

This is the third edition of Rounds & About. We need your news and snippets. Please send these to: [angelaclarkbuttons@btinternet.com](mailto:angelaclarkbuttons@btinternet.com)

## Upcoming District Events

See you there!

<b>4th February 2023</b>	10:00-12:00	<b>Leigh</b>	District Practice
<b>4th March 2023</b>	10:00-12:00	<b>Penshurst</b>	District Practice
<b>1st April 2023</b>	10:00-12:00	<b>Cranbrook</b>	District Practice and Quarterly Meeting

## Have you paid your subs for 2023 yet?

by Hamilton Woods

Please ensure your £15 (if appropriate) is paid to the KCACR as soon as possible. You will need your membership number and your password. Any difficulties – contact Hamilton Woods 01732 463240 or [hamwoods@kent2.co.uk](mailto:hamwoods@kent2.co.uk)

Remember! If you no longer need to pay, you are still required to register. Otherwise, not only will you be deemed no longer a member – you will be omitted from the 2023 Handbook, available on Easter Monday.



## Christmas 2022 at Edenbridge

by Kathy Staff

Mince pies and mulled wine, and the sound of church bells ... it must be the Christmas Ringing hosted by Edenbridge, a curtain-raiser to the festive season.

There was something for everyone to take hold of a rope, from rounds to more advanced methods. With the spicy smell of refreshments provided thanks to the District officers, there was the additional seasonal sound of handbells given an airing in the church. It was a most enjoyable break from writing cards and gift shopping, and time to catch up with friends old and new.

## How did I end up there?

by David Offen

So where was there? There was the top of a long spiral stone staircase leading up to the ringing chamber at Horsmonden Church on Saturday 3rd December.

I'm always interested to hear about other people's route into bell ringing so I thought I would tell you all mine. Some of you reading this will know Nick Wilkins who is Tower Captain at Farnborough and regular ringer at Chelsfield. I've known Nick for more than 40 years and always knew that he was a bell ringer (as he is known to mention it on occasions!!).

In June 2021 Nick and I went on a road trip to South Wales to join a group of mutual friends for a walking weekend. On the way back we needed to stop at Matthew Higby & Co to collect some repaired bell ropes. What was meant to be a quick 10 min stop ended up as a 2 hour exploration of everything bells and ropes. And that was it, I was hooked. I was totally fascinated by the whole process of bell repairing and tuning, and of rope making, and ringing. Sadly Matthew and his team didn't get much work done that afternoon due to my incessant questioning!!



So I asked Nick for a contact at my local tower (St Mary's Westerham) and after about 20 lessons with the ever patient Peter Fevyer and 10 Tuesday practice sessions there I was at my first District Practice with Timon also from Westerham and a couple of other relatively novice ringers. It was an excellent turnout with 22 experienced ringers as well as us novices.

Those who know Horsmonden will know that it is not a large ringing chamber and with 26 of us, a few chairs and 8 bell ropes we all had to move in unison as we changed the teams on the bells. Emma was in charge and did an excellent job of 'herding the cats' and making sure we all had a good number of sessions. All of us novices had 5 sessions of rounds and call changes, the last ones of which had us on one at a time with 7 'experts' on the other ropes (and 18 people watching!). I think we all did really well and were made to feel very welcome by Emma and the whole band. In between it was great to watch the others ringing 'something-or-other triples'.

The slightly unnerving thing about the morning wasn't the ringing itself but the tower. Quite how an 80' high solid stone tower weighing in at many thousands of tons can sway about 2" when the bells are all ringing is beyond me. One of the locals said "yes it is a bit unnerving isn't it. But look", he said, "its been here for 700 years so it's probably not going anywhere"!

Overall a really excellent morning and I will definitely be along to the next District Practice.

If you've not done it yet do come along. You will definitely enjoy it.

At the end of 2022, St Margaret's tower celebrated 3 of our ringers all reaching their 80th birthdays.

Michael (Mick) Harris reached 80 in November but started his ringing journey in 1977 at Goudhurst Church. Joining the St Margaret's team, some 10 years later, Mick has been an integral member of our ringers ever since. He has trained and coached some of our younger and new members over the years and enjoys participating with visiting ringers, especially when more complex methods are rung. Mick has extensive knowledge of these and regularly helps with calling at the Friday night practices, alongside the tower captain. Mick's favourite bell is... one of the tenors – No 7!

Martin Drinkwater tuned 80 at the beginning of December. He joined St Margaret's ringers just 5 years ago demonstrating that anyone, at any age can learn to ring. Martin ran Horsmonden's newsagents (Crowhurst) for many years and was an integral member of the local community. Following retirement Martin joined St Margaret's ringers and now regularly gives back to his community again ringing for weddings, church services and other key church events. Martin's favourite bell – No 4.

Ken Bromley is the youngest of the 3 celebrating 80 years young in mid-December. Ken is our Tower Captain and has been ringing for nearly 60 years. St Margaret's has a well-documented history of the ringers on the walls with many of these being direct relatives of Ken's. His father, grandfather, uncles and their siblings all are named & celebrated ringing peals and other key events all captured and remembered for their contribution. Ken's favourite bell – No 3, also known as the Willard's bell but that's a story for another article .....

Ken also shared his actual 'birthday' with another St Margaret's ringer, Brian Bassett who continued to actively participate beyond 80. Brian passed away in 2021 and is sadly missed by all of us still.

