

Sonning Deanery Branch ODG – Reports on 2024 for 2025 AGM

Branch Secretary's report

Our branch AGM, held in February at All Saints, Wokingham, was attended by 26 branch members from 12 towers, together with Steve Rossiter, ODG Steward. All branch officers remained in post. 9 new members were elected in 2025 with 1 returning member.

We held our Branch 6-bell striking competition in April, kindly hosted by White Waltham. 6 bands took part including a Youth band, with an age range across all the bands of 8 to 87. It was a close competition with only 2 points separating first and second place which were Easthampstead and Wokingham All Saints respectively, with Arborfield not far behind in 3rd place. Easthampstead represented the Branch at the Guild 6-bell competition, coming a creditable 5th place. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Branch 8-bell striking competition due to a lack of bands entering. However, the bells at Sonning did not go to waste as a quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples was rung.

This year our twice monthly elementary practices have been

split into an elementary practice and a focused practice. The elementary practices help ringers progress from rounds to change ringing, and the focused practices concentrate on a particular method each month. Both practices have been well attended although fewer members now attend the Elementary as they have progressed to the Focussed intermediate practices. Our last Focussed intermediate practice included Treble Bob and Grandsire Triples.

In August we held a Branch Bells and BBQ Day. The day started with a quarter peal of Bob Doubles at Shottesbrooke (a first for one of our young ringers), followed by a quarter peal of Cambridge Surprise Minor. Then in the afternoon a quarter of Bristol Surprise Major was rung at All Saints, Wokingham. The BBQ was kindly hosted by St Paul, Wokingham. The weather was kind to us and the event well supported by members who enjoyed delicious food and good company. The evening was rounded off with an interesting bell ringing focussed quiz.

Jan Glen

Treasurer's Report

The names of all members who have paid their subs. for 2026 have been sent to the Guild Treasurer and their MemberMojo details updated.

One Tower (Binfield) had all their members paying via MemberMojo and 3 other Branch members have also paid via MemberMojo.

Subs. are outstanding for the following Towers:

- Arborfield, Barkham
- Shottesbrooke
- Sonning
- Twyford
- Waltham St. Lawrence

I have been notified that 10 members have not renewed their membership.

I have received subs. for the following new members – to be elected at the AGM:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| • Alison Wilkins | Warrfield |
| • Anton Petrov | Easthampstead |
| • Luke Attfield | Easthampstead |
| • Jodie Hill | Easthampstead |

The accounts are currently with Simon Smith awaiting examination.

Sue Davenport

General fund	Income	Expenditure
Subs	£1,498.00	
Hall Hire	£0.00	£208.70
BBQ	£193.00	£149.43
Subs to guild		£1,029.00
Competition Judges		£22.50
Newsletter		£60.00
Postage, stationery etc		£18.29
Tower fees		£0.00
Donation	£250.00	
Toilet Hire	£250.00	£500.00
Books	£0.00	
Young Ringers		£100.00
General fund 2025 totals	£2,191.00	£2,087.92
Carry over of 2024 balances	£3,676.86	
General fund balance	£3,779.94	
Bell fund	Income	Expenditure
Interest	£302.94	
Donation	£130.00	
Tower grants		£0.00
Bell fund 2025 totals	£432.94	£0.00
Carry over of 2024 balances	£3,276.69	
Bell fund balance	£3,709.63	
Actual branch funds	£7,489.57	

Ringling Master's report

The branch has continued to provide practices aimed at all standards of ringing levels with 59 scheduled in 2025 of which 12 were cancelled. We made a change in 2025 to introduce a Focused practice to replace one of the twice monthly Elementary practices. We also alternated the evening midweek practices between a Tuesday and Wednesday to avoid constantly clashing with tower practices.

The Elementary practices that we started in late 2019 have not been as well attended with 4 out of 12 cancelled. As last year, we have not seen as many new elementary ringers attend, is this because we don't have as many?

In 2025 we also started to run practices at the practice night of some of our branch towers. This I believe has

generally worked well; however, I would appreciate feedback if this were not the case. We only needed to cancel one Advanced practice in 2025 which was an improvement on previous years, I think mainly due to running 5 of them during St. Paul's Wokingham practice.

The ringing standard of those that have been attending the Elementary practices has continued to improve and I have changed them to more of an intermediate level. We have been focusing more on simple change ringing methods rather than Kaleidoscope, bell movement handling exercises and call changes. Binfield Afternoon Practices were held every month except for one (April), they continued to be reasonably well supported. We have continued to ring plain, treble bob and surprise methods when possible.

