

Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Minutes of General Management Committee meeting
held on Saturday 28th February 2009 at 10.30am in Stowupland Church Hall.

Present: Philip Gorrod (Chairman), Richard Munnings (Ringing Master), Mary Garner (Secretary), Keith Ashton Jones (Treasurer), Jason Busby (NE Halesworth), Trevor Hughes (NE Hoxne), Jonathan Stevens (NE Saxmundham), Alan Stanley (NW Hartismere), Brian Hale (NW Ixworth), Marion Turner (NW Mildenhall), David Steed (NW Stowmarket), Maurice.Rose (NW Thingoe), Peter Harper (SE Colneys), Robert Scase (SE Loes), Kate Eagle (SE Woodbridge), Sue Freeman (SW Hadleigh), Richard Knight (SW Clare), Stefan.Labedzki (SW Lavenham), Bruce Wakefield (PRO)

Apologies: David Mulrenan (NE Beccles), John Smith (SW Sudbury)

1. Welcome

Philip Gorrod (PJG) thanked everyone for their attendance and warmly welcomed two new members of the committee, Alan Stanley (NW Hartismere) and David Steed (NW Stowmarket)

2. Minutes

The acceptance of the minutes from the meeting held on 18th October 2008 was proposed by Peter Harper and seconded by Maurice Rose. It was carried unanimously following the correction of two spellings.

3. Sub-committee reports:

i. Belfry Advisory Committee

Jonathan Stevens (JJS) reported that at the last GMC it was suggested that the Grant Conditions should be shared with the bellhangers; this has been done by recorded delivery. He has had feed-back from just two; Bob Smith has passed copies to those who design and cost their projects at Taylors Eayre and Smith and he had had a long conversation with Alan Hughes of Whitechapel who is supportive of our ambitions. The conditions are on the website for downloading by any interested party.

He had hoped to report that Ixworth was finished following his re-visit that morning, however, this was not so. There is still serious odd-struckness in the ring. Chediston is complete except for a slider and clapper for the tenor. When these are in the Master and he will organise the Guild test ring and inspection. He was waiting for confirmation that the treble is on the top layer at Fressingfield before he returns, inspects this work and advises on safety platforms. Elmsett are Suffolk's newest three. The bells are out at Bardwell. Brome has asked for an inspection and test-ring to see what work needs to be done to get these bells in top going condition. Wissett has the funding in place to start work on that project. Long Melford is in discussion with English Heritage who would like the old frame to stay where it is and the new frame to be put in the existing ringing chamber. He was visiting this tower after this meeting. Eye is applying for a faculty to put a new frame in to replace the existing one and augment to ten bells. The headstock is made for the seventh at Sudbury All Saints, ready for fitting by the BAC team, when they have some kinder weather.

The listing, by David Salter, of projects supported by the Guild is nearly complete; Winston will then add what work was done and by whom, before this list is posted on our website.

The day to day help to parishes continues.

PJG thanked JJS for his report and asked for any questions.

ii. Recruitment and training

RJM reported that teaching the teachers is probably the most important thing at the moment and to that end a course was held before Christmas at Stowmarket where everyone learnt something. John Harrison came from CCCBR to run this. The next meeting will be held soon.

There has been a lot of media coverage which has helped raise awareness of bellringing. A mini ring could be a very good resource for R&T particularly because it would be more accessible to the public rather than climbing a church tower, and good training for youngsters.

RJM was asked whether any more teaching the teachers are planned, and he said there were.

When asked about materials to share with districts he pointed at the material on CCCBR website.

4. Applications for grants.

They have been no new applications. However Bardwell has asked for a short time extension for their grant. The bells are out and the project is expected to be finished by the summer.

5. Ringing Master's report

RJM reported that he had been very busy in his role since the last meeting.

On a PR front he had been privileged to be involved in a number of events with the media. Sadly the 'Escape to the Country' edition was a disappointment as we were edited out. He had been unable to contact anyone involved as to why this was, as a lot of time and effort was taken up to oblige their requests. (*Post-meeting note: the producers of Escape to the Country have now agreed to make a donation to the BRF*)

However, the Inside Out episode went out to much acclaim, giving birth to some new stars of the big screen!

The St Edmund's Day ringing, requested by BBC Radio Suffolk was a massive success. We received huge coverage throughout the day and two peals and three quarters were scored into the bargain.

The White Ribbon Campaign was a success on 29th November with nine towers taking part to the best of his knowledge.

