

Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Association of Church Bell Ringers Charity Number 281431

Dear Tower Correspondent

As you already know, the 2012 AGM will take place

on: Saturday 21st April 2012

at: Maisemore Village Hall (map reference **813213**, post code **GL2 8HB** – but please see below about parking)

commencing at: 3.30 p.m. approx

And in addition to the meeting itself – though not at the same time – there will be:

- Ten towers open for general ringing
- Refreshments at some of those towers
- The Penn and Croome Trophy Striking Competitions - at Quedgeley and Moreton Vallenge
- A short service with an address by the Dean of Gloucester
- A superb tea
- The presentation of all sorts of trophies
- Magnificent Gloucester Branch countryside and villages

Please pass this information on to your band. It is also available on the Association website – www.bellsgandb.org.uk . The detailed timings are below and the meeting Agenda is below that; but as there are a couple of quite tricky decisions to be made at the meeting, if you're going to come, please glance through the Agenda and Notes now.

And as ever, Hugh, as Chairman, promises you a fast and friendly meeting; Hazel, as Ringing Master, promises you friendly and enjoyable ringing; And Philip, as Treasurer, promises you simple answers to all your accounting questions.

We all very much look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes

Steve

Telephone 01452 831197

The Morning Open Towers

09:30 – 10:30 **Longney** (map reference **763124**, post code **GL2 3SL**)

10:00 – 11:00 **Elmore** (map reference **767149**, post code **GL2 3SP**)

10:30 – 11:15 **Hardwicke** (map reference **793124**, post code **GL2 4RP**)

11:00 – 12:00 **Hempsted** (map reference **813170**, post code **GL2 5LW**) ~ *

11.30 – 12.30 **Upton St Leonards** (map reference **862149**, post code **GL4 8AN**) *

12.00 – 13.00 **Brockworth** (map reference **891170**, post code **GL3 4QU**)

13.0 – 14.00 **Barnwood** (map reference **858178**, post code **GL4 3JB**) *

* Toilets available

~ Refreshments available

The Afternoon

The timetable for the afternoon and evening is below. Please note that the service ringing and service is at Maisemore church but the AGM itself and the tea are in Maisemore Village Hall which is a 300 yard, very scenic walk away.

13:15 – 14:30 Service Ringing at **Maisemore** (map reference **814216** post code **GL2 8EY**)
The Association Ringing Master will be in charge and everyone will be welcome.

N.B. Maisemore is a splendid and easy-going ground floor ring of six.

14:30 – 15:15 Service in Maisemore Church
15:30 – 16:30 AGM in Maisemore Village Hall
16:30 – 17:15 Tea in Maisemore Village Hall

Maisemore Parking:

Parking will be at Maisemore Village Hall and/or in *The Steadings Business Centre* – which is next to the church and where toilets will be available.

The Evening Tower

17:30 – 19:15 **Gloucester Cathedral** (map reference **867096** post code **GL1 2LR**)
The Association Ringing Master will once again be in charge and **absolutely everyone** will be welcome.

N.B. Gloucester Cathedral is a magnificent ring of twelve but even the most inexperienced ringer will be able to handle the middle bells without difficulty. The approach to the ringing room and the tower itself are also of exceptional interest and everyone will be able to visit the bell chamber and tower roof. Entry is through the small door below the tower on the South side next to the car park. Parking should be available in the Cathedral Close which you approach by travelling up Westgate Street from the river, entering the pedestrian precinct and then turning left.

AGM Agenda

1. Opening Prayer
2. A Prayer for Members who have died
3. A Welcome from the Gloucester Branch
4. Results of the Striking Competitions
5. Minutes of 2011 AGM
Copies have already been circulated to all Branches and are on the Association website, but a further copy will be available in the hall.
6. Matters Arising not covered by this Agenda
7. 2011 Annual Report and Accounts
8. Election of New Members
9. Ratification of Belfry Elections to Non-resident Life Membership

10. Election of Officers

Nominations Received:

 Ringing Master: Hazel Bridges
 Chairman: Hugh Evans
 Secretary: Steve Coleman
 Treasurer: Philip Twentyman
 Peal Secretary: Mark Davies

All these nominations were made by all twelve Branches.

11. Election of Independent Examiners

The Management Committee recommends the re-election of Charles Woodd and Michelle Harris.

12. Subscriptions for 2013 - The Management Committee recommends that they remain unchanged as follows:

Seniors: £10 of which £7 goes to BRF, £1.50 to General Fund and £1.50 to the Branch

Retired Members: £5 of which £4 goes to BRF, 50p to General Fund and 50p to the Branch

Juniors: £2.50 of which £1.50 goes to BRF, 50p to General Fund and 50p to the Branch.

