

June  
2006



# Witney and Woodstock Branch Newsletter

*Newsletter of the Witney and Woodstock Branch of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers*

## **Celebrating 125 years of The ODG.**

### **Inside this issue:**

• The Outing

• Chairman's  
Chatter

\*From Your  
Ringing Master

Plus:

\*Update from The  
Branch Secretary

\*Ringing for The  
Queen's Birthday

\*Bell Calling

\*Quarters

PLUS MUCH, MUCH  
MORE.....

## From your Editor

I keep thinking that perhaps I should start preparing the next newsletter, I then put it off a bit as it feels as though I have only just circulated one, then I realise it's been nearly 6 months! It was heartening to hear all the reports of ringing for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Guild and The Queens 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. We can all still look forward to the Anniversary Festival at Christ Church Oxford in July. I understand that lunch is a bit over

subscribed but there should plenty of room in the Cathedral for the service so try and make the effort to attend. For those who haven't been before I can confirm that it is an enjoyable day out. You will also get the rare opportunity to ring at the Cathedral. The outing seemed to go well and was fairly well supported. Mel Leggett from Wootton has prepared a report in this issue of the day's events. It's a shame that the same

old towers support this event; it would be nice to see a few new faces next year. Good luck to all the officers elected into their new roles at the Branch AGM including Lorna as Ringing Master and Bernard Coggins and Mary Clark-Maxwell as deputies. Please support them, remember they do this for FREE!

Richard White

## Stonesfield and Combe Open Tower Days.

Stonesfield's tower was open as part of various fund-raising events for the restoration of their church roof. Held on Easter Monday it attracted a lot of interest. It was a challenge to climb amongst the bells and then the vertical ladder to the roof but most were determined to reach the top. They were rewarded with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside.

Combe's event, on Saturday 17 June, was to show the village the bells

and how they work with the enticement of getting onto the roof. It started with a quarter-peal to celebrate the Queen's birthday. Display boards, showing various aspects of ringing, had been obtained from the Oxford Guild, helpers were positioned at points in the tower to assist with the climb and home-made cakes and biscuits were provided by the ringers. Those who showed an interest in ringing were given a demonstration of rope handling on a tied bell.

Both events were extremely popular and help to integrate our mysterious art into the wider community.

### Striking Contest Results

Method Winners –  
Bampton

Call Change Winners –  
Woodstock

WELL DONE TO ALL  
WHO TOOK PART.

*“The coach, it seemed had a height of 12’1’ and the bridge, which Richard quite naturally, driving a car, hadn’t noticed was only 12’8”*



*Waiting for The bus at Henley in Arden*

## ‘The’ Outing – Mel Leggett

Next year I shall sit at the back of the coach, so that I’m well out of sight when Lorna is casting around for a “volunteer” to do the write-up.

Anyway, maybe it’s a small price to pay for a good day out!

The pick-up was a tad early, but the morning weather was fine, so it didn’t feel so bad, and once the coach starts to roll who cares anyway. An uneventful journey got us to our first tower of the morning, St Nicholas in Warwick, in very good time. The church is at the edge of a city park, where the café advertised breakfasts, and several of the party moved optimistically in the direction of the arrows. But were disappointed. A stroll round the park, within sight of the fairy-tale castle, had to suffice until we could get into the tower. The ringing-up moved on to Grandsire Triples which was so well done that it elicited a round of applause from the rest of us! Everyone had ample opportunity to tug a rope at some point and a bit of “Oxford” brought things to a close. Back on the coach, we meandered on through blossom-lined roads and green fields (sorry, all sounds a bit lyrical) until the coach slowed to a crawl, and then stopped, for no apparent reason. The front of the coach was lowered, as though expecting someone to get on, and then proceeded at

a snail’s pace. The coach, it seemed had a height of 12’1” and the bridge, which Richard quite naturally, driving a car, hadn’t noticed, was only 12’8”!

On to Packwood. This was an interesting little church, next to a moated enclosure with one or two rather grand houses, it’s a ground floor ring and the bells are rather light which, sadly, resulted in three losing its stay early on. After a bit of a conflag, Richard arrived and, without more ado, performed his Spiderman impression, leaping up towards the rope end, probably 9 or 10 feet above the floor, grabbing it with one hand and then proceeding to bounce up and down, getting increasingly distant above us, until the bell “went over” and he was able to bring it back under control, albeit without the stay! Now I was left wondering: if it had gone over backwards, would he have been extruded through the ring on the guide?? These gymnastics enabled ringing to continue unaffected, though three needed continuous attention.

