

Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Annual Meeting 2018

The 2018 meeting of the Council was held in warm sunshine at the University of Lancaster campus, two miles south of the city, over the Whitsun bank holiday weekend.

In a number of firsts the event had been arranged by the Council's Administrative Committee with help from the local ringers rather than the host association itself. In another break from past practice, the Council's Annual Meeting, was held over two days with the Ringing World AGM and first part of the meeting being held on Sunday afternoon while the remainder of the Council's meeting was conducted on the Monday. Despite the confusing layout of the campus and extensive building works that were ongoing we were all made very welcome with good accommodation, meals, and atmosphere. Veronica Downing & I travelled up on the Saturday morning and took part in all the proceedings with Stephen Pettman joining for the second part of the meeting on the Monday. One representative post remains vacant and Veronica retired from her post on the council after the meeting.

At the Ringing World AGM, the Board reported a further fall in subscriptions, but for the second year running the Company recorded a surplus in 2017. This, together with the rather larger surplus achieved in 2016, had enabled the Company to reach a healthier financial position than appeared likely in 2016 when multiple annual deficits had eroded reserves more than was desirable. The Board recognised that a decline in subscriptions for the printed version of the journal was likely to continue, but was pleased to report an increase in online subscriptions. Nonetheless, we were told that it remained possible that the paper might switch to fortnightly publication at some point, although it would always give at least a year's notice if any such change were to be implemented. The Ringing World is still dependent upon generous donations from its readers, and without these the Company would very quickly cease to be able to trade. The upgrade to BellBoard that was promised last year has not been delivered due to lack of suitable resources. It is predicting to break even for the year 2018/19.

The main business before the council meeting was a proposal to make a radical change to the Council's constitution, which those who advocated it felt would make the Council less bureaucratic, more capable of change, and better able to offer the services and advice which it was felt ringers needed. This is the implementation of some of the recommendations made in the CRAG (Council Review Action Group) report approved last year.

In brief summary, the Council's Administrative Committee would be abolished, an eight member Executive (comprising the four main officers of the Council and four members elected by the Council at large) would assume all decision-making powers, and the fifteen specialist Committees of the Council would be replaced by five Workgroups which could comprise of not just interested members of the Council but other ringers as well. This will allow people to get involved with elements that they enjoy and specialise in rather than having to be involved in every aspect of the council.

The five work groups are; Technical & Taxonomy combining Methods, Compositions, and Peal records; Communications and Marketing combining Public Relations and Publications, of which I am a member; Historical & Archive combining Library and Biographies; Stewardship & Management combining Tower Stewardship, Towers & Belfries, & Bell Restoration; and Volunteer & Leadership combining Education & Ringing Centres.

This model has been 'shadowing running' for the past six months and has worked very well. It is the model adopted by most charities and national organisations so it has been proven to work.

While some members felt either that the case for so radical a change had not been made or that the Council should pause for further thought before going ahead with these proposals, the

overwhelming majority of 137 members voted in favour of the necessary motions, with only a small number either voting against or abstaining out of the 162 present. For the record, all your representatives voted in favour of the changes.

I am pleased to say that the debate on this issue was, like the rest of the meeting, conducted in a courteous and respectful manner with all points of view being heard without dissent.

The remainder of the business passed with much less incident.

We were given a presentation by the Technical & Taxonomy workgroup on a review of the Council's Decisions on Methods & Peal Ringing which will make some significant changes to the principles which have applied to change ringing and peals, in some cases for centuries. This will involve a move to a permissive rather descriptive framework. The consultation includes the allowing of jump changes, or that one could ring Plain Bob Minor on the front six of a ring of twelve while ringing Stedman Doubles on the back six as part of a twelve-bell peal provided that the complete peal is still true, that the minimum number of changes necessary for the completion of a peal will be standardised at 5000 on all numbers of bells.

You can see the full proposals and get involved in the consultation here

https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcccbr.github.io%2Fmethod_ringing_framework%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C81867561e5d84f32d5f008d5c9a4fbae%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636636632786964476&sdata=TjTsbnhbDZXlqXpX9VSqKP in6Zvj6S8C%2BPEuNkzaOIs%3D&reserved=0

Also to note that the Councils Methods Library is now held on the excellent Composition Library site <https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcomplib.org&data=02%7C01%7C%7C81867561e5d84f32d5f008d5c9a4fbae%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636636632786964476&sdata=Afd3%2Bs52NZlsJEBzhNXqOvW9iSDoUOX287OQBgwDIYY%3D&reserved=0> rather than Methods.org.uk

We were also given details of the Ringing Remembers initiative, which seeks to encourage the recruitment of new ringers in remembrance of the 1400 or so who lost their lives in the First World War.

The final change in this meeting of changes is that for the first time since the Council was formed in 1891 next year's meeting will no longer be held in the spring. The 2019 meeting will take place in London over the first weekend of September.

The council accepted the Guild's invitation to hold the 2022 meeting in Suffolk to mark the start of our centenary year. In 2023 meeting will be held in Ireland.

If anyone has any questions on this meeting or the Council in general Veronica, Stephen, I should be very pleased to try to answer them.