

## OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS BICESTER BRANCH

MINUTES AGM HELD in KIRTLINGTON ON SATURDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024

**(1) OPENING REMARKS** Teresa Carter (Vice President) took the chair. She welcomed the Guild Master, Katie Lane, as well as 25 members from 8 towers (a new record) and thanked Penny Wood for taking the service, Steve Vickers for playing the organ, and the Kirtlington ringers for making the arrangements for the service and the meeting. It had been a memorable year for bellringers with the Coronation of King Charles III (and many visitors who had been invited to 'ding for the King' including a 11-month-old in Woodeaton). All present stood to remember Morwen Ashton (Piddington) who had died in May.

**(2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Jeremy Adams, Jan Haseldine, Richard Haseldine, Colin Lee, Andy Dudley, Jill Bailey

**(3) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING** The minutes of 18 February 2023 which had been made available on the Branch website, were accepted on the proposal of Sue Macready, seconded by Teresa Carter, and signed.

**(4) MATTERS ARISING** The Master spoke about the need for an accurate record for the 2,400 members of the ODG and the introduction of a new database which would have the advantage of improved communication within the Guild, Branches and towers and reduce admin tasks. She also highlighted the ODBF (Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund) Leap Year Sponsored Ringing Week (24/2-3/3) when monies raised go to supporting bell repairs/ augmentation etc from annual interest income on the capital. On Bank Holiday Monday 6 May Ringing Day will be held in the City Branch (with some outlying towers e.g. Woodeaton also open) – around 25-30 towers are available with one route and a fee of £20 for the day or £2 per tower for any ringer wishing to 'tower grab'.

**(5) OFFICERS' REPORTS (all adopted *nem con*)**

Secretary (Kathryn Grant)

2023, in common with most years, has seen highs and lows – a record number for our AGM in February with two new members elected, many towers in the Branch ringing for the King's Coronation in May, new learners in Ambrosden (which has had no resident ringers lately), enthusiastic turnouts for the April Branch outing around Bedfordshire and for the striking competition in September. In addition, Branch practices have seen good numbers of participants, and several practices, held in Bicester, for more advanced ringing have proved popular.

On the downside, we have no resident ringers at 3 towers (Brill, Souldern and Woodeaton) and ringing is infrequent at Charlton-on-Otmoor now, as well as at Piddington which has also seen the sad loss of Morwen Ashton who died in May. Kirtlington has been the venue for the Winter Ringing School, as well as the Oxon Ringing School, and focussed practices have been held at Bletchington leading to several ringers achieving their first quarter peals in the year. Other Branch members have enjoyed attending the Radley or Steeple Aston courses as students or helpers/ tutors and ART courses during the year.

The Branch was asked to give the prayers at the Guild Festival Service in July which reminded us, as quoted in *The Voice of the Church* by The Guild of Clerical Ringers that 'change ringing is something to be celebrated, nurtured, discovered and promoted'. Our newly purchased model bell, in memory of our past President, Willie Haynes, will also be a useful addition to further understanding for those unable to see bells *in situ*.

Treasurer (Anne Martin)

I would like to thank you all for the prompt payment of subscriptions last year. I have already contacted Tower Captains regarding payment of fees this year. We can accept cheques or direct transfer to our current account (and also cash, if paying in person). This year there were 64 members, an increase of 5 from last year. Our income for 2023 consisted of the Branch's part of the subscription (64 x £3) £192. (£8 collected per member, £5 to Guild and £3 retained by the Branch), the interest on the deposit account, £176.04., income of £160 from weddings and £196 from social events. The CCLA changed banks in the last quarter of 2023, and the arrangements for interest payments have been changed. Now interest will be credited on the second banking day of January, April, July & October. Therefore, interest will be credited on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January and hence there was no interest in December as per previous years. **Total retained income for 2023 is £724.04.** (As expected, the subscriptions will rise in 2024 to £10 per ringer, with £7 going to the Guild and £3 retained by the branch).

Outgoings were: **£320** Guild Subscriptions (64 x £5, see above), and a donation to the Bell Fund (agreed at AGM 2023) was **£250**. I have received a letter of thanks for the donation to the Bell Fund. No Secretarial expenses have been paid in respect of 2023. Payment of **£250** has been made during 2023 for the grant to Kirtlington for work to convert the Hastings stays to traditional ones. (The grant was requested In August 2022.) Also, we bought a model bell, in memory of Willie Haynes, our former president, who died in 2022. Cost **£350**. **Outgoings for 2023 (excluding Guild Subscription), are £850.**

**Expenditure exceeded Income by £125.96** giving a financial position at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 as follows:

## Balance sheet as at 31 December 2023

Current a/c balance	302.28
Deposit Account	5,488.43
Cash held	118.27
Total funds held at year end	£5,908.98

(Deposit account interest rate at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 4.929%.)

