



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Minutes of the Witney and Woodstock Branch AGM

St Bartholomew, Ducklington - 19th February 2022, 19:30

Present:

Catherine Lane, Hazel Howarth, Andrew Goldthorpe, Richard Law, Richard White, Anthony Williamson, Julie Minch, Roger Barnes, Margaret Barnes, Madeleine Bone, Richard Ford, Dana Josephson, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Joan Marshall, Martin Spurrier, Anne Taylor

1. Apologies.

Tony Crabtree, Lindsey Thornton, Michael Probert, Ian Wilson, Sue Rhodes, Michael Douglas, Marysia Hermaszewska, Jennifer Pratley, Meg Roberts, David Duthie, Carol McRobbie, Ruth Leatherdale, Dan Neil, Kenny Wilkes, Elizabeth Stevens, Julian Stevens, Lorna Curtis, Shirley Warren, Hilary Bowley, Martin Bowley, Ian Russ, Sharon Wilcox, Catrin Russ, Steve Vickars, Heather Horner, David Smith, Robert Walton, Neil Ephgrave, Andrew Smith, Adele Hambidge, Ronald Burgess, Jane Burgess, Jenny Haviland.

2. Requests for urgent items of Any Other Business

There were none.

3. Chair's welcome and minutes from 2021 AGM

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

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

Point 11 e on the 2021 AGM minutes was corrected to show the correct date.

The minutes were approved and signed.

Proposed Julie Minch, Seconded Anthony Williamson, carried nem con.

4. Ringing Master's Report – Richard White, Ringing Master

Prior to the Omicron outbreak, most towers were adopting a very cautious approach, preferring to wait until all ringers had received both vaccinations. We re-started branch

practices in the winter of 2021, asking that attendees take a Lateral Flow Test prior to attending, and had well attended practices at Bampton and Combe.

Since Omicron has started to abate, we have started organising a calendar of events, scheduling a branch outing for October, one branch practice at a different tower every month, and one 8-bell practice a month, rotating between all six of the branch eight bell towers. Practices have already been held at Witney, South Leigh, Bampton, and Woodstock, with Broadwell and Clanfield in the diary.

The greatest concern of most towers has been the loss of ringers in the interregnum. There have been several useful webinars prepared and hosted by the Guild, the CCCBR and ART, which have been communicated to all our ringers, as well as tips and tricks for recruitment and returning to ringing.

5. Treasurer's Report – Richard Law, Hon. Treasurer

The branch accounts for 2021 show a current balance of £3,129.69 (2020: £3,324.09) and a deficit of income over expenditure of £194.40 (2020: surplus £302.28).

Income from subscriptions was £0 from 174 members, including three second branch members (2020: 183 @ £3, with three second branch members). There were three honorary members (2020: four). There were donations of £13 (2020: £0) and interest income of £0.41 (2020: £3.28).

There was no retiring collection at the virtual AGM (2020: £50) and, because of Covid-19 restrictions, there was no further income or expenditure in the year, other than an amount spent on improving the branch website of £207.81 (2020: £0).

My thanks to Heather Horner for acting as the Independent Examiner of the 2021 accounts.

Richard Law

Hon. Treasurer

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| <i>Balance Sheet</i> | 2021 | 2020 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Opening Balances: | | |
| Current Account | 2,534.38 | 2,235.38 |
| Deposit Account | 773.59 | 770.31 |
| Cash float | 16.12 | 16.12 |
| Excess of expenditure over income | -194.40 | 302.28 |
| | £3,129.69 | £3,324.09 |

Closing Balances:

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Current Account | 2339.57 | 2,534.38 |
| Deposit Account | 774.00 | 773.59 |
| Cash Float | 21.12 | 16.12 |
| Less: Owed to ODG | (5.00) | 0.00 |
| | £3,129.69 | £3,324.09 |

The accounts were approved and signed.

Proposed: Julie Minch; Seconded: Roger Barnes. Carried nem con.

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

With ringing having largely halted due to the pandemic, this year has afforded opportunities to maintain and improve bells and ringing rooms.

At St James the Great, South Leigh, Steeple Keeper, Martin Spurrier, seized the moment to embark on a year-long, much-needed refurbishment of the ringing chamber, improvement of safety measures in the bell tower, and work in the clock chamber and on the clock. Recently completed, we are in awe of the countless hours of thought, the attention to detail and the labour that he single-handedly gave to this, and of the remarkable transformation he accomplished. Not to mention the donation of an Edwardian pendulum clock, in keeping with the ring of eight bells installed in 1907.

Our gratitude also goes to Chris Moxon, the South Leigh Ringing Master until October, who generously funded the refurbishment. The tower received a Gold Award from the ODG Tower Maintenance Award Scheme and won "Highly Commended" in the "Westley Award for church bell maintenance and improvement 2021".

The work on rehanging the augmented peal at Broadwell finally concluded last summer after several pauses due to lockdown and cracked bells. An enormous vote of thanks goes to Tony Crabtree for leading the project, and to the many branch and external branch volunteers who provided all the labour in support of the Nicholson bell hanger, to make this wonderful project a reality. Generous donations covered the cost of two newly cast bells and the un-ringable five is now a very pleasing ground floor eight.

St Mary's Witney was able to complete an overhaul of clappers, pulley boxes and bosses, with the help of the St Mary's DCC, a generous local donation, and £1,000 from the ODG Bell Fund. The same anonymous donor also contributed 50% of the cost of a full set of ropes.

Following the loss of several ringers at local towers, we are encouraging towers to try recruiting locally. St Mary's, Witney was successful and now has seven keen learners all recruited by laminated posters placed in prominent locations around the town.

