

Introducing The Guild of Devonshire Ringers

Welcome - the Purpose of the Handbook

Members' Edition

Welcome to the Guild of Devonshire Ringers! If you are a new member the purpose of this handbook is to tell you what the Guild and its branches can offer you as a member and to encourage you to make the most of its activities and services.

Towers' Edition

For Affiliated Towers the handbook is intended to act as a reference source for tower captains and others who may wish to be reminded of what the Guild has to offer. By placing a copy in each tower it is intended that all members attached to the tower should have access to an up-to-date listing of the activities and services of both the Guild and the local Branch. Amendment sheets for the Towers' Edition will be issued from time to time to maintain the currency of the information.

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1. What is “The Guild of Devonshire Ringers”?

The Guild of Devonshire Ringers is one of the two bodies which organise and represent church bellringers in the Diocese of Exeter, which covers virtually the same geographical area as the County of Devon. The Guild’s membership is made up of Ringing Members and Affiliated Towers in Devon and these are organised into local Branches covering areas of the County to assist the organisation of the Guild’s activities.

2. What are the Guild’s aims?

The present-day aims of the Guild, as set out in the Guild Rules, are two-fold, namely:
to encourage the ringing of bells for Christian worship *and*
to provide financial assistance to Devon towers for bell maintenance and improvement

To this end, the Guild promotes the art of method ringing, but the only requirement of members is that they should be able to ring rounds competently. A number of the Guild’s Affiliated Towers are content to ring call changes; nevertheless the members at these towers are active and welcome participants in the Guild. Above all, the promotion of good fellowship amongst ringers in the County is a prime consideration.

3. Why was the Guild established?

The Guild was founded on 21st March, 1874 by a group of mainly clergy, landed gentry and professional people who had developed an interest in method ringing through reading or contact with it at university. Before that date, there were no county or diocesan ringing associations, and the first members of the Guild believed that a diocesan guild and the attraction of method ringing would be an effective way of improving the standard of behaviour in towers, and of linking bellringing to the work of the Church. This emphasis on belfry reform made its members hostile to the tradition of call-change ringing for prizes in the County. Attempts to lure the traditional call-change ringers of the County over to method ringing were not always successful, however. This has led to the development of two parallel ringing traditions in Devon, call-change and method ringing, and eventually to the establishment of two ringing societies for the area. In 1924 the Devon Association of Bellringers was formed to promote call change ringing and to provide a forum for local competition associations in the County. Needless to say a strong rivalry developed between the Guild and the Association initially.

A detailed history of the Guild, “Devon Bellringing 1874 - 1975”, was written by the Revd John Scott and published to mark the Guild’s centenary in 1975.

4. How does having two ringing traditions work in practice?

Today, however, the roles and work of the two societies are seen as complementary and relations between them are cordial. The Guild and the Association co-operate regularly through the Devon Ringers' Council on activities such as fundraising for bell restoration, publishing a Directory of Devon Towers, and holding an annual bellringers' Christmas carol service. Nevertheless, new ringers in Devon will need to be aware of the history of the two traditions and to respect them both whichever style of ringing they adopt. Some Devon towers remain independent of both organisations.

5. What can the Guild offer me or my tower?

A. Events and activities

In addition to taking part in the activities organised by your Branch, Guild members are encouraged to join in the events organised by the Guild, which bring together ringers across the whole county.

June **Guild Festival Day**, during which the Annual Meeting of the Guild is held. Towers may be open in the branch area responsible for hosting the meeting, and there may be training events.

October **Guild Competition Day**. In the morning, a six-bell competition (Fidler Cup) is open to all Affiliated Towers, and the band may ring any method of its own choice. In the afternoon, the Guild inter-branch eight-bell competition (Andrews Trophy) is held for branch teams to ring a specified touch of a particular method.

A **Quarter Peal Week** is organised every autumn to raise money for bell restoration. Towers and branches are encouraged to organise quarters during this week, especially with a view to developing members' ringing ability. If you wish to take part, speak to your Branch ringing master.

