

Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held at St Marys Church Kingsland on Saturday 10th October 2026 2:30 PM

Those present:

<i>Guild Master</i>	Sue Robinson	<i>Clerical Rep</i>	Rev Barney Bell
<i>Guild Secretary/CC Rep</i>	Fran Watkins	<i>Ledbury Sec</i>	Judith Faux
<i>Guild Treasurer</i>	Mark Aston	<i>Ledbury Rep</i>	Chris Roberts
<i>Peal Recorder/CC Rep</i>	Andrew Watkins	<i>Church Stretton Sec</i>	Neil Pirie
<i>Tower Stewardship Advisor</i>	Alan Reade	<i>Clifford & Kington Sec</i>	Pat Key
<i>Clerical Rep/CC Rep</i>	Anthony Ellis	<i>Clifford & Kington Rep</i>	Tim Hollinghurst
<i>Webmaster</i>	Nick Chapman	<i>Hereford Sec</i>	Bruce Talmage
<i>Bridgnorth Rep</i>	Richard Rogers		

Apologies were received from

<i>Report Secretary</i>	Neil Bragg	<i>Hereford Rep/Safeguarding</i>	Jason Walker
<i>Vice President</i>	Val Roberts	<i>Ross District Sec.</i>	Greg White
<i>Master Elect</i>	Mark Gilham	<i>Leominster Sec.</i>	Abigail Pugh
<i>Public Eng. Officer</i>	Nicky Aubrey	<i>Events Team Rep</i>	Richard Bracher
<i>Clerical Rep.</i>	Rev Nicky Seabright	<i>Church Stretton Rep.</i>	Anne Hone
<i>Bromyard Sec.</i>	Clare Bellis	<i>Clerical Rep.</i>	Sheila Anthony
<i>Bromyard Rep.</i>	Nick Cronin		

Not in attendance, no apologies received:

<i>Belfries Officer</i>	Ashley Fortey	<i>Ross Rep.</i>	Sally Townsend
<i>Bridgnorth Sec.</i>	Darren Swancott	<i>CC Rep</i>	Tyler Edwards
<i>Leominster Rep.</i>	Alice Pugh		

1. Opening prayers:

The Guild Master welcomed everyone to the meeting, then opening prayers were led by Rev. Anthony Ellis remembering those who have died since our last meeting in March 2026: John Hope (Almeley), Emily English (Almeley), David Lovelace (Norton Canon), Mike Reynolds (Presteigne), David Manton (Welshpool) and Edward Windsor (Chirbury).

2. Apologies for absence were formally received from those members indicated above

3. Minutes of the October meeting had been distributed before the meeting, there were no questions and Chris Roberts proposed, Andrew Watkins seconded, that they be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. Matters arising:

Several matters arising from the minutes were discussed –

a) Feedback from the Districts re recruitment events and opportunities

Church Stretton. Neil told the meeting about the very successful **RingFest** that had been organised by the Church Stretton district. Bishops Castle was an ideal location with a ground floor ring and accessible churchyard it is a small town with sufficient numbers of the public passing the church. The day included ringing on tower bells; the peals on wheels mini ring; and a group of experienced handbell ringers using the

Guild handbells. A team of steward volunteers meant that ringers and non-ringers alike were able to try all three types of ringing. The district invested in publicity materials, these were delivered to all towers in the Church Stretton district and more widely throughout the guild and on social media. They contacted BBC local radio and other media outlets. The church itself had been very involved and supplied refreshments throughout the day. A register of attendance was kept, there were at least 250 attendees throughout the day, 75 of whom were ringers. A separate list was kept for those who had expressed an interest in learning to ring, Neil is following up on these. It is hoped that a similar event can take place again next year in another suitable venue.

Ledbury. Judith told the meeting that the Ledbury district had been developing a social media presence to try to attract new recruits. They have tried Tiktok and Facebook. Tiktok had limited impact but Facebook has been very successful. The new Facebook group is called **Ringling West of the Malverns** this name was chosen so as not to make the group focused only on Ledbury but to include the wider surrounding area. They have been posting twice weekly with over 200,000 views over a three month period. They have 930 followers. The age breakdown shows that 46% of followers are over 65 and 19% are below 45 years, with 4 distinct groups of people who follow the group: Ledbury District's own ringers; the local population; ringers from elsewhere; and a group that doesn't seem to have any particular allegiance. The initial posts had been followed up with four open days. Whilst several people had expressed interest, currently they have two new recruits who appear to be very keen. Judith said that it appears to be wise to manage expectation, and that the district is very aware that they need to focus as much on retention as recruitment and they feel that good teaching is essential. The district has been working hard to ensure that new recruits have a good experience with initial intensive teaching sessions and all towers should be a supportive and welcoming environment, particularly when integrating learners into the main practice.

Judith said that the District would welcome the Guild developing ways to enable members to share experiences and good practice.

Bridgnorth. Richard told the meeting that Much Wenlock had held two **open tower days**. The ringers make the most of the Christmas fair and Heritage Open Day events that also involve the wider church. These events have resulted in some recruits and now are all ringing with the band on a Sunday morning. Richard makes use of 'Tower Open' boards when he is in the tower and frequently gets visitors keen to know more. Richard did worry about the lack of depth of experienced ringers to teach new recruits. Richard asked whether there was any support for young ringers within the Guild, and whether the Guild could consider a role such as a Youth Development Officer and a Teaching Support Group.

Bromyard. Sue told the meeting that the recent tower open day which had begun at Whitbourne has led to interest from Whitbourne church in recruiting and starting a new band. Both Sue and Fran have been in contact with the churchwardens in the initial phase and the church will be advertising for recruits in its parish magazine. Sue will liaise with Whitbourne to progress this.

There was no feedback from Clifford & Kington, Hereford, Leominster or Ross Districts.

Sue suggested that if Districts need support at a particular stage they should approach the Guild. There was discussion about the care and planning that would be required to create a young ringers' group, and though there would need to be careful planning, all agreed that it would be very worthwhile.

Judith requested that the Guild helps to get those who are interested in teaching together, to share good practice and ideas, whether ART or not. Ongoing support, and discussion platforms could be very helpful.

