



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Association of Church Bellringers held at Battersea on Saturday 11 May 2019

Noel Gibbin, Master, welcomed the members to the meeting. He thanked Revd Paul Kennington for his short reflection on religion and politics including a fictitious European Striking Competition before moving on to memories of Bethlehem and some links to bells. Caroline Prescott and the team of Battersea ringers for organising refreshments were also thanked.

The meeting started at 5:50pm.

1 Apologies for absence

These were received from Trish Shannon (Southwark), Andrew Robinson (Merton Park), Martin Foster (Life member), Gill Tomlinson and Tony Nunn (Streatham), Paul Beeken (Dorking), Milica Reardon (Caterham St John), Ian Griffiths (Oxted), Katharine O'Carroll (Godstone), Robin Grant (Horley), Ed & Val Muller (Bletchingley), Sandie Hooper (Bletchingley), Vicky Williams (Nutfield), Jackie Harrison (Richmond), Libby Powell (Nutfield), Linda Wood (Beddington), Deborah and Tony Bishop (Kingston upon Thames).

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Merstham on Saturday 12 May 2018

These had been circulated to members prior to the meeting and copies were available today. They were approved unanimously, and the Master signed them as being an accurate record.

Noel asked for a minute's silence to remember the ringers who had died since the last meeting: Richard Horn, Peter Jefferson-Smith, Jan Herd, Ray Parsons and Grayson Clarke.

3 Matters arising

- a (5.4) Kate Wills had taken over ordering BRF Clothing and had sent out details on how to order via Yahoo Groups and email lists three weeks ago,
- b (9b) After further review, no change to rule 39 was currently considered necessary to comply with GDPR as it currently stands.

4 General Committee Report and General Fund Accounts

The new Annual Report had been issued that day. The relevant pages for items on today's meeting agenda were published on the website three weeks ago to give people a chance to review in advance and come ready with any questions. Richard Wallis said that he had nothing to add to the Report (page 17) and the General Fund Accounts (pages 18 & 19). For another year there had been a deficit on the General Fund after payment of the Fellowship Grants, but he was not concerned about the Association's finances. There were no questions. The adoption of the accounts and report were proposed by Kate Wills and seconded by Sue Dixon. The meeting voted unanimously to accept them.

5 Belfry Repair Fund Report and Accounts

5.1 Malcolm McAlister said that the fund continues to grow after the large payment to Southwark cathedral two years ago. In particular, he thanked Jill Wigney for organising The Numbers Club and those involved in the Brockham Bonfire in November that brought in £550. He also advertised the clothing that was now available again. Kate Wills said she had 16 orders so far; but she had hoped for more. She would keep taking orders for another couple of days.

5.2 Anne Rueff asked about the donation from “St John’s Church” listed. Jeremy Cheesman explained that this money arrives in the bank by standing order each year after Robin Leale’s appeal some years ago. Efforts to find out which St John’s had not proved successful to date.

5.3 Lawrence Davies proposed the report and accounts, seconded by Susan Gibbin and accepted unanimously.

5.4 The Numbers Club regular monthly, quarterly and annual draws were then made by Russell King. The winning number 2 for the monthly draw of £25.00 belonged to Geoff Paul of Kingston upon Thames. The winning number 117 for the quarterly draw of £96.58 belonged to the Beddington bellringers. The winning number 119 for the annual draw of £261.50 belonged to the Beddington bellringers.

6 Training Group Report and Accounts

Paul Flavell continued on from his printed report with a summary of recent events. There were now more than 20 Association members with ART teaching accreditation and 100+ learners have passed through the ART Learning the Ropes programme. He also said that the newly trained band at Mitcham were now ringing regularly. He ended by thanking all those involved and who have helped over his four years as Training Officer. Noel thanked Paul on behalf of the Association for his work in that time.

The Report and Accounts were proposed by Martin Crick and seconded by Trisha Hawkins. The members voted unanimously to accept them.

7 Communications Officer’s Report

Chris Baldwin had reported to the Districts’ Annual Meetings. The main items of the year started with the work to ensure GDPR compliance and then the Newsletter that stopped offering a printed version in March 2018 and is now available only online. Downloads indicate that it is still being read.

He reiterated how important email communication and the website were to the success of the Association. Yahoo Groups only reaches half the membership, and all were encouraged to get more subscribers as it is the main way to keep members informed. The social media outlets are also important, and he encouraged regular contributions to make them more interesting and relevant. Ringing Remembers was also promoted during the year.

