



Minutes

November General Committee Meeting Saturday 23rd November 2024

St Thomas of Canterbury Goring-on-Thames RG8 9DR

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

There were 16 apologies for absence received and noted in the attendance book.

2. Minutes of the General Committee Meeting of Saturday 9th March 2024

These were circulated prior to the meeting.

Proposed by Jon Chamberlain

Seconded by Jenny Page and accepted.

3. Matters Arising

Regarding agenda item 6a, Reports from Sub-committee L&D Workgroup Robert Newton Vice President recommended a better wording:

The Learning & Development Workgroup report was noted with thanks.

The courses planned for 2024 were pointed out to General Committee members, to be commended to the wider membership.

Robert Newton stated that the workgroup would co-opt Jonathan Cresshull, Lesley Belcher, Joanne Druce, Dorothy Hall and Sue McCouaig, as they were not members of the General Committee. The Guild Master, Secretary and Treasurer are ex-officio members.

The following General Committee members were formally elected: Tony Crabtree, Colin Lee, Elizabeth Mullett, Chris Mundy, Patricia Newton, Robert Newton and Lindsay Powell

4. Correspondence – none noted

5. Reports from:

a) Learning and Development Workgroup – Chris Mundy

b) Towers and Belfries Committee – Tony Crabtree

Ken Darvill Trustee: Some very valuable points have been made in the report, especially the item on emergency lighting. The report should be sent to all the towers in the Guild.

Action: Karen Pile Hon. Gen. Sec. to arrange circulation of the T&B Report

c) Finance and General Purposes – Karen Pile

6. Verbal updates from:

a) **Safeguarding Officer** – June Wells provided a resume of the amendments to safeguarding procedures:

- Main change, DBS checking only has to be completed for Tower Captains when there are young people in the band. Please do not make this a reason for refusing to allow young ringers to join the band, we need to encourage every one of them.
- Clarification of definition of a vulnerable person: DBS is required only if there is involvement with personal care, finances or travel arrangements. It no longer applies for ringers on the basis of age alone.
- Tower Captains, who want to renew their enhanced DBS check may find that the PCC tells them it is no longer required. This could be as a result of increasing costs. However, Tower Captains may renew their DBS check through an alternative provider e.g. ART, who are able to process it at no cost.
- The Master thanked June Wells for her commitment to ensuring the members are kept up to date with safeguarding matters.

b) Membermojo status – Jenny Bennett and Jan Glen

- As of 23 November 2402 members have been put onto the system.
- The system is being tested and Zoom meetings have been arranged to explain procedures to all. The MM team is grateful for the support from the Branches.
- The Master thanked the MM team for their expertise and dedication to the project.

Discussion:

Sue Davenport (SDB) expressed her objection to being asked to provide a date of birth on the membership data form because the information could increase the possibility of identity fraud. Patricia Newton (EBSB) agreed that similar objections had been raised in EBSB Branch. They suggested that it should be sufficient to provide, less precise but informative, date ranges.

The MM team responded that the Treasurer, Stuart Gibson, has explained that the date of birth is necessary to provide accurate information to the Insurers; a claim may be made invalid if an individual who has not provided their date of birth.

Action: the MM team will discuss the topic again at the fortnightly meeting.

- c) Librarian** – Doug Beaumont confirmed that he has been Guild Librarian for 24 years and will be standing down. The Guild members have been circulated with the details of the vacancy and there has been one enquiry. The library consists of seven bookcases and 20 boxes which is too much for the volunteer to accommodate.

Action: the officers and members of the Guild to investigate alternative means storage for the library. This will be an agenda item at the next F&GP meeting.

