

CENTRAL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT 2021

This year's meetings were held on 4 September, and once again took place by Zoom.

The Council has now settled down to its current format whereby the majority of its work is carried out by workgroups who report to an elected Executive. Our Guild plays its part in this work, with Hayley Young as a member of the Volunteer and Leadership team, Ian Self involved with the Historical and Archive workgroup and Jane McCutchan active in the Public Relations team. Add to that the other workgroups covering topics such as the technical aspects of method definition and extension, composition theory and liaison with university and college ringers and it can be seen that the Council covers a vast range of ringing topics ranging from the commonplace (for example, help with maintenance and insurance) to the extremely abstruse. Reports were received from all these groups and progress was noted on many fronts, even though little practical ringing had been possible at least within the British Isles on account of the pandemic. A visit to the Council's website (cccbr.org.uk) will show the range of tasks being undertaken.

We were told that no steps were actively taking place on proposals to reduce the size of the Council, as had been foreshadowed when the Council underwent a major restructuring exercise in 2019. This was partly a consequence of an inability to arrive at any broad consensus within the Council as to the form which any reduction in numbers might take. While most members did support a reduction in size, no one proposal had yet been identified which was likely to attract majority support. Nonetheless, we were assured that work on this would continue.

One aspect which will undoubtedly be well-remembered in our part of the world is one of the Council's strategic priorities, that the pursuit of method ringing is not the only measure of success for a ringer. There does at long last now seem to be a recognition within the Council that method ringing is not the only valid form of ringing, and for that I am sure most of us will be grateful.

The perils of Zoom became apparent when an attempt to propose an amendment to a motion descended into administrative chaos as a consequence of our IT guru (who had otherwise done a superb job) not fully understanding what had been proposed. However, this was the only hiccup in an otherwise uneventful meeting which concluded at 1.45pm, some three hours after it had commenced.

After a break, the Annual Meeting of The Ringing World Limited took place in the context of a record deficit of £28,000 recorded in 2020. It was also pointed out that the Chairman's Report repeated some technical errors from the previous report, and the directors appeared at times to be uncertain just what to do. Add in a debate about the correctness or otherwise in terms of the Companies Act of an agenda item and it can be guessed that this was not a particularly happy gathering.

Notwithstanding the parlous financial position of the company the Chairman did emphasise the initiatives which the Board were taking both to control costs while increasing income. We were also told of various planned developments and products both with the weekly paper and with BellBoard by which it was hoped to turn the company's financial affairs around. The basic point was that the company was receiving much less in the donations upon which it has for many years relied upon to remain in business, and subscriptions had fallen sharply as readers chose not to renew at a time when little ringing was taking place.

Eventually the accounts were received, and directors were re-elected as appropriate. They live to fight another day.

Next year's meetings will take place next year in a face-to-face format in Nottingham. Mind you, we were told that last year!

Robert J Perry