

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Details of both attendees and those that gave their apologies are held in the separate attendance records. The meeting was quorate with 34 attendees. Eleanor Linford, Master, referenced the poor weather and thanked everyone for the effort that they had made to attend.

2. Remembering members who have died in 2025

Dennis Bernard Clive 1930 – 2025

Denise learnt to handle a bell at Boldmere. He was one of 'The 43ers', probably ringing's first national recruitment event. In 1950 he joined the band at St Margaret's, Great Barr.

Vernon Green. A prominent member of the St Martin's Guild in the 1970s. He came to Solihull in 1973 and he quickly became the Deputy Tower Master and then Tower Master 1976 – 1980. He was both Treasurer and Secretary to the St Martin's Guild between 1974 and 1977 returning in 1984 to chair the Henry Johnson Dinner.

We stood to remember them.

3. Approval of minutes of the AGM 11th January 2025

The minutes were proposed by Jon Townsend and second by Sharon Wall.
All agreed.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. Officer Reports

All reports were circulated before the meeting.

• Financial Reports

i. Treasurer's report - Malcolm Paulson

The Independent Examiners had signed the accounts.

We have 277 members at the end of last year.

The Guild ended the year with a surplus of £493.46.

The Bell Restoration Fund has a balance of £34, 886.43. The fund has made a contribution to the clapper refurbishment at Edgbaston, and we have applications from Coleshill for a rope guide and St Paul's, Jewellery Quarter, for clapper refurbishment and swing time alteration.

We are using Mojo as our membership database but getting increasing use of it as an administration tool, currently we are using it for Henry Johnson Dinner tickets and going forward will use it for merchandise payments and book sales. Malcolm explained why it was proposed that subscriptions should increase. The CCCBR fees increase this year from 40p to £1 per member, Brumdingers are now paying tower fees which the Guild covers, we pay tower fees for Guild events at £20 per session, there has also been general inflation. Malcolm proposed an increase from £10 to £12 in membership fees (associate and full) with 50% reduction for concessions. Peel fees to remain at nil.

Malcolm thanked the Independent Examiners for their time.

In respect to the 100 Club, Clare McArdle wanted members to know that there are always numbers available for the 100 Club. If members are interested they can get in touch with Clare or Malcolm.

There were no questions for Malcolm from those present.

Simon Linford seconded the increase in subscriptions and all agreed.

Jon Townsend seconded retaining peal fees at nil and all agreed

ii. **Independent Examiners Report** - Tom Horton James Mundy
No comments made.

iii **100 Club** – Clare McArdle
No comments made.

• **Ringing Master's Report** – Rachel Thomas

It was commented that events have gone from strength to strength and there is a lot going on. Eleanor thanked Rachel and all those that arranged Guild events.

• **Henry Johnson Dinner Secretary's Report** - Simon Linford

Simon has been acting Dinner Secretary. There was nothing to add to his report.

- **Archivist and Webmaster Report** – Mark Eccleston
No comments made.
- **Safeguarding Officer's Report** – Trish Everett
Trish asked that Towers ensure that contact details are up to date with the Guild Secretary so that we can be sure that any safeguarding alerts reach them. Training requirements remain unchanged.
Trish will support us when any advice is needed. The route for safeguarding issues being Parish Safeguarding Officers, The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer or Trish.
We discussed the need for 'professional curiosity' and remaining alert in all towers.
Trish will always pass on safeguarding concerns where needed and where appropriate.
- **CCCBR Representatives' Report** – Simon Linford/Richard Andrew
Richard referred to the circulated report noting the significance of the focus on The Ringing 2030 project. He referenced the Sunday evening online sessions of the main working group for recruitment and development, the first being held last November and the next 8th February. Details available in the Monthly Update or from Richard, or the Guild Secretary.

6. Election of Members

i. Full Members

Charlotte Holiday – who is now ringing with BUSCR at Edgbaston.

Thomas Wareing – who whilst rings in Bath learnt at Shirley and we are pleased that he would like to continue his association with us.

Both were proposed by Eleanor Linford and seconded by Trish Everett. All agreed.

ii. Associate Members

Teresa Dale

Louisa Burke

Phill Burke

All three are ringing with The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing. They were proposed by Clare McArdle and seconded by Tony Daw. All agreed

3. Life Members

The Standing Committee members proposed that Arthur Reeves be elected a Life Member. He was Guild Ringing Master 2015 – 2021, Secretary 2021 - 2023 and a key player in winning the Guild's ART award in 2021 for Inspiring Leadership. Arthur is soon to move to New Zealand.