- d) **Website Manager** – Andrew Goldthorpe was unable to attend and provided the following update which was not available before the meeting due to an error on the server: “There are no significant developments to report in the ongoing maintenance of the Guild website. Everything is functioning as expected. I have not yet finalised the position of Assistant Webmaster and aim to have someone in place prior to the 2025 AGM.”
- e) **Server Manager** – Richard Stanworth has appointed an assistant server manager, Les Minchinton-Smith (VoWH) who is looking into one specific aspect of the server upgrade which will take place soon.
On 5 December 2024 the ISP who provide our server are doing a general upgrade and the server is due to be migrated; the server will be down while the work is completed.
- f) **Report Editor** – Heather Browning was unable to attend the meeting and provided the following update which was delayed for the same reason as the website update: “The 2024 Annual report will be produced early next year and issued at the March meeting. Before Christmas I will circulate all the information and documents for updating to the branch secretaries and send a prompt to all officers regarding their reports. Deadline for all information for inclusion is 31 January - if you know that you will not be able to meet this deadline please let me know. Many thanks for everyone’s input into the annual report.”
- g) **CCCBR** – Central Council Representatives – the Master thanked Lucy Hopkins-Till for the most informative report.
(This report is attached to these Minutes for anyone who has not been able to
- Robert Newton and Tim Pett expressed disappointment at the comments that had been received regarding the stability of the Central Council’s Touring Tower.
 - John Harrison: confirmed that the Touring Tower is easy to erect from the trailer.
 - Master: The Touring Tower has been booked for the AGM in May and ringers will be able to try it out themselves.
 - John Harrison: The CC has initiated a complete record of photographs of peal boards. The database is being organised by Richard Andrews and the photographs are being accumulated by volunteers and local contacts: the ODG has not yet received any request to contribute. JH recommended the History section on the CCCBR website
http://history.cccbr.org.uk/peal_board_search.php

7. **Diary of events** – to be confirmed and circulated after this meeting

8. **Financial matters** – Katherine Eyles Assistant Treasurer

- a) Briefing on the CCCBR proposal to increase association subscriptions.

John Harrison was invited to present the briefing. This subject is of significant importance to the membership of the ODG, so the Master requested the transcript of the important points which has been provided by JH. It should be noted that the

recording of the meeting was inaudible due to the background storm noise. The transcript is therefore an accurate account.

The Council is a federation of ringing societies and it aims to do things that are best done, or can only be done, nationally. Within ringing it provides coordination and resources, and it represents ringing to the wider world including the church, government, regulators, media and the public. However, what it can actually do is constrained by available resources.

Historically almost all the Council's income came from investments, and society affiliation fees only contributed about 10%. That was roughly the cost of the AGM weekend, and the affiliation fees were seen as paying for that, which is why they were based on the number of representatives a society had.

In recent decades investment income has fallen dramatically, and the Council had a deficit in many of the last 20 years. The Council increased the affiliation fee to try to balance the books but that was difficult because the original formula for sharing the cost meant that small societies could pay up to 15 times more per member than big societies like the ODG. That didn't matter when the cost was small but it does if the affiliation fee is going to fund the bulk of the Council's work. Two years ago the Council changed it so that all societies, big or small, now pay the same amount per member. In 2024 it was 20p per member (which is 2% of the Guild subscription) but at this year's meeting the Council increased it to 40p in 2025 and £1 per member from 2026.

Why the increase? Without it, in 2025 the Council would not even cover the cost of its statutory obligations – what the Treasurer calls 'keeping the lights on'. The 40p fee covers that but not much in terms of delivering its charitable objectives. The £1 fee should cover currently projected expenditure, including Ringing 2030.

For those not familiar, it's a major project to tackle major challenges that have been creeping up on us for many years, including ...

... 'the demographic time bomb'. 60% of current ringers are over 60 and only 15% under 40. If you roll that forward a couple of decades with the same rate of recruitment we have now there won't be not much more than half as many ringers, and only half as many towers will have a viable band.

Recently Council has spent money on:

- The Touring Tower
- Two 'Discover Bellringing' videos
- Work on the 'branding' of ringing

To understand why branding's important, think what non-ringing members of the public know about ringing. Is it: 'a fascinating activity that blends physical and mental skills to provide intellectual stimulation, modest physical activity and social contact? Or is it: 'people swinging on bell ropes'?

- Which of those makes people interested?
- What would make ringing attractive?
- How can we change perceptions?

How much the Council can achieve will depend on the resources it can deploy – human and financial, historically it's been run on a shoe string. Improving its funding is one step towards it being able to achieve more.

Comments from the committee members:

Tim Pett – CC Rep. At the CCCBR AGM, TP supported the subscription increase to 40p per capita, but not the suggested 2026 £1.00 per capita increase because, although it is a relatively small amount, he believes it to be but too much to be applied at one time.

