

# SCACR Northern District Annual Meeting: Agenda

4 pm, Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Cowfold

Attendees: Rob Lane (Association Master; Chair), Steph Pendlebury (Northern District Secretary), Rosie Gregory (Northern District committee member), Richard Pendlebury (Northern District committee member), Chris Westwood (Northern District committee member), Hamish McNaughton (Association Secretary), Sue Gadd (Association Treasurer), Ian and Margaret Oram, Graham & Moya Hills, Julie Quinn, Alison Coley, Mike Cattell, Sue Spurling, Vicky Chase, Emma Gadd, Stella Bianco, Miriam Coghil, Stephen Pocock, John and Marion Moore, Liz Moore, Libby Sheed, Angela Cash, Iain Davey, Roger Clark, Christine Cowell, Kye Leaver, Anne & Guy Ekins.

*Note: several attendees are not Northern District members so did not vote.*

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Rob welcomed everyone to the first in-person ADM since 2020. Apologies for absence were received from: Margaret Benson, Val Burgess, Graham Burling, Rosalind Cowsill, Neil & Jenny Dobson, Val Farley, Hamish McNaughton, Chris & Michael Shaw, Tom & Steph White.

## 2. Deaths of members

A minute's silence was held for the following Northern District members who had died in the past year: Betty Stoner (Worth), Anthony Rouse (Worth), Cecil Butcher (Worth), Margaret Thomas (Horsham).

## 3. Minutes of ADM on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021 (Zoom) and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting had been circulated electronically in advance, and were accepted as a true record, with minor corrections (proposed by Julie Quinn and seconded by Guy Ekins). There were no matters arising not otherwise covered by the agenda.

## 4. Welcoming of new members

The following new members were welcomed in their absence: Nicholas Bone (Cuckfield, joined February 2021), and David Sawney (Fletching, joined January 2022).

## 5. District Secretary's report for 2021 – Steph Pendlebury

The following report had been circulated electronically in advance, and was read out at the meeting:

“2021 started very quietly, in lockdown once again. Throughout the year, the committee kept in touch with all District towers (thanks also to Stella Bianco (Cowfold), who assisted with this). During lockdown, we advised on how ringers could keep in touch with one another (e.g. using social media and Zoom) while meeting up in person wasn't possible. We also asked whether enough ringers were likely to return to ringing for towers to continue practices and services. Initially, most tower captains and correspondents were quite positive: they thought that numbers might be slightly down, but they'd have enough to continue. However, it has become apparent that many towers are struggling to have enough ringers for weekly practices or to ring for services regularly. This is clearly a very serious situation, and needs to be addressed. Continuing with a “business as usual” (see below) approach to District support for training (and essentially no District support for recruitment) is not going to address this challenge. We need to plan how to do things better. We need to retain the ringers we currently have, and recruit and train new ringers. How can we make best use of the resources (volunteer time and Association funds) available to us?

“The latter half of 2021 saw a return to some sort of normality. Six days after national COVID-19 restrictions were lifted on 19<sup>th</sup> July, we broke with tradition to hold an event on a Sunday – a walk around Slaugham, with ringing, coffee and cake in the church afterwards. Many thanks to Ian Oram (Warnham) for running the ringing, and to Linda Richardson (Worth) for organising the walk (the latter sadly didn't actually happen as the weather was so dreadful on the day!). August saw another event involving ringing, cake and walking – this time at West Grinstead and Cowfold; many

thanks to the local ringers for providing such a wonderful spread of refreshments, and to Guy and Anne Ekins for leading the walk. Then petrol shortages caused us to cancel October's event. But the situation improved, and ringing events returned to the usual pattern of first Saturday of the month: new members' welcome with coffee & cake at Cowfold in November, and mince pies and mulled wine/juice at Balcombe in December. Thanks to everyone who provided refreshments, or just came along to ring and support these events!

"All ringing and events took place with COVID mitigations in place: good ventilation, limited numbers in the ringing room, face masks recommended, and lots of hand sanitiser! We introduced sign-up-in-advance; partly so that events could be cancelled *beforehand* if there weren't enough attendees, but also so that we knew in advance what everyone wanted to ring, which is very helpful for planning and running practices.

