

Minutes of the 2012 AGM held in Maisemore Village Hall on Saturday 21 April 2012

The meeting followed an excellent service attended by 120 members and taken by Robert Merchant with the new Dean of Gloucester, Stephen Lake, delivering a first rate address. 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:

Betty Cole, Gloucester Branch; Martin Brown, Forest Branch; Jennifer Rogers, Wotton-under-Edge Branch; Robin Screen, Stroud Branch; Barbara Holden, Cirencester Branch; Mark Edwards, Swindon Branch.

In order to do full justice to the sumptuous and magnificent tea prepared by the Gloucester Branch, the meeting was held first. It was attended by Hugh Evans, Chairman; Hazel Bridges, Ringing Master; Steve Coleman, Secretary; Philip Twentyman, Treasurer; Mark Davies, Peal Secretary; and 130 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 3.26 p.m.

2. A Prayer for Members who had Died

Hugh read out the names of those members who had died in 2011. In alphabetical order they were, Peter Baker of Bishops Cleeve in the Cheltenham Branch, Ray Hayden of Lechlade in the Cirencester Branch, Alex Hunter of Chipping Sodbury in the Wotton-under-Edge Branch, George Phillippo of Highworth in the Swindon Branch, Lily Strange of Purton in the Swindon Branch, Jean Taylor of Malmesbury in the Chippenham Branch and David White of Rodbourne Cheney in the Swindon Branch.

Hugh then led the meeting in prayer for all those members.

3. A Welcome from the Gloucester Branch

Bob Nightingale warmly welcomed the Association on behalf of the Gloucester Branch. (Applause)

4. Results of the Striking Competitions

a. Croome Trophy Competition

The judges, Angela Newing and Robin Screen of the Stroud Branch gave a complimentary summary of the morning's ringing, and then placed the bands as follows:

1st – and winners of *The Croome Trophy* – St Mary Redcliffe (Bristol Branch), 2nd – and winners of *The Littledean and Purton Trophy* – Tewkesbury Abbey (Tewkesbury Branch), 3rd – and winners of *The Great Peter Trophy* – Christchurch, Swindon (Swindon Branch), 4th – and winners of *The Chairman's Baldric* – Dursley (Wotton-under-Edge Branch), 5th Lacock (Chippenham Branch), 6th Cheltenham St Mary's (Cheltenham Branch), 7th Bisley (Stroud Branch), 8th Barnwood (Gloucester Branch), 9th Frampton Cotterell (Bristol Rural Branch), 10th Newent (Forest Branch).

Hazel presented the Ringing Master's Clappers to Lacock for their fine early ringing and to Newent for their excellent ringing until they unfortunately fired out and for being the first Forest Branch band to enter for over 20 years. In addition, all the teams received framed and illuminated certificates.

Hazel thanked Angela and Robin for judging. (Applause)

b. Penn Trophy Competition

The judge being the Association Chairman, Hugh Evans, Karen Evans as Assistant Judge, gave a short and summary on his behalf and then placed the bands as follows:

1st Swindon Branch, 2nd Bristol Branch, 3rd Gloucester Branch, 4th Cirencester Branch, 5th Tewkesbury Branch, 6th Cheltenham Branch, 7th Chippenham Branch, 8th Stroud Branch, 9th Forest Branch.

5. Minutes of 2011 AGM

These had already been circulated to all Branches and placed on the website. A further copy had also been available in the Hall for reading beforehand. They were approved unamended, as proposed by Martin Pearson and seconded by Keith Scudamore.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7. 2011 Report and Accounts

These were in the 2011 Annual Report which had been distributed before the meeting with further copies being available in the Hall. Philip said he had nothing to add but would welcome any questions or comments. There being none, the Report and accounts were approved unanimously, as proposed by Philip and seconded by Pat Hickey.

8. Election of New Members

Tracy Scott and Daniel Scott of Chippenham, St Andrew were proposed by Bob Mustow and seconded by Ian Wigmore.

Elizabeth Dennison of Bristol was proposed by Elizabeth Evans and seconded by Keith Scudamore.

Michael Howorth of Purton was proposed by Graham Quincey and seconded by Mark Edwards.

Andrew Bond, Michael Etches and Matthew Stokes of Newent were proposed by Clive Bryant and seconded by Martin Brown.

