

**Minutes of the Old North Berks Branch Annual General Meeting
Held at St Mary, Cholsey on Saturday, 17th March 2018**

29 members attended the Annual General Meeting, including Patricia Newton (Guild Steward).

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

Robert and Patricia Newton of High Wycombe judged the competition and gave the results. They said that the four towers entering the competition had done a lot better than all the towers that had not managed to raise a team, and that they had heard some good ringing. The results were as follows: 1st Wallingford (20 faults); 2nd Abingdon (39 faults); 3rd Blewbury (92 faults); 4th Harwell (110 faults). The Wallingford ringers were invited to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell striking competition on Saturday, 6th October, in the Central Bucks Branch.

Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master) thanked Robert and Patricia for judging the competition, the four teams for taking part, the Reverend Andrew Petit for taking the service, Colin Davies for playing the organ, and Jenny Jeskins and the Cholsey ringers for providing an excellent tea.

1) Apologies for absence

Received from: Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Nick Clarke, Peter Collinson, Chris Cook, Mary Friskney, Jill Garlick, Shirley Goss, Debbie Greenfield, Roy Thorpe, Chris Tuckett, Colin and Nicola Turner, Mark Walker

2) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 18th March 2017

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

- We have continued to hold monthly branch practices, bi-monthly surprise major practices and monthly mid-week afternoon practices. Susan Read has organised events for young branch members during school holidays
- Since the 2017 AGM, we have gained seventeen new members from eight towers: Eden Bramhill (Blewbury), Amelie Wymer (Brightwel), Jeanette Davey, Daniel Gillett and Joseph Gillett (Abingdon), Simon Young, Jo Walshe, Rachel Marffy and Tom Coates (Aston Tirrold), Toni Robinson, Lily Robinson and George Barber (Letcombe Regis), Adam Clarke (North Moreton), Paul Wooldridge (Sunningwell), Tim Lancaster (West Hanney) and Nicola Kerry (Unattached).
- Sadly the Branch has lost three members in 2017: John Pearce of Appleton, Jim Blond of Blewbury and Helen Walker of Didcot.
- On 26th 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 22nd 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.
- Congratulations go to the Wallingford ringers, who represented the Branch in the Guild's 6-bell striking competition at the beginning of October and were placed third. The branch band ringing Stedman Caters in the Guild's 10-bell striking competition in Olney was placed first and will represent the Guild in the Tewkesbury Shield competition on 5th May 2018, ringing a course of Cambridge Surprise Royal.
- The barn dance and supper evening at Harwell on Saturday, 11th November, was very well attended by just over one hundred branch members, their families and friends. Thanks go to Janette and Philip Roberts, Kathryn and Dave Roberts-Locke, the Harwell ringers and the dance band 'Jigworks' for their magnificent organisation of the evening. The dance raised £263 and the raffle £190 for branch restoration projects.
- New Year's Day 2018 ringing with refreshments was held at Appleton and there were almost thirty attendees. Thanks go to Sylvia Harrison and all the Appleton ringers for the excellent refreshments, which ranged from

tasty soups through to delicious cakes. This was once again a very happy occasion for the Branch and a good start to 2018.

- On Sunday, 21st January 2018, there was a meeting of Branch Officers. At this we discussed the recent ringing accident at St Helen, Abingdon, together with ways we can improve safety in the Branch and support the Abingdon ringers.

Joint Ringing Masters

- All scheduled branch practices have taken place with encouraging attendance at both the Surprise Major and Afternoon practices, and there has been an improving attendance at the evening monthly practices at various towers. The poor attendance at evening practices has been a concern for a while but there have been some useful practices with new members attending recently. We hope that this trend continues and we encourage tower captains or other branch members to try to come with new ringers to at least one of these practices in a year.
- 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.
- The enormous local and national media attention given to the unfortunate incident at Abingdon St Helens highlights our need to be extra careful with all aspects of safety in the tower. Another serious incident will surely create a major story for the press and potentially result in unwanted investigations into the safety of ringing generally. We urge all members, whether in a position of responsibility or not, to be vigilant and highlight any areas of concern which could compromise the safety of our ringers. This can range from the condition of our bells and fittings, to dangerous practices or horseplay in the tower, safety of minors in the tower and transporting to and from practices, supervision of novice ringers, etc.
- Finally, the branch has had a period of little activity regarding bell restoration, with Brightwell being the last significant project. There is currently a nascent plan at Long Wittenham which if it becomes a reality would be an excellent and worthwhile project for us all to get behind.