"Monday night District practices restarted in October; thanks to Susie Bowen (Bolney) for booking the towers. We made use of towers with good ventilation which are located centrally in the District, so that the practices were accessible to as many members as possible. Each month had Advanced 8-bell (Stedman Triples and Surprise Major), "Moving on to Methods" (focusing on Kaleidoscope exercises and Plain Hunt), Minor Methods, and rounds-onwards 10-bell practices.

"Thanks to the District committee – Susie Bowen, Rosie Gregory (Slaugham), Chris Westwood (Hartfield) and Richard Pendlebury (Horsham) – for helping to plan and organise practices and events.

"Newsletter editor Katherine Potter was sadly taken seriously ill while on holiday in September. Thankfully she is making a good recovery and was discharged from hospital in January. On behalf of the District's members, enormous thanks to Katherine for her hard work over the past 6 years! Kye (Crawley) has now volunteered to become newsletter editor.

"Our BRF rep, Simon Alford, has provided advice to a few towers over the past year (see his report).

"As ever, if Northern District members have requests or suggestions about practices, training, events, or recruitment please do get in touch: [sec-north@scacr.org](mailto:sec-north@scacr.org)."

Rob echoed Steph's comments that ringing is not currently in good health and that we urgently need to address this. The report was accepted with no amendments.

## **6. Bell Restoration report for 2021 – Simon Alford**

The following report had been circulated electronically in advance, and was read out at the meeting:

"I thought last year was quiet; this year has been quieter! I've had a few email enquiries during the last year, but haven't needed to make a visit to see anything for myself. Advice given has generally been to try something, or look at something in more detail and then let me know. It would seem that this approach has, so far, resolved the situation, because I've not heard anything further.

Earlier this month Kye Leaver at Balcombe mentioned in passing to Richard Pendlebury that they had some wobbly stays. Richard has investigated and found that some coach bolts have been fitted back to front, and will return to resolve the issue soon. Thank you, Richard!

I have one outstanding item – to help adjust the ropes at Slaugham. I wasn't able to fit this in during the busy pre-Christmas period, and had to recover from Covid-19 earlier this month. I'm currently in contact with the ringers there to arrange a mutually convenient meeting, so this should also be resolved soon."

The report was accepted with no amendments.

Kye briefly gave an additional update on Balcombe bells: the issue with the stays has been fixed but the clock hammer for the 2 is catching the wheel.

## 7. Central Council Representative's report – Steph Pendlebury

The following report had been circulated electronically in advance; Steph verbally summarised it during the meeting:

“Although a significant part of 2021 was affected by COVID-19 restrictions, the Central Council and the “grassroots ringers” who are members of the various Workgroups (more on those below!) were working hard throughout the year. Of course, a major part of this work was to produce up-to-date guidance on how to mitigate coronavirus risks in ringing rooms.

“The Strategic Priorities have also been updated:

1. **Find alternative long-term sources of recruits who have the potential to be good ringers**  
We can no longer rely on the church to supply us with recruits, particularly youngsters, and we have to work harder to attract and retain them.
2. **That no ringer should hit a barrier to their own progression**  
If a ringer wants to progress, they should always be able to find a pathway that helps them, although it will probably not just be at their own tower.
3. **The pursuit of excellence in everything we do**  
The pursuit of high quality performance should be what binds together all the different strata and styles of ringing. To achieve this we need the best possible ringing environments, organisation and leadership.
4. **The sound of church bells remains part of our cultural soundscape and is appreciated and understood**  
The sound of church bells is quintessentially British, although it exists more widely. When people hear bells it should not only remind them of the presence of the church, but they should recognise and appreciate the skill involved.
5. **The pursuit of method ringing is not the only measure of success for a ringer**  
No one should feel a failure if they do not do method ringing. All ringers are valued.
6. **The Church continues to value our contribution**  
We must retain the Church's goodwill in order to continue to have access to their bells.

“The biggest news story for the Northern District was District young member Ollie Watson's win of the Westley Award for church bell maintenance and improvement. The judges were impressed by Ollie's enthusiasm and accomplishments.