December Bellringers Christmas **Carol Service** held jointly with the Devon Association, featuring ringing before and after the service with handbell ringing and singing by Devon ringers

B. Publications

Every year, the Guild publishes an **Annual Report**, which contains details of the year's activities and contact names for branches, towers and Guild officers, which is distributed to every member in advance of the annual meeting.

The Guild also produces an occasional **newsletter**, "Ringing Round Devon", which features news of ringing events and people across the County. A free copy is sent to every Affiliated Tower, but members may subscribe to the newsletter to have it delivered to their home. See the Guild report for further details.

The Guild has been involved in the publication of a complete **directory** of Devon Towers, compiled jointly with the Association. See the Guild report for further details.

The Guild **website** contains all kinds of information about the Guild and its activities, including the annual calendar, editions of “*Ringing Round Devon*”, and details of Affiliated Towers (<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/gdr/>).

Members of the Guild are also encouraged to subscribe to an **email list** which publicises coming ringing events in the county, as well as giving news and items of interest to all ringers in the county. To subscribe you should send an email to DevonRinging-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and follow the instructions you get on the reply.

C. Bells and belfries

The Guild has two **bell advisers** who are recognised by the Diocesan authorities. They are pleased to give informal advice to tower captains and steeple keepers. Formal inspections of bell installations can also be made, but requests for this service should come from the incumbent or the Parochial Church Council. A written report is normally produced.

Financial help towards the cost of significant maintenance work, restoration and development projects are made after application to the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund, which is an independent charity administered by Trustees drawn from the Guild and the Association. Grants are usually worth up to about 10% of the total cost of the work. See the Guild report for contact details.

Guild members are encouraged to help raise money to donate to the Fund. Collections at branch services and meetings are often given to the Fund and individual towers sometimes have schemes for regular giving. The Association raises a substantial amount each year through a Prize Draw and Guild members occasionally ring sponsored quarter-peals. All monies raised by Guild members should be sent to the Fund by way of the Guild Treasurer. In this way the Guild is able to maintain its status as a Registered Charity and can demonstrate that its fundraising leads to charitable activity.

D. Training and developing ringing skills

Individual members are encouraged to join any of the **training events** that are organised by the Guild or by the branches, and can be sure of a warm welcome at other Guild towers, where there may be opportunities to progress not available at their home tower.

The **Education Officer** gives help and advice to towers and branches about how ringing is taught and how training events can be organised. It is intended that a bank of training materials will be created including video and computer-based programmes and that the Guild will encourage schemes and events to promote training. The Education Officer works in liaison with branch officers who have a training role and with those who are responsible for promoting education and training nationally.

A number of towers in the county have been designated **Ringing Centres**. These offer a ringing simulator and further facilities for training, and their use can be booked by

individual towers. Those in Affiliated Towers are at Tavistock (SW Branch), Troyte Ringing Centre (Bampton & Huntsham, NE Branch) and Wolborough (Mid Devon Branch).

The Guild **Certificate** is awarded to Guild members who can demonstrate their ability to ring 120 changes on a working bell. Speak to your Branch ringing master if you think you qualify.

E. Other resources

The Guild maintains a **library** of books, pamphlets and journals about bells and bellringing. This is soon to be housed in the Troyte Ringing Centre at All Saints Church, Huntsham and is available to all members of the Guild. A list of items in the Library has been published in the Annual Report from time to time, and new additions are normally noted in the Guild Librarian's Report to the Annual Meeting. More information is available from the Librarian.

Some **publicity** materials are held by the Guild, including display materials, a demonstration bell and a miniature ring of bells; these are available for use by local bands for open days and recruitment. Speak to the Publicity Officer for further details.

F. Guild Records

The Guild maintains records of **peals and quarter peals** rung for the Guild through its Peal and Quarter Peal Secretaries. Peals must conform to Guild Rules if they are to be accepted and a fee is payable (see Guild Rules and Annual Report). All quarter peals rung in Devon and by Devon bands outside the county are recorded from details published in "The Ringing World". The Guild Annual report contains records and analyses of the peals and quarters rung during the year.

G. Links with other organisations

The Guild sends representatives to the **Devon Ringers Council**, which acts as a liaison group between Guild and Association. The Council looks at matters of common concern, and organises projects for both organisations.

