

Birmingham University Society of Change Ringers
Annual General Meeting
Friday 29th January 2010, Edgbaston Old Church

The meeting was opened by Canon Alison Joyce at 7.35pm.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Matthew Franklin, Chris Spencer and Mark Eccleston.

2. Members Present

Alison Joyce, Paul Chandler, Katherine Hazell, Helen Herriot, Adam Slack, Steve Collisson, Will Bosworth, Matthew Hardy, Helen Roberts, Emily Tamhne, James Forster, Elizabeth Marsh, Eric Bumstead, Rebecca Butler, Ali Munro, Georgie Roberts, Alex Stone, Lucy Fawcett, Jenny Hunt, Catt Smith and Matthew Bevan

3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting

The minutes from the previous AGM were proposed for approval by Paul Chandler and seconded by Adam Slack. They were accepted with the following amendments:

- a. The committee positions contested for election should be stated
- b. Line 6 of the Treasurer's Report should state £1,200 not £12,000

4. Treasurer's report

To be appended to these minutes.

Alison Joyce stated that the church bell fund stands at £1,680.34 but the new ropes have not yet been paid for. Elizabeth Marsh noted that this is £200 more than last year because of wedding fees.

5. Master's Report

To be appended to these minutes

6. Election of Officers

The following officers were elected to the following positions without contestation

| Committee Position | Nominee | Proposer | Seconder |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ringling Master | Jenny Hunt | Adam Slack | Helen Herriott |
| Deputy Master | Craig Holloway | Will Bosworth | Adam Slack |
| Treasurer | Georgie Roberts | Adam Slack | Lucy Fawcett |
| Secretary | Lucy Fawcett | Adam Slack | Georgie Roberts |
| Steeple Keeper | Adam Slack | Rebecca Taylor | Eric Bumstead |
| Social Secretary | Alex Stone | Helen Herriott | Paul Chandler |
| Life Members' Secretary | Helen Herriott | Adam Slack | Rebecca Taylor |
| Web Master | Catt Smith | Jenny Hunt | Helen Herriott |

Adam Slack said that he would only be able to hold the position of Steeple-keeper until June. Craig Holloway was proposed by Paul Chandler to be the replacement from Jime to January 2011, seconded by Eric Bumstead. The motion was passed by a vote.

7. The Mayday tour

Rebecca Taylor volunteered to organise the Mayday tour and Bristol was the suggested destination. Monday 3rd May was the agreed date.

8. The summer camping trip

Lucy Fawcett and Jenny Hunt offered to organise the summer camping trip in Lucy's home county of Devon. No date was confirmed but requests were made for it not to be on the weekends of 26th June, 3rd July or 10th July.

9. Proposed changes to the BUSCR year

Adam Slack provided members with potential pros and cons:

Pros: It is hard to get people involved in the committee, first year students are reluctant after only a term and second year students are reluctant because of going into final year. Having the BUSCR year follow the academic year would give first years longer as a society member before committing to being an officer.

Cons: Freshers can't become an officer and final year students would be very reluctant to spend their entire finals year being a committee member.

Will Bosworth said that after much thought there are more cons than pros to changing the AGM date and the problems caused would outweigh the benefits. It is possible to have a committee made entirely of final year students, in which case they would all leave in the summer and there would be no-one to welcome new freshers at the Guild fair or organise the fresher' tour. Also, Will said that the AGM is always linked with the Annual Dinner to allow Life Members to attend. Other university ringing societies also have their committee change-over at the end of January.

Comments made by Mark Eccleston via email are appended to these minutes.

Adam Slack agreed to withdraw his proposal.

Alison Joyce made the point that this topic was well worth discussing and having the views of current members minuted because the subject is likely to reappear in the future.

10. Matters arising from the last minutes

(a) Ropes sent for re-splicing

Elizabeth Marsh questioned the progress of the ropes sent to Tewkesbury for re-splicing. Paul said that the flooding in Tewkesbury had hindered the task. Helen Herriott suggested asking Katie Lane at the Annual Dinner on the next day.

(b) Working party to amend the BUSCR constitution

Will Bosworth apologised for having not done anything towards re-working the constitution but agreed that it does need work as it is very vague. Katherine Hazell said that the Guild are currently re-wording their constitution and Paul Chandler suggested to therefore leave it until this is finished as the BUSCR constitution will probably need to be brought in line with the new Guild version anyway. He recommended leaving this for the next AGM.

(c) State of the Ringing World collection

A delay in paying Ringing World subscription fees has meant two months' worth of copies have not been received. Helen Herriott suggested making up the collection with our own personal copies should we have them, or alternatively requesting free back copies when they are advertised.

Will Bosworth said that he had been told by Mark Eccleston that the Ringing World archive in the Birmingham University main library may be at risk of being thrown away because so many journals are now online. Will urged the new committee to approach the library about this.

(d) Broken hook on the ringing room wall

Adam Slack said he had taken the hook off as it was redundant.

