

Minutes of St Martin's Guild Annual General Meeting

Held on Saturday 9 January 2021 via Zoom.

The meeting began at 10.00, the Master, Clare McArdle, in the Chair. Standing Committee Officers also present were Arthur Reeves (Ringing Master), Tracy Stevens (Treasurer), Mark Eccleston (Archivist and Webmaster), Trish Everett (Safeguarding Officer), Stella Tew (Secretary)

1. Attendance and apologies for absence

There were 60 members present, including the Officers. Apologies for absence were received from: Fran Dodds, Malcolm Paulson, Jean Willis and Ben Sassons.

2. Remembering members who have died

Guild members were invited by Clare McArdle (Master) to spend a few minutes in silence in memory of Andrew Stubbs and Molly Barron, both of whom have died since the last AGM. (See addendum at foot of minutes for a summary of Molly Barron's ringing life)

3. Minutes of the business meeting held on 3.10.2020

The minutes of the last business meeting held on the above date were agreed as an accurate record: proposed by Phil Ramsbottom and seconded by Arthur Reeves.

Matters arising from the Minutes

4.1 BRF Rules

This action related to minor amendments required to the BRF rules. As this action had not been concluded, Tracy Stevens agreed to pick up discussions this year, in advance of a future Business Meeting.

5. Reports

Written reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting in a document entitled 'Officers' Reports'.

5.1 Financial reports

5.1.1 Treasurer

Tracy Stevens (Treasurer) presented the Guild's accounts and a written report.

Guild Accounts : Tracy referenced the balance sheet presented in the papers. She reported that the BRF was in a healthy position standing at £24,571, although it is not good practice to keep such a high level of funds on the balance sheet without plans for use. Whilst there were a few projects in the pipeline, Tracy encouraged members to get in touch if any local initiatives might require financial support.

Running costs: Areas of increased revenue costs were highlighted for software. £250 per annum (pa) is required to run the website as well as Zoom to support meetings, webinars etc. at around £172 pa. (i.e. around £450 increase in annual expenditure). Tracy clarified that whilst these costs have been partly offset in the year by savings on room hire, when room hire restarts, Zoom costs will continue as new way of working given the proven benefits this year with improved access.

In the light of these increased costs to the General Fund, it is suggested that there should not be a 25% apportionment of subscriptions to the BRF this year.

In support of identifying projects for BRF allocation, Simon Linford indicated that the CCCBR will be encouraging Guilds to spend from their accounts. This is especially important as the pandemic will cause a fall in heritage funding support to towers and the tower and bell restoration industry will be in need of support through use of such funds.

5.1.2 *Independent Examiners*

Steve Horton reported that both he and Tom Horton had reviewed the accounts for the year in detail. A few minor queries and points on presentation raised with Tracy had been dealt with satisfactorily. Steve Horton and Tom Horton therefore confirmed their assessment that the accounts were a true representation of the Guild's finances and commended the accounts to Guild members.

Thomas Horton proposed that the accounts be accepted and this was seconded by Rowena Shipley and these proposals were carried by those present.

5.1.3 *Treasurer's proposals*

Membership

- Annual subscription to remain at £10 with 50% concession rate as per rules.
- Associate membership currently equivalent to the annual subscription.

Apportionments to:

- £150 to the library in view of planned expenditure.

Peal fee

- To remain at zero.

The proposal was seconded by Olly Buckley and the motion was carried.

Clare McArdle thanked Tracy for her work throughout the year as Treasurer in support of the Guild.

5.1.4 *100 Club*

Clare McArdle reported that the 100 Club was now fully subscribed with 100 numbers sold to members. The monthly prizes now stand at first prize of £50 per month, second of £15 and third of £5. The resultant funds were contributed to the BRF at a level of £1,400 for the year.

Tracy confirmed that renewal letters for the 100 Club would be going out shortly. As 'the will of the members' is required to support this, Clare requested support for its continuation and this was confirmed by members present.

Clare thanked members for supporting the 100 Club and invited any member interested in supporting the management and operation of the fund in future to get in touch.

In response to a question, Clare was positive about the potential for the club to be expanded in numbers over 100 and is happy to explore this.

Simon Linford enquired whether 100 club members would be happy to contribute if this was to support to a training fund. Clare agreed to take this issue to both Standing Committee as well as opening this suggestion for discussion with 100 club members.

Jon Townsend also commented that a fund would still be required for both training as well as bell restoration. Clare thanked him for this point and suggested this would also be considered in the discussions.

5.2 ***Ringing Master***

Arthur Reeves (Guild Ringing Master) had submitted a written report.