The Guild is also represented on the national body for ringing, the **Central Council of Church Bellringers**. The work of the Council and its many sub-committees is regularly reported in "The Ringing World".

6. Where does my subscription go?

Guild Finances. Seventy per cent of your subscription as a Ringing Member is forwarded by the Branch to the Guild Treasurer to meet the costs of running the Guild and particularly the costs of producing the Annual Report. The Report accounts for a significant proportion of your subscription.

Branch Finances. The remaining thirty per cent of your subscription is retained to run the Branch and is spent on stationery, printing, postage, telephone calls, etc.. Some events organised by the Branch are subsidised from these funds.

The amounts of the membership, Affiliated Tower and other fees are decided at the Guild's Annual General Meeting each year after recommendation by the Guild Committee and the Guild Treasurer. Details of these are given in the latest Guild Annual Report. The accounts are published each year in the annual report, for approval at the annual general meeting.

7. What can I do for the Guild?

The Guild is a voluntary organisation and its officers give much of their time and commitment to make it successful. You might like to serve as an officer in your branch or in the Guild, in order to promote and develop its work. Speak to your branch chairman.

As a charity, the Guild can claim back income tax on its subscriptions, and use this money for bell restoration. If you pay income tax, you might like to apply to gift aid your subscription. Your branch treasurer has full details.

The Guild is above all about ringing. The most you can do for the Guild is to be a loyal member of your local band, and take part in Branch and Guild events, even when you cannot see any personal gain from them. You will be helping other ringers to progress.

GUILD OF DEVONSHIRE RINGERS: RULES 2006

1. NAME AND OBJECTS

- 1.1 This Society shall be called 'The Guild of Devonshire Ringers'.
- 1.2 The object of the Guild shall be the promotion of the Christian religion by
- (a) the promotion and fostering of the ringing of bells for Christian worship and on other appropriate occasions;
 - (b) the provision of financial assistance to churches within Devon for the purpose of maintaining and improving their bell installations.
- 1.3 To this end the Guild shall seek to encourage
- (a) ringing for divine service and the recognition of the true position of ringers as church workers;
 - (b) the promotion of order and good feeling among ringers;
 - (c) the cultivation of the art of method-ringing.

2. STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Branches

The Guild shall be divided geographically into Branches, as determined by a General Meeting after consideration by the General Committee. A General Meeting shall also have the power to give branch status to other ringing societies within the county of Devon.

2.2 Membership

- (a) The Guild shall consist of Ringing Members, Honorary Members and Non-Resident Life Members.
- (b) Members shall be admitted at any meeting of the Guild or of the Branch to which the member wishes to be attached on being proposed and seconded, and approved by the majority of those voting.
- (c) Members who wish to terminate their association with the Guild shall do so in writing to the General Secretary or to the Secretary of the Branch to which they are attached.
- (d) A member whose conduct brings the Guild into disrepute shall have his or her membership withdrawn by recommendation of the General Committee and the assent of the majority of those present at a General Meeting.

2.3 Ringing Members

- (a) shall be persons able to ring rounds competently.
- (b) shall pay the appropriate subscription.
- (c) shall be attached to a Branch either directly or through an affiliated tower.
- (d) shall be entitled to receive the annual report.
- (e) shall be entitled to vote at meetings of the Guild and of the Branch to which they are attached.
- (f) shall be entitled to hold office within the Guild and the Branch to which they are attached, subject to the conditions of 4.2 (c).
- (g) shall be entitled to receive the appropriate Guild certificates when they have satisfied the relevant conditions.
- (h) shall after payment of three consecutive annual subscriptions be entitled on becoming resident outside the County of Devon to be Non-Resident Life Members without further payment.
- (i) may be nominated as Vice-Presidents in recognition of service to the Guild. Vice-Presidents shall be exempt from the annual subscription without loss of membership privileges.

2.4 Non-Resident Life Members

- (a) shall be persons normally resident outside the County of Devon able to ring rounds competently.
- (b) shall pay the appropriate non-resident life subscription.
- (c) shall not be entitled to receive the annual report or to vote at meetings or to hold office in the Guild or Branches.
- (d) shall become Ringing Members without election from 1st January after taking up residence in the County of Devon. On leaving the County they may resume Non-Resident Life Membership without further payment.

