

**Sonning Deanery Branch, Business Meeting,  
18 November 2023 at 5.00pm  
St Mary, Twyford**

**Minutes**

**Present:**, Vikki Bullbeck (Branch Representative (Shottesbrooke)), Ken Davenport (St Paul Wokingham), Sue Davenport (Treasurer), Pam Elliston (Sonning), Simon Farrar (Twyford), Jan Glen (Secretary (Binfield)), Lesley Graves (White Waltham), John Harrison (Chairman), Andrew Mitchell (Easthampstead), Rob Needham (Newsletter Editor), Jennifer Moynihan (Youth Officer) (Arborfield & Barkham)), Graham Slade (Hurst), Stephen Smith (All Saints, Wokingham), Kate Titford (WSL), Steve Wells (Deputy Ringing Master), Judith Witting (Finchampstead), (13 towers and 7 Officers), Steve Rossiter (ODG Guild Steward),

**Apologies:** John Coombes (Wargrave), Nicola Lee, Jane Mellor (Training Officer), Nigel Mellor (Ringing Master), Mike Sherren (Sandhurst), Stuart Gibson ODG General Treasurer), Katie Lane (ODG Master),

**Matters arising from the 2023 AGM:**

SDB Officers to review payment processes with a view to clarifying the requirements and ensuring timely payments of subs can be made; The Chairman referred to the circulated note explaining the subs payment process and asked tower correspondents to help ensure it runs smoothly by paying by cash or cheque well before the AGM.

The Treasurer stated that 12 towers paid by cheque last year. The Treasurer reported that subs may increase to £10 from next year, although there would not be any change to the branch portion.

**Finance Update:**

The Treasurer, Sue Davenport, reported the following figures:

General Fund	£3,443.66
Bell Fund	£2,877.01
Total Funds	<u>£6,320.67</u>

Bank interest has gone up appreciably.

**Youth Ringing (future needs and Prospects:**

The Youth Officer reported that the young ringers (YR) are going from strength to strength. There are currently not the numbers to run a dedicated SDB only monthly practice, so practices are run jointly with Reading. YR have the opportunity to ring on 3 Sundays each month.

There are YR in the branch who don't attend the YR practices, particularly the 16-23 age group. A request was made for Towers to ask what their YR want from the practices.

Simon Farrar commented that there were 4 YR at Twyford and some were scared to ring at other towers and easy bells would be needed.

It would be good if some of the YR attended other tower practices, so they all got to know one another.

Simon also mentioned that YR who are now teaching, should teach adults only in case of any accidents.

The Youth Officer asked for Towers to let her know if they would like some YR to visit their practices.

The following Towers expressed an interest in the Youth Officers touting for new YR through the Duke of Edinburgh programme; Hurst, Twyford, Wokingham All Saints, Wokingham St Paul.

**Practices – need and support for, including Advanced:**

The Chairman stated that the branch was investing much time in branch practices and some people were benefitting, although half of the members were not attending any practices and he asked for thoughts on the current practices. The practices are one of the main things the branch provides, so it's important to meet the needs. Key comments from the general discussion:

Jennifer Moynihan made a plea for the Advanced practices not to be cancelled from the programme as a couple of people were now just ready to attend those practices.

Where towers are made up of ringing families those families have other commitments and activities at the weekend, so ringing is mainly done during the week.

Some people are happy to just attend their tower practice and ring for service, and we are not going to be able to engage with them.

We didn't have all the other branch practices in the days when 30 people attended a branch practice.

Some people are supporting other tower practices during the week and then don't have any desire to attend weekend practices.

Some people are too nervous to go to other towers.

**Branch training (activity and future needs):**

The Chairman reminded everyone about the survey that was conducted a while back and asked if there was support to run another one. The consensus was that it would be useful. There is a form on the branch website where people can input training needs.

Vikki Bullbeck suggested that a ringing up and down course is needed. This has been one of our most popular courses and Simon had run one last year at Arborfield.

There was a discussion on the idea of scheduling time to ring regular quarters:

Shottesbrooke ring a quarter every Sunday morning.

Before a service when ringing is scheduled anyway.

Ringing a quarter for services excludes some members of the tower.

Before a Branch practice is a time already in the diary and shares the overhead of travelling.

Ringing a quarter before a branch practice could make the practice too long and be too long for locals

One suggestion was to ring somewhere that has evensong, but consideration of locals would need to be factored in.

Arborfield was offered for Sunday evening quarters.

**Update on Guild Matters:**

Steve Rossiter, Guild Steward, advised that the next Guild General meeting was next week, so it was a week too early for up-to-date feedback, but he was happy to take questions.

Simon Farrar asked how much it cost to produce the ODD Bob magazines that had just been distributed and was an online only option being considered. No printed copies are required for Twyford, not just in respect of costs but for protecting the planet. SteveR took an action to raise it with the Guild.

Sue Davenport felt that readers would be lost if it was online only. Rob Needham (current ODD Bob Editor) suggested another survey of branches for number of copies required is needed. Around 600 are currently printed and this is down from 900 a while back.

Jennifer Moynihan thanked the Guild for the courses they run. Having attended a couple recently, she said that they were brilliant and as it was a whole day, travelling wasn't a problem.

The Treasurer advised that places are always offered first to Guild members, so a good reason to pay subs.

**Long term recruitment and impact of Ring for the King:**

8 towers had got recruits from Ring for the King.

The Chairman asked how can we better recruit and if the branch could help. General comments:

Helping with teaching, especially those towers that don't have teachers.

Training hubs, although some towers like to do it themselves.

Jane Mellor is trying to train more teachers, eg 9 branch members attended an ART M2 course.

With YR, the parents also need to be welcomed.

Encourage new ringers to mix with other ringers so they feel part of the band.

Ensure that we don't just teach recruits the mechanics of ringing but inspire them with a vision of the richness of a ringing career.

**Officer Vacancies – Deputy Branch Ringing Master, Newsletter Editor**

All Officers are up for re-election at the AGM but some have already said that they don't wish to stand next time. The Newsletter Editor is stepping down and the Deputy Branch Ringing Master would prefer not to stand.

**2024 – 2025 draft calendar**

The Secretary 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 please do so. A provisional 'yes' now with final confirmation later is fine.

**AOB:**

Steve Smith asked how many towers had rung for weddings this year as Wokingham All Saints had not had any. Wokingham St Paul had rung for 4-5 and some other towers also gave a show of hands.

The Secretary advised that the Guild are concerned that members are not receiving communications and asked if Towers forward the emails that the Secretary sends out. Some emails are sent directly to members and some to Towers only. The towers present confirmed that they pass on emails and also print out posters when appropriate. The Chairman referred Steve Rossiter to the page on the website describing Branch communications services.

Steve Rossiter advised that a new Guild 15-year plan was now available and that SDB is scheduled to host the 6-bell striking competition on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their time, and Twyford for hosting.

The meeting ended at 18.10.