

The 2019 Essex Association Dinner

The 65th Annual Dinner of the Essex Association took place on Saturday 19th October 2019 and saw a return to Benton Hall. Ninety four ringers, friends and guests gathered for pre-dinner drinks before the official welcome from the Master, Andrew Kelso. Andrew introduced our guests for the evening, the Revd Paul Watkin, the Association's Chaplain; Alan Regin MBE, Steward of the Central Council's Rolls of Honour; and our newly elected Life Vice Presidents Mary Bone and Yvonne Towler, and newly elected Life Member Clive Stephenson. Most notable at this year's dinner was a table of Essex Young Eagles, the Association's young ringers group.



Dinner guests

Dinner ensued and drinks flowed, as did the conversations and laughter. New and old friendships reignited where ringing ability was irrelevant. Friendship was very much the theme for the evening.

In his summary of the year, the Master highlighted the achievements of the Essex Young Eagles who were placed 3rd in SEECON, and 7th out of 24 in the National Youth Competition in Liverpool. Their achievements met with enthusiastic applause, and as the Master said "In the Essex Young Eagles will be a future master, or secretary,

or public relations officer, or regular and dedicated Sunday Service ringer – all of equal importance to the exercise".

Although peal ringing had declined this year all was not lost. The benefits of peal ringing; the sense of satisfaction and bettering our own ringing, is not just for the elite. The Master pledged to help anyone to ring a peal, whether their first, or for improving their own skill.

In his early years the Master changed friendship allegiances on a regular basis but has found through ringing that friendships were enduring and even though there may be concentration in the tower, the camaraderie is maintained through the social activities that bell ringing provides.

In proposing a toast to the Church, the Master proffered that our closest friend is the church, providing a place to practise our exercise, pastoral support, protection and our moral backbone.



Rev Paul Watkin

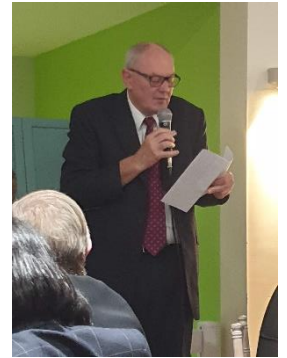
In reply, Rev Paul Watkin echoed those sentiments adding that the sign of the life within the church is outwardly facing. If the outside of a church looks and sounds inviting then the call to worship is greater, whether there be a clock that tells the right time (at least twice a day), a flag or the sound of the bells. He added that the sound of bells transcends language, tradition (whether high or low church or somewhere in between), denominations, age,



Andrew Kelso, Master

gender and so on. Rev Paul called us to celebrate all that we do to bring the worshipping life of faith.

Alan Regin, MBE, in proposing his toast to the Association, told of great Essex ringers of the past and his trips abroad, emphasising the experience of great camaraderie and getting to visit many special places. Alan provided an outline of his work with the Rolls of Honour and highlighted two Essex ringers who had died during the Great War: Major George Bernard Ward from Foxearth and Driver Harry Phillip Saffell of Leytonstone both of whom are commemorated on the Association's memorial in Chelmsford Cathedral. Alan was pleased to hear of plans to update the memorial to include the names of other ringers that had subsequently been found. He paid tribute to Ian Culham, a serving Army Officer, who had arranged many peals to remember the Essex ringers. Alan praised the Ringing Remembers campaign that sprung from an idea of his to replace the 1,400 ringers that were known (at that time) to have died and the work that was led by Essex ringers in recruiting well over that target.



Alan Regin, MBE

Alan went on to praise the work of the Association in supporting bell restoration work, the Essex Young Eagles - the future of our exercise led by Christina Brewster, and the recruitment and training through the Essex Ringing Course and ART accredited teachers.



Mary Bone, LVP



Yvonne Towler, LVP



Clive Stephenson, LM

Our newly elected Life Vice Presidents and Life Member were presented with their certificates and our guests were duly toasted and thanked for their friendship and company.

The evening continued with friendships sustained. Our thanks to Andrew Brewster and the Social Committee for arranging another great evening.

Vicki Chapman