

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

East Berks & South Bucks Branch

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Chalfont St Giles on Saturday 22 April 2017

The AGM was preceded by ringing and a short, Hymns of Praise-style Service at which the Incumbent, the Rev Ian Brown, officiated. The Chairman, John Davidge, opened the Meeting at 5.15pm. The attendance sheet for the afternoon was signed by 30 members, representing 13 towers and 1 unattached member, plus 1 visitor.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Hilarie Rogers, Master, ODG, Stuart Gibson, Treasurer, ODG, Elva Ainsworth, Sheila Bruce, Graham and Katharine Firman, Janet Gillard, Roy Lyle, Patricia and Robert Newton.

2. Minutes of the HYM held at Lane End on 8 October 2016

These had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was pointed out that although John Davidge had stated at the meeting that the Branch Bell Restoration Fund could provide grants for ropes, this had subsequently been corrected after reference to the Guidelines. The correction will be inserted in the section **Grants Available** after which it was agreed that the Minutes be accepted as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

There were no further matters arising.

4. Obituaries

The following obituaries (recorded here verbatim as delivered) were read:

Reg Renn, Clewer. Read by Georgine von Eckenwort

Reg died in his sleep on 22nd January 2017 while on holiday at his godson's farm in Devon. His dog Moss, who was with him, will continue to live there.

Reg learned to ring as a boy at Clewer, where he rang for many years. He later became a regular ringer at Winkfield. He followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a member of the Curfew Tower, where his father had rung for 62 years. Reg junior rang there from 1980 until 2016 at which point he was made an honorary member.

Reg's favourite pastimes were fly fishing and shooting, both pheasant and clay. Like many fishermen, he rarely ate fish himself, but distributed his catch among neighbours. He fished for England, tied his own flies, and regularly helped out at charity fishing events. He made bespoke walking sticks from wood which he gathered and stored to ensure they were exactly right for purpose. He made the handles from ram's horns which he soaked and bent to shape, decorating the stick for each individual.

During his working life, Reg taught motor mechanics at Windsor and Langley College of Further Education, using unconventional methods for which he became well known. He had been treasurer at the Youth and Community Centre, helped at the King George V1 Day Centre and was a Scout Master. Reg had also been a keen allotment gardener.

At St Andrews Clewer he had been churchwarden for many years, and was later the current Rector's 'Go to Man' (her own words). On the pew, where he sat every Sunday, there is a cushion embroidered with a bell, a fish and a gun.

Reg was always willing to help others if asked or he would volunteer his help where he saw the need. He was a born teacher, whether motor mechanics, fishing, or gardening. He will be sadly missed by many people. Reg leaves behind one daughter as both his wife and other daughter have already passed away.

Paddy McDermott, Slough. Prepared by David Rowlands and read by John Dieppe

Paddy McDermott was a loyal and dependable ringer based at St Mary's Slough for about 40 years. I first met him in

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1980 when he was a regular at the Langley practices run by Jeff Birt, and he soon after began attending our weekly practice at Iver too. He was unusual among Christian ringers in being of the Roman Catholic persuasion (after the Reformation few RC churches had bells hung for change-ringing), and on Sundays used to attend Mass before arriving (sometimes a little out of breath) to ring for the Anglican service at St Mary's Slough. He was a good friend who supported our practices at Iver every week for more than 30 years, as well as ringing with us for special occasions. He was a modest and self-effacing person with many unusual interests and abilities, and surprisingly diverse knowledge. A talented gadgeteer, he took advantage of the transistor and micro-chip revolutions in electronics to produce a hand-held "gizmo" (he called it) that would perform pre-set change ringing methods in a chromatic scale of electronic "buzzes", and which he named "Clanger". Clanger went through several marques of improvement, development and complexity. I urged him to write it up for "The Ringing World" or for "Practical Electronics" but, alas, like many inventors, he was handier with a soldering-iron than with a pen! Clanger is now in the Guild Library

Rest in Peace, Paddy. We miss you!

Arthur Grout, Hitcham. Prepared by Jo Eden and read by Terry Cheney

Arthur was a much loved and loyal member of the tower bell ringers at St Mary Hitcham where he had learned to ring as a boy, at which time he was a member of Hitcham and Taplow church choirs having been brought up in Taplow and attending local schools.

