



Northern District Newsletter

March 2007

Deputy District Master Changes

On Saturday 6th January the Annual Meeting of the Northern District was held at Stebbing, following a good warming supper served to 43 people.

The Master opened by welcoming all members and visitors, including Fred Bone, representing Association Secretary Mary Bone.

A minutes silence was then observed in memory of recently departed members, Mrs Mabel Boniface (*Black Notley*), Dr Lewis Castledon (*Great Dunmow*), Mr Samuel Courtauld (*Greenstead Green*), and Mr Charles Turner (*Coggeshall & Feering*)

Later during the meeting **Marian Wood** (*Stebbing*) was re-elected District Master, **Peter Smith** (*Braintree*) was re-elected District Secretary, and **Di Carpenter** (*Felsted*) was re-elected Treasurer.

Andy Smith (*Halstead*) did not stand again, and Life Member **Maurice Downs** (*Rayne*) was elected as Deputy Master for 2007.

The meeting thanked Andy for his support of District activities during the last year. The meeting then went on to welcome 9 new members to the District: John Pearson (*Felsted*); Laura Clarke and Poppy Crooks (*Finchingfield*); Francis Holliday, Eleanor Mackle and Matthew Jerram (*Wethersfield*)

The Master thanked all Ringers for keeping the bells of the District ringing, especially where many travel to 2 or 3 towers each weekend. We have very few silent towers. Marian reported that 18 peals were rung in 11 towers involving 12 different methods, and 127 Quarters were rung in 20 towers involving 30 methods from Royal to Doubles across the District in 2006, including one on a mini-ring! 9 Conductors shared the Peals with 12 ringers gaining "Firsts"; while 25

conductors called the quarters.

The first peal and quarter have been rung at Kelvedon on their new 8.

Well done to all those helping to keep ringing alive in this District.

The Ringing School continues to flourish under Marian & Peter Wood's leadership. Attendance at the Advanced Practice has improved and the number of methods rung increased. The Intermediate Practice was renamed "Beyond Bob Minor" covering methods from Little Bob to Surprise minor and attendance from both students and helpers is good. Such is the packed programme that the first Saturday will not be free much! (*see back page*)

The District now has 167 members, nearly a quarter of whom are now over 65! Come on you youngsters!

History of Bells and Bellingringing

Peter Wood will be talking on the History of Bells and Bellingringing on **Friday 30th March** at **Great Bardfield Church** starting at **8pm**. All welcome!

STOP PRESS

Sadly ringing has had to cease on the new 8 bells at **Kelvedon** following growing concern at frame movements.

A meeting was held with Taylors Eayre & Smith (TESCO) on Friday 2nd March, but the bells still are not ringable. There is now to be a larger meeting with engineers from TESCOs, EACR and the Diocese as soon as possible when all the bells will be rung, individually and en masse, to identify exactly where the major stresses causing the movement/twisting arise (seems to be around the 7th at the moment).

It is likely that the frame design will need to be improved with additional bracing where needed before re-fixing it into the tower walls.

District Events

- **Friday 11th May:** District Practice at Foxearth, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 2nd June:** District Striking Competition at Stisted - draw at 6pm. Call Change and Changes sections will be open : Do put in a team!
- **Saturday 30th June:** Service and District Meeting at Castle Heddingham. The Service is at 4:30pm with ringing from 3:30pm; Tea & Meeting from 5:30pm. Evening ringing is at Sible Heddingham from 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 4th August:** District Picnic & BBQ at Finchingfield; home of Graham & Sue Tobbell by the Church - with pool!
- **Saturday 11th August:** District Practice at Pentlow, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Tuesday 7th August:** District Practice at Great Dunmow, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Wednesday 5th September:** District Practice at Halstead, 7:30 to 9pm.
- **Saturday 27th October:** Service and District Meeting at Finchingfield. The Service is at 4:30pm with ringing from 3:30pm; Tea & Meeting from 5:30pm. Evening ringing is at Wethersfield from 7:30 to 9pm.

November is District Quarter Peal Month

Association Events

Thursday 12th to 14th April:

The Essex Training Course, based as usual at the Honywood School, Coggeshall.

