

MINUTES of the Branch Committee Meeting held by Zoom meeting on **Sunday, 28th February 2021** at 7.30pm.

1. ATTENDEES

Rob Nickless (Chairman), Katie Lane (Guild Master), Patricia Newton (Guild Steward), Philip Roberts (Joint Ringing Master), Richard Loyd (Joint Ringing Master), Gill Loyd (Secretary), Stuart Gibson (Treasurer), Susan Read (Training Officer), Daphne Pollard (Newsletter Editor), Janette Roberts (Branch Representative), Josie Irving (Branch Representative), Dick Peters (Branch Representative), Nick Clarke, Jenny Dyer, Jill Garlick, Andrew Jones, Tim Pett, Colin Turner, Claire Ward, Michele Winter

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Julia Sargent, Dave Trotman

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th October 2020

Circulated and read, after two minor amendments to the Treasurer's report, Richard Loyd signed the minutes as a correct record of the meeting on behalf of the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT

AGM: The postponed March 2020 AGM was held by Zoom meeting on 14th November 2020. At the AGM it was agreed that ONB Branch will donate £450 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. Daphne Pollard offered to edit a short newsletter and said that she would ask all tower correspondents to provide news. The excellent newsletter was distributed in December by email and included articles from many towers, giving details of the various activities that had taken place during 2020. Our thanks go to Daphne.

The next AGM will be held by Zoom meeting on 20th March 2021.

6-bell striking competition: This will not take place in March and will hopefully be held later in the year.

Branch membership: There have been no new members elected since November. Sadly we have lost one member, John Money of Cholsey who passed away on 10th December after a short illness. John was 95 years old and was a long standing member of the Guild, joining in 1940.

Practices: All practices have been cancelled until further notice. Hopefully they will resume later in the year.

Events: The April mini outing has been cancelled. It might be possible to hold the barbecue in July with an outing based within the branch. The autumn social will be a barn dance in Harwell Village Hall, which was rescheduled from last year.

6. JOINT RINGING MASTERS' REPORT

Little has changed in terms of Branch ringing since our last report to the committee. However there is now hope and optimism for a full return to normal and regular ringing later in the year, possibly from late June onwards. Branch members will undoubtedly be very pleased with this prospect after more than a year of either restricted or no ringing at all.

Tower captains will face numerous challenges in reinvigorating their teams and it is possible that some members will decide not to return to their hobby. In contrast, the slower pace of life, working from home and additional time may have had the opposite effect, and we may experience the prospect of a new wave of adult recruits to train. Whatever happens, the return to ringing will give us the chance to rebuild our ringing skills, physical fitness and most importantly, our friendly social contact through ringing.

The Branch and Guild can be very useful in helping tower captains to overcome any challenges that they may face when ringing recommences. Their role will be the subject of discussion by the branch committee at this and subsequent meetings. We are sure that all branch officers will work hard to ensure that the ONB returns to good form as soon as possible.

Finally, we will all be delighted that the restoration of Long Wittenham bells will have been completed during this lockdown, and will look forward to ringing there and enjoying the latest successful branch bell restoration project.

7. TRAINING OFFICER'S REPORT

There is nothing further to report since the October 2020 Branch Committee Meeting.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

In 2020 the membership of the Branch was 261, a decrease of 16 from 2019. There were 250 members who paid subscriptions, 6 Honorary members, 1 Life member and 4 associate members who paid their Guild subscription through another Branch.

So far in 2021 we have 55 paid up members (from 9 towers) along with the 4 Honorary and 1 Life members plus 3 members who pay a subscription through another Branch. 18 towers have not paid their subscriptions to date. Branch subscriptions must be paid over to the Guild, usually before the end of March to ensure members benefit from the Guild Insurance policy. There may be an extension to the date due to the pandemic.

There were no fund raising events in 2020 but honey sales resulted in a donation of £220.

The Branch, for the fourth year, collected a voluntary £2 donation with subscriptions. £528 was collected in the year. Almost everyone made the donation to put towards branch restoration projects. The Branch supported the work at Letcombe Bassett with a grant of £500. The Branch has committed to support the project at Long Wittenham with a grant of £3,000, which hopefully will be completed in 2021.

Two youth events were organised by the Branch before the pandemic stopped activities. These resulted in a surplus of £48.

A donation of £450 was made to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund.

The Branch at the end of 2020 had funds in the region of £6,682, which is well in excess of reserves required by the Branch. This includes the £3,000 grant to be paid to Long Wittenham.

The accounts for 2020 have been examined and circulated ready to be presented for approval at the AGM.

The Treasurer confirmed that the annual subscription for the Guild is still £8 for 2021, with a request for a voluntary donation of £2 for branch restoration projects.

He said that there is only £1,000 in the deposit account because £3,000 will shortly have to be paid to Long Wittenham and interest rates are very low at the moment.

9. UPDATE ON PROJECTS

Abingdon, St. Nicolas: Tim Pett advised that the work, which had been scheduled to start in January, had been postponed until April in accordance with Covid 19 regulations and should be completed in June. Some preparatory work, such as covering the bearings to avoid dust ingress, had already been done by the local ringers.

