

**North East District Annual District Meeting,
Saturday 8th November, Theberton**

Suzanne Stevens stood in for Jason Busby as chairman and read his welcome to the eighteen members:

The welcome, from Jason Busby – District Chairman

Hello everyone. Welcome to the Annual Meeting at Theberton. Welcome to our guild chairman Alan Stanley, great to have you with us. I'm sorry I can't be with you today I've gone on a badly timed holiday. Thank you to everyone for coming along today, to everyone involved with the service, from the vicar to the organist (not sure who that was!) and the readers. Thank you all for bringing food along I'm sure I will be missing a fabulous ringers tea.

This past year for the district has been a mixed bag, and Michelle will be reflecting on past events shortly. However, one thing has been constant and that's our secretary Julie Rapor who after many years of faithful service is standing down from the role. Julie on behalf of the district a very big thank you for all you have done, from booking towers, taking minutes, telling me what to say and when, sign here please, and organising the district walks...the list is endless. The district can only run well if the team work is tip top and I personally have really enjoyed working with you over recent years Julie. Can we all please say a big thank you to Julie.

As for me I'm standing down from the role of District Chairman, a role I've enjoyed and I'm sure will come back to in the future but for now I need to focus on my wife & daughter and the new arrival due in February. Can I finally say a big thank you to Michelle who has worked incredibly hard over the past year rallying the troops and organising super events. We need a great ringing master and Michelle you have my vote. Thank you.

Now on to the rest of the meeting.....

Apologies:

Faith Darch, Kathy Ferrar, Sal Jenkinson, Peggy Meredith, Julia Johnson, Marion Squier, Richard Rapor, Christine Blunt, John Tesh, Jane Savage, Jason Busby.

Minutes of the previous meeting-these had been circulated during tea and were approved by the members present and signed by the chairman.

Matters arising-none.

Review of the year: (from the ringing master-Michelle Williams)-this had been circulated during tea. Michelle said the main focus was looking forward to next year with some slightly different events. She said it had not been an easy year and thanked everyone for their help during the year. Suzanne Stevens expressed thanks to Michelle for her work during the year. Maggie Ross said it would be useful to have a deputy ringing master if possible to help out.

New members:

Nora Schroeter ratified as a member by the membership present after a tower election at Rendham in May.

As the meeting moved to the election of the officers Trevor Hughes suggested that there should be reports from the current officers first, Philip Gorrod said a district report was required and this had been covered by Michelle's report.

Election of Officers:

Chairman: Ed Rolph-proposed by Jason Busby as outgoing chairman

Secretary: Christine Blunt-proposed by Michelle Williams, sec Julie Rapior.

Treasurer: Julie Rapior-proposed by Michelle Williams, sec Ambrin Williams

Ringing Master: Michelle Williams-proposed by Ed Rolph.

Magazine Correspondent: Ambrin Williams prop Sarah Plummer, sec Suzanne Stevens.

District Technical Advisor: Jonathan Stevens prop Philip Gorrod, sec Hugh Spink

Reps on GMC: it was suggested these were proposed as a block but Philip Gorrod requested that these were done separately to allow the membership to show their approval for each individual.

Jason Busby-proposed Michael Rolph, sec Jonathan Stevens

Philip Gorrod-proposed Maggie Ross, sec Michelle Williams

Jonathan Stevens-proposed Michelle Williams, sec Maggie Ross

Trevor Hughes-proposed Philip Gorrod, sec Ambrin Williams

Ed Rolph-proposed Ambrin Williams, sec Michelle Williams

Maggie Ross asked if it was worth having a youth rep on the GMC in the future.

Philip suggested it would be better to have those willing to contribute vs token representation.

District Reps on R and T:

Michelle Williams-proposed Ambrin Williams, sec Sarah Plummer

Hugh Spink-proposed Michelle Williams, sec Ambrin Williams.

District Committee Members:

Richard Rapior- proposed Philip Gorrod, sec Sarah Plummer

Maggie Ross said it is important to have a deputy ringing master and proposed having this as a post even if it is left vacant at present. This was seconded by Michelle.

Deputy Ringing Master: Philip Gorrod- proposed Michelle Williams, sec Ambrin Williams.

