

# Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

## Annual Newsletter - January 2014

### New Officers

The following Society officers were elected at the AGM held on Monday 2nd December in Exeter College:

President	Jeremy Pratt
Senior Member	Stephen Cameron
General Secretary	Simon Bond
Master	Matthew Johnson, Christ Church
Treasurer	Peter Elliott, St John's
Secretary	Isobel Fray, Merton
Librarian	Stephen Turrell, St Catherine's
Steeplekeepers	Courtney Spoerer, St Catherine's and Frederick Manners, Balliol
Webmaster	Robert Hornby, Corpus Christi
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, Nigel Herriott, Paul Mounsey, Donald Niblett, Dermot Roaf, Andrew Stubbs, and Lester Yeo were re-elected.

### Bell Restoration Fund

BRF Trustees: Senior Member and Treasurer *ex officio*, Andrew Stubbs and Christopher Poole  
Independent Examiners: Marika Haseldine and Nigel Orchard

### Life Members

The following have become life members:

Fergus Colquhoun (Balliol 2010-13)  
Jack Gunning (Pembroke 2001-09)  
Peter Jasper (St Stephen's House, 2012-13)  
Edmund Mottershead (St Hilda's 2010-13)  
Rachel Prior (St Hilda's 2010-13)  
Rosalind Roberts (Wolfson 2010-13)

## Residents' Review

*Rosalind Roberts, immediate past Master, writes:*

This year has seen a surge in enthusiasm for ringing and drinking among the resident members of the OUS, which continued into Michaelmas despite the loss of a few regulars over the summer. Tuesday evening practices have been well-attended and we are now regularly ringing Spliced Surprise Minor and Surprise Major. Good progress by the learners from last year has been made at the Monday night St Thos practices. Pre-practice quarters have been very successful – Trinity term saw a perfect record!

Although there were relatively few sign-ups at Freshers' fair (probably due to our crushed corner stall), the two learners who are regularly attending practices are progressing well. A few other learners have come less frequently, but hopefully we can hold on to them next term! We also managed to attract 3 ready-made ringers.

Service ringing has been generally well-attended and we have produced some good ringing at St Thos and Mary Mag, as well as for our fortnightly slots at New College, where we rang a half-muffled quarter for Remembrance Sunday, St Ebbe's and the newly rehung SMV. It's been a real pleasure for the OUS to be able to ring regularly at so many varied towers and especially to be able to ring once again on the beautiful bells of the University Church. Thanks to all of the OUS members who contributed so generously to the SMV project.

Our termly 12 bell practices have proved popular with the residents and have allowed many to ring on 12 for the first time or to improve their 12-bell ringing. The first of these practices was in Reading and the most recent two were at Christ Church. Thanks to past members and Oxford Society members for all their help with these practices.

The OUS Annual Dinner was held once again at Harris Manchester College and an excellent evening was had by all. The Annual Tour was based in Romsey and provided a wide variety of towers and pubs for the enjoyment of the many residents in attendance. Thanks to Nigel Herriott for organising an excellent week.

Each termly outing has been well-attended, most pleasingly the joint outing to Northampton, organised by Peter Jasper, at which the OUS outnumbered the CUG. Courtney Spoerer organised the summer outing to the Dunstable area and again we had a minibus-full of OUS! The freshers' outing (with only one pseudo-fresher whose DPhil supervisor had moved from Cambridge in attendance) took us to the East of Oxford by bus and was organised by Matt Johnson.

The SUA was held in Southampton this year and the 6-bell and 8-bell bands both performed commendably. Simply entering the 8-bell competition was something to be proud of as that meant Southampton didn't get the trophy by default! We finished 3rd in the 8-bell competition and

4th in the 6-bell. Thank you to everyone who rang and especially to those for whom it was their first striking competition.

The OUS has had an excellent year of peal and quarter-peal ringing. Five peals were scored this year, including four first peals and one first tower bell peal. 41 quarters were scored, including many firsts of method and seven in hand. Congratulations to Rachel Prior, Isobel Fray and Peter Elliott on ringing their first quarters this year, and to Edmund Mottershead and Emma Stanford for ringing their first in hand.

Thank you to everyone for their support and enthusiasm this year and to all those who have organised and attended the many OUS events throughout the year.

