

Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

Annual Newsletter - January 2021

Officers

The following Society officers and officials were elected at the AGM held virtually on Monday 30th November 2020 via the Zoom platform:

President	Liz Barnes
General Secretary	Simon Bond
Senior Treasurer	Mark Bell
Central Council Representative	Craig Robertson

Vice Presidents: Quentin Armitage, Doug Beaumont, David Brown, Ian W Davies, Peter Giles, Nigel Herriott, Paul Mounsey, Donald Niblett, Nigel Orchard. Dermot Roaf, and Lester Yeo were re-elected.

The following were elected at the student section AGM held on Monday 18th January 2021, also via Zoom.

Senior Member	William Poole, New College
Master	Ben White-Horne, St Anne's
Treasurer	Alastair White-Horne, Somerville
Secretary	Julia Stadlmann, Merton
Librarian	Jess Dixon, Brookes
Steeplekeepers	Cameron White-Spunner, Pembroke Finian Bassford, Somerville
Webmaster	Josie Godfrey

Bell Restoration Fund

BRF Trustees: Senior Member and Senior Treasurer *ex officio*, Doug Beaumont and Alex Byrne
Independent Examiners: Nigel Orchard and Robert Wallis

Life Members

The following have become life members since the last newsletter:

David S Phillips, St Hugh's, 2016-20
Craig M Robertson, Keble, 2016-20
Laura C Gill, Queen's, 2017-20
Kathryn Pendelberry, Keble, 2019-20

Residents' Review

Claire Pearson, immediate past Master, writes:

For fairly obvious reasons, there is somewhat less ringing than expected to report on this year!

It seems like several lifetimes have passed since Hilary term; however the year started very well for the OUS. Our three learners joined us at our main Tuesday practices and made excellent progress, from handling through to call changes. Many other members also made excellent progress, with new methods being learnt by many and a large number of first in method quarter peals being rung for people. Attendance on Tuesdays has regularly been high, which is excellent. However, attendance at other practices and Sundays was variable to say the least.

We had a 12 bell practice in Hilary at Christ Church. Despite a clash with OS paid ringing at Magdalen, attendance was good and we managed to ring call changes, plain hunt and Grandsire, with some people ringing on 12 for the first time. Thank you to everyone who came to help out with this!

The dinner this year was held on the 1st of Feb at Harris Manchester. The weekend featured the traditional Friday evening pub session, this year at the KA. Four quarter peals and two peals were achieved over the weekend, including the first ladies peal since 1945! There was plenty of open ringing (and open drinking...) as per usual. The dinner itself was attended by 107 people and one dog, and was a genuinely superb evening! Thank you to everyone who was involved in the organization of this.

We sadly haven't been able to ring in person since the end of Hilary term, which has made my job as Master somewhat easier. We have been able to meet for a weekly catch-up and practice on Ringing Room throughout Trinity and Michaelmas. A few people have been reticent to try out Ringing Room, but there has been a reasonably large core of people who have come along every week, and some really excellent progress has been made. We are actually in the unusual situation of having a member who can competently plain hunt without ever having been near an actual bell. In particular, many of our learners have progressed onto method learning very quickly away from the stress of bell handling. Several members sadly left at the end of last year, but we were fortunate enough to gain several new keen ready made ringers at the start of term. As a result, we've regularly managed to ring Stedman, and Surprise Minor, with some Surprise Major being attempted.

It has been great to be able to keep in regular contact with all of the residents throughout the lockdowns, although hopefully at some point in the new year it will be safe to allow some sort of a return to the tower and normality. Thank you very much to everyone, residents, friends and badgers alike, for their support throughout this unusual year.

President's Notes

Liz Barnes writes:

It has become a cliché to say that we live in strange times. Nevertheless, there can be no denying that few of us could have predicted how the last year would pan out and quite how completely our lives would have changed in such a short time.

Even time itself seems to have been affected with the restrictions due to the pandemic seeming to have gone on forever, yet the 2020 Annual Dinner seems like it was only yesterday. For those of us Life Members who are struggling with it all, and worried about the lost opportunities of the last year, we should think of the residents whose student experience will be so different from what they might have expected and which we were so lucky to have had.

It is therefore reassuring to know that the residents have at least managed to meet “virtually” on a regular basis and have included some ringing activities on Ringing Room too.

Although the opportunities for ringing have been minimal since March, we did manage to hold a successful Dinner in February with the Bristol based ringer, broadcaster and pyrotechnician Matthew Tosh as our guest speaker. As ever, Harris Manchester College looked after us well and many of those who attended got in touch with positive feedback.

