

Officer's Reports 2021

General Secretary

Due to the continuing effects of the Covid pandemic, 2021 was still by no means the return to normal life and ringing activities that everyone had been looking forward to. However, the mass vaccination programme that began early in the New Year did enable a limited resumption of ringing by early summer. The wearing of masks, reduced duration, restricted number of ringers and maximum tower ventilation appeared a small price to pay for being allowed to ring again. The Central Council, with expert advice from our own Chairman, was instrumental in providing advice for ringers to safely return to ringing.

The virus continued to mutate and, whilst increasing in its transmissibility, the life-threatening effect lessened to flu like symptoms for most people. As 2022 dawns, our ringing lives really do now seem to be returning to a pre-pandemic normal, although much work will be required ahead to rebuild the bands where ringers have been lost over the past 2 years.

In 2021 the AGM and General Committee meetings were held via Zoom conference. Committee members have found the digital meetings very convenient and less time-consuming personally. They could be considered more environmentally friendly (less personal travel miles) and a less expensive way to conduct the Association business (no hall-hire costs). Whether the new members of the General Committee, to be voted in at the AGM 2022, will think likewise remains to be seen.

Decisions made by the General Committee resulted in the purchase of 10 pairs of eBells for loan to members. For a £10 deposit, members can borrow a pair of eBells and engage in handbell ringing with others over the internet. It appears that there has been a great resurgence of handbell ringing world-wide in this new form. Contact Phil Barnes.

Thanks to a very generous donation by Jacqui Barlow in memory of Tom, two superb and versatile sets of handbells were purchased for use primarily by the Kent Young Ringers. They were dedicated at a Service in memory of Tom Barlow at St. Michael's, Maidstone in January 2022. They are now being used regularly and enthusiastically by Kent Young Ringers.

Ringing Recruitment was considered to be a very important issue, particularly as the virus enters the endemic stage and teaching can resume. Association members have much work ahead to encourage and pass on our ringing skills to new people, if the decline in membership numbers is to be turned around. The General Committee agreed to purchase equipment for loan to Kent towers to support any Ringing Recruitment drives. The equipment and its potential uses are detailed on the KCACR Website. Contact Doug Davis.

As we return to ringing locally and further afield, a survey to assess the current state of bands in Kent was launched by the Chairman early in 2022. It is hoped the responses will help to guide members of the Association towards helping one another to recover from the loss of so many ringers and towards rebuilding bands in the future. We all have a stake in this and cannot sit back and expect others to help us. If you can ring, you should learn to teach or at least support ringing and bands outside your own tower in any way you can. Sometimes a visitor from another tower can really make a difference but every ringer needs also to get out and seek the ringing they need to maintain (and hopefully progress) our art.

Association events in 2021 were limited to just two but individual towers tolled a bell in April in memory of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Staplehurst ultimately hosted the Essex Trophy competition in September, at which the Kent Team did us proud. The Memorial Service of Remembrance at Rochester Cathedral in November was very much appreciated by those who had lost loved ones during the pandemic. It has been agreed that this will become an annual event, the next to be on 6th November 2022.

It is hoped that sufficient members put themselves forward to fill the vacancies that arose at the AGM 2022. Those who stood down have done a great job over some very difficult years and issues arising. They should each be much appreciated for their contributions, alongside those who agreed to continue for another year. In particular, the Chairman, Phil Barnes, for his energy, diligence and clear-thinking (as well as on the Central Council). In addition, the Treasurer, Maureen Poole, managed the Association accounts very efficiently. Other contributors to the well-being of the Association were thanked for their input in key areas of expertise including the Archives/Library Hazel Basford, Health & Safety Peter Simms and Publicity Caroline Stockmann. If vacancies remain after the AGM and by the time this Handbook is published (with many thanks to the Editor, Doug Davis) it will never be too late to step up and offer yourself for co-option to the General Committee.

J Susan Bassett

Training

Because of legal restrictions affecting churches and ringing, there has been very little activity on the training front in 2021. The Training Fund sponsored an initiative to purchase equipment required to relay activity in the ringing chamber and belfry to a screen located in church, which was tried out at a recruitment event at Boxley. The useful experience gained will lead to some adjustments. The equipment is available for use across the Associations' towers and those wishing to use it should contact Doug Davis.

David Grimwood

Youth Officer

Covid guidelines ruled the year! The better weather enabled us to have handbell sessions outdoors at Bredgar in mid-April. Matthew Jerome was present as a helper and tolled the tenor for HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Matthew holds a gold D of E award, so this seemed particularly appropriate. One tower bell practice was also held at Bredgar in April with parents basking in the sunshine, but our next get together wasn't until June, with a broken rope and quarter peal at West Malling.

The summer proved to be a scramble of arranging practices in preparation for September's RWNYC around holidays, Covid isolations and suitably ventilated towers! Huge thanks are due to those towers and ringers who accommodated 2 or 3 youngsters invading practices to practise the test piece with local ringers. We are really indebted to you as this all paid off when we took two teams of 6 to enter the Call Change category of the RWNYC at Worcester on September 11th. Our more inexperienced team surpassed our expectations and achieved the wonderful position of 5th of 15 teams whilst our more experienced team were delighted to WIN the Ringing World Editor's Trophy for Excellence, returning this Trophy to Kent. Many, many congratulations to them all! This was the icing on the cake for a very enjoyable weekend.

We enjoyed sharing the delights of East Peckham (another Quarter peal) and Quex with Will Bosworth, editor of the Ringing World in August. Fish and chips and frisbee on the beach at Whitstable happily filled a couple of hours on the only day all six of our winning team were able to practise together. A video recording was made of a good touch of Plain Bob Doubles at St Alphege, Whitstable for the church Facebook page. They then went on to ring on the recently augmented 10 at Faversham.

