

Guild Trustees report:

Trustees are the people responsible for controlling the work, management and administration of the charity on behalf of its beneficiaries.

The trustees report- As trustees, we are required to demonstrate that everything we do is aligned to the aims of our charity. We do this through financial planning and through all the Guild activities held throughout the year. There were many good things to come out of 2025 for our Guild.

Meeting our members -The opportunity to meet our members at the district AGM's and for so many Guild officers to be able to attend them. We received a very warm welcome everywhere and enjoyed a fine selection of the all-important ringer's teas.

Membermojo -The natural feelings of caution when implementing such a major change were swept away by the obvious and numerous advantages to using such a membership tool. However, for the relative few who do not have access to a computer or the internet, or do not wish to engage in using Membermojo, the old routes to membership are still very much available and will remain so. All our members are very important to us.

Rule changes - We have implemented several rule changes which enable guild business to be conducted in far shorter timeframes, and which allow subscriptions to be collected through Membermojo.

Guild AGM -Held in Ross-on-Wye, the event was much enjoyed by a very encouraging turnout of our members. Our hosts and the Guild Officers put a great deal into making that day a success and the model is one we will build on for future AGM's.

Guild Finances - We have asked, and still are encouraging, members to subscribe to Easy Fundraising and give as you live. Anyone who makes purchases on the internet will find both options extremely easy to use, there is no cost to the purchaser and to date a very small number of people have raised over £400 for the guild. Membermojo has facilitated direct subscription payment & notes whether your payment attracts gift aid. We have a backlog of gift aid to claim which should boost our finances significantly.

With Guild finances potentially in a good position the membership has given the guild a mandate to retain more of the funding raised and target it towards recruitment and training, promoting bellringing and ensuring a richer experience for us all. Mark Aston is our Guild treasurer.

Ill health sadly forced the resignation of Neil Bennett as the long serving Guild Peal recorder; he has been very ably replaced by Andrew Watkins, and a review of the Peal fee system is underway.

Recruitment- Throughout the year local and central initiatives have taken place to recruit new ringers. The mini ring event outside Hereford Cathedral received partial funding from the guild and boosted by the beautiful weather and the hard work of all the volunteers, attracted a great deal of interest - it did gain us some new recruits as well! Local events such as tower open days, facebook campaigns etc have yielded results and it is something we intend to give a great deal of focus to. New recruits are going to require committed teachers & this year has seen us start the process of identifying willing teachers and teaching locations. Those preferring to receive some training will be offered subsidised ART courses and those already good to go will be offered workshops to share knowledge.

Education - At the AGM we took the opportunity to elect a new Education Officer (Kris Perruzza). Since his appointment he has worked extensively to promote teaching and coaching around our Guild.

The programme of learner's practices has been extended and been taken around the districts; the programme has also been expanded to include sessions covering triples & major.

A big thank you goes out to the host towers of these sessions, and to the core group of supporters without whom the sessions would not be as successful as they have been. And of course, thanks to those who come along and enjoy them.

It is impossible for a central resource to support every individual's needs. The focus will be on key skills that make a difference in improving the standards of ringing and support fundamental skills such as bell handling, rounds, call changes, plain hunting, 8 bell ringing and leading well as this enables bands to ring confidently for Sunday services and to make progress themselves.

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Safeguarding- The Church of England implemented a new Safeguarding policy which has impacted on the safeguarding training requirements for our members. We have appointed a Safeguarding Lead for the Guild (Jason Walker). We, of course, are dedicated to encouraging everyone to complete all relevant training the Diocese wants for its volunteers, but when it comes to individual towers, this is the responsibility of the PCC and PSO (Parish Safeguarding Officer).

