

The Belfry

February 2005

Issue 81

The Quarterly Journal of the Maidstone District

Editorial

The Belfry is moving into the new technological age.

Towers have already been approached by the District Secretary with a view to electronic transmission of administrative paperwork such as Minutes of Meetings, flyers for forthcoming events etc. Now, as mentioned at last October's ADM, *The Belfry* is to start using the Internet as its primary means of distribution. With effect from the next issue copies will automatically be sent as e-mail attachments to those on the Secretary's circulation list, along with other individuals who have already asked to be sent an electronic version. At the same time it will be posted on the District website.

Of course, not everyone has a computer, and even if they have they might not have an Internet connection. Therefore, a hard copy will continue to be available for those who wish it, but it is not likely to be available until several weeks after the electronic version.

So what will be the main advantages?

Accessibility. First and foremost anyone with an Internet connection will be able to access their own copy of *The Belfry* as soon as it is published, printing it off if they wish. No more waiting around for the tower copy to become available. Also, the electronic version will be available earlier.

Flexibility. An issue of *The Belfry* can be published as soon as there is sufficient material to warrant it, rather than tie publication to Quarterly Meetings as at present. This should also prevent delays in publication such as has afflicted the current issue!

Financial savings: The cost of running off copies of *The Belfry* on a one-per-tower basis, plus necessary copies for the County Secretary, Central Council Library, Ringing World etc is currently around £80 per year – money which could be put to far better use. Most of this should be saved with an electronic distribution.

Full details of how the system will work will be circulated to towers, and individuals on the e-list, shortly. If you are not on the e-list but would like to be included on it please e-mail subscriptionenquiries@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk.

Roy Barclay

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Plus all the usual features

Belfry Gossip

Two new members were elected at the Annual District Meeting at West Malling on 9th October. We welcome **Andrew Barclay** of Staplehurst and **David Saunders** (Harrietsham).

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At the Quarterly Meeting at Birling on 8th January no less than nine ringers from seven different towers were elected. Welcome to **Peter Mack** and **Richard Ashton** both of Nettlestead, **Rosie Green** (Boxley), **Howard Goacher** (East Farleigh), **Martin Gerhards** (All Saints, Maidstone), **Nigel Baker**, (Hollingbourne), **Beryl Boxall** and **Peter Gundrey** (both of Yalding) and **Simon Glover** (Staplehurst). What a difference it will make if all these take an active part in the District. Certainly it will be a great boost to the towers at which they ring.

* * * * *

As part of their practice for the **County 8 bell Competition** a District band rang a quarter peal of Erin Triples for Evensong at Staplehurst on 23rd January. At the successful conclusion of the quarter it was discovered that it was the first in the method for all the band and first in the method as conductor for David Grimwood

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Have you any gossip from your belfry?

Let the Editor know on
(01580) 890247
or E-Mail
*thebelfry@kcacr-maidstone-
district.org.uk*

MAIDSTONE DISTRICT COMMITTEE 2005

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Rosemary Ferrell — 50 years a ringer

Rosemary Ferrell has been ringing at Boughton Monchelsea for fifty years—no mean achievement. Below she shares with us some of her experiences from over that time:

I started ringing on 10th February 1954 when the late Charlie Broad was captain. Arthur Lamb was vice captain and at that time was introducing method ringing. Previously we rang by following numbers on cards on the floor. We learnt to handle the bell with the clapper tied so there was no noise! I still remember the first lesson and the rules that were laid down and thinking “I will never manage this” – more so when I got to change ringing. Fifty years on I am still ringing at St Peter's.

Very few people had cars in the 50s, or the telephone. We walked to and from the Church and when ringing had to be cancelled communication was made via our employers' telephones or knocking on doors. The bells at weddings cost 30/- (£1.50) if the choir were present, £2 if they were not. In 1957 subscriptions to funds were introduced 1/- (5p) per ringer per month. This later fell by the wayside. However, wedding fees and subscriptions enabled the band to have outings to London theatres with a relative or friend, most of the cost coming from funds. Bell ropes in 1960 cost £3-7s-0d (£3.35) each. The last ropes bought cost £71.30 each.

Ringers come and go and for many years we were only able to call people to Church on a few Sundays. Then on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. Now we ring every Sunday on a rota system. Other than normal Church services and festivals I have rung for weddings, funerals, Remembrance Sundays, confirmations and at the inductions of our vicars. The tower joined the KCACR in 1960 and received help from the Association when the bells were taken down and sent to the bell foundry for attention and were subsequently re-hung.

I have many recollections. Among them are:

- *Meeting the Archbishops of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher and Dr. Carey.
- *The bell ringers and the choir being invited for a meal in Boughton Monchelsea Place when Mr. Michael Winch first came there.
- *Ringing for the Church service when it was filmed for television.
- *Making a recording for the radio slot “Church Bells on Sunday”.
- *Ringing at Canterbury Cathedral by a special introduction.
- *A tour of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry with other ringers whilst our bells were there receiving attention.
- *Ringing for the V.E. Day celebrations and ringing in the New Millennium when bells across the country were rung at the same time.

