

# **Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers**

## **East Berks & South Bucks Branch**

### **Minutes of the EBSB Branch AGM at All Saints' High Wycombe on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

The meeting was attended by 29 members representing 9 towers, plus Chris Mundy (Guild Deputy Master)

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction:**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He thanked Fr Anthony Searle, Team Rector of High Wycombe, for the excellent service and Philip Wayne for playing the organ so brilliantly. He also thanked the High Wycombe ringers for the refreshments.

**Apologies** were received from:

Katie Lane (Guild Master), Peter Blower, Vikki Bulbeck, Angela Darvill, Ken Darvill, Mick Francis, Janet Gillard, Jill Glennerster, Kathryn Harris, Mike Spracklen, Fred Reynolds, Tina Ruff, Pamela Walters, Emma Warburton and James White.

#### **2. Minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting held on Saturday 14th October 2023 at Chalfont St Giles**

These had been circulated via the User Group. They were accepted and signed by the Chairman.

#### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

#### **4. Obituaries:**

##### **The Rt Revd Dr Alan Wilson, Bishop of Buckingham:**

Patricia Newton (Secretary) noted that Bishop Alan had been President of the East Berks and South Bucks Branch since he became Bishop of Buckingham in 2003. We had little contact with him at Branch level but many will have listened to one of his wonderful sermons. He was a master of flitting from one subject to another and pulling all his thoughts together to produce an entertaining, intellectual and thought provoking speech. He preached at the service of dedication of the new bells at High Wycombe and also the service celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication. The service of thanksgiving for the life of Bishop Alan was held at High Wycombe as is available to watch on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oJO42dVsgQ>.

##### **Sylvia Harrington** (tribute written by Graham Firman, read by Robert Newton)

31/03/1940 – 4/05/2023

Sylvia joined the St Michael, Bray band in the early 1980s. She had learnt to ring as a teenager at Walberton, a six-bell tower in West Sussex, and went on to experience ringing on 8 by attending practices at the nearby towers of Arundel and Chichester Cathedral. She rang her first peal on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1955.

She was a member of the band at St Mary, Putney in her 20s but then had an extended break from ringing until moving to Maidenhead. Sylvia became a loyal and dependable member of the Bray band, hardly missing any practices or Sunday morning ringing sessions, and regularly ringing for other occasions such as quarter peals and striking competitions.

Sylvia was a first-class striker and was more than happy to learn new surprise major methods as the repertoire of the Bray band increased.

The Bray ringers have always retired to the pub after practices and Sylvia was a regular. She had many stories to tell about her other interests – diving, gardening, painting, walking and the holidays she took with her husband, Bill. She lived life to the full.

Her funeral was attended by several of the Bray, and ex-Bray, ringers, having rung a quarter peal to her memory immediately before the service. We will remember her commitment to the Bray band, her skills as a ringer and her good company. May she rest in peace.

##### **Mary Haskell** (tribute written by Cliff Blundell, read by Robert Newton)

Those of us who knew Mary before she had to stop ringing because of problems with her legs, may not be surprised to know that she has left a lengthy file covering both the ringing history of herself, her husband, David, and several of her four children and ringing at Burnham over the past 150 years. Having learnt to ring as one of George Gilbert's girls in the early 1950s, she rang her first ¼ peal at Hitcham on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1956 at the age of 14. Her 27<sup>th</sup> quarter was a family event when, as part of a meeting of the Haskell Family History Society (of which Mary was secretary and prime mover for many years), Mary was joined by her husband, David and

their older daughter, Rachel. Mary also rang 5 peals, including one at Boyne Hill when the late Queen opened the new Town Hall in 1963. She had also rung for the late Queen's Coronation in 1953.

Mary shared her ringing career between Burnham and Hitcham, serving as tower secretary at Burnham from 1983 to 1990, before handing over to Lloyd Cartwright, and as Tower Captain, taking over from Giles Blundell in 1994, and handing over to Cliff Blundell in 2000. Her list of officers includes several of George Gilbert's pre-war boys' band who went on to serve in the forces during the second World War. It also includes Gordon Limmer's name as Tower Captain from 1932 to 1975 and as secretary/treasurer from 1979 to 1981 and as treasurer from 1982 to 1998.

