

Report from The Abingdon Guild of Town Criers

Abingdon is unique in England in having its own Guild of Town Criers. Our Town Criers are all volunteers, I am the Master of the Guild, having succeeded the previous Master, the late Ewart Hemmings on his death. The Town Council helped to set the Guild up in 1999 to advertise Town Events, and to support us for our bi-annual Meeting. The Town Council also helps with provision of equipment such as bells, hats and the Town Criers' Regalia.

We support all Mayoral, Town Council Events and Charity Events in Abingdon free of charge. We do charge for attending and crying at special occasions and requests, such as special Birthdays or Anniversaries, Weddings, new Shop Openings, Lectures and the like. All the money raised goes to the Mayor's Charity Fund. The Criers receive no payment.

We currently have 5 active Criers - 4 men and 1 woman, and 3 other volunteers who are temporarily out of action because of illness or other family commitments. We have a volunteer organiser, Patrick Bird, who has himself been a Crier for many years. To request help with events, organisations and individuals who need a Town Crier need to give Patrick as much notice as they can. He is contactable via the Town Council office. The more notice you can give, the better chance he has of finding a Crier for your event.

Since it was set up, the Guild has been very busy, although Covid did adversely affect our activities. As well as Crying in Abingdon we have, when asked, performed in Wallingford, Thame, Faringdon, Oxford and Witney. So it's a travelling life if you're an Abingdon Town Crier!

Volunteers are welcome and anyone who wishes to be a volunteer Town Crier should contact Patrick or myself for a chat and a voice Test in front of the Guild. After that, you'll find the work and the people you'll meet both fulfilling and exciting.

Lesley Legge 8 April 2024