

A butterfly with brown and orange wings is perched on a white daisy flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of similar flowers under a warm, golden light. The text 'Broken Rites' is written in a cursive, light-colored font in the upper center, with a small butterfly icon to its right.

Broken  
Rites

# Annual Report 2015-16

Working since 1983 as an interdenominational self-help and support group for separated and divorced spouses of clergy and ministers

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# Acting Chairman's Report – Sue Atack

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IT is with very mixed feelings that I sit down to write what will be my last report as Chairman of Broken Rites. It has been an honour and privilege to serve as Chairman over these past three years and before that as Secretary for four years. When I took on the role of Chairman three years ago, as I have said before, I was not sure whether Broken Rites had a future in its existing form. Over these three years the Committee, together with the membership, have discussed and explored whether we are still relevant and needed and the response to this was a resounding 'yes'! However the focus of the help and support needed by clergy spouses/ partners whose marriage/partnership are in crisis has changed from that identified 33 years ago when Broken Rites was formed. Many more clergy spouses/partners are now in employment and have an independent income and social/support

network. This means that the social network of local meetings that has been a life line in the past is not as important to many of our new enquirers. However the initial help and information provided by us at the time of crisis is still vital to many of those coming to us for help, as is being able to communicate with others who have experienced a similar crisis – although this now sometimes takes place via our Facebook pages rather than in local social groups. Although the number of enquiries we receive from those looking for our help remains fairly constant, as has been said before the number of those joining Broken Rites continues to decrease. Subsequently our total membership continues to shrink and the number of those from whom we recruit our Links, Area Representatives and Elected and Co-opted Committee members is smaller. This continues to be one of our biggest challenges and we need

to continue to explore different ways of engaging with new members especially those who live in areas where there is no active social group. The committee have agreed to create a new co-opted role of Social Media Co-ordinator, see election and co-option form for details. We hope this role will help Broken Rites to explore the opportunities and potential that the social media now brings and encourage, those for who social media is an integral part of their lives, to engage with us.

During the second half of 2015 the Committee spent time reviewing the role of our Associate Members. The number of associate members has been in decline for probably the last 20 years and we needed to take some action if the role was to continue. As stated in the last edition of Rite Lines we have created a leaflet titled '*Did you know that...?*' specifically aimed at recruiting new Associate Members and a copy

of this is enclosed with this Annual Report. We are asking all members to endeavour to recruit a minimum of one new Associate Member during 2016. Remember Associate Members have the same voting rights at the AGM as Members and we would welcome active involvement from them, however their prayers and financial support are equally welcomed. One of our longstanding active associate members, Dilys Stone, has agreed to liaise with enquiries from any new potential associate members and can be contacted on [associates@brokenrites.org](mailto:associates@brokenrites.org).

A general flyer has also been created that is mainly designed to accompany the Help and Information Pack sent out to initial enquirers. This is headed "*Broken Rites*", carries the strapline "*Here for you, there for others*" on the front page, and is designed to give someone a very concise overview of what Broken Rites is. It does not and is not intended to replace the tri-fold leaflet. The Committee felt that as the Help and Information Pack contains lots of detailed information it

would be helpful for new enquirers to be able to see at a glance what help and support Broken Rites can provide. The two leaflets are printed in the Annual Report and we hope that you will extract them and be able to use them.

Both these leaflets are designed to be e-mailed as attachments but can also be printed out in A5 format as and when required. Copies of the general flyer were given out at the Bishop's Visitor AGM last November and feedback from them was that they thought this would be useful to them in their roles.

Lastly we have created a simple 'family tree' diagram to show the structure of Broken Rites. We hope this will be helpful to new and existing members and others in outlining the various roles within our organisation. A copy of this is printed in the annual report for your information.

All of the above and much more could not have been achieved without the hard work and dedication of your Committee. I feel proud of what the Committee has achieved over the years

and especially the last few years under my Chairmanship. Chairing committee meetings can sometimes be a challenge as we all have views and opinions we want to express. I have very much enjoyed working alongside my fellow Committee members and thank them all for their support and encouragement. I will miss the laughter and smiles we all enjoy during our meetings but feel that it is time for me to move on. Thank you all for your friendship and I will continue to support Broken Rites and show my face from time to time at future AGMs.

