

Oxford Diocesan Guild
of Church Bell Ringers

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

RULES

(As at May 2016, amended March 2026)

BRANCH RULES

(As at 21 May 2011, amended 30 September 2025)

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Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

THE OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

RULES

1. NAME

The name of the Guild shall be “The Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers” hereinafter referred to as the “Guild”.

2. INTERPRETATION

In these Rules, except where the context otherwise requires:

(a) the singular includes the plural and the masculine includes the feminine;

(b) “the Diocese” means the geographical area which from time to time comprises the Diocese of Oxford in the Church of England;

(c) “member” means a member of the Guild in any category;

(d) “voting member” means a member entitled under these Rules to vote;

(e) “Officer” means any of the persons mentioned in Rule 9(a), (b), (c)(i) and (c)(ii); and

(f) “Branch” means a Branch of the Guild duly constituted under Rule 19.

3. OBJECTS

The objects of the Guild are:

(a) the encouragement of the attendance of its members both at service ringing and at public worship;

(b) the recognition of the position of ringers as Church workers;

(c) the recruitment and training of new ringers, so that there may be regular service ringing in all the towers within the Diocese where the bells are ringable;

(d) the promotion of interest in the care of all the bells within the Diocese; and

(e) the promotion of the art of change ringing.

4. AFFILIATION

The Guild may be affiliated to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and shall, if so affiliated, abide by the rules and decisions thereof.

5. MEMBERSHIP

There shall be the following categories of membership:

(a) Resident Ringing Members.

To become a Resident Ringing Member a candidate must

(i) be competent to ring for Sunday Service;

(ii) live within the Diocese or ring regularly at a church within the Diocese and either

(A) be elected on the proposition of a voting member at a General Meeting of the Guild or of a Branch, or

(B) be elected before starting for a peal by the voting members then present. Such election shall be of no effect unless ratified at a subsequent meeting of the Guild or of a Branch.

(Guidance note: a member who has been a Resident Ringing Member for at least 30 years and who has given meritorious service to the Guild or a Branch may be proposed for a Distinguished Membership Award by two members of the Guild. This proposal, which should include a citation of the reasons for it, should be sent to the General Secretary. If approved by the Executive, the names of those proposed for a Distinguished Membership Award will go forward for ratification at the Guild AGM.)

(b) Non-resident Ringing Members.

To become a Non-resident Ringing Member a candidate must

(i) live outside the Diocese and either

(A) be elected on the proposition of a voting member at a General Meeting, or

(B) be elected by the voting members present before starting for a peal.

Whenever a Non-resident Ringing Member is elected before starting for a peal the conductor of the peal shall forward his subscription to the Peal Secretary together with his name and address and the date and place of the election. Such election shall be of no effect unless ratified at the next Guild Annual General Meeting.

(Guidance note: a Resident Ringing Member may become a Non-resident Ringing Member in accordance with Rule 8(b) and a Non-resident Ringing Member may become a Resident Ringing Member in accordance with Rule 8(a).)

(c) Life members.

A Resident Ringing Member may become a Life Member at any time by paying a lump sum equal to 25 times the annual subscription current at the time. A Life Member shall retain his membership regardless of his residence.

(d) Honorary Members.

Anyone appointed or elected to be the President or a Vice-President under Rule 9 who is not already a voting member shall become an Honorary Member. Anyone who is not a voting member and who is considered to have given meritorious service to the Guild may be elected as an Honorary Member by a General Meeting of the Guild or of a Branch.

(e) Associate Members.

A person ineligible for membership as a voting member and who takes an active interest in the Guild or a Branch may be elected as an Associate Member at a General Meeting of the Guild or of a Branch.

(f) Honorary Ringing Members.

A person who was elected an Honorary Ringing Member before the 2009 AGM.

6. ENTITLEMENT TO VOTE AND HOLD OFFICE

(a) Members of the following categories and no others shall be entitled to hold office and to vote at all meetings of the Guild or of the Branch of which they are members, including meetings of any committee or sub-committee of which they are members:

(i) Resident Ringing Members;

(ii) Life Members;

(iii) Distinguished Members;

(iv) Honorary Ringing Members; and

(v) Honorary Members.

(b) Non-resident Ringing Members and Associate Members may attend meetings of the Guild or of its Branches. They shall not be entitled to be elected to any committee or sub-committee of the Guild or of a Branch but may be co-opted by any such committee or sub-committee which has power to co-opt. When attending a meeting a Non-resident Ringing Member or Associate Member may be allowed to speak at the discretion of the person presiding at such meeting.

7. EXPULSION OR SUSPENSION

(a) Any member may be expelled or suspended from membership on the ground that he has by word or action brought discredit to the Guild, provided that the procedure laid down in this Rule is followed.

(b) A proposal to expel or suspend a member may be made only by:

(i) a resolution of a Branch, or

(ii) a proposal signed by not less than five voting members.

