

ROUNDS & ABOUT

Tonbridge District Newsletter No.12 March, 2024

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

TRIVIA EVENING 2024 - Saturday, 13th April 2024

Tickets from Hamilton Woods, hamwoods @kent2.co.uk

Training

BELFREE WIRELESS SIMULATOR

Ray Taylor

In January 2024 we had enough help to run training sessions at Edenbridge, Hadlow, Otford and Speldhurst. It is fantastic to have such interest and support, and to be able to widen the net so that people don't have so far to travel. I wrote in the R&A April 2023 issue that we have a Belfree Wireless Simulator on loan from the Association. Until recently it has been installed in Tonbridge to help with their training. It is now available to any of our towers. Up to 6 bells can be fitted with sensors and it takes minutes to fit each sensor. It comes complete with a laptop and Abel ringing program. Please contact me if you think your tower could use it to host a training session or if you would like to consider borrowing it to help with your teaching. rayt142536@gmail.com 07973 123 323



CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

Ray Taylor

Watch points to improve your ringing technique and/or help others

Stance

1. Have you removed all loose items from your clothing?
2. When the bell is set at backstroke, is the rope a good length for you?
3. Are you close enough to the rope not to have to reach forward?
4. Is your stance comfortable and balanced?

Backstroke

5. Are the hands close together on the tail end?
6. Are both arms at a comfortable stretch at the top of the backstroke?
7. Are the hands low enough at the bottom of the backstroke?

8. Is the rope pulled vertically at handstroke and backstroke?
9. Are both arms pulling with equal effort?
10. Is the rope pulled with the minimum effort to get the bell back up to the balance?
11. Are you able to creep up/down the rope and get the bell up to the balance next stroke?

Handstroke

12. Are the hands close together on the sally?
13. Are all fingers around the sally and not gripping the tail end?
14. When holding the sally is the tail end facing you?
15. Do both hands move high enough at the top of the stroke?
16. Do both hands move down to the bottom of the stroke?
17. At handstroke do both hands leave the sally simultaneously?
18. Does the top hand move immediately to grip the tail end?

General

19. Is the bell rung without bumping the stay?
20. Is the bell rung under control?

FEBRUARY RINGING

Angela Clark

The ringing chamber at Chevening on 3rd February was full – these lovely bells are a pleasure to ring and Emma managed splendidly ensuring everyone was catered for. The local band provided coffee and cakes throughout the morning, and it must have been a treat for Lord David Cameron (if he was in residence next door) to hear the 8 going so well, because sadly the bells are now only heard on Sundays – rarely even ringing 6.



DISTRICT PRACTICE AT HEVER

Angela Clark

We met at Hever on 2nd March (District events are arranged each month). It was delightful to count 23 in attendance. Okay, the ringing chamber was crowded which was not helped by everyone having to bring hats, coats, umbrellas and sou'westers, but we squashed in. Phil Jarvis ensured there were no gaps in the ringing and all abilities were catered for.

Although they did not shine at either Stedman or Cambridge, the less experienced made astonishing progress – no problems on these very nice bells.

Owing to security issues, the committee had to undertake to provide a guard over the silver and other church treasures. This fell to Tessa who sat in the doorway not letting anyone in to the church – a splendid job on a cold and wet day.



The Henry VIII pub opposite which had been earmarked for refreshments and toilet facilities, was closed for refurbishment. In

fact, there had been a Portaloo in the graveyard, but someone broke in to it and vandalised it, regrettably, not yet replaced.

.....and Hugo's at it again!



News

LUCILE M CORBY

Ann and Stanley Jenner

Lucile has been a member of the Tonbridge District since the 1950s, when she and her husband Phil, with their family Andrew and Judith (now Rogers), came to live at Sevenoaks.

She learnt to ring while studying history at St Anne's College Oxford and rang her first peal (Plain Bob Major on handbells) on 28th April 1945, followed 10 days later by her first tower bell peal (Grandsire Triples at Edmonton). Her peal total currently stands at 214 (21 on handbells), including 175 with her late husband Phil, 88 with Andrew and 82 with Judith.



Lucile and Phil were mainstays of the band at Sevenoaks for many years (where they were instrumental in the recasting and rehangng of the fine ring of 8), and later at Chiddingstone after their move to Chiddingstone Hoath.

ZOE IS 40!!!!

