

Trustees' Annual Report for 2021

The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021.

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 10th April

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

10th April to 31st December

Chairman - R P Wilson Treasurer - S A Cheek Secretary – K M Gill

Review of Progress and Achievements

Bellringing

2021 was very much a year of two halves for the Guild. From January to May the lockdown restrictions continued and ringing was once again limited to outdoors (handbell ringing) and online using Ringing Room. GMC meetings and the AGM held in April remained on Zoom.

When the national restrictions finally began to lift in May 2021, ringers were once again allowed to meet indoors in groups of 6 so this enabled towers, with sufficient space for 1m+ social distancing, to recommence ringing. The rule of 6 restricted the tradition of 'everyone welcome' at practice nights across the Guild, however quarter peals began to be organized.

The first quarter peal on tower bells was rung on Wednesday 19th May at Pettistree followed by Bury St Edmunds (Norman Tower) on Sunday 23rd May, both towers showing their intention to get back to regular QP attempts. In total there were 158 tower bell quarters at 48 towers, 54 handbell quarters and 20 quarters rung online wholly in Suffolk giving a total of 232. They involved 191 ringers, a small proportion of the Guild membership, but the seeds of recovery had been sown. The first peal (since 2020) was on Saturday 24th July at Grundisburgh and a total of 19 were rung for the Guild over a 6 month period.

Following 'Freedom Day' in mid-July, towers tentatively started to run practices but it has been an uphill struggle for some to gather their members together and get back into the habit of ringing regularly for Sunday service and practice night. Interestingly, handbell ringing and online ringing have continued and actually thrived. Many ringers have returned to their towers but new skills picked up during lockdown and possibly different working arrangements have enabled some to continue with both tower-based and home-based ringing.

The Heritage Open Days Event in September provided a good opportunity to re-engage with the general public and promote the art of bellringing. Approximately 70 people visited the Norman Tower for the traditional Saturday open day but a further 50 then attended an 'Open House' afternoon session later in the week where they were given a demonstration of bellringing and the opportunity to ask about the bells and bellringing at the Norman Tower.

Restoration

Although the Belfry Advisory Committee (BAC) met only once in 2021, considerable work has been undertaken by BAC members throughout the county with the completion of projects at Buxhall, Laxfield and Barham. Other projects in progress include Combs and Stowmarket and ongoing projects, at an earlier stage, include a restored 6/8 bell ring in a new steel frame at Fornham St Martin and restoration/augmentation at Drinkstone, Framsdon, Hoxne, and Westhorpe. Troston's bells are currently being restored, however the Guild has neither been directly involved nor is financially supporting this project.

The BAC continues to conduct minor works, repairs and inspections where needed and has been active at Brome, Dalham, Falkenham, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Gazeley, Hintlesham, Hoxne, Ipswich St Mary at Elms, Levington, Little Blakenham, Oakley and Westhorpe.

There has been only one Application for Grants from the Guild Restoration Fund during 2021, which was from St Gregory's, Sudbury. The St Edmund clapper competition ending in 2021 reached a grand total of £1042.98 (with the inclusion of Gift Aid on some donations). This directly supports the Guild Restoration Fund, and is a magnificent contribution during difficult circumstances.

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

Income for 2021 was 7% down from previous year, and expenditure down by 29%, resulting in a net income of £6,455 (7% up on 2020). Peal fees were not surprisingly very low (£144), owing to the restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic. Two new online income streams (AmazonSmile and EasyFundraising) have contributed small amounts of additional income (£107). The General Fund overall stands at £11,974, compared with £9,833 for 2020.

Restoration Fund

At year end the Restoration Fund totalled £61,815, including £24,850 already allocated for approved grants awaiting payment. This leaves £36,965 available for new grant applications. During the year two grants were paid out for completed projects – Laxfield (£12,000) and Barham (£6,200). No new grants were awarded.

The Golden Bottle Trust Fund

Projects for simulator installations have now been undertaken at Southwold (£711) and Felixstowe (£881). The fund now stands at £3,264.

Jubilee Fund

All interest accrued in this capital Fund is transferred into the Restoration Fund. Donations for the year amounted to £1177 and at year end the fund's value was £5,292.

Other Funds

At year end all other funds had positive balances. Library Fund (£237), Handbell Fund (£932), Pipe Family Trust Fund (£1,122) and St Peter's Sudbury Fund (£2,175).

R P Wilson
Trustee & Chairman

S A Cheek
Trustee & Treasurer

K M Gill
Trustee & Secretary

December 2021