

Minutes of the Meeting of the Guild Management Committee Held on Saturday 17th October, 2 pm, Stowupland Church Hall

Present: Alan Stanley (Chairman), Carl Melville (Secretary), Owen Claxton (Treasurer), Winston Girling (Chair BAC), Jason Busby (NE), Neal Dodge (NW), Ralph Earey (SE), Sue Freeman (SW), Philip Gorrod (NE), Peter Harper (SE), Trevor Hughes (NE), Sally Munnings (SE), Ed Rolph (NE), Tom Scase (SE), David Smith (SW), Michelle Williams (Hon.)

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting but extended a particular welcome to Michelle Williams who was invited to speak about the Annual Report later in the meeting.

2. Apologies

Jed Flatters (Ringing Master), Mary Garner (SE), Bryan Mills (SW), Derek Rose (SW), Gordon Slack (NW). David Steed (NW), Jonathan Stevens (NE), Marion Turner (NW)

3. Absent Friends

Charles Mullet RIP was mentioned as a ringer, but not a Guild member.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 21st June

The Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising

6a – a discussion was held about levels of subs received by District.

6c – Neal Dodge and Winston Girling updated the GMC on progress at St Mary Quay and Redgrave Churches. It seemed that some of the Guild's hope could not be followed, but at least the Guild tried to have an input.

6f – it was decided that the Central Council Representatives should be invited to attend the June GMC 2016. Secretary to invite.

12 – the survey results from Ralph Earey were not included in the June GMC minutes. They will be included with the minutes of this meeting.

13b – Saturday GMC dates are included on the current GMC Agenda.

13c – Winston Girling and Carl Melville had been in touch with Sal Burrows about their taking over the Parish Affiliation Scheme.

13e – the secretary wrote to the Bishop to invite him to be our President. He didn't expect a response.

6. Officer Reports

i. Treasurers Report

General Fund - at present stands at £5,477, but not year end!

There have been no exceptional items of expenditure.

Brief summary of overall position:

Subscriptions					
	NE	NW	SE	SW	Row Total
As of 08/09/2015:	1,361.00	1,867.00	2,402.00	1,102.00	6,732.00
	NE	NW	SE	SW	Row Total
As of 12/09/2014:	1,316.00	1,772.00	2,275.00	1,288.00	6,651.00
2015 as % of 2014	103%	105%	106%	86%	101%

Restoration Fund

Grants paid from 01/01/2015 to date (£'s):

Elmsett	1000
Wickham Market	2,500
Halesworth	500
Stoke Ash	292

Grants outstanding:

<i>Horringer</i>	<i>12000</i>
<i>Ipswich SMLT</i>	<i>1500 paid within next few weeks</i>

A more fuller report can be found attached.

ii. Ringing Master's Report

I visited Wickham Market with Winston on 14th July to inspect the work recently completed. I did not expect too much but was surprised by how responsive the bells now were even though the low ceiling is retained I found each bell easy to ring. I approved our grant to this project.

I also visited Stoke Ash to inspect work carried out by the BAC working team to keep this ring of five in action. I was pleased to advise payment of our grant for a job well done.

I have helped the Ipswich SMLT ringers dismantle the bell fittings in preparation for the major overall and have helped in their refitting.

I was delighted to be invited in the first peal at Elmsett, I had been involved in this project with Crawford Allen for the best part of 20 years, the last four in helping with the augmentations from 4 to 5. They are a super little 5.

We have held two R&T meeting, (see separate report).

Summer ringing has seen me joining the NW outing to Norfolk cycling and ringing at 6 towers and the mini tour to Essex, a well attended day with most people turning out in stripy shirts in memory of Simon Griffiths.

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.

iii. Belfry Advisory Committee Report

STOKE ASH A number of visits were made to this Church and after much hard work a rotten frame support beam has been cleated with 2 sections of large channel which have been secured in the tower walls and the bells are now safe to ring again. Chris Davies, Nathan Colman, Mark Steggles and Keith Marlow all worked long and hard on this project and I am grateful for their invaluable assistance.