One of these was Andrew Stubbs, who quite possibly attended more dinners than anyone else still living and was on good form this year. It was thus a shock and source of great sadness when Andrew succumbed to COVID just two months later.

As you will see later in this newsletter, we are regrettably not able to hold our dinner as usual this year and it seems inconceivable that we will be able to hold the already once rescheduled Tour. Should circumstances improve during the year it is, however, hoped that we may be able to have some form of gathering in Oxford possibly in the early Autumn.

2021 Annual Dinner

Current restrictions due to Covid-19 mean we cannot hold our Annual Dinner as usual, however, arrangements are being made to hold a 'virtual' Dinner on 6th February.

The plan is that members and friends organise their own tables on a video call (eg. Zoom) enjoying their normal camaraderie during a meal. This will provide the opportunity for those who aren't normally able to travel to Oxford for the Dinner to meet up with others and I would urge you to make contact with your contemporaries and arrange your tables.

We can then join together at 8:30pm for a short set of speeches on a Zoom open for all. Once the speeches have finished, we will keep the Zoom open with breakout rooms available. These breakout rooms will be based on the different decades of matriculation however you can wander between rooms to chat to others from different eras if you so wish. To help with the arrangements for the Zoom please could you give me an idea on lizzie@piltdown.org.uk of the number of devices from your table that may be joining the 8:30 meeting.

If you want to coordinate the menu for your Dinner, a suggestion chosen from David Woodfine's 'From Kitchen to High Table' is:

French Onion Soup

Duck braised in sherry, soy and ginger

Parsnip mash

Stir fried pak choi and spring onions

Crème Brûlée

Cheeseboard with Port

Coffee and Chocolates

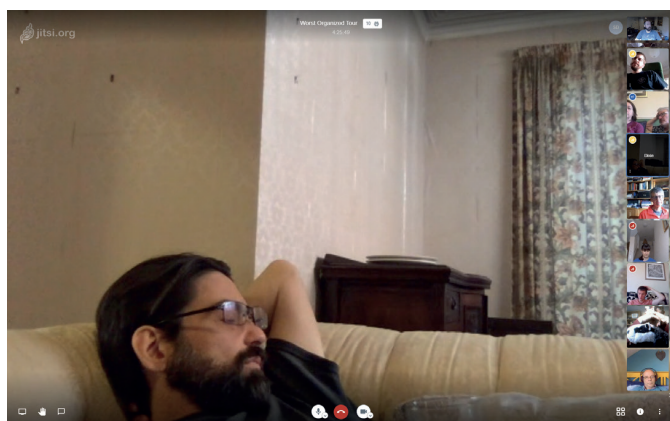
David Woodfine was the former High Steward at Harris Manchester and was very enthusiastic about selling his recipe book to those attending the Dinner. The menu above represents a typical Dinner menu from his time (David's book is somewhat short on vegetarian options). You can, of course, make up any menu of your own choosing!

Further details including Zoom link details, recipes and menu card template will be available on the OUSCR website and circulated to the mailing list.

For the last few years we have been able to give resident students a small discount on their ticket price out of the surplus in the Dinner account. To enable this to continue you may wish to consider making a small donation to bolster the Dinner account in lieu of paying for your own Dinner tickets this year. Bank details are OUSCR Dinner Committee 30-96-35 01047993. I'm sure the students would appreciate this. The cost of a couple of pints of beer might be an appropriate donation.

