

# Writtle Bell Ringers

## 2012 Annual General Meeting

**Minutes of meeting held at Writtle Church on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012 at 7:30pm.**

Present. Christina Brewster, Andrew Brewster, Andy Champ, Nick De Keyser, Roger Bailey, Laurie Cansdale, Carol Brown, Mark Spurgeon, Rev Michael Jones, Joy Madigan, Emer Wilson, Adam Sloman, Peter Brisley, Chris Newton and James Hustler.

### **1. Introduction and Welcome**

Andrew welcomed everyone on this wintry evening, especially the Vicar, Rev Michael Jones, the youngsters Adam and Emer, and thanked Joy for the biscuits.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Ellanor Collop, David Meah, Neil Pasmore, Mollie Brett, and Jo Strong.

### **3. Minutes of last meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

The AGM minutes had been circulated to members in advance.

No comments were received.

The minutes were then signed as a true record of the meeting.

### **4. Actions and matters arising**

Andrew reviewed all actions from the minutes and confirmed all were complete.

Other matters from last year's minutes were as follows:-

Pages 5/6 – archive report – no further news on the future of the old bells other than we had a visitor in church recently from America who expressed an interest in buying the old bells for a new tower but he never got in touch and he has by now returned to the States. A missed opportunity!

Page 8 – Item 5f wedding fees - the General Synod rejected changes to the structure of wedding fees and our fees will therefore remain the same for 2012.

Page 9 – two expressions of interest in learning to ring are still to be followed up.

### **5. Officers reports**

#### **a) Tower Captain Report**

Andrew presented the attached report which highlighted the following areas: fundraising, social events, PCC and Leadership Group meetings.

Concluding his report, Andrew said as attendances on Practice nights and Sundays were dropping it would be useful to let Christina or I know if you weren't able to attend. Please don't let others know and have to rely on them to pass the message on. He said it was worth reminding ourselves that in our tower we currently have the Essex Association's Treasurer, the SE District Master and Deputy Master and the joint District Bell Maintenance Officers. All show a level of commitment

to ringing not just here at Writtle but more widely within Essex and as a tower it is quite an honour for us all and anything we can do to support them would be most welcome.

Finally, Andrew thanked Christina, Andy, Rog and Mark in their various tower officer roles for all the work that they have put in during the year and also thanked Neil and Laurie (as well as Emer and Mollie) for assisting in tower maintenance matters and to Michael and the PCC for their support of the ringers.

No further comments or questions were received.

#### **b) Ringing Masters Report**

Christina presented the attached report which highlighted the following areas: membership, practice nights and training, Sunday Service ringing, quarter peals, peals, competitions and outings.

Concluding her report, Christina said she hoped for improvements in attendances at practice nights and for service ringing in 2012, that we could improve our striking and rhythm and that we could progress as a band and have fun in the process. Hopefully this was not too much to ask but it did depend on commitment by everyone to try to make it happen. Finally, the Sunday-service ringing target of Plain Bob Royal, originally set by Phil for 2010, had failed again. However, Christina had decided to keep it as our target for a third year – it should be possible!

No further comments or questions were received.

#### **c) Treasurer.**

Andrew circulated the accounts and asked for comments.

Christina enquired about producing a peal board for the peal that was rung on 30<sup>th</sup> December. It was agreed that a peal board should be produced similar to the one for the peal rung 200 years ago. Everyone agreed this was a good idea.

#### **d) Steeple Keeper.**

Neil reported the following.

Four full inspections plus two prior to peals were carried out during the year resulting in some minor work consisting of the following.

Feb 2011, the number 4 stay was adjusted due to striking the slider plate.

March 2011, the belfry and clock tower were cleaned and a blind installed to cut out bright sunlight.

April 2011, a new tail end was spliced to number 8 rope, which was cut from the original terylene rope.

May 2011, broken number 4 stay was replaced, number 6 stay was tightened, cracked number 3 stay was replaced and the number 4 clapper was tightened.

The inspection in November noted some slight rope wear through the garter holes and this will be monitored during future inspections.

The last check was carried out on December 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 prior to the peal and all was OK.

We have assisted Ford End by providing our number 7 spare stay. This ensured they were able to ring on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January. It was made clear that this stay should be replaced as soon as possible. Our remaining stays are dwindling and Martin and Neil will try and source some Ash. It

may be necessary to purchase some at retail cost to ensure we are able to replace stays in quick time.

Many thanks to Roger, Emer, Molly and Laurie for their help during the year.

Chris asked if there was any anticipated expensive work for the coming year, Roger confirmed that there wasn't.

James asked about the odd struckness of the 7<sup>th</sup> bell and whether anything could be done about it. Roger said he would have a look at the next inspection.

#### **e) Archivist report.**

Andrew gave the following report.

