

### **Chairman's Report – Paul Scoble**

This time last year I was persuaded to take on just one more year as your Chair, so to those who encouraged me can I just give a one big thank you. It has been a very special year for Marie and I, one we will both remember with a great deal of affection for many years to come.

It all really began back in June at a RRR we attended as a team at Wilcove, such a lovely sunny day, the hall full to capacity and pasty's that ticked off so many boxes in my essential Cornish pasty guide. I find it strange that so many years later I'm still reflecting back to the pandemic, but this was the first event following those uncertain years that I really felt we were turning a corner and moving on. We were able to enjoy the company of others in a packed hall that would have been oversubscribed had it been half as big again, people really were ready to attend events again.

As for events we certainly had some very special ones this year, Remembering Ryan rally at Bagley in September, what a great day that was. A full-on day playing the lovely music left to us by Ryan Price who was so deserving of this long-awaited tribute. The Christmas prelude at Leigh that ignited like a damp sparkler, eventually bursting into life like a Roman candle. A relaxed and light hearted event containing a little bit of everything that left us all feeling much happier.

Finally, the Sou'westers Christmas concert at St Petroc's church Bodmin. All the usual self-doubts when trying to put together such an event, but we need not have worried, it was a huge success played out to a capacity audience. Following the event and way into the New Year I have received excellent reviews from attendees who hadn't realised that handbell ringing existed at such a level, the parting question always being "when will they be back?" So, I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all those within the Sou'westers for their support of this event.

My intention when taking on chairman for this second term was to provide some stability during a difficult and uncertain period and see us come out the other side in reasonably good shape, hopefully I've managed to do that so thank you all for your help and putting up with me for so long.

### **Secretary's Report – Ann Tyack**

A few years ago, I had been heard to have said "Committees aren't for me!" But here we are, one year on from agreeing to be John's Apprentice Secretary and I must admit once I'd got over the initial nerves of "Can I actually take minutes?" I've actually thoroughly enjoyed it... well, not the bits where I've had to stand up and speak in front of a room full of people like now! And unfortunately, I think mine is probably the longest report today. But what I'm trying to say is if I can go on a committee then so can all of you because you don't have to be "A certain type of person".

Anyway, the committee has met 5 times since the last AGM, 3 of these were in person and twice, over the winter, by zoom.

The region has 372 Adult members and 6 Junior members. There are 78 teams registered in our region, this includes 3 teams who have joined us by switching regions from WM to SW. These include Tintinnabulis, Burghill & Tillington who we are pleased to welcome here today from Herefordshire and also St Bartholomew from Stourport on Severn who we welcome to the region and hope to welcome them to a SW event later in the year. We also give a warm welcome to all other new members especially any present here today.

Since the last AGM we have had RRR events in Cornwall & Devon, our very special Remembering Ryan Rally in Somerset, the Christmas Prelude in Dorset and the Sou'wester's concert in Cornwall all of which were very well attended.

6 SW members attended the National Rally in Stirling, Scotland last April and approx. 15 SW members attended the National Residential Ringing Week in Sheffield in August. As well as lots of ringing the

group performed some after dinner light entertainment – a rendition of Widcombe Fair. There were no bells involved but if you've not seen it, I urge you to look back on the "**HRGB SW**" Facebook page. All I'm going to say is our conductor Diane is a master of many talents!

The SW owns a number of sets of handbells that have been donated to the region mainly by past/present members. These are mainly used by Sou'westers, and some are here being rung today but some are also available for loan by members and teams. Unfortunately, one of these sets was returned to us last year with some damage. This is being rectified from Regional funds as it was not covered by the insurance, and this will have a negative effect on next year's accounts.

The Sou'westers met every month during 2023 practicing hard under the baton of our conductors, (I use that term loosely as only one of them last year actually used a baton!) We thank our 3 main conductors, Heather, Fiona & Diane for their hard work during the year, and also thank other members for volunteering to conduct too (I'm not listing other names as I might leave someone out but thank you to all of you).

The Sou'westers were honoured to perform at the Remembering Ryan Rally which also included Beverley conducting. Our practicing culminated in the very successful concert down in Bodmin in December. I'm sure every member of the group will agree with me that, although nervous at performing to such a huge audience, by the end we had all enjoyed playing it. Following this concert we have now in 2024 welcomed some new members who were in the audience that afternoon, so they know what is expected of them!

We are now starting to think about where and when our next Sou'westers concert might be so if you have an idea for a suitable venue please come forward and talk to one of us.

That leads me on to briefly mention events planned for this year: currently 4 RRR, in Devon, Bristol & Cornwall. 2 x 4 in hand workshops led by Jason Walker one north of Bristol and also here in this hall. Christmas Prelude will be in Somerset, and we are still working on a venue for our Christmas Festival. Burghill & Tillington are also planning a rally in November and would welcome anyone who fancies travelling north.

A good number from the region are also attending the National Rally in Derbyshire in April, and booking is still open for UK Bronze in October which is being held in Hampshire so not too far to travel for some from SW.

Looking further ahead we are considering delaying next year's AGM for various logistical reasons, to later in the spring, this would also mean it would be daylight for journey's home which I know some who live further afield would appreciate and it would also hopefully eliminate any issues with snow which was an issue for some today! Look out for information on this in due course on our SW website and in the next Newsletter.

