



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Eastern Branch of the LDGCBR

Held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at Ingoldmells Church Hall

### Attendees at the ringing sessions and/or the AGM:

Susan Stevenson\*, Antony Wakefield\*, Josie Trewin\*, Karen Johnson\*, Sally Sivil\*, Barbara Rand\*, Christine Higginson\*, Andrew Greatrix-Smith\*, Caitlin Meyer\*, Madeline Turner\*, Jayne Clayton\*, David Clayton\*, Yvonne Starr\*, Alison Shimmens\*, Geoffrey Spencer\*, Cathy Spencer\*, David Collin\*, Val Wild\*, Ed White\*, William White\*, Andrew Cooke\*, Matthew Armstrong\*, Benjamin Rothwell, \* Michael Aicken\*, Tracey Robson\*, Jackie Harris\*, Keith Butter\*, Jo Pearson\*, Tess Rowland\*, Tony Barker\*, Diana Povah\*, Phil Ford\*, Ronnie Crighton\*, Sandra Taylor\*, Gavin Escott\*, Robert Ingamells\*, Lynda Hankin\*, Julie Abbott\*, Thomas Gaskins\*, Emma Williamson\*, Isabel Barker\*, James Barker

\*present at the AGM

### Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was chaired by Tony Barker, President of the Eastern Branch.

Keith Butter (Guild Master), Barbara Rand (Guild Treasurer), and Charles Macrorie (Guild Bell Repair Fund Administrator) were welcomed to the meeting. New ringers attending for the first time, including some prospective new members, were also welcomed.

Apologies for absence were received from: Richard Willoughby, Andrew Douglas, Don Hare, Steve and Judy Lumb, Richard Jeffries, Trevor Pasfield, Ian Evans, Janice Elley, Tony Ladds, Kath Hooper, Joy Scott, Judith Quincey, Jill Day, Michael Evans, Stephen Palmer

### Obituaries

The loss during the year of Anita Collin (Horncastle), Graham Ridgway (Coningsby), John Collett and Harold Gibson was marked with a minute's silence.

### Minutes of the Previous AGM

Minutes of the AGM held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025 at Butterwick Village Hall, had been circulated by email prior to the meeting and hard copies were available in the room. These were accepted by the meeting as a true record, following the minor correction of two names on page 2. (Proposed: Caitlin Meyer and Seconded: Andrew Cooke). The file copy was signed by the Chairman/President, Tony Barker.

### Matters Arising

A query was raised last year under Treasurer's Report regarding a small BRF claim made by Sutterton. Tess Rowland confirmed that this had been paid in March 2025 (£42.20).

There were no other matters arising which were not covered on the Agenda.

## Nomination of New Members

The following were proposed and accepted to become members of LDGCBR:

	Proposed	Seconded	Carried on a show of hands
William White (Junior Member)*	Caitlin Meyer	Joanne Pearson	Yes
Andrew Greatrix-Smith (Alford)	Caitlin Meyer	Stephen Palmer	Yes
Jayne Clayton (Coningsby)	Tess Rowland	Lynda Hankin	Yes
David Clayton (Coningsby)	Tess Rowland	Lynda Hankin	Yes
Matthew Armstrong (Alford)	Caitlin Meyer	Richard Willoughby*	Yes
Cathy Spencer*	Tony Barker	Val Wild	Yes
Geoffrey Spencer*	Tony Barker	Caitlin Meyer	Yes
*Unattached		*not present	

## Branch President's Report (inc. MTL)\*

These reports had been circulated by email prior to the meeting and hard copies were available in the room.

If any member is interested in observing/learning more about the maintenance of bells and towers please let Tony Barker know.

## Ringling Masters' Report\*

The joint Ringing Master and Deputy Ringing Master Report had been circulated by email prior to the meeting and hard copies were available in the room.

## Secretary's Report\*

The Secretary's report to the Branch had been distributed by email prior to the meeting and copies were available in the room.

A further report by the Secretary for inclusion in the Guild Annual Report had also been circulated prior to the meeting with hard copies available. Acceptance of this report was proposed by Joanne Pearson, seconded by Sally Sivil and carried on a show of hands. The report will be forwarded to the Guild.

## Treasurer's Report

The report, financial report and independent examiner's report (Lesley Reeson) had been circulated by email prior to the meeting and hard copies were available in the room. There were no questions or queries. Tess highlighted the difficulty of paying in cash and problems experienced by some when making bank transfers (due to the account name) which were the only problems. Fund raising was good during the year. The "pig" money collected at each meeting is given to the church towards expenses, as had been agreed previously. It is hoped Lesley Reeson will inspect the accounts for the current year.

