

**Minutes of the Old North Berks Branch Annual General Meeting
Held at St Michael, Cumnor on Saturday, 18th March 2017**

28 members attended the Annual General Meeting, including Hilarie Rogers (Guild Master) and Mary Friskney (Guild Steward).

The 6-bell striking competition, evensong service and tea preceded the meeting.

Jon and Kay Chamberlain of Faringdon judged the competition and gave the results, saying that they had heard a lot of good ringing, which gives the Branch something to be proud of on Sundays. They pointed out that tenor ringing is very important for competition ringing and it is important for the whole band to lead at the same speed, either open or closed at handstroke. They were also impressed by the members of the Abingdon Youth team, saying that they had recovered on several occasions and were to be congratulated.

The results were as follows: 1st Wallingford (29 faults); =2nd Blewbury and Abingdon S (62 faults); 4th Abingdon C (82 faults); =5th Harwell and Abingdon Y (120 faults). The Wallingford ringers were invited to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell striking competition on Saturday, 1st October.

The Chairman thanked Jon and Kay for judging the competition, the six teams for taking part, the Reverend Jonathan Widdess for taking the service, Andrew Dyer for playing the organ, and Jenny Dyer and the Cumnor ringers for providing an excellent tea.

1) Apologies for absence

Received from: Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Nick Clarke, David and Kate Crennell, Bertie Doy, Cliff and Jill Garlick, Shirley Goss, Debbie Greenfield, Jenny Jeskins, Carina Lobley, Kathryn Roberts-Locke, Lyn Small, Graham Stotor, Jeanette Thomas, Roy Thorpe, Colin and Nicola Turner, Helen Walker

2) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 19th March 2016

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

3) Matters arising from minutes

There were no matters arising.

4) Officers' reports

Secretary's report

- We have continued to hold monthly branch practices, bi-monthly surprise major practices and monthly mid-week afternoon practices. Before the January practice at North Moreton, twenty-five learners and helpers enjoyed lunch at a pre-practice social in The Bear.
- Susan Read organised events for young branch members: an outing and treasure hunt in Cambridge held jointly with young ringers of the Ely Diocesan Association in March, a walk from Letcombe Regis to Childrey with a quiz in May, ringing and rounders at Harwell in August, a visit to the falconry centre at Millets Farm with ringing at Marcham in October; skittles and ringing at Radley in December; a treasure hunt, magic show and ringing at Brightwell in February.
- Since the 2016 AGM, we have gained four new members from three towers: Charles and Rachel Morrish (Milton), Margaret Richards (Cholsey) and Jo O'Reilly (Wallingford). Ellen Bramhill (Blewbury) was re-elected to the Guild.
- On 27th April, the afternoon ringers had a mini-outing to Chieveley, Peasmore and East Ilsley, with lunch at the Crown and Horns in East Ilsley.
- The Branch outing on 18th July was organised by Philip Roberts of Harwell. Over twenty branch members and friends visited Goodworth Clatford, Hurstbourne Priors, Whitchurch, Longparish and Highclere, with a pub lunch in Whitchurch and afternoon tea at Longparish. In the evening there was a well-attended barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson. Thanks go to Philip, Janette, Stuart and Naomi for arranging a good day for the Branch. The proceeds of the barbecue and raffle went into the branch fund and will be used for future restoration projects.
- The branch was not represented at the Guild's 6-bell striking competition because the Abingdon ringers were not able to raise a band. Richard Loyd has had an attractive trophy made for the winners of our 6-bell competition to hold for a year (a model bell wheel and clapper), and this has been belatedly presented to Abingdon for winning the 2016 competition.
- The branch band entering the Guild's 10-bell striking competition in Banbury was placed equal third with EBSB Branch, only one percent behind the Newbury ringers who came second.
- The quiz and supper evening at Brightwell on Saturday, 12th November, was very well attended by fifty-two branch members, their families and friends. Thanks go to Roy Thorpe, the Brightwell ringers and the quiz

master, Robert, for their magnificent organisation of the evening, which started with ringing on the newly rehung bells. Nine teams entered the quiz and Blewbury were the winners. The event raised £410 for branch funds.