There have also been a few memorable happenings:

- *The time that Charlie Broad buttoned his jacket with the bell rope inside it when about to ring.
- *Broken ropes finishing up in a heap on the floor, the bell ringing down to its rest on its own – in front of a church full of people.
- *Firemen from the training school at Linton coming into the church on a practice night. One said that he could ring. Chaos! It transpired that he had rung his school bell!
- *The wedding when a fairly new ringer pulled the rope from rope's end (high up) with just one finger in a loop. He had no control and the rope was everywhere.
- *Our band of ringers coming third in a District Striking Competition.

The ringers no longer have outings but we do enjoy an annual dinner when our partners and friends join us. At our A.G.M. I was presented with a beautiful bouquet and at the dinner, a garden voucher. I was also given a 50 year service medal made by a fellow ringer!

A big thank you to everyone – in ringing the bells we do our duty to the Church, we meet lots of people and have fun. I have enjoyed helping to keep the bells at St Peter's ringing and will continue to do so. However, we do need more ringers to ensure that our bells do not fall silent in the future.

Rosemary Ferrell

The above article is based on one originally published in St Peter's Boughton Monchelsea Parish Magazine. We are grateful to them for allowing us to reproduce much of it here.

When Irish Bells are Ringing

Eight days, 1000+ miles, 25 towers, 2 guesthouses, 2 hotels, 5 beds, good food, plenty of Guinness and extremely good company – Ireland bottom to top.

From Skibbereen in the south to Coleraine in the north, from Grey Abbey on the east coast to Limerick in the west – we have certainly seen Ireland.

The eight days started with a slow drive along the M25 and an overnight stay at the Holiday Inn, Heathrow. Four ringers and four non-ringers met in the bar where, over the first drink of the holiday, Dot shared some previous experiences of Ireland – including tales of potatoes and Guinness – apparently not together, but you do get potatoes with almost everything.

“...tales of potatoes and Guinness – apparently not together, but you do get potatoes with almost everything...”

The following morning we met up with our fellow travellers at the airport and, after check-in, most managed the hearty breakfast we were all advised to have. Unfortunately some missed out but they would gain an advantage later in the day.

On arrival in Cork the sun was shining and we were divided into three mini-buses and on the road to the first tower. It was suggested that if we arrived ahead of time we could get some lunch and the four in our bus were those who had missed breakfast. Nothing was going to stop us having lunch. The first stop was Skibbereen and a bar called “Annie Mays”. This was our first chance to see the pace of life in Ireland – slow to almost stop.

A lovely gentleman who was more interested in our booklet and our holiday than serving us lunch eventually served up the baguettes as ordered together with two very large bowls of chips – and the first Guinness of the holiday. A very good start.

Two further towers at Bandon and back in Cork and we were ready to check into our two adjoining guesthouses for the night. After a quick shower and change we were off to find something else to eat – was this the pattern for the week?

We set off in a small group and found a hostelry serving food – unfortunately the other

half of the party had found it first and had ordered the last of the Irish stew – a fact that Tim Wraight was not to be allowed to forget.

After a very comfortable night and an excellent breakfast served by the most charming elderly couple whose staff were late arriving, we were all aboard and heading for Doneraile.

Doneraile will be remembered for two things; it had connections with Kent as a memorial to a family from the village showed that some family members were buried in Ulcombe and one of the buses had a flat tyre.

The group rang at two further towers during the day before heading to Waterford and our accommodation. This was again in two lovely guesthouses and once settled in we were off again – no not to eat – to ring. The group had an evening ring at the Cathedral.

This time Dot made sure of her Irish stew by pre-booking their evening meal. Others who had not been so quick were left trying to find somewhere that served food after 9.00 p.m. The Italian was very good.

Another very comfortable, quiet night. It was decided that as the traffic had been so heavy the previous evening, departure would be even earlier and a 7.45 a.m. breakfast was enjoyed by all.

“We set off in a small group and found a hostelry serving food – unfortunately the other half of the party had found it first and had ordered the last of the Irish stew...”

Using an alternative route to avoid the predicted traffic we were north of Waterford in good time heading for Kilkenny. Unfortunately, we then ran into more traffic jams and some slow moving farm vehicles, all resulting in a late arrival at the first tower.

On arrival we found the Church locked. Entry was eventually gained by a rear door only to find that the builders were in renewing the heating system and that they had been trying to contact us to cancel our ring. However, after some negotiating with a very nice man a short ring took place.

Having availed ourselves of the facilities, a

wonderfully decorated loo in a very small cupboard, we were back on the road and heading for Wexford.

