

# *Oxford University Society of Change Ringers*

## **ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2000**

A happy new year to everybody. The Society enters the new millennium with a new President, John Camp. We wish him well in his office, and thank Andrew Stubbs for his very conscientious and effective work over the previous seventeen years. After the Y2K bore, cheer yourself up with an OUS newsletter, send off for your tickets for the new, improved OUS Dinner, and find out how you can help to make the world a better place by contributing to the appeal for a new frame at Mary Mag's.

### **New Officers**

Andrew Stubbs has now retired from the Presidency, and at the AGM held on Monday, November 29th 1999 in Exeter College, there was a contested election for his successor. There was also a contested election for the mastership, and not surprisingly the meeting was very well attended. John Camp was elected as President with 25 votes to Nigel Orchard's 9, and Mark Humphreys was elected as Master after a second vote by 10 votes to John Taylor's 9. This is a complete list of the new Officers:

President	John Camp
Senior Member	Dermot Roaf
General Secretary	Peter Giles
Master	Mark Humphreys (New College)
Resident Secretary	Mark Bell (Jesus)
Librarian	Sarah Butt (St Anne's)
Treasurer	Rebecca Glen (Balliol)
Steeplekeepers	John Taylor (St John's) Grant Berry (St Hugh's)
Website Maintainer	Barney Stratford (St. John)
Brookes rep.	Lisa Broughton-Head
CC Rep	Peter Niblett

All the Vice Presidents were re-elected: Peter Border, Paul Mounsey, David Brown, Ian W Davies, Donald Niblett, Robert Bruce, Wilfrid Moreton, Dermot Roaf, Betty Robbins, John Spice, Doug Beaumont and Quentin Armitage. In addition, Andrew Stubbs was elected following his retirement from the Presidency.

Rodney Meadows is Past President.

Peter Giles                      6 Pittsfield, Cricklade, Wilts SN6 6AN tel 01793-751690  
*email peter\_giles@burmahcastron.com*

## 2000 Annual Dinner

Last year's newsletter appealed for opinions on the Dinner and its future. This proved opportune, as the Dinner the next month suffered various problems both with the food and with the other arrangements. A Dinner committee was formed to investigate the possibility of improvements. The conclusions were that whilst a change of date to a more seasonable time of the year was in itself desirable, the nature of the ringing calendar with its fixed dinners and events made it inadvisable to move from our accustomed slot unless we really had to; and a location in central Oxford remains essential to the character of the whole weekend. We have arranged this year's Dinner at Rhodes House, which is the next best thing to a college dinner, and remains central while letting us use outside caterers.

The provisional menu is:

- Warm salad of wild mushrooms. A selection of breads.
- Rack of Lamb with a Herb Crumble and a Shrewsbury Sauce  
(Vegetarian alternative: Spinach and Cheese Pie)  
Selection of Fresh Vegetables
- Chocolate Truffle Torte with a Fruit Coulis
- Cheese and Biscuits with Celery and Grapes
- Coffee and Tea with Mints

The price per head is £35, or £30 non-drinking. There will be a bar on the premises.

Rhodes House was built by the Rhodes Trust in 1928, and should be of architectural interest. Its design, by Herbert Baker, resembles an H-shaped Cotswold mansion, with a copper-domed rotunda set between the two north wings. From the rotunda, one moves into an ante-room and then the Milner hall, which has a gallery and an apse. The dome of the rotunda is crowned by a zimbabwe bird. The war memorial includes the name of von Trott.

Friday evening drinking will be in the upstairs room of the Folly Bridge, and Sunday morning coffee in Merton hall.

To help the organisers, please order your tickets using the form which accompanies this newsletter.

## **From the President**

The AGM in 1999 saw the first ever contested election for the post of president of the OUS. I am very honoured to have been elected. Let me say at once that I acknowledge the strong views of those who preferred another candidate. I hope to be able to reassure them. There is now a maximum term of office for a president and I am conscious that there are others who have a strong claim to the post.

