

Minutes of the Guild Week Meeting held in Ye Olde Thirsty Pig, Maidstone on Monday 20th August 2018

Members Present

President: R A Smith

Master: M F Nash

Minute Taker: J R A Dann

AJ Carlotti AJ Griffin JA Harrison N Laredo BI Le Gallez BG Meads
JD Shanklin NJ Small RL Underwood IG Vincent JJ Wakeling HJMA Armitage*

*Associate member

The President was in the chair and the meeting opened at 19:17.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

CR Hill PW Hill C Nutton V Nutton

2. Minutes of the Guild Week Meeting 2017

The minutes had been available online for several months. The spelling of the River Exe was corrected, and BG Meads asked for a list of those present to be included in minutes. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by IG Vincent and seconded by JJ Wakeling. With no objections they were signed by the President.

3. Matters Arising from the Guild Week Meeting 2017

RA Smith reported that the remembrance peal had been scored. A peal of Stedman Caters was rung at St Magnus the Martyr, London, on Saturday 11th November 2017.

The peal weekend reported in the diary dates of the Guild Week Meeting 2017 had to be cancelled due to a lack of interest.

4. Future Guild Weeks

RA Smith began a discussion on the format of future Guild Weeks. He said that over the course of the four Guild Weeks in the new format attendance by students has increased, so it has achieved its objective. However, numbers generally have gradually fallen, but this had started before the format change, so it is difficult to know if people have been lost because of the format change. Some people have said that they preferred the old format and RA Smith explained the old format for anyone who didn't know. He listed some reasons that students didn't go as: higher cost, needing to commit far in advance, the student body in general got out of the habit of going. RA Smith said he was conscious for the lower attendance this year, partly due to its last minute nature, for which he apologised and explained it was due to disruption from moving house the previous week. He reported that JD Shanklin had started looking into Boston, Lincolnshire, for the 2019 Guild Week, had found that some Scout groups have halls (but had not yet heard back from any of them) and would appreciate advice from the meeting regarding the format, etc.

NJ Small pointed out that the old format had its own virtues. RA Smith agreed, mentioning: it was more sociable, people ate together, the base was either within walking distance of a pub or had wine and/or beer in a common room. AJ Griffin added that it was easier for cars. BG Meads agreed that it was more sociable, with more contact between groups. He said that the main reason for the change was the feeling that Guild Week was not attracting students, so was becoming separate from the resident Guild and older members wanted to keep it relevant. He pointed out that the changes to the timing and the nature of the accommodation were separate decisions. He agreed that the changes have encouraged student attendance, but at the cost of reducing the family feeling of Guild Week. JA Harrison recalled that undergraduates used to camp (but sometimes the organiser was not able to find somewhere for camping). JRA Dann pointed out that some students don't want to camp.

MF Nash reported that the reasons for low student attendance this year included clashes with other things and people working. RA Smith suggested that in general students feel more need to work during the summer than they used to.

AJ Carlotti suggested trying to find accommodation that could provide a floor (similar to Scout huts) for those who wanted that and rooms for others. RA Smith and BG Meads both stated that such accommodation would be very difficult to find. JD Shanklin reported that for the 2019 Guild Week he is looking at Scout halls for students to stay in, and that others would be expected to make their own arrangements in hotels or similar. JRA Dann opined that, if available, a hall next to a hotel works well. BG Meads enquired how the resident Guild generally feels about camping. MF Nash responded that everyone is reasonably happy with a floor. AJ Carlotti said that camping requires more planning.

IG Vincent asked whether the decline in numbers at this Guild Week was an outlier or part of a general trend. BG Meads replied that some people had said that the short notice had inhibited them from attending. JD Shanklin pointed out that there were not many keen peal ringers present, and wondered whether the lack of peals had put them off. BI Le Gallez said that people generally wanted confirmation about a month beforehand. JA Harrison reported a rumour that Guild Week had been cancelled, and that he had been particularly worried as the planned peal weekend in February hadn't happened. N Laredo suggested in future telling people that there is no news, to avoid such rumours.

RA Smith said that there used to be 1 or 2 peals per day on Guild Weeks, and that some people went to ring peals, but that it is now difficult to get a band for ordinary peals, as lots of keen peal ringers want to ring exciting things, not just a large number of peals. BG Meads pointed out the need to have enough ringers for both peals and open ringing. RA Smith suggested trying to get a core of peal ringers, perhaps by ringing something like Cyclic Maximus to attract people.

JA Harrison recalled that it used to be the case that people would grab a tower before a quarter peal was rung there. RA Smith said that in the 1930s there used to be one tower at a time, with some as quarter peals. The general feeling was that just tower grabs are less attractive. N Laredo suggested a peal or quarter peal at the beginning and end of Guild Week. RA Smith mused that numbers are usually low by Wednesday afternoon, and that this might attract more people to stay. BG Meads pointed out that there are keen quarter peal ringers, as well as keen peal ringers, and that it might be worth circulating to local Guild members to attract more people from nearby. JA Harrison suggested fixing peal and quarter peal slots in advance and asking people to sign up, but RA Smith pointed out that this had the same problem of lack of enthusiasm for ordinary peals. MF Nash suggested asking students what they want to ring and telling others that it's a first for someone; this suggestion had general approval.

RA Smith summarised that so far the feeling of the meeting was to find a hall for student accommodation next year, and that there was support for the idea of organising peals and quarter peals to progress students' ringing, and using this to attract others. JD Shanklin suggested having some open ringing followed by a quarter peal at the tower before lunch; this idea also had general support.

