

# Minutes of the Witney and Woodstock Branch AGM

Combe -18th February 2018

Present:

Hazel Howarth, Sue Rhodes, Neil Ephgrave, Jean Richards, Andrew Goldthorpe, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Hilarie Rogers, Tony Crabtree, Michael Douglas, Mel Leggett, Roger Barnes, Robert Walton, Katie Walton, Julie Minch, Anthony Williamson, Ian Davey-Wilson, Hugh Deam, Judy Kirby, Janet Robinson Wood, Deborah Phillips, Elaine Sherrott.

## 1. Apologies.

Lindsey Thornton, Michael Probert, Mark Probert, Jeffrey Thomas, Jack Peppiatt, Stuart Gibson, Meg Roberts, Rebecca Smith, Katherine Goldthorpe, Grace Goldthorpe, Malcolm Fairbairn, Jane Burgess, Ron Burgess, Sue Hall.

## 2. Chair's welcome and minutes from 2017 AGM

Hazel Howarth welcomed everyone and thanked all members for attending the meeting.

In addition, there were special thanks to Rev Roy Turner for the church service, Hilarie Rogers and Tony Crabtree for travelling to the meeting and to Combe for hosting this year's AGM, especially Anthony Williamson for organizing the ringing and the Combe ringers for a superb ringers' tea.

Throughout the year there have been no meetings of the W&W committee.

There were no corrections to the 2017 AGM minutes.

The minutes were then approved and signed. Proposed by Roger Barnes, Seconded Anthony Williamson.

## *Matters Arising:*

There were no matters arising.

## 3. Ringing Master's Report - Sue Rhodes, Ringing Master

Firstly, I would like to thank Neil Ephgrave, Deputy Ringing Master, Michael Probert and Alison Merryweather-Clarke who has been extremely helpful to me in my first year as Ringing Master.

Our first major task of the year was the branch striking competition held at Tackley in June, ably judged by two of my bell ringing friends from the Cirencester branch of the G&B diocese. Competition was fierce, and it was great to see the hosting tower entering a band for "rounds and call changes". After much deliberation Ducklington won the trophy for rounds and call changes and North Leigh won the method ringing. A splendid tea was provided, and a good evening was had by all.

There has been some support for branch activities and we would encourage all to attend as many as possible. It doesn't matter what level of ringing you're able to achieve but the benefits of ringing on different bells and broadening your network of ringing colleagues can be invaluable.

Witney and Woodstock were the hosts of this year's ODG 6-bell striking competition, which was held at North Leigh tower. There were 10 entries from the guild with the home team taking 7th place! Tea and cakes were in abundance and a good time was had by all.

Thank you to everyone who supported the event and, in particular, North Leigh for the use of their bells and excellent facilities.

We are all grateful to the invaluable support of ringers from other areas in providing sound advice, extra ringing opportunities and conducting, highlight being the 10 bells of St Laurence in Ludlow, and Christ Church Swindon. Thanks also to Tony Crabtree for providing dedicated training sessions throughout the year including a conducting course which I found particularly helpful.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke has organised several directed training sessions focusing on particular methods which have proved valuable when practising for a QP and we are hoping to repeat these again next year.

We are also grateful to City branch for supporting many of our branch practices and social events namely Hugh Deam and Judy Kirby.

Significant achievements within the branch are:

1st QP Dawn Chambers, James Gibbons, Heather Horner, Barbara Summers, Evadne Valance, Katy Walton

1st away from cover Zoe Monkley

1st minor Andrew Goldthorpe, Robert Walton

1st triples inside Jane Burgess, Rebecca Smith

1st surprise major Neil Ephgrave, Michael Probert

1st major as conductor Neil Ephgrave

1st blows in Yorkshire Surprise Major Neil Ephgrave; also, his 300th QP

1st royal Alison Merryweather-Clarke.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke and Michael Probert celebrated their 250th QP together, which was also Mike's 1st on ten bells, at Shrivenham. This was one of several QPs that could not have been attempted without the help of many experienced members from other branches and guilds who have welcomed us to their practices, rung and conducted our QPs and run various courses, including a conducting course rung by our Steward Tony Crabtree, and the Michaelmas and Steeple Aston courses.

Thank you to all who have supported us and provided opportunities. If you have any special requests for training, then please contact either Neil or myself and we will be happy to support.

