

Secretaries' Report February 2012

At our AGM in February 2011: Ringing Master Ken Davenport was replaced by his deputy John Manley, with Graham Slade becoming Deputy RM; Sue Davenport replaced Eric Bowes as Treasurer; Alison Clayton was confirmed as Newsletter Editor (having replaced Sarah Boys in mid-term), and 11 new members were elected. During the service before the meeting, instead of a sermon the vicar entertained us by reading Chapter 3 of Akenfield, which concerns the bellringers of the village.

Our 6-bell striking competition at Waltham St Lawrence attracted six entries, the best for years, with three teams ringing rounds. All Saints fielded two teams, and eight new members participated. Sonning were placed 1st with 38 faults, followed by Wokingham All Saints (43) and Arborfield (69). Sonning later represented the branch in the ODG 6-bell final, coming 5th out of 9 teams but only 10 faults behind the winners.

Security has been enhanced at some of our towers, owing to a series of burglaries and attempted break-ins. The roof of Sonning tower was found to leak during rain, and new end-pieces were spliced into its main beam before it was given new lead; scaffolding in the bell chamber prevented ringing for 6 weeks.

Several of us enjoyed a day in London on 26 March for the Ringing World Centenary celebrations. As their

own celebration of this centenary, Wokingham All Saints rang 100 different methods within the next 10 months. On 29 April there were quarter-peals and general ringing at various towers to celebrate the royal wedding.

Sonning's outing was to South Bucks, Wokingham All Saints visited the Wimborne area, and the branch outing was a circular tour from Wallingford to Dorchester including Benson, Ewelme, Berrick Salome and Warborough. At Ewelme Brian O'Callaghan gave us an interesting talk about the church and the tombs.

In June, John Harrison ran a Learning Methods course for four members of the branch, covering several different techniques that in combination enable one to learn a method thoroughly. The students put their learning into practice and all managed to ring a new method without much help.

Fundraising events included a sale at Woodley Pagoda and a quiz at Wokingham St Paul hall. In September Wokingham All Saints opened the tower to the public as part of Wokingham's Heritage Weekend; 105 visitors enjoyed demonstrations, talks on ringing and the view from the tower roof.

Hurst has been very short of ringers and has not held any practices for some time. Recently Graham Slade and lapsed ringers from the Hurst congregation have begun regular ringing again. Ringers from Twyford have helped to support this. Andrew & Pam Elliston

GUILD REPs REPORT, Feb 2012

Committee Meetings were held at Great Brickhill in March and Clanfield in November.

North Bucks Branch asked the Guild to support "The Big Ring Pull" – a recruitment and training event they intend to hold in the middle of Milton Keynes. The venue was offered free, but funding of £600 was requested towards putting a simulator in Downs Barn to aid training. This was subsequently granted at the AGM.

The Master had contacted the Lord Lieutenants of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire about the most appropriate time(s) for ringing to take place for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The main national celebration will be from June 2nd to June 5th but all three counties will be holding special services the weekend before: on May 26th at Christ Church Cathedral and on May 27th in Berks and Bucks. Perhaps special ringing could take place to coincide with these services when timings are known. There will be a special service at St. Paul's Cathedral on Tuesday June 5th. The Master suggested there should be ringing throughout the Guild to coincide with the end of this service. It was agreed that, if local celebrations were taking place, it would be appropriate to ring specially for them as well. Perhaps branches could find out from their local councils what is being planned.

As indicated in the Diary of Events, sponsored ringing for the Bell Fund in the last week of February 2012 is hoped for.

The Olympic Torch will be travelling through the Guild's area from Monday July 9th to Wednesday July 11th and it is suggested that ringing should take place as it travels along the route. General locations can be downloaded from the Olympic Torch website but exact details of the route will not be released until April 2012. Evening events will be held in Reading and Oxford.

The Bell Maintenance course run by the Towers & Belfries Subcommittee had been fully booked, and another will be arranged.

In connection with recent damage to churches, it was noted that while scaffolding is in place, a church is not insured. The question of who should pay if bells or gear suffer damage during a Guild event was discussed. A rule change was proposed (to be further examined at the AGM) whereby the Guild need not be liable in cases of poor maintenance or gross negligence, each case to be decided by an officer or the F&GP subcommittee.

Annual subscriptions remain at £6 (£4 to the Guild, £2 to the branch); peal fees rose to 50p per rope.

