

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers
Reading Branch Annual General Meeting
Chantry House, Henley on Thames
Saturday 9th February 2019 10.00 – 11.00

7b : Branch Secretary's Report

2018 has been as full a year as 2017 with a number of significant successes from our young ringers, which is very satisfying indeed. Firsts include Jennifer Ellis (Plain Bob Triples on 8), Kiran Bahra (quarter peal) and Matthew Stone (peal of Surprise Major). In January, Anna Sherwood and Daniel Page took part in a peal of Royal becoming the youngest band to ring a peal of Royal at St Paul, Birmingham, breaking the previous record set 34 years ago. With an additional two ringers, they went on to set another new record at St Michael, Melbourne, becoming the youngest band to ring a peal of Maximus (average age for both bands was just under 16) and in September, they were part of the youngest band to ring Bristol Surprise Maximus at Worcester. Daniel Page, aged 15, was awarded the Oxford Diocesan Guild (ODG) Young Ringer of the Year Trophy, and the ODG Gold Award. In the first quarter of the year, Daniel conducted his first peals of Spliced Surprise Major and Spliced Surprise Royal whilst Anna conducted her first Maximus peal for her 18th birthday. Keeping it in the family, Thomas Sherwood achieved his first peal of Stedman Triples, first peal on 10 and conducted his first Surprise quarter peal aged 14. In July, an ODG team including three young ringers from the Reading Branch, took part in the eighth Ringing World National Youth Competition (RWNYC) in London and were delighted to win the Method Ringing category and the Ringing World Editor's Trophy for Excellence.

There was no Reading team at the ODG 8-bell 2018 striking competition in May at St Andrew, Shrivenham (10 bells,13-0-2).. However, Reading branch was well represented by a team from St Michael, Tilehurst, which came second, just two points behind the winning team from Newbury. The 2018 Reading Branch Striking Competition took place at St John, Mortimer (six bells – 7-12-16), in September with four teams competing. The team from St Michael, Tilehurst, came first followed by Goring, Mortimer and St Mary and St Laurence. Tilehurst represented Reading Branch in the ODG 6-bell contest on 6 October, at North Marston in the Central Bucks Branch coming fourth out of eleven entries behind High Wycombe, Wallingford and Drayton St Leonard. In November, the Reading branch team won the Oxford Diocesan Guild (ODG) 10 bell competition at St Nicholas (10 bells, 21-2-1), Newbury. The team comprised ringers from Caversham, Reading (St Mary & St Laurence), Shiplake and Tilehurst.

2018 has seen a wide variety of events across the Branch. The traditional hand bell day held for the last 30 years or so on Holy Saturday aims to ring five or six quarter peals every hour on the hour. This year, 25 of 31 quarters attempted were successful and the event raised £80 for the Tilehurst Bell Fund. To mark the Royal Wedding, Swallowfield (with a few friends!) rang a quarter peal and flushed with success, went on to ring a further quarter to celebrate a good Ofsted report for Shinfield Junior School. In November, 21 of 23 Reading

towers participated in Ringing Remembers with members of the committee giving several radio interviews. Ringing Remembers recruits took part at Pangbourne (5) and Henley (1).

Outings have been a particular feature of the year, Henley ringers enjoyed two very different visits, the first to the 'Cathedral of the Cotswolds', St Peter and St Paul, Northleach then on to 'Venice of the Cotswolds', Bourton on the Water to ring at St Lawrence's before finishing at St John the Baptist in Great Rissington and St Mary the Virgin on the Great Barrington Estate. Henley's autumn outing to Gloucestershire took place on a rather wet and windy weekend when a total of eleven ringers fought their way up the tricky stairs at St John the Baptist in Coln St Aldwyns and finished at the beautiful St John Taynton via Hatherup and Windrush. The April Oxon outing was supported by fourteen ringers who toured four churches in north-east Oxfordshire. Reading's outing in June was a very relaxed affair visiting three churches in Evesham, the first of which (Evesham Bell Tower) was declared by many as the best they had rung in. The day included a crossing on the Hampton ferry which has been in use since the 13th century. The St Giles team visited the Vale of the White Horse taking in Hinton Waldrist, Shellingford, Shrivenham and Longcot. Later in the year, St Giles were pleased to celebrate Keith Vernon's 80th birthday with a long extent of Grandsire Triples with his wife, daughter and son-in-law in the band. Caversham opted for an 'English Heritage' trip through the beautiful South Oxfordshire countryside taking in Chilton, Long Wittenham, Warborough, Drayton St Leonard and Chalgrove. For their eleventh outing, Tilehurst elected to visit North Herts and Bedfordshire with a weekend trip that involved self-catering for the first time. They visited nine towers of which the most challenging was at St Mary the Virgin Ashwell with an 18cwt tenor and 'elastic' ropes.

We look back with satisfaction at a very active and successful year and look forward to offering many similar opportunities for experienced and new ringers alike in 20-19.

Pam Williams-Jones