2.5 Honorary Members

- (a) shall be persons in sympathy with the objects of the Guild.
- (b) shall pay no subscription and shall be subject to re-election annually at the appropriate branch Annual General Meeting.
- (c) shall be attached to a Branch.
- (d) shall be entitled to receive the annual report, if they so desire.
- (e) shall not be entitled to vote at meetings or to hold office in the Guild or Branches.
- (f) shall transfer to Ringing Membership without election upon payment of the appropriate subscription if able to ring rounds competently.

2.6 Affiliated Towers

- (a) Towers wishing to become affiliated to the Guild shall make a written request to the Secretary of the Branch to which they would like to be attached.
- (b) Affiliation shall be ratified at any meeting of the Guild or appropriate Branch.
- (c) Each affiliated tower shall pay an annual subscription equal to half that of a ringing member, and shall receive a copy of the annual report.
- (d) Affiliated towers requesting instruction may have the privilege of being taught by competent instructors appointed by the Guild, the expenses for such instructors and instruction to be paid by the members of the Guild or the Branch of the Guild in such proportion as may be determined by the General or Branch Committee as the case may be.

2.7 The Guild shall be affiliated to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and loyally abide by the rules and decisions thereof.

3. SUBSCRIPTIONS

3.1 Subscription rates shall be recommended annually by the General Committee and endorsed by the Annual General Meeting.

3.2 All subscriptions shall become due on January 1st and no member whose subscription is three months in arrears shall be entitled to any privileges of membership until the arrears are paid. The membership of any person whose subscription is twelve months in arrears shall be deemed to have terminated. Any members elected after September 30th shall pay no subscription until the following January unless taking part in a peal for the Guild.

4. GOVERNMENT

4.1 General

- (a) The Bishop of Exeter shall always be invited to be patron, and the Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons shall be invited to be associate patrons.
- (b) The Annual General Meeting shall be held between Easter Day and the end of June.
- (c) The quorum shall be fifty Ringing Members or one-tenth of the total ringing membership, whichever is the lower. If the meeting is inquorate, business shall be conducted with each motion requiring the assent of not less than two-thirds of those present. Matters involving expenditure by the Guild and changes to this constitution shall not be decided at an inquorate meeting.
- (d) At the Annual General Meeting each year the members shall nominate and elect from the Ringing Members: a President, a Master, a General Secretary, a General Treasurer, a Librarian, an Education Officer, a Peal Secretary, a Quarter Peal Secretary, a Report Secretary, a Publicity Officer, one or more Bell Advisers and three Trustees of the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund.
- (e) At the Annual General Meeting each year the General Committee may nominate for election from the Ringing Members one or more Vice-Presidents in recognition of service to the Guild. Vice-Presidents shall be elected for life and shall be exempt from the annual subscription without loss of membership privileges. They shall also be entitled to participate in meetings of the General Committee if they so wish.
- (f) The members shall also appoint a suitably qualified independent Examiner of Accounts at the Annual General Meeting each year.
- (g) Triennially at the Annual General Meeting, the Central Council Representatives shall be elected.
- (h) Triennially at the Annual General Meeting, five members of the Devon Ringers' Council shall be elected.
- (i) An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Guild may be called by the Standing Committee, or shall take place within one month of a written request of 25 ringing members to the President or General Secretary.
- (j) No-one except paid up Ringing Members and Vice-Presidents may speak at meetings of the Guild or its Branches, unless invited to do so by the person chairing the meeting.