We were now back on time and following the ringing in Wexford and Arklow including a quick lunch purchased on route and eaten in the car park in Wexford, we were on our way to Dublin and our overnight stay at the Ashling Hotel. Very comfortable and clean but a typical "businessman's" hotel and as it was raining most of us took dinner in the hotel.

I had always been led to believe that leprechaun were the "little people" of Ireland. Well, the one I met in the hotel corridor certainly wasn't. He was at least six feet tall - and that was before I had partaken of any "liffy water".

Again the time for breakfast on Thursday morning was brought forward. This time not everyone got the message and Darren, Tim and Chris S were on the receiving end of a wake-up call from Dot via the hotel reception.

Nevertheless we were soon packed up and on the road to Drogheda. By now the navigators in the two white buses were gaining in confidence and trying to find quicker, alternative routes to beat, not only the traffic, but each other. The third bus with Dot in charge decided it was much easier just to follow one of the other two.

The journey to Rostreveor took us over the border into Northern Ireland...but what border? The only indications that we were in the north were the money exchange signs, the fact that we were now back to spending English pounds

and that the distances had suddenly become mile rather than kilometres. The remaining part of the day took us along some of the most picturesque costal roads and to some delightful villages with very pretty churches and very dainty, tingly bells.

We arrived in Rostreveor early and all took the opportunity to have a civilised lunch either in one of the village pubs or on park benches enjoying the wonderful scenery. Following the ringing it was so nice to receive hospitality in the form of tea and biscuits before wending our way to Newcastle and Greyabbey before reaching our accommodation in Belfast.

The Days Hotel was again clean and comfortable and some decided to eat in whilst others ventured into town.

After some debate we decided to try to eat out and took directions to the "golden mile". Never thinking that we would ever walk around Belfast as a couple after dark, with some trepidation and thoughts of the past troubles in this area, we set off - in the wrong direction. We were about to give up and head back to the hotel, wherever that was, when we came across a lovely Italian restaurant and, although we did not actually eat Italian, we had the most enjoyable meal. With an extra tower introduced into the Friday programme it was off to Colraine, but first we were given the opportunity to drive through some of the troubled areas only previously seen in the media. We decided to go, not to gloat but to gain a deeper understanding of what these people went through and, to some extent, are still experiencing.



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The latest winning numbers in the 120 Club Draw are:

October:

40 (£20) Geoff (Boxley)
48 (£15) Brenda (Boughton Monchelsea)
73 (£10) Lilly (Maidstone)

November:

83 (£20) Sue (Otham)
3 (£15) Jim (Otham)
5 (£10) Darren (Aylesford)

December:

92 (£40) Geoffrey (King's Hill)
83 (£30) Sue (Otham)
58 (£20) Boughton Monchelsea Ringers

Winners have been notified.

Remember that results are available 24 hours a day on the 120 Club's very own website at:

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

The Shankhill Road, the barricaded police stations and the red, white and blue pavements and flags will leave a lasting memory.

After ringing in Colrairie we had leisure time and everyone headed for the Giants Causeway. Very exhilarating walk down and a gentle bus ride back. Unfortunately we misjudged the time and needing fuel, we were late arriving in Carrickfergus for the first of three evening rings. By the time we reached Bangor, the longest ring of the tour, it was dark and the only option for the non-ringers was to sit in the buses.

Up early and away on Saturday we left Belfast heading for Ballylesson. On arrival it was pointed out that an historic monument was only "400 yards" down the road. After a brisk walk of at least a mile Andy and I reached the Giants Ring which can only be described as a pile of five large rocks in a very large grassy ring – not impressed!

At Hillsborough they were preparing for their harvest festival and did not appreciate the disturbance of wandering visitors. The festive arrangement in the porch was lovely but the finishing touch was definitely the two bunches of unwashed carrots which were hung each side of the main door. We returned to The Ashling Hotel in the red light district of Dublin for the night and a very enjoyable evening meal together as a group.

On Sunday the buses were left in the garage and we went on a ringing walk around Dublin. The ringers joined three groups at their respective churches for Sunday service ringing and one group for coffee before we were let loose on Dublin. There was time for some sightseeing and souvenir shopping before the final ring in Dublin at the National Cathedral Church of St Patrick. Whilst the ringers were busy we were able to enjoy the choir practice and a look around this wonderful building. Some more free time and we took a city bus tour which only confirmed our desire to return.

Monday and it is already time for our flight back to England, but before this there was just one more ring and a chance for some final sightseeing. This time around the Wicklow Mountains. Spectacular views, cascading waterfalls and bumpy roads, what a way to finish an awe-inspiring week.

Our thanks to all those who put together such an organised trip. To Dee and Dot for the overall arrangements, to Chris for his maps and clear directions, despite the traffic jams, to Tim for arranging the transport, to the drivers and navigators in each bus and to Mal & Dee for the booklet which will be a lasting memory but finally to all those who made the whole week so enjoyable.

