

Suffolk Guild of Ringers Belfry Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at on Friday, May 31st at The Wolery, Rectory Road Ipswich at 7.30p.m.

Those present: David Salter, Winston Girling, (convenor) George Pipe, John Pereira, Alan Moulton, (Guild technical adviser) Chris Nunn, Bruce Wakefield, Neville Whittell and Stuart Harrison.

Apologies were received from: Chris McArthur, Julian Colman, David Greenfield and David Moyses.

The Minutes were taken by: Mrs Carol Girling.

The chairman thanked everyone for attending and grateful thanks were given to Katharine and David Salter for inviting the Committee to hold the meeting at their home.

Ranald W.M. Clouston MBE: This was the first meeting of the Committee since the death of Ranald and George Pipe reflected on the lifetimes work and dedication to bells which Ranald had given. A Life Honorary Member of the Guild since 1982 he is sadly missed by ringers everywhere.

Minutes: The Minutes of the previous meeting held on February 8th 2002 had already been circulated to members and were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising: Chris Nunn mentioned that much help had been given at **Wingfield** to put the frame and bells back into the tower and that the Dedication had been held.

Directory of Suffolk Towers: Neville Whittell asked if the list could be updated as there were anomalies, **Acton** has a wooden frame and should be 9, not 10 and **Wilby** should be 10, not 8. Alan Moulton said that both he and Winston Girling had taken steps to get the list updated and corrected but it was a big job and would take time. Winston Girling asked Alan Moulton if he would be happy to receive amendments as the Technical Advisor had traditionally done this and forwarded them to the Report Editor. Alan said he would and Neville was asked to notify Alan of any that he was aware of.

District Reports

North East: The restoration at **Wingfield** is complete apart from some work on the tower which needs finishing, and ringing is to be limited until this is done. The Dedication at **Mendham** is to be held next Sunday. **Reydon** have asked about the need to attach a lightning conductor to the frame as well as the tower. Chris Nunn and Alan Moulton both pointed out that it is essential that this is done. **Laxfield** are taking steps to obtain quotations for the work needed there.

North West: Alan Moulton and Winston Girling have visited **Thwaite** to examine the single 2 cwt bell situated in a bell cote. The wooden headstock and supporting gear are in a poor condition and the Parish have been advised that the bell needs lowering and rehanging with a new headstock, all metal work, new clapper and sealed bearings. The cast in crown staple also needs drilling out. **Worlington** have obtained quotations for rehanging as the back four of a new six with the original tenor as a chiming bell.

South East: Slow progress is reported at **Easton**. Alan Moulton and Chris McArthur are doing a lot of the work on this restoration themselves but progress is being made. At **Wickham Market** work on the tower is progressing and the clappers are to be skimmed. Ringing has been stopped but should resume in due course. The Parish have painted the frame at **Cretingham**. Over £20,000 has now been promised at **Earl Stonham**. George Pipe mentioned that **Hacheston** are much improved but still difficult to strike. Alan Moulton said that it was because the bells had to be 'tucked up' by a large amount to get them all in on one level. Stuart Harrison said that this is a result of trying to get too much into the space allowed. At **St Mary le Tower Ipswich** the tenor clapper had come out of the bell and it was discovered that the independent bolt had sheared at the bottom. Luckily damage was minimal but with the four largest bells some distance above the others there was always the risk of severe damage with a large clapper falling down on to the lower tier of bells. George Pipe reported that a grillage is to be inserted under the top tier to prevent anything dropping through. Bruce Wakefield said it was impossible to tighten the 5th clapper at **Woodbridge** and advice was given about the best way to resolve this. Also the old clock and carillon are to be restored.

South West: Neville Whittell said he had been to **Haverhill** re problems with tightening the 5th clapper there. He should be able to resolve this.

Technical Advisors Report: Alan Moulton had nothing further to add.

Complaints: Winston Girling said that both he and Alan Moulton had received complaints from Clergy, architects, ringers and Church authorities re the recent ringing on bells which are classified as in the Guild Report as unringable. Whilst it was commendable that the Golden Jubilee should be celebrated by ringing at as many towers as possible problems had been caused at some towers and both he and Alan had been asked to visit towers after the ringing. Problems were as follows:

All Saints Newmarket: (no ringing took place) Winston Girling had a call from the incumbent who said that he had asked the organiser of a proposed quarter to speak to Winston Girling or Alan Moulton to see if it was in order to do this and it was subject to their agreement. Neither had been contacted and as the bells are not ringable permission was refused.

Ingham St Bartholomew: a quarter-peal was rung on these bells. The architect has complained that because of severe storm damage to the pinnacles and top of the tower the bells should not have been rung.

Hepworth St Peter: a quarter-peal was rung on these bells. A brass 'V' block on one of the bearings on the 4th is so loose that it slams in both directions if the bell is rung full circle. There is extreme danger of the gudgeon pin shearing off because of this and the bell should not have been rung full circle.

Thorndon All Saints: Here the bells were rung full circle. Letters have been received from the Churchwarden and a PCC member stating that attempts were made to stop the ringing taking place. Here the 6' high frame spreads alarmingly as the 13cwt tenor is rung full circle, and there is a grave risk of the bell dropping. Other bells could also drop because of badly worn bearings and there is nothing to stop these bells (or indeed the tenor) falling through the floor below the frame.

The overall condition of the installation, especially the frame and supports gives reason for grave concern. Alan Moulton and Winston Girling visited Thorndon at the request of the Churchwarden and were so alarmed at the condition of the bells they removed the ropes to prevent the bells being rung full circle.

A discussion took place about the implications of ringing on bells that are unsafe because of the tower and/or bells and the likelihood that the Guild insurance would not cover if something went seriously wrong. Members asked that the matter be raised at the next Guild Management Committee Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 9.30p.m.

Date and Place of next Meeting: Friday, 27th September 2002 at Tudor Cottage, Broad Street, Orford, by kind invitation of Stuart Harrison.

Winston S. Girling
Convenor