Andrew Stubbs, who stood down after 17 years in office, has been a conscientious and active president. He has earned the sincere thanks of the society. The dinner, which I hope you will all make a big effort to attend, will be the occasion for expressing those thanks to him personally.

## **Life Members**

The following have become Life Members:

Dr Robert Sherlaw Johnson (retired fellow of Worcester)

Duncan M McBurnie Exeter (1996-1999)

Fiona M Anderson Pembroke, (1995-1999)

Barney J Stratford St John's (1996-1999)

Philip W Livermore Exeter (1996-1999)

## **Meeting Dates in 2000**

The Society's business meetings are held on Mondays, and take place in the Quarrell Room in Exeter.

TGM dates - the first Monday in term. Jan 17th, May 1st, Oct 9th.

AGM date - Monday, Nov 27th.

(If you think that eighth week is getting earlier every year, so does the landlord in the KA. This year he was complaining about undergraduates coming in drunk from their Christmas dinners in college before it was even December!)

## **Bell Restoration Fund**

Mark Shepherd and Alex Byrne have been re-elected as 'Independent Examiners' 95% of the fund as at the Michaelmas TGM will be given to the new Mary Mag project.

## **The Annual Tour**

The 2000 Tour will be based in Liverpool. The organiser is Mark Humphreys of New College, email: [mark @ marknvc.freeisp.co.uk](mailto:mark@marknvc.freeisp.co.uk), 13J Bradmore Road OXFORD OX2 6QP. Tel: 01865 513016, Mobile: 07801 711337. Arrangements are well in hand, but please note that because Easter is exceptionally late this year, the tour has been shifted back by a fortnight and begins on Sunday April 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **Address List**

The Address List is available on request electronically, on paper or via diskette. The following 24 members are still lost: Catherine Bannister, Sarah Bates, Paul Crane, Rosemary Clark, Robert Galloway, Andre Gren, Sally Hawksworth, Luke Heaton, Lance Hewson, Anne Lambert, John S Leonard, Andrew Loveland, Jeremy McCabe, Melanie Milan, James Mumford, David Newman, Colin Parker, Nigel Sheppard, Richard Tapper, C Turnbull, Sarah Vicary, AJ Vincent, Gill Wilce and Richard M Wilson.

## **Newsletter Account**

The cost of printing and posting this Newsletter will be about £160. The Newsletter account will stand at about £810 after this letter has been sent. I thank Jean Pailing, Wilf Moreton, Bill Gibbons and David Bennett for their contributions. If you wish to contribute, please make your cheque payable to `Mr P Giles` or `Post Office Counters`.

The newsletters for 1997 and 1998 have been included on the OUS website, and this and its successors will be joining it. If you would be happy to read it there and save the society some money, please let me know.

## **Society Ties**

Thirty still remain, for just three pounds each. Why not order one at the same time as that copy of the History you never got round to buying?

## **The Society's History**

Sales have now reached 226. Another 30 or 40 sales are needed to break even, and then it all goes to the BRF. Copies now come with a free index compiled by John Lonsbrough.

. Please support this project, help to liquidate the remaining debt and boost the BRF by sending a cheque for £30.00 per copy (incl. postage and package), made out to 'OUSCR History', to the general secretary.

## **History Errata and Addenda**

*from Peter Robbins:*

*p.37* the dedication of Drayton church is St Peter.

*p.47* the all-clerical peal was rung on Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 1882, according to Clerical Guild records, not in February.

*p.398* EV Cox was secretary to the Clerical Guild until 1952. C Carew Cox (a Durham man) was the one who succeeded Canon Coleridge as President of the CC in 1946.

## **Another Summer Meeting?**

*John Spice writes:*

Three years ago we held a very successful summer reunion, which appealed particularly to those non-residents who for one reason or another do not feel inclined to attend either the Dinner or the Easter tour.

