

## TONBRIDGE DISTRICT NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2022 AKA NOT THE LOOK TO!

We are all aware of the impact of the pandemic on ringing and it is a very long time since the last edition of Look To because of the lack of ringing activities. Sadly, our Look To Editor is unwell with Covid and has been unable to resurrect Look To. It is great to see that ringing has almost returned to how it was pre pandemic, albeit with fewer ringers and less service ringing. Hopefully this hastily compiled Newsletter will give a flavour of recent ringing activities. I apologies that it is not up to Steve's usual standard!  
Ray Taylor

### SUSPENSION OF RINGING by Angela Clark

When Covid struck in early 2020, it meant the closure of churches, with no services taking place, there was little point in calling the faithful to worship. At Tonbridge the last "official" ringing took place in March 2020 when we rang for a funeral on Friday, then hung up our ropes, locked up, and went home.

We kept in touch throughout the early Summer with picnics, Zoom meetings, and breakfasts in Wetherspoons and by July, short services were held at 11 am so we rang 2 or 3 just to let them know the bells were still there. At Easter Sunday in 2021 we rang 4 and in May of that year, our practices resumed. Throughout the Summer service ringing had returned but, for various reasons, our numbers had declined and sadly have not picked up since.

The mental effects of no longer practising something can result in a loss of confidence. This can, and should, be addressed. In time "we get by with a little help from our friends". It is worth it.

### RINGING FOR THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

There was a significant return to ringing during June to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The information below has been sourced from Bellboard. Apologies to all those who rang for the celebrations and are not recorded below.

<b>Chevening</b>	5040 Grandsire Triples
<b>Cowden</b>	Rounds and Call Changes
<b>East Peckham</b>	Minor and Doubles
<b>Edenbridge</b>	5040 Grandsire Triples
<b>Goudhurst</b>	Rounds and Call Changes
<b>Hadlow</b>	1296 Plain Bob Major 1280 Cambridge Surprise Major
<b>Kemsing</b>	Call Changes, Plain Hunt, Bob Doubles (on 2 occasions)
<b>Kilndown</b>	Rounds and Call Changes
<b>Lamberhurst</b>	Rounds and Call Changes
<b>Leigh</b>	Rounds and Call Changes 1260 Doubles (Stedman, Grandsire, Plain Bob)
<b>Penshurst</b>	Call Changes
<b>Seal Chart</b>	Rounds on 6 rung for the first time by 4 pupils
<b>Sevenoaks</b>	Call Changes 1260 Plain Bob Doubles
<b>Speldhurst</b>	Plain Hunt, Grandsire Triples and Call Changes
<b>Tonbridge (Cranford Road)</b>	1440 Double Bob Minor (handbells)
<b>Tunbridge Wells</b>	1260 Grandsire Triples

## JUBILEE RINGING AT TUNBRIDGE WELLS by Tessa Worthington

As with hundreds of others up and down the country, a quarter peal was rung over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend at St. Peter's, Tunbridge Wells. However this tower has only 2 members of its own and thanks to ringers from about 5 other towers the bells have rung out on the one Sunday a month allowed for several years now. We wanted to mark the Queen's remarkable 70 years of reign, so called on the services of yet another tower to conduct the quarter peal of Grandsire Triples we had chosen to ring. Conductors seem to be few and far between these days and we are very grateful to Louise Nightingale for agreeing to help us out.

There is now a framed printout of the occasion up in the belfry with a mention of the rounds Ian Cochrane rang with us beforehand. Ian has maintained the bells and belfry in his own inimitable style year after year and his dedication to the bells is remarkable.

## SEAL ST LAWRENCE (SEAL CHART) by Jen Thomas

A conversation last summer with Head Teacher Alison Saunders (née Raynor) led to the start of a project to teach pupils at Seal St Lawrence Primary School to ring at the church adjoining their playground. I did a little presentation on ringing to the junior school just before the February half term holiday. Trevor Arnold kindly set up his simulated ring of Maypole Bells in the playground for pupils to try. This was a great introduction to ringing and a little team of us started teaching 7 pupils aged 10 and 11 on 4th March.

