

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Surrey Association of Church Bellringers held by Zoom call on Saturday 16 May 2020

The meeting started at 5.10pm with 57 people joining the call, most of whom were Association members.

Noel Gibbin, Association Master, welcomed everyone to the Association's first ever virtual AGM, caused by the country being in Lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus. He explained how the meeting was going to work, with most people being muted to avoid unnecessary noise diversions during the meeting. People would be unmuted if they were due to speak and comments could be made by all on the Group chat section of the website at any point. Everyone was asked to show their full name on their "video" so a record could be kept of who was there. Everyone was asked to record any apologies for absence on the Group Chat list. Where voting was needed votes against could be recorded on the Chat list. Kate Flavell was taking the minutes. The meeting was being recorded. No one objected so recording began.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Kathleen Chilcott (Beddington), Michael Chilcott (unattached), Linda Georgiades (Kingston), David & Sarah Gilmore (Reigate), Ruth Goodsir (Nutfield), Andrew Hamilton (Reigate), David Hardcastle (Benhilton), Sarah Mitchell (Reigate).

The Master requested a few moments' silence to remember those of our members who had died since the last meeting: Jim Cook (Beddington), Joan Fountain (Mitcam), Tony Gullett (Kingswood), David Hardcastle (Benhilton), Keith Hood (Battersea), Brenda Judd (Betchworth), John Saysell (Old Coulsdon), Michael Wallis (Lingfield) and Michael Williamson (formerly of Beddington).

2 Minutes of the AGM held at Battersea on Saturday 11 May 2019

The minutes had previously been circulated via the website and were unanimously agreed as a true record of that meeting, proposed by Paul Flavell, seconded by Malcolm McAlister. There were no matters arising.

3 General Committee Report and approval of general fund accounts

All the reports to be considered at this meeting had previously been published on the website. In proposing this report secretary Ann Beirne stressed that the past year had been a big learning curve for her but she had received plenty of support and was pleased to be able to put something back into ringing. Highlights of the report included:

- Enthusiasm of members for meetings
- Invaluable training and follow-up opportunities
- Striking competitions throughout the year
- BRF continuing to grow and contribute
- One fellowship grant with a reminder of the availability of this grant facility and awards from the legacy account
- Steady membership numbers – a small decrease since last year.

Concerning the General Fund accounts, also published online, income had remained static. Expenditure had risen slightly in line with inflation and there was still a healthy balance. The accounts were unanimously approved on a proposal from Andrew Fisher, seconded by Susan Gibbin.

Noel expressed the Association's thanks to Ann for all her hard work in preparing the annual report and accounts and over the year as General Secretary.

4 Officer reports

4.1 Northern District Report

Paul Flavell, reporting for the Northern District, said that huge thanks are due to Caroline Prescott for all her hard work as District Master over the last four years. The District is still looking for someone to step forward to work as District Master, but in the meantime the committee has put together a good schedule of events for the year, which are all now sadly suspended pending the resumption of ringing. The Annual District Meeting had been held on 14 January and the last District Committee meeting was 13 February. The committee had been pleased to welcome Wendy Archibald to the committee.

4.2 Southern District Report

Paul Beeken, Southern District Master, reported big thanks to the Southern District Committee and to District members who had all given up time to help others. They had been updating the styles of ringing practices, promoting ringing and social events and their summer friendly striking competition (currently suspended). They were focusing on monthly practices for plain hunt, plain Bob and Grandsire and were also regularly using the facility at Oxted. Thanks were expressed to Noel for running monthly surprise major and royal practices at Bletchingley and to Reigate for hosting the Southern District AGM. Once ringing resumes it is hoped to focus on weekday ringing with lunch and possibly on developing ringing of triples.

4.3 Training Officer's Report

Martin Crick referred to the published report and added that most courses are now suspended although there had been a good course the previous week on Zoom on 'How to learn methods'. This can still be viewed online via training resources. Martin mentioned Paul Beeken's activities on training on early stages of change ringing in the Southern District and Russell King's similar work in the Northern District. Much of this early stage training is best delivered more locally, with plenty of practice, and is proving successful. The Training Group provides support when needed. Martin expressed his thanks to this group for their support and explained that he is standing down as Training Officer. The meeting was advised of a typo at the bottom of P30 of the annual report, where the figure shown as £2385.15 should be £2358.15.

Martin was asked about the future of Training Days. He said there is a wide range of views and it is something the Training Group is currently considering. He encouraged members to let the Training Group know their views about the value of Training Days in their current or previous forms.

4.4 Communication Officer's Report

Further to the published report, Chris Baldwin reported a good year with all aspects of the Association's communications flourishing, with a lot of interest in what is going on. The website has been upgraded and developed and a new training website established – thanks to Martin Crick and Trisha Hawkins. The current situation underlines the need for these channels to engage with our community. Chris also drew attention to the new Community section of the website, designed to help us all keep in touch and keep motivated in these non-ringing times.