(c) Any such proposal shall be sent in writing to the General Secretary who shall within 28 days convene a meeting of the Executive of which at least 14 days' notice shall be given to the members of the Executive, to the member concerned and to the Branch or members making the proposal.

(d) The member concerned shall be entitled to be present and to speak at any meeting of the Executive when such proposal is considered but shall withdraw when the Executive considers its decision. A representative of the Branch or of the members making the proposal shall also be entitled to be present and to speak but shall also withdraw when the Executive considers its decision.

(e) After hearing the case for the proposal and for the member concerned, the Executive shall decide whether or not the member concerned should be expelled or suspended from membership for a specific period. Such decision shall be final.

(f) The Executive may draw up rules for the conduct of hearings under this Rule and, if so, such rules shall be communicated to the parties concerned.

(g) A member expelled under this Rule shall not be re-admitted to membership within two years and then only with the consent of the Executive after notice of proposed re-admission has been given on the agenda. Any money owing by the expelled member to the Guild shall become payable immediately on expulsion and any property of the Guild in his care or possession shall be returned immediately to the appropriate officer.

(h) A member suspended under this Rule shall return immediately to the appropriate officer any property of the Guild in his care or possession and shall not be re-admitted to

membership after suspension unless such property has been returned and any money owing by him to the Guild has been paid.

8. SUBSCRIPTION

(a) Resident Ringing Members, Distinguished Members and Associate Members shall pay an annual subscription of such an amount as shall from time to time be decided by the Executive. Such subscription shall be payable on election to membership and thereafter annually on 1st January in respect of that calendar year and shall be paid to the Treasurer of the Branch to which the member belongs. Any Resident Ringing Member or Associate Member whose subscription shall be unpaid by the 31st March in the year in which it is due shall thereupon cease to be a member of the Guild and shall not be re-admitted to membership unless the subscription for that year is first paid, provided that a Branch may resolve to excuse such payment after notice of such proposal has been given in accordance with Branch Rule E.

(b) A Resident Ringing Member who ceases to meet the condition of Rule 5(a)(ii) may become a Non-resident Ringing Member without further election either on payment of the amount of the Non-resident Ringing Member's subscription, or without further payment if he has previously paid annual subscriptions of a total not less than the amount of the Non-resident Ringing Member's subscription. Such change of status shall be communicated by the Branch Secretary to the General Secretary.

(c) A Non-resident Ringing Member shall, immediately on election, pay a subscription of such amount as shall from time to time be decided by the Executive, such subscription to be paid as provided by Rule 5(b). A Non-resident Ringing Member who subsequently qualifies as a Resident Ringing Member under Rule 5(a)(ii) shall thereupon cease to be a Non-resident Ringing Member but shall, without further election, become a Resident Ringing Member and shall be required to pay the annual subscription from 1 January following the date of his qualification.

(d) Following election under Rule 5(a) or qualification under paragraph (c) of this Rule a Resident Ringing Member shall be issued with a certificate of membership and with a copy of the current Rules of the Guild.

9. OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

(a) The Lord Bishop of the Diocese shall be invited to be the President of the Guild.

(b) The Bishops Suffragan of the Diocese, the Archdeacons within the Diocese and the Deans of Christ Church and Windsor shall be invited to be Vice-Presidents. Other persons who have performed meritorious service for the Guild may be elected Vice-Presidents at a General Meeting.

(c) There shall be:

  (i) a Master, a Deputy Master, a General Secretary, a General Treasurer and a PR & Communications officer. These officers shall make up the Executive Committee (known as the Executive). The Executive may co-opt up to three additional members. The Master and Deputy Master must be change ringers;

  (ii) a Librarian, an Editor of the Report, a Peal Secretary, a Safeguarding Officer, and five Stewards of the Guild. Additional officers may, from time to time, be appointed by a General Meeting after consideration of a report by the Executive; and

  (iii) representatives of the Guild to serve on the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers shall be elected from time to time so as to comply with the rules of that organisation.

(d) All such persons as are mentioned in Rule 9(c) shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting from among the voting members present or who shall have agreed to be nominated with the exception of the Safeguarding Officer who will be appointed by the Executive. Those elected shall hold office from the end of the meeting at which they were elected until the end of the next following Annual General Meeting, provided that the persons elected as representatives of the Guild to serve on the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers shall serve until the expiration of their period of office under the rules of the Central Council.

(e) There shall be a Scrutiny Committee consisting of:

(i) those Vice Presidents of the Guild who are change ringers; and

(ii) a Branch spokesperson from each Branch, selected by the branch.

(f) The Scrutiny Committee shall elect a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary from its members.

