

The Belfry

Newsletter of the
KCACR
Maidstone District

September 2015

Issue 101

Editorial

There has been much talk in recent months about the age profile of ringers nationally. Like church congregations the average age is increasing and we in Kent are no exception. Indeed the KCACR Handbook for 2015 shows that of 1419 practising members just 92 were either junior members or full-time students, whilst 597 were senior members aged 65 or more. This is clearly a matter of great concern as, without younger people coming through, we will need to rely more and more on recruiting mature learners if our towers are to continue to be manned for the next generation.

There is of course no quick fix for this situation. Whether we like it or not life has moved on. Unlike the young people of fifty years ago, today's youth have many competing interests. Computers, games consoles, satellite TV with nigh on a thousand different channels, social media, all seem a far more attractive proposition than spending a couple of hours in a cold tower with people more than twice their age. Then of course there comes the time when boyfriends/girlfriends appear on the scene. In years gone by many a romance has started through meeting in the belfry (including your editor and his wife). Not so these days. Ringing is not considered "cool" by today's young people. And herein perhaps lays a partial answer to the problem. We more mature ringers need to sell our activity to those in that impressionable age group, or at the very least show that it is as relevant to them as to those who learnt fifty years ago.

Here in Kent I would like to think that we have already started on that process. Kent Young Ringers now hold their own practices, to which anyone aged 25 or under is welcome. Practices are normally followed by a social activity such as tenpin bowling or a picnic. They also have their own page on the County website and their own Facebook page. On Saturday 24th October Kent will be hosting its first County Youth Competition at Chalk. This reflects the efforts of the Central Council whose annual Ringing World National Youth Striking Contest is going from strength to strength.

At the County AGM in April our own Daniel Brady was elected County Chairman, at just 26 years of age probably the youngest ever to hold the post. In our own District we have one ringing master also aged 26 and another in his mid-teens.

We are heading in the right direction. We have a nucleus of keen young ringers but there is a long way to go yet. Let's make sure we do our utmost to encourage our young people and show them that not only are they a valued part of the ringing community but that the future of ringing lies with them.

The Editor

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District News

District Practice at All Saints Maidstone

Alas the District 10-bell Practice scheduled for All Saints Maidstone on Saturday 9th May was postponed at short notice when the Government announced that the commemoration of VE day was to take place on that day (rather than the actual historical date of 8th May). It was felt that many ringers would want to join in the national ringing, scheduled for 11am, at their own churches, and All Saints bells were not available in the afternoon. Apologies to those whose arrangements were disrupted by this.

District Practice at Linton

Having not had a Practice Meeting the previous month we expected a good turn out for the District Practice at Linton on Saturday 13th June. It was a little surprising therefore that the attendance was somewhat lower than at recent meetings. However the 16 ringers who came enabled us to ring both special methods, Cambridge Major and Single Oxford Bob Triples, along with Erin Triples, Bob Triples and three leads of Kent. There were also lots of Rounds - particularly useful for the ringers from Lenham's fledgling band who it was pleasing to see at the Practice.

Summer Quarterly Meeting at West Malling

The lovely warm sunshine certainly brought out the crowds to West Malling on Saturday 11th July for the Summer Quarterly District Meeting. The attendance book showed 32 names but it is estimated that in fact around 40 ringers were present at some time during the morning - the largest attendance at a District Meeting for many years. This enabled us to ring both special methods, Superlative Major and Middlesex Triples, along with Grandsire Triples, plenty of Call Changes and even a touch of 5-spliced Surprise Major (including Bristol!).