8 Central Council 2019

Richard Wallis gave a brief outline of the weekend’s events as known at the moment as the meeting is now on the first weekend of September rather than the traditional May date. No agenda was available yet, but people could contact our representatives (Kate and Paul Flavell, Jeremy Cheesman and Richard Wallis) nearer the time if members had any issues. The proposed new Central Council website was now in beta version for people to comment upon in they wished.

To update people after last year’s report, Kate Flavell said that the new Executive Group and Working Groups seemed to be bedding in and there was very little communication available about what they are doing. It was thought that the gaps and overlaps that was a concern of the old setup remained. The weekend of events aimed to be more like the Ringing Roadshows were (i.e. with stalls and seminars open to all). The event was at Goldsmith’s University.

Jeremy Cheesman gave notice that he wouldn’t be standing at next year’s AGM for nomination as a CC rep. for the next three years. Richard Wallis then said he wouldn’t be standing either.

Phillip Ridley was a regular ringer and doesn’t hear about what the Central Council actually does. He asked for more detail next year of what they do for ringers and whether the subscription and expenses claimed by some were worth the money. Kate said that the Committees and Workshops work in the background (including the library and public relations). They were open to suggestions.

Jeremy added that the Bookstall includes many books from them (including the new Dove). Trisha Hawkins said she signed up to a weekly email update that was available to all. Not many knew of this and details would be passed on. Gavin Bennett also extolled the virtues of The Ringing World and its regular updates on work of the Central Council. **Action: Trisha Hawkins / General Secretary**

9 Motions received from members:

The Appendix gives the details of each of the motions and the one amendment.

Noel started by saying that the 14 motions were the result of work by a small Working Group (Chris Baldwin, Martin Crick, Richard Wallis and himself) that had come up with those presented. Not all were agreed amongst ourselves so you may not agree them here. However, there were designed to be more fit for purpose. Each motion would be taken one at a time after a general discussion.

The Master invited Chris Baldwin to propose the motions. He started by saying that these motions followed on from last year's AGM that voted for the principle of removing elections. After looking in more detail, it became apparent that this necessitated changing some other rules. The opportunity to revise some others was also taken in these proposals.

In his 9 years on the General Committee he was concerned at the low level of engagement. Less than half of our 600 members subscribed to the email groups or registered for social media. Many less come to meetings. In 2014, a new members application form was introduced that required a contact address and was the first step in making direct contact.

June's General Committee started to undertake the task of revising or rewriting some rules (through the Working Group) and they consulted on proposals and asked for feedback during the autumn and winter and the Working Group reported back to the October and March meetings. Progress was also given via the website. This was quite time consuming in drafting and trying to reach a consensus on several issues.

He summarised that the main changes from the current rules were:

- Ending membership elections and replacing joining with a sponsor of two years' membership and payment of the current subscription.
- Removing gender specific terms.
- Increasing the age of students from 17 to 18.
- Removing the category of Senior membership.
- Removing Honorary Life Membership for services to the Exercise or to the Association.

No one should be disadvantaged by the removal of Senior membership because a later proposal reduces the standard subscription to £5 – the current concessionary rate. This is not felt to adversely affect the Association's finances as it makes a sufficient surplus every year.

Honorary Life Membership has only been awarded for completion of 30 years' service. The other options are superfluous.

The other changes are just minor housekeeping tasks. Only motions 5 and 7 relate to the removal of the elections.

Noel Gibbin then opened the floor to questions from those present:

Charlotte Kirwan asked about motion 4 and how people would get elected. They would continue to fill in an adapted form, that was submitted via a sponsor (Resident Ringing Member who has been a member for at least 2 years or an Honorary Life Member) and payment of the subscription.

Michael Uphill was unclear about the new peal membership rule worked and if someone rang more peals for the Association later. He didn't think it made any sense at all. Oliver Thompson agreed.

Chris Baldwin said that, from today, peals for the Association only needed a majority of members; not all being members. If belfry elections were still needed, this is against the other rule changes that removes them for Resident Ringing Members.

It was commented that this did allow, for example, 3 Non-Resident Members and 2 Non-Members to ring a 5-bell peal. David Wallis wondered why and this seemed pointless.

Jeremy Cheesman pointed out that peal ringers were usually well-organised, and they could still go online before the peal attempt and join; nothing precludes them becoming members that way. The rules still allow peals where all taking part are members of the Association.

David Bassford asked for clarification on when someone becomes a member if they fill in the online application form and pay their money. Perhaps a two week grace after the peal could allow people to join was suggested. There was no definitive answer as it would differ on how payment was made to the relevant Secretary.

