



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

Minutes of the Witney and Woodstock Branch AGM

St Mary the Virgin, Witney - 4th February 2023, 19:45

Present:

Tony Crabtree, Hazel Howarth, Andrew Goldthorpe, Richard Law, Richard White, Anthony Williamson, Carol McRobbie, Margaret Barnes, Alison Merryweather-Clarke, Susan Shelley, Michael Probert, Neil Ephgrave, Sue Rhodes, Dan Neil, Debra Scrimshaw, Dave Shellard, Rachel Mackenzie, Amy Thomas, Nadine Woods.

1. Apologies.

Catherine Lane, Dana Josephson, Hilary Cozens, Lindsey Thornton, Meg Roberts, Ron Burgess, Jane Burgess, Clare Fairbairn, Malcolm Fairbairn, Julie Minch, Ruth Leatherdale, Dan Neil, Catrin Russ, Heather Horner, Andrew Smith, Richard Ford.

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.

There was a minute's silence in memory of Roger Barnes.

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

The minutes were approved and signed.

Proposed Anthony Williamson, Seconded Sue Rhodes, carried nem con.

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

The past twelve months has seen ringing in West Oxfordshire pretty much back to normal. I would guess that the number of ringers is less than before the pandemic, but all restrictions are now lifted. Hopefully masks are a thing of the past although hand cleansers are probably here to stay.

I was very saddened to learn that Roger Barnes had died. Roger was an accomplished ringer and an asset to ringing wherever he went. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Margaret and family.

Practices have continued every second Saturday 10.30-12.00. These have generally been well attended with the odd exceptions. We have continued to join eight bell towers on their practice night every fourth week. I am always heartened when local ringers attend and disappointed when they don't. Regular attendance at practices with experienced ringers is always the best way to progress and I encourage those who want to progress to attend as many practices as possible. I try to arrange ringing with as many experienced ringers in the band as possible whilst introducing those who want to learn one or two at a time. This is the best way to progress.

The Branch striking contest was held at Freeland in June. Freeland ringers put on a splendid tea. We had a good number of entries which was very pleasing to see. North Leigh won the call changes and Church Hanborough method. My thanks to Tony Crabtree for giving up his Saturday evening to judge and his very constructive comments. He was rewarded with a bottle of wine. Also, thanks to my George for time keeping.

Hanborough went on to represent the Branch at The Guild six bell contest at Shaw near Newbury.

The band came joint sixth with Wycombe. There were seven teams but as one kind member pointed out there are 15 Branches!

The following weekend we headed to Bucks for the Branch outing. Towers were Aylesbury, Aston Clinton, Tring, Marsworth, Weston Turville and Hughenden. Thanks to all those who supported the day.

I've started to arrange practices for the coming year. I will endeavour to get the cards printed again with the schedule. I have put all practices confirmed so far on Bellboard Diary and Andrew has put them on the Guild website. I advertise on our Facebook page. Andrew sends out email reminders so there should be no excuse not to know about it.

One thing that plays on my mind is the lack of youth in the Branch. I think we should address this. Perhaps the committee could get their heads together to agree ways to encourage young recruits. Youth practices? Outings? Approach Scout and Guide groups?

Many thanks for all your support.

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

The branch accounts for 2022 show a current balance of £3,129.69 (2020: £3,324.09) and a surplus of income over expenditure of £217.37 (2021: deficit £194.40).

Income from subscriptions was £513 from 171 members, including three second branch members (2021: 174 @ £0, with three second branch members). There were four honorary members (2021: 3). There were donations of £5 (2021: £13) and interest income of £10.17 (2021: £0.41).

There was no retiring collection at the virtual AGM (2021: £0) and there was no further income or expenditure in the year, other than a contribution to the Bell Fund of £300 and Ringing Master's expenses of £10.80 (2020: website expense £207.81).

My thanks to Heather Horner for acting as the Independent Examiner of the 2022 accounts.

