

Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers AGM

St Mary's Woburn Saturday 17th May 2025 at 5pm

1. President's welcome

Linda Garton opened the meeting at 5pm

2. Minutes and Accounts of the final District meetings held in January 2025 to be signed by the Chairperson or Secretary of each District.

- Bedford District minutes signed by Chairman Alex Nash. Proposed Ann Steward, Seconded Richard Hillson. All in favour from Bedford District.
- Biggleswade District minutes signed by Chairman Sue Silver. Proposed Dean De-Matteis, Seconded Angela Newberry. All in favour from Biggleswade District.
- Luton District minutes signed by Chairman Richard Horne. Proposed Godfrey Foat, Seconded Simon Stranks. All in favour from Luton District.
- The former Bedford District Treasurer Martin Goodwin presented the accounts of the BRF for transfer to the Association Accounts. Proposed by Sarah Ward, Seconded by Philip Kino, All Bedford District members in favour.

Apologies for Absence

Penny Bellis, Chris Williams, Sue Matthews, Mike Matthews, Chris Hartley, Mary Hartley, Karen Humphreys, Nicky Hele, John Hele, Robert Jones, Barbara Woplin, Sue Chandler, Rosemary Buckle, Amanda Harvey-Wade, Sarah Harvey-Wade, John Loveless, Merlin Fox, Pam Ward, Russell Brown, Shaun Somerville, Anthony Smith, Charlotte Smith, Yvonne Humberstone, Vernon Green, Steve Goodenough, Barbara Fraser, Chris Catlin, David Adams, Paul Biscoe.

3. Members who have died since the last AGM

Members stood in silence to remember those who had passed away since the 2024 AGM: Cliff Izzard, Robert Neil Roy, Pat Staite, Brian Toyn, Linda Lazzarini, Randall Perry, Ruth Betts, Raymond Watkins, Bryan Pattison.

4. Minutes of the previous AGM held 18th May 2024 at Bromham

Proposed by Terry Brown, Seconded by Simon Stranks.

Minutes were signed by Linda Garton.

5. Matters Arising for items that are not on the agenda

The President reported on The Ridgman Trophy regional 10-bell competition held at Biggleswade on 8 June 2024. The Bedfordshire Association won the competition. Linda thanked Charlotte Smith and team of helpers at Biggleswade for the excellent organisation.

6. 2024 Annual Accounts

Richard Hillson raised the following point that there was an error in the 2023 annual report. The word 'restricted fund' was omitted from the account heading in the annual accounts of 2024. This will be corrected in the 2025 accounts. Our restricted funds are the Association BRF and the RJ Sharp.

The accounts have been independently examined and sent to the Charity Commission.

Linda Garton, thanked the Treasurer, Sue Silver and Independent Examiner, Trevor Groom, for their work.

Proposed by Terry Brown, Seconded Marc Kasfiner. All in favour.

7. Annual Report

The President thanked Simon Stranks for editing the report.

A paper copy had been sent to each tower and to those members who had requested one. 136 members were content to have access to an on-line copy only. 81 members had requested and received a hard copy.

Amendments to the report will be corrected on the website copy:

- Bedford District report: Jenny Thompson served 42 years as Treasurer 1983-2025
- Bedford District Officers listed were incorrect (from a previous year) and will be changed.
- Arlesey practice time change; now 7pm-8pm.
- 'Cople' was mis-spelt.
- Peal 344. The number is in the wrong column.
- Hyphens are in the wrong places and will be removed. These are all the way through the report.
- The obituary of Randall Perry was unfortunately omitted from the 2024 Annual Report. It will be published in the 2025 report and included on the web site.
- Josh Kelechukwu (Luton District member) was mis-spelt.

Adoption of the Report was proposed Godfry Foat, Seconded Beryl Gardner, All in favour.

8. Proposed Change to the Accounting Year

The Treasurer proposed that the 2025 accounting year will end on 30th November. Subsequent accounting years will run from 1st Dec to 30th November. The accounting year is not stated in the rules and so no change was required.

