

Witney & Woodstock Branch: Ringing Master Report 2024.

The branch has continued holding monthly practices every second Saturday 10.30 - 12.00. These have been generally well supported. I have advertised these in the diary on Bellboard and Facebook. Andrew has sent out email reminders to all members, so they have been well publicised. It is always heartening when locals attend, and I have met new Branch members. I encourage all members to attend practices. They are the best way to progress, and all abilities are catered for. They're also a good social occasion.

The Branch striking contest was held at Bladon in June. My thanks to Steve Vickars from Kirtlington and Hugh Deam from Marston for judging. Well done to all teams that took part.

The Branch outing in October took us to Rutland and Stamford. We enjoyed the superb Gillett and Johnston eight at Oakham and two towers in the lovely town of Stamford. The staff at The Tobie Norris in Stamford looked after us very well and we managed to take further refreshment in Uppingham. I thought the ringing throughout the day was pretty good and I'm very grateful to those who supported the day. I plan to arrange another outing in April as well as the traditional one in October.

There seems to be a lot of activity in the branch with various towers arranging additional practices and quarters.

Anthony Williamson has done inspections of the bells at Minster Lovell and Shilton. There seems interest at both towers to get the rings of three restored and augmented.

I have approached Brize Norton to see if we could inspect their bells but was unsuccessful.

Quarters and peals were rung in the branch to mark the coronation.

Peals were also rung at Ducklington in memory of Roger Barnes and Bampton to celebrate Dave Roses 50 years as Tower Captain and his 80th birthday. The first ever peal in the tower was rung at Broadwell back in March.

I think it's been a good year. Many thanks for all your support.

Richard White

Witney & Woodstock Branch: Hon. Treasurer Report 2024

I regret that, due to circumstances beyond my control, I am unable to present a final set of accounts of the branch for 2023. This is because I have not received the deposit account statement for the final quarter of the year.

The ODG treasurer informed me a few weeks ago that, without letting him or me know, the management company that looks after our deposit (and other church-related funds) changed banks at some point in the last quarter of 2023. I have been told that the new bankers pay interest on different dates, with the result that the first interest payment from them will be in 2024 (i.e. after our year-end).

While it has been suggested that I should use the balance shown in the 30 September 2023 statement as the end of year balance, that does not seem to be appropriate without further details. It may well be appropriate if the change of banks happened on 1 October, but the date on which the actual change occurred is not yet clear. A change on any other date would be expected to result in “interest to closing” being added to the balance transferred to the new account, with the consequence that the end of year balance would not be the same as that at 30 September.

While I cannot yet provide final accounts, I have prepared a draft report and draft accounts on the assumption that the 30 September balance is the balance at the year end. These are merely for information and not for approval. I will prepare final accounts as soon as the end of year deposit statement is available.

Richard Law

6 February 2024

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The draft branch accounts for 2023 show a current balance of £3,347.06 (2022: £3,129.69) and a surplus of income over expenditure of £503.70 (2022: £217.37).

Income from subscriptions was £570 from 190 members, including three second branch members (2022: £513 from 171 members, with three second branch members). There were four honorary members (2022: 4). There were donations of £5 (2022: £5) and interest income of £79.62 (2022: £10.17).

The retiring collection at the AGM raised £30.85 (2022: £0) and there was no further income in the year. Expenditure consisted of Ringing Master’s expenses of £13.25 (2022: £10.80) and £168.52 on the summer social (2022: £0). There was no contribution to the Bell Fund (2022: £300).

[My thanks to Heather Horner for acting as the Independent Examiner of the 2023 accounts.]

Richard Law

Hon. Treasurer

06 February 2024

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Balance Sheet	2023		2022
Opening Balances:			
Current Account	2,541.77		2,339.57
Deposit Account	784.17		774.00
Cash float	21.12		21.12
Less: Owed to ODG	0.00		(5.00)
Surplus (deficit) of income over expenditure	503.70		217.37
Total Accumulated Fund	£3,850.76		£3,347.06
Closing Balances:			
Current Account	363.23		2,541.77
Deposit Account	3,474.41		784.17
Cash Float	13.12		21.12
Less: Owed to ODG	0.00		0.00
Total Accumulated Fund	£3,850.76		£3,347.06

Witney & Woodstock Branch: Hon. Secretary Report 2024

I have reproduced my most recent “editor’s” contribution to Odd Bob as the majority of my 2023 Annual Report. My role as Branch Secretary involves getting round the Branch as much as I can and getting involved where I can. It shows some of the many activities I have been involved in or enjoyed hearing about during 2023 and I am grateful for the assistance, friendships, and contributions from ringers across the Branch.

