



# LEWISHAM DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS [www.kcacr.org.uk](http://www.kcacr.org.uk)

April 2007

## Lewisham District Training Day

**David Brown, District Training Officer**

Nine a.m. on a bright but rather chilly Saturday morning saw the trainees and the County Training Officer, Jim Hardy, and myself huddled round a gas fire and a white board at the back of Horton Kirby church. The day started with a theory session led by Jim on Plain Hunt and Plain Bob. His explanation of the principles that underpin all change ringing was supplemented by a set of notes given to each trainee that they could refer to later.

By now all the helpers who were going to support the trainees during the practical sessions had arrived. Before ascending the tower to put the theory into practice, we all enjoyed a welcome break for tea or coffee and biscuits. The practical session lasted for an hour and a half. As with all the practical sessions, each trainee rang in turn with five experienced ringers manning the other ropes and with another experienced ringer standing by the trainee to give help and advice as required. The trainees practised plain hunting on different bells and, while some of the trainees found the lighter bells something of a challenge, all were beginning to make progress.

By midday everyone was ready for lunch and we adjourned to *The Fighting Cocks* in the village. As well as enjoying the food this also gave us the opportunity to assess what had been achieved so far and to plan the afternoon sessions.

Eynsford was the first tower after lunch, where we rang the back six of the eight. Some of the trainees found these a little more difficult at first but good progress was made during the ninety minutes with every-

one starting to ring with more confidence and placing their bells more accurately.

This was followed by a break for tea. By now the weather was unseasonably mild and we were able to sit outside at *The Lion* in Farningham, enjoying a much-needed pot of tea before heading off to Farningham church for the last session of the day.

By this time everyone was ringing more confidently and was able to attempt trebling to Plain Bob or Grand-sire Doubles or plain hunting when the remaining bells, all except the tenor, had been mixed up so that the plain hunt did not start with rounds. By the end of the hour and a half session everyone was beginning to tire and most of us returned to *The Lion* for a farewell drink before heading for home.

All in all I thought it was a very worthwhile day. I would like to thank all the ringers who came to assist and without whose help the day would not have been possible, and Jim Hardy for taking the theory session as well as for his help during the rest of the day. Thanks also to Martin Luffman and David Hilling for the use of Farningham and Eynsford bells and to Lesley Barclay for the use of Horton Kirby bells and Horton Kirby's kitchen facilities to provide morning refreshments. As a thank you money collected for these was donated to Horton Kirby's augmentation fund, in addition to the donation given to every tower used during the day.

Finally I would urge all the trainees and everyone else who is learning to make an effort to come to District practices. I am always concerned when I hear learners say that they think they are not good enough to come to District practices. These practices are for everyone and

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# A Word from the Editor

Spring appears to have been a busy time for training in the Lewisham District. Under the auspices of the newly elected District Training Officer, David Brown, there has recently been a very successful training day as outlined on the front page and the week after Easter will see a number of Lewisham District ringers head off to take part in a national training course.

All of this set me thinking about when I was learning Bob Doubles. After struggling with the 3-4 up dodge I set off, armed with a half term holiday and a travelcard, to try and sort it out. One week, five practices and seemingly hundreds of dodges later I'd finally conquered it. Which just goes to show, it is possible to make progress outside of specially arranged training days. District practices are a good place to start as everyone is made welcome and a good standard of ringing is usually achieved. Forthcoming district events (including district practices) can be found just to the right of this column.

Thanks,

Dominic Meredith

Zen and the Art of Bellringing

If a ringer rings a bell in the forest and their tower captain isn't there to hear them, are they still late at backstroke?

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## Forthcoming District Events:

District Practice: Saturday 28th April, Deptford, 7-9pm

District Practice: Saturday 19th May, Foots Cray, 7-9pm

District Practice: Saturday 9th June, Greenwich, 7-9pm

County Training Day: Saturday 16th June. Bell handling clinic. See the KCACR website for details.

County Training Day: Saturday 7th July. Maintenance of bells and their fittings. See the KCACR website for details.