At the short business meeting no less than 19 new members were elected to the Association - thought to be a record. They are **Anthony Crawford, Christine Dudley, Tom Gardner and Jane Howells** (all from Addington), **Katharine Evans, Graham Fowler, Charles Worsfold** (East Sutton), **Roger Martin** (Harrietsham), **Geraldine Breedon, Michael Dale, Marilyn Graveson, Brandon**



Holdsworth, Kristina Holdsworth, David Humphrey, Jennifer Newton, John Newton, Neil Pedlingham, Derek Rose (all from Lenham) and last, but by no means least, young **Victoria Higgs** from Marden (pictured above receiving her membership certificate from County Chairman Daniel Brady). It was pleasing to see so many of them there for their election and we look forward to seeing them at future events.

Personalia



It was great to see **Tom Barlow** at the District Barbeque after a lengthy spell in hospital following major heart surgery. From the picture on the left he is clearly looking fit and well and his recovery has been little short of miraculous. He took a further step along the road when he rang for Sunday morning service at St Michael and All

Angels, Maidstone, on 6th September. Welcome back Mr Vice-President!

Tom's wife **Jacqui** has something else to celebrate, besides her husband's return to health. On Saturday 8th August she rang her 400th peal. The peal, of Bristol Surprise Major at Staplehurst was rung for the wedding of Staplehurst ringer **Steve Bassett** and Becky Mahoney.

Ulcombe will be saying goodbye to **Pat Davis** who is moving with his wife to the Isle of Wight, where they will be closer to their daughter. Pat has been a ringer at Ulcombe since 1965 and amongst other occasions rang for the funeral of Winston Churchill and the 50th anniversary of VE Day. We wish Pat and his family well in their new home.

Obituaries

Sadly we also have to say goodbye to several ringers who have recently passed away. May they Rest in Peace

Frank Lewis, County Webmaster and General Committee member, passed away on Wednesday 22nd July. The funeral was held on Monday 3rd August at a packed Brasted church, following a private cremation. Immediately after the service a half-muffled quarter-peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on Brasted bells by a band comprising some of Frank's many ringing friends.

Sid Watts of Marden died on Wednesday 29th July. His funeral was held at Marden on Thursday 20th August. A quarter-peal of Plain Bob Triples was rung at Marden on Sunday 2nd August in thanksgiving for his life.

Alan Bourne of Frittenden sadly passed away on Sunday 23rd August after a short battle with a brain tumour. Although not a member of the Maidstone District, he had many friends in the District and indeed throughout the County. A half muffled quarter-peal of Grandsire Triples was rung following Alan's funeral at Frittenden on Tuesday 8th September.



Loch to! (or the Wealden Wanderers in Scotland)

For some years now Tim Munt, tower captain at Smarden in the Ashford District, has organised a ringing weekend away in the spring for his own ringers and friends. In the past we have visited such diverse areas as North Yorkshire and Devon, Hereford and Lincolnshire. At the end of the last year's trip it was suggested that in 2015 we go for the ultimate ringers' holiday (in the UK at least) and ring at every ringable tower in Scotland. With only 21 rings of bells in the whole country and a planned ten days to visit them it sounded like this year's trip would be relaxing – until you look at a map and realise that some of the towers are more than 100 miles apart! Yes, this would take some planning.

Various options were considered over the next few months and the formula eventually decided upon was for individuals to make their own way to Scotland and their own arrangements for the first four nights when we would be travelling the longest distances between towers. The last five nights we would all stay together in Stirling as most of the towers in Eastern Scotland were within reasonable driving distance from there. So while Chris Bassett and Tim were doing sterling work booking the Stirling accommodation and arranging – and re-arranging (several times) the towers, the rest of us spent hours on booking.com trying to find somewhere to stay.

At long last the first day of our long distance tower grab arrived. We had opted to travel up by train to Dumfries the day before and hire a car from there. This turned out to be a good decision as we arrived refreshed – and soaked from the torrential rain that greeted us on the five minute walk from the station to our B & B. It also meant that we were only a short distance from the 10³/₄cwt eight the following morning where we all met up in the bright sunshine and introduced ourselves. Fortunately no-one had lost their way during the 350 mile journey from Kent. The bells here were only installed in November 2013 as a six and augmented to eight just three months later. Very nice they were too.

