

SUSSEX COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS

Registered Charity No. 268588

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE HELD AT
THE VILLAGE CENTRE, HURSTPEIRPOINT ON SATURDAY 11 JANUARY 2014 (9.30am)

PRESENT:		Librarian:	Stella Bianco
Master:	Christine Baldock	Safeguarding Officer:	Sue Elrick
Secretary:	Marisa Hayes	Central Council Reps:	David Kirkcaldy
Treasurer:	Val Burgess		Andrew Barnsdale
Trustees:	Val Atkins		Stephen Beckingham
	Mike Wake	Divisional Representatives:	Diana Day
	Peter Wilkinson	(N)	Anne Ekins, Rosie Gregory
Education Officer:	Anne Franklin	(S)	Clare Cullen, Meg Heyworth
Publicity Officer:	Kathy Howard	(E)	David Hollands, Peter
BRF Secretary:	Graham Hills		Bradford
Peal Secretary:	Alan Baldock	(W)	Jack Burton, Christine
			Butterfield

The Master took the chair and members were asked to stand in memory of members who had died since November: Alf Pullen, Buxted and Jean Pike, Shoreham. The following members were also remembered at this meeting have passed away during 2013: Keith Honeyball, formerly of Heene; Roy Kirkcaldy, formerly of Hurstpierpoint and Westham; Jean Osbon, formerly of Withyham, Margaret Binstead, formerly of Westham.

1. No apologies for absence had been received.

2. The Master opened discussion on the Working Group's proposal which had been in circulation to the General Committee, to each tower and via the website for one month. The anticipated outcomes for the meeting were clarified:

- to decide by way of voting on a way forward and a steer for the forthcoming four ADMs in February and
- to work towards a resolution to put before the AGM in May.

3. A number of concerns were raised during the discussion and some were answered by members of the working group (*the following recording of the comments made may not be entirely word for word but hopefully conveys the gist of the comments made*):

- How would we achieve a critical mass of advanced ringers within smaller units? Answer: Advanced ringing would be organised across hubs or wider areas as is currently the case. It was not so much the geographical boundaries – the essence of the hub is to support towers and to meet the needs of the ringers within each hub.
- Smaller hubs / networks follow the same logic of the Divisions on a smaller scale so what is the need for change?
- It was perceived that there was little support for the vision as it currently stands.
- The nature of the hubs and how they will work seems unclear. Each hub would be doing something different.
- Abolishing the Divisional structure is a huge risk with little justification; cautious and gradual evolution to a new structure is to be encouraged.
- Less Officers on the General Committee? Does this mean more work? Answer: No because the work would be shared across a team.
- Asking Divisions to find enough people to take these tasks on could be difficult.
- Not only do the lines drawn on the map put unnatural links between towers, some ignore existing arrangements and they attempt to move towers from one division to another. Answer: The lines are just a starting point; all areas are flexible and in fact Sedlescombe have already made representation to the General Secretary that they are included in the same group as Battle with whom they already work.
- Divisional committees were encouraged to expand to welcome additional committee members. Are we now suggesting these groups be swept away? Answer: Not at all, the teams would be open to all.
- There is still a need to address the concerns of those who don't feel welcome at meetings and would not want to speak openly at a large meeting.
- There is a fear that the Vision underestimates the average members' perception of their Division, their newsletter and a feeling of belonging to a Division.

4. There were some general observations:

Leaders will pop up from anywhere, all over the Division, more than one per hub in some cases. We must encourage more workshops and teams of helpers across the county as a whole.

- The Vision goes some way in acknowledging the massive job that the Ringing Masters undertake and encourages a stronger lower level training network with advanced ringing handled across several hubs.
- Towers need to be encouraged via their coordinators to look at how they run themselves. Could this be one of the long term outcomes for Sussex?

- The fundamental aim is to improve standards across the county. In all the local discussions about education and training it was obvious that people wanted help to come to their tower and may not consider going elsewhere. It has become clear that where towers are sharing their resources they are making progress.
- Many people have a set amount of time which they give for ringing. For some it is one practice night and Sunday ringing, for others a few evenings a week.
- The type of community which we are describing in the hubs is not one which can be created artificially. It is something which can only occur through progression.
- The meeting recognised the importance of getting closer to the ground level whilst keeping the existing structure.
- The flexibility of the areas was questioned, the hub coordinators are to be elected by a group of towers but he/she needs to know which towers that is before an election can take place. Everyone recognised that things change and hub structure would be reviewed everywhere on a yearly basis anyway.
- Ideally each hub would be represented on the divisional committee to help and support one another and also to liaise on division-wide events: still valued by a good number of members.
- After discussion about events for juniors, it was agreed that hubs are not designed to serve the needs of a specific group of people such as juniors or advanced ringers and they were to provide a point of contact for individuals and towers to get help and support.
- Recruitment is a big issue and there is only a finite number of people able to help in this area.

5. Before breaking for coffee, AF read an email from Louise Pink representing the 1066 Youths:

'I think the idea of a local network caught the imagination of the local ringers, and then giving it a name seemed fun. It does seem more manageable than the large Eastern division; as you know, I've been asked to be the co-ordinator, and one of the reasons was that I know most of the ringers - not difficult in just a few towers, but to know most of the Eastern division would be much more difficult.