Phil and Pam Selwood of Charlton by Malmesbury were proposed by Chris Daw and seconded by Bob Blanden.

Elizabeth, Andrew, Michael and Matthew, all being present, then stood to receive the applause of the meeting.

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

Hugh read out the list of names on page 77 of the 2011 Annual Report, and these were ratified unanimously.

Hugh then thanked

- a. Philip Twentyman for his immense work in producing not only the accounts but also the great bulk of the Trustees' Report;
- b. Rob Clive for his equally immense work producing the Annual Report and looking after the Association website;
- c. Hazel and Steve for their work as Ringing Master and Secretary respectively;
- d. Mark Davies for not only recording all the peals but also getting all the peal fees in;
and
- e. Charles Woodd and Michelle Harris for performing the independent examination.

Most importantly, he thanked all the Branch Officers for their enormous efforts in keeping the Association running. (Applause)

10. Election of Officers

Hugh said that nominations had been received as follows:

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

All these nominations had been made by all twelve Branches, and in the absence of any other nominations he declared them elected. (Applause)

11. Election of Independent Examiners

Michelle Harris and Charles Woodd were re-elected unanimously as proposed by Bob Nightingale and seconded by Barbara Holden.

12. Subscriptions 2013

It was unanimously agreed that the 2013 subscriptions should remain unchanged from 2012 as proposed by Alwyn Jones and seconded by Jeff Carrick. Those subscriptions would be:

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.

13. Affiliation Fee 2013

It was unanimously agreed, that this remain unchanged at £10, as proposed by John Nicholls and seconded by Philip Twentyman.

14. Replacement for the Best Kept Tower Competition

Steve reminded members that the 2011 AGM had decided – unanimously – that a new *Tower of the Year Competition* should be started and that he should draw up a suggested set of rules in accordance with the ideas expressed at the meeting and circulate them to all Branches. This he had done. At the Branch Officers' Meeting two small amendments had been made, and now on behalf of the Management Committee he proposed that those rules – set out at the end of these minutes – be adopted. This was seconded by Owen Barraclough and passed unanimously.

15. Proposed Rule Changes

a. The Membership Rule

Barbara Pettit proposed and Nigel Bearne seconded that Rule 17.ii should be amended to read:

“Members who have not paid their subscription by 31st October shall automatically and without notice cease to be members; they may be re-admitted without election at any time on payment of the current annual subscription. If payment is made after 31st October this will apply to their subscription for the following calendar year.”

During the lengthy discussion that followed, Barbara explained that the aim of the change was to ensure that a person's membership would cease at the end of the financial year if they did not pay their subscription **during** the year. This would make the job of Branch Treasurer simpler. When put to the vote after a lively and informed discussion, the proposal was defeated by a significant margin.

b. The Vice-Presidents Rule

Steve said that in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Branch Officers at their annual meeting in March, he was proposing on behalf of the Management Committee that Rule 5 should be amended to read:

"The Suffragan Bishops of Tewkesbury and Swindon shall be invited to be Vice-Presidents of the Association."

He explained that at present the Association ostensibly had ten Presidents and Vice-Presidents, none of whom ever did any presiding. All the bishops, deans and archdeacons in the two Dioceses were included – albeit not mentioned by name – but quite apart from this being just plain silly, the real problem was that by lumping them all together in one massive "job lot" the Association was essentially giving none of them the proper respect they deserved. We currently had good relations with all of them and we certainly wished to continue those good relations, but the Branch Officers felt that turning all of them into ineffectual, "job lot" Vice-Presidents added nothing to that. The effect of the Rule change would be that the Archdeacons and Deans would no longer be Vice-Presidents. Keith Wrightson seconded.

In answer to the question as to whether the current Vice-Presidents would be removed from office, Steve replied that since the Rule only said that all the relevant persons should "be invited" to be Vice-Presidents, and since none of the current incumbents had ever actually **been** invited, there wouldn't be a problem.

Opposing the motion, Mary Bliss said that she had had as much to do with Archdeacons as anyone over many years and she could speak for three hours about what they had done for ringing. Archdeacon Wardle, she said, had been particularly helpful concerning Stinchcombe 45 years ago. She thought making everyone a Vice-President gave us stronger links with the Church.

On being put to the vote, over half the meeting abstained, but there being 16 votes for and 29 votes against, the motion was lost.

