

**Minutes of the Old North Berks Branch Annual General Meeting
Held at All Saints, Sutton Courtenay on Saturday, 16th March 2019**

31 members attended the Annual General Meeting, including Catherine Lane (ODG Master) and Patricia Newton (Guild Steward).

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

Keith Osborne of Ashford, Kent and Bill Stungo judged the competition and gave the results. They said that they had heard some good ringing with very few method mistakes from the four teams that entered. The results were as follows: 1st Abingdon B (14 faults); 2nd Wallingford (25 faults); 3rd Blewbury (75 faults); 4th Abingdon A (81 faults). The Abingdon ringers were invited to represent the Branch in the Guild 6-bell striking competition on Saturday, 5th October in the EBSB Branch.

Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master) thanked Keith and Bill for judging the competition, the four teams for taking part, Jack Jarvis for taking the service, John Napper for playing the organ, and John and Trish Napper for providing an excellent tea.

1) Apologies for absence

Received from: Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Ian Minns (Newsletter Editor), Mark Cooke (Web Master), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Nick Clarke, Chris Cook, David and Kate Crennell, Debbie Greenfield, Anne Hales, Beryl Jones, Kathryn Roberts-Locke, Mark Walker

2) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 17th March 2018

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

The Chairman thanked all branch officers, together with the Branch Committee and all branch members, for their support. He told the meeting that Susan Read had recently been presented with a Highly Commended certificate at the ART conference Award ceremony. The Award for Excellence in Recruitment or Retention (of learners) had been given to ONB for the work done by the Branch Ringing School.

Secretary's report

- 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 last AGM there have been fourteen new members elected to the Guild: Odette Dawkins, Willow Gathergood-Dains, Philip Kimber and Michelle X (Abingdon), Helen Aitkins (Blewbury), Louise Helen Wymer (Brightwell), Thomas Addison and Helen Stutley (East Hagbourne), Sebastian Small and Bridget Taylor (Harwell), Caroline Wright, Matthew Wright (Letcombe Regis), Jackie Chan (Marcham) and Sonia Wall (West Hanney).
- On a sad note, in August we were sorry to hear of the death of Phyllis Brook of East Hagbourne. Phyllis learnt to ring at Aston Tirrold and was a Guild member for many years. She will be sadly missed
- A branch band entered the Tewkesbury Shield 10-bell competition in May and, unfortunately, was unable to complete the test piece, which was a plain course of Cambridge Surprise Royal. 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 25th April, the afternoon ringers had a mini-outing to Burghclere, Kintbury and Hungerford with lunch at the John O'Gaunt in Hungerford.
- The Branch outing on 21st July was organised by Philip Roberts of Harwell. Over twenty branch members and friends visited Tadmarton, Bodicote, North Aston, Deddington and Steeple Aston. This was an excellently organised outing and included a pub lunch in Adderbury and afternoon tea at Steeple Aston. It was followed by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson with 60 in attendance. As usual, the food was superb and there was fun on the croquet green. 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.

- 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.

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 at 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.
- Having achieved first place in the Guild 10 Bell striking competition, unfortunately the pressure of the national competition at Tewkesbury Abbey proved too much and our branch team failed to complete the test piece.
- 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 their being placed second against some very stiff competition.
- 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. Thank you and well done to everyone who took part in the competitions, you represented the ONB magnificently.
- 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.

Training Officer's report

Outings and events for young ringers

- The following events took place - 4th April: Ringing at Iffley and Cowley, with a guided tour of Iffley church; 29th May – 1st June: Ringing Club in Abingdon; 3rd September: Ringing at St Giles, Oxford, with a quiz and handbell ringing; 24th October: Ringing in Cholsey, with refreshments and party games in the church; 2nd January: Ringing on tower and handbells in Radley, with board games; and 20th February: Ringing in Thame and cooking in the Thame Barns centre. Ringing interspersed with interviews by Channel 5 news, broadcast at 5pm.
- There will be a 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 both be in St Giles Parish Hall.
- The next planned events will be 29th May: South Stoke, Streatley and Goring (tbc), with walking along the river between the towers; 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.

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 am immensely pleased with the help I have been given by other ringing teachers from all over the branch. I arrange for three ringing teachers to teach at each LTR1 Handling session. As the learners progress beyond handling to LTR2, Foundation Skills, it is less necessary to have other teachers present, but it is often useful to have a second teacher, especially at practice nights where the whole band is comparatively inexperienced.
- Although we are using the ART syllabus, all experienced ringing teachers are welcome to help. I am really glad that there are so many good ringing teachers in our branch and that they have been so generous with their time. Nevertheless, I would like to recommend that each tower tries to find someone from their band who is willing to train as a teacher of ringing, not only to help with the Branch Ringing School but as a way of training the next generation of Tower Captains, with the mutual support of others from other towers.
- There are currently only 19 ONB towers which I can book reasonably often. I have started occasionally taking the sessions to towers outside our branch and have been once each to Benson, Dorchester and Witney. Altogether we have used 28 different towers so far. Attending so many towers is proving to be a big advantage as the learners are not frightened to ring in other towers, are happy to attend branch events and know most of the branch officers.
- 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.

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.

