

Notes of the informal meeting of the Belfry Advisory Committee held on 9 February 2001 at Wheatley, Haugh Lane, Woodbridge.

Present:- George Pipe, Chris McArthur, Neville Whittell, Bruce Wakefield.

This should have been a full meeting of the Belfry Advisory Committee, but unfortunately the car in which Winston Girling, Alan Moulton and Richard Coe were travelling broke down and they were unable to get to the meeting. However, the four members present decided to hold an informal discussion about belfry matters. The following notes are a summary of what was discussed.

South East District.

For information, Chris McArthur made the following comments concerning matters in the SE District.

He commented that although the church at Easton had paid for some reinforcement work on the bell frame some two years ago, since then nothing further had been done to get the bells restored. The vicar had got frustrated with the lack of progress. Alan Moulton had been to meet the vicar, and had advised that a way forward would be to purchase some "off the peg" headstocks for the bells. This would cost between £10,000 and £12,000. Half of this sum had now been raised in the parish, and it was now hoped that the bells would become ringable again by late summer.

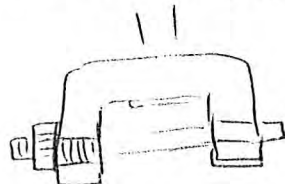
At Brandeston, the clappers had been rebushed and the frame painted.

At Wickham Market, where the tower is cracking, until recently limited ringing had been taking place (with the approval of the architect). However, because it was felt that the periodic ringing of the bells might be giving the wrong message to the parish (ie, that the state of the tower might not be as bad as it really was, and that nothing really needed doing at present) ringing had now stopped.

The ringers at Campsea Ashe were concerned about the "lumpiness" of the back bells. Despite reassurances about the safety of the bells, they were concerned that the gudgeon pins might be failing. Alan Moulton had suggested that they approach Eayre and Smith for a quote to "sort out" the back two bells. However, the church is short of money.

Hasketon has asked for some maintenance work to be done on the bells, and Chris has agreed to deal with this.

Neville Whittell reported that he has still not received the clapper from the Rushmere tenor bell that needs rebushing. — clapper now with Neville — threaded shackle (one side) & threads gone. Needs new shackle.



South West District

For information, Neville Whittell made the following comments concerning matters in the SW District.

It appears that the restoration/augmentation work at Elmsett is off. It now appears that the possible promise of £20,000 towards the project from a benefactor has been withdrawn. As £50,000 – £60,000 is needed for repairs to the church tower, the additional cost of the restoration is now too much for the parish.

The intent to get Groton ringable again is still there, but this is still a long way off.

There is some interest in restoring the bells at Little Waldingfield, but as this would be a major project, such a task would be still a long way off.

Finally, Hitcham is another possibility for restoration in the future.

Other Matters

George Pipe commented on the recent excellent TV coverage of the restoration work at Wingfield. It was given much more than “your average 20 secs worth of airtime!”

* George expressed his concern about the “odd struckness” of many of the bells in Suffolk. He recommended that the Guild ought to try to get someone like Chris Pickford (who is an expert on the odd struckness of bells) to come to talk to it, and to offer advice on what could be done to cure or reduce the odd struckness of bells.

George also wondered why there were no lady members of the Belfry Advisory Committee. The work of the committee was not all heavy lifting, and he was sure that there were lady members of the Guild with a lot of bell maintenance expertise that would be invaluable.

Finally, George said that Winston was to be congratulated on yet another good year’s work leading the Belfry Advisory Committee, and for increasing still further the number of PCCs that have joined the Parish Affiliation Scheme.

* we should be able to manage, I suspect!