The subscriptions were raised to these amounts from 1/11/2007.

13. Affiliation Fee 2013

The Management Committee recommends that it remains unchanged at £10 - last raised from 1/1/1994.

14. Tower of the Year Competition

The 2011 AGM decided – unanimously – that a new *Tower of the Year Competition* should be started and the Secretary should draw up a suggested set of rules implementing that decision and circulate them to all Branches. This he did. At the Branch Officers' Meeting two small amendments were made, and so on behalf of the Management Committee the Secretary will propose that the suggested rules – detailed below – be adopted.

15. Proposed Rule Changes

a. Barbara Pettit, Secretary of the Cheltenham Branch, will propose that Rule 17.ii should be amended to read:

“Members who have not paid their subscription by 31st October shall automatically and without notice cease to be members; they may be re-admitted without election at any time on payment of the current annual subscription. If payment is made after 31st October this will apply to their subscription for the following calendar year.”

b. Following the unanimous request of the Branch Officers at their annual meeting, the Secretary will propose on behalf of the Management Committee that Rule 5 be amended to read:

“The Suffragan Bishops of Tewkesbury and Swindon shall be invited to be Vice-Presidents of the Association.”

The effect of this Rule change would be that all the Archdeacons and Deans would no longer be Vice-Presidents.

16. Annual General Meeting Saturday 13 April 2013

The Management Committee recommends that the Tewkesbury Branch's kind invitation to host the AGM on Saturday 13 April 2013 be accepted.

18. Any Other Business

a. Tower affiliation and BRF grants

Under our charitable objectives we can only give BRF grants to affiliated towers. Affiliation was introduced in 1920, so some of our towers have been paying their annual affiliation fee for over 90 years and the great majority have been paying for over 50 years. The total received from affiliation fees in 2011 was £2,530, a figure which has been much the same for many years; and the maths shows that although our total investments are currently £84,000, if we had never introduced the Affiliation Scheme we would now have no investments at all but we would still have had to have paid smaller grants.

But as our rules stand, a non-affiliated tower may make one affiliation payment and immediately be awarded a substantial grant whilst those towers which have been paying for over 50 years – or, indeed, over 90 years – are in no better position. The case of Stanway – **see emails below** – brought this to the Management Committee's attention and they felt that some minimum affiliation period should be required. They were concerned both on the grounds of fairness and of whether it would otherwise be right to continue to collect affiliation fees from those towers who pay regularly. But they know that the members as a whole might take a different view, and Simon Ridley of the Cheltenham Branch will be proposing that, since our aim is to have as many towers ringing as possible, we should award grants to all towers in our area no matter what their affiliation record.

No Rule Change is required for this as all grants are discretionary. But following the debate the Chairman will be asking members to vote on whether they think **no** minimum affiliation period should be insisted upon, or whether they think there *should* be such a period; and if they do think that, what that period should be. The Management Committee will then award grants in accordance with that decision.

And on points of detail, apart from being eligible for a grant and receiving a summary report each year, towers get no other tangible benefit from affiliation. And although Stanway itself is not the central issue here, Philip Twentyman first pointed out in writing to Simon in June 2007 that Stanway was not affiliated, and several reminders have been made since.

b. Any other items of AOB must be notified to the Chairman before the Meeting

19. Closing Prayer

Tower of the Year Competition Suggested Rules

1. Each Branch can only nominate 1 tower.
2. The nomination can be for any reason at all.
3. The method of selecting the nominated tower is entirely a matter for the Branch concerned.
4. Entries must be submitted - by email only - by 31 January after the year in question.
5. The results will be decided by way of a paper ballot vote at the Association Branch Officers' Meeting at the beginning of March.
6. Every Branch Officer and Association Officer present will have one vote but may not vote for a tower in their own Branch.
7. In the event of a tie for any place, the Chairman will have a casting vote but may not – in order to avoid him or her any embarrassment – cast it for a tower in his or her own Branch.

8. In addition to the trophies, every nominated tower will receive a framed illuminated certificate.

9. The entry must consist of one Presentation Statement not more than 500 words long. There is no restriction on photographs or web links - including video links - but equally, there is no guarantee that those voting will actually look at them.

NB The nomination can be for any reason at all. Examples of possible reasons are:

training achievements,
recruitment,
helping other towers,
overcoming difficulties,
creating publicity,
trying out new initiatives,
fund raising,
ensuring good public relations,
providing social support,
ensuring good tower maintenance,
helping the community,
belfry restoration,
ringing activity,
ringing achievement,
struggling on in the face of adversity,
creation of a website,
etc.

