

OPENING REMARKS

Teresa Carter (Vice President) took the chair. She welcomed the Guild Master, Katie Lane, as well as 18 members from 8 towers. She also thanked Penny Wood for preparing and taking the service, Bob Hessian for playing the organ and Gerald Bushby Pam Holley and the Weston on the Green ringers for hosting the AGM and making the necessary arrangements including lunch at the Ben Johnson

After all the excitement of ringing for the Coronation of King Charles III the previous year, 2024 had been fairly quiet with no specific nationwide events to ring out for.

Although not a member of the Bicester Branch, we were all very sorry to hear of the passing of Ron Burgess of Kidlington. Over the years he had helped the branch with teaching, quarter peal and wedding ringing on many occasions. A good friend who will be very much missed.

On a lighter note Sue Macready was congratulated on being Tower Captain at Bletchington for 25 years. A great achievement.

(1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jeremy Adams, Colin Lee, Andy Dudley, Fay Harris, Gus Bridges, Hillary Wallbank, Christine Redford, Marcus Adams, Julie Penny, Di Lavender, Mandy Jones, Judith Vickers

(2) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of 17th February 2024 which had been made available on the Branch website, were accepted on the proposal of Steve Vickers, seconded by Sally Cross, and signed.

The Master Catherine Lane made some observations on the state of ringing with the ODG <https://odg.org.uk> and from the perspectives of the CCCBR (Central Council of Church Bell Ringers) <https://ccbr.org.uk>

Ringers are generally older with fewer younger people than we would all wish to join and become committed to the Exercise (plus possibly outdated bureaucratic practices), silent towers due to diminishing numbers of ringers (and possibly closed churches) are a real threat; There are vacant positions within the Guild (Odd Bob Editor, Guild Secretary, Librarian-plus location archives) and Catherine's own wish to stand down as Master.

She praised the efforts of many and the encouragement received and finally drew attention to the desirability of those present to attend the ODG AGM on Saturday May 17th at Warborough, plus make preparations for the 10 Bell Striking competition to be held at Bicester on Sunday November 22nd. The Bicester Branch will also host the General Committee meeting on the same day and provide refreshments.

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

Secretary (Pam Holley)

This year has had many highlights-a record number of new members (9) elected at our AGM and there have been regular tower and branch practices (though some poorly attended if clashing with a local practice elsewhere) as well as special practices at Oxfordshire Ringing School and on 10 bells at Bicester had a very enjoyable branch outing to 5 towers around the Lambourn area in April and our annual striking competition was held in September (5 teams entered and won by Islip B team).

In September Steve Coleman came to Bletchington to give a talk to a packed and entranced audience on 'Ropesight how to get it and how to survive without it' and on 'The best way to learn methods' later that month the Launton handbell ringers came to the village hall to give a much-appreciated recital of traditional and folk music, popular classics, children's nursery rhymes as well as secular music ending with an opportunity for all to 'have a go'

Although not a Bicester Branch Member we were all saddened by the death of Ron Burgess in August who had helped our novice-and more experienced ringers -over many years

Membership Mojo the ODG online membership database for managing member data is now live..

Over 60 members of the Bicester Branch have submitted their details. The new system will streamline membership applications and renewals

On the proposal of Kathryn Grant, seconded by Sue Carter the report was adopted, all in favour

Report From Treasurer (Anne Martin)

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). I hope you are aware that the Guild has brought in the use of the membership database, MEMBERMOJO and it has gone live for 2025. All members are asked to access their accounts, update any information such as preferred communication, and also RENEW for the current year i.e. 2025. There are instructions on the ODG website how to do that. No money is being taken on the website. Subs are being collected in the usual way this year. A copy of the MEMBERMOJO page showing instructions for Existing and New members is attached to the Guild Rep report for your information. In 2024 there were 69 members, an increase of 5 from last year. Our income for 2024 consisted of the Branch's part of the subscription (69 x £3) £207. (£10 collected per member, £7 to Guild and £3 retained by the Branch, £690-£483=£207), the interest on the deposit account, £291.31., £110 from weddings and £45 from social events. Total retained income for 2024 is £653.31 Outgoings were: £483.00 Guild Subscriptions (69 x £7, see above), and a donation to the Bell Fund (agreed at AGM 2024) was £250.00. I have received a letter of thanks for the donation to the Bell Fund. No other expenses have been paid in respect of 2024. Outgoings for 2024. (excluding Guild Subscription), are £250 Income exceeded Expenditure by £403.31 giving a financial position at 31st December 2024 as follows: Balance sheet as at 31 December 2024 Current a/c balance 421.28 Deposit Account 5,779.74 Cash held 163.27 Subscriptions paid in advance -£52.00 Total funds held at year end £6,312.29 (Deposit account interest rate at 31 St December 2024 4.71%) The accounts were audited by Hilary Bradshaw of Launton. A letter of thanks has been sent to her on behalf of the Branch.

