



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE DEVON ASSOCIATION OF RINGERS
SATURDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2021 AT ST PETERS CHURCH, NORTH TAWTON

1. Chair's Welcome

Ian Avery welcomed members to the 87th Annual General Meeting at 14.15.

Prior to the commencement of formal business, Ian Avery confirmed that the meeting was not quorate as required by the Devon Association of Ringers constitution. It was **resolved** that the meeting would continue on the understanding that any decisions made at this meeting may be challenged. (Proposed by Barry Osbourne, seconded by Graham Sharland).

2. Prayers

Ian Avery welcomed all present and led prayers for the Association.

3. Apologies for Absence

The secretary had received apologies from Geoff Hill, Philip Stevens, Bob Robinson, Roger Algate, Jereme Darke, John Lock, Robert Brown, John Bass, Tim Jones, Ryan Trout, Roger Trout, Bill Thirtle, John Lagdon, Margaret White, Ken Down, Margaret Down, Clive Ward, David Gammon, Jo Tucker, Stephen Herniman, Kerry Vaughan, John Orchard, Lee Avery, Cathy Thorp, John Staddon, Reid Partridge and Michael Adams.

4. Fill vacancy – Honorary Secretary

Ian Avery thanked outgoing Honorary Secretary Jo Tucker for her input over the past two years. It was **resolved** that Rachel Avery be elected as Honorary Secretary on a temporary basis. (Proposed by Ian Avery, seconded by Julia Jarvis).

5. To approve the following minutes and to discuss any matters arising:

- **AGM – 14 November 2020**
It was **resolved** to approve the minutes. (Proposed by James Steer, seconded by John Barnes).
- **Committee meetings – 18 February 2021, 17 June 2021, 16 September 2021 (in draft form)**
It was **resolved** to accept the committee minutes. (Proposed by Julia Jarvis, seconded by Graham Sharland).

6. Treasurer's Report

Christine Ley thanked Gillian Herniman for auditing the accounts.

There were no questions relating to the report. It was **resolved** to approve the accounts. (Proposed by James Grant, seconded by Michael Webster).

7. Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund Report

Ian Smith provided a report, which forms part of the minutes as appendix one.

8. Officer Reports

Reports were received from the following officers:

- Chairman
The report forms part of the minutes as appendix two.
- South Secretary (North and South overview)
The report forms part of the minutes as appendix two.
- Publicity Officer
The report forms part of the minutes as appendix two.
- Training Officer
Graham Sharland reported that the training bell now in circulation.
The pandemic has highlighted a need to bring in grass roots ringing, which is integral to the continuation of call change ringing.
ART (Association of Ringing Teachers) are bringing in new resources to aid call change ringing.
- Devon Calls
The report forms part of the minutes as appendix two.
- Safeguarding Officer
Charles Conibear reported that the Association has adopted a safeguarding policy, which will be circulated to all towers.

Thanks were extended to John Staddon for his hard work as Publicity Officer through the pandemic. Thanks were extended to Colin Barnes and Eleanor D'Albinac for their work as proof-readers for Devon Calls and a message of thanks would be sent to them by the Honorary Secretary.

9. Formal Approval by the meeting (third year of Triennium) of elected officers:

Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretaries (North and South), Publicity Officer, DevonCalls, Training Officer, Fund Raising Officer, Guild Liaison Officer, Web Master, Safeguarding Officer

Prior to the meeting, the situation with the pandemic meant that the Presidential position was unknown. A decision had been made to transfer the presidentship to Keith Bavin as President-elect. Sue Ashton read her outgoing President report and presented the sash to the new President. Sue Ashton was presented with a past President badge before Keith Bavin made a short speech.

It was resolved to elect the following officer roles (proposed by Michael Webster, seconded by Graham Sharland):

Chair: Ian Avery

Vice Chair: James Steer

Honorary Secretary: Rachel Avery

Honorary Treasurer: Christine Ley

Competition Secretary (South): John Langdon

Competition Secretary (North): Andrew Steer

Publicity Officer: John Staddon

Devon Calls: Colin Adams

Training Officer: Graham Sharland

Fundraising Officer: Julia Jarvis

Guild Liaison: Ian Avery

Webmaster: James Kerlake

Safeguarding Officer: Charles Conibear

Devon Church Bell Restoration Trustees: Graham Sharland, Elaine Grant and James Steer

10. To receive a report of the Constitution Review and to consider and ratify the following recommendation:

- **the division of Devon into 6 areas: North West, North Central, North East, South West, South Central and South East, in order to future proof against any Deanery and to achieve an equal number of towers in each area (with no more than two representatives of each division sitting on the committee)**

John Barnes asked what would happen if a proposed area already had too much representation on the committee. It was generally accepted that this resolution was an initial step, and the committee would possibly require adjustment. The areas and personnel affected would need to be identified and arrangements where everyone is happy.

