

Bicester Branch Training Officer's Report 2022

The year began with a recovery from COVID restrictions and easing of wearing of face masks, which greatly helped. In January Christine Redford achieved her first quarter peal, which has been followed by two others.

In addition to our regular branch practices we held a surprise minor practice at Bletchingdon in April, recognising the needs of our more experienced ringers, which was much appreciated. A raising and lowering course at Bletchingdon was run in July, attended by five students and six helpers. We have also held a number of very successful focussed practices at Bletchingdon, where we have been supported by experienced ringers to help improve trebling, covering and ringing inside to doubles methods.

More progress can be reported with some of our ringers, with Pinder Parkes achieving her ART Learning the Ropes Level 1 in November and Julie Penny her ART Learning the Ropes Level 2 certificate in January, followed by her first Quarter Peal on treble in December. Also in November Sally Cross achieved her first quarter peal on tenor.

Sue Macready, Gerald Bushby and Judith Vickars attended the ART Foundation skills teaching course in April and have been regularly putting their newly-learned skills to practice in weekly practices. In addition, in October Kirtlington hosted an ART teaching of handling course, attended by Graham Frogley and Gerald Bushby.

An exciting development has been the co-hosting of the Winter Ringing School from October 2022 by Kirtlington with Old North Berks Branch, enabling students to receive one-to-one teaching in a safe and supportive environment following the well-established ART national teaching programme. Ringers from Bicester, Banbury, Witney & Woodstock and Oxford City Branches have benefitted from these sessions also supported by Bicester Branch teachers.

2023 will be the first year since 2019 which should be free from Covid restrictions and the Guild training courses are expected to proceed in April, September and October. I am confident that more of our ringers will be able to make increasing contribution to ringing in the branch including ringing their first Quarter Peals at cover, treble and inside.

I am most grateful for all the help and support that ringers within and outside the branch have provided to the various practices, training sessions and first Quarter Peals that have been held in the past year. I look forward to continuing these useful events that help our ringers make progress.

Having expressed concern in last year's report that our branch has relatively few members with capability and confidence to teach handling to new recruits, there are definite signs that we are beginning to build our own teaching resources albeit from a low base. We need to continue and if possible, accelerate our teaching resource to increase the chances of sustainability of the amazing yet threatened art of Change Ringing.

Steve Vickars

January 2023