### **President's Notes**

*Jeremy Pratt writes:*

The activities of the year are largely covered elsewhere in this newsletter, but I think it is worth highlighting some.

The Annual Dinner was well attended, and once again, Harris Manchester College made us most welcome. It was a fortunate coincidence that the service of rededication at SMV took place that weekend. Open ringing on the restored ring of six took place on Dinner day, and a quarter peal was rung following the conclusion of the service on the Sunday. The support of so many members in contributing to the successful restoration of this glorious ring was very much appreciated, and this was emphasised in a short speech from the Vicar of SMV who was a guest at the Dinner.

After the problems of 2012, it was good to have a full tour back on the programme. I am most grateful to Nigel Herriott for his exemplary organisation, and for not getting too upset that his choice of headquarters pub failed to survive the first evening. There was an excellent turnout from residents and non-residents alike, which I hope can be sustained in future. I am certainly very much looking forward to the Liverpool tour in 2014. If anyone is yearning to organise a tour, do please let me know.

One of the joys of the last year has been to see the enthusiasm in the resident society (if not always for early ringing at St Thos on a Sunday morning). A contested election for Master at the December 2012 AGM left the President with the unenviable task of exercising a casting vote and choosing between two potentially excellent candidates. It is impossible to know, even with the benefit of hindsight, if the decision was right. Suffice it to say that I am relieved that it was certainly not wrong, and the Resident Society has clearly had a very successful year.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Dinner and on the Tour.  
Wishing everyone a very happy 2014.

## **2014 Annual Dinner**

The 2014 OUSCR Annual Dinner will take place on Saturday 1st of February, at 7.00 for 7.30pm. It will once again take place at Harris Manchester College where we hope to enjoy the same level of hospitality that we have for a number of years.

The guest speaker will be David Hilling, Conductor of the Westminster Abbey Company of Ringers. Chris Poole will propose the toast to the guests, and Matthew Johnson will reply to David's toast to the Society.

Tickets are now on sale for £56 (last year's price having been held through careful negotiation) to include a sparkling wine reception, wine and port.

### ***Menu***

*Celeriac Soup with Truffle Oil, Chives and Pancetta*

*-/-/-*

*Confit of Duck with Herb Spatzli and Cider Braised Red Cabbage*

*Fontina Cheese, Egg and Vegetable Strudel (v)*

*-/-/-*

*Forest Fruit Apple Tart with Vanilla Ice Cream*

*-/-/-*

*Cheeseboard with Port*

*-/-/-*

*Coffee and Chocolates*

Pre-dinner drinking on Friday evening will take place at the Cape of Good Hope on the Plain from 7pm. General ringing and peal attempts will take place during the day on Saturday and coffee, included in the ticket price, will be available at the Royal Blenheim on Sunday morning.

To book tickets please send a check payable to 'OUSCR Dinner Committee' to: Matthew Johnson, Christ Church, St Aldates, ON1 1DP, enclosing a SAE, details of any dietary requirements, and seating preferences. Payment can also be made by bank transfer. Please contact [matthew.johnson@chch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.johnson@chch.ox.ac.uk) for details. The closing date for tickets is 18th January.

## **2014 Tour - Sunday 6th - Thursday 10th April 2014**

*Michael O'Hagan writes:*

The 2014 OUS Tour will be based in Liverpool. Lucy Bricheno and I are jointly organizing the event and we think that our local knowledge has allowed us to put together an enticing programme of ringing and drinking.

Please note that the tour this year is being held the week *before* Easter. Activities on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April will be based within the city centre; on the subsequent four days we will travel between towers by coach, allowing us to sample the local drinking establishments as well as the bells. Aside from the ringing, drinking, eating and sleeping aspects discussed below, the bottom line is that the tour is an excellent opportunity for members to enjoy each others' company, especially in allowing current residents and Badgers to get to know each other. You will be welcome at as much or as little of the tour as you would like to attend, whether a seasoned full-timer or casual day-tripper.

The tour will begin on the Sunday afternoon with ringing (1.30 - 3pm) on the twelve at Liverpool Cathedral, needing no introduction as the heaviest ring of bells hung for change ringing. There are a manifold of pubs nearby where we will be able to begin tour socializing with abandon. The following four days will include excursions to the Wirral, Ormskirk and Chester as well as towers in and around the city. The ringing itinerary is taking good shape, including the twelve at the Pier Head as well as the new ring of bells at St Nicholas', Halewood.