Like Mary herself, the file of her ringing history, which is now a part of the history of ringing in Burnham during the past 150 years, is a scholarly record of village, church and ringing life in Burnham. I am finding it difficult to put it down. Mary would be pleased to think that she has made a lasting mark for us to emulate. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

#### **Patti Walsh** (tribute by Sheila Bruce)

Patti Walsh, who died in November 2023, lived nearly her whole life in Hambleden. She was brought up by her mother who was a single parent and lived in the Pheasants Hill area of the village – her mother worked as a housekeeper to a military gentleman, Commander Piggott.

Patti attended Gillotts School in Henley and later worked in administration in the Young Offenders' Centres -first at Finnamore Wood near Frieth and then, when that closed, at Huntercombe. When her mother died, she moved to the mobile home park (Swiss Farm) near Henley.

She was a committed member of the Hambleden tower and served as Tower Secretary. As far as method ringing was concerned, it was not her priority but she did call changes from time to time. She was short in stature and used boxes and also a rope extension. As far as the Hambleden records show, she didn't ring any peals or quarter peals and it was doubtful that she ever rang at many towers other than Hambleden. She had strong views on the type of ringing she wanted while her ashes were being interred in Hambleden Churchyard - in her words, 'happy bells, no tolling or muffles'.

She gave up ringing about 17 years ago due to ill health, not long after the bells were augmented from 6 to 8 in 2007. She wrote a very interesting account of the history of the band from 1970 to 2008 and the project to augment the ring and also shared some photographs of the band and the bellhangers at the try-out of the augmented ring at Easter 2007. She supported Hambleden church in other ways, including looking after the Christmas crib and its figures in the church.

She and the Hambleden organist, Christine, together helped the Rev'd Wilfred Watts to produce an interesting booklet about his time as the Rector of Hambleden.

Outside of ringing and the church, Patti was something of a poetess and wrote a poem for my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. One of her main hobbies was gardening and she loved cats, being a cat-owner.

All in all, Patti was a bit of a legend in Hambleden and will be much missed by her friends and family.

#### **Ian Desborough** (1951-2024) (tribute by Ann Davies)

Ian was born in January 1951, and although probably not known by many in the Branch, he had been a member of the band at Hughenden since 2011. Ringing was not new to Ian though. He'd learned as a schoolboy in the early 60s, at Kimpton in Hertfordshire, and by the time he left school, he'd taken part in numerous quarter peals, as well as one peal - conducted by Ken Darvill.

Like many other youngsters, he then drifted away from ringing, as work and family life took over. Although he was awarded a PhD in Physics from Manchester University, Ian's whole working life was spent in the pharmaceutical industry. He eventually came to live in Hughenden, and after his wife died, was persuaded to take up ringing again by David Cornwall.

Ian soon became a regular attender at practice nights and on Sundays, and served as tower secretary for a while. However, after being diagnosed with Chronic Lymphatic Leukaemia in 2017, he found it increasingly difficult to ring, and had virtually given up by the time the Covid pandemic started. However, having managed to ring for the passing of HRH Prince Philip and of HM Queen Elizabeth II, Ian was determined to ring for the Coronation, and did so, but sadly this was the last time he touched a bellrope.

Ian died on 24<sup>th</sup> March, and his funeral was held at Hughenden on 24<sup>th</sup> April, with the Guild Banner on display. At the request of his family, the bells were rung half muffled at the end of the service, with the congregation, somewhat unusually, preceding his coffin out of the church.

A minutes' silence was observed in memory of these people.

#### **5. Officers' Reports:**

##### **a) Ringing Masters** (Matthew Johnson)

Branch practices have continued twice a month as well as training practices. He was pleased to see so many new members being elected and encourages them to attend practices to experience ringing at other towers. The Christmas social was held at Hughenden. This year started with a surprise practice at Hughenden where

Cambridge, Yorkshire and Superlative were rung. We are grateful to those who maintain the bells, especially to John Davidge for his work at Farnham Royal, Windsor and West Wycombe.