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

Report From Joint Ringing Master (Jeremy Adams)

Branch Practices

We have continued holding two branch practices a month. Some have been reasonably well attended whilst at times we have not had enough members present to ring. It seems like it may be preferable to revert to one branch practice a month and hopefully this can be discussed at the AGM. It would also be useful to know which days of the week would be preferred. We always encourage members to come along to branch practices as it can be really useful to help leaners progress, when there are experienced ringers to help, and they provide good social occasions when there are ringers from across the branch attending.

Striking Competition

The Striking Competition was held again in September and we are very grateful to Islip tower, and particularly to Kathryn Grant, for hosting this event once again. We managed to make up six teams, one of which was a youth team who rang very creditably coming second overall. Congratulations are due to the Islip B team which won. Each team rang either Grandsire Doubles, Bob Doubles or Call Changes and the ringing was pretty even for all teams. Hugh Deam and Maarit Kivilo very kindly judged for us and were very generous with their comments on our ringing. The placings were very close; well done to all who took part. The BBQ which followed the ringing was excellent as always with very tasty food on offer and a jolly social time enjoyed by all.

Ringling Outing

We were able to organise a ringling outing in April to five towers around the Lambourn area of Berkshire. The outing was particularly memorable for high level access to ringling chambers, an anti-clockwise ring, great lunch, one of the longest draughts ever, and ringling with a broken stay (not caused by anyone on the outing) in our first tower of the day (Lambourn) – a challenging start! Our thanks go to those who opened the towers for us – and particularly Stefan in Lambourn who provided us all with coffee too. It was pleasing to see a good number of ringers coming along on the outing and several non-ringling partners also came along and enjoyed the day. If you haven't been on a ringling outing before then do it give it a try at the next opportunity. If anyone would like to take on organising an outing this year, then that would be very welcome

On the proposal of Teresa Carter, seconded by Kathryn Grant, the report was adopted All in Favour

Report from Joint Ringing Master (Richard Haseldine)

Attendance at branch practices during 2024 was very patchy. When they were held at towers with a strong local band they tended to be well attended whilst those with a small or non-existent band were very poorly attended. On at least 3 occasions we didn't have enough to ring. This tends to suggest that if a branch practice clashes with a local one, ringers want to go to their own rather than a branch one. Given what's happened over the last 12 months I personally think that we need a rethink with regards to branch practices. I would suggest going down to 1 branch event per

month, this should be discussed at item 4 on the agenda. Jeremy organised a very enjoyable branch outing in April to Lambourn and the surrounding area, yet again the numbers attending were rather disappointing. The Striking competition/ barbecue was the most successful event of the year, congratulations to Islip B who won

On the proposal of Steve Vickars seconded by Jan Haseldine the report was adopted All in favour

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 – Printed May and November. now available on Guild website under Publications Next Issue May 2025

Latest at ODD BOB – Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers (odg.org.uk) Annual Report – next issue available March 2025

Subscriptions 2025 – Same as last year, £10 per ringer for 2024. (£7 to Guild and £3 to Branch). A Branch can also request additional voluntary subs. MEMBERMOJO Database Link to MemberMojo page This is going live this year, 2025. All members are asked to access their accounts, click on Review and update any information such as preferred communication, and also RENEW for the current year i.e. 2025. There are instructions on the website how to do that. No money is being taken on the website. Subs are being collected in the usual way this year. Instructions for Existing and New members taken from the MEMBERMOJO page is attached.

