

MINUTES of the Branch Committee Meeting held at 1 Lockton Barns, Harwell, on **Sunday 28th February 2016** at 7.30pm.

1. ATTENDEES

Philip Roberts (Chairman), Susan Read (Vice-chairman), Nick Clarke (Joint Ringing Master), Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master), Mary Friskney (Training Coordinator), Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Gill Loyd (Secretary), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Josie Irving (Branch Representative), Dick Peters (Branch Representative), Daphne Pollard, Peter Rolfe, Roy Thorpe, Dave Trotman, Colin Turner, Nicola Turner

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Jill Garlick, Carina Lobley, Tim Pett, Kathryn Roberts Lock, Claire Ward

The Chairman congratulated Claire Ward on her marriage to Bob Mannix yesterday, and Nicola Turner reported that a celebratory peal had been rung at Milton.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th October 2015

Circulated and read, signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- **Branch Website:** Liz Woodhouse has said that she can now make amendments to the website. It has been decided not to update it until after the AGM in March, so that any changes to branch officers can be incorporated. The Secretary will ask Liz if she is happy to continue in this role, and both she and Susan Read have offered to help with looking at what needs to be updated on the website.
- **North Moreton:** The first quarter peal on the bells since the augmentation and rehang took place earlier today, with three North Moreton ringers in the band. The complainant is still making a nuisance of himself and contacting the ringers, but is refusing to speak to the Rector. Ringing has not been curtailed and visiting bands are allowed in accordance with the policy for ringing adopted by the whole benefice. The work to the new toilet and kitchenette is almost complete, and a new electricity supply cable is still required. The builder cannot submit his final bill until completion and it is anticipated that there will be a small shortfall in funding. This will be covered by a loan from one of the villagers.
- **Radley:** All the work has now been completed, including a new ladder to provide access to the bells. Philip Roberts has recently carried out an inspection for the Guild and the ringing chamber is now being decorated.
- **Brightwell cum Sotwell:** The bells are being taken out on 4th April. Sufficient funds have been raised to cover the total job, including strengthening work to the tower costing about £5,000. The grant of £3,000 offered by the Branch will not be required. Roy Thorpe has asked if any branch members will volunteer to help and Stuart Gibson is investigating transport for the bells.
- **Sutton Courtenay:** The gudgeons on the tenor have been replaced and all eight bells are now being rung.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT

- Since the last Committee Meeting, monthly branch practices have been held at Milton, West Hanney, Blewbury, and Steventon. Mid-week afternoon ringing practices have been held at North Moreton, Drayton, Chilton, Cholsey, Brightwell and Marcham. Before the practice at Brightwell, twenty-two learners and helpers enjoyed lunch at a pre-practice social in the Red Lion. Surprise major practices were held in Wallingford, Milton and Harwell.
- For young branch members, Susan Read has organised: ringing at Wallingford and a walking treasure hunt from Wallingford to Benson in the October half-term; ringing at St Giles, Oxford, and a treasure hunt in the Natural History Museum in the Christmas holidays; ringing at Shiplake in the February half-term. Susan is planning an outing in Cambridge jointly with young ringers of the Ely Diocesan Association on 31st March.
- We have gained nine new members from four towers (Polly-Mirren Cockburn, Josiah Shields and Benjamin Small from Harwell; Arthur McClintock, Sophie Hannon and Tallulah Johnson from Letcombe Regis; Alison Saunders and Alistair Auckland from North Moreton; Rob Smith from West Hanney).

- After winning the branch 6-bell striking competition in March, Wallingford represented the Branch at the Guild's striking competition on 3rd October. Together with Roy Thorpe of Brightwell, they were highly commended, being placed fifth. The branch band entering the Guild's 10-bell competition at Warfield in November also came fifth.
- A very popular skittles evening and supper was held at Radley Village Hall on Saturday 14th November. 63 members attended and all enjoyed the evening. A total of £346.00 (including £112 from the raffle) was raised towards the ONB Branch contribution for the Radley Bell Restoration Project.
- New Year's Day 2016 ringing with refreshments at Blewbury was very well attended. I would like to thank everyone who helped me with the refreshments, especially Anne, Chris and all the wonderful cake makers. This was once again a very pleasant and successful occasion for the Branch.

6. JOINT RINGING MASTERS' REPORT

- The pattern of ONB ringing practices, evolved over many years, still seems to be delivering the needs of most branch members as far as we can tell (on the basis that nobody has complained!).
- All practices are providing support and helping to develop the ringing ability of those attending, whatever their level of expertise. Meeting others at a similar stage of learning, and receiving encouragement from experienced ringers is one of the key benefits of being a member of a wider organisation than just your own tower. Therefore it would be risky to change something that is working well.
- Generally branch towers are enjoying mixed fortunes. Some are developing well with newly recruited ringers making good progress, while a few are struggling to maintain a practice even on an occasional basis. A good sign is that many of the newer ringers are feeling confident to come to branch practices and also regularly visit other tower practices. Hopefully this trend will continue and the numbers at all practices will swell as time goes on.
- As has been previously raised by the Ringing Masters, there is a concern that there is no obvious succession plan to identify and support new ONB Officers into the future.
- Thank you to all the helpers, supporters and attenders at all our branch practices in 2015.