Bruce asked whether there was capacity to teach at every tower. This is not the case. Sue said that several of the districts are developing teaching hubs, and the mutual support is very important.

b) Feedback on numbers of uncollected annual reports

Clifford & Kington had distributed all the reports, Church Stretton had 5 left over, Hereford had approximately 20, Bromyard still has copies left. Andrew told the meeting that he had tried contacting Ross District several times to get the reports to them, there was no reply, until he was able to pass them on to the district Ringing Master at the Guild Dinner.

There was no feedback from Bridgnorth, Leominster, or Ross Districts.

c) **Review of rules/roles** – the survey of members had been sent out, and the results have been published to all members, Ledbury District has sent a response which was sent to all Management Committee members, to be discussed later in the meeting.

d) **Accounts** – the accounts had been finalised and were adopted at the AGM.

5. Correspondence

a) PCC and tower funds

The secretary had been approached by Llangarron tower captain as a new PCC Treasurer had wanted to take monies from the restricted tower fund into the general church fund. Fran referred the matter to Alan Reade (Tower Stewardship Advisor) and suggested that Steve Coleman might be able to offer advice on the matter. Alan and Steve had both been very willing to support and advise the tower captain during the dispute, and Alan had submitted a summary to the meeting (see **appendix 1**). Alan recommended that all ringers read Steve's series of articles which had appeared in The Ringing World. Alan would be able to send these to any ringer who contacted him. Alan urged all to think of the financial arrangements at their own towers, and the importance of **restricted funds**. It was agreed that this should be discussed at tower AGMs.

b) St Nicholas

The purchasers of St Nicholas are to be a free church, and the CofE has indicated that they will be writing a clause into the sale contract to ensure that ringing can continue. Fran had written to Sarah Mellor, Closed Churches Case Officer for an update but none had been received prior to the meeting.

c) Report on the meeting with the Bell Restoration Fund.

Sue gave a report of the meeting between three Trustees each from the Bell Restoration Fund and the Guild. She reiterated that the BRF is an independent charity that has its own aims, its own rules and its own Trustees. The BRF membership is made-up of our members and local PCC representatives. Its funds are raised from the PCCs who pay an affiliation fee, the 600 club which many Guild members support, donations including bequests and fundraising activities. Traditionally the Guild has transferred any excess income as a donation to the BRF. However we are all very aware that more recently the Guild opted to retain and use surplus monies in order to fund and invest in recruitment, education and our own charitable aims.

Sue took the opportunity to quell any rumours that there was any kind of rift between the two charities. On the part of the Guild Trustees, we have approached the BRF to better understand the criteria that they apply to grant applications as we plan to introduce our own tower fund which is intended to be very different to bell restoration projects & funding. We intend for the Guild fund to butt up against any provision that the BRF might be prepared to offer to towers, so that is why we requested a level of transparency from the BRF about the criteria they apply to grants. We did not receive a clear written criteria or full understanding about the way they make decisions.

After writing to the BRF with the AGM's request for a meeting, we were offered the opportunity to attend a meeting with three of their trustees and three of ours (those present Rick Shallcross, Ginette Pardoe, Richard Clements from the BRF and Sue Robinson, Fran Watkins and Mark Aston from the HDGB). Sue felt that we made some progress during the meeting, the relationship and open level of discussion was good. The BRF pathway is a little bit clearer to us, they have made a commitment to reaffirming their aims and activities in writing so we all better understand their way of working and to help us celebrate their achievements. We suggested they do this so all of our members can understand the aims of each respective charity, and where we share things in common.

We have also requested that they tell us the date of their AGM, and we agreed to publicise this so hopefully more of our membership will attend and take the opportunity to participate, vote for their trustees and to influence the projects that get grants.

Overall, we felt the meeting was positive and we need to carry on building that relationship. Fran said that during the meeting we tried to put across the viewpoints that we'd heard from our members at our AGM – our members want to support the BRF but would like a clearer understanding of exactly what it does and what they will give grants for.

d) Ledbury District Response to the Survey of Members (see appendix 2)

We had discussed a working group at the last Management Committee Meeting to discuss our rules, roles and tenure, and Ledbury District had sent a formal response to the survey with their thoughts on the current and possible future set-up of the Guild. No other District has submitted a response. Judith spoke to give some background about the response, they felt that in some ways, the current structure gets in the way of moving the Guild forward. There are many ex-Guild leaders in the Ledbury District, and they have put the response forward as starting place to help move the debate on. Sue asked whether anyone present at the meeting would like to volunteer to take part in the working group who could approach the work with a blank page. Chris Roberts suggested that this be opened up to the wider Guild members who may have relevant experience, or be able to present the viewpoint of those who do not currently get involved with the Guild. Bruce asked whether the Central Council might have a template or exemplar of what a good structure is. The Secretary will write to all members, from the meeting Judith indicated her willingness to take part.

6. Officers' reports (Appendix 3)

The Officer's Reports received had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were no questions about the reports other than a clarification regarding the CC report and The Ringing World funding, and a brief discussion about contingency planning. Anthony felt that his concerns about the CCCBR employing people were shared by other ringers and associations.

7. Tower Support Fund (Appendix 4)

Details of the proposed pilot of a Tower Support Fund had been distributed prior to the meeting. There were no questions from the floor about the outlined structure. Judith suggested that by running a trial period, it will become clear whether the initial scheme will work in practice. Mark said that we very much wanted to have a scheme where the process and criteria were transparent, and that the scheme should be used as a distress fund more than a first point of funding for towers that might hold sufficient funds anyway. Alan said we should recognise the importance of Tower Captains. Bruce Talmage proposed, and Judith Faux seconded that we launch the pilot to members, all were in favour. Andrew asked about future fundraising specifically for the Tower Support Fund, Judith suggested that whilst the fund was still in a pilot it might be wise not to do any designated fundraising, rather put any fundraising into the general

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fund, which can then be allocated as required. Sue asked that the information be widely spread around the membership.

The pilot fund will be launched to members in the next newsletter, with an interim review at the next MCM.

