

Society of Cambridge Youths AGM

Monday 6th March 2023

Minutes

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by the chair, Jutta Brueck, at 20:04 with a prayer.

Present:

Jutta Brueck (Chair)	Dave Richards (Master)	Melissa Nash (Secretary)
Phil Orme	Liz Orme	Cecilia Pipe
David Pipe	Greg Chu	George Unsworth
Catriona Agg	Patrick Brooke	Ali Brooke
Chris Seaman	Gareth Davies	Jonathan Shanklin
Richard A Smith	John Sherwood	Barry Johnson
Luke Smith	Michael O'Callaghan	Andrew Roberts
June Mackay	Jonathan Nash	Jadd Virji (from 20:18)

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Helen Atkins	Claire Barlow	Michael Williams
Frank King	Akiko Saito	Kirsten Hawkins
Jonathan Agg		

3. Minutes of 2022 AGM

These were circulated in advance of the meeting. One minor correction had been noted - Devin McLachlan, who chaired the meeting was not listed in the summary of those present. The amended minutes were proposed for approval by George Unsworth and seconded by Liz Orme. Signing of the minutes is to be held over until GSM has a vicar in post.

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising were identified that were not to be covered elsewhere.

5. Election of New Members

David Richards proposed Greg Chu and Kirsten Hawkins as new members. Jonathan Shanklin seconded the nominations and all voted in favour. It was noted that while Kirsten has not yet attended twelve (Youths') service ringings, she has been a regular attender at morning service ringing more recently, and both she and Greg had expressed keenness to become more actively involved in the Society. Greg and Kirsten were welcomed to the Society.

6. Master's Report

This was circulated a week in advance of the meeting. Dave Richards has had an enjoyable year and hopes others have also. Dave highlights two key points from his report. The first of these is attendance at Sunday evensong ringing, which can often be low in numbers, particularly when there are fewer students around. Four options are outlined in the report:

- Invitational ringing for some or all evensong ringing slots
- Continue as is currently
- Invite other local towers to attend
- Actively try and balance attendance between morning and afternoon ringing

A discussion then follows on service timings. Michael O'Callaghan comments that it is difficult to get into the centre of Cambridge for ringing at the current evensong time. Others agree that the timings are difficult and that a later service time, such as 6pm, would likely help. Patrick Brooke comments that the change of time of the morning service to 10am has also impacted ringers - several ringers used to support other towers in Cambridge but this is now difficult to do due to overlapping timings; and if a ringer is attending the 08:00 service at GSM, there is now an awkward gap before ringing. It is noted that evensong attendance has always been a problem but the change in timings has made it worse. Jutta says that it is useful to have this feedback.

Returning to the question of approach going forwards, Liz Orme suggests perhaps evensong ringing could be a quarter once a month on a trial basis. Barry Johnson comments that it may be difficult to stop people not in the quarter band from turning up and it is commented evensong ringing does also attract visiting ringers occasionally. Ali Brooke agrees that a mix of quarters and open ringing would make it difficult for people to know whether to turn up or not. Gareth Davies mentions that many other towers in the area don't have evensong ringing, so inviting ringers from those towers could be sensible. Dave states that he prefers this idea. He notes that one risk could be a crowding out of locals but he feels that on merit the slight risk versus the potential benefits is one that should be taken. Jonathan Shanklin comments that there's a risk that ringers invited from other towers may find they don't get the higher standard of ringing they were expecting because there are too few local ringers in attendance.

The second point Dave raises from his report is that he would appreciate feedback on what people would like to ring. Liz states that she enjoys the training elements of the practice and seeing younger ringers progress; in terms of more advanced ringing, some more cyclic methods could be nice, as well as the Phobos and Zanussi that have returned regularly to practices more recently. One touch with all the best ringers in the room, ringing 'comfort' bells, would also be nice, to have a touch purely about striking rather than method ringing. George Unsworth agrees that a striking focused touch would be nice but preferably not as the final touch of the evening; if it is earlier in the practice, it sets a standard for people to aim for. The meeting decides it is perhaps better not to dwell on the question of who decides who the best ringers in the room are.

Yorkshire is suggested as something else we could ring more. George thinks that it is good that lots of different people are being asked to call things but that it is sometimes difficult for younger ringers to give striking comments to older ringers. She suggests that it can be good to have a more experienced ringer who can provide comments or make a judgement to stand, something she feels we don't have much of at the moment. Cecilia Pipe states it has been nice when Dave hasn't been here because when absent he has given lots of different people the opportunity to run the ringing.

