

SUFFOLK GUILD OF RINGERS – SOUTH WEST DISTRICT

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING HELD AT BURES

23rd November 2024

Present: Pauline Brown (Chairman); Richard Knight (Ringing Master); Christine Knight (Secretary); Katharine Salter (Guild Ringing Master); Neal Dodge (Guild PRO)

Members from: Bures, Cavendish, Clare, Kersey, Little Cornard, Poslingford and St Gregory, Sudbury.

We also welcomed visitors from: Bury St Edmunds, Great Barton and Troston.

Total attendance: 20

Thanks

The Chairman thanked Sylvia Gasper for taking the service, Sue Emerson, the organist, and David and Lynda Lee for making all the local arrangements.

Apologies for Absence

These were received from: Alan Baker, Kate Banks, Desmond Crone, Rodney Downer, Jenny and Ray Filby, Tim Forsey, Sue Freeman, Nigel and Astrid Gale, John Game, Richard Gates, Alan Moulton and David Wedgwood.

Tributes and Silence for Departed Members

Christine Knight read out a tribute she had written to Evelyn Reeve. Evelyn was a loyal member of Bures tower for over 70 years. She was also a very efficient District Secretary in the late '60's and early '70's. We were delighted that Evelyn's daughter, Claire Free of Troston, was in attendance. Christine also read out Nigel Gale's tribute to Alastair McArthur, a member of Woolpit tower, who died suddenly and unexpectedly in the prime of his life.

Approval of Minutes of last Meeting

Acceptance **proposed:** David Lee, **seconded:** Richard Knight.

Matters arising from the Minutes

(Background) Christine Knight arranged a meeting with Alli Burke, Administrator of the Sudbury Arts Centre for 10th February 2024. Topics discussed included access to ringing all 10 bells, the remedial works required in the ringing chamber, taster sessions on the front six rung from the mezzanine level and issues with the sound control. The possibility of complaints arising unexpectedly (even with good PR) was highlighted. The meeting was attended by Pauline Brown, Richard Knight, Christine Knight, Derek Rose (tower captain), Gerald Bird, David Lee, Peter Upson and Neal Dodge (Guild PRO). After the meeting, participants had a ring on the mezzanine level, prior to observing a lunchtime taster session for the general public.

Ringing at The Arts Centre was discussed again. Gerald Bird provided an update on insurance, CCCT paperwork, and a proposal for an overlaid floor in the ringing chamber, with costings to be

approved by The Friends of St Peter's and the CCCT. There was some concern that the floor might impede sound on the mezzanine level, but a grille could be installed in the trapdoor.

Richard Knight stressed the importance of access to ringing all 10 bells. Katharine Salter felt that any peal attempts on the 10 should not be restricted to a particular time of year. The issue of the need for effective sound control was discussed again and Richard Knight stated that a simulator would be very useful. Gerald Bird reported that the regular taster sessions on the front six at mezzanine level had led to the recruitment of 4 or 5 ringers.

Election of New Members

None.

Ratification of Belfry Elections

The following were ratified en bloc, **proposed**, Richard Knight and **seconded**, Christine Knight: Tom Hancock (Cowlinge); Gary Edwards (Kersey); P Sayer (Monks Eleigh) and Sarah Franklin (Stradishall).

District Officers' Reports

Ringling Master/Chairman

During 2024, practices were held at venues right across the district. We visited Lavenham, Polstead, Kersey, St Gregory's, Sudbury, Edwardstone, Bildeston and Great Thurlow. All these practices were very well attended. In addition, the SW District Striking Competition took place at Polstead in June, and in October, a very enjoyable outing to five towers in the Aldeburgh area attracted 29 people. At every event during the year, new members have been elected to the Guild. The superb total of 25 is a testament to the dedicated teaching effort taking place across the district. It is particularly pleasing to recruit young members. During the year, four junior members from Long Melford and one from Lavenham were elected. Many will remember seeing them all ringing together at the Polstead practice in February.

In May, we assembled a band to represent the SW District in the Guild Eight Bell Striking Competition at Felixstowe. The band was placed fifth, a creditable performance, with several unable to take part due to holidays and other commitments. Our own District Striking Competition took place on 22nd June at Polstead and was judged by Maurice Rose and Neal Dodge from the NW District. It was a huge success, attracting eight teams in all, with Little Cornard C emerging as worthy winners. This year, there were no entrants in the method ringing category, a good target for next year.

August was SW District Quarter Peal Month. The aims of providing opportunities for 'firsts' of various kinds as well as encouraging wider participation in quarters were achieved. In all, eleven quarters were rung, and congratulations go to Robyn Slater and Duncan Riches for ringing their first quarter peals. Also, Eleanor Waller achieved her 'first inside' and Jill Apter her 'first of Treble Bob'. Thanks go to the experienced ringers who helped to make up the bands, and in particular, to Alan Mayle for conducting eight times.

It has been a year of considerable progress, which would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of members, for which the officers are very grateful.

Treasurer

The Secretary read out Nigel Gale's report in his absence to accompany the 2024 Accounts and Membership summary, which had been circulated.

'It is great to see a significant increase in membership of the Suffolk Guild in the SW District in 2024, an increase of around 20% compared with 2023. Ringing is clearly thriving in such towers as Little Cornard and Long Melford, both of which have 16 Guild members! It is also pleasing to see more younger members (those in Full-Time Education), particularly at the latter tower, and it has been splendid to see their enthusiasm at the meetings that they have been able to attend. The increased membership is also reflected in the larger attendances at the monthly meetings, which has seen a corresponding increase in the tower donations. Some members may not be aware that the donations collected at each meeting are always split 50:50 between the local tower and District funds and at the end of each calendar year we pay any cash we are holding over £100 into the Guild funds. Half of every member's annual subscription is paid into the Bell Restoration Fund.

Thank you to everyone for your continuing support of the Suffolk Guild in 2024.'

Election of District Officers

The current post-holders, Pauline Brown (Chairman), Richard Knight (Ringing Master), Christine Knight (Secretary) and Nigel Gale (Treasurer) were willing to stand. They were re-elected en bloc, **proposed**, Tony Baker and **seconded**, Neville Whittell.

District Representatives on the GMC

Alan Moulton had indicated that he wished to step down. Richard Knight and Pauline Brown agreed to continue.

Eleanor Waller was elected to replace Alan Moulton, **proposed**, Richard Knight and **seconded**, Gerald Bird.

Recruitment and Training Committee Representatives

Richard Knight and Pauline Brown agreed to continue. Re-election **proposed**, Sheila Baker and **seconded**, Halcyon Mandelstam.

Deanery Contacts

Christine Knight (Clare); Richard Gates (Hadleigh); Martin Weaver (Lavenham) and Jill Apter (Sudbury) were re-elected en bloc, **proposed**, Christopher Moore and **seconded**, Eleanor Waller.

Proposed District Ringing Programme for 2024

A provisional programme was circulated and introduced by the Secretary. All details subject to confirmation.

Any Other Business

Neal Dodge had a stock of 'Learning to Ring' promotional leaflets, which were available for members to collect.

The meeting requested that the Secretary send best wishes to Kate Banks, who is currently unwell.

Guild Ringing Master, Katharine Salter, spoke about the vacancies at Guild level for a Peal Secretary and Report Editor. Members were asked to contact her for more information if interested.

Date of next year's ADM: Saturday 22nd November 2025.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.24pm.