

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in the Boys Smith Room, St John's College on Sunday 3rd May, 2009

Members Present

President: C Y Barlow

Master: D A Winter

Secretary: R T Backhouse

J A Agg

H A-M Ingram

F R W M Manners

L D G Simpson

S C Walters

P L H Brooke

C M P Johnson

A B Miller*

L T W Smith

A C Burman*

F H King

C C Shearer

O T Staves

* Elected during the meeting.

The president was in the chair and the meeting opened at 14.09.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

E Abbey

R Heppenstall

J D Shanklin

C L Taylor

P Abbey

M S L Jordan

J Sherwood

M S Edwards

P A B Saddleton

J Suett

2. Minutes of 2008 AGM

At 14.10, the Master received a phone call and left the room.

The minutes of the 2008 AGM had been circulated in advance, allowing conscientious members to pick over them in order to find spelling and grammar mistakes; more pertinently, C M P Johnson noted that the Selwyn college peal had been rung at Lincoln, not Peterborough, and that it was the Governing Body of St John's, not the committee, that had voted against previous proposals to install a ring of bells in the chapel tower.. The meeting accepted the amended minutes as a true and correct record and they were signed by the President.

At 14.12, the Master returned with A C Burman in tow.

3. Matters Arising

S C Walters asked about the photo album, particularly if requests for copies of older photos had been made; it was admitted that this had not yet been done and agreed that it should be followed up.

L T W Smith remarked that he now felt that the bells at Bene't's were not going better than they had previously and asked if he could retract his comment from last year's meeting. The meeting determined that he could not, but agreed with his sentiments.

4. Relevant matters from Lent Term Business Meeting

At 14.15, P L H Brooke entered.

The President reported that she had written to Martin Faulkes informing him of his election as an honorary member of the Guild, but had received no reply. Upon seeing him at the Bell Foundry at Loughborough, however, he seemed delighted to accept.

S C Walters remarked that non-resident members of the Guild would like the opportunity to comment on honorary membership proposals and suggested that a month's notice of any such proposal should be given so that there would be a chance for non-residents to speak for or against and attend the meeting in which the election was to take place. L D G Simpson noted that it was important to maintain the candidate's anonymity and S C Walters agreed to amend his request accordingly. L D G Simpson thought that there would be practical problems with preventing news leaking back to the nominee, which could cause subsequent embarrassment in the event of a non-election; S C Walters suggested that an e-mail could be sent to the global list stating that a candidate for honorary membership was being considered, to which members could reply in order to obtain more details. D A Winter felt that ensuring anonymity would still be a significant issue and commented that the course taken over the election of Martin Faulkes had been felt to be the best option at the time; F H King concurred that maintaining anonymity would be practically impossible. L D G Simpson suggested that honorary membership election could maybe be limited to the AGM, but the meeting expressed concerns that this would potentially delay elections for an unreasonable length of time.

An amended motion was tabled by S C Walters "that one month's notice should be given of intention to propose an honorary member, without naming them." C M P Johnson seconded the motion and the President called the vote; the motion was duly carried, with F H King and L D G Simpson opposed.

It was agreed that the proposal for such a change to the Guild rules should be considered at the Michaelmas Term Business Meeting, to be voted on in Lent.

5. Cambridge Towers

C M P Johnson stated that the bells at St Bene't's needed replacing; F H King enquired whether he had any other honorary members in mind.

F H King noted that Great St Mary's was currently a building site, but the new bells had been cast and the project was on schedule to be finished by late June.

C M P Johnson was invited to speak about St John's and reported that the Governing Body was required to agree in principle to the installation of the bells before the project could proceed. A paper had been sent to the college Council in March in the hope that it would be commended to the Governing Body. It had been returned with certain requirements and requests for more information regarding some issues: an independent, college approved engineer was needed to comment on the suitability of the tower; assurances were required over the effectiveness of sound control; and a more exact estimate of cost needed to be provided. Regarding the latter, quotations had been obtained for a 22cwt ring of ten in a radial frame with two spare pits for possible future augmentation, but there were significant other costs to be considered regarding work on the tower. C M P Johnson noted that the Domus Bursar had nominated an engineer, but that a suitable light source was needed in the tower before an inspection could be carried out and that a detailed brief needed to be supplied, which C M P Johnson had volunteered to write. It was felt that the reworked proposal could be sent to college Council for consideration early in the next academic year and, if recommended to the Governing Body, would hopefully meet with a more favourable response than those put forward in 1980 and 1988, each of which was rejected by a single vote.

The President suggested that what the Guild most needed at the moment was good access to a light eight; J A Agg commented that St Andrew's was fine for Guild purposes and it was felt that the church had been more amenable of late. L D G Simpson remarked that the OUS made excellent use of their light ten at St Thomas' and that the Guild should be able to do the same with a similar ring of bells. C M P Johnson noted

that no definite agreement regarding the number of bells or weight of the tenor was necessary until the college had agreed to the project in principle.

6. Election of new members

The Master proposed two new members for election, seconded by J A Agg:

A C Burman (King's)
A B Miller (Churchill)

Both were elected unopposed as life members.