Alison's ambition was for the school to contribute to the celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by ringing the bells. Intensive teaching sessions took place on Friday afternoons, with Covid(!), family circumstances and school activities trying to disrupt the learning process. It was decided we would aim for them to ring together on Midsummer's Day, 24th June.

A new challenge entered the equation: one family was hosting a young girl from the Ukraine, so she came along to learn... and we had to work out how to teach someone with minimal English!!! STOP was the first word!! As they got nearer to being able to ring independently our teaching team increased (THANK YOU SO MUCH!) so they could practise following one, two or three bells in an approximation of rounds. Finally they each had a go at ringing rounds on 6 with adult helpers, setting their bell (x10) at hand or back stroke, and each whole pull, to enable them to earn their "Ambitious Apprentice" badge (Sherborne teaching scheme). Also at this practice they were interviewed by Jo Burn from BBC Radio Kent. I hope you heard them speak so beautifully on Friday 24th June.



L-R: 4 Kira, 6 Esme, 1 Rosie, 2 Matthew  
(photo by Alison Saunders)

I went along to their Sports afternoon on Thursday 23rd to present 4 of them with their badges and to say "farewell" to one who was unable to ring on 24th as her family was flying off to a new life in Australia... but she knows which towers she can go and ring at!

Anyway... despite all the setbacks we achieved Alison's ambition ..... and 4 Seal St Lawrence pupils, along with their head teacher and one dad rang in rounds to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It has been so lovely to be involved in this project with such enthusiastic young learners... 2 have already been to MINI-Ringers and we hope they will be going along to practice night very soon now. Watch out for the next stage in September!

## MULTIPLE FIRSTS AT EDENBRIDGE by Ray Taylor

Members of Edenbridge and Cowden bands set the bar at a new height for ringing challenges for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

A peal of Grandsire Triples had been chosen. Peal ringing can be challenging enough without the added pressure of ringing for a special occasion, but this attempt would also be a first for FIVE of the eight ringers in the peal band!

Louise Nightingale had agreed to conduct the peal attempt and arranged quarter peal attempts to give the best chance of success on the day.

The day came. The bells were raised nervously, but well. Not a good sign, since this band considers that a successful raise often results in a failed attempt!

No need for worry. Louise's calls were spot on and there was some excellent ringing with hardly any trips.

Massive congratulations to the band on a terrific achievement. It was a privilege to be part of it.

Details of the ringers' firsts are included in 'milestones'.



Front L-R: 1 Richard, 2 Caroline, 3 Janice, 4 Ray  
Back L-R: 5 Phil, 6 Louise, 7 Andy, 8 Carl  
(photo by Carl's phone)



Louise's ET fingers after the peal (photo by Louise)

## KEMSING JUBILEE RINGING ..... by Ray Taylor



Some of the regulars (photo by Ray Taylor)

Fraser wrote –

".... no, not that one - this is far more important! I at last got round to checking my old diaries, and found that the first Kemsing Surprise Practice took place on Tuesday 6th May 1997, so this coming one (3rd May 2022) is the Silver Jubilee event. In those days it was Cambridge only, and the participants were mainly from the Kemsing band. In the earliest days it didn't sound much like Cambridge! The weekly Kemsing practice was on a Wednesday back then. To celebrate this momentous occasion we will ring Silver Jubilee Treble Place Minor."

Some of the regulars couldn't make it but the rest of us gave the tricky method a go. We were very successful ..... at sipping bubbly and eating Jenny Williamson's lovely 80+2 birthday cake!

Congratulations to Fraser for persevering with the practices and reaching this milestone. We've just about got Cambridge cracked!

## PLATINUM JUBILEE RINGING – NOT ONLY IN THE UK by Cub Reporter

We were all encouraged to ring for the Platinum Jubilee on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. One might expect towers in the Commonwealth to join in and I am sure some did; but elsewhere?

Our man in Houston, Nick Fulford, took it on himself to get the former colony to ring for the Platinum Jubilee. The band at Palmer Episcopal Memorial Church, Houston, was persuaded to ring.

