

**Sonning Deanery Branch – Business Meeting,
All Saints Wokingham, 18th November 2017, 5 pm.**

MINUTES

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

Present: Ken & Sue Davenport (St Paul's Wok.), Hugh Dempster (Finchampstead), Lesley Graves (White Waltham), Chris Grundy (Arborfield), John Harrison (All Saints Wok.), Jacquie Hazell (W.St.L.), Rob & Pauline Needham (Sonning), Derek Palmer (Sandhurst), Darren Smith (Arborfield), Steve Wells (Easthampstead), Amanda Witherspoon (Binfield). [So 11 towers were represented out of 16 active towers, counting Sandhurst as effectively one band.]

Apologies: Alison Clayton, Pam Elliston, Aidan Hopkins, Nigel Mellor, Bob Packer, Sue Portsmouth.

Financial update: the Treasurer, Sue Davenport, reported:

General Fund	£2120.49	
Bell Fund	£3458.53	
Total Funds	£5579.02	held in: Current Account £ 295.26
		Deposit Account £5283.76

The meeting agreed that funds were healthy. The Chairman, John Harrison, reminded the meeting to notify any forthcoming work that might need supporting.

Review of Branch Practices: The BRM, Steve Wells, gave the following average numbers attending:

Binfield practices, Tuesday	11
Saturday BPs	12
Surprise practices, Wednesday	12
Young Ringer practices	11 (young ringers and helpers)

Matters arising from the 2017 AGM: There were no matters raised.

Branch Training: We currently have no Training Officer but some training has been happening; Jacquie Hazell has organised some advanced practices on Fridays at Twyford, for which the branch is grateful. The Chairman, John, said that his questionnaire to establish branch members' training needs was currently "work in progress" until the Guild server restores an email response facility.

Young Ringers Training: The Secretary, Rob, summarised the Young Ringer (YR) training, which is a new branch initiative this year. A training session once a month starting in March 2017 meant a possible 9 so far, of which 7 had taken place. The July session and November session had to be cancelled for lack of numbers. Rob did not have a record of attendees but estimated that the average number of SDB YRs at a practice (i.e. not including helpers or YRs from other branches) was 4 – 5. Rob & Pauline organised a quiz after the ringing at Finchampstead in May that was popular, and in August at Wargrave the Reading YRs were invited and they considerably swelled the numbers. Darren reminded the meeting that last year Simon Farrar had suggested a YR ringing practice combined with 10-pin bowls.

Steve didn't know which of his YRs were on the email list and also asked about adding new YRs to the email list – answer: give email details to John (Postmaster). John suggested there should be a 'trawl' for new YRs periodically. Darren Smith thought towers should be given the names of their YRs that are on the email list as a check.

Rob is currently acting Youth Officer (Josh Slade has stood down) and a new Youth Officer needs to be elected at the AGM. Sue thought there were no suitable youngsters in the Branch, and Steve said YRs don't have enough experience of running a practice. Pauline suggested that a training course for inexperienced tower captains and potential Youth Officers on running a practice would be very useful.

The Youth Officer doesn't need to be a YR and the Branch should identify a suitable candidate before the AGM.

Update on Guild matters by Branch Reps: Jacquie said she was not at the March ODG meeting [ART seminar that day]. Sue said that the PRO (Elva) was ill [but she's sent out 3 emails in the last week], the Master (Hilarie) plans to step down, there is currently an acting ODG Secretary, and the Guild website is being redesigned leaving the current site falling into disrepair.

Report on Branch Ringing Outings survey: Rob summarised the results of his Ringing Outings survey [addendum to these minutes]. Easily the most frequent reason given for not going on Ringing Outings was that they were too long and clashed with other activities on a Saturday. He suggested mini outings on a Saturday morning might work better and had proposed two dates on the schedule of events for 2018.

Jacquie said that Vikki Bulbeck had organised an excellent Ringing Outing for the branch in October but Vikki was upset that not a single branch officer attended, and that the general standard of the ringers on the outing did not warrant any 8-bell towers. Steve thought that the late change to the October dates was largely responsible for poor attendance.

