

*The Weekly Journal for
Church Bell Ringers since 1911*

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Editor: Robert Lewis

About ourselves: future of *The Ringing World* by Nigel Orchard, Chairman of the Board and Trustees

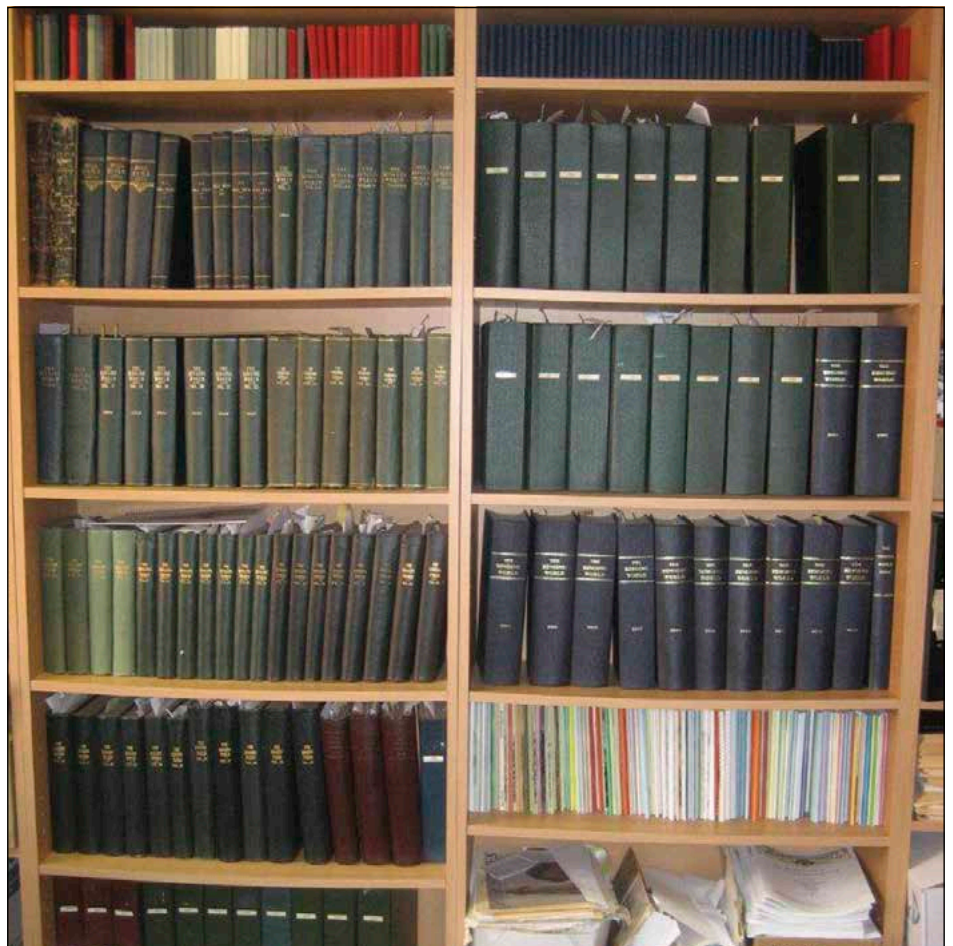
The difficulties facing The Ringing World Ltd and the need to take action to secure its future have been aired through *The Ringing World* and in other discussion forums. The board has been considering a range of options, being clear that “do nothing” is neither prudent nor attractive. Last Saturday, I reported our plans to a meeting of the Administrative Committee of the Central Council.

The challenges

In summary, declining subscriptions to the paper version, low take-up of on-line-only subscriptions, decreasing advertising revenue, decreasing donations, poor merchandise returns and rising costs – despite cost saving measures which still continue – have resulted in significantly worse results in recent years than the board expected. Balanced budgets for the last two years have out-turned as a loss of **£5,000** in 2013 and **£8,000** in 2014.

Current financial position

Our initial budgets for 2015 and 2016 would have resulted in running down to our stated minimum reserves some time in mid 2016. We have changed our reserves minimum after careful recalculation of what is really needed for an orderly shut down without calling on members’ £10 pledges; we have cut costs so that the budget for 2015 shows a loss of £2,500 which we expect will be eliminated by our short term plans which are set out on the next page under the heading ‘Immediate measures’. We had assumed that the CC would fully cover the cost of its supplement (over £2,000 in 2014), but the £500 offered for 2015 does not, so the deficit will be higher; we shall be discussing with the Council how to reduce and more fully defray this cost. These actions are expected to secure the future of *The Ringing World* for at least a couple of years, however this strategy is not sustainable long term as it allows no money for buying new merchandise (except the diary and calendar) this year, renewing the assets