The ringers at Palmer first visited Tonbridge in 2016 and, along with Tonbridge tower members, travelled on motor cruisers from Windsor to Reading and back taking in a couple of towers each day on the way and even a couple of towers in Oxford, a play at Sonning as well as Windsor Castle. In 2017 a more local to Tonbridge outing was arranged for the US visitors but it did include being invited to Canterbury Cathedral for a personalised tour and to join in on the Canterbury band's practice night.

So, Nick Fulford set up a Zoom from the Palmer tower for 4 June and we at Tonbridge were invited to see and hear the ringing of our erstwhile comrades as well as having a quick "hello" between ringing. Afterwards the Cub Reporter congratulated the band on behalf of the Tonbridge ringers and thanked them for ringing. Nick Fulford's response included, "I have to say Tonbridge's influence was clearly very meaningful at our end, I would say that rounds on 8 was probably the best we've managed since before the pandemic!"



Panoramic view of ringing in the Houston Palmer Tower for the Platinum Jubilee of HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

From the left: Harold Robertson, Ivo van der Werff, Marcy Antiuk, Lynsey Slavonic, Sarah Bittner, Nick Fulford, Corbin Sturch, Rose van der Werff.

## MILESTONES SINCE 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2022

The information below has been sourced from Bellboard. Apologies to those who have achieved milestones and are not recorded below.  
**Congratulations to all.**

**Esme, Kira, Matthew, Rosie**

Rounds on 6 rung for the first time by 4 pupils aged 10 and 11 from St Lawrence CoE Primary School (Seal Chart) who started learning to ring in March and May along with their head teacher and one parent. Rung as a celebration by the school for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and for Midsummer's Day.

<b>Andy Wickenden</b>	First triples peal inside
<b>Carl Nightingale</b>	First quarter peal including Plain Bob Minor First triples peal
<b>Caroline Levy-Cooper</b>	First triples peal inside
<b>John Prior</b>	First quarter peal at first attempt
<b>Louise Nightingale</b>	First triples peal inside and as conductor
<b>Rachel Cargill Thompson</b>	First QP in over 20 years
<b>Ray Taylor</b>	First peal in hand
<b>Richard Dyson</b>	First quarter peal including Stedman Doubles First peal



## FESTIVAL OF RINGING or IS RINGING DEAD?

by Cub Reporter

There has been paucity of ringing over the last two years and lethargy seems to have set in. Ringers have given up ringing, seem loathe to start again, maybe have developed other interests or just don't care anymore.

First, the Striking Competition. There was superb ringing to listen to during the Striking Competition courtesy of the competitors; video feed to the church of the ringing bells – also fed to Taywell Farm Shop for visitors there; tea ably provided by Angela Clark; slick organisation of the competition by Emma Tamkin – a well-run competition. Details of the competition can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Past Chairman, Phil Barnes, proposed a Festival of Ringing to go along with the 8-bell Striking Competition. What was to be done? People have been missing outings for two years and they are enjoyable. Instead of bands having to organise towers and “find the pub” a ready-made outing was arranged by Catherine Heathcote for everyone – 8 towers all within 5 miles of Goudhurst all open at the appointed times – no lock-outs. For refreshment – barbecue, beer, food, drinks were available at the conveniently placed Taywell Farm Shop - ready and waiting. On top of that the Charmborough Ring was there for ringers, and indeed the public, to show their skills or try their hand.

The events were advertised widely - KCACR website; e-mail notices to individual towers in the Tonbridge District; e-mail notices to other districts well before the event.

And the outcome?

In short – no-one came.

Not quite true but it felt like it. There are some 200 members in the Tonbridge District. It is understood that apart from the competition ringers and those who helped put up and take down the Charmborough Ring about three Tonbridge District members turned up. The number of members of the 1400 from other districts, excluding competitors, could be counted on two hands.

The event was a success, but it was also a failure.

I'll ask again, is ringing dead?



Association promotional material and live streaming (photo by Doug Davis)



District Tea Lady (photo by Andy Wickenden)



The Charmborough Ring at Taywell Farm Shop (photo by Ray Taylor)

## COUNTY 8-BELL STRIKING COMPETITION by Ray Taylor

Finding ~~mugs~~ ringers to represent the District in the County 8-bell competition is a real challenge, but Emma Tamkin used her renowned tactful persuasion to assemble a band. Goudhurst had been chosen for the test piece of 252 Stedman Triples because of its proximity to Taywell Farm Shop and the ability to host the Festival of Ringing at minimum cost to the Association. Challenging bells for a competition!

