

The Belfry

Quarterly Journal
of the
KCACR
Maidstone District

January 2008

Issue 86

Editorial

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Goals! We all have them to a greater or lesser extent. Maybe excelling at sport, getting to university, reaching the top of one's profession or simply being a good parent. Many of us may never achieve the ultimate we had hoped for, but when we look back we realise just what we have achieved. Goals are one of life's driving forces and without something to aim for life would be dull indeed.

This is particularly true of ringing. Your target may be to ring Call Changes well for Sunday service, to ring Spliced Surprise Maximus at St Paul's Cathedral or anything in between. Every goal is important to the individual concerned. The great thing with ringing is that you can progress just as far as you wish if you have the desire to do so. Having achieved your goal you can set yourself another, then another and so on. The learning curve can be as steep or gradual as you wish.

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We are fortunate that in our District at the moment there are a number of ringers – both young and not so young – who are doing exactly that. They are setting themselves goals and achieving them. This is an encouraging sign for the future of the District following several years of comparative stagnation. With this in mind we have decided, with effect from this issue, to reintroduce the *Achievements* column which was discontinued a few years ago. It will include such ringing milestones as first peals and quarter-peals, first as conductor, first of Surprise, and landmark events such as 100th peals/quarters. The hope is that this will both give those concerned the credit to which they are due and also to give encouragement to those who are perhaps just a step behind.

The *Achievements* column is on page 7. The information has been gleaned from a number of sources, including the Ringing World and Campanophile. However, the only way to ensure inclusion is by letting the Editor know. People are normally too modest to blow their own trumpet so, if someone in your tower has achieved something to be proud of, let the world share their success. They deserve it!

Website:

www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

Roy Barclay

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Plus all the usual features

Belfry Gossip

A new member was elected to the Association at the Quarterly Meeting on 12th January. We welcome **Ellie Wheal** of East Farleigh and look forward to seeing her at future District events.



On Friday 14th December **Brenda Sladen** of St Peter & St Paul Aylesford rang her first quarter peal at her first attempt. Nothing unduly amazing about that you may think until you learn that it was rung on the eve of her 70th birthday! Why the eve of her birthday? Well she had organised a barn dance for the evening of 15th and wanted to make sure that everything went smoothly during the day so that her guests had a really fantastic time at the dance. Well done Brenda from all your fellow ringers.



Those of you who remember **Darren and Rachel Williams**, formerly of Otham, will be pleased to hear that they have become proud parents with the birth of their first child, Bethany Louise. She weighed in at 8lb, and mum and daughter (and dad!) are reported to be doing well. Congratulations to Darren and Rachel and of course to grandparents Mal and Doreen!



Congratulations to young **Bethany Gerrish** of Aylesford, who rang her first quarter-peal inside on Saturday 29th December at Stansted. The occasion was not without incident, as can be seen on page 7.

Congratulations too to 13 year old **Samantha Harman**, also of Aylesford, who rang her first quarter peal at her first attempt for Sunday morning service on 27th January. What made this a little different was that no-one let on to her before hand that it was going to be a quarter. When asked afterwards when did she suspect something unusual was happening, she admitted it was around the 20 minute mark and was extremely glad that she had not been told about the attempt in advance!



Mereworth bells have been removed from the tower and taken to White's of Appleton for restoration work. Work on the tower is also necessary, and it is likely to be about a year before the bells are back in the tower. There is more about the removal of the bells on page 10.



Finally, belated congratulations to **Richard Ash** of Bearsted who was elected Mayor of Maidstone in May 2007. A quarter-peal of Doubles was rung at Bearsted on 1st July to celebrate the event, with Richard ringing the tenor.

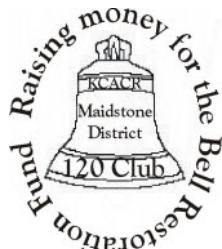
Have you any gossip from your belfry?

Let the Editor know on

(01580) 890247

or E-Mail

thebelfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk



The latest winning numbers in the 120 Club Draw are:

July:

- 87 (£20) Veronica (*Ulcombe*)
- 54 (£15) Freda (*Staplehurst*)
- 10 (£10) Fred (*Lenham*)

October:

- 110 (£20) Margaret (*Boughton Monchelsea*)
- 100 (£15) Richard (*c/o Yalding Ringers*)
- 101 (£10) Richard (*Ightham*)

August:

- 15 (£20) Gerald (*Boxley*)
- 82 (£15) Dot (*Folkestone*)
- 105 (£10) Andrew (*Harrietsham*)

November:

- 38 (£20) Jennifer (*Boughton Monchelsea*)
- 28 (£15) Robert (*Maidstone*)
- 102 (£10) Rosemary (*Maidstone*)

September:

- 37 (£20) Peter (*Linton*)
- 114 (£15) Sonia (*Boughton Monchelsea*)
- 105 (£10) Andrew (*Harrietsham*)

December:

- 37 (£40) Peter (*Linton*)
- 21 (£30) Doreen (*Otham*)
- 51 (£20) Bell Restoration Fund

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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

