

Appendix to General Committee Meeting, 11th March 2017: main discussion item feedback – Guild Festival.

Banbury –

Discussion took place that the event needs to be more widely advertised and much earlier (a year before?) to allow branches to plan their own programme of events; our branch outing had been booked on the same date a long time before.

Suggestion to use an eye catching poster for the towers might help.

On previous occasions the Guild have written to every member inviting them to come which proved effective for attendance numbers. If attendance increased, perhaps a 3 yearly event would be better?

It was felt that July was not the best time to help attract younger ringers because it is the start of the summer holidays and they often go away. It was acknowledged this is the best time for access to the bells however.

Bicester- Members didn't seem aware of this event. Others have had problems getting into towers on a previous event, date not good for some.

Central Bucks - No feedback given

Chiltern – Agreed with Bicester's feedback. Some people don't like going to Oxford –parking also an issue.

Chipping Norton – No strong feelings have been voiced either way about continuing with the Guild Festival. Last year 5 out of a total of 89 members attended the service and 3 of those five went ringing, commenting favourably on their experience.

At a Branch officers' meeting, these points were made:

July is a holiday month so might any other times be considered that might be more popular?

On previous occasions, ringers had to queue to ring but that obviously was not the case last year.

When there was a lunch, it had been enjoyed but it is appreciated that the organisation of that is difficult & that it would be expensive.

Personally, I feel that some people may not be comfortable with a Holy Communion Service.

That said, as we find it difficult to get ringers to come to our own AGM's service which is Evening Prayer with hymns, they are probably unlikely to go to a service in the Cathedral.

All Branch members were given the opportunity to respond by email and they had a further chance to comment if they so wished, at last week's AGM.

EBSB – Patricia Newton wrote an article* for our Branch newsletter (which is circulated electronically via our Google User Group) in which she explained in full the history and nature of the Guild Festival, asking for comments to be sent to me in order to answer the Master's call for input. I received none. Patricia herself received one letter in the mail from someone who would have attended the Festival if her husband hadn't been ill at the time. She said: " I think the problem is the personal touch in so many things these days. I could relate to your observations over the years. The Oxford Festival was a must in my day, always on Henley Saturday – no motorway – leave early, go the back way - we all enjoyed the day. I do hope you will get some good feedback."

Newbury – no-one from the branch attended.

N Bucks – had already been to Oxford on a branch outing. Transport an issue.

Old N.Berks - The Branch Committee felt that the Festival is still relevant and has a place in Guild events. Who the Guild Festival is for is not made very clear in the publicity material. Our less experienced members feel that ringing is 'pyramid-shaped', with most ringers at the bottom of the pyramid, the more experienced in the middle and the most competent at the top. They think that ringing in Oxford (especially at the Cathedral) is for ringers at or near the top of the pyramid, and so they feel prevented from going because they would be out of their depth. Future publicity needs to be very clear that all levels of competence are

welcomed, and that there is something at the Festival for everybody. The Committee thought the personalised invitation from the Guild Master about ten years ago was a good idea.

Some long-standing branch members have been to Guild Festivals in the past and now see no reason to repeat the experience. Perhaps they should be encouraged to attend and to bring along members of their towers who have never been before (i.e. those members at the bottom of the 'pyramid', who might feel intimidated).

The 2016 Festival itself seemed to be disjointed, with little flow. There was a big gap in the middle of the day for attendees to 'do their own thing'. This would be better filled with a lunch to give everyone the opportunity to socialise. This could be in the style of a traditional ringers' tea in a hall (it was thought that a previous festival used a hall on Aldgate), or there could be a picnic lunch in Christchurch Meadows. This would help to keep everyone together and make the day feel less divided into two halves.

Oxford City – No feedback given.

Reading – No feedback given.

Sonning Deanery – hadn't discussed this.

S.Oxon - Generally, we felt the Guild Festival is a good thing to have.

Lunch (first topic to be raised):

Makes a difference if you have lunch in Christ Church – even for a cost. Could branches subsidize attendance for the lunch (or the Guild?)

What would you pay? £20 was noted as being possible – but it was felt that the Guild should not be expected to pay thousands for the meal.

Date Mentioned: avoiding the date of exams in the university.

Date was last weekend before schools break up – so the date could have been a problem.

The Service: Service in the cathedral IS a plus.

Publicity : Needed more publicity. One poster in the tower was not enough.

We felt that within our branch (or branches in general), a personal of invitation always helps.

How Much Ringing (a few people raised this concern)

Message of managing expectations of how many towers you can ring at on the day. (There was concern about the long queues on some festival days).

Vale of White Horse – made an effort to take newer ringers. Gap in the middle of the day was not ideal. More publicity needed.

Witney & Woodstock – No feedback given.