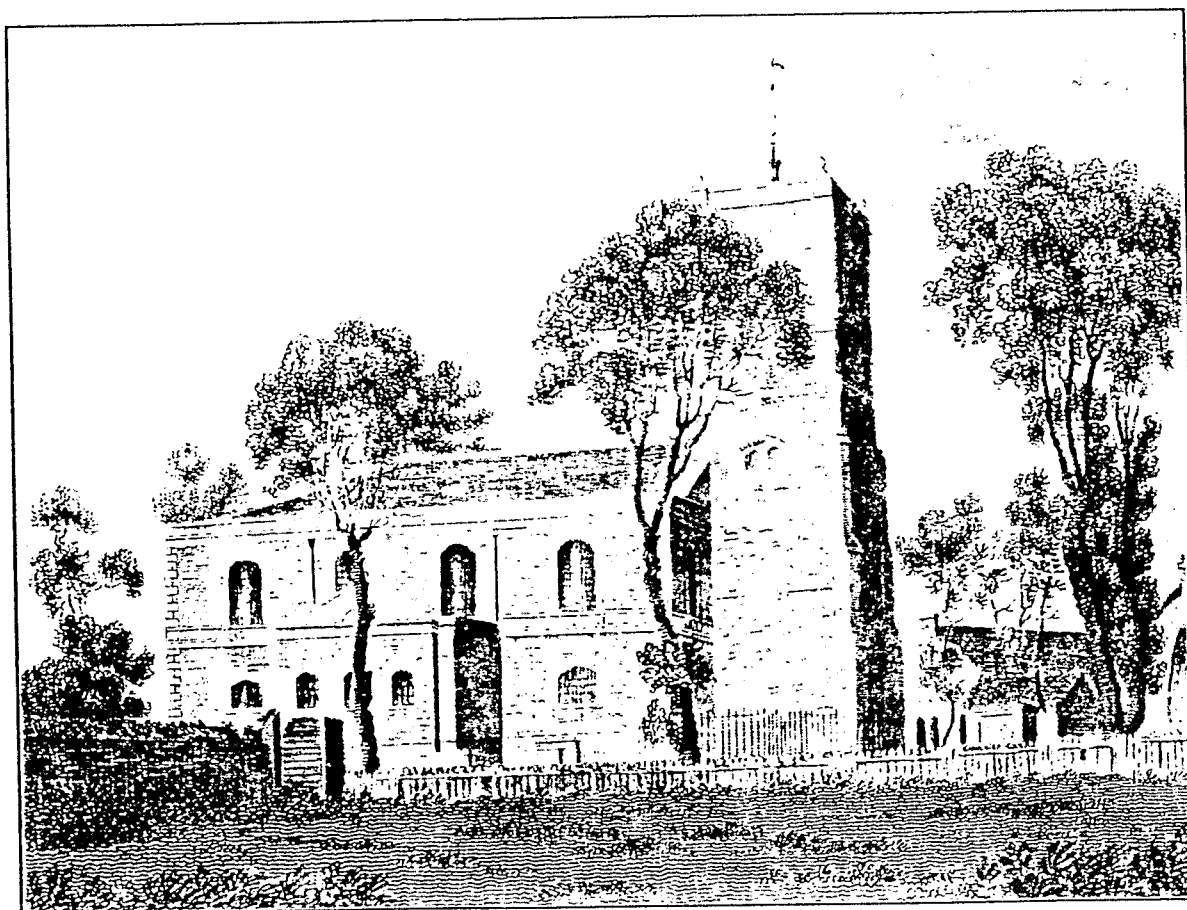


*The*  
*Lewisham District*

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*Christmas News Letter*



*Issue No 13*

## DISTRICT CENTENARY - 1992.

As I have already written (in the Lewisham District Newsletter produced in July 1990), 1992 will be the centenary of the Lewisham District being formed and added to the K.C.A.C.R. In that, I expressed various feelings and ideas as to what I felt could and should happen in celebration of this event.

At the District's AGM at Bexley on 3/11/90, it was agreed that members should think carefully over any ideas that they had for 1992, express them in writing in this edition of the newsletter, with a view to formally discussing everything that had been suggested at the quarterly meeting in January 1991. I am therefore writing to re-iterate what I said in that article last July.