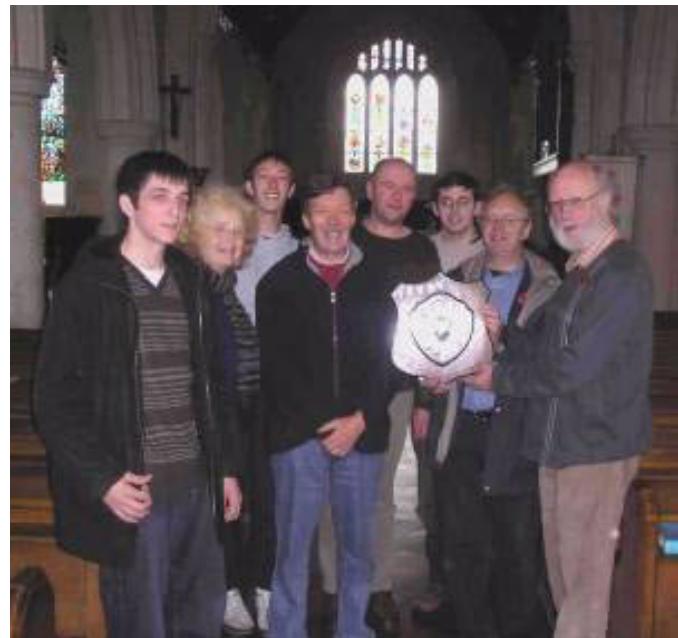
Call Change Contest

By modern day standards this year's Call Change Striking Contest, held at Snodland on 10th November, was reasonably successful with five bands taking part, representing four towers.

The winners this year were Staplehurst. In fact they put in two bands, one male and one female. No further comment! The successful band is pictured right with the shield and the judges. Congratulations to them, and in particular to Colin Friend who rang in the winning band in his first attempt at competition ringing.

There is also a trophy for the most improved band, but it has not been possible to award it for the past few years due to the small number of bands entering. This year it was suggested that this trophy be awarded to the band with the most ringers ringing in a striking contest for the first time. Congratulations to the joint Stansted/Aylesford band which contained no less than three novices.

Our judges this year were our friends Frank and Catherine Lewis from neighbouring Tonbridge District. Our thanks to them for coming over to judge the contest for us, and to Snodland (and particularly Sue Brooks) for hosting the contest and providing refreshments.



Staplehurst Lads receive the Call Change Competition winners' shield from the judges

Call Change Striking Contest 2007

Winners	<i>Staplehurst Lads</i>	43 faults
2nd	<i>Aylesford</i>	64 faults
3rd	<i>Leeds</i>	123 faults
4th	<i>Staplehurst Lasses</i>	162 faults
5th	<i>Stansted/Aylesford</i>	209 faults

Training Courses at The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Dover

Saturday morning practices at the Centre have now resumed . They run from 10am to 12noon and the aim is to cater for all standards up to Plain Bob. We do not teach bell handling from scratch, but the first half hour or so is devoted to bell handling practice.

The Centre will run four extra Saturday courses during 2008, on 23rd February, 31st May, 30th August and 22nd November respectively. The first of these, on 23rd February, will be at Dover from 10am to 4pm. The course is entitled "Kaleidoscope Techniques"; it will include material of interest both to learners and their instructors.

An application form for the course on 23rd February is on page 12

Committee Matters

The District Committee has met twice since the last issue of *The Belfry*, on Wednesday 5th September and Wednesday 31st October. Below is a résumé of the main points discussed at those meetings.

Maidstone District Committee Meeting of 5th September 2007

Matters arising from the previous meeting

District Website: There had been no progress on the three website issues, but these would be completed by the next Committee Meeting.

Jubi-Peal: The Committee were unsure of progress by County. It was agreed that the District should explore ideas and bring them to the April 2008 Quarterly Meeting at Ulcombe for discussion by membership.

County AGM 2009 Maidstone District: Progress report awaited. To be added as regular Agenda item.

District Officers' Reports

The Treasurer reported that all subscriptions for 2007 had been received except from one tower who would now be uninsured. There were 207 members overall against 233 in the previous year. No more wedding fees had been received since May and a reminder would be sent with the request to towers for next year's subscriptions. A total of £202 donations had been received through the Barn Dance (£120), Ready Steady Cook (Aylesford) (£62) and Anne Wallen (£20). Together with the 120 Club the Treasurer saw no problem in meeting the County target this year. Some new members' certificates and books needed sending out. The District Secretary would provide details to the Treasurer to complete this aspect.

The Publicity Officer reported that *The Belfry* had been published online in July but he had no contacts for photocopying 20 copies x 16 sides. The District Secretary would add a request for help in next letter to towers. A contribution towards costs could be made.

The District Reps reported on the items concerning the

Maidstone District from the meeting held on 25th August. A District 10-bell challenge was to be held at Ashford on 27th October and the District Secretary would encourage interest in next letter to towers and gather support at the ADM for Maidstone District to enter a band. The eight-bell competition on 23rd February 2008 would be in Tonbridge District, but from 2009 onwards would be held in June.

Appointment of Committee Tower Representatives

It was agreed to keep the list handy and not allocate towers to individual representatives as we had managed for some years without this. The District Secretary would advise towers accordingly and a copy of next tower letter would be placed on the website.

