

THE RINGING WORLD LIMITED

Minutes of the thirty-ninth Annual General Meeting

Held in The Hold, Suffolk Archives, 131 Fore St, Ipswich, IP4 1LN, on Saturday 2nd September 2023 at 11:00 hrs.

Present: P Jopp (Chairman of the Board of Directors), Ms E R Ainsworth, R D Crighton, Mrs M Bone (Company Secretary) and 127 Members of the Company (list held separately).

Apologies for absence had been received from the following members: Tim Jackson, David Mattingley, Allen Nunley, Ian Oram and Chris Ridley (Ex-officio members); Colin Newman (ASCY); Rhona McEune (Barrow & District Society); Mike Hansford and Charles Pipe-Wolferstan (Bath & Wells DA); Duncan Walker (Carlisle DG); Glen Fiddy and Gill Hughes (Derby DA); Ed Sterland (East Derbyshire & West Notts Assn); Chris Povey (Four Shires Guild); Mark Davies, Simon Edwards and Derek Harbottle (Gloucester & Bristol DA); John Couperthwaite and Deb Margason-Baker (Guildford DG); Caroline Stockmann (Kent County Assn); Cate Gardner (Lancashire Assn); Chris Sharp (Lincoln DG); Matthew Turner (Llandaff & Monmouth DA); Hans Rashbrook (Middlesex County Assn & London DG); Beverley Furniss (North Wales Assn); Jo Belsten (Norwich DA); E Ann Williams (Shropshire Assn); Graham Hayward (Southwell & Nottingham DG); Philip Pawley (Sussex County Assn); and Michele Cambareri (Veronese Assn).

Apologies had also been received from G M Bradshaw and G R D Lay, directors.

Members of the Company were required to consent to be a member of The Ringing World Ltd and in the event of the Company being dissolved, undertake to pay a sum not exceeding £10.00 as a contribution to the assets of the Company for the payment of debts and liabilities. No members of the Company who were present at the meeting declined their consent.

1. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

The Minutes of the thirty-eighth Annual General Meeting of the Company were approved by the meeting.

There were no matters arising.

2. Company Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2022, together with the Report of the Directors and the Independent Examiner

The Chairman presented the accounts and reported that the Company had experienced a good year: although subscriptions had declined again donations had increased significantly, due largely to the amount of ringing for the Platinum Jubilee and then to mark the death and funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II. He noted a rise in the cost of printing as the price of paper had increased during the year. Expenditure was carefully controlled. The Chairman thanked Will Bosworth, Editor, and the team for all their work producing a high-quality journal (applause). He pointed out that the balance sheet showed sufficient reserves to cover 8 months' expenditure and confirmed that the Company remained in a strong financial position. The budget meeting held by the Board in November 2022 had decided to freeze subscription rates and had also approved salary increases for the staff. Commenting on the accounts for January to June 2023, the Chairman stated that income was some 16k better than forecast, with expenditure some 5k worse. Donations had increased as ringers responded to the request for £1/rope and because of the additional ringing in May to mark the Coronation. Other sales had also improved thanks to the work of Jo Leigh. He concluded

his remarks by stating that the Company expected a surplus of 35k for 2023 – sufficient to cover the deficits incurred during the Covid years – and by warning of a more difficult financial position in 2024 when there would be a rise in postage rates.

Anthony Lovell-Wood queried the increase in expenditure on compositing; the Chairman replied that this reflected a change in position after the retirement of Chris Caryer: the work was now undertaken on a contract basis and not by a salaried member of staff. Fred Bone asked that subscription figures and breakdown by postal / digital should be included in the report, together with comparison with previous years. Jackie Roberts, past chairman, pointed out that the figures were included in the Chairman's report.

The Chairman proposed that the company accounts were adopted and this was carried.

3. Chairman's Report for the year ended 31st December 2022

The Chairman presented his report. He reported on staff changes during the year: the Deputy Editor, Chris Teasdale, had resigned and Chris Caryer, compositor, had retired; a number of new staff had joined the team, namely Jo Leigh and Trisha Shannon; Sarah Carreck was the compositor on a freelance contract; Will Bosworth, Editor, had moved to Dublin in the autumn. He thanked all those who volunteered for *The Ringing World*. The Chairman noted a number of new publications during the year, in particular *The Little Green Ringing Book* and *Criblines: Treble Dodging Royal*.

He invited Ms E Ainsworth to speak about the RWNYC competition. Ms Ainsworth reported on the competition held in York in 2023 when 240 young ringers had been present with supporters and family. She thanked the York team of 175 helpers. The award ceremony had been moved to an alternative venue to accommodate a Minster service and an improved social event had been held in the evening. She congratulated the winning teams and David Hull, organiser. She announced that Joanna Cresshull would become the new RWNYC organiser. Ms Ainsworth concluded by thanking the regular sponsors of the competition: Whitechapel Bells, the Founders and Girdlers companies, Westley Engineering, Talent Innovations, and, for 2023, the Yorkshire Association.

