

Sonning Deanery Branch ODG – Reports for 2015 AGM

Branch Secretary's report

During 2014 Sonning and Wargrave combined their practice evenings; the members of both towers going to Wargrave on Wednesdays and to Sonning on Thursdays; service ringing was still separate. Later in the year Twyford and Hurst towers combined, and they ring alternate weeks for both the Monday practices and Sunday service ringing.

A Branch Officers meeting in April decided that branch officers between them should visit all branch towers to ascertain whether a tower would value some help from the branch at their practice evenings, and to establish what sort of help would be most useful to them. This led to John Harrison and Andrew Elliston attending Arborfield's practice nights.

The branch Training Officer, Jacquie Hazell, ran a couple of Novice branch practices on a Wednesday evening, mainly for learners of Waltham St. Lawrence tower. Later in the year Jacquie, with help from an EBSB tower captain, taught 7 learners from the local primary school. Using a mix of the children and experienced ringers, the children were excited to ring before the school's Christmas service at Waltham St. Lawrence. Some of the children are continuing their training into 2015, some on a Monday and some on a Wednesday evening.

The Branch Secretary has traditionally been the guardian of all the branch archives; some of the records go back to the formation of the branch in 1880. In April the Secretary visited the Guild Librarian and a lot of the archive records were transferred to the ODG Library. Other old records went to the Berkshire Record Office, and more recent records were retained by the Secretary.

Waltham St Lawrence rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles on St. George's Day and it included two first quarters, by Jennie (treble) and Ben (tenor) King. It was also a belated celebration of their first wedding anniversary; they were married in the same church.

In the summer several learners started their training with the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS). Some of the learners had already been learning without the framework of ITTS but decided to join the scheme. During the year there were 4 learners at Waltham St. Lawrence, 5 at Sonning and 2 at White Waltham learning to ring with ITTS.

Over the weekend 19th/20th July the ringers of St. Paul's, Wokingham celebrated the 150th anniversary of the consecration of the church with a peal. The method was Berkshire Surprise Major, chosen because the first peal in this method was rung in the tower in 1934. On Sunday 20th July the Bishop of Oxford made his first visit to the parish to celebrate the 150th anniversary Eucharist. This provided an opportunity for a quarter peal involving some of the tower members and regular visitors.

Several towers marked the centenary of the start of WWI. Ten ringers from Waltham St Lawrence rang the bells, half-muffled, for 45 minutes before a solemn commemoration in music and poetry of the start of the First World War. Easthampstead rang a quarter of Plain Bob Doubles half-muffled on Monday 4 August to mark the start of World War I on this day in 1914, and Connor Bannister scored a first quarter inside. On the same day St. Paul, Wokingham, rang 1260 of Grandsire Triples half muffled prior to the Vigil Service; a first quarter was scored by Ashley Gray on the tenor.

At All Saints, Wokingham, a peal of Yorkshire was rung on 13 September as a wedding compliment to Siân Haseldine, formerly one of their ringers. The next day the tower rang a quarter of Plain Bob Minor and Kristin Fitch scored a first quarter inside.

A new venture for the Branch took place in October when it held the first joint 8-bell striking competition with Reading branch. The competition this year was organised by Sonning Deanery branch at All Saints, Wokingham, and the winner, by a very small margin, was St. Andrew, Sonning.

At the branch Business Meeting in November it was agreed that the Ringing Master would name at least two methods per practice (one simple, one more advanced) that would get most of the practice time. At the same meeting the Branch Officers agreed to consider how the branch as a whole could help towers with their recruitment of ringers. The issue of recruitment was discussed further at the Branch Officers' meeting in January 2015.

Easthampstead recruited several young ringers during the year. At a practice night towards the end of 2014 the youngsters rang some very respectable rounds together: Tom Wood (13), Charlie Wood (12), Bradley Herrington (11), Tom Helyer (16), Christopher Otim (17), and Connor Bannister (14).

