

## The story so far

Kate Flavell received an e-mail (12 May) from X (see Annex) asking why she was constantly asking for bequests for bell restoration when what is need is recruitment and training of ringers. He offered to fund someone full-time for a year to act in the interests of ringing, by implication in the field of training and recruitment. The e-mail was copied to John Harrison, in view of the obvious training connection, and to Robert Lewis. John involved Judith, because of the equally obvious PR connection.

After discussion, Kate sent an acknowledgement (17/5) of his exciting offer and enquired about the amount of money he had in mind, and any ideas of how he would like it used (also in Annex). At Leicester, these three had a meeting with the CC officers (Derek Sibson, Tony Smith and Ian Oram) to discuss the way ahead. The meeting briefly discussed some of the issues, including the balance between spending on training and recruitment, how to ensure that training was available to respond to the results of recruitment, and the accountability requirements that would follow if the money were used to unlock public money (eg Heritage Lottery Fund).

The main conclusion of the meeting was to form a working group that would explore the issues that needed to be addressed, and develop ideas for a practical response. The intention was that the group would meet with the donors as soon as there were some clear ideas about what might be possible, to ensure that our ideas were in line with what they wished to support. In due course, the donors would be given a written proposal.

In addition to John, Judith and Tony a small number of others would be invited. Kate stepped back, since the work was not in her area. Tony would have been the natural convener, but because his recent job change takes him out of the country a lot agreed to take part 'when available'. Derek subsequently agreed to try to cover for any meetings Tony could not manage. It was agreed to form a working group, initially of CC members. Gail Cater, as chairman of the Ringing Centres Committee, and Roger Booth, were agreed at the meeting. A further representative of the Education Committee was discussed after the meeting. The meeting was unclear about who would lead the working group, but subsequent discussions produced a consensus that John Harrison will, as training is the lead topic.

At the meeting, there was some discussion about options, including:

- 1 Whether to 'employ' a person (and if so by what mechanism) or whether to make a contract with someone as a consultant.
- 2 The issues surrounding payment for tutors
- 3 Useful precedents from which to learn, eg Martin Hough in Ireland, paid tutors who have gone to US, courses run for LAs (several) or universities (Keele), some of the more intensive privately run courses (eg FireRing)
- 4 The balance between effort (and funding) needed for training and recruitment

Kate, John and Derek spoke briefly to X and Y after the CC Open Meeting.

From the various contacts, with them, we have gathered the following: They anticipate spending around £20k. (Depending on the calibre of the person involved, that might pay for rather less than a year full time.) They expect something to happen in under 2 years (or by implication they would withdraw the offer). They were initially sceptical that CC would rise to the challenge (we hope we have changed their minds now). They did not express any concern at our suggestion of using the money as seedcorn to unlock larger funding, rather than just paying for someone to do 'recruitment and training' until the money runs out. B&W have been given £60k with a similar purpose, and have not been able to decide how to spend it (it might be possible to work with them on a pilot scheme). X has run successful ringing courses in Birmingham under the auspices of the local authority.

## Annexes

This annex contains two of the many e-mails that passed. There were others but they have been largely superseded by the meeting, and by talking to the donors at Leicester.

### Original E-mail from X to Kate Flavell, 12 May 2006

Kate Flavell – CCBRF

Hi Kate

For a long time you have been appealing for ringers to be more generous and bequeath money to ensure the future health of the exercise. Also for a long time, I (and many people like me) have been deeply concerned about the obvious decline in the number of people learning to ring.

I see the problem as partly of our own making. Our organisation is huge (the figure of 40,000 ringers is often mentioned) and we pursue our hobby on equipment worth around £500million. Many fine people take on voluntary tasks in our guilds and associations and pride themselves that they are doing their bit to keep ringing going, but as a whole, our organisation has no leadership and no effective management to inspire and coordinate their efforts. At a time when we need it most, there is not a single paid post.

Our pastime is culturally and socially important and there are many grants available which reflect this and which make very significant monetary awards when approached correctly. Shouldn't our organisation have a fundraiser? Don't we have a duty to our unique heritage to bring in money wherever possible and then spend it on trying to secure a bright future?

You suggest that bequests should be aimed at bell restoration funds. These are worthy causes for sure, but the greater problem seems to be that there will be nobody to ring! Again, many fine people are individually attempting to do their bit to recruit and train new ringers but it's all voluntary and largely uncoordinated. Surely our large organisation can do better than this and support at least one full-time recruitment and training official?

Y and myself have individually enjoyed several decades of ringing but, try as we might, we can see little point in our ultimately leaving sizeable bequests. We are however prepared to 'put our money where our mouths are' while we are still living and to this end we are prepared to put forward the money to pay the salary of one person for one year to act professionally in the interests of the future of ringing.

We would very much like your views on this idea.

X Copies to: John Harrison, RW Ed - this might ultimately form the basis of a printable item.

### Kate's reply to X, 17 May 2006

X - many thanks indeed for this e-mail. You are making a very exciting offer that I am sure the Council will want to consider most carefully to see how it can be put to best use. It raises a lot of questions and we will have to put in some work to find the answers. We are already putting this in hand.

To help us in our deliberations it would be very useful to know the approximate amount of money you had in mind, and whether you had any particular ideas yourself as to how you would like it used. If you could let me know, this would help our further consideration of this project.