Bound volumes of The Ringing World from 1911 to the present in the boardroom at Andover: testament to a proud history that we hope to take forward – with your help – into the 21st Century

such as our creaking IT system and rebuilding our reserves. Further, it is becoming clear that we shall not be able to rely as heavily as we have done so far on volunteers eg for stand-in editor services and fast response to IT problems; we shall have to generate enough income to pay for these services. Therefore we

need to turn a small budgeted loss this year into an ongoing “profit” on this year’s costs basis of several thousand pounds. The long-standing business model no longer works. We appear not to be fulfilling our role as people would like and want to pay for. On the other hand, the free and increasingly sophisticated



(Founded by John S Goldsmith)
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Editor and Manager: Robert A Lewis
 Mobile: 0797 4914936
 editor@ringingworld.co.uk

Email addresses – editorial & production – please see beneath relevant section headers for letters, peals, quarter peals and *Around & About*. For all other copy submissions please use the Editor's email address as above.

35A High Street, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 1LJ
 Telephone: 01264 366 620 Fax: 01264 360 594

The RW administrative office is normally open:
9.30am - 4.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu and Fri.

The office is closed on Wednesdays

Visitors to the RW office **MUST** telephone and make an appointment well ahead please.

Email addresses – administrative support:
 subs@ringingworld.co.uk (subscriptions)
 notices@ringingworld.co.uk (advertising)
 admin@ringingworld.co.uk (other enquiries)

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The Ringing World Limited

Registered Office:

35A High Street, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 1LJ

Directors:

N R D Orchard (*Chairman*)
 chairman@ringingworld.co.uk
 W A Hibbert, C M Parker, C F Roulstone,
 R A Smith, D N Wallis, R J Wallis

Company Secretary:

Claire F Roulstone, 3 Stocks Farm Cottages,
 The Street, Bramley, Hampshire, RG26 5BP
 companysecretary@ringingworld.co.uk
 Registered in England Co. Number 1722963
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Officers of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

President: Chris Mew

Vice-President: Christopher D O'Mahony

Hon. Treasurer: Andrew Taylor

Hon. Secretary: Mary Bone,

11 Bullfields, Sawbridgeworth, Herts, CM21 9DB
 (01279 726159) secretary@cccbr.org.uk

Hon. Assistant Secretary: Carol Franklin

Website address: www.cccbr.org.uk



RW Chairman Nigel Orchard

services *BellBoard* offers are clearly meeting needs. Another positive is that people continue to make donations (mainly for quarter peals), which, though the annual totals are declining, amounted to nearly £26,000 in 2014.

The wider context

This is not a problem for *RW* in isolation. Print publications everywhere are struggling. The Central Council is making impressive progress in defining its role in the new cultural, demographic and technological circumstances in which we all now operate; we are working closely with it and will co-operate with other relevant bodies as necessary. It may be that the future role of *The Ringing World* and The Ringing World Ltd is as part of an overall package of benefits offered to the Exercise but we suspect that progress on this wider front will be slow and we need to take action now. With a reputed 40,000 ringers and thousands of ringing towers around the world, the Exercise is at present fairly well supported. It has a long history. At the cutting edge people are pushing out the boundaries of methods and compositions. Mini rings are being developed to a high degree of sophistication. At the grass roots, there is continual effort to recruit, train and retain ringers. We must all comply with the changing requirements of the law and maintain working relationships with the clergy in whose decreasing numbers of churches we ring. Bell installations have to be maintained and refurbished. I cannot believe in the context of all of this, that there isn't a role for The Ringing World Ltd to unite, inform and amuse people whilst fulfilling its charitable purpose. Note that I am being careful to distinguish between **The Ringing World Ltd** which is a charity with the object of promoting ringing and **The Ringing World** publication which is currently its main activity devoted to meeting this object.

Immediate measures

The Board held an awayday and formulated plans for a sustainable new business model

– but it will take time to develop this further. In the meantime, the Board has decided:

- **From 1st June this year, for a test period yet to be determined but probably about 9 months, no quarter peal reports will be published without a donation at a specified level (60p per ringer is the likely level)*. They will continue to be published free in *BellBoard*.**
- **From the same date, we shall be requesting donations at a specified level with peal reports, and will use an alternative, shorter format (the quarter peal format) for peals submitted without donations*.**
- **Personal and Association performance analysis services will be made available for a charge via *BellBoard***
- **We will lay our problems openly out to the ringing community and ask it what it wants from The Ringing World Ltd and *The Ringing World*. For this to be useful, we must reach out beyond our 2,800-or-so subscribers and one of the ways suggested has been to add some RW-related questions to the Council's proposed nationwide survey. We shall also have to identify how best to use modern social media for this.**

** Block donations will still be possible and managed through *BellBoard**

We do not know what the extent of support for the above will be nor the possible detrimental effect on our subscription levels; the test period will give us valuable insights into this. The board will closely monitor the reactions to the test period and may need to modify it accordingly.

The way forward – have your say!

