

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell ringers
Oxford City Branch
Annual General Meeting

Held virtually at 4pm on Saturday 12th February 2022

Minutes

Attendees: Rachel Croft, Susan King, Austin Dunn, Mark Hunter, Tony Crabtree, Jane Bishop, Craig Robertson, Lindsay Powell, Paul Lucas, Wendy Austin, Dorothy Hall, John Pusey, Elizabeth Mullett, Hazel Rothera, Simon Edwards, Simon King, Clare Fairbaian, Peter Bayliss, Hugh Deam

Apologies for Absence: Catherine Lane, James Scott-Brown, Mary Bayliss, Janice Beale, Jonathan Beale, Steve Everett, Annika Everett, Gregory Rose, Colin Taylor

Matters Arising: After the last AGM Rachel Croft expressed interest in the secretary role and took this on for the rest of the year, with Lindsay Powell temporarily taking over shortly after she had a baby.

Election of new members: The following were elected to the branch.
Kate Saunders and Catherine Sage (Garsington) were proposed by Mark Hunter and seconded by John Pusey.
Lydia Poole (Marston) was proposed by Hugh Dea and seconded by Paul Lucas.
Gregory Rose (Headington) was proposed by Clare Fairbairn and seconded by Paul Lucas.
Jane Bishop and Austin Dunn (St Giles) proposed by John Pusey and seconded by Lindsay Powell.
Mike Kinghan (Iffley) was proposed by Elizabeth Mullett and seconded by Lindsay Powell.

Reports from officers:

Treasurer – Dorothy Hall reported on the City branch finances and provided accounts for viewing via the zoom share facility, having previously shared them via email. There were no questions about the accounts. There is a surplus over the year and members are reminded that there are funds available for suitable activities and resources to aid learning and teaching. Some towers didn't pay any subs last year. This has been decided not to be chased due to the restrictions in place with covid. This years subs are due and will be expected shortly. There is an allocation outstanding as a grant for the restoration at Cuddesdon if they needed it, but this hasn't yet been requested. Other ways of spending the money need to be thought about.

Chair: Our thanks were noted to Steve Everett for taking on the role of temporary

ringing master and running online branch practices during covid restrictions. These went well and he continued to provide support at various towers when ringing restarted and at the ringing day held by Wheatley. Thanks also to Tony Crabtree for providing his miniring for this.

Election of Officers:

Chair: Simon Edwards was willing to stand again and there were no other nominations. Proposed by Craig Robertson, seconded by Lindsay Powell and duly elected.

Vice chair: Paul Lucas was willing to stand again and there were no other nominations. Proposed by Simon Edwards, seconded by Wendy Austen, and duly elected.

Branch Secretary: Rachel Croft was willing to stand again and there were no other nominations. Proposed by Dorothy Hall, seconded by Elizabeth Mullett, and duly elected.

Ringing Master: Craig Robertson was nominated. Proposed by Rachel Croft, seconded by John Pusey, and duly elected.

Treasurer: Dorothy Hall stood down from the position and nominated Peter Bayliss. Proposed by Dorothy Hall, seconded by Craig Robertson, and duly elected.

Branch Representatives: Lindsay Powell & Elizabeth Mullett were willing to stand again and there were no other nominations. Proposed by Rachel Croft, seconded by Dorothy Hall, and duly elected.

Auditor: Katherine Stonham was willing to stand again and there were no other nominations. Proposed by Craig Robertson, seconded by Simon Edwards, and duly elected.

Recovery of Ringing:

Towers had been asked in advance to be ready to provide an update as to where they had got to with ringing and what support they needed going forwards. A general consensus was all towers would greatly benefit from one or two extra ringers at each practice, but the majority would like to be notified in advance as there are still concerns about having too many people suddenly at a practice. The tower correspondent details can be found on the city branch website.

A number of updates were received in advance as no members could make the AGM..

Email updates:

Cowley – usually 3 ringing for services from a maximum of 5 ringers (who all were there for Christmas Midnight service). They haven't restarted practices due to Covid rates increasing, but had been just about to after building work had been finished. Covid and building work has challenged the commitment to ringing. They are in need of support for practices when they restart. Hugh Deam added that Jamie (from Cowley) had been making it to Marston practices at the end of last year, with the intention of Marston ringers providing Cowley with support when they restarted, but their practices haven't restarted yet.

North Hinksey – all ringing has stopped, with only one ringer planning on continuing ringing. The bells have been made safe and unringable. Ideas were discussed as to how the branch can ensure ringing continues. Ideas included branch ringing, such as

quarter peals and branch practices. Hugh Deam reported that many of the ringers were looking to retire from ringing prior to covid.

Stanton St John – not ringing much due to ill health of tower captain, leaving the band down to 5 ringers without him. There have been no practices, but some Sunday ringing has been possible. RC passed on to the tower correspondent to let members know other towers are practising and would welcome ringers. Advice can be provided as to which towers are practising at what levels if wanted.

Wolvercote – trying to get back to normal, the ringers are happy with this and doing well. Limited by church restrictions as open to the rest of the church, but hoping this will continue to improve as restrictions ease.

In Person updates:

St Aldates (Dorothy Hall) – Currently ringing on Sunday mornings for 15 mins, vicar has changed and some sound control has been taken out by the church. The vicar doesn't like the very loud noise, but open to sorting things out. DH to meet with vicar, discuss getting sound control back in and happy for them to ring. Simulator sensors renewed and will be reinstalled shortly and then will restart in person practices. Have been having ringing room practices online, been ringing surprise minor and doing well.

