

News from the Bell Tower

May 2025

Hello everyone!

My name is Jenny Bennett and I have recently taken over as Tower Captain of Wantage Bellringers at the Parish Church. One of my new responsibilities is to write a newsletter about what the bellringers get up to, which I hope you will find of interest.

It has been a busy time since our AGM in March:

The Big Clean: During Holy Week you will notice that we do not ring any bells, but as all the ringers are available, we get together for the annual 'Big Clean'. We sort old ropes, dust away the spiders webs, clean pigeon guano off the bells and other major cleaning tasks.



Here you will see our Steeple Keeper, Teifi, with Andy and Richard working amongst the bells.

Wellbeing Event: Bellringing is shrouded in mystery for many people, so we were pleased to be invited to organise a table at the recent Wellbeing Event at the Beacon to explain what we do, the wellbeing benefits and how to get involved.



Dick, Sarah and Robert manned the Bellringers' table at the Beacon Wellbeing Event

The Haines Change: Parishioner Andrew Haines is a keen supporter of bellringing in Wantage, so we were delighted when he was recognised in the 2025 New Year's Honours' List and subsequently invested at Windsor Castle. To mark the occasion, and as a thank you for his contribution to our bellringing, we dedicated our exciting discovery (after a lot of research) of a previously un-named 'change' (the order in which the bells are rung) to him.

We rang the change for the first time on Sunday 4 May, and officially named it. Details of the newly christened change have been submitted to Bellboard, an online forum for bellringers worldwide and presented to Andrew in the form of a certificate:

Oxford Diocesan Guild

On Sunday, 4 May 2025

Wantage, Oxfordshire

St Peter and St Paul

Tenor: 21-2-15 in D

50 Call Changes

7 5 1 2 3 4 6 8

Graham Stoter

Andy Bennett (C)

Teifi Walters

Sarah Macdonell

Dick Peters

David Endacott MBE

Robert Haine

Duncan Francis

Jenny Bennett

Liz Woodhouse

Andrew Haines OBE has been recognised this year in the Honours List and was invested recently at Windsor. He is a local parishioner and great supporter of Bellringing at Wantage. During Service Ringing today we rang the following, previously unnamed change 7 5 1 2 3 4 6 8. We would now like to formally call this change 'Haines' and offer our congratulations to Sir Andrew on his knighthood.

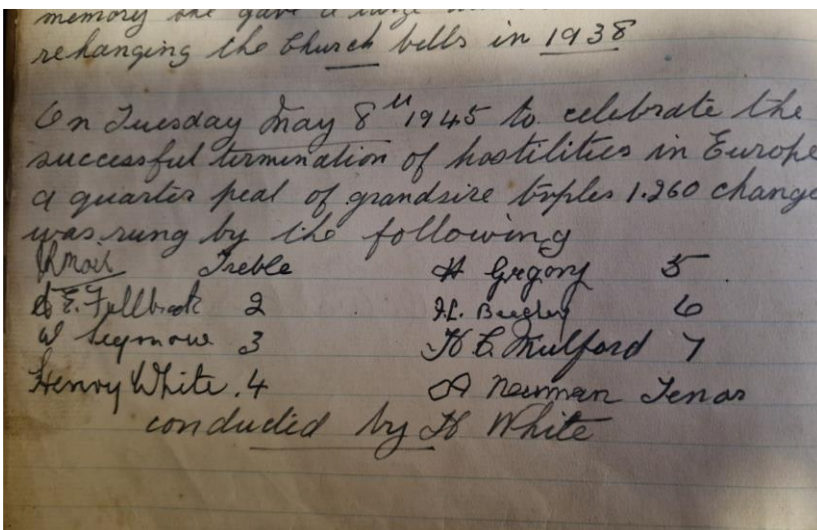


*Sunday Service Band Left to Right;
Sarah Macdonell, Robert
Haine, Andy Bennett, Jenny Bennett,
Graham Stoter, Duncan
Francis, David Endacott, Liz
Woodhouse, Dick Peters, Teifi Walters*

VE80: Our bellringers played an important part in Wantage's celebrations to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe this month. We rang before the Service for Peace on Sunday 4 May at the Parish Church, trying to reflect the sequences rung in the Tower on VE Day in 1945. Graham found an entry to say that the ringing had included Grandsire Triples, so we made sure we rang the same thing 80 years later:

Oxford Diocesan Guild
 On Sunday, 4 May 2025
Wantage, Oxfordshire
 St Peter and St Paul
 Tenor: 21-2-15 in D
92 Grandsire Triples and Call Changes

Karen Powell
 Liz Woodhouse
 Jenny Bennett
 Sarah Macdonell
 Graham Stoter
 Andy Bennett
 David Powell (C)
 Duncan Francis
 Dick Peters
 Robert Haine
 Teifi Walters
 Dave Endacott



General Ringing including a touch of Grandsire Triples, as rung in 1945 in this tower

The Central Council of Church Bellringers also suggested that as many bellringers as possible ring at 6.30pm on the actual anniversary of VE Day, Thursday 8 May. Wantage bellringers joined with hundreds of other churches across the country who were all ringing their bells at the same time. As we finished at 7pm we were just in time to hear the Town Crier reading the words that King George VI said in 1945, followed by the speech of Winston Churchill



The team after the General Ringing to mark VE80, prior to the Town Crier reading the speeches made by King George VI and Winston Churchill on 8 May 1945.

Wantage Bellringers' Open Day: On Monday 5 May the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers organised an Open Day. All the towers in our 'Branch' were open for an hour each during the day, where ringers from all over the country could come and ring our bells. Wantage was open from 6pm until 7pm and we had nearly 60 visitors during that hour. This was quite a challenge as we only have 8 bells and the access to the tower is narrow!

My thanks to the team for making it happen!

I hope this gives you some insight to what the Bellringers get up to and the role we play in the life of the parish – and in particular the Parish Church.

In our next newsletter, we hope to share with you a little of the history of the bells and some of the major events they have been involved in .

We are always keen to welcome new ringers, both experienced and new! In particular, it is our ambition to introduce more young people to bellringing.

If you would like to know more about us – or to come along – please email me at: bellringers@wantageparish.com or contact the Parish Administrator at administrator@wantageparish.com

Jenny Bennett
Tower Captain