

Sonning Deanery Branch response to questions

All questions about 'society' have been answered in the context of 'Sonning Deanery Branch'.

- What training is provided at Society level (type, frequency and level) The Branch runs periodic courses, see: <http://odg.org.uk/sdb/training/> The aim is to match courses to demand, ie to ask members what they need, and then to organise courses around those who have asked for a particular topic. Typically several courses are run a year, but it has varied between 0 and 4. The main constraint is the limited number of people with time and ability to organise and run the courses.

The Branch runs monthly Saturday practices, and monthly weekday practices (subject to enough people being available).

Some Branch officers regularly visit towers in need, but this is normally an individual rather than a Branch decision.
- What programme for enhancing these facilities is envisaged and over what period? The only current plan for enhancement is to consider changing the times of Saturday practices in an attempt to suit the availability of more members.

The band at one Branch band in danger of becoming non-viable is considering joining forces with two others (one in a different branch and one in a different society).
- Is there a dedicated youth officer to seek out and progress the training of younger ringers (10-25 years of age)? No
- If not, is there a proposal to create such a responsible person? No. All officers should share this responsibility. The Branch is currently having difficulty finding a Ringing Master, so creating a new post might not be filled anyway.
- What specific ringing centres exist There are no CC recognised Ringing Centres within the Branch.
- are there any proposals to increase the number in operation? There are no proposals for a ringing centre, but there has been recent discussion about the possibility of some more formal mechanisms for sharing or pooling teaching expertise within the Branch.
- Where there are centres of excellence based on existing tower activities how are these utilised in progressing ringers? Within the Branch there are several groups of towers whose members who regularly attend each other's practices, and there are cases where bands without anyone willing/able to teach benefit from learners being taught initial handling in other towers.
- What external contacts have been made with such bodies as schools in the interest of new recruitment The Branch has made no such contacts. Some bands make contact with schools, but mostly to give talks and raise awareness, rather than overt recruitment. Several bands routinely have visits from members of youth organisations, also for awareness rather than overt recruitment.
- are there any proposals to extend the areas of opportunity to recruit? There are no current proposals for recruitment at Branch level.
- What resources does the society need from the Council, Ringing Foundation or other agencies to ensure adequate replenishment of ringers in the future? The most conspicuous resource shortage within the Branch is effort – people with the time, energy and relevant skills. We are aware of initiatives in other branches, like The Big Ring Pull, which required significant funding, but we also know it required a vast amount of manpower, which we would probably have difficulty raising even if we had the funding.
- Are there measures which these agencies could provide which are not being provided? Not that we are aware of. This question stimulated requests for 'how can I get/retain more recruits'. Raising awareness of what has worked elsewhere is worth doing.

at present?

- What proportion of annual society expenditure is spent on training and recruitment? The Branch spends nothing on training and recruitment. All courses are run at no cost to the Branch. All support and coaching provided to bands or individual ringers is provided at no cost. The Branch does not undertake recruitment.
- How much would be required to carry out all aspirations for training new ringers As a result of discussing this response, the Branch has some embryonic aspirations, for example that every band should have at least one active teacher of bell control (ideally ITTS qualified) and as mentioned above for some mechanisms to share teaching resources in some way. But these do not yet have buy in from bands or members at large. As noted above, the problem is currently perceived in terms of lack of ideas and especially lack of the effort to carry them out, rather than lack of money.
 - and how should such monies be raised? This question stimulated the usual discussion about ringers having a hang-up about paying for things, and didn't reach any conclusions that are not already known.
 - Is there support within the membership for paying more for ringing to ensure its future? We don't know. The Branch income is almost entirely a precept from the Guild subscription, and barely covers the cost of running the Branch (it wouldn't if the newsletter was not printed free by one of the members). What ringers pay towards ringing is tiny compared with what participants in almost any other sporting or musical activity pay, but we don't know how many of our members would be willing to pay a more realistic subscription. It would be more likely if they knew the money would be spent on something specific.
 - It is recognised that many societies already have advanced training programmes and a feed-back on good practice would be useful to share. The way we organise training courses is 'non-standard' (see: <http://odg.org.uk/sdb/training/>) but it has allowed us to run far more courses over the years than we could with the traditional approach of picking a date and a topic, advertising it, and seeing who comes.