

# Suffolk Guild of Ringers

## Minutes of Belfry Advisory Committee Meeting held on Friday 8 June 2001 at 6 Cavendish Road Stowmarket

**Present:** R Clouston MBE, R Coe, W Girling (Convenor), Dr. S. Harrison, A Moulton, C Nunn, G Pipe, M Rolph, N Whittell.

The convenor welcomed David Greenfield and David Moyes to the meeting. Both are from Reydon and were invited with a view to becoming members of the Committee. This will be ratified at the G.M.C. on 16 June 2001.

**Apologies:** J Colman

The convenor then thanked Bruce Wakefield, George Pipe, Chris McArthur and Neville Whittell for holding the previous BAC Meeting at Bruce's home on 9 February 2001. Owing to car breakdown the convenor, Alan Moulton and Richard Coe could not get to that Meeting and informal Minutes only were taken. These were read to the Committee and agreed together with a list of work over the last 4 months. The Committee agreed that both sets of information should be signed and accepted as Minutes for this Meeting, which was done. He also thanked Ranald Clouston for copying and supplying all of his inspection files on towers containing 1 - 4 bells. This was a great deal of work and with Ranald's permission the convenor will now produce an index of all the inspection files on Suffolk Bells covering several decades.

**Matters Arising:** G Pipe mentioned that it was very apparent that in all the work on bells in Suffolk there were generally no ladies involved and as lady ringers were a tribute to the exercise could we not encourage some on to the team. He also stressed that odd-struckness should be dealt with immediately after the try out. A Moulton said that we needed to be careful because the Parish might not wish to pursue odd-struckness with the bellhangers and we could only advise. W Girling mentioned that even if odd-struckness was cured it often only took a loose clapper for any adjustment to be lost and setting a bell up could take a very long time to get right. R Coe said that **Haughley** had been set up correctly after the bells were restored and S Harrison mentioned **Orford** where Eayre and Smith did a superb job but still had to leave persistent odd-struckness in one bell which he had been happy to cure himself afterwards. A Moulton said that at **Easton** prices were being obtained for headstocks and other gear.

### District Reports

**North East: Barsham** - W Girling thanked S Harrison for attending at short notice and curing rope problems which had been reported. G Pipe asked was there anything further on **Brampton** and A Moulton said he had no further information or progress. At **Laxfield** he had attended just after Christmas. The Frame is beyond repair and a report is awaited. He also visited **Rendham** and gave a talk on restoration and fund raising is coming along well.. **Parham** (chiming 4) have asked for quotes for hanging the bells for full circle ringing. David Greenfield mentioned that a report is awaited from the architect about the tower at **Wrentham** where the bells are rung occasionally. David Moyes said that there were conflicting reports about the condition of the tower but a problem with the tenor has now been resolved.

**North West: Bardwell** - C Nunn said he had attended at short notice to check the bells before a visiting band came. He had managed to stick the disintegrating third wheel together with silver gaffer tape. R Clouston said that the bells were re-hung by Bowell in 1935 and A Moulton suggested that the Churchwardens be asked to ascend the tower with a member of the Committee to see just how many problems there are with this installation. W Girling pointed out that the bells were not really in a fit condition to allow visiting bands to ring. Very limited ringing by ringers who were familiar with the bells was all that had been recommended by R

Clouston and he had also warned against visiting bands attending. R Coe mentioned that sound proofing had been fitted at **Haughley** after a complaint. Sound flaps allowed adjustment of levels outside the tower. W Girling reported that he had recommended that the treble at **Thurston** should not be rung because of a severely cracked headstock. C Nunn had given them information on fund raising and grants and none of the bells were in fact being used because of the poor state of the gear and worn soundbows generally and it was hoped that sufficient money could now be raised to have the peal re-hung properly. G Pipe said that there could be interest in restoration work at **Worlington, Market Weston and also Westhorpe**, where the worn steps to the bells indicated a very active tower in years gone by. W Girling said that he had visited **Combs** to put new metal wedges in the rusting straps to hold the 18cwt tenor bell, and had reported on the poor state of a window arch in the bell chamber which could lead to a large fall of masonry if not attended to. A Moulton and W Girling had been to Gt. **Livermere** where the architect is enquiring about the viability of ringing from the ground floor. W Girling mentioned **Stowmarket** where it is hoped to fit a steel frame and augment to 10. S Harrison reminded the meeting that if the augmentation is done at the same time as the bell work the new bells will not attract VAT. If they are added later they will. W Girling has also had a letter from **Newmarket St Mary** asking for the bells to be checked over and R Coe agreed to attend and deal.

