

Proposed rule change for the KCACR, relating to its purpose

To amend the aims of the KCACR to one overarching aim which reads:

'The aim of the Association is to foster ringing in the historic county of Kent by promoting and protecting the interests of ringing and ringers'.

Background to the proposal

There has been a lot of discussion around the country recently about the purpose of local associations. Articles and letters in the 'Ringing World' reflect the concerns that are being raised. This leads to a fundamental question, which is: What is the purpose of the Kent County Association?

The present Association rules list five aims:

- The establishment, maintenance and encouragement of service ringing in the churches in its area
- The recognition of ringers as church workers
- The proper care and use of bells and belfries
- The cultivation of the art of change ringing
- The safety and wellbeing of its Members.

The problem with this list is that it contains a number of different priorities and agenda. It is also open to debate whether the Association is able to fulfil some of these aims, and whether in reality they are appropriate for the Association. This is not to criticise the Association officers and members, but simply to suggest that the aims are too wide-ranging, and they are not all primary aims in themselves but secondary.

So what is the primary purpose of the Association? Surely it is quite simply to foster ringing in the area of the (historic) county of Kent.

Since 98% of the county's rings are in churches, it follows that church services provide a significant requirement and opportunity for purposeful ringing which will be appreciated by the local community. But it is not the only opportunity. Churches and communities are generous in their encouragement of ringing, whether for special occasions or for recreation – such as for visiting ringers. Fostering ringing therefore will include the priority for service ringing, but the primary purpose is even more basic, the development of ringing.

If the primary aim is to foster ringing, it follows also that the care and maintenance of bells is essential, along with the safety and wellbeing of ringers. These follow on from the primary purpose. It is not evident that the KCA has campaigned for the recognition of ringers as church workers, nor is the rationale for making this a primary purpose clear. Responsibility for the relationship between ringers and churches, while essential for the fostering of ringing, lies at the local level rather than at county level.

The KCA is an Association of Change Ringers, yet this is the fourth of the present aims! Fostering ringing will include the encouragement of change ringing, which will need a focus on recruitment, training and education if the KCA is to fulfil this aim. Focusing the aims to one primary purpose enables members and officers to focus

energy and resources on the main reason why the KCA exists and what it can offer and encourage throughout its area, at county, district and local levels.

Phillip Barnes and David Grimwood
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