

Minutes of GMC Meeting 15th February 2014 at Stowupland

Present: Alan Stanley (Chair), Jed Flatters (Ringing Master), Mandy Shedden (Secretary), Gordon Slack (Treasurer), Jonathan Stevens (Technical Advisor), Jason Busby, Neal Dodge, Sue Freeman, Brian Hale, Peter Harper, Trevor Hughes, Sally Munnings, Revd. Brian Redgers, David Smith, Marion Turner.

Mandy Shedden, having made all the necessary arrangements had to leave the meeting early, as previously advised, for family reasons; the Chairman kept a record of the meeting.

1. Apologies received from: Mary Garner, Philip Gorrod, Derek Rose, Robert Scase, David Steed.

The meeting stood in silence to remember the late Roger Peters Tower Captain at Benhall for a number of years.

2. Welcome

Alan Stanley welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked retiring GMC members for their support and hard work. It's not always fun turning out for meetings in the winter time and there are often other things competing in the summer: Ed Delatte NE, Julie Rapior NE, Maurice Rose NW, Kate Eagle SE.

He went on to welcome to new GMC members, and stated we hope that you will enjoy making this contribution to the running of the Guild. Many of you of course make other contributions. And a reminder for everybody that now we are a committee made up of members from each District rather than the Deanery based representation that this has replaced. New members: Philip Gorrod NE, Neil Dodge NW, (who had previously attended), Ruth Munnings SE.

Alan also welcomed Ralph Earey as a guest representing Mary Garner SE.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2013, circulated previously, were agreed to be a true record subject to the correction of adding Neil Dodge to the list of those present.

4. Matters arising from the minutes.

Jonathan advised that the frame at Thurston is being re-grouted with a cement based grout.

Updates to the 'Towards better Striking' leaflets previously reported as being in progress. The status on this is unclear. Jed will follow up.

The draft minutes of the 2013 AGM have been placed on the Guild website.

5. Sub Committee Reports

5.1 Belfry Advisory Committee – Jonathan Stevens

Our most recent meeting was at Ipswich St Matthews on 6th February. After ringing we had a balanced and informative talk from Douglas Kent who is the Technical Director of SPAB about their history and their approach to bells and bell frames. Interestingly, it closely matched the policy of the DAC which was subsequently emphasized to me by James Halsall (DAC Secretary) who was my guest at the talk. Some interesting conversation followed the talk. These talks are open to anyone who wishes to come, BAC member or not, and are published on the What's On.

We then learned of the recent work done by the Technical Advisor and other BAC members and then discussed four Grant Applications.

A training session on the use of the Strike Meter is planned to take place at Earl Stonham in the near future.

The outgoing Chairman of the BAC will be nominating Winston Girling for the post at the AGM. As yet the outgoing Technical Advisor has not got a replacement lined up.

5.2 Recruitment and Training Committee – Jed Flatters

There has not been a meeting since the last GMC meeting.

6. Applications for Grants – Jonathan Stevens

There are four Grant applications. Each has been looked at critically by the Technical Advisor and the BAC.

Rattlesden. They had a historic grant offer which has now lapsed. The work has started and has grown a little with sound management measures and inflation. The total expected relevant costs are around £56K. The BAC propose a grant offer of £6K.

Wickham Market. Here the unsatisfactory headstocks are to be replaced, the clapping sorted, new pulleys fitted and a new sound management and working floor installed below the frame. The total expected cost is £24,636. The BAC propose a grant offer of £2,500.

Halesworth. This tower is one where the bells are particularly loud in the immediate vicinity which inhibits their use outside ringing for services and normal practice nights. The planned cost of an exterior sound control system is £2,750. The BAC propose a grant of £500.

I must at this point declare an interest in that, despite my best efforts, I am the chosen contractor.

Horringer. This tower has at last agreed on a plan and is in the process of applying for a faculty.

They intend to have all eight bells re-cast to Gillet and Johnson profiles and rehung in an all new frame. The grant aided content of this project is around £110K. The BAC propose a grant offer of £12K.

The GMC considered each of the above proposals separately and in each case the grant proposals were agreed by a show of hands without any votes against.

7. Ringing Masters Report – Jed Flatters

I have continued to attend various events in each of the Districts both weekly and on a Saturday and managed the DGM's at all but the SE where a late return from Peterborough meant that I was too late to even make the evening meeting.

I did however assist Tom by ringing in a couple of the quarter peals for the SE Quarter peal week.

A good outing to Essex organised by Tom saw about 30 ringers well marshalled through each tower, a goodly number of learners were in attendance.