Basically, I said that I felt it would be best for the District Officers to generally decide what happens, and oversee the arrangements, having the power to co-opt people to this 'sub-committee' if need be.

I then went on to suggest a few events: an inter district 10-bell competition (run on the same basis as the 8-bell competition); a Centenary Dinner; a tower open day, all profit going to the BRF; a quarter peal week; a Centenary Service, held as close to the actual formation date as possible, at the place where the first meeting was held.

I also suggested that we have a centenary project. This could take the form of giving the district a ring of 12. Yes, this is ambitious, but despite what various people think, I do feel that this is within our grasp. I am sure that there is either an 8 or 10 bell tower in the district that would prove suitable for 'conversion'. Yes, it would be hard work, but we will get nowhere if we are pessimistic. Even if we have a 'lesser' project, we need to have a dynamic and forthright approach in order to raise the necessary funds. **Nothing should be impossible if we apply our collective minds properly.** But the right attitude has to be there, whatever project is chosen.

The above is only meant to be a startpoint for discussion. I am sure that many other ideas will come forward at the January meeting at Foots Cray. Let us all discuss this fully, and plan an exciting year of events for 1992 that will etch indelibly in our minds just what 1992 was about.

Alex Britton.

## Ideas for the Centenary Year

There are three towers in the district that have three bells hung for ringing but are at present unringable. In their current state they could be considered as neither use nor ornament to any one. It may be worthwhile investigating the possibility of restoring one of these rings of three as a project for the district's centenary year. If there was found to be enough support and enthusiasm both at a local level and at district level a situation may present itself for restoration, possible augmentation and teaching a local band. It would be a project which would make good out of something which is at present could only be classed as having historic interest and could be looked upon as a promotion for ringing in a part of the district which, to date, has been devoid of any.

As the first Lewisham ADM was held at Lewisham in 1892, it would be most appropriate to hold the 1992 ADM there as well.

For those towers who possess a copy of the 1892 Bell News (like Lewisham), it would be worthwhile thumbing through its content to see whether any other district events and achievements may be repeated in 1992.

Special methods during the year could include Kent TB, Lewisham and Cray Surprise Major, Foot's Cray Doubles, Erith Little Bob Major and any other method appropriately named.

If there is a social function either at district or county level, there would be scope for having a large suitably decorated celebration cake to commemorate the centenary.

HOW TO DO IT  
By C Brett-Smith

So you want to ring changes on handbells? Good, you will find it absorbing, satisfying and exciting, and if, like me, you are conceited, you will have a smug feeling of being able to do something that most tower bell ringers don't. It is assumed you are a fairly reliable tower-bell ringer and can ring plain methods up to including Bob Minor (and Major). If you are looking for a set of handbells or have found one and the owner/custodian is a competent double-handed change ringer, then put yourself in his/her care and cease reading this article. Let us assume, then, that you are starting from scratch, and what do you do? If you are a keen gardener and your rhubarb is good, but your geraniums are droopy, or you want to grow climbing strawberries to avoid bending to pick them, you consult a good gardening book; if you aspire to culinary arts you consult a good cook book. So, to learn handbell change ringing you consult "SMITHY'S RINGING RECIPE BOOK (CIRCA 1921 - unfinished and so far unpublished) and of course it gives a list of ingredients and how to use them.

1. THE BACK SIX OF A DIATONIC EIGHT, TENOR SIZE 12F (SAY)

This size is about right for either hand, either sex. I recommend six as maximum for a start, as that is quite enough arms to be flailing up and down for beginners.

2. FIVE COMPANIONS, EITHER SEX, WITH LIKE INTENTIONS

This is important. Do not, please, try to reduce the number under the impression you can just "sail in", pick up a pair and start ringing changes. You will inevitably, try to ring two "blue lines" in separate hands, which is not what it is all about. I know you could ring Grandsire Doubles to a plain course (and perhaps a touch) as the 1-2 course each other with one bell in between, so do 3-4, and the 5-6 only has one working bell and one donging behind all the time. But, supposing you want to extend to Triples, who is going to ring the 5-6, which immediately separate and go two different ways? Certainly not one of the band at that stage, and not of course, the one you excluded when choosing the three originals! Set your mind on Plain Bob Minor, rung by beginners with one bell each. This single-handed ringing need only last about a fortnight, before turning to double-handed.

