

Minutes of the Guild Week Business Meeting, held in The Gateway, Yeovil, on Monday 19th August 2024

Members Present

President: J A Agg

Minute taker: L I van Dongen

Brian Meads
Catriona Agg
Chris Rogers
Chris Winkless-Clark
Christine Hill
Christine Nutton
Clarke Walters
Greg Chu
Ian Vincent
James Tan
John Hutchinson

John Sherwood
John Sturdy
Jonathan Nash
Jonathan Shanklin
Karen Lebon
Ken Darvill
Kirsten Hawkins
Martin Bright
Naomi Laredo
Nicholas Small
Nicholas Smith

Peter Hill
Richard Smith
Richard Underwood
Richard Youdale
Rod Lebon
Stella Johnson
Thomas Cox
Vivian Nutton
Stedman Lebon*
Peel t C Dunn-Jennings*

*Non-human

The President opened the meeting at 19:04

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:

Alan Griffin
Bill Perrins
Kate Jennings
Jadd Virji
Marianne Hayward

Melissa Nash
Richard Pargeter
Sam Spencer
Tom Hooley

2 Matters Arising from the Guild Week Business Meeting 2023

There were no matters arising.

3 Election of New Members

Juliet Thornton (Christ's 2018) was proposed for membership by Stella Johnson and seconded by Jonathan Nash. Duncan Loweth (St John's 2004) was proposed by Peter Hill and seconded by Christine Hill. Isabell Nicoll (Christ's 1983) was proposed by Jadd Virji and seconded by Jonathan Nash.

All were accepted unanimously.

4 Current Guild Week

The President started by thanking Christine and Peter Hill for their hard work organising the week. Christine Hill summarised the week as going well. She said that an extra 45 minutes had been added at the 6 bell tower on Tuesday, and one of the earlier quarter peals was relocated to a different tower, but otherwise everything is still as publicised.

Catriona Agg added that she was not intending to arrange any transport for Wednesday, under the assumption that most people will be needing to drive, but that anyone needing a lift should let her know.

Kirsten Hawkins proposed a thanks to Catriona Agg for organising transport for the week, which was met with agreement from all. The President thanked Christine and Peter Hill again, adding that it had been a difficult task with more people than usual.

5 Future Guild Weeks

The President thanked Chris Winkless-Clark and Stella Johnson for offering to organise next year's Guild Week. Chris Winkless-Clark said that they are planning for it to be based in the West Midlands, including a day in Birmingham and a day in Worcester. They have already booked an hour and a half at the Bullring, and told everyone that if they have requests or advice for any particularly nice or challenging towers, then they should let him know. He added that Guild Week will take place on the usual dates – the week before the August bank holiday.

The President said that it's great to already have places booked, and urged anyone considering hosting future Guild Weeks to get in touch. Chris Rogers remarked that there haven't been any Guild Weeks in Lancashire for a while, with the last one being in 1992, and this could be a good location with many towers in the area.

Christine Hill raised a concern that there is a noticeable gender imbalance, and wondered if single women may be deterred, perhaps by the lack of central organisation. Stella Johnson asked if there are more women that would actually want to come, and Christine Hill confirmed that she historically remembers more coming when the accommodation was more cohesive. Jonathan Shanklin suggested that if Chris Winkless-Clark can find a central boarding school that this might help, but the President added that this would be a big change from recent years. Stella Johnson felt that the church hall setup worked better for students. She also said that it would be helpful to find out why certain individuals are deterred, as this would make finding a solution easier.

6 Obituaries

The President invited attendees to share memories of several Guild members who have sadly passed: Andrew Johnson, Giles Galley and Jim Foster. Many fond memories and anecdotes were shared, and a moment of silence was held.

7 Diary Dates

Guild Week 2025, Saturday 16th - Wednesday 20th August 2025 - As already discussed, this will take place in the West Midlands area.

London Outing, Saturday 30th November 2024 - Kate Jennings is organising the London Outing this year, and arrangements are progressing well.

Annual Guild Dinner, Saturday 15th March 2025 - This year's university term dates are later than usual, so the Master has confirmed a booking for the week before the usual date to avoid a clash with the 12 Bell Striking Contest. The Dinner will be held at Fitzwilliam College.

8 Any Other Business

Richard Smith, one of the two CCCBR representatives for the Guild along with David Richards, spoke about changes coming from the Central Council. There is a motion coming up in September to change the manner in which affiliation fees are paid. Currently the fees stand at 20p per active member, which for the Guild is around 200. The proposal is to increase this fee to 40p next year, and then to £1 in 2026. For many associations this is not an issue, but for the Guild, with no fixed income, £200 would be a significant yearly sum to pay. Richard Smith has tried to find out what the money would go towards in the Central Council, but hasn't been able to get any details. He listed a number of possible things the money may go towards, such as general increase in costs, and various one off projects, but explained that he did not see how this would require the suggested fee increase. When asked for clarification of where the figure of 200 members came from, Brian Meads explained that he did try to count it up once from peals rung, the Annual Dinner and Guild Week, but that the number is quite a rough estimate. Richard Smith explained that a possible course of action would be to pass a motion only for the first fee increase, and the increase to £1 could be left as a future motion, to avoid committing to it immediately. Clarke Walters pointed out that the College Youths are in the same position, with not having an annual subscription fee, and hold similar views to the Guild. He also pointed out that the majority of Guild members are also members of county associations, so those people are effectively being counted twice. Greg Chu asked for clarification on the benefits of being affiliated to the Central Council. Richard Smith explained that it is partly to show support of the work they do, and also to have influence over what it does. John Sturdy suggested that in order to help raise the funds, the Guild could consider creating a straightforward way for people to make voluntary donations. Rod Lebon suggested that prices could be increased, such as the cost of Annual Dinner tickets, peal fees, or an extra small charge for Guild Week, for example by adding £1 to the costs and explaining its purpose as being towards affiliation costs. The President concluded that there have been many good suggestions for the representatives to consider.

Clarke Walters presented various Guild documents that had been in his possession, including a handbell report from 1997, a receipt for work done on handbells in 1981 and a list of Guild Weeks as far back as 1906. He explained that he is happy to give them to the Guild in case there isn't already a copy available. Richard Underwood suggesting using the Guild Week list to put a full list on the website. Clarke Walters also said that one of the documents is a list of missing books from the library, and if it is still the case that these are missing, he has some personal copies that he would be willing to pass on to the Guild. The President thanked him for this kind offer.

Peter Hill brought up the fact that many people haven't been able to stand the tenor at towers this week, and conductors should take care to call stand before the tenor pulls off. Stella Johnson pointed out that another contributing factor is that many of the bells have been difficult to set regardless of timing.

The President proposed a clarification of signatories and the address on the Guild bank account. He proposed that the signatories should be David Richards, Jonathan Agg, Sam Spencer and Andrew Cooke – as Senior Treasurer, President, Master and Secretary respectively. He also proposed changing the address to that of David Richards, the Senior Treasurer. Kirsten Hawkins seconded the proposal, and all were in favour.

With no further business, the President closed the meeting at 19:48.

L I van Dongen