

Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2005

A quieter year for the Society in some ways, 2004 will be remembered as the year we entertained the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Dinner. It is also good to see another Moreton (Wilf's granddaughter) in the Society.

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	Nick Balderson (Magdalen)
Resident Secretary	Caroline Lee (Somerville)
Librarian	Jennifer Lane (Exeter)
Treasurer	James Marchbank (Lincoln)
Webmaster	Christopher Backhouse (Oriel)
Steeplekeepers	Alison Moreton (st John's) Damian Payne (St Peter's)

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

Life Members

The following have become Life Members:

Oliver Lomax	Lincoln 2001-2004
Marika Pascovitch	St Hilda's 2001-2004
Katherine Chambers	Keble 2001-2004

2005 Annual Dinner

This year's Dinner will again be at Harris Manchester College, on Saturday 5th February at 7.00 p.m. for 7.30 p.m. The principal guest will be Philip Rogers, until recently Secretary of the College Youths, and the clerical guest Revd Dr Peter Groves, Chaplain of Brasenose and curate of Mary Mag's (to be licensed as priest-in-charge there next April). The OUS speaker will be Andrew Graham.

The menu is French onion soup with garlic croutons, Pan fried duck breast with cherry and honey sauce, Warm apple and cinnamon strudel and a Cheese board. The vegetarian main course is Quorn, lentil and butterbean loaf with peanut sauce.

Tickets are £45.00. Please send an SAE and a cheque payable to OUSCR Dinner Committee to Nick Balderson, Magdalen College OX1 4AU, stating any seating plan preferences and dietary requirements.

Drinking the night before will be at Folly Bridge, and Sunday coffee (tbc) in Christchurch.

Newsletter Account

The cost of printing and posting this Newsletter will be about £130. The Newsletter account will stand at about £550 after this letter has been sent. If you wish to contribute, please make your cheque payable to `Mr P Giles`.

Meeting Dates in 2005

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 17th, April 25th and Oct 10th.

AGM date - Monday, Nov 28th.

Society Ties

We still have six left, at the absurdly low price of £3.00 each, available from the General Secretary.

The Society's History

Sales have now reached 243. 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.

The Annual Tour

The 2005 Tour will be based in Colchester, and arranged by Marika Paascovitch. She may be contacted at 44 Crotch Crescent, Marston oxford OX3 0JJ, tel. 07739-337794, email marika.pascovitch@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk. A website will shortly be available: www.pascovitch.co.uk/oustour05

The first organised day will be Easter Sunday, March 27th. Note that Easter is very early this year.

John Camp writes:

This year's tour, based in Hove and organised by Jeremy Pratt, was very well attended by residents and non-residents and was much enjoyed by everyone. For some years now, it has been a feature of tours that many - probably most - resident and recent non-resident members have taken part, as well as the old stagers. It's an excellent way for non-residents and residents to get to know one another.

This year was typical in another respect. There was a large age-gap between the early thirties and late forties. I know that these are the years when many of you have small children, heavy work commitments and other good reasons for being unable to come on the tour. I hope, though, that those of you in this age-group will think hard about whether you could manage a day or two, if not longer, on next year's tour. We miss you!

The current pattern is that the tour is in Easter week, starting on the Sunday and finishing on Thursday, unless Easter week coincides with 0th week, in which case the tour is two weeks earlier. In 2005, Easter Sunday is on 27 March - particularly early - so the tour will begin then.

If you have any thoughts about how tours could be improved, or made more accessible, please let me know.

Finally, we need tour organisers for the coming years. Is there anyone who would like to think about organising the 2005 tour, or even the 2006 or 2007 tour? It may be easier if you have been on a recent tour and have some idea of the expectations of the regulars, but don't let that deter you. As we were on the south coast this year, we probably need to move up-country for 2005 - possibly, though by no means necessarily, somewhere in the Midlands. Please e-mail me if you would like to discuss the possibility of organising a tour.

Address List

If you would like a copy of the Address List, either electronically or on paper, please ask. If you can help us trace any of the following 26 members who are currently lost, we would be grateful:

Catherine Bannister, Sarah Bates, Mike Capocci, Simon Chadwick, Rosemary Clark, Frances E Collins, Paul Crane, Robert Galloway, Andre Gren, David Hamblin, Jason Hargreaves, Sally Hawksworth, Luke Heaton, Lance Hewson, 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.