The accounts were audited by Hilary Bradshaw of Launton. A letter of thanks has been sent to her on behalf of the Branch.

### Report from Deputy Ringing Master (Richard Haseldine)

Over the course of the last 12 months the branch has organised at least one and usually two events each month. These usually take the form of branch practices with an outing and striking contests thrown in for good measure. The branch practices are generally fairly well attended with all ringers attending having a chance to attempt to ring to their level. The practices that I've been to have seen a range of methods rung that meet most people's ability levels.

At some practices there does seem to be a geographical split where towers to the west of the branch get better attendance than those in the east, it would be nice if we could level this up.

The Branch outing ventured into Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire this year, the weather was fine, and we had a good turnout of ringers and guests. We had a nice selection of six bell towers which suited our abilities well. A donation was left at each tower as is customary, after the collection we had £20 surplus that went to branch funds.

The branch held a striking contest at Islip in September, it was nice to see that most of the active towers in the branch entered at least one team. It was particularly pleasing to see the Islip team containing 3 teenagers come 2<sup>nd</sup>. I generally think that the branch has had a successful year, and hope that all our newer ringers will continue to improve. Keep listening and concentrating on the striking.

Lastly, ringing is a hobby, so don't get stressed about it and most importantly enjoy it.

### Report from Guild Representative (Anne Martin)

For information on the Guild, see the Guild website: <http://odg.org.uk/>

Publications from the Guild: *Odd Bob* – (May and November). now available on Guild website under Publications

Next Issue May 2024 Latest at [ODD BOB - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](http://odg.org.uk/)

Annual Report – next issue March 2024

The activities of the Guild are managed by various Sub-Committees. These each produce reports twice a year, which are presented at the General Committee meetings held in March and November. The reports and minutes of the meetings can be viewed on the website at:

[General Committee Meetings - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](http://odg.org.uk/)

Or look under Publications/General-committee-meetings/

*Subscriptions 2024* – Increased to £10 per ringer for 2024. (£7 to Guild and £3 to Branch). A Branch can also request additional voluntary subs.

### Learning & Development Workgroup

The usual courses are being planned, see Diary of Events

### Next Guild Festival

The Guild Festival is normally held every 5 years. However it has been decided to make the next one coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Guild and will be held in 2031.

### Towers and Belfries Sub-Committee Report

Members are reminded to continue to check for the kind of problems caused by the extremely dry weather in 2022, e.g. loose frames, headstocks.

Some towers may suffer from stretchy ropes, causing them to 'go' badly. To remedy this, the ropes will need to be stretched by hanging a heavy weight on the rope for a week or so. If the problem persists and is traced to the polypropylene top, then that top may need to be replaced.

A General Tower Maintenance course will be held on April 27<sup>th</sup> at Hook Norton. This unfortunately coincides with our Bicester Branch outing.

As always, the Towers and Belfries Sub-Committee would welcome more members.

### Report of Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee

They are seeking members for the Public Relations Working Group.

The Guild is considering reorganising the Guild management and the role and setup of the General Committee. This is ongoing.

#### [ODG Transformation – Case for Change](#)

Work is ongoing with regard to the ODG website, including the server upgrade, Mail Lists and issues with some email addresses. They are considering implementing an online membership database software system (MemberMojo) and the use of QR codes for PR material. If anyone has skills that can help the set up these processes efficiently, please get in touch.

#### [Training Officer's Report \(Steve Vickars\)](#)

2023 has been a very busy year, with good progress by several of our ringers. Both Christine Redford and Julie Penny achieved their first treble and tenor quarter peals, respectively, consequently they have passed their ART Learning the Ropes Level 3. Congratulations to them!

In addition to our regular branch and ten-bell practices we have continued very successful monthly focused practices at Bletchington, supported by experienced ringers to help improve trebling, covering and ringing inside to doubles methods. Following attendance of these practices, several ringers have achieved their first quarter peals on treble, tenor and inside to doubles.

Several Bicester Branch members have attended the Oxford Diocesan Guild Radley and Steeple Aston Training courses as students. Branch members have also supported these events as helpers and tutors.

2023 has seen recruitment of several new ringers across the branch, and their progress to become regular ringers at their towers. Four new branch recruits: Liping Liu, Tracey Rowan, Pam Holley and John Mayo have successfully passed their Learning the Ropes Level 1 assessment. More recruits are currently receiving handling tuition and are progressing towards becoming regular service ringers and Guild members.

