



**Minutes of the North East Annual District Meeting held via Zoom (Covid-19) 4.30 pm
Saturday 13 November 2021**

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair, Sal Jenkinson, (SJ) introduced herself and welcomed 16 Members to the meeting. She explained the way in which the meeting would run today via Zoom, due to the continuing concern about Covid-19 case rates. She explained that the high levels of infection following the district event in Reydon in October have shown the need for continuing caution.

The Chair noted apologies from the Guild Chairman, Rowan Wilson, together with apologies from the Guild PRO and 11 NE members.

2. Approval of the minutes of the previous ADM held on 14th November 2020

SJ reminded Members that the draft minutes of this meeting had been circulated to Members earlier. She asked for any key points of discrepancy. There were none raised and the minutes were approved as a true record.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 14th November 2020

There were no matters arising other than items on the agenda.

4. District Ringing Master's Report (attached at end of these minutes)

The District Ringing Master, Philip Gorrod (PJG) referred to his written report, which had been circulated prior to the start of the meeting. It was agreed that an extra sentence will be added to the first paragraph, with reference to a first QP for Erika Clarke at Blythburgh on 11th November.

Richard Rapor asked also that reference be made in the DRM report to the handbell peal at Leiston of Stedman Cinques on 1st September. This was agreed as an addition.

5. Election of New Members

There were no new Membership application forms. There are some new ringers learning at present, who may be ready for election in due course.

6. Election of District Officers

SJ stepped down from the Chair whilst the election of the district chairman took place.

District Chairman

SJ indicated that she is willing to carry on as Chair for one more year. There were no other nominations and she was voted in as Chair. SJ resumed the chair at this point.

District Secretary

Kate Gill (KG) said she is willing to continue as district secretary, but suggested others might like to think about taking on the role. There were no other nominations and KG was voted in as District Secretary.

District Treasurer

Julie Rapor (JR) said she is willing to carry on for one more year. There were no other nominations and JR was voted in as district treasurer.

District Ringing Master (DRM)

PJG is willing to continue as DRM but happy for someone else to take over the role. He suggested that the district considers appointing a deputy Ringing Master who could shadow PJG and take over the role in 2022. There have been deputy RMs in the past.

Katharine Salter (KS) commented that a ringing master does not necessarily have to be one of the best ringers, but someone with good organisational skills, capable of running practices well. She is happy to give advice and support.

There were no other nominations for DRM and PJG was voted in.

Magazine Correspondent

Vacant as Guild is not currently producing a magazine

GMC Representatives (5 places)

The current representatives, Philip Gorrod, Sarah Plummer and Dave Goldstone, have all indicated their willingness to stand. In addition, Mike Cowling has offered to take up one of the district GMC places. He was proposed by PJG and seconded by Sarah Plummer.

There was no nomination for the fifth GMC place, but this can be filled later in the year if required. KS confirmed that there would be no issue with someone who may be interested in becoming a GMC representative observing a GMC first, before committing themselves. There are only 3 GMC meetings each year.

Julia Johnson proposed and Chrissie Pickup seconded the GM representatives. They were voted in.

R&T Representatives (2 places)

Both Philip Gorrod and Fiona Shuttle (FS) are willing to continue as R&T representatives. There was a brief discussion about the role of the R&T, including training new ringers and those teaching them. Retention of existing ringers is a particular focus at present. Both NE and the NDA have been badly affected with loss of members.

There were no other nominations for the R&T. Kate Gill proposed, and Chrissie Pickup seconded, PJG and FS as R&T representatives. They were voted in.

Other committee members

Richard Rapor is willing to continue as a committee member. Rona Sporle has stepped down. PJG proposed and Sal Jenkinson seconded him, and he was voted in. There were no nominations for other places.

The officer positions were proposed, en-bloc, by Chrissie Pickup and seconded by Mike Sage. (They had been voted in earlier in the meeting).

