

OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

**NORTH BUCKS BRANCH**

**MINUTES OF AUTUMN MEETING  
held at Bradwell Memorial Hall on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

**Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman, Graham Bartholomew, welcomed 23 members to the meeting.

**In Memoriam**

Members stood in silence to remember Hugh Butler of Whaddon who had passed away in the summer.

**Apologies for absence**

Alan, Tine, Alex and John Marchbank, Sheila Watts, Sheila Ware, Sheila Blenkhorn, Roy Keeves, Hilary, Claire, Alice and Sophie Reading, Jean Mattinsley, Zoe Jones, Hilarie Rogers, Ruth Groves

**Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the AGM held at Olney on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015 had been circulated prior to the meeting and were published on the Branch website. There were two amendments to note:

- Two of the new members elected at the last meeting (Martin Petchey and Roger Everson) were in fact re-elections so the minutes will be changed to reflect that.
- The first sentence will be changed to "The officers had agreed that Doug Hird would chair the meeting in the absence of Brian Newman".

Adoption of the minutes was agreed by a show of hands.

**Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**Election of new members**

Nominations were received for the following:

<u>Tower</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Second</u>
Shenley	Liam Spanner	Ann Birch	Lesley Belcher
Bradwell	Emily Guinness	Ian Green	Christine Abbott
Newton Longville	David Baskerville	Linda Maycroft	Sheila Watts

**Re-elections**

Newton Longville	John Clarke	Linda Maycroft	Sheila Watts
Newton Longville	Nigel Titley	Sheila Watts	Linda Maycroft
Newton Longville	Alexandra Titley	Doug Hird	Linda Maycroft

All were approved by show of hands.

## **“In Touch” editor**

The Chairman informed the meeting that Nick Read had resigned as “In Touch” editor. There was one nomination to take on the role. Lesley Belcher was proposed by Linda Maycroft and seconded by David Middleton. This was carried by show of hands.

There was now a vacancy for the RDL for the Buckingham Deanery.

## **Presentations**

### **Chairman’s Cup**

The competition had been held earlier in the afternoon at Bradwell and was won by the Newport Pagnell Deanery. The Chairman presented the Cup to Doug Hird.

### **Branch 6-bell Striking Competition**

The Chairman presented certificates as follows:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | Woughton        |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Branch Officers |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Loughton        |

Brian Baldwin reported that the Striking Competition trophy had been much admired by the parishioners of Woughton.

### **Guild 6-bell Striking Competition**

The Chairman presented a certificate for Highly Commended to Hanslope.

### **First Quarter Peal Certificates**

Graham said that the Officers had proposed that the Branch should award First Quarter Peal Certificates. The meeting was in favour of the idea. It would be advertised in “In Touch” and on the website.

## **Inception of Branch Bell Fund**

Doug gave a presentation introducing the idea of setting up a Branch Bell Fund. At this stage he would be explaining the proposal to the Branch which would be a starting point for discussion and a vote on the proposal would be taken at the next AGM in March.

- The Bell Fund would be set aside as part of the Branch accounts and ring-fenced and would be a separate item at the Branch AGM.
- The Branch already gives grants, but on an ad hoc basis, and is not widely known.
- There is currently no formal governance in place.
- The Fund would be used for bells and fittings, to include ropes, guides, frames, sound control and simulators and would be limited to work in North Bucks Branch towers. However, it would need to be made clear in what circumstances consumables would be included.
- Grants would be between £50 and 1% of the estimated cost to a maximum of £450, dependent on available funds and would be valid for three years (in line with how long faculties last).
- The Fund would have limited funds to start with, but would build up over time so fund raising will be necessary.

- The Fund would be managed by the Branch Treasurer. Trustees might be required. The Fund could be set up with its own management structure from the start, or it could wait until it is large enough to require one.
- The rules governing grants would be freely available and if any rules needed changing this would be done at the AGM.
- Applications should be supported by the church PCC or equivalent. The different church organisational structures in Milton Keynes would need to be taken into account.
- The question of who carries out inspections would need to be answered.
- There was a need for funding, most towers in the Branch required some work.
- The Branch should identify other branches in the ODG which have a Bell Fund and learn from their experience. The ODG's position on Branch Bell Funds should also be looked at.
  
