

# *Oxford University Society of Change Ringers*

## **ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2004**

This year has seen the finishing touches put to the Mary Mag project. With perfect acoustics to go with faultless handling and a classic soft Taylor sound, they are now a stunningly good ten, and the Society owes Stephen Ivin immense thanks for the efforts, skill and perseverance which have achieved this.

Dermot Roaf retires before the next AGM, so will be ineligible to remain as Senior Member. We are grateful to him for staying in post so long despite all his other and varied commitments, and to John Pusey for agreeing to replace him in that office.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the right revd Rowan Williams, will be a guest and speaker at the Dinner this February. As demand may be heavy, please order your tickets as early as possible.

### **New Officers**

This is a complete list of the Officers elected at the AGM:

President	John Camp
Senior Member	John Pusey
General Secretary	Peter Giles
Master	Graham Drabble (St John's)
Resident Secretary	Catrin Littlejohn (St Cat's)
Librarian	Lucy Moore (Wadham)
Treasurer	Nicholas Balderson (Magdalen)
Webmaster	Alex Dicks (Christ Church)
Steeplekeepers	Christopher Backhouse (Oriel) Daniel Haines (St Cat's)
Brookes rep.	Sarah Taylor
CC Rep	Peter Niblett

The Vice Presidents were re-elected en bloc: Quentin Armitage, Doug Beaumont, David Brown, Ian W Davies, Stephen Ivin, Wilfrid Moreton, Paul Mounsey, Donald Niblett, Dermot Roaf, Betty Robbins, John Spice and Andrew Stubbs.

## **Bell Restoration Fund**

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

Mark Shepherd and Alex Byrne have been re-elected as Independent Examiners.

## **Life Members**

The following have become Life Members:

Hannah Sutcliffe	1999-2003
Martin Cansdale	Christ Church 1999-2003
Henry Coggill	St Hugh's 2000-03
Laura Duncan	Wadham 2000-03

## **2004 Annual Dinner**

This year's Dinner will again be at Harris Manchester College, on Saturday 7th February at 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. Tickets will be £42.00 (the same as last year). As already mentioned, this year's principle guest will be the Archbishop of Canterbury. The menu is:

Smoked Salmon Blinis  
Beef braised in red wine (or Swiss cheese and xxx pancake)  
Apple Strudel in Chantilly Cream

Please send an SAE and a cheque payable to OUSCR Dinner Committee to: Graham Drabble, St John's College, Oxford OX1 3JP, stating any seating plan preferences and dietary requirements. Please apply early, as the hall has a strict limit of 120 and we may have to restrict non-members.

Drinking the night before and Sunday coffee arrangements are still incomplete.

## **Newsletter Account**

The cost of printing and posting this Newsletter will be about £150. The Newsletter account will stand at about £600 after this letter has been sent. If you wish to contribute, please make your cheque payable to `Mr P Giles`.

## **Meeting Dates in 2004**

The Society's business meetings are held on Mondays, and take place in the Quarrell Room in Exeter. (As Dermot Roaf has retired as Senior Member, this cannot currently be assured. Please check before attending.)

TGM dates - the first Monday in term. Jan 19th, April 26<sup>th</sup> and Oct 11<sup>th</sup>.  
AGM date - Monday, Nov 29th.

## **The Annual Tour**

The 2003 tour was based in Leeds and organised by Lawrence Haines. A large number of members both resident and non-resident attended.

The 2004 Tour will be based in the Brighton area, and arranged by Jeremy Pratt. He may be contacted at Culmer Hill, Wormley, Godalming GU8 5SW tel 01428-684062 email jrpratt(at)lineone.net. The first organised day will be Easter Sunday, April 11th.

## **Society Ties**

Amazingly, stocks are down to the last seven, and they are still only £3.00 each., available from the General Secretary. At this rate, they may all be gone before I finally run out of comments on them.

