OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS CITY BRANCH

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Minutes for the Annual General Meeting held at St. Nicholas, Marston, on 16th November 2002.

There were 32 members present at the meeting.

The members stood in memory of George Parsler, a member at Garsington for some thirty years.
In the absence of the Chairman, the Deputy Guild Master, Jon Chamberlain, was asked to chair the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence:
Graham Clifton Guild Master, David Lane Chairman, Anthony Cole Steward, Joy Fitzpatrick, Clare Tucker, Nicholas Hartley, Janet Farrow, Clive Holloway, Charlotte Everett, Michael Williams, Basil Townsend, Wendy Austen, Lesley Smith, Jane Marlow, Andy Broadbent, Victoria Davey-Wilson, Phil Samson, John Beale, Gill Harper, Corinne Grimley-Evans.

2 Approval of the minutes of the informal meeting held at Cowley on 11th May 2002.
The minutes, having been circulated before the meeting were accepted as being read and were approved and signed by Jon Chamberlain.

3 Matters Arising.
Jonathan Beale had requested a copy of the Guild Insurance Policy. The Chairman had made inquiries but to date had not received the documents. The Deputy Master suggested that he would be able to obtain the information at the Guild Committee Meeting on 23rd November.

4 Election of New Members

Hillary Stevens	Iffley	Proposer: Susan King	Seconder: Keith Godfrey
Leon Thompson	Unattached	Roy Jones	Anthony Hughes
Andrew Dunn	Unattached	Roy Jones	Anthony Hughes
Heather Banyard	Wheatley	Dee Nunan	Paul Lucas

5 Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6 Presentation of Certificates

Jon Chamberlain presented the Branch 6 Bell Striking Competition Certificates; the competition was held at Bletchingdon.

Third Place St Nicholas, Marston
Second Place St Mary the Virgin,Wheatley
First Place St Aldate's, Oxford

7 Reports from Officers

Secretary:

The secretary reported back from the Secretaries' meeting held at Radley in October and the Guild Training Officers' Meeting held in November.

It was agreed that the methods for the 8 and 10 bell striking competitions should continue to be such as would encourage the most entries, and the following were selected for 2003:

Grandsire Triples and Plain Bob Royal.

A suggestion had been put to the F&GP Committee that all members should receive annually, a copy of the Guild Report. It was considered that the majority of members would not be interested in this and it would be an unreasonable expense. The same decision was made for copies of Odd Bob.

The Guild Treasurer has indicated that income would be down by about 5% this year and therefore a suggestion has been made that members should contribute, through the Guild subscription, to the Bell Fund which is diminished due to the grants given for Millennium Projects. The majority of Secretaries were in favour of any funds, deemed to be surplus to Guild needs at the AGM each year, would be transferred to the Bell Fund.

T. Peter Franklin recalled the discussion that had taken place at last year's Branch AGM where the members agreed that they would approve a temporary increase in their subscriptions in order to strengthen the monies in the Bell Fund. The City Branch has habitually supported the Restoration Fund as several towers in the Branch have benefited from a grant from that fund in the past.

There was overwhelming support from the Secretaries, and from the members present at this AGM, that Subscriptions should be increased and the Bell Fund Draw discontinued. In 2002 the Guild Draw raised £1300. Len Porter commented that the current subscription was very small compared with many other subscriptions required for societies and associations. Anthony Ellis reminded the meeting that the bells and fittings were very expensive to establish and maintain and that ringers should be prepared to pay more for the privilege of ringing them.

The Secretary continued to tell the meeting about the Training Meeting that she attended. The Guild Education Committee would like information about courses that Branch members would like them to arrange. There were suggestions for subjects such as raising and lowering, an introductory course for tower captains and ringing masters, teaching bell handling and follow-up courses for Easthampstead.

It was suggested that a post of Branch Training Officer should be given consideration, and that City Branch members may like to decide on the election of such a position at the Half-Year Meeting in May. The Secretary read out a sample job description for a Training Officer:

- To co-ordinate the training courses provided by the Branch
- To identify training needs in the Branch by liaison with the Ringing Master.
- To react to requests for training by individual members or towers.
- To inform Branch members of the availability of ringing books and to liaise with the area steward and the Guild book stall over the supply of such books.
- To liaise with the Shinfield Ringing Centre on training matters.
- To liaise with the Guild Education Sub-committee on training matters.
- To keep the Branch informed on the areas of training, which may arise from individuals, Branches, the Guild, or other Guilds or Associations, or the Central Council.