The only activity this year has been the updating of folders as and when something happens that is worth recording.

Two plaques are still awaiting fixing: one to the old frame and the other to the wall at the back of the church. The third – a list of donors covering the bell project and sound lantern – remains to be completed.

I have written an article for Saints Alive and the Ringing World about the first peal on the old eight bells and the 200th anniversary peal on 30th December 2011.

Chris asked if there were any sound recordings of the old 8 bells. Andrew said he will look and if there were any he would enter it into the archives.

#### **f) Webmaster report**

Mark gave the following report.

The original website was designed and implemented by Andrew a few years back and provides an interesting background to the history of our bells and the people that ring them.

Over the previous year there have been no changes made to the existing website and its content, however work has been ongoing behind the scenes to redevelop the structure and content so that our future activities can be shared across cyber space.

My plan for the coming year is as follows:-

1. Find a new host for the existing website.
2. Finalise the new structure and content.
3. Upload to the new host and remove existing website.
4. Oversee regular monthly updates (Tower Diary)
  - ❖ Tower News
  - ❖ Quarter Peals and Peals
  - ❖ Service times
  - ❖ Social events
  - ❖ Method of the month

If anyone has any ideas, comments or suggestions for the website please let me know.

Apologies for the slow progress with this but it's taken me longer than expected to get to grips with HTML and Web design but the finished outcome will be worth the wait.

## **6. Election of officers**

Rev Michael Jones took the Chair for the election of the Officers.

He asked if all current officers were prepared to stand for their posts and that there were no other nominations. This was the case, therefore all posts were elected en bloc as follows.

Ringling Master – Christina Brewster

Tower Captain – Andrew Brewster

Tower Secretary – Andy Champ

Treasurer – Andrew Brewster

Steeple Keeper – Roger Bailey and Neil Pasmore

Archivist – Andrew Brewster

Webmaster – Mark Spurgeon

## **7. Wednesday and Saturday practise**

Christina commented that for the time being Saturday practices have run their course

She believes Wednesday practices are still necessary but more helpers are really needed, even a couple of extra people just once a month would make a difference.

## **8. Recruitment**

Christina commented as follows.

As I said in my report I believe we do need to address the issue of recruitment. It fills me with dread because I cannot do the things I currently do and do all the teaching. Even if I am prepared to do the initial teaching, which I am, (although if you have a group there has to be more than one teacher) there has to be the support by other ringers after bell-handling has been taught and this is my biggest worry based on the current level of support. It is a massive commitment but once started has to be seen through.

Christina asked what do people think about the concept of recruitment? Who do you think we should target – the church, advert in Writtle News, or a visit to Writtle Junior school?

Adam has done a course for training and can help on Saturdays. Christina thanked Adam.

Peter asked how youngsters were recruited. This was via the Tower Tours.

Michael suggested making a DVD and showing it in the schools in the village and surrounding area. Adam said he would be prepared to show the DVD if one was produced. Perhaps John Howden could be approached to take this forward.

Chris asked how we kept the current youngsters involved. Adam commented that a lot was to do with competition between them. Christina commented that helping and giving support is key as well. Also interesting competitions and outings to keep their interest going.

## **9. Method of the Month**

Christina handed out the sheet for 2012 and made the following comments.

I wasn't sure whether it was worth continuing with this as I can only go with the ringers present at practice and that is where it has fallen down in the last year. However, Andrew has convinced me otherwise.

There are also two other methods I propose we look at (I'm not sure if we will actually ring them) – Five Rings Doubles and Five Rings Triples. They are not true “methods” due to the fact that the treble does five blows in one place (which apparently represents the five rings of the Olympic emblem) and hence they have been created as pieces of music with the view that they could be rung as part of the Olympic celebrations. They are not easy but if there are a group of people willing to learn them we will certainly give them a try during the summer.

## **10. Weddings, quarter peals and peals**

Christina gave the following report.

### **Weddings:**

The list up the tower worked reasonably well and only on a few occasions were there too many ringers available. We have a list of weddings for 2012 but not a list of those wanting bells.

Analysis of weddings in 2011

We rang for 15 weddings 14 on 8 and 1 on 10 Bells.

9 on a weekday and 6 on Saturday

For 6 weddings (5 weekday and 1 Saturday) we had to seek outside help

The priority in the year was to give those who were retired first option for the weekday weddings and those in work or students first option for the weekend weddings and that has resulted in a fairly even distribution of ringers putting their names down to ring for weddings, obviously skewed due to the occasions when there were insufficient numbers. However, as Sunday service ringing attendance drops this will have to be factored in. Clearly if people do not ring for services then they cannot expect to ring for weddings.

### **Quarter Peals:**

List still not working as well as it might. Still often ending up arranging QPs on the day

Need to encourage people to complete more in advance.