Applications for Students have closed, but if you would like to come along as a **Helper** Yvonne Towler will be delighted to hear from you. Please ring her on 01621 817212 as soon as possible.

Monday 7th May: Association Annual General Meeting at Chelmsford Cathedral.

There will be general ringing from 9:15 to 10:15am, followed at 10:30 by the Association Service. The AGM will follow at around 11:30am.. There will then be a ringing tour around the NE District in the afternoon. Please get Tea tickets from Mary Bone, Association Secretary **Saturday 1st July:** Association Striking Competition in Southern District at **Orsett** (6 bell) and **South Weald** (8). The draw for the 6-bell competition is usually at 1:30pm, with the draw for the 8-bell at 6pm after Tea.

Saturday 7th October: Association Dinner at the County Hotel, Chelmsford., near the railway station. Please book your tickets (*with deposit*) with Mary Bone ASAP.

District Officers for 2007:

Master: Marian Wood (01371-856382)
Deputy: Maurice Downs (01376-330412)
Secretary: Peter Smith (01376-322094)
Treasurer: Di Carpenter (01279-870414)

21st World Scout Jamboree

Richard Ocroft, Local Liaison Officer, 21st World Scout Jamboree, and former Churchwarden, All Saints Writtle writes: "I believe it would be fabulous if the bells of Essex could be rung to celebrate this prestigious event, which will be held in **Hylands Park, Chelmsford** from **27th July to 8th August, 2007**.

A World Scout Jamboree has not been held in the United Kingdom since 1957 when it was held in Sutton Park in Warwickshire.

In July, 32,000 Scouts and Guides, together with an International Service Team of 8,000 will be arriving at Hylands Park and will stay for twelve days. These 40,000 people will, we hope, represent all 210 countries and territories that play the game of Scouting - this has never been achieved before and will certainly represent more countries and more participants than the Olympics.

The highlights of our event are likely to be the Opening ceremony in the evening of 28th July, the Closing Ceremony on 7th August, and the Special Sunrise ceremony which will take place on Wednesday, 1st August at 8.00am - and I suspect the party will last all day! Indeed, we hope that most of the 28million Scouts Worldwide will give thanks for the first 100 years of Scouting as 8.00am is reached in their time zone and celebrate the dawn of the second century. Although we shall be making good use of modern technology to keep in touch with other parts on the world, it would also be wonderful to use the tradition of bell ringing to publish abroad the good news of this unique gathering in celebration of this very special occasion.

The Association is planning to be there - with a mini-ring: helpers WILL be needed, so please make a note of the dates above.



A Ringers Mystery Tale...

It was some time after the last Essex Ringing Course when I went to my wardrobe - and I suddenly realised that I had **two** bottle-green Ringing Course Sweatshirts there - one more than I should have - and **no** grey Ringing Course Sweatshirt that I am sure I did have once....

So I made enquiries based on where I had been ringing recently. And, lo and behold, Pat Healy found that there was indeed an unclaimed apparently surplus grey Ringing Course Sweatshirt at Finchingfield. Thus my wardrobe is complete once more.

That still leaves the mystery of the extra green Sweatshirt: surely I must have left my grey one behind and put on a green one instead? But no one at Finchingfield admits to being short of a bottle green sweatshirt! So now I am the proud possessor of two green Ringing Course Sweatshirts and one grey one.

District Quiz Nite

About 30 members met up one dark evening in the middle of November in the nice new Church Hall adjacent to Black Notley Church, seemingly in the middle of nowhere! (*Well one party who shall remain nameless got lost en route and missed the start!*)

Peter and Marian Wood asked the tricky questions: some with music, some with pictures, and an anagram or three; and the 5 teams did their best to come up with the right answer - or at least the same one as the quiz masters had on their paper.

It seemed an exhausting evening, but with a half-time break for a special delivery fish and chip supper and a pause to draw the raffle there was still plenty of time for a natter and to complain about the questions.

In the end it was a close run thing between the Coggeshall team, and a combined team (the "Toby Jugs") from Felsted and Black Notley - the latter winning in the last round.