5 young ringers benefited from an introduction to steeple keeping in the bell chamber at Staplehurst run by Daniel Jarvis.

Amber Cusick continued to make great strides in handbell ringing with 4 quarter peals and 13 peals (see Bellboard). She also corralled 6 young women and called a quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles at Westerham. An interview with her and a photo were subsequently published in the Ringing World in the "Image of the Week" series.

KYR monthly sessions saw lowish numbers during the autumn (for a whole variety of reasons), but we were able to have very well-attended District sessions in the Ashford and Lewisham Districts in December which gives us much hope for 2022.

Ellen Jones and Callum Clark starred in the item on bellringing at Rochester Cathedral as part of the ITV programme "Love Your Weekend" with Alan Titchmarsh.

Jennifer Thomas

Publicity

It goes without saying, this was another strange year in terms of public relations activities, given there was limited ringing. There were two main pieces of work I got involved in: the creation of a 'back to ringing survey', with Phil and Doug, and that has now been issued, and the reporting of the Essex Trophy competition for the Ringing World (the host association does the write-up). As many readers of the handbook may not take the Ringing World, I'd like to summarise my Ringing World article here.

Saturday 11 September saw the Essex Trophy competition play out at All Saints, Staplehurst, Kent on a slightly dull but pleasantly mild morning. It was an achievement that three bands managed to make it – as host KCACR Chair Phil Barnes said in his opening words, 'congratulations: you got through the eliminators!' Unfortunately, a sign of our times, as was the case that the competition could not be held in Ashford District as originally planned. Staplehurst All Saints was a great choice though, with an airy ringing room, good facilities, and the Ashford support team travelled over and dealt with all the arrangements (including providing a good range of refreshments for the ringers). Many thanks went also to Staplehurst for helping by providing such a great venue!

The test piece was Cambridge Royal, and the bands were drawn to ring in the following order: Kent, Surrey, then Guildford. The timings were planned such that ten minutes of airing occurred between each band being in the ringing chamber, and CO2 was monitored.

The bells were last rung for the Essex Trophy in 2000, shortly after their augmentation in 1997. They are a 19cwt ring, the old octave mainly by Mears & Stainbank of 1885 with a 7th of 1605 by Joseph Hatch, and the new trebles cast by Whitechapel. The only challenge was not the bells themselves, but the draft which affected the ringers of the 4, who were positioned directly in front of an open window! The judges, Henry Coggill and Tom Lawrance, complimented these lovely and clear bells, and said they enjoyed the morning thoroughly from their marquee placed in a quiet corner of the graveyard.

Scores were as follows, leaving Kent holding the trophy for another year:

Band	Rank	Peal Speed	Score
Kent	1 st	3'16"	72%
Guildford	3 rd	3'11"	68%
Surrey	2 nd	3'18"	63%

It was commented that the usual peal speed of these bells is 3'08", so all the bands took it slightly steadier in fact, though Guildford were very close to this as can be seen.

Tom Lawrance acknowledged that Kent, being the first band up, had a slightly 'rough' practice, but the 2nd and 3rd leads were particularly good, and all the leads were pretty good (with the treble standing out in particular here).

Surrey's tenor 'wanted to get on with it a bit', but in fact the speed was very similar to that of Kent. There wasn't quite the same balance of 'heavy and light' in this piece, but the leading was improving so a shame in a way that the piece was not slightly longer for this band.

Guildford set the brisker rhythm of the three, but the judges commented that it occasionally felt rushed, and cut short in 10th place, but all in all very 'comfortable'.

Thanks were given all round by Phil Barnes, and especially to the judges as well as the Ashford organising team headed up by Charles Sinden and Maureen Poole, who looked after everyone so well. Tom thanked the helpers for providing the judges with tea and sustenance throughout the morning and mentioned they also 'enjoyed the assistance from the chap on the lawnmower next door'.

The other bands that had originally intended to join, including Essex in fact who had to drop out for Covid-related reasons only a couple of days before, were very much missed, and everyone is looking forward to a larger competition next year – when the new Public Relations Officer will no doubt be asked to arrange the write-up!

Band members for Kent were, in order starting with treble: Phil Barnes (C), Liz Barnes, Gwen Rogers, Peter Swift, Damien Smith, Doug Davis, Mark Chittenden-Pile, Andrew Hills, Ian Mills and Phil Rogers.

Caroline Stockmann

Bell Restoration

A bit more activity this year but mainly inspections prior to ringing for the first time after lockdown, the only major works being Faversham back in action and reports/quotes being obtained at Bethersden for rehangng.

Aldington	Inspection and maintenance.
Ash-next-Sandwich	Inspection and maintenance.
Ashford	Inspection and refit one clapper.
Bethersden	Various site meetings with contractors re rehangng.
Boxley	Inspection of the 5th bell.
Chislehurst St Nicholas	Inspection (thanks to Graham Long).
Faversham	Now ringing, with some adjustments required to sound and clock hammers.
East Langdon	Inspection and maintenance.
High Halden	Inspection, maintenance and repair to 5th clapper.
Ightham	Clappers rebushed and refitted.
Minster in Thanet	Inspection and maintenance.
Minster in Sheppey	Inspection and maintenance.
Quex Park	Inspection and replace worn pulleys.
Sellindge	Inspection and maintenance.
Throwley	Inspection and some minor works.
Tunbridge Wells	Inspection and 7th wheel made serviceable.
Waltham	Inspection and maintenance.
Willesborough	Inspection and maintenance.

Brian G Butcher