For 2012 I am looking to advance our ringing by attempting more quarter peals, not just for specific events or occasions but also for the sheer fun of it! Too many times we have been left with a Bob Doubles band and no real reason to ring.

In order to do this we need some help from a few more experienced ringers around this and neighbouring Districts and I am in the process of identifying a pool of people who are willing to help us in future

### **Peals:**

4 local peals and 2 outside peals this year. Four dates are now fixed:

4 February – Local peal for 60th Anniversary of the Queen's Accession to the Throne

2 June – Local peal for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

7 July – Local peal for the Olympic Torch Relay as it leaves Hylands

13 October – Martin Cansdale's peal

This leaves one outside peal possibly in April and one local peal probably in December

I know of two people who would like to attempt their first peal. If there is anyone else who would like to attempt a peal please let me know as it isn't always easy to guess people's ambitions and I don't want anyone to feel pressurised into ringing anything.

Michael commented that we should know who requires the bells for weddings in the coming year this weekend.

James asked for more than a months worth of quarter peal dates on the list, perhaps 2 months would be better for those that attended irregularly due to work commitments.

## **11. External Events in 2012**

### **(a) District meeting at Writtle on Saturday 3 March**

We need a preliminary discussion on thoughts for food, which will be hot. If anyone has any suggestions speak to Christina.

### **(b) St George's Day on 23 April**

Ringling for England. Ringling is encouraged in as many towers as possible at 6.00pm.

### **(c) Diamond Jubilee on the weekend 2-5 June**

Already mentioned a peal on 2 June. Parish Picnic on the Green on Sun 3 June.

Ringling for the lighting of the Beacons on 4 June

Ringling on 5 June for the main procession in London

### **(d) Bells within Sunday Service in June**

Long standing invitation to all ringers but to include the youngsters.

### **(e) Olympics Torch Relay 6/7 July**

Already mentioned a peal on 7 July

Torch coming from Brentwood on Friday 6 July and will overnight at Hylands where there is an event run by Chelmsford Borough Council and Essex County Council called Sparks Will Fly. On Saturday it will travel from Hylands Park towards Harlow, through NW Essex and Suffolk and on to Cambridge.

Sparks Will Fly is a countywide cultural celebration consisting of three events. Event 2, the Transition Event will be the event of most interest and may take place between 4.00pm-9.30pm. It will be along the lines of a country show with different stands featuring local craftsmen etc. Attendance is expected to be in the region of 15,000. The Suffolk Mini Ring has been booked and Tracey Southgate, the Association PRO is looking for 10 or so volunteers to help set up in the morning, and man the mini ring, and give hand bell demonstrations etc in the afternoon/early evening and try to get some recruits in the process. While the event is free, volunteering to help will enable anyone to gain access to the event without having to queue to get in.

If anyone is interested please let her or Christina know and she will pass it on.

### **(f) Writtle Fun Day on 14 July (Have a Go)**

Now been approached by the organising committee and they have asked about Teddy Bear parachuting.

### **(g) Olympics Opening (27 July) and Closing Ceremony (12 August)**

Original plan to ring as "fast and as loud" as possible for 3 minutes at 8am on Friday 27 July. Not gone down too well with ringers. Further suggestions appear to be ringing at 3pm. Any comments at this stage as plans seem to be quite fluid at the moment?

### **(h) EACR and SE District Programme**

Young Ringers Outing on Saturday 17 March

❖ Helpers required

Essex Ringing Course 12-14 April

❖ Deadline for applications 17 February

❖ Helpers also needed

Quarter Peal Fortnight 15–29 April

Association AGM on 7 May

Annual Dinner on 6 October

District Barn Dance on 17 November

## **12. Tower Events**

### **(a) Spring clean**

Date to be arranged. [Later arranged for Saturday 25 February]

### **(b) Ringing and Rambling**

Set for 28<sup>th</sup> April, Andy to organise

### **(c) Barbecue**

To be held at Carols on 8<sup>th</sup> July.

### **(d) Ringing Weekend Away**

Set for 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> July, Andrew and Christina to arrange

### **(e) Day outing**

Car or coach outing on 8<sup>th</sup> September, Carol and Chris to arrange.

### **(f) Christmas party**

Set for 15<sup>h</sup> December at the Rose and Crown, arranged by Andrew and Christina.

## **13. Any other business**

Visiting Ringers this year.

❖ 19 April – Society of Royal Cumberland Youths Eastern Practice

❖ 5 May – Ringers from York

❖ 25 May – Banbury Branch of the Oxford Guild

Christina said there was a new selection of books bought for the tower from the EACR Bookstall.

## **14. Date of next meeting**

This was set as 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

Meeting closed 9.10pm

Minutes taken by Andy Champ.

Signed as a true account of the meeting

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Date

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