



Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

General Committee Meeting
Saturday 27th November 2021

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Requests to take any items of Any Other Business.
3. Minutes of the previous General Committee meeting – 13th March 2021 - attached

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

4. Matters arising
 - a) F E Robinson Silver Bowl
 - b) Guild registering as a Charity
 - c) Survival and Recovery post-Covid
5. Correspondence
6. Reports of Subcommittees
 - a) Finance and General Purposes - attached
 - b) Learning & Development Workgroup (Education) - attached
 - c) Towers and Belfries - attached
7. Central Council Representatives' report - attached
8. Diary of Events - attached

FINANCIAL MATTERS

9. Subscriptions for 2022
 - a) Resident Ringing Members & Associate Members
 - b) Non-resident Ringing Members
10. Peal Fees for 2022
11. Guild Budget – see separate document

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

12. Any Other Business – as agreed at the beginning of the meeting
13. Concluding vote of thanks

ITEM 3

MINUTES OF GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Held online on Saturday 13 March 2021 and attended by 47 Committee members.

The meeting was chaired by Catherine Lane, Master, who welcomed members to the meeting and reminded them that the meeting would be recorded. She also re-iterated an invitation to all General Committee members to attend the Bell Fund AGM, to be held online at 3pm on the following day, 14 March.

Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next General Committee meeting.

1. Apologies

16 apologies for absence were received. A list of members attending will be recorded.

2. Any other urgent items of business

See Item 13

3. Minutes of the meeting on 28 November 2020

Rosalind Garrett-Bowes queried the interpretation in the minutes of the discussion about the Branch subscription levels for 2021. The panel agreed to look again at the minutes to ensure clarity – see the Postscript below. On a vote, the minutes were accepted as a correct record with 93% of attendees in favour. Proposed by Ken Darvill, seconded by Stuart Gibson.

4. Matters arising

a) Public Relations Working Group

Catherine Lane reported that the small PR working group had been meeting and making slow but useful progress since the last meeting and she thanked its members. More expertise would be welcome and anyone able to offer any should contact her.

b) F.E.Robinson Bowl

A photograph of the rose bowl was shown to those members present, although the pandemic was delaying its delivery to the Guild. This year the bowl will be awarded virtually to the winners of the forthcoming Quiz Nights.

5. Correspondence

None had been received.

6. Reports of and elections to subcommittees

a) Education (Learning and Development Workgroup)

Robert Newton reported that it was not known when courses could resume. Some ringers may be nervous about returning to face to face training courses and what support would be available. However there was some excellent progress to report during 2020, in particular by the Badgers handbell group. Members were encouraged to read Lindsay Powell's report on the group's activities.

On another positive note, the Guild has ordered ten pairs of e-bells which are available for Guild members to borrow and potentially purchase.

The 2021 Training meeting, originally advertised for 20 March, will now take place on 10 April, online. Details will be sent out shortly and the meeting will address training requirements for recovery across the Guild.

The Ringing World National Youth Competition is currently planned for 11 September at Worcester.

Joyce Vernon has stood down from the Working Group. She has, however, kindly offered to continue to find helpers for courses.

The following General Committee members were re-elected to the Working Group, proposed by Stuart Gibson and seconded by Ken Darvill: Colin Newman, Robert Newton, Tony Crabtree, Patricia Newton, Elizabeth Mullett, Lindsay Powell.