Arthur expressed his enormous gratitude to all members for supporting Guild events during what has been a challenging year. As a Guild he considered that we have made the best of a difficult situation. Despite physical constraints and limited ringing opportunities he considered that there had been improved participation and engagement during the pandemic and lockdown periods thanks to the new online platforms Zoom, Ringing Room and handbells.

Arthur thanked the many members who had facilitated the training opportunities on offer. Membership has also increased significantly this year which seems to be a reflection of the fact that people are happy to buy into the values of the Guild. Arthur said that it had been a great privilege for him to have undertaken this role.

Clare McArdle and members present thanked Arthur for his support as Ringing Master.

5.3 ***Henry Johnson Dinner Secretary***

Jenny Sunter (Henry Johnson Dinner Secretary) had submitted a written report.

Jenny reported that a decision had been made to book a different venue to the Council House for the 2021 dinner, although events with the pandemic had subsequently overtaken this. The Burlington Hotel had been booked for 2021, and they are now holding for 2022.

In view of this, the current proposal is now to replace the event with a virtual meeting and celebration. It is meant to provide a chance to toast Henry Johnson and have a virtual opportunity to meet with friends and fellow ringers on Saturday 27 February 2021. This has now been set up as an event on Eventbrite for interested ringers to register and book. There is one option for a free ticket and another option to book and also make a donation. Any funds generated from donations will go to the General Fund. A link to the event has been provided in the Officers' Reports for the AGM, as well as in the next Newsletter issued and is soon to be posted on the Guild Facebook page.

Note: Jenny recommended that people book as many tickets as they need for Zoom access. For example, if one family wishes to use three different devices to access the event via Zoom, three separate places will need to be booked.

The full programme can be accessed on the link for those people who prefer to have this available. There is also an option to contact Jenny as organiser through the link.

Clare McArdle thanked Jenny for the 2020 dinner organisation. Sincere thanks were also given to Gill Postill for chairing the event. Further, recognition was given to the planning work and preparation that Jenny had put in, earlier in the year, before the plans needed to be changed.

In response to a question from a member, Jenny agreed to explore the opportunity for using break out rooms at the event.

Arthur Reeves clarified that any funds donated could offer the opportunity to boost the General Fund or possibly raise some useful funds to upcoming projects such as the Kings Heath tower, Birmingham University of Bell Ringing or future training events.

5.4 **Archivist**

Mark Eccleston (Archivist) had submitted a written report.

Library : Although it has not been possible to work at the Guild Library due to limited access to St Martin's, Mark reported that it had been possible to purchase the 26 printed items listed in the report. The majority of these had been from the Estate of John Illingworth – former member and Guild Secretary in 1980s. Items had also been acquired from the Estate of Andrew Stubbs. John Fielden was thanked for acting as point of liaison with Andrew's family in this exercise in support of Mark.

Many of Andrew Stubbs' archival papers related to his period on the Board of the Ringing World, his involvement in the Central Council, Oxford University Society and especially the Ancient Society of College Youths. Mark acted as a point of contact with those organisations to repatriate documents where required. He was then left with relevant printed publications and some archival materials relating to both St Martin's Guild and St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham.

YouTube Channel: For much of the last twelve months, Mark has focussed on creation of a digital archive via the medium of a dedicated Guild YouTube channel. This now hosts over 60 videos, largely from the training sessions run, but also including digitised content from the Library, e.g. oral history from cassette tape from Richard Jones, transferred before the medium becomes obsolete – e.g. interviews with Henry Fearn, Stephen Ivin and Alan Ainsworth. Recordings of hand and tower bell peals can also be found on the YouTube channel which is proving to be a great tool as a digital archive and to build corporate memory.

Website: Arthur gave a demonstration of the website as a result of work undertaken this year. Heritage and history have been a major focus for development and the website gives an opportunity for all members to access the library. Any further proposals or suggestions from members are welcome.

Clare McArdle thanked Mark for his tremendous work this year work as Archivist and for making the website more user friendly.

Clare emphasised the point that the Standing Committee would increase the use of the Website as a means of communication with say, meeting papers to be accessed there in the future rather than sent as enclosures via email.

5.5 **Safeguarding Officer**

Trish Everett (Safeguarding Officer) had submitted a written report.

Trish reported that the Church of England had continued to make Safeguarding a priority during the year by moving training online via zoom as well as updating material on their portal.

Training is available on three levels of Awareness, Training and Leadership. At the end of November, the Guild ran a successful event for bellringers which was well attended. The Church of England is reviewing who has attended and what is required in the future. Trish Everett is due to attend a Training Reference group on Tuesday 12.01.21.

Ringling activities online – in light of the extent of ringing activity on Ringing Room as well as online, Trish has developed a parental consent form for online activities for young ringers which is on the website for people requiring this.

