



Bath & Wells Diocesan Association of Change Ringers

President: THE RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS
The BELL FUND of the Association is Registered Charity No. 273962

Treasurer
LIZ LANE
17 STARRS CLOSE
AXBRIDGE
SOMERSET BS26 2BZ
01934733119

Association.Treasurer@bath-wells.org

Master
REV MARK JACKSON
12 PALMER STREET
SOUTH PETHERTON
SOMERSET TA13 5DB
01460 242171

Master@bath-wells.org

General Secretary
DAVID PARFREY
9 KINGSTON AVENUE
SALTFORD
BRISTOL BS31 3LF
01225 873887

General.Secretary@bath-wells.org

Draft Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting Held by Zoom at 10:00 on Saturday 8th May 2021.

1. Welcome

The master welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular welcomed new members attending their first AGM.

2. Remembering Friends

The Master asked the meeting to take a moment to reflect on friends who we see no longer. The meeting remembered with affection the following:

Roland Backhurst – Butleigh
Peter Bartin - Limington
Marcus Barton - Leigh on Mendip
Rob Bonnet - Queen Camel
Valerie Boyce - past member at Lydeard St Lawrence
Martin A Briggs - past member at Queen Camel
Richard Burningham – Barrow Gurney
Jim Cook - Bath Abbey
Anthony E Cox – Blackwell
Richard Dowdeswell - Kingsbury Episcopi
Peter M Giles - Batheaston
Eddie Hancock (HLM) - Drayton
Michael Horseman (HLM) - Farmborough
Mary Knight NRLM - previously St James, Taunton
Ken Laver - South Cadbury
Sally Lawrence - Weston super Mare
Christopher Robinson – past member at Pitminster
Jim Taylor - Preston Plucknett
Mike Woolacott - past member at West Monkton

3. Attendance and Apologies

The Gen Secretary reported that members were attending via 55 Zoom connections [60 members in total attended], no apologies had been received.

4. Minutes of 2020 Annual General Meeting

The Master introduced the minutes of the previous AGM held by Zoom on Saturday the 10th of October 2020. He hoped everyone had had the opportunity to read the minutes in advance, and after confirming with the meeting that there were no objections, he approved the minutes as a true record.

5. Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere)

The Master confirmed with the meeting that there were no matters arising that would not be covered elsewhere in the agenda.

6. Officers Reports

The General Secretary reported that the reports would normally be available on the website as a part of the annual report, however due to the untimely and unexpected death of Jay Bunyan, our Report Editor, the reports are delayed. He hoped members will understand that there is a significant task in picking up the threads and completing the final report. As ever Jay had done a huge amount of work on pulling together the information. He was indebted to Paul Feast and to Mathew Higby for assisting in obtaining Jay's files very sensitively from Jay's family. He reported that he had been able to do some further work on this and was therefore able to have included an incomplete draft in the meeting papers. He highlighted that were several sections missing and it not yet been proofread, and therefore asked for members' forbearance whilst we seek to complete this work.

7. Election of Officers for 20/21

The Master invited the General Secretary to introduce the table of officers provided in the meeting papers; this showed the current incumbents and the three vacancies left by Jay's untimely death. He noted that the Webmaster currently shows Julian Back and Laurence Bignell, although Lawrence was elected Webmaster at the last AGM, we remain in a period of handover Julian has been continuing to do sterling service during this period, and so the list recognises Julian's continuing contribution. Of the other officers none has identified a particular desire to step down, and therefore it was assumed that all are willing to remain in post if elected.

The three vacancies were considered first:

- Bell Funds Officer: Margaret Lee was proposed by David Parfrey and seconded by Helen Beaufoy.
- Central Council Rep: Paul Feast was proposed by Charles Pipe-Wolferstan and seconded by Peter Athleston.
- Report Editor: Ken Hallett was proposed by Nick Boyd and seconded by Sue Haynes.

There being only one proposal for all the positions: Valerie Payne proposed all existing officers should be re-elected and this was seconded by Margaret Lee.

All the exiting incumbent and new officer elections were carried unanimously.

Liz Lane, Association Treasurer wished to give notice that, although happy to continue this year, she would like to step down at the next AGM.

8. General Committee Decisions

The Master said that it was with great delight that the General Committee had agreed the award of Honorary Life Membership to John Hallett and Monica Horseman.