Undoubtedly – for him at least – the highlight of the last four months from a ringing point of view had been Guild Peal Week 2009. In all, twenty peals were attempted with sixteen of those scored with 72 members involved in total. Most impressively there were seven first pealers and Gordon Slack conducted his first peal. The week followed on from another good year peal-wise last year.

He asked to record his thanks to all those that helped with the above events, none of it would have been possible without the many Guild members that contributed, time, effort and advice.

He reported that he had tried to get round the districts as much as possible and had been to events in all four since the last GMC and has seen a great deal of enthusiasm which is pleasing.

Discussion followed regarding the ringing for the 40th Anniversary of the Churches Conservation Trust on Feb 21st. BBC Radio Suffolk broadcast from St Mary at Quay. The ringing was poor and did not give a good advert for the guild. It was reported that it had been an open event and that the radio recorded the first six who arrived for ringing. The PRO said that we have no control over what the media choose to use, however unfortunate. It was pointed out that the interview did at least point out some of the difficulties and that the idea was to get the bells into ringable order.

RK reported that St Peter's Sudbury had been rung for the event on the previous Saturday.

6. Financial Report

KAJ reported that last year's account were at the Examiner's.

1. The **General Fund** was up slightly. However subs were down as members of the Guild move into the 65-74 and 75+ categories. There are not many Juniors. Income is up; in particular, Peal fees increased by 50%. However admin and printing costs have also increased. The general fund balance provides a reserve which would see us through the year if necessary.

2. **Restoration Fund.** £22,200 was approved last year, ie nearly all the Sharpe bequest. The GMC can still allocate £16,000, a similar position to 2004.

Last year the income was about £13,000. £24,000 was paid out on completed projects. He was pleased to report this since the Charities Commission like large amounts of monies raised to be spent as soon as possible.

£50,000 is allocated and awaiting the completion of projects.

Looking to the current year, KAJ reported that the Guild made about £400 in 2008. He reported that there were some inflationary pressures on costs, and he was conscious that the committee was trying to ensure that people claimed expenses as necessary, and that it had agreed that the Guild wanted to spend more on R&T. This is likely to erode the £400. He was hopeful that we should break even or may be a little overspent. This projection was based on a nil increase in subs.

This is the meeting where we look at subs for 2010. KAJ suggested that when considering these we should assume a similar income to the past. Subscriptions should bring in 450 full and 160 half payments. Last year the subs were simplified to £14 and £7. KAJ proposed full members at £15 for 2010. Although half subs would be £7.50, he suggested leaving it at £7. The projected increase from this would be an extra £430, giving a £215 increase to the GF.

Considerable discussion ensued covering the following points:

- 65-74 rate to be £10. Suffolk Guild is very cheap compared with other types of organisation, even though NDA and Essex Association are less.

- What about an advisory sub? Invite contributions from non payers especially since 50% goes in the BRF, ultimately for the benefit of all and the skill in general. Send a letter to every member.
- A £1 increase is more acceptable. As a Guild we should be very proud of the generous grants made.
- The subscription equates with a wedding fee, often less. Put in that context, it really is not large.
- It was commented that collecting from most people is not difficult and many, new members particularly, would expect to pay more.

Richard Knight proposed, seconded by David Steed, that the GMC propose the following subscriptions at the forthcoming AGM: Full Adult Members £15, Ringing Members 65-74 £10, Members 75 and over free, all other categories £7. This was passed with 11 for, 1 against and 7 abstentions.

KAJ was asked how quickly subs were paid at the beginning of each year. He explained that most are in by the end of March with a flurry at the AGM. However he still receives payments as late as November. It's possibly a reflection on how we collect.

Direct Debits and Standing Orders were mentioned, but the meeting was reminded about the difficulties with identification from the banks

Perhaps a flier in the report might be considered for the future or a separate emailed flier, emphasising the benefit. The feeling of the meeting was that it was something to consider for the future.

3. Reimbursement of Expenses KAJ reminded the committee that a scheme has been agreed for subsistence and travel for CCCBR meetings. Expenses are available to members of the GMC and to Central Council representatives. Should expenses embrace the District AGMs, hall hire and the costs involved in self catering for meetings?

Lively discussion ensued and following points were considered:

- Should we be asking people (including visitors) for hall hire when a bring and share tea has been provided?
- Should the Districts pick up the tab? The Districts are the Guild.
- Members attending a meeting expect to pay some amount.
- The Guild obliges us to have an ADM, perhaps the Guild could underwrite any loss, but not pay out automatically.
- When you bring generously it seems steep to be asked to pay for the hall hire too.
- Remember contingency and slush funds are illegal under the Charities Acts.
- If people choose to make a donation at a meeting that's fine. PJG would like the rules to allow for reimbursement. If it's already in place in the district that is fine. However it won't work all of the time and he would like to see flexibility which would cover those occasions.
- Underwriting is really what is being discussed here.
- Writing to District Secretaries, laying down ground rules.

