

Trustees' Annual Report for 2020

The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020

Charity

The Suffolk Guild of Ringers for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich was registered with the Charity Commission on 10 December 1975, registration number 266869. The Charity's registered address is Denton House, Colchester Road, Ardleigh, Colchester, CO7 7NS. It is governed under a constitution originally registered in 1977 and most recently revised in 2019

Principal Objectives

The main purposes of the Charity are: to promote and encourage the practice of bellringing within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; to recruit, train and encourage bellringers in the practice of their art; to cultivate the art of scientific change ringing; to promote and advise on the preservation, renovation and augmentation of bells in an efficient condition.

Trustees

The Trustees during the period were:

1st January to 19th September

Chairman - R P Wilson Treasurer - S A Cheek Ringing Master - T G Scase

19th September to 31st December

Chairman - R P Wilson Treasurer - S A Cheek Secretary – K M Gill Ringing Master - T G Scase

Review of Progress and Achievements

Bellringing

The year started really well with 98 quarter peals being rung on tower bells in the first three months and 27 peals (compared to 23 in 2019) but then the Coronavirus struck and stopped activity overnight. With the development of online ringing platforms such as Ringing Room and Handbell Stadium and the more traditional use of handbells, 52 additional quarter peals have been rung giving a total of 150. A positive thing to come from the lockdown is the re-emergence of handbell ringing with a total of 21 handbell quarter peals (up from just 4 in 2019). Peal ringing has sadly not re-commenced but, with Guild peal week being held in February, it was not affected by the lockdown and 9 peals were scored.

With its February slot, thankfully the GWP 12-bell trophy did not fall victim to lockdown restrictions and was retained by the Guild with the Norman Tower (Bury St Edmunds) winning the striking competition held at St Mary le Tower, Ipswich. Sadly George was not able to attend the competition in person this year due to ill health and, sadder still, died in early March; ringers from across the world showed their respect and affection for George by ringing peals and quarter peals in his memory but these were somewhat curtailed when ringing ceased in mid -March.

While 2020 was a year of missed opportunities it also showed what an industrious group of people members of the Suffolk Guild are. Events to promote ringing to the wider community such as the 2020 Taster session, which was due to be linked with the Abbey 1000 celebrations in Bury St Edmunds, and the annual Gather event for young church-goers, could not be held but we were still able to promote the Guild through various Radio Suffolk interviews. Both the AGM and the traditional Christmas Ipswich ringing event were held online using Zoom and many towers have kept their bands together with regular on-line social meetings, quizzes and Ringing Room sessions. The St Edmunds Clapper competition, to raise funds for the Bell Restoration Fund, was also re-launched and has already exceeded £500.

On-line meetings have also replaced the Guild Management and Recruitment & Training Committee meetings and, although meeting in person obviously facilitates discussion, the option of holding a virtual meeting will certainly be considered in the future, especially in the winter months.

Restoration

Thankfully this is one area of the Guild's day to day work which has not been completely wiped out by C-19. Restoration and augmentation projects have continued at both Hitcham (completed Nov 2020) and Barham (due

to be completed in Jan 2021), and work is in progress at Laxfield and Stowmarket (due to be completed in Spring and Summer 2021 respectively). The Belfry Advisory Committee members have been working hard behind the scenes to ensure that the bellhangers completing this work have received the support of much needed volunteers and hopefully their efforts will be rewarded when we can finally ring on the refurbished and augmented rings of bells. Other projects in the pipeline include Combs, Fornham St Martin, Hoxne, Troston, Framsdon and Drinkstone.

Guild Finances

Reserves Policy

The Trustees have formulated a Reserves Policy, in which The Guild will expect to hold at the bank a surplus of approximately one year's running costs.

Policies

All money in the Guild's funds not required for day-to-day purposes is invested or deposited by the Treasurer, as directed by the Guild Management Committee (GMC). Grants from the Restoration Fund are authorised by the GMC, but are only paid after completed work has been approved by the Guild Ringing Master and the Technical Advisor. Grants are normally only offered for work to restore bells and their fittings for full-circle ringing, but may include augmentation and other ancillary work associated with any such project. In order to respond to the short-term need to provide financial support to training activities, the GMC introduced a process to enable grants of up to £50 to be made immediately, at the discretion of the Ringing Master, and grants of up to £500 to be made within seven days at the discretion of the Guild Executive, in both cases subject to appropriate records being kept and presented to the GMC. As an enabling measure, the Public Relations Officer has been given a budget, the purpose being to enable greater flexibility, and faster reaction, to PR recruitment opportunities when they arise.

General Fund

Surprisingly, during a year of little ringing because of the coronavirus pandemic, subscription income was up by 16% compared to 2019. However, it should be borne in mind that this does not necessarily reflect membership numbers for the year, as this income also covers late payers from 2019 and advance payments for 2021. Income from peal fees was understandably down by 63%, with very few peals being rung because of the pandemic restrictions. The apparent doubling in cost for handbell insurance is a function of a changed billing cycle, with two years' renewals occurring in the year. The expense of £915 for lapel badges was an exceptional item, giving us a stock to last several years. The General Fund overall stands at £9833, which is an increase of 16% over 2019.

Restoration Fund

At year end the Restoration Fund totalled £70,942, including £43,050 already allocated for approved grants and those awaiting payment. This leaves £27,892 available for new grant applications. During the year one new grant of £6200 was approved (Barham), and one grant of £6700 was paid out for the completion of the Hitcham project.

Other Restricted Funds

The Golden Bottle Trust Fund, Library Fund, Handbell Fund, Jubilee Fund, Pipe Family Trust Fund, and St Peter's Sudbury Fund all have positive balances.

R P Wilson
Trustee & Chairman

S A Cheek
Trustee & Treasurer

K M Gill
Trustee & Secretary

T G Scase
Trustee & Ringing Master

December 2020