#### **b) Young Ringers Organiser (Simon Smith)**

This year started much as previous years despite my inexperience, the handover of responsibility and continued support from Peter has been excellent and invaluable. After the last AGM, we were hot off the back of the young ringers Southeast striking competition and in full preparation for the National Youth Contest in July. Our practices in May & June tended to be focused on competition ringing, practising the competition-prescribed call changes frequently. The towers of Wargrave and Amersham were used for our normal practices on the first Sundays in May & June, with Amersham used again, along with Shiplake & Wraysbury for additional dedicated competition practices in the weeks immediately prior to the big day. Usually, the competition tower is a ring of 8 in the region of 12-14 cwt, to cater for the very short, the very tall, the very young and the nearly-adults among the nearly 300 participants of the competition.

At 5am on the 8<sup>th</sup> July, 15 of us (9 young ringers and 6 helpers), made our way up to York for what promised to be an exciting day. The fun-bus was in full party mode right from the start, and the young ringers were in fine voice despite the early start. As is preferred by us, our competition slot was early in the day. The ring went well and all eight emerged from the tower happy to have done their best. The rest of the day was spent grabbing towers ranging from the 10lb 7oz Beverley and District mini-ring, to the imposing but delightful sound of the 59cwt bells of York Minster. The tenor was in high demand, and I'm not sure it stopped ringing for the whole day!

As some of you will have seen, our band came an amazing joint 6<sup>th</sup> out of 17 bands competing in the call change competition. An incredible effort seeing as our band is drawn from 2 branches, versus most of the other bands who call upon the resources of an entire guild. One other thing that sets us apart, is the inclusivity and fun that our band are adept at displaying throughout the day, and throughout the year for that matter.

Following on from the competition, we usually have a break from monthly practices in August and resume in September. We have visited Twyford, Clewer, Beaconsfield, Wokingham, Maidenhead, Shottesbrooke, West Wycombe and finally Hughenden in our Sunday practices. Ringing everything from rounds all the way, to Surprise Minor and even Surprise Major on the odd occasion. Charley Smith rang her first peal this year. Theo Boughton (aged 9!) & Jack Francis both rang their first quarters this year. And Euan Thomas, our current longest serving young ringer, has rung 42 peals since April last year. All regular attendees of the band.

We recently competed in the southeast striking competition in Hertfordshire, and although we came 7<sup>th</sup> out of 8, a great day was had by all and a first competition experience for 2 of our band. Preparation is now in full swing for the National Youth contest in July, this year in London, which I'm hopeful means we can start a little later than 5am.

I would like to say a thank you to all of those that have helped out our band this year, the towers who graciously let us practice on a Sunday afternoon, the parents and helpers of the young ringers who end up as a taxi service driving about all over the place, but in particular to Peter Jasper, who has helped and guided me in my first year as youth officer and continues to organise the competitions and a large part of the fun. I would also like to acknowledge the continued support of the branch and the guild, who provide funding to help us keep the costs as low as we can for our young ringers.

Lastly, I would like to encourage any of you who are, or know, any young ringers, to come and join us. We are very inclusive and are happy to include anyone who can just about handle a bell all the way up to surprise ringers and conductors

#### **6. Treasurer's report and 2023 Accounts:**

The assessed accounts and Treasurer's report had been circulated in advance. The treasurer noted that the membership numbers are going up, which is good after the post-Covid drop. Accounts are much the same as last year but we are now getting interest on the deposits, which has made a difference to the income.

The accounts were formally accepted.

