

THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS - LEWISHAM DISTRICT

Minutes of the Annual District Meeting held at St Martin of Tours, Chelsfield on Saturday 7th October 2023

29 attendees signed the register of attendance, representing eight different towers

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Rupert Cheeseman, Nink Sampson and Ann Saunders (Crayford); Maurice Cook, Andrew Correia, Julie Furlong and Graeme Jefferson (Dartford); Daniel Oates and Peter Oates (Eltham); Margaret Heald (Erith); Graham Long (Greenwich); Lesley Barclay (Horton Kirby); Alison Jones (Sidcup) and Sue Cameron (Unattached)
2. The news of the **death** of Paul Alexander of Cudham was reported by Nick Wilkins on behalf of Megan Smith. A silence was kept in Paul's memory.
3. The **minutes** of the last meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.
4. The Chairman notified the meeting of a proposed Association **rule change** which will remove the need for new members to be proposed, seconded and elected at District meetings. The background to the rule change, which is being proposed by the Acting County Membership Secretary Doug Davis, is as follows:

For some years now we have had an online membership system, and this is the preferred method for managing membership today & in the future. As such, there is no longer a need for new members to be elected at District meetings – I don't believe I've ever heard of anyone not being elected when proposed, and hence as long as someone applying for membership meets the criteria, they should simply become a member.

*The proposed change is to replace Rule 4 (a) with: **Applications for membership may be made through the online membership system or as authorised in Rule 11. Alternatively, a completed application form can be sent directly to the Membership Secretary.***

Debbie Runting and Jim Hardy sought assurance that membership applications would be reviewed individually rather than just automatically "processed". Debra Say provided some additional clarification that under the new rule the existing systems of checks and balances would be retained, including the requirement for any new applications to be approved by a District or Association Officer who must personally witness the applicant ringing a bell down safely.

The Chairman asked the meeting for its general agreement to the proposed rule change, which was given by a show of hands.

5. Applications for three **new members** from Farnborough were received and had previously been assessed for competency by Philippa Rooke. **Oscar Brooks-Wilkins, Sam Cox** and **Julie Cox** were elected unopposed and welcomed to the Association by the Chairman.

6. The 2022-23 **officer reports** had been circulated by email in advance, and printed copies were available at the meeting. They are appended to these minutes.

Liz Morris was pleased to announce that all shares for the 2023-24 120 club had now been sold [applause].

There were no other comments or questions on the reports and they were accepted nem con.

7. A **County Rep update** was provided by Debra Say:
 - a. Further to the discussion on the rule change above, Debra explained that the Association was now operating a new membership database which was more versatile than previous versions, and included the facility for members to be able to access Insurance documents, County Reports and other information more readily. The Chairman asked that all members ensure that they renew their subscriptions online when then become due in January, and to encourage their local members to do the same. Debra added that the new database system also includes the option for members to administer memberships on behalf of others, which was positively received.
 - b. The 2023 Choral Evensong and Ringer’s Remembrance Service will held at Rochester Cathedral on Sunday 19th November at 3.15pm.
 - c. Debra reminded all to ensure that their online Safeguarding training is up to date
 - d. The 2024 inter-District 8-bell striking competition is to be held on Saturday 22nd June in the Canterbury District. The meeting was asked to note that this date has changed from some previous communications to avoid a clash with the National 12-bell Striking Contest.

8. Advance Nominations had been received for the **Election of Officers** & circulated by email. The meeting agreed that, with the ever-increasing ease of communication, the role of a quarterly Newsletter may have run its natural course. Any urgent news is circulated by email or otherwise, and the current monthly email updates are being utilised as a roundup of the more routine news. Despite their extensive efforts, the Newsletter Editors have received little or no content for any Newsletters since the first issue of 2023. The meeting agreed to allow the Newsletter Editor role to lapse temporarily, with the note that it could easily be re-created if required in the future.

There were no further nominations from the floor, so the Chairman asked the meeting to ratify the elections en bloc, which was agreed:

Chairman	David Holdridge
Secretary	Svetlana Sokolova
Ringin Masters	Ruth & Nigel Pointer
Youth Officer	Becca Hardy
Training Officer	Tom Hinks
District Reps	Peter Norwood & Svetlana Sokolova
Membership Secretary	Rupert Cheeseman
120 Club Administrator	Liz Morris

It was noted, in light of the previous discussions around Membership, that it is likely that the role of District Membership Secretary will become redundant in the next year or two as the Association's Membership administration becomes centralised. Rupert has agreed to continue to provide whatever support is necessary until such time arises.

Thanks were expressed to County Rep Debra Say, and to Newsletter Editors Debbie and Alexander Runting for all their work as they retire from their roles.

9. The **120 club draw** was held. The Chairman thanked the organisers for their work, noting that over £500 had been passed to the BRF this year. It was hoped that this year's "profit" would be even higher.

10. Any Other Business

- a. Philippa Rooke announced the launch of a £175,000 Spire Appeal to repair the damaged roof at Chelsfield.
- b. Angela Wilkins said that she had enjoyed the organ playing at the service which preceded the meeting today.
- c. Ian Mills passed on a message he had received from Daniel Oates, a young ringer from Eltham, who thought that more young ringers should be recruited and that young ringers should be encouraged. Various responses from the floor recommended that Daniel contacts the excellent *Kent Young Ringers* group in the first instance.
- d. Angela Wilkins expressed concern over the safety of some towers' lighting, stairs etc. and asked who should ensure that they were safe and suitable for all generations of ringers. Jim Hardy explained that the PCC of each individual church is responsible for administering repairs to their own buildings, and encouraged Angela to bring any specific concerns to their attention in the first instance. It was noted that it would be polite to raise any concerns with the local ringers first. Debra Say noted that each tower *should* have its own risk assessment document (there is a pro forma on the County Website), and that if any matters of concern are raised then they should be recorded in that document to ensure that the incumbent is made aware.
- e. Jim Hardy proposed a vote of thanks to Rev Michael Gentry for conducting an excellent short service before the meeting; to Graham Long for planning the service, preparing the service sheet and playing the organ; and to Philippa Rooke for making all the local arrangements at Chelsfield and for the use of their bells, church, kitchen and meeting rooms.

