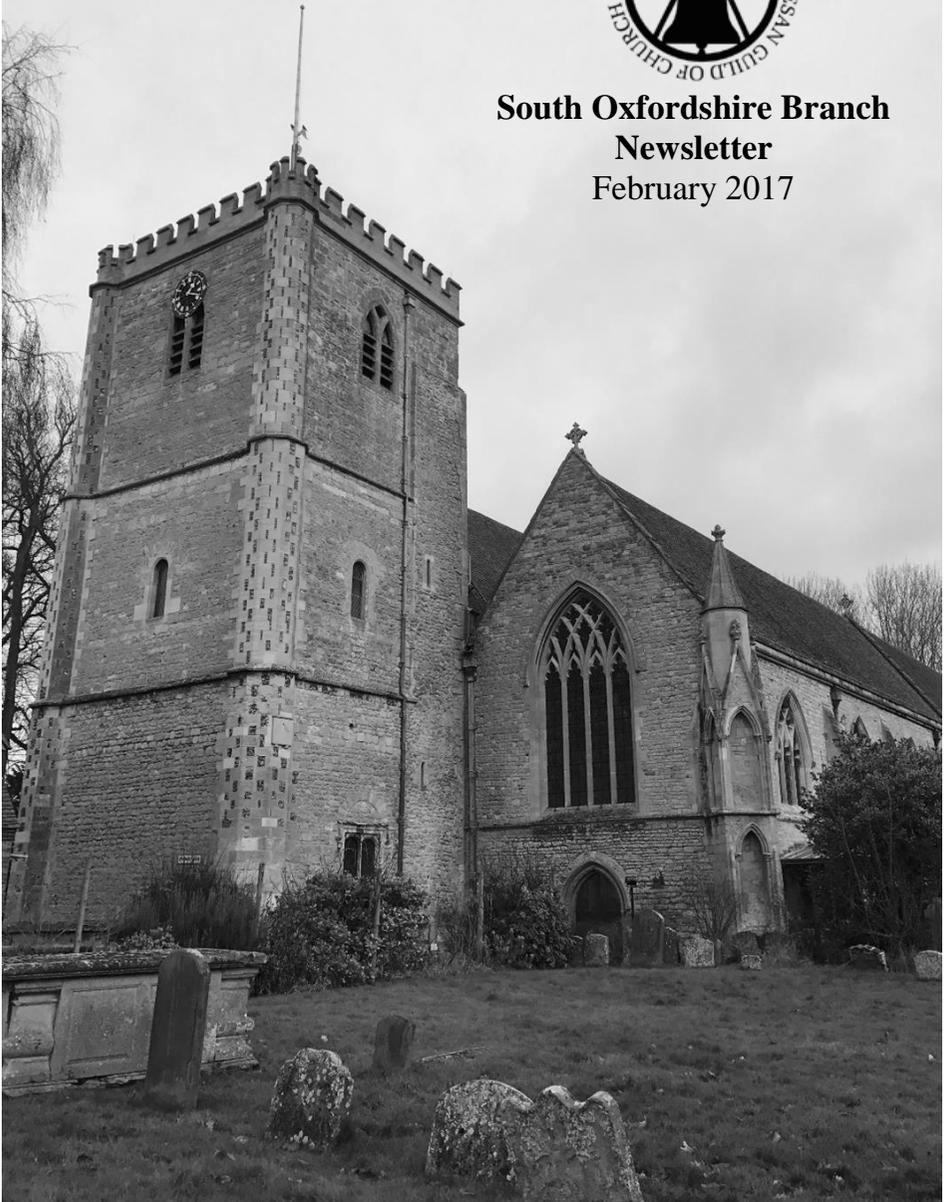




**South Oxfordshire Branch
Newsletter
February 2017**



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
SATURDAY 25th FEBRUARY 2017
The Abbey Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Dorchester (8)

The programme will be:

- 3.00pm Ringing
- 4.00pm Service, conducted by the Rev.Canon Sue Booy
- 4.30pm Tea
- 5.00pm AGM

Please could you kindly email Gillian (johnson.gs@btinternet.com) to let her know if you expect to attend and, in particular, if you wish to partake of tea and cakes! We will be asking for a donation (suggest £3) for tea. It would be helpful to know numbers by 19th February please.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 27th February 2016.
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes
4. Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
5. Donations from the surplus branch funds to the Guild Bell and / or Restoration Fund.
6. Donation to tower hosting Branch Officer and Tower Captain meetings.
7. Gift for outgoing auditor of the accounts
8. Secretary's Report
9. 100 Club report
10. Branch Representative's Report
11. Ringing Master's Report
12. Branch Outings
13. Election of Officers (Notice –all posts become vacant)
 - Chairman
 - Vice Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Ringing Master
 - Deputy Ringing Master
 - Training Officer
 - Branch Representative (2 representatives can be elected)
 - Newsletter Editor
 - 100 Club
 - Webmaster
 - Auditor
14. Election of New Members and presentation of certificates.
15. Any Other Business

The Abbey Bells



Our ancient Abbey bells are famous for their tone, and the five oldest bells have a preservation order. This means that if they are ever damaged they cannot be recast, and if ever they become redundant they must be kept together as a ring and not rehung in several different towers.

The lightest bell in the tower is always called the treble, while the heaviest bell is called the tenor. In between, the other bells are given numbers down the scale. The eight bells of Dorchester, when rung in

sequence from treble to tenor, come down the scale in the key of E flat. Since 1987, when the bells were lowered to the ground by bellhangers Whites of Appleton and sent for retuning at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry using modern technology, the harmonics of the bells have blended perfectly.

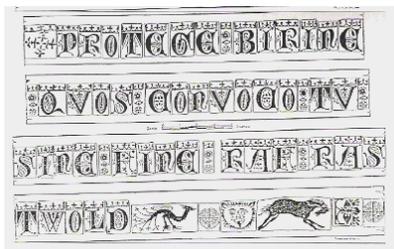
It is interesting that the third oldest of our bells, the 6th, was cast in 1591, just three years after the Spanish Armada was defeated (was it cast to celebrate the victory?). Then in 1602 the tower was rebuilt, to be followed the next year by the casting of the 4th bell and three years later by the 5th, in 1606 (the year after the Gunpowder Plot). The 3rd was cast in 1661, two years after the execution of Charles 1.