His wife Doris also learned to ring bells as did his brothers, one of whom, John, rings at Henley I understand. They were married in Hitcham church in spring 1948 and had three children, Shirley, Jenny and David.

During the war he was in the Royal Navy using the skills of semaphore and Morse code he had learned in the scouts; firstly on gunboats and then on HMS Queen Elizabeth in particular sending messages between Princess Elisabeth and Philip Mountbatten. After the war he started the 1st Lent Rise scout group and was instrumental in getting the plot of land in Institute Road where the Scout hut is still in use. He was awarded the Silver Acorn medal which he received at Windsor Castle from his colleague from Navy days, the Duke of Edinburgh.

When he came back to ringing after attending a wedding at Hitcham and being invited by Cliff Blundell to take a rope he said he was pleased he could still ring after 40 years!! This was about 25 years ago and he Doris and some other 'elderly' gentlemen practiced in the afternoon. When we were ringing round the font he was one of the few ringers who could ring the treble without knocking the font about.....even with flowers in it. When we were able to ring again after the church reordering he managed the stairs pretty well until he became unwell. Even at 90 he was still determined to get a ring in but was easily tired. Even this year when I spoke to him about membership he still wanted to be counted despite a damaged shoulder from a fall. Ever the optimist he thought he might get back to it again, but it wasn't to be. He will certainly be missed.

A period of silence was observed in memory of these former members.

5. Officers' reports

The Chairman's and Ringing Master's reports had been circulated in advance and there were no questions or comments.

The Treasurer's report and the draft Accounts had been circulated in advance. There being no questions, he proposed that the Accounts be accepted. This was seconded by Maryanne Roach.

6. Election of members

The following had been nominated for membership of the Guild:

AMERSHAM Oliver Lockwood	DENHAM Luke Boreham Roy Lyle Keith Sugden
BRAY Tim Palmer Maggie Ross	HIGH WYCOMBE Sander de Groot

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Michael Trimm	
BURNHAM Paul Milson	MARLOW Teresa Smith
CHALFONT St. PETER Sally Lippiatt Ruth Abigail Williams	TURVILLE Rebecca Richardson Ava Ainsworth Mark Ainsworth Peter Botevyle Tony Chavez
CLEWER Carol Hughes Bernard O'Keefe	WRAYSBURY Chloe Lunnen-kay Gina Barber Zoe Barber
RE-ELECTION, HUGHENDEN Verity Nicholls	

The election of these members en bloc was proposed by John Dieppe, seconded by Jan Galloway and the motion carried. Keith Sugden was present at the meeting and received his certificate of Guild membership from the Chairman.

7. Election of Officers for 2017/18

The Chairman handed over to the Ringing Master. John Davidge's re-election was proposed by John Dieppe, seconded by Mandy Salter and carried. The Chairman then took the Chair again and the following Officers were elected or re-elected:

- Ringling Master – Ken Darvill, Beaconsfield (proposed by Jan Galloway, seconded by John Dieppe)
- Deputy Ringling Master – Jan Galloway, Amersham (proposed by John Davidge, seconded by John Dieppe)
- Secretary – no nominations
- Treasurer / Membership Secretary – no nominations
- Newsletter Editor – Patricia Newton, although not present had indicated she was willing to stand again (proposed by Peter Wiltshire, seconded by Meryl Kennedy)
- Independent Assessor – John Dieppe (proposed John Davidge, seconded by Ken Darvill)
- Branch Representatives on the Guild General Committee – Jan Galloway (proposed by John Davidge, seconded by Janice Dieppe). One vacancy remains. John Davidge also sits on the General Committee in his capacity as Chair of the Towers and Belfries Sub-Committee.

The Chairman thanked the outgoing Officers, Maryanne Roach (Secretary), John Dieppe (Treasurer) and Stan Barlow (Independent Assessor).

8. Appointment of other Managers

- IT Manager and Webmaster – although these are really two separate roles, Ken Darvill agreed to handle them both for one year.
- 100 Club Manager - Margaret Carlyle

The Chairman thanked Graham Firman and Maryanne Roach for their hard work on the new website and thanked the outgoing 100 Club Manager, Stuart Galloway.