Arthur had been approached before the meeting and thanked us. Life membership would mean a great deal to him if the membership saw fit to elect him, he was genuinely touched when the Standing Committee approached him with the proposal. The St Martin's Guild has been an important part of his life in Birmingham and he has thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Guild. He has been proud to be a member of such an innovative and forward-thinking community. His involvement in the Guild helped him enormously throughout the pandemic. He is keen to maintain his connection to the Guild.

Proposed by the Standing Committee and agreed by all.

7. Election of Officers and Officials

No nominations had been received before the meeting, other than the Standing Committee proposals.

Officers – those making up the Standing Committee

- **Master** - Eleanor Linford
- **Ringing Master** - Rachel Mitchel
- **Secretary** – Sand Cooper
- **Treasurer** – Malcolm Paulson
- **Archivist & Webmaster** – Mark Eccleston
- **Safeguarding Officer** -Trish Everett
- **Public Relations Officer** – Kirsty Gifford

The Officers of the Guild were agreed by acclaim.

Rachel noted that she considered this to be her last year in the role

Officials

- **General Fund Trustees** - John Fielden and Stephen Shipley
- **Bell restoration Fund Trustees** - Tony Daw and Jon Townsend
- **Independent Examiners** - Tom Horton and James Mundy
- **Henry Johnson Dinner Secretary** - Simon Linford
- **CCCBR Representatives** - Richard Andrew and Simon Linford

The above named were as last year with the exception of Stephen Shipley replacing Arthur Reeves who has stepped down. All agreed by acclaim.

Not an elected position but we still need a Newsletter Editor and anyone willing to take on the role is encouraged to talk to the Standing Committee members or Lucas Williams. We would want the newsletter to continue.

8. 2026 Programme of Events

Circulated before the meeting. Eleanor picked out some events. We will continue with the general monthly programme including surprise practices, usually held at Edgbaston. Some changes have been made to the first Saturday routine to accommodate Easter/bank holidays etc. The special methods will match the methods of the month suggested by The Ringing World.

Midweek practices will continue at Moseley 3rd Thursday of the month.

Higher Numbers will continue, 4th Wednesday of the month.

Sheldon special practices will continue 3rd Wednesday of the month.

A Spring event is planned 16th May and it is proposed to return to a striking competition. Both towers are booked in Moseley for a 6 bell, rounds and call changes competition to which novice bands are encouraged to take part. And an 8 Bell competition. The day will also include a short business meeting and 'ringers tea'.

There will be an online business meeting in September and Guild Outing.

The Henry Johnson Dinner is the last Saturday in February.

9. Henry Johnson Dinner 2026 – 28th February

Last year there were 90+ attendees though it is noted that there is often some anxiety about making minimum numbers with people buying tickets very close to the date of the dinner. If we are planning to attend and buy tickets nearer to the date, we are urged to advise the Dinner Secretary, for peace of mind!

Malcolm pointed out that you can apply for tickets through Mojo opting for an electronic payment, which can then be made nearer to the date of the dinner.

This year the dinner will be chaired by Will Bosworth, Editor of The Ringing World. Elva Ainsworth, Director of the Ringing World and prominent organiser of the National Youth Contest. Mark Eccleston will make the toast to The Chair. Beer will be made available at the event and we await the menus for this year.

All were asked to support the event particularly as so few other Association Ringers Dinners continue to be held.

Simon is keen to support someone new into the role and would provide shadowing to anyone prepared to take on what he says is not an onerous role.

We do not as yet have a Chair arranged for 2027.

The ticket price has risen to £50 and we find this is in keeping with similar events. Friends and non Guild members are welcome.

10. Any other business

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Simon Linford explained the Living Heritage application to UNESCO which The CCCBR are pursuing. He explained why it has only now become appropriate to the UK. Whilst the benefit of Bell Ringing being acknowledged is questionable, it is thought that it will bring some cache. With the authority of The Guild he would sign the petition on our behalf. It was clarified that there would be no financial implications for us, in fact, it may give some access to funding.

There were no objections and Simon will act on our behalf.

CCCBR are also keen for individuals to support the petition and details will be included in the next Monthly Update.

Eleanor thanked Paul McEvilly and the Sutton Coldfield ringers for supporting us.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next Annual General Meeting will be Saturday 9th January 2027. We will continue to visit different towers and in view of recent year's meetings being held at Coleshill and Smethwick it is anticipated that we will look for a tower in the south-east area of The Guild.

The meeting was closed and was followed by open ringing.