The tour headquarters pub will be the Ship and Mitre ([www.theshipandmitre.com](http://www.theshipandmitre.com)) boasting a plentiful selection of real ales. Should members prefer a change of scene, Thomas Rigby's, located a few hundred yards away, provides an alternative place to drink. Many restaurants and curry shops are to be found within walking distance.

Liverpool is readily accessible by rail, with Lime Street Station being approximately five minutes' walk from the Ship and Mitre. The city provides an abundance of accommodation to cater for all tastes and budgets. We have secured good rates on rooms at two establishments for members who wish to take advantage of either of these:

Accommodation	Price per night	Comments
Sir Thomas Hotel <a href="http://www.sirthomashotel.co.uk">www.sirthomashotel.co.uk</a>	£57 (double or single room)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Two-minute walk from HQ pub</li> <li>· Cooked breakfast available at small surcharge</li> <li>· 20 rooms available</li> </ul>
Everton Hostel <a href="http://evertonhostel.com">http://evertonhostel.com</a>	approx. £9 (for bed in a 10-bed dorm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 25-minute walk from HQ pub</li> <li>· 20 beds available</li> <li>· Free breakfast included</li> <li>· Bed sheets provided</li> </ul>

Of course, members are free to choose their own accommodation if they prefer – please get in touch with us if you require any suggestions. Priority on space at the hostel will be given to OUS residents in the first instance.

If you'd like to come on any of the tour, it would be great if you could express your interest, along with accommodation preferences, as soon as you are able. You can get in touch with either of us by email or in person at the Annual Dinner in February. We look forward to seeing lots of you on tour!

*Michael O'Hagan and Lucy Bricheno*

[michaelohagan@gmail.com](mailto:michaelohagan@gmail.com)

[l.bricheno@gmail.com](mailto:l.bricheno@gmail.com)

See <http://www.bricheno.me.uk/> for more details as they become available.

## Obituaries

### ***Betty Robbins (née Spice) - Somerville 1943-47***

I first met Betty in 1946. I played bridge with a friend in Magdalen College, Oxford, John Dickenson, who had a bridge-playing fellow Berhamstedian in Hertford called Bill (or Maurice) Grey. The latter was struck down with appendicitis, and visiting him in the Acland Home I used to encounter lots of vivacious fellow visitors, whom I discovered were bellringers, members of the OUSCR! Both these friends were in fact bellringers as well as bridge players. I was so taken by their good natured enthusiasm that I decided in October I would take up ringing too. I was part of a large number of potential recruits who assembled in the belfry at New College to start to learn on tied bells. I had my first pulls under the instruction of Mr George Spice, Secretary of the Kent County Association, who was in Oxford at the time. His daughter Betty was Master of the OUSCR, having succeeded her brother John. I was one of the recruits who stuck, but I remained a fairly callow beginner throughout this, my final year. However I was hooked on ringing and

continued my progress at the St John-on-the-Wall ringing school in Bristol during the vacations. I also kept in touch with the OUS which used to go in August to an Agricultural Farming Camp at Honeybourne near Evesham weeding or picking fruit in the day, and ringing in the evenings. There it was that my relationship with Betty blossomed.

1946 came as part of a great post-war resurgence of university ringing at Oxford. John Spice was an outstanding ringer and the OUS had made immense strides in handbell ringing and then when the ban was lifted on tower bells. John in his history of the OUS quotes Peter Wright: "In Michaelmas Term 1946 ... Wilfrid Moreton came back. If Betty and the young ladies had been formidable, the combination of Betty and Wilf was irresistible."

Betty had been born into the Spice family of Tunstall near Sittingbourne in Kent. Her grandfather William Spice had several ringing sons, but they never quite achieved an 8-bell peal together. Betty did ring a handbell peal of Grandsire Triples with her father, mother and brother John. Just as she grew up the War intervened and with it the ban on tower bell ringing. Her first peal in 1941 was Grandsire Triples in hand with an all-spice band. Her first tower bell peal was Bob Major at Tunstall on Sept. 18th 1943 – her 18th peal! Her third tower bell peal was Grandsire Cinques at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford six weeks later. These were her glory years – those four years at Oxford, followed by two when she taught chemistry in Bedford and was based at St Paul's Church there. When she left Bedford she had rung 273 peals including the first ever peal of Glasgow, and spliced surprise in up to 13 methods. In hand she had rung Stedman Cinques.

