

MINUTES OF THE BRANCH AGM HELD AT DRAYTON ON 15TH MARCH 2008

Thirty-two members attended the meeting, including Hilarie Rogers (Guild Secretary) and Bobbie May (Guild Central Council Representative). Hilarie and Kay Tuckwell judged the 6-bell striking competition, and the results were: 1st Wallingford, 2nd Blewbury and 3rd Abingdon.

1) **MATTERS ARISING**

The Guild Secretary advised that generic email addresses were being set up for Guild and Branch officers and would be rolled out to the Branches. The next step would be to set up a membership database. The Guild web site would be moved to odg.org.uk following the appointment of a new Guild Webmaster at the Guild A.G.M. in May.

Susan Read enquired about the unringable towers within the Branch. The Secretary advised that John Napper of Sutton Courtenay was still planning to inspect Appleford bells with Peter Davies but there was nothing further to report about Ardington.

2) **OFFICERS' REPORT**

Most Branch practices have been fairly well attended, with local ringers benefiting from ringing the two chosen methods. Nine new members from Letcombe Regis were elected to the Guild at the April Branch practice: Robert Andrews, Christine Birch, Nick Ereaut, Alex Ereaut, Joe Ereaut, Vicky Jones, Jenny Liddell, Anna Samuel and Lucy Samuel.

Surprise Major practices, organised by Richard Loyd, are going from strength to strength; with touches of 8 spliced being rung regularly, together with attempts at plain courses of Glasgow. Anyone who is able to ring the treble to surprise or treble bob major or who is learning Cambridge is most welcome to attend. Kate Crennell's mid-week afternoon sessions are also popular with beginners, and all are welcome, as students or helpers. Thanks go to Richard and Kate for all their efforts.

The Ringing Master attended the Guild training meeting and had submitted a statement on behalf of the Branch. He is awaiting a composite report of all the statements submitted by the various Branches of the Guild.

It was suggested to the Ringing Master by a Branch member that the more experienced ringers of the Branch should make a regular commitment to visit individual towers that were thought to be failing. It could take a period of several months to help the local ringers improve. The Branch committee felt that this type of request should only come from those at tower captain level, with the support of all of the ringers at their towers. As it could be difficult to obtain the regular commitment of experienced ringers, it was suggested that ringers from struggling towers should also be encouraged to attend other practice nights to gain more experience and get to know other ringers locally.

The Branch outing in July fell on one of drier days of the summer, and spirits were not dampened by the 'lock-out' at Great Bedwyn. Savernake Forrest, Kintbury, Chilton Foliat and Hungerford were all rung well and were interspersed with a pub lunch and tea break. A barbecue at the home of Stuart and Naomi Gibson followed on in the evening. The food was excellent and the croquet competition fierce, with Helen Walker of Didcot showing us all how it should be done. Thanks go to Philip Roberts for organising the outing and to Stuart and Naomi for hosting a super evening.

Sixty Branch members and friends showed their appreciation to the East Hagbourne ringers for organising an excellent quiz night and ploughman's supper in their village hall in November. Thanks also went to Jeff Powell, ably assisted by Buzz, for preparing the questions and providing excellent entertainment as quizmaster. The Latecomers, headed by Colin and Nicola Turner were victorious, with a local team coming a close second. The evening raised £188 for Branch funds.

The Branch did not enter the Guild 6-bell striking competition in October because neither Abingdon nor Blewbury were able to raise a band. However we came a creditable 4th in the Guild 10-bell striking competition at Aston Clinton in November, ringing Stedman Caters. It is hoped that the Branch will enter a band in the Guild 8-bell striking competition in May, when Double Norwich CB Major will be the chosen method. We have also been invited to host the next Guild 10-bell striking competition and Autumn General Committee Meeting on 22nd November 2008.

New Year 2008 got off to a good start when the Wantage ringers hosted the New Year's Day ringing and refreshments, and we extend our thanks to them.

In 2007 the membership of the branch rose from 257 to 268. There were 251 members who paid subscriptions, one of which was a member of the Guild through another Branch. In addition there were 15 Honorary and 2 Life members. Although interest rates had risen

during the year, the funds invested had been reduced due to grants being paid out in the previous year. Branch expenses covered the cost of printing, postage, stationery, tower fees for the Branch outing and the production of the Branch Newsletter. The Branch had reserves well in excess of £1000 at the end of the year and, with no known bell restoration projects on the horizon, these would be more than sufficient. The Branch will have an exposure to Corporation Tax in 2008 for 2007 of approximately £10. The Treasurer suggested that, as there were no known new bell restoration projects within the Branch in 2008, the Branch might consider making a donation to the Guild Bell Restoration Fund.

Jill Garlick requested that the officers' report be distributed before the A.G.M. The Secretary explained that she had only compiled the report two days before the meeting, but would aim to distribute next year's report sooner by email.

Richard Loyd questioned whether other Branches donate to either the Guild Bell Restoration Fund or the Guild Bell Fund. The Treasurer responded that, although some do, it was not across the board. Helen Diserens advised that the Reading Branch contributes to both funds, and the difference between the two funds was discussed. Jill Garlick recollected that the Branch once had the policy of donating a percentage of its available funds each year.

Richard Loyd proposed that the Branch should donate to both funds on an annual basis and suggested £100 to each for the current year. After some discussion, this was defeated by Martin Crick's counter proposal that the Branch should donate £200 to the Guild Bell Fund and that 'Donation to Guild Bell Fund' should be an item on the agenda for any future A.G.M. This was seconded by Jill Garlick and carried with only one objection that the amount was too high.

On the agreement of all members present, the annual accounts were adopted.

[Note: there was an interruption to the meeting when Richard Loyd received a text message from Peter Davies, expressing a certain amount of glee that Wales had won the Rugby Union Six Nations Championship, completing a Grand Slam!]

3) **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The election process resulted in no changes to Branch Officers (see Officers page).

4) **ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

Radley: Peter Bennett, Martha Young, East Hagbourne: Duncan Webb, Cholsey: Mandy Winters, Claire Glaccum, Abingdon: Simon Yarrow, Catriona Shearer, Drayton: Stephanie Glover, Heather Loosemore,

West Hanney: Rosi Rollings, Neil Surman, Chris Surman, Max Williams. Blewbury: Sue Barrance re-elected.

The Secretary asked for photos of the new members to be sent to Peter Davies for the Newsletter.

5) **SOCIAL EVENTS**

Saturday 5th July: Outing in Witney area and evening barbecue at Stuart Gibson's, Milton Hill

Saturday, 15th November: Barn dance in Blewbury Village Hall.

New Year's Day 2009: Ringing at West Hanney from 10.45am – 12.30pm.

6) **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a) Kate Crennell thanked those who had attended her afternoon training sessions at which the minimum attendance was 12 and urged towers to encourage members to attend.

b) Richard Loyd admitted to having made an impulse buy when purchasing a large clock, whose size made it unsuitable for Blewbury tower. He offered it free to a good home in the Branch, and Susan Read accepted it on behalf of the St Nicolas, Abingdon ringers.

c) The Chairman thanked Hilarie Rogers and Kay Tuckwell for judging the Branch six-bell striking competition and also thanked them and Bobbie May for attending the meeting.

d) The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to the Rev. Josie Midwinter for conducting the service, to Elizabeth Griffiths for playing the organ and to the Drayton ringers for providing an excellent tea.