Reports:

BAC: Jonathan Stevens reported that he was hoping the Guild Technical Advisor would be here to talk about his idea of having district technical advisors-it is a huge guild and one man can't do it all. If in the first instance technical advice/help is required ask him as our district advisor. He said the technical reports by Ranald are now digitalised, previously only the technical advisor had access to them-he is trying to get them onto the Guild website with a password required to access them-this is required so those with a lorry and crane cant steal any bells!! Jonathan said he had done a lot of reports over the years which frequently parrot his reports-if you get a report saying to do something please do it-it means it is necessary to be done. Sound control is going into Halesworth soon. Beccles are still waiting for some detail on the sound control to be agreed with English Heritage. Bedford keep 'sniffing' about a restoration, this would be a good historic restoration-they didn't involve the

Guild when they did the tower restoration, the reports didn't get to the BAC, the tower is just as unsafe as it always was and they have spent £120,000. Maggie Ross said that we have a handful of towers that are rung regularly by local bands, we also have some nice towers but only one ringer in each band-whose responsibility is it for the maintenance of these bells. Jonathan Stevens said the responsibility rests with the incumbent, next is the PCC. We have to have an invitation from the parish to help with their bells. Jonathan Stevens has been to Blythburgh recently and Michael Rolph has been to Wilby. Trevor Hughes said that peal ringers should pay a realistic fee for their peal and then the towers could have enough money to replace ropes as required, £10-£20 is not enough. Jonathan Stevens said during his tenure as Guild technical advisor he ran courses on belfry maintenance and trained others, 100 people have attended so we should not have to rely on half a dozen people. Maggie Ross said we need communication with towers. Jonathan Stevens said this is not happening but he had also been to a tower recently with a regular band where every rope was about to go.

R and T: a report had been circulated on the tables.

Recruitment and Training Report for 2014:

This year, the Recruitment and Training Committee have met a couple of times with the aim of reviewing the handling tips and keys to progression documents used by the Guild. These documents are currently available on the Guild website and have been for some time, so it was seen as an opportunity to update them, particularly in light of the new ways of teaching encouraged by the Integrated Teacher Training Scheme (ITTS) modules.

A first review has now been carried out. It is planned that photographs will be added before they are issued once again to all towers in the Guild.

Exploratory work is also underway to prepare and present a Guild leaflet explaining the benefits of becoming a member of the Suffolk Guild. Aimed specifically at those who are learners and those who have been ringing for a while, but are not members of the Guild, the aim is to encourage membership as much as possible and to introduce some of the key advantages of membership along with a brief introduction of who does what within the Guild management structure.

It is hoped that the new documents will be available for issue in 2015 so look out for these. We would encourage as many towers as possible to display the new handling tips documents and to use the introductory leaflets once they are available.

Hugh Spink

Michelle Williams

Hugh Spink said there must be a way of recruiting ringers and asked the meeting for ideas that had been tried. Philip Gorrod said he thought recruitment was easy but you need people with the right attitude who will stay-it is retention that is the issue and recruitment and retention are different issues. Hugh Spink said Huntingfield is going well, they can now ring and call changes and are wanting to plain hunt. Maggie Ross said ringing at Huntingfield started again after a district carol service several years ago which was an unexpected bit of outreach, maybe we should look at this again. Suzanne Stevens said that it is the people that put the effort in that stay. If they have that effort rewarded then they stay. It is important to make sure people know they are welcome. Philip Gorrod said it is a two way process, they need to commit and we need to commit to them. Jonathan Stevens said it would be nice for newer recruits to realise they are part of a bigger community. Trevor Hughes said recruitment and

retention comes and goes at towers over the years. Sarah Plummer said often just one or two more or less can make a big difference. Trevor Hughes said we need towers to keep ringing otherwise we will get complaints when they start again.

Ringling Master: report already covered in review of the year.

GMC: Alan Stanley the Guild chairman said it was a pleasure to be at the district ADM. GMC is alive and well, the current focus is on youth ringing. Neil Dodge from the North West district is on the GMC and is bringing youth ringing interest. They are currently looking at how they should be funding youth ringing as this is the future, because of the people we have we are in a fortunate position but we mustn't be complacent about it, should youth ringing be funded separately. Neil has brought the average age of the GMC down, the GMC needs people who want to be there and do jobs and Neil is doing well, they could do with more young people who want to do the job and make a difference. The GMC is also looking at succession-both the secretary and the treasurer will have done their maximum five year term next year-two key posts are available if anyone wants to do it. The GMC meetings have not been as well attended as they might have been but they have a good team. There will be recognition of 50 years of membership of the guild at the AGM next year which has been compiled by Peter Harper.

Guild Striking competition:

Philip Gorrod said this has been discussed at the GMC but not at length as the ringing master had not been present at the last meeting. The striking competition in 2014 was very lengthy, there was a broken rope then the key didn't turn up on time for the eight bell competition in the evening. It was too big an event. The guild ringing master thinks the number of entries needs to be cut down and cut down the number of people who can ring in multiple teams. Jonathan Stevens and Philip Gorrod both think that this is one of the few Guild events with a big turnout and we don't want to stop that. The GMC would like to know the districts views. Philip Gorrod suggested perhaps separating the six bell and the eight bell competition or perhaps having separate judges. Maggie Ross said we spend a lot of time trying to encourage people to enter; we want to make it as inclusive as possible rather than curtailing it. Jonathan Stevens said we need a debrief on last years event, the tower had not been properly prepared for a striking competition where people don't ring with their normal competence –the ropes are jerked and then break. There was a policy that the ropes should be checked/maintained first. The event also needs to be managed-people taking note of when they should be ringing, it was well organised at Woodbridge where the next team was waiting ready to ring. It is the management of the event that needs sorting out rather than changing the format. Philip Gorrod said we need an official district view-we need to examine the organisation, check the towers, check the ropes, it's not an inherent problem with the day but events on the day that caused the problems. Suzanne Stevens said she is very anti only two teams from each district going forward. Maggie Ross said Suffolk is a very big county with poor roads-there was nobody from SW or NW, it is often a long way to places so we need to bear in mind where the competition is held. The district hosting should put a team in, there should be representation from all the districts or if not make sure the location is appropriate,(for example if it is held in the south west it is a long way to go, there is no point in going to the far edge of the district if the SW aren't going to enter.) Suzanne Stevens said we have a distribution of current young ringers through the