The Church of England would like the following positions to have the following training:

Bellringers – Basic Awareness (online OR face to face)

Tower Captains/Ringing Masters – Basic Awareness, Foundation (online OR face to face) and Domestic Abuse (online only)

Tower Captains/Ringing Masters of Market Towns/Teaching hubs – Leadership Training (face to face only – see diocese safeguarding webpage for dates - <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/parishsupport/safeguarding/safeguarding-training/>)

The Diocese has given Jason permission to lead Basic Awareness and Foundation Courses to our members, so if a band of ringers would like this training face to face, then please get in touch.

The Diocese safeguarding team also has appointed a Safeguarding Trainer. I have been told by the administrator that they will be looking at providing a Saturday Leadership Course for our District/Guild Officers that require it. We recognise that these requirements are causing distress for some of our members however it isn't something to fear.

The courses are largely common sense, informative and enabling. At the end of the day the Church own the bells we all love to ring and we, as volunteers, need to meet their requirements.

Communication -We have taken a deep dive to look at who we communicate with and how we communicate with those groups of people we've identified.

Our guild emails are in the process of being transferred to outlook as the previous provider was causing us delivery issues. The Website has been transferred to an alternative host, early indications are that the speed has been dramatically improved, but we are aware that there is a great deal of work to be done to make the changes the working party has proposed and to get the new site fit for purpose. In the meantime, please continue to send items for publication to Nick Chapman the Guild webmaster.

The Guild has a facebook page administered by Nicky Aubrey (Public Engagement Officer) and again, please post everything of interest so our members can enjoy reading about your activities.

The annual report has been the subject of another working party to look at what we want to achieve with the report and how best to do that. Neil Bragg, the Guild Report Secretary, headed up this project team and we look forward to your reaction to the first edition in its new format.

We have introduced several policies aimed to meet our governance requirements as a charity and to provide some guidance material for our members in several areas. We are conscious these will need regular review, and we intend to draft a "housekeeping" document to formalise the actions that are fundamental to the running of the Guild.

Fran Watkins (Guild Secretary) has the most challenging role of all the trustees and has worked tirelessly, often in the background, organising countless meetings, calls, reaching out to third parties, co drafting policies, administering 'Member Mojo' to name a few things. Fran very definitely deserves a very huge thank you for her efforts to have made 2025 such a success.

On behalf of all the trustees I would like to thank every one of you who has contributed to making 2025 a success for the Guild and we look forward to your continuing support in 2026

Sue Robinson 12.01.2026

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Information from the Guild Secretary

2025 has seen the introduction of membermojo for our membership records. As I write, over 98% of our paid-up members are now registered, thank you to everyone, especially the District Secretaries, who have encouraged and helped almost all our members to register.

A small number of members do not use email, and they can continue to receive information through their tower secretaries and captains as they always have done. The rest of us now have control over our personal information and can update our contact details and preferences whenever necessary.

Ringers are often traditionalists and some members may have felt uncertain about the need for change to the online system, however the world is changing and we must observe the Law, and the requirements of the Church, and Charity Commission, before we can consider our own rules, which (for the most part) were written at a very different time.

As we move forward, I hope that we will be able to make more use of the membermojo system to allow us to improve how we communicate.

New membership.

New members should complete an online application through membermojo at <https://membermojo.co.uk/hdgb/joinus>.

New members must be proposed and elected at a Guild or District meeting where minutes of the election will be recorded

Once an application is received it will be approved by an administrator, the new member will then be able to pay their subscriptions through membermojo or to the district treasurer in the traditional manner.

The election of new members will be verified with the district secretary and noted on the membership record.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to talk about any ideas please do get in touch at guild_secretary@hdgb.org

Webmaster's report

During the last year, the Guild website at hdgb.org and Guild Officers' email services were successfully moved to new service providers. These actions not only give us improvements but also financial savings.

The Guild website contains up to date information about every district and tower in the Guild, together with a lot of other useful information about the Guild, the Bell Restoration Fund and helpful links to other websites.

Please make use of our website and help keep it accurate and up to date for everyone by letting the webmaster know of any changes, corrections, interesting news items and maybe even suggestions for improvements.