Remember that the date and venue for the 2017 AGM is already confirmed as being held in Edinburgh at the Kirk of the Canongate, on the Royal Mile, on Saturday 29th April 2017. More information about this will be in Rite Lines and many of the Scottish members are happy to provide overnight accommodation. So please put this date in your diaries and enjoy a visit to the beautiful city of Edinburgh.

**Sue Atack**

# Rt Hon Frank Field, MP President

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I AM so pleased to be able to report on another year of Broken Rites' success and development. During 2015 the Committee have worked hard in revising and updating the Help and Information Pack. The 'Children, Separation and Divorce' section have been totally rewritten and the pages dealing with 'Legal Help and Information' updated and enlarged.

I am confident that this Pack will be very well received and valued by those seeking help and information at the time of their marriage/partnership crisis.

I was also pleased to learn that you have distributed this revised Pack to all the Bishop's Visitors and other Senior Church Leaders and trust that they will use this Pack and the excellent information it contains, as and when appropriate.

It is good that there is continuing liaison with the Bishop's Visitors through

the good offices of Bishop Alistair and I hope this continues to grow and develop.

The launch of the 'secret' Face Book group for members is timely as, whether we like it or not, communicating using the social media is with us and has become the normal way of communicating for many.

It is good that some members are already using this facility and can express their feelings and ask questions and know that there is a network of other members who can affirm and support them. Broken Rites will have to continue to develop ways of engaging with younger clergy spouses/ partners using the social media if you are to recruit new members.

Broken Rites has established good relationships with the Church Commissioners and supported them in the review of the Value Linked Loan. I sincerely hope this review brings more

consistency in the way these loans are granted and administered and I look forward to seeing the final outcome of this process.

Your Committee has been looking at the role and purpose of the Associate Member and the creation of the 'Did you know?' flyer is an excellent development in seeking to grow and widen this role.

This flyer has been designed to encourage the friends and acquaintances of members and church communities to find out more about 'Broken Rites' and how they might provide help and support.

It is important that the whole membership becomes involved in the process to recruit new Associate Members and I wish you every success in this venture.

I hope to join you at your forthcoming AGM on the 16th April.

# Website Editor, Enquiries co-ordinator's report and Facebook report

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## **Website Editor's report**

2015 has been a relatively quiet year for the web editor. There have been no major changes to the website this year. Items have been updated or added as and when necessary. Do please continue to send me anything which might be of interest to members and also to those who may be looking at the website for the first time. Photos are always welcome as they brighten up the text.

For those of you who are interested in statistics and especially for those of you who wondered why we had so much traffic on our website I have to report that now that our website statistics exclude visits by robots and other automated systems the frequency of visits to the website has fallen to an average of 12

each day, with an average of two pages being looked at on each visit.

## **Facebook Group report**

The secret Facebook group was created shortly before the AGM in 2015. It now has 34 members and is proving to be a valuable addition to the support that we are able to offer. Members must belong to Broken Rites and be invited to join the group by someone who is a member of the Facebook group.

No-one else has access to the page or what is written there. It is a much valued safe space where difficult, painful or confused emotions can be expressed in the knowledge that others will understand and be supportive. As one member said "it is a good place to

go at two in the morning when you are feeling overwhelmed by everything". If you like Facebook, do join us. You can do so through your link or rep or by sending in a request through the contact page on the website.

## **Enquiries co-ordinator's report**

As in previous years, the majority of enquiries have come through the website. This year there were 32 in total. Two thirds (twenty) of these were from separated or separating clergy spouses, including one husband of a clergy wife. Whilst each person's situation is unique, one recurring theme this year has been that of emotional abuse within marriage. Those of you who have experienced

this will know how difficult it is, firstly to recognise what is happening, then to stop blaming oneself and finally to take steps to change the situation. The situation is made even more complicated because of the fear that we will not be believed when we do find the courage to talk about what we have experienced.

