

## **ONB Officers' report to the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Annual General Meeting**

### **Secretary's report**

#### **Branch membership**

Ten new members have been elected to the Guild: Caroline Ball (Childrey), Gill Murray, Rebecca Pocock and Cameron Watt (Cholsey), Gary Sumption (Letcombe Bassett), Katy Taylor (North Moreton), Bob Mannix (Steventon), Andy Bennett and Jenny Bennett (Wantage), Seth Christopher Hutchinson (West Hendred).

Sadly Claire Ward of Steventon, Helen Diserens of Wallingford and Roy Thorpe of Brightwell have all passed away and will be sadly missed throughout the Branch. 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**

There were no practices during 2021. Despite hoping to start practices in January 2022, the first practice held was the afternoon session at Drayton on 23rd February 2022.

#### **6-bell striking competition**

This was held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at Steventon, and was followed by a service remembering Claire Ward (former tower captain of Steventon) and a traditional ringers' tea outdoors. Six teams entered the striking competition and the results were: 1<sup>st</sup> Wallingford (73 faults), 2<sup>nd</sup> Wantage (83 faults), 3<sup>rd</sup> Steventon (88 faults), 4<sup>th</sup> Blewbury (90 faults), 5<sup>th</sup> Abingdon (110 faults) 6<sup>th</sup> North Moreton (130 faults). Thanks go to Martin Rice of Newbury and Mark Robbins of Hungerford for judging the competition, Jack Jarvis and Rev. Phil Sutton for the service, John H Napper for playing the organ, and the Steventon ringers and friends for providing a superb tea.

#### **Events**

The branch outing was cancelled; however the barbecue took place at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> September. Over fifty members attended and it was a great opportunity to catch up with each other for the first time since the pandemic began. As usual the food was excellent and out thanks go to Stuart and Naomi for hosting the event.

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

#### **Gill Loyd**

### **Joint Ringing Masters' report**

During the autumn 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 with regard to an increase in 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.

Although there were no branch practices in 2021, judging by the enthusiasm for the BBQ and the attendance at the Striking Competition at Steventon, there is a chance that we will have a good return to these events. Six teams entering the competition, including two call change bands, was very pleasing indeed, and our thanks to the efforts of the branch tower captains for organising their teams. Surprisingly there have been already quite a number of new members elected, and this is encouraging.

It has been decided to postpone the 2022 branch 6-bell striking competition, which was scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> March, until the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> June to allow more time for teams to prepare and for the weather to improve.

We are 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.

The Long Wittenham project was finally completed, and congratulations to Julia Sargent for her determination and leadership to complete this much needed rehang against all manner of difficulties. We understand that the result has been well worth the effort and we look forward to a branch practice there at some point.

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**

#### **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. The twelve ringers on the course included three from the ONB (Jenny and Andy Dyer from Cumnor and Willow (18) from Abingdon). 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 September 2021 – 2 April 2022**

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 April 2022**

Tony Crabtree and I have collaborated again. The day course will provide 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. Of the ringers booked on the course so far, there are five from Old North Berks Branch (three from Abingdon, one from Harwell and one from Aston Tirrold).

#### **Young Ringers**

Our young ringer offerings have changed from only 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 Pollard has provided refreshments on each occasion. Numbers have varied between 10 and 12 young people plus the parents and tower captains who occasionally make 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 Ringers practices.

#### **Ringing World National Youth Competition (RWNYC), ODG team**

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

I am pleased to report that when the ODG team won the Whitechapel Trophy at the RWNYC competition held in Worcester on 11 September, four of the thirteen-strong squad came from the ONB.

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 practices I am organising will help more of the young ringers to reach the standard needed to join the ODG squad.

**Susan Read**

**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**