Wendy Borer

PS: Never did meet Bob Major who seemed to follow us everywhere!

Kent Archaeological Society

On Saturday 12th March 2005, the Churches Committee of the Kent Archeological Society will be staging an all-day event, entitled "*Reading a Church*", at the medieval church of St. Helen's, Cliffe at Hoo, beginning at 10.30a.m.

Ringers with an interest in church history and architecture may wish to be aware of this event.

The principal speaker will be Prof. Nigel Saul, distinguished medievalist from Royal Holloway, University of London.

Professor Saul will use the varied features of Cliffe church as a means to interpreting the inter-related history, architecture, and ideology, of this, and other churches.

Cost: £5.

Bookings to: Mr. Philip Lawrence, Barnfield, Church Lane, East Peckham, Tonbridge, Kent. TN12 5JJ.

Tel. 01622 871945.

A hot lunch may also be booked for an additional £5.

Cheques to be made payable to "Kent Archeological Society".

Early booking is advised, as numbers may have to be restricted.



The Kent County Association of Change Ringers

125 in 2005

A celebration of 125 years of
the KCACR

Saturday 14th May 2005

- ? 11am: Service at Canterbury Cathedral
- ? 12 noon: panoramic photo session
- ? 1pm: Anniversary Luncheon in the
International Study Centre at Canterbury
Cathedral (licensed bar available)

Tickets for the 3-course Luncheon cost £25 from
Frank Lewis, Mallans, Main Road, Sundridge,
Sevenoaks TN14 6EF
(cheques payable to *KCACR* please)

District Events

In contrast with the early part of the year the last three months of 2004 were very busy ones for the District. Below is a résumé of what went on.

Annual District Meeting

Only about 20 people attended the 2004 ADM at West Malling on Saturday 9th October. Fortunately the range of expertise enabled a variety of ringing including Cambridge Major. Evensong (from the Book of Common Prayer!) was followed by a delicious tea kindly provided by the West Malling ringers. At the ADM itself the main items of business were:

- *Reports for 2004 from the District Officers;
- *Election of the District Officers and Committee for the coming year;
- *Election of two new members. Their names appear on page 2;
- *Announcement of the draft programme for 2005. Details have for the most part been confirmed and are listed on page 15;
- *Discussion on several proposed changes to the Association rules.

Following the Meeting there was further ringing on West Malling's 8 bells.

Rock 'n' Roll Night

The long-awaited Rock 'n' Roll Night was held at Harrietsham Village Hall on Saturday 31st October. Well over a hundred people enjoyed themselves, dancing the night away to music from the '50s and '60s. The highly successful evening benefited the Bell Restoration Fund to the tune of more than £500. The success of the event was due largely to Cathy and Darren. Our grateful thanks to them.

Call Change Striking Contest

A report is on page 12.

District Carol Service

The District Carol Service this year was held at Aylesford and was organised by the local ringers. The 30 or so people who came were treated to a full choir, traditional carols and readings and, of course, the traditional mince pies and mulled wine afterwards. Our grateful thanks go to the Aylesford band.

Quiz Evening

Following the Carol Service the Aylesford ringers had another treat in store for us. Their Quiz Evening attracted 11 teams and raised over £350 towards their bell restoration project. Winners were Santa's Little Helpers with 109 points. As their name implies this team had the youngest average age of all the teams. Runners up were Forth Position with 93½ points, followed by Deep Thought with 91. Once again, many thanks to the Aylesford band for organising such a good evening.

Quarterly and Tower Captains' Meetings at Birling

The first Quarterly Meeting of 2005 attracted 19 people. Despite the low attendance, we were able to ring both the designated special methods (Erin Triples and Pain Bob Major) as well as other standard methods and rounds and call changes. At the business meeting a short report was given on the earlier Tower Captains' Meeting which had discussed a variety of issues including training and retention of ringers and communication within the District. More information can be obtained from the District Secretary. No less than nine members from seven different towers were elected (in some cases re-elected!) to the Association. Their names are on page two.

Tired of waiting to see that single tower copy of The Belfry?

**Well, in future you will be able to get your very own copy on-line
and
you will get it before the hard copy version is even printed
...and it is free!**

**To find out more e-mail
subscriptionenquiries@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk**

Coots in Hampshire

by Freda Groves

The COOTS holiday 2004 was based at the Warner holiday complex on Hayling Island. As in previous years Pat Dickens organised the accommodation whilst I looked after the tower planning. Unlike last year, this year was fraught with a few problems, not least that David Earl was unable to come with us due to a family bereavement. Then at 8pm on the day before we were due to go I had a call from the tower captain of the first tower on Tuesday to say he had got to cancel our visit because of frayed ropes! However he was kindly able to arrange a replacement tower at short notice.