7. Reports (attached at end of these minutes)

Belfry Advisory Committee (BAC)

No written report had been submitted to the meeting. But elements of the BAC work have been covered in the GMC report.

GMC

Kate Gill (KG) briefly summarised her written report, which had been circulated prior to the start of the meeting. She referred to the recent completion of the new ring of 8 at Laxfield. The payment of subscriptions continues to be of concern to the Guild. JR commented that NE has only lost 18 members, and if we had had elections of new members our overall total would not be far down. It was considered that this is not too bad a position.

Mary Garner pointed out that we need to be sensitive about chasing members for subscriptions, as some people's personal circumstances have been badly affected by Covid-19.

Recruitment and Training

Fiona Shuttle had written a report, circulated before the meeting. Keith Dennis has been doing an excellent job with the installation of the Southwold simulator on 4 of their bells. There are still a few issues needing fine-tuning.

Mike Sage observed that there is still some uncertainty about how to make best use of the facility, and the need for an operating protocol for ringers unfamiliar with the bells to tie them safely. One of their ringers is writing guidelines for this at present.

PJG said that the district will support Southwold in thinking through a protocol and the use of the simulator.

SJ added that Julia Brown from Theberton has provided an update on ringing there, and that sadly regular practices have been suspended due to lack of ringers. Leiston, Yoxford and Theberton are supporting each other.

8. Planning for 2022

SJ referred to the list of ideas previously circulated.

After discussion, it was agreed that there will be a quarterly district meeting at Aldeburgh on Saturday 19th March 2022. The church is available and Richard Rapior will book the church hall, if it is free. Ringing 3 pm to 5 pm, tea 5 pm, rolling into the quarterly meeting. Ringers will make their own judgements about Covid-19 at the time and SJ said that other people may need to fill in roles for any committee members unwilling to attend due to Covid concerns, if these are still an issue next March.

The Guild 6 bell striking competition is being hosted by NE in 2022. This will be held on Saturday 21st May. KG is exploring suitable venues and adjacent halls. A ground floor ring with good ventilation is preferred. Blythburgh has had good CO2 readings during ringing.

District outings to Laxfield and Southwold will be planned. Probably 2nd Saturday in July and second Saturday in October.

There will be ringing associated with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee during the extended bank holiday weekend from 2nd to 5th June. The Festival of Suffolk celebrations will be spliced into this weekend.

Consideration will be given to a district striking competition, perhaps in September, probably with a rule relaxation about number of tower members within a band.

A visit to the 8 bell simulator facility at Mancroft will also be considered. Both this and the district striking competition will be further considered at the next district committee meeting in January 2022.

9. Safeguarding

SJ reminded Members that the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) website has useful advice regarding the legislation and best practice associated with safeguarding. She reminded Tower Captains who have vulnerable adults or children in their bands that they should look at the guidance and undertake the appropriate training. She also asked members to check the diocesan website for the links to the required training. <https://www.cofesuffolk.org/safeguarding-training/>

SJ also said that care needs to be taken around safeguarding issues on social media and when using Zoom.

The Guild Safeguarding Officer, Liz Christian, safeguarding@suffolkbells.org.uk is also available to give advice if needed.

10. Any Other Business

Nick Hughes drew members' attention to 'Operation London Bridge', the planning arrangements when the Queen dies. This involves a number of different episodes of ringing, the first at short notice following the announcement of HM's death, also with a recommendation that the bells are fully muffled, with the tenor open at backstroke.

SJ thanked everyone for attending, and Richard and Julie Rapor for organising the quiz. There was general agreement not to go ahead with the quiz, but to hold it over for another day.

The meeting closed at 5.54 pm.

