



Branching Out

The Oxford City Branch Monthly Newsletter



Monday 26th February 2018

Please keep your articles coming in for 'Branching Out'.

Email me with your news and photos to: paulclucas@hotmail.co.uk.

The next edition will be out on Monday 26th March. (Deadline for copy, 24th March)

The Ringing Master's Report

Spring is in the air! It was still decidedly wintry on 10th February though, so thank you to everyone who came to the branch practice in Kidlington.

I try to suit the practice to the ringers so please let me know what you want to ring.

At Kidlington we had Stedman Triples with singles and Plain Bob Triples, amongst other things.

After the ringing, we held a brief business meeting. We approved the accounts and elected Craig Robertson, Namiko Minai and Fukiné Minai as members.

There has apparently been a recent stirring of interest in handbell ringing in the branch. John Pusey and Steve Everett have been teaching the St Giles learners to ring rounds and plain hunting, and Steve ran a session at St Andrew's too. Ringing handbells is a good way for learners to get started on change ringing without having to be confident at bellhandling yet; there's a more direct connection between the ringer's motion and the sound of the bells, and less physical skill required. Once you get to method ringing it's good for seeing more of what's going on in the method, too. Rather than trying to ring two bells independently (I don't know about you, but I don't have the brainpower for that!), you learn the bells as a pair. This means you get the hang of noticing where you pass the treble, or watching course bells (the bells that reach the back one after another).

If you want to try it, you're welcome to join John and Steve at St Giles' 6:30pm practice on Thursdays. If you can already ring plain courses of Plain Bob Minor and are ready to ring more, want to go a bit further, you could join them on Mondays from 6pm, so do get in touch.

Andrew Freer

Dates for your Diary

- Saturday 17th March** John Hearn's outing to Hampshire. Full details from John Hearn: monzajohn980@gmail.com
- Saturday 24th March** David Parkes/Hugh Deam's outing to Gloucestershire.
10.30am Grittleton (6) 14cwt; 11.30am Nettleton (6) 11cwt; 12.45pm lunch. Venue (t.b.c.); 2.15pm Colerne (8) 21cwt; 3.15pm Marshfield (8) 15cwt; 4.15pm Dyrham (6) 13cwt (t.b.c.); 5.15pm Pucklechurch(6) 12cwt;
- Monday 2nd April** Kirtlington (8) 16cwt A Morning Practice – open to people of all abilities 10.30am-11.45am
- Monday 9th April** Colin Taylor's Outing to North Warwickshire: Shirley (8) 6cwt 1030am; Lapworth (6) 10cwt 12noon; Lunch. Venue (t.b.c.). Packwood (8) 6cwt 2.30pm
- Saturday 21st April** Bicester Branch Outing to South Oxfordshire: Drayton (8); Milton (8); Marcham (6); Towers t.b.c.
- Saturday 5th May** Dave Jennings' Outing to Essex:
Coggeshall (10); Greenstead Green (6); Halstead (8); Sible Hedingham (8);
Lunch at Baythorne End; Ridgwell (6); Stoke by Clare (6). Followed by tea. All towers and times are still to be confirmed

If anyone else is interested in organizing a trip in 2018, please contact Hugh or Andrew.

For more details about everything else, please go to the Oxford City Branch website: www.oxfordcitybranch.org.uk
Any articles or photographs for inclusion in 'Branching Out' please email me: paulclucas@hotmail.co.uk

A list of proposed Branch Practices coming up

- Saturday 17th March:** St Aldates (6) Branch Practice 10.30am-12.00noon
- Saturday 14th April:** St Giles (8) Branch Practice 10.30am-12.00noon
- May:** The Half-Yearly Meeting and Striking Competition has been moved to June as there is a clash with the Guild AGM which has been moved to avoid the Royal Wedding. Coupled with Andrew Freer's wedding, two bank holidays and the Branch Secretary's holiday, June looked the better option.
- Saturday 9th June:** Headington (8) Branch Practice 10.30am – 12 noon (on the simulator), followed by tea, and the Striking Competition on open bells from 1.00pm onwards.
- Saturday 30th June:** Branch Outing organised by Andrew Freer - all day. Venues (t.b.c.), but probably Old North Berks Branch towers.
- Saturday 14th July:** Cowley (6) Branch Practice 5.00pm - 6.30pm
- Saturday 11th August:** Yarnton (6) Branch Practice 5.00pm - 6.30pm
- Saturday 8th September:** Marston (6) Branch Practice 5.00pm - 6.30pm
- Saturday 13th October:** Wheatley (6) Branch Practice 10.30am - 12 noon(tbc)
- Saturday 17th November:** AGM in the afternoon, but still to be confirmed
- Saturday 8th December:** Iffley (6) Branch Practice 10.30am-12 noon (tbc)

Please remember that all these Branch Practices are open to people of all abilities. You are all welcome!

Don't be put off from coming along. We were all learners once!

