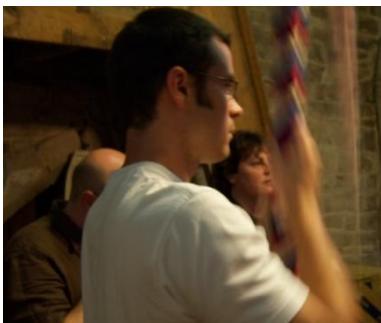




YORKSHIRE ASSOCIATION
OF
CHANGE RINGERS

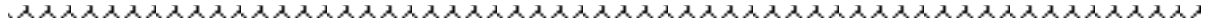
2020 VISION

SHAPING THE FUTURE



IDEAS TO DEVELOP PURPOSE, FOCUS AND STRATEGY

--- RESPONDING TO CHANGE ---



DEVELOPING THE ASSOCIATION

We live in changing times.

Technological advances, a fall in the number of churchgoers, different public attitudes to group activities, and increasing bureaucracy all impact upon bell ringing.

Our Association was founded in 1875 and we can hardly imagine what living in those times was like. Yet, I suspect, we could walk into a tower in 1875 and quickly fit in.

Bell ringing has evolved slowly and it would be too easy to see it as being overtaken by modern times. But bell ringing has always been different, something special, something which brings people together. Our Association needs to respond to our changing world, make the best use of modern technologies and communication, and at the same time preserve our heritage and celebrate our traditions.

As your president, I was challenged to share my thoughts on future developments. If I were to continue for a second term of office, how would I like the Association to be when my successor takes over in four years time? Hence my **2020 VISION**.

Our Association was founded to bring together ringers from different churches, to develop their ringing and to achieve more than they could in isolation. That purpose is still at the core of what we do.

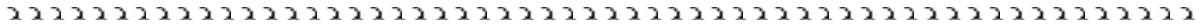


However, over time we have subtly changed our perspective. We used to ignore towers with no members and dismiss them as 'not affiliated'. We were all about people. Now we feel some sort of commitment to silent towers through training, through our bell repair fund, through communication, and through a general sense that it is down to us look after towers on our patch. This must be a good thing yet it shifts the balance of responsibility from churches to the Association and it stretches our resources.

What should our priorities be and how can we respond to future changes?

Andrew Aspland
YACR President

---BRANCHES---



HOW DO WE DIVIDE UP OUR ASSOCIATION?

Since its formation in 1875 the Association has gradually been divided into more and smaller branches. Some of the branches have been formed to incorporate existing smaller societies, some to accommodate groups of ringers already ringing together, and others to facilitate management of the Association. Within that branch structure several individual towers have moved between branches. Our branch structure is seen as geographical; each branch serving towers within its defined area. However, geography rarely played a part in the formation of new branches.

ARE THE NEEDS OF THE ASSOCIATION BEING SERVED BY ITS BRANCH STRUCTURE? DO WE NEED TO REVIEW OUR CURRENT BRANCHES OR LOOK AT A QUITE DIFFERENT STRUCTURE?

1875 The Association is formed with no internal boundaries. The **County of York** was, and remains, the area of operation.

1913 The growing number of members sees the Association now split into four divisions: **Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western**. This enables easier management of an increasing membership and the basic structure and duties of a branch are laid down.

1969 The **Leeds and District** Branch is formed to cover the area of the former Leeds and District Amalgamated Society. Also, the **Cleveland and North Yorkshire** Branch is formed from the Cleveland and North Yorkshire Association.

Associate membership is created to allow all members of merging societies to be members of the YACR.

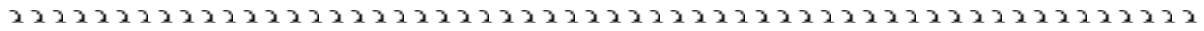
1973 The **Sheffield and District** Society becomes a branch of the Association. The remaining towers of the former Southern Division form the new **Central Branch**.

1976 By now York is isolated in a corner of the Eastern Division. The **York and District** Branch is created to serve the increasing interest in ringing in the area. The **Scarborough and District** Branch is formed to unite towers previously split between the Eastern Division and Cleveland and North Yorkshire Branch.