Our band had practices to get used to ringing together. Sadly, a week before the competition Dave and Fran James tested positive for Covid. Louise Nightingale and Catherine Heathcote kindly stood in. We were pleased with our ringing after a false start, which was also scored for faults. Lewisham did not complete the test piece. Ashford and Maidstone did not enter bands. The judges, Julian Ferrar and Julian Hemper of The Salisbury Diocesan Guild, counted faults as below in the order that bands rang.

3<sup>rd</sup> Tonbridge 12+35=47; 2<sup>nd</sup> Rochester 38; Lewisham 44.5 (disqualified); 1<sup>st</sup> Canterbury 10

Canterbury were clear winners and it was a real pleasure to listen to some lovely ringing in the sunshine.



Support in the church for the Tonbridge Band (photo by Andy)



Front L-R: 1 Louise, 2 Catherine, 3 Jacqui, 4 Phil  
Back L-R: 5 Ray, 6 Pam, 7 Richard, 8 Carl  
(photo by Andy Wickenden)



Eric the timekeeper seemed to enjoy it (photo by Andy)

## WHAT GOES ON HERE? by Mike Worthington

Horsmonden is a place with many clubs and organisations for people to join. On 23rd April, grouped under the Horsmonden Village Events Community banner, over 30 organisations joined in the 'What Goes On Here' event at which they showcase their activities and hope to sign up new members.

Ken Bromley, Tower Captain at St Margaret's church, organised a stand for the ringers. Obviously he needed a model bell to explain how bells are hung and rung, as well as some posters and recruiting leaflets. He knew just where to lay his hands on an eye catching model. A few phone calls later and the loan of the model from St Peter's in Tunbridge Wells was arranged.

The photo shows Ken with the bell. It's an unusual frame, being triangular, but apart from that it's a faithful model of a ringing bell. The bell is brass, the bottom frame is wood, the 'A' frame iron and the wheel, stay, pulleys, etc., all wood. It is entirely handmade, reputedly by Ernie Ladd, with fine attention to detail.



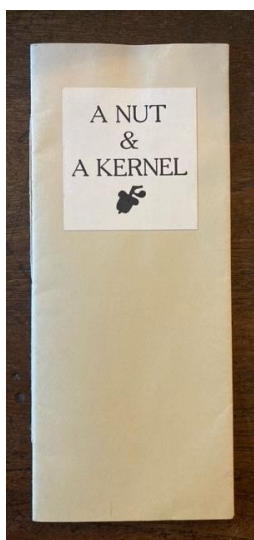
(photo by Mike)



## BOBBIE FAIRCLOUGH by Tessa Worthington

We are used to seeing Bobbie Fairclough around over the years and some will have noticed her absence for a while. She has found walking difficult but for those who know her, never is she heard to complain. However, she has been in hospital recently with a serious infection of the spine. Due to expert medical intervention I gather she is now on the mend and may even be home again soon. We wish her well in her recovery; but the very happy news that her daughter Astrid is to marry her fiancée Ben in September at Wimborne Minster should speed up her recovery as she sorts out her mother of the bride ensemble.

## FRASER'S BOOK CORNER (Written during lockdown)



### LIMITED EDITIONS - 1 OF 3 (or maybe more, eventually!)

Within my bell and ringing book collection I have a few which are, or purport to be, limited editions. I was planning to tell you the story, as far as I know it, of the so-called limited editions of 'The Church Bells of Suffolk' (1890) by John James Raven, D.D. However, I decided that, although the story is interesting, the book lacks any colour to brighten your days in these odd times. Raven's 'Suffolk' will have to wait until another day.