Of the remaining twelve enquiries, four were straightforward requests for information, two to assist in the update of Diocesan handbooks, one from a newly appointed Bishop's visitor and one from an academic undertaking research on violence in clergy marriages. Some were more complicated. Another Bishop's Visitor was looking for information about provision for a couple separating after retirement. The debate about the nature of Christian marriage led to a number of enquiries. During the year we received two requests for someone to speak on radio programmes.

Despite members being willing to do so at short notice neither was needed as the focus was not on marital breakdown but the theology of marriage. We also

heard from the ex-wife of a gay priest incensed about the church's attitude to gay marriage.

The final four enquiries do not fit into any category. There was an enquiry from abroad for help in pursuing a vocation to the priesthood and a clergyman who was wanting support for himself following a separation. The last two enquiries were really positive. One was from a wife who separated ten years ago and wanted to offer to help us and the other was seeking support to nominate someone for an award.

As in previous years I am most grateful to area reps and local links who have always been willing to follow up referrals and make and maintain contact with our enquirers.

**Margaret Wilkinson**

**As always a reminder that *Rite Lines*, our thrice yearly Newsletter, is only as good as the items sent in by its members. Please continue to send in news, items of interest, ideas, photographs, meetings, even experiences which may help others.**

## 'Secret Facebook Group' – facts and joining information

YOU WILL of course need to already to be a Facebook member to join! Opening a Facebook account is easy, but we can help.

All postings can only be viewed by those within the Group – they are NOT visible on the general Facebook pages, or your own Timeline, so postings can be made in the confidence that they will only be read by other Broken Rites' members.

If you would like to join the Group please contact your Area Rep who will help you join or put you in touch with someone else who can.

# Financial Report – 2016

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**M**EMBERS will be aware that the mainstay of our annual income is from the subscriptions paid by you. The other main income source is the bi-annual senior church leaders appeal. However both of these income sources do not currently cover the total of our outgoings and have not done so for several years.

In 2015 we had 140 members who should have brought in a total income from subscriptions of around £2,000. At the end of November 2015, 67 members (48%) still had their subscriptions renewal outstanding.

However upon receiving their renewal letters/reminders another 16 members (11%) paid their subscriptions, giving us a year-end total of 63% of paid subscriptions. This means that 37% of subscriptions are still outstanding for 2015 amounting to approximately £750.

We do appreciate that many just forget to send off their cheques and the subscription renewal notice that is sent out with the Annual Report can get buried and forgotten. However we would urge all members to respond to their subscription renewal notice as soon as this arrives on your doorstep. We **do need everyone** to pay their subscriptions if we are to continue!!

There are a small number of members (4%) who are exempt due to being elderly frail or in extreme financial difficulty and, of course, new members are exempt for their first year. There is also the option to pay a minimum of £2 for those members in financial hardship which we urge you to take up if appropriate to your needs. There are also other members who pay an additional donation to their membership subscription, for which we are extremely grateful.

If you are unsure whether your 2015 subscription is still outstanding please contact Veronica Bale our membership secretary on 01372 721146 or e-mail [membership@brokenrites.org](mailto:membership@brokenrites.org). If you pay by standing order please, please check that you have increased this to £15 and that the bank reference gives your name, so we are able to link these from the bank statement to individual members.

REMEMBER if you are not sure please check, we need your support!!!!!! As you know, in accordance with our Constitution, membership termination will be automatic if there has been no renewal of subscription for two consecutive years, so after the third year of non payment. Though we do our best to ascertain why there has been no renewal before doing so.