I suggested that to "launch" the Youths we try to ring a quarter in each tower, with as many local ringers as possible. This idea has gone down well but I'm not sure if it will actually happen in each tower; I've asked the tower captains to make the arrangements because as you know I'm going to be out of action for a while.

Most of the towers are already in contact and visit each others practice nights, not all the other towers, but several of them. The exceptions are Hooe and Ashburnham. I'm hoping to encourage a bit of visiting at Hooe, but I understand that it might be best not to rush it. I can't, anyway! Ashburnham has no local band, as you know, but five parishioners want to learn, and Alan Collings is going to start teaching them this month. Incidentally, Sedlescombe were very pleased to find themselves moved into our group.'

6. After coffee, the focus turned to the working group's proposal regarding Association-wide teams:

- One of the key focuses in the future would be recruitment and training and this could be delivered by an effective team of the right people.
- It was suggested that this could be done within the present structure and that the rules stated who should attend each of the committees.
- Each committee requires a clear purpose and function and at the present time, the working party considered that only the BRF does this. They meet with a clear purpose, having read the papers, they discuss and they make clear and informed decisions and act upon them.
- Some members wished they had enough volunteers to attend the existing committee meetings and wondered why renaming them would make such a difference.
- It was felt that new teams would be set up to get specific tasks done to help develop the work of the Association overall.
- The fundraising opportunities of regular divisional meetings were discussed with donations and raffles at many of the Western Division events. It was felt that these opportunities would still exist.
- Getting the right people in place to help deliver this work is key but is it achievable?
- If teams and committees are falling short at the current time, this ought to be addressed by the chair and could be done so in the current structure.
- Difficult to fill existing roles but everyone understands the voluntary nature of all the work undertaken by so many. Numerous people have indicated they are happy to help out somehow but would not wish to be on a committee.
- You don't have to be an Officer to be useful.

7. There were further general remarks before the final stage of the meeting:

- If one of the fundamental needs is more training for more people locally, there is no need to change existing structure.
- Please change less all in one go; maintain existing divisional structure, create smaller hubs within divisions is achievable.

- Let's not forget that we are all here on the same side - the best for the county by working together.
- Retain existing structure, get closer to the grassroots within existing Divisional boundaries.
- We are being asked to make really important decisions and we shouldn't take too many risks. Existing rules denote who will be elected at ADMs this year.
- Whatever the outcome it's hoped it is not a divisive exercise.
- Changes cannot be made until the AGM has voted on it although perhaps the spirit of change could be adopted from the ADMs going forward. All secretaries would require some clarification ahead of the ADMs.
- Consider whether the Association we have now is fit for the next generation? What are we handing on?
- Thanks to the working group for the time and effort. Slower rate of change would be preferred, perhaps looking at a couple of pilot areas this year?

8. Revised Association Rules

- MHayes explained that as well as revising some particular points, the working group had attempted to update the style of the rules with more modern language.
- MHayes highlighted rules 3 and 11 where a fundamental change to the election of members was introduced. MH explained that this means that a ringer may join the Association at any point in the year by paying a full fee and producing a completed membership application form, proposed and seconded by tower captain, correspondent as appropriate. In effect removing the existing election procedure and bringing the rules into line with modern membership organisations, whereby a member pays their money and benefits from membership immediately. A certificate may still be issued as required and the date of joining will be noted on the database.
- MHayes remarked that the Hon Member category has been removed. It was considered confusing (different to Hon Life Members) and only applied to a couple of Warnham ringers. These were in fact past ringers who could still benefit from full membership if they wished and is often the case in other towers where members fees are paid although they are no longer regular members of the band.
- MHayes also drew attention to the lapse of membership after 3 months, bringing matters in line with other organisations, particularly regarding insurance as should there be a claim, the insurance company would want to know that subs had been paid by the claimant.
- ABaldock requested two changes to the rules as circulated: Such members shall not be required to pay and annual subscription' to be added to Rule 6. And 'and ratified at the AGM' added to Rule 23.
- MHayes asked for the meeting's approval to these particular points and it was agreed the Rules would be considered again at the March General Committee before going before the AGM in May.

9. The next steps

- AFranklin proposed that the working group's proposal document in its entirety is adopted as the way forward for the Association. This was seconded by Val Atkins. With all votes considered the count was 7 for, 11 against and 6 abstentions.
- SBeckingham then made the following proposal, seconded by Rosie Gregory:
 - divisional committees remain in place for the time being
 - networks/hubs (numbering around 14) are established during the course of the year
 - the Divisions be responsible for liaising with an appropriate person for each hub (perhaps by including them on the Divisional Committee)
 - the four SCACR teams as per Appendix 3 of the Vision proposal be set up
- Jack Burton proposed an amendment to the motion which drew much discussion. Having consulted with both parties since the meeting; the final motion which was then seconded by Peter Bradford was as follows:
 - divisional committees remain in place for the time being
 - any number of flexible networks/hubs are established within the existing Divisions for training and local collaboration and these are to be encouraged by the Divisions
 - the Divisions be responsible for liaising with an appropriate person for each hub (perhaps by including them on the Divisional Committee)

This was agreed with 13 votes in favour and 8 votes against.
- Subsequently Stephen proposed, and Val Atkins seconded:

The four SCACR teams be established to help make the Association fit for purpose and the Association Structure section of the proposed rules continue to be looked at regarding representation on the General Committee. This motion was then agreed with 13 votes in favour and 7 votes against.

There being no other business, the Master thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting at 12.05.