Cuddesdon (Paul Lucas) – update via Brian Lowe, they are ringing with a shared band with Horspath. Not at full strength, but are recruiting new people.

Horspath (Paul Lucas) – update via Brian Lowe, they are ringing most Sundays on 6 and practice nights are happening.

Garsington (Mark Hunter) – 6 basic ringers up to plain hunt, but only 2 beyond that (lost one last year to Thame who has continued ringing), two more in training including the vicar's husband. They have been ringing since allowed again and not limited to 15 mins. Masks worn during face to face training. Have got stuck at plain hunt, hope to bring people to branch practices to get them started with Plain Bob. Weekly practice and monthly service ringing. Could do with support at practices to help bring ringers on.

St Giles (John Pusey) – grateful not to lose any previous members and got increased turnout from one member. They have rung as much as they can at the limits of restrictions. Made the most of their ventilation with 2 windows. Gradually decreasing the use of masks. Quarter peals occurring after the service started, but then choir wanted to use that time so are currently discussing this. Often get 8 for Sunday mornings and 6-7 for Sunday evening. Lots of call changes, some plain hunt on 7. Have tried recruitment with a poster, initially no response, and now had some new recruits to the tower, two being elected today having been previous ringers, and some others learning, but not yet at regular attendance. Would always benefit from one more good ringer to support the band.

Headington (Clare Fairbairn) – managing to ring almost normally, but haven't had everyone back without having lost anyone from the membership. One addition of a ringer who moved from London. Sometimes thin on the ground for Sundays. Practices

vary between 4-9 ringers. Ringing room practices throughout lockdown. Hope to restart Sunday surprise major practices soon.

Iffley (Elizabeth Mullett) – Back to ringing for services and practices, 6 learners currently which is where the main focus currently is, and working on them in pairs predominantly so that they can progress. Pleased they haven't lost interest during the pandemic. Open practices, but would like an email in advance as a lot of focus is currently on the learners. Susan King had nothing to add.

Kidlington – No one from tower present to update. Craig Robertson has heard at least 5 ringing call changes, Clare Fairbairn is aware they are ringing at least Sunday mornings and some practices, but not everyone has come back to ringing.

Marston (Hugh Deam) – similar to St Giles and Headington, but have lost some ringers. Still have 10. Had been doing 1 quarter peal a month until December, but this has decreased. Practices are back on Fridays, but adjusted time 7.15-8.30. Don't think this is likely to change. Sundays are very changeable due to church requirements – different times of day, some services outside. Usually have 5, sometimes 6 on a Sunday. Hard to ask for extras for this due to the variability in timings. Mostly general ringing as some members cannot ring for longer durations due to health conditions. More handbell ringing is occurring than previously. Had been attending a W&W tower practice on a Saturday afternoon (South Leigh) to help them as only 3 ringers and to get their band up and also to help themselves by getting some 8 bell ringing. Antony Hughes has retired from ringing, but is still their treasurer - subs will be on their way.

Wheatley (Peter Bayliss) – small, but enthusiastic band. Back ringing as soon as allowed. Have 8-9 regular ringers, all bar one of retirement age and frequent shielding occurring. Usually only 4-5 ringing at practices and services. Not currently recruiting as major works due on body of church this year. Waiting on the work being finished before recruitment in earnest. Katie Lane has been helping support the practices in a very gentle way which is much appreciated.

Handbell ringing (Lindsay Powell) – before covid there was a Tuesday night practice that was making slow and steady progress, but with tower bells a priority for most ringers. Covid enabled handbell ringing when outdoor meeting only was allowed leading to lots of progress and lots of new members of the group. People have learnt from scratch or extended their repertoire. Anyone who is interested in learning handbells is very welcome and the group will be happy to teach them.

Branch Practices

Plan to restart in person monthly branch practices on the first Saturday of the month from April.

Discussion was had whether Saturday practices (with a mixture of mornings and afternoons, so those with other commitments can still make some of them) or to move between towers and attend their regular tower practice was discussed. Tony Crabtree advised that in their branch going to regular practices has worked well in the past and focus methods have been used in discussion with the tower being visited to help

support them in their learning. Peter Bayliss raised the concern that having everyone descend on their tower can be quite intimidating, and not everyone would turn up to the practice, and one or two supporters is more helpful for them. Clare Fairbairn supported this, as if the ringers miss their regular weekly practice then it is a net negative effect, rather than a positive.

Craig Robertson decided to keep Saturday branch practices for now and work out what each tower wants as additional support. Towers are to email Rachel Croft (secretary) with how many extras would be useful to them on a practice night.

Joh Pusey suggests tower captains encourage their own band to do some extra homework if they do have additional numbers coming to their practices so they can maximise the benefit to them.

Elizabeth Mullett suggests alternating between morning and afternoon branch practices.

Branch practices should also enable individual towers to get support by having the opportunity to ask other ringers to come along to their practices.

It is noted that there are opportunities to support towers once a ringer is able to ring rounds and call changes.

Any other business:

Elizabeth Mullett said it was good to see the health of the branch finances. In principle, regarding supporting training of branch members, would paying for some ART materials be a possibility?

Dorothy Hall said that supporting towers in recruiting and being able to teach would be beneficial. There is a precedent of paying towards courses (supporting up to 3 courses/£75 per person – would need to check the numbers on this). ART training to learn to teach would also be beneficial to the branch if any members are interested.

Simon Edwards reminded towers/members to contact the treasurer directly about individual course requests.

Hugh Deam wanted to note in regard to ventilation that Marston has an air purifier and may also be getting a CO2 meter.