

Oxford University Society of Change Ringers

Annual Newsletter - January 2022

Officers

The following Society officers and officials were elected at the AGM held virtually on Monday 29th November 2021 via the Zoom platform:

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| 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 17th January 2022, also via Zoom.

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| Senior Member | William Poole, New College |
| Master | Alistair White-Horne, Somerville |
| Treasurer | Alice Gambles, Merton |
| Secretary | Julia Stadlmann, Merton |
| Librarian | Joe Bell, Merton |
| Steeplekeepers | Yuhan Jiang, St Peter's Tim Jenkins, Wadham |
| Webmaster | Finian Bassford, Somerville |

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:

Freddie Gingell, Magdalen 2017-21
Seamus Hargrave, St Stephen's House, 2017-21
Adam Rebick, Pembroke, 2016-19

Residents' Review

Ben White-Horne, immediate past Master, writes:

Ringling in the first two terms was mainly on Ringing Room, complemented by an increasing amount of handbell ringing as the weather got warmer. While the overwhelming feeling of the pandemic will be one of being apart, the accompanying rise of online ringing provided a unique opportunity to bring people together through long-distance online practices. Inspired by this, Stella Johnson (then CUG master) and I decided to run joint Oxford/Cambridge practices every other week. These were great fun and I gained many new friends through them. Long may good Oxford/Cambridge relations continue!

The annual tour and dinner both went ahead during lockdown - neither could be considered 'normal' but nonetheless were well-attended and very enjoyable. Eight quarter peals were attempted for dinner day, ranging from Minor through to Maximus. All eight were scored, clocking a total of 11 firsts.

In-person ringing is once again possible this term, finally allowing us to break out of our involuntary hibernation. A little bribery never goes amiss, particularly with students, so we brought free pizza to both Fresher's practices and advertised that at Freshers Fair. These practices turned out to be an absolute success: we had 18 complete beginners (corresponding to nearly half of the 44 sign-ups at our stall) and an equally good turnout from existing ringers. Even better, 14 of the beginners came back to the first practice of term.

The rest of the term has been going extremely well. Turnouts to practices have been excellent, even compared to before covid. On Tuesday nights, we've been running two practices (learners at 6:30, existing ringers at 7:30) to allow us to gently move the beginners into our practice when ready. After the expected drop-off at the start of term we've settled to around seven learners - a few invariably fizzle out from the extra workload, balanced out by people bringing along their friends. Our learners are now ringing handstrokes and backstrokes separately with a few putting the two together; impressive progress from one hour of one-on-two teaching each week.

The 'normal' practice is also doing extremely well: the turnout has been excellent, peaking at 21 people in 6th week. We quite reliably have a Surprise Major band and have been ringing everything from rounds and called changes through to simple Surprise. Sunday ringing is, for once, also well attended, reliably ringing on six or eight at Mary Mag. Even St Ebbe's has got somewhere from four to eight ringers. We had two quarter peal attempts of Surprise Major this term, both of which were scored. We even got an impromptu quarter of uncovered Stedman Doubles (honestly more difficult than Surprise).

Looking forward, I'm very optimistic about the future of the OUS. The society could easily have ground to a halt over a year and a half of relative inactivity but is instead in an extremely healthy state of activity. Therefore, I'd like to finish by thanking everyone who's helped in any way with keeping the society moving over the last year and helped it spring back into action.

President's Notes

Liz Barnes writes:

If one were describing 2021 as a weather report one might describe it as a mixture of sunshine (real life) and showers (virtual life). Sadly the COVID showers rained both on the Dinner and the Tour but in true OUS fashion we still managed to get together and have fun despite the circumstances.

The 2021 Dinner was held “virtually” on February 6th and was a great success. The suggested menu was taken from the book of Harris Manchester’s greatest hits (aka *From Kitchen to High Table* by David Woodfine) and a total of 130 people took part over the three days of the online Dinner weekend including quite a few faces who we have not seen at a real Dinner for many years. Our guest speaker was Professor Sarah Hart, Gresham Professor of Geometry and Professor of Mathematics at Birkbeck College (and non-ringer) who was introduced by Alex Byrne and spoke about her time in Oxford and subsequent career including the background to her interest in the mathematics of ringing. Drinking and online socialising took place both on the Friday night in an online Kings Arms and on the Saturday night in a virtual Harris Manchester College. The final revellers were ejected from the Zoom call at about 3am on the Sunday morning and all without the intervention of the police!