8. Guild Insurance

The renewal premium from Ecclesiastical for 2026/7 was £319.42 (which includes £89.89 for All Risks cover on the Wombel). All were in favour of renewing the policy. All Districts should be encouraged to consider making use of the Wombel

9. Safeguarding & Safer Recruitment

Sue reminded the meeting of the safer recruitment requirements for volunteers, safeguarding and Trustees responsibilities. Each District should carefully consider their nominations for the roles for 2027. The importance of developing more substantial and useful role descriptions was discussed.

10. Forthcoming District AGMs

The following dates have been received:

Bridgnorth – 6th February

Bromyard –

Church Stretton – 16th January at Leintwardine

Clifford & Kington – 5th December at Presteigne

Hereford – 30th January Ewyas Harold

Ledbury – 6th February

Leominster –

Ross –

11. Any Other Business

Sue asked all present to feedback about the Management Committee Meeting to the District members and to make sure that they are aware of any decisions and salient points.

Sue asked whether there was support for another subsidised ART course. After discussion it was agreed that it could be Module and/or Module 2 and we should approach members again. Chris asked whether membermojo records who is and is not ART approved, currently members have the option to record this on a voluntary basis.

Anthony spoke about the CCCBR census and appealed for volunteers to act as enumerators. Information about the enumerator role is available on the CCCBR website.

Judith said that at the Ledbury District meeting it was the wish of the members to pass on their appreciation and thanks for the things the Guild is continuing to do for them.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 13th March 2027.

The meeting closed at 16:25pm

APPENDIX 1

Management Committee Meeting 10 October 2026

Agenda item 5a PCCs and tower funds

Context

Dispute between tower captain and PCC treasurer at HDGB church

Summary of issue

The church treasurer insisted, as a matter of principle, that the bellringers' funds be merged into the PCC accounts

Discussion

With the assistance of Steve Coleman, a review of alternative arrangements for the collection, administration and investment of tower funds was made, referring to several articles by Steve Coleman that had been published in the Ringing World

Conclusion

There was no one-size-fits-all solution, the arrangement at each individual church being dependent on the personalities and competence in financial matters of the individual people concerned, but several basic issues and rules to maximise the investment potential and to protect the bellringers' funds from misappropriation by either the bellringers or PCC emerged.

1. Accurate and up-to-date financial records are necessary
2. Opening bank or building society accounts is difficult
3. There are distinct advantages for bellringers' funds to be placed in a restricted fund in the PCC accounts
4. The storage of small amounts of cash in a petty cash account can reduce administration but the cash box should be clearly identified and stored under lock and key by a nominated member of the band
5. Steve Coleman's RW articles are available (from me) to read and advice will be provided to tower captains free of charge by Steve on request

Alan Reade, HDGB Tower Stewardship Advisor

October 2026

APPENDIX 2

Ledbury District Response to the Guild Survey

Introduction

This paper sets out a view from the Ledbury District in response to the Guild initiative to review its purpose, structure, and the way it can support ringers across the Diocese. It is put forward for consideration as a contribution to the debate.

It includes details of what the District is looking for in terms of support from the Guild and puts forward proposals for changes to the way in which the Guild operates to enable this.

It considers the views of those of our members who responded to the recent Guild survey and is further informed by members with experience of interacting with the Guild, who hold Guild positions, and have had Guild leadership roles in the past.

It has been circulated to all members for comment and as adopted at the District's Mid-year Meeting on 26th September, 2026 to which all members were invited.

Critical Issues

There are 3 critical issues which all need addressing now

1. Recruitment and retention
2. Improved teaching
3. Restructuring to allow the Guild to operate effectively

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention are vital issues. All towers and Districts need encouragement and support to increase the size of their bands. We as a district are recruiting, but not as successfully as we would like.

We would welcome a Guild initiative to facilitate exchange of ideas, examples of what has worked and what hasn't etc.

Improved Teaching

This includes the initial teaching of handling, maintaining the quality of handling and encompasses all stages of change ringing. Much could be done to improve this.

The quality of teaching makes a large difference to retention. We believe our teaching is generally good, with the proviso that there is always room for improvement, and that our retention rate is, therefore, generally good.

It is also vital that more competent ringers are encouraged and supported to become teachers so that ringing can be sustained in the longer term.

We would welcome a Guild initiative to facilitate sharing of good practice, and the establishment of a support network for existing and new teachers.

Restructuring to allow the Guild to operate effectively

The Guild's current objectives, rules and management structures are no longer fit for purpose and change is urgently required to enable the Guild to respond to current issues in a timely and effective manner. Particular concerns include the fact that exactly the same body of people are both Guild Officers and Trustees, which is inappropriate, and that the Management Committee can overrule the Trustees, who have responsibility for ensuring the Guild complies with its legal obligations.

We very much support the Guild's initiative to review its purpose, structure, and the way it can support ringers across the Diocese and set out some detailed proposals below.

We believe these proposals support good management on a day to day basis, timely and effective decision making, and facilitate consultation and support from members.

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Restructuring Proposals



Purposes/Charitable Objects

The current charitable objectives are outdated and don't align to our views of a viable Guild relevant to today's needs. For example, there is no reference to recruitment and retention. The objectives should be reviewed. They should continue to demonstrate public benefit as that is important to retain the charitable status of the Guild.

Objectives should be:

1) To promote, support, and sustain the ringing of bells for the benefit of the community, particularly but not exclusively, to call people to worship, to celebrate local and national events, and in times of sorrow and remembrance.

2) To ensure every ringer, ringing leader and district and guild official plays their part in creating a safe, welcoming environment for all.

3) To facilitate:

- The recruitment of ringers and the retention of existing members
- The provision of high-quality training and education
- The achievement of a high standard of ringing
- The maintenance, care and, where appropriate, enhancement of bells in the diocese
- Recognition of ringing as part of our Intangible Cultural Heritage and as a service for the benefit of Church and the broader community
- Communication and collaboration with the Church and other relevant organisations
- Community Engagement e.g. to appreciate, value, support ringing, and facilitate participation from ringers and non-ringers
- Promulgate best practice within the ringing community regarding their interactions with other ringers and when representing ringing at large.