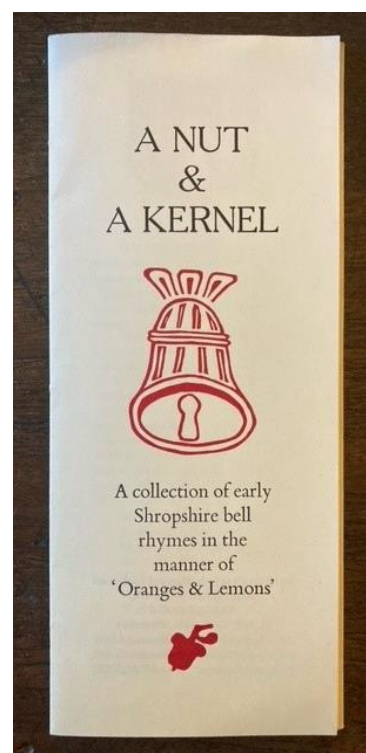
Instead, I've plumped for a booklet whose cover belies what lies within. I hope that the pages inside will lighten your mood!

'A Nut & a Kernel' was illustrated, hand-set and printed by Peter Criddle in 1981, at his Erius Press in Shrewsbury. He is described on a Facebook posting as "very talented and inventive man".

The book lists thirty four Shropshire bell rhymes "collected by Georgina Jackson, and published in Charlotte Byrne's 'Shropshire Folk-Lore' in 1883". Incidentally, these two-line verses or rhyming couplets, the book tells us, are known as distichs, a word which had escaped me until now, notwithstanding my crossword-attempting habit!

The coloured illustrations show the title page, and the first page of distichs. The decorations at the head of each page are bell-founders' marks, the one in the title page being that "used by the Rudhall family of Gloucestershire in the eighteenth century", and the second by John Finch from Hereford, in the seventeenth century.

The limitation given is 150 (unnumbered) copies, which I suspect is true, unlike the aforementioned Suffolk book! The book measures 10 3/8"/26.4cm by 4 3/8"/11.1cm, and the eight pages are bound in thin card covers. For the budding printers amongst you, or even those who've blossomed already (ok, I mean Phil Jones, the previous editor of 'Look to', who is a printer) the booklet "is set in 14 and 24 point Bembo Roman and Italic, and 36 point Gloucester, on Grosvenor Chater's Basingwerk Parchment". The 150 copies were probably sold very quickly, but if you do come across one do buy it - you won't be disappointed!





My favourite couplet, you won't be surprised to hear, is –

"You're too fond of beer,  
Say the bells of Ellesmere."

Another, which is possibly pertinent to-day –

"We must all die,  
Say the bells of Lydbury."

Did I say rhyming couplets!?

Hopefully the latter couplet won't happen to any of us just yet, but do remember to wash your hands, respect social distancing, and, above all, nil desperandum and keep smiling!

Fraser Clift

PS I've only come across two copies of this book, one of which I bought. The second is for sale on ABE Books at the moment. The price, £250, is way more than I paid!

## **NEW RINGERS – BELL HANDLING** by Catherine Lewis

At the moment, inevitably, many towers seem to have a shortage of ringers on Sundays. I suspect there are many towers where no one feels quite confident/competent enough to teach bell handling. Or maybe there are too many learners for the teachers you have. In either case I'd be delighted to try to provide help. But also please would you contact me if you might be interested in a practical teaching-to-handle event, where we run through the whole process in detail. If enough people get in touch we can fix date(s) as soon as possible, rather than wait for a space in the calendar.

## **TRAINING MORNINGS** by Catherine Lewis

**17 September, 10 December and 18 March 2023, all 9:30-13:00**

Training Morning subjects can range from Rounds and Call Changes, Hunting/Ropesight to Bob Doubles, Bob Minor, Raising and Lowering in Peal or Trebling up and down. If you'd like to take advantage of these sessions, or would like to request a topic, please get in touch with me. The first people to book will define the subject(s) available.

Catherine Lewis, District Training Coordinator  
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## **TONBRIDGE DISTRICT 120 CLUB** by Ray Taylor

The final draw of the 2021/2022 season takes place at the District's July Quarterly Meeting. Thanks to all who have bought shares and have contributed to raising around £670 for KCACR Bell Restoration, Training, and Kent Young Ringers Funds. Please consider buying shares (still £10 each) for yourself or your tower if you don't already do so. Details of how to apply, plus a list of prize winning share numbers, are on the KCACR website or available from me. [rayt142536@gmail.com](mailto:rayt142536@gmail.com)