

Officers 2022/2023

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From the Chair

One of the many joys of bell ringing is being able to visit almost any tower in any part of the UK (or the wider ringing world), being made welcome and joining in the ringing. I can't think of any other activity where becoming part of the local community, even if only for one evening, is so possible. When I worked as an External Examiner for the Pearson HNC and HND qualifications in Engineering it was a very welcome activity in the evening when I was away from home. (I used to plan my visits to some extent based on which evening was the local practice night.)

In January this year I have taken advantage of this opportunity to ring at the Swan Tower in Perth, Australia (whilst on holiday and meeting up with my brother); in April in Ashbourne, Derbyshire (on the Sunday evening after my son's wedding);

and just a few days ago in St Mary's on the Isles of Scilly (whilst on a walking holiday and meeting up with Chris Pack from Newbury, much to his surprise).

I look forward to reading about all your ringing activities in this edition of the newsletter, especially ringing for the late Queen, for the Coronation of the King and how any new recruits are shaping up.

Martin



For those who want to learn about the Swan Tower and bells, here is a link to the Wikepedia page:

Swan Bells - Wikipedia



East Garston

We are very pleased to announce, if you haven't heard already, that following a mammoth fundraising campaign led by East Garston bellringers and friends our bells have been returned to the tower and are in full working order. Whites have done a wonderful job in refurbishing them.

It is great to have the cracked treble mended and back in action and sounding like a bell rather than a bucket! The six are now much easier to ring and sound wonderful following tuning.

The ringing chamber looks very smart with a lovely new carpet (kindly donated by Lambourn church) and has a new plaque dedicated to the late Doug Vellender who resurrected ringing in East Garston for the millennium. The only job outstanding is to further improve the sound proofing (which was affected during the works) to return the ringing chamber to previous sound levels.

To celebrate the return of the bells, a quarter peal of Grandsire Doubles was rung on Easter Monday with a band consisting of current and past local ringers (https://bb.ringingworld.co.uk/view.php? id=1609651).





Villagers are pleased to hear the bells ringing again, including the clock chimes which are sounding out again on every quarter after the long silence. The village is back to normal!

Practices have been reinstated on Wednesdays at 7.30pm, after many years of absence. Visitors are always very welcome to join us and bolster numbers as

we progress with new (and rusty!) ringers. Sunday morning ringing is a bright and early 8.30am on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month if you'd like to join us.

We have started a new initiative, The Valley Ringers, where the three Lambourn Valley tow-

ers (Great Shefford, East Garston and Lambourn) practise together on the third Wednesday of the month, taking it in turns to host. By joining forces we are able to tackle something slightly more challenging and also improve opportunities for learners.

We also (continue to) support each other on Sundays and occasions such as weddings.

We are looking forward to many more years of ringing in East Garston!



Rebecca Gay

ODG Eight Bell Striking Competition

The ODG used to hold this competition on May Bank Holiday each year, and we always had trouble raising a band with, understandably, most ringers having other plans for the holiday. But since they

- F

moved it to a Saturday, there have been more ringers available and willing to take part. This year, the competition was planned to be held at Broadwell near Brize Norton, in the Witney and Woodstock Branch. In fact this recently augmented and rehung eight, while a bit off the beaten track, is right under the approach path for RAF Brize Norton, a treat for aircraft spotters as there was quite a lot of traffic (photo), but also quite a distraction for the



judges I would imagine.

We started the day in the usual format, with a practice, this time at Longcot, which is on the way there for all of us. A couple of runs through the test piece, comprising five courses of Erin Triples, yielded no problems, so we set off for Broadwell in good time. The usual tea, cakes and socialising preceded our time to ring so we enjoyed the occasion in the idyllic country surroundings. But wait, there is a possible pitfall for the whole event, in that there is another Broadwell not a million miles away from this one! Being wise to this, the organiser pre-warned all entrants of going to the wrong one, so what could possibly go wrong? You guessed it, one member of the band drawn to ring before us, went there by mistake, consequently we were asked to ring early. Our run through the test piece went very well, so well in fact, that I thought to myself "that was a really good piece of ringing". With quite a long way home, we all eventually departed the scene before the end of the competition and before the AGM, which was to be held in the afternoon. Later, I contacted Tony Crabtree, the organiser and enquired about the results. He responded "I have a cup for you". So, although we won the competition, we were slightly on the ODG's naughty step for all going home and leaving nobody to receive the cup. But in mitigation, none of us thought, even in our wildest fantasies, that we'd come first!

