

Minutes of GMC Meeting, 10.00am Saturday 21st February 2015 at Stowupland Church Hall

Present: Alan Stanley (Chairman), Jed Flatters (Ringing Master), Gordon Slack (Treasurer), Neal Dodge, Ralph Earey, Philip Gorrod, Peter Harper, Trevor Hughes, Ed Rolph, Derek Rose, Tom Scase, Jonathan Stevens and Marion Turner.

1. Welcome: The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Ed Rolph as a new member of the GMC. In the absence of the Secretary Alan Stanley acted as minute taker.

2. Apologies: Apologies were received from: Jason Busby; Mary Garner, Winston Girling, Linda Goodban, Brian Hale, Ruth Munnings Sally Munnings, Mandy Shedden, David Smith and David Steed. Philip Gorrod pointed out with attendance and apologies numbers the SE were potentially over the 5 representatives per District permitted level. Ralph Earey will resolve.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 18th October 2014, had been circulated prior to the meeting and were taken as read. The meeting agreed that they were a true record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes:

- a) 11 complete Ralph Earey had passed the emails to the Web master for distribution related to Porch Notices and the Central Council leaflet.
- b) 14c complete Alan Stanley had passed details of the NDA commemoration service to the Web Master for distribution by email.
- c) 14e Publication of minutes; Alan Stanley stated that further work was needed to achieve a satisfactory level of transparency and information in a more timely manner which he will undertake. Carried forward.

This prompted a question about publication of the draft minutes of the 2014 AGM. Alan Stanley stated that these had been produced in draft but with an omission of remarks made by George Reynolds which he had pointed out when he received the minutes for inclusion in the Annual Report. He will provide the text to correct this. When this is done the minutes will be distributed to GMC members and passed to the webmaster.

Other actions in the previous minutes were against items appearing on this agenda and would be dealt with at that point.

5. Treasurers report: Gordon Slack presented the following report:

Overall

The accounts for 2014 have been finalised and sent to the Report Editor and also to the Examiners.

General Fund

Income to the General Fund decreased by 5% overall in 2014, although this conceals increases in some categories and decreases in others. The most notable change was a

reduction in subscription income of 10%. Membership numbers have fallen and a further contributory factor is the increasing age profile of our members with more paying the senior rate or becoming free. Many such members give a generous donation to the Restoration Fund in lieu of their subscription.

Expenditure was virtually unchanged from 2013 although again there were increases and reductions, particular over £400 for the digitisation of tower reports produced by Ranald Clouston and others. The Young Ringers raised sufficient funds for the Striking Competition to offset their costs and although this income and expenditure is included in the accounts, they virtually balanced out. Overall there was a small reduction in the General Fund of £162 which compares with a reduction of £272 in 2013.

Restoration Fund

The significant increase in Restoration Fund income from donations and interest reported last year has meant that income this year is down by 20%, especially as interest rates have deteriorated further. Grants made were relatively low again at less than £7,500 but after several years where requests for grants were small, grants of over £21,000 were approved in 2014. As a result, the sum available for allocation to new projects has decreased to £46,600. The grant to Elmsett was paid in January. The Halesworth grant will be paid as soon as I receive the necessary details.

Strategy

Subscriptions for 2016 are on the agenda separately.

6. Subscription Levels for 2016: Gordon Slack had circulated a paper on this subject showing that revenue from subscriptions has fallen partly due to a 1% drop in membership but also because members reaching 65yrs enjoy a lower level of subscription and for those attaining 75yrs membership is free. He acknowledged that some senior members replace their subscription with a donation. The effect is subscriptions net of the 50% donation to the Restoration fund and with one off costs taken into account fail to fully meet the running costs of the Guild leading to a small reduction in the General fund year on year. Donations and the gift aid return go in whole to the Restoration fund, rather than a 50/50 split with the General fund. It was agreed that there was flexibility available to credit these two items in whole or in part to the General fund, acknowledging that any stated preference for the use of a donation would be heeded.

It was agreed that subscriptions would remain unchanged for 2016. And also that a survey of members attitudes to shifting the age breakpoints or removing them should be conducted. Alan Stanley will frame some questions for discussion / agreement by the GMC. Initial thoughts were to have this as a table top survey at the AGM but a web based survey was selected as potentially having a greater response. Ralph Earey offered to assist with this.

It was acknowledged that success in recruiting new members was another way to delay increasing subscription rates.

