

Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2012

New Officers

The following Society officers were elected at the AGM held on 28th November in Exeter College:

President	Jeremy Pratt
Senior Member	Dr. Stephen Cameron, Keble
General Secretary	Simon Bond
Master	Stephen Dann, Lincoln
Treasurer	Rosalind Roberts, Wolfson
Secretary	Wilfred Lewis, St Catherine's
Librarian	Edmund Mottershead, St Hilda's
Steeplekeepers	Rachel Prior, St Hilda's & Canna Whyte, Wadham
Webmaster	Fergus Colquhoun, Trinity
Brookes rep.	(vacant - no ringers this year)
CC rep.	Mark Bell

Vice Presidents Quentin Armitage, Doug Beaumont, David Brown, John Camp, Ian W Davies, Peter Giles, Paul Mounsey, Donald Niblett, Dermot Roaf, Betty Robbins, Andrew Stubbs and Lester Yeo were re-elected.

Bell Restoration Fund

BRF Trustees: Senior Member and Treasurer ex officio
Andrew Stubbs
Christopher Poole

Mark Shepherd and Marika Haseldine have been elected as Independent Examiners.

Life Members

The following have become Life Members:

Kirsty Monk (Hertford 2008-10)
Michael O'Hagan (Merton 2006-10)
Simon Roberts (New College 2010-11)

The following recent life members have not previously been announced in a newsletter:

Lucy Bricheno (Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics, 2009-10)
Luke Camden (Keble 2006-09)

Residents' Review

Hannah Guggiari, immediate past Master, writes:

The number of resident members of the OUS is currently quite low. However, with the support of many non-residents, the Society has continued to ring and socialize

effectively. Tuesday evening practices have remained popular, with much progress being made. A variety of pre-practice quarters have been rung, with a reasonable level of success overall. The Monday intermediate practices at St Thos have been slightly less well-attended, but have still proved very beneficial for those taught to ring in Michaelmas 2010.

Sunday morning quarters at St Thos have continued to achieve a 50% success rate. This has been followed by service ringing at Mary Mag. Fortnightly ringing at New College has produced some good ringing, including a half-muffled quarter on Remembrance Sunday.

The traditional termly 12-bell practices have all been well-supported by past members and the Oxford Society, giving many residents the opportunity to either ring on twelve for the first time or improve their 12-bell ringing. Two of these practices were at Christ Church; the third was at Reading.

The Society's annual dinner was held at Harris Manchester College and was, once again, a splendid occasion. The annual Tour, based at Melksham in Wiltshire, was well-attended by both residents and past members. My thanks go to Robert Sworder for organizing such an enjoyable week.

As usual, each term has brought an outing, with varying levels of attendance. The joint outing was organized by Luke Camden to Watford (North London) and the OUS once again outnumbered the CUG. Fergus Colquhoun's summer outing took us by minibus to Burford and the surrounding area. Stephen Dann organized the Freshers' outing (which no actual freshers attended) by bus to south-west Oxfordshire, followed by fireworks in South Parks.

This year's Freshers' Fair has seen us welcome one proficient ringer to the Society. We also have three enthusiastic learners who are making good progress and we hope they will return for 2012.

At the SUA in Cambridge, we managed to enter both the 8-bell and the 6-bell competitions. Both teams put in commendable performances. Thank you to everyone who rang, especially those for whom it was their first striking competition.

The past year has seen seven successful peals. 28 quarters have been scored, including several firsts in method. Congratulations to Emma Stanford, Edmund Mottershead and Fergus Colquhoun, who each rang their first quarter last year.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has organized and participated in events throughout the year. It is your support and enthusiasm that makes the OUS such a success!

2012 Annual Dinner

The 2012 OUSCR Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday 4th of February, at 7.00 for 7.30pm. It will once again be at Harris Manchester. The guest speaker will be David House, newly elected Secretary of the Ancient Society of College Youths. Henry Coggill will be returning ten years after his ill-fated first attempt at speaking at the dinner to propose the toast to the Guests, and Stephen Dann will reply for the Society.