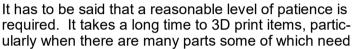
Team	Faults	Placed
Banbury Branch	45	5th
Oxford City	54	7th
Newbury Branch	25	1st
Reading Branch	27	2nd
North Bucks Branch	43	3rd
Vale of White Horse	53	6th
EBSB	44	4th



Mark Robins

Coronation Weekend Without Ringing

At the end of April 2023 like most of the ringing community I was looking forward to taking part in "Ring for the King". However, I returned from a business trip to the USA with Covid which forced me to pull out of the planned quarter peal and general ringing. While I was feeling unwell and unable to venture out I thought I would try to put my recently purchased 3D printer to some use. After a reasonably short search on google I found there was indeed a working Church Bell design which I could download and print. A single bell in a frame with wheel, slider, stay etc. Here is the link for anyone that may want to see more detail or download and print themselves: English church bell with frame by leadinglights - Thingiverse (https://www.thingiverse.com/thing:281323)





to be assembled and glued together. I printed the frame, wheel, stay, slider and headstock using the white PLA filament which was already loaded in my printer. It was several days of printing before I had all the components. I initially had issues with getting the print bed level, I had only printed a number of small items previously. The larger the object being printed the more important the bed is completely level, so I had a couple of false starts as well.



The frame and wheel were made of several different parts. There was an option to print the wheel as a single item if you had a larger printer bed. However, I had to print more than 25 parts for the wheel which needed to be put together.

Having printed most of the components in white I decided that I really needed to paint them. So, I opted for a blue frame, attempted to mix up some wood colour for the wheel, slider and stay then used black on the headstock and fittings.

I did have some grey PLA which I used to print the bell itself and clapper. With hindsight it would have been much better to print the components using the appropriate colour PLA rather than attempting to paint them. So if I try this again I will get a wider colour variety of PLA filament.

Continued Overleaf

Coronation Weekend Without Ringing (continued)

Following the instructions, I used M3 nuts, bolts, screws and cable ties to assemble the components. I found some relatively cheap bearings on amazon which fitted in the mountings for the bell. It was then a case of finding some rope and drilling a hole in the wheel. The bell turns, sets at both backstroke and handstroke. The clapper is a bit unorthodox because it swings in all directions given the chance – but it is only held in place using a cable tie!

So I spent my time 3D printing, assembling and painting a model bell instead of ringing for the coronation of King Charles III. Not through choice but it was good to get my printer working properly as I had not had the time to completely set it up prior to this. I had purchased it as a gadget/toy with the intention of trying some things but this was the first semi-useful object I have printed. At least we now have a model bell in Bucklebury tower to help explain to any interested visitors or new ringers what happens upstairs above the rope.



Graham Brown (May 2023)

Newbury

The annual tower dinner was held on Saturday the 18th of March at the Craven Arms and attended by tower members, partners, and friends. A jolly time was had by all. At the regular Monday evening tower practice the band has been developing its Surprise method ringing, with Kent, Norwich and Cambridge all being rung recently. In addition, the tower is currently teaching five learners, plus we have swelled our service band by one with the joining of a returning ringer. On Saturday the 6th of May, the band plus three of the new learners rang for the King's coronation (see photo). St Nics is very proud that six of its band were part of the Newbury Branch team that won the ODG 10 bell striking competition in May. The tower also won the branch six-bell string competition at Beenham on 7th July.



Ringing on 6th May, Coronation Day.

David Bebbington

Beedon—Centenary of the First Peal

April 2nd saw the centenary of the first peal on the bells at Beedon, so Ben Waller, family and extras in the shape of Mike Hurst and myself were engaged to commemorate the event with a quarter peal. The village made quite an occasion of it with tea and cakes, also marking Palm Sunday and the start of the church's 800 year celebrations.

