

GUILD OF DEVONSHIRE RINGERS – ANNUAL MEETING 2019

Relocation and development of the Guild Library

BACKGROUND

The Guild library comprises a collection of over 300 printed volumes, ringing journals and a small number of original manuscript records, such as minute books and the first peal book. It dates back to the 1950s but has now been without adequate accommodation for over 10 years. Several possible locations have been investigated but none has proved suitable in terms of secure storage, proper access for users, facilities such as power and heating, or reasonable start-up costs. A key criterion is that interested members should have the possibility of supervised access to the collection. The collection is currently boxed up at the librarian's home in Tiverton, which makes access difficult. A rudimentary library service has been provided and regular enquiries are being answered by the librarian on behalf of users. Three travelling collections of current textbooks covering learning to ring, teaching and conducting are occasionally made available at Guild and branch meetings.

A working group of Guild officers has recently been investigating possible homes for the library. This has been driven by two factors: firstly that the present arrangements are unsuitable and place an unreasonable burden on one individual member, and secondly that, with the Guild's 150th anniversary in 2024 fast approaching, we should be encouraging research into the Guild's history and the history of ringing in Devon by providing adequate facilities for our library.

SUGGESTED LOCATION

St Petrock's Church, Exeter

An approach to the Rector of Central Exeter through St Petrock's tower captain, Steph Brown, has resulted in an offer of cupboard space for the library in St Petrock's Church. The Rector, the Rev'd Sheila Swarbrick, is very supportive of the idea and has the backing of her PCC chairman and PCC buildings adviser. She sees the housing of the library as a natural extension of a ringing centre development at St Petrock's.

What's on offer at St Petrock's

St Petrock's can offer the following:

Access – The church is open daily in the daytime (unless there is an event booking), so a key to the building is not required. Occasional out-of-hours access can be negotiated.

Location – Central Exeter with good public transport links and parking fairly close by.

Security - Cupboards with good locks and bolts provided but some keys are common to cupboards used by other groups - irreplaceable items would not be kept there.

Heat & light – Good natural light in the main area plus accessible electric light controls. Underfloor heating in winter plus 3 electric radiators in main area and 2 in the chapel area. The chapel area would make a useable study area with heating and electric light/power.

Power – Available to charge laptops and use other electrical equipment.

Facilities – Small and large folding tables are available for readers’ use and there are plenty of chairs. There is a sink and tea/coffee making facilities. It may be possible to negotiate Wi-fi in due course at additional cost. The nearest free public toilets are in the Guildhall Shopping Centre opposite St-Petrock’s and via a covered walkway. The environment is good for study – see pictures appended.

Shelving – We are being offered the three cupboards (5, 6 & 11) giving 5.66m of shelving (with double stacking in cupboard 11). This would accommodate about 200 volumes, although one shelf would be needed for box files. The librarian would continue to keep very valuable and irreplaceable materials in Tiverton and can utilize some of the metal shelving already owned by the Guild.

Costs – This move would involve no start-up costs. It is proposed that the Guild contribute to St Petrock’s heating and lighting expenses, based on a suggested pattern of 2 hours’ charity hire charge per month – amounting to an annual total of £250

Regular library service - This location would allow the librarian to offer a regular library opening to members as outlined below.

Security of tenure – The arrangement would be subject to termination at a minimum of 3 months’ notice.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Focus – While the library should continue to acquire some general ringing books, the main focus of its activities should be to collect material relating to ringing in Devon.

Services – The librarian will organise regular opening of the library at St Petrock’s Church. It is suggested that this normally be on the 3rd Saturday afternoon of each month, to coincide with the Saturday opening of the Devon Heritage Centre and the Cathedral open practice. Times would be advertised on the Guild website.

Digitalisation of records – The trial programme of digitalisation begun with the Guild reports should be continued and extended.

Friends of the library – Guild members would be invited to join a “Friends” scheme with a £5 annual subscription in return for additional benefits such as additional free postal loans, visits by appointment out of normal hours and an annual newsletter.

A Devon ringers’ library – In the longer term, use might be promoted to all ringers in Devon through the “Friends” scheme and support might be given to a project to record the history of Devon ringing by collecting images of materials currently held in towers, some of which are at risk of being lost.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS

Members are asked to support the following proposals:

1. The library moves to St Petrock’s Church and Guild officers are mandated to conclude a user agreement with St Petrock’s PCC including payment of an annual “hire” charge of £250.
2. The librarian develops a service to members in accordance with the future developments outlined above.

Les Boyce, 31st May 2019

PICTURES OF ST PETROCK'S



Light and airy building with fresh décor makes St Petrock's an attractive place to visit and work.



The built-in cupboards are well made and secure. The cupboard tops are suitable for display of books and other documents and artefacts.



The Chapel is used as a meeting room and offers a warm and light study space with folding tables available nearby.