

## CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING 2018

The 2018 meeting of the Council was held in warm sunshine at the University of Lancaster, two miles south of the city from which it takes its name. As for the first time in many years no territorial society had offered to act as host the arrangements were made by the Council's Administrative Committee with help from the local ringers. In another break from past practice, the AGM of The Ringing World Limited, as well as the initial part of the Council's Annual Meeting, were held on one day (as it happened, the Sunday before the late May bank holiday) while the remainder of the Council's meeting was conducted on the Monday. The university wasn't the easiest of places to navigate around, with one building tending to look very much like others and with our movements constrained by extensive building works in progress, but we were all made very welcome. Three of our representatives (Helen Perry, Robert Perry and Ian Self) were able to attend.

The Ringing World Board reported a further fall in subscriptions, but for the second year running the Company recorded a surplus in 2017. This, together with the rather larger surplus achieved in 2016, had enabled the Company to reach a healthier financial position than appeared likely in 2016 when multiple annual deficits had eroded reserves more than was desirable. The Board recognised that a decline in subscriptions for the printed version of the journal was likely to continue, but was pleased to report an increase in online subscriptions. Nonetheless, we were told that it remained possible that the paper might switch to fortnightly publication at some point, although its finances currently enabled the Board to be able to give at least a year's notice if any such change were to be implemented. The Ringing World is still dependent upon generous donations from its readers, and without these the Company would very quickly cease to be able to trade.

The main business before the meeting was a proposal to make a radical change to the Council's constitution, which those who advocated it felt would make the Council less bureaucratic, more capable of change, and better able to offer the services and advice which it was felt ringers needed. In brief summary, the Council's Administrative Committee would be abolished, an eight member Executive (comprising the four main officers of the Council and four members elected by the Council at large) would assume all decision-making powers, and the fifteen specialist Committees of the Council would be replaced by five Workgroups which could comprise not just interested members of the Council but other ringers as well. Another alteration proposed was that the three-year period for which representatives have hitherto been elected would be abolished, and affiliated societies would be free to choose their members of the Council for whatever period they thought was most appropriate for them. While some members felt either that the case for so radical a change had not been made or that the Council should pause for further thought before going ahead with these proposals, the overwhelming majority of members present voted in favour of the necessary motions, with only a small number either voting against or abstaining. For the record, one of our representatives voted in favour of the changes while the other two voted against. I am pleased to say that the debate on this issue was, like the rest of the meeting, conducted in a courteous and respectful manner with all points of view being heard without dissent.

The remainder of the business passed with much less incident. We were told that a review of those of the Council's Decisions relating to peal ringing was ongoing – it is possible that this may make some significant changes to the principles which have applied to change ringing and to peals, in some cases for centuries. So it is possible that jump changes may become possible, or that one could ring – say – Plain Bob Minor on the front six of a ring of twelve while ringing Stedman Doubles on the back six as part of a twelve-bell peal, or that the minimum number of changes necessary for the completion of a peal will be standardised at 5000 on all numbers of changing bells. We were also given details of the Ringing Remembers initiative, which seeks to encourage the recruitment of new ringers in remembrance of the 1400 or so who lost their lives in the First World War.

The final change in this meeting of changes is that for the first time since the Council met towards the end of the nineteenth century next year's meeting will no longer be held in the spring. The 2019 meeting will take place in London over the first weekend of September.

If anyone has any questions on this meeting Helen, Ian and I should be very pleased to try to answer them.

Robert Perry