The Virtual Society

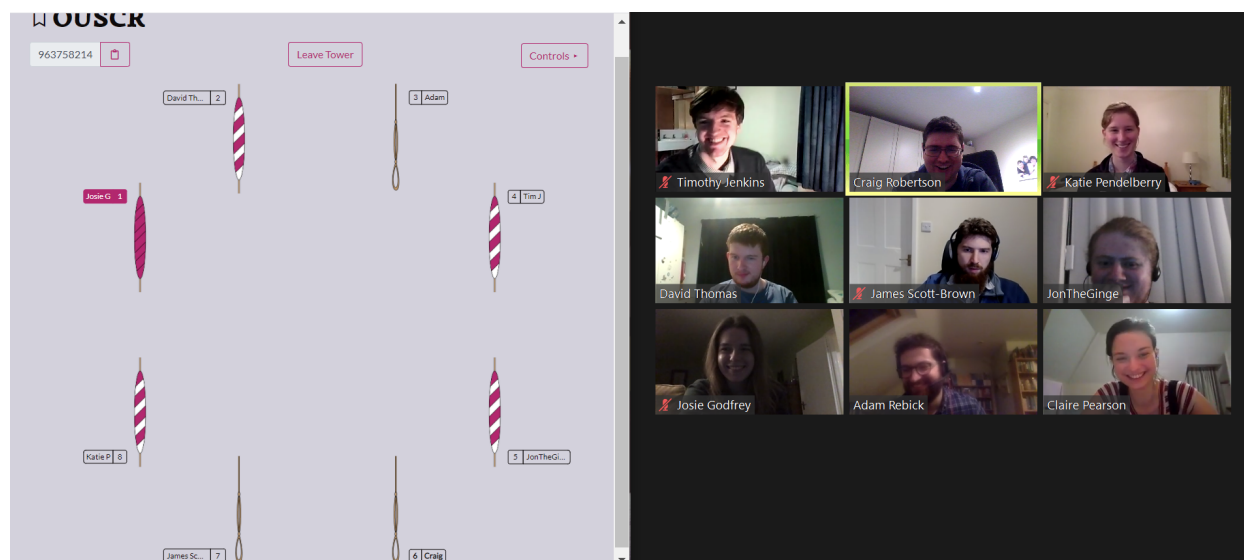
The 2020 pandemic has had a huge impact on ringing, and as a Society with membership scattered across the country, the OUS has felt this particularly keenly. The Annual Dinner in February was one of the last occasions that many members will remember meeting in a large group in person. By the time of the planned Tour to Yeovil in April, the country looked very different.



The virtual Tour, hosted by Chris Griggs on the afternoon of Easter Monday was an opportunity for 39 members and friends to spend some time chatting about what could have been, and drinking away their sorrows. Moving online allowed the added benefit of the Tour going international, as Rozzy Roberts joined from Canada.

Alex Dicks fully enters into the spirit of the Tour.

The resident Society has not been prevented from meeting weekly, leveraging Zoom and Ringing Room to recreate at least some part of the usual Tuesday evening experience. The Hilary and Michaelmas TGMs and the November AGM were also hosted online, so ensuring that the business of the Society continues despite restrictions on meeting in person.



A typical Tuesday

OUS on Blue Peter

Concerning a video clip that the BBC Archive Facebook page released on New Year's Eve, Paul Mounsey shares these recollections with contributions from Nigel Herriott, David Cooper, Les Boyce, and Pat and Gareth Evans.

Recently a clip appeared online, from the BBC archive, of an episode of Blue Peter, broadcast I think in 1974, with Lesley Judd and Peter Purves being taught to ring by the OUS at St Cross, at that time one of our regular Sunday towers. I have been in contact with some of the others and put together a few memories of the day we made the film, which was towards the end of ninth week of Michaelmas Term 1973. I had been elected Master at the AGM the week before, Pat Seymour (now Evans) was Secretary and David Baxter the Librarian. Nigel Herriott was one of the steeplekeepers, and Les Boyce had recently stood down as Treasurer. The others there were David Cooper and Gareth Evans.

Les recalls having a hand in making the arrangements with the BBC, and he spent a day with the crew visiting several towers with ground floor rings to find a suitable location. These included Wolvercote, where he was given lunch at the Trout, and St Cross, which they decided would be the best place for filming, despite their tricky handling. He was treated to tea at the Randolph at the end of that preliminary day. He also remembers that at Wolvercote he shinned up the long vertical ladder from the ground floor into the bell chamber above and was alarmed to find that the bells were all up and the ropes downstairs just hung up normally!

On the actual day of filming we met at 8am. It was cold and windy. On his way Les had an accident when, pedalling furiously down the Banbury Road, he hit the back of a car which had pulled out of a side road across his path. His bike was whipped from under him and dragged along. The lady driving had to stop because the bike was firmly attached to her rear bumper. Notes of the realm were exchanged towards the cost of repairing a bent front wheel. He eventually arrived a little late at St Cross, shaken but not too seriously stirred.

Despite the early start, filming went on well into the afternoon, all for just a 5 minute piece. David Cooper says he was interested in the process of putting the programme together. It wasn't filmed in the order it appeared. Probably all the roof scenes were filmed in one go. There was a continuity person making lots of notes, and at one point there was some worry about whether someone was wearing a sweater in the scene supposedly next after the one they were filming. And at the end the imperfect rounds suddenly become some well struck minor method.