It has been suggested that now is the time to hold another such occasion – probably in May. Before we make definite arrangements, it seems sensible to find out how many non-residents would be likely to come. So if you would be interested, please drop a line to Peter Giles **WITHOUT DELAY**.

If Peter is not assured of sufficient support by the end of January, he will not go ahead. So if you want a summer gathering, write at once!

## **New College reunion**

John Spice would like another reunion of New College members, with ringing (and we hope SCR tea!) at the college. A Saturday – or maybe a Sunday – in September seems a sensible date to look at. Would any NC members interested please contact Peter Giles before Easter, with dates.

## **Mary Magdalen Appeal**

*Stephen Ivin writes:*

### **WHAT ARE WE SCHEMING FOR?**

A wonderful opportunity has presented itself to replace the 1874 timber frame and supporting timbers. The west end of the church is to be re-developed, and as a first step the organ has been completely removed, leaving clear access to the tower for the next few months.

Ever since the re-hanging work in 1987 and the 'Taylorising' of the back six bells in 1990 it has been uncomfortably obvious that the acoustic in the ringing chamber posed problems that only a root-and-branch approach could solve. The main problem lies in the way in which the timber frame is mounted on the ringing chamber ceiling, which results in the transmission of a great deal of mechanical noise into the ringing chamber. The short draft between ringing chamber and bells also means that sound reduction is very important. Ad hoc attempts to reduce the sound have been moderately successful, but an unfortunate side-effect is that the bell sounds have been reduced while the mechanical noise has not. A satisfactory solution requires a frame mounted in the tower completely independently of the ringing chamber ceiling, which in turn would be re-constructed with acoustic improvements as the top priority.

While the 1874 frame improved by recent additions is not in a terminal state, it does not meet modern requirements for stability, and the 'go' of the bells is therefore limited to acceptable rather than good or excellent. In addition, it is not a practicable proposition to re-build it on an independent foundation. A new metal frame is the preferred alternative for practical reasons, and it would also mean that no further expense would be required for several generations to come. The bell fittings all originate from 1973 or later, with the exception of the wheels, and are mostly suitable for re-use, provided that the new frame is designed around them - that is to say in terms of headstock lengths and wheel diameters. (If funds allow, it would be worthwhile to replace the headstocks on the three trebles with a more satisfactory pattern - say £1,000.)

The Diocesan Advisory Committee has given approval for a Faculty application to install a new metal frame and a new ringing chamber ceiling, subject to a proviso that the ceiling timbers, end posts and corbels be retained if possible. While this complicates the design problem of getting a good rope circle, it may be possible to satisfy it, without jeopardizing the target of acoustic improvements.

## CAN WE FUND IT?

To have a new frame of conventional pattern installed would cost at least £24,000. However by using our reservoir of voluntary labour, and having the new frame fabricated from steel bar (both of which were successful at St Thos) the cost can be reduced to an absolute maximum of £8,000, and possibly a good deal less. It is not possible to be more precise until a certain amount of dismantling has been done.

The current (Dec 6th) financial position is that our Bell Fund has grown by stealth in recent years to £2,100 - a major contributory factor being a levy on peal attempts at Mary Mags of £1 per rope - and at the TGM in October it was resolved that 95% of this be made available should this project materialise. In addition, our principal benefactor at St Thos, Roger Abbott, leads the queue this time (amount not yet specified). A big boost has been received from Robin Pittman, who has returned to active ringing in recent years, and, having missed our earlier fund-raising, has sent a cheque for £1,000. I gather that the Oxford Society may be asked to consider making a grant when they meet in January, and there is a sporting chance that our good friend Leslie Plummer (secretary of the MM Restoration & Development Trust) will get the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust to unbelt to the extent of perhaps £1,000 - they meet in February. Thus at present we can see a sum of around £4,000 or a bit more being available so far.

Our efforts at St Thos (augmentation & recasting) succeeded on the basis of twelve donations of £400 upwards. While some of these generous folk will no doubt come forward again, it would be gratifying if the load could be more widely spread this time.