Adoption of the accounts and acceptance of the reports was proposed by Tess Rowland, Seconded by Josie Trewin and carried on a show of hands.

\* Acceptance of the Branch President's Report, MTL Report, Ringing Masters' Report and Branch Secretary's Report was proposed by Phil Ford, seconded by Andrew Cooke and carried on a show of hands.

### **Bell Repair Fund / Training Grants**

Joanne Pearson advised that amendments to the guidelines/rules were being proposed in a document which had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting by email for consideration. Hard copies were available in the room.

This was not to change the level of grants, but to ensure a fair, flexible and consistent set of rules. For section 4 a definition of "regular ringing" has been included and towers receiving a grant for new ropes are asked to donate any ropes which can potentially be repaired or spliced for redistribution within the Branch. With the greater emphasis of reusing ropes where practicable, any member with an interest in learning how to splice/repair ropes should contact Phil Ford or Caitlin Meyer.

Charles MacRorie (Guild Bell Repair Fund Administrator) asked what would happen in the unlikely event of the Eastern Branch BRF being wound up and was advised that in line with the new BRF rules the funds would be passed to the Guild BRF.

The LDGCB Eastern Branch Belfry Repair Fund document presented to the meeting was proposed for acceptance by Joanne Pearson, seconded by Caitlin Meyer and carried on a show of hands with no objections. A new grant application form will be made available.

### **Guild Update (Guild Master)**

Keith Butter, the Guild Master, addressed the meeting and congratulated the branch on the health of the its Bell Repair Fund due to successful fundraising efforts during the year.

He went on to give facts and figures from year's gone by for peals and quarter peals, ie in 1975 there were 123 peals rung in the Guild, and 263 quarter peals rung in Eastern Branch, which is a very different situation to today. Quarter peals are a very good way of learning and consolidating progress and should be encouraged.

The Ridgman Trophy held in Boston was very successful and was featured prominently in Ringing World.

In 1988 there was an estimated 41,000 ringers, it is thought to be down by 25% currently. The current number of ringers and their demographic continues to cause concern with the number of ringers over 60 years of age at over 60% from only 13% and the number of peals rung down dramatically. There is a real need for recruitment and training of younger ringers and Ringing 2030 is being launched specifically to address this situation, aiming to recruit 10,000 more ringers, half of them under the age of 30, with a retention rate of 50%.

The Guild six bell simulator needs rehousing as a whole, or dividing into six units, one for each branch. Proposals for the future of this are being sought.

Important Guild dates for 2026 were listed and have been included in our branch Calendar.

He asked that tower information supplied to the Guild is kept up to date and that members amend their Membermojo information with any changes as they occur. Please also check your spam folder for any branch or Guild emails.

There is a need in the Guild for two calligraphers to update record books. (Alison Shimmens expressed an interest in this).

Keith invited members to consider standing as Membership Secretary, as Chris Turner is standing down at the Guild AGM in April 2026.

Following a very interesting recent trip to Ypres, members were asked if there was any interest in a zoom presentation by Alan Regin on the bellringers who took part and were lost in WW1. There was a good response from members, so we look forward to hearing more on this in the future.

### **Safeguarding**

Caitlin Meyer addressed the meeting as Guild Safeguarding Officer, reiterating that it is responsibility of all members to ensure they have completed the relevant safeguarding course for their position within the tower. There is a link from the Guild Website to the Basic Awareness Course. Let your Tower Captain and PCC know that you have completed the course. A course will be arranged for those who do not wish to use the computer version.

At the Guild Special Meeting in September, a proposal to ask for photo ID was not passed mainly because the proposal became confusing. This will be revisited at the Guild AGM, together with a request for Date of Birth to be added to the membership form. Alternative arrangements will be specified for those with no obvious photo ID.

Towers need to have various safeguarding documents on display or in a folder clearly marked and readily available to anyone in the tower. Any young ringers present should have a form completed by a parent giving consent for them to be there. Ideally registers should be signed by those attending or specified register keepers appointed. An email will be sent out soon highlighting requirements and documents for display.

As Branch Safeguarding Officer, Christine Higginson reiterated the above.