Richard advised that, once the report from the Abingdon Churchwardens has become public, guidelines on safety will be issued to all branch towers.

Brian Read gave a brief report on the accident at Abingdon, St Helen:

At a learners' practice on Friday, 19th January, a 17 year old boy was practising setting the 8th and broke the stay. He did not let go of the rope until he was over 10 feet up in the air. He fell on to his feet and then sideways. It was decided to call for medical attention and paramedics arrived 10 – 15 minutes later. As he had injured his shoulder and feet, they decided that he needed to be seen in hospital. The Fire and Rescue came and lifted the trapdoor and lowered the boy on a stretcher, and then he was taken to the John Radcliffe Hospital. He is almost recovered now and is hoping to return to ringing.

Training Officer

Outings and events for young ringers

- 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, ringing in Witney & Ducklington with a walk between the towers and refreshments, ringing in Bladon & Woodstock with a walk between the towers and refreshments and ringing in Old Marston & Headington, card games and a ploughman's lunch.
- A date in the Easter holidays 2019 has been agreed with the Oxford Society for a mid-week outing to Oxford for young ringers.
- Any ideas from branch members for future outings/activities will be welcomed.

Branch Ringing School

- The Branch Ringing School idea came from the Birmingham Ringing School, a very successful venture by the St Martins's Guild. It is based on the 'Learning the Ropes' (LTR) syllabus used by the Association of Ringing Teachers. The idea is that learners from our branch should learn together from the best teachers in our branch, providing a steady stream of new ringers to all our towers.
- 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.
- The ringing lessons have continued from July 2017 as the LTR2 (rounds and call changes) group on Saturday mornings (9.30 – 10.30 am) at a variety of branch towers, with local ringers who kindly gave up their time to

act as helpers. Two learners have dropped out, one because of illness and the other because Saturdays didn't suit him.

- From January 2018, the LTR2 (rounds and call changes) group has moved to a different practice night/tower each week from 7.00 – 8.00 pm. This group of three has now been joined by four ringers from Aston Tirrold and there is room for others to join in. With the cold dark evenings in February, numbers dropped off so the practices for the remainder of February have been cancelled. The intention is to recommence after Easter when the evenings are light again.
- From January 2018 a group of three new ringers, the LTR1 (handling) group has started on Saturdays (9.30 – 10.30 am) at a series of different branch towers. They are very keen and learning very quickly. As they improve and can ring reliably on their own, I will move them to the LTR2 group. A fourth young lady has just joined and there is room for others to join the group.
- One of the ringers who started learning in May 2017 has got to the point where he has the control and is ready to start learning plain hunt. Ideally we should start a third class each week to teach plain hunt in a LTR3 group. There are certainly lots of ringers who would benefit from such a course. However I am finding organising, staffing and running two groups each week quite draining so will leave that for now until I have found someone willing to share the administrative and training load as Training Coordinator.
- I would like to thank all those who have opened their towers, helped to teach and rung with the learners from the Branch Ringing School. Their help is much appreciated.

Safeguarding

- All tower captains and trainers should be DBS checked.
- 'Permission to ring' forms need to be used.
- Towers should keep an attendance register.

Treasurer

- In 2017 the membership of the Branch was the same as in 2016, at 264. There were 255 members who paid subscriptions, 6 of which were a member of the Guild through another Branch. In addition there were 7 Honorary and 2 Life members.
- So far in 2018 we have 108 paid up members (from 11 towers and 1 unattached) along with the 6 Honorary and 2 Life members plus 5 members who pay a subscription through another branch. 16 towers have not yet 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.
- The main fund raising event in 2017 was the Barn Dance at Harwell. This raised £453 with an additional £224 from the BBQ following the outing. Honey sales raised £184 and the Outing raffle £33.
- The Branch, for the second year, collected a voluntary £2 donation with subscriptions. Almost everyone made the contributions to put towards restorations projects. Again, this has been retained awaiting a suitable project, which potentially could be Long Wittenham. £474 was collected in the year.
- Four youth events were organised by the Branch resulting in a small loss (£4). Donations were made to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (£250) and the Oxford Diocesan Guild Restoration Fund (£100).
- The Branch, at the end of 2017, had funds in the region of £4,797, which is well in excess of the reserves required by the Branch.

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

The Chairman thanked all the branch officers and committee members for all their work during the year, and said that they helped to make the Chairman's role relatively easy.