The York branch later loses many towers to other neighbouring branches.

1996 The **Selby and District** Society had been disbanded in the 1980s. However, a branch roughly based upon the same area is formed by a group who regularly ring together.

--- MEMBERSHIP ---



WHO IS THE ASSOCIATION FOR?

YORKSHIRE: that pretty much defines our area of operation and our resident members live or ring within the historic county.

ASSOCIATION: 'a society of persons joined to promote some object.' Some organisations have *society* or *guild*. Our choice of *association* suggests looser ties.

OF: we use *of* and not *for*. Our members are the Association: the YACR does not stand separately.

CHANGE: this defines the sort of ringing we are about.

RINGERS: people!

That would seem to make membership a straight-forward issue. However, we have various categories of membership:

- ◆ **Qualified** members (64% of our members) need to have demonstrated a certain level of competence to be qualified. They were the historic **Ringing** members of the Association.
- ◆ **Associate** membership (28%) was created in 1969 to accommodate all previous members of our merging societies. Initially, they paid a lower subscription and had no voting rights or certificate.

Older, retired members, used to pay a reduced subscription.

Younger members still do.

- ◆ **Life** members (8% and growing) pay no subscription and are those, qualified or associate, who have been members for a long time! The bar was originally set at 10 years. However, this was financially unsustainable.
- ◆ **Non-resident** members pay a one-off subscription, and have no rights other than being able to ring peals for the Association.
- ◆ **Honorary** membership (0%) was originally opened to non-ringers for a one-off payment. These members were clergy of our Association towers.

DO WE NEED A SIMPLER MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE?

CAN WE SUSTAIN AN INCREASING NUMBER OF LIFE MEMBERS?

CAN WE RE-ENGAGE WITH CLERGY AND THE CHURCH?

--- LOCAL BANDS ---



THE VAST MAJORITY OF RINGING IN YORKSHIRE TAKES PLACE AT TOWER LEVEL

However powerful the Yorkshire Association seeks to be, there is no escaping from the fact that if the Association didn't exist there would still be plenty of well-organised ringing in Yorkshire.

Ringling is about ringers and so about people; and very special people who know the importance of teamwork like no other group. That close-knit bond between ringers can be both our best asset and our worst enemy. Are we inclusive or exclusive?

Exclusive: Is not a positive term despite its connotations of something special. To exclude is to leave out, to not allow in. This is the very antithesis of our bellringing team spirit and yet it can manifest itself in so many ways: ringers who never venture from their home-tower nor use their skills to help others; tower leaders who fail to encourage their learners to engage with the broader world of ringing; attitudes which resist outsiders, whether visiting bands, peal ringers, occasional visitors or even help!

Inclusive: It is an oxymoron that **inclusive** should be **outward-looking**. Yet if ringing is to thrive then it needs to be just that.

So if the Association can have a purpose at tower level then surely it is to foster that inclusive spirit and create opportunities for all ringers to engage with ringing beyond their own tower.

The Association cannot, and should not, attempt to regulate or impose control over local ringing. However, it does need the cooperation of its members in all towers to fulfil its mission in promoting good fellowship amongst ringers.

WHAT STEPS CAN THE ASSOCIATION TAKE TO ENGAGE WITH ITS MEMBERS IN ALL TOWERS TO FULFIL ITS PURPOSE?

---HERITAGE---

WE HAVE AN EXTRAORDINARY HERITAGE OF VINTAGE BELLS.

There are fifteen
Taylor sixes in our
Association

Whitechapel Peals
Sheffield
Knottingley
Pudsey

**Eighteen Gillett and
Johnston peals are
in Yorkshire,
including their last
ever 12.**

Taylor Twelves
York Minster
Leeds Minster
Wakefield Cathedral
Rotherham Minster
Holy Trinity, Ossett
Selby Abbey
Bradford Cathedral
Holy Trinity, Hull
Ripon Cathedral

**Yorkshire has 50
peals of eight made
up entirely of Taylor
True Harmonic
bells.**

**Yorkshire is rich in vintage peals of bells
from our great twentieth century bell
foundries. Only one of them is protected
by listing: Norton, Sheffield, the first
true-harmonic peal of bells.**

Amenity societies, such as Historic England or The Victorian Society, have a strong voice when it comes to faculty applications. However, there is no organisation which speaks up for preserving and maintaining our most treasured peals of bells.