The format for next year's branch practices will remain the same unless there are any objections or other ideas

Finally, our resurrected "Witney and Woodstock quiz night" made a return to Freeland village hall last weekend and was a huge success. Quiz master extraordinaire Neil Ephgrave, actors M. Probert and A. Merryweather Clarke will be signing autographs later.....a very successful evening!

#### 4. Treasurer's Report – Jean Richards, Hon. Treasurer

The branch accounts for 2017 show a current balance of £2,740.08 and a surplus of income over expenditure of £285.38.

Our income from subscriptions was down by £32 from 2016 (i.e. 4 fewer members).

The branch outing and branch social generated surpluses of £25 and £28 respectively.

The branch again donated £125 to each of the two ODG bell funds.

There were no other significant outgoings in 2017.

Very low interest rates meant that we continued to receive only a small amount of interest.

Jean Richards passed on her thanks to Mel Leggett for acting as the Independent Examiner for the 2017 accounts.

## **Balance Sheet**

### **Opening Balances:**

Current Account	£1681.80
Deposit Account	£758.67
Cash float	£14.23
Excess of income over expenditure	<u>£285.38</u>
	<b><u>£2,740.08</u></b>

### **Closing Balances:**

Current Account	£1912.60
Deposit Account	£760.80
Cash Float	<u>£66.68</u>
	<b><u>£2,740.08</u></b>

## **5. Secretary's Report – Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary**

Ducklington hosted the 2017 AGM in February where a well-attended open ringing session was followed by tea and cakes and the annual service. Robert Walton of North Leigh handed over his roles of Chair and Secretary to Hazel Howarth of Ducklington and Andrew Goldthorpe of Witney respectively. Anthony Williamson of Combe handed over the ringing Master position to Sue Rhodes of Freeland, with Michael Probert, also of Freeland replacing Richard White as Branch Representative. All departing committee members were thanked for their invaluable service. Membership was slightly down by 4 from the year before but we welcomed a new ringable tower at Black Bourton into the branch, along with welcome plans to make Broadwell ringable.

Unfortunately, two much loved and well-respected members passed away in 2017, Derek West of Witney and Mary Douglas of Bladon. Obituaries were published in Odd Bob and several quarter peals were rung in fond remembrance.

Our branch annual social was hosted by Freeland on 22nd July. After ringing at St Mary's church, we moved next door to the Oxfordshire Yeoman for food & drinks and a wet but competitive game of Aunt Sally to bring the evening to a close.

In September, a band of ringers from Witney and Woodstock branch joined Kevin Musty on an outing to South Wales. Organised by Kevin, originally from Swindon, who has recently moved to a small village in South Wales, it was our great fortune that he invited us to ring in his new territory. Set over a long weekend with two nights away we enjoyed many excellent towers and lots of good hospitality. Ringing at Dyffryn, Cadoxton, Neath, Llanelli, Sketty, Bridgeend, Gorsienon, Aberavon and Aberdare we attempted a QP at each and got most. At Gorsienon we had the honour of ringing for a wedding. It was an excellent trip and all the towers are well worth a visit.

This year's well-supported Branch outing took place in Warwickshire on a warm and sunny October day starting in Harbury, followed by Lighthorne, an excellent lunch at Bishops Tachbrook followed by afternoon ringing St Nicholas Warwick, Barford and lastly St Peter's Wellesbourne. Our thanks to Michael Probert for his excellent choice of church towers and bells and a fine pub in such a beautiful part of the Warwickshire countryside.

November saw the re-dedication service for the new ring of six at Black Bourton with the service taken by Area Bishop Colin Fletcher. David Harding, tower captain, and his new band of Black Bourton ringers rang the bells for the first time after they were blessed during the service followed by an open ringing session. The subsequent branch practice was the best attended of the year with 17 ringers keen to try out the new bells. The Black Bourton ringers, as well as the whole branch, are extremely grateful to the family of Jackie Wheeler who donated the funds to enable completion of the restoration and a new treble was cast in her honour. Thanks also go to the village for its dedication and support in fundraising over the last few years, Richard Betteridge for organising the whole project, David Nixon for his tireless hard work in the tower and all the other helpers who have completed a mammoth task in such a short time.