I should like to thank all of those members who made substantial donations to the Dinner account. These have allowed us to offer a generous reduction on the 150th Anniversary Dinner ticket price for those resident members who have not yet been able to attend a Dinner in person.

In place of the Annual Tour, which had to be cancelled for the second year running, we held a five hour Zoom pub session on Easter Monday which allowed 27 participants to do plenty of reminiscing about more normal times. I would like to thank Laurence Odell for his hard work in organising the Yeovil Tour twice – and hope that we can actually manage to hold it before too long.

We send our congratulations to Harriet Armitage and James Dann and to Laurence Odell and Emma Rouse on their respective marriages during the year as well as to Lucy Bricheno and Dougal Lichtman and to Rachel Croft and James Scott-Brown on the births of sons and to Catrin and James Morgan on the birth of a daughter.

In sadder news, we were very sad to hear of the death of a true OUS stalwart, David Darby (New College, 1958) on Christmas Day and send our deepest condolences to Christine and their family.

Details of the 150th Anniversary Dinner appear elsewhere in the newsletter and at the time of writing it is a sell out. It will be good to be able to meet together in real life. The 150th anniversary of the founding of the OUS is on the Wednesday before the Dinner and there will be a peal attempt at Drayton to mark this. We hope also to hold a daytime event in Oxford on October 1st.

The 2022 Tour will take place in and around Oxford during the week after Easter and is being coordinated by Chris Griggs with the assistance of Craig Robertson, Laurence Odell and Simon Bond. Although Easter week coincides with 0th week of Trinity Term we hope that the choice of venue means that residents will nevertheless still be able to join us on tour.

It has been heartening to know that the residents are back ringing again on real ropes in real towers with plenty of enthusiasm. Best wishes to the incoming committee and many thanks to those who have kept things going during “virtual” life.

2022 Annual Dinner

We look forward to the 2022 Annual Dinner taking place in real life, this year marking the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Society. The Dinner will take place as usual at Harris Manchester College on Saturday 5th February. We will meet at 7.15pm for the pre-dinner reception before sitting down for dinner at 7.30pm.

Tickets are now sold out. The guest speaker this year will be Rupert Littlewood, former President of the University of London Society. Martin Cansdale, himself an expert to the UL, will propose the toast to the guests and we look forward to hearing from the immediate Past Master with his review of the year. The menu is as follows:

*Chalk Stream Trout with Moselle Wine Sauce
Wild Mushroom, Tarragon and Madeira Risotto (V)*

*Roast Fillet of Beef with Celeriac Gratin, Glazed Baby Vegetables and Madeira Gravy
Bulgur Wheat Feta and Mint Croquette (V)*

*150th Anniversary Cake
Sparkling wine toast*

Cheeseboard with Port

Coffee & Chocolates

Pre-Dinner drinking will take place on Friday evening from 7pm in the upstairs room of the St Aldates Tavern with all members very welcome to attend.

Obituaries

Margaret Malpas (née Muir), St Anne's 1963, died 24th January 2011

Margaret Muir was born in 1945 and brought up in Twickenham. She attended St Paul's Girls School before being elected to an Exhibition to read French and Italian at St Anne's in 1963.

After graduating she took a BLitt and taught at Amsterdam University. She married the Hertford philosopher Richard Malpas in 1975 and became a lecturer in Linguistics based at Hertford but tutored throughout the university.

She fell ill at the beginning of Michaelmas Term 2010 and died on 24 Jan 2011. Her packed funeral took place in Hertford College chapel. She rang only one peal - Plain Bob Major at Warborough for the OUS on 14th November 1964.

