

ODGCBR North Bucks Branch - Annual Reports 2020

Secretary

The first quarter of the year was almost normal with a full program for the year and positive objectives for taking part in all three of the Guild Striking Competitions. The Branch AGM was held on Saturday 7th March at Emberton. The usual and much-loved routines of pre meeting ringing, a Service, the meeting followed by an excellent tea were enjoyed by representatives of 16 towers. The only hint of changes ahead was the odd restriction of not shaking hands. The AGM turned out to be the last formal event of the year and the lockdown in the middle of March changed our Ringing World almost completely.

Very limited ringing has taken place since the original lockdown with many churches not having services for long periods and at the time of writing this report no services are taking place in the majority of North Bucks churches. The restrictions of social distancing, ventilation issues, limited services, time constraints and the personal safety of individuals have only been eased in a limited number of towers where adequate space exists and where family groups have made some ringing possible.

One tower, **Hanslope** has been busy with great results and equal measures of frustration. Hanslope bells were taken down from the tower by White's of Appleton in August 2019, and they were put into the church to enable people to come in and see them. They had a "Goodbye to the Bells" evening which was extremely well supported and raised several thousand pounds. White's then collected the bells and began working on them at their premises, with a planned return date to Hanslope of December 2019 / January 2020. However, after removing the headstocks they discovered that the 7th and tenor bells had too many holes in the crown so they had to be sent away for welding and then re-drilled. There was also a delay due to a backlog of work at the company where the frame was being cast. By this time it was March 2020 and the start of coronavirus pandemic which impacted further on the work schedule at White's.

The bells were eventually returned to Hanslope in August 2020 and once again were put on display in the church for people to view them, but under very controlled conditions due to the imposed restrictions of the virus, and they were unable to hold the envisaged big fundraising event to welcome the bells back to the church. In the event, there was a very lowkey Service of Dedication of the Bells, with a small and socially distanced congregation. The following week White's returned to put the bells back up into the tower, and over the next few weeks they completed the installation which was not made easy for them with all the Covid restrictions, and this also prevented them from ringing all eight bells together to try them out. The bells were finally inspected and signed off in October 2020, over a year after work had commenced on the bells, and this enabled the Hanslope Restoration Project to receive the money from the various grants that had been secured. So as of January 2021, there has been no ringing at Hanslope for seventeen months. A plan to ring for the first time on Remembrance Sunday was prevented by the second lockdown, and a similar plan for Christmas morning was thwarted by the third lockdown. They are now hoping to be able to ring them at Easter. As a result of the extra work required on the bells and an increase in the cost of the building work, there is still an amount of £8,000 outstanding and no prospect of being able to hold any money raising events for some time to come. If anybody enjoyed their last visit to Hanslope or would like to plan a ring on the refurbished ring and would like to make a donation, please contact Sheila by email: hanslope@northbucksbranch.org.uk

Branch and Guild Meetings have carried on during 2020 in virtual form using Zoom. Whilst the Branch has not had a formal program of activity there has been a wide variety of Handbell, Zoom social contacts and the use of Ringing Room and other online facilities. Whilst there is great uncertainty about the timing of a return to ringing the desire and aspirations are profound.

Assistant Ringing Master

The following is a summary of Towers that have been ringing during 2020 when live services have taken place. **A few bells:** Great Linford (5-6 bells), Newport Pagnell (4 bells), Bletchley (3 bells), Downs Barn (5-6 bells), Shenley (4 bells) Fortnightly, Emberton (3 bells), Loughton (2 bells), Lillington Lovell (5 bells), Old Bradwell (3 bells). **Just one bell:** Woughton on the green, Olney, Simpson, Leckhampstead, Great Brickhill, Maids Moreton and **No ringing:** Stowe, Hanslope, Buckingham, Fenny Stratford, Sherington, Whaddon, Old Wolverton, Wavendon, Shalstone, Stony Stratford, Calverton.

Archives Report 2020

2020 hasn't been much of a year for new ringing records but there is still plenty of the past to be researched.

The Little Horwood restoration project has organised a number of interesting Zoom sessions focussing on the history of the bells and ringers in the village. As North Bucks used to extend this far south our archives contain much of interest. I have contributed to a number of these sessions and carried out an inspection of the old installation. As a result, Little Horwood now appears in the archive web site.

