

RITE LINES

SUMMER 2025

Newsletter of Broken Rites



Broken Rites is an inter-denominational group, offering information and mutual support to separated and divorced spouses or partners of clergy and recognised ministers.

For contact details, please see the back page



Broken Rites

Chair's Report – Summer 2025

Last Saturday, 21st June, we held our Summer Committee meeting in York. Eight of us met on a very hot, humid summer's day but luckily Alison, our secretary, had arranged our meeting to be held in the York Quaker Meeting house which had a lovely, sheltered courtyard garden that our meeting room opened



directly onto! Our agenda was full and covered a wide range of items. I would like to share with you some of the details of a couple of these.

Sadly, over the past twelve months our membership has grown substantially and is now approaching 200 full members! Providing help and support to our existing, as well as new members, can prove challenging both for those providing that first contact support when the initial enquiry comes in, as well as for the Area Reps/Links when referred on. So, we spent some time looking at the current structure and how different areas support their local members as well as the valuable role of our facebook group. I have been very aware that a couple of our regions do not currently have an Area Rep and have been liaising with our membership in one of those areas to try and address this and will move onto the other areas shortly.

Our aim has always been to have a Link in each English county and again there are currently gaps due to very small or no members in that county. All areas are unique in their make-up, both in membership numbers and spread as well as their geographical challenges. Our facebook pages provide a valuable support network for those who feel able to join this but I appreciate that not all members are able or feel comfortable using this. Some areas now have WhatsApp groups, where members can support, share and laugh together. If for any reason you are not in touch with an Area Representative or Link and want to be put in touch with other members in your region then please do make contact with myself or the membership secretary (e-mail details on the back cover).



Broken Rites

So, to begin the review of our current structure of Area Reps and Links, I am planning to hold a zoom meeting, sometime over the summer months, for all the current Area Representatives. The aim being to explore current ways in which support and contact is made with those Link members in place, as well as the wider membership in the area.

This will hopefully facilitate the sharing of problems and issues as well as what has worked well or not. Longer term I am proposing that a yearly or six-monthly Area Reps zoom meeting could be held to provide ongoing support and sharing and provide support for any newly appointed Area Rep.

Thank you to those members who completed the members' survey earlier this year. Heather, our Vice Chair, gave a presentation of some of the key findings at our AGM in May. Further analysis is currently being undertaken in some areas and has produced some valuable statistics and information. The next step is to produce a report of the key findings, and the plan is to circulate this to the membership before the end of the year. The report will also be sent to Church Leaders of the main denominations, as well as the Anglican Bishop's Visitors and those in similar roles in other denominations.

I have always been very proud of how the Broken Rites' membership has embraced members whose faith journeys have come to a full stop and those who have carried on the road and whose faith has grown, plus everything in between! For some members going into a Church building can be distressing and are unable to do this now and any symbol of Christian ministry, like a dog collar, can cause anxiety and distress. Broken Rites, on the whole, seems to have navigated this balance extremely well over the years and the membership are respectful and sensitive to this. So, a **very big thank you** for being sensitive to this and aware that some members have not begun or are very early on in their recovery road.

Our British summer weather has been a bit of a roller coaster this year and as I write this some of us are in for another very hot spell of weather. So, wherever you live, I hope you manage to stay comfortable and are able to enjoy some of what the British summer throws at us!



Broken Rites AGM – New Member’s Perspective

Journeying to London alone on a warm spring day, to meet in person some of the people who have given me so much support over the last 18 months felt like a significant and positive step forward. I was unsure what to expect having only been able to view a small amount of last year’s AGM content online. We were hosted in St Matthew’s House, close to Church House which was a lovely calm space.

My immediate impressions of the group were that of intelligent welcoming people, keen to ensure that Broken Rites continues to develop as an effective organisation, using volunteer’s skills and talents to work together in raising our profile.

Our Chair Susan Bamber whizzed through the agenda for the formal meeting, and all those with nominated roles came across as professional, providing their information efficiently and clearly, for those like me who were unfamiliar with the organisation. It was clear that these roles do take peoples time but that this is willingly given.

Heather’s presentation on the survey conducted with BR members a few months ago, was really interesting, and some of the statistics she had pulled out were shocking, particularly on those in clergy marriages who may have suffered abuse, particularly domestic or coercive control. The discussion was lively, balanced and emotional for some.

Bishop Ian (Thetford) then proceeded to respond to some of the issues raised by our survey results, in a thoughtful way and I was particularly pleased to see his commitment to reviewing the CofE guidance on Bishops Visitors and having BR input into that process.