The Master also reported on Bell Fund Grant Decisions made at the recent General Committee meeting. Grant Offers have been agreed for:

- Chew Magna - Grant to be awarded: £4,800.
- East Harptree - Grant to be awarded: £6,400.
- Staplegrove - Grant to be awarded: £8,900.

9. Financial

The Master invited the Treasurer to give an Oral update on the Association's financial position.

The Treasurer was pleased to report that the Association finances we are in good shape but reminded the meeting that there are a few unusual factors, such as the lack of activity over the last year, and the change in financial year.

Following the decision taken at the last AGM the financial year has moved from November - October to January – December. To facilitate the change, there has been a transition period with a 14-month financial 'year' running from 1st November 2019 to 31st December 2020 [the annual membership fees paid for the original year commencing 1st November 2019 equally run for 14 months to 31st December 2020].

Turning to numbers. For the General Fund, the opening balance was £31,751. During the year there had been income of £19,662 and expenditure of £7,077 leaving a closing balance of £44,389. She noted that expenditure was unusually low due to the covid situation.

At the last General Committee, a decision had been taken transfer £20,000 from the General Fund to the Bell fund, this will be reflected in the 2021 accounts.

Regarding the Bell Fund there was an opening balance of £98,772. During the year there had been income of £15,916 and expenditure of £29,591 leaving a balance of £85,519. The Treasurer noted that most of the expenditure was from the payments of grants, the biggest of which had been to Bridgwater, where £17,000 had been paid. She said how pleasing it was that despite COVID how many projects had been able to move forward. She also noted that there remains £6,000 to £7,000 in grant liabilities yet to be paid, and of course to this will be added the grants awarded this year to Chew Magna, East Harptree and Staplegrove.

The treasurer went on to talk about the 'Return to Ringing Scheme' which had created much interest. At the present time nearly £2,250 has been granted, although there are many more applications in process just now. The original scheme had allowed a budget of £10,000 and was due to be closed at the end of this month (May), however

due to the further lockdown period delaying the actual return she would like to propose that the scheme be extended until the end of September this year - this received full approval from the meeting. Keith Beale commented warmly on the scheme saying it had been a splendid idea and he wished to say well done. The Treasurer said she would put something on the website announcing the extension till September.

The Master thanked the Treasurer for all her hard work, noting the thankless task for sorting out financial affairs but reaffirmed how grateful we are.

Due to the exceptional circumstances surrounding the annual reports this year final accounts for publication were not available to the AGM, however the General Secretary suggested, that given the oral update we might note the good health of our finances with an 'in principle' approval and navigate a way to provide full and proper approval when the final accounts were available. Bernard North suggested that this meeting delegates approval to the General Committee, and this was generally felt to be a good solution, it was formally proposed by Guy Morgan and seconded by Derek Livsey and the proposal was carried. Nevertheless, Yvonne Criddle asked that General Committee members reports back to their respective branch members on this final approval.

10. Agreement of Proposed New Rules

The Master introduced this item saying that much work had been undertaken on this at various stages over the last two years; it had been discussed at two General Committee meetings and at the last AGM, where it was felt that a period of open consultation would be appropriate and helpful. The consultation period had happened, and the General Committee had fully discussed again. The General Committee are therefore recommending approval of the revised rule proposals as included in the included in the meeting papers. The consultation period having closed, and General Committee recommendation being made, AGM attendees were being asked to make a simple decision to adopt the new rules, or not; however, he did remind members that nothing is ever cast in tablets of stone, and that there is always the opportunity to work through General Committee if other changes are desired, additionally the new rules provide for a full review every five years in future. Before moving to vote the Master invited the General Secretary to add any further comments. The GS referred to a helpful question of clarification he had received the previous day yesterday concerning the change from 'Ringing Member' to 'General Member' and any potential impact on eligibility for the new 'Member Emeritus' category. The GS confirmed that the 'General Member' category should not be regarded as a new membership category, simply a retitling of 'Ringing Member', this had been done to recognise that other categories of membership such as HLM and Non-Resident Life Member also ringing members. He further confirmed that all time served as 'Ringing Member' would be carried forward to the new status.

A further question was raised about the process for becoming a member emeritus, he responded that this is contained in the general process document produced to sit alongside the rules. However, he stated that the document will need updating to reflect changes to the proposed rules through the open consultation period and the last General Committee meeting before uploading to the website. Nevertheless, the process for recognition of Member Emeritus was not intended to be onerous and would involve a communication between the Branch Secretary and the Membership

Secretary, but the details would be available soon on the website.