Some towers have their own ringing outing and it was suggested that those towers could invite other Branch members to attend. Darren and Steve said that each tower needs a ringing outing 'champion' that would encourage members to attend Branch outings as a group and to share transport. Jacquie said that an outing needs a core of able ringers for it to work well.

The meeting decided that one mini Branch outing should be in the 2018 schedule and that it should avoid half term holidays. Rob offered to organise it; [*changed to morning of Sat 12 May*].

Results of 'Health of Towers' survey: John summarised the responses from the survey [*addendum to these minutes*]. The number of inactive ringers is a lot higher than previous figures suggested; the active branch membership is 106 rather than the ~162 on the membership list. Several towers are unable to ring for services at all or are able to ring for a few of their services only. Two thirds of bands have managed to recruit new ringers in recent years.

Jacquie urged that the 'thriving' towers do more to support the struggling bands. Rob said that Pam Elliston had suggested that Sonning might be able to supply a competent adult to Twyford for Sunday morning service ringing.

Derek Palmer said that the Sandhurst rector and church wardens were galvanised by the news of no service ringing, and amongst several suggestions an Open Tower event has been proposed. Derek said he would need some branch support when the Saturday morning event takes place. He also mentioned that Choral Evensong was a popular service at Sandhurst and it attracted some Yateley ringers once a month.

Officers for 2018: Rob said that he will have served for the maximum of 5 consecutive years as stated in the branch rules and that he will be standing down as Secretary at the AGM next February. He urged tower representatives to consider who in their tower might take on the role, which is largely an administrative one; ringing expertise is not a requirement. John added that the posts of Training Officer and Youth Officer were also vacant and members should consider taking on these roles.

AOB: Safeguarding. The Guild Safeguarding Officer, Katie Lane, had circulated all towers with a request to provide information relating to safeguarding, including whether or not it would be possible to create a children's officer, separate from tower captain and teacher, who would be DBS cleared and present whenever children are present. It was assumed that towers currently operate in accordance with the requirements of their PCCs and it was clarified that this was not the Guild seeking to impose different constraints but the Guild responding to a Diocesan request for information that could help to inform future Diocesan policy. Also it's OK to put answers to Katie in an e-mail rather than completing her form so long as you answer all the questions.

Hurst Show. John said that the Charmborough Ring was booked for the show over the weekend of 23rd and 24th June, and that he hoped that it would provide some recruits as well as advertising. He said that it would need support from a wide spread of members and urged members to put the dates in their diaries now. [*Rob will add the Hurst Show to the branch schedule and John will add it to the online calendar.*]

Branch QP 'week'. Rob was asked why this was not in the schedule of events; he said that it was suggested by Sue at a previous meeting that it was redundant and did not encourage actually doing quarter peals. Ken said that it was our Branch, not a Guild, event that had been going for many years and was spread over two weekends, i.e. about 10 days in total. It was originally designed to encourage towers to ring quarter peals and help ringers achieve 'firsts'. The meeting felt that this should be done throughout the year and decided that *QP 'week'* should be left off the schedule. Darren pointed out that there were lots of events in 2018, for example the Armistice Day centenary, that would warrant QPs. Pauline and Jacquie both thought that a QP email list (a bit like the Weddings list) would be a good idea, so that towers could ask for help with (quarter) peals, and John agreed to set up such a list; [*done*].

New Members. Rob had a supply of New Member forms and offered them to any tower that would be proposing a new member at the AGM. He said that for young members (under 18) it was important to get a parent's signature. [*Make sure that the new member's name is spelt correctly because I will get New Member Certificates from the ODG for award at the AGM.*] Sue reminded the meeting that it was vital to be accurate with the information that towers return on the members list that she sends to each tower in the New Year, and that subs for 2018 (which includes new members proposed for election) should be paid to her by the date of the AGM.

John urged towers to remember throughout the year to notify him of any changes to members' email addresses that they are told about.

The meeting closed at 6.40 p.m.