

ONB Branch Committee Meeting 28th February 2022

Secretary's report

2022 AGM: Please note that the 2022 AGM will be held by Zoom meeting in the evening of Saturday, 19th March.

6-bell striking competition: Although currently scheduled to take place on Saturday, 19th March, this might be postponed until later in the year.

Branch membership: There have been no new members elected since the ONB Branch Committee meeting on 10th October 2021.

Colin Turner has advised that Dawn Smith, a former Guild member from Milton, died at the beginning of December. She and her family moved away from the village many years ago, but both she and her son Ian were very involved with the new bells project.

Practices: Despite planning to start practices at the beginning of 2022, no branch practices have yet taken place because of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. However it has been decided that we will recommence practices with the afternoon session at Drayton on 23rd February 2022.

Events:

Hopefully there will be a mini outing (3 towers and lunch) on Wednesday, 27th April.

We need to arrange a date for the branch outing and barbecue.

The barn dance and supper at Harwell Village Hall, which was postponed from Novembers 2020 and 2021, is now scheduled for 12th November 2022.

Gill Loyd

Joint Ringing Masters' report

At the time of the autumn committee meeting there were signs of normality returning to ringing at tower and branch level. However Omicron put everything back and once again the winter period was very restricted in terms of increased activity and the first events, such as the New Year's Day ringing and January branch practice, were cancelled. However, there are now brighter signs and it is sincerely hoped that we might at last be able to begin to have more freedom to organise events and move around towers and practices more easily.

We continue to be grateful to Jenny Dyer in her role of Ringing Recovery Champion for the Branch, and for the information that she obtains from the ODG and national groups. It would appear that our Branch is in much better shape than many, and this is surely a result of the dedication and resolve of our tower captains and branch membership. Well done everyone.

There are a number of new members being elected and also some successful teaching happening, and if this trend is sustained then we should recover well and have some enthusiastic new faces to take the Branch forward in the coming years.

We should discuss the timing of the branch 6-bell striking competition. At the moment it is scheduled for 19th March, but it might be wise to delay this to the morning of June 11th or 18th to allow more time for teams to prepare. Opinions requested please for discussion at the meeting.

No bell restoration projects are officially active within the branch, but there are some exciting developments to potentially restore the long silent bells at Culham. Whites have recently inspected and have reported their recommendations to the PCC for consideration. Branch officers are in close contact with the incumbent and PCC to support their decision process, and to advise on available financial opportunities should they proceed. Culham bells are a light 6 cast by Whitechapel during the 1920s and enjoyed a very short ringing career of less than 50 years, becoming derelict due to water ingress in the tower during the 1960s. Should this project become a reality it would be a very exciting prospect for our membership to support, and we hope to bring some positive news of developments in the coming months.

Thanks to all for your continued support.

Richard Loyd and Philip Roberts

Treasurer's report

In 2021 the membership of the Branch was 247, a decrease of 16 from 2020. There were 237 members who paid subscriptions, 4 Honorary members, 1 Life member and 5 associate members, who paid their Guild subscription through another Branch.

So far in 2022 we have 58 paid up members (from 7 towers) along with the 2 Honorary and 1 Life members, and 0 members who pay a subscription through another branch. 20 towers have not paid any 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 were no fund raising events in 2021 but honey sales resulted in donations of £203. The one social event, a BBQ, raised £159.

The Branch, for the fifth year, collected a voluntary £2 donation with subscriptions. £472 was collected in the year. Almost everyone made the contributions to put towards Branch bell restorations projects. The Branch supported the work at Long Wittenham with a grant of £3,000. The Branch has no other bell restoration project commitments at present. However, there is one potential project at Culham but this is in the very early stages.

Three youth events were organised by the Branch in the latter half of the year, following the shutdown caused by the pandemic. These resulted in a surplus of £26. A Donation was made to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund of £500.

The Branch, at the end of 2021, had funds in the region of £4,700, which is well in excess of the reserves required by the Branch.

The accounts for 2021 are being circulated with this report and are currently being independently examined. They should be ready to be presented for approval at the AGM.

Just one note from the accounts – the Branch is holding £1,600 for Long Wittenham following the completion of the restoration project as the PCC didn't wish to hold the excess funds. This is restricted money only to be used for expenses relating to the bells at Long Wittenham.

Stuart Gibson

Training Officer's Report

ONB / VOWH ART Teaching Bell Handling Course, Longcot, 18 Sep 2021

Tony Crabtree and I collaborated to organise an ART course to teach twelve new teachers of ringing for our branches. So far, four of the twelve who attended the course have been accredited as Teachers of Bell Handling and many of them continue to help teach our learners at the ONB Branch Ringing School on Saturday mornings.

ONB Branch Ringing School, 25 Sep 21 – 2 Apr 22

The Branch Ringing School has taken place in Abingdon for an hour each Saturday morning. The first session was on 25 September. A rota of sixteen teachers has taught twelve learners: four each from our Old North Berks branch and Oxford City branch, and two each from Woodstock & Witney and Bicester branches. We have averaged four learners each week, all taught individually for an hour.

ONB / VOWH ART Teaching from Rounds to Plain Hunt, Longcot, 23 Apr 2022

Tony Crabtree and I have collaborated again. The day course provides the skills and techniques necessary to build really good foundation ringing skills in your ringers. The course is designed for anyone involved in teaching a new band where the teacher can personally ring at least plain hunt.

The ringers booked on the course so far are five from our Old North Berks Branch (three from Abingdon, one from Harwell and one from Aston Tirrold), three from Bicester branch, two from Central Bucks branch and one each from the Witney & Woodstock branch and Lincolnshire. Three more ringers are on the waiting list.

Young Ringers

As discussed at the autumn ONB committee meeting, we changed the young ringer offering from six outings a year to monthly Sunday afternoon practices. Since November, we have practised at Shiplake (21 Nov), Drayton (Dec 12), Longcot (9 Jan) and Brightwell (13 Feb). Daphne has provided her sumptuous cakes, scones and biscuits for us on each occasion. Numbers have varied between 10 and 12 young people plus the parents and

tower captains who enjoy joining in with the refreshments on offer and occasionally making up the numbers necessary for some of the more advanced methods rung.

The Abingdon School Bell Club has continued to meet weekly during term time at St Helen's Church, Abingdon. The teachers, Adam Jenkins and Ollie Lomax, have continued to come with two more new learners this term. We are glad that two of our younger fully-qualified young teachers help by teaching the boys to handle their bells. One of the older boys from the school has started attending the Young Ringer practices.

Ringing World National Youth Competition (RWNYC), ODG team

I have been providing transport for our young ringers to the monthly practices held for the ODG squad for many years and continue to do so. The team which rings in the competition is drawn from the larger squad who meet to practise monthly.

I am continuing to help with the ODG team for the 2022 competition, which will be held in Exeter. Currently, there are three young ringers from the ONB in the squad (two from Abingdon and one from Brightwell). Hopefully the young ringer practices I am organising will help more of the young ringers to reach the standard needed to join the ODG squad.

Susan Read