

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

We have invested considerable time, effort and expense in training, with probably the largest training budget in the country. It is hoped that this will pay dividends for the future but we must also look at how we retain our ringers, especially the younger ones. What do we need to do to make both branch and association events more attractive? How do we improve communications? Three branches now have their own Facebook pages but it tends to be the same few people posting information and comments with considerable overlap of members.

As the Master has mentioned, there were many special events to ring for in 2013. One that is becoming increasingly popular is St George's Day and although we have few churches in the diocese dedicated to this particular saint many towers look on the day as an opportunity to celebrate our patron saint.

All your representatives attended the Central Council meeting in Guildford and Richard Newman's report is available to view on the association website. There have been comments that the council is too large, and that not enough people are involved in the committees. As the third largest member association (after Oxford Diocesan Guild and running neck and neck with the Yorkshire Association) we are "entitled" to five representatives. Of these, four are on committees and I certainly find my membership of the Bell Restoration Committee both useful and rewarding. Matthew Higby stood down at the last AGM and I would like to thank him for all his hard work. Matthew has been one of the youngest members of council and he is being replaced by an even younger one in George Wyatt. At 17, George will be the youngest ever member.

Restoration/repair projects have been completed at Crewkerne, Milborne Port, Worle, Timberscombe, Winscombe and East Brent. Bicknoller have been augmented to 5 from 6. There are a variety of projects under way and in the pipeline and we look forward to their completion. Most branches contribute in various ways to the Bell Fund and I would ask that those who have not done so recently look at how they can help raise funds.

Our Patron for almost 11 years, the Right Reverend Peter Price, retired last summer and we look forward to welcoming his replacement, the Right Reverend Peter Hancock, as the 79th Bishop. Another event for celebratory ringing?

New officers have been elected in several branches this year and I would like to thank the retiring officers for all their hard work and wish the new officers well. Special mention should be made here of David Floyd, whose excellent handover material made the task of the new Report Editor so much easier than it could have been.

Please remember that Association officers are happy to give help and advice and that the Central Council website offers a mine of information and assistance.

JAY BUNYAN