There was also concern about the Association's lost income if people no longer became members, but it was noted that non-resident subscriptions are insignificant in the total income.

Paul Flavell asked whether the General Committee had looked at rules from other Associations. Only Chris Baldwin had done so and they didn't show a consistent approach. Anecdotally, he didn't think they were sticklers in their rules anyway.

Mike Bangham suggested that no amendments be taken, the meeting vote on the motions as they stand and, if any are not passed, the General Committee consider them again.

Chris Baldwin said that the new table of memberships was introduced for simplicity. It increased the age of students from 17 to 18 and removed Senior membership.

Chris Ridley had previously expressed concerns about the 30 year rule for Honorary Life Membership as this applied to lots of members now and people were living longer. Fewer and fewer younger people/newer ringers were subsidising the others. Anne Rueff agreed with Chris. She also felt it gave a misleading impression of membership where Life Members who no longer rang were listed in the Annual Report under towers, She suggested an asterisk indicated they either did still ring or vice versa. Phillip Ridley also agreed. Sue Dixon said Life Members could still contribute if they wished; and some do. **Action: Report Compiler**

Joining the Association now needed a sponsor and this was introduced after the consultation. People had expressed concern over "entryism" and "bad" people could join and undermine what most members wanted the Association to do and access its funds. The controls remaining are that the person needs to be a bellringer, be sponsored by someone of two years' membership and get to a position of influence (elections at district or Association meetings). This just removed a fourth level of control (the election at a meeting) that was often just a cursory show of hands. Malcolm McAlister was still concerned about the potential problems this may lead to and didn't provide enough protection. He was concerned that a relatively small group could come to the AGM and cause problems.

Chris Baldwin said that the final sentence of motion 8 (iii) had been left in error and there would be a proposal to remove that.

There was a query about the alternative use of "and" or "or" in the category of Non-Resident Ringing Member in motions 6 and 7. This would be reviewed by the General Committee rather than changed today. **Action: General Committee**

The Master closed the discussion as there were no further issues raised. He reminded people that these were Special Resolutions that needed 75% of those present and eligible to vote to pass. For

speed, he thought that the votes against and then the abstentions would be counted.

Malcolm McAlister and Alan Cooke, both on the General Committee, were appointed as tellers as no non-member said they could do it. The initial job was to count the number of members present – there were 56 – so 42 or more were needed for motions to pass.

The Transition arrangements were needed just to confirm that the existing rates and membership categories continue until the end of the year.

The subscription rates apply from 1 January 2020 as that is when the “membership year” runs.

Results of voting:

Motion	Votes Against	Abstentions	Votes For	Result
1	0	1	55	Passed with 98.2% in favour
2	0	1	55	Passed with 98.2% in favour
3	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
4	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
5	11	3	42	Passed with 75.0% in favour
6	2	0	54	Passed with 96.4% in favour
7	1	1	54	Passed with 96.4% in favour
Amendment for Motion 8	0	1	55	Passed with 98.2% in favour
8	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
9	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
10	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
11	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
12	0	1	55	Passed with 98.2% in favour
13	0	0	56	Passed with 100% in favour
14	2	0	54	Passed with 96.4% in favour

10 Forthcoming Events

10.1 The Quarter Peal Week had started, and ringers were asked to put successes on BellBoard and link to the event, so they could be published together.

10.2 Best wishes and good luck was sent to the youngsters representing the Association at the Ringing World National Youth Contest (RWNYC) in Liverpool on 6 July. Caroline Prescott and Jason Hughes were leading this effort.

10.3 The Call Change Striking Competition is to be held at Ashted on 27 July and invites/details would be sent out in June.

10.4 Forthcoming training opportunities were advertised by the new Training Officer. In particular, the Conference (for all active trainers) on 9 November (ley by an ART organisation trainer) was promoted.

11 Election of New Members

11.1 Honorary Life Members – Gavin Bennett (Southwark Cathedral), Jennifer Meade (Esher), Anne Rueff (Redhill) and Sally Sayce (Buckland) were elected under the 30 year rule.

11.2 Resident Members – Richard Hoey, Helen Flanagan, Lesley McMahon and Emily Pye (all of Dorking), Katy Deragan and Cornelia Viol (both of Chipstead), Cynthia Westley (Streatham), Harriet Smelt (Lambeth/Waterloo), Susan Reed (Unattached ND), Rowena Proctor (Benilton) and Jeffrey Perry (Merton Park) were all nominated for the final election process and unanimously elected as members of the Association.