Learning & Development Workgroup Radley Course March 29th 2025, closing date for applications, 21/02/2025
Safeguarding

Latest guidance is on the website, and you should have received a communication from MEMBERMOJO. Amendments stated at last Gen Comm meeting, • Main change, DBS checking only has to be completed for Tower Captains when there are young people in the band. Please do not make this a reason for refusing to allow young ringers to join the band, we need to encourage every one of them. • Clarification of definition of a vulnerable person: DBS is required only if there is involvement with personal care, finances or travel arrangements. It no longer applies for ringers on the basis of age alone. • Tower Captains, who want to renew their enhanced DBS check may find that the PCC tells them it is no longer required. This could be as a result of increasing costs. However, Tower Captains may renew their DBS check through an alternative provider e.g. ART, who are able to process it at no cost

Towers and Belfries Sub-Committee Report It is important that all towers have some form of emergency lighting. Ash for Stays – there is increasing evidence that it's hard to find proper air-dried ash from healthy (not ash-dieback) trees. If you are replacing a stay, make sure you go to a reputable supplier

Report of Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee

They are seeking members for the Public Relations Working Group. Proposed changes to Guild management structure The Guild is considering streamlining the Guild management structure. Currently, this is done by members of the General Committee who are elected Guild Officers, plus the Secretary and Guild Representative of the Branches (about 50 members). The General Committee meets twice a year. The reports and minutes of the meetings can be viewed on the ODG website at: General Committee Meetings - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers (odg.org.uk) Or look under Publications/General-committee-meetings/ A proposal has been put forward to replace this structure with an Executive Committee consisting of elected Guild Officers who will be responsible for the management and running of the Guild, and setting future strategic direction The General Committee would cease to exist but there would instead be a Governance and Scrutiny Committee consisting of approximately 20 members whose role is to scrutinise the work of the Executive and hold them to account. The membership of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee is expected to be: one spokesperson for each branch (15) and Ringing Vice Presidents It is envisaged there will be in the region of six Governance and Scrutiny Committee meetings a year of which one will be a formal meeting in person. Detailed papers referring to this can be found at General Committee Meetings - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers (odg.org.uk) Detailed papers describing the proposal are under the meeting of November 2024 and also the discussion points in the Minutes for that meeting. In practical terms for the Branches, the role of Guild Representative would disappear. Each Branch would be asked to provide a spokesperson for the Governance and Scrutiny Committee As can be seen in the minutes for the November 2024 General Committee meeting, discussion is ongoing.

On the proposal of Pam Holley seconded by Kathryn Grant the report was adopted All in Favour

Training Officer's Report (Steve Vickars)

2024 has continued on from 2023, with good progress by several of our ringers. Sally Cross achieved her first treble quarter peal and Julie Penny her first quarter peal inside to Plain Bob Doubles, consequently they have passed their ART Learning the Ropes Level 3 and Level 4 respectively. In December Christine Redford and Charlie Bates achieved their first 8-bell quarter peal to Plain Bob Triples at Kirtlington. Congratulations to them both! In addition to regular branch and ten-bell practices we have continued very successful monthly focused practices at Bletchingdon, 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. At least five Bicester Branch members have attended the Oxford Diocesan Guild Radley and Steeple Aston Training courses as students. Again, branch members have also supported these events as helpers and tutors. Our recent recruits have also been making very good progress, with Jo Strange and Leo Owens passing their Learning the Ropes Level One and Liping Liu passing Learning the Ropes Level Two followed up by her first Quarter Peal on tenor very recently. All the above recruits have benefited from attending Oxfordshire Ringing School Handling and Foundation sessions, giving them the required skills to participate in team ringing. Altogether, at least seven branch ringers have attended Ringing School sessions this year. On the teaching front, Andy Dudley has now gained accreditation in teaching ART handling skills with Oxon Ringing School. Many congratulations to him! In the summer, Charlie Bates returned from Manchester University, attended an ART M1 teaching handling course in November and is now making good progress towards gaining accreditation. These achievements provide encouraging signs that teaching of ringing is in good health in our branch. In September, renowned bell ringing author Steve Coleman delivered two talks at Bletchingdon concerning "ropesight and how to achieve it" and "how best to learn methods". Both talks were well attended and Steve's approachable, entertaining and informative talks were really appreciated. 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. 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

