

Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

East Berks & South Bucks Branch

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Bray on Saturday 28th April 2018

The AGM was preceded by ringing, tea and cakes. The Chairman, John Davidge, opened the Meeting at 5.00pm. The attendance sheet for the meeting was signed by 24 members, representing 8 towers.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Hilarie Rogers (ODG Master) Tony Crabtree (ODG Deputy Master), Stuart Gibson (ODG Treasurer), Francoise Allen, Ralph Bagge, Sheila Bruce, Angela Darvill, Ken Darvill, Anne Frank, Janet Gillard, Roger Lewiston, Josie Martin, Helen Riddoch, Tina Ruff, Mandy Salter and Peter Wiltshire.

2. Minutes of the HYM held at Chalfont St Peter on 14th October 2017

These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were accepted with no amendments.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Obituaries

The following obituaries were read:

Stirling Maguire (read by Fred Reynolds):

Stirling Maquire came to ringing late in life. He lived in Stoke Mandeville next to the church. He became the main stay of ringing there and encouraged many learners and got ringers in from local towers to help. He moved to Chesham about 15 years ago and became a loyal member of the band, but continued to support Stoke Mandeville for some time. He didn't enjoy perfect health, and when well in his 70's the unfriendly access at Chesham forced him to call it a day with ringing. Stirling was interested in local history and volunteered at Chesham museum. There as a 1748 Whitechapel bell in the old town hall that was demolished in 1965. The bell, which had been in the care of the demolition company, was returned to the town and given to the museum, and Stirling was instrumental in getting it installed in the clock tower in the market square. After Stirling died there was a memorial service in the market square and the bell was named the "Stirling Bell". He would have been pleased to know that it continues to strike the hour.

Howard Oglesby (read by Robert Newton):

Howard rang at Hitcham where he married Frances, and was EBSB Branch Treasurer during the 1970's. (1972 to 1979?). He lived in Burnham before moving to Sunningdale where there are only 2 or 3 bells, and became an unattached member of EBSB Branch. He rang at the Curfew Tower for many years, including in a few peals. He also rang peals for the Zipper Society. He was a founding member (with Ron Russ) of the Society of Raving Ringers and was Master in 1963/64; he was also a member of the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths. Howard eventually moved to Brackley and did some local ringing there. Howard died on 17th December 2017, and his ashes have recently been interred at the foot of Hitcham bell tower.

F Ronald Forster (read by Jan Galloway):

Ron Forster learnt to ring as a teenager at his home tower of Christ Church Burbage, near Buxton Derbyshire, where his father, Frederick A Forster, was a lifetime ringer. He rang his first peal, Plain Bob Minor on the 5th, aged 17, on 25 February 1950 in 2hrs 58 mins. It was the first peal by Burbage ringers since 1915 and his father was also in the band. He was very proud to have his name inscribed on a pealboard in the tower. On 3rd February 1951, the local band rang a special spliced peal at Burbage to wish Ron well on his leaving to do National Service in the RAF. For all bar one it was their first peal of spliced (Oxford, Kent, London Scholars, Kingston, Overton and Sandal) in 2hrs 42 mins. He rang 2 other peals in 1951, Kent Treble Bob Major on 6 January at Fairfield in Derbyshire and, on 1 July Treble Bob Minor at Burbage. He managed to fit in some ringing whilst he was in the RAF, ringing at Hereford Cathedral on one occasion. After National Service, his job and marriage gave him little time to continue his ringing but he was inspired to return to ringing by a TV production of Dorothy L Sayers The Nine Taylors in the early seventies. He started ringing regularly at Amersham in May 1974 on the old heavy 6 and went on the trip to Taylors in Loughborough when the bells were recast and augmented to 8. He rang two quarters at Amersham on the newly recast bells; Grandsire Triples on 4 May 1983 and Stedman Triples on 1 June 1985. He rang the tenor on both occasions. He continued to ring regularly for Sunday services and weddings until he started having elbow and shoulder problems in 1997. He always kept an interest in what was going on and was delighted when a fellow ex-BBC man and new Amersham ringer, Steven Newnham, made a

demonstration model bell, complete with wheel and sally, out of a small bell Ron had. Ron was a gentle man, with a lovely sense of humour. I have fond memories of ringing with him.