Lindsay Powell

Branch Secretary's Report

When Alison Merryweather-Clarke, of the Witney and Woodstock branch, suggested ringing some women's quarter peals to mark the centenary of The Representation of the People Act (6th February 1918) which gave women of property over the age of 30 the right to vote, she didn't know just how popular the idea would be. To date, there have been 11 ladies quarter peals rung in the Guild. Alison has rung in 10 of these and conducted 7 of them – well done on an excellent job Alison. I have rung in four of them – all were very enjoyable, but there are two which deserve a special mention as they were first quarter peals for two city branch ringers – Brenda Gratwicke and Nora Tarczy Novak both from Kidlington. Huge congratulations to both of them. They both rang really well, and I hope they will be the first of many.

Oxford Diocesan Guild

**St Giles, Bletchington, Oxfordshire on Saturday, 3rd February 2018 in 42m (8–0–1 in A)
1260 Grandsire Doubles**

1. Susan King ; 2. Judy Kirby ; 3. Maarit Kivilo; 4. Lindsay Powell; 5. Alison T Merryweather-Clarke (C); 6. Brenda Gratwicke.

Rung in celebration of the centenary of the Representation of the People Act (6th February 1918), giving the vote to qualifying women in the UK for the first time. (1st QP: tenor. 1st ladies band QP: all except C. 1st ladies band as C).

Oxford Diocesan Guild

**St Mary the Virgin, Kidlington, Oxfordshire on Saturday, 10th February 2018 in 43m (12–1–5)
1260 Grandsire Doubles**

**1. Nora Tarczy Novak; 2. Ailsa Reid; 3. Sue Rhodes; 4. Maarit Kivilo;
5. Alison T Merryweather-Clarke (C) 6. Lindsay Powell**

Rung on the front six in celebration of the centenary of the Representation of the People Act (6th February 1918), giving the vote to qualifying women in the UK for the first time.

1st QP: treble.

There are at least two more women's quarters planned – there will be an update in next month's issue if they are successful.

Lindsay Powell – City Branch Secretary

A Trip to the Berkshire Downs

Twelve lucky ringers had a great time on the fortuitous first ringing outing of 2018, visiting **Kintbury (8)**, **Great Shefford (6)** and **Lambourn (8)** on

Monday 12th February. I was particularly excited about this outing because Hugh had unwittingly arranged the outing in the new parish of North Leigh's previous House for Duty Priest Miri Keen, on the very day that she was to be collated, inducted and installed as Rector in her new group of 8 parishes!

As the service in the evening was at Brightwalton, the local ringers were very happy for us to visit Great Shefford and ring Miri's new bells in celebration of her special day, just across the road from her new Rectory. Before arriving at Great Shefford, our day got off to a balmy start at Kintbury

when John and Steve indulged me in ringing handbells in the glorious sunshine, surrounded by snowdrops in the churchyard. I don't think we really managed to do justice to the 8 tower bells of

Kintbury (although I'm happy to report we did a lot better than I did on the handbells!). The close proximity of tenor and treble plus the huge gap between treble and two kept us on our toes and messed with our heads; maybe it was the influence of the Kintbury Witch, who is said to have prevented the locals from retrieving the Kintbury Great Bell when it fell into the river during a great storm in the 15th century. The delightful six old bells at Great Shefford, rehung anticlockwise in their round tower in 2012, were an entertaining sequel to this confusion. The treble, tucked away round the corner out of sight of

the tenor, presented sufficient challenge to keep us amused even without the abundant and helpful reminders to "look to your left". After a good pub lunch at 'The George' and more handbell ringing in the sun, it was lovely to walk into Lambourn ringing room and see Steve Lowman beaming at us from a photo. These heavy old bells each presented their own challenges but our efforts were rewarded with their deep sonorous tones, which when played back on YouTube are the only bells I've found that don't send my cats running from the room!

All in all a delightful day, with a very happy ending for me at Brightwalton in the evening as I joined ringers from Preshute (Miri's next parish after North Leigh), Great Shefford and Brightwalton to celebrate the beginning of Miri's new ministry there.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke



Roy Jones Memorial Tree

A replacement white willow tree has been planted in the Mortimer Hall recreation ground and the official ceremony was held on Saturday 3rd February.

The original tree was unfortunately hacked down by vandals and £300 was allocated from the community budget administered by Marston parish council.

An article about this was published in the Oxford Mail on Tuesday 6th February.

Hugh Deam



Farewell to Namiko and Fukiné Minai

Two Japanese visitors, Namiko and Fukiné Minai, started ringing at St Giles in October. Namiko is an associate professor at the Japanese Women's University in Tokyo, and has been in Oxford as an academic visitor to the School of Built Environment at Oxford Brookes University, interested in design and management of streets and living environment. Fukiné is her daughter, aged 14, and has been attending Cheney School.