**Broken Rites Committee**  
**2015/2016**

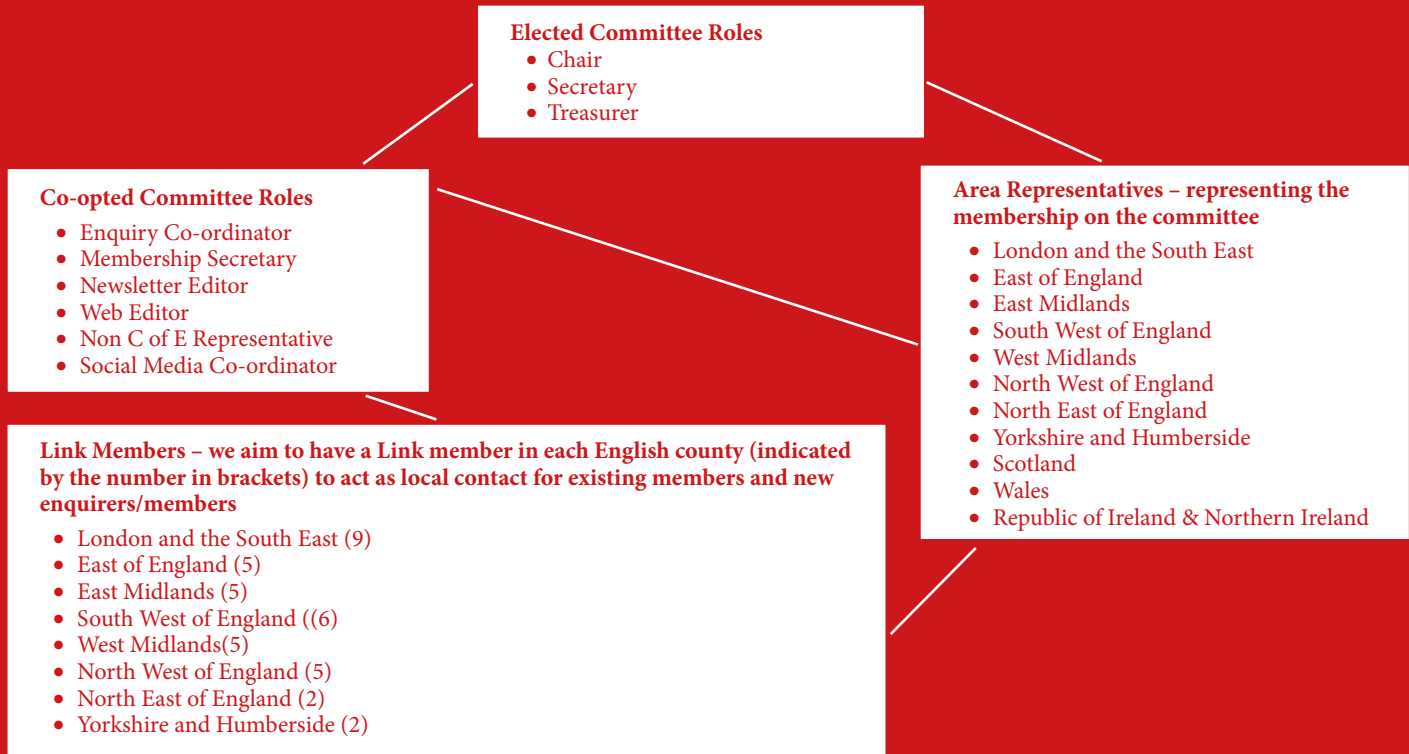


## Membership stats as at January 2015

	<i>Link</i>	<i>No of members</i>		<i>Link</i>	<i>No of members</i>
<b>East Midlands – Viv Blount</b>			<b>South West England – Solveig Warren</b>		
Derbyshire	Janet Smith	5	Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	Vacant	1
Leicestershire, Northamptonshire & Rutland	Mary Daniels	5	Devon	Rebecca Ould	3
Nottinghamshire	Vacant	3	Dorset & Wiltshire	Christine Woodcock	4
Lincolnshire	Vacant	2	Bristol	Jean Whatmough	4
			Gloucester	Christine Donald	4
			Somerset	Vacant	3
<b>East of England – Vacant</b>			<b>West Midlands – Rosemary Aveyard</b>		
Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire	Teresa Nichols	3	Herefordshire	Vacant	0
Cambridgeshire	Vacant	0	Staffordshire & Shropshire	Vacant	1
Essex	Vacant	2	Warwickshire	Vacant	0
Norfolk	Vacant	3	West Midlands	Vacant	1
Suffolk	Vacant	1	Worcestershire	Rosemary Aveyard	1
<b>North East England, Yorkshire and Humber – Heather Boase</b>			<b>Scotland – Shirley Douglas</b>		
County Durham & North Teeside	Vacant	2	All of Scotland	Patricia Robertson	13
Northumberland, Tyne & Wear	Vacant	2			
North and West Yorkshire, South Teeside	Vacant	5	<b>Wales – Dilys Stone</b>		
South Yorkshire & Humber	Jennifer South	6	All of Wales	Ceria Thomas	7
<b>North West England – Vacant</b>			<b>Northern Ireland &amp; Republic of Ireland – Helen Oxley</b>		
Cheshire	Beth Gardner	6	All of Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland	Vacant	3
Cumbria	Vacant	2	<b>Diocese in Europe – Vacant</b>		
Gt Manchester	Vacant	3	Whole of Europe, Morocco, Turkey and the former Soviet Union		
Lancashire	Sue Atack	4	<b>Total Membership</b>		
Merseyside & Isle of Man	Gillian Haines	1	<b>145</b>		
<b>South East England – Vacant</b>			<b>Non Anglicans – 18 %</b>		
Berkshire & Buckinghamshire	Vacant	3	Methodist	8	Independent Baptist
Oxfordshire	Alexandra Green	2	URC	1	Church of Scotland
Hampshire, Isle of Wight & Channel Islands	Vacant	6	Baptist	1	Congregational
			Ecumenical	1	Presbyterian Church in Ireland
<b>Greater London &amp; South – Ann Richards</b>			<b>Other Anglicans – 5 %</b>		
Greater London – North	Vacant	4	Church in Wales	4	Scottish Episcopal
Greater London – South	Sarah Thorley	5	Church of Ireland	2	
Kent	Christine Murchison	9	<b>Church of England – 77%</b>		
East and West Sussex	Vacant	10	Total number of members as at 31st December 2015 = 145		
Surrey	Veronica Bale	6	Number of new members joined during 2015 = 9		