Frances M Stephens (née Martin), St Anne's 1943, died 18th September 2021

Frances (known as "Fritz" at college) Martin came up to St Anne's in 1943 from Cornwall to read French. Also reading French at St Anne's in that year were Julia Preston (later Edge) and Rosemary Hood and at the beginning of Michaelmas Term in their second year they decided to try out bellringing. By the end of the first practice all three were, according to Julia Edge's account in the OUS History, hooked. As well as learning to handle at New College they all started to ring handbells and egged each other on but it was Frances who first rang a peal, in hand, on 15th December of that year. The three of them (known as, the Springfield Trio after the house where St Anne's was then based) rang a peal of Plain Bob Royal on handbells with John and Betty Spice in June 1945, less than nine months after taking up ringing, and later that year were in the first OUS Peal rung entirely by ladies. She rang a total of 14 peals, 12 for the OUS and eight of them in hand.

She went down in 1947 and returned to Cornwall. Although she rang no further peals after 1949, she continued ringing and was the Secretary of the St. Winnow ringers, as well as being churchwarden there, both for many years. She earned the title of Churchwarden Emeritus from the parish and was a regular speaker about local history matters well into her eighties. Predeceased by her husband Henry, she leaves three stepsons. At the time of her death, Frances was 95 years old and one of our most senior members.

Alec Osbaldiston, Queen's 1982, died 19th October 2021

Alec was born in February 1940 and grew up in Rhyl, moving to Marple in 1955. After a short time working at the Westminster Bank, he trained as a teacher at Chester College and Didsbury College before taking a teaching post in mathematics at Cleobury Mortimer in 1962, remaining there until his retirement in 1997. He became tower captain at Cleobury Mortimer not long after his arrival, a post he held for over 50 years.

He joined us in Oxford on a one year course at Queen's in 1982 and rang in one peal during the year for the OUS - Plain Bob Triples at Mary Mag. He became a Freeman of the Hereford Guild

in 2006 for his work helping to organise the Thomas Cooper Competition. Alec died aged 81 peacefully at home surrounded by his wife Margaret and family.

Alec is remembered here by Christine Darby:

“Alec learned to ring soon after I did at All Saints Marple, then in Cheshire in the mid 1950s. He was one of the band of youngsters trained by our inspired teacher Jack Pryor, many of whom later became very well known in ringing circles.

“I rang his first peal (my second) on Boxing Day 1956, at Fairfield, Buxton, no doubt much to the disgust of my parents! It was Bob Minor conducted, as were many of the band’s peals, by Brian Woodruffe.

“Alec and his younger brother Frank, who still rings in Cheshire, moved to Marple to be brought up by their grandparents, their parents having tragically died in an accident I believe.”

2022 Annual Tour

Owing to a mix-up with dates, the 2022 Tour will not be taking place in the pre-Holy Week slot as previously advertised. Instead a Tour based in Oxford will be held in Easter week, **Monday 18th - Thursday 21st April 2022** (note that this is 0th week of term). The week is being coordinated by Chris Griggs with individual days being organised by Laurence Odell, Craig Robertson and Simon Bond. It is expected that members will be able to arrange their own accommodation, and especially hoped that resident members will take the opportunity to join us where they might otherwise feel unable to afford a week away from home.

2022 - The OUS 150th Anniversary

2022 sees the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Society. All being well, large social gatherings will still be permitted later in the year allowing us to mark the occasion. 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, 17th January 2022 (16th January 2023).

Student TGMs: first Monday in Trinity and Michaelmas terms, 25th April and 10th October

Senior Society AGM: the last Monday in Michaelmas term: 28th November

Society Funding

Generous contributions from members over recent years have put the Society on a good financial footing. While there is no need for additional support at this time, the Senior Treasurer is always happy to receive contributions from members! The General Secretary is only too happy to provide bank account details.

The Society's History

As the Society reaches 150 years old, so the History reaches 25. Still covering 83% of the Society's lifetime, the History remains essential reading material for all members, historians of ringing, and those who need to prop up uneven furniture. Copies are available for the cost of postage plus a donation to the BRF. Contact the General Secretary.

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.

If you have OUS friends who are not on the mailing list, please send their details my way. Every year members get in touch who are not currently on the mailing list asking whether they can be added. The answer is always "yes"!

Contact Details

You can contact the General Secretary by e-mail at: gensec@ouscr.org.uk
or by telephone on: 07722 884389

I have been trying to move house since March 2021, and hope that maybe this year will go better! Anybody wanting my postal address should contact me by one of the above methods first.