The Working Group report was passed on a vote with 93% of members present in favour, proposed by Robert Newton and seconded by Stuart Gibson. Patricia Newton asked for it to be recorded that she and Robert Newton had been unable to vote.

b) Towers and Belfries

Tony Crabtree reported that all 14 current members of the Workgroup are willing to continue. Tony Crabtree, Alan Marchbank, John Davidge, Chris Potter, Keith Vernon, Graham Clifton are the General Committee members seeking re-election. Tony Crabtree reported that geographical coverage across the Guild is good but new members are welcome. Anyone interested should contact Tony Crabtree. Face to face courses had not been offered since lockdown began but the group has been looking at online courses and rebuilding web pages with much more technical material now available. Members remain available to do Ringing Recovers and Bell Fund inspections. The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Tony Crabtree and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

c) Finance and General Purposes Committee

Ken Darvill reported that three General Committee members require election – Robert Newton, Alan Marchbank and Graham Clifton are the current additional members. The report was accepted and the members re-elected unopposed, proposed by Ken Darvill and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

7. a) Peal Secretary report

Ken Davenport's report noted the lower number of peals rung in 2020 due to restrictions on ringing. 86 peals were rung in 2020 compared with 271 in 2019. The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Catherine Lane and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

b) *Safeguarding Officer report*

June Wells reported that there had been no face to face training in the past twelve months. However a new development in the Diocese was that the training requirement for Tower Captains had changed. Last year the C2 and C3 (leadership) courses had been merged and Tower Captains were no longer required to attend C2. A discussion was planned with the Learning and Development Working Group to develop and deliver in-Guild training for Tower Captains as aspects were felt to be very valuable. June Wells also noted that the Central Council is working on online safety and on how we audit safeguarding activity.

Alan Marchbank noted that he and others had been invited to refresher safeguarding training, to be run by the Methodists in Milton Keynes on an ecumenical basis. It was unclear whether the training would include safeguarding in a bellringing context, but Alan would report back to Guild Officers.

The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by June Wells and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

c) *Librarian's report*

Doug Beaumont reported that requests for information or to borrow material had in fact increased in the past twelve months. Although in-person visits to the library were not currently possible, Doug encouraged anyone in need of information to get in touch with him.

The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Doug Beaumont and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

d) *Webmaster's report*

Ken Darvill presented the report in the absence of Tim Hayward. A great deal of work had been done to reorganise the new website, including providing greater access to officers to update pages and to post new material. There had been some reorganisation of the menu and file structures on the test site ready to go live in May, and the new Guild logo would be introduced.

The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Ken Darvill and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

e) *Server Manager's report*

Richard Stanworth reported good progress on costing and planning for the server upgrade. The aim was to have sufficient capacity to host all Guild activities, including Branch online spaces and additional email support. A cost increase of just 12% would provide double the server capacity and greatly increased bandwidth. Transfer to the new server would take place in approximately two months.

The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Richard Stanworth and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

f) *Report Editor's report*

Heather Browning reported that the 2020 Report was to go to the printer imminently. This year electronic copies of the Report would be available as PDFs well as 560

hard copies and any members not requiring a hard copy were encouraged to let Heather know. Currently, distribution posed a challenge: meeting in a car park somewhere in the centre of the Guild to hand over bundles of reports could be the most practical solution.

Heather thanked Branch Secretaries and Richard Stanworth for his help in providing all Tower Correspondents with generic email addresses.

Catherine Lane offered her thanks for the Report Editor's work during this exceptional year. The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Heather Browning and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

8. Diary of Events

Ken Darvill reported that the 8 bell Competition has been cancelled and the 2021 AGM will take place online. Currently it is hoped that the Ringing Day will go ahead in September, as will the Michaelmas course on 25 September, the Six Bell Striking Competition on 2 October, the Steeple Aston course on 30 October and the Ten Bell Striking Competition at Aston Clinton on 27 November. The November General Committee Meeting will be hosted by Cuddington.

The Ringing Festival had been planned for July 2021, very soon after Covid restrictions are likely to be lifted. It was therefore decided to postpone it for two years. Catherine Lane reported that she was in contact with the Oxford Society and had booked Christ Church (Cathedral) for 8 July 2023. Magdalen College is unable to host the service but a reply from Christ Church is awaited.