We then broke for lunch which was an excellent opportunity to network and informally meet those who until that point, had been known to me only by responses within the facebook group. Sharing stories was valuable and affirming. Being able to speak freely with others who are further along the path had the biggest impact on me of the whole day.

We returned after lunch to our speaker Patrick Regan founder of Kintsugi Hope, who presented on 'Life does not have to be perfect to be good'. He spoke passionately from a Christian perspective about his work in the mental health and wellbeing arena, linking this to the story of Elijah. He spoke about self-compassion, making space for our feelings, listening to the quiet voice inside and being gentle on ourselves. There was a lot to digest in this talk and I was grateful that Patrick offered the opportunity to purchase books he had written on the subject allowing me to explore further in my own time.

I came away from the day both energised and reflective. Thank you to those who put so much time into arranging and hosting the AGM and the commitment of Broken Rites members to support one another this coming year.

Helen Hallett

New Member, South Central Region

Treasurer's Report June 2025

The last few months have been busy for Broken Rites.

Subscription payments have been coming in along with monies for the AGM lunches. We have received a good number of subscriptions so far and reminders will be going out shortly. Sue, Julie and myself have been looking to update the membership list and remove some of the inactive members where subscriptions have not been paid for several years. We are checking with Area Reps before removing anyone but feel it is important to keep our records as up to date as possible to ensure the confidentiality of the members only group.

We received a further donation of £500 from the Darlington Methodist District in response to our appeal letter to the Methodist Districts following our attendance at the Methodist Conference last year, which makes a total of £1500 from this appeal.

We have paid a £1000 deposit for the 2026 weekend away in Chelmsford and further details of costs etc for this will be circulated once agreed.

As always please continue to encourage members to claim their travel expenses for



local and national meetings and any other costs incurred on behalf of Broken Rites.

Please contact me if you would like an expenses claim form or you can email with receipts to treasurer@brokenrites.org

Helen Perry

Treasurer

Membership Secretary & Enquiries Report

At May 31st 2025, there were 192 full members, 22 associate members, and 305 former members (full and associate). We have 14 new members in 2025 year to date.

All new membership enquiries are being responded to within 48 hours for initial contact and passed to the area reps for follow up.

During the first 5 months of 2025 there were 18 enquiries via the website with a variety of needs. All are dealt with within 5 days of initial contact with reference to other members of the group/committee where necessary.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has assisted in responding to enquiries and welcoming new members into the group.

Julie Robinson, June 2025

Regional Reports

Greater London and Kent

We have met twice so far this year. We had a well-attended and lively lunch at Sigrun Wagner's new home in Camberwell and others of us went to Christine's near Canterbury when Bishop Rose (Bishop of Dover) also came.

Her attendance was the result of Christine's persistence over many years to get recognition of Broken Rites by the local Church Hierarchy. Bp Rose fully engaged with our stories and was really keen to find out about BR. It was a joy to get to know her.

Ann Richards



Southwest

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the AGM this year as I was convalescing following an operation. This is still the case for the June Committee Meeting.

So far this year we have had two Zoom sessions. The January one was on a festive theme and in April we welcomed Heather to talk about the Survey.

We have had one actual Meet Up this year. This was in Bath when 6 of us met for a meal followed by a visit to a member's flat for a drink and cake!

We are planning two other meetings this year: Salisbury in August and Devon in the Autumn plus our regular Zoom meetings.

Jennifer Smith

Yorkshire & Humber

Currently we have 20 members in the Yorkshire and Humber region. We continue to have a lunch gathering on a 6 monthly basis and I am in contact, either face to face, or by phone, with several members in the area. The next regional gathering is planned for 2 July at the Royal Armouries in Leeds for lunch followed by a walk.

Julie Robinson

Northwest

A few of us met up in Liverpool for coffee and lunch in April and a member living in the West Midlands joined us, as she was visiting family in Chester.

There have been several referrals from three of the four dioceses in the region and I have met up with these individuals on a 1-2-1 basis.

Scotland

Janet Forbes reports that Meet Ups have been arranged but unfortunately no one has turned up. She is going to ask Liz to see if she can help.

Ireland

Helen Oxley says there is little to report from Ireland except that Rosie Richards has been unwell and in hospital again. She remains cheerful and well looked after by her family, many friends and acquaintances.