16. Annual General Meeting 2013

Bob Nightingale proposed and Mary Lynch seconded that the Tewkesbury Branch's kind invitation to host the AGM on Saturday 13 April 2013 be accepted. This was passed unanimously.

17. Thanks

Hugh then thanked all those in the Gloucester Branch who had made this AGM day such a splendid success, mentioning as many as he could by name but stressing that everyone knew there were a great many more who had been quietly and anonymously involved. (Sustained applause)

18. Any Other Business

Tower affiliation and BRF Grants

Steve explained that under our charitable objectives the Association could only give BRF grants to affiliated towers. Affiliation had been introduced in 1920, so some towers had been paying their annual affiliation fee for over 90 years whilst the great majority had been paying for over 50 years. The total received from affiliation fees in 2011 was £2,530 – a figure which had been much the same for many years – and the maths showed that the BRF had become over £100,000 better off as a result.

But if the Rule were interpreted unthinkingly, a non-affiliated tower could make one affiliation payment and then immediately be awarded a substantial grant whilst towers which had been paying for over 50 years – or, indeed, over 90 years – would be in no better position. The case of Stanway – emails in respect of which had been included with the Agenda – had brought this to the Management Committee's attention. In that case, although a grant application had been anticipated for six years and reminders about the need for affiliation had been sent throughout that time, no affiliation fee had ever been paid. The Committee had felt that some minimum affiliation period should therefore be required. They had been concerned both on the grounds of fairness and of whether it would otherwise be right to continue to collect affiliation fees from those towers who paid regularly. They thought a period of two years would cause no problem to any tower that genuinely intended to affiliate because the lead time from the conception of major work to grant application was always substantial.

Nevertheless, they knew that the members as a whole might take a different view, and Simon Ridley of the Cheltenham Branch – although not now present in the meeting – had been intending to propose that since our aim is to have as many towers ringing as possible, we should award grants to all towers in our area no matter what their affiliation record.

Steve said that no Rule Change was required since all grants are discretionary. But Hugh would be asking members to vote on whether they thought ***no*** minimum affiliation period should be insisted upon, or whether they thought there *should* be such a period; and if they did think that, what that period should be. The Management Committee would then award grants in accordance with that decision.

In answer to questions, Steve added that apart from being eligible for a grant and receiving a summary report each year, towers got no other tangible benefit from affiliation. What they ***did*** get was the good feeling of cooperating with others in taking forward belfry restoration throughout the two Dioceses.

Following a discussion aimed primarily at clarifying points of detail, Hugh called for a vote on whether a minimum affiliation period was supported by the members. They voted overwhelmingly that it was, with only two members voting against. Hugh then asked whether anyone wished for a vote for a period other than two years, but no one did.

23. Closing Prayer

There being no other business, Hugh closed the meeting at 4.42 p.m. with everyone saying The Grace together. A truly splendid tea followed with Ringing at Gloucester Cathedral until 7.30 p.m.

Tower of the Year Competition Rules

1. Each Branch can only nominate 1 tower.
2. The nomination can be for any reason at all.
3. The method of selecting the nominated tower is entirely a matter for the Branch concerned.
4. Entries must be submitted – by email only – by 31 January after the year in question.
5. The results will be decided by way of a paper ballot vote at the Association Branch Officers' Meeting at the beginning of March.
6. Every Branch Officer and Association Officer present will have one vote but may not vote for a tower in their own Branch.
7. In the event of a tie for any place, the Chairman will have a casting vote but may not – in order to avoid him or her any embarrassment – cast it for a tower in his or her own Branch.
8. In addition to the trophies, every nominated tower will receive a framed illuminated certificate.

9. The entry must consist of one Presentation Statement not more than 500 words long. There is no restriction on photographs or web links - including video links - but equally, there is no guarantee that those voting will actually look at them.

NB The nomination can be for any reason at all. Examples of possible reasons are:

training achievements,
recruitment,
helping other towers,
overcoming difficulties,
creating publicity,
trying out new initiatives,
fund raising,
ensuring good public relations,
providing social support,
ensuring good tower maintenance,
helping the community,
belfry restoration,
ringing activity,
ringing achievement,
struggling on in the face of adversity,
creation of a website,
etc.

And lastly, with the agreement of the towers concerned, all entries will be placed on the Association website after the presentation of awards, so that others may have the benefit of their ideas.