11.3 Non-Resident Member – Michael Uphill said he needed ratification of Ian J Culham after a belfry election prior to a successful peal at Putney on 16 March. This was passed.

12 Election of Officers

Noel started by saying that Richard Wallis who was standing down after 25 years of “fantastic” service as General Secretary; and to Paul Flavell who was standing down as Training Officer. They were thanked for all they had done and, hopefully, will continue to do and this was met with applause.

There had been one nomination for each post and he declared them elected:

Master	Noel Gibbin
Secretary	Ann Beirne
Assistant Secretary	Milica Reardon
BRF Secretary	Malcolm McAlister
Training Officer	Martin Crick
Communications Officer	Chris Baldwin

Also, the election of Independent Examiner, with one nomination received, Andrew Robinson was declared elected.

He welcomed Ann and Martin to their roles.

13 Future Annual General Meeting

Saturday 9 May 2020: As this year’s AGM had been held in the Northern District next year, it would traditionally be the turn of the Southern District to host it. No offers were forthcoming, so the Southern District Committee would investigate. **Action: SD Committee**

14 Any Other Business

14.1 Kate Flavell asked about the apparently three random words by towers in the new Report. Richard Wallis explained that these were “what3words” and someone had suggested that these were used by some sat navs to identify a three by three metre square anywhere in the world. As he wanted to continually improve the report, these were added.

14.2 Bob Cooles asked about the attendance book. This had started going round but was available at the end as well.

14.3 Lawrence Davies said he had laid out the Bookstall at the back of the church for people to peruse and buy from at the end of the meeting.

14.4 Michael Shelley of Clapham St Mary had details of chiming there and asked people to take an interest (only one member had done so in the past year).

14.5 Caroline Prescott thanked Chris Ridley for organising the towers for ringing today. The box for the tea contribution (£2 or more) was at the back of the church. Any surplus would go towards the team polo shirts for the “Surrey Strikers” (the name of the RWNYC team).

14.6 Noel closed the meeting with a presentation to the retiring General Secretary of a specially embroidered jacket with the Surrey logo, “25 Years” and “1994-2019”.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

APPENDIX – Detailed Motions

Motion 1

Rule 5 is amended to change the word 'Ordinary' to 'Special' i.e. a 75% majority is required to change number of Districts and boundaries instead of just 50%.

Motion 2

Rule 22 : Second sentence is amended to apply gender neutral language. Revised wording is: *"They may not hold an office which confers membership of the General Committee."*

Motion 3

Rule 26 : Third sentence is amended to change the word 'attached' in the third sentence to 'affiliated' and apply gender neutral language. Revised wording is: *"A Resident Ringing Member is only eligible as a District Officer for the District to which they are affiliated for the time being."*

Motion 4

Rule 44 is amended to remove reference to election of members. New wording is: *"No notice need be given of motions for the adoption of minutes, reports or accounts. "*

Motion 5

Rule 45 and 45A are amended to introduce proposals relating to formation of peal bands and the recognition of peals. New wording is: *"A peal can be recognised as having been rung for the Association provided that the majority of the band are members of the Association (e.g. on 8 bells 5 ringers must be members allowing for a maximum of 3 non-members to be in the band) and the composition meets the standard accepted by the CCCBR."*

Motion 6

New Rule 6 – Types of Membership

The types of membership recognised by the Association are detailed in the table below:

Membership	Qualifying criteria	Subscription	Affiliation	Voting Rights*
Resident Ringing Member	A ringer (or lapsed ringer) resident in or ringing frequently for Sunday Service within the County and meeting one of the following criteria:	Annually renewable at the rate below		
Adult	An adult who does not fall under other Resident Ringer categories.	Full	District	Yes
Student	A young ringer who has not yet reached their 18th birthday at the 1st Jan or is still in full time education. Note: Resident Ringing Members may be attached or unattached to a tower, but shall be affiliated to a District.	Student Concession	District	Yes
Honorary Life Member	Awarded on the achievement of thirty years as a Resident Ringing Member. The total of thirty years membership does not need to be accumulated in a single continuous period.	Exempt	District or Association	Yes

Membership	Qualifying criteria	Subscription	Affiliation	Voting Rights*
Non-Resident Ringing Member	A ringer who is not resident and does not ring frequently for Sunday Service within the County.	Single payment on first joining as a member	Association	No

* All Members eligible to vote shall receive a copy of the Association Annual Report.