- Should the Yorkshire Association take a lead in promoting its vintage peals of bells?
- Can we be pro-active in maintaining vintage peals of bells, some of which are over a century old?
- Are we in a position to create the heritage of our future by continuing to commission complete peals of bells?
- Can we attract grants towards restoration work by celebrating our vintage bells?
- How can we increase awareness amongst ringers and non-ringers?
- Can we become recognised as a body to be consulted as part of the faculty process?

**Historic Organ Certificates are issued by the
National Pipe Organ Register. Should the YACR
issue Vintage Bell Certificates?**

---HARDWARE---

YACR OBJECT 5: TO OBTAIN THE CO-OPERATION OF CHURCH AUTHORITIES IN THE MAINTENANCE OF BELLS AND RINGING ROOMS IN PROPER CONDITION

Of our five objects (or objectives in modern parlance) object 5 has received less attention than it might. Yet a well-maintained peal of bells rung from a well-appointed ringing room is our basic need.

Whatever the approach of some ringers, we are completely dependent upon churches to provide the means by which we exercise our art.

Our Association owns none of the equipment that we perform on, not even a set of handbells. However, the burden of maintenance tends to rest upon ringers (and thus our members).

Steeple-keepers used to pass on their skills from generation to generation but in many towers that chain has been broken. Whilst bell hanging is a triumph of low-technology, our hi-tech world is not necessarily able to address the needs of ringers in maintaining their bells in good condition.

CAN THE ASSOCIATION RESPOND TO THE NEED FOR TRAINING IN BELL MAINTENANCE?

Churches can play their part through annual maintenance contracts and regular funding for ropes; through faculty procedures, and helping ringers understand insurance and health and safety requirements. However, the

Association provides no guidelines in any of these matters.

HOW CAN THE ASSOCIATION DEVELOP ITS ROLE IN WORKING WITH CHURCHES TO FULFIL OBJECT 5?

Nevertheless, there are towers with bells maintained in superb condition and PCCs who fully recognise their responsibilities towards their bells and ringers. Creating a network of experienced steeple-keepers and PCCs could help improve the situation.

WHAT CAN THE ASSOCIATION DO TO PROMOTE NETWORKING AMONGST THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR HARDWARE?

Bell maintenance can be labour-intensive yet otherwise good value. Bell *restoration* can be costly and yet long-lasting. There is no doubt that training in bell maintenance can save expenditure in the long-term.

--- BELL REPAIR FUND ---

Since the Bell Repair Fund made its first grant of £5 to Hutton Cranswick in 1948 it has continued to offer support to nearly 300 towers and has made grants, at today's value, of more than a quarter of a million pounds.

Clearly there are two strands of operation within the work of the Bell Repair Fund:

- ◆ Distribution of grants
- ◆ Income generation

Recent developments have seen reforms to the distribution of grants: a single board of trustees considers grant applications twice per year and those applications are based upon information provided by the applicants using a standard application form.

We also have a recent bequest which is being used specifically for projects which include the casting or recasting of bells.

Our income is generated through a proportion of annual subscriptions, a proportion of peal fees, collections at meetings, direct giving from Friends and others, profits from the sale of books and clothing, and from legacies. We also receive tax recovered through the Gift Aid scheme.

Collections at meetings often average less than £1 per ringer

All of these income streams focus on raising money from ringers or, in some cases, from PCCs.

How can the BRF raise funds from outside of the church and ringing communities?

We have a membership of around 1700 serving some 300 towers and yet there are only around eighty Friends of the Bell Repair fund.

Only 23% of churches who have received a grant now support the BRF as a friend

If we are able to generate a greater income then the Bell Repair Fund will be able to offer more, and more generous, grants to Yorkshire bell projects.

Church attendance is falling and yet there is growth in Cathedrals and Greater Churches.

Should we focus on our *greater* peals of bells?