7. Ringing Master's Report: Jed Flatters presented the following report:

The striking competitions are due to be held in the SW district, although towers are not yet confirmed it is hoped the morning tower for the six bell competition will be Rattlesden with a 10.00 draw followed by a late lunch and results with a break before the 8 bell competition at Lavenham with a 2.00 draw.

I visited Stowmarket to check over work carried out to the bearing assemblies and recommended our grant be paid.

I assisted Winston and our DAC bells advisor Alan Moulton in trying to find a resolution to the impasse at Redgrave, we think we put forward a suitable plan of action but still the churches trust is dragging it's heels whilst Albert Driver's legacy remains locked and earning little interest as bellhangers prices creep up and up.

I helped Crawford and Bob install the new treble to complete the five at Elmsett just before Christmas, they make a lovely light ring. Winston checked them over and recommended we pay our Guild grant.

Winston and I inspected the new sound doors installed at Halesworth, we were delighted to find how efficient they were and recommended our grant be paid.

I attended the NW district meeting at Stowmarket which unfortunately was poorly attended. I was also able to attend the SW meeting at Sudbury which had a better attendance. I could not make the NE meeting and failed to get to the SE.

I missed out for about six weeks over Christmas as I visited family in Spain and was detained by my mother's illness this lead me to miss my own district and SE meetings though I have managed to attend the February meetings of both districts but could not make the NE held on the same day as our own meeting.

I continue to support the second Tuesday practices organised by Peter and Jane Harper, if you are free give them a try as they are usually a good day out and will only carry on if supported.

8. Belfry Advisory Committee report: In Winston Girling's absence, Jonathan Stevens presented the following report.

There were 8 members of the BAC at the last meeting. Matters which will need to be discussed at the GMC are:

1) SMLT grant application. £13717.20 total to de-rust and paint frame and replace 8 clappers which are breaking up. BAC suggested grant level of £1500.

2) Small grants. At least 20 years ago when I first took on this job the GMC encouraged applications for small grants to keep bells up and running and I seem to remember we even helped once with a set of ropes. My view is that we should continue to do this and there is nothing to suggest that SMLT are any less eligible than anyone else.

3) Philip's suggestion that we make a list of towers where maintenance is minimal or absent and quarters and peals are rung.

In the absence of Kev. the Rev. all quarters and peals are arranged by SG Members and the BAC agreed that this needs to be tackled from the education angle. Most organisers of peals are sensible and if there is any doubt about the state of maintenance at a tower

will make enquiries and if necessary contact the BAC accordingly. This happened recently with Richard Knight who wanted to go to Kelsale for a peal.

BAC suggested we should put a bit in Magazine, at Districts and perhaps briefly at AGM to try and make sure that this happens. Members of BAC happy to arrange whatever necessary at a tower if somebody lets them know. Suffolk Guild Members in general need to be aware that the BAC is a small group of people who all have their own towers to look after and invariably are already looking after a group of towers around them. This means that we cannot always leap into action straight away and have to organise and deal with requests for maintenance in strict rotation.

I am looking at arranging maintenance seminars etc as soon as possible and probably on a District level, most likely starting with the NE and SW this year. These will also be a good opportunity to address the above problem.

4) Elmsett now completed and grant passed. Halesworth soundproofing - a first class job - likewise.

St. Nicholas Ipswich. Rung at Christmas, no major problems, could probably do with some maintenance. No request yet received for us to get involved though.

5) Little Saxham. Treasurer has been in touch. 2 old bells stolen from Church floor a while back. They have no idea of present state of frame or what is in tower! Research indicated that 10 years ago Taylors fitted steel frame to house 3 bells for chiming. Tenor already installed in this frame. Unfortunate that they did not have the other 2 bells put in the frame at the time. They can have 2 new bells on insurance claim but insurers will not pay to hang them in tower. Suggested it would be a lot easier if they had this done at the same time and they are now looking at this option.

6) Whatfield (2 bells) looking at installing new frame etc similar to Elmsett.

Next Meeting Wed June 3rd 7pm hopefully at Wickham Market where the work should be finished.

Jed Flatters reminded the meeting that if Ropes purchases were made through a PCC then the vat would be refundable.

9. Consideration of Applications for Grants Jonathan Stevens Proposed that a grant be made available to SMLT of £1500 (details above), Seconded by Neal Dodge. The meeting approved.