The Revd William Macfarlane was Vicar of Dorchester from 1856 – 1885 and he was a great benefactor to the Abbey and village. Was he the same person as I. A. Macfarlane, the donor of the number 2 bell?

The Abbey bells, unlike many others, were not lowered to the ground during the second World War. They were not rung during the war, but they were to be 'fired', i.e, all rung together, not spaced, as a warning if an invasion occurred.

Mary Tame, who passed away last year aged 101, was one of the bellringers and she has not forgotten how hard it was to

ring the bells in those days because they were on plain bearings. After the War, in about 1950, the bells were lowered, rehung and fitted with ball bearings. Immediately that took the hard work out of ringing them, and it remains a pleasure to ring the bells to this day. The next time the bells were rehung was in 1987 when, as well as having the bells tuned, the bells were



quarter turned so that the clappers struck the bells in a fresh place thus avoiding excessive wear and risk of cracking.

Bell	Date	Founder	Weight Cwt Qtr Lbs	Inscription
Tenor	1380	Wokingham	16 - 2 - 11	PROTEGE BIRINE QUOS CONVOCO TU SINE FINE RAF RASTWOLD
7th	1375	Exeter	13 - 0 - 0	PETRE: TUIS: APERI: DA: PAULE: TUIS: MISERI
6th	1591	Henry Knight 1	10 - 1 - 15	VIRGINIS EGREGIE DICAR CAMPANA MARIA
5th	1606	Henry Knight 1	7 - 12 - 0	SANCTA TOMA ORA PRO NOBIS
4th	1603	Henry Knight 1	5 - 2 - 4	HENRI KNIGHT MADE ME
3rd	1651	Ellis Knight 1, Francis Knight and Henry Knight11	6 - 15 - 0	LOVE GOD
2nd	1867	Mears and Stainbank	4 - 3 - 5	IN HONOREM S.S. TRINITATIS D.D. DORCENSI ECCLESIAE. I.A.MACFARLANE
Treble	1867	Mears and Stainbank	4 - 1 - 22	IN HONOREM S.S. TRINITATIS D.D. DORCENSI ECCLESIAE INCOLAE

For further detailed information about the bells please visit:
<http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/the-bells/>

Treasurers Report

by Kay Bartholomew

**SOUTH OXON BRANCH OF ODG
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2016**

<u>Receipts</u>	£	<u>Payments</u>	£
Brought Forward 31/12/2015	2438.13	Guild Subscriptions	630.00
Subscriptions	1008.00	Guild Bell Fund	373.20
100 Club	660.00	Bell Restoration Fund	165.00
Donations	3.00	100 Club prizes	330.00
AGM Collection	58.20	Domain Name Renewal	12.56
Interest on Deposit	5.59	Website Address Renewal	107.64 20.49
		Postage/Stationery	34.83
		Honoraria	
Total Receipts	1734.79	Total Expenses	1673.72
		Balance Carried forward 31/12/2016	2499.20
	4219.15		4172.92

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2016**

	£
Balance brought forward 1.1.2016	2438.13
Receipts	1734.79
Payments	<u>1673.72</u>
Balance carried forward 31.12.2016	<u>2499.20</u>
Current Account Balance	1332.04
Deposit Account Balance	1158.44
Cash	<u>8.72</u>
	<u>2499.20</u>

Prepared by Kay Bartholomew

Audited by Raymond Fergusson

Date 2nd January 2017

Date 15th January 2017

Subscriptions remained at £8 per member for 2016 and we had a total of 133 members, comprising 126 paid members, 5 Honorary Members and one member who made a donation.

66 members supported the 100 Club and £165 was sent to both the Guild Bell Fund and Restoration Fund. In addition, £150 from Branch funds, together with

the collection from the AGM, was also sent to the Bell Fund, making a total of £373.20. My thanks to Margaret Coombe for running the 100 Club again. This year, both the Branch Domain name and website address were renewed totalling £120.20. A small gift of appreciation was given to Frank Norman who retired as our Independent Auditor this year and we are indebted to him for the many years of service he has given to the Branch in this role. My thanks to Raymond Fergusson for taking over and auditing the accounts this year.

100 Club

by Margaret Coombe

South Oxon Branch of ODG 100 Club 2016

Receipts	£	Payments	£
Subscriptions	660.00	1 st Prizes: 1x £15 (Jan), 11x£17 (Feb-Dec)	15.00 187.00
		2 nd Prize: 12 x £10	120.00
		3 rd Prize: 1 x £5 (Dec)	8.00
		Total Prizes	330.00
		Transfers to	
		ODGCBR Restoration Fund	165.00
		Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund	165.00
	660.00		660.00

The prize money was as follows:

<u>2016</u>	<u>1st Prize</u>	<u>2nd Prize</u>	<u>3rd Prize</u>	<u>Total £</u>
January	Patricia Newton	Salli Pelling		25.00
February	Olive Lawrence	Maureen Bosley		27.00
March	Brian Gray	Chris Webb		27.00
April	Salli Pelling	Margaret Coombe		27.00
May	Anita Clayton	Kay Tuckwell		27.00
June	JohnTchighianoff	Wendy Simon		27.00
July	Amy Herlihy	Hilarie Rogers		27.00
August	Wendy Simon	Patricia Newton		27.00
September	Margaret/Richard Jewson	Clive Bosley		27.00
October	Margaret Coombe	Anne Thomson		27.00
November	Catherine Mason	Brian Gray		27.00
December	Kay Tuckwell	Anna Herlihy	Raymond Fergusson	27.00
				330.00

Secretary's Report

by Amy Herlihy

Our AGM was held on 27th February at St Mary's Thame. At this meeting Andrew Davis stood down after 5 years of being Chairman, handing over to John Tchighianoff. All other officers stayed in post.

