

Minutes of the 2010 AGM held in Coaley Village Hall on Saturday 17 April 2009

The meeting followed an excellent service attended by 105 members and taken by Ian Robb with Paul Phillips as organist. Nearly all of those members had participated in the ringing beforehand, and a fine service touch of Stedman Doubles was rung by the following six ringers representing the following six Branches:

Sheila Taylor, Tewkesbury Branch; John Cornock, Wotton-under-Edge Branch; Alan Woodward, Swindon Branch; Barbara Holden, Cirencester Branch; Pat Hickey, Cheltenham Branch; Elaine Scudamore, Bristol Rural Branch.

Following a sumptuous and magnificent tea, the meeting was attended by Hugh Evans, Chairman; Steve Coleman, Ringing Master and Acting Secretary; Philip Twentyman Treasurer; and 120 other members representing all of the Association's twelve Branches. The business proceeded as follows:

1. Opening Prayer

Hugh opened the meeting with a prayer at 4.46 p.m.

2. A Prayer for Members who had Died

Hugh read out the names of those members who had died in 2009 and the start of 2010. They were: Dr Tony Bennett of Tytherington in the Bristol Rural Branch, Mike Bufford of St Briavels in the Forest Branch, Rev. Bill Burlton, formerly of Cromhall in the Wotton-under-Edge Branch, Margaret Davis of Chipping Sodbury in the Bristol Rural Branch, Clare French of Twyning in the Tewkesbury Branch, Eric Goodwin of Littledean in the Forest Branch, Arthur Herbert of Almondsbury in the Bristol Rural Branch, Dennis Higgs of Alvington in the Forest Branch, Roger Liddell of Tewkesbury Abbey in the Tewkesbury Branch, Hubert Matthews of Haresfield in the Stroud Branch, Judith Spencer of Swindon Village in the Cheltenham Branch, and Tom Walters of Coalpit Heath in the Bristol Rural Branch, and Val Willard, formerly of Cheltenham St Mary in the Cheltenham Branch. Hugh then led the meeting in prayer for all those members.

3. A Welcome from the Wotton-under-Edge Branch

Peggy Collett warmly welcomed the Association on behalf of the Bristol Rural Branch. (Applause)

4. Results of the Striking and Best Kept Tower Competitions

a. Croome Trophy Competition

The judges, Alan Woodward and Katie Whittaker of the Swindon Branch gave a complimentary summary of the morning's ringing, and then placed the bands as follows:

1st Charlton Kings (Cheltenham Branch), 2nd Dursley (Wotton-under-Edge Branch), 3rd Chippenham, St Andrew (Chippenham Branch), 4th St Mary Redcliffe (Bristol Branch), 5th Wanborough (Swindon Branch), 6th Tewkesbury Abbey (Tewkesbury Branch), 7th Cirencester (Cirencester Branch), 8th Barnwood (Gloucester Branch), 9th Westerleigh (Bristol Rural Branch), 10th Mickleton (North Cotswold Branch), 11th Leonard Stanley (Stroud Branch).

Steve then presented the Ringing Master's Clappers to Westerleigh for their fine old world stately ringing, and to Barnwood for producing such a splendid second half to their test piece. In addition, all the teams received framed and illuminated certificates.

b. Penn Trophy Competition

The judges were Janet Covey-Crump and Karen Evans of the Cheltenham Branch. Karen gave a short and complimentary summary and then placed the bands as follows:

1st Tewkesbury Branch, 2nd Gloucester Branch, 3rd Bristol Branch, 4th Swindon Branch, 5th Wotton-under-Edge Branch, 6th Chippenham Branch, 7th Cirencester Branch, 8th Cheltenham Branch, 9th Stroud Branch, 10th North Cotswold Branch.