JH - the increase to £1.00 will not take place until after there has been further discussion and a vote at the CCCBR AGM in September 2025. At this point in time the arguments for and against are purely speculative and no final decision has been made.

Stephen Rossiter (Reading) – emphasised that it is important that the ODG membership is accurate so that we pay the correct amount to the CCCBR.

JH – currently the ODG has 5 CC Representatives; our membership allows 6. At the CC AGM in 2024 it was proposed that the number of society representatives should be reduced but the motion was rejected.

- b) Guild budget: The Guild budget is in line with current year expenditure: an end of year small deficit is expected.
- c) Subscriptions and Peal fees for 2025

Resident Members £10

Proposer K. Eyles Seconder Robert Newton. Carried unanimously

Non-Resident Members £10

Proposer K. Eyles Seconder Robert Newton carried with 1 abstention

Peal Fees 50p

Ken Davenport asked if there was any allowance in the budget for an increase of the publication cost of the Annual Guild Report. A small increase for publications was confirmed by the Assistant Treasurer.

Proposer K. Eyles Seconder Ken Darvill. Carried unanimously.

9. 'Proposed Changes to the Guild Management Structure' – presentation by Chris Mundy, ODG Deputy Master

The papers have been circulated and are available on the Guild website.

Summary of the reasons for the proposed changes to the management structure:

- Hugely changing world and way people spend their time
- Fewer recruits
- Diminishing church congregations
- Redundant churches
- Increasing average age of the ringing population
- Social changes since the pandemic and its challenges and implications
- The CCCBR, other territorials and societies have changed their structure or are in the process of so doing as a result of the changing world

- Ringing 2030 has been started nationally to try and address the recruitment issue

How does this affect the ODG?

- The Guild activities must be relevant and meaningful to the membership
- The officers need to ensure that the Guild and its objects are set up for the future including 2030 and beyond
- The management of the Guild needs to be agile enough to adapt to the fast-moving future of ringing

Chris reported that the proposals he was putting forward are not a solution to the difficulties that lie ahead, it is a start on the journey.

The current structure does not facilitate agile thinking. The leadership and management of the Guild is vested in this management committee of 55 people who meet twice a year; that is not really feasible to make sure that changes of direction can be relevant and agile.

The officers' roles consist mostly of administrative tasks, the roles are specific but there are few opportunities to work as a group together for strategic planning and innovation. A great deal of time is taken up in administrative tasks involving preparation for meetings and other important business, but these activities do not take the Guild forward and are not relevant to many all members.

A small number of officers have started working together and meeting regularly to consider a structure which makes the future of the Guild a priority.

The suggestion is to form an Executive Committee consisting of The Master, Deputy Master, Secretary, Treasurer, PR and Communications officer and the discretion to co-opt up to three advisors.

In addition, there would be non-executive officers with specific roles, as is currently in place.

The workgroups and sub-committees that are in place today work well; in the future other workgroups may be formed by the executive, as needed. For instance it may be that some form of technology or workgroup is formed.

The proposal is that the Executive Committee will have the power to run the Guild. So there will be a small leadership team – to make it easier to adapt and move forward but with checks and balances. The Executive Committee will need to report to a Governance and Scrutiny Committee that will hold the Exec to account to make sure that they do not “go rogue” or take the Guild in a direction against the wishes of the members. The Governance and Scrutiny will be led by a chairperson and consist of 15 Branch spokespersons (ie one from each branch) as well as ringing vice presidents.

How will it work?

- It is suggested that the Executive Committee will meet monthly and work together as a team, thinking ahead, planning for the future, reviewing the

objects of the Guild, looking at roles, not individuals, and developing a structured plan for the Guild that will benefit the present and future membership.

- The Executive will prepare open and transparent Minutes of their meetings to the Governance Committee and publish them on the website for all members to access.
- The Governance and Scrutiny Committee will meet physically at least once a year, more often if necessary, and there will be other virtual meetings and a continuous dialogue between Chairperson and the Master.
- There are some actions to focus time and attention on because they need to be addressed promptly.

Next steps

Feedback and comments from this group are an essential part of the discussion and presented below.

