

MINUTES of the Branch Committee Meeting held at Dornie Lodge, Bessels Lea, Blewbury, on **Sunday, 24th February 2019** at 7.30pm.

1. ATTENDEES

Rob Nickless (Chairman), Philip Roberts (Joint Ringing Master), Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master), Gill Loyd (Secretary), Susan Read (Training Officer), Josie Irving (Branch Representative), Dick Peters (Branch Representative), Tim Pett, Dave Trotman, Colin Turner, Nicola Turner, Karen Walker, Claire Ward

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Nick Clarke, Debbie Greenfield, Anne Hales, Daphne Pollard, Kathryn Roberts Locke

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7th October 2018

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

4. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT

- Since the last Committee Meeting, monthly branch practices have been held at Blewbury, Didcot, Little Wittenham, Radley and Abingdon, St Helen. Mid-week afternoon ringing practices have been held at Cholsey, Chilton, Blewbury and East Hagbourne. Surprise major practices were held in Drayton and Brightwell. Susan Read has continued to organise events for young branch members during the school holidays.
- Since the last Committee Meeting we have gained six new members: Philip Kimber (Abingdon), Helen Aitkins (Blewbury), Louise Helen Wymer (Brightwell), Caroline Wright, Matthew Wright (Letcombe Regis) and Sonia Wall (West Hanney).
- 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 second. The branch band ringing Plain Bob & Little Bob Royal in the Guild's 10-bell striking competition in Newbury was placed equal second.
- On 10th November 60 members and friends attended the skittles evening with fish and chip supper at Radley Village Hall. The event raised £397 for branch funds. Thanks go to Daphne Pollard for organising the food and also to her ringers at Radley for making such an enjoyable time for everyone.
- New Year's Day 2019 ringing with refreshments was held at North Moreton and there were over thirty attendees. Thanks go to Beryl Jones and all the North Moreton ringers for the excellent refreshments, which ranged from jacket potatoes with delicious fillings through to scrumptious cakes. This was once again a very happy occasion for the Branch and a good start to the New Year.

6. JOINT RINGING MASTERS' REPORT

- All scheduled branch practices have taken place, with improvement in attendance at the evening monthly practices, especially from newer ringers who have stayed on after the scheduled learner's practices. There is still a need to increase attendance at these practices from the wider branch membership, which would provide even better learning opportunities. It seems that our newest members are more inclined to venture out than the more established membership. The afternoon and Surprise practices continue to be well supported and successful in their aims.
- Tower practices appear to be generally healthy with relatively few towers being 'silent', but some would benefit from either local recruitment or support from neighbouring towers. Of particular note is the success of Aston Tirrold, who have produced a team from absolute zero and who now ring

regularly for practice and Sunday services. Well done to all. Other towers are also recruiting and training new ringers with some very creditable retention rates and successes.

- The ONB team was awarded a very satisfying equal second place in the Guild 10 Bell striking competition, held at Newbury in November. This was an excellent achievement for a team drawn from around our branch towers and who do not practice regularly together. The Wallingford 6 bell team once again represented the branch at the Guild competition at North Marston with 10 of the 15 ODG branches taking part. Another excellent result was achieved by being placed second against some very stiff competition. Thank you and well done to everyone who took part in both competitions, you represented the ONB magnificently. We look forward to seeing several teams taking part at this year's branch 6 bell competition at Sutton Courtenay.
- Of course it is not just about the ringing, and it is great to report how well attended the social events, such as the skittles and New Year ringing, have been. The social atmosphere is an essential ingredient to recruiting and retaining our ringers.
- The branch continues to restore our bells to tip top condition, with projects currently underway or in readiness at Steventon, Long Wittenham, Letcombe Bassett, Sparsholt and potentially others in the longer term. We look forward to improvements at these towers and the consequential local recruitment and training opportunities that come with bells in good condition.
- Thank you to all members who continue to support the branch practices and ringing activities.

7. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

ART Course to learn to teach ringing handling

- Organised by the ODG and held at Kirtlington on Saturday 16th February. Two new teachers (Kathryn Roberts-Lock and Mark Vincent) and a mentor (Debbie Greenfield) from the ONB attended the course. They need to practice the skills they learned over the next few weeks and will be assessed in the autumn for Associate Membership of the ART.

Branch Ringing School

- A ringing course took place from October 2018 to January 2019. Three learners attended including a mother and her eleven year old child. The mother and child sadly dropped out before the end of the course. In retrospect, the course was too dry for the child and the mother had to give up when the child lost interest. The remaining learner continues and is ringing both strokes together now.
- Another ringing course is starting on 2 March, partly as an opportunity for our new teachers to practice teaching. We have three people on the course, and others have expressed an interest.
- From January 2018 the LTR2 (foundations skills) group have moved to a different practice night / tower each week from 7.00 – 8.00 pm. This group (up to ten ringers from several towers around the branch) continues to meet weekly and attends most of the Branch Practices. Many of them can now ring plain hunt. Although this is not on the syllabus of LTR2 it is worthwhile training which many of our branch practice nights can help with. I am continuing to organise these practices week by week.
- 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.

Outings and events for young ringers

- Events organised during school holidays for young ringers have consisted of:
 - 24 Oct 2018: Ringing in Cholsey, with refreshments and party games in the church.
 - 2 Jan 2019: Ringing on tower and handbells in Radley, with board games.
 - 20 Feb 2019: Ringing in Thame and cooking in the Thame Barns centre. Ringing interspersed with interviews by Channel 5 news, broadcast at 5pm.
- Ringing Fest in Oxford on Saturday, 13th April. This is an all-day event booked with the help of the Oxford Society, and is for all the young ringers from the ODG plus a group of young ringers from Gloucestershire. Towers booked: St Thomas, St Mary Mag, St Giles, Magdalen College, Lincoln College, St Aldates and Carfax. There will be a quiz sheet for young ringers with questions in between towers. Lunch, organised by Daphne Pollard, and a striking competition for individual ringers on Alan Griffin's simulator will be in St Giles Parish Hall.