Districts

Some sort of District arrangement is essential. The Guild can't possibly do everything for everybody. We do need to help ourselves. We believe it is important for every tower to be part of a local or District organisation otherwise they are unlikely to be able to obtain additional support, guidance, and adopt best practice to sustain local ringing.

The current arrangements and the administrative structure we have in place in Ledbury are reasonably effective if a little fragile (hence the content of our Longer Term Proposals described below). There is neither appetite nor resource to participate in another review of the District system at Guild level.

Guild Governance and Structure

The Guild's current rules, governance and structure are not well suited to meet what we believe ought to be the Guild's objectives as described above. The key problems are

- The relationship between the executive team/trustees and management committee is flawed and must be changed: the trustees are responsible for ensuring that the organisation meets its legal obligations and can be held financially liable and yet, according to the current rules, the Management Committee has the final say.
- The rules, objectives, and roles and responsibilities of the Management Committee members are not aligned to a future-relevant Guild. The Management Committee is too large, insufficiently agile and holds the Guild back from being able to respond and adapt to emerging needs of the ringing community.

We propose an alternative arrangement as follows:

- A Leadership/Management Team, consisting of the Guild Master, Secretary, the Treasurer and 2 or 3 others with responsibility for key areas of the Guild's activities, for example recruitment and retention, education and training etc. This team would have responsibility for the day-to-day activities of the Guild and for developing proposals for further consideration. It would be supported by volunteers with specific responsibilities such as peal recorder, safeguarding lead, report secretary etc. It should meet sufficiently frequently to carry out these duties effectively and to enable the Board of Trustees to be effective.
- An Advisory Body consisting of District representatives (one per District) which would be consulted on proposals developed by the Leadership/Management Team. This body should meet quarterly in order to feed into meetings of the Board of Trustees.
- A Board of Trustees, consisting of Guild Master, Secretary and Treasurer with, say, five other independent, directly elected Trustees. This Board would have, between them, experience and expertise across all areas of the Guild's activities. This Board would be chaired by one of the independent Trustees. This Board would ensure the Guild's activities remain aligned to its objectives and that the objectives remain aligned to the evolving needs of the ringing community. This body would be legally and financially accountable for the Guild's activities and accountable to the membership. It is the Guild's decision-making body. It should meet quarterly. It should contribute a synopsis of proposals received and its decisions in an annual report.
- The formal purpose of the AGM is to receive the annual report and accounts, communicate the activities of Leadership/Management Team and Board of Trustees, elect members to Board and Leadership/Management Team positions, elect freemen of the Guild, and make other relevant appointments as appropriate (e.g. volunteers to particular positions). It should also provide an opportunity to present to members details of the activities undertaken by the Guild during the year in question.
- Arrangements in each District that are not prescriptive. Every District must be able to contribute to the Advisory Body effectively, put forward and/or consider nominations for guild positions in a timely manner and, where relevant, submit adopted annual accounts in time to be included in the Guild accounts.

Election of Officers, Trustees and Freemen

Although some respondents to the survey consider the process of electing Guild officers to be transparent and effective, recent experience suggests that this is not always the case.

Nominations for Guild positions should be invited well in advance of the AGM in accordance with a published timetable. The invitation should be accompanied by a role description or, in the case of Freemen, the basis for the recommendation.

These principles should also apply when vacancies arise between meetings.

All nominations should be accompanied by a short precis of the experience and expertise that candidates would bring to the role and should be circulated in time to be considered prior to the meeting.

Next Steps

It is important that this process is seen through to a conclusion because the current rules and structures are a barrier to making progress and discourage some from engaging with the Guild.

Prompt action needs to be taken to develop concrete proposals and a timetable by which they can be brought to the next AGM.

This should not be a long drawn-out process and must not detract from advancing the identified priorities of the Guild.

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Longer Term Proposals



We would envisage the Guild:

1. Providing support and guidance to members, towers and districts to help us achieve these functions:
 - Recruitment/retention
 - Training/education, including the training of teachers
 - Improving standards by facilitating practice/performances
 - Bell maintenance experience and guidance
 - Governance i.e. things we need to do or input into to ensure the District is run properly and meets its obligations such as safeguarding, GDPR, health and safety, risk assessments etc
 - Financial e.g. Guild support to claim Gift Aid on donations to maintenance fund or running (funds in a bank account for the District etc
 - Promotion of ringing as an official part of our Intangible Cultural Heritage, a unique skill, and a community service

By:

- Promoting good practice and providing advice and guidance
- Encouraging and facilitating communication and collaboration within and between Districts
- Encouraging and facilitating communication and collaboration with local organisations, particularly, but not exclusively the Church
- Communicating effectively with us
- Engaging with us and our members and ensuring that our voices are heard and our views are taken into account

2. Performing these activities where they are best done across a wider area.

For example, higher profile recruitment campaigns, supporting and encouraging ringers to teach others, facilitating practices for those things that aren't feasible at a local level (e.g. advanced ringing), specialist advice on bell maintenance).

This should include identifying a group or groups of volunteers from all Districts able and willing to effect greater recruitment, better teaching, training and ringing activities across the Guild potentially including new communication channels too. The Guild should help this group or groups run activities aimed at achieving the above.

3. Exerting influence and collaborating at Regional and National levels, including, but not only, with the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers.

APPENDIX 3

Officer's Interim Reports to Management Committee October 2026

Guild Master's Report October 2026 Management Committee Meeting October 2026

The trustees and guild officers have strived over the last year to add to the framework previously identified, on which we can continue building the kind of Guild we want for the future of bellringing in our Diocese.

The changes we have implemented have allowed us to communicate more effectively through our membership management tool, previously unformalised rule changes are now definitive, financial planning re-structuring has enabled us to offer financial support in essential areas: an education programme, recruitment and teaching initiatives. Integrated safeguarding into our policies and practices with a dedicated Safeguarding champion helps us to provide safe spaces for existing and new members and keeps us compliant with the C of E framework. The annual report format was reviewed by a project group with a revised presentation on offer for 2026. The programme of events planned to celebrate our 140th anniversary year has been supported to varying degrees & if you or your tower has yet to participate in any of the activities on offer, please support your guild by getting involved.

What now?