The committee agreed that some suitable wording should be put together to allow this flexibility.

Action: KAJ

Discussion followed regarding travelling expenses for people who work on behalf of the Guild, particularly BAC members, who necessarily visit across the whole Guild not just their own areas. A contribution could be made for some who do considerable mileage. This would help particularly if someone is not working but has the time to carry out various jobs.

A comparable rate would be 10-17p a mile (as in Local Government)

MR proposed, seconded by RS, that the treasurer be authorised to reimburse reasonable mileage claims up to 15p a mile.

This was carried unanimously.

4. KAJ asked that all correspondence was sent to his new address as printed in the last two reports.

7. Ratification of NRLM

Edward P D Colliss, Roy LeMarechal, Gillian M Knox, Faith J Pearce, Edward C Westlake, Jennifer E Butler, Melvyn Potts were ratified as Non Resident Life Members of the Suffolk Guild. Proposed by MR and seconded by PWH.

8. Report and Handbook 2009

MSG reported that Ruth Suggett met with the printer during the previous week. 950 copies ordered at a cost of about £1,400. Although more expensive than in 2008 it should be noted that the cost of paper has risen by 40% during the past twelve months and the size increased by a sheet (4 sides). We do save on delivery costs (previously £40+) and the Guild gains through the goodwill of a good working relationship, with someone who resizes as necessary etc.

KAJ asked about the income from adverts.

9. AGM (i) Arrangements

The AGM will be held Wenhaston Village Hall at 5.15pm. The service will be at 4pm at Wenhaston followed by tea in the Village Hall. Ringing on the way will be at Bramfield and Halesworth (Stradbroke if the treble at Halesworth is not ready).

Evening ringing will take place at Wenhaston and Chediston.

(ii) Constitution and Rule Changes

PJG explained that, as agreed by the last GMC, PJG, MSG and KAJ had met to tidy up the rules, with John Girt acting as watchdog. PJG emphasised the intention had been to tidy up and not fundamentally change anything. The following was presented to the committee.

PROPOSAL: That the Constitution be varied as follows:

B4: add “of an amount at least equal to an Associate (Senior) change member’s subscription”.

D6: revised as follows:

- D6 6.1 The President shall be the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.
- 6.2 A Suffragan Bishop within the Diocese shall be a Vice-President
- 6.3 A member may be elected as a Vice-President at an AGM.
- 6.4 A non-member may be elected as a Patron at an AGM.
- 6.5 Patrons and Vice-Presidents shall hold office without re-election, but may be removed by a resolution at an AGM. Vice-Presidents elected under 6.3 shall cease to hold office if they cease to be a member of the Guild.

D7: delete “Vice-Presidents may be elected. Subscriptions and fees for the year beginning the following January shall be set at the AGM or a SGM”.

[See H2 below]

D9: delete “to certify the accounts” and add “to act as Independent Examiner in accordance with The Charities Acts”

D10 (3rd line): delete “Certified”.

E14: delete “applied to the work of the Guild in the restoration and maintenance of bells” and add “transferred to the Guild Restoration Fund”

F24: add “and the secretary shall maintain an up-to-date inventory of other Guild assets”

H2 (2nd line after “year”): add “and shall be set at the preceding AGM, or a SGM”.

K16 (3rd line): add “(including District)”

Handbell Regulations Delete 8 [duplication of 6]

Questions and comments were invited. MR, a Vice President, indicated his support D6 in particular.

PJG proposed, seconded by MSG, that these constitution and rule changes be taken to the AGM. It was passed unanimously.

Further, the implementation date for Guild Constitution and Rule Changes etc was discussed.

PJG proposed, seconded by MSG, that rule 26.2 should be as follows:

Delete “1 Jan following” and replace with “date given in the proposal”

This was carried unanimously.

(iii) Life Honorary Members for proposal by districts

MSG had received correspondence from the NW district saying they would like to propose Chris Nunn for Life Honorary Membership at the AGM, in recognition for the outstanding contribution he has made to the restoration project at Ixworth and also for his ongoing support at Ixworth and Barrow helping and encouraging new ringers. Even before the restoration project evolved, Chris has always been in the background contributing a great deal of physical help and technical advice and knowledge to all the towers that he has had connections with.

