

**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS  
BICESTER BRANCH**

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT WESTON ON THE GREEN  
ON SATURDAY 22nd FEBRUARY 2014**

**(1) OPENING REMARKS**

Mrs Teresa Carter (Vice President) took the chair. She thanked Mrs Penny Wood for taking the service, and Mr Bob Hessian for making the arrangements and playing the organ for the meeting. She welcomed 12 members of the Branch to the meeting and the Guild Steward. The Vice President asked those present to stand to remember, with affection, past President, Cliff East (RIP July 2013).

**(2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Robert Newton, James Champion, Sue Macready, Michael MacArthur, Keith Thomas

**(3) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of 23 February 2013 which had been circulated and made available on the Branch website were accepted on the proposal of Jeremy Adams, seconded by Anthony Cole, and signed.

**(4) MATTERS ARISING**

None

**(5) CORRESPONDENCE**

None

**(6) OFFICERS' REPORTS**

- *Secretary (Kathryn Grant)*

Bicester Branch's AGM was held on 23 February at Ludgershall – held with some speed due to the cold and lack of change of Branch officers or business.

The happy event of the year was the augmentation to six at St Mary the Virgin, Weston-on-the-Green and the return of all the bells to a ringable state by the end of the year. The re-dedication of the bells was held on 5 May and congratulations are due to Tower Captain, Bob Hessian, who managed the project, and to Taylors who completed the work.

Our outing on 23 March had to be cancelled due to snow but was rearranged for the autumn when we went to the Newbury area – ringing by only a handful of members at Brightwalton, Chieveley, Speen and Thatcham – but enjoyed very much by those who came.

Sadly, in June, our former President, Cliff East, died after a long and happy life – he held most positions in the Branch over the years: as secretary, branch representative, ringing master, Vice President and President, as well as Tower Captain in Ludgershall. He will be missed by all who knew, and rang, with him.

In September we held our Branch striking competition and barbecue with three teams competing for the Cliff East shield – won narrowly by the home team, Islip – a veil is best drawn over the Branch's subsequent appearance at the Guild striking competition.

Two noteworthy quarters have been recorded this year – the first to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ringing on 16 April of our joint ringing master and webmaster, Anthony Cole, and the second on 13 December to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the Bicester Branch (both at St Edburg's, Bicester). Elsewhere ringing throughout the Branch during the year has been steady – for weddings with further quarters and peals for wedding anniversaries notably at Brill, service ringing and the encouraging news of some Branch ringers (Anne Martin, Ali McConnell and Hilary Wallbank) taking part as students at the Steeple Aston course.

On the proposal of Anthony Cole, seconded by John Hadfield, the report was adopted.

All in favour.

- *Treasurer (Sally Wale)*

The Current Account stands at £1,707.94, £776.00 above the incoming balance for the previous year. Subscriptions were £568.00 and Wedding donations were £190. The Deposit Account stands at £7,686.50 with the Central Board of Finance, Church of England Funds. Interest accrued this year was £43.78 with interest down to 0.500%. Donations of £75 were sent to ODG Bell Fund and to the Bell Restoration Fund.

Ringers went down from 79 to 71 last year. The payment of subscriptions were received promptly on the whole this year, all were completed by the end of March (the dead line for Guild insurance purposes). Tower Captains have been reminded again and it is hoped that this year we will have the same response.

Our Bell Ringing Outing, held on 19<sup>th</sup> October, attracted few ringers and made a loss as the cost of the tower fees outweighed the ringers' contributions. The deficit was £17.00 - paid out of Branch funds.

The accounts have been audited this year by David Hughes one of the Islip Church Wardens and I have written to thank him on behalf of the Branch. I have also written to Les Harris to thank him for the many years of support he gave us auditing the accounts.

On the proposal of Jeremy Adams, seconded by Jill Bailey, the report was adopted.

- *Report from Guild Representative (Keith Thomas)*

*The March meeting of the General Committee of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers was held at Kidlington – although the branch was unrepresented at the meeting this is a resume: future issues of the Guild report and/ or Odd Bob may carry advertisements; the Education Subcommittee reported that 3 courses have been run since the previous report. The Radley course was slightly oversubscribed and ran with five groups catering for Plain Hunt up to basic Triples. The Steeple Aston course ran with 25 students in 5 groups covering hunting to plain Minor. The Michaelmas course was under subscribed and again ran with three groups catering for Stedman Triples, basic Surprise Major and advanced Surprise Major.*

An educational grant of £100, from Marsworth towards the cost of a simulator, had been received and approved. Details of the grants scheme are on the Guild website at: <http://odg.org.uk/education/#GRANTS>.

