

**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD – SONNING DEANERY BRANCH**  
**Annual General Meeting, Saturday 18th February 2017, Sandhurst**

**MINUTES**

*[Text in these minutes that looks like this is for clarification and was not discussed at the meeting.]*  
*[All documents, survey, rules and schedule referenced in these minutes are on the branch website.]*

**Present:** There were 32 branch members at the AGM, and Pat Newton who was representing the ODG and was welcomed to the meeting by the Chairman.

The meeting stood in memory of Andrew Elliston, Sonning and Jill Betts, Arborfield.

**Apologies:** Aidan & Liz Hopkins, ODG Master (Hilarie Rogers), ODG Treasurer (Stuart Gibson), Mary Friskney (ODG steward), Steve & Ba Wells, Andrew Eastwell, Simon Farrar, Graham Slade.

**Approval of minutes of previous AGM:** The minutes of the 2016 AGM were approved by the meeting without dispute and signed off by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

**Approval of minutes of previous Business Meeting:** The minutes of the November 2016 Business meeting were approved by the meeting without dispute and signed off by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

**Branch Officers' reports:** Acceptance of each report available was proposed and seconded and agreed by the members present. There were no matters arising.

Secretary (Rob Needham)

Treasurer (Sue Davenport)

Ringling Master (Steve Wells)

Bookstall Officer (temporarily, Rob Needham)

Training Officer (Jacquie Hazell)

Webmaster/Postmaster (John Harrison).

John pointed out that use of the website had more than doubled since 2012 and that there were a lot of branch newsletter downloads, surprisingly, mostly old ones from previous years.

**Election of new members:** The secretary read out the names of the proposed new Branch members that had been notified to him and they were elected as members of the Guild; proposer Jane Mellor, seconder Daniel Chafen. The 16 new members elected were:

Katie Armitage	Wokingham, All Saints
Stephen Bates	Wokingham, All Saints
Andrew Eastwell	Wokingham, All Saints
Penka Kasarova	Wokingham, All Saints
Angela Lazda	Wokingham, All Saints
Julian Bedford	Arborfield
Michael Fowler	Sandhurst, St Michael & All Angels
Edward Owen	Twyford, Berks.
Helen Anderson	St James, Finchampstead
Findlay Anderson	St James, Finchampstead
Joanna Lewis	St James, Finchampstead
Abraham Otim	Easthampstead
Georgina Herrington	Easthampstead
Andrew Mitchell	Easthampstead
Jane Mitchell	Easthampstead
Joshua Presnail	Waltham St Lawrence

The joining packs for the 16 new members above were awarded to new members who were present at the AGM.

The names of the following two proposed new members were put forward at the AGM and were elected as members of the Guild; proposer Lesley Graves, seconder John Coombes.

Jane Reed	Binfield
Helen Fagg	Binfield

**Election of Officers:** The following officers said they would continue in post if re-elected, and no other nomination for any of those officer posts was raised, so the following officers were re-elected.

Chairman, John Harrison	proposer Rob Needham, seconder Nigel Mellor
Secretary, Rob Needham	proposer John Harrison, seconder Nigel Mellor
Treasurer, Sue Davenport	proposer Geoffrey M Harvey, seconder Dave Creasey
Ringling Master, Steve Wells	proposer Nigel Mellor, seconder Daniel Chafen
Deputy Ringling Master, Nigel Mellor	proposer Rob Needham, seconder Katie Armitage
Branch Representatives: Jacquie Hazell	proposer John Coombes, seconder Jane Mellor
Sue Davenport	proposer Nigel Mellor, seconder Katie Armitage
Newsletter Editor, Alison Clayton	proposer Sue Portsmouth, seconder Jacquie Hazell
Webmaster, John Harrison	proposer Rob Needham, seconder Daniel Chafen
Postmaster, John Harrison	proposer Rob Needham, seconder Daniel Chafen

The following two officer posts became vacant and new officers were sought:

Bookstall Officer, Sue Portsmouth	was proposed by Jacquie Hazell, seconded by Rob Needham and duly elected
Training Officer	No nominations were raised so this post is VACANT.

Independent Examiner, Mike Davis proposer Daniel Chafen, seconder Judith Atkinson.

**Branch youth activities and election of a Branch Youth Officer:** John pointed out that this new Officer post would require a very small change to the Branch rules, namely adding “(h) Youth Officer” to the bottom of the list of officers, and this was accepted by those present.

John said that Josh Slade was keen to take on the Youth Officer role; Josh was proposed by Martha Hazell, seconded by Jacquie Hazell and was duly elected. There are youth officers in EBSB and Reading branches and their youth activities are on Sunday afternoons; SDB has set the second Sunday of each month for its youth practices, which does not clash with neighbouring branches or the Guild. The first Youth Practice will be on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2.30 to 4pm at Twyford.