Beedon, Berkshire

Sunday, 2 April 2023 in 40m (61/4 in B)

1260 Beedon Doubles

- 1 Joanne A Waller
- 2 Ben Waller (C)
- 3 Michael Hurst
- 4 Mark Robins
- 5 Ken Waller
- 6 Carol Waller

Believed to contain the first extents in the variation, Beedon Doubles, Chase Bob with an Ascension Bob (204 vu*).

Rung on Palm Sunday to commemorate the centenary, to the day, of the first peal on the bells; also beginning celebrations to mark 800 years of Beedon church.



Ben named a new doubles variation specially for the event:

Beedon Doubles

(Chase Bob with and Ascension Bob)







Thatcham

Thatcham bellringers joined with hundreds of towers round the country to Ring for the King on Saturday May 6th to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. In all, thirteen ringers joined in and we had a morning and afternoon session (with eight each time) so that everyone could participate and fit around their other arrangements for the day.

We were especially pleased that our newest recruit, Rhiannan, who has only been learning for a matter of weeks was able to ring unaided and even managed to not get distracted with her husband and two small children watching on!

Fiona, who was a returning ringer following our open day for the Thatcham Festival in the autumn, had the foresight to take a picture of the afternoon band.

Sunday 7th saw us attempt a quarter peal before evensong. Sadly this was unsuccessful but we had some good ringing and did score a complete 720 before we came to grief.

720 changes Cambridge Surprise Minor

Treble	Anthony D Smith
2	John Kape
3	Rachel Backhouse (Cond)
4	Adrian Moon
5	Richard Marshall
Tenor	Mark Backhouse



Coronation Day afternoon band L to R:

Roy, Mark, Sue, Tony, Rachel, John, Fiona, Adrian.

Tony Smith stepped down as Thatcham tower captain at the AGM in March. He had held the post for 14 years having said he would take it on for three! Our thanks go to him for his service. His replacement is Rachel Backhouse who moved to Thatcham five and a half years ago having previously been tower captain at Christchurch, Erith, Kent for 20 years. Richard Marshall has stepped back up to deputy alongside his steeple keeping hat and John Kape continues as secretary/treasurer.

Rachel Backhouse

Speen

Speen hosted the Branch Towers and Belfries Maintenance course at the end of April, run by Tony Crabtree and Anthony Williamson along with several helpers. The course was well attended with over 30 in the group and was most interesting as well as being beneficial to St Mary's in that we got our bells looked over. Prior to that, and with the course in mind, Martin Rice came and checked the bells for "odd struckness". He then

gave us a printout explaining which bells are odd struck and by approximately how much.

Tony's e-mail after the course suggested that it was a success. He said that the location worked well and that they had received appreciative comments from the attendees. He also thanked the local team, Ros, Mary and Lin for providing tea, coffee and cakes and for



making everyone so welcome. Best of all, they found no real problems with the bells so many thanks to Dave Thorpe for all his work as steeplekeeper.

Our June mini-outing was not just a Speen event but more a "Speen and friends" outing with ringers from Andover, Hungerford, Kingsclere and Whitchurch as well as Speen. We started with the five at St Peter's, Over Wallop, where the tenor dates from c1480: the frame which houses it and the two 1630s bells is believed to be the medieval original, reused from the previous tower. On to the eight at St Peter's, Goodworth Clatford, where the rising temperature and limited ventilation in the chamber did nothing to spoil the sound. A super lunch at the Cricketers, Longparish set us up for the local tower at St Nicholas. With-



out a resident band, this ground floor six are little used so we had to shift some of the stored items in the chamber, and the ropes were on the bouncy side but they made a nice noise. We finished with a flourish at St Mary Bourne with some Stedman and a super touch of Cambridge. Many thanks to all who joined us and to Ros Brandwood for the organisation.

Mary Hills



Shaw

On Friday 5th May there was a wedding and afterwards the band stayed on to ring for His Majesty King Charles III. The band rang Call Changes, Grandsire Doubles and then finished with more Call Changes. The band comprised Sue Gore, Angela Brown, Chris Pack, Kevin and Lin Rogers, and Roy Pratley.