Branch practice attendances have been a bit hit and miss in 2017 but always provide an excellent opportunity to try out the 25 ringable towers we are fortunate enough to have in the district, as well as to socialise. Highlights of the year included Wootton's excellent pub and ringers' chips as well as our first ever branch practice at Langford. December saw a low turnout for the Yarnton practice but an enthusiastic if exhausting quarter peal of bob doubles was rung on the back five.

There were many 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter peal congratulations this year which is a tribute to the quality of teaching we are fortunate to benefit from in our branch towers as well as the strength of our support group of Association of Ringing Teacher qualified teachers. Sue Rhodes, our Ringing Master will elaborate on these achievements in her own report but, on the subject of ART, and its awards system for ringing achievements, Fiona Methley of North Leigh achieved Level 5; Robert Walton of North Leigh achieved Level 4, both with the support of their ART tutor Alison Merryweather-Clarke. Marysia Hermaszewska of Ducklington achieved Level 1 and Hazel Howarth of Ducklington achieved levels 3 & 4 as did I at Witney, all with the invaluable support of our ART tutor Roger Barnes. I will also be attending the ART Level 1 teacher training course in March to improve my bell handling teaching skills and I would encourage any members interested in improving their teaching or ringing skills to speak to one of our branch ART members.

Concerning recruitment, at Witney, we are currently training 10 sea cadets with a view to them ringing at the 2018 Remembrance Day national ringing event encouraged by the 1400 poster which you should all have seen circulated by your tower correspondents. It provides a helpful conversation starter if you are trying to recruit new ringers, as well as a target for new recruits to take pride in achieving.

As branch secretary, I have benefitted from extra ringing opportunities associated with my attendance of several ODG meetings and training events. My personal highlight was a recruitment and training course held in Amersham where I was able to ring at my old school church which I last attended at my leavers ceremony 38 years previously, having also discovered that my course tutor and the Guild PR officer was an old school friend. A topic of debate at this meeting was developing the concept of ringing hubs at strategic locations, not only in this branch but also our neighbouring branches of VOWH, Old North Berks and Bicester, with less regard being taken of historic branch boundaries and more attention paid to drawing on the wealth of resource and talent at our disposal. I look forward to exploring this further in the year ahead with the committee and other Guild members.

Finally, I am personally very grateful for the counsel of my current and previous committee members in my first year as branch secretary, as well as the invaluable support of ringers from other branches of the ODG in providing sound advice and extra ringing opportunities. My special thanks go to Hugh Deam from OCB for organising outings and quarter peals and Tony Crabtree from VOWH for running the tower maintenance and rope splicing course at Witney. I encourage all branch members who want more experience in tower maintenance or extra ringing opportunities to get in touch with these individuals, or me and my fellow committee members, as we have a wealth of ready and able support upon which to draw in this branch.

## 6. Election of New Members

<b><i>Tower</i></b>	<b><i>New Member</i></b>	<b><i>Proposed</i></b>	<b><i>Seconded</i></b>
Black Bourton	David Nixon	David Harding	Adrian Hillier
Black Bourton	Susanne Bains	David Harding	Adrian Hillier
Black Bourton	Wendy Taylor	David Harding	Adrian Hillier
Black Bourton	Rebecca Harding	David Harding	Adrian Hillier
Black Bourton	Ellie Hughes	David Harding	Adrian Hillier
Cassington	Tim Johnston	Keith Turner	Clare Want
Clanfield	Aisha Holmes	Adrian Hillier	Emma Somerfield
Clanfield	Matthew Hillier	Adrian Hillier	Emma Somerfield
Combe	Joanna Kantor	Anthony Williamson	Jean Richards
Combe	Sally Pursell	Anthony Williamson	Jean Richards
Ducklington	Lynda Lawrence	Roger Barnes	Hazel Howarth
Ducklington	Madeleine Bone	Roger Barnes	Hazel Howarth
South Leigh	Richard Law	Alison Merryweather-Clarke	David Smith
Stonesfield	Jeffrey Thomas	Lindsey Thornton	David Smith
Stonesfield	Jack Peppiatt	Lindsey Thornton	Roger Barnes
Witney	Katherine Goldthorpe	Andrew Goldthorpe	Rebecca Smith
Witney	Grace Goldthorpe	Andrew Goldthorpe	Rebecca Smith
Witney	Carol McRobbie	Andrew Goldthorpe	Rebecca Smith

Witney	Martin Whiffin	Andrew Goldthorpe	Rebecca Smith
<i>Also need to re-elect (but not advise ODG as existing number is still OK)</i>			
Witney	Charles Smith	Andrew Goldthorpe	Hazel Howarth

The election of new members was agreed by those present at the meeting.