Following a request from Jonathan I have visited Thurston church and with help from Chris Nunn and new Guild member Paul Ebsworth lifted the bells out of their pits so that the builders can rake out the pockets and re grout with the correct material, our work is on a volunteer basis but the building work is being charged, and is a totally unnecessary expense. It is hoped that the wording of our grant aid forms and continuing vigilance by our BAC chairman will see this does not happen again.

I attended the funeral service of Peter Mayle at Clare on 13th Dec. Peter was a long time Guild member. Out of the county I attended the memorial service to Roger Peckham, a good friend and known to many of us.

8. Treasurers Report - Gordon Slack

Overall

The accounts for 2013 have been finalised and sent to the Report Editor and also to the Examiners.

General Fund

General Fund income in 2013 increased slightly compared with 2012 mainly from an increase in the sale of rope and from peal fees. Subscription income was virtually unchanged. General Fund expenditure also increased by 8% from 2012 with the purchase of a substantial stock of rope and also the odd-struckness meter, although these increases were offset by the spend on publicity banners in 2012. Small increases were incurred in printing the Annual Report and the Magazine and in administration and travelling costs. The net effect after an increased transfer to the Restoration Fund is a reduction in the General Fund of £272 (which compares with a reduction of £359 in 2012).

Restoration Fund

Restoration Fund income was up by 27% on 2012 principally from increased donations, which more than doubled from 2012. For the fifth year running grant approval at £2,685 was low. The sum now available for allocation to new projects stands at £58,369. The interest on our deposit account increased as a result of the investment in one-year bonds through the Charities Aid Foundation.

Most of the grants allocated before 2013 were paid during the year. The largest payments were £6,500 to Clopton and £4,000 to the Norman Tower leaving £1,685 carried forward for Elmsett, Thurston and Thelnetham.

Donations

I am pleased to record that George Pipe and his sister-in-law Mary made a generous donation to the Pipe Fund last month which increases the Fund balance from around £200 to £900. George was eager that interested parties should know of this donation so they would not be deterred from requesting a grant by the relatively low balance in the Fund at the year end.

As you may have seen in the Ringing World, the West Anglia Guild has recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary and has made a donation of £200 to our Guild in recognition of their ringing in Suffolk during this period.

Strategy

The year 2013 was satisfactory from a financial point of view with the small deficit on the General Fund equivalent to the one-off expenditure on the odd-struckness meter. Unless we meet any unexpected expenditure, I expect us to break again even this year and perhaps make a small loss in 2015 if costs continue to rise. In view of the healthy balance in the Restoration Fund and in the General Fund I propose that the subscriptions for 2015 are kept at the current level.

Trevor Hughs proposed a vote of thanks to the Treasurer for his hard work throughout the year and especially that going into the preparation of the accounts. Endorsed by the Chairman and supported by all present.

9. Ratification of NRLM's

Ian Boocock and Simon J T Smith were ratified as NRLM's.

10. AGM Arrangements - Jed represented the SE District on this.

Arrangements are well advanced and follow the usual pattern: Ringing 2pm Service 4pm hot meal 5pm (booking essential) AGM 6pm. The usually popular Fringe meeting, again organised by Jonathan Stevens, will be held in the hall at 2pm and the topic this year will be handbells, with guest speaker(s) and demonstrations. Jed will liaise with Winston Girling to arrange publicity through What's on, the Guild magazine, a bulk email and the Guild website. The GMC suggested the inclusion of parking details would help to attract attendees. As part of AOB later in this GMC meeting it was agreed that immediately following the AGM business meeting Ralph Earey would introduce an Open Forum with the topic 'Planning the Future of Ringing'.

11. Ringing Foundation request for funding.

The Guild has received a letter from Brian Meads of the Ringing Foundation requesting financial support, a copy of which was circulated to GMC members prior to the meeting. The Ringing Foundation has played a major part in ensuring the development and launch of the ITTS scheme. This scheme is valued by the Guild and has been implemented in Suffolk. Jed pointed out that contrary to his personal commitment two years ago that there would be no direct cost associated with ITTS the Ringing Foundation now made a charge of £10 per student toward training materials, which the Guild was happy to support. Gordon advised that as a member of the executive, bearing in mind Jed's comments, and concerned that a donation would not fall within the Objects of the Guild as stated in the Constitution, he felt unable to support the application. Mindful of the Treasurer's report above that shows the Guild General Fund just about breaking even year on year a donation to the Ringing Foundation along the lines mentioned in their letter would necessitate an increase in Guild Subscriptions. Trevor Hughes reminded the GMC how difficult it had been in the past to get the membership to agree to increases in subscriptions. There was no proposal put to the meeting to make a donation to the Ringing Foundation. Alan Stanley will draft a letter to Brian Meads for review / editing by the Executive prior to posting.