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

In the Treasurer's absence, the Secretary reported that Jeanette Thomas was standing down as independent examiner and Katherine Stonham had agreed to take on this position. In response to a question from Jill Garlick, the Treasurer had advised that the Guild's insurance covers personal injury to members at all times, but public liability is only given at Guild events, which includes branch practices. Jill Garlick asked whether the situation of ringers teaching learners at their own towers would be covered. The Secretary said that she would ask the Treasurer and either she or he would email his response around the Branch

5) Projects in the Branch

- **Letcombe Bassett and Sparsholt:** Richard Loyd reported that he had been told by Whites of Appleton that the three bells of Letcombe Bassett would soon be rehung and refurbished. They also said that the four bells at Sparsholt were going to be rehung with new bearings and fittings, and there would be the option of augmentation.
- **Steventon:** Claire Ward reported that the bells were taken out of action at the end of February. There had been a problem with removing the clappers of the 5th and tenor and they had had to be drilled out. This had added delays and so the bells might not be ringing again by Easter. Whites had started work on the wheels and had ordered the new rope guide. Robert Crocker was building a new trap door, which will be fitted before the rope guide is fixed. Claire said that she is trying to recruit new ringers and it is hoped to hold practice nights on Wednesdays. She said that the project had been funded by generous donations from the village and people who had been married in Steventon, by the ODG and ONB Branch, and by a £5,000 donation from the organisers of the Truck Festival.
- **Long Wittenham:** Julia Sargent reported that £40,000 was needed for repair works, retuning and rehanging the six bells. The bells are heavy going and ring unpredictably. So far she has raised £12,850. The problem with fund raising is that there is another major project taking place in the church: a toilet extension costing at least £90,000. So far she has received no support from the PCC, however the Parish Council have recently expressed an interest and will put details of the bell project on their web site. Crowd funding could also be a possibility. The Rev. Sue Boys from Dorchester would like a feasibility study on having a ringing gallery.
Jill Garlick congratulated Julia on getting so far, despite all the problems she is facing.

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

- The Secretary said she had been advised by the Treasurer that it was hoped that the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund will be amalgamated later this year. However it will still be possible to donate to both funds until this had been done.
- Proposed by Alice Auckland and seconded by Charles Morrish, that the Branch donates £300 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and £150 to the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers Restoration Fund. The proposal was agreed and the Secretary said that she would advise the Treasurer.

7) Election of officers

The following were nominated and elected unopposed as branch officers:

		Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Rob Nickless	Susan Read	Jill Garlick
Vice Chairman	Dick Peters	Josie Irvng	Rachel Morrish
Secretary	Gillian Loyd	Dick Peters	Daphne Pollard
Treasurer	Stuart Gibson	Josie Irving	Philip Roberts
Joint Ringing Masters	Richard Loyd Philip Roberts	Josie Irving	Susan Read
Training Officer	Susan Read	Richard Loyd	Jenny Jeskins
Newsletter Editor	Ian Minns Daphne Pollard	Charles Morrish	Christine Kowalczuk
Webmaster	Mark Cooke	Josie Irving	Tim Pett
Branch Representatives	Josie Irving Janette Roberts Dick Peters	Jill Garlick	Christine Kowalczuk

- 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.

8) Election of new members

- The following were proposed as new members of the Branch and Guild:
Abingdon: Mark Claxton (proposed by Susan Read)
Harwell: Rowan Cockburn, Jayne Conway, Jude Eccleston, Helen Fallaize, Susan Lambert, Caleb Mobey, Elisha Small (proposed by Philip Roberts)
Sutton Courtenay: Benjamin Bampton, Tobius Bampton (proposed by John Napper)

All were seconded by Josie Irving and elected as members.

- Philip Roberts advised that Brendan and Lucy Bailey (formerly Nettlebed) and John Porter (formerly Henley) had transferred to Harwell.

9) **Branch evening practices**

At the 2018 AGM it had been decided to continue monitoring branch evening practices. Since then:

- Attendance had improved slightly over the past year. Practices were better attended since the Branch Ringing School LTR2 had started to attend.
- The Joint Ringing Masters were not downhearted, but said they would like to see more of the newer branch members attending.
- We will continue to monitor attendance over the coming year.

10) **Social events**

- On 24th April there will be a mini-outing to Warborough, Chalgrove and Dorchester Abbey, with a pub lunch.
- The outing and barbecue will be on Saturday 13th July. Philip Roberts will arrange towers, with a pub lunch and afternoon tea, but has not yet decided upon the area. Stuart and Naomi Gibson are hosting the barbecue in the evening.
- To be confirmed: a quiz evening with supper at Brightwell Village Hall on Saturday, 9th November. Anne Hales of Blewbury will be quiz master.

11) **Any other business**

- Catherine Lane (ODG Master) advised that:
 - The date of this year's Guild AGM is Saturday, 18th May. It will be held at Great Missenden.
 - Photographs of branch events should be sent to the Guild Web Master for inclusion on the Guild's new website.
- Brian Read advised that there will be a young ringers' outing (under 21s) to Oxford on Saturday, 13th April. This is a Guild event that is being locally organised and is a new initiative. All young ringers are welcome.
- Richard Loyd advised that our Chairman, Rob Nickless, is giving a talk on 'The Fascinating World of the Honey Bee' in the Manor Barn, Blewbury at 7.30pm on Wednesday, 10th April. Proceeds, which will be match funded by a local company, will go to the Resound project to install a new contemporary stained glass window in Blewbury church, and will be dedicated to bells and bell ringing. All are welcome to buy tickets.

12) **Date of 2019 Annual General Meeting**

Next year's AGM will be held on Saturday, 21st March 2020.

The Chairman thanked Catherine Lane and Patricia Newton for attending. There being no further business the Meeting closed at 7.17pm.

Signed.....

Date.....