(g) Should a vacancy arise among the Officers, the Scrutiny Committee shall appoint a substitute (decided at a general or extraordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee) who shall hold office until the end of the next Annual General Meeting, provided that, if the appointment is urgent in the opinion of the Master or, in his absence, the Deputy Master, it may be so made by the Executive.

(h) The Executive shall have the power to manage and administer the Guild's property and affairs in pursuit of the Guild's objects and in accordance with its Rules and policies.

(i) The property, funds and assets of the Guild will be vested in the Executive.

(j) The Executive will only exercise the following powers with the specific approval of the Scrutiny Committee:

(i) borrow money;

(ii) acquire or dispose of significant assets; or

(iii) make any decision or take any action which reduces or places at risk the Guild's total assets by more than 30% of their value (as reported to the most recent Annual General Meeting).

(k) The Scrutiny Committee shall have the following powers:

(i) to call an Extra-ordinary General Meeting of the Guild's members if it has material concerns about the conduct of the Executive or members of the Executive which cannot be resolved between the Executive and the Scrutiny Committee; and

(ii) to report to members of the Guild on its work and dealings with the Executive at the Annual General Meeting.

(l) The Executive shall report to the Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis and not less than four times a year. Minutes of such meetings shall be kept and shall be available for members to view.

10. GENERAL MEETINGS

(a) A General Meeting to be known as the Annual General Meeting shall be held each year. The business to be transacted at the Annual General Meeting shall be:

(i) to receive from the Executive a report and audited accounts for the previous year;

(ii) to elect the Officers of the Guild in accordance with Rule 9;

(iii) to appoint an Independent Examiner who shall be appropriately certificated; and

(iv) other items placed on the agenda by the Executive or Scrutiny Committee and any further business allowed by the chairman.

(b) The General Secretary, whenever requested by the Executive or Scrutiny Committee, or in writing by any 25 voting members, shall, within 28 days of receipt of such request, convene an Extraordinary General Meeting. In case of emergency, the President, the Master or the General Secretary may convene such a meeting at his own discretion.

(c) Not less than 14 days' notice in writing of any General Meeting specifying the date, time and place and the business to be transacted at such meeting shall be given to the tower correspondent of each tower within the Diocese at which there are voting members of the Guild. Whenever possible, notice of such meeting shall also be given by publication in "The Ringing World".

(d) No business shall be transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum of 50 voting members are present. Every voting member present shall have one vote and matters shall be decided by a simple majority except where otherwise stated in these Rules. In the case of an equality in the voting the chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

(e) The Master shall take the chair, whenever possible, at all General Meetings. In his absence the Deputy Master shall take the chair but if he also is absent, the meeting shall elect an officer to take the chair.

11. MANAGEMENT

(a) The management of the Guild shall be entrusted to the Executive, which may regulate its own proceedings and generally exercise all such powers of the Guild as are not required by these Rules to be exercised by a General Meeting or specifically by the Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee and Branches shall fix their own quorums.

(b) The Executive may from time to time appoint, revise or dissolve any sub-committee as it considers necessary. The terms of reference of any sub-committee shall be as determined by the Executive from time to time.

(c) The General Secretary shall, if possible, attend all General Meetings and meetings of the Executive. He, or his deputy, shall keep the minutes of such meetings in duplicate (the duplicate copy being in the care of the Librarian), conduct all the correspondence of the Guild, except in matters relating to finance, issue notices of meetings and carry out such other duties as are required for the general running of the Guild.

(d) A register of members shall be kept by such person as the Executive shall agree.

12. FINANCE

(a) The property of the Guild, both real and personal, shall be vested in the Executive Cheques, electronic bank transfers and other orders drawn on the Guild banking accounts shall be signed/made by the General Treasurer or by a member appointed by the Executive to sign cheques/make such transfers; save, however, that cheques/transfers for more than five hundred pounds must be expressly approved by the Executive.

(b) The General Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring that satisfactory arrangements exist for the safe receipt and banking of all monies due or paid to the Guild and the efficient payment of all expenses incurred by the Guild. He shall keep such accounts as the Executive may direct. At the Annual General Meeting he shall present an independently examined statement of accounts made up to the previous 31st December. He shall be responsible for investing any funds which are surplus to current needs, subject to the approval of the Executive.

13. LIBRARY

(a) The Librarian shall have the care and maintenance of the Guild Library, and in particular any documents unique to the Guild, including the duplicate minute book, the first Guild peal book, the list of peals together with the bound copies of the Annual Reports containing such peals, the Roll of Honour and such other property belonging to the Guild as may be placed in his care by the Executive. He shall issue and receive books in accordance with paragraph (b) of this Rule.

(b) Books and the Guild handbells may be borrowed by any member in accordance with such conditions as may from time to time be determined by the Executive.

(c) The Librarian shall be empowered to purchase suitable books.