Comments from the committee members:

Tim Pett (ONB) – we must make sure that the Executive Committee is carefully regulated so that there is no misuse of financial powers and that could lead to the significant depletion of the Guild's assets.

Jon Chamberlain (VoWH) - confused by the details because it is not clear what the difference is between the agendas of the Executive and the Scrutiny committees. Chris Mundy responded - the Executive will run the Guild; the Scrutiny Committee will make certain that it has the approval of all Guild members and hold the Exec to account.

Jon Chamberlain – concluded that it will be important to have people on the Scrutiny Committee who are well informed about Guild matters.

Richard Stanworth (N Bucks) – any expenditure must be regulated and ratified by the Scrutiny Committee. Chris Mundy commented that this can be achieved by approval of budgets.

Ken Davenport (SDB) - in favour of the need to review the organisation of the Guild but further details must be confirmed before there can be any agreement it is necessary to get much more detail of the rule changes eg all the officers/Trustees of the Diocesan Bell Fund must be elected from the General Committee which could limit the number of potential candidates if they then come from the Governance and Scrutiny Committee. He therefore feels sufficient time is needed for detailed examination of the proposed rule changes and putting it before the before the Spring General Committee in March is going to be too soon.

John Harrison (SDB) – develop small cohorts of people to look closely at the detailed changes to the rules. They should go through a number of iterations. It may be too soon to have them ready for the next General Committee meeting.

Patricia Newton (EBSB) – A deputy secretary is mentioned but does not appear to be a member of either committee. There is no mention of the stewards who are integral

to the running of the Guild.

Chris Mundy responded – the proposal wanted to limit the number on the Governance and Scrutiny committee to make decisions more agile.

Christopher Potter (Chiltern) – The proposal of six meetings a year sounds a lot when there is difficulty in getting enough people to volunteer for two. Is the issue the number of people on them or the frequency of the meetings? Also the current objects of the Guild are about ringing all the bells in the Diocese. Having looked at the information about the future organisation of the Guild, do we know what we are supposed to do? Should we ask the members first what they want?

The Master responded – at a General Committee Meeting a few years ago, the members were asked what they wanted from the Guild and their opinion was better communication and more ringing. This is what we are aiming to achieve.

There is a small group of people who understand what needs to be achieved but cannot be effective without support.

It is necessary to think about the future, not the present day but planning how this historic Guild will be functioning in 20 - 30 years' time. We do not yet have that vision.

Doug Beaumont (Reading) - the general committee represented here is supposed to manage the Guild. The Branch officers or reps who attend these meetings do not come to manage the Guild, they come to manage their own area. We do not really need to massively change the structure, but we need far fewer Branch representatives and at least twice as many people managing the administration of the Guild.

Robert Taylor Ayles (EBSB) - made various comments on the present Guild structure and in particular suggested that many ringers are interested only in what takes place in their own church tower and Branch. He believed the ODG and CCCBR, Odd Bob, and the Annual Guild Report, are of little interest or consequence to them; we should consider online meetings to encourage people to attend and remove the need to travel. Rob did not feel General Committee meetings being held physically around the Guild requiring significant travelling were a good use of time. Chris Mundy responded – these are all good points which we realise and discuss regularly.

Sue Davenport (SDB) - anything we do doesn't get more people interested in ringing, we should concentrate on recruitment and getting ringers into church.

Chris Mundy responded - this is not going to change easily get more people engaged and involved and it is the responsibility of this group here to get ringers involved in their churches.

The Master responded – the Guild has not had a dedicated PR Officer for at least eight years. That role is absolutely key to getting the message out to everyone. To be effective it is unlikely that it could be a volunteer as it would take many hours of work to raise the profile of ringing and to contact every single ringer, across many platforms, including social media.

Ken Davenport – We have failed to get anybody for the role because it is too big a task for one volunteer.

Chris Mundy responded - could foresee an appropriately skilled workgroup being formed.

Amy Herily (S. Oxon) – commented that not all the Vice Presidents may want to be involved in the Governance and Scrutiny Committee. Please to hear a post of Deputy Secretary is being discussed because of the amount of work there would be for the Secretary.

Robert Newton (S. Oxon) – in an attempt to cut down on the admin there is a proposal to involve people not actually on the committees but there are at least 18 lots of notes to produce. To attempt to cut down on secretarial administration could the use of AI be considered?