Ian Fielding stated that this recommendation offers the committee an opportunity to agree arrangements for the proposed changes.

It was **resolved** to accept the division of areas. (Proposed by Colin Adams, seconded by Ian Fielding).

11. Committee Membership Approval

It was **noted** that as per the constitution review, it was anticipated that there would be natural changes to the committee as the resolution progresses.

It was **resolved** that the following individuals would be elected to serve on the committee (Proposed by Julia Jarvis, seconded by Graham Sharland):

NORTH: John Barnes, Ian Fielding, Tim Jones, James Steer, Lee Avery and Margaret White

SOUTH: Michael Adams, Charles Conibear, John Dietz, James Grant, Paul Hext and Barry Osbourne

12. Association Bell Advisors update

Graham Sharland thanked Ian Smith for his dedication to the Devon Bell Restoration Fund, as this is likely to be his final year reporting to the Association.

13. Invitations to Association Competitions 2022 (to include national competition)

It was **resolved** to approve the following dates and towers for the 2022 Association competitions (proposed by John Barnes):

Novice - 12 March 2022: Zeal Monachorum

6 Bell North Devon Qualifier - 14 May 2022: Dolton

6 Bell South Devon Qualifier - 14 May 2022: Sherford

6 Bell Minor Final - 28 May: East Ogwell

6 Bell Major Final - 11 June: Molland

8 Bell - 17 September: Plympton St Maurice.

It was **noted** that these towers are now closed for practice until the competitions are held.

14. To consider the creation of a '300 Club' (number to be confirmed) to replace the Annual Prize Draw

Julia Jarvis explained that a '300 Club' would replace the Annual Draw, with a letter being sent to all towers.

It was **resolved** to create a '300 Club', with a new separate bank account being created to aid administration. (Proposed by Christine Ley, seconded by Michael Webster).

15. Date and Venue of AGM 2020

It was **resolved** that the next AGM would take place on Saturday 12 November 2022 at the Jubilee Hall, Chagford. (Proposed by Colin Adams, seconded by Graham Sharland).

It was **noted** that no areas will be excluded by location, though they can be kept central if that is deemed more suitable.

The authorities of North Tawton Church were thanked for allowing the Association to meet here for so many years.

Ian Avery declared the meeting closed at 15.36.

Mrs Rachel Avery
Honorary Secretary
Devon Association of Ringers

Appendix One – Devon Church Bell Restoration Fund Report (Ian Smith)

During 2021 the Fund has been actively involved with 14 towers at some stage in their restoration projects. In addition to these, a further eight towers have requested grant application forms, though have not as yet completed and submitted them.

With the easing of coronavirus restrictions we have been able to restart our quinquennial bell inspections and this year have carried out a long overdue inspection at Musbury, and have paid a return visit to Yarnscombe, following up our quinquennial of 2016. Inspections of completed restoration work have been carried out at Axminster, Shaugh Prior, Pilton and Dunkeswell.

We held our usual two meetings during the year; our meeting on 29th March using the “Zoom” facility, while it was nice to revert to our normal face-to-face format at our meeting this morning at Brian Drake’s home in North Tawton. Also, we have a meeting planned with our financial advisors in Exeter for Monday 22nd November.

One major change in our ranks is that James Clarke, having resigned as Consultant on Bells and Clocks to the Exeter DAC at the beginning of the year, chaired his last DCBRF meeting in March and has now been replaced by his successor David Hird. During his time as chairman, James had attended 38 meetings, missing only one. His wise counsel will be sorely missed.

The bulk of our financial assets remain in the form of the investment portfolio purchased from the William Smale Bequest, and continue to be managed through the Discretionary Portfolio Service of Cathedral Financial Management Ltd of Exeter. In recent months the value of the portfolio has varied between £350,000 and £364,000, having hit a low of £302,618 at the end of March 2020. In spite of the obvious problems during the last eighteen months, its value is still significantly higher than the original purchase price. The main problem arising from the currently financial situation is that we anticipate the dividends received from the investment portfolio this year will be of the order of £8,000, compared with the £12,000 to £13,000 we were receiving in the pre-Covid era.

Our other income has again been very much reduced when compared to the pre-Covid era, such that our total anticipated income for 2021 is little more than half that previously received in a ‘normal’ year.