12. Youth Ringing – Neal Dodge

The Young ringers again intend to enter a band into the Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC), this year to be held at Worcester on 5th July. With Band selection at St Mary le Tower on the 23rd March. Estimated cost will be £57 per ringer staying one night at the University of Worcester and travelling from Suffolk in a hired minibus. The cost will reduce as more people confirm their attendance and accommodation is booked. Young Ringers are undertaking some fundraising activity, amongst which is a raffle to be run to coincide with the Guild AGM. Any prizes would be gratefully welcomed. The GMC were pleased to confirm that the Guild would support the Young Ringers RWNYC entry in a similar way as before, from the Pipe Family Trust Fund.

As the band find it hard to all meet up to practice before the competition support from the District Ringing Masters arranging Quarter Peals and extra practice for their band members would greatly benefit our RWNYC entry.

Monthly Youth Ringing events continue with a simulator and the Guild mini-ring planned for April 15th at Bardwell where they intend to launch the RWNYC fundraising campaign. The Young Ringers will welcome experienced ringers able to provide help to their monthly meetings and encourage other Young Ringers to attend.

13. Amendments to Guild Constitution and Rules

Reviewed by Alan Stanley based on a suggestion by David Steed at an earlier GMC. There are no outstanding references to Newsletter to be changed to Magazine. Last year a question was raised as to the necessity of placing a notice in The Ringing World re the Rose Trophy Competition when entry was open only to Suffolk Guild members. The GMC agreed that at the present time no changes to the Rules and Constitution were desirable; noting that this would continue to support The Ringing World in a small way.

14. Ringing for St. George's Day

The Guild had again received a letter from Libby Alexander of the Ringing for England Campaign via Mandy encouraging ringing on St George's day. The GMC agreed that no actions were necessary.

15. Any other business

15.1 Jonathan Stevens suggested there would be benefit in strengthening the link between the GMC and the Guild's Central Council rep's where none existed. Peter Harper pointed out that he is now a central Council rep. and it was agreed that Jonathan's idea was sound but that because Peter is now a rep no action was necessary other than to ask Peter for a report as a GMC agenda item following Central Council meetings.

15.2 Recorded here but decided under the Treasurers Report: The agenda for future GMC meetings will have a slightly different running order. The Treasurer's report will precede the Application for Grants so that informed decisions can be made.

15.3 Recognition of 50 year membership. Recorded here, discussed earlier in the meeting. Peter Harper has done further work on this by examining a copy of the 1963 Guild Annual Report as a way of identifying candidates, revealing 17 members. Discussion followed about the problem of verifying continuous membership and Alan Stanley suggested that an award marking 50 years since first joining could sidestep this difficulty. Agreed that certificates presented at AGM's would be the way forward acknowledging that starting this year was probably a bit ambitious. Peter Harper agreed to do further research, generally run the scheme and set out a framework for consideration by a future GMC meeting.

15.4 Magazine, Sue Freeman asked if anyone was willing to help with the Magazine by taking on the role of soliciting advertising. No stampede. Agreed that she should raise it as part of her report to the AGM.

15.5a 800th Anniversary (octocentenary Oxford Concise Dictionary) of signing of Magna Carta in 1215. Raised by Neal Dodge. There was an article in the RW regarding this matter.

There are 5 towers in Suffolk associated with the signing of the Magna Carta. They are Clare (SW), Norman Tower Bury St Edmunds (NW), Framlingham (NE), Halesworth (NE), and Huntingdenfield (NE). Jed Flatters informed the meeting that ringing was planned amongst the other events that included the Magna Carta coming to Bury St Edmunds. There is to be a big national ringing day on Sunday 14th June 2015 but as the Barons met a year earlier in Bury St Edmunds there is to be a pageant on 3rd July 2014 to celebrate the town's connection to the Magna Carta.

15.5b On Monday 9th June 2014 the commonwealth games baton will come to Suffolk visiting Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, and Newmarket. As we are the only county it will visit in the eastern region some ringing would be a good PR opportunity.

Neal will pass this information on to the PR officer.

15.6 Ralph Earey asked as a guest whether he could raise the issue of supporting youth ringing with funding and in other ways. The Chair welcomed his comments. After some discussion Trevor Hughes suggested the topic might be included at the AGM. Alan Stanley supported this but stated that he would prefer it to be conducted outside of the business meeting, and Ralph agreed to lead an Open Forum discussion immediately after the AGM with the topic 'Planning the Future of Ringing'.

16. Dates of next meetings

Sunday 15th June 6pm

Saturday 18th October at 10am

Saturday 14th February at 2pm