

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

Guidelines for Branch Secretaries

Updated November 2011

BRANCH SECRETARIES' GUIDELINES

These guidelines are provided by the General Secretary and do not take account of additional or different procedures which apply to individual Branches. The comments and procedures below should be taken as guidelines only, for the assistance of Branch Secretaries, particularly when they are new to the work. They supplement the Guild and Branch Rules and do not replace them.

Some Branches share some of these tasks amongst other Branch Officers. These guidelines will certainly be of assistance to Branch Treasurers whether or not this office is combined with that of secretary.

BRANCH PRACTICES AND MEETINGS

The frequency and dates of these will depend upon the tradition of your Branch and the wishes of the members.

If at all possible, decide on a schedule of towers for all practices and meetings for a year in advance. Keep a record to ensure that all towers are visited reasonably regularly. Also maintain a record of which towers have halls which can accommodate meetings and where people exist who will organise tea.

Notice of the Branch AGM and other business meetings must be sent to all correspondents of towers with members at least 14 days in advance, and also to the Officers of the Guild (i.e. Master, Deputy Master, General Secretary, General Treasurer, Librarian and your Branch Steward). Branch meetings must be minuted, and a copy of the minutes should be sent to the Guild Librarian. It is recommended that old Minute Books should be deposited in the Guild Library for safe keeping.

If necessary, items of business such as the election of new members can be taken on the occasion of Branch Practices provided notice is given at least 14 days in advance. (You could consider the possibility of giving such a notice for each Practice to allow for emergency items. A minute of 'No business' would suffice for those (many) occasions when there is nothing to raise.) The Guild banner may be used at Branch services and this is available from the Guild Master.

Expenses for postage and printing should be claimed from the Branch Treasurer, providing receipts wherever possible.

BRANCH STRIKING COMPETITIONS

For your Branch Striking Competition(s), arrange the location well in advance. Also at least 3 months in advance find one, or preferably two, judge(s). A list of ringers who would be able to act as judges can be obtained from the Guild Master or Deputy Master. Good judges are difficult to secure, so book them early.

The judge(s) should be from outside the Branch whenever possible. Copies of the rules for striking competitions should be sent to the judge(s) and to the competing teams.

Ensure that there is suitable accommodation for the judges. They should be able to hear the bells clearly without being disturbed by the noise or sight of other people.

In advance organise two stewards - one to marshal the teams according to the draw order and the other to be in the ringing room advising the conductor when allocated times for practice and for the rounds are reached, etc.

NEW MEMBERS

When new members are elected at one of your meetings, the name(s) and date(s) of election should be sent to the Membership Secretary as soon as possible. The Membership Secretary will issue a certificate for you to forward to the new member together with a copy of the Guild Rules and the New Members information leaflet.

The Branch should keep an up to date list of members, including the date of election, membership number (obtained from the certificate), tower and when subscriptions have been paid (or whether the subscription has been waived as described in the Guild Rules). In the event of a member moving to another Branch, details should be sent to the Secretary of that Branch. All changes in membership, including deaths, should be notified to the Membership Secretary. The General Secretary should be informed before each Guild AGM of the names of members who have died during the year.

FINANCE

Subscriptions are due to be paid by members at the start of each year. Ensure that you (and they) know the subscription amount, which is generally decided at the Autumn General Committee Meeting.

Chase up towers and members who are slow in sending subscriptions.

The Branch Treasurer should send the appropriate proportion of the subscriptions to the General Treasurer as soon as possible but definitely by 1st March each year.

The Branch Treasurer should maintain accounts and submit them for auditing. A copy of the accounts should be sent to the Guild General Treasurer by 30th April.

BADGES AND RULE BOOKS

The General Secretary holds stocks of these. Rule books are available free of charge but badges should be purchased (and resold to your members as required).

FIRST QUARTER PEAL CERTIFICATES

Blank, signed copies of first quarter peal certificates may be obtained from the Guild Secretary.