John Lonsbrough *writes:*

My second cataract operation was on December 23rd 2003 (thus I had a very quiet Christmas at home), and it was a great success, as I now have good normal vision and need glasses only for close work and small print. I highly recommend the Oxford Eye Hospital. My ringing continues at weekends and at the Lincoln College and St Aldate practices – the stairs have not (quite) beaten me yet!

Revd Eric Wood

Eric Wood died suddenly on Sunday October 10th from a heart attack in the tower at St John in Bedwardine, Worcester, shortly after calling a touch of 252 Grandsire Triples. His wife Pat died only a few weeks earlier, and Eric was arranging to move to sheltered accommodation in Surrey. This was to his last Sunday service ringing in Worcester before the move.

Stephen Ivin and London Surprise Major

On September 27th Stephen Ivin went to St Stephen in Brannall in Cornwall to call a peal of London Surprise Major. Not only did this coincide with the seventieth anniversary of Bill Pye's last peal as conductor, in the same method and at the same tower, but Stephen thereby equalled Pye's record of 227 peals of London SM as conductor. Earlier in the year he had beaten Pye's record of London SM rung by an individual. Congratulations, and we hope we see the record comprehensively broken.

WGW Warren, DFC

As mentioned in last year's letter, WGW Warren, our oldest member, died in late 2003. Here are extracts from his obituary in the RW:

George Warren, who died aged 93, was a ringer for eighty years and a faithful supporter of ringing in north Dorset for nearly thirty.

William George Wickham Warren was born in 1910 at Meare, near Bridgwater, Somerset, the oldest of eight brothers. Their father, who was the rector of Meare, was himself a ringer and was responsible for the augmentation of the four at Meare to a five. He taught most, if not all, of his sons to ring, and George was one of those who remained an active ringer all his life.

George was a pupil at Crewkerne Grammar School, from where he gained a place to read Natural Science at Oriel. He rang his first peal for the OUS at Drayton on May 31st 1931 (Stedman Triples). This was the first OUS peal for 11 years. Eleven days later, he rang in the first peal by junior members of the University, Plain Bob Minor at St Ebbe's. He was a keen oarsman who rowed stroke for his college.

After taking an Upper Second, he moved to Liverpool to work for British American Tobacco as a chemist in their papermaking division. In 1938 he was transferred by BAT to Brazil. On the outbreak of the war, he joined the RAF and served with distinction as a pilot, flying Halifax and Lancaster bombers. He was awarded the DFC after successfully returning his Halifax from a mission with two of the four engines shot away and a third damaged, with no loss of life to his crew.

Demobilised in 1946, George returned to work for BAT, and was sent this time to Calcutta, where he lived and worked until 1964. He then returned to the UK and taught mathematics to apprentice engineers in the midlands, while being based in Stourpaine, Dorset, where his mother had settled following his father's death.

Following his retirement, George was a stalwart of ringing in north Dorset. He was an enthusiastic teacher of new ringers, and could be found in a tower on most weeknights. He supported faithfully the North Dorset branch of the Salisbury DG, being joint Ringing Master from 1977. Many bands and individual ringers of the 1970s and 80s owe their continuity and success to George's quiet but dogged support and teaching. He played a major part in establishing new bands at Bryanston School and Pimperne, to name but two.

He was a keen record-keeper, and would scan the peal and quarter-peal columns of the RW for performances by Guild bands and report on them to the monthly branch meetings. His enthusiasm for record-keeping extended beyond ringing to meteorology:

with his brother John, who also lived in Stourpaine, he kept meticulous records of local weather for many years.

While he faithfully attended ringing meetings, he would without fail return to Stourpaine for the weekly practice at Saturday tea-time. He was a gentle man and a gentleman, softly spoken and infinitely patient. Though a very capable ringer, he always put others' advancement before his own ambitions.

He continued to ring until advanced Parkinson's Disease forced him to give up in the late 1990s. He spent his final years at the family home in Stourpaine with an extended family including his brother, nephew and great-nephews. Six of his brothers survive him. He never married. A peal and quarter-peal were rung in his memory.

OUS Peals

Fourteen peals have been rung in 2004. In 2002 there were fifteen, and last year nine. The total is now 941. Eleven were at St Thomas, one at Mary Mag, and two in hand. The methods were Bristol royal, London royal, Cambridge royal, Yorkshire royal (two), Stedman caters, 4-spliced major, Glasgow, Bristol, Cambridge, Superlative and Plain Bob. The handbell peals were Cambridge and Yorkshire major.

Congratulations to Sarah Butt on ringing her first peal. Other special footnotes were Andrew Stubbs' hundredth peal for the Society, a residents' tower-bell peal (Cambridge major), and the first residents' handbell peal since 1979.

