

**Sonning Deanery Branch, Business Meeting,  
19 November 2022 at 5.00pm  
All Saints, Wokingham**

**Minutes**

**Present:**, Tricia Amos (Finchampstead), Vikki Bullbeck (Shottesbrooke), Ken Davenport (St Paul Wokingham), Sue Davenport (Treasurer), Pam Elliston (Sonning), Jan Glen (Secretary (Binfield)), Lesley Graves (White Waltham), John Harrison (Chairman (All Saints Wokingham)), Rob Needham (Newsletter Editor), Mike Sherren (Sandhurst), Darren Smith (Arborfield), Kate Titford (WSL), Steve Wells (Deputy Ringing Master (Easthampstead)), (11 towers and 5 Officers), Katie Lane (ODG Master),

**Apologies:** John Coombes (Wargrave), Nicola Lee, Jane Mellor (Training Officer), Nigel Mellor (Ringing Master), Jennifer Moynihan Youth Officer), Judith Witting, Tony Crabtree (ODG Dep Master),

**Matters arising from the 2022 AGM:**

John Harrison and Jane Mellor to conduct an audit to ensure branch events are safeguarding compliant: Jane Mellor has consulted with June Wells and there are no special safeguarding requirements specific to branch practices. We can carry on as we are, including keeping a record of who attended.

Officers to make a plan for the independent examination of the accounts as Mike Davies is currently unwell and unable to undertake the task:

The independent examination of the accounts has been completed.

**Finance Update:**

The Treasurer, Sue Davenport, reported the following figures:

General Fund	£3374.45
Bell Fund	£2543.50
Total Funds	<u>£5917.95</u>

Deposit a/c	£5506.33
Bank	£ 411.62

The deposit account is now getting a bit more interest.

The Chairman summed up as being in a healthy position.

**Training Officer Report:**

In the Training Officer's absence, The Chairman summarised the key points from the report (which is available on the website - [http://odg.org.uk/sdb/documents/minutes\\_reports/](http://odg.org.uk/sdb/documents/minutes_reports/)).

A raising and lowering in peal course is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> December at Eversley. The course is being led by Simon Farrar: Helpers are still needed to support this course.

Another rope splicing course will be scheduled as not everyone could attend the last date.

The Chairman enquired if people were happy with the overall approach to training.

Steve Wells commented on the elementary practices, that Jane is now keeping a record of learners' progress, which will help the teachers to prepare appropriate lessons for upcoming practices. Tricia Amos suggested asking people what they would like to do when emailing out to check who is attending a practice. The Chairman suggested the next step would be for Towers to share more information about their learners' progression.

Vikki Bullbeck commented on the useful emails sent out during the hot weather regarding the need for checking and 'tightening up' and asked if there was anything that needs to be done now, such as 'loosening', so not over-tight? John Harrison (JAH) advised to check things regularly, especially with

timber headstocks and not to over-tighten. Vikki also suggested that after lockdowns, newer people may be taking on the maintenance role so was there a need for some training. JAH advised that there is an online version of the Belfry Upkeep book and that the branch can also help where required, and that the Guild run maintenance courses, with one having been run at Twyford last February. Also, the Guild has a [Tower Maintenance Award Scheme](#).

Ken Davenport reminded everyone to check the emergency lighting as part of regular maintenance.

#### **Youth Officer's Report:**

In the Youth Officer's absence, The Chairman summarised the report and highlighted the questions the YO would like responses on from Tower Captains why their young ringers, especially the older ones, don't attend the YR practices. General discussion followed with a few comments such as; ringing is not cool, they may have other priorities/preferences on a Sunday, and it's easier if they have family members who also ring and if they are in a group of a similar age, and they need to be treated like adults, and to give them gentle power such as running the ringing.

Katie Lane suggested that Jennifer should get in touch with Colin Lee who runs the national youth squad. The Chairman asked Tower Captains to provide feedback to Jennifer.

#### **Sponsorship for training courses:**

The Chairman summarised the topic and asked for input as to whether people felt the general principles are reasonable. (See Topics for discussion document with the meeting documents on the website).

Sue Davenport commented that by covering the cost of the hall hire for the ART M2 course, we were sponsoring the delegates. Mike Sherren felt that if we were short of funds, then to scale back, if not, then it sounds reasonable.