The 6-bell striking competition was held at White Waltham and judged by Ken Davenport and Dominic Ellis. We had 6 teams enter in total including a youth band. Congratulations to Easthampstead who won the

competition. They went on to represent the branch at the ODG 6 bell competition and came a creditable 5th. We were unable to enter a band into the Guild 8 bell competition and due to lack of teams our own 8 bell striking competition was cancelled.

98 Quarter peals (3 fewer than last year) and 3 peals (5 fewer than 2024) have been recorded for the Branch on the Ringing World's Bellboard website during the year. The leading tower once again was Shottesbrooke with a total of 48 quarter peals.

I would like to thank James Moynihan, our DBRM, for running some of our branch practices, this has particularly helped me when I have not been available. As we on average organise 5 practices a month it is particularly helpful when branch members do let us know their attendance plans so that we can ensure a viable practice can take place.

May I express my thanks to everyone who has supported Branch ringing activities throughout the year.

Nigel Mellor

Training Officer's report

During 2025 training has primarily been at the continued branch practices run regularly through the month. There continues to be one Elementary, Focused and Advanced practice each month when we occasionally join towers on their practice night. The Saturday branch practice continues as usual. These have all been run by the Branch Ringing Master or Deputy Ringing Master.

John Harrison has continued to offer his training and has run 2 simulator sessions in April and June.

In August a Quarter peal and BBQ day was organised. Three quarters were successful with a couple of firsts in surprise methods. Thanks to St Pauls for use of their garden and all who supported it.

Two youth ringers James Moynihan and Becki Shuttleworth both gained their Association of Ringing Teachers, ART, Level M1 Handling Teaching certificate after successfully focusing on teaching two individuals over a few weeks in the summer and passing the accreditation in September.

The summary of the October 2024 survey showed there are many elementary ringers in the branch who are still not accessing the regular elementary practice each month. Tower Captains were asked at the business meeting in November to encourage their members to attend. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Plans so far this year.

Saturday 28th March we are planning a training morning and pub called "From Kent to Cambridge" at Twyford. Details to be available soon with possible quarters in the afternoon.

To be considered:

A rope control and skills course has been requested.

Ringing up and down has been requested.

Another quarter peal day and

An outing in July or August.

Jane Mellor

Youth Officer's report

The young ringers in SDB have again been very active over the last year.

With a quick glance at Bellboard, they have clocked up around 120 quarter peals between them. Congratulations to Emily and to Elliot for ringing their first quarter peals and a massive well done to James for scoring a peal of Bristol Max in London earlier this year.

Most of the group young ringing has been done with Bucks&Berks this year with monthly practices, an outing to Guildford and entering 2 competitions.

Bucks&Berks hosted SEECON, the south East competition, this year and also won the competition!! The band then travelled to Birmingham in the summer for the RWNVC (Ringing World National Youth Contest) where they scored second place in the 8 bell Call Change competition. This year we are hoping to enter a method band and a call change band.

The future looks bright for youth ringing in the branch with the progression of existing youngsters a few new recruits. Thank you to all the Tower Captains and tower members for your hard work teaching, mentoring and the encouragement you give to them all.

Claire Shuttleworth

Newsletter editor's report

Due to confusion with the MemberMojo system last spring, the spring newsletter was delayed and so there were only 2 editions sent to print in 2025. Hopefully the difficulties have been resolved and there will be three editions this year. I am

now looking for articles and photos for spring 2026 which will go to print at Easter. As always, thank you so much to everyone who contributes.

Jennifer Moynihan

Webmaster's Report

The website has been kept up to date throughout the year. This includes:

- Diary – Timely practice updates (provisional / confirmed / cancelled), and any changes of time or venue.
- Documents to download – Meeting papers, newsletters and occasional reports
- Events – Pictures and results of striking competitions
- Contact details – Updated for officers and towers whenever I am informed of changes.
- Services – Updated email services information following the transfer to MemberMojo, see: odg.org.uk/sdb/services/email.html

I updated the page headers on the website with the modern ODG logo and the new generic bellringing logo.

Nothing was added to the downloadable resource area: odg.org.uk/sdb/download/

I liaise with the Guild Server Manager to resolve occasional external problems affecting the Branch website and email services and I helped to resolve occasional local email problems (though most of the old PostMaster role was removed with the closure of Branch mailing lists when services were moved to MemberMojo),

Reference information on the website includes contact details for officers, an events diary, information and contact details for Branch towers, services offered by the Branch including training courses, newsletters, reference documents, past events, history of the Branch and useful external links. The website is at: odg.org.uk/sdb/ and details.