Rob Needham

Accounts

Sonning Deanery Branch Accounts
Year to 31st December 2014

AGM Balance sheet

General fund	Income	Expenditure
Subs	£1,336.00	
Branch Outing	£17.30	
Interest		
Subs to guild		£805.00
Competition Judges		£17.73
Newsletter		£72.09
Postage, stationery etc		£41.59
General fund totals	£1,353.30	£936.41
Carry over of 2013 balances	£1,028.07	
General fund balance	£1,444.96	

Bell fund	Income	Expenditure
Interest	£20.14	
Fundraising	£52.72	
Bell fund 2014 totals	£72.86	£0.00
Carry over of 2013 balances	£3,189.15	
Bell fund balance	£3,262.01	

Actual branch funds £4,706.97

Signed: S Davenport

Treasurer

I certify that these accounts are in accordance with the books, statements and vouchers given to me by the Treasurer. No matter has come to my attention that gives me grounds for concern

Signed

Examiner

Ringling Master

Saturday Branch Practices have been held each month around the Branch and on nine Tuesday afternoons at Binfield. Wokingham AS have been holding occasional Surprise Major practices throughout the year. An average of 10 people attended the Binfield practices and 11 at the Saturday practices. We are grateful to those towers for letting us ring.

Twelve different methods have been rung at the Binfield practices and 10 at Branch Practices. The introduction of different plain minor methods this year and sometimes splicing them seems popular.

Five towers entered the 6-bell Striking Competition at Arborfield in April with Arborfield, AS Wokingham and Sonning coming 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Sonning Deanery and Reading held the first of what is hoped to become an annual inter branch, 8- Bell Striking Competition at AS Wokingham. Reading was represented by ringers from several towers: Caversham, St Giles, Shiplake, and Tilehurst. AS Wokingham and Sonning represented SDB. Sonning came first, AS Wokingham second and Reading third.

A successful Branch Outing was held in October to the west and south of Reading.

Several towers have asked for help from the Branch to assist in teaching people to ring bells and to develop their bands capabilities. This is a long term commitment and we are grateful to those ringers who now support other towers on a regular basis.

Steve Wells

Bookstall Holder

After last year's success, the bookstall has had a slow half-year, with sales of £29.61 and the purchase of £109.88 of new stock. I have taken it to most of the Saturday and midweek branch practices but have rarely been able to be proactive at selling items. My first full inventory revealed that several items had disappeared: 3 high value items [Tower Handbook, Change Ringing volume 1, and Learning & Ringing Std8 Surprise Major Methods]; Variation & Transposition, and Elementary Method Splicing. Total stock value is now £340.41, and we are currently subsidising the float. The transactions are summarised below:

SOLD		Items	value
Personal Progress Card (aka What's My Next Work?)	4		£ 0.80
1 per learner	19		£15.96
Follow-on book	1		£ 0.85
Diagrams (blue)	1		£12.00
New Ringer's Book	2		£19.00
	TOTAL		£29.61
BOUGHT			
1 per learner	30		£25.00
Diagrams (blue)	2		£24.00
Easy Stages mini-leaflets (5 Grandsire D, 5 Plain Bob D)	10		£ 2.00
20 Questions	20		£ 2.50
Bell Club Starter Pack	1		£ 5.00
New Ringer's Book	4)		
Will you call a touch please Bob	1)		£51.38
Tower and Bells Handbook (Frost)	1)		
	TOTAL		£109.88

Andrew Elliston

Training report (also Branch report to Guild Training meeting)

Tower Practices – The great majority of training takes place on a week-by-week basis at the practices of each of our towers. Several towers have been co-operating with each other to make weekly training more effective: for example, Sonning & Wargrave, Shottesbrooke & White Waltham, Twyford & Hurst. Also, ringers from Easthampstead have supported Binfield practices, and ringers from All Saints & Sonning have supported Arborfield practices.

Branch Practices – These practices provide training opportunities for people to ring with more experienced ringers, and to ring a wider variety of methods than is possible at some towers usually. The practices have continued to be held once a month on Saturdays, at different towers around the branch, and for the last few months they have been well supported. Also, a monthly mid-week day-time 6-bell practice is held at Binfield when there is sufficient support (ringers confirm in advance if they are able to attend). It was held nearly every month in 2014.

Surprise Practices – A monthly mid-week evening Surprise practice was started during 2014. Again, ringers confirm in advance if they are able to attend. After a successful start, support has wavered, but we hope it will pick up again as many of those who do attend find it very valuable.