“The Recruitment & Retention team (of which I am a member) gave Zoom talks “across the country” for several guilds and associations.

“There is a new, worldwide “Young Change Ringers Association” (YCRA), that young ringers themselves have set up and are running, with a loan from and the support of the Council. This is an Association for anyone old enough to handle a bell, up to the age of 30, with the aim to be an Association for young ringers, by young ringers. Several events per year are planned.

Work is underway on a new mobile belfry. This will be easy to transport, quick to set up (30 mins), provides a realistic ringing experience, and looks the part. It will be part of a major push to get bells in front of more people – in schools, at music festivals, shopping centres, etc.

“The Council ran a photo competition with several themes (e.g. “Ringers in Action”, “Bells in Art”). The images submitted form a media library that can be used when you need a picture e.g. for a news article for a local paper, on a website, in a recruitment leaflet... They are available from the CC website (cccbr.org.uk).

“You may be aware that the Church of England is currently reviewing its “Mission and Pastoral Measure” with a view to potentially closing some churches. The Council submitted a response to this review, on behalf of ringers. This emphasised that bells are the voice of the Church, and the importance of early consideration of the bells in the process of closing any churches.

“‘Ringling Forums’ (ringingforums.org) is a new set of online networks for like-minded ringers to ask specific topic questions, get support and share information quickly and easily. No social media account is needed, and the Forums are fully-searchable (unlike Facebook!).

“A formal Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with the Churches Conservation Trust to develop a National Ringing Centre for all ringers to use, at the Old Black Lion (an historic real ale pub) in Northampton. The plan is for six training bells, meeting and conference facilities, and letting bedrooms in the pub. There is a light eight in St Peter’s church, next door. All just five minutes’ walk from a mainline railway station.

“The new North West Ringing Course has been launched; the first course will take place in August 2022, based at Myerscough College, near Preston. The course is open to anyone, not just those in the NW. A range of topics will be covered. More info on the CC website.

“There is currently a push to encourage lapsed ringers to return to ringing. Do you know anyone who used to ring – perhaps they learned as a teenager, then gave it up when they moved away or went to university? Why not bring them along to the next District event?! Even if they don’t want to ring, there’s usually plenty of cake to eat and lovely people to talk to...

“Finally, if you are interested in contributing to the wider ringing community, there are opportunities for everyone, no matter what your interest or skills, in the CC’s Workgroups. All ringers have skills and knowledge (not just about ringing!) that are useful to others. Any ringer can volunteer in a Workgroup, and Workgroups cover a range of subjects – from supporting young ringers and university ringing, to caring for churches and bells. More information on the “situations vacant” page on the CC website ([cccbr.org.uk/about/volunteering-with-the-council/](http://cccbr.org.uk/about/volunteering-with-the-council/)). My experience of being on a Workgroup has been one of fun, friendship and fulfilment – I definitely recommend it.”

The report was accepted with no amendments.

Stella asked which workgroup Steph is part of – this is the Volunteer and Leadership Workgroup, specifically the Recruitment & Retention sub-group.

## **8. Election/Appointment of Northern District Officers**

Steph thanked Susie Bowen, who was now stood down, for serving on the committee and booking towers for the Monday evening practices. The following nominations had been received:

(a) Secretary – Steph Pendlebury

(b) Ringing Master – nominations were invited from the floor, but there were no nominations. This position remains unfilled.

(c) General Committee Members – Rosie Gregory, Julie Quinn (new member), Kye Leaver (new member), Richard Pendlebury, Chris Westwood. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

(d) Bell restoration/maintenance (“BRF”) contact – Simon Alford

(e) Central Council Representative (for 2023-2026) – Steph Pendlebury

(f) 2 Committee Members to sit on General Committee – Steph & Richard Pendlebury

The nominees above were proposed by Margaret Oram and seconded by Stella Bianco, and duly elected *en bloc* by majority vote.

Rob thanked the outgoing committee members for work in support of the Association, and the new members for joining the committee, particularly Kye for taking on the role of Newsletter Editor.