And lastly, with the agreement of the towers concerned, all entries will be placed on the Association website after the presentation of awards, so that others may have the benefit of their ideas.

Note to Item 18

Email from Simon Ridley to Malcolm Taylor

Having just agreed with the PCC to affiliate the tower and continue with this longer term it does make me look rather stupid and does the reputation of the G and B no good within the PCC of this group of parishes (who do affiliate all their other towers - Didbrook, Toddington, Stanton). I am assured that the non-affiliation of Stanway was due to serious financial concerns (the church was uninsured for a year at one point). The PCC are prepared to pay back duty to cover unaffiliated years, however because the MC did not consult with me prior to this decision they were unaware of this.

I have to say this does seem a cynical decision which does not appear to relate to supporting ringing nor the restoration of bells in the geographical area the assoc is purported to support, but rather to the pursuit of some other agenda.

One implication of this decision is that were any new rings of bells to be installed and wish for support, they would have to affiliate an empty tower for two years before hand. I trust this means Oakridge will also not be able to apply for a grant and will not receive G and B support for it's project?

I shall raise the matter at the G and B AGM since I do not believe that a decision to withhold financial support from restoration projects on these grounds is something that would be supported by the membership (who actually pay the money in the first place).

Please can you pass my comments onto the MC committee. Do you know who I need to send agenda items for the meeting to?

Email from Steve Coleman to Simon Ridley

Many thanks for your email to Malcolm.

I've spoken to Hugh, as Chairman, and although it's too late for a formal motion to be added to the AGM Agenda, he's completely happy for this to be included in Any Other Business as it is likely to be of interest to the members generally. Also, since I like to ensure the members have detailed advance notice of difficult issues, I'll include your email to Malcolm in the Notes to the Agenda.

The Decision

But just to explain the Management Committee's decision, there wasn't anything "cynical" about it, nor was anyone in "pursuit of another agenda." And if you were wondering if the decision related in some way to yourself, I can assure you that it certainly did not, and I don't suppose anyone has any secret antagonistic feelings towards Stanway either. Indeed, speaking personally, I have the greatest respect and admiration for your restoration work and I imagine the rest of the MC feels the same. But what's certainly true is that the failure of Stanway to affiliate despite anticipating **for over four years** that it would apply for a grant in 2012, did bring an important issue to our attention. Put simply, it was whether churches should be able to pay a last minute £10 in order to be awarded an immediate £5,000. And having carefully considered this, we thought not.

The Reasoning

As regards our reasoning, as you probably know, under our charitable objectives we are only able to award grants to affiliated churches. This was a decision of the membership a great many years ago, and we assume their intention was that only those churches which showed a genuine and lasting commitment to our work should benefit from grants. And I'm pleased to say that the great majority of affiliated churches are in exactly that position. They have paid their affiliation fee punctiliously every year for decades, and they go on paying whether or not they are anticipating any direct benefit either in the near future or at all. They share our purpose, they share our goals and they share our burdens, and they are in a very real sense *affiliated*.

But a church which pays its first affiliation fee just before making a very large grant application is not in that position at all. Stanway, you now tell us, is prepared to pay for a couple of back years if we'll let it apply immediately. Rather than paying just £10 in order to obtain an immediate grant of over £5,000, it is now – under pressure – offering £20. To use your own word, this appears on the surface to be distinctly "cynical". Indeed, it scarcely seems like the kind of commitment and genuine affiliation which our charitable objectives appear to anticipate. We have already had an example of a church affiliating just before a grant application, paying for one year only, and then never paying again; and I really don't think that the members would think that kind of behaviour acceptable.

The Way Forward

So the Management Committee attempted to introduce – in their role as Charity Trustees – a basic guideline for interpreting the affiliation requirement sensibly, and they decided on two years. Of course, all MC decisions are reviewable by the members as a whole, so if they feel differently that's fine, and we'll certainly follow their wishes. At the AGM you can therefore put your view to them and they will decide what elapsed time is appropriate. They may decide on none as you propose, or they may decide on two years. Equally, they may decide on a longer period. They may well feel that since their own churches have paid the fee punctiliously every year for decades, less punctilious churches shouldn't be allowed to slip through on the blind side. For myself, I would agree with that, and I'll personally suggest the period should be five years. But of course, the decision will be entirely for them.

The Details

And on two points of detail, if the period were to remain at two years only and Stanway were to affiliate immediately, I suspect that a grant application could be made well before the funds were needed. And as regards Oakridge, they have indeed been affiliated for two years.