

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held in Sidgwick Hall, Newnham College, Cambridge, on Sunday 5th May 2024

Members Present

President: J A Agg
Master: K J Hawkins
Secretary: L I van Dongen

Amy Dunn
Andrew Cooke
Andrew Roberts
Catriona Agg
Chris Winkless-Clark
Claire Barlow
Clarke Walters
David Richards
Eleanor Marshall

Frank King
James Tan
Jonathan Martin
Josho Sarma
Kate Jennings
Luke Butcher
Luke Smith
Oliver Winkless-Clark
Richard Smith

Sam Johnson
Sam Spencer
Stella Johnson
Thomas Haslam
Tilly Heaton
Toby Clifton

The President opened the meeting at 13:58

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Greg Chu
James Ellison
Ben Gladwyn
Lucy Hennessy
Christine Hill
Peter Hill
Thomas Hooley

Melissa Nash
Oliver Richards
Jonathan Shanklin
Jadd Virji
Alan Winter

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting YEAR

These were proposed as a true and correct copy of the meeting by David Richards, seconded by Eleanor Marshall, accepted unanimously, and signed by the President.

3 Matters Arising

There were matters arising.

4 Election of New Members

There were no new members to elect.

5 Cambridge Towers

5.1 St Andrew the Great

The Steeplekeeper reported that the annual inspection took place yesterday afternoon, and no major issues were found, but there were some minor issues. After checking all of the stays, the stay on the 6 was found to be slightly damaged. The bottom bolt has been overtightened and consequently punctured the fibreglass. There are plans to replace this during quiet period. Furthermore, a number of bolts were missing on some wheels: two bolts on the 2, and one on the 5. It should be fairly easy to get replacements for these. Also, the clapper on the 7 is slightly loose, but this wasn't something that could be fixed at the time, so this will be adjusted at the same time as the new stay being put in for the 6. The reason for this adjustment not being possible was lack of some tools, such as a long spanner and pliers.

The Steeplekeeper continued on to suggest that these could be purchased and kept with the Steeplekeeper instead of in the void, to avoid them going missing. The President suggested putting a toolbox in the void to keep all the tools in, rather than the tools being scattered over the floor. Frank King noted that there is a formal inventory of the tools owned by the Guild, but Stella Johnson explained that this is no longer up to date due to some tools having gone missing a few years ago. Chris Winkless-Clark explained that some builders had been in the tower for unrelated purposes, and presumably took the tools by mistake. The President concluded that all of the points discussed should be considered by the new committee, and new steeplekeeping tools should be purchased.

He added that the acoustics at StAG are now much better, and thanked Amy Dunn and Melissa Nash for their work in resolving this.

5.2 St Bene't's

Sam Johnson reported that a complete set of six new ropes have now been ordered. Combined with the ropes we currently have, this should be enough to last quite a while, as well as fully replacing the stretchy rope on the 4. He pointed out that this is something many people in the Guild will be happy with. Chris Winkless-Clark suggested swapping the rope back to the stretchy one when the SUA is next held in Cambridge, to keep our advantage in the striking competition.

Sam Johnson continued, reporting that in the past year two peals have taken place at St Bene't's, the first peals since 2013. There have also been regular quarters, although recently not as many, which he suggested may be due to Melissa Nash organising less.

He also assured those present that the bells are still there, and an inspection is scheduled for the last Friday of quiet period. The President reminded everyone that there are many quarter peal slots available at St Bene't's, and it would be good to make use of these.

5.3 Great St Mary's

David Richards said that there was not much to report on Great St Mary's. A new vicar - Jutta Brueck - has recently been appointed. In terms of bells and access to the tower, he reported that the intercom just outside the ringing chamber is variably working. Most of the time it does work, but for those occasions where it doesn't, there is a contact number for the front desk on the noticeboard, which should be used instead. He also said that the simulator was repaired shortly after the AGM last year, but he is aware that it often requires turning off and on again a few times before working. He said that it is now working on most bells, and Sam Johnson clarified that it is currently not working on the 8.

