



Minutes of the Witney and Woodstock Branch AGM

South Leigh - 15th February 2020, 19:45

Present:

Baroness Cox, Catherine Lane, Hazel Howarth, Jean Richards, Andrew Goldthorpe, David Smith, Heather Horner, Evadne Adrian-Vallance, Anne Peake, Chris Moxon, Richard Law, Neil Ephgrave, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Andrew J Dyer, Michael Probert, Janet Robinson-Wood, Anthony Williamson, Jane Burgess, Ron P. Burgess, Meg Roberts.

1. Opening Prayer

Offered by David Smith.

2. Attendance Book

The attendance book was circulated to all present.

3. Apologies.

Lindsey Thornton, Richard White, Carol McRobbie, Roger Barnes, Katherine Goldthorpe, Grace Goldthorpe, Sue Rhodes, Jenny Haviland, Rob Walton, Katie Walton, James Gibbons, Michael R D Douglas, Shirley Warren, Stuart Gibson, Julie Minch, Madeleine Bone, Richard Ford, Tony Crabtree, Toby Goss.

4. Requests for urgent items of Any Other Business

There were none.

5. Chair's welcome and minutes from 2019 AGM

Hazel Howarth chaired the meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked all members for their attendance.

In addition, there were special thanks to Revd. Simon Kirby for the church service, David Smith for the readings, Andrew Dyer for playing the organ, Catherine Lane the Guild Master for travelling to the meeting in terrible weather, and to the South Leigh ringers for hosting this year's AGM, organizing the ringing and providing a superb ringers' tea.

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

There were no corrections to the 2019 AGM minutes.

The minutes were approved and signed. Proposed Chris Moxon, Seconded Alison Merryweather-Clarke, carried nem con.

6. Ringing Master's Report – Toby Goss, Ringing Master

2019 was a productive year for bell ringing in the Witney and Woodstock branch. Highlights were our striking competition at Combe on the first Saturday in June, our branch social at the Red Lion, Northmoor in July, and our annual branch outing, on this occasion to North Hampshire in October. Most branch practices were well supported, and we welcomed a number of new ringers into the branch as well as seeing significant improvement in recent starters. Unfortunately, I am unable to continue as Ringing Master in 2020, but I'm confident that whoever continues in this post will do so to the very best of their ability.

7. Treasurer's Report – Jean Richards, Hon. Treasurer

The branch accounts for 2019 show a current balance of £3,021.81 and a surplus of income over expenditure of £226.72.

Our income from subscriptions was the same as in 2018.

The branch outing generated a surplus of £22.50.

The expenditure for the catering at the striking contest BBQ was £46.32.

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

Thanks to Anthony Williamson for acting as the Independent Examiner for the 2019 accounts.

Balance Sheet

Opening Balances:

Current Account	£2014.40
Deposit Account	£764.57
Cash float	£16.12

Excess of income over expenditure £226.72

£3,021.81

Closing Balances:

Current Account	£2235.38
Deposit Account	£770.31
Cash Float	£16.12

£3,021.81

8. Secretary's Report – Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary

In February, South Leigh's newest ringing recruit, Steve Ebanja, sadly passed away. Steve began learning to ring the previous July, having been attracted by the sound of one of our ladies' band QPs so that we found him outside when we emerged from the church. Steve was an enthusiastic learner and was able to join us in ringing for the Armistice Centenary service.

In April, the Bicester branch welcomed neighbouring branch members from Oxford City and Witney & Woodstock to join their annual outing which progressed down the beautiful Windrush valley, starting at Northleach and moving on to Sherbourne, Windrush, the delightful new 6 at Taynton, Fulbrook and finishing at Asthall.

On the 6th May, several branch members attended the Guild ringing day hosted by North Bucks branch, which offered a variety of towers ranging from the 24cwt 10 at Olney to the 7cwt 5 at Shalstone.

Later in May, St Mary's, Witney hosted an oversubscribed ART Module 1 (Teaching Bell Handling) course attended by branch members from all over the Guild which was unanimously well received, encouraging all present to continue with their ART accreditation.