3. SIX SEATS TO ACCOMMODATE THE ABOVE

You may get on better at first standing up, but eventually you will prefer to sit.

4. A SOFT CLOTH (CHENILE IS NICE) TO COVER THE SURFACE ON WHICH YOU LAY THE BELLS DURING RESTING

Never put down a handbell on a hard surface, particularly if it is humming after being struck, as bells vibrate concentrically and a hard surface will harshly break the vibration and could cause a crack or worse.

## 5. A ROLL OF SURGICAL ADHESIVE TAPE ( $\frac{1}{2}$ " )

A couple of layers around the knuckle of the index finger will save a lot of pain from broken skin.

### METHOD

Now, having acquired your handbells, just gently pick up one and cradle it in your hand, with the outer three fingers lightly clasping the strap, and your forefinger and thumb cradling the crown of the bell but not touching the metal. Never let your fingers touch any of the metal as the moisture leaves a mark which eventually turns green if not attended to. Just turn the wrist and look down the inside of the bell, note the clapper assembly, how the leaf springs keep the clapper ball off the metal after striking, allowing the bell to vibrate to its full extent. Note too, what a beautiful thing it all is, and how an instrument, designed for the utilitarian purpose of producing a sound of beauty is, in itself, a thing of beauty. Now, to strike it. Grasp the strap with the fingers, the forefingers hard against the circular leather crown guard, with the thumb projecting clear, bring it up towards the shoulder, and about half-way between the waist and nose, stop it abruptly against the thumb - it should strike once. Downwards the strike is effected by stopping abruptly against the forefinger (hence the adhesive tape). Do not take the bell down very far before striking, otherwise when sitting you could give yourself a nasty clout with the rim of the bell against your leg just above the knee. Very painful!

Now to begin operations. Take one bell each and form a circle and proceed to try a plain course of Bob Minor. Do this a few times, each one changing bells each time. Try a few short touches until you reach a stage where each one can ring any bell to a plain course or a touch. This could be achieved in about 2 weeks over about four or five practices. You are now ready to go into double-handed ringing, one person at a time. Decide whom shall try first. My advice is for whomever it is, to ring the 5-6 as there is only one bell between them all the way through the plain course except in the lead following the 5th making seconds' place and the 6th coming to the front to do the same, when the two bells resume coursing. In attempting to ring two at once remember the odd bell is in the right hand and the even bell in the left - at the start of changes the left hand comes up and strikes first and continues striking first each time with the right hand following, both doing a plain hunt, so it is only necessary to do the work with the bell which is striking first, concentrating on the movement of the leading bell - the follower drops in place automatically and you are ringing two blue lines without realising it. Here is illustrated the movement of both bells:

LEFT HAND FIRST	xxxx65;	xxx6x5;	xx6x5x;	x6x5xx;	6x5xxx;	65xxxx;
	HAND	BACK	HAND	BACK	HAND	BACK

The x's represent the other bells.

At this point the 5th has come to the lead and the right hand becomes the leader. It is not advisable to try showing a diagram

as before, as the position of the bells shown would be exactly the reverse of the picture from the ringer's position. With the right hand leading at handstroke and backstroke the 6th (left-hand) is now in thirds place. The right hand then strikes up (2nds place) down (3rds place) and has now to dodge 3-4 up with the 2nd, and with the ringer concentrating on the right hand's movement, keeping the 6th two blows further away, both bells will have dodged (3-4 up and 5-6 up) without much difficulty. With both bells continuing to plain hunt the 5th eventually comes to the lead again and this is the "crunch lead", and if the ringer masters this with a little practice he/she will have then the necessary skill for ringing any pair of bells to whatever method or methods is the band's repertoire. Please study what follows very carefully and slowly.

The 5th (right hand) having led - the 6 is now in thirds place at back stroke, the treble then leads and the 5th (right hand) makes second's place while the 6th dodges in 3-4 up. The bells come up:

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1536 - 1563 - 5136 - 53126
  x x   xx   x x   x x
      together
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and the right hand has now three bells between it and the left hand. At this point it lags a whole pull behind and the 5th gradually closes the gap till it is in thirds place going out (backstroke) the 6th then leaves the back into fifth's place (at hand) with the 5th coming up in the place (fourths) immediately 'next door'. So they come up right-left (56) and down left-right (65) with the treble last laying a whole pull behind. This is known as "crossing over" and had it occurred (as far as your bells are concerned) in the middle of a lead of Plain Bob Royal where they come together from left and right, cross over and continuing each its own path you have performed what is know as "scissoring" like a pair of scissors open, then closing, then opening again.