District Meeting: Saturday 14th July, Chelsfield 3.00pm Bells, 4.30pm Service then tea, meeting and evening ringing.

Names for tea to [names4tea@lewishamdistrict.org.uk](mailto:names4tea@lewishamdistrict.org.uk)

District Practice: Saturday 28th July, Cudham (tbc), 7-9pm

# Around the District

## Erith, Christchurch

Carol is making a very good recovery following an operation on her back – we look forward to the time when she can resume ringing. We are delighted to report that we have two keen adult learners. They are both making good progress and are a welcome addition to our band.

We have carried out some work to improve our security – we now have a locked gate at the top of the stairs above the ringing chamber. This prevents unauthorised access to the clock chamber and the belfry while we are ringing. Whilst ringing for a wedding recently, we heard childish voices on the stairs (followed by shouts of ‘Get back down here’!). Secure in the knowledge that they could go further, we happily carried on ringing.

By Elizabeth Brett

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## Foots Cray

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March saw the Foots Cray Ringers and invited friends heading down into deepest, darkest Kent for an outing come training day. Five Foots Cray Ringers and Six experienced ringers sped down the A2 or A20 and met up at Bekesbourne, South East of Canterbury, the less experienced or travelled ringers feeling a little wary of ringing on 6 bells which are all heavier than those at home.

The day was bright and sunny if a little chilly, just right for those ringing most of the time. The aim for the day was to work on ringing heavier bells, Plain Hunt to method and for those able Plain Bob Doubles.

Bekesbourne was an ideal place to start, a 7½cwt ring of 6 which allowed confidence to grow whilst ringing mainly Call Changes and Plain Hunt. From there we went on to Waltham, slightly heavier but again a nice ring of bells, here we progressed to Plain Hunt to method. Lunch followed at The Compasses Inn, Sole Street where good beer and food were to be enjoyed.

During the afternoon we rang at Godmersham and Chartham, both heavier rings again. Methods here progressed to Plain Bob Doubles, Grandsire Doubles and Reverse Canterbury Pleasure Doubles some of the Foots Cray ringers hunting to methods, one other managing plain courses of Bob Doubles for the first time and one successfully revising touches of Bob Doubles. All in all a very successful day but there is no way we could have managed without help, so a big thank you to all who gave up their time so willingly to help the Foots Cray Ringers.

By Margaret Macey



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will be tailored to meet everyone’s needs. So even if all you can do at the moment is rounds and call changes do come. Details are on the District website [www.lewishamdistrict.org.uk](http://www.lewishamdistrict.org.uk)

**Provisional date for the next training day :  
Saturday 23 June 2007**

This has yet to be finalised and will depend on towers and a sufficient number of experienced helpers being available. This training day will be for those who want to learn or improve Plain Bob Doubles and Plain Bob Minor. Trainees must be able to plain hunt.

Please let me have the names of those who are interested by **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May**. (E mail [chris@cwebb88.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:chris@cwebb88.fsnet.co.uk), Telephone 020 8778 2\*\*\*)

Numbers on training days are usually limited to 6 trainees.

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# Chelsfield Ringers' Sunday

**John Barnes**

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This year, Ringers' Sunday was held on October 15<sup>th</sup>, and for his address at Evensong our guest preacher, the Rev Robin Noble, 'cousin-in-law' to Bobby Lawes, told the story of the young lady of Chertsey, Surrey who, by her timely action and deeds, saved the life of her sweetheart. The story centres around the curfew bell. In mediaeval times and later, when buildings were made from easily combustible materials, fire was a major hazard. Many a town has been destroyed by fire and some towns have perished more than once. Traditionally, the signal for people to extinguish their fires was the curfew bell being chimed from the church tower. The word curfew is derived from the French 'couvrirfeu', literally, cover the fire.