Its "Eyes Down" here as the competition gets under way

And here are the



After all that excitement someone has to do the clearing up and washing up!

backroom staff cheerfully preparing Teas and Coffees for all



NEXT QUIZ NITE: Saturday 10th November at Gestingthorpe: **Book it NOW!**

So, the green-one-which-does-not-belong-to-me is a 125th Anniversary special edition one, i.e. it has 1879 - 2004 in addition to the usual Essex Ringing Course badge on it. It is size XL. Whereas mine is of the "normal" Ringing Course design - and is also size XL.

Have you lost a bottle-green Essex Ringing Course sweatshirt, size XL?

Can you offer **convincing proof** that you used to be in possession of a garment matching that description? If you cannot, but would still like to add one to your sartorial collection I am offering a **Prize** for the most imaginative story as to how you could have lost such a garment.

Entries to the Editor in a plain brown envelope....

The Prize is of course one bottle-green, size XL, Anniversary design, Ringing Course Sweatshirt!

Obituaries

Charles Turner

Charlie Turner died in November 2006 and will be remembered by many in the Northern District for all the years he was Tower Captain in Coggeshall. Although not a prolific peal ringer, he rang the treble to the first peal on the bells after the Second World War. Many ringers attended his funeral service and heard the details of his career in the Military Police, driving jobs and latterly as a gardener. In recent years he had become a member of the band of ringers at Feering until increasing frailty forced him to give up ringing. He was laid to rest in the Coggeshall churchyard not far from the bells that he loved.

Heather Semken

Sam Courtauld 1940-2006

The ringing band of St. James the Apostle church at Greenstead Green were sad to learn of the death of their long-serving Tower Captain, who died in hospital on 23rd November 2006.

Sam, who was sixty-six, had been Tower Captain for a quarter of a century, having taken on the role in September 1981. He has also been Churchwarden at St. James' since 1972.

A service of thanksgiving for Sam's life was held at Halstead Church on Thursday 7th December with the Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge, taking part. In the years that I have been ringing at Greenstead Green there have always been more ringers than bells on practice nights because of Sam's cheerful and informal approach, which made Tuesday evenings an enjoyable social occasion. Sam would invariably be the last to arrive and always entered the ringing chamber with a cheerful smile and a friendly greeting to all those present.

(I also remember Sam arriving with a wonderful fruit cake for all - Alistair)

I visited him in hospital from time to time and he was always more interested in his fellow ringers than giving details of his own condition. I was often asked "How's Sam?" when visiting other towers, such was the affection in which he was held by many.

He will be sorely missed by the Greenstead Green band, and we offer our condolences to Amanda and his family

Roger Fleming

Dr. Lewis S Castleden

1914-2006

Life Member, Great Dunmow

Lewis, or "Doctor" as he was known to many of his ringing friends, learnt to ring while in his teens. Shortly after he had completed his medical training the Second World War started and he saw active service in the RNVR.

In 1947 he moved to Great Dunmow joining one of the local GP practices.

He quickly gained a reputation as a kind and caring GP and was much loved by his patients. He became much involved in the life of St. Mary's Church serving as a member of the PCC, Churchwarden, member of the choir and Tower Captain. He was a keen ringer and always ready to encourage learners. He was also a member of The Guild of Medical Ringers and W.A.G.S.

Health problems forced him to give up his GP practice prematurely and, in spite of suffering a number of strokes, he continued to ring and sing in the church choir. It was only towards the end of his life that he was unable to continue with these activities.

He was a gentle and humble man who will be greatly missed by his family, friends and former patients. May he rest in peace.

Peter Wood

Mabel Boniface 1923-2006

Mrs Mabel Boniface who died on 14th Dec 2006 aged 83 years, was born in the village of Black Notley, where she spent all her life, getting married and bringing her family up there. Mabel started her ringing career in 1944 while the ban on ringing was still on due to the war, she was introduced to hand bells and practiced on those until the ban was lifted. In the 1980s when the tower was short of ringers and Mabel took over as tower captain she rallied round with help from other towers and started a new band of ringers. At Mabel's funeral on 29th Dec 2006 at Black Notley Church, muffled bells were rung before the service by the local ringers and a quarter peal after the service by members representing the district. Mabel was also organist and deputy organist for many years, and when she wasn't playing the organ she would be singing in the choir. Her cheerful smile will sadly be missed around the village.