These changes will prove controversial ... to say the least ... but we hope that this will stir people to think hard about what they want from The Ringing World Ltd and *The Ringing World* in future and make constructive suggestions. Just asking people what they want often gives a misleading impression so we are deliberately making changes so that you will react. It has to be said that in a very limited number of private conversations and in the wider context already explored, these actions have often been spontaneously suggested.

How to respond

We have set up a dedicated email address rwwfuture@ringingworld.co.uk for your comments and suggestions. Please indicate clearly if your email or letter is NOT to be published. Also tell us if you are an existing or lapsed subscriber – or simply read the *RW* in your tower. We shall select contributions to be published and summarise emerging topics and views as fairly as we can but will make all email contributions available to view via *BellBoard*. Further, the chairman's report to the AGM, previously privileged, will now be subject to questions and answers. May I suggest that all towers should have a subscription to the paper to keep up with this



Ringing World National Youth Contest

'TAKE A LEAD IN THE FUTURE OF RINGING'

The Ringing World is seeking a successor for its Youth Contest Organiser, Colin Parker, who will be moving abroad with his work later this year. The Organiser has traditionally been a member of the RW Board, but this is not necessarily a requirement for the next post holder (although co-option to the Board may be offered).

In any event the successful candidate will:

- liaise closely with the RW Chairman, Editor and Local Contest Organiser (appointed annually for each contest venue) to ensure smooth running of the contest year-to-year and to maintain the long term direction of the event in line with the RW's charitable objectives
- manage and coordinate the Organising Team for each annual contest
- be responsible for the contest budget
- have good organisational skills and a natural rapport with young ringers
- become fully aware of, and implement as appropriate, current best practice in Safeguarding
- display an enthusiasm for developing and enhancing this hugely successful event, which is now in its fifth year.

Although the post is voluntary and unpaid, all reasonable expenses will be met in the execution of duties associated with it.

If you are interested in finding out more about exactly what the job entails, then please contact **Colin Parker** for an informal chat on **0794 731 6107** (or rw NYC@ringingworld.co.uk). We would particularly welcome interest from ringers who have had some prior involvement with the contest either as adult team leaders or as parents of participants.

Applications should be submitted to:

The RWNYC Organising Team,
 c/o The Editor at The Ringing World Office,
 35A High Street, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 1LJ
 or emailed to editor@ringingworld.co.uk
 no later than **Friday, 24th April** please.

Interviews will be scheduled the following week.

discussion? You may also wish to have your own subscription so that you can keep up promptly and you may wish to urge others to subscribe as well?

NIGEL ORCHARD
 Chairman
 (on behalf of the board of
 The Ringing World Ltd)

24th March 2015



**Whitechapel
 Bell Foundry Ltd**

32/34 Whitechapel Road,
 London E1 1DY

Tel. 020 7247 2599 Fax. 020 7375 1979
bells@whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk
<http://www.whitechapelbellfoundry.co.uk>

Editorial

Today (24th March) sees the 15th anniversary of my editorship of *The Ringing World*. It is also the 104th anniversary of the very first edition. There is nobody more committed to this weekly paper publication than its seventh Editor – but we must be realistic about the prospects of keeping the magazine running using the current business model: it is simply not an option open to us. Moreover time is not on our side; we all know that a failure to adapt rapidly enough to changing circumstances usually results in a failure to survive.

My instinct is that the RW Board is absolutely right to take a bold approach to the challenges facing us, rather than just wait for the “orderly shut down” that appears be the inevitable (and not-too-far-distant) consequence of steering the same course. Part of our necessary ‘adaption’ process will be a cultural one – we must start to regard *The Ringing World* as an information brand, rather than simply a weekly printed journal. In truth that journey began some time ago, first with our acquisition and development of peals.co.uk and then with the advent of our *BellBoard* website.

If a successful plan can be pursued then the printed publication may yet remain a core part of the RW ‘information brand’ for years to come – but that will depend largely on you, dear reader, being prepared to pay the price of making it so. If our founder, John Sparkes Goldsmith, were alive today he would surely be urging us to embrace new media technology to advance the essential mission of the newspaper he started 104 years ago this week. Any reliable and sustainable mixed media information service will come at a cost: perfecting a business model that is acceptable to you is the immediate task ahead of us.

First Peal Congratulations

Rebecca J. Harrison, Rosanna M. Wareham,
 Richard J. A. Stevens, Caroline A. Prescott,
 Claire E. Reading, Lucy B. J. Williamson,
 Claire L. Pearson

5,000th Peal Congratulations

Peter C. Randall

| In this issue: | page |
|-----------------------------|------|
| ART Conference 2015 | 300 |
| Letters to the Editor | 302 |
| Book Review | 303 |
| News Review | 304 |
| Peal reports | 305 |
| Quarter Peal reports | 309 |
| CCCBR Rolls of Honour | 314 |
| Obituary – Mike Marshall | 316 |
| Rambling with Clare Balding | 317 |
| Notices | 318 |
| Tail Ends | 319 |
| Thought for the week | 319 |