As the ODG Website Manager, I am also an officer of the Guild, and a member of the F&GP committee so I am able to represent the views of branch members at ODG committee level should any branch members wish to raise any issues.

I would also like to thank the students and teachers who have volunteered so much of their spare time to the newly established Oxon. Ringing School, a joint activity of the Bicester, Witney & Woodstock, Old North Berks, and South Oxon Branches, who have come together and formed a Teaching Hub with the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART). I have become involved as the Lead of the Witney Ringing Centre as an ART accredited teacher of bell handling. Students can attend hour-long, one-on-one teaching sessions at Witney, Kirtlington, Abingdon, and Dorchester. The intention is to continue and improve the delivery of good, consistent teaching of bell handling, foundation, and more advanced ringing skills across the Witney & Woodstock branch and the other Ringing Centres. We are greatly encouraged to see the first of our graduates applying for and attending the ODG supported courses for method ringing such as the Steeple Aston and Radley Courses.



Neil and Clare Crossley (Standlake), receiving their graduation certificates at Witney Ringing Centre from Susan Read (Lead – Abingdon Ringing Centre), and Andy Hayden (Stanton Harcourt, Witney Ringing Centre teacher).

Nigel Eagle

A Quarter Peal was rung to celebrate the life of Nigel Eagle on the day of his funeral in Stanton Harcourt, where he rang for over 50 years, and was Tower Captain for nearly 40 years, and very much more to so many people.

<https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php?id=1624160>

Branch 6-Bell Striking Competition

The 2023 competition was hosted by Bladon on a warm and thundery afternoon.

5 branch towers entered the Call Change competition, and 3 towers entered the Method Competition.

Steve Vickars of Woodstock & Kirtlington, and Hugh Deam of Marston kindly gave their time and expertise to judge the competition whilst sheltering from the elements as best they could outside the tower.

After the judges had rung a touch of Bob Minor and lowered the bells, a few of us went over the road to The White House for a drink and a meal, whilst others left for the end of the Witney Music Festival (and got very wet!).

Call Changes

1st	Church Hanborough	28 faults
2nd	Combe	64 1/2
3rd	Freeland	70
4th	Witney	80
5th	North Leigh	86



Method

1st	Church Hanborough	21 1/2
2nd	Witney	30 1/2
3rd	Freeland	75



The 2023 6-Bell Striking Competition Winners: A clean sweep for Church Hanborough in Call Changes and Method.

South Leigh and Witney 'Ring for the King'

Witney and South Leigh bands came together for the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla to ensure that both towers had sufficient ringers for the big day.



The combined South Leigh and Witney band at South Leigh (l-r): Heather Horner, Carol McRobbie, Evadne Vallance, Ruth Leatherdale, Dan Neal, Anne Peake, Amy Thomas.

Combe tower 'Ring for the King'

Combe celebrated the coronation of King Charles III by ringing 30 minutes of call changes, followed by Ding for the King. We were thrilled with the response with over 50 people who queued to chime the bells (under supervision). All the names of ringers and dingers were recorded for the church archives. Especially pleasing was the positive feedback from our dingers, and the 3 people who said they would like to learn to ring as a result.



The Combe band (l-r): Sian, Jacque, Robert, Flo, Elaine, Anthony, Lyndsey, Janet, Joanna. Not in the picture but who also rang are Zeb and Rob.

ODG combined AGM, 8-Bell Striking Competition, and Activity Day

It was Witney & Woodstock branch's turn to host the ODG AGM on 20th May, and to experiment with a new format for the day. For the first time, the 8-bell Striking Competition, Guild Activity Day, and AGM were all hosted on the same day at the same venue, Broadwell. Whites of Appleton also opened their doors for guided tours and a chance to ring the workshop campanile.

Broadwell is one of the most recent additions to ringable towers in the Guild, having recently been augmented from an un-ringable 5 to a ground floor 8, so it proved a good attraction.



First Peal at Broadwell

A band comprising of ODG members and some of the volunteers who installed the augmented ring of 8, rang the first ever peal at Broadwell in March. Special thanks go to Tony Crabtree, Andrew Goldthorpe, and Steve Vickars for their help in making the Broadwell dream a reality.



The Broadwell Peal band (l-r): Lindsey Thornton, Lorna Curtis, Sue Rhodes, Katie Lane, Tony Crabtree, Richard White, Andrew Goldthorpe, Steve Vickars.