The month of June delivered a perfect summer evening in Combe for the branch 6 bell striking competition where teams from Cassington, Freeland, North Leigh and hosts Combe duelled for the glory of winning the two trophies up for grabs. In the end, the Call Changes Trophy was won by Freeland, and North Leigh won the Method Ringing Trophy. My thanks to Jean, Anthony and all the Combe ringers for putting on a splendid barbecue. Unfortunately, at least two teams who usually enter were not able to send teams this year so it is hoped that we can encourage more teams to enter this friendly contest next year for what is always my own highlight of the ringing year.

July saw the summer social hosted at Northmoor, where a fine evening meal in the community owned Red Lion followed open ringing at the historic St Mary, Northmoor. As the evening wore on, the ringers moved onto the beer garden for an enjoyable, torch lit, game of Aunt Sally.

Later in the summer, Church Hanborough changed its weekly practice night to a Wednesday and has started to thrive again since Richard White joined and lent his experience to encourage a mixture of new and experienced local ringers.

In August, Ducklington ringers organised an outing to Worcester Cathedral, albeit not to ring the actual bells, for beneath the ringing chamber lies a teaching floor where 'bells' are linked to computers – the simulators. The 'bells' feel real – a real sally to pull with a real-bell-feeling weight at the end of it which can 'break' a stay, so you have to move the bell correctly. It's fair to say the group enjoyed the experience to varying degrees as it appears to be more challenging, in many ways, than the real thing, but was nevertheless a memorable experience.

2019 was busy year in the branch for bell maintenance planning and projects. The Broadwell re-hang and augmentation project was unfortunately unable to be completed for Christmas 2019, due to the discovery of cast-in crown staples in all the bells. The staple is of wrought iron while the bell is of bronze and cracks are caused by a combination of differential expansion between the two metals and corrosion. Consequent expansion of the wrought iron staple has caused cracks in all the bells. The necessary repairs have considerably increased the cost and delayed the completion of the project. However, Tony Crabtree reports that he is attending Broadwell later this month to mark out the tower walls for the imminent installation of the new bell frame.

Nicholson's bell hangers also attended Eynsham which is preparing quotations for a major overhaul/re-hang project; and attended Witney to quote for drilling out the cast-in crown staples on the historic back five bells and repair the clappers. It is hoped that both projects may make some progress in 2020.

Last but by no means least, our hosts South Leigh elected a new Tower Captain, Heather Horner, after Alison Merryweather-Clarke stepped down after a long period of splendid work training the new, enthusiastic band. Nowadays, we sometimes manage to ring 6 for Sunday Service at South Leigh followed by 6 and sometimes 8 at Witney as both towers have been very supportive of each other on practice nights and service ringing. South Leigh also welcomed two new talented and enthusiastic belfry keepers, Martin Spurrier and Michael Collett, following the retirement from the role, after long and faithful service, by Ian Thompson.

9. Election of New Members

<i>Tower</i>	<i>New Member</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Seconded</i>
Bampton	Linda Sunderland	David Rose	Margaret Barnes
Black Bourton	Karen Bendall	David Harding	Rebecca Harding
Bladon	Elizabeth Owen	Michael Douglas	Gillian Bevan
Church Hanborough	Jacqueline Senior	James Gibbons	Richard White
	Jasmine Mellor	James Gibbons	Richard White
	Hugo Mellor	James Gibbons	Richard White
Eynsham	Howard Humphris	Peter Butler	Rupert Boulting
	Josh Humphris	Peter Butler	Rupert Boulting
Northmoor	Alison Waller	Nicholas Robinson	Nigel Eagle
South Leigh	Joy Dawe	Heather Horner	Evadne Vallance
Tackley	Christine McCormack	Barbara Summers	Meryl McQuay

Witney	Ruth Leatherdale	Andrew Goldthorpe	Carol McRobbie

Re-election: Zoe White & Louise Brown – Church Hanborough

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

10. Election of Officers

All officers were willing to continue except for Toby Goss (Ringing Master) and Alison Merryweather-Clarke (Deputy Ringing Master). The meeting offered its thanks to both outgoing officers for all their hard work.

