



HEREFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF BELLRINGERS
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2025 and Special General Meeting
Held at St Mary's Church Ross-on-Wye
Saturday 10th May 2025 at 14:25

78 members present

1. Welcome & Prayers

The meeting was immediately preceded by a café -style church service during which Rev. Nicky Seabright asked for a blessing on our meeting, and we remembered members who had died since our last meeting:

Reg Maund, Clun	Vic Chamberlain, Stoke Prior
David Waring, Bishops Frome	Chris Kippin, Cleobury Mortimer
Fred Jones, retired member Condover	Norman Mattingley, Freeman, Hereford District
Clive Daw, retired member Mathon	Greg Harris, Bosbury
Mike Jefferis, Holmer	Ena Plant, Broseley
Bob Leeson, retired member Llangarron	Jerry Cummins, retired member Whitbourne
Gerald Hodnett, Honorary Life Member Much Wenlock	Cherry Hughes, Bridgnorth
John Powter, retired member Clun	Andrew Barnfield, retired member Kings Cople

The Master then welcomed all to the meeting and was pleased that so many members were present. The Master reminded those present that full details of the matters to be discussed during the meeting had been distributed well in advance of the meeting via the District Secretaries, and on the Guild website, but paper copies of the information were also available for those that needed it.

2. Apologies

We had received apologies from 48 members:

Neil Pirie; Alan Reade; Chris Jones; Margaret Oakley; Yvonne Prestidge; Andria Lewis; Abi Pugh; Rob Prestidge; Nick Cooper-Tomkins; Ian Johnson; Ginette Pardoe; Martin Elcock; Jan Greatrex; Tony Greatrex; Cathy Fuller; Linda Taylor; Sarah Parkinson; Andrew Talbot-Ponsonby; Rick Shallcross; Sue Rees; Sue Hack; Ian Thornewell; Margaid Nickalls; Sylvia Bland; Neil Bragg; John Macleod; Mike Williams; Ian Tait; Gill Tait; Jenny Lawrence; Catriona Lambeth; Tina Reddick; Mark Pugh; Rhiannon Pugh; Brian R Jones; Clare McFarlane; Jane Mason; Mary Organ; Ken Hollett; Rev. Mandy Welch; Andrew Burdett; Liz Donovan; Robert Hodges; Richard Bracher; Debbie Bramley; Anthony Ellis; Peter Hallowell and Ashley Fortey.

3. Minutes of the previous AGM

The adoption of the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting was proposed by Andrew Watkins, seconded by Colin Ward, and accepted by the meeting as a true record. The minutes were signed by the Master.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the 2024 minutes.

5. Correspondence

The Secretary told the meeting that we had been contacted by the Central Council as they are creating a new national recruitment portal and need us to provide names and contact details of those willing to be contacted to



teach and positively welcome new recruits at an appropriate tower. As the deadline to provide initial contact details was 16th May, we will initially provide Guild and District officers detail, but we would like to hear from any towers willing to teach and recruit.

6. Long Service Awards

The Master read the list of, and congratulated, the following members who had achieved long service awards:

25 years of Service:

Neil Bragg, Coalbrookdale	Dorothy Chamberlain, Stoke Prior
Rachel Coates, Tarrington	Stuart Edinborough, Burghill
Martin Elcock, Claverley	Jan Greatrex, Ludlow
Tony Greatrex, Ludlow	Rachel Hamer, Welshpool
Peter L Johnston, Clungunford	Heather Kennard, Wellington
Margaret Oakley, Ludlow	Susan Rees, Stoke St Milborough
Cherelyn Sell, Ludlow	Martin Speight, Diddlebury
Deborah M Talbott, Ross-on-Wye	Cecilia Walters, Eastnor
Ray Wilson, Cleobury Mortimer	

50 years of Service:

Brian R Jones of Leominster.

Each recipient of an award had been contacted by email and invited to attend the AGM, some had sent their apologies, but the Master invited those members who were present to come to the front for a presentation of the certificates immediately after the end of the meeting.

As Brian Jones had achieved 50 years membership he was entitled to be elected a Life Member, this was proposed by Sarah Chedzoy and seconded by Andrew Watkins, all present were in favour.

All recipients were congratulated by a round of applause.

7. Election of New Members

We had received nominations for the following new members –

Peter Clark and Tina Reddick from Goodrich, proposed by Sally Townsend and

Kirsty Davis, Jackie Hill, Meghan Hughes, Ricky Hughes, Antony Newton, Jamie Newton (junior member), Laura Warren and Will Whittaker-Brown all proposed by Reg Preece via Pat Key (District Secretary).

Kris Perruzza seconded both sets of new members, and all were in favour of electing the new members.