## **Address List**

The Address List is available on request electronically, on paper or via diskette. The following 26 members are currently lost: Catherine Bannister, Sarah Bates, Mike Capocci, Simon Chadwick, Rosemary Clark, Frances E Collins, Paul Crane, Robert Galloway, Andre Gren, David Hamlin, Sally Hawksworth, Luke Heaton, Lance Hewson, Robin Hodgson, Anne Lambert, John S Leonard, Andrew J Loveland, Jeremy McCabe, Melanie Milan, JD Mozley, David Newman, Colin Parker, Nigel Sheppard, Richard Tapper, C Turnbull, and AJ Vincent.

## **The Society's History**

Sales have now reached 240, an increase of two since last year. The price is the same as seven years ago, so the real value gets better and better, and we need to sell about 30 more to break even. Please send your cheque for £30.00 per copy (incl. postage and package), made out to 'OUSCR History', to the general secretary.

## **Old Newsletters**

The Society is trying to improve its library, and would welcome copies of Newsletters before 1980. Please contact the general secretary if you have any to give or copy.

## **Members' News**

**Robert Perry** is now ringing master at Truro cathedral, and has been Secretary of the Truro DG for twenty years now.

**Revd George Paton** writes 'by the time the next newsletter comes out, I shall have celebrated two anniversaries on one day. June 14<sup>th</sup> 2003 will be 80 years from the day of my birth, and 50 years from my ordination as a priest. On the one hand, I cannot remember when I was last able to handle a bell; on the other, I am still taking services when so requested'. We all hope he had a good day.

**Bob Mordaunt** says 'the last notice about Mrs Edge brought back memories of a gathering one Christmas vacation day for ringing around Staffordshire. (28 December 1964) That must have been the one and only time I met an Edge. I believe Hilary Pardoe helped to organise it perhaps with Richard Wharton. We had no conductor for a planned peal but Ewart Edge was contacted and persuaded to conduct but whether or not we actually even started a peal is beyond my memory. We certainly didn't finish one.'

**William GW Warren**, the Society's oldest known member (Oriol 1928-32), died in November. He taught David Sheppard to ring in Dorset. An obituary will be published next year. He rang two peals for the OUS, both with interesting footnotes: Stedman Triples at Drayton on May 31st, 1931 (called by Harry Miles) was the first OUS peal for 27 years, and Plain Bob Minor at St Ebbe's on June 11th 1931 was the first peal rung by junior members of the University.

**Ewart Edge** recalls being in the Squadron with Basil Almond in the 1940s, and that Rodney Meadows was his best man in 1957. He was one of Rodney's OUS bridge players.

## **AEF Trotman**

We have just heard a suggestion that AEF Trotman, who perhaps came up in 1930, and was Master of the OUS in 1932-33, is still alive and living in Wiltshire. We welcome any information, as he would be the oldest member of the OUS and also of the College Youths.

**Julia Edge** died at the end of 2002. *John Spice writes:*

Julia Edge died on 19 December 2002, after suffering from cancer for more than a year.

Julia - then Julia Preston - joined the OUS in October 1944. She came along together with Frances Martin ('Fritz') and Rosemary Hood. All three were second-year undergraduates at St Anne's, and lived at Springfield St Mary, an undergraduate hostel in the Woodstock Road run by the Anglican Wantage Sisters. It was thus natural to refer to them as 'the Springfield Trio'. They all made rapid progress, and rang their first handbell peals (Bob Major) the following February. They rang various other handbell peals that academic year; in particular, all three were in the same peal of Bob Royal. In November 1945 they were all three in a peal of Grandsire Triples at St Ebbe's, this being the first all-ladies peal for the OUS. And in March 1946, Julia was in the first all-ladies handbell peal - Bob Royal. As far as I know, Rosemary Hood did no ringing after leaving Oxford, but Julia once told me that Frances Martin married a farmer in Cornwall, and regularly rang call-changes with the local band.