Nick Chapman, webmaster@hdgb.org.

Belfry Officers report

2025 was a year where a number of inspections have been carried out, resulting in advice and written reports. The inspections have been at Cradley, King Caple, Mathon, Pencombe and Richards Castle.

I have helped out several times at Kings Caple to tidy the belfry and floors leading to the ring of six. Kings Caple are notorious as being somewhat difficult to ring and this comes from the fact the bells have had sporadic spells of ringing. The bells are a mixture of dates and bell hanging work least not in 1992 when the two tenor bells being rehung by Eayre & Smith. Kris Perruzza and Mike Williams have also helped with the undertaking of cleaning the belfry. Work to improve the 'go' of the bells will take place in 2026 when the weather and light improves.

Richards Castle are in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and Tracy Genever local Community Officer for the organisation contacted me to look at Richards Castle, an inspection has been carried out and some minor work will need to be done to make the bells ringable.

At Cradley, an in-depth inspection will be carried out to work out why the bells are not satisfactory in the round. It comes as though the bells are a new installation the bells do not flow or feel difficult to get accurate striking on them. This means that when most bellringers talk about bells being awkward it a reflection of three variables within

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a ring of bells that causes the difficulties. "Oddstruckness is a combination of where the clapper is centred in the bells, often we say the bell is slow at handstroke and therefore quick at back, but you can get bells that feel slow or quick at both strokes, this is caused by the other two variables. The first of these two variables is the speed in which a bell turns in relation to the position of the bell in the ring. This is called the swing time and if a bell has a slow swing time it needs to effectively be checked in at both strokes to ring in the correct place. The second variable can cause the same affect and that is the clapper throw, it is the speed in which a clapper travels the bell in relation to the swing time. The clapper throw can affect whether a bell easily goes up false or the clapper ends up on the wrong side of the bell when raised. Cradley seems to suffer with some of these problems and possible can be addressed like that of Worcester Cathedral or Tewkesbury Abbey.

I am keen to hear directly from towers with issues however large or small, I have been phoned up about advice like getting clappers repaired as in the case of Woolhope, etc and always here to help. Also, I am happy to run training sessions on belfry maintenance and am currently booked to carry out a session in Bromyard district.

Ashley Fortey

Safeguarding

Since taking on the role of the Safeguarding Lead for the Guild, I have been working alongside the Diocese Safeguarding Team to work out what training is required for whom. As stated in previous write ups, the PCCs are responsible for the ringing and those in tower captain/ringing master roles in their towers. The Guild's responsibility is for those with District and Guild roles. If you are a tower captain or ringing master and have not been approached by a church official such as a Parish Safeguarding Office or your incumbent, in regard to training and DBS checks, please go and speak to them.

The Diocese Safeguarding Team have allowed me to deliver face-to-face training sessions for the 'Basic Awareness' and 'Foundation' courses. Domestic Abuse is still an online only course for the time being.

I have recently started working with Nikki Roberts (the new diocese safeguarding trainer), to put together a more bespoke leadership training programme for bellringers, with the hope that I will be able to deliver this, which will make life a little easier.

On 16th January I delivered the Basic Awareness course at Pencombe, with a number of members from across the guild attending. Everyone was engaged and positive feedback was received from a number of them that attended. If you feel this is something your tower, or district would like for its members then please get in touch.