8. Officers Reports

The officers' reports had been distributed prior to the meeting (appendix B), however it was necessary to formally adopt the accounts. Nick Cronin proposed, and Jason Walker seconded that the accounts and reports be adopted, and the motion was carried.

9. Election of Guild Freeman

There were currently two vacancies for Freeman of the Guild and two nominations had been received by the Management Committee. Written proposals had been distributed prior to the meeting (appendix C), but the Master invited both proposers to speak in support of their nominations. Andy Wilson spoke regarding his proposal of Paul Lewis, and Andrew Watkins spoke in support of his proposal of Ann Bennett.

Paul and Ann both indicated that they were willing to accept their nominations as Freeman. The meeting was in favour of the nominations and Paul and Ann were welcomed and congratulated on their appointment as Freeman of the Guild.

10. Election of Executive Officers

A table showing all nominations for Guild posts received by the Management Committee had been distributed prior to the meeting (appendix D):

Executive Officer roles:

Secretary – Fran Watkins

Treasurer – Mark Aston

Peal Recorder – Andrew Watkins

Report Secretary – Neil Bragg

Education Officer – Kris Perruzza

Barney Bell proposed the nominations en bloc, Tyler Edwards seconded, and the meeting was in favour.

11. Election of Non-Executive Officers

A table showing all nominations for Guild posts received by the Management Committee had been distributed prior to the meeting:

Non-Executive Officer roles:

Master Elect – Kris Perruzza

Public Engagement Officer – Nicky Aubrey

Belfries Officer – Ashley Fortey

Tower Stewardship Advisor – Alan Reade

Webmaster – Nick Chapman

Barbara Fox proposed the nominations en bloc, Nick Cronin seconded, with all in favour.

12. Election of Clerical Representatives

A table showing all nominations for Guild posts received by the Management Committee had been distributed prior to the meeting:

Clerical Representatives – Anthony Ellis, Barney Bell & Nicky Seabright

All were proposed by Kris Perruzza and seconded by Nick Cronin – all in favour.

13. Election of Central Council Representatives

A table showing all nominations for Guild posts received by the Management Committee had been distributed prior to the meeting, however since the list had been sent out one of our current reps, Abi Pugh, had indicated that she no longer wished to stand.

The Master asked whether any person was willing to stand as a Central Council Rep, and Andrew Watkins indicated that he was willing. The other nominees previously notified to the membership were

Anthony Ellis, Tyler Edwards and Kris Perruzza.



Martin Harrison proposed, and Ann Bennett seconded that Anthony Ellis, Tyler Edwards, Kris Perruzza and Andrew Watkins be elected, the meeting was all in favour.

14. Appointment of a Safeguarding Lead.

The membership had recently been notified that, following changes to the Church of England's safeguarding framework, the Guild has appointed a safeguarding lead. The Master said that we were very lucky to have a member who has relevant external experience of such a role and also has qualifications and personal attributes to make him an ideal candidate, and she welcomed Jason Walker and invited him to say a few words.

Jason told the meeting that he had contacted the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Carl Steventon, and they had met to discuss how best we can make members aware of the training the need to undertake. Jason will be putting together information for the membership over the next few months. Jason reminded the meeting that for any individual tower it is each PCC that would be responsible for safeguarding training and matters, but that on a District or Guild level Jason would be the first point of contact. Jason advised the meeting that Carl has given permission for Jason to deliver the foundation course to our members in person, so if there are members who do not use computers, he can arrange to deliver training in person. Carl has also agreed to hold some Leadership training sessions for guild-members only, so they will be putting together some dates when this can be delivered.

Jason will send out information in due course, and said he would be happy to receive any questions that members might have.

15. Approval of nomination for the Independent Examiner.

Ruth D'Avanzo had indicated that she was willing to continue in the role, and the meeting was in favour.

16. Rule Changes

16a Change to Rule 20(b)

Full details of this rule change had been circulated through two management committee meetings, the district AGMs, via the District Secretaries and on the website (appendix E). The proposed revision would change the notice required from 'by 30th September in the preceding year' to 'not less than 90 days prior to the Annual General Meeting'.

Jason Walker proposed, and Adam Crocker seconded that the rule be changed, a vote was taken with a large majority of at least two-thirds of the members present were in favour and none against.

16b

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

The Master explained that as we had 78 members present at the meeting, we were able to hold the Special General Meeting that had been called and advertised via the District Secretaries, the Guild website and newsletter and in the Ringing World (Appendix F). The required quorum for a special general meeting is 50 members.

The current rules had required us to hold a special general meeting to vote on proposals that had been submitted to the management committee meeting from the District AGMs.

Two districts (Ross and Church Stretton) had proposed that online payments of subscriptions be enabled, traditional methods of payment will still be available. Hereford District had proposed that the requirement of payment of one year's arrears for returning lapsed members be scrapped.



