

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS BICESTER BRANCH

MINUTES AGM HELD AT BLETCHINGDON SATURDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2020

(1) OPENING REMARKS Mrs Teresa Carter (Vice President) took the chair. She welcomed 18 other members, from 9 towers, of the Branch to the meeting (as well as the Guild Steward, Colin Lee) and called first for a minute's silence in memory of Steve Cameron, Philip Curtis and Tony Pearce. She expressed her thanks to Sue Macready for the arrangements for the meeting; Penny Wood for taking the service; and Steve Vickars for playing the organ. A retiring collection was given to St Giles, Bletchingdon.

(2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Gus Bridges, Ricky Shaw, Hilary Walbank, David Grimshaw, Sue Paine, Elaine Morley, Jan Smith, Pam Newall, Chris & Jane Singleton

(3) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING The minutes of 16 February 2019, which had been made available on the Branch website, were accepted on the proposal of Sue Macready, seconded by Michael MacArthur, and signed.

(4) MATTERS ARISING None

(5) CORRESPONDENCE A request had been received from Weston-on-the-Green for a grant towards the first phase of the work to soundproof the ringing chamber (for which a Faculty has been received) at the cost of about £15,000 (to which the PCC have committed £10,000 and fundraised another £3,000). £1,500 was proposed from Branch funds by Jeremy Adams; seconded by Judith Vickars and all in favour.

(6) OFFICERS' REPORTS

Secretary (Kathryn Grant) and Branch Ringing Master (Jeremy Adams)

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 Kathryn Grant – 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/>

On the proposal of Sally Wale, seconded by Sue Macready, the report was adopted. All in favour.

[Treasurer \(Sally Wale\)](#)

On 31st December 2019 the Current Account stood at £726.28, cash £99.15 and the Deposit Account at £6856.90, which is invested with the Church of England Central Board of Finance. The interest we received for the year was £51.55.

Interest rate was 0.75% this year.

Subscriptions were £552.00, (69 ringers) and wedding donations £80.00. We have an increase of ringers this year by 4, but wedding donations are down. Donations of £150 were sent to ODG for the Bell Fund and to the Bell Restoration Fund. Subscriptions to the Guild were £345 (£5 for each ringer).

The Treasurer has continued to produce two summaries: the landscape edition used for audit purposes, the small picture and the landscape edition for the Guild, and the current and previous years can be compared. The handwritten ledger is no longer used.

There are still no ringers at Fritwell, Ambrosden nor Souldern.

Tower Captains have been reminded about their annual subscriptions and are responding.

The accounts have been audited again this year by Chris Rippon (Treasurer of the Islip Village Hall Committee), and has been thanked on behalf of the Branch.

The Treasurer announced her wish to stand down from her position and was warmly thanked for her work on behalf of the Branch over the last fifteen years.

On the proposal of Steve Vickars, seconded by Teresa Carter, the report was adopted. All in favour.

[Report from Guild Representative \(Anne Martin\)](#)

Guild Publications: *Odd Bob* – Printed May and November - Next Issue May 2020 and an Annual Report

Guild website <http://odg.org.uk/>

Future of the Guild

The Guild considers that it needs to modernise and raise its profile with both members and the wider community.

It would like to develop a PR group. One idea was to provide a package of information about the Guild for new members. Any suggestions should be sent

to the Guild Master.

Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund/ Restoration Fund

At an EGM in November 2019, a proposal to merge the Bell Fund (ODBF) and the Restoration Fund (ODGRF) was approved.

Objects

The objects of both charities are pretty much identical (slightly different words are used), with the exception that the ODGRF supports augmentation work, where it is explicitly excluded by the ODBF. It is intended that the merged entity will support augmentation work.

To achieve this the following actions would be required:

i) Change the ODBF rules to remove the word “augmentation” from the exclusions.

ii) Update the objects of the ODBF and submit the revisions to the Charities Commission/HMRC

When the merger has taken place, there will be one fund dealing with repair, maintenance and renewal, and also augmentation.

This merger was registered as at 31st December 2019.

Loughborough Foundry fundraising

In 2009 the bellfoundry came close to being lost forever. A small group of individuals bought the business out of administration and saved the bellfoundry at the very last minute. Over the following years they relaunched the business and set up the Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust – allowing the manufacturing of the finest sounding bells in the world once again.

