OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS CITY BRANCH

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Annual General Meeting at St. Mary the Virgin, Wheatley, Saturday 17th November 2001.

There were 22 members present.

The Chairman, David Lane, welcomed the Hon. Guild Secretary, Nigel Harrison and Roy Goodwin, who is thankfully recovering from his illness.

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
   Guild Master E.J. Wells, Deputy Guild Master Ken Davenport, C. Grimley-Evans, J.G. Pusey, R. Day, S. Morrison, S. Edwards (Branch Treasurer), C. Taylor, R. Jones, G. Lockey, M.Gretton, P.Baylis, J.Beck, P.Lucas, Rev. A. Ellis, R. Woodforde, L. Smith, P. Samson.
2. **Approval of Minutes of the Half-Yearly Meeting**
   A. Ellis appeared twice in the apologies for absence in the 2000 minutes; this was amended.
   The amended minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman, David Lane.
3. **Matters Arising.**
   The secretary asked if Simon Edwards had designed a form for midweek available ringers. It was decided that Simon Edwards had promised to circulate this form with the 2002 request for subscriptions.
4. **Correspondence.**
   There was no correspondence.
5. **Election of New Members.**
   Janice Knowles (Marston)
   Proposed by Hugh Deam & seconded by Len Porter.
6. **Presentation of Certificates.**
   The striking competition held at Marston, 2000.
   1st place Marston
   2nd place Kidlington
   3rd place Headington
   The striking competition held at North Hinksey, 2001
   1st place St. Aldate
   2nd place Iffley
   3rd place Kidlington
   Nigel Harrison presented the above certificates.

7. **Reports from the Officers.**

SECRETARY

a) The secretary reported back from the Branch Secretaries' Meeting, which was held in October.

Generally it was agreed that there was no need for any increase for Branch purposes from the current £5.50 (£3.50 to the Guild £2.00 to the Branches). It was suggested that it might be appropriate for an extra 50p to be raised, with half being paid to the Bell Fund and half to the Restoration Fund. This received a mixed response and it was decided that the secretaries should consult their members, but recommended no change this year.

Discussion followed with reference to the concerns that have become apparent with regard to the possible shortfall in Guild funds. The members of the City Branch would be happy to see an increase in the subscription of up to £1.50 per year for the next two years, with a differential for members aged under eighteen.

b) Striking competitions: it was agreed that methods should continue to be such as would encourage the most entries, and the following were selected for 2002:
Plain Bob Major and Grandsire Caters.
It was suggested that the 10 Bell Striking Competition might take place on the morning of the Autumn General Committee Meeting (due to be held in North Bucks in 2002). It was felt that as by no means all taking part would be going to the meeting and it might be appropriate for it to be a slightly more central venue within the Guild. Simon Coles said that Bicester would be available.

c) Health & Safety: the Finance and General Purposes Committee suggested that copies of the recent circular notice which had been distributed to all towers should be passed on to clergy, in cases where others apart from ringers had access to towers. If further advice is required the Towers and Belfries Committee could be consulted.

d) Child Protection: it is important that members take notice of the information that has been circulated regarding child protection issues. Every tower should have someone registered with the PCC and then most activities are covered by the PCC policy. No member should put him or herself at risk by being alone with an unaccompanied minor. All under 18 ringers should have their date of birth recorded on their membership details. (The secretary agreed to circulate additional copies of the child protection procedures.)

e) Printer Cartridges: used printer cartridges as per the Odd Bob list should be passed on to Pat Newton, as this could prove to be quite a useful source of income.

f) Bell Fund Draw: it was suggested that the Draw was no longer the attraction that it once was and perhaps some alternative form of funding would be preferable.

TREASURER

Anthony Hughes reported in the absence of Simon Edwards. The accounts were circulated and Anthony Hughes outlined a few changes.

Subscriptions are up by 15 (89 in 2002 to104 in 2001)

£1040 will be depleted by the Easthampstead Course fees (3 x £65), and the money donated towards the Branch outing.

There is £840 in hand.

Thanks were given to T. Peter Franklin who donates his subscription to the Guild Bell Fund.

Len Porter wished it to be recorded that Paul Foote (Headington) is a non-paying member, not a life member.

RINGING MASTER

Branch Practices: some are well supported while others are not; please continue to attend branch practices in order to keep them going. It is emphasised that the practices are for all members, including the ringers at the Branch Practice tower.

The circulated dates list does not include additional doubles courses, please ask if any courses are needed.

St Aldate's Monday night practice is for aspiring surprise ringers as well as confident surprise ringers, please attend.

REPRESENTATIVE

Anthony Hughes felt it would be helpful to new members if he were to give a summary of the Guild administration and the representative's role in the Branch.

All ringers in the Branch belong to a tower

Groups of towers belong to a Branch.