Mary Lees (read by John Davidge):

Mary was one of those loyal and dedicated ringers who whilst regularly turning up Sunday by Sunday and on practice nights, are relatively unknown outside their own tower. Mary was taught to ring, together with Ken, by my predecessor as Ringing Master, Myles Hawkins, during the seventies. Both she and Ken became very regular ringers, turning up promptly Sunday by Sunday (for both services) with Mary disappearing at the last minute to change for the choir. For weddings the process was reversed, with Mary slipping out of the choir, during the signing of the registers, to join the ringers. Both Mary & Ken became competent ringers, ringing up to Cambridge Major & Stedman Triples. Their attendance was exemplary, although in later years, after the introduction of a new monthly service (laughingly called All Age Worship) both she and Ken then found it necessary to visit their family (also monthly!). Mary had strong views on lots of subjects and was not afraid to express them, something which I valued highly.

During the eighties, we had a number of young ringers who were keen to ring in other towers and we were able to arrange weekend outings, with other ringers, in other areas of the country (now largely impractical because of the current safeguarding requirements). Their other commitments meant that Mary and Ken preferred to remain at Chalfont, where they helped to ensure that the bells were still rung for services while we were away. When, in 1992/3, the bells were dismantled and sent to Whitechapel for tuning, Mary (who was not overly keen on walking about on bell frames) nevertheless played her part by labelling the various bits so that we knew where to put them back, and providing refreshment for the workers. Her loyalty and support I valued very highly and it was a big loss to the band when, through frailty, she finally had to give up; however she still retained her interest and would frequently ask after the ringing. Mary was a keen supporter of the Friends of the Church, particularly in respect of Quiz Suppers and churchyard working parties. For Quiz Suppers she usually managed to get together tables of knowledgeable people who, if they didn't win, were frequently in the top three. Mary, until she became too frail, was also a tireless, all-weather supporter of the churchyard working parties, always present whatever the weather, and once again a key part of the team. She was also at one time a keen marmalade maker for the fundraising committee and also helped to man the Amersham stall. Finally, I would like to say how pleased and thankful I am to have known Mary and benefited from her support.

Revd John Grover (read by Marcia Dieppe):

John was vicar at Cookham from 1965 – 1985. He died on 6th February this year, just before his 89th birthday. Although not a ringer himself, John Grover was Chairman of the East Berks & South Bucks Branch from 22nd July 1972 until 23rd April 1983. He took over as EBSB Chairman from Rev Corr, Rector of Denham, who had resigned the post due to ill health. Following his commissioning as Rural Dean of Maidenhead, John retired from the Chairmanship at the Branch AGM on 23rd April 1983, and was succeeded by Stan Darmon. When he entered the Ministry, John was a Curate at St Paul's church in Maidenhead – a daughter church of All Saints, Boyne Hill. When St Paul's was demolished in 1963, John returned to All Saints until being appointed as vicar of Cookham in 1965. Having known him myself from the start of his ministry at Cookham, he was always most supportive of the ringers. Indeed, hardly any Sunday went by without John (or sometimes his Curate), visiting us during evening ringing. After leaving Cookham, for a while, John and his wife ran a retreat in Hampshire. Eventually they moved to the Scottish borders, and from there, moved down to the valley. John became Honorary Priest at St John the Evangelist Church in Jedburgh, where a packed memorial service was held for him on 20th February. John was a lovely vicar. Many years after leaving Cookham, on the occasions when he came back to the area to visit, he would always greet you by name, a hug, and with a warm and genuine smile. I'm sure he will continue to be missed by very many people for a long time to come. RIP.

A period of silence was observed in memory of these people, and also of John Hollis (Marlow) and of Janet Livingston (who learnt to ring at Slough, married David and moved to Aldermaston where she rang for many years).

5. Officers' reports

- a) The Chairman's report had been circulated in advance. It was noted that the 2017 Guild 6-bell Contest was at North Leigh, not at Penn. John Davidge brought attention to his last sentence saying that the number of people prepared to ring out of their own towers is falling.
- b) The Ringing Master's report had been circulated in advance. No further comments were made.
- c) The accounts and Treasurer's report had been circulated in advance. There were no queries, and Peter

Jasper (Independent Assessor) said that the accounts had been well documented and were easy to audit. The accounts were proposed by Michael Bayley, seconded by Jan Galloway and accepted nem con.

6. Election of members

a) Edward Westlake (unattached) had been proposed for membership prior to a peal in December. His membership was seconded by Peter Jasper and accepted.

b) The following had been nominated for membership of the Guild by members of their towers:

Amersham

Matthew Johnson

Beaconsfield

Kerry Smaje

Bill Edwards

David Knowles

Burnham

Toby Palfrey

Chalfont St Giles

Caroline Jackson

Chesham

Keith Bond

Martine Bond

Clive O'Sullivan

Clewer

Jennifer Yates

Denham

Matthew Cadman

Fulmer

Gilbert Runnicles

Pamela Runnicles (re-election)

Hambleden

Bettina Zietman

Christine Wride

High Wycombe

Sheila George (re-election)

Hughenden

Michelle K F Bailey

Gillian Hargreaves

Elaine Morley

Cordelia Thompson

Albertine Trobridge

Georgia E Wilson

Marlow

Jacob Minihane

Murray Whittaker

Michael Spracklen (re-election)

Old Windsor

Joanna Wattis

Penn

Duncan Reeve

John Whiteman (re-election)

West Wycombe

Michelle Woodward

Tim Walker

Hazel Stansbury

Gill Marman

Elaine Tranter

Alys Eley

c) Renny Thomas and Euan Thomas had requested to be elected as unattached members. They were nominated by Jan Galloway and seconded by Peter Jasper.