The Young Ringers Award Scheme is currently running with nine participants. It started in April 2013 and will run to the end of March 2014, with awards presented at the 2014 AGM. A training meeting is planned for Saturday 1st February 2014. This is an opportunity for people involved in training within branches to hear and exchange ideas about training. It will again include both discussion in the morning and practical work in the early afternoon, with lunch together in between.

The Towers & Belfries Subcommittee had carried out 18 inspections/visits which included a general inspection at Kirtlington and a Grant inspection at Weston-on-the Green. A bell maintenance course took place on 11<sup>th</sup> May attended by eleven people. Feedback was positive but it is felt that in future the courses should be less frequent as more of the potential candidates will have attended one. A mini-maintenance course will be run for those participating in the Young Ringers Award Scheme.

A paper to help people construct a rope drier to reduce the problem of stiff ropes in damp weather has been added to the Guild web site.

A paper has been prepared on aligning clappers to reduce wear which has been added to the Guild web-site as a technical paper and will also be used to update the Guild's maintenance booklet.

All towers in the Guild should be aware of the existence of the Towers & Belfries committee and the advice and assistance that it can offer. Several requests for inspections have resulted.

A Health and Safety issue which has recently been highlighted is the position of the lighting switch in the ringing room. In some towers this is a unprotected tumbler switch set at or about shoulder level and where someone leaning against it can plunge the ringing room into darkness – causing an “interesting” situation if ringing is in full flow! The other, possibly dangerous situation is for the lighting in an upstairs ringing room to be controlled from a switch somewhere in the church below. If this is the case in your church it should be brought to the attention of the PCC, pointing out, if necessary, that they will now have the liability if nothing is done and an accident occurs due to the lights being switched off.

18% of Towers in the Guild (from 9 of the 15 branches) participate in the Tower Maintenance Award scheme (none from the Bicester Branch however).

*The Bicester Branch was represented at the November meeting of the General Committee of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers held at Thatcham.* There were some general points: The Master was pleased with the amount of ringing that had taken place for St George's Day. He had received advance notice of the intention to ring from 20 towers and a few others retrospectively.

David Middleton of Great Brickhill had contacted the Master to ask what the Guild insurance covers, as he had a raw learner who suffered a minor ear injury and there was now a threat of legal action against him, as her instructor. The Great Brickhill PCC seems to be under the impression that as David Middleton 'has personal insurance through the ODG', they do not need to cover him. A note about what the Guild insurance does and does not cover will be circulated soon so that PCCs can be made aware. The Guild insurance would cover accidents that warrant time away from employment or that cause permanent disability.

#### Restoration and Bell Funds

7 branches had so far made donations to the Restoration Fund this year. He had received 6 applications for grants. Grants had been paid to Thatcham, Adderbury and Weston-on-the-Green (which had been augmented from five to six). John Davidge said that he had been asked to inspect Weston-on-the-Green but the grant had already been paid. The Guild Treasurer pointed out that a Bell Fund grant would not be made until an inspection confirmed that the work had been satisfactorily completed.

Donations to the Bell Fund have reached over £7,000 in 2013, compared with a total of £13,000 in 2012. The Treasurer expressed the hope that there was more to come: he thanked the 14 branches that had made donations to date. Grant applications have been received from Horley and Weston-on-the-Green, and grants have been paid to Cheddington and SMV Oxford.

#### Guild Striking Competitions

Kathy Bossom suggested that the rules of the 6-bell striking competition be changed to allow people from several towers to ring together as a band. Diana Slevin reported that the winning band in her branch contest refused to enter the Guild competition and no other tower was confident to do so. Ken Davenport pointed out that it was up to the branch to select a representative team within the rules in whatever way it thought fit. Bill Butler gave some background to the 6-bell competition, which was the start of such contests within the Guild (and in 2014 will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 6 bell competition). Branches had needed to organise their own competition in order to find a representative band. The later 8- and 10-bell competitions were different. Richard White felt that to open the 6-bell competition to branch bands would dilute the benefit of striking competitions to the towers. The above points are to be discussed by the F&GP subcommittee, which will then report to the March 2014 General Committee meeting. Any further suggestions that General Committee members would like put forward should be sent to the General Secretary. Richard Marshall thanked the meeting for the discussion and suggested that an introduction about the striking competitions and the reasons for the rules be circulated to members rather than making changes.

The subscription remains at £8, with the split (£5/£3) unchanged.

The Ringing World Roadshow will be held at Newbury Racecourse on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

On the proposal of Jeremy Adams, seconded by Sally Wale, the report was adopted.

- *Branch Ringing Masters* (A.C.Cole & J Adams)

As last year we've had two practices each month – a branch practice to help the local band wherever we are visiting, and a special practice with set methods to give us something to work towards.