Talking of the Website and earlier I mentioned Facebook. Please let me know if you have any events going on that you would like us to mention or any photos and details of any events that you have played at. We want to get our Facebook page **HRGB SW** filled with what's going on in our region for the rest of the country to see. There are currently approx. 300 followers but I'm sure we can increase this.

Finally, first I'd like to thank the rest of the committee for putting up with me and to thank our outgoing Chair, Paul Scoble for all his hard work during his time as Chair. I'm pleased to say he is going to be continuing on the committee so he will no doubt be found in a kitchen at a rally again soon.

And lastly, I personally have one committee member to whom I owe a huge "Thank you" and I also have one person to complain about. My big thank you goes to John. As I said earlier, 12 months ago I agreed to be his apprentice secretary having never done anything like this before. I was thrown in at the deep end but have been guided by John all the way. There are so many things that I could mention that he

does behind the scenes; including sending out mass emails to all SW members some of which you might think have come from me! I also like to refer to him as our “Events and hall co-ordinator” as he does all the behind -the -scenes co-ordination for all our events including the major task of floor planning. We also all owe John a huge thank you for all his hard work as editor of both Reverberations and our own regional newsletter which brings me on to my complaint... although he produces a lovely magazine for the region twice a year the last newsletter contained far too many photographs of me! And he managed to get me from all angles – front, left side, right side and even my back! I counted 7 pictures in total, and I really think he needs to pick on someone else in the next edition!

### **Treasurer’s Report – Jane Willis**

Firstly, Jane apologised for people having to wait around outside before being let into the hall. 12 noon was the start of our hire and that it was let to others from 9-12. Maybe we should have said 12.15 for others to arrive so that we had time to set up the tables etc first. Jane then read her report as follows:

The finances of the Region continue to be healthy and, thanks mainly to a couple of major events this year, we have a healthy surplus of £1,240 for the year.

The most noticeable entries on your sheet are those for Rallies and Events. The expenditure figure was inflated this year by a group hotel booking for the Sou’westers at their Bodmin concert and this is reflected in the income as they paid individually for their rooms. Overall, the Sou’westers were responsible for bringing in a healthy profit of over £800 from this very successful concert. Many had a long way to travel, and we are grateful to them and to those people who regularly lend bells and other equipment to supplement the Region’s own.

Another very successful event was the Remembering Ryan Rally where we were able donate £425 to the Alzheimer’s Society in Ryan’s memory.

Sales have increased during the year bringing in £144 in commission and interest on our savings account increased to £271.

There was another slight drop in the Regional Rebate due to a further fall in the number of members, but this was offset by the reduced number of newsletters printed and posted and I expect that figure to recover in 2024.

Committee expenses were again controlled by the use of Zoom and, although there was an increase in the Chair’s expenses due to the distances Paul has had to travel to attend the various events in the Region, other items of expenditure remain similar to previous years. Bell insurance premiums remain unchanged.

The value of our assets has increased in 2023 as we were donated a set of handchimes for which we were most grateful. The asset valuations are based on the estimated resale value of the equipment we own and, while one might have expected to see an increase in line with the higher prices from the foundries for new sets, there are so many old sets now on the market that we felt this depressed the prices to an equal extent. The assets were not, therefore, revalued this year.

Thanks again to Phil Jolly, our examiner of accounts – he has indicated that he is willing to continue next year, and I recommend his appointment accordingly.

### **Report of the Regional Representatives to the NEC – Jane Willis**

The NEC held all their meetings during 2023, via Zoom.

At the National AGM Keith Rowland from the SE Region took over the National Chair from Tim Willetts. This heralded a change of leadership style at the NEC meetings. These have all still been via Zoom but there has been much less detailed analysis of our actions and processes and the meetings that previously took many hours are now completed in half a day.

I reported last year that four volunteers had been found to cover various aspects of the Secretary's work, but Keith has now realigned things so that we now have an NEC Secretary in Judy Gees from NE Region (who will stand for election at the National AGM in April), while Sandra Winter remains as Correspondence Secretary, fielding enquiries from both HRGB members and the public.

The NEC decided after much heart searching that Membership Cards will be phased out when current stocks are exhausted. In the interim, people renewing their membership are being asked to request cards only if they need them. This will cut down on postage and unnecessary paper.

The HRGB 'Webinars' (online seminars) continue to be popular and a programme for 2024 has been published in Reverberations. These sessions, which only last about an hour, use the Zoom facility and can be booked online via the HRGB National Website.

It has been agreed to repeat the Team Leader and Conductor weekends that have proved very popular with those attending. These are aimed at improving conducting techniques and leadership skills and are thoroughly recommended for those who have to stand 'out front'!

The National Rally hosting rota continues to be an issue. In 2025 the event will be held in Milton Keynes, hosted by East Anglia Region and for 2026 there will be a one-day event (to be called a National Skills Day) hosted by the South West; this is because the UK will be hosting the International Symposium that year and two major residential events would be beyond us. The following year, 2027 is the HRGB Diamond Jubilee year and the whereabouts for that is now open to doubt because neither the East nor West Midland Regional committees have the necessary support and resources.

Being an NEC Rep is not particularly onerous – there are only four meetings a year, all on Zoom and it is an opportunity to hear how other Regions do things and what issues they have. It is an opportunity to influence decisions on how HRGB is run and which matters are given priority. If anyone is interested in attending as an observer, all the meetings are open to members and, who knows you could become the next SW NEC Rep.