Our first tower on the Monday was Ss. Peter & Paul, **Hawkley**, a small church in a village setting with some very decorative carved stone work inside. The fifth had a cracked stay but we all managed to have a good ring on the eight. Access to the belfry at All Saints, **Steep**, a very ornate exterior with a tile hung tower. was by climbing up two wooden ladders. Once there we all enjoyed our ring on this light six. Ringing done for the day, we checked into the hotel in the afternoon and everyone came to our room for pre-dinner drinks.

St. Peter, **Titchfield** (the "replacement" tower) was our first venue on the Tuesday. This church is one of the oldest buildings in the country in daily use and we had a good ring on the easy to handle six. St. John the Baptist, **Shedfield** is a large Norman church with a red brick interior. Unfortunately we were only able to ring the back six of this ring of eight because of problems with the trebles. Luckily we were joined by one of the local ringers and we rang Bob Minor, Stedman and Cambridge.

The ground floor eight at St Peter, **Bishops Waltham** went well. This big church has a very large oak door at the entrance, dating from 1613. The tower collapsed in 1582 and was rebuilt between 1584 and 1589 with a "pepper box" top. There was no-one to let us in St. Barnabas, **Swanmore**, but a quick call to the rector and we were soon on our way. The light six went well and we finished up there with another course of Cambridge. The ground floor eight at St. Peter, **Soberton** also went well, but the church was a very dark dismal place and not very welcoming.

Wednesday saw us at St. John the Baptist, **Westbourne**. We arrived in good time to ring before joining the locals for Holy Communion. Alas we got a very cool reception from the rector and he even started the service before

we were all seated. We rang for 15 minutes after the service and then made a hasty retreat. It was the first church at which I had ever received yellow Communion wine!!

Bosham is a pretty little hamlet on one of the inlets of Chichester Harbour and was busy with tourists and boating people. We were warned to park only in the public car-park. If you park by the water's edge your car may be gone on your return, due to the fast rising tide. Holy Trinity's six bells were easy to handle 6 and a good ring was had by all.

All Saints, **Catherington**, our first tower on Thursday was augmented to eight last year. We had an enjoyable ring there and were joined by one of the local band. On to St Peter, **Petersfield**; These were the heaviest bells of the holiday but the eight went well.

St. Barthomew, **Rogate**, and disaster! We had been given permission to ring there but the contact forgot to meet us. It was a ground floor ring so we got underway. I was ringing up the 3 when it suddenly set itself. When we started to ring again the 3 was firmly fixed. We made about ten phone calls to report the problem - all to answerphones - so we rang the rest down and left. I rang my contact later who was very apologetic and said if we had been met we would have been warned about the trouble with the "Hastings" stay. St. Mary & St. Gabriel, **Harting**, was interesting! A six, rung from the chancel crossing, a very long draught and no guides! We all managed to have a go. There is a wooden spiral stair-case in the church which leads to the bell chamber and the clock room - said to have been carved from one oak tree from the nearby Uppark estate, in 1852.

We were joined on the holiday by Janet and Alistair Donaldson from near Sudbury, Essex, both experienced ringers and they were a great asset to our holiday group. They had brought with them their "mini ring" of 8. They managed to find a church hall nearby where they were able to set it up and we all spent two hours that evening learning the art of ringing these bells.

All too soon our last day had arrived. We started at the easy-to-ring eight at St. Mary, **Liss**, a Victorian church built about 110 years ago when the railway went through the area and all the locals moved near their work. It is a splendid, open plan church, with the belfry is at first floor level looking down into the nave. St. Peter, **Liss**, is now a redundant church and it

was a bit dark, damp and dismal. The ground floor six needed a strong arm.

There were about two dozen of us on the holiday and we all managed to have a ring at all the churches, except Rogate! The less experienced were given encouragement and the more experienced were able to ring up to Cambridge.

The COOTs' holiday in 2005 is to the Isle of Wight, from Tuesday 11th to Saturday 15th October. We have a few vacancies, and if anyone is interested they should contact Pat Dickens on 01622 726101. We will be staying at a hotel in Shanklin and will hopefully be "doing" all the towers on the island.

Committee Matters

The District Committee has met once since the last issue of *The Belfry* went to press, on Sunday 7th November. Here is a resumé of the main points discussed:

Maidstone District Committee Meeting of 7th November 2004.

Arising from the previous meeting

Bells on Sunday: The liaison process in place.
Rock and Roll evening: This had been a great success with a projected profit of more than £530. Thanks were given to everyone who had helped in any way.

Special Methods at meetings: It was agreed that if special methods were to be included in District meetings, they would be decided by the Ringing Masters and the District advised of such well in advance through notice on the website and tower posters.

Officers' Reports

Chairman: The raising and lowering morning at East Malling had been successful in spite of low manning levels.

Publicity officer: A .pdf version of The Belfry was now available and response to it would be welcomed. It is envisaged that in future The Belfry will be available electronically (*although hard copies would still be available—Ed.*), with the responsibility for circulation then being with individual towers.

