

**MINUTES of the Branch Committee Meeting** held at Dornie Lodge, Bessels Lea, Blewbury,  
on **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017** at 7.30pm.

1. **PRESENT** were Rob Nickless (Chairman), Dick Peters (Vice Chairman), Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master), Philip Roberts (Joint Ringing Master), Gill Loyd (Secretary), Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Susan Read (Training Officer), Josie Irving (Branch Representative), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Tim Pett, Daphne Pollard, Dave Trotman and Claire Ward.

2. **APOLOGIES** for absence were received from Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Nick Clarke, Mary Friskney, Debbie Greenfield, Colin Turner and Nicola Turner.

3. **MINUTES** of the Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were circulated and read by those present. After section 13, point 4, had been amended from 'Aldgate' to 'St Aldates', the Chairman signed the Minutes as a correct record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

No matters arising.

**5. SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**AGM:** Twenty-eight members attended the Branch AGM in March. Susan Read stood down as chairman and took on the role of Training Officer. Rob Nickless became chairman, with Dick Peters as vice-chairman. Mark Cooke's position as branch web master was ratified. The meeting approved a donation of £250 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and a donation of £100 to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund. Currently there are no restoration projects taking place within the Branch. It was decided that the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer may, at any point in the year, agree to pay up to £250 as grants to towers.

**Membership:** At the AGM, seven new members from Abingdon, Cumnor, Radley and Wantage were elected to the Guild, and one member from Brightwell was re-elected. Since the AGM, Eden Bramhill of Blewbury and Jeanette Davey of Abingdon have been elected to the Guild.

Sadly the Branch has lost three members since the AGM: John Pearce of Appleton, Jim Blond of Blewbury and Helen Walker of Didcot.

**Striking competition:** The Branch six bell striking competition was won by Wallingford, who will represent the Branch at the Guild's 6-bell striking competition in later this month.

**Practices:** Evening branch practices have been held at: Harwell, Sunningwell, Drayton, Chilton and Sutton Courtenay. Afternoon branch practices have been held at: East Hagbourne, Marcham, Childrey, Radley, Brightwell and Sunningwell. Surprise major/royal practices have been held at: Blewbury, Abingdon (St Helen) and Milton.

**Events:** Susan Read has continued to organise events for young ringers during the school holidays.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, the afternoon ringers had a mini-outing to Shellingford, Longcot and Faringdon, with lunch at the King and Queen in Longcot.

The Branch outing on 22<sup>nd</sup> July was organised by Philip Roberts of Harwell. Over twenty branch members and friends visited Royal Wootton Bassett, Wroughton, Liddington, Wanborough and Lambourn. This was an excellently organised outing and included a pub lunch in Wroughton and afternoon tea at Lambourn. This was followed by a well-attended barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson. As usual, the food was excellent, but the croquet green was too wet for play. 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.

**6. JOINT RINGING MASTERS' REPORT**

- The numerous and varied branch practices are often well or very well attended. The practices are catering for ringers at all skill levels. The regular monthly evening practices help beginners and advancing learners to be able to ring with the added strength from experienced branch members attending. These practices are also useful for introducing new ringers to others from different towers and to help share their learning experiences. Recently the number of branch members attending these practices has dramatically declined. The reasons for this are unclear but it is a trend that we need to reverse in order to maintain the future of these practices. Conversely, the popular monthly afternoon practices are extremely well attended by ringers at all levels, and again these are a very worthwhile means for advancement at the intermediate level. The Surprise Major practices are also going well with good attendance of members from within ONB and also neighbouring branches. All in all, this is quite a

healthy situation and although there are many practices to attend, having 'joint' Ringing Masters does share the workload. Very occasionally both of us are unable to attend a practice and we are very grateful for the help of experienced 'volunteers' who have kindly stepped into our shoes.

- Despite this picture the branch does have its challenges. Many of our bells have received some major overhauls and this has really helped ringing and teaching at these towers. However, some of our bells remain difficult to ring and this 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 and membership in the future.
- The age profile of our membership is increasing year by year, although this is now somewhat balanced by the brilliant efforts by Susan Read and several others in recruiting young ringers in recent years. There is still a shortage of people with sufficient youth and energy, combined with suitable leadership experience to be 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 who 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.

## **7. TREASURER'S REPORT**

- To date 246 members have paid full subscriptions, bringing the branch membership to 261 with the 7 Honorary, 2 life and 6 members who pay their subscription via another branch. This is four less 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 – thank-you!
- There are no outstanding grants.
- The majority of members paid the voluntary £2 restoration fund contribution. All the members that didn't pay were from one tower and as last year I suspect the reason was a communication failure!
- The Branch has funds totalling £4,353 of which £1,100 is held in the CFOB and £3,253 at Lloyds. This gain is much increased due to the collection of the additional £2 per member for branch restoration projects.