Steve thanked Alan, Katie, Janet and Karen for judging the competitions. (Applause)

c. Best Kept Tower Competition

The chief judge, Malcolm Taylor of the Tewkesbury Branch, kindly and entertainingly summed up the judging by himself and Mike Seagrave. He said that the standard of all the steeple keeping had again been high, as had been the work in the ringing chambers. He pointed out that the record high entry, albeit of only nine teams, had needed two full days of judging and 250 miles travelling. He particularly noted that Great Rissington had entered on 13 occasions and that the steeple keeper, Rupert Duester had kept the bells there in immaculate condition for the past 20 years. He then announced the results - and presented trophies and framed, illuminated certificates - as follows:

Commended: Woodchester and Minchinhampton.

Highly Commended: Brislington, Churchdown, English Bicknor, Painswick.

Winner of the Ground Floor Six category, and awarded the Great Peter Trophy: Great Rissington.

Winner of the Upstairs Six category and awarded the "Littledean and Purton" Trophy: Lydiard Tregoze.

Overall winner, and awarded the Bliss Trophy: St Mark's, Cheltenham.

Hugh then awarded the Chairman's Baldric to Painswick and thanked the judges for their very considerable work. (Applause)

5. Minutes of 2009 AGM

These had already been circulated to all Branches and placed on the website, and further copies were available in the Hall for reading beforehand. They were approved unamended, as proposed by Chris Hickey and seconded by Angela Newing.

6. Matters Arising

Steve said that among the most successful things that the Association did, if not *the* most successful, were the Training Days. They had now been going for 30 years but they took a lot of organising and so far, new volunteers had come forward as the previous ones retired. Ian Wigmore was now retiring as the organiser of the Cirencester half of the Spring Day and Claire Redstone was looking to retire either this year or next as the organiser of the Tewkesbury half of the Spring Day. If new volunteers would come forward, Steve would be extremely grateful. It would certainly suit the recently retired – although he stressed that Claire was very much younger than that!

7. 2009 Report and Accounts

These were in the 2009 Annual Report which had been distributed before the meeting and further copies of which were available in the Hall. Philip had nothing to add and proposed that they be accepted. Mike Mulvey seconded and the accounts were approved unanimously.

Hugh then thanked Rob Clive for his immense work in compiling the Annual Report and maintaining the Website and Martin Pearson for his very punctilious proof reading. Rob and Martin stood to receive the applause of the meeting.

8. Election of New Members

The following nine ringers from Minsterworth were proposed by Steve Coleman: Rachel Andrew, Sue Sterry, Mary Fear, Neil Tappin, Bruce Richardson, Gemma Sterry, Trish Fawcett-Henry, Lynda Simms and John Simms. Lucy Burley of Corsham was proposed by Paul Adkins, and all ten were seconded by Caroline Emerson and elected unanimously.

9. Ratification of Belfry Elections to Non-resident Life Membership

Hugh read out the list of names on page 57 of the 2009 Annual Report, and these were ratified, as proposed by Bob Nightingale and seconded by Owen Barraclough.

10. Election of Officers

Hugh said that nominations had been received as follows:

Steve Coleman as Ringing Master;
Hugh Evans as Chairman;
Philip Twentyman as Treasurer;
Mark Davies as Peal Secretary.

These four had been nominated by all twelve Branches, and in the absence of any other nominations he declared them elected. (Applause)

There had been no nominations for Secretary but Steve was prepared to continue as Acting Secretary. (More applause)

11. Election of Central Council Representatives

Hugh said that five nominations had been received for the triennium 2011 – 2014. In alphabetical order these were:

Derek Harbottle
Pat Hickey
Bill Nash
Angela Newing
and John Nicholls.

Since there were five vacancies, he declared them all elected, and they all stood to receive the applause of the meeting.

12. Election of Independent Examiners

Michelle Harris and Charles Woodd were re-elected unanimously as proposed by Chris Hickey and seconded by Peter Holden. Hugh thanked them for all their work.

13. Subscriptions 2011

It was unanimously agreed that the 2011 subscriptions should remain unchanged from 2010 as proposed by Owen Barraclough and seconded by Bob Nightingale, as follows:

Seniors: £10 of which £7 will go to the BRF, £1.50 to the General Fund and £1.50 to the Branch.