We had five hours to cover the 150 miles to our next tower – Scotland's supposed "jewel in the crown" at Inveraray, set amongst beautiful scenery in this small market town beside Loch Fyne. This 41¹/₂cwt ten have no local band

but are in great demand by visiting ringers and have a rather complicated sound control system. Personally I found them a little disappointing, but the view (above) over the Loch from the roof of the tower was stunning, once it stopped raining.

We had opted to stay overnight at Fort William, which entailed a journey of some 70 miles through the stunning scenery of Glencoe, enhanced by fresh falls of snow only a hundred feet above us. Well it was only the beginning of June! Even when we reached Fort William we could see the hills covered in snow – a theme that continued as long as we were in the Highlands. From Fort William it was only a short drive (by Scottish standards) to our first "tower" of the day, which gave us time to explore Neptune's Staircase, an impressive flight of locks at the beginning of the Caledonian Canal with the snow-covered Ben Nevis as a backdrop. The tower was not actually a tower, but a farm. The ring of 12 at the Tulloch Ringing Centre was an experience in itself and provided us with the opportunity to ring on higher numbers. There are in fact some local ringers, but they rely on visitors to help out, which is precisely what we did. In return we were treated to a delicious spaghetti Bolognese, consumed around a roaring wood fire.

We spent the afternoon driving along the western edge of Loch Ness to Inverness. No monsters, but some lovely scenery and a strange happening en route. Having stopped at a gift shop we returned to our car – a rather nondescript Vauxhall Insignia – to find it surrounded by a group of Japanese tourists taking photos of it. Very strange! A press of the remote key soon had them scurrying in all directions. Inverness Cathedral is the most northerly church in the world containing a ring of bells, a 16³/₄cwt ten in this case. Now it is difficult to judge when inside a tower which direction is which, so the secret was to make sure that you rang on each side of the tower to ensure that you had rung the most northerly church bell in the world (as those in the picture below are doing!).

Inverness is not the easiest place to find accommodation, so we had booked a B & B at Nairn, several miles north-west of Inverness and close to the Druim Campanile which we were to visit the following morning.



My memories of Nairn will always be: a Chinese meal with sauce so strong it made your eyes sting, a walk round the harbour, meeting up with others from our party who were staying at a pub and the walk back from the pub at closing time in the daylight. Indeed there was still daylight in the sky when I eventually fell asleep at around 12.45am. Answering a call of nature at 2.30am I realised that it was already totally daylight again. Does it ever get properly dark in Nairn?



The 1cwt six at Druim (above) are the most northerly permanent ring of bells of any kind in the world, and the same procedure applied to make sure that one had rang the most northerly bell. Leaving Druim we began our journey southwards and headed the 100 miles to Aberdeen. The 14cwt eight at St Machar's Cathedral were originally at West Ealing and made for some good ringing. Unfortunately we had been unable to get permission to ring at St Mary's, Aberdeen, due to structural problems.

Once again to save a long journey to our first tower in the morning we stayed in the delightfully named Blairgowrie, at an old rectory which felt like it should have its own resident ghost, but I didn't see one. From there it was only a short drive to the ruined Cathedral Church of St Columba at Dunkeld. After a somewhat tortuous access to the ringing room we found no lighting. The fact that the weather was dull and wet (our first rain since Inveraray) did not help.

Afternoon ringing was on the 24½cwt eight at Dunblane, where the Cathedral houses a touching memorial to the sixteen schoolchildren massacred by a gunman in 1996. It was interesting to note that the 2015 wedding list in the ringing room had a date booked for 11th April but no bride or groom listed. Game, set and match to Mr and Mrs Murray! On the day of our visit there was another wedding taking place, not at the Cathedral but at the town hall on the opposite side of the square. Perchance the non-ringing wife of one of our ringers had just used the toilet in the town hall when she was approached by the happy couple to be a witness at their nuptials. Although rather shell-shocked she happily agreed.