7. TRAINING COORDINATOR'S REPORT

- The monthly afternoon training sessions continue to be well attended, thanks particularly due to the more experienced ringers, who come along to support those who are trying to progress in their ringing. There is a social aspect to this too – we enjoyed our 'Christmas' lunch at Brightwell in January.
- Branch members continue to support in several towers, Aston Tirrold, North Moreton and Cholsey to name just those that have come to my attention. There is, of course, teaching going on quietly in many towers in the branch. If your tower could do with some help, either with a particular aspect of ringing or generally, it would be worth contacting the committee to see if something can be set up for you.
- Susan Read and the Abingdon ringers are, as ever, doing sterling work encouraging youngsters in the branch. Susan and Mary are helping to run the Guild's team of young ringers that takes part in The Ringing World National Youth Competition. Half of the team comes from our branch.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

- In 2015 the membership of the Branch was 260 (2 less than in 2014). 251 members paid subscriptions, four of whom were members of the Guild through other Branches. In addition there were 7 Honorary and 2 Life members.
- So far in 2016 we have 172 paid up members (from 18 towers and 2 unattached) along with 7 Honorary and 2 Life members, plus 4 members who pay a subscription through another branch. 9 towers have not paid their subscriptions to date. Branch subscriptions must be paid over to the Guild before the end of March to ensure members benefit from the Guild Insurance policy. So far everyone has paid without question the additional £2 requested by the Branch to help towards restoration projects within the Branch.
- The main fund raising event in 2015 was the Skittles at Radley. The event proceeds and expenses did not go via the Branch books as it was agreed the proceeds would go directly to the Radley restoration project. The BBQ following the outing raised £250 (including the raffle) and was also donated to the Radley bell restoration project.

- At the end of 2015, the Branch had funds in the region of £1,850, which is well in excess of the reserves required by the Branch. The proceeds of future branch events will now be donated to Brightwell cum Sotwell, if required, to help with the restoration project which will get underway in April.
- The accounts for 2015 have been examined and circulated ready to be presented for approval at the AGM.

9. UPDATE ON PROJECTS

- For North Moreton, Radley, Brightwell cum Sotwell and Sutton Courtenay, please see '4. Matters Arising'.
- **Blewbury:** Following an inspection by Whites of Appleton, the clappers and pulley blocks are being replaced during the first two weeks of March. Whites have said that the clappers provided by Taylors for the 1998 rehang were not the correct length. It is hoped that this work, costing just over £6,000, will further improve the go of the bells. The Guild has given a grant of 20% and the remaining funds have been donated by the local ringers and the PCC.
- **East Hendred:** On Christmas Day, a clock hammer irreparably damaged the wheel of the 2nd. The new wheel has cost £1700, which has been funded by insurance and the PCC. The clock hammer had a fundamental design flaw and will be repaired in the spring. Dave Trotman is planning to contact Whites of Appleton and Nicholson Bell Hangers to carry out inspections. Permission will not be given to change the frame, but the bells, currently on plain bearings, could be rehung on ball bearings.

10. DONATIONS FROM BRANCH FUNDS

ODG Funds: The Committee will recommend to the AGM that £250 be donated to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and £100 to the ODG Restoration Fund.

11. ITEMS FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

There are no additional items for the agenda for the AGM.

12. SOCIAL EVENTS

- Mini outing with three towers and lunch at East Ilsley on Wednesday, 27th April.
- Branch outing and barbecue on Saturday, 16th July. Philip Roberts is arranging towers in Hampshire, with a pub lunch in Whitchurch.
- Quiz evening and supper at Brightwell Village Hall on Saturday, 12th November.
- New Year's Day ringing and refreshments 2017 at Abingdon, St Helen.

13. RINGING FOR ENGLAND ON 23RD APRIL

- Although the Branch will not take part in the 'rolling ring', as many towers as possible will be encouraged to ring on St George's Day.

14. GUILD MASTER'S DISCUSSION ITEM FOR ODG MARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

The Secretary will email the Guild Master with the following response to the request for the discussion item on good striking and bell handling:

- ONB Branch does not hold specific activities to improve striking or tackle handling issues. At all our branch practices and ringing events, whenever necessary experienced ringers will comment on handling and striking and give constructive help.
- The ONB Committee would like to know what are the aims and objectives of having a regular discussion item, and also what is the output of the exercise other than having the results documented on the Guild's website.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Guild AGM will be held in the Vale of the White Horse Branch on Saturday, 21st May 2016. As there were insufficient attendees at last year's meeting for business to proceed, there will be several events on the day to encourage better attendance. A poster with full details has been distributed to all towers.
- On 22nd May at Drayton, a blue plaque for the Rev. F E Robinson will be unveiled. Nick Clarke will invite branch members to this event.

- There will be celebrations at Abingdon, St Helen, during May. On the 7th branch members will be invited to ring on the Stallpits mini-ring, and on the 22nd the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, will attend the service.
- Dick Peters of Wantage requested clarification regarding visiting ringers and insurance. Stuart Gibson, Guild Treasurer, responded that tower members and visiting ODG members are covered. Other visitors are only covered by the church's public liability insurance. Therefore they ring at their own risk and could be asked to sign a form to this effect.
- The Vicar of Harwell has recently asked for a risk assessment to be conducted. Wantage ringers have already carried out a risk assessment, which can be viewed by other towers if they are interested.
- Janette Roberts is no longer tower foreman at Didcot. Kathryn Roberts Lock has taken on this role, assisted by Peter Jones.
- It is hoped that many towers will take part in the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations by ringing on the weekend of 11th/12th June.
- Susan Read has nominated ONB Branch for an Association of Ringing Teachers award for its work with young ringers. The results will be announced on 12th March.

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This will be Sunday, 9th October 2016 at 7.30pm, at Dornie Lodge, Bessels Lea, Blewbury.

After the Chairman had expressed thanks to Nick and Debbie for their hospitality, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Signed..... Date.....