4.2 General Committee

- (a) There shall be a General Committee consisting of the Guild officers as defined at 4.1 (d), together with the Central Council Representatives, a Guild representative of the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund Committee, the Chairman, Secretary and one representative of each Branch, and any co-opted members.
- (b) The number of co-opted members shall not exceed one third of the total membership of the Committee at the time of co-option.
- (c) Members under the age of 18 shall not serve on the Committee.
- (d) The Committee shall meet at least twice a year and the quorum shall be ten or one third, whichever shall be the greater.
- (e) In the event of Branch Officers or representatives being unable to attend a General Committee Meeting, they may each appoint a member of their own Branch as their deputy, who shall have the right to vote.
- (f) The General Committee shall have general powers of management subject to Guild or Branch rules, and, in the event of a casual vacancy among the officers to appoint a successor to act until the next Annual General Meeting.
- (g) An extraordinary meeting of the Committee shall take place within one month of a written request of five members of the Committee to the President or General Secretary.
- (h) The President, the Master, the Secretary and the Treasurer shall form a Standing Committee with power to co-opt not more than two Ringing Members of the General Committee in order to make decisions as necessary for the administration of the Guild between meetings of the Guild or the General Committee.

4.3 Branches

- (a) Every Branch shall hold an Annual General Meeting at which the members of the Branch shall nominate and elect from their numbers a Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Ringing Master, a representative on the General Committee, and such others as may be determined by the Branch, subject to 4.2(c).
- (b) Every Branch shall be administered by a Committee consisting of the Chairman, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Ringing Master and such others as may be determined by the Branch, subject to 4.2 (c).
- (c) The Secretary of each Branch shall collect and forward to the Report Secretary not later than January 31st a correct list of members and reports of the work of the Branch and of its individual bands during the previous year.
- (d) The Treasurer of each Branch shall send to the General Treasurer by January 31st the Branch accounts for the past year and by March 31st the subscriptions of the members for the current year, retaining the agreed percentage for Branch needs. The subscriptions of members elected subsequently shall be sent to the General Treasurer before December 31st.

5. FUNDS

5.1 In addition to the general fund there shall be:

- (a) an instruction fund;
- (b) a bell restoration fund as distinct from the Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund.

5.2 If the General Committee by a simple majority decides at any time on the grounds of expense or otherwise it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Guild, it shall call a meeting of the members of the Guild who have the power to vote, of which meeting not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the Resolution to be proposed thereat) shall be given. If such decision shall be confirmed by the assent of not less than two-thirds of those present and voting at such meeting the General Committee shall have power to dispose of any assets held by or on behalf of the Guild. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be distributed for the purposes of bell maintenance and restoration equally among those churches which at the time of the dissolution are affiliated to the Guild or shall be given or transferred to such other charitable

institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the Guild as the General Committee may with the approval of the Charity Commissioners determine.

5.3 A bank account shall be opened in the name of the Guild. All cheques must be signed by not less than two members of the General Committee.

6. ANNUAL REPORT

The Guild shall publish an Annual Report, the form, contents and price of which shall be determined by the General Committee, but always to include a statement of the Guild's accounts signed by the General Treasurer together with the report of the independent Examiner of Accounts thereon.

7. PEALS

7.1 Peals rung by the Guild shall be recorded in the Guild Peal Book and printed in the Annual Report.

7.2 All those taking part shall be either fully paid up Ringing Members or Non-Resident Life Members of the Guild. More than half the band shall be current or former Ringing Members.

7.3 An assembly of ringers before attempting a peal may constitute a meeting of the Guild for the purpose of electing members of the peal band as Ringing or Non-Resident Life Members; more than half the band must be Ringing Members.

7.4 A peal fee per ringer fixed annually by the General Committee and published in the Annual Report shall be sent to the Peal Secretary together with full details of the peal rung, including the composition, within one month.

8. GENERAL

8.1 If any member shall forward to the public press any communication reflecting adversely on any affiliated tower or upon any member thereof in connection with their membership without first obtaining permission from the General Secretary, the General Committee shall be empowered to discuss and if necessary censure such action.

8.2 Any alteration of this Constitution shall receive the assent of not less than two-thirds of the ringing membership of the Guild for the time being present and voting at a meeting specially called for the purpose provided that notice of any such alteration shall have been received by the General Secretary in writing not less than 21 clear days before the meeting at which the alteration is to be proposed. At least 14 days clear notice in writing of such a meeting, setting forth the terms of the alteration, shall be sent by the General Secretary to each ringing member of the Guild provided that no alteration shall be made to this rule, rule 1.2 and rule 5.2 and provided that no alteration shall be made which would have the effect of causing the Guild to cease to be a charity at law.