We welcome Mark Gilham as Master Elect, his three years in office as Master will be here very soon so please give him all the support he needs for his tenure to be successful. We remain without an education officer which is unfortunate as this role is pivotal to the success of any recruitment, teaching & improvement initiatives. If anyone would like to discuss this role with us, please let us know.

There is a lot of positive activity around our districts which is something to be celebrated. Working together remains crucial for our survival, reaching out for help if we need it and taking opportunities where they present themselves.

Sue Robinson – Guild Master

Secretary's Report

Since the AGM, at Guild level we have held the 140th Anniversary Dinner, the Guild Striking Competition and the Tower Open Day, sadly the level of support for these events was not strong and whilst those who took part have thoroughly enjoyed all the events, it seems clear the silent majority of the membership either do not want, or feel some barrier to supporting the events.

The Ring Fest organised by the Church Stretton District was a hugely successful event, congratulations to all involved. Similarly the Ledbury District has been working very hard to establish a social media presence to attract non-ringers.

I emailed all district secretaries prior to this meeting to ask when the District AGMs will be held and for items for the October Newsletter – only Church Stretton district has responded.

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Ledbury District has submitted a response to the Guild Survey, I would like to thank them for their time and consideration in consulting with members.

As requested by the AGM, I wrote to the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers Bell Restoration Fund to request a meeting between both sets of Trustees. Rick Shallcross responded to suggest a meeting between three representatives of each charity at his home. This was agreed and three trustees from each organisation (Rick Shallcross – BRF Chairman, Ginette Pardoe – BRF Secretary, Richard Clements – BRF Treasurer, Sue Robinson - HDGB Master, Fran Watkins – HDGB Secretary, Mark Aston – HDGB Treasurer) held an informal meeting at the end of August. We discussed our common aims, and it was suggested that the BRF might put together some documentation to make it clearer exactly what help (financial or otherwise) they can offer to towers within the diocese. The aims of the Guild Tower Support Fund were also discussed. The meeting established that our members will benefit from a good relationship between the two separate charities and, in this vein, we have publicised their recent fundraising walk; will include their news items in the Guild Newsletter; will alert members to the date of their AGM; we publish their contact information etc on the HDGB website; and their accounts in our annual report.

District AGMs – please consider nominations for Guild and District officers very carefully at your upcoming AGMs. Do not assume that any member currently in post wishes to continue, or should continue without challenge. If you know of any member who would like to stand for ANY post, please nominate them. If the Guild is to thrive it needs keen and willing volunteers with ideas and energy.

Fran Watkins, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

Interim Financial Report

Financial position. The Guild's finances remain healthy. The aim is to maintain sufficient funds to cover approximately two years' expenditure, estimated at £11,000. The current balance is £16,152.80, held across a range of accounts. This provides both a strategic reserve and working capital to support ongoing projects, including the new Tower Support Fund.

Fundraising and events. The Guild's funds have been strengthened this year by income from the sale of badges, the raffle at the Guild Dinner and the Tower Open Day. The Management Committee is invited to record its sincere thanks to everyone whose considerable effort and commitment contributed to the success of these events.

Online payments. The online payment system continues to operate successfully. Collection of subscriptions through Membermojo has become more straightforward, while the use of a QR code at the recent Tower Open Day made purchasing day tickets quick and convenient.

Mark Aston, Treasurer

Peal Recorder's Report

Up to the 26/9/2026 there have been 29 peals rung for the Guild, three of these being on handbells. More details about the peals rung will appear in my 2026 report in 2027. You can look at all the peals on Bellboard.

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Two peals have been found by Dr. John C Eisel rung at Bishop's Castle in 1919, both peals have been included in the Guild Records and will appear in the 2027 report. I have checked the peals and all the ringers were guild members at the time of ringing the peals. I have checked these details through the old data base and the old Guild reports. Full details of both peals are on Bellboard.

The new £1 per person peal fee seems to be going well with all money now going into the separate account. Some conductors/peal arrangers are still using the peal credit account, which is not a problem. If at any time you want to check the balance of your peal credit account, please email me. I still have to check with the treasurer that money has been paid into the account. Perhaps the peal recorder should be able to access this account?

All Non-Resident members details should be sent to the peal recorder as I am the person who puts the full details on Membermojo and gets the new members ratified. We did have a bit of confusion earlier this year with one new member.

Andrew Watkins, Peal Recorder

Report Secretary's Report

The last report was well received with the changes to the order and layout. We will use a similar pattern for the next report.

As regards numbers we have certain commitments with regard to sending advertisers and national libraries copies, but I think we will drop the load to one copy per tower plus a number based on member mojo responses

Neil Bragg, Report Secretary

Public Engagement Officer's Report – *No Report Received*

HDGB Webmaster Report for MCM 10th October 2026

Website and email accounts hosting

Website hosting (Hostinger) running well.

- HDGB.ORG domain name renewal due 28Jun2027
- Website hosting renewal due 18Jan2030

Microsoft "not for profit" account also running well:

- 34 mailboxes now set up; Ledbury district committee recently added
- No use made of SharePoint and OneDrive

Website

Minor changes done in the last 6 months with News and Announcement items added. An audio recording of Eastnor bells has been added to the Eastnor tower page as a trial.

As you may have seen in the last Guild newsletter, I would like this to be my last year as webmaster. No-one came forward wanting to take on the job as a result of the newsletter, but Zarino Zappia from Burghill has now been approached and has the skills to take it on. Zarino has been looking around behind the scenes.

Nick Chapman, webmaster@hdgb.org. 29th September 2026

Belfries Officer's Report – *No Report Received*

Tower Stewardship Advisor's Interim Report

The subjects that the Central Council classifies as Stewardship and Management are detailed on their website at <https://cccbr.org.uk/about/workgroups/stewardship-and-management/> which provides detailed guidance and support in 37 categories grouped under three headings:

1. Tower Infrastructure
2. Major Projects
3. Tower Operations

The Tower Stewardship Advisor continues to be available, with the Belfries Officer to provide help and guidance to tower captains in researching all these subjects as and when needed.