## **9. Nominations for Association Officers**

(a) Association Master – no nomination received

(b) General Secretary – Hamish McNaughton (nominated by Steph Pendlebury)

- (c) Treasurer – Sue Gadd (nominated by Stella Bianco)
- (d) Safeguarding Officer – Val Clay (nominated by Margaret Oram)
- (e) Trustee – Jonathan Franklin (nominated by Sue Gadd)
- (f) Bell Restoration Fund (BRF) Secretary – no nomination received

## 10. Brief update from towers

**Ardingly & West Hoathly** – have a shared practice daytime on Fridays every week (alternating between towers), with up to 10 ringers. Trying to ring for both church’s services every Sunday, but struggle to achieve this.

**Balcombe** – practices are popular but struggling to ring for Sunday services; one new learner

**Coleman’s Hatch** – struggling: practice approx. once per month, don’t currently ring on Sundays but hoping to ring for one evensong service per month in future

**Cowfold** – 8 ringers but struggling to get 4 for Sundays; have had to cancel a lot of practices

**Crawley** – 4-7 ringers, ringing on Sundays and most practices. Ringing room has no ventilation; modifications to the windows have been requested but not expected to be actioned for some time.

**Cuckfield** – ringing for most practices with 4-5 ringers, and 5-6 ringers on Sundays

**Danehill** – practice nights are very popular, they ring every Sunday, and also help out other towers with practices

**Hartfield** – ring most Sundays with 6 ringers, usually have 6-7 at practices

**Horsham** – ringing every Sunday (typically 6-8 ringers), including evensong twice per month (aiming for 1 quarter peal each month). Practising every week but numbers are variable – sometimes more than 10, sometimes just 6.

**Itchingfield** – 5-7 ringers for practices, haven’t had to cancel many; ring for services on alternate weeks. Had a new learner but they stopped due to COVID.

**Slaugham** – not managing to ring for all practices or every Sunday; typically 4-5 ringers

**Warnham** – typically have 12 ringers, ringing for all practices and on Sundays

**West Grinstead** – has new heating! Always ring on Sundays, with 4-6 ringers; have just restarted practices after the winter break. Don’t currently have anyone to teach new learners (but wouldn’t choose to teach at this tower if there’s an alternative).

## 11. Discussion: how best to support training and recruitment in the District?

Steph summarised the committee’s thoughts, and the feedback from those who were unable to attend the meeting:

The current format of District practices is probably not the best way to achieve effective support for training (or recruitment) with the resources (volunteer time) that we have available. What could we do better?

- feedback from several attendees at advanced practices: this is their only opportunity to ring something other than simple Doubles methods. Keen to keep this going as a monthly practice. *We need someone to volunteer to take ownership of this and organise it.*
- committee could assist towers to form up into small local “clusters” (2-4 towers) to support one another’s training, practices and service ringing.
- suggestion that larger groups of towers could get together to organise their own joint practices using Monday evenings, e.g. focusing on particular methods.
- suggestion that e.g. 3 consecutive Monday practices at a time could be used to focus on a particular theme (e.g. Novices’ Practice, intro to Plain Hunt, Plain Bob, Stedman Doubles...), with a small group of learners attending all practices. This could be organised by “clusters” with support from the committee to e.g. ask around for helpers.

The following suggestions were made by attendees:

- a) Organise an Association of Ringing Teachers “Module 1” course on teaching bell handling – so that we have more people who can teach new recruits;
- b) Hold a District practice joint with an individual tower’s practice, so that additional people can help that particular tower – this has helped e.g. at Henfield recently;
- c) Organise some e.g. 3 consecutive Monday night practices to focus on one particular theme (e.g. Intro to Plain Hunt, touches of Stedman Doubles, calling call changes), with a cohort of learners, to reinforce learning.

## **12. AOB**

### **12.1 Sussex Young Ringers update**

Marisa Hayes encourages all young ringers to get involved in the SYR events and activities; not just for those interested in competitions, for all under 25 yo! Aiming to resume very shortly with monthly meet ups so if anyone would like to host us, Marisa would be very grateful (Sunday afternoons work well).

Rob and Steph thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and the Cowfold ringers Stella Bianco, Sue Spurling and Angela Cash for providing much-appreciated sandwiches, cakes, tea and coffee.