Over the course of the year we welcomed the following new members: Hazel Gibb (Thame) Justine Gibb (Thame) Salli Pelling (Berrick Salome) Sue Palmer (Warborough) and Joan Sweby (Shabbington)

We had several firsts this year. Two first peals were rung, although one was technically in 2015 ... but didn't make the last Newsletter! James Anderson-Besant rang his first peal on Monday 28th December 2015 at Nettlebed. The peal was 5040 changes of Minor (5 methods) in 2 hours 30 minutes. It was rung by representatives of the ODG band in the Ringing World National Youth Contest, all of whom were age 18 or under. Benji Coles rang his first peal at Berrick Salome on Saturday 7th May 2016. It was 5040 Plain Bob Minor in 2 hours 34 minutes. Benji rang the 2nd and the peal was conducted by Robert Newton. This was the first peal on the refurbished Berrick Salome bells and was rung in memory of Bill Simon. Two first quarter peals were rung as well. On 10th April Isobel Anderson-Besant rang her first Quarter Peal on Sunday 10th April 2016. She ran the treble to 1260 Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles. Her brother James conducted. On Sunday 23rd October 2016 Dylan Warrell rang his first quarter peal at Shabbington. Dylan rang tenor to Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles, conducted by John Whitham.

In May, Sue Dyke, Tower Captain of Warborough, was awarded a Guild Distinguished Membership at the Guild AGM meeting.

The Drayton St Leonard bells were recast at Whitechapel Foundry in the spring and rehung over the summer, ready to ring by 10th July. A Service of Dedication and Celebration was held on 28th of September. With the structural work on the tower and the bells a lighter weight, there are expectations that the tower will no longer sway over the dry summer months, ensuring the bells will ring for many more years!

On 23rd April, the Branch Striking Competition was held at Berrick Salome and although only 3 bands participated, it was a good event. The results of the competition were 1) DSL, 2) Chalgrove and 3) the Ringing Master's Invitation Band. The Ringing Master's Invitation Band was a band to encourage new ringers to compete in a competition.

Drayton St Leonard represented the South Oxon Branch in the Guild 6-bell competition on the 1st October in Penn. Even though two of the team got a little lost (within the village of Penn) on the way to the competition, the team rang well - and won!

As there were several times during 2016 to remember battles of the First World War, Great Milton Tower held a special remembrance for the three soldiers from the village, two who were directly related to a current bell ringer. The men remembered were: Harold Tame, William Allen and Joseph Allen, all lost in the Great war.

And finally – at the end of the year - on 28th December 2016 a quarter peal was rung at Chalgrove to celebrate the 80th birthday of Brian Gary, Tower Captain, and the 50th birthday of Andrew Davis, Steeple Keeper.

25 Years Ago

The AGM was held in April at Thame. At this meeting Stan Day stood down as Chairman passing the baton to John Tchighianoff. Apologies were received from a few towers and from Pat Newton - the Guild Master. It is noted that Wheatley was part of the branch at that time, electing Mark Walker from Wheatley as a new Guild Member. Andrew Gillard and Graham Hume were presented with their first quarter peal certificates too. One interesting branch officer was the “Flying Squad” organizer, who was Meg Way. There was discussion about abandoning the October Half Yearly meeting – deciding to have a simple meeting prior to the October branch practice (sound familiar?). There was also discussion about how to use the legacy of Mr. Holloway in the form of a Striking League to be run during the winter months. It was indicated that the Striking League would start the winter of 1992.

Election of New Members – Reminder

If you want to nominate a new member, please give Amy Herlihy the names of the ringers 2 weeks prior to the AGM.

Distinguished Membership

Should you wish to nominate a branch member for Distinguished Membership please contact the branch secretary. 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/pdf/dm_nomination_form_2014.pdf

Reminder that many useful documents about bell ringing can be found on the web! Check out our branch web page: <http://www.southoxonodg.co.uk/> as well as the Guild Web page: <http://odg.org.uk/> Look on the Blog tab for musings from the Guild Master (aka Hilarie Rogers).

Branch Representative’s Report

by John White

Guild General Committee Meeting, Sat.12th March 2016, held at Little Missenden, Bucks

As is customary the AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund preceded this meeting.

AGM of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (Registered Charity No. 268390)

Report of the Managing Trustees for the year ended 31st December 2015

New money raised in 2015 amounted to £19,153, a substantial increase of £9,791 compared to 2014, although this includes a legacy of £11,000 and in real terms the figure is down some £1,200. However, Guild members are reminded that grants from this fund are made from interest received on investments and the continued steady performance of these investments has meant that it has been possible to make provisional grants to all 12 of the new applications received during the year, these allocations being to Cholsey £880; Taynton £13,200; Little Hampton £500; Drayton St Leonard £11,000; Loughton £10,000; Radley £6,725; Brightwell-cum-Sotwell £6,000; Little Wittenham £1,050; Stratfield Mortimer £1,900; Appleton £600 and Cuddesdon £9,000. Each allocation now represents assistance of 20% towards the cost of eligible works. Five grants totalling £9,920 have been paid during the year towards work at Cholsey £850; North Moreton £3,230; Appleton £600; Berrick Salome £3,290 and Clanfield £1,950.

Investment income for the year was £23,144, an increase of 3% from 2014.

Accounts

Following the exceptional figure of new money raised in 2015 the Trustees were able to make an investment of £20,000 in 2015 in contrast to the more usual figure of £10,000 made in 2014. This brings the total (market value) of the Investment Assets of the Fund to £526,091, which, with the Fund's current assets, brings the total value of the Fund to £631,342, an increase of 5.6% against 2014.

Election of Officers

All the serving officers of the Fund were re-elected with the exception of Barry Cowper who retired as an Additional Managing Trustee.

General Committee Meeting

Requests for items of Any Other Business

At this point in the meeting your correspondent was permitted to deliver some words of special recognition and support for the Guild General Secretary James Champion, who had recently suffered the death of his wife Julie; to Julie herself who had supported James in his work for the Guild and to the Master Hilarie Rogers who had taken on, and currently continues, the work of Guild Secretary in order to relieve James for the time being in addition to her own already considerable workload.

