

SUFFOLK GUILD OF RINGERS
BELFRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10, Mitre Close, Woolpit, at 8.0p.m. on Thursday, 11th February, 1999.

The Chairman, on behalf of the meeting thanked Alan Moulton and Margaret for kindly allowing the meeting to take place at their home.

Present: R. Clouston M.B.E; W. Girling (chairman); Dr. S. Harrison; C. McArthur; A. Moulton; C. Nunn; G. Pipe; M. Rolph and D. Salter.

Apologies for Absence: R. Coe and J. Colman.

The previous Belfry Advisory Committee Meeting had been held on 8th October, 1998, and the minutes of this meeting duly circulated to all the members of the Committee prior to the current meeting. R. Clouston mentioned that the reference to the bells at **MARTLESHAM** should include that the tenor was re-cast in 1963. This was added and the minutes agreed and signed as a true record of that meeting.

MATTERS ARISING: There were no other matters arising.

DISTRICT REPORTS

NORTH EAST: G. Pipe asked about **BEDFIELD**. D. Salter reported that he had been there once with Robin Allum and will go again as soon as possible (bells reported as loose and need tightening) M. Rolph reported as follows - **BLYTHBURGH:** tenor clapper put back having fallen out (no damage). Ladder to roof at **WESTHALL** moved slightly as it was touching the lip of one of the bells, and R. Clouston reported that **RENDHAM** may be re-hung. There is a very weak frame in this tower.

NORTH WEST: W. Girling reported as follows - **ROUGHAM:** new stay made; **ERISWELL:** stay replaced having been broken at N.W. meeting; **NAUGHTON:** single 6cwt bell hung in decayed frame and sounded by clocking clapper on severely worn section of bell well below soundbow. Maintenance team have fitted rods across frame on both sides of bell to prevent frame spreading any further and fitted Ellecombe hammer at side of bell to strike on unworn section, and new ground pulley to re-route rope. Also stout boards fitted across frame under bell. Now works satisfactorily but Parish have been informed that work must be regarded as interim and bell will require re-hanging sooner rather than later. At **OLD NEWTON** work was now being carried out by the team. So far the treble has been replaced following successful welding which has restored this excellent Derby bell. A new clapper has also been fitted. Clamps are being made to stabilise the frame and work has now commenced on the second. Much of the rusty ironwork is being shot blasted and painted. It is also anticipated that during the work the original ringing floor (above the present ringing chamber) will be restored and the bells rung from this floor, where there are windows and from where the bells were clearly rung at some time in the past. This will necessitate fitting a further floor between here and the service floor under the bells to create a new intermediate chamber which will also enable control of sound levels to the ringing floor. Much work remains to all of the other bells and new rope guides and bosses will also have to be installed. At **STOWUPLAND** the single bell by Oliver, of Wapping, has been lowered to the next floor owing to concerns over its stability. A Faculty has now been issued and the team will repair the bell frame and re-hang the bell, following drilling out of the crown staple, on a new headstock and ball bearings, together with associated ironwork, for swing chiming. This is the only example of a bell by Oliver in Suffolk (1843 - diam 22 1/2"). He cast 12 in all between 1810 and 1845 - 2 of which remain at Carshalton, in Surrey and one at St. John's, Wapping, so the Stowupland bell is one of only four in existence. Of the others 2 were lost in the blitz and 6 were re-cast in 1928, all at Chichester, Sussex. (information kindly supplied by R.W.M.C.) At **TOSTOCK** the bells have now been taken to Eayre and Smith for a new frame to be designed. Casting of the new bells is also awaited and the work will be carried out by Tony Baines of Diss. The work will be marginally cheaper as a result and slightly revised costings will be reported to the Guild Management Committee when it meets in about 2 weeks time.

SOUTH EAST: C. McArthur reported that apart from special occasions all ringing had stopped at **WICKHAM MARKET** because of tower problems (pulling away from Church) the lead spire here may also be contributing to the overall weakness. At **EASTON** the project to put new supports under the bell frame and other work is unlikely to go ahead. The grant has failed and the band are drifting away. W. Girling said that he had received a letter from Simon Cottrell re **HACHESTON** where the contract has now been signed. Taylors have said that they are over committed and this may hold up casting, and Simon Cottrell is anxious about getting local help when work starts in late October. Assistance has been promised by W. Girling and will be organised nearer the time and it was noted by G. Pipe that this will be the first job by Hayward Mills in the Diocese. D. Salter reported that the 2nd is about to be welded at **CAMPSEA ASHE**. Tie rods have been installed in the frame and it is the intention to re-