Forthcoming events

12th September: District Practice – Linton. 7.30 – 9pm. Special methods: Plain Bob & Rutland.

6th October: Surprise Major Practice – St. Michael's Maidstone. 10.30am -12noon.

13th October: ADM – Staplehurst. 3pm ringing, 4.30pm service, 5pm tea and meeting, 6.30 - 8pm evening ringing. The District Secretary would organise local arrangements and evensong with two readings.

10th November: Call Change Striking Competition – Snodland. 9.45am draw.

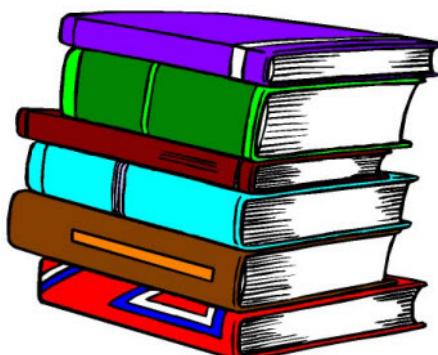
8th December: Carol Service – Hunton. 3pm ringing, 4pm service followed by mulled wine and mince pies, then further ringing.

Remainder of advertised calendar as advertised and suggestions for 2008-2009. The Committee indicated agreement to the suggested calendar.

Any Other Business

AGM 2009 – Roy Barclay had offered to organise the ringing routes for the day. There were queries over the luncheon and meeting venue and an update would be requested from Aylesford.

Maidstone District Bookshop



*Lots of new titles now in stock
Also badges, car stickers, DVDs, etc*

*Available at most District Meetings,
or from*

**Chris Saunders, 44 Royds Road,
South Willesborough, Ashford, TN24 0DR**

Tel: 01233 663365

ADM: There was discussion regarding election of officers. The existing Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Publicity Officer and District Representatives were all willing to stand again. There was a query regarding the Ringing Masters. It was recommended that two additional members (without portfolio) be appointed at the ADM to the District Committee. Suggested names in the frame included Adam Brady, Tina Bastow and Gordon Hunt.

FS Macey Fund: The Treasurer had received an enquiry from Tom Barlow about the use of this fund. It was reported that a supply of "One Per Learner" books had been purchased which were currently held by The District Secretary. These would be passed to the Treasurer for sending to new members. Additional books could be purchased as required.

Maidstone District Committee Meeting of 31st October 2007

Matters arising from the previous meeting

District Website: Otham and Staplehurst had provided information but Boughton Monchelsea and Snodland had not yet returned any details. It was agreed that basic information from all towers be included. It was not possible to create a members' only area or an open forum with the current web provider without incurring considerable cost. It was agreed that abridged minutes be included on the website or in The Belfry. The revamp of the website was almost completed and was expected to go live before the end of the year.

District Officers' Reports

The Treasurer reported that all subscriptions for 2007 had been received. Finances were healthy and the expected annual donation of £1,000 to the BRF is covered by wedding fee donations and 120 Club profits.

The Ringing Masters did not report as one was absent and the other was new to this post. It was requested that special methods or practices be planned and notified to the District Secretary 5 or 6 months in advance to allow time for adequate publicity. It was suggested that a Surprise Royal practice be included in the programme. Maidstone was considered more central than Staplehurst but support could come from other districts too. Suggested a strong nucleus of ringers be invited. The

simulator at Staplehurst could be used in Holy Week. **The Publicity Officer** reported that hard copies of the July issue of The Belfry had not been circulated due to copying difficulties. Staplehurst Church Office was considered too expensive at £20 but Kevin Fulcher had offered to use his laser printer. The next issue was planned for early December. The Publicity Officer thanked the committee for arranging his surprise gifts for completing 25 years as Editor of The Belfry.

Forthcoming events

10th November: Call Change Striking Contest – Snodland. Draw 9.45am. Five bands had entered to date. Judges to be Frank and Catherine Lewis. Consideration would need to be given to the award of the "Most Improved" shield this year.

8th December: Carol Service – Hunton. 3pm ringing, 4pm service followed by mulled wine, mince pies and further ringing.

AGM 2009: Roy Barclay offered to organise ringing routes for the day. Queries over the luncheon and meeting venue. An update was needed from the local tower

Remainder of the advertised calendar was noted. The District Secretary would chase up 2008 venues still to be confirmed.

Calendar 2008-2009: The District Secretary would begin making enquiries soon.

Any Other Business

Membership and Tower Update: The Treasurer confirmed that she would be sending out information requests early December but these were best kept separate from meeting papers to avoid confusion.

Tower Captains' Meeting: The Chairman stated that he expected Committee members to attend this meeting. Towers to be reminded to send a substitute if their Tower Captain was not available.

This does not purport to be a complete and accurate report of the meetings. Any member of the KCACR can obtain a copy of the full minutes by contacting the District Secretary.

CHURCH CHUCKLES



The Mothers' Union were having a discussion on the subject
"What Makes a Happy Marriage?"

The leader posed the question
"What do you and your husband have in common?"

Quick as a flash one of the ladies replied
"We were both married on the same day"

District Events round up

Summer Quarterly Meeting

Once again we had joint venues for the Summer Quarterly on the morning of Saturday 14th July. First on the agenda was ringing on the six at Hollingbourne, followed by the business meeting. Moving on to Harrietsham, a variety of methods was rung by the 20 or so people who attended but unfortunately a course of Double Norwich Major (the day's special method) was unsuccessful.