Richard Law

Branch Treasurer

28 February 2023

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<i>Balance Sheet</i>	2022	2021
Opening Balances:		
Current Account	2,339.57	2,534.38
Deposit Account	774.00	773.59
Cash float	21.12	16.12
<i>Less: Owed to ODG</i>	(5.00)	0
Surplus (deficit) of income over expenditure	217.37	(194.40)
	£3,347.06	£3,129.69
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Closing Balances:		
Current Account	2,541.77	2,339.57
Deposit Account	784.17	774.00
Cash Float	21.12	21.12
<i>Less: Owed to ODG</i>	0	(5.00)
	£3,347.06	£3,129.69
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The accounts were approved and signed.

Proposed: Amy Thomas; Seconded: Hazel Howarth. Carried nem con.

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

We started the year with some recruitment success in the branch. The simple technique of laminating some colourful A4 posters and leaving them in town shops such as hairdressers, butchers, and bakers, and getting them posted on Town Notice Boards produced six new ringers for one tower alone.

The passing of Queen Elizabeth II provided some memorable experiences for our new ringers and created a noticeable sense of pride and camaraderie in all our towers. It is to be hoped there will be a new crop of learners encouraged by the opportunity to Ring for the King.

The branch 6-bell striking competition was held at Freeland this year, with the winning Method Team, Church Hanborough, finishing a creditable joint sixth in the Guild competition.

We are becoming increasingly aware in the branch of low recruitment of young ringers and are concerned about where the next generation are going to come from to take over from the age 50+ ringers who seem to dominate most of our tower bands. We also need to be recruiting and training the next generation of steeple keepers who do not necessarily have to be ringing members and who could join as associate members. We already have an award-winning associate member looking after South Leigh.

Several of our ART qualified branch members have been working with other ART teachers from Banbury and ONB branches to provide Saturday morning Ringing School lessons aimed at getting pupils through the ART Level 1 and 2 qualifications. The lessons have been very well received so far and it is planned to add Witney to the rota along with Kirtlington and Abingdon in 2023.

Sadly, in the summer one of our best known and well-respected ringers, Roger Barnes, passed away suddenly. He was well known locally as a musician and book shop owner, as well as a talented ringer. He will be missed, and we all send our thoughts and prayers to Margaret and family.

The branch outing to Buckinghamshire was a well-attended success providing a first opportunity for some to ring on the ten bells of Aylesbury and Aston Clinton. Branch practices and 8-bell practices have once again become a well-attended monthly feature, so we look to the future positively.

7. Election of New Members

<i>Tower</i>	<i>New Member</i>	<i>Proposed</i>	<i>Seconded</i>
NEW MEMBERS			
Cassington	George Hunter	Richard White	Richard Law
Clanfield	Seren James	Richard White	Richard Law
Combe	Jacqueline Morrison	Richard White	Richard Law
Combe	Matthew Vance	Richard White	Richard Law
Combe	Robert Woore	Richard White	Richard Law

Ducklington	Evie Morris	Richard White	Richard Law
Ducklington	Sarah Morris	Richard White	Richard Law
Eynsham	Helen Rhodes	Richard White	Richard Law
North Leigh	Louise Brown	Richard White	Richard Law
Stanton Harcourt	Andy Hayden	Richard White	Richard Law
Stanton Harcourt	Sandra Cosier	Richard White	Richard Law
Stanton Harcourt	Steve Cosier	Richard White	Richard Law
Witney	Nadine Woods	Richard White	Richard Law
Witney	Hilary Cozens	Richard White	Richard Law
Woodstock	Fred Mills	Richard White	Richard Law

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

7.1 ODG Memberships

There was a discussion about the various grades of membership permitted for long serving or distinguished members.

7.1.1 Honorary Members

This type of membership is no longer open although those elected in the past retain this membership. They have full voting rights. There is no annual subscription due from these members.

7.1.2 Long Service Members

This recognition of 50 years' service has taken over from the Honorary Membership. They have full voting rights, but Annual Subscription remains due. To nominate, please contact master@odg.org.uk and inform your Branch Secretary for inclusion in the Annual Report.

7.1.3 Distinguished Membership

A member who has been a Resident Ringing Member for at least 30 years and who has given meritorious service to the Guild or a Branch may be proposed for Distinguished Membership by two members of the Guild. This proposal, which should include a citation of the reasons for it, should be sent to the Honorary General Secretary. If approved by the Master, Deputy Master and Honorary General Secretary, the names of those proposed for Distinguished Membership will go forward for ratification at the Guild AGM.

