Essex Association of Change Ringers

Bell Restoration and Maintenance Sub-Committee

16th September 2026

Held at The Orange Tree pub, 6, Lower Anchor, Street, Chelmsford, CM2 0AS

Present:
Nigel Taylor (EACR Master)
Andrew Brewster (EACR Treasurer)
Fred Bone (North Western District)
Colin Chapman (South Eastern District)
Ian Cresshull (Northern District)
David Culham, (North Eastern District)
Simon Mann, (North Eastern District)
Steve Ashley, (Technical Advisor and Southern District)

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**
   The Technical Advisor thanked all for travelling to the in-person meeting and then congratulated Andrew and Christina Brewster on their 20th Wedding Anniversary.

   Apologies from Julia Taylor (EACR Secretary) who was caught up in heavy traffic.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting**
   David Culham pointed out that his name had been spelt incorrectly twice, there were no further comments.

3. **Update on projects underway**

   - **Earl's Colne.**
     Nicholson have started work on the bells, they are currently being tuned, the belfry is being cleaned and the frame treated with wood preservative. Ian Cresshull reported that the bells were expected to be back in the tower by early October this year, however, Nigel Taylor doubted this very much, telling us that he had tuned only two of the eight bells so far.

   - **Great Bentley.**
     Roger Carey-Smith said that the Great Bentley re-hang project will hopefully start in April 2027.

   - **Little Bromley.**
     The four bells from Little Bromley have now been removed and taken to Taylors. Gavin Edwards hopes the project will be completed early next year.

- **White Roding**
  According to Ian Kerwin the White Roding project has been successful in their Heritage Lottery Fund grant application. Quotes are having to be re-submitted and plans changed to fit in with the National Lottery's strict requirements. A start date has yet to be agreed, but the team are aiming for July – September 2027

4. Grant Applications

Great Hallingbury
A grant application has been received from St Giles, Great Hallingbury for a partial rehang. The Church has been quoted by Nicholson Engineering for bell hanging works, works to the frame, works to the bells, and scaffolding, as shown in the table below.

Nicholson Engineering have also quoted **£2,728.00** for installing rope guides.

	Costs					Funding	
		Cost	Saving	VAT	Sub Total		
1	Works to Bell hanging, wheels etc.	£21,001.00	-£4,337.00	£3,332.80	£19,996.80	Bells fund at Church	
1A	Works to frame	£3,620.00	-£525.00	£619.00	£3,714.00	EACR Bells Restoration Fund	
1D	Works to Bells	£1,511.00		£302.20	£1,813.20	Heritage Lottery Fund	
	Scaffold/Hatch to toilet estimate	£1,500.00			£1,500.00	Stansted Airport	
	7.5% Contingency				£2,026.80	Private Benefactor	
					£29,050.80	Fund Raising	
1B	Rope Guide	£2,728.00	-£468.00	£452.00	£2,712.00		£0.00
1C	Augmentaion to 6	£27,080.00	-£2,112.00	£4,993.60	£29,961.60		
						Left to find	£29,050.80

The local band remain to be convinced of the merits of rope guides. Also, Mark Smith stated that the band feel they would like to remain a five-bell tower

The application process for a faculty is almost complete.

Mark has said that the final stage is posting of the notice of the faculty outside the church which took place on 17th August 2026. The notice will be taken down on 17th September 2026, subject to no objection being made the faculty will be granted.

Works are pencilled in with Nicholson Engineering for a start date of 10th May 2027

Great Hallingbury has an active band who ring for services and have a weekly practice night.

Mark said that the band would be grateful for whatever financial support the Bell Restoration and Maintenance Sub-Committee can offer.

Fred Bone proposed that the committee offers Great Hallingbury £6,000.00 toward their project, plus the cost of the rope guides £2,728.00, giving a total of £8,728.00. A vote was held and the proposal was agreed unanimously.

Shenfield (minor works grant)
St Mary's, Shenfield has made an application for a minor works grant for fitting protective shutters to the tower louvres to prevent weather damage to the interior.

Beth Johnson, Tower Captain has proposed the works to allow flexibility to open the louvre shutters during the summer, but to be able to fit the shutters to protect the internal working of the bells during inclement weather and the winter season.

The application states that the PCC have agreed to this work and the total cost of this work (excluding VAT) is **£595.00;** the grant request is **£172.50.**

Following discussion, Ian Cresshull proposed that we agree to pay this grant, which was agreed unanimously.

5. Projects on the Horizon.

West Hanningfield
John Harpole has sent an e-mail to inform the committee that quotes have been obtained for additional strengthening work to the bell frame and tower at West Hanningfield.

The PCC have recently accepted a tender from Punch Construction to complete this strengthening work which includes packing various joints and a gap between the frame and the tower. Securing of the frame more tightly to the tower timbers.

John Harpole has asked whether the committee would consider making a further grant to West Hanningfield to help get the historic bells ringing again.

The committee agreed that no firm commitment can be made unless an application is made, further commenting that consideration could be given for works that improved linking the bell frame to the tower.

Rettendon
On a recent visit the Technical Advisor found missing nuts and greater problems set out in his report, noting that the cracked tenor is no longer rung.

Lin Benson (tower correspondent), told the Technical Advisor the band have been presented with various options following an inspection by Nicholson Engineering, ranging from repairs to the cracked tenor, to a quote for a completely new ring of eight bells.

I recommended for the band to make a grant application at the earliest opportunity for the committee to consider the merits of the project.

Fyfield
The bells were recently rung with the clock hammer down; the wheel has survived but Ian Kerwin has told the Technical Advisor that he now has some repairs to carry out on the hammer mechanism. He also said that Fyfield will soon be making a grant application for a project that involves all clappers being re-bushed and a new wheel for the 4th bell.

