THE RINGING WORLD LIMITED

Minutes of the forty first Annual General Meeting

Held at the Niagara Conference Centre, Sheffield, on Saturday 6th September 2025 at 10:00 hrs.

Present: Ms E R Ainsworth, G Davies, Mrs M Bone (Company Secretary), W T Bosworth (Editor) and 138 Members of the Company (list held separately).

Apologies for absence had been received from the following members: P Jopp (Chairman); Chris Mew and Barbara Wheeler (Fellows); Kira Chase, David Mattingley and Ian Oram (Ex-officio members); Rhona McEune (Barrow & District Society); David Parfrey (Bath & Wells DA); Revd Jonathan Rose (Clerical Guild); Glen Fiddy (Derby DA); Sue Marsden and Daniel Stevens (Ely DA); David Towell (Lichfield & Walsall Archdeaconries Society); Keith Butter (Lincoln DG); Alan Marchbank and Tim Pett (Oxford DG); Dorothy Hall (Oxford Society); Cath Colman (Suffolk Guild); Vicky Chase (Sussex County Assn); Grace Dooley (Swansea & Brecon DG); Caroline Beckett and Hayley Young (Truro DG); Giovanni Michele Cambareri (Veronese Assn); and Michael Church (Winchester & Portsmouth DG).

Apologies had also been received from G M Bradshaw, R D Crighton (Salisbury DG) 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.

In the unavoidable absence of the Chairman, the Chair was taken by Ms E R Ainsworth.

1. Minutes of the 2024 AGM

The Minutes of the fortieth 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 2024, together with the Report of the Directors and the Independent Examiner

Ms Ainsworth presented the Trustees' Annual Report, Accounts and Independent Examiner's report. She reported a surplus of £20,061 for 2024, as against a £34,139 surplus in 2023. Incoming resources were lower than in 2023; subscriptions, donations, merchandise sales and advertising were all lower, although interest receivable had increased. The overall financial position remained healthy. Ms Ainsworth acknowledged an error, pointed out by Andrew Aspland, on the displayed slide where the 2023 surplus and 2024 decrease in income were shown as the same amount. [Post-meeting note: the correct figure for the decrease in income was £14,078.] W T Bosworth confirmed, in reply to Robert Perry, that one small legacy had been received during the year. Ms Ainsworth displayed a slide which showed that over 75% of income came from subscriptions to the paper and online Ringing World, and donations. The Company remained heavily reliant on donations. Expenditure was £5,057 less than in 2023. Ms Ainsworth thanked the staff for their amazing work producing a quality journal throughout the year (applause). A pie chart showed that the majority of expenditure was on staff and printing and franking, with lesser amounts on other products, office and telephone costs, bank charges, the Diary, and computer and miscellaneous costs. Alison Hodge queried how costs would change if the product were to become digital-only? Both Ms Ainsworth and W T Bosworth confirmed that the current digital version is a pdf of the printed paper; staff costs would be likely to increase considerably for a different digital-only product. The balance sheet showed assets of £314,152; liabilities and creditors of £156,560; and a general reserve of circa £360,000, of which some £150,000 was available for investment.

Ms Ainsworth proposed that the company accounts were adopted and this was carried.

3. Chairman's Report for the year ended 31st December 2024

Ms Ainsworth introduced the Chairman's Report and began by noting that the staff had remained stable during the year under review. Trisha Shannon had been promoted from editorial assistant to assistant editor. The staff (Will Bosworth, Trisha Shannon, Jo Leigh, Sarah Carreck and Christine Hooker) were supported by a number of volunteers and Ms Ainsworth thanked them all for their work during 2024 (applause).

Ms Ainsworth invited the Editor to speak on publications. W T Bosworth mentioned the re-launch of the Viggers series of ringing record books, all of which could be customised for towers or individuals, and highlighted the publication of Gareth Davies' history of ringing in Cambridge *Foolish Youths and Substantial Rewards*.

Ms Ainsworth referred to BellBoard and reported on architectural changes, updating and upgrading software, and action to protect the service against bots. Richard Smith noted that these were background changes to enable the site's continuity. W T Bosworth thanked Richard Smith for his time and work in maintaining a robust and stable site and protecting it against abusive bots (applause). Comments and suggestions by members included: whether there was a single point of failure and whether sufficient people were involved in maintaining the service; was the aim still to monetise BellBoard; how much volunteer time was spent and had it been costed; that costing volunteer time was important for any grant applications; and that BellBoard is invaluable to the ringing community. Ms Ainsworth, W T Bosworth and Richard Smith replied that the database itself and the code were backed up, and that others assisted when there were service issues; that the aim was still to monetise BellBoard; that the original agreement with Richard Smith specified that basic functions would remain free but a premium service could be developed; and that costing volunteer time should be investigated and was already underway for the youth contest.

