

**Sonning Deanery Branch – Business Meeting,
St Mary Twyford, 17th November 2018, 5.15 pm.**

MINUTES

Present: Alison Clayton (Sonning), John Coombes (Wargrave), Ken & Sue Davenport (St Paul's Wok.), Hugh Dempster (Finchampstead), Lesley Graves (White Waltham + Shottesbrooke), Chris Grundy (Barkham), John Harrison (All Saints Wok.), Jacquie Hazell (W.St.L.), Nigel Mellor (All Saints Wok), Andrew Mitchell (Easthampstead), Rob Needham (Sonning), Derek Palmer (Sandhurst), Sue Portsmouth (Sonning), Darren Smith (Arborfield), Steve Wells (Easthampstead), (*13 towers*)

Apologies: Graham Slade (Hurst), Pam Elliston

Financial update: the Treasurer, Sue Davenport, reported:

General Fund	£2222.72
Bell Fund	£1998.38
Total Funds	£4221.10

The Bell Fund has supported work at Sonning (£1,000) and St Michael, Sandhurst (£250) during the year, for which the towers are very grateful.

Sue D asked what approval would be needed to make a transfer of £2000 from the General Fund to the Bell Fund, and it was agreed it would be the AGM. Several people referred to the need to retain enough in the General Fund for a given number of years' expenditure (e.g. 2 years) and John Harrison asked Sue D to find out what the Guild's policy is. Because the Bell Fund balance is restricted, for use for work on bells only and could not then be transferred back into the General Fund, Sue D will prepare a motion with this request for the AGM.

Review of Branch Practices: The BRM, Nigel Mellor, reported that the monthly Surprise Practices were quite well attended, and ringing has included methods from the 'Standard Eight' and from PPE (Project Pickled Egg).

The monthly Tuesday practices at Binfield cover a range of abilities, including everything from Rounds and Call Changes to Surprise Minor. Saturday Branch Practices have variable attendance, and the meeting agreed that morning or afternoon practices tend to be better supported than evening ones.

Matters arising from the 2018 AGM: There were no matters raised.

GDPR: John Harrison stated that we wish to be compliant with GDPR requirements without going overboard.

John is reviewing our current practice; what we do already appears reasonable. Consent is only one of several legal bases for the use of data, but is needed in certain areas. It is important that we protect data properly, and where we gather it for other people, we must be sure of how it is to be used and protected by them; this is a grey area. John will complete a proposal on data management for the AGM.

Branch Training: We currently have no Training Officer, but some training has been organised by John Harrison; there have been two Listening courses, one on raising and lowering bells and one on simulator ringing. John proposed a course to improve striking, and suggested that this could be done on a tower by tower basis, if there was sufficient interest. The course(s) would be held at All Saints Wokingham, where there is capability to measure striking accuracy. Attendees are encouraged to discuss this with their towers, and to contact John with their requirements.

Young Ringers Training: The Youth Officer, Rob, summarised the Young Ringer (YR) training. A training session is held once a month and of the last 8 practices, 3 have had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers. Rob stated that the average number of SDB YRs at a practice (i.e. not including YRs from other branches) was 5, with same number of adult helpers. There are 17 Young Ringers on the books at present, although some do not attend the practices. Rob has asked for feedback as to whether Sunday afternoon is the best time for these practices, and responses showed a strong preference for retaining this.

Publicity: John Harrison started by referring to a lot of national publicity for ringing around the Armistice, and hoping that towers had done something locally. John shared the figures that have been provided for the number of ringers recruited under the 'Ringing remembers' initiative. The intention was to recruit 1,400 new ringers to commemorate the 1,400 lost during WWI. The actual figure is 2,792 which, even allowing for the fact that some may not continue their learning, is a remarkable achievement.

Darren Smith spoke about some success that he has had in getting expressions of interest from potential new learners at Arborfield. This has come about from a recent offer of a £15 advertising credit on Facebook; while Arborfield had a page already, it was not being regularly updated. Under the terms of the offer Darren was able to nominate the demographic that would view the post, and limited it to adults living within a 3 km radius of the tower. The post gained over 600 views, and has already resulted in 4 or 5 expressions of interest. This is potentially a better targeted means of making ringing visible, where posters and leaflets do not seem to be as effective.

John Harrison spoke about the use of the Charmborough Ring at the Hurst Show in June. The net cost to the Branch was £193, after a donation of £150 from the Show organisers. There was a great deal of interest during the weekend, but the taster sessions were poorly attended, in spite of Rob's hard work in setting them up, and no new learners were recruited this time. John requested that each tower discusses what they believe the Branch should be doing in terms of publicity; this should not be left to the towers alone.

Update on Guild matters by Branch Reps: Jacquie said that as the next meeting is only one week away, there was nothing new to report. Sue D said that the new web site is progressing, and Katie Lane, the new Master, has had meetings recently to move this on. There is still no PRO.

The Branch representatives will put updates into the Branch newsletters and on to the Branch website at the time in future.

Branch support for bands: A volunteer list of ringers prepared to help with Quarter Peal attempts was set up a year ago, but no band has yet asked for assistance.

Steve Wells suggested that bands could ask for help via the members list to support practices.

Officer vacancies: Sue Portsmouth reiterated JH comments that we still do not have a Training Officer, which means that John is still covering that area as well as his other Branch commitments. If anyone would like to consider taking up the Training Officer post, or knows of someone in their tower who might be interested, they should contact Sue P or John in the first instance.

2019/20 draft calendar: competitions / practices / meetings: Sue Portsmouth has prepared a first draft of the schedule, and requested that towers discuss and confirm the suggested dates to her as soon as possible. We are aware that some towers are not able to confirm bookings more than a few months ahead, but it would be helpful to know this too, so that potential problems are not overlooked. The schedule is open to discussion and change, so if any tower already knows that it might have a problem with a date allocated to it, please let Sue P know. SDB has been asked to host the General Committee Meeting and 10-Bell Competition on November 23rd 2019; Sonning has confirmed that it will host the meeting in the afternoon, and a request has been sent to Warfield to find out whether it is able to host the competition in the morning.

A.O.B: There was discussion about Branch social events, and quizzes/skittle evenings were agreed to be potentially popular. Following this, Derek Palmer thanked the Branch for the financial support provided to help enable some immediate work to be carried out at St Michael Sandhurst. Derek has been offered free use of a skittle alley, and it was agreed by the meeting that this would be an ideal fund-raising activity to help towards the extensive (£41k) further bell work that has been identified as being needed at Sandhurst. Derek has offered to run a skittles evening and John requested that a date be fixed as soon as possible so that it can be added to the calendar,

Nigel Mellor asked if the Branch website could be updated to recognise when it is being accessed from a mobile device and not from a PC. JH agreed to investigate. Steve Wells has recently been involved in a similar programme elsewhere, for which a contractor was used.

The meeting closed at 6.20 p.m.