14. CUSTODY AND INSURANCE OF GUILD PROPERTY

(a) All Guild property, other than that mentioned in Rule 13, shall be in the care and custody of such person as the Executive may from time to time direct.

(b) The Guild property mentioned in Rule 13 and all other Guild property shall be adequately insured by the Guild.

15. DAMAGE

The Guild may pay the cost of any damage to bell or gear occurring during a Guild function.

16. DISSOLUTION OF THE GUILD

The Guild shall not be dissolved nor its funds divided or disposed of except by a majority of three quarters of the voting members present at a General Meeting of which not less than 28 days' notice in writing has been given to the tower correspondents of each tower within the Diocese having voting members of the Guild and such notice shall have specified the intention to propose such a resolution.

17. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

No motion shall be put in the agenda at any General Meeting except as specified in Rule 10(a) unless a notice in writing specifying the resolution to be proposed shall have been given to the General Secretary not less than six weeks before the date of the General Meeting at which such resolution is to be proposed.

18. ALTERATION OF RULES

Alterations or additions to these Rules or to Branch Rules shall not be made except at a General Meeting after consideration of a report by the Executive and agreement by the Scrutiny Committee. All such alterations or additions must be approved by three quarters of the voting members present.

19. BRANCHES

In order to advance its objects and to make for better organisation the Guild shall be divided into Branches based on geographical areas. Any reorganisation of Branches shall take place

only with the consent of the towers and Branches involved. Such reorganisation shall be subject to approval by the Executive.

20. ANNUAL REPORT

The Executive shall decide each year whether to publish a report on the activities of the Guild (but any decision to stop producing such a report is to also be agreed by the Scrutiny Committee) and shall decide the content of any such report.

21. PEALS

(a) A peal will be recognised by the Guild only if it complies with the following conditions:

  (i) The peal must comply with the Rules of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers;

  (ii) All participants must be members of the Guild or provisionally elected in accordance with Rule 5(a) or (b); and

  (iii) The conductor of the peal shall submit to the Peal Secretary details of the peal including participants and the composition (for seven or more bells), details of provisionally elected members and the appropriate peal fee as determined by the Executive. This submission must be received by the Peal Secretary within one month of the peal being rung.

(b) A peal may be rejected by the Guild after publication by “The Ringing World” if it is subsequently found not to comply with any of the conditions of paragraph (a) of this Rule.

THE OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

BRANCH RULES

A. Branch members must be voting or Associate Members of the Guild. Only members of the Branch may vote at Branch meetings.

(Guidance note - Voting Members of the Guild may vote in the Branch through which their Guild Subscription is paid. They may become voting members of additional Branches, by paying to them the Branch portion of the Guild Subscription. Regardless of the number of Branch memberships held, Voting Members of the Guild have only one vote at any Guild meeting.)

B. There shall be a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of each Branch (hereinafter referred to as "the Branch officers"). Every Branch shall hold an Annual General Meeting each year and the Branch officers shall be elected at such meeting from among the voting members of the Branch. They shall hold office from the end of such meeting until the end of the next following Branch Annual General Meeting. If the Branch so resolves the same person may hold the offices of Secretary and Treasurer. Additional officers of the Branch may from time to time be appointed at the Branch Annual General Meeting.

C. There shall be a committee of each Branch consisting of the Branch officers, a representative of each tower of the Branch at which there are Branch members and the Branch spokesperson who serves on the Guild Scrutiny Committee.

D. Should a vacancy arise among the Branch officers, it shall be filled by the Branch in general meeting or by the Branch committee and the person so appointed shall hold office until the end of the next following Branch Annual General Meeting.

E. The Annual General Meeting of the Branch shall be held each year at such time as each Branch may decide, when the Branch officers shall be elected and general business transacted. Not less than 14 days' notice in writing of the date, time and place and the business to be transacted at the meeting shall be given by the Branch Secretary to the Guild Executive and to members of each tower of the Branch at which there are Branch members. The branch may decide how to select its spokesperson on the Guild Scrutiny Committee.

F. The Branch Treasurer shall collect the subscriptions of the Branch members who are Resident Ringing Members and Associate Members and shall forward to the General Treasurer by the 31st March each year such proportion of the subscriptions as shall from time to time be decided by the Executive, the remainder of the subscriptions being retained for the use of the Branch. The Branch Treasurer shall submit an audited statement of accounts to the end of each calendar year at each Annual General Meeting of the Branch and shall forward a copy of such statement to the General Treasurer by 30th April following.

G. The Guild may pay the cost of any damage to bell or gear occurring during a Branch function, provided that notice of any such damage shall be given as soon as possible to the Guild General Treasurer by the Branch Secretary.

H. Each Branch may regulate its own proceedings and make rules for the conduct of its business provided that such rules are not inconsistent with the Guild Rules and these Branch Rules. Should any such inconsistency occur, the Guild Rules and these Branch Rules shall prevail.