

**MINUTES of the Branch Committee Meeting** held at Dornie Lodge, Bessels Lea, Blewbury,  
on **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016** at 7.30pm.

1. **PRESENT** were Susan Read (Chairman), Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master), Philip Roberts (Joint Ringing Master) Gill Loyd (Secretary), Mary Friskney (Guild Steward), Josie Irving (Branch Representative), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Cliff Garlick, Jill Garlick, Tim Pett, Daphne Pollard, Roy Thorpe, Colin Turner, Nicola Turner and Claire Ward.

2. **APOLOGIES** for absence were received from Fiona Lloyd (Vice-chairman), Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Mark Cooke (Interim Webmaster), Dick Peters (Branch Representative), Nick Clarke, Debbie Greenfield, Beryl Jones and Carina Lobleby.

3. **MINUTES** of the Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2016 were circulated and read by those present. The Chairman signed the Minutes as a correct record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

- Section 7: The ODG band came equal second in the methods section of The Ringing World National Youth competition. Half of the team came from ONB Branch.
- Section 14: The reply from the Guild Master regarding discussion items at Guild Committee meetings is that some branches benefit from the responses of other branches, however the discussions will now be limited to one per year in March.
- Section 15: The additional events at the Guild AGM in the Vale of the White Horse Branch appear to have attracted more Guild members to attend the meeting.
- Section 15: ONB were runners up in the Association of Ringing Teachers awards and were highly commended for work with young ringers.

**5. SECRETARY'S REPORT**

- Evening branch practices have been held at: East Hagbourne, Didcot, Long Wittenham, Appleton, Childrey, West Hendred and Radley.
- Afternoon branch practices have been held at: Sunningwell, Childrey, Harwell, West Hanney, Sutton Courtenay and Milton.
- Surprise major/royal practices have been held at: Cholsey, Drayton, Goring and Appleton.
- Twenty-five members attended the Branch AGM. Nick Clarke and Mary Friskney stood down as branch officers. Philip Roberts, Susan Read and Fiona Lloyd were elected as joint ringing master, chairman and vice-chairman respectively. No one wanted to be branch training coordinator and this position is vacant. Liz Woodhouse later confirmed that she no longer wished to be branch webmaster. In the interim, Mark Cooke has taken the post pending ratification at the 2017 AGM.
- The AGM approved the Committee's recommendations: £250 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund, £100 to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund. The Brightwell ringers said they did not require the grant of £3,000, which could be used for other restoration projects.
- At the AGM, seven new members from Abingdon, Blewbury, Cholsey and Long Wittenham were elected to the Guild, and one member from Blewbury was re-elected. Since the AGM, Charles and Rachel Morrish of Milton and Margaret Richards of Cholsey have been elected to the Guild.
- Susan Read has continued to organise events for young ringers during the school holidays.
- On 27th April, the afternoon ringers had a mini-outing to Chieveley, Peasemore and East Ilsley, with lunch at the Crown and Horns in East Ilsley.
- The Branch outing on 18<sup>th</sup> July, organised by Philip Roberts, was well attended, with ringing at Goodworth Clatford, Hurstbourne Priors, Whitchurch, Longparish and Highclere. The excellently organised outing included a pub lunch in Whitchurch and afternoon tea at Longparish. It was followed by a very well-attended barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson. As usual, the food was superb and there was fun on the croquet green. Thanks go to Philip, Janette, Stuart and Naomi for arranging a good day for the Branch.

- The branch six bell striking competition was won by Abingdon. Unfortunately, the Abingdon ringers were unable to raise a band to represent the Branch at the Guild's 6-bell striking competition in October.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for her work during the past six months.

#### **6. JOINT RINGING MASTERS' REPORT**

- Some branch practices have been reasonably well attended, particularly the one at Childrey. However, those at Radley and West Hendred were very poorly attended, with Appleton cancelled. Surprise practices are generally reasonably attended, whilst afternoon practices are always well attended.
- It is possible that the age profile of branch members lends itself more to ringing during the afternoon. However, the ringing masters are reluctant to stop holding evening branch practices, and would welcome suggestions on how more branch members can be encouraged to attend.
- If each regular attender at branch practices were to bring an additional person with them, that would make a big difference. Another idea would be to encourage more tower captains to attend and bring some of their tower members with them.

#### **7. TREASURER'S REPORT (PRESENTED BY THE SECRETARY)**

- To date 250 members have paid full subscriptions. Branch membership is 264, with 7 Honorary, 2 Life and 5 members who pay their subscription via another branch (4 more than last year).
- All but 1 tower managed to pay their subscriptions by the new due time of March this year, with the last one paying in May. The majority of members paid the voluntary £2 restoration fund contribution.
- There are no outstanding grants. The New Year's ringing at Blewbury raised £66 and the outing and barbecue £260.
- The Branch has funds totalling £3,174 of which £1,097 is held in the Central Board of Finance and £2,077 at Lloyds Bank.