Appleford: Colin Turner advised that the church is currently closed and that nothing is happening other than Nicola Turner checking the situation every six weeks or so.

Letcombe Bassett: The rehanging has been completed and it is hoped that we will hold a practice there later in the year.

Long Wittenham:

Julia Sargent reports that work is progressing well at Whites and they should soon confirm the date for the return of the bells. The headstocks were made prior to work starting in January, and the rims on the wheels completed last week. New bearing plates have been bolted onto the frame. The bells were tuned 2 weeks ago and there should be a video of this. Both the scaffold contractors and the shot blasting firm were excellent, on time and efficient. The frame is looking very different from its previous state, definitely worth bringing in the professionals. The local school colours have been chosen for the new ropes (blue and white) and the school is appreciative. The rope guide will be installed after the bells and ropes have been hung.

The accounts have been reconciled with the PCC Treasurer and have been noted on his report as restricted funds. The PCC have agreed that the Barron Trust money will be paid directly to Whites, following an email from Brian White confirming that the Trust would not pay to the PCC.

We are hoping that the bells will be returned after the schools reopen on 8th March, allowing the children, the village and others to see the bells on the ground, if Covid 19 restrictions permit. The Vicar will be asked to conduct a service to bless the bells, but we are not yet sure how many will be permitted to attend.

Sutton Courtenay: Colin Turner advised that there had been a problem with pigeon ingress, which has been dealt with and the louvres have been re-netted.

10. DONATIONS FROM BRANCH FUNDS AND OTHER SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS

- **Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund:** It was proposed by Susan Read and seconded by Tim Pett that the Branch Committee recommends to the AGM the donation of £500 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund.
- It was noted that, once the work at Long Wittenham has been completed, there are no major restoration projects in the pipeline.

11. ITEMS FOR THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- **Agenda:** Survival and recovery of ringing (national initiative) will be added to the agenda.
- **Date and time:** The 2021 AGM will be held at 7.00pm on Saturday, 20th March, by Zoom meeting. The Chairman will arrange the meeting and set up voting.
- **Election of officers:** All officers present, apart from Dick Peters, said that they would be prepared to stand again if there were no other nominations at the AGM. Philip Roberts, Richard Loyd and Gill Loyd advised that this would be the last year they would stand for office. The Chairman thanked Dick for all the work he has done for the Branch over the past six years. He also thanked Daphne Pollard for producing an excellent online newsletter in December.

Actions for Secretary:

- Email Mark Cooke to see if he is willing to stand again as Web Master.
- Email branch members to ask for nominations either before or at the AGM, and advise which officers are willing to stand again.

12. SOCIAL EVENTS

- There will be no mini outing in April.
- We might hold a branch outing within our branch and have an evening barbecue in July or August if Covid 19 regulations permit.
- There will be a barn dance and supper on Saturday, 13th November in Harwell Village Hall. £50 deposit has been paid to Jigworks Ceilidh Band, with £440 to be paid on the day.

13. SURVIVAL AND RECOVERY OF RINGING (NATIONAL INITIATIVE)

Katie Lane, Guild Master, explained the joint initiative between the Central Council and ART. She said that in January all Guilds, Associations and Societies had been asked to provide volunteers to be 'Recovery Champions' to become a focus for recovery planning within their local areas. Katie had agreed to represent the ODG, together with all the Guild Stewards. It is hoped that every branch in the Guild will provide their own recovery champion, who would not be expected to take on all the work but would have an overview and coordinate what can be done in the various branch towers. Additionally there is a toolbox at <http://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>, which covers all areas, from getting fit to ring, checking bells, getting together and keeping in touch, etc.

Patricia Newton, Guild Steward, said that it would be good if ONB, being a large branch, could appoint two champions to communicate with our towers. Recovery Champions need to express their interest to Annie Hall (email annie.hall@sky.com). There will be a presentation from the steering committee with a review and Q&A session on 13th March. Each Guild Steward will also hold meetings with their respective branches to discuss ways forward. ONB Branch is grouped with the EBSB and South Oxon branches.

Richard Loyd felt that, as the Branch's recovery champion(s) would have to deal with branch officers (secretary, ringing masters and training officer), it would be advantageous if they were not branch officers themselves. He wondered if Jenny Dyer might be interested in becoming a recovery champion and she said she would look at the details and think about it. The Chairman thought that we might have to do some 'behind the scenes' recruitment.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Tim Pett reported that Angela Smith, a long standing member of Abingdon and the Guild, had recently passed away, and said he would advise the Guild. Her funeral has not yet been arranged.

- Richard Loyd felt that it was important that all branch members who have died are mentioned by name in the branch records.
- Daphne Pollard agreed to produce a newsletter in June which will be distributed online.
- Stuart Gibson confirmed that the ODG is still maintaining a 20% grant towards bell restoration projects.
- Abingdon and Steventon are entering teams for the Guild quiz in March.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This will be Sunday, 10th October 2021 at 7.30pm, venue to be decided.

After the Chairman had expressed thanks to everyone for attending, the meeting closed at 8.27pm.

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