The story may be familiar to some people from the American poet Rosa Hartwick Thorpe's poem 'The Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight'. It relates that, as the sun was setting, its rays fell upon the heads of sweethearts, a sad and forlorn Basil Underwood and Bess his young lady, whose lips, cold and white, struggled to keep back the murmur "Curfew must not ring tonight". When it would ring, her Basil was to be executed.

In vain Bess pleaded with the aged sexton not to ring the bell that night – miss it, just this once. Stubbornly he insisted that throughout his long life he had nightly rung the curfew bell and that he was not going to be stopped from ringing it that night. He must perform his duty. "Curfew bell must ring tonight".

Wild with desperation, Bess rushed to the church tower and dashed up the stairs, reaching the topmost ladder just as the great bell began to swing. With her pale lips saying determinedly, "Curfew shall not ring tonight", she flung herself forward to grasp the cold, rough iron clapper and, although cut and bruised, hung on to it with all her might. Far below her, the sexton dutifully pulled at the rope, his deafness preventing him from realising that the bell was not sounding. Bess clung on until she felt the bell swing no more and then descended the tower. As she ran from the church, she spotted Oliver Cromwell approaching on horseback. Stopping him, she showed him her bruised and bleeding hands and begged him to forgive her Basil. Moved by Bess's honesty, her suffering and her feeling for Basil, Cromwell wrote a pardon and handed it to the girl. She ran to the place of execution, reaching it in the nick of time. Basil was saved.

Robin suggested that it would seem that Oliver Cromwell was moved by the sufferings of Bess to redeem her beloved,

thus reminding him of the Saviour's sufferings to redeem the mankind that He loved. Bearing that in mind, when we hear the sound of the bells, we too might be reminded of Jesus and what he had done for us.

The poem is one of the most likable narrative poems in the English language and it brought fame to Rose Hartwick Thorpe – but not fortune, for 1887 was before the days of copyright in the USA. It may be found on the sunflower.com website - as well as on other sites, by typing 'curfew' and 'bells' into the google search engine.

There are several versions of the story, one of which suggests that it may have taken place in 1471. The probability is that it is based on a real life incident. In Chertsey the young lady is said to be one Blanche Heriot. Furthermore, there is a statue of her close to Chertsey Bridge. In 1845 the writer Albert Smith, who lived in the town near St Peter's Church, wrote a melodrama based on the story.

Interestingly, we know that a bell was cast for Chertsey Abbey in 1310. When the Abbey tower fell down in 1370 the bell broke up as it fell. Ten years elapsed before it was recast. When the Abbey was pulled down in 1537 at the Dissolution, the bell was given to St Peter's Church in the town. It is still there and it forms the fifth bell in the ring of eight. Furthermore, in winter time, from 29<sup>th</sup> September until 25<sup>th</sup> March, the curfew continues to be rung at Chertsey, although the fourth bell is used nowadays to try to preserve the ancient Abbey bell. Around the Abbey bell's inscription band are the words Ora mentor pia pro nobis Virgo Maria. As Ernest Morris comments in 'The History and Art of Change Ringing', published in 1931, it is quite likely that Chertsey still has the very bell which is so important to the story! Whether the date was as early as 1471 or whether it was in the seventeenth century or even later, that bell cast in 1390 from the metal of its predecessor may well have sounded the curfew bell that night. It seems possible also that it may have been tolled as the body of the (probably) murdered King Henry the Sixth was brought to Chertsey for temporary burial prior to being transferred to Windsor. If only bells could relate what they have witnessed!

In 1887 J C L Stahlschmidt's book 'Church Bells of Kent' was published. As he listed the then current local uses of bells, I looked through the book in search of references to the curfew bell. In 1886 it was still being rung a Ash by Sandwich (as was a five o' clock morning bell!), at Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Lydd, Marden, Minster in Thanet, Ringwould and Wye, in some cases only in the winter months. At Can-

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# 120 Club

## Rachel Backhouse

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October 14<sup>th</sup> at Beckenham (District AGM)

- 1<sup>st</sup> 78 June Dance (Dartford)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 83 Antony Fisher (Eynsford)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 23 David Hilling (Eynsford)
- 4<sup>th</sup> 87 James Hardy (Beckenham)