The Master responded – we know that there is technology available but, at the moment, we do not have the skills or the time to investigate further. The bottom line is to ensure we have enough ringers recruited for the future.

Chris Mundy – asked for a show of hands for those, in principle, in favour of continuing to explore the proposed changes, and also for those who think the Guild should continue as we are, to understand if it is the desire of the committee to restructure along these lines.

The show of hands indicated that the vast majority of members present would like the process of change to continue.

Sue Davenport – the process should not be rushed through too quickly; details must be looked at very carefully.

Chris Mundy – emphasised how much work had been dedicated to bringing the proposal to the General Committee and gave sincere thanks to the people involved including the F&GP and John Harrison.

10. AOB

- a) Odd Bob - The Master reminded the Branch representatives to collect their copies of Odd Bob before leaving. She thanked the editor, Judd Flogdell, for a very successful first edition but with regret, announced that she had stood down. Therefore, the Guild will be looking for a new Odd Bob editor. There were the following questions: Why do we have Odd Bob and why is it a hard copy and not electronic?
Explanation: this matter was raised a few years ago and there was a vote to retain Odd Bob in hard copy and also the e-version available on the Publications dropdown on the Guild website. If there is no volunteer to take over the role of editor the publication of Odd Bod will be reviewed.
Sue Davenport – Odd Bod is the only way that the Guild can reach the Branches and towers.
Karen Pile (C. Bucks) – the Membermojo system will provide a way of distributing an electronic copy to every member.
- b) 10 bell results – the 10 bell competition took place at St Thomas, Oxford and the winners were Reading who go through to the Tewkesbury Shield competition. The details of the results were published elsewhere.

11. Concluding vote of thanks - Chris Mundy thanked the Reading Branch and the members of Goring tower for arranging the meeting venue and providing excellent refreshments.

CENTRAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT from Lucy Hopkins Till

This year's meeting of the CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS was held on 7th September in Exeter. The draft minutes were published in The Ringing World on 4th October. The minutes and recording of the 127th Annual Meeting are also available on the CCCBR website together with the relevant meeting papers and the recording of the Ringing 2030 Presentation on Bells in Changing Churches. Members of The Ringing World Ltd are, by right, all those members of the Central Council who indicate a willingness to be company members before the AGM, which is held on the same day as the Council meeting.

Most of our ODG reps. have continued to be involved in the Workgroups : John Harrison (Digital Platform for the Council's Historic Archive Resources and Biographies co-ordinator)-Historical & Archive and (Methods)- Taxonomy and Technology, Lucy Hopkins Till (Development team lead)- Recruitment & Development, Graham John (Composition Team Lead and Methods)-Taxonomy and Technology and Tim Pett-Dove Database Steward. Katie Lane, ODG Master, is also one of the Trustees. This report includes just some key points from the meetings.

CCCBR AGM

Election of Fellows Chris Mew for his work on the Central Council, for the Ringing World and in safeguarding. Barbara Wheeler for her sterling work with Publications for 35 years.

The Trustees' Report The current Trustees are Tina Stoecklin (President), Vicki Chapman (Deputy President), Ernie de Legh-Runciman (Secretary), Fergus Stracey (Treasurer), Ian Roulstone, Clive Whittaker, Beverley Faber and Katie Lane (Ordinary Trustees). The role and duties of the workgroups were changed slightly during 2024 in the light of the Ringing 2030 Programme. Ringing for the Coronation was particularly well supported. However the national ringing centre has not proved to be viable. Much effort is focused on Ringing 2030. The Mobile Belfry is now in operation. Yellowyoyo has provided advice for rebranding of ringing which has already been used at the International Scout and Guide Jamboree in Essex. The President's Blog continues to be successful. The Council has continued its engagement with the Church of England's Safeguarding Training and Development team and scenarios related to bellringing are going to be included in the next edition of the "Basic Awareness" training course. The "Code for Ringing" was formally adopted by the Council in January 2024.

In the **Accounts for 2023**, the total assets of the Council were £419,257. However, the General Fund loss had risen to £18,712, primarily as a result of spending £16,613 for Ringing 2030. Nine grants were paid from the Bell Restoration Fund leaving a total of £33,200 in outstanding commitments. Resources Expended in 2023 exceeded Incoming Resources by £22,410.