Safeguarding Audit of Towers This was redone in Autumn 2020 following the last survey three years ago. A similar number responded as last time with 14 respondents.

Trish reported the results as follows, some of which showed an improved position:
12 Tower Captains have DBS, 10 involved in teaching have DBS, 12 have undertaken Diocesan Safeguarding training, 7 have a role description, 10 have been formally appointed by their PCC, 10 have registers of attendance, 12 have safeguarding information displayed in their ringing rooms and all 14 knew where and how to get safeguarding help and advice if required.

Trish also reported that she had provided ad-hoc support and advice when required and her contact details are referenced in the Safeguarding Report.

Clare McArdle gave thanks to Trish for all her work and especially for her work on training. Clare gave emphasis to the fact that there were 14 respondents out of 30-40 towers which was a concern. This would require a focus on the remaining towers next year with this high on the Guild agenda for 2021.

Simon Linford queried whether there were many Guild ringers represented on PCCs to raise the profile of ringers. Alternatively, better links could be forged through representatives to link with the churches.

5.6 **Central Council Reps**

James Ramsbottom and Richard Andrew had submitted a written report.

It had been a busy year for the CCCBR representatives and much activity had been focussed on ways to keep interest in ringing going as well as readiness for recovery when ringing resumes.

Clare McArdle gave thanks to both James and Richard who expressed their enjoyment of the roles and their active input on national working groups. This was also acknowledged by Simon as CCCBR President.

Election of members 6.1

Full members

The following full member was elected:

Name	Tower	Proposed	Seconded
Ben Sassons	St Mary's and St Margaret's, Castle Bromwich	Jean Willis	Jane Morris

6.2 **Life Vice President Proposal**

Clare McArdle expressed her pleasure in putting forward a proposal for Chris Mills to become a Life Vice President. This is an honour bestowed upon Guild members who merit it for outstanding service to the Guild. It had been supported by Standing Committee members.

The proposal made by Clare is attached in full in an addendum at the foot of these minutes.

This proposal for Life Vice President was fully endorsed and supported by those present with applause from those present.

7. Election of Officers

Following the annual process of confirming officers' willingness to continue for a further term, two officers were not seeking re-election to their roles: Arthur Reeves was standing down as Ringing Master and Stella Tew as Secretary. In addition, a nomination had been received for the hitherto vacant post of Public Relations Officer. All other officers were willing to stand for re-election.

Clare offered sincere thanks for all that Arthur had contributed to the Guild as Ringing Master over the last six years and highlighted some of his achievements as well as the support he had offered to Clare over his time in post.

She also thanked Stella for her assistance during the last year in fulfilling the role and associated activities.

The following officers and officials were elected:

Office	Name	Proposed	Seconded
Master	Clare McArdle		
Ringing Master	Phil Ramsbottom	Tony Daw	Arthur Reeves
Secretary	Arthur Reeves	Trish Everett	Stella Tew
Treasurer	Tracy Stevens		
Archivist	Mark Eccleston		
Safeguarding Officer	Trish Everett		
Webmaster	Mark Eccleston		
HJ Dinner Secretary	Jenny Sunter		
General Fund Trustee	John Anderson		
General Fund Trustee	John Fielden		
BRF Trustee	Tony Daw		
BRF Trustee	Don Finnemore		
Independent Examiner	Stephen Horton		
Independent Examiner	Thomas Horton		
Press Relations Officer	Jonathan Townsend	Mark Eccleston	Eleanor Linford
CC Rep	Richard Andrew		
CC Rep	James Ramsbottom		

Nomination of officers listed as continuing office for a further year was proposed by David Hull and seconded by Jonathan Townsend.

8. Guild Survey and Forward Look

Clare McArdle presented the meeting with a powerpoint presentation of the results of the Tower Survey undertaken in Autumn of 2020. This had been carried out to determine the extent of the impact that the pandemic might have on future ringing across the Guild. It was intended to assess the state of the Guild before and after the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

The Survey went to all Tower Captains and Tower Contacts. The powerpoint is located on the Guild Website alongside the AGM papers.

The main conclusion on Guild aggregate numbers: Sunday ringing before pandemic -134 across the Guild. The assessment of likely levels of ringers returning after pandemic rose to 150 with the number put against likely loss to ringing over the next five years at around 50.

Standing Committee has discussed the potential support that can be given to towers by the Guild looking forward to a recovery phase. This is likely to take the form of support to carrying out risk assessments, recruitment workshops, marketing, social media and training. There was support at the meeting for central refresher workshops to run across the Guild rather than on an individual

basis. However, it will not be possible to muster help to towers on a long-term basis as there may be too many places requiring support to have the capacity to send ringers in to help towers over an extended period.