9. Posts specified in Rule 9(c) and (f) (iii): Notification of officers not willing to stand for re-election

Catherine Lane reported that four posts would fall vacant and strongly encouraged members to come forward to help fill them. The posts are:

- 1. Central Council Representative, to replace Ken Davenport, who has stepped down*
- 2. Minutes Secretary (joint role), to replace Elizabeth Mullett, who has stepped down*
- 3. Assistant Server Manager, to replace Colin Newman, who has left the Guild area*
- 4. Website Manager, to replace Tim Hayward, who has stood down.*

10. Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2020

The accounts have been audited and Susan Read was thanked for her work on them. As expected, both income and expenditure for the year are lower than for 2019. Subscriptions for 2021 are due on 31 March although this year a grace period until 30 April will be allowed.

Rosalind Garrett-Bowes noted a potential omission in the wording of Note 1: Stuart Gibson agreed to check the text and correct as necessary.

Stuart Gibson reported that a restricted Youth Fund had been created to receive youth-specific donations, including donations from the Bradfield courses to be used for youth training. It was still a possibility that the Guild as a whole could become a registered charity in future, but in the meantime it was hoped that the creation of a restricted fund might encourage HMRC to allow Gift Aid.

The accounts were accepted on a vote with 97% of those attending in favour, proposed by Stuart Gibson and seconded by Ken Darvill.

11. Donation proposals for the 2021 Annual General Meeting

The following proposals by Stuart Gibson were accepted:

£2,000 to the Bell Fund (unopposed, seconded by Ken Darvill)

£200 to the Ringing World (by 97% of those present, seconded by John Davidge)

£750 to the Association of Ringing Teachers (by 78% of those present, seconded by Kathryn Grant)

12. Survival and Recovery post-Covid

Catherine Lane commended to the meeting the collaboration between the Central Council and the Association of Ringing Teachers which had produced comprehensive recovery plans including the concept of Recovery Champions.

Within the Guild, each Branch is connected to its Steward and volunteer Recovery Champions will work in each area.

Ken Darvill noted that here is an evident keenness to get back to ringing, but return to ringing needs to be gentle and there may be some ringers who need individual support to return.

13. AOB

Stuart Gibson updated the meeting on the member database. He had looked at some software products which might be suitable for the Guild, in particular one called LoveAdmin. He will research further and update officers as this work progresses.

14. Thanks

Catherine Lane thanked those attending the meeting, and all members for their efforts to keep some normal organisation going during this exceptional year. She also thanked John Harrison and Colin Newman for their organisation and hosting of the meeting behind the scenes. The meeting closed at 4.22 pm.

Postscript

In clarification to the point raised by Rosalind Garrett-Bowes about the Minutes of the last meeting and the level of Branch subscriptions, Ken Darvill writes to clarify:

The problem was that the debate and resolution at the November 2020 General Committee meeting about the Ringing Members subscriptions did not reflect the message that had preceded it with respect to the level of the 2021 subscription, in particular the Branch allocation. The F&GP had previously recommended a lower Guild allocation and that Branches should be able to set their own level of Branch allocation. Some Branches had already prior to the F&GP indicated that they would set a lower Branch allocation and other Branches had got that message. In retrospect the resolution should have been fine-tuned to reflect that.

On the day following the last General Committee, the Guild Master, Deputy Master, General Treasurer and General Secretary agreed a form of wording recognising this situation which was sent to the Branch Secretaries. The critical part of that email was:

“At their meeting yesterday, the Guild General Committee decided to leave the subscriptions for 2021 unchanged from recent years. Thus the Resident Ringing Member’s subscription stays at £8, of which £5 is payable to the general Guild and the remainder is held by the Branch. The General Committee has a responsibility to set the level of subscriptions. However some Branches may feel that in view of the limited activity during 2020 they will reduce the subscription that they ask members to pay thereby reducing their allocation but still paying £5 to the general Guild.”

ITEM 6 a)

Finance and General Purposes Sub Committee

The Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee has met once since the November General Committee meeting, in September as a hybrid meeting with some members joining via Zoom.