# Broken Rites – Structure – 2016

## Members and Associate Members



# 32nd AGM – My Thoughts

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“I’m not quite sure what motivated me to attend the AGM of Broken Rites in April, except for Sue Atack’s kind invitation and the prospect of ‘a day out’. I was intrigued by idea of ‘The Thirty-second AGM’, and sure it would take a bit longer than that! (Sorreeee!) It didn’t take long for me to realise that this bunch was what my life had lacked – a group of people who know just what it’s like to be in out special situation.

It brought home to me just what it has been like to feel cast adrift from all the jolly church gatherings of my past, which somehow have eluded me in the two years since the break-up of my 35-year marriage; I’ve certainly felt like an outsider in these two years.

The thing I most remember about the meeting was the feeling of human warmth in the room; I felt a kind of unspoken understanding and support

which I’d not had in a group way, though there have been some individuals doing sterling work to help me. I usually say about such experiences, ‘It was like getting into a warm bath’.

My memory isn’t great, (so I’ll leave others to describe the proceedings of the meeting in more detail) – perhaps this is something to do with trauma – and I rather remember the effects of the things that happen to me, and the effect of this gathering was to make me realise that my feelings of being still unsettled and ‘not quite right yet’ were really quite to be expected, and thus, happily, I might expect further progress – I won’t have to settle for this feeling of being in a kind of half-life forever.

Perhaps in time, I could become one of these vibrant people, and to try to make wounds to heal too quickly might only lead to a kind of infection being trapped in the system.

As I write, I’m trying to arrange for myself a new home, back in the diocese I left, and it’s stirring up some mud at the bottom of the murky pond that is my emotional life. It’s frankly scary, as I try to answer the question ‘Where is home?’ that I’d been asking for some time before the break-up.

Perhaps one day I’ll be able to become one of the cheerful ones and be aware of what I’ve gained as well as what I have lost.

Being a coffee addict in the mornings, I was a bit disconcerted at the lack of hot drinks, but I DID have to giggle at the idea of Church House, the very epicentre of the C of E, banning the use of the kitchen to a bunch of ex-vicar’s wives!

Next time, like the wise virgins, I’ll bring a flask!”