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

Following last year's inquorate meeting considerable work has been done by the Vale of the White Horse Branch to encourage a better attendance at the forthcoming Guild AGM to be held in that branch on 21st May 2016. A full day's

programme of events is on offer including timed trips around the workshops of Whites of Appleton Ltd (bell hangers) and ringing at local towers in the morning, plus lunch, exhibitions, a mini-ring and handbell ringing at Faringdon church, with the Guild AGM in the church rooms in the afternoon. The day finishes with a Songs of Praise service and further ringing at Faringdon.

Correspondence

Suitable presentations and expressions of thanks had been made to Bill Mills, the calligrapher who had for many years produced the Guild's Striking Competition certificates and written up the competition record books. Following Bill's retirement from this work the Deputy Master has begun to produce the Guild's certificates electronically but using fonts that very closely match Bill's original writing.

Reports from and election of sub-committees

Education reported that there was some concern surrounding the lack of applications for some courses and also that finding sufficient helpers was difficult.

Following an incident in which the emergency services had difficulty in locating a church the committee recommends that the postcode of the church is displayed on a notice in the tower and that if the church itself does not have a postcode (some don't) then that of a nearby building be used instead.

All the existing members of the sub-committee were re-elected.

Towers and Belfries reported on the continued work of tower inspections and the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme. The latter had shown an increase in the number of awards with the number of current awards having increased by five to twenty.

Again, all the existing members of the sub-committee were re-elected.

Finance and General Purposes reported on ongoing arrangements for the Guild Festival in Oxford on Sat. 9th July 2016. Regrettably it had been decided not to offer lunch as part of the day as the cost of this was now going to be prohibitive, but the hall at St Giles' church is to be offered as a base for lunch and hot drinks will be served.

Once again all the existing members of the sub-committee were re-elected.

Peal Secretary's Report 2015

A total of 276 peals were rung for the Guild in 2015, an increase of 17 compared with 2014, with 24 members ringing their first peal. A copy of the full report appears in the recently published Guild Annual Report for 2015.

Safeguarding Officer's Report

Katie Lane reminded the meeting of the Oxford Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and the link to this subject which can be found at www.oxford.anglican.org. Both Katie and the

Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Stephen Barber, are available for advice at all times. Stephen may be contacted on 01865 208920 or by email at **stephen.barber@oxford.anglican.org**.

The importance of keeping a tower attendance register was stressed as complaints can be made against individuals many years after an alleged event.

Diary of Events

Attention was drawn to HM the Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations in 2016. Her actual birthday is on Thursday 21st April and there are official celebrations over the weekend of Friday 10th – Sunday 12th June. Special ringing is requested during the Patron's Lunch along the Mall between 12 noon and 2pm on Sunday 12th.

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2015

These showed an excess of income over expenditure of £1,033, (2014 £1,419) and accumulated funds now stand at £15,468. Income was £15,642 (2014 £15,154), the slight increase being chiefly due to a greater volume of peal fees, course fees and increased income from the Guild book stall. Expenditure was however greater still than in 2014 (£14,608 as opposed to £13,735) largely attributable to an increase in grant expenditure, including payments for dumb-bell and simulator projects.

Management of the Restoration Fund (Registered Charity No. 284053)

The total funds raised in 2015 were £2,150, a small increase on 2014 (£2,027). Three grants were paid during the year, to Chearsley £4,620 (augmentation from 3 to 6); Reading St Mary £212 (replace tenor gudgeons) and North Moreton £900 (augmentation from 5 to 6). In addition two requests for new grants were received and both given provisional allocations. That to Shabbington of £212 (replace tenor gudgeons) had already been paid and the other to Drayton St Leonard of £5,000 to re-cast and re-hang the 6 bells will remain outstanding until the work is done.

The balance of the fund as at 31st December 2015 was £15,065 and includes restricted funds of £2,820 for the proposed project at Longworth.

Donations to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, Restoration Fund and Ringing World

In common with recent years donations of £750 to each of the two funds and £250 to the Ringing World were proposed, subject to ratification at the Guild AGM in May.

Guild Rules

Clarification of the status of Distinguished Membership awards had become necessary since some had been presuming this to be a category of membership, which is not the case. The insertion of appropriate guidance notes

into the rules, together with some “tidying-up” by way of correcting the numbering various paragraphs, was agreed.

Library Review

The continued expansion of the Guild Library had recently made necessary the purchase of a further book case but at the same time the increasing volume of the material held had given rise to the need to consider future strategy. A working Group set up for this purpose had put forward twelve options for consideration of which meeting asked that the Group consider four in greater detail. These include the possible digitisation of some of the material, finding a permanent home for the material and possibly reducing the volume of the library.

Main discussion item

In recent meetings the Master had challenged all branches to consider and discuss a number of issues regarding the health of bell ringing in the Diocese and on this occasion the question surrounded what each branch does to identify and tackle bell-handling issues and to improve striking. Around two-thirds of the fifteen branches responded with comments in their allocated two-minute time-slot including the South Oxon Branch. Initiatives surrounding this subject may follow in due course.

Guild General Committee Meeting, Sat. 26th November 2016 at Chipping Norton

Matters arising from the previous meeting

a) Library Review. Following discussions at previous meetings regarding the increasing size of the Guild Library and consequent storage problems, the Guild Librarian, Doug Beaumont, has begun work on an electronic archive which it is intended will store Guild and Branch meeting minutes, Guild Annual Reports other general archives. Further details regarding the project can be found via the following link: <http://odg.org.uk/pdf/GCMar16/LibraryReview.pdf>.

