

## **Guild of St Edmund Committee Meeting**

**Thursday 25 January 2024 at 10 am**

1. LM welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially CM attending for the first time. MV led the opening prayers.
2. **Apologies** were noted.
3. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were approved. It was noted that abbreviations sometimes need expanding.  
**Matters arising:** it is good to welcome CM to represent the St Edmundsbury Singers.  
Kneelers – the kneelers are now sorted and approx. 500 are in the Cathedral in alphabetical order, one for every parish. Parishes are being contacted to collect one kneeler each. It is yet to be decided what to do with those not collected. The inventory is being updated to include details of kneelers plus a photo.  
The visitor survey gives valuable information on the profile of our visitors, their motivation for visiting, what they did during their visit, how they heard about us. Results are what we might have expected but it is good to have evidence. The survey shows how many more people access information via social media. Staff are considering the findings now and how to use them to inform work plans. It might be used to help inform work on recruitment of volunteers (eg which sectors of the local community are we not drawing volunteers from?).
4. **Cathedral update**  
SJA gave a **financial update**, explaining that due to support from grants, savings on expenditure and increased income from events, 2023 ended with a modest surplus. A deficit budget is planned for 2024 so the financial situation continues to be tough. Enterprises is doing well, contributing £100,000 to the Cathedral in 2023 including regular rent payments. The Yard is a self-funding project. Some staff posts are funded from the Cathedrals Sustainability Fund (CSF) eg the new Fundraising Assistant, Katie Schutte, whose post is funded for two years. Funding is also being sought from CSF to support three part time Welcome Assistants, who will be tasked with not only maintaining a warm welcome but also encouraging donations. This role will be in addition to the volunteer Welcome Stewards. This measure is being taken as visitor income remains low, though there is no intention to introduce charging and no-one will be refused entry. These new staff members will be part of the Fundraising team and will be line managed by Cressida Parsons. This intervention will also enable the collection of visitor data more accurately than the hand-held clicker.  
In terms of the **buildings portfolio**, the Deanery is being retained and refurbished, the work is currently out to tender. This will create one section for the Dean's residence and two sections for rent. 3 Crown Street and the Loft is being purchased as a single unit and the sale is proceeding. An agreement has been reached with Sanctuary Housing and the flats (two flats and three bedsits) will be refurbished, supported by funds released from the sale of 3 Crown Street. One flat will be used

by the Deputy Head Verger. Accommodation provision for the choral and organ scholars may also be moved here if this is the better financial outcome (they are currently accommodated elsewhere).

The costs of the buildings portfolio are treated separately from the main budget. Refurbishment of the Anselm building is part of the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). If successful the building would be converted into a Visitor Centre. The application also includes an extension to the West Cloister and renovation to the Norman Tower and Abbey Gate, as well as creating an additional accessible entrance to the Cathedral via the Great South door. The upper floor of the Anselm building may be considered for an extension to the Ancient Library.

## **5. Volunteering Update**

The new volunteer application process using ChurchSuite is working well. Eleven new volunteers are currently at various stages of recruitment. A new Young Volunteers Policy has been developed and will now be used for all new young volunteers, including those coming to do Duke of Edinburgh award placements.

At the last meeting there was agreement that the guides might be interested in disability awareness training. We have signed up to an online training course which can be shared with ten people. SF is trialing this.

A further batch of the volunteer lanyards will be purchased.

## **6. Safeguarding**

Safeguarding Sunday (14 January) has gone well and been well received at all the services. SF to ensure that all volunteers have the Safeguarding contact detail slips to put with their lanyard name badges. In general all volunteers are up to date with training. DBS checks now have to be renewed every three years.

## **7. Terms of reference update**

As the Guild Committee is not a committee of Chapter, under the new Constitution and Statutes, we are able to amend the Terms of Reference ourselves. Details of the governance structure can be found on the Cathedral website. A volunteer Minute taker will be sought. SF updates Chapter on volunteer matters (usually once a year) and they receive Guild Committee minutes.

There was discussion about length of membership of the group as in practice the representative does not change every 3-6 years as suggested. SF will look at how long members have served. It was felt that Objective **f** did not refer to the group and should be deleted. SF will send the Guild Committee Minutes to all Guild members to ensure consistency in how the information is delivered.

## **8. Feedback from Edmundtide meeting (Nov 2023)**

The event was enjoyed and issues with the style of serving of the lunch were noted.

## **9. Plans for Guild meetings in 2024**

Annual Guild meeting 2024 - Thursday **13** June at 4.00 pm (NB this is a change to what was previously stated). John Saunders, town guide, is booked to speak

Wednesday 20 November at 1.00 pm Eucharist, lunch and talk

It was suggested that the Edmundtide meeting might have a music theme (link to St Cecilia's Day).