#### **7. Election of New Members:**

The following had been nominated for membership of the Guild:

<b>New Member</b>	<b>Tower</b>	<b>Nominated by:</b>
Niamh Brosnan	Amersham	Jan Galloway
Amelie Smith	Bray	James Gladwyn
Aurora Callaway	Bray	James Gladwyn
David Pickles	Burnham	Emma Warburton
Monica Horton	Burnham	Emma Warburton

Tania Pell	Burnham	Emma Warburton
Cheryl Spriggs	Chalfont St Giles	John Davidge
Steven Mason	Chalfont St Peter	Valerie Robbins
Emily Lawrence	Chesham	Godfrey Reynolds
Jenny Symon	Clewer	Jane Cockman
Erin Margetts	Cookham	Marcia Dieppe
Helen Story	Cookham	Marcia Dieppe
Adrian Miller	Denham	Andrew Simpson
Ursula Hanman	Hambleden	Gay Doggart
Hugh Howard	High Wycombe	Patricia Newton
Daniel Hipwell	Hughenden	David Cornwall
Sarah Barry	Lane End	Susannah Clements
Rosalind Lake	Marlow	Tina Ruff
Caitlyn Spracklen	Marlow	Tina Ruff
Maxine Denne	Old Windsor	Geoff Clements
Raza Rizvi	Penn	Judy Weaver
Peter Fuller	Penn	Judy Weaver
Camilla Bullough	Penn	Judy Weaver
Simon Wright	Stoke Poges	Anthea Wright
Deborah Rose	Turville	Rachel Wallace
Rhonda Prout	Winkfield	Kathryn Harris
Dominic Brown	Winkfield	Kathryn Harris
Lisa Hickley	Wraysbury	Roger Lewiston
Olivia Lewiston	Wraysbury	Roger Lewiston

These nominations were seconded by Rob Taylor-Ailes  
All were elected unopposed.

The following had been nominated for re-election to the Guild:

Kathleen Douthwaite	Chalfont St Giles	John Davidge
Clive Hearne	Wraysbury	Roger Lewiston

These nominations were seconded by Rory Haines and the members were re-elected unopposed.

Certificates were presented to the two new members who were present at the meeting.

## 8. Removal of the post of President of EBSB Branch

The secretary reported that the Bishop of Buckingham has (as far as could be established) always been President of the EBSB Branch and the post had been held by Bishop Alan since he became Bishop of Buckingham in 2003 but there had been very little contact with him in this capacity. Only one other Branch in the Guild has a President and Vice President and they are ringers who are, essentially, Chairman and Vice Chairman. She proposed and Robert Newton seconded that the position of President is removed whilst we are in an interregnum between Bishops. It was agreed to retire the post of President of the EBSB Branch in honour of Bishop Alan.

## 9. Addition of the post of Vice Chairman of EBSB Branch

The secretary proposed and Robert Newton seconded that a new post of Vice Chairman of EBSB Branch be created. The Chairman pointed out that this allows for handover in case of anything happening to the Chairman while in office and gives the opportunity for someone to learn about the job.

It was agreed to create a new post of Vice Chairman of EBSB Branch.

## 10. Election of Officers:

Patricia Newton took the chair for the election of chairman. John Davidge was proposed by Rob Taylor-Ailes and seconded by Rory Haines. John was elected unopposed and took the Chair again. He indicated that this would be his last year as Chairman.

The following Officers were elected or re-elected:

Vice Chairman – Rob Taylor-Ailes (proposed by Jane Cockman, seconded by Rory Haines)

Ringing Master – Matthew Johnson (proposed by Jan Galloway, seconded by Jane Cockman)

Deputy Ringing Master – Vikki Bulbeck (proposed by Matthew Johnson, seconded by Jane Cockman)

Secretary – Patricia Newton (proposed by John Davidge, seconded by Sheila Bruce)

Treasurer / Membership Secretary – Rosalind Garrett-Bowes (proposed by Jan Galloway, seconded by Simon Smith)

Newsletter Editor – Lyn Lee (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Robert Newton)

Young Ringers Organiser – Simon Smith (proposed by Rob Taylor-Ailes, seconded by Rosalind Garrett-Bowes)

Branch Representatives on the Guild General Committee (3) - John Davidge and Jan Galloway (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Rosalind Garrett-Bowes). The third post remains vacant.