- New Year's Day 2017 ringing with refreshments was held at Abingdon, St Helen and over forty people attended. Thanks go to Susan Read and all the Abingdon ringers for the excellent refreshments, from interesting and tasty soups through to delicious cakes. This was once again a very happy occasion for the Branch and a good start to 2017.

Joint Ringing Masters' report

- The numerous and varied branch practices are often well or very well attended and cater for ringers at all skill levels. The regular monthly practices give beginners and advancing learners the chance to ring with the added strength from experienced branch members, and can introduce new ringers to others from different towers, giving the opportunity to share learning experiences.
- Recently the number of branch members attending evening practices has dramatically declined. The reasons for this are unclear but it is a trend that we need to reverse in order to maintain their future. Conversely, the monthly afternoon practices are extremely well attended by ringers at all levels, and are a good means for advancement at the intermediate level. The Surprise Major practices are also going well with good attendance by members from within ONB and also neighbouring branches.
- Although there are many practices to attend, having 'joint' Ringing Masters shares the workload. We are very grateful for the help of experienced 'volunteers' who have kindly stepped into our shoes on the few occasions neither of us could attend.
- Despite this picture the branch does have its challenges. Many of our bells have had major overhauls, which have really helped ringing and teaching at these towers. However, some of our bells are difficult to ring, which adds to the problem of recruiting locally. Hopefully the branch will continue its excellent work to support new restoration projects to increase the potential for more recruitment in the future.
- The age profile of branch members is increasing year by year, although this is now somewhat balanced by the brilliant efforts by Susan and several others in recruiting young ringers in recent years. However there is a shortage of people with sufficient youth and energy, combined with suitable leadership experience, to become our future Tower Captains or Branch Officers. Some experienced ringers have moved to our area recently, and we know of several lapsed ringers who have returned to ringing after many years and are making a real difference at their towers. Let's hope this trend continues so as to introduce some new faces to the leadership roles.

Training Coordinator's report

This position is currently vacant.

Treasurer's report

- In 2016 the membership of the Branch was 264 (4 more than in 2015). 255 members paid subscriptions, 5 of whom were members of the Guild through other branches. In addition there were 7 Honorary and 2 Life members.
- So far in 2017 we have 117 paid up members (from 12 towers and 3 unattached), together with 7 Honorary and 2 Life members, plus 4 members who pay a subscription through another branch. Branch subscriptions must be paid over to the Guild before the end of March to ensure members benefit from the Guild Insurance policy.
- The main fund raising event in 2016 was the Quiz evening at Brightwell, which raised £410. The New Year's ringing at Blewbury raised £66, the BBQ proceeds were £195 and the BBQ raffle raised £80. There were no active restoration projects in the branch so these proceeds have been retained, unlike in earlier years when they were donated to a specific project.
- For the first time, the Branch collected a voluntary £2 donation with the annual subscriptions. Almost everyone made the contribution to put towards restoration projects. Again this has been retained awaiting a suitable project.
- Five youth events were organised by the Branch, resulting in a small surplus.
- Donations were made to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (£250) and the Oxford Diocesan Guild Restoration Fund (£100).
- At the end of 2016, the Branch had funds in the region of £3,530, which is well in excess of the reserves required by the Branch. Suitable restoration projects are needed!

Jenny Dyer asked if the Treasurer could make sure that all towers were aware of the cost of Guild annual subscriptions. Stuart Gibson responded that he would put this information on the branch website.

It was proposed by Helen Diserens and seconded by Dick Peters that the accounts be adopted. Proposal agreed.

