**DAR AGM 2019**

**Correspondence**

Letter from Mr Dave Trout of St Edward’s, Egg Buckland

This was read on behalf of Mr Trout by Rachel Avery (Hon Sec) at the meeting on the 9th November 2019

Dear Madam Secretary,

I would like to comment on some of the points contained in the Constitution Review which are being debated for ratification at The AGM. In particular Rule 6. (All competitors must be regular church service ringers of the competing team).

Without church bells it goes without saying that The Devon Association, or indeed, any other church bell ringing organisation in the country would not be in existence. None of us would be able to participate in our much-loved hobby were it not for these installations, save for a few private rings which make up less than 1% of the total across the Nation. The purpose of these bells, lest we forget, is to call people to church services. Therefore, ringing is inextricably linked to The Church and I believe that if we wish to ring church bells then it is incumbent upon us to ring for services.

I was dismayed to read that The DAR review committee recommended the omission of ‘service’ from the competition rules (Rule 6.) and that members of The Committee want to remove the rule altogether. To agree to this is an open invitation to include the participation by ‘secular’ ringers in DAR competitions. Whilst there are a few unscrupulous individuals who disregard the rules, the vast majority respect and adhere to them.

The term ‘regular’ has, to most participating bands, meant ‘frequent and often’ but to some it has been interpreted as an interval of every month or two or even less, which, in my view, is not acceptable (exceptions can be made if e.g. a church only has one service per month). Perhaps the wording should be changed to read ‘frequent and often’ or added to qualify ‘regular’. It has also been mentioned that this rule is difficult to implement but to my knowledge, no team has ever been officially approached on this issue.

The rule on borrowing has been blatantly flouted over the past few years too. Indeed, a couple of years ago, an ineligible team competed in The Minor Final and should have been disqualified as there was a clear breach of the rules regarding borrowed ringers but were still permitted to participate even though it was brought to the attention of the competition secretary. The failure by The Association in not dealing with this at the time caused the resignation of a committee member and the subsequent withdrawal by his team from the DAR. It would appear that the only rule that The Association has no problem invoking, is the one concerning the duration of the peal, where teams who fail to comply are disqualified quite readily. This is far less of an issue than either of those already mentioned.

It seems a great pity that the rules are watered down in this way as an attempt to attract more teams to enter the competitions. Surely it is better to have fewer ‘legitimate’ teams in the competitions than resorting to this. The number of borrowed ringers permitted in a team was increased to two a few years ago in the hope that it would, in turn, increase the number of teams entering but this has failed to materialise. If the number of teams participating falls to a level whereby the competition can be run on one day rather than holding qualifier events, it won’t signal the end of DAR ringing competitions, merely a return to how it was prior to their introduction.

It should be noted that the continual contravention of these rules is a contributing factor in the standard of striking by some of the top teams at competitions being artificially high. Is there any wonder that some teams consider themselves not to be of a good enough standard to compete and thus adding to the decline in entries (ref. June meeting: article 5 – competitions 2019).

Considering the push to accept teams comprising of ringers who may not necessarily be regular service ringers, may not be band members and indeed, may be secular and also the inclusion of a practice prior to The Major and Minor Finals, it would appear that The DAR is attempting to make some radical changes which, if ratified by The Membership, will take them into a new era. Perhaps now would be an appropriate time to place the existing trophies into storage or hang them in the training centre and purchase new trophies to compliment this transition, especially as the existing trophies require attention.

The rules that existed prior to the recent changes on borrowing etc. are the reason why The Devon Major Final was considered to be “special” and I sincerely hope that the proposed rule changes are not adopted.

Yours,

David Trout

St. Edward’s, Eggbuckland