doug Hird, proposed by Brian Newman, seconded by Graham Bartholomew

RDL Milton Keynes Graham Bartholomew, proposed by Patricia Roswell seconded by Roy Keeves

RDL Buckingham Lesley Belcher, proposed by Jonathan Griggs, seconded by Nick Read

Guild Representatives 1, Linda Maycroft, proposed by Brian Newman, seconded by Sheila Ware 2, Anne Birch, proposed by Graham Bartholomew, seconded by Lesley Belcher 3, Position Vacant

Newsletter Editor Nick Read, proposed by Alan Marchbank, seconded by Barry Eglesfield

Branch Archivist Doug Hird, proposed by Graham Bartholomew, seconded by Lesley Belcher

Independent Examiner Alison Fowler, proposed by Sheila Watts, seconded by Sheila Blenkhorn

All officers were elected on a show of hands.

Application for a grant for the Hanslope Bell Rehanging Project

A letter from the Hanslope Church had been received enquiring as to whether the branch would be able to make a grant towards the bell rehanging project at Hanslope Church. A copy of the letter is included in the AGM pack. Jonathan Griggs gave a short summary of the project's objectives. Sheila Watts advised the meeting of the previous levels of grants awarded by the branch and indicated that the officers had felt a grant in the order of £250 would be appropriate. Linda Maycroft questioned whether there would be other towers that would need similar support in the near future. It was indicated that Leckhampstead might be considering a project but there were no others at this stage. Alan Marchbank proposed that the grant should be £750 being 1% of the total project costs. Hugh Butler seconded this proposal. The proposal was passed on a show of hands. Roy Keeves, Tower Captain of Hanslope, thanked the meeting for the generous contribution to the project.

Contd.

Branch AGM Minutes contd.

Discussion

There followed a presentation to the meeting on the future of the branch by Lesley Belcher, including some thoughts on what we as a branch are good at and what we are not so good at. It provided some ideas about what we could do to improve the levels of ringing in the branch and also how branch practices could be improved. The attendees at the meeting then split into four breakout groups to discuss four aspects of the branch: Branch Practices, Communication, Social meetings, Training and Development. Due to the enthusiasm of the discussions and a lack of time there was no time for each group to report their thoughts back to the meeting. It was agreed that the feedback would be gathered together and shared across the branch.

Forthcoming Events

12th April – Branch Outing. Details of the branch outing to Hertfordshire were provided in the AGM pack. Graham Bartholomew reminded everyone that places need to be booked and deposits paid as soon as possible.

17th May – Guild AGM at Downs Barn – This comes around once every fifteen years. It was hoped that there would be a good turnout from the branch to support this event. There are two towers open beforehand for ringing: Great Brickhill and Woughton and the Big Ring Pull ringers would be ringing before the service at Downs Barn. Alan Marchbank will be requesting help with teas in due course. Details of the day are on the ODG website.

7th June – Branch Summer Social and Striking Competition. The members present were asked to consider if their tower could host this event this year.

15th March – 10 bell practice at Olney. Due to an error this has not been booked. There was enthusiasm for the practices so the Secretary will try and book the bells for the practice.

Any Other Business

Linda Maycroft offered some carpet squares to anybody who wanted them. After analysis it was discovered that the carpet material is not ideal for using under ropes on ringing room floors.

Alan Marchbank mentioned that in May there is the Guild Ringing Day and 8 bell competition and that it would be good if North Bucks could enter a band. The method this year is Cambridge Surprise Major. It was also mentioned that there would be the Guild 10 bell competition in November. The method for this is Grandsire Caters. Lesley Belcher is to organise an 8 bell band and Graham Bartholomew to organise a 10 bell band for the competitions.

As Jonathan Griggs is standing down from the committee Nick Read thanked him for his contribution to the branch.

Vote of Thanks

On behalf of everyone present the Chairman thanked the Lillingstone Lovell and Leckhampstead ringers for hosting the ringing, the meeting and providing the excellent tea.

Quarter Peals

Oxford Diocesan Guild

Loughton, Bucks

All Saints

Saturday, 8 February 2014 in 43 mins (11-0-8)

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Anne McIntyre
- 2 Graham Bartholomew
- 3 Ann Birch
- 4 Gary Reading
- 5 Ted Fawcett (C)
- 6 Terry Page

18th Birthday compliment to Jenny McIntyre, daughter of 1.

