

**Minutes of the Old North Berks Branch Annual General Meeting
Held by Zoom meeting on Saturday, 20th March 2021**

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

Before the meeting a minute's silence was held in memory of John Money (Cholsey) and Angela Smith (Abingdon).

1) Apologies for absence

Received from: Karen Walker and Chris Cook

2) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, 14th November 2020

Circulated and read, Elizabeth Gill of Harwell was added to the list of members who had passed away in 2020. The minutes will be 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's report

AGM: The postponed March 2020 AGM was held by Zoom meeting on 14th November 2020. 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.

6-bell striking competition 2021: This will hopefully be held later in the year.

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

Branch membership: There have been no new members elected since November. Sadly we have lost two members. John Money of Cholsey passed away in December 2020 after a short illness. John was 95 years old and was a long standing member of the Guild, joining in 1940. Angela Smith of Abingdon also passed away in February 2021. She rang her first peal for the Guild in 1949, probably first joining around 1947, but had a break in Guild membership of about fifteen years when her children were young.

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.

Joint Ringing Masters' report

Little has changed in terms of Branch ringing since the 2020 AGM. However there is now hope and optimism for a full return to normal and regular ringing later this 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 at the 2021 AGM and by the branch committee at 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.

Training Officer's report

There is nothing further to report since the November 2020 Annual General Meeting.

We will think about how to restart ringing training when ringing itself has settled down and we know how things stand.

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.

Following a vote to approve the financial statement for the year ending 31st December 2020 (proposed by Susan Read and seconded by Josie Irving), the accounts were ratified.

The Treasurer reminded everyone that quite a few towers had not yet paid their annual subscriptions for 2021. These are needed by the end of April.

5) Projects in the Branch

- **Long Wittenham:** Peter Collinson reported that the bells were being returned to Long Wittenham on Monday, 22nd March and would be placed in the body of the church for a week before being returned to the tower. This would allow them to be seen by the children from the village school. On Thursday, 25th March, there will be a short service to bless the bells with attendance by invitation only. On Friday and Saturday the church will be open for villagers and ringers to view the bells. Peter thanked the Branch and Guild for their donations towards the cost of rehanging and retuning the bells. Stuart Gibson asked Peter to let him know when the bells are ready for inspection.
- **Abingdon, St Nicolas:** Brian Read 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 had advised the February Branch Committee meeting that the church is currently closed and that nothing is happening other than Nicola Turner checking the situation every six weeks or so.

Richard Loyd pointed out that, once these projects have been completed, no other projects are currently in the pipeline. He reminded everyone that grants are available from the Branch and the Guild for bell restoration work.

6) Donation to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and other recommendations

- It was agreed that ONB Branch will donate £500 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund (proposed by Stuart Gibson and seconded by Susan Read). The Guild Master thanked the Branch.
- There were no other recommendations.

7) Election of officers

Dick Peters said that he wished to stand down as Vice Chairman and Branch Representative. The Chairman thanked Dick for all the work he had done for the Branch over the past six years.

		Proposed by	Seconded by
Chairman	Rob Nickless	Richard Loyd	Josie Irving
Vice Chairman	Charles Morrish	Philip Roberts	Daphne Pollard
Secretary	Gillian Loyd	Jenny Dyer	Josie Irving
Treasurer	Stuart Gibson	Philip Roberts	Michele Winter
Joint Ringing Masters	Richard Loyd Philip Roberts	Josie Irving	Janette Roberts
Training Officer	Susan Read	Richard Loyd	Dick Peters
Newsletter Editor	Daphne Pollard	Charles Morrish	Josie Irving
Webmaster	Mark Cooke	Janette Roberts	Jeanette Thomas
Branch Representatives	Josie Irving Janette Roberts Charles Morrish	Gillian Loyd	Brian Read
Independent Examiner	Katherine Stonham	Susan Read	Michele Winter

There being no further nominations, the above were duly elected.

8) Election of new members

There were no new members.

9) Survival and recovery of ringing (national initiative)

The Chairman handed the meeting over to Jenny Dyer, who has agreed to become a Recovery Champion for the Branch. Jenny is the Tower Captain at Cumnor and has been ringing since 1973. She is passionate about ringing and wants to ensure that it continues after the Covid-19 pandemic. Jenny had attended a meeting about the survival and recovery of ringing and gave a presentation:

- The Association of Ringing Teachers (ART) and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) have joined forces to produce a series of activities, teaching and support tools, through the Survival and Recovery Toolbox (available at <https://ringingteachers.org/survival-and-recovery-toolbox>). This aims to help existing ringers to return and to help gain new ringers.
- A national network of Recovery Champions had been recruited to support with recovery planning within their local areas, and to coordinate the flow of ideas and information. Patricia Newton (Guild Steward) is a Recovery Champion, and Katie Lane (Guild Master) is the Recovery Champion for the Guild. It is also possible to appoint an additional Recovery Champion in the Branch if anyone is interested.
- The next step for the Branch is for Jenny to hold a Zoom meeting with representatives from each tower in the Branch. They will be able to share successes of lockdown and new ideas, and identify the challenges and what support might be needed in preparing for a return to ringing.

It is important that towers not represented at the AGM become engaged and attend the meeting. There will be different dynamics in retaining existing ringers and recruiting new learners for the various towns and villages in the Branch. Some towers will need some help to train new learners. The Joint Ringing Masters confirmed that they will support any initiatives at tower and branch level. Susan Read confirmed that the Branch Ringing School will restart as soon as is possible.

10) Social events

- It is hoped that we will be able to have a ‘local towers’ outing organised by Philip Roberts, followed by a barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson, on Saturday, 17th July.
- The barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall, which was postponed from November 2020, is now scheduled for 13th November 2021.

11) Any other business

- Katie Lane (ODG Master) said that she was pleased to see everyone at the meeting.
- Brian Read questioned the recent CCCBR announcement about Easter Sunday ringing, which was very unclear. It was thought that any ringing would be decided by ringers and their own church authorities, and that a risk assessment would be necessary. Colin Turner suggested that the ‘rule of 6’, social distancing, good ventilation and ringing for no more than 15 minutes should be observed. Philip Roberts reminded everyone that it was important to do maintenance checks before any ringing took place.
- Claire Ward asked whether the Branch 6-bell striking competition could be held later in the year at Steventon. The Guild’s 6-bell competition is scheduled for 2nd October at Great Brickhill. Claire will check with Steventon church authorities to see if the Branch can hold our competition there on 18th September.
- Claire Ward asked when had it been decided to change the Guild’s logo and expressed her dislike of the new logo. Katie Lane said that the Guild’s PR group had carried out a survey and the results suggested that the old logo was not modern enough. The new logo had been designed by an expert in logo designing. Other members agreed with Claire’s negative view of the new logo.
- Richard Loyd advised that the annual Blewbury Duck Race, which is in aid of the tower maintenance fund, will be held at midday on 4th July on the Playclose in Blewbury. Duck tickets will be available to purchase in advance and all are welcome to attend.
- Richard Loyd reminded everyone that he is still selling clear and set honey produced by Rob Nickless for the Branch. He said that he will deliver it to anyone in the Branch who contacts him.

The Chairman thanked everyone, especially Katie Lane and Patricia Newton, for attending. There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.12pm.

Signed.....

Date.....