On through country lanes we proceeded to Henley-in-Arden where we had our lunch stop arranged. The food was fine, though the staff and management seemed a bit overwhelmed by our arrival. The rain also started while we were

eating. Anyway, after moving off to the tower, we were shortly joined by Richard who reported that the pub claimed that they were £30 short on the bill. This didn’t surprise some of us who had had to point out significant errors in their maths to our advantage. A bit later Richard re-appeared to announce that they had waived the shortfall which led to considerable conjecture as to the persuasive techniques employed!! I can’t read the rest of my scribblings about H in A but remember the bells being rather heavy-going, and the pendulum which swung in the centre of the ringing circle! Now replete from our lunch stop, we moved on to Tanworth-in-Arden, an attractive village, with views over the surrounding countryside from the graveyard. The bells, here, sounded really well and I left the tower towards the end to listen outside and take a look at the church. The organ, which dates from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup>C is very ornate and has pipes on both sides of the Chancel. Was this an early attempt at stereo sound?? Back on the coach, the sweeties were passed around as we sped on to Kings Norton for a final ring on St. Nicholas’s ten bells.

Cont on page 6.

## Chairman's Chatter – *Anthony Williamson*

Emerging from our Branch AGM in February I found that I'd volunteered for the role of Branch representative - it all happened so quickly. As a result I've been to a couple of Guild meetings on behalf of the Branch. It's been interesting to see how the Guild operates, what activities they are planning and to meet those involved. The last meeting, which I attended with Zoë White, was the Guild AGM at Dorchester. Top of the agenda were changes to the forthcoming 125th Anniversary Guild Festival in Oxford. Due to increased numbers, the Festival Lunch is at a new venue - The Newman Room, The Catholic Chaplaincy, Old Palace, St. Aldates, Oxford (opposite the entrance to Christ Church

Meadow, behind Cafe Loco) Tickets will be sent to those who have applied for the lunch and there are still places available. Please remember to bring your invitations to obtain access to towers. Zoë has forwarded the committee's email of changes to all tower correspondents. Another subject discussed was the recent article in Odd Bob about communication. The Communications Working Group would like feedback about what you think of the cards and this newsletter. More immediate information is emailed by Zoë to tower correspondents. It's important that our records are kept up to date and that notices

are posted in towers for those who do not have email access. Please can you let me have your thoughts on the subject? Referring to the minutes of our Branch AGM, there are a few of items that I need to get under way and would welcome your support and suggestions:-

- 1- Individual tower web pages.
- 2- A social event (the circus idea has proved too expensive).
- 3- Branch 100 year celebration book – please send articles to Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson.

Many thanks to Richard White for organising such an enjoyable Branch outing to Warwickshire. It was well supported and had a good mix of towers. Last of the day was the ten at Kings Norton where the touch of Grandsire Caters was sublime and proved a fitting end to Steve Goddard's time with our Branch.

(continued on p5)

### Did You Know?

**The Rev C W O Jenkyn was the Guilds second Master. From 1899-1910 he was at Witney where he was the spur needed to form a new branch.**

**In 1902 he brought together the sixty six ringers from the towers of Burford, Ducklington, Freeland, Kidlington, Stanton Harcourt, Witney, Woodstock and Yarnton to form the Witney and Woodstock Branch.**

**It is interesting to note that two of these towers situated on the edge of the branch have since 'transferred'. Burford is now in The Chipping Norton Branch and Kidlington is in the Oxford City Branch**

**The Revd Jenkyn was elected Deputy Guild Master in 1905 and served as Master from 1910 – 1933**

**Not only was he fine ringer but also a fine oarsman.**

**In 1933 he attended a meeting at Newbury to ring on the newly augmented ten. Having just rung a touch he went outside to listen. Walking down the street he collapsed and died.**

**Information from '100 Years of the Oxford Diocesan Guild by William Butler'**

---

## BELL-CALLING by David Smith.

O Lord, speak now within the living sound  
Which we pour forth.  
This even-paced methodic line of joyous notes  
That mounts the air;  
And You so fair, Lord Jesus, loving us,  
Enjoying every well-struck blow.

Our bells bring all Your Word, of peace,  
Forgiveness, love and life all new  
That there may be a few,  
Who in their need or pain  
May turn again ... to YOU  
And be made whole.