John Harrison

Bookstall Holder's report

There have been no requests for books this year. So much is now available online, that I propose we no longer need a

bookstall.

Jennifer Moynihan

Branch representatives to the Guild report

1. Governance & Management Restructure

Proposed New Management Structure (Ongoing – Not Yet Adopted)

A major strategic theme across all meetings was restructuring Guild governance to improve agility and future sustainability.

Reasons for Change

- Declining recruitment and aging ringing population
- Changing social patterns post-pandemic
- Fewer church congregations and church closures
- National initiatives such as Ringing 2030
- Current structure (55-member General Committee meeting twice yearly) seen as too slow and administrative

Proposed Structure

- Executive Committee
 - Master, Deputy Master, Secretary, Treasurer, PR & Communications Officer
 - Up to 3 co-opted advisers
 - Meets monthly
 - Responsible for running the Guild
- Governance & Scrutiny Committee
 - Chair + 15 Branch representatives (one per branch) + Vice Presidents
 - Holds Executive to account
 - Meets at least annually (with additional virtual engagement)

Key Discussion Points

- Strong support in principle for continuing to explore change
- Concerns about:

- Financial oversight and asset protection
- Rule changes affecting Diocesan Bell Fund trustees
- Need for detailed scrutiny before approval
- Risk of rushing implementation

- Request for small working groups to refine rule amendments
- Timeline target: Second draft by 1 November 2025

AGM Quorum Proposal

- Proposal to reduce AGM quorum from 50 to 25 members
- Concerns raised that 25 was too low
- Outcome: Proposal rejected — quorum remains 50

2. Financial Matters

2024 Accounts

- Audited and approved at 2025 AGM
- Youth ringing funds unused — carried forward
- Banner repair required additional funds
- Small deficit anticipated but budget broadly aligned with expenditure

Donations (Approved for 2025 AGM)

- £0 to Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (large bequest received; fund financially stable)
- £500 to The Ringing World
- £500 to Association of Ringing Teachers (ART)

CCCBR Affiliation Fees

- The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR):
- Increased per-member fee to 40p (2025)
- Proposed £1 per member (2026, subject to vote)

Reasons:

- Investment income decline
- Ringing 2030 funding needs
- Operating deficits

Concerns raised about scale and timing of increase.

3. Membermojo Implementation

Status

- Fully operational from 1 January 2025
- Training and support provided by membership team

Achievements

- Centralised membership database
- Improved communication capability

Issues Raised

- Data protection concerns (date of birth requirement for insurance)
- Variation in branch processes — need for standardisation
- IT support clarity and contact points

Actions

- Ongoing refinement and troubleshooting
- Further discussion on data requirements

4. Library Future

Long-serving Librarian standing down after 24 years.

Issues:

- Large physical collection (7 bookcases + 20 boxes)
- Storage and volunteer capacity challenges
- Only 10–15 information requests per year

Actions:

- Form working group to:
 - Investigate long-term storage
 - Digitise materials
 - Develop archive processing system
 - Return branch minute books for copying before transfer

5. Education & Learning

Learning & Development Workgroup

- Focus on developing foundation skills

Bookstall Review

- Reduced physical display opportunities
- Many books now available online

No final decision — further review needed.

6. Safeguarding Updates

Key changes:

- DBS checks only required for Tower Captains if young people present
- Clarified definition of “vulnerable person”
- Alternative DBS route via ART if PCC declines renewal

Bellringing scenarios to be included in Church of England safeguarding training

7. Communications & PR

PR & Communications Officer

- Role vacant for ~8 years
- Lesley Belcher volunteered and in position

8. Publications

- 138th Annual Report produced (cost per copy reduced by 32p)
- E-copy to be uploaded to website
- Odd Bob editor stepped down; new editor (Kathryn Grant) volunteered

9. CCCBR & National Developments

- Strong focus on Ringing 2030
- Library relocated to Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust
- Safeguarding engagement with Church of England
- Peal and quarter peal numbers increased

10. Recruitment & Strategic Challenges

Repeated themes across meetings:

- Aging ringing population (60% over 60 nationally)
- Risk of tower decline over next 20 years
- Need for:
 - Youth engagement (suggestion for youth rep under 30)
 - Technology use

Vikki Bulbeck

Typo in original report corrected by JAH.