Betty was in fact one the outstanding ringers in this post-war era, and perhaps the leading female ringer. Her bell-handling technique was superb. If you could view the ropes in a long-draught ground-floor ring you would note that Betty's rope was always taut and never flapped, and her striking was impeccable. She rang heavy bells with assurance, and was much mortified when because she was a lady she was not allowed to ring the tenor at Southwark Cathedral. She maintained she was not a conductor, and had the benefit of ringing with such conductors as her brother John, Wilf Moreton, Walter Judge and many others. However she was very capable conducting on standard methods (up to Cambridge and Yorkshire Major); she fully grasped the composition and always followed closely the coursing order. 49 of her 329 peals were conducted by herself, and additionally she rang in a silent peal of Plain Bob Major. I can recall one famous row at Tunstall when she was conducting a peal of Cambridge Major, and Wilf Moreton intervened. She held her ground and eventually silenced him; she had been right! There was another celebrated occasion on a Clerical Guild tour when she had been conducting Ashted. She had to correct Peter Bond, and he argued about it. Afterwards he went on about it, calling her "My dear" (like the Prime Minister) and she rounded off the discussion with "And I'm not your dear".

In 1949 life became more complicated, because we became engaged. We had to wait until I was priested and married in October 1951 (and rang a peal together on our honeymoon – 6-spliced Surprise Major). Soon the demands of home-making and bringing up four children – coupled with the fact that we only had bells in our parishes from 1963/73 and 1983/90 – meant that Betty's

main energies were directed elsewhere, including being a superb "Vicar's Wife" in the best traditional sense. Her peal total reached 329 with a handbell peal in 1992 after we had retired to Staffordshire – although we had achieved 8-spliced together in the previous decade. The 56 steep steps to the belfry at Tamworth didn't help as Betty suffered with arthritis, and eventually about ten years ago she had to give up entirely after we had moved to Lichfield. She was diagnosed with leukaemia last December, and died on 14th March 2013, aged 88 after we had enjoyed 61 years of married life together.

*Peter Robbins*

### ***Elizabeth Guy (née Roe) - St Hilda's 1948-51***

Elizabeth Roe, as she then was, learnt to ring when she went to Oxford to study Maths in 1948. She was taught by Ewart Edge, and two lifelong friends who were with her at St Hilda's College, Renate Buchthal and Pat Wareham, also learnt to ring. OUS ringing was thriving at this period. "The general experience was that those recruits who did not quickly drop away usually made good progress." (John Spice, 1979) This was certainly the case as far as Elizabeth was concerned. She rang her first quarter peal in October 1949 and her first peal in March 1950. These were both rung on church bells, but her second peal – which she conducted – was Bob Minor in hand, rung just six days after the first.

These were followed by numerous quarters – mostly Doubles or Minor – and a good number of peals, many in hand. These included Peter Border's first peal of Royal, which was also his first in hand, and a peal of 5220 Spliced Royal conducted by Michael Slaney rung on 9th November 1951 which was the first peal of spliced for the band and for the OUS, and the greatest number of methods then spliced in a peal of Royal – five! Handbell ringing took place in various settings – including in punts on the river – and towers round Oxford provided variety. Getting between towers was usually a question of cycling, so it was an energetic business and Elizabeth continued to enjoy cycling for many years afterwards.

As well as ringing with the OUS, Elizabeth rang in her home village of Gayton in Northamptonshire. Here she rang with a group of slightly younger boys who – like her – were enthusiastic ringers. One of the local ringers was an undertaker, and the keen young ringers were taken round to meetings and practices in the area in the hearse. A peal of Doubles at Alderton in 1951, conducted by Ivor Dicken (aged 15), was rung as a farewell to Elizabeth whose family were leaving the district. The other ringers were aged 15, 14, and 13.

In June 1951 a proposed CUG ringing tour to Warwickshire looked in danger of being cancelled because too few people could go. So members of the OUS were invited to swell the numbers. The significance of this is that it was on this ringing tour – which involved camping, but not cycling – that Elizabeth met Robin Guy, in a campsite near Rowington.