Jutta thanks Dave for taking on the role of Master and there is applause from the meeting.

7. Treasurer's Report and Accounts

Copies of the accounts have been present on the ringing room table for the last couple of weeks. Phil Orme summarises that it has been a good year financially, with income from peal fees higher than pre-pandemic and the collection box up on the previous year, although not yet at pre-pandemic levels. The Society returned to receiving the full £500 annual donation from the University. The Faulkes Fund has been covering all maintenance costs. Maintenance costs are paid from the Society's account and then reimbursed by the Fund. If maintenance expenditure and the donation to the St Clement's' bell are excluded, this year has seen a profit of ~£1300. Phil comments that this is fairly typical, the average over the past 18 years is ~£1800 so the Society is nearly back to its pre-pandemic profit generation.

The Society donated £5000 to St Clement's, which, combined with other donations, gifted a bell in the Society's name to St Clement's. Phil notes that this is a piece of landmark history for the Society.

The Society currently has ~£13,000 in the bank. This is the equivalent of just over seven years of profit and a more than healthy reserve.

Phil suggests that the Society should increase its wedding fees. Currently wedding fees are £260 - this is £20 per ringer for 12 ringers and £20 for the tower. Phil suggests increasing the fee to £300 to give £25 per ringer (and £0 for the tower since the Society's funds are not in need of the money). Regarding wedding fees in the accounts, it is clarified that payment is always received in advance. In 2021, a refund was made to someone who had booked pre-covid and had given up trying to rearrange.

June Mackay comments that £13,000 is a lot of money and asks if the Society should try and do something with this. Phil comments that there's not much we can do with it in terms of investment. George Unsworth asks about the donation the Society used to make

to the EDA. This was stopped a while ago, c. 2016, in anticipation of making a large donation to St Clement's. George suggests that now this donation has been made, perhaps the Society should recommence donation to the EDA. Gareth Davies raises that the EDA is currently discussing the future of their bell fund at the moment, since they currently have more money than they know what to do with. Tom Ridgman is looking at this so it could be worth speaking to him before doing anything. It's raised that, most recently, the Society had donated to the EDA's training fund rather than their bell fund. Barry Johnson reports the training fund also has a good kitty built up.

Patrick Brooke thinks it's a shame that the Society's regular donation to the church stopped. He suggests that we resume this, particularly given the church are paying for the tower intercom. Dave Richards reports that the cost of the intercom installation is £1400, approximately 10% of this cost has been covered by donations from individual members so far. Patrick formally proposes that we make a donation of £750 to the church. Jonathan Shanklin seconds this proposal and the motion is carried with none against.

Phil formally proposes increasing the wedding fee to £300. Patrick seconds this and the motion carries with none against. Dave clarifies that ringing for external (college) weddings will now be £340, since this has always been £40 more than ringing for GSM weddings. A few clarifications on fees follow in response to the floor's questions. The number of bells rung doesn't change the fee. Changes in cost only tend to occur when the couple has a connection to the ringers and negotiates directly with them. Hardship cases are also considered. Fees for funeral ringing are the same as for weddings. Memorial services are also technically the same fees but historically there have often been special circumstances for these.

In advance of the meeting, Phil sent an email out about funding for the 300th anniversary. This will be returned to under agenda item 13, 300th Anniversary.

One of the matters arising from last year's minutes was investigating the feasibility of a card reader for the tower. Phil has researched the matter and found that a cheap hand held terminal, which one either keys a number into or connects to a phone, can be purchased for £16 + VAT. A more upmarket box, like the ones seen in shops costs £120 + VAT. There is a transaction fee of 1.75%, equating to 2p on a typical tower donation. Given the fairly low cost, Phil states his intent to purchase a cheap card reader to trial. George Unsworth and Cecilia Pipe both voice their support for this.

Jutta thanks Phil for his work as treasurer.

8. Statement from the Independent Examiner

There is nothing further to add to the statement contained in the accounts.

9. MCF Bell Fund

Phil informs the meeting that the Fund is currently sitting at just over £100,000 and that Frank King has emailed round his usual annual update. As stated in the report, maintenance bills are submitted in September and then paid at the end of the calendar year. This system is working really well. At the time of last year's AGM, it was noted that

the Fund was 'increasingly increasing'. The Fund has gone down in the past year, this is unsurprising given that it tends to track the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) but well behind the FTSE in time. Last year, the point was raised that there is a lot of money in the Fund and the officers were asked to look at this. It should be noted that technically the Fund is not the Society's money, it is administered by the Fund managers - Frank King (as University Bell Ringer), Claire Barlow (on behalf of the University) and Tom Culver (on behalf of GSM).