It was at this stage that we all met up at Stirling for the last five nights of our holiday. Having booked in and had something to eat we took the opportunity to ring on the 6¾cwt six at the Church of the Holy Rude (yes that is the correct spelling). Only a quick grab here as six of our band

rang a quarter as part of Sue Bassett's "40 Quarters in 40 towers" challenge. Back at the hotel it was nice to enjoy a few beers together at last.

It was also nice not to be living out of a suitcase and to be able to go out to different areas each day as is the norm for ringing holidays. An extremely windy Saturday saw us ring at the two Dundee towers, St Paul (23¼cwt eight) and St Mary's Old Steeple (8 bells, 19½cwt) whilst on a warm and sunny Sunday morning we rang on the rather daunting 41¼cwt twelve at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh (below) and the much more manageable 14½cwt eight at St Andrew's. Unfortunately we were unable to ring on the light six at Fettes College in Edinburgh as the students were in the middle of their exams.



No trip to Edinburgh is complete without a trip to Princes Street, but a less well known attraction is the legend of Greyfriars Bobby. Bobby was a Skye Terrier who belonged to John Gray, a night watchman for the Edinburgh Police and the two were inseparable. When Gray died Bobby spent the remaining 14 years of his life sitting on his master's grave in Greyfriars Churchyard. Bobby himself was buried just inside the churchyard gate and we took the opportunity to visit Bobby's grave. Alas, heavy traffic meant that we were a little late for afternoon tower at Haddington (8 bells, 11¼cwt).

A free Monday morning enabled us to visit a National Trust folly called "The Pineapple" (because of its shape) before ringing on the 13cwt eight at Alloa and then on to St Andrew's, busily preparing for the British Open Golf Championship. The University Chapel of St Salvator has a rather flighty 7¾ cwt ring of six, which were not the easiest of the week to handle.

As anyone who has driven in Glasgow will know, it is not the easiest city to drive in, despite the fact that the M8 goes right through the middle. As the final tower of our trip was the 22¼cwt eight at Paisley we decided to park in the churchyard there and take the 15 minute train journey to Glasgow Central to reach St Mary's Cathedral (10 bells, 32¼cwt). This also provided us with the opportunity to ride on Glasgow's unique underground system, now re-branded as the Metro. Although this was the end of our scheduled ringing, there was one more available tower which we had been unable to fit in to our programme. By

pure good fortune it happened that St Cuthbert's in Edinburgh practise on a Tuesday evening, so by making a "small" diversion on our way back to Stirling we managed to grab the 21cwt ten there as well.

All too soon we were dropping the hire car in Glasgow and boarding the train for the 6 hour journey back to Kent. Having driven around 800 miles in the past ten days we enjoyed the relaxation of letting the train take the strain. It had been tiring but well worth the effort and our thanks go to Tim and Chris for all their work in organising the trip. Will we be doing a similar mega-trip in a couple of years' time and, if so, where to? The jury's still out on that one...

Roy Barclay, Richard Barclay & Steph Rueff



Above is a picture of the Wealden Wanderers outside Haddington Church. Many more photos of the trip are available online via Dropbox by following the link <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/eecr93sjpfly6xf/AAC3xYUzpF2Di4z4ark7IPHDa?dl=0>. You may need a Dropbox account to view - it's free to set up and use by going to www.dropbox.com.

Ringers' Cryptic Crossword - the solution

How did you fare with the Ringers' Cryptic Crossword in our 100th anniversary issue? Well, the solution is below. I did warn readers that it was rather cryptic.....