Thank you to all for taking part.

on Friday 30th June I met a touring band of ringers from Exeter. They rang **Shaw Surprise Minor** which sounded very nice and tood 43 minutes. Later they moved on to Midgham, which became a challenge. In the morning I



drove over to check the bells at Midgham, only to find that the road leading to church was closed due a water mains leak. I took a chance drove past the notices and made it to the church to ring bells up ready. So I was able to pre-warn the visitors that the road was closed and suggested they follow me via Bucklebury Common. The quarter peal was rung and they left for Reading. A lesson to learned from this, is always check the church arrangements before the event.

Midgham

Last Summer at Midgham, I met a couple who said they were planning to be married at the church. When I enquired as to the date of the event, they replied "Saturday December 31st". "Are they joking?" I thought, but no, they assured me that it was the planned date. I was then left wondering who would turn out to ring on New Years Eve for a wedding. I need not have worried, as I had plenty of time to find ringers and when the day came I had my band: Rachel and Mark Backhouse, Kevin and Lin Rogers, Chris Pack, Diana Hibberd and myself.

Many thanks for turning out on such a special day as this.

I wonder if any other ringer has rung at a wedding on last day of the old year and when was the last time a Saturday 31st happened?

Roy Pratley

Midgham, Berkshire

St Matthew

Friday, 5 May 2023 (5-0-9 in C♯)

1260 King's Delight Doubles

- 1 Ken Waller
- 2 Carol Waller
- 3 Tim Pink
- 4 Jonathan Waller
- 5 Ben Waller (C)
- 6 Joanne A Waller

Rung to celebrate the coronation of TM King Charles III and Queen Camilla.



A Memorial Board for Ron Christopher

There are a number of memorial boards at Thatcham for ringers, all in the same style on oak boards. The latest board was for Bill Butler, which was dedicated at a Time to Remember Service in November last year.

At the beginning of this year a member of the Thatcham band asked if there was going to be a memorial board for Ron Christopher who died in September last year. Ron had been a ringer at Thatcham for 75 years and it was immediately agreed that it should be arranged. The joinery company and the signwriter who made Bill Butler's board were approached and agreed to make a board in memory of Ron. The wording on the board was agreed with Rita, Ron's widow. The board was manufactured and delivered to the Signwriter. Like so many sole traders he was extremely busy and the board was finally ready a couple of weeks ago.



Both Rita and her daughter Kay are unwell. Rita was keen for the dedication to take place soon. A provisional date of 2 July was agreed, pending some hospital appointments for Rita and Kay. However Kay was



Tony Smith

admitted to the Chuchill Hospital, Oxford during the previous week. Rita and Kay decided that the dedication should go ahead as planned, without Kay, but fortunately Kay was discharged from hospital, in time to be present for the dedication of the Memorial Board.

Rachel arranged for us to start ringing at 9.15 am on Sunday 2 July prior to the 10.00 am Service. We rang rounds and call changes, Grandsire Triples and a well struck course of Stedman Doubles, Ron's favourite method. The board was displayed on an easel at the front of the church throughout the Service. Our Rector, Revd. Mark Bennet invited Rita, Kay, her husband Martin and those ringers at the Service to come to the front of the church, whilst he conducted the Dedication at the end of the Service

Sue's Midweek Group

The location of the towers for January and February is chosen to avoid difficult road conditions in the event of bad weather. The first tower of 2023 was Thatcham where we rang all ten bells, followed by lunch at the White Hart. The February tower was at Shaw where the tiles to the tower floor had been removed, awaiting the laying of new tiles.

The March meeting was at Ecchinswell, where a light ring of six have recently been installed. The ringing chamber is very small, so it was a case of "six ringers up, six ringers down". John Manley invited us to Aldermaston in April, where we were pleased to welcome some of his local band. Lunch was at The Spring Inn, Sulhamstead, a new pub for the group.

We went to Chieveley in May with lunch afterwards at another new pub, The Fox at Chieveley. We rang at Harwell in June and returned to The Plum Pudding at Milton where we had been last year.

The standard of ringing is good, with a number of the group having made significant progress since returning after Covid.