In 2017, the other major British bellfoundry at Whitechapel closed; this has left Loughborough as the last major bellfoundry in Britain.

Whilst the business is in good fettle, the historic bellfoundry is not. After 150 years of severe wear and tear the site is in a perilous condition and there is a risk that without major investment it could vanish. Parts of the site are already unsafe and unusable and the Trust is fighting a losing battle to undertake urgently needed repairs.

The Trust is working with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and hopes to secure final approval for a grant of £3.8m in 2020 to contribute towards a package of £5m+ repairs. However, it needs to raise £1.1m from other sources to secure the Lottery grant and make the plans a reality. They need your urgent support to do this.

<https://loughboroughbellfoundry.org/how-you-can-give-and-donate/>

Training

All of the regular courses took place successfully in 2019. The Guild thanks all involved in organising and helping with them. However, it was noted that the Michaelmas course only had 14 applications out of a membership of 1400.

The Guild is reviewing its training offerings and a Training Meeting will be held on 21st March (venue TBC) to discuss current Learning and Development offerings and their value; Ideas for the future (what’s missing and what can we do better); Youth development

Any views on these can be forwarded to edcchairman@odg.org.uk

The Guild has somewhere in the region of 140 ringers under the age of 21 and is keen to develop and retain the younger element of our membership and address problems of bringing them together to ring, as they are geographically widely spread. To this end a youth ‘Roadshow’ is planned.

Last year, the Guild Youth Team managed to meet monthly in various locations

to develop their striking skills in preparation for the Ringing World National Youth Striking Competition. The contest was held in Liverpool, and the team, having worked extremely hard, was placed first and brought home the Whitechapel Trophy for the first time. A fantastic achievement for them.

The Guild is always looking for new blood in this group and would be pleased to hear from any young ringers under the age of 18 who can hunt the treble to Triples unaided as a minimum.

[Towers and Belfries Committee](#)

Still looking for new members in the East and North East of the Guild.

You do not need to be “experienced” in belfry matters but must have a practical outlook, be keen & able to learn and work as part of a team. Please contact Tony Crabtree if you are interested.

There will be three courses in 2020:

1. A rope course at Radley was held on 8th February
2. General tower course on 6th June at Leckhampstead (NBucks)
3. General tower course on 19th September at Ivinghoe.

Invitations for all these courses will go out in due course.

There is a big demand for rope splicing and the Guild is happy to support local courses with tuition.

The Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) scheme continues and towers are encouraged to join in. There are 22 “current” awards and a further 28 recently “expired”, representing 50 towers or about 19% of the ODG. Inspections are free and there is lots to be gained from the inspection and the advice you may receive, so please get in touch if you would like a visit.

Besides doing TMA inspections and grant inspections, members are happy to come and give general advice too. If you want to book a visit, you have only to ask the Secretary or Chairman who can then find the nearest member to come and have a look.

The sub-committee is producing a series of technical notes to help steeplekeepers, which can be downloaded from the website

<http://odg.org.uk/towers-and-belfry-committee/>

subjects so far: Emergency Lighting; Risk Assessment; Correcting Oddstruckness; Clapper Bush Wear; Friendly Rope End Drier

[Finance](#)

Guild Budget

Had slightly higher expenditure last year due to the Youth Competition in Liverpool. This year is expected to be similar with the event being held in York. Subscriptions to remain at £8, no change to peal fees.

[Quorum for AGM](#)

It was proposed that at the AGM we should consider a change to the Guild rules on the AGM quorum (currently 50) with either no limit or a lower number. There was discussion on the best way to progress this. If the AGM has other events it can prove very popular, but in some areas parking is an issue. Hosting the 8 bell competition beforehand may help with numbers.

A proposal for a quorum of 25 was not supported.

On the proposal of Judith Vickars, seconded by Kathryn Grant, the report was adopted. All in favour.

[Website Manager \(Steve Vickars\)](#)

26 articles have been submitted to the website in the past year, including reports for each branch practice, branch outing, striking competition, focussed practices and training courses.

Last year we introduced a "Contact us" form to the website, which has been useful to potential new ringers and by visiting bands wishing to book visits to towers in the branch.