Andrew Elliston

Ringing Master's Report – February 2012

The Branch held the 6-bell competition in April at Waltham St Lawrence with an entry of six teams, the best in the last seven years for which I have records. Our thanks to Derek Titford and the local team who made all the arrangements and provided welcome refreshments. We were fortunate on the day to secure the services of two experienced ringers as judges: Ken Darvill (Beaconsfield) and Peter Mackie (Stoke Poges) who decided on the following placings:

1st Sonning,	Plain Bob Doubles	38 faults
2nd Wokingham, All Saints (B)	Cambridge S Minor	43 faults
3rd Arborfield	rounds	69 faults
4th Wokingham, All Saints (A)	rounds	96 faults
5th Easthampstead,	rounds	102 faults
6th Sandhurst,	Plain Hunt	145 faults

Sonning went on to represent the Branch at the Guild 6-bell competition in October held at Streatley coming a creditable 5th out of nine entries.

The Branch entered a team to the Guild 8-bell competition in May held at Childrey. We did well to come 4th out of nine entries after two very experienced bands, Reading and High Wycombe, and the up and coming South Oxon band.

The Branch 8-bell competition took place at Twyford in October, judged by Tim Pett (Abingdon) and Bobbie May (Shinfield). There were only three entries which has not been bettered in the seven years for which I have records but only one tower managed to field a team from its own membership, the home tower Twyford. Winners were a combined Sonning & Wokingham All Saints band with 22 faults, followed by a combined Easthampstead/Shottesbroke/Wargrave band with 31 faults and Twyford with 39 faults. Thanks to Simon Farrar and the home team for the refreshments and arrangements.

In November, for the first time in the seven years for which I have records, the Branch entered a 10-bell team in the Guild competition held at Shrivenham coming 7th out of eight entries which position understandably reflects our relative lack of 10-bell experience as a band. Indeed, the complete band rang for the first time only in the competition (details on the Guild website). My thanks to all who were able to

commit to the pre-competition practices, especially our reserves Richard Woodward and Richard Bennett who kindly stepped in to help as needed, as well as turn up on the day. I hope we can have another go this year putting in some more serious practice. It would be worth the effort.

There has been a continued steady decline in attendances at the Branch practices. Overall, about 60 members out of a Branch membership of 165 plus a few visitors have attended at least one practice ie 36%. But more than half of those members attended only one or two practices. The average attendances at Branch practices were: 15.8 (Saturdays) and 9.2 (Tuesdays). No doubt, some of the reasons will emerge from John Harrison's recent survey of the Branch membership. However, there has been a very recent upsurge in attendance at both Saturdays and, especially, Tuesdays on the change of venue to Binfield of the latter. This may, of course, be only a passing phenomenon but the advance notice to all members (on email) might have helped. There have also been favourable comments about the easier access to the tower at Binfield (GF), the easier 'go' of the bells and the ample parking. Binfield ringers have decided to cancel their evening practice on the first Tuesday and encourage their members to attend the afternoon session on that day. I hope the Branch will continue those arrangements while attendances are so encouraging.

The methods rung at Branch practices have ranged from rounds and call-changes, plain hunt on 3 with 4-5 dodging and a cover bell, through the standard methods of Grandsire, Plain Bob, Stedman, Little Bob, Kent and Oxford TB, to the more advanced Cambridge, Norwich and London Surprise. On a couple of occasions we have managed Reverse Canterbury Pleasure, Double Oxford and Oxford Bob Triples spliced with Grandsire; something for everyone.

In October, we had marvellous weather for a very pleasant outing to the South Oxon area visiting Wallingford, Benson, Ewelme, Berrick Salome, Warborough, Dorchester, centred around a pub lunch at B. Salome. Many thanks to the organisers: Pam and Andrew Elliston.

John Manley (Ringing Master)

Sonning Deanery Training report for 2011

Courses run:

- How to learn a method (June),
- Maintenance (Branch students attended Guild course (November)
- Rope splicing (December)

Courses waiting:

- Several courses have one or two people waiting, but too few to run them

Course changes:

- Specific method courses no longer offered (too little demand over the years, and catered for by Guild courses)
- New course offered on Listening and judging striking

Website:

- The training pages on the Branch website at: <http://www.sdb.odg.org.uk/training/>
- Prospectuses for all course offered

- Status reports of all course topics
- On-line form for people to request courses

Monthly Saturday practices:

- Mixed support (max 14 min 7, apart from AGM 24) (with membership of ~170)
- Time varies between morning, afternoon or evening (no clear preference for any one)
- Turn up on spec.

Monthly weekday practices:

- Variable support (max 11 min 6, but some cancelled for lack of support)
- E-mail invitations, and only confirmed when we have enough Concerns

- Low turnout for Branch practices (Survey initiated to find out members views and how they can be improved)
- The number of experienced, proactive ringers in the Branch able to share the work of training is very small.

John Harrison, January 2012

Webmaster/Postmaster Report for 2011

Website – The website has been kept up to date throughout the year. It includes full contact details for officers, an on-line diary, contact details for towers organised by practice night, number of bells and map, details of training courses (with an application form), full list of all Branch and Guild services, copies of all newsletters since 2005, reference documents, reports and pictures of events, the history of the Branch, and a list of useful ringing links. The website is at: odg.org.uk/sdb/

I would like to be able to monitor usage of the website, but for some reason the software on the Guild server that does this only sees access to change the mailing lists, and not the main web pages. I have asked the Guild server administrator to look into this.