On the proposal of Teresa Carter Seconded by Pam Holley the report was adopted All in favour

Website Officer's Report (Angus Bridges)

In the last year the website has been popular, with nearly 8,000 individual visitors making 14,000 visits. Fifteen posts were added, covering a wide variety of events and Guild business items. In September the Oxford Diocese server was migrated to a new, 'state-of-the-art cloud infrastructure', providing better performance and a more secure environment. The old Group Mailing Lists have now been superseded by the MemberMojo versions. Members of the Guild should ensure that they are included by visiting the MemberMojo website at <https://membermojo.co.uk/mm/signin>, signing in with their email address to check that their record is accurate and that they will continue to receive Guild and Branch communications

On the proposal of Sally Cross and Seconded by Richard Haseldine the report was adopted All in favour

(4) Highlights Of The Year and Events

Our main events were the outing to The Lambourn area, the striking competition and the packed church at Bletchingdon in September to listen to the very entertaining talks by Steve Coleman, bell-ringer & renowned author of bell ringing books. Mixed attendance at Branch Practices was discussed & it was proposed and agreed that from March 2025 the Branch Practices would be reduced to one per month and perhaps held only at towers with an active band of ringers, although noted that it would be a shame if the non-active tower bells became completely silent as a result. also discussed was focus practices such as Ringing Up/Down

Proposal to reduce to one Branch practice per month Richard Haseldine seconded by Jan Haseldine Agreed by all

(5) ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS

Felix Marsden Islip Proposed Teresa Carter; seconded Kathryn Grant
Jo Strange Kirtlington Proposed Steve Vickars; Seconded Sally Cross

Jan Harwell Kirtlington Proposed Steve Vickars; Seconded Sally Cross
 Charlie Bates Kirtlington Proposed Steve Vickars; Seconded Sally Cross
 Bharat Mistry Weston Proposed Gerald Bushy Seconded Pam Holley
 Gilly Blackwell Weston Proposed Gerald Bushy Seconded Pam Holley

(6) ELECTION OF OFFICERS

On the proposal of Sally Wale seconded by Richard Haseldine the following were re-elected *en bloc* – all in favour:

President: Jeremy Adams
 Vice Presidents: Richard Haseldine
 Vice Presidents: Teresa Carter
 Treasurer: Anne Martin
 Secretary: Pam Holley
 Guild Representative: Anne Martin
 Training Officer: Steve Vickars
 Joint Ringing Master: Jeremy Adams
 Joint Ringing Master: Richard Haseldine
 Website Manager: Gus Bridges

(7) GUILD/ BRANCH EVENTS

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|-----------------------|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Tuesday 25/02/25 | Islip | Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm | 8 bell practice |
| 8/3/25 | Buckleberry | ODG Spring General Committee Meeting & Bell Fund AGM | |
| Thursday 27/03/25 | Weston-on-the Green | Branch Practice 7.30 – 9pm | 6 bell practice |
| Saturday 29/03/25 | Radley Course | | |
| Wednesday 23/04/25 | Charlton -on Otmoor | Branch Practice 7.30- 9pm | 6 Bell Practice |
| Saturday 26/4/2025 | Proposed Branch Outing | All day | Details TBC |
| Saturday 17/05/25 | Warborough | Guild AGM | |
| Saturday 06/09/25 | Bicester | Striking Competition & Barbecue | Details TBC |
| Saturday 22/11/25 | Bicester | 10 Bell Striking Competition & Guild Officers Meeting | Details TBC |

(8) DONATION TO THE BELL FUND

On the proposal of Teresa Carter, seconded by Steve Vickars £250 will be given to the fund. All in favour.

(9) AUDITOR APPOINTMENT

Hilary Bradshaw (Launton) to be asked to audit the 2025 accounts.

(10) FIRST QUARTER CERTIFICATE

Liping Lui Steve Vickars received the certificate on behalf of Liping

(11) GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Master Katie Lane remarked that changes needed to be made to the constitution of the guild to enable it to keep going. .At present there is too much admin for a small group of people

(12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING AGM on Saturday 28TH February 2025 at Bletchington