There being no other questions of clarification, the Master moved to a vote on adoption of the new rules for the Association and Bell Fund. There were 52 votes for adoption, no votes against adoption, and 8 abstentions. The proposed rules were therefore adopted.

11. Ratification of election of non-resident life members elected prior to peals.

The Peal Secretary reported that peals had clearly been scarce through the pandemic, and consequently he had not been made aware of any new Non-Resident Life Member elections. The Master thanked the Peal Secretary for his contribution.

12. Association Striking Competition

The Master noted that the six-bell competition will again be unable to be held in 2021, however It is hoped that the eight-bell competition may be possible in the autumn. Details will be agreed when confidence permits.

13. Central Council Annual Meeting 2022

The General Secretary reported that we had, at the last AGM, considered the possibility of the Central Council meeting in 2022 being held in the Bath & Wells Diocese, however it looked as though another place was ahead of us in the queue, and therefore we may have to wait until a future time to host the Central Council.

14. 2022 AGM

The General Secretary reported that the next AGM would be on the 2nd Saturday of May 2022 (14th). This will hopefully be a physical meeting, and we are indebted to Frome Branch for again deferring their hosting until 2022.

15. Any Other Business

One item had been raised in advance of the meeting by Keith Beale: "Duties and responsibilities of officers at both Association and Branch Level". The Master invited Keith to introduce this item. Keith began by saying he had not anticipated that the emails he had included with his request for the AOB item would be circulated, and he apologised for not being clearer in his request. There were two points he wished to comment on. The first was his concern about a lack of response to email communications, and his expectation that elected officers should respond to member communications. In the case leading to this AOB item the question surrounded decisions made at a previous striking competition by the judge, Branch Officers, and the Master. However, he felt he now had the opportunity to raise the matter, and we should now move on. Keith then highlighted his second point which regarded ringing during COVID. He wanted to make clear that at no time did he feel his tower had been in breach of guidance and was saddened by the complaint that had been made against his tower, and the subsequent intervention by the Master. He wanted to clarify that they have not held a practise but that the weekday ringing had been for a service of compline, and that they had arranged to ring from 2 floors to maintain numbers in line with the guidance. He was disappointed that the matter could not have been raised

with him direct such that it could have been explained. The Master, in response, noted that his advice had been to the incumbent, but recognised the incumbent's authority in this; his interest was to help ensure the protection of ringer's themselves, and to limit reputational risks for the Association. Keith said he regretted everything that had happened and said how upset his ringers were about this. He concluded with a request that officers do respond fully to correspondence and thanked the meeting for this discussion.

Tony Cox asked the meeting to confirm the situation regarding membership fees and peal donations for the coming year. it was confirmed that the membership fee would remain at £10 for this year. Regarding peal donations this had been discussed at length by General Committee, the former peal fee had been set at 10% of the membership fee and had originally been to cover the cost of recording peals in the peal book. However, with Bellboard and other electronic databases the peal books are no longer completed. The General Committee had decided it was time to discontinue the fee but replace the fee with a voluntary donation to the Bell Fund (as the Bell Fund is a Charity it cannot 'charge' fees). The General Committee had also decided to break the link with membership fee and to recommend setting the suggested donation level at £1 per rope. There was a view that £1 was too high, although equally there were views that it was not. Matthew Higby proposed that the level be set at £1 for this year and that this should be regarded as a donation to the Bell Fund replacing the old peal fee, this was seconded by Julian Back and carried by the meeting.

16. Closing Remarks

The Master thanked everyone for their contribution and their efforts over this last difficult year, and for all the kindness that had been shown by members to others across this period. The Master remarked that, as we return from COVID it would be good to find ways to remember those affected by the pandemic, perhaps in dedicated peals or quarter peals, or other in other ways, he asked members to think about this. Particularly thinking about Jay there was a short discussion on how she might be remembered, and several ideas were forthcoming, for example we could have a new call change competition across the Association with a trophy dedicated in her memory. He also informed members that he had been in touch with Cathedral authorities about the potential for dedicating one of the chapels as a Ringer's Chapel, however regrettably had not received any response yet but he hoped we would continue trying on this, Robert Perry suggested we write to the Tower Captain at the Cathedral to enlist his support. The Master once more thanked everyone for their contribution generally and for their attendance at this meeting and drew the meeting to a close.