### **11. Appointment of other Managers:**

IT Manager and Webmaster – Ken Darvill (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Matthew Johnson)

Independent Assessor – Peter Blower (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Matthew Johnson)

100 Club Manager - Margaret Carlyle (proposed by Patricia Newton, seconded by Matthew Johnson)

All appointed unopposed.

### **12. Report and Accounts of Fundraising Committee:**

The assessed accounts and Treasurer's report had been circulated in advance.

Patricia Newton (secretary of the Fund Raising Committee) thanked Trevor Woodward for producing the report and accounts and thanked the new marmalade makers (Anne Milne, Verity Nicholls, Ros Garrett-Bowes and Lyn Lee). She reported that Wenda Fowles, who had been one of the mainstays of the committee for over 40 years, had recently been in hospital and that her future involvement with the committee is likely to be very limited. We thank Wenda for all that she has done over the years.

There are only four other members of the committee so if this work is going to continue we need new members. Stalls are run at all the main Guild and Branch ringing events, and also a couple of public events to raise money for the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund.

### **13. Guild 8-bell contest and AGM on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May at Stoke Poges:**

The Stoke Poges ringers will be looking after refreshments at St Giles Church where the contest will take place. All other activities will be at St Andrews Church where lunch will be served. Help is needed.

A message had been sent to Branch members via the google group requesting help at Stoke Poges. Anyone who could help with stewarding or catering, etc should please contact the Secretary.

### **14. Membermojo and Guild matters:**

Chris Mundy, new Deputy Master of the Guild was welcomed. He informed the meeting of the plans to implement a new electronic membership data base (Membermojo) to bring the Guild's record keeping into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The system will require the name of each member together with an email address. The data will be used for insurance purposes so the year of birth of members will be required.

All members will need to register and can use a nominated email address if necessary. The system is GDPR compliant and is UK based software.

He thanked the Branch for hosting the forthcoming AGM and 8-bell contest and noted that there will be 3 vacancies amongst the officers – Meetings Secretary (to collate and circulate papers and take minutes at the 3 meetings per year), Assistant Server Manager and Assistant Website Manager.

He was pleased to see the huge number of new members in the Branch and noted that there will be a new members' morning at Steventon on 6<sup>th</sup> July where they can meet others who have just joined the Guild and to find out more about the Guild.

He also asked if there was anything that the Branch wants from the Guild.

## **15. Any Other Business:**

- i) The Chairman thanked the officers for all their hard work during the year.
- ii) Jan Galloway (Branch Representative) reported on the March General Committee Meeting and Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund AGM. The Bell Fund has been going for nearly 50 years and the invested capital is worth nearly £1 million. Grants are available for bell restoration at Guild towers and are currently offered at 25% of relevant bell work. A legacy leaflet has been produced (circulated to towers last year). The trustees have a problem because of a vacancy for the Diocesan Financial Advisor. They are looking for a professional advisor to help them.

At the General Committee Meeting the Code of Conduct for Ringing (produced by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and circulated via the Branch google group) was brought to the attention of the meeting. Reports from the sub-committees were received. There will be three ringing courses in the autumn plus some courses run by the Towers and Belfries Committee (rope courses and belfry maintenance). There was also discussion on whether the Guild Report and Odd Bob should continue to be printed or be available electronically only.

Robert Newton mentioned the trophy he had donated to the Guild last year for a Raising and Lowering Contest. The inaugural contest in Chipping Norton Branch went well but only attracted 3 entries. It would be good if the EBSB Branch could get six ringers together to enter this. Raising and lowering in peal is a skill that is overlooked.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed after 66 minutes.

## **16. Lorna Newton Contest:**

The draw was made for the second round of the competition:

Windsor Curfew Tower	vs	Hughenden
Winkfield	vs	Beaconsfield/Penn
High Wycombe	vs	Clever/Windsor St John
Marlow	vs	Amersham "B"
Lane End	vs	Chesham

## **17. 100 Club:**

The monthly draw for the 100 Club was made. Margaret Carlyle pointed out that the 100 Club also supports the Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund and donated £740 last year. 100 Club membership has increased so a larger donation will be made this year.

Patricia Newton  
May 2024