Angela Clark

Zoe Worthington (daughter of Mike and Tessa) rang the tenor to a quarter of PB Doubles at Sevenoaks on 4th February 2024 to mark her 40th birthday. Both her parents took part and it was called by Shirley Raynor.

Zoe was born too early and was too small, however, she defied all the odds and survived. Mike taught Zoe to ring at Sevenoaks and we hope they will repeat their quarter peals there to celebrate many more birthdays.



NEW ROPES AT SHIPBOURNE

Steve Sullivan

After eagerly anticipating their arrival for many months, the new ropes were finally delivered to Shipbourne in February. It was time for the spliced, knotted and worn ropes to retire after faithfully serving the tower since 1993.

Paul Britton had discovered a rope blessing rite performed in England since mediaeval times, which was incorporated into the Family Service at Shipbourne. A full complement of ringers was enticed out of the tower by a promise of coffee and biscuits, with the blessing ceremony ending with holy water being flicked over the ropes, bellringers, congregation and choir with a sprig of rosemary.



The ropes were hung the following week under the guidance of Tower Captain Graham Edwards and Paul Britton. Graham was then left alone in the tower for many hours to tie the tail ends.

On 3rd March, by the time of the first ring, the ropes had already settled at different heights despite careful measurement during installation. Undeterred, the ringers sank their hands into the plush sallies for the first time.

The ropes have since been adjusted and are settling in well; for now, Shipbourne can proudly claim to have the newest ropes in district!

WESTERHAM VISITS THE JOHN TAYLOR'S LOUGHBOROUGH BELL FOUNDRY AND THE SOAR RIVER VALLEY.

Alison Axon

There is something very special about the qualities of molten iron, not just its very distinctive aroma but also its beautiful display of fireworks as it's poured out of the furnace and into the crucible - like a *Da Shuhua* festival on the Chinese New Year. The roar of the furnace, the licking flames, the clink of metal chains and pulleys as they hoisted the hissing and spluttering volcanic lava-like contents, evoked our primeval senses. The crucible, with its molten cargo, now winched carefully across the cavernous casting hall to the awaiting moulds. We had just watched the miracle creation of a new iron headstock followed by the annealing of clappers brought in for restoration. Jim and Kira our friendly and knowledgeable guides explained the casting process, covering both the historical lost wax process and also the traditional loam cast method still in use. It was a winter's day in February, *anno* 2024, yet the process we just observed, the building in which we stood, and the tools and techniques were all timeless.



Kira regaled us on the history from its beginnings in the 14th Century with Johannes de Stafford, the transfer to the Taylor lineage in 1784, its location in St Neots, and then finally moving to Loughborough 1839. Its first location was on Pack Horse Lane. In fact, why not go to the Organ Grinder Blue Monkey Brewery Pub and have a beverage; you'll be sitting on the original site of the Taylor foundry. After being "kicked out" by the landlord (that's Taylors not us!), this allowed the business to expand into its current position in 1859 on Freehold Street. The purpose-built Victorian red brick foundry, now grade II* listed, is the one we see today.

In the joiners' shop, the sweet smell of saw-dust filled the air. Jim described the properties and characteristics of Beech, Oak, Ash, Sapele, Tulipwood and Pine – the woods used in frames, wheels, stays and sliders. A wheel was laid out on the rounded workbench, spokes radiating outwards, the sole plate expertly steam-bent. Most of the connections are skilfully fitted together by wood joints alone. The wheel was made into two halves, dividing at the transom and meeting spokes: There are two great reasons for this, firstly this allows it to be fitted around the headstock, and secondly somebody has to carry it up to the bell chamber!

It was time for our combined music-physics lesson in the tuning shop. Jim went on to discuss the bronze alloy ratios of copper to tin and



demonstrated the different timbres of bell metals. The next topic was the 5-tone true-harmonic tuning principle, covering the hum, prime, tierce, quint and nominal. By striking the bell in different locations one could hear the emphasis on these different partials and a resonating tuning fork resting on the rim of the bell which, if correctly tuned, the bell will *sing* back, magical music to our ears!



Not only does the foundry possess its own Carillon, which chimes throughout the day, it has its own belfry. Sounds like a great place to work! What an amazing experience it was to ring at this historical 12 bell tower. The treble weighing in at just over 1 cwt! The clear high pitch light bells pealing in rounds at such lightning speed. (Tenor 6-2-13 in B).