Juniors: £2.50 of which £1.50 will go to the BRF, 50p to the General Fund and 50p to the Branch.

The Retired: £5 of which £4 will go to the BRF, 50p to the General Fund and 50p to the Branch.

14. Affiliation Fee 2011

It was unanimously agreed, that this remained unchanged at £10 as proposed by Philip Twentyman and seconded by Graham Quincey.

15. Peal Fee 2011 et seq

It was unanimously agreed to ratify the Management Committee's decision to raise the Peal Fee from 25p to 50p from 2011, as proposed by Pat Hickey and seconded by Peter Holden.

16. Annual General Meeting 2011

Hugh said that the Stroud Branch had kindly invited the Association to hold the AGM there on Saturday 9 April 2011. The meeting unanimously accepted this invitation with thanks, as proposed by Rob Clive and seconded by Mary Chapman.

17. Child Protection Policy

The Management Committee's proposed amendments to the Association's Child Protection Policy had been circulated beforehand with the agenda.

Steve explained the way in which the new legislation for the protection of children and vulnerable adults was designed to work, and said that in addition to the legislation itself, there were Home Office Guidelines on how the various phrases should be interpreted. In some respects – and especially as regards their effect on Ringing Associations – those guidelines had been changed on a number of occasions. And most especially, the parts relating to Ringing Associations registered as charities – as the G&B was – had been changed since the Management Committee had agreed the proposed Policy amendments at the beginning of March. More importantly still, Sector Specific Guidelines relating to faith organisations were being worked on by the Home Office at this very moment and were due to be published in the coming months. There was therefore now doubt as to what extent the Association's Policy would need to be changed, or whether it would need to be changed at all, and in the circumstances he proposed that the motion be withdrawn.

That said, Steve emphasised that the Association and everyone in it took Child Protection very seriously indeed and we had been the very first Ringing Association in the country to draw up a Child Protection Policy. We were also the first Ringing Association to discuss Child Protection with the Diocesan Authorities. The essence of our Policy was informed vigilance by all members at all times, and that would continue to be pursued with the utmost punctiliousness come what may.

After discussion of the details of the new system, Stan Burrage seconded and the meeting was unanimous in agreeing the withdrawal of the motion.

18. The Annual Report

Steve explained that representations had been received from a number of members to the effect that putting the previous year in large print on the cover of the Annual Report was misleading since it was primarily a handbook for the current year. The issue had been considered by the Branch Officers' Meeting in March who, in a straw poll, had voted by a margin of 2 to 1 to change the title so that this year's issue, rather than being the "Annual Report 2009," would have been the "Handbook 2010." The Management Committee, by a majority were inclined to agree, but since they simply wished any decision to be made by the AGM, he was proposing the change on their behalf. He stressed that the Committee weren't trying to persuade the AGM, they were simply seeking their decision.

He added that he himself supported the change simply because it made for clearer communication, but he knew that many people were attached to the way things had always been.

Philip Twentyman spoke in favour of the current title but said he would be happy for the words "and Handbook 2010" to be added onto the cover. Linda Gittings proposed and Angela Newing seconded that the motion be amended in accordance with that view, and following comments by others, that was agreed by a margin of approximately 3 to 1. The amended motion was then passed with no one voting against.

19. Best Kept Tower Competition

Steve said that, as pointed out by Malcolm Taylor in his judging of this year's entries, although the Competition involved enormous time, effort and expense by the judges, only a few towers entered, and those were all towers with a high standard of maintenance anyway. Whilst encouraging good tower maintenance was of fundamental importance, regrettably the Competition no longer did this. On behalf of the Management Committee he therefore proposed that the Competition be no longer held. Mary Bliss – who had been a founder of the Competition and who had run it for a great many years – seconded.