We now come to the last important exercise, which is with two bells going in opposite direction from the start of changes. In this case the 3-4 in Bob Minor is a good example and a fairly easy pair on which to learn. On going off into changes it is left hand first, the figures being 214365 and you have made the first cross-

xx

over. In proceeding further you must realise the left hand loses a bell while the right hand gains one, so at the second blow (at backstroke) the figures become 241635 and you have two bells

x x

between. This happens every time the bells come together, change and part company - on the next up you will have four bells between, one leading and the other laying a while pull behind, the leading bell being the left hand one. Now they draw together on the next up stroke, with only two between, and on the down stroke they come together, 645231 - 654321, cross over next up

x x xx

stroke (RIGHT hand first) 563412 - 536142, then lead, the treble

xx x x

takes 3 and your right hand makes seconds place, and your left hand dodges, as all the other bells do when the treble leads. You

have now done the cross-over, the parting, the coming together, crossing and parting again - you have also learnt "scissoring".

I would recommend that when competent on the 5-6 the ringer transfers to the 1-2. Just plain hunt back and forth with the right hand and dodge with the other one every time the treble leads. Plain hunt with one bell between for the first lead, dodge 3-4 with your left hand, pass and change in 2-3, part, lead with left hand, close the gap and pass in 4-5, treble comes to the front as you lay a whole pull behind with the left hand then dodge 5-6 down. Then the gap between closes until in the last lead they are coursing with one bell in between.

The reader may think I have over simplified what is involved. The article has, of necessity, been as brief as possible due to the demands on space, resulting in avoiding unnecessary frills and elaborations which could possibly have caused confusion, and have been of no use.

You may rest assured it is not too difficult, and there is no reasons why you should not become proficient if you follow the system carefully. At least, I hope it will have helped.

*PS. With four competent ringers you could ring BOB Major, so what about some Treble Bob, and later Stedman Triples?*

#### FUND RAISING FOR CHILDREN IN NEED.

On Friday 23rd November 1990, eight members of the Lewisham District met at Greenwich to ring on the back eight a sponsored quarter peal of Pudsey S. Major for the annual BBC "Children in need" TV appeal. Pudsey was chosen as the method, because the BBC's emblem for this event is a teddy bear with the name Pudsey. Considering the national interest in this annual event, it was decided to ring it with the sound control 'open', so that all of the local residents would hear it.

The band stood as follows: 1. Janet Costidell, 2. Peter Swift, 3. Martin Mason, 4. Sonia Irwin, 5. Bill Lanyon, 6. James Normington, 7. Ngel Parsons (C), 8. Alex Britton.

The quarter was duly scored in 51 minutes, with all of the band wearing Children in need T-shirts. £700 was raised.

## A DAY OUT IN STAINES

It has become somewhat of a regular occurrence for the Lewisham ringers to have a late autumn outing where the local band and friends can meet, by car, to enjoy a handful of towers, a worthy pub, good company and an enjoyable day of ringing.

This year was no exception and on Saturday 1 December we enjoyed all the afore mentioned things in the Staines area of West London, ably organised as usual by Julie and Martin Mason.

The bells of Heston (Hounslow) rang out at 9.45, prompt, under the expert leadership of David Hollis and on the rather loud, but easy going bells, we rang a variety of methods including Yorkshire and Stedman.

The second tower of the day was Cranford a delightful six at the side of the M4 set within a wide expanse of parkland. A convoy of cars left Heston, lead by our two resident Land Rovers 'Alice' and 'Daisey' and arrived in good time allowing us to boil water on a camping stove to make freshly ground coffee for all. The back of the Land Rovers served the purpose of a portable coffee shop very well indeed and the coffee with a selection of biscuits went down very well on a cold morning.

We were meet at Cranford by one of the locals and the ringing commenced under the guidance of Helen Montague to the tune of Norwich Surprise Minor, Beverley Surprise Minor and Little and Plain Bob spliced amongst others.