The OUS Online

We now have over 130 newsletters going out electronically, and just 193 paper copies.

The website is <http://www.users.ox.ac.uk/~ouscr>

The online peals database is <http://www.ouscr.org.uk/peals/>.

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

Residents' Review

Graham Drabble, the immediate past Master, writes:

2004 has been another strong year for the OUS. We have had regular practices and Sunday ringing at Mary Magdalen and St Thomas as well as Sunday ringing at St Ebbe's, St Mary the Virgin, New College and St Cross. We are often seeing fifteen or more people at practices (although often slightly less on Sunday morning!) with ringing ranging from rounds and call changes to Stedman Caters and occasionally Surprise Royal.

We have been attempting quarter peals before practice and before the service at St Thomas as well as various hand bell attempts and have scored fifty this year. Notable quarters included first quarter peals for two people, a first quarter in hand, a first as conductor as well as quarters of Yorkshire and Cambridge Royal, 8 spliced major and London.

There have also been two quarters at St Mary the Virgin. Whilst the majority of these have been purely resident efforts I would like to thank the members of the OS who have assisted when asked.

The regular Monday night peals have continued with a good mix of badgers and residents and 12 tower bell peals have been scored including Glasgow Major, Bristol Royal on Dinner Day and an all resident peal of Cambridge Major. There were also first peals for Graham Drabble and Sarah Butt.

Two OUS hand bell peals were scored including one of Yorkshire Major which was the first resident hand bell peal of Surprise since 1979.

There have also been termly 12 bell practices, a trip to the mini ring in Wheatley, a trip to Exeter for the SUA, the tour in Brighton and termly outings to various places all of which have been well supported.

The non ringing side to the OUS also continues to thrive. As well as our own dinner there have been OUS contingents at the Cambridge and London dinners as well as termly Cheese and Wine parties. The OUS tradition of supporting breweries is also in good stead with good numbers being found in the pubs after ringing.

Finally I would like to thank all those that have made this year what it was, especially the committee, and wish Nick and his committee all the best for next year.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at the Dinner

In February, we were very pleased to have the Archbishop and his wife as our guests at the Dinner. Stuart Nelson wrote this account for the RW:

... after an excellent dinner, the Society's President, John Camp, proposed the toast to the guests. He noted, to robust audience reaction, that there was a strong Cambridge connection with many of them: Rowan Williams had studied at Cambridge, and the other guests included the current Master of the CUG, Nicola Baxter, and a former CUG Master, Robin Hall, now Ringing Master of the Oxford Society. Robin, had, however, had the very good taste to marry an OUS member. John then thanked Dermot Roaf, the Society's Senior Member for 27 years, and Canon Hugh Wybrew of St Mary Magdalen, retiring this year, for their support of the OUS and Oxford ringing. Patricia, past and first female master of the ODG and tower captain of High Wycombe, would be proposing the toast to the Society. She was pleased to be asked to speak at a dinner, rather than to ring handbells, as happened in other strange environments.

Turing to the principal guest, John reminded us that John Henry Newman's father had said that religion carried too far induces softness of mind. Fortunately this was not something that the Archbishop could be accused of, despite his less than successful driving lessons when at Oxford: 'I don't think we saw that bus, did we, professor?' . Rowan Williams had been John's spiritual director for many years, following Richard Holloway who became Primus of the Church of Scotland. Clearly being in charge of his spiritual direction was so demanding that rapid advancement followed. The Society, the President concluded, was deeply honoured to have so distinguished a guest speaker.

The Archbishop replied on behalf of the guests, addressing a perhaps unusually attentive audience. He confessed his lack of knowledge about bellringing. Thanks to 'The Bells of Santiago' and Dorothy L Sayers he mostly associated ringing with arson and murder. It was Sayers who wrote that, having perfected the art of tuning bells, it was a very English thing not to ring any tunes on them, but instead to run through permutations of mathematical patterns. There was a book about science and religion called 'Fire and Equations' and it seemed to him that the enthusiasm, exhilaration and exuberance of bellringers as they made their own mathematical patterns could bring about its own fire. It was this form of arson that he encouraged us to pursue, rather than the traditional sort.

Robin Hall then presented Rowan Williams with a handsome peal board commemorating the peals rung by the Oxford Society to celebrate his appointments as Archbishop of Wales and Canterbury.