Julia went down from Oxford in 1946 and for the next six or seven years worked in Liverpool, her home being in nearby Prescot, and then - briefly - in a finishing school in Gstaad. During this period she was in a number of peals with local bands. In total she rang 55 peals on tower bells and 23 in hand. These were mostly for the OUS, the Universities Association, the Lancashire Association and the Chester Diocesan Guild.

Her last peal as Julia Preston was at Macclesfield in September 1954, and was the first of Cambridge Royal for the OUS. Also in the band was Ewart Edge. This was not the first time he and Julia had met, but neither seems to have taken much notice of the other on this occasion. They next met in 1956, on the Universities Association ringing week at Leiston, Suffolk. Events then moved very rapidly, and in 1957 they were married. In June of that year they both rang in a peal at Eccleshall, Staffs, but that was the one and only peal to be rung by Julia Edge!

For the next few years they were busy raising a family, but when their three children were old enough Julia was again able to ring regularly. As well as being regular service ringers at Wolstanton, she and Ewart set out to ring in as many towers as possible. To this end they usually attended the annual Universities Association ringing week, and also arranged one or two further ringing weeks or weekends each year. In this way Julia reached a grand total of 4850 towers of five bells and upwards!

As well as ringing, Julia took a full part in the life of her local community: in particular she participated in a local experiment aimed at introducing French to primary schools, and for some years taught French part-time. She was a lady with a warm and friendly disposition, and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

**John Lonsbrough** *writes:*

I started 2003 in fine form, having recovered well from the broken foot, but noticed some difficulty in seeing vehicles when crossing the road and was diagnosed with cataracts on both eyes. The worst one, on the left eye, was removed on 13 May and the improvement in clarity and colour brilliance is amazing - I can now recognise people across the street and avoid complaints of having ignored them! The down side is that I now have the left with good clarity but poor focus and the right with good focus but poor clarity. They won't work together and either give double vision or switch involuntarily from one to the other, so the only solution is to keep the right closed and use the left with a magnifier for close work and a small telescope for distance. This gives a decent focus at both ends of the range, from reading the newspapers to seeing the bus route numbers in time to signal them to stop, but the range from about 2 feet to 15 feet is blurred (including roovesight). This will continue until the second removal, for which I am to have the pre-operation assessment on 3rd December and then, hopefully, the operation early in 2004. It can't come too soon!

The other trouble is that at about the same time I began to notice pain in my arms and shoulders when ringing and this was diagnosed as overuse, with a recommendation to reduce ringing. Therefore I stopped ringing every day and did Sundays and the official ringing only, which resulted in some improvement in the condition. After about 3 months I no longer need painkillers and so I am trying adding the practices at Lincoln College (Wednesdays) and St Aldate (alternate Mondays) as a gradual comeback.

He has also added a biographical note. Of particular interest to the OUS are accounts of ringing at the end of the war and just after:

'I learned to handle a bell at New College in autumn 1944, concurrently with attempts to ring PB Minor double-handed on handbells. My first unsilenced ringing was rounds on the second at SMV for an end-of-term service...

' On the Saturday of 7<sup>th</sup> week the beginners were introduced to the Ringers' Outing, and I made the classic mistake when I cycled to Garsington and found no ringing there. Eventually I arrived at Cassington after the ringing but just in time for the tea party, so it all came right in the end!

'I was sent off at the end of term with a letter of introduction to the local captain (we were very formal in those days), so I rang on the then ten bells at St Peter's Nottingham on Christmas Day 1944. ...

'By the summer of 1945 I had been introduced to 8-bell ringing at St Giles and St Ebbe. We were allowed to watch (not to ring) at All Saints and the Cathedral, where I was told that if I persevered I would eventually be able to ring Cambridge Maximus; that came to pass 49 years later at Towcester...