Local meetings discuss Branch matters.

Oxford City & District Branch is part of the Oxford Diocesan Guild and is odd because of the other two ringing societies in Oxford i.e. The Oxford Society of Change Ringers and the Oxford University Society.

The Oxford Diocesan Guild (ODG) has 15 Branches. It covers the whole of the diocese, and manages the money for the funds (Bell and Restoration), the library (now administrated by Doug Beaumont) and other resources. All the Guilds have representation on the Central Council that is involved in church synod, education and health and safety matters etc.

The representative's duty is to put forward the views of the Branch at Guild meetings that can sometimes result in changes of Guild policy.

Recent agenda items at Guild Meetings have included member's insurance, central funds, Ringing World sponsorship, review of millennium ringing, donation to library records, health and safety in towers, Shinfield Ringing Centre, charitable status, Queen's jubilee and forthcoming events - to mention just a few.

John Lonsbrough added the information that The Ringing World is the official journal of the Central Council, annual deliberations are reported in it.

T. Peter Franklin mentioned that completing a Gift Aid form for subscriptions could raise additional monies.

8. Election of Officers

Nigel Harrison took the Chair while nominations were made for Chairman. David Lane was nominated by Bob Benstead and seconded by Hugh Deam, there were no other nominations and David Lane was elected as Chairman of the Branch.

T. Peter Franklin suggested that as there were no other nominations for the other officers they should be nominated as circulated and seconded en bloc.

Ron Burgess seconded this proposal.

The officers were all re-elected:

Hon.Secretary: Catherine Lane, Hon.Treasurer: Simon Edwards, Ringing Master: Len Porter, Representative: Anthony Hughes and Branch Liaison Officer: Hugh Deam

In addition it had been brought to the attention of the Chairman the suggestion that there should be an assistant ringing master. There followed a lengthy discussion among the members about the pros and cons of such an appointment. Eventually a proposal was made by the Chairman that 'We establish the post of assistant ringing master'. Susan Reynolds seconded it.

A vote was taken; there were 6 in favour and 8 against. The proposal was lost.

9 Reports on Fund Raising

Hugh Deam reported that the number of cans collected had increased, mostly thanks to Kidlington, Bob Benstead, Len Porter and Dave Woodward.

Katie Lane thanked Hugh for his contribution with the sticky job of can collecting.

Hugh also raised the idea of a Branch calendar costing between £9.99 and £14.99. It was suggested that the Secretary should canvas members' opinions.

10. Approval of Candidates for Educational Courses.

Any nominations for Easthampstead 2002 should be brought to the attention of one of the Branch officers.

Two of the three members sponsored for the 2001 Easthampstead Course had enjoyed the weekend. The dissatisfaction of the third had been taken up with the Guild Master and members were reminded that the accommodation was student accommodation and not hotel accommodation.

There was some discussion about the amount of funding that should be made available, some people recalling that in previous years up to half the course fee had been sponsored. It was pointed out that in the past a larger amount had been sponsored because younger ringers who were not earning would have been able to attend. Now that no student under the age of 18 is eligible the sponsorship has been reduced.

Anthony Hughes proposed that £240 should be available with up to £80 for an individual. It was seconded by Joy Fitzpatrick. The proposal was carried.

In an attempt to avoid any dissatisfaction in 2002 it was suggested that the students should ensure that they are placed in the right tutor group by discussing their expectations of the course with the organisers before going to Easthampstead.

11. Any Other Business

Ron Burgess asked the secretary to attempt to trace his lost membership certificate circa1975.

David Lane reminded members to complete the form that had been circulated with regard to the information requested for the Guild Annual Report.

Anthony Hughes expressed the opinion that as cost for maintenance by Whites of Appleton had risen there may be towers within the Branch who would now find it a struggle to finance the replacement of tower consumables e.g. ropes, stays and sliders. If the PCC were to decline funding such expenses could there be some way in which Branch funds could be used to do work and replace equipment? Len Porter said that at £140 per stay the Branch would not be able to help many towers.

David Lane advised any tower with a financial problem to contact a Branch officer. It was acknowledged that the increase in Whites fees had much to do with health and safety legislation requiring two bellhangers to attend every job.

Sue Reynolds asked if it was possible to take out a maintenance agreement with Whites; it was explained that most PCCs operate an annual check with bell maintenance firms as was recommended good practice by The Guild.

Len Porter proposed that Basil Townsend and David Lane should be elected as non-paying members due to their length of Guild membership. (30 years are needed to qualify)

The proposal was seconded by Clare Tucker and carried unanimously.

The Chairman thanked the members of St Mary the Virgin, Wheatley, for their hospitality and tea, John Fuller and Caroline King for taking the service and Ann Walker for playing the piano at short notice.

11 May 2002