Tickets are now on sale for £55 to include a white wine reception, wine and port.

Menu

Celeriac Soup with Parsnip Crisps and Truffle Oil
Fillet of Beef with Wild Mushroom and Parmesan Crust
or
Wild Mushroom and Chestnut Strudel (vegetarian option)
Sunken Chocolate Soufflé
Cheese Board
Coffee & Mints

Pre-dinner drinking on the Friday evening will be held in the Cape of Good Hope on The Plain. General ringing and peal attempts will take place during the day on Saturday and coffee will be available on Sunday morning. To book your tickets, please send a cheque payable to "OUSCR Dinner Committee" to: Stephen Dann, Lincoln College, Oxford OX1 3DR, enclosing a SAE, details of any dietary requirements, and seating preferences. The closing date for tickets is 21st January.

Printed Newsletter

The contents of the newsletter account is currently a bit of a mystery pending a changeover of the signatories. It is likely that there is very little money left in the account and the previous General Secretary is owed money for the last newsletter. Therefore it is unlikely that a future printed newsletter will be possible. Any contributions will be used to cover the outstanding expenses for this and previous newsletters, but no promises can be made about the viability of a printed newsletter in the future.

The newsletter will be made available on the OUS website in future (<http://www.ouscr.org.uk>) and I recommend you request a copy from a friend or relative with internet access. That said, any contributions sent to the General Secretary will be gratefully received and next year's newsletter will be sent to any donors.

St Mary the Virgin

Last year's newsletter contained news of the need for work on the installation at SMV. The following article, written by Michael O'Hagan and published on the front page of the Ringing World for 25th November, gives fuller details on the project.

St Mary the Virgin, Oxford: Bell Restoration Appeal

The imposing Gothic spire of St Mary the Virgin is surely one of the most iconic features of Oxford's High Street. A climb to the foot of the spire affords splendid panoramic views of the city, making an ascent a 'must' for any visitor to Oxford. A church has been present on this site since Anglo-Saxon times and, during its early history, it was adopted as the first building of Oxford University. Congregation, the University's governing body, began meeting there from at least 1252, though nowadays the nearby Sheldonian Theatre is used for this purpose.

The tower itself dates from the 13th century and has contained bells since 1492. The church's current bells are the seventh heaviest ring of six in the world, with the tenor weighing approximately 27cwt. The fourth bell is rare in that much of its inscription consists of musical notation around the lower shoulder, so it is known as "The Music Bell", and the second and fifth bells are decorated with Shields bearing the crests of Oriel College and Oxford University. The fourth and fifth are listed in the Church Buildings Council's "Schedule of Bells for Preservation".

Until recently, the bells at St Mary the Virgin (known colloquially as "SMV") were rung by the Oxford University Society of Change Ringers for Sunday Services during Oxford term, and by the Oxford Society for special ceremonies such as Encaenia, where the University confers it honorary degrees, as well as Royal occasions.

Over recent years, however, we noticed that the bells were becoming increasingly difficult to ring; not surprising since their last rehang was in 1894!

A recent inspection of the bells and their fittings revealed that urgent repair work is necessary. The bearings of the front five are extremely worn and corroded, and misaligned with their housings due to distortion of the elm headstocks. The fourth has been unringable since 2009 due to a broken gudgeon. The wheels and pulleys are in poor condition, and the bell frame, whilst being structurally sound, needs to be cleaned, de-rusted and repainted. The bells themselves require turning due to heavy wear in the soundbow areas where the clappers strike.

To preserve this historic ring of bells and allow them to continue to be enjoyed by ringers and townspeople over the coming years, an ambitious project has been planned, with work to be carried out by local bellhangers, Whites of Appleton.