David Richards also reminded those present that it is currently the 300 anniversary year of the Cambridge Youths, and if anyone wishes to celebrate ringing in Cambridge, be it by ringing a peal, quarter peal, short touches or ringing blindfolded, then they should get in touch.

Kate Jennings brought the attention back to the simulator, and suggested a troubleshooting guide being produced, containing suggested fixes or step by step instructions for students to follow if the simulator is not working during teaching. Often students are unsure what to try, because there are so many wires and objects, such as a mannequin head. There was general agreement that a guide would be a good idea. Sam Johnson pointed out that many people know how to fix different bits of the simulator, but that the knowledge is not necessarily all in one place.

5.4 Our Lady and the English Martyrs

Richard Smith provided those present with an update on the status of ringing at OLEM. He started by explaining that the bells have not been rung for over a year. There were scheduled practices in May and June, including a Guild practice on 7th June. Unfortunately some masonry fell off the spire near the pavement next to Hills Road, just a few days before the planned Guild practice. The northbound side of Hills Road was closed for weeks after this, and scaffolding was put up around the spire. During this time no ringing was allowed. Work was carried out very quickly, but unfortunately ringing has not yet been able to resume. He added that test ringing recently took place on 6th April, where there were structural engineers and people from the church present. This will result in a report from the engineers, hopefully stating that ringing can resume. When the test ringing took place, Richard Smith was told that the report would be prepared in a matter of days, but the report has yet to appear. If this report is successful, it will go to the Diocese of East Anglia, following which we will be able to resume ringing. He added that a realistic timeline for this will not involve any ringing in the summer, but that we may be able to resume ringing in the autumn.

5.5 St Clement's

Sam Johnson reported that the teaching centre is fully set up now, and they are continuing to get members of the public paying to learn about ringing. St Clement's now has 30 five star reviews on Tripadvisor, and the Bells of St Clement's are now in the top 50 things to do in Cambridge. He hopes that this will increase interest further.

Other than teaching, the church is available for other ringing. The Guild has recently been using St Clement's to hold intermediate practices, as well as making use of it more frequently for quarter peal slots. Chris Winkless-Clark added that this is helped by the fact that it has become the Guild's go-to tower for more ambitious quarter peals, such as jump methods, where a bell as heavy as the Bene't's tenor is not desired. Sam Johnson agreed, and concluded that good use is being made of the Guild time we have available at St Clement's. Frank King asked if we should all head to Tripadvisor and leave glowing reviews, but Sam Johnson said that this was not advisable.

The President added that St Clement's are holding regular teaching sessions, for which they need helpers. If anyone is interested in helping with sessions and getting mentoring in how to teach, they should consider going along to these, and get in touch with Lynne Hughes in the first instance.

6 Presentation of Accounts

The Secretary presented the accounts as examined on Friday 3rd by Frank King. She explained that we have made a loss of about £500 this year, not including pending cheques at the previous year end, and one obvious factor in this may be the new tenor clapper at StAG, which cost £522. The Guild also made a slight loss on the dinner this year, which in part is due to Christ's charging VAT on non-student tickets, but this hadn't been factored in when setting the ticket prices.

Chris Winkless-Clark asked about funding for the Freshers Fair, and if any reimbursement had come from the ART recruitment package. The Secretary explained that the form for this has been sent off recently, so this has been applied for but is not included in the accounts for the past year. If the application is approved this will amount to roughly £350, to reimburse the Guild for the 2023 Freshers' Fair.

