

ROUNDS & ABOUT

Tonbridge District Newsletter No.4 – March 2023

Please send news and snippets (ringing related) to angelaclarkbuttons@btinternet.com

Upcoming District Events

4 th March 2023	Penshurst	10.00 -12.00	District Practice
11 th March 2023	Goudhurst	7.00-8.30	Grandsire Triples Practice
1 st April 2023	Cranbrook		District Practice and Quarterly Meeting

Please come along to the Quarterly Meeting on 1st April – the committee needs to know your views: what you like, what you don't like and if we can help your tower in any way.

Surprised by Appreciation

Gavin Knight

Recently, Tonbridge tower received two genuine complaints about bell noise and how it was causing problems for tower neighbours. We were concerned and decided to write a letter to all our neighbours, the goal being to inform them of our usual pattern of ringing, give them the opportunity to communicate with us and if they wished to visit us they would be welcomed. We also offered, if requested, to notify them of any additional ringing so they could be prepared.

The letter was accompanied by a recruitment leaflet which explained all about ringing and was delivered to 140 households located near the church.

This brought forth a plethora of letters and emails praising the bells, some expressing horror that we might not ring, and encouragement indicating “they are our bells and we want to hear them”. I have to say it was a lovely surprise to receive such a response and know we have such a fan club who love us, without negative feedback. One letter is reproduced below:

“Dear Gavin and the bell ringers,

Thank you for your recent informative communication.

The sound of church bells is deeply woven into the very fabric of this country and is appreciated as such in this household. Being a dedicated country walker – generally on Sunday mornings – I find the natural beauty of the landscape is magically enhanced by the choice intervention of chimes from a nearby or distant church. A perfect harmony of sight and sound.

I have long been intrigued by the curious names given to the various ringing sequences and wonder if there is a list of these available.

At the age of 80 I am unlikely to join your local team, but you have the full support for, and appreciation of, your great traditional endeavour.”

Training at Hadlow

Angela Clark

Ray Taylor worked really hard at the Ropesight and Call Changes morning held at Hadlow in February.

He ensured that the learners: 2 from Westerham and 1 from Tonbridge, received lots of practice – all of whom made good progress, and he provided the refreshments as well. The photo shows the happy band



Photo by Catherine Lewis

Peter Jeffrey

Peter Jeffrey, former tower captain at Edenbridge and eldest son of Brian and Betty Jeffrey, passed away on 16th January, aged 55 years. His funeral was on 6th February, at Edenbridge. Peter took over tower responsibilities from Brian on his father's death, in 2008, before moving to London a year later. He was an affable and warm-hearted person, happy to support tower members and always willing to chat to visitors. Unsurprisingly, he was a very capable ringer, having been schooled by Brian. As a youngster, perhaps on holiday or out for a day's cycling with Brian, it was often a happy coincidence that there was a tower with practice night in the vicinity. However, although Peter could ring methods, he was never as passionate a ringer as his parents, preferring travel and sport, particularly cricket.



Richard Dyson

Thank Goodness for the Bells

I'm Deb Williams from Tonbridge. I had a bit of a void to fill in my life and just at the right time "Perspectives" the church magazine popped through my door. After having a quick flick through, one page on bells caught my attention. So, feeling brave I popped along to Tonbridge tower. Just going there felt a privilege and then I was drawn in hook line and sinker. In the few months I have been attempting to ring I've already met some amazing people and fantastic ringers. (no names mentioned I hope you know who you are!) It's with the biggest thanks to all those so far that have had time, patience and all who have given me tips and advice which inspire me to keep learning and improving. I look forward to what is to come.



Deb Williams

District Practice – Leigh

We went to Leigh in February for our District monthly practice (1st Saturday each month). The Ringing Chamber is not exactly large, but those sitting out managed to find a perch, there was a good attendance of 20.

Birthday boy Timon from Westerham rang with a video camera trained upon him and the Tower Captain at Leigh (Stella) won a prize in the 120 Club Draw.



Photo by Catherine Lewis

Angela Clark

Ringling Out for the Dentists

Hamilton Woods

At the dentist we all enjoy the buzzing of that drill and the slurping of the sucker thing stuck in the mouth. It's what dentists provide for our enjoyment; so we should be grateful and reward them in some way.

At Tonbridge we do. When the staff at a dentist's within earshot of the bells leave at 8pm on a Thursday they hear our practice and they say it feels as if we are ringing just for them.

Never mind ringing out for weddings; we add ringing out for dentists.

Towards joining the Association

Mahala and Bob Turnbull

As bell ringing novices, last June we both embarked on the journey to learn. St Peter's church at Hever boasts 6 bells and we try our best, with excellent instruction and encouragement, to master the technique. However, when the opportunity arose to further our learning at St Martin, Brasted, we grabbed the chance and were welcomed (together with Alison, another learner) by Ray, our trainer for the session, together with a team of very experienced ringers.

During the next two hours, we were expertly put through our paces, helping to refine our technique. With all the knowledge and experience from the team, they enabled us to fine tune our skills so that, by the end of the session, we hoped that we had gained a little more consistency in our ringing.

We both really hope that there are many more of these sessions that we can attend and, in time, creep up the ladder of competence!! We certainly have a long way to go but it's a fun way to spend a few hours, albeit somewhat frustrating sometimes.