The F E Robinson silver bowl which has been bequeathed to us is now in the Guild's possession and we are in the process of deciding how to house it. The Master has also purchased a tablecloth which will be available for Guild and Branch activities and is particularly suitable for events attracting the general public.

The meeting decided to leave all subscriptions at the pre-pandemic levels. They also approved increasing the mileage rate for officers from 14p per mile to 20p.

The treasurer was given the authority to purchase a limited number of CO2 monitors if requested by Branches or towers. These assist in identifying the extent that Covid might spread within an enclosed space dependent upon ventilation.

The Server Manager (Richard Stanworth) reported on his investigations into an alternative host company for the Guild computer server, which might provide a cheaper option whilst still giving us the same facilities. This is an ongoing project.

The new Webmaster (Andrew Goldthorpe) reported that he has set up a new diary system and is looking to enhance the appearance of the site.

Ken Darvill

Tablecloth as part of an event in Wheatley church



ITEM 6 b)

Learning & Development Workgroup

The group has held meetings via Zoom on 22nd April, 1st July and 7th October, with Colin Newman as Chairman and Robert Newton as Secretary and an average attendance of eight.

Discussions have centred largely on the frustrations of being unable to run our traditional Guild courses owing to the uncertainties of Covid infections and potential restrictions some months ahead. At the time of writing, it is pleasing to report that firm plans are in place for a Grandsire Caters course at Shrivenham (06/11/21) and the Radley Course (09/04/22). It is hoped to hold an in-person Training Meeting with representatives of the branches (05/02/22) to build on the discussions that have taken place virtually over the last 18 months. It is also our intention to run the Michaelmas and Steeple Aston courses during 2022 as long as circumstances do not deteriorate significantly.

Consideration has been given to the future of Guild courses in general and what restructuring might take place, the possibilities of blending practical and online learning and the need for clear information about location and content.

We have heard encouraging reports of the work of ‘Recovery Champions’ within our branches and elsewhere, and of a gradual progression to a ‘new normal’. It is encouraging that ART has been able to resume in-person training: a very successful M1 course took place using the enhanced facilities at Longcot on 18th September.

It is disappointing that so few have taken advantage of the opportunity to borrow one of the sets of eBells purchased by the Guild for their benefit. Stuart Gibson is looking after the distribution of these and hopes to hear from more members wishing to develop their handbell ringing.

The response to the Young Ringers’ Lockdown Award was also disappointing, with only two – Daniel and Fiona – submitting something for consideration. Thanks and congratulations to them. On the other hand, the opportunities for young ringers to practise after lockdown have borne much fruit: two squads from the Guild’s area participated at Worcester in the RWNYC on 11th September. The Bucks & Berks band performed creditably in what has become a festival of high quality ringing and the ODG band were adjudged clear winners of the method ringing section, retaining the Whitechapel Trophy that they won over two years ago in Liverpool. Huge congratulations to them and to their supporters. All the youngsters were able to benefit from a range of opportunities, which included ringing at the cathedral and ‘mummifying’ their team coach.

The Young Change Ringers Association was launched at the RWNYC. For an annual subscription of £15, members will have access to four events during the year and other benefits. We encourage all those eligible to take full advantage of this.

Robert Newton

ITEM 6 c)

Towers & Belfries Sub Committee

The T&B committee has met once since the last GC report; using Zoom, in August. It should have been face-to-face, but the practicalities of the pandemic dictated otherwise.

At the end of September, we heard the sad news of the passing of Keith Vernon; one of our longest serving and most experienced members. He gave his time and expertise willingly and cheerfully and will be sadly missed.

After missing several courses to covid, we finally held an October course at Ivinghoe where we had planned to be a year earlier. Six committee members were there and the chance to chat face-to-face was very useful. We were made most welcome by our hosts at Ivinghoe and had twenty students from all over the ODG. Judging by the quality and variety of the discussions and debates, the students learned a lot. You will see a report from one of the participants elsewhere in this edition of Odd Bob. The next course is in the diary for 26th February at Radley and will be our popular rope splicing and rope management course. Please watch out for details and feel free to email the secretary tbsecretary@odg.org.uk or me tbchair@odg.org.uk if you would be interested in attending. If you would like to host a course, either for the Guild or locally, for your Branch, please get in touch.