hang the treble in the middle of the frame. A band is being trained at the present time. S. Harrison said that the beams supporting the frame at **IKEN** are under discussion and they may be replaced with oak and not steel. Apparently the Faculty has not been issued yet and G. Pipe was concerned that there may be influence from a quarter where experience could be limited. R. Clouston said that there was some agreement on the D.A.C. and that he was keeping a close eye on the situation, the Day frame is badly designed and could not be replaced anyway. S. Harrison noted that stainless steel rods are to be used to anchor the frame to the supports and expressed concern for the frame and/or tower if the job is not done properly. It was reported that the Architect is a Mr. Woodley, from Felixstowe. At **ORFORD** the new bells are at the Church. Bakers, builders had been at Church today to commence filling the nave arch. Many aspects of the work have been dealt with but there are still one or two matters to sort out with the Local Authority. Although the tenor is now 15cwt the integrity of tower still needs to be looked at and the earliest start could be April, 1999. G. Pipe asked about **FRAMLINGHAM** where the bells are reported as not going as well as they perhaps should. D. Salter said that he rang there last year and they were very odd struck and maintenance appeared to be at a very low level. R. Clouston said that £1000 had been spent on re-installing the clock hammers. The bells had been re-hung in a massive wooden Day frame and it was unfortunate that ringers today just do not seem to have the expertise needed to maintain their bells. C. Nunn suggested that perhaps a party could attend at the invitation of the local ringers to point them in the right direction as far as maintenance was concerned and C. McArthur agreed that the Chairman's suggestion of this being initiated by the District in the first instance would be a good idea and would be looked at in the most appropriate way possible. G. Pipe said that on Monday evening the S.G.tenor clapper had broken at **ST. MARY LE TOWER** and this was now the second time it had happened and the fifth clapper to break in the tower since the bells were re-hung. In view of this it had been decided to go to Whitechapel to replace the Taylor clapper with a wrought iron one. He also reported that £2000 has been left for the bells and a similar amount for the organ at this Church. Being looked at as a result are: having the clock faces re-fixed slightly proud of the tower to allow the sound of the lower tier of bells to be heard more prominently outside the tower; re-casting the Warner 9th or even having new bells for 10 and 11. Also, **ST. CLEMENTS, IPSWICH** are now ringing once a month, and a consideration has now been given towards new ropes for this tower from the fire insurance claim. At **ST. MARY AT ELMS, IPSWICH** some cracks have been noted in the tower but the architect maintains that it is a very good and strong tower. It was found that the wheels were tied to the frame and the bells were being clocked. The bearings and pulleys have been cleaned out and 5 ropes from **S.M.L.T.** fitted (without tail ends) for chiming. R. Clouston said that the bells had not been turned and soundbow wear therefore likely to be excessive. The Chairman suggested that if this was so care should be taken over the amount of work the bells should undertake and the wear should be regularly and carefully monitored. The committee noted that this Church had been mentioned before and that the incumbent had asked for the bells to be chimed for the Millennium if possible. It was very much a P.R. exercise and agreed that progress should be as discussed. At the Cathedral, Bury St. Edmunds the amount of money required to be raised was now down to £750,000. A. Moulton said that on April 17th 1999 an open day at the Norman Tower was being organised in aid of the appeal.

SOUTH WEST: A Moulton has completed an excellent report on the bells at **BOXFORD**, following a visit there accompanied by W. Girling on 18th November, 1998. The local ringers had reported disappointment at the go of the bells following re-hanging in a new steel frame with new fittings by Taylors in 1997. It was discovered that apart from the bells being 'out of progression' to some extent, there were problems with the clappers which were carrying excess weight owing to the fact that they had not been machined after casting, and some counterbalancing may not be necessary. In addition, the sliders were very stiff and required freeing off. The report is to be submitted to the local ringers and Parish. Also at **LITTLE THURLOW** it was reported that the bells have been removed from the tower prior to re-hanging.

TECHNICAL ADVISORS REPORT: Michael Rolph said that he wished to stand down from this office at the next Guild AGM in April, 1999. He had completed 7 years in the post and would carry on as North East Belfry Advisor and attend the B.A.C. meetings as before. A. Moulton has agreed to stand for the post at the next AGM and the Chairman said that on behalf of the Committee and the Guild we were extremely grateful for all the work and advice that Michael has given, especially when inspecting work for grant purposes which involved travelling all over Suffolk from his home near Sizewell. We are pleased that Michael will remain as part of the team.

SUFFOLK GUILD GRANTS FROM THE RESTORATION FUND

At the last Guild Management Committee meeting in October, 1998, it had been requested that the B.A.C. Committee should be asked to come up with suggestions as to how the grant system could be tightened up, in particular as far as the wider issues concerning matters such as: i) is the Church likely to become redundant; ii) if tuning of the bells is prohibited or the frame cannot be properly repaired or replaced, is it likely that a sub-standard job could result; etc. etc. Should we impose many more conditions at the outset.

Following a discussion it was agreed unanimously that to prevent potential problems in future all applications which are received by the Guild Secretary for grants should immediately be forwarded (or copied) to the Chairman of the Belfry Advisory Committee. This Committee should then discuss the implications of the grant and all the likely problems surrounding it. If necessary, because of the time scale involved, a special meeting of

the B.A.C. Committee should be called to discuss the grant. Following discussion the Committee should then make recommendations to the Guild Management Committee for this Committee to make a decision on the grant. This procedure should obviate the need to make any changes to the terms of grants and the Management Committee would then be presented with a clear and suitably researched application for discussion.

Also discussed were the circumstances where a grant has been given and bells re-hung, and often also much help given voluntarily by ringers, sometimes from far afield, only to find that when the bells are completed the local ringers then proceed to exclude the Guild from ringing a celebratory peal on the bells. It was felt by the Committee that, although ringers have no rights, only privileges, it should be part of the grant system that ringers should be aware that it would be courteous to allow this subject to the Guild being at all times sensitive to local aspirations.

It was agreed that G. Pipe would compose a suitably worded piece to be circulated with the terms of grants so that organisers are at least aware of our wishes.

The meeting closed at 10.0p.m.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, 10th June, 1999, at 8.0p.m. to be held at 8, Lansdowne Road, Ipswich, by kind permission of Mr. G. Pipe.

Winston S. Girling
Chairman.