The concerns over the correct management of under 18 ringers continue to be emphsised. The Secretary reminded the members that every tower should have a ' Named Person' who is responsible for those children and young adults under 18. The Named Person should have been checked by the CRB. The Secretary has circulated to all towers in the Branch detailed information on these matters. The implications were also discussed at the Half-Year Meeting. Hilarie Rogers has parental consent forms, a copy of which has also been circulated to tower captains, which should be completed before the young person is allowed to ring, or take part in ringing activities, without parental supervision. The Secretary brought to the attention of the meeting that 70% of all ringers are over the age of 40. Despite the difficulties and constraints that supervision of under 18 ringers creates, it is incumbent upon us to encourage new and younger recruits to bell ringing.
The Secretary asked the members if the Branch would like to reconsider Branch Practices during the week at individual tower practices. There followed considerable discussion, which included support for the suggestion, comments that it had been tried elsewhere and found to be wanting, that members of the host tower stayed away from such practices because they felt threatened, and that arrangements would have to be made when two practices were held on the same night.
Jon Chamberlain asked for a proposer to accept the Secretary's Report - John Lonsbrough volunteered and it was seconded by Mary Porter.

Treasurer:
The Treasurer presented his report; copies were circulated among those present.
Members were reminded that the Bell Fund is an interest only fund and that the Restoration Fund is a capital fund with all resources available for expenditure.
Hugh Deam proposed that the report should be accepted, seconded by Roy Jones.

Ringing Master:
The Ringing Master opened his report by noting that his successor would have to obtain up-to-date quarter peal certificates, signed by the current Guild Master.
He then continued by reading the following report, which is transcribed in its entirety:

As most of you will be aware, I am not standing for re-election as Ringing Master. I have also decided not to stand for any other Branch Office. In giving my report, I would like to explain some of my reasons for this.

I was first elected to Branch Office in 1973, and in most of the subsequent years I have worked my way through most of the Branch Offices, mainly as Ringing Master and as Chairman. I have not been the only person to be 're-cycled' through the offices, as over the years a small number of relatively willing people have been elected to more than one office. It has been recognised that this can lead to 'officer fatigue', and it can also give rise to suggestions of an officer clique. The first is understandable, but the second is due to not enough people offering themselves for election. If there is no competition, those who are prepared to stand will usually be elected.

I have been aware for several years that there are some people in the Branch who do not like the way I do things, but as I keep being re-elected I can only assume that the majority are happy. In recent years, those who dislike my approach seem to come from an increasingly large group who seem to want to be able to ring badly without any objection from me. If they do really want to ring badly I can hardly stop them, but they cannot expect my support when I am running the ringing.

It is important to make clear what I mean by bad ringing. I do not mean people who are learning at any stage, whether it is handling a bell or ringing Cambridge. What I regard as bad ringing is people who are capable of ringing something well, but just don't seem to be bothering. If someone rings large numbers of quarter peals, you would expect them to be able to ring at practices, without mistakes and bad striking in plain courses of the same methods. At the very least, such a ringer should be able to handle a bell properly, and plain hunt and lead with fairly accurate striking. In recent years I have witnessed far too many examples of quite the opposite.

A good example of what I mean occurred earlier this ear, when I ended up judging the Branch's Striking Competition. The tower at the centre of recent quarter peal activity was easily beaten into third place by a relatively inexperienced band ringing call changes. The method ringing suffered from repeated errors which should and could have been corrected by such an experienced band, whereas the call changes were a good piece of ringing. We should not lose sight of the fact that when we ring, local residents are forced to listen to what we do, and despite a widely held belief to the contrary, they can tell the difference between good and bad ringing.

I would like to finish by making three points. Firstly the Branch (in common with others) is only as good as the majority of the members make it. The activities of the Branch need to involve more than just a small percentage of the members. It is particularly disappointing that Branch Practices often do not involve more than one or two of the local band.

Secondly I hope that you will think carefully about whom you choose to be the next Ringing Master. That person does not need to be a particularly advanced ringer, but they should be able to set a good example of tidy bell handling and reasonably accurate striking. Anything less will certainly not get support from me, and eventually cease to get enough support from elsewhere.

