

Minutes of Sonning Deanery Branch Business Meeting, Finchampstead, 15th Nov 2014, 4.30 p.m.

[Text in these minutes that looks like this is for clarification and was not discussed at the meeting.]

Present: Tricia Amos, John Coombes, Dave Creasy, Ken & Sue Davenport, Lesley Graves, John Harrison, Jacquie and Martha Hazell, Aidan Hopkins, Rob & Pauline Needham, Bob Packer, Jon Tutcher, Steve Wells, Martin Wheatley.
[Thirteen of the 17 towers in the branch were represented – an encouraging number.]

The Chairman thanked the Finchampstead ringers for hosting the meeting and for providing a generous tea at the start of the meeting.

Apologies from Alison Clayton, Pam & Andrew Elliston, Graham Slade, Judith Atkinson (Martin Wheatley was representing both Barkham and Arborfield towers).
Towers not represented were: Hurst, Sandhurst St Michael, Sandhurst Immaculate Conception, Twyford.

Matters Arising from Minutes of 2013 Business Meeting The chairman, John Harrison, pointed out that these had been approved at the AGM in Feb 2014, but he asked whether there were any matters arising – there were none.

Financial update Treasurer Sue Davenport read out her interim financial report: Total funds £4683.48 comprising Bank a/c £360.33 and Deposit a/c £4323.15. The General fund stands at £1414.31 and the Bell fund £3269.17. Finances are healthy. There are 171 members and 3 honorary ringing members.
Steve Wells said that although he was elected Independent Examiner at the previous AGM, he has raised with the branch officers that this is now not appropriate (because he is also an officer of the branch and therefore not independent). The Treasurer said that a chartered accountant, Mike Davis, would be prepared to be the Independent Examiner, and that he could examine the financial accounts presented to the 2015 AGM. The meeting approved this approach.

Joint SDB/Reading 8-bell competition – review Although there was only one team from Reading branch at this first joint competition, the date that SDB had set for the competition was an unfortunate one for the two strongest towers in Reading branch. Because the two branches alternate in doing the organisation of the competition, next year Reading can choose the date and therefore avoid conflicts. It was agreed that it is too early to decide whether the joint competition is a success and that it should continue for another year.

Officers for 2015 The meeting knew of no officer who wished to stand down at the next AGM, and the chairman asked towers to find out if any of their members wished to be proposed as an officer and ‘add new blood’ to the running of the branch.

Weekday Practices. The ringing master, Steve Wells, reported that his analysis of all practices organised by the branch showed that the weekday practices (early afternoon) had a slightly higher average attendance than the traditional Branch Practices [*most of which were in the morning this year*]. The Tuesday practices averaged 10.6 attendance and the BPs 9. Rob Needham pointed out that he had scheduled more variety of times of the practices in the new schedule for the coming year.
The weekday practices have definitely benefited Binfield and perhaps in a year’s time the practices should be moved to another tower to benefit those ringers.

Training – Novice practices Our Training Officer, Jacquie Hazell, described novice practices that she had organised for Waltham St. Lawrence learners. Finding the time and suitable towers was difficult and Shiplake was used. The practices depend on members keen to learn and enough willing helpers. The chairman asked Jacquie to continue with these practices, to spread the word to all members to see who ‘bites’, and perhaps to hold the practice on the usual practice night of one of the towers providing learners. Rob Needham said that over the next 2 or 3 months there would be 5 Sonning learners and 3 Wargrave who would benefit from novice practices, and Dave Creasy mentioned 3 from Binfield.

Training – Targeted practices The Branch already has an example of these, the monthly Surprise Major practice at All Saints, Wokingham. After much discussion and a straw poll of those present, it was agreed that the Ringing Master should ask participants (students & helpers) to sign up to each practice in advance. And at the same time to name two methods per practice (one simple, one more advanced) that will get most of the practice time. These practices take the place of the former Branch Practices and so maintain practices on the 3rd Saturday of the month [*proposed dates and times in the schedule distributed at the meeting; up-to-date details will be on the branch website*].
John Harrison said that he would mark the practice as provisional on the branch website until sufficient numbers were confirmed to him by the Ringing Master, as already happens with weekday practices.
Steve Wells suggested that the practices need to be marketed more strongly so that they sound helpful and useful to the targeted participants.

Training – Collective/shared training The pros and cons of this type of practice were mentioned by the chairman and he described the large amount of planning, organisation and time put into *The Big Ring Pull* by North Bucks branch [*a bigger branch than ours: roughly 250 members to our 170*]. The time needed for training up the teachers to provide shared training using a consistent scheme (for example ITTS) was underestimated by North Bucks branch.

There was little enthusiasm at the meeting for full-scale shared training, and Sue Davenport said that the branch needed to concentrate on recruiting new ringers before spending resources on shared training. This view was supported by others present, and the chairman proposed that the branch would consider what it could do on the recruiting front to support towers. Ken Davenport said it would be good to discuss recruitment at branch level and to share ideas between towers. A recruitment idea mentioned was mounting a mini-ring at a suitable location to get ‘outsiders’ interested; also to target schools at the branch level. The branch would need to have a trained teacher at each tower for these initiatives to be effective.

Tricia Amos said that training learners together at a tower that was not their own would present a transport problem for Finchampstead learners and helpers, particularly in the evenings. Steve Wells said that towers should first look to their own church, youth club and Sunday School for recruiting learners – he actively seeks out potential ringers.

Lesley Graves said that White Waltham & Shottesbrooke are actually a joint band with the same members so do not run a collective practice [*as was implied on the Agenda*]. [*Examples of where two towers currently share practices are Sonning/Wargrave and Hurst/Twyford*]. Steve and Ba Wells help at Binfield (Dave Creasy expressed his thanks for this), and John Harrison and Andrew Elliston help at Arborfield.

Provision for young ringers Steve said that he knows of 9 young (under 18) ringers in the branch and Easthampstead has 7 of them. He said other towers were welcome to bring young learners to training he organised for his youngsters. Steve said that towers need to be made attractive to young ringers. Jacquie told the meeting that she is currently teaching seven 8 – 10 year olds at Waltham St. Lawrence.

2015 practices & meetings schedule The *Practices & other events* schedule for 2015/16 was distributed and discussed. Sue Davenport strongly disagreed with the early afternoon time of the Business Meeting, and after discussion it became clear that the late Saturday afternoon evensong at St Paul’s would not prevent the Business Meeting from being held at the usual time of late afternoon. Several towers confirmed their dates and the others were urged to try to confirm within the next week.

The Binfield and White Waltham representatives said that their towers could do a quarter in Quarter Peal Week if support from the branch is offered.

The chairman pointed out that our branch is hosting the ODG 10-bell striking competition in 2015 and he hoped our branch would enter a team.

Branch events these are non-ringing events such as a quiz to raise funds; nothing was requested or proposed.

Information about new members Rob said how important it was to get details of potential new members who will be proposed at the AGM before the AGM takes place. He urged towers to use the New Member form on the branch website and send it to him in good time before the AGM. The Treasurer said that she asks for details of new members on the list that she sends to each tower for collection of subscriptions. Discussion showed that some towers took new members to mean existing members who had joined during the previous year (a transfer from another branch for example), and did not mean ringers who will be proposed for election as a Guild member at the AGM. The meeting agreed that the wording on the Treasurer’s lists needs to distinguish between these situations. [*Since the AGM the New Member form has been re-examined and that also will be subject to improvements.*]

Any other business None.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.40 p.m., and it was not followed by a branch practice for lack of support.

Rob Needham, Hon. Sec., Sonning Deanery Branch