At the beginning of 2021 the liquid assets of the Fund stood at £59,479. Since that time five grants totalling £7,950 have been paid. £1,200 went to Ermington for cleaning down and descaling the sub-frame and repairing where necessary, and also repainting all the ironwork of the frame and fittings; £900 to Shaugh Prior for sand-blasting and galvanising some of the frame’s cross-bracing, repainting the rest of the frame, sub-frame and headstocks, re-facing the clappers, and repairing the cracked bell-pad of the fourth bell; £950 to Axminster for overhauling the bearings, re-profiling the clappers and fitting new hinge pins and bushes, new pulley sheaves for the third and tenor bells, and new runner boards for the treble, second and third bells; £3,000 to Pilton towards cleaning down and re-painting the bell-frame and support grillage, repairs to the treble, seventh and tenor clappers, removal of old crown staple stumps, servicing the bearings, sliders and runner boards, and turning the second and fourth bells; and £1,900 to Dunkeswell for descaling, treating and painting the beam ends of the frame foundation and inserting new padstones, also improving the access to the ringing chamber and bell chamber.

Income during the year (excluding that from the investment portfolio) has so far amounted to £11,469, including £3,645 from the Guild and its Branches, £965 from personal and miscellaneous donations, £210 from various individual towers, and £100 following tower inspections. Personal donations made through the CAF donation facility on both the Guild and Association web pages has amounted to £282, and donations via AmazonSmile raised a further £58. Tax refunds following gift-aided donations and bank interest make up the balance. No income has been received directly from the Association, due to the Annual Draw and the Doddiscombsleigh/Dunsford Competition again being cancelled in 2021, though individual members and towers have donated to the Fund as previously mentioned.

At present the liquid assets of the Fund stand at £62,998.

Grants agreed this year include the £950 to Axminster as previously mentioned, and £6,250 to Bigbury towards a complete rehang of the six bells in the existing frame but on completely new and re-positioned supporting grillages.

At our meeting this morning we agreed grants of £5,300 to Ss Philip & James, Ilfracombe towards rehangng the eight bells with new or refurbished fittings in the existing strengthened bell-frames, the upper frame being provided with new steel support beams; and £8,100 to Hatherleigh for rehangng the bells in a new steel frame. At Hatherleigh, as part of a major church re-ordering scheme, a new ringing floor will be provided some eleven feet higher in the tower which, together with an improved rope circle, will make the bells far easier to ring.

Assuming that all of the agreed grants are taken up, the uncommitted liquid balance of the Fund stands at £10,048.

While our finances may appear reasonably healthy we need to remember that the potential cost of schemes waiting in the wings amounts to nearly £400,000.

Appendix Two – Officer Reports

Chairman's report (Ian Avery)

As we slowly and cautiously return to ringing after the pandemic, it's pleasing and encouraging to hear that many towers are getting close at least to a position we were in prior to the first lockdown in March 2020.

However, it must also be recognised and acknowledged that not all towers have reached this position and clearly there remains work to be achieved on recruitment and retention of ringers in every area of the county.

With the inactivity of ringing for most towers over the past 18 months, it's given us the opportunity to reflect on where we are in general terms and what could and should be in our plans for the short-, medium-, and long-term future of ringing.

This obviously includes our committee who have continued to meet throughout the past 18 months, mostly via zoom but delighted to have met face to face in September.

From within our committee members, a sub-committee has been set-up and with the relative ease of organising zoom meetings, it has been able to meet on several occasions between the general committee meetings.

This has proved extremely beneficial in that with only six or so key members have been able to discuss future projects and ideas with relative speed and success and been able to report back to the full committee for discussion and approval. Evidence of this will be seen today when later in our agenda ideas and proposals appear.

Looking further ahead and in trying to develop and update the DAR, future ideas for discussion (for the sub-committee initially) will include the formal setting up and use of ART (the Association of Ringing Teachers) across the county and likewise the use of the Association's Saxilby Simulator where it could be used to significant effect. These two exciting projects lend themselves to combine in maximising future opportunities for the DAR to fulfil a need, get around the county with enthusiasm and to have a visible presence amongst our towns and villages.

With competitions taking a back seat presently, it gives us all the opportunity to think longer-term about our future and to kick-start these ideas and projects to put the DAR and ringing in general in a better place.

The opportunities are there, and we need to grab them with both hands. We should be approaching these excellent opportunities full-on and be doing all within our powers to ensure they come to fruition.

I wish you all the very best in tackling future projects and that 2022 brings about continuing involvement of the DAR in order that we are able to celebrate with pride and do justice to our centenary celebrations in 2025, not only for us involved in the present time and for future generations but to remember and continue with the enormous and tireless dedication of work carried out by past members over the past 96 years.