Broken Rites

Away Weekend at Pleshey Retreat Centre – Essex July 2026

Following on from our previous lovely weekends away, we're hoping to hold another one next year at Pleshey Retreat Centre, Chelmsford. The dates for the weekend are Friday 17th – Sunday 19th July and, as usual, the weekend will be a mixture of group sessions, free time and social activities (nothing is compulsory). Overall, we are aiming for a relaxed weekend with the opportunity to catch up with old friends and make some new ones too.

Pleshey is very accessible by both road and rail networks. Chelmsford station is approx. 15 mins away and transport can be arranged for station pick-ups. The house is set in extensive grounds with plenty of green space. There are a number of shared spaces inside the house with numerous nooks and crannies both indoors and outdoors for either personal space or small group conversations. There are also some 4-footed members of the community including very friendly goats and alpacas!

We have provisionally booked for 18 people, but the Centre has the facility to accommodate up to 25 people in individual en-suite rooms.

Details of the cost and help with this (if required) are outlined below:-

Total cost for weekend full board (all rooms are ensuite) maximum £268 00 depending on final numbers.

A deposit of £50 will be required with the booking form with the balance due in April 2026

Broken Rites will reimburse reasonable travel expenses (mileage 35p per mile or the cost of public transport i.e. train or bus)

The following may be able to provide financial assistance/bursaries:

The Edward Storey Foundation (Anglican backgrounds only)

www.edwardstorey.org.uk

The Association for Promoting Retreats www.promotingretreats.org

or telephone 01395 272243

I'm also in the process of enquiring as to whether Pleshey are able to provide bursaries.

More information about the centre can be found at

<https://www.retreathousepleshey.com/>

To request a booking form please send an email to julieandshadow@yahoo.co.uk or call Julie Robinson on 07732 336787

Deadline for bookings

15th January 2026



Broken Rites needs your help!

Do you remember when you first contacted Broken Rites and realised that there were people who understood your situation and had experienced the same trauma? Broken Rites is growing fast and we would dearly love to recruit some members for the following volunteer roles.

Membership secretary

Treasurer

If you feel you could take on either of these roles and would like to know more, please contact your Area Rep or the current post holder, details on the back page. Thank you.

Anna May Watson – founder member of the Scottish group

Sadly, Anna May Watson one of the founder members of the Scottish Broken Rites Group, died on 5th January. She died peacefully at home and her family were with her. She was a lovely lady who was much loved and respected by the many Broken Rites members who knew her. She enriched so many of our lives. She suffered ill health for many years but this did not stop her helping a great number of ladies.

If any lady in Scotland contacted Broken Rites, Anna May was the person they first spoke to and she kept in contact with all her ladies. There came a time when she slowed down and we did not see so much of her but we kept in touch by phone and email.

For years she organised all our meetings in Edinburgh. We met up several times a year and we knew that every meeting would end with much laughter and lifted spirits. People who sat near us in the hotel Tea Room/Bar would have thought we had all been drinking rather too early in the day!

She will be greatly missed by her family and her Broken Rites family. She is now at peace. Thank you, Anna May, for all you did for Broken Rites.

Patrica Robertson

PS

I remember Anna May and her quiet calm patience. She was one of a group of members who provided a 'listening ear' to any member over the telephone* particularly over the main holiday periods and her support for other members was always appreciated.

*Anna May's phone number used to be published in Rite Lines along with a couple of other members who provided this 'listening ear' support, which was superseded by our Facebook pages, I think!

Sue Bamber





Scotland members 2017. By kind permission from left to right

Nancy, Patsy, Janet, Patricia, Shirley (now 90), Julia, Loraine and dear Anna May


Summer Committee Meeting – key points of discussion

1. 2027 members' away weekend - timeframe for bookings agreed and planning group explored
2. Area Reps and Links – support, refreshment and sharing – see Chair's report
3. Communications – future plans, who what, when? – initial priorities identified, and next steps carried forward
4. 2026 AGM – 9th May 2026 – Westminster, London - suggestions for afternoon speaker explored, and committee vacancies identified
5. Information on Safeguarding training shared. Initially for Area Reps but will be made available for Links in due course.

If you would like to know more or wish to contribute to any of the above, please discuss with your Area Rep or contact the Chair direct.

(N.B. Front page quote by Zig Zigler)

Broken Rites Officers 2024

President Vacant	
Interim Chair Susan Bamber	chair@brokenrites.org
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Find us at:  Website	http://www.brokenrites.org/
 Facebook	Broken Rites (public page which signposts to closed groups for Broken Rites and Clergy Marriage in Crisis) Wellbeing of Clergy Households
 Twitter	@Broken Rites

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