**Viv Rowett**

# East Midlands Area Report for the Annual Report 2016

On two occasions during this past year several members from our Area have enjoyed getting together for lunch in the Anne of Cleves pub in Melton Mowbray and the Red Hot World Buffet restaurant in Leicester. We are scattered in five large counties, so for every member to attend each venue is nigh on impossible, however, even though travel times are

usually an hour to an hour and a half for most of us, changing the venue each time helps one or two ladies to be closer. From time to time members from the Yorkshire and Humber Area join us, as once they were in our region and friendships had been made.

We find these times of sharing very supportive, fun too; and when we can

stop chatting, we try to explore the local area for a while, however the chat doesn't stop.

Some of us are also in touch via Facebook, the general site as well as the Broken Rites secret page.

**Viv Tillin – East Midlands Area Representative**

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## Wales

The members in Wales are quite widely scattered, and the geography and difficult transport links don't help. We have not managed to meet up for a while, but haven't stopped trying! I try to keep in touch with everyone, and it

is encouraging that members have been very willing to support a new member this year, both by telephone links and also by meeting with her. We are in discussion with the Church in Wales about the support that is available when

relationships break down – they do not have a Visitors scheme as such, but have guidelines which are similar to those used in England.

**Dilys Stone**

# Broken Rites

**Supporting separated and divorced spouses/partners of clergy/ministers and Church Army Officers**

*The butterfly image symbolizes renewal and rebirth*

## Confidential

- Information
- Advocacy
- Concern
- Understanding

## About

- Children
- Domestic & Emotional abuse
- Finance
- Housing
- Illness
- Legal issues
- Pensions
- Retirement
- Charities

***A support group of about 140 members throughout the British Isles and into Europe. Our aims are to:***

- provide one-to-one support and understanding
- combat isolation of the separated and divorced
- raise awareness amongst church leadership of issues surrounding clerical marriage/partnership breakdown
- generate understanding and awareness of the issues unique to clergy families
- lobby on issues
- advocate appropriate implementation of disciplinary actions
- achieve support from numerous charities
- access church housing schemes
- strive for equality in pension provision
- campaign for consistent support by the churches for divorced and separated clergy and their spouses/ partners

**Open to spouses/partners of clergy/ministers of all denominations and Church Army officers**

**For further membership information please contact:** [enquiries@brokenrites.org](mailto:enquiries@brokenrites.org)

**Or to make a donation:**

[treasurer@brokenrites.org](mailto:treasurer@brokenrites.org)  
[www.brokenrites.org](http://www.brokenrites.org)

***Here for you, there for others***





## ***Supporting separated and divorced spouses and partners of clergy and ministers***

*Did you know that.....?*

Clergy families encounter the same problems and difficulties in their relationships as everyone else.

Clergy spouses and partners can be in a very difficult position when this happens. As their role is a public one, they can feel very isolated when things go wrong.

The problem of stress and relationship breakdown in clergy families affects us all.

The whole Church needs to work on it together.

*How you can help them*

Join Broken Rites as an Associate member – it would encourage and validate us to have your support.

Offer your time and skills to Broken Rites to help with various projects which are in the pipeline, but need people to bring them to fruition – e.g. do you have skills in IT, finance, archiving, administration?

We need practical, prayerful, and financial support to help us continue to offer our unique service.

If the welfare of clergy and their families is something that concerns you, why not get in touch and see if you can help.

Contact us on: **[associatemembers@brokenrites.org](mailto:associatemembers@brokenrites.org)**

# Annual General Meeting 2016

Saturday 23rd April

at

Church House, Great Smith Street, Westminster SW1P 3NZ  
10.45am (coffee and registration) – 3.30pm

Speaker: The Rt Rev Libby Lane  
Bishop of Stockport

Buffet Lunch available £6.50  
payable in advance please

If you are not a member but would like to join us on this occasion as a guest of Broken Rites please contact our Acting Chair: Sue Atack 01257 423893 or email: [chairman@brokenrites.org](mailto:chairman@brokenrites.org) It would help too if you would indicate if lunch is required.

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*(For security reasons, Church House requires the names of those who will attend).*

# Broken Rites Officers 2016-17



President: Rt Hon Frank Field MP

Acting Chairman: Sue Atack  
Email: [chairman@brokenrites.org](mailto:chairman@brokenrites.org)

Secretary: Rosina Elston,  
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Treasurer: Vacant  
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