There being no further business, the Charman declared the meeting closed and the ringers returned to the tower for further ringing.

Appendix: District Officers Reports for 2022-23

Masters' Report

It hardly seems possible that a whole year has flown by already! Since the AGM at Eltham last October, when the last vestiges of the COVID restrictions were still in place, we've somehow managed to make it through a year more or less in one piece!

When you asked us to take on the role of Master, we promised that we'd retain our focus on the core purpose of the District as a training support network, but with an agenda of change on the administrative side. The tower survey we carried out before Christmas gave sobering cause for concern. There are only a handful of towers left who have a regular, "self-sufficient" local band. More and more ringers are having to join forces between towers in order to keep their bells ringing, or to make any progress with their personal ringing goals. The role of the District in keeping those ever-fragmenting towers in contact and part of a "bigger picture" is arguably more important now than it has ever been.

We firmly believe that the monthly District Practices are at the very heart of the role of the District, albeit with various alterations and additions month by month. They are deliberately focused on basic and intermediate method ringing, as that's where we feel we can add the most value. It's been really satisfying to see such strong attendance numbers, and we are extremely grateful to the more experienced ringers who continue to come along and support the practices – you really do make a difference, so thank you. We've tried very hard to make sure that every touch has a specific purpose – bands are usually placed, and whenever possible there's only ever one person "learning" at a time. But please, let us know what you'd like to ring, look it up beforehand and come prepared so that we can give you as much support as we can. The more you help yourself, the more we can help you!

The administrative changes have flowed through quickly, and perhaps more seamlessly than we anticipated! The monthly District Update emails in lieu of the Quarterly Newsletter appear to be being well received, and we thank you for the response we've had to them. The reformatting of the old Quarterly Meetings into *Practice Plus Business Meetings* seems to have become the "normal" very quickly, and attendance and participation at them has been very encouraging. The more social events – the "Bells, Beer and Curry" night, the Country Meeting and the upcoming Christmas Social – so far have been well supported and enjoyed. Maybe we'll try some more adventurous venues next year, and we'll definitely try to get to some of the District towers that we haven't been to in 2023. We did note that the Friday evening practices that we tried were less well attended, so we plan to revert to Saturdays for all the events next year, with a mixture of morning, afternoon and evening start times.

If you like what you've seen so far, then we're very willing to continue for another year. But please do keep the feedback and ideas coming. We can only organise things in the way that we *think* you want us to, unless you tell us otherwise! Thank you for trusting us to run your Lewisham District this year.

Best wishes
Ruth & Nigel

120 Club Administrator's Report

I have now completed my first full year as Administrator. Sales this year (23/24) have now reached 116 shares. Thank you to everyone for your continued support for the 120 Club. Thank you also to Debra Say who on several occasions helped me sell shares at practices and meetings and also sold shares at towers that she visited.

Accounts for 2022-23

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
81 shares @£10	£810.00	Prizes	£540
Unclaimed prizes	£255.00	Council fee	£20
		Expenses	£14.52
TOTAL	£1,065.00	TOTAL	£574.52
		To BRF	£490.48

As indicated last year we have moved on and now pay most of the prize monies into shareholders accounts direct. From my point of view this has been a success, I am happy to receive any feedback from shareholders.

Liz Morris

Training Officer's Report

A significant amount of training work took place in towers across the district ahead of the Coronation, with recruitment through the 'Ring for the King' project proving very successful. Well done to all towers who were able to recruit and train new ringers as part of this initiative. We have not held any training days over the last year, but I hope to restart these in the coming year - any requests for topics please let me know! The Lewisham District Training YouTube channel, created in 2020, has nearly 100 subscribers and the training videos on the channel have accumulated over 5000 views. There is a wide range of ringing training content on the channel, so do please continue to make use of it!

Tom Hinks

Youth Officer's Report

The youth ringers have continued to make good progress this year across the district and have been involved in several Kent youth ringer events. Notably, 6 of our ringers attended the County youth striking competition at Stansted earlier in the year. This is the first time Lewisham has put forward a band for several years. Thanks to several towers this year, we have gained many new youth ringers who are continuing to flourish. Bromley specifically has seen great success in their recruitment drive during 'Ring for The King' with 7 new youth ringers continuing at either Bromley or Beckenham.

No safeguarding matters of concern about behaviour were drawn to my attention during the year.

Becca Hardy

Membership Secretary's Report

We currently have 119 adult, 12 80+ and 15 life members so 146 in total. The worrying thing is that we don't appear to currently have any junior members.

Subs continue to be encouraged to be paid mainly online although the option still remains to be paid in other ways. The majority of people in Lewisham District managed to pay online either by credit card or bank transfer. It is this data that is used for the entries in the handbook as long as it is paid before a cut off date usually in February.

Going forward, the County have changed the provider of the database and the login is now via email with passwords not necessary. It might be worth logging on and having a look at it otherwise a reminder will be sent on or around January 1st about renewing next year. Membership certificates and Handbooks can also be downloaded from there.

It is also now possible to become a member of the KCACR at any time and not just at District Meetings although it will still be nice if new members turn up to at least their first meeting or practice after election. Details are on the county website <https://membermojo.co.uk/kcacr/joinus>

Rupert Cheeseman