Changes to rules 16 (b), 13 (c), 13 (d), 13 (e) and 14 (g) had been drafted in response to these proposals and widely circulated amongst the membership (Appendix F).

Jason Walker proposed, and Nicky Aubrey seconded that all rule changes above be adopted, a vote by a show of hands indicated that at least two-thirds of the members present were in favour.

This vote concluded the Special General Meeting and the AGM resumed.

17. Agree Donation from the Guild to the Bell Restoration Fund

The Master explained that considering the Guild's plans to increase recruitment and celebrate our 140th Anniversary next year, the Management Committee had agreed a reduced donation to the Bell Restoration Fund for 2025. The Treasurer confirmed that the proposed amount would be £400.00. Richard Clements, the BRF Treasurer replied that the Bell Restoration Fund was extremely grateful for the donation and that there was no obligation on the Guild to give any particular sum, as we need to consider our own activities and obligations. The Master reminded the meeting that our members would still be able to contribute to the BRF in many other ways including the 600 Club.

Kris Perruzza proposed, and Adam Crocker seconded that the Guild donates £400.00 to the BRF, this was agreed by a majority show of hands.

18. Awarding of the Centenary Shield

The Master told the meeting that she was privileged to be able to award the Centenary Shield this year to Pencombe tower. Since moving to Bromyard, she had initially heard that Pencombe were quite hard to ring and was also told at one stage they were unringable. However, as Tower Captain of Bromyard, she was approached by a group of people wanting to learn to ring, because they wanted to be able to ring the bells at their village church, and that village was Pencombe. The band has been taught at Bromyard. Since then, Simon Wells with Rachel Lewis, the new tower captain, with others, have sought help and funding and undertaken a lot of work to get the bells ringable again. The Master invited Simon to receive the shield on behalf of Pencombe ringers. Members showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

19. Awarding of the George Cousins Cup

This item did not proceed as the Bell Restoration Fund has yet to hold an AGM for 2025 and so do not have any nominations for the award.

20. Invitation for the 2026 AGM 9th May

Nicky Aubrey, Secretary of the Hereford District, invited the Guild to Hereford District for the 2026 AGM.

21. Any Other Business

Richard Clements spoke to pay tribute to our outgoing Peal Recorder, **Neil Bennett**, and to propose a vote of thanks for his huge contribution to the Guild. Richard told the meeting that he had first met Neil in 1974 and shortly afterwards Neil and Ann had moved to Welshpool. Since joining the Guild Neil has been active in the Church Stretton district and has done a meticulous job as Peal Recorder for many years. Richard told the meeting how he had worked alongside Neil in the Bell Restoration Fund, Neil was in the role of Treasurer until recently. Richard told the meeting that we should not underestimate what an accomplished ringer Neil is, he has rung over 2000 peals and rang in the first extent of major, 40320 changes in 1963. He conducted a notable peal of 105 spliced surprise maximus and closer to home he has led the Church Stretton district to win the Thomas Cooper trophy more than any other district. He asked the meeting to recognise Neil's years of outstanding service and support the vote of thanks. This was met with a round of applause.



The Master read out a message from Nick Cooper-Tomkins who could not attend the meeting but wished to convey his thanks to all those towers who had hosted the **Hereford Ringing Course** this year.

The Master told the meeting that the Guild had entered a team in the **Tewkesbury Shield** this year, and thanked Richard Bracher for organising the team, and all those who took part. We had been placed 7th, and hope to enter a team again next year.

Next year will be our **140th anniversary** and we have ambitions to celebrate, and would love to recruit 140 new members, so we will be planning and encouraging everyone to recruit and teach new ringers.

Kris Perruzza thanked everyone who had attended the meeting and proposed a vote of thanks to our hosts, Ross District & St Mary's Church; to everyone who had contributed to the day whether by stewarding or bringing/running activities; and a massive thanks to the caterers. This was met with a round of applause.

On a personal note Kris said that the day would not have happened without the hard work of Sally Townsend and Greg White, this received another round of applause.

Stuart Edinborough said he would like to speak on behalf of those receiving long-service certificates, he said he had learned to ring twenty-five years ago and had been delighted to find what a friendly, helpful, welcoming and happy group ringers are, and how lucky we are that we will receive the same welcome and enthusiasm from ringers anywhere else in the country. He thanked his fellow ringers for their community.

Kris Perruzza invited all those in the meeting to take part in the activities available after the meeting, there was the wombell, handbell method ringing, handbell tune ringing, an ART stand, a BRF stand, History & archive stand, bookstall, guild merchandise, raffle and further ringing at St Marys.

Frank Seabright spoke to thank the Guild Officers, saying that this year there have been a tremendous number of extra things going on, and he thanked the officers for their work.

The Master declared the meeting closed at 14:59.

Immediately after the meeting the Master presented the long service awards to those present.