Now is an excellent time to carry out this overhaul as the church itself is currently embarking on a large-scale restoration project necessitating a six-month closure of the tower. It was recommended to the church that the bells should be removed, for safety, during the restoration and that the required work on the bells and fittings could be done whilst they are out of the tower. This has been accepted by the PCC subject to independent fundraising given its existing commitments elsewhere.

The front five will be turned and hung on cast iron headstocks with new bearings, whilst the tenor will be turned and rehung on its refurbished cast iron headstock and bearing housings. All bells will have new hardwood wheels, hardwood pulley units, ash stays, sliders and hardwood runner boards, and be rehung with new fittings in the existing oak and cast iron frame, which will receive necessary maintenance. New hardwood floor rope bosses and anodised aluminium ceiling rope bosses will also be installed.

Such an ambitious overhaul comes, of course, at a high price. The total cost of the project will be in the region of £30,000 which The Oxford Society of Change Ringers and The Oxford University Society of Change Ringers have jointly undertaken to raise. Any donations to help us achieve this sum, however large or small, would be extremely welcome.

Fund raising for the project is proceeding extremely well. Large grants from the Oxford Society of Change Ringers, the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and the Doris Field Trust, together with generous individual donations and existing OUS BRF funds mean that we are well on our way to covering the cost of the project. Donations are invited from members as we still have a not insignificant shortfall to cover.

Cheques payable to "OUSCR Bell Restoration Fund" should be sent to the General Secretary at the address at the end of this newsletter. A Gift Aid form is enclosed for those receiving this in paper form. Electronic readers can find this at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr/BRFGiftAid.pdf>. Gift Aiding your donation allows the BRF (a registered charity) to reclaim an extra 25% on donations received.

The bells should return to the tower in May 2012 and those of us in Oxford look forward to welcoming you to ring on them.

Meeting Dates in 2012

The Society's business meetings are held on Mondays, and customarily take place in Exeter College. Please confirm the venue in advance.

TGM dates - the first Monday in term: Jan 16th, April 23rd and Oct 8th.

AGM date – the last Monday in Michaelmas term: Nov 26th.

The Annual Tour

The 2012 Tour will take place in Easter week, Sunday 8th to Thursday 12th April. Planning is still in the early stages, but I have been guaranteed that Henry Coggill and Duncan McBurnie will be organising ringing and accommodation based in or around Nottingham. More details will be available from Henry (henry@coggill.com) or the OUS website nearer the time.

The Society's History

Copies are available for £30 each (including postage and packing), made out to 'OUSCR History', from the general secretary.

Address List and Websites

The General Secretary maintains the Society's address list, of nearly 330 members. The vast majority are now on e-mail. If you would like a copy of the list, either electronically or on paper, please ask.

Email addresses are held on the website and by the secretary, but the master list is maintained by John Camp for use on the mailing list. This is used for important announcements and the dissemination of this Newsletter, and all members are strongly encouraged to join it. You can do so either by e-mailing ouscr-admin@bellringers.net or by visiting http://www.bellringers.net/mailman/listinfo/ouscr_bellringers.net.

20 members are currently lost. If you can help us trace any of the following, we would be grateful:

Catherine Bannister, Rosemary Clark, Paul Crane, Harold Dobbin, Lindy Ellis, Maurice Gray, Andre Gren, Douglas Hird, Sally Hawsworth, Anne Lambert, Andrew J

Loveland, Jeremy McCabe, Melanie Milan, JD Mozley, David Newman, Kate Richardson, Nigel Sheppard, Richard Tapper, C Turnbull, AJ Vincent.

Please be sure to tell us if you change e-mail address.

The OUS website can be found at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr>. There is also an online peals database <http://www.ouscr.org.uk/peals/>. Updates to the website have been sparse at best of late but, with changes to those tending to it, it is hoped that the website will be kept more up-to-date so as to be a useful resource for members.

Members' News and Obituaries

No members' news or obituaries have been received or published this year. As ever, if you wish for any news to be included in next year's newsletter, please send this to the General Secretary.

Contact Details

You can contact the General Secretary by post at:

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