Please apply to Peter Giles for covenant and Gift Aid forms. Peter will also be happy to receive any cheques etc, but of course covenanting gives the advantage that we get the tax back. The financial side of the appeal will be handled by Leslie Plummer of the Mary Mag Trust as part of the church's much bigger Millennium appeal, and Peter will be funnelling all the documents for the bells work through Stephen Ivin to ensure it goes where intended.

## Members` News

**John Lonsbrough** has kindly revised the index to History. **Wilf Moreton** has been able to supply Richard Clement's address, as he sees the family every Easter on the Hereford course. **Julie Sheard** is now living in Prague, and hasn't rung for ten years. **Peter Robbins** is investigating the history of the early years of the Clerical Guild. **John Pusey**'s wife Julie died on April 25<sup>th</sup>, unexpectedly, although her health had been deteriorating for some years. She was not a ringer. **Jim Pailing** is now suffering from the same degenerative disease as Dudley Moore. His eyes and coordination are badly affected, leading inevitably to a diminished quality of life. He can no longer ring, but can at least still attend practice night.

**Bill Gibbons** now sees Ewart and Julia Edge frequently, as they live nearby. His ringing has had to be somewhat curtailed this year due to the onset of severe and permanent osteo-arthritis in his right shoulder – caused by teaching recruits to ring for the Millennium. Tower bell peals are out, and handbell peals down to once a fortnight. He also claims that having just finished War and Peace when Churchill announced the invasion of Russia, he accurately prophesied the end of the war! He has also kindly made a donation to the newsletter fund in gratitude for John Spice giving him Bill Leese's copy of the History and Art.

Jim Cook and Ewart Edge write that **Phyllis Marshall** (nee Holborn) died in Feb 1998. She had not done much ringing in the last few years before her illness, but had been a very keen golfer, being Ladies' Captain of her club. She had remarried very shortly before her death. She learnt to ring with the OUS, and while living in Chesterfield rang at Clay Cross and Bolsover.

Peter Wright pays this tribute to his late wife: **Kate Wright** (nee Higgins, LMH 1944-48) died of cancer on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 1999, aged 72 years, after a short illness, being diagnosed in September as having the disease. She learned to ring in her first year at Oxford and met Peter (already a ringer) in the belfry of May Mag on his first Sunday in Oxford. They became close friends, and sat together in the same classes in the Physics School, graduating together in 1948. Kate stayed on in Oxford as Assistant Curator in the Museum of the History of Science in the Old Ashmolean, and as a senior member was able to continue active membership with the OUS, including a short period as Master in 1953. She left the Museum and entered the teaching profession, taking her first post in Croydon in 1954, where she and Peter (who was already teaching in the area) resumed their friendship and were married in 1955. After raising her family she resumed teaching full time, becoming head of department for

Physics at the Dame Alice Harper School in Bedford, retiring in 1987 to an active retirement including teaching a fair number of new ringers at Ampthill.

As a ringer she had been a keen and skilful member of the OUS, ODG and Yorkshire Association in her early years, ringing 63 peals (2 as conductor), including 17 on handbells, in all the standard methods, but rang her last peal in 1961, being content thereafter to be a Sunday service ringer with occasional quarter-peals. She and Peter celebrated their Ruby wedding in 1995 with a quarter of Bob Major (conducted by Peter), and she rang her last quarter (Grandsire Triples, also conducted by Peter) in 1997. As an active member of Ampthill church in many ways, especially as chorister and ringer, she will be sorely missed.

**Joan Marshall** died on Dec 21<sup>st</sup> 1998. (obituary RW 12-3-99). An undergraduate at LMH, her knowledge of German took her into secret work during the war. She learned to ring at Bucklebury in 1957, after going down. **John Ellams** has also died. (obituary RW 30-4-99). A CC rep, he reintroduced David Thorne, a later editor of the RW, to ringing. He rang a total of eight peals, and his appearance on a recent tour will be well remembered.