11. Any other business

- Will Bosworth said that the peal board in memory of Reverend Coombes is in progress and he will approach the church for funding. Alison said that she will inform the PCC.
- Adam Slack said that there would need to be a period when the bells are not rung in order to carry out proper repair work. Ideally the bells need to be surveyed and he has spoken to Simon Adams briefly about this - vibration is causing the bolts to fall out and so stays fall off, and the wheel of the 6th keeps falling off. Adam noted that the bells were last re-hung 80 years ago and it is recommended that they are re-hung every 100 years. Adam therefore suggested that this be done soon.
- Paul Chandler mentioned that there is no committee overlap this year and Helen Herriott suggested the old committee holding meetings with the new officers to ensure a successful hand-over of responsibility.
- Alison Joyce enquired as to the risk assessment for events such as the open tower day in September 2008 and whether a sign should be permanently fixed on the

stairs up the tower. A small number of parishioners and other people such as heating engineers occasionally go up the tower. Emily Tamhne said that they should always be accompanied but Steve Collisson noted that the bells are not normally left up. It was decided that a sign indicating the dangers should be arranged.

- Adam Slack said that the trap door on to the roof needs repairing and it was agreed that it was the church's responsibility.
- Alison Joyce wished the new committee luck and thanked the out-going officers for all they had done.

The meeting was closed at 8.17 pm.

Email from Mark Eccleston - 28/01/10

Hello BUSCR

I'm writing as a past member of BUSCR. I am fully aware that I shouldn't have much of a say in the way that BUSCR is currently run. It is a student society, run by students - and that is definitely a good thing! However, I am concerned with the proposed change of moving the BUSCR AGM from its current date in January to one at the start of the academic year (presumably in October). Although I haven't been to Edgbaston much this academic year, I have been a member of the University for nine years and hope you don't mind reading my concerns before the AGM (as I won't be around to voice my concerns tomorrow evening).

I notice that the BUSCR constitution does not currently dictate when the AGM should be (Point 6: "There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the Society at a time to be decided by the Society's Officers, to elect officers for the next year and to consider a report to be submitted by the Ringing Master, a statement of accounts to be submitted by the Treasurer and to discuss any other business"). However, the AGM has traditionally been held in January (nearly always the evening before the Annual Dinner).

These are my thoughts concerning the pros and cons of moving the BUSCR AGM to the start of the academic year. (When I refer to 'position', I am largely referring to the positions of Master, Secretary and Treasurer):

Pros of moving the AGM to October:

- In theory the proposal enables a BUSCR member to hold position in any one of the academic years in which they are studying at Birmingham. Currently a member may feel unable to hold office in their final year/or across years in which they are working in industry.

Cons of moving the AGM to October:

- In reality, the proposal doesn't really increase the opportunity to hold office. If the AGM is held at the start of the academic year then...
 - (a) It would be very difficult for a fresher to hold the position of Master, Secretary or Treasurer without having the three/four months of seeing what's involved in the job which they currently have.
 - (b) It may be difficult for a member to hold a position throughout their final year-although I'm sure many people could do this. I'm thinking about the spring/summer terms when a BUSCR member may be studying for their finals and may not be able to commit to any significant BUSCR responsibilities.
- The start of the academic year is a crucial time. A time when a society needs consistency and leadership. If the AGM is held at the start of the academic year you could, theoretically, end up with your entire committee graduating in the summer the Master, Deputy, Secretary etc could all leave Birmingham by the end of Jure. Who then assumes responsibility for organising the Freshers Fair?

Organising the Freshers Tour? Dealing with the Guild? Organising wedding ringing? Arranging the AGM at the start of term? Running the ringing at the start of term? Organising the Annual Dinner? I know this would, arguably, be an extreme case scenario - but it is, at the very least, a possible scenario. The current January AGM date enables members to hold office throughout the summer months and into the autumn term - surely this greatly helps stability and consistency when dealing with the heaps of organisational things that Adam and Becci (and others) must have done for BUSCR this past year.

- Moving the date of the AGM doesn't necessarily mean that people who would like to be Master will get a shot at it. For instance, there are lots of people who would have liked to hold the position of Master in the past who haven't had the opportunity. When I arrived at University, BUSCR was very strong and throughout my degree there were lots of members who were keen and capable of holding the position of Master. I never had the opportunity because there were many other candidates who wanted to do it. Moving the AGM date to October doesn't solve this issue.

Solution:

Are people concerned that, if they have a year out in industry or similar, they may not have enough opportunities to hold position? If so, what is wrong with a keen and capable member holding position from the current January AGM date until they leave in the summer term (providing they ensure BUSCR is aware of this when they vote for him/her)? I can't believe this situation will arise very often, but if it does then BUSCR can always call an EGM to deal with that situation (the whole society having six months to think of a successor). There is also precedence for members holding office jointly with somebody else – in many instances this is a very healthy thing and something that isn't very often considered.

I personally think that the cons strongly outweigh the pros of moving the AGM to October. The AGM has been held in January for many years. Although that doesn't mean BUSCR shouldn't be frightened of changing things, I think all current members need to be aware of the possible implications of such a big change. It is not simply a case that moving the AGM to October increases opportunity for people to hold positions – it can introduce an awful lot of problems that BUSCR doesn't currently have and members may not be aware of these problems when initially thinking about this proposal. That is the reason I've sent you all this email so you have time to think about these points before tomorrow's AGM.

I'm sure that collectively you will do what you think is best for BUSCR. If that involves moving the date of the AGM to October then that's fine – it should, quite rightly, be the decision of the current members. I just wanted to provide you with an alternative perspective of a past member – it would be interesting to hear whether other members can provide any other pros/cons to add to the list...

Thanks for your time,

Mark