Sue Smith



Branch Six Bell Striking Competition

On a warm Friday evening we gathered at Beenham for this event. A fine tea was laid on by the Beenham ringers and we all settled down for some socialising and a bit of ringing as well. Five teams took part, two ringing call changes and three ringing Grandsire Doubles which, by chance, was the favoured method for the evening. With some attendees not being in a team and feeling left out, a scratch band was put together and went on to break the tradition whereby the scratch team usually does quite well, by coming last. Mike Hopkins Till judged the event and gave a very detailed, helpful and positive debrief, placing Newbury first. Here are the results, method teams first, then call changers:

Newbury 33 faults,
Bucklebury 34
East Garston/Great Shefford 68
Scratch 76

Beenham 57% Yattendon 48%



So Newbury will go on to represent the Branch at the Guild event in October. The Marshall Shield award also took place, see the separate article with citation on the next page.





Mark Robins

Richard Marshall Shield 2023

What better way to feature the Marshall Shield award, than to publish the citation word for word. Here it is:

I would like to nominate Maureen Velvick of East Garston Tower for the Marshall Shield.

Maureen led a phenomenal fundraising campaign to raise around £50k in two years in order to have the East Garston bells restored. Her passion. enthusiasm and drive captured the village community and wider ringing circles to organise and/or support a range of fundraising events including a lottery, bric a brac sales, Christmas fayres, sponsored walk, paella

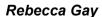
lunches, plant sales, metal detecting, sales of covid face masks, and

much more. Maureen organised volunteers from within the branch and local community to help with manual labour and transportation of the bells in order to save thousands of pounds on the overall cost of the project. The tower was grateful to receive both £5k match funding from the Greenham Trust and a £6.4k grant from the ODG.

Maureen's vision was for the 'challenging' bells of East Garston to be made easier to ring so that we could invite local ringers to join us and recruit new ones to the band. Maureen's enthusiasm remains as strong as ever, as she helps teach new ringers and supports and promotes 'Lambourn Valley' ringing in general.

I am sure Maureen would want to thank everyone that contributed in any way at all to making this project a success, and the Lambourn ringers in particular for their help, support and guidance during the project. East Garston tower welcomes all ringers to come and ring





the beautifully restored bells.



East IIsley

We have been busy training new recruits in preparation for the 'Ring for The King' event. Like many towers, we left the whole campaign too late but were very pleased with our efforts on the day. We hope to consolidate and improve on our performance in due course.

The band that rang on Coronation day



On the morning of Saturday 8th July our Monday evening ringers visited Appleton. We started with ringing at The Tower of Fame, St Laurences' where we acquitted ourselves well on the ten bells and it was interesting to read the peal boards recording the many record length peals rung in this tower.



We then moved on to the workshops of Whites (Bell Hangers) of Appleton where Brian White made us welcome and we had fun ringing on their mini ring.

We later rounded the morning off by visiting 'The Dog House', Frilford for lunch and socialising.

St. Laurence, Appleton (The Tower of Fame)

John Hibbert.

Hungerford

A well established tradition at Hungerford now, we set off in fine fettle for our Winter outing, fresh from the turkey, prezzies and washing up! A good mix of "country" sixes and eights lay ahead of us, with East Hagbourne, Harwell and East Hendred before lunch, then on to West Hanney and finally, Wantage. With bells of character to entertain us, we gave a good account of ourselves with decent ringing being the theme throughout the day. The grand finale was a plain course of the newly-named *Hungerford New Bob Triples* at Wantage to round the day off nicely.











Throughout the last six months, we have been ringing occasional quarters, at times commemorating events and sometimes just for the sake of it. Methods rung include Plain Bob Major, Single Oxford Triples, Yorkshire and of course, good old Stedman and Grandsire. Here are some of them with self-explanatory footnotes:

Monday, 19 September 2022 in 45m

1260 Plain Bob Minor

- 1 Cath Fitsell
- 2 Andrea Barletta
- 3 Mike Winterbourne
- 4 Jenny Jones
- 5 David Thorpe
- 6 Mark Robins (C)
- 7 Maurice Barletta

Rung half-muffled on the occasion of the State Funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second



Continued overleaf

Hungerford (continued)



Sunday, 5 March 2023 in 45m (12-

1260 Single Oxford Bob Triples

F Martin

- 1 Tim Pink
- 2 Helen Piper
- 3 Angela Brown
- 4 Andrea Barletta
- 5 Mike Winterbourne
- 6 Michael Hurst
- 7 Mark Robins (C)
- 8 Maurice Barletta