### **Election of Branch Officers**

2025 Branch Officers were Chairman/President: Tony Barker, Interim Secretary: Susan Stevenson, Treasurer: Tess Rowland, Inspector of Accounts: Lesley Reeson, Ringing Master: Joanne Pearson, Deputy Ringing Master: Caitlin Meyer, Maintenance Team Leader: Tony Barker, Website Editor and Guild Fundraising: Phil Ford, Branch Safeguarding Officer: Christine Higginson

There were no new nominations for these roles and therefore the 2025 Branch Officers were re-elected as follows:

Nominee	Proposed	Seconded	Carried on a show of hands
<b>President:</b> Tony Barker	Phil Ford	Sally Sivil	Yes
<b>Secretary:</b> Susan Stevenson	Joanne Pearson	Caitlin Meyer	Yes
<b>Treasurer:</b> Tess Rowland	Josie Trewin	Christine Higginson	Yes
<b>Ringing Master:</b> Joanne Pearson	Julie Abbot	Christine Higginson	Yes
<b>Deputy Ringing Master:</b> Caitlin Meyer	Ronnie Crighton	William White	Yes

Nominee	Proposed	Seconded	Carried on a show of hands
<b>Maintenance Team Leader:</b> Tony Barker	Caitlin Meyer	Thomas Gaskins	Yes
<b>Website Editor and Guild Fundraising:</b> Phil Ford	Val Wild	Sally Sivil	Yes
<b>Safeguarding Officer:</b> Christine Higginson	Antony Wakefield	Josie Trewin	Yes

After several years as Treasurer, Tess will be standing down at the next AGM and the Branch will be seeking a replacement for this important role.

### **Proposals for Monthly Meetings, Branch Outings and Targeted Training**

A calendar of proposed events for 2026/27 had been distributed to members before the meeting and hard copies made available. Some events are TBC but emails will be sent out each month with full details.

During September there will be targeted practices. The location and nature of these to be decided nearer the time. The aim is to encourage members/learners to ask either Jo or Caitlin for the help they feel they need, either in their own tower or at an organised event elsewhere.

Methods have been added for each event as some members benefit from extra time to learn a new method. This is not to deter anyone, there will always be rounds and call changes and something for everyone.

The Branch away outing this year will be in the Winchester area on the first Saturday in May, put together by Colin Simpson for us.

If any towers/members wish to organise quarter peals and need a conductor or, if anyone wishes to learn to conduct, please speak to Jo and Caitlin.

It would be good to see more teams entering striking competitions but also to hold a Eastern Branch striking competition.

### **Branch Wombel**

As previously mentioned by Keith Butter, this is needing a new home within the Guild. Tony Barker gave a description of what it was and how it worked. It is a helpful learning tool for beginners and, with the help of the computer simulator, for learning methods.

Joanne Pearson has an idea and wishes to explore that further before putting forward a proposal.

### **Guild AGM - 25<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – EB Branch to provide lunch**

Isabel Barker has been approached to organise catering for the Guild AGM with the help of volunteers from the branch. An email will be sent to all members asking for help and details of any particular skills they can offer, together with an invitation to form a sub-committee to organise the event. Volunteers do not need to be members.

**Any Other Business**

- Charles Macrorie (Guild Bell Repair Fund Administrator) – addressed the meeting and listed the churches which were affiliated to the Guild Repair Fund by way of donations made during 2025. 11 EB donations were received (some by ringers), raising approximately £500. PCC’s need to be encouraged to contribute to the fund but it is unclear as to whether this should be directed at them, rather than ringers, and some churches have no congregation or funds and are struggling financially. Any tower can apply for funding for bell repair work whether affiliated or not. The Bell Repair Fund is 50 years old this year.
- Joanne Pearson advised that the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme allowing PCC’s to reclaim VAT on bell work ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, or when the fund runs out if sooner. There will be another scheme but no details are available yet.
- Susan Stevenson advised that she holds the set of Bell Plates which were passed to her by Colin Simpson. These belong to the Branch and if anyone wishes to use them for an event please get in touch.
- Phil Ford thanked those who had helped with the sale of Christmas cards and calendars last year. The Racenight Guild Fundraiser raised over £800 which was passed to the Guild Training and Recruitment fund. Members are asked to consider whether this fundraiser should be used for Branch funds or 50/50 split Guild/EB BRF for 2026.

**Vote of thanks**

Keith Butter proposed a vote of thanks to Isabel Barker for an excellent lunch, and also to Revd. Geoffrey Spencer for taking the service.

There being no further business the meeting closed.

The next Branch AGM will be held at Alford on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2027.

Signed ..... Dated .....