

Suffolk Guild of Ringers

Belfry Advisory Committee Minutes: 6th October 2015

Meeting held at Wickham Market church and thanks given to Ray Lewis for his assistance and hospitality.

Attendees – W Girling (Chair), C McArthur (Sec.), J Stevens, N Whittell, M Steggles, C Girling, P Rose, M Rose, J Taylor, C Nunn and D Salter.

Apologies – M Croucher, A Moulton, and N Colman.

1. Minutes of previous meeting signed as an accurate record.

2. **Correspondence:** A letter was mentioned requesting details of Polstead bells prior to the 1825 restoration, several people will look into records and report back.

3. **Grant Applications:** None were tabled at this meeting although it was noted that Horringer have been offered a grant of £12,000. Payments of grants to Wickham Market and St Mary le Tower had been agreed.

4. **Technical paper: Wooden Heritage:** Jonathan introduced this paper that was his personal view of ways to protect ancient bell frames whilst using them still for full circle ringing. He was a little concerned about bell hanger's views dominating the options for refurbishment, when steel/iron frames were frequently used as the preferred option. Moving them down the tower below old frames often gave sound problems. John Taylor and David Salter spoke at some length and at the end of discussions a number of key points were agreed to address issues with preserving frames worthy of continued use. Maintenance of wooden frames is not complex and skills do exist in Suffolk for such work, but frequently relative costs are raised as an issue. The meeting agreed that steel/iron frames were certainly appropriate in many towers, but the careful discussion of the merits of moving away from a wooden frame should always take place first with a wide circle of interests.

The agreed position of the BAC on this matter is:

a) We should not generalise about wooden frames and each should be assessed on its merit and condition, by experts from within the BAC.

b) The Diocesan advisor and other neutral experts are very important and should be able to balance the arguments between all parties involved.

c) Identifying the towers with high quality wooden frames worthy of preservation was considered essential and a project to detail them would take place over the next few years, it is a big task however. Little current detail exists about such matters.

5. **Bell advisors conference:** Jonathan had attended this event and gave feedback to the meeting. Restoration of wooden and steel bell frames had been discussed and it was noted that new contractors had very successfully fabricated new bell frames at much reduced costs. Tuning of bells was an increasing concern when old bells were adjusted to other new bells in the tower, and old sound character was lost, examples of this occurring in Suffolk were noted.

6. **Training:** The Long Melford event had been very successful and the format will be followed at a similar event, perhaps later this year.

7. **Technical Advisors report:** attached to these minutes as given by Winston Girling.

8. **District reports: North East** - Jonathan reported Wenhaston tenor had striking adjusted and that Kelsale had been in discussions about using a legacy for rehanging the bells in the near future. At Huntingfield money is now available for new rope guides and Jonathan is dealing.

North West – Ixworth tenor has been turned through 180 degrees and this has improved things.

South East – Wickham Mkt. have had 5th and 6th clappers replaced by Taylors because these two bells tended to go up wrong. The recent work by Taylors is now finished. Cretingham has accessed some old marine bells to be used for casting a new treble to add to a vacant pit in the frame. The meeting noted completed tower repairs will enable regular ringing when this is complete, but fund raising is still ongoing, and discussions about the merits of plain bearings on the original five. Charsfield have designed a new organ loft to restore the ringing chamber, as a first phase of restoration.

South West – Whatfield may well be rehung by Taylors following a site visit. The cracked 5th at Hartest has been welded and White's have replaced it in the tower. Lavenham clappers were all removed on 28th September for refurbishment re-bushing, replacement of some badly rusted top bolts and re-profiling of the clappers on 6 and 8. Little Cornard scheme is still progressing and John Taylor is assisting. Hintlesham improvements works are planned by Neville and he made enquires about St Nicholas Ipswich, but was told by the caretaker all the bells were fine!!.

9. **Meetings:** Next will be Stowmarket Church at 07.30 hrs on Monday 1st February 2016.