The archive database is being tidied up with a lot of checking of typos and indexing of newspaper articles. A number of photos have also been added. Other research has looked into the tunes played by the 1793 Joseph Eayre tune machine at Newport Pagnell.

I have developed a set of map pages showing the locations of bells cast by particular founders. This came out of an expression of interest in the Drayton Parslow bells at Little Horwood and evolved into a wider set of pages. Shortly afterwards, and coincidentally, the idea was also implemented on the Dove web site. Their version shows current bells while ours attempts to include bells that have subsequently been re-cast.

This dataset of historic bells also lends itself to the addition of a time-line on the tower page. This shows the history of the bells in a particular tower and is helpful in a number of cases where the county book isn't clear. I am also communicating any corrections I find to Matthew Smith regarding his county books.

2020 Webmaster Report

While the number of visitors to our website has dropped off for obvious reasons during 2020, we have had an opportunity to attend to some much needed maintenance work. With generous assistance from Gary Reading we have modernised the 'look and feel' of the site, replaced some obsolete elements and now have a cleaner, brighter looking website which will be easier to use and maintain in the future.

In July our biennial website subscription was renewed with LCN.com at a modest price increase but still eligible for the 50% discount offered to volunteer organisations.

Following advice from the Guild with regard to data protection of our members email addresses we have completed an exercise to replace the publicly displayed Tower Correspondent email addresses on our website with alias addresses. In the process we were also able to validate and update our Tower Correspondent records.

Steve Thomason - North Bucks Webmaster

Treasurer's Report for the year to December 31st 2020

The accounts are presented on a Receipts and Payments basis with a final bank balance of £5710.93, which is allocated across three funds, General, Training and Bell Fund. A copy of the accounts is enclosed. They have been submitted to the Independent Examiner, Peter Green. We maintain one current account with Lloyds Bank. The principal payments are made online based on a single authority principle with prior written confirmation by the Secretary, which needs your approval. When cheques are used, which is rare, two of the three current signatories, Anne, Brian and Martin are applied.

I seek your approval to these accounts and banking arrangements.

The income is all derived from Members with a basic subscription of £8 for adults and £6 for Juniors, an optional levy of £7 for the Branch Bell Fund and a small number of personal donations.

Receipts

Subscriptions	£1512.00
Bell Fund Levy	£957.00
Donations	£51.00

Payments

Postage/Paper	£114.26
Zoom Membership	£143.88
Web Hosting renewal	£99.50
Microsoft Office Access	£59.99
Printing	£59.76

The Bell Fund grant of £1000.00 agreed for Hanslope has been paid.

Anne Nightingale

Guild Reps Report

2020 started almost normally! We were elected as Guild Representatives at the Branch AGM in March, and the following week travelled to Tilehurst to attend the Guild General Committee Meeting and Bell Fund Meetings.

These meetings were unusual as the country was about to go into lock-down and there was no refreshments provided. A first for Alan in over 30 years of attending these meetings!

The Bell Fund AGM came first. The ODG Restoration Fund had been closed and it's assets transferred to the Bell Fund at the end of 2019 and so the Meeting considered the changes to its responsibility and ability to give support to augmentation project elements.

The business was concluded within an hour.

The General Committee Meeting came next and dealt with all the usual business, accepting the committee reports, and preparing for the Guild AGM in May.

Preparations were made for the AGM elections, plans agreed for the budgets and election of Guild office holders.

We attended the General Committee meeting on 28th November by Zoom.

Within the discussion about the Youth Fund the Treasurer reported that HMRC suggested that the Guild should become a charity and register with the Charity Commission. This would entail compiling a comprehensive members data base. It was suggested this be attempted in 2 or 3 branches initially as a pilot.

It was been suggested that when normal meetings are held in the future the Zoom facility should be still offered for those who cannot attend.

ODG finances broke even in 2020 The meeting voted to keep Guild Fees the same but allow branches to decide what they want on top of that.

The 8 bell striking competition to held on the same day and same place as the AGM in 2021. This to be reviewed in November and is dependent on Covid restrictions.

For the Annual Report it was proposed that Tower correspondants should have a generic email address. Also 'protected persons' should be redacted from lists of tower members. It was proposed that old copies of Odd Bob should be withdrawn from towers and shredded to protect peoples personal information.

Cath Robinson grand daughter of Rev FE Robinson, has donated a silver bowl to the Guild.

Alan and Ted