The Fund seems to contain far more money than would ever be needed, unless purchasing a new set of bells, which is not expected to be needed. Major maintenance would be a big expenditure but anticipated to be quite a way off yet. There is no awareness of the Fund managers having a reserve policy but looking at the Charity Commission's information this is good practice to have. Dave Richards, Phil Orme and Luke Smith have investigated how much reserve might be needed and if the terms of the gift can be changed while still respecting the donor's wishes. An idea is to extend the terms from maintenance of the bells to include recruitment and training of ringers for the bells. Before approaching the donor, there are some legal hoops to jump through. Conversation with the University has confirmed it is possible to change the terms of the Fund. However, variation of the grace is complicated by the fact the University is unable to locate the donation agreement paperwork at this time. Consultation with the Charity Commission and some legal advice may be required. Phil has queried if there'd be a cost to this and has not yet had a response, he will chase this. George Unsworth comments that any solicitor fees should be paid by the University if they are the ones at fault. George has evidence from the time that the Fund was set up that the paperwork in question was the University's responsibility.

Michael O'Callaghan seeks clarification that this is just information being presented to the meeting and that the meeting cannot influence events. It is confirmed this the Fund is the responsibility of the Fund managers. The Fund managers will have to go through the University to make any changes. Phil asks the meeting if they think adding recruitment and training to the scope is a good and appropriate idea. If so, the officers can proceed further with discussions with the Fund managers. Jutta comments that the need for a reserve policy should perhaps also be taken forward.

Patrick Brooke is strongly of the opinion that this is not the business of the meeting given the Fund is the responsibility of the Fund managers. Cecilia Pipe thinks that it is good to think about recruitment and training but queries how much money can realistically be spent on this. Phil gives example suggestions of granting Dill Faulkes training awards to say attend the Bradfield Training Course or for training sessions at St Clement's Ringing Centre; another idea might be the hire of a mini-ring to bolster training and recruitment, similar to what the CUGCR do, and something we might do for the 300th anniversary. It is reiterated that there is no intention to drain the Fund, which is why a reserves policy is very important.

George formally proposes that the officers talk to the Fund managers about a) a reserves policy and b) depending on what this reveals, explore the possibility of expanding use of the Fund. There is a show of hands in support of the proposal with none against and four abstentions. The motion carries.

10. Belfry Maintenance Officer's Report

The report was circulated earlier that day. Luke Smith summarises some of the points from the report. Some general rope repairs have been made and a brand new set of ropes purchased in the past year to be used in due course. There was a general feeling at the last AGM that some money should be spent so this has been done. There have also been some odd struckness adjustments and a new set of muffles purchased, including supplementary muffles for fully muffled ringing for when this is next needed. Two stays have been replaced and the broken sound control shutter has now been fixed. Problems with the simulator have been discussed for quite a few years - the problem has now been identified as the reflective strip being too far away from the sensor. In one case this has been fixed by applying a highly reflective material to the wheel; it is anticipated the eighth will be fixed soon.

Luke moves on to an update on the void. Frank King commissioned a timber expert to look at this and a thorough cleaning of the void was recommended. This should be carried out by professionals with the right equipment to lift floor boards etc. Frank is to liaise with professionals to develop a proposal. Michael O'Callaghan asks about the peal boards currently stored in the void and the proposal to hang these on the walls. Luke answers that the cleaning needs to be sorted first.

Cecilia Pipe raises that some of the new ropes have got very fat sallies, which is not helpful for those with smaller hands. Luke has seen similar comments being made on bell ringers' Facebook groups, with the issue occurring with ropes supplied by a number of suppliers. In the next order, Luke will add a note to not have sallies which are too big.

Thanks is extended to Luke with general applause.

11. Election of Officers

The following nominations have been made prior to the meeting:

Role	Nominee	Proposer	Second
Master	David Richards	Jonathan Agg	Patrick Brooke
Secretary	Patrick Brooke	Chris Seaman	Melissa Nash
Treasurer	Phil Orme	Luke Smith	David Richards
BMO	Luke Smith	Catrina Agg	Jadd Virji
Independent Accounts Examiner	Michael O'Callaghan	Michael Williams	Barry Johnson

It is queried whether Michael Williams, one of the proposers, has had 12 attendances at service ringing, and hence is eligible to propose. This is to be checked after the meeting. Jonathan Shanklin proposes to nominate on block. All vote in favour. Jutta thanks outgoing secretary Melissa Nash and the meeting applauds. Patrick Brooke is thanked for taking on the role.