9. Report and Accounts of Fundraising Committee

These had been circulated in advance. They were read and accepted, there being no questions. The Chairman congratulated and thanked Derek Fowles for his many years' work as Chair of the Fundraising Committee (and previously also the 100 Club).

10. Bucks and Berks Young Ringers

Peter Jasper's report had been circulated in advance and he added to this at the Meeting, saying that he hoped to be able to enter a team for the Ringing World Youth Competition in 2018 and he was pleased to be invited to enter a "scratch" team in the Branch 6 bell striking competition. He thanked the Branch for their support regarding Safeguarding, donations and

provision of refreshments.

John Davidge explained that a *draft* Safeguarding Policy is being discussed by the Guild and Oxford Diocesan Safeguarding Officer which, if agreed, would require extra DBS-checked individuals of both genders to be present when teaching those under 16 and vulnerable adults, unless the parents were present.

John Dieppe had pointed out that Branch funds are providing £10/month in donations for towers used for the youth practices and that this could be considered anomalous when those towers are in our own Branch. However, it was pointed out that donations were usually left after in-Branch tower outings and that this is money well spent encouraging young ringers. Peter Jasper proposed that the Branch should continue paying these donations, Ken Darvill seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

11. Discussion - Should the Branch introduce defined durations of office?

Members had been asked to consider whether the Branch should institute defined terms for all Officers following a staggered schedule. People at the Meeting spoke both in favour of the concept and against. The following points were made either in discussion at the Meeting or by prior input by email:

Advantages

- Easier to get rid of someone who is not doing a good job than having to oust them
- It is unlikely that a person would still be effective in the role if there was a longer maximum term of office eg 6-8 years
- People may be more willing to stand if they know it is only for, say, 2-3 years
- People are always hesitant about standing for election against a sitting Officer
- More people would be involved and there would be useful “new blood/skills”
- Barring unforeseen events, major positions won’t fall vacant at the same time

Disadvantages

- Good people in post would have to stand down at the end of their term of office and there may not be a suitable replacement. It would be a shame to have to lose someone who is doing a good job
- People would feel that they had to take on the role for “x” years, which could put them off standing eg in the case of Branch Representative it is good to get new people involved to “try out” the post but if they don’t think it is for them they should be able stand down as soon as they like
- For several of the posts it takes a year or two to get through the calendar of events and to get to grips with the job. Good officers should be encouraged to stay in post to be able to maximise on their experience; we wouldn’t want to lose them as soon as they are getting confident in the post
- It is difficult finding new people to take on posts. If Officers had to stand down we would probably end up with posts remaining vacant
- It is possible to encourage individuals to take over positions without fixed terms
- It is not required as the Branch has a steady turnover anyway

It was pointed out that the Branch used to have 3 year fixed terms of office although no-one was sure when or why this was altered.

Branch Officers will consider this input and decide whether to propose implementation of fixed terms at a subsequent meeting.

12. Guild activities

The Chairman noted that Great Missenden have requested assistance hosting the May 2019 Guild AGM. He has suggested they raise the issue again nearer the time when they have a proposed route. (It was noted that EBSB is also due to host the Spring General Committee Meeting that year.)

The Ringing Master reminded people of the Guild Ringing Day on Monday 1 May in the Bicester Branch and the Guild AGM on Saturday 20 May in the Reading Branch.

13. Any other business

Ken Darvill reminded members of the Walking Outing taking place in the Henley area on Friday 5 May. It was noted that these outings alternate between Saturdays (when weddings can intervene) and Fridays (when some may be working or at regular classes).

Peter Jasper commented that his young ringers are precluded from attending mid week Branch activities because they

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(narrowly) miss half term holidays. This had been planned purposely when there were no younger ringers because many adults tended to be on holiday at these times but the Officers agreed to review the situation when planning the 2018 programme.

The Chairman thanked the incumbent, the Rev Ian Brown, for the use of the bells and church and for officiating at the Service. John Davidge also thanked the organist, Fred Reynolds, and Sylvia Morrison Moore and other members of the local band who provided tea.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.20 pm.

Maryanne Roach
Secretary, EBSB
April 2017