District Practice at Linton

Only about a dozen people turned up for the District meeting at Linton on Wednesday 12th September, although it must be said that there was the rival attraction of an England football match on TV. Consequently it wasn't possible to ring Rutland, although we did manage the other special method, Plain Bob Major, along with Grandsire and a course of Stedman Triples.

County Six Bell contest

It was a lovely sunny day for the County 6 Bell Striking Competition on Saturday, 22nd September and a chance to ring on the lovely ring of 6 at Chevening in the Tonbridge District. Five out of the six districts were represented, with Aylesford – drawn to ring third - proudly representing Maidstone District. All the ringing was of a very high standard and judges Robin and Gillian Leale from Kingston-on-Thames commented that there was not a single method mistake throughout the whole competition. It was all very close with only 11 faults separating first and last places. Although we came 5th with 39 faults it was nevertheless a good effort by the band who thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The winners were Tonbridge, representing Tonbridge District, with 28 faults

Annual District Meeting

The 2007 ADM was held at Staplehurst on 13th October. A report is on page 8.

Call Change Striking Contest

The Call Change Striking Contest was held at Snodland on 10th November. A report is on page 3.

District Carol Service

Traditionally, we hold our Carol Service at a church where we do not normally hold a District ringing event. In practice this usually means one of our three or four bell towers. This year was slightly different in that the venue was Hunton which has six bells, but because there is not much ringing there we thought we would treat the villagers to some Christmas ringing. We invited them to join us for the service, and many of them did just that, swelling the attendance to more than 50. The service was followed by the traditional mince pies and mulled wine,

which were greatly enjoyed as can be seen from the picture below.

The people of Hunton always say how nice it is to hear their bells rung, and the good news is that a band is currently being trained there. So hopefully it won't be long before they hear them rung a lot more regularly.



Winter Quarterly Meeting

The Winter Quarterly Meeting is invariably the best attended of the year. The Meeting at East Farleigh on January 12th lived up to this reputation, although at 22 numbers were down on last year. Nevertheless, we were still able to ring all the special methods - Grandsire and Stedman Triples, Plain Bob Major, Cambridge and Yorkshire, plus an unsuccessful attempt at Rutland! There was also plenty for the less experienced ringers.

The short Business Meeting received reports from the Ringing Masters, Treasurer and Publicity Officer and forthcoming events for the next quarter were noted (see page 14 for details). One new member was elected to the Association - welcome to Ellie Wheal of East Farleigh. As usual the East Farleigh ringers provided an excellent tea, for which we are very grateful.

Tower Captains' Meeting

As usual the Quarterly Meeting was preceded by the annual Tower Captains' Meeting. Matters discussed included dissemination of tower information, recruitment and retention of ringers, attendance at District events, and training issues. Fourteen towers had submitted progress reports.

Minutes of the Meeting will be sent to all Towers in due course.

Ringers interviewed following fatal shooting

by Mal Williams

Nothing different you may say in a pre-arranged quarter-peal around Christmas. Nothing different you may also reply if the arrangements may include a ringer's first inside. OK, so that's the arrangement; we would all meet at approximately 11am on 29th December to do just that, but the band were not to expect what happened when they reached Stansted.

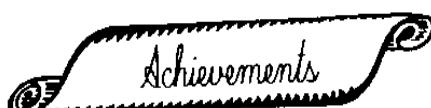
Visitors to St Mary's Stansted will know that the best place to park is in the Black Horse public house, but on arriving at the turning were to find it blocked by a police car. The policeman told us that there had been an incident (it turned out to be a fatal shooting by the police) and that the road was closed. Being ringers we asked if the pub was open and was told that it may not be. We therefore had to park past the church down the hill and walk back up to the church where we rung a very good quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles and a first inside for Bethany Gerrish.

Not to be beaten and to find out what had happened we made our way to the Black Horse, where we found out from our host what had gone on that morning. The phone rang non-stop as customers and locals were informed that there would not be any food this lunch time which messed up the next part of our arrangements. So no food, but at least the beer had gone down well. We then made our way past the police to bump into a BBC news crew who had already interviewed the landlady who had taken the officer a cup of coffee. Tower captain Keith Foxwell was interviewed and later was to be seen on the news south east at approximately 5pm. Alison Gerrish and Mal Williams were also interviewed. We understand that Radio Kent also used the material recorded.

Oh, and just for the record the quarter peal was as follows:

Stansted Kent. 29th December 2007; 1320 Plain Bob Doubles: Elizabeth Holte 1, Bethany Gerrish (1st inside) 2, Malwyn Williams 3, Alison Gerrish 4, Darren Elphick (C) 5, Keith Foxwell 6.

Well done to Bethany on her First inside.