5) Donation to the Oxford Diocesan Guild Funds and other recommendations

- Proposed by Stuart Gibson and seconded by Tim Pett, that the Branch donates £250 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and £100 to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund. The proposal was agreed.
- Abingdon St Nicolas:** Brian Read advised that the church had paid for the professional sandblasting and repainting of the frame, with local ringers providing the labour to remove the pulley blocks and runner boards and replace them afterwards. New rope bosses had been fitted in the ringing chamber ceiling and the floor of the room above. Whites of Appleton had quoted £1015 + VAT for supply and fitting. Brian, seconded by Dick Peters, asked the meeting to adopt the recommendation of the October Branch Committee meeting to give a grant of £200 towards this work. This was agreed.

Decision: After some discussion it was proposed by Stuart Gibson, seconded by Mark Cooke, that the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer may, by unanimous decision, at any point in the year agree to pay up to £250 as grants to towers. The proposal was agreed.

6) Election of officers

- Susan Read (Chairman) wished to stand down and was thanked for her services to the Branch as Chairman.
- The following were nominated and elected unopposed as branch officers:

		Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Rob Nickless	Dick Peters	Anne Hales
Rob Nickless then took the Chair			
Vice Chairman	Dick Peters	Richard Loyd	Josie Irving
Secretary	Gillian Loyd	Dick Peters	Josie Irving
Treasurer	Stuart Gibson	Susan Read	Philip Roberts
Joint Ringing Masters	Richard Loyd	Mark Cooke	Anne Hales
	Philip Roberts		
Training Coordinator	Susan Read	Gillian Loyd	Mark Cooke
Newsletter Editor	Ian Minns	Dick Peters	Josie Irving
	Daphne Pollard		
Webmaster	Mark Cooke	Brian Read	Janette Roberts
Branch Representatives	Josie Irving	Philip Roberts	Daphne Pollard
	Janette Roberts		
	Dick Peters		

- Philip Roberts thanked the Secretary for all the work she does for the Branch.
- Richard Loyd thanked Daphne Pollard and Ian Minns for all the work they do to produce an excellent branch newsletter.
- It was proposed by Richard Loyd, seconded by Dick Peters, that the Training Coordinator is now a leadership role and should be called Training Officer. The proposal was agreed.

7) Election of new members

- The following were proposed as new members of the Branch and Guild:
Abingdon: Rebecca Peberdy and Abi Gibson (proposed by Brian Read)
Cumnor: Clare Saunders, Aidan Saunders and Jill Last (proposed by Jenny Dyer)
Radley: Joshua Sandford (proposed by Daphne Pollard)
Wantage: David Smith (proposed by Dick Peters)
All were seconded by Stuart Gibson and elected as members.
- Brightwell:** Kevin Beer was transferred from Beaconsfield to Brightwell.

8) Branch practices

- The Branch Committee had discussed the relevance of branch evening practices at their recent meeting. It had been decided to ask members for their opinions at the AGM.
- The Secretary said that it had come to her attention since the Branch Committee meeting that the Guild only permits new members to join at either branch business meetings or branch business meetings held during practices that are open for all branch members to attend, or prior to peal attempts. This now means that new members cannot be elected at afternoon practices.

- Following discussion that covered branch practices being held on fixed days, Saturday mornings or staying the same, Richard Loyd pointed out that going to a tower on its practice night meant that local ringers get additional support, possibly at an advanced level, and have the chance to socialise with other branch members. He said that, if every branch member were to attend one branch practice per year in addition to any at their own tower, it would make a big difference.

Decision: It was proposed by Janette Roberts, seconded by Anne Hales, that evening practices should continue in their current format, we should encourage more members to attend, and we should review the situation at the next AGM. The proposal was agreed.

9) Social events

- On 26th April there will be a mini-outing to Shellingford, Longcot and Faringdon (tbc), with lunch at The King and Queen, Longcot.
- The outing and barbecue will be on Saturday 22nd July. Philip Roberts will arrange ringing at five towers in Wiltshire (including Royal Wootton Bassett, Liddington, and Wanborough), with a pub lunch and afternoon tea. Stuart and Naomi Gibson are hosting the barbecue in the evening.
- There will be a barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall on Saturday, 11th November. The Secretary has committed deposits of £50 to the dance band 'Jigsaw' and £200 to Harwell Village Hall. In September, she will invite branch members, together with their friends and families. In October she will invite South Oxon, Vale of White Horse, Oxford City and part of the Reading Branch to attend.