Stella Johnson asked for clarification for the VAT for the dinner. She asked if this was something that we were aware of before paying. The Master clarified that this was not expected, but there was wording from Christ's to suggest that this might be the case. She added that this is something to be aware of for future dinners, and clarified that this was not a planned loss. Frank King added to this that the rate of inflation has also increased this year. Since the Dinner is where the Guild makes the majority of their income, but dinner prices have gone up at fast rates, this is making it harder to raise a profit. He added that future organisers will need to think about increasing the prices to avoid the Guild sinking into oblivion. He also made the suggestion that we might need to look for cheaper dinner options without reducing the ticket prices. The Master pointed out that this will be challenging, because all decisions made this year were made to keep costs as low as possible already. Kate Jennings and Stella Johnson

added that this had been the case for the previous two dinners as well.

Stella Johnson suggested that we could look at raising the membership fee, since this has remained at £10 for many years now. She suggested a possible price to be £15 instead. Eleanor Marshall opined that this sounded very reasonable, since many other societies charge much higher membership fees. The President agreed that this is a consideration the new committee should take, as well as considering if we would want to raise the price as a one-off increase, or gradually ramp it up over time. Sam Johnson added that he recalls that his dad, Barry Johnson, paid a membership fee of roughly £2 in 1968, which, adjusted for inflation, would be around £30 now.

Claire Barlow pointed out that many societies require payment for events, whereas the Guild doesn't charge anything for attending practices, so this could be worth considering as well. Sam Spencer suggested introducing a quarter peal fee at StAG, since this may be less threatening to the growth of the society, while still being a common practice in towers.

Kate Jennings returned to the topic of the Dinner, and added that since the costs are being kept low anyway, further reducing the quality of the dinner or increasing ticket prices may deter people from wanting to attend, so this would need to be taken into consideration. She added to Claire Barlow's point that ringing is quite an odd hobby, and particularly new learners may not enjoy it enough while still learning bell handling to want to pay.

Toby Clifton suggested making it easier for members to make one-off donations. With a quick skim on the website, he couldn't see any easy way for one to make a donation. Since the Guild has such a large number of members, this could be something worth doing. Claire Barlow added to this that we should especially consider this when people 'pop their clogs', and suggested marketing this as: "Remember the Guild in your will and we will ring for you!"

The President thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion, and noted that there were many useful points raised. He also suggested that we could look at putting some money into a higher interest account, since we don't urgently need access to everything owned by the Guild. Eleanor Marshall asked what the current interest rate is, which the President said was around 1% this has increased significantly from previous years, and gave the example that two years ago the interest amounted to about 70 pence, whereas now it was £70.

The Senior Treasurer added that he has briefly looked into other options for savings accounts this year.

The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Stella Johnson, seconded by Kate Jennings, and passed unanimously.

7 Officers' Reports

The reports from the Master, Teaching Officer, and Steeplekeeper, which were circulated in advance of the meeting, are included at the end of these minutes.

The Master had nothing to add to her report, and reiterated her thanks to the current committee and wished the incoming committee good luck. The President thanked the Master for all her efforts this year. This was met with applause.

The Steeplekeeper had nothing more to add to her report or those matters about StAG that have already been discussed.

The Secretary, in absence of the Teaching Officer, pointed everyone to the Teaching Officer's report for a summary of teaching in the past year.

The President thanked the whole committee, and this was again met with applause.

8 Election of Officers

8.1 Senior Officers

The Master read out the nominations for Senior Officers, which were as follows:

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
President	Jonathan Agg	Jadd Virji	Melissa Nash
Senior Treasurer	David Richards	Kirsten Hawkins	Jonathan Nash
Accounts Examiner	Frank King	Greg Chu	Lena van Dongen

These proposals were accepted with no objections.

8.2 Junior Officers

The Master then read out the nominations received for Junior Officer positions:

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Seconder
Master	Sam Spencer	Greg Chu	Kate Jennings
Secretary	Andrew Cooke	Lena van Dongen	Eleanor Marshall
Assistant Master	Jonathan Martin	Kirsten Hawkins	Andrew Cooke
Steeplekeeper	Amy Dunn	Kate Jennings	Stella Johnson
Teaching Officer	Josho Sarma	Stella Johnson	Chris Winkless-Clark
Librarian	Eleanor Marshall	Josho Sarma	Sam Spencer

These proposals were again accepted with no objections.

