

**Sonning Deanery Branch, Business Meeting,  
16 November 2024 at 5.00pm  
All Saints, Binfield**

**Minutes**

**Present:**, Vikki Bullbeck (Branch Representative (Shottesbrooke)), Ken Davenport (St Paul Wokingham), Sue Davenport (Treasurer), Jan Glen (Secretary (Binfield)), Lesley Graves (White Waltham), John Harrison (Chairman), Nicola Lee (Arborfield and Barkham). Keith Milner (Hurst), Andrew Mitchell (Easthampstead), James Moynihan (Deputy Ringing Master (All Saints Wokingham)), Claire Shuttleworth (Youth Officer, (Sonning)), Kate Titford (WSL), Steve Wells (Easthampstead), Judith Witting (Finchampstead), (12 towers and 6 Officers), Steve Rossiter (ODG Guild Steward),

**Apologies:** John Coombes (Wargrave), Pam Elliston (Sonning), Jane Mellor (Training Officer), Nigel Mellor (Ringing Master), Jennifer Moynihan (Arborfield (Newsletter)), Graham Slade (Hurst), Stephen Smith (All Saints, Wokingham), Stuart Gibson ODG General Treasurer), Katie Lane (ODG Master),

**Matters arising from the 2024 AGM:**

None

**Finance Update:**

The Treasurer, Sue Davenport, reported finances are in a good position:

General Fund	£3,676.86
Bell Fund	£3,276.69
Total	£6,953.55

John Harrison (JH) reported that Sandhurst has requested funds towards the restoration of their bells. The officers have approved support with a provisional amount of £500 and the AGM will be asked to confirm or vary the amount.

James Moynihan (JM) reported that Taylors have inspected the Arborfield bells and will report on work required. It has not been confirmed yet if the church will provide any financial support.

**Practices**

JM reported that he and Nigel are currently discussing what to do with the Advanced practices and are considering rotating them between Tues and Wednesday evenings. A successful advanced practice was recently held at St Paul's on their normal practice night. The Elementary practice has now grown into a more intermediate practice so they are also considering splitting the two practices each month into elementary and intermediate.

JH asked if there was anything the branch doesn't provide that towers felt their ringers would benefit from and support.

Steve Wells (SW) commented that only two towers ring triples and major methods on a regular basis. No other towers ring on 8 bells unless they get visitors and there is a lack of opportunity at intermediate level. JM commented that the changes to the elementary practices would help address that.

Sue Davenport said people are always welcome at St Pauls as they regularly ring triples.

**Branch training**

JH asked if, having read the Training Officer's report, there were any question on training or if anyone would like to volunteer to run some training courses. From the last training survey, lots of people put down 'striking'. If a group from one tower wanted to do it together then it could possibly be on their practice night, since we choose dates to suit participants. Overall, 30 people expressed an interested in some training. Regarding the fact that none of the members who attended the ART M2 course run in October 2022 has yet achieved accreditation, SW felt that the timescales to complete it were too tight. The chairman pointed out that the Branch does not control ART's arrangements, and any suggested changes should be sent to ART.

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

Claire Shuttleworth (CS) reported that not many young ringers (YR) regularly ring outside their own tower. SDB YR join up with Reading for practices and outings and also take part in the Bucks & Berks YR group including coming 7<sup>th</sup> at the South East England Youth competition (SEECON) and a very credible 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ringing World National Youth contest in the 8-bell call changes competition. The Bucks & Berks YR will be hosting the 2025 SEECON at Twyford.

CS commented that recruitment is an issue and had tried recruiting through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. CS asked towers to encourage their YR to join in with YR events and practices and said that the YR group could come and join tower practices sometimes. YR events will be notified via towers and there is a YR mailing list. Lesley Graves said two weeks' notice would give parents chance to plan their calendars.

### **Update on Guild Matters:**

Steve Rossiter, Guild Steward, advised that the next Guild General meeting was next week, and encouraged all those eligible to attend to do so. The meeting would include two key items: a shake-up of the structure of the Guild and the frequency of meetings. The decisions would be taken at the Guild AGM but the discussions as to how we take the Guild forward needed to be had in advance.

There was brief discussion on Guild membership, eg Why should ringers join and how many current members are active ringers.

### **Officer Vacancies**

JH reminded that all Officers are up for re-election at the AGM, and was not aware of anyone standing down, but new blood is good, so please encourage people to come forward.

### **2025 – 2026 draft calendar**

The Secretary thanked those towers that had confirmed the branch practice dates on the draft calendar and asked that those that had not yet replied to please do so.

Our annual 6-bell competition falls on Holy Saturday in 2025, so we need to reschedule the date. CS advised that there is a YR contest on 12<sup>th</sup> April. Vikki Bullbeck suggested the 5<sup>th</sup> April.

A discussion was had regarding moving the date of the next Business Meeting away from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of November as two key officers are currently unable to make that date. Lesley Graves requested that it is not moved to the morning as she is unable to attend.

JH commented that is our branch's turn to host the 8-bell competition with Reading. Last year's competition slipped to February this year. The 8<sup>th</sup> February 2025 was suggested or the next one.

### **AOB:**

Sue Davenport commented that although she does not attend Saturday branch practices, she feels they should not be cancelled as they are published in ODD Bob and visitors may attend. Steve Wells agreed as his band don't decide until their Thursday evening practice whether anyone will be attending or not only to find it has been cancelled. Although Saturday practices normally go ahead without a check on likely attendance, one practice was cancelled when several regular attenders were known to be absent and a late request for support showed only three people expecting to attend. A lively discussion followed including views that running them with very low numbers didn't work.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their time.

The meeting ended at 17.54.

### **Actions**

- 1 - Consider moving the business meeting to ensure key participants can be present.
- 2 - Clarify whether Saturday practices can ever be cancelled, and if so why and how.
- 3 - Consider realigning the scope of regular practices to meet needs.