

SUFFOLK GUILD OF RINGERS BELFRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Committee Meeting held at St. Mary's Cratfield, on Friday, 13th June, 2008, at 7.0p.m.

Present: Carol Girling, Winston Girling (Chairman) Christopher Nunn, Jonathan Stevens, Dr. Bruce Wakefield, Neville Whittell, David Salter, John Taylor, Chris McArthur. The Guild Chairman, Philip Gorrod, and Trevor Hughes were also present having been invited to attend. The Chairman thanked Naomi Shaw for meeting them and also for laying on cups of tea.

Apologies for Absence: Alan Moulton, Michael Rolph and John Pereira.

Confirming Minutes: The Minutes of the previous Meeting, held at Stowmarket during February, 2008, were confirmed and signed. There was one small amendment.

Matters Arising: None

District Reports:

North East: Chediston (Jonathan Stevens) funding is now in place. The bells should come out this month and be on display in the Church on July 1. Cratfield (Jonathan Stevens) Architect Donald Peacock and Naomi Shaw are a delight in that they are sharing this project. They have had a positive report from structural engineer Adrian Dempster and are in negotiations to move the windlass and clock case. They have had reports from Andrew Nicholson and Whitechapel. Nicholsons were briefed to use the existing fifth as a tenor, Whitechapel were asked to use the existing tenor. Rope circle leaves a lot to be desired but it is hoped that all six bells will ultimately be used. Fressingfield (Jonathan Stevens) who has fitted sound baffles to the louvers which should help to balance the external sound. Some wood removed from above the new treble pit and scaffold boards are to be removed from the redundant wooden pit above the treble. This should improve the air path considerably, and may save having to relocate the treble to the upper layer. The remedial work requested of White's has all been done except drawing the 6th rope through the clock case. Go of bells much improved as is the internal sound. The clappers all remain un-machined. Great Glemham (Jonathan Stevens) Toilet installed in ground floor ringing chamber, making it impossible to ring the bells from this floor. Jonathan requested a temporary scaffold ringing chamber which is in place. With Stephen Pettman's help ropes raised, wheel on 3rd re-fixed, new ceiling bosses fitted, rope chutes realigned and adjusted to fit sallies. Go of bells improved. Proper ringing gallery and restoration of bells may be considered by Parish in long term. Metfield (Jonathan Stevens) Was asked to replace a broken rope on the 5th (upper tier) The bell had set itself. Poor access and no headroom. No local willing to go up and undertake maintenance. Jonathan has done some work on the ropes and has more to do. This installation raises serious questions about safe access to repair and maintain bells. It may be that we need to consider a grant condition seeking to ensure the safety of steeple keepers. Rendham (Jonathan Stevens) Treble has been piped and scaffold boards placed under the fifth. The hatch has been opened a little. Aimed at improving sound levels in the ringing chamber. Also retaining the sound balance outside. Bronze rope bosses have been fitted to the front five and back two and a plastic boss to the sixth (bronze bosses courtesy of Winston) Southwold and Wingfield Jonathan has been asked to sort out striking at both towers, both of which may need some re-clapping. Wissett After six years of negotiating project now moving forward with the old frame

being removed and put in a local museum. Chediston HLF grant for £40,000 awarded.

North West: (Chris Nunn) bells are all out at Ixworth and Brian White has been back to take measurements. The chairman thanked Chris and helpers for their hard work so far. Stowmarket (Winston Girling) simulator received and would be fitted as soon as possible. Hopton Letter received from Stephen Young that the restoration appeal beginning to move forward - £17,000 of required £44,000 raised to date. Eye Letter received about potential restoration and asking about grant aid. Replied that Guild would be pleased to consider a grant providing all the necessary conditions were in place. Mendlesham (John Taylor) There are local disagreements about the fitting and form of ringing gallery, and the bells are urgently in need of restoration. Some progress has been made, however.

South East: Ipswich, St. Mary at Quay (Neville Whittell) said that Rev. Brian Redgers had asked if we could hold our October Meeting here. David Salter said that these bells required a bit of attention but not too much work was probably needed to improve them. The possibility of going there in October will be looked at. Dennington (Winston Girling) now has £15,000 towards their restoration. Ufford (Jonathan Stevens) attended with Alan Moulton as Taylors had shut bells down claiming loose gudgeons. Clappers need some minor attention but Alan has agreed that it is safe to continue ringing the bells. In the long term re-hanging the back four bells on canon retaining headstocks would be beneficial. Bruce Wakefield reported that Jonathan had assisted with improving the striking of the bells at Woodbridge and they were now much more even striking. Brandeston (Chris McArthur) has re-built the pulley boxes on three of the bells.

South West: Sudbury All Saints Neville Whittell asked if there was any further news. Winston Girling said that he had completed a Faculty application for the Church which was now with the Churchwarden for signing and submission. Long Melford (Winston Girling) reported that he had met with Alan Moulton and Graham Pledger and Church authorities and it was agreed that the present wooden bell frame is beyond redemption. Various schemes were suggested and the most suitable one was to lift up the old frame and secure it higher in the tower to preserve it. A new, 10 bell steel frame could then be installed in place of the present wooden frame, the bells restored and rung from the first floor gallery, using the present ringing chamber as a silence chamber, which would also assist with drawing the ropes into a circle.

Applications for Grants: Wissett an application for a grant towards restoring these bells was discussed. After a discussion it was agreed that the suggested work was in order and a level of grant was agreed for recommendation to the Management Committee. Philip Gorrod said that he had been teaching new ringers at Wissett (one rang first quarter-peal the previous evening, and there will be a band when the bells are done. Ipswich, St. Lawrence A letter had been received from George Pipe giving further details about this pending restoration and giving extra costs which had not been apparent at the original application. Members of the Belfry Advisory Committee said that there were aspects of this restoration which had not been answered, namely: 1) as the bells are being lowered, will there be safe access to them 2) will sound proofing be considered, and 3) what will be the position with ringers having access. The Committee felt that they did not wish to recommend any increase in grant aid at this stage.

Technical Advisor's Report: Dealt with elsewhere in this report.

Any Other Business: Central Council (David Salter) Looking at report on new working conditions and how it affects ringers.. Also Ellis's Ropes are increasing production following long delays, and also looking into poor quality of hemp. Also looking at problems with Taylor's Eayre & Smith who it is said may have been increasing the price on bells cast for bell hangers at originally agreed fixed contract prices. Trevor Hughes said that these days we are paying out a lot of money in grant aid to bell restorations and ending up with second rate jobs. The Committee agreed that this was clearly due to increasing emphasis on preservation, an issue which was being pushed to the fore to the detriment of producing excellent rings of bells. Trevor also said that at Fressingfield the tenor will tend to 'go up wrong' especially if an inexperienced ringer tries to raise the bell.

A discussion was held about problems with certain bell-hangers not fitting clappers of the correct profile, as required by the grant conditions. This raised issues of how the Guild could try and make sure that this and any other conditions were complied with, and also to achieve early delivery of the grant conditions and how to oversee the work as it progressed.. David Salter suggested that a Sub-Committee be formed to discuss this and come back with ideas. This was agreed, and he will convene the Sub-Committee with four members of the Belfry Advisory Committee.

Date and Place of Next Meeting: Friday, 10th October, 2008 at St. Mary at Quay, Ipswich – venue to be confirmed.

The Meeting closed at 9.20p.m.

Winston S. Girling
Chairman.