Reports of Sub-Committees

a) Finance and General Purposes reported on work undertaken researching the possibility of hosting a meeting of the Central Council, tidying-up of the Guild Rules and review of the Terms of Reference of the Guild sub-committees. Striking Competition methods for 2017 were agreed as Grandsire Triples for the Eight-Bell Competition and Grandsire Caters for the Ten-Bell.

b) Education reported that the usual courses had been organised around Radley in April, the south-east of the Guild at Michaelmas in September and Steeple Aston in October with a Ten-Bell Training Day booked for Aston Clinton in February 2017. Discussions have been held regarding working with schools,

new teachers of ringing, young ringers' practices, teaching bell handling and the possibility of reinstating a residential course. With the Michaelmas and Steeple Aston courses being under-subscribed the latter has not been pursued. Anna Sherwood was awarded the Rodrick Trophy in the 2015/16 Young Ringers Award Scheme.

c) Towers and Belfries reported that the number of towers participating or expressing an interest in the Tower Maintenance Award Scheme has increased to 86, although this still represents just 19% of the towers in the Guild. The committee itself had undertaken 11 inspections, two related to OD Bell Fund/ODG Restoration Fund grants, five in connection with the TMA Scheme and four related to other matters. Two courses had been run, one each on rope splicing and maintenance.

Central Council Representatives' Report

John Harrison reported on Council business undertaken at the annual meeting held at Portsmouth in May, which in the main surrounded committee procedures and terms of reference. Over the next few years the Council intends to transform the format of its annual meeting from a weekend focused on the whole-day AGM to a weekend conference with workshops, debates and seminars open to all, with the formal AGM as a relatively small part.

Guild Budget for 2017

The figures for the year to date (2016) showed an excess of income over expenditure of £3,631 (author's note: final expenditure for 2016 could of course see this excess reduced; the past two years have seen an excess of some £1,200). The budget for 2017 expected no significant variance to the average figures for the years 2012-2015.

Subscriptions for 2017

In the light of the above the Guild Treasurer, Stuart Gibson, proposed that the annual subscriptions for 2017 remain at £8 per head for Resident Ringing Members, Associate Members and Non-resident Ringing Members. This was carried.

Peal Fees for 2017

These will remain at 50p per participant.

Management of the Restoration Fund (Registered Charity No. 284053)

Total funds raised to date in 2016 were £2,055, the same as the equivalent period in 2015 (£2,051). There had been a fewer number of grant requests this year and the Trustees had been able to make provisional grants to all of them. Together with a provisional grant carried over from 2015 these were Shabbington, £212 (grant moved to the OD Bell Fund); Horspath, £185 for the replacement of pulleys (outstanding) and Drayton St Leonard, £5,000 for one of

the new bells* (paid). Investment income for the year has been low but on a similar level to previous years. Author's note: members are reminded of the distinction between this, the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund, which is a smaller fund and is permitted to make grants towards augmentations as well as bell restoration and renewal, and the larger Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund which is permitted to make grants towards bell restoration and renewal work only.

* This grant represents a legacy which had been passed to the Restoration Fund for safe-keeping pending a decision by the relatives of the deceased as to where it would eventually be spent.

Guild Festival

The well-organised Guild Festival held in Oxford in July had nevertheless received a modest attendance and the Guild Master, Hilarie Rogers, intends to make the future of the Festival a subject for a future Master's Feedback request.

Approval of Safeguarding policy

The Guild's Safeguarding Officer, Katie Lane, presented the Guild's Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults in the context of Bell Ringing Policy for approval. All tower captains, at the very least, must ensure that they are fully conversant with this policy. The policy can be viewed at <http://odg.org.uk/policies/safeguarding.php>. Katie's contact details, if required, appear in the Guild Annual Report and OddBob.

Amendment to Guild Rules

A "tidying-up" exercise with regard to the wording of Rule 8, Subscription, relating to the requirement for subscriptions to be paid by 31st March, was agreed.

From the Ringing Master

by Hilarie Rogers

Branch practices were well attended during 2016, with John White and myself sharing the running of them. People had the chance to ring things that are not always possible in their home tower. Do come along in 2017 – and if there is anything in particular that you would like to ring, a quick email in advance would give us the chance to prepare!

Both improvers and helpers from other branches have been invited to the Surprise Major practices (held every other month) which has made them more viable. The Surprise Minor practices which alternate with these have continued apart from once in the summer when numbers were low.

The monthly afternoon Doubles practice alternating between Grandsire and Plain Bob has struggled a bit, mainly due to fewer helpers being available. We will look into this in 2017.

The Tower Twinning has continued to be popular and enjoyable, giving towers the chance to visit another tower and to benefit from them attending their practice.

Do ask if there is anything we can help you with, or if you would like a concentrated session on something particular.

TOWER NEWS

Aston Rowant

by Robert Newton

All fairly quiet on the Eastern Front of the branch! We usually have enough to ring all six bells on practice nights but it's mostly a case of four or five for services. Our repertoire of methods is limited: Cambridge Minor is a rarity but Stedman seems to be a bit more regular and reliable. Maybe we'll manage a quarter of it one day.

Speaking of quarter peals, following the previous year's glut, we rang only two in 2016: Grandsire for HM the Queen's (actual) 90th birthday in April and Stedman, Grandsire and Plain Bob in anticipation of Christmas. A visiting band from the Chiltern Midweek group also rang one of Cambridge at short notice in December.

Our annual Dinner, at the Peacock, in Henton, was as enjoyable as ever, as was our Summer Evening get together with churchwarden and clergy. Occasional alternatives to practice nights are always popular.

Owing to illness, for the first time in the last 20 years or so, we failed to ring carols on handbells at the Christmas service of lessons and carols. The children from Year 6 made up for that at their school Nativity!

The quest for recruits continues. We again had a couple of "Church Open Days and Tower Tours" in August but no new ringers resulted from them. I'm sure people in the village are beginning to avoid me (!) because they know what I'm going to ask.

Benson

by John Tchighianoff

I am pleased to report that our numbers continue to grow. Two of our three young learners are now ringing regularly on Sundays and are being put forward for Guild membership at the AGM.