7. Presentation of Accounts

The Secretary referred the meeting to the summary of account distributed at the start of the meeting, noting that he was still awaiting a few cheques for the Dinner, upon receipt of which the Guild would have made a surplus for the year of about £200. L D G Simpson noted that the Dinner had been at Robinson, not Queens'; duly embarrassed, the Secretary amended the accounts and blamed his tendency to copy and paste things from previous years.

The Secretary proposed that the deficit in the Michaelhouse account should be transferred to the General account and the former be closed, since it currently only served to make interest more difficult to apportion. F H King seconded the motion and the meeting voted in favour of the change.

It was explained that the St John's account had been established via a grant from the Societies Syndicate for the express purpose of moving the bells from St Andrew's, which necessitated its continued presentation as a separate account. S C Walters asked whether the money in the St John's account should perhaps be paid back, given that its original purpose was no longer under consideration; the President suggested that she would instead write to the Societies Syndicate at an appropriate moment to request its assignation to the new project. C M P Johnson noted that the funds could be useful for meeting early consulting fees; the President duly agreed to pursue their release as soon as possible.

The accounts were proposed by C M P Johnson and seconded by S C Walters; the meeting voted unanimously that they be accepted.

8. Master's Report

The Master had not written a report in advance, but promised to provide one to the Secretary at a later date for inclusion in the minutes.

The Master instead gave a brief verbal report, noting that numbers at ringing and social events had been gratifyingly high. He was pleased to note that a number of freshers had made significant advances in the former and thanked them for not being scared off by the latter. The Master apologised for his incompetence, but reminded the meeting that he had promised nothing else when elected, and thanked the Secretary and Assistant Master for their help, stating that he was especially grateful to the latter for agreeing to step into the role in only his second week in Cambridge.

The President thanked the Master for his work during the year, noting that his inimitable attitude had been a great asset to the Guild this year and that, despite his own initial misgivings, he had left it in a very promising position for the future.

9. Steeplekeeper's Report

The Master reported that J Suett, the current Steeplekeeper, had found himself increasingly busy as a second year medic and had regrettably been unable to attend any Guild ringing this year. He noted that the treble stay at St Andrew's needed replacing, while L T W Smith raised the need for a new padlock for the spider.

10. Election of Officers

The meeting was informed that no written nominations for Senior Officers had been received before the end of Lent full term and that the positions would therefore fall vacant. There was no implication that reappointment of the current officers was against the wish of the Guild, although it was noted that the Dr Edwards would not seek re-election if another candidate for the office of Senior Treasurer were to be found. According to Guild rules, the committee would assemble after the AGM to appoint a President, Senior Treasurer and Auditor, who would be confirmed in their positions at the Michaelmas meeting.

The Master read out the following nominations for Junior Officer positions:

Master

J A Agg Prop: L D G Simpson Sec: R T Backhouse

Secretary

F R W M Manners Prop: D A Winter Sec: L D G Simpson

Assistant Master

C C Shearer Prop: J A Agg Sec: F R W M Manners

Steeplekeeper

M S L Jordan Prop: D A Winter Sec: J A Agg

Librarian

C L Taylor Prop: D A Winter Sec: C C Shearer
A C Burman Prop: H A-M Ingram Sec: C L Taylor

Webmaster

L D G Simpson Prop: D A Winter Sec: J A Agg

It was noted that C L Taylor had requested that her nomination for the position of Librarian be withdrawn and that she had gladly seconded the proposal of an alternate candidate. With no other nominations, all were duly elected unopposed.

S C Walters thanked the outgoing officers for their work during the year and welcomed in the new.

11. Diary Dates

R T Backhouse drew the meeting's attention to the dates for the Cambridge District striking competitions on 13th June and the Ridgman Trophy at Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire on 20th June.

Guild Week this year would be in Cheshire from 22nd - 29th August; J D Shanklin had passed on news that preparation were advancing and encouraged undergraduates to consider attending.

12. Any Other Business

L D G Simpson was invited to speak about the Central Council and reported that he had been elected to the Methods Committee. He explained the Central Council is currently undergoing broad reforms in an attempt to make its business more relevant and transparent.

F H King raised the issue that the Guild was still in need of more junior members. Stating that he had visited the Societies' Fair and, in addition to finding the whole experience most unpleasant, felt that the Guild's stall was inappropriately placed in the music section, he enquired whether it would be possible to ask to be grouped with mathematical societies. C Y Barlow suggested the possibility of setting up a mini-ring on Parker's Piece; D A Winter commented that this was an issue for the new Master to decide what was felt to be appropriate and manageable. A C Burman felt that the stall should be more noticeable, since the space was very crowded and some stalls were more prominent than others. S C Walters asked if it would be possible to display a ringing video. F R W M Manners mentioned that there were a number of lapsed ringers in Cambridge that the Guild did not attract; P L H Brooke concurred and it was also noted that attention should be paid to graduate students as well.

With no further business, the President closed the meeting at 15.21.