#### **8. TRAINING IN THE BRANCH**

- Mary Friskney and Susan Read have helped the joint ringing masters to run the monthly afternoon practices, and the format of these has not been changed.
- Susan continues to organise events for young ringers during the school holidays.
- Several towers help each other at their evening practices, e.g. East Hagbourne at Long Wittenham and Blewbury at North Moreton.
- During July and August, Susan Read ran a pilot course for new learners. Ten towers surrounding Abingdon were chosen to hold teaching sessions, using the Association of Ringing Teachers 'Learning the Ropes' scheme. These were held twice per week over six weeks. Initially 9 learners joined the course and 4 are still ringing.
- Susan would like to repeat the course in the spring/summer of 2017, but felt that it needed to be organised and advertised early, and be preceded by one or two 'taster' sessions.
- Richard Loyd said that a recent 'taster' event at Blewbury had been unsuccessful in gaining any new recruits, despite being very well advertised locally over a three-month period. Also an open morning at North Moreton had attracted over 80 people, none of whom wanted to learn to ring. Therefore, it appears that the problem with courses is more about how to encourage people to attend rather than the organisation of the course itself.
- Although some towers prefer to teach their own learners and so promote loyalty to their tower, others appreciate help with teaching. Also some learners enjoy trying other bells. Susan will draft a programme for another course and bring it to the next meeting.
- Susan will approach Tony Crabtree to see if he will take his mini-ring to a venue in the Branch (e.g. Didcot shopping centre) to try to engage local interest in ringing.

#### **9. BRANCH BELL RESTORATION PROJECTS UPDATE**

##### **North Moreton:**

- The project has been completed apart from the purchase of furniture for the ringing room and new vestry. This is thanks to a retrospective grant of £7,000 from The Gladiator Trust.

- On 15<sup>th</sup> November there will be a peal attempt in the morning. In the evening there will be a service of rededication and celebration, attended by the Bishop of Dorchester. There will be ringing from 6.00 – 6.30pm and refreshments after the service. Branch members are all welcome to attend.
- The person who has been complaining since the rehang has been quiet in recent months. However the Rector is aware and has handled the situation well.

#### **Radley:**

- The restoration project has been completed in full.

#### **Brightwell:**

- The restoration project has been completed in full. The Brightwell ringers wish to thank all branch members who have helped with the project.
- The tenor bell is awaiting repair and this will be funded by the local ringers and PCC.

#### **Blewbury:**

- All the clappers have been replaced by Whites of Appleton. This was paid for locally and with a grant from the Guild. The clapper balls on the trebles are smaller and so the bells sound less shrill. The bells are all striking well, however the 6<sup>th</sup> still has a tendency to go up wrong and Whites cannot think of a solution.

#### **Little Wittenham:**

- The tenor now has a new headstock and Whites have carried out maintenance work to the wheels and pulleys. This has been paid for in full by the Friends of Little Wittenham.

#### **Sparshalt and Letcombe Bassett:**

- It is thought that the Vicar might be interested in having the bells restored at both of these towers.

#### **Abingdon St Nicolas:**

- Tim Pett advised that the church had recently paid for the professional sandblasting of the frame.
- New rope bosses are now needed for the ceiling and the floor of the room above. Whites of Appleton had quoted £1015 + VAT for supply and fitting. Tim asked if the Branch would be able to give a grant towards this work.

**Decision:** The Committee can only make recommendations to the AGM and it is for the membership as a whole to decide whether or not to offer a grant. As the next AGM is not until March, it was decided that the Committee would ask the Treasurer to give a loan of £200. The Committee would then recommend to the AGM that this loan be converted to a grant.

**Decision:** As there is only one business meeting each year, at the next AGM the Committee will request the permission of the membership to be allowed to offer discretionary grants to towers for restoration and maintenance of up to a maximum of £500 if necessary.

### **10. BRANCH PROGRAMME FOR 2017**

The two Joint Ringing Masters and the Secretary met in September to plan practices and events for the Branch in 2017:

- The Secretary has already written to various towers for evening, afternoon and surprise major practices. When they have all been agreed, she will advertise the practices in the branch newsletter and in the diary on the ODG website.
- The New Year's ringing and refreshments will be held at Abingdon, St Helen, on 2<sup>nd</sup> January from 10.30am - 12.30pm.
- The Secretary will organise a pub lunch at The Bear, North Moreton, before the afternoon practice in January. She will also organise a mini-outing on 26<sup>th</sup> April in the Checkendon area for the afternoon practice ringers.

### **11. SOCIAL EVENTS**

- Roy Thorpe and the Brightwell ringers have organised a quiz and supper evening in Brightwell Village Hall at 7.30pm on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> November. There will be ringing at Brightwell from 6.00 – 7.00pm. The cost will be £10 per head, payable on the night. The Secretary has emailed a poster to tower correspondents.
- Philip Roberts offered to organise a branch outing on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2017, and Stuart Gibson offered to host the evening barbecue.
- The autumn social will be a barn dance and supper on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017 (venue to be decided). The Secretary will invite members of the Vale of the White Horse Branch to attend.

**12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Richard Loyd is still planning to have a trophy made for the winners of the branch striking competition to keep for a year. He hopes to have this made so that Abingdon can have it for a short time at least before the next competition in March.
- Mary Friskney advised that:
  - The Radley Course will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2017.
  - The Guild AGM will be on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017 in Tilehurst.
  - She has a small supply of books from the Guild's book stall and can also order others.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This was arranged for Sunday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2017, at 7.30pm (venue to be advised).

After the Chairman had expressed thanks to Richard and Gill for their hospitality, the meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Signed.....

Date.....