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

- Proposed by Helen Diserens 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.
- **Long Wittenham:** Julia Sargeant reported that the six bells are becoming harder to ring and something will need to be done soon to prevent them going silent. The Whites of Appleton report recommended a complete rehang, with new bearings and fittings, and they stated their confidence that the bells could be successfully retuned (total cost £30,000). Whites recommended the construction of a new ringing gallery, and the ringers had visited North Moreton to see what was done there. The PCC currently has permission to build a kitchen and toilet and might decide to carry out the work on the bells after completion of this. Julia is hoping that the decision will be taken to run both projects together. In the meantime, the Oxford Diocesan Guild has made a provisional grant of £6,000 towards the work on the bells.

Decision: After some discussion it was proposed by Josie Irving, seconded by Susan Read, that the Branch make a provisional grant of £3,000. The proposal was agreed. Julia thanked the branch.

6) Election of officers

The following were nominated and elected unopposed as branch officers:

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

- Philip Roberts thanked the Secretary for all the work she does for the Branch.
- Rob Nickless thanked Daphne Pollard and Ian Minns for all the work they do to produce an excellent branch newsletter.

7) Election of new members

- The following were proposed as new members of the Branch and Guild:

Cholsey: David Over (proposed by Jenny Jeskins)

Wallingford: Karen Walker (proposed by Helen Diserens)

Both were seconded by Stuart Gibson and elected as members.

8) Branch evening practices

At the 2017 AGM it was decided to monitor the attendance at branch evening practices.

- These are designed for helping the local band on their practice night and are a chance to socialise with other branch members.
- It was agreed that only one additional branch member being present could make a big difference.
- Evening branch practices are the only opportunity for electing new members to the Guild and discussing Guild business, other than annually at the AGM.
- Patricia Newton said that many branches were moving away from the traditional Saturday evening branch practices and several now hold practices on weekday evenings.

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

9) Social events

- On 25th April there will be a mini-outing to Burghclere, Kintbury and Hungerford, with a pub lunch.
- The outing and barbecue will be on Saturday 21st July. Philip Roberts is arranging towers south of Banbury, with a pub lunch and afternoon tea. Stuart and Naomi Gibson are hosting the barbecue in the evening.
- There will be a skittles evening with fish and chips supper at Radley Village Hall on Saturday, 10th November. Daphne Pollard has booked the hall and will send details of food choices to the Secretary to distribute around the Branch.

10) Guild 8-bell striking competition

The branch enters the Guild's 6 and 10-bell striking competitions, but has not managed to field a team in the 8-bell competition for many years. Reasons for this year's failure include:

- Unavailability on a Bank Holiday Monday.
- Choice of method – Double Norwich Court Bob Major.

The Branch has again asked the Guild (this time via the Deputy Master, Tony Crabtree) if the day can be changed to the same day in March as the General Committee Meeting, holding the meeting during the morning and the competition during the afternoon.

Patricia Newton advised that, at the Guild's last discussion on this matter, it was decided that the March meeting is a long meeting, which includes the AGM of the Bell Fund, and so the competition should not be held on this day. Instead it was decided to hold the competition in a branch adjoining the branch which is holding the Guild Ringing Day.

11) Any other business

Patricia Newton (Guild Steward) advised that

- The date of this year's Guild AGM is Saturday, 12th May. It will be held at Bodicote in the Banbury Branch.
- Guild posts being vacated this year are: Guild Master, Guild Public Relations Officer. Also the Safeguarding Officer is hoping to have someone work with her with a view to taking on this position.
- The Guild's Safeguarding Officer has agreed with the Diocese that towers will, on every occasion when there is a child under 16 present, who is not accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult, nominate an adult to be responsible for safeguarding on that occasion. This adult should be aware of the behaviour in the ringing room and be prepared to take action if any inappropriate activity occurs. Towers need to ensure that everyone present can identify the nominated person and can approach them if necessary. If this procedure is followed there is no requirement to appoint a Children's Officer for every tower. This adult should be identified on the attendance register for the occasion.
- Armistice 2018: There is a letter from Battles Over, which requests open ringing at 7.05pm. Patricia will forward this to the Secretary for distribution around the Branch.

12) Date of 2019 Annual General Meeting

Next year's AGM will be held on Saturday, 16th March 2019.

The Chairman thanked Patricia and Robert Newton for attending. There being no further business the Meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signed.....

Date.....