The Executive and Workgroup Reports

The Executive Report. The Executive has met monthly online and held quarterly meetings with Workgroup Leads. It has also continued regular meetings with the Church Buildings Council, Historic England, Ecclesiastical Insurance, ART and The Ringing World. The Executive is of the opinion that the current affiliation fee is insufficient to sustain the current and planned work for Ringing 2030. *Historical and Archive WG* The CCCBR Library Collection has successfully been relocated to the Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust and

continues to be both used and added to. Subscriptions from Friends of the Library help to maintain it. Work has continued on the development of the ringing history website, capturing images for the peal board database, updating the Rolls of Honour, maintaining biographical information through obituaries and maintaining records of society badges, certificates etc

Public Relations WG This has been renamed “Ringing 2030 Marketing”. A short film called “What do you enjoy about Bellringing?” was produced for the CCCBR You Tube channel. Bands were also encouraged to ring for the 80th anniversary of D-Day and there was further promotion of Bell Sunday this year.

Stewardship and Management WG This has now been split into two groups, the second one named “Ringing 2030 Environments” Members of the Workgroups continue to respond to an assortment of enquiries from various sources, update and add to documentation.

Technical and Taxonomy WG Reorganisation of the workgroups has resulted in the ICT team now reporting directly to the Executive as a support service. A draft report of Accepted Method Extensions is now available. The Methods and Composition Libraries continue to be maintained.

Volunteer and Leadership WG This workgroup has been renamed “Ringing 2030 Recruitment and Development” and tasks have been adjusted to focus on that particular project. The Development Section has continued to supply and develop training posters for towers and 3D printed model bells. The North West Ringing Course is established and plans are progressing with the South West Ringing Course.

Young Ringers-Schools and Young Ringers WG This workgroup is a merger of the former “Schools and Youth” and “Universities and Colleges” workgroups. Material supporting young people undertaking a Duke of Edinburgh Award has been developed further. An on-going project is the virtual hub for university ringing. *Technology for Ringing 2030* is a new workgroup which has been set up to create a Ringing 2030 digital platform.

Ringing 2030 Environments is another new workgroup focusing on safe and secure environments and technical and leadership training.

Support Services

Publications has a new team.

Performance Analysis Peal numbers had increased slightly to 3,629 and most peals were still of Major. The Yorkshire Association was marginally the leading affiliated society, followed closely by the Ancient Society of College Youths. Quarter peal numbers had increased by more than a thousand to 16,090, the majority being doubles this time and again the highest number were rung in Kent.

Safeguarding, Membership, ICT, Small Societies and Public Relations continue to provide their services .

External Liaison Simon Linford has now established an important relationship with the Association of Festival Churches and is maintaining a high profile in the Heritage Religious Buildings Alliance. It is estimated that 10 - 15% of churches might close over the next ten years.

Stewards *The Bell Restoration Fund, Dove Database, Fred Dukes International Bell Fund, Carter Ringing Machine* stewards continue their work.

The Touring Tower is now fully operational and is now under the wing of the Mobile Belfries Trust.

Forward Plan The President explained the “Three Pillars” of Ringing 2030 – Publicity and marketing – recruitment and development – quality environment.

Financial Update The Treasurer reported that overall there had been a £25,075 spend with Yellowyoyo which is now complete. There being no upper limit on the value the Executive

can authorise, John Harrison encouraged Council Members to read Executive Reports closely and feedback responses to them.

Elections of Trustees Fergus Stracey was elected Treasurer and Peter Harrison was elected Ordinary Trustee.

Motions were carried to extend the maximum term of service of Stewards from six years to nine years and to increase the Annual Subscription to 40p per Affiliated Society member from January 2025 and £1 from January 2026.

Attendance at the meeting was 152 out of a possible 220. 41 members were absent and 27 positions were vacant.

Next Year's Meeting will be held on Saturday 6th September hosted by the Yorkshire Association

THE RINGING WORLD LTD AGM There was a £34K surplus this year owing to royal events. In addition to the sales of merchandise, the Company received donations and legacies amounting to £67K. There are 2300 subscribers to The Ringing World.