RA Smith brought up how many towers there should be per day. He said that traditionally there had been 6 or 7, but that he had reduced this to 5 for the Worcester Guild Week, as that many had been feeling onerous with fewer people going, as people were no longer able to go to the pub instead of ringing as they used to. BG Meads commented that 5 feels too relaxed for him, and that he had 6 for his. JA Harrison said that he was comfortable with 5 towers per day. RL Underwood pointed out that the number of towers per day should depend on the geography of the area and how long is spent at each tower. JD Shanklin reported that he was aiming for 5 or 6 towers per day.

BG Meads asked if the current format is correct on a long term basis, and suggested consulting the wider Guild. RA Smith responded that the current format was based on a consultation he had done. One of the strongest feelings from that consultation had been people not liking the accommodation: only single rooms were usually available; it was quite expensive compared to a hotel; younger people didn't particularly like camping and would prefer a Hall floor. There was also a preference for a bus/walking tour rather than a car based tour. BG Meads asked if it was time for another consultation, as the previous one was 8 years ago.

AJ Carlotti recalled HJMA Armitage mentioning that the OUS have a coach on their tour. MF Nash asked how much that would cost. JD Shanklin suggested approximately £400 per day. HJMA Armitage reported that the OUS tour charges approximately £90 per person for the hall, towers and coach, or £50 per person excluding the hall.

RL Underwood repeated the need to work out why people (especially students) aren't going. JJ Wakeling said that a lot of students are busy, either with PhDs, summer jobs, or holidays. BG Meads pointed out that most university societies now have fewer resident members than they used to, and suggested that the proportion of students going on Guild Week might be similar to what it used to be. RA Smith said that there is a higher proportional turnout now than when he started. JD Shanklin suggested sending an email outlining the proposals and asking those who don't go what they'd like to see. JRA Dann pointed out that people who don't go on Guild Week might not read a Guild Week email, so JD Shanklin suggested putting it in a termly email.

BI Le Gallez asked about dates for Guild Week 2019. RA Smith said that as the bank holiday will be the 26th August, the same timing as this year would be 16th - 21st August. JD Shanklin confirmed that his initial inquiries were for those dates give or take 1 day, with the previous 2 weeks as alternatives. IG Vincent asked what objection there was to the bank holiday weekend; JD Shanklin replied that it had been ruled out because of travelling and because teachers start back shortly afterwards. JA Harrison asked if the dates would be confirmed well in advance; JD Shanklin responded that he hoped to have something definitive by the Michaelmas Business Meeting.

JD Shanklin asked if we needed to ask for offers to organise the 2020 Guild Week. RA Smith replied that it is less essential with the new format, but did ask those present to consider whether either they would like to organise it, or whether they know someone who might.

A possible date for the next Cambridge Guild Week was brought up. NJ Small informed the meeting that the previous two had been in 2000 and 2011. RA Smith suggested that 2020 should provisionally not be based in Cambridge. JA Harrison suggested that, if the aim is to attract students

and if students don't want to go to a Guild Week based in Cambridge, then we should go elsewhere, and that non-residents can go back at other times.

RA Smith asked for the meeting's general thoughts on locations for Guild Weeks. BG Meads and HJMA Armitage said that having good rail access is useful, and more important than how close somewhere is. IG Vincent suggested considering the density of towers in the area. RA Smith asked if going to a nice part of the country is beneficial, and reported that a lot of people had said that the Lake District was their favourite Guild Week location. BG Meads said that he finds it preferable to have countryside.

HJMA Armitage enquired if it would be possible to have free time on a Guild Week. RA Smith replied that traditionally there has been a full itinerary, but that lots of people took time out. BG Meads interjected that it is easier to take time out in a full week, and that some Guild Weeks had no towers for a whole afternoon. RA Smith responded that he wouldn't want a scheduled half day off, but that people could take time out. The general feeling of the meeting was that a scheduled half day off would not be appropriate in the shorter format. AJ Carlotti suggested having something non-ringing at the start or end of Guild Week.

RA Smith asked if people would be attracted by prestigious towers. RL Underwood said that he would be provided there are some good ones. BG Meads said that he prefers nice country 6s and 8s and avoiding getting stuck in traffic. AJ Carlotti said that they appeal to him. N Laredo said that she found that the Guild Week in St Albans had a good combination of country towers and going to London by train. AJ Carlotti suggested having a day or two planned for transport, rather than travelling by car. MF Nash pointed out that the National Youth Contest has made it more likely for young members to have rung at prestigious towers. HJMA Armitage pointed out that not all areas have bands for the National Youth Contest. JA Harrison suggested, and BG Meads agreed, that if an area has prestigious towers, then they should be included, even if they do not specifically attract more people. JA Harrison suggested that prestigious towers might appeal more to less experienced students, and also suggested unusual towers for a similar reason. JJ Wakeling agreed, saying that the Piltown campanile appealed to him.

5. Diary Dates

The following dates were noted:

- 24/11/18 – Possible date for London outing
- 16/03/19 – Guild Dinner at Corpus Christi

RA Smith reported a plan to attempt a peal weekend in the spring. The intention was to focus it around 12 bell peals to draw people in with other peals arranged around it in the same area, with a hope to integrate it better than the previous peal weekend in Birmingham. There was not yet a date for the peal weekend. RL Underwood opined that it would be a nice alternative if there are no peals on Guild Week.

6. Any Other Business

MF Nash thanked JRA Dann for agreeing to take the minutes.

BI Le Gallez and BG Meads thanked RA Smith for organising Guild Week.

With no other business, RA Smith declared the meeting closed at 20:32.