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P	E	A	L	R	A	T	E			H		S		N		E		
	D			E						E	R	I	N		L			
				E	I	G	H	T				D			O	M		
C	A	T	C	H			A					E	N	D	S	E		
A		A		O			T		F	C	H		O		T	R		
M	A	X	I	M	U	S			R		I					E		
B				E				S	E	T	S	I	T		B	O	W	
R	O	W		S	I	N	G	L	E				U				O	
I						E		O				U	N	C	O	V	E	R
D		L		M		T	O	W		A			K		D			T
G		O	V	E	R					L			T	O	U	C	H	
E		N			I					C	L	A	S	H				
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	B		I		E		D	O	G		I		I					
	C	A	T	E	R	S					L	I	N	T	O	N		

The brain cells get a rest this time. Meanwhile your Editor would appreciate feedback on whether our readers enjoyed having something a little different and whether you would like to see the occasional brain teaser included in future issues of *The Belfry*. Perhaps someone would like to compile a ringing-based quiz for example?

Kent's Newest Ring of Bells at Broomfield

July saw the completion of the newly augmented ring of Bells at Broomfield from only having just three to being a ring of five bells, something that has been nearly eight years in the making .

Verger Derek Hadlow had approached the PCC with an offer to donate a new bell, which was accepted but not realising what a train he had set off of legal and structural requirements that were required before we could apply for a Faculty to get the work done, or the finance needed to fund the project . The job for completing these tasks fell to the Chairman of the Fabric committee Brian Hardy, thanks to his unstinting work and perseverance in acquiring all the necessary paperwork and finding grants to make the job become reality.

In early 2014 a Faculty was issued by the Diocese to say we could begin the project. An order was then placed at John Taylor Bellfounder in Loughborough to cast the Treble – known as the Hadlow bell – with a small contingent from the parish to watch it take place . Then in February 2015 the old three bells that had been taken down from the Tower were collected by the Foundry and taken to Loughborough, so they could have new headstocks fitted and be tuned to fit in with the new Treble and a bell that would be the second that had been given to us by the the Redundant churches commission Kelttek Trust .

The new frame extension was installed and tied in with the existing frame just after Easter with the front four returning from the Foundry and being hung in position during June. So it was that the marathon process came to the final day, when on 15th July 2015 the Tenor bell was hauled up into position in the belfry and Broomfield at last became a five bell tower.

To celebrate the historic event ringers gathered on the following Friday night, 17th July, to ring the first Quarter Peal on the bells, details of which are below together with a picture of the band.

The new bells were dedicated at a service on Sunday 30th August, and on the same day the first peal on the augmented bells was rung. More details will appear in our next issue.



Kent County Association
Broomfield, Kent
St Margaret

Friday, 17th July 2015 (3cwt 3qr 8lb in C)

1320 Doubles (6 methods)
Grandsire, Winchendon Place, Reverse Canterbury, St Simon's, St Martin's & Plain Bob.

1. Alison M Gerrish
2. Timothy Munt
3. Malcolm J Hitchcock
4. Darren W Elphick
5. Christopher R Saunders (C)

First quarter peal on the augmented 5.
With thanks to Derek Hadlow for his generous gift.

This article was originally published in the Leeds and Broomfield Parish Magazine and we thank them for allowing us to reproduce it here (with minor additions)

If you haven't yet rung on Broomfield's augmented ring of five there will be two opportunities to do so in the coming months.

Firstly, the bells will be available between 2.30pm and 3.30pm on Saturday 10th October, immediately prior to the Annual District Meeting at nearby Leeds.

There will be a further opportunity to ring at Broomfield before the District Carol Service on Saturday 12th December.

Forthcoming Events

Well, the summer (or what we have had of it) is well nigh over and the nights are rapidly drawing in, giving your editor the chance to complete this issue of *The Belfry*. With conflicting summer activities such as holidays out of the way there is even less reason for ringers not to attend some of the District events coming up this autumn.

By the time this issue is published the **District Practice at Lenham** on Saturday 12th September will be upon us, so just a reminder that there will be ringing on the 21cwt eight from 10am to 12noon.