The T&B page of the ODG website [Towers and Belfries - Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers \(odg.org.uk\)](https://www.odg.org.uk) has more new material since my last report and many useful links. More material is being loaded all the time. You will also find contact details and the services offered by our members.

We would still like more members. Thirteen may sound a lot, but we have three counties with 450+ towers on the patch so we are spread quite thinly! You don't have to be experienced but you do need to be interested in learning and gaining from the expertise of the other members.

The Tower Maintenance Award (TMA) is still active, despite the pandemic. Towers are encouraged to ask for an inspection. There is a full TMA report in the November Odd Bob. Since the last GC report, Committee members have been active, within lockdown constraints, with TMA, grant inspections and general advice at the following places: Slapton, Ivinghoe, Witney, Stoke Poges, Cheddington, St Aldate's, Ruscombe, Langford, Broadwell, Little Horwood, Middleton Stoney, Kingham, Letcombe Bassett, Woodeaton, South Leigh, Charlton on Otmoor, Bletchingdon, Ambrosden, Kirtlington, Steeple Aston, Long Wittenham and Wavendon.

There have also been many "return to ringing" inspections done on behalf of or with the local ringers.

Tony Crabtree – Chairman – Towers & Belfries Committee.

ITEM 7

Central Council Representatives' Report

These reports include just some of the interesting/important points from both meetings. Fuller reports of both the CC Meeting and the Ringing World Ltd AGM can be found in Ringing World no.5759, 10 September 2021. The original workgroup reports are available online at cccbr.org.uk-2021 Annual Meeting-Meeting Papers.

There is no longer the automatic expectation that CC Representatives serve on workgroups as had been the case with the committees. This is because anyone may apply to join a workgroup now, thus enabling the Council to benefit from the skills of those who have most to offer. However, several of our ODG reps. have continued to be involved in workgroups this year: John Harrison-Historical & Archive, Lucy Hopkins Till-Volunteering & Leadership, Graham John (Leader) and Tim Pett (Dove Steward)-Technical and Taxonomy.

This year's meeting of the CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS was held on Saturday 4th September, online, using Zoom.

Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Officers reported that guidelines had been produced for online ringing. They also called upon the ringing community at large to reject even low-level bullying on social media, by supporting victims and challenging perpetrators.

Support Services

The *Performance Analysis* Report recorded that, predictably, the total of peals rung in 2020 was significantly affected by the lockdown ban on ringing. Nonetheless, the ODG was the leading

affiliated society for both tower and handbell peals. Major was overall more popular than peals on other numbers and Surprise was most popular for both Major and Minor peals. This is the first year that data from BellBoard has been used to analyse quarter peals, providing very useful information regarding grass-roots ringing. Naturally there were fewer quarter peals rung too. Somerset and Gloucester and Bristol rang most, and Doubles and Minor were the most popular. The report from *Publications* noted that, as expected, income from sales was sharply down and no new titles were published during the year.

Stewards

The *Bell Restoration Fund Grants Panel* received 37 applications for grants.

Workgroups

During the year, the *Communications & Marketing* Workgroup had been investigating initiatives to promote bell ringing to a wider audience and also improve communications amongst ringers. A new *Public Relations* Workgroup was established in 2021 to promote the Central Council and bell ringing to both the ringing community and the general public. It will have close dealings with the media and had a prominent role after the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. The group encouraged ringing for COP26 and, amongst other things, is promoting ringing for the Queen's forthcoming Jubilee.

The *Senior Stakeholder Liaison* Workgroup had a significant role in the last year, interpreting the Government legislation and C of E guidance into guidance for ringing. The Central Council now has direct communication at a high level in the C of E and, likewise, it is the first port of call for the C of E with regard to bell ringing issues.

