

Secretary's report for 24th February 2019 Committee Meeting

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.

Gill Loyd

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 has been. The social atmosphere is an essential ingredient to recruiting and retaining our ringers.

Finally, the branch continues to restore our bells to tip top condition, with projects currently underway or in readiness at Steventon, Long Wittenham, Letcombe Basset, 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.
Richard Loyd and Philip Roberts

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.
Stuart Gibson

Training Officer's report

ART Course to learn to teach ringing handling

This was 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

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.

- A ringing course took place from October 2019 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 definitely 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 and so 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.

Susan Read

Young Ringers' report

Outings since the last report

24/10/18 Cholsey – Party!

10 YRs (5 ONB, 3 OCB, 2 S Oxon) 7 adults. Ringing in tower overlapping with branch practice. Party games and refreshments in the church.

2/1/19 Radley - Games

11 YRs (5 ONB, 4 OCB, 1 Bicester, 1 Witney & Woodstock), 12 adults. Ringing, board games in church room and tunes on handbells in the tower.

20/2/19 Thame – Cooking

8 YRs (4 ONB, 2 OCB, 1 Bicester, 1 Reading), 7 adults. Ringing interspersed by interviews from Channel 5 News team. Cooking in the Thame Barns Centre organised by Sandra Diesel, one of the mothers. The young people cooked cheese scones, apple pies on sticks and rocky road. We played board games while the food was cooking, and the food cooked was eaten as part of our refreshments.

Outings planned (in school holidays)

Sat 13/04/19 Ringing Fest in Oxford (all day event booked with the help of the Oxford Society)

All the young ringers from the ODG invited plus a group of young ringers from Gloucestershire.

Towers booked:

St Thomas, St Mary Mag, St Giles, Magdalen College, Lincoln College, St Aldates, Carfax.

Other activities:

Quiz sheet for young ringers with questions in and in between towers.

Tea, scones, cakes, hot dogs(?) in St Giles Parish Hall at lunch time organised by Daphne Pollard

Striking Competition for individual ringers on Alan Griffin's simulator in St Giles Parish Hall at lunch time.

Competition prize giving at St Aldates tower.

Wed 29/05/19 South Stoke, Streatley & Goring (tbc)

Walking along the river between towers

Saturday 29/6/19 ART M1 course for young people at Abingdon

Organised by the ODG for after the exams. Advertised nationally. Two Abingdon youngsters are already enrolled.

Summer 2019, Ringing week for young people at Abingdon, (mornings only)

An opportunity for new ringers to learn to ring and for new teachers to teach them. Also for other young ringers to play ringing games and to improve. With refreshments and games away from the tower each morning.

Summer 2019, Stanford in the Vale & Shellingford (tbc)

Date not yet chosen, walking between towers.

Susan Read