Motion 7

New Rule 7 - Joining the Association

- (i) A new member satisfying the criteria for membership can join the Association on completion of a membership form with sponsor and on payment of the current year's subscription.
- (ii) All new members must agree to be bound by the Rules of the Association and have their application sponsored. Sponsors must have been a Resident Ringing Member of the Association for at least the preceding two calendar years, or be an Honorary Life Member.
- (iii) Resident Ringing Members shall be affiliated with the District in which they are resident or most frequently ring. New members eligible for more than one District may choose their affiliation by writing to the relevant District Secretary.
- (iv) Although common it is not necessary to be attached to a tower to be a member of the Association. Ringers who are unattached to a tower but otherwise qualify as a Resident Ringing Member may join the Association and choose their affiliation to a District.
- (v) An existing Resident Ringing Member may choose to change their District affiliation provided they qualify by residency or place of ringing by notifying, in writing, both District Secretaries.
- (vi) A ringer who is not resident in the County **or [to be changed to 'and' to comply with Rule 6 detail]** is not a frequent Sunday Service ringer in the County may join as a Non-Resident Member, on completion of a membership form with sponsor and on payment of the subscription.

Motion 8

New Rule 8 - Subscriptions

- (i) The subscription and concession rates shall be kept under review by the General Committee and set by a Special Resolution of the Association for the following year.
- (ii) The methods of payment and collection of subscriptions shall be agreed by the General Committee and be appropriate to the type of membership, affiliation and processes available for collection at the time.
- (iii) The total subscription raised each year shall be shared between the Association and the Districts. The basis on which subscriptions are shared shall be determined by a Special Resolution of the General Committee. *The percentage of subscriptions received in each year by District Secretaries that is determined from time to time by the General Committee shall be remitted to the General Secretary out of the funds of the Districts by 31st December in each year.*
- (iv) Annually renewable memberships shall be continuous with all subscriptions becoming due on 1st January each year.
- (v) The subscription of any annually renewable membership commencing on or after 1st October shall run to 31st December of the following year.
- (vi) A member resigning or being expelled before their subscription is paid shall not be liable for that year's subscription. Once paid no refunds shall be given for resigning or expelled members.

Amendment to Motion 8

The final sentence of point (iii) [*now in italics*] was included in error and removed before the final vote.

Motion 9

New Rule 9 - Conduct of Members

- (i) Members eligible to vote may only do so in person at a meeting of the Association.
- (ii) Members with voting rights will be eligible to vote at all meetings of the Association and at meetings of the District to which they are affiliated. Honorary Life Members may vote at all meetings of the Association and at any District meeting regardless of their affiliation.

Motion 10

New Rule 10 - Leaving the Association

Membership of the Association shall cease if a member dies, resigns, lapses or is expelled.

- (i) Resigns by notifying the District or General Secretary they no longer wish to be a member of the Association.
- (ii) Lapses by failing to pay their subscription renewal within 12 months of the date it became due.
- (iii) Expulsion on completion of the process for expulsion of a member (see below).
- (iv) A Resident Ringing Member who moves away from or ceases to ring within the County may transfer their membership to a Non-Resident Ringing Member upon notification, in writing, to the General Secretary or the appropriate District Secretary.

Motion 11

New Rule 11 - Expulsion of a Member

- (i) The General Committee shall consider any case for expulsion of a member and may, after an Ordinary Resolution, invite a member to resign within a given time period.
- (ii) If no such resignation is received within the time given the General Secretary shall organise an Extraordinary meeting of the Association and propose a motion for Special Resolution at that meeting for the expulsion of the member.
- (iii) The member has the right to be informed of any complaint against them and be invited to speak at any meeting where a proposal has been made to expel them.

Motion 12

Current rules 12 to 19 are removed and subsequent rules renumbered accordingly.

Motion 13

Transition Arrangements

The previously adopted rule changes shall come into effect immediately following the conclusion of this AGM 2019 subject to these conditions:

- Existing members shall retain their existing membership type until December 31st 2019.
- New members joining before October 1st 2019 shall join subject to the existing membership types, which they shall retain until December 31st 2019, and rates.
- New members joining on or after October 1st 2019 shall join subject to the new membership types and rates.

Outstanding subscriptions of existing members shall be paid at the existing rates as they were due on 1st January 2019.

Motion 14

The subscription rates from 1st January 2020:

Membership	Subscription type	Rate	Collected
Resident Ringing Member			
Adult	Full	£5.00	Annually
Student	Student Concession	£3.00	Annually
Honorary Life Member	Not Applicable	Exempt	Not Applicable
Non-Resident Ringing Member	Non-Resident	£5.00	Single payment on first joining or exempt if transferring from Resident Member

These rates also apply to those joining after 1st October 2019.