#### **10. Volunteer Co-ordinators' Open Forum**

Flower arrangers – the Cathedral looked very good at Christmas. One new recruit has come on board. MW has retired after many years so now VH is deputy to SC. There will be a coffee morning on 17 February for existing arrangers with invitation to bring along anyone who might be interested. This will be advertised in the Weekly Bulletin.

Guides – There have been good numbers on the tours, as discussed at a review of the year meeting held in October. The Guides have had a training session on Beckford Bevan (benefactor of many of the windows), a quiz, lunch and will be learning about the Bury Cross in February from Canon Michael Robinson. The Ancient Library welcomed 155 visitors for Heritage Open Days as well as German visitors from Wittenberg, Chantry High School Ipswich and trainee archival librarians from Cambridge. Work is being done on cataloguing plans and the development of an online exhibition. Conservation work continues with one volume recently returned.

Events - September to the end of December is traditionally the 'concert season'. An extremely busy period for our event stewards, of which there was a full turnout at each event. Some notable ones were G4 at Christmas, Christmas with the Cathedral Choir and The Christmas Market. Since the turn of the new year, we have met to review 2023 and preview 2024. A good turnout of around 14, bringing the event steward team to 20 strong, with a potential two new stewards.

St Edmundsbury Singers – CM gave an overview of the history of the choir which was founded in 1988 by Paul Trepte. Some founding members still sing with the choir and many members have been singing for over 20 years. A recent choir tour to Worcester Cathedral was supported by the FOCC which was appreciated. Several new members have joined since COVID including two former Head Girl Choristers. The Choir sings Evensong regularly as well as singing at many other services and concerts. They are an integral part of the music ministry of the Cathedral.

Gardens – Winter bulbs will be showing soon. Box blight in the Herb garden is being attended to. The Garden of Remembrance lawn is being monitored as it has been in poor condition. The gardeners cannot currently access the area by the wall as this is waiting for maintenance. The area covered by hoardings is in the jurisdiction of English Heritage. It is hoped to have an information poster to advise visitors of what is happening. It was noted that Cants of Colchester has closed and there was a query over where to purchase St Edmund roses.

Sunday Morning Coffee is available for chorister parents and after the 9 am and 10.30 am services. Cakes are often brought to celebrate anniversaries. Two volunteers have retired.

Learning Hub – September to early December was a busy period. The rhythm of schools work continues and family activities attract good numbers (93 at the Christmas Market).

Banners for Messy Messiah were produced by schools. Between September 2022 and September 2023 the Learning Hub had contact with 2400 young people (not including adults accompanying them). A small team of six volunteers manage these activities. They need to have an understanding of faith for this role. They are increasingly having to organise bespoke programmes. Chris Eyden has joined the team focusing on adult learning.

The Cathedral Shop had a busy quarter leading up to Christmas with turnover ahead of target. It is noticeable that people are spending less money. There are new volunteers but also two have retired. The new Easter stock is just arriving. The stocktake was challenging.

Chaplains – The new rota pattern covering March to December had gone well, allowing for a chaplain to be on duty in the Easter and Christmas periods. There is a good number of new chaplains, lay and ordained.

LEGO – The brick count is now 124,000. It continues to attract interest and potential new volunteers.

Welcomers – We now have 40+ Welcome Stewards and manage to fill most slots each month; even January and February this year. Everyone is very obliging and helpful when the rota is being prepared.

Two new recruits have started this month which will help keep the rota as full as possible. There has been the occasional clash so everyone is asked to check their diaries against the final rota.

It will be interesting to see how the 'donation stewards' trial works when it is implemented. In the recent few days' cold snap the heater was very welcome.

Bellringers – In the last few months they have rung for St Edmunds Day and for the extra Christmas services as well as the regular Sunday ringing. The band that rang a peal on Saturday 6 January included two of our local ringers. It was their first peal on 12 bells and took 3 hours and 26 minutes. A magnificent achievement.

Vergers - since the last Guild meeting, SO has been recruited to the role of honorary Verger, joining KI and PC. SO has previous Verger experience of working at Peterborough Cathedral, and now works for the Ambulance Service.

SO and PC were both able to assist with the Vergers Team throughout the Christmas period, helping at several services, including, the Advent Procession and Nine Lessons and Carols. KI is still recovering from knee surgery which he had at the end of 2023, and we look forward to welcoming him back at the beginning of February.

September to end of December is a very busy period for the Verger team, but thankfully all are still in good spirits ahead of a busy 2024.

JS (on paternity leave) thanked everyone, in their relevant areas of volunteering for their hard work working alongside the Vergers Team, and SF for supporting volunteering and visitors.

11. Closing Prayers were led by MV

**Date of forthcoming meetings**

**Guild Committee Meetings 2024**

9 May and 12 September. Both at 10 am in the Chapter Room.

**Annual Guild meeting 2024**

Thursday **13** June at 4.00 pm (NB this is a change to what was previously stated).

Wednesday 20 November at 1.00 pm Eucharist, lunch and talk