On leaving Oxford, Elizabeth taught in Sevenoaks for a while, before marrying Robin in 1953 and moving to Coventry. For the next few years, Elizabeth did very little ringing while her children were growing up. The family moved from Coventry to Corley Moor, then to Draycott, near Derby, and then again to Southport. It was here that she started ringing again regularly at Emmanuel, where her children – Joan, Catherine, and Patrick – learnt to ring. Meetings – with amazing Lancashire hotpot – were attended, and new friends were made amongst the Southport and Preston ringers.

Then in 1972 Robin and Elizabeth bought a house near Leek in Staffordshire and started ringing at the parish church in Leek. They helped to teach a band of young ringers and – again – Elizabeth was involved in encouraging these aspiring youngsters. The peals she rang during the 1970s are full of firsts: Plain Bob Major in 1976, three first peals and two firsts in the method; 7 Surprise Minor in 1977, first in 7 Surprise Minor for all except the conductor; Plain Bob Royal in 1977, first on 10 for five of the ringers. It was a good time. Excellent progress was made with the ringing, and the social side of things – always an important part of ringing for Elizabeth – was great fun. It included cooking Staffordshire oatcakes in the belfry on a primus, and going to the pub with a young Robert Chadburn who insisted on asking for milk.

From the late 1970s onwards Elizabeth went on a good number of ringing outings and holidays, with the Leek ringers, with the UA, and with groups of friends from Lancashire and elsewhere. This was one of her favourite pastimes, combining ringing with visiting new places, and giving endless opportunities to chat! She had a truly enquiring mind, and found much to look at and remark on in all the various churches visited, as well as so much enjoying the company of friends.

In 1978 Robin and Elizabeth made their last move to Clifton-upon-Dunsmore in Warwickshire. Here the five bells had not been rung for about 20 years. They both became involved in getting work done to make the bells safe, and then recruiting a band of ringers. Here, again, Elizabeth's energy and organisational ability came to the fore, and by 1986 the money had been raised to install a new treble. She rang in the first peal on the new six in 1992, with a local band, and the first peal of Minor on the bells in 1996. She was also involved from the outset with the newly created Rugby Deanery branch of the Coventry Guild.

This was another very active time in Elizabeth's life, with many ringing events to be organised. It was a time of garden open days (involving mini rings, maypole dancing, barbecues, beer tents and brass bands), Rugby Deanery parties at the village hall (which entailed masked sketches, silly games and good food), ringers' New Year parties (including more silly games and wonderful food) and ringing outings with the Clifton and Rugby ringers (which always involved a picnic, and usually a pub supper).

Elizabeth's last peal was rung in Clifton in 1997, on the 50th anniversary of Robin's first peal. She continued to ring until her illness in the last few years made it difficult for her, but even when she wasn't able to ring, she enjoyed coming to the belfry at Clifton for the company and

conversation. She is remembered very fondly by many ringers and others who benefited from her encouragement and enthusiasm and enjoyed her company.

*Catherine Jamieson*

### **Meeting Dates for 2014**

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: 20th January, 28th April, 13th October

AGM date – the last Monday in Michaelmas term: 1st December

### **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 over 500 members. The vast majority are now on e-mail. Please do keep the General Secretary informed of any changes to email or postal address and, if you wish to get in touch with a member, just 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](mailto:ouscr-admin@bellringers.net) or by visiting [http://www.bellringers.net/mailman/listinfo/ouscr\\_bellringers.net](http://www.bellringers.net/mailman/listinfo/ouscr_bellringers.net).

The OUS also has a 'chat' mailing list. This list allows Society members to discuss matters related to the Society and ringing in general. More details on this list, including how to join, can be found by visiting

[http://www.bellringers.net/mailman/listinfo/ouschat\\_bellringers.net](http://www.bellringers.net/mailman/listinfo/ouschat_bellringers.net)

## Contact Details

You can contact the General Secretary by post at:

Simon Bond  
5 Hodges Court  
Oxford  
OX1 4NX

or by telephone on:

01865 249922 or 07722 884389

or by e-mail at:

[gensec@ouscr.org.uk](mailto:gensec@ouscr.org.uk)