Finally, Andrew Goldthorpe attended the first ART Teaching Course to be run since the lockdown. The course was hosted at Longcot, and Andrew has been awarded his Module 1 teaching qualification.

7. Election of New Members

| <i>Tower</i> | <i>New Member</i> | <i>Proposed</i> | <i>Seconded</i> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| NEW MEMBERS | | | |
| Church Hanborough | Tim Campbell | Richard White | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Clanfield | Sarah Hillier | Hazel Howarth | Anthony Williamson |
| Clanfield | George Stanley | Hazel Howarth | Anthony Williamson |
| North Leigh | Joan Marshall | Alison Merryweather-Clarke | Julie Minch |
| North Leigh | Susan Shelley | Alison Merryweather-Clarke | Julie Minch |
| North Leigh | John Baalham | Alison Merryweather-Clarke | Julie Minch |
| Witney | Dan Neal | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Matthew Porter | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Amy Thomas | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Rachel Mackenzie | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Debra Scrimshaw | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Dave Shellard | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Witney | Louisa Nutt | Dana Josephson | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Woodstock | Sarah Wheeler | Malcolm Fairbairn | Ian Wilson |
| Wootton | David Smith | Mel Leggett | Sue Ross |
| RETURNING MEMBER | | | |
| Bampton | Janet Rouse | Roger Barnes | Julie Minch |
| Black Bourton | Judy Venn | David Harding | David Nixon |
| ASSOCIATE MEMBER | | | |
| South Leigh | Martin Spurrier | Heather Horner | Richard Law |

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

8. Election of Officers

All officers were willing to continue except for Lindsey Thornton (Assistant Secretary), and Michael Probert (Branch Representative).

The meeting offered its thanks to Lindsey and Michael for their many years of loyal service.

Members of the committee are:

| Position | Name | Proposed | Seconded |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Chair | Hazel Howarth | Julie Minch | Richard Law |
| Hon. Treasurer | Richard Law | Andrew Goldthorpe | Dana Josephson |
| Hon. Secretary | Andrew Goldthorpe | Anthony Williamson | Julie Minch |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ringling Master | Richard White | Andrew Goldthorpe | Alison Merryweather-Clarke |
| Deputy Ringing Master | Anthony Williamson | Dana Josephson | Richard Law |
| Branch Rep. | Richard Law | Anthony Williamson | Richard White |
| Branch Rep. | Vacant | | |
| Assistant Secretary | Vacant | | |
| Webmaster | Andrew Goldthorpe | Alison Merryweather-Clarke | Richard Law |

9. Items for discussion

a. Donations

- The Master confirmed that donations range from £0 to £300 from branches to the transparent and newly merged Bell Fund (details published on ODG website).
- It was noted that North Leigh and Witney have recently benefitted from donations from the ODG Bell Fund.
- The Treasurer confirmed that the Branch had sufficient funds to donate £300 to the combined Guild Bell Fund. Proposed Dana Josephson, seconded Alison Merryweather-Clarke, carried nem con.

b. Ringing Master's Honorarium

- This was kindly waived by Richard White.

c. Focused Practices

- Alison Merryweather-Clarke raised the prospect of holding more Saturday morning focused practices including Surprise Minor and Major, and QPA's, some to be held at Witney.
- The Ringing Master is content for them to proceed but reiterated the benefits of ringers attending the regular monthly branch practices, and monthly 8-bell practices.

d. Recruitment and Training

- There was a discussion covering various means of recruiting new ringers, including use of social media and laminated posters
- It was noted that Reading Branch has a dedicated Youth Officer

- Richard White to keep under review
- e. Branch 10-bell project
 - Andrew Goldthorpe reported on a proposed 8 to 10-bell augmentation project at Witney and will keep the committee apprised of future developments. Andrew reported that Tony Crabtree, Chair of the ODG Towers and Belfries committee, had seen the quotation from Taylor's of Loughborough and thought it was of merit and worthy of Branch and Guild support.

10. Branch Practices / Training

The Ringing Master and Webmaster are preparing the ringing calendar (including Branch Practices, 8-bell practices, Firsts' Fortnight, the Summer Social, the 6-bell striking competition, and the Branch Outing) and publishing all dates via the Secretary's correspondence which goes to all branch members who have not unsubscribed from the mailing list, and on the Branch Website (which links through to the ODG Diary page).

Action: Ringing Master, Webmaster/Secretary

11. Programme for 2022

- a. 6 bell striking competition: June 2022
 - a. Tbc by Ringing Master

Action: Ringing Master

- b. Branch social/Firsts Fortnight: July 2022
 - a. Tbc by Ringing Master

Action: Ringing Master

- c. Branch outing: October 2022
 - a. Tbc by Ringing Master

Action: Ringing Master

- d. Quiz Night: 2022
 - a. Tbc. Secretary to seek organiser.

Action: Secretary

- e. Next AGM: 25th February 2023.
 - a. Secretary to approach Bampton.

Action: Secretary

12. Any other business

There was no further business.

13. Concluding vote of thanks

Julie Minch proposed the vote of thanks for the retiring committee officers, Lindsey Thornton and Michael Probert; thanked Johan Schoeman for leading the Ringers' Service and Amanda Bennett for playing the organ; and thanked the Ducklington Band, in particular Roger and Margaret Barnes, Madeleine Bones, Richard Ford, Marysia Hermaszewska, and Meg Roberts for providing the food and catering for the ringers' tea. Richard Law added his thanks to Jean Richards for her assistance in the handover of the Hon. Treasurer role.

The meeting closed at 20:50

Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary

22/02/2022

Final v2.