Ernie Andrews

In Memory of Sam Courtauld

On 26th November 2006 a full peal was rung at St. Mary the Virgin, Radwinter, and dedicated to the memory of Sam Courtauld who had died earlier that week.

4 of the band were from the Knights & Hospitallers band (Gestingthorpe and Pebmarsh), 2 were from Braintree and one each from Felsted and Sible Hedingham.

The band is to be congratulated on achieving many "firsts": Pip Darkins and Janice Watkins rang their first peal at their first attempt; Libby Laurence rang her first peal on 8 bells; Debbie Hill, Di Carpenter and Alistair Donaldson rang their first peals of Triples; and Daniel Smith called it to make it his first peal of Triples as Conductor.

The band wish to thank Peter Smith for agreeing to bring up the rear on the tenor - without falling asleep once!



Left to right: Debbie Hill, Pip Darkins, Di Carpenter, Libby Laurence (front), Peter Smith (rear), Janice Watkins, Daniel Smith, and Alistair Donaldson.

Radwinter, Essex

St Mary the Virgin

Sunday November 26th, in 3hrs 14mins (tenor 12cwt)

5040 Plain Bob Triples (comp D. F. Morrison)

1. Janice Watkins
2. Libby Laurence
3. Debbie Hill
4. Diane E Carpenter
5. Alistair M Donaldson
6. Pip Darkins
7. Daniel J Smith (C)
8. Peter Smith

First Peal at First attempt: 1 & 6.

First on 8: 2.

First Triples: 3,4 & 5.

First Triples as conductor.

Rung in memory of Sam Courtauld, Tower Captain for 25 years and Churchwarden for 34 years at Greenstead Green.



Beginners School

The District Beginners School is at Coggeshall until the end of March - ringing is from 10 am to 12 noon, with a coffee break halfway or thereabouts. The School will move to Finchingfield for the Summer Term from 12th May to 14th July

All abilities from initial bell handling to Call Changes, Plain Hunt Doubles and Plain Bob Minor are taught here by the District Master Marian Wood and her team of helpers. Some theory sessions and discussions of "Belfry Etiquette" are often given.

No need to Book! You will be made very welcome - just come along and see what goes on! Marian is on 01371-856382.

THE COGGESHALL RINGING CENTRE

Coggeshall is a Ringing Centre recognised by the Central Council as equipped for teaching all aspects of ringing, and the Coggeshall ringers want to invite everybody to come and use it more!

In case you have not visited it yet, The Coggeshall Ringing Centre features a recently augmented and rehung ring of 10 bells, (*tenor 24 cwt*) with a simulator fitted in the ringing chamber, and a lecture room just beneath. Toilets and a kitchen meeting room are available in the church. Access is via a iron spiral staircase.

If you need a training venue as a Tower, District or independent group of friends why not get in contact and see whether we can suit your needs (we do have some expenses to cover, and therefore there is a charge of £10/hr/group).

As a new venture, in 2007 the Centre is independently organising three training workshops. In discussion with the EACR Training Officer these are designed to be complementary to (and not duplicating) events being organised by the Association.

Saturday 19th May 10am to 1pm

Spliced Surprise Minor

- subtitled "The Cambridge Six".

Leader: David Sparling

- ▶ For those who feel fully secure ringing touches of Cambridge Minor.

Saturday 8th September 10am to 1pm

Improving your Calling and Conducting.

Leader: Brian Meads

- ▶ For those who already call simple touches, and want to know how to put people right!

Saturday 3rd November 10am to 1pm

Change ringing on Handbells

- subtitled "Moving on from Plain Hunt".

Leader: Paul Cammiade

- ▶ For those who want to make progress in Plain Bob. (*You should already feel confident in Plain Hunting your pair*)

To apply for a place on any of these workshops please complete and return an application form. Forms are available on the Training page of the EACR web site (go to Ringing Centres) or direct from the Ringing Centre.

The fee per workshop is £5 per person, and should accompany your application. Tea/coffee will be available during each workshop.