We went to the Turf for lunch which was quite good. We were told we could order what we liked and put it on the BBC tab, although when the second round started we were told that funds weren't unlimited.

Peter Purves seemed to be a quick learner, and could have made a ringer. At one point though he deliberately made a mistake for the camera (maybe missed the sally?), and was told in no uncertain terms that bells aren't toys and are potentially dangerous. That bit clearly didn't make the final edit. Gareth remembers that they really wanted to see us flying around with our feet off the ground, but we stayed very professional - that is until the cameras had been put away, when we rang down very briskly, and they were quite cross not to have filmed it!

Les points out that Lesley Judd could have done with a slightly longer rope and is surprised how calm he appears to be while clearly being close at times to hanging a TV personality.

Memories of the details of the day are otherwise a little sketchy. Nigel recalls Lesley Judd being extremely foul-mouthed with f*** as every other word. It was quite a contrast to when she was on screen, switching from something like "you f***ing bastards get on with it, I am f***ing tired of f***ing waiting" to ... camera, action.... "hello children, how lovely to see you all again..." – all sweetness and light.

My own recollection is that there was a lot of hanging around and although I don't remember the swearing there was a fair amount of grumpiness from some of the BBC people. I suspect one of the reasons was they had significantly underestimated how difficult it was going to be, and were frustrated that there wasn't enough time for them to learn to control a bell properly without help. I wonder whether they ever tried it again?

Overall though we felt very special to have been involved in the programme, and of course actually being on Blue Peter was (and no doubt still is) quite a big thing.

And we all got Blue Peter badges!



Blue Peter at St Cross, with Lesley Judd ringing the third (far left), and Peter Purves ringing the tenor (second from right). The video is available to view, with or without a Facebook account, at <https://www.facebook.com/BBCArchive/videos/3455220244584813/>

Obituaries

Stella Strawbridge (née Hassid), St Hugh's 1942, died 31st August 2020

Stella studied Chemistry at St Hugh's from 1942-46. She was one of the group of ringers taught on the tied bells at New College during the war and was ringing in churches around Dorset up until her 92nd birthday. Her husband, David, who was at University College took up ringing after leaving Oxford. They both became Honorary Life Members of the Salisbury Diocesan Guild in recognition of their contribution to ringing in the area. Stella died in Dorchester on 31st August 2020 aged 96 after suffering a stroke.

R Andrew Routh, Magdalen 1943, died 21st October 2020

Andrew originally came to Oxford in 1943 to study Classics but then enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He returned to Oxford in 1946, switching to the sciences and graduated from Magdalen in 1950. Having already learnt to ring at Beaconsfield as a teenager, his first peal was in 1947 at Lymington. He went on to ring four OUS peals between 1948 and 49.

Andrew remained an active ringer for most of his life, training over 150 students from Bedales School (where he taught Biology) and others at his home tower of All Saints' Steep, Hampshire. He rang at Steep for 60 years and became a Life Member of the Winchester & Portsmouth Diocesan Guild in 2005.

In 2014 he moved to Farnham, Surrey where he continued his ringing up to the age of 93. Andrew died peacefully at his care home on 21st October 2020 following a stroke aged 96. His father Rev R F Reginald Routh and brother Martin H Routh were also OUS members, as is granddaughter Katy.

Ruth M K How, Somerville 1947, died 29th June 2020

Ruth studied Physics at Somerville from 1947 to 1951. She learned to ring with the OUS and, in the Society History, described her time in Oxford as 'a golden age as regards enjoyment, though not as regards ringing standards', speaking fondly of her membership.

She rang 52 peals, 22 of which were for the Society. Included in these were her first peal, Plain Bob Major in hand on 21st June 1948 and the Society's first peal on 12 tower bells, Stedman Cinques at Aston in 1954.

After leaving Oxford, Ruth followed a career in teaching, working for a time as Headmistress of St Martin-in-the-Fields School for Girls, London. She joined the band at St Augustine's Kilburn in 1966 along with a number of other former OUS friends and became tower captain during the 1970s, training new ringers and ensuring established ringers had the opportunity to improve. On retirement she moved to Gloucestershire and was very involved with the church at Longborough where she rang and became church warden.

Ruth died at Cheltenham General Hospital on 29th June 2020 aged 91 years.

R James Cook, University 1949, died 9th January 2020

Jim arrived in Oxford in 1949 to study Chemistry at University College. He, and his brother Bill, had learned to ring whilst at St Paul's School in Barnes where he also developed his love for rowing. His first peal was Grandsire Triples at St Ebbe's, rung for the OUS on 14th March 1952. In total he rang 243 peals of which 27 were for the OUS, 10 on tower bells and 17 in hand.