Our ringers are all amazing and special people but to have 3 at this stage in their lives very much active and willing to climb the 42 sandstone steps up to the bell tower, to ring and then climb a further 42 steps to inspect the actual bells each Friday night and Sundays .... is something to celebrate.

From all of the St Margaret's ringers, and the wider ringing community, I wanted to take the opportunity to wish to Mick, Martin and Ken a very Happy Birthday and thank them all for their continued commitment to our beautiful St Margaret's and the local Horsmonden's community.

## Recruiting New Learners - A Success Story - We Hope! .... One you could try?

by Gavin Knight

Tonbridge, like many towers, has been declining in the number of ringers we have over the last few years. Having discussed the problem a number of times, we knew action had to be taken, we were struggling to have a band on a Sunday morning!

Clearly the message needed to get out to the local community of Tonbridge as they simply did not know we needed them. We set about producing a leaflet for two purposes 1, to act as a poster around town in every location we could get it placed and 2, to be photographed and put out onto social media. We found a very good poster on the CCCBR website which had been made for elsewhere but was allowable to be customised for anyone to use. No need to reinvent the wheel so we customised it for our own use and had 200 printed at a cost of £80. Some A4 and some A5.

Next step was to use them, and the current band has been spreading them around the town wherever we can get them shown. In churches, in pubs, on noticeboards in shops and in other clubs and on community noticeboards. I can foresee that the notices will need to be replaced at some point as they are fighting for space amongst other organisations messages but that can be done.

We then set about posting it on all the social media sites we have in Tonbridge, mainly Facebook ones and this is where we have scored our biggest success. Luckily Tonbridge has quite a few sites and it is easy to upload a copy of the leaflet with a short message. 'Tonbridge Daily' had already allowed us to post some video about ourselves ringing for the Queen's funeral and describing the tolling of the bells so they were happy for us to post our recruitment message. 'Tonbridge Gang' 'Tonbridge Community Hub' and 'Tonbridge Mums' were more sites along with the local resident's association site that were used.

So far by email we have had 7 enquiries, 4 have started to learn up the tower, 1 more is going to start and 2 could not fit in with our arrangements once they had all the details. These new ringers added to one other who started 3 months ago after reading an article in the church magazine, have swelled our numbers considerably.

We are delighted and knuckling down to the challenge to get them ringing with the band ASAP. We are of course getting them to come to our regular practices but are also for a period of time giving them individual sessions of learning at times to suit them to accelerate their learning experience. Having got them – we must invest our time to keep them. It remains to be seen how far their ringing journeys go, but we are delighted.

Hopefully this could be an encouragement for your tower to take action.

## First Quarterly Meeting of 2023

by Angela Clark

The District meeting in January has always been well attended and, despite the ghastly weather, 19 came along for the ringing at Speldhurst on 7th January and many remained for the meeting. A welcome visitor from Wittersham even travelled by bus to join us. It is proving popular to hold these events on a Saturday morning, but do let the committee know what you think. Tea, coffee and biscuits were enjoyed before the meeting.

Phil Jarvis organised the ringing and ensured everyone was included. There were plenty of experienced ringers present which meant helpers were available to "stand behind" for those who required help and assurance.

At the meeting an update on the District's finances was reported and two new members were elected – one each from Sevenoaks and Seal Chart.

Jen Thomas brought along her small granddaughter who kindly drew the numbers for the 120 Club and (possibly as instructed) drew grandma's number as first prize.

## Tonbridge District 120 Club

3rd December 2022 draw at the District Practice at Horsmonden	1	£20	109	Catherine Lewis	Brasted
	2	£15	64	Karol Leeves	Speldhurst
	3	£10	15	Guy Fancourt	Sevenoaks
7th January 2023 draw at the District Quarterly Meeting at Speldhurst	1	£40	90	Jen Thomas	Brasted
	2	£30	110	Louise Nightingale	Cowden
	3	£20	4	Catherine Lewis	Brasted

Please contact Ray Taylor [rayt142536@gmail.com](mailto:rayt142536@gmail.com) 07973 123323 to find out more about the Tonbridge District 120 Club or to buy a share, £10 each. Draws take place at a District event each month.



## Saying Farewell to Bob Dockerty

by Carl Nightingale & Andy Wickenden

Many bell ringers across our district will be familiar with the fine taste of Larkins beer and may even have met the man himself when collecting beer from the brewery. Bob Dockerty founded the Brewery in 1986 when the Dockerty family acquired the Kentish Ales Brewery before moving it to the Larkins Family farm in Chiddingstone in 1990.

It certainly was a great shock to hear of Bob's sudden passing. Bob did a lot for good causes and supported many local charities and events we are involved with so it was the least we could do to ring the bells and pay our respects to him.

We rang before the service and tolled the tenor as the coffin was brought into the church. The "Badgers" rugby team were on ushering and traffic duty and they commented afterwards that the sound of the bells was very moving.

By the time we got downstairs the church was packed and it was standing room only in the smaller chapel at the back of the church - a sign of what a popular man he was and the impact he had around our villages and towns.

Following the service, the wake was held in a marquee at Chiddingstone Castle where 16 barrels of Larkins had been shipped in to raise a glass to Bob. There must have been at least 500 people there sharing fond memories, recounting tales of hop-picking and celebrating Bob's life.



The lyrics from the song at the end of the service were a very fitting farewell to a great man:

Fill to me the parting glass  
and gather as the evening falls  
and gently rise and softly call goodnight  
and joy be to you all  
goodnight and joy be to you all.