At the same time, clustering between towers may help to cope with dwindling numbers in specific places. The new Ringing Master will obviously have ideas to bring forward on this issue.

In relation to this recovery period, the Guild has received a joint email from the CCCBR Recovery Group and ART looking to planning for the future of ringing. It is likely that there will be virtual opportunities and new resources from which many can learn. The proposal is to co-ordinate ideas and information with a proposal to identify ringing 'Recovery Champions' as part of a network across the country.

If anyone wishes to volunteer for this role on behalf of the Guild, please get in touch.

9. 2021 planned events

Wednesday webinars are now booked till the end of March with a programme recently circulated.

In addition to this programme, the Standing Committee will be discussing ideas and welcome any input or suggestions. Consideration is being given to another Bake-Off event around Easter in view of the success of last year's as well as a possible Photo Competition.

10. AOB

10.1 2019 Yearbook

Clare reported that the last Guild Report was published in 2017. Following that publication there were perceived problems with GDPR but the fact that the report was no longer produced created a gap as this was previously recognised as an archive.

Mark Eccleston has drafted one for 2019 which is considered to fulfil the need for a useful historical record for the Guild. The intention is to have this as an online document to avoid a print run as a possible downloadable PDF for people to create their own copies. There could also be an option to produce one copy per tower for reference. As an attractive, outward facing document it could be used as a PR tool to attract new members and for stakeholders. In due course a 2020 version could be produced.

Members present gave positive and feedback on the concept as well as style of the Yearbook and Mark was thanked for this initiative.

10.2 Guild Membership

An email is due to go out regarding Guild Subscriptions and 100 Club. Different options will be available for method of payment. Anyone with difficulty in making payment at this time are invited to contact Tracy Stevens to let her know.

10.3 Steve Shipley

Birthday greetings were offered for Steve Shipley and Rowena asked to pass these on.

11. Date of the next meeting

This will be held via Zoom at 10.00am on Saturday 1 May 2021

Note: This meeting will be held via Zoom on Saturday 15th May 2021, beginning at 10am

12. Meeting close

- The meeting closed at 12:00 midday

Addenda to Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 9 January 2021

1 Molly Barron (Item 2, p1)

Molly Barron died 21st November 2020. Molly was a ringer at King's Norton for sixty three years and will be deeply missed in the parish. She was probably the last survivor of the band which learned to ring at Kings Norton in 1945. Elected a guild member in 1950.

2 Proposal for Chris Mills as Life Vice President of the Guild given by Clare McArdle, Master (Item 6.2, p5)

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Standing Committee to nominate Chris Mills for Life Vice Presidency of the Guild. Becoming a Life Vice President is an honour, but it is an honour bestowed on those who merit it for outstanding service to the Guild. Before I begin, I must thank Mark Eccleston for supplying much of what follows.

Chris learned to ring in 1961 at St Alphege Solihull, which back in those days were a 10. When we were chatting last week, she describes herself as an accidental ringer. She started because, as part of her confirmation to the CofE a volunteering activity was expected. She was already a member of one choir and fancied doing something a bit different. She couldn't do flower arranging because of hay fever, so she took up bell ringing instead. But she said that from the outset, she knew that ringing would be a massive part of her life, and so it has proved to be.

Chris was elected a full member of the SMG on 14 October 1961 at the business meeting held in Yardley. She was proposed by Tom Warner and seconded by Edgar Shepherd (the then Guild Master).

She has rung 409 peals for the Guild from a total of 555. This total includes a significant number of 12 bell peals, many at St Philip's Cathedral.

She has always been keen and willing to ring in people's first peals – she has rung in the first peals of 35 different ringers, including the current Guild Master!

She has held several offices in the Guild:

Secretary of SMG 2002 to 2006

Northern Area RM 2008 to 2014 (when the area posts were disbanded)

General Fund Trustee 2012-2019

In the minutes of the 2007 AGM at which Chris stood down after five years as Secretary, The Master, Richard Grimmatt spoke in praise of the important role that Chris had played during the preceding five years. She has always produced the right papers, sent regular emails to the committee and generally worked beyond the remit of her role to ensure that everything has been done on time. We are all sad to see her go! Chris has also done the honourable thing by finding a successor.

Chris has been a regular supporter of Guild events, the BSoBR from its inception, and a number of local towers including all four Birmingham city centre towers, Edgbaston, Harborne, Erdington Abbey, Sutton Coldfield and Great Barr.

She has also served ringing at a national level as Secretary of The National Twelve Bell Contest committee 2009-2011, which amongst other things included the responsibility for coordinating the organisation of three eliminator contests and a final each year.

By coincidence 2021 will be the 60th anniversary of Chris learning to ring and being elected to the Guild. Can there be a more fitting way to celebrate this than making her a Life Vice President of the Guild?