On leaving Oxford he joined the Royal Artillery for his National Service but suffered a near fatal accident in Scotland which resulted in him spending several months in hospital in Hexham where the Newcastle ringers came and rang handbells for him.

He and Betty Wilcox (another OUS member) married in Bristol in 1956 and they had four children all of whom learned to ring at Beddington. His work took him on many overseas trips, particularly to Russia and Eastern Europe starting a rumour that he may be a spy!

Betty died in 2016 by which time Jim had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. Although his body was failing him he continued to live independently until his death on 9th January 2020, three days short of his 89th birthday.

Andrew N Stubbs, Hertford 1958, died 2nd April 2020

Andrew studied at Hertford College from 1958-61 and served as Master in 1959-60, was made a Vice President in 1968 and was President from 1982-99.

He learned to ring at Handsworth in Birmingham during the 1950s and rang a total of 2184 peals. He is the Society's 4th leading peal ringer having rung 138 Society peals between 1959 and 2013, stopping only when ill health curtailed his peal ringing career. Outside of his OUS ringing, Andrew was a well known figure in the ASCY, becoming a member in 1961 and serving as Master in 1968 and Treasurer from 1981 to 2006. He also represented the College Youths on the Central Council from 1975 and became a Life Member in 2008. He was also Master of the St Martin's Guild in Birmingham for 11 years and subsequently Life Vice President as well as a member of the Ringing World committee, later the Board from 1978 to 2002.

Andrew was a great organiser of holidays with his OUS friends: Lynton over the first May Bank Holiday and a weekend in November to take part in a Devon Call Change Competition at Molland, not to mention his famous canal trips. He also enjoyed music, sport and travelling. He travelled extensively on ringing tours throughout the world. More recently he had been on his own amazing trips to Iceland, South America, the Falklands and Antarctica, Alaska and Egypt. He had plans for more exciting trips in 2020, however he contracted Coronavirus just before the first lockdown and passed away on 2nd April 2020 aged 80.

Many of us have watched the recording of his funeral service, the live version having crashed as so many tried to log in to watch. A memorial event will be held at Birmingham Cathedral once restrictions on meeting together are lifted.

The OUS remembered him during our Virtual Tour Day and again on what would have been his 81st birthday on 9th October with 30 members and friends sharing their reminiscences. His unstinting presence and support of the OUS in so many ways will be missed immensely.

2021 Annual Tour

It will come as no surprise that we don't expect that a Tour will be possible this year. We extend our thanks to Laurence Odell for the work he did in preparation for the 2020 Tour to Yeovil, and hope that this organisation won't be completely in vain. Make a note of the 2022 dates in your diary! **Monday 4th - Thursday 7th April 2022**, being the pre-Holy Week week.

2022 - The OUS 150th Anniversary

2022 sees the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Society. We very much hope that social gatherings, the likes of which we haven't seen for a while, will be possible again by then. Plans are in the making for a gathering on **Saturday 1st October 2022**, so please make a note of this. Further details in due course.

Meeting Dates

The Society's business meetings are held on Mondays. For the time being, meetings are being held virtually, so members wishing to attend meetings are advised to contact an officer to determine how to join. Non-resident members are welcome to attend meetings of the student section, but are not entitled to vote at these meetings.

Student Section AGM: first Monday in Hilary term, 18th January 2021 (17th January 2022).
Student TGMs: first Monday in Trinity and Michaelmas terms, 26th April and 11th October

Senior Society AGM: the last Monday in Michaelmas term: 29th November

Society Funding

Last year's appeal for financial support resulted in a very welcome flood of contributions towards the Society's ongoing funding. While there is no need for additional support at this time, the Senior Treasurer is unlikely to refuse any donations that are sent his way! The General Secretary is only too happy to provide bank account details.

The Society's History

A number of Histories previously in possession of Andrew Stubbs have been added to the copies available for purchase. These are available for a minimum £5 donation to the Bell Restoration Fund. Contact the General Secretary to snap up your copy. Perfect lockdown reading.

Address List and Mailing List

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, get in touch with the General Secretary, who will try to put you in touch in a GDPR-compliant manner!

The Society also has a 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 by visiting <https://groups.google.com/g/ouscr> or by contacting the General Secretary.

Contact Details

You can contact the General Secretary by post at:

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