Patricia Newton then proposed the toast to the Society. She remembered her first encounter with OUS members, when they all appeared to be excellent at ringing and very bad at talking to women. She noted that one former Master had proved in June that he couldn't walk on water. Today the Society remained in good shape, having won both the SUA 8 bell and 6 bell striking competitions. She concluded by mentioning the important role of university societies in teaching young people to ring.

Graham Drabble, Master, replied on behalf of the Society. He thanked the guests and gave an overview of the Society's activities over the last year. He noted that no matter how poor his own speech might be, at least he had the comfort of knowing that it was always going to be better than the master's speech of two years ago. He was entirely correct.

A highly successful and enjoyable evening concluded in traditional fashion, with the bar at the back of the hall doing very brisk trade.

Supplementary Notes on Belfrymanship

more advice from the Master, from The Ringing World of 29th June 1951

The necessarily brief scope of a Belfrymanship article leaves certain points in need of amplification. While it may be true to say that you can satirise most of the people some of the time, suspicion has arisen that any resemblance to ringers, active or passive, was possibly quite intentional. Any Sunday morning sets the scene.

“If I don't watch myself, I shall be turning up in the next Belfryman article.”

“Well, as a matter of fact, you were in the last one.”

Clearly the last word has not been said. In the Potter spirit, therefore, though with inadequate mastery of the Potter patter, these supplementary notes are offered.

The distinction between a belfryman and a conductor is not always clear. A genuine conductor has no need to be a belfryman; and few are. But circumstances, too, affect the issue. Krenecke's formula, embodying the most recent research, proves true for most values and may serve as a provisional guide: R being the ability of the person concerned to put the others right, T his tendency to go wrong himself, S the coefficient of friction among the ringers and N the number of bells on which changes are being rung (R, S and T being measured by a device known as the Initometer and expressed in Isospasms where $(S + T)^2 - 2R$ divided by $13 - N$ yields a result of 4.25 or more, we have a belfryman; where below 4.25, a conductor.

>From this there emerge two interesting corollaries: (a) That a belfryman will be relatively more common on the higher number of bells; (b) That a conductor in one tower may deteriorate into a belfryman in another.

And now for a cardinal principle of Belfrymanship. Always get your word in first. Take a leaf out of Big John's book. Mark the crispness of approach:

“You're in 4-5; here with me; no, slow bell now; come on, watch it. ..stand. You can't

ring Stedman unless you get the leads right. Let's try it again and strike it this time."

Big John's doctrine is, up to a point, sound; Stedman goes much better when the leads are right. It goes better still when Big John remembers his Last Whole Turn.

Sometimes in method ringing the situation will get out of control. A yawning chasm gapes beneath your feet. You are lost. Faced with this predicament, some belfrymen copy the eminent statesman and ring on, until they remember where they are. This is all very well with a light bell. Greater weight of metal calls for sterner measures.

PUT SOMEONE ELSE WRONG

The principles of this will be set out in a pamphlet at present being compiled by the Belfrymanship Research Centre, and entitled "Wandering to Some Purpose," (or How to be Lost in Good Company). These are, of course, emergency tactics. For upsetting others at your leisure, one pretty little move deserves mention, here. This is the Additional Dodge Inducement. In Superlative, for example, on completing your five-pull in 7-8, you take up an attitude of expecting another dodge and then, with a deft flick strike a perfect blow in 8ths, leaving your dodging partner floundering. (Try this.) Then, at a similar position in the next course, you rub it in by remarking: "That's the last, now down to the front." Of a well-known Midland ringer, though he has yet to acquire the title of Artful Dodger, one may well ask: "Was this the face that launched a thousand trips?"

On the subject of good and bad striking one embarks carefully. Among indifferent ringers it is not hard to make broad distinctions. But the more accomplished the band, the further one is driven towards the doctrine of Mighty Willie, a prince of tenor men, if not a prolific peal ringer. Both the logic and the definition are simple. Good striking is the way I am ringing my bell, as opposed to the way the rest of the band are ringing theirs. As Mighty Willie also conducts a little, fascinating results follow. In a course of Cambridge Royal, Mighty Willie has been known to start 5-6 instead of 7-8 place, and, at the delicate hint of a few sharp growls from the tenor box, the rest of the band has obediently reverted to the previous lead en mass. To a casual observer the transition is almost imperceptible; so perfect the standard of striking.