Next up is the **Annual District Meeting** which this year will be held at **Leeds** on **Saturday 10th October**. There will be ringing on the 17½ cwt ten to suit all levels from Rounds and Call Changes upwards from 3pm - 4.30pm, followed at 4.30pm by shortened Evensong. Tea will take the form of a hot meal which will be provided in the lower kitchen area of the tower. For catering and accommodation purposes **those wishing to have the meal should send their names to Chris Saunders** on 01233 663365 or email csaunders792@btinternet.com by 7th October. Following the meal the Business Meeting will be held in the upstairs tower room. There will be evening ringing as required following the Meeting.

Remember that this is your opportunity to hear what your Committee have been doing on your behalf over the past year and to elect the new Committee for 2015/16. Better still why not stand for election yourself? Every post is up for election every year and several Committee members have expressed their intention not to re-stand. It would be great to have some new blood on the Committee - you don't have to be an expert ringer, just an interest and enthusiasm to carry the District forward.

As a curtain raiser to the afternoon's proceedings the newly rehung and augmented ring of five at **Broomfield** (tenor 3¾cwt) will be available for ringing from 2.30 to 3.30pm. The church can be



St. Margaret, Broomfield

found at the lower end of the road that is the turning for the back entrance for Leeds Castle off the A20 and takes you up to Kingswood, finishing at Chartway Street. On approaching the church entrance you will find there is plenty of car parking that will clearly marked.

We will be starting a **County Surprise Major Practice** as of this October which will be held regularly on the 5th Saturday of a month where there is one. These practices are open to people from everywhere, and will rotate around the County, being held at towers on or near District borders. We hope to start out ringing methods from the *Standard 8*, both individually and spliced, and we may extend this as time goes on. The first of these practices is to be held on Saturday 31st October from 10am to 12 noon at Wrotham.

The first **Kent Youth Striking Competition** will take place on Saturday 24th October 2015 at Chalk (Rochester District). Initially the competition is aimed at young ringers under 25 years of age and will be an inter-District Call Change competition. There should be one team entered per District, and if required the changes can be called from someone outside of the ringing circle.

In future, should the competition be a success, it may be extended to include method ringing and could perhaps be used as the basis to form a team for the following years' Ringing World National Youth Competition!

If you are a young ringer and would like to get involved, or know someone who would be interested please contact your local District Ringing Master, KCACR Chairman Daniel Brady or organiser Ben Legg.

In previous years we have of course had the Call Change Striking Contest on the second Saturday in November. However as this event is now combined with the method Striking Contest and takes place earlier in the year we have instead scheduled a **District Practice** for this date, **Saturday 14th November**. The venue is **Boughton Monchelsea**, where there will be ringing to suit all levels on the 13¾ cwt six from 10am to 12noon. We are always made welcome by the local band here, so please do come.

Hard though it is to believe, Christmas is little more than 3 months away. What better way to start the festive season than to enjoy the **District Carol Service**? It will be held at **Broomfield** on



Saturday 12th December, so if you didn't get the chance to ring on this newly augmented ring of five (4cwt) here is another opportunity. The Service will start at 4.30pm with open ringing beforehand and the traditional mulled wine and mince pies afterwards. See above for details of how to get to this tower - and remember to bring a torch!

The first District event of 2016 will be a **Quarterly District Meeting**, which is provisionally scheduled for the afternoon of **Saturday 9th January**. Further details will appear in the next issue of *The Belfry* and will also be posted on the District website when known.

Remember that all our ringing events cater for all levels of ringing from Rounds and Call Changes upwards. Most also include two designated methods, one fairly basic and the other slightly more advanced, to give the keen ringer something to aspire to. However, ringing is tailored to suit those present and, provided you can handle a bell reasonably competently, you will be most welcome.



