

MINUTES OF GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Held at St Mary's Church, Wendover on Saturday 12 March 2022 at 2:40pm and attended by 38 Committee members.

The meeting was chaired by Catherine Lane, Master, who welcomed members to the meeting and told them that the meeting would be recorded

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

1. Apologies

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

2. Any other urgent items of business

John Harrison asked that we consider reorganising the Guild management and the role and setup of this committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 27 November 2021

The minutes were agreed on a proposal of Ken Davenport, seconded by Alan Marchbank.

4. Matters arising

a) Oxford Botanic Garden 400th Anniversary

Catherine Lane reported that we are in contact with the Gardens about their vast PR exercise leading up to the anniversary on 15th July. They have asked that bells be rung particularly in Oxford about 2:15pm. It would be nice if as many towers as possible throughout the Diocese could ring some time that day.

b) F.E.Robinson Bowl

The rose bowl was shown to those members present, together with a box made by Charles Morrish. The plan is that it would be held with the Master's artefacts and would be on display at Guild meetings and events such as the Festival. It is insured.

c) Registering the Guild as a Charity

In response to a query from Robert Newton, Stuart Gibson said that there had not been any progress on this matter, although it was on his to-do list. Ken Darvill pointed out the advantage of gift aid particularly for donations supporting youth ringing. The Treasurer will progress this matter.

5. Correspondence

Ken Darvill reported that he had received a consultation email from the Central Council looking towards a revised basis for their affiliation fees based on membership. For our Guild this will result in a slight increase in the fee. Later they will be seeking to reduce the number of representatives from each society.

6. Reports of and elections to subcommittees

a) Education (Learning and Development Workgroup)

Robert Newton reported that the Training Meeting had been postponed and notice would be sent shortly about the new date of 30th April. He urged members to promote the e-bells which are available to borrow and potentially purchase.

The following General Committee members were elected to the Workgroup, proposed by John Wells and seconded by Jenny Page: Robert Newton, Tony Crabtree, Patricia Newton, Elizabeth Mullett, Lindsay Powell and Colin Lee.

b) Towers and Belfries

Tony Crabtree reported that there had been a lot of demand for inspections. There are 13 current members of the Workgroup. Tony Crabtree, Alan Marchbank, John Davidge, Chris Potter, Philip Dobson, Graham Clifton are the General Committee members seeking election. Jon Chamberlain proposed their election, seconded by Patricia Newton, which was carried.

Tony Crabtree reported that geographical coverage across the Guild is good but new members are welcome. Anyone interested should contact him.

Face to face courses have resumed with three recent ones.

The report was accepted unopposed, proposed by Tony Crabtree and seconded by Stuart Gibson.

c) Finance and General Purposes

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 Angela Darvill and seconded by Ruth Groves.

7. a) Peal Secretary report

Ken Davenport's report was noted.

b) Safeguarding Officer report

June Wells pointed out that it is mandatory for tower captains and those involved with teaching children to take the Foundations course, but this is down to the parish to impose not the Guild. Similarly all ringers should undertake the Basic Awareness training. There was some debate about the appropriateness of asking minors to be expected to undertake this training and whether this age limit should be 16 or 18 years of age. June undertook to discuss this issue with the Diocese and to circulate the further information that she had received from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer within the past couple of days.

c) Librarian's report

Doug Beaumont reported that he had received a box of papers accumulated by Bill Butler and passed on to the Guild by his son. These included one of J J Parker's notebooks. Katie Lane pointed out that historic minute books and the like from Branches should preferably be passed on to the Guild Library.

d) Webmaster's report

Andrew Goldthorpe is gradually improving the layout and content of the website. There was an appeal for everyone to pass on interesting news and information to Andrew and for anyone with graphic design experience to help with updating the maps.

e) Server Manager's report

Richard Stanworth reported that he is still looking to move to a new server but without losing the current facilities on the existing server. Several members highlighted the benefits of the mailing lists which we would not want to lose. Robert Newton pointed out that a section of the report is missing. The fourth paragraph should read: "As well as looking at a server upgrade in order to increase the memory, I am currently investigating alternative suppliers who can provide a significant increase in resources for about half the current server cost."

f) Report Editor's report

Heather Browning pointed out the new front cover with the coloured Guild logo. Katie Lane thanked Heather for all the work that she put into producing it and in such a tight timeframe.

8. Diary of Events

Ken Darvill highlighted the Ringing Day in May based around the Sonning Deanery Branch and the Guild AGM on 21st May combined with the Eight-Bell Striking Competition.

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

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

1. General Secretary, to replace Ken Darvill, who will be stepping down, although we do have a volunteer to take over
2. Steward to replace Bobbie May, who will be stepping down. Katie Lane urged members to look for a replacement to cover the Reading, Sonning Deanery and Newbury Branches.

10. Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2021

The accounts have been published and Susan Read was thanked for her work on them. As was to be expected, we ran at a deficit last year of about £2,000, with subscriptions down by about 200 members.

The accounts were accepted, proposed by Stuart Gibson and seconded by Alan Marchbank.

11. Donation proposals for the 2022 Annual General Meeting

The following proposals by Stuart Gibson were made, seconded by Tim Pett:

£2,000 donation to the Bell Fund

£200 donation to the Ringing World

£500 donation to the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART).

Graham Clifton proposed that the Ringing World donation be £500. John Harrison proposed donations of £500 to the Ringing World and £750 to ART, seconded by Robert Newton, adding that we should be encouraging ringers to subscribe to The Ringing World. This was agreed. Subsequently however in view of some confusion about what had been agreed, the votes were retaken on an individual basis and then the following were agreed by members:

£2,000 donation to the Bell Fund

£750 donation to the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART)

£750 donation to the Ringing World.

12. AOB

a) Use of Microphones

Sue Davenport raised the point that in buildings such as this church microphones would help. She asked that for future meetings we try to obtain them and the related equipment.

b) Guild Governance and Management Structure

John Harrison asked that we readdress the issue of whether the current structure is right for the long-term good of the Guild. Katie Lane thought that it was a good idea.

c) Striking Competition Judges

Tony Crabtree appealed for suggestions for judges, particularly for the eight-bell competition.

13. Thanks

Catherine Lane thanked Chiltern Branch and Wendover for hosting the meeting. The meeting closed at 3:47 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.