



**Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers**  
**Newbury Branch**  
**Minutes of Annual General Meeting**  
**7<sup>th</sup> March, 2026 at 4pm**  
**Held at St Lawrence Church, Hungerford**



**Present:**

Stuart Gibson (Guild Treasurer), Peter Robson (Guild Steward), Martin Rice (Chairman), Maureen Velvick (Treasurer), Mark Robins (Secretary), Marcus Allum (Vice chair), Michael Hurst (Advance Practice Ringing Master), Lin Rogers, Kevin Rogers, Rosemary Evans, Rachel Backhouse (First Friday Practice Ringing Master), Chris Maslen (200 Club Officer), Angela Brown, Roy Pratley, Cath Fitsell, Mike Hopkins Till, Lucy Hopkins Till (Guild Rep), Amanda Marchant, Nick Annetts (Webmaster), Jeanne Lambourn, David Thorpe, Mike Cole.

**1. Welcome:**

Martin welcomed Stuart Gibson, Peter Robson and all members present at the meeting.

**2. Act of Remembrance:**

There was a short silence to remember Ross Couch and Bruce Lousley.

**3. Apologies for Absence:**

ODG Master Katie Lane, John Hibbert, John Manley, Tony Smith, Sue Smith and Jenny Velvick.

**4. Minutes of 2025 AGM:**

Paragraphs 7B and D were amended to correct Mike Till to read Mike Hopkins Till. Then they were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**5. Matters Arising:**

Under AOB, it was proposed by Maureen Velvick that we hold a Tower Reps meeting in April and October. Those meeting were held and minutes are available on the website.

**6. Officers' Reports:**

**(a) Chairman:** is optimistic about the state of the Branch. Membership is up on last year. We have two lively and productive Branch practices thanks to the two practice Ringing Masters. The Vice Chairman acknowledged the work of all the other officers in the year.

**(b) Midweek Ringing Master:** Was unable to attend. A written report will accompany these minutes.

**(c) Branch Ringing Masters:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Friday: Rachel Backhouse** reported that practices have been well attended and productive. Usually between 10 and 20 attend with an exceptional turnout at Peasmore in March. Rachel thanked those attending, both those seeking advancement and those supporting.

**Advanced Practice: Mike Hurst** reported that practices were usually well attended but not always, and the reasons could vary. He has introduced 6 bell towers with methods to suit, which seem a success. Discussion centred on a means of knowing in advance who plans to attend, to ensure a viable practice. No decision was made but possibly a request for attendance confirmation on the calling notice would suffice.

**(d) Secretary: Mark Robins** re-iterated that the Secretary tasks as defined by the ODG are shared around the other officers in the Newbury Branch. Membermojo (MM) has largely superseded the need for an email comms hub but there is still a residual amount of traffic, so will need to continue for the time being.

**(e) Treasurer: Maureen Velvick** presented the accounts for the year. Copies will accompany these minutes. She stated that we have £2990.14 in the bank, which gains minimal interest, so proposed transferring £1K or £2k into the Church of England's CCLA high interest fund.

**Decision:                    £2000 to be transferred to CCLA**

**Proposed Maureen Velvick  
Seconded Mike Hopkins Till  
Unanimous vote**

There was some discussion about paying subs in light of the new MM system, as some had already paid their subs online this year. It was explained that it is possible to pay via MM or in the old way via the Branch. The Treasurer can see who had paid online to avoid any duplication or non-payment.

**(f) 200 Club: Chris Maslen** presented the status of the 200 Club account and proposed that 50% of the years' subscriptions, **£395**, would be sent to the ODG Bell Fund. There was also some discussion on the merits of aligning the 200 Club year with the main accounting year, but it was agreed that it worked best as it is, running October to October, so will be left unchanged.

**Decision:                    Donate £395 to ODG Bell Fund**

**Proposed Chris Maslen  
Seconded David Thorpe  
Unanimous vote**

*The ODG Treasurer thanked the Branch for donating such a generous amount.*

There was some discussion on the make-up and management of the ODG Bell Fund, which was explained by The ODG Treasurer. Roy Pratley asked what happens to the money and it was explained that it supports bell restoration and repair projects in the Guild. Any amount could be bid for, but it doesn't include high-wear items such as ropes.

**(g) Training Officer: Lucy Hopkins Till** explained that there had been 4 sessions in 2025, including rope-sight, covering and hunting, touches of Grandsire, ringing up and down, and listening skills. She also has for sale, bellringing books for anyone, on request.

**(h) Newsletter Editor: Mark Robins** reported that it remains ongoing at two editions per year and, as always, copy with photos is requested and usually arrives just in time for a viable edition. Feedback is useful and encouraged.

**(i) Webmaster: Nick Annetts** reported that the website is working well and all relevant meeting minutes and other material are available there. The diary is kept up to date with Branch events. It was previously requested that towers provide information on their own towers to include there but few towers have done this.

