

Sonning Deanery Branch response to questions

*** *This version is a straw man from one person, intended to start the ball rolling.* ***

*****I hope it will lead to discussion and more ideas, and not be seen as an excuse for others not to contribute. *****

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.
Contra view – Could a post like this be given to someone who had good ideas about attracting young people, who might not be suitable for one of the current officer roles?
- 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? Not currently.
Should we be trying to create some sort of teaching centre in the Branch, even if it isn't in the traditional 'Ringing Centre' mould?
- Where there are centres of excellence based on existing tower activities how are these utilised in progressing ringers? *[We assumed this question refers to strong bands whose activities benefit ringers from surrounding bands.]* We have very few strong bands. Most regular interaction between bands tends to be between weaker bands.
Is this the best way to answer the question?
- 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.
How many bands have done this, and do we know whether any have gone further and recruited?
- are there any proposals to extend the areas of opportunity to recruit? The Branch has no such proposals.
Do we know of any bands that do?
Should the Branch be taking any initiatives?
- What resources does the society need from the Council, in the future? Since the Branch doesn't have a plan to 'ensure adequate replenishment of ringers in the future' it is impossible to know what resources such a plan would need. We

Ringling Foundation or other agencies to ensure adequate replenishment of ringers in the future? are aware of an initiative in another Branch (eg The Big Ring Pull) that required significant funding, but we also know the vast amount of manpower that went into it. We would probably have difficulty raising the manpower even if we had the funding.

• Are there measures which these agencies could provide which are not being provided at present? *Any suggestions?*

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.

• How much would be required to carry out all aspirations for training new ringers? We can't answer this question because we don't have a list of aspirations, let alone costed plans. *Any better ideas?*

• and how should such monies be raised? ?? *Any suggestions for this?*

• Is there support within the membership for paying more for ringing to ensure its future? We don't know. The Branch receives a fixed proportion of the Guild subscription, which 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 above) 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.