Guild Report

# Bicester Branch

In February at our AGM at Kirtlington we were delighted to elect 11 new members, including 3 who are contributing to the resurgence of ringing in Weston-on-the-Green. Our Branch officers remained the same but sadly during the year three well respected members died – Stephen Cameron (Tower Captain at Charlton-on-Otmoor) in April, Philip Curtis (formerly Stratton Audley) in August, and Tony Pearce (Tower Captain at Piddington) in September. They are all much missed.

Our 15 Branch practices have been well attended with a range of ringing at most – additionally two focussed practices, of doubles methods, have been held in Kirtlington and Bletchingdon in May. Three members have rung their first quarters – Charlie Bates (Kirtlington), Gareth Ricketts (Charlton-on-Otmoor) and Sue Carter (Islip) - and three others from Weston-on-the-Green: Mandy Jones, Andrew Wilkinson, Gerald Bushby, plus Sally Cross (Bletchingdon) have achieved ART LtR Level 2; Sue Carter, and Rosemarie Weigand ART LtR Level 3; Charlie Bates ART LtR Level 4. In January Steve Vickars conducted his first quarter peal (subsequently conducting 9 more in 2019) and also in January three members rang their first quarter of Triples inside – Ellie Seddon (latterly Kirtlington), Jeremy Adams (Stratton Audley), and myself – with helpful conducting by Richard Haseldine. It’s encouraging to see so much activity at all levels in the Branch.

We had a successful outing in April (20 ringers from 5 branches) to Gloucestershire (Northleach, Sherbourne, Windrush, Taynton, Fulbrook and Astall) with the warm Easter weather a – now – distant memory and then the striking competition and barbecue in Islip in September when 45 members of the Branch (and supporters) came – Ludgershall were the winners and seven teams took part including a band of young ringers.

The Branch hosted the Spring Committee meeting at Kirtlington in March and the ART M1 course when 16 delegates (including Andrew Wilkinson) spent the day enhancing their teaching bell handling skills. Four Bicester Branch ringers (Anne Martin, Launton, Sue Paine, Ludgershall, and Charlie Bates) attended the Steeple Aston course, and Andrew Wilkinson a Tower and Belfry course (in preparation for the improvements which are in prospect in 2020 at Weston-on-the-Green). Steve Vickars attended the Michaelmas course in September, followed by his first quarter of Stedman Triples in November. We are delighted too that Charlie Bates has been part of the Young Ringers of the ODG group this year.

Finally, Bob Hessian, Tower Captain at Weston-on-the-Green for many years, has decided to retire – many thanks to him for all his efforts over the years.

Full details of all activities are given at <http://www.bicesterbranch.org.uk/>

Kathryn Grant