6. **The future of ringing at St Thomas, Navestock.**
Clare Beech (S District Master) attended the meeting held on Saturday, 12th September to discuss the risk of church closure at Navestock and the possible loss of access to the bells.

The Technical Advisor asked Clare what the situation is following the meeting; she responded that a meeting has yet to be arranged with the diocese and therefore currently no changes to ringing at the tower in the short term.

7. **Updates from the districts.**
Officers from each district gave bell maintenance updates including any progress, new projects or challenges within their districts.

a) Fred Bone (**NW**) had nothing to report.

b) Ian Cresshull (**N**) reported that:

Stisted would like to augment to a ring of eight bells and move the ringing chamber to the ground floor. There is a possible cost of £200,000.00 and a feasibility study for the works will begin in the new year.

Great Dunmow Church would like to create a new kitchen under the tower and move the ringing chamber to a new first floor. The local band object to this proposal.

c) David Culham (**NE**) reported that:

St Osyth and **Ardleigh** had been recently maintained, (mostly the tightening of loose nuts), David noted that the 7th at Ardleigh was becoming odd struck and would soon need adjustment. Nothing major to report.

Harwich, the third bell is rubbing on some boarding within the tower, affecting its handling. There is a plan to make some adjustments.

St Peter's Colchester was discussed and the committee lamented that it was unlikely any significant works would be done on these superb bells in the current climate.

St Leonard's at the Hythe, ringing is suspended here due to concerns regarding the security of the pinnacles atop the tower.

d) Colin Chapman (**SE**) reported that:

Purleigh all ringing has ceased here, and the church is closed due to a visible gap between the tower and the church roof, pending a visit from the architect.

Fryerning had a problem with 3rd, all felts were replaced and bearings oiled and pulleys lubricated; all now seems OK.

Great Leighs everything was checked for tightness and oiled. The bells ring well.

Ingatestone there were reports of a problem with 5th; but nothing significant was found, the problem maybe a bell handling issue.

Pleshey there were reports of an issue with 3rd and frame movement. All wheels were very loose and tightened. The frame section between 4 and 5 shunts, but this is not a new issue. Colin suggested they move forward with restoration.

Springfield there has been concern over 2nd hitting the bell frame. Whilst there is evidence that this has happened in the past it is not currently happening (routine maintenance may have sorted this out. It was suggested that they monitor the situation. They would benefit from new headstocks and general overhaul.

Margaretting The 4th was reported as being more difficult than usual. Colin checked the tightness of everything and was pleased to find no real movement, which is good considering they had not been touched for 30 years. He found some tower movement, but this is unsurprising as bells 1,2 and 5 all swing the same way in what is probably the weaker direction.

High Easter Colin is planning to help the band by removing clappers 1-3 for painting and checking.

8. **Activities of the Technical Advisor.**

- **Hatfield Broadoak** checks were made of cracks in bells 6 and 7; Nicholson Engineering has also checked the bells, we both noted minimal progression of the cracks and so it was felt safe to continue ringing.

- **Wivenhoe** a general maintenance visit was carried out, loose nuts were tightened (particularly those on the staple bolts for the clappers) which were lubricated and tightened, this work was lengthy.

- **Rickling** the third bell is loose on its headstock; some shrouding is dropping off and there is abundant woodworm. Ian Kerwin has spent a day tightening everything up. He is enthusiastic to get a band started here, (a couple of ringers have moved to the area, and a joint Clavering/Rickling band is envisaged), but only if the bells can be made ringable. Nicholson Engineering have visited recently, and a grant application will soon be made.

- **Epping upland** I visited with Ian Kerwin to help put on two new ropes. One of the bells seized during a peal earlier this year, I was able to look at the bells briefly, they are slathered in grease which is not appropriate for plain bearings. I scraped some aside and applied some oil. The bells very much need a visit from a professional bell hanger to have a look at the bearings and the fittings generally; as well as a working party to clean up.

  Unfortunately, there is nobody on site to drive a restoration project, so nothing is likely to change. I speculated that maybe there could be a future alliance with nearby Epping to ring and maintain the bells?

- **Great Wakering** I made a return visit to check everything over and do what I could to improve the handling of the fifth which drops. Although it has not been long since my last visit, a high proportion of the nuts ranged from loose to very loose following the dry summer. I was especially pleased that Tim Baskett, Tower Captain, and I managed to tighten up the six large bolts securing the frame to the tower floor.

  The three still has a bounce in the clapper but it is correctly aligned; the five is still poor and is missing a nut from the bracket connecting the gudgeon to the headstock. I have urged Tim to invite Nicholson Engineering for a visit, for advice on the clapper of the 3rd and handling of the 5th.

- **Epping** I was invited to look at the clapper on the three which seemed to be failing before the district striking competition was held at the tower. The bearing of the clapper for the 3rd bell was very dry and in dire need of lubrication. Once lubricated, the bell handled normally during the practice. The clapper of the 4th is just as dry and still needs to be treated.

  I found the belfry to be generally in good condition, clean and well maintained by Dave Knott.

  Mark Brooking (a local ringer) and I took the opportunity to carefully tighten everything up on the bell frame before the Monday practice took place as the steeple keeper is currently unable to assist.

8. **Any other business.**
   There was no further business

9. **Date of next meeting.**
   The agreed date for the next meeting is 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, 27th January 2026, to be held at the Orange Tree pub, 6 Lower Anchor Street, Chelmsford, CM2 0AS.

Steve Ashley, EACR Technical Advisor

SA September 2026