Ringing Masters: Reports from Watringbury, Yalding, Staplehurst, Aylesford and West Malling indicated various situations and degrees of concern on support, standards and commitment. It was generally agreed that falling numbers was a major contributory factor in these concerns.

Tower Liaison

The tower Liaison list would be updated.

Forthcoming Events

Call Change Competition: Two teams entered to date. The judges would be Margaret Funnell and one other. All arrangements were in hand, including trophies, draw and certificates.

Carol Service: All arrangements in hand including service sheets. Readers required, and several Committee members volunteered.

Quiz: Eight teams were known to be participating so far. Support from the Committee and District for both the Carol service and the Quiz should be promoted. Profits from the quiz would go towards Aylesford Bell Restoration Fund.

Tower Captains' Meeting January 8th, 2005: The Agenda would include the following for discussion:

- *Recruitment and retention of ringers
- *Bells on Sunday
- *Competitions
- *Training
- *Attendance at social events
- *Good practice and sharing of ideas

It was agreed that the respective correspondence would be addressed directly to the Tower Captains.

Any Other Business

County AGM: This would be held on Monday 28th March at Otford.

County 125th Celebrations: This would be on Saturday May 14th at Canterbury Cathedral. It was agreed that notification of this to the District membership was a matter of urgency, thus ensuring that members had every opportunity to apply for the restricted number of tickets available. Frank Lewis was the County contact for this event. It would be advertised on the District website and enclosed in District correspondence including the email group.

County 6-bell Competition 2005: Our District are hosts. Suggested possible towers were Snodland, Boughton Monchelsea and Bearsted. Catering facilities must be separate.

County 8-bell competition: This would take place on February 26th on the back 8 at Beckenham and the method would be Erin Triples. The Ringing Masters would arrange District practice sessions.

Ringing Opportunities: The Chairman reported on an advert placed in Otham Parish magazine about ringing opportunities.

This does not purport to be a complete and accurate report of the meetings. For a copy of the full minutes please contact the District Secretary.



TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

County Elementary Ringing Schools

Friday 1 April - booking by 17 February

Saturday 30 July – booking by 11 June

Exact activities in each group will depend on individual requirements. All groups are likely to discuss appropriate bell handling and listening skills. Groups will be arranged according to bookings on the following topics:

Rounds and Call Changes - ringing accurately and understanding call changes, calling changes (if there is demand)

Plain Hunting - ropesight, accuracy and general awareness

Plain Bob or Grandsire Doubles - plain courses and touches

Putting in the Bobs

Saturday 29 October - booking by 1 September

Day course on elementary conducting. We expect to run basic groups on Plain Bob Doubles/Minor and Grandsire. Please let us know **as soon as possible** if you would like other topics.

Individual bookings please by due date giving name, address, phone number and email (if any).

Further information/bookings for the above:

Catherine Lewis 01959 563767 or cmlewis@btopenworld.com

TSC members: Peter Dale, Neil Jones, Judith de Leeuw, Catherine Lewis, Don Niblett, Roger Pocock, Mike Worthington (**ex officio:** Cathryn Hills, Margaret Funnell, Eric Roughley)

For more information see the KCACR website (kcacr.org.uk).

Canterbury Cathedral 12-bell practices

Minimum standard Grandsire Cinques

Thursday 31 March 7.15 pm, Saturday 28 May 6 - 8 pm, Saturday 30 July 6 - 8 pm,
Thursday 29 September 7.15 pm, Saturday 26 November 6 - 8 pm.

Further details from Hazel Basford 01227 861144 or hazel@basford.com

The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Dover

Basic Skills

Weekly sessions are held on Saturday mornings from 10 to 12, concentrating on practice in basic skills such as bell handling, raising and lowering, rounds and good striking.

No booking is required; contact Barbara Dale for street map and advice about parking

01304 823217 or barbaradale@fastmail.fm

Call Change Contest

The 2004 Call Change Striking Contest was held at Stansted on Saturday 13th November and three bands took part, the same number as last year. The winners this year were Staplehurst with 33 faults, with Aylesford runners-up with 51 faults. Host band Stansted came a creditable 3rd with 64 faults. At the risk of your editor being accused of favouritism, a special mention must be made of Andrew Barclay who, at the age of 12, was in the winning band in his first striking contest. A picture of the happy band is below.

Due to the small number of bands entering this year it was not possible to award the shield for the most improved band.

The contest was judged by Margaret Funnell, Graham Cottle and Alex Britten of Rochester District, to whom we are very grateful. Our thanks, too, to the Stansted ringers for providing us with cups of hot tea and other goodies on a bitter afternoon.