12. Events for 2023

The events listed below have been set out on the agenda. There are no comments on these, just a reminder for people to put these in their diary.

- Sat 25th March - National 12 Bell Eliminators
- Mon 3rd April - Spring Clean
- Sat 22nd April - Surprise Royal Practice
- Sat 29th April - EDA 12 Bell Practice
- Sun 18th June - Youths vs Guild rounders and picnic
- Sat 24th June - National 12 Bell Final
- Sat 29th July - EDA 12 Bell Practice
- Sat 23rd Sept - Robert B Smith 12 Bell Competition
- Sat 30th Sept - EDA 12 Bell Practice

13. 300th Anniversary

Gareth Davies informs the meeting that himself, George Unsworth, Dave Richards, Phil Orme and Liz Orme have been meeting regularly as an informal committee to think about and plan appropriate events to support the 300th anniversary. Their list of proposed events hasn't changed much since the last AGM. Gareth goes on to summarises some of their progress:

- Staging an exhibition in the University Library is one of the proposed events. Progress on this is currently proving challenging, with the people they need to talk to difficult to get hold of. However, they are continuing to pursue the idea and are gradually making progress.
- The date for the dinner is fixed (Saturday 21st September 2024) and has been for a while, with all members informed of the date. The venue is Trinity College's Great Hall, which can seat up to 500 people. This is expected to be adequate capacity as it is slightly more than the total numbers of Youths since 1724.
- Discussions had started with the church about services and music, however, these conversations were with Devin, who is no longer at GSM. Jutta advises that the key thing with church is to get a date in the calendar and that this doesn't need to wait until there is a new vicar. She recommends speaking to Richard Summers, the church's Director of Operations. There is currently an interim Director of Music but music discussions can wait a bit. Jutta states she is happy to assist in getting a date fixed. The current intention is the same weekend as the dinner.
- Gareth has started writing a book on the history of the Society. The Ringing World will publish this, with it fairly formally agreed that they will be taking on the associated risks of publishing.

The costs involved in celebrating the anniversary are not yet clear. This is why Phil has suggested (in an email in advance of the meeting) ring fencing £5000 for the 300th anniversary. Phil states that this would still leave ~£8000 reserves in the Society's account. The meeting are not being asked for approval of this expenditure currently but just to mark some money. Approval of spending will need an EGM, sometime in the next 6 months, once there is a more formal proposal of exactly what to spend money on.

If other members are interested in being involved in the committee or have ideas, they are encouraged to let the committee know.

Gareth elaborates further on the exhibition idea. The University Library has an exhibition space to the right of the entrance as one enters, and this is what the committee are seeking to use. Exhibitions run here for 6 months at a time. Gareth emailed over a year ago and has not yet had a response. If he doesn't hear back soon, he will look for another exhibition space, perhaps in the Central Library.

When the National 12 Bell was hosted at GSM, there was an idea of having some pull out stands about the history of the Society at the back of the church. This didn't happen as the organising committee ran out of time but a revival of this idea is being pursued. Jutta thinks it could be good to educate the wider church community about ringing. (It is also noted that this is an example of an educational purpose that the MCF Bell Fund could perhaps be expanded to cover.)

The committee will continue with their current organisation. Another (early stage) idea in the works is handbells on punts. It is commented that perhaps a Guinness World Record for most bells on punts could be set, leading George to comment that it would be good to have some events that the press will like.

It is clarified that not all the events will take place over one weekend but throughout the year. Other than for the dinner, dates are not yet set. Lesley Boyle is expected to join the team to help with the communications strategy.

Phil returns to the topic of ring fencing £5000 and asks if the meeting are happy with this, again emphasising it's not a commitment to spend. Patrick Brooke comments it sounds like a lot of money and asks why it needs ring fencing if it needs an EGM to approve the spending anyway. George clarifies they are not necessarily expecting to spend as much as £5000. Ali Brooke adds to the comment that it sounds like a lot of money and that it would be good to have a better idea what it is needed for. Gareth gives as an example the idea of taking a mobile belfry to the Cambridge Folk Festival for 4 days, which would have associated hire costs etc. It is deemed that no formal proposal will be made to ring fence funds but people have been formally notified of the intention to spend money, so cannot be surprised by this at an EGM.

Cecilia Pipe thanks the committee for all the work that has gone on behind the scenes.