NE DISTRICT RINGING MASTER'S REPORT TO ADM 13 NOVEMBER 2021

Once again there is not much to report. Since restrictions were lifted in June, a number of bands have resumed ringing, albeit often with self- or church-imposed restrictions. Apart from a peal at Aldeburgh and a handful of quarter peals, mostly at Blythburgh, there have been no performances of note, except for a handbell peal at Leiston (by a non-resident band) marking the 100th anniversary of a similar peal by the Bailey brothers, and Erika Clarke's first quarter peal at Blythburgh on 11th November – well done Erika!

Of concern, the pandemic has seen three issues combine to restrict our progress further. Firstly, a number of ringers have simply given up, that is not returned to ringing having found they didn't miss it, or have taken up other pursuits: some will hopefully return one day. Also a couple of our best ringers have moved away for employment purposes. Across the Guild membership has fallen by 38% over the last 2 years. Secondly, it has been impossible to do any teaching of new recruits as this is inconsistent with distancing, social or otherwise. Thirdly, experienced ringers have been less inclined to travel to other practices to help out, leaving inexperienced bands to struggle.

What we may be able to do to mitigate the effect of the above is to develop local clusters, whereby towers in a locality come to an agreement to work collaboratively. This might involve helping each other out for service ringing, or combining practices, not necessarily every week but on a regular basis, and having a nominated ringing master to help bring newer ringers on and establish some consistency of progress for bands. I have no firm views on the size of each cluster, and would not wish to impose any defined structure, and hopefully this is something we might discuss at our ADM. What I have in mind already operates to some extent in some parts of the District so it's not a revolutionary idea, but I do think that a number of struggling bands would benefit from a coordinated approach to development.

Philip Gorrod November 2021 (amended as discussed at ADM)

REPORT ON GMC TO ADM 13 NOVEMBER 2021

GMC has continued to meet, albeit virtually via Zoom, throughout the last year. Despite restricted 'real' ringing in towers, business has continued very much as usual. This has covered areas such as membership subscriptions, review of insurance arrangements, making grants for bell restorations and augmentations, producing the Guild Annual Report and handbook, and planning for the Guild centenary in 2023.

Points of note are:

Membership subscriptions are a continual point of concern to GMC. These have been a difficult couple of years during the pandemic, and districts have noted a drop in members renewing subscriptions. Efforts have been made to collect subscriptions. Whilst normal district and Guild activities have been curtailed due to the pandemic, members continue to receive other Guild benefits, such as personal accident cover.

The GMC has endeavoured to keep abreast of the CCCBR advice regarding a safe return to ringing, and to communicate this to members, during the different levels of Covid-19 restrictions during the year.

Neal Dodge, the Guild's Public Relations Officer, has continued to do an excellent job promoting ringing, including arranging several radio interviews.

The Belfry Advisory Committee, which approves grants and inspects installations after work is completed before the grant is paid out, has approved a number of grants during the year. Most notably, for the NE district, this includes the new ring at Laxfield, augmented to 8 from 6.

A service for absent friends, together with ringing beforehand, had been arranged at Laxfield on 24th October. Sadly, this needed to be postponed, due to increasing concerns about Covid cases and the experiences with the Covid outbreak at Reydon.

Each district has 5 places on the GMC. NE currently has vacant places and is looking for members to make sure we have a full complement of representatives on GMC. On the face of it, it can appear as another dry committee, but there are plenty of areas within it in which to become more closely involved. The planning for the Guild centenary in 2023 is just one example.

Kate Gill November 2021

REPORT ON RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE TO ADM 13 NOVEMBER 2021

During the past 12 months Guild Recruitment & Training meetings have taken place online with the primary focus on retaining existing ringers and getting back to ringing, rather than recruiting, due to proximity restrictions for training etc.

District representative shared guidance on risk assessments for ringing and encouraged use of lateral flow tests and masks. Lack of space/ventilation in many ringing chambers has delayed bands returning to normal ringing.

Representatives also highlighted the importance of inspecting bells and running gear that hasn't been used for a number of months.

Looking forward to 2022, events including training sessions using simulators within the NE District are being planned.

Fiona Shuttle November 2021