**Action:                    Towers to forward tower  
information to the webmaster for  
inclusion on the website**

**(j) Guild Representative: Lucy Hopkins Till** said that the next meeting was imminent, so there was nothing to report.

## **7. Election of Officers:**

The Guild Treasurer took over the meeting temporarily to elect the Chairman. Martin Rice was proposed by Mark Robins and seconded by Roy Pratley. The Chairman then resumed the Chair and stated that the Guild Rep and 200 Club Officer were standing down, and that all other officers were willing to continue for another year.

**The Guild Treasurer** explained the concept of the new position of Branch Spokesperson, which will supersede Guild Reps, being part of the streamlining and modernisation of ODG management. Fifteen of them, one per branch, will form the Scrutiny Committee, monitoring decisions taken by the Executive Committee which, in turn, will be made up of eight senior ODG officers. It is intended to seek approval for these changes at the AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> May, upon which they may be implemented, and he asked, on the Guild Master's behalf, for as many members as possible to attend.

Lucy and Mike Hopkins Till both agreed to stand as guild reps until the reorganisation, then one will become the Branch Spokesperson. Jenny Velvick (not present) volunteered to take over the 200 Club. All other officers were re-elected for the forthcoming year.

**Elected:**  
**(all votes unanimous)**

**Chairman**  
**Vice Chairman**  
**Secretary**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Friday Ringing Master**  
**Advanced Ringing Master**  
**Midweek Group Ringing Master**  
**Training Officer**  
**Webmaster**  
**Guild Reps**  
**200 Club Manager**  
**Newsletter Editor**

**Martin Rice**  
**Marcus Allum**  
**Mark Robins**  
**Rachel Backhouse**  
**Mike Hurst**  
**Sue Smith**  
**Lucy Hopkins Till**  
**Nick Annetts**  
**Lucy and Mike Hopkins Till**  
**Jenny Velvick**  
**Mark Robins**

**8. Election of new members:**

None.

**9. To approve auditor's honorarium of £25:**

**Approved:**

**The auditor will receive a £25 honorarium**  
**Unanimous vote**

**10. Date and venue of next meeting:**

The AGM 2027 will take place at Kintbury on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March.

**11. Vote of thanks:**

The Chairman thanked Reverend Mike Saunders for taking the service, Julian Holloway for playing the organ and Dave Thorpe for reading the lesson. Lastly, The Hungerford Bellringers for hosting the meeting and providing the refreshments.

**12. AOB:**

Maureen Velvick proposed election of James Prior as auditor.

**Elected:**

**James Prior as auditor**  
**Unanimous vote**

With there being no other business, the meeting was then closed.

## Treasurers Report

Balances at the end of the year stood at General Fund £2336.38 & 200 Club £615 (£220 for prizes & £395 for the ODG Bell Fund), plus £2046.93 deposited with the CCLA

As you can see from the accounts there was very little activity during 2025. The main being the transfer to the CCLA which had been agreed, the collection of subs and transferring to the ODG & the incoming and outgoing of the 200 Club. Martin, Mark & I managed to transfer the accounts from Lloyds to Metro as agreed at last years AGM, unfortunately not long after the transfer Metro followed in Lloyds foot steps and introduced bank charges, albeit cheaper than Lloyds. There seems no point in trying to move again as it seems most banks charge these days. I would suggest that we could possibly move another £1000 to the CCLA as the interest is far better.

It has been brought to my attention that with the 200 Club split over 2 years makes the accounting period in the current account not clear to understand as the balance includes the 200 club funds that are already in theory spent. The only solution I can come up with is to move the running to the Club to match the Branch year, ie: collect in January and finish with the Christmas Draw, this does make sense although there are 2 issues, the first being that the 200 Club funds will due to be collected at the same time as the subs and the second being that there would be no Christmas Draw this year. I wonder if we should keep it the same and possibly alter the account summary at the end of the year to show the general fund and 200 Club balance as separate entities on the balance sheet.

Finally, I'd just like to ask Stuart Gibson if he would give the meeting an idea of how the 2027 Subs would or could be collected.

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers

Newbury Branch

Annual General Meeting

7th March 2026

Midweek Ringing Master's 2025 Report

We started the year as usual ringing on the ten bells at Thatcham in January. Tony and I were unable to attend as we were in Lancaster attending Tony's sister's funeral.

For the rest of the year, we visited some of the towers in the branch and also Harwell, Brightwell cum Sotwell, Pangbourne and Highclere, which were a first for many of this group.

Ringling has been of a good standard, with some members having made significant progress during the year. Methods ranged from Grandsire Doubles and Triples to Surprise Minor and Major.

Lunch after ringling is always a convivial occasion, enjoyed by everyone.

My thanks to members of the Group for their continuing enthusiastic support and particularly to Tony for his assistance with the lunches.

Sue Smith

7 March 2026