Finally I would like to thank all those of you who have supported me over the years, especially my fellow officers. I have enjoyed most of what I have been involved with, but now is the time for me to take a back seat and let others take my place. Thank you.

Acceptance of the report was proposed by Katie Lane and seconded by Jonathan Cresshull.

There were some further comments from members. Jonathan Cresshull endorsed the requirement that the quality of ringing should not be forgotten in the desire to ring more complicated methods. He quoted, 'Non-ringers cannot tell what we're ringing, but they can tell how we are ringing.'
He continued to say that Branch Practices should not be seen as the experts coming, as there are only a handful of 'experts' in the country. There is no end to the learning, Branch Practices should not be avoided, it is a chance for the good ringers to support learners.

Then Katie Lane, on behalf of the members, thanked Len Porter for the commitment and skill that he has brought to the Branch over the years.

Branch Representative:
The Branch Representative enlightened the members on the matters that would be discussed at the Guild Committee Meeting on 23rd November.
There will be an Extraordinary Meeting of the Bell Fund to discuss the possible over-expenditure of the funds.
He reminded the members about the new criteria for the Best Kept Tower competition, and announced that Marston would be entering, hoping to achieve an 'Individual Maintenance Award'.
He mentioned that Guild Subscriptions include an amount for insurance.
The Guild Library is an under used resource.
Both the Bell Fund and the restoration Fund require support from ringers.
He mentioned the Guild Web Site, run by Tim Pett, Child Protection, the Guild Festival, the bookstall for which Pat Newton is responsible, reports from the Central Council and forthcoming events in the ODG.

8 Election of Officers

The Secretary read out the nominations:

Chairman	N. David Lane	Prop. Joy Fitzpatrick	Sec. June Steele
Secretary	Catherine Lane	Prop. Paul Lucas	Sec. Joy Fitzpatrick
Treasurer	Simon Edwards	Prop. June Steele	Sec. Paul Morley
Ringing Master	Hugh Deam	Prop. Susan King	Sec. Sue Reynolds
Branch Rep.	Anthony Hughes	Prop. Paul Morley	Sec. Paul Lucas
Branch Liaison Officer	Hugh Deam	Prop. Paul Morley	Sec. Joy Fitzpatrick

Len Porter reminded the Secretary that she had omitted the office of independent adjudicator and it was agreed that this could be addressed at the Half-Year Meeting.
There was some discussion concerning the nomination for a Deputy Chairman as no one had been nominated on the previously circulated papers. The acting Chairman asked for nominations from the floor, but the Secretary, with a point of order in mind that had been raised at the AGM in Headington, recalled that she had been brought to task for allowing a nomination from the floor to take place on that occasion. The members agreed that on this occasion they would like to revert to previous practice and allow a nomination to be made from the floor.
Roy Jones was nominated for Deputy Chairman by Hugh Deam and Seconded by Jonathan Cresshull.
There then followed another discussion about members not knowing in advance of the meeting who had been nominated. The Secretary explained that is was not custom and practice at Guild or Branch level to circulate nominations before the meeting, and that elections were made by those present at the meeting; that she had received returns with nominations from only three towers in the Branch and that she had taken those in chronological order, and that there was only one nomination for each post. It would be possible, if members wished, for nominations to be circulated and all members balloted, but that this would have to be decided in advance of the AGM.

9 Fund Raising

Hugh Deam said that he had given the monies collected from the recycled cans to Simon Edwards and that he had received an additional amount at the meeting. The amount collected was about the same as last year.

10 Approval of Grants Candidates for Educational Courses

Subject to the funds being available Len Porter proposed that a sum of £240 should be granted to candidates who would like to benefit from an educational course.
Anthony Hughes seconded the proposal.

11 Any Other Business

Jonathan Cresshull suggested that someone in the Branch should organise a Branch Carol Service next year, and that perhaps it could be combined with a Branch Practice. Our ringing incumbent, Anthony Ellis, received this with some hesitation as he felt that he, and others, were already saturated with Carol Services and he would find it hard to support an additional Branch one. Len Porter suggested that it could be discussed further for 2003-04.
Roy Jones expressed his concern that notice of confirmation of the Branch Striking Competition had come very late. Len Porter replied that not all towers had been able to confirm that they could take part.
Jon Chamberlain suggested that a cut off date for entries should be required.
He then brought the meeting to a close. The Secretary thanked him for chairing the meeting in the absence of David Lane.