A specific recent enquiry concerned the management of bellringers funds, where they should best be kept and who should be responsible for their safekeeping and administration. We have been fortunate in this case to have voluntary expert input from Steve Coleman to advise and to guide us towards a solution and to be reminded of his detailed articles on the subject published in past editions of the Ringing World copies of which can be forwarded. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to the handling of cash from fund-raising events and donations, and money from grants, legacies and bequests with strings attached which depend on individual tower and church circumstances (and the personnel involved), but the study has highlighted the need for basic rules to be followed to avoid confusion.

Alan Reade, HDGB Tower Stewardship Advisor, 26 September 2026

Central Council Representatives' Report

The Central Council meeting took place on 5th September at Rugby. Our guild was represented by Fran and Andrew Watkins and Anthony Ellis.

The morning business is the Annual Meeting of the Ringing World. This meeting is well run.

We learnt that the Ringing World as a company aims to break even but it only does so because of the donations that are received mostly from this who ring Quarter Peals. There are about 900 ringers who ring between them an average of 2.25 quarters a year. Last year their donations totalled £70,000 which meant there was a significant profit. At the same time the circulation of the paper copy is in decline but those who subscribe digitally are increasing in number.

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The great success story of the Ringing World however is the National Youth Competition which attracts more young ringers every year it is held. It would be most gratifying to see young riders from our Guild at the gathering of young ringers at Guildford next May.

There was a significant discussion about the future of the Ringing World. I foresee that in time there will not be paper version of the Ringing World. A great deal off the editor's time is being taken up with the development of digital services for the ringing community. There is a new website being launched as part of that review.

The full Council met in the afternoon. The meeting was less tedious than usual but like many annual meetings it is tightly controlled by the chair. The agenda is that of the executive and the membership have to go along with that!

The main issues arising at the meeting were the finances, the ringing census, the need to recruit more young ringers and safeguarding.

The treasurer had not been able to submit the accounts in time for the meeting due to other pressures.

There is to be a special meeting at the end of October to receive these accounts. However I am still concerned about the ability of the Council to employ two part time members of staff. I sense the executive do not want to talk about employing people on the longer term. It still needs to be resolved. The issue of direct membership of the Council for all ringers is still an issue in the background. Again this issue is being kicked into the long grass with a proposal to set up a working party. There is to be an increase in the mileage rate paid those who carry out work on behalf of the Council. Until the meeting it had been set at 25p per mile and I think the new rate is now 50p. a mile. This is necessary because there are paid staff who need to travel to undertake their duties.

One of the employed workers is responsible for developing youth ringing . As we all know the majority of ringers are not in the first flush of youth. Unless young ringers are recruited the future of ringing looks bleak. It is thought that there may as few as 500 ringers under the age of 18.

There is to be a ringing census between 16th and 22nd November this year. At the moment there is no accurate knowledge of the number of ringers who are actively ringing bells. I thought that the plans for the census were defined more for the urban and suburban setting than for an area that is as rural as that covered by our Guild. To make the Census effective we require volunteers to collect the statistics for their area.

Under Any Other Business the issue of Safeguarding was raised. Because each Diocese has its own Safeguarding policy it is very difficult for Bellringing Associations and Guild to come up with a common policy. Dr. Ian Roulstone has now established contact with those who oversee Safeguarding at Headquarters of the Church of England and is raising these issues . I foresee difficulties in this discussion until the House of Bishops comes up with a unified safeguarding policy. As an aside I feel that the current executive has neglected to engage sufficiently with the Church of England bureaucratic structures.

Next year the Council will meet at Uttoxeter at the invitation of the lichfield and Walsall Archdeaconries Society.

APPENDIX 4 - *Management Committee Information Sheet - Tower Support Fund*

For Management Committee discussion, support, member feedback and agreement to launch

Purpose: The Trustees have drawn up a proposed Tower Support Fund to help towers meet the cost of essential maintenance and repair work that keeps bells ringing safely and reliably. The scheme falls within the Guild's charitable aims and is intended to provide practical, modest financial support where it will make a clear difference to ringability, safety, or continued tower activity.

Governance position: Some members have asked whether the scheme requires approval by an AGM or EGM. The Trustees have sought legal advice and understand that this is not required. As the proposal sits within the Guild's charitable purposes, the Trustees have authority to establish and manage the scheme. However, the Trustees want the Management Committee to consider the proposal, support the approach, and help communicate the position clearly to members.

Proposed scheme: Towers would be able to apply for grants of up to 50% of eligible project costs, capped at £250 per application. The scheme would focus on ringing-related works such as stays, sliders, pulleys, ropes, urgent safety-related maintenance, restoring ringability, and minor access or environmental improvements that directly support ringing. Where a request relates to ropes, towers would be encouraged to seek practical support and advice first, such as through a Guild rope library or similar shared resource, but rope-related applications would not be excluded. The fund would not support major structural building work or general tower fabric repairs.

Assessment approach: To ensure fair and consistent decisions, applications would be assessed using a points-based scoring system. The proposed criteria are ringability impact, tower activity level, urgency and risk, affordability, wider Guild benefit, and alignment with the purpose of the fund. Applications would be sent to **scoring panel** members with a deadline for responses. Each scoring panel member would be required to complete a declaration confirming they have no conflict of interest. A minimum of four eligible scoring responses would be required for an application to be considered. The average of all eligible scores received would be used to determine whether the application meets the scoring threshold. The scoring outcome would inform the Trustees' decision, but Trustees would retain discretion, particularly in special cases or where the score does not fully reflect the need, risk, or likely benefit.

Financial safeguards: The proposal recognises that some towers may hold their own tower funds or ring-fenced PCC funds. Where a tower has substantial reserves, trustees would retain discretion to reduce the grant, even if the application scores highly. Priority would be given to towers with limited funds, urgent need, and a clear impact on ringing.

Payment and use of grant: Grants would normally be paid to the tower, PCC, or supplier, rather than to individuals. Where eligible costs have already been paid, receipts or invoices would need to be provided before any reimbursement is made. Any grant awarded must be used only for the specific purpose approved by the Trustees. If the work does not proceed, or the grant is no longer needed for that purpose, the Guild must be informed and the grant may need to be returned or withdrawn.