Maidstone District 120 Club
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk/120club

Winning numbers May - August 2015

May 2015

1st Prize (£20)	63
2nd Prize (£15)	99
3rd Prize (£10)	70
4th Prize (£5)	36

*Drawn at Staplehurst Practice
Night on 19th May*

June 2015

1st Prize (£40)	118
2nd Prize (£30)	33
3rd Prize (£20)	61
4th Prize (£5)	66

*Drawn at District Practice at
Linton on 13th June*

July 2015

1st Prize (£20)	64
2nd Prize (£15)	45
3rd Prize (£10)	74
4th Prize (£5)	77

*Drawn at Quarterly Meeting at
West Malling on 11th July*

August 2015

1st Prize (£20)	71
2nd Prize (£15)	29
3rd Prize (£10)	44
4th Prize (£5)	104

*Drawn at Staplehurst Practice
Night on 25th August*

The 120 Club draw is made monthly from March to December inclusive.

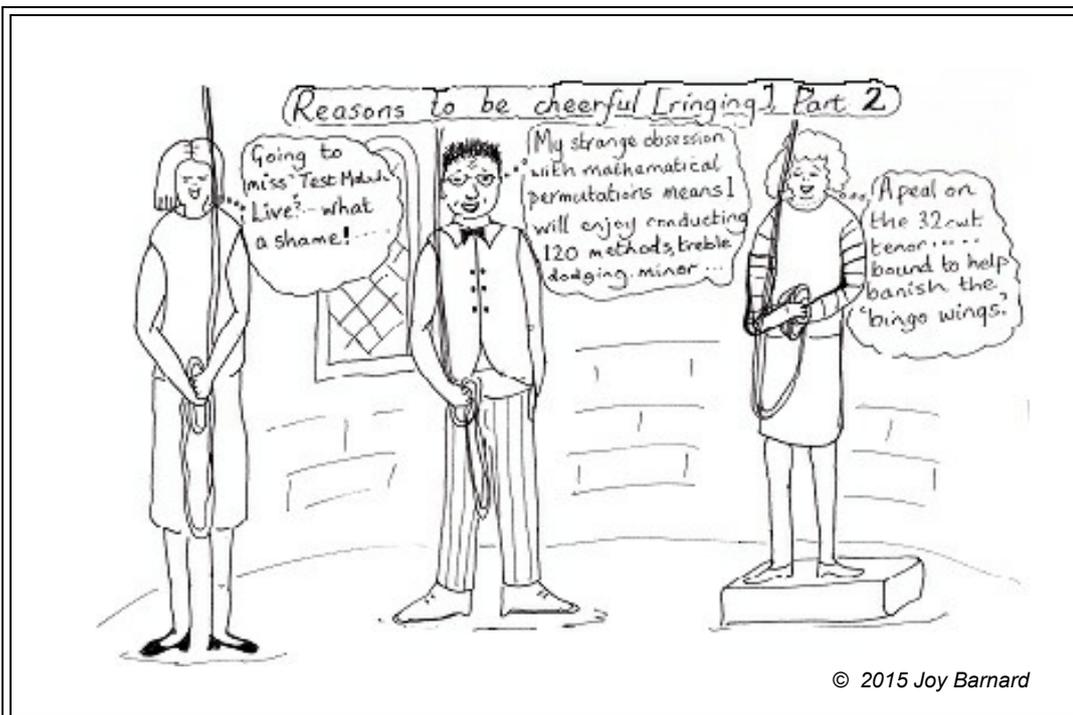
Winning numbers appear in "The Belfry" and also on the District website at

www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk/120club



Wot? No Jargon Buster?

*Due to space constraints there is no Jargon Buster this time.
We hope to resume this popular series in the next issue.*



Here is the latest in the series of cartoons by Joy Barnard

© 2015 Joy Barnard

District BBQ

The weather was kind to us for the District Barbeque on Saturday 15th August. Around 30 ringers and friends attended the event at Marden which featured not only delicious food and drink but also the traditional mini-ring.