DJS April 1995

---

*“We cannot do miracles, although we sometimes try, so please support as many branch practices as you are able”*

## From Your Ringing Master *Lorna Smale*

Thank you to everybody who took the time to complete a training Questionnaire for the ringers in their tower. Anthony, Bernard, Mary and I have discussed the feedback and we have been busy following up on it all. We cannot do miracles, although we sometimes try, so please support as many branch practices as you are able. The best way to improve is to venture out and about to other towers. Branch practices are twice a month, and these are the ideal place to come to learn new methods and/or practice those that you haven't rung for a while. The benefits to everybody are enormous, since you meet new people, experience ringing on different bells, and as well as learning something new for

yourself, most importantly, you will be able to give something back to the exercise, helping others and ultimately improving Service ringing. Congratulations to Jimmy Clark on ringing his first Quarter Peal of Bob Minor, and Mark Wastie on ringing his first Quarter Peal of Bob Minor on an inside bell. A big thank you to Richard White for organizing a wonderful Branch Coach Outing (details elsewhere). Finally, well done to Bampton on winning the trophy (again!) for the method ringing, and Woodstock on winning the trophy for the call changes section of the Branch Striking Competition. Thanks also go to Ken Smale for giving up his evening to be time keeper, and producing certificates at short notice, Mel and

Ann for booking the village hall, and ensuring we were all supplied with refreshments, Demelza and Ann for the excellent bell biscuits and cakes, Jeremy Adams and Philip Curtis for giving up their evening to judge our competition, and to the ringers from Combe and Wootton for entering and having a go. I hope you all had fun, once the nerves had subsided! A plea to all our towers out there - why not start practicing for next year's striking competition now? We have 21 towers, but only 4 of those towers entered this year. Please come out of your towers to support your Branch and let the Branch Offices know what you would like to see happening!

*Lorna Smale*

## Update from the Branch Secretary *-Zoë WHITE*

Hello again from your Branch Secretary. I am trying to take things a bit easier now as I am about to have a baby in 5 weeks time and it can't come soon enough as far as I'm concerned in this blistering heat! So I'm easing back on the ringing too, but had a ring on Saturday in our striking competition which was good fun. Back in May, Anthony Williamson and I attended the Guild AGM and I can report back that

Hilary Rogers (our previous Children's Officer) has now taken over from Nigel Harrison as Guild Secretary. Rob Needon is the new Odd Bob Editor and Peter Davis has taken on the role of Public Relations Officer. The Children's Officer post is currently vacant so if there is anyone out there be it a teacher or church warden who has some spare time on their hands, I'm sure John Chamberlain would

love to hear from you. He can explain to you what the post involves. I have decided to step down as Branch Secretary from next February because I won't be able to devote the time the post needs. If there is anyone out there who would like to know more about the post, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cont p6

---

**WATCH OUT!**

**NEW BRANCH  
SECRETARY  
REQUIRED NEXT  
AGM!**

---

## Ringling for H M The Queens 80<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

### Aston

Aston had two lots of ringing to celebrate the Queen's birthday! You will no doubt hear from Lorna about the successful peal that her team made on Saturday 22nd April in our tower at Aston for the celebration, but the local ringers got together on the Friday evening, when we thought the Royal Party were sitting down to the celebration meal at Kew Palace, and rang, and then toasted the Queen and wished Her Majesty a very happy birthday! Nothing like what was to follow on the Saturday but we enjoyed it and it made us all feel like good citizens!

*Shirley Warren*

### Church Hanborough

Church Hanborough ringers celebrated with half an hour of call changes

*Cathy Rowland*

### Combe

Combe ringers celebrated with general ringing on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> from 1800 hrs for about 30 mins,

*Lorna Smale*

### North Leigh.

The usual Friday practice at North Leigh was rather depleted on the Queen's birthday – hopefully because most of our usual faithful visitors were busy with celebratory ringing in their own towers. However, we did achieve

a milestone for the occasion which deserves recognition, in that Vanessa Eeley, our latest local recruit, managed to cover for the first time ever, first to plain hunt and then to Stedman Singles:

- 1 Terry Hester
- 2 Mark Wastie
- 3 Alison Merryweather-Clarke
- 4 Vanessa Archer

A rather more humble offering than the rest of you managed, I'm sure, but thanks to Terry and Mark for helping us to ring our best and well done to Vanessa!

*Alison Merryweather-Clarke*

### Stanton Harcourt

Stanton Harcourt ringers rang for a short period of for the Queen's 80th birthday at 7.30pm on the 21<sup>st</sup> April

*Jane Eagle*

### Stonesfield

Stonesfield ringers rang 30 minutes of (quite nice) call changes for the Queen's birthday, with 4 bars of "Happy Birthday to You" at the start and finish of the ringing! I wonder if any other tower achieved this.

*Rachael Sherlaw-Johnston*

### Tackley

At Tackley we rang for half an hour at 7pm. Nothing special, but we made the effort!

*Barbara Summers*

### Woodstock.

On the evening of Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April we decided to attempt a Quarter Peal.