- Wednesday, 29th May: South Stoke, Streatley and Goring (tbc), with walking along the river between the towers.
- Saturday, 29th June: ART M1 course for young people at Abingdon. This is organised by the ODG and will be advertised nationally.
- Summer 2019: Ringing week for young people at Abingdon (mornings only).
- Summer 2019: Stanford in the Vale and Shellingford, with a walk between the towers.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

- In 2018 the membership of the Branch increased by 4 compared with 2017, at 273. There were 265 members who paid subscriptions, 6 of which were a member of the Guild through another Branch. In addition there were 6 Honorary and 2 Life members.
- So far in 2019 we have 173 paid up members (from 17 towers and 2 unattached) along with the 6 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.
- The main fund raising event in 2018 was the Skittles evening at Radley. This raised £397 including the raffle, with an additional £380 from the BBQ (including the raffle) following the outing. Honey sales raised £216 and the Outing tea £39.
- The Branch, for the third 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. The branch has committed to support both the projects at Long Wittenham and Steventon. £516 was collected in the year.
- Six youth events were organised by the Branch resulting in an overall loss (£68). Donations were made to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (£250) and the Oxford Diocesan Guild Restoration Fund (£100).
- The Branch, at the end of 2018, had funds in the region of £6,243, which is well in excess of the reserves required by the Branch.
- The accounts for 2018 have been examined and circulated ready to be presented for approval at the AGM.

Susan Read questioned the use of the term 'overall loss' that was applied to the six youth events, and suggested that this is an expense rather than a loss. The Secretary will inform the Treasurer.

9. UPDATE ON PROJECTS

- **Long Wittenham:** Julia Sargeant has raised half of the money that is needed. The project will not happen in the next twelve months as there is an issue with some of the clergy because toilet facilities are currently being built at a cost of over £100,000. Julia still has other grants to apply for and has other promises. The Dorchester Deanery has recently asked that the option of building a ringing gallery should be looked at.
- **Steventon:** Claire Ward reported that work is going to start tomorrow (25th February). Dismantling work and measuring for the new rope guide will be carried out over two days and it is hoped that all the work will be completed by Easter.
- **Letcombe Bassett and Sparsholt:** Whites of Appleton have told Richard Loyd that work is planned for the two rings of bells. The work at Sparsholt will allow for a future augmentation.
- **Marcham:** Most of the work planned is maintenance rather than restoration.
- **Appleford:** Nicola Turner reported that the pigeon detritus has now been removed and the belfry has been 'pigeon proofed'. She is awaiting Whites' inspection. Ropes will be required.
- **East and West Hendred:** Dave Trotman reported that there are no problems at West Hendred. There is currently an interregnum and the new vicar is expected to start at the end of March. At East Hendred there are problems with worn out pulleys and the wiring for the carillon needs to be replaced this summer. Dave is still awaiting the results of the Whites' inspections, which were carried out last year.

10. DONATIONS FROM BRANCH FUNDS AND OTHER SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS

- **ODG Funds:** Proposed by Colin Turner and seconded by Dick Peters that the Committee will recommend to the AGM that £300 be donated to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and £150 to the ODG Restoration Fund.
- It was noted that the grant of £1,500 to Steventon is still outstanding, as is the provisional grant of £3,000 to be given to Long Wittenham for bell restoration.

11. ITEMS FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

- **Election of officers:** All officers present said that they would be prepared to stand again if there were no other nominations at the AGM. Dick Peters advised that this would be his last year in office. Richard and Philip also said that the positions of Joint Ringing Masters should regularly be refreshed, but they were both happy to stand for another year if there were no other nominations.
- There were no additional items to be added to the agenda for the AGM.

12. SOCIAL EVENTS

- Ringing Fest in Oxford on Saturday, 13th April. Susan is looking for stewards for this event. She will also contact the Guild Secretary and ask other branches for assistance.
- Mini outing with three towers and lunch in the Dorchester area on Wednesday, 24th April.
- Branch outing and evening barbecue on Saturday, 13th July (tbc).
- Quiz evening with supper on Saturday, 9th November. We will ask for offers of a venue at the AGM.
- New Year’s Ringing and Refreshments 2020: the Secretary will approach the Wantage ringers.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Richard Loyd reported that Rob Nickless will be giving an interesting talk on ‘The fascinating world of the honey bee’ on Wednesday, 10th April, at The Manor Barn, Blewbury. The cost is £6 to include a glass of wine or soft drink, and proceeds will go to the new stained glass window and are match funded up to £900. All branch members are invited.
- Philip Roberts reported that Debbie Greenfield is starting up weekly practices in Chilton from 7.30 – 9.00pm in Chilton. Everyone is welcome to attend.
- Philip Roberts reported that a branch member had brought three young ringers by car to ring at Didcot and was taking videos of them ringing. There is concern that the parents might not have given either permission to ring or permission for the videos to be loaded on to Utube. Also no donation was left at the tower. Rob Nickless offered to talk to the ringer concerned about this.
- Dave Trotman reported that there are six weddings booked at the Hendreds this summer and that he will be asking the branch for assistance with the ringing.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This will be Sunday, 6th October 2019 at 7.30pm, venue to be advised.

After the Chairman had expressed thanks to all officers for submitting their reports before the meeting, and thanked Gillian and Richard for their hospitality, the meeting closed at 8.27pm.

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