We rang two significant Quarter Peals in 2016. On the 10th April Izzie rang her first Quarter which was conducted by her brother, James, and which was also a birthday compliment to Benji. This was a sponsored Quarter for the ODG Bell Fund and raised £283.61 Then on the 19th May a Quarter was rung to

celebrate James' 18th birthday and also mine (but not 18th needless to say). Congratulations to Benji who rang his first Peal on 7th May in Berrick Salome.

Amongst other opportunities for special ringing in the year was the Queen's 90th birthday. On her official birthday 11th June we rang at 9.00am for half an hour and then together with family and friends about twenty of us went to The Waterfront Café where we enjoyed a good breakfast.

However I did find the following 'special' ringing particularly moving:

Margaret was a bell ringer in Benson in the 1950s when she was a teenager. When she became an adult she married and moved to London. As far as we know she never rang again.

However she always had fond memories of the bells and her time as a ringer. When she died in 2005 her funeral took place in Benson and her ashes were laid to rest in the churchyard. Her husband John decided that the collection should go towards work on the bells that she was so fond of.

This was the spur that encouraged us to start in earnest our campaign to raise money for the bells to be restored. John then agreed to sponsor the rehanging of one of the bells. We agreed this should be the treble and once the work was completed in 2009 a plaque was fixed to the headstock stating that this had been rehanged in Margaret's memory.

A few years later John became terminally ill and asked that his ashes should be interred with Margaret in the churchyard at Benson. He had also asked if it would be possible for the bells (including Margaret's bell) to be rung at this time. The interment was planned for 2.00pm on Friday 5th August and it was agreed with Margaret's niece that we would ring the bells open as a joyful sound whilst the family assembled at the graveside.

Later I joined the family for tea in the Canons' Room. Everyone wanted to thank me for arranging to ring the bells. Apparently they had all proceeded to the churchyard on time and then stood around the grave for five minutes listening to the bells before the ceremony began. They all found this very moving and at least two of them told me they were moved to tears.

Margaret's brother and his family were in attendance and also John's family including his sister and her family from America.

All the ringers were grateful for the support John had given to our project to rehang the bells and were pleased to show our gratitude in the way that John

had wanted. The whole occasion was very moving for us as well as for John's family.

Berrick Salome

by Wendy Simon

A peal of Plain Bob Minor was rung last May. This was the first peal on the newly refurbished bells. The team of ringers consisted of Andrew Davis, Geoffrey Riglar, Robert Partridge, Robert Newton, Benji Coles and John Tchighianoff. Well done to Benji, for his first peal.

Another first, was for the youngest member of our band - Alice Derbyshire, who rang her first quarter on the treble in April. Alice is now away at university, but we are planning to ring quarters for her when she is back home on holiday breaks.

A second peal has been rung recently – on New Year's Eve - by a band of visiting ringers (the St Blaise Society, organised by Colin Turner). They rung a peal of six surprise minor methods.

When the weather warms up, we will be repainting the floor of our ringing chamber, as only 18 months after it was last done, it is looking decidedly in need of cheering up. The joys of a ground floor ring. Our Steeplekeeper, Andrew Davis, is doing a great job in monitoring and caring for our tower and bells.

Chalgrove

by Andrew Davis

Our practices continue weekly with a small but loyal group, assisted by Wendy and often Gordon from Little Milton. We tend to ring a lot of Minor, including Little Bob, Reverse Canterbury and when adventurous Cambridge, although I still need my copy of the blue line on the floor for comfort! Sunday's have been a struggle, most weeks we are only able to ring 5 bells as there are so many other commitments taking people elsewhere. We were able to manage a full band for all of our Christmas services at Chalgrove and Berrick Salome which was appreciated in the communities. The refurbishment of the church is now complete, with just some minor snagging to take care of, if you haven't visited yet please check our updated website to see what has and is happening, www.chalgrovechurch.org

Dorchester

by David Parker

Rumour has it that up and down the country there is concern amongst bell ringers about declining numbers of ringers. That is not our experience in Dorchester, and the tower captain has not been given the sack (not yet, in spite of his trying at our AGM the other day). We have a band of 13 loyal ringers, admittedly of advancing years, but will that not always be so? The great thing is that we enjoy ringing together, whether it is simply rounds and call changes or something more ambitious like Bob Doubles.

From time to time we are fortunate in being able to welcome a visiting ringer, sometimes a person staying at the White Hart who hears the bells and pops in.

At other times we are glad to welcome ringers from neighbouring parishes, sometimes to help with a wedding and sometimes to help with a special Abbey celebration such as the welcome given to our new Bishop of Oxford, Stephen Croft. On that occasion a quarter peal of Grandsire Triples was rung, with John White conducting a team drawn from around the area. May I say that members of the Branch are always welcome to join us at our Tuesday practices at 7.30pm or for Sunday ringing, and may I suggest you ring me (on 01865 340402) if you intend to come as we have to lock the door behind us and we would hate you to have a wasted journey.

After hesitating to join in the branch twinning exercise, we are proud to have taken part for the last year. It has not always been easy to arrange combined practices, as much as anything because not all towers practise on the same night and sometimes the fixture involves quite a long drive. But we have enjoyed meeting ringers in other towers and we have benefitted from ringing different bells. We look forward to continuing to take part.

Training is something which has to go on all the time, and in the last year we have been delighted to have Richard Farrant join us. Perhaps in the past some towers have built up a band of ringers who with time have all become experts capable of ringing advanced methods, but there is then a danger of it becoming difficult for a learner to feel part of the team. As we don't have 'experts', we do not have that problem in Dorchester, but nevertheless it can be something of a juggling act giving everyone the right amount of attention according to their level of skill. It seems to be working amicably in our tower thanks to the willingness of our more experienced ringers to ring lots of basic stuff for the sake of bringing people on. That said, we are grateful to Hilarie and John White for arranging branch practices, and to John Tchighianoff for welcoming us at Benson enabling some of us to get practice in more advanced methods. Even quite experienced ringers find teaching a learner a bit scary, and we worry about how we would train learners at Dorchester if I could no longer do it. I try to reassure my ringers that they would be OK, but it could come to a point that we need some help from outside. It is good that this issue is being discussed by the tower captains in the branch, but there is no easy solution when the capable teachers around are already so busy.

