

Sonning Deanery Branch, Business Meeting, On-line via Zoom, 21 November 2020 at 4.30pm

Minutes

Present: Tricia Amos (Finchampstead), Alison Clayton (Sonning), John Coombes (Wargrave), Jan Glen (Binfield), Lesley Graves (White Waltham), John Harrison (All Saints Wokingham), Jacquie Hazell (Waltham.St.Lawrence and Shottesbrooke), Aidan Hopkins (Warfield), Nicola Lee (Barkham), Jane and Nigel Mellor (All Saints Wokingham), Rob Needham (Sonning), Darren Smith (Arborfield), Steve Wells (Easthampstead), (13 towers and 8 Officers), Katie Lane (ODG Master), Bobbie May (ODG Steward)

Apologies: Ken and Sue Davenport (St Paul's Wokingham), Peter Duggin (Warfield), Simon Farrar (Twyford), Lyn Newman (Sandhurst), Derek Palmer (Sandhurst), Sue Portsmouth (Sonning), Vinnie Sullivan (Wargrave), Pam Elliston (Sonning)

Matters arising from the 2020 AGM: No one has volunteered to take on the organisation of social events. To be revisited once ringing resumes. There were no requests at the AGM for branch funds for support for Towers – again revisit once a return to ringing is planned. Rob Needham reminded the chairman of his earlier request for the officers to consider supporting Sonning's recent investment in the simulator installation. Another training needs survey to be issued once ringing fully resumes.

Financial update: from the Treasurer, Sue Davenport, as at 20 November 2020

General Fund	£3,195.93	Deposit A/C	£4,865.98
Bell Fund	£2,479.55	Bell Fund	£2,479.55
Total Funds	£5,675.48	Gen. Fund	£2,386.43

John Harrison advised that the Guild have proposed a reduction in subs from £5 to £3 and this will be decided at the ODG meeting on 28th November. Payment of some ODG subs is required to cover fixed costs such as insurance and website etc. After considering options including reducing the Branch component to zero, there was consensus on reducing it to £2, so members would pay £5 (including £3 to the Guild).

Post meeting Note: The Guild meeting decided not to reduce the Guild component of the sub, which would have led to a budgeted loss of around £7,500, since many of the Guild's costs do not depend on the amount of ringing. However, the Guild officers recognised that the situation may be different in individual branches, and therefore indicated that each branch can for this year determine the amount it will charge in addition to the £5 Guild element. Following consideration by Officers, it was decided that the Branch component for 2021 will be £0.

Review of activity during pandemic: Jane Mellor thanked Steve Wells for organising the activity survey and compiling the table. Steve reported that five towers didn't respond, (Finchampstead, Hurst, Sandhurst, White Waltham, Wokingham St Paul), but felt a follow up was not required. The survey showed that some towers were very active. **Action - Steve to circulate results to the Towers.** Steve is supporting towers by running three sessions a week – Binfield, Warfield and Easthampstead. Half of the Easthampstead band join their session but the other half do not. Rob reported that Sonning ran a three quarter hour social session followed by a three quarter hour RR session.

Lesley Graves said she and other White Waltham members were unable to use RingingRoom (RR) due to problems with rural internet connection. **Action - Darren Smith offered to see if he could help.** Jane Mellor asked if other members of White Waltham would like to join a session if one was arranged. Alison Clayton also reported problems using RR with issues some weeks but fine others. Darren mentioned that one of his band has issues with RR if not near their router. **Action - Jane agreed to contact members to find out who was not currently using RR but would like to.** Alison Clayton asked if we could publish the sessions that are currently available with contact details, so people could request to join. **Action - Jan Glen to follow up.** Nigel Mellor reported that he had started handbell training during lockdown and had been moderately

successful.

John Harrison added that early on in lockdown Officers had talked about possible activities such as quizzes or learning sessions, such as the How to ring big Bells run by the St Martin's Guild. John circulates details of these as soon as he is aware of them. There was support for a quiz and another suggestion was an online branch social with wine. **Action - Officers to decide how to progress.**

Support for Towers: Lesley Graves said that White Waltham will need support (when normal ringing resumes) and will let the Officers know more specifically at the time.

