

Central Council 2013

Once again it was my privilege and pleasure to represent the Guild at the Central Council gathering, this year held in Guildford. The venue of the meeting was the United Reformed Church which, it turns out, lies a few hundred yards from my big sister's house. She doesn't know that I was there as she would have insisted that I call on her. Because I am unable to stay away from home overnight I travelled down early on Monday morning; the journey was largely uneventful and surprisingly rapid. On arrival at the venue I was able to park right outside the door (a Blue Badge is very useful). The facilities offered by the building were surprisingly accommodating and I settled myself right at the front of the meeting space so as not to miss anything.

Central Council meetings are sometimes not very exciting and this one was no exception. Throughout the day there were hardly any outburst of any kind – perhaps because some of the most outspoken members of the Exercise were not present. The start of proceedings was delayed whilst someone was sent to locate the missing minister of the church who was finally run to earth in his office. After opening prayer the meeting got under way, guided by the President Kate Flavell. We were informed that there are 65 Societies with 197 Representative Members, 4 Life Members, 10 Additional Members and 7 Ex-Officio Members and that all subscriptions are up to date.

The first substantive item was an application from the Barrow and District Society to be affiliated. As this is an organisation headed by Barry Peachey there was a request from the floor that a paper ballot be used. This request was decided by a show of hands, and was lost. Following that diversion the Application to Affiliate was accepted by 85 'for' votes and 31 'against'. New Members were welcomed and made to stand up and be identified and then special mention was made of Derek Sibson, who has been a Member for 50 years and has attended 50 meetings of Council, which may well turn out to be an unbeatable record. Apologies for absence were followed by a remembrance of Members lost through death in the past year, including notables Roger Bailey and Howard Eggleston. After the Minutes of the last Meeting were approved, following an amendment caused by someone's inability to spell ICT, we were treated to a brief lecture on behaviour and decorum from the President whose basic message was "be nice to each other".

The Annual Report of the Council was adopted and due thanks recorded to Richard Wallace who had acted as independent examiner. Derek Harbottle then introduced the Accounts which were also adopted. Three Additional Members, Stella Bianco, Roger Booth and Bob Cooles, were voted for and all achieved the necessary majority support. Motions before Council this year were less exciting than in the past and all received approval by show of hands. Briefly they were:

- That the subscription be increased to £30 per representative member as from 1st January 2014. A suggestion that the subscription should in some way reflect the number of members rather than representatives of each society stimulated little interest.
- That the Terms of Reference of the Ringing Trends Committee be amended to make them more relevant.
- That the Terms of Reference of the Compositions Committee be amended so as to encourage more people to learn to compose rather than rely on computers.
- That the Terms of Reference of the Ringing Centres Committee be amended to include other means of learning support. This prompted a brief discussion that such change might cause

confusion with the Education Committee and it was agreed to keep an eye on possibility of a merger at some future time.

- That Decision *the second paragraph of Decision (D)D be amended to remove the sentence "Any such performance not rung in full compliance with these conditions shall not be published in The Ringing World"*. This produced a comment about "counting angels on pinheads" and also a passing reference to the editorial independence of the Ringing World.

The next item was listed in the Agenda simply as "Change Ringing for the Future". In giving an update on the past year's work we were reminded that we often hear people say "why doesn't the Central Council do something"; the key being that the Central Council is its Members and they should all involve themselves in just that. There are apparently three key issues to be addressed:

1. Engagement – at all levels, especially local. The Council should Listen, Inform and Encourage.
2. Communication – talking with ringers and potential ringers; holding regional meetings; using effective channels of communication including social media.
3. Finance – explaining that innovation needs money; society subscriptions should perhaps double and then add a further 50 per cent. This would enable the funding of training and development. Therefore a proper business plan is needed which should include funding for public relations and marketing.

Regional meeting venues suggested included Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, London, Nottingham, Newcastle and Norwich. Points raised during the following debate included the question "how do we measure progress?", "shouldn't we hold meetings such that no-one had to travel more than 50 miles?" and "could we not exploit the Internet by using web casting?". Andrew Wilby suggested that we needed to re-brand the Central Council!

Committee Reports were all adopted with very little comment. It was pleasing to see some fresh faces being elected to Committees. The Publications Committee hope to place some publications on-line soon. The Vice President announced that some changes to the functioning of the Disclosure and Barring Service had recently been announced which appeared to suggest that new CRB Certification would be portable and that some minor offences might not be included on future CRB Certificates; this caused one delegate to explain that he doesn't beat his wife. The Bell Restoration Committee urged Council Members to tell people what they can offer in the way of support. Alan Regan asked Members to report to him directly the details of any people who should be included in the Rolls of Honour which they might spot in churches and churchyards. Stewards of the Dove Database announced that the Reverend Doctor John will stand down next year.

In drawing the proceedings to a close the President announced that the Scottish Association had invited the Central Council to visit in 2017 and that next year's meeting would be held in Kent. It turns out that the Sunday Songs of Praise next year will be held in the church in which I was Baptized, Confirmed and Married. The Secretary announced the attendance figures which showed that 66 Societies were accounted for. In Any Other Business Guy Morton suggested that Members might like to consider using electronic voting in future but this received no support. Matthew Sorrell gave a brief update regarding Christchurch New Zealand and Hilary Aslett asked that a letter of thanks be sent to the "calligrapher who had produced the new Book for the Rolls of Honour"; it was pointed out that the person involved was not a "calligrapher" but an "illuminator", which many Members no doubt found illuminating.