Discussion ensued as to why the change was necessary. Sue Silver and Linda Garton stated that it was principally to facilitate use of the newly adopted membership software Member Mojo. Subscription reminders are issued automatically at the end of the accounting year (currently December) and the software is insufficiently flexible to alter this to issue reminders earlier. This does not afford sufficient time for subscriptions to be collected and accounted for prior to approval of the accounts by the Trustees and submission to the Independent Examiner in February, resulting in subscription arrears.

It was noted that the rules relating to peal fees would need to be reviewed. Currently, the deadline for collection of current year peal fees is 14 January of the following year.

Linda Garton thanked Sue for her work relating to adoption of the membership system.

Proposed by Marguerite Smith, Seconded Ruth England.

The proposal was carried with 4 abstentions and 5 against

(Number of members present 39)

The following consequent changes to other funds:

- Bell Restoration Fund accounting year to run from 1 Dec to 30 Nov. Proposed Marc Kasfiner, Seconded Dean De-Matteis. All in favour.
- Change the Bell Restoration Fund wording – add “Unless otherwise specified” to allow members to directly make a donation to the Bell Restoration Fund. Proposed Robert Tregillus, Seconded Terry Brown. All in favour.

- The Ronald J Sharp Fund accounting year to run from 1 Dec to 30 Nov. Proposed Terry Brown, Seconded Marguerite Smith. All in favour.

9. Annual Membership Subscriptions for 2026

The Treasurer suggested that no change be made to the 2026 subscriptions.

Subscriptions may need to be reviewed for 2027 to reflect a pending increase in the Central Council Association membership fee.

Proposed by Angela Newberry, Seconded Dean De-Matteis.

The vote was carried with one abstention.

10. Association Action Plan

The President stated that the Action Plan was developed during COVID. It now needs to be reviewed and updated. The new committee will review.

11. Election of Officers and Trustees (Trustees*)

- President*: Linda Garton, Proposed Simon Stranks, Seconded Angela Newberry.
All in favour.
Sue Silver gave a vote of thanks to Linda for her work in the past year.
- Ringing Master*: Angela Blackburn, Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Angela Newberry.
All in favour.
The President gave a vote of thanks to Angela for her work in the past year.
- Secretary* Marc Kasfiner, Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Marguerite Smith.
All in favour.
The President gave a vote of thanks to Sarah Ward who was stepping down.
- Treasurer*: Sue Silver, Proposed Ruth England, Seconded Sarah Ward.
All in favour
- PR and Comms Officer* Terry Brown, Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Sue Silver.
All in favour.
- Bells and Towers Officer*: This post will not be filled this year, Pat Albon has agreed to stand in as an interim measure until the scope of the role is defined and a suitable nominee identified.
- Independent Examiner: Trevor Groom, Proposed Terry Brown, Seconded Marc Kasfiner.
All in favour.
- BRF Committee Chairperson: Stephen Stanford, Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Ann Steward.
All in favour.
- Association BRF Committee Members:
 - Simon Stranks, Proposed Godfrey Foat, Seconded Angela Blackburn.
 - Ian Steward, Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Sarah Ward.
 - Alex Nash, Proposed Martin Goodwin, Seconded Philip Kino.
 - John Loveless, willing to stand, nomination withdrawn by Linda Garton on the basis that the BRF rules limit the Committee to 3 members.
All in favour.
- R J Sharp Fund Committee Members:
 - Simon Stranks: Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Angela Blackburn.
 - John Loveless: Proposed Linda Garton, Seconded Dean De-Matteis.
 - Alex Nash: Proposed Martin Goodwin, Seconded Delroy Grey.
All in favour.

The President thanked the following members who had previously served on the Committee as representatives from the three former Districts: Robert Jones, Martin Goodwin, Barbara Woplin, Nicky Hele, Claire Francis, Clare Wright, Barbara Fraser.

12. Election of New Members

- David Hewison (Steppingley): Proposed John Hele, Seconded Marguerite Smith. All in favour.
- Jasmine Rowland (Sandy). Proposed Steve Akhurst, Seconded Vivienne Johnson. All in favour.
- Josh Kelechukwu (Luton). Proposed Beryl Gardner, Seconded Delroy Grey. All in favour.