Colin Friend	1st Quarter-peal at 1st attempt	4th November
David Fox	1st Quarter-peal	8th November
Brenda Sladen	1st Quarter-peal at 1st attempt	14th December
Alexander Barnes	1st Quarter-peal	29th December
Charlotte Alford	1st Quarter-peal	29th December
Samantha Harman	1st Quarter-peal at 1st attempt	27th January
Bethany Gerrish	1st Quarter-peal inside	29th December
Adam Brady	1st Quarter of Surprise Major	8th December
Daniel Brady	1st Quarter of Surprise Major as Conductor	8th December
Richard Barclay	50th Quarter-peal	21st October
Darren Elphick	1400th Quarter-peal	21st October

The above information has been obtained from a variety of sources. The only way to guarantee inclusion is to let the editor know. Please note that only major achievements/milestones will be listed. This would not normally include a first in an individual method.

Annual District Meeting

Only 22 people attended the Annual District Meeting at Staplehurst on 13th October, including two visitors from Essex. Afternoon ringing was followed by traditional Evensong, led by the Staplehurst choir, and then a delicious tea provided by the local ringers. Our thanks to them, and to Revd Gill Calver for taking the service.

The meeting itself was rather low key, with only one change in officership – Daniel Brady replaces Graham Heath as one of the joint Ringing Masters. Many thanks Graham for all your hard work during the past year. See below for details of the new Committee.

The usual reports were received from the District Officers, and the draft programme for 2008/9 announced (now confirmed - see opposite page for details).

However, perhaps the high spot was the presentation of an engraved tankard and a cheque to Roy Barclay to mark his 25 years as Editor of *The Belfry*. Opposite is a picture of a rather gobsmacked Roy being presented with the gifts, together with his wife Sallyann who received a bouquet of flowers.

More ringing followed and the evening was rounded off for some by a visit to the highly recommended Bell Inn opposite the church.

Next year's AGM is scheduled for Saturday 11th October at Leeds.



120 Club

There are still some shares in the 120 Club available for the year March - December 2008

Shares cost £10 each and you could win one of the monthly prizes of £20, £15 or £10 (£40, £30 and £20 in June and December)

For further details contact the Promoter, Mal Williams at malwyn.williams@tesco.net or telephone 01622 861143

District Committee 2007/8

The new District Committee, elected at the Annual District Meeting at Staplehurst on 13th October, is:

Chairman	Chris Bassett	<i>proposed by Mal Williams, seconded Ann Fulcher</i>
District Secretary	Sue Bassett	<i>proposed by Kevin Fulcher, seconded Mal Williams</i>
Treasurer/Membership Sec	Pat Phipps	<i>proposed by Chris Saunders, seconded Roy Barclay</i>
Ringing Masters	Daniel Brady Darren Elphick	<i>proposed by Sue Bassett, seconded Richard Barclay proposed by Mal Williams, seconded Bernard Williamson</i>
District Representatives	Malcolm Hitchcock Chris Saunders	<i>proposed by Darren Elphick, seconded Bernard Williamson proposed by Darren Elphick, seconded Bernard Williamson</i>
Publicity Officer	Roy Barclay	<i>proposed by Sue Bassett seconded Ann Fulcher</i>
Other Committee members	None proposed	

The Meeting agreed that the Ringing Masters should also act as joint District Training Officers

District Calendar 2008

The District has a full and varied programme planned for 2008. District events are listed below, along with those County events in which our District is involved. Please note that at the time of going to press timings of some events have still to be confirmed; these are marked as "TBC" and confirmation should be sought from District Secretary Sue Bassett on 01580-891917 before attending. Updates will of course be posted on the District Website at www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

Sat 9th February	<i>District Surprise Practice</i>	St. Michael & All Angels Maidstone	<i>10am -12 noon</i>
Sat 8th March	<i>Joint Practice with Canterbury District</i>	Chilham	<i>3pm Ringing 4.30pm Service & tea then evening ringing.</i>
Easter Monday 24th March	<i>County AGM</i>	Lewisham District	<i>All Day</i>
Sat 12th April	<i>Quarterly Meeting (Special methods: Stedman Doubles & London S Minor)</i>	Ulcombe & Jubi-Peal	<i>3 - 4.30pm Ringing 4.30 - 6pm Meeting & Tea 6 - 7pm Ringing</i>
Sat 10th May	<i>Joint Practice with Lewisham District</i>	Eynesford	<i>7 - 8.30pm</i>
Sat 14th June	<i>Striking Competition</i>	Bearsted	<i>Draw 3.45pm Competition starts 4pm</i>
Sat 28th June	<i>County 8-bell competition</i>	Westerham	<i>Timing to be confirmed</i>
Sat 12th July	<i>Quarterly Meeting (Special methods: Plain Bob Major & Lincolnshire S Major)</i>	West Malling	<i>4 - 5pm Ringing 5 - 6.30pm Tea & Meeting 6.30 - 8pm Ringing</i>
Mon 8th September	<i>District Practice (Special method: Stedman Triples)</i>	Lenham	<i>7.30 - 9pm</i>
Sat 27th September	<i>County 6-bell Contest</i>	Ashford District	<i>Venue/Timing to be confirmed</i>
Sat 11th October	<i>Annual District Meeting (Special methods: Grandsire Caters & Little Bob Royal)</i>	Leeds	<i>3 - 4.30pm Ringing 4.30pm Service 5 - 6.30pm Tea & Meeting 6.30 - 8pm Ringing</i>
Sat 8th November	<i>CCSC</i>	Nettlestead	<i>Timing to be confirmed</i>
Sat 13th December	<i>Carol Service</i>	Addington	<i>4pm Ringing 4.30pm Service</i>

Mereworth Bells leave the tower

by Barry Evans

I thought - or rather I hoped - that we had thought of everything. Today we would find out. At least the Vicar, Fr. Noel McConnachie, had very kindly arranged for a bright sunny day in the middle of a week of rain. He arrived early on and watched with interest.