With all best wishes,

Kate

## Draft Response (not sent) from JAH to original e-mail

*This is included as it covers points we discussed, which the working group needs to address*

We are aware of the imbalance between monetary investment in bells and human stock. We have also been aware for some while that money to invest in human stock (skills, culture, etc) is available from major funding bodies, as well as money for capital projects, such as the very successful £3 million Millennium Bells project.

In the CC Education Committee, we have sought to find ways in which (large) amounts of money could be turned into (measurable) increases in the quantity and/or quality of training, but so far, we have not produced any conclusive result. We did not anticipate a private donation, such as you and Y are suggesting.

As you note, training and recruitment are both essential to the future stock of ringers. Recruitment falls within the remit of the CC Public Relations Committee. (You did not copy your message to Judith Rogers, Public Relations Committee chairman, so I have copied our correspondence to her.)

It has often been said that if we could solve the retention problem, there would be no recruitment problem. I firmly believe that good inspirational training is a key to retention, so there is a strong link. I have tried to respond to some of your points below. I'm sorry it is rather long, but the issues are not simple, and I wouldn't want you to think we thought they were.

*> ... as a whole, our organisation has no leadership and no effective management to inspire and coordinate their efforts.*

Ringling doesn't have a hierarchical command structure, like say the Church or a company, it has a federal structure, with autonomy at all levels. Most ringers would rebel against any suggestion to change to a more formal structure. The CC does take the lead where it can, especially in matters where ringers as a whole need representation to the outside world (the heritage bodies, the Church, the Government, etc). Despite limited powers and funds, over its lifetime the CC has made a huge impact in many aspects of ringing, most of which are taken for granted by the mass of ringers. (It's a bit like the Monty Python sketch about 'what did the Romans ever do for us?')

*> At a time when we need it most, there is not a single paid post.*

I think there are three reasons.

- There have so far been enough volunteers to do what was wanted.
- Paid posts could not be afforded.
- There is a strong cultural aversion to payment among ringers.

These apply at all levels - local societies and the CC.

The first two are probably self fulfilling, since organisations tend to set their targets according to what can be achieved. Anyone proposing to do something new is likely to be expected to do it (free). Income is mainly from subscriptions, which tend to be set to cover current expenditure.

The third goes to the heart of the matter. Despite many selfless contributions, mostly of effort, but some times of money, ringers as a whole do not like paying for anything to do with ringing, and expect it all to be free. The flip side is an aversion to using paid services. Everything we use is either free (towers, bells) or unreasonably cheap (books courses) compared with its cost of provision.

*> Shouldn't our organisation have a fundraiser?*

It has many fund raisers, but their scope is limited (a) to raising money for bells and (b) to being voluntary.

Before considering a paid fund raiser, we need to consider two questions: one about purpose and

the other about organisation.

#### Purpose

Fund raising needs a clear target. Those giving need to know what their money is for and how it will be used. Those receiving need to know how they can spend the money to yield the desired results.

We have one target - bell restoration. The people, processes and resources for turning money into better bells are all in place and proven.

You have articulated an equally important target - more/better ringers. We do not currently have the means of turning money into more or better ringers, other than at the margins. An extra £x thousand cannot deliver an extra y competent ringers.

Part of the problem is that little is currently paid for. If it were, then it would be much easier to buy a bit more, with a bit more money. There must be ways to buy better, more effective recruitment and training, but we don't know what they are, and discussion of them runs into the cultural aversion to payment, and the problems of paying someone to do something alongside others who are not being paid (or do you pay them all?)

From our discussions so far, it is clear that we need to do something a bit smarter than just 'throwing money at it'. So the first problem to be cracked (by a paid expert or by the current stakeholders) is how to make the transition to ways of recruiting and training that can absorb extra money and deliver extra output.

#### Organisation

Currently there are fund raisers (voluntary and for hardware) in all the major local associations and in the CC - say a couple of dozen. Where would a paid fund raiser fit in?

The CC is the only place where (s)he could serve the Exercise as a whole, but the CC's role is necessarily limited, being remote from the 'coalface'. Virtually all recruitment and training is done at local level, with the CC producing things like training resources and recruitment leaflets (have you seen the one launched at the RoadShow last year - available on request?) interfacing with the national media, and so on. CC projects might be larger than those of individual associations, but I suspect a smaller fraction of the whole cost.

*> Don't we have a duty to our unique heritage to bring in money wherever possible and then spend it on trying to secure a bright future?*

Indeed we do, and we must seek new ways to do so. Entraining external funds to support recruitment and training is a major opportunity, but before we can tap into the funds, we must work out how to deliver the results when we get them.

*> ... we are prepared to put forward the money to pay the salary of one person for one year to act professionally in the interests of the future of ringing.*

That is an extremely generous offer. My initial reaction is that the most valuable professional input might be someone who can help us to reform the way we think about recruitment and training, as a precursor to major fund raising. There might be a continuing role for a fund raising professional, possibly to initiate and manage umbrella projects of the sort that worked so well for bell restoration. But the key need is to sort out the mechanisms for turning cash into results. With that done, the current army of local and central fund raisers could redirect some of their efforts towards money for investment in ringers as well as in bells.

Even if this were agreed, there would be quite a lot of practical detail to discuss and sort before any appointment could be made, in terms of skills needed, appointment, accountability, etc. The Council meeting is in a couple of weeks, and I will arrange to discuss your proposal with key officers. We can then get back to you with a more specific response. In the mean time, any thoughts you have on my ideas above would be most welcome.

Once again, thank you for a most generous offer. I hope that we will be able to find a way to use it to the benefit of ringing.