E-mail lists – I manage the three Branch e-mail lists (Members, Officers, Towers) and provide assistance if required for the four tower lists hosted by the Branch (Easthampstead, Twyford, Warfield and Wokingham All Saints). The defences built into the members list have successfully protected it from all spam sent using some members' stolen address books.

All e-mail changes and new addresses that I have received were incorporated into the e-mail lists, but I can only do this

when I am informed. Often I have discovered that someone isn't getting messages, either because of an address change, or because he or she is not on the list. In September I asked all tower correspondents to check whether any of their members were not receiving messages via the list. I received responses from four towers.

The members list currently has 120 addresses, 50 fewer than the number of members. Some members do not have e-mail, but 30% seems a very high fraction.

Please tell me if your e-mail address changes. If you manage a tower e-mail list, please tell me when you change anyone's address, because the change you make does not automatically get copied to the members' distribution list.

Member survey – At the November Committee meeting I agreed to conduct a web-based survey of members' views of practices. The survey form went live on the website before the end of November, and with several reminders over the next few weeks, a total of 38 members completed the questionnaire. I produced a paper with the analysis of the results and recommendations. Where the survey pointed to the need for more or better information on the website, this has already been implemented.

John Harrison, February 2012

Sonning Deanery Branch Bookstall Officer's Report, 20011/12

This report covers the period from the 2011 AGM to just before the 2012 AGM. The bookstall is effectively just an 'at cost' service to members of the branch. It enables members to browse what books and CDs are available, and it saves members the task of ordering the items themselves. The bookstall cannot make a profit unless books are re-ordered in large amounts to get a discount. In fact the bookstall may make a small 'loss' each year because of the expenses involved (stationery and stamps).

During the year I have taken the bookstall to the following towers on their practice nights: Arborfield, Binfield, Sonning, Twyford, and Waltham St. Lawrence. I also took the bookstall to the Branch 2011 Committee Meeting. In all, 32 items were bought by members, the One-Per-Learner booklet being the most popular. The bookstall is now

holding stock of *The New Ringer's Book*, which is proving popular.

The finances of the bookstall operation during the year are as follows:

Opening cash balance	£42.68
Sales	£63.80
Purchases	£67.65
Expenses for the year	£0.30
Closing cash balance	£38.53

The total value of stock at year-end is £301.69.

Rob Needham, Bookstall Officer, Feb. 2012

Treasurer's AGM Report – 18 February 2012

The attached accounts have been inspected by Steve Wells and his report states "no matter has come to his attention that gives grounds for concern".

Year	Paying Members	Non-Paying	Total
011	158	8	166
010	156	8	164
009	163	9	172
008	169	10	179

General
282.00 was transferred to the Bell Fund at the start of 2011.

General fund income & expenditure

at year end our Ringing World account was £8.22 in credit. There are no outstanding 011 commitments that I am aware of. The Quiz Evening raised £162.00 plus a small profit from the AGM tea which ensured our expenditure did not exceed our income. The increased expenditure was incurred because of the cost of the Newsletter.

Bell fund income & expenditure

there was one grant paid out this year, £500.00 to Arborfield. The Quiz evening, organized by the Sonning Ringers, raised £160.00. The year end balance is as indicated in the balance sheet, there are no outstanding expenses and no unfulfilled commitments that I am aware of.

Year	General	Bell
011	£248.09	£2,977.88
010	£282.00	£2,960.98
009	£215.78	£2,667.06
008	£163.73	£2,092.68
007	£-36.58	£2,047.87

Sue Davenport
Hon Treasurer
13 February 2012

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS SONNING DEANERY BRANCH 2011 Accounts

General fund	Income	Expenditure
Subs	£948.00	£0.00
Income Quiz Evening (Part)	£212.25	£169.88
Branch outing	£21.00	£30.82
Donations	£15.50	£40.00
Subs to guild		£49.88
Ringing World		£632.00
Postmaster		£0.00
Practising tower etc		£1,186.75
Branch meetings courses etc		£948.66
Quiz evening cost (Hall)		
Quiz evening cost (Hall)		
General fund totals	£1,186.75	
General fund balance	£ 248.09	Expenditure
Bell fund	Income	Expenditure
Profit Quiz Evening (Part)	£160.00	
Interest on deposit account	£10.90	£500.00
Grant Arborfield		
Branch Bell	£64.00	
Bell fund 2011 totals	£234.90	£500.00
Carry over of 2010 balances	£9,060.98	
Transfer of general fund balance	£282.00	
Bell fund balance	£9,977.88	
Actual branch funds	£9,225.97	