Brian Butcher and his happy band arrived at 9am and work started immediately. Shortly after 10am the Tenor was gently lowered to the floor of the entrance of the Church. The fifth followed in about 40 minutes, and the others came down at regular intervals. Noel's wife, Evelyn, arrived and made tea and coffee but the work did not stop.

My brother, Chris Evans (no, not that one) arrived with his lorry and driver, Michael Webb. The Tenor was ready and the Hyab crane easily lifted the half ton bell on to the back of the lorry. By 2pm the last bell was lifted into place, and the load was strapped securely into place. Right is a picture of the Tenor being loaded on to the lorry.

Transport was kindly arranged at no charge by Hoist and Plant Hire Co Ltd., in exchange for some publicity. We left for Appleton, with Douglas Bratt (the Tower Captain) and myself following. We had a lovely sunny and traffic free run up to Appleton behind the lorry which was governed to 57 mph. This meant that my car returned a record 48 mpg on the way there. Arriving at Appleton Brian White kindly opened his works specially for us. There were bells everywhere - clean ones, dirty ones, big and small. Some with headstocks, some without - and some with the new, blue special headstocks which are to be fitted to our own bells, so they can retain their Cannons. I was back home by 7pm, tired but happy.

The six Mereworth bells were cast in 1746 by Joseph Eayre, Clockmaker and Bell founder. He owned a bell foundry in Priory Lane, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, and cast the bells for several Churches, including St Neots Parish Church. He died in May, 1772. The fifth unfortunately cracked at some time in its life, and in 1958 it was recast by John Taylor of Loughborough. It was cast in the newer style, without canons, which is now the accepted norm. There were some repairs in 1885, but the fixtures and fittings are substantially those of 1746.

All the bells have interesting inscriptions - but I will only give you the Tenor here. In doggerel Latin, it says "To leave this life and to celebrate our Death".

Work on the Tower is expected to take about a year (and you know what builders are) but it is possible (fingers crossed) that we can ring our new bells for Christmas and/or New Year 2008/2009.

*Mereworth Bells
are loaded onto
the lorry en route
to White's of
Appleton*



HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF THE KCACR FOR 50 YEARS OR MORE?

If so you are entitled to a certificate celebrating that achievement

HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER OF THE KCACR FOR 25 YEARS OR MORE AND ARE AGED 65 OR OVER?

*OK, you might have a few years to wait for your certificate,
but did you know that you are now entitled to free membership of the Association?*

*If you, or anyone you know, falls into either of these categories
please let the Hon Treasurer, Pat Phipps, know on 01622 751714 or e-mail P.Phipps@tesco.net*

The District website**Maidstone District OnLine****has been completely updated**

- ~ modern interface ~ easier navigation ~
- ~ more information ~ improved links ~
- ~ individual pages for every tower in the District ~
- ~ and of course the *Electronic Belfry* ~

Visit now on

www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk**Your copy of *The Belfry*.....**

Do you remember only five years ago when your Editor would appear at each Quarterly Meeting armed with around 50 printed copies of *The Belfry* which he would hand out to whoever was there from each tower? People would take copies to "pass on" to other towers which they would "probably be going to in the next week or two". The rest would be posted to Tower Secretaries, at considerable cost to the Association. In reality many towers would be receiving their copies up to a month after publication, and if any individual at a tower wanted their own copy they would have to pay for it.

Well not any more. With the advances in technology, and particularly the now widespread use of the internet, there are a variety of ways in which members of the District can receive a copy of *The Belfry*:

By e-mail to your inbox

This is the only way to guarantee that you receive your *Belfry* the moment it is published. It is sent as an attachment to an e-mail and all you need to do is to send an e-mail to subscribe@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk with the word "Belfry" in the title line. It costs nothing and you can unsubscribe at any time. The e-mail is sent to you as an "undisclosed recipient" to prevent potential spammers getting hold of your address. A broadband connection is advised as each issue is about 1MB in size. Please note that you cannot receive *The Belfry* through the normal Maidstone "Yahoo" e-group as this does not allow attachments.

You can of course request a copy of any issue (including back issues from October 2004) at any time by sending an e-mail request to the above address.

On the Maidstone District website

The Belfry will normally be posted on the website within 24 hours of publication. It can be accessed at www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk/belfry_latest.pdf.

Hard copy

For those without internet access, paper copies of *The Belfry* will continue to be available for the foreseeable future. However, this is dependant on the goodwill of someone to make the copies, and the extra work involved means that hard copies will not generally be available until about two weeks after they appear on the internet.

The advantage of the electronic methods is that anyone can have their own copy which they can print off in full or just selected pages, the photographs are in colour, and you don't have to wait until someone else has read it before you get it. Also, it doesn't cost anyone anything, so the money saved by the Association can go towards more important things such as bell restoration.