## **8. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT**

- Events organised during school holidays for young learners have included: ringing at Brightwell and a magic show, ringing at Great Milton and Great Haseley with a walk and quiz, ringing at Sunningwell with a walk to Abingdon to ring on Isaac O'Shea's mini-ring, ringing the church bells and handbells at St Giles, Oxford. Nothing has yet been planned for October and December 2017. Any ideas from branch members will be welcomed.
- An intensive ringing course took place from May to July 2017. Five learners attended (three from the beginning and two towards the end), and one could handle both strokes fairly confidently before the end of the course.
- When the pilot intensive course last year in Abingdon finished, we did not continue and two of the four new learners dropped out. I have been warned by ART members that it is important that the group dynamic is maintained by ongoing training of some sort.
- From September I have set up a Branch Ringing School. Initially we are continuing to teach those who attended the intensive course under the Association of Ringing Teachers' Learning the Ropes (LTR) syllabus. I have continued to invite the teachers of ringing from our branch to help. As the learners have progressed to rounds and call changes, the help needed has changed.

Following the report, it was decided that:

- The Branch Ringing School will continue i) to teach beginners, ii) to teach rounds and iii) to teach plain hunt and other simple methods. Now that it is no longer summertime, teaching will take place on Saturday mornings and possibly during evenings using the simulator at St Helen, Abingdon.
- The charge for the ringing course will be £10 initially to cover the cost of books, followed by £2 per training session that will be given to the host tower. A certificate will be given upon completion of a course.
- An additional post of Training Coordinator was approved as Susan needs an assistant. This post will be co-opted now and ratified at the next AGM.

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

**East and West Hendred:** Dave Trotman reported that some work is required at the Hendreds (rust removal from clappers, new pulleys), and he will ask Whites to inspect them.

**St Michael, Abingdon:** The three chiming bells have been restored and dedicated, and Susan took three young ringers to to chime them for the service.

#### 10. BRANCH PROGRAMME FOR 2018

- The two Joint Ringing Masters and the Secretary will meet later in October to plan practices and events for the Branch in 2018. When these have all been agreed, the Secretary will advertise the practices in the branch newsletter and in the diary on the ODG website.
- The Secretary will organise a pub lunch before the afternoon practice in January. She will also organise a mini-outing on 25<sup>th</sup> April for the afternoon practice ringers.

#### 11. SOCIAL EVENTS

- There will be a barn dance and supper this year in Harwell Village Hall at 7.00pm on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> November. The cost is £12 per head, payable in advance. The Secretary has emailed a poster to tower correspondents and, so far, has received responses from about forty branch members, their families and friends. As we need between 80 and 100 to attend, the Secretary will now invite the Vale of the White Horse Branch members.
- Next year's autumn social will be a skittles evening on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018 in Radley.

#### 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- **Branch practices:** At the AGM, it was decided that we will continue to hold branch evening practices during the year and attendance will be monitored. So far this year, attendance at Childrey and Chilton was good, however other practices have only been attended by a few additional branch members. It was felt that the concept should continue under the branch umbrella, as only one or two additional attendees can make a big difference in towers that are struggling. Also these practices are the only opportunity for electing new members to the Guild apart from at the AGM. Some felt that the named methods could put off some attendees.  
**Decision:** We will continue with the practices but will not name in advance the methods that will be rung at them. The Joint Ringing Masters will email all tower captains urging them to attend, and also to encourage their tower members to attend, some of the evening practices.
- **Guild membership and insurance:** Following on from the success of the intensive ringing course, the branch now potentially has ringers who are happy to visit other towers on their practice nights, but who have not yet joined the Guild. The minimum standard for Guild membership is that the new member is able to ring competently for Sunday Service. Until such time, everyone is insured to ring whilst under instruction with a Guild member. Therefore anyone, who is not a Guild member and is attending a tower practice by themselves, should make this known to the Tower Captain.
- **Coffee morning in Didcot:** There will be a coffee morning in Didcot on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> October. All proceeds will be donated to Macmillan Cancer Support in memory of Dr Helen Walker.
- **Didcot bells on BBC1:** Didcot bells featured on 17<sup>th</sup> September on BBC1's prelude to the Invictus Games. This programme is still available on the BBC i-player.
- **Guild insurance:** It was noted that the benefits under this policy are reduced once a ringer reaches the age of 75.

#### 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was arranged for Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2018, at 7.30pm at Highfield, The Winnaway, Harwell.

After the Chairman had expressed thanks to Richard and Gill for their hospitality, the meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed.....

Date.....