Guild Report 2018

# Bicester Branch

We held our AGM in Bicester on an evening in March following a Branch Practice and elected one new member to double the Bletchingdon band. Approximately a quarter of the Branch’s membership were present and, apart from electing Steve Vickars as website officer, all other officers stayed in post.

There has been a resurgence of activity within the Branch led, in part by more participation at Branch Practices (a couple at Bletchingdon were almost too popular) and ringing quarter peals. We started the year with a quarter peal as an 80th birthday compliment to President, Willie Haynes, rung by Branch members. Two of our newer ringers, Steve Vickars and Ellie Seddon, both of Kirtlington, rang over 20 in the year (and, taught by Steve, Ellie became the 100th ringer to achieve Level 5 ART certificate). Gus Bridges, Bletchingdon rang his first quarter, Jill Bailey, Anne Martin and Sue Macready their 4th whilst Richard and Jan Haseldine rang about 20 including one, with their son in Yorkshire, to celebrate the birth of their grandson.

In addition, following a taster evening in July in Weston-on-the-Green, run by Lesley Belcher of the North Bucks Branch under the auspices of ART, nine individuals started to learn bell handling and made enough progress to ring on 11 November on the centenary of the Armistice along with every tower in the Bicester Branch. We, in the Bicester Branch, owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to fellow ringers who have so willingly given of their time to teach a new band.

Our Branch outing was held in April to 5 towers in the Old North Berks Branch where Steve Vickars, our organiser, had grown up. Although only fifteen ringers from three branches were able to come we rang at Drayton, Milton, Steventon, West Hanney, and Marcham.

We held our striking competition and BBQ on 1 September in Islip. Ludgershall and Islip entered tower teams, but we mustered five separate teams with the gentlemen’s team somehow winning the trophy. Thanks to all who helped, took part and particularly to Philip Curtis who expertly judged the teams’ efforts.

Sadly on 8 April John Harris of Launton died after a long period of ill health – he was our Vice-President for many years and known to retain his interest in ringing and the Bicester Branch to the end. May he rest in peace.

Kathryn Grant