To contact Coggeshall Ringing Centre you can write to:

Janet Edwards,
181 High Street,
Kelvedon,
Colchester, CO5 9JD

Or Phone: 01376 573412

E-mail: janet@ajsplace.fsnet.co.uk

Congratulations to:

First Peal

Janice Watkins (Radwinter)
Pip Darkins (Radwinter)

First Quarter Peal

David Dempsey (Felsted)
Eleanor Mackle (11) (Wethersfield)
Mary Ann Villar (Witham)

First in Method or Inside

Plain Bob Doubles

Valerie Darkins: Vicky LeFevre
Bradley Hill Jennifer Ford

Grandsire Doubles

Graham Tobbell Matthew Bayley

Reverse Canterbury PB Doubles

4 members from Great Easton

Treble Bob Minor

Sue Tobbell (treble)

Plain Bob Triples

Kate Champness

Treble Bob Major

Libby Laurence

Lincolnshire Surprise Major

Ian Hamilton

Other Notables

David Learmonth First QP as
Conductor

Debbie Hill First Peal of Triples

Di Carpenter First Peal of Triples

Alistair Donaldson First Peal of Triples

Janet Edwards First Peal of Surprise
Royal

Daniel Smith First Peal of Surprise
Maximus:

First Peal of Triples
as Conductor

Kath Downs First Peal of Surprise
Maximus

Great Easton: 100th Peal rung on May 21st 2006, with Adrian Malton also ringing his 1000th peal as Conductor.

Cherry Threadgold: Chosen to be Essex "Carer of the Year" - a well-deserved award. Hoping you enjoy your prize!

Libby Laurence: Organised the special peal to mark the 60th anniversary of BBC Womans Hour on October 6th 2006.

Pearl Wedding Anniversaries: 6 district members celebrated 30 years of marriage in 2006: Graham & Sue Tobbell, Alistair & Janet Donaldson, and Roy & Cherry Threadgold. They jointly marked the occasion with a Quarter Peal of Plain Bob Minor; Roy calling a touch of 1,260 changes involving exactly 30 calls....

Colonel Sir John Ruggles-Brise

Colonel Sir John Ruggles-Brise, of Spains Hall, Finchingfield died on 20th February at the grand age of 98.

He was well known in the area, a former Lord Lieutenant of Essex, and will be missed by many.

The ringers of Finchingfield rang for his funeral on 2nd March, including tolling the Tenor 98 times.

Beyond Bob Minor...

The District is running a series of training sessions intended to help ringers progress from Bob Minor as rung at the Saturday School up to surprise minor methods in easy steps. I have put together a "syllabus" to support this involving 2 methods each session, as you will see set out below; but I am always pleased to receive suggestions for other methods to be included or substituted - just give me a call to discuss!

Please note that these sessions will now take place on the **FOURTH** Saturday of the month unless another event intervenes. Each session will start as usual with a short discussion and theory session from 7pm with actual ringing from 7:30 to 9pm.

Everyone welcome to come along – helpers especially welcome - but please let the Alistair Donaldson know if you are coming during the week before... and please study the methods beforehand!

Let Alistair know if you would like a Handout sheet.

A big "Thank you" to everyone, students and helpers, who have come along to past sessions - and then gone on to organise their own local practices. If you would like to ring a quarter peal to reinforce the session please contact a District Officer.

Future Sessions:

24th March: (Stedman)

28th April: (Little Bob & Kent)

26th May: (Woodbine & Norwich)

23rd June: (London & Bourne)

28th July: (St. Clements & Double Court)

No Session in August

22nd September (Double Oxford & Oxford TB)

No Session in October either!

Contact Alistair Donaldson 01787-463106
Or alistair@donaldsonfamily.org.uk



Advanced Practices

These practices continue on the 3rd **Saturday** of each month at St. Michael's Braintree: they follow from the Beyond Bob minor sessions above, extending methods from 6 to 8 and 10 bells. Please come along if you want to ring Treble Bob hunt, Surprise major, or Stedman triples or better. We also intend to ring some Caters and Little Bob Royal methods during the evening whenever practicable.

Please contact Maurice Downs on 01376-330412 if you want to practice a particular method. Suggestions: Look up Rutland and Lincolnshire Surprise Major....

Future practice dates:

21st April; 19th May; 16th June; 21st July, 18th August; and 15th September.

Put them in your Diary **now!**