9 Diary Dates

Cambridge District 6 bell Striking Competition, Saturday 11th May 2024 - The Master commented that so far only one person has let her know that they would be interested in ringing, so encouraged others to consider taking part. She added that there is no need for previous experience in striking competitions, and that the location this year is Stapleford - a convenient distance to cycle. Stella Johnson added that there is also a bus that goes to Stapleford. The President reiterated that all are welcome, and Rounds and Call Changes are an acceptable piece of ringing in the competition.

University Sermon, Sunday 26th May 2024 - The Master encouraged people to attend this to ring, and the President explained that part of the agreement with the church is to ring for this, in exchange for being allowed numerous practices there.

Ridgman Competition (Biggleswade), Saturday 8th June 2024 - The Master thanked all those who have responded to her email about this, but added that some people have not yet done so. So requested that they do so soon, in order for the band to be confirmed. She hoped to organise practice touches soon, and would discuss with the incoming Master about holding these at Evensong ringing.

Youth vs Guild Rounders, Sunday 16th June 2024 - The Master said that for the past few years the Guild has been soundly thrashed, so asked as many people as possible to come along. Kate Jennings suggested an alternative solution of someone taking the Pipes on holiday for the weekend. The President noted that the 12 bell striking contest is being held the day before, so the Youths' numbers may be down.

Guild Week (Somerset): Saturday 17th to Wednesday 21st August 2024 - The Secretary reported on behalf of Christine and Peter Hill that preparations for Guild week are going well, and read out a summary she received from them, as can be found below:

The “week” will be based in Yeovil with attendees making their own arrangements for accommodation (a number of members have already booked in to The Manor Hotel in Yeovil), however we have found a hall where younger members will be able to stay at a cost of about £10 per night. Peals and quarters will depend on demand - currently we have a 12 and an 8 bell peal planned. A good range of towers have been booked for general ringing, including Queen Camel and Sherborne, the twelves at Shepton Beauchamp and South Petherton and the tens at Beaminster and Charminster.

We will be sending out a letter to all members in May with more details and asking for people to let us know if they will be attending. If anyone has any questions in the meantime please contact us at cugw2024@gmail.com.

The President added to this that Yeovil is easy to get to by train, and if anyone isn't able to make the full “week”, they could consider coming for only half of it. He noted that there are good arrangements in place for accommodation this year.

Dave Richards reminded the meeting that the 300th anniversary dinner of the Cambridge Youths is being held on 21st September 2024, and it is open to anyone as long as they don't mind being around lots of ringers for the evening. He added that, as discussed previously with the increasing cost of holding dinners at colleges, this is a rare opportunity to attend a dinner at Trinity College. Student tickets are subsidised, so the dinner should be affordable to attend. He encouraged everyone to consider attending, and to let him know if they need help with accommodation for the weekend.

10 Any Other Business

Sam Johnson turned the discussion towards the new ropes at St Bene't's, suggesting that the Guild could contribute towards the cost of these. He explained that the Bene't's bell fund doesn't quite cover the cost, since there is around £800 in the fund, but the ropes cost £1300. He suggested that since an overwhelming majority of the ringing at St Bene't's is done by Guild members, it seems reasonable for the Guild to contribute, and suggested an amount of £100 to £200, which would be roughly the price of one rope. Chris Winkless-Clark agreed that this is a fair suggestion, given how much ringing we do at St Bene't's. Richard Smith asked for clarification on how much the church would be contributing, but made clear that he is also happy for the Guild to contribute. Sam Johnson clarified that the church would be able to make up the difference. Stella Johnson asked whether the Guild's contribution would replace payment from the bell fund or from the church, and Sam Johnson said that he was unsure, but would discuss this with the church. He suggested that one solution may be for the church and bell fund to cover the cost of the ropes, and for the Guild to top up the bell fund.