They have both progressed well, have recently started ringing on Sundays, and were elected as members of the City Branch and of the Guild in February. They have rung at several other towers as well as St Giles - several times at practices at Headington - and many Branch members have probably met them. They also made a visit to Canterbury during the recent half-term, and were able to get a ring at the Cathedral practice.

Sadly, they will both be returning to Japan in late March, and we shall miss them. We wonder what impressions of English bellringing - and bellringers - they will pass on to their friends at home. Fukiné has agreed that we can use the accompanying photograph of her ringing when we next reprint our recruitment leaflet, together with her own words:

'Ringing is awesome. It's traditional, musical, good exercise... also you can have an international chat with ringers. You just need your brain and body!'

John Pusey



Old North Berks Branch - Young Ringers Outing to Old Marston & Headington on Wednesday 14th February

It was cold and drizzling on Wednesday. We had tried the walk a few days before. The first half was pleasant with allotments and sports fields

and a bridle path. But the second half was a complex of not very interesting suburban housing which might result in young ringers getting lost. So we decided not to run a treasure hunt. Instead we decided to take the young people to the second tower by car.

We had had a reasonable response to our email about the outing. We met at 11.00am with nine young ringers (under 18), one university student and five adult ringers.

Branches represented among the young ringers were Oxford City Branch 1, South Oxon Branch 3, Old North Berks 4 and Witney & Woodstock Branch 1. It was good to meet two

young ringers from Thame, who found the bells we visited rather too light for their taste! Sadly there were several young people away with their families, not such a bad idea with such dismal weather in Oxford. After raising the bells at Old Marston we were able to ring call changes, plain hunt and bob

doubles. We also tried the "Twister" game we had played on the previous outing, involving turning round to face the wall while ringing rounds. The rounds weren't terribly good, but we enjoyed ourselves!

We travelled to Headington in four cars and then found how difficult it was finding parking spots. We all got to the church in a reasonable time though and while Daphne prepared the ploughman's lunch and pizzas for us all, most of the young people played card games. Paul hadn't realised what had been planned and took his car load of young ringers up the tower and organised ringing on the simulator. He wondered why it took the rest of us so long

to park. We wondered where he and his car load were but of course couldn't hear the bells ringing! Luckily we found Paul and the boys by the time lunch was ready and everyone enjoyed the spread that Daphne had provided.

Paul organised us all for a group photo and also took some shots of the girls playing card games.

Whilst the ringing took place, the adults had to go and rescue their cars from two hour parking slots around Headington!

The next ONB young ringers outing will be in the Easter School holiday, probably on Wednesday 4th April, (venue yet to be decided). Offers to organise something very gratefully received!

Susan Read. ONB Training Officer



Headington's late, late Christmas meal!

As is the tradition at Headington, the St Andrew's ringers always go out for their Christmas meal around two months after Christmas Day!



And so it was that on Wednesday 21st February, we assembled at 'The Acropolis', the new Greek restaurant in Headington – along with a few friends and acquaintances from other towers, who decided they would like to join us.

Everyone had a thoroughly good time

with plenty of Greek wine and fine food – although no plates were smashed during the course of the evening!



And of course, Steve Everett, being the type of guy he is, had unbeknown to us, smuggled a set of handbells into the restaurant, and at the end of the meal he serenaded the ringers and the other diners in the restaurant with a medley of rounds and plain hunting, ably assisted by Namiko and Fukine from St. Giles, who have become regular visitors to Headington!

It was nice that they could join, because as you can read in John Pusey's article, they are heading back to their home country of Japan at the end of March. They have both embraced the 'quirky art' of Campanology and have done incredibly well – and we will miss them both.

Thanks to everyone who came along, and especially to Jenny Stonard who took all the excellent photos of the evening!

Paul Lucas



Grandsire Morning at Cassington (6) on Saturday 24th February

It is usually a precursor of a successful morning when there are more than enough ringers assembled ready to ring up more than five minutes before the intended start time, and so it transpired.

Thanks are due to the tower captain, Keith Turner, for letting us book the excellent set of bells here, and the local ringers, five in total, for making sure that Cassington was well represented.

The mix of experienced Grandsire ringers and keen beginners allowed significant strides to be made, with several ringers taking their first steps into touches and others consolidating plain

courses or touches, plus we slipped in some Stedman, Reverse Canterbury and Plain Bob Minor towards the end of the morning. Of the sixteen ringers who attended, nine did some conducting, another vital benefit to accrue from these mornings.

Hugh Deam



Grandsire Triples Practice at Kirtlington (8)

There was an excellent turnout on Saturday 29th January for the Grandsire Triples practice on the lovely bells at Kirtlington, which are now being

rung more than ever before, thanks to the arrival of Steve Vickers as Tower Captain, who with the help of Ron Burgess at Kidlington, has managed to recruit a whole new band of ringers – many of them from the local community.

It was a very productive morning – enjoyed by all!

I've included a new photo of the bells I took on the day.

Paul Lucas