Backdated claims and precedent: Trustees may consider reimbursement for eligible costs already paid where receipts or invoices are provided, but this does not mean that all retrospective claims will be approved. Each application will be considered on its own merits, and any grant awarded has no bearing on any other future application.

Process: Applicants would complete a short form and provide quotes, receipts, invoices, and supporting information, as appropriate. A **scoring panel drawn from Trustees and Guild officers** would review applications and the combined score would determine eligibility for consideration. Conflicted panel members would not score or count towards the minimum number of eligible responses. The process is intended to be quick-acting and should not normally require a separate meeting for each application.

Recommendation: The Management Committee is asked to discuss the proposal, note that legal advice confirms AGM or EGM approval is not required, support the Trustees in launching the Tower Support Fund as a one-year trial scheme, and agree how best to feed back to members. At the end of the first year, Trustees would review take-up, fairness, affordability, and effectiveness before deciding whether to continue, amend, or close the scheme.

Tower Support Fund Application Form

For applicants to complete (you can complete and return online, or print and post to...

A. Tower Details

- Tower name: _____
- Parish / PCC: _____
- Contact name: _____
- Email / phone: _____

B. Project Summary

Please describe the work you are applying for (max 200 words):

C. Ringability Impact

Explain how this work will improve or restore ringing:

D. Tower Activity Level

Please describe your current ringing activity:

- Practice night?
- Sunday ringing?
- Teaching?
- Cluster involvement?

E. Urgency and Risk

Is the work urgent or safety critical?

- What will happen if the work is not carried out?

F. Tower Funds / Affordability

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Does your tower have its own tower fund or ring-fenced PCC funds, and are those funds available to contribute to this work?

- Yes / No. If yes, approximately how much is held? £_____ How much of this is available for this project? £_____

Please describe any fundraising or other contributions:

G. Benefit to the Wider Guild

Does your tower host district practices, teaching sessions, or cluster ringing? If yes, please provide details. If the work will enable an increase in ringing or teaching please explain how this will be achieved:

H. Alignment with Fund Purpose

Explain how the project fits the aims of the Tower Support Fund (maintenance, repair, ringability):

I. Costs and Timescales

- Total project cost: £_____
- Amount requested: £_____ (max 50% up to £250)
- Expected start date: _____
- Expected completion date: _____
- Does the work require a faculty? Yes / No (if yes please indicate whether this has been applied for, or granted)

J. Payment Details

- Who should payment be made to, if a grant is awarded? PCC, tower account, supplier, or reimbursement against receipts. Grants will not normally be paid to individuals.
- If reimbursement is requested, receipts or invoices must be attached before payment can be considered.

Declaration

Please review the terms below. If you are completing this digitally, you may type your name to sign.

- **Approved Use:** I confirm that any grant awarded will be used only for the specific purpose approved by the Trustees.
- **Future Funding:** I understand that retrospective claims are considered at the Trustees' discretion, and that any grant awarded has no bearing on future applications.
- **Accuracy:** I confirm that all information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

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Applicant Signature:

Print full Name:

Date:

K. Supporting Information

Please attach:

- Quotes, receipts, or invoices, as appropriate
- Photos (if relevant)
- Any other supporting documents

Tower Support Fund – How to Apply

The Tower Support Fund exists to help towers with **essential maintenance and repair work** that keeps bells ringing safely and reliably.

We can award grants of **up to 50% of the project cost**, to a **maximum of £250**.

To ensure fairness, applications are assessed using a **points-based scoring system**. A scoring panel drawn from Trustees and Guild officers will assess each application and make a recommendation to the Trustees. At least four eligible scoring responses are required before an application can be considered. Panel members with a conflict of interest must not score, and their responses will not count. The average of all eligible scores received is used to determine whether the application meets the scoring threshold. Meeting the threshold creates eligibility for consideration, not an automatic entitlement to a grant. Trustees retain final discretion, subject to the purposes of the Fund, affordability, special cases, and available budget.

What the Fund Can Support

The Fund can help with:

- repairs to ringing fittings, such as stays, sliders, and pulleys
- work that restores ringability
- urgent or safety-critical maintenance
- rope-related requests where practical help, such as a Guild rope library or shared advice, is not sufficient
- minor access or environmental improvements that directly support ringing

The Fund **cannot** support:

- major structural building work
- repairs to the tower fabric (masonry, spire, roof etc.)

What We Look For

Applications are scored against six criteria:

1. **Ringability impact** – Does the work restore or significantly improve ringing?
2. **Tower activity level** – Is the tower active, teaching, or part of a cluster?
3. **Urgency and risk** – Is the work safety-critical or time-sensitive?
4. **Affordability** – Does the tower have its own funds, and are they available for this work?
5. **Benefit to the wider Guild** – Does the tower support district or teaching activity?
6. **Alignment with the Fund's purpose** – Is the work clearly ringing-related?

Tower Funds

If your tower has its own tower fund or ring-fenced PCC funds, trustees will take into account how much is held and whether those funds are available to contribute to the proposed work. Towers with **substantial reserves** available for the work may receive a **smaller grant**.

How to Apply

1. Complete the application form.
2. Provide quotes, receipts, invoices, and any supporting information, as appropriate.
3. The Belfries Officer may be given an opportunity to comment on technical suitability where this would assist trustees.
4. A scoring panel drawn from Trustees and Guild officers will assess the application and make a recommendation to the Trustees. At least four eligible scoring responses are required before an application can be considered. Conflicted panel members must not score, and their responses will not count. Trustees retain final discretion.
5. The process is intended to be quick-acting and should not normally require a separate meeting for each application.
6. If the average score is **75% (30/40) or above**, the application will normally be eligible for consideration for a grant, subject to trustee discretion and available budget.

How Much Can We Receive?

- Up to **50%** of the project cost
- Maximum **£250**

Trustees may reduce the grant if the tower holds significant reserves or if the work is desirable but not essential.

If you're unsure whether your project is eligible, please contact the Guild Belfries Officer or Guild Secretary for advice.

If an application falls outside the scope of the Tower Support Fund, the Guild will, where possible, signpost applicants to alternative sources of funding or advice.