WICKHAM MARKET Inspected by Jed Flatters and myself for Guild grant aid. Passed subject to 2 clappers on the heavier bells being replaced as these bells tended to go up wrong. Taylor's will do this and any payment is being withheld until this work is completed. Work here included new headstocks and clappers.

EYE Chiming hammer on tenor completely re-furbished and rope run down to the porch fitted with new pulleys. Thanks to Nathan Colman and St. John Perry for their help.

PALGRAVE Clappers on 3 of the bells had tight nylon bushes and these have now been reamed out and replaced and the problem cured. Thanks to Chris Davies for his assistance.

REDGRAVE Report to Churches Conservation Trust about the forthcoming restoration on these bells.

STOWMARKET Installation checked and tightened including wooden frame.

RICKINGHALL INFERIOR (3 CHIMING BELLS) Checked prior to chiming for wedding. Thanks to Carol Girling for her assistance.

ST MARY LE TOWER Inspected by Jed Flatters and myself for Guild Grant purposes. (frame painted and new clappers on front 8 bells carried out by Taylors. Excellent job and passed accordingly.

HORRINGER Visited with Alan Moulton to meet architect and suggest sound proofing arrangements in accordance with Guild Grant conditions. Agreed that all 4 louvres should be boarded up to within 18" of tops.

LAVENHAM All 8 clappers removed to ground to be taken to Taylors for re-bushing and re-profiling on 6 and 8. Some new headstock bolts will also require replacement. Thanks to Mark Steggles, Derek and Penny Rose and local assistance in getting these clappers down the 137 steps. The treble and tenor were very difficult to remove because the bells have all been left up in the past and rainwater has collected in them and leaked out via the clapper bolts.

A report circulated previously by Winston Girling about wooden bell frames was discussed. The report was written in response to an article in the Guild Magazine, Issue 17. WG emphasised dialogue between the variety of groups. The meeting

agreed that it would be a good idea to compile a date base of Suffolk's wooden frames. Please see attached.

Neal Dodge contacted the Churches Conservation Trust Re St Mary at Quay and Redgrave and that they confirmed that the ringing room at StMaQ would be turned into office but with mobile furniture and bells would not have any work done to them as part of their regeneration project due to the other works running over budget. Stephen Pettman, the key holder, has been managing the design team and confident that ringing will be able to continue.

ND also reported that it was now over 5 years since Albert Driver passed away and left the money for the restoration and augmentation of the bells at Redgrave. It was 3 year since the planning permission for the full scheme was granted by Mid Suffolk District Council but the CCT have denied the project any further progress. In September they launched a consultation on how to proceed with the scheme. Winston provided a response on behalf of the Suffolk Guild along with other stakeholders including the NDA. The result of the consultation is that the existing wooden frame must be repaired and no bells are to be added which is very disappointing. The CCT did give the Redgrave Church Heritage Trust the option to take over ownership of Church and continue with the project as was originally wished by Albert but they refused.

iv. Recruitment and Training

The R&T Committee met on 25/6/15 and again on 9/9/15 at the Royal William in Stowmarket. A further meeting is planned for 26/11/15.

We have looked at the Training documents (Ringing Tips) on the Guild web site and have started to update these to improve the language. Currently "Learning methods - first steps" and "Learning methods - next steps" have been posted. A new document "Learning Styles questionnaire" has also been produced. All of the other sheets are being reviewed including the two documents dealing with handling a bell which we feel need a total rewrite with pictures to better illustrate them.

Neal Dodge has been working to produce a welcome handbook for new guild members. A copy has been forwarded to Mary Garner our Guild membership secretary.

As a committee we have been tasked to find out how best to allocate funding following the unanimous decision at the last AGM to give financial support to Training. Please see separate attachment with our views and recommendations to the GMC.

Financial support to Trainers and Recruits (from written comments submitted by JF)

We believe that this should operate simply with an accountable request and payment system.

For accountability we recommend a letter or email request to the Ringing Master.