CHANGE OF BRANCH OFFICERS

You should notify the General Secretary, Newsletter Editor and the Report Editor of changes of Officers, particularly the Branch Secretary. Changes of Branch Treasurer should also be notified to the General Treasurer. It is preferable also to place a notice in the Ringing World for changes of Secretary.

NOTICES FOR GUILD ACTIVITIES

Notices will be sent to you by the General Secretary regarding Guild activities such as the AGM, Ringing Day, Festival, Striking Competitions and General Committee Meetings.

These notices should be distributed promptly as follows:

- Notices of meetings of the General Committee and the Bell Fund to yourself and to the Branch representative(s).
- Striking Competition notices to those concerned as described below.
- Other notices: one to each tower with members and spare copies to Branch Officers.

Guild Competitions

The General Secretary will send you notices regarding the various Guild Competitions.

For the Six Bell Competition, your Branch will be represented by one tower band, either the winner of your Branch Competition or another selected by an appropriate procedure. The notice for the Guild competition should be forwarded promptly to the conductor/tower captain of the band concerned so that they can submit their entry form to the Deputy Master (or other organizer) by the due date.

Entry to the Guild Eight Bell Competition is for tower or Branch bands with no restriction on numbers. Again, notices should be forwarded promptly to likely entrants so that entry forms can be submitted on time.

In the Ten Bell Competition your Branch will be represented by a single band selected in a manner approved by your Branch members. The notice for this competition should be sent to the person(s) responsible for organizing the band.

SECRETARIES' MEETING

As a Branch Secretary, we hope that you will be able to attend the annual Branch Secretaries' Meeting at which various Guild and Branch issues are discussed informally. This meeting is held on the first Friday of October. The General Secretary will send a reminder of the meeting, possibly with a list of topics to be discussed, but please feel free to ask for any other items to be included. If you can give prior warning this would be appreciated, but items can be raised at the meeting if there is no time to give notice.

GUILD MEETINGS

As a Branch Secretary, you are an ex-officio member of the Guild General Committee and a Governor of the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and should attend the meetings of these bodies. These meetings are held on the second Saturday of March and the fourth Saturday of November. It is also hoped that you will be able to attend the Guild AGM in May.

GUILD STEWARDS

The Guild Stewards act in an advisory role and as a link between the Branch and the Guild Officers, especially through the Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee. They will also help in arranging Guild events in your area if required. Each Steward is asked to liaise with three Branches and they will try to attend as many of your Branch events as possible. Please keep your Steward informed of activities, welcome them to your meetings and practices and ask for their help whenever you need it.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Report Editor will ask you for a range of information which is to be included in the Guild's Annual Report. This includes a Branch Report for the year, a list of paid up members (liaise with the Branch Treasurer for this), amendments to the details of tower ringing times and names of correspondents (these should be sent as soon as they are known to ensure that the published Correspondents' list is up to date), names of members who have died during the year (this list should also be sent to the General Secretary for use at the Guild AGM), names of long serving members (50 years +) etc. You will receive a set of deadlines for these and it is vital to keep to the dates given to ensure that the information is included in the Report.

The Editor will also ask you how many copies of the Report you will need. Copies are distributed one to each tower with members. As Branch Secretary you are entitled to one for yourself and you should ask how many members would like their own copy.

Copies of the Guild Report will be sent to you by the Report Editor when they are available.

ODD BOB

The Newsletter Editor will ask you for a short report of activities within your Branch and a list of your forthcoming events for each of the three editions of ODD BOB each year. Again it is vital to keep to the given deadlines.

Issues of ODD BOB will be sent to you by the Newsletter Editor. These should be distributed to all towers with members. The current distribution is one copy to every seven members. You should inform the Newsletter Editor of the numbers required and update the total as necessary.

GUILD WEBSITE

The main diary of branch practices and events across the Guild is held on the Guild website <http://odg.org.uk>—please send your events to the webmaster@odg.org.uk.