Payment and use of grant: Grants will normally be paid to the tower, PCC, or supplier, rather than to individuals. If eligible costs have already been paid, receipts or invoices must be provided before reimbursement can be considered. Any grant awarded must be used only for the specific purpose approved by the Trustees.

Backdated claims and precedent: Trustees may consider reimbursement for eligible costs already paid where receipts or invoices are provided, but this does not mean that all retrospective claims will be approved. Each application will be considered on its own merits, and any grant awarded has no bearing on any other future application.

Initial eligibility and conflict of interest check

Before scoring begins, each panel member must confirm that:

- the application appears to fall within the scope of the Tower Support Fund;
- they are able to score the application fairly and objectively.

Section 1: Assessor & Project Details

Assessor Name:

Date of Assessment:

Applicant Tower:

Grant Application Ref:

Section 2: Conflict of Interest Declaration - Before assessing this application, please review the criteria below to ensure impartiality.

• **Disqualifying Conflicts (Do Not Assess):** You must not assess this application if you are a regular band member, hold an official post at this tower (e.g., Tower Captain), have a financial interest in the work/contractor, or helped write the application.

• **Declarable Interests (Must Disclose):** You must disclose if a close relative drives the project, or if you visit/ring at the tower more than 4 times a year.

• **Permitted Connections:** Ringing at the tower as a casual visitor 4 or fewer times per year (e.g., for an outing or striking competition) is not a conflict.

Please check one box below:

☐ No Conflict: I confirm I have read the guidelines and have no conflicts of interest regarding this application.

☐ Potential Interest Disclosed: I have a potential connection, detailed here:

(e.g., "Visits tower 6 times a year for joint practices") _____

Scoring panel: Applications will be assessed by a scoring panel drawn from Trustees and Guild officers. The panel will make recommendations to the Trustees. At least four eligible scoring responses are required before an application can be considered. Conflicted panel members must not score, and their responses will not count. The process is intended to be quick-acting and should not normally require a separate meeting for each application.

Average score: The average of all eligible scores received will be used to determine whether the application meets the scoring threshold. Meeting the threshold creates eligibility for consideration, not an automatic entitlement to a grant. Trustees retain final discretion, particularly for special cases, affordability issues, and available budget.

1. Tower Funds Check

Does the tower have its own tower fund or ring-fenced PCC funds, and are those funds available to contribute to this work?

- Yes / No. If yes, how much is held? £ _____
- How much of this is available for this project? £ _____

Note: If the tower holds **substantial reserves that are available for the work**, the grant awarded may be **reduced**, even if the application scores highly.

2. Scoring Criteria (Total: 40 points)

Applications receiving an average score of at least 30/40 (75%) will normally be eligible for consideration for a grant. The scoring outcome informs the Trustees' decision and does not remove trustee discretion.

A. Ringability Impact (0–10 points)

Priority 1

- 10 – Restores ringing where bells are currently unringable
- 8 – Resolves a safety-critical issue
- 6 – Significantly improves reliability or usability
- 4 – Minor improvement to ringing conditions
- 0 – No direct impact

Score: ____ / 10

B. Tower Activity Level (0–8 points)

Priority 2

- 8 – Regular practices + Sunday ringing + teaching
- 6 – Regular practices + Sunday ringing
- 4 – Occasional ringing or cluster-based activity
- 2 – Rare ringing but realistic plan to increase activity
- 0 – No ringing and no plan

Score: ____ / 8

C. Urgency and Risk (0–8 points)

Priority 3

- 8 – Immediate safety risk or imminent failure
- 6 – Likely deterioration within 6–12 months
- 4 – Work advisable but not urgent
- 0 – Routine or cosmetic

Score: ____ / 8

D. Affordability / Tower's Own Funds (0–6 points)

Priority 4

- 6 – Tower has **minimal funds** and cannot afford the work
- 4 – Tower has **modest funds** but needs support
- 2 – Tower has **significant reserves**; grant should be reduced
- 0 – Tower has **ample funds**; grant unlikely

Score: ____ / 6

E. Benefit to the Wider Guild (0–4 points)

Priority 5

- 4 – District practice venue / teaching hub
- 2 – Supports cluster ringing or occasional Guild use
- 0 – No wider benefit

Score: ____ / 4

F. Alignment with Fund Purpose (0–4 points)

Priority 6

- 4 – Strong alignment (core maintenance/repair)
- 2 – Moderate alignment (access/environment improvements)
- 0 – Weak alignment

Score: ____ / 4

3. Total Score _____

AVERAGE SCORE FROM ALL ELIGIBLE PANEL RESPONSES: _____ / 40

Average score normally required for grant consideration: 30/40 (75%)

Number of eligible panel responses received: _____

4. Grant Award Calculation

If the application receives an **average score of 30 or above**, the tower will normally be eligible for consideration for a grant. Meeting the threshold does not create an automatic entitlement to a grant.

- **Up to 50% of the project cost**
- **Maximum £250**

Payment and restricted use: Grants should normally be paid to the tower, PCC, or supplier, rather than to individuals. Reimbursement should only be made where receipts or invoices are provided. Trustees should make clear that any grant is restricted to the specific approved purpose and must be returned or withdrawn if the work does not proceed or the money is no longer needed for that purpose.

Backdated claims and precedent: Reimbursement may be considered for eligible costs already paid where receipts or invoices are provided. This does not guarantee approval of retrospective claims. Each application should be considered on its own merits, and any grant awarded has no bearing on any other future application.

Trustees may reduce the grant if:

- the tower holds **substantial** tower funds or **ring-fenced** PCC funds that are available for the proposed work, or
- the project is desirable but not essential.

5. Notes for Trustees

- If an application falls outside the scope of the Tower Support Fund, trustees should, where possible, signpost applicants to alternative sources of funding or advice.
- The Belfries Officer may be given an opportunity to comment on technical suitability where this would assist trustees.
- Towers with **substantial reserves available for the work** should normally receive **smaller grants**, even if they score well.
- Towers with **no reserves** and **high ringability impact** should be prioritised.
- Trustees retain discretion in special cases, including urgent safety issues or applications where the strict score does not fully reflect the need, risk, or likely benefit.