The Chairman reported on progress during 2022: the company had seen the benefits of software and contract changes made in 2021; ringing, and the amount of donations, had increased, particularly for the Jubilee and then the death and funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II; there had been increased revenue from advertising; and a hot foil stamping machine had been acquired for the Andover office which would enable improvements to the Diary and other products. He displayed graphs showing the number of peals and quarter peals by month in 2019, 2022 and 2023, and a graph showing donations by month in the same years. Subscription numbers continued to decline; there was a lack of knowledge and information about *The Ringing World* in the ringing community. The Chairman concluded his remarks by urging Central Council representatives to be ambassadors for the journal.

In response to questions and comments the Chairman confirmed that most donations were received from quarter peal ringers; that the peal totals included those published in the journal and those only on BellBoard; that the business was over-reliant on donations; and that there was no easy answer to financial pressures. A number of suggestions were made from the floor of other magazines which might advertise *The Ringing World*.

The Chairman's report was approved by the meeting.

4. Appointment of Directors

Ms E R Ainsworth, R D Crighton and G Davies were elected by paper ballot.

The Chairman stated that the necessary skills were covered by current Board members but additional directors could be proposed for future annual meetings. The Articles allowed for a maximum of nine directors.

5. To give the directors authority to appoint an Independent Examiner

The Chairman informed the meeting that the company had used Langdowns DFK Chartered Accountants and Business Advisors for many years. However, they produced the whole report and were very expensive. Technology had moved on and the production of the report was now a lot more straightforward. The Chairman asked members for approval to use an independent examiner and research the market before appointing one. This was approved.

6. Ideas for the Future

Ms E Ainsworth reported on the results of the survey held in March. She explained that the purpose of the survey was to consult and listen to subscribers and ringers and to understand their needs and wishes. She thanked all those who had participated and reminded members of the recent articles in the paper; a summary document was available online. Ms Ainsworth reported that 2162 surveys were completed, of which 867 were from subscribers and 1468 from others (mostly BellBoard users). There had been many compliments, thousands of comments and suggestions, as well as requests for special offers etc. The original questions were designed to find information about both subscribers and non-subscribers and to seek their views on frequency of publication, quality of print, online or paper publication, editorial matter, content, and inclusion of performances. She then moved on to the survey's findings, displaying graphs which showed the age of subscribers and the relationship between age and subscription. Most respondents loved BellBoard, the RWNYC, the front covers, special editions, accurate performance records, easy access to records and history, and being part of the ringing community. Further analysis of the data showed that there were 2 groups of respondents. Group 1 were aged between 60 and 80; they were experienced ringers who had learnt when young, preferred the print publication and appreciated the importance and purpose of *The Ringing World*. Group 2, a larger group, were aged under 60, made wide use of technology, would prefer a monthly publication with performances only on BellBoard. These ringers read the publication but were less likely to subscribe or donate. Younger ringers also expressed concern about the ethics of producing a print journal. Ms Ainsworth concluded her remarks by stating that the Ringing World currently intended to trial a new approach alongside the weekly title and that this would obviously require a different financial model.

The following comments and suggestions were made by members: was there any correlation between the age of ringers and their subscriber status; will current younger ringers progress to become subscribers; could BellBoard be monetised; the importance of the digital copy for overseas ringers; the value of *The Ringing World* as the primary weekly publication which should not be lost; that the front page of BellBoard could be used more and that subscriptions to *The Ringing World* made suitable presents for non-subscribers; that the Company had sufficient reserves to allow for innovation and to cover costs if there were mistakes; that the risk of producing a second publication should be taken; that younger ringers read a family or other copy; and that there were issues with ease of donations to BellBoard.

The Editor stated that few survey respondents had reported that donations were too difficult and that a new PayPal platform was being introduced. He hoped to monetise series of articles for separate sale. The Chairman thanked all members for their contributions.

7. Any other business

Nick Elks, Peterborough Guild, asked if this meeting was open to other ringers; the Chairman replied that the Ringing World was a limited company with restricted membership.

Fred Bone, Essex Association, asked for an indication of how many of those present were subscribers; a goodly number responded in the affirmative.

Revd Tony Ellis, Hereford Guild, thanked The Ringing World and Will Bosworth for publication of *The Voice of the Church* (applause); he urged all present to buy a copy.

Linda Garton, Bedfordshire Association, paid tribute to the hard work by the Board and Editor in producing such a high quality publication.

The meeting closed at 12:30 hrs.