**South East: Hacheston** found they were over subscribed when the restoration work was completed and the grant paid to them by the Guild has been returned. G Pipe said he was pleased that they were now done and is going over shortly to run an evening devoted to good striking. A Moulton had been to **Nettlestead** with W Girling to report on the mediaeval 3 bell frame and single bell. Two options had been suggested, involving either installing a steel grillage for full circle ringing and using the present bell as a tenor of 6, or re-hanging the present bell for full circle ringing. W Girling and A Moulton had been to **St Mary at Elms Ipswich** where all ropes had been removed from the 5 bells on their advice because of the poor state of the frame and gear and excessively worn soundbows (up to 30%) W Girling will attend shortly to fit a safe chiming system to the tenor. R Clouston said that **Felixstowe St John** had some money left and may install a ring of bells. At the moment they have a single bell of excellent quality hung dead on springs.

**South West:** N Whittell said that the tower at **Bildeston** had now been made watertight by the builders. An old peal board is to be re-made to R Clouston's specification from a photograph which is all that exists of it. R. Clouston mentioned the letter in the Ringing World this week about a quarter peal band which it appears had problems at **Hawkedon**. These bells were only rung infrequently and would need a good deal of attention before they could be rung and if the band expected to just go and ring on them then this was most unwise. People should be aware that at many installations where the bells had had no major work for over 100 years (and we do have a lot of these in Suffolk) a proper check over and oiling is amust before any ringing commences. G Pipe said that last October he took a peal band to **Long Melford** having been assured that the bells had been checked. The 4<sup>th</sup> rope broke and they spliced it and the 5<sup>th</sup> broke as they were lowering the bells. Mark Regan was in the band and ultimately supplied a set of second hand ropes from Bow! A Moulton and W Girling had visited **Sudbury All Saints** where repairs are about to start on the tower. The bellframe is set on very old timbers and frame movement is without doubt the cause of the tower problems and these bells have clearly been difficult to ring for many years. G Pipe mentioned the density of housing around the Church. W Girling had received a grant request for the tower work and had written to the Church pointing out that our rules do not allow grant aid to go to work on the fabric.

**Technical Adviser:** A Moulton had nothing further to add.

**Any other business:** N Whittell said that there appeared every chance that **Hitcham** would be re-hung. R Clouston said that at **Gt Barton** cracks in the tower had now extended through and round the tower stitching installed to repair the tower when the bells were last re-hung. The architect had been informed. The chairman asked if anyone would be prepared to

produce **maintenance cards** for towers to hang up and S Harrison said he would do this. A Moulton mentioned the present **Guild system of grant aiding bell work** and suggested some changes, particularly where the Guild are doing the work as a project. He suggested an across the board grant level of 10% based on lowest quote of 3, and a further £1000 if new frame and fittings, or £500 if old frame and new fittings. G Pipe said that £1000 compared to average cost was only about 2 1/2%. N Whittell said that the scheme needed sorting out and suggested that if the **Guild are going to do a lot of the work this should not reduce the grant level, which should be based on the lowest quote obtained initially.** C Nunn mentioned the difficulty with job specification and A Moulton said that he was not always able to specify on any particular job. The Committee agreed that the GMC should be asked to adopt the first part of the suggestions, i.e. 10% across the board and £1000 (or £500) as above. Any further suggestions should be left until the Committee has had time to consider what should be recommended. S Harrison said that payment should be by arrangement between Guild Technical Advisers and work, reporting back to the GMC.

**Next Meeting:** Friday 21 September 2001 at 7.30p.m. at 8 Lansdowne Road Ipswich, by the kind invitation of George Pipe, who will send details of how to find the address to all members who are unfamiliar with the location.

The meeting closed at 9.45p.m.

Winston S. Girling  
Convenor