14. St Clement's Update

Barry Johnson states that in the past year, a ring of bells has been fully installed and they are now in use. He thanks the Society for their gift of a bell, which lots of Society members scattered around the country contributed to. The bells are already been used but use is expected to increase when Lynne Hughes starts as manager on Monday 20th March. The financial situation is healthy, with the project completed within budget and with there still being enough money to operate for at least two years, including paying Lynne's salary. Longer term sustainability needs to be considered. Barry outlines five points that the centre is working towards in the next year:

- Being open to the public five days a week.
- Contacting local schools.

- Spreading word around the local area. There is already interest in the district and the aim is to build on this.
- Recruit volunteers, asking them to sign up for a session once a fortnight for example.
- Investigate funding to reduce the cost of teaching for children and students. This might be money from ART but other possibilities should also be looked at.

June Mackay asks if there is any service ringing. Barry responds there is not, since general Sunday mornings don't work but there could be for special services. The idea is for people to come of St Clement's and populate towers in the surrounding area.

The meeting applauds.

15. Safeguarding

Dave Richards states that there is nothing in particular to report. He has redone his leadership safeguarding course in the last year. The meeting are reminded that it's about three years since the last big push for people to do C0, so many people will now need to renew their safeguarding training. C0 is now called the Basis Awareness Course. As a rule of thumb, if someone has a key fob, they should do the Basic Awareness Course.

Cecilia Pipe asks if there is anyone who manages when we do the course and issues reminders. Dave responds that previously this was done by former GSM Church and Music Administrator Emma Dunn but some information was lost when she left. Marianne Hirtzel, Church Administrator, now issues some reminders but many people won't receive a reminder. Jutta acknowledges that the church probably need to reconstruct their information. Patrick Brooke says he will follow this up as secretary.

Jonathan Shanklin highlights that there was recently an article in the Ringing World about how it is desirable to have a means of expulsion from a society and suspension of officers if an incident occurs. He is not suggesting that there have been any incidents or need for this to date, but that the Society perhaps needs to make an allowance for this. Phil Orme clarifies that there is not currently a means for this, members are elected for life. Barry Johnson voices that exclusion from the ringing room is not necessarily a matter for the Society, a point with which Cecilia Pipe agrees. Liz Orme suggests officers review the article. Dave agrees that the officers can review if an expulsion term should be added to the rules.

16. Health and Safety

Liz Orme informs the meeting that the safety assessment has been reviewed in the past year and is on the noticeboard. Last August, Liz and Luke Smith went through the risk assessment in detail, carrying out a comprehensive review. Liz has been managing the risk assessment since about 2005 and would like to pass it on, she suggests that the secretary takes this on. She has prepared guidance documentation to outline what needs doing and how.

Richard Smith raises his concern, as he has in previous years, that if you go out the east window of the ringing room during an emergency, for example if there is smoke or flames

on the staircase, the escape route is not adequate. Liz responds that this issue was resolved a couple of years ago - the east window is not a recognised escape route. Richard feels that resolving you shouldn't do it is not a resolution. Liz informs the meeting that independent consultants reviewed the church's emergency escape route strategy - there are different door closers and releases in the stairs and through the choir room provides a second exit route . It would also be very difficult to get a helicopter to take you down from the roof. Richard acknowledges the multiple routes but is dissatisfied because both still require getting as far down the stairs as the organ. Liz suggests that if Richard would like more details, perhaps she can put him in touch with GSM's Director of Operations, Richard Summers.

Richard Smith would like consideration to be given to the case where it is not possible to descend the stairs far enough to reach any of the potential exit routes. He acknowledges that ascending the stairs to the top of the tower would definitely be a very last resort. He outlines that the drop out of the east window onto the nave roof is only about 4 foot, which could be jumped, or the ladder that lives by the window could be used to descend this drop. Once on the nave roof, one could proceed to the south aisle roof and down to the ground from there. However, from the nave roof to the south aisle roof is about a 10 foot drop, too great a distance to jump without likely injury. Richard suggests putting in a roll up safety ladder, so that in the worst case, when the tower stairs cannot be descended far enough, this could be used as an escape route. Richard feels that the addition of such a ladder would convert this escape route from leaving someone with serious injuries (e.g. a broken ankle) to a reasonably safe exit route.

George Unsworth points out that having another option is generally a good idea. Patrick Brooke states he is happy to follow this matter up with Richard Summers. Liz will give Patrick the details she has from two AGMs ago when the church put a lot of effort into its fire escapes.

Liz is thanked for looking after health and safety for so long.

17. AOB

The outgoing secretary thanks her fellow officers and extends a big thank you to Liz Orme for acting as church liaison during her time as secretary. Jutta is thanked for chairing the meeting. There is no other business. The meeting closes at: 21:34.