' On VE Day Oxford went mad. Almost the whole population was dancing in the streets, buses were hijacked, and the Canadian soldiers (who had taken over, and wrecked, the Clarendon Hotel, now Littlewoods) made bonfires of just about everything they could

lay their hands on. This included the rubber paving blocks of Cornmarket, and the smell was vile! We rang all the bells for most of the day...'

Since the war, he has been at Newbury, Honiton, Ayshire, Brighton, Brackley, Newhaven, Wellingborough, Milton Keynes, Bicester, and now Oxford again.

### **Rodney Meadows & Belfrymanship**

John Ketteringham has put Rodney's obituary and his Belfrymanship articles online at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/john.ketteringham/rodney.htm>. They are also available on paper in a manila cover from John for £5.00: the gen.sec. can find the address if needed. We will all enjoy this reminder, written in Feb 1951: for sheer practical advice, it has never been beaten.

Belfrymanship is defined as the Art of being "Top Man" in the belfry. There are "rabbits" in every tower; you need never be one of them. In fact, as a belfryman, you should seldom fail to inspire awe and respect whenever you cross the threshold. In introducing this subject I gladly acknowledge the pioneer work of S. Potter in the allied spheres of Lifemanship and Gamesmanship, and wish to explain that to compress so vast a subject as Belfrymanship into this small compass forces me at the moment to confine this article to what are little more than random jottings.

First, let us consider the belfryman's entry into a strange tower. The welcome is nearly always courteous: "What would you like to ring?" Stop this nonsense with, "Oh, I'll fill in for anything" or, if definitely aggressive at the start, "Anything suits me. I am quite happy with rounds provided they are well struck". (You know full well that for some reason they seldom are). This draws attention to your superiority at once and puts you as it were "one up". But a warning is necessary at this point that this opening can sometimes come unstuck. The locals are not always so docile. The following exchange illustrates one possibility:-

"What would you like to ring?"

"Don't let me upset the routine. I'll just fill in"

"Well, if you don't mind my saying so, you are the least good, of those here tonight, so we had better fit in with you, hadn't we?"

Though even this drastic cutting of the knot was not the end of the matter. The visitor promptly asked for Cambridge Major, and the locals found that they did not have a band. But fortune is not always so genial when it comes to regaining the initiative.

When selecting your bell, choose a large rather than a small one. There is a theory that little bells must "ring round" big ones. This means in practice that the little ones are, in the absence of any obvious cause, blamed for indifferent striking.

Always be on the lookout for the faults of others. You can, of course, become a Hisser. The disease is catching. One big Hisser in a band breeds several little hissers. It is a

form of self-defence, the non-hissers being, as it were by definition, hissed at. When everybody hisses the ringing will no doubt reach an acme of perfection. But then there will presumably be no need to hiss. The belfryman requires a better weapon. More subtle is the gesture of stretching out the arm and hand horizontally and making slight but majestic waves upwards or downwards. This indicates to the person at whom you gesticulate that there are slight but distinct imperfections in his striking, audible and painful to you (but not to him), which he will please adjust at once. The downward motion is the more effective, suggesting, as it does, the patting of a tolerated but misguided dog. The victim has no redress. He is probably having trouble with his bell anyway, and to retaliate by imitating the gesture will be fatal or, at best futile. He can only try next time to lure his tormentor onto a difficult bell and pray that the rope will slip wheel.

Good striking is a matter of cohesion and mutual confidence within the bend. Personalities do not dominate good striking, but only in the mess-ups. So, when the ringing becomes at all shaky, hasten the process by rasping, in the most vinegary tone you can muster, "watch your striking". This commits you to nothing and can be devastating. I am thinking of trying it out on the dance floor, when things are not going well: "Watch your dancing, dear".