10. R & T Committee Report: The Ringing Master stated that attempts to set up a meeting had failed to attract sufficient attendees to be able to proceed. A meeting will be fixed for end February / early March.

11. Youth ringing update: Neal Dodge presented the following report:

We have continued to meet at least every month for a practice right across the Guild. We have also endeavoured to have a varied and interesting programme as demonstrated by the high level of attendance we have received including new and returning young ringers.

The meetings we have run since October are listed below.

- 30th October- Outing to 5 towers in Ipswich including handbell session.
- 7th November- Ringing at Sproughton followed by village bonfire & firework display.
- 23rd November- General Practice at Woolpit and Rattlesden.
- 29th December- Christmas Social at Benhall and Saxmundham • 24th January- Ringing at Sudbury St Gregory with the SW district practice at Lavenham afterwards.

- 20th February- Half Term Grundisburgh practice including 2 quarter peals at Tostock and Brandeston followed by a group meal in Woodbridge.

The coming months:

The next planned practice is a 12 bell workshop at the Norman Tower on 15th March. All young ringers welcome. Details on what's on.

After March we will begin to start preparing for the Ringing World National Youth Striking Contest in Oxford to be held on the 11th July.

We'll do this by running more focused 8 bell sessions to improve our method ringing and striking. Whilst also organising the logistical side of the weekend. More details to follow.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those who help organise and run our practices. Also to the ringers who attend month after month. Long may they continue.

Any questions or suggestions regarding Suffolk Young Ringers please contact me at youth@suffolkbells.org.uk.

12. Funding Ringing Training: A discussion led to the following agreements

- a) a separate fund would not be set up at this time but awareness should be raised within the Guild that funding is available. Starting with the AGM in April.
- b) Allocation of funds would follow a similar pattern to that in place for restorations except that the R&T Committee would fill the role played by the BAC in
 - The establishment and publication of guidelines
 - The consideration of applications
 - The recommendation of specific funding amounts made to the GMC
 - Any necessary follow up and quality check
 - Maintaining records

It was agreed that the Treasurer would assist in the development of guidelines

Jed Flatters stated that he felt that the R&T should also provide insight on a case by case basis on the suitability of proposals.

13. AGM details Ralph Earey provided details of the timings as follows

3pm - 4:30pm Ringing at St. John's
 4.30pm Church service
 5pm - 5:45pm Tea in St. John's Church
 5:45 - 7:15pm AGM in St. John's Church
 7:15pm – 8.30pm Ringing at St. John's

Photography of attendees had been arranged in principal, it was agreed that this would take place in the church between the tea and the meeting. The task of capturing names is yet to be fully resolved.

Changes were made and items were added to the draft agenda to cover 'BAC role and Bell Maintenance sessions'. Also 'The Way Forward' to pick up from last year's open forum; introduced by Ralph Earey handing over to Jed Flatters to describe the role the R&T committee will play. Revised agenda distributed with the minutes.

The Exhibition of George Pipe's ringing memorabilia is set to take place at St John's Masonic Hall Princes Road Felixstowe. Attendance and support by many guild members is hoped for, along with local people. Ralph Earey will write a feature piece for the

Ringling World with a view extending attendance in the County and beyond. It should be seen as a recruitment opportunity for the Guild and the Marketing banners will be used and other material will be available.

14. Succession Planning: Treasurer and Secretary offices become vacant this year as five year maximum terms are reached. There has been a decidedly muted response to approaches to individuals. Efforts continue.

15. Any Other Business

a) Alan Stanley stated that George Pipe had written proposing that the Guild should make a donation of £100 to the Mancroft Appeal. The Treasurer reminded the meeting of the difficulty that can arise in making donations between charities; and it was agreed, with the support of Ed Rolph that the way to proceed would be to hold a raffle in support of the appeal at the Guild Social in September, which if past experience were to be repeated a sum in excess of £100 could be raised

b) The Guild Social will be held on the 26th September. Ed Rolph stated that the format would be towers open for ringing yet to be identified with an Adnams Brewery tour and a Distillery tour. Derek Rose kindly undertook to re-arrange a South West District event to a different date.

c) Marion Turner enquired as to a source for Muffles. Jed Flatters suggested googling Big Wilf's Bell Muffles or any of the well known bell hangers e.g. Whites or Taylors.

16. Future meetings to be held:

Sunday 21st June 2.00pm

Saturday 17th October 2.00pm

Saturday 20th February 2016 2.00pm