Best wishes to everyone for lots of enjoyable ringing in 2017.

Drayton St Leonard

by Hilarie Rogers

By the start of 2016, we had raised enough money to place the order with Whitechapel Bell Foundry for the work to the bells; and with the contractors for the structural work. A meeting in January agreed a timescale and from then on it was a case of timetabling the work and meeting contractors.

The clock mechanism was removed for safe-keeping in mid-March and the hands set to 12 noon (or midnight). Over the next week or so, they gradually found their preferred time which was about twenty to nine, and remained there!

On 13th March we rang the last quarter peal on the bells, which was Linda Blansjaar's first quarter – this was recorded for the archive. After that we began clearing out the ringing room and rang for the last time on Easter Sunday. On 4th April our bellhanger arrived – three of us had already removed most of the fittings – and over the next two days we opened up traps, dismantled a large section of the frame, and lowered the 6 bells to the church ready to go to Whitechapel.

Then the ringing room and back of the church was protected ready for the major work to the tower. Over the next five weeks, steel bracing was fitted, followed by work to the west wall, then clearing up and reinstating ladders so that we could once again get to the clock room and belfry. During this time, a group of donors and ringers went to Whitechapel to watch the bells being cast!

In mid-May the bellhanger returned to fit cross-bracing in the clock room and set the bearing plates on the parts of the frame that were in the right position. In June several of us rubbed down the metalwork and gave the tower a good clean. The electrician fitted lights in the belfry and clock room, and renewed the lighting at ground level. The clock face was lowered to the ground in impressive fashion by an abseiler, and went off for renovation.

The bells arrived on Friday 1st July, watched by a photographer from the local paper, were unloaded and blessed, and together with their fittings were on display in church over the weekend to allow villagers and supporters to view them.

Hanging then took just over a week, and gradually the belfry became more crowded as bells, wheels, stays, sliders, pulley blocks, runner boards were carefully fitted. Attention then turned to the clock room, with more pulley blocks and flap boards. A new rope guide was fitted and we were delighted when an ex-ringer offered to make a rope spider which arrived the next day!

We had tantalising glimpses of how the bells would sound as they were rung individually to check clapping and set – but nothing really prepared us for the try-out when they were rung up in peal for the first time. Although a light ring (tenor 6-0-19), there was a lovely roundness to the sound – and minimal creaking of the tower. It was almost unbelievable.

During the autumn, much finishing-off took place (decorating, floor covering, return of clock) and three different quarter peals were rung in thanksgiving for the donors; and to thank those who worked on the project.

In “other news” we were also delighted to be placed first in the Guild 6-bell competition at Penn in October!

Great Haseley

by John White

With Hilarie continuing to have a busy schedule, as in 2016 I have taken on the task of writing the Great Haseley report.

A quarter peal of 1290 Grandsire Doubles was rung on Sunday 12th June 2016 on the weekend of the Official Celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday, the length of this performance having been arranged to suit the occasion.

Later in the year we rang for the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols in December. Nothing unusual about that, but it was pleasing that for the fourth year in a row one of the ringers was invited to read a lesson at this service. Having had no local ringers for some years it is heartening that the church authorities continue to maintain such a link with those who keep the bells ringing.

On Saturday 31st December we attempted a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles which was also successful. This was notable for Japhiah Slaney who rang the treble in what was his first quarter away from a covering bell. As reported in 2016 Japh was one of the newer recruits following the formation of the band at Marsh Baldon and in the last couple of years he has attended regularly at Great Haseley, taking the opportunity to ring with relatively experienced ringers and making steady but sure progress. In the quarter peal he put in a very solid performance and his errors, none of which could really be classed as serious, were easily counted on the fingers of one hand .Well done Japh.

In 2016 I reported that work in the tower had been on-going for some years to replace the protective mesh over the inside of the louvres and construct adjustable sound-reducing measures. The author has not found the time or energy to do any further work on this for the time being, and it remains about three-quarters complete. However, he has managed to finish another long-standing project and a new turret door at the top of the spiral staircase has now finally been hung. Whilst at the time of writing a few finishing touches remain to be done, the top of the staircase does at least now have a proper barrier against the weather.

We continue to acknowledge the work done by Hilarie Rogers who in the main is responsible for keeping the ringing going at Great Haseley. With there being no local band she continues to work tirelessly, each practice on a Monday effectively being arranged ad hoc depending upon which of the regular ringers

can attend. She also endeavours to organise a band once a month to ring for the Family Service. Thank you for your work Hilarie.

Great Milton

by Pat Cox

Overall we have had an interesting year at St Mary's. With weddings, funerals and visitors, as well as the 'special' services - things have been busy.

In between all of this, there was a very pleasant afternoon when the Year 2 children from Great Milton school came to look round the Church with the Rector, and then came up to the Tower to see and hear the Bells. Later in the year, there was the Leavers service and then the Children's Carol Service - so we are doing our best to enlist the youth!

As with other villages, we remembered our 3 Great Milton bellringing soldiers who died in the Great War 100 years ago.

Visitors came and went - all seemed to enjoy the bells. Exeter rang the 2016 full peal, and one particularly enthusiastic supporter cycled all the way from East Sussex to ring with us for a Sunday service!

The year ended with some excitement - the theft of lead from the Church roof - for which there is now increased security.

Thanks must go to our friends at Little Milton, who regularly help us - one way or another!

So a full and entertaining year for GMB.

Little Milton

by Jane Willis

Practices continue to be well supported, bolstered by the regular attendance of Chris Rogers without whom we would all collapse. Geoff and Mary continue to support us on the first Tuesday of each month and we are delighted to welcome Margaret Coombes back on a regular basis. Graham Griffiths continues to keep us on our toes with his (often) controversial opinions on the state of the nation and his sharp observations on our dubious ringing styles. We rang to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday, and regularly summon the faithful to church for family and benefice services at St James, offering a helping hand at Great Haseley and Great Milton as required. We had a particularly busy time over the Christmas period, with carol services, Christingle etc.

A select group of our ringers....well those who could be persuaded....enjoyed a day in London in May, when we attended a Gresham Lecture at St Sepulchre without Newgate. Professor Christopher Page gave a very informative talk entitled "The Lands of the Bell Tower" giving a potted history of bells, dating from medieval days. St Sepulchre houses the handbell which was rung outside the cells of the condemned at Newgate Prison the night before their execution. The Professor rang the handbell and recited the words said to prisoners. A stark reminder of the many different messages which bells can convey - from despair and sorrow to joy and celebration. A band of ringers, including two of our own, then rang out a fine peal on St Sepulchre's

12 bells. A good day was had by all. Even if some of our members fell asleep during the talk.....

Our AGM will be held shortly, where we will again visit the ringing targets we set ourselves some five years ago. Perhaps this year we may achieve one of those targets!

Shabbington

by Caroline Lewis

We continue to ring on Thursday evenings, and have been practising regularly. But this last year we have gone through a quiet phase, we haven't had a Wedding in a long while. We rang for Easter Sunday, Remembrance Day, Nine lessons and Carols. The bells were also rung when the Bishop of Buckingham came on Sunday 18th September to dedicate the works that had been carried out in the Church.

Congratulations to Dylan and Jasmine, and Joan on becoming members of the guild. Joan has done really well, having transported her grandson (Dylan) for about eighteen months to practise meetings then decided to have ago herself. And now rings with the group every week. Also more congrats to Dylan who rang his first quarter on Sunday 23rd October. The Branch Practise was held in Shabbington on Saturday 22nd October at 4pm. About eight ringers attended. The tea and cakes were much appreciated by all.

Cream Teas! This event was held in July, the gazebo went up tables and chairs were set out and the bunting was given an airing. The scene was set for a quintessentially English afternoon. And the sun came out!! Thankfully!

Many customers came and really enjoyed the delicious cakes and cream teas that were on sale. The bell room was open, adults and children were encouraged to chime a bell. Many thanks to Jasmine, Dylan and both families for all the help on the day. Not forgetting all the bell ringers who also came to help thank you very much. The sum of £391.30 was raised which was shared between the Bell Fund and the Friends of St Mary Magdalene.

Thame

by Rosalie Gibson

Early in the year we hosted the Branch AGM which was well attended though with severely reduced ringing due to our ongoing local difficulty. There was also a hiccup at the beginning of the Service as the Vicar, Revd Choldcroft had mistaken the time. He is still full of remorse about this, but it can happen to any of us.

We have now started to stretch our Practice nights out a little and are ringing from 7.30.p.m. to 8.45.p.m. We hope over time to gradually extend this back to 9.00.p.m. but are taking it slowly, slowly. We have one new learner who is doing well and three potential ones starting soon.

Once again, in 2016, we had a number of weddings, there being something like 35 of which we were asked to ring for 29, although in the end it was only

28 as the Church Office had given us the wrong time for one of the Friday ones and the wedding party were just leaving as we arrived. We managed to ring for all the weddings with our own band apart from one where we 'imported' two ringers. We are finding an increase in the number of midweek weddings but so far manage. Already we are booked for 21 in 2017 but this is bound to increase.

Service ringing is well attended, often having as many as twelve ringers turn up. Practice nights vary, sometimes lots of ringers and others a bit sparse. Recently we had two visitors one Monday, one from Cornwall and the other from Devon. However this seemed to have a jinx as no sooner than we started to ring than the tenors staple pin snapped in the headstock causing it to shed its clapper with a distinctive thud! Unfortunately this was the bell the Cornish visitor was on. A bit later for some very unknown reason the tail end of the rope the Devon visitor was on unravelled. A real mystery but both said they would come back next time they were in the area. The following day White's were due to do the annual maintenance and were able to do the repair by the next week, just prior to Christmas. Just as well as we were requested to ring four times on Christmas Eve and twice on Christmas Day. In addition we also rang for some special occasions including St Georges' day, the Queens 90th birthday, Remembrance day, and the Civic Service. We also took part in the Church's Flower Festival and finally we were pleased to renew our Gold Award for Tower Maintenance with 100%. Many thanks to our dedicated team who keep a close check on the bells.

Warborough

by Sue Dyke

We continue to tick along ringing on Sundays with our 6 regular ringers. There have been seven weddings this year which we have been asked to ring for and we are very grateful to Alf Cooper, Philip Mills and David Parker for helping out when we are short of ringers. The weddings have been quite varied - from typical quiet 'village' ones and the 'society' weddings which sometimes cause us problems with wedding planners trying to get through the belfry in a panic whilst we are ringing! The problems of a ground floor ring!!

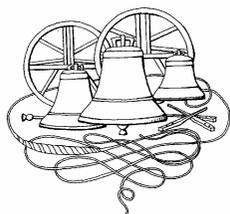
Branch Secretary

Amy Herlihy
3 Ford Lane
Drayton St Leonard
OX10 7S
01865 400864
a.herlihy@btinternet.com

Newsletter Editor

Benji Bateman (*formerly Coles*)
36 Blacklands Road
Benson
OX10 6NW
07845 828567
benji@benjibateman.com

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS



South Oxon Branch 2017

7th January	7.30pm – 9pm	Caters to Maximus at High Wycombe
15th January	Tower Captains' and Branch Officers' Meeting	
28th January	4pm	Great Milton (8)
25th February	From 3pm	AGM at Dorchester (8)
25th March	4pm	Benson (8)
22nd April	7.30 pm	Striking Competition at Shabington (6)
6th May	Branch Outing	
27th May	7pm	Drayton St Leonard (6)
24th June	7pm	Warborough (8)
22nd July	7pm	Marsh Baldon (5)
August	No Practice	
10th September	Tower Captains' and Branch Officers' Meeting	
23rd September	7pm	Chinnor (6)
28th October	4pm	Autumn Meeting and Practice Aston Rowant (6)
2nd December	4pm	Great Haseley (6)