Full results of the Contest are:

<i>Winners</i>	Staplehurst	33 faults
<i>2nd place</i>	Aylesford	51 faults
<i>3rd place</i>	Stansted	64 faults



Barming visit West Kent

by Freda Groves

Not being content with organising the COOTs' ringing holiday I also once again arranged the Barming ringers' own outing in September. This year we decided to go westwards from Maidstone.

We arrived early at our first tower, St John **West Wickham** with its nice ring of six. We had expected a lot of traffic because of the Biggin Hill Air Show but it didn't materialise. We were welcomed by the tower captain and her little dog which welcomed each of us.....apparently he does this every time he is taken to the church! A bit of nostalgia here as on the belfry table was a copy of Alex Waddington's *Grandsire*. Three of us had been taught to ring by Sandy in "the good old days" and we all have a copy of the first edition.

We encountered problems at our second tower, St Mary **Hayes**. The locals are fed up with the sound of bells and our visit was almost cancelled. In the end we agreed to keep our visit short and sweet. The six bells were very noisy both inside and out.

On to St Mark **Biggin Hill** and still no traffic! The history of this church is interesting. Until the late 1950s it was a "tin tabernacle" but the then vicar and his congregation built the new church themselves with bricks from a redundant church in Peckham, South East London. The six very light bells are in a separate tower which is air conditioned. **Downe** was to be our next tower but it was cancelled at short notice.

Ss Peter & Paul **Cudham** was our first tower after a picnic lunch during which we watched the aerobatics from the air show. We only managed rounds and call changes on the interesting light ten.

I had looked for another tower and found that everyone already had visiting bands or weddings. In the end we finished up just a few miles from home at St Michael, **East Peckham**. The six bells at this redundant church were heavy and, with a long draught, were not easy to ring.

We had only a small group this year - twelve from Barming and two visitors - but a good time was had by all.

Belfry Reminiscences

5 years ago issue 62 was the first of the new millennium. Unfortunately, since it had been prepared in the previous one it did not contain details of the large amount of ringing in of 2000. However the Editorial in January 2000 looked forward with optimism to the future and the changes it would inevitably bring in the name of progress.

Articles in that edition included one on the recently installed simulator at Staplehurst and there was a report on the new lease of life for the chimed bells at Langley following work undertaken there by Malcolm Hitchcock. Sheila Dobbie was congratulated on achieving 50 years' membership of the Association, whilst it was with sadness that *The Belfry* carried an obituary on Peter Carter, former Tower Captain at West Malling.

10 years ago in January 1995 issue 45 of *The Belfry* carried an Editorial on the intention of the government to ensure that church servants, including ringers, paid tax on their "earnings". The Belfry regretted that a service which is done primarily out of love was being brought into the fiscal arena, particularly since many church servants freely give many hours of their own time, and not a little of their own money, in furtherance of the church's work. Fortunately no more was heard, and the government fell from power a couple of years later!

There were no less than 28 achievements listed in issue 45 including Martin Pring's first peal on 12 - Grandsire Cinques for the Police Guild at Amersham. Similarly there was a respectable entry of eight bands for the 1994 Call Change Competition at Boxley, which was won by All Saints' Maidstone with East Farleigh taking the shield for the most improved band.

For the first time in many years the Association had held a Dinner in 1994 and issue 45 carried a report of the occasion. Although socially an enjoyable event, it was not well supported, with only around 50 people attending including just six from our District - and one of those was the County Chairman! Not surprisingly the venture has not been repeated since.

20 years ago in January 1985 issue 13 was a relatively small one by modern standards. Nevertheless there was still plenty going on. The Editorial in that issue, for example, suggested three new year ringing resolutions: firstly to attend District Meetings; secondly to ensure regular Sunday service ringing; and thirdly to take *The Ringing World* each week. In fact the Editor of the RW contributed an article to that issue extolling the virtues of our national journal.

Around 45 members attended the 1994 ADM and discussed proposed new rules for the Association and a simplified statement of rules for KCACR Striking Competitions. On the subject of striking contests, All Saints Maidstone won the Call Change shield by a close margin over Wateringbury on a mild dry November afternoon. Ten teams met to do battle at Boxley, compared with just three for the 2004 contest; East Sutton entered a band for the first time but were heavily penalised by the judges for their closed handstroke leads. This prompted a letter to the Editor from the then East Sutton tower captain Maurice Fermor expressing dismay that they should have been thus penalised, given that cartwheeling was their usual style of ringing. As a result the rules were ultimately changed to cover such eventualities.

Finally, the issue of January 1985 carried a tribute to Percy Town, Tower Captain at Linton for many years, who had died on 14th September 1984.

55 Years ago January 1950 saw issue 2 of the original Belfry, and the Editorial looked back on a successful 1949 both in terms of ringing standards and the number of peals rung. It looked forward with confidence to the second half of the 20th century.