All new members were elected unopposed.

Cordelia Thompson, Elaine Morley and Michelle Bailey were present at the meeting and were presented with their membership certificates by the Chairman.

7. Election of Officers for 2017/18

Jan Galloway (Deputy Ringing Master) took the chair for the election of chairman. John Davidge, agreeing to serve for one more year, was proposed by John Dieppe and seconded by Fred Reynolds. He was elected unopposed and took the Chair again. The following Officers were elected or re-elected:

- a) Ringing Master – Peter Jasper, High Wycombe (proposed by David Cornwall, seconded by Jan Galloway)
- b) Deputy Ringing Master – Angela Darvill, Beaconsfield (proposed by Robert Newton, seconded by Rosalind Garrett-Bowes)
- c) Secretary – Patricia Newton, High Wycombe (proposed by John Davidge, seconded by Michael Bayley)
- d) Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Michael Bayley, Penn (proposed by John Davidge, seconded by Peter Jasper)
- e) Newsletter Editor – Patricia Newton, High Wycombe (proposed by David Cornwall, seconded by Alison Bayley)

- f) Independent Assessor – Peter Blower, High Wycombe (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Peter Jasper)
- g) Branch Representatives on the Guild General Committee – Rosalind Garrett-Bowes, Amersham (proposed by Jan Galloway, seconded by John Davidge), Peter Jasper, High Wycombe (proposed by David Cornwall, seconded by John Davidge), Jan Galloway (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by John Davidge).

Marcia Dieppe proposed a vote of thanks to the Secretary, and the Chairman thanked the outgoing Ringing Masters.

8. Appointment of other Managers

- a) IT Manager and Webmaster – although these are really two separate roles, Ken Darvill had agreed to handle them both (proposed Robert Newton, seconded Jan Galloway)
- b) 100 Club Manager - Margaret Carlyle (proposed John Davidge, seconded David Cornwall)

9. Report and Accounts of Fundraising Committee

These had been circulated in advance. In the absence of Derek Fowles (Chairman), Patricia Newton (Secretary of the Fundraising Committee) noted that £1500 had been donated to the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund from sales profits and £600 from the 100 Club. One new member (Jen Slade, Beaconsfield) had joined the committee, but if anyone else has fund raising ideas and would like to join the committee they would be very welcome. Robert Newton paid tribute to this committee. He said that the success of the Bell Fund means that the fund is able to make phenomenal grants. A large proportion of the money in the capital account has been raised by our committee. John Davidge asked why more had been given to the Bell Fund than had been raised – the accounts show a deficiency of £131.91 after the donation for £1500 had been taken out. Patricia Newton pointed out that each year Derek Fowles considers the level of stock and what we might need to purchase in the early months of the year before deciding how much to transfer to the Bell Fund and how much to keep in reserve.

10. Bucks and Berks Young Ringers

Peter Jasper's report had been circulated. He said that at the ten practices there had been at least 11 young ringers plus adult helpers ringing rounds to surprise, and 10 new people had joined in the last year. They will be entering the Ringing World National Youth Contest. Peter Jasper will be stepping down from organizing these practices, and we are pleased that Josie Godfrey will take over (at least in the short term). Tower Captains are asked to encourage their young ringers to attend these practices.

Maggie Ross asked if the organiser of the young ringers' practices should be an official post. This will be discussed at the next officers' meeting.

11. A.O.B.

The Chairman referred back to the comment in his report that people are not going to other towers. He noted that the unwillingness to travel to other towers was also reflected in the results from the last survey. It was pointed out that there is quite a lot of support between towers. John Davidge said that his comment was based on attendance at Branch practices. Rosalind Garrett-Bowes commented that it was incumbent on people who want to get better to go to towers where people can help them. Jan Galloway pointed out that it is helpful if inexperienced ringers are accompanied by an experienced ringer. John Davidge stated that people feel stressed outside their own tower.

A vote of thanks was given to the ringers of Bray for allowing us to ring at their tower and for the refreshments.

The meeting closed at 6.05 pm