Once the bells had been rung down it was already lunch time and the convoy progressed from Cranford, along the M4, and then M25, to the pub next to St Mary's Church, Staines. We had a very leisurely lunch sampling Adnam's South Wold bitter and Couriage Director's before ringing at St Mary's at 2.30pm.

During the lunch break Alex Britton became bored and set off into Staines in search of a 'Magic Money Machine'. He came back sometime later with a mysterious packet under his arm. It turned out that during his wanderings he had come across a 'home brew' shop which he had been tempted to go into unintentionally. He hadn't bought himself any home brew kits but he had bought himself a glass yard (as in 'a yard of ale') which he faithfully assured us would be filled with his own home brew (Jesters Revenge) at some suitable time.

Julie Mason ran the ringing at St Mary's where, due to the slight awkwardness of the bells (and the usual state of ringers directly after lunch), mostly Triples were rung including Royal Hollaway College Bob Triples. This had been speedily learnt by ringers from a blue line on the belfry wall.

Next came Egham, a delightful ten, which enabled us to ring Little Bob Royal, Cambridge Royal as well as some well struck Call Changes and Plain Bob Caters.



The last venue of the day was the other tower in Staines, St Peter's, where we rounded off the day with Bristol Major and a welcomed cup of tea supplied from the back of the Land Rovers once again.

As the dark and rather chilly evening had now well and truly set in, half the ringers headed for home, the rest stayed to sample the beer at the Lucan Arms, about a mile from St Peter's.

Our thanks go to Julie and Martin for organising the outing which was around the area where they both learnt to ring and where they spent much of their ringing life before they were married.

SONIA IRWIN

A quarter peal of 1250 Gainsborough Surprise Major was rung at St John's Deptford on 18 November to mark the engagement of Cyril Brett-Smith of Erith to Kathy Harvey. The band would like to wish Cyril, who was a ringer at St John's over sixty years ago, and Kathy much happiness for their marriage and life together.

Treble ... William D Lanyon  
\* 2 ... Martin A Mason  
\* 3 ... Freda Cannon  
\* 4 ... Sonia A Irwin  
\* 5 ... James R Sawle  
\* 6 ... Philip M Irwin  
7 ... Nigel R Parsons (c)  
8 ... David G Hollis

\* First blows in method.

Also our congratulations go to James Normington of Lewisham and Helen Montague of Greenwich - on their engagement on Sunday 24 November among a close circle of fellow ringers. All good wishes are sent to James and Helen for the future.

As some of you will now know, Bob Oakshett of Hayes died on Wednesday 31 October, after several strokes. Regrettably, the ringers were not told in time for his death to be announced at the Annual Meeting at Bexley.

Bob was a regular worshipper and a loyal Sunday Service ringer at St Mary the Virgin, Hayes for 56 years and had been a member of the KCACR for over 50. During that time, he held such offices as Steeple Keeper, Tower Secretary and latterly Treasurers and continued to climb the fearsome iron ladder to wind the clock every week, until illness prevented him from doing so.

He and his sister Hilda were also a great source of information and encouragement to beginners, and you could always rely on them to come up with a little tip to help you remember something!

We shall remember him, in particular, for his seemingly effortless rope-handling and for the way he entertained us with tales of ringing outings, peals, ringers and days gone by. Every tower should have a Bob Oakshett - he will be greatly missed.

**1****9****9****1**

## **YOUR DISTRICT NEEDS YOU!**

Calling all district members...

The district needs the support of all its members as we turn the corner into 1991, in order to maintain the standards which have already been achieved and to progress into the future.

The district is for the benefit of everyone, to make use of and to enjoy, and everyone is welcome at all district practices and events.

Its aim is to help you to progress and, ultimately, to improve the quality of service ringing at your home tower.

Every effort will be made to accommodate all ringing needs during the coming year. So if you wish to ring rounds on more bells than you are used to, do battle with the 'ins and outs' of plain hunt or plain bob (and win), grapple with the mysteries of Stedman or be surprised by Surprise then come along to the next district practice and have a go.

Don't forget, if you want to ring something then say so, don't wait to be asked.

There is a core of regular supporters whose time and enthusiasm is invaluable to the cause of the district, but the district also needs new faces in order to continue in its good work.

Make a date with your district in 1991

**Remember - your district needs your support.  
Don't leave it up to someone else!**