News from around the District showed that combined practices held in the east of the District were thriving, with visitors from miles around attending those at Staplehurst, Egerton and Headcorn (the last two then being in Maidstone District!). At Staplehurst two of the local band - Frank Tomlin and his sister Margaret (now Margaret Cramp) had achieved their first peal together. At the other end of the District some enterprising ringers had decided that the best way to improve the "go" of the old eight at Birling, in readiness for a quarterly meeting later in the year, was to ring a peal on them. This they duly did. Soon after the bells were declared unringable, and remained so for the next forty years.

Future Events

Last year saw a scaling down of District events, partly in the hope that more people would attend those that remained. This did not happen, and the District Committee therefore suggested a fuller and more varied programme for 2005. The provisional programme was agreed by the Annual District Meeting, and most of the events and venues have now been confirmed.

A full list of District events for 2005 is on the District Calendar on the inside back cover. Could Tower Captains/Secretaries please detach it and place prominently on their tower notice-boards. Remember that you can also check out future events by visiting the District website *Maidstone District OnLine* at www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk and choosing "Calendar of Events".

The first two are not strictly District events, but have District involvement. Firstly on Saturday 26th February we will be entering a band in the **County 8-bell Striking Contest** on the back eight at Beckenham. Ringing Master Sue Bassett has arranged the band for the test piece of Erin Triples, and those involved will have been informed. This is the first time in three years that Maidstone District has entered a band so, even if you're not in the band why not come and support your team.

Then on Easter Monday 28th March there is the **County AGM** which this year will be held at Otford in the Tonbridge District. There will be a service in Otford Church at 12noon, followed by lunch at 1pm (advance booking essential) with the AGM itself starting at 2.30pm. Towers will be open on routes to and from Otford before and after the meeting. For more details contact Jane Nielson on 01732 52970. Maidstone District are not noted for their support of the County AGM. Let's try and alter that this year.

The next **District Quarterly Meeting**, which will be somewhat unique in that it will be held in the morning of Saturday 9th April at St Michael & All Angels, Maidstone. There will be ringing from **10am to 1pm** with a break from 11.30 – 12.00 for a short business meeting. **Please note the unusual timing of this meeting.** The special methods for this meeting will be posted on the website when known. There will also be ringing from rounds upwards. All are, of course, most welcome.

There is no District event in May, but there is of course the **KCACR 125th Anniversary celebration** on Saturday 14th May. There will be a service in Canterbury Cathedral at 11am, a panoramic photo shoot at 12noon and a three course lunch (early booking strongly recommended) at 1pm. Tickets for the lunch are now available, and sales are going quite well so don't leave it too long if you plan to go. Full details are available on the County website at kcacr.org.uk, or you can simply send £25 per ticket direct to Frank Lewis at Mallans, Main Road, Sundridge, Sevenoaks TN14 6EF (don't forget to enclose an SAE).

Looking way ahead, the **District Striking Contest** this year is at Barming on 11th June, draw at 4pm. Towers will receive full details nearer the time.

Any updates or revisions to these events will be notified to towers and will, of course be posted on the District website.

Articles for publication in the

The Belfry

Should be sent to the Editor at

belfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

*Please limit articles to one side of A4
in 10pt Arial if possible*



120 Club

Have you renewed your membership for 2005 yet?
If you were a member last year you will have been invited to rejoin
If you would like to join the Club as a new member please contact the
Hon Promoter Mal Williams as soon as possible on (01622) 861143.

For more information visit the 120 Club's own Web Site at
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk/120Club



MAIDSTONE DISTRICT CALENDAR

2005

Easter Monday 28th March
COUNTY AGM at OTFORD
Service 12noon, Lunch 1pm, Meeting 2pm

Saturday 9th April
QUARTERLY MEETING
at St Michael & All Angels MAIDSTONE
Ringing from 10am - 1pm
with break from 11.30 - 12noon for short Business Meeting
PLEASE NOTE UNUSUAL TIMING OF THIS EVENT

Saturday 14th May
KCACR 125th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
Canterbury Cathedral
Service 11am, photo shoot 12noon, Luncheon 1pm

Saturday 11th June
STRIKING CONTEST at BARMING
Draw 4pm

Saturday 9th July
QUARTERLY MEETING at HUNTON
Ringing from 5pm - 8pm
with break from 6.30 - 7pm for tea and short Business Meeting

Saturday 6th August
DISTRICT PRACTICE NIGHT at QUEX PARK
Details to be confirmed

Saturday 9th October
ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETING at LEEDS
Ringing from 3pm, Service 4.30pm, Tea 5pm
Followed by Business Meeting at 5.45pm approx
Further ringing in the evening

Saturday 12th November
CALL CHANGE STRIKING CONTEST at IGHTHAM
Draw 2.30pm

Saturday 4th December
DISTRICT CAROL SERVICE at NETTLESTEAD
Ringing from 4pm
Service 5pm

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For updates visit Maidstone District OnLine at
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk
or contact the District Secretary on 01622 746571