On this occasion we rang at Bladon. A successful attempt resulted in Ian Davey-Wilson ringing his first away from cover and Jimmy Clark first away from treble. We rang 1280 changes in recognition of 80 years. (see back page).

*Richard White*

### Chairman's Chatter (cont from p3)

Thanks also to Lorna Smale for organising the annual striking competition at Wootton. It's a key fixture in the Branch calendar and it was a pity that only four towers, out of our twenty-one, put in teams. Those that did attend had a very enjoyable evening despite all the nerves during the competition itself.

*Anthony Williamson*



### STONESFIELD HANDBELLS BAFTA NOMINATION!

....actually it's not quite that exiting. The TV drama by Richard Curtis, "The Girl in the Cafe" with music by Stonesfield composer Nick Hooper has indeed been nominated for a BAFTA, and the Stonesfield handbells can be heard jangling softly in several scenes, especially when the hero and heroine are casting amorous glances at each other. Nick has now been commissioned to write the score for the next Harry Potter film, and I'm trying to persuade him that the handbells would be perfect to accompany high jinks at Hogwarts!

*Rachael Sherlaw-Johnson.*



Send your articles  
to

Richard White  
26 Hill Rise,  
Woodstock, Oxon  
OX201AB  
PHONE:  
01993 812424

E-MAIL:  
zoe\_white25@hotmail.com

---

Branch website  
See us at:  
[www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk](http://www.witneyandwoodstock.org.uk)

## Quarter Peals

Woodstock, Oxon  
Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March  
2006  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1- Jimmy Clark  
2- Sarah Perrett  
3- Richard White  
4- John Harwood  
5- Malcolm Fairbairn  
6- John White ©  
First Minor-1

Combe, Oxon  
Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
1260 Plain Bob Minor  
1-Jimmy Clark  
2-Bernard Coggins  
3-Mark Wastie  
4-Dave Rose  
5-Richard White  
6-Lorna Smale ©  
First in method-3  
For Evensong.

**CHECK THE  
BRANCH WEB-  
SITE FOR  
FORTHCOMING  
PRACTICES AND  
EVENTS**

Bladon, Oxon  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006  
1280 Doubles; 600 Plain  
Bob and 680 Grandsire.  
1- Ian Davey-Wilson  
2- Bernard Coggins  
3- Mary Clark-Maxwell  
4- John Harwood  
5- Richard White ©  
6- Jimmy Clark.  
First away from  
cover – 1  
First away from  
treble – 6  
Rung to celebrate HM  
The Queens 80<sup>th</sup>  
Birthday.

### STOP PRESS

Guild Festival Times  
Extended!

**St Ebbes 9.45-11.00**  
**Cathedral 10.15-  
11.15 & 12.30-1.00**  
**Lincoln College  
2.15-3.30**  
**St. Mary Magdalen  
2.45-3.45**  
**New College 3.30-  
4.15**  
**St Giles 3.00-5.00**  
**Magdalen College  
4.45-5.45**  
**Carfax 5.45-7.00**

### Update From the Branch Secretary

(cont from p 4)

I also just wanted to mention about tower correspondence and posters coming into your towers. Please do let me know if you aren't receiving Guild information and posters in your towers. I do generally send everything via email now to your tower correspondent and leave it to them to print the information for your tower. There was a complaint recently about not seeing Guild information and I need to be told if this is happening in your tower so I can do something about it. Don't forget to look at our web-site and the Oxford Diocesan Guild web-site too for information about forthcoming events.

Thanks  
Zoe White  
Branch Secretary  
01993 812424  
[zoe\\_white25@hotmail.com](mailto:zoe_white25@hotmail.com)



Braving the drizzle outside Tanworth in Arden  
Thanks to the friendly local who offered to take the picture.

A big thank you for all those who supported this event and  
thanks to Lorna for the photo's.  
*Richard*

### 'The Outing (cont from p2)

Here we enjoyed a large and comfortable ringing chamber, only 52 steps up – it felt more! A prominent commemorative board records the ringing, "On May 11<sup>th</sup> 1903, in a most excellent manner, a true and complete peal of London Surprise Major, containing 14112 changes in 8 hours 40 minutes. Being the greatest length ever rung in any surprise method." With what seems great commitment, "Mr. Harry Withers took down every lead end of the peal outside the tower as it was rung."

A stop-over for refreshment on the way home saw us back in Woodstock around 8.00pm as planned, at the end of a most enjoyable day. Our thanks to Richard for his organisation, gymnastic and negotiating skills and to everyone involved in the organisation of the day.

Mel Leggett (Wootton)