Branch Training (future needs & prospects): Having recently taking on the Training role, Jane Mellor said she was brimming with ideas and then the pandemic hit. Jane felt RR was working well for some people and helping with rhythm and learning methods. The Elementary group have not yet got together on RR but this should be considered now. It is likely to be a while before towers can have practices for learner ringers who would likely need closer contact help. More experienced learners will need bell handling practices, and expert ringers won't have a problem, although potentially health related issues for older Ringers. Katie Lane reported that lots of towers were using the 15 minutes of ringing for less confident ringers, with the bells already up, for handling practice. This has helped quite a number of people. Steve raised the issue that no one would be able to get close enough to grab the rope to help anxious ringers. Katie said this had only happened once and the risk is very low. The issue is close proximity for more than 15 minutes. Steve felt use of RR should continue once back to tower ringing as people have made great progress with methods without having to worry about controlling the bell – just concentrate on the blue line. Jane agreed a more blended approach to learning would be helpful, including the use of handbells. Darren is using RR every other week and asked if a branch RR practice would be useful to pick up tips on how other people are running the RR sessions. Jane felt this was a good idea and we would need to decide how many people it would be viable to run with. People could sit out at times as they do in the tower. Nigel uses Discord where you can have concurrent voice channels and 'go' in to separate rooms. Before setting up a branch practice, Nigel would like to see what the commitment would be. Jane will ask as part of her action above. Nicola Lee agreed a branch practice would be a good idea for Barkham as what you can do with so few members is very limited. Nigel suggested we could advertise on Bellboard which has a section for virtual practices. Jane added that ART people are willing to join your practices and could approach them for help if we need it.

Young Ringer Training (future needs & prospects): Rob Needham has contacted towers to find out what they have been doing with YRs and what they need. Some YRs are not interested in RR whilst others have learnt methods really well and are regulars on their tower's sessions. Rob won't schedule any YR sessions until we know when ringing will resume. John H suggested the 2020 dates could just roll over. Rob provided a detailed update where various YRs are with their progress. Competent ringers will be needed to help support the YRs when we return to practices.

Publicity (future needs): John Harrison highlighted that sadly we had missed the publicity opportunity of VE day, including the press coverage that he had planned. Next Friday John is giving an online talk on the history of ringing at All Saints to the congregation. Steve said that there had been quite a few comments at Easthampstead when they started ringing on 4. People were happy to hear the bells again. Jan Glen asked if there was any way we could use the return to ringing after the pandemic, with people having missed the bells, to help with recruitment.

Update on Guild matters: Branch representative Jacquie Hazell reported that the Guild meeting was next Saturday, therefore little to report currently. Guild Master, Katie Lane reported that a lot was going on behind the scenes at the Guild, with this time being an opportunity to look at doing things differently. The PR group were looking at revamping the website and the possibility of a new logo. Katie's message to all ringers is to keep the faith, look after each other and keep contact with the fraternity. Guild Steward Bobbie May mentioned the Guild bookbox and can take orders, but understands that SDB has its own bookbox. John confirmed that the SDB bookstall is out at events and thanked Bobbie for her offer.

Investment in ringing (future needs): John Harrison noted Rob Needham's request, reported above. **All to think about what investment could help their bands**, especially during the recovery, for example simulators for training or even sound control to permit more practice time.

Officer vacancies: Alison Clayton would like to stand down from the role of Newsletter Editor after 11 years. **All to think about who could take on this role** – for the AGM.

2021 - 22 draft calendar: competitions / practices / meetings: Jan Glen reported that she had produced a draft schedule, effectively moving this years cancelled sessions to the same towers for next year, which had general agreement. **Jan to circulate the schedule.**

AOB: Nicola said they were currently unable to ring at Barkham due to having such a small ringing room. Nicola is concerned about the safety of the bells when they can return to ringing and asked if the branch could help with the safety aspect. John H confirmed that such help could be provided and said that other towers should ask if they also need assistance.

Rob Needham is currently working on the next edition of ODD Bob which will be available online for members on the Guild website. As agreed with the Guild, there will be 80 printed copies which will go to various people and organisations such as the British Library. If anyone knows any members without internet access, please let Rob know as there are likely to be spare copies.

Darren offered an open invitation to join the Arborfield RR session this Friday and every other week. Details of RR sessions to be sent out.

John Harrison thanked everyone for attending.

The Meeting closed at 17.50

Summary of Actions and Owners

Sonning would like a contribution for the simulator installation. Information as to how it will be used has been provided. **Rob Needham** to submit a request to Officers for consideration.

Steve Wells to circulate the results of the activity survey to the Towers.

Lesley Graves said she and other White Waltham members were unable to use RingingRoom (RR) due to problems with rural internet connection. **Darren Smith** - help/advise White Waltham to investigate/resolve Internet problems.

Jane Mellor agreed to contact members to find out who was not currently using RR but would like to. Jane to also sound out members to see if they would be interested in attending regular Branch RR sessions. (*Post meeting note: Jane has sent email to members*) **Nigel Mellor** to organise any required branch RR sessions.

Alison Clayton asked if we could publish the sessions that are currently available with contact details, so people could request to join. **Jan Glen to action**

All tower representatives to consider people who could be suitable for officers, especially newsletter editor.

Officers to consider ideas for Branch social, quiz, etc and decide how to proceed.

Jan Glen to circulate the 2021-2022 draft schedule. (*Post meeting note: sent out on 7th Dec*)