In the past year, the *Stewardship & Management* Workgroup had a significant part to play in providing guidance to towers as churches were closed and then again, as they were gradually reopened. It also responded to a wide range of enquiries during the pandemic. The workgroup is busy putting more comprehensive information online, relating to Tower Infrastructure, Tower Operation and Major Projects.

The *Technical & Taxonomy* Workgroup reported that despite tower bell restrictions, 683 new methods were named. Much work has also been done on creating the new Dove database.

The *Volunteering & Leadership* Workgroup has been developing and promoting a Recruitment and Retention workshop which had already been produced by ART. A Northwest residential course is planned for summer 2022 and an online Question and Answer Forum is in the pipeline. The workgroup was also involved in writing materials for the online toolbox of the joint CC and ART Survival and Recovery Group. Work is ongoing to create a new list of Ringing Centres.

The goal of the new *Young Ringers-Schools & Youth* Workgroup is to establish new long-term sources of recruits from schools and youth groups. An encouraging development is that there has been cooperation with the Senior Stakeholder Liaison Workgroup to produce lesson plans for Years 5,6 and 7, in all subjects, with ringing as a common thread. The group is also working with the Scout and Guide movements to reintroduce ringing badges. Work is nearing completion on ringing as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the group is also in contact with Young Farmers and the Girls/Boys Brigade.

The *Young Ringers -Universities & Colleges* has taken under their aegis the website for students to find out what is on and where, in terms of university and college ringing. This has also been updated. The workgroup is also encouraging specialist 6th Form maths schools to exploit the theory of change ringing as part of an enrichment programme.

The *Historical & Archive* Workgroup is planning to start recording details of peal boards. The Library has been particularly busy in the past year.

Forward Plan for 2022

The President spoke of the continued effort to combat the spread of Covid 19 in towers through ventilation and CO2 monitors. He also referred to the task ahead of aiding ringing recovery and commencing a major coordinated recruitment campaign. Other items mentioned were the plans for the National Ringing Centre in Northampton, the new mobile belfry, the direct membership organisation for Young Change Ringers, Ringing Forums and the Cast of 1000 to support aspiring Surprise ringers.

Financial Update

The General Fund balance brought forward at the end of December 2020 was £166,146 and there was expected to be an approximate £4,000 loss over the course of 2021.

Next Year's Meeting

This will be at Trent University, Nottingham on Saturday 3rd September. There will be training sessions, a Roadshow and social events; anyone may attend.

At the RINGING WORLD LTD AGM, the Finance Director predictably reported that performance donations, a major source of income, had been severely reduced by the pandemic, resulting in their largest ever deficit of £28,748. The rate of subscription non-renewals has also increased. The Chairman, Paul Jopp, reported that there were only 2436 subscribers to the Ringing World at the beginning of September 2021. Various changes have been implemented which should save approximately £14000 per annum and also improve efficiency.

Lucy Hopkins Till

ITEM 8

DIARY OF EVENTS (as at 8th November 2021)

2021

November General Committee
Saturday 27th November
Cuddington

Ten-Bell Striking Competition
Saturday 27th November

2022

Training Meeting
Saturday 5th February

Rope Splicing & Maintenance Course
Saturday 26th February
Radley

March General Committee and Bell Fund AGM
Saturday 12th March
Chiltern Branch

Radley Course
Saturday 9th April
Radley

St George's Day
Saturday 23rd April

Ringing Day
Monday 2nd May
Sonning Deanery Branch

AGM and Eight-Bell Striking Competition
Saturday 21st May
Reading Branch

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee
Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June

Michaelmas Course
Saturday 24th September?
EBSB and neighbouring branches

Six-Bell Striking Competition
Saturday 1st October

Newbury Branch

Steeple Aston Course
Saturday 29th October?

Steeple Aston

November General Committee
Saturday 26th November

VOWH Branch

Ten-Bell Striking Competition
Saturday 26th November

VOWH Branch