

**Minutes of the Sonning Deanery Branch Committee Meeting,
Arborfield, 19/11/2011**

The Chairman thanked the Arborfield ringers for hosting the ringing and providing refreshments.

1. Apologies were received from John Manley, Rachel & Andrew Moss, Lesley Graves, Paul Tyrrell and the Barkham ringers.

Those present were: Aidan Hopkins, John Harrison, Graham Slade, Judith Atkinson, Joyce Crockford, Michael Boys, Ken & Sue Davenport, Simon Milford, Rob Needham, Andrew Dugdale, Pam & and Andrew Elliston.

Towers not represented were: Easthampstead, Binfield, Barkham, Finchampstead, Sandhurst St Michael, Sandhurst Immaculate Conception, Shottesbrooke, Twyford, Waltham St Lawrence, Wargrave and White Waltham.

2. Matters Arising from Minutes of 2010 Committee Meeting

It was stated that in item 7, the quorum for the daytime practices is 6 ringers, not 8.

3. Financial update (enclosed)

We have 158 members, one more than last year. The Treasurer had not transferred the excess cash from last year from the General Fund to the Bell Fund. The newsletter had proved a large expense this year, and without the income from fundraising events and the said excess, the general fund of the branch would not have remained solvent. Most of the extra income had come from events organized by Sonning tower. There was general discussion about how widely the newsletter was seen, and how the costs associated with producing the newsletter might be reduced. Suggestions included printing only one copy per tower, and using colour for the outer sheet only. It was agreed that printing hard copies was preferable to totally online distribution. 20 copies was a reasonable minimum number, and we should establish the lowest possible printing cost. At this point, Andrew Dugdale of Arborfield offered to print the newsletter free of charge using his own high-spec machines, if the editor would send him a pdf of each issue. It was suggested that the expenses should still be recorded in the Accounts. The newsletter would benefit from more contributors, providing wider interest. It was suggested that we could request an increase in Guild Subscription, with branches getting a larger share. Of the quiz profits, £160 was going to the Branch Bell Fund and the rest to the Branch General Fund.

4. Striking competitions

At present the 8-bell trophy (last won by Sonning in 2009) is missing.

At the last competition it became clear that branch 8-bell competitions were rare in this Guild nowadays. It was agreed that ideally we should continue to hold the 8-bell competition but, as so few teams enter, we should find a means of judging that avoided asking judges to come from outside the branch. Perhaps suitable internal judges could attend a listening course extended to include marking of competition pieces.

5. 2012 Branch practices & Guild AGM

The proposed schedule for the coming year was discussed. It was decided to ask tower correspondents whether towers would prefer to have branch practices at a fixed time every month, and whether an alternative to Saturday would be preferred. It was also

suggested that the attendance at the committee meeting might improve if the meeting was before the practice rather than after; alternatively the practice could be 4:30-6pm, followed by the meeting. Such changes would be for 2013 rather than 2012.

St Paul's ringers need help with the guild AGM tea; this will be discussed again at the branch AGM in February.

6. **Officers for next year**

No requests to stand down have been received from any of the officers.

7. **Daytime Practices**

These continue, but John Harrison stated that he often does not know until very late whether there are enough people to make the practice viable, despite emailing all known regular attendees.

7b **Training** A method-learning course had been conducted successfully, and those interested in bell maintenance had been transferred onto a Guild course. Another rope-splicing course was to be organized. Anyone interested in any course should either notify John Harrison directly or go to the website and complete an online form.

8. **Branch events**

Another pagoda sale is provisionally booked for 31 March 2012. Sonning ringers would be grateful for any saleable items.

Graham Slade offered to organize the next Branch Outing, on 5 May 2012.

9. **Any other business**

Rob Needham drew attention to an item about to appear in Odd Bob, about a scheme called the Big Ring Pull, being tried by North Bucks branch. It is an intensive recruitment drive involving (in this order) teacher training sessions, a recruitment Day, and intensive training courses for the new recruits including simulator work at Newport Pagnell. The massive effort in organizing this, and evaluating the results with a view to use of the system in other branches, is being supported by a grant of £600 from the Education Committee. The Guild will monitor progress, and would be able to help a small branch like ours if we tried to do something similar.

It was noted that our branch has entered a band in the Guild 10-bell competition to be held at Shrivenham. They were wished good luck.

Andrew Dugdale had accessed the branch website by phone to find out which towers practise on which night, and wondered if the information was out of date, as he had recently visited a tower and wasted half an hour waiting for someone to open it – no-one arrived.

He was advised to check with the correspondent of any unfamiliar tower before attending a practice that might not take place, and also to check in the Guild Report as to whether the tower had enough ringers to hold a regular practice.

Closing the meeting, the chairman thanked Arborfield ringers again for their hospitality and splendid baking.

Pam and Andrew Elliston

20/11/2011.