November 18<sup>th</sup> at Eltham (Call Change Striking Competition)

- 1<sup>st</sup> 53 Len Morley (Eltham)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 68 Jim Rooke (Chelsfield)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 62 Ros Farmer (Footscray)
- 4<sup>th</sup> 93 Robert Backhouse (CC,Erith)

December 11<sup>th</sup> at CC, Erith (Practice night)

- 1<sup>st</sup> 93 Robert Backhouse (CC,Erith)
- 1<sup>st</sup> 104 120 Club
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 49 Mary Rowedder (Hayes)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 35 Esther Correia (Dartford)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 69 Alex Britton (Unattached)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 94 Jeremy Byers (Beckenham)
- 4<sup>th</sup> 32 Judith Cheeseman (c/o Crayford)
- 4<sup>th</sup> 99 Andrew Boyd-Bell (Hitchin)

January 13<sup>th</sup> at CC,Erith (District meeting)

- 1<sup>st</sup> 67 Jim Rooke (Chelsfield)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 59 Barbara Carpenter (CC,Erith)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 16 Christine Webb (Bromley)
- 4<sup>th</sup> 26 Graeme Jefferson (Dartford)

3<sup>rd</sup> March at Downe (Striking Competition)

- 1<sup>st</sup> 52 David Holdridge (Eltham)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> 21 Liz Brett (Erith, Christchurch)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> 112 120 Club
- 4<sup>th</sup> 97 Freda Cannon (Greenwich)

## Annual Report 2006-7

There was an excellent response this year so please carry on with your support. This year I sold 108 shares (some to generous people who immediately put their winnings back into the club) to 78 people representing 22 towers from

within the district and a few outside. This year we increased the number of prizes to 48 and 41 of these went to 31 different people representing 16 different towers. The remaining 7 prizes went to the 120 club and so direct to the BRF. The luckiest towers this year were Christchurch, Erith with 8 wins, Dartford with 6 and Eynsford with 4, but to be fair I did sell over a quarter of the shares to these three towers.

## Accounts

Income 108 shares @£10 £1080-00

Interest 0-62  
£1080-62

Expenditure Prizes £455-00

Council fees 17-50

Other expenses (mainly postage) 8-32  
£480-82

Total donation to BRF £599-80

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terbury Cathedral an 8 pm bell was thought to be a survival of the curfew. It is recorded as having been discontinued at Folkestone in 1860, at Staplehurst about 1840, at Loose about 1830 and at Westerham about 1820.

Back to Chelsfield, Ann Blatcher, a ringer, took Family Service at which Robert Pruden and Nick Wilkins gave a short talk about their experiences of ringing on different bells and in different church towers around the country. Another ringer, Anne Mead, organised the children in ringing tunes on handbells. We hope that some interest has been created! (Following the recent Tower Open Afternoon and general publicity, we now have five new recruits learning to ring and we welcome them to the tower.)

Prior to Evensong, six of us rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor in about 45 minutes, the band including both Robin Noble and Bobby Lawes, Bobby having learned to ring at Robin's suggestion. The ringers stood as follows:- Bobby Lawes, Treble; John Barnes,2; Rev Robin Noble,3; Philippa Rooke,4; Jim Rooke,5 and Robert Pruden, conductor, Tenor. After the service we all enjoyed refreshments provided by the ringers. It was a day that we will remember and we thank Robin for his significant contribution and Leslie for his help and encouragement.

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# Minutes from the Last Meeting

## THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS LEWISHAM DISTRICT

MINUTES OF QUARTERLY DISTRICT MEETING HELD AT CHRISTCHURCH ERITH ON 13  
JANUARY 2007

### **1. Apologies for absence**

24 people attended the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from: Len and Pauline Morley (Eltham); Sara and James Hardy (Beckenham); Monica Hanscomb and Doug Fisher (Biggin Hill); Derek Jones, Marian Wansbury, Graham Jefferson (Dartford); Bill Lanyon (Woolwich); Philippa Rooke (Chelsfield).