On the teaching front, Andy Dudley attended the ART handling skills teaching course in November 2023 and has started teaching with Oxon Ringing School. Also last year Andrew Wilkinson and Judith Vickars gained their ART accreditation in M1 handling and M2F Foundation teaching, respectively. Many congratulations to them.

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 will help our ringers make progress.

I am encouraged that our branch's capability and confidence to teach handling, Foundation, hunting and method ringing skills to new and improving ringers, is continuing to grow steadily and look forward to this continuing.

#### [Website Officer's Report \(Angus Bridges\)](#)

The Bicester Branch website is now hosted on the Oxford Diocesan Guild's web server, thanks to the hard work of Richard Stanworth, the Guild's Server Manager. In the last year more than 30 posts were added to the website. The majority are reports of Branch Practices, with additional items regarding Quarter Peals, training achievements and social events.

Pages and posts were visited over 2,100 times.

The email addresses of tower management contacts are updated from time to time, again with the assistance of Richard Stanworth. This process ensures that when site visitors click the contact links for towers, their messages are routed to the personal email address of the appropriate tower manager. There are currently 60 members on the Branch Members' mailing list. The mailing list platform is somewhat antiquated, and we are investigating migrating to a more up-to-date system.

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

Tracy Rowan (Weston-on-the-Green) Proposed Gerald Bushby; Seconded Mandy Jones

Pam Holley (Weston-on-the-Green) Proposed Gerald Bushby; Seconded Mandy Jones

Liping Liu (Kirtlington) Proposed Steve Vickars; Seconded Judith Vickars

John Mayo (Kirtlington) Proposed Steve Vickars; Seconded Judith Vickars

Clare Brown (Ludgershall) Proposed Anne Martin; Seconded Michael Macarthur

Ali Lovatt (Ludgershall) Proposed Anne Martin; Seconded Michael Macarthur

William Goodfellow (Islip) Proposed Teresa Carter; Seconded Kathryn Grant

Michael Beverly (Islip) Proposed Teresa Carter; Seconded Kathryn Grant

#### **(7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

On the proposal of Teresa Carter seconded by Sue Macready the following were re-elected *en bloc* apart from the Secretary – all in favour:

President: Jeremy Adams

Treasurer: Anne Martin

Vice Presidents: Richard Haseldine

Vice Presidents: Teresa Carter

Joint Ringing Master: Jeremy Adams

Training Officer: Steve Vickars

Guild Representative: Anne Martin

There was one nomination for the post of Secretary and on the proposal of Kathryn Grant, seconded by Gareth Ricketts, Pam Holley was elected. All agreed.

Teresa Carter thanked Kathryn Grant for 21 years as secretary and presented her with a card, signed by many, and a beautiful planter of Spring flowers.

**(9) GUILD/ BRANCH EVENTS**

Joint Ringing Master: Richard Haseldine

Website Manager: Gus Bridges

Tuesday 12/03/2024	Bicester	Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm	10 bell practice
Monday 1/4/2024	Kirtlington	Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm	8 bell practice
Saturday 13/4 2024	Radley course		
Tuesday 23/4/2024	St George's Day	All	
Saturday 27/4/2024	Branch Outing	All day	5 towers in Berkshire
Saturday 27/4/2024	General Tower Maintenance (Hook Norton)		
Monday 6/5/2024	Oxford City	Ringing Day	
Wednesday 8/5/2024	Bletchington	Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm	6 bell practice
Saturday 18/5/2024	North Bucks Branch	Guild AGM & 8 bell competition	
Wednesday 22/5/2024	Middleton Stoney	Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm	6 bell practice
Saturday 6/7/2024		New members' morning	
Saturday 28/9/2024		Michaelmas Course	
Saturday 5/10/2024		6 bell competition & raising/ lowering	
Saturday 26/10/2024	Steeple Aston	Steeple Aston Course	

**(10) DONATION TO THE BELL FUND**

On the proposal of Anne Martin, seconded by Gareth Ricketts £250 will be given to the fund. All in favour.

**(11) GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Hilary Bradshaw (Launton) to be asked to audit the 2024 accounts.

Helen Parkinson commented that the ringing on all 10 bells at Bicester for the recent installation service was well received.

Katie Lane reminded members that the next Guild meeting to be organised by the Bicester Branch would be the November General committee meeting and 10 bell competition on Saturday 22 November 2025 and then the Bell Fund Ringing Day on May Bank Holiday 2026.

Details of the Branch outing on Saturday 27 April 2024 in the Berkshire area were circulated and are on the website <https://bicester.odg.org.uk/wordpress/index.php/2024/02/17/bicester-branch-outing-saturday-27th-april-2024/>

**(12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING** AGM on Saturday 15 February 2025 – venue to be agreed.