Two-thirds of our District towers already have *The Belfry* e-mailed to a nominated representative, thus dispensing with their hard copy. Could we make a plea to the remaining dozen towers to seriously consider nominating one of their ringers to receive it by e-mail (it doesn't necessarily have to be the Tower Secretary/Captain). Remember that, apart from making it easier for all concerned, by dispensing with the paper copy you will be helping to save the planet!

The Cinque Ports Ringing Centre at Dover

Saturday, 23rd February 2008
“KALEIDOSCOPE TECHNIQUES”
10 am to 4 pm

“Kaleidoscope” is the name given to this system of basic ringing exercises by its developer Gordon Lucas from Langdon Hills, Essex. His book on the subject is a Central Council publication and is available on most District bookstalls.

At the introductory level the scheme starts with place-making and dodging, continuously going out of and back into rounds. This is more effective than call-changes for developing good bell control, accurate striking, and an awareness of the concept of “place”, but it is best seen in operation to appreciate how well it works.

The Centre often uses kaleidoscope during its Saturday morning practices and the first session of the course, from 10 to 12, will be in effect the normal beginners’ practice, but with kaleidoscope used throughout. **Beginners and established ringers alike should find this experience quite interesting, particularly the system of “distributed calling”.**

Before the lunch break at 12.30, there will be a discussion about different types of further kaleidoscope work. The afternoon session from 2 to 4 pm will provide an opportunity to put the theory into practice and may include kaleidoscope *Treble Bob, Yorkshire, or Superlative*.

Ringers attending only the morning session will be asked to contribute the usual £2 on the day. The charge for the whole course is £5, payable in advance. Please register with Barbara Dale: at barbaradale@fastmail.fm, tel. 01304 823217, **no later than 9th February**.

REGISTRATION FORM

First Name	
Surname	
Home Tower	
Address (to send course material)	
Postcode	
Phone	
E-mail (if any)	

Will you be staying for the whole course?

Yes No

If “Yes” please complete the form and send it, with your cheque for £5 payable to “Cinque Ports Ringing Centre”, to Barbara Dale, 9 Chisnall Road, River, Dover, Kent, CT17 0RH.

Belfry Reminiscences

5 years ago.....

....in January 2003 the Editorial to Issue 74 looked at a proposal then before Parliament to include bellringing as "entertainment" under new licensing laws which would have resulted in churches having to pay £500 upwards for a local authority licence before they could ring their bells. There was also the danger that in areas where there had been complaints about the bells a licence might be refused and therefore ringing the bells would become illegal. This in turn could have led to a large increase in the number of silent towers. Fortunately common sense prevailed and church activities, including ringing, were ultimately excluded from the bill.

Ringers in the news five years ago included present Chairman Chris Bassett and his wife Sue (presently District Secretary) who had just celebrated their Silver Wedding, and a 16 year old German student who had learned to ring in 3 months at Yalding and rang a quarter-peal before returning home. Sadly the death was reported of Sandy Alderman of Barming, and formerly Boxley.

Bearsted won the Call Change Competition at St Michael and All Angels, Maidstone, with a combined East Farleigh Linton band as runners-up. We also looked ahead to the County AGM which we were to host at Staplehurst.

10 years ago.....

....in January 1998 the Editorial to issue 55 looked forward to ringing for the millennium celebrations, for which plans were already well advanced. The message coming out from the 1998 tower captains' meeting had been that we needed to be pro-active in our efforts to get new ringers for the millennium. In the event a good number were recruited; rather less still ring.

In 1998 ringers were providing plenty of *Belfry Gossip*, including a whole load of congratulations to bands and individuals. At that time there was also a separate *Achievements* column which was also full. (Over the following few years less and less achievements were reported and the column was discontinued. However we are pleased to report a reversal of this trend and *Achievements* have been reinstated with effect from the current issue).

Back in 1998 there were two continuing series in *The Belfry*. One was a "visit" to District towers, the featured venue in issue 55 being Otham. The other was a series of interviews with District personalities, appropriately entitled *The Personal Touch*, which on this occasion featured that well-liked ringer from Ulcombe Jim Eagle. Alas Jim does not ring these days, but his wife Ronni is a regular supporter of District events.

15 years ago.....

....in January 1993 we had reached issue 37 of the modern day *Belfry*. Amongst the interesting snippets of news in *Belfry Gossip* at that time we read that at 10 years of age David Bassett of Staplehurst had become one of the youngest ever in the District to have rung a first quarter-peal. By coincidence David's first peal was 5 years later almost to the day, and then 10 years later he rang his first peal of Stedman Caters. Alas he no longer rings as he now lives in Canada. It was good to hear that Boughton Monchelsea bells were ringing again following refurbishment, but at the same time ringing at Bearsted had been suspended whilst the crack in one of the bells was welded. Meanwhile the quarter-peal mania which had started five years earlier was at its peak with a number of ringers scoring more than a hundred in 1992, including Mike Birkbeck with 196.