The branch practices have in the most been well attended and the only tower we didn't get enough to ring at this year was Ambrosden though one Bicester practice was also a close run thing where we only managed Plain Bob Minimus! We mostly managed Grandsire Doubles and Plain Bob Doubles or Minor, but we did manage Grandsire Triples last March and at Bicester this January.

The special practices each month have also been fairly well attended. As suggested at our last meeting I added a couple more Grandsire Doubles practices at Bletchington and they were all very well attended. The other special practices have been mixed – we have often managed one of the two methods proposed, but also we have added other methods to cater for those who attend. We did manage some slightly different and unusual methods at the other special practices such as St Nicholas Doubles, New Bob Doubles, Little Bob Minor and Grandsire Minor.

Our outing in March had to be cancelled because of snowfall, but was rearranged in the Autumn instead. I am a little disappointed that we only had 7 ringers as this meant we were unable to appreciate all the bells at the 8 and 10 bell towers, but we had a good (if eventful) day out with a pub meal and a trip to Kwikfit on the way home! This year's outing will be in the Springtime – Kathryn has kindly volunteered to organise this so I am sure we will be receiving details soon.

We held our branch striking competition in Islip again. We only had 3 tower teams this year, but the standard of ringing was very good with all teams scoring above 90%. My thanks to Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Louise Brown and Liz Lawrence for judging, to Kathryn and the Islip ringers who organised the venue and the catering.

The branch celebrated its centenary in December and despite the proximity to Christmas a band was eventually formed to ring a quarter peal at Bicester to mark the occasion.

This coming year's practices will follow a similar format with mostly two practices a month though in July I have proposed a Ringing Up & Down course instead of a branch practice and there will be no special practice in August as too many people seem to be away in August.

On the proposal of Fay Harris, seconded by Jeremy Adams, the report was adopted.

- *Website Manager (Anthony Cole)*

The branch website was moved to new hardware in July of last year and I continue to add posts detailing all branch events. My thanks to Ian Smart for submitting a report on the most recent branch practice at Kirtlington that I was unable to attend. As well as branch events I have also added a number of interesting articles about ringing items that are reported in the media so please do go and take a look if you are able. Equally if you find something that might be interesting to the other ringers in the branch please do email me the details and I'll endeavour to add it to the website.

On the proposal of Kathryn Grant, seconded by Sally Wale, the report was adopted.

#### **(7) ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

The following new members were elected:

Simon White (Bicester)	P: Anthony Cole	S: Sarah Cole
Alex Pykett (Bicester)	P: Anthony Cole	S: Sarah Cole
Kate Hessian (Weston-on-the-Green)	P: Bob Hessian	S: Anthony Cole

#### *Transfer*

Ian Smart from Tingewick to Bicester

Hannah Smart from Tingewick to Bicester

#### **(8) ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

President: Willie Haynes	P: Fay Harris	S: Anthony Cole
Vice Presidents: John Harris and Teresa Carter	P: Kathryn Grant	S: Sarah Cole
Secretary: Kathryn Grant	P: Anthony Cole	S: Jeremy Adams
Treasurer: Sally Wale	P: Jeremy Adams	S: Sarah Cole
Guild Representative: Anne Martin	P: Teresa Carter	S: Fay Harris
Thanks were expressed to Keith Thomas for previously undertaking this role.		
Branch Ringing Master: Anthony Cole	P: Teresa Carter	S: Sally Wale
Deputy Branch Ringing Master: Jeremy Adams	P: Teresa Carter	S: Sally Wale
Website Manager: Anthony Cole	P: Sally Wale	S: Willie Haynes

#### **(9) GUILD EVENTS**

- Spring General Committee Meeting on Saturday 8 March 2014 (Purley on Thames)
- Radley course on 29 March

*St George's Day, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, suggested ringing at 6pm*

- Annual Ringing Day on 5 May 2014 hosted by the Witney and Woodstock Branch
- Guild AGM on 17 May 2014 hosted by the North Bucks Branch
- Centenary of First World War – Monday 4 August
- Michaelmas Training Day on Saturday 27 September venue TBC
- 6 bell striking competition on 4 October hosted by Old North Berks Branch
- Steeple Aston course on 25 October in Steeple Aston
- Autumn General Committee Meeting and Guild 10 bell striking competition (Bicester Branch) 22 November

#### **(10) DONATIONS TO BELL FUND AND RESTORATION FUND OF ODG**

On the proposal of Kathryn Grant, seconded by Willie Haynes £100 will be given to each fund. All in favour.

#### **(11) CHURCH COLLECTION**

The collection at the service would be given to Weston-on-the Green.

#### **(12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

AGM on Saturday 21 February morning (proposed for Launton). It was noted that it would be beneficial if each branch tower could be represented by at least one member at the AGM.