Bell Sunday

Witney Tower put on a display in the church for Bell Sunday which attracted a lot of interest. Thanks to all involved.



L – r: Hilary Cozens, Nadine Woods, Rachel Mackenzie. Combe Gift Day

Combe Gift Day

Dragon enjoying the teddy zip wire at St Laurence Combe on gift day. Thanks to Amanda and Jonathan our Steeple keepers for setting this up and keeping it running all day.



Photo: Janet Robinson-Wood

Handbells in North Leigh

The delicate tinkle of the North Leigh handbells can still be heard on Thursday afternoons, on the Green in good weather, or otherwise in the impressively fan vaulted Wilcote Chapel in St Mary's Church which provides excellent acoustics. Eight of us continue to progress at various levels, be it kaleidoscope, plain hunt, plain bob, or quarters. Following Bell Sunday, we were invited to ring at Café Church on Environment Day in June, when members of the community were able to enjoy lapping with us. In July, Lorna Curtis achieved her first QP as conductor in hand in the churchyard at Stanton Harcourt, celebrating the life of Tower Captain Nigel Eagle who rang there for over 50 years. It has been a pleasure to welcome Alison and Peter Felton who have moved into the area and enabled us to ring six QPs in North Leigh since August, including possibly the first ten bell QP in the Witney and Woodstock branch ever.

Oxford Diocesan Guild

Stanton Harcourt

St Michael (Churchyard)

Sunday, 2 July 2023 in 36m

1260 Plain Bob Minor

1-2 Toby Goss

3-4 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke

5-6 Lorna Curtis (C)

Rung to celebrate the life of Nigel Eagle, who rang in Stanton Harcourt for over 50 years, nearly 40 of them as Tower Captain.

First as Conductor in hand.



Oxford Diocesan Guild

North Leigh, Oxfordshire

St Mary (Wilcote Chapel)

Monday, 25 September 2023 in 46m (9 in B)

1260 Plain Bob Royal

Composed by Traditional

1-2 Alison Felton

3-4 Peter Felton (C)

5-6 Craig M Robertson

7-8 Alison T Merryweather-Clarke

9-10 Lorna Curtis

1st on 10 in hand: 9-10

1st 10 bell QP in the Witney and Woodstock branch of the ODG in living memory - possibly ever?

Alison Merryweather-Clarke

Witney & Woodstock Branch Outing

The branch was treated to a most interesting outing to the Stamford and Rutland area on 21st October 2023. On learning of the itinerary, it seemed like a long way to travel but it was well worth the early start for those that hadn't chosen to stay over and make a weekend of it.



Once again, the outing was superbly arranged by our Ringing Master, Richard White. We took in an array of 6 and 8 bell towers as we visited Oakham (with its massive tenor), Easton on the Hill, and Uppingham plus two towers in Stamford. Incredibly, 3 of the 5 churches were dedicated to All Saints but we managed to not let this confuse us! The experience level was mixed which led to plenty of opportunities for us all to ring, including call changes, Plain Hunt, and touches of Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob, and Cambridge. There was lots of support and encouragement along the way – it's always so nice to hear bells whether ringing or listening, especially when it is a newly discovered tower with different sounding bells –time just whizzed by!



For lunch we enjoyed a delicious meal at The Tobie Norris in Stamford, a historic pub named aptly after a former bell founder in the town.



Summer outing lunch at The Tobie Norris in Stamford

Over 20 people joined in the day from various Towers within the branch which allowed for a good chance to catch up with friends or introduce ourselves to new ringers. We managed to avoid too many people banging their heads in stairwells and although we sadly missed seeing any Peregrines at Stamford All Saints we did get showered with various types of bird-related debris, no injuries but quite some amusement! Towards the end of the day, we had time for a stop at the lovely Brasserie in Uppingham for a much-appreciated cuppa and slice of cake before our last ring of the day.

Many thanks to Richard White for organising such a lovely day out and to all the volunteer drivers and the hospitable folk who opened their Towers to let us enjoy. I would definitely recommend future outings especially to new ringers and I'm looking forward to next year's trip already!

Rachel Mackenzie (Witney)

I recognise that a lot more than has been contained in my report takes place around the branch, and it is only a small sample. Like Richard White, I encourage all branch ringers to attend the monthly branch practices and events organised throughout the year by your committee, if not just for the social opportunity they present but also the opportunity to retire to the pub or café afterwards for a catch up!

Andrew Goldthorpe