LIAISON ON GUILD SERVICES

Education

The Education Sub-committee organises a number of courses for the Guild. Notices will be sent to you for distribution to towers. Please encourage members to attend these courses. Many Branches subsidise students from their Branch on these courses. Also, the Education Sub-committee will organise courses for a Branch, or even a tower if there is sufficient demand. If there is a need in your Branch, contact the Chairman of the Education Sub-committee for help and advice.

Towers and Belfries

If any tower captain is concerned about the condition of his/her bells, then ensure that the Towers and Belfries Sub-committee is asked to inspect the tower and bells. Members of the Sub-committee act in a liaison role with the Branches. Details of this can be found in ODD BOB and on the website.

Library

Advise your members on how to obtain books from the Guild Library. A catalogue of the books is available on the Guild website, and contact details for the librarian are available both on the website and in the Annual Report.

DATES OF GUILD EVENTS

These are (from 1995) the dates of the main Guild activities. Wherever possible, you should try to avoid any Branch activity which would clash with them. (Note the General Committee Meetings are usually finished before 6.00pm and so evening practices will probably not clash with these).

2nd Saturday in March	General Committee Meeting and Bell Fund AGM*
May Day Bank Holiday	Ringling Day and 8-bell Competition*
3rd Saturday in May	Guild AGM*
2nd Saturday in July (every 5 years)	Guild Festival
1st Friday in October	Branch Secretaries' Meeting
1st Saturday in October	6-bell Competition*
4th Saturday in November	General Committee Meeting and 10-bell competition *

Other events are held from time to time and the following are held on a regular basis:

Saturday in March/April	One-day Ringing Course
Saturday in September/October	Michaelmas Training
Saturday in November	One-day Ringing Course

BRANCH PARTICIPATION IN GUILD EVENTS

The Guild depends on the help of Branches, Secretaries in particular, for the organisation of the events marked * above. In order to spread the load, this is arranged in a 15-year plan so that over a period of 15 years each Branch is asked to help in arranging each of the main five events once. This should mean one event every three years. You should have a copy of the plan; if not the General Secretary will supply one or you can get one from the website.

Guidelines of what is required for the various events are given below, but in each case the General Secretary and your Branch Steward will be able offer advice and assistance.

Indicative timings are included but you may find that reference to previous notices will be helpful.

RINGING DAY

Towers and Routes

Arrange 1 or 2 routes for the period 9.00 am - 7.00 pm approx. i.e. 24 - 30 towers for 1 hour each if possible. (An overlap of 15 minutes may help to keep things moving).

If possible arrange the routes so that toilet facilities are available at suitable stages, e.g. mid-morning, lunch time and mid-afternoon. Coffee, tea or cold drinks are often appreciated by the ringers. If this can be arranged at convenient towers the profits will help the fund-raising for the day. If this is not possible, then any indication of towers where refreshments may be obtained locally would be helpful.

Suggest suitable lunch venues where possible.

Information should be sent to the General Secretary in good time for the necessary publicity to be arranged - before the end of February.

Stewards

Arrange for at least 2 stewards to be at each tower. This is vital for the smooth running of the day and the avoidance of

unpleasant incidents. (See Notes of Guidance for Stewards which are available from the General Secretary).

Tickets

The charge per tower and the cost of a Day ticket will be determined by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and the information and tickets sent to the Branch Secretary in good time for circulation to the stewards.

All monies collected should be sent to the General Treasurer as soon as possible after the event.

EIGHT BELL STRIKING COMPETITION

Towers

In liaison with the Guild Deputy Master, arrange for 3 convenient towers: 2 for the heats and one for the final. The 2 peals of bells used for the heats should be of similar weight and go if at all possible. The tower for the final should not be one of the towers used for the heats, but the bells can be different in weight. The peals of bells chosen should not present undue difficulties for the bands competing.

Since bands often travel some distance for the competition, it is appreciated if there are toilet facilities available at or near these towers.