For defensive purposes an impassive countenance should be cultivated. One distinguished ringer always used to betray his mistakes by turning red in the face This was eventually pointed out to him and, like a good belfryman, he cured it, though I believe an operation was necessary. Now he never seems to go wrong. But one defends best by attacking. Particularly in ringing on the larger numbers of bells, when (as one of the foremost exponents of Belfrymanship so beautifully described Stedman Cinques going amiss) trouble begins to spread like a wet patch on the ceiling, then is your time to act. "You're too high" is a fair-sounding piece of useless advice, just the means to upset the conscientious dodger, who knows exactly where he should be, but has no one to dodge with. It induces panic and adroitly shifts the blame from yourself when trouble threatens. And, since the topic of useless advice has cropped up, the purely attacking functions of this must not be overlooked. It has even been used by belfryman against belfryman with good effect. If you are faced by a tough adversary who persists in remaining "one up" and will not go wrong, tell him something that he obviously knows already e.g. "You're 6th place bell" or "Two blows and lead", or "In slow next time". In racking his brains for a suitably crushing retort, he will probably forget what he is doing.

When asked to call a touch, remember that you thereby become ex-officio "Top Man". All that is necessary is to preserve the status quo. A novice of Belfrymanship (and of conducting) once called a bob in Stedman Caters while in 4-5 and made it there himself. The ringing fired its way to a standstill, and in the ensuing discussion, the novice found two culprits and argued them into accepting the blame - and in all innocence too. Poor conducting this, but good Belfrymanship. It was myself, anyway.

Sometimes it does pay to show the white flag. This can bring enormous dividends. A sharp dispute between two members of a North Country Association over an unsuccessful touch of Double Norwich, that seemed likely to end, if not in blows, at any rate in refusal to ring together again, was once sweetly resolved by a lady member of the band, well versed in Belfrymanship, who confessed that it was all her fault. The response was electric. By the end of the evening one had asked her to stand in a peal, the other was taking her out to dinner.

One final hint on the practical aspect of Belfrymanship: close your eyes intently when dodging or assume the air of one whose attention encompasses place-making, dodging, leading and, in fact, all the bells work at once. This gives your dodging partners the humble feeling of being interviewed in an outer office on a matter of minor importance. They will then meekly accept the blame for any clashes.

Belfrymanship is not, one need hardly add, confined to the ringing chamber. In pubs and cafes and places where they talk, keep on top of the discussion. There are some who, particularly if not feeling lively or energetic, employ the Super Plain Man approach: "I know that sort of thing is all very well, but just give me a good-going six-bell tower and some enthusiastic learners and I am quite content teaching them plain hunting". These tactics succeed only against feeble or exhausted opposition. Several replies are available, the following being reasonably terse: "You did say enthusiastic, didn't you? No, the belfryman should not fight shy of theoretical discussion. Learn up the technical terms. Import "Q Sets" into the conversation whenever a depth charge is called for. Casual mention of "In Course Singles," too, can often freeze a promising discussion among weaker brethren and leave you with the field free to air your own pet views. The use of "Grid Analysis" for this purpose is not recommended. You may be asked to enlarge upon it, and lucidity is not the most effective means of being impressive. You are trying to clear the stage, not to clear the discussion.

And now as letters to *The Ringing World* so incongruously conclude, good wishes to all. And may you go on making unnecessary enemies.

## **Residents' Review**

*Marika Pascovitch, the immediate past Master, writes:*

2003 was a varied year for the OUS. Although attendance dropped off during Trinity Term, a pleasing number of freshers joined us in the New Year, and numbers at Mary Mag on Tuesdays have regularly been above 20. As in previous years, a quarter is rung before each MM practice and also before the fortnightly St Thomas practices. In Hilary Term we had Wednesday practices at St Cross, replaced by tied bell practice at Mary Mag during Michaelmas Term. Sunday morning ringing has been at St Thos, for a quarter, Mary Mag, St Ebbes (even weeks) and New College and SMV (odd weeks). 48 quarters have been rung this year (so far) in a variety of different methods and numbers. Congratulations to the many people who have rung methods for the first time: there have been many.