#### **Recruitment, training, retention, and investment within the branch:**

The Chairman asked how can the branch help towers?

Steve Wells said he had a good response on Ring for the King and had started teaching some people.

The branch needs to advertise which towers needs help. People would need to commit to supporting another tower by providing time on a continuous basis. Steve has been helping Binfield for 10 years.

Ken Davenport previously helped Sandhurst and was now helping Binfield.

The Chairman added that retention was also important. A few suggestions and comments were made such as there used to be encouragement for towers to ring a quarter peal each year to help encourage bands. Making more use of the printed Newsletter. Ensuring we motivate learners to continue and not just tick the 'bell ringing done' box and leave. What motivates people and ringing may not be their priority.

Lesley Graves highlighted that there was a gap between Elementary and Advanced practices and therefore it was demotivating as she had little opportunity to practice. Lesley attends the practice at Warfield but that is now mainly elementary ringers. Lesley commented that she had raised this issue a number of times, but nothing happens. The Chairman said the gap was a very valid point which the branch had not provided for and committed to discussing with Nigel Mellor and taking another look at it to see what could be done.

#### **Update on Guild matters:**

The Treasurer advised that subs would be staying the same and she will be posting out the subs forms before Christmas in order to use up older postage stamps.

Katie Lane provided an update from the Guild, commenting that the topics being discussed are replicated in all branches and solutions not known. Katie felt that SDB was more advanced than many branches and it was good that we were meeting to discuss the issues. The Guild would like to provide more ringing at Guild level but with less admin. Contacting branches and members can be a challenge for the Guild as not all branch secretaries forward information as requested, but Katie knows this is not the case for SDB. Email is not always the answer, and they are looking at alternatives such as WhatsApp for something instant. Darren Smith suggested Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp in addition to email. Katie felt that often people don't know what is going on and requested we include as much information as possible in the Guild Report. The Guild are currently finding it difficult to recruit officers and have a

number of vacancies, so please don't hold back if we know someone suitable, as Katie and the team are working very hard to keep things going.

Katie also mentioned that when recruiting it is important to ensure there are good, experienced teachers.

### **Officer Vacancies – Branch Representative on Guild General Committee**

Vikki Bullbeck offered to take on the role and to attend the General Committee Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

### **2023 – 2024 draft calendar**

Jan Glen thanked those towers that had confirmed the branch practice dates on the draft calendar, as previously sent out, and asked for those yet to respond to do so. A tentative 'yes' now with final confirmation a couple of months before would be fine.

There was general agreement that the 22<sup>nd</sup> April would be a better date for the branch 6-bell competition rather than 15<sup>th</sup> April, as this date was at the end of the Easter holidays. The 22<sup>nd</sup> April date is confirmed with Sandhurst.

The Guild 8-bell competition and AGM is on the 20<sup>th</sup> May at Broadwell (approximately 1.5 hours drive away). If we are to enter a team, will there be enough people to run a practice on the same day?

### **AOB:**

Tricia Amos asked if there was any update about the member database. Steve Wells summarised that testing was complete, and the system would work well for the branch. The other branch taking part in the trial had not yet completed any testing. The Chairman highlighted the issues for the system at a Guild level; a separate email system would still be required for the generic email addresses (eg chairman@sdb.odg.org.uk) and the system does not allow for hierarchical administration. Jan Glen suggested that as a number of branches were not at the same stage as SDB admin / system wise, it would take a long time for a database to be setup and working at Guild level. Therefore, SDB could go ahead with Membermojo in the meantime. If a different system was eventually selected by the Guild, it would be possible to transfer the core data across. Sue Davenport felt that members would not put their information on the system. Jan Glen advised that the core data (name, Tower, email address) would be imported so that should not be a barrier.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their time, and asked people to consider if any of their members could get involved with one of the Guild roles.

The meeting ended at 19.02.

### **Actions:**

**Tower Captains** to provide feedback about their young ringers to Jennifer Moynihan.

**John Harrison** to discuss with Nigel Mellow how the gap in practices between Elementary and Advanced could be plugged.

**John Harrison** to add Katie Lane to the SDB members email list.

**Jan Glen** to ask Nigel Mellor regarding a branch practice on 20<sup>th</sup> May as it clashes with the Guild 8-bell competition.

**Jan Glen** to send the updated 2023-24 calendar to TCs for the final dates to be agreed / confirmed.