Ms Ainsworth reported on extensive discussions on the future of the paper. Plans for a monthly title were currently on hold as the Board explored possibilities for a digital product which could appeal to younger ringers. She confirmed that the Board understood the importance of maintaining an archive of ringing records into the future. Ms Ainsworth stated that further talks had been held with Subscribe CRM; the aim was to automate subscription processes, enabling integration with BellBoard and possible future personalisation. A slide then showed the decline in total subscriptions over the past 20 years, the decline in subscriptions to the paper and the slow increase in digital subscriptions. Comments, queries and suggestions included: what had been the take-up of tower subscriptions; whether there was scope for more advertising to reduce the subscription cost; what was the readership of the paper; what was the number for new subscribers; how territorial societies could promote the *Ringing World* with fliers in new member packs; that an increase in tower subscriptions would not offset the decline in individual subscriptions sufficiently; that fliers and sample issues should be offered; whether there should be a minimum donation level for performances; and that a link to the *Ringing World* could be placed on association membermojo pages. Ms Ainsworth and W T Bosworth welcomed the suggestions from members. W T Bosworth added that the Ringing World was always willing to provide copy for local newsletters. Further slides showed the level of donations and the number of peals and quarter peals rung during the past 3 years. Ms Ainsworth acknowledged that peals and quarters did not reflect the amount of other ringing in the country.

Ms Ainsworth concluded by apologising for the omission of the following paragraph from the Chairman's report:

Ringing activities remained broadly flat in 2024 with 3,586 peals (2023: 3,629) and 17,582 quarter peals (2023: 16,519) rung during the year. This consistent pattern provides the Board with a reliable basis for understanding and planning future revenue streams and expenditure.
Work on exploring a monthly publication was paused during 2024, allowing us to focus instead on investigating digital products, particularly subscription management solutions. It quickly became clear that integration with BellBoard would be complex, so an alternative approach was needed. Developing this approach has now become our priority for 2025.

The Chairman's report was approved by the meeting.

4. Appointment of Directors

Ms Ainsworth asked the meeting for approval to elect directors by show of hands and this was given.

G M Bradshaw, G Davies, Ms R L Sugden and J J Watkins were each elected separately by show of hands.

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

Ms Ainsworth proposed that the Board of Directors be given authority to appoint an Independent Examiner for the 2025 accounts. This proposal was approved.

6. RWNYC

Ms Ainsworth reported on the successful youth competition held in Birmingham in July. She thanked the major sponsors of the competition: Whitechapel Bells; the Founders, Girdlers and Drapers companies; Westley Group; John Taylor & Co; and the Ancient Society of College Youths. She also thanked the Birmingham ringers for all their work before and on the day. A record 37 teams had entered; a further 4 teams had applied and then had to withdraw. Nearly 1,000 people had been involved during the day: team members and leaders, helpers and tower stewards. The numbers involved posed a problem as there were not many suitable venues. A review had been held after the competition and a full report prepared for team leaders. Members commented that the tower organisation had been very successful; whether there should be an upper limit on the number of teams; and whether the special issue of the journal should be offered to competition participants. W T Bosworth welcomed this last suggestion. S Linford (St Martin's Guild) thanked the Ringing World and said how very rewarding the day had been. Ms Ainsworth thanked W T Bosworth, Trisha Shannon and Joanna Cresshull for all their work to make it such a successful day (applause).

7. Plans for the Future

Ms Ainsworth referred to earlier remarks (item 3) and reported that the Board's focus was on re-developing and modernising the ringingworld.co.uk website, enabling subscription and membership management and electronic payment options. The website would provide access to all Ringing World services, including BellBoard and future digital services. Work was also underway to develop the marketing strategy. The Board planned to build on the success of the RWNYC. Ms Ainsworth noted the importance of involving the staff team and other volunteers and recognised that the staff in particular were under time pressure as they produced the weekly paper. The Board were in discussion with suitable service providers. Members suggested and commented: that the entry fee per ringer for the RWNYC be increased and the monies used to provide digital access to the Ringing World for young ringers; that many societies, eg Surrey, subsidised their young ringers; that video of the youth contest could support engagement with schools and encourage young ringers; and that live-streaming of the event should be considered. Ms Ainsworth reported that Taylors had sponsored production of a professionally-made video on the RWNYC which would shortly be available on YouTube. Ms Ainsworth concluded by reiterating her thanks to the sponsors of the RWNYC, and especially to David Chalk.

8. Any other business

Nick Elks (Peterborough Guild) pointed out that he had abstained on the appointment of directors as he did not know the candidates; he urged those standing for appointment to attend the meeting and meet the company members.
Neal Dodge (Suffolk Guild) highlighted recent themed issues of *The Ringing World*. W T Bosworth welcomed ideas for future issues. He stated that 2025 calendars were now on sale and that diaries and the *Little Blue Book* would be on sale shortly.
Graham Jenkins (Chester DG) commended the excellent RWNYC and suggested that it be linked with ringing as part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Elizabeth Tennant (Worcestershire & Districts) noted the networking opportunities at the RWNYC. W T Bosworth responded that he hoped to encourage RWNYC alumni to volunteer as helpers at the event, and that he was working with Andrea Haynes of the Central Council on other networking opportunities. Andrea Haynes added that she would be at the Roadshow the next day and hoped to meet people then.
Tim Jones (Devon Assn) regretted the amount of space taken in the paper by peal reports; these were of limited interest, especially in call change areas.
Tina Stoecklin (CCCBR President) hoped that the Ringing World and the Central Council would continue to work together to benefit ringing as a whole and, especially, to encourage young ringers. She congratulated all concerned and welcomed their willingness to try new ideas (applause).
Ernie de Legh-Runciman (CCCBR Secretary) thanked Ms Ainsworth for her chairmanship of the meeting (applause).
Jane Wilkinson (SRCY) thanked Mrs M Bone for her work as Company Secretary during the last three years (applause).

The meeting closed at 11:35 hrs.