### **2. Minutes of the Annual District Meeting at St Georges Beckenham on 14 October 2006**

Corrections to the minutes:

Apologies for absence were received from Graham Long not Graham Wood.

New Members Janis Roddy (not James Roddy)

David Brown was elected as District Training Officer not District Ringing Master

The minutes were approved (subject to these corrections) on the proposal of Freda Cannon, seconded by Jim Rooke.

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes**

- **Item 9** Note that funds from the bookstall go to the general fund not to the BRF.

### **4. KCACR Committee Meeting report**

- The county decided to stay with existing association prayer.
- A memorial service for David Say will be held on the 2 February at Rochester Cathedral. Contact Neil Jones if you are interested in ringing.
- James Hardy is looking to renew his list of people prepared to help with District Training days
- If anyone wants to advertise in the Handbook or knows someone who does, please contact Brenda Barton. Full page A5 £35 and half page £25 for about 2000 copies.

### **5. Reminder about providing tower information for handbook**

Letters asking for updates of tower information for the 2007 Handbook were sent to tower correspondents with the most recent District Newsletter. Updates should be sent to Alice Baverstock, \*\* Turners Meadow Way, Beckenham, BR3 \*\*\* **by 29 January.**

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## 6. Election of new members

The following new members were elected:

<b>New member</b>	<b>Tower</b>	<b>Proposed by</b>	<b>Seconded by</b>
Karen Robinson	Dartford	Brenda Barton	Esther Correia
Richard George	Chelsfield	James Rooke	Nancy Gay

## 7. 120 club draw

This was the last meeting of the year at which the 120 club would be drawn. Letters will be sent to towers asking for members for next year which commences in April. The draw took place and the winning numbers for this month were:

1 <sup>st</sup> Jim Rooke	67
2 <sup>nd</sup> Barbara Carpenter	59
3 <sup>rd</sup> Christine Webb	16
4 <sup>th</sup> Graham Jefferson	26

## 8. Any other business

- **Training day on 10 March – to learn plain hunt up to Bob Minor.** Names to David Brown by 25 February.
- **Ringing for the Olympics** There was a meeting last Saturday at Westminster City Hall at which Central Council said they want all bells inside the M25 to ring for the opening and closing ceremonies. This will require about 700 more ringers. Training sessions and purchase of a mini ring are planned to help with recruitment.
- **County training events** – Basic conducting 16 February, 17 April discussion seminar on training events. See KCACR website for details and ask Jim Hardy if you have questions.
- **Newsletter** – all tower correspondents should have a copy of January 2007 edition. Please send or give articles and subscriptions to Dominic Meredith. Subscriptions now needed - £5. Each tower gets a free copy (subsidized by the County) but please sign up for personal copies.
- **District subscriptions** are £9 due to Mark Jones. Cheques payable to KCACR.
- **County 8 bell competition** 24 February Oxford Bob at St Margaret's Rochester. District will try to enter a band.
- **8 Bell practice at Eynsford** will be on the second Friday in February rather than usual first Friday

## 9. Forthcoming events

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
District practice	27 January 7-9pm	Beckenham
6 bell striking competition	3 March	To be arranged
Next quarterly meeting	21 April	Bromley Common

## 10. Vote of thanks

Dominic Meredith proposed a vote of thanks to the Rev. John Draycott for conducting the service, to Jack Greenwell for playing the organ and to Rachel Backhouse and the Erith ringers for the excellent tea.

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# Agenda for the Next District Meeting

THE KENT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF CHANGE RINGERS  
LEWISHAM DISTRICT

Quarterly District Meeting at Bromley Common, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2007

## AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Quarterly District Meeting at Christchurch Erith on 31 January
3. KCACR Committee Meeting report
4. Election of new members
5. 120 club draw
6. Forthcoming events
7. Any other business
8. Vote of thanks

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# *Next District Practice*

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2007 - Deptford, 7-9pm

Everyone Welcome

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