Initial Training – The tradition in this branch is for each tower to recruit and train its own new ringers. At a recent meeting, there was support for the Branch providing more help with recruitment. But there was no great enthusiasm for the Branch helping out with the initial bell-handling training. The general pattern is that each tower tries to recruit a couple of new ringers each year, not always successfully!

Under-18s – Most towers do not have many under-18 ringers. The main exceptions are Easthampstead (where youngsters from the youth club are recruited regularly) and Waltham St Lawrence (where an experiment is in progress – teaching seven 9-11 year-olds from the local Primary school).

Targeted Practices – As an experiment, a few targeted practices were arranged in the summer of 2014: for instance, a Plain Bob Doubles practice for two particular ringers, with a strong band of helpers around them. Although these practices were valuable for the targeted individuals, it was very complicated to arrange, trying to fit in with everybody's busy lives! So our future plan is to set out some Training practices in the branch annual diary, covering particular topics eg. Ringing up and down in peal, Developing good striking, Plain bob minor. Those who wish to attend will need to 'sign up' in advance, and there will be a strong team of helpers to support the 'learners'.

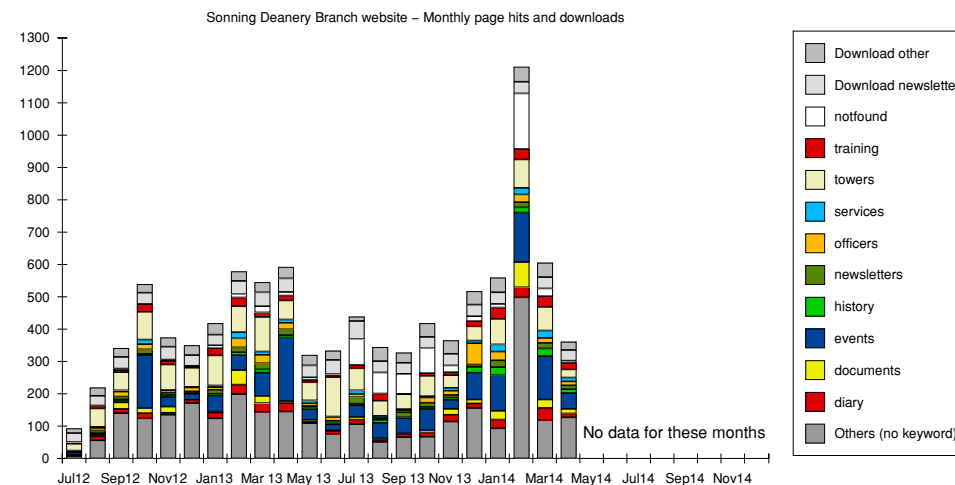
Courses – In June 2014 an all-day Bell Maintenance Course was held. The tutors from the Guild were John Davidge and Len Palfrey. The 'students' learnt a great deal, and thank the tutors for a valuable day. The course was arranged by John Harrison – and he also provided a rope splicing evening course, which was much appreciated by those who attended.

Jacque Hazell (Training Officer)

Webmaster/Postmaster Report for 2014

Website – The website has been kept up to date throughout the year, with periodic additions. The site 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/

Usage statistics for the website have been recorded since late July 2012, but owing to a technical problem there are no records from mid April 2014. During the first three months of 2014, several things are apparent. It appears that usage levels are higher than previously. February stands out, but the main increase was in 'other', most of which were visits to the home page. The number of 'not found' (where the address didn't match any page) was also very high that month. Newsletter downloads continued at around 35 per month.



E-mail lists – I manage four Branch e-mail lists (Members, Officers, Towers & Wedding volunteers) and provide assistance if required for the four tower lists hosted by the Branch (Easthampstead, Twyford, Warfield and Wokingham All Saints).

I try to keep the addresses on the list up to date and complete, but I can only do so when given the information. The number of members on the list is very slightly more than last year (141 v 136) – just over 80% of our members. I periodically ask tower correspondents to check that all of their members are on the members list and receiving messages from it, and I also periodically discover that there are members who aren't.

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, since changes that you make don't automatically get copied to the members mailing list.

I occasionally respond to other Guild members who run websites and/or mailing lists and ask for help.

John Harrison,