Our massive thanks go to Ray together with the 'helpers', all of whom made us feel so welcome. Thank you to you all and we hope to see you again soon.

Young Ringers

Jen Thomas

The youngsters at Seal Chart continue to make great progress. Currently 6 pupils are learning, although one is out of action for a bit having broken her arm in the playground. 5 can ring independently and are ringing rounds and simple call changes. 3 of last year's Year 6 pupils, who have now left the school, join the early Wednesday evening practice and are making places, dodging, covering and learning the first stages of Plain Hunt. We all loved the challenge of ringing Twinkle, twinkle little star to celebrate Kira's 12th birthday. This requires setting your bell as appropriate, including at backstroke.

5 are joining in ringing for Sunday Service.



Kira, Flo and Eli have now earned the first bell in the Pam Copson "one per learner" series: "Ambitious Apprentice".

We will be presenting the 2nd badge to the more experienced three before too long, methinks.... they are very keen!

Esmé and Matthew also rang in the Kent Young Ringers' Inter-District Striking Contest at Stansted on 18th February...well done!



Happy Birthday on Tower Bells

Timon enquired whether it was possible to ring Happy Birthday on the bells. Your Editor put the question to Tiff Lynch, here is her reply:

Hi Timon - you'd think that chiming Happy Birthday would be straightforward, wouldn't you? You'll have seen though that many bellringers are completely unfamiliar with the idea of using their bells to play tunes - unlike bellringers on the continent (but they tend to have more bells too, so a much bigger choice of notes. Then they have a variety of tunes they can play).

The range of notes you need is an octave. On the face of it, that means a ring of 8 - like at Westerham - could do it. But not quite. Bell no.2 won't be the right note - in a standard ring of 8, it's a semitone sharp.

To get the notes right, you actually need to use the front 8 bells of a ring of 12! So, the order the bells would ring in would be:

8 8 7 8 5 6, 8 8 7 8 4 5, 8 8 1 3 5 6 7, 2 2 3 5 4 5 ... and in the right rhythm, of course.

Your nearest ring of 12 is East Grinstead, I think. I doubt it's something they ring often though.

Plain Hunting at Speldhurst

Julia Church from Edenbridge

On Saturday, 21st January I, along with two other trainee bell ringers Ginny and Nick from, respectively, Sundridge and Westerham, visited St. Mary's Church in the beautiful village of Speldhurst, to develop our "Plain Hunting" skills. Emma, our teacher, welcomed us warmly and we were introduced to her assistants - experienced ringers from St. Mary's and other churches, who had kindly given up their time to come and help. The pressure was on, because gremlins had got into the computerised bell-ringing simulator, so we would be "open ringing" for all the locals to hear.

We had already learned the basics of plain hunting and were at slightly varying levels of progress, depending on how much practice we'd had before our session with Emma. I had reached the level where I could plain hunt on five if I memorised the order in which to ring, but had not learned the art of "ropesight", an essential skill if I was to make further progress. But with Emma's expert guidance and plenty of patience from the helpers, all three of us were soon managing to plain hunt. In the second half of the session we progressed to hunting on seven, again with close guidance from Emma, which meant we all felt a huge sense of achievement. Before the training session ended I even had the opportunity to ring Grandsire, quite a bell-ringing milestone for me, which I suspect I achieved more by luck than judgement. But I had been stoically counting my place to keep in time as I had been taught, so even if my ropesight faltered, I miraculously ended up in the right place.

None of us could have made the progress we did without Emma and her assistants - Andy, Anthony, Caroline, Howard, Sara and Stella, so thank you to you all. I hope we get further opportunities to ring with you as we continue our bell-ringing journey.

Rolvenden Bellringers' Ode

Anthony Leeves

This ODE appeared in a 1993 Ringing World (picked up from the Maidstone District Newsletter). Why it was in their Newsletter is not known (Rolvenden is in the Ashford District).

When Go is called we don't depart
At Stand it's time to sit
Our Hunt does not involve a fox
By Blows no-one is hit.

Royal for us involves no kings
Though Queens there may be found
No-one is tempted to revolve
When comes the call Go Round.

When Striking we are hard at work
Our Covers don't conceal
Five Courses do not make a feast
But just a Quarter Peal

A Single ringer may be Spliced
A Spliced one still unwed
And when we shout to someone "Bob"
It may be Joe or Fred.

When leading Wrong we may be Right
When In we're not at Home
Delight may bring us all to grief
Surprise may be well known.

So if you watch us at our task
And hear the words we call
There's only one you'll know and love
The merciful "That's All".

Tonbridge District 120 Club

4th February 2023 draw at the District Practice at Leigh	1	£20	61	Jean Westacott	Chevening
	2	£15	40	Gordon Bubb	Hadlow
	3	£10	86	Stella Wooldridge	Leigh

Extra Bell Handling Sessions

Some of the more experienced ringers in our District are willing to help at sessions dedicated to bell handling. If you are new to ringing, or would like some extra rope time to improve your bell handling, then please contact me. The venue and timing for the sessions will be geared towards those wishing to attend and could be in addition to the monthly (3rd Saturday) training sessions.

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For the next Rounds and About

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