Stony Stratford, Bucks

St. Mary & St. Giles

Tuesday, 11 February 2014 in 47 mins (12-1-16)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Malcom Hooton
- 2 David Moore (C)
- 3 Wendy Price
- 4 Christopher Crompton
- 5 Michael Nimmo
- 6 Kieran Salter
- 7 Phillip Starr

First inside: 4.

Oxford Diocesan Guild

Hanslope, Bucks

St. James the Great

Sunday, 16 February 2014 in 47 mins (22cwt)

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Lesley Belcher
- 2 Phil Haslam
- 3 Brian Berry
- 4 Ian Thompson
- 5 Jonathan Griggs
- 6 Nick Gray
- 7 Tony Gray (C)
- 8 Roy Keeves

Rung for Sunday Service.

First of Triples as conductor. First in method: 3.

Calverton, Bucks

Friday, 21 February 2014 in 45 mins (10-1-24)

1280 Doubles (600 All Saints; 680 Grandsire)

- 1 Susan Freer
- 2 David Moore
- 3 Wendy Price
- 4 James Woodcock
- 5 Michael Nimmo (C)
- 6 Robert Freer

Hanslope, Bucks

St. James the Great

Saturday, 1 March 2014 in 47 mins (22cwt)

1260 Plain Bob Triples

- 1 Dorrie Mutch
- 2 Alan Cozens
- 3 Brian Berry
- 4 Roy Keeves
- 5 Ian Thompson
- 6 Tony Gray
- 7 Jonathan Griggs (C)
- 8 Nick Gray

Rung on St David's Day by our Little Welsh Dragon.

First Quarter Peal: 1. First in method: 3.

Quarter Peals contd.

Oxford Diocesan Guild Newport Pagnell, Bucks

SS Peter & Paul

Sunday, 9 March 2014 in 46 mins (10-0-5)

1260 Plain Bob Doubles

- 1 Liz Wagstaff
- 2 Nick Read
- 3 Scott Ayers
- 4 Charles Knight
- 5 Alan Marchbank (C)
- 6 Keith Wagstaff

Rung to celebrate Gerald Stratton's 85th Birthday, Charlotte Clarkes's 102nd birthday and to wish Brian Riddy a speedy recovery.

1st Quarter Peal: 1 & 6.

Oxford Diocesan Guild Woughton on the Green, Bucks

St. Mary's BVM

Thursday, 20 March 2014 in 42 mins (7cwt)

1260 Grandsire Doubles

- 1 Brian Baldwin (C)
- 2 Hazel Dallen
- 3 Peter Tribble (C)
- 4 Martin Petchey
- 5 Simon J O Head (C)
- 6 Paul Crumblehome

Newport Pagnell, Bucks

SS Peter & Paul

Sunday, 13 April 2014 in 48 mins (21-2-16)

1250 Cambridge Surprise Major

- 1 Graham Bartholomew
- 2 Lesley Belcher
- 3 Tony Gray
- 4 Simon Head
- 5 Nick Gray
- 6 David Phillipson (C)
- 7 Philip Haslam
- 8 B Douglas Hird

For Palm Sunday Evensong.

Oxford Diocesan Guild Gt. Linford, Milton Keynes, Bucks

St. Andrew

Wednesday, 23 April 2014 in 44 mins (16cwt)

1260 Doubles (660 Grandsire, 600 Plain Bob)

- 1 Steve Thomason
- 2 Graham Bartholomew
- 3 Gary Reading
- 4 John Marchbank
- 5 Alan Marchbank (C)
- 6 Carole Thomason

For St George's Day.

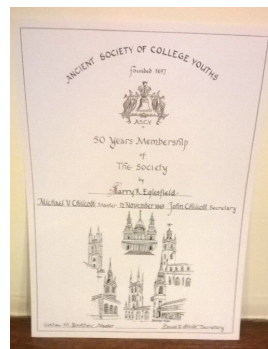
First Quarter Peal: 1 & 6

Congratulations.....

One of the branch's distinguished members, Barry Eaglesfield, has recently celebrated 50 years as a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths (ASCY).



Barry receives his 50 year ASCY certificate from the Master, Graham Bradshaw.



Barry's Certificate

And congratulations go to two well-known members of our branch who were elected as Distinguished Members of the guild at the Guild AGM on 17th May. This is in recognition their long and significant contributions to the branch and guild.



Allan Marchbank



Doug Hird