Remember, the safeguarding courses are not "pass or fail" type courses, they are interactive. They don't expect you to have any safeguarding experience prior to attending and are designed to give you tools to help keep our towers, districts and guild safe and welcoming places for all. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Central Council Report, Sheffield 2025

In September 2025 the Central Council met at Sheffield where all four of the representatives of the HDG were present. The day begins with the Annual meeting of the Ringing World. In the absence of the Chairman of the Ringing World Committee Elva Ainsworth led the meeting. We learnt that the Ringing World's income and expenditure were down on the previous year's figures. The paper subscriptions for the publication continue to decline but there has been a modest rise in the number of people who have taken out a digital subscription. The main sources of income remains the subscriptions but a very significant sum is the donations made by those who ring quarter peals and some peals. It was suggested that if every tower took out a subscription the Ringing World's financial position would be strengthened. This raises the question yet again about the future of the Ringing World as a paper version in a world where younger people are no longer finding their news reading newspapers as former generations have done. We heard again the suggestion that the Ringing Worlds could become a monthly publication. 'Bellboard', which is part of the Ringing World, continues to offer a very important resource for ringers but does need an upgrade so that it remains useful for ringers and to provide protection from AI bots.

We were reminded that the Ringing World organises the annual Young Ringers event which has been a great success. So far, the HDG has not taken part in this event and it would seem that our young ringers are missing out on a very significant experience. The meeting expressed its thanks to Will Bosworth and his team who make the Ringing

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World the useful asset that it is.



The Central Council Meeting was better managed this year. Tina Stoecklin was chairing the meeting for the second time and because all the reports of the working groups were circulated before the meeting much time was saved. After attending four Central Council meetings in person and one online version I have come to realise that most of the decision making has already taken place.

The Executive of the Council works out beforehand what has to be achieved at a Council meeting and then formulates a way to implement the policy. It is what any large organisation has to do and those who attend the Council generally approve what the Executive is proposing. In many ways the annual meeting of the Council is little more than rubber stamping the work of the Council's executive committee. However, having said that the Council is worthwhile because there are working groups who are advancing the cause of ringing throughout the year and their work is invaluable.

The most significant work of the Council I believe is the Ringing 2030 strategy plan, which has three pillars, the first being Marketing, the second Recruitment and Development and the third Environment.

I would urge you to go on to the Council Website and see how these pillars can be of help to you and your band.

One issue that was only alluded to at the meeting was the idea that the work for the Ringing 2030 strategy plan required the payment of someone to do the work. In the budget for 2026 published since the meeting the sum of £11,000 has been allocated for this. I believe this is a major departure for the Council and should have been debated at the 2025 meeting. The money for this work will come, I believe from the affiliation fees paid by the Guilds and Associations. I would like to know whether this is just a temporary period when the Council employ someone to perform these tasks or if this to be a permanent practice. If it is there will be more demands placed on those who pay affiliation fees. This situation needs to be monitored.

The Sheffield meeting's main business was a review of Governance which came out of the failure the previous year to deal with affiliation fees for small ringing societies and University societies. The result is that small societies will not have to contribute for each member but be able to pay an annual sum to retain their membership of the Council.

The meeting in 2026 will take place in Rugby and there will be ringing activities in that are over the first weekend in September. These activities give ringers an opportunity to meet and share experiences and will recommend members of our Guild to make the relatively short journey to take part in those activities.

Treasurer's report:

2025 has been a strong year financially, with the Guild achieving a surplus of £3,400. This improvement has come from a 12% increase in membership subscriptions across all districts, along with reduced expenditure. As a result, we now hold reserves equivalent to two years of operating costs, placing us in an excellent position as we enter the Guild's 140th anniversary year, which includes a full programme of events—many requiring advance financial commitment.

The introduction of MemberMojo last year has also made a significant difference. Going into 2026, we can now collect subscriptions directly from members, simplifying renewals for members as well as tower captains, district treasurers, and the Guild Secretary. It has also streamlined preparation of our Gift Aid return, for which we are awaiting an HMRC payment of approximately £1,000.

Our strengthened financial position means I can say something you don't often hear from a treasurer: we have money to spend. If districts have initiatives—particularly around recruitment or activities aligned with our charitable objectives—please contact the Guild Management Trustees to discuss potential support.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has assisted me throughout the year. A special thank you also goes to our Independent Examiner for reviewing the accounts, ensuring accuracy, and providing invaluable oversight.

Mark Aston