Small grants of up to £50 may be approved by the RM who will inform the Treasurer and forward a copy of the request.

Larger grants up to £500 will require the RM to circulate an email to the R&T committee who will reply with approval or otherwise within one week, a majority is required for approval. The master will then inform the Treasurer as above.

For major grants over £500 the R&T committee will advise the GMC of its approval and will ask for confirmation at a GMC meeting. The master will then inform the Treasurer as above.

We will approve a part payment of £5 for those attending ART training courses, teaching literature etc. dependent on costs. We envisage major grant aid to assist in the provision of simulators.

The GMC then discussed the above proposal for financial help to Trainers and new Recruits. The meeting agreed the following:

Grants of £50 could be made at the Ringing Master's discretion, should be recorded and reported and should not exceed an initial budget of £250.

Ralph Earey proposed. Ed Rolph seconded. All in favour.

For larger amounts, where it would be inappropriate to delay a decision until the next GMC meeting, grants up to £500 should be brought by the Ringing Master to the Guild Executive via email with a decision being made together within seven days.

Grants of over £500 need GMC approval.

A clear budget would be discussed at the next GMC meeting when the Master was present. The grants would be allocated from the General Fund. Alan Stanley suggested we could also look to the Pipe Fund.

v. Young Ringers

We've had a practice planned for every month since the last meeting though some have been more successful than others. Both the July and August practice at Ufford and Chediston were very well attended with roughly 15 people at each, we even managed a Pre practice YR QP at Wehaston in August. September's practice was at Palgrave where there was only 5 of us and the October meeting has been cancelled. ER commented on the choice of Sunday afternoons for YR practices due to the lack of public transport. ND replied that as YRs now have secretary (Ambrin Williams) they, with the assistance of the YR Master (George Salter) are responsible for organising & setting the dates of the meetings. Also in a survey of practice slots for YRs it was found that Sunday afternoons were the best option in terms of availability.

A discussion followed Neal's report about communication between the Young Ringers' groups and the wider Guild. The secretary said he was happy to chat with George Salter about how this potentially might be done. Ralph Earey said he would

talk to the group in the meantime to see how leadership of the group might be maintained to a high standard.

7. Applications for Grants

No new applications for grants.

8. Membership Secretary update

Please see attached.

Mary Garner had been working on the membership process in order to improve organisation, speed and data gathering/management.

AS proposed, on Mary Garner's behalf, that up to £50 be made available to assist with data gathering / improvement subject to expenditure being recorded and receipted. All in favour.

A discussion followed about new members to the Guild attending the district meeting that they are proposed at. All agreed that encouragement was needed. The meeting agreed that a note to all District Ringing Masters and Secretaries was needed in order to ensure that members could ring rounds unaided on a tower bell (Constitution B.2.1) and to protect the Guild from accidents that may occur. The secretary to action.

9. Ratification of NRLM(s)

- i. Helen C Mansley
- ii. Helen J Carter
- iii. Christopher M Bennett
- iv. Timothy M Bayton
- v. Benjamin D Kipling
- vi. Tim R Palmer

Ralph Earey proposed. Alan Stanley seconded. All in favour.

10. Guild Annual Report

The chairman handed over to Michelle Williams, the Guild Report Editor. Michelle said that she was able to start the Report from scratch this year, and would like to know how the GMC can support her in doing this.

AS assured MW of the GMC's support in any way she needed, especially by chasing contributors.

The Secretary would write to district masters and secretaries to encourage them to send in the necessary information promptly this year and to aid MW in the task.

MW's deadline was the end of November.

The GMC decided the following:

- To reinstate the calendar.
- To reinstate names of President, Patrons etc on the front or inside cover.

- To introduce postcodes in place of OS map references. The OS map references would now go on the website.
- Do away with deaneries, as these were no longer relevant to Guild organisation.
- To add email address to tower correspondents.
- To dramatically limit the length of reports from the District Secretaries.