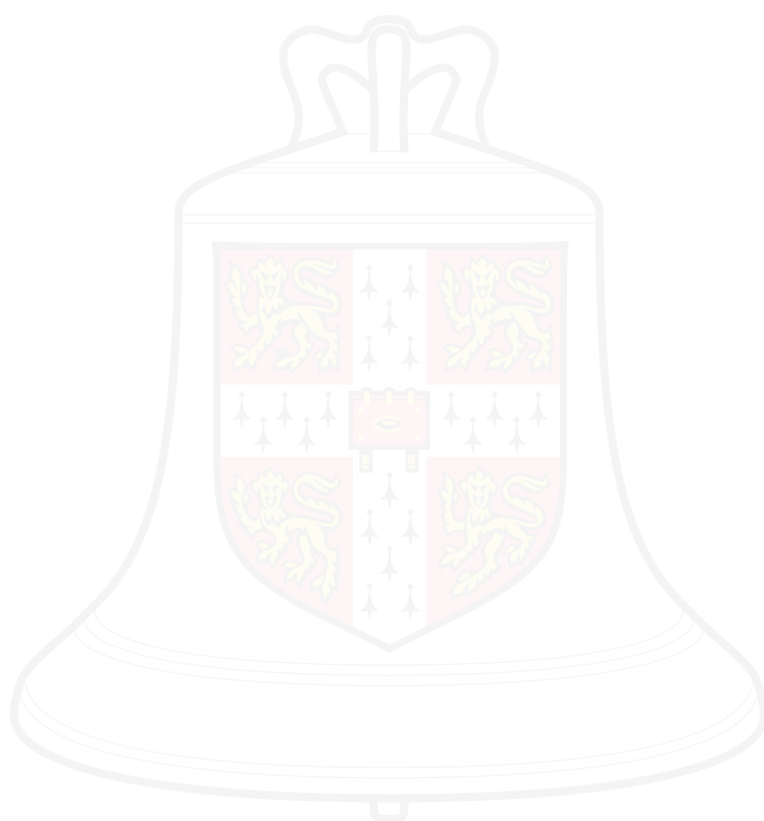
The President suggested to pass a proposal that up to £200 can go towards the ropes or bell fund, as Sam Johnson sees fit after discussions with the church on whether they would like us to contribute. Kate Jennings agreed that this would be a good proposal. The President pointed out that he appreciated that Sam Johnson is in a difficult position, as it is reasonable for the Guild to contribute something, but any agreement made should be fair for all parties.

The President proposed this, David Richards seconded, and all were in favour.

Amy Dunn wished to propose the new crocheted Guild mascot, Peel the Carrot, for associate membership, noting that there is a performance listed on Bellboard where the mascot rang a short touch in hand. The Master added that the outgoing committee agreed that if the membership fee of £10 is going to be paid on behalf of the mascot, then it seems appropriate. She said that if no one objects to inanimate members, then she would be happy to propose the membership. Stella Johnson seconded, over half of those present were in favour, and one was against. The mascot was welcomed to the Guild.

The President then raised a point that there have recently been Premier Inn signs put up near St Andrews the Great, and they are planning to open rooms in what was previously office space. He said that this would be happening within the next year. Chris Winkless-Clark commented that the bells are relatively quiet from the outside, so hopefully noise will not be too much of an issue. The President concluded that this should be something for the new committee to keep in mind, but no action needed to be taken at present.

The President thanked Claire Barlow for her much appreciated efforts in booking the room for the meeting. With no further business, he closed the meeting at 14:42.
L I van Dongen



Appendix: Officers' Reports

Master's Report - Kirsten Hawkins

Hopefully it is not getting too boring for the Master's report to start with "this has been a good year for the Guild", because it is once again the case. We continue to enjoy strong attendance at practice nights, service ringing, and social events, not least thanks to the continued support of resident members.