A number of members then spoke about the importance of encouraging good maintenance, and various ideas were put forward. Mary Bliss then proposed that the motion be amended such that the Competition be not held for the next two years while members put forward ideas for an alternative. This was seconded by Angela Newing and carried nem con.

Richard Davenport asked what would happen to the trophies, and it was agreed that the Bliss Trophy would be held by the current winners until a final decision was made, and the other three would be recycled into the striking competitions.

20. Honorary Life Membership

A briefing note had been supplied with the Agenda explaining that the Bristol Rural Branch Officers had proposed that the mechanism for creating new Honorary Life Members be removed from the Rules. And having heard their views, the Management Committee had agreed. Their view was that the 40 year membership list provided the clear recognition of outstanding *long* service to the Association, and set against that, the HLM category provided little extra. Yet it caused everyone considerable doubt and difficulty because no one knew how the word "outstanding" in Rule 3.iii should be interpreted.

Under the Rule, the Management Committee had to receive the name of a potential nominee confidentially, and then decide whether that person's service has been "outstanding." But in an Association where the service of so many members has been so very great - often in very different ways - this was very difficult indeed to do.

In proposing the motion on behalf of the Management Committee Steve said that he personally found the HLM idea very difficult. When he travelled around the Branches he saw an enormous number of members whose work for the Association had been absolutely outstanding by any standards. What was more, that service had been performed in a whole host of different ways, many of which were very quiet and unobtrusive. His great concern was that the outstanding but quiet work done by so many members was somehow downgraded and belittled because those members didn't become HLMs. Since we were now an Association in which members expressed clearly, genuinely and from the heart their thanks to one another, his own view was that was enough and that the honorary life membership system was no longer needed.

The motion was that the current wording of Rule 3.iii be removed and replaced by the words, "Honorary Life Members elected before 2010. (The election of Honorary Life Members was discontinued by the 2010 AGM.) " This would result in the status of existing HLMs being unchanged but no new ones being elected in future. Alan Woodward seconded.

Paul Adkins said that he understood where Steve was coming from but he nonetheless felt that the system for electing honorary members should be retained.

Ian Unsworth said that every Association should have a way of formally recognising outstanding service.

Katie Whittaker suggested that a definition of outstanding service should be sought, and a number of members then supported the view that the HLM nomination system should continue.

On being put to the vote, the motion was defeated by a ratio of approximately 4 to 1.

21. Thanks

Hugh then thanked the makers of the magnificent and sumptuous tea (sustained applause) and all the many other Wotton Branch members who had joined in the very hard work of providing such splendid hospitality throughout the day. He also thanked Rachel Coates for the Competition Certificates and Steve Thomas for providing the public address system. (More applause)

Referring to the year as a whole, Hugh thanked the Training Day organisers for their enormous efforts: Claire Redstone and Ian Wigmore of the Spring Training Day, and Chris and Gill Greef of the Autumn Training Day. (More applause)

And lastly, he thanked his fellow Officers – Steve, Philip and Mark – and Sue Coleman for all her behind-the-scenes assistance. (More applause) On behalf of everyone, Steve then thanked Hugh. (Yet more applause)

22. Any Other Business

Philip said that he was concerned that he had now been Association Treasurer for nearly twenty years, and that he didn't want to stay in the job simply because people were too nice to ask him to step down. He enjoyed the job and would happily continue for many years, but if members thought it was time for him to retire, they had only to approach Hugh or Steve and say. Spontaneous applause indicated members were entirely content that he remain.

Steve said that he had now been Ringing Master for twelve years and Acting Secretary for six, and he would not be seeking re-election in 2011. Both jobs were very enjoyable and he would recommend them to anybody because lots of people talked to you, everyone was very nice, and a splendid atmosphere of friendliness and co-operation existed throughout all the twelve Branches. He would happily give full details of the work of each job to anyone who was interested.

23. Closing Prayer

There being no other business, Hugh closed the meeting at 6.19 p.m. with everyone saying The Grace together. Ringing continued at Slimbridge until 7.45 p.m.