**Bicester Branch Training Officer’s report 2021**

The first half of 2021 was largely spent online, with use of Ringing Room for online regular practice nights as well as for specific focused practice of methods, assisted by the amazing AI helper, Wheatley. During this period Sally Cross achieved her first virtual quarter peal.

With the lifting of lockdown restrictions in July we got our ringers back into handling real tower bells, with Gerald Bushby achieving his first Quarter Peals at Bletchingdon and Weston on-the-Green, the latter in the exalted company of Lesley Belcher, Chair of ART and Tony Crabtree, Deputy Guild Ringing Master.

It is good to see recruits from before Lockdown continuing to make progress, including Dinah from Islip and Christine at Kirtlington, both of whom are regular service ringers and have been attending branch practices. Of particular note, Christine achieved her ART Learning the Ropes Level 2 certificate in October.

Following the rule that opportunities for training should be taken by all ringers, I attended the 10-bell training course at Shrivenham in November, taking the opportunity to ring plain courses and touches of Grandsire Caters and enjoying the striking at fast pace of experienced ringers.

Three new learners have started since September and are making progress, helped very much by attending the Abingdon Ringing School on Saturday mornings. Julie started in September and has made remarkable progress, achieving her ART Learning the Ropes Level 1 certificate in December, and is now a regular service ringer.

There are reasons to be confident that teaching of handling and methods will have been only minimally affected by the resurgence of Covid 19 just before Christmas and that the Guild training courses will be able to proceed in April and October and that a number of our existing ringers will be able to ring their first Quarter Peals at cover, treble and inside.

There is also an expectation that there will be a national recruitment drive in 2022 in anticipation of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June. It would be good for the branch to play its part in such a recruitment and training campaign. I am therefore an advocate of establishing a branch ringing school to pool our teaching resource as soon as time and opportunity allow.

However, it is of some concern that our branch has relatively few with capability and confidence to teach handling to new recruits, such that should we wish to renew the team of one of our currently depleted or silent towers, we will be very dependent on teaching resource from across the Guild. It is therefore of prime importance that we are able to build our own teaching resources within our teams and to increase the chances of sustainability of the amazing yet threatened art of Change Ringing. I am hopeful that a number of our members will be able to enroll on one of the local ART training courses this year and am more than happy to answer any questions about the scheme.