Last Easter term the Guild was kept busy with plenty of ringing, scoring three quarter peals for the King's coronation and entering band into several striking competitions. On the social side, we enjoyed another alternative dinner at Cote Brasserie, a rounders match against the SCY, and plenty of pub trips. In August there was a ringing outing to the Hitchin/Stevenage area, and also Guild Week, organised by Brian Meads around Essex.

Our recruitment efforts at the beginning of Michaelmas were once again successful, recruiting several existing ringers and gathering over 150 sign-ups to our mailing lists for new learners. I am pleased to see that many of our new learners are now joining us regularly at practices and service ringing, and it is thanks to the efforts and enthusiasm of everyone who has helped with teaching this year that this is the case. Particular congratulations go to James, Tianyi, and Toby, who have all rung first quarter peals within a year of beginning ringing.

Michaelmas term was also a busy one for outings and socials; there was the Cycle Outing to the east of Cambridge, organised by Sam; the SUA hosted in Bristol; the London Outing, organised by Greg; and the term rounded off with Guild Christmas dinner, coordinated by our anti-curry officers Oliver and Amy.

The Guild descended upon Devon at New Year, enjoying activities including climbing, late-night board games, and some ringing. The Lent Term, too, had a packed social calendar, including a formal at Downing College, pancake day celebration, squash games, and the Joint Outing with the OUS. At the end of term, the Annual Dinner was held at Christ's College, accompanied by a successful weekend of peal and quarter-peal ringing. I would like to thank the Dinner Touch band for their hard work practising, and in particular congratulate Amy, Andrew, and Jonathan on a great debut performance. Thanks also to Lena, Jonathan, and Alan for making the weekend a success. We also rang for the Boat Race again this year, no doubt playing an important role in encouraging the Cambridge boats forwards towards victory.

Since last year's AGM (and at the time of writing this report), the Guild has scored 62 quarter peals and 19 peals, many of them reflecting the progress made by members. There have been first quarter peals for James, Tianyi, Toby, Oliver, and Amy; a first peal for Jonathan, and first for the Guild for Ben; and too many other 'firsts' to list them all here. Among these have been firsts on higher numbers achieved at GSM, including firsts of Stedman Cinques for Lena, Ben, and Chris, and Cambridge Maximus for Andrew and Sam; we remain grateful to the Cambridge Youths for the opportunity to attend their practices and further develop our ringing. I am also grateful to Melissa Nash for organising the successful Intermediate Practices at St Clement's, bridging the gaps from rounds to called changes to plain hunt.

That the Guild is in such great health is in no small part thanks to the efforts of the committee (as well many others, who are too numerous to all thank here); my thanks to Sam, Lena, Lucy, Amy, and Andrew for all their work. I wish the upcoming committee all the best, and am sure that they will continue the Guild's success into the future.