10) Events for young ringers and new ringers

Susan Read reported:

- There will be an event during the Easter holidays on 19th April at Great Milton and Great Haseley.
- There will be more events during the school holidays in May and over the summer months.
- There will be a training course for new young ringers during the Easter school holidays. The cost will be £20, to include 2 hours of training daily at Abingdon (apart from on Bank Holidays) and books. Details are on the website. Everyone helping on this course needs to have been DBS checked.
- There will be a six week course in the Wallingford area for 6 – 10 new adults, costing £20 per trainee; held on three nights per week in twelve different towers in the Wallingford area, with six different teachers. The course will take place on tower practice nights, meeting before the start of the practice, and will begin in North Moreton. Prior to the course, taster sessions will be held at Blewbury and Harwell (a look at the bells, a brief lesson on backstrokes, meet the ringers and have refreshments). There will be an end of course party, possibly a 'bring and share' supper in North Moreton Village Hall. Jenny Jeskins will book and coordinate the towers.
- The pilot course held in autumn 2016 had been successful. Of the trainees, two are still ringing and two are planning to return to ringing after recovery from an injury.

11) Any other business

- It was proposed by Gillian Loyd, seconded by Susan Read, that the afternoon practices be controlled by the Joint Ringing Masters and not the Training Officer. The proposal was agreed.
- The date of this year's Guild AGM is Saturday, 20th May. This starts at 10.00am with ringing at other towers, and continues with activities until the meeting starts at 4pm. Members are asked to contact the Guild Secretary to confirm that they are planning to attend.
- The Guild's 2016 Annual Report is available from the Secretary after the meeting.
- The branch evening practice at Sunningwell has been changed from 10th May to 17th May 2017.
- At the recent Guild Committee Meeting, the Guild's Safeguarding Officer, Katie Lane, advised that she had met with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, John Nixon, and will need to extend the policy and procedures previously circulated. She outlined some of the main additional points. Each tower with young ringers will be required to appoint a 'children's officer', who must not be the tower captain, or the person teaching children or vulnerable adults. There should be at least one man and one woman who are DBS checked. When transporting children/vulnerable adults, written permission must be obtained. Before taking any photographs a consent form must be obtained and the person told where the photographs will be stored. If emailing a child or vulnerable adult a third person must be copied in. A DBS for ringing is portable; a copy should be carried when visiting another tower. There is a National Safeguarding Awareness course that can be done on line. If any ringer has been convicted only the Community Officer and the home tower would be informed of the offender. Alan Marchbank JP said that the only people who would know if a crime had been committed would be the Vicar and Tower Captain. It was agreed that Katie would update the procedures

and send to F+GP before circulating. They will be brought back to General Committee in November for final approval.

- Jenny Dyer asked whether Culham could be considered as a branch bell restoration project. It has been unringable for many years and having no ringers could make it difficult. We could recruit new ringers there to be taught at Abingdon to set the project going.
- Richard Loyd said that the Vicar of Sparsholt was keen to have the four bells restored and augmented.
- Brian Read advised that, at the Annual Conference of ART, the Sarah Beacham Youth Group Award was given to the Abingdon Society of Bell Ringers. Susan Read advised that the cash prize of £400 would be used towards the purchase of a dumb bell for Abingdon (total cost approximately £1,600). The dumb bell would be a wheel with weights and a bell rope, and would be attached to a computer so that the ringer could hear other bells and learn to ring by listening. The dumb bell will extend opportunities for individual practice and always be available.

12) Date of 2018 Annual General Meeting

Next year's AGM will be held on Saturday, 17th March 2018.

The Chairman thanked Hilarie Rogers, Guild Master, for attending. There being no further business the Meeting closed at 8.08pm.

Signed.....

Date.....