districts-we need to get them enthusiastic. Maggie said there are some in the SW but not so many adults to bring them along.

Ed summarised the views of the district:

Split it into two days for the 6 and 8 bell-possible if really required.

Allow only the top two teams from the district striking competitions to enter-no.

Proper management and scheduling of the day, proper organisation at towers and maintenance checks prior to the day-our preferred option.

Sarah Plummer said the guild ringing master should not be expected to do it all on his own-it needs a good team helping to organise the day.

2015 Guild Social:

Jonathan Stevens said at the committee meeting we were discussing a possible fun day at a sports centre or village hall with a playground. John Massey from Rendham could organise playground games. Trevor Hughes suggested badminton etc at a sports centre. We need somewhere for the mini ring. Trevor Hughes had made enquires about using the sports centre at Leiston which shouldn't be a problem but we need a date to progress further. Maggie Ross and Sarah Plummer suggested there would be some members who would want something more sedate. Maggie also suggested a possible morning activity-if it was to be Leiston possibly reduced rate tickets to the Long Shop museum. Perhaps one of their ringers Pete Lock could do something connected to Sizewell. Philip Gorrod asked about food-this is to be discussed later. Pete Lock might know about any possible Sizewell connections or possible sponsorship from them.

Porch Notices:

Philip Gorrod reported that in the 1980s the Guild produced some porch notices.

Ralph Earey has been to some churches and noticed that the same notices are up with incorrect details. Please could we be vigilant and check the districts notices are up to date and if not remove them. Suzanne Stevens said that someone had seen one and gone to learn to ring at that church, it would be useful to have notices in churches that don't ring to suggest the nearest one to ring at. Sarah Plummer suggested the notices should also have details of the facebook page/website etc.

2015 events:

2015 programme circulated on the tables. Please could people put the dates in their diaries.

Maggie Ross asked if Wenhaston was an appropriate striking competition tower, Jonathan Stevens and Hugh Spink agree and think we should go somewhere else.

Maggie Ross though Blythburgh would be a better option. After some discussion it was decided that we will come back to a venue for this at the next committee meeting.

AOB:

Maggie Ross-this Thursday at 2pm in Beccles library there is a talk on churches in South Norfolk.

Philip Gorrod-as of the end of November the Halesworth practice will change from Tuesday to Thursday. The forth Thursday practice of each month will be a method on eight practice with a minimum standard of plain hunt triples.

Maggie Ross congratulated Richard Stevens on his first peal.

District Ringing Master's Report for 2014

What an interesting and educational year it has been! In my year as District Ringing Master it would be fair to say that my learning curve has been vertical and I must thank you all for your endless support and encouragement along the way, it has been greatly appreciated.

As a District, we have offered a wide variety of events over the year. Some were better attended than others, but I hope all had the opportunity to come along and participate. The highlights include a well attended quarterly meeting at Wissett, striking competition kindly hosted by Sweffling, walk and picnic (complete with flypast), a week of firsts designed to link in with World War One outbreak commemorations and a quarter peal afternoon just over the border in Norfolk.

More specialised practices have continued (5th Friday Surprise Major at Halesworth and Beyond Bob Minor at Worlingham) and whilst attendance has fluctuated throughout the year, it has provided scope for consolidating quarter peal attempts.

The District continued to support its young ringers throughout the year, and in particular with their preparation for the Ringing World National Youth Competition held in Worcester. It was a great experience for all involved and one which we hope to build upon during 2015 as the younger generation go from strength to strength.

Events for 2015 have been planned and are detailed on a separate sheet. I would encourage you to share these future dates as widely as possible within your towers, to raise awareness and help increase attendance at our district events. If there is anything that your tower would like help with that is not on the list or is planned too late in the year for your needs, then please do speak to myself or a member of the committee and we will do our best to help.

Finally, I would encourage as many as possible to be part of a District communication review planned for 2015. If you would like to receive emails from the Guild informing you of forthcoming District and Guild events, or would like to join the North East District Facebook page, please let me know.

Thank you all once again for your support and encouragement during 2014. I hope to see you all at the events during 2015.

Michelle Williams