Try to arrange for a suitable 'Judges' Den' e.g. a room in a nearby house. It is important that the judges can hear the bells clearly but are not likely to be disturbed.

Information concerning towers etc. should be sent to the General Secretary before the end of February.

Stewards

Arrange for 6 stewards to be available, 2 at each tower. One steward should act as marshal etc. outside the tower and the other should supervise the ringing inside the tower. All stewards should be familiar with the rules of the competition. The Judges are arranged by the Deputy Master.

Tea

Arrange this at a venue which is convenient for the Competition, usually at the venue for the final. Numbers for tea depend on the number of entries but are usually between 70 and 100. If tea tickets are required by the ringers involved in the Competition, these will be distributed by the Deputy Master who will be responsible for communicating numbers etc. to the Branch Secretary (or the person organising the tea).

It is helpful if the hall used for tea can be available during the competition particularly if the weather is inclement.

Timings

These are usually as follows but are open to discussion if local circumstances require something different.

- Heats 14.00
- Draw for Final 17.00
- Final 17.00
- Results 19.30
- Tea available from 16.45 approx.

Car Parking

It is very helpful to have any relevant information on the availability of parking facilities - particularly with a sketch map or postcode.

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Accommodation

The arrangements for these require a hall which will seat at least 50 people, together with some space for bookstalls etc.

Tea

This is usually taken at the end of the meeting.

Ringling

It is usual to have bells available for 40 - 45 minutes before the meeting and/or after the meeting.

Timings

The timings are approximately as follows:

- Ringing 13.45-14.25
- Meeting 14.30
- Tea at the end of the meeting, (hopefully between 17.00 and 17.30). It is appreciated if a cup of tea or coffee could be offered without the need to book for those who do not wish a full tea.

If there is a particularly long agenda, you will be advised beforehand and tea might be taken during a break in the meeting, but this is very unusual.

The General Secretary will need to know the following information at least six weeks before the meeting in order that the notices can be prepared:

- The venue for the meeting (preferably with a map) Arrangements for ringing.
- Name and address of the person to whom names for tea should be sent.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Accommodation

Attendance at the meeting is usually between 80 and 90 but it would be safer to use a hall which will seat at least 100. Not all those attending the meeting have tea.

Ringings

The Service and Meeting are usually preceded by ringing at three or four towers. One or two towers open after the meeting are often appreciated.

Service

Arrangements for the service are left to the discretion of the local Branch, but help and advice are always available from the General Secretary or your Branch Steward. The form of the service is usually a version of Evensong but this is not a requirement and local incumbents may have other Ideas.

Timings

Timings are usually as follows:

- Ringing 13.00- 15.30
- Service 15.30
- Tea 16.30
- Meeting 17.30
- Ringing 19.30 - 21.00 (at the latest)

Details of the arrangements (including map(s) where appropriate) should be with the General Secretary by the middle of March in order to allow time for production and distribution of the notices.

SIX BELL STRIKING COMPETITION

This event is similar to the Eight Bell Competition and the requirements are very similar in terms of bells and stewards.

Tea is usually held in a hall close to the tower for the Final and is attended by around 45 people. If the hall can be used during the competition, it is a great help as the weather is often inclement and it is not always possible to use the Church during the competition if it is a ground floor or gallery ring.

The usual timings are as follows:

- Heats 14.00- 16.00
- Results of heats at heats
- Tea from 16.00 or 16.30 and draw for final at 17.15
- Final 17.30-19.30.

Details of the arrangements should be sent to the General Secretary and the Deputy Master by the end of July.

CHARGES FOR GUILD EVENTS

Teas/refreshments at Guild events are expected to be self-financing, and should be charged for accordingly. Hire of halls can be covered by the Guild, but this should be discussed and agreed with the General Treasurer beforehand. If there appear to be problems over the finance of events which would leave your Branch 'out of pocket', these also should be discussed and agreed beforehand with the General Treasurer.