7.1.4 W&W Branch Members (Honorary, Long Service, Distinguished)

The Secretary confirmed that the only surviving branch members recorded in the 2021 Annual Report are the following: *Sixty Years Membership* - David J Rose, Bampton (1957) and David Smith, South Leigh (1954); *Fifty Years Membership* - Terence Hester, Witney (1962), and Christine Putt, Ducklington (1962).

The Secretary confirmed that he believed David Rose to be the only official Honorary Member. The Secretary has nominated Janet Rouse, Bampton (1970) as a Long Service Member as Honorary Memberships have now been retired.

The Hon. Treasurer to investigate with the ODG Membership Secretary other potential Honorary/Long Service Members for inclusion in the ODG Annual Report.

Action: Hon. Treasurer

8. Election of Officers

All officers were willing to continue.

Members of the committee are:

Position	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Hazel Howarth	Andrew Goldthorpe	Anthony Williamson
Hon. Treasurer	Richard Law	Alison Merryweather-Clarke	Dave Shellard
Hon. Secretary	Andrew Goldthorpe	Anthony Williamson	Richard Law
Ringing Master	Richard White	Sue Rhodes	Alison Merryweather-Clarke
Deputy Ringing Master	Anthony Williamson	Neil Ephgrave	Michael Probert
Branch Rep.	Richard Law	Alison Merryweather-Clarke	Sue Rhodes
Branch Rep.	Vacant		
Assistant Secretary	Vacant		
Webmaster	Andrew Goldthorpe	Amy Thomas	Richard Law

9. Items for discussion

a. Ringing Master's Honorarium

- This was kindly waived by Richard White.

- b. Junior Membership subscriptions
 - The Treasurer proposed waiving the Junior subscription to encourage more junior membership. As the sum is so trivial (£3 per annum to the branch), it was decided to keep it.
- c. Recruitment and Training
 - There was a discussion covering various means of recruiting new ringers.
 - Richard White to keep under review and organise a Young Ringers practice.
- d. Attendance at Future AGM's
 - The Secretary asked that Tower Captains and Tower Leaders please make an effort to attend future AGM's.
 - The 2024 AGM may be moved to a 3pm start ending no later than 7pm to encourage better attendance.

Action: Ringing Master

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 2023

- i. Guild AGM and 8-bell striking competition (Broadwell) – 20th May 2023
 - a. The Secretary announced that he will be approaching towers local to Broadwell such as Black Bourton, Clanfield, Langford, and Bampton for assistance in organising a mini tower outing on the morning of 20th May to encourage attendance at the Guild AGM to be held at Broadwell.
 - b. The 8-bell striking competition will be held on the morning of 20th May at Broadwell.
 - c. The Branch is expected to provide lunch at the Molyneaux's barn adjacent to Broadwell Church.
 - d. The results of the 8-bell competition will be announced after lunch.
 - e. There will be a short Ringers' Service prior to the AGM.
 - f. There will be open ringing at Broadwell around the 8-bell competition and AGM.
 - g. Tony Crabtree will arrange hand bells and the Stallpits mini ring.
- ii. 6-bell striking competition: 10th June 2023

- a. Ringing Master to approach Bladon

Action: Ringing Master

- iii. 8-bell striking competition
 - a. As the branch is hosting the event this year, it was hoped that the branch would be able to assemble a band to ring the Erin Triples test piece. As the Ringing Master is away on holiday at the time of the competition, it was decided not to enter a team.
- iv. Branch social
 - a. Ringing Master to investigate combining with the 6-bell striking competition at Bladon.

Action: Ringing Master

- v. Firsts Fortnight
 - a. Tbc by Ringing Master. Certificates to be awarded at Summer Social.

Action: Ringing Master

- vi. Branch outing: 2nd Week October 2023
 - a. Amy Thomas suggested Northamptonshire which was agreed. Tbc by Ringing Master

Action: Ringing Master

- vii. Quiz/Social Night: 2023
 - a. Tbc. Secretary to seek organiser.

Action: Secretary

- viii. Next AGM: February 2024.
 - a. To be held at Church Hanborough
 - b. Ringing Master to confirm date.

Action: Secretary/Ringing Master

12. Any other business

There was no further business. The meeting closed at 20:45

Andrew Goldthorpe, Hon. Secretary

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