Rung for the ordination service of Revd Marcia Wadham, The Rt Revd Olivia Graham, Bishop of Reading presiding. This was the first ordination in Hungerford since medieval times. Saturday, 6 May 2023 in 43m (1

1260 Grandsire Triples

- 1 Cath Fitsell
- 2 Andrea Barletta
- 3 Mike Winterbourne
- 4 Julie Winterbourne
- 5 Jenny Jones
- 6 David Thorpe
- 7 Mark Robins (C)
- 8 Maurice Barletta

To Celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles

We ring almost every Sunday, often on six but sometimes on all eight. Call changes or Grandsire Doubles with 7-6-8 covering, is the norm, but always struck nicely. Our bells are left down when not in use and, as a band, we are now quite adept at raising and lowering in peal, an essential skill for all. With eight weddings last year, we were down to just one this year, where we rang a 350 touch of Grandsire Triples. This photo shows the whole Sunday band with Walter Newton on the right, who sadly passed away recently. Walter's funeral is next Friday and we will be ringing a quarter of his favourite Grandsire Triples, calling his composition, half-muffled in his memory.





On the

Wednesday in Holy Week (because we aren't supposed to ring), we always hold our annual dinner, this year at the Craven Arms, Enborne. It was a grand affair, opened with a welcome from Andrea our captain, to the assembled throng. Wine, good food, and some topical news reports were closely followed by an inter-table general knowledge challenge, presided over by Denise, who took no prisoners when disputes flared up! Some impressive answers to some very obscure questions showed up the real academics (anoraks?) among us. For example, who would have known that Bob Dylan is the only musician ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize? Anyway a good, if not a little rowdy, time was had by all and the winners went home proudly sporting their medals.

Continued overleaf

Hungerford (continued)

And finally, last Saturday, Andrea and Maurice took Cath, Dave and myself to the Guild Open Day, which this year was in Oxford City. We managed to "grab" a few towers and, although we took picnics, the attraction of a Wetherspoon's lunch proved too much for us and we went there instead, saving our picnics for tea time. The highlight of the day for me, wasn't the ringing or the grabbing, but visiting Hogwarts Dining Hall, which is actually Christchurch College Hall.

None of us remembered our wands, otherwise we could have had such a lot of fun!

Mark Robins

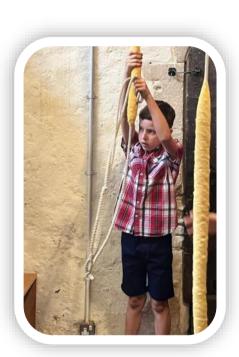
Hampstead Norreys & Yattendon

We're still ringing and practising as a joint band, but on some occasions we have just enough to ring at both churches simultaneously. One of these occasions was the Coronation weekend. On the Coronation day, we started off at 9.30am at Compton, where the bells are not often rung these day. Then to our home churches of Hampstead Norreys and Yattendon for short rings of the Coronation Changes at 10.15 before heading to our various homes and the TV.

At Hampstead Norreys we were joined by a photographer from the Newbury Weekly News, there to record the ringing by Thomas, our 10-yr-old learner. This made Thomas's day, an excitement that was further heightened a few days later when he received a letter from Laura Farris MP on House of Commons headed notepaper, congratulating him on his achievement.

We were please to be able to enter a Yattendon team in the recent Branch striking competition. Although we were placed 2nd out of only 2 towers ringing call changes, I feel I can strongly congratulate the team of mostly beginners - for stepping up and making the attempt despite the daunting prospect of ringing among all the 'experts'.

A couple of years ago one of the team from our Beenham days moved to Devon, so now Tessa and I are having great fun getting to grips with Devon call changes when we visit.



Thomas Craig, aged 10, on Coronation Day.

Marcus Allum



Anyone who has been to Devizes will know this scene. Very familiar to me as a regular ringer at Bishops Cannings, but driving that route I usually glance left and keep going.

This particular January morning though, I just had to stop, such was the amazing scene with the mist hugging the frosty landscape in the winter sun and the spire dominating the skyline.

I thought I'd share it with you on this Summers day.



Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter.
The deadline for the Christmas edition will be 17th December

Mark Robins—Editor