- In summary:
- Pros
  - establishing a formal framework
  - ensuring the Branch does not run out of money by keeping grant money separate
  - available funds will be visible
  - can support more projects, especially small work
- Cons
  - more work to administer and to raise funds for the Bell Fund
  - the Guild already has two Bell Funds
  - limited use of money
  
- Ultimately, improving the bells in the Branch leads to better bells to ring and aids retention of ringers
  
- The Bell Fund proposal will be published in full in "In Touch" and will be fully discussed at the next AGM in March.

Graham thanked Doug for his presentation.

### **Loughton Grant**

Graham referred to the letter from the Churchwarden at Loughton seeking funds towards the cost of refurbishing the bells. Gary Reading spoke about the need for extensive work at Loughton. The last time any substantial work had been done was in the 1930s. The proposal was to grant £450. This was proposed by Becky Fawcett and seconded by Ann Birch. The proposal was carried by show of hands.

### **Leap Year Ringing**

Linda Maycroft gave a presentation on Leap Year Ringing.

- The Branch receives many requests for support, and in particular next year from Ringing for England, ART and the Guild Bell Fund.
- The idea is to have a sponsored Leap Year Ringing Wave across the Branch to take place on St George's Day in 2016
- All the ringable towers in the Branch would be rung one after the other throughout the day.
- The event would raise money and awareness of ringing.

The meeting was in favour of the idea. There followed a discussion on who to raise money for. There were three proposals:

A – a split between the ODG and ART

B – ART only

C – ODG only

The meeting supported A and C, but the percentage split between ODG and ART would need to be worked out.

Feedback was given regarding the sponsorship mechanism and it was felt that the best approach would be for the individual ringer to be sponsored. Further details will be communicated with the wider membership through “In Touch”.

### **Recruitment, training and retention**

Linda gave a presentation on recruitment, training and retention.

- The Branch's 2020 ambition is to have increased and retained the numbers of ringers in towers which have active bands in 2015 and to have formed new active bands in two more towers.
- A project has been commenced to design a method which can be used by towers to assist them with recruitment, training and retention.
- The age profile of ringers in the Branch matched the national profile with the majority falling in the 45-65 age bracket.
- Those in the younger age groups have competing demands on their time.
- Teachers – most ringing teachers in the Branch have no formal ringing teacher training, but use their long experience of ringing to train others
- Clusters of towers may be the way forward. Some already exist which work well in pooling ringers and teaching.
  
- The Branch therefore needs to:
  - Recruit more new ringers
  - Train people better
  - Motivate ringers to stay

The meeting then divided into three Breakout groups to discuss Recruitment; Training; Tower Clusters. Each group then summarised their discussions to the meeting.

Group One:

- Clusters are the way to go.
- Recruitment needs to be pro-active. Advertising and promoting ringing at existing events, eg church open days, can reach more people.
- Recruitment needs to start with the congregation.
- Trainers are doing a good job, but more should be encouraged to have a go at teaching.
- For retention and motivation, stepping stones and rewards are needed to mark achievements.
- There is a need to eliminate intimidation which is very off-putting to new ringers.

Group Two:

- Recruitment – make it easy to have a go at ringing. Open Days are good, but need to be focussed and follow-up is essential.

- Recruit from the congregation. It helps to have a face which is known in the church.
- Age groups – the young learn best, but have other calls on their time. At the end of the day, you have to reach who you have.
- Training – new ringers should be encouraged to visit other towers. Good stander-byers are needed to continually correct to discourage bad habits developing.
- Identify good role models for teaching and tower captains.
- Retention – need to motivate people to stay, perhaps by developing the social side of ringing. Better to learn as a group rather than individuals.

#### Group Three:

- Recruitment – a recent Open Evening at Bradwell had been a success. It was held on the normal practice night. It was actively promoted by the vicar during the service. There was no commitment involved, just coming along to find out more.
- It helps to recruit from the church community.
- Easier to learn in a group rather than individual. It was felt that the distribution of new ringers from the Big Ring Pull had been patchy.
- Worth looking at university societies, in particular, did Buckingham University have a society.

#### **Any other business**

There was no further business.

#### **Date of next meeting**

The AGM on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

The Chairman thanked Bradwell for hosting the ringing and meeting, and Andy Jowitt for taking the service.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.