



# HANDBELL RINGERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

Registered Charity No 298945 England - SC038918 Scotland

## NORTH EAST REGION

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**Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting  
held on Zoom  
on Sunday 29th March 2026 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

John Atkinson (Chair)

Solna Burnham (NE Committee)

Andrew Ford (NE Committee)

Rosalind Rogerson (Broomhill Bells)

Greta Pilgrim (Ryburn Ringers)

Molly Barker (Ecclesfield)

Helen Foley (NE Committee)

Rona Gager (NE Committee)

Eleanor Merson (El's Bells)

Caroline Sutherland (Clifton)

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman, John Atkinson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies received from:

Tom Baker, Kerry Bayliss, Sheena Bayliss, Lynne Dawson, Christine Lazenby, Roger Lazenby, Jane Lynch, Rachel Schoon, Steve Southcoat.

3. Approval of the Minutes for the 2024 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read. Proposed by Andrew Ford and seconded by Rosalind Rogerson, they were unanimously approved as a correct record. The Chair will sign a copy accordingly.

#### 4. Matters arising from the previous Annual General Meeting

Preparations for the upcoming symposium massed ringing rehearsals are still in preparation, to date have approximately 20 participants.

It was noted that the card-reading system has been successfully implemented and is now in active use at rallies.

The committee discussed the establishment of a library for music arrangements intended for one-off performances. There are some challenges to this due to the complexities of copyright law, there was a request of clarification on these laws:

- Public Domain: Members were reminded that music is generally only eligible if it is in the public domain. In the UK, this typically applies 70 years after the composer's death (90 years in the USA). Verification of this status must be documented.
- Licensing: Alternatively, formal permission must be sought from the publisher. It was noted that if a publisher fails to respond after three documented attempts, a moral right to proceed with the performance may be exercised.
- Communication: John is currently drafting an explanatory article on these copyright requirements for the next edition of eNews.

The donated Taylor bells have been successfully returned following an inspection at the Whitechapel Foundry.

#### 5. To receive the report of the Regional Treasurer

John expressed his gratitude to Andrew for his diligent work and continued service as Treasurer. The Treasurer's Report was presented and is attached to these minutes for reference.

John commented on the current valuation of the organisation's assets. He raised concerns regarding the adequacy of insurance coverage, emphasising that local teams must ensure all sets of bells and chimes are insured at their full replacement value to mitigate financial risk.

There were no questions raised for the Treasurer, and the report was accepted by the committee.

#### 6. To adopt the Financial Statement for the year 1st January to 31st December 2025

Solna Burnham proposed and Eleanor Merson seconded the acceptance of the Statement of Affairs; the motion was carried unanimously.

## 7. To receive the report of the Regional Committee 2025-26

Since the last AGM, the committee has met three times and issued several e-newsletters to keep our members informed. It has been a busy year for regional activity, with successful events held at Grassington in May and Summer Ring at Ecclesfield in July. We also enjoyed mini-rallies in Bridlington, Ecclesfield, and Bingley throughout October. The region had representation at a joint regional rally in Alton.

Nationally, some of our members participated in the Residential Ringing Week in Sheffield, and we continue to maintain a strong voice through our representation on the National Executive Committee.

We currently have 200 members in the NE Region and are delighted to welcome a new team: the Harthill Handbell Ringers, from Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

The Northern Bell Orchestra, our regional team, has two significant concerts on the horizon. The first, in Hessle, will be held in memory of Louise Cowton, with all proceeds donated to charity. The second, in Chester, will serve as a special 20th-anniversary celebration.

Looking ahead, upcoming events include the Spring Rally at Grassington, we have two Summer Ring events - Holy Trinity Sheffield and Otley, and the Autumn Rally hosted by the Clifton Handbell Ringers. Nationally, we look forward to the National Skills Day in Moreton-in-Marsh and the International Symposium in Aberdeen.

Finally, we are excited to anticipate two major milestones: the 2027 Jubilee Rally in Harrogate, hosted by the Northern Bell Orchestra, and the 2029 National Rally, which will be hosted here in the North East Region.

*Rona Gager NE Regional Secretary*

John thanked Rona for her work as Regional Secretary over the past year.

## 8. Election of Officers

Officers have indicated their willingness to continue for a further twelve months. In the absence of any other nominations they were duly re-elected.

## 9. Election of Committee Members

An open invitation was made to all members who may be interested in joining the committee or would like to attend a committee meeting as an observer.

The Chairman thanked the NE committee for the work done over the year. All committee members have indicated that they were willing to be re-elected.

The following were duly elected to the committee:

Chairman                      John Atkinson

Treasurer                     Andrew Ford

Secretary                     Rona Gager

Committee Members: Thomas Baker, Solna Burnham, Helen Foley, Christine Lazenby, Jane Lynch, Steve Southcoat.

Sales Manager:                Claire Ford

Young People Co-Ordinator/Safeguarding Officer: Jane Lynch

## 10. Election of Representatives to the NEC

John Atkinson and Christine Lazenby expressed their willingness to continue in their roles as NEC Representatives. In the absence of further nominations, both were duly elected for the forthcoming term.

It was noted that Roger Lazenby also represents the region in his capacity as Life Membership representative. The Chair reminded the committee that all regional members are welcome to attend meetings as observers.

## 11. Election of Examiner of Accounts for the financial year 2023-24

Andrew Ford proposed that David Hepworth should be the Examiner of Accounts for the Region. This was seconded by Solna Burnham and all were in agreement.

## 12. Any other business

Attendees provided updates on their respective teams. Several common challenges and priorities were identified across the region:

- Recruitment and Youth Outreach: A primary focus remains the introduction of handbell ringing into schools to engage younger generations.
- Demographics and Logistics: Concerns were raised regarding aging memberships, the impact of travel distances on participation, and maintaining consistent commitment for performances.

Discussion turned to diversifying audience participation, with suggestions including "sing-along" segments and the use of percussion instruments. To address the broader issue of membership, John announced a proposal to host a webinar specifically focused on recruitment strategies.

*Grassington Review:* Participation levels at the Grassington event were discussed. It was agreed that alternative venues or formats would be considered at future committee meetings.

*AGM Scheduling:* Andrew noted the attendance levels at the current AGM and proposed that the meeting be relocated to the Spring Rally in future years to maximize turnout. This will also be considered by the committee.

The recent article in *The Dalesman* was commended for providing excellent coverage of the Clifton team and raising the public profile of handbell ringing in general.

John thanked all members for their attendance and contributions. He invited any further suggestions or ideas to be forwarded to the committee for consideration.

Meeting closed at 3.20 pm.

NER AGM - RG - 02/04/26