The 1992 Call Change Competition at Snodland had been won by Leeds, and Issue 37 reported that the trestle table holding the tea had collapsed. Fortunately most of the food had been eaten by then, but Jessica Vale's teapot came to an untimely end, shattering into a hundred pieces. *The Dirge of the Peal* was one of the few poems to appear in *The Belfry*, whilst advertisements included one for the then newly-released KCACR recruitment video *Anyone can be a Ringer*. Can the beer really have been going down well for fifteen years now.....?

25 years ago.....

....in January 1983 Issue 3 of this journal was still called simply the Maidstone District Newsletter. It marked the beginning of the second year of publication in its resurrected form by outlining its anticipated future. Amongst the suggestions were the adoption of the title *The Belfry* (which took effect from the following issue) and a proposal for an editorial board (which elicited no response whatsoever). The journal was published in its now familiar booklet format for the first time in January 1983. It was also the first to be produced by word processor. The Editorial concerned that ever-controversial question of those ringers who never stayed to service, whilst a review of peals rung in 1982 was provided by Andrew Gunstone. *News and Views* (now *Belfry Gossip*) contained both happy and sad news: Walter Dobbie of Mereworth celebrated 50 years' membership of the Association, whilst it was with regret that we recorded that Pat Cannon of Dorking - a great friend of many older Kent ringers - had died in a road crash whilst on a ringing tour in South Africa. He had been one of the judges at our County Striking competition only a few weeks previously. Finally, Wateringbury scored a "double" in an enjoyable call-change competition at Barming by taking both the winner's shield and the trophy for the most improved band of 1982.

Future Events

For many people January is about the most depressing time of the year. Christmas has come and gone, but the days are still cold and the nights long. Not much point in doing things outdoors, much better be in a nice cosy tower ringing with friends (at least it will be cosy if enough people turn up!). No matter what your level of expertise - or lack of it - there is something to suit you over the coming months.

A list of District Events for the whole of 2008 is on page 00 of this issue. More immediately, however, there is a list of District events for the next three months 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 "Upcoming Events".

The most imminent event is a District **Surprise Major Practice** to be held on Saturday 9th February at St Michael and All Angels, Maidstone, from 10am - 12noon. This is a great opportunity both for those who are just beginning to venture into the field of surprise methods and for those more experienced ringers who want to extend their repertoire. There will be ringing to suit all levels, but please make sure you know the blue line before you come!

Next up is a **Joint Practice with the Canterbury District** on the 17½ cwt eight at Chilham, on Saturday 8th March. Ringing will begin at 3pm, there will be a service at 4.30pm followed by tea and then evening ringing. This is a good opportunity to visit a different tower, so make the most of it.

Then on Easter Monday 24th March there is the **County AGM** which this year is being hosted by the Lewisham District. The service, lunch and Annual Meeting itself will be held at St George's, Perry Hill, Catford. You won't find this church in the Handbook, or even in Dove's Guide, as it has no bells! Oh well, different I suppose.....let's hope there will be the usual ringing routes to the AGM venue. At the time of going to press no further details were available, so look out for information on the County website at www.kcacr.org.uk.

The **Quarterly District Meeting** on Saturday 12th April will be held at Ulcombe. It will follow the usual pattern of ringing from 3pm to 4.30pm, followed by tea and Business Meeting, with further ringing from about 6pm to 7pm. The special methods will be Stedman Doubles and London Surprise Minor, but as usual there will also be ringing to suit all levels from rounds upwards. Also, as a bonus we are hoping to have the late Walter Dobbie's Jubi-peal available. For those who don't know, this is a portable mini-ring. Good fun and well worth having a try!

Looking forward to the spring, on Saturday 10th May we have another **Joint Practice**, this time with the **Lewisham District** on the 9½ cwt eight at Eynesford. This will be an evening only event with ringing from 7pm to 8.30pm. Another opportunity to ring at somewhere different.

Looking even further ahead we have the **District Striking Contest** at Bearsted on Saturday 14th June. The draw for order of ringing will be at 3.45pm, with the competition itself starting at 4pm.

Finally, **Meeting Cards** for 2008 are in the process of preparation and should be available shortly.

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

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at the address on page one
or e-mail to**

belfry@kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

**Please limit articles to one side
of A4 if possible**



MAIDSTONE DISTRICT CALENDAR

Winter/Spring 2008

Saturday 9th February
DISTRICT SURPRISE PRACTICE at St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, MAIDSTONE
From 10am to 12noon

Saturday 8th March
JOINT PRACTICE with Canterbury District at CHILHAM
*Ringing from 3pm to 4.30pm
Service 4.30pm followed by tea
Further ringing in evening*

Easter Monday 24th March
COUNTY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
at
St George, Perry Hill, London SE6
Details still to be announced

Saturday 12th April
QUARTERLY MEETING at ULCOMBE
*Ringing from 3pm to 4.30pm
followed by Business Meeting and Tea
Further ringing from 6pm to 7pm*
Special methods: Stedman Doubles & London S Minor
It is hoped that the Jubi-peal mini ring will also be available

Saturday 10th May
JOINT PRACTICE with Lewisham District at EYNSFORD
Ringing from 7pm to 8.30pm

Saturday 14th June
DISTRICT STRIKING CONTEST at BEARSTED
*Draw 3.45pm
Competition starts 4pm*

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For updates visit Maidstone District OnLine at
www.kcacr-maidstone-district.org.uk

or contact the District Secretary