## **OUS Peals**

Peals rung for the Society since January 1999 are now published on the website. Mark Humphreys hopes to extend this to cover all the Society's peals eventually.

He says 'The newly-elected Master is keen to encourage peal ringing both amongst the resident and non-resident members, and would like to hear from any non-resident members who may not presently be on the 'peal list' to contact him (at New College, or by telephone on 01865 513016) if they wish to be involved in OUS peals this year. There has been something of a resurgence in residents' peal ringing activities this year - long may it continue, and with the support of non-resident members.'

## **Dorothy L Sayers**

The Society is an honorary member of the DLS Society, and dedicates peals to her memory at appropriate times. *Jean Pailing writes:*

To refresh your memories! The OUSCR is an honorary member of the DLSS, a compliment returned on behalf of DLS herself who in the 1950s was made an honorary member of the OUS. The DLSS flourishes as never before and to give you details of all the activities would be impossible. For me, the high spot

this year has been the dramatic reading of three of the plays from *The Man Born to be King*. The production, directed by Sheila Mitchell, took place at The City Temple in Holborn, and parts were read by members of the DLSS and RADIUS. The Evangelist's linking words were read by P.D. James.

In April, the DLSS was privileged to spend the day as guests of Roedean School: here we were let into some of the secrets of Roedean life, and gained first hand experience of the famous bracing winds which make Roedean girls what they are! DLS' Sussex connections were explored, clergy ancestors and so forth, and we also treated to a quasi-serious paper on Lord Peter Wimsey's sister's years at Roedean – a seamless blend of fact and fiction (mostly fiction!).

Over 80 members attended the 24<sup>th</sup> annual Convention in Newnham College, Cambridge, where the theme was 'DLS – a voice for her time'. Many fresh views of DLS were presented, from 'Reviewer of Detective Fiction' to 'DLS and the Jewish Tradition'. From the report of the convention it would seem that, as always, it was an intense weekend of lectures and activities with more than a little fun thrown in. Just what DLS would have liked!

For those who would like to know more about the DLSS, the website is [www.sayers.org.uk](http://www.sayers.org.uk).

## **Residents' Review**

*Chris Poole writes:*

The first major event of the term was the Annual Dinner at LMH. The Friday night before at the Folly Bridge Inn was indeed splendid, with the hard core (Stubbs, Camp) kicking off the proceedings early in the evening. Then came dinner day itself. A number of peals were rung by the Society and some CUG compliment on handbells. The lead up to the dinner unfolded in its traditional manner in the King's Arms, building up to the evening itself. I am told that the speeches continued to get better (!), after which we relocated to Wolfson for the bar afterwards, the night concluding with Andrew Stubbs buying a comedy round of 5 pints of Hook Norton after most other people had left. I should perhaps mention and congratulate Robin and Dorothy on their engagement (now happily married), even if those extra 30 seconds in my speech did cost Nigel Bailey the sweepstake!

Having recovered from the dinner, it was that time of year again when we had our joint outing with our fenland friends. Mark Humphreys ably organised the outing to the Coventry area, although he and a few others got more than they bargained for with the mixed grill.

The CUG dinner at the end of term was an enjoyable event, although one member felt he was still hungry afterwards and stopped off at the local kebab van on the way back!

Thanks must go to Dave Bennett for organising a superb tour in the dark depths of Bournemouth. The tour certainly contained all the typical hallmarks of an OUS tour, there being copious amounts of alcohol with ringing sprinkled between to pad things out. We also bore witness to John Camp, Andrew Graham and their bunch of followers making their acting debuts whilst fleeting across a stage at one of the towers that happened to be host to some local performers!

Next on the timetable was Trinity Term. At the end of first week, May morning dawned upon us with its usual yearly spot, with ringing at SMV and a lardy breakfast to follow. The Summer outing occurred a few weeks later with visits to both the Appleton towers. The workshop in Appleton proved to be more than a handful for one of our long-armed members insisted on stretching them as far as he could with truly amusing results.