13. Future Events

- The full calendar is on the website. Some minor changes / updates to be made this week.
- Ridgman Trophy 10 Bell Competition: 21 June at Boston Stump. Bedfordshire is entering a team.
- Young Ringers Competition will take place in Birmingham on 7 July Bedfordshire is entering a team this year.
- Surprise Major practices have not been well supported, now under review.

14. Any Other Business

- Odell Village Fete 7 June. We have been requested to ring. If anyone can help please let Sarah Ward know.
- The Bishop of St Albans who is a Patron of the Association retires tomorrow, Sunday 18 May. When a new Bishop is installed, the Association will invite him/her to be a patron.
- Beth Overfield asked how many scheduled meetings had been cancelled, Angela Balckburn responded that 3 meetings had been cancelled.
- Bells, Bangers and Beer at Blunham, 26 July, in aid of the Blunham Bells appeal.
- St Pauls Tower Clock and Bells appeal: Stephen Stanford reported that a recent dinner very generously hosted by Charles and Jane Whitbread at Southill Park had raised in excess of £110k and all of the bells have now been sponsored at £10k or £15k. Final quotes, (except one of the three possible main contractors) have been received and are under review with the Church architect. It is hoped that the faculty will be granted and orders placed within the current year. The significant curtailment of the listed places of worship grant VAT scheme in the April budget will negatively impact the appeal by some £125k, possibly more. As a result of this and considerable cost escalation of the tower fabric work, a further £250k will need to be raised. A National Heritage Lottery grant application is being progressed, and is probably the best hope of achieving this. Julian and Lucy Polhill are opening their gardens at Howbury Hall, Renhold, on the afternoon of Sunday 28 June in aid of the appeal. Details are on the web site. It's a rare opportunity to see the gardens. He asked people to attend and support the appeal if possible.

Linda Garton suggested the Association hold a tower open day in support of St Pauls. Stephen said that an open day had originally been considered for April but would probably now be rescheduled for the autumn. The Appeal Committee would welcome support in organising this or indeed other events to support the appeal.

Stephen Stanford said that the re-organisation of the Association structure and membership software seems to have progressed well, but he expressed concern about an apparent lack of focus and support for the actual ringing, which is the Association's main purpose. It is encouraging that the young ringer's meetings, basic bell handling sessions at Biggleswade, and also some elementary method ringing sessions are popular and well supported. However, organisation and support for more advanced

ringing beyond this has not been what it needs to be. It is far more difficult and requires greater effort to organise more advanced ringing, not least because the pool of capable ringers who are able to help those who wish to progress is far more limited. Stephen suggested that the Committee might engage with the more experienced ringers and see if they could contribute more. Without their commitment and support, it would be difficult to advanced ringing / ringing on higher numbers

- Richard Hillson suggested that the Committee should consider how new members are elected. If prospective members complete membership details on Member Mojo as is now required, it needs to be clear to them when and where they are going to be elected, and ideally, they should attend and ring at their election meeting. Membership should not be achieved only by entering details in Member Mojo, although that is the current implication.

Post meeting note – All applications on Member Mojo are screened for eligibility, a proposer and seconder and require election at a meeting and subsequent approval in Member Mojo.

- Vivienne Johnson felt that booking into ringing events in advance was not viable for some people who have other priorities and commitments.

Stephen Stanford said that, unlike years ago when one could turn up at a meeting or practice and pretty well guarantee there would be enough ringers for some reasonable ringing, this was sadly no longer the case. Attendance is often below the critical numbers needed and the only way to ensure ringing will be viable is for organisers to know in advance and ideally publish the list of those helpers and learners attending, and then to cancel if necessary. All ringing generally needs to be organised in the same way as weddings, quarters, and peals to ensure there will be viable bands. With ringers now possibly travelling greater distances across the county to attend Association practices this is even more important to avoid wasted journeys.

Linda Garton requested that ringers make every effort to inform Angela in good time when they plan to attend or support an event and also if their situation changes and they can no longer do so. If an event needs to be cancelled, it is also important that Angela is able to inform those who are signed up for it in good time.

15. Date of the Next Meeting Annual General Meeting

This will be on Saturday 16th May 2026. Time and place to be decided by the Committee. The meeting was closed by the President at 6.40pm.