

HANDBELL RINGERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

Annual General Meeting—12th April 2025

National Secretary's Report

It has been my pleasure to be the new National Secretary and I have enjoyed the role enormously since I was appointed in April 2024.

I would like to start by thanking my fellow Officers, Keith Rowland, Anthony Hayes and Diane Holt for their help over the last few months. The Regional Secretaries have been very helpful too as have Alan Hartley, Roger Lazenby, Malcolm Wilson and of course, Mr Fix It, John Willis!

We have had some wonderful Regional rallies as well as the 21st International Symposium in Japan last August, as well as a very successful UK Bronze event in October 2024.

Tim Willetts held a conducting seminar in August 2024 and the feedback has been how much our new conductors enjoyed the weekend, and how much they had learned. Many thanks Tim and the associate conductors, Kate Sawallisch and Susie Dingle.

This year we have the National Residential Ringing Week in Sheffield from 4th to 8th August 2025, an event that features UK and International conductors. This is always a fun week, ending in a public concert on the Friday evening. Do try to attend if you can.

Our most exciting news was announced last year at the AGM: the 22nd International Symposium to be held in Aberdeen from 4 to 8th August 2026, hosted by the UK. The theme of the Symposium is "Bridging the World Through Music" and the logo competition was won by Margaret Reid, a copy of her design was published in Reverberations, Autumn/Winter 2024. Martin Winter and his organising team are doing a super job and applications will be opening soon.

We have had an exciting year with some very successful webinars on grant funding, reasons for attending HRGB events and our most recent webinar last month given by Damien Lim of Singapore on how to put on a successful concert. These webinars are well worth attending but if you cannot attend, they can be found on the HRGB website.

John and Jane Willis held a successful sale of our music stock last June, sending out one hundred and sixty two packages of music and raising £3k for HRGB. Thank you and very well done to John and Jane Willis for all those trips to the Post Office.

We have two new appointments to HRGB: Rob Willis as our new Data Controller and Deborah Lowther as the new Reverberations Editor. Thank you Rob and Deborah for taking on these roles.

At the NEC this past year we have been trying to come up with ideas to increase the membership of HRGB. One brilliant idea from the South West Region is to hand out forms at rallies with a printed note of just what your £12 membership fee gets you. Attached to the note is an application form to join HRGB with a request for a cheque or cash to be handed in to the rally organiser. One region used this tactic at a rally last year and gained twenty new members. Bravo!

This past year has been an exciting one in terms of publicity and Malcolm Wilson and his team have been busy promoting HRGB on social media. A new Bluesky account has been opened and there are regular posts online promoting events National and Regionally. Please contact Malcolm if you would like him to publicise a concert or event for you.

HRGB will be celebrating it's Diamond Jubilee in 2027. Roger Lazenby has been collating ideas for this event and if you have any ideas you would like to be considered, please do speak to Roger. The event will be held in all likelihood in the North East, North West or the Midlands Region but planning is in the very early stages as yet.

Reverberations has been published twice, in the Autumn/Winter 2024 and in the Spring/Summer 2025. Our new editor, Deborah Lowther would love to hear from you with your photos and articles.

Finally, the television. Handbell ringers have been on the box at least three times in the past year. Peter Fawcett was on the Antiques Road Trip in August 2024, Martin Winter and two friends were on TV taking part in a Christmas taste testing programme which looked like enormous fun, on Channel 5. And finally, the North East Region's very own Northern Bell Orchestra appeared on Britain's Got Talent on ITV on 29th March 2025.

Well done everyone for all your efforts in raising the profile of HRGB nationally and internationally. All your hard work organising rallies, workshops, symposia, courses, webinars and events is very much appreciated and helps to raise our profile and to increase our membership.

Thank you for making my first year as National Secretary so enjoyable.

Judy Gees

National Secretary

March 2025