**Branch striking competitions survey:** John said there were 31 replies; most respondents (90%) felt that friendly local competitions encouraged ringers to think about improving their striking. Nearly half thought competitions would be more attractive if combined with something else; a fun quiz was the clear lead, with several suggesting a talk/workshop on a ringing-related topic. Sue Davenport thought that the level of response to the survey was too low; John said that (at about 20% of members) it was typical of surveys of this type. Ken Davenport felt that the branch needs to promote both striking competitions and other ways to improve members’ striking. An alternative approach has been successful elsewhere, where (team members are drawn at random from those present, with all touches recorded and everyone judging the striking. Another branch has had success with a combined event of ringing (team members drawn at random from those taking part) and judging the other teams’ striking.

**6-bell and 8-bell striking competition rules:** Changes were proposed to both sets of rules, primarily to encourage the entry of youth teams, which can be drawn from all bands in the branch, and to enable young ringers to ring for two teams (usually their home band’s team and the youth team). The 8-bell rules go further and enable any ringer to ring in two teams, and a youth team to be drawn from either or both branches. Both sets of rules were approved at the AGM.

**Branch practices and events schedule:** Rob thanked the towers for booking their date/time slots in good time; all Saturday BPs are now confirmed. The only events yet to be confirmed are the Branch Outing on Oct 21<sup>st</sup> and the tower for the first Young Ringers event on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March.

**St George’s Day ringing:** April 23<sup>rd</sup> is a Sunday this year so most towers will be ringing anyway. Rob suggested that any tower that doesn’t ring for a service that day does a short session of ringing in the afternoon. If a tower cannot make up a full band it could canvas support from members on the ‘Weddings’ email list.

**Charmborough Ring at Hurst Show 2016, review and future plans:** John said that the Hurst Show is cost effective being over two days, with a good attendance, and subsidised by the Show organisers. Some of the costs (for publicity leaflets and banner) are not needed again, and the total cost to the Branch would be about £250. Sue Davenport thought that individual tower recruitment initiatives such as ‘open tower’ events were more effective, and John agreed that tower recruitment is important and can continue in parallel with branch initiatives. He pointed out that ringing publicity (in addition to recruitment) is a good aspect of our stall at the Hurst Show and that most helpers at the 2016 Show now rate the publicity aspect important and are happy to help at a repeat event.

John gave a summary of the 2016 event results in terms of recruitment; 32 people in total expressed interest in a follow-up, of those some could not be contacted; of those contacted nine attended a taster session, and of those three joined a tower.

Ken wondered whether it would be mainly the same visitors to the Show if we repeated the event. Daniel thought this might sometimes work in our favour if true; some people need more than one exposure to something before they make up their minds. John said that a key lesson learnt from the 2016 event is that we need to be more careful to record clear contact details of people interested in a follow-up. Jane Mellor said that at the 2016 event there were too many young children ‘hogging’ the ring, and it was agreed that we must find a way to prevent this at a future event. Jane suggested that the Sandhurst Donkey Derby might be a good venue for the Charmborough Ring, but Mike Sherren of Sandhurst said that the Donkey Derby was no longer held.

John said that for 2017 the Charmborough Ring was already booked by someone else on the date of the Hurst Show, and he proposed that the Branch books the Charmborough Ring for the Hurst Show in 2018. This action was approved by the AGM.

**Branch striking competition results:** Pat Newton kindly agreed to present the certificates for the Branch 6-bell striking competition held in April 2016. Third were Easthampstead, second were All Saints Wokingham, and the winners were Sonning.

#### **Any Other Business:**

**Guild events:** Pat Newton promoted two forthcoming Guild events that are listed in the Branch schedule:

Radley Course on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April; some of the groups are not full (particularly the Bob Major) and you can still apply – [*details at the back of the November Odd Bob or contact annosborne1.@BTInternet.com, Tel: 0118 942 5876*]

Guild AGM on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May; two years ago the AGM had to be postponed for lack of the quorum, so last year VofWH branch put on an excellent set of events to support the AGM and encourage attendance. This year the AGM will be in Reading Branch at Tilehurst, so not too far to travel for our branch, and there will be a route of towers open for ringing, plus handbell ringing, rope splicing and other things of interest. All ODG members are welcome; more detail nearer the time.

**Facebook groups and websites:** Sue reported that St Paul’s now has a Facebook page with several photos of ringers, including one taken in a pub to prove they are ‘normal’ people! The Facebook page links to part of the St Paul’s church website for further bell ringing information.

John said that Wokingham All Saints has a Facebook Group, and that they got two of their recent recruits via their website.

Darren Smith said that Arborfield has set up a Facebook group and a website but these did not get many hits. However, another Facebook group that is dedicated to Arborfield has over 1600 subscribers, the vast majority of which live in Arborfield. Darren managed to get them to publish a link to the Arborfield bell ringing website, which then got a large number of hits. [*If asked, Darren will give advice to towers in the Branch that wish to develop this type of publicity/recruitment material.*]

**Subscriptions:** The Treasurer ‘named and shamed’ the towers that have not yet paid their members’ 2017 subscriptions: Hurst, Twyford and Warfield.

#### **Thanks**

The Chairman thanked Pat Newton for attending the meeting, the Rector, Rev John Castle, for an interesting service that related to bell ringers, and the Sandhurst ringers for organising the whole event and providing such an excellent tea.

The meeting closed at 6.53p.m.