The end of the term saw a handful of people with their noses to the grindstone before the start of their finals. Those of us without finals met up with people after they finished for celebrations. I perhaps should mention (for future historical evidence) that Chris Rusby can't hold his alcohol - literally, as his champagne bottle, hitherto unopened, slipped through his fingers and smashed into smithereens on Merton Street.

Finally we had Michaelmas Term. The Freshers' practice was first on the agenda, with a fine trip to The Victoria afterwards (£5 a jug - not bad!). The Fresher's outing (note the place of the apostrophe, pedants) occurred slightly later to the Witney area. As always, this was a grand day out. The next few weeks led up to the SUA striking competitions in Cardiff. Although we had one person drop out through illness on the day, the band (though not strictly OUS for the 8-bell) came a respectable third (cheers Stuart for standing in at the last minute.) The 6-bell - well, that was a different story. This occurred in the afternoon and, as we were drawn 6th, happened after some drinking. However, we notched up first position in this (ringing bob minor), whereas our usual competitors came just above the scratch band. The end of term was the run up to the AGM. This was going to be no ordinary AGM, as it had the untraditional events of two contested elections - one for president and the other one for mastership. The committee returned from the Turf for their committee meal with the outgoing president (Andrew Stubbs) to find a horde of OUS members (both badgers and residents) awaiting them in the dungeons of Exeter College. The meeting took its usual form and the outcome of the votes was John Camp voted in as President, and Mark Humphreys as Master (though the latter was extremely close!). 1999 concluded with my last practice on the Tuesday and a cheese and wine party on the Thursday (8th week.)

I've also been asked to write a bit on the ringing side of things and about the resident culture. Well, as you probably know, we have our weekly practices on Tuesday nights (at Mary Mag.) with practices at St. Thos and St. Cross

sprinkled throughout the term. We normally ring a quarter-peal before the practice, the aim being to try and get people to improve both method ringing and their striking. In the last year, I have reintroduced the special methods (NB future masters - don't trace off previous ones without checking that the previous sheets are correct (esp. from 1990 :-)) and special striking practices, where the aim has been to ring something a bit simpler and strike it well (though it didn't quite materialise in its usual form this last term owing to practices for the SUA.)

Wednesday nights bring us our learners' practices (we have 3 learners this year, who seem to be doing quite well.) Once a term, we have a 12-bell practice which was at Reading this term. It was the first time in living memory of some residents (/badgers) that we rang Bristol Max. at an OUS 12-bell practice (which hopefully we can repeat next term!)

On Sundays, we ring at St. Thomas's for the 10:00 service - this consists of a 1/4 peal (which I think we have a 100% success rate for this term). We then move on to Mary Mag. and ring until 10:30, after which we go to coffee in someone's room. "Pub discussions" normally start at 11:30, when we discuss where we can go for lunch. This is usually a different pub each week, often one of the closest pubs we happen to be near to. Occasionally, Sunday afternoon turns into a 'sesh', which often happens to be one of the weeks we ring at SMV for some strange reason. Most Sunday evenings, a few of us (novices) try our hands at ringing handbells. We then adjourn to the Lamb and Flag (as it has been this term) for a final pint in the day.

Peals - an OUS band usually tries to ring a peal at St. Thomas's every other Monday. We have tried a few resident peals as well, though only managed to get one of them (not strictly a residents peal, but a peal of people 'resident' in Oxford!

I can't think of much more to say at the moment, so I'll just wish Mark and his Committee all the best for next year.

Why not take this newsletter electronically? It will be posted to the OUS Website, where you can also keep in touch with much more about the Resident society, see the peal and quarter-peal records since January 1999, and even get a map of Oxford if you can't remember the fastest way to the KA. You will also help reduce the cost and effort of producing the Newsletter. The website is [users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr](http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr). Please email Peter Giles if you are willing to receive the Newsletter this way. Thank you to the eight members who already have.