Members of the committee are:

Position	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Hazel Howarth	Meg Roberts	Anthony Williamson
Hon. Treasurer	Jean Richards	Anthony Williamson	Hazel Howarth
Hon. Secretary	Andrew Goldthorpe	Richard Law	Chris Moxon
Ringing Master	Richard White	Alison Merryweather-Clarke	Chris Moxon
Deputy Ringing Master	Anthony Williamson	Andrew Goldthorpe	Meg Roberts
Branch Rep.	Michael Probert	Anthony Williamson	Anne Peake
Branch Rep.	Vacant		
Assistant Secretary	Lindsey Thornton	Andrew Goldthorpe	Jane Burgess
Webmaster	Andrew Goldthorpe	Richard Law	Chris Moxon

11. Items for discussion

a. Donations

- The Treasurer reported on the merger of the Oxford Diocesan Guild Bell Restoration Fund and Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund. In previous years we had donated £150 each to both bell funds.

- Jean Richards confirmed that the Branch had sufficient funds to donate £300 to the combined Guild Fund. Proposed, seconded, carried nem con.

Action: Treasurer

- Branch Bell Fund link - <https://www.witneyandwoodstockbells.co.uk/Blog-and-news/tag/Branch%20Bell%20fund%20Policy> .
- Ringing Master's Honorarium
 - This was kindly waived by Richard White.
 - Guild Learning & Development - Training Meeting - 21st March
 - The Ringing Master/Deputy Ringing Master agreed to attend.

Action: Ringing Master

12. Branch Practices / Training

The Ringing Master and Deputy Ringing Master are preparing the ringing card and reviewing branch practices. Firsts fortnight to be added to the ringing card as an event to encourage participation.

Action: Ringing Master

13. Programme for 2020

- 6 bell striking competition: Saturday 6th June 2020
 - It was suggested that, as last year, towers not usually active within the branch be approached to try and encourage more participation.
 - Black Bourton or Ducklington to be approached.

Action: Ringing Master

- Branch social: Saturday 18th July 2020
 - Secretary to approach towers.
 - To be preceded by "Firsts Fortnight".

Action: Secretary

- Branch outing: Saturday X October 2020 – area tbc.
 - Ringing Master to organise avoiding school half term and the 17th if poss.

Action: Ringing Master

- Quiz Night: 2021
 - January - South Leigh kindly offered to organise and host.

Action: Heather Horner

- 2021 AGM: 27th February 2021.
 - Secretary to approach Bampton.

Action: Secretary

14. Any other business

- Catherine Lane thanked the meeting for agreeing its donation to the Guild Bell Fund. The fund currently offers 20% of project cost.
- On behalf of Tony Crabtree, Catherine Lane reported that a legacy had provided the impetus and most of the funding for the Broadwell project, but donations are still required.
- Ringing for VE day (Friday 8th May @ 19:00) – provisional permission has been given to include Broadwell and Alvescot and Black Bourton have been invited to participate in the Guild organised ringing day. Details can be found at www.Veday75.org .
- Towers & Belfries: Rope course to be held at Coleshill and clapper course at Longcot.
- Anthony Williamson reported Combe has new ropes due to a legacy and the frame was raised about 2 foot to help prevent rope wear. The position of the frame had allowed sallies to go through the guides causing tail-end wear just below the sally.
- Catherine Lane requested that W&W news be forwarded to the branch secretary and then to Tim Hayward, the Guild webmaster, for inclusion on the Guild website.
- Guild Festival - 20th July. The Guild Master has requested Christchurch and Magdalen.
- Posters were circulated as the Guild needs to recruit a PR officer.

15. Concluding vote of thanks

Hazel Howarth offered thanks for the warm hospitality and the fabulous tea.

The meeting closed at 20:50

Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary