

Fifty years' ringing at St Mary's

Over fifty bellringers and friends gathered on Tuesday evening to celebrate Terry Hester's fifty years of ringing the bells at St Mary's Church in Witney. Terry was born and brought up in Witney, and has achieved the rare accomplishment of ringing for five decades at the same tower. He is the current Tower Captain, with responsibility not only for maintaining and supervising the bells, but also for running practices for beginners and experienced ringers.

Following a well-attended service led by the Rector, Revd Toby Wright, the full set of eight bells were rung from the tower, while refreshments and drinks including Ring o'the Bells beer donated by the Wychwood Brewery were served in the Winchester Room. The Ringing Master of the Witney and Woodstock Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, thanked Terry warmly for his service to the tower and to the many bellringers he has taught and encouraged over the past half century. In reply, Terry remarked how, although much else has changed on Sunday mornings, the bells of St Mary's continue to summon parishioners to worship as they have done for the past four hundred years, and he is proud to have been able to continue this tradition.