Belfrymanship revolves all the time around the subtle interplay of individual and group. The earlier article illustrated the One being welcomed by the Many. Some notes are now appended on the Many being welcomed by the One (known in some parts of the country as Yokelship or Counter-Coachtourship). The situation is easy to gauge; (a) They are in good time, have a lethargic after-lunch look, wives and children struggle in tow. Hustle them up the tower without any unction. Lock the door behind them as "we can't be too careful. About people wandering in." Or (b) They are behind schedule, aglow with the tower-snatching fever, their nerves taut and friable, to be soothed only by the sound of still more bells and the bringing round of still more methods. I insist on

showing them round the church in painstaking detail.

After this pleasant overture they can hardly avoid co-operating in making their stay unenjoyable. Someone is sure to want to pull the tenor up and a couple more will scamper to his aid when she proves difficult to chime. Let them sweat awhile as you slyly ignore their efforts and direct the attention of the others to the Visitors Book, before remarking, innocently, "We generally turn 'er when she's up: Morale being suitably deflated, announce gaily, "Well, make yourselves at home. Mind you" (going to the window), "we have to be a bit careful here, local opinion being what it is. But" (looking out, as though expecting to see an irate mob assembling in the churchyard below) ."you are sure to be better than last week's lot, as tried to ring Double Norwich." Those who had been nervously bracing themselves for a course of London are by now reluctantly deciding that it had better be Stedman - and good Stedman too - which, of course, it now has very little chance of being.

You are by this time ensconced in your favourite seat and, if not actually stopping your ears, at any rate going through the motions of cerebral repression. "Would you care to have a ring with us?" they enquire. No, you are inclined to think perhaps not. Though they may try to turn the tables on you. For instance, once in Somerset;-

Imposing Visiting Ringer: .How about having a ring with us?

Modest Local Ringer: "No, you folks carry on".

I.V.R. : "Believe me, we're quite willing to fit in for anything you'd like. I don't suppose you get much of a band locally."

M.L.R.: "No thanks. I can always do a little homework."

I.V.R. ; "Homework?".

M.L.R. : Yes, Next Saturday we're going for a non-conducted peal. Only Yorkshire. mind you, as it's just a local band. Besides, I don't want to tire myself out, do I? " (The implication that the visitors striking is suspect effectively closes this jolly repartee.)

UNOBTRUSIVE DEVICES

Reports are from time to time received from various parts of the country of simple and unobtrusive Belfrymanship devices, While Belfrymanship should not savour of the practical joke (being practical, but never a joke) it is thought fit at this juncture to offer a few appliances and : hints to steeple keepers and tower captains.

(i). The Cynical Sally. Emits the sound. "tut-tut," when passing through the ceiling, should the ringer fail to maintain a tight rope.

- (ii). Gramophone record of “The Storming of the Bastille,” to be played by amplifier (large) in the vicinity of the church, when a visit proves interminable or peal attempt falls below local standards of striking. When belfry funds are low, a police whistle can sometimes be made to do the trick. Alternatively, given powerful influence with the local council, a road drill may be pressed into service.
- (iii). Large mirrors positioned around the ringing chamber. Dodging with self and two others is great fun for strangers.
- (iv). Synthetic tower sway. (Application for patent now in hands of Board of Trade.)
- {v}. Beams set up at inconvenient places around the rope circle. They need not fulfil any obvious purpose and can be dismantled. (Incidentally, the Belfrymanship Research centre wishes to dissociate itself from the recent scandal in Southern England where movable beams were transported by van from tower to tower ahead of a Saturday coach outing.)
- (vi). Enormous diagram of unringable method on wall concealed behind a curtain, to be slyly unveiled while a difficult touch is in progress.
- vii). Stuffed birds in glass cases, if possible second-hand and decrepit. These successfully damp the spirit of the most enthusiastic visitor by creating the atmosphere of an indifferent Guild meeting.

And now it is time for a drink, and our finest hour. The company may not have an absorbing interest in theoretical questions. They must be lured imperceptibly down the sticky road. Proceed from the known to the unknown, or rather, start with something that they ought to know (and probably don't} and so involve them in something about which they neither know nor care. Let us take, for example, the False Course Heads in Cambridge :- “There's a point I would like to put to you.” The company is politely attentive. I would value your opinion very much. You know, some of the chaps one comes across don't even understand the False Course Heads in Cambridge. You'd hardly credit it, would you?” The sickly silence that follows signifies uneasy assent. .Well now, in this little composition of mine here, I've got a second copy. There we are now:. No, really it's my turn to buy them. All right then; a brown ale.”

A few more minutes of this and all will be set fair for a jolly evening. Your hapless audience is soon forming a roster, taking turns to escape and prop up the bar counter for a few blissful moments before returning to the inquisition.

That's what I like about being a ringer. It's not only the ringing itself, it's the comradeship.