JJS said that on the BAC Chris always gave good advice and was very hardworking. MR said Chris been involved like this for years, especially in the NW and SW.

PJG said that the choice was obviously popular and it was supported wholeheartedly by the GMC.

10. Life Honorary Members (from October Agenda)

It had been suggested that Guild Members should become Life Honorary Members after 50 years and this had been discussed by each district. Reporting back to the GMC, the SW felt that it was not a good idea, about 80% in the NW said leave it as it is, the NE was not decided and the SE was quite in favour.

PJG commented that whilst this does not meet with popular approval we should consider recognising long membership and that he would bring some proposals at a future date.

11. Guild Social (27th June 09)

RK reported that all was in hand for this. Hadleigh Guildhall is booked, outside and in. He hopes that afternoon ringing will be at All Saints Sudbury and on the three at Elmsett, with evening ringing at Hadleigh. He was hopeful that the Guild might own a mini ring by then.

The cost will be £10 a head, including a barbecue, with a different rate for the afternoon only. The probable limit on numbers will be 100.

12. Mini Ring

PJG told the GMC that he has been given first refusal for a mini ring. He thought it would be good for the Guild to own and use. He said that he would keep it if no one else wants it.

It is a portable 6 with a 10lb tenor. It can be put up in 20 min and dismantled will fit in a Fiesta. It needs a stepladder to help with its assembly. There is an optional canopy (£200). Total cost £2300.

PJG explained that he did not want to be responsible for hiring it out, but did the GMC feel it was a good idea, and if so how should funds be raised?

Discussion followed considering how funds might be raised and where it might be kept. It would be good as tool for Public Relations and Recruitment and Training. Grant awarding bodies could be approached (seeking information from Tim Holmes at Campsea Ashe especially regarding Awards for All).

The following was proposed by PJG and seconded by RJM:

The Guild purchase a portable mini ring and actively seeks financial support towards the cost.

It was passed unanimously.

Action: AGM Agenda (MSG)

13. Guild History

PJG had been contacted by a member concerning writing a Guild History. It was thought George Pipe has considerable knowledge and would be a good person to ask.

Some discussion followed in support of this.

Action: PJG to write to GWP

14. Membership Certificates & 15. New Member Pack

1. PJG told the meeting that George Pipe had offered to design a Membership Certificate along the lines of the one he has recently done for the Ancient Youths.

This was passed round together with one put together by MSG along the lines of the original one. The meeting favoured the more traditional one, providing the spire on St Peter's, Sudbury was removed!

2. New Member Leaflet. MSG circulated several copies of the leaflet she had produced. This was thought to be a good idea. The leaflet together with a report and badge will be given to new members at their election and the certificate produced once MSG has received the application form.

16. Matters arising from the minutes not itemised in the agenda:

Protocol for use of Grant Conditions

JJS passed round copies of a suggested protocol which he had produced. This, subject to the approval of the GMC, is to be published on the website and sent out with the Grant Conditions. JJS emphasised that this was meant as a suggested route and not to be definitive.

The GMC was very impressed with this document and proposed its immediate adoption. PJG thanked JJS on behalf of the Guild for all his work in producing this.

17. Correspondence

1. The bill for 4 delegates to attend CCCBR conference had been received. It also contained the information that Ian Oram will have completed his post as secretary

2. Signed Grant conditions had been received from Helmingham

3. George Pipe had written to PJG to inform him that the order had been placed for St Lawrence. A grant for £5,800 has already been awarded, but now extra building work is needed., This will cost another £20,000: would the GMC consider increasing the grant?

Discussion followed. It was felt that the Guild does not have sufficient funds for this nor does it give grants to help with building.

Action: PJG to write to GWP.

18. Any other business.

1. There are new ringers at Great Barton and Jacky Savage would be grateful for help at practices which take place on the 2nd, 4th and 5th of the month.

2. RK drew attention to the fact that meeting dates have varied considerably over the past 12 months and asked whether they should be fixed for Sunday afternoons in future.

It was further noted that there was very good support for this meeting on a Saturday morning. It was agreed that this was a better venue than Old Newton since it was closer to the A14.

MSG was asked to enquire about meeting on Sunday afternoons at Stowupland. **Action: MSG**

19. Date of next meeting, Sunday 21st June 2009 at 3pm (Venue to be confirmed)

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1pm.

Additional items for the June agenda to be notified in writing by 21st May please.

Mary Garner
Hon. Secretary