"Lies, damn lies and Statistics"

Since the introduction of a plugin for visitor statistics in February 2019 this tool shows that on average the branch site has had about five visitors per day. The daily average fell below that number between July and December 2019, but has since picked up, possibly as a result of more frequent updates.

After the home page the most popular posts and pages have included the Bicester Branch Outing April 2019 (45 visits), the Striking Competition (35 visits), the Special Practice at Souldern in October (31 visits) and the report of the ART Module M1 course at Kirtlington (31 visits).

Of the tower pages, Brill appears to be most popular with 119 hits with Charlton with 56 hits.

Of the web browsers that visitors use, Chrome, unsurprisingly, is the most popular (60%), Gecko/Mozilla with 23% and Firefox 12%. Most visitors arrive via a Google search or bookmark (75%), a link on Facebook (23%) or from the ODG site (7%).

Branch Web Site Hosting

We have been indebted to Anthony Cole for several years for hosting the Bicester Branch website and maintaining the distribution lists and calendar.

Work is now under way to set up the new Branch website on the ODG server, with a test site established and being further developed. The Website Manager has been in contact with the ODG Web Team to establish a new set of distribution lists for officers, towers and Branch members, which will allow us to maintain directly the lists and keep them current, also to hold more distribution lists for particular groups within the Branch.

It is expected the new Branch site will be launched this summer.

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

(7) ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

The following new members were elected:

Melanie Vallance (Ludgershall) Proposed: Richard Haseldine Seconded: Jan Haseldine

Christine McCormack (Kirtlington) Proposed: Steve Vickars Seconded: Judith Vickars

Alison Waters (Stratton Audley) Proposed: Jeremy Adams Seconded: Fay Harris
Transfer of Andy Windmill, Sue Paine & Elaine Morley to the Bicester Branch from the Central Bucks Branch is noted as is the return of James Carter from Southampton to the Bicester Branch.

(8) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were elected: President: Willie Haynes Proposed: Teresa Carter S: Jeremy Adams

Vice Presidents: Jeremy Adams Proposed: Kathryn Grant S: Mandy Jones

Vice Presidents: Teresa Carter Proposed: Willie Haynes S: Sally Wale

Secretary: Kathryn Grant Proposed: Sally Wale S: Sue Macready

Treasurer: Anne Martin Proposed: Steve Vickars S: Teresa Carter

Guild Representative: Anne Martin Proposed: Jeremy Adams S: Sue Macready

Training Officer: Steve Vickars Proposed: Teresa Carter S: Andrew Wilkinson

Joint Ringing Master: Jeremy Adams Proposed: Richard Haseldine S: Anne Martin

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Joint Website Manager: Steve Vickars Proposed: Judith Vickars S: Kathryn Grant
Joint Website Manager: Gus Bridges Proposed: Judith Vickars S: Kathryn Grant

(9) GUILD/ BRANCH EVENTS TO BE NOTED

(10) DONATION TO THE BELL FUND

On the proposal of Sue Macready, seconded by Richard Haseldine £300 will be given to the newly merged fund. All in favour.

(11) First ¼ Guild certificates had been prepared for presentation to Gareth Ricketts and Sue Carter.

(12) GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Branch outing around the Milton Keynes area was enthusiastically received. The possibility of holding the Branch striking competition on 12 September (instead of the 5th) was noted.

The appointment of the auditor for the 2020 accounts to be confirmed.

Following the circulation of Marianne Fisher's article in *The Ringing World*

13.12.2019 with ideas on pooling resources for practices these were some of the views expressed:

- monthly branch practices are open to all whilst the monthly special practices with proposed ringing of nominated methods should be publicised more widely with the hope of attracting ringers able to attempt them;
- in advance of the practice it would be helpful to have definite attendance notified so that a special practice fulfils its intended aim;
- focussed practices with experienced ringers meets the needs of those learning new methods most effectively;
- since the object of ringing is to ring for services, those ringers who only wish to do so, and not ring beyond their home towers, should still feel valued, included, and supported;
- ringing up and down practices are popular;
- to contribute to the ODG training meeting on 21 March (discussing current Learning and Development offerings and their value) via email.

(13) DATE OF NEXT MEETING AGM on Saturday 13 February 2021 - evening with/ without service (Weston-on-the-Green proposed venue).