North Devon Secretary report (Andrew Steer)

As you would expect there's not that much to report on the ringing competitions side of things with the pandemic canceling all Devon association and non-Devon association Competitions.

It has been pleasing to see most towers are now back ringing though and hopefully Competitions of all kinds can proceed again next year. I am grateful to those towers that have put themselves forward to host the towers next year and look forward to working with them to put on a good competition day for each concerned.

I hope to be able to see and ring with you all in the not to distance future.

South Devon Secretary report (John Lagdon)

Firstly I apologise for not being present today, unfortunately I have a pre-existing annual engagement in the City this weekend.

As I'm sure you're aware there isn't anything to report on the Competitions for 2021, so I'll reflect on a couple other aspects of ringing for this year's report. If I begin to bore you, whomever is reading this, please feel free to stop!

One of the tasks I have taken on this year has been collating the list of names of ringers at each affiliated tower provided to the Association. I'm sure I will have a lot more to enter after today, and I thank Chris for sending across all those already submitted to make my task that bit easier.

Before starting this I believed that Call-Change ringing, and DAR in particular, was slowly dying a death. And I'm sure I wasn't the only one that this was a mutual feeling for.

However, collating this list has so far proved that this simply isn't the case.

I have so far entered 46 towers into the database (kept in accordance with the DAR Data Protection Policy). This equates a massive 401 unique ringers. This, to me and hopefully some of you, is a staggering number of ringers. And I have yet to enter a lot of towers that I know have large bands but have yet to submit, so this will increase further!

While this seems very promising, this also highlights to me, and hopefully some others, that while in a normal year we have approximately 25 teams total enter the various DAR competitions equating to about 120-140ish ringers, there are at least twice that number that do not get involved with the DAR.

What can we as a committee and an Association do to provide value of affiliation to the towers that don't ring in competitions?

'Encouraging' them to ring in the competitions isn't the way forward. I know of a lot of DAR ringers that don't want to ring in competitions because there is a bit of a stigma. 'Its the same teams that go and win all the time', or 'We're not good enough to ring in them, so why even try?'

Every year I have rung in the Devon's a different team has won the Major. There are definitely two tiers of ringers in the DAR. Those who ring in competitions and those who don't.

I believe in order for the DAR to fully thrive there needs to be more integration between these two groups. Be it through training, social events, trips etc.

Believe it or not, I've been ringing for 20 years in May 2022. The only benefit I saw for the first 15 or so years of this time has been ringing in the Novice a few times.

I'm now fortunate enough to ring with Stoke Gabriel on a regular basis (when there isn't a pandemic) and I would like to thank Mike Webster for this opportunity.

At the risk of repeating myself, what could we be doing as the DAR to actually provide a top class service to all members. Whether they are regular Major Final teams, or only ring on a Sunday. I do appreciate for some just ringing in their tower is enough and that's fine, but there are certainly others out there who only have the opportunity to ring on a Sunday morning that would greatly appreciate some extra tuition or ringing opportunities or social events or anything else that the DAR could offer.

Hopefully this has provided some food for thought for all in the DAR, and not gotten any ringer's backs up.

I'm just a fresh, new pair of eyes that has seen the DAR from the committee side and there needs to be change.

Hope to ring with you all in the not-to-distant future.

Publicity Officer report (John Staddon)

After being accepted as the Publicity Officer at the 2020 AGM, I composed an email list of all Tower Captains/ Contacts registered on the DAR website, that are, or have affiliated to the DAR in recent years.

The list was then used to circulate all information that related to ringing that could be used to benefit all ringers across Devon. Almost 200 towers now receive regular information to support their ringing. The emails are all sent under the "BCC" section for recipients, to ensure security of all their email addresses.

I also registered, to receive directly from the Central Council for Church Bell Ringers, all their communications. This proved extremely successful and useful. It enabled all information relating to Health, Safety and Well-being issued by the CCCBR as well as those relevant to Covid restrictions to be sent to all the towers. Their guidance on returning to ringing when Covid restrictions were reduced has been valued by all towers. Many have replied directly to me expressing their appreciation of the advice and guidance they received.

During 2021 there have been over 15 "bulletins" emailed to all the towers. They have covered all aspects relating to ringing, together with information on the actions discussed and taken by the DAR Committee during their meetings. The results of these discussions are presented for further discussion and ratification by those attending this AGM.

The results of the decisions reached at the AGM and actions that need to be followed and discussed at future Committee meetings will be circulated to all towers as soon as possible after the AGM. It is highly likely that the Constitution and Rules of DAR will need to be reviewed as a result of decisions taken at the AGM.