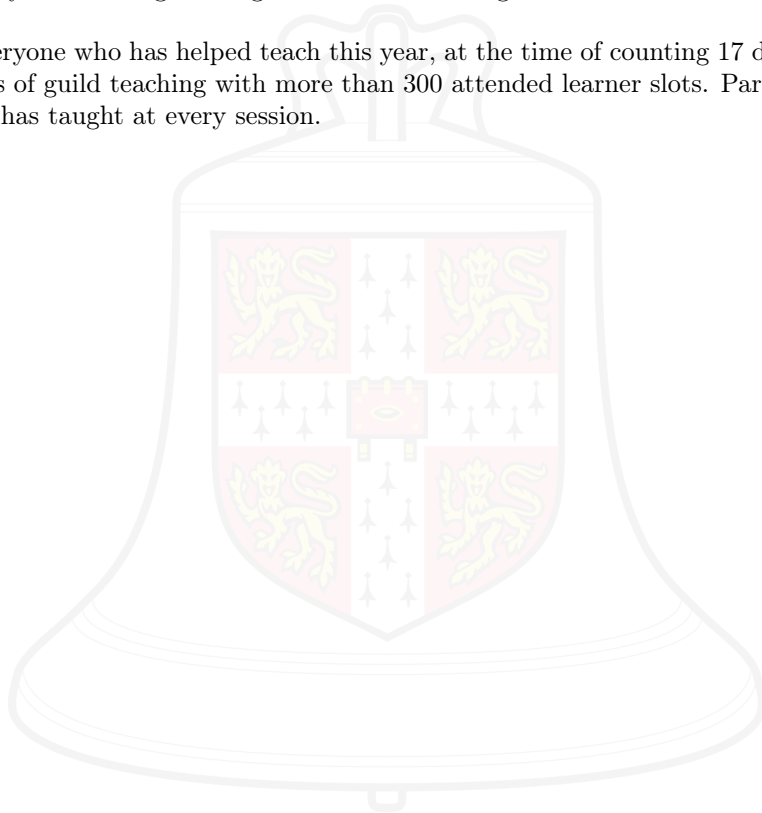
Teaching Officer's Report - Lucy Hennessy

This year has seen continued growth in the guild's teaching endeavours. Thanks to the Charmborough Ring, nearly 100 people signed up to our mailing lists alongside 15 existing ringers. 48 people signed up to the have-a-go sessions, and we were at full capacity for the first few weeks of regular teaching. Throughout Michaelmas around 12 learners attended regular sessions, and most continue to attend in Easter. Three of these learners have rung their first quarters this year, including one ringing their first quarters in hand and tower on consecutive days.

The regular teaching sessions continue to focus on the basics of both hand and tower, and new intermediate practices introduced by Melissa and Sam have been run to push learners further. These have focussed on rounds and calls, plain hunt, and other group handling exercises to help bridge the gap between one-on-one teaching and ringing as part of a band on practice nights.

Lent term was particularly strong, with well attended bootcamp sessions putting the term off to a good start. Thanks to the ART recruitment package, we were also able to run a successful ART M1 course in January attended by a wide range of ringers from within the guild and much further afield.

Thanks goes to everyone who has helped teach this year, at the time of counting 17 different people have supported 50 hours of guild teaching with more than 300 attended learner slots. Particular thanks go to Sam Johnson who has taught at every session.



Steeplekeeper's Report - Amy Dunn

My predecessor wished me a less eventful time as Steeplekeeper than the previous year and, for once, this seems to have been the case, with all clappers remaining firmly attached to their respective bells and no other catastrophes occurring.

The main issue that needed taking care of was the ongoing problem with the internal sound control at StAG. The noise of the bells in the ringing room had been increasing to an unpleasant, if not unhealthy, level, leading to difficulty in hearing calls etc. The main form of internal sound control in the tower was simply the air gap between the belfry and the void. Furthermore, there were significant cracks and gaps in the floor of the void, in particular around some ducting passing through the floor and between the wooden floor and the walls of the void. In photos from 2021, there had been carpet present around the ducts. This was removed by the Church due to the fire risk presented and may have been the cause of the increased volume.

In Michaelmas, the decision was made to fill in these holes using sound insulating foam kindly provided by the Youths. This, along with the addition of a small piece of wood filling in the remainder of the hole for the trapdoor between the void and belfry, had the desired impact and the sound of the bells returned to a more suitable volume. I would like to say thank you to Melissa, Kirsten and Jonathan Agg for helping out with the foam installation and Richard Smith and Luke Smith for their advice. During this work, the need for some further tools was noted. These were subsequently purchased, including a headtorch, file and tape measure, to supplement the collection already present.

The annual inspection of the bells at StAG is planned to be carried out on the 4th May, with help from Sam Johnson and Chris Winkless-Clark, which will hopefully go smoothly. It will also be a good opportunity to raise the ropes on the trebles as some find the sallys to be falling a bit low.