11. Guild Social

Ed Rolph reported that the Guild Social had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers. The question was asked if they were needed at all. It was reported that the NW district would be holding the Guild Social to coincide with a District Practice.

12. Succession planning

It was noted that the Ringing Master steps down next year as Jed comes to the end of his five years in office. AS wanted to encourage the GMC to look for possible candidates and said that Jed may already have a few people in mind.

13. Review of AGM quorum, possible amendment to rules

AS and CM had looked at 'Robert's Rules' to see if they could give guidance on the lack of a recorded fixed quorum for AGM meetings. It was agreed that we needed a quorum to 'protect against smaller sub groups'. However, the meeting felt that the necessary change to Guild rules could wait until other changes were necessary.

14. AGM review/planning

AS and CM wanted to speed the planning of the next AGM, as Easter is early next year. The secretary needs details by January to send to the Ringing World. In Derek Rose's absence, the meeting believed the AGM to be held in Sudbury on Saturday 2nd April 2016. AS would contact Derek Rose.

15. AOB

No items of AOB had been previously notified to the Secretary and time being short there was no invitation to the meeting.

16. Date of Next Meeting

Saturday 20th February, 2016, 2pm, Stowupland Village Hall.

Future meetings: Saturday 18th June, 2016. Saturday 15th October, 2016.

Attached:

- Financial Reports in more detail (Item 6.i)
- Wooden Bell Frames Report (Item 6.iii)
- Membership Process (item 8)

Wooden Bellframes: Replace or Repair?

For a good few years now Churches with peals of bells hung in timber bell frames often find themselves involved in all sorts of complications when they decide to have their bells restored. Preservationists from various organisations will deliberate on the wooden bell frame and are likely to make decisions which do not necessarily agree with what the Church and ringers are seeking to achieve. What you can or cannot do with an old wooden frame will be the subject of many complicated reports and it is likely that disagreement will arise between the various parties, particularly between the ringers and the conservationists.

My experience over the years has taught me three main lessons. The first is that you cannot generalise over old wooden frames, they come in all conditions and designs and you can only deal with each case individually. Secondly, that the preservationists are often misunderstood by ringers. Thirdly, those ringers are frequently misunderstood as well.

If I may be allowed to quote Mark Regan in his report to the Suffolk Guild of Ringers in 2014: "Bellframes are part of something bigger and should not be looked at in isolation. They have a functional purpose and a context. Some are archaeologically important; only some. What's more important is the practise, heritage, history and archaeology of bellringing. This is something which is alive and dynamic and helps define "Englishness." Mark goes on to describe how everything we now take for granted was once new. The railways caused great controversy at first. Everything we have today, even steel bell frames, will one day be archaeologically interesting.

Bellframes are crude pieces of engineering hidden away in Church towers. If wooden frames are not fit for purpose then they should be replaced or sensibly preserved if they are important archaeologically. Preservationists presently seem to favour repairing frames which should be preserved to allow bells to be returned to them for future use. This may well be possible. At Wickham Skeith a wooden frame well over 100 years old built by Days of Eye continues in use despite only having pegs to hold it together and it still works very well. However, at Redgrave an estate frame built in late 18th century has suffered badly from decay. Here the Churches Conservation Trust want the frame repaired so that six bells can be put back into it for full circle ringing. Almost 50% of the frame will have to be replaced, and much steelwork added to even begin to make it fit for purpose. Accessing suitable 14 foot lengths of timber suitably seasoned, and repairing the frame will cost a vast amount of money on its own (probably approaching £50,000) Here a plan to move the old wooden frame down one level and keep it in its entirety, thereby preserving it, has so far been refused point blank. It would allow the bells to be put in a steel frame at the original level and heard by the village a mile away. This has been requested by every household in the village.

The above gives two examples of wooden frames at opposite ends of the spectrum. It also highlights the intransigence of some people involved in preserving our heritage. It would be nice to see a move towards all parties involved prepared to openly discuss preservation issues by getting together round a table and being prepared if necessary to negotiate sensible compromises with each other. One day, perhaps!

Winston Girling, September 2015.