4.5 BRF Officer's Report

Further to the published report, Malcolm McAlister highlighted that figures were similar to last year, with modest disbursements (to Godstone & Ewell) and some clothing sales and other income. It is hoped to revive sales of clothing in November, although Kate Wills commented that she is happy to accept clothing orders via the website at any time. The Brockham Bonfire brought in the usual £550, despite the low attendance due to bad weather. Martin encouraged members to contribute online to the Fund in lieu of passing round the bell for contributions as we usually do at meetings.

The numbers club draw was made at this point, with the winners being drawn out of the hat by Gail Terry's mother:

Monthly draw for £25, number 146 Newdigate Ringers

Quarterly draw for £102.91, number 11 Emma Booth, Redhill

Annual draw for £293.13, number 171, David Rowe-Lister, Merstham

4.6 Surrey Strikers (Young Ringers)

Caroline Prescott reported that there is now (although currently suspended) a good core group meeting once a month at Caterham & Battersea. They were desperately sad to have their trip to York cancelled as they had secured a place in the competition there. It is hoped that the group will get going again as soon as ringing re-starts. Milica Reardon polices their active WhatsApp group. They are working with Susan Gibbin on Safeguarding issues.

Thanks were expressed to Caroline & Milica for their important work with the young ringers.

Noel expressed thanks on behalf of the Association to all officers and everyone who works hard running the Association, organising the events and for everything else that they do.

5 New honorary life members and welcome to new members

New honorary life membership was awarded as follows:

David Bell (Limpsfield), Marianne Bell (Limpsfield), Lynda Boast (Limpsfield), Ian Henderson (Lingfield) and Tom White (unattached). Certificates will be forwarded to them in due course.

Noel was unaware of any new members to welcome

6 Election of Officers

Noel thanked those officers standing down at this meeting – Milica Reardon as Assistant Secretary and Martin Crick as Training Officer. He hoped they would continue to be actively involved in Association matters. He noted there was still a vacancy for a Northern District Master and also for a fourth Central Council rep, who could be elected today if nominated. One nomination had been made for each officer post so those nominated were duly elected as follows:

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| Master | Noel Gibbin |
| Secretary | Ann Beirne |
| Assistant Secretary | Kate Flavell |
| BRF Secretary | Malcolm McAlister |
| Training Officer | Ian Griffiths |
| Independent Examiner | Andrew Robinson |
| Central Council Reps | Kate Flavell, Paul Flavell, Jason Hughes, (one vacancy) |

Noel welcomed Ian Griffiths, Kate Flavell & Jason Hughes to their new roles.

7 Future Annual General Meeting

It was agreed that next year's AGM would be held on Saturday 8 May 2021, reverting to our usual date of the second Saturday in May. It had been changed this year because of the change of the Bank Holiday date. Next year the meeting will be in the Southern District, as this year's should have been. Noel reminded everyone he had intended to combine the VE Day anniversary and our AGM with Quarter Peal week and to have a quarter rung in every tower in the Association. He hopes to try this again next year.

8 Membership Development

Chris Baldwin reminded members that this project was intended to improve both membership engagement and compliance with GDPR. Last year we had introduced a new rule to simplify membership processes. The General Committee working party has finalised a set of requirements and identified candidate systems. Work has been interrupted by COVID-19 but will continue as soon as possible. Meanwhile there has been increased use of online payments for 2020 membership renewals. The Yahoo groups are well-populated, covering over half the total membership. Noel thanked Chris for all the work he doing leading on this initiative.

9 Ringing Reinstated

We clearly need to follow the advice of Government and Church authorities, but we envisage difficulties, including loss of ringers, no immediate return by all ringers and reduced visiting. We need to consider the challenges to reinvigorate our ringing, with teaching, recruitment, events and striking competitions. Wider use of Zoom for committee meetings and for training might encourage more people to work with committees and to help training continue during lockdown. It was mentioned that the Kent Association run good training courses online that anyone can join and the link would be sent round later (**Action: Rhiannon Meredith to provide link**). The Central Council output was felt by some to be unhelpfully negative, suggesting that

ringing might be off limits for a very long time. We need to work with the Central Council and the Church to explain the peculiarities, needs and benefits of ringing and to work on a risk assessment template to help towers work out how they can safely resume ringing. Noel undertook to take this up with the Diocese and Kate Flavell will do the same with the Central Council (**Action: NG / KF**). There was concern about the few ringers who did not take part in tower Zoom calls or virtual practices and how to keep them engaged. Many towers were using *RinginRoom* and finding that a helpful way to practise.

10 Any Other Business

- Noel offered the Association's congratulations to Michael & Kath Chilcott, celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary the next day – married at Beddington.
- Noel welcomed Helen Allton of Peterborough Guild and Mark Chilcott of Manchester to the meeting. Mark was asked to pass on the Association's best wishes to his parents Kathleen and Michael Chilcott of Beddington who are celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary.
- Michael Uphill said he had almost achieved 60 years membership of the Association and Chris Mew and Alan Bagworth already had and should be shown as such in the report. (**Action: AB to investigate their membership and correct the records**).
- Noel was congratulated on successfully planning and chairing the meeting, helped by Ann and Chris.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.