With St Lawrence's, Reading out of action for two terms now, it has been difficult to organise termly 12 bell practices. However, the OUS went to Amersham in Michaelmas Term and rang everything from rounds and call changes to Yorkshire Max.

Handbell practices have also been very popular, being held every Wednesday lunchtime and occasionally on Sunday evenings (when we can be bothered to get out of the pub...). Of the quarter peals scored, eight have been in hand, and we hope that some peals will follow.

Eight peals have been rung this year, with several firsts on higher numbers, in new methods and as conductor. All of the bands have included both residents and non-residents and the OUS thanks the non-residents who have helped us to achieve these firsts.

Socially the OUS has enjoyed the traditional events of the Annual Dinner, the residents' joint outing with the CUG to St Albans, the tour based in Leeds, the summer outing to Bodicote, the Freshers' outing to Long Crendon, and the SUA weekend, which was based this year in Oxford. A mention should, perhaps, be made of the SUA as the OUS entered two teams for both the eight and the six bell competitions, with wins in both. Members of the OUS have also attended both the CUG and the UL Dinners. Termly cheese and wine parties along with the annual pancake party continue to be well supported, as is the drinking after practices.

To end I would like to wish Graham and the new committee all the best in the new year and hope that the OUS continues to grow both socially and in terms of aptitude.

## **OUS Peals**

Nine more peals have been rung since the last letter: Stedman Triples, Yorkshire SM (2), 16-spliced SM, 23-spliced SM, Stedman Caters, Cambridge S Royal, Bristol S Royal and 4-spliced S Royal. Paul Mounsey is now only short of David Brown's leading figure of 186 for the OUS, Peter Giles reached 100 a year ago, and Andrew Stubbs is now on 99.

Yet another benefit of the work at St Thos and Mary Mag is that residents can now easily arrange peals in methods where they could not raise an entirely resident band and previously had to go without.

## **The OUS Online**

We now have 130 newsletters going out electronically, and just 200 paper copies.

The website is very good: see <http://www.users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr> for all current and recent details about the OUS.

Peals may be viewed, complete with statistics, at <http://www.ouscr.org.uk/peals/>.

There is a bulletin board - not a chatlist - which sends out essential messages and the newsletter. To join this list, contact [ouscr-admin@bellringers.net](mailto:ouscr-admin@bellringers.net). Joining this list will also help the Society by cutting down the number of paper newsletters.

The Gen. Secretary is available by email on [pggiles\(at\)lineone.net](mailto:pggiles@lineone.net) or [gilesp\(at\)bp.com](mailto:gilesp@bp.com) or [oldgrimes\(at\)hotmail.com](mailto:oldgrimes@hotmail.com).

## OS Tower picture

The Oxford Society is now selling prints and polo shirts, etc: see <http://www.oxfordsociety.org.uk/OSprints.htm>

Available now - a limited edition of 300 black and white prints (100 x A2, 200 x A3 unframed) of the Oxford Society towers drawn by Jim Godfrey (Canon's Verger at Christ Church). Each print is individually numbered and signed by the artist.

A2 prints £10 & £1 p&p.

A3 prints £7 & £1 p&p.

Oxford Society Polo Shirts and Sweatshirts are also available – these feature an embroidered motif on the upper LHS (white picture of Tom Tower (from the print), surrounded by wording (The Oxford Society of Change Ringers, Est. 1734) in yellow on navy blue material). 4-5 weeks delivery.

Polo Shirts cost £15 & £2-50 p&p.

Sweatshirts cost £18 & £2-50 p&p.

Sizes available (inches) S (34-36), M (38-40), L (42-44), XL (46-48) and XXL (50-52).

Enquiries – [lane.catchmole@virgin.net](mailto:lane.catchmole@virgin.net)

Orders to be sent to David Lane, Catchmole Cottage, 12, High Street, Wheatley, Oxford. OX33 1XX.

Cheques to be made payable to The Oxford Society of Change Ringers.

Limited Edition Print of Oxford Society Towers