It was particularly pleasing to see Tom Barlow enjoying himself at the barbeque, and looking pretty well following his lengthy stay in hospital. Welcome back Tom!

Below is a selection of photos taken at the Barbeque. For more pictures of the evening's fun follow the link <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hyr9lzwelmdav/AAAX1y4fJUWD5xYIUo-UVkCoa?dl=0> (you may need a Dropbox account to view - it's free to set up and use by going to www.dropbox.com).



Andrew Brady gets the food cooking...



...and some of the ringers start eating it.



Tom Barlow with Ashleigh, the District's youngest member



People tucking into their food (which is why the mini-ring was not being rung at that time!)



Enjoying the mini-ring



Tom Barlow enjoying what he enjoys most (apart possibly from ringing).

Thoughts from a virgin pealer

If your tower captain ever suggests you should attempt a peal, stop him or her right there. Take a deep breath and think long and hard about your response. Your brain will be telling you to say 'thanks for thinking of me, but no', but your mouth does not get that message and blurts out 'OK, sounds good to me, count me in!' Before you can think of a good enough excuse to retract your answer, your captain will have sorted out the band around you and you are committed.

Suddenly panic sets in. You realise you will be pulling a huge lump of metal around for close to 3 hours. First thoughts are, will my bladder hold out for that long? (*I know the feeling- Ed.*) Will I crack up with the concentration? Will I collapse with sheer mental and possibly physical exhaustion? Oh no! Letting the side down is not an option.

The pressure builds as the day of reckoning approaches. A nervous twitch comes over you. Why am I doing this? What happens if I lose it after an hour – or two - or worse still with only 120 changes to go?

The moment of truth arrives. We are in the tower. Everyone has had a final visit to the loo. The extra strong mints have been passed around and then the familiar words are uttered by the treble ringer, 'look to, treble's going, she's gone.' We are off into rounds. The conductor checks that everyone is happy, and then calmly says 'go Grandsire Triples'. There is no turning back now. The nerves immediately vanish and suddenly there is a feeling that at the moment this is really quite enjoyable. All is well and the striking is actually quite good. An hour flies by; the next half hour finds your feet fidgeting a bit to get the blood flowing as they tingle from standing in one spot. The muscles in your right arm feel enormous from the repetitive pulling on the sally. You realise that you have passed the half way mark, the point of no return and you feel every part of you is under scrutiny. The muscles in your hands are asking when are they going to wrap themselves around that tankard of ale you promised yourself. Your brain questions whether you would be able to lift a tankard of ale, let alone hold it. 'Oh yes', you tell yourself. 'You bet I can!'

The mind wants to go into a dark corner and sleep forever and every minuscule ache is coming to the fore. Suddenly you are brought back to the here and now. The conductor has uttered those wonderful words 'That's all!' After a few well struck rounds, the final instruction is given – that you are to stand your bell. An incredible sense of pride and achievement comes over you. Get that peal board made and put on the wall. I have earned the right to be immortalised.

Next peal to be rung inside? The jury is still out on that one!

Paul Bastow, Aylesford

This article originally appeared in The Ringing World and we are grateful to Paul for making it available to us also.

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 10th October	Annual District Meeting at Leeds	3pm - 8pm
<i>Election of your District Committee for 2015/16, ringing on the 10 at Leeds...and the new 5 at Broomfield!</i>		
Saturday 31st October	County Surprise Major Practice at Wrotham	10am - 12noon
<i>First in a series of such practices, to be held on the 5th Saturday in the month when there is one.</i>		
Saturday 14th November	District Practice at Boughton Monchelsea	10am - 12noon
<i>Enjoy the last District Practice of the year</i>		
Saturday 12th December	District Carol Service at Broomfield	4.30pm - 5.30pm
<i>Ringing on the new five before the Service and Mulled Wine and Mince Pies afterwards</i>		

***More information about District Events can be found on our own website at
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk***