

## ART a quarter of the way through the 21st century!

### Financial performance

Another year of ART and I am really pleased to report that at the recent Away Day for Trustees and ART Management Committee, our Treasurer expressed an opinion on the financial outcome for this year that was dressed in black.

For most of you this will signal that the expected operating difference between income and expenditure was reported as being most likely a positive number with no red fonts visible! After a few years of negative budgets whilst we invested in IT we have come to the point, once again, where an operating surplus can be expected.

This is excellent news and has come about because we took some critical decisions a year or so ago to increase membership subscriptions and day course fees, whilst keeping a close eye on expenditure. The raising of the subscriptions, in particular, has been a long time coming in ART. As money is tight across all activities at the moment and is likely to remain so for some time to come in the UK at least, we need to maintain our core income in line with our increasing costs. This means that in the future we shall have to take full account of the inflation in our main areas of supply, for example printing and postage costs, and in our main areas of income, such as membership subscriptions and day course fees.

Your contributions over the past year have been a really important component in our income. I hope that you will continue to contribute so generously, as you have done for a number of years.

### SmART Ringer Development

We shall shortly be confirming the budget for 2026 and expect to post a small but significant surplus of around £2400. I should point out that in the past few years we have had a 'below the line' extra expense, treated as an investment from our accumulated surpluses in previous years and outside operating calculations, that has added expenditure to our overall yearly outturn. For the current financial year, 2025, this was around £7000. I am happy to report that this investment has now run its course and we will not have this line in our accounts during 2026.

You will remember, I am sure, that this investment was to cover the costs of developing the replacement for our SmART Ringer system (SR).

I know I am tempting fate a little, but I want to let you know that we expect to 'fire up' the replacement system in the new year. Many people have contributed a huge amount to this project across many of our systems: the new app itself; the web interface for normal users; the development of the Moodle to take the load away from the new SR app, and to provide a substantial contribution to our advice and



guidance to ART Members and to the wider ringing public. We have also introduced MemberMojo, which has made a huge difference to the human costs of processing our members subscriptions.

At the same time as all of this we have had many attacks on our IT systems from the usual suspects across the world. Some of the team developing the SR system have had to also fight off these attacks, including the re-building of the [www.bellringing.org](http://www.bellringing.org) website and dealing with our shop systems to keep them up and running. Some recent changes in our systems to tighten access methods and housekeeping puts us, I hope, in an excellent position for next year.

In the new year, following the successful launch of the new SmART Ringer and associated systems, I shall communicate with you again and there I shall name names, so that you can see who has worked so hard for ART over many years.

## Day course delivery in 2025

We are continuing to run a strong course portfolio with five more to run before the end of this year and a further 10 already open for 2026. These are a mix of M1 and M2 courses with the balance in favour of the M1 course. This is good position to be in, but we always need more courses coming onto the books, enabling ART to deliver relevant and timely training and development for bellringers across the world.

## University Recruitment Package

The Universities Recruitment Package is running again this year. Supported financially by Abel Sim, this has attracted applications from a number of universities. We are currently seeking some additional support for this venture as part of our offer to the universities is essentially a free ART course. This means no income for ART but the usual expenses in money and time. We are especially pleased that some of the universities being supported this come from societies that have only just revived their activities, increasing the pool of universities with active bellringing societies.

## Review of course packs

Last year I reported the following, taken from my report to you,

***‘We also received indications that in the full year 2025 this would move further to a small but sustainable surplus, providing investment possibilities once the figures are confirmed’.***

We shall report a small but sustainable surplus for 2025 as I mentioned above but we must also plan to keep a close eye on expenditure and to trim costs where we can. As part of our budget discussions at the Away Day on November 23rd 2025 we discussed the costs of course packs and the acceptability of continuing to print and supply a reasonably large amount of paper in the form of worksheets and course content.

We are looking closely at this and will be making some changes to the position to both reduce costs but also to reflect the continuing concerns members and others rightly have about the



environment. We do have, of course, all of the materials we use in courses in the form of documents and PDFs. We are looking at ways in which we do not have to print all of this and post it out. Discussions are on-going as we look at the budget figures but if you have any comments about this I would be delighted to hear them.

## Hello and goodbye

Last year I mentioned that Denise Tremain was retiring and that we were in the process of appointing a replacement. I am pleased to announce (as you are probably already aware) that we appointed Claire Penny, one of our Tutors in the UK, to the post. Claire has financial experience and has taken over a number of activities to do with the shop financials and the membership subscriptions that were previously performed by volunteers. This serves to bring into ART's staff base a number of key activities that are essential to ART and its operation.

I will be stepping down as Chair at the 2026 AGM and I am delighted to report that Neil Jones has agreed to take over.

Neil learned to ring before university and has been an active ringer ever since. After graduating, he returned to Kent, worked in retail, then trained as a primary school teacher, spending most of his career in Kent schools. Alongside teaching, he joined the Rochester Cathedral band, later becoming Tower Captain, and also served as Ringing Master and Chairman of the Rochester District.

Although family life reduced his ringing time for a while, he remained committed to the cathedral band and later became more active locally. Neil took early retirement in 2022 and was elected Chairman of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers the same year.

Passionate about teaching ringing, he has trained new bands, supported the Kent Young Ringers, and gained ART accreditation (M1 and M2F). He has helped raise ART's profile within the KCACR and recently became an ART trustee. Neil is also a member of the Central Council and the ASCY and is honoured to be standing as ART Chairman at the March AGM.

## In conclusion

Thank you for your support which has enabled ART to develop a strong, robust and sustainable future. I look forward to seeing some of you at our Conference in Loughborough on 7-8 March 2026.

If you have any comments or questions do get in touch with me and I will do my best to answer or point you in the right direction. Thanks again for your outstanding support over the year and do have a restful and happy festive period over Christmas and the New Year.

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