Well, we were all in fine fettle! It was an amazing day which fired the inspiration, broadened our knowledge, enhanced our listening skills and all in good company. All

bell related aspects were covered and by the time you leave you will know your harmonic partials, twiddle pins, dingers and strickles and much more. What beautiful language of music, engineering, bells and bellringing! The skilful and stunning craftsmanship and engineering feats of the industrial arts are still alive. We highly recommend visiting Britain's last major bell foundry. We continued the merriment with more rounds in the Royal Oak and then onwards for a romantic dinner for 20 at the Eastern Spice Indian restaurant - as it was Valentine's Day after all!

The Knights Templar, the Glass Peacock, the Last Supper and the Barrow Kipper.

The following day afforded us much joyful ringing, with call-changes, Plain Hunt, Bob, Grandsire and Stedman Doubles. We journeyed down the Soar River Valley, visiting St Mary the Virgin & St John the Baptist in Rothley, The Holy Trinity Church in Barrow Upon Soar, and St James the Great in Birstall. This Loughborough to Leicester stretch included historic quarrying communities and is lined by the Great Central Railway – a heritage line which has period signalling, locomotives and rolling stock.



Rothley's ringing chamber was reached by a very narrow spiral staircase. The four Tudor bells of 1553 were recast into five and rehung by Edward Arnold in 1784. The John Taylor treble was added in 1934 to complete this 6-bell ring (tenor 11-2-19 in F#). There is interesting history of the Saxon cross shaft in the churchyard. Also links to the Knights Templar, and the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, known as the Hospitallers - a precursor to St John Ambulance. The window in the tower enabled us to view the solar panels installed on the church roof. It's not just the Cathedrals, like Salisbury and Gloucester that have solar panels. It's good to see parish churches are installing them too.

We were also enlightened at Birstall by the work of the Leicestershire-based stain glass artist Theodora Salusbury, of the arts and crafts movement. Most of her work bears the image of a peacock. The complete set of 8 bells of this cosy ground floor ring were all John Taylor's (1882 and 1948), tenor 10-0-23 in G#.

The Holy Trinity Church in Barrow upon Soar possessed a spacious ringing chamber. The 8 bells were a selection of different founders and dates (Tenor 9-2-14 in G, by George Oldfield of Nottingham 1620 - maybe one of his earliest castings). Don't forget to view the stunning carving of the Reredos depicting the Last Supper by the talented British sculptor Nathaniel Hitch. It's amazing what you find out on these trips if you start digging, and that's probably what the locals thought when quarrying for limestone in 1851 they uncovered a 4-meter plesiosaur fossil. It's now the emblem of the town, affectionately known by locals as the Barrow Kipper!

On this fish-tail end, our grateful thanks to David Offen for suggesting and organising the tour, and Lynne Proudfoot for organizing lunch at The Woodman's Stroke Pub at Rothley.



To John Taylors Bell foundry and guides Jim Crabtree and Kira Mills. To Revd. Rob Gladstone and tower captains Charles Poole (Rothley), Ginny Wilcocks (Barrow upon Soar), Nick Bryan (Birstall), and Elaine Merrylees (Westerham). To Hamilton Woods and Amanda Jones for some of the follow up research on historical points. Photos: Rebecca Colegrove (Iron pour); Stuart Merrylees (Wheel); Jim Crabtree (group outside the foundry); Amanda Jones (Taylors ring of 12); the author (Barrow upon Soar and bells).

120 Club 2024

FEBRUARY	125 £20	Carolyne Sullivan, Shipbourne
FEBRUARY	128 £15	Lucy Menard, Penshurst
FEBRUARY	40 £10	Gordon Bubb, Hadlow
MARCH	20 £20	David James, Leigh
MARCH	33 £15	Caroline Levy-Cooper, Cowden
MARCH	16 £10	John Harrison, Otford

Future Delights

23 March	Stedman practice	Edenbridge	18.45 – 20.45
1 st April	KCACR AGM	Rainham	10 – 12 Details to follow of towers that will be open before and after the AGM
6 th April	Quarterly meeting	Goudhurst	1000-1200
4 th May	District outing	Ashford district	Rolvenden 0930-1015 Wittersham 1045-1130 Appledore 1200-1245

TAIL END

PECULIAR PURSUITS

Tessa Worthington

I was delighted to read Richard Morrison's article on quirky hobbies (Why are Britons mocked for their strange hobbies) A fellow bell ringer once said how much he loved Morris dancers, because they made us ringers look vaguely normal.

George Medd, Twyford, Hants.

(A letter to The Times)