## 7. Election of Officers

All officers were willing to continue except for Ian Davey-Wilson who stood down as webmaster.

Members of the committee are:

Position	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Hazel Howarth	Anthony Williamson	Alison Merryweather-Clarke
Hon. Treasurer	Jean Richards	Anthony Williamson	Alison Merryweather-Clarke
Hon. Secretary	Andrew Goldthorpe	Roger Barnes	Sue Rhodes
Ringing Master	Sue Rhodes	Neil Ephgrave	Julie Minch
Deputy Ringing Master	Neil Ephgrave	Sue Rhodes	Robert Walton
Branch Rep.	Alison Merryweather-Clarke	Julie Minch	Neil Ephgrave
Branch Rep.	Michael Probert	Julie Minch	Neil Ephgrave
Assistant Secretary	Lindsey Thornton	Andrew Goldthorpe	Hazel Howarth
Webmaster	Andrew Goldthorpe	Roger Barnes	Sue Rhodes

## 8. Donations

Ringing Master's Honorarium – waived by Sue Rhodes.

Jean Richards proposed that the Branch repeat their donations of 2017 and give £125 to the Oxford Diocesan Guild Bell Restoration Fund and £125 to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. It was proposed by Robert Walton that these sums be increased to £150 each, seconded by Anthony Williamson and approved by the meeting.

Jean Richards confirmed that the Branch had sufficient funds for these donations.

## 9. Branch Practices / Training

The Ringing Master, Sue Rhodes, stated that branch practices would continue in a similar format to last year with the addition of some special practices eg: based on one method or ringing up / down etc.

Robert Walton suggested that Langford and Black Bourton be approached for the AGM and or special practices.

## 10. Programme for 2018

Dates and some provisional arrangements were agreed for the following events. Ringing Master/ Secretary will organise.

6-Bell Striking Competition: Saturday 2nd June 2018. It was suggested that, as last year, towers not usually active within the branch be approached to try and encourage more participation.

Social Event: Saturday 28th July 2018 – Black Bourton to be approached, to be preceded by "Firsts Fortnight".

Branch Outing: Saturday 13th October 2018 – area tbc.

Quiz Night: circa January 2019 - tbc

Next AGM: 16th February 2019. Host tower tbc.

#### 11. Any other business

Hilarie Rogers, Guild Master, reminded everyone that:

- There is an ODG course on the 21<sup>st</sup> April at Amersham
- The Guild AGM will be held on 12/05/18 in Bodicote and that 50 attendees are required to be quorate. As with last year there will be numerous exciting activities planned for the day. There are also several vacancies for Guild Officers – Master, Public Relations Officer, Secretary. It would be good if as many members as possible could attend and the Guild are keen to have new people on the committee.
- The forthcoming Radley and Steeple Aston courses would appreciate voluntary helpers.
- Please circulate the Ringing for Peace 1400 posters for November 2018

Rob Walton proposed a vote of thanks to Lindsey Thornton for her work preparing the monthly tower posters.

Alison Merryweather-Clarke reported there is a need for urgent repairs to the bells at North Leigh. The repairs are the responsibility of the North Leigh PCC and Alison has approached them as well as the friends of North Leigh, but also requested assistance from the committee and what its policy was towards assisting with repairs to branch towers.

It was commented that a maximum sum of £300 has been offered by other branch AGM's on a case by case basis, rather than a blanket policy.

Roger Barnes proposed that a **loan/grant** of £200 should be offered from the branch bell fund on condition that the contract is commissioned from the raising of funds.

A working party is to be organised to create policy on how the committee disburses funds in similar future circumstances.

*Action: Secretary to request policies from other branches and arrange working party.*

Tony Crabtree